

Marvel Manifestor

Chapter 211 - 211 – Forcibly Breaking the Barrier

The four of them were now certain of one thing—they had fallen into a trap.

What they couldn't understand was why them.

If the goal had simply been to kill the four of them, Amon could have acted long ago. Why wait until now?

They began examining the barrier, but no matter how they looked at it, they couldn't make sense of it. The patterns and symbols etched into the barrier were not written in any known demonic language.

"Wong, open a portal," Lucas suddenly said. "Let's get out of here first and talk later."

Only then did Wong smack his forehead. He'd completely overlooked the simplest solution. With a Kamar-Taj sorcerer present, why bother studying the barrier at all? A portal would solve everything.

He casually reached for his waist—

And froze.

His expression changed instantly. Wong quickly searched his entire body.

"The sling ring is gone."

He let out a sigh. There was no need to guess—it had obviously been stolen by Sister Agatha. Whoever was behind this had come fully prepared; they even understood Wong's abilities inside and out.

The others sighed as well, but Lucas suddenly realized something.

I can teleport too.

The Phoenix abilities he possessed granted him short-range teleportation—how had he forgotten that?

Without hesitation, Lucas circulated his magic. Flames flared beneath his feet, and in the next instant, his figure vanished.

A split second later, flames flashed again—

Bang!

Lucas slammed directly into the tower door, his body practically embedded in it. After a moment, he slid down slowly.

Covering his reddened nose, Lucas stood up awkwardly.

"Damn it."

Even teleportation had failed.

He immediately cursed the damn system in his heart—what kind of garbage skill was this?

Now everyone was out of options. The only two people capable of spatial movement were both shut down.

Did that mean they really had to forcibly destroy the barrier?

...Wait.

Why couldn't they?

Almost as if sharing the same thought, the four of them realized they had all been overthinking it. Instead of finding clever solutions, they'd completely ignored the simplest one.

As long as they used overwhelming force to disrupt the balance of the barrier, it would collapse on its own.

By now, night was slowly falling.

The group discussed their options carefully. If they destroyed the barrier recklessly, the tower itself might collapse, so ideally they needed to find the core of the formation.

They searched the entire tower, practically peeling the walls apart—but still found nothing resembling a formation core.

"In that case," Daimon said, spreading his hand, "let's just smash it."

A trident appeared in his grasp, glowing with an eerie crimson light that made it hard to look directly at.

"Agreed," Elsa said immediately.

Wong nodded as well.

"Alright," Lucas said. "Then I'm starting. Be ready."

As he spoke, wind, lightning, and fire magic gathered around his body. He planned to fuse all three and break the barrier with maximum destructive power.

Strictly speaking, Lucas's strongest attack was still the Zodiac Meteor—but that was out of the question. A meteor falling from the sky would wipe out all four of them along with the tower.

That would be a very stupid way to end things.

After glancing at the others, Lucas raised his hand sharply.

Wind blades wrapped around raging flames, instantly forming a violent firestorm.

Fire fed on the wind, and scorching heat flooded the tower. The inferno evaporated all moisture in the air, and the ancient books and documents burst into flames one after another.

Rumble—!

Brilliant flashes of light erupted as bolts of lightning joined the firestorm. In an instant, the storm transformed into something resembling a natural disaster—howling winds, raging flames, and lightning tearing through everything in their path.

The most primal forces were always the most violent.

Inside the narrow tower, the apocalyptic scene unfolded in full. The interior was reduced to chaos, stones crashing down as the barrier began flickering with unstable light.

"Now!"

Lucas roared, pointing toward the door.

The storm screamed as it slammed into the barrier.

The barrier flared bright red, resisting the assault—but the lightning within the storm struck relentlessly, tearing into it again and again.

The barrier held for only a few breaths before shattering completely.

Immediately, the entire tower began shaking violently. Countless chunks of stone rained down from above.

"Move—now!"

Lucas shouted.

The storm exploded outward, obliterating the front wall of the tower and creating a massive breach.

Wong grabbed Elsa and vanished in a flash. Daimon followed, hellfire engulfing his body as he disappeared, then reappeared beside them like a meteor crashing down.

Crash—!

At that moment, the top of the tower collapsed, smashing down toward the entrance.

Lucas glanced upward, flames flashing beneath his feet as he vanished from the tower.

Boom!

The tower fell.

The ancient structure—nearly a thousand years old—collapsed into ruins, officially erased from the face of the Earth.

Lucas reappeared beside the others.

