

MAG – 109 – Nightfall

[The Magnus Archives Theme - Intro]

JONATHAN SIMS

Rusty Quill Presents The Magnus Archives Episode One Hundred And Nine
Nightfall

[The Magnus Archives Theme – Intro - Continues]

(Click)

(Gurgling, gasping noise)

ARCHIVIST

Well?

TREVOR

She said you could turn it on. Didn't say anything 'bout talkin'.

ARCHIVIST

Look, we're on the same side.

JULIA

If you're telling the truth.

ARCHIVIST

I mean, I don't know what proof I can give you.

JULIA

Well, if you're right about it, it won't be long until "Officer Mustermann" over here is able to talk again. That should be illuminating.

TREVOR

He's almost got his lungs again, if you can call 'em lungs.

JULIA

As long as they can push air, it'll do.

ARCHIVIST

And if you don't like what he has to say?

JULIA

Then this cabin is a long way away from anything that can hear you.

(Trevor and Julia chuckle)

ARCHIVIST

A-and if I run?

TREVOR

We're very much hoping that you do.

(Trevor and Julia chuckle)

ARCHIVIST

I read your statement, you know. You, you don't kill people, only monsters.

TREVOR

The line gets blurrier every day.

ARCHIVIST

What about you, Julia? Following in your dad's footsteps?

JULIA

Hm, it's a legacy I've learned to be proud of. There are people who would sell us all out for things you can't even imagine. I'm happy doing what it takes to stop that.

ARCHIVIST

Murder?

JULIA

Why not? Everything dies. You think if you walk out of this cabin you just keep going? Something gets you, even if it's just time. Mostly though, life on this planet ends violently. It's the most natural thing in the world, and sometimes it makes the world a better place.

ARCHIVIST

And when something comes for you?

JULIA

Then I die.

ARCHIVIST

Th-that doesn't scare you?

JULIA

Every second.

(Gurgling, gasping noise, someone struggling to breathe)

ARCHIVIST

C-can we keep that somewhere else?

TREVOR

I want it where I can see it.

ARCHIVIST

And when you're satisfied that I'm not trying to harm you?

TREVOR

If you're right about that ritual, I guess you talk to Gerard.

ARCHIVIST

You said he was dead.

JULIA

He is.

(Trevor chuckles)

ARCHIVIST

Right, so we just... wait.

JULIA

That's the plan.

ARCHIVIST

Right.

(More gasping sounds)

ARCHIVIST

Perhaps, if all we can do is listen to this... regrowing itself. May I suggest a way to pass the time?

JULIA

Sure. You want our story?

TREVOR

Gave you folks plenty already.

ARCHIVIST

I m-mean, yes, but the situation has changed quite a bit. Last I heard you were dying of lung cancer.

TREVOR

I was.

ARCHIVIST

And now?

TREVOR

I'm not.

ARCHIVIST

And that doesn't strike you as... odd?

(Another struggling breath)

TREVOR

Not much I see these days isn't 'odd' somehow or other. Not going to turn my nose up at the one bit of it that worked out well for me. I hunt monsters; my lungs don't kill me. Seems like a fair trade. Maybe God did it.

ARCHIVIST

What about you, Julia? C-care to make a statement? Maybe about, uh, how you met Trevor?

JULIA

Sure. Why not? It's not like you or your tape recorder get to leave here without us.

ARCHIVIST

Thank you. **(Cough)** Statement of Julia Montauk, regarding her initial encounter with the hunter Trevor Herbert. When did this happen?

JULIA

About six years ago.

TREVOR

Seven. 2010.

JULIA

Sure. Summer 2010.

ARCHIVIST

Statement taken direct from subject, June 29th 2017. Statement begins.

JULIA

I tried to live a normal life. I really did. I took jobs working in the back room of offices where I wouldn't need to meet anyone. I had boyfriends who promised they didn't care. I burned through a half dozen counsellors. None of it worked.

