**The Magnus Protocol**

**Episode 44**

**"Back to Basic"**

**Written by Alexander J Newall**

**Edited by Jonathan Sims**

**Transcriber Note: This transcript features German text with translations available in the footnotes.**

**[Intro Theme]**

**Announcer**

**Rusty Quill Presents: The Magnus Protocol.   
Episode Forty-Four – Back to Basic**

**[Music]**

1. **Berlin café (Alice's Phone), int., afternoon, clear**

**ALICE is sat nervously sipping her Coffee. HEINRICH sits with her, seemingly unimpressed.**

**HEINRICH**

**You see this? People cannot even eat or drink without a screen now.**

**ALICE**

**Uh-huh.**

**HEINRICH**

**This Kaffeehaus[[1]](#footnote-1) used to serve the strongest Muckefuck[[2]](#footnote-2) north of the Spree. The children would queue outside for the Cocoa. Now…**

**He sighs. ALICE ignores him, distracted.**

**HEINRICH**

**(cont.)**

**Now it is all just smartphones and bad coffee and French Fries-**

**ALICE**

**(distracted)**

**Only Americans call them “French Fries”**

**HEINRICH**

**You see! Who can keep up! Die Zeit vergeht wie im Flug[[3]](#footnote-3)…**

**ALICE**

**Uh-huh.**

**Pause.**

**HEINRICH**

**I am uncomfortable.**

**ALICE**

**You didn’t have to come with me.**

**HEINRICH**

**I am being helpful.**

**ALICE**

**What exactly do you think is going happen? She must be what, at least 70 by now?**

**HEINRICH**

**(leading)**

**You do not think the old can be dangerous?**

**ALICE**

**You’re different, you’re…**

**HEINRICH**

**Hmmm?**

**ALICE**

**…special.**

**HEINRICH**

**Danke schön[[4]](#footnote-4), but you are mistaken. The Stasi and I, we were similar in many ways. We both relied on fear and knew how to wield it.**

**ALICE**

**It’s not the same.**

**HEINRICH**

**Das ist wahr[[5]](#footnote-5). I usually spared the children…**

**Someone enters the café and hesitates. ALICE notices.**

**ALICE**

**(nervous)**

**Is that them?**

**HEINRICH**

**Yes.**

**ALICE**

**You’re sure?**

**HEINRICH**

**(ominous)**

**I am sure.**

**ALICE pushes out a chair. The person hesitates then walks over and sits carefully.**

**ALICE**

**Klara V-**

**KLARA**

**Shhhh!**

**Beat.**

**ALICE**

**(quieter)**

**Mrs. Vogel?**

**Beat.**

**ALICE**

**(Cont.)**

**My name is Alice Dyer. I’m with the O.I.A.R. and-**

**KLARA**

**(Intense)**

**Wie hast du mich gefunden?**

**ALICE**

**Er...**

**HEINRICH**

**She wishes to know how you found her.**

**ALICE**

**Oh er… well, your name was listed in some records I found with the help of my, er… experienced colleague here.**

**HEINRICH**

**(deliberately mistranslating)**

**Wir konnten deine Sünden riechen.[[6]](#footnote-6)**

**KLARA gasps softly, considering Heinrich.**

**HEINRICH**

**Guten Tag.**

**KLARA**

**Ich kenne deine Stimme…[[7]](#footnote-7)**

**Alice**

**What’s she saying?**

**HEINRICH**

**(Ignoring Alice)**

**Und ich kenne dich... Klara[[8]](#footnote-8).**

**KLARA is unsettled.**

**ALICE**

**Uh, sorry-**

**KLARA**

**Wer seid ihr?[[9]](#footnote-9)**

**HEINRICH**

**Hast du Heinrich vergessen, Klara?[[10]](#footnote-10)**

**Klara whimpers slightly, realising.**

**ALICE**

**Excuse me! Look, I’m sorry, *enshooldigun*, I don’t want to be all tourist about it, but Heinrich said you spoke English, and my translation app isn’t keeping up. Can we y’know...?**

**Beat.**

**KLARA**

**Who are you to travel with him?**

**Alice**

**What? Oh okay. She was one of yours, then I take it?**

**Heinrich**

**I told you I am helping.**

**Klara**

**What do you want, English?**

**ALICE**

**Okay, well... I’m looking for someone. Someone I think you may have... kept an eye on back when you were a... um... when you were younger.**

