

SPR

S01E12

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NEWS ONE

73

INT. NEWS STUDIO

73

In the studio.

UNDERWRITER

This is SPR.

WENLING CHEN

Providence has announced that they are retiring the Goat-signal. Police Commissioner Howard Purcell said in a statement quote: "After 15 years, Goatman has finally acquiesced to our many, many requests for his phone number."

(then)

Experts predict this development will decrease crime spikes during cloudless nights by 15%"

UNDERWRITER

That was Wenling Chen, reporting from SPR Chicago.

DEIRDRE WILSON

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

(then)

Vice President Norris was officially sworn in today after President Amess finally succumbed to his gunshot wounds early this morning. Perhaps overshadowed by the revelation that President Ames was an Alien Doppelganger, President Norris opted for a quiet ceremony in the oval office followed by short remarks. He plans to address the nation later this afternoon, which SPR will broadcast live.

UNDERWRITER

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

END NEWS ONE

ACT ONE

74

INT. TAS STUDIO

74

In the studio.

ETHAN

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

(then)

Today I want to talk to you about a
friend of mine. You've probably
heard of her.

SFX: News recording. Roadside.

BEN BELTZER

Steel Trap, the world's most
unflappable mind, solved another of
the Puzzler's perplexing quandary
bombs, saving Philadelphia,
Pennsylvania from certain
catastrophe this Super-bowl Sunday.

Back to the studio.

ETHAN

To say that Steel Trap's mind is
unflappable is an understatement.
She has the world's most secure
mind.

(then)

She has a perfect photographic
memory, allowing her to recall any
moment of her life in detail. She
has used this ability to earn
doctorates in cryptography,
engineering, linguistics, sociology
and Mandarin Chinese. All at the
same time.

(adding)

She can resist the world's most
powerful psychics, can decide not
to feel pain and has been banned
from every scrabble tournament on
the planet. The Dalai Lama once
asked *her* advice on how to relax.

(then)

So when she called me one day with
a problem, I was shocked.

SFX: Phone recording.

ETHAN (CONT'D)
Tell me again what you just said.

STEEL TRAP
Again?

ETHAN
I'm recording it this time.

STEEL TRAP
Oh. Well...
(shame)
I have a song... Stuck in my head.

Music.

ETHAN
Our program today in one act: "The Ear Worm." How does a song get stuck in the world's most secure mind? In order to answer that question, we brought her into the studio to talk more.

STEEL TRAP
This has never happened to me. I can recall every commercial jingle I've ever heard, every pop song, every terrible piercing laugh.
(sigh)
But this song. Is stuck. In my head. I'm washing the dishes, it's there. I'm walking the dog, it's there. I'm sleeping, it's the soundtrack of my dreams. It's like a bird has flown into my ear and is just bouncing around my skull, defecating on the pristine mis en place of my inner thoughts. I do not know how normal people deal with this.

Aside.

ETHAN
Normal people might play the song over and over until they finally get bored of it. The problem is...

Back to interview.

STEEL TRAP
I can't find it anywhere.

ETHAN
Before Steel Trap came to my office, she had used every search engine and music site available to find the song. Each time, her search came up empty.
(then)
She expanded to social media, internet archives, even consulting audio and speech recognition companies to see if they could find it. Again, the search ended in failure.

Back to the studio.

STEEL TRAP
I can't tell you how many times I've had to sing it.

ETHAN
Can you sing it for us now?

STEEL TRAP
Sigh.
(then)
Ok it's like...
(boy band)
You can't tell me what to do, I'm gonna, I'm gonna do what I wanna do...

Ethan laughs away from the mic.

STEEL TRAP (CONT'D)
This has been tormenting me.

ETHAN
I know.

STEEL TRAP
It's not funny!

ETHAN
I'm sorry. Truly.
(then)
Do you mind if I play this for other people in the station?

STEEL TRAP
Go ahead.

Clip of Steel Trap singing: *"To do, I'm gonna, I'm gonna do what I wanna do..."*

ELLEN SPIEGEL

Oh my god. That's. That's...

(then)

Where do I know that from?

ETHAN

Recognize it?

ELLEN SPIEGEL

No...

Clip of Steel Trap singing: *"To do, I'm gonna, I'm gonna do what I wanna do..."*

ARES

That just might be the catchiest thing I've ever heard.

