

EPISODE SEVEN

WRITERS:

JOHN DORSEY & MAX CLARK

EPISODE SEVEN - NEWS ONE

INT. NEWS STUDIO

In the studio.

UNDERWRITER

Celebrations continue through-out the geo-dome as Paradise City Celebrates it's 50th anniversary. SPR will have special coverage across our programming to commemorate the day. And now for the SPR News break..

WENLING CHEN

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

(then)

Since the public acknowledgement of the doppelgänger threat, Agents of ACRONYM has been coordinating with state and private research institutions to create a vaccine against duplication.

(then)

In the meantime, puzzler hero Steel Trap has invented a device that will help identify those who have been duplicated.

SFX: Press conference.

STEEL TRAP

The Mobile Online Operational Duplication Detection Ring works as a part of a networked system of DNA tracers. Should the wearer be duplicated the ring will go from green to yellow. If the wearer is themselves a doppelgänger, it will begin to glow red and emit this sound.

SFX: RING SOUND

STEEL TRAP (CONT'D)

It then sends a signal directly to ACRONYM so that Agents can isolate and quarantine the duplicate.

REPORTER #1, NEW 1, EP 7
So this ring offers no personal
protection?

STEEL TRAP
If we all wear this simple ring, we
will no longer fear our neighbors.
Doppelgängers will have no safe
harbor in which to hide. That
protects everyone

PETER TWIP VLN, NEW 1, EP 7
Peter Twip, VLN. Your solution is
literally mood rings?

STEEL TRAP
If it helps to think about it like
that, sure. It's 1997, MMMBop on
the radio and mood rings are all
the rage.

PETER TWIP VLN, NEW 1, EP 7
And what is Hanson doing now?

STEEL TRAP
They are still touring. But lets
focus on the issues at hand.

PRESS CHORUS, NEW 1, EP 7
I have more questions about
Hanson!/Do You think they are
cute?/Can You wear the ring as a
septum piercing?

WENLING CHEN
Steel Trap has assisted with global
catastrophes in the past and is
supposedly responsible for ridding
the world of the deadly Mind Virus
song: "Can't Tell Me What to Do."
Even though none of us can remember
it.

UNDERWRITER
That was Wenling Chen reporting
from Washington, it's 75 degrees
here in Paradise City. And now for
a special presentation by 100%
Invisible and These American
Supers.

EPISODE SEVEN - END NEWS ONE

EPISODE SEVEN - ACT ONE - TAS TICKET TO PARADISE PT1

INT. 100I STUDIO

In the studio.

ETHAN SCHWARTZ

What do you think of when I ask you to picture Paradise City? Palm trees and pools? Art deco and jazz? How long until you realize that for as much as you've heard about it, you've never seen the inside.

(then)

The iconic home to the world's most powerful has opened itself up to journalists for the first time in forty years. SPR reporters have been given unprecedented access to one of the most mysterious places in on Earth.

(then)

So today, in collaboration with fellow SPRmedia program 100% Invisible, we give you this program in two acts. Act one: "City of Dreams." Ares Greco has the story.

ARES

There was a quote emblazoned on the entrance of the old Paradise City. "As a city upon a hill, the eyes of all people are upon us"

(then)

The phrase is taken from John Winthrop's treatise: "A Model of Christian Charity."

(then)

The founder of Paradise City, Wyatt Rand, may not have believed in God, but he did have faith in the new and emerging generation of Super-humans.

(then)

Not a super by birth, Wyatt did have a massive fortune that made him consider himself something "more than human." He left his oil fields in Oklahoma and wandered into the American Desert in hopes of creating a new home for those he considered his peers.

WYATT RAND

Paradise on Earth!

(then)

Congratulations, you have been granted a place in the City of Dreams. Where anything you want is yours to be had. Be the person you've always wanted to be, free from the stifling shackles of ordinary living. A place where you can truly be super-human.

(then)

Paradise City opens its arms to you!

Sound FX: Incredibly light applause that dies out.

ARES

Marketed as a retreat for the super-powered or wealthy industrialists, it ran on a system of self-determination. That is to say: completely unregulated city services. The domed city soon suffered from a lack of sanitation and clean water, as well as a monorail that was described by one rider as "An unbalanced casket running across unfinished tracks at high speeds direct to St Peter."

(then)

Law suits amassed and the city stood empty. By 1952, eight months after the city was opened, it was shuttered and forgotten. Not a single super called Paradise home. Bankrupt, Wyatt surrendered the city to the American Government to avoid jail time for back taxes.

(then)

When Wyatt first built his home for supers, only 1% of the global population claimed special abilities, and the public was largely supportive of those shining new heroes who entered the spotlight for the first time.

