

AND THERE CAME A DAY, A DAY UNLIKE ANY OTHER. WHEN THREE FRIENDS ROSE FROM THEIR DOOM TO FIGHT ON, VOWING NEVER AGAIN TO GIVE IN TO THE FORCES OF EVIL. ON THAT DAY, E.G.G. WAS REBORN.

E.G.G

Experimental Government Gadgets

-EPISODE 28-

SECRET INVASION

It had been a week since Josh walked out on E.G.G. He went to New York City to consult with Iron Man on the scope of the problem. It was worse than they had feared. It was discovered the Cobra, one of the members of the Serpent Society, had been replaced by a Skrull. Now they were taking villains too. Josh sat outside at a café, Allyson sitting across from him in her best Sunday dress and hat.

“This is nice.” She said. “A vacation to New York, just to get away from it all.”

“Yeah,” Josh replied, playing with his fork. Allyson frowned.

“You don’t look happy.” She said. Josh looked up.

“Sorry Allyson, I’m just trying to sort out this whole ‘who’s got a case of the Skrulls’ deal. They can be anybody...”

“Josh, Eileen and Acacia are still themselves.”

“What? How’d you...”

“Because they’re your best friends, and you want to be able to trust them. The uncertainty has to be devastating.”

“Yeah...”

“But you know them better than anyone. So what do you say we head back to E.G.G. Base tomorrow and get this settled? In the meantime, relax! We’re in New York City!” Josh smiled.

“You’re right Allyson! I should take a load off!” The waiter dropped off a shrimp salad for Allyson and gourmet burger for Josh. Josh rubbed his hands together. “And enjoy this meal!”

“That’s the spirit!” Allyson happily replied, biting a forkful of salad. Josh lifted his glass to sip some raspberry lemonade when he stopped. In the reflection, sitting at the table behind him, was Agent Rice.

“No freaking way.” He said. Allyson looked up.

“What’s wrong?”

“That’s Agent Rice!”

“Agent who?”

“From the Wolfpack! The one that got away!”

“Oh!”

“I’m gonna bag him...” Allyson put her hand on Josh’s.

“Please, don’t.” She begged.

“Allyson, this guy’s on S.H.I.E.L.D.’s radar in a big way!”

“Josh, this is us time...”

“And it’ll still be us time when I get back. Get a to-go bag and head to the hotel. I’ll meet you there.” Josh quickly kissed Allyson and made his way towards Rice. Allyson sighed and sunk in her seat.

“There goes our vacation.” She said. Josh snuck behind a waiter, got him in a chokehold, and dragged him into the shadows. Seconds later he emerged in the waiter’s outfit and walked over to Rice’s table. Rice had his face buried in his phone.

“Work stuff?” Josh asked.

“Yeah.” Rice replied, not looking away from the screen.

“Huh, well sometimes work can be murder. Now, you ordered the scrambled eggs with the side of rice?”

“What? I didn’t...” Rice turned to see Josh, smiling. He sighed.

“Crap.” He jumped up and threw the table at Josh. People panicked and ran as Josh ducked under the table and threw the tray like a frisbee. It nailed Rice in the back.

“Gah!” He cried, holding his back and rushing across the street. Josh was in hot pursuit, dodging a few cars and making his way to Agent Rice. Even hurt, Rice was twice as fast as Josh. He booked down the street, Josh struggling to keep up.

“Come on...” Josh said to himself, speeding up. Rice pushed into an abandoned warehouse and made his way to the center of the room. Josh rushed in and assumed a fighting stance. “Ha! Nowhere to go!” Rice sighed, grabbed Josh’s head, and turned it to the ceiling. On the support beams were dozens of Syndicate soldiers, and Skrulls.

“An ambush!” He shouted as they all jumped down and surrounded them. “And a Syndicate-Skrull team up!” Rice took out a Fighting Stick and tossed it to Josh. “And you’re helping me? I’m not sure which of the three is worse!”

“Shut up and fight.” Rice said, taking out two swords.

“Right, he gets swords.” Josh said, extending his Fighting Stick into a bow staff.

* * *

Lightstream landed on the Helicarrier.

“Okay, play it cool.” She said to herself. “And try not to attract any unwanted...”