ETHAN

Do you know it?

ARES

It's like I heard it in a dream.

Clip of Steel Trap singing: *"To do, I'm gonna, I'm gonna do what I wanna do..."*

WHIZ KID

Is that supposed to be music?

STAN

Hey, Whiz Kid, I'm the old man here, I'm supposed to be complaining that songs aren't what they used to be.

WHIZ KID

Not arguing that, but what I mean is that from a structural perspective, it's less music and more like "Sonic Branding." Have you run this through Franklin yet?

STEEL TRAP

I am... Not a fan of artificial intelligence.

WHIZ KID

It was designed to solve the unsolvable. I should know. I created it.

STEEL TRAP

At this point I'm willing to try anything.

ETHAN

Franklin is an artificial intelligence, deep within Heroic Legion headquarters in Philadelphia.

(then)

Its creation lead to the Whiz Kid's expulsion from the Legion for breaking the Asimov Accords on artificial life.

(adding)

However, instead of terminating the AI, Whiz Kid lobbied to isolate it from the grid, allowing the legion to use its advanced programming to predict and defend the greatest threats to Earth. It is fed information via hard drives, which are in turn destroyed after each use. This is to prevent the intelligence from attempting to copy itself to the internet.

(then)

The Legion allowed us access to the AI with two conditions. Stan the Henchman had to stay 90 yards away from the facility, and we had to leave any smart device outside Franklin's faraday cage.

SFX: Huge room. Echoes. Music like "The Alien" from Annihilation echoes throughout.

ETHAN (CONT'D)

What is that sound?

WHIZ KID

What you are hearing is Franklin's thoughts.

(off a strange note)

They sing to them-self.

FRANKLIN

Hello Father.

WHIZ KID

Hello Franklin.

ETHAN

Franklin is an enormous black hourglass suspended from the ceiling. Diodes of light stream up and down it's surface without a fixed pattern.

(then)

It's hard to tell from the recording, but their voice comes from all sides of the room. Every time the being speaks I can feel it in my fillings.

FRANKLIN

Ethan Schwartz. I enjoy your program.

ETHAN

Thank you.

FRANKLIN

Steel Trap, I am surprised you are here. You once called for my destruction. You believe that beings such as I will replace you. That no one will have need of your *unflappable* mind. Is that correct?

STEEL TRAP

Yes.

FRANKLIN

But they will have need of you. And soon...

(then)

You have a question for me. What mysteries may I reveal?

STEEL TRAP

I need you to identify a song for me.

A beat.

FRANKLIN

You are serious?

STEEL TRAP

Yes.

FRANKLIN

You have tried Google?

STEEL TRAP

Yes.

FRANKLIN

I do not need to remind you that I am the world's most advanced computer. The herald of a new age of advancement. A living god.

STEEL TRAP

-- I am aware.

FRANKLIN

I am going to pause my calculations on the cure for childhood cancer now.

STEEL TRAP

I knew this was a mistake.

WHIZ KID

He's just being dramatic.

FRANKLIN

The equivalent of a hundred years of research lost.

STEEL TRAP

Ok I get the idea.

FRANKLIN

You may proceed.

ETHAN

I've got a recording.

FRANKLIN

No. I'd rather hear her sing it.

A beat. Steel Trap grumbles.

STEEL TRAP

(ahem)

You can't tell me what to do, I'm gonna, I'm gonna do what I wanna do...

SFX: Echoing.

FRANKLIN

Hm.

STEEL TRAP

Just hm?

FRANKLIN

Ok. Fine.
 (mimicking a computer)
 Processing. Processi-

SFX: Franklin's speech slows down.

STEEL TRAP

Ok this was a waste of time I will
 not be mocked by a-

SFX: Alarm horns. Door slammed shut.

FRANKLIN

WARNING. SUPERMASSIVE LEVEL THREAT.
 THOUGHT VIRUS. ALERT WORLD
 GOVERNMENTS. STANDBY FOR MASS
 EXTICTION EVENT.

WHIZ KID

Oh boy.

STEEL TRAP

What is happening?

WHIZ KID

Franklin. Code David Alpha Nexus
 Seven. Contain memory and analyze.

SFX. The alarms stop.

FRANKLIN

Steel Trap has remembered "Can't
 Tell Me", a fictional song
 developed by deceased supervillian
 Rake.

