

Chapter 1: Waking Up After Being Dead is Confusing

Neo woke up to his alarm for school feeling much better. After all, he had died the day before.

It all started with a simple trip to the store with Wyatt, the boy who lived two houses down from him who was afraid of everything. Neo didn't do much with him, but if Wyatt wanted to walk someplace alone, he often asked Neo to come with him. After all, the city wasn't really safe, not with all the super-villains who had been showing up recently. Everyone in Metford was used to super-villains attacking, and didn't think too much about it, as the super-heroes always showed up to fight them, but in the past few weeks, super-villain activity had really risen. Some people thought it was because Neo's parents had been gone for three weeks on some secret mission across the world. After all, Neo's parents were the most powerful of all super heroes.

Neo wasn't worried about them being gone so long. It wasn't the first time, and he'd heard from them two weeks before.

He walked to the store with Wyatt, who wanted to get the latest science fiction novel that had just come out by his favorite author. Neo enjoyed reading, but didn't get much time, as he spent so much time at school and so much time trying to stop gangs and thugs that weren't big enough to attract the

attention of the super-heroes. The police chief loved Neo because he'd helped so much.

Neo didn't think he was going into danger when he went to the store with Wyatt. After all, the store was only a mile away, which is why they walked. Neo did have a license, so he could drive, but it was a nice evening. Besides, Wyatt was terrified of cars. Plus, they lived downtown, so walking was practical. Many super-hero families lived downtown, as that was where they were most often needed to fight crime.

Neo and Wyatt walked down the street. The sun was setting, but the street was noisy, as usual.

They didn't make it to the store without incident. They were only blocks away when someone screamed.

Neo told Wyatt to stay where he was, and he ran around a building to see what was wrong.

A man with a knife was mugging a lady. He'd taken the lady's purse already, and she was taking off her jewelry to give it to the mugger.

"Stop!" Neo called as he ran over and jumped between the lady and the mugger.

The mugger laughed at him. "Go home, boy!" he mocked. "You are out of your league here. You can't fight me."

The statement looked very true. After all, the man was larger than Neo and looked pretty buff. That said something, because Neo wasn't a wimp. He didn't have super-strength. Honestly, he didn't really have any super-power that gave him the ability to pack a punch, but he did work out several hours a day, so he was strong.

“Give the lady her purse back,” Neo insisted. “Let’s not do this the hard way.”

The man again laughed. “Are you going to make me?”

“I don’t want to,” Neo answered, “but I will if I have to.”

“Cocky, aren’t you?” the man mocked. As he said it, he slashed at Neo with the knife. Neo grabbed his wrist, and the two started struggling over the knife.

“Call the police!” Neo ordered the lady as he fought.

The lady pulled her phone out, but before she made the call, a boy in a leather vest with almost a dozen gang members behind him came and grabbed the phone from the lady’s hand.

Two of the thugs were holding Wyatt, one holding each arm.

“We meet again,” the leader of the gang hissed. “Last time, you only survived because Maniac showed up. It seems you have no one to help you now.” He pointed to Wyatt. “Certainly this wimp will be no help.”

That was very true. Neo knew it. He looked around. A dozen against him didn’t look like a fair fight, particularly with Wyatt and a lady to protect.

Neo grabbed the purse from the mugger, kicked him to the ground, and stepped back from the gang members.

“Let’s not do this, Butch,” Neo pleaded. He knew the guy’s name, as they’d faced off before. “You know you’ll be in huge trouble if you are caught again. Aren’t you already on probation?”

Neo looked cautiously around, wishing the lady had called the police, and wishing he had super-speed. He glanced down at the mugger on the ground. The man was getting up, but instead of attacking Neo, he ran away from the gang, not even trying to get the purse back.

“Help!” Wyatt screamed. “Help!”

There was no more negotiation, as Butch and the others all attacked Neo.

