

SPR

S01E11

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NEWS ONE

67

INT. NEWS STUDIO

67

In the studio.

UNDERWRITER

This is SPR.

BEN BELTZER

Spark Industries stock dropped by nearly 65% following the announcement that CEO Vincent Spark was in fact vigilante superhero Metal Monger. The board has fired him and are seeking criminal charges, including embezzlement.

UNDERWRITER

That was Ben Beltzer, reporting from SPR Detroit.

DEIRDRE WILSON

From SPR News in Washington I'm Deirdre Wilson.

(then)

A meteor headed for Earth has been deflected at the last moment by Force Major. NASA apologized for the late notice of the apocalypse-sized asteroid, saying:

NASA PR REP

The reality is that space is just so very, very big. Surprise asteroids could strike at literally any moment without us seeing it. Just out of no where. Pow.

Makes explosion sound.

NASA PR REP (CONT'D)

We had requested money for a new telescope to monitor that region of space, but with the President's cutbacks to the Space Defense Program, we're basically out here using binoculars. In the meantime, thank goodness for Force Major.

UNDERWRITER

That was Deirdre Wilson reporting from Washington, up next is These American Supers. It's 72 degrees here in Paradise City. And now these American Supers...

END NEWS ONE

ACT ONE

68 INT. TAS STUDIO

68

In the studio.

ETHAN

With QSPZ Baltimore, it's These American Supers. I'm Ethan Schwartz.

(then)

It's been a couple months since we first ran our story about Henching in the Gig economy, "Bad Apples," but we wanted to update you on our lead, Tim.

(then)

Tim, whose real name is Harold Harrison, lost his case against the state of Arizona. The judge threw the book at him, charging him with felony henching, making his crime a Villainous Act.

(then)

We caught up with him at Saguaro Superhuman Prison for the state of Arizona.

SFX: Tim on phone. Prison walla in BG.

HAROLD

I thought I'd do my time in a normal prison, not one with laser bars.

ETHAN

Saguaro is infamous among villains. In its fifty year history, no one has broken out of it, though not for a lack of trying.

HAROLD

They give you your uniform, your new shoes, check your, you know.

(whistle)

For contraband. Honestly, it was a lot like signing up with croc command.

ETHAN

Were you scared?

HAROLD

I was terrified! I'm not superhuman! I barely finished college. They just shove you in and tell you not to eat the fish.

(then)

I mean it's Arizona, and prison, so yeah, the fish is never going to be good.

(back to it)

But... Yeah. I've never been so scared in my life.

ETHAN

So how is it?

HAROLD

Honestly...

Deep breath.

HAROLD (CONT'D)

...It's great.

ETHAN

Great?

HAROLD

Yeah. I mean, the facility is falling a part and the guards treat us like cattle, but the guys here are awesome.

(then)

We do yoga every morning, lift weights. Depending on what you're into, there's a club for everything.

(then)

I'm apart of a DND game that plays twice a week. I've always wanted to play DND.

SFX: Dice rolling. Men cheering.

HAROLD (CONT'D)

Obviously I wish I was a home with my wife, but you have to make the make the best of a bad situation.

ETHAN

Tim left shortly thereafter to join his cellmate Toe jammer for Shakespeare night.

Music.

ETHAN (CONT'D)

When the whole world's against you,
you have to support the man beside
you, even if he did get his
nickname for breaking the pinky
toes of a hundred men.

(then)

In the spirit of our friend Harold,
we give you the theme of today's
episode: "Sympathy for the Devil."
Stories from the other side of
Justice. Our tale is told in two
acts.

(then)

Act One, House Mom. Producer Ellen
Spiegel has the story...

RUTH

I like to think of them as my boys,
after all, I made their lunches,
mended their clothes - but yes, I
guess most people would call them a
"Death Squad."

ELLEN SPIEGEL

For thirty years, Ruth Gainstrom
has been shopper, cook, and "house
mom" to some of the most sinister
forces in the world.

RUTH

Everybody has to eat.

