

Mere Mortal

written by

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FADE IN:

INT. GOVERNMENT HEARING ROOM - DAY

A stark, utilitarian room. Long oak table. FLUORESCENT LIGHTS hum overhead.

SOUND of a gavel slamming

DIRECTOR WENDY CHEN (50s, sharp, severe, a no-nonsense government official) stands before a panel of grim-faced SENATORS and MILITARY BRASS. Charts and graphs depict escalating destruction, casualties, and financial losses.

At the end of the table sits THE MIGHTY (40s, powerful physique, but his custom-tailored suit seems to weigh heavy on him). He's still dressed in his public persona, though his posture is slumped, eyes distant. He projects a deep, weary apathy.

DIRECTOR CHEN

...and while The Mighty's contributions to global security have been immeasurable for decades, recent events paint a starkly different picture. The catastrophic events of two weeks ago, colloquially dubbed 'Zero Day,' represent not just a failure of response, but a disturbing pattern of escalating recklessness and... detachment.

A large monitor behind her cycles through GRAPHIC IMAGES: collapsing skyscrapers, a street choked with dust and debris, first responders covered in ash.

The Mighty watches, impassive.

SENATOR DAVIS

We understand the emotional toll, Director. The loss of his wife...

DIRECTOR CHEN

While tragic, Senator, personal grief cannot be allowed to jeopardize national and global safety.

(MORE)

DIRECTOR CHEN (CONT'D)
 His last three major interventions
 have resulted in higher collateral
 damage than ever before, his
 engagement reports are concerningly
 brief, and his psychological
 evaluations...

She pauses, choosing her words carefully.

DIRECTOR CHEN (CONT'D)
 ...suggest a profound loss of
 empathy. A disassociation from
 human suffering. We are no longer
 dealing with a protector, but an
 unpredictable, god-like force.

She gestures to a medical chart.

DIRECTOR CHEN (CONT'D)
 Our scientific division has
 developed a failsafe. A containment
 protocol.

The Mighty doesn't react. He looks utterly spent.

<DIRECTOR CHEN
 The panel's recommendation is
 unanimous. Effective immediately,
 The Mighty will be stripped of all
 known powers. His secret identity
 will be revealed. And his continued
 freedom, indeed his very life, will
 depend on his ability to prove,
 unequivocally, that he can once
 again become the human being the
 world needs him to be.

A technician approaches The Mighty, carrying a sleek, silver
 COLLAR. It looks less like jewelry, more like a medical
 device.

The Mighty's eyes finally focus, though without fear. A
 flicker of something - recognition? Resignation?

THE MIGHTY
 So this is it, then? The mighty
 fallen.

His voice is deep, resonant, but laced with a chilling
 emptiness.

DIRECTOR CHEN
 This is a chance, Martin. A chance
 for redemption.
 (MORE)

DIRECTOR CHEN (CONT'D)
The name hangs in the air. MARTIN.
It sounds alien on her tongue.

The technician, with clinical precision, attaches the collar around The Mighty's neck. It hums faintly. The Mighty tenses, his knuckles white, but he doesn't resist.

A soft CLUNK. The collar locks into place.

The fluorescent lights seem to flicker. The Mighty's face contorts, a silent gasp. His body shudders violently, as if a profound electric current has just passed through him. He clutches the table, knuckles bone white. He sweats profusely. His breathing is ragged.

The Senators watch, a mix of fear and grim satisfaction on their faces.

EXT. CITY SKYLINE - DAY (FLASHBACK/MONTAGE)

A montage, fast-paced and visceral, plays out the glory and the horror.

MOMENTS AGO: The Mighty, resplendent, flies through the blue sky. He catches a plummeting jetliner, its wing ablaze. He gently sets it down on an impossibly small landing strip. Cheers erupt from the crowd below. He smiles, a beacon of hope.

THEN:INT. HIGH-RISE OFFICE - DAY

(FLASHBACK) MARTIN MACREADY (30s, vibrant, genuinely happy), dressed in civilian clothes, laughs, embracing his beautiful, pregnant wife, SARAH (30s). They share a tender kiss. He's full of life.

EXT. WAREHOUSE DISTRICT - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Martin, as The Mighty, confronts WHITECHAPEL (O.S. - unseen, but his menacing LAUGH ECHOES). A desperate struggle. Explosions. A CRUSHING SOUND. Martin screams Sarah's name. His face contorts in raw grief.

BACK TO PRESENT (MONTAGE CONTINUES):

EXT. CITY STREET - MORNING (PRESENT)

A beautiful, clear September morning. People walk to work, kids laugh. The city is vibrant.

Suddenly, a WHISTLE CUTS THE AIR. A large COMMERCIAL JETliner, flying impossibly low, slams into the side of a gleaming skyscraper. A monstrous EXPLOSION ROCKS THE CITY. Debris rains down.

Panic erupts. Screams.

Another plane hits. Then another.

The Mighty appears, flying at incredible speed. He's there, but something is wrong. He moves through the chaos with a detached efficiency that borders on indifference. He deflects a falling piece of rubble from hitting a car, but doesn't bother to save the screaming family trapped inside a burning bus just meters away.

He tries to hold up a collapsing building, his face blank. But his power isn't enough. Or perhaps, his will isn't. The building CRUMBLES around him, burying untold lives.

He stands amidst the smoke, dust, and SCREAMS. A small figure, a CHILD, lies motionless nearby, half-buried in rubble. The Mighty glances at him, then looks away, his jaw set. A faint tremor runs through his hands. He just... stands there.

The image holds for a beat, a haunting testament to his failure.

INT. PRESS CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

A sea of MICROPHONES and flashing CAMERA LIGHTS. Reporters jostle for position. The air crackles with anticipation.

Director Chen stands at the podium, a large screen behind her displaying the UN logo.

DIRECTOR CHEN

For decades, he has been known to the world as 'The Mighty.' A symbol. A legend.

She pauses for dramatic effect. The cameras flash wildly.

DIRECTOR CHEN (CONT'D)

Today, that era ends. Effective immediately, by decree of the United Nations Security Council, and with the full cooperation of the United States government, The Mighty's identity will be known.

She presses a button. The screen behind her displays a high-resolution photo of THE MIGHTY. Then, the image morphs, transforming the powerful superhero into a normal-looking man. Underneath, in bold letters: MARTIN MACREADY.

The room erupts. SHOUTS and questions.

REPORTER 1

Martin MacReady?! Who is that?!

REPORTER 2

Is he still super?!

REPORTER 3

Does he still have his powers?!

Director Chen raises a hand, silencing them.

DIRECTOR CHEN

Mr. MacReady, a civilian, is now under the full jurisdiction of the U.S. government. His powers have been contained.

She steps aside. Martin, looking disheveled, paler than before, steps up to the podium. The silver collar gleams around his neck. He looks like a man who hasn't slept in days. The cameras flash, blinding him. He flinches.

He tries to speak, but his voice is hoarse. He clears his throat.

MARTIN

I...

