

Vigilante

Written by

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CHARACTER

Phoenix Jones (aka Benjamin Fodor)- Black Man, Late Thirties

voice recordings of Tucker Carlson and two policemen are also employed

SETTING

Place: Seattle Parole Board hearing

Time: circa 2025

At rise, a bare stage with a single spotlight chair.
PHOENIX JONES, a Black Man in his late thirties
wearing an orange prison jumpsuit, enters and takes
the seat. Video of him plays on the back wall. He
looks out into the audience for a moment.

PHOENIX JONES

...Because I'm Black. That's why I'm in here.
I guess you probably hear that one a lot, huh?
I know I should probably take this more seriously, but it doesn't matter.
My life ended the minute the arrest hit the blotter.
It was all over the news.
Can't go back to the daycare.
UFC won't take a felon as a fighter.
And there's no way anyone on the streets is gonna trust me again.
Really, I'm not sure why the hell I'm in here. Because crime doesn't pay?
Well, neither does fighting it. I can tell you that with certainty.
Sure, there's some brand deals: Kevlar vests, pepper spray, the comic book.
That thing ended up being more trouble than it was worth.

Phoenix stands.

You know, I only started doing this because the police wouldn't show up.
Oh, do you mind? I think better on my feet.
Anyway, have you tried getting a squad car to come to Capitol Hill? Good luck.
A few years back, some guys broke into my car. I was with my son.
You think I was running in then? God no.
I called the cops as I watched them do it.
No one even showed up to take a statement. Nothing.

That's why gangs form.
There's nobody to protect the innocent, so they make themselves guilty.
We were never one of those. Seattle's lucky.
We could have been drug dealers. Well, we could have started out as drug dealers.
We just wanted to run around in spandex.
I mean, I've always been in good shape. My brother and I were on the MMA circuit.
Just the local. Part-time. Strictly nights and weekends.
And I took care of people for a living.
It seemed almost natural to put the two things together.

The first mask I got was because someone tried to mug me.
I kicked his ass and took it. How's that for an origin story?
My wife, well, my ex-wife, always thought it was fate.
"No one's coming to save us. We gotta figure out how to save ourselves."
You know we were the only team to actually make citizen's arrests?
I got over two hundred, by myself, and you can confirm that with Seattle PD.
But would even one of them give me a character witness? Fuck no.
I know for a fact that I saved some of you here on May Day 2013.
You know, from those anarchists. But god forbid I make one mistake.

Honestly, I do wanna get out of here.
If for no other reason than I can't hear another one of these assholes say,
"I'm not locked in here with you, you're locked in here with me."

Every day, over and over again.
 One of them is gonna finish that scene, eventually, and try to get me with some fry oil.
 You watch.
 Nah, these guys are mostly cool.
 That's the weird part, right? Most of them are pretty cool.

You know America's first real-life superhero was actually a millionaire inventor?
 His name was Captain Sticky.
 He invented corrugated fiberglass then started fighting elder abuse and crooked mechanics.
 Maybe he was onto something.
 At least he knew how to run a business.
 Mine cost me my family and my best friend.
 But have you ever tried to keep nine nut-jobs in colorful costumes happy at the same time?
 It's impossible.
 Caballero was a good guy.
 He just got spooked when the police started arresting us for helping them.

Video of a Seattle PD officer plays on the back wall.

POLICEMAN ON VIDEO

We don't want citizens taking the law into their own hands.

Phoenix laughs scornfully.

PHOENIX JONES

There's this old joke. You know why Batman's mask doesn't cover the bottom of his face?
 Because he wanted the police to know he was white.
 I shouldn't have unmasked. That was the beginning of the end.
 But I didn't have a choice. Phoenix Jones can't get arrested on trumped-up assault charges.
 Only Benjamin Fodor has that superpower.

After the first time, the team was pretty shaken.
 We got lawyers. We stopped doing so much direct action. We got insurance.
 In other words, more money going out, and no more flashy take-down videos to bring it in.
 What was I supposed to do?
 I didn't get in this business to start a PPO.
 I made mistakes, but I didn't steal from anyone.
 At least not on purpose.
 At least not at first.
 I don't know what people wanted from me.
 I'm just a really strong guy in a Kevlar costume.
 I'm not faster than a speeding bullet.
 I froze once, okay. I admit it, I froze.
 It's not like the cops haven't done worse.
 I didn't kill anybody.
 I just couldn't stop everybody from being killed either.

Phoenix sits. His jumpsuit starts to slide off his body,
 revealing his black and gold superhero costume.

So maybe shit was hard after that.
 Maybe the Pioneer Square shooting was the straw that broke my back.
 Maybe I needed something to cope.

And maybe when I ran out of money, I started selling it.
 But a murder victim's sister isn't calling *you* every week, is she?
 She's probably not calling me anymore either, come to think of it.
 I'm not the world's greatest detective. Hell, man, I barely got out of high school.

Phoenix swallows hard. He stands again.
 I changed my mind about some things in here.
 I have some different ideas, now, about crime and the law.
 I've been doing a lot of thinking about how to do good.
 The cops are never gonna find who murdered Nicole Westbrook.
 They're never even gonna look, and they'll use me as the reason why.
 The more I think about it, the more I think those May Day anarchists had a point.
 If they'd had a little more... money, food, dignity, I don't know.
 If they'd had it, they wouldn't have any reason to be in the streets.
 And if they're not out there, I sure as hell don't need to be.

Phoenix looks directly into the audience.
 I spent all my time trying to get the cops to come out to Capitol Hill.
 I should have gotten you all the hell away from there.

Video of the Capitol Hill Autonomous Zone (aka the
 Chaz aka the Chop) plays on the back wall.
 If anything led me to my crime, it was failing to realize that I have more in common with
 the people I put away than the people who helped me do it.

If I have learned anything at all, it's that a vigilante supported by law enforcement is either
 an attack dog or a scapegoat. Guess how they decide which is which?

If I left prison, I would make sure anyone who wanted to take the law into their own hands
 knew that it'll never make anyone safe. It can only put folks away, or worse...

I'll go back to my cell now. I don't need to hear the verdict.

Phoenix shrugs off his orange jumpsuit completely,
 exposing his superhero suit. He tears that off of his
 body in chunks. Underneath are civilian clothes.

Phoenix stands. Video of Tucker Carlson plays on
 the back wall.

TUCKER CARLSON ON VIDEO

Are we really surprised that looting and arson escalated to murder? Are we really
 surprised that seventeen-year-olds thought they had to maintain order when no one else
 would?

Video of Kyle Rittenhouse getting water from the
 police plays on the back wall. Phoenix shakes his
 head and exits.

POLICEMAN ON VIDEO

We appreciate you guys, we really do.

Blackout.