



MARVEL STUDIOS

THE  
INFINITY  
SAGA

FROM IRON MAN TO  
AVENGERS: ENDGAME

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CREATED ESPECIALLY FOR  
KEVIN



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THE  
**INFINITY**  
SAGA

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**ESPECIALLY FOR KEVIN**

Hope you enjoy this book

From Nikki xxx

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"Before creation itself, there were six singularities. Then the universe exploded into existence, and the remnants of these systems were forged into concentrated ingots... Infinity Stones."

—THE COLLECTOR

## TONSBERG, NORWAY, 1942

Inside an ancient building in the town square stood an elderly caretaker. Suddenly the ancient structure quaked and the great wooden doors were demolished, leaving a gaping hole in the front of the great stone hallway and knocking the caretaker to the floor. In this new doorway could be seen, illuminated by moonlight, a single man in a Nazi officer's uniform. His name was Johann Schmidt and he strode into the ruin with an air of authority which made the caretaker extremely nervous.

Offering to spare the village in return for "The Tesseract, the jewel of Odin's treasure room," Schmidt convinced the caretaker to give up its true location. The frail old man pointed to a secret panel in the wall. As soon as it was opened the powerful blue glow from the Tesseract lit up the night. This is what would help win the war. Schmidt gave the order to shell the village and shot the caretaker, taking the Tesseract with him into the night.



# THE FIRST AVENGER

Steve always felt small around the other boys, mainly because, physically, he was. Steve was much shorter than average, with a slight frame, and he weighed in at just under a hundred pounds. He had difficulty breathing the polluted New York City air and was easily winded. His cheeks looked hollow, and he was so thin that his eyes nearly bulged from his skull. But those same eyes revealed another side of Steve. He was filled with kindness, compassion, and a need to defend what was right and just. If Steve had any power at all, it was not in his body, but in his soul. With the Second World War still raging in Europe, Steve knew he had to volunteer.

The army, however, was not interested in what Steve believed in, so much as what he could do. And after a brief physical exam, they determined he couldn't do much. He'd be more of a liability on the battlefield than an asset. For Steve's own good, and the good of the other soldiers, the army refused to allow him to enlist. Steve tried his luck again and again, each time at a different recruitment center. But he always failed his physical. Though it seemed as if his luck would never change, Steve refused to give up hope.

The night before Bucky, Steve's best friend, was set to leave for the army, he and Steve went out on a double date to the World Exhibition of Tomorrow — a World's Fair that was part science show and part amusement park. Bucky and the girls he'd brought along wanted to see the Stark Industries exhibition. The world-renowned inventor Howard Stark was going

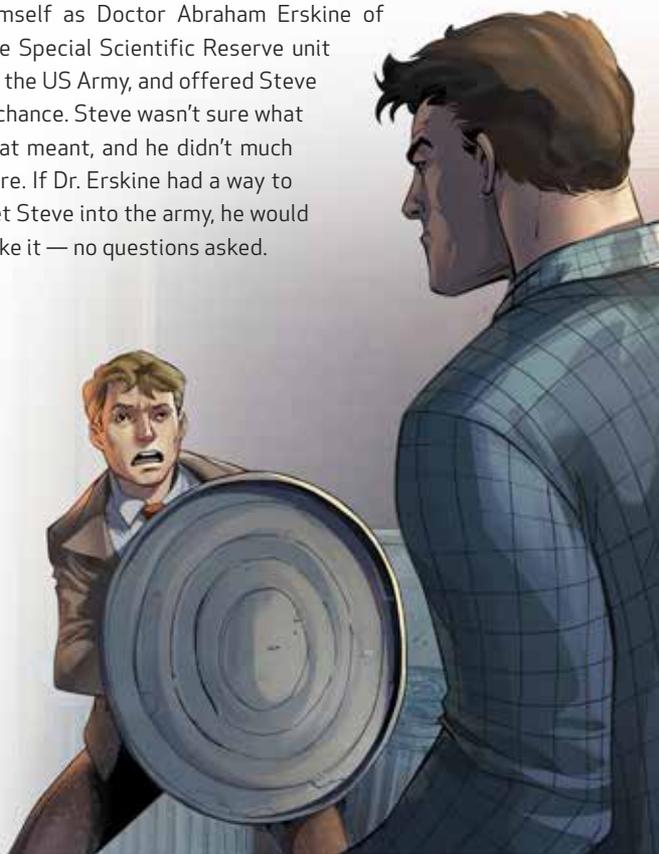
to personally present some of his latest creations.

But despite the amazing display of futuristic technologies, Steve wandered away from the others and approached the exhibition's army-recruiting center. Bucky asked Steve to forget about enlisting — at least for now. But Steve just smiled and shook his head. Bucky sighed, seeming to know that nothing would change his friend's mind. The two hugged, not sure if they'd ever see each other again, and each began a new journey.

