

The Magnus Protocol

**Episode 13
"Futures"**

**Written by Alexander J Newall
Edited by Jonathan Sims**

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ANNOUNCER

This episode is dedicated to Odin Panek - Hello everyone! It's Odin, your nerd named after a Norse god. I hope you enjoyed the episode. I also hope you have a wonderful day, evening or night whenever or wherever you are.

[Intro Theme]

ANNOUNCER

**Rusty Quill Presents: The Magnus Protocol.
Episode Thirteen – Futures**

[Music]

1. INT. PLEASANT RESTAURANT – EVENING, CLEAR (SAM'S PHONE)

There is a pleasant murmur of conversation combined with soft piano music coming in over speakers. It's a well-chosen date spot, fancy enough to matter without being ostentatious. Sam and Celia sit opposite one another.

SAM

So what are we thinking?

CELIA

On the one hand, this technically counts as breakfast so I should probably go with something light, but on the other... I'm in the mood for rich and cheesy. Choices, choices.

SAM

Yeah, I must admit, it is kinda weird waking up then immediately going out on a dinner date.

CELIA

Yeah, working nights is taking some getting used to.

SAM
You seem all right.

CELIA
You're not too bad yourself.

SAM
(blushing)
I, Heh- uh...

Celia laughs. A waiter arrives.

WAITER
Are we ready to order?

CELIA
I'll have the baked camembert and he's...

SAM
I'll have the same, thank you.

WAITER
Very good.

The waiter departs.

CELIA
Alice was right – it is easy to make you blush..

SAM
You just caught me unawares.

CELIA
Of course.

SAM
So you asked her about me?

CELIA
Just doing my due diligence.

SAM

And what else did she say about me?

CELIA

That you don't know how cute you are.

SAM

(pleased)

Oh. Well...

CELIA

**...and that you're an overachiever,
obsessive, a bit repressed-**

SAM

Okay-

CELIA

-nosey, kind of a recluse-

SAM

Thank you.

CELIA

-and very easy to wind up.

Beat.

SAM

**Well, she's not wrong, I guess. So who
do I talk to to get a complete list of your
flaws?**

CELIA

No-one. I'm mysterious.

SAM

**Hmmm. Well jokes aside we should
probably just get all of our baggage out
on the table now. It's risky enough
dating at work without adding
bombshell revelations to the mix.**

CELIA

**You want to start with the big stuff? Ok
then.**

CELIA settles herself.

CELIA

(cont.)

I have a baby. Jack. He's just over a year old now.

SAM

Cool.

Beat.

CELIA

And before you ask, no there's no dad on the scene. Not even sure who he is. I had a couple of wild years after I moved here. It was a really weird time for me, but somehow I got lucky enough to come out of it all with him.

SAM

Fair enough. Do I get to meet him?

CELIA

That depends on your baggage. Dish.

SAM

All right...

SAM arranges his own thoughts.

SAM

(cont.)

No kids of my own. Both my parents are still around. I haven't worked up the nerve to tell them that I bailed on my last job yet.

CELIA

They'd care that much?

SAM

I was tested as a kid and, uh, they said I was "gifted" so mum and dad got a bee

in their bonnet and enrolled me in every
“enrichment” program they could find-

CELIA

Like The Magnus Institute?

SAM

No. They were the first ones that didn't
want me.

CELIA

That why you're so hung up on them?

SAM

I don't know. Maybe? That definitely
feels like when it all started.

CELIA

When what started?

SAM

Well after that it all just went downhill.
Didn't get into Oxford, so I went to
Nottingham. I graduated but I missed a
first by one mark. Then I went to work
at a legal firm. I was there for years,
hoping they'd eventually sponsor me
for a law degree.

CELIA

And?

SAM sighs.

SAM

I had a breakdown. Stress. There was
an... incident at work. I... freaked out
during a presentation. After that they
“encouraged” me to move on and I did.
Six unemployed months later and I took
a job at the O.I.A.R.

CELIA

(Slightly cautious)

Alice hooked you up?