**Beat.**

**ALICE**

**(cont. Pressing on)**

**Anyway, he was a computer guy, big into Alchemy tattoos**

**KLARA**

**(realising)**

**Schwietzer…**

**ALICE**

**So you know who I’m talking about?**

**KLARA**

**(flat)**

**Yes. I watched him work.**

**ALICE**

**So do you know where I can find him or-**

**KLARA**

**No.**

**ALICE**

**(disheartened)**

**Oh.**

**HEINRICH**

**Spiel schön, Klara...[[11]](#footnote-11)**

**KLARA reacts again, she fails to hide her deep fear of HEINRICH.**

**KLARA**

**I do not know where he is! If I did, I would go kill him myself.**

**ALICE**

**Why? What did he do to you?**

**KLARA**

**Nothing you would understand.**

**ALICE**

**(frustrated)**

**Right. Shall we just get down to it then yeah? You don’t like me. I get it. Honestly, the feeling is mutual-**

**KLARA tuts.**

**ALICE**

**(cont.)**

**-But you know something about Klaus Schweitzer and I need to hear it. I was going to offer you money but I’m not really feeling that now so let’s try this instead: You tell me what I want to know, or I tell everyone you’re Ex-Stasi and then we see how people react.**

**KLARA**

**Ha! And then, what, they beat an old woman to death? These fat, lazy children have no stomach for such work. Your threats do no not frighten me English.**

**HEINRICH**

**Aber das tue ich, nicht wahr Klara...?[[12]](#footnote-12)**

**Heinrich does not move but as he speaks and begins to loom and darken.**

**HEINRICH**

**(cont.)**

**Es gibt ein Mädchen, klein und fein,**

**die zornige Klara.**

**Sie hasst die Kinder, spottet gemein,**

**sie spielt nie mit dem Schwarm da.**

**Sie klagt die Jungs, die böse schrein,**

**und Mädchen, die sie necken.**

**Sie ließ sie büßen, zahlt’ es heim,**

**bis alle sich verstecken.**

**O arme Klara, alt und starr,**

**kein Kind will mit ihr spielen.**

**Und wenn kein Lachen klingt mehr klar,**

**wird Heinrich sie einstielen.[[13]](#footnote-13)**

**The cafe is gone, Heinrich is demonic, Alice is disturbed and Klara is terrified.**

**Heinrich**

**Schau mich an, Klara. Schau mich an! [[14]](#footnote-14)**

**Klara**

**(horrified)**

**Heinrich... Es tut mir leid! Werde ich spielen! Ja, ich werde spielen… [[15]](#footnote-15)**

**Heinrich returns to his avuncular persona and brings the café back with him.**

**HEINRICH**

**Auf Englisch Klara. Wir haben einen Gast.[[16]](#footnote-16)**

**Klara**

**(broken)**

**I will talk.**

**ALICE**

**(hushed)**

**Christ, Heinrich, what did you tell her?**

**HEINRICH**

**Just remembering old times.**

**ALICE**

**(dubious)**

**Uhuh.**

**(more authoritative)**

**So. Klara. Tell me everything you know about Klaus Schweitzer.**

**As Klara speaks the café fades slightly into the background.**

**KLARA**

**The first time I saw Klaus Schweitzer, I was watching, uh… Schwarzwohnen?[[17]](#footnote-17)**

**HEINRICH**

**A squat.**

**KLARA**

**Ja. In Prenzlauer Berg. They thought that they were Punks: radicals, would-be anarchists. He was easy to see. His skin was covered with tattoos. Strange diagrams on his arms, his chest, even his face. They reminded me of my grandmother. She also held… folk beliefs.   
  
He visited the squat a few times and I would have taken him if he was not already on the list. We needed computer people.  
  
I was chosen to make the offer because I was young and beautiful and he was ugly. It was the right decision. It was very easy. After we raided the “squat” I made him the offer: He could work computers for me or join his punk friends. He agreed of course but I do not know if it was because he wanted me or because he feared me. Perhaps both I think.   
  
