

THE ORIGIN OF



**SWORD
MASTER**

CAPTIVES OF THE KILLER

Published in 2023

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Captives of the Killer

Book 2

The Origin of Sword Master

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THE ORIGIN OF

**SWORD
MASTER**

CAPTIVES OF THE KILLER



ALISA BEAGLEY

Character Profiles



Rifle Power



James Power



Grandfather Power



Tyler Power



Flame



Tilly Summers



Jason Young



Fiona Dan



Ninja Star



Killer Kaine



Matt Benson



Leon Charles



Baxter Jones

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Recap

Rifle and Tyler Young lose their home and family in a fire. As they run from the fire, Rifle is hit by lightning, and it deflects off him onto Tyler. Both boys receive superpowers from it: the ability to create fire with their hands. A superhero named Tiger-eye takes the twins to Power Mansion and reveals himself as James Power. He raises the twins as his own children and begins training Rifle to be a superhero. When Tiger-eye believes Rifle is ready for crimefighting, he takes him out onto the streets as his new alter ego, Sword Master. Both superheroes are attacked by a woman they later identify as Ninja Star, AKA Fiona Dan. Then, a car hits Tiger-eye, bringing their crimefighting to a stop. As James recovers from his injuries, Fiona and her niece, Tilly, visit him to order a large number of James' Power Autos vehicles. Tilly gives cookies to James. These contain a poison that makes him very sick, and after ten days of a high fever, James has finally woken up...

Chapter 1

Talking with Tilly

Rifle watched as Grandfather walked into the room, tightening his robe around him. It had been half a day since the fever lost its grip on his adopted father, James, and he hadn't spoken to anyone much since then.

'Grandfather,' James greeted the old man, a smile creeping onto his pale face as Rifle's hand slipped into his own.

'Welcome back to the land of the living,' replied Grandfather. 'Do you think you can eat something?'

'I'll try.' James nodded weakly. 'I'd say it's great to be back if I weren't feeling so awful right now.'

'You'll feel better soon,' said Rifle confidently.

Grandfather left to prepare food for James.

'I think that cookie I ate caused this,' said James suddenly.

The comment brought Rifle's mind back to the time right before James became sick, when a mysterious

business lady named Fiona and her teenaged niece, Tilly, visited them.

‘Are you delirious again? What are you talking about?’ he asked.

‘I’m not delirious,’ insisted James, ‘and I also think the cookies were intended for you. Didn’t you notice how pushy Fiona and Tilly were for you to try one?’

‘Well, yeah, I thought it was like a big deal for someone to try the homemade cookies or something,’ argued Rifle, but he could see James’ point. Tilly had made the cookies herself and insisted on at least one of her hosts trying them. Then, suspiciously soon afterwards, Fiona suggested that they eat the cookies. ‘So, you believe the cookies were infected with some kind of virus?’

‘It makes sense,’ confirmed James. He paused before adding, ‘Tilly seemed innocent enough though. Unless she’s a professional actor, I’m sure she wouldn’t have known about a secret extra ingredient in her cookies.’

‘What makes you say that?’

‘A hunch.’

Grandfather returned with a steaming bowl of soup for James. The sick man tried to eat but couldn’t manage to get past the first mouthful.

'Sorry, I can't... eat it.' James shook his head, pushing away the bowl. He buried his head in his pillow and grunted in frustration.

Grandfather shoed Rifle out of the room, telling him to let James get some rest.

Rifle scowled, blowing his messy red hair out of his eyes and glancing at the time. It was 10am. As he didn't need to go to school and would've missed it anyway, he grabbed his swords and headed to the training room. Aspects of James' sickness were beginning to make sense, but he needed to work out the rest of the details. In the meantime, he would keep himself occupied.

Rifle ran to the office and raided James' filing cabinets for Tilly's address. He knew James kept a record of every person who visited Power Mansion, and after a few moments of searching, Rifle found Fiona Dan's business card paperclipped to a neatly written note. The note stated Fiona's address, then Tilly's right underneath it. James' meticulous organisation of his office proved useful for Rifle.

Once satisfied that he'd memorised the address, Rifle rode his bike to the location and marched purposefully

up the driveway of the reasonable-sized mansion. When he knocked on the door, a brunette in her late thirties answered it.

'Hello?'

'Hi, I'm Rifle. Is Tilly here? I wanted to talk with her about the cookies she made the other day,' said Rifle with a smile.

'Oh, yes. She loves that recipe,' recalled the lady, opening the door a little wider. 'Come on in. Tilly will be down here soon.'