SAM
(noticing)

Yeah. Uh Full disclosure, we dated at Uni and stayed in contact after. I did my best to help her though her parents' deaths but after that we pretty much dropped out of touch. According to her she dropped me a line about the job after "the most pathetic vague-post she had ever seen".

CELIA
And now?

SAM
Now she's a friend. An insufferable, obnoxious know-it-all friend but yeah, just a friend.

CELIA
All right then.

Pause, they both drink.

SAM
That everything we think?

CELIA
Yeah. I did want to ask you, though...

SAM
(Bracing himself)
All right...

CELIA
The cases, at work. Do you think they're real?

Beat.

SAM
Do you?

CELIA

I asked you first.

Beat.

SAM

I... don't know. I hope not. You?

CELIA

I'm pretty sure they're real.

Awkward pause.

SAM

More wine?

CELIA

Please.

SAM pours.

The call ends abruptly.

**2. INT. MANAGER'S OFFICE – NIGHT, LIGHT RAIN
(MANAGER'S LANDLINE)**

GWEN enters the office and stands silent and shaking. Lena looks up calmly.

LENA

Can I help you Gwen?

GWEN

Is it my fault?

LENA

You'll have to be more specific.

GWEN

Bonzo. One of the cases. Did it really happen? Was it because of me?

Beat.

LENA

Yes. Whatever horrible case you read, it happened.

Beat. GWEN reacts.

GWEN
And am I responsible?

LENA
To a degree.

Beat.

GWEN
Tell me why.

Beat. Lena stands and sits against her desk.

LENA
Sit.

GWEN
I don't want- [to sit]

LENA
Sit.

Gwen does so, unsteadily.

LENA
(cont.)
The world is full of opposing forces, some benevolent, most not. In order for the wheels to keep on turning, all these forces need to be monitored and balanced. That is where we come in.

GWEN
That doesn't mean anything.

LENA
And yet it is the only explanation you're going to get for now.

GWEN
So what? We're the bad guys?

LENA
We are... *managing* the “bad guys”..

Beat.

LENA
(cont. returning to her desk)
There should be an email in your inbox.
We have another external that needs
assignment. It’s quite urgent.

Beat.

LENA
(cont.)
Gwen?

GWEN
I’ll sort it.

LENA
See that you do.

**3. INT. QUIET FRENCH HOSPITAL WARD – SUNSET, CLOUDY
(CASE RECORDING).**

ANSWERPHONE
Welcome to the Zorrotrade customer
support line. This call may be recorded
for training and monitoring purposes.
Please select from one of the following
options:
For sales enquiries, press one.
For technical support, press two.
For complaints, press thr-

Someone pushes three.

Beat.

We’re sorry that you are not completely
satisfied with the Zorrotrade app.
Unfortunately, all our operators are
busy at the moment. Please leave a
message, including your account

number and an explanation of your complaint and we will contact you as soon as possible. Thank you.

Tone.

Beat.

Someone takes a deep breath, holds it shakily then exhales.

DARRIEN

(intense)

Listen you thieving bastards, I want my money.

I don't care about your "suspicious activity" bollocks, I have burnt my entire life to the ground for this stupid bloody app and now you owe me my goddam money. So, you can either pay up or I drop a line to the Ombudsman and tell them all about your little "Projection" trading, see what they make of it.

Beat.

DARRIEN

(cont.)

You can't just take my money, lock me out of your app, and then expect me to roll over. I've been a user for years.

Hell, I've probably invested more via this poxy little program than everyone else put together and what do I have to show for it? Eh?

You owe me.

So either give me my money or... Or I'll- I'll-

Beat.

Is this meant to be, like, punishment or something? I'm not a bad person, all

right?

Wanting to be rich doesn't make you a bad person. Sure, most rich people are dicks but most of them started that way. Hell, most of them got to be rich because they were dicks.

