

The Sprintress #7 - "The Patriot and the Terrorist"

Written by Steven Bland

Terrorists were holding people at the Statue of Liberty hostage one night. The terrorist's leader had bionic implants, which gave him superhuman strength, leaping ability, reflexes, vision, and hearing.

Suddenly, a costumed man carrying a blue disc-shaped shield with a large, stylized white eagle burst in and landed before the evil group. The costumed man was big and strapping. He was in his mid-to-late twenties and wearing a durable skin tight costume which consisted of a red long sleeved shirt with a large white eagle-shaped chevron on his chest and upper back, a red full head mask that exposed his blond hair, long white pants, gloves and boots that were both blue, as well as a blue belt with a big, blue circular belt buckle with a white star on it.

"WHO ARE YOU?" One of the terrorists asked.

"I'M PATRIOT PRIME," the costumed man with the shield answered.

"RELEASE YOUR HOSTAGES AT ONCE AND SURRENDER PEACEFULLY," the costumed man demanded. "NOW!"

The terrorists opened fire, but Patriot Prime, using extraordinarily fast reflexes, deflected the bullets with his shield, which absorbed the impacts of each of the shells, ensuring the safety of each of the hostages.

Steven

Bland

The Sprintress #7 - "The Patriot and the Terrorist"

Then, Patriot Prime, with his shield thrust forward, charged toward the terrorists and knocked them down like bowling pins, rendering them unconscious. Then, the superhero grabbed their guns and crushed them.

"You may have caught my men," the terrorist leader said, revealing himself to be a cyborg, "But now, you'll have to deal with me!"

"Lyle Hazard?" Patriot Prime asked as he beheld his enemy.

"Yes, my old enemy! And I intend to destroy you," Hazard said as he threw a punch at the flag-costumed superhero who quickly blocked it with his shield which generated a shockwave that deflected the terrorist leader's blow, knocking him out. Before losing consciousness, Hazard pushed a special button on his watch.

"I've just activated a bomb I had hidden in this statue," Hazard said. "In *one minute*, the Statue of Liberty will be blown *sky high*!"

"And you'll never find it in time," Hazard added.

A few seconds later, a golden blur rushed in. The Sprintress had just arrived with the hidden bomb.

"You mean *this bomb*?" The Sprintress asked. "Which I just defused?"

"NO," Lyle exclaimed.

Steven

Bland

The Sprintress #7 - "The Patriot and the Terrorist"

"Your terrorist group will be taken to the proper authorities," Patriot Prime told Hazard. "And, soon, *you're* going to join them!"

"No," Lyle said as he leapt out of the Statue's window. He fell until he was out of sight. Then, he activated a hidden jet pack and flew away.

Patriot Prime and the Sprintress tended to the hostages and freed them.

"Everything's okay," Patriot Prime said.

"You're all safe now," the Sprintress said.

"Nice work, whoever you are," the super-fast superheroine told Patriot Prime.

"Patriot Prime, Sprintress," the red, white, and blue-clad superhero told the Sprintress. "Same to you."

"Who was that terrorist leader you fought?" The Sprintress asked.

"His name's Lyle Hazard," Patriot Prime answered. "We fought years ago. I wasn't wearing a costume then. I was a soldier in the Army, who happened to have enhanced physical abilities which made me a one-man army, while he was a member of the enemy ground force which turned him into their own super-soldier by reinforcing his skeletal structure with steel and enhancing his muscles with micro-motors."

"I have to go now, Sprintress. I have an appointment," Patriot Prime told the super-fast superheroine.

Steven

Bland

The Sprintress #7 - "The Patriot and the Terrorist"

"I guess I've got to get going, too," Sprintress said. "It was nice meeting you, Patriot Prime. You're a *real hero*."

The Sprintress zoomed out. Then, it was Patriot Prime's turn to leave. As he did, the grateful hostages waved goodbye to him.

Once he was outside the Statue of Liberty, Patriot Prime thought back to how he began his career as he left.