You see, my father has always remained one of the darlings of the true crime community. Articles, documentaries, grisly retrospectives... Wherever I ended up, somehow it would always worm its way into my life. One of my co-workers or new friends would stumble across a profile of my father and that would be that. Every time I ended up in a relationship, it was only a matter of time

before I caught them on some true crime blog, or spotted a profile of my father in their search history. Sometimes I'd try to lie about it, say there was no relation, but the damage was done. They'd get distant, throwing me nervous glances when they didn't think I'd notice or, worse, they started to look at me like I was some sort of prize, some small claim to fame: the serial killer's daughter!

I suppose I could have changed my name. Something always stopped me, though. It was the only connection I still had to my dad, and even if it did keep ruining my life, I couldn't bring myself to lose it. The counsellors and the therapists were more understanding, but even they couldn't quite keep the eager quiver out of their voice when I started talking about the murders. It felt like every couple of years I was having to start my life over from scratch.

What is it, do you think, that makes people so obsessed with horrific things happening to other people? Even now, after all I've done, I can't quite figure out what it is that makes people treat actual atrocities like cheap entertainment. Maybe we're all just broken inside, unable to really grasp the difference between fictional people and people we just don't know. They're all just abstract ideas we're happy to have suffer for our enjoyment. Or maybe the fact it really happened is exactly the point, adding the awful spice of reality to people's morbid fantasies. When I think of the lurid joy some people would feel if I were caught, the serial killer's daughter taking over the family business, it makes me sick.

But even back then, with my hands unbloodied, that collective obsession with brutality chased me through my life. In the summer of 2010, I made another

attempt to outrun my father's legacy and moved up to Manchester to take a new job. It was night shift work, security and maintenance for an old office building occupied by a handful of failing companies trying to save money on floorspace. I liked it because I didn't really have to talk to anyone. I was on the desk alone, and generally anyone working there late enough to cross paths with me wasn't in a talking mood.

There was another reason that I chose to work nights. If you've read my statement, then I'm sure it will come as no surprise that for most of my life I've had quite a significant fear of the dark. I used to lie awake at night, listening, straining my ears for the noise of movement or that dreadful growl coming out of the dark. It was one of my better counsellors that suggested I try working nights as a way to address it. And it worked, for the most part. It made the darkness mundane, just another aspect of my everyday life to be dealt with, and kept me within the comforting glow of lamps and light bulbs basically all the time. It also let me sleep during the day, when the faintest hint of sunlight that crept around edges of my thick bedroom curtains made me feel safe enough to relax. It made dating even harder, of course, but by that point I'd mostly given up trying. It wasn't a perfect solution, by any means, but it helped. To start with, at least.

I never really worried about keeping track of the companies that kept offices in my building. It seemed like they came and went pretty regularly. Sometimes a start-up would make it big, but usually it was the inevitable bankruptcy that moved them out. All except DKN Systems. I never really figured out what it was they were meant to be doing, something full of meaningless buzzwords like "business networks" or "media solutions". Thinking about it, it might actually

have been “business media network solutions”. Point is, there didn’t seem to be anything suspicious about them. At least not at first. I knew a bit more about them than the other people renting space, since they seemed to do a lot of work after dark, and there were a handful of their staff I knew on sight. I mean, I assumed they also did a lot of work in the daytime that I just wasn’t seeing, so it didn’t seem particularly weird, just another small business burning the candle everywhere they could to stay afloat.

But even if the company itself didn’t seem weird, the people who worked for it really did. I remember there were four of them normally around, and at one point I thought it must have been a family thing, because I got it in my head that they were related. I don’t know why, they didn’t even look that similar, but there was just something about their faces. It was the eyes, I think. It looked like they all had irises so dark that they seemed almost completely black. And they dressed the same, not like a uniform, but they all wore black trousers, a dark blue shirt and a brown leather belt. They also wore soft-soled black canvas shoes, which were almost completely silent when walking down the carpeted halls of the building. It made them even more unsettling, quietly wandering the corridors, never quite looking where they were going. Like their attention was focused on something you just couldn’t see.

