

THE MAGNUS PROTOCOL

**Episode 4
“Taking Notes”**

**Written by Cole Weavers
Edited by Jonathan Sims & Alexander J Newall**

Show-Notes are available at the end of the Transcript.

ANNOUNCER

Louise Ironside - To the greatest friends I could wish for: To my craft fair companion Mimie; To JC who's kept me sane with endless walks; and ultimately to Harrow and Ivy, here's to another two decades and more.

[Intro Theme]

ANNOUNCER

**Rusty Quill Presents: The Magnus Protocol.
Episode Four – Taking Notes**

[Music]

1. INT. LOCATION - OIAR OFFICE. NIGHT. CLEAR. (COMPUTER).

The decrepit computer turns on. SAM is typing whilst idly singing to himself.

Alice stomps closer then slams her hands down on his desk.

ALICE

**(whisper)
What the hell Sam.**

SAM

What?

ALICE

Don't 'What?' me. I invented 'What?'.

SAM

**(quieter)
Wh-I... I honestly don't know what you're on about.**

ALICE

I just received a security notification.

SAM

About me?

ALICE

**Someone was trying to access restricted files.
And my money is on you.**

SAM

Why would you be getting those notifications?

ALICE

I shouldn't be, but you should be damn glad that this system doesn't do anything like it should. If Colin caught wind of this he would have a meltdown!

SAM

Right. Well, thanks, I guess?

ALICE

Apparently you tried searching for files with the terms...

(checking printout)

"Magnus" and "Protocol"?

SAM

That's what this is about? I mean, yeah, okay, I got a case referencing the Magnus Institute and then I looked it up and found a few files on the system that mentioned using "The Protocol". Why would that be restricted?

ALICE

Because we work for the government and- the government loves secrets, you dickhead!

SAM

Alright, yeah, I get it...

Beat.

ALICE

(slightly gentler)

Listen Sam. I don't know what "The Protocol" is but a couple of the old guard mentioned it over the years. The way they talked about it... it's high level stuff. You do not want to get found anywhere near it, never mind openly looking it up.

SAM

Well, I mean it isn't exactly as though I'm-

ALICE

This is not something you go poking around in. Not if you want to keep your job... or your neck.

SAM

Okay, okay! I get it. Consider me scared straight.

ALICE

I'm serious. I don't want you getting in trouble all right?

SAM

(realizing)

I mean, how much trouble are we talking here?

Beat.

ALICE

All I know is it used to involve Starkwall.

SAM

Starkwall? As in "The San Pedro Square Massacre" Starkwall?

ALICE

The private military contractors yeah.

GWEN approaches.

SAM

(whispering)

I thought this was supposed to be a "boring office job"!?

ALICE

(whispering)

It was until you started messing around!

Gwen arrives and sits.

Beat.

GWEN

You could at least pretend you weren't talking about me.

ALICE

Aw damn, you caught us! I was just telling Sam how important it is that he focuses on his work otherwise he'll end up trapped here like you forever.

GWEN

Of course you were. Well keep it down. Some of us do actual work here. At our job. Which pays us.

SAM

Noted.

GWEN double clicks on her PC.

AUGUSTUS

My Nephew,

/If you are reading these words, then I am already gone, and can offer no assurances as to the truth of them. You must simply trust in their

veracity and import-

ALICE

/Hey! Augustus! Feels like I haven't heard him in forever!

SAM

So is this, like, a rare voice?

Gwen presses spacebar, irritated. The voice stops.

ALICE

Kinda. It's usually just Chester or Norris. Augustus is a bit of a special occasion.

GWEN

Firstly, they don't have names. Stop trying to give them names. Secondly, can I please just get on with my job.

SAM

I'm sorry.

ALICE

I'm not.

GWEN takes a calming breath then hits the spacebar again.

2. CYBER SPACE

AUGUSTUS

My Nephew,

If you are reading these words, then I am already gone, and can offer no assurances as to the truth of them. You must simply trust in their veracity and import.

Keep what you read close to you, and secret, for as long as you may live.

I must hope that what lamentable inheritance I am able to offer might solicit a modicum of that familial affection which I have neglected to display in years past.

