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The Magnus Protocol

**Episode 22
"Mixed Signals"**

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Draft 2.0**

ANNOUNCER

This episode is dedicated to April Richards.

[Intro Theme]

ANNOUNCER

**Rusty Quill Presents: The Magnus Protocol.
Episode Twenty-Two – Mixed Signals.**

[Music]

1. INT. MANAGER’S OFFICE – NIGHT, RAINING (LANDLINE)

GWEN is stood dripping in the middle of the **OFFICE**. **LENA** remains seated.

LENA

(suppressing irritation)

So you just... ran away?

GWEN

(furious)

Of course I ran away! You sent me out there unguarded, unprepared and uninformed. It’s a miracle I got away at all. If it weren’t for that... thing-

LENA

Ah yes, this “watching figure” you mentioned. Presumably you didn’t get any contact details from them?

GWEN

I guess it slipped my mind as I was fleeing the supernatural psychopaths!

LENA

Clearly.

Beat. LENA shuffles some papers.

LENA

(cont.)

I must say Gwen, I am quite disappointed. I'd hoped that you might surpass your earlier... trepidation but unfortunately it would seem my initial estimation of you was accurate after all.

GWEN

(shaking)

I know what you're doing.

Beat.

LENA

Oh really?

GWEN

You won't get rid of me that easily.

Beat. LENA stands, GWEN squares off but LENA is just pouring herself some water. She sips.

LENA

GWEN, firstly, just to be crystal clear, if I wished you gone, you wouldn't be sitting here.

She sips again.

LENA

(cont.)

Secondly, and contrary to your accusations, I can assure you that your death would be much more of an administrative inconvenience for me than simply firing you. Though admittedly it might have been simpler than having a dead bystander and two uncontrolled externals on the loose.

GWEN

So what happens now?

LENA

Unfortunately, I believe your little foray into real responsibility is at an end.

The blackmail was a bold move I'll grant you, but it seems you lack the qualities necessary for the more challenging aspects of this work and I think we can both agree that you would feel safer returning to data processing. Unless of course you'd rather quit wholesale?

Beat. GWEN pointedly doesn't respond.

LENA

(cont.)

Back to your desk then.

Beat. GWEN moves to leave. She opens the door.

LENA

(cont.)

Oh, one last thing, with the ministerial visit coming up, we want to avoid an impression of...

instability... You will retain your new title for now but will undertake no further assignments involving externals. Otherwise, your departure from here will cease to be optional. Do we understand one another?

Beat.

GWEN
(Quiet and sullen)

Yes.

LENA
(cont.)
What was that?

GWEN
(Sarcastic)
Of course, Mrs. Kelley.

LENA
Very good.

2. CYBERSPACE – N/A, N/A (CASE READING)

AUGUSTUS
Welcome Collection Private Record #5876-3 letter from Hans Berger to Dr. Richard Caton dated 14th December 1924.

Letter Reads:

To Doctor Richard Caton,

Richard, you will forgive the delay to this message.

I wanted to inform you of the results of my latest experimentation sooner, but it was not possible for me before now.

Your reply to my first letter was most valuable and I modified the conductive surfaces as you advised, but now I must ask you for further clarification. When you described your first experiments on Canis and Hominidae and your later work on Leporidae and Cercopithecoidea you did not mention any unusual side effects in your subjects. I must know if there was any information you failed to reveal to me because the consequences of my own experiments have been alarming.

I will explain.

In my last message I told you of my latest experiments on the subject "Herr Schmidt" and his unusual cranial deformity which allowed direct access to the Dura Mater above the Occipital Lobe. You will remember that in addition to electric stimulation sessions I was taking advantage of this deformity to record more accurate pressure measurements using a vulcanized rubber tube filled with saline and capped with latex inserted into the cranial aperture. I enclosed, for your consideration, charts displaying the predicted pressure changes correlating with emotional shifts,

stimulation and cognition in the patient.

Your response advising me to use silver for improved conductivity in the stimulation sessions proved correct and so, given hope by this positive result, I decided to attempt a recording of the electrical signals within the brain once again.

I placed wires of silver beneath the scalp of the patient, fore and aft and, instead of the customary stimulator, I instead attached a Lippmann Capillary Electrometer. The results were erratic at first but after much trial and error I found that by using a double-coil Siemens Recording Galvanometer I was able to reliably record the electrical signals. I have this time enclosed a photograph of the results from these sessions taken by my assistant (and wife) Ursula.

This discovery alone should be enough to upset the Zeitgeist, coming so soon after the work of Einthoven, but I am too aware of my reputation of late and I know that I need a significant discovery to quiet the naysayers.

