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The Magnus Protocol

**Episode 34
"Eliminations"**

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ANNOUNCER

This episode is dedicated to Gray Anderson.

[Intro Theme]

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**Rusty Quill Presents: The Magnus
Protocol.
Episode Thirty-Four – Eliminations**

[Music]

1. MEDICAL ROOM – DAY, LIGHT RAIN (TAPE RECORDER)

SAM is sleeping uneasily in a medic cot. GEORGIE sits writing in a notebook at a nearby desk.

SAM stirs then awakens confused. He looks around, slightly panicked, and notices an IV drip in his arms.

No one notices the tape recorder under the bed.

GEORGIE

I wouldn't touch it. The nurse said it was hard enough finding a vein for it in the first place.

SAM

(Weakly)

What?

GEORGIE

I think it's just saline, some electrolytes... probably some vitamins, if they've got them. They didn't give me the full run down.

SAM

Why?

GEORGIE

To keep you alive? You were in a bad way when we picked you up, “Sam”. Malnutrition, dehydration, the works.

SAM

Oh. Um... Thanks?

GEORGIE

Don't mention it. Now it's your job to convince me that we were right to use those resources.

SAM

(a bit stronger)

How long was I asleep?

GEORGIE

You've been in and out for a couple of days.

Pause. Sam adjusts himself and settles into a more upright position.

GEORGIE

Comfy?

SAM

Yeah, although actually if you've got another pillow-

GEORGIE

What are you?

Beat.

SAM

Excuse me?

GEORGIE

What are you?

SAM

I don't understand the question.

GEORGIE

Are you human?

SAM

What else would I be?

Georgie does not answer.

Pause.

SAM CONT'D

Y-yes. Yes, I'm human.

GEORGIE

And that's a problem. Because the only humans allowed in the London Exclusion Zone are me and my team. And you're not one of my team, "Sam".

SAM

...Where am I?

GEORGIE

We've checked pretty much the whole border at this point and can't find any breach, any tracks, no evidence at all of how you got yourself inside.

SAM

Please, I just need someone to explain what's happening-

GEORGIE

So as far as we can tell, you came from the Square Mile. And humans don't come from the square mile.

SAM

What? Look, I don't even know how I got there, okay? I don't even know where there is. Last thing I remember... I was in the basement and there was, uh...

GEORGIE

So what's the deal "Sam"? By the look of you I'm guessing some kind of hunger thing right? You look into my eyes, make me realise the hunger in my soul and turn the whole building into cannibals?

SAM

No, there were people. I saw people... In a dream... I didn't know them, but... Celia was there.

He looks at Georgie.

SAM

And I think... you were there.

GEORGIE

Okay so some kind of dream-eating creature then? Help me out here "Sam". What's your thing? What's your schtick? What's your messed up little horror power?

SAM

Wait, are you talking about-?

GEORGIE

All the monsters have one.

Beat. Sam is fully awake and making connections.

SAM

We call them Externals.

GEORGIE

Who's "we"?

SAM

I work for the Office of Incident Assessment and Response. We're a branch of the UK Civil Service. Or, were, maybe... You said that was London you found me in?

GEORGIE

Technically. The zone's too dangerous to break down for scrap. And I hate to break it to you, but there hasn't been a proper Civil Service for a while. Government's just one big "Incident Response" for a few years now so either you're lying or...

SAM

(panicking)

Wait! What year is it!?

GEORGIE

(dubious)

2024.

SAM

(relieved and surprised)

Oh.

(realizing)

Ooooh, okay, yeah. In that case then, I think I might be from another dimension.

Beat.

GEORGIE

What.

SAM

(a bit defensive)

Oh, what, hunger monsters from post-apocalyptic London are just another day at the office to you, but other dimensions is just too far-fetched?

GEORGIE

I mean it wasn't exactly on my bingo card.

(sighing)

Okay, let's just skip the whole "why should I believe you" stuff for now and get straight to the big stuff. Why you? Why now? Why hasn't this happened before?

SAM

I don't know. Maybe they have? I mean, there was this tear in- in the world, my world, but it was hidden. Maybe no-one else found it.

GEORGIE

Where was it?