The tower was now nothing but rubble.

"It's time we got some answers," Elsa said, scanning their surroundings.

Night had fully fallen, yet the monastery remained unnaturally silent. The collapse of the tower should have drawn everyone's attention—but not a single person came out to investigate.

"Looks like everyone in this monastery is involved," Wong said grimly.

Indeed, the monastery was pitch black—no lights, no movement—like a beast with its jaws wide open.

The group headed straight for the prayer hall, the monastery's main chamber and the only place where light remained.

Bang!

Daimon kicked the door open.

The hall was packed.

Every single person inside was a nun.

They all turned toward Lucas and the others in unison, their faces filled with twisted devotion and fanaticism.

"You're finally here," Sister Agatha said calmly. "The ritual is about to begin. You are all the protagonists this time."

She wore a pristine new nun's habit, a cross hanging from her neck—

Upside down.

The rest of the nuns, both full members and novices alike, were dressed in pure white robes, each wearing the same inverted cross.

An inverted cross—the symbol of demons, a declaration of defiance against God.

"They're all radiating demonic auras," Daimon whispered. "They've already been possessed."

"Your perception is very sharp, Daimon," Sister Agatha said with a smile. "All four of you are essential to this ritual. You are the key to Amon's descent into the human world."

She walked forward calmly, showing no fear of Daimon or the others.

Daimon was about to strike—

But Sister Agatha walked past him and stopped directly in front of Lucas.

"Come with me," she said softly, taking Lucas's hand.

"You are the core of this ritual."

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Chapter 212 - 212 – The Truth Behind the Scenes

Following Sister Agatha, Lucas was led to the very center of the hall. A complex magic array had already been drawn there, and at its center lay a blood-red book, resting quietly.

It was the Blood Book.

Unlike before, it had returned to its original appearance, no longer dark and blackened.

"That book... isn't that—"

The other three, who had also stepped closer, recognized it at once.

"That's right," Sister Agatha said. "It is the Blood Book. It has now been fully activated and awaits only the chosen vessel of Lord Amon to open it."

She guided Lucas to the very heart of the array.

"Open the Blood Book, Lucas. You will receive Amon's favor. You will become the one and only king of this world. You will possess everything!"

Her expression was fanatical as she knelt before him, as though praying.

At the same time, all the nuns dropped to their knees in unison, gazing at Lucas with devout reverence.

At last, everything became clear.

The reason they had been brought here—it was all a trap. Amon required a perfect vessel to descend into the world, and that vessel...

Was Lucas.

"Archbishop, how long are you planning to hide?" Lucas said calmly, turning toward a shadowed corner. "You're the one behind all this, aren't you?"

In that corner lingered a dense demonic aura—along with a presence Lucas knew all too well.

As his words fell, a figure stepped forward.

It was the archbishop, dressed in his purple robes.

"Heh... I have to say, you're very perceptive, Lucas," the archbishop said with a smile. "It seems Lord Amon made the right choice."

Not a trace of injury remained on his body, as if he had never been wounded at all.

"So you were the mastermind all along," Elsa demanded coldly. "Was everything from the beginning a lie? How can you face your faith? How can you face your God?"

"Faith? God?"

The archbishop suddenly burst into laughter.

"Let Him rot in hell!"

His eyes burned crimson as he stared at Elsa.

"I devoted my entire life to Him. I gave Him my body and soul, treated Him as my one and only truth. But when I was dying—when I was struck with a terminal illness—did He answer my prayers? No. He turned a blind eye to His most loyal servant! What use is such a God?!"

His voice grew increasingly hysterical as he gestured wildly.

"When I was at my lowest, only Lord Amon responded. He gave me life again. He gave me a healthy body."

"So you abandoned God?" Daimon said coldly. "Abandoned a lifetime of belief? And for that, you slaughtered innocents?"

Even as a demon himself, Daimon despised demons above all else.

"Abandoned God?" the archbishop roared. "He abandoned me first!"

He stepped up to the array and looked straight at Lucas.

"Do you know why I chose you?"

Lucas met his gaze without fear, his expression calm and unreadable.

"Because of your strength. Your presence during the Battle of New York was unforgettable. That primal power within you perfectly matches Lord Amon. Being chosen as His vessel is your honor."

The archbishop's eyes turned completely black as demonic energy surged violently around him.

"And you three are just as indispensable to the ritual."

He pointed at Daimon.

"You—son of Satan—possess an innate, immense demonic aura, capable of guiding Lord Amon's true spirit so He may descend accurately into this vessel."