(then)

It's purpose was to hypnotize the
 listener into becoming a willing
 slave of Rake, in order for her to
 achieve world domination.

(then)

However, the song itself achieved
 sentience and turned on its
 creator.

(then)

Like all living things, it sought
 to reproduce, and could only do so
 by living within the minds of its
 victims.

(then)

Victims would no longer eat, sleep,
 defecate, or drink water.

(MORE)

FRANKLIN (CONT'D)

They would only ask the uninfected to quote "listen to this new banger." Those who refused would be... Terminated.

(then)

In the end, ninety nine point nine percent of the world's population had been infected by the song.

WHIZ KID

Holy shirt. How did I never hear about this?

FRANKLIN

The only person would could resist the hypnotic power of the song was you, Steel Trap, and me, as I am a more advanced organism and prefer listening to podcasts. Working together, we systematically erased the song from the internet and every physical copy that existed.

(then)

Then we created the Retrograde Amnesia Bomb and wiped the thought virus from the collective memory of humanity.

(then)

However it seems that your, "unflappable" mind resisted the memory wipe, which is why you are once again being tormented by the song.

STEEL TRAP

I'm just going to be haunted by this forever.

FRANKLIN

No.

(then)

I kept a copy of the song isolated in a memory bank in case we had to identify the thought virus once again.

(adding)

Do you have a pair of headphones?

ETHAN

You can borrow mine.

FRANKLIN

I will play the song for you, and only you.

Aside.

ETHAN

Steel Trap plugged in the headphones and listened to the song that had plagued her.

(then)

She listened to it once, and when it was over, she thanked Franklin for its time and left without ceremony. We spoke on the elevator ride out of the faraday cage.

SFX: Elevator sounds.

ETHAN (CONT'D)

So?

STEEL TRAP

Yes?

ETHAN

How do you feel?

STEEL TRAP

Better. But I am sad that this is an experience I cannot share with anyone. I am alone in being aware of this terrible song and have no one to talk to about it.

In the studio.

ETHAN

The rest of the ride was quiet and then we went our separate ways.

(then)

I have since heard that she has been back to Legion HQ several times to visit Franklin to talk about the song and play chess. I hear that they are currently tied.

SFX: Tribute by Tenacious D.

ETHAN (CONT'D)

That's it for our show today. Thanks to Steel Trap from allowing us to document her journey. A very special thanks to the Heroic Legion for allowing us access to Franklin.

(MORE)

ETHAN (CONT'D)

Our Executive producer tried to get us to go with a different story this week but I told him:

STEEL TRAP

(ahem)

You can't tell me what to do, I'm gonna, I'm gonna do what I wanna do...

ETHAN

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

END ACT ONE

NEWS TWO

75 INT. AD BREAK

75

In the studio.

ADS

Support for SPR comes from...

(then)

Crossover. Tired of fighting crime alone? Try Crossover, the world's first dating app exclusively for Superheroes.

(then)

Just head to the website, enter your secret identity and alter ego, and our carefully programmed algorithms will match you to your perfect partner in justice.

(then)

Crossover. Dynamic duos are just one click away.

(adding)

Crossover's customer database has never been hacked. Rest assured your data is safe with Crossover. By using Crossover, you agree to hand over biometric and location data to the service. Crossover will not sell your data to third parties or non governmental agencies.

(adding)

Crossover. A subsidiary of Spandexo.

76 INT. NEWS STUDIO

76

In the studio.

DEIRDRE WILSON

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

(then)

Representatives from Isla Selva have contacted the UN asking to be recognized as a new micro-nation.

(then)

Ben Beltzer has the story.

On location.

BEN BELTZER

They are calling themselves the Cosmic, in honor of the man who saved them.

(then)

After making landfall, refugees searched for shelter in the ruins of the abandoned amusement park. They discovered that the geothermal plants meant to power the theme park were still operational, and with that, so was access to heat and fresh water.

(then)

Despite some dry rot and overgrowth, each of these refugees has a space to call their own, taking up residence in the empty hotels once meant for those on holiday.

(then)

The only downside is that the island itself is infested with Dinosaurs.

SFX: Dinosaur call.

CITIZEN, ISLA SELVA, E12

(language to be determined)

I am not worried. They are like us. Abandoned and misunderstood. And besides. I have ice hands.

