

MAG003 – Case 0070107 – “Across the Street”

ARCHIVIST

Statement of Amy Patel, regarding the alleged disappearance of her acquaintance Graham Folger. Original statement given July 1st 2007. Audio recording by Jonathan Sims, Head Archivist of the Magnus Institute, London.

Statement begins.

ARCHIVIST (STATEMENT)

I first met Graham two years ago, more or less. It's hard to say exactly when we first met or even started talking, as we were taking a class together at the time. I'm sure there was plenty of discussion or interaction before we learned each other's names, but I started my course in September of 2005, so yeah, about two years. I had decided to take a Criminology course at

Birkbeck University as a way of getting out of the rut with my office job – I'm an Associate Compliance Analyst at Deloitte, and if you think that sounds boring, well... yeah. It is. I knew a night course in Criminology wasn't going to go anywhere, of course, even if I'd finished it. I just had to do something to find a bit of interest in my life, and it was either that or become an alcoholic, so...

Sorry, I'm going off topic. I initially found Graham a bit off-putting, to be honest. He was a chain smoker and wore far too much deodorant to try and cover the smell. He was a bit older than me, maybe ten years or so. I never asked his age, I mean, we weren't *that* close, but he was starting to grey at the edges of his hair, and you could see that the tiredness on his face wasn't just from missing a single night's sleep. That's not to say he was bad looking – he had a round, open sort of

face and quite deep blue eyes, but very much not my type. He was well-spoken in group work, at least when he did speak, and I think it came up once that he'd been to Oxford, though I don't know what college. I'd noticed earlier that during lectures he always seemed to be scribbling furiously in a notebook even when the lecturer wasn't speaking. At first I just thought he was thorough, but I swear I watched him fill a whole A5 notebook in one lecture. I remember it was a talk on youth and the justice system where the speaker was so slow that it wouldn't have filled that book even if Graham had been writing down literally every word. Not to mention I asked to borrow his notes once for an essay, and he gave me this weird look and said he didn't take any notes.

So yeah, point is, I wouldn't have called him a friend, but we got on alright. It was about four

months into my course that I first encountered Graham outside of the university. I was riding the night bus home, having gone for a couple of drinks and missed the regular service. I live in Clapham, so there's a pretty regular night bus service headed there. Of course, regular also means drunken angry vomiters, so yeah, I generally try to be unobtrusive, sitting in a seat at the back of the top floor. It was there that I saw Graham. He was sat right at the front, staring out of the window. People-watching is one of my guilty pleasures, so I decided not to say hello, at least not right away. I wasn't disappointed, either – he was stranger alone than he had ever been during class. It was the middle of winter at this point, so the windows were solid with condensation, but he almost obsessively wiped it away from the one in front of him the moment it started to obscure his view. He seemed to be intently scanning the street for something, except

that at times he would crane his neck to stare at the roofs of the buildings passing by. He seemed nervous, as well, and was breathing way faster than normal, which fogged up his window even more. It was slightly alarming to watch, to be honest, and I finally made up my mind to tell him I was there.

He jumped a bit when I greeted him, and I asked him if he was alright. He told me he didn't usually stay out so late and found nighttime public transport unsettling. I sat next to him, and he seemed to get much more relaxed, so I didn't push the issue. We talked for awhile about nothing in particular, until the bus started to approach my stop. As I rose, I noticed that Graham had stood up at the exact same time as I had, and I realised with some discomfort that we must live at the same stop. I liked the guy fine, don't get me wrong, but I still didn't really feel ok

with him knowing where I lived. But yeah, it was obvious that I'd gotten up to get off the bus, so I couldn't really ride on to the next stop, and it wasn't even that I felt unsafe with Graham, I'm just a private person. I decided to just walk back with him as far as necessary and make sure he didn't see what building I went into. Maybe we weren't even walking in the same direction. Yeah, we were walking in exactly the same direction. We even seemed to be heading to the same street.

It was at that point I felt a hand grab my shoulder and throw me into the road. I don't know how else to describe it, one moment I was walking along, the next I was flying towards the ground. It can't have been Graham – he was in front of me at the time, and I would have sworn there was nobody else on the street. There weren't any cars coming, but I hit my head hard. I think I must have been unconscious for a few seconds, because

the next thing I remember is a panicky Graham on the phone to an ambulance. I tried to tell him I was alright, but didn't really manage to get the words out, which, yeah, probably meant I wasn't alright.

