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**The Magnus Protocol**

**Episode 25  
"Gut Feelings"**

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

**02-01-2023  
Draft 2**

**ANNOUNCER**

**This episode is dedicated from  
Cassidy: To the friends I've met  
thanks to Magnus, to my cat Néron  
who patiently allowed me to listen  
and relisten to episodes instead of  
giving him pets as is his right, and to  
the cup of tea the person listening to  
this likely forgot to drink!**

**[Intro Theme]**

**ANNOUNCER**

**Rusty Quill Presents: The Magnus  
Protocol.  
Episode Twenty-Five – Gut Feelings**

**[Music]**

**1. INT. OIAR OFFICE INT. – NIGHT, CLEAR (COMPUTER)**

**ALICE is working at her desk, clearly tense. SAM enters puts his  
bag down.**

**SAM**

**Hey.**

**ALICE**

**(relieved)**

**Hey! How was it?**

**SAM**

**(Setting up)**

**Well, no monsters stalked and ate  
me, if that's what you're worried  
about.**

**A beat. This clearly is what she was worried about.**

**ALICE**

**Good. Probably not enough meat on you anyway. Barely a snack.**

**Another beat.**

**ALICE CONT'D**

**Have you heard from Celia?**

**SAM**

**She's fine, too. Got a text from her a few minutes ago. She's running late again.**

**ALICE**

**Another childcare emergency?**

**SAM**

**Sounds like it. But she is, and I quote, "definitely not dead, please reassure Alice".**

**ALICE**

**Christ. Am I that bad?**

**SAM**

**You don't want me to answer that.**

**ALICE**

**(A little sheepish)**

**Sorry.**

**SAM**

**I get it. You're worried. I mean, we are too. And that's why we're being careful, but like... You know when a dog gets nervous and starts barking at the postman because its worried he might secretly be a murderer or whatever?**

**ALICE**

**Wow. Okay. Well, first of all, statistically seventy-three percent of all postmen are murderers, and second, you better not compare me to a dog again or I will start humping your leg.**

**SAM**

**(laughing)**

**Noted. Any sign of Gwen, by the way? Not that I imagine it would devastate you if she got a bit monsterised.**

**ALICE**

**How dare you, I would definitely consider being sad about it at some point. But no, she's fine, got in a few minutes ago and was immediately dragged into some planning session with Lena. I assume they're deciding which of the minister's ass cheeks to snog when he visits-**

**NORRIS**

**To: Kieran Harte  
(eqwrites@mailpod.com)**

**SAM**

**Hold that thought...**

## **2. CYBERSPACE – N/A N/A (COMPUTER)**

**NORRIS**

**From: Tom Connolley  
(editor@museninepublishing.com)**

**Date: February 07 2024**

**Subject: Re: Hungry Man Grill review**

**Hi Kieran,**

**Thanks for sending the review, it was a real ride! That said, sorry to be blunt as it sounds like you've had a rough one, but I'm afraid we just can't publish it as is. I know I usually only give you a few line edits, but I think this one needs a full redraft.**

**First up, it's waaay too anecdotal. I know that Dirty Eating is a personality-driven series, but it takes you over half the review just to get to the food. And the whole tone of the piece is off in a way that makes it kind of hard to take seriously. We're looking for early-2000s Gordon Ramsay rage. I don't know who you're channeling in this one. Hieronymus Bosch? Regardless, it needs to be more in line with your previous reviews. I also don't actually understand what you mean when you talk about the diner's location.**

**Also, and I hope I'm off base here, does that ending mean you're planning to retire? Fingers crossed that's not the case, but if you are looking to get out of the game, I would have hoped you would actually talk it through with me and not let me know through some surreal faux-review. Are you available for a call tomorrow? Would love to get on the line and hash all**

**this out.**

**All the best,  
Tom**

**Original message:**

**To: Tom Connolley  
([editor@museninepublishing.com](mailto:editor@museninepublishing.com))**

**From: Kieran Harte  
([eqwrites@mailpod.com](mailto:eqwrites@mailpod.com))**

**Date: February 06 2024**

**Tom.**

**Here's your review. I hope you choke on it.**

**Dirty Eating: The Hungry Man Grill, Newham.**

**It has often been said that there is nothing in this world as satisfying to read as a truly bad review. The writer, unchained at last from the need for balance and consideration, can unleash the full force of their pen, indulging in turns of phrase and condemnation as vile and awful as the food they have been served and it was with full knowledge of this that I began the "Dirty Eating" column four years ago.**

