

[Transcript] Morbid / Episode 502: The Highgate Vampire

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Hey weirdos, I'm Alina, I'm Ash, and this is morbid.

We're on hinge today.

We're on a different level today.

Not even spice level, no like intergalactic.

There you go, that's what I was looking for.

I know.

Yeah, we're eating lots of food, we're being lots of crazy.

It's Thursday, but we got Fridays.

Hey!

Look at that.

Have you guys had from Fridays, it's like the crispy rice, and they put a little avocado on the top, and then a tiny little jalapeno.

It's really good.

It is stupid good.

It is, it's real good.

I love sticky rice.

A little soy sauce on there.

No soy sauce, I prefer coconut aminos, but soy sauce will do.

Excuse me, look at this health and wellness journey.

I know, it's Braggs even, so just look at that Bragg.

Just give me soy sauce on everything.

Here you go, thank you.

You're welcome.

I'm pretty scared of the soy sauce, I did it, it was imaginary.

I also have some ginger sitting next to it.

I have some ginger on either side of me, a bottom tusk.

Wow.

We got tattoos yesterday, so I don't know why that made us loopy, but it did.

It did.

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Shout out to Matt and Ryan on the block wall.

Matt and Ryan on the block wall, shop of Dre and Wanda, and you know what, it's okay that we're being so kooky because we're going to talk about vampires today, so vampires or lack thereof, or lack thereof, which is even better, but two kooky crazy people.

I looked them up just to see what they look like, I didn't want to know, I know nothing about this story.

I know nothing.

I know what they look like, and it made me even more excited to listen to this story.

Yeah, they out in the streets cosplaying.

Yeah.

So, I know, let me just tell you, we're talking about that, but I'm like, go into it.

We're going to be talking about the Highgate Vampire story.

Story.

It's a good one.

You know that story?

Story.

So it starts on November 1st, 1968, when several London news outlets were reporting on an incident of pretty substantial vandalism at the Tottenham Park Cemetery, and it included, among other things, graves being dug up.

Being dugged up.

Being digged on up.

That's like not good.

That's really, you know, a lot of people would say that's bad.

Like who does that?

Yeah.

Like you want to vandalize things, I don't know, I'm not sure about that, but.

But don't vandalize people's graves.

What the fuck?

Like just let them rest.

They also had pride open coffins, and there was just like destroyed crosses everywhere.

What the fuck?

It was wild.

And the cemetery's superintendent reverend Lionel Phillips.

He told reporters that he had never seen anything like it.

He said, it isn't just ordinary vandalism.

Everything has been carefully done and arranged according to some evil right.

There's more to this than meets the eye.

And then the credits roll in the beginning of the movie happens.

No, this is for realsies.

So according to Reverend Phillips, when he arrived at the cemetery that morning, he was shocked to find the grounds, quote, strewn with dead flowers, inverted crosses and broken urns, which had literally been robbed from the graves.

Oh, cool.

And he told reporters everything had been arranged in a pattern that pointed to three

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recently buried gravesites, all of which had been dug out, coffins and all.

Now Phillips himself had initially been alerted to the vandalism by the caretaker of the cemetery, William Dakin, I believe is how you say it.

And William Dakin told the press, there's definitely something strange going on here.

The graveyard is supposed to be haunted, but this has been done by humans and it looks like black magic or something.

I've never seen anything quite like it, although coffins and graves have been disturbed here before.

I always love when people go straight to this must be real black magic and like real satanic shit because it's like, you know that lots of people know how to make something look like that so that your thought process immediately goes to that and it makes you not look at the actual thing that's happening precisely.

And it's like, it's weird to me that more people, especially like around this, you know, decades earlier than now, their immediate thought was to go to the very obvious instead of being like red herring, perhaps.

Yeah.

Well, we'll kind of talk about why they went there and like the current social climate at that time and kind of why their heads were going to black magic and Satan worship.

Interesting.

Yeah.

But the next day, Dakin, he was less tentative about his theories about who was responsible for the vandalism before he was like, could be black magic.

Maybe.

I don't know.

But things have happened before.

Also, every time I say that, I just think black magic.

Yeah.

That's true.

It's a good song.

But he told the Guardian Journal, this isn't just ordinary vandalism.

Everything has been done carefully for some evil right.

I believe some kind of black magic ceremony has been performed here.

It was Halloween last night.

You didn't expect that, did you?

I didn't.

But I welcome it with open arms again.

It's called Dramatic Effect.

Look it up.

It was lovely.

So the official story from the police was that the vandals were most likely just youths celebrating Halloween.

That's kind of what I thought most people would.

But the incident did raise some concerns about whether there were devil worshipers lying among the ordinary Londoners.

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Well, here's the thing.

If it was just like a bunch of shit in there, like people, you know, they turned over some crosses and stuff and like through some, even that would be, I'd be like, wow, that's some like fucked up youth shit.

Like we didn't do that.

Like the grave robbing.

That's the thing.

I'd be like, and I'd even be a little like, oh, that's a lot for kids.

Like why are they going in a cemetery?

But they've done that before.

Kids do stupid shit.

Of course.

But like you're saying when you're opening up coffins, that's when things do take and I didn't take that into consideration.

That does take it into a different place entirely.

Like we're not just setting up some flowers in a weird way in a cemetery and turning some crosses over.

You're, you're like really, I don't know where you're going, but you're not going anywhere good when you're opening people's coffins up.

Not on a good path.

No.

Like two roads diverged in a yellow wood and you chose the wrong ass one.

Yeah.

And you just like dug straight into the earth's crust.

Yeah.

Don't go there.

Yeah.

I can understand why they were a little more like, what the fuck's happening here?

I get it.

That's the thing.

And here's the other thing.

Given the evidence, it kind of seems like an irrational jump to make going from like rambunctious asshole youths to full blown devil worshipers.

But at the time, modern day British people really weren't that far removed from like witchy satanic hysteria and just like panic in general.

Because in the late 19th and early 20th century, similar concerns were actually raised publicly about this influential cult society called the hermetic order of the golden dawn.

Damn.

That sounds awesome, but I bet it's not at all.

No, it actually is.

Oh, cool.

That's pretty awesome.

I mean, they literally had no association whatsoever with devil worshiping or any kind of malevolent deity at all.

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They just practiced like mystical traditions and magic as a spiritual practice.
And everyone was really freaking out about it because they were like the devil.
So satanic panic is happening.

Yeah.

Exactly.

The other thing was that the press and the public weren't familiar with the order's beliefs, so they just immediately labeled them dangerous people.

That's awesome.

But they were basically just kind of like witches and warlocks, if you ask my ass.

You should do that.

When you don't understand something, immediately label it as dangerous.

I think that's a great way to go about your life.

There's a certain group of...

And you can't tell that was like the biggest heaping helping of sarcasm just in case anybody took that for a serious thing.

But some people might have because there is a group of people in particular that really love to do that.

Exactly.

So you want to make sure.

Exactly.

Now, while most of the Golden Dawn members spent a ton of their time trying to combat the image of an evil secret society that had been placed upon them, one early member, you might know him, one Alistair Crowley.

Never heard of that guy.

Yes, you have.

Yes, you have.

You have.

You have.

He, like other people were like, okay, let's try to like show the public and these people in society that we're actually not what they think we are.

Yeah.

Let's lean right the fuck into it.

Hell yeah.

And he embraced the whole thing and embraced the notoriety by quote, implying that he was genuinely involved with devil worship.

He's just like, sure.

And then there were other parts of his personal life like his being bisexual, his drug use and his social opinions that made him even more threatening to a very buttoned up British society.

Yeah.

Now, he had actually broke away from the Golden Dawn around 1900 and he traveled the world for a few years, which is pretty cool.

And after that, he actually formed his own esoteric society called Thelima.

Ah.

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Now, his celebrity and the occult beliefs of Thelima were so influential in a ton of social circles throughout the first half of the 20th century, so much so that L. Ron Hubbard, future founder of Scientology and then a whole ass rocket engineer named Jack Parsons, they established a branch of Thelima in LA during the late 40s and early 50s.