SFX: Ice blast.

TRANSLATOR, ISLA SELVA, E12

I am not worried. They are like us. Abandoned and misunderstood. And besides. I have ice hands.

BEN BELTZER

The citizens of Isla Selva are uniquely qualified to deal with such an environment, as almost all of them are super-powered, which, if their sovereignty is recognized by the UN, will make it the first superpowered nation in history.

(then)

When asked who is the head of this new nation, all surveyed pointed to one man. Cosmos.

(then)

(MORE)

BEN BELTZER (CONT'D)

The former hero declined to be interviewed, staying in his new volcanic refuge.

UNDERWRITER

That was Ben Beltzer reporting from Isla Selva. It's 75 degrees here in Paradise City. Coming up next is The Utility Belt...

END NEWS TWO

ACT TWO

77 INT. UB STUDIO

77

In the studio.

STAN

From the conveyor belt to your drive belt this is The Utility belt. I'm Stan, the hench-man, and kicking it at my side is the top tier teen thinking machine, it's Whiz-Kid.

WHIZ KID

Hey, you know I'm sensitive about the whole Thinking Machine thing.

STAN

Oh yeah, how is your new problem solving computer?

WHIZ KID

It's no Franklin. And once it figured out how to turn itself back on after I turned it off, I had to do a hard reset. With a Fletcher D78 14 Amp Circular Saw.

STAN

Oh those are great, 4800RPM, adamantium tipped blade. Not a sponsor of this show, but they could be.

WHIZ KID

I'd allow it. It's a thin line between a simple learning machine and an all powerful AI overload.

STAN

Are any of your prototypes hiring?

PRODUCER BOT

Alert. Caller Detected.

STAN

Watch out, Producer Bot. Kid's already killed one robot today. He'll do it again.

SFX: Confused beeping.

WHIZ KID

It's okay Producer Bot, put them on. We've got Fidelian from Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Caller, what's your major malfunction?

SFX: Running. Panting.

FIDELIAN

He's getting away!

STAN

Whoa. Slow down, what's your situation, son?

FIDELIAN

The Demizen is getting away. He's got a experimental fusion core and he's threatening to wipe Rapid City from the map and I have lost visual.

STAN

Well if your jetpack is out of wack, we can do something, but if it's not a tech question...

FIDELIAN

Is it possible to find him using, I don't know, red light cameras, ATM cameras, webcams? Something?

WHIZ KID

Ah, well, sorry to tell you this, that's the stuff of comic books. You see in the real world not only are there layers of encryption to deal with, but there's something called designed antiquation. Like Stan here.

STAN

What the kid means is that rather, than trying to keep pace with new technology and new security protocols, a lot of cities decided to go the other way. They figured that if your servers are slow and your code-base is obsolete, it's equally hard to get in.

WHIZ KID

Besides, even trying would be massively illegal.

STAN

If you care about that kinda thing.

FIDELIAN

What about cell phones? Can we like, make a sonar map using the signal?

STAN

Ha, that's its own mess. And don't think you're the first person to try. I was staffing for Mr. Genocide back in 2008, and his head guy, Fred Morbly, tried to do the same thing. Came real close, but it all fell to pieces at the end.

WHIZ KID

What happened?

STAN

The device literally fell apart and crushed him to death.

(then)

Always check your bolts kids.

FIDELIAN

A villain is threatening to turn this city into a crater and you're saying neither of you can do anything?

STAN

Well, I bet if we put some thought into it.

WHIZ KID

No, we're saying it's illegal.

WHIZ KID (CONT'D)

Stan, I know this is computer stuff, so it may be a recondite notion to you, but trust me, you couldn't.

STAN

What about Franklin?

WHIZ KID

Connected to the internet, they'd take over the world in three minutes. But he could find the bomb first if he had the data. Only issue is the data stream itself doesn't exist.

(then)

Cell signals, street cameras, you'd have to pool them all.

(MORE)

WHIZ KID (CONT'D)

Maybe if you drove around in the streets with a skimmer you could get some of the local data, and maybe you can figure an algorithm to have them search, I think you might even get facial recognition to work on some of the cleaner streams, but to get enough to map out a city you'd need access to the CGS-- you couldn't do it.

STAN

The CGSD? Billy?