Nephew, to you I leave my violin, an instrument of the finest craftsmanship.

I will confess I once harbored the notion to dismantle the thing, or consign it to the fire, but I have at times been called covetous, and perhaps there is some merit to such an accusation, for I cannot now bring myself to do so.

There has been a great deal of rain here this last fortnight, which has been strangely pleasing to my maudlin mood, and has brought with it some nostalgia for that dreary summer you took residence with me.

I flatter myself to think that I might have imprinted upon you some part of myself in that time together, and perhaps in this way I seek to keep hold of my prized violin still.

I have never spoken of how I came to possess this violin to a living soul, but I must now confide the truth of it to you, for it, and its history, are now yours.

I was a young man, younger than you are now, when I was called to try my talents before the Royal Court Orchestra of the Palatinate.

While I must confess the thought of leaving the material comforts of Alnwick Abbey caused me trepidation, in truth I had little say in the matter, and the privilege of being so summoned was

not lost upon me.

My violin tutor, one Oliver Bardwell by name, nursed a conviction that this honor was purely the fruit of his own skills as an instructor, rather than a product of my talent and endeavor.

Bardwell, a singularly vexatious man, reveled in the task of reminding me that, though my father may hold station in the Lords, the regrettable position of my birth ensured I could not rely upon that fact to provide for my future.

In these moments of Bardwell's cruelty, I shall confess I indulged my imagination in contemplation of what morbid or grotesque fates might befall him on the journey, by happenstance or even by my own hand.

Regardless, it was with both nervousness and delight in my heart that I watched Alnwick Abbey gradually recede from view. My course was set for Mannheim, a destination where I felt a youthful certainty that my brilliance would at last be acknowledged.

As for my towering father, with his unshakeable belief in his own celestial significance, he too disappeared from sight, surrounded by my useless half-siblings, impatiently awaiting their inheritance.

Naturally, it was Mr. Bardwell who undertook the role of companion on my journey across the continent, surely harboring his own dreams of ennobling himself through my imminent accomplishments.

I paid little heed to his prattle or ambitions, spending those weeks en route refining my

finger patterns upon the timeworn bridge of my cherished Rogeri, at least as far as the unsteady coach would permit.

Alas, as the journey continued, Bardwell's practiced manners and veneer of refinement gradually eroded, and as the summer's warmth yielded to autumn's chill, his demeanor truly soured, a change hastened by each rut and jolt of the aged carriage.

Soon, a feverish restlessness had settled upon him like a shroud of tulle, and his once discerning eyes had clouded with a frantic, almost manic gleam.

I watched with growing unease as shadows danced upon the walls of his thoughts, their forms and nature hidden to me, save for what I overheard him utter beneath his breath, barely perceptible to the ear. At moments, it seemed almost as if he were listening to some far away music, though my instrument lay quiet beside me.

I have made mention of the grim fantasies that on occasion possessed my youthful mind, but you must believe me, nephew, when I say I had no part in his death. I do not know what at last caused the frenzied paroxysm which seized him that night. He had slept but little the week prior, and the strain upon his nerves was plain to see.

It was as I missed the fingering of what should have been a simple exercise, a mistake I ascribe to the coach's jostling, that he leapt to his feet. Words tumbled from his lips, devoid of coherence, a symphony of mania conducted by some unseen maestro of his own imagination.

It were as though some specter flitted just beyond his sight and grasped his hands, moving them with wild abandon as Mr. Bardwell sought salvation from whatever phantoms haunted his waking dreams.

I often wonder if I might have intervened to save his life. But I was young and frightened, and simply watched in quiet awe.

As the storm within his mind reached a crescendo, Bardwell seized the handle of the carriage door, opened it abruptly and, without hesitation, hurled himself head first into the night.

The coachman, noticing immediately what had happened, brought the carriage to a sudden halt, and we confronted the grim spectacle that lay before us.

A rock, marked with the grisly remnants of my tutor's troubled mind and the fragments of his fractured skull, served as a morbid marker, looming over the lifeless form of the detestable Mr. Bardwell.

In my naiveté, I turned to the coachman to ask what we might do. Alas, I saw at once the suspicion that gripped him.

