

The Wake  
By Warwick Johnson

***While the stage is still dark, there is the sound of static followed by the sound of channels being changed by a remote. The television eventually settles on a news station.***

Anchor: ---This was the scene two days ago after New York's superhero, The General, destroyed Malicious' flying lair. Malicious had been holding the entire city for ransom but The General was finally able to end his reign of terror. The two extrahumans have been bitter enemies for many years, with most of their battles occurring here in New York City. This time, there thankfully were no innocent lives lost in the explosion that took down the fortress. Unfortunately, Malicious and many of his henchmen remain at large. The General had this to say after saving the city ----

***Sound of the television being switched off. Lights up on-stage and we are inside of a funeral home. There is a closed casket at the back of the stage and rows of chairs set up for a memorial service. There is a large picture of a man in his late 30's set up next to the casket. In the front row there is a woman sitting and waiting. A man enters, wearing a suit. He crosses over to the casket and stands there for a moment looking at the picture. Alice, the woman, stands and crosses to him.***

Alice: The service doesn't start for another hour.

Travis: I know.

Alice: Suit looks nice. Can't remember the last time I saw you dressed up.

Travis: It has been a while. I've worked hard to master my "hobo chic" look.

Alice: And it shows.

***Pause.***

Travis: Have you been here all morning?

Alice: Most of it.

Travis: You need to get some sleep, Alice.

Alice: Not used to sleeping alone. Where's Patty?

Travis: Still at home getting ready. She'll be here soon. Is Charlie's family coming today?

Alice: He doesn't really have any left. He has a couple cousins scattered around, but I don't think any of them are going to be here.

Travis: That's a shame.

Alice: Are a lot of the others from work coming today? Do you know?

Travis: I think almost all of them are going to be, yeah. Our boss probably won't. He wants to but... I mean, I doubt he will.

Alice: I understand. Most of Charlie's friends from law school have all said that they aren't coming.

Travis: Really?

Alice: They turned their backs on him just as fast as they could when they found out what he did.

Travis: Those silver spoon motherfuckers didn't do anything for Charlie when he got downsized. None of them were willing to help him then, why wouldn't they turn their backs on him?

Alice: You never liked them, huh?

Travis: They were always phony. They looked down on me whenever I'd hang out with Charlie and them. Like I wasn't good enough because I wasn't a lawyer. They weren't really his friends, so why should they bother coming today?

Alice: Travis...

Travis: (*pause*) I'm sorry, Alice. I...

Alice: Stop, just stop. I can't take you apologizing to me anymore.

Travis: It should have been me. Charlie should be here today, not me. I should have...

Alice: You should what, be the one in the coffin? And should have left Patty pregnant and alone without you? Charlie never would have let that happen to her.

Travis: But what about you?

Alice: I'll be fine. It's just me that I have to worry about.

Travis: I'll help take care of you, okay? I can send you money or...

Alice: You've got enough to worry about with a baby on the way. I won't add to your burdens.

Travis: It's not a burden.

Alice: I have enough money saved. You don't have to worry about me.

Travis: You're always so stubborn, huh?

Alice: Used to drive him nuts. We were both so stubborn. When we fought... no one ever was willing to be wrong. We'd fight for days about stupid little things. We argued for a week about our wedding thank you notes. I'm pretty sure he wrote the most, but I refused to admit it. Guess we were just perfect for each other, huh?

Travis: You were. I mean, everybody fights and gets on each other's nerves. But you guys were perfect together.

Alice: I hope so. I loved that man so much, Travis. I just...

***Travis sits next to Alice and puts his arm around her. She cries into his arm for a little while. A man dressed in a black suit and wearing a black hat enters. He stands at the back of the room for a moment watching them. He crosses slowly to the casket. Alice sees him and stands up, wiping the tears out of her eyes.***

Alice: Can I help you?

Malcolm: Just here to pay my respects is all.

Alice: The service doesn't begin for another hour, I'm afraid.

Malcolm: I can't stay for the service, unfortunately. I was hoping to pay my respects early before people started showing up.

Travis: Sir? Is that you?

Malcolm: Hello Travis.

Travis: What are you doing here?

Malcolm: I was not going to miss seeing Charles. ***(to Alice)*** He was a good man. He was the nicest, most considerate person that I have worked with. Just a wonderful person.

