

EPISODE ONE - "MASK UP"

WRITERS:

JOHN DORSEY & MAX CLARK

EPISODE ONE - NEWS ONE

INT. NEWS STUDIO

In the studio.

APOORVA SINGH

In Trenton, NJ it's raining men today. Local villain Dr. Mortico has claimed responsibility for this horrifying phenomenon saying it was an unintended side effect of a cloning experiment gone wrong. Local residents are cautioned to stay indoors until the roads are cleared.

UNDERWRITER

That was Apoorva Singh reporting from SPR Trenton.

WENLING CHEN

Live from SPR News in Washington, I'm Wenling Chen sitting in for Wenling Chen.

(then)

With the DC Zombie Outbreak now under control, the senate will reconvene this afternoon to vote on the controversial Super Act.

(then)

The Super Act proposes to create a public registry of all super humans within the United States. The bill has been a key issue for President Norris since he assumed office following the assassination of President Ames last March.

(then)

However, the bill is predicted to fail now that Senator Joe Expansion of California has withdrawn his support, citing privacy concerns for working heroes.

(then)

We will have live coverage of the vote later this hour.

UNDERWRITER

That was Wenling Chen reporting from Washington.

(MORE)

UNDERWRITER (CONT'D)

As always, please report any zombie sightings to the CDC by calling 611. It's 74 degrees here in Paradise City. Now for These American Supers.

EPISODE ONE - END NEWS ONE

EPISODE ONE - ACT ONE - TAS MISTAKEN IDENTITY

INT. TAS STUDIO

In the studio.

ETHAN SCHWARTZ

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

(then)

Unmasking is a risk that superheroes have faced since the first of them slipped on a cowl. With the looming vote on the SUPER Act, thousands of ordinary men and women are forced to imagine a world where their secret identities become public.

(then)

Over the last four months, we asked hundreds of people who have been outed as super to share their experiences. Today we bring you two of the most unexpected stories on this theme.

(then)

Today's program, "Mask Up" told in two acts. First: Burlington Vermont with TAS Producer Sydney Rackoff as he brings you Act one: "Will the real Mightosis please stand up?"

SFX: TV whine.

SHEPHERD

Sorry to interrupt your Nightly News Broadcast, docile sheep. I am the Shepherd, and I am here to guide you to the truth!

SYDNEY RACKOFF

This is not your typical Thursday night in Burlington. While The Shepard often cuts into the local news feed to threaten the citizens of Vermont, this night he has a very different announcement...

SHEPHERD

Tonight's message is for the so called hero Mightosis...

SYDNEY RACKOFF

One that changed everything for one person named...

SHEPHERD

Avery Young. Yes. That's your real name isn't it? 2-2-4 Lanceberry Road? Well, Avery, The Villainous League is offering one million dollars to anyone who makes sure you don't get any older.

(then)

Onward my flock *Cackling laughter*

AVERY

And I was like... Oomph, that's no good.

SYDNEY RACKOFF

This is Avery Young.

AVERY

I couldn't believe it. I signed up for that no-call list thing, I thought I was immune to this kinda stuff.

(then)

But right then and there my front door explodes! It's some guy in a giant robot. They're screaming. I'm screaming. The neighbors are screaming.

SYDNEY RACKOFF

There was just one problem.

AVERY

I'm not Mightosis.

SYDNEY RACKOFF

The Shepherd had identified the wrong Avery Young.

(then)

Heroes and Villains may be at constant war but the Villainous League USUALLY advises their members not to kill their foes. But sometimes...

Note: XXL speaks in a slavic accent.

XXL

It called Cancellation.

SYDNEY RACKOFF

XXL is a former Villain who now owns a popular Gym in Utica, NY.

XXL

What do they say at the Legion?
"Catch and release, keep the peace."

(then)

Mightosis crossed line first. He took down Lazy Bones. Killed him. Bones was good bad guy. Shepherd's best friend. Called themselves "Rest and Relaxation."

(then)

Mightosis broke code so League say break him. Cancelled.

AVERY

Where was I? Oh yeah. Door explodes. *makes the sounds* and I'm there screaming my guts out. *mock screaming*

(then)

Dude's all up in my yard in a giant robot all like: "AVVVVVVERY YOUNG! Your doom comes."