I knew from his files he was a computer coder from HfE, good at statistics, at predicting people. This was useful to us. My superiors tired of arresting the guilty. Better to stop them before they could commit the crimes. The program was to track the fears of the targets and so predict disorder and disloyalty, find the traitors before they knew themselves. It was a grand dream.**

**Schweitzer did not want to work for us, but the idea… He longed for it, I think. More even than he longed for me. So I gave him computers, files, data. Always he was asking for data. When he tired I would... encourage him. I was not very good at this. But when he was slow, or stupid I would scold him.**

**This I was very good at.**

**Soon he could not eat, could not drink, could not breathe without checking if it pleased me. And if it did not…**

**Klara tuts with grim satisfaction.**

**KLARA**

**(cont.)**

**I did my duty and ensured he did his. He was an ugly, foolish man but his work, his work was strange, almost wonderful but never correct. No matter how I loved him, how I hurt him, he could not make it work. Again and again he failed, and so my superiors began to question *me*. So I pushed him harder. Too hard.  
  
By the end he did not know where the love ended and the fear began but all that mattered is that we both knew he was mine. He could not live without me and I wanted code. So he would Code. Or die.**

**I left him to work alone that final time. He was already mine and would not disobey.**

**I left him with food for one week and returned after two. By then he stank like a caged dog and he could not speak but the work… Es hat für mich gesungen...[[18]](#footnote-18)**

**I did not understand the code, it was, uh… Kauderwelsch[[19]](#footnote-19)… but the symbols… he had carved them into the walls with his nails, into the keyboard, into his own skin, copied from the photographs of old tattoos he would shuffle in his hands at. In the glow of the filthy screen it was hard to tell where his wasted body ended and the work began. But there was paper falling from the printer, completely clear except for a list of names, dates and times…**

**I knew the first name well. Karin Müller. She was a known thief and… spekulant at der locale Handelsorganisation [[20]](#footnote-20)and she was already due arrest the next day, at the date on the list.**

**I attended the arrest. But it was not an arrest. There had been an accident. Frau Müller had been killed by a, uh, Fleischwolf[[21]](#footnote-21). Her arm was caught in the mechanism and she was somehow pulled in.**

**The second name was an old study mate from die Hochschule[[22]](#footnote-22). I had not spoken to Matthias since graduating but I knew where he was working. I found him just as he placed the electric cable into his mouth. I read his watching-notes before I called der VoPo. It seemed he had been following special orders from a supervisor who had never existed.**

**Every name I investigated from that list was the same: broken and strange. It was not what we asked for, but Schweitzer had made something wonderful and terrible. I did not understand it but I knew we needed it.  
  
I informed my supervisors and then returned to him, ready to take his work from him and hand him over, but when I stepped inside, I found he was already gone. He had left and taken the computer, the program, the data… everything except his filth, his carvings and a small envelope. This envelope.**

**KLARA reverently pulls out the envelope.**

**KLARA**

**(cont.)**

**I have not opened it. I already know what is inside: A name, a date, and a time; my time. Every day I hold this letter and dare not open it because what if that date is today and that time is now. I cannot know but I cannot not know. All these years and I cannot eat, cannot drink, cannot breathe without thinking of him and this letter.   
  
I do not know if it was meant as a gift, or as torture. Perhaps both. All I do know is that however much he wanted me, he loved the program.**

**Pause.**

**Alice**

**And that’s everything? You never saw him again?**

**KLARA ignores her.**

**HEINRICH**

**(warning)**

**Klara…**

**KLARA**

**No. Never. I do not know how he left the country, but if he had not… I would have found him.**

**ALICE**

**And this place where you locked him in, where he finished the program, what was the address?**

**Klara scribbles something on a scrap of paper and pushes it to Alice.**

**KLARA**

**There is nothing there now.**

**Alice considers. Finally:**

**ALICE**

**All right. We’re done. You can go.**

**Beat. KLARA looks to Heinrich.**

**KLARA**

**(Afraid)**

**Wenn ich diesen Umschlag öffnen würde... Wäre es heute?[[23]](#footnote-23)**

**HEINRICH**

**(sadistic)**

**Finden wir es heraus, miene kleine Klara...[[24]](#footnote-24)**

**Heinrich laughs unpleasantly as Klara stands and flees. The other customers notice and conversation falters momentarily**

