

ACT I

Scene 1

Open on a well furnished house---balcony over looks the city, from quite high up. The upper portions of sky-scrappers are visible in the background. It's 10am.

A NYC skyline. The kind of view that the very rich might have an opportunity to enjoy.

Stage left, there is an entrance to the apartment... coat rack, place for shoes. A skateboard, well worn, is against the wall. Up Center, the balcony. Up right, a hallway leads deeper into the apartment.

Center, there is a couch and coffee table. A few toys for a child---around 5---are scattered here and there, though neatly assigned to the corners of the room they're kept in.

Stage right, there is a door, heavily fortified. It's been designed to look like it belongs here, but it's a bit too large for the home.

We hear a deep RUMBLE from somewhere outside, followed closely after by another.

The door to the outside opens and RACHEL rushes in, followed by DAVID.

Rachel is in her mid-30s....in good shape and with sharp eyes---she's dressed smartly and has a gun at her hip. She's a police academy trainer and left there mid-day.

David has a mop of unkempt hair, a black AC/DC shirt---the kind bought in semi-trendy stores among the goth and skater set---and has a skateboard he leans against the wall as he comes in.

Rachel goes to the couch, grabs the remote off of the back of it, and turns on the TV.

NEWS CASTER

It made landfall near FDR and Broad Street.

I've...you can see the immensity of it and what the destruction....

I've never seen anything like this before. It's destroyed most of 1 New York Plaza. Shadow, Revenant, and Bantam have been getting as many people out as they can.

Aegis has destracted the thing but there's no sign of Pulsar.

A loud RUMBLE and CRASH is heard on the news cast and then, fainter but still loud, out beyond the window.

David rushes to the balcony and is looking off to the SL, where we can't see.

DAVID

Jesus, mom, it's huge.

NEWS CASTER

CONTINUES UNDERNEATH WRITE THIS LATER

RACHEL

David, get your emergency kit.

DAVID

Like Reggie's is going to be far enough....

RACHEL

Now!

David, giving one last look at whatever it is, heads in and down the hall.

Rachel pulls out her cell phone.

RACHEL

Jules?

This is Rachel.

Yeah, we just saw it. I need to....

Jules? Where's Adam?

I don't know, but look at the news, Jules! He needs someone else there. Where is Adam?!

David returns to the living room with a large case, metal and fancy. It looks like some kind of future tech and, though it looks big, he hefts it easily.

He swings it over the couch and drops it on the cushion.

He's transfixed, looking at the TV.

RACHEL

I don't care. When you find out where he is, call me.

Jules...listen, Jules....it's going to be okay.

No! Stop!

It's going to be okay. This is Adam and John. It's going to be okay.

I love you, too. Call me when you hear something.

Rachel hangs up and looks at the television, her face drawn. Her resolve is starting to break.

NEWS CASTER

It grabbed Aegis with one of it's tentacles and...oh, Jesus.....he's gone through two buildings.

Where'd he go? Has anyone seen him?

The creature---it's....oh, god, it's turning back into the city. It's...it's just WADING through buildings!
The dust rising from the ruins---it's hard to see...

Rachel closes her eyes, as if praying, trying to keep herself together.

RACHEL

John, don't you fucking do this to me.

DAVID

Mom!

NEWS CASTER

Aegis is alive! He's alive!

He's grabbed one of its tentacles and flew in fast enough to pull it back towards the bay!

Rachel's head drops, a ragged sigh leaving her.

David puts his hand on her shoulder.

DAVID

It's gonna be okay, mom. Dad's got this.

The lights start to dim, fading and pulsing. Not a brown out, but something different---something deliberate.

RACHEL

Joe.

David grabs the case as the lights fade again. The outside is still full day, but the room itself is getting unnaturally dark.

As the lights fade down all the way, even dimming the light from outside, Joe appears in the room.

Joe is hurt. His left arm is bleeding and his coat and shirt are torn. He has small nicks and scrapes along his exposed face---debris that become shrapnel. Not all of the blood on him is his.

He eyes look like he's waded through Hell.

Joe catches himself on the couch. David drops his case and grabs Joe, steadying him.

RACHEL

Joe?

JOE

Rachel. David.

RACHEL

Get him something to drink, David.

