

SPR

S01E03

Written by

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NEWS ONE

16

INT. NEWS STUDIO

16

In the studio.

UNDERWRITER

This is SPR.

DEIRDRE WILSON

New Slovakia has been overtaken by super intelligent chimpanzees in a landslide election. The New Free Primate government has promised increased spending on education and public health. According to the new Prime Minister, Kiko--

(then)

Apologies. We turn now to Stephen Singh.

STEPHEN SINGH

Breaking News!

(then)

The masked vigilante Red Canary has taken The Heroic Legion's National Data Center hostage. The Heroic Legion is working with local law enforcement to negotiate the safe release of their staff, but reports suggest that Red Canary has fortified her position, meaning this crisis may continue into the next several hours.

(then)

Red Canary has released the following recording from inside the data center:

RED CANARY

"Citizens of the United States, Your "media" may tell you that I am a criminal. But the real crimes are being done right here. By your "heroic" legion.

(then)

While all of you salivate over the idea of their shiny new building and all the money changing hands, the Heroic Legion has been robbing you blind.

(MORE)

RED CANARY (CONT'D)

Not money, oh no, they want the secrets of your genetic code.

(then)

They are stockpiling information on anyone with powers. Thousands of illegal data points for their heroing machine.

(then)

Today I'm going to show you what's under the Legion's mask.

STEPHEN SINGH

The Heroic Legion has denied these accusations. Legion Leader Iron Barracuda made this statement to the press:

IRON BARRACUDA

While the Heroic Legion maintains records on its active heroes, the Legion has and will always be committed to the security and privacy of those we protect. The Legion will investigate these charges fully once this situation has been resolved and our staff released safely from the clutches of this villainous rogue.

STEPHEN SINGH

We will update you as this story develops.

UNDERWRITER

That was Stephen Singh reporting Washington. It's 72 degrees here in Paradise City. Coming up next we enter the Speech Bubble...

END NEWS ONE

ACT ONE

17 INT. TSB STUDIO

17

In the studio.

KELLY CLOSE

From JDHC Houston, this is Speech
Bubble, I'm Kelly Close.

(then)

When I was a kid growing up in
Texas, we had a golden retriever
named Thurston.

(thens)

Both my parents worked, so I spent
more time with him than I did with
any anybody else. I told him my
hopes, my dreams, my fears. I
always liked to imagine what it
would sound like if he could talk
back. Our guest today doesn't have
to wonder because of his
extraordinary power.

(then)

Genus, is famous for his ability to
speak with animals. He brings us
this poem from his upcoming
collection.

GENUS

The majestic falcon lives on the
breeze,

(then)

Guide feathers test for warm air,
they glide there, through dark
clouds and strike down like
thunder. The falcon's spirit is
alive like fire.

(then)

And every falcon I've ever met is a
goddamn liar.

(then)

Eagles lie, buzzards lie, pigeons
lie too. Peacocks are well named
because they're huge dicks,
Owls are freaking morons who are
only wise if you compare them to
albatrosses who wouldn't find water
if they fell in the ocean.

(then)

Hawks cat-call your girlfriend,
geese I despise,

(MORE)

GENUS (CONT'D)

ducks call out discouraging barbs
about your weight while you're
trying to jog in the offseason and
falcons will lie.

(then)

Just birds. I hate them. I hate all
birds.

(then)

I just want them all to die.
Die die die. Because they all lie.
Lie. Lie.

A beat.

KELLY CLOSE

And he's joins us in the studio
today. Hello, Genus.

GENUS

Aye.

KELLY CLOSE

So. It seems like you don't much
care for birds.

GENUS

Parrots a'right. Sometimes.

KELLY CLOSE

That's strange because in folk
stories, talking animals are always
these sage creatures. That hasn't
been your experience though?

GENUS

Here. Let me tell you a bit about
it. In story books, animals speak
with Cambridge accents and these
haughty knowing manners. But
animals for the most part just say
what's on their mind. And you know
what that is?

(then)

Food! Hot! Danger! Food! If you
ever wondered what's on your pet's
mind, it's almost always this:
When's dinner? It's not that they
couldn't say interesting things
about the nature of man, it's just
that they're driven by more simple
motivations, they mostly don't have
the imagination for that big talk.
Dogs want to eat, cats sleep, and
birds lie for no reason.

(MORE)

GENUS (CONT'D)

(adding)

It's part of who they are.

KELLY CLOSE

And this is all birds?

GENUS

We have time for a story?

KELLY CLOSE

Actually my producer is --

GENUS

-- The year was 2008. I had Dr. Slaughter pinned in his lair. His robot spider thing was destroyed, plan foiled. This was my moment. I felt it. You really only get so many chances to take down a tier-one villain like that. He's in the corner and so what does he do? Blows the whole place up. Fire everywhere. My two hounds Canus and Lupis pulling me out of the roast just in time. The Dr. had vanished. But just outside was a murder of crows. Crows are usually fine. Intelligent, reward motivated. They understand that keystone of interspecies cooperation: the bribe.