And people seemed to be really inspired by the practices, so actually a lot of new religious movements that emerged in the 60s were actually influenced directly by Thelima.

Damn.

And of course, most Christians and Catholics looked at those unfamiliar spiritual practices as dangerous and evil.

That's why to me, and this is just my opinion, like gathering like that into one society of something or other.

Yeah.

I think it ever ends up as a great thing in the end.

I don't know.

I share that belief.

I don't think we're supposed to.

No, I think that's why.

I just like practice my own shit.

Yeah.

I'm like, you just have your little little group if you want, but I think when it gets too big, that's when things go awry.

Yeah.

You know?

Now, those are all just like examples of reasons why the British society was a little freaked out by all these things going on now.

It was a little like quick on the draw here.

Exactly.

To be like, this is definitely Satan.

This is definitely an ancient black magic right ritual that has been happening in this graveyard.

Like I, you know, they're conditioned at this point.

Exactly.

And they were like, you know, they're probably sacrificing things to some malevolent deity.

I just like to go ahead and say that if there's no band called malevolent deity.

That is pretty great.

Band name, I call it.

Yeah.

Hello, Cleveland.

We are malevolent deity.

Wow.

You can make awesome shirts.

I'm not musically inclined, so you can have it like you listener.

You.

Not to say that you're not musically inclined.

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You listening listener, you can have it.

Take it.

Sure.

But listen, even though the Golden Dawn, Alistair Crowley and Thalimo were all active about like five decades earlier, like I was just saying, all of their influences would feed the fears of Satanism and witchcraft in 1970s London.

So that's how we got here.

Fun.

And then those fears were also fed by the release of Rosemary's Baby.

The movie was released in June of 1968, and it was based on Ira Levin's novel from the year before.

And in case I'm not the only person that's never seen it, I've never seen it, have you?

I have.

I feel like I'm going to get attacked in the comments.

You should see it.

But I don't look at them satisfied.

I'll have you read it.

I know.

I was like, you won't know.

I won't know.

But in case I'm not the only person who's never seen it, Rosemary's Baby basically tells the story of a young woman named Rosemary Woodhouse, which is a beautiful name who becomes the target of a group of Satan-worshipping witches that want to snatch her baby.

So in the context of Satanic Panic and Mass Hysteria, the influence of Rosemary's Baby can't really be understated, like you got to mention it.

Of course.

And then of course, the movie reignited Hollywood's interest in horror films, and at the same time presented the public with an idea of witchcraft that was modern, insidious, and well-connected.

So they were like, witches, walk among us because I saw it.

Isn't Mia Farrow in that movie?

Yeah.

I saw it.

Mia Farrow experienced it.

What's going on?

Her hair is great in that movie.

She's got a really cool pixie cut.

See, I know that because Tyra wanted to give that pixie cut to everybody, and she always was like Rosemary's Baby.

Well, and she wanted to give that pixie cut to that one girl who wouldn't cut it a half inch more to be that way and got kicked off.

And I was like, you wouldn't look great with that haircut if it was real.

I know.

Honestly, there was probably many other reasons why she wanted to get the fuck out of there.

You don't say.

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But that's for another day.

That's for another day.

In all reality, William Dakin and Reverend Phillips had no idea what a black magic ceremony entailed or what kind of mess or destruction it would leave behind.

They were just like, devil worshipers.

Buzzwords.

Yes, exactly.

But still, they were both almost entirely convinced that the vandalism at Tottenham Park Cemetery was the work of Satan-worshipping witches who were conducting some sort of black mass.

And then witches came into the picture and said, so what?

They said, I don't give a fuck.

Now, their opinion on the matter wasn't the result of any kind of experience that they'd ever had.

No.

They were just relying on the countless examples of modern-day witches from Golden Dawn to Aleister

Crowley and then the new religious movements in Rosemary's Baby that they really thought this was a real threat to society.

I think, again, I think that's a great way to go about life is to have no actual evidence, nothing to go off of, no previous experience with something, and then just listen to something somebody might have said once and look at a Hollywood movie and say, yeah, I got it.

I know a lot about this now.

I think that's an awesome way to go about things.

Me too.

Yeah.

What?

You know?

Heavy dose of sarcasm.

Enter sarcasm here.

But while the hysteria and the occult groups in Evil Rights in London were rooted more in rumor and social anxiety than reality, it is worth noting that there were groups like the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn that existed to pursue an interest in the occult.

Now, unlike the Golden Dawn, these groups didn't have any kind of formality or structure. It was more just groups of young people who were kind of pursuing a shared interest in the day of all.

I like that.

No, I'm just kidding.

I like that.

I love that.

No, it's just like those, that's where I feel like it's like really hard to have any kind of gathering of people that have a shared interest in that way because even the ones that you're like, that's nice.

Like you're just gathering together, you have this interest and like magic as a spiritual

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practice and like, you know, you probably love nature and all that shit.
And you found a bunch of people that also feel that way and you feel like connected
and like you're belonging to that.
I'm like, if that's something you need, then that's nice to have.
But even that will get turned.
That's the thing.
You just can't have a group of people that just want to do some stuff because it always
turns dark.
It always turns dark even if they have like good intentions.
And then sometimes I feel like a lot of times it seems like there's like one or two people
within that group that just loses themselves a little bit in it.
People are tough, man.
Yeah.
People are tough.
We're tough species.
Yeah.
We're like the worst species.
We really shouldn't gather that much.
It's not, it's really not a great idea.
Just stay at home and don't, just kind of free float.
Yeah.
Just be like those little, little pieces of dust in the air when you see a sunbeam go
down and you see all the dust floating in the air.
We should all just be like that.
I always wonder if it's actually dust or if it's like something else.
Like what?
Magic.
I like that better than dust for sure.
It's better for my allergies.
My old stepdad would say that like where somebody else's ants.
Damn.
So like what if where somebody else's dust?
Cool.
Wild.
That's pretty awful thought.
Food for thought.
Nothing matters then.
Nothing matters anyway.
Have you ever seen like the thing of like pictures of like the whole ass universe?
Oh yeah.
And it's like you are here crying in the shower and I'm like.
Okay.
And they're like, it doesn't actually matter.
I'm like, it does.

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One day in the morgue when it was a particularly slow day and nothing was happening, we were just sitting in the office for hours on end, somebody who was training me and I'm not going to like blow them up, but it was, he was great.

Oh, okay.

But we were, I just don't know if he wants to be doing that.

Fair, fair, fair.

But we were like, he had found like some video that showed like in scale all the different planets and like the galaxies and all that and like where we are.

And we just sat there and kept replaying it and being like, why are we even in this office?

Like what are we even doing?

Like what's happening?

By the end of it, we were having such like an existential crisis.

Yes.

Like we both left like feeling some type of way.

Cause we're like, what matters?

I was like, and we're in the morgue.

So there's like death around us, which added an element of like what's going on.

Like we're just surrounded by death, but look at how tiny we are and how nothing matters.

It was like so weird.

Yeah.

That's why I left there and just needed to be like reprogrammed.

Wow.

Yeah.

How did you just like wake up the next day?

I don't know.

I think we were both fine the next day.

Good for you guys.

Listen up babies.

Hydration isn't just about the summer.

It's not just about people training for championships or spooky girls and we need to be spooky hydrated because proper functional hydration is essential.

And liquid IV is the number one powdered hydration brand in America.

Their hydration multiplier is the one product you're missing in your daily routine.

Use it first thing in the morning before a workout when you feel run down in the afternoon after a night out with friends, if you know what I mean, or on a long flight.

I drink a liquid IV every single day to start my morning because I like to start the day hydrated before I go out there and face the spooky, spooky world.

Liquid IV comes in 12 delicious, refreshing flavors to keep your hydration routine exciting.

And my personal favorite at the very moment is strawberry lemonade.

Just tastes like a little treat.

