

FADE IN:

EXT. PARK - DAY

Eight year-old STEVE NICHOLS is dressed in a beach towel cape and a brown paper mask around his head and stands upon the "edge of a building," surveying all below him, fists on hips and very serious as the clouds beyond roll by gracefully. CAMERA PULLS BACK to reveal that the boy is actually standing on the top of a slide.

Suddenly, he leaps onto his belly and goes down the slide headfirst, arms thrust forward as if flying. He makes the "shhhh" sound as if soaring through the air. Climbing from the slide, Steve suddenly hears the sounds of laughter coming to him and he quickly looks in the direction of three older BOYS entering the park. The three boys are much bigger and stronger-looking than Steve. They deliberately encircle the much smaller boy.

FIRST BOY

Who the heck are you supposed to be?

SECOND BOY

It's Spaz-Boy!

They all laugh as Steve attempts to run away. The three suddenly grab him and pull his mask off. He struggles to escape, but the boys are too big and manage to yank his cape up over his head. Wrapping it around his neck and shoulders, they kick Steve in the rear and send him sprawling to the ground in a heap. Laughing, the boys walk away.

THIRD BOY

Spaz-Boy has been defeated!

Their laughs fade away as Steve removes the cape from his face and retrieves the torn and crumpled paper mask from the ground. Brushing it off and UN-WRINKLING it, he dons the mask crookedly as he stares off at the departing boys.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SUBWAY CAR - DAY

Twenty-eight year-old Steve is looking down at a superhero costume in his hands as he turns over a business card that reads "Costumes Galore."

WOMAN

Costume party?

STEVE
No. New job.

The WOMAN smiles back pleasantly and nods.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Steve crosses the street and enters an apartment building.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Steve approaches a door, package under one arm and his apartment keys JINGLING at the ready. As he reaches his apartment door, he notices a sign attached to the door. CLOSE on the sign reads, "Eviction Notice Proceedings."

STEVE
Oh, c'mon!

Noticing that a padlock has been installed on the door, he TUGS on it in frustration. Walking down the hall, he KNOCKS on a door marked, "Superintendent." After a moment, the door opens and a small WOMAN eating a bag of chips appears. Her face immediately turns cold as she lays eyes on Steve.

STEVE (CONT'D)
Mrs. Armetta, I --

MRS. ARMETTA
Save it, Steve! You're five weeks late!

STEVE
But, I just landed a gig!

MRS. ARMETTA
Right.

STEVE
No, really! Look!
(showing her the costume
box)
It's a good job.

MRS. ARMETTA
So, what are you? A life-sized
action figure now?

STEVE
No, it's an acting job. I'm the
new superhero outside of Costumes
Galore...on Broadway!

MRS. ARMETTA

Look, Steve, you're a nice kid, but it's out of my hands. Mr. Wendell is tired of deadbeats who -

STEVE

But, I'm not a deadbeat! I've got a job! It pays twenty-two dollars an hour!

MRS. ARMETTA

Yeah? Well...

STEVE

Please, Mrs. Armetta! I promise I'll have the rent in three days!

MRS. ARMETTA

It'd better be in my hands by Thursday then!

STEVE

Oh, thank you, Mrs. Armetta!

Steve zealously leans forward to kiss the woman.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Thank you so much! You're my favorite!

MRS. ARMETTA

Whatever. I'll get the keys.

INT. STEVE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Steve is standing in front of the full-length bedroom mirror, with yellow boots, red spandex pants, black belt with a fanciful letter "V" on the buckle, a red spandex shirt with a larger version of the buckle's "V" on the chest, widely-cuffed yellow gloves, a long shimmering red cape and a yellow mask, oddly shaped like a "V" and formed about his head. Putting his fists on his hips, he straightens up and puffs out his chest. Letting out his breath, he makes a muscle with his arm.

STEVE

I'm gonna need some muscle.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Steve is dressed in normal clothes and is carrying the costume in his arms. He KNOCKS on a door and, after a moment, an OLDER WOMAN answers.

STEVE

Betty, I need a huge favor.

BETTY

Hey, Steve. What's the favor?

STEVE

I need muscles.

BETTY

Pardon me?

STEVE

I got a job, Betty! I'm a superhero!

BETTY

(looking down at costume)
Oh! I see. What's a superhero without the guns, right?

STEVE

Exactly.

Steve enters the apartment and, as the door is closing:

STEVE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Do you think a six-pack would be too much?

The door closes.

INT. STEVE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Alarm clock GOES OFF as Steve climbs groggily from bed. He is excited about the new job prospect and grabs the costume as he enters the bathroom.

Steve showers and shaves quickly before carefully donning the costume. It is readily apparent that Betty did a great job on the foam inserts, because the muscles look superb. He is particularly happy with the perfect six-pack she has sewn into the abdomen area and he admires the work. Putting the mask, his cell phone, and a change of clothes into a small bag, he dons a very long overcoat to hide the costume. *In New York, he figures, I'll fit right in.*

He leaves the apartment, his bright yellow gloves and boots the only parts of his costume now visible.

CUT TO:

INT. SUBWAY CAR - DAY

Steve boards the subway car with the rest of the CROWD. He finds a seat at the end of a bench, pressed up against the brass arm rest. A very LARGE WOMAN sits beside him, squeezing him between her and the metal pipe. Suddenly, the brass bar SNAPS from its bolts and Steve TUMBLES to the floor.

Embarrassed and mildly annoyed, Steve stands quickly, feeling the eyes of the other subway riders on him. He manages to sit upon the very edge of the bench, for there is now just enough room for half of his buttocks. Steve makes sure to avoid everyone's gazes by staring into the corner of the subway car in front of him. Steve pulls his feet and arms in tighter, attempting to hide as much of his body as possible behind the large woman. As he stares out the side window, the subway car emerges from an underground tunnel, flooding the car with daylight, and races over the city streets on raised outdoor tracks.

Just then, a woman's scream interrupts the SOUNDS of the subway car. All eyes go immediately to the source of the sound where a MAN is seen to be brandishing a gun.

ROBBER

Sit down! Everybody now! Stay
down!

The man pulls a linen pillow case from his jacket pocket and throws it to the crowd.

ROBBER (CONT'D)

Fill that bag! Put your jewelry
and your wallets in the bag!
Quick, quick! C'mon!

Steve is terrified. He ducks behind the large woman even more than before, attempting to stay completely out of sight. The criminal continues to scream orders at the people as the scared crowd hurriedly THROWS its wallets, rings, necklaces, cell phones, and other paraphernalia into the bag, passing it along to the next person. An OLDER WOMAN who is handed the bag passes it along without putting anything into it. The man notices and grabs the bag, throwing it back at the woman.

ROBBER (CONT'D)
I said, "Fill it!" C'mon! What
the hell do you think you're doing?

OLDER WOMAN
This is my wedding ring! I will
not give you my wedding ring!

ROBBER
I'm not playin', old lady! Put it
in the bag!

Steve winces as the words begin to become muddled and fade.
He closes his eyes tightly.

FLASHBACK

Eight-year-old Steve is being bullied by the three boys in
the park. As the beach towel cape is pulled over his head,
we:

END FLASHBACK

Steve opens his eyes. Steve's POV pans down from the robber
to his yellow-booted feet. Steve's face is suddenly focused.
The yelling of the robber steadily becomes CLEARER AND LOUDER
as he continues to shout at the old woman. Looking down,
Steve spots the costume mask in the bag at his feet.
Carefully and deliberately, and while everyone's eyes are on
the criminal, Steve retrieves the mask and pulls it over his
ducked head. Looking down, he spots the broken brass arm
rest on the floor.

ROBBER (CONT'D)
Look, I'm telling you for the last
time! Either you put that ring in
the bag or I'm gonna -

Steve stands suddenly and swings the brass pipe, HITTING the
robber's arm and KNOCKING the gun to the ground. The
surprised robber turns and Steve finds the courage to PUNCH
the man square in the jaw. The thug TUMBLES to the floor as
Steve's coat opens, revealing his costume. Some of the crowd
gasp and a reeling Steve stares into the shocked faces of the
subway riders. Grabbing the bag from the floor of the subway
car, Steve TOSSES it to the crowd.

STEVE
(in a much deeper voice)
Take your belongings back.

Spotting a MAN in the crowd with a cell phone in hand, Steve
points in his direction ominously.

STEVE (CONT'D)

You!

The man hesitates.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Call nine-one-one!

The man nods as some in the crowd begin to murmur. The subway car enters a tunnel and the daylight disappears. The subway car begins to pull into a stop and Steve retrieves his own bag before turning to the crowd.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Make sure he doesn't move and get that gun to the police!

The subway car slows and Steve can see that the POLICE are approaching the platform. As the car comes to a halt and the doors open, Steve dashes out the opposite side of the subway, removes the mask and quickly circulates into the crowd. The riders get to their feet and ERUPT IN CHEERING as the police find it difficult to enter the car.

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

Steve emerges from the subway stairway. Quickly closing his coat over him and stowing the mask, he walks deliberately down the street. The police exit the stair as well and look around wildly, but are unable to spot Steve as he blends into the sea of people on the street.

Peering back nervously, Steve is shaking uncontrollably. As he continues to walk aimlessly along the streets, his cell phone begins RINGING inside the bag. A visibly upset Steve digs the phone out of the sack and opens it.

STEVE

Hello? Oh, yeah. I'm so sorry. I got caught up in traffic, but I'm on my way right now. I just have to - Y-you filled the position? But I thought the job was mine. Yeah, I'm sure. But I really need this - Oh. Okay. Well, thanks.

Stowing the phone, Steve looks bewildered. As he walks past a department store window, a dozen wide-screen televisions are tuned to the same channel. A news report is running live. Steve slows as he watches the report. There, on the television screen, although we cannot hear the report, is a picture of the subway car and then a reporter is interviewing riders on the train.

Steve's mouth drops open as he sees a man mimicking the fight in the subway car. As the ANCHORMAN appears on the screen, a picture of Superman appears behind him and the caption below the screen reads, "Super Samaritan."

STEVE (CONT'D)

Oh, God.

INT. STEVE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Steve enters his apartment and quickly closes the door. Picking up the remote control, he struggles with the thick yellow gloves before getting one off his hand. The harried expression on his face is nothing compared to his reaction when he TURNS ON the television and sees that every news channel is talking about the subway incident.

REPORTER ONE

- not clear why the Super Samaritan was dressed the way he was, but police are urging that the Hero of Fifth Avenue turn himself in immediately for questioning in this bizarre case of -

Steve changes the channel.

REPORTER TWO

- claim that he appeared out of nowhere and struggled with the would-be robber, before knocking him out cold with one punch.

The screen cuts away to a MAN.

WITNESS ONE

He just jacked up that guy! He was ripped!

The shot switches to a WOMAN who is showing a cellphone to the REPORTER.

WITNESS TWO

I got this picture just before he ran out the door of the subway.

There is a close-up of a blurred image of Steve from behind, leaving the subway car. The reporter appears again.

REPORTER TWO

Stunned subway riders watched as the Super Samaritan returned the stolen articles to the crowd and instructed someone to call Emergency Services before vanishing into thin air. Police are baffled as to the -

Steve switches off the television and sits down HEAVILY on the sofa, letting out a huge, fatigued breath.

STEVE

Talk about a cherry role.

A KNOCK on his door startles him as he jumps up quickly and goes to the door as quietly as he can.

BETTY (O.S.)

(muffled through door)

Hello? Steve?

Breathing more easily, he reaches for the latch, when suddenly he notices the yellow boots on his feet. In a panic, he begins to tear off his coat and then the costume.

STEVE

Hold on, Betty! Be right there!

Quickly, he dresses in normal clothes and stuffs the costume under the couch before rushing to the door and opening it. Betty looks at him worriedly.

BETTY

Oh, thank God, you're okay.

STEVE

What? What's the matter?

BETTY

Didn't you see? The report on the television! Turn on the news, Steve!

Steve walks over toward the TV and turns it on casually.

STEVE

What am I looking for?

BETTY

There was a man dressed in a superhero costume who saved a trainload of people today!