I thus invited Herr Schmidt, for another, more intensive recording session. He was hesitant at first, but I was eventually able to impress upon him the Zeitnot of our research and he consented.

I have recently become aware of the Russian Physiologist Konstantin M. Bykov and his work on the “Hemispherical Bridge”. In short, he claims to have found the center of the self, nestled as a bundle of fibers between the two halves of the brain. When I corresponded with him, he claimed that once this bundle is severed in Canines, their behavior resembles that of two separate animals in one body.

I was dubious of these results, but they did present a new avenue for experimentation and one I knew that no one had yet attempted. So, it was two weeks ago that Schmidt finally consented and we began insertion of the silvered wires to the depths of his brain.

The surgery was taxing but eventually the electrodes were well positioned and we were able to begin recording electrical activity. We first ran through the standard tests and replicated previous results with little variation. I then began to question the patient, regarding himself: “Imagine yourself”, “tell me of yourself” “what is it you want” etc. At this point the familiar, sweeping waves I had come to expect were instead strongly exaggerated. Herr Schmidt, seemed completely unaffected but we feared the equipment had shifted or miscalibrated so we ended our first

**session there and began
disconnecting the equipment.**

**I reviewed the data late into the
night, somewhat downcast that this
latest exploration to new depths had
provided little new data.**

**I will admit to falling asleep at my
desk, overcome with exhaustion. I
dreamed of an ocean, deep and
unforgiving, with an unplumbed
heart full of dark secrets waiting to
be uncovered, whilst overhead flew
radio signals, invisible and
unknowable, not even rippling the
surface. Such a shame these two
things would never meet. Such a
shame...**

**I woke with my own brain charged
with inspiration and an idea for a
wholly new approach to our work. I
began by borrowing some
equipment from the engineering
department: A Telegraph key and
Sounder, some wiring, contacts,
relays, capacitors and various
electrolytics. No doubt the engineers
will complain but at this moment that
is the least of my concerns.**

**In a blitz of activity I deconstructed
both the Sounder and Key along with
my latest Edelmann Galvanometer
and then reassembled them in rather
a novel way. Looking back, I cannot
say how I arrived at the final design
but nonetheless in my fervor I was
certain it would work. We would**

plumb the depths of that ocean from which I had awaked.

Urusla and I returned to the college theatre and after a brief explanation to the patient, we began to reattach the electrodes to my new device. I then began to question him. He answered the standard questions normally but now, rather than waves of ink unfolding across a paper drum there was instead a distinctive clicking from the Telegraph receiver, a languid pattern as though it were operated by one in a state of torpor.

H. Schmidt laughed at the novelty of the device and even Ursula was skeptical of my logic but we nonetheless proceeded with my new line of questioning.

“Imagine yourself.” The clicks slightly accelerated as the patient did so before slowing to their previous random rhythm. I pressed on:

“Tell me of yourself” Again, there was a slight increase in the ignorant tapping whilst the Patient repeated his name and occupation. “What is it you want?” Again, the same banalities of food, drink and toilet from Herr Schmidt and accompanied by the gentle tapping of the Telegraph sounder accelerating as he considered his words.

All had proceeded well and even Ursula appeared to be more

enthused having seen the results. We thus prepared to end the investigation. I should point out here that though very sure handed, my Ursula is not the fastest of assistants and so I have often found myself forced to wait upon her during sessions. It was during such a delay that I had a moment of uncharacteristic whimsy. As Ursula assembled the equipment for disconnection, I idly began to tap at the sending key as though sending a telegraph myself:

“Imagine yourself”.

Immediately the clicks stopped dead. There was a moment of stillness as the last echo finished rebounding off the tiled walls. Then it was replaced by a sudden flurry of activity from the sounder. The patient seemed completely unaffected, but the equipment was triggering faster than I would have thought possible. If before we had seen waves lapping at a shore, this was a torrent, a tidal wave of signal.

I tapped again, automatically following the script I had prepared for myself without thinking. “Tell me of yourself.” The activity intensified, the Sounder rattling across the pitted wooden desk with its vehemence. Finally, I spoke my last question via the telegraph, “what is it you want?” This was met with an overwhelming surge, and the

struggling Sounder began to smoke under the strain.

My concentration was broken at this point by the clatter of dropped metal instruments. I was irritated by such an uncharacteristic clumsiness in Ursula, especially at the moment of possibly my greatest breakthrough yet. I turned to scold her but then I saw her face.

She was pallid and stood near swooning in terror, staring at Herr Schmidt as though it were a corpse answering my questions rather than our completely healthy and vigorous patient. I turned back to him, and he was seemingly as confused as myself, frowning with concern for my wife.

“Is something wrong?” I asked her, gesturing to the procedure which had, until that moment, been proceeding quite excellently.