He trails off, unable to find the words. He looks out at the sea of faces, no longer admiring, but ravenous, judgmental. His eyes fall on a small, grainy photo clutched by one of the reporters - a picture of Sarah. His jaw clenches.

He turns and walks away from the podium, leaving Director Chen to field the barrage of questions.

INT. SMALL APARTMENT - NIGHT

The apartment is small, sparsely furnished, functional. A far cry from any previous lair or penthouse The Mighty might have inhabited.

MARTIN (now just Martin MacReady) sits on a worn sofa, staring at a blank TV. He looks rough.

His skin is clammy, a fine tremor runs through his hands. He keeps rubbing his temples, as if trying to clear a persistent headache. The collar around his neck is a stark, silver reminder.

A soft KNOCK at the door.

Martin doesn't move. The knock repeats, firmer this time.

KEVIN (O.S.)
Mr. MacReady? It's Kevin. Kevin,
from the FBI?

Martin sighs, a long, weary exhalation. He drags himself up, moves to the door, and opens it a crack.

KEVIN (20s, neatly dressed, a bit awkward, wearing glasses) stands outside. His eyes, behind the lenses, are wide with a mixture of awe and nervousness. He clutches a briefcase like a lifeline.

KEVIN (CONT'D)
Sir. Mr. MacReady. Wow. I mean,
it's an honor. To...be here.

Kevin extends a hand. Martin stares at it, not taking it.

MARTIN
You're my handler.

It's not a question.

KEVIN
Yes, sir! Kevin Miller. My team's
objective is to, uh, facilitate
your reintegration. Provide
support. Guide you towards...
becoming a good human being again.
Those were Director Chen's exact
words, sir.

Martin steps aside, letting Kevin in. Kevin's eyes dart around the small apartment, a slight grimace on his face. This is clearly not what he imagined.

KEVIN (CONT'D)
So, uh, first order of business, we
need to establish a daily routine.
And, uh, you'll need to schedule
your first therapy session. Dr.
Albright is highly recommended.
Specializes in... loss and
reintegration.

Martin walks to the kitchen, opens the fridge. It's nearly empty. He pulls out a bottle of water.

MARTIN

Loss. Right. Just missing the invulnerability and flight. Small things.

He takes a long drink, his hand trembling slightly.

KEVIN

Sir, with all due respect, it's more than that. The government analysis suggests you're going through a profound physiological and psychological withdrawal. Your body's cells, your very brain chemistry, were accustomed to... processing immense energies. Losing that is like... going cold turkey from a very powerful, lifelong addiction.

Martin snorts, a humorless sound.

MARTIN

Addiction. Is that what you call it?

He closes his eyes for a moment, a wave of nausea washing over him. He grips the counter.

KEVIN

Sir? Are you alright? You look a little... green.

MARTIN

Peachy. Never better. Just getting used to being... mortal.

He opens his eyes, a haunted, distant look in them.

MARTIN (CONT'D)

So, Agent Miller, what exactly does a "good human being" do these days? Beyond staring at a blank wall and trying not to throw up.

Kevin clears his throat, opening his briefcase. He pulls out a thick binder.

KEVIN

Well, sir, we have a comprehensive plan. Starting with community engagement...

He flips to a page. Martin just stares at the empty wall, the hum of the fluorescent lights a dull buzz in his ears, a tangible reminder of his new, powerless existence.

INT. SMALL APARTMENT - DAY

Days later. The apartment is slightly more lived-in, but still stark. Martin sits on the floor, doing push-ups. He's grunting, sweating. His muscles, once effortlessly powerful, strain with every rep. He finishes, chest heaving, collapsing onto the carpet.

He stares at the ceiling, a vein throbbing in his temple. The silver collar gleams.

SOUND of a faint HUM

The apartment building is old. Martin can hear his NEIGHBORS through the thin walls. A baby crying. A TV blaring. A dog barking. Mundane sounds that he, as The Mighty, would have filtered out or simply been above. Now, they're oppressive.

His phone, a cheap burner model provided by the FBI, RINGS. He ignores it. It rings again. He glances at the caller ID: KEVIN.

He lets it go to voicemail.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

A bustling, generic coffee shop. Martin, wearing a plain hoodie and jeans, sits by the window, nursing a black coffee. He looks tired, unshaven.

He tries to blend in, but people STARE. Whisper. A group of TEENAGERS point their phones at him, giggling.

TEENAGER 1

Is that him? The Mighty?

<TEENAGER 2

Dude, he looks like crap.

Martin's jaw tightens. He grips his coffee cup so hard his knuckles whiten. He wants to lash out, but he can't. He just takes a slow sip, forcing himself to breathe.

A NEWS REPORT plays silently on a wall-mounted TV. A reporter stands in front of the ravaged skyline, talking about the ongoing recovery efforts from "Zero Day." The reporter's tone is somber, critical of the "failed hero."

Martin watches the images, the dust, the rubble. His eyes are haunted. He remembers standing there, doing nothing. The child in the debris.

He sees his reflection in the window, a gaunt, angry stranger staring back.

EXT. ALLEYWAY - NIGHT

Rain slicks the grimy alley. Dumpsters overflow.

Martin walks alone, hunched against the elements. He's trying to get back to his apartment, taking the backstreets, avoiding the main thoroughfares.

A SHADOW DETACHES from the darkness ahead. Then another. And another.

Three figures emerge. Not supervillains, but hulking THUGS. Scars. Tattoos. They look familiar. Former enforcers from small-time crime lords he put away.

<THUG 1

Well, well, look what the cat dragged in. Marty MacReady.

THUG 2

Thought you was God, didn't ya, big man?

Martin stops, hands clenched in his pockets. He scans the alley, calculating escape routes. There are none.

THUG 3

My cousin still got a titanium plate in his skull thanks to you. Said you hit like a freight train. Let's see how you hit now.

Thug 1 lunges first, a wild, club-like punch aimed at Martin's head. Martin dodges, but it's clumsy. He's slow. He swings a punch of his own, connecting with Thug 1's jaw, but it's a weak, human blow. Thug 1 barely stumbles.

THUG 1

Pathetic.

Thug 2 kicks him hard in the stomach. Martin doubles over, gasping. The collar digs into his neck. Pain radiates through him.

They descend on him, a brutal, uncoordinated but effective beatdown. Punches, kicks. He falls to the ground, trying to cover his head. Memories flash: the roar of a crowd, a soaring flight, effortless power. Now, just pathetic weakness.

He coughs, tasting blood. He hears the LAUGHTER of the thugs. This is his new reality.

THUG 1 (CONT'D)
Just like a normal man, ain't ya?
Fragile.

SOUND of a bottle SMASHING!

The thugs pause. They look up.

LUCY (20s, sharp, quick-witted, Asian, dressed in street clothes that are a mix of practical and subtly stylish) stands on top of a dumpster. She holds a broken bottle like a shiv. Her eyes gleam with dangerous intelligence.

LUCY
Leave him alone, creeps. Or you're gonna regret it.

Thug 1 scoffs.

THUG 1
Get lost, little girl. This ain't your business.

LUCY
Oh, but it is. This one owes me a drink. And nobody messes with my tab.