I love it.

One stick of liquid IV and 16 ounces of water hydrates you two times faster and more efficiently than water alone.

It contains five essential vitamins.

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Those are B3, B5, B6, B12, and vitamin C. It's got three times the electrolytes of leading sports drinks and it's made with quality ingredients, non-GMO.

It's free from gluten, dairy, and soy, and we love it.

Real people, real flavor, real hydrating.

Grab your liquid IV in bulk nationwide at Costco or you can get 20% off when you go to liquidiv.com and use Code Morbid at checkout.

That's 20% off anything when you shop better hydration today using promo code morbid at liquidiv.com.

Hey, weirdos, we want to thank you for keeping it weird with us, traveling back in time with us, and journeying through the strange and very unusual with us.

I have a question.

What is it?

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I love getting **** early.

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Do it!

No, seriously, do it.

Do it!

But so yeah, going back to the story and like these groups of people that gathered together in the late 60s, one of these groups that emerged from London's suburban high gate neighborhood, they called themselves the British Occult Society.

Find me out.

I know, right?

They were led by David Farron and Sean Manchester, two occult enthusiasts who were in their early 20s at the time.

Now, the group was said to, quote, have grown out of a circle of friends who had been in the habit of visiting Highgate Cemetery late at night in the 1960s.

And according to David Farron's wife, all the members shared an interest in the supernatural, but mostly participated, quote, for a laugh and a joke.

We would wander about, frighten ourselves to death and come out again.

Sounds like fun to me.

And David Farron's the guy who looks really cool.

He does look really cool.

He does, like, all the pictures you're like, damn.

He's a character.

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I know nothing about him, so I'm just saying totally based off aesthetic, so I was like, you look cool.

He does look cool.

Cool.

And I think he was cool for like a minute, like he had his moment and then it went a little too far.

Cool.

And we'll get there.

The 1960s Highgate Cemetery, the one where everything had gone down, it had seen better days.

It had been filled to capacity actually decades earlier, but for some reason they still tried to squeeze in new plots, so things were overcrowded, unsustainable, and sadly the grounds were really poorly maintained.

And then the situation was even further exacerbated by the bombings that were sustained during World War One and World War Two, and that left many of the stones and crypts just in crumbling disrepair.

So this was all made even worse by mid-century neglect and overgrowth, like nobody was taking care of this place, so everything was overgrowing to the point where you couldn't even walk up half.

Oh, and that's so sad.

I know, because it's people's final resting places.

I think cemeteries personally are beautiful.

I love cemeteries.

And they should be maintained.

There's a whole foundation.

I think it's called Saver Cemetery, so I will look it up just so we can link them, because they take donations to help revitalize forgotten about cemeteries so that people can have.

They've done a lot for New Orleans cemeteries and stuff, so we'll link it, because it is an important organization, I think.

Yeah, and definitely super pertinent to this story, good call, because they do a lot of good work.

Hell yeah.

Well, so listen, by the time the British Occult Society started visiting the cemetery in the late 1960s, it was in peak shambles.

Richard Altec wrote, to reach one grave requires from the path through the brambles and burrs and hip-high undergrowth and clinging vines that constantly trip up the explorer fresh from the London pavements.

Damn.

So basically he was like, you're going to be wading through overgrown shit, clinging to brambles, probably getting cut by thorns, like it was gnarly.

So when Farron and the group started visiting Highgate, their trips did involve some light vandalism, which that's the thing where I'm like, don't do that.

Now what they did, I guess, wasn't really noticeable underneath the overgrowth and the

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ruin of the cemetery, but during later visits in 1969, David Farron did notice obvious signs of vandalism that had not been done by the group, but by other nighttime visitors.

He was like, we didn't do that.

He would later tell reporters, vaults had been broken open and coffins literally smashed apart.

Oh, that's awful.

The top gate was wide open and one could see the remains of a skeleton where it had been wrenched from a coffin.

Another vault on the main pathway had been thus entered and one of the coffins inside set a light.

That's fucked up.

Like literally meaning somebody had lit a coffin on fire.

You got to be a special brand of fucked up.

That's the thing.

Yeah.

Now around this same time that David Farron is like telling people that this is going on, the police in Highgate had actually started to receive reports of small groups of teenagers vandalizing local cemeteries.

So the police figured that the recent disturbances at Highgate Cemetery were made by those same assholes, but some people were not so sure that they were just dealing with teenagers and some people thought everything going on in Highgate was because of something supernatural at work.

Oh.

Now by December 1969, Farron's group had received two reports from locals claiming that they had been walking in Highgate Cemetery when they encountered a tall dark specter, this is a quote, that temporarily hypnotized or paralyzed the bystander.

Whoa.

So Farron, for obvious reasons, was very intrigued by this report because he's a cult enthusiast.

Yeah.

So he decided to see what he could see for himself and he made plans to stay in the cemetery overnight on December 21st.

Oh, shit.

So when he reached the gate and he was just about to climb over, he said he was stunned by what he thought to be a tall person walking through the cemetery grounds.

Now he stared through the bars trying to get a closer look and he said he, quote, realized the shape was over seven feet tall and saw, quote, two eyes meeting mine, which were not human, rather reflecting some alive presence.

So in that moment, he was scared shitless and he figured he was in some kind of danger.

So he was able to tear his gaze away from the specter and he said at that point, the figure just vanished.

I love it.

Iconic.

Yeah.

So the encounter with this specter at the cemetery gates was thrilling for him.

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Like he's been searching for this for a long time.

Of course.

For years, he had hoped to have his own experience with the supernatural and now he just fucking had one.

Hell yeah.

So after telling the rest of the British Occult Society about the interaction, he became determined to find other people with similar experiences so he could learn more.

So he drafted a letter titled Ghostly Walks in Highgate that he submitted to the Hampstead and Highgate Express.

On February 6th, 1970, he wrote to them, and this is beautiful.

Some nights I walk home past the gates of Highgate Cemetery.

On three occasions, I have seen what appeared to be a ghostlike figure inside the gates at the top of Swain's Lane.

The first occasion was on Christmas Eve.

I saw a gray figure for a few seconds before it disappeared into the darkness.

The second sighting a week later was also brief.

Last week, the figure appeared only a few yards inside the gates.

This time, it was there long enough for me to see it much more clearly.

And now I can think of no other explanation than this apparition being supernatural.

I have no knowledge in this field and I would be interested to hear if any other readers have seen anything of this nature.

Good for him.

The parent's letter actually got a ton of responses, and four were actually printed by the paper the next week.

Damn.

They mostly confirmed the existence of the Highgate Ghost.

One letter writer claimed the ghost had been appearing for years on a regular basis, quote, showing itself nightly for about a week at intervals of about a month.

And then another letter writer claimed that there had long been stories, quote, about a tall man in a hat who would walk across Swain's Lane and just disappears through a wall into the cemetery.

I love this.

It's so much fun.

So the responses to Farron's letter elicited even more responses the next week.

And this issue included a note from the editors actually asking readers to send their own accounts of supernatural experiences like in and around the cemetery.

It's so much fun.

Let's go.

Now, in addition to the further sightings of the tall man, letters started explaining more of the folklore surrounding the area.

One letter writer wrote about a mysterious figure seen moving the headstones in the cemetery late at night.

And another letter told of a ghostly bicyclist known to chase women down Swain's Lane.

Hate that.

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Yeah.

I don't love that.

I like that guy.

I also just like immediately hear that.

But the trend continued until the end of February when the Hampstead and Highgate Express finally ended their coverage on the Phantom at Highgate Cemetery with six letters.

Some people described the tall man, other people told of a woman in white who could be seen in the cemetery late at night, and they said she was crying out loud for Hugo.

Where are you, Hugo?

Hugo.

Hugo.

Right in.

Tell us what's going on.

Come on, man.

Now, among the final letters was one from David Ferrant himself telling his own story and expressing his quote, relief that his ghostly experience had been corroborated by others.