“Can you not hear it?” She whispered, barely audible over the Telegraph sounder. My irritation grew yet greater; of course I could hear the Sounder, it was deafening! Before I could say as much however, the patient began to convulse.

There was no warning. One moment he was looking quizzically at Ursula and I, the next moment his back was arched and shuddering with the most violent Grand Mal seizure I

have ever witnessed. He was already restrained, of course, but the leather straps creaked in distress as his muscles snapped taut and the arteries throbbed in his neck. He began to scream in agony.

I once saw Tetanus take a man during my time in the Cavalry and this seemed horrifyingly similar: vicious and mindless facial spasms, rupturing contortions of the body and fingers arched in a rictus claw. Ursula and I fought to insert a belt into his mouth before he severed his own tongue, but were unsuccessful.

We were all yelling then and as the telegraph reached a repeating frenzied crescendo there was an almighty crack, loud as a gunshot, and a gout of bright arterial blood sprayed from the deformity at the back of Herr Schmidt's head.

The telegraph abruptly stopped, as did our yelling. There was then a moment of deafening silence punctuated by the gristly tear of fibres ripping themselves from the patient's skull and landing with a wet slap upon the tiled floor before falling still.

Urusla and I stood staring at one another over the bloodied and broken corpse that was once our patient. She then whispered one last time, with terror stricken eyes: "You could not hear it?"

In the weeks that followed, there was all manner of paperwork and investigation but ultimately it was a moot point. We had signed consent from the patient prior to the procedure and there was no evidence of foul play. Just another case of unfortunate frontier Science. Regrettable, awful even, but not suspicious. It was brain surgery after all. Neither I nor Ursula attended the funeral. It would not have been appropriate. I did write a letter of condolence to his wife that I thought quite touching, and convinced the University accountants to pay the fee owed to his widow despite their vociferous protestations. They relented only on condition of her sworn secrecy on the matter.

It was some time before I was able to sit and review the formal findings of the experiment. I had had the foresight to set up a recording ticker for the Telegraph Sounder so I had a complete transcription of the event, at least from the perspective of the equipment. I began to examine this ticker, unsurprised to see random noise from the outset. I almost set it aside, assuming that was all there was to it, but instead I noticed a pattern. Peering closer, I found myself frozen in realisation. Clearly, I had misfiled something. I checked my folders carefully and was only convinced these were the actual records when I noticed the bloodied

fingerprints across the third page I had left as I retrieved the data.

I returned to the tape and quietly examined it in silence. That was when I finally understood my wife's fear. She was always a better communicator than I and this extended to her proficiency with Telegraph. I can use it, but I lack the skill of her ear. I must decode where she can just listen. Thus, it took me this later study to ascertain what it was she had heard during the experiment before Herr Schmitt's unfortunate passing. It was written there plain for anyone who thought to decode it:

Question: "IMAGINE YOURSELF".

Response: "I. I AM. I AM "I". ME, I. I AM ME, WE, I ARE WE, WE ARE."

Question: "TELL ME OF YOURSELF"

Response: WE ARE, I AM HERE. HERE ALONE. WE ARE I ALONE. ALL ALONE, SO ALONE TOGETHER. TOGETHER ALONE. NOTHING, NO, ALONE, ALONE, ALONE, ALONE!

Question: "WHAT IS IT YOU WANT?"

Response: HELP. HELP WE US. ALONE. HELP WE I HELP NEED HELP OUT HELP OUT NEED OUT OUT WE OUT OUT I OUT OUT OUT WE OUT I OUT OUT OUT OUT HELP NEED OUT OUT OUT OUT OUT OUT!

The rest was obscured by Herr Schmidt's cerebrospinal fluid. I have enclosed a photograph of this record for your examination.

You see now Doctor Caton why I have contacted you. Was there anything in your original experiments which might explain the psychic phenomena I have witnessed here at Jena? I have searched my whole life for proof of such events but I was ill prepared for such violence, especially considering your own claims that your experiments were without complication. I fear that unless you can verify my results or at the least provide some prior correlative indications I must delay publishing my findings for the foreseeable future. Worse still, I may even need to omit the details of this final experiment for fear of the ridicule of my peers.

I entreat you Dr. Caton, any help you can provide on this matter would be warmly received. I await your thoughts with humble expectation.

**Signed, Your earnest Colleague,
Hans Berger**

3. INT. OIAR OFFICE INT. – NIGHT, RAINING (COMPUTER)

SAM sighs and begins to process the case. After a few moments of typing he hesitates, then double clicks something.

Beat.

SAM

Alice?

Alice pulls out her headphones.

ALICE

Yeah?

SAM

Has anyone else been using my PC?

Slight beat.

ALICE

Why do you ask?