(then)

And he just goes on for like five minutes, I left out the back door.

(then)

The robot crushed and I mean, absolutely crushed my begonias.

SYDNEY RACKOFF

The attacks lasted for months.

AVERY

Freeze rays, levitating guys, underground guys, piranhas in the tub. Like, how did they think that would work? Yeesh. Had to shower at the Y for a month.

SYDNEY RACKOFF

And you survived all of this without a power?

AVERY

I actually do have a power, I am really good at estimating.

(then)

(MORE)

AVERY (CONT'D)

Like if you want to know how much something costs, I can usually get it pretty close.

SYDNEY RACKOFF

So how many attempts were made on your life?

AVERY

Oh, about, 60?

SYDNEY RACKOFF

Villainous League says over 400.

AVERY

(low whistle)

Is that right?

(then)

Anyway after what was probably three months

SYDNEY RACKOFF

Six.

AVERY

Really? Anyway, I reached out to the Villainous League directly.

RAZORTOOTH LION

It's really hard to get un-cancelled once the ball gets rolling.

SYDNEY RACKOFF

This is Razortooth Lion, head of Cancellation at Villainous League.

RAZORTOOTH LION

Plus cancellation is good for morale. Half the time we're fighting each other.

(then)

A week in we realized that this probably wasn't Mightosis, but as an organization we thought it was better to let it just die out in it's own time.

(then)

It being Avery.

SYDNEY RACKOFF

We caught up with The Shepherd at the at Shady Acres Villain Rehab Center in Bloomington, Indiana.

SHEPHERD

I've destroyed innocent lives before. But this was an honest mistake.

SYDNEY RACKOFF

At the time you REALLY thought that this Avery Young was Mightosis?

(then)

If you look closely at photos of the two of them, there are a couple differences.

(then)

Including hair color. Height. Build... **(Author Note: Improvise more)**

SHEPHERD

Yeah but that Avery person wears glasses. So who knows?

(then)

When you're cancelling someone, you feel so good, so righteous. You just go for it, live in the moment. We talk about that in group.

SYDNEY RACKOFF

I know what you're wondering: Where was Mightosis during all this? That's a great question. And the answer was surprising.

MIGHTOSIS

Turks and Caicos.

SYDNEY RACKOFF

Vacation?

MIGHTOSIS

Well sorta. It's Legion policy to lay low after you've been cancelled to avoid the inevitable onslaught of villains. I hopped a plane and waited for my rep to tell me it was all over.

SYDNEY RACKOFF

Didn't anyone tell you what was happening?

MIGHTOSIS

It's Legion policy to not acknowledge identity leaks, so until I came home for a routine colonoscopy I had no idea this was going on.

(adding)

I'm good by the way, Doctor said my backside was like a brand new water slide.

AVERY

When Mightosis found out about me, he came right to the rescue. We did a little press conference together.

(then)

One of those, "look at us here in the same place at the same time things." He's a really cool dude.

SFX: Press Walla.

MIGHTOSIS

Here we have an American made Steel Beam. Avery can you bend this for me?

SFX: Struggles. Sweating.

AVERY

I can't. I can't do it.

MIGHTOSIS

Not an inch. Look at those little chicken arms. Allow me

SFX: STEEL BENDING. Audience applauding.

MIGHTOSIS (CONT'D)

There you go, chicken arms, it's a little Giraffe for you.

SFX: Drops THUNK.

MIGHTOSIS (CONT'D)

And that's the Mightosis difference, folks.

(then)

I don't think anyone is going to think I'm Avery Young for a long time.

REPORTER #1, MASK UP, EP 1

Avery!

MIGHTOSIS

Yes?

(then)

Ah crap.

AVERY

...And after that life got back to normal.

SYDNEY RACKOFF

The Villainous League settled out of court with Avery for an unspecified amount.

(then)

The League apologized for causing undue distress and promised to review company policies concerning cancellation.

AVERY

Sometimes I miss the excitement. Well, sometimes.

SYDNEY RACKOFF

The Villainous League has promised that the next cancellation will go smoother.

Music Cue.

ETHAN SCHWARTZ

That was producer Sydney Rackoff.

(then)

We'll be back for Act Two of our program, after the news break.

