

CHAPTER ONE

WIPING THE SWEAT OFF her forehead, Blizzard remembered why she had been so eager to leave Arizona nearly a year ago now, when she had been offered a spot on the Young Neos by Mecha Knight. Even with the air conditioner in the car on full blast, Blizzard felt too hot. She took a swig from her large thermos of ice water, which helped cool her down a little, but not nearly as much as it should have. Even her body's naturally generated ice energy did little to make her feel as cold as she should have. Thinking about it, she was quite surprised that she had not melted at some point since she and the others had arrived in Phoenix a couple of hours ago.

Thankfully, we're almost to our destination, Blizzard thought, glancing out the window at the tall buildings they passed. *I hope.*

"Blizzard?" said Bolt, her boyfriend, who was sitting in the driver's seat where he drove the car. She looked at him; he had taken his eyes off the road briefly to look at her. "Are you okay? You look hot. And not in the good way, either."

Bolt's hands were firmly on the steering wheel, a concerned look on his face. He was not in his usual superhero costume; instead, he wore a red t-shirt and black jeans, along with a thick set of sunglasses to protect his eyes from the sun's glare. Indeed, he looked like a normal teenager, with the only indication that he was a superhero being the smart watch on his right wrist, which contained his super suit.

Blizzard wasn't wearing her costume, either. She instead wore a blue and white blouse with dark blue jeans, although like Bolt, she had a suit-up watch on her wrist just in case. And frankly, Blizzard was thankful to be in normal clothes for once; while her superhero costume was designed to regulate her body temperature in a reasonable way, she thought it might be too warm for Arizona's heat. It made her wonder how other superheroes operated in Arizona; she supposed they survived the same way that anyone living in Arizona did.

Shaking her head, Blizzard smiled and said, "I'm fine, Bolt. Just a little hot is all."

Suddenly, the head of a teenage boy of about sixteen, with a thick mop of brown hair, leaned forward, a mischievous grin on his face. "Are you sure you aren't going to, like, melt or something? Because I brought along a towel to mop you up with if that happens."

"Shut up, Stinger," said Bolt, before Blizzard could respond. "Or I'll swat you like an insect."

Stinger—another one of Blizzard's teammates in the Young Neos—pulled back, sitting upright in the back seat, though his grin didn't fade. Like Bolt and Blizzard, he was not wearing his super suit; instead, he wore a gray t-shirt and cargo shorts, his wings somehow hidden inside his shirt. "Hey, just joking around. No need to get so upset."

"Yeah, it's fine, Bolt," said Blizzard, though she couldn't help but smile at how he had defended her. "There's a reason I haven't been back to Arizona for a while. I haven't been able to handle extreme heat since I gained my powers."

Bolt huffed. "Okay, but I just don't want you to feel uncomfortable, that's all."

"What about the rest of us?" said Stinger.

"You guys can take care of yourselves," said Bolt, without looking over his shoulder. "You're fine."

Stinger rolled his eyes, while Blizzard looked over her shoulder at the rest of the team sitting in the back seats of the suburban they had rented for this trip. Stinger sat in the first row of seats next to a blonde teenage girl known as Talon, who, even in her simple yellow dress and her long hair, somehow managed to look more fabulous than the rest of the team put together. In the next row of seats, a

young man who looked almost exactly like Bolt, except with blue eyes, sat next to a girl with brown braided hair, his eyes stuck to the windows while the girl anxiously glanced at him every now and then like she was worried that he might snap and attack her. They were White Lightning and Treehugger, who Blizzard felt a little bad about seating together knowing Treehugger's fear of White, but White had behaved pretty well through the plane ride from New York to Arizona and so far seemed to be handling Arizona pretty well, even excited about it, probably because White had never visited Arizona before.