Me, a hero, the smiling superhero thought to himself. It's hard to believe that, many years ago, I, Dean Roberts, was a sickly child who was stuck in bed while all the other kids were outside playing and having fun. I spent half of my time in bed and I had no visitors except for doctors who came to treat and check up on me. To help me get through my sickness, my parents gave me comic books about superheroes. Those superheroes I read about gave me hope and the courage to get through life. Soon, I dreamed of how great it would be if I could actually become one.

As I grew older, he added as he left. I outgrew my sickness and got better. I wanted to make up for all the years I had been bedridden, so I exercised every chance I got. One day, while I was surfing the internet, I saw a book called "The Achilles Method" on eBay. I begged my parents to order it for me and didn't stop until they did. My begging paid off and I got the book. I used it immediately and started training by myself every afternoon.

Steven

Bland

The Sprintress #7 - "The Patriot and the Terrorist"

In time, the exercises from the Achilles Method gave me enhanced physical abilities, which I had difficulty controlling. But, with my parents' help, that became possible.

My physical abilities allowed me to do things like, jump three stories straight up, make a three-foot vertical jump, see faster than bullets, as well as dodge and block them, chase down and catch up to a car, punch through a brick, or concrete, wall, bend metal with my bare hands, and a lot more. The Achilles Method also made me virtually impervious to pain, much like the legendary Greek hero which the Method was named after.

Right after high school, I joined the United States Army. Thanks to my enhanced physical abilities, I took on many of the enemy's ground forces single-handedly. I had become a literal *one-man army*.

Eventually, the war ended. I wondered how I could now use my enhanced physical abilities. That answer came when I was approached by a secret organization who offered to make me their agent. I accepted the offer and was given the body armor, shield, and code-name Patriot Prime.

Steven
Bland

The Sprintress #7 - "The Patriot and the Terrorist"

Meanwhile, the Sprintress arrived at Garrett Laboratories, where she saw Professor Kay Garrett completing a phone call.

"Yes, the serum has been completed," Kay said over the phone. "We'll test it at Fort Hamilton early tomorrow afternoon."

"You're welcome. Goodbye," she added before hanging up.

"Who was that?" The Sprintress asked as she removed her mask.

"That was the head of the military," Kay answered. "I have just developed Serum Alpha for them."

"What's Serum Alpha," Nellie asked.

"It's a formula that is supposed to enhance any soldier's physical abilities to incredible levels," Kay answered.

Steven
Bland

The Sprintress #7 - "The Patriot and the Terrorist"

"Interesting," Nellie said. "Tonight, I was chasing down some diamond thieves who were driving off with millions of dollars in diamonds. One of them got the idea to throw ball bearings from the back which caused me to slip and fall. I got rid of the ball bearings as fast as I could, then I searched everywhere for the thieves. Eventually, I found them again and, this time, I stripped their car of their rims, causing them to make a stop. I super-spiced the thieves to the police and the diamonds back to the Diamond Exchange. Then, I heard over the police radio about the hostage situation at the Statue of Liberty. Once I got there, I noticed the ticking of a time bomb that was hidden somewhere. I followed the sound to its source and found the bomb. It was set to explode in one minute but the first fifteen seconds ticked by. With my super-speed, I used every possible combination, but I was successful in stopping it from exploding. I also saw a man in a costume who had just mopped up a bunch of the terrorists and was facing off against their leader. His name was Lyle Hazard, but unfortunately, he managed to escape."

"Who was this costumed man?" Kay asked.

"He called himself Patriot Prime," Nellie added.

Elsewhere, Patriot Prime reached his destination, an abandoned warehouse and entered it.

The inside of the warehouse was filled with sophisticated high-tech monitors, computer systems, and scientific equipment.

Steven

Bland

The Sprintress #7 - "The Patriot and the Terrorist"

One of the scientists, Simon Kirby who was in the middle of a project, sensed Patriot Prime's appearance.