**While I certainly wasn't lying when I told you my aim was to push back on health-food puritanism by profiling the grimiest and most deep-fried of**

roadside eateries and greasy spoons, I was also quite certain that I'd get to write a lot of bad reviews. And I did. And no doubt you devoured them greedily, reveling in my bile and distain. Perhaps *The Hungry Man Grill* is my punishment. Perhaps it is all our punishments.

I found it down a small side road in Newham, though should you be in line for a seat at its table I have no doubt it will move to accommodate your booking. I shall not give the address as, even if I should be wrong and it remains where I found it, I would not risk those who consider themselves “adventurous eaters” going to find it.

The question of where I first heard about the place is one that has preoccupied me since my visit. It was nestled in the list of reviews I was due to write, far enough down so as not to draw attention, but when I think about those long hours of research I spent compiling my monthly itinerary of epicurean disasters, I cannot recall adding it. Nor was there anything written in my notes to explain why I might have considered it worth visiting. This, however, is something I have realized only since the end of my meal there. At the time, I simply accepted it as the next stop on my grand tour of London grease, and made my way down there on an otherwise unremarkable Tuesday

**lunchtime.**

**Finding the place was more challenging than expected, as the address I had (apparently) noted down did not correspond precisely to the roads I found myself on, and my SatNav kept sending me round in circles. It was only when I noticed a grim little alleyway tucked behind an overflowing skip looming in front of a closed-down vape shop that I finally found my destination. The street was narrow, and steeper than I would have expected from that part of London, and as I made my way gingerly down it, I nearly slipped and fell twice. The cobbled stones were slick and oily, stained by small rivulets of old fat that leaked from the torn plastic of the bin bags that piled up on either side. Small white shapes dotted them, and I turned my eyes away, reluctant to come face to face with the maggoty refuse so close to the time and place I would, supposedly, be eating my lunch.**

**Perhaps this is what the astute reader might have pointed out as my “first warning”, but to be clear it was not. Unpleasant and extreme as the place was, it was far from unique in my odyssey to the heart of the capitol’s least-healthy eating-houses. Such flyblown paths have more than once led me to hidden gems serving deep-fried masterpieces and symphonies of fat and batter. No, my first warning was**

**that, as I approached the filthy sign at the bottom of the street, I felt hungry.**

**No doubt those who regularly indulge in my columns will raise an eyebrow at this. Lavish prose extemporizing the depths of my ravenous hunger are a common feature of my more ebullient reviews. And here is where I must reveal that these, all of these, were lies. It has been my habit, of a day when I am to visit one of these establishments, to ensure I have had a full and proper lunch beforehand.**

**My reasoning is, I should hope, obvious: given how vile many of these diners can be, I always wish to be in complete control of how much of their food I wish to eat, and not be compelled by hunger to take more than a single bite if I do not wish to.**

**On this particular day I had fortified myself not an hour before with a sizable sandwich from The Green Pig, a reliable café near Embankment. And yet, as I walked down that fetid, noxious alleyway towards the dimly buzzing sign for The Hungry Man Grill, I found myself... Well, I found myself a hungry man.**

**Nor was it the sort of hunger that I am accustomed to. It was not the creeping, gentle ache of the stomach that alerts the mind to a need for**

**sustenance. Rather, I felt it in my whole body, a sudden weakness and trembling in my legs, punctuated with the most terrible emptiness I have ever known in the depths of my gut. The feeling was so thorough, so profound and unsettling, that part of my mind rebelled, desperately telling me to turn and leave. But my appetite pushed me onwards, towards the doorway that seemed to hold the most immediate promise of food.**

**There was the smallest hint of resistance when I pushed on the door. Perhaps it was a symptom of my own reluctance to enter, or perhaps another manifestation of that sticky, pervasive filth that I soon realized coated everything inside. In layout and décor it is everything you would expect from an aging greasy spoon, from the red plastic of the chairs to the chipped formica of the tables. Faded posters advertising illegible meal-deals papered the walls, interspersed with picture frames containing photos of supposed celebrities who had eaten there. I recognized none of them and they did not look happy to be on the wall of The Hungry Man Grill. There were other people eating there, hunched over tables in silence, but when I first entered I took no notice of them, so overwhelming was my agonized appetite.**

**I slumped down at an empty table,**

noticing but paying no mind to the tiny shapes that scurried away into the shadows when I did so. There was no counter that I could see, or any obvious waitstaff to take my order, but I did not have the strength to stand up again and go looking. All I could do was wait. And it was as I waited that two things hit me at once.