But it took Blizzard a moment to find the last member of the team. For a moment, she almost thought that they must have forgotten Shell at the airport because she didn't see him at first, at least until he sat upright on his seat in the back row of the car. Shell was the shortest and quietest member of the team, which sometimes made it hard to see him when he was sitting down. Like White, he was staring out the windows, but he seemed less interested in the city of Phoenix and more like he was distracted by something. His frown even made him look depressed.

Blizzard turned to look back at the road, but she couldn't help but think about Shell. He was usually the quietest and most introverted member of the team, but it seemed like in recent months he had become moodier and more introverted than ever. She wasn't sure if he was depressed, necessarily, but he never seemed quite as involved in the team as everyone else was. Blizzard had brought up these concerns with Bolt a lot, but he always brushed her concerns off as if they were irrelevant because of Shell's normal introverted nature. That didn't stop her from worrying about Shell, though, mostly because she was a worrier by nature.

Her thoughts were interrupted when Talon suddenly said, "How much longer until we reach your parents' place, Blizzard?"

"Not much longer now," said Bolt, answering for her. "According to the GPS, we should be at their house in five minutes."

"Is it a big house?" said White, his head appearing between Stinger and Talon's headrests, an eager grin on his face.

"Yeah, it's kind of big," said Blizzard. "My parents are pretty wealthy, so they're able to afford a large house."

"How did your parents become so wealthy?" said Stinger. "Did they start a big business or something?"

"My dad was an executive at a huge oil company a while back," said Blizzard. "He wasn't one of the founders, but he was brought into the company pretty early and reaped huge profits when the shale boom started in North Dakota. He invested the money in a lot of different companies and now we're pretty well off."

"So none of your parents are superhumans, then?" said Bolt, glancing at Blizzard.

Blizzard shook her head. "Nope. I'm the only superhuman in my family. Took my family by surprise when I first manifested my powers."

"How is that possible?" said Stinger. "I thought that superhuman powers are genetic. How can a normal human give birth to a superhuman?"

"Maybe you have a superhuman somewhere in your family tree, Blizzard," Talon suggested. "I've heard of the neogene skipping generations before."

Blizzard shrugged. "I have no idea. All I know is that Arizona has the lowest superhuman populations in the US, so that makes me even more unusual."

"Are there any famous superheroes from Arizona, besides yourself?" said Bolt with a frown. "Any NHA or INJ members you can think of?"

"Only one I can think of is that weird Radicles guy, though he doesn't belong to any superhero organization that I know of," said Stinger. He chuckled. "Not that he's an entirely great representative of Arizona's superhumans, I'm sure."

Blizzard scowled. "Don't bring up that idiot. I wish the media wouldn't talk about him whenever they talk about Arizona superheroes. He makes the rest of us look bad."

"Who is Radicles?" said Bolt as their car turned down a street. "Never heard of him."

"Oh, he's hilarious," said Stinger. "He likes to run around without a shirt on beating up drug dealers. Always takes the time to deliver some really cheesy message about not doing drugs just in case kids are watching and talks like a surfer dude. There's this really funny meme about him that I'll have to show you about sometime."

Blizzard folded her arms in front of her chest. "Every time I tell someone I'm from Arizona, the first thing they ask me about is that guy. I don't know why everyone thinks I know him just because we are both from the same state."

"Also, he thinks that the NHA and INJ are being controlled by the government," said Stinger. "Says that the first invasion was just a false flag event to make humanity ignore the 'true' threat of government-controlled superhero organizations. He even has a regular podcast where he rants about the various conspiracies of the day, among other things."

"Okay, that is pretty crazy," said Bolt as their car came to a stop before a stop light. "And kind of hilarious. I'll have to listen to his podcast later."

"You should listen to the one where he has a 'Pokacu specialist' on who explained how President Plutarch is actually a Pokacu in disguise," said Stinger. He suddenly looked over his shoulder to the back of the car and said, "Remember that one, Shell? It was hilarious, wasn't it?"

Shell glanced at Stinger before returning his attention to the window. "Yeah, I guess so."

