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The Second Wave (The Meta Superhero Novel Series) (Volume 2)



Synopsis

Summer's over and Connor Connolly is headed back to school to start junior year. But with metabands falling from the sky, the world has changed overnight, and now there are thousands of new metahumans. Just like regular humans, not all metahumans are using their new powers for good. Now, Connor's not only dealing with the pressures of being a super-human and training with his mentor, Midnight, he also has to balance relationships with the people he cares for most. People who find themselves on different sides of the fence when it comes to their feelings about the new metahumans and the impact they're having on everyone else's lives. As the world struggles to adjust to the events of the past few months, Connor's alter ego, Omni, works with The Agency to apprehend law breaking metahumans, and detain them at the Silver Island Meta Detention Facility. When he's recruited for a job assisting the government agency with disarming one of the most powerful and secretive metas in Bay View City, he never expects the devastation of that mission or the affect it will have on both humans and metas. Is Connor capable of becoming the hero he wants to be?

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Tom Reynolds graduated from the University of Maryland, College Park, with a Bachelor of Arts in American studies. Tom is cohost of the popular comedy podcast The Complete Guide to Everything and the new pop culture podcast Pop Everything. He lives in Brooklyn, New York. Kirby Heyborne is an accomplished actor, musician, and comedian who has received a number of AudioFile

Earphones Awards for his audiobook narrations. He has had starring roles in over a dozen features and many short films. Kirby is also a cofounder and director of the Los Angeles-based improv comedy group The Society. --This text refers to the Audio CD edition.

Almost didn't get this book after seeing the review that it ends on a cliffhanger... it doesn't ... not in the sense that I use cliffhanger anyway. As an analogy w/o giving any spoilers, the "cliffhanger" is akin to the shot at the end of XMen: Last Stand where Magneto moves a metal chess piece or Xavier speaking through a formerly comatose hospital patient. Doesn't really affect the main story but does T-up the next one quite well. It is a "classic part 2" though in that the battle is won but the war still rages on. So... if that's too much of a cliffhanger for you... may be better to wait till #3. (it wasn't for me...) On a grander level, I'm kinda wondering where Mr. Reynolds is going with this. For the most part all the meta are restricted to Earth... or at least our solar system. So since it's plausible that aliens dropped the meta bands they can do so w/o risking retaliation from us as the meta bands don't allow us to leave the solar system and don't increase our technological knowledge. I doubt these themes will come up in book 3, but it would be an interesting world to continue to write stories in, especially if those stories get to these issues. HOWEVER... book 2 comes dangerously close to making that a hard transition. There are 4 key things Mr Reynolds does that if the bands were supposed to be some sort of self-contained test of the human race then we're chipping at the walls of that self-containment. I can't really go into 3 of those as ... spoilers... but the 4th... some metas can shrink themselves down to the molecular level. (They are hired by rich people to cure their cancer.) However, a much more interesting use of a molecule sized meta is to help jump-start a nanotechnology revolution. Making the first nano machine is hard... making the 2nd not so much... making the first with the help of a meta... pretty easy.

I desperately wanted to like this book (along with the first one). The concept was an interesting idea; for the uninitiated, the series essentially asks the question, "What would happen if mysterious, silver bracelets of unknown origin started showing up by the hundreds and granting amazing and varying abilities to the different people to find them?" The concept is both practical and intriguing. It's practical because it gives you a relatively unique reason to have multiple people (heroes, villains, and the morally ambiguous in-between) running around with super powers. It's intriguing because the mysterious origin can go in so many directions and be easily explored as a sub-plot throughout one or more stories. Are these metallic bands part of some massive, international conspiracy to test new technology are humans? Are they some sort of divine gift, or perhaps provided by aliens as a