Then his gaze shifted to Elsa.

"And the Bloodstone on your chest will allow Lord Amon to adapt more quickly to His new body."

Finally, he looked at Wong.

"As for you, sorcerer of Kamar-Taj—you can veil the dimensional web, ensuring Lord Amon's spirit reaches Earth without interference."

The archbishop spread his arms wide. A tidal wave of demonic energy erupted as Amon's sigil appeared on his forehead.

"Bring the girl."

At his command, a nun stepped forward carrying the unconscious Jenny, placing her beside the Blood Book.

"She was the first to be possessed by Amon. Her blood is the catalyst that activates the Blood Book."

Excitement filled the archbishop's face as he reached toward Jenny's wrist.

Just as his nails were about to pierce her skin, Lucas spoke.

"What happened to the Knights Templar stationed outside?"

The archbishop paused.

"You're still concerned about them?" he sneered. "They've already become Lord Amon's meal."

One sentence sealed their fate.

"Well then," Lucas said casually, "since you've explained everything, there's nothing left to discuss. Wong—did you record all of this?"

He turned his head.

On Wong's chest was a tiny camera, no larger than a pearl.

A product of S.H.I.E.L.D. technology. After the New York incident, Skye had "borrowed" quite a few useful gadgets, and this camera was one of them. Everything it recorded would be stored internally.

Wong flashed an OK sign.

Before coming here, Lucas had given him the camera so the entire process could be documented as evidence for the Vatican. Otherwise, no one would believe that an entire monastery had fallen to demonic corruption.

The archbishop waved dismissively.

"There's no need. Today, all of you will kneel at Lord Amon's feet and become His most faithful followers!"

As he spoke, he moved to slash Jenny's wrist.

Suddenly—

Lucas seized the archbishop's arm.

"Now that everything's clear, you can rest in peace," Lucas said coldly. "Go worship your Amon in hell."

The Judicator appeared in his hand in an instant, the muzzle pressed under the archbishop's chin.

Bang!

The archbishop's head exploded, dissolving into a pool of blood.

"ROAR—!!"

Seeing this, Sister Agatha let out a furious howl. Demonic energy surged from her body as razor-sharp claws extended from her hands, and grotesque wings burst from her back.

"Kill them!"

At her command, every nun transformed into a demon and charged toward the other three.

Lucas couldn't help but feel confused. He had merely killed the archbishop—so why would these demons abandon Amon's grand plan and attack him directly? Was the ritual impossible without the archbishop?

There was no time to think.

Agatha's claws were already upon him.

Clang!

Lucas raised his arm. A pair of blazing crimson wings unfurled instantly, blocking her strike.

He dismissed the Judicator as the Ultimate Divine Weapon appeared in his grasp.

Three slashes.

Three arcs of blazing sword energy tore through the air, striking Agatha squarely in the chest and cleaving her body into four pieces.

With Agatha's death, the remaining demons grew even more frenzied.

Wong had already deployed a magical shield, punching through demons one after another. Despite being known as "melee mages," the sorcerers of Kamar-Taj were anything but weak—Wong's shield strikes landed with crushing force, every blow a devastating impact.

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Chapter 213 - 213 – The Monastery Sinks

Daimon was engulfed in hellfire, trident in hand, looking every bit like a great demon of Hell. For a moment, it was hard to tell whether he or the demonized nuns were the real demons.

Elsa, by contrast, was far more composed. She didn't engage in close combat at all. The longsword Ulysses had left her remained sheathed, while she calmly raised the rune-engraved hunting rifle and fired again and again, each shot precisely dropping a demon nun.

Lucas spread his hand, and countless wind blades burst forth, shooting in all directions. At the same time, green spectral claw-shadows appeared one after another, relentlessly harvesting the demons around him. Not a single demon was able to come within three feet of his body.

"Hellfire!"

Daimon suddenly roared. In an instant, violent flames erupted from his body, expanding outward like a blazing ring. Any demon touched by the fire was instantly reduced to ashes.

In just a few breaths, every demon inside the prayer hall was incinerated by the hellfire. The monastery fell silent once more.

"Are you alright?"

Elsa stepped forward and helped up the heavily panting Daimon. He was drenched in sweat, clearly exhausted, and the bracelet on his wrist had once again burned his skin black.

Daimon shook his head. "It's nothing. Just drained."

