

SPR

S01E09

Written by

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NEWS ONE

55

INT. NEWS STUDIO

55

In the studio.

UNDERWRITER

This is SPR.

WENLING CHEN

Mr Projection of the Projector Corp has reportedly lost his power ring. The public has been warned that if you find yourself in possession of the ring, try not to think of anything dangerous, as it will materialize.

UNDERWRITER

That was Wenling Chen reporting from SPR, Portland.

DEIRDRE WILSON

The deportation of Cosmos has split the country along political and ideological lines. The most prominent - and surprising criticism comes from within the Whitehouse itself.

(then)

Vice President Norris shocked members of his own party when he voiced support for Cosmos after he was asked about it in unrelated press briefing this morning...

SFX: Cameras. Murmur.

NORRIS

Look, I have disagreements with the President almost every day. I think that by making an example of Cosmos, he's not only alienated our alien citizens, but our powered citizens.

(then)

The strength of our country lies within them. We cannot hold our place as the world's premier superpower without them.

(then)

(MORE)

NORRIS (CONT'D)

I voiced these concerns to the President, and he thanked me for them. Obviously he chose a different path.

REPORTER, VP PRESS, E9
Why do you believe he's made this the key issue of his administration? Six months ago we were talking about tax cuts and foreign policy, what changed?

NORRIS

Well as you remember, President Ames had a heart attack then. We were all shocked at hearing that news, none more than I.

(then)

But that experience... Invigorated him. When I was finally allowed to see him, I no longer saw the man I had campaigned with all those years ago, but a man possessed. He told me he had a vision of a stronger county, and this was the way to do it. He never told me what inspired him, but I am his Vice President and serve at his pleasure.

REPORTER, VP PRESS, E9
How does expelling the strongest man on the planet make us stronger?

NORRIS

You will have to ask him that question ma'am.

SFX: Reporter surge.

DEIRDRE WILSON

Press Secretary Jill Wessell insisted that the White House remains united even in the wake of the Vice President's Comments.

UNDERWRITER

That was Deirdre Wilson reporting from Washington. It's 73 degrees here in Paradise City. Coming up next is 100 Percent Invisible...

END NEWS ONE

ACT ONE

56 INT. 100I STUDIO

56

In the studio.

ARES

This is 100% Invisible, I'm Ares Greco.

(then)

From volcanoes to icebergs, some of the greatest architectural achievements have been made in places almost no one will see - by design. Creating a super hero headquarters is trusted to a select few names in the engineering world and one of those names is with us today. Artemus Deco.

DECO

Hello Ares.

ARES

So you've worked on some of the grandest buildings on earth, from the Cave of Wonders to the Lighthouse of Freedom. Buildings known for elaborate architecture, technological innovations, state of the art security, and magic crystals. Grand and imposing works of art. But you didn't work on those parts of the building.

DECO

(laughs)

No.

ARES

So what do you do?

DECO

I make doors.

ARES

Doors?

DECO

Doors.

DECO (CONT'D)

I specialize in making hidden entrances and exits for secret bases. Let's say you're a superhero

--

ARES

That's ridiculous. Me? I couldn't. I'm just a radio host. Oh, hypothetically. Right.

DECO

You spend a good amount of time out in the world, which gives your nemesis ample opportunity to get into your headquarters, and most of them would eventually get in, if they knew where it was. Secrecy is the only protection most heroes have.

ARES

I'm trying to imagine what that would be like, but okay?

DECO

Now, when you're designing a secret entrance, there's three things you have to keep in mind: function, aesthetics, and convenience. It has to work, be inscrutable to the naked eye, and it has to be on theme. You couldn't have The Goatman coming out of a Toys R Us. And it has to be immediate. Heroes need to deploy quickly and return quickly. When everything goes right, you don't even notice. But if one of those three fails, that's where you run into problems.

ARES

And you've literally written the book on this: "DANGER: ROAD CLOSED. Declassified secrets of the secret entrance." In it you talk about some pretty big disasters that most people never knew happened.

DECO

Yes. In the Gilded Age of heroes you had a lot of Do It Yourselfers. There wasn't the Legion with their engineering corp.