She points the broken bottle at Thug 3, who is closest to her.

LUCY (CONT'D)
Besides, I know all about your little operation on the docks, Vinnie. And how you've been skimming from Big Tony. He likes that even less than I like you touching my friends.

Thug 3 (VINNIE) freezes. His eyes widen.

VINNIE

You don't know nothin', bitch.

LUCY

Oh, I know. I also know where your cousin keeps his stash of...

"collectables." And I've got a really good memory for numbers.

She gives a cold, knowing smile. The thugs exchange nervous glances. Big Tony is not someone to cross.

Thug 1 growls, frustrated.

THUG 1

This ain't over, MacReady!

The three thugs back away, reluctantly. They disappear into the rain-swept darkness.

Lucy jumps down from the dumpster, landing lightly. She looks at Martin, who is slowly, painfully pushing himself up, leaning against a wall. His face is bruised, a cut on his lip.

LUCY

You look like hell. Still saving the world? Or just getting your ass kicked by it now?

Martin looks at her, recognition dawning.

MARTIN

Lucy?

LUCY

The one and only. Looks like the mighty have fallen. Hard.

She offers him a hand. He hesitates, then takes it. Her grip is surprisingly strong as she helps pull him up.

MARTIN

Why?

LUCY

Why? Because you saved my worthless ass from that pimp, years ago. Remember?

(MORE)

LUCY (CONT'D)

Before you decided you were too busy to help anyone unless they were a skyscraper. This makes us even. Now, let's get you somewhere less... stabby.

She glances around the alley. Martin, still reeling, can only nod. He follows her, a strange mix of humiliation and relief washing over him. The cold reality of his new vulnerability has just hit him harder than any punch.

INT. MARTIN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Lucy is dabbing antiseptic on a cut above Martin's eye. He winces. The apartment is small, but clean.

LUCY

You really let yourself go. I thought you were supposed to be the guy who could punch through a tank.

MARTIN

That was then. This is now.

He looks at his bruised knuckles, remembering the pathetic punch he threw.

LUCY

Yeah, I saw. Looked more like a kitten swatting. So, what, the government just pulled your plug? Made you a civilian?

MARTIN

More or less. Says I gotta prove I can be 'a good human being' again. Whatever that means.

LUCY

Sounds like a load of crap. They used you. And now they're trying to figure out how to dump you without a PR nightmare.

She finishes, capping the antiseptic.

LUCY (CONT'D)

You're not doing so hot, are you? Physically. I heard whispers. The collar... it's like a leash, huh?

Martin touches the collar, a flicker of something raw in his eyes.

MARTIN

It's worse than a leash. It's...
poison. Every cell in my body feels
like it's screaming. Like it's
starving. I can't eat, I can't
sleep... I feel like I'm coming
apart.

He takes a deep, shuddering breath. This is the closest he's
come to vulnerability with anyone.

LUCY

Withdrawal. That's what it sounds
like. I've seen it. Not from
superpowers, but from other things.
It's hell.

She looks at him, a surprising amount of empathy in her gaze.

LUCY (CONT'D)

You wanna talk about it? Or just
sit here and feel sorry for
yourself? Because I'm a
professional listener. Got plenty
of practice.

Martin looks at her, a strange woman from his past, now
helping him in his lowest moment. He manages a faint, tired
smile.

MARTIN

I think I just did.

She nods.

LUCY

Okay. So, what's next for the great
Martin MacReady? Soup kitchen?
Volunteer work? Picking up trash on
the highway?

MARTIN

My... handler... wants me to try
therapy. And community engagement.
He has a whole binder.

LUCY

A binder, huh? Sounds thrilling.
Look, I don't know much about being
a 'good human being' according to
the Feds, but I know how to
survive. And you don't look like
you're doing a great job of it
right now.

She stands.

LUCY (CONT'D)

Here's my number. If you need anything. A ride, someone to talk to, someone to kick some ass for you... though it looks like you're on your own there now.

She places a small, crumpled piece of paper on his coffee table.

LUCY (CONT'D)

Don't be a stranger, Mighty. Or, whatever you are now.

She gives him a small, wry smile and heads for the door. Martin watches her go, the paper with her number a stark, hopeful contrast against the bland apartment.

He finally reaches for his phone, scrolling through his missed calls. He finds Kevin's number. He hesitates, then calls.

MARTIN

(Into phone, voice strained)
Kevin. It's Martin. About that therapy session...

He hangs up. He looks at Lucy's number, then at the empty wall. He has hit rock bottom, but perhaps, a tiny crack of light has just appeared.

INT. DR. ALBRIGHT'S OFFICE - DAY

A tastefully decorated office. DR. ELEANOR ALBRIGHT (50s, kind eyes, sharp intellect) sits opposite Martin, who is slumped in an armchair. He fidgets with the silver collar.

DR. ALBRIGHT

...and you mentioned feeling like you're "coming apart." Can you elaborate on that, Martin?

MARTIN

It's... physical. Like my bones are aching. My skin feels too tight. And my head... it's like a constant hum, a ringing. Like a feedback loop in my brain.

DR. ALBRIGHT
And emotionally?

Martin shrugs. He stares out the window.

MARTIN
Empty. Mostly. There's the guilt, I
suppose. The... failure.

DR. ALBRIGHT
You're referring to Zero Day?

Martin tenses. He nods, slowly.

MARTIN
Thousands. Gone. And I just stood
there. Couldn't... wouldn't...

He trails off. He can't even articulate his own apathy.

DR. ALBRIGHT
You lost your wife, Sarah, some
years before Zero Day. To a
criminal named Whitechapel. How did
that impact your view of...
protecting the city?

Martin's eyes harden.

MARTIN
It changed everything. The world
became... messier. Less worth saving,
sometimes. The lines blurred. Good
and evil... they seemed like quaint
notions.

DR. ALBRIGHT
So your loss led to a detachment
from human suffering?

MARTIN
Maybe. Or maybe I just saw the true
nature of things. That all the
power in the world can't stop the
inevitable. Or the truly evil.

He looks directly at her, a flicker of his old arrogance, but
it's brittle.

DR. ALBRIGHT
That's a very lonely perspective,
Martin.

(MORE)

DR. ALBRIGHT (CONT'D)
And one that puts the weight of the
entire world on your shoulders.
You're no longer The Mighty. You're
Martin. What can Martin do?

Martin looks away, silent. The question hangs in the air,
heavy and unanswered.

EXT. COMMUNITY CENTER - BASKETBALL COURT - DAY

Sunlight. The sounds of bouncing BASKETBALLS and KIDS
LAUGHING. This is a local youth center.

Martin, dressed in plain clothes, looks utterly out of place.
Kevin, ever-earnest, stands beside him, holding a clipboard.

KEVIN
Okay, so for your initial community
engagement, Director Chen wants you
to start with the "Youth and
Accessibility" program. It's about
helping kids with

disabilities participate in sports and activities. Builds
empathy.

Martin watches a group of kids, some in wheelchairs, playing
a modified game of basketball. Their laughter feels alien to
him.