Suddenly her body was flooded with laser pointers, as auto turrets and a welcoming committee of about 100 S.H.I.E.L.D. agents came to greet her. She sighed. “Attention.” She put her hands up. “I want to talk to Nick Fury.”

“You got him.” Fury said, walking onto the deck, signaling his men to stand down. “And what can I do for you?”

“I heard about this alien invasion.” She replied. “I want to help in any way I can.”

“You want to help?” Fury asked. “Then how about you finish up the Skrull detector you started a week ago, Eileen.” She froze.

“You know?”

“We’re S.H.I.E.L.D. Of course we know. You think we’re gonna let some half-trained new hero fly the streets without gathering proper intel?” Eileen sighed and took off her mask.

“Fine, point taken. But I’m serious, me and Acacia hit a dead end with that detector! For every step we take one day it seems like we went three steps back the next! Everything seems right, but the components somehow keep screwing up. I can do more good as Lightstream than I can in the Humpty Dumpty Hall.”

“Listen, that’s where we need you right now.” Fury said. “We need a super hero assist, we’ll call you. But right now, our main priority is finding out where the Skrulls are.” Eileen nodded.

“Okay, I’ll work twice as hard.” She put her mask on and jumped off of the Helicarrier, flying back to E.G.G. Base.

* * *

Josh was backed into a corner, taking on two Skrulls and four Syndicate.

“Ah boy.” He said, whacking a Syndicate into a Skrull and kicking another Syndicate into the wall. He looked over at Rice, who was cutting his way through everyone with his swords. “Dang, he’s good.” Rice sliced a Skrull, ducked under some gunfire, elbowed a Syndicate, and threw a Skrull into about three more. The two fought and fought, and eventually, the room was quiet. Rice spun his swords and sheathed them both.

“Well that was fun.” Josh said. “So whose side are you on anyways?” Rice looked at him.

“Yours, idiot.” He replied.

“Well, you didn’t seem like you were on my side back at E.G.G. Base.” Josh angrily defended.

“Because you were screwing everything up.”

“By stopping you from stealing my weapons?” Rice growled under his breath.

“Listen, and listen good, because I’m only saying this once. My team and I were ambushed by Skrulls. They got Milan and Trevino, but the alien was no match for me. I had won the fight and pretended I was the Skrull. Their mission was to break into your base and steal as much of your technology as they could for study. Once we were clear, I was going to lead them

to S.H.I.E.L.D., turn them in, and tell Fury we had an alien problem on our hands. And your toys would have been returned safe and sound.”

“You could have told me that back at E.G.G. Base!”

“No, because I couldn’t risk blowing my cover. Then you stopped me and ruined everything. So I had to escape and finish my mission.”

“Right, so what was all this?”

“I’ve been on the Skrull’s trail for weeks now, this was them trying to stop me. I recently figured out the Syndicate already knew about the Skrulls and formed an alliance for protection and extra manpower.”

“Wow, this is heavy...”

“Exactly. I need to report back to S.H.I.E.L.D. Go back home, this is the big leagues now.”

“Now wait a minute, I’m not going anywhere!” Josh stood proud. “Like it or not, we’re partners now.” Rice sighed.

“Fine, Chrysler Building, 8:00, don’t be late. What’s that?”

“What?” Josh turned and saw nothing. He turned back and Rice was gone.

“Really? Psh, whatever. Thinks he’s big stuff...” Josh left the warehouse.

* * *

Due to the circumstances, Eileen gave everyone time off until further notice. She didn't know if any agents were Skrulls, and there were simply too many to account for. Celeste, Harry and even Jocasta left and were staying in Eileen's old house. E.G.G. Base was empty, with the exception of 'Acacia'. She snuck into the Humpty Dumpty Hall and approached the Skrull detector. She then opened it and began to rearrange the components. She smiled.

"This planet is ours." She said. "As it is..."

"Acacia?" She quickly turned to see Eileen standing in the doorway. "What are you doing?"

"I'm... fixing the device." Acacia hesitantly replied. Eileen squinted.

"I thought we were working on this together."

"I figured I could do it faster by myself..." Eileen walked over and looked at it. She clicked her tongue.

"Acacia, you're making it worse! Are you even paying attention to what you're doing? These are rookie mistakes! Have you been tampering with it this whole week?"

