

MAG009 – Case 0020312 – “A Father’s Love”

ARCHIVIST

Statement of Julia Montauk, regarding the actions and motivations of her father, the serial killer Robert Montauk. Original statement given December 3rd 2002. Audio recording by Jonathan Sims, Head Archivist of the Magnus Institute, London.

Statement begins.

ARCHIVIST (STATEMENT)

My father was a murderer. There’s no way I can reasonably deny it at this point; the evidence provided by the police was overwhelming and I saw his shed myself. I’m not here to try and clear his name. There wouldn’t be much point anyway as I’m sure you know he died in prison last year. Seven years isn’t much to have served out of a life sentence but I doubt it was the early parole he’d have hoped for.

Sorry, maybe that wasn't in the best taste. Still, his passing is why I feel like I can tell this story; something I've never really felt free to do before now. I always expected him to talk about it during the media frenzy that surrounded his trial but for whatever reason he kept quiet. I think I understand a bit more now why he never spoke about it, preferring people draw their own conclusions, but at the time I couldn't fathom why he just sat there silently, letting others talk for him. I'd like to tell someone now, though, and I've only recently finished my court-appointed counselling sessions, so I'd rather not tell the tabloids and have 'MY FATHER KILLED TO FUEL CULT MAGIC, SAYS DAUGHTER OF MONSTER' splashed over page 7 of the weekend edition. So that leaves you guys. Respectable is hardly the word I'd use but it's better than nothing.

So yes, my father killed at least 40 people over the course of the five years prior to his arrest in 1995. I won't recount the lurid details – if you're interested

you can look up Robert Montauk in the newspaper archive of any library. There'll be plenty there: the papers clearly didn't care much about the American bombing, because in April of that year they seemed to be talking about nothing but my father. There are also a couple of books on him, none of which I can really recommend, but I guess Ray Cowan's *No Bodies in the Shed* is the closest to what I'd consider accurate, although it does imply that I was an accomplice despite the fact that I was 12 years old at the time. Honestly, I discovered most of the details from the newspapers and the court, just like everyone else. My father spent my formative years killing dozens of people and I had no idea. But the more I think back over my childhood, the more sure I am that there was something else going on. I don't have any theories as to what any of this means but I just need to get it down on paper somewhere. And this seems as good a place as any.

I've always lived in the same house on York Road in

Dartford. Even now, after all that's happened and all I know about what went on there I can't bring myself to leave. As far as I know the shed came with the house; it always sat in the garden: old, wooden and silent. I don't recall it being used until after the night my mother disappeared. That's when everything started to get strange.

My memory of early childhood is patchy, mostly isolated images and impressions, but I remember the night she vanished like it was yesterday. I was seven years old and had been to the cinema that evening for the very first time in my life. We had been to see *The Witches* at what was back then the ABC down on Shaftesbury Avenue. I had seen films before, of course, on our tiny living room television but to see a movie on the big screen was awe-inspiring. The film itself was terrifying, though, and even now I'd say it's far scarier than any "child's film" has a right to be. I remember I spent a lot of it close to tears but had been so proud of the fact that I hadn't cried at all.

When we got home, I lay awake for a long time. That scene where Luke is transformed into a mouse kept playing in my mind and for some reason it left me too afraid to go to sleep.

It was then that I heard a thump from downstairs, like something heavy falling over. I didn't have a clock in my room so had no idea what the time was but I recall looking out of the window and the world was dark and utterly silent. The thump came again and I decided to go downstairs and see what it was. The landing was almost pitch black, and I tried to be as quiet as possible so nobody would know I was there. The fourth stair down from the top of the staircase always creaked, and still does in fact, but I don't think I've ever heard it creak louder than it did that night as I crept down them so slowly. The lights downstairs were all turned off, except for the kitchen light, which I could see from the bottom of the stairway.