Now, in a piece for folklore, writer Bill Ellis noted, quote, the most impressive detail about the letters to the paper is the sheer amorphousness of the Highgate traditions.

Apart from the ghostly bicyclist, hardly two informants gave the same story, yet all young people seemed compelled to walk by or even enter the cemetery with the idea that something is supposed to happen.

So basically he was saying, even though all the letters shared different stories, they all kind of created this like shared mythology around Highgate Cemetery.

I love that.

And kind of established it as a place known for supernatural encounters or hauntings.

Yeah.

Makes sense.

So I'm like, get me their ASAP.

Let's go.

Now, under normal circumstances, the letters published to the Hampstead and Highgate Express might have been dismissed as, you know, like folklore, naivete, naivete.

Just like the way that UFO abduction stories and ghost encounters aren't taken very seriously.

But like I said earlier, during the late 60s and early 70s, London was undergoing major cultural shifts.

And older generations were paranoid about younger generations being interested in these dark things like witchcraft and satanic shit and dark arts.

So these supposed hauntings in the Highgate Cemetery actually gave these older like fearful generations something to concentrate on.

And it kind of seemed like they started projecting their anxieties that way.

Yeah.

Exactly.

We were right all along.

Like Reverend Phil there in the Cemetery Keeper, William.

William Dakin.

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I know.

What a cool name, right?

That's a, you should be a cemetery care worker.

Yes.

A caretaker.

If your name is William Dakin.

You just have to be.

I don't make sense.

I don't know why.

I like it.

Now, Sean Manchester, if you remember, he was one of the leaders of the British Occult Society, but he split from the original British Occult Society in early 1970.

Dakin ended up founding his own faction and he immediately seized on these stories being published in the press.

Now, unlike David Ferrant, who was essentially looking for validation, Sean Manchester came forward and told reporters that he didn't think this was a simple matter of a ghostly entity.

Instead, he said that he believed something far more dangerous was at work.

He claimed he was, quote, concerned by the numbers of carcasses of foxes and other large animals that were showing up with lacerations around the throat completely drained of blood.

He thinks there's a vampire at work.

So given the success of the previous round of these paranormal letters, the Hampstead and Highgate Express leapt at the chance for more letters of this nature.

Yeah.

They probably saw this was like a big draw.

So they were like, let's go.

They were like, party.

Vampires, you say?

All right.

Vampillers.

So in late February, they published a front page article featuring Sean Manchester under the headline, does a vampire walk in Highgate?

I am obsessed with that.

Love it so much.

So in the article, Manchester warned local residents that this was not any old ordinary vampire or vampire.

See to happen more.

He quote, speculated that it was a king vampire from, I think it's Wallachia, that had been brought to England in a coffin by his supporters at the start of the 18th century.

That sounds fucking awesome.

Why doesn't this happen more?

I don't know.

If someone told me a king vampire had arrived after being brought over in a coffin, I mean, come on.

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We're calling out to work today, fellas.

Make my day.

Yeah.

Well, he went into detail.

He said, quote, now that there is so much desecration of graves by Satanism, I'm convinced that this has been happening in Highgate Cemetery in an attempt by a body of Satanists who, excuse me, to resurrect the king vampire.

We would like to exercise the vampire by the traditional and approved manner, drive a stake through his heart with one blow just after dawn between Friday and Saturday, chop off his head with a grave digger shovel and burn what remains.

This is what happened centuries ago, but we'd be breaking the law today.

So quick question.

Sure.

Between Friday and Saturday.

I don't know why.

So they're like, I know everybody's got to go to work during the week, and I'm sure this vampire has a sweet ass nine to five.

So we should wait until the weekend when his guard is down.

Just after dawn.

When he's had a nice brusky after work and then we can dust his ass only in these certain time periods.

Like I really like that.

I'm obsessed with that.

Yeah.

I think that might be what I'm like, okay.

I was going to be a question, but then I worked it out in my own head.

There ain't no rest for the wicked.

Yeah.

That's why they continue their work on the weekends.

Yeah.

Everybody's working for the weekend.

Everybody's working for the vampire and they have to chop off his head.

Yeah.

With a grave digger shovel.

So it's not like Buffy where they just dust.

No.

It's a little different.

It's close.

It's neat.

Yeah.

It's neat because it's just like poof and you're gone and it's like, you don't have to do anything else.

You don't have to get rid of any body or just like, I know that is true.

You sweep him into a dustpan.

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I like it.

But also Buffy's version is neat too because that's what I mean.

Buffy's version is neat.

Oh, that's what you're saying.

So like chopping his head off with a grave digger shovel is not neat at all.

And then you have to light a fire like Buffy doesn't even have to light a fire.

Yeah.

No.

Buffy's way is far and above the better way.

By the way, go listen to the rewatcher.

Yeah.

It's our favorite podcast.

It's too pretty to do it.

Well, you know, one of our favorite podcasts, but by the next day, Manchester story had obviously gained some attention from people like us at first, the attention like us at first.

This is not just us.

The attention was mostly from people who appreciated his creativity, but absolutely dismissed the reality of vampires couldn't be us.

But after the public sat with the story for about a week or so and Manchester continued to push this narrative of vampires and Satanists in the press, some people started to wonder whether there might be some truth to what he was saying.

After all, there had been an alarming rise in youth rebellion in recent years that coincided with increased drug use and an interest in the paranormal and the occult.

The paranormal.

The paranormal.

That was a, that was a soul.

And then there was the vandalism and the evidence of the quote unquote evidence of witchcraft in local cemeteries and also church yards, which were followed by all the letters sent to the Hampstead and Highgate Express about these paranormal happenings in Highgate Cemetery. So while it may have sounded outlandish at first, after giving it some thought, these people in Highgate started to think maybe Sean Manchester was onto something and maybe they ought to do something about the evil that invaded their motherfucking neighborhood.

I love this because it's a movie.

It is.

This is literally a movie.

Like everybody's just like, we got to do something about this evil.

I guarantee you this king vampire vampire, I guarantee you that they probably did make a movie about this.

I did look that up because I did.

Look it up.

So on March 13th, Ferrant and Manchester, David Ferrant and Sean Manchester, both appeared together in a news segment produced by ITV about the cemetery and standing in front of the cemetery gates, Ferrant told a reporter that he had received quote, threatening letters

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with black magic symbols on them, warning him to stay away from things he could not understand.

Ooh.

Now Sean Manchester interrupted and kind of seemed to see an opportunity to undermine David Ferrant.

So he challenged Ferrant's power and knowledge of the occult, telling the reporter, we feel he does not possess sufficient knowledge to exercise successfully, something as powerful or evil as this vampire, and may well fall victim as a result.

He's like, me on the other hand, I know what the fuck I'm doing.

Me, I'm good.

You, not good.

He said, I'm hot and you're not.

Top that.

So the program followed the interview with a segment on the ghostly apparitions seen in the park and included interviews with several neighborhood children who have also claimed to see this dark figure in Highgate Cemetery.

So the new segment on ITV aired at 6 PM and within two hours, there were nearly a hundred people who assembled at the gates of Highgate Cemetery for what the press later described as a vampire hunt.

Wow.

It's just for realies, it happened.

I love it.

I fucking love it.

Logan Ray.

So while many residents were residents of this local London neighborhood, Highgate, several others had actually driven pretty far to participate in this event.

One of those people was Alan Blood.

I don't know if that's his real name or not.

I was just going to say, please tell me that's his real name.

I mean, he's a self-described vampire expert, so like I'd be willing to put money on the fact that he changed it, but I don't know his life.

But he traveled, what I do know, is that he traveled more than 40 miles to participate in the hunt for what he described as an undead Satan-like being.

You know what?

Get it.

I just, I'm like, you know, like just, if it makes you happy, it can't be that bad.

Cheryl said it.

My girl, I love Cheryl, and Blood told reporters.

I met Mr. Farron, that's his name, and they were like, Blood told reporters.

I met Mr. Farron in a pub, and we talked about his plans to stake the vampire.