He had been witness to many heated exchanges between myself and Mr Bardwell, and as I approached, it became clear he perceived not a terrified and distraught youth, but a violent killer.

A primal fear seized the man, and he acted rashly. I shall not speak of what followed, but suffice it to say that I ended up alone, wandering

in the night.

How long I walked through those woods I cannot say. I was near insensible, and darkness shrouded all.

I do not know whether to call it luck or misfortune, that twist of fate which saved me, but at length I spied through the trees the flickering of flame and a figure huddled close for warmth.

A gentleman, it appeared, of surprisingly refined countenance sat there, casting a stark silhouette against the firelight.

"Spreekt u Engels?" I inquired in broken Dutch, Mr Bardwell's indifferent instruction having left me still ignorant of any German.

"A fellow Englishman," came his warm reply, accompanied by a hearty chuckle.

"You have a look that speaks of hunger," he continued, and offered some crudely skewered morsel, nearly charred to ash by the flames.

Devoid of caution, and keenly aware of my empty stomach, I accepted the burnt meat without ceremony.

Sitting by the fire, he probed gently into how I came to be there, and I found myself disclosing, with a candor I did not intend, the unvarnished truth of not only the night just past, but my life up until that moment.

Attentively he listened to my story, his gaze unwavering, and seemingly kind. Then he sighed.

"Fortune does seem to have forsaken you," he mused, his expression unreadable and his tone strangely conspiratorial.

"Indeed, I would suggest a stroke of luck is much in order."

I agreed, and the smile that then crossed his face, as though my acquiescence had sealed some compact between us, was a most curious thing.

The stranger reached over and retrieved from behind the log on which he sat an unusually shaped sack.

Within it I could spy an assortment of trinkets, ranging from battered knives and chipped porcelain to fine jewelry, small ivory figures and even a set of gambler's dice.

"Luck assumes a myriad of forms, " he proclaimed, his practiced manner warm and inviting, "and today it takes the form of a simple traveler offering you his wares. You mentioned playing the violin, I believe?"

He plunged his hand into his curious bag, and after moment of two of searching, pulled out an instrument of such apparent quality that the providence of its appearance seemed almost otherworldly.

Placing a bow upon the string, and in a single fluid motion, he executed an echoing double stop that resonated with a satisfying thrum.

He said nothing as I examined it, ascribing it no history, no famous maker or master luthier.

The neck, a paragon of symmetry, led the eye from the deep crimson hue of the upper bout gradually surrendering to a subdued natural mahogany as it descended.

"Ah, is this the face of fortune today?" He inquired, observing as my fingers traced the strings' span.

At that moment a cry of pain erupted from my throat, a cry that shocked even myself, as I realised I had cut my fingertip upon the strings.

The merchant only smirked, looking at me as one might a boy who'd touched a cooking pot.

"I have nothing to offer in return," I confessed, unused to being without means, and attempting to return the violin.

"Then let us not consider it a purchase, but a gift from a true friend."

His words were warm, yet there was within them some undertone which seemed to elude my understanding.

Before I could inquire further, this man, whose name I had never thought to ask, gestured down the path and, already beginning to kick dirt upon the fire, assured me my destination was but a few hours walk away.

In something of a daze I left my companion then, and soon enough it became clear that he had spoken true, and my whole ordeal had unfolded less than a day from the end of my journey.

And so at last I made my arrival at the Manheim

School, that nurturing ground of virtuosos who would grace the grandest stages of Europe, beckoned with its promise.

The luminaries it had borne, illustrious names such as Grua, Stamitz, Richter, and Fraänzl, made the prospect of joining it, and them, almost overwhelming.

No mention was made of the manner of my arrival, nor of what might have befallen me on the road, and after some few days I found myself ushered into a resplendent hall, where sat a panel of my would-be arbiters.

A tremor of apprehension coursed through me as I faced the silent assembly, and it was with an unfamiliar feeling of uncertainty that I gripped my new instrument.

Its neck, more slender than its predecessor, sat awkwardly in my hand, and as I began my fingers fumbled in their search for purchase upon the strings.