Bucky was off to war, and Steve was walking into the sixth battle of his own personal war — a battle to be allowed to fight.

Inside the center, while Steve was waiting for his physical exam, an old, bearded man in a lab coat and glasses walked in.

"So, five exams in five tries, in five different cities," He said in a thick German accent. He introduced himself as Doctor Abraham Erskine of the Special Scientific Reserve unit of the US Army, and offered Steve a chance. Steve wasn't sure what that meant, and he didn't much care. If Dr. Erskine had a way to get Steve into the army, he would take it — no questions asked.



## ESPECIALLY FOR KEVIN

The chance that Dr. Erskine had offered Steve was to take part in a clandestine experiment called Project: Rebirth. For years, the government had been working on a project that would deliver them a soldier who was stronger, more agile, and more adept than even their best men. Steve, having proved he had the heart, would be awarded the body.

Steve trained at a boot camp under the command of Colonel Phillips and beautiful British agent Peggy Carter. As usual the group of men Steve trained with were taller, healthier, and fitter than he was. Steve struggled to keep up during training runs and obstacle courses. But Dr. Erskine could see something in Steve that others didn't — a fire in his eyes and a desire to do the right thing. On Steve's final day at training camp, a grenade was dropped in the middle of the trainees.

"Grenade!" cried Colonel Phillips.

Every soldier fled. Except one. Steve jumped on the grenade to save his fellow soldiers. But the grenade didn't go off. It had been a test — and Steve had passed. For all his physical shortcomings, he had exactly what it would take to become the best man the army had — a Super-Soldier.

That evening, alone in the barracks, Dr. Erskine spoke to Steve. He told Steve of his time back in Germany. Johann Schmidt, the head of Hydra, Hitler's research division, had forced Dr Erskine to develop a strength serum which made Schmidt strong, but there were complications with the procedure.

"The serum amplifies everything that is inside. Good becomes great. Bad becomes worse. This is why you were chosen," Dr Erskine said.

The very next day, Steve, Dr. Erskine, Colonel Phillips and British agent Peggy Carter arrived in a secret lab under an old antiques shop in Brooklyn. In the lab a crowd of scientists — one of whom was Howard Stark — and government officials had gathered to watch.

Steve allowed himself to be strapped to a table within a chamber. Soon its doors sealed shut around him. Mr. Stark pulled a lever, and several doses of serum were administered through a special device. Then Mr. Stark turned a dial to administer vita rays — to control Steve's muscle growth. An unearthly wail came from inside the chamber — and some in the group called out to stop the experiment. But Steve hollered from his confines, telling them not to stop. The lights began to flicker — some even burst. Finally, the doors of the airtight chamber opened with a low hiss, and Steve emerged.

Agent Carter found herself blushing. Steve, who had entered the lab a weak and sickly kid, was now the fittest soldier in the US Army. But before any celebrating could commence, an explosion rocked the lab's control booth. Then one of the observers pulled a gun from his jacket — it was a Hydra spy. He shot Dr. Erskine in the chest, killing him, then he grabbed the only remaining vial of serum and fled. Steve rushed off to avenge the only man who had ever believed in him.

Steve ran faster than any human being ever had. His new powerful body allowed him to catch the Hydra agent — but the vial of serum was broken in the process. The spy warned Steve that he and his agency, Hydra, could not be stopped. Then he bit down on a poison capsule and choked, taking his own life before Steve could question him any further.

When Steve regrouped with Colonel Phillips and Agent Carter, Phillips decided that one super-soldier was not enough. Newspapers had reported on his heroics chasing the Hydra spy, and so Steve was offered a different military job — performing shows around the country as a character called Captain America.

"The Captain," wore a bright red, white, and blue costume with a star emblazoned on the chest. The costume was made complete by a coat-of-arms-shaped shield adorned with stars and stripes. His shows were a huge success. Steve was doing his part, but he still felt like he should be doing more — especially given his abilities. He finally did get to Europe but not the way he'd been hoping for.

At a USO performance in Italy, Steve discovered that his best friend, Bucky, was part of a battalion that appeared to have been lost in battle. Steve was not one to disobey orders, but he knew that if Bucky was still alive, Steve might be his only chance. With Agent Carter's and Howard Stark's help, Steve disobeyed orders, boarded one of Stark's jets, and headed for the coordinates where Bucky's division had last been seen.

As they neared enemy territory, blasts sounded around Stark's plane and the craft began to rock. Steve told Stark and Carter to fly to safety, then he opened a hatch and leaped from the plane, parachuting through enemy fire and into a Hydra munitions factory. Steve knocked out each Hydra agent he came across, looking for the POWs from Bucky's division. When he finally found the prisoners Steve used all his strength to set them free. But Bucky wasn't with them — and the building had begun to self-destruct.