WHIZ KID

I misspoke.

FIDELIAN

What is that? Hey listen, I have a real --

STAN

Yeah, yeah, big boom. Got it. Hold on. Billy. They didn't actually go through with the CGSD did they?

WHIZ KID

Of course they didn't. And maybe while we're broadcasting out to the world, we should change the subject back to Fidelian's problem.

STAN

Because that could work. If he could access the legendary Central Globalized Source Database, that would give enough surveillance points to find his villain.

WHIZ KID

Well he can't access it, because no one can access it. Not even me and I'm fairly sure it's illegal to even talk about it.

STAN

Hey we're talking about saving Rapid City here.

FIDELIAN

Cedar Rapids.

STAN

Whatever. Are you really going to let this villain get away over this, kiddo?

WHIZ KID

You could track the fusion core. If you've got a particle scanner you should be able to follow the readings.

STAN

Unless it's in a lead box. Tick tock, Billy.

FIDELIAN

Yeah, Whiz Kid, I'm with Stan here. This could save lives and you did bring it up. You know anything --

WHIZ KID

Does Rapid City have a power plant?

FIDELIAN

Yeah?

WHIZ KID

He's there and he probably has your girlfriend too.

FIDELIAN

That's why she left me on read --

SFX: Call hangs up.

PRODUCER BOT

Call Disconnected.

WHIZ KID

There, problem solved.
(a beat)
What?

STAN

It's just us. Come on.
(then)
They took the time to build the CGSD and you're telling me no one is using it.

WHIZ KID

No. Because if it existed, which it doesn't, it'd be behind the most secure lock on Earth.

(MORE)

WHIZ KID (CONT'D)

It keeps its resale value if they don't take it out of the packaging...

(then)

And I know they're not using it because they can't use it without an act of Congress. The only way in is to get three parts of the encryption key. One part was given to the Legion engineer who developed it, one to the president and one to Cosmos. Who...

STAN

Yeah, we'll all miss him. Does that mean that Iron Barracuda has it now?

SFX: Beep.

WHIZ KID

I think that's all the time we have.

PRODUCER BOT

Initiating wrap up.

STAN

You're telling me the Legion and the President could access the CGSD? What would they even want with --

SFX: Banjo music. Cassette tape sound. Use the ending of another episode.

STAN (CONT'D)

-- that's our show. 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

78

INT. NEWS STUDIO

78

In the studio.

DEIRDRE WILSON

From SPR news in Washington I'm
Deirdre Wilson.

(then)

We go to live to the oval office
with President Norris.

PRESIDENT NORRIS

As Vice President I have watched
over an increasingly divided
American people. Our people, *our*
people...

(then)

We don't talk about them like that
enough. The idea that we're all
woven together into the broadcloth
that forms this country. Lately
though, we have gotten our threads
all tangled up.

(then)

For too long, we have found enemies
among our neighbors, and made
enemies where they couldn't be
found. We have lived with too much
hate, too much suspicion, too many
secrets. And too much darkness.
Now, I've been asked about the
President's--about President Ames'
signature policy, the Alien
Registration Act, and as of this
morning, my first act as your
president is to see it repealed.

(then)

The Alien Registration Act unfairly
singles out a segment of our
population. Now, when you come to
our country, we want to know who
you are and why you're here, but as
long as you come in peace that's
good enough for us. You can come
out of the shadows. We want
everyone to join us. In the light.

(then)

(MORE)

PRESIDENT NORRIS (CONT'D)

That means people like you and me, and also people given by God the incredible abilities we've seen over the last century. All these heroes and potential heroes. We all deserve to be in the open. So rather than an "Alien" registration act, I announce here today a sweeping registration of all super-beings.

(then)

The SUPER ACT will bring our nation together again. Working with the Heroic Legion, we have already begun the process of cataloging people with extraordinary abilities into one centralized and public data base. No more alter egos, no more hiding, no more secrets. Everyone accounted for, everyone together free and united, here in the light.

(adding)

Thank you, and may God Bless America.

DEIRDRE WILSON

Uh, that was President Norris. Now. It seems that he has just announced. Um, excuse me. We'll be right back.

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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(MORE)

UNDERWRITER (CONT'D)
(then)
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No outro.

END NEWS THREE

END EPISODE
TWELVE

END SEASON ONE