'Thank you.' Rifle stepped into the luxurious building. Unlike Power Mansion, Tilly's home contained many expensive decorations and elaborate furniture.

The lady led Rifle into a lounge room, and she offered him drinks and snacks. Rifle politely turned them down and waited for Tilly to arrive. Soon, Tilly bounced down the stairs into the room and stopped dead when she saw Rifle.

'Oh, it's you,' Tilly began uncertainly. 'Why have you come?'

'I wanted to ask you about your cookies,' explained Rifle.

'I'll leave you to it,' interrupted the lady, walking into another room.

'What did you put in your cookies?' asked Rifle.

Tilly, almost nervously, listed the ingredients, twisting then untwisting her ponytail of thick, black hair.

'Are you sure there wasn't anything else?' pressed Rifle.

'What does it matter to you?' Tilly frowned, her blue eyes troubled.

'After my dad ate one, he threw up, had a high fever that lasted ten days and still can't eat anything. Dad knows it's the cookie.' Rifle crossed his arms.

'All right, all right.' Tilly's face crumpled as she tried not to cry. 'I heard Aunty Fiona say after I'd been to your house that she'd contaminated the cookies. She was angry at me for giving them to Mr Power rather than to you. She said... she said that because of me, Mr Power could die.'

'The sickness almost killed him – she's right about that – and we're not out of the woods yet,' responded Rifle. 'So, was your aunty trying to kill me?'

'No, she just wanted to give you a long-lasting sickness. I have no idea why,' shrugged Tilly, angrily wiping the tears off her lightly freckled face. After a moment of composing herself, she sighed. 'I'm really sorry about your dad.'

'It's okay.' Rifle could read Tilly's body language and



knew she spoke the truth. 'I know you didn't intend for your cookies to be poisonous.'

'I didn't. In fact, I've been trying to work out what kind of poison could've been used in them. Mum thinks I make so many batches because I like eating them, but it's actually to experiment on them.'

'Have you found out anything yet?'

'I'll show you my results,' replied Tilly, leading Rifle up to her bedroom. 'I haven't had much luck yet.'

When Rifle returned to Power Mansion, he was convinced that Tilly was innocent. She seemed to genuinely want to find out the truth and fix her mistake of giving the cookies to James. Before Rifle left her house, Tilly provided him with her phone number so he could contact her if he found out anything about the cookies.

Rifle approached James, who remained resting on a bed, propped up with pillows. Rifle noticed James eating some toast, which already made him look much healthier than earlier that morning. The fact that he'd combed his previously tangled golden blond hair helped too.

James greeted Rifle with a slight smile.

'I would be helping you investigate right now if it weren't

for Grandfather's unrelenting decision that I "must totally rest". He mimicked Grandfather's voice and rolled his eyes good-naturedly.

Rifle grinned. James was exceptionally good at impersonating people.

After a couple of moments, Rifle said, 'Today, I proved your theory that Tilly didn't intend for the cookies to poison you.' As he spoke, he tucked the slip of paper with Tilly's phone number on it into his shorts' back pocket.

'How did you prove it?' James sat a little straighter, stifling his wince of pain as he moved.

'I visited Tilly and asked her about the cookies,' explained Rifle, eyeing James in concern but not commenting. 'Her body language matched up with her words, and she only knew about the poison in the cookies because her Auntie Fiona told her after they arrived home.'

'Well, I'm glad she's innocent,' nodded James, settling back into his pillows. Still, a troubled expression lingered in his green-and-gold eyes. 'I hate not knowing what all this is about. Why are we being targeted by Fiona and who is hiring her?' The corner of his mouth turned downwards as he stared at the ceiling, obviously deep in thought.

Chapter 1

'I'm sorry, Dad. I don't know.' Rifle knew James wasn't expecting an answer. 'Apart from the fact that Fiona's boss is a teenager called Killer Kaine.'

Chapter 2

Memories

Kaine turned over in bed agitatedly. It was the middle of the night, and he was supposed to be sleeping, but his mind wouldn't let him rest.

The fear and confusion when he woke up from his coma years ago weren't easily forgotten, and they haunted his dreams. The turmoil in his head had been enough to drive anyone insane, especially a mind so young and vulnerable as his.

After the coma, his mind changed, and it wasn't only emotionally. He could still see, in his mind's eye, the MRI scan of his brain, with its new circuitry visible.

'What is wrong with me?'

He begged for answers, and the only one he received was, 'We don't know. But it appears as though your brain has taken on features of a robot.'