Alice: Thank you.

Malcolm: You're his wife Alice, yes? He spoke about you often to me.

Alice: I am.

Malcolm: I'm Malcolm.

Alice: I know who you are. You were his boss.

Malcolm: I'm afraid I am the reason that your husband is here today.

Travis: Sir, no one thinks that...

Malcolm: It's true. I hold myself responsible.

Alice: You gave him a job when he couldn't find one anywhere else. We knew there were risks.

Malcolm: I should have done more to protect him.

Alice: You've done enough. And thank you for paying for the service.

Travis: You paid for this?

Malcolm: It was supposed to remain anonymous. I asked them to not tell you who paid for everything.

Alice: I demanded that they tell me.

Travis: She doesn't give up easily.

Malcolm: I see. You are quite welcome Alice.

Alice: Why are you doing this? He was just another guy working for you; you don't have to go to all this trouble for my husband?

Malcolm: I would never turn my back on someone who risks their life on my behalf. If something happens to one of my employees, it becomes my responsibility to take care of their families.

Travis: We appreciate it, sir.

Malcolm: I'm afraid that I'm going to have to be going. Don't want to be drawing the wrong kind of attention to the service today. Alice, I'm sorry again for your loss. If there is ever anything that you need, you call this number and leave a message of what it is. Either I or my associates will take care of it for you.

Alice: Thank you. I'll let you know if I need anything.

Travis: Should I walk you out to your car, sir?

Malcolm: That'll be alright, Travis. Take the rest of this week off. We'll see you back in on Monday.

Travis: Thank you sir.

***Malcolm grabs his hat and heads for the door. Just then the door is kicked open and a large man dressed in a military looking uniform enters. His clothes and demeanor definitely suggest a superhero and a military man. He strides quickly across the stage towards Malcolm and the others.***

Chris: Malicious! You are under arrest! Get down on the ground and put your hands behind your back!

Malcolm: General, this is not the time or place for this.

Travis: General, listen...

***Travis gets in between them, and Chris easily pushes him to the ground with one arm while still walking towards Malcolm.***

Chris: Surrender immediately. Don't make this uglier than it has to be.

Malcolm: Chris, just listen to me...

Chris: DON'T YOU EVEN. Get down on the ground immediately, or I will take you down!

Alice: Stop it! Stop it right now!

Travis: Alice...

Alice: ***(Points at Chris)*** It's your fault that my husband Charlie is dead! Don't you dare ruin his funeral!

Chris: Ma'am, listen to me...

Alice: Don't. This is your fault. You're a hero; you're supposed to protect people. Where were you when my husband died?!

Chris: Who was your husband?

Alice: WHO WAS HE?

Malcolm: One of my men. He was on the ship when you blew it up.

Chris: He was one of your henchmen?

Alice: He was my husband, you son of a bitch. Not some common thug. The only reason he was on that boat in the first place was because he had no where else to go. He couldn't get another job with the goddamn economy the way it is. The only people hiring in this town are supervillains. He (*points at Malcolm*) might be scum to people like you, but Malcolm has taken care of us.

Chris: Ma'am, you might think that but...

Alice: My Charlie graduated from law school, passed the bar. But that didn't matter to anyone. There are hundreds of lawyers looking for work. Any kind of work. He was just another sob story in a sea of thousands in this fucking city. He and Travis turned where they had to, turned to the only people that would give them a chance. Yeah, they were henchmen for a supervillain. So that gave you the right to blow my husband up? Like he wasn't human just because of who he worked for?

Chris: They were holding the city hostage. I did what I had to in order to protect it from Malicious. He was threatening the lives of millions of people. We should have, what, just given in to them and paid him what he was asking for? Then what happens the next time a lunatic builds a death ray?

Alice: It used to be that superheroes protected all life. They didn't pick and choose whose lives were important to them. My husband would be in jail now, sure. But he'd be alive. I would still have him.

Chris: They weren't just men in brightly colored jumpsuits. They had weapons pointed at the city. Your husband wasn't an innocent civilian; he was a man with a gun threatening the safety of others. My first concern was the lives of innocents.

Alice: You pretend like you aren't, but you are just like him. (*points at Malcolm*) Only difference is that people don't care when you murder someone.