SAM

Basement of an old retail unit in the Hilltop Shopping Centre, if you can believe it.

GEORGIE

(suddenly serious)

Hill Top? In Oxford?

SAM

(surprised)

Yeah. You know it?

Georgie exhales and puts her notepad down. She extends a hand to shake.

GEORGIE

Georgie.

SAM

(shaking her hand
tentatively)

Uh... hi Georgie.

Beat

SAM

(cont.)

So... does this mean you believe
me?

GEORGIE

(rubbing her eyes)

You know, Sam, it would have been a
lot less complicated if you'd just
been a monster.

SAM

Sorry, I guess? So like, can you tell
me where I am now? What happened
to London? Who are you people?
This world is a lot different to mine.

GEORGIE

I suspect it was probably pretty
similar until about five years ago,
then all hell broke loose.

SAM

What sort of hell?

GEORGIE

The kind where your world is
transformed into a psychoformed
fear-farm for otherworldly entities
outside of human understanding.

SAM

Oh. Okay then.

GEORGIE

It didn't last long, objectively speaking at least. But time wasn't exactly working right. Anyway, we eventually managed to... get rid of them and we've spent the years since trying to rebuild and get back to something approaching normal.

SAM

Where I landed didn't look normal.

GEORGIE

No. A few places around the world never fully changed back. I think of it as a sort of lingering fear radiation, and London was at the heart of what happened.

SAM

And you look after them?

GEORGIE

We try to contain them. Officially we're part of the wider civil defense militia, but most people just call us "Wardens". I suppose it fits. We try to keep the horrors in and the people out.

SAM

Why would anyone want to get in somewhere like that?

GEORGIE

You'd be surprised-

WARDEN DAVE enters. He's clearly worried.

WARDEN DAVE

Captain, you're needed.

GEORGIE
(immediately ready)
Talk to me.

WARDEN DAVE
It's Heidi. They found her.

**2. GEORGIE'S OFFICE – DAY, LIGHT RAIN (TAPE
RECORDER)**

The tape player is on a table in the middle of the office. It starts recording part-way through a tense conversation between **GEORGIE** and **WARDEN DAVE**.

WARDEN DAVE
-we found it near the body.

GEORGIE
How near? Right next to her?

WARDEN DAVE
Her hand was touching it.

Beat.

GEORGIE
Was it recording when you found it?

Dave considers, clearly unsure.

WARDEN DAVE
I'm not sure. I don't think so.

GEORGIE
Ok.

Beat.

GEORGIE
(cont.)
How was she killed?

WARDEN DAVE

Doc's not sure yet, but it definitely wasn't natural.

GEORGIE

Dave. Details, come on.

WARDEN DAVE

(bottling it up)

Sorry I know, I just-

GEORGIE

Feel later, work now. What happened to Heidi? What state was her body in?

Beat.

WARDEN DAVE

(keeping it together)

It was pale. Shriveled. Like she'd been sucked dry. And she had- There was glass all over her body, embedded into the skin, but nothing in the surrounding area.

GEORGIE

Describe the glass?

WARDEN DAVE

I dunno. Clear? Uh slightly curved. I think it was, like, camera lenses maybe. A few of them were still whole enough you could make out the shape.

Pause.

GEORGIE

Did Heidi ever tell you about her domain?

WARDEN DAVE

No. We didn't know each other that well. Why, did she tell you?

GEORGIE

It's part of the standard psych eval for the newer recruits.

WARDEN DAVE

And it involved cameras?

GEORGIE affirms.

Beat.

WARDEN DAVE

What are we dealing with here Cap?

GEORGIE

I don't know. I have a suspicion. A suspicion that I really, really hope is wrong. But I can't say for sure. Not yet.

WARDEN DAVE

So what's the plan?

GEORGIE

I go have another talk with our guest. You put everyone on alert. Double up the rounds, at least one auto per pair and notify the other branches.

WARDEN DAVE

Got it.

GEORGIE

Steer clear of any tape recorders and if you hear anyone starting to get all poetic and tell a really personal, really traumatic story for no obvious

**reason, you grab them and you run.
Understood?**

WARDEN DAVE
Understood.

GEORGIE
Right, you get going and I'll-

DAVE notices the tape player is on.