(then)

However, over the next twenty years, as more powerful supers began to emerge, the general public's admiration turned to fear.

(MORE)

ARES (CONT'D)

Something captured by President Nixon's infamous Tipping Scales speech:

SFX: Recording Artifacts.

NIXON

At a certain point the inevitable question must be asked: "When will a single individual be too strong for the United States Military?

(then)

Too strong for our Heroic Squadrons? Every day more powerful beings reveal themselves and we must protect the many from tyranny of the few.

(then)

The scales are tipping and will need to be balanced.

ARES

The idea that a single person could be born with powers so strong they would dominate the world became one of the top political flashpoints in the country.

XIOMARA

Nixon's cabinet never thought twice over whether they should kill these supers, but they were stalled by the question of whether they could.

ARES

This is Xiomara Estrella, author of Eden II: The declassified secrets of Paradise City.

XIOMARA

And military consensus was that they couldn't. But they were getting closer.

ARES

So what miracle stopped them from destroying us all?

XIOMARA

Tina. The miracle's name was Tina.

TINA

I was just nine years old then.

ARES

Tina is now sixty and has the honor of being the first super resident of Paradise City.

(then)

Her house is on the edge of the city near the curve of the dome. Her yard is filled with lilacs.

TINA

My father was a researcher at the Department of Superhuman Services.

(then)

It was a good job, I was always proud of him. He worked with supers! To a kid that was everything.

(then)

Until one day it became very frightening.

ARES

Frightening how?

TINA

His team had been tasked to develop a chemical that would create... "Complications" for people with Superpowers.

(then)

And *only* in people with Superpowers.

ARES

Even at age nine, Tina displayed powerful Superhuman abilities. Abilities her father went to great lengths to keep secret.

TINA

He was worried that if the department found out, I would become test subject number one.

ARES

And it seems like with good reason. Especially with your particular power.

TINA

It's called Verumsomnia.

(then)

It means my dreams come true.

ARES

Literally.

TINA

Literally. There'd be times when I'd wake up to find we had a pet goat, or the house would be filled with chocolate. And I mean filled! I couldn't control it. It was complicated. Sometimes I'd have nightmares.

ARES

You can find Washington Post articles from the late sixties that contain reports of strange, misshapen creatures, which drew ghost hunters and occultists from all over.

TINA

My parents did their best to protect me from bad thoughts...

(then)

To this day I've never seen a horror movie. They were always so calm and gentle. So when my dad came home scared...

(then)

I knew something was very wrong.

ARES

Her parents loaded up their car and went out west to stay with Tina's Grandfather.

TINA

The air in the car was so tense that they were afraid to let me sleep. They kept switching off driving, so one of them could keep bouncing me and telling me stories. For two days.

(then)

Mom told me a lot about my grandpa, who I'd never met. She told me about the city he built just for me. It was like something out of a fairy tale. I was enraptured.

ARES

That's because her grandfather was...

XIOMARA

Wyatt Rand. Paradise City had consumed his fortune, but he lived in a small piece of land not far from its gates. The City itself was too isolated to be worth tearing down, so it just was left to rot away in the desert.

TINA

Green gardens and quiet streams, beautiful castles and forts and life sized doll houses and a thousand things to do. We got there in the middle of the night and I suppose it must've actually been retched and rusted, but in the dark my imagination colored in the details. The grand statues, the great glass dome halfway to the moon, green paths and duck ponds. I don't remember what parts were real and what was me half-dreaming.

ARES

You went to the old city?

TINA

My father hadn't actually talked to his dad in years. He knew he lived nearby somewhere, but we'd all been up for days and when they saw the dome, they finally felt safe enough to let me sleep.

(then)

And as I slept, I dreamed of Paradise.

YUKON

For about two hours we were at DEFCON Two.

ARES

This is General Titus Yukon, Military Head of the Paradise City Project and, in 1972, base commander at Nellis Air Force Base in Las Vegas.

YUKON

Radar pinged heavy right in the middle of the desert.

(MORE)

YUKON (CONT'D)

Our officers on watch said they could feel the wind from it from the tower and we were some 150 miles away. We didn't know if it was the Russians, Tsarpathians, or some costumed menace. We were on site in forty minutes.

TINA

I remember my mom shaking me awake asking me: "what did you do? What did you do?" She meant the tanks and the soldiers. But she didn't know the half of it. Because as soon as I woke up, I knew I was safe.

ARES

Street cars slid down golden tracks, every light was now aglow. Robot servants and endless fruit trees. It wasn't the city Wyatt Rand had built, it was the city he had tried to sell.