STEVE

Really?

BETTY

There! You see! Turn up the volume!

As they watch the news, Betty interrupts the report.

BETTY (CONT'D)

When they said that the man was in a superhero's costume, I thought maybe that you were the Super Samaritan.

STEVE

Super Samaritan? That's ridiculous.

BETTY

Are you sure you weren't on a train today?

STEVE

No, I never got -

BETTY

Wait a minute. Didn't you say that you have a new job? Why aren't you working?

STEVE

Well, that's what I was going to say, Betty. They let me go before I even worked an hour. Said they filled the position with somebody else and they didn't need me anymore. I already returned the costume.

BETTY

So, you didn't save anybody today?

STEVE

Save anybody? Betty, you know me better than that. I'm afraid of my own shadow!

Betty still appears incredulous.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Do you have any idea how many of those costumes were handed out for that job?

Betty shrugs.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Probably a dozen or more! Trust me, Betty. I'm not that stupid. I don't do heroics.

BETTY

Well, all right, then. I wasn't sure. I was worried about you.

Steve escorts her by the shoulder toward the door.

STEVE

Well, thanks, Betty. I appreciate your concern.

Opening the door for Betty, Steve gives her a reassuring smile as he closes the door gently and leans his back HEAVILY against it, breathing a sigh of relief. His eyes open and he realizes that a bright yellow glove was sitting on the coffee table in plain sight all along.

INT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

A POLICE OFFICER sits at his desk as another walks up and drops off a report. The seated officer looks up briefly.

SECOND OFFICER

Those prints from the metal bar and the bench in the Samaritan case. About a million prints on it. No matches.

The seated officer looks extremely disappointed.

FIRST OFFICER

So, maybe the Super Samaritan doesn't have a prior record.

The standing officer scoffs.

SECOND OFFICER

In this city? Who knows?

INT. STEVE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Steve paces the floor of his bedroom. He looks visibly distraught and his eyes stare at the carpet. Picking up the mask gingerly from the bed, he stares into it.

After a long glance, he tosses it back onto the bed and then removes his shirt, getting ready for bed.

CUT TO:

INT. STEVE'S APARTMENT - LATER

Steve sits up quickly in bed, a worried look on his tired face. He is sweating and his hair is unkempt. Looking at the clock, he sees that it is 12:40 a.m. Rising from bed, he goes to the bathroom and washes his face. He looks into the mirror earnestly.

CUT TO:

INT. STEVE'S APARTMENT - LATER STILL

The television screen blinks to life as the CAMERA PULLS BACK to reveal Steve, half-dressed, sitting on the couch, pointing the remote. Switching channels, he stops on a news report. TURNING UP the volume, he leans forward curiously.

STEVE

Maybe, this'll all blow over.

REPORTER (V.O.)

After being confronted by the attacker, Mrs. Davids struck back...with the most unlikely of weapons.

The picture switches to a very frail-looking, OLD WOMAN.

OLD WOMAN

I hit him with my umbrella. Right on the head!

REPORTER (V.O.)

When the robber demanded her purse, Mrs. Davids responded by striking the man with her trusty umbrella.

OLD WOMAN

Nobody talks to me with that type of filthy language.

The woman has a hand and microphone near her face.

REPORTER (O.S.)

Weren't you afraid?

OLD WOMAN

Oh, dear, no. After the Super Samaritan beat up that thief on the train, I wasn't afraid at all. My robber didn't even have a gun.

The reporter's voice goes on with the report, but the sound becomes muted as we SLOW ZOOM on Steve's face. His eyes widen with the comprehension of what he has begun.

EXT. SIDEWALK CAFE - DAY

Steve's best friend, MALCOLM, sits at a metal patio table and sips on a latte. Steve approaches from the street and greets him with a shoulder SLAP, spilling his latte.

STEVE

Hey.

Malcolm is annoyed and uses a napkin on his expensive shoe.

MALCOLM

What's up?

Steve whispers to the WAITRESS serving the next table.

STEVE

Could I get one of those...
(indicating latte)
...please.

The waitress nods as she begins taking another COUPLE'S order. Malcolm begins laughing suddenly.

MALCOLM

What a moron!

STEVE

What?

Malcolm is staring across the street.

MALCOLM

That guy who beat up the robber on the train yesterday.

Steve turns to see where Malcolm is looking. A digital billboard on a storefront is announcing a "Super Samaritan Discount on Mace & Brass Knuckles." Steve closes his eyes painfully.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)

Oh, please. This is New York. Somebody wants your wallet, you give it to 'em. Who's stupid enough to fight over a little cash?

STEVE

Maybe you've got money to burn, Malcolm, but I'm an actor. If somebody wants my money, I'm fightin'.

MALCOLM

Hold it. This coming from the same guy who was carjacked a couple years ago?

STEVE

That was different! That guy had a gun and -

MALCOLM

So did the guy on the train with Super Dork.

The waitress sets down the latte in front of Steve.

STEVE

Yeah, but the guy on the subway had a crowd behind him.

(to waitress)

Thank you.

MALCOLM

From what I heard, the crowd didn't do anything but sit there and watch. Typical New Yorkers.

WAITRESS

You talkin' about that superhero guy on the subway?

Steve looks up quickly.

MALCOLM

Yeah. My buddy, here, thinks that everybody should risk their lives instead of handing over the cash.

WAITRESS

I think he's right.

Malcolm stops chuckling.

WAITRESS (CONT'D)
If everybody just stands and takes
it, it's like saying -

MALCOLM
I don't wanna die?

WAITRESS
No. Like, "I'm a coward."

Malcolm continues laughing mockingly.

MALCOLM
You don't know my friend here,
then, sweetie. He's a bigger
coward than -

WAITRESS
You?

Malcolm pauses and then smirks.

MALCOLM
You work for tips, right?

WAITRESS
You're threatening me with the
dollar twenty-five you always
leave?
(chuckles as she looks at
Steve)
That's bravery, huh?

Steve laughs as the waitress walks away from the table.

MALCOLM
(toward waitress)
Maybe you should go into comedy!
(to Steve)
Oh, brother. Where do these people
come from?

Steve is not hearing him as he watches the waitress. Steve's
POV as she is taking another order, but turns her head and
looks in his direction, smiling. Steve grins and turns away
as Malcolm's muted conversation continues.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - DAY

Steve and Malcolm are walking down the crowded avenue.

MALCOLM

The guy's even got a bit "V" on his chest! Like, what the hell is that? Victory? "Vengeance Man?"

STEVE

Maybe it doesn't stand for anything.

MALCOLM

Yeah, okay Steve. The guy has a gigantic "V" on his chest and it doesn't stand for anything.

STEVE

Maybe it's just a symbol or something.

MALCOLM

A symbol? You think that...hold on! Why are we still talking about this?

STEVE

You started it.

Just then, a THIEF is running across the street, pushing past people. He is carrying a plastic shopping bag and another man is chasing him.

MAN IN PURSUIT

Stop him! He's a thief!

The New York CROWD watches the scene indifferently. But then, a MAN leaps forward and tackles the fleeing man, toppling him to the sidewalk. The thankful SHOP OWNER catches up as others in the crowd help restrain the thief.

STEVE

That's why we're still talking about it. That guy on the subway inspired a lot of people.

MALCOLM

Oprah inspires a lot of people, too. You don't see them buying cars for everybody.

STEVE

Man, you are such a pessimist.

MALCOLM

Realist.

STEVE

Same thing.

INT. STEVE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Steve is sitting on his couch, a newspaper in his hand. The television is on in the background and the news can be heard playing as Steve uses a pen to circle several prospective jobs in the classified section.

HOST (O.S.)

Thanks for tuning in. Is vigilantism on the rise? That's the question tonight for our panel. What do you think, John?

PANEL MEMBER #1

Well, ever since that guy on the subway -

PANEL MEMBER #2

A guy in his mid-thirties in tights...

PANEL MEMBER #1

Right. Ever since that guy confronted a would-be robber, it appears that vigilantes have been nabbed by police in increasing numbers.

STEVE

Mid-thirties?

HOST (O.S.)

Strangely enough, controversy has been building around the Super Samaritan because of his costume, which many eyewitnesses have said was emblazoned with a large letter "V". Was it a "V" for vigilante?

The next words fade as Steve's eyes shift slowly from the television to the costume folded neatly upon a table across the room, the bright yellow gloves, boots and mask alongside the stack. SLOW ZOOM on stack. Steve's eyes come into focus as we CLOSE on his face.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Steve is walking slowly along, the lengthy overcoat snugly about him and his yellow boots and gloves the only sign of the costume that is visible. Streets are sparsely populated at this time, but as he passes an old HOMELESS MAN, he is noticed briefly.

HOMELESS MAN
Hey! Super Samaritan!

Not paying him any heed, Steve continues to walk along the street with a purpose. Soon, he passes a Korean market where, out of the corner of his eye, he sees a BOY of sixteen pocketing an item in his coat inside the store. Slowing, he notices two other BOYS near the back of the store looking suspicious as well.

Steve quickly runs to the alleyway at the side of the building and, while in the darkened corridor, removes his overcoat and pulls the mask down over his head. His cape, red and shimmering, billows behind him as he dashes toward the rear of the store.

INT. KOREAN MARKET - NIGHT

Two boys at the back of the store slowly move toward the front, joining the third who is obviously carrying something large under his jacket. As they all converge in the main aisle and move rapidly toward the front door, the OWNER moves to block their path.

OWNER
You pay for that! You pay!

One of the two boys suddenly pulls out a small handgun and points it at the owner.

BOY
Outa the way, old man!

The man, fearful, puts his hands up and moves back behind the counter as the boy with the gun continues to hold it on him.

OWNER
You go now!

BOY

Shut up!
(motioning the gun toward
cash register)
Open it up! Let's go!

CUT TO:

INT. BACK ROOM - NIGHT

Steve enters the market through the rear employee entrance which is miraculously unlocked. Seeing an older KOREAN WOMAN standing at the door, he realizes that she is watching her husband. She hears the door CREAK behind her and turns, startled. Steve quickly places his finger to his lips, motioning for her to keep quiet.

The frightened woman steps away from the door as Steve steps up toward the door and peers out through the small window.

From Steve's POV, we can see that the owner is opening the cash register and the three boys are still present.

INT. KOREAN MARKET - NIGHT

Steve opens the door quietly and slips out into the main part of the market, using the aisle shelves as cover. He gingerly moves up the aisle toward the front of the store and when he is near the front door, he PUSHES OVER a rack of magazines.

Before the owner has surrendered the cash, the surprised robbers run toward the back of the store. The nervous owner ducks down below the counter and puts his cell phone to his ear.

As the armed boy turns a corner at the end of the aisle, Steve jumps out and PUSHES the boy hard into the beer cooler, knocking the gun to the floor which goes SKITTERING across the buffed floor and slides neatly under a shelf.

The other two surprised boys SKID to a halt and turn back toward the front door. Steve jumps toward them and TACKLES one to the floor. The falling boy HITS his head on a shelf and is out cold.

The old woman has entered from the back room and fishes the gun out from under the shelf. Quickly, she points it at the boy by the beer cooler, still dizzy.

Adrenaline pumping, Steve dashes after the third boy with the bulky jacket, but is too late as the boy DROPS a six-pack of beer and opens the front door, running off into the night.

Steve watches him as he goes and turns quickly. The owner rises slowly from behind the counter to watch. Striding back toward the boy held at gun-point by the old woman, Steve stops, standing over him menacingly.

STEVE
 (in his newly adopted
 superhero voice)
 If you move, I will make you hurt.
 Stay right there on the floor and
 wait until the police arrive.
 Understand?

The boys nod enthusiastically without making eye contact, then chances a frightened look up toward Steve.

STEVE (CONT'D)
 You're moving.

BOY
 Sorry!

OWNER
 You are hero! Thank you! Thank
 you!

STEVE
 Just doing my job.

Steve moves to leave out the back door.

OWNER
 What's your name?

STEVE
 I am -

At that moment, Steve spots flashing lights approaching from the street. Before the owner speaks again, Steve sprints toward the back door.

