

"How does it feel to be unmasked?" I ask.

"Extremely uncomfortable, to say the least," says Phoenix. "They're not going to charge me with a crime. They can't. So I'm going to be sitting there in court in a few hours, unmasked, not charged with anything. It's ridiculous."

"Unmasked and named," I say. "Will people knowing your name now be problematic for the superheroism?"

There's a short silence.

"Wait," Phoenix says. He looks startled. "People know my *name*?"

*Oh my God, I think. Nobody has told him.*

"Phoenix," I say with concern. "Yes. They do."

"Hehehehehe!" says Phoenix. "I knew that! I'm just kidding you!"

"Oh, Phoenix!" I say.

I thought I'd find him humbled, perhaps even broken, but he's as enthusiastic as ever. He's convinced there's no case against him. "The police said they were frolicking and dancing," he says. "My video comes out and there's no frolicking, no dancing. They're trying to make it seem like I was out of control. What kind of guy who's out of control stands there and lets a girl hit him in the face thirty-six times with a shoe?"

"She says she was pepper-sprayed," I say.

"My pepper spray has orange dye in it," Phoenix replies. "So no way was she pepper-sprayed by any spray belonging to Phoenix Jones. So she can take that claim and . . . throw it away."

"But still," I say. "In hindsight would you do anything differently?"

"Yeah," says Phoenix. "Next time I'm in a situation like that I'm going to use more of my superpowers. I'm going to freeze time so I can make every decision right." He pauses. "No. I didn't do anything wrong."

Phoenix seems in high spirits. He has a new girlfriend—a superhero named Purple Reign. She looks veiled and impressive and an excellent match. Phoenix says the assault charge is nothing about the incident and all about a pre-existing police agenda to shut him down.

"I dress up as a superhero and fight crime because I like to," he says. "They dress up as cops and don't fight crime because they like to."

But, he says, their agenda to disempower him by unmasking and