

Chapter 2 - Wake up call

The slow steady beep of an EKG machine, as well as slow and steady breathing were the only sounds in the private hospital room. Suddenly the door opened and three individuals entered. The first was a doctor, followed by two men dressed in costumed outfits. One man was in a red suit with yellow accents, while the other was in a black and gray suit, a long black cape on his back. The doctor seemed nervous but spoke anyway, focusing on his clipboard.

“His metabolism is elevated, anything we gave him was cleaned out of his body incredibly fast. His muscles are incredibly dense, as are his bones. We called it in when we realized something was up.” The doctor explained before continuing. “He shows no signs of hypothermia and any minor frostbite he might have experienced while encased in ice was healed before we even got a chance to check for it. No head trauma either. We have no idea why he is still unconscious.”

“And the blood samples?” Batman asked.

“All samples were accounted for and destroyed.” The doctor answered truthfully.

“I’ll check that myself.” The dark knight responded.

Slowly he walked further into the room, looming over the unconscious form of Warren Reeves. After a moment he reached down and moved the unconscious patient's arm, using a small syringe to draw his own sample of blood before slotting it back into his utility belt.

“So, who is he Bats?”

“We don’t know.” He admitted. “He has been going by Warren Reeves according to a local garage that he works at, but so far I haven't been able to identify him. He has no records I could find, and the name turns up nothing.”

“So it's an alias?”

“Potentially. But so far facial recognition doesn't go back more than a few months. Before that, nothing.”

“So we have a mystery kid, clearly a metahuman of some kind.” Flash said, zipping to the opposite side of the bed. “He popped out of nowhere and threw himself in front of Captain Cold to save a mother and her child.”

“We don't know who he is.” Batman said before turning to the doctor. “I want to be notified the moment he starts to stir. Flash, I want you to be here when he wakes up.”

“No problem, I want to be here to thank him.” Flash agreed, the doctor nodding behind him. “The mom might have been okay but her baby would not have survived being encased in ice.”

Batman nodded, pulling out a small handheld scanner and waving it slowly over the unconscious young adult. As he moved the scanner he watched the screen, which failed to show any inconsistencies or anomalous energy sources. After a moment more the device beeped, having completed its scan. He collapsed the device and returned it to his belt, turning to the Flash.

“I've gotten what I need.” He said. “I'll be in touch.”

----- The next morning -----

I faded into consciousness slowly, unfamiliar sounds greeting me as my brain slowly kicked on. When I was finally awake enough to recognize the sound of a beeping hospital room I opened my eyes, slowly looking around. I was tucked into a hospital bed, connected to machines, an IV in my arm. Any fogginess I felt faded quickly, and I slowly sat up in my bed, sliding to the edge.

I took a long deep breath, holding it for a moment before letting it back out. Gone was the weight of foreign instincts and memories. I could feel some knowledge lingering, but it felt much more natural, completely lacking the alieness that threatened to overwhelm me. I was still me again. Maybe with a bit extra, but I was still me and I would remain that way.

Before I could figure out what I was going to do next the door to my room opened, a nurse rushing in only to gasp.

“Oh my god you're awake already! Why are you sitting young man? You've been out for two days, you shouldn't be exerting yourself like that!”

The nurse rushed to my side, guiding me back onto the bed fully. I let her, not wanting to give away how quickly I was recovering. When I was laid back she straightened and headed to the door, sticking her head out.

“Jenna, get Dr. Tokim here, tell him his patient is awake.” She called out to someone close by before returning to my side, starting to check my hook ups.

“You're lucky you didn't tear out your IV.” She said, checking it again before smiling at me. “That can be dangerous, but you're fine.”

“I was careful.” I assured her. “How long was I out for?”

“You were brought in two days ago, it's July sixth.” She answered.

“That long?”

“Mhmm! When you got here you were already unconscious. A few hours later we realized we couldn't get you out of it. Dr. Tokim will be able to explain it better. Until then, is everything alright, does anything feel off? Any pain, confusion, nausea?”

“No, I feel fine.” I said, smiling at the older woman. “Honestly I'm a bit hungry but that's it.”