(MORE)

DECO (CONT'D)

So heroes were mostly figuring things out on their own. They had some ingenious ideas, they just didn't have the engineering to back them up.

ARES

There's a particularly good story about Croesus from back in the late 1940's. Croesus, super strong, can punch through a mountain, but he wasn't very fast. So he had his trademark plane, the Golden Jet, that would launch out of his base and deliver him where he needed to go around the world.

SFX: Old Recording.

DICK WILLIAMS

For SPR WorldWide, deep beneath the Black Hills of Deadwood, South Dakota, I'm Dick Williams. We're here inside the secret headquarters of Croesus, the golden giant.

CROESUS

Thanks for coming Dick.

DICK WILLIAMS

Behind me are the six legendary Golden Jets. Tell me, are those things real gold?

CROESUS

Only on the outside!

DICK WILLIAMS

Wow, the legendary wealth of Croesus at work!

Back to studio.

DECO

We now know that Croesus was millionaire mining tycoon Lance Finley. Unfortunately for him, so did Hex-Patriot, his greatest nemesis. That news footage led Hex right to the secret fortress under Lance's mansion and he smoked the hero out.

(MORE)

DECO (CONT'D)

Croesus was one of the richest men in the world at the time, so he merely packed up the remains and moved shop to one of his abandoned mines.

SFX: Old Recording.

DICK WILLIAMS

We're here inside Croesus's *new* secret headquarters, which I have been led to by helicopter and blindfold.

CROESUS

Thanks for coming Dick.

Back to studio.

DECO

The new HQ integrated all of the latest technology, but the actual layout remained largely the same. He had paid my father, Jupiter Deco, to create the original hanger for his golden jets and ever the business man, figured he could use the same design.

ARES

What was the problem?

DECO

There's a number of factors that affect the length of runway you need for a successful takeoff. The engine power, the weight and design of the aircraft. But the original golden jets survived Hex-Patriot, so no problems there.

(then)

But then there's the less obvious factors such as temperature and altitude. The colder the air, the more dense it is. The higher the altitude, the less dense it is. And the less dense the air, the longer the runway you need is.

ARES

Well up in the mountains, it's high up, but it's colder too, doesn't it balance out?

DECO

Yes, but he was in the Rockies and it doesn't get much higher than that. So the Golden Giant found himself a little short?

ARES

How short?

DECO

1500 feet.

ARES

Oh no.

DECO

Yeah. So it's six months later and they're all moved in, when in comes his first mission out of the new base.

(then)

This was stopping Hex-Patriot from blowing up the first Hoover Dam.

(then)

Creosus got the call and...

(then)

Well, the permafrost disguising the entrance took most of the impact. That's not the worst part.

ARES

Crashing a jet full speed into a mountain wasn't the worst part?

DECO

No.

(then)

He survived. His team did full mechanical analysis on the remaining five planes and didn't find anything wrong, so they assumed it was sabotage. So when he had recovered...

ARES

Oh no.

SFX: Old recording.

DICK WILLIAMS

We're here with Croesus at the Sacred Heart Hospital as he recovers from his recent crash.

(MORE)

DICK WILLIAMS (CONT'D)
Croesus, did Hex Patriot have
anything to do with this sabotage?

CROESUS
Thanks for coming Dick. I have no
doubt that he had something to do
with this. But rest assured once
I'm out of this full body cast I
will bring him to justice.

Back to studio.

DECO
Hex of course had nothing to do
with it, but Croesus was convinced.
Maybe it was because after Hex blew
up the dam, he sent a bouquet of
flowers to Croesus's hospital room.
They were sure Hex had tampered
with the plane. So when he was able
to walk again...

SFX: Old recording.

DICK WILLIAMS
We're back at the secret gilded
cave of Croesus. He is primed and
ready to take flight to celebrate
his release from the hospital.

CROESUS
Thanks for coming Dick. Don't you
worry, next time you see me I'll
have Hex Patriot in handcuffs.

DICK WILLIAMS
Godspeed Golden Giant!

SFX: Jet noise. Explosion.

DECO
Yup. Down another plane. After
that, he brought in a team from
Boeing and it took them about three
minutes to figure out what
happened.