MARTIN
You want me to... babysit?

KEVIN
It's not babysitting, sir. It's
connecting. Building bridges.
You'll be assisting the lead coach.
Starting simple, just observing,
then helping with drills.

Martin sighs, pinching the bridge of his nose. He still
suffers from the lingering effects of withdrawal - a dull
ache, a slight tremor in his hands.

KEVIN (CONT'D)
Oh, and one other thing. Jaxon
Thorne is in this group. He was
injured during Zero Day. Left...
paralyzed. We thought it might
be... cathartic for both of you.

Martin freezes. His eyes snap to the court.

He sees him. JAXON (10s, bright, but with a hard edge to his eyes) is in a customized wheelchair, expertly maneuvering it, trying to block a shot from another kid. He's fierce, determined.

Martin's breath catches. He remembers the child in the rubble. He feels a fresh wave of sick guilt.

MARTIN

Jaxon...

KEVIN

Yeah. He's a good kid. Resilient.
But, understandably, a little...
angry.

Martin can't take his eyes off Jaxon. He sees the defiance, the struggle. He feels a knot of dread in his stomach. This is going to be harder than he thought.

INT. COMMUNITY CENTER - GYM - LATER DAY

Martin sits on a bench, watching the basketball practice. He's supposed to be "assisting," but he mostly just observes, a silent, grim presence.

Jaxon is struggling with a particular drill. He tries to make a shot, but his arms are tired, the ball clunks off the rim. Frustration flashes across his face.

The lead coach, a patient WOMAN, offers encouragement.

COACH

Almost, Jaxon! Keep that elbow up!
You got it!

Jaxon glowers at the ball. He looks over at Martin, who quickly looks away, as if caught doing something wrong.

A few minutes later, Jaxon's wheelchair gets snagged on a loose floor mat. He tries to free it, grunting, clearly embarrassed. Other kids glance over.

Martin hesitates for a long moment. He's not supposed to just watch. He's supposed to help. He remembers saving entire cities, but helping a kid with a stuck wheelchair feels like an insurmountable task for his current, broken self.

He slowly gets up. He walks over to Jaxon.

MARTIN

Need a hand?

Jaxon looks up, eyes narrowed. His expression is wary, hostile even. He recognizes Martin from the news.

JAXON

I'm fine. I don't need help from...
you.

The "you" is spat out like an accusation. Martin flinches, but covers it quickly.

MARTIN

Right. Just... looked like it.

He crouches down, carefully, and frees the wheel from the mat. He avoids touching Jaxon.

JAXON

You're The Mighty. Aren't you?

MARTIN

I'm Martin.

JAXON

My dad says you were supposed to
save everyone.

Martin's face is a mask. He stands up, avoiding Jaxon's gaze.

MARTIN

I... I tried.

JAXON

You didn't try hard enough. My legs
don't work because you didn't try
hard enough.

The words are like a physical blow. Martin absorbs them, shoulders slumping. He has no defense, no witty retort. He can only stare at Jaxon, then at the floor.

MARTIN

I'm sorry.

Jaxon just stares at him, unconvinced, then turns his wheelchair and pushes himself back towards the court, leaving Martin standing alone, the weight of his guilt heavier than any skyscraper.

INT. MARTIN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The small apartment is dark, save for the glow of a single lamp.

Martin sits at a tiny, cheap desk. He's trying to fill out forms for his social work program application. He squints at the tiny print. He's exhausted.

He pulls open a drawer to find a pen. Inside, tucked beneath some old papers, is a single, neatly folded sheet of white paper. It wasn't there before.

He picks it up. It's heavy, expensive paper.

He unfolds it. Printed in elegant, almost mathematical font:

"THE FALL BEGINS WITH A SINGLE, MISPLACED BLOCK. YOURS, MARTIN, WAS QUITE MONUMENTAL."

Below the text, a small, stylized image of a DOMINO falling.

Martin stares at it, a cold dread creeping through him. This isn't from the government. It's too personal. Too specific.

He looks around the apartment. No sign of forced entry. It's too neat.

He walks to the window, pulls back the thin curtain. The street below is quiet. Too quiet.

He glances at the collar, then back at the note. He's powerless. And now, someone knows. Someone is watching him.

INT. MARTIN'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Sunlight filters weakly through the blinds, illuminating dust motes dancing in the air.

Martin sits at his small desk, the white paper with the falling domino design clutched in his hand. He traces the elegant font with a bruised finger. "The fall begins with a single, misplaced block. Yours, Martin, was quite monumental."

He scans the room again, paranoia creeping in. Nothing seems out of place, yet the note is undeniably real. How did it get here? No forced entry. Someone was inside. Someone knew. He glances at the collar around his neck. It feels heavier than usual.

He pulls out his burner phone and scrolls to Kevin's number. He hesitates, then calls.

MARTIN

Into phone, voice low)
Kevin, about those, uh, security protocols for the apartment. Are they... robust?

KEVIN (O.S.)

(Muffled, sounds busy)
Mr. MacReady, good morning! Yes, sir, top-tier civilian-grade security. Motion sensors, reinforced locks, discreet perimeter monitoring by a local contractor. Why, is something amiss?

Martin rubs his temples. He can't tell Kevin about the note yet. Not without sounding crazy. They'd think he was cracking.

MARTIN

No. No, just... adjusting. To not having super-senses. Everything feels... exposed.

KEVIN (O.S.)

Understood, sir. It's a process. Director Chen reminds us it's about rebuilding trust, on both sides. Speaking of which, your intake appointment for the Social Work program is this afternoon. And you're scheduled to assist with the community center's after-school program again today.

MARTIN

Right. Community.

He hangs up. He stares at the note again, a cold dread solidifying in his gut. This isn't just about the government controlling him. This is personal.

INT. COMMUNITY CENTER - ARTS & CRAFTS ROOM - DAY

A brightly lit room. Crayons, glitter, and construction paper are scattered everywhere. Martin, looking incredibly uncomfortable, sits at a child-sized table. He's attempting to help a little girl, CHLOE (6), glue sequins onto a drawing of a butterfly. He manages to get more glue on his fingers than on the paper.

CHLOE

You're not very good at this, Mr.
Martin.

MARTIN

I'm out of practice, Chloe.

Jaxon sits at another table across the room, meticulously drawing something with colored pencils. He occasionally glances over at Martin, a curious but still guarded expression on his face.

The lead coach, a warm, patient woman named CARLA, walks by.

CARLA

Doing great, Martin! You're really
connecting with them.

Martin forces a smile. He feels like a fraud. He's not connecting. He's just... existing.

He glances at Jaxon again. He still feels the burning shame of Jaxon's words. He notices Jaxon's drawing - it's a detailed sketch of the city skyline, but one of the skyscrapers has a jagged, dark crack running through it, smoke billowing.

Martin's eyes fall to Jaxon's legs, motionless in the chair. He swallows hard.

EXT. PARK - LATE AFTERNOON

Martin is on a designated route, picking up litter with a grabber stick and a plastic bag. It's mundane, humiliating work for a man who once cleaned up entire battle zones with a single swoop.