KOREAN WOMAN
 Thank you!

Two squad cars, sirens BLARING and lights flashing, converge from opposite directions in front of the market and SKID to a halt. The police peer into the building with weapons drawn, then swarm into the market, realizing that the owner is waving to them.

One officer is relieving the old woman of the firearm while the other turns to the owner.

POLICEMAN #1
What happened?

A third and fourth officer CUFF the unconscious boy and call for an ambulance.

OWNER
Superman come and beat up boys!
They try to steal from me!

The policewoman looks up as she's CUFFING the frightened boy.

POLICEWOMAN
Did he say, "Superman?"

OWNER
Yes! Superman beat them up!

POLICEMAN #1
Oh, not again.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Steve enters his apartment building and stands against the wall as more squad cars, sirens BLASTING, speed by the front door of his apartment building. He watches them furtively through the window. Turning, an elated smile on his face, he jumps and shouts.

STEVE
Woo!

Hurrying down the hall to his apartment, he digs the keys out of his overcoat pocket as another door down the hall opens quietly. Startled, Steve turns to see his neighbor, Betty, peering out at him. Steve smiles amiably as beads of sweat are forming on his forehead.

STEVE (CONT'D)
Betty! Hey, what's up?

BETTY
Were you just whooping it up out here?

STEVE
Yeah. I just, uh, came home from a date.

BETTY
A date? Oh.

STEVE

Yeah, we, uh, went out for dinner.

BETTY

I guess it was a *good* date.

STEVE

Oh, definitely. I'll be seeing her again...for sure.

BETTY

Well, then, good night, Steve.

STEVE

Good night, Betty. Sorry about the whooping.

Betty begins to close her door as Steve goes back to putting the key in the door. Betty opens her door again.

BETTY

Are you wearing yellow boots?

STEVE

Oh my gosh, look at that. We went to play laser tag and they, uh, they make you wear their boots. I was supposed to return them. I guess I forgot.

(long uncomfortable beat)

It was a *really* good date.

BETTY

I guess so. Good night, Steve.

Rolling his eyes and JINGLING the keys even more loudly, Steve finally finds the lock and opens it quickly, slipping inside and closing the door behind him.

INT. STEVE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Steve stands with his back against the inside of the door, breathing heavily and looking worried. Suddenly, he smirks and begins chuckling softly.

EXT. SIDEWALK CAFE - DAY

Steve sits at one of the metal tables outside on the patio, a newspaper spread out in front of him. On the cover of the Daily News is an artist's rendition of what "Vigilante Man" looks like, according to the description given to police by one of the boys from the Korean Market.

Scrutinizing the picture, Steve bends closer to look at the paper in front of him.

STEVE
(softly to himself)
My mask is all wrong.

WAITRESS (O.S.)
That guy's really startin' to scare
the criminals.

Steve looks up suddenly and sees the waitress standing over him.

STEVE
Huh? Oh, yeah.

WAITRESS
What can I get you?

STEVE
Oh, um, latte, please?

WAITRESS
Coming right up.

The waitress walks away and Steve looks back down at the paper. Malcolm is approaching from the street.

MALCOLM
Hey, Steve, how ya been?

STEVE
(folding newspaper
quickly)
Hey, what's up?

Malcolm sits and nods toward the paper.

MALCOLM
Well, looks like your buddy's
struck again, huh?

STEVE
Yeah, well...

MALCOLM
Mark my words, my friend. This guy
is gonna either find himself in a
hospital bed or a casket. Then
New York goes back to normal again.

STEVE

I don't understand it, Malcolm.
People bitch and moan everyday
about the crime in this city.
Somebody finally does something
about it and now everybody's mad
that the poor criminals are gettin'
roughed up.

MALCOLM

People aren't mad about that.
They're just mad because all the
criminals are gonna be that much
more pissed off when Vigilante Dude
gets caught by the police or killed
by some guy with a gun.

STEVE

Yeah, but what if he doesn't stop.

MALCOLM

Not gonna happen.

The waitress approaches and places the latte in front of Steve. Malcolm quickly reaches over and takes the latte, sipping it. The waitress looks indignant.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)

Hey, sweetie, could I get another
one of these for my friend?

The waitress balks for a moment, then looks down at Steve

WAITRESS

This really your friend?

STEVE

Unfortunately.

Malcolm seems amused.

WAITRESS

Seriously, you need to go back to
your contact list.

MALCOLM

Wow, that's quippy. Lattes...and
comedy.

The waitress walks away, shaking her head.

STEVE

You're such an asshole.

MALCOLM

She started it. Why don't you just ask her out?

STEVE

What?

MALCOLM

You been dancin' around her for a month. Might as well grow a pair and ask her out.

STEVE

What the hell is wrong with you?

The waitress approaches and places the latte down in front of Steve.

WAITRESS

S'on the house.

Steve's eyes quickly flick toward Malcolm, who rolls his eyes disdainfully.

STEVE

Thanks so much!

The waitress smiles again and then turns away.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Hey, ex-excuse me. What's your name?

WAITRESS

Wendy. What's yours?

STEVE

Steve.

Malcolm goes to speak when the waitress holds up her hand toward him.

WAITRESS

I don't really care who you are.

Steve laughs out loud as Malcolm closes his mouth with a smirk.

STEVE

May I take you to dinner sometime...Wendy?

WAITRESS

'Bout time.

Now, Malcolm laughs out loud. Steve smiles with embarrassment.

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

Steve approaches a brick office building, a newspaper rolled up in his hand, dressed up with a tie. Looking up at the sign for a brief moment, he then consults the paper. Finally, he pushes open the door and enters.

INT. OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

PAN inner office window where Steve is standing up from a chair and shaking hands across a desk with a businessman. He looks happy as he exits the office.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Steve is walking along the street, talking on his cell.

STEVE

Yeah, it's a copyboy job.
Basically all I do is run copy from the columnists and reporters up to the editors all day long. Well, I'm sure there's other stuff to do, like cleaning toilets and making coffee. Yeah, I know...

Steve's eyes are drawn to a hotdog stand as he slows.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Okay, man, talk to you later.
(puts phone away and to
VENDOR)

Foot-long. Sauerkraut, mustard.

Steve sees a small TV mounted to the hotdog stand's pole and listens as the news is playing.

REPORTER (V.O.)

...exclusive video from the Korean market near 38th Street where Vigilante Man struck for the second time in a week.

A shocked Steve continues to watch as he then sees his own image on the television. A surveillance camera video of him chasing down one of the boys in the market plays. The image is grainy and somewhat distorted.

REPORTER (V.O.)

Market owner, Louis Nan, told us that Vigilante Man seemed to have appeared out of nowhere and beat up the would-be thieves. As seen in this video taken by a surveillance camera at the market, Vigilante Man took matters into his own hands.

Over and over, the choppy images of Steve tackling the boy in the front aisle are played. Steve takes the hotdog from the vendor and reaches into his pocket for the money as he continues watching.

REPORTER (V.O.)

Police are studying this footage and trying to determine if there is a clue somewhere in the video as to the true identity of the mysterious crime fighter. Police are asking if anyone has -

VENDOR

Guy deserves a medal.

STEVE

Yeah.

VENDOR

I hope the police never catch dat guy. He's doin' us a service. Ya know what I mean?

Steve nods slowly as he then locks eyes with the vendor.

STEVE

Thanks.

EXT. STOREFRONT - DAY

Glass of the storefront has a picture of a fancy Oriental dragon. The words "Enter the Dragon Tai Quon Do" adorn the outside of the circle around the artwork.

KENNY (V.O.)

Not only will you learn the proper way to defend yourself, but you will also learn proper conditioning for a healthier lifestyle and nutritional regimen.

CUT TO:

INT. DOJO OFFICE - DAY

Steve is sitting in a chair in front of a desk, opposite KENNY who is the operator and instructor of the dojo. He is dressed in the traditional martial arts garb.

KENNY

It's an ideal way to change your whole life for the better, Mr. Nichols.

STEVE

Well, that sounds great. I really want to learn the finer points of self-defense. A-And that other stuff, too. So, what does the basic program cost?

KENNY

The membership is for one year. In that time, you'll learn all the basics of self-defense. If you choose to extend your membership, you'll move on to the more advanced studies. We like to stress -

STEVE

How much?

KENNY

Three hundred dollars a year.

Steve's eyes widen noticeably.

KENNY (CONT'D) (CONT'D)

That includes the cost of the uniform, your locker facilities, and a nutritional diet plan based on your personal needs.

STEVE

Thanks for the info, Kenny. I'm going to think about it for -

KENNY

You can pay that membership off over the course of the year, if you'd prefer. That's a mere twenty-five dollars per month.

Steve hesitates.

STEVE

I think that might be doable.

KENNY

Excellent!
 (extending hand across
 desk)
 Then, welcome to "Enter the
 Dragon"!

Steve shakes his hand and smiles. He gets up from his seat and takes out his wallet.

STEVE

Hey, Kenny, is there, like, an
 accelerated lesson that we can
 take?

FADE OUT

EXT. STREET - DAY

Steve is walking down the street with his cellphone to his ear.

MALCOLM (V.O.)

(through phone)
 You asked her out and you don't
 even have money? What were you
 gonna do? Take her out to the East
 River at low tide for a romantic
 outing? Watch the fiddler crabs
 mate?

STEVE

It's just a hundred bucks! C'mon,
 Malcolm. I'll pay you back next
 week when I get my paycheck.

MALCOLM (V.O.)

Don't you have rent to pay? And a
 phone? Hello!

STEVE

You're burnin' twenties in your
 fireplace. C'mon, Malcolm!

MALCOLM (V.O.)

You friggan' low-life actors are
 all the same.

STEVE

Unemployed?

MALCOLM (V.O.)

No. Moochers!

STEVE
Thanks, man! I love you!

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Steve and Wendy are seated at a table and talking over glasses of wine.

WENDY
So, what kind of acting do you do?

STEVE
None...at the moment.

They both laugh.

WENDY
How about when you are working?

STEVE
Mostly, anything I can get. The jobs are real tough to come by. There's so much competition out there for every single part. Sometimes, I think about just giving up and admitting to myself that I just can't cut it.

WENDY
But then you land a part, right?

Steve smiles and points to her, winking as he sips the wine.

STEVE
Just when you think you're done, they reel you back in again! What about you? Do you aspire beyond waitressing?

WENDY
Wouldn't I be pathetic if I didn't? Actually, I'm going to school. I'm studying journalism.

STEVE
Wow. That's really interesting work. Are you going for the whole television thing, or print?

WENDY
Definitely television. More money there. In fact, next week, I start a small internship at the Times.

STEVE

Oh, cool! That's great!
Congratulations!

WENDY

Thanks. Yeah, my first assignment
is going to be digging up something
on this Super Samaritan-Vigilante
Man.

Steve pauses and swallows.

STEVE

Oh.

WENDY

I guess the paper figures that if I
can come up with something no one
else has that I'd be a good
addition to the crew or something.

STEVE

That'd be...good.

Off the two, we:

FADE

EXT. LAUNDROMAT - NIGHT

Betty is sitting on a bench awaiting her laundry to finish
drying. A few OTHERS are there, sitting and reading
magazines and books or sorting and folding laundry.

A MAN walks into the laundromat and sits down. He is
shabbily dressed and doesn't appear to have any clothes to
launder. Betty looks up briefly from her embroidery work.
The man rises abruptly and goes over to one of the patrons,
speaking to him in whispered tones.

When the man shakes his head, the shabby man walks away and
begins CHECKING all the coin return slots on the vending
machines. Suddenly, he begins BANGING the machine violently.
The other patrons nervously ignore him.

Betty puts her embroidery away and picks up her purse. She
shuffles for the front door when the man suddenly steps in
her path, blocking her way.

BETTY

Excuse me, son.

The man mumbles something.

BETTY (CONT'D)

Excuse me?

SHABBY MAN

I need ten dollars.

Betty attempts to walk around him.

BETTY

Then, I suggest you get a job.