I walked into the kitchen to find it empty. The back door stood open and a cool breeze blew through it that made me shiver in my pyjamas. I saw something shiny laying on the table. Reaching up, I found my mother's pendant. The design had always struck me as beautiful: it was silver, an abstract shape of a hand with a symbol on it that I believe was meant to represent a closed eye. I had never seen her take it off. In my child's mind I assumed that she had just left it on the table, an accident, and that the open door meant nothing. I went back upstairs, necklace clutched firmly in my hand, to return it to her. She wasn't in bed, of course, the space next to where my father lay fast asleep was empty.

I gently touched my sleeping father's shoulder, and he awoke slowly. I asked him where mum was, and he started to say something when he saw the silver chain clutched in my hands. He quickly got out of bed

and started to get dressed. As he pulled on a shirt he asked me where I had found it and I told him, on the kitchen table. Following me downstairs, his gaze was immediately locked on the open door and he paused. Instead of going outside, he walked over to the kitchen sink and turned on one of the taps. Immediately there began to flow a dark, dirty-looking liquid and the sick, salty smell of brackish water hit my nose, though at the time I didn't understand that's what it was.

The light in the kitchen blew out at that moment and the room got very dark. My father told me everything was fine, that I should go back to bed. His hands shook slightly as he took the pendant from me, and I didn't believe him but I did what I was told anyway. I don't know how long I lay there, waiting for my father to return that night but I know it was getting light outside when I finally fell asleep.

Eventually I woke up. The house was quiet and empty. I had missed the start of school by hours but that was fine because I didn't want to leave the house. I just sat in the living room, silent and still. It was almost evening again by the time my father actually returned. His face was pale and he barely looked at me, just walked straight to the cupboard and poured himself a glass of scotch. He sat next to me, drained the glass, and told me that my mother was gone. I didn't understand. Still don't, really. But he said it with such finality that I started to cry and I didn't stop for a very long time.

My father was a policeman, as I'm sure you've read, so as a child I just assumed that the police had looked for my mother and failed to find her. It wasn't until much later that I discovered they'd had never even had a missing persons report filed on her. As far as I know, I never had any living grandparents and apparently no-one noticed she was gone, which was strange as I have vague memories of her having

friends over a lot before she vanished. Everyone assumes she was one of my father's first victims but there was never enough evidence to add it to the official tally. It doesn't really matter.

For what it's worth, I don't think he did it. I won't deny it makes sense from the outside but I remember how devastated he was when she disappeared. He started drinking a lot. I think he did try to look after me as best he could but most nights he just ended up passed out in his chair. That was also when he started spending a lot of time in the shed. I'd never really paid it much attention before. As far as I was concerned the sturdy wooden structure was just the home of spiders' nests and the rusted garden tools my parents would use once a year to attack the overgrown wilderness that was our back garden. But soon after my mother's disappearance, a sturdy new padlock was placed on the door and my father spent a lot of time inside. He told me he was woodworking and sometimes I'd hear the sounds of power tools

from inside and he'd present me with some small wooden token he had made, but mostly there was silence. It should probably have bothered me more than it did, the hours he spent in there, and that odd smell I sometimes noticed, like tinned meat. But I never really paid it much attention, and I had my own grief to deal with.

He was gone most nights as well. Often I would wake up from one of my nightmares to find the house silent and empty. I would look for him and he would be gone. I never despaired at this, for some reason, not like I had when my mother vanished. I knew he would return eventually, when he was finished with what I had decided must be 'police business'.

Sometimes I'd lie awake until he returned. Once, as I lay awake, I heard him come into my room. I pretended to be asleep. I don't know why, but I thought I'd be in trouble if he found out I was awake. He walked over to me, and gently stroked my face. His hands smelled strange. Back then I didn't know

the scent of blood, and mixed with that faint, saline smell of brackish water. He whispered to me then, when he thought I was asleep, promised to protect me, to make sure that "it wouldn't get me too".