He sees a HOMELESS MAN shivering on a bench, wrapped in a thin blanket. Martin hesitates. His old self would've been halfway across the city dealing with a mugging. Now, this small act of human decency feels immense.

He approaches the man cautiously.

MARTIN

Sir? Are you... are you alright?

The Homeless Man looks up, startled. His eyes are cloudy.

HOMELESS MAN

Just cold. And hungry.

Martin reaches into his pocket. He has a few dollars. He pulls out a granola bar Kevin had given him earlier.

MARTIN

Here. It's not much. But...

He offers the bar and the money. The Homeless Man stares at them, then at Martin's face. He takes them slowly.

HOMELESS MAN

Thank you. God bless you, son.

Martin nods, a strange feeling in his chest. It's not the surge of power he once knew, but something quiet. Meaningful.

He continues his route. As he reaches the edge of the park, he notices something odd. A single, small, black DOMINO piece lying on the path, face-up. It wasn't there when he started.

He stops. His heart pounds. He looks around. No one. The park is nearly empty now.

He kneels, picking up the small, polished piece. It feels cold. A shiver runs down his spine. This is no coincidence.

INT. CHEAP DINER - NIGHT

The diner is greasy, neon-lit. Martin sits in a booth, sipping lukewarm coffee. He stares at the domino piece on the table.

Lucy slides into the booth opposite him. She's dressed sharply, but her eyes are tired.

LUCY

Rough day, Mighty? You look like you just saw a ghost.

Martin pushes the domino piece across the table to her.

MARTIN

This. It was left for me. Not by the FBI.

Lucy picks it up, turns it over in her fingers. She's instantly serious.

LUCY

This is a message. Not a random piece of trash. Someone's messing with you. Someone who knows.

MARTIN

I got a note in my apartment, too.
Talking about my "fall." And a
domino.

He recounts the words of the note. Lucy listens, her
expression grim.

LUCY

That's specific. And creepy. Who'd
have a grudge against... Martin
MacReady? Not The Mighty, but you?
Your old enemies would just want to
punch you. This feels... smarter.
Colder.

MARTIN

don't know. My life as Martin
MacReady barely exists. As The
Mighty, I had plenty of enemies.
But this... this is different. It
feels like they're playing a game.

LUCY

A game where you're the only one
who doesn't know the rules. What
are you going to do? Tell Agent
Naive?

MARTIN

He'd just run it up the chain.
They'd probably just tighten the
leash. Or put me in a padded room.

LUCY

So you're going to find out who it
is yourself. Powerless.

She raises an eyebrow, a challenge in her eyes. Martin looks
at the domino piece. A flicker of resolve.

MARTIN

Someone got into my apartment.
Someone left this. Someone wants me
to know they're there. I need to
find out why.

Lucy sips her own coffee, watching him.

LUCY

Okay. So, what do you know?
Anything weird? Any patterns?
Martin shakes his head.

MARTIN

Not yet. Just the notes. And the feeling.

LUCY

A feeling. The Mighty relying on a feeling. This is new.

She pulls out a small notepad and pen.

LUCY (CONT'D)

Alright. Let's brainstorm. Who's got a beef with you, specifically, but also enough brains to play these mind games? And how do they know where you live? And how do they know about the collar?

Martin looks at her, a glimmer of genuine appreciation. He's not alone in this.

MARTIN

I don't know. But I have to find out.

INT. CHEAP BAR - NIGHT

The air is thick with the smell of stale beer and desperation. MARTIN sits with LUCY in a secluded booth. Lucy's laptop is open between them, displaying a convoluted web of connections, old news articles, and grainy photos. She's navigating a digital underworld.

LUCY

Okay, so 'The Mighty' had a lot of enemies. Mob bosses, rogue scientists, alien warlords... but a super-smart, vengeful profiler? That narrows it down. Most of your villains liked to punch things, not play mind games.

MARTIN

Whitechapel. He was different. Calculating. But he's long gone.

LUCY

Unless he had an apprentice. Or a fan. Someone with a similar twisted brain.

(MORE)

LUCY (CONT'D)

What about anyone you put away who felt like it was personal? Not just business.

Martin closes his eyes, trying to access a lifetime of enemies. It's a blur of faces, names, powers. He feels the phantom ache of his former abilities, the urge to just see the answer.

MARTIN

There was a cult leader. Thought I was a false god. A disgruntled inventor whose tech I confiscated. They all hated me, sure, but... this feels colder. More precise.

Lucy pulls up an old article. A picture of a bombed-out research facility.

LUCY

This one. Professor Aris Thorne. Brilliant theoretical physicist. His lab was destroyed during that 'Singularity Cascade' event five years back. You stopped him from opening a black hole, right? He lost everything. Reputation, funding, even his family was affected, the article says. He disappeared after his release.

Martin stares at the photo of PROFESSOR THORN (50s, intense, intellectual). He remembers the man. Obsessive. Dangerous.

MARTIN

Thorne. He swore he'd make me understand cosmic injustice. But he was physically frail. Not capable of... this kind of planning.

LUCY

People can surprise you when they're pushed to the edge. And brains don't need muscles.

She circles his name on the screen.

LUCY (CONT'D)

I'll do some digging on Thorne. See where he vanished to. It's a long shot, but it fits the 'smart, personal' criteria.

Martin nods, a sliver of hope, mixed with deeper dread.

INT. COMMUNITY CENTER - CLASSROOM - DAY

Martin is leading a small group of kids through a basic math exercise. He's surprisingly patient, taking his time to explain concepts. He even manages a small, genuine smile when a child grasps a new idea.

Jaxon sits in the back, observing Martin with a critical eye. He's working on a complex puzzle. One of the kids, a shy girl, struggles with a multiplication problem. Martin leans over, gently guiding her.

MARTIN

Think of it like building blocks.
Each number is a stack. You're just
making more stacks of the same
size.

He illustrates with his hands. The girl's eyes light up. She solves it.

Jaxon, watching, a faint, almost imperceptible curiosity on his face.

Later, during a break, Martin notices Jaxon struggling with his puzzle. A particularly tricky section. He walks over.

MARTIN (CONT'D)

That's a tough one. The trick is to
find the central point of leverage,
then work outwards.

Jaxon looks up, surprised.

JAXON

You know puzzles?

MARTIN

Used to unwind with them. Before...

He catches himself. He gestures.

MARTIN (CONT'D)

Sometimes, when things seem too
big, you just need to break them
down into smaller pieces. Find the
first piece that fits.

He points to a specific edge of the puzzle. Jaxon eyes him, then looks at the puzzle piece. He tries it. It clicks into place.

A tiny, almost invisible smile touches Jaxon's lips. He looks up at Martin again, not with hostility, but with a flicker of genuine interest.

INT. MARTIN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Martin is immersed in his social work textbooks, highlighting passages, making notes. He's truly trying to reinvent himself.

SOUND of a phone VIBRATING on the table.

It's an unknown number. He answers cautiously.

MARTIN

Hello?

The line is silent for a moment. Then, a distorted, synthesized VOICE, cold and clear:

DISTORTED VOICE (O.S.)