Blizzard frowned. She found Shell's monotone response rather weird, but she decided not to think about it. She didn't want to think about Radicles anyway; he was such an embarrassment to superheroes and to Arizona that she generally preferred to pretend that he didn't exist.

Instead, Blizzard turned her attention to the road just as the stop light turned green and the car started moving again. She was thinking about her parents. This was going to be the first time that Blizzard had visited her parents since joining the Young Neos nearly a year ago now; this was also going to be the first time she introduced Bolt and her friends to them. Initially, Blizzard had just wanted to visit her parents with Bolt alone so he would get to meet them, but Bolt had decided to make the trip to Arizona a team vacation and brought everyone else along as well. Mecha Knight, the team's supervisor in the NHA, had approved of their vacation and so they were now going to spend a week in Arizona.

And, while Blizzard didn't complain about it, she had to admit that she didn't like that Bolt had decided to turn this into a team vacation. She had fantasized about spending a week in Arizona alone with Bolt; she thought it would be very romantic, especially since she and Bolt didn't get to spend nearly as much time alone as she'd like. The presence of the other Young Neos ruined those fantasies for her, but she supposed there was nothing she could do about it right now. She hoped that she and Bolt could still get some alone time just the same; maybe she could get the others to go sightseeing around Phoenix while she and Bolt spent some time alone in the hotel. It was nice to fantasize about, anyway.

Just hope that my sister will be polite to them, at least, Blizzard thought, though Rebecca should be in school right now, so hopefully she won't be around to give me any trouble.

It was about a minute later that Bolt pulled up in front of a gated house. A huge, thick iron fence surrounded a large two-story house, while a swimming pool full of clear, cool water stood in the front yard. A large white SUV was parked in front of the garage, while tall palm trees stood around the pool, providing some shade from the Arizona sun, though not too much.

When they stopped in front of the gates, Bolt lowered the window and pressed the button of a speaker in front of the gates. As soon as he pressed the button, a gravelly voice blared from the speaker, saying, "Who is there?"

"Uh—" said Bolt, but Blizzard leaned across his lap and said, "Hi, Ralph! It's Emily. I'm here with my friends to visit my parents!"

"Emily!" came the voice from the speaker, now sounding far more delighted than before. "Oh, it is so wonderful to hear your chipper voice again! Yes, your father did tell me to expect you today, so let me just open the gates for your vehicle. Please wait a moment."

The speaker clicked off, prompting Bolt to ask Blizzard, "Who is Ralph?"

"My family's butler," Blizzard replied. "He's worked for us for five years. He's a great guy. I'm sure you guys will love him when you meet him."

A few seconds later, the gates slowly opened inwards, allowing Bolt to drive the car through the front gates and up the driveway to the front of the house. After stopping the car, Blizzard, Bolt, and the rest of the team poured out of the car and walked up to the front doors of the house. Blizzard was in the lead, with Bolt by her side. She was looking forward to seeing her parents so much that she could barely contain her excitement. She glanced over her shoulder at the rest of the team, just to make sure that they were all presentable, before turning her attention to the front doors again.

But Blizzard didn't even have to knock on the door before it swung open, revealing a middle-aged man standing in the doorway who wore a button-down blue shirt and had a large gray mustache.

"Ralph!" said Blizzard, smiling when she saw him. "Long time, no see."

"Welcome home, Emily," said Ralph. "I am so glad to see that you are well. Your parents and I have been anxiously watching the news about your superhero exploits, but you appear to be well despite all of the danger you've been in."

"Well, I have a lot of help," said Blizzard. She gestured at Bolt and the others. "Ralph, these are my friends and teammates from the Young Neos, including my boyfriend, Kevin Jason, or as you might know him, Bolt."

"Bolt?" Ralph repeated, looking at Bolt more closely than before. "Ah, yes. Your father told me that you were dating Bolt. He's the son of Genius, isn't he?"

