

SILON, season 1: The Baltimore Plot, Episode I - A Ripple in the NoöSphere

[Radio Static. An old-timey radio tunes up and down the dial]

ANNOUNCER: The Miasma Plague Mask company is proud to sponsor this audio performance of *The Secret and Impossible League of the NoöSphere* presented by Live Girls! Theater and Pendant Productions.

[applause]

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ANNOUNCER: Back to normal... yes... Well... Dear Listeners, if this is your first encounter with the NoöSphere; welcome. Welcome to a world where reality is formed and destroyed through the power of Ideas. Ever had an idea that seemed to come from nowhere? Every thought ever had, by anyone, expressed or in secret is recorded in the NoöSphere. It's the source of all inspiration, divination, and innovation, a world apart from the BioSphere in which humans, like you and me, live out our lives. And our deaths.

This episode, "A Ripple in the Noosphere," is the first in a six-part adventure called "The Baltimore Plot." Our guide to this world is a traveler within it, a sentient sailing vessel that began as an idea, to become so much more. It's my pleasure to introduce you to our narrator, the ghost-ship Mary-Celeste.

[Noosphere Theme music. A sound like a rope squeak as we tether to Mary-Celeste in the Noosphere.]

MARY-CELESTE: If you can hear this message, then it's meant for you. Not everyone can discern this wavelength from the noise and static. The fact that you can hear my voice from the NoöSphere is a gift. I'm here to tell you the history of a secret league of exceptional people caught out of time in the NoöSphere. With the help of an analytical engine they protect the NoöSphere from, well, you'll see.

[Interwoven with the music, we hear the sounds of the Noösphere: ideas being created and destroyed, making ripples through space and time which becomes a mixture of organic breathing and heartbeats with sci-fi thrums, buzzes and clicks.]

[These resolve into the interior sounds of wood creaking on the deck of a ship and a deep mechanical breathing. The Difference Engine clicks, then ka-chunks, then and emits a ding.]

TESLA: Lady Lovelace, the Engine is detecting another Anomaly.

ADA: Hand me the punch card, Mr Tesla. I'll transcribe the Bernoulli numbers.

[A pencil scratches on paper. The Noösphere ripples.]

TESLA: The anomalies are coming closer and closer together now.

ADA: Finished! The Engine's message is... "We Never Sleep." And what may be a name... "Warne." What do you make of this, Father?

BYRON: *[snoring]*

ADA: Father?

BYRON: *[snoring]*

ADA: Lord Byron!

BYRON: *[waking up noise]* You shrieked, my dear? Ah, a new Anomaly. I suppose you want me to distill its meaning from your equations? Very well. Just let me set down my drink.

[Byron places a glass of scotch on a table.]

BYRON: *[dramatically]* Noösphere! Speak through me!

ADA: Oh, the drama.

[Byron channels the noösphere. A single sustained cello note sounds, then fades out.]

BYRON: *[clears throat]* "We never sleep" is the slogan for a private detective agency. They're looking for something... a detective. They're advertising for a new detective. They don't know it yet – but they will hire someone named... "Warne."

[Tesla fidgets with a terminal near the engine.]

TESLA: I know what you need, Lord Byron. p[*A click and whir followed by a pneumatic whoosh and clank [like an old bank vacuum tube].*] Here you are.

BYRON: You really do make the most wonderful things, Mr. Tesla.

TESLA: All I've done is print words on paper.

BYRON: Don't sell yourself short, my good fellow. You've designed a machine to craft whatever you ask of it. Not to mention this fancy floating ghost ship that carries us about the Noösphere.

TESLA: I didn't design Mary-Celeste.

BYRON: Yes, well. Well done, all the same. Now, tell me about this feuilleton you've handed me?

TESLA: It's a paper reproduction of a newspaper advertisement.

ADA: Gentlemen. Back to the Deviation, if you please. Why would a Detective Agency need our help to fill a vacancy?

TESLA: Perhaps the person who ought to apply, this Miss. Warne, is being dissuaded.

BYRON: [*stage whisper*] Or perhaps the Pinkertons don't pay very well.

