

SPR

S01E01

Written by

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In the studio.

UNDERWRITER

This is SPR.

DEIRDRE WILSON

The FAA has issued a travel alert for all sky-bound superheroes due to an increased likelihood of bird strikes during the Canada goose migration season. Bird strikes are the third leading cause of flying hero mortality, behind airplane turbines and power line entanglements.

(then)

The FAA will post live migration path updates on their Twitter, and they advise heroes to yell loudly before all take-offs and landings.

UNDERWRITER

That was Deirdre Wilson reporting from SPR, Philadelphia.

STEPHEN SINGH

Live from SPR News in Washington I'm Stephen Singh.

(then)

World renowned hero Cosmos was transferred into ICE custody following his arrest during yesterday's March for Alien Life here in Washington DC.

(then)

Known for his humanitarian acts and numerous rescues of the planet, Cosmos has been charged with unlawful presence and illegal re-entry into the United States.

(then)

The arrest is one of many, targeting extraterrestrials in the United States since the President's controversial executive order last month.

(then)

Before being escorted away, Cosmos made this statement to the press:

2 EXT. CAPITOL

2

SFX: Cameras snapping. Cuffs jangling. Crowd walla.

COSMOS

I have never run from a fight in my life and I'm not starting now.

(then)

That is why I am willfully surrendering myself into police custody. I do this because I have never hidden what I am. Because I believe that this country was founded on the principles of justice and law. Because am proud of my alien heritage, heritage that the President now considers to be a crime.

(then)

American Aliens are our neighbors, our doctors, our teachers.

(then)

We are not a threat by the nature of our birth. We must come together in acceptance or we will fall apart in our fear.

(then)

God bless you all, and god bless America.

REPORTER CHORUS, E1

Cosmos!

3 INT. NEWS STUDIO

3

In the studio.

STEPHEN SINGH

Cosmos came to earth from the planet Xenon, which was destroyed in the supernova of Beta Centauri. Adopted by a couple in Arkansas, he has called Earth home for 45 years, although he has never been officially naturalized as a US citizen.

UNDERWRITER

That was Stephen Singh reporting from Washington. It's 74 degrees here in Paradise City. Coming up next is These American Supers...

END NEWS ONE

ACT ONE

4 INT. CAR - DAY

4

SFX: Car idling. Doors opening. Siding into backseat.

TOMMY

Rashid?

RASHID

Yessir. Tommy?

TOMMY

Yeah, yeah, let's move.

SFX: Doors shutting. Seatbelts.

RASHID

No problem. No problem at all. Are we all in? Good. I got water and mints in the side pockets if you like...

ETHAN

This is Rashid Abboud. He came to the states about a year ago, and like many immigrants, he's fallen into the gig economy...

RASHID

Nice masks by the way.

JAMES

Just drive man.

ETHAN

This is his first fare of the day.

SFX: Car driving.

ETHAN (CONT'D)

His passengers, Tommy and James, are carrying around 80 thousand dollars from Topeka National Trust, as well as a pair of sub machine guns.

RASHID

So what kinda music do guys like?

JAMES

You think they saw us?

TOMMY

Naw, be cool man. Be cool.

ETHAN

No this isn't Uber or Lyft. Rashid is a henchman for hire.

(then)

Yesterday he helped off-load stolen cargo, today he's a get a away driver. All of this through the App LAKY, that aims to disrupt the minion industry.

RASHID

Me. I love (music to come).

SFX: (music to come) floods the cabin. Police Sirens.

TOMMY

(yelling)

Oh shit, they're behind us.

SFX: Car revs.

JAMES

I thought you took care of the alarm!

TOMMY

That was your job!

JAMES

I am not going back to prison. Strap up!

SFX: Guns are cocked. Windows roll down.

RASHID

If anyone needs ear plugs I have some in the console.

JAMES

Fuck you pigs!

SFX: Machine gun fire. Cars flipping. Bullet ricochet.

