

MAG – 011 – Dreamer

Content Warnings

- Mass death
- Suffering
- x
- **Discussions of:** Murder, body horror, gore, character death.
- **Mentions of:** graphic injury, falling, heights, crushing, suicide, parental death

[The Magnus Archives Theme - Intro]

JONATHAN SIMS

Rusty Quill Presents The Magnus Archives Episode Eleven Dreamer

[The Magnus Archives Theme – Intro - Continues]

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Statement of Antonio Blake, regarding his recent dreams about Gertrude Robinson, previous Head Archivist of the Magnus Institute. Original statement given March 14th 2015. Audio recording by Jonathan Sims, current Head Archivist of the Magnus Institute, London. Statement begins.

Statement begins.

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(Read a loud from the archived witness statement of Antonio Blake)

First off, I should admit that I lied to get in here. I know your criteria are very clear: “Any supernatural or unexplainable experience or encounter occurring within the realms of apparent reality. No out-of-body experiences, visions,

hallucinations or dreams”. And this is about dreams, make no mistake, but I think you need to hear it anyway.

Whether you believe it or not, well, that’s up to you. I just don’t feel like I could rightly go on my way without at least trying to explain myself. You see, I had a dream about you. I know how that sounds, and I can assure you we don’t know each other, but the Institute, the building, even this room... I saw them in my dream as clearly as I see them here before me now. So no, I don’t have any tale about a shambling horror in the dark. I ask you to read on, though, as this wasn’t the sort of dream you just ignore.

I should probably give a little bit of background about myself rather than just gibbering about dreams and prophecies. I’ve lived in London for almost a decade now. I came here to do my undergraduate degree at the London School of Economics. I ended up taking a position with Barclays shortly after graduating and did well enough there. It didn’t last long, though; I barely made it through a full year before the stress of my new job, not to mention some problems in my personal life, led to me having a full nervous breakdown.

I’d broken up with Graham, my boyfriend of six years and had to leave the home we shared, going to stay with some of the few friends that had survived my year of stress-fuelled outbursts and constantly cancelled plans. It was there, sleeping on my friend Anahita’s sofa, in the depths of my misery, that I first started to have the dreams. I found myself standing atop the very peak of Canary Wharf and overlooking the Barclays building where I had spent so many hateful hours. Behind me I could feel the pulsing beat of the light that stands atop that looming tower; it thrummed through me and I could see the glow pass across my skin like oil but, try as I might, I could not turn around to look at it.

It was then that I noticed that there was something wrong with the city below me. It was dark, lit by the sickly orange glow of the streetlamps and there too something pulsed oddly. Looking down I could see a web of dark tendrils criss-crossing the streets and crawling up the buildings. They were like blood vessels, thick and dark, some as wide as roads and some as thin as a telephone wire, and they all throbbed in time with the beat of light behind me.

I needed to get closer. Lucid dreaming has never been a skill I've possessed and I generally get swept along in the current of whatever runs through my sleeping consciousness.

So it came as something of a surprise when my wordless desire to get closer became manifest and I moved forward. Even more surprising was that my forward motion brought me over the edge of Canary Wharf's roof and I fell. I plummeted, I don't know how far, until I hit the ground with a crack. I would have expected this to wake me but instead I simply lay there, spasmed by dream-pain, you know, the knowledge of pain without the white heat of nerves. After some while, who can say how long in sleep, I became standing again and started to move through that veined orange hellscape that I knew to be the City.

As I moved, I will not say walked, for that would not be quite correct. I saw people. Not many, and not moving, but they were there. They leered like photographs, overexposed and washed out, caught and immortalised in a single instant. Each had those tendrils wrapped around them, pulsing against their stillness. One had a thin black vein that snaked around her arms and appeared to vanish into where her heart would sit.

Another, an older gentleman in a dark blue suit, laid on the ground with a beating mass the size of a tree trunk crushing his legs. On the face of each and

every person I saw was that same rictus of surprise, pain and terrified confusion. I had never dreamed like this before, and I knew there was something in it beyond my own reeling consciousness.

Eventually my wandered drifting led me back to the Barclays building. Something inside me wanted to go inside, to see what it was like in this rhythmic, fleshy dreamscape. The lights were on, but like they were a sodium-vapour orange like those outside, and as with all the other lights their brightness pulsed in and out in that beating world, which seemed to rule over all this place.

The desks were set up as I knew them to be but there were no people that I could see. I took the stairs, as something about the thought of riding the lift filled me with a cold dread.