(then)

That's what my mom used to say. She
had a boarding house in the Bronx
and we used to get all types. I
said the same thing when people
asked why I started working for The
Green Venom.

ELLEN SPIEGEL

Ruth lived a quiet suburban life
until her husband died in 1995,
leaving her with a mortgage and in
desperate need of work.

RUTH

I spent a few years as a
housekeeper for some well-to-do
families in Westchester. A little
tidying, a little cooking, making
do.

(MORE)

RUTH (CONT'D)

One day I see this ad in the newspaper: "Looking for some excitement? Strong domestic skills? The Venom wants you!" I was 55 with no kids, and I thought to myself, I don't think I've ever done anything exciting before in my life. So I went in for an interview.

ELLEN SPIEGEL

And just like that she was working for one of the largest terrorist organizations in the country.

RUTH

I had been working for a real estate mogul at the time, so the transition was pretty easy.

(then)

There was a lot of travel, which I liked. But it was after they took those UN Delegates hostage back in 98 that it all started to feel different. It began to feel like I was doing something important.

(then)

When Palladium put Venom in jail, I just kept working for villains. It was good money and I always found them just a little more polite than the heroes I'd worked for.

(then)

It was like being an undercover celebrity. I kept expecting people to recognize me. I'd be at a Costco buying 400 eggs when I'd think: "I was just in a laboratory watching a bear get fused with a scorpion and here I am in public just being little old Ruth."

ELLEN SPIEGEL

Soon other villains took notice and began to hire house moms of their own.

(then)

Some would kidnap them from local retirement communities. A few reanimated them from local graveyards.

(then)

Villains wanted a mom, and they would stop at nothing to get one. But there was no one like Ruth.

RUTH

Sundays we'd have these big meals for the whole gang. That's important to me, getting everyone together. And after a while, some other kids would show up. Stanley, the hench-person was a regular fixture.

(then)

Dr. Riot would pop in around 5pm some weeks just to "share resources," but he'd stay for dinner.

(then)

Whenever I made my special Stuffed Manicotti it looked like the Council of Evil was in town. They'd bring old ripped capes or burnt clothes and I wouldn't make a fuss, they'd come away with them patched and cleaned and maybe with a homemade muffin if they were lucky.

ELLEN SPIEGEL

As many henchmen have found, working for villains carries a social stigma, but Ruth never let it bother her.

RUTH

People say "Oh, they're evil, they need to be defeated."

(then)

The things that mean Attorney General tried to tell me when they were charging Kevin with trying to destroy St. Louis. But they don't know my boys like I do. People see the mask and the robots and the monsters.

(then)

People don't see them crying because their giant robot got destroyed, or heartbroken when a country rejects their leadership. I'm the one wiping glowing tears from their eyes. These are good boys who just need a mom. And that's what I am.

ELLEN SPIEGEL

Ruth has been called in front of grand juries a whopping twenty eight times in the last thirty years, but has refused to testify against any of her employers.

(then)

Every-time, she has said: "I will never tell on my boys."

(then)

Ruth is now retired and living in Caracas, Venezuela.

ETHAN

That was Ellen Spiegel. We'll be back for Act Two. That's in a minute. After the news break...

END ACT ONE

NEWS TWO

69 INT. AD BREAK

69

In the studio.

ADS

Support for SPR comes from...

(then)

Laky. Do you dream about being your own boss? Setting your own hours with competitive pay? Henching could be right for you. Being a henchman isn't about serving others, it's about serving yourself.

(then)

With Laky, you can pick your boss and your job. Want to drive? Drive! Want to work with your hands? Bring your boxing gloves! Want excitement? We paint houses!

(then)

Laky is about empowering you to reach your full potential. Learn why henching with Laky is a better alternative to an office job or other henching apps. Laky. Henching made easy.

70 INT. NEWS STUDIO

70

In the studio.

DEIRDRE WILSON

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

(then)

Facing substantial pressure from the White House, the Heroic Legion has agreed to comply with Homeland Security requests for information they have on Aliens living in America.

(then)

The move has been criticized by Legion members, stating this goes against the charter, while Legion Leader Iron Barracuda insists they are just following the law.