means of making humans strong enough to be enslaved as military fodder for their own war-time agendas? There are any number of directions the concept could have gone. Unfortunately, the author fails to take the concept anywhere. It seems every character in the book has given up on exploring the nature of the bracelets before they even begin. So where it could have been a multifaceted mystery to gradually uncover, instead it gets thrown at the reader as "This is why all these people have powers," and then forgotten about. The other problem I had throughout the book (and the first suffered from this as well, though to a much lesser degree) is the meandering, directionless nature of the plot. It isn't until about 75% of the way into the book that the plot actually feels like it's going anywhere. Up until that point, it feels largely like a day-in-the-life-of-this-hero sort of story, rehashing all the same tired hero-problems that we've seen before (a double life is difficult, it sucks keeping secrets from your best friend and girlfriend, etc.). In addition, the author has a bad habit of introducing a big problem with little preamble, and then ignoring the problem and leaving it largely unresolved. For details on what I'm talking about above, read on but beware of some spoilers. *****SOME MINOR SPOILERS AHEAD***** Regarding the meandering plot, there's a plot beat that does go beyond the day-in-the-life type action around a quarter of the way into the story, in which our hero accompanies a team to capture a high-profile businessman who may or may not have powers himself. You might call this an inciting incident, as it sets the ball rolling for what seems like might be a big showdown (which isn't, but more on that later). However, the next event that ties into this one at all doesn't come until about three-fourths of the way into the book, and ends with the hero as little more than a bystander. Then there's the issue of unresolved issues. There are many, many things that are brought up and left unresolved throughout the story. I understand that this is meant to be part of a series, but it feels less like a "to be continued" and more like "oops, I forgot I started that sub-plot." For example, the hero has one or two run-ins with his best friend where his friend, usually the stereotypical fun and light-hearted side-kick type, is moody and unhappy. Then while out fighting crime, out of the blue the hero is confronted with a group we've heard nothing of earlier (called the Blanks, for reasons I can't remember, and they're anti-meta vigilante's apparently), and lo and behold, the one member of the Blanks to get his mask knocked off in the scuffle happens to be the hero's best friend. So what happens next? Absolutely nothing. We get a few lines inside our hero's head about how he can't believe or understand why his best friend belongs to this group, and the issue is forgotten. *****SLIGHTLY BIGGER SPOILERS***** The ending of the book not only left a number of major threads completely unresolved, but introduced a new one at the last second, as if the author thought the audience needed yet another unresolved story line as an incentive to pick up the next book. First, several

meta's show up demanding all other meta's turn in their bracelets or they'll destroy them by force. You'd think this was a setup for a fun showdown between them and our hero, but instead the supposedly powerless Midnight, our hero's mentor, suddenly out of the blue not only turns out to have meta bands himself, but he also suddenly has a robotic suit of armor powered by one of his meta bands, and he goes up against the villains himself. The most of the battle the audience gets is seeing Midnight and the villains throw each other around a bit while the hero gets the much less interesting responsibility of evacuating the meta-prison that they're fighting around. And not only do we miss the fight (since the hero isn't in it), but we don't even learn how the fight turns out, or who comes out on top. Instead of our hero fighting three powerful villains, our hero instead dukes it out over a few pages with a fellow heroin as the two have a disagreement over whether to release the dangerous meta-inmates on the city or let them stay and die at the hands of the villains. And that fight itself leaves some unresolved threads, as the hero falls unconscious from the heroin using some strange, unseen power (which is never explained), and wakes up to find the inmates gone to who-knows-where and doing who-knows-what. Lastly, our hero teleports out of there badly damaged from his brief and less-than-thrilling fight with the heroin, landing in his brother's apartment and unmasking himself just in time for his brother's random girlfriend, who showed up exactly once before, to catch him, but lo and behold (notice how things keep happening out of the blue?), she's not who she said she was (anybody with any sense saw that part coming, at least) and is actually a recruiter for some sort of program or school, which they want the hero to join. So, we're left with no idea what happened to the villains who were trying to destroy other meta's, and no idea what happened to Midnight who was fighting them. We're left with no idea what happened with his best friend, either why he joined the Blanks or whether or not he's still with them. And we're left with no idea what this 'school program' is, who is running, why they're running it, or whether they're good or bad (or somewhere in between). I don't mind cliffhangers when you've made it clear there will be a sequel, but the author treats these threads less like mysteries to be solved later and more like things we shouldn't bother caring about. All we really have are a series of three or four big events that seem to occur out of nowhere and with little or no buildup, and no resolution. It's as if the author was writing random day-to-day events for the hero and thought, "Hey, such-and-such would be a cool thing to have happen," and so the author drops that event in without warning. Then, before bothering to resolve any of these events, he got tired of writing and just published what he had already. *****END SPOILERS***** Another big issue I had was the development (or lack thereof) of the characters. We really aren't given any reasons for why the characters are doing what they're doing. For our main hero, Conner/Omni, we never find out why he feels the need to be a hero. Even