"You knew my father?" said Bolt in surprise.

"No, but I knew of him," said Ralph. "He was quite famous, you know, before he retired. Anyway, it is incredibly hot today, so allow me to lead you to the living room where your parents are."

"All right," said Blizzard, smiling in relief; she could already feel the air conditioning blowing from the open door and was eager to get inside. But then she frowned and said, in a slightly hesitant voice, "Is Rebecca here, too?"

Ralph paused. "Ah, Rebecca ... she is in her room. I will let her know that you are here, but after I tell your parents."

Blizzard nodded, but deep down, she was relieved. She didn't want Bolt or any of her friends to meet Rebecca, at least not yet. Her twin sister would probably just make the visit awkward, although based on how curious Bolt looked, she knew that she was going to have to introduce him to Rebecca eventually.

Maybe I'll get lucky and Rebecca will become stricken with some kind of terrible disease that will force her to stay in her bedroom for the entirety of the visit, Blizzard thought. Or maybe she'll become so swamped with homework that she won't be able to hang out with us much.

Blizzard knew that those thoughts weren't exactly the most appropriate or kind thoughts a sister should have toward her sibling, but she couldn't help it. She just didn't want this visit to be messed up and Rebecca had a terrible tendency to ruin things for Blizzard, sometimes deliberately so.

Regardless, Blizzard followed Ralph into the house, as did the rest of her team. Stepping through the doorway, Blizzard sighed in relief as she was hit with the full blast of the house's air conditioning system. She also looked around at the entryway, because it had been so long since she had last visited here that she wanted to see if everything was still as she'd remembered it.

The mudroom of the house was open and bright, mostly thanks to the light streaming from the windows reflecting off the white paint on the walls. The floor was also a clean and shiny hardwood, while a set of stairs leading up to the second floor stood to their right. To their left was a shoe rack, which had a few sets of shoes on it, mostly Dad's shoes from what she could see. The entryway smelled fresh and clean, too; no doubt Ralph had cleaned it recently, perhaps in anticipation of Blizzard's arrival.

"Wow, this is nice," said Stinger, looking around at the mudroom. "This whole room is almost as big as my Papa's entire house."

"It's nice, I suppose," said Talon, brushing aside some of her blonde hair as she looked around the place. "My mother's mansion is much fancier, though, but I suppose this is what you would call middle class."

Blizzard rolled her eyes. Talon was always hard to impress thanks to her upper class upbringing, so Blizzard probably shouldn't have been surprised at Talon's initial reaction. Still, she sometimes wished that Talon would keep her comments to herself, especially when they weren't asked for.

That was when Blizzard caught a glimpse of black moving at the top of the steps. She looked up just in time to see a small black cat staring down at them with big blue eyes. The cat looked like it was trying to decide if the people who had just entered the house were friends or foes, but Blizzard recognized the cat immediately. It was Rebecca's black cat, Tom, and, while Tom had never been as close to Blizzard as he had been to Rebecca, he was usually a pretty friendly cat.

Unfortunately, before Blizzard could call Tom down, the cat quickly vanished down the hallway out of sight. She wondered if he was going to tell Rebecca what he saw.

What am I thinking? Blizzard thought, following Ralph across the entryway to the living room on the other side. *He's just a cat. He can't talk. He can't tell anyone anything.*

"Mister and Missus Ricker," said Ralph as he passed through the entrance to the living room, "Emily has finally arrived, along with her friend."

Excited to see her parents again, Blizzard looked around Ralph to see both of her parents sitting on the main sofa in the living room. Despite being in his early forties, Dad looked more like he was in his early thirties, primarily thanks to his muscular arms and his red polo shirt, which displayed his muscles quite well, which told Blizzard that Dad was still working out. And Mom was as beautiful as ever, her long white hair flowing down her back like water, while her light blue sun dress accentuated her figure quite well. The two of them appeared to have been watching the news, which was talking about President Plutarch's upcoming visit to Phoenix, but Blizzard paid no attention to that.