“Well then, I'll go get you some food when Dr. Tokim gets here.” The nurse responded with a smile.

“You'd better make that a double serving.” A voice said with a chuckle, getting both the nurses and my attention. “Hello Warren, my name is Dr. Tokim, I'm the doctor in charge of your stay here.”

The doctor, a middle aged man with black hair and a short goatee walked to my bed, standing on the opposite side as the nurse. He smiled and started reading from his clipboard, checking multiple sheets.

“Alice go ahead and get him some food, make sure it's something substantial.” He said, looking up from his clipboard to smile at the nurse. “Warren here needs some extra calories.”

The nurse smiled, patting my arm before leaving quickly, shutting the door behind her. The doctor looked back down at me, pulling a nearby stool to sit on.

“I'm glad to see you awake Warren, we noticed you were transitioning to a normal sleep state late last night, but decided to let you wake up naturally.”

“Uh... how do you know my name?” I asked, knowing I had no ID for them to check and no records here as far as I knew.

“Ah, well you see, after your little incident with Captain Cold, the Flash left his details behind so he could meet you when you woke up. When you wouldn't wake up we did some blood work and realized that you were more than a little unique.”

I sat up when they mentioned blood work, my eyes going wide. I had no idea if someone having a sample of my blood could reverse engineer the super soldier serum. I needed to get the samples back before someone got their hands on it. I was clearly showing signs of panic because the doctor put his hand on my shoulder.

“Relax, when we realized something was going on we got in contact with the Flash to see if he had any idea what it was. He got in contact with Batman through the League and he rolled

through our lab like a hurricane, even after I assured him all of the samples were destroyed. I'll tell you, that man is intimidating as all get out. He took a vial of blood himself before he left. You can ask him what he did with it when he gets here."

I slowly processed what the doctor was telling me. It appeared that part of my secret was out, but with any luck no one managed to get a sample of my blood. Well, other than Batman, who's name I recognized from my research. I needed to discuss it with him, maybe he would be able to tell me if someone could accidentally create Red Skull or worse from my blood.

"When can I leave?" I asked.

"Well, that depends on how you're doing. Batman left strict instructions that he wanted to see you when you woke up as well. Both him and the Flash are on their way. The Flash should get here any moment. He can answer more of your questions."

"Uh... Thanks. I-"

The door to my room opened, and Nurse Alice returned with a tray of food. She laid it down on an overbed table, sliding it over me so I could get to it without getting up. Two sandwiches sat on the tray, along with an apple, a bag of chips and a pudding cup. I couldn't help but smile.

"Thank you." I said sincerely, picking up a sandwich and taking a large bite.

"Of course. I'll be nearby so I'll check up on you in a little while."

As she left the doctor took out his stethoscope as well as retrieving a blood pressure band.

"While we are waiting, why don't we check your vitals."

Over the next few minutes the doctor went over my vitals, checked my pupils and all sorts of tests, all while I quickly polished off my meal. Before he could start testing my reflexes there was a quick series of knocks at the door. I looked at the doctor who gestured that it was up to me. I cleared my throat before talking.

"Uh...come on in." I called out, feeling awkward in the hospital bed.

The door opened, revealing the Flash standing in the doorway. He stepped into the room with a big smile.

"Looks like the hero is awake!" He said happily, walking at a normal speed to my bed. "Glad that ice blast didn't keep you down for long."

"Uh... thanks. I just did what was right." I shook my head, a bit flustered but quickly recovering.

“And I appreciate that. As do the two people you saved.” He said reassuringly, before smiling again. “You made quite an impression. Imagine my surprise when I got a call from Dr Tokim here saying that your bloodwork came back weird and that you were some type of meta human.”

“Yeah... about that. How much do you know?” I asked, looking from the Flash back to the doctor.

“Well, you clearly heal at an accelerated rate. Your metabolism is elevated as well. Your muscles are more dense, you weigh quite a bit more than you really should and your brain activity is pretty high as well.” Dr Tokim explained, leafing through his clipboard.

“You also don't appear on any database we could access, which through the League is basically all of them.” Flash added, now leaning against the wall. “Which is what really got Batman's attention.”