It was 23 floors to the office where I worked but if I even had legs in this place they were not what carried me up that stairwell. It was there I found my own desk, clear and empty as I had left it some weeks before. I then knew all at once that there was something in the small office next to me. I felt it in the rhythm of my dream, and I carried myself across to see. It had been the office of my old line manager, John Uzel, and he was inside. One of the dark black veins had snaked in through the window and seemed to have suspended John two feet from the floor, wrapped lightly around his throat. Like all the others he was still, an image held in place, dangling and hanged by this pulsing mass of otherness.

I awoke at that point. Normally, a nightmare would leave me a sweating, wide-eyed mess, but that morning I felt invigorated. It came to me that, while the dream had in all ways appeared as nightmarish, I had never felt any true discomfort. Even my fall at the beginning had been curiously lacking in any true

distress. I tried to put it from my mind as I searched through the jobsites, but something about the dream lingered, like a foul odour you only smell when you've stopped thinking about it.

I hadn't seen John Uzel in several months. He had left the company some time before my breakdown and I had never known him that well, but the image of his face in my dream wouldn't leave me, so I resolved to find out why he had returned to my mind in such an odd manner. For whatever reason, the idea that there might be no cause for his appearance, that it may be entirely incidental, never occurred to me. I had been offered the chance to return to Barclays after my rather dramatic departure, once my mental health was in a better state, but at that point I couldn't even take the Docklands Light Railway, as I'd get a panic attack whenever the train hit Poplar and the looming figure of the Barclays building and Canary Wharf came into view. I had declined the offer but I still kept in contact with some of my now ex-colleagues, so emailed a few of them to see if they knew how to get in touch with my old manager.

It didn't take long to find out the truth. John Uzel had apparently hanged himself following the loss of a bitter custody battle with his ex-wife. I'm sure I don't need to tell you that this shook me deeply. Again there was no question to me that it may have been a coincidence. I knew, I still know, that what I saw in my dream deliberately mirrored his fate.

I don't remember my dreams for the next few nights but I do remember that I had that same dream again the following Saturday. It was the same in every detail, except there were different people. Some remained the same but others were new or had disappeared, and those that I remembered had faded, like wallpaper left too long in the sun. Again, I began atop Canary Wharf, with the light pulsing behind me, and once I was down I found myself able to

traverse the city at will, watching all the figures wrapped in those throbbing veins.

I returned to where John had been, and sure enough there he remained, though faded to the point where if I didn't know who he was already, I could not have identified him. The tendrils that wrapped his throat were as dark as they ever had been, though. Knowing now what I did about John, I could see the deaths of each poor soul I saw as I wandered through the dream. The dark vines would clutch the head of the stroke victim, the lungs of a cancerous smoker and would bury the car crash victims under the vastness of their bulk. I did not go towards the hospital, as so many of those thick and rubbery lines led towards it that I could see no space within that was not choked with them.

These dreams have been a regular part of my sleeping for about eight years now. Even as life improved and I found a new job and place to live, believe it or not I now work selling crystals and tarot cards in a magic shop, they continued to crop up a few times each month. If there's one advantage to working where I do, it's that I've been able to read every book on esoteric dreaming ever written but none of them even come close to what I have experienced.

I tried to make peace with the dreams for some time, reasoning that as long as they caused me no discomfort, they were harmless. This worked fine until I saw my father in the dream, walking down Oxford Street, the pulsing veins climbing up his leg and into his chest. I tried to warn him of course – asked leading questions on his health and how he was feeling, whether he'd been tired recently. I even went so far as to book him a doctor's appointment, much to his annoyance. It did no good, though – ten days later the heart attack came for him and, despite the rapid response of the paramedics and how much of his medical history I had immediately to hand, there was nothing I could do to

save him. He died on New Year's Eve, and as 2014 ended, so did any hope I had of my dreams doing good in the world.

It took a month and a half for my father's image to fade from the orange glow of the streetlamps in my dream London. And by my estimation he had appeared about ten days before his death. I tell you this because I feel you have a right to know the sort of timescales that we're dealing with here. I haven't had much of a chance to experiment or see anything more specific, I'm afraid. There are so many people who die in London, and I know so few of them. But I recognise you. As I write these words I can see you in the other room, eyes locked on whatever book you're diverting yourself with; I recognise you from my dreams. They said at the front desk that you review all the written statements, so I can only hope that you take the time to read through this one fully.