'I know that! I can see the scans.' He could sense the bewilderment of the doctor at this, as if the adult was wondering how a seven-year-old could know what a normal MRI scan would look like, let alone one with abnormalities like these.

Suddenly, everything became overwhelming. Sounds were enhanced, electrical signals sent him messages, and everyone's emotions were as easy to read as the simplest of books. It was too much for him.

He fled from the hospital, somehow able to find the shortest way out despite having never visited the hospital before in his short life.

And now, seven years later, he knew it was because he could communicate with technology. Artificial intelligence from the robotic parts of his brain allowed him to identify even hidden emotions, by catching the tiniest muscle movements with his enhanced vision. He'd come to appreciate his new skills, but his photographic memory never allowed him a moment of peace.

Such as now, when Kaine needed to fall asleep. If only he had an off switch for his mind! Instead, it seemed endless streams of his worst memories flowed through his head like a roaring waterfall.

Despite the fact he could see in the dark well and was usually comfortable in it, he switched on the light. The brightness pushed away the images from his head. But not for long. He drifted to sleep with the light still on.

'Mum?' His eight-year-old self sat up, groggily rubbing sleep from his eyes.

'It's okay, Kaine. It's just me,' reassured his mum, Amelia. 'Just checking on you.'

'Okay.' He could sense she was telling the truth, and he relaxed slightly. 'I'm all right.'

Amelia gave a warm smile, touched his cheek softly then headed out of the room.

'I love you, Kaine. Don't you ever forget that.'

'Love you too, Mum,' murmured Kaine. He calmed down until he received information from motion sensors around the house, making him aware that someone else was heading for his room. Fast.

His dad, Jason, burst in excitedly.

'Incredible news! The university just accepted my application!' Jason grinned.

'What, at ten at night?' Kaine eyed the clock that rested on his set of drawers.

'Yes! I have an appointment the day after tomorrow for you,' explained Jason. 'I'm taking all my research on you to them, and they're going to find out everything that makes your brain the way it is.'

'What? No, no!' Kaine backed away, feeling cornered. He knew what the university tests would do to him. 'They're going to cut me open to study my brain. They'll...'

'Shhh, I won't let them harm you.' Jason moved forwards, hands outstretched.

'You don't understand. I know what's coming! They're gonna destroy me!' cried Kaine.

'They'll do no such thing,' scoffed Jason. 'Don't be ridiculous. This is your chance to fully understand what happened to you.'

'You mean your chance to understand me,' Kaine retorted. His vision blurred and turned red-hued, and he glared at Jason. His voice felt strange as he monotoned, 'The university is an evil that cannot be encouraged.'

'Your eyes.' Jason took a step backward. 'Kaine, they're glowing red. Are you feeling okay?'

'No, I am not okay. You are trying to get me killed!' Kaine's voice had risen to a shout.

'I swear I'm not!'

'Then cancel that appointment. Or I will.'

'Kaine, I can't do that. This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.' Jason was panicking, Kaine knew, but the stubborn man wasn't backing down.

'Mum! Help me!' sobbed Kaine. 'Mum!' As the tears rolled down his face, the red glow faded from his eyes.

Amelia shot into the room.

'Jason, you shouldn't be telling him these things when he's trying to sleep,' scolded Amelia. 'You're scaring him.'

'But...'

'We'll talk about this tomorrow. At a reasonable hour.' Amelia stared pointedly at her husband, who huffed and stormed out of the room. She waited until he was out of earshot before sitting on Kaine's bed. 'I'm so sorry, honey. He shouldn't have told you tonight.'

'Don't let them get me,' sniffled Kaine, snuggling close to his mum.

'You'll be fine,' soothed Amelia, stroking his pale blond hair. 'I'll talk to Dad about this.' Kaine observed she was holding back the second part... 'but I can't guarantee he'll listen.'

Kaine's mind had already calculated a way of stopping or at least delaying that dreaded appointment. It involved burning