The first was the smell. I've been to more than one restaurant where the fridge had failed, and the smell lingers with you, most notably the cloying, vomity smell of spoiled milk that nothing seems to shift. There were hints of other things in there as well, the sweeter notes of rancid meat and something acrid and chemical, all carried on a base of old and overused cooking oil. To say it was the worst smell I have ever encountered would be redundant. And yet, it did nothing to quash my hunger. If anything, it seemed to make it sharper still.

The other was my fellow diners. Thin, ragged people lost in old suits and tattered dresses, all bedecked with a gruesome rainbow of ancient food stains. They said nothing, but many of them seemed to be openly weeping as they shoveled forkful after forkful of their meal desperately into their toothless mouths.

And that was when I saw the food.

**Even in my weakened state the sight of it was almost enough to send me running, but I did not have time to even get to my feet before the door at the back opened and the chef walked out.**

**He was, underneath it all, a very normal looking man. Average height, slim build, dark brown hair. But he was a normal looking man born of an overflowing waste bin and baptized in a deep fat fryer. Every part of him was caked in grime and slick with a dozen varieties of viscous ooze. And in his hand he carried my plate.**

**“Order up,” he said.**

**This is what you’re here for, isn’t it? This is why you read these reviews: the money shot of awful food. The lurid, exquisite descriptions of the most disgusting food imaginable. What did it taste like? What was the texture? Did I throw up? How much of it did I choke down, feeling the writhing lumps sliding slowly down my throat?  
Fine.**

**The first course was soup. Viscous, creamy white with streaks of lurid green. Thin pale strands floated in it that, were I to try and rationalise, I would pretend were noodles. But noodles don’t move like that. Noodles don’t leap off the spoon and crawl eagerly down your throat. The soup itself was oily, with a sour**

**metallic tang to it, both too watery and too lumpy, with an aftertaste reminiscent of a week-old unchanged bandage.**

**I swallowed every last mouthful, so acute and agonizing was my hunger. Yet still it grew. So down came the second course.**

**The contents of the burger might have once been meat, but if it were beef, lamb or... something else entirely, it was impossible to say now. It glistened with a putrid rainbow sheen, as though it was coated in some sort of petrol, and I could not tell if the thick pus-like substance that dripped from it was some awful condiment or an emanation of the meat itself. By contrast, the bun seemed, at first glance, almost edible. A touch stale, perhaps, slightly discolored, but no obvious signs of mold or rot. It was only when the jagged knife of rising hunger forced me to bite down into it that I felt the thousands of tiny, rice-like weevils that crawled within its hollow shell.**

**My reviewers' arsenal of descriptors fails me when I try to describe the taste of that burger. Fetid, foul, noxious, none quite encapsulate the experience. Was it sweet? Yes, but the sweetness of spoiled milk. Was it salty? Yes, but the saltiness of infected blood. Was it bitter? Yes. Perhaps that is the only word I can**

**be sure of. Bitter in a way that went beyond the tongue and seeped its way into my brain. I can still taste it. They weevils were the most palatable part after they had stopped moving and my teeth had ground them to a paste. But that took an awful lot of chewing.**

**I will perhaps skip the detailed portrait of desert. Suffice to say it was presented as an ice cream cake, and no matter how much I willed myself to throw it back up, to purge myself in a vomitous fury, my ever-growing hunger kept me eating.**

**At that moment, there was a feeling almost like hope. Starter, main, desert. I had finished. Surely that was enough? But despite the roiling fullness in my stomach, I was still ravenous. Far hungrier than when I started. And as the chef, if so I might call him, walked back into the kitchen, I knew that there would be more coming. I knew there would always be more.**