There was a strangled sound to his words; I think he might have been crying. As he left, I opened my eyes just enough to see him. He stood by the door, his face in his hands, wearing light grey overalls that were stained with a thick, black substance. I often wish I'd asked him about that night. I wonder, if he'd known I was awake, if I had asked him in that moment of weakness... Well, it's far too late for that now.

Over the next couple of years I noticed that my father seemed to be injured quite a lot and there was rarely a time when he didn't have some sort of plaster, bandage or bruise visible. I'd also occasionally find small bloodspots or smears on the floors or tables, especially in the hall. I got very good at cleaning them, and it never occurred to me to pay much attention to where they came from – I just

assumed the blood was my father's. He started staying home during the day and told me he'd been permanently assigned to the night shift. I believed him, of course, and it was only after his arrest that I discovered that had been the point he'd resigned his job on the police force. I don't know where the money came from after that but we always seemed to have enough.

Knowing what I know now, it sounds awful to say, but those were some of the happiest years of my childhood. I'd lost my mother, but my father doted on me and together it seemed like we would get past our pain. I know I've made him sound like an alcoholic recluse who lived in the shed, but those were generally nocturnal activities for him. During the day was time he spent with me.

There was only one time I recall him going into the shed during the day. This was a couple of years after

my mother's disappearance, and I must have been about ten. The phone in the kitchen started ringing and my father was upstairs. I had recently received permission from my father to answer the phone, so I was excited to take up my new responsibility. I picked up the handset and said my memorised phone script into the receiver: "Hello, Montauk residence!" A man's voice asked to speak with my father. It was a breathy voice, like that of an old man, and at the time I decided he had a German accent, though, when I was young a lot of different nationalities and accents were lumped together in my mind under the label "German". "What is this regarding?" I asked, as I had a whole phone conversation memorised and wanted to use as much of it as possible. The man sounded surprised at this and said hesitantly that he was from my father's work. I asked him if he was from the Police and after a pause, he said "Yes". He asked me to tell my father that it was Detective Rayner on the line with a new case for him.

At this point my father had come down to the kitchen to see who was calling. I told him and he visibly paled. He took the handset from me and placed it to his ear, not speaking but listening very intently. After a moment, he told me to go up to my room as this was a "grown-up" conversation. I turned to leave, but as I was heading up the stairs the light bulb in the landing blew. The bulbs in our house broke often – my father said we had faulty wiring – so even at that age I was quite adept at changing them. So I turned around and headed back downstairs to fetch a new bulb. As I approached the cabinet where we kept them, I heard my father's voice from the kitchen. He was still on the phone and he sounded angry. I heard him say "No, not already. Do it yourself." Then he went very quiet and listened, before finally he said okay, that he'd do it as soon as possible. He put down the phone, then went over to the cupboard and poured himself a drink. He spent the rest of the day in the shed.

The one question they kept asking me over and over during the investigation into my father was whether I knew where the rest of the bodies were. I told them the truth, that I had no idea. They claimed they wanted to confirm the identities of the victims, which they couldn't easily do with what was left. I didn't know where the bodies were, but I also didn't tell them of the other way they might have identified the victims: my father's photographs. I didn't say anything because I had no idea where he kept them and I thought it would only make things worse if they couldn't find them, but, yes, my father took photographs.

During those five years, I had gradually started to notice more and more canisters of photograph film left around the house. This puzzled me since, though my dad and I did sometimes go on short holidays, we never took a lot of pictures. Asking him about it, my father told me he had been trying to learn photography but didn't trust developers not to ruin

his films, as he'd apparently had problems before. I suggested he make himself a darkroom for developing them himself. I'd seen one in *Ghostbusters 2* on TV the previous Christmas and loved the idea of having a room like that. His face lit up and he said he'd convert the guest bedroom. He then warned me that once it was done I could never go in there without his supervision, there would be lots of dangerous chemicals. I didn't care; I was just so glad that an idea of mine had made my father so happy.