## ESPECIALLY FOR KEVIN

While vaulting over a collapsing beam, Steve saw a man laid out on a stretcher. Rushing over he saw it was Bucky! Bucky was woozy and confused, but able to walk, so the two quickly raced to escape the building before it was fully destroyed.

A tall, imposing man blocked their path. As Steve met his eyes, he recognized him as Johann Schmidt, Hydra's chief officer. Steve and Schmidt began to battle, but when Steve landed a punch on Schmidt's face, the Hydra officer's skin appeared to slide out of place. Schmidt tore a layer of false skin from his face and revealed himself as he truly was — a man with a gruesome red skull for a head. The Red Skull left Bucky and the Captain to burn but eventually they escaped the collapsing building and made their way back to base.

When they arrived, Steve found himself in the unfamiliar position of being respected, trusted, and admired. Colonel Phillips even allowed Steve to assemble a squad called the Howling Commandos to identify and destroy all of Hydra's bases. In the months that followed, Steve became the man he always knew he could be. One by one, Captain America and his commandos eradicated every Hydra base on the map. The army outfitted Steve with a unique suit and Howard Stark bestowed upon him an unbreakable vibranium shield, painted to match his uniform.

Then one day, on a particularly dangerous mission aboard a train running through the Alps, Steve lost his best friend. Bucky, struggling to hang on to the side of the train as it traveled over a gorge, fell from the side and plummeted into the abyss before Steve's eyes. Though the loss hit him hard, Peggy made Steve realize he had to continue his fight against Hydra. Steve pressed on even further, taking out Hydra

agents left and right. He would not relent until he had the opportunity to combat the Red Skull.

Steve soon got his chance, when he cornered the Red Skull aboard a hulking Hydra aircraft. The two men battled bitterly, and then Steve did something that turned the tide of the fight. He tossed his shield, which crashed into a lighted power supply in the center of the ship. The supply crackled with energy. Something was obviously very wrong.

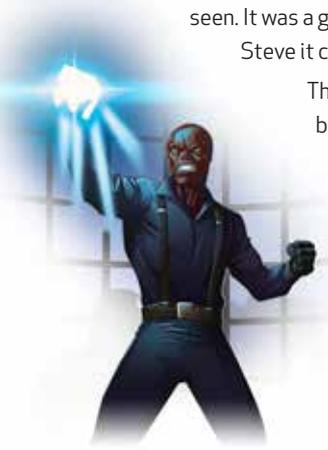
Red Skull rushed to pick up something that had fallen from the vessel — it was unlike anything Steve had ever seen. It was a glowing blue cube, and the Red Skull told Steve it contained unimaginable power.

The Red Skull lifted the cube, which began to pulse with power — too much power. A beam of blue light shot down from the heavens and absorbed Schmidt. The Red Skull and everything around him was vaporised. Everything but the cube itself, which burned all the way through the aircraft's thick metal and plummeted to the Earth below. Steve rushed to gain control of the listing aircraft. He noticed on a monitor that

the ship was loaded with explosives and locked on a target — New York City. It would be impossible to land, and even more difficult to deactivate the ship's weaponry. There was only one way to handle the situation. Steve radioed Agent Carter at base. He told her of his plan to crash land in the Arctic. The last thing he did was to ask her on a date.

Not long after Steve's final flight, victory was declared in Europe and shortly thereafter on the Pacific front. The battles were won, the war was over. And so was the age of the Super-Soldier, the age of the Super Hero.

Or so it seemed.



# OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA, 1992

Erik had only ever known the run-down apartment block where he lived with his father, but he often wondered what his life would have been like had he been raised in his father's homeland. And so, not for the first time, he asked his father to tell him a story of home.

N'Jobu spoke honestly to his young son, "Millions of years ago, a meteorite made of Vibranium, the strongest substance in the universe, struck the continent of Africa, affecting the plant life around it. And when the time of man came, five tribes settled on it and called it Wakanda. The tribes lived in constant war with each other until a warrior shaman received a vision from the Panther Goddess Bast, who led him to the Heart-Shaped Herb, a plant that granted him superhuman strength, speed and instincts. The warrior became king and the first Black Panther, the protector of Wakanda. Four tribes agreed to live under the king's rule, but the Jabari Tribe isolated themselves in the mountains. The Wakandans used Vibranium to develop technology more advanced than any other nation. But as Wakanda thrived, the world around it descended further into chaos. To keep Vibranium safe, the Wakandans vowed to hide in plain sight, keeping the truth of their power from the outside world."

N'Jobu had rehearsed his story well, for parts of their history, and their present, did not sit right with his conscience. He looked at his son, who perfectly summed up what was wrong with Wakanda.

"And we still hide, Baba?" Erik asked. "Why?"

End of  
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