"Hello, Dean. Were you able to get the hostage situation at the Statue of Liberty under control?" The scientist asked.

"Yes, Simon," Patriot Prime answered as he took his mask off. "The hostages have been freed and the terrorists have been dealt with. The shield absorbed the impact from each of the terrorists's bullets, so there were no ricochets into the hostages."

"Wonderful," Simon said.

"I also took care of their leader, Lyle Hazard," Dean added.

"That bionic super-soldier you often faced off against years ago?" Simon asked.

"That's the one," Dean answered. "He threw a punch at me but I countered it with the shield and used the feature you put into it to generate a shockwave that deflected his blow, causing his own strength to knock him out."

"Wonderful," Simon said.

"Their leader had a bomb that was hidden somewhere in the Statue, but the Sprintress found it and defused it," Dean said. "Unfortunately, Hazard got away."

"Well, we'll get him next time," Simon assured him.

Steven

Bland

The Sprintress #7 - "The Patriot and the Terrorist"

"I'm sure we will," Dean said before putting his mask back on. "I'm going to head for home and get some sleep."

"Okay. See you later," Simon said before Patriot Prime left.

Soon, the superhero was gone.

The next morning, in his secret underground complex, a brooding Lyle Hazard, while listening to the news on the television monitors had his right-hand man, Hans, inject him with a nanotech solution, which started upgrading the micro-motors enhancing his muscles.

"Patriot Prime thwarted me last night," Hazard said. "I must be better, stronger, and faster the next time we meet, so that I may defeat him once and for all."

In minutes, Hans finished upgrading Hazard's micro-motors.

"Your upgrades have been completed, master," Hans said.

Soon, Hazard heard the beginning of a news report which interested him.

"Today's top story is a new special formula called Serum Alpha, which could potentially enhance the physical abilities of any soldier, making him, or her almost superhuman," the TV new reporter announced.

The Sprintress #7 - "The Patriot and the Terrorist"

Hazard quickly turned his attention to the monitors.

"The serum, which was developed by Professor Kay Garrett, of Garrett Laboratories, will be tested at Fort Hamilton, where many soldiers will volunteer for the experiment that will take place early this afternoon," the reporter continued.

"With that serum, I could make my terrorist group *invincible*," Hazard said. "I *must* have it!"

Inside their hidden high-tech lair, Simon Kirby and Dean Roberts had been watching the same news report.

"Looks like you won't be the only super-soldier, anymore," Simon told Dean.

"Hey, I got my enhanced abilities from the Achilles Method, which was accessible to *anybody* when it first came out years ago," Dean said. "During that time, many other people could have gotten enhanced abilities, too, that is, if they put in all of the training that I did."

"True," Simon said. "And this new Serum Alpha could make our military forces stronger than ever before."

Steven

Bland

The Sprintress #7 - "The Patriot and the Terrorist"

"Lyle Hazard won't like that," Dean said. "Another possibility is that he may want to get his hands on Serum Alpha and use it to give every member of his terrorist group enhanced physical abilities."

"I think I'll attend that demonstration at Fort Hamilton to make sure that the serum won't fall into Hazard's hands," Dean said.

That afternoon, at Fort Hamilton, in a special laboratory, Professor Kay Garrett, with her assistant, Nellie North at her side, greeted the top military brass who made up the only audience for the demonstration and the four hundred soldiers who volunteered to be her test subjects. Hidden in the shadows and watching nearby was Patriot Prime, who had his shield with him at the ready.

"Thank you for coming," Professor Garrett said as she addressed the brass. "This project could forever change the lives of our armed forces. It is my hope that Serum Alpha will help create super-soldiers who can win any war for America swiftly and decisively."

Then, Professor Garrett addressed the four hundred volunteers.

"And thank you for volunteering," she said. "I want to warn you that you could be risking your lives right now. So, if you're having second thoughts, you may take the time to leave right now."

The Sprintress #7 - "The Patriot and the Terrorist"

None of the soldiers chose to leave.