ARES
So did this sort of thing happen a
lot?

DECO

More than you'd like to think. Creosus was wealthy and had a support staff, and even that wasn't enough. For a lot of other heroes, they were literally doing it on their own.

ARES

Any advice?

DECO

Well, now there are resources out there. The Legion and a lot of smart people working online. What I'd say is that if you're going for something complicated, don't be afraid to call in an expert. This is one area where you shouldn't try and be a hero.

Music.

ARES

Special thanks to Artemus Deco. His book is: "DANGER: ROAD CLOSED. Declassified Secrets of the Secret Entrance," available in bookstores now.

(then)

Thanks to the whole 100% Invisible team. We will back next time with more stories of design...

END ACT ONE

NEWS TWO

57 INT. AD BREAK

57

In the studio.

ADS

Support for SPR comes from...

(then)

Shieldspace. Let's face it: designing a secret hideout is a hassle, from hiring architects to getting permits for that waterfall entrance. With Shieldspace's all-in-one platform, you design it and we'll do the rest.

(then)

Shieldspace makes it easy for you with free, unlimited designs, address privacy, and 24/7 support.

(then)

Visit Shieldspace and start designing your secret lair now. A better lair starts with Shieldspace. Enter SPRPOD at our website to get a 10 percent discount on your first lair.

58 INT. NEWS STUDIO

58

In the studio.

DEIRDRE WILSON

Live from SPR news in Washington, I'm Deirdre Wilson.

(then)

Cosmos has been sighted for the first time since his deportation from the United States.

(then)

Cell phone footage smuggled out of Tzarpathia, shows the hero flying out of Tzargestall, ancestral home of the Nokov family. In his arms appears to be Galatea, the android prototype developed by Prince Nokov. Tzarpathian State Media denied that the figure seen with Cosmos was Galatea, stating that the Prince was successful in fighting off the hero.

(MORE)

DEIRDRE WILSON (CONT'D)

(then)

The President has demanded the Heroic Legion disavow Cosmos. Iron Barracuda called a press conference in response to the President's statement...

SFX: On location. Hushed murmurs.

IRON BARRACUDA

The Heroic Legion has operated independently at home and abroad since its inception. Our Mission is simply to "Do Good." To stand against villainy where ever it may be found. However...

(then)

Our independence depends on sound judgement, and acting for the greater good. The actions taken by Cosmos in Tzarpathia were in breach of international law.

(then)

So, it is with a heavy heart that we strip Cosmos of his membership and title. Should he return to the United States, it will be under the designation: Villain.

In the studio.

DEIRDRE WILSON

The President went on to the praise the Heroic Legion, inviting Iron Barracuda to the White House to discuss increased funding.

UNDERWRITER

That was Deirdre Wilson reporting from Washington. It's 75 degrees here in Paradise City. Coming up next is The Utility Belt...

END NEWS TWO

ACT TWO

59 INT. UB STUDIO

59

In the studio.

STAN

Live from deep within our secret fortress.

WHIZ KID

QTRP studios in Milwaukee. Next to the Panda Express.

STAN

For your gadgets and gizmos, it's your dynamos of dynamite, the pair in repairs, the quip men for your equipment.

WHIZ KID

This is The Utility Belt.

STAN

That's right. With me as always is a literal brain child, the now 11 year old wunderkind, it's Whiz Kid.

WHIZ KID

And putting the literal con in contrived openers, it's Stan the Henchman.

Both laugh.

PRODUCER BOT

End Banter. END BANTER.

WHIZ KID

Thanks Producer Bot.

STAN

Does Producer Bot seem a little short tempered today?

WHIZ KID

I might have tinkered with the programming limits of his banter tolerance.

STAN

Ah, I play with the limits of
people's tolerance all the time, so
--

PRODUCER BOT

Warning. End Banter.

SFX: Laser charges up.

WHIZ KID

Oh, maybe I set the parameters a
little too strictly.

PRODUCER BOT

5. 4. 3...

STAN

How about a call?

SFX: Laser powers down.

WHIZ KID

Okay yes, we have a caller.
DayKnight - that's Knight with a K -
from Baltimore.

STAN

Like Day as in daytime and Knight
like of the Round Table?