Rachel takes Joe and settles him onto the couch.

RACHEL

(as soon as David's gone)
Joe, where's Adam?

JOE

Rachel...

RACHEL

Don't fuck with me, Joe. Where's Adam?

Joe's head dips down. His jaw clenches.

Rachel stands up, backing away in shock.

JOE

We couldn't...

RACHEL

God. Oh, god.

JOE

He just...

RACHEL

No. No no no no no. Joe, look at me. FUCKING look at me, Joe. Adam's not dead.

JOE

Rachel, he..

RACHEL

No. Adam can't die. That thing couldn't kill Adam!

JOE

It was the other one.

RACHEL

Other one...

JOE

Adam died killing it.

*David comes back in the room with some water,
which he gives to Joe.*

Joe holds the cup, staring into it.

Silence passes between them.

Joe sets the cup down.

RACHEL

Why are you here?

JOE

Rachel.

RACHEL

Why are you here?

JOE

I came to get you.

RACHEL

You left him.

JOE

Rachel...

RACHEL

You left him, Joe! You left him alone, with that...
that thing!

Rachel closes in on Joe, who stands up.

RACHEL

You're supposed to be helping him!

She pushes him, hard, in his wounded arm.

JOE

Damn it, Rachel.

RACHEL

Why aren't you out there? You fucking coward.

DAVID

Mom.

RACHEL

You get to run? Why aren't you actually doing anything?

Joe's had enough at this point and gets in her face.

JOE

Because I can't, Rachel! Because it was only ever John and Adam and now Adam's dead! Because Diana, Lindsay and I aren't on their level. Because we never were.

Now John's doing what he has to because he's the only one who can and we're trying to make sure that people don't die. Don't you think I would rather be able to help him with that? To get revenge for what killed Adam? I want to tear the world down with my bare fucking hands and all I can do right now is help stupid, screaming people who are too scared to stay put so I can teleport them out.

So I'm here, getting you out of the way so John can do what he has to do. You don't get to blame me for this. You don't get to look down your nose at me for not doing what I can't do.

RACHEL

Don't tell me what I can't...

JOE

I haven't gotten Carl out yet! My husband is waiting on me to get you out, so don't, for a fucking second, think I'm going to keep taking shit from you. You're scared, I get that, but get your shit and get ready to go.

Rachel rushes into the hallway.

DAVID

He's going to be okay, right?

JOE

If he's not, I don't think we'll be around long enough for it to matter.

Rachel comes back in with a case like David's.

JOE

Still got those?

RACHEL

Be prepared.

Rachel and David gather close to Joe, near the window.

The lights in the apartment start to dim, unnaturally. It fades down three times before it hits black.

JOE

You didn't strike as a boy scout.

RACHEL

We don't get to feel safe. Not in this family.

JOE

(in black)

I'll get you as safe as I can.

The lights fade to black and then come back up, with Joe, David, and Rachel gone.

NEWS CASTER

He's....he's just floating there.

Aegis isn't moving anymore. The creature---it doesn't seem...it looks like it's expecting a trap.

It's...oh, god....it's got him. Aegis isn't even fighting anymore. The mouth....it's...

Aegis has just been eaten by the creature.

There's no....I...

I'm getting unconfirmed reports that a nuclear strike might be authorized to destroy it. The further it goes inland, the more damage will be done. If it strikes at it's current location, we're getting estimates that up to 1 million people will die from the blast and radiation.

This...this feels like the end of the world.

There's a deafening ROAR.

NEWS CASTER

It's screaming. It's.... what's happening.....

There's the sound of an explosion.

NEWS CASTER

It's throat---it just exploded! It's toppling backwards....it's...oh god.

Aegis---Aegis is alive! He's hurt---badly, but he's alive!

He seems to have killed it!

He's flying down into the wound....he's disappeared.

I can't see....I can't see from here what's happening--- he must be...

Aegis has appeared again....he's barely keeping up in the air---he looks ready to drop at any minute!

He just left---some kind of burst of speed---I can't see him now.

Reports are coming in that the creature seems to be dead. That it fell back into what was already destroyed....we're not going to know the total death counts for some time, but....this is amazing.

We're hearing that the nuclear strike has been aborted! They still want to evacuate the Eastern tip of Manhattan, but, providing this thing doesn't come back to life, we're out of danger of a nuclear strike!