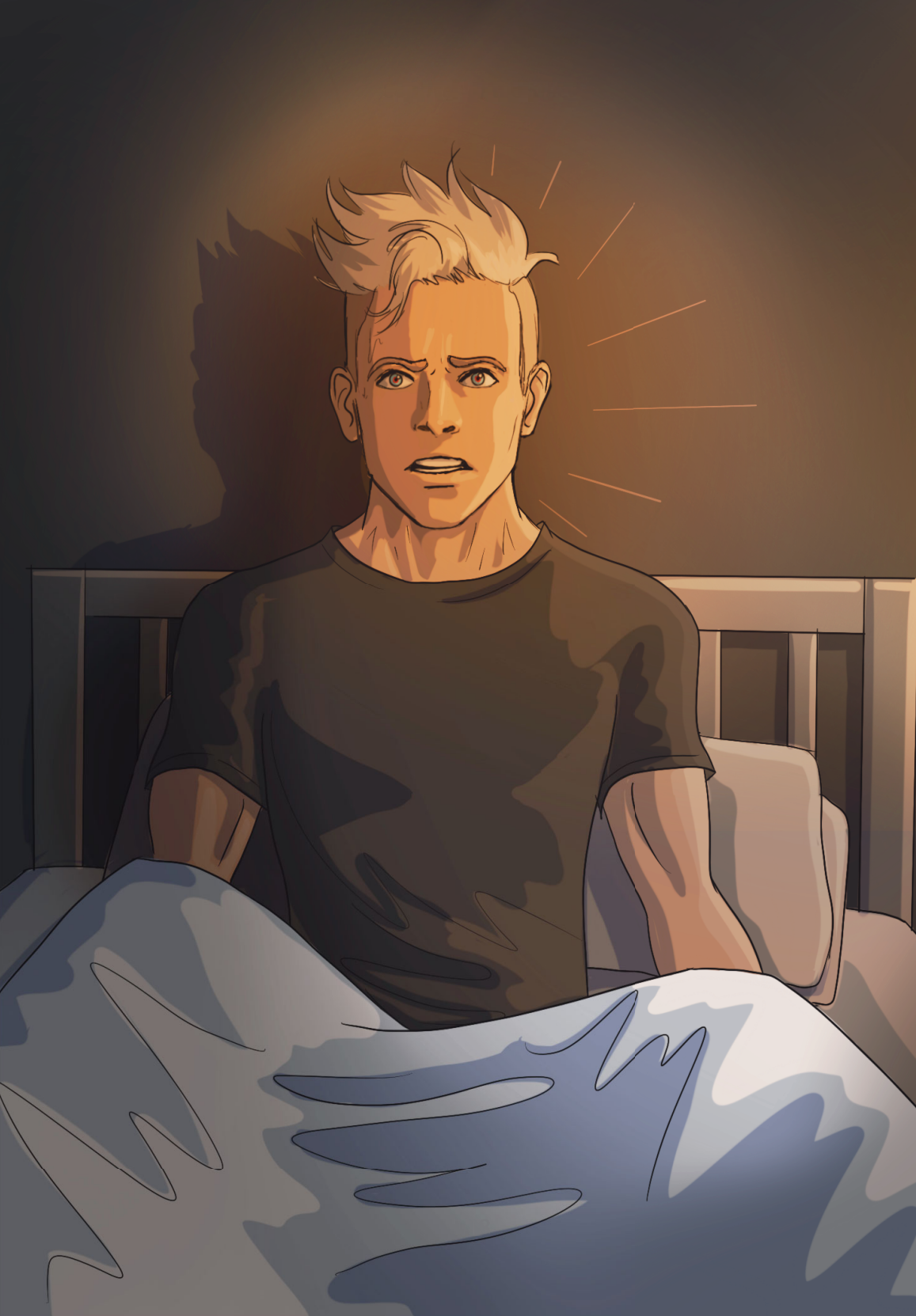


paperwork in the office to destroy all his dad's research, so the university couldn't have it easy finding out about him. Then, he'd run away from home until Jason changed his mind.

'Try to get some sleep,' whispered Amelia. 'Everything will work out okay.'

'No, it doesn't! It doesn't work out!' Kaine's eyes flew open. He glanced around in panic, instantly realising he wasn't in the dream. 'Ugh, those stupid memories,' he grumbled, his heart rate immediately beginning to slow down.

He knew the result of his ill-thought-out plan with the fire. His parents had died when it got out of control.



Kaine knew he'd saved his own life and set up a scheme that would soon be earning him millions of dollars. But he still felt anger, sadness and fear about the areas that had failed. He didn't want his parents dead. That was never a part of the plan, and now he was forced to live with the consequences of his actions.

Kaine shook his head to clear his muddled thoughts. He must stop thinking about the past. He needed a clear mind if he were to complete his plan successfully. Closing his eyes, he recruited the robot side of his brain to compartmentalise his thoughts, systematically locking away his memories where they wouldn't bother him anymore.

The sun hadn't even begun to rise above the horizon when he got up and dressed into his black-and-white robe. Killer Kaine would be ready for his plan when the time was right. And that time was imminent.