WHIZ KID

Yeah, Day-Knight. Sounds
chivalrous.

STAN

Sounds indecisive.

SFX: Laser charges up.

WHIZ KID

DayKnight, what's your major
malfunction?

SFX: Bird sounds. Slight breeze. Far off traffic.

DAYKNIGHT

You know the Epoch Tower in
Baltimore?

STAN

Quite well, giant building,
beautiful. Lots of gothic touches,
old gargoyles?

(MORE)

STAN (CONT'D)

Used to be a highlight when I did walking tours in downtown Baltimore.

WHIZ KID

You did walking tours of Baltimore?

STAN

Dr. Demented made all us henchmen do it to make sure we were tough enough for his undying army. That's a good 60 story building. Great views of the whole city.

DAYKNIGHT

(strained)

Yes, that's why I like it.

WHIZ KID

So how can we help?

DAYKNIGHT

Well I have a issue with my grappling hook. It's a 2013 Deployer class grappler.

WHIZ KID

Pneumatic. Carbon fiber cable. Good model. Think Goatman uses it. The 300 foot?

DAYKNIGHT

Yep, spared no expense. Get off of me!

SFX: Bird wings.

STAN

Great model. Have you been using it since 2013?

DAYKNIGHT

Yeah, and I've never had problems with it before.

(grunt)

But well, I'm stuck.

STAN

Okay, tell us about it.

DAYKNIGHT

Well I was going up the Epoch Building and it fired, latched, got the latch confirmation and started retracting and right around the (looks around) 40th floor, it stopped working.

WHIZ KID

Are you up there now?

SFX: Gravel fall.

DAYKNIGHT

(Grunting)

Yeah.

STAN

You know something I remember from my tours is that that building has an elevator.

DAYKNIGHT

I know, I know. But.

STAN

You're a hero and it looks way cooler?

WHIZ KID

Presentation is a big part of it. Besides you've probably done this before right DayKnight?

DAYKNIGHT

All the time. Never had this problem.

WHIZ KID

Important question. Is the latch confirmation indicator light still green?

DAYKNIGHT

Yes. But there's another light and they're both flashing.

WHIZ KID

Yellow light?

DAYKNIGHT

Yeah.

WHIZ KID

STAN

Hmm.

Hmm.

STAN (CONT'D)

Okay, I have a question. Is there a NightKnight who takes over when you get off duty?

DAYKNIGHT

No?

STAN

An EveningKnight?

WHIZ KID

Stan.

SFX: Laser blast. Debris.

STAN

Okay, okay. So, have you had to replace any of the parts since you first bought it?

DAYKNIGHT

Just the um... What do you call, the gas canisters weren't firing right.

WHIZ KID

The loading canister or the pressure capsule?

DAYKNIGHT

Pressure capsule, yeah. Took it to an authorized dealer. That was maybe two years ago.

STAN

And that's it?

DAYKNIGHT

Yeah. But they gave it a full inspection.

STAN

Ah, when you sent it in, did they mention anything about the feeder spring?

DAYKNIGHT

No. Hup.

STAN

So there's two parts that make up the retracting mechanism.

(MORE)

STAN (CONT'D)

One is a nano-motor that pulls the cable back into the launcher and those are great. Rated to 500 pounds, self-repairing, really great. The other part is the feeder spring, which keeps tension on the cable and pulls it into the nano-motor. It's this spring that tells the device that there's a secure connection so it knows to pull you up.

WHIZ KID

Have you noticed a little lurching or jerkiness coming up before?

DAYKNIGHT

Yeah. A couple times last month but rarely.

STAN

Now what can happen over time is that the spring gets a little worn and so the device doesn't register a latch when you're going up. The device panics and freezes the rotor. But you should be able to manually --

SFX: Cable twang. DayKnight drops a few feet.

DAYKNIGHT

Oh shit -- Just fell a couple feet there.

WHIZ KID

Ohh. Might also have a loose locking brake, which makes sense since that's also tied to the feeder spring. So you have two options, technically three. Can you get onto a ledge or into a window?

DAYKNIGHT

Not above the 8th floor, windows don't open.

STAN

They're also bulletproof.

