

"Good to see you!" he hollers enthusiastically through the mouth hole. He gives me the thumbs-up, which makes the IV needle tear his skin slightly.

"Ow," he says.

His two-year-old son and four-year-old stepson run frantically around the room. "Daddy was out fighting bad guys in his Super Suit and now he has to wait here," he tells them. (I promise not to identify them, or his girlfriend, to protect his secret identity.)

He looks frustrated, hemmed in, fizzing with restless energy. "We break up two to three acts of violence a night," he says. "Two or three people are being hurt *right now* and I'm stuck here. It bothers me."

By "we" he means his ten-strong Seattle crew, the Rain City Superheroes. They were patrolling last night when they saw "this guy swinging at another guy outside a bar with a baseball bat. I ran across the street and he jabbed me in the stomach. Right under my armor."

Unfortunately the baseball bat landed exactly where he'd been punched a week earlier by another bar brawler holding a car key in his fist.

"A few hours ago I went to use the bathroom and I started peeing blood," he says. "A lot of it. So I came to the hospital."

I glance over at Phoenix's girlfriend. "There's no point worrying about it." She shrugs.

Finally, the doctor arrives with the test results. "The good news is there's no serious damage," he says. "You're bruised. It's very important that you rest. Go home and rest. By the way, why do you name a pediatrician as your doctor?"

"You're allowed to stay with your pediatrician until you're twenty-two," Phoenix explains.

We both look surprised: this huge, disguised man is barely out of childhood.

"Go home and rest," says the doctor, leaving the room.

"Let's hit the streets!" says Phoenix. "I'll get suited up!"

Phoenix didn't know this when he first donned the suit about a year ago, but he's one of around two hundred real-life superheroes currently patrolling America's streets, in Florida and New York City and Utah and Arizona and Oregon, and on and on, looking for wrongs