UNDERWRITER

That was Deirdre Wilson reporting
from Washington. It's 74 degrees
here in Paradise City. And now back
to These American Supers...

END NEWS TWO

ACT TWO

71 INT. TAS STUDIO

71

In the studio.

ETHAN

We've arrived at Act 2 of our program. Act 2, "No Stopping Us Now," what happens when a villain has the perfect plan for holding the world hostage.

(then)

Producer Hailey Frond has the story...

DR. INSANO

The hardest part about holding the world hostage is that sooner or later, you have to tell everyone you're doing it. That's when you find out how good you really are.

HAILEY FROND

Dr. Insano is a name that many West Coasters may remember from his 1993 attempt to activate the Yellowstone Super Volcano.

(then)

He speaks to us from the Heroic Legion Reformation Center in an undisclosed location.

DR. INSANO

It's not hard building a doomsday machine, *mein gott*, most people these days have a hard time **not** destroying the Earth.

(then)

All you need is the right materials, the right people, and the right attitude. Laws of Physics crave destruction. The issue isn't building the machine, it's how do you keep it safe from someone like Cosmos? That's what keeps you up at night.

PHOBOS

We really came close, though, didn't we?

HAILEY FROND

Phobos Marina, Dr. Insano's long
time assistant.

PHOBOS

There was this energy at the time,
when that countdown clock went
live, that maybe, just this once,
we'd done what no one else had.

DR. INSANO

It was spring of nineteen... ninety
one, I think. I was driving. All my
best schemes come while driving. Oh
I miss it. The radio had announced
Heroic Legion was instituting a one
Hero policy. Keep heroes off each
other's toes. It had always been
understood, but then they got the
lawyers involved.

(He laughs.)

Human selfishness. They want their
territory, their brand. You could
just tell that this was the window.
Because what it meant for
"villains" is that you could
effectively choose your nemesis.

PHOBOS

I remember the doctor sent this
drone into my bedroom and woke me
up with a hologram, and it told
me...

(Dr. Insano Voice)

"Vee are going to Wyoming!"

(Normal voice)

Then it exploded. And I was like,
great. Wyoming. Right in the heart
of the action.

DR. INSANO

Wyoming at the time had just one
hero; Leapfrog. A child doing the
work of an adult. And why not, what
happens in Wyoming?

PHOBOS

It took about eighteen months to
build the lair. Design was my
specialty. I have an doctorate in
structural engineering.

(adding)

Or would have if I hadn't
incinerated the thesis committee.

(MORE)

PHOBOS (CONT'D)

Wyoming has strong bedrock,
inhospitable mountains. There's a
lot to work with. It was exciting.

DR. INSANO

Now, you have to defend your
machine against mundane intruders,
special ops, the FBI, but human
defenses are child's work.
Protecting against supers takes
nuance. Cunning.

PHOBOS

We set a devious trap for Leapfrog.
(then)

I climbed into a hole and called
out for help and when Leapfrog came
bounding up. Bam. I hit him in the
head with a baseball bat. Child's
play. As the team loaded the boy
into a cage, the Doctor and I
shared this look. That was the
moment we realized, "We're really
doing this."

DR. INSANO

The hero was imprisoned and sedated
three days before we went live, the
machine's failsafes all checking
out, the countdown clock ticking
down. That's when I made the
speech.

PHOBOS

The Doctor went on the PA in the
control room and...

(then)

He said it. He really said it.

DR. INSANO

"Nothing can stop us now!"

Evil laugh.

DR. INSANO (CONT'D)

I believed it too. I didn't know
how right I was.

PHOBOS

I remember sitting by his side,
over the control room, waiting for
our Cayman island account to
register the transfer of funds,
finger over the "abort" button.

(MORE)

PHOBOS (CONT'D)

I couldn't stop smiling. The whole gang, it was the biggest thing any of us had done, it felt like being a part of history.

DR. INSANO

But then no money. We had but ten minutes left on the clock and still. I called the president and no answer. I call UN, no answer. I call Bill Gates, he answers, thinks I am prank call, hangs up.