(then)

So I called them to me and asked for their help in the search. Their leader, Skeewar agreed to show me the path of a flying man who came through the treetops.

(then)

"One of the crevices nearby," Skeewar told me. "Man of valor who speak the tongue, we will lead to you to your quarry and you in return bring seeds." Typical deal.

(then)

So they take me along and we come to this crack, barely wide enough to squeeze through. I take off my kit, get my legs through, I'm down into my waist wondering and Skeewar flies off. Fine. My feet touch bottom and I get in there and nothing. Big flat underside of a rock. Canus and Lupis smelled nothing.

(MORE)

GENUS (CONT'D)

Eventually after I search all the sides of it, I squeeze my way out and then I see it. The crows had stolen my freaking backpack. And those are one of the most trustworthy kind of bird there is. There's your Aesop's fable right there. Don't trust a bird.

KELLY CLOSE

Well there you have hit. Genus, 2004 winner of the Nobel Prize for Conservation.

(then)

For the Speech Bubble, I'm Kelly Close.

Music.

END ACT ONE

NEWS TWO

18 INT. AD BREAK

18

In the studio.

ADS

Support for SPR comes from...

(then)

Reader Parker. We all know how hard it is to shop for glasses when you've got lasers shooting out of your eyes.

(then)

That's why here at Reader Parker it's our mission to bring you boutique-quality eye care for those with optic blasts. Just head to our website, choose five optic harnesses and they will be delivered right to your door. Keep the one you love and send back the rest.

(then)

Reader Parker. Helping you focus on what's important, without incinerating it to dust.

19 INT. NEWS STUDIO

19

In the studio.

DEIRDRE WILSON

From SPR news, I am Deirdre Wilson sitting in for Stephen Singh.

(then)

The President joined Prince Nokov at the D20 conference in Berlin today to announce a joint resolution on artificial intelligence.

(then)

The meeting marked the first friendly relations between the United States and Tzarpathia after the latter was accused of continuing research into Artificial Intelligence.

(then)

(MORE)

DEIRDRE WILSON (CONT'D)

Prince Nokov has repeatedly denied accusations that he has created androids capable of beating the Turing test, a practice outlawed by the Asimov Accords of 1942.

(then)

President Ames has defended the Prince, tweeting: "Prince Nokov is a great guy who has gotten a bad rap over the years."

(then)

The Heroic Legion and Allied Intelligence communities have condemned the President's remarks, and reaffirmed their joint opposition to Tzarpathia and its leader, calling Prince Nokov a ruthless homicidal Dictator.

UNDERWRITER

That was Deirdre Wilson reporting from Washington. It's 72 degrees here in Paradise City. Coming up next is 100% Invisible...

END NEWS TWO

ACT TWO

20 INT. 100I STUDIO

20

In the studio.

ARES

This is One Hundred Percent
Invisible. I'm Ares Greco.

(then)

Earlier this week I pulled a book
from my shelves that fascinated me
as a child. "The Thousand and One
Prophecies of Theodamus."

(then)

In the 17th century, before the
world had a language to describe
super powers, Theo of Nostredam was
famous for his gift of prophecy.

(then)

During his lifetime he warned the
Holy Roman Emperor, Fredrick the
3rd, of countless disasters and
assassination attempts. At the time
people in the court called his gift
"dark magic." The cure for magic
powers then was a large bonfire. So
instead he began to keep his
prophecies to himself writing them
into his journal in code.

(then)

Nearly five hundred years later,
the book was properly translated at
the Technical University of Munich.
What the German Government found
was a warning of disaster. A
warning of every disaster. So, in
the interest of humanity, they
warned the Heroic Legion of the
next Supermassive Level event.

(then, with weight)

You will remember this as the
Failure in Cairo.

SFX: News Footage. Helicopter. Sirens.

BEN BELTZER

With thousands dead, the Heroic
Legion has taken full
responsibility for the failure to
contain Echnaton the Lich.

ARES

The book had warned of an ancient King that would be reborn in the winter of 6254 and lay waste to the world.

(then)

According to the Book's Translator, Theo had used the Egyptian Calendar, making the date the winter of 2012

IRON BARRACUDA

The goal was to destroy to lich before he reanimated.

ARES

This is a snippet of the interview Iron Barracuda, leader of the Heroic Legion had with SPR following the incident.

IRON BARRACUDA

With the help of the Egyptian Government, Legion experts had successfully discovered the location of Echnaton's tomb.

(then)

Unfortunately as our team of experts was securing the sarcophagus there was unintended damage to the seals binding the ancient horror.

(then)

That team was turned into scarabs.

(then)

And you know what happened next.

BEN BELTZER

Do you believe if the Legion had never taken action, that this disaster could have been avoided?

(a beat)

Iron Barracuda?

IRON BARRACUDA

No comment.

Back in the studio.

ARES

This is the problem with prophecy. By heeding their warning, you might be ensuring the very calamity they warn of.

(MORE)

ARES (CONT'D)

(adding)

But by doing nothing, you risk catastrophe.