The shabby man grabs Betty's purse and rips it from her grip. As he turns and makes to dash out the door, the other patrons merely watching, he stops dead in his tracks as Steve is standing in the doorway, decked out in his costume.

STEVE

Make this easy on yourself and give her back the purse.

Betty looks at the costumed figure and her mouth slowly opens in recognition.

The shabby man's eyes dart back and forth quickly and he then makes a run toward the back of the laundromat. Steve takes off after the thief and catches him before he can get away.

The other stunned patrons watch in shock as Steve holds the man on the ground and removes the purse from his grip. Looking around and seeing only one man in the group, Steve nods toward him.

STEVE (CONT'D)

You. (a beat) Hold this man until the police arrive.

The man obediently moves forward in response, grasping the man. After the shabby man is restrained, Steve rises and takes the purse back to his neighbor.

Betty is in shock as she accepts the purse, staring into the eyes of her young neighbor.

BETTY

Thank you, Stev-

STEVE

Don't tell my secret.

Betty stares up into his face, entranced by his eyes. She slowly shakes her head. Turning to face the other patrons who are still in shock as well, he puts his fists on his hips and puffs out his chest.

STEVE (CONT'D)
Does anyone have a cellphone?

LADY #1
I do!

STEVE
Call nine-one-one.

He turns to walk out.

LADY #2
We love you, Vigilante Man!

Steve winces and suddenly halts. Turning to face the patrons, he again puts his fists on his hips.

STEVE
I am...I am Viking!

The patrons gasp. With that, he turns and darts out of the laundromat, disappearing around the corner. Many of the patrons rush to the door after him, but he has already vanished. Betty stares distractedly into the distance.

INT. STEVE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Steve suddenly awakens to the sound of BANGING on his door. His eyes fly open as he imagines the worst. Climbing quickly from bed, he puts on jeans and a shirt as the BANGING continues.

STEVE
Coming!

When he arrives at the door, he peers through the peephole. From Steve's POV through the distorted glass, Betty is looking angry. Steve rapidly opens the door.

STEVE (CONT'D)
Betty, what are you doing here so late?

BETTY
(pointing a finger in his chest)
Steve Nichols! How dare you?

Steve closes the door quietly after nervously surveying the hallway.

STEVE
Did you talk to the police?

BETTY

I have been at the precinct all night, Steve! How dare you?

STEVE

I'm so sorry, Betty, but I couldn't tell anyone about -

BETTY

You're sorry? How dare you?

STEVE

Stop saying that!

BETTY

We are neighbors! You allowed me to sew muscles on your costume and you couldn't even tell me that you're a superhero?

STEVE

But -

Steve suddenly stops himself with a puzzled look.

STEVE (CONT'D)

I'm not a real superhero. I'm just pretending, Betty.

BETTY

Pretending? Are those criminals pretending, too?

STEVE

Well, no, but -

BETTY

Then, neither are you!

STEVE

But I didn't mean for this to happen! It just kind of -

BETTY

Whadaya mean, you didn't mean for it to happen? You must have known how dangerous this is!

STEVE

Well, I didn't think about that when the guy on the train was pointing a gun at people!

BETTY
This needs to stop, Steve!

STEVE
Stop?

BETTY
Yes, stop! You can't do this!
It's crazy!

STEVE
I'm fine. I'm taking self-defense
lessons and -

BETTY
Self-defense? They have guns,
Steve!

STEVE
Please, keep your voice down!
(smirking and then raising
a finger)
They have guns, but I have the
element of surprise.

BETTY
You think this is funny?

STEVE
C'mon, Betty! I'm doing a good
thing!

BETTY
Well, I can't keep your secret.

Steve's face suddenly becomes serious.

STEVE
You can't tell anyone.

BETTY
Oh, yes I can! I'm going straight
down to that police station and
telling them that my idiot neighbor
is Vigilante Man!

STEVE
(annoyed, whispering)
It's Viking.

BETTY
You are not a real superhero,
Steve! Someone could really hurt
you! Or kill you.

STEVE

All right, then. I'll stop.

Betty hesitates with a suspicious look.

BETTY

Really? You'll stop all this nonsense?

STEVE

Yes.

Betty smiles and hugs him tightly.

BETTY

Then I won't go to the police.

STEVE

Thanks.

BETTY

Oh, stop with the sad face. What you did was a nice thing. It was just stupid. That's what we have police for.

Steve nods in defeat as she embraces him one more time before letting herself out of the apartment.

BETTY (CONT'D)

Good night, Mr. Viking.

Steve watches her leave, a sour look on his face.

FADE

INT. STEVE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Steve is sitting on his couch, a bowl of cereal in his hand as he watches the news.

ANCHOR (V.O.)

(through television)

After another dramatic good deed in a laundromat eight days ago where the Viking, formerly known as Vigilante Man, foiled another robbery attempt, he has appeared to have disappeared. Some have suggested that his name be changed to the Vanisher.

STEVE
(mocking tiny voice)
Oh, that's so funny.

Steve reaches forward and shuts off the TV with the remote in disgust. Placing his half-eaten bowl of cereal on the table, he sits back as he peers over at his costume on the table.

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Betty opens her door to Steve in the hall.

BETTY
Hi.

STEVE
Be my Alfred.

INT. BETTY'S APARTMENT - DAY

Steve is sitting on old-fashioned furniture while Betty enters the room with a tray of teacups and a small teapot.

Steve is quiet as Betty sits and POURS two cups of hot water and gives one to Steve with a spoon.

BETTY
You do understand my concern.

STEVE
Of course.

BETTY
You know that I lost a son in
Korea.

STEVE
I didn't know.

Betty points over toward a wall where a photo of a young man in a steel pot helmet and uniform is hanging.

BETTY
My son, Johnny, volunteered in
1952. I begged him not to go, but
he was proud and wanted to serve
his country.

STEVE
I'm so sorry.

BETTY

His airplane went down and he was never found. I know what it is to be a young man full of patriotism and goodness. And I know how dangerous this world can be.

STEVE

I understand. I won't ask you again.

BETTY

And I know how important this is to you...as a man.

Steve is quiet and respectful.

BETTY (CONT'D)

I'll keep your secret.

Steve looks up from his cup in surprise.

STEVE

Are you sure?

BETTY

Who else is gonna sew muscles into your new uniforms?

STEVE

Oh, Betty!

Steve stands quickly and hugs her where she sits. She smiles lightly.

BETTY

What's your next good deed?

STEVE

I have no idea.

INT. DOJO - DAY

Steve is practicing his martial arts stance and moves in front of a mirror. There are a couple of other STUDENTS moving in the background with their own lessons.

INT. DOJO LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Steve is ZIPPERING his bag closed, dressed in his regular clothing, as he readies to leave, when he hears Kenny's voice high-pitched and sounding comical.

Turning the corner, he looks out into Kenny's office and sees the owner playing with action figures on his desktop. Smiling, he walks across the hall.

INT. DOJO OFFICE - DAY

Steve enters slowly and Kenny looks up from his action figures that are all set up on the desk, small buildings made out of cardboard being used as props.

KENNY

Hey, Steve! Wanna join in?
I got -
(pointing at the toys)
- the Viking facing off against a
bunch of bad guys! This one is the
girlfriend of the Viking and
they've kidnapped her!

Steve's face slowly turns from a comical grin to a serious look of concern.

STEVE

No, thanks. I've got work soon.

KENNY

Hey, your loss!

Steve looks down at the desktop and sees a small action figure that appears to have been hand-made to look like his costume.

STEVE

You like Viking, huh?

KENNY

You kidding!

Kenny begins moving some of the figures and having them fight each other.

KENNY (CONT'D)

He friggan' rocks! I'm his biggest
fan!

He suddenly looks up at Steve with a very serious gaze.

KENNY (CONT'D)

Ya' know, I go out at night looking
for him.

STEVE

Really?

Kenny jumps to his feet and rushes over to a map of the Borough on the wall and points to a bunch of red push pins.

KENNY

Yeah, look at this! These are the locations of the places where the Viking's been spotted. Notice how they're all in this general neighborhood?

He turns and grins furiously at Steve.

KENNY (CONT'D)

He lives right around here! He could be our neighbor!

STEVE

Yup. Looks like it. Unless...

KENNY

Unless what?

STEVE

Unless he takes the bus in from Jersey?

Kenny's face suddenly breaks and he begins laughing hysterically.

KENNY

The Viking ain't from New Jersey!

Approaching the desk again.

KENNY (CONT'D)

You sure you don't wanna play? C'mon! I'll let you be the Viking.

STEVE

Yeah, sorry, Kenny. Gotta get to work.

KENNY

Okay, man! Take it easy!

Steve exits.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Steve is walking along the street with his cell to his ear.

STEVE

Crazy! As in somebody needs to commit him! Yes! *That* crazy! And he's got this scary obsession with me - not-not me. The Viking. You know, the superhero guy? Yeah, okay! See you around eight. 'Bye!

Ending the call, Steve takes a deep breath and exhales as he continues walking.

INT. STEVE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Steve and Wendy are in bed, lying side-by-side, her head cuddled up against his chest.

WENDY

You okay?

STEVE

Yeah! Why?

WENDY

I dunno. You seem a little ...preoccupied.

She raises her head to look him in the face.

STEVE

No, no. I'm fine. I've got a lot on my mind.

WENDY

That's what preoccupied means, sweetie.

Steve chuckles.

WENDY (CONT'D)

Something you need to talk about?

STEVE

No. I mean, maybe. I don't know.

Wendy continues to watch his face closely.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Okay. Well, you know how I was telling you about that crazy trainer...Kenny?

WENDY

Yeah.

STEVE

He's my martial arts trainer who is teaching me self-defense.

WENDY

Right.

STEVE

I'm taking self-defense lessons because of something that happened to me about three weeks ago.

WENDY

Oh. What happened?

STEVE

I...was...on the train...and...

WENDY

Oh, my God! Were you robbed? Is that what Malcolm was talking about?

STEVE

No, no...no. Okay, let me just come out and say it.

Wendy props herself up on an elbow while Steve sits up against the headboard.

STEVE (CONT'D)

I got hired for this job a few weeks ago and they gave me a superhero costume to wear. I put the costume on and was heading to the costume shop where the job was when the subway got held up.

Wendy's face becomes serious and she sits up slowly.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Well, I didn't know what to do and -

WENDY

Shut the hell up!
(smiling)
You're Vigilante Man?

STEVE

Viking.

WENDY

(shouting)
Are you kidding me?

STEVE
I thought you'd be mad.

WENDY
Why would I be mad? I mean, it's
all an acting job, right?

Steve's face falls.

WENDY (CONT'D)
It *is* acting, right?

STEVE
Not exactly.

WENDY
It's real?

STEVE
Well, I didn't plan on this being -

WENDY
Are you insane?

STEVE
No, Kenny is.

WENDY
It's not funny! You could get
killed!

STEVE
That's what Betty said.

WENDY
She's right!
(a beat, then suspicious)
Who the hell is Betty?

STEVE
My neighbor. She sewed the muscles
into my costume.

WENDY
What? She have the hots for you?

STEVE
She's seventy-something years old.

Wendy relaxes.

WENDY
Steve, you gotta stop this.

Steve hesitates and then smiles.

STEVE

Gotcha!

Wendy looks confused.

STEVE (CONT'D)

It's not real, you silly girl!

Wendy smiles and breathes a sigh of relief.

WENDY

Oh, my God, Steve. You had me scared.

STEVE

Yeah, but you were into it, though. When you thought Viking was real, you thought it was cool.

WENDY

Yeah, when it wasn't my boyfriend being the crazy moron. So, who sets all this up? Some P-R firm or something?

STEVE

They give me a call and tell me where to show up and I get a script. It's real simple stuff.

WENDY

So, the police are actors, too?

STEVE

Yup.

WENDY

Hold on.

Steve looks suddenly nervous.

WENDY (CONT'D)

How much are they paying you? S'gotta be a pretty good gig.

Steve relaxes and smiles.

STEVE

Pretty good.

WENDY

Oh, my God! Do you realize what this means?

STEVE

What?

