

MEMORANDUM

Privileged and Confidential

TO : ANTI-VIGILANTE TASK FORCE (GROUP)
FROM : AGENT DALE PETEY
DATE : SEPTEMBER 15, 2019
SUBJECT : “Internal Affairs”

Several of you have reached out since *American Hero Story: Minutemen* has begun airing to tell me you are enjoying the show and you don’t know why I’ve got such a “bug up my ass about it.” Simply put, I’m a historian. And facts matter.

My intensifying concern with accuracy and representation in *American Hero Story* prompted me to acquire a “rough cut” of another episode. And rough is right! Pretentiously titled “Internal Affairs,” this 55-minute exercise in egregiousness continues a practice of bad taste and reckless fictionalization (setting the Harlem riot of 1943 three years earlier!?!). Worse, it fulfills the fear that I voiced in my previous memo by dramatizing a horrific event involving the mother of our own Agent Blake. As she does not have any interest in reading these memos, I felt it optimal to make you aware of the forthcoming episode so that you can demonstrate the appropriate sensitivities once it airs.

The Incident

On the evening of October 2, 1940, Edward Blake, known as the Comedian, sexually assaulted Sally Jupiter, the first Silk Spectre. (Contrary to how we’ve told this story in the past — a dim chorus that includes myself — this was not “an attempted rape.” It was, simply and criminally, a sexual assault, period, full stop. It’s time we adopted this as our official language.) What we know of the sexual assault comes from three sources: *Under The Hood*, the controversial memoir of Hollis Mason, the first Nite Owl, published 23 years after the incident; a *Probe* magazine interview with a reluctant and conflicted Jupiter from 1976; and *Baby, This Is Tops!*, the bold and brassy autobiographical one-woman show she performed late in life on regional cruise ships and the Ojai supper-spa circuit. (Jupiter Jones, arguably the premiere Silk Spectre drag queen in all of D.C., performs *Baby, This Is Tops!* in its entirety on the last Thursday of every month at Vargas Girl Revue. I recommend it without reservation.)

Jupiter, then 20, and Blake, then 16, were both founding members of the Minutemen. The sexual assault occurred after a procedural meeting at the team’s New York headquarters. The primary work of the gathering was shooting publicity materials for the group’s lucrative marketing and merchandising activities. Afterward, Jupiter retired to the Trophy Room to change out of her costume. Blake lingered behind after their other teammates had departed. He propositioned her. She said “No.” He attacked. Hooded Justice — with whom Jupiter was having a public (and apparently fake) romance — happened upon the assault and stopped it with brutal force.

Jupiter wanted to press charges against Blake. But Louis Schexnayder, the Minutemen’s marketing guru and Jupiter’s longtime agent (and later, her husband), convinced her to let it go, “for the good of the group’s image,” according to Mason. It appears that every single member agreed with Schexnayder’s counsel, even Hooded Justice. In her one-woman show, Jupiter offers him some grace. “If he testified on my behalf, he would have had to tell the court who he was, and there was no way he was doing that. Hollis

got this much right: *none* of us ever saw his face. Even me. And I was dating the guy! Well, technically. It was all for show, and I certainly never saw any *other* part of him, either, if you know what I mean. Our chemistry? Sub-zero. But he was always very, very careful about what he said about himself. I always assumed there was a good reason for it. But his story is not mine to tell. A lesson dearly departed Hollis never learned. Ah, well. Bygones.”

The epilogue to this story occurred eight years later. While not dramatized in “Internal Affairs,” we should know it — or rather, know it accurately, since this tale is much gossiped-about in the office — so we can understand how complicated this history is for our colleague. In 1948, Blake, now a decorated war hero and a super-soldier in the employ of the United States military, visited Jupiter, who had retired from masked life in 1947 to marry Schexnayder. A consensual sexual encounter ensued. From the affair came a daughter, Laurel Jane.

Jupiter raised her daughter to carry forward her legacy in more ways than one, starting with her family name, Juspeczyk. She also raised her to be a costumed adventurer, a next-generation Silk Spectre until she was forced into retirement in 1977 with the passage of the Keene Act. Agent Blake did not know the identity of her father until 1985. Shortly thereafter, she adopted his family name, as well a version of his alias. Silk Spectre never wore a mask, but “The Comedienne” did. The second act of her vigilante career concluded one year after the death of her mother when she was captured by the FBI in Oklahoma City and offered a plea deal that required her to become a special agent of the Anti-Vigilante Task Force.

American Hero Story

I must acknowledge that my critique of “Internal Affairs” is compromised by a lack of sufficient context, as I was not provided with the two episodes that preceded it. But I doubt they would matter much. The treatment of the sexual assault by J.T. March III, the creator of *American Hero Story* and the writer and director of this episode, is an onslaught of odious choices.

The violence is extreme and fetishistic. The filmmaking toggles between frenetic cuts, wide-screen framing and zooming close-ups on blood gushes and ripped clothing. At various moments, the sexual assault is shown upside-down and distorted in the lens of “Moloch’s Solar Weapon,” one of the Minutemen’s many trophies. The ironic funhouse mirror presentation speaks to March’s larger project of turning “hero” archetypes on their heads and deconstructing them as warped personalities. But by prioritizing his flourishes and metaphors over Jupiter’s experience, March diminishes her even more.

Not that March really cares about Jupiter. Because the character that interests him the most in *American Hero Story: Minutemen* — to the detriment of all others — is Hooded Justice. As this clumsily staged version of Jupiter’s sexual assault moves into its final act, with Hooded Justice intervening and brutalizing Blake, we realize we’ve been watching the crime through his point of view, and the whole point of depicting this crime has been to nurture a portrayal of Hooded Justice as a true savior, albeit one with troubled conscience and a very convoluted identity disorder (March seems to be suggesting that Hooded Justice might have been schizophrenic).

Later in the episode, we see an explicit sexual encounter between Hooded Justice and Captain Metropolis, a choice that plays to claims made by Mason and Jupiter that multiple unnamed Minutemen were homosexual. March shoots the fraught intimacy in a way meant to deliberately echo Jupiter’s sexual assault — in the Trophy Room, their bodies reflected in Moloch’s Solar Weapon. As the sequence reaches its climax, so to speak, the camera pushes in on Hooded Justice’s eyes. As we hear him narrate his internal drama, we see him flash on Blake’s violence and his own. Once again, March demeans Jupiter by turning her trauma into one more step in Hooded Justice’s hero’s journey.

To be clear, I find it commendable that March wishes to create provocative mainstream entertainment with an LBGQTQAI+ protagonist. We need more of this kind of representation in the culture. But Hooded Justice is a problematic vehicle for advancing this vital cause. What little we know for sure about him

presents us with too many paradoxes and complications to reconcile in credible fashion, and March simply lacks the imagination to crack the riddle of history that is Hooded Justice in a way that actually does him... well, justice.

To quote from Mason's memoir: "Real life is messy, inconsistent, and it's seldom when anything ever gets resolved. It's taken me a long time to realize that." It appears that J.T. March III has to yet to realize this himself. And Sally Jupiter is the lesser for it.

We all are.

Submitted respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Dale Petey". The letters are fluid and connected, with a prominent capital 'D' and 'P'.

Special Agent Dale Petey

Anti-Vigilante Task Force/Research Unit
Sub-Basement 1, Room X, Desk 2