WARDEN DAVE
Captain!

GEORGIE
What?

WARDEN DAVE
What do we do if it starts to record?

GEORGIE considers the tape player then sighs bone-weary.

GEORGIE
Pass me that claw hammer.

Beat. The hammer is passed.

GEORGIE
Then all you do is-

She jams the claw into the tape-player and wrenches, it squeals as if in pain, then the recording cuts out.

3. MEDICAL ROOM – LIGHT RAIN (TAPE RECORDER)

GEORGIE strides into the room and drops the smashed recorder onto SAM's bed.

GEORGIE
What is this?

SAM

(examining unconcerned)

What? I don't know, broken junk? Is this another test? God, someone really did a number on this thing...

GEORGIE

Fine. Do you know what it was?

SAM

(inspecting)

Plastic... Some metal... Magnetic ta-
Oh.

GEORGIE

One of my team is already dead and if this means what I think it means they're not going to be the last. So, no more games. You are going to tell me what you know, right now.

SAM

The tape players, we think they're something to do with the... thing that's been chasing us. It found me near the... the hole- portal, whatever it is. I'm still fuzzy on some stuff but it must have come through with me.

GEORGIE

Who's "we"?

SAM

Oh, uh.. me, Alice, Gwen, my colleagues at the OIAR. My friends. Alice called it an "Archivist".

GEORGIE reacts and sits heavily at the desk.

SAM

Is that... wrong?

GEORGIE

Tell me everything.

SAM

Right, okay... Uhh... So, I was looking into this old organization called The Magnus Institute-

GEORGIE

Oh shit.

SAM

You know it? Do you have one in here?

GEORGIE

Used to.

SAM

Yeah, well, ours burned down in the late 90s.

GEORGIE

(quiet)

Lucky you.

SAM

(noticing but pressing on)

Anyway, Alice and I were poking around and... Our best theory is we accidentally let it loose somehow. Unlocked something or disturbed something or opened something... Or just woke it up I guess. Since then it's been sort of stalking us and... feeding on people nearby.

GEORGIE

But he hasn't killed you. Why?

SAM

I don't know. It even dragged a story out of me at one point but it didn't finish me off.

(reasoning)

I wonder if it wanted us to find this place so it could follow us here.

GEORGIE

(intense)

What does he look like? What's his voice like? Think, Sam, this is important.

SAM

I- I don't even know if it is a 'he'. It's... hard to look at. It dresses in rags, or a cloak or something that hides most of its shape. But it's face... It's all eyes...

Beat

SAM

Look it was an accident. I didn't mean to bring it here-

GEORGIE

I don't give a crap what you meant to do. If this is who I think it is...

SAM

What?

GEORGIE

There won't be anything left to rebuild.

4. GARDEN – DAY, CLEAR (TAPE RECORDER)

An elderly GARDENER is happily tending a strawberry plant near a small suburban home. The rest of the neighborhood seems empty.

GARDENER

There we go. Had a good drink in the rain, didn't you, but it's all cleared up now. Just as well, you need a little sunshine, get those berries nice and ripe.

Behind her, the ARCHIVIST approaches.

GARDENER

People always say strawberries are easy to grow, but I've never really been able to get a handle on them. Nor any other plant, to be honest. I guess I've got what you might call a brown thumb. But it doesn't matter, I'll stay out in my garden as long as it takes. As long as I'm here, in the fresh air and the sun, trying to give things life, it doesn't matter if I succeed or not.

She pauses, realizing she's monologuing, but is unable to stop. She turns to see the ARCHIVIST.

GARDENER

(cont.)

It's not the sun, though, not really, nor the sky nor open air... Even at the end of it all it was never the cave that scared me, but I need to see the world moving, to watch the light grow and dim, the sun to march on its path, the clouds blow through the sky. It reminds me the world is

moving, that I'm not stuck in that long empty moment.

When I was young I read about a man who went into a cave for two months. He was some sort of scientist and wanted to see what would happen to him if he just didn't come out. So down he stayed, no watches, no clocks, no night and day, for what he thought was two months. It was four. His whole sense of time had become unstuck. That stayed with me. That scared me. To be trapped in a moment, to have no sense of motion... And the longest moment I was ever trapped in was when I killed a man.