She just ran over to her parents, who rose from the sofa as she ran over to them. Blizzard ran into Dad's arms and hugged him tightly, saying, "I missed you guys so much!"

“Wonderful to see you again, Emily,” said Dad, his voice as deep and reassuring as ever. He hugged her even tighter than she hugged him before letting go and saying, “We are so glad that you came to visit. Ever since you went off to join the Young Neos, it has been rather quiet around the house, even with Rebecca and Tom.”

“Yes, we’ve been so worried about you,” said Mom. She hugged Blizzard briefly and said, “And is it me or have you grown up while you were away? You look so much older than when you left.”

Blizzard just smiled. “Oh, you know how it is. Fighting supervillains and saving the world is pretty stressful.”

“Yes, but it is also highly rewarding work, is it not?” said Dad. He put a hand on her shoulder and looked her in the eyes. “Emily, your mother and I are proud of you and everything you’ve done. We’ve always wanted our daughters to make the world a better place, although I will admit that even I didn’t think that would include one of you becoming a superhero.”

Blizzard smiled sheepishly. She never handled praise very well, even from her own parents, but thankfully she didn’t have to say anything, because Mom suddenly looked at her friends and said, “And are these your friends? The other Young Neos?”

Before Blizzard could introduce them, Bolt suddenly stepped forward, holding out a hand toward Dad. “Hi, Mr. Ricker. I’m Bolt.”

Dad took his hand off Blizzard’s shoulder and shook Bolt’s hand. “Nice to meet you, but I don’t believe you’re actually a superhero.” His voice suddenly became serious and his grip on Bolt’s hand tightened, like he did not want Bolt escape. “I think you’re a supervillain, and the worst kind, too.”

Even though Bolt had super strength, he didn’t seem capable of breaking Dad’s grip. He leaned back slightly, an alarmed look on his face. “What ... what do you mean I’m a supervillain? I’ve never done anything evil in my life. Well, never intentionally evil, but—”

“Because you stole my daughter’s heart,” said Dad, his voice and face as dead serious as ever.

He looked at Bolt for a full second with that same serious expression. But then his face broke into a smile and he laughed, a deep, booming sound that made the rest of the team jump in alarm. Not Blizzard, however. She just groaned. She had expected Dad to do something like that, but she’d hoped he would keep his embarrassing side a secret for at least a little while longer.

Bolt, on the other hand, just looked confused, but relieved as he let go of Dad’s hand. “Um ...”

“It was just a joke,” said Dad, patting Bolt on the shoulder. “You seem like a fine young man and certainly a good boyfriend to my daughter. I approve.”

“Yes, he’s a very handsome young man,” said Mom. She gestured at the sofa. “But please, everyone have a seat. You shouldn’t all be standing around like this; we have plenty of chairs for everyone.”

Mom was right. Although there had only been a handful of chairs in the room when Blizzard and the others first entered, there were now seven wooden chairs with comfy seats situated in a neat way before the sofa, while the TV had been muted, although it still showed the news. Blizzard realized that Ralph must have been taking chairs into the living room while they spoke with her parents, which was confirmed to her when she saw Ralph place the final chair near where Shell stood.

“Yes, everyone take a seat,” said Dad, gesturing at the chairs. “And Ralph, please get nine tall glasses of lemonade for everyone and make sure they have plenty of ice.”

“Yes, of course, sir,” said Ralph with a bow before he hurried out of the living room to the kitchen, which was adjacent to the living room.

When Ralph left, Blizzard and the others all took seats in the chairs, which were even comfier than they looked. Even Talon appeared impressed by how soft the chairs were, while both Stinger and Shell

practically melted into their seats. Even Blizzard was a little surprised, despite having sat on these chairs before.