(then)

Paradise City had come alive.

YUKON

We knew about the theme park, a couple of our men would sometimes use it for target practice. But that was some abandoned lot. A tourist trap with broken glass and graffiti.

(adding)

This was...

TINA

Home. I just felt it. The house was just like the one I'd always wanted. There were flowers in the front yard all the way to the curb. My mom was still panicked, but my dad, he just was standing out front so quiet and still he might have been turned to gold.

YUKON

The dome was suddenly three hundred feet tall, and glowing with energy. The whole thing was OPG.

(then)

Over my pay grade.

XIOMARA

The military left super emergencies to the Legion. And the local ranking hero was Bonobo, the super-ape. Incredibly intelligent, powerful, a wonderful singer too.

(then)

That part didn't come up.

YUKON

We'd seen the chimp work before, good kid, professional. But then as soon as he flew over the threshold, bam, comes down like a meteor. Ten seconds later he just popped up, dumb as dirt. Just a normal monkey, ape, whatever.

ARES

See beyond the miracle of bringing the city to life, she had created something even more amazing. The suppression field.

(then)

Tina had dreamed of a place where her powers would no longer endanger others.

(then)

To this day scientists are not sure how it works, but whatever keeps the city running, also suppresses superpowers.

(then)

Tina has her own theory.

TINA

It's child logic. It doesn't have to make sense in order to work.

(then)

I call it: "the security blanket." And more than anything I wanted to be safe from myself.

ARES

For the first time in years. Tina could dream without having to worry if her manifestations would run wild.

YUKON

We were on the outside babysitting the ape, hands itchy on triggers.

(MORE)

YUKON (CONT'D)

Everybody's looking at me, I'm looking at the Legion Rep, he's looking at the phone and waiting for the White House to get involved. Then, the doors open and we see a little girl. This relaxes absolutely no one.

TINA

I knew the city would protect me, and I told everyone: "This is the place I made for everyone you're afraid of, so you don't have to be afraid of us anymore."

YUKON

I mean. What do you say to that?
Laughs

XIOMARA

Tina had them. No one could get in, Tina refused to leave, so it was a stalemate. Alfred, Tina's Father, called in the DSS. They ran tests over the whole city. Slowly everyone realized that this little girl had created the perfect compromise. Safety for supers, peace of mind for civilians. Department of Superhuman Services, the Legion, hell, even the Villainous League signed up.

(then)

If someone was too powerful for the outside world, Paradise City would be their new home.

YUKON

Those of us that weren't too freaked out living within shaking distance of a snow globe full of human nukes, well we became part of the Paradise City Project.

TINA

People were so happy. A lot of them were practically fugitives before the city showed up. Even now, our invitees, would be experimented on, exploited, conscripted, or purged if they were left out there. 95% of them say yes.

YUKON

People act as if we're giving folks an ultimatum. It's not. It's just an offer. But it's a really good offer. Sometimes we get refused, and some of those have gone on to have hugely successful careers.

ARES

Like, Cosmos for instance?

YUKON

(laughs)

Cosmos? No. Our typical candidates are considerably more powerful than him.

ARES

...Oh.

TINA

It's not for everyone. My grandfather visited in those early days, but he never liked to stay. He and my dad would take walks in Paradise Park sometimes, but I think it made him feel... Uncomfortable.

(then)

My dad said grandpa never liked to be bottled up. Grandpa just said "too much government."

(then)

As a child I wanted to be safe. But now, after living here, I wonder what I could have become if I had allowed myself to dream bigger.

ARES

Do you ever consider leaving?

TINA

No. And it's a good thing because no one knows what would happen if I did. This place came out of my dreams, but now a lot of people have their hopes tangled up in this dome. And a lot of new folks still getting settled. I think they need me to set the example.

ARES

"As a city upon a hill, the eyes of all people are upon us" A city of dreams. In more ways than one.

ETHAN SCHWARTZ

That was Ares Greco with 100% Invisible. A special thanks to Tina Rand and the Paradise City Project.

(then)

You can listen to 100% Invisible every week on your local SPR station or online at SPRpod.com.

(then)

We'll be back with part two of the paradise city special, after the news break.

EPISODE SEVEN - END ACT ONE

EPISODE SEVEN - NEWS TWO - TCAS PT. 1

INT. AD BREAK

In the studio.

ADS

Support for SPR comes from...

(then)

Biggas (Big Ass) Shorts.

(then)

We wouldn't like you when you're angry at your tight constricting wardrobe. Biggas Shorts are the first truly one size fits all pant, thoughtfully engineered for comfort, durability, and maximum stretchiness.