*Alice storms off and exits. Travis turns to Chris.*

Travis: Do you even want to know why he died? The autopilot was wrecked in our ship. Someone had to stay behind and pilot it over the water. I was going to do it but Charlie wouldn't let me. He shoved me into the escape pod and sent us away while he stayed behind. I don't know how many people would have died if he hadn't sacrificed himself. But to you, he's just another guy in a jumpsuit.

*Travis exits. Chris watches him leave. Chris stands there for a moment in silence. Malcolm watches him.*

Chris: When did we change so much, Malcolm?

Malcolm: I don't know.

Chris: They're right. It used to be that I could save everybody, no matter what. Somewhere along the way it all changed.

Malcolm: The world is what changed, Chris. It changed around us as we've been playing this game together.

Chris: Is that what this is to you?

Malcolm: What would you call it?

Chris: It's not a game! People's lives are at risk.

Malcolm: Don't forget that it is my people whose lives are lost.

Chris: Your people? You've kidnapped my family. Tried to murder my girlfriend I don't know how many times.

Malcolm: You've broken most of my bones.

Chris: Blew up my apartments four times.

Malcolm: You've destroyed all of my homes.

Chris: When?

Malcolm: Every time you destroy one of my headquarters, I have to buy all new furniture.

Chris: So what?

Malcolm: Do you know how hard it is to find new flying ships to convert into headquarters?

Chris: Do you ever miss the days of just robbing banks?

Malcolm: The good old days of simple fist fights and bank robbery schemes? Sure.

Chris: But we can't, can we?

Malcolm: It's too late for either of us to turn back now. Things have gone too far between us. We can't go back to the simple things after we've tried to murder each other so many times.

Chris: Yeah, I guess so. It was nicer back then. Back before it got so personal.

Malcolm: General, you and I have been enemies for a long time.

Chris: Yes we have.

Malcolm: I see you more often than my own family. Here we are a supervillain and his nemesis, the all American superhero. And yet you're the closest thing that I have to a friend in this whole world. Isn't that ridiculous?

Chris: Maybe, but it's true.

Malcolm: Does that bother you?

Chris: No. It probably should though.

Malcolm: Perhaps.

Chris: I'm sorry about your man. I am. I should have saved him.

Malcolm: Not even you can save everybody, Chris. With all of your power, you are still one man.

Chris: Than what's the point, huh? What's the point of having all of this power?

Malcolm: You do as much as you can. That's all the normals can ask of you.

Chris: Have you ever thought about giving this up? Giving up your crusade to take over the world? You could do so much good for this world.

Malcolm: I still will. It's why I can not give up. If you really wanted to help this world, you would join me.

Chris: That's not going to happen, Malcolm. You know that.

Malcolm: And you know that I can never join you. It's funny. Neither of us wants to admit that the other is more capable of saving the world. It's why we will always be opposed.

Chris: How do you want to end this? I assume that you don't want to make a mess here.

Malcolm: No. *(pause)* I'll go quietly into custody. But just you and I. Don't send your men in here. We've done enough damage here. Charlie's service is going to begin soon.

Chris: Alright.

Malcolm: Good.

Chris: We should go then.

Malcolm: Yes we should.

***Malcolm crosses over to the picture of Charlie and the casket.***

Malcolm: I'm sorry, Charlie. I am. You were a good soldier and a good friend. Looks like I'll be taking that last train after all.

***Malcolm crosses back over to Chris.***

Malcolm: Let's leave them in peace then.

Chris: You want to hand over your pistol first?

Malcolm: You know me too well. (*takes a gun out of his coat and hands it to Chris*) I assume you want the knife too?

Chris: I would.

***Malcolm hands him a large knife. Chris and Malcolm start walking towards the exit.***

Chris: Malcolm, why don't we go and grab some hot dogs on our way? There's a great place a couple blocks down on Seventh.

Malcolm: Sure. That sounds good.

Chris: Since you're going to be going to prison for a long time, ten more minutes won't do any harm right?

Malcolm: I suppose not. (*pause*) You know that I'll be breaking out of that prison again.

Chris: I know. But you know that I'll be waiting for you when you do.

Malcolm: I do. I'll look forward to seeing you then.

Chris: Maybe I'll come visit you while you're still in prison.

Malcolm: Then you'd better come visit soon.

***Chris and Malcolm laugh. They exit together.***

***The End.***