“Now that we’re all seated,” said Dad, putting his hands on his knees, “why don’t we introduce ourselves? I’m Martin Ricker and this is my wife, Carrie Ricker.”

“Nice to meet you,” said Bolt. “You know who I am already. Let me introduce the others—”

“You mean Talon, Stinger, Shell, Treehugger, and, of course, White Lightning, your twin brother?” Mom finished for him, pointing at each member of the team in turn as she said their names, correctly identifying each one.

“How did you know who everyone is?” said Bolt in astonishment. “We haven’t even introduced them to you guys yet.” He glanced over his shoulder at the rest of his teammates, who all looked just as surprised by Mom’s comments as he was.

“We’re big fans of superheroes in general,” said Dad. “That’s why we were so excited when Mecha Knight came by to recruit Emily to the Young Neos. We made sure to identify every member of the team when you made your public debut earlier this year and we’ve been closely following your adventures ever since, or as closely as we can based on news reports we’ve seen on TV and read online.”

Blizzard scratched the back of her neck sheepishly. She looked at the others, who looked rather surprised, and realized that she had forgotten to tell the rest of the team about how avid fans her parents were of them.

As for Bolt, he said, “Um, okay. Guess that saves us a lot of time.”

“It does,” said Dad. He spread his arms. “And can I just say how honored I am to have you all here? You are true heroes, having saved the world multiple times over the last year. It is a grand honor to have heroes like you visit us. Even if you are not full members of the Neohero Alliance yet, both Carrie and I are humbled that you came here and that you are friends with our daughter.”

Bolt now looked like a deer caught in headlights, as did the rest of the team. That wasn’t too surprising; the Young Neos, in general, were not used to this kind of effusive praise from random people they just met, even if it was completely sincere. And Blizzard knew that it was. All her life, she’d heard her parents gush about superhumans who used their powers to make the world a better place. She well remembered how ecstatic they had been when her powers first manifested last year, probably because they considered having a superhuman in the family a great honor.

“Er, you’re welcome, Mr. Ricker,” said Bolt, rubbing the back of his neck. “But really, we’re not that special. We’re just kids who happen to have superpowers.”

“And you are so modest, too!” Mom gushed. “That makes you even better! Emily, you certainly hit the jackpot, didn’t you?”

“Mom, come on,” said Blizzard. “You’re embarrassing me in front of my—”

Blizzard was interrupted when she heard light footsteps from the doorway. She looked over toward it, wondering who it was, but as soon as she saw who the person standing in the doorway was, she immediately wished that she had not looked.

The person standing in the living room doorway was a teenage girl the same age as Blizzard. She even had similar hair to Blizzard, although hers was more of a blonde color than white, while her skin was infinitely paler and she wore old, baggy clothes that made her look more like a homeless person than the daughter of a well-to-do family. Her brilliant blue eyes had bags underneath them, like she never got enough sleep, and she carried a small black cat in her arms which was purring contentedly, although it was also watching Blizzard and the other Young Neos warily as if it didn’t trust them.

"Oh, Rebecca," said Dad. He no longer sounded as confident and happy as before; now he sounded a little awkward. "We didn't hear you come down from your room."

"That's fine, Dad," said Rebecca. Her voice was similar to Blizzard's, although there was a definite edge to it. "I didn't know you were all down here. I thought that Emily and her friends weren't going to arrive for another few hours."

Rebecca spoke in a flat, monotone voice. She also pointedly avoided looking at Blizzard or the others; she wasn't even looking directly at Mom or Dad. That just added to the awkwardness of the situation, but Blizzard didn't know what to do to alleviate the feeling.

"Well, they got here early, as it turned out," said Dad. He smiled, although it looked forced. "Why don't you come in and introduce yourself? Ralph can get another chair for you and Tom."

But Rebecca shook her head. "Nah. I'll just go back to my room. I need to finish up my original music composition for the recital at my school next week."