But this whole thing is timed wrongly.

There were too many people around, which would disturb any undead spirit.

Of course.

He's like, if this were up to me to organize, I would have done it a little more, a little

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more, you know.

I would have understood the nuances here.

Thank you.

That's what I was looking for, the nuances.

I would have fine-tuned some of these details.

I just, I really like that these people believe this so wholeheartedly.

I love it.

I really, I fucking love it.

I find this endearing.

It's fantastic.

At one point, like an entire school of children, like descended upon this cemetery with like stakes and dogs and fucking everything.

I love it.

I love it.

I'm in.

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Now, some people who were there, like this, this happened a lot.

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This happened a few times.

So some people there seem to take Farrent and Manchester's claims seriously.

But a lot of people also just seem to be there to witness the spectacle.

Me.

I didn't.

It's us.

Now, when they couldn't get through the gates, several would-be vampire hunters climbed a 10-foot wall surrounding Highgate Cemetery and just went in search of open graves looking for this king vampire.

Wow.

It's for real, dog.

Other people, though, refused to go very far into the cemetery, and they claimed that they had seen something moving beyond the gate.

Ooh.

Now, a man named Anthony Robinson, boring.

Sorry, Anthony.

Sorry, Anthony.

You're following up Mr. Blood.

Yeah, exactly.

He told reporters, I walked past this place twice and heard a high-pitched noise.

Then I saw something gray moving slowly across the road.

I'm sure there's something evil lurking here at Highgate.

I love that the vampire's just goes gray.

Yeah.

Just figure.

He's just like, I'm just gray.

I'm just gray.

Just let me go about my day.

Oh, look at it.

I love it.

That'd be adorable.

That would be so cute.

He's like, just leave me alone.

But by 10 o'clock, the scene resembled what one onlooker described as a football crowd with tons of people carrying blunt objects that they were planning to use against any evil presence.

And John Manchester later told a reporter, it was like the end of a Frankenstein film where the monster was chased.

People had weapons and looked as if they could turn nasty if they had seen a tall, lean person in dark clothing.

See, that's where it turns for me, because when you're just like, oh, this person went in there by himself and was like, I'm going to stake a vampire, I was like, that's, that's delightful.

Yeah, look at that.

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You do what you want to do.

When it becomes an angry mob of people, like at Beauty and the Beast, like if Gaston is leading this whole thing.

I'm not into it because it goes right back to my whole thing of like, you're gathering with a common interest.

Just stay at home and get door mashed.

Don't gather with a common interest because some of you are going to start getting crazy.

And like this guy just said, you're going to start beating on some poor, tall drink of water that walks by, like John walks by and everybody starts beating the shit out of them.

Like that's, it's not good.

It's not good.

It's not turning good for me.

It's not getting better.

But listen, I'm a little upset.

Luckily the police were also aware of that fact.

And because the situation did have the potential, like we were just pointing out to get pretty dangerous, they eventually were able to drive the crowds out of the cemetery before anybody got hurt.

Do small patrols, you know?

Yeah, exactly.

Like groups of five.

Like a scoop gang.

Right.

Yeah.

But in the days and weeks that followed, Highgate police had to contend with several smaller incidents of groups of teenagers or young adults breaking into the cemetery, stakes in hand in search of the paranormal.

It's important.

But nearly all of those individuals actually hadn't even taken the claims of vampire seriously. They just like wanted to be part of this, I guess.

Yeah.

Everybody wants to be part of something.

But then other people were like, no, there's a motherfucking vampire in here and I'm going to be the one to get him.

Vampire.

But the press, on the other hand, they kept presenting this story as though it were 100 percent fact.

They actually usually cited Shawn Manchester, I don't know what happened there, David Ferrant, and even Alan Blood as experts on vampirism.

Now, Shawn Manchester told a reporter from Hampstead and Highgate Express, it is too much to be the work of vandals.

There are some black magic signs and symbols, limbs, and even entire bodies missing from graves.

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It all points to something very evil.

Yeah.

I mean, again, that's not great.

Bodies missing from graves and shit.

Like that's not cool.

Yeah.

That's the thing.

Just go look for a vampire.

Yeah, exactly.

Don't worry about the people that are there.

But what he's saying, he's like, keep looking for the vampire because the vampire is the one taken and his followers are the ones taking these bodies and trying to resurrect King V there.

That's not great.

No way.

That's not how you do it.

No.

But a few months after the vampire hunt in Highgate, the story was revived, of course, in early August when three young girls were walking through the cemetery and discovered the headless charred remains of a woman's corpse lying on the ground outside of one of the crypts.

Holy shit.

A police spokesperson told the press, we're working on the theory that this may be connected with black magic.

The body could well have been used for that reason.

Damn.

So people were taking this to like another level.

Way too far.

And the discovery of the remains reignited the excitement surrounding the supposedly supernatural aspects of Highgate Cemetery.

And once again, the press turned to the supposed experts for a quote.

Instead of being like, what group of asshole teenagers did this?

Because you know that's what it is.

Now they're leaning in a little bit.

And John Manchester.

I keep saying Manchester.

Manchester.

Manchester.

Manchester.

John Manchester told the Highgate and Hempstead Express, the same Satanists that desecrate Highgate Cemetery are disciples of the evil one, like referring to the King Vampire.

According to him, stealing a human skull brought the cultists one step closer to reviving the King Vampire and increasing his number of followers.

And in all the excitement over the discovery, few noticed the comments from Highgate's groundskeeper

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who told police he saw no signs of black magic and he just also chalked it up to ordinary vandalism.

And it's like, did he cite a source for that?

He's like the human skull.

If you bring it to the King Vampire, like it brings you closer and it's like, did anyone go, do you have a source for that?

Or did you come up with that yourself?

And that therein lies the problem.

That's the problem.

They're just taking this man for face value and they're like, well, he says he's an expert at this.

Yeah, this is just fanfic.

Everybody, they're just making it up as they go along.

This is fanfic.

They're like, oh, they're entirely correct.

It was a headless corpse.

Well then, you know, that's very coincidental because you need a human skull to get closer to that.

It's like they're just making it up as they go along.

That's the thing.

But of course, not wanting to be outdone by Manchester's supposed expertise, David Ferrant took to Swains Lane and vowed to patrol the local cemeteries until he found those responsible. On August 17th, his Buffy patrolling, though, came to an end when he was arrested in St. Michael's churchyard and charged with trespassing.

Now at the time of his arrest, he was carrying a large crucifix and a wooden stake.

And in their statements to the press, Highgate police claimed that Ferrant had told them he had, quote, gone to Highgate to watch for a vampire raising from its grave.

And he told them, according to the police, I would have entered the catacombs in my search and upon finding the supernatural being, I would have driven my stake through its heart and then run away.

I love that for you.

Now later, Ferrant said that this statement was entirely fabricated and that he had not said that.

He said he'd really gone to the cemetery with the British Occult Society to conduct a seance intended to establish a psychic link with the dark specter.

Wow.

He said, I wasn't going to stab anyone.

Yeah, come on.

I was just holding a seance to talk.

Yeah, don't, don't make me out to be something else.

Said I just want to chat.

I just wanted to talk.

But because he had been charged with trespassing, he had to appear before a judge on September 30th and he pleaded not guilty to the charge.

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Now his lawyer, Jeffrey Bayes, argued that the cemetery was, quote, not an enclosed area in the strict legal sense, so technically his client hadn't broken any laws.

And then Ferrant told the judge, I decided to go out and destroy it.

I was aware of the power of the cross and went to the cemetery with a crucifix on which I had engraved a black magic emblem.

So he's really going for it.

I was, he's, he's taken this and run with it.

But his lawyer explained that while it may not make sense to the courtroom, technically it's not an illegal activity to go out hunting for vampires.

And he told them it is akin to people spending fortunes looking for the Loch Ness monster or some other supposed creature.

And for some reason the judge agreed and the charges against Ferrant were dropped.

Okay.

He was like, you know what, fair point.