“Batman, he is from Gotham, right?” I asked, recalling one of my many research sessions in the library. “Base human? Scares criminals?”

“That's right.” Flash confirmed. “Though you're forgetting the part about knowing a terrifying amount of martial arts. He'll be here in a few minutes.”

“I thought Gotham was along the east coast?” I asked. “How is he getting here so fast?”

“We have our ways.” The Flash answered with a smirk. “Plus the good doctor here warned us you were waking up.”

“Oh... well thanks.” I said, not really sure how I felt about my doctor calling a pair of super heroes randomly without my permission. Though I suppose they were legitimate peace keepers with the UN backing. I was beginning to realize why Steve's instincts had felt that research was so important.

“Just a fair warning, Batman can be a bit... intense.” Flash warned, smiling still. “Don't let him scare you though, he is really a big softie.”

“I bet.” I said, a bit of sarcasm leaking in before my nervousness cut through. “So...What do you want from me?”

“We want to know who you are, and where you came from.”

We all jerked, startled by the deep voice coming from the now open doorway. I had to fight myself to keep from rolling out of my bed. Standing in the doorway was a tall costumed man that no one had noticed. His suit was dark gray, with a yellow belt and a stylized bat symbol on his chest. He wore a black cape draped around his shoulders that connected to his spiked cowl.

He looked at Dr. Tokim, who stood nervously and quickly went to leave the room, only to be blocked by the caped hero..

“Do not forget Dr. Tokim. Not a word of your findings to anyone.” He said simply, before standing aside and letting him pass.

I watched my doctor leave with a frown before sitting up again, not liking the vulnerable position I was in on the bed. I slid to the side, sitting at the edge of the bed with my bare feet touching the floor. I watched as Batman walked around in front of me, standing in front of Flash with a seriously stern expression.

“What is your name?” He asked bluntly. “And why can't we find any records of you anywhere?”

I studied them both for a moment, swallowing my nervousness as I looked into their eyes. I knew that they were both trusted members of this realities superhero community and members of the frequently praised Justice League.

“Is... is this room secure?” I ask them both before focusing on Batman. “I'll share but some of it is stuff that shouldn't get out.”

“It is.” The gray and black clad man answered simply.

“Alright. My name is Warren Reeves. I'm... not from this reality.” I admitted, waiting for the disbelief.

“That would explain him not existing until a few months ago.” Flash pointed out. “How do you know you're not from this reality? And how did you get here?”

“Wait... you guys believe me? Just like that?”

“No.” Batman answered. “We have no reason to believe you yet. But interreality travel isn't unheard of.”

“I... Suppose it wouldn't be...” I responded, trailing off.

“How do you know you're in a different reality?”

“You mean besides being in an entirely different place? I'm from a reality where superpowers, meta humans and super tech doesn't exist.” I explained after a moment of recovery. “At least not outside of comic books.”

“How did you get here?”

"I... I was chosen. I don't know why, or how, or by what." I explained, cutting off the next question. "My last memory was staring down the barrel of a bank robber's gun. Then I woke up in a void with some voice telling me I had been chosen. I don't know why it picked me."

The Flash put his hand on Batman's shoulder, almost like he was holding him back, before looking at me. It seemed like the Flash was the good cop to Batman's bad cop. I wonder if he even realized.

"I'm sorry you got pulled away like that. I can't imagine how difficult this has been for you. How old are you?"

"I'm eighteen." I answered simply. "I just graduated."

I saw Flash's eyes go a bit wide for a moment, but couldn't read Batman's face at all, though my gut told me he was surprised as well.

"I know I don't look like it." I explained, answering the unasked question. "It is a side effect of... what they did to me."

"They' as in the people who took you?" The speedster asked, clearly not approving of whoever did this to me. "What did they do?"

I winced and spent a moment trying to get my thoughts in order. I couldn't help but let out a sigh that while I could tell my thoughts were still more clear than before my "adventure" began, what Steve Rogers would have said didn't immediately press down on me.