Neo didn’t carry a weapon. Perhaps he should, as he got in many fights, but since he was only seventeen and not considered a full-fledged super-hero, he wasn’t allowed to. The police chief had told him that he was fine with it as long as the weapon wasn’t a deadly one.

Neo fought hard against the gang, but he took a bad beating, taking all the punches while he focused on stopping the knives.

He did get cut when one of the gang members grabbed the lady. Neo pulled the lady away from him and fought a path for her to get safely to the street where people could see her. Unfortunately, he couldn’t run off with her, as Wyatt was still caught.

Neo told the lady to call the police, then turned back to the fight to try to free Wyatt. He fought hard and managed to stay alive and conscious until the police came. Unfortunately, he wasn’t in good shape by that time. He was bruised, cut, and bleeding, but he managed to stay on his feet and keep fighting.

When the police came, Chief Foster ordered his men to round up the gang and congratulated Neo on a job well done.

He offered to take both Neo and Wyatt home. After all, it wasn't safe, and Neo was not in good shape. How he was standing was nothing short of miraculous. Of course, that was Neo's super power. He healed well and could keep fighting as long as he was conscious.

Neo figured Chief Foster could handle the situation, so he helped Wyatt to the police car. Wyatt was terrified, but rather excited to get to ride in a police car. He hopped in rather eagerly.

Neo didn't make it in. Something caught his eye. A man was hiding behind a column to the doorway of a hotel. He had twin blades drawn. Neo knew exactly who the man was, Scimitar. Scimitar had only the week before been accused of murdering a newspaper reporter. Neo had no idea why, but several people had ended up dead since his parents were out of town.

Neo put his hand on the cut on his side and put pressure on it as he walked over as silently as he could toward Scimitar.

He didn't know if Scimitar would recognize him or not. After all, his parents were well-known; he was not. He walked straight up to Scimitar and insisted, "Put the blades away. The police are right there." He pointed toward the alley.

Scimitar laughed, showing no fear of the police at all. He didn't even respond to Neo, but turned and looked at the hotel as the door opened.

Several men stepped out, and Scimitar started to make his move, so Neo tackled him to the ground.

Of course, a fight ensued. Neo was a good fighter, but bare hands against two swords was hardly a fair fight.

Unfortunately, none of the people around came to his aid. Instead, they started calling for a hero to help.

A hero did come, a man called “The Guardian.” He had super-strength and nearly impenetrable skin.

“Get out of here!” The Guardian scolded Neo. “Students aren’t supposed to try to take on super-villains.”

The Guardian had called Neo a student because Neo went to Striker Academy, a special school for people with powers.

Neo said nothing back. The Guardian could handle the situation, so he turned to go to the police car, eager to get home and sleep. After all, he healed well if he could sleep.

He didn’t make it to the car. In fact, he’d only gone about twenty feet when a lady stepped out from behind a tree without making a sound and stabbed him through the chest. He recognized the lady all too well. She wore a red and black skin-tight outfit and went by the name Scarlet Dagger.

Neo didn’t have a chance to fight her. Her strike was too clean. His world started spinning, then it went black, and he fell to the ground.

He didn’t remember anything else. Likely, he was found and declared dead. Chief Foster would give him a hard time about having to fill out the paperwork for him dying again. Perhaps not. Who knew if he was found or not.

None of that really mattered. What did matter was that it was 6:00 am, and that if he didn’t get up and get ready for

school, he wouldn't have time to do his morning workout and still get to school on time. Principal Striker wouldn't cut him a break, even if he'd been killed the night before.

Neo rolled out of bed and stretched. Actually, he felt fine. Yet, he definitely didn't want to get stabbed through the chest again. That really hurt.

He yawned and turned the light on. It would likely be a normal school day. Still, he couldn't get the events of the night before off his mind. Why was Scimitar after that man? Who was he? Even more confusing was why Scarlet Dagger was after him. He wasn't a threat to super-villains. Why would they even care if he got away?