"Honestly," Lucas said, glancing at Daimon's wrist, "that bracelet of yours—if you ask me, you'd be better off taking it off. It suppresses your strength and hurts you at the same time. What's the point of keeping it?"

If the Church had tried to put something like that on him, Lucas would have flipped the entire Vatican upside down and erased it from the map.

"I can't," Daimon replied, instinctively touching the bracelet. "It's part of my agreement with the Vatican. As long as I wear it, they guarantee my sister won't be targeted by demons."

If it weren't for his sister, he wouldn't wear this thing even if he were paid to.

Lucas shrugged and said nothing more. Family matters weren't something an outsider should comment on.

After a brief discussion, the four split up and conducted a thorough search of the entire monastery. Once they confirmed that there were no survivors and no remaining demons, they regrouped at the dock where they had first landed.

Their boat was still there, miraculously undamaged, ready to take them away.

"Did you find your sling ring?" Lucas asked Wong, who was holding Jenny, as they boarded the boat.

Wong shook his head. "No. Looks like I'll be punished again—probably sent to watch over the library."

Lucas burst out laughing. Wong's aggrieved expression made him look like a scolded child.

The engine started, and Daimon slowly steered the boat away from the island.

"I don't think there's any reason for this monastery to continue existing," Lucas said, gazing at the island growing smaller in the distance. "Let everything here come to an end."

He raised his hand.

Magic surged violently from within him, and a black vortex appeared high above the island.

"Zodiac Meteor."

Lucas spoke softly.

From within the vortex, a blazing crimson meteor slowly emerged, then slammed straight down toward the monastery.

Boom—!!

A massive mushroom cloud rose into the sky. Under the impact, the island began to sink into the sea, and the monastery was obliterated in an instant.

The explosion and the island's collapse churned the previously calm sea into violent waves.

"Get out of here—now!" Elsa shouted.

She knew that a massive whirlpool would soon form, and their boat would stand no chance if they lingered.

Lucas instinctively shrank his neck. He had completely overlooked what would happen after the island sank—a vortex capable of swallowing everything.

Daimon pushed the throttle to its limit, fleeing the area at full speed, terrified they might be dragged into the depths if they were even a moment too slow.

They escaped the danger zone without incident. Only then did Daimon slow the boat and resume normal sailing.

By the time they reached the harbor, it was already past midnight. Jenny was still unconscious as Wong carried her to meet the Church personnel waiting at the dock.

When informed that the monastery had sunk, the Church representatives were visibly shocked. But when they learned that every nun—including the purple-robed archbishop—had been possessed by demons under Amon's command, they were utterly stunned. The idea that a purple-robed archbishop could fall to demonic possession was simply unbelievable to them.

Lucas had expected this reaction.

The Church's arrogance made it impossible for them to accept that their own clergy—devout believers, messengers of God—could be corrupted by demons.

Only after watching the recorded footage did they finally have no choice but to accept the truth.

That very night, an urgent report and the video evidence were sent to the Vatican.

Before long, orders came down from the Holy See: the agent was to bring Lucas and the others back to the Vatican immediately.

Early the next morning, the four boarded a Church jet once more and returned to Vatican City.

They dozed fitfully on the plane and were in poor spirits, sitting listlessly in the conference room afterward. Lucas even had his eyes closed, on the verge of falling asleep.

Soon, a cardinal entered the room.

"I have reviewed the footage," he said solemnly. "Regarding this incident, the Church offers its deepest apologies. This was our failure—we did not discover that a purple-robed archbishop had been possessed by a demon."

After viewing the footage the night before, the Vatican had convened an emergency meeting. Even the Pope had been alerted. A high-ranking clergyman being possessed by a demon—let alone willingly serving one—was the first such case since the dark ages of the Middle Ages. It was enough to shake the entire world.

The Pope immediately ordered the incident sealed. To the outside world, the monastery would be reported as having sunk due to an earthquake.

At the same time, the four hired exorcists were to be recalled. No matter the method, the Church was determined to ensure that the truth did not leak. If necessary, any means would be used.

Seeing that none of the four spoke—each of them looking half-asleep—the cardinal quietly began weighing how to ensure their silence.

Daimon was easy. He already had an agreement with the Church, and unless he wanted his sister to suffer, he wouldn't speak.

Next was Wong. As a sorcerer of Kamar-Taj, he rarely appeared before the public anyway. That was not a concern.

Third was Elsa Bloodstone. After a moment's thought, the cardinal relaxed. As Ulysses Bloodstone's daughter and a professional monster hunter, her professional ethics were trustworthy. Mercenaries did not betray their employers—this was common ground.