I never even knew his name. Not before and not after I fled. It was nothing, just an argument in a pub. I didn't even think when I pushed him. But when he went down as his head sailed towards the wood of the broken barstool... I don't know how to measure the time that took. Two seconds? Two hours? Two forevers. And even when it had happened and I was running from the pooling blood and the accusing eyes, the moment didn't end. Every time I closed my eyes I saw it, my life trapped in the amber of those seconds when I realized with crystal clarity the violence of which I was capable.

When the world died screaming and I was taken to that cave, I didn't understand why. It was dark, but I

wasn't afraid of the dark. It was cramped, but I wasn't afraid of tight spaces. I thought I was going to die, but I wasn't afraid of death. Not my death, at least.

There were others there, shapes and silhouettes in the gloom. Enough detail to realize how many people were down there with me. And in the middle, sat between us all, the only thing we could see clearly in that place: the rusty knife.

There was only one, and we all immediately knew what that meant.

Nobody said a word. In the deep, in the dark, I have no idea how long we were there before it all ended, but in all that time not a one of us spoke. What would we have to say? Each and every one of us knew we were a killer, and what could a killer say that would ever be trusted in a place like that. And so the moment stretched on, dragging the pain of our potential cruelty across our souls with a point sharper than any blade.

I would imagine picking up the knife, it's cold heft, the reassuring weight of it. My mind swarmed with images of rusty points buried in flesh, of how my muscles would feel as they forced it through skin and into muscle. Would it hit one of their ribs? Or a clean cut right to the heart? Or perhaps messier, slashing open their stomach, filling the cave

with the stench of blood, acid and death.

I didn't want to. The idea repulsed me, left me lying there shaking and pressed up against the wall. But it didn't matter what I wanted. All that mattered was what I knew that I could do it.

I longed for one of the others to pick it up and raise it in anger. If only one of them would lunge at me. Slice my stomach open, spill my entrails across the stony floor. Then I would be free. Maybe not free of that place but at least free of that lingering, growing, pulsating temptation.

In the end I was the first to break. I was the first to take the knife that lay in the middle of the cave, but not the last.

ARCHIVIST

(hungry)

PICK IT UP.

The Gardener reaches down and finds a rusty knife in her grip.

GARDENER

It felt in my hand exactly as I thought it would. The weight, the balance, the course wood grain of the handle. My stomach curdled at the feeling, at the butcher's extension of my body and will.

The others didn't flee or cower or try to defend themselves. Instead, they crept forward in pathetic

supplication, silently begging to be released from what they might do in turn.

But my motives were entirely selfish. I grasped the blade and angled its wicked, rusted point. Then I closed my eyes, though that was pointless in the dark...

ARCHIVIST

YES.

The Gardner stabs herself in the gut, gasping.

GARDENER

(pained)

It... did not cut cleanly. It tore... and caught... on every scrap of my flesh... but it did not help. So I pulled it out... and tried again.

ARCHIVIST

YES.

The Gardner attempts to stabs herself in the heart.

GARDENER

(Wheezing)

The heart... was difficult. It was an excavation of rib... and lung... and so much blood... But it did not help... So... I pulled it out and tried again.

ARCHIVIST

YES!

The Gardner slits her own throat.

GARDENER

(gurgling)

I slit... my throat... but there was no
escape... from that eternal...
second... of violence.... It did...
not... help...

The Gardner finally dies. The ARCHIVIST is sated. For now.

Click.

[Music]

ANNOUNCER

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The Magnus Protocol 34 - Eliminations
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ERROR (Unknown Source)

Incident Elements:

- Death
- Graphic Violence
- Murder
- Imprisonment
- Psychological Torture
- Suicide

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This episode is dedicated to Gray Anderson. You can find a complete list of our Kickstarter backers <https://rustyquill.com/the-magnus-protocol-supporter-wall/>

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Produced by April Sumner

Featuring (in order of appearance)
Sasha Sienna as Georgie Barker
Shahan Hamza as Samama Khalid
David Ault as Warden Dave
Rebecca Ashley as Gardener
Beth Eyre as Archivist

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