Technically it is not illegal.

He's like, you know what?

Valid.

No.

While Ferrant has, is going and appearing in court for all these trespassing charges, the other members of the British Occult Society were standing watch over the cemeteries and high gate like their leader had told them to.

But just moments after the charges against him had been dropped, Ferrant gave a comment to reporters telling them that he vowed to quote, continue his investigations and carry on trying to warn people that followers of this black magic cult were performing evil ceremonies at the cemetery.

Dun dun dun.

It's like a Scooby-Doo episode.

It really is.

Like I swear.

It truly is.

Somebody tagged me in something on TikTok that just made me think of this.

We need like the theme song that somebody said that ghost is just like Scooby-Doo music.

Like if you put it to certain songs to Scooby-Doo episodes of them like running away.

You should try that.

There's a couple that, there's one in particular and I can't remember.

I think it's Zombie Queen.

I don't know if I know that one.

It's very much like sing it.

Sing it.

Sing it right now.

It's like the music that really, it actually worked and I was like, I'm not offended and

I support this message.

I love Scooby-Doo.

And it just made me think of that song playing over this whole thing and it actually works

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really well.

I need to listen to that song.

I'm gonna have to like play it for like the part for you because you're gonna be like, wow.

Yeah, please do that.

That's actually very true.

One time I just paid for a Boomerang subscription only to watch Scooby-Doo.

I remember that.

That was pretty great.

It was money well spent.

Yeah.

I like that.

I'm like, you just gave a huge thumbs up.

Yeah.

Wow.

I don't know if I've heard Zombie Queen.

To be fair, this song is like very out of their normal side.

Yeah.

It's a little groovy.

Wow.

And that's ghost.

You know so many things.

You're, I love your hyper fixation on this band like genuinely, I love your hyper fixation on this.

Cause you have fun new like little fun facts every time.

I can always come up with something new in a while, but doesn't that work out really well?

That does work.

Zombie Queen, it really does.

Yeah.

Scooby-Doo chase music.

And I really want to listen to that more now.

Cause I like that.

Like actually Fairy's and Sean Manchester, there was no other way to go back to it.

So Farron Ceresce, the same Michael nachochard kicked off a new chapter in this.

Basically at this point, him and Sean Manchester had a rivalry and this whole thing kicked off a new chapter in that.

The fact that is like, it's like a rivalry about a vampire king.

Yeah.

Like this is a king vampire rivalry in a king vampire enthusiast.
rivalry among brothers.

Just let that settle for a second.

That's the thing.

They belong to the same group once, and then they were like, never mind.

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Yeah, I mean, I'm for this.

So in early November, just a month after Farron appeared in court, British Occult Society member John, I believe it's British, was reported to the police for assaulting Sean Manchester.

Oh, shit.

Things took a turn.

According to John there,

Sean Manchester threatened him and his family with black magic unless he rescinded the bail money that he had put up to bail David Ferrant out of jail following his arrest for trespassing.

Damn.

So appearing before a London court,

British told the magistrates that Manchester had called his wife and, quote, warned her that unless the bail was revoked, odd things will happen to you and your children.

Odd things.

That's what he said.

Not even bad things.

Just odd things.

It's going to get weird in here.

But are you going to fuck around with that?

No.

It's just like, it's such a gentle threat.

Sort of.

It's not like fucked up things are going to like bad things.

It's like odd things.

Some odd things.

It's not even gentle.

It's like menacing.

Yeah.

Gentle isn't the way to describe it.

It's like a, yeah.

It's just like kind of menacing.

It is.

Yeah.

Now in court, Manchester was quoted as saying,

I believe in black magic.

Do you?

I am an occult.

Excuse me.

And Dave said that he's going to yell this at people whenever he's annoyed at them.

I am an occult.

I love it.

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Somebody just disrespects you and you're like,
I'm an occult.
I am an occult.
I'm an actual occult.
So, okay.
So fuck off.
That's Dave's way to deal with people that he doesn't like.
And I might steal it.
But anyway, when British learned of these threats,
he went to Manchester's home in an argument ensued.
And apparently during the argument,
Sean Manchester and a friend tried to forcibly remove
John from their home,
at which point Manchester was knocked to the ground
and supposedly hurt his leg.
Damn.
So after hearing both sides of the argument,
Magistrate William Hughes noted that British
technically was guilty of assault.
But under the circumstances, he dismissed the charges.
He was like, this is all a little much.
Just out here, just being like, this is a lot, guys.
Like, knock it off.
I'm just going to keep dismissing these charges
until you all stop.
So, British didn't get in trouble,
but Manchester was placed on probation
and fined 200, I think it's pounds,
with explicit instruction,
instructions not to have any more contact with John British.
They'd be probably smart.
Now in the weeks and months that followed,
both Ferrant and Manchester did everything they could
to stay in the spotlight and keep all these stories
about black magic and occultists and vampires alive
in the press,
while being careful to make sure that their antics
didn't violate any more laws.
Yeah, you know, just fun silliness.
But they both maintained that devil worshipers
were still at work in the cemeteries.
Ferrant said that the British Occult Society
had been attempting to exercise the evil spirits,
and Manchester said that he was performing

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various rituals outside of the cemeteries
to take care of this.

Of course.

Now in late October,
BBC, the BBC program, 24 hours,
heard about the situation
and actually traveled to Highgate to cover the story.

Wow.

Now the story relied heavily on interviews
with Sean Manchester
and included what they referred to
as a documentary reconstruction
of Manchester's attempts to exercise the evil spirits
from Highgate Cemetery.

I love that a lot.

I want to see it personally.

Yeah, I want to watch that.

I couldn't find it.

But in the opening segment,
the host told audiences,
we have a film report of a secret and satanic ritual
being practiced in Britain in October 1970.

24 hours is building up a case history of the occult.
We've heard of ghost hunters, psychic researchers,
covens of witches dancing naked around bonfires
in the middle of winter,
and even the odd black mass.

Sometimes the fascination with the black arts
leads its inheritance to far more sinister rituals.

Ooh.

Spooky.

Now just as he had done with countless other media appearances,
Manchester used this appearance on 24 hours
to continue building out his vampire narrative.

In one instance, he said that he had actually come
into contact with a young woman

he referred to as Louisa,

and he said that she was a London girl
supposedly possessed by demonic spirits.

Spirits, excuse me.

And according to Manchester,
he followed Louisa to the crypts at Highgate one evening,
and that was when he discovered,
quote, an extra coffin with no nameplate

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and opening it to find a body
which appeared neither dead or alive.
So he said, jumping into action,
he grabbed his stake and, quote,
placed the point between the seventh and eighth rib on the left.
Grabbing my arm,
one of my assistants pleaded with me
to desist saying that it would be sacrilege.
If what lies before us is an undead, I replied,
it would be an act of healing.
Consternation grew among the group and the vault,
and the consensus of opinion was that the stake remained unsoiled
until at last proper permission
had been obtained from the correct quarter.
I just love this.
So basically, he was like,
I wanted to dust this motherfucker,
but all of my people were telling me that it's sacrilege,
and the general consensus was that we should leave the stake unsoiled,
aka not stab things.
You know, I think that's just like having a good team around you
that you can trust to tell you when you've gone a little too far.
I think they like don't stab this person.
But I want to know where you get the permission.
Like, what's the correct quarter to ask the permission from?
I mean, these are questions that probably have answers
that I'm sure they'll come up with in the moment.
Yeah, I'd have to ask Sean Manchester.
You'd have to ask Sean Manchester.
Do you think that if you were this reporter,
you'd be like, so did you ask anybody?
100% I'd be like,
my next question would be, who do you ask?
Do you want me to come with you?
Should we go do that right now?
That's the thing, like Diane Sawyer got on the case.
Yeah, nobody's doing a good job with the follow-up questions here.
Ash is a really good interviewer.
I feel like Ash would be really good at this.
Oh my God.
You would have the perfect follow-up questions.
Thank you so much.
That's because I'm inquisitive.
You are, and I like it.