TOMMY

Floor it Rashid!

SFX: Stunt driving.

ETHAN

LAKY is one of many apps to hit the freelance henchman market this year, competing with others such as HENCH or STOUGE.

(then)

Once a unionized job, henchmen find themselves competing with men like Rashid, for gigs that traditionally came from a henchman hiring hall.

(then)

Villains and Criminals are using apps more and more as they drive the price of labor down.

SFX: Machine gun fire. Ricochet on Rashid's Car.

JAMES

Oh shit! I'm hit! I'm hit!

RASHID

I should warn you there's a two hundred and fifty dollar cleaning fee for bleeding in the cabin.

TOMMY

Get us fuck out of here!

RASHID

OK.

SFX: Accelerating.

TOMMY

Oh my god. Slow down. Slow down!

RASHID

I know a short cut.

TOMMY

Slow down!

RASHID

It's fine.

SFX: More cars crashing. Car squealing. Tommy and James screaming. Skidding stop.

RASHID (CONT'D)

See. Short cut.

TOMMY

Why are we stopped?

RASHID

Uh, you selected LAKY pool option.
We're picking up another customer.

JAMES

Get me the fuck out of here man.

SFX: Slamming doors. Running.

RASHID

Don't forget to give me five stars!

ETHAN

They will in fact rate him four stars. This will drop him in the rankings, costing him over five hundred dollars in income this week alone. It will take him a month to return to his previous ranking, and he is still seeking the two hundred and fifty dollars for cleaning his car.

Music.

ETHAN (CONT'D)

Today on our program: "Bad Apples." We investigate the growing community of freelance henchmen in America.

(then)

With QSPZ Baltimore, it's These American Supers, I'm Ethan Schwartz. We'll be back, after the news break. Stay with us...

END ACT ONE

NEWS TWO

5 INT. AD BREAK

5

In the studio.

ADS

Support for SPR comes from...

(then)

MeOuties. Nothing ruins a photo op like underwear lines in your spandex, and going commando isn't an option. That's why we created MeOuties, the first underwear, you wear over your costume.

(then)

Available in prints and bolds, our ridiculously soft pieces will match not only your costume, but your comfort level.

(then)

You're protecting the city, let us, protect your modesty. MeOuties. Now offering Male Thongs.

6 INT. NEWS STUDIO

6

In the studio.

STEPHEN SINGH

Live from SPR News in Washington

I'm Stephen Singh .

(then)

The Heroic Legion has announced that it is planning to open a second headquarters, "Tower Two," as a sister location to Tower One in Philadelphia.

(then)

The project is projected to cost upwards of two billion dollars and will house up to a thousand members in training.

(then)

Legion Leader Iron Barracuda made this statement:

SFX: Press conference walla. Cameras snapping.

IRON BARRACUDA

The Legion has been a guiding light for the heroes of the world for over seventy years. Tower Two will expand that light and our mission to "Do Good" across the world.

(then)

We are excited to bring our new class of heroes to the next great American city.

STEPHEN SINGH

The Legion has made an open call for proposals from any urban center within range of an international airport. This is expected to instigate a bidding war among candidate cities.

(then)

When asked about the arrest of Legion member Cosmos, Iron Barracuda said quote: "members come from a variety of backgrounds and political beliefs, but the Legion itself does not take sides."

UNDERWRITER

That was Stephen Singh reporting from Washington, It's 72 degrees here in Paradise City. And now back to These American Supers...

END NEWS TWO

ACT TWO

7 INT. TAS STUDIO - DAY

7

In the studio.

ETHAN

Welcome back it's These American Supers, I'm Ethan Schwartz.

(then)

Henching is an American tradition, accounting for 1.2% of the overall workforce, even showing up on the Career Aptitude Placement Exam in high-school.

(then)

They have the world's twelfth largest labor union, the International Henchman Group On Rights, or IHGOR for short. And even their own retirement community in Florida.