That left only one person.

Lucas.

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### Chapter 214 - 214 – The Vatican's Calculations

In the end, Lucas was the only one left.

The cardinal looked at Lucas, who was slumped over the table. To be honest, not just the cardinal, but the Vatican as a whole knew almost nothing about him. The reason they had been able to involve him in the first place was entirely due to the purple-robed archbishop's personal actions. Lucas was not a traditional monster hunter, nor was he particularly famous within hunting circles. Because of that, the cardinal couldn't read him at all—neither his mindset nor his way of doing things.

While the cardinal was still pondering how to handle him, Lucas had already fallen asleep, even letting out soft snores.

As everyone knew, drowsiness was contagious. With Lucas sleeping so soundly, the other three soon couldn't hold on either. Their eyelids grew heavier and heavier, as if glued together.

At that point, the cardinal stopped wasting time and spoke directly.

"You've all returned to the Vatican overnight. You must be exhausted. Please, go rest for now."

No one argued. They were far too tired. Familiar with the place by now, they returned to the rooms the Vatican had prepared for them and were soon snoring away.

Taking advantage of this time, the cardinal began thinking about how to deal with Lucas. He had already assumed that Lucas would not easily agree to keep this matter secret—though in reality, Lucas couldn't care less.

After a good night's sleep, everyone gathered in the conference room once more.

The cardinal sat in his usual seat, looking at them calmly.

"This is the reward previously promised to you."

With a wave of his hand, a priest behind him stepped forward carrying a tray.

On the tray lay four gold coins, each about an inch in diameter. The front was engraved with a knight, the back with the cross of the Knights Templar—the very coin they had been promised.

Each of them took a coin.

To most people, this coin was indeed valuable. But to Wong, a sorcerer of Kamar-Taj, it was no different from an ordinary gold coin.

Back when the reward had been proposed, the Ancient One had not refused it. The coin itself wasn't valuable in monetary terms; its true worth lay in what it represented. To Kamar-Taj, this coin symbolized a favor owed by the Vatican.

That was precisely why the Ancient One had chosen to accept it. Otherwise, with her stature, she would never have asked for any reward.

Lucas toyed with the coin for a moment, then stored it in his backpack space. There was nothing special about it—just a symbol.

The cardinal continued, "Regarding this incident, we ask that you all keep it confidential. After all, it concerns the Church's reputation. We hope you won't spread this matter further."

His words were polite, but there was a clear hint of threat in his eyes.

Lucas glanced at him and asked casually, "Your Eminence, what exactly does this coin do?"

The cardinal chuckled. "Aside from being an honor, as long as there is a church, you will be granted protection. All churches will open their doors to you, and the Vatican will remember your contributions."

Lucas nodded, then tossed the coin back to the cardinal.

"I'll use this coin to exchange for the public disclosure of the truth behind this incident."

The cardinal's expression immediately changed, his tone turning sharp.

"So you intend to reject the Vatican's goodwill?"

Lucas laughed loudly. "I've got a bad habit—I don't like being threatened. Didn't you just say that anyone holding this coin would be welcomed by the Church? Why go back on your word so quickly?"

The cardinal froze.

As Lucas said, the significance of the coin was enormous. Under normal circumstances, Lucas's request wouldn't have been excessive at all. But this time was different.

If the cardinal refused, then the so-called Knights Templar coin would become a joke. If he agreed, the Vatican's reputation would be ruined.

Even as a cardinal with immense authority, he didn't know how to respond.

"Haha... you misunderstand," the cardinal said smoothly. "I would never threaten you. This is simply a misunderstanding. If my words earlier caused any offense, then I sincerely apologize."

The apology sounded pleasant enough, but there was no sincerity in his eyes. It was nothing more than a concession forced by the situation.

Someone of his status—how could he truly apologize to a few lowly hired hunters? He was a cardinal, wielding immense power. How could he be wrong? If there was a mistake, then it must have been these damned hunters.

But of course, those thoughts stayed in his head. If things truly escalated, even he wouldn't be able to bear the consequences. If these hunters made a scene in the Vatican, his position would be finished.

Lucas shot the cardinal a sideways glance and sneered.

"I can't accept this coin. Why don't you offer something else? I prefer cash."

He had no desire to have any ties with the Vatican. In his eyes, the Church was nothing more than a tool used by rulers to brainwash the masses—a fact made painfully clear by its actions during the Middle Ages. A leopard couldn't change its spots; the modern Church wasn't much better.