(then)

So here we were. Big drill, payload intact. I had our engineers run diagnostics. Everyone checked in. Alarms quiet. No money.

PHOBOS

There was a lot of nervous laughter in the room. Myself included. We just watched the drill revving up and one of our henchmen, uh, Stan, I think, he said something like:

(Stan impression)

"I guess they choose death?"

(then)

And all of a sudden it wasn't all that funny anymore.

DR. INSANO

They had to pay. They HAD to. Otherwise the entire Earth would be choked by ash, plants would die, nations would freeze and starve.

PHOBOS

We would die first. We knew that going in, of course, but you see these things ending in two ways. Either they pay up or they stop you, you don't ever really think about what happens if it's door number three.

DR. INSANO

I remember Stan, good guy, we all liked Stan, he made joke about them choosing death. And we all just got quiet. My men, and women of course, they all were looking at me, and I saw that there were those that would do it. An amazing team. But am I zealot? No.

(MORE)

DR. INSANO (CONT'D)

(then)

We just wanted money.

PHOBOS

The countdown ticked down to one and still no ransom. It was weird, we were all holding our breath like "Someone's going to stop us, right?" It made a lot of us wonder what we were really all doing there. Then the Doc, he puts a hand on my shoulder, and that was it.

DR. INSANO

Who, I ask, is the real bad guy? I ask you. We have made the case of course, that I saved day. After all, who powered down drill?

Music.

PHOBOS

They called our bluff. We all were a little rattled. After all, a different boss, a different day and we all would be eating lava.

HAILEY FROND

So what happened next?

DR. INSANO

The Government of course, gave themselves a big pat on the back, so smug and self-assured.

(then)

I think that's why I decided the Grand Teton had to go. I mean, we were there anyway, we had the explosives. Makes you wonder though, how close we've all come. If I was in a worse mood...

(then)

How could they know? How could they REALLY know? Now that's what keeps me up at night.

HAILEY FROND

Dr. Insano's therapists have gone on record saying he's made tremendous progress at the Rehabilitation Center, leading meditation on Tuesdays.

ETHAN

That was Hailey Frond, reporting
from an undisclosed location.

(then)

That's our show, a special thanks
for the Heroic Legion for allowing
us access to Dr. Insano. Of course,
before we publish our episodes we
always ask ourselves:

DR. INSANO

"Someone's going to stop us,
right?"

ETHAN

We'll be back soon, with more of
These American Supers....

Music.

END ACT TWO

NEWS THREE

72 INT. NEWS STUDIO

72

In the studio.

DEIRDRE WILSON

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

(then)

Two young empowered teens were
caught stealing the St. Louis Arch
early this afternoon, but it has
since been returned. The city has
yet to decide if it is going to
press charges stating... Stand by
we have breaking news.

(then)

It's being reported that the
President has been shot while
giving a speech to the National ISM
conference in Cleveland. SPR
reporter Wenling Chen is on the
scene.

SFX: Panic. Screams. Sirens.

WENLING CHEN

Thank you Deirdre. Moments ago
three shots rung out in the hall
and the President collapsed to the
ground. As he was being escorted
out by the secret service, his face
seemed to... Shift between several
different personas.

DEIRDRE WILSON

Can you elaborate?

WENLING CHEN

I would be speculating. But, my
guess is the President has
unconfirmed superhuman abilities or
it's something else entirely.

DEIRDRE WILSON

Has the would be assassin been
caught?

WENLING CHEN

He remains at large.

DEIRDRE WILSON

Stay safe Wenling.

(then)

We will keep you updated as this story develops.

UNDERWRITER

That was Deirdre Wilson reporting from Washington D.C.

(then)

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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Outro:

UNDERWRITER (CONT'D)

Coming up in the next hour, 10 hours of Beethoven as played by the Helsinki Hyper speed Orchestra.

SFX: End Music.

UNDERWRITER (CONT'D)

This is SPR.

END NEWS THREE

END EPISODE
ELEVEN