(then)

Available in purple and beetroot, for every pair of shorts you buy, Biggas donates a pair to a rage monster in need. Get twenty percent off your first purchase by entering the code: SPRpod at our website.

(then)

Biggas Shorts. Smashingly good. A spandexo family company.

INT. NEWS STUDIO

In the studio.

WENLING CHEN

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

(then)

Last week, the world was stunned by the apparent return of Quantum, the Ultimate Speedster.

(then)

While the internet has been alive with rumors explaining the hero's recovery, some believe that this Quantum may be an imposter.

(then)

SPR news has one reporter uniquely equipped to investigate this story.

(then)

We go now to Apoorva Singh.

APOORVA SINGH

Some knew my father as SPR reporter
Stephen Singh, others as Quantum.
But both men were heroes.

SFX: Clips from Babylon Attack Season 1 - Ep. 6

APOORVA SINGH (CONT'D)

September 9th, 2020. New Orleans.
Babylon's attack on the city should
have taken thousands of innocent
lives. Instead it only took one.

SFX: Funeral bagpipes. Cameras. Press conference walla.

IRON BARRACUDA (V.O.)

The Earth turns a little slower
today. There will never be anyone
quite like Quantum. May he rest in
peace.

SFX: Quantum zip.

APOORVA SINGH

Most heroes struggle to manage a
work life balance. Not so, when you
are nearly as fast as light. My
father didn't miss birthdays or
recitals. He didn't miss deadlines.
He didn't leave people behind. He
was everywhere. So when he was
suddenly nowhere, we grieved. Until
this past month.

Note: We should have dialogue from that segment play here,
even if it's just in the BG.

APOORVA SINGH (CONT'D)

What's the saying about
Superheroes? If you don't see them
die, then they aren't really
dead... So let me tell you. Quantum
is dead.

(then)

I regret that this isn't the
continuing story of Quantum. Of my
father. This is the story of an
imposter. I don't know who they
are, or what their intentions are.
But I will find out.

(then)

I'm Apoorva Singh and is this is
"To Catch a Speedster".

SFX: Apoorva Speedster Zip.

JUHI SINGH

When he first showed up I thought it was you. But then I remembered you're too much of a teacher's pet.

APOORVA SINGH

I brought my sister Juhi Singh into the studio because she is Hallucikinetic, or in layman's terms, an illusionist, and therefore an expert in imposters.

APOORVA SINGH - JUHI IMPRESSION

Therefore an expert in imposters.

JUHI SINGH

You know how nerdy this all sounds, right?

APOORVA SINGH

As you can hear, she can mimic just about anything or *anyone*.

(then)

When I first heard Quantum had returned, she was my first suspect.

JUHI SINGH

But as you can hear.

QUANTUM (JUHI IMPRESSION)

Whenever I use my power near microphones it *FART SOUNDS*

(whine picks up)

Hear that? It's really annoying.

Ruins my tik-toks.

SFX: Mic fizzles out.

APOORVA SINGH

So it's not me and it's not you, but you agree it's not Dad?

JUHI SINGH

I don't know. Is there anything he couldn't do?

(then)

Once he told me that he could run so fast, he could break time.

(then)

Would it be so awful if it was him?

SFX: Apoorva sighs. Recorder is picked up and switched off.

APOORVA SINGH

While our household is divided on the issue, sightings of the imposter continue to mount across the country.

SFX: Factory Whistle

APOORVA SINGH (CONT'D)

In Bloomington Indiana, they manufacture Chornox, a medicine that keeps young shapeshifters stable.

(then)

When a gang of Tier D villains raided the plant, they received a surprise.

MARV

They didn't know what hit them. Just flash, wham, bam! They were all tied up, plant secured. There was even a thank you package for our security team.

APOORVA SINGH

This is Plant Supervisor Marv Dunlap.

MARV

It only took a second.

(snaps)

Flash of light. Zip, zip. In and out.

SFX: Typing on keys.

APOORVA SINGH

Security images show a hooded figure blurred across a single frame. Did any of the villains have rope burn?

MARV

Nope, everyone was unharmed. **Let's go Quantum!**

SFX: Apoorva Speedster Zip.

APOORVA SINGH

Meanwhile 400 miles away in Jonesboro, Arkansas, a growing Norm-core presence had been putting pressure on the local school board to expel Curtis Jennicks, a young boy with telekinesis.

(then)

Curtis's family was ready to move before someone intervened.

MRS JENNICKS

It was incredible. There were about thirty people on the sidewalk outside our house with their signs and then: Whoosh! A bright swirl of light! They're all back in their cars, with a pamphlet on tolerance in their hands.