"I... uh..."

"Acacia! You've set us back days!" Eileen slammed the table.

"Are you..."

"No, I'm not okay! Josh is gone, aliens are invading, and you're making stupid mistakes..." Eileen took a deep breath. "Sorry, sorry. I'm just, really stressed." She fell into a chair and laid her head on the table. "Acacia, I don't know what to do."

“Well, we should stop working on this...”

“No, Fury needs this. Come on, let’s get going.” Eileen grabbed the schematics from the corner. “Alright, I need the positron fusion nodes, and get me those 9-inch radar rods...” She looked up to see Acacia standing there, staring. “Acacia, snap out of it, get to work.”

“Right...” She replied, slowly gathering the things Eileen was asking for. Eileen looked at her.

“What’s wrong with you?” She asked. “And where’s your lab coat?”

“My... huh?”

“Acacia, are you okay?”

“Fine,” she said, grabbing her lab coat. “Continue.”

* * *

Josh rushed back and forth in the hotel room, gathering essential items.

“Come on Josh,” Allyson said. “Don’t go. Just stay here.”

“Can’t do that.” Josh replied. “We’re in the midst of a full blown alien invasion. Agent Rice is good at what he does and he knows more about this than anyone else right now.”

“What if it’s a trap? He tried to rob the Hall of E.G.G.”

“I told you, he did that to trick the Skrulls.” Allyson stood up and threw her arms into the air.

“What does it take to get your attention?” She shouted. “Should I fly and shoot lasers out of my hands?”

“What? Wait, don’t tell me you’re talking about Lightstream!”

“Well you care about her more than you do about me, and you don’t even know her name.”

“You are spewing nonsense Allyson! Listen, I know I keep promising to spend time with you, but in my life, it’s just not possible.” Josh threw his duffle bag over his shoulder and opened the door. “Look, I gotta go. We’ll talk more when I get back.”

“Joshua Westbrook, if you walk out of that door we’re through!” Allyson shouted. Josh stopped, one foot out the door. “I mean it, if you leave you’ll never see me again.” Josh stood there. Allyson held her breath. Then Josh stepped back and closed the door.

“I’m sorry.” He said, putting his duffle bag down and wrapping his arms around Allyson. “I haven’t been paying much attention to you, have I?” He wiped a tear from Allyson’s face. “I really care about you, a lot. And if you want me to stay with you, I will.” Allyson smiled.

“Thank you.” She said. “Now go.”

“Wait, what?”

“That was a test. I just wanted to see what you’d do.” She kissed him on the cheek. “Now go, save the world. I’ll be here waiting.” Josh smiled.

“Thanks Allyson!” He exclaimed, grabbing his duffel bag. “Back in a flash!”

* * *

“There.” Eileen said, holding up the finished product. “It’s done.” Acacia stood nervously.

“So, we can give it to Fury?” She asked.

“Acacia, when have we ever given anything to Fury without testing it first?” Eileen replied.

“I know, but, you said yourself he really needs it. Plus there’s no Skrulls here for it to detect, so...”

“I know, I’m hoping it’ll point out the closest one.” Eileen flipped a switch and viewed the screen. Acacia slowly backed up and grabbed a screwdriver. The screen had a meter with a needle going from red to green and a percentage number. Suddenly, the device began beeping. The needle swung heavily to the green side and the percentage read 94%. Eileen raised an eyebrow. “Well that makes no sense.” She said, tapping it. “Maybe this thing is on the fritz...” She slowly turned it. The beeping got louder. The percentage went up. 95%. 96%. 97%. Eileen squinted suspiciously. She moved the device towards Acacia. The needle maxed out, the beeping got louder, and the screen read 100%.

“What the...” Eileen looked up at Acacia. “Oh no.” Acacia screamed and lunged at Eileen with the screwdriver. Eileen quickly jumped back and grabbed Acacia’s arm. Twisting it, she forced her to drop the screwdriver and kicked her against the wall. Acacia fell to the floor and transformed into Ailemara. Eileen gritted her teeth and violently grabbed her.

“Where is Acacia!” She growled. Ailemara laughed.