TESLA: Mary-Celeste, would you extend a Tether to the Noösphere at the date, time, and location coordinates identified by the Engine. Please?

MARY-CELESTE [*disembodied voice*]: Of course, darling.

[*The ship tethers to a specific point in time.*]

BYRON: Darling?

ADA: Is it wise to let the ship become so attached to you, Mr. Tesla?

TESLA: Mary-Celeste is her own being.

MARY-CELESTE [*disembodied voice*]: The Tether is secure in Chicago, 1856. We are anchored at the source of the Anomaly.

ADA: I will go.

BYRON: Dearest Duck, allow me. I know how you feel about Americans.

ADA: I am as capable of finding this presumptive detective as you are.

BYRON: A woman may—

ADA: —A woman may discover secrets in places a man could never hope to enter.

TESLA: It would be better if you both go; you will perceive different sensory data.

BYRON: You mean we'll see different things?

TESLA: That is what I said.

ADA: Fine with me.

MARY-CELESTE [*disembodied voice*]: The first X-point will be defined in 3...2...1.

[An x-point opens: a quick sci-fi sound somewhere between a snap and a hum.]

BYRON: Shall we?

ADA: Aren't you forgetting something?

BYRON: Am I?

ADA: You need an Anchor. We are stepping out of the NoöSphere and into 1856. You'll need to look the part. Take this hat.

BYRON: Is that really necessary?

ADA: Don't make me explain how Anchors work again. Anachronisms create more trouble than they're worth.

BYRON: Fine. Wait, I should go---

[Ada's footsteps take her into the x-point as it closes with a quick sci-fi sound somewhere between a snap and a hum - reversed.]

BYRON: --first... Well, she needn't have taken my X-point.

TESLA: Don't be so obtuse next time.

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BYRON: *[grumble “don’t be so obtuse” grumble]*

MARY-CELESTE *[disembodied voice]*: The second X-point will be defined in 3...2...1.

[An x-point opens.]

TESLA: Byron. Don’t forget your Bollard.

BYRON: I shan’t. See, I’ve got the damned thing pinned on. Between these silly hat-anchors and cumbersome bollards, Beau Brummel would give me the cut direct, but I suppose I should like to be able to come back from... where am I traveling to again?

TESLA: Chicago. 1856. Don't allow Lady Lovelace to get into trouble.

BYRON: I never allow Ada do anything.

[An x-point closes.]

[The hiss of steam engines and the bustle of train station activity. The bustle of general city activity continues quietly in the background. A train whistle.]

STATION MASTER: Trains bound for Evanston, Springfield, and Decatur will be departin' in ten minutes from platforms seven, sixteen, and two. Evanston, Springfield, and Decatur trains departin' in ten minutes.

LEAH: Your turn now, Kate. Choose your mark.

[A lady passes by, her high heels clicking on the pavement. A single sustained violin note sounds, then fades out.]

KATE: She'll do.

LEAH: Just like I showed you. Approach casually. Breathe in, breathe out and take what's yours.

[Kate walks over to the lady.]

KATE: Excuse me, ma'am. Do you have the time?

LADY: Of course.

KATE: That's a beautiful timepiece.

LADY: Thank you. My grandmother, a great lady, gave it to me when--

[The Station Master clomps over.]

STATION MASTER: Hey you. What are you doing?

KATE: Just asking the time, sir.

STATION MASTER: It's time to keep walking.

KATE: Of course, sir.

[The Station Master stomps away. The lady wanders away as well]

LEAH: Did you get it?

KATE: No, the station master... I'll try again, Leah.

LEAH: Alright. I'll be right over there.

[Leah walks away as a man walks by.]

KATE: *[Hums and drops a coin on the floor in front of the man.]*

MAN: *[picking up the coin]* Miss? You dropped this coin.

KATE: Oh, thank you, sir. I--

[A single sustained violin note...]

[Thoughtful music]

MAN: You alright, Miss?

KATE: Yes. I just had the strangest... you look familiar, that's all.

MAN: The name's Pinkerton, Allan Pinkerton.