KARA KAVALER

It's a problem we've had with technology since the dawn of time. We use new technology without ever considering if we *should* use it.

ARES

This is Kara Kavalier, translator of "The Thousand and One Prophecies of Theodamus." The following is from her first interview after decoding Theo's cypher in 2011.

KARA KAVALER

I worry this translation of Theo's Book will set off an arms race across the world with almost every major power seeking their own source of the future.

ARES

Now in 2020, the United States has the AI Franklin, the EU classified the translation of "The Thousand and One Prophecies of Theodamus" China has linked three of their most powerful psychics to create a premonition engine, and Russia has the Equation of the Super Mathematician, Tau.

(adding)

The list goes on and on with unconfirmed rumors of precognitive painters, profits, and ancient tablets being sold on the black market. We tracked Kara Kavalier down at the University of St. Andrews, where she teaches the science behind precognition.

New studio.

ARES (CONT'D)

Thank you for taking the time to speak with us.

KARA KAVALER

Thank you for having me.

ARES

There is an irony with your prediction about prophecy coming true, isn't there?

KARA KAVALER

I am certainly not happy to be correct.

ARES

In light of these countries fierce pursuit of prophets, do you ever see the world responsibly using prophecy?

KARA KAVALER

No.

(then)

My research leads me to believe that every prophecy is self fulfilling. Before I had translated Theo's book, we knew nothing about the Lich. It was our attempt to stop him that lead to his release.

(then)

We will never know if this would have happened naturally. And now all I can think about is the other warnings within those pages.

(then)

Some never came to pass. I had initially chalked it up to not knowing the context, but now I'm sure it is because no one had acted on them.

(then)

I am reminded of Oppenheimer after the creation of the Atomic Bomb. I have started an arms race without an end.

ARES

What would you do with the sources of prophecy that exist today?

KARA KAVALER

I would throw them into a fire and be done with it. The future does not belong to us, it comes for us. We belong to it, not the other way around.

ARES

I still have my copy of Theo's book, which is of course useless without the cipher Kara developed. I often gaze upon the cryptic symbols within it, wondering if I am named anywhere in its pages.

(adding)

My favorite place to read it, is in my wingback chair, by my fireplace.

Music.

ARES (CONT'D)

Special thanks to Kara Kavalier and the whole 100% Invisible team.

(then)

Kara has a new book coming out entitled: "Theo and Me", about her years translating his book of Prophecies. Look for it at your local bookseller.

(then)

We will back next time with more stories of design.

END ACT TWO

NEWS THREE

21 INT. NEWS STUDIO

21

In the studio.

DEIRDRE WILSON

Live from SPR news, I'm Deirdre Wilson.

(then)

We have an important update on the hostage situation at the Heroic Legion Data Center.

(adding)

We go to Stephen Singh on location. Stephen?

STEPHEN SINGH

Thanks Deirdre. There are still thirteen hostages in the secure vault of the data center with no end to the stand off in sight.

(brief beat)

Oh wait. I see Quantum, the ultimate speedster.

SFX: Speedster sounds.

STEPHEN SINGH (CONT'D)

(winded)

Incredible. The hostages have been rescued.

SFX: Ambulance. Cop Walla.

STEPHEN SINGH (CONT'D)

Remarkable, it seems Quantum was able to disarm the bombs after triggering them but before they detonated. The hostages are alright and now in the hands of medical professionals after suffering minor friction burns from traveling at mach two. It seems that Red Canary had kept them safe and comfortable during her attempt to hack into the data center.

DEIRDRE WILSON

And what of Red Canary? Stephen?

SFX: Speedster sounds.

RED CANARY

Quantu --

SFX: Speedster sounds. Punching.

DEIRDRE WILSON

Oh it seems that there is a slight satellite delay. Red Canary is of course an incredibly polarizing figure...

SFX: More Speedster sounds.

STEPHEN SINGH

And Red Canary is in police custody. It is interesting. Red Canary had insisted that she only wanted to draw public attention to the matter. Given her intentions, and the care given to the hostages, Quantum has asked authorities for leniency.

DEIRDRE WILSON

And what of the hack itself?

STEPHEN SINGH

Canary's claims are interesting. It does seem that the hack was not completed. But I --

(catching himself)

Am told Quantum has resolved to investigate the matter to its fullest extent. It's very... The claims Red Canary has made seem to...

DEIRDRE WILSON

Stephen?

STEPHEN SINGH

Yes sorry. We will continue to cover that aspect of the story as it develops rest assured. Quantum and all of us at SPR will uncover any wrongdoing --

(adding)

If it exists.

DEIRDRE WILSON

...And thank you Stephen.

UNDERWRITER

That was Stephen Singh reporting from Lenoir, North Carolina.

(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, what are Spider Dan's webs made of? The answer may shock you. We'll head to the SPR test kitchen to investigate...

SFX: Music and fade out.

UNDERWRITER (CONT'D)

This is SPR.

END NEWS THREE

END EPISODE
THREE