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The Magnus Protocol

Episode 44 "Back to Basic"

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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 Kaffeehaus¹ used to serve the
strongest Muckefuck² 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-**

¹ coffeehouse

² A particularly bad coffee/coffee substitute

ALICE
(distracted)
Only Americans call them “French Fries”

HEINRICH
You see! Who can keep up! Die Zeit vergeht wie im Flug³...

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.

³ ‘Time flies...’

HEINRICH

Danke schön⁴, 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 wahr⁵. 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.

⁴ 'Thank you'

⁵ 'That's true.'

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

KLARA gasps softly, considering Heinrich.

HEINRICH
Guten Tag.

KLARA
Ich kenne deine Stimme...⁷

⁶ 'We could smell your sins.'

⁷ 'I know your voice...'

ALICE
What's she saying?

HEINRICH
(Ignoring Alice)
Und ich kenne dich... Klara⁸.

KLARA is unsettled.

ALICE
Uh, sorry-

KLARA
Wer seid ihr?⁹

HEINRICH
Hast du Heinrich vergessen, Klara?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.

⁸ 'And I know you... Klara'

⁹ 'Who are you?'

¹⁰ Have you forgotten Heinrich, Klara?

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

¹¹ 'Play nicely, Klara...'

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**

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**

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

HEINRICH

**Schau mich an, Klara. Schau mich
an! ¹⁴**

¹² 'But I do, don't I Klara...?'

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.'

¹⁴ 'Look at me, Klara. Look at me!'

KLARA

(horrified)

Heinrich... Es tut mir leid! Werde ich spielen! Ja, ich werde spielen... ¹⁵

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

HEINRICH

Auf Englisch Klara. Wir haben einen Gast.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

¹⁵ 'Heinrich... I'm sorry! I'll play! Yes, I'll play...'

¹⁶ 'In English, Klara. We have a guest.'

¹⁷ An illegally occupied flat

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

I did not understand the code, it was, uh... Kauderwelsch¹⁹... 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 Handelsorganisation²⁰ 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, Fleischwolf²¹. Her arm was caught in the mechanism and she

¹⁸ 'It sang for me...'

¹⁹ 'Gibberish'

²⁰ 'speculator at the local trade organization'

²¹ A meatgrinder

was somehow pulled in.

The second name was an old study mate from die Hochschule²². 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

²² 'the university'

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**

HEINRICH

(sadistic)

**Finden wir es heraus, meine kleine
Klara...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.**

²³ 'If I were to open this envelope... Would it be today?'

²⁴ 'Let's find out, my 'little Klara...'

**2. 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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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

Featuring (in order of appearance)

Billie Hindle as Alice Dyer

Robert Vernon as Heinrich Unheimlich

Claudia Woodhouse as Klara Vogel

Anusia Battersby as Gwen Bouchard

Sarah Lambie as Lena Kelley

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