The ambulance arrived in pretty good time, considering it was London on a Friday night, and the paramedics gave me a look over. I was told that the injury itself wasn't serious – apparently head wounds always bleed that much and it's nothing to panic about – but that I did have quite a nasty concussion and shouldn't be left alone for the next few hours. Even though we were within sight of my door, I had for some reason settled upon the idea of Graham never knowing where I lived. In retrospect this was likely the concussion talking, but the upshot was I agreed to go back to Graham's flat to recover. He was quite awkward about the whole thing, and took great pains to

assure me that there was nothing untoward about the situation; apparently he was a gay, which I'll admit did actually reassure me a bit. Still, it was clear this wasn't how either of us had hoped to be ending our nights.

As it turned out, Graham's flat was directly across the street from mine, just a couple of floors lower. I wondered if I could see my window from his, and I remember I had the odd thought that, if I had to look out, I'd need to be careful of his window box, as I could see the hooks attaching it to the frame. I asked him what he grew, and he gave me a look, as though my concussion had stopped me making sense again. I mean, maybe it had, because when I looked back at the window the hooks were gone, and there was no sign of any window box. At the time I put it down to my head wound, and even now I'm not sure.

The flat itself was a simple affair, quite big by London standards. It had only a few pieces of furniture and a lot of bookshelves, each covered with rows and rows of identical notebooks, with no apparent marking system or indication of contents. I started to ask about them, but my head throbbed and I didn't feel up to any answer that might have been forthcoming. Graham led me to the sofa and disappeared to fetch me an icepack and a mug of sugary tea. I graciously accepted both, though I wasn't in much of a mood to talk. Graham clearly felt awkward enough with the silence to do the talking for both of us, and I learned more about him over the next hour than I'd ever had a desire to know. Apparently his parents had died in a car accident a few years previously and had left a great deal of money and ownership of this flat. He didn't need to work anymore and so had found himself somewhat adrift, taking night college courses to pass the

time and broaden his mind - his words, not mine. He said he was trying to figure out what to actually do with his life.

He talked on like this for a while but I stopped listening about that point, as I'd become enraptured by the table on which he'd placed my tea. It was an ornate wooden thing, with a snaking pattern of lines weaving their way around towards the centre. The pattern was hypnotic and shifted as I watched it, like an optical illusion. I found my eyes following the lines towards the middle of the table, where there was nothing but a small square hole. Graham noticed me staring and told me that interesting antique furniture was one of his few true passions. Apparently he'd found the table in a second-hand shop during his student days and fallen in love with it. It had been in pretty bad shape but he'd spent a long time and a lot of money restoring it, though he'd never

been able to figure out what was supposed to go in the centre. He assumed it was a separate piece and couldn't track it down. And yeah, like most of his conversation, I'd have found it dull even if I wasn't concussed. But by this time, I was beginning to feel well enough to leave and started to make my excuses to Graham. He expressed his concern, said it hadn't been as long enough, as the medics suggested, but if I had to... Well, you get the picture. In the end I did leave, as I kept getting lost in the lines of the table, and the pipes outside of the window made such a weird noise that I didn't think staying was actually going to help me recover.

I went straight home, making sure Graham couldn't see me from his window, and spent a few hours watching TV until I recovered enough to go to sleep. By the time I woke up the next morning I was feeling more or less ok, though I kept a

plaster on the cut on my forehead, and tried not to think too much about the previous night.

One evening a few days later, though, I found myself staring out of my window, the one that faced the street, and I remembered how close Graham lived. I looked to see if I could figure out which window was his and, yeah, sure enough, there it was. It was actually a remarkably clear view of his flat, and I could see him sat on the sofa, reading one of the notebooks from his bookshelves. I realised that if I could see him so clearly, he could likely see me just as well if he chose to look up and, with some remnant of my apprehension from that Friday, I decided to turn off the light in my flat, so he wouldn't see me if he looked up. And then, I went back to watching him.