in the first book, this isn't an issue that's ever covered. He acts as though having these powers makes him obligated to be a hero, but neither he nor anybody else asks "Why?" Then there's his mentor, Midnight; I understand that he's meant to be mysterious and formidable both physically and mentally, but we don't get even the slightest hint as to how he developed his skills/intellect, or where his apparent unlimited resources come from. And like the hero, we're never given any hint as to why he does what he does. He's basically like Batman with all the skills and cunning, not to mention gadgets to suit any occasion, but without any apparent motive for fighting crime. On top of not having any explanation for why the characters are doing what they're doing, there also isn't a single character that grows in any way throughout the story. Every single character is exactly the same in the end as they were in the beginning. The only one who comes close to having any character development is Conner's best friend, but that's only in comparison to the first novel; In the first book, he's the happy and peppy sidekick, while in the second book, all we see is him being moody and angry. And for as little interaction and affect his character had, it may have just been a different character from the first book altogether.

IN CONCLUSION . . . You might be wondering at this point why I've even given the book two stars. The truth is, the initial concept was definitely a strong one. Also, though I don't know for sure, I get the sense this book was probably self published (lists the publisher as "Leonard & Calyer" but the only publications I can find under that imprint are the two books in this series). And while I don't typically like double standards, I have to admit that this is definitely above the average in quality compared to other self published books. There are some typos/grammatical errors (more so than a traditionally published book would have) but not so many that it becomes a distraction. Besides, part of me is hoping that the author improves his storytelling abilities before taking a crack at the next book in the series. Most of the issues I have really boil down to a single flaw; Reynolds has issues looking at the big picture, to see how all the pieces fit together. If he can get a better grip on piecing these disparate events together in a more organic way, while finding at least one purpose to drive the story and build on to a dramatic conclusion, I think he could turn into a marvelous writer.

I got the first in the series because it was free but it was so good that I had to get the rest. In the midst of all of the Marvel & DC books and movies, it's a great point of view to see how a single person deals with the everyday issues with new powers. Yeah, I know...Spider-Man. This goes into much greater depth and really lives inside the mind of the person. Totally enjoyable & I can't wait to hit Book 3!

I really love this series. As a fan of the superhero genre its easy to say that no new ground has been tread, but Tom Reynolds manages to make everything seem fresh. I was worried after the first book that this would devolve into YA drivel, but was pleasantly surprised at the development of Connor. Even though he's 16 you don't get the sense that he's dealing with teenage angst or hormones (most of the time I forgot he was that young until it was mentioned). He comes across as a hero who has really accepted his burden regardless of cost. This allows him to become more than the what we normally get from a follow up novel where the hero over examines if its worth it. The power system lays a unique groundwork for problems and solutions that kept me reading from cover to cover. I liked the ending. Some people didn't, but as a second act it fits right into the universe and set up more books. (Hooray)

The Second Wave is the second book in the Meta Superhero Series. I gave it five stars because it made me feel like I WAS the main character. It's written on a personal level from the viewpoint of the main character, who is a young teen who comes into possession of technology that gives him super human powers. Between juggling his personal life and his life as a superhuman, the frustration, fear and confusion that results make for a very believable and relatable character. The steady pace keeps you wanting to know what happens next without being overblown. A very good read.

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