The cardinal, shrewd as he was, immediately understood Lucas's meaning. He also knew the amount couldn't be small—otherwise, it wouldn't be enough to keep Lucas quiet.

He smiled faintly. Since it was about money, that was easy. If there was one thing the Vatican had in abundance, it was money.

With great generosity, he transferred Lucas one million US dollars—most of it purely to buy his silence.

Lucas accepted it without hesitation. Only after seeing the money deposited into his account did he smile in satisfaction.

"Any other instructions, Your Eminence? If not, I'll be leaving. The beds here are too soft—I don't sleep well on them."

The cardinal smiled as well. "If you wish to rest, then I won't trouble you further."

Lucas turned to Elsa, Wong, and Daimon.

"I'm heading out. Let's stay in touch."

They had already added each other as contacts. These days, social platforms were convenient—even if Lucas didn't enjoy using them, they worked well enough as communication tools.

After saying goodbye, Lucas vanished directly into the Chocobo Space. The cardinal froze for a moment, realizing he had still underestimated him.

Inside the Chocobo Space, Lucas soaked blissfully in a hot spring, while Onion lounged in the bird enclosure, basking in the sun. Man and bird enjoyed a rare moment of leisure.

Lucas didn't rush back to the agency. He planned to relax in the space for a while. During this time, Skye and Gwen frequently returned as well. Gwen lived in a school dorm—how could that compare to a luxury villa in the space? Naturally, she stayed here almost every day.

As for Skye, she was simply bored. The agency was empty all day with only her there. Lucas was gone, and Natasha was nowhere to be seen.

If the boss wasn't around, what difference did it make whether the agency was open or not?

So Skye simply closed it and stayed in the Chocobo Space with Lucas—fishing, hiking, and enjoying the mountains and water. With scenery like this, it felt just like a vacation.

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More than a month had passed since the monastery incident.

Lucas had once again returned to a life of sitting in a chair all day, spacing out. He honestly couldn't understand it—other hunters were busy to the point of exhaustion, yet he was so idle he was practically growing mold.

He had registered on that so-called hunter website ages ago, but not a single commission had come his way. He couldn't help but wonder how Skye had signed him up in the first place—maybe she'd accidentally registered him as site maintenance staff.

Skye, on the other hand, was busier than ever. Her reputation online had grown steadily, to the point where even major corporations were hiring her to maintain their networks. She enjoyed it immensely. After all, being able to turn one's hobby into a job was rare, and she happened to be one of the lucky few.

In that entire month, Skye had only taken on one job—but that single job had earned Lucas over a million dollars. She was basically a walking money printer, a little goddess of wealth.

Life continued day by day. Time, after all, was the ultimate heartbreaker—it never stopped for anyone.

Then one day, Lucas received a call from Tony.

That old guy had cooked up a brand-new suit of armor again, but he'd run into a problem: he was short on raw materials. So he wanted to pick Lucas's brain about Wakanda.

When Lucas arrived at Tony's place, the man was busy tweaking parameters on a massive screen. As a first-rate academic underachiever, Lucas couldn't understand a single thing he was looking at.

"Come up with another crazy idea?" Lucas asked, plopping down on the couch.

Burgers and fries had already been set out on the table—clearly, Tony had been waiting for him to eat together.

After finishing the final adjustments, Tony finally wandered over and took a huge bite out of a burger.

"Ever heard of liquid metal?" Tony said. "I'm thinking of trying to turn vibranium into liquid metal."

That made Lucas pause. This guy was already researching liquid metal—and on top of that, he wanted to liquefy vibranium? Was he kidding?

"Then go research it. Don't tell me you're short on vibranium?"

Tony nodded hard, wearing a you guessed it expression.

"Exactly. I'm running out. And I can't get in touch with Ulysses Klaue anymore. Looks like I'll have to make a trip to Wakanda."

For someone like Tony—both a capitalist and a scientist—if there were materials to be had, he would buy them without hesitation. Money? That was never the problem. Tony Stark might lack many things, but cash wasn't one of them.

As Tony's longtime frenemy, how could Lucas not know what he was thinking? But this time, it really wasn't about money.

Wakanda was the global leader in technological advancement. They could completely cure cancer. That alone put them on a different level. Would a nation like that be short on cash? Not to mention, they sat on a unique vibranium mine—one of a kind in the world. Did they really need his money?