WENDY

My assignment! Holy crap, Steve! My assignment! I have to dig up info on Vigilante Man!

STEVE

Okay, first of all, it's -

TOGETHER

The Viking.

WENDY

Sorry. Anyway, I could do an exclusive interview!

STEVE

Um, but I've got kind of a closed contract thingy.

WENDY

No one has to know your identity. Besides, this is good for the firm you're working for, right? I mean, it's like free publicity!

STEVE

I dunno. I'll have to ask.

WENDY

(disappointed)

Wow. Not even for your girlfriend?

STEVE

I'll ask.

She lunges at him and hugs and kisses him.

INT. DOJO - DAY

Establishing scenes of Steve working out and becoming better at the martial arts. He is seen sparring with others and defeating them. Then, he is seen sparring with Kenny and doing well against his trainer.

EXT. PARK - NIGHT

Steve is sitting on a park bench looking out at the lamp posts as they illuminate the night. Looking down at the mask in his lap, he begins to ponder. He turns his gloved hand over, examining it closely. Just as he readies to stand and leave the park, a twig SNAPS behind him.

MAN IN SHADOWS (O.S.)
Don't turn around.

Steve nervously darts his eyes, but freezes without turning. He looks down at the mask in his lap.

MAN IN SHADOWS (CONT'D)
(standing behind Steve)
Take your wallet out of your pocket
and put it right next to you on the
bench.

STEVE
I'm gonna have to stand up, man.

MAN IN SHADOWS
Real...slow.

Steve grasps the mask and stands slowly. Reaching toward his coat pocket, the MAN suddenly speaks.

MAN IN SHADOWS (CONT'D)
What the hell is with those gloves?

Steve hesitates.

MAN IN SHADOWS (CONT'D)
Hold on. Hold on! Holy -

Before the man can finish, Steve deftly turns, stepping up onto the bench and leaping toward the surprised man, KICKING him square in the jaw, sending him SPRAWLING to the ground.

Landing on his feet neatly, his martial arts training working masterfully well, Steve bends down over the man who appears to be out cold.

Putting on his mask, he then hoists the man's body up on his shoulder and walks toward the street. As he gains the sidewalk outside the park, he waves down a taxi.

A cab pulls up and the CAB DRIVER, shocked by what he sees, opens his door and stands to look over his hood at Steve and the unconscious man.

CABBIE
You're the Viking! Holy shit!

STEVE
Help me get this man into the cab.

CABBIE
Yeah, sure!

The cabbie runs around the vehicle and opens the door.

CABBIE (CONT'D)
Oh, my God! No one's gonna believe
this!

The cab driver helps Steve put the man into the back seat and then he closes the door. Steve begins to remove money from his coat pocket.

STEVE
Take this man to the police
precinct and tell them that he
tried to rob me in the park.

CABBIE
Did you kick his ass?

STEVE
I kicked his jaw.

CABBIE
Holy shit!

Steve holds money toward the cab driver.

CABBIE (CONT'D)
No, no, Viking! I couldn't. Don't
worry about it! I gotta get to the
police!

As he runs around the cab, he suddenly stops and comes back to Steve.

CABBIE (CONT'D)
Can I get a selfie with you?

STEVE
Uh...sure.

The cabbie reaches into his pocket and pulls out his phone. Positioning himself next to Steve, he raises the camera, puts his arm around the shoulder of the superhero, and SNAPS the shot.

CABBIE

You keep up the good work!

Getting into the vehicle, the cab speeds off as Steve realizes that a CROWD is beginning to form across the street.

Dashing off into the shadows of the park, Steve quickly removes his mask and disappears.

INT. STEVE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Steve arrives at his apartment and closes the door, LOCKING it behind him. Quickly, he undresses and folds his costume neatly on the coffee table.

WENDY (O.S.)

(startling Steve)

Fun time?

STEVE

(breathing rapidly)

Oh, Wendy! You scared the crap outa me!

WENDY

What the hell are you doing out this late in that costume?

STEVE

I told you. They call me and tell me where to be and I just go.

WENDY

Let me see your phone.

Steve stops and looks at her seriously.

STEVE

What?

WENDY

Gimme your phone.

STEVE

No...why?

WENDY

Because you're lying.

STEVE

No, I'm not.

WENDY

Then, let me see your phone.

STEVE

This is ridiculous.

Wendy stands and makes to leave.

WENDY

I'll tell you what's ridiculous, Steve. You prancing around in a superhero costume at night, beating up bad guys, and then lying about it not being real.

STEVE

I told you -

WENDY

I know what you told me. Then I started thinking about it and realized that, in order for me to buy your story, you would have to have the entire city staff in on your whole act.

A long beat as she looks him in the eye.

WENDY (CONT'D)

Should I call the mayor's office for official comment, Steve?

No answer as Steve looks ashamed.

WENDY (CONT'D)

I didn't think so.

She opens the door to leave the apartment.

STEVE

Wendy, please...

WENDY

When you're ready to quit this self-appointed stupid-ass crusade...call me.

She closes the door LOUDLY and Steve is left with yellow gloves in his hand.

INT. DOJO OFFICE - DAY

Steve KNOCKS softly on door and enters as Kenny is going over some papers at his desk. Steve notices that the red push pins are spilled over the surface.

KENNY

Hey, Steve.

STEVE

Hey, Kenny. I need to talk to you about something.

KENNY

Okie-doke.

STEVE

Remember when I came to you a few weeks ago and asked you to start training me?

KENNY

Yeah, sure. You looked like you had something happen to you and were looking to protect yourself.

STEVE

Yeah, well, I did...have something happen. On a subway car.

KENNY

Statistics say that most people who seek self-defense courses had an incident on a train, believe it or not.

STEVE

Yeah, well, the incident kind of...spiraled out of control.

KENNY

Oh, yeah?

STEVE

Yeah. What happened was that I confronted a thief.

KENNY

Hold on. You confronted the thief and he robbed you?

STEVE

No. He was robbing other people on the train.

KENNY
 (slowly)
 Okay.

STEVE
 And I hit him.

KENNY
 You scared him off?

STEVE
 Not exactly.

KENNY
 Okay, Steve. What...*exactly*...did you do? Are you trying to tell me something?

STEVE
 Yeah, Kenny. I'm trying to tell you that...I'm Viking.

Kenny's face straightens noticeably. He begins to stand.

KENNY
 You're...

STEVE
 I'm him.

KENNY
 You're the...

Then Kenny bursts out in a fit of euphoria.

KENNY (CONT'D)
 Oh, my God! You have got to be kidding me! You're the Viking?

Steve nods slowly.

KENNY (CONT'D)
 I'm training the Viking!

Steve looks out into the hallway nervously.

STEVE
 Kenny, keep your voice down, will ya?

KENNY
 Oh, yeah! Right! Sorry...
 (suddenly smiling again)
 ...Viking.

STEVE

Okay, Kenny. Listen to me.

Kenny's face becomes serious again and he sits promptly.

STEVE (CONT'D)

No one can know about this. You understand?

KENNY

Yeah, yeah! Of course.

Steve sits in the chair opposite Kenny.

STEVE

And the thing is -

KENNY

When do you go out again? (a beat)
Tonight?

STEVE

Hold it, Kenny. I need to explain -

KENNY

Do you think I could go, too? I mean, as back-up? You know, like your sidekick or something?

STEVE

No, no. Kenny, I'm not going out anymore. That's what I'm trying to tell -

KENNY

Whaddaya mean? You going on vacation or something?

STEVE

No. I'm quitting, Kenny. I'm not doing it anymore.

Kenny's face seems confused.

STEVE (CONT'D)

I know you've been following the stories and all -

KENNY

Wait, wait! Why are you quitting?

STEVE

Because it's dangerous! And stupid! They've got police for that kind of -

KENNY

Dangerous? You kicked that guy's ass last night?

Steve stops and shakes his head in confusion.

STEVE

Wait...how did you know -

KENNY

It's all over the news!

He reaches into the desk drawer and pulls out the morning paper.

KENNY (CONT'D)

Front page, Steve. Dude says you kicked him square in the jaw! Knocked him silly! He's suing you!

STEVE

Suing me?
(reaching for paper)
He doesn't even know who I am!

KENNY

Hold on, that doesn't even matter! You can't quit now!

STEVE

Yes...I can. And I am.

Kenny looks perturbed momentarily. Then, his face brightens.

KENNY

I guess I can do it then.

STEVE

Wait, what?

KENNY

The Viking!

Kenny begins looking over Steve's physique.

KENNY (CONT'D)

We're about the same build. I could definitely pull it off. Nobody'd be the wiser.

STEVE

No, you can't do that, Kenny! I'm explaining to you that I'm quitting because it's too dangerous!

Steve rises from his chair and looks down sympathetically at his trainer.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Look, we'll talk about this later.
I gotta get to work.
(no answer)
Okay, Kenny?

KENNY

Yeah, sure.

Steve turns and leaves the office.

KENNY (CONT'D)

Superheroes never quit, Steve.

Off Kenny's serious face, we:

CUT TO:

EXT. STEVE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Steve seems unhappy as he sips coffee and is waiting on a microwave dinner. When it BEEPS, he retrieves it and takes it to the couch where he sits, reaches for the remote and TURNS ON the television.

After a couple of channel changes and getting ready to bite into his dinner, the scene on the TV shows a burning building, the news identifier in the corner and a banner along the bottom readings: "Live - Fire in Lexington Apartments".

Steve watches and turns up the volume.

REPORTER THREE (V.O.)

(through television)

...raging through the upper floors, but firefighters are having trouble getting to some of the areas in the building. Family members are worried that there are still people trapped in the apartments. At least one person, a ten year-old girl, is unaccounted for at this time.

Steve lowers the forkful of food that he was about to put into his mouth, not having taken a single bite. His eyes are riveted to the screen.

Standing, he walks over to the window, the voice on the TV becoming muted. When he reaches the window, he twirls the rod, opening the blinds. The FADED SOUNDS of sirens can be heard. SLOW ZOOM on Steve's face as emergency lights flashing reflect off the window.

CUT TO:

EXT. BURNING BUILDING - NIGHT

Steve, wearing his long overcoat, his gloves and boots visible, runs through the CROWD outside the wide police ring. In the background can be heard the SIRENS as the flashing lights of the squad cars and fire engines play off the shadows of the buildings.

As Steve draws near to the police ring, he surveys it for a weak area and spots a place near the next building where a dark alley looks like it could possibly lead to the burning building.

He jumps to action toward the alley.

EXT. DARK ALLEY - NIGHT

Steve runs to the back end of the alley and scales a dumpster, then a wall, and jumps to a fire escape ladder. Quickly, he ascends the ladder toward the top of the neighboring building.

EXT. ROOF - NIGHT

Steve dashes across the roof of the building and halts at the other edge, overlooking another alley below him. The building across the alley is burning some floors below and Steve then backs up and takes a running leap across to the burning building.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Several ONLOOKERS in the crowd and a POLICE OFFICER near them, as they watch the upper floor fires, suddenly see Steve leaping across the gap of the alley to the roof of the burning building. In his short flight across, his coat opens and reveals his costume.

Onlookers gasp and point, some yelling, "Look! It's the Viking!"

The police officer makes his way suddenly toward the front of the burning building.

EXT. ROOF - NIGHT

Steve LANDS and ROLLS with martial arts skill. Standing quickly, he dons a small white construction dust mask and then his Viking mask over it.

Spotting the door to the interior of the building, he makes for it, his cape billowing behind him.

INT. STAIRWAY - NIGHT

ANGLE looking up toward door as it opens and Steve enters from the roof.

He descends the stair quickly.

INT. HALLWAY #1 - NIGHT

Steve enters the hall from the stairway door and looks up and down the empty hall.

STEVE

Is there anybody here? Hello?

Nothing.

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY #2 - NIGHT

Stairway door opens as Steve pokes his head into empty hallway.

STEVE

Is anybody here? Hello? Anybody?

Nothing.

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY #3 - NIGHT

Steve pokes his head into the hallway from the stairway door and shouts.

STEVE
Anybody here? Hello?