Yeah, I know that sounds creepy. It really wasn't meant to be. I said earlier that I really enjoy people-watching and, regardless of how boring he may have been to speak to, Graham was weirdly compelling to watch. So that's just what I did. And not just that night, either. Yeah, there's no non-sinister way to say that watching Graham became my hobby. It was strange, I'll admit it. But I just couldn't stop myself. I reasoned I wasn't watching him with any purpose or malice in mind. It was purely out a detached interest in his life. And in my defence I would have stopped a lot sooner if it hadn't been for the bizarre things he would do. He would constantly reorder his journals, without any apparent system of organisation, most of the time without even opening them. Sometimes he would grab an apparently random notebook from the shelves and start scribbling in it, even though I could see that the page was already covered in writing. Once,

and I swear this is true, I saw him take one of his notebooks and start to tear out the pages one at a time. And then, slowly and deliberately, he ate them. It must have taken him three hours to get through the whole book, but he didn't stop or pause, he just kept going.

Even when he wasn't doing anything with the notebooks, there was an odd energy to him. From what I could see he was constantly on edge, and jumped every time any loud noise passed on the street below. A police siren, a breaking bottle, hell, I even saw him freak out over an ice-cream truck once. Each time he'd leap to his feet, run to the window and start looking out; wildly craning his neck from side to side. Sometimes he'd look up, but I'd learned his patterns well enough to avoid being spotted. Then, all at once, he'd decide that there was no problem and go back to whatever he was doing before.

And by “whatever he was doing before”, yeah, I mean *nothing*. He apparently didn’t have a television or a computer – the only books he seemed to own were his own notebooks, and I only ever saw him eat takeaway food. I don’t know how many times I watched him eat the same pizza – pepperoni with jalapeño peppers and anchovies. Yeah, I know. But the rest of the time he just sat there, smoking; sometimes looking into space, sometime staring at that wooden table of his. And yeah, I remembered the pattern was kind of hypnotic and I spent more than a couple of minutes staring at it myself when I was there, but he did almost nothing else.

Who knows, perhaps he had a rich and fulfilling life outside of the flat. He certainly left it regularly enough, and yeah, I wasn’t so far gone as to actually follow him. In fact, I always waited a good

long while before leaving my own building to make sure I didn't bump into him. I still didn't want him to know where I lived, although now for very different reasons. In the end, though, it was a hobby, not an obsession, and often days would pass when I wouldn't see Graham at all. Maybe there was stuff I missed that would have explained his behaviour. I just wish I'd missed what happened on April 7th. Then maybe I'd have just thought he'd moved on or... I don't know. I just wish I hadn't seen it.

Work had been intense for a couple of months, with so many late nights I'd had to drop out of my course. It was just as well, really, as I hadn't actually spoken to Graham since the night I suffered my head injury. I think he still felt awkward about it, and I'd seen him do so many weird things alone in his flat that I think I'd have struggled to have a normal conversation with him.

Anyway, this week I'd barely had time to eat, let alone do much in the way of Graham-watching, so when I got home at about half ten at night, my first thought was just to fall into bed. But it was Friday, and I'd drunk a huge amount of coffee to keep going at work, so yeah, I was wired and looking forward to a long lie-in the next day. So when I saw Graham's light was still on, I decided to spend a relaxing few minutes checking in on him.

His light may have been on, but I couldn't see him, and I wondered if perhaps he'd gone to bed and simply forgotten to turn it off. More likely he was just in the bathroom, so I decided to wait a while longer. As I stared at that window, I realised there was something... I don't know, *off* about it. It looked different somehow, but I couldn't figure out what it was. Then I noticed it. At first I'd just taken it to be a water pipe running down the side

of the building, attached just below Graham's open window. The light from the streetlamps didn't reach up to his fourth floor flat, and the window ledge cast a shadow that stopped the light from the room illuminating it, but it was long, straight, dark, and from what I could see it just looked like a pipe, except I'd been watching that window for months now, and would have sworn that there had never been a pipe there before.

And as I stared at it, it moved. It started to bend, slowly, and I realised I was looking at an arm, a long, thin arm. As it bent the joint close to where the arm ended, I think I saw another joint further down, also moving, and bending what I can only assume were elbows; it hooked the end of the limb over through the window. When I say moved, that's not quite right. It *shifted*. Like when you stare at one of those old magic eye paintings and you change from seeing one picture

into seeing another. I never saw anything I could actually call a hand, but still it pulled itself through his window. It took less than a second, and I didn't get a good look at what it was, I just saw these... arms, legs? At least four of them, but there might have been more, and they kind of folded themselves through the window in a flash of mottled grey. I think that was the colour – it was mostly a silhouette, and if there was a body or head, it shifted inside faster than I could see it. The moment it was inside, the light in Graham's flat went out, and the window slammed down behind it.