Aegis (John) lands heavily on the balcony. He was wearing a trenchcoat, which is pierced through with small holes in dozens of places. He's bleeding quite heavily and barely able to keep himself standing as he stumbles into the apartment.

He falls towards the hallway, catching himself on the wall.

NEWS CASTER

(all of the newscaster's lines, from here on out, are at the same time as what's happening with John)

We don't know what this thing was or where it came from. We're being told that there were 2 and that Pulsar died killing the other.

JOHN

Ray?

His voice is a weak, shuddering thing.

NEWS CASTER

Shadow, Bantam, and Revenant managed to teleport hundreds of people in the path of destruction to safety. We don't as of yet have confirmation on how many or who is alive, though authorities are putting a list together, which will be posted online.

JOHN

David?

He slips and collapses, sliding down the wall that leads into the hallway.

He curls in on himself, starting to shake violently.

NEWS CASTER

We are being told that the phone lines are being flooded currently and only to call 911 in case of an emergency and not to check to see if loved ones are safe. As soon as the police have a full list, they will release that online and to news agencies. They are currently working at the sites to find survivors.

All we know right now is that Aegis went into the belly of the beast to defeat this thing. He stood, firm, and saved the people of New York City.

Is this why those with super powers erupted 2 years ago? Was it, somehow, to protect us from things like this? Are there going to be more?

Right now all we can be sure of is that this city--- this country, perhaps even this world, is grateful to its protector. We don't know where he's at currently, but there are still people who need him.

Aegis, if you can hear this...if you're okay, you have all of our gratitude.

Shadow and Bantam are currently helping with the rescue efforts and soon, we hope....Aegis will be there to help find anyone trapped in the rubble.

(concurrently with the newscast)

A strangled cry struggles to escape him, but he's fighting with everything he's got to keep it under control.

His head tilts back and he takes a deep breath, followed by a hoarse sob which he chokes down.

His eyes are up on the ceiling as he begins to shake, unable to keep it in anymore.

As he cries, he curls up, almost fetal against the wall, trying to hide himself as much as he can. To not be seen.

He's shut his grief and fear up inside him he's losing control of it.

(During "there are still people who need him")

As it rips out of his throat, he looks towards the TV. The sound of the TV begins to waver.

He focuses his fear and hurt and grief at the set, which, as the scream builds up inside him, emits a loud SMASHING sound just before it

explodes.

His scream continues, his eyes cast to the heavens as the lights burst out, shutting out the world.

scene 2

*Single spot on Aegis, who sits on the couch.
Alone. The rest of the stage is in darkness.*

The Therapist is not seen. They are located in front of John, who interacts with the disembodied voice as if the person is in front of him.

John is distracted and distant. He's close to agitation....he clearly doesn't want to be here.

THERAPIST

Normally, this is when I ask a new patient something about themselves, but I know at least a bit about you.

JOHN

Comes with the territory, I suppose.

THERAPIST

You helped my brother.

JOHN

Hm?

THERAPIST

My brother. He was in the Churchhill Downs apartment complex.

JOHN

Churchhill?

THERAPIST

There was a fire...an explosion that happened in the kitchen at the bottom. Construction had caused problems...lot of people trapped inside.

JOHN

Oh. This was....around Halloween?

THERAPIST

Yeah.

JOHN

How's he doing?

THERAPIST

Won't shut up about it. You flew him to the next building.

JOHN

Yeah, well---one of the benefits of being me is that flying is really cool.

THERAPIST

I can imagine.

JOHN

You'd think people would be more afraid if I picked them up to fly them somewhere. I mean, if I dropped them or if something happened---they'd die. But, for some reason, they don't freak out.

THERAPIST

And why do you think that is?

JOHN

I don't know. Trust?

THERAPIST

And why do you think they trust you?

JOHN

So we've switched into therapy mode?

THERAPIST

Is that a problem?

John is quiet for a moment, turning it over in his head.

JOHN

I've never given them a reason not to trust me before.
It's easy to.... as a kid, I used to dream of being a
supero and... I just trusted that they wouldn't let
me down, I guess.

THERAPIST

Before? Why did you say before?

JOHN

Hm?