That summer my father converted the guest bedroom into a darkroom for developing photographs. Like the shed, it was locked almost all the time, but occasionally my father would take me inside and we'd develop photographs of cars or trees or whatever else a ten- or eleven-year-old with a camera takes pictures of. Mostly, though, my father worked in there alone and kept the door locked while he did. He seemed almost happy those last couple of years.

I didn't have an unsupervised look inside until a few weeks before my father was caught. It was a Saturday evening in late autumn, and my father was out of the house. I spent the day watching TV and reading, but as it started to get dark I found myself bored and alone. Passing by the door to what was now the darkroom, I noticed that the key was still in the lock. I sometimes think back to that day and wonder if my father left it deliberately. He'd been so careful for so many years and then he just forgot? I knew about the dangers, but something inside me couldn't resist going in.

There were no photos stored there. To this day I don't know where my father kept his developed pictures. But there were about a dozen images hung out to dry. They're still vivid in my mind – black and white and washed in the deep red of the darkroom. Each photo was of a person's face, close up and

expressionless, their eyes were dull and glassy. I had never seen corpses before, so didn't really understand what I was looking at. On each face were thick black lines that formed these symbols that I didn't recognise but they were clearly drawn on the faces themselves, not just on the photographs. I don't remember the symbols in any great detail, I'm afraid, just the faces that they were drawn onto, though they weren't people I recognised. Nor did they match any of the photos the police showed me later.

I never went back in the darkroom after I closed and locked the door behind me that day. I spent the next weeks wondering if I should tell my father what I had seen. I didn't know what I had seen, not really, but it felt like a bad secret and I didn't know what to do.

Finally, I decided to tell him. He was drinking on the sofa at the time, and he turned off the television as soon as I mentioned going into the darkroom. He

didn't say a word as I told him what I'd seen, just looked at me with an expression on his face I'd never seen before. When I was finished, he stood up and walked towards me, before taking me in his arms and giving me the last and longest hug I would ever get from him. He asked me not to hate him, and told me it would soon be over, then turned to go. I had no idea what he was talking about but, when I asked, he just said that I needed to stay in my room until he got back. Then he left.

I did what I was told. I went up to my room and lay in bed, trying to sleep. The air was heavy somehow, and in the end I spent the night staring out of the window at the street below. I was waiting for something, though I didn't know what.

I remember it was 2:47 in the morning that it started. I finally had an alarm clock and the image of it is still clear in my memory. I was thirsty and went

downstairs to get a glass of water. I turned on the tap, but what flowed out was a thick stream of muddy brown, brackish water. It smelled terrible and I froze as I remembered the last time that had happened. My father still wasn't home and I went into the living room to watch desperately out of the window, looking down the street for his return. I was terrified.

As I stared down the road, I was struck by how small the puddles of light were from the streetlamps made, stretching far into the distance. But not as far as they should've gone. There were fewer lights than there should be, I was sure of it. Then I saw the light at the end of road blink off. There was no moon out that night, and all the houses were quiet; when the streetlights stopped there was nothing but black. The next closest streetlight failed. Then the next. And the next. A slow, rolling blanket of darkness making its unhurried way towards me. The few lights still on in the houses along the road also disappeared as the tide

approached. I just sat there, unable to look away. Finally, it reached our house, and all at once the lights were gone and the darkness was inside.

I heard a knock on the front door. Firm, unhurried and insistent. Silence. I did not move. The knocking came again, harder this time, and I heard the door rattle on its hinges. As it got louder it began to sound less and less like a person knocking and more like... wet meat being slammed the sturdy wood of the front door.