"All right," Professor Garrett said. "May the first soldier step forward."

The first soldier who stepped forward was U.S. Army Lieutenant Colonel John Nguyen, whose grandfather was a Vietnamese immigrant.

"What is your name, sir?" Kay asked.

"John Nguyen," the soldier answered

"All right, John," Kay said. "I'm going to give you the first dose of Serum Alpha right now."

John rolled up a sleeve on his right arm and Kay injected it with a hypodermic filled with Serum Alpha.

"If I have made a mistake, John Nguyen could end up dead or sick within seconds," Kay told the brass. "But if I have succeeded, his physical abilities will be greatly enhanced."

Kay turned to John.

"How are you feeling?" She asked.

"I'm okay, so far," John answered.

"Good," Kay said.

Professor Garrett grabbed an iron bar from a nearby table and took it to John.

The Sprintress #7 - "The Patriot and the Terrorist"

"John, I want you to try and bend this iron bar with your bare hands," Kay said as she handed the bar to John, who succeeded in doing so. The top military brass were very pleased with what they had seen.

"Congratulations, John," a smiling Kay told him. "You are now the first of an army to come, an army of super-soldiers!"

Kay turned her attention to the other volunteers.

"Step up one at a time," she told them. "There are plenty of doses of Serum Alpha for each of you."

Before the next soldier could step up, Lyle Hazard suddenly burst in.

"I HAVE COME FOR SERUM ALPHA! ALL OF IT," Hazard shouted. "AND *NOTHING'S* GONNA STAND IN MY WAY!"

I'd better slip away and change, Nellie North thought as she quickly left the room.

"WELL, I'M STANDING IN YOUR WAY," Patriot Prime exclaimed as he emerged from his hiding place, with his shield positioned in front of him. "AND THE *ONLY WAY* YOU'LL SEIZE THE SERUM IS *OVER MY DEAD BODY!*"

"I'VE UPGRADED THE MICRO-MOTORS WHICH ENHANCE MY MUSCLES, PATRIOT PRIME," Hazard exclaimed. "I AM NOW MUCH STRONGER AND FASTER THAN THE LAST TIME WE'VE FOUGHT!"

Steven

Bland

The Sprintress #7 - "The Patriot and the Terrorist"

"Doesn't matter, Hazard," Patriot Prime said. "I've beaten you before, I can do it again, no matter *how* powerful you are!"

Hazard threw a powerful punch at Patriot Prime, who quickly blocked it with his shield which, because of the terrorists's upgraded superhuman strength, generated a greater shockwave which sent the Hazard flying across the room.

"My shield generates shockwaves that deflect and repel beings with superhuman strength who strike it, Hazard," Patriot Prime told his enemy. "The *stronger* you are, the *greater* the shockwave!"

The Sprintress zoomed in.

I can't let Hazard get his hands on the serum, she thought as she removed every canister of Serum Alpha from the room at superhuman speed.

With all of the canisters removed, the Sprintress zoomed out.

Patriot Prime told me that Hazard's skeletal structure is reinforced steel. If I were to punch him, I would most likely end up breaking my hand, she thought as she continued to run at superhuman speed. But *maybe, just maybe*, a punch at supersonic speed *might* do some good.

The Sprintress ran until she was five point three miles away and stopped. She turned back and started running at eight hundred thirty-seven miles per hour.

The Sprintress #7 - "The Patriot and the Terrorist"

Back in the laboratory at Fort Hamilton, Patriot Prime turned to the top military brass and the test subjects.

"Everyone, get out of here! This is a dangerous situation," the red, white, and blue superhero told them. "I'll deal with Hazard!"

Everyone left, except for John Nguyen. Patriot Prime noticed.

"What are you doing here?" Patriot Prime asked Nguyen. "I wanted *everyone* to get out of here, *including* you."

"No," Nguyen replied. "I see this as a test to see if I *really am* a super-soldier."

"Okay. fella," Patriot Prime relented. "And I sincerely hope you *pass*."