There was only one of them that ever spoke, at least to me: a young man by the name of Vardan Darvish. He seemed to be the manager, at least as much as there was any clear structure, and unlike his colleagues he seemed happy, almost eager to talk. I asked him about it once, and he laughingly told me that his co-workers “didn’t sign up for the quality of conversation”. He’d chat with me about my job and the latest headlines, which he always had a strong

opinion about. We never discussed any details of his life, though, or his job. He generally came over to let me know about a blown light bulb somewhere in the building, and then stick around for a bit of conversation. I once jokingly suggested he must be breaking the lights himself for an excuse to talk to me, and he laughed, but then got kind of quiet, and didn't stick around to talk. At the time, I assumed my awkward flirting had made it weird, but unfortunately not.

TREVOR

The bulbs were breaking because of what they were doing 'round the offices. I'd been tracking Darvish for a good few weeks by then. There'd been a couple of homeless I knew go missing round Parrs Wood, where I was keeping back then. Now, usually I wouldn't pay much mind, was the summer after all, but they were a couple of weeks gone, so I checked in with shelters and a worker that dealt with them, but no-one had the first clue. I knew Morris had at least a kid with a woman down in Moss Side, so he wouldn't have skipped town, but she hadn't seen him neither.

My first thought were vampires, as they like to go after rough sleepers, but I knew by then there were other horrors kicking around, not to mention your mundane murderers. Didn't matter to me of course, not by then. I had a hunt on, and I was going to see it through. It weren't long after I went down to see you folk, so I was still convinced I were on the way out, and caution weren't something I cared for.

Don't recall exactly how Darvish got on my radar. Someone had seen something that sent me somewhere that led me to him. I don't know. Point is,

soon as I saw him, I knew he were the one I was after. There was a smell to him, something dark and sick, rolling off him in waves. Sure, he didn't smell like a vampire, but he smelt like something that weren't meant to be in this world, so I reckoned I'd best help him out of it.

Took to following him for a couple of days. I didn't know exactly what he was or what he wanted, so I weren't keen to charge right in. He seemed normal at first mind, happy enough in the sun, though he worked nights – that's how I first saw him. He didn't spot me, or if he did, he never paid me no mind. They never do. Third night, I spotted him at work, taking a delivery. It were a big truck for some company called 'Outer Bay'. Tried to follow them up since, but didn't find much. Then again, maybe I didn't know what I were looking for. I mean, to anyone else the box they were unloading would have looked like nothing much, but if there's one thing I know, it's what a box looks like when it's got someone inside. There's a certain shape it tends to be, and the folk carrying it had to take a second to manage the shifting weight of it. Might have looked like a big old flight case, but as I soon as I saw it, I were certain there was somebody inside. What I didn't know was, alive or dead?

JULIA

Looking back, I feel like an idiot. I was watching them unload that same case. It was policy to have whoever was working security present for deliveries, something about insurance. Thinking about it, I even noticed Trevor lurking past the fence, though I didn't give much thought to just another tramp.

(Trevor chuckles)

I had no idea what they had in the box, though. They told me it was new computer servers, and I didn't have any reason not to believe them. They'd had plenty of similar deliveries before. Vardan was there and we talked for a while. He wanted to discuss the tennis, I think, but I've never really followed sport. He didn't seem suspicious or weird, and I had no reason to think that this was anything other than a late delivery of normal computer parts.

They took the case up to their offices, and I returned to my desk with a fresh cup of coffee and a plan to dig in for the night with some episodes of an old radio show I was working my way through. The plan went pretty smoothly for an hour or two, with the exception of a couple of DKN employees silently shuffling past at unnerving moments. Then I happened to glance up at one of the video feeds and saw that the tramp I saw earlier had managed to sneak inside the building.

TREVOR

It wasn't as hard as all that. Didn't even need to break a window or nothing, just waited until the last of the office weirdos were heading back inside. They were slow enough; it were pretty simple to tail them through before the door swung shut. Once in, I had a look around for cameras, because I knew there were a security guard. I'd seen her when they were unloading and I were pretty sure I could take her out if I needed to.

JULIA

(Chuckling) In your dreams, old man.

TREVOR

But I didn't want it to come to that. I tried to stay out of sight, but she must have spotted me, because soon enough I could hear her coming my way. I managed to duck into a stairwell and head up towards the fourth floor, where the front of the building said Darvish's company was. I could hear her behind me though, so I ducked out a floor early and nipped inside a cleaning cupboard to wait her out.