EPISODE ONE - END ACT ONE

EPISODE ONE - NEWS TWO

INT. AD BREAK

In the studio.

ADS

Support for SPR comes from Over
Armor by Spandexo.

(then)

Are you tired of washing your
costume? Wish that you never had to
replace it again? Love things of
unknown origins? That why we made
Over Armor, a dynamic, fully
symbiotic costume that lives inside
your skin.

(then)

Over Armor works with your body to
provide additional strength,
protection, and encouragement
directly into your mind. A simple
injection and Over Armor becomes
the one part of your suit you won't
ever have to worry about.

(then)

Over Armor Symbiote may cause
feelings of rage, confusion, and in
some cases schizophrenia. If your
Over Armor encourages you to eat
your villains please contact your
local Spandexo Support team
immediately.

(then)

Over Armor by Spandexo. See website
for details.

INT. NEWS STUDIO

In the studio.

WENLING CHEN

Live from Washington I'm Wenling
Chen.

(then)

John Paul Jackson, the man charged
with the assassination of President
Ames has once again repeated his
claim that he was set up by
"doppelgängers."

(then)

(MORE)

WENLING CHEN (CONT'D)

As the proceedings were closed to the public we've brought in actor and former Governor of Texas Matthew McConaughey to read the court transcript...

MATTHEW MCCONAUGHEY

Alright...

(then)

Folks treat me like I was some sort of maniac. But I wasn't wrong. That thing I killed wasn't the president, that was the thing that killed the president. One of those cold-blooded doll-eyed doppels. Y'all should be thanking me. Y'all should be giving me a goddamn medal of goddamn honor, but those lizard breathed imposterios set me up. You can tell from their eyes. Look at their eyes! The eyes! Hup. Look over there, Juror number six just gave me the blink! He's one of them I tell you!

(impersonating the judge)

Order in the court!

(banging on the table
messing with the mic)

The eyes! The eyesssss!

WENLING CHEN

Mr. Jackson has been representing himself after claiming his defense attorney was, quote: "Too Expensive."

UNDERWRITER

That was Wenling Chen reporting from Washington. It's 75 degrees in Paradise City. Now back to These American Supers.

EPISODE ONE - END NEWS TWO

EPISODE ONE - ACT TWO - TAS LAME POWERS

INT. TAS STUDIO

In the studio.

ETHAN SCHWARTZ

Welcome back to These
American Supers, I'm Ethan
Schwartz. Coverage of unmasking
tends to focus on those who work
within the Super-heroic community.

MONTAGE HEROICS #1, LAME POWERS, EP 1

They just stopped the missile with
their bare --

MONTAGE HEROICS #2, LAME POWERS, EP 1

Hands alive with energy she's
diving into--

MONTAGE HEROICS #3, LAME POWERS, EP 1

The ocean obeying his every
command, krill and seaweed wrapped
around his--

MONTAGE HEROICS #4, LAME POWERS, EP 1

Giant balls of fire, destroying
everything in his path.

ETHAN SCHWARTZ

But we often forget that the
majority of superhumans live and
work as ordinary civilians. They
worry that, if unmasked, they will
be defined by their abilities,
instead of who they are.

(then)

Act two: "Everyday Powerful."
Hailey Frond has the story.

HAILEY FROND

In the last hundred years, we've
seen an explosion in the number of
people with super powers.

(then)

They've performed miracles from
controlling the weather to
rerouting lava to...

JULES SAPROH

Un-pickling.

HAILEY FROND

Is that --

JULES SAPROH

Yes. I can take a pickle and make a cucumber. Refresh green beans or onions, undo ponzu, it all depends on what's been pickled.

HAILEY FROND

Jules's power has been rated "D," or "inconsequential" by the Department of SuperHuman Services.

JULES SAPROH

Doesn't mean it's not a miracle.

HAILEY FROND

A miracle?

JULES SAPROH

Can you explain how I do it? It's magic.

(then)

Try this pickle.

SFX: Jar pops. Hailey bites into a cucumber.

HAILEY FROND

That's the best cucumber I've ever had.

JULES SAPROH

See. Magic!

(then)

When it first manifested, my family wondered if I was able to rewrite the very fabric of the universe.