"Well...It's a bit of a story." I admitted before continuing when Flash gave me an encouraging nod. "They said that they were going to give me power so I could be a hero. They talked like this was some sort of gift, like they were sending me on an adventure."

I focused on unclenching my fist, taking a deep breath. When I was ready I continued, my voice thick with bitterness and frustration.

"They gave me the abilities of a hero from a different reality, one I was familiar with because it seemed to be mirrored in our comics and movies."

"You mean the powers or the hero?"

"The hero. He is a pretty well known character, kind of like a pinnacle of heroism named Steve Rogers. He was kind of like Superman, but not nearly as powerful. His powers come from a super soldier serum, he was supposedly slightly past peak human performance, but everything about him was magnified. His strength, his mind, his personality. And I got the same treatment. But for some reason they also gave me his spirit, some of his thoughts, personality and memories. They almost overwhelmed me, almost erased me. But I managed to hold on and

struggle through. When I pushed back they scaled some of it back, but there was still so much of him inside my head... I felt like I was constantly in danger of being overwritten.”

As I talked it started to flow out of me, like a cascading effect that was hard to stop. I wanted to talk about how terrible it was, how scared I was of losing myself, but I took another deep breath, steadying myself.

“When I saw that woman and her kid about to be caught up in that fight I released my hold for a moment, letting him take over so I could save them.”

“This hero, he fought with a shield?” Batman asked, his face still stern but he seemed to be looming less.

“Y-yeah, it was a big part of his concept. The shield had special properties that let it block most impacts easily. How did you know?”

“You were frozen in a specific position, like you were holding something to protect yourself.”

“Oh. Yeah I brought my arm up but I don't have a shield like his.”

“Are you still being pressured by this hero's memories?” The Flash asked, now clearly concerned. “We have a few people who might be able to help with that.”

“No, it's been reduced a lot.” I explained. “When I was knocked out by the blast I got to talk to Steve. Apparently it was his boon for letting the copy happen. We managed to convince the entity that did this that it was basically torturing me. It agreed to lessen the amount of influence on my mind, but Steve pushed for more, a boon to make up for the suffering it put me through.”

“A boon?”

“Yeah, the entity seemed to be pretty intent on boons. But he didn't ask for anything in return, they considered it payment for my pain.”

“What did you ask for?” The Flash asked.

“I asked for another power, something from a different universe. A type of Geokinetic ability that works through martial arts called earthbending. It has some asian influences and I think I'm going to have to learn a lot. I'm starting out as a novice but the entity said I have the potential to be a master someday.”

“Why?” Flash asked, seemingly genuinely curious. “You didn't seem like you were that interested in the hero scene, so why not just ask for a billion dollars?”

“Because I am interested in being a hero... maybe.” I explained, shrugging in uncertainty. “If I do it would be at my own speed, as my own choice. I was terrified that submitting to any of Steve's instincts would give them a better hold on me. I haven't eaten pizza since I got here because when I did, some alien portion of my mind lamented that it wasn't as good as new york pizza. Every time I walk by something beautiful I got the urge to sketch it. I never learned how to draw, I don't have an artistic bone in my body! My body felt too light without a shield on my back that I had never actually held. I felt love sick for a woman that I've never met and doesn't even exist in this reality, or the one I came from!”

The Flash reached forward and put his hand on my shoulder, giving it a gentle squeeze. I stopped and took a deep breath, closing my eyes until I had calmed down. When my heart stopped thundering in my chest I continued.

“The point is I don't know what I want. But with the influence gone, my enhanced body and earthbending I can choose my own path. Money can't buy that.”

“I'm still concerned about this entity.” Batman asked after a long pause. “It didn't demand anything, and you didn't make a bargain with it?”

“No. It didn't ask for anything. It congratulated me for being chosen before violating my personhood. When it finally understood it was hurting me it offered compensation.”

The room was quiet for a moment as Batman studied me closely. I could practically feel his eyes on mine, watching and waiting for the slightest twitch. Eventually I couldn't take it any more.

“D-do you have any more questions?”

“Yes.”

“Sorry buddy, he is just getting started.” Flash said, taking a step back to sit down in one of the padded chairs. “You should probably get comfortable.”