APOORVA SINGH

Can you describe the "whoosh?"

MRS JENNICKS

It was like...

(Quantum Zip impression)

The lawn was mowed, trash taken out and there was a little Quantum action figure in Curtis's room. Signed card saying to "hold fast." It's meant the world to him.

APOORVA SINGH

Can I see the message?

MRS JENNICKS

Got it right here on the fridge.

SFX: Paper rustle.

APOORVA SINGH

Whoever did this did their research. Handwriting is a perfect match, it's even written on my father's stationary. But it is signed "Incognito."

(then)

This sounds like my father, but it doesn't feel like him.

(then)

Whenever we did lawn work at home we ran at quarter speed or we'd dig gouges in the dirt. Nothing like that here.

(MORE)

APOORVA SINGH (CONT'D)

(then)

No skid marks on the sidewalk.

MRS JENNICKS

He was your...

(stops himself)

Do you mind if we thank him?

APOORVA SINGH

(with a forced grin)

Of course.

MRS JENNICKS

Thank you Quantum. We always knew you'd come back.

SFX: Apoorva Speedster Zip.

APOORVA SINGH

SPR News has authorized me to investigate this story despite my personal attachment to it because they believe I am the only person on Earth who can catch up to whoever is doing this.

(then)

They aren't wrong. If the imposter is listening to this, my father always encouraged people to run their own path. If you believe in your work, I invite you to drop the disguise. Or I'll drop it for you.

(then)

Until then: Hold Fast.

UNDERWRITER

That was Apoorva Singh with To Catch a Speedster. It's 74 degrees here in Paradise City. And now back to These American Supers.

EPISODE SEVEN - END NEWS TWO

EPISODE SEVEN - ACT TWO - TICKET TO PARADISE PT2

INT. TAS STUDIO

In the studio.

DYNA

I was 13 when I got the visit. When you're that age and Weather-girl invites you to a place where anything you want is yours for the rest of your life, you say yes.

(adding)

You don't read the fine print.

MENTA

I was eighteen, and just coming into myself. Everyone knew I was telekinetic, but they didn't know what that meant. When you can move things with your mind, the only limits are your imagination. And I have a wild imagination.

RONDO

I think they knew that I didn't mean to do that to Arizona. That's why I'm here and not Seguardo. I've learned so much since then. And not just about my powers! We have Salsa classes, pottery, glass blowing. Anything you want.

(then)

Paradise City is well...

WYATT RAND

The City of Dreams. Where anything you've ever wanted is yours to be had.

ETHAN SCHWARTZ

Hidden deep in the sands of the Mojave is the most secure community on Earth. It's an oasis in the desert, a spa, a school, and...

DYNA

The nicest prison on earth. Ta da.

ETHAN SCHWARTZ

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

(MORE)

ETHAN SCHWARTZ (CONT'D)

Now Act Two: Ticket to Paradise.
Since Tina Rand brought her
grandfather's dream back to life,
the city has flourished.

(then)

But what does it mean to live in
Paradise? And, more important, what
is the cost?

(then)

Ellen Spiegel has the story.

ELLEN SPIEGEL

Since the doors of Paradise
"reopened," they have never
actually been used. Once you accept
an invitation, you just find
yourself there.

(then)

Courtesy of teleportation expert
Bernice Wallace. Who is the first
face you see.

BERNICE

It's a great job. I get all the
perks of being a resident without
the usual qualifications. If you
can't be all powerful, be
irreplaceable, that's what my Mom
said when I started.

(chewing)

Want some Baumkuchen? It's freshly
baked.

ELLEN SPIEGEL

You arrive on a small marble
platform in the center of a koi
pond the size of a lake. The large
blue hall is filled with soothing
music.

(then, to Bernice)

That's really lovely.

BERNICE

It's the San Francisco Philharmonic
this week.

ELLEN SPIEGEL (STUDIO)

Sure enough, behind me was an
entire symphony orchestra playing
on a large wooden ship, lit by
paper lanterns and fireflies. I
waved to them because... what else
do you do?

BERNICE

(Can you believe it?)

All I said was "Could I listen to music."

(Then)

This way.

ELLEN SPIEGEL

She guides me towards an archway, intricately carved in runes and vines. There is a grey mist underneath. **[ALT: It is filled by a rolling grey mist, flickering like a stormcloud]**

BERNICE

If you have a power, watch out, it can be a little disorienting out there.

ELLEN SPIEGEL

The suppression field?

BERNICE

This is the only place it doesn't reach. A present from the people of Atlantis. You'll be fine, long slow breaths. And welcome, to Paradise.

(snort)

They make me say it like that. Have fun.