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Thank you.

Whenever we have interviews, I'm like, girl, take it over.

Oh my God, thank you so much.

I get very nervous.

If I think to ask a follow-up question in an interview,

I always go, I asked.

I love that.

I didn't ask the question.

I asked the question.

Wow, that's hot.

So one of the members of the group stopped Manchester here from going through with the staking.

He said he did the next best thing,

and he filled the coffin with holy water, garlic, and salt,

and left the door to the crypt open

to let sunlight take care of the rest.

And then he added some chicken tenderloin,

and he sauteed it.

Get the holy water out of there, and I'll eat that.

But the segment on the Highgate Vampire that appeared on 24 Hours

turned out to be one of the last big stories

to feature Sean Manchester and David Ferrant

that took their claims seriously.

This was partially because the public's attention had moved on to new stories.

It had been a while, and they were like, yeah,

we still haven't seen it, so like, I don't know.

We're like gnats.

We can't focus on something for that long.

No, but more importantly, the more progress

the police made towards stopping the vandalization,

the less inclined Londoners were to believe

in the existence of King Vampires and Black Masses.

Sad.

And in July 1973, Highgate Police did arrest

a group of teenagers who invaded the cemetery.

And at that point, they learned since the original claims

in 1970, these local kids had actually made a habit

of going quote-unquote adventuring in local cemeteries

looking for supernatural phenomenon.

Makes sense.

So this, the locals realized,

was a far more plausible explanation

for the disturbances than vampires and demons.

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I love that it took the police being like,
hey, you see this group of youths?
They say that youths have been doing this for a while
and going in there because cemeteries are spooky
and kids are gullible.
Yeah.
And everybody was like, wow,
I wish someone told us that before.
We went on a vampire hunt.
And it's like, that's what it took everybody?
It's like at the end of Scooby-Doo.
Like no one thought of that.
When they take the mask off and you're like,
oh, it was just that creepy old guy.
We should have worn that.
You don't, kids.
Or the creepy old guy.
Who just admonishes them for being youths.
Exactly.
Yeah.
Now it was the youths admonishing people for not being youths.
I don't know.
I don't know.
Admonishing them for believing in something supernatural
because they were like, yeah, we haven't found it.
I just love that that was clearly the case the whole time.
Like I could have told you,
I told you that in the beginning actually.
And then it's like we get here and all of a sudden they're like,
everybody wants a little more theater.
I mean, I do too, for sure.
Yeah.
Like I'm into it.
I'm into it.
I think it just got too far.
That was the kind of spooky and macabre stories
that send chills down your spine.
But few stories are creepier than the one
at the center of my new podcast, Ghost Story.
Ghosts aren't real.
At least that's what I've always believed.
Sure, odd things happen in my childhood bedroom.
But ultimately, I shrugged it all off.
That is until a couple of years ago

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when I discovered that every subsequent occupant of that house
is convinced they've experienced something inexplicable too.
Including the most recent inhabitant
who says she was visited at night
by the ghost of a faceless woman.
It just so happens that the alleged ghost
haunted my childhood room
might just be my wife's great-grandmother.
He was murdered in the house next door
by two gunshots to the face.
Ghost Story, a podcast about family secrets,
overwhelming coincidence,
and the things that come back to haunt us.
Follow Ghost Story wherever you get your podcasts.
Listen everywhere on October 23rd,
or you can binge early
and add free on Wondery Plus the same day.
But listen, we got two characters still to hear about.
What's up with them?
So despite the decline in public interest,
David Farron and Sean Manchester
kept up their act in the decades that followed.
They wanted to keep this alive.
Good for them.
Manchester stayed real flashy
and he maintained his theatrical appearance
that really belonged in some kind of gothic horror story.
Like you've seen it.
Hell yeah.
He's got...
Oh yeah.
He's got what the kids, I believe, call drip.
Oh, is that what that means?
Yeah, I think drip is when your outfit's good.
So I have a question.
This is gonna sound...
I might not know because I just found that out.
I'm gonna become a relic.
What's that?
What is Riz?
I've heard that word.
Do you know what's so upsetting to me?
Do you know what's so upsetting to me?
You don't know.

I don't know.
That makes me happy.
And I used to be the one to tell you
what these things meant.
But I did hear a child say the other day
that somebody had Riz.
Is that like you have style?
Oh.
Oh, Mikey's got...
What is it?
If you want to Riz someone,
you want to flirt with or charm them.
So how do you have Riz?
You have charm.
Oh, it drags from the word charisma
or special magnetic charm or appeal.
Oh, okay.
So it's like you have Riz.
Like you got a little something.
You know what?
Sometimes I don't like these stupid things
that like you say, but I like Riz.
I hate it a lot.
I think it's such a bad word.
I think it's...
I would much rather someone tell me
that I have charisma.
You have spunk.
I have this nerve and talent.
You have charisma.
You have spunk.
Oh, you got Riz.
There's something magnetic about you.
You know what I said?
You have Riz.
I'd be like, fuck you.
No, I don't.
No, I don't.
It kind of feels like 20s to me.
Like, oh, I got Riz, kid.
Yeah.
Like I feel like...
It feels clunky.
It's not a...

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No, I feel like it does clunky.
It's a drip to me is clunky.
I mean, that's...
Like if you tell me,
because I think they say you're dripping
and I'm like, that's gross.
That's upsetting.
I'm not dripping.
Yeah, no, that's offensive.
I don't like that.
I like, like people in my day said swag.
Swag.
I like swag.
I think we just said like, you look cool.
No, you guys said that.
You definitely had something.
You must have.
No, we didn't have things for like,
like we didn't have like swag or Riz
or anything like that.
We were just like, cool.
I'm trying to think.
I guess you're right.
Yeah, we really didn't.
That was...
You know what it was?
That became a thing when the internet became a thing.
So when the internet was just a baby,
it was not a thing.
But then I think about like people like that
are my mom's age and she used to tell me
like the things that they would say,
like like zingers or something like that.
We're like stoners.
Oh no, that was only...
I won't say what it is.
It was only a group of people.
No, it was only here.
Okay.
Gotcha.
So I don't even think I said the right word.
You didn't.
So I'm not going to say the actual word
because it's very specific to our high school.

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I didn't know that.
Yeah.
Well, moving on.
How did we even get here?
Oh, he had Riz, I guess technically.
Because he's theatrical.
He had Riz and I'm looking at them right now.
They do indeed have Riz.
They have Riz and Drift.
Both of them do.
Well, so yeah.
Farrant, he stuck to his nightly patrols,
his rituals and exorcisms.
And in time, authorities actually kind of grew weary
of the antics of both men.
And that led to a very strange relationship
between the police and the occult groups.
Now, even though the public interest in the supernatural,
specifically regarding the Highgate vampire
had waned considerably by mid to late 1970s,
Farrant and Manchester and their respective occult groups
remained very active.
And actually in late 1972,
Farrant and his girlfriend, Victoria Jarvis,
were arrested in Highgate Cemetery
on a charge of indecent behavior.
Oh.
When the two were discovered in a private cemetery
conducting a ritual to contact the spirit
of a long dead pirate, Thomas, while, uh, whelmsly.
I'm sorry, they were in a cemetery.
In the cemetery.
Conducting a ritual.
In Highgate Cemetery.
To bring forth a long dead pirate.
Yeah, Thomas Whelmsly.
Let them go.
Let them live.
Let them live.
That's awesome.
Now, Farrant ended up telling the court,
I really believed it possible that it could have appeared.
If it had, it would be, uh,
it would have been the means I used.

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It would have appeared within the circle.
Now, ultimately, they were given a small fine
and they were told to get the fuck out of the cemetery
and stay out of it.

Now, Farrant and Manchester again made headlines
in early 1973 when the two announced their plan for
an occult duel to the death.

What?

At Parliament Hill in London.

In preparation, they literally plastered
London's urban area with posters announcing the duel,
claiming the ceremony would involve naked witches,
demon-raising.