So yeah, I just kind of stood there for a long time, trying to process what I'd just seen. I could make out some vague movements from inside Graham's flat, but couldn't see anything clearly. I finally decided I had to phone the police, though I didn't have any idea what to tell them. In the end I

simply said I'd seen someone suspicious climbing in through a fourth floor window at his address and hung up before they could ask me who was calling. Then I waited and watched the darkened flat opposite. I couldn't look away – I was convinced that if I stopped staring that... whatever the hell it was would fold itself back out, reach over and step into my home. Nothing came out.

About ten minutes later I saw a police car driving up the street. No sirens, no flashing lights, but they were here, and right away I started to feel better. Looking up, though, I saw the light had come on in Graham's flat. There was no sign of the thing I'd seen climb in, but as the police pressed the buzzer outside his building, I saw someone walking towards the door to let them in. It wasn't Graham.

I can't stress enough how much this was not Graham. He looked completely different. He was maybe a few inches shorter and had a long, square face topped with curly blond hair, where Graham's had been dark and cut short. He was dressed in Graham's clothes, though; I recognised the shirt from my months of watching, but he was *not* Graham. I watched as Not-Graham walked to the door and let the two police officers in. They talked for a while, and Not-Graham looked concerned and together they started to search the flat. I watched, waiting for the thing to emerge, or for them to find the real Graham, but they didn't. At one point I saw one of the police pick up a dark red shape that I recognised as a passport. My heart beat faster as I saw her open it and look at Not-Graham, clearly comparing, waiting for the moment when she detected the impostor. But instead she just laughed, shook Not-Graham's hand, and they left. I watched the police car drive

away, feeling a sense of helplessness, and when I looked up, he was standing at Graham's window, looking back at me. I stood there frozen as his wide, staring eyes met mine and a cold, toothy smile spread across his face. Then in one swift motion he drew the curtains, and was gone.

I didn't sleep that night, and I never saw Graham again. I saw this new person, though, all the time. For the next week I'd see him taking out large, heavy-looking rubbish bags several times a day. It took me a while to realise he was disposing of Graham's old notebooks, but soon enough the flat was empty of them. I think he did other redecorating, but I never got a good look, as the only time he had his curtains open was when he was staring intently at my flat, which he now did every night. I tried to find evidence of the old Graham, but anything I could find online with a picture – it was always a picture of this new

person. I even asked some of my old classmates, but none of them seemed to remember him at all.

Eventually I moved. I really liked my old place in Clapham, but yeah, it just got too much. The last straw was when I was leaving for work one morning, and didn't realise until too late that Not-Graham had left his building at the same time. He greeted me by name, and his voice was nothing like it should have been. I started to make my excuses and hurry away, but he just stared at me, and smiled.

"Isn't it funny, Amy, how you can live so near and never notice. I'll need to return the visit someday."

I moved out a week later, and I never saw him again.

ARCHIVIST

Statement ends.

I'd be tempted to dismiss this as hallucination resulting from long-term head trauma complications, but Tim came through with this one and managed to get hold of Ms. Patel's medical records. God knows how he got them, but he'd better not be using Institute funds to woo filing clerks again. The records just don't support the idea she was suffering those sort of problems. Not to mention I usually trust co-worker testimony as far as I can burn it, but her job really doesn't seem like the sort you could do with a compromised sense of reality. Ms. Patel has refused our request for a follow-up interview and seems to be trying to distance herself from these events.

Graham Folger definitely existed, and appears to match up with her story. According to coroner's records, Desmond and Samantha Folger, his parents, died on the M1 near Sheffield on August 4th 2001, and Graham Folger's name appears on the register of several colleges and universities in and around London over the next few years. The flat she mentioned did belong to Mr Folger, but was sold through an agency in early 2007. All the photographs we've been able to source seem to match the description of this "Not-Graham" that Ms. Patel described, except for a few Polaroids, enclosed, which appear to be from the late 80s, and show the two parents alongside a dark-haired teenager who doesn't match the later photos at all.

There doesn't seem to be much more to be done here. Ms. Patel, like so many of our subjects, seems to have been more interested in giving her

statement as a form of personal closure, rather than as the start of a serious investigation. She wasn't even interested when Sasha told her we'd managed to locate what we believed to be one of Graham Folger's journals. Doubt it would have done much good. It just says the same thing on every page: the words "Keep Watching" over and over again.

Recording ends.