The architect of ruin. You thought you could simply walk away from the debris you created, Martin?

Martin's blood runs cold. The Domino.

MARTIN

Who is this? What do you want?

DISTORTED VOICE (O.S.)

I want you to feel. To understand. To know what it is to be utterly, hopelessly powerless. Your pathetic attempts at rehabilitation amuse me. But the game must progress.

MARTIN

What are you talking about?

DISTORTED VOICE (O.S.)

Look to your shepherd, Martin. The lamb will be led astray.

A click. The line goes dead.

Martin stares at the phone, his heart hammering. "Your shepherd." Kevin.

He tries to call Kevin, but it goes straight to voicemail. He tries again. Nothing.

INT. DIRECTOR CHEN'S OFFICE - DAY

Director Chen sits at her large, imposing desk. KEVIN stands opposite her, looking utterly devastated, his usually neat hair disheveled.

DIRECTOR CHEN

Agent Miller, I'm afraid this is regrettable. But the evidence is inconclusive. Unsanctioned communications. Unauthorized access to classified files. Misallocation of funds.

KEVIN

Director, I swear, I don't know anything about this! I followed every protocol! My systems must have been...

DIRECTOR CHEN

(Cutting him off, cold) >
...compromised? Agent, this is highly sophisticated. It implicates you directly. We have no choice but to suspend your clearance indefinitely. Pending a full internal investigation.

Kevin looks like he's been punched. His dreams, his career, dissolving before his eyes.

KEVIN

But... Mr. MacReady... who will-

DIRECTOR CHEN

We will assign a new handler. Effective immediately. You are to surrender your credentials and leave the premises.

Kevin nods numbly, his face pale. He turns and walks out, defeated.

INT. MARTIN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Martin opens the door. Kevin stands there, looking utterly broken. His jacket is unbuttoned, his tie loose. He's holding a small box of personal items.

KEVIN

Martin... they suspended me. Indefinitely.

Martin's stomach drops. He knew it.

MARTIN

What happened?

KEVIN

They're saying I... I accessed files, diverted funds. It's all lies! I never did any of it. My system was probably hacked. But Director Chen... she didn't even listen.

Kevin looks utterly lost, tears welling in his eyes.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

I was just trying to help you. To show them you could change. This was my shot...

Martin, for the first time in a long time, feels a surge of genuine fury, not for himself, but for someone else. Kevin, his earnest, naive handler, now a casualty in a game Martin didn't even know he was playing until it was too late.

He puts a hand on Kevin's shoulder, a gesture of comfort he hadn't thought himself capable of.

MARTIN

This wasn't your fault, Kevin. This was mine. It was a message. To me.

Kevin looks up, confused. Martin's eyes are burning with a new, dangerous resolve. The Domino just made it personal.

INT. MARTIN'S APARTMENT - DAY

The small apartment feels colder than usual. Martin paces, running a hand over his face. Kevin's devastated expression is burned into his mind. The cold voice of The Domino echoes in his head.

He punches the wall. It's a weak, frustrated thud. His knuckles ache. He feels utterly helpless. The collar feels like a chain.

He pulls out his phone, dials Lucy's number. She answers quickly.

MARTIN

(Voice low) > Lucy. It's Martin. He hit Kevin. The Domino. Got him suspended. He's crushed.

LUCY (O.S.)
(Voice grim)
Son of a bitch. I knew this wasn't
just idle threats. You okay?

MARTIN
I'm fine. But this isn't a game
anymore. We need to find this
person. Now.

LUCY (O.S.)
Got a lead for you. Remember
Professor Thorne? The physicist? I
pulled some strings. Got an
address. Old abandoned research
facility. Could be nothing, could
be something. Meet me. Send you the
details.

A flicker of focus. Martin takes a deep breath. He has a
target.

EXT. ABANDONED RESEARCH FACILITY - NIGHT

Wind whistles through shattered windows of a dilapidated,
industrial complex. Broken glass crunches underfoot. The air
is cold, damp.

Martin and Lucy move cautiously through the overgrown lot.
Lucy holds a small, powerful flashlight, sweeping it back and
forth. Martin is tense, hyper-alert.

LUCY
This place has been abandoned for
years. Used to be a hotbed for
fringe science, before you put a
stop to it.

MARTIN
Thorne's work. Experimental quantum
physics. This was his last known
location.

They approach a loading bay door, rusted shut. Lucy pulls out
a lock-picking kit, nimble fingers working.

LUCY
Let's see if our genius professor
kept his old key.

SOUND of a faint SCRAPE behind them.

Martin spins. Nothing. The wind? His nerves?

MARTIN

You hear that?

LUCY

Probably rats. Or your old paranoia
kicking back in. Almost got it

Suddenly, a heavy, BLUNT OBJECT slams into Martin's back. He grunts, stumbles forward, crashing into the door.

Three hulking FIGURES emerge from the shadows. More of his old enemies, or their muscle. This time, they look more organized, more menacing. Not just opportunistic thugs, but sent.

BRUISER 1

The boss said to send a message.
Painful.

Martin tries to fight back, but his movements are sluggish. He lands a weak punch that bounces off a bruiser's jaw. He's quickly overwhelmed, dragged down. Kicks and punches rain down on him.

Lucy, seeing this, doesn't hesitate. She springs into action, no longer just a lookout. She's a whirlwind of calculated violence. She ducks a swing from BRUISER 2, then uses her momentum to ram her shoulder into his gut. He doubles over, gasping.

She spins, using the momentum to kick BRUISER 3 in the knee. He howls, hopping on one leg. She's not strong, but she's fast, precise, using leverage and surprise. She's a street fighter. Martin, on the ground, gets a boot to the ribs. He coughs, tasting blood. He sees Lucy, a blur of motion, holding her own against two larger men.

LUCY<

Get up, Mighty! Or you're gonna be
a pancake!

Her voice cuts through the pain. Martin tries to push himself up, arm shaking.

Bruiser 1, enraged by Lucy's defiance, grabs her. She struggles, but he's too big. He throws her against a rusted metal wall with a clang. She slumps.

MARTIN

LUCY!

Fury, cold and absolute, floods Martin. He pushes past his pain, something primal stirring. He lunges at Bruiser 1, tackling him low.

It's a desperate, unrefined move, but it takes the bruiser by surprise. They hit the ground hard. Martin scrambles on top, raining down frantic, wild punches. He's no longer Mighty, but he's fighting with the desperation of a cornered animal protecting its own.

The bruiser manages to throw him off, sending him sprawling.

Suddenly, the eerie DISTORTED VOICE from Martin's phone crackles over a hidden SPEAKER nearby.

DISTORTED VOICE (O.S.)
Enough. Message delivered.

The bruisers instantly stop. They look around, confused, then at each other. They clearly weren't expecting this.

BRUISER
What the—

DISTORTED VOICE (O.S.)
Leave him. He understands now.

Reluctantly, the bruisers retreat, melting back into the shadows of the facility. They leave Martin, battered and bruised, lying next to a groaning Lucy.