“You’ll never find her!” She replied. Eileen punched Ailemara, causing her to slide across the floor. She began to walk towards her, and Ailemara backed up. “You can’t win! We have the upper hand, we know everything about you. We know of your secret identity as Lightstream.” Eileen stopped.

“What?”

“Yes. We also know some things you don’t about your friends. Did you know that Joshua is secretly dating an agent of E.G.G?”

“You’re lying!”

“Oh, and I know more about Acacia than you ever will. Did you ever wonder about her past? Why she and Clay Quartermain are so close? Her connection with the Osborn family? The truth of what happened to Celeste’s father?”

“Shut up!”

“It must burn you. To know so little about the people you claim are your friends.”

“I said shut up!” Eileen’s voice sounded as if it were two in one. Her eyes flashed red and her hair flared up. Ailemara cowered in fear. Eileen picked her up. “Where. Is. Acacia.”

“You will see her soon, after we have taken this world. As it is written.” Eileen slammed Ailemara so hard against the wall she fell unconscious. She activated her earpiece.

“Fury, this is Eileen. Acacia was a Skrull. I’m heading to the Helicarrier to give you the device, then I’m going to New York to find Josh.”

“Make one trip Wutrich.” Fury replied. “I’m flying to New York now.”

“Roger that.” Eileen said. She restrained Ailemara and rushed off down the tunnels of E.G.G. Base into the hangar. She flipped on the lights, which shone down on a newly rebuilt E.G.G. Jet. She took out her cell phone and dialed a number.

“Hello?” Harry answered on the other end.

“Osborn, I need your help.” She said.

“How’d you get my number?” Harry asked. “And where’s Acacia? I haven’t heard from her in a week.”

“I... I don’t know. The Acacia we know is missing. The one here was a shape shifting alien.”

“A what? Wait... Gross! I kissed an alien!”

“Osborn, focus. I need you to tell Jocasta to upload to the E.G.G. Jet.”

“Yeah, sure, as soon as I finish rinsing my mouth out!”

“Harry!”

“Okay, I’ll do it, bye!” She hung up and got into the jet. She strapped herself in and powered it up.

“Jocasta, you awake?” She asked.

“I am here.” Jocasta replied.

“Good, we’re going to New York. I need you lock onto Josh’s E.G.G. ID and play copilot.”

“Affirmative.” She answered. In the library Jake was putting a book on the shelf when it began to shake. He looked around to see the entire library was shaking.

“No,” he said. The bookshelves shook and books fell off this way and that. “No, no, no!” All of the books spilled off of the shelves. Jake fell to his knees. “NOOOO!!!” Underground, the E.G.G. Jet sped down a corridor. The football field to Chandler High School suddenly split down the middle and opened up. The E.G.G. Jet took off into the skies and headed for New York.

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Nick Fury stood in front of a bulletin board with pictures of various heroes on it. Some heroes like Spider-Man and Cyclops had X’s on them. Others like Elektra and the Invisible Woman had circles on them. And then there were some like Iron Man and Daredevil with question marks. Josh and Acacia had an X on them, while Eileen had a question mark. Fury took a red marker and marked an X on Eileen, then circled Acacia. He slammed the board and sighed.

“Can’t trust anyone.” He said to himself. He walked into the bridge of the Helicarrier. “Keep this speed.” He called. “I wanna be in New York in three minutes.”

“Sorry Director Fury,” Quartermain said. “But I don’t think you’ll be able to make it to New York.”

“Why’s that?” He asked. Suddenly the door opened behind him. He turned to see Spider-Woman standing in front of him. “Jessica? I thought I told you to assist the Avengers in the Skrull search.”

“Yes, you did.” She replied. Just then every agent in the bridge stood and turned their guns on Fury. He turned and examined the room.

“Every blasted one of them...” He said.

“All Skrulls!” Spider-Woman replied. Quartermain walked up and kissed her hand.

“Queen Veranke,” he said, as she transformed into a Skrull. “I have accessed the Helicarrier mainframe and we now have full control over all of their weapon systems. The message will soon be spread. The invasion begins.”

“At last we will have our new home!” Queen Veranke called. All of the Skrull S.H.I.E.L.D. agents cheered. “As it is written!”

“Write this!” Fury said, taking out his gun. Quartermain knocked Fury’s hand up and threw off his shot. He elbowed Fury in the chest, but Fury grabbed his arm and reversed it. They slammed against a terminal, and Quartermain began choking him. Queen Veranke laughed.