Nothing. But just as he goes to close the door, he hears something faint. Poking his head back into the hallway, he listens.

GIRL (V.O.)
(muffled)
Help!

Steve runs toward the source of the sound.

STEVE
Keep talking! I'm here!

GIRL (V.O.)
(closer)
Here!

Steve approaches a door and tries the knob. Locked!

STEVE
Open the door! Hurry up!

The door opens quickly and a 10 year-old GIRL stands there in tears. Steve leans forward and grabs her up, carrying her toward the stairway door.

GIRL
Did you fly here?

STEVE
I landed on top of the building.

INT. STAIRWAY - NIGHT

The door opens to reveal Steve carrying the girl. Putting her down quickly, he turns his back and removes his mask momentarily, then puts it back on again.

He turns toward her and hands her the dust mask.

STEVE
Put this on, quick!

The little girl follows his directions.

He takes her by the hand and begins to step down the stairs when the building suddenly shakes and a loud CRASH can be heard.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Let's go!

They begin racing down the stairs. Several floors later, the smoke becomes thick and Steve begins coughing. They continue to race down the stairs through the smoke when they stop at the bottom and Steve opens the door there. A fire is RAGING on the first floor. Steve quickly removes his overcoat and wraps it around the little girl.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Close your eyes, sweetheart! Don't open them!

The girl's eyes shut quickly.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Good girl!

Picking up the girl, he rushes through the door into the conflagration.

INT. HALLWAY #4 - NIGHT

Steve rushes through the falling debris as the fire RAGES all around them. Steve coughs a few more times as they make their way carefully through the destruction toward the front door.

A FIREFIGHTER who is searching the debris looks up when he hears the coughing and stares through his helmet. Steve spots him and approaches.

STEVE

Please take her to safety!

The firefighter reaches forward slowly as Steve transfers the girl to the arms of the firefighter.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Go!

The firefighter obeys and rushes toward the front door. As Steve surveys the wreckage looking for another way out, he is startled by a loud voice.

POLICE OFFICER (O.S.)

Son of a bitch!

Steve turns to see a POLICEMAN with a weapon drawn and pointing in his direction.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

A firefighter rushes from the building, carrying the little girl in Steve's overcoat. The crowd and gathered NEWS CREWS take notice and rejoice.

The firefighter is joined by a TEAM of EMTs who rush to get the girl to safety. The firefighter removes his helmet and face shield as another comes up to congratulate him.

FIREFIGHTER
Not me! I'm not the hero! The
Viking is in that building!

He points dramatically.

FIREFIGHTER (CONT'D)
He saved that little girl!

The crowd ERUPTS in murmurs as news reporters begin talking about the Viking.

INT. HALLWAY #4 - NIGHT

The police officer walks toward Steve slowly, his firearm trained on the superhero.

POLICE OFFICER
I can't believe I got you.

Steve coughs violently.

POLICE OFFICER (CONT'D)
All right, Viking.
(nodding head toward exit)
Let's go.

Steve resigns to the fact that he has no other choice and moves to leave with the officer when a smoldering beam falls from the ceiling and STRIKES the policeman, KNOCKING him to the floor. The officer's weapon has CLATTERED to the floor.

Steve rushes toward him and struggles to move the smoking beam. Steve coughs and another CRASH is heard as the building continues to become more unstable.

Sitting down on the floor, Steve places his feet against the beam and pushes upward with all his might, lifting the wood away from the officer. The policeman struggles to free himself and then Steve DROPS the beam again.

Another RUMBLE as more of the building collapses.

The officer rises and Steve hands him his weapon. The policeman looks at the weapon and then meets Steve's gaze. Slowly reaching toward the gun, he grasps it and points it toward Steve.

They both begin coughing and another burning beam FALLS and an entire stairwell COLLAPSES behind them.

POLICE OFFICER (CONT'D)
Go! Get outa here!

Steve hesitates.

POLICE OFFICER (CONT'D)
Go on! Get!

Steve regards the man's badge and squints to see it through the smoke.

STEVE
Thank you...Officer Lawton.

Steve then runs off in another direction toward the rear of the building and disappears in the smoke.

EXT. DARK ALLEY - NIGHT

Steve runs down the alley, fully aware that he now has no coat to protect him from being seen. As he flees the scene of the fire, he approaches the end of the alley only to see that the crowds are even bigger now. Backing into the alley, he looks around and then up toward the fire escape, noticing clothing hanging from clotheslines.

Coughing momentarily, he then dashes off toward the ladder.

INT. STEVE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Steve arrives in his apartment wearing strange and mismatched attire over his costume. His phone has just stopped RINGING.

He undresses and puts the costume off to the side, smelling of smoke. His phone begins RINGING again. As he looks down at his cellphone, he sees that it's Wendy.

Just as he is about to push the "TALK" button, there is a KNOCK at his door. Rushing to the door, he peeks through the peephole to see Betty.

Opening the door, Betty surveys him quickly.

BETTY

Are you okay?

He ushers her inside his apartment.

STEVE

Yeah, yeah! I'm fine.

Steve pushes "TALK" on his phone and doesn't even say "hello". He holds a finger up toward Betty.

STEVE (CONT'D)

I'll call you in a few minutes.
'Bye.

As he ends the call, Betty sniffs the air.

BETTY

I can still smell the smoke.

STEVE

That was crazy! A policeman caught me.

BETTY

What? Did you beat him up?

STEVE

What? No! C'mon, are you kidding?
I don't beat up the police.

BETTY

Well, then, why aren't you in jail?

STEVE

The ceiling fell down on top of
him.

BETTY

Oh, my God!

STEVE

So...I saved him.

BETTY

You saved a policeman? You are a
superhero!

STEVE

I've gotta stop this, Betty. It's getting dangerous.

BETTY

Well, of course, when you're jumping over rooftops and rescuing people from burning buildings.

STEVE

No, Betty...I mean, it's really getting dangerous. I inhaled so much smoke tonight.

BETTY

Well, why don't you rest tonight and take a break from all the heroics?

STEVE

Betty, I'm quitting.

BETTY

If this is you quitting, I'd love to see you doing this full-time.

STEVE

Good night, Betty.

BETTY

Good night. Take a long, hot bath.

STEVE

Uh huh.

She exits and Steve immediately dials Wendy.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Wendy?

INT. WENDY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Wendy is sitting at her kitchen table, her laptop open in front of her. She has a phone to her ear.

WENDY

Are you okay?

STEVE (V.O.)

(through phone)

Yeah. A little banged up and smoky, but...

WENDY

I was worried about you.

STEVE (V.O.)

Oh, yeah?

WENDY

Yeah. That little girl you rescued? She said that you wrapped her in your overcoat and that she was going to keep it forever.

(laughs lightly)

Steve...you saved a little girl.

STEVE (V.O.)

And a police officer.

INT. STEVE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Steve is sitting on the couch with the phone to his ear.

WENDY (V.O.)

(through phone)

Oh, my God, Steve. You really are a superhero!

STEVE

Still want that interview?

WENDY (V.O.)

Are you joking?

STEVE

No, seriously. I'm quitting, Wendy.

(coughs loudly)

This heroic stuff is too dangerous.

WENDY (V.O.)

Oh. Okay, then. I guess I got my wish.

STEVE

Yup.

FADE

INT. STEVE'S JOB - DAY

Steve is dressed in a blue shirt, sleeves rolled up, and a tie and slacks. He has an armful of manila folders as he walks quickly down a hall.

As he enters an office, he notices that the editor (placard on desk reads: Billie Yarden - Editor) is not there.

Placing the pile of folders down on the desk, Steve exits the office and continues to walk the halls. As he turns a corner near the break room, he sees that many of his CO-WORKERS are crowded around the television. He begins to pass by the break room when he hears something issuing from the TV speakers.

ANTHRAX (V.O.)
(through television)
...won't be any peace unless the
Viking shows up!

Steve halts and darts back to the doorway to look at the screen. A shot of a REPORTER standing in front of what looks to be a huge, old factory is showing.

REPORTER FOUR (V.O.)
(through television)
That recording was submitted to
news agencies this afternoon and
has had crime and law enforcement
experts combing through the video
looking for clues as to the
authenticity of its message. Right
now, the only questions that remain
are, is this self-described "Anti-
Hero" Anthrax genuine and, if so,
will the Viking answer his call to
action?

STEVE
What's going on?

WOMAN #1
This crazy dude named Anthrax says
he kidnapped some woman and wants
to meet the Viking at an abandoned
factory to fight.

STEVE
What? Is he serious?

MAN IN SUIT
He looked pretty serious.

STEVE
Well, what are the police doing?

MAN IN SUIT

They got the place surrounded, but he said in the tape that if they interfere, he'll eighty-six the woman.

STEVE

Eighty-six?

MAN IN SUIT

Yeah, you know?

The man motions with a finger across his throat and makes an accompanying slashing noise.

Steve withdraws slowly from the room. He begins walking down the hall, then quickens his pace. Retrieving his phone, he speed-dials Wendy. A recording goes to voicemail.

Steve breaks into a full run, nearly knocking over another COPYBOY as he carries a box of doughnuts.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Steve is walking along the sidewalk, CROWDS in front of television stores watching the ANTHRAX recording playing over and over. Steve is speaking on his cell.

STEVE

Malcolm? Holy shit, dude! Do you see what's going on with this Anthrax guy? I know, but - yeah, right now. I'll be there in ten.

As he ends the call and puts the phone in his pocket, he slows significantly as his eyes rise up. From Steve's POV, we see the Times Square Big Screen replaying the Anthrax message. There is no sound, but Steve is floored.

A man in a black and grey mask is speaking directly into the camera threateningly. It's obvious that Anthrax is holding the camera himself.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Kenny.

Anthrax then motions behind him and focuses the camera on an old woman sitting on a chair, tied up with rope.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Betty!

EXT. STREET - DAY

Steve runs through the streets at full speed, dodging PEOPLE.

EXT. SIDEWALK CAFE - DAY

Malcolm is just arriving at the cafe when he hears a shout coming from across the street.

STEVE (O.S.)

Malcolm!

Malcolm gazes across to see his friend running quickly. As Steve crosses the street, Malcolm raises his hands questioningly.

MALCOLM

What's goin' on?

Steve arrives, CLATTERING to a halt and catches his breath. He puts his hand on Malcolm's shoulder as he breathes out the words.

STEVE

Dude, I gotta tell you something.

MALCOLM

Okay.

INT. CAB - DAY

Steve and Malcolm are inside the cab, talking in the back seat while the cabbie pays attention to traffic. Malcolm leans forward toward the CABBIE.

MALCOLM

Hey, man, I told you quick!

CABBIE #1

(through indistinct
accent)

You say "East Forty-Ninth"! That's
what I go!

MALCOLM

No, I say "East Forty-Ninth...make
it snappy!"

CABBIE #1

(pointing ahead)
Traffic!

MALCOLM

There's always traffic. Listen,
there's an extra twenty in it for
you.

The cabbie hits the gas and swerves around a few cars,
throwing Malcolm into the back of his seat.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)

That's more like it. Now, what
were you sayin'?

Steve is trying a call on his cell and shaking his head
worriedly.

STEVE

She's not there! Dude, this is
serious. That guy, Anthrax...he's
got my neighbor, Betty!

MALCOLM

Oh, shit!

STEVE

It's my trainer, Malcolm! My
martial arts trainer, Kenny! He's
nuts!

MALCOLM

My God! You know who this guy is?
Call the cops!

STEVE

I can't.

MALCOLM

What? The cops don't know who this
guy is! You need to tell them!

STEVE

I can't!

MALCOLM

Why not!

STEVE

Because I'm Viking!

The cabbie looks briefly into his mirror at Steve and Malcolm
notices, improvising quickly by smiling and hugging his
friend.

MALCOLM
You got the part! Oh, man,
congratulations!

STEVE
(struggling to free
himself)
What are you -

MALCOLM
Shut up...the cabbie!

Steve looks toward the cabbie, but he is looking at the road.

STEVE
I'm Viking.

Malcolm lets him go slowly and leans back, watching his friend's face.