Martin pushes himself onto his elbows, gasping. He crawls over to Lucy.

MARTIN
Lucy! Are you okay?

She's clutching her side, wincing.

LUCY
Peachy. Just... winded. And probably cracked a rib. This is The Domino's work, isn't it? He knew we were coming.

Martin helps her sit up, leaning her against the cold metal. He looks around the dark, empty facility. The voice. The ambush. The precision.

MARTIN
He knows. Everything.

He pulls out his phone. Calls Kevin's number. It rings, then goes to voicemail. Martin looks at Lucy.

MARTIN (CONT'D)
Kevin's not just suspended, Lucy. He's isolated. We're on our own.

He glances at the deep shadows.

A new resolve, forged in pain and vulnerability, hardens his eyes.

He is no longer just defending himself. He is fighting back. And for the first time, he knows he's not alone in this fight.

INT. MARTIN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Hours later. Martin is patching up a bruised and bandaged Lucy on his small sofa. She winces as he gently wraps her ribs.

LUCY

You're getting good at this.
Practice makes perfect, huh?

MARTIN

You saved my life tonight, Lucy.
Again.

LUCY

You distracted them. And you
actually fought back this time.
Progress.

She looks at him, a faint, tired smile.

LUCY (CONT'D)

So, what's our next move? This
Thorne guy is clearly connected.
But he's playing a different game
now. This isn't about some black
hole machine.

Martin pulls out his laptop. He's found a digital copy of Professor Thorne's old, obscure research papers. He scrolls through complex equations, diagrams of theoretical physics.

MARTIN

"The elegant dance of cause and
effect." "The ripple in the pond
created by a single, seismic
stone." His writings. They're all
about patterns. Retribution.

He stops scrolling. He sees an old, blurry photo embedded in one of Thorne's personal essays.

A family picture. Professor Thorne, his wife... and a smiling young boy, no older than seven or eight, standing between them.

The boy. He looks familiar.

Martin zooms in. The boy's face becomes clearer.

It's JAXON. A younger, vibrant Jaxon, standing on his own two feet.

Martin stares at the photo, a cold, sickening realization dawning. The guilt he felt over Jaxon's injury, the boy's resentment, Thorne's philosophical bent, the dominoes, the precise attacks. It all clicks into place with a horrifying certainty.

He feels the blood drain from his face.

MARTIN (CONT'D)

Oh, God.

Lucy looks at him, concerned.

LUCY

What? What is it?

Martin pushes the laptop toward her, pointing at the photo of young Jaxon. His voice is a horrified whisper.

MARTIN

The Domino. It's Thorne. Professor Thorne. And Jaxon... Jaxon is his son.

Lucy's eyes widen as she sees the photo, connecting the dots. The pieces of the domino fall, perfectly, tragically into place.

INT. MARTIN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The laptop screen glows, illuminating Martin and Lucy's stunned faces. The picture of Professor Thorne with his young son, Jaxon, stares back at them. The implications are horrifying.

MARTIN

It makes sense. The precision. The pain. He wasn't just targeting The Mighty; he was targeting Martin MacReady. The man who indirectly paralyzed his son.

LUCY

He's been playing you. Guilt-tripping you into caring about Jaxon, making you build this new life, just so he could watch it all crash down. He wants you to feel every single domino fall.

Martin's mind races back to the terrorist attack, to the child he glanced at and did not help. The child he later discovered was Jaxon. The weight of his past failures feels crushing.

MARTIN

He's using his own son as a weapon. How can a father—

LUCY

Grief does strange things, Martin. It twists people until they're unrecognizable. And Thorne was brilliant. Maybe his grief twisted his brilliance into something monstrous.

MARTIN

He said the game must progress. What's his final move?

They look at each other, a shared, urgent understanding. Thorne wouldn't stop until he'd utterly destroyed Martin's newfound sense of self. And Jaxon was at the heart of it.

INT. COMMUNITY CENTER - DAY

It's the annual "Community Hero" award ceremony. A small, heartwarming event. Kids and parents fill the main hall. Jaxon, dressed in a sharp shirt, is seated proudly with his father, PROFESSOR ELIAS THORNE (50s, looking outwardly distinguished, but his eyes hold a chilling intensity). Thorne gently adjusts Jaxon's collar.

Martin is there, off to the side, looking nervous. He's been nominated for his work. Kevin, despite his suspension, is also there, watching from the back, still supportive of Martin.

The DIRECTOR of the Community Center takes the stage.

CENTER DIRECTOR

...and this year, we are especially proud to honor someone who has truly embodied the spirit of service and second chances. Someone who has dedicated himself to making a real difference in the lives of our children.

Martin scans the crowd, looking for anything out of place. He sees Thorne's subtle, unsettling smile.

Suddenly, the lights FLICKER. The microphone on stage emits a piercing FEEDBACK SQUEAL.

The large video screen behind the stage, which was displaying a generic "Community Hero" graphic, flickers. It changes.

A high-resolution image of THE MIGHTY flashes on screen. Then, it quickly transitions to a close-up of the September 11th-type attack. Not the news footage, but raw, unfiltered security camera footage.

The camera focuses on The Mighty standing amidst the devastation, looking detached, almost bored, as the building collapses behind him.

The footage FREEZES on a clear shot of The Mighty glancing at a child trapped in the debris - a young, terrified JAXON.

A synthesized, familiar VOICE booms over the speakers, distorted, chilling:

DISTORTED VOICE (O.S)

This is your hero, citizens. The god who stood idly by while innocents perished. The man who caused the very suffering he now pretends to alleviate. Behold the monster. Behold... MARTIN MACREADY.

Panic erupts. Parents pull their children closer. Whispers turn to SHOUTS. People point fingers at Martin.

Jaxon, watching the screen, his face draining of color as he sees himself in the footage, then looks at Martin, then at his father, a dawning horror in his eyes.

Professor Thorne stands, a grim satisfaction on his face. He looks at Martin, a silent, triumphant challenge.

Martin is frozen. His past, his biggest failure, exposed. His new life, shattered.

He sees Jaxon's terrified face. The boy is reaching for his father, but Thorne is staring at Martin, ignoring his son.

MARTIN

(To himself, a whisper) > No. Not like this.

EXT. ABANDONED OBSERVATORY - NIGHT

The wind howls around the decaying structure atop a remote hill. Inside, it's dark, filled with old, dusty equipment. Thorne's temporary lair.

Martin, fueled by a cold rage, bursts through a loose door, followed by Lucy, who's still favoring her ribs but looks fierce.

MARTIN

THORNE!

Professor Thorne is at a makeshift console, surrounded by monitors showing various news feeds, the Community Center footage on repeat. He turns, a triumphant, almost serene smile on his face.

PROFESSOR THORNE

Martin. My apologies for the theatrics. But a grand finale requires a grand stage. Did you enjoy the performance? The exquisite irony of your redemption' being built on the very destruction you wrought?

MARTIN

You used your own son! You re-traumatized him!

PROFESSOR THORNE

(Laughs, a dry, bitter sound)
He needed to see the truth. To understand the true villain. You crippled him, Martin! You took his legs. You broke my world. I merely returned the favor. A perfectly balanced equation.