You don't even know me. I mean, sure, I went to a Public school but I got there on a scholarship and I worked my ass off. I hid it from the other lads, of course I did, otherwise they'd have ripped the piss out of me. One time I even faked a broken leg just to get out of admitting I couldn't afford a skiing trip. Classic.

'Course mum and dad weren't happy but they'd been dirt poor their whole lives so what did they know?

I earned everything I got. Most of the other lads went to uni, Oxbridge and that, but not me. I had "the plan". While the rest of them were stuck translating Plato or whatever I would be out there earning bank.

I took my entire student loan out and got straight to shorting using your app. This was back when it had only just launched. I struggled through your first janky interface, your weird background checks, all those damn glitches but I stuck with it because unlimited Margins and Deposits was pretty sweet. Made some quick cash shorting failing startups then used that to broaden into Crypto, leveraged some EM ETFS, scraped up a few pennies then started to go long on a few obvious winners like Omni and Sparkhub for some hedging. Easy peasy.

It was good. It was working. I'd meet up with the lads and suddenly I was the one buying the good stuff. And sure, money can't buy you love, but you'd be amazed what personal trainers, high end surgery and hair plugs can achieve on a speccy little finance nerd.

Life was good. Bloody expensive but good. I had a couple of close calls sure but something always came along. God bless Bitcoin amirite?

So yeah, then I got cocky and I bet against the big man himself. I shorted Dantex hard in 2020. Stupid, really, but the whole Zurich thing had wiped a bunch out of my portfolio and I got a tipoff from one of the lads. So I went all in.

And no, I don't blame Zorrotrade for that. But it was a bad time.

I remember I was sitting on deck with Oli, watching the sun set in the Riviera and I was ready to close up shop. I grabbed my phone and started messing with the settings looking to settle up. That was when I noticed your new: "Personal Projection Short Selling" feature. It was disabled, buried under advanced lab settings and covered in disclaimers without any explanation but it still grabbed me. I had no idea what it was and there was nothing about it online

Just that one slider with the warning: "These settings are experimental and may not function as intended, user discretion is advised." You really think

that is enough after what you've done to me?

But hey, screw it, I figured I was already basically broke, what did I have to lose. I flicked it on and a new dialogue window opened with two words: "Investment Amount". Bear in mind that at this point I barely had a pot to piss in. So I put in my last few grand. Why the hell not?

The phone pinged and a little approving tick appeared and then it was gone. Nothing else. I carried on drinking and passed out around 4am.

Oli kicked me shoreside in "Le Brusc" the next evening. He wasn't too impressed with the mess I had made of his guest cabin and let's be honest, we didn't really get on anyway. He dumped me at the dock with nowhere to stay and told me he'd send me a bill for the TV.

I tried calling up one of the other lads but no-one was picking up. That was when I checked the group chat. Turns out I must have run my mouth the night before because now Oli had told everyone I was broke. Apparently, they always knew I'd "end up back in the gutter eventually." I was just writing a proper response when my phone died. I'd been borrowing Oli's charger.

Beat. There's a beep on the call.

DARRIEN

Yeah, I know I'm going long with this, but tough. You can just shut up and

listen. So it turns out that stepping off a yacht, alone, in some pissant fishing dock in the arse end of nowhere, in the middle of the night with a thousand dollar case and a lost look on your face is a good way to get yourself mugged.

They took everything. The case, my watch, my jacket, even my shoes. But not my phone. Dunno why, it's like they didn't even notice it. Kicked the hell out of me, though. Talk about rock bottom...

It took a while to convince anyone to let me borrow their charger and call the British embassy. Took me even longer to get through to the embassy. They told me to go online for an emergency travel permit and it was as I was applying for it, that I saw a new email ping up from my bank app. "Deposit received" I opened it and got as far as "remaining balance: one hundred thousand and eighty three pounds, twelve pence" before I was I was back on Zorrotrade reading a notification:

"Congratulations! In recognition of your change in circumstances, you're Personal Projection Short Sell has now been paid in full. We hope you invest again soon!"