(then)

But like many legacy jobs in America, it too has been changed by the gig economy.

(then)

Ellen Spiegel has the story...

SFX: Music.

ELLEN SPIEGEL (O.S.)

The first thing stated in the terms and conditions of HENCH is that the company cannot be held responsible for bodily, financial, or situational harm undertaken while working as a contractor for HENCH.

(then)

This may include, but is not limited to; arrest by the police, kung fu, eye beams, super strength, concussive blasts, mutations, lacerations, incinerations, and snakes.

(adding)

Signing that agreement and providing a valid driver's license are all you need to become verified.

SFX: Hold on music.

ELLEN SPIEGEL (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 It took about a week before I was
 given my first gig.

SFX: HENCH Ding.

FADE TO:

SFX: Highway overpass...

ELLEN SPIEGEL (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 The app directed me to an abandoned
 handbag factory downtown. It was in
 the sort of neighborhood you
 usually try to avoid.
 (then)
 A great place to hide out.

8 INT. FACTORY - DAY

8

SFX: Water dripping.

ELLEN SPIEGEL
 Hello?

SFX: Voice echoing.

ELLEN SPIEGEL (CONT'D)
 I'm here for Croc Command?

SFX: Door shutting.

ELLEN SPIEGEL (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 The shutter door comes crashing
 down behind me and then a bright
 light shines in my face.

TIM
 Ellen?

ELLEN SPIEGEL
 Yes?

SFX: Light turning off.

ELLEN SPIEGEL (CONT'D)
 The spotlights turns off and the
 overheads come on. I am greeted by
 a group of men dressed as
 anthropomorphic crocodiles. Think
 Olympic ski suit made from old lady
 handbags.

(MORE)

ELLEN SPIEGEL (CONT'D)

The leader introduced himself, but in the interest of protecting his identity, we'll just call him Tim.

TIM

You had coffee today? We have a Keurig in the back, just make sure you replace the water or Gold Croc will drown you in the sink.

(adding)

He's a good guy though.

ELLEN SPIEGEL

I expected ex military, former gang members, bikers. You know. Hard men. But everyone here is pretty friendly. Tim himself is a middle school teacher, and only does this part time to help pay off his mortgage.

TIM

Flexible hours, competitive pay, implants that let you breathe underwater. It's better than retail. Hey, let's get you a suit.

ELLEN SPIEGEL

Tim takes me over to a rack of suits identical to his own.

(then)

When we find one that fits, I can't help but notice bullet sized holes, that riddle the front.

TIM

Don't you worry about that.

ELLEN SPIEGEL

Let's take a second to talk about my employer...

SFX: News clip walla. We can hear "terrorist". Possible music.

ELLEN SPIEGEL (CONT'D)

Croc Command has officially been designated as a religious group within the United States, while abroad it's widely considered to be a terrorist organization.

(MORE)

ELLEN SPIEGEL (CONT'D)
 It's founder, Crocodile Commander
 created the group after the
 collapse of a Pyramid scheme in
 1982.

SFX: Register sound.

ELLEN SPIEGEL (CONT'D)
 Borrowing fascist iconography and a
 cell based command structure, the
 group has proven difficult for both
 superhero and government agencies
 to combat. Today there are a least
 two members of Congress suspected
 of owing allegiance to the
 Crocodile Lord.

TIM
 Most of us don't buy into the
 message. It's really just a job at
 the end of the day.

ELLEN SPIEGEL
 Again this is Tim.

TIM
 Every once in awhile you meet the
 fanatics, and you just need to
 smile and nod while they gush on
 and on about their Crocodile God
 and how benevolent he is.
 (distracted)
 Oh here's your last piece of gear.

ELLEN SPIEGEL
 Tim hands me a gun.

SFX: Gun rattle.

ELLEN SPIEGEL (CONT'D)
 Is this thing loaded?

TIM
 You should treat every gun as if
 it's loaded.
 (adding)
 But yes, this one is loaded.