“Poor fool! You cannot stop us.” She said. “Nothing will stop us.”

“Override... protocol...” Fury choked. “3...6...1...1...” Suddenly the Helicarrier shut down. The lights flickered off, the computers went black. Queen Veranke looked around.

“What happened? Get us back in control!” Then Fury punched Quartermain. He hit the ground and turned back into a Skrull. “Vax! Get up!” she shouted. Fury growled and charged for Queen Veranke, but Vax rushed him. He ran with full force and broke through the window with Nick Fury. The two fell, struggling with each other. Fury punched Vax, Vax kicked Fury.

“You are not taking our planet!” Fury shouted, head-butting Vax. He shook his head and smiled.

“Yes, we are.” He kicked Fury away from him.

“NOOOO!!!!” Fury screamed as he fell. Vax looked down to see he was approaching the ground fast. He closed his eyes.

“As it is written.” He said, and fell to his doom.

* * *

Josh climbed onto an eagle statue on the Chrysler Building, weary and out of breath, where Rice was standing and waiting for him.

“Do you have to be at the top of the dang thing?” He panted. “You couldn’t just stay on the ground?”

“Quit complaining.” He said.

“Why are we even here again?” Josh asked. Rice sighed, grabbed Josh’s head, and turned it upwards as the Helicarrier came through the clouds. “Oh...”

“Fury’s gonna beam me up and I’ll turn in my intel.”

“Right.” Josh said. He and Rice watched the Helicarrier, coming towards them. “Hm, Helicarrier’s coming in close.” Josh observed. “And fast!” Rice squinted, then his eyes widened. “Wow, they really need to be this close beam...”

“Move!” Rice shouted, tackling Josh off of the eagle, as the Helicarrier scraped the edge of the Chrysler Building. Josh screamed as they fell.

“You’re crazy!” He shouted.

“I saved your life!” Rice replied.

“Yeah, you’ve got me, but who’s got you!”

“The pavement soon…”

“Wow, some plan!”

“Okay, here’s an idea, why don’t you use one of your gadgets to save us!”

“Oh, right.” Josh took out a Thwip Blaster and launched a web line to the side of the building. The two stopped short and swung through a window, where they tumbled across the ground. Josh dusted himself off. “Well that was easy.” He said. “You’re welcome by the way.” Rice slammed his face into his palm.

“You just swung us into the same building the Helicarrier crashed into!” He shouted. The building began to shake. Josh looked around.

“Run!” He shouted.

“No, I was just gonna stand here!” Rice sarcastically replied. They both took off. Josh dinged the elevator button multiple times. “What are you doing?”

“Elevator.”

“You’re an idiot.” Rice grabbed Josh’s arm and ran over to the staircase.

“But I don’t wanna take the stairs!”

“Again with the complaining!” They rushed down the stairs when suddenly the building shook again. There was a crack above them. Josh and Rice looked up to see part of the staircase break off.

“Look out!” Josh shouted, but too late. Both Josh and Rice were piled under a mountain of rubble.

Epilogue

Acacia’s eyes opened. She quickly sat up to find herself on an operating table with needles stuck in her arms.

“Five percent, ha!” She said, taking the needles out. “I should get a sticker that says I survived the Super Skrull procedure! Whatever that is...” She stood up just as a Skrull walked in with a clipboard. They stared at each other. The Skrull looked at the door. Acacia held up her finger. “Don’t...”

“She is awake!” The Skrull shouted. He began to run but Acacia got him in a chokehold.

“Shh...” She said, as the Skrull fell unconscious. Acacia slid him into the corner. She grabbed the clipboard and pulled a paper off. It was all written in Skrull. “Ugh, this better be my prescription for Aspirin.” She folded it up and put it in her pocket. She peeked out of the room and snuck down the hall. She moved along the wall.

“I gotta get out of here...” She said. She saw an open doorway. She held her breath and rushed past it. Then she stopped. She turned back. “Was that...” She peeked into the room. Skrulls were all around, but in the center was a very familiar item, and a very familiar man floating in a stasis tube.

“Oh no.” She said. “That’s... That’s Captain America.”

To Be Continued...