JULIA

I went all the way to the fourth floor, not realising that this git wasn't up there. The corridor light was out, and I made a note to replace it later as I turned on my torch. It was very quiet, far quieter than I would have expected for a company installing new equipment. I took a moment to get my bearings and there was no sound at all. Utter silence, except for the faintest drip, drip, drip, coming from somewhere up ahead. I called out, first for the trespasser, then for Vardan, then for anybody who might be up there, but there was no answer.

My torch beam fell on the door labelled DKN systems. It stood open, unmoving, with no light at all coming from inside. As my light crossed the doorframe, I could see the windows had been covered with thick wooden boards, and painted a dark matte black. In the corner of my mind, I could feel panic starting to claw its way up, as the darkness started to press in on me. I called out again, but there was still no reply. I wanted to turn around and run back to the light, but not enough, not as much as I wanted to overcome my fear.

I slowly headed inside, calling out every few steps to make sure anyone who might be in there knew I was with security. Inside, the rooms were bare,

completely empty. There was no sign they'd ever been used to run a business, and the only sign that I wasn't the first person to set foot in there was the complete absence of dust or dirt. I checked another room, but it was exactly the same. The same with the third I checked, and the fourth. Then I opened a normal-looking wooden door near the back, and I froze, once again on the threshold of something that didn't make sense.

In front of me was what should have been a normal meeting room, but it was far from that. The floor was covered in water, pitch black and utterly still. I knew in my mind it couldn't be more than a few millimetres deep, it didn't even spread past the doorway when I opened it, but as my torchlight reflected off the surface, it seemed to me like it was much, much deeper. In the centre of the room was a plain wood and metal table, with a man lying on top of it. I'd never seen him before. He lay motionless, and I could make out a thin, dark trickle of liquid flowing from his mouth and eyes, over his face and dripping down the table legs into the dark water. Three figures stood around him, the other workers from the office. Each was stood on a small square platform a few inches off the floor, facing directly towards the central table, arms outstretched and mouths wide as though they were screaming. They still made absolutely no sound.

I don't know how long I was frozen there, staring at the scene in front of me. Nothing was right about what I was seeing. I started to scream at them, shouted to stop whatever they were doing or I'd call the police. They didn't seem even remotely aware of me. Finally, I decided I was going to leave, to make the call, but not before I got the man on the table out of there. He clearly needed help, and whatever these silent screamers were doing to him wasn't

helping. I told them. I announced what I was about to do, but still got no response. So I stepped into the room and over to the table.

As soon as my foot hit the water, I fell into it completely. It was colder than anything I had ever experienced, and the torch slipped from my hand as my vision immediately went dark. I tried to orientate myself, to find which way was up, and I saw a faint pinprick of light, as my torch sank away from me, down and down and down, into the icy black water. I started to panic then, with the lightless deep pressing in on me, eager to take me away. I was absolutely sure that in a few moments there would be no surface left, just dark still water forever.

TREVOR

Luckily, I'd been watching a while, and I saw her go down. I didn't have a clue what were going on – still don't – but I was quick enough to get there and reach my arm into the water before she were too far gone. It were bloody cold. I couldn't see anything, obviously. I had my own light, but it just bounced off the surface. I could feel the back of her jacket down there, though, and I made a grab for it.

Now, I'm not as strong as I was, maybe, but I held on and pulled. Wasn't enough to get her out, something in there didn't want to let her go, but I got her high enough that her arm broke the surface. She flailed a second, but got hold of the doorframe and started to pull herself out. Took her a while, but she were almost there when I heard something moving behind us. Turned around to see Darvish stood there, and he did not look happy. I were already holding the knife. I could smell him so thick it tasted like rancid treacle, and whatever

he were shouting was quieter than the blood in my ears. It was going to be good.

I got him once across the chest, through his shirt, but he were a lot faster than I gave him credit for and he cracked me once, hard, across the face. I didn't go down, but I didn't get him with the blade again before he slammed his elbow into my gut. That time I did go down, and the knife dropped to the floor. He was on top of me, hands around my throat, and I thought that was it, no waiting for the cancer. Not going to lie, I was scared.