SAM

My caseload is off.

ALICE

Off how?

SAM

Someone's been in and edited my setup since the start of the night...

ALICE

(standing, deflecting)

I wouldn't worry, you know the system's screwed. It's probably all the horrendous porn you've been downloading. Anyway, I'm grabbing a coffee. You want me to bring you something?

Beat.

SAM

Why are you messing around with my cases Alice?

ALICE

I, uh... I would never- -

SAM

We both know you're crap at lying so can we skip that bit? What are you doing?

Beat.

ALICE

(softly)

Listen Sam-

SAM

(sharp)

Alice.

Beat.

ALICE

There is something up with your computer. I don't know how or why but it's deliberately giving you cases that feed into your whole Magnus thing-

SAM

(Incredulous)

Seriously? You go on and on about me losing it and now you're telling me what? The computers are out to get me?

ALICE

I'm just trying to look out for you-

SAM

(Angry)

No, you're not! You're trying to control me. Again. Well tough. I don't need you breathing down my neck every second and claiming it's to "protect" me! I can look after myself.

ALICE

Can you, though? Colin's already lost it, Gwen is clearly heading the same way and now you're getting ready to start pinning up a conspiracy board as well! I've seen this happen to people before.

SAM

Then why would you recommend me for this job?

ALICE

Because you needed something and...

(sighing)

I guess I just thought you'd be different. That you might actually listen to me.

(beat)

SAM

Why are you even here Alice?

ALICE

I- What?

SAM

The money isn't that good, the hours are crap and clearly you've seen this job destroy people. But you've still been coming in every night for years.

ALICE

You know why. Luke's-

SAM

Don't give me that. All you do is complain, but if things were as bad as you make out you'd already be gone. You'd never hang around if there wasn't something in it for you, so what is it?

ALICE

Because if you can keep your head straight it's actually pretty easy money. And you know what, maybe I do get a kick out of being the only one who can really hack it, but I had hoped you might be the same, that if I showed you the ropes we could...

SAM

(suspicious)

What?

ALICE

Forget it. I'm done. You want to go get your head stuck spelunking down a rabbit hole with Celia? Be my guest.

SAM

(slightly condescending)

Alice, I know this must be hard for you, seeing us together-

ALICE

(snorting with derision)

Don't flatter yourself.

She starts to walk off.

ALICE

(cont.)

Enjoy your breakdown. Just keep it quiet, some of us are trying to work.

SAM

(irritated)

For god's sake Alice-

She can't hear. She's already put her EarPods back in.

4. INT. O.I.A.R. BREAKROOM - NIGHT, RAINING (CCTV).

SAM enters angrily and fails to hide it before catching site of **CELIA**.

Beat.

SAM

(Walking over)

You heard that then?

CELIA

Hard not to.

SAM

(sitting)

Yeah, I'm sorry. She just... pushes my buttons.

CELIA

It's fine. You two have history. Maybe it's easier if I don't get mixed up in all the...

SAM

Baggage?

CELIA
(smiling)
I was going to say “noise”.

SAM
Don't worry about it. It's her problem, not ours. I'm done trying to placate a jealous ex. She can either get over it or get lost, and right now either's fine with me.

CELIA
Okay.

Beat.

CELIA
(cont.)
So. Does that mean you're looking back into The Magnus Institute?

Beat. SAM picks up on her weird energy.

SAM
Why? Do you have something new?

CELIA
I might.

SAM
Tell me.

CELIA
You're sure?

SAM
I'm in. All the way.

Beat.

CELIA
(conspiratorially)
I might've come across a few
important names.

SAM
Oh yeah? Like who?

CELIA
(Quietly)
Jonathan Sims and Martin
Blackwood.

Beat.

SAM
(genuinely lost)
Who?

[Music]

ANNOUNCER
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The series is created by Jonathan
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Newall, 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,
Shahan Hamza as Samama Khalid,
Anusia Battersby as Gwen Bouchard

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Lowri Ann Davies as Celia Ripley, Sarah Lambie as Lena Kelley, with additional voices from Tim Fearon
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 22 – Mixed Signals

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Experiment (brain) -/- imprisonment (existential)

Incident Elements:

- Existential Horror
- Human Experiments
- Graphic Surgical Detail
- Seizure
- Arguments

Transcripts: <https://rustyquill.com/transcripts/the-magnus-protocol/>

This episode is dedicated to April Richards, 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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Produced by April Sumner

Featuring (in order of appearance)

Sarah Lambie as Lena Kelley

Anusia Battersby as Gwendolyn Bouchard

Shahan Hamza as Samama Khalid

Billie Hindle as Alice Dyer

Lowri Ann Davies as Celia Ripley

Tim Fearon as Augustus

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