Allow me to explain in a bit more detail. It was the night before last that the dream came again. It started as it always did, with me on top of Canary Wharf, but almost immediately I could feel that something had changed. The dull orange glow that thrummed up from below seemed muffled somehow and there was an oppressive knowledge within me that something was deeply wrong. Looking down, I could see that the veins, whose domination of the dreamscape had only ever been partial before, had thickened and now seemed to cover almost the whole space of every street. They still pulsed as before but rather than pumping their dark, unknown cargo invisibly, there would now sometimes be seen a dark red light that travelled along the inside of them. I thought I saw this red light illuminate faces and shadows within those tendrils but it moved too quickly for me to be sure of any details beyond the direction. This was not something I had ever seen happen before in these dreams, and I

was aware that I had two choices: to follow the light to wherever it might lead or to turn and retreat into the waking world. I decided to follow the path of that scarlet glow, though I found I was floating some distance from the ground, so thick were the vines below. I followed them for some time; how long exactly I couldn't say. I never seemed to travel faster than walking speed in these dreams and yet the distances I covered as I passed through the orange twilight of this pulsating other London seemed far further than the time it took to traverse. Such is the way of dreams, I suppose.

All I know for sure is that I realised after some time that the red light was leading me towards Vauxhall and the Thames. There were fewer people visible here – did rich people die less? Or perhaps they just had greater control over where they died? Or maybe they just couldn't be seen, fighting off death for so long that when it came at last its icy tendrils covered every inch of them. I crossed the Thames, and the bridge was knotted high with the flashing vines. One or two of them seemed to pass through the river itself and the occasional flash of red could be seen beneath the water but most of them were laid across the bridge.

Finally, I saw the destination of the blood-tinged glow. A small building, standing alone the other side of the bridge near the Embankment. I couldn't have told you what the street was called, the London of my dreams has no street signs. It was old, pillared and possessed of a quiet dignity. It was this building into which all the veins flowed: every door, every window was solid with them. When the bursts of red light passed into it, the whole building glowed crimson. I could see a bronze plaque next to the door, not quite covered. It read: The Magnus Institute, London. Founded 1818. I entered, though I couldn't tell you how. The veins blocked every possible entrance

entirely and yet I found myself moving through them. I saw the corridors, these corridors, choked with that shadowed flesh, and passed through them, following that red light that would now pulse so bright that I knew were I to see it awake it would have blinded me. It led me to a room, the label of which was still visible, and read “Archive”. I entered to see walls covered with shelves and cabinets stretching off into the distance. These shelves were coated in a sticky black tar, which I knew at that moment was the thickened, pulpy blood that pumped through each and every one of those veins. At the front of the room stood a desk, and the veins were wrapped around it so tightly and so thick that I knew that this must be where they ended.

Getting closer I realised that there was a person sitting at that desk and it was them that all of this scarlet light was flowing into. I could see none of the figure’s body beneath the flesh that enclosed them, but as I moved around I saw the face was uncovered. It was your face and the expression upon it was far more fearful than any I had seen in eight years of wandering this twilight city. That was when I awoke. I’m well aware that I don’t even know your name, and I have no responsibility to try and prevent whatever fate is coming for you. Based on my previous experience, such a thing is likely impossible anyway, but after what I saw I couldn’t live with myself if I didn’t at least try. I did as much research into your Institute as possible, and arranged an appointment to provide a statement about some spurious supernatural encounter. Even then I was told that the Archivist only reviews the written statements once they have been taken, so here I am, pouring out my lunatic story on paper in the hopes that you might eventually read it.

If you do see this in time and read this far, then to be honest I don’t know what else to tell you. Be careful. There is something coming for you and I don’t know

what it is, but it is so much worse than anything I can imagine. At the very least you should look into appointing a successor. Good luck.

JONATHAN SIMS

Statement ends.

I'm sure I don't need to explain how disquieting it was to find this statement tucked into the recent archives. I'm not... entirely sure whether to bring this up with Elias or not. When he hired me, he was vague on the point of what happened to my predecessor, Gertrude Robinson. I asked if she would be available to train me up for a handover, but he simply said she had passed away and not to worry about it overmuch. Actually, now I think about it, his exact phrase was that she "died in the line of duty", which I had assumed meant having a stroke at her desk or something similar. She was quite elderly, I believe.

I mean, I don't believe in the predictive power of dreams, obviously, but still, it's a deeply unsettling thing to find. I had Tim look into it, as I don't entirely trust the others not to have written it as a practical joke and slipped it into the archives. Unsurprisingly, he came up with nothing. Antonio Blake is a fake name and all of the contact details he provided were similarly fraudulent. It's almost certainly a joke, a bit of hazing for the new boss, maybe? Best not to engage with it, I think.

Still, I might have a word with Rosie, to make sure I get a copy of any new statements as soon as they're made, not just once the researchers are done with them. She seemed very open to idea of recording them, so I'm hopeful she'll be willing to do this too. If this is genuine, well, I have no idea if Gertrude got the chance to read this statement before she passed away, but if anyone

comes in ranting about dreaming my death, then I very much want to hear about it.

End recording

[The Magnus Archives Theme - Outro]

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