(then)

As it turned out it was just unpickling. But still. That's --

HAILEY FROND

A miracle.

(then)

That's very refreshing.

SFX: Hailey takes another bite.

JULES SAPROH

It's intentional reframing. It's something I've taught our clients to do when thinking about their powers.

HAILEY FROND

Jules runs Everyday Powerful, a non-profit dedicated to helping D-listers cope with the bullying and depression that can come with their power class.

JULES SAPROH

Most powers are a part of our DNA.
(then)

They're not something we asked for any more than our height or skin color. The problem is that powers are treated as a commodity in this country. Superpowered children are pressured from an early age to go into heroics, our whole culture is tilted towards it.

(then)

I felt it as a teen. Like I had let someone down. It wasn't until I heard the speeches of Dr. Invictus Marsh that I even considered that I had worth outside my powers.

HAILEY FROND

This is an excerpt from the Doctor's "We Are Worthy" speech in Washington, protesting the sending of superhumans to fight in Vietnam.

SFX: Cheers. Artifacts. Dr. Invictus's dialogue is from an old recording. Think MLK's I have a dream speech.

DR. INVICTUS

Our value to the world is not defined by how many buses we can lift or robots we can smash.

(then)

Our value is more than as a body to be caped and masked and sent to war. We have love, creativity, and strength that transcends the random shuffling of our DNA.

(then)

We are worthy not because of what we can do, we are worthy because of what we choose to do.

JULES SAPROH

When I first found out I was a super I was so excited. My parents tried to warn me not to "show off," but I couldn't be stopped.

(MORE)

JULES SAPROH (CONT'D)

I thought the whole school was going to be blown away. And no one was. I found pickles in my locker for the rest of the year. I can do something that no one else on Earth can do. I mean, no one else can do it. And yet, I just felt...

DOC SANDERS

Lame. Just totally lame.

SFX: Rocking chair. The beans in the jar shift back and forth clinking against the glass.

HAILEY FROND

I met with Doc Sanders on his front porch on a hot afternoon. His long white beard loomed over his overalls and in his hands he held a large mason jar.

DOC SANDERS

I can tell exactly how many beans are in this jar. Can't do it with rice, can't do it with coins. Just beans. And it's lame. That's what I'd always thought. My brother can fly. I can do this.

SFX: Jar rattling.

DOC SANDERS (CONT'D)

465. I bet you didn't know that.
(laughs, then to himself)
Bet you didn't know that

JULES SAPROH

I did my thesis on how power class affects the emotional development of youth.

(then)

It's bad. 53% of all powers are rated D-class.

(then)

A lot of those people don't even realize they have one. And those that do, tend to struggle with confidence. Though some have the opposite problem. Like Kevin.

HAILEY FROND

If you were in Aurora, Colorado in the winter of 2015, you might remember...

KETCHUP AVENGER

The Ketchup Avenger! Do you want to see the costume?

HAILEY FROND

(please no)
I'd love to.

SFX: Rummaging.

HAILEY FROND (CONT'D)

Oh very cool. It's like a Pollock painting.

KETCHUP AVENGER

I used real Mustard for the Mustard yellow.

HAILEY FROND

You can tell by the smell.

HAILEY FROND (ASIDE) (CONT'D)

Kevin McGuinness is condo-kinetic:
He can control condiments with his mind.

KETCHUP AVENGER

I know what you're thinking.
Ketchup soaring through the air.
Relish striking like lightning.
(then)
Well condiments can't fly. But they can ooze real well. Yeah. Pretty...
(thinking about it)
Pretty much just ooze.

HAILEY FROND

And he used this power in an attempt to fight crime.

KETCHUP AVENGER

I got a couple of good scraps.
(then)
There was this one guy robbing a 24-7 store, heh, he picked the wrong place.
(then)
As he was running off with the register under one arm, I got him with a "Wha-HA" mayo swipe. Hot sauce right in his eyes. Guy crashed down like a jar of olives.
(then, regretful)
And hit his head on a counter.
(MORE)

KETCHUP AVENGER (CONT'D)

Yeah, I spent most of that winter in lockup. Heroing without a license. Courts said I had to stop. But if I wasn't a hero, what was I? Then I met Jules.

DOC SANDERS

I was pretty low before I came to Everyday Powerful.