**It took every ounce of strength I had to rise from that table. I tapped into some core of resolve I never knew I possessed, pulling myself away, surrounded by diners who would never stand up again, and fleeing, stumbling blindly out into the sunlit London afternoon.**

**This will be my last review. Not simply because I am afraid to cross**

**the threshold of another restaurant, terrified that on the other side I might find myself back in that place. But because even now, a week after I took my last bite at The Hungry Man Grill, I can still feel that food inside me. It sits in my stomach: pulsating, heavy... and growing. I can feel it pressing against the inside of my flesh even as I write this, see it bloating and distending my belly.**

**In conclusion, a meal at The Hungry Man Grill will stay with you until your dying day.**

**3. INT. OIAR OFFICE INT. – NIGHT, CLEAR (COMPUTER)**

**ALICE**

**Well that brings back uni memories doesn't it.**

**SAM**

**Does it?**

**ALICE**

**The student union caff?**

**SAM**

**(remembering amused)**

**Oh god, yeah! Eurgh how could I forget those "sloppy joes".**

**ALICE**

**Sloppy was definitely the word. I can still taste it...**

**SAM**

Ugh, D'you remember when they tried to do a veggie option and it just-

**COLIN enters.**

**SAM**

(cautious)

Oh. Uh, hi Colin.

**ALICE**

(turning, upbeat)

Oh hey Colin! I thought you weren't-

**They both spot the large hammer he's holding.**

**ALICE**

(standing concerned)

Colin, mate... What uh... what's with the hammer?

**COLIN**

Stay out of my way, Alice.

**SAM**

Um Colin, what are-

**Colin swings the hammer, demolishing a nearby PC monitor.**

**SAM**

Jesus!

**COLIN**

I'm going to the sever room.

**ALICE**

I don't think that's a good idea, mate.

**SAM**

I think you should listen to Alice-

**COLIN**

Shut up! Both of you just shut the fuck up! Don't you get it?! I am trying to help, to save us from this goddamned fucking nightmare machine!

**ALICE**

Ok. Ok, Colin, listen to me all right. We've all seen messed up things happening recently. You say the computers need to be destroyed. We could totally believe that! Right, Sam?

**SAM**

I mean, yeah. That actually sounds pretty plausible right now.

**ALICE**

But you can't just start smashing shit without explaining what's going on.

**COLIN**

No. It's listening.

**ALICE**

But that doesn't matter if you're going to smash it into bits does it? So why don't you just tell us-

**COLIN**

That's only if it lives in the servers. If not...

**SAM**

Then let's go somewhere it can't hear.

**COLIN**

**There isn't anywhere, that's the problem!**

**SAM**

**You're not making sense Colin-**

**COLIN**

**No, you just don't get it. You don't believe me. You're just trying to buy time, keep me busy until-**

**ALICE**

**Colin, that's not-**

**COLIN**

**(swinging the hammer)**

**Get back!**

**SAM**

**Watch it!**

**Sam lunges at Colin, grabbing at the hammer. They struggle over it as Alice tries to restrain Colin.**

**SAM**

**Give me the-!**

**COLIN**

**Get off!**

**In the struggle, the hammer smashes into the recording computer.**

#### **4. MANAGER'S OFFICE – NIGHT, CLEAR (MANAGER'S SPEAKERPHONE)**

**LENA is debriefing SAM, ALICE and GWEN with customary coldness.**

**LENA**

**So, does anyone care to explain why you thought it was a good idea to tackle an unstable armed man on government property without alerting the authorities?**

**ALICE**

**Is Colin going to be ok?**

**LENA**

**I doubt it but since he's in custody the matter is out of our hands. The OIAR's mental health policies only stretch so far and this became a police matter as soon as he attacked government property and employees.**

**GWEN**

**It's a miracle no-one was hurt.**

**LENA**

**A miracle that cost us three computer terminals and damaged a server rack. So I'll ask again, what on earth were you thinking confronting him like that?**

**ALICE**

**We were trying to talk him down.**

**LENA**

**Oh really? Because it looked to me like Sam attempted to body tackle him.**

**SAM**

I thought he might hurt Alice.

Alice chuckles quietly to herself.

**LENA**

How very chivalrous. And foolish. I expect you to review our liability waivers before you attack any other hammer-wielding maniacs. Is that clear?