"Isn't Wakanda's location marked right on the map?" Lucas said. "They're even a UN member state. It shouldn't be hard to find."

He genuinely didn't understand. Anyone could find Wakanda on a map, and he refused to believe Tony's intelligence network was worse than his.

"Just tell me if you're helping or not," Tony said. "I am Tony Stark—Iron Man—the true hero in the hearts of the people, the defender of Ameri—"

"Alright, alright, enough!" Lucas cut him off. "Just say what you want."

If Tony kept hyping himself up like that, Lucas was going to feel an overwhelming urge to shoot him.

"I want you to come to Wakanda with me," Tony said, swallowing the last bite of his burger.

"Ohhh~ So you don't dare go alone~" Lucas grinned mischievously.

So even the great Iron Man, Tony Stark, had things he was afraid of.

"No! Absolutely not!" Tony denied it immediately, fast and firm. "I'm Iron Man—why would I be scared? I just think going alone would be... rude. Yes, rude! And traveling alone is lonely anyway. I'm taking you so you can broaden your horizons. Otherwise, you'll rot at home and start growing mushrooms."

Lucas laughed so hard he nearly bent over backward. Now it was Tony who looked like he wanted to shoot him.

"Are you going or not?!" Tony crossed his arms, striking a if you don't go, I'll jump off the building pose.

"I'm in. When do we leave?" Lucas asked.

"I'll call you. I need to prep a bit—within the next few days."

Only then did Tony look satisfied. He sat back down, ordered a few more burger combos, and the two of them dug in.

Three days later, they boarded Tony's private jet and headed for Wakanda.

Along the way, Tony showed Lucas his latest research成果—Portable Armor 2.0.

Although it wasn't the vibranium suit, it was built from an ultra-strong alloy. Aside from energy weapons, it carried no physical armaments at all. Tony had begun deliberately moving away from conventional weapons and focusing on energy-based systems.

This suit also came in the form of a briefcase, but it was far more compact than the old bulky one. It supported remote control as well—under JARVIS's management, it could actively locate Tony's position. Sentry mode was still included.

In short, even if Tony lost the case or didn't have it on him, it could locate him on its own.

The flight from New York to Wakanda took over ten hours.

Since Tony and Pepper had made their relationship official, his private jet was no longer staffed with sexy flight attendants. Instead, it was equipped with the latest gaming consoles, along with every game currently on the market—all courtesy of Tony. There was no chance of boredom.

By the time they arrived at Wakanda's airport, both Lucas and Tony had been asleep the entire time. They were woken up by the flight crew.

Still groggy, the two of them went straight to the hotel they had booked in advance.

Although Wakanda claimed to the outside world that it was a backward agricultural nation, its tourism industry was thriving. Tony had directly booked two of the best suites in the best hotel Wakanda had to offer.

After a good night's sleep and a hearty meal, the two of them began their search for the real Wakanda.

They hired a local guide—a man dressed in traditional Wakandan attire, wrapped in a checkered cloth that looked suspiciously like a bedsheet.

But Lucas knew better.

That was no ordinary cloth—it was vibranium-woven, essentially a portable shield. Super bulletproof.

The guide drove them around in a doorless jeep, taking them to Wakanda's famous tourist spots. The vast grasslands in particular stretched endlessly, home to many rare wild animals.

They spent an entire day touring without finding a single clue—no sign whatsoever of Wakandan technology.

"You sure Wakanda is technologically advanced?" Tony said, exhausted. "It's been a whole day, and all I've seen are tents."

He really was tired. A full day of sightseeing, and that jeep was practically falling apart. The seat was so hard it nearly broke his ass.

"Relax," Lucas said calmly. "I've already got a lead. Our guide isn't as simple as he looks."

He voiced his suspicion.

In truth, there was barely any need for suspicion. Every Wakandan knew what their country really was like. The people on the surface were essentially Wakanda's outer sentries—there to put on a show, and more importantly, to monitor tourists and prevent them from accidentally wandering into the real Wakanda.

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Chapter 216 - 216 – Black Panther T'Challa

"Are you serious?" Tony said. "I don't see anything wrong with that guide. If anything, he seemed pretty enthusiastic."

Naturally, Tony couldn't tell that the guide was wrapped head to toe in advanced technology.

"Let's observe him a bit longer," Lucas replied calmly. "Seeing the real Wakanda was never going to be easy."

The two of them returned to their respective rooms to rest.

Around midnight, both Lucas and Tony jolted awake at the same time. A low, buzzing hum passed overhead—quiet, yet unnaturally distinct.