I attempted the first of my well-practiced recitations, but my playing was inelegant and rough, eliciting only dismissive whispers, and derisive muttering from my audience.

A surge of indignation and fear welled within me, urged on by the knowledge that I, my father's son, who had done terrible things to reach that hall, could never return home in disgrace.

I executed a 'jete', a jarring musical demand for their attention, a declaration that I must be seen, and heard.

A rapid and perfect volley of eleven notes, past which no murmur, no whisper lingered. I had

their complete attention.

In that moment of silence, a piercing pain radiated from my left ring finger.

As my eyes opened, I saw of blood pooling on the neck from where my skin should be, as the uppermost layer of the fingertip dangled, torn and hanging like discarded parchment.

Pain and panic blossomed, but no option remained other than to play, and to play the most daunting melodies my mind could conjure.

Sluggish at first, as I felt the strings run their length against my bloody flesh, then rapidly accelerating, crescendos intertwining diminuendos, a dance of command and submission enacted upon the strings.

Double stops, left-handed pizzicato, and heart-rending spiccato bowed in rapid succession, each note eliciting something deep and primeval. I could see in the faces of my audience an astonishment, and something not entirely unlike terror, and when the final notes rang out at last, a palpable breathlessness blanketed the chamber.

I was, of course, accepted, hailed as a singular talent.

Yet a suspicion took root in me. A realisation that the positions of “player” and “instrument” were not so firmly set with this hungering violin. It was a creature with needs and purpose of its own.

The needs were simple enough. Blood. Flesh. Little enough at first. Skin shaved and cut and

singing in pain. And the rewards were great, as with each performance, agony intermingled with melody, and my bleeding fingers lubricated those resonating strings.

My audience too showed a remarkable appetite for my artistry, and as I progressed through the school my reputation began to grow.

I was demanded, hailed, celebrated. And all the while, I bled. Did those who listened to me ever truly notice my sacrifice?

Did they see the slow transformation of my fingers, as each sonata exacted its toll? Applause followed me as each elongated note testified to my life's blood, and my pain.

Yet still I played for them. How could I do otherwise?

Standing tall, a man in my own right, my grandest ambitions realized.

And yet, while admiration rained down upon me, never was I elevated beyond the confines of my origins. The rarified world of my noble patrons was closed to me.

Modest riches adorned me, some small fame clung to my name, but never was I truly allowed to escape the position of my birth.

It was only then, in the depths of my pain and bitterness, that I found a secret truth. A truth I impart to you alongside the violin itself.

The blood for its strings need not be your own.

It was not simple philanthropy that led to my

taking on positions of tutelage in those bustling cities where I plied my trade, providing a musical education to the poor and the easily forgotten, asking nothing in return. Nothing except the occasional student who would not be missed.

Perhaps you pale at this, and abjure me for a monster. But you will learn that to feed this instrument, now yours, is of singular importance. Only once did I play it without paying its price: wrapping my fingers in thick bandages so as to prevent its razored strings from cutting me.

I had believed my playing would be lackluster, my performance uninspired. Yet the music that came from my instrument that day was somehow more beautiful than it had ever been before. It was lively, pulsing, carrying with it a spirit of motion, an irresistible urge to dance. I looked out upon my audience, a small gathering of minor Austrian gentry, and saw in their eyes a strange and familiar look. One I had not seen in many, many years. Not since that night in the carriage with the unfortunate Mr Bardwell.

They fell upon each other then, a dance of teeth and nails, of tearing and gouging. I watched as a gout-ridden man in emerald silk sucked the eyes from his son's skull and crushed them in his jaws like ripe cherries. A demure young woman bedecked in gold peeled the cheeks from her betrothed as she sang to the music that I could not stop playing. It was only when a candelabra was upended and the room engulfed in flame that I was at last able to cease my recitation and make my escape.

Perhaps you shall prove a stronger will than I,

and will yet find it within yourself to destroy this hungry thing of wood and cat-gut. But I cannot. I shall not.

For my music, ah, my divine music, is truly a balm for the unhealed wounds of my existence.

In its celestial strains I have found solace, a sanctuary woven from ethereal threads.

And perhaps you shall find similar.

Feed my violin, nephew, for I have given it all I that have and more.