MALCOLM
You're serious, aren't you?
(Steve nods)
What the hell were you thinking?
Was it you right from the
beginning? On the tr -

STEVE
Train...yeah.

MALCOLM
Holy shit.

STEVE
I need your help. I don't know
what to do. This guy, Kenny. He's
obsessed, Malcolm. I mean, crazy
obsessed.

Malcolm nods slowly, looking out the opposite window.

MALCOLM
You do need help. You need a
partner.

Steve balks. Malcolm turns and looks directly into Steve's face.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
I'm gonna need a costume.

Steve stares momentarily in disbelief.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
(looking away again)
I'm gonna need a *good* costume.

Off Malcolm's fixed gaze, we:

CUT TO:

INT. WENDY'S APARTMENT - DAY

Wendy is approaching her apartment door and opens it to reveal Steve and Malcolm.

STEVE
Hey -

Before he can say anymore, Wendy embraces him tightly.

WENDY
Oh, thank God you're not going
after that maniac!

STEVE
Wendy, I gotta talk to you about
something.

Wendy stops hugging him suddenly and eyes him and then Malcolm.

WENDY
You *are* going after him...aren't
you?

STEVE
Can we just come in?

She stands aside. They enter.

WENDY
I take it you told Malcolm your
little secret, too.

Steve turns toward her as she closes the door.

MALCOLM
Listen, sweetie -

WENDY
Don't call me "sweetie"!

STEVE
Can we please talk before you guys
start fighting again?

Wendy and Malcolm look at Steve.

STEVE (CONT'D)
Thank you. Wendy, that guy...
Anthrax...it's Kenny, my martial
arts trainer.

WENDY
What?

STEVE
I told you he was crazy, didn't I?

WENDY
Well, what does he want?

MALCOLM
Well, obviously he wants to fight
Vigilante Man.

WENDY & STEVE
(together)
Viking!

MALCOLM
Whatever.

STEVE
Listen. If you're going to be my
sidekick, you'd better learn my
name.

WENDY
Sidekick?
(begins laughing)
Malcolm? The Brainless Wonder?

MALCOLM
(mock laughing)
Say, I know! That could be *your*
name!

Wendy stops laughing suddenly and looks seriously toward
Steve.

WENDY
Hey, yeah! What about me? I wanna
be a superhero, too!

Steve is floored.

STEVE
This is not a game!

WENDY

Then why are you playing with Malcolm?

STEVE

Oh, my God! You guys don't seem to understand! Kenny is threatening Betty! She's an old woman!

MALCOLM

Oh, please! He's not gonna do anything to her.

STEVE

You know that for sure?

WENDY

Well, whadaya planning on doing?

STEVE

I'm gonna rescue Betty.

WENDY

How?

Steve is silent.

MALCOLM

I'll tell you how. The Viking and his partner, Muscular, are gonna -

WENDY

Muscular?

(a beat)

Your name is an adjective?

MALCOLM

Oh, you're a linguist now?

WENDY

I *am* a writer.

STEVE

Can we please stop arguing? Or else I'm going to do this by myself!

The other two look at Steve again.

MALCOLM

We need costumes.

Steve looks exasperated. He looks over at Wendy who smiles hopefully as she nods.

STEVE
All right, fine!

Wendy yips excitedly as she grabs her keys.

WENDY
I'll drive.

MALCOLM
Shotgun!

Wendy and Malcolm file out as Steve shakes his head.

STEVE
(miserably to himself)
Batman never had to ride in the
backseat.

EXT. OLD FACTORY - DAY

A police barricade has been established around the exterior of the factory.

CAMERA TRACKS along the line where REPORTERS from different news networks stand with their CAMERA OPERATORS, doing their separate reports for the live feed to the studios. CAMERA halts on one of the reporters.

REPORTER FIVE
(into microphone)
...with a new deadline set up by
Anthrax. The timer is counting
down live from somewhere inside
this abandoned textile mill. What
happens when that timer runs out?
We'll soon find out. Back to you,
John.

A commotion suddenly breaks out somewhere behind the news vans as reporters begin stampeding in one direction.

REPORTER FIVE (CONT'D)
Turn that thing back on!

CUT TO:

EXT. OLD FACTORY - DAY

A costumed Steve is walking slowly through the rush of reporters and camera operators who are surrounding him. Behind him, the CAMERA reveals two other figures: Malcolm and Wendy, both in costumes of their own.

REPORTER FIVE

Viking! Are you going to fight
Anthrax?

REPORTER SIX

(thrusting microphone in
Malcolm's direction)
Who are you? What's your name?

REPORTER SEVEN

(thrusting microphone in
Wendy's direction)
Are you a team? Is Viking your
boyfriend? What's your name?

Other reporters are casting random questions into the air as they continue to walk toward the police line. As they near the barricade, one of the POLICE OFFICERS turns to another.

OFFICER #1

I don't believe it.

OFFICER #2

You've got to be kidding me.

In the background, another officer turns to see the trio and stares. It is Officer Lawton from the burning building.

When the trio reaches the line, they halt.

OFFICER #1

All right, people, shut it!
Enough! Quiet!

The crowd silences itself with a couple of reporters' questions in subdued fashion.

OFFICER #1 (CONT'D)

You actually think I'm letting you
through here?
(to Officer #2)
Get the cuffs.

OFFICER LAWTON

Let them through.

Steve's eyes turn suddenly toward Officer Lawton and his mouth opens slowly.

OFFICER #1

Seriously?

OFFICER LAWTON
(staring at Steve)
Let them through. He saved that
little girl.
(looking at Officer #1)
We owe him this.

The officers step aside and allow the trio to pass, looking over their costumes.

OFFICER #2
(to Malcolm)
Who's your tailor?
(laughs derisively)
Aquaman?

Malcolm looks toward him menacingly and the officer stops laughing.

STEVE
Thank you, Officer Lawton.

OFFICER LAWTON
Go get him, Viking.

They smile toward each other and the trio struts on toward the old factory, reporters chattering and CROWDS murmuring.

MALCOLM
You know the police?

WENDY
Is that the policeman you saved?

MALCOLM
You save a policeman?

STEVE
Guys?

Steve nods toward the old factory.

STEVE (CONT'D)
Bad guy?

MALCOLM & WENDY
(together)
Sorry.

INT. OLD FACTORY - DAY

ANGLE on inside of factory doors as they OPEN and sunlight streams in. The trio enters cautiously.

STEVE
Kenny! I'm here! Where are you?

Silence.

MALCOLM
Split up?

WENDY
You're kidding right? Don't you
watch movies?

STEVE
Please! You guys go that way and
I'll go this way. Kenny doesn't
care about you two. No offense.
He wants to fight me. Besides...
he'll kick your asses.

MALCOLM
Won't kick my ass.

STEVE
Betty is the priority.

WENDY
Right.

STEVE
Please be careful.

They separate and go on their way.

EXT. OLD FACTORY - DAY

Betty is sitting in the chair that she's been tied to and she
looks over at Kenny as he fiddles with a video camera.

BETTY
Are you really a bad guy? I don't
think you're a villain. I think
you just need attention.

Kenny looks over toward her, but doesn't say anything.

BETTY (CONT'D)
That's what it is! Your mama never
cuddled you.

KENNY
For your information, my mother
left when I was six years old.

(MORE)

KENNY (CONT'D)

And my father was a gun runner to
Canada.

BETTY

Is that why you're so angry?

KENNY

I am not angry, Betty.

BETTY

Oh, you know my name?

KENNY

I know that you're Viking's
neighbor.

Betty suddenly looks confused.

BETTY

You know Steve?

Kenny stares at her for a moment, then turns back to the
camera.

BETTY (CONT'D)

Are you Malcolm?

KENNY

Who's Malcolm?

BETTY

Well, nobody else knew who the
Viking was...except Wendy and me.
And you're no girl.

KENNY

Thanks for noticing. What the hell
is wrong with this thing?

BETTY

Well, then, who else knew about
Steve?

KENNY

Got it!

EXT. OLD FACTORY - DAY

REPORTER is talking with another REPORTER when her CAMERAMAN
comes quickly up to her.

CAMERAMAN
(to reporter)
He's transmitting again!

The reporter follows the cameraman over to the van and the monitors inside are showing Anthrax's face as he's talking.

KENNY
(sing-songy)
Where are you, Viking? Time's
running out!

The camera turns roughly toward a digital timer that reads:
00:38:15. It is counting down.

INT. OLD FACTORY - DAY

Wendy and Malcolm are walking slowly, being careful, and looking around for any sign of Kenny.

MALCOLM
So, did you decide on a name?

WENDY
Yup.

MALCOLM
(halting and facing her)
Really? What?

WENDY
The Linguist.

MALCOLM
Really?

WENDY
Yeah. You got a problem with that?

MALCOLM
No, no. It's a great superhero
name. If you're like five.

WENDY
Okay...Muscular.

MALCOLM
I changed my name!

WENDY
To what? Poodle Walker?

MALCOLM

No.

Malcolm begins to walk away from her.

WENDY

What is it? C'mon. I won't laugh.
I swear.

MALCOLM

The Cure.

Wendy pauses, unsure.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)

You get it? He's Anthrax and I'm -

WENDY

The Cure. That's actually not bad.
But, maybe...

MALCOLM

What?

WENDY

Maybe not The Cure. I mean, it was
an eighties hair band, right?

MALCOLM

Well, so was Anthrax.

WENDY

What about...Antidote?

MALCOLM

Antidote...I like it. Maybe we can
work on yours -

KENNY (O.S.)

(very distant shouting)
Tick tock, Viking! Tick tock!

Wendy and Malcolm are startled at the sound and look in the
direction of the voice.

WENDY

C'mon.

They creep through the darkened corridor.

INT. OLD FACTORY - DAY

Steve is walking carefully through the debris left over from bygone days.

KENNY (O.S.)
 (very close)
 Tick tock! Are you afraid?

Steve begins running through the factory.

INT. OLD FACTORY - DAY

Kenny turns toward Betty and smirks.

KENNY
 I don't think Viking is showing up,
 my dear!
 (turning to camera)
 You hear that, New York? Viking is
 a coward!

STEVE (O.S.)
 Cowards kidnap defenseless women!

Kenny turns dramatically as he cape billows behind him.

STEVE (CONT'D) (CONT'D)
 Heroes save them!

Betty looks and gasps with a grin.

CUT TO:

EXT. OLD FACTORY - DAY

A cheer goes up from the crowd as they watch the monitors in and around the news vans.

INT. OLD FACTORY - DAY

Kenny adjusts the camera.

KENNY
 Hero?
 (laughs sinisterly)
 You think because you can beat up
 common thugs on the streets that
 you're a hero?

BETTY
He is a hero!

KENNY
Aw, look, Viking. Your biggest fan.

STEVE
Let her go, Anthrax!

Kenny turns dramatically toward Steve.

KENNY
Or what?

STEVE
Or I tell everyone who you are!

Kenny hesitates and squints his eyes.

CUT TO:

EXT. OLD FACTORY - DAY

The police are now watching the monitors with everyone else as a collective gasp goes through the crowd.

OFFICER #1
(to reporter)
Holy shit! He knows his true identity!

INT. OLD FACTORY - DAY

Steve steps into the center of the large textile dyeing room. There are large, rusting metal vats set in a straight line behind Kenny, against which rests Betty's chair.

Kenny begins chuckling evilly.

KENNY
You'll tell everyone who I am? We both know *that* won't happen.

STEVE
Oh, yeah? Why's that?

KENNY
Because I know your true identity.

STEVE
Then I guess it's a stalemate.

Kenny begins to take on a martial arts stance as Steve draws nearer.

KENNY

It's only a stalemate for thirty minutes more, Viking!

Steve takes on a martial arts stance and begins to circle Kenny.

STEVE

And what happens in thirty minutes, coward?

KENNY

A surprise!

Just then, Malcolm and Wendy arrive through a large doorway. Steve spots them and smirks.

STEVE

I hate to be a killjoy, Anthrax, but my team has arrived.

Kenny turns to look behind him and sees the two stepping into the room in costume. He looks happy to see them.