THERAPIST

You said "you've never given them a reason not to
trust you before." Why before?

JOHN

Oh. Figure of speech.

THERAPIST

Do you feel like you've given them a reason not to
trust you?

JOHN

You mean, like regular people?

THERAPIST

Is there someone else?

*John goes quiet. He takes a drink from a bottled
water and sets it back down.*

THERAPIST

(after some time)

Did you want to talk about...

JOHN

(interrupting)

No.

THERAPIST

What's it like? Being part of a superhero team?

JOHN

Not what I thought.

THERAPIST

Why's that?

JOHN

Aside from....

Aside from a few of the others who erupted, it's not like we really have any super villains to fight. And they don't just run around causing havok for us to find. So we're kind of like police deputies or a rescue team.

THERAPIST

And how is that?

JOHN

Harder.

THERAPIST

Why?

JOHN

With a bad guy---you've got something....concrete. Something you can do something to but there's been almost none of that. When you're rescuing people from a disaster---you're always too late for some of them. I mean, the closest thing we come to actual superheroing is...

THERAPIST

Is what?

JOHN

You don't have the clearance. I'm not allowed to tell you.

THERAPIST

Are those things that weigh on you?

JOHN

No. Those have a purpose and a plan and... I say no if I don't think what we're doing is ethical. I've been asked to do some things that I wouldn't.

THERAPIST

By who?

JOHN

You're not cleared for that. Government types. Those ones feel closest to what I thought this would be. I don't even get the worst of it. Bantam scouts the area. Revenant scans for people and Shadow teleports in and takes people out. We just help with the heavy lifting.

THERAPIST

How'd you come up with those nicknames?

JOHN

(slightly embarrassed)

At first? Because it sounded cool. Did you ever see the pictures where we tried costumes?

THERAPIST

I remember those.

JOHN

They---don't look good. It's not like there are many of us in the world--- The names stuck because it's much easier to listen to Aegis than John. Someone says "John's arrived" and no one knows what you're talking about. Aegis gets people to listen.

THERAPIST

Aegis is a shield?

JOHN

Yeah. From greek mythology.

THERAPIST

You big into mythology?

JOHN

I like it, but not big into it. The name sounded cool. I remembered it from something.

THERAPIST

Any idea what?

JOHN

Something I read? No clue anymore but the word was there when I wanted something to call myself.

THERAPIST

So you're the shield.

JOHN

Yeah. Pretty much.

THERAPIST

How difficult is that?

JOHN

Used to be pretty easy.

THERAPIST

And now?

LIGHTS FADE UP ON THE WHOLE ROOM

Three bottles of whiskey and one of everclear are empty on the bar behind John. John stares ahead, not really there at the moment. He gets up and pours the last of the everclear into a cup, which he shoots in one go.

His phone, on the table, gets a text.

John doesn't notice it.

He puts his head down, frustrated.

The door quietly opens.

Rachel comes in and shuts the door.

The slam of the door hits John hard. Before he can realize what he's done, he spins around reaches a hand out.

Rachel slams, HARD, into the wall behind her. The force that's holding her up has cranked her neck to a dangerous degree.

RACHEL
John.

John's hand unclenches and she falls to the ground. He looks at his hand in horror and numble collapses on the couch.

LIGHTS FADE BACK TO SPOT

THERAPIST
And now?

JOHN
Now I haven't been home in two weeks.

THERAPIST
Where have you been?

JOHN
Spent some time in the arctic. Went to our training facility---the place they tested us.

THERAPIST
Have you done any drinking? Drug use?

JOHN
I tried drinking. Bottles of whiskey and one of everclear---started to catch a buzz, but that's way too much to try to drink. I can't even get drunk anymore.

THERAPIST
Do you want to get drunk?

JOHN
Yes.

THERAPIST
Why?

JOHN
You're really asking that?

THERAPIST

Is it a compulsion?

JOHN

Because it could take the edge off. Because sometimes people need a fucking drink, okay? You've never felt like you had a rough day and you needed a drink?

THERAPIST

Sure. But I haven't been through what you've been through.

JOHN

And you can't do what I can do.

THERAPIST

Why haven't you been home?

JOHN

Because I'm the most dangerous force on earth and right now I'm not completely in control.