

Sensible Super Heroism

The scene is an office. Into the room bursts a stern and well-suited business executive, with a pencil thin mustache and the butt of a cigar. Behind him strides an overweight pitch man, with a bulging belly and overwrought physical manner. The executive is

JB: I'm tellin' you Puffy. I can't deal with this shit. I need a superhero and you bring me silly stuff.

Puffy: Well, it's fantasy J.B. It's not supposed to make perfect sense, huh? This is for kids' entertainment, right?

JB: I think there is an adult market to be developed here. Superheroism for truth, justice etcetra should appeal to adults too, so you can't just throw logic out the window. Maybe a great hero can appeal to adults too. But just look at these proposals, here's one on top.

Superman? That's so obvious as to be childish. His disguise is a newspaper reporter. Daily Planet? Damned if that's not pretentious. Anyway since he's in the center of news, he knows shit and runs off and into a phone booth. A phone booth? Lucky to find one these days.

And then he performs the incredible stunt of changing a suit and tie into a skin-tight leotard, with a cape inside a fuckin' phone booth. Wow! Talk about super power?

Puffy: Well, it's like artistic license. Remember the old westerns. Remember when Charles Starett rode his horse into a cave and minutes later comes out as the Durango Kid, black outfit and a whole new horse. I always loved that one.

JB: But it's not for today, Puffy. And neither is this guy. It's just packed with idiocy, like the idea that a pair of horn rimmed glasses keeps people from recognizing this reporter is, like, Superman. Standing right here.

Puffy: And like Tarzan, you know, major success story. Handsome near naked white man with muscles. None on his body, none at all. They didn't want a big old hairy guy. They wanted a hero, noble, naked, and above all, good looking.

JB: We're not headed to the wilds of Africa here, Puffy. This hero is for today.

Puffy: Yeah, well, just saying. Maybe the audience doesn't care too much about detail, you know, if it spoils the magic. But okay ... you don't like it, let's dump it. Ain't we got something you like in that stack?

JB: Well, here's a really silly one – Batman. People hate fuckin' bats, and he flies through the sky with tiny ropes, which come from God knows where. He's throwing them around and swinging on them. Same as old Superman, he's flying around the skyscrapers. Doesn't make sense to do that.

Puffy: There's an added attraction here, to take away some of the dark mystery angle. The guy, a millionaire, has a ward, a youngster he looks after, and he turns into a more colorful character. We call him Robin. It's the father-son thing. Uniform is like red, green and yellow. He's a youngster working with old dad. That lightens the whole thing up ... and then we just create a menagerie of super villains, evil people with distinguishable ugliness – like in Dick Tracy.

JB: I just don't think we could sell bats, Puffy. They spread rabies, people won't buy it. It's an image thing. What does it represent to Mr. and Miss butts in the seats. Why don't we have an Eagle Man pitch here some where. I like eagles.

Puffy: Eagles are good. But everybody has used them, they're the icon for the whole damned country. We can't top that? But take a look at that one, there, the Spiderman proposal.

JB: A spider man? You got to be kidding. Spiders are fucking creepy, as bad as bats. And they've got him flying through the skyscrapers too, with that sticky web stuff holding him up and defacing the buildings? Ha! And he's got an outfit that covers his eyes. Is Spiderman blind as a bat? What's that about?

Puffy: Well, there's one there about an Iron Man. A millionaire man about town builds an iron rocket suit. He's like a likeable, fun-loving everyman rich man paramour who fights epic evil. Robert Downey Jr. is interested in the script for that one.

JB: Robert Downey Jr. starring as a Super hero. Now that stretches credulity. He's not the type. You can't play Charlie Chaplin and a superhero in the same career. Ha!

Puffy: You're laughing everything off, J.B. Downey is still a name. There's one more there.

JB: I don't think you can make a millionaire into a super hero. That's not a good thread. We need a sympathetic ... vessel, like Billy Batson, the crippled news body who turned into Captain Marvel with a "Shazam."

Puffy: Yeah, Shazam. Remember Gomer Pyle. Is that where you want to go.

JB: Well in its time, they had this Tiny Tim thing going for him. The poor boy who faced off with old man Scrooge. Worked well. And that Oliver Twisted piece, the little poor kid who was bold enough to ask for more gruel. Now that was empathy.

Puffy: So we want a superhero with which we can empathize, huh? He's rags and then suddenly he's riches. From pitiful to powerful and by a magic stroke I guess. Some other kind of shazam to trigger it all. How about free the Krakken? Ha!

JB: No reptiles, please. People don't like reptiles ... snakes ... bats ... spiders. We're searching our vermin here to find a super hero.

Puffy: Well, there's one, J.B., the last one in your stack. That involves a beautiful woman, a really smart costume. It's time we cracked the gender gap in this biz.

JB: Wonder woman. Yeah, I read it. She rides in an invisible plane, stupid, here she is sitting in the air, on nothing. And those bracelets. When they throw hails of bullets at her, she says, 'Let's play bullets and bracelets.' Ha! The bullets got no chance. And she throws a magical lariat. Cowgirl kinda thing"

Puffy: Wonder how much breast we can show.

JB: I just can't deal with all of this, Puffy. I got to ask: Where are people's heads anyway?

Puffy: Beats me. That's all I got. But I did get a phone call this morning from Angelina Jolie, her agent anyway.

JB: No shit?

Puffy: She's finishing a proposal for a woman with superpowers who raids tombs, a vehicle for her ... illustrious self of course.

JB: How do you raid a tomb? For what?

Puffy: Ah, you know, that's where all the hidden treasures are, and some magic keys and stuff that open up to new dimensions. Some things like that.

JB: Good. We'll do it. Work up the papers. We're bound to get some zombies in there and they're hot right now.

Puffy: So ... Go ahead and ... accept the proposal then, the one she's working on?

JB: Do it, yes.

Puffy: Wanna hear more?

JB: No Puffy ... duh ... this is Angelina Jolie.

Puffy: The story seems to relate to ...

JB: Angelina ... fuckin' ... Jolie, Puffy. I swear ... don't you know the business?

(Stage fades to dark.)