KATE: I'm--

LEAH: [*breaking in*] Kate! Katekatekate! I need to talk to you.

KATE: [*under her breath*] Right now?

LEAH: Right now.

PINKERTON: Well, you have a nice day, Miss.

KATE: You-you, too, Mr. Pinkerton.

[*Pinkerton walks away.*]

KATE: What was that?

LEAH: Why did you look at him like that?

KATE: He had a feel to him... like I knew him. Maybe I should--

LEAH: [*stern*] Leave that man be. Not him. I mean it.

KATE: Fine. Fine.

LEAH: Promise me, Kate.

KATE: I promise, Leah.

LEAH: An honest man will hurt you worse than a wicked one if you cross him.

KATE: [*embarrassed*] I've learned that lesson already.

LEAH: Forget him. Forget all of 'em.

KATE: I'll try again. I need to pay you back.

LEAH: There's time for that... You know, you read people pretty well, Kate.

KATE: [*takes a quick, audible breath before she speaks*] I just see through most people's tells, I guess.

LEAH: You have a tell, too, you know. You breathe in real quick before a lie. It's subtle, but it's there.

KATE: I'm not lying to you. It's hard to explain what I see. Most folks don't believe me.

LEAH: I've been watching you these last few weeks. I believe you've got a gift: one that'd be mighty useful on a long con.

[Suspenseful music.]

KATE: I don't know if I have the stomach for that.

LEAH: You got no problem picking pockets.

KATE: *[smiling]* It isn't stealing if it's meant to be mine.

LEAH: I know a man; he's got big plans and money to burn. I've got an angle on him. I could use someone with your gifts to ease him along. You interested?

KATE: In being some big man's skill?

LEAH: He'd be ours, more like. Think about it.

KATE: I will.

[An x-point opens and closes.]

KATE: *[whispering]* Did you see that?

LEAH: No. What? Do you see a mark?

KATE: No, that woman just appeared out of nowhere—

LEAH: If she ain't a mark, I've got a train to catch. I'll be in Rochester for a month, sorting out some... family business.

[A sweet little bong-bong sound interrupts the scene.]

ANNOUNCER: Footnote. In 1848 Margaret and Kathryn Fox were 11 and 14 years old, when they began receiving messages "from the beyond" in a little hamlet outside of Rochester, New York. At that time, Rochester was a hotbed for religious activity. Their sister Leah recognized their potential to galvanize the populace and under her savvy management, the Fox Sisters spawned the Spiritualism movement gaining millions of followers, including such luminaries as Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Mary Todd Lincoln. Until 1854 that is, when new, more spectacular mediums appeared and the Fox Sisters were pushed from center stage. The sisters quarreled and parted ways with Leah Fox, causing her to seek out other avenues of employment. End footnote.

[A sweet little bong-bong sound concludes the footnote interruption.]

LEAH: You sure you don't wanna come to Rochester with me, Kate?

KATE: I'll have what I owe you by the time you get back.

LEAH: Sweetie, we got all the time in the world.

KATE: Stay safe, Leah.

LEAH: You too, Katie-Girl.

[Leah walks away. Train whistle.]

[Another x-point opens and closes.]

BYRON: There you are, my dear. Ah! Look around us. Chicago. America's Midwestern metropolis. I'm thoroughly delighted.

ADA: I see little to delight the eye. Or the nose.

BYRON: Listen to it! America is a model of force and freedom, and its people exhibit all the coarseness and rudeness one could desire.

ADA: Happily, we must need find only one among the coarse and the rude. I recommend we divide the area into equal sections to multiply our opportunities.

BYRON: Numbers have never spoken to me the way they do you, Ducky—

ADA: Don't call me that.

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BYRON: —I know that two and two make four, though I must say if by any sort of process, I could convert two and two into five, that would give me much greater pleasure.

[A sweet little bong-bong sound interrupts the scene.]

ANNOUNCER: Footnote. Lord Byron also expressed this opinion in the year 1812 in a letter to his future ex-wife and Lady Lovelace's mother, mathematician Anne Milbanke, whom Byron called his “Princess of Parallelograms”. End footnote.

