

Steve Rogers watched Warren as he talked to a hero named Batman, explaining who he was, where he came from and why he was here. The clear, two dimensional plane he was watching him through fluttered occasionally, like a ripple in water. He was standing in a void, dark and infinite, marked with stars, nebulae and spark that dance between the gaps. The currents of milky way like dust swirled and circled around him and the viewing plane, far enough that it was impossible to really judge its distance.

“How long can I keep an eye on him?” He asked the disembodied entity that had put him here.

“*Time means nothing here.*” It answered after its customary delay, as if the short response explained everything.

Shaking his head the super soldier continued watching, his view from a corner of the room, undetected and invisible. He hated skulking and watching like this, like some sort of twisted voyeur, but he needed to make sure.

When the nameless, formless entity asked if he would allow his abilities and his heroic spirit to be copied so that another hero could rise he had been hesitant. In the end, he allowed it, only after confirming he could use his boon to not just meet the hero, but also watch him for a short while, to see if he could bear the burden of Erskine's formula, and if he couldn't, then to strip it away.

He hated lying to the poor kid, especially after everything the entity had put him through, but he needed to see him act naturally, not as if his power could be stripped away. He owed Dr. Erskine to make sure his gift was passed on responsibly. The promise that the Entity would prevent it from being copied didn't hurt either.

In truth he had almost called off this whole watching process when Warren, as emotionally damaged and exhausted as he was, still tried to warn him about something. The Entity had already confirmed that he was attempting to warn him, but that there were certain rules that needed to be observed. The fact that he would eventually wake up, that he wasn't dead and stuck in purgatory had been confirmed when the Entity had first contacted him.

Steve watched the second costumed hero, a man dressed in stylized red tights with a gold lightning bolt in a white circle on his chest, seemed to be much less serious. He attempted to uplift Warren's spirits by joking with him and teasing the much more dark and stoic bat themed hero. Eventually though he had to leave, leaving Warren alone to weather the man's interrogation.

The questions went on for a while, until eventually the dark hero was satisfied. He left without much fanfare, the speedster in red, who had returned some time after he left, leaving not long after. The screen slowly faded to black, the last visible image being Warren as he laid back down on the hospital bed, a doctor coming in to finish his examination. The pane of glass

was dark for a while before regaining its color in a swirl of blurry images that slowly solidified into one scene.

Warren was training, using his 'Earthbending' to move, crush and shatter rocks, stone and boulders. He was smiling, clearly enjoying the thrill of unleashing his abilities. After a long series of moves he took a break, smiling as he caught his breath.

Eventually he recovered and began cleaning up the mess he had made, filling in holes and crushing slabs of rock he had pulled from the earth into gravel. After he was done he made his way back to a warehouse, where a woman he eventually called Black Canary, dressed in a rather interesting outfit, put him through his paces, testing his capabilities.

"He is slightly weaker than me." Steve said, looking around. "Why is that?"

*"Age. He will grow into his full potential over time."* The entity answered coldly.

Steve simply nodded and kept watching, the young man making his way out of the warehouse. It didn't take long for Warren and the other boy, Superboy, to head to a clear space to spar.

The fight devolved almost immediately, with Warren keeping a relatively cool head but Superboy getting more and more angry. Warren handled the anger well, if not with a bit too much dramatic flair. When Superboy gave up and walked away Steve frowned.

"Who is Superman?"

*"Clark Kent, one of the most powerful heroes on Earth-2361-DC, who Superboy is, in part, a clone of."*

"Clone?"

*"A genetic duplicate made from a DNA sample."*

"Why? No, never mind, it doesn't matter." He said, waving his own question away. "Why is Superboy so upset about it?"

*"Clark Kent has refused to acknowledge him due to confusion and awkwardness."*

Steve couldn't help but shake his head. Looks like drama followed heroes everywhere. The scene spun forward, skipping and reverting to just after Warren wakes from Manhunters mental examination.

"Dammit!" He cursed, listening and watching Warren crack around the seams as Martian Manhunter and Black Canary broke the news. He whirled and faced the nebulous void around

him, pointing at the screen. "Are you trying to make a villain? Because this? This is how you make a villain! He is already struggling with being torn from his family, now this? If Warren breaks it will be on your head!"

*"We are aware." The voice responded, quicker than usual but not instantly. "The suffering that Warren Reeves underwent is unfortunate. We are starting to understand more about the consequences of us creating heroes in such a method."*

"Does that mean you're going to stop?"

*"No." The voice replied instantly. "We will simply ask permission first."*

For a moment Steve looked into the sparking and spotted void, before looking back to the plane.

"It's a start."

The image sped up again, following Warren as he climbed onto a rock and sank into meditation. For a moment Steve wondered if the image was frozen, opening his mouth to comment before the entity spoke first, surprising in its own right.

*"We provided him with a teacher for his earthbending ability. It is a non sentient artificial construct he gains access to by meditating."*

Steve closed his mouth, watching as the green Martian girl made her way to Warren, watching for a few minutes, probably a bit longer than was socially savvy. She chewed her lip and looked around nervously before eventually stepping closer and calling out his name. It took a few tries before Warren eventually shifted, looking at the girl and smiling.

"What's her deal?"

*"M'gann M'orzz. A G'arrunn, a white Martian. She is forty eight and currently suffering from the first stages of R'dorum C'ranum, mental connection withdrawal. Symptoms include erratic and obsessive behavior, difficulty regulating thoughts, impulsiveness, and possible issues with empathy and self moderation if it becomes extreme over time."*

"Holy hell... wait, forty eight? Why is she on a team with kids?"