3. INT. OIAR OFFICE NIGHT, STARTING TO RAIN (COMPUTER)

SAM and ALICE have been listening despite themselves. GWEN is still working.

ALICE

Dear grandpa Augustus does always tell such lovely stories.

SAM

Why on earth would something from the 18th century show up on Freddy?

ALICE

(smirking)

I told you Gwen was behind on her work.

GWEN

(irritated)

Someone likely digitized an old historical record and it triggered the search engine.

ALICE

And so was solved the horrifying mystery of the Quite Old Letter. Gosh, I've got chills.

GWEN

Maybe doing some actual work might warm you up.

SAM chuckles.

ALICE

(to Sam)

Yeah you might get the odd historical record by accident. I wouldn't even bother scoring or assessing it.

GWEN

Whilst I would advise our junior colleague to

remember that that they are being paid to do just that. Besides, it still counts towards your numbers.

ALICE

And you really do need those numbers don't you Gwen.

GWEN

We all do.

ALICE

(turning off PC and collecting things)

Not me! I'm done. Sam?

SAM

(Doing the same)

Pretty much...

ALICE

Then I cordially invite you to bugger off home and think about how important it is to focus on your work.

SAM

Yeah, yeah. Coming Gwen?

GWEN

Not quite yet.

ALICE

(moving off)

Case and point. Ta Ta Gwendoline darling, chow.

SAM

(following)

See you tomorrow.

GWEN

(Still working)

Hmmmm.

They both exit.

Extended pause as GWEN works.

There is an email notification from her PC.

GWEN

Hmmmm?

She opens the attachment a recording plays. The audio quality is very poor.

KLAUS

(video, begging)

Please. Please, you don't have to do this!

YOUNGER LENA

(video)

We both know I do.

KLAUS

(video)

/I I-could disappear again! They would never know!

GWEN

(Gasp)

/Lena? What the hell?

Computer turns off.

[Music]

ANNOUNCER

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The series is created by Jonathan Sims and Alexander J Newall, and directed by Alexander J Newall.

This episode was written by Cole Weavers and edited with additional material by Jonathan Sims and Alexander J Newall, with vocal edits by Lowri Ann Davies, soundscaping by Tessa Vroom, and mastering by Catherine Rinella with music by Sam Jones.

It featured Billie Hindle as Alice Dyer, Shahan Hamza as Samama Khalid, Anusia Battersby as Gwen Bouchard, Sarah Lambie as Lena Kelley with additional voices from Tim Fearon.

The Magnus Protocol is produced by April Sumner, with executive producers Alexander J Newall, Dani McDonough, Linn Ci, and Samantha F.G. Hamilton, and Associate Producers Jordan L. Hawk, Taylor Michaels, Nicole Perlman, Cetius d'Raven, and Megan Nice.

The Magnus Protocol 4 – Taking Notes

CAT3C7494-19111831-29012024

Collection (blood) -/- musical [letter]

Incident Elements:

- **Blood**
- **Gore**
- **Violence**
- **Hysteria**
- **Self-harm**

Transcripts: <https://shorturl.at/gzF15>

This Episode is dedicated to Louise Ironside, Mimie, JC, Harrow & Ivy, thank you for your generous support! You can a complete list of our Kickstarter backers <https://rustyquill.com/the-magnus-protocol-supporter-wall/>

Created by Jonathan Sims and Alexander J Newall

Directed by Alexander J Newall

Written by Cole Weavers (for more of his work visit

<https://www.thetownwhispers.com/>)

Script Editing with Additional Materials by Jonathan Sims and Alexander J Newall

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Associate Producers Jordan L. Hawk, Taylor Michaels, Nicole Perlman, Cetius d’Raven, and Megan Nice

Produced by April Sumner

Featuring (in order of appearance)

Billie Hindle as Alice Dyer

Shahan Hamza as Samama Khalid

Anusia Battersby as Gwendolyn Bouchard

Tim Fearon as Augustus

Sarah Lambie as Lena Kelley

Paul Schmidt as Klaus

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**Music by Sam Jones (orchestral mix by Jake Jackson)
Art by April Sumner**

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