[A sweet little bong-bong sound concludes the footnote interruption.]

ADA: Logic isn't magic. It will work for anyone who wishes to employ it. I don't know why you should wish the world to be less comprehensible than it already—

[A single sustained viola note...Ada sniffs the air.]

BYRON: You've found our object?

ADA: *[sniffs]* Tobacco and Peppermint. It might be a coincidence.

BYRON: At an Anomaly?

ADA: Mr. Babbage isn't responsible for these Anomalies.

BYRON: But isn't that the most logical conclusion?

ADA: *[sniffs]* I need to follow it.

BYRON: Then who will finish our assignment?

ADA: Why don't you employ that fabulous intuition you're always going on about?

BYRON: Ducky, surely you don't mean to go alone.

ADA: I have my own Bollard.

BYRON: Then I hope you'll use it sooner rather than later.

ADA: Hmmph.

BYRON: Right, Good luck, then.

ADA: You believe in luck if it makes you happy. I shall believe in myself.

[Ada walks away.]

BYRON: Damned fool of a woman. Wouldn't you agree, Miss?

KATE: Do you mean me?

BYRON: I haven't noticed anyone else slyly eavesdropping on my companion and myself.

KATE: *[quick breathe]* I wasn't--

BYRON: --To go off on her own like that, why she could be accosted by some nefarious scoundrel.

KATE: Hmmph.

BYRON: You are... *[A single sustained cello note...]* *[a hint of surprise]* Miss Kate Warne.

[Tango music.]

KATE: How do you know my name?

BYRON: Now that I'm listening, I know many things about you. I know you were raised a good girl but have fallen on hard times, through no fault of your own, of course. And I know you've taken to performing small grifts, here and there, but that your heart is in the right place.

KATE: You've been following me?

BYRON: No. I've been listening. Now, I would speak with you.

KATE: You can have nothing to say to me.

BYRON: That's hardly likely, as I've already said that I have.

KATE: I'm prepared to scream.

BYRON: No harm will come to you.

[The Station Master clomps over.]

STATION MASTER: This gal bothering you, Mister? She's trouble.

BYRON: Not at all, we are having a charming conversation, are we not?

KATE: Charming.

STATION MASTER: If you say so, Mister. And you: I've got my eye on you.

[The Station Master stomps away.]

BYRON: I'm so very grateful you chose not to scream.

KATE: Satire does not become you, sir.

BYRON: My critics agree with you, Miss Warne. But you may rest assured, I'm not here to sully your reputation. Not without your permission, at any rate.

KATE: Your point?

BYRON: To bring this item to your attention.

[Byron brings out a newspaper clipping.]

KATE: You've given me a newspaper advertisement for private detectives.

BYRON: Excellent inductive reasoning.

KATE: What's it to do with me?

BYRON: Perhaps nothing.

KATE: There are no lady detectives.

BYRON: I've been told a woman might discover secrets in places no male detective could ever hope to go. Do you agree, Miss Warne?

KATE: It's Mrs. Warne.

BYRON: My apologies.

KATE: Who are you?

BYRON: Let's not spoil it. Go. Or don't. The decision is yours. Until we meet again, Mrs. Warne.

[An x-point opens and closes.]

KATE: Wait. Where did he go?

[Train whistle. The train station noise fades out.]

[Noösphere noises. The Engine breathes.]

TESLA: Mary-Celeste, I want to continue my experiment. Will you please keep a record?

MARY-CELESTE *[disembodied voice]:* Can't we play a game first?

TESLA: We can play chess in another moment, my dear. Will you record me in this one?

MARY-CELESTE *[disembodied voice]:* *[sighing]* Recording.

TESLA: Copper Finial Experiment #16. I am fastening the Finial to the ship to harness her tethering ability and channel the Noöspheric currents.

MARY-CELESTE *[disembodied voice]:* Will it hurt?

TESLA: I shouldn't think so. If I'm right, the Finial will allow me to direct currents of information from the Noösphere into the BioSphere without any wires.

MARY-CELESTE *[disembodied voice]:* Fascinating. Will this have any effect on the Anomaly you are trying to correct?