*"Martians of Earth-2361-DC age slowly. She is considered an adolescent, around Warren age psychologically."*

"Oh..." He responded, continuing to watch the two interact, speaking up when Warren offered to help with her problem. "Will that help?"

*“Yes. While over time she would have learned to adapt, without a deeper connection to ground her she would have suffered for quite a long time. The team eventually would have seen the use of telepathic communication but that would have been insufficient.”*

“‘Would have’?” Steve asked, looking around again. “What do you mean ‘would have’?”

*“This is one version of Earth-2361-DC, technically Earth-2361-DC followed by a designation consisting of several quintillion alphanumeric characters.”* The entity explained. *“This one in particular now has the extended designation of Earth-2361-DC-WR-01. Warren Reeves is an outside element, unique to all other versions. We said ‘would have’ because we know what would have happened, many versions were observed before pulling Warren from his home reality and sending him there.”*

“Right... okay...” Steve said, trying to wrap his mind around what the Entity was telling him, choosing to instead focus on the plane in front of him.

Once again the image sped up, this time getting faster and faster. He watched snap shots of moments Warren experienced, watching him try and make his way through the new world. Steve couldn't help but feel a little proud when Warren outlined his plan to his teammates, winning their hearts through a rousing speech.

“How much of that was my influence?” He asked as the feed spun up again.

*“His confidence, calmness and a few other aspects were indeed influenced by the imprint.”* The entity answered. *“But Warren Reeves does not lack heart. He would have gone on to be a successful pillar of his community had he not died.”*

Steve nodded and continued watching, smiling at the increasing closeness between M'gann M'orzz and Warren.

“We can skip these moments. I feel voyeuristic enough as it is.”

Without comment the image cut and skipped to another moment, now of Warren supporting Superboy, doing his best to help. Steve couldn't help but shake his head. Before he could comment the voice spoke again.

*“There is nothing we can do. Warren Reeves has already received his boons, his scales are balanced. Any trips to Earth-2361-DC-WR-01 would be one way only. And you are needed in your own reality, Steve Rogers.”*

Despite the temptation, Steve nodded his head, flashes of images rolling through his head, fading quickly. He had already gotten a taste for his future and the Entity wasn't wrong. Still, a fresh start was tempting.

Shaking his head he focused on the plane again, watching as the images changed. Now focused on the team, once again in some sort of meeting. He watched as the group of young heroes voted for one Warrens plan, unanimously agreeing.

"I think he is going to be okay." Steve said with a smile, watching as the team discussed plans and ideas.

*"We cannot say." The entity replied. "While infinite instances of Earth-2361-DC have occurred and will occur, Earth-2361-DC-WR-01 is, again, unique. We do not know what will happen."*

"Maybe... But I have faith." He responded with a smile. "Warren is settling in, making friends and recovering from the trauma you put him through. He is strong, smart and has a good heart from what you've shown me. He is going to be okay."

The image on the viewing plane jumped, fluttering even harder for a moment before settling. Now it was focused on the team, minus Warren. An introduction that was short and clearly left M'gann wanting more. Another skip and the team was fighting some sort of large black and red humanoid, controlling the wind and lightning. They struggled against it before finally succeeding. It skipped to a mission, the teams first. With a little stumbling, stumbling that could have been avoided, they managed to get back on track, adapting to bad intel. Clips spun by faster and faster, moments of connection, team building and of success and of more than a few failures.

Eventually the plane snapped off and fizzled away into dust, fading into the void of starry blackness around him.

*"Are you satisfied then?"* The entity asked.

"Yes, Erskines formula is safe in Warren's hands."

*"Very well. Then it is time for you to return to your reality." The entity said. "Your boon has been paid."*

"Thank you." Steve said, nodding to where he thought the voice was coming from.

*"Unfortunately, We cannot allow you to keep your memories of this." It explained. "Your universe is closed and these memories, and the memories you retained by being connected to other versions of yourself would be a severe contamination."*

"Fine." Steve said with a nod, knowing that he really didn't have any choice. "I'm ready when you are."

*"Farewell Steve Rogers of Earth-3891-MCU-CW-01."* The entity said, as the infinite space around him began to fade.

"Wait, what does that mean?" He called out, the floor suddenly gone, the super soldier free floating in space. It felt cold, but it was quickly warming up. "CW-01 means it's unique right? What does MCU stand for?"

The entity was silent as his consciousness faded and his memory was cleared, all the way back to when it asked for his permission, the hero still frozen in ice. With surprising care and gentleness Steve Rogers' soul was placed back in his body.

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Steve slowly awoke, his eyes still closed. He could feel the soft bed under him, feel the warmth of a blanket around him. He slowly opened his eyes, looking at a plain white ceiling. For a long moment he said and did nothing, his mind slowly starting up. His body was sore and heavy, resisting his orders to sit up. Before he could work out how to do it he felt a squeeze on his hand.

He looked over and saw the most beautiful sight he had ever seen. Peggy Carter, watching over him with a soft smile.

"Peggy?" He said, his voice just as tired as the rest of him. "What... What's going on?"

"Oh Steve. You can't imagine how wonderful it is to hear your voice again." She said, a tear trailing down her face. "I'm sorry, but a lot has happened without you Steve. You have a lot to catch up on."