

Hero Or Villain Proposal – Written By Searnold (5-5-08)

We all know that with great power comes great responsibility. But is it really that easy to put on a costume and put yourself in harm's way? And what happens when the ones causing the harm are your best friends? "Hero Or Villain" will take a serious look at some of the moral issues often glazed over in comic books – blurring the line between right and wrong into a difficult discussion of gray. It will follow one group's journey as they decide to become heroes or villains.

The basic plot revolves around four regular college students: Gerrard Johnson, his girlfriend Leesa Nguyen, his best friend Ben Demetaris, and his younger brother Adam Johnson. They're each at that stage where they're still trying to figure out what they want out of life and how they fit into this crazy world. Answering those questions becomes much more difficult when they suddenly find themselves with strange powers. When they go to investigate the mysterious origin of these powers, the army shows up and arrests them. It turns out Ben's father, General Demetaris, hopes to use their abilities for his own schemes. However, while in jail, they discover that their new powers make them invincible, which means the army can't tell them what to do. With great *enough* power comes the ability to do whatever you want whenever you want.

Gerrard, Ben, and Leesa decide to use their powers for their own selfish gain – leading them down a slow path towards villainy. How will Adam find the strength to stand against his friends? This question of peer pressure takes on a whole new meaning in the context of super powers. And just how far into villainy will Adam's friends fall when they realize that there is nothing anyone can do to stop them? "Hero Or Villain" will explore the good and evil natures inside all of us, and examine how, given the right situation, ordinary people can become either heroes or villains. We'll also look at what makes Adam Johnson so special that causes him to go against the grain and use his powers to uphold righteousness.

Characters:

Adam Johnson is a twenty-one year old college student who doesn't know what he wants to do with his life. He doesn't fit in with any of the stereotype crowds; he's not a jock, or a frat boy, or a nerd, or one of the theater kids. So he finds himself hanging out with his older brother Gerrard. What Adam really wants out of life is excitement and adventure, but he doesn't know how to get it – until one of Professor Steinberg's mysterious experiments gives Adam, Gerrard, Leesa, and Ben extraordinary powers. They all seem to be surrounded by some sort of strange psionic energy that makes them impervious to harm and incredibly strong. Now, finally given the chance for adventure, Adam finds himself in a moral pickle when his friends use their powers to escape from jail. It takes the coaxing of his childhood friend – Sarah Parker – to keep Adam on a righteous path and convince him that the right thing for him to do with his powers is become a hero.

Sarah Parker is Adam's closest friend and moral guide. They've known each other since forever. Gerrard even thinks of her as a little sister. She secretly has a crush on Adam, but would never risk harming their friendship. Sarah is really into comic books, but not in a geeky way. (Come on – it's okay for regular people to like comic books without becoming geeky stereotypes.) So when Adam gets these mysterious powers, she thinks it would be awesome if he became a super hero. Ultimately, it will be her friendship and support that give Adam the strength to stand up to Gerrard.

Gerrard Johnson is a laid back fairly typical college bro. Twenty-four years old, he's already been in college longer than most, and he doesn't have plans to graduate any time soon. He and Adam are quite close. Adam doesn't really fit in with any cliques, so Gerrard always encourages Adam to hang out with him and his friends. However, Gerrard doesn't realize how much affect he has on his little brother. He definitely doesn't see himself as a role model. He's not really looking towards the future as his objectives in life only go about as far as partying as hard as possible this weekend. When Gerrard finds himself with super powers, he sees it as an opportunity to continue the party indefinitely. It's important that we see that Gerrard isn't a bad person. He's not evil or malicious – just a little selfish. But he loves his brother very much, so it hurts him deeply when they find themselves at odds with each other and locked in an epic duel.

Leesa Nguyen is Gerrard's on-again-off-again girlfriend. She's an emo goth rocker who has a difficult time feeling happiness. She's bitter. She hates the world. She doesn't feel like she has any real friends. She thinks Gerrard is just using her, but is actually okay with that. Leesa craves attention causing her to resent Sarah whom Gerrard looks after like a little sister. So when Sarah suggests that Leesa should use her powers for good, Leesa goes in the exact opposite direction and feels compelled to use her powers for evil. After all, what better way to get the attention that she craves?

Ben Demetaris is Gerrard's best friend. He shares a lot of Gerrard's views about life – namely that partying is the most important thing one can do at this age. Ben has had more of a tortured past than Gerrard and Adam, who grew up in upper middle class America. Ben comes from a broken home and an abusive father, and thus has serious anger problems. Because of Gerrard and Leesa's laid back natures, Ben tends to be the leader of their group. So it is no surprise that when Ben decides to rebel against his General of a father, Gerrard and Leesa join him. Ben doesn't specifically mean anyone any harm, but he's certainly not going to let anyone stand in the way of getting what he wants.

General Demetaris is Ben's father. He's a tough guy who's used to getting what he wants. He feels the need to control everything, especially the life of his son. Unfortunately, he and his son rarely see eye to eye. Ben was never the child he wanted, and General Demetaris was never the father Ben needed. The General believes that Professor Steinberg's research has military applications – but the government deemed human testing to be unethical. So at General Demetaris' behest, Professor Steinberg sets up the "accident" that gives Adam, Gerrard, Leesa, and Ben their powers. Then – in an attempt to assert his dominance over these powers – General Demetaris has his son and friends arrested. However, the harder General Demetaris tries to control his son, the harder Ben and his friends push back.