ELLEN SPIEGEL

She pushed me through the barrier. It was paper thin, but it felt like a waterfall. I came through the other side expecting to drown in the weight of it. But instead I breathed in the fresh air of the Swiss Alps. It was 72 degrees and the sun was high in the sky. Far better than the convection oven in the desert outside. Yet my body still felt uncomfortably tight.

GRITL

Can I offer you a mint, Ms. Spiegel? I've been told they help.

ELLEN SPIEGEL

The mint did help. Eventually.

(then to Gritl)

I can't even see the dome.

GRITL

(gentle laugh)

This is a place of dreams. And
people dream of the sky.

ELLEN SPIEGEL

This was Gritl, my guide and
chaperone for my day in the city.
They were so stunning I wondered if
they were human.

GRITL

I was born in Sweden, but I've been
here for five years. The air here
is good for the skin and the water
whitens your teeth. But they didn't
just hire me for my charm and good
looks. Can I offer you a piggyback
ride?

ELLEN SPIEGEL

Oh. No thank you.

(then)

I should have taken them up on it.
We spent the day crisscrossing long
scenic paths as we bustled from
appointment to appointment. Of
which there were many. The strict
schedule was part of the terms of
my visit.

(then)

We toured the art galleries, the
arcade, the hundred little
flourishes of culture and comfort
the city is famous for. And
eventually they took me to my first
interview.

(then)

We met Tyrone Weech, a weathered,
grey haired man, at one of the
city's many spas. Tyrone is one of
Paradise City's oldest inhabitants.

TYRONE

I don't think there's a better
place in the world.

ELLEN SPIEGEL

He was getting a massage from
someone who could have been Gritl's
twin.

TYRONE

A lot of kids in here don't appreciate what we have. Maybe we take them in too young now.

(then)

But I've seen the world. Hell. When I came here in 1975 you know what it was like? Forget being a super. First time in my life I had so many white people calling me sir. Everyone. Like they really meant it. Ain't that right, Durndl?

DURNDL

Yes, *sir*.

TYRONE

I could bend space on the outside and people barely gave me the time of day. Most of them hated me twice as much for how powerful I was. In here I get the royal treatment without having to fight for it.

ELLEN SPIEGEL

Do you ever want to try the outside world again? I know they let people out from time to time.

TYRONE

No, not for me.

ELLEN SPIEGEL

The world's gotten better.

SFX: The massage stops. Tyrone lifts his head up.

TYRONE

I'm good right here. You know we get the news in here too, sweetheart.

UNDERWRITER

(from outside, booming)

News?

SFX: A pitcher breaks.

ELLEN SPIEGEL

The voice came out of every speaker in the building, including my phone. I even heard it echo out of Tyrone's hearing aid.

TYRONE

Ah, me and my mouth.

UNDERWRITER

Did somebody say "News?!"

ELLEN SPIEGEL

Despite its isolation, Paradise City is home to its own SPR station, established at the request of one of its residents, Nebraskan native, Douglas Corona.

(then)

Many of our listeners may recognize his voice coming to you between ad breaks.

UNDERWRITER

Is that Ellen Spiegel, reporting live from Paradise City? It's 72 degrees and sunny. Up next, a long awaited meeting.

ELLEN SPIEGEL

In another swirl of blue light, I found myself suddenly in the Paradise City Studio.

UNDERWRITER

Ah, that was a little more direct than I was planning.

(then: **AMPLIFIED**)

Thanks Bernie!

ELLEN SPIEGEL

I couldn't take my eyes off the room which.

(then to Doug)

-- Is the nicest recording studio I've ever seen in my life.

UNDERWRITER

Want to see the rest?

ELLEN SPIEGEL

Doug took me through the pristine and futuristic broadcast station. It was twice the size of our Baltimore affiliate and it seemed like he was the only person there. After the tour, he sat us down in studio and we took turns interviewing each other.

UNDERWRITER

I've always loved the radio.
Soundscapes colored in by the power
of your imagination.

ELLEN SPIEGEL

Doug was a -- you know what, he's
right, imagine him how you want.
But his power is certainly unique.

UNDERWRITER

I ... am an amplifier.

ELLEN SPIEGEL

Of?

UNDERWRITER

Anything! Electricity, heat,
feelings, inspiration, hope, radio
waves. I think that's why our
ratings are so high.

ELLEN SPIEGEL

It's true. The Paradise City
station is the most listened to SPR
affiliate in the country. Sometimes
its listenership surpasses the
population of the Earth.

UNDERWRITER

There's a chance our signal extends
into other solar systems. I even
interviewed a professor who
believes our programming has broken
into the multiverse. Did you hear
that one? It's on our local morning
show, Mugs with Doug.