HAILEY FROND

Again, Doc Sanders.

DOC SANDERS

I have a PhD in applied mathematics, but because of my power I just always felt like no matter what I did with my life, I'd always be a plain old bean counter.

JULES SAPROH

The suicide rate among empowered teens is three times that of unpowered youth.

HAILEY FROND

Jules tells us that is why she knew something had to be done.

JULES SAPROH

People get referred to us by social workers, mental health facilities, schools... The message young supers receive is that their power makes them less special.

(then)

Think about it. Less special for having an ability.

HAILEY FROND

And what do you think will happen if the Super Act Passes?

JULES SAPROH

There's plenty of kids out there who have powers so mild they don't even know about them. Imagine finding out in front of the whole world. Look, I am all for people embracing their powers, but the choice should be theirs.

(then)

Even if this bill doesn't pass, this mentality is destructive.

(MORE)

JULES SAPROH (CONT'D)

There's people who hide their powers because of religious beliefs, to fit in, to protect themselves, a thousand valid reasons. Now they're going to be thinking of their gifts as some sort of curse.

(then)

This year, we're opening three more locations and expanding our tele-health team. We actually have a great volunteer, Clariza, who improves wifi connections with her hair.

(then)

It's been a great asset.

HAILEY FROND

Everyday Powerful services over 2,000 clients a year. That's a lot of people you've helped.

JULES SAPROH

We do our best. We have a great team.

HAILEY FROND

In preparing this story, we've spoken to over two dozen former clients of yours, do you know what they say about you?

(beat, implied)

They say you're their hero.

JULES SAPROH

(choked up)

I just do what I can.

HAILEY FROND

If you have trouble managing your powers, Everyday Powerful invites you to attend their online workshop later this month "Taking control of your story." Details available on the SPR website.

ETHAN SCHWARTZ

From Kalamazoo, Michigan, that was Hailey Frond reporting.

(then)

That's it for our show. I try to be the cool guy in the office, but recently I heard our interns call me.

DOC SANDERS
Lame. Just totally lame.

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

EPISODE ONE - END ACT TWO

EPISODE ONE - NEWS THREE

INT. NEWS STUDIO

In the studio.

WENLING CHEN

Live from SPR News in Washington,
I'm Wenling Chen.

(then)

With congress preparing to decide
the fate of the President's SUPER
Act, the bipartisan Unmasking
Coalition have staged one last
effort to save the bill.

(then)

We go live to Junior Reporter
Apoorva Singh at the Capitol.
Apoorva?

INT. CAPITOL

Office Walla. News Walla.

APOORVA SINGH

Thanks Wenling.

(then)

Senator Joe Expansion has invited
the leaders of the two largest
Heroic organizations, Iron
Barracuda of the Heroic Legion and
Steam Engine Jackson of the
Southern Battalion, to a closed
door meeting to find some way to
save the bill.

SFX: Rising sound of tea kettle boiling.

APOORVA SINGH (CONT'D)

Both organizations have been vocal
opponents of the bill so it is
unclear what the Unmasking
Coalition can offer that will
change--

SFX: Door blasted off it's hinges. People yelling.

WENLING CHEN

Apoorva? Are you there?

APOORVA SINGH

Yes, Wenling I'm here. Steam Engine Jackson has just exited the meeting and he is... Fuming.

(then)

Mr. Jackson what happened in there?

STEAM ENGINE JACKSON

That eel sold us out!

APOORVA SINGH

You mean Iron Barracuda?

STEAM ENGINE JACKSON

She gets her heroes off the list and lets the rest of us hang.

APOORVA SINGH

I'm sorry Mr. Jackson, but what does that mean?

STEAM ENGINE JACKSON

It means this country is finally off the rails. The SUPER act is gonna pass.

SFX: Steam and thunder.

UNDERWRITER

That was Wenling Chen reporting from Washington.

(then)

Today's show was written and produced by John Dorsey and Maximilian Clark. Additional producing by 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...
 (then)
Are we in a fictional world being
broadcast for people's light
amusement? Meet the scientist who
says "No." Next on the Speech
Bubble.

SFX: End Music.

 UNDERWRITER (CONT'D)
This is SPR

EPISODE ONE - END NEWS THREE

END EPISODE 1