KENNY

Well, well, well...what do we have here? Your girlfriend and your butler?

WENDY

Your about to be CDC-ed, Anthrax!

Kenny continues to keep an eye on Steve as he turns slightly toward the others.

KENNY

I don't believe we've been introduced.

WENDY

Linguist.

KENNY

Linguist? And the butler?

MALCOLM

The Cure!

WENDY

(whispering)
Antidote!

KENNY

Okay, butler! Let's tango!

Kenny rushes toward the duo and Steve bursts forward to intervene. Kenny turns toward Steve and they begin to fight. The match is even as they trade BLOWS as Wendy races toward Betty to free her.

KENNY (CONT'D)

(as he fights)

Very nice, Viking! You almost know what you're doing!

Malcolm rushes forward and grabs Kenny from behind, but the martial arts expert TOSSES Malcolm like he's a rag doll. Steve takes the opportunity to roundhouse KICK him in the jaw, knocking him to one knee.

CUT TO:

EXT. OLD FACTORY - DAY

A tremendous cheer goes up in the crowd as they watch Kenny down on one knee. He climbs to his feet slowly, chuckling.

KENNY

Nice shot, Viking.

(resuming stance)

But you're going to have to do better than that!

Kenny lunges at Steve.

As they fight, Malcolm climbs to his feet.

Wendy is working on the ropes to free Betty.

WENDY

Are you okay, Betty?

BETTY

Oh, I'm fine, dear. I like your outfit!

Wendy smiles brightly.

Malcolm looks around and spots a large wooden board. Stooping to pick it up, he turns back to see Steve KNOCKED to the ground, flat on his back. Kenny approaches, standing over Steve and breathing heavily.

KENNY

Say hello to Odin for me!

Suddenly, Kenny is HIT with the board across his back and he FALLS to the ground. Malcolm DROPS the board and grabs Kenny. Kenny KICKS Malcolm in the chest and knocks him backward.

Wendy frees Betty and runs toward the fight.

KENNY (CONT'D)
 (toward Wendy as he
 stands)
 I don't fight girls, sweetie!

WENDY
 Don't...call...me...sweetie!

Wendy punches toward Kenny, but he sidesteps and SWEEPS her leg, tripping her to the ground.

STEVE
 ANTHRAX!

Kenny stops and turns quickly. Steve is standing there and wiping blood from his lip.

STEVE (CONT'D)
 It's over.

KENNY
 Not yet.

Steve rushes Kenny and begins PUMMELING him with martial arts strikes. More and more, Kenny gives ground, until Steve lands a massive PUNCH to the jaw. Kenny staggers back as Steve notices the timer counting down.

STEVE
 What's the timer for, Anthrax?

KENNY
 (weakly)
 Surprise.

Steve frowns and PUNCHES Kenny again. Kenny goes DOWN in a heap as Malcolm and Wendy both rush to restrain him.

EXT. OLD FACTORY - DAY

Officer Lawton looks away from the monitors toward the old factory.

OFFICER LAWTON
 Let's get in there!

A few officers charge forward toward the front of the factory with weapons drawn.

INT. OLD FACTORY - DAY

Steve looks around the timer for anything it might be attached to, but sees nothing.

STEVE

I don't think this timer is connected to anything.

Malcolm and Wendy are both struggling to hold Kenny down on the ground.

MALCOLM

Open the back of it and take out the batteries!

Steve looks momentarily at Malcolm and then grabs the timer, flipping it over. Opening the back cover, he removes the AAA battery and the timer winks off.

Betty rushes forward to embrace Steve as he puts an arm around her.

STEVE

Are you okay?

BETTY

You're my hero!

The police show up through the doorway, weapons drawn. Immediately, they rush forward.

OFFICER LAWTON

Put that diseased maniac in cuffs!

Malcolm and Wendy stand and slowly back away as two officers take Kenny into custody.

OFFICER #1

(to Officer Lawton)

Should I take off his mask?

Officer Lawton quickly looks at the camera and shakes his head.

OFFICER LAWTON

Downtown.

Officer Lawton moves toward Steve and Betty.

OFFICER LAWTON (CONT'D)
Thank you, Viking. Again.

Steve smiles as their eyes meet.

CUT TO:

EXT. OLD FACTORY - DAY

The officers restraining Anthrax emerge from the old factory front entrance to a ROAR of cheers and whistles. The rest of the police at the line also cheer.

Next out are Malcolm and Wendy and the cheers become LOUDER.

MALCOLM
(to Wendy)
Now I see why Steve couldn't stop.

Wendy smiles and nods as they approach the police line.

Finally, Officer Lawton, Betty, and Steve emerge from the old factory and the crowd GOES NUTS.

At that moment, the crowd begins to part as a black car is pulling through them up to the line, BEEPING its horn.

OFFICER LAWTON
(squinting at the car)
What the hell?

As they get close to the line, Kenny's put into the squad car. Steve comes to halt beside Malcolm and Wendy. Officer Lawton escorts Betty to another squad car as he then recognizes the car.

OFFICER LAWTON (CONT'D)
Oh, crap. The mayor.

A MAN exits the vehicle and approaches the line, moving toward Officer Lawton.

MAN WITH GLASSES
Randy?

OFFICER LAWTON
Mr. Klein.

MAN WITH GLASSES
The mayor wants to see Viking.

OFFICER LAWTON
What? Now?

MAN WITH GLASSES

Right now.

MALCOLM

What about us? Can we go, too?

The Mayor's assistant looks at the other two and nods.

MAN WITH GLASSES

And Randy? Don't process Anthrax until the Mayor's head of security speaks with him.

OFFICER LAWTON

No problem.

The Mayor's assistant waves the trio toward the car and turns to leave.

OFFICER LAWTON (CONT'D)

Thank you, Viking!

BETTY

Thank you, superheroes!

The crowd begins to cheer again as the reporters and cameramen get ready for their onslaught. The police clear a path for the Mayor's assistant and the trio and they climb into the back of the car. The car backs out slowly.

INT. LIMOUSINE - DAY

As the car drives, the Mayor's assistant stares at the three across from him.

The three stare back.

INT. MAYOR'S OFFICE - DAY

The door opens to the office and the assistant leads the trio inside as the Mayor stands slowly.

MAYOR

(to Man With Glasses)

Thank you, Andrew. Leave us alone.
No calls.

The assistant obediently nods and closes the doors quietly behind him.

MAYOR (CONT'D)

Sit down, people.

They find seats and sit quietly. The Mayor leans his backside up against his desk and faces them.

MAYOR (CONT'D)

You have caused a lot of problems the last few weeks.

STEVE

Sir, I really didn't mean to -

The Mayor holds up a hand to stop him.

MAYOR

I really don't want to hear why you did what you did.

STEVE

I just -

MAYOR

Nor do I care to know who you are and where you live.

Steve wrinkles his brow as he slowly closes his mouth.

MAYOR (CONT'D)

You have single-handedly made my entire police force out to look like the Keystone Cops. Do you realize that? Do you understand that you've managed to turn the entire population of the city against me?

STEVE

I was trying to apologize.

MAYOR

Apologize. Apologize? For making me look like I'm incompetent!

MALCOLM

Hey! He did something good! Maybe you could recognize that, huh?

The Mayor calms himself and eyes them individually.

MAYOR

What are you? You all friends? Co-workers? Republicans?

WENDY

We're concerned citizens.

MAYOR

(chuckles)

Concerned citizens. You have broken the law! You have no idea how many people have called our police stations to take credit for being the Viking! Do you get just how much money this city has spent trying to find you?

STEVE

Well, now you've found me. And now you can arrest me.

MAYOR

Arrest you? You're kidding, right? In this town? The press'd rip me apart! I'm not arresting you! You're here so that I can sleep at night knowing that you...

(and then looking at the others)

...and you...will never show up on the streets again wearing those costumes! Do you understand what I'm saying?

The three continue to watch the Mayor quietly.

MAYOR (CONT'D)

I don't ever wanna hear that the Viking has stopped another robbery anywhere! Not the Bronx, not Staten Island...in fact, not anywhere in New York, ever again!

The Mayor rises to a standing position and walks back around to his seat, looking out the window.

MAYOR (CONT'D)

When you leave here, you will get into the car and the driver will take you wherever it is you go to dress up. Your secret lair...whatever you wanna call it. The Batcave.

Turning back to the three, he sits slowly.

MAYOR (CONT'D)

I want you to understand that I do appreciate what you think you were trying to do for the people of the city.

(MORE)

MAYOR (CONT'D)

But I also want you to disappear
 ...forever. If you ever show up
 again in these ridiculous costumes,
 you will be put away. And trust me
 when I say that a lot of robbers in
 jail right now would just love to
 meet the guy behind the Viking.
 D'ya get me?

ALL THREE

Yes, Mayor.

MAYOR

All right, now. Run along.

The three rise and go toward the door.

MAYOR (CONT'D)

Oh, and...by the way...
 (the three turn to face
 him)
 This conversation *never* took place.

ALL THREE

Yes, Mayor.

MALCOLM

Sorry.

The Mayor waves with annoyance as they open the door and
 leave the office.

MAYOR

(quietly to himself as he
 smiles and shakes head)
 Son of a bitch.

EXT. MAYOR'S OFFICE - DAY

The three are entering the limo again as the police line the
 sidewalk to stop the cheering crowds and throngs of reporters
 and camera operators. The door closes on the car.

INT. LIMOUSINE - DAY

The three are quiet as they sit next to each other. The
 window to the front seat ROLLS DOWN as the driver turns to
 face them.

DRIVER

Where to, heroes?

Steve and the others look at each other in puzzlement.

STEVE
Times Square?

The driver nods and turns as the window ROLLS back up again.
The three remain quiet for another moment.

WENDY
(examining her leg)
I think I bruised my shin.

MALCOLM
(touching his chest)
I think Anthrax cracked my collar
bone!

They all begin laughing.

STEVE
Did you see how many reporters were
there at the Mayor's office?

The voices fade as the three continue to happily and
excitedly speak to each other.

FADE

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Kenny is sitting in a bed with a hospital gown on as he talks
animatedly to Wendy who is sitting in a chair bedside. She
is holding a pad and making notes.

Legend over screen reads:

Kenny was deemed unable to stand trial due to his
psychological profile and was confined to a hospital for a
period of one year. Since it was his first offense and no
one was hurt, he never served any jail time.

Wendy was so impressed that Kenny's timer was just a prop and
that no explosive actually existed that she began visiting
him and asking him about his life story. The resulting book
became a New York Times Bestseller.

INT. MALCOLM'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Malcolm is sitting at a laptop typing away furiously, as he
pauses to take a gulp of his latte. In the background on the
wall hangs his Antidote costume.

Legend over screen reads:

Malcolm wrote a feature-length screenplay about Steve's exploits, incorporating Wendy's book about Kenny's role in the story. It was bought and produced, premiering in New York City for a sneak preview to rave reviews.

INT. TALK SHOW SET - NIGHT

Steve walks onto the set from behind the stage in full Viking costume to cheers as the HOST stands and CLAPS to receive him.

Legend over screen reads:

Steve, the out-of-work actor, managed to snag the lead role in Malcolm's film, getting the part because "he looked and sounded just like the REAL Viking!"

CUT TO:

EXT. NEW YORK CITY STREETS - DAY

CAMERA slowly pulls back as legend appears over screen:

Viking's exploits, paired with the smash hit movie, inspired many other people across the country to begin taking matters into their own hands. Superheroes began to spring up everywhere.

Legend fades as CAMERA continues to pull back showing a PERSON in a superhero costume scaling a fire escape, chasing another MAN with a bag full of stolen items. Pulling out farther, its wide shot shows another PERSON in a superhero costume standing on top of a roof overlooking the streets below her.

As CAMERA pans across the Hudson River, it comes to rest on a wall overlooking the New York City skyline. A legend appears:

But as everyone knows, superheroes cannot exist without the supervillain.

A SUPERVILLAIN'S BOOT steps down HEAVILY upon the wall, dominating the screen as the words fade.

THE END