Somehow, when I was pissed out my skull, I'd used the app to bet against *myself* and come out ahead. It didn't make any sense but when I checked with the bank, there it was all was, every penny.

Obviously you hadn't worked the bugs out of this projection thing yet but that's your problem. Not mine. It's not like I hacked it or anything.

Still, I knew it was probably a fluke. Time to call it quits. Only, that's the thing with money. It multiplies, especially when you're good at finding loopholes.

Maybe I should have focused on how it worked but the wheels were already turning. If by some bizarre twist this really was shorting against what, my own life? I could make bank. I just needed to nudge things in a bad direction and the payout would grow... And no, it wasn't fraud. I've checked and there's no regulations about it or anything, so like I said: your app, your problem...

I started with a couple of small tests. Nothing huge. I bet a thousand quid then picked a fight with the biggest stranger I could. It cost me a tooth but... four hundred profit. A good return but it didn't cover the dental bill to get it properly fixed. I tried again, this time betting 10k before renting a car (with insurance) and crashing it into a tree at speed. That messed my leg up pretty badly and I got a faceful of glass but I also got 50k profit. That was more like it. I spent a few weeks breaking myself, and sabotaging my life, in various ways, and by the end I'd banked a cool mil.

It was just so liberating, so addictive, literally cashing in my misery into cold, hard cash. So as the sun set over the

harbor I opened the app again and dug straight through to the Personal Projection Short Selling box: “Investment Amount” One million pounds, ‘You Only Live Once’ right? Again, the little ping and the tick. Then it was time to go for a walk.

I’d picked out the spot the day before, a cliff about an hour and a half’s walk uphill near some old monastery or whatever called Notre-Dam du Mai. It had a decent view if you’re into that kind of thing but more importantly it was high. Just high enough to really hurt me, not enough to kill me. Or so I hoped.

On the way I made a few phone calls, first to my parents, telling them I never loved them and hoped they died horribly, next I was on the group chat with the lads telling each of them just how many times I slept with their partners, even when I hadn’t. Then it was on to my socials publicly declaring my affiliation with every messed up ideology and psychopath I could find. I ran out of time before I could confess to robbing orphanages to buy drugs but I think I made my point.

Then I got to the cliff. It felt much taller standing at the top. There was a surprisingly chill wind blowing across the edge, driven upwards from the sea and that coupled with the sheerness of the drop gave me a moment of vertigo. I hesitated. Was this really worth it?

DARRIEN

(cont.)

I jumped.

Beat

DARRIEN

(cont.)

I woke up here at l'hopital Jean-Marcel, 2 days later. Apparently, I was in a medically induced coma since they found me. One leg was amputated and the other is full of pins. Cracked spine in two places, ruptured spleen, 6 broken ribs and a cracked skull. Every second hurts.

But when I woke up I couldn't be happier.

I was alive sure, but more than that I was rich, properly rich, untouchably rich. Everything was going to be okay.

Everyone crowded me when I woke up but I just kept demanding my phone until finally one of the nurses gave up and handed it over.

I had about a thousand missed calls but I skipped straight to Zorrotrader. I braced myself, looked down and there it was. Almost fifty million. But... there was a tiny symbol to the left of the figure. A minus symbol. And then I saw your notice.

“Your payment has been suspended due to suspicious account activity including potential insider trading. Official bodies have been notified. Please repay your outstanding balance or prepare for Personal Adjustment.”

That was twelve hours ago and no matter what I do I can't seem to get

through to anybody.
So yeah, I need my money.
I didn't do anything wrong I just... used
a loophole, that's all. You can't blame
me for playing the system.
Besides I've got nothing left. Nothing.

So just, give me my goddamn money.

Beat.

DARRIEN

Oh, right. Darrien Laurel. Account
number 428813.

ANSWERPHONE

Thank you. You are being transferred to
our adjustments department.

Click. There is something on the other end of the phone. It clearly
isn't human. Metallic insectoid chittering grows louder.

DARRIEN

H- hello?

The chittering grows even louder. DARRIEN drops the phone.

DARRIEN

(cont.)