JULIA

I could still feel that dark water sticking to me, tugging at me, pleading at me to fall back into it. I pushed it from my mind, and I could just about make out the homeless man that saved me. He was struggling with someone, his torch fallen to the ground next to an old pocketknife. I grabbed the light and pointed it at them. Vardan was on top of him, hands around the old man's throat. I saw those eyes properly and, for the first time, I realised that Vardan's irises weren't dark, it was just that the pupils were so wide that they swallowed them completely.

That wasn't what did it, though. That wasn't what made me pick up the struggling tramp's pocketknife and plunge it in again and again to Vardan Darvish's throat. No, what did that was the tattoo, huge and dark on the chest beneath his ripped shirt. The closed eye sigil that was as familiar to me as the nightmares of my mother. I have never felt rage like I did then, and I have never felt any sensation as wonderful as the satisfaction of ending his life. There was a shiver in the air as the floor behind me dried in an instant, and the

three silent screamers dropped down dead. Well, I suppose they might have just been unconscious when they fell, but they were definitely dead by the time we left. The man on the table had never been alive to begin with.

TREVOR

I just knew, then. I never even had to explain anything to her. She just gave me back the knife and we left together. Wasn't any question as to who I was or what I was doing. We just clicked.

JULIA

And we've been hunting together going on seven years now.

TREVOR

She ain't too bad at it.

JULIA

He's starting to slow down a bit, though.

TREVOR

It's just the lack of respect that gets me.

JULIA

And he's going a bit senile, which is a shame.

TREVOR

Least I'm not so soft I need a feather bed.

JULIA

Beds are a good thing, old man, I keep telling you. So are baths.

TREVOR

You see what I've got to put up with, Mr Sims?

ARCHIVIST

I, um... Yeah, it's... What do you do for money?

JULIA

Sorry?

ARCHIVIST

I-I-I j-just ... I doubt roaming around killing things pays all that well. What, what do you do to support yourself?

JULIA

Oh, I don't know, we find ways. When you're out here, the odd bit of robbery or trespass doesn't really phase you.

ARCHIVIST

And why America?

TREVOR

Heard tell there were a wolfman. Old Davies down in Plymouth swore blind his brother had seen one up the Pacific Crest Trail.

JULIA

I told Trevor he was a liar, but here we are anyway. Have been for a couple of years.

TREVOR

Hey now, no wolfman, sure, but there's been plenty out here what needs killing.

JULIA

True enough. Plus, it's hard to leave – we're not exactly here legally and trying to get a flight home would get us noticed by authorities we'd rather avoid.

TREVOR

I keep telling her we could hop a boat.

JULIA

And I tell him I'd rather stay hunting here than trap myself on a boat for two weeks.

ARCHIVIST

So, what have you—

(Deep breath)

MAX

(Rasping) Shut up!

TREVOR

Hey, look who's talking!

MAX

(Struggling to talk) You could have at least chopped my ears off too. You people just won't shut up. How am I supposed to get the lungs lined up right when I can't even concentrate?

JULIA

Happy to chop them off again if you need the practice.

MAX

Do it. You're the ones who want to talk.

ARCHIVIST

Why were you looking for me?

MAX

Why do you think? Out here, exposed, unaware, on your own, at least I thought so – thought it was a good chance to get you home, to get you ready for the dance.

JULIA

Is this that “unknowing dance”?

ARCHIVIST

Yeah. Ok, Mustermann, or whatever your name—

MAX

Just turn it off. You got more questions, you turn that thing off.

ARCHIVIST

I don't think you're in any position to make demands.

MAX

Maybe not, but are you sure you know what's listening in?

ARCHIVIST

Do you?

MAX

No, but I don't like it.

TREVOR

What's he mean, "listening in"?

ARCHIVIST

Wh— No, I, I'm not...

JULIA

I knew this was a bad idea. Turn it off.

ARCHIVIST

It, it's fine, it's never bee—

JULIA

(Articulating slowly) Turn it off.

(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.