**SAM**

Crystal.

**LENA**

Good. Now, how's the system looking Gwen?

**GWEN**

It seems fine ... As far as I can tell the server damage was superficial but again, as I keep saying, I'm not an I.T. expert. I don't actually know how any of this works so...

**LENA**

I shall have someone take a closer look in due course. In the mean time, I want you all focusing on cleaning everything up ahead of the minister's visit.

**GWEN**

(standing)

Understood.

**SAM**

No, no, hang on a minute, I think we need to discuss if Colin's right.

**LENA**

**Right about what exactly?**

**SAM**

**About the system listening in on us,  
about there being something  
dangerous in the computers?**

**ALICE**

**(warning)**

**Sam...**

**SAM**

**No, I'm done playing office intern,  
after everything else that's been  
going on it would be stupid of us not  
to even consider it.**

**Beat.**

**LENA**

**While I understand your concerns,  
Sam, there's no way we can  
realistically act on them. Whatever...  
quirks the system might have, it is  
still essential for departmental  
functionality and interfering with  
government equipment is a criminal  
offense. As it is, Colin will be lucky  
to avoid charges of domestic  
terrorism.**

**ALICE**

**So what do you suggest?**

**LENA**

**I suggest you do as you are told and  
clean up. Meanwhile I will begin  
looking for a replacement IT  
manager. As if we didn't have  
enough new hires already...**

**Speaking of which, does anyone know where Celia is?**

**SAM**

**She had an emergency. She's not sure when she's going to get in.**

**LENA**

**Let me know as soon as she does. Her repeated absences have become a problem and I will not hesitate to add a second position to the jobs page if I have to.**

**SAM**

**I'll tell her.**

**LENA**

**See that you do. Now if that's everything I would appreciate it if you would all get to work.**

**Everyone begins to shuffle out.**

**LENA CONT.**

**And please refrain from any further attempts at heroism on government property. I could do without the paperwork.**

**5. COACH STATION NEAR OXFORD – NIGHT, CLEAR (CELIA'S PHONE)**

**CELIA is queuing for the information booth. She is clearly disoriented and tired.**

**CELIA**

**Hi, uh, could you tell me when the next coach to London is?**

**ATTENDENT**

You're in luck, should be any minute.  
If you need a ticket, the machine's  
over there.

**CELIA**

Right, cheers. Can I pay by phone?

**ATTENDENT**

Yeah, you should be able to.

**Beat.** CELIA sighs exhausted.

**ATTENDANT CONT.**

Listen is everything alright? Not to  
be rude but you're looking like  
you've had a bit of a time of it.

**CELIA**

No, yeah, I'm alright. Just a lot of last  
minute travel recently.

**ATTENDENT**

(unconvinced)

If you're sure... well best get that  
ticket. Looks like this is your coach.

**CELIA**

(Hurrying off, flustered)

Oh right, thanks!

**ATTENDANT**

(sympathetic)

Just try and get some rest when you  
get home yeah?

**CELIA**

(bitterly to herself)

Yeah. Right...

**[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 Jonathan Sims and edited with additional materials by Alexander J Newall, with vocal edits by Nico Vettese, soundscaping by Mg 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, Ryan Hopevere-Anderson as Colin Becher with additional voices from Alexander J Newall.**

**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 25 – Gut Feelings**

**CAT2RB2474-07022024-24042024**

**Food (Gorging ) -/- compulsion (disgust)**

**Incident Elements:**

- **Disordered Eating**
- **Food Hygiene**
- **Compulsion**
- **Nausea**
- **Manipulation (Suprnatural)**
- **Hunger**
- **Infections/Infestations**
- **Maggots**
- **Destruction of Property**
- **Mental Breakdown, Mania**

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**Written by Jonathan Sims**

**Script Edited with additional material by [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**

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**Featuring (in order of appearance)**  
**Shahan Hamza as Samama Khalid**  
**Billie Hindle as Alice Dyer**  
**Alexander J Newall as Norris**  
**Ryan Hopevere-Anderson as Colin Becher**  
**Sarah Lambie as Lena Kelley**  
**Anusia Battersby as Gwendolyn Bouchard**  
**Lowri Ann Davies as Celia Ripley**  
**Mark Nicolson as Ticket Attendant**

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