ELLEN SPIEGEL

How did you wind up here? Most of
the resident's powers can be pretty
destructive, but yours is
constructive, if anything.

UNDERWRITER

The government tried to plug me
into the national grid. My mom
bless her, didn't want that for me
and wrote the Paradise City Project
on my behalf. I guess I'm something
of a scholarship case.

(then)

She knew I could have a more
fulfilling life here. .

(MORE)

UNDERWRITER (CONT'D)

I'm grateful I got to choose my own path. Some of our residents, they aren't so lucky.

(then)

Hey you could probably use that as a transition in your story if you talk to someone like --

MENTA

With a power like mine, I could never live a normal life.

ELLEN SPIEGEL

On Doug's advice I went to see Menta, an extremely powerful telekinetic, and one of the residents of Paradise who didn't have the choice to come here.

(then)

Gritl caught up with me as we sat in her atrium, which was decorated with beautiful blue mosaic that gave the feeling of being near the ocean. Menta served lemonade.

MENTA

Your mind is connected to the world around you, but for me, it's integrated. There was no sense of where my body ends. Pick up that glass.

SFX: Glass lifted off glass table.

MENTA (CONT'D)

Did you notice how the 24 muscles in your wrist and hands and fingers contracted and expanded to position your hand, and grip the glass with just enough pressure to lift it, but not break it?

ELLEN SPIEGEL

No.

MENTA

Right. Silently your mind does its work: sending impulses out to create the movement you desire. That's how it is for me. But my reach...

SFX: Ice, liquid, movement.

ELLEN SPIEGEL

The lemonade in my glass swirled, a stream of liquid twisted through the air and siphoned into her mouth.

MENTA

Is limitless.

ELLEN SPIEGEL

I'm surprised you still have so much control here. Doesn't the suppression field weigh you down?

Menta laughs.

SFX: Rumbling, stone chipping, wind, shutters clattering.

ELLEN SPIEGEL (CONT'D)

Suddenly the mosaic making up the floor and walls broke free, each individual tile swirling around us, joining with others that flew in from other rooms. The individual pigments from some grew darker or lighter as paint moved from one tile to the next. Gritl, beside me, merely sighed, drumming their fingers impatiently. Soon the tiles began to set, displaying a perfect panoramic of a deep wooded glade. I'd never seen anything like it.

MENTA

You should've seen me on the outside.

ELLEN SPIEGEL

Why not leave?

MENTA

Where would I go? This world isn't big enough for someone like me.

ELLEN SPIEGEL (STUDIO)

And it wasn't just her.

(then)

Dyna is a young super in her early twenties. She sported a black nirvana hoodie and fluffy pink slippers.

DYNA

I never really had a choice.

ELLEN SPIEGEL

I met Dyna in a three room ranch house. Compared to the aesthetic wonders around it, it seemed out of place.

(then)

Grey carpets, white walls, not a single picture. Just a computer gaming setup and a couch.

DYNA

It used to look different. When I first moved here, I had a palace, but it felt...too big. I guess I was just used to having my whole family around and after a while, the loneliness...

ELLEN SPIEGEL

You don't get to see them?

DYNA

Sure, the city has holographic suites where I can even sit down to dinner with them, but it's not the same.

(then)

My folks offered to move in. Some families do. But I couldn't do that to them.

ELLEN SPIEGEL

You don't think they'd like living in paradise?

DYNA

Maybe they would, for a bit. For a few years. But it's hard to stay in a room when the door's wide open. And then they'd be gone and it'd only feel emptier.

(Beat. Chair creaks.)

So, I don't think I could do it to me.

ELLEN SPIEGEL

Following Doug's new itinerary, which Gritl reluctantly accepted, our next stop was at a twenty story tower carved from ice. Home to Rondo Bellweather. He famously worked as the hero ICE-Tray, before he got his invitation to Paradise.

RONDO

"Invitation" *snorts* It was a condition of my plea deal.

ELLEN SPIEGEL (STUDIO)

I automatically looked to Gritl expecting them to step in, but apparently there are no secrets in Paradise City.

RONDO

A lot of people can freeze things. People love it when you can freeze things. And that's what I thought I did. That's what everyone thought.

(then)

As it turns out, I have something a bit more general. All freezing is changing the movement of molecules and *that's* what I do. And it's not just liquid to solid. As it turns out, people don't like it so much when you go the other way. Especially when you do it with something that really, really should be solid.

ELLEN SPIEGEL

Do you have regrets?

RONDO

About what I did, sure. About being here?