Diamonds.

And the slaughter of a cat.

Oh, I hate that.

Which I really don't like.

Yeah, no.

But it does sound like an interesting version
of Musk versus Zuckerberg.

Oh, yeah.

Like, like previously.

Yep, absolutely.

Minus the cat's slaughter.

Minus the cat's slaughter.

Why do we have to bring cat's slaughter into it?

Well, that's the thing, because actually,
the announcement caused a shit ton of outrage
among the public, mostly because they had said
that they would slaughter a cat.

Because of the cat.

Like, if you just like, if you want to just duel,
like, in your own occult way.

Yeah, just like, we would all be like,
that sounds fun.

Like, naked witches, demon-raising, go ahead.

Yeah, like, go right ahead.

Don't kill an animal.

Stop.

Exactly.

Now, so people were mad that they said
that they were going to slaughter a cat,
but also because of a myriad of other claims
made by both sides.

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Manchester told the Sunday Mirror,
my opponent intends to raise a demon
to destroy me by killing a cat.
I will be relying solely on divine power.
So he was like, this guy's an animal cruelty guy.
I got the power.
So who was it that said he wasn't going to?
Manchester.
So Manchester said, I'm not going to kill a cat?
Yeah, so I'm voting for him.
All right, I'm going to have to be on his side
for that one.
Exactly.
Yeah, and even though-
And even though-
Right, exactly.
And even though he had actually put up nearly
a thousand posters announcing the duel,
Manchester told the Mirror,
I advise people not to attend.
They may easily be horrified.
I mean, don't tell me don't attend
because you will easily be horrified
because I am going to be putting my shoes on.
Precisely.
I think he knew that.
Yeah, of course he did.
That's an amazing way to get people there.
Now, in response,
Farron told reporters,
blood must be spilled,
but the cat will be anesthetized.
But to which I say, seek help.
Yeah, I don't care if the cat
is anesthetized.
I don't care about any of that.
Exactly.
No, thank you.
It's unclear whether the duel
ever actually happened,
but if it did,
it didn't result in the death of either one.
If it happened,
they were both winners, I guess.

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But the arrest and disruptions
only continued in the years that followed.

In early 1974,
David Ferrant and several members
of the British Occult Society
were arrested for lighting a fire
in a derelict building in London.
Oh.

And in their report,
the police said that they received a call
about the fire from a neighbor,
and when they searched the home,
they discovered Ferrant and the others
engaged in quote,
a witchcraft ceremony
involving two men
pressing naked around a fire.

Which is like,
just not illegal.
It's not illegal at all.

Yeah, you can do what you want.
I mean, going into a building is illegal.
But Ferrant and the others
were charged with arson
and appeared in a court
a short time later,
and Ferrant told the judge
he had lit the fire
because it was cold.

Cause and effect.
He's not trying to burn down the building.
No.

So technically, is it arson?
He was just trying to warm up.
But Ferrant was arrested again
a few months later,
this time for breaking into the crypts
in Kensel Rye's cemetery
where several coffins were disturbed
and bodies exposed.
And that's where I mean,
he lost it.
Yeah, he's lost it.
And he's like the whole cat thing.

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Like I'm like, you're going down a dark path.
Lost the plot.
Now at his trial,
his estranged wife, Mary Ferrant,
told the court that she had been shown photos
of the broken crypts and bodies
just after Ferrant returned home
from the cemetery.
She told the court,
I cannot remember the sex or age of the corpse.
All I can remember is that it was black inside.
I was shaken and horrified.
Yeah, same.
So that's what I mean,
where like it started off like-
It's like fun, like silliness.
Into the occult,
but he like really took it to another place.
Yeah, way too far.
Now unlike the previous arrests
for petty crimes,
Ferrant's arrest for the desecration
of human remains was far more serious
than he seemed to understand.
He went on trial in early June
and was charged with body snatching
and witness intimidation.
Damn.
After he sent several voodoo dolls to witnesses
in an attempt to prevent them
from testifying against him.
Holy shit.
Now under oath,
he claimed that he and his followers
had nothing to do with demons or vampires,
but were simply misunderstood adherents
of an often maligned spiritual belief system.
All right.
But it's like-
Yeah, you-
You're doing bad stuff, though.
You can definitely be
among that group of people
that is misunderstood,

but if you're breaking into corpse,
if you're breaking into crypts
and like disturbing human remains,
nobody's ever going to get that.
No.
No one's ever going to be on your side on that one.
And you shouldn't.
You shouldn't get that either.
Now he was actually ultimately acquitted
of a very serious charge of body snatching
when the actual grave robber came forward
and admitted that he and several of his friends
had broken into the crypt
and vandalized the graves,
quote unquote, for a laugh.
Oh my god.
Punch that guy in the chin.
Please.
Now while Ferrant may have dodged
the most serious charges,
he was still found guilty of vandalizing memorials
in the cemetery and witness tampering,
and he was sentenced to four years
and eight months in prison.
Damn.
A sentence that, according to Bill Ellis,
quote, even the normally hostile honorary journal
characterized as unnecessarily harsh.
Wow.
Or excuse me, Hornsey Journal.
Now, Ferrant ended up appealing that sentence
and he was evaluated by a psychiatrist
who did deem him sane, quote,
but in need of guidance
because there was a possibility
of his beliefs taking him into a condition
of a mental disorder.
I wondered that.
He was really teetering a line there.
He's teetering on that line.
Now, despite the psychological evaluation,
Ferrant's appeal was actually denied
and he ended up serving two years
of his sentence before he got out on parole.

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Wow.

Now, once out of jail,
he pretty much kind of disappeared
from the public view,
which is probably a good thing,
just like he chilled out a little bit.

Yeah.

And he really only ever came up in discussions
that were remembering the Highgate vampire
and the occult panic of the 70s.

And he died in April 2019 at the age of 73.

Oh, wow.

He's just young.

Yeah, I know.

Now, his arrest served as kind of a wake-up call
for Sean Manchester,
who further toned down his antics
and rhetoric following David Ferrant's trial.

And in the years that followed,
Manchester's public persona
became increasingly oriented around vampires
and so did his branch of the British Occult Society
that he had started.

He continued to appear in the news articles and TV
whenever a so-called vampire expert was needed.

But by the early 1990s,
he had mostly abandoned his kind of occult persona.

And he claimed to have been ordained
as a bishop of the Old Catholic Church.

I saw pictures of him and I was like,
what's happening here?

But I bet you didn't see that coming.

I didn't see that coming.

Like from a cultist to the Catholic Church.

Yeah, I didn't see it.

What a path.

Yeah.

But they continued to trade barbs
with each other and insults in the press
until David Ferrant passed away in 2019.

Wow, that was like a blood feud.

A blood feud.

That wasn't till the end.

Truly, they got real pissed at each other.

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Damn.

But what an interesting story.

That is a fascinating tale.

Like multiple, multiple times,

huge groups of people ran to Highgate Cemetery

in search of a vampire, a king vampire.

I love that that happened.

I do as well.

And I'm glad that mostly nobody was hurt.

That's when I'm glad that no one was murdered

there wasn't any like, you know, I'm glad that there was,

but I'm really bummed for all those graves that got disturbed

because it's like, that sucks.

I know, I feel like they need to do something

or like obviously they wouldn't have done it back then,

but they needed to do something like more like technical

to get into the cemetery.

You know what I mean?

Like passcode or something.

Yeah.

But what a fucking story.

What a tale.

Very interesting.

What an aesthetic.

An aesthetic.

An aesthetic.

Aesthetic.

Aesthetic.

Aesthetic.

So yeah.

Thanks for listening.

Yeah.

We hope you keep listening.

And we hope you.

Keep it.

Weird.

But not so weird that you disturb people's graves

because what the fuck is wrong with you

if you're out there doing that?

No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no.

No.

Eat a moon pie.

No.

No.

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[illegible]

No.

No.

No.

No.

No.

No.

No.

survey.