**Beat.**

**ALICE**

**(Thoughtful)**

**She left her envelope.**

**HEINRICH**

**(amused)**

**Do not worry. I shall return it to her later.**

1. **Lena's house (Gwen's Phone), int., afternoon, clear**

**LENA sets a delicate cup of tea down in front of GWEN. It is “nice”.**

**GWEN**

**(small)**

**Thank you. Do you have any sugar?**

**LENA**

**No.**

**Pause, LENA sits.**

**Eventually.**

**GWEN**

**I like your house. It’s very… uh…**

**Beat.**

**GWEN**

**(cont. struggling)**

**It’s not what I expected.**

**LENA**

**What exactly were you expecting?**

**GWEN**

**I don’t know something less -uh… nice.**

**LENA**

**I see.**

**Beat.**

**LENA**

**(cont.)**

**Gwen, when I agreed to speak with you I was under the impression that you needed to discuss something more substantial than my personal living arrangements. If that is not the case then-**

**GWEN**

**No! I mean yes, I do, I was just making small talk.**

**LENA**

**Well don’t. You’re not very good at it.**

**GWEN**

**(snapping)**

**Oh and you’re just so-**

**GWEN catches herself. Beat.**

**GWEN**

**I am glad you’re doing well.**

**LENA**

**Are you?**

**GWEN**

**(frustrated)**

**Yes! Look I know we had our…**

**GWEN searches for a flattering word but LENA leaves her twisting in the wind.**

**GWEN**

**(cont. lamely)**

**…differences, but I am genuinely glad you’re okay.**

**LENA**

**Because you need something from me.**

**GWEN**

**No! Well, sort of. But also, because, well, you left so suddenly and there was no record of you anywhere-**

**LENA**

**Something I had orchestrated at considerable effort and no small expense.**

**GWEN**

**I was starting to worry that you had been… Disappeared.**

**LENA**

**I see. Surely the minister could have disabused you of that particular notion easily enough himself?**

**GWEN**

**Oh. Well we don’t- we haven’t really been in contact since… um…**

**LENA**

**(bitterly amused)**

**I’m sure he’s very pleased with that outcome. Well then, as you can see I am perfectly content in my obscurity and would prefer to stay that way. So, what is it that you need that is so urgent that its justifies invading my home like this?**

**GWEN**

**I’m sorry if I overstepped but-**

**LENA**

**(exasperated)**

**What do you want Gwen?**

**Beat.**

**GWEN**

**I don’t know what to do. Nobody does. We just turn up, sort cases and then horrible things happen There’s no onboarding, no documentation and it’s not like the minister has any idea what actually goes on at the OIAR. And before you jump in with “I told you so”, I’m still not convinced you know any more than the rest of us.**

**LENA**

**Then why come here for answers you don’t trust?**

**GWEN**

**Because- because for all our differences I know that neither of us can stand to see a job done badly, so if anyone knows, it’s you**

**Beat.**

**Lena considers her.**

**Eventually:**

**GWEN**

**(moving to stand)**

**I don’t know why I even bothered-**

**LENA**

**Dread is organised into four key elements: Death, Pain, Helplessness and Wrongness. It is essential that these four elements remain balanced, that is the purpose of the O.I.A.R.**

**GWEN**

**(sitting)**

**…okay.**

**LENA**

**Too little of any one of them and we need to generate more, too much of any of them and we need to increase the others to compensate. The Fr3-d1 system monitors these levels and anticipates what interventions are required in order to maintain balance. Failure to maintain balance will lead to “horrible things happening”, which I am guessing is what has brought you to me.**

**GWEN**

**(working it out)**

**But wait, that would mean… that would mean the system can only trend upwards, generate more dread over time.**

**LENA**

**(impressed)**

**Hm. Correct.**

**GWEN**

**So why not reduce them, or just get rid of them entirely?**

**LENA**

**Because it can’t be done. At least not to my knowledge and there’s no one else to ask. I believe the Response team used to try, but in my experience utilizing appropriately sympathetic externals has proved the most reliable solution.**

**GWEN**

**(careful)**

**That doesn’t sound… good.**

**LENA**

**Perhaps not, but it is the job.**

**GWEN**

**Says who?**

**LENA**

**I don’t know. Perhaps nobody.  
I never controlled the O.I.A.R. Gwen, I just worked there long enough to understand what the system needs. The only thing I have ever known with any certainty is that when the levels are unbalanced terrible things happen. Leave it unbalanced long enough and the things you’re worried about will become exponentially worse. I can only hope you’ve come seeking help before anyone is too badly hurt.**