I turned and ran towards the phone. Picking it up, I heard a dial tone, and would have cried with relief if I wasn't already crying with fear. I dialled the police, and as soon as they picked up I started to babble about what was happening. The lady on the other end was patient with me, and kept on gently insisting I give her the address until finally I was composed enough. Almost as soon as I had told her where I was

I heard the door begin to splinter. I dropped the phone and ran towards the back of the house. As I did so, I heard the front door burst behind me and I heard a... growl – it was rumbling, deep and breathy like a wild animal but had a strange tone to it that I've never been able to place. No matter where I turned, it sounded like it came out of the darkness right behind me. I didn't have time think about it as I ran into the back garden and into a light that I did not expect. There in front of me was the shed. It glowed, a dull, pulsing blue from every crack and seam. I didn't stop, though, as I heard again that growl behind me and I ran towards it and pulled at the door.

The shed was not locked that night, and to this day I don't know if I regret that fact. The first thing I saw when I opened that door was my father, bathed in the pale blue light. I couldn't see any source for the glow but it was so bright. He was knelt in the centre of an ornate chalk pattern scrawled on the rough

wood of the floor. In front of him lay a man I didn't know, but he was clearly dead – his chest had been cut open and still gaped and bled feebly. In one hand my father held a wicked-looking knife, and in the other he held the man's heart. My father was chanting and as the song rose and fell the heart in his hand beat to its rhythm, and the blue light brightened and dimmed in time. I looked at the walls, and noticed that they were covered in shelves, each of which contained glass jars, full of what I would later learn was formaldehyde containing a single heart, which also beat in time with the one that dripped in my father's hand. It was an odd thing to notice at the time but I remember that the dead man wore the same pendant as my mother – a silver hand with a closed eye design.

I don't know how long I stood there staring. It might have been hours or it might have been only a moment or two. But then I heard that growl behind me and sensed a presence so close that I could feel

the darkness on my back. Before I could react or move or scream, my father's chant came to a crescendo and he plunged the dagger into the beating heart. All at once the presence vanished and the blue glow died. I could no longer hear the beating of the hearts. In the silence, I realised I could hear police sirens in the distance. I heard my dad tell me he was sorry, and then he started to run.

You know the rest. Manhunt, trial, prison, death. They say there were 40 hearts kept in that shed, not including his last victim, but of course the police didn't arrive until all that was left of it was a grisly trophy cabinet. Whatever I had seen my father doing in there, its effects had long since vanished. I don't know why my father did what he did, and I doubt I ever will, but the more I go over these events in my head, the more sure I am that he had his reasons.

ARCHIVIST

Statement ends

There's not much more to be added here. The police reports on Robert Montauk are predictably thorough, and there are few details to be added. The vast majority of research into this case has already been done by the serial killer enthusiast community which, though weird and deeply unsettling, does often prove to be surprisingly useful in high-publicity cases like this.

In addition to the body of one Christopher Lorne, 40 preserved hearts were recovered from Robert Montauk's shed. They were arranged on the walls on individual shelves forming patterns of eleven hearts on each inner wall and seven on the wall with the door. Photos of the patterns match up to the various formula of sacred geometry but don't appear to correspond exactly with any specific school. Of possible significance also is that fact that the rest of the bodies were never found.

The symbol on the two pendants is that of the Peoples' Church of the Divine Host, a small cult that grew around the defrocked Pentecostal minister Maxwell Rayner in London during the late eighties and early nineties. I knew I recognised the name from Statement 1106922 though, currently, it just looks like a coincidence. Christopher Lorne was a member of the church and his family hadn't heard from him in the six years prior to his murder. Mr Rayner himself disappeared from public view sometime in 1994 and the group fragmented shortly afterwards. The police made many attempts to follow up on this lead in the Montauk case, but were never able to locate any members willing to make statements.

The house on York Road is still inhabited, though the current owners pulled down the shed over a decade ago and replaced it with a patio.

Robert Montauk died in Wakefield Prison on November 1st 2002. He was stabbed forty-seven times and bled out before anyone found him. After reading this statement, three points of interest occur: no culprit or weapon was ever found connected to the killing; he was apparently alone in his cell at the time, which was supposed to be locked; and at the time of his death the light bulb in his cell was found to have blown out, leaving him in darkness.

Recording ends.