Oh god- what!? Nurse! NURSE!

Darrien screams. The call ends.

4. INT. O.I.A.R. OFFICE - NIGHT, DRIZZLING (COMPUTER).

SAM is quietly working. He's a little faster than he was but still
hardly "dynamic." ALICE approaches.

ALICE

Coffee?

SAM

'fraid not. I'm still catching up.

ALICE

Yeah, that'll happen when you turn up late and half-trolled.

SAM

I don't know what you're talking about.

ALICE

Those cheeks don't lie. Either you're reading a particularly saucy case or someone had a cheeky tippie before work.

SAM

There may have been some wine.

ALICE

Come on then, how was it? Did your eyes meet across a crowded MacDonald's or was it more of a crate of Buckfast under a bridge sort of situation?

She gives a sarcastic wistful sigh.

SAM

It was nice.

ALICE

Nice, he says. Is she at least going to make an honest woman out of you?

SAM

Alice, look, I'm not really comfortable talking to you about this.

ALICE

Since when?

SAM

It's just- I get that you might not love the idea of me seeing Celia, but... I just think we should keep things a bit more... professional now. You know?

ALICE
Professional.

SAM
Sorry, bad wording, but you know what I mean.

Beat.

ALICE
(Hurt and failing to hide it)
No, you're right. I should probably stop getting tattoos of your face and return all your kidnapped pets...

SAM
Alice-

ALICE
(Cont.)
It's fine, I get it, I'll just find a way to soldier on somehow, despite this crushing blow.

ALICE moves to leave.

SAM
Alice wait.

ALICE
What.

SAM
I just don't want things to get weird...

ALICE
Then you're in the wrong line of work.

SAM
Yeah.

Beat.

SAM
I'm sorry.

ALICE
(softening)
Yeah. Look, I'm... happy you're happy.

SAM
Thanks.

Beat.

ALICE
But if you ever ask me to be professional again, I'm going to have to take a shit on your desk.

SAM
That seems completely fair and reasonable.

Alice moves to leave.

SAM
Hey...

ALICE
What?

SAM
(sighing)
We spent most of the time discussing, if they are real. The cases.

ALICE
Sounds romantic.

SAM
So what do you think? Are they?

ALICE
Does it matter?

SAM
Yeah, kind of! If we're working for the Men in Black or covering up ghosts or whatever then shouldn't someone go to the press or...

ALICE

Okay, a) You're drunk, b) You can't prove anything and c) you signed the official secrets act in your onboarding. And I know all your school friends say treason's "bussin'" and "fire", but it won't look good on your CV.

SAM

Yeah but-

ALICE

Look Sam, you really want my opinion? Sober up and stop trying to make an impact. Just do the job and take your pay.

SAM

And what, just ignore what's going on right under my nose?

ALICE

(heading off)

Pretty much. Keep it professional.

SAM

(incredulous)

I'm sorry?

ALICE

It's ok when I say it.

SAM sighs and goes back to work.

[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 Alexander J Newall and edited with additional materials by Jonathan Sims, with vocal edits by Nico Vettese, soundscaping by Meg McKellar, 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, Lowri Ann Davies as Celia Ripley, Sarah Lambie as Lena Kelley.

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.

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Thanks for listening.**

The Magnus Protocol 13 – Futures

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Gambling (application) -/- murder [voicemail]

Incident Elements:

- **Self Harm/attempted suicide**
- **Obsession**
- **Finance problems**
- **Addiction (gambling)**
- **Mentions of: Vehicle Accidents**
- **SFX: insectoid**

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

This episode is dedicated to Odin Panek, thank you for your generous support! You can a complete list of our Kickstarter backers <https://rustyquill.com/the-magnus-protocol-supporter-wall/>

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Billie Hindle as Alice Dyer

Anusia Battersby as Gwendolyn Bouchard

Sarah Lambie as Lena Kelley

Zena Carswell as Answerphone

Euan Shedden as DarrienEp

Dialogue Editor – Nico Vettese

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