**Beat.**

**LENA**

**Ah. That’ a shame.**

**GWEN moves to speak.**

**LENA**

**(quickly cont.)**

**Please, don’t give me details. I’d rather not know.**

**Beat.**

**GWEN**

**So what’s “The Protocol”? Is that just the official name for keeping things balanced?**

**LENA**

**Now where did you hear that I wonder?**

**Beat. GWEN is giving nothing away.**

**LENA**

**(cont., moving on)**

**In a sense. “The Protocol” is the last resort for keeping all this secret.**

**GWEN**

**(reflexively)**

**What’s wrong with transparency?**

**LENA**

**(worldly)**

**I wouldn’t try it. Even if people believed you, which they wouldn’t, it would make it impossible to properly operate. Too many motives, too many variables, too many people looking to take advantage. So, if it looks like someone or something is going to sink the whole ship, you enact The Protocol.**

**GWEN**

**(growing impatient)**

**Which is?**

**LENA**

**(reciting)**

**Isolate, Gather, Control, Excise and Subvert.**

**GWEN**

**Can I please just get one straight answer?**

**LENA**

**(normally)**

**Quarantine the problem, collect the information, extract whatever’s useful, burn the rest, blame someone else.**

**GWEN**

**Right.**

**Beat.**

**LENA**

**Just do whatever it takes to keep things balanced. If you can manage that Gwen the rest will take care of itself.**

**GWEN**

**Even if people die?**

**LENA**

**That’s the job.**

**Beat.**

**GWEN**

**(standing)**

**Thank you Lena. If there’s anything I can do to repay you…**

**LENA**

**Like giving me my job back?**

**GWEN**

**(she pauses)**

**Oh er…**

**LENA**

**(deadpan)**

**That was a joke. You can keep it.**

**GWEN**

**Oh. Ha.**

**GWEN moves to the front door with LENA showing her out.**

**lENA**

**There is one thing though.**

**GWEN**

**(Wary)**

**Oh?**

**LENA**

**Leave me alone Gwen. Forget I ever existed. Not many of us get out unscathed. I’d like to stay that way.**

**GWEN**

**I’ll… see what I can do.**

**LENA sighs then opens the front door.**

**GWEN**

**(cont.)**

**See you later Lena.**

**LENA**

**No you won’t.**

**LENA closes the door.**

**Beat.**

**GWEN takes a deep breath then sets 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 Alexander J Newall and edited with additional materials by Jonathan Sims, 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, Anusia Battersby as Gwendolyn Bouchard, and 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.**

**CAT3RAC2175-26031987-12062024  
prescience (computing) -/- equilibrium**

**Incident Elements:  
·   psychological manipulation  
·   abuse  
·   imprisonment  
·   implied sexual coercion**

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Produced by April Sumner**

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Claudia Woodhouse as Klara Vogel  
Anusia Battersby as Gwen Bouchard  
Sarah Lambie as Lena Kelley**

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1. coffeehouse [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. A particularly bad coffee/coffee substitute [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. ‘Time flies…’ [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. ‘Thank you’ [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. ‘That’s true.’ [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. ‘We could smell your sins.’ [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. ‘I know your voice…’ [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. ‘And I know you... Klara’ [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. ‘Who are you?’ [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Have you forgotten Heinrich, Klara? [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. ‘Play nicely, Klara...’ [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. ‘But I do, don't I Klara...?’ [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. ‘There is a girl, small and delicate, the angry Klara. // She hates the children, and mocks them meanly, she never plays with the crowd (swarm). // She complains about the boys who shout evil, and the girls who tease her. // She made them pay, paid them back until everyone went into hiding. // Oh poor Klara, old and rigid, no child wants to play with her. // And when the laughter no longer sounds clear, Heinrich will stop her.’ [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. ‘Look at me, Klara. Look at me!’ [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. ‘Heinrich... I'm sorry! I'll play! Yes, I'll play...’ [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. ‘In English, Klara. We have a guest.’ [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. An illegally occupied flat [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. ‘It sang for me…’ [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. ‘Gibberish’ [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. ‘speculator at the local trade organization’ [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. A meatgrinder [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. ‘the university’ [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. ‘If I were to open this envelope... Would it be today?’ [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. ‘Let's find out, my ‘little Klara... [↑](#footnote-ref-24)