LUCY

This isn't balance, you psycho!
This is obsession!

PROFESSOR THORNE
Silence, harlot. You understand
nothing of true loss.

Thorne moves toward a large, complex device, humming faintly. It's a localized EMP generator, rigged to target and disrupt the city's power grid, creating a blackout designed to cause panic and chaos, a final symbolic "fall" mirroring Zero Day.

PROFESSOR THORN
EThe city will fall into darkness,
Martin. Just like my son's life
fell into darkness. And you, the
great Mighty, will watch,
powerless. This time, there will be
no one to even attempt a rescue.

Martin surges forward, but Thorne raises a remote control. A sharp ELECTRIC SHOCK courses

through Martin's collar. He cries out, falling to his knees, convulsing.

PROFESSOR THORNE
Oh, yes. I have full control over
your little leash. One push, and
your heart explodes.

Lucy, seeing Martin in agony, acts. She spots a heavy wrench on a workbench. Without a word, she grabs it and swings, aiming for Thorne's hand holding the remote.

Thorne sees her coming, but he's too focused on Martin. The wrench connects. Thorne cries out, dropping the remote.

He lunges at Lucy, surprisingly agile for his build, driven by fury. He throws her across the room, slamming her against a concrete pillar. She crumples.

Martin, gasping, tries to stand. He sees Thorne activate the EMP device. It starts to hum louder, building to a crescendo.

Suddenly, the door bursts open. KEVIN, surprisingly, stands there, flanked by two FBI AGENTS.

KEVIN
Freeze, Thorne! FBI!

Thorne snarls. He ignores them, desperate to complete his mission. He runs back to the EMP device.

PROFESSOR THORNE
Too late! The fall is imminent!

Martin, still weak, sees the EMP device's charge indicator rapidly climbing. He knows Kevin and the agents can't stop it in time. He has one chance.

He remembers Jaxon's words about the puzzle. "Break it down into smaller pieces." He remembers Lucy's advice, "brains don't need muscles."

He looks at Thorne, and for the first time, he doesn't see a supervillain. He sees a broken, grieving father.

MARTIN

Thorne! Look at him!

Martin points to a small, hidden monitor Thorne had set up, showing a live feed from the Community Center. Jaxon is visible, sitting on the floor, weeping, surrounded by comforting adults. He is terrified.

MARTIN (CONT'D)

You want to make me feel powerless?
You're doing the same to your own
son! You're tearing him down,
destroying his fragile sense of
safety, all for your twisted
revenge! Is this what balance looks
like? Is this what you want for
Jaxon?!

Thorne freezes. His eyes dart between the charging EMP and the monitor displaying his son's anguish. The cold precision in his eyes wavers. The raw, paternal grief surfaces.

PROFESSOR THORNE

He needs to understand

MARTIN

He needs his father! He needs you
to be better! Not a monster! You're
putting him through hell! You talk
about the elegant dance of cause
and effect, Thorne? The cause was
my failure. The effect was his
injury. And now your revenge is
destroying him all over again! Stop
this!

Thorne is visibly conflicted. The EMP device hums louder, seconds from activation.

Kevin and the agents close in. Thorne makes a split-second decision. He slams his hand down on the EMP's emergency shut-off, then turns to face the agents, a look of profound, exhausted defeat on his face.

The HUM of the EMP dies. The threat averted. Thorne is apprehended, his eyes still fixed on Jaxon's image on the screen, a single tear tracing a path through the grime on his face.

Martin collapses, exhausted, but a profound relief washes over him. Lucy slowly pushes herself up, wincing but a defiant smile on her face.

LUCY

Not bad, Mighty. Not bad at all.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Jaxon sits up in his hospital bed. He's been brought in for observation after the traumatic event.

His father is now in custody.

Martin sits beside him. The air is heavy.

JAXON

My dad... he said you were a monster. He said you did this to me.

MARTIN

He was right. About my failure that day. I was detached. I lost my way. I let people down. I let you down.

He looks Jaxon in the eye, fully accepting the blame.

MARTIN (CONT'D)

I won't make excuses, Jaxon. What happened to you was because I wasn't the hero I should have been. And for that, I am truly sorry. More than you can know.

Jaxon studies him, seeing the honesty, the pain, the vulnerability. No mighty bravado. Just a man.

JAXON

So what now?

MARTIN

Now... I try to be better. Not 'The Mighty.' Just Martin. And if you'll let me, I'd like to help you with those puzzles. Or anything else. If you ever need me.

Jaxon considers this. He glances at his legs, then back at Martin. A tiny, almost imperceptible nod.

JAXON

Okay.

It's not forgiveness, but it's a start. A flicker of connection.

INT. DIRECTOR CHEN'S OFFICE - DAY

Director Chen sits opposite Martin. Kevin stands beside him, reinstated, a new respect in his eyes.

DIRECTOR CHEN

Your actions, Mr. MacReady, in the apprehension of Elias Thorne, were... commendable. You averted a catastrophic event. You proved... resourceful.

MARTIN

I just did what was necessary.

DIRECTOR CHEN

Indeed. Your commitment to rehabilitation has also been noted. Your transcripts for social work are impressive. However, the initial terms of your release still stand. The Power Inhibitor Collar... remains.

Martin feels a familiar pang, but it's less sharp now.

DIRECTOR CHEN (CONT'D)

For the foreseeable future, you will remain Martin MacReady. The world needs a man like that now. We will continue to monitor your progress. Perhaps, one day...

She leaves the possibility hanging. Martin looks at Kevin. He sees that he doesn't need a costume or powers to make a difference.

EXT. COMMUNITY CENTER - DAY (EPILOGUE)

Months later. The Community Center is bustling, vibrant.

Martin, wearing simple, comfortable clothes, laughs with a group of kids. He's genuinely happy.

He's comfortable in his own skin. He is a social worker, a mentor, a presence in the community. He still wears the collar, but it no longer feels like a prison. It's a reminder.

He teaches a group of kids, including Jaxon, how to play chess. Jaxon is focused, learning quickly. There's an easy camaraderie between them.

Lucy arrives, holding two coffees. She watches Martin, a soft smile on her face. Her rib has healed. She looks less guarded now.

LUCY
Still playing house, Mighty?

MARTIN(SMILING)
Just being a good human being,
Lucy. Comes with a lot less
collateral damage.

She hands him a coffee. Their fingers brush. A quiet, knowing moment.

Jaxon, having won a chess game, looks up at Martin.

JAXON
Mr. Martin? Can you show me that
move again? The one where you trick
them into thinking you're weak,
then you surprise them?

Martin looks at Jaxon, then at Lucy, a profound understanding in his eyes. He is no longer The Mighty. He is Martin MacReady. And in his newfound humanity, he has found a different kind of strength.

He smiles, a genuine, warm smile.

MARTIN
Absolutely, Jaxon. Let me show you.

He bends down, leaning close, ready to impart wisdom. The sun shines down on them, a new day for a mere mortal.

FADE OUT.