TESLA: That's an excellent question. I'm connecting the Finial to the Tether... now.

[Tesla switches on the copper finial, it creates a low-level electrical hum, like a Tesla coil. The Noösphere ripples]

[The low-level hum of the copper finial continues.]

[Someone turns on a sink tap.]

TESLA *[not fully here nor there - an echo of himself]*: What—Where am I? Mary-Celeste?

PINKERTON: *[Yawning and stretching, Pinkerton turns off the sink tap and enters his office from the private restroom.]*

TESLA *[echo]*: Oh, excuse me, sir. I didn't mean to interrupt your ablutions. I— Hello? You can't hear me. Or see me. —Fascinating.

[A knock at the door.]

PINKERTON: That better be you, Timothy. *[Another knock.]* Just a minute. *[To himself]* Let me get my jacket on. *[Pinkerton walks to his office door and opens it.]* You're the girl from the train station.

KATE: Hello again, Mr. Pinkerton.

PINKERTON: You have me at a disadvantage, Miss...

KATE: Warne.

TESLA *[echo]*: Warne! Of course. Miss Warne.

KATE: Mrs. Warne.

PINKERTON: I'm sorry, Mrs. Warne, but the Pinkerton Detective Agency does not handle cases which might turn scandalous.

KATE: I'm glad to hear it.

PINKERTON: Well, then.

TESLA *[echo]*: He should invite Mrs. Warne inside.

PINKERTON: If you will...come into my office. *[Kate brushes past him and walks into the office.]* *[under his breath]* Why did I invite her in?

TESLA *[echo]*: Interesting. Did he invite her in because I suggested it?

KATE: Is there a problem, Mr. Pinkerton?

PINKERTON: In my experience, women are only interested in my agency when the matter is... domestic.

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KATE: Mr. Pinkerton, I do not wish to employ your services, domestic or otherwise. I want you to employ mine.

PINKERTON: We don't have any secretarial openings at present.

KATE: Your advertisement.

[Kate hands him a newspaper clipping.]

TESLA *[echo]*: Oh. It's the advertisement I made. Excellent work, Lord Byron!

PINKERTON: Why on earth should I consider hiring a woman detective?

KATE: A woman could go and worm out secrets in places a male detective might never hope to go.

PINKERTON: I suppose the question then becomes, what use would you be as a woman detective?

KATE: Mr. Pinkerton, certainly you would be more comfortable in your chair than standing over me in what I imagine is usually a very effective intimidation technique.

[Pinkerton sits down, his chair scraping the ground in a slow, insulting fashion.]

PINKERTON: I'm waiting for your qualifications, Mrs. Warne.

KATE: I've been a seamstress, so I could make costumes. I've done some acting and... sleight-of-hand performances. And I can read people. Exceptionally well. *[A single sustained violin note...]* You, for instance, Mr. Pinkerton, I can tell from the way you finger that ring you're happily married, though the state of your dress shirt shows me you often sleep in this office. Your bearing betrays that you used to be in the army... no, on the police force. But I think you're better at giving orders than taking them. Your hesitance to sit down told me you aren't above trying to intimidate a woman, which is entirely acceptable, but it also means you don't want to take me seriously. Which is a mistake.

PINKERTON: How did your husband die?

KATE: Why do you--?

PINKERTON: No husband would allow his wife to enter this line of work, so you are either here against his wishes, or he is dead. Are you here against your husband's wishes, Mrs. Warne?

KATE: *[quick intake of breath]* My husband is dead, sir.

PINKERTON: You have my condolences.

KATE: Thank you.

PINKERTON: You're clever, I grant you. But it takes more than smarts to be a detective. It takes steel. Sewing clothes and play-acting aren't precisely what I'm looking for. I have no way to judge your steel.

KATE: How can I prove it to you?

PINKERTON: Are you an honest, God-fearing woman?

KATE: I fail to see why my faith is relevant to catching criminals.