SFX: Men bellowing. (See Crocodile bellowing)

TIM (CONT'D)
 Hup, the boss is here.

ELLEN SPIEGEL

The men around us start bellowing and stomping their feet as they converge on another croc man with gold scales instead of our muted green.

GOLD CROC

Minions!

ELLEN SPIEGEL

Everyone falls into line.

GOLD CROC

Our fearless leader sends his thanks for our efforts to convert. To convert...

SFX: Paper rattling.

GOLD CROC (CONT'D)

Bisbee, Arizona!

CROCS

Cold blooded! Cold blooded! Cold blooded! Cold blooded!

GOLD CROC

We will bend these milk drinkers into willing servants of the Croc Commander!

CROCS

Cold blooded! Cold blooded! Cold blooded! Cold blooded!

ELLEN SPIEGEL

Fists pumping, we march into a series of white vans and head onto the highway...

SFX: Heavy van. Rain.

ELLEN SPIEGEL (CONT'D)

So what are we doing today?

TIM

General menace. The powers that be want us to "take over" areas, but really it's a glorified field trip.

ELLEN SPIEGEL

And the guns?

TIM

It's a part of the costume. Look chances of running into any resistance is slim to none. Our job is to look tough, say the words and then go home.

(then)

Everything will be great.

ELLEN SPIEGEL

The rest of the ride is spent in silence. If these men were like Tim, and were here to pay their rent or student loans I couldn't help but think about the circumstances that eventually brought them here.

SFX: Van stopping.

TIM

It's time.

SFX: Guns being cocked.

TIM (CONT'D)

Follow my lead.

SFX: Door burst open. Guns clinking. Screams.

ELLEN SPIEGEL

The sunlight is painful after an hour in the windowless van. We find ourselves in a parking lot behind a large stage.

(then)

Two overweight security guards in yellow t-shirts are caught unprepared for this rush of croc commandos.

TIM

Let me see your hands!

ELLEN SPIEGEL

We had infiltrated our way into the Bisbee Blues Festival. Inside, we stumble onto a group of stagehands sneaking a beer.

TIM

Tie them up.

ELLEN SPIEGEL

Tim hands me zip ties and I fumble
my way through tying the men to a
the truss that made up the stage.

(then)

Thankfully they don't resist.

SFX: Zip.

ELLEN SPIEGEL (CONT'D)

I'm so sorry.

STAGE HAND

It's OK, we're still getting paid.

GOLD CROC

When they call for the next act, we
spring out on stage with the bomb.
You three stay here and guard the
van.

ELLEN SPIEGEL

I am on guard duty, while Tim is
part of the away team.

TIM

(whispered)

And remember: menacing!

ANNOUNCER, HENCH, E1

And for our next act!

SFX: Drumroll.

ELLEN SPIEGEL

The crocs behind the curtain bounce
with anticipation.

ANNOUNCER, HENCH, E1

The Bisbee Blues Festival is proud
to announce...

SFX: Screams. Microphone feedback.

GOLD CROC

Bisbee! Croc Command has come to
save you!

ELLEN SPIEGEL

They wheel the bomb onto the stage.
But then things go south pretty
quickly.

GILA MONSTER
Your cold blooded scheme ends here!

GOLD CROC
Gila Monster!

GILA MONSTER
That's right!

ELLEN SPIEGEL
Gila Monster is Bisbee's home town
Superhero, and as it turns out, an
avid music lover.

SFX: Gunfire.

ELLEN SPIEGEL (CONT'D)
He is also immune to bullets. He
jumps on the stage and cut through
my fellow henchman without breaking
a sweat.

SFX: Punching. Gunfire. Crashing.

CROCMAN
They got the leader let's cheese
it!

ELLEN SPIEGEL
Tim? Tim!

SFX: Car doors slamming. Tires squeal.

