

Chapter 1: Metahumans

Rachel sat in her cell, waiting. Today was the day she was to receive the drug cocktail that Dr Amell believed was going to activate her metahuman gene.

Personally, she thought it was nonsense. This was real life, not a comic book.

And yet she felt nervous. The procedure she took today was to be the culmination of the five years she had spent in this hell. If it succeeded, the time she had spent here would mean something.

On a whim, she glanced over at the empty bed that her cellmate had once occupied.

How did you feel, Ayane? she wondered.

She was pulled out of her thoughts by footsteps on the other side of the heavy door.

Bolts were pulled back, and it swung open.

On the other side of the threshold stood Dr Amell, clad in a white lab coat and slacks.

He looked harmless, with his black hair, blue eyes and glasses. His posture was loose, and he almost looked like a teacher. Rachel knew better than to judge by appearance. The lab coat and loose trousers hid his impressively honed physique, and his almost friendly posture hid the fact that he was dangerous. With martial arts expertise, a cold, calculating mindset and skill with various weapons, he was utterly terrifying.

He had brought her here five years ago. She saw their encounter in her dreams every night.

She was 13. It was a Thursday morning.

Rachel had woken up far too early and decided to go downstairs to get a drink.

When she walked into the kitchen, he was waiting. Clad in a black, hooded outfit with a mask, he had appeared as if out of nowhere to grab her.

She had picked up a knife off the counter, and she swung at him. He had released her with one hand, disarmed her with the other. When she

saw an opening and tried to run past him, he had tripped her and pulled her into a sleeper hold in one fluid movement. The next day, she had woken up in this cell.

Pulling her thoughts back to the present, she kept her eyes on Dr Amell as he approached, stopping beside the foot of her bed.

“Good morning, Rachel,” he said in a cheerful voice. “How are you feeling?”

“Nervous,” she replied honestly.

He nodded and asked, “Do you have any questions before the procedure?”

Rachel had thought about it all morning.

“What will happen if it works?” she asked.

He replied, “The next phase will begin, you will be moved to a different block, and will learn how to use your powers.”

Rachel nodded. His tone had been even the whole time, and his face betrayed no dishonesty. As difficult to read as always.

“Are you ready?” he asked.

She replied, “Let’s get it done.”

The Doctor nodded and stood aside, gesturing at the door.

Finally, Rachel thought. Time to see if there was any truth to all this.

She walked out and Dr Amell followed, his footsteps mirroring her own. This was likely to aid in stealth, where none was required. A strange habit. Rachel found herself wondering who he had been before all this. Everything that made him terrifying had to have come from somewhere.

They walked through the block, the prisoners watching Amell in silent terror. There had been little interaction, as each prisoner was trained by someone different on a one to one basis.

The pair came to a turn. Where they would usually go right to the training room, they instead turned left. Amell sped up slightly to get

in front of her and led her to an unremarkable door.

They went into the room, which was clean. The walls were white, with a chair in the middle of the room and various pieces of medical machinery around it.

Amell said, "When the procedure starts, you will be rendered unconscious by an anaesthetic. If it works, you will wake up in your new room. If it doesn't, you won't wake up. Understand?"

Rachel nodded, knowing that it was futile to resist at this point. He had taught her to fight, and so knew all her moves before she could make them.

She sat on the chair and asked, "Before we do this, can I ask you something?"

Surprised, he paused before nodding.

She asked, "Why are you trying to make metahumans?"

He thought a moment before replying, "I'm burdened with knowledge of threats that will

come. The metahumans are needed to face these threats. That's all I can tell you."

Rachel nodded and sat back. A few more scientists filed into the room, and they set up the equipment efficiently.

In a few moments, it started to move. Rachel looked up at the ceiling as she felt needles pierce her skin. Soon, everything went black.

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Amell looked at the scans of Rachel's DNA as a smile spread over his face. It had worked. She was one of the few individuals the treatment worked on.

The lights dimmed, and there was a slight crackling sound. When the sound stopped, he turned to see a man clad in blue and grey armour with a white cape standing there.

The Architect stepped forward and said, "The procedure went well, I assume?"

Amell nodded and said, "Rachel Knight is now a metahuman."

Frowning, he said, "I hope all this is worth it. Because you've had me do things that I will regret the rest of my life."

The Architect nodded and said, "You are having doubts. I have seen how things end if you do not do this."

He offered his hand and said, "Come, I will show you."

The Doctor took it, and then they were no longer in the lab. They were standing on what he recognised as O'Connell Street.

All of the buildings were aflame, and the street was littered with corpses.

Kneeling a short distance away from them was a man in a black suit with a red cape. Amell couldn't see any of his features.

He got to his feet and turned, eyeing something behind them. Amell turned to see a humanoid with grey skin and glowing gold eyes.

"You cannot stop me, Ifrit," the humanoid said.

The man, who Amell assumed his name was Ifrit, replied, "But I can't just give up. I will not let you destroy this world."

Ifrit closed the distance between himself and his adversary in seconds, punching him several times. The humanoid chuckled and laughed off all of the attacks before grabbing him.

"You are persistent," he said. "I'll give you that."

Then he punched through Ifrit's chest. He cried out, and then fell when the humanoid withdrew his hand. He then bent down and raised a glowing hand.

He struck the ground, and everything was enveloped in a white light.

When Amell opened his eyes, they were standing back in the lab.

"What was that?" he asked.

The Architect replied, "That was what would have happened had you refused to help me. The Ifrit cannot save your world alone. He

needs others who will rise up to join him in battle against that foe.”

Amell nodded and said, “I will finish their training, and be the monster they need to rise up against to leave this place.”

The Architect nodded and said, “The future gives you a lonely destiny. Take solace that your sacrifice will allow the people of your world to survive.”

The crackling started again as the air around the Architect lit up and when the glow subsided, he was gone.

Amell shuddered before lifting a radio off his desk and saying, “Have Knight brought to her assigned cell.”

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Rachel opened her eyes. The ceiling was higher than usual. Frowning, she sat up before looking around. This cell was more spacious than the last one, and slightly warmer. As well as the bed she was laying on, it also contained a bathroom,

separated from the rest of the cell, a bookshelf and a desk.

She took in the rest of the cell before it clicked. If she had woken up, that must mean that the procedure worked. Which meant that it wasn't bullshit.

She got to her feet and thought hard for a moment. She jumped when she noticed Amell standing in the corner of the room, arms crossed.

"What did the procedure do?" she asked.
"What exactly?"

Amell nodded and said, "In addition to activating your metahuman gene, which we have discussed, it also decreased your myostatin production, leading to greater muscle mass and physical strength, as well as increasing your red blood cell count for endurance, and a few other things."

Rachel nodded and asked, "What will the metahuman gene do now that you activated it?"

Amell replied, "It will give you power. We don't know what power, but we will soon find out. For now, take time to rest after the procedure. I will come back tomorrow."

He vanished, and Rachel realized why he was so certain the procedure would work. He had done it on himself.