WHIZ KID

Okay, well then you're going to want to try and override. It's easier to go down than up.

STAN

No kidding.

DAYKNIGHT

Down?

STAN

No, no he's right. How's your upper body strength?

DAYKNIGHT

Good. Ish.

STAN

You could climb up manually, but you'd have to worry about the hook disengaging, which it can do if you take pressure off the launcher. So don't do that!

DAYKNIGHT

Okay. I was going to try that next, so thanks for warning.

WHIZ KID

You have two buttons on the right side, one is the hook release button --

SFX: Beep. Clank. Man falling and screaming very faintly.

WHIZ KID (CONT'D)

Which you don't want to press. The other is the line release, which will feed out line just like on a fishing pole. You press that and you'll get a little slack and should descend at a more reasonable pace.

STAN

More reasonable than the alternative.

WHIZ KID

Yeah, from 40 floors, that'd sting.

STAN

I've done it.

WHIZ KID

Land on your head?

STAN

Sure, benefits of a thick skull.

WHIZ KID

Anyway, when you get down I'd take it in for a full diagnostic. Good news is that the spring is only a 5-6 dollar part. Okay?

SFX: Thud.

WHIZ KID (CONT'D)

DayKnight?

STAN

Hello? Hmm. Okay, we lost him. Maybe it was time for the mid-afternoon knight to take over.

PRODUCER BOT

Call terminated. 5 seconds of banter permitted.

STAN

Okay we're going to loosen the bolts on Producer Bot and be back with more calls and hopefully no falls. As always, if you have tech questions, we've got answers.

WHIZ KID

Give us a call at 414-555-BELT. That's 414-555-BELT.

STAN

I am Stan the Henchman.

WHIZ KID

I'm Billy the Whiz Kid.

STAN

And this was The Utility Belt!

WHIZ KID (CONT'D)

And this was The Utility Belt!

Banjo music.

END ACT TWO

NEWS THREE

60 INT. NEWS STUDIO

60

In the studio.

DEIRDRE WILSON

From SPR news in Washington I'm
Deirdre Wilson.

(then)

The Heroic Legion has come under
scrutiny after the announcement
that Seattle has been chosen as the
new home of for Tower Two.

(then)

What was expected to be a
celebrated announcement was instead
met by masked protesters at each
Legion outpost in the city. Ben
Beltzer was on the scene.

SFX: On location. Sirens. Clamor. Light rain.

PROTESTORS

Roads not spandex. Roads not
spandex. Roads not spandex.

BEN BELTZER

The chant has become the slogan of
the resistance here in Seattle, new
home of Tower Two, and the only
place that did not want it.

PROTESTORS

Schools not capes. Schools not
capes. Schools not capes.

BEN BELTZER

The protest has taken aim at the
controversial tax breaks the city
has given the Legion to construct
the tower, breaks that only became
public after the announcement was
made. Riot police were deployed and
were swiftly pushed back by the
protestors. Mayor Takahashi
requested aid from the Legion and
they dispatched a group of
trainees.

BLUE BELLE

Stay back!

SFX: Energy blast. Rubble. Screams. Sirens. Light rain.

BEN BELTZER

Television crews caught Legion Trainee Blue Belle severely injuring a group of protestors and then flying away from the scene.

(then)

The Legion has placed Blue Belle on administrative leave pending an internal investigation. The protests are ongoing.

DEIRDRE WILSON

Legion head Iron Barracuda is scheduled to hold a press conference early tomorrow to talk about the incident. More on this story as it develops.

UNDERWRITER

That was Deirdre Wilson reporting from Washington.

(then)

UNDERWRITER (CONT'D)

Today's show was written and produced by John Dorsey and Maximilian Clark. Additional producing by Brendan Sokler and Carla Lerner, This episode's cast include (see website). With special thanks to Brenna Killeen.

(then)

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(then)

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(then)

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Outro:

UNDERWRITER (CONT'D)
...Coming up next, our man
underground, Moe Morlock takes us
on a tour of the civilization 2000
feet beneath our daylight world.

SFX: Music and fade out.

UNDERWRITER (CONT'D)
This is SPR.

END NEWS THREE

END EPISODE NINE