ELLEN SPIEGEL (CONT'D)
I hopped out of the van and looked
for Tim. The other henchmen weren't
so loyal. As Gila Monster jumped
through the curtain, they sped off,
leaving me behind.

GILA MONSTER
Stop right there!

ELLEN SPIEGEL
I fished in my bag for my press
credentials. But Gila Monster
passed me by, chasing after the van
on foot. He caught it, but I didn't
see what happened after he tore the
doors off, because I am already
running.

SFX: Metal tearing. Van escape.

SFX: Running.

ELLEN SPIEGEL (CONT'D)
 I ran six miles. Back to my hotel
 room.
 (then)
 Dressed, as an anthropomorphic,
 Crocodile.

SFX: Road walla.

ELLEN SPIEGEL (CONT'D)
 I don't know if you've ever taken
 off a full body suit after running
 a marathon, but it truly does feel
 like shedding your own skin.

Back in the studio...

ETHAN
 Ellen, welcome back to the studio.

ELLEN SPIEGEL
 It's good to be back Ethan.

ETHAN
 So, did you get paid?

ELLEN SPIEGEL
 An even one twenty for the day, but
 I was given a rating of three stars
 which pretty much is the last nail
 in the coffin of my henchwoman
 career.

ETHAN
 How would you describe the overall
 experience?

ELLEN SPIEGEL
 It was kind of a rush.
 (then)
 You're geared up, surrounded by
 strangers all working towards the
 same thing. And it's something new
 every day. I get the appeal.
 (then)
 When I was in college I bused
 tables, but had this been around, I
 dunno.

ETHAN
 And what ever happened to Tim?

ELLEN SPIEGEL

Tim was caught by Gila Monster, and turned over to the police. We've talked on the phone a few times. He's hopeful, but he doesn't have money to post bond so he's sitting in the Bisbee County Jail waiting for sentencing.

(then)

It should be noted that HENCH and similar apps such as LAKY do not provide money for bail or legal services. Something they make sure not to advertise to potential employees.

ETHAN

That was Ellen Spiegel, investigative reporter for SPR Arizona. A special thanks to Rashid Abboud for allowing us to record his day on the job.

(then)

That's our show for today. It's always great coming to work here:

TIM

Flexible hours, competitive pay, implants that let you breathe underwater, it's better than retail.

ETHAN

I'm Ethan Schwartz. We'll be back soon, with more of These American Supers.

SFX: Music. (Something about work. Maybe Maggie's Farm or Working for the Weekend. Possible parody.)

END ACT TWO

NEWS THREE

9

INT. NEWS STUDIO

9

In the studio.

STEPHEN SINGH

Live from SPR news in Washington
I'm Stephen Singh .

(then)

A team of international astronomers has captured a silhouette of Astrogigas the Devourer. Evidence of the existence of Astrogigas, an extra-dimensional being that sustains itself on planets, has been debated, since he was heralded by the Sapphire Skater back in 1966.

(then)

Astronomers have long observed the effects of Astrogigas on the galactic landscape, but have never gained a clear picture of the being in action until now.

(then)

In the popular imagination, it has been depicted as a titanic sized man with red glowing eyes, but these images clearly depict something that resembles a duck. We have a link to the JPL gallery on the SPR homepage.

(then)

In other news, the Heroic Legion has declined to offer Cosmos legal representation for his upcoming immigration case. The Legion has a robust legal department to protect their members in cases of liability, but has often declined to represent heroes in personal matters.

(then)

The ACLU was quick to condemn the move and offered their services to the hero. Cosmos accepted and is reported to be in good spirits in the lead up to the trial.

(then)

We will follow this story as it develops.

UNDERWRITER

That was Steven Singh reporting
from Washington.

(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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Outro:

UNDERWRITER (CONT'D)

Coming up in our next hour, Capes?
How long is too long? An SPR
investigative report.

SFX: End Music.

UNDERWRITER (CONT'D)

This is SPR

END NEWS THREE

END EPISODE 1