With that, Rebecca turned and left the living room without another word. But she did cast one quick glare at Blizzard before she left, although Blizzard didn't know how to respond except by watching her sister leave.

But then Blizzard felt someone shake her shoulder and she looked at Bolt. He was looking at Blizzard with a deeply confused frown on his face, an expression shared by the rest of the team.

"Um, Blizzard?" said Bolt. "Is there something, um, wrong with your sister?"

"Oh, she's perfectly normal," Mom interrupted, before Blizzard could answer. "She just isn't very social. A true blue introvert. Hard to believe, I know, considering how both Martin and I are such big extroverts, but it's just one of those funny things that happens to people sometimes, you know? Like how we had a superhuman daughter despite not being superhumans ourselves."

"Yeah, Mom's right," said Blizzard, shrugging off Bolt's hand. "It's nothing. Rebecca's always been like that. Nothing to worry about."

Bolt looked from Mom to Blizzard and back again with a deeply skeptical expression, but Blizzard hoped he wouldn't ask. She wasn't ready to delve into her personal relationship with her sister at the moment. It would just be too awkward, especially having to explain it to not just Bolt, but also the rest of the team.

"Well, okay," said Bolt, although the look he shot at Blizzard told her that he expected her to explain it later. "I guess I can meet her later."

"Yes, of course," said Mom, sounding just as relieved as Blizzard felt at the change of subject. "Anyway, why don't you tell us a bit about—"

"Hold on, what's that on the news?" said Dad suddenly.

Blizzard and Bolt looked over their shoulders at the TV. Although still muted, the TV showed footage from what appeared to be somewhere in Phoenix. It showed a ruined street, along with several smashed cars and burning trees, which made Blizzard wonder what the heck happened until the camera turned upwards to show a man standing on top of a building laughing maniacally. The man wore a long, flowing black cape and he kept shooting some kind of green fire from his hands. There didn't seem to be any people in the street, but Blizzard had no idea who the man was or what was even happening until Dad unmuted the TV just as the scene switched to a news reporter describing the scene.

"...officers have blocked off the street and warned all citizens to stay away from the area while Doctor Danger is out," the reporter said in a serious tone. "It is believed that Doctor Danger may have hostages, but the police do not know for sure. It is also unknown what Doctor Danger wants, but police are already gathering from all over the city to save civilians and take him down."

"Doctor Danger?" Bolt repeated. "Who is that?"

"A local Phoenix supervillain," said Dad with a grim sigh. "We don't have too many supervillains here, but the ones we do are crazy. You should forget about him. The police will take care of him."

"But according to the news report, Doctor Danger's attack isn't far from here," said Bolt. "If we left now—"

"The police will take care of him," Dad repeated, this time in a firmer voice. "You kids don't need to put yourself in danger. This is supposed to be a relaxing visit."

"What about Phoenix's superheroes?" said Bolt. "You know that the police won't be able to beat a man like him, right?"

"Phoenix ... doesn't really have very many superheroes," said Dad, rubbing the back of his neck. "Sometimes the government will call in NHA members to deal with supervillain threats, but very few actually live here."

"Then that's even more reason for us to go out and deal with this freak," said Bolt. He stood up. "Don't worry; we'll be back in time for dinner."

"But—" said Dad, before Blizzard interrupted him, saying, "Dad, it's fine. We've beaten supervillains before. We know what we're doing. And like Bolt said, we'll take him out quickly; he won't be able to stop all seven of us working together, especially since he doesn't even know we're here."

Dad and Mom looked like they didn't agree with this decision, but Dad finally nodded and said, "Fine. I trust you know what you're doing, Emily, but please be safe." Dad looked at Bolt sharply. "And you, young man, make sure that she doesn't put herself in needless danger. If she gets harmed, or, God forbid, even killed—"

"Again, don't worry, Mr. Ricker, I will keep Blizzard safe," said Bolt. "Now, everyone, let's go before this Doctor Danger guy hurts or kills too many people."