PINKERTON: This job requires you to lie, Mrs. Warne. Well and often and without a second thought. As a detective, I not only lie, I steal. I take the only thing a criminal truly calls his own: his pride. Have you ever befriended a criminal? It's a rare thing for a criminal to have someone he can trust. To gain that trust, I must disguise myself so completely, I forget who I really am. I'm no longer Allan Pinkerton; I'm George Gordon, an unscrupulous bank teller who needs a friend because my personal funds have run a little thin of late; Or Mr. Maroney, a cargo expressman with the keys to the strongbox, who likes to play the ponies. I live these lies. They are the truth - right up 'til the moment when I rip away my disguise, and the detective resurfaces. Then my felonious friend looks me in the eye, and he isn't outraged; he's saddened by my betrayal. And so, I ask you again, Mrs. Warne, are you an honest, God-fearing woman?

KATE: I know there's a difference between lying for a good reason and a bad one.

PINKERTON: But can you live with that difference?

KATE: For all you know, everything I've told you today was a lie.

PINKERTON: And was it?

KATE: You tell me. I see. I'll take up no more of your time.

TESLA: *[echo]* Her proposal has merit.

PINKERTON: Your proposal has merit. Tomorrow, 10 o'clock, be here, and I'll introduce you to the rest of the agency. Start you on the essentials. Pay is \$2 a day.

[The Noösphere ripples.]

MARY-CELESTE *[disembodied voice]:* Nikola.

[The Noösphere ripples.]

TESLA: Mary-Celeste. I'm back.

[Tesla powers down the finial, the Tesla Coil sound rises then dies away.]

[The Noösphere theme resumes.]

TESLA: What happened to me, Mary-Celeste?

MARY-CELESTE *[disembodied voice]:* The Finial conducted me to open a Tether, and then you vanished...Please don't leave like that again.

TESLA: I assure you, it was quite unintentional.

MARY-CELESTE *[disembodied voice]:* Do you wish to record your observations now?

TESLA: I do, indeed.

[Tesla scratches furiously into a notebook.]

[Organ music]

MARY-CELESTE: And that, dear listeners, is where we must leave our adventurers, for now. But remember, nothing in the Noösphere happens by chance. You were meant to hear this story.

ANNOUNCER: Next time in The Baltimore Plot:

[The Noösphere ripples.]

BYRON: Ideas are in motion, my dear. Dangerous people are making dangerous plans. My colleagues and I inspire 'precautions' to prevent these dangerous plans from coming to fruition. Mr. Pinkerton is one of those precautions.

KATE: Who are you?

BYRON: We're out of time, Mrs. Warne.

KATE: Get your hands off me.

BYRON: I promise I'm here to help.

KATE: Mysterious men may be charming, but they're rarely honest.

BYRON: I've done nothing but help you.

KATE: You're not telling me the whole truth. I can see that clearly enough.

BYRON: Then you must also see that you can trust me. *[Impasse.]* Fine. I'll show you.

[Credits music.]

ANNOUNCER: Pendant Productions would like to express our thanks to our stars:

Alyssa Kay as Lady Ada Lovelace,
Marena Kleinpeter as Kate Warne,
Daniel Christensen as Lord Byron,
Sherif Amin as Nikola Tesla,
Caitlin Frances as Leah Fox,
Troy Lund as Allan Pinkerton, Imogen Love as Mary-Celeste and a Lady,
and Mark Fox as the station master and other voices.
Advertisements were read by Shawnmarie Stanton and
I am Roy Stanton.

SILON was conceived and written by Darian Lindle. The Baltimore Plot was originally produced as a stage play directed by Meghan Shalom Arnette for Live Girls! Theater. This episode was directed by V C Morrison and assistant directed by Paul Brueggemann.

Songs "The Game Stays the Same," "A Desperate Move," "Driven Beyond Measure," "A Lovely Night," and "Standing Tall" by Josh Molen at TheTunePeddler.com.

Other original music and the SILON theme were composed by Michael Owcharuk. Some sound cues created by Stefanie Senior. Produced by Pendant Productions. This production is Copyright 2021 Pendant Productions and Live Girls! Theater.

Stay safe and good luck.

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[An old-timey radio tuner moves up and down the dial again, ending in radio static.]