"I want that serum, Patriot Prime," Hazard said as he got up. "And if I have to *kill you* to get it - -"

"THEN, *SO BE IT*," he exclaimed as he charged toward Patriot Prime.

Suddenly, the Sprintress returned at a speed just over Mach One and landed a punch that injured Hazard. Both of them went down.

"BUH-WHOOM!"

A few seconds later, Hazard stood up again.

"I - - won't stop, do you hear me?" Hazard said. "Serum Alpha - - *will be mine!*"

Steven

Bland

The Sprintress #7 - "The Patriot and the Terrorist"

"No," Nguyen said as he cocked his right fist.

"You *won't* get Serum Alpha," Patriot Prime added as he did the same.

"*EVER*," Nguyen and Patriot Prime exclaimed as they both delivered powerful jabs at the off-guard Hazard, finishing him. The terrorist was down for the count.

"Ooohh," the Sprintress moaned as she recovered. Patriot Prime and Nguyen turned their attention toward her and went to her.

"Sprintress, are you all right?" Patriot Prime asked as he and Nguyen helped her up.

"Yeah, I'm fine," the Sprintress answered. "I had to build up enough momentum to hit Hazard with a supersonic punch. It took *him* down, but it also did the same to me."

"You are one gutsy lady," Nguyen told the superheroine.

"And you're quite gutsy yourself, Mister - -?" Patriot Prime told Nguyen.

"Nguyen," Nguyen answered. "Lieutenant Colonel John Nguyen, U.S. Army. Thank you, Patriot Prime."

"You're welcome, Lieutenant Colonel Nguyen," the red, white, and blue superhero said. "You know, I was in the U.S. Army, myself."

The two men shook hands, then they turned their attention to the Sprintress.

"But, what happened to the canisters of Serum Alpha? Where are they?" Nguyen asked.

Steven

Bland

The Sprintress #7 - "The Patriot and the Terrorist"

The Sprintress was soon standing on her own.

"Don't worry. I got them safely away from Hazard," the superheroine answered. "I'll be right back."

Moving at superhuman speed, the Sprintress returned all of the canisters of Serum Alpha in mere minutes.

"Serum Alpha is safe," the superheroine told Patriot Prime and John Nguyen.

"The crisis is over, so I'll be leaving now. Take care. And, good luck to you, Lt. Col. Nguyen," the Queen of Quickness said before zooming off.

"Lt. Col. Nguyen," Patriot Prime said.

"Please. Call me John," Nguyen said with a smile.

"John, if you need my help or just want to talk about our stints in the Army," Patriot Prime said before handing Nguyen a business card with a phone number on it. "You can reach me through Simon Kirby. This card has his phone number."

"Thank you, Patriot Prime," John said with a smile as he accepted the card.

*Steven
Bland*

The Sprintress #7 - "The Patriot and the Terrorist"

The next day, Nellie North, in her apartment, and Dean Roberts, in Simon Kirby's lab at an abandoned warehouse, watched the news reports.

"Today, we are now witnessing a rise in super-soldiers in the Army, the Air Force, the Navy, and the Marine Corps, who are more than ready to defend America," the TV reporter said. "And it's all thanks to the huge success of Serum Alpha."

Soon, Simon received a phone call and answered it.

"Hello?" Simon asked.

There was a brief pause.

Simon handed the phone to Dean.

"Dean? It's for you," Simon said. "It's a Lt. Col. John Nguyen."

"Thank you," Dean said as he took the phone. "I was expecting this."

"Hello, John," Dean said. "How are you?"

There was a brief pause and Dean was soon smiling.

"You're going to lead the Army's super-soldiers?" An enthusiastic Dean said.

"Congratulations!"

The Sprintress #7 - "The Patriot and the Terrorist"

There was another brief pause.

"You've got to get ready to brief your group, now?" Dean asked. "Okay. Good luck. And, again, Congratulations."

A smiling Dean handed the phone back to Simon.

THE END

- 19 -

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