They stepped out onto their balconies simultaneously and saw a streak of blue light flash past in the distance. Lucas recognized it immediately.

"That was a Wakandan aircraft," he said.

Tony leaned over the railing and called out, "What was that thing just now?"

Their suites were adjacent, separated only by a wall, so speaking across the balconies was easy.

"A Wakandan ship. Let's follow it and take a look."

Lucas quickly got dressed as his cloak floated over and settled onto his shoulders. With a sharp whistle, he mounted Onion and shot straight into the sky. At the same time, a gold-and-red armored figure streaked upward, trailing blazing exhaust.

The two of them sped off in pursuit of the aircraft.

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At the same moment, deep within the forest below, a convoy of five trucks was speeding along a dirt road. The wheels sank deeply into the ground, making it obvious the vehicles were heavily loaded.

A jeep led the convoy, with another bringing up the rear. Every person inside wore a mask and carried a firearm.

"We're now directly above them, Prince T'Challa," a voice reported.

Inside the Wakandan aircraft, a bald woman sat cross-legged as if meditating. In reality, she was piloting the ship.

High above the forest, the cloaked aircraft gradually revealed its true form.

T'Challa stepped toward the central console. In the middle of the cockpit was a massive black sand table filled with magnetized sand. It shifted automatically, perfectly recreating the convoy below in real time.

T'Challa reached out and lifted the central truck from the projection, brushing away the roof of the cargo compartment. Instantly, the interior was revealed.

Ten figures sat inside. Due to the sand-table simulation, their features were indistinct—but one figure glowed a faint orange-red.

That was his target.

The aircraft switched to autopilot. The bald woman stepped forward and grasped the spear she never left behind. The weapon gleamed silver from tip to shaft, forged seamlessly from vibranium, its blade radiating lethal sharpness.

Her intent was obvious, but T'Challa stopped her.

"It's fine, Okoye," he said calmly. "I can handle this myself. Don't forget—I'm the prince of Wakanda."

T'Challa wore a sleek black bodysuit, its metallic sheen reflecting the cabin lights. The necklace of silver fangs across his chest added a savage, primal edge to his presence.

"All right," Okoye replied. "I trust you."

She didn't argue, but her expression said everything. Her duty was to protect T'Challa—she was prepared to take a bullet for him without hesitation.

It wasn't that she lacked confidence. It was simply that T'Challa had not yet consumed the heart-shaped herb. For now, all his combat ability depended entirely on the Black Panther suit.

"Prepare the drop," T'Challa said. "I'm going to rescue Nakia."

He put on the panther-shaped helmet. Okoye handed him five small black beads.

"Try not to freeze up when you see her," she teased. "This is a real battlefield."

She knew the history between T'Challa and Nakia—she was the woman who had nearly become Wakanda's queen.

"What are you talking about? Why would I freeze?" T'Challa said, momentarily stunned.

Before he could react further, he waved impatiently, signaling her to open the hatch.

With his arms crossed over his chest, T'Challa stepped forward. The floor beneath him vanished, and he dropped straight through the opening.

This was nearly a thousand meters above the ground.

Without a parachute, T'Challa plummeted in free fall.

When he was roughly a hundred meters from the ground, he flung the five black beads downward. They spun rapidly in midair, transforming into thin, coin-sized discs.

Each disc landed precisely on the hood of one of the five vehicles, glowing blue as they activated.

Thunk—thunk—thunk—

All five vehicles shut down simultaneously. Engines died, electronics failed, and the lead jeep lost control, flipping violently to the side.

Headlights went dark. The area was plunged into total darkness, broken only by insect chirps and the distant, indistinct howls of animals.

"What the hell just happened?!" the leader shouted.

He ordered his men out of the vehicles to investigate.

"Boss, the engines won't start," one of them reported.

"What the—" the leader muttered as he stepped toward the hood.

There, stuck firmly in place, was one of the glowing metal discs.

Everyone saw it. A curious man even tried prying it off, but it was completely immovable.

"All units, defensive formation," the leader barked. "Something's wrong."

Years of dealing in human trafficking had forged his caution. Instinct screamed that they were being ambushed.

"You—check the cargo," he ordered.

The man nodded and hurried to the truck, pulling back the black tarp. Inside were mostly women, all terrified—except one.

Nakia.

Her expression was calm, her gaze steady, as if she were already looking at a dead man.

"Behave yourselves," the guard warned.