ELLEN SPIEGEL

Rondo went to the ice wall and sublimated some of it into steam, so he could look at the horizon. He turned to Gritl.

RONDO

Sunset please.

ELLEN SPIEGEL

The geo-dome adjusted, bringing the sun down low across the city. It was beautiful, but Rondo stared looked dismally at it.

RONDO

When I first came here, I thought I hated it. All of it, this big, shiny cage that is so polished you can't even see the bars.

ELLEN SPIEGEL
The illusion of freedom?

RONDO
Yeah, but then I realized that it's the same illusion outside. I had these powers and so I checked some hero box and that was my job. Waking up every day "doing the mission." If I didn't have these powers, I'd be in some other box with maybe a better view, but how far out of our boxes do any of us really go?

(then)
That actually brought me a little peace. At least here I don't have to worry about what other people think.

MENTA
It's a good deal, that's why it's such a great trap.

ELLEN SPIEGEL
Menta again.

MENTA
It's understandable to think we give up our potential when we come here. But that was never something we had in the first place. So we trade one illusion for another. And everyone feels a little bit safer.

ELLEN SPIEGEL
I had hoped to understand the City after seeing it with my own eyes, but I somehow feel even further away. The City of Dreams shifts like a mirage. Whether you see a shelter, a cage, or something entirely unique may just be a trick of the light.

ETHAN SCHWARTZ
That was Ellen Speigel.
(then)
That's our episode. We'd like to thank our friend, Douglas Corona for arranging access to Paradise City as well as the Paradise City Project for their cooperation.

(MORE)

ETHAN SCHWARTZ (CONT'D)

Thank you so much for listening to
our program.

BERNICE

All I said was "Could I listen to
music."

ETHAN SCHWARTZ

Sorry, Bernice. Join us next time
for more of These American Supers

EPISODE SEVEN - END ACT TWO

EPISODE SEVEN - NEWS THREE

INT. NEWS STUDIO

In the studio.

WENLING CHEN

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

(then)

One week after the unsuccessful
military intervention by the
Kamikaze Krew, the United Nations
has joined President Norris in
declaring the island of Xen a
Villainous State.

(then)

The people of Xen have responded by
expelling foreign diplomats and
press from their shores. Before
doing so, Cosmos made one final
statement.

SFX: Xen walla. Dinosaurs. Press. Murmurs.

COSMOS

Tezz H'rum and Malme Rohard were
twins, both 24. Maru Mayumi, age
42. Tony Duncan 50. Isrep T'lak 18.
Vai Cornax, 62. Jai Cornax, 11.
Seven people and a new Thent tree
sapling. Murdered by the American
President.

(then)

This was an island that no one
wanted and we filled it with people
that no one wanted and still, we
cannot have even that.

(then)

They didn't try to capture Galatea.
They didn't try to round up the
Green Force. They didn't attack me.
[Alt: Repeat the dead count]

(then)

We had a garden, a school and a
hospital. Now we have a graveyard.
The Kamikaze Crew is buried there
too.

SFX: Wind blows through the trees.

COSMOS (CONT'D)

What were you thinking? We tried to live peacefully among you. But you said we were too different. Too alien. We are here because you were so afraid of us you couldn't even accept our help. Did you forget that fear?

SFX: Deep rumble.

COSMOS (CONT'D)

Galatea, what would happen if the US killed me and invaded Xen?

GALATEA

With the combined US Military forces, the US would succeed in 23% of projected scenarios.

COSMOS

And if I fought?

GALATEA

The US would succeed in 2% of projected scenarios.

COSMOS

And if you helped?

GALATEA

The United States would fail in 100% of projected scenarios and would be unable to resist a Xen counterattack without significant support of global powers.

COSMOS

We are peaceful. But threaten us again and I swear you will remember your fear. **(ALT) Now get out.**

WENLING CHEN

We will have more on this story as it develops...

UNDERWRITER

That was Wenling Chen reporting from Washington.

(then)

Today's show was written and produced by John Dorsey and Maximilian Clark.

(MORE)

UNDERWRITER (CONT'D)

Additional producing by Carla Lerner, This episode's cast include (see website). With special thanks to Brenna Killeen and Brendan Sokler.

(then)

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Outro:

UNDERWRITER (CONT'D)

Coming up next...

(then)

You know her for her investigative reports, but SPR great Ellen Spiegel has layers you've never seen. Join her in our test kitchen making her favorite childhood recipes! That and musical Guest Rihanna up next on Mugs with Doug.

SFX: End Music.

UNDERWRITER (CONT'D)

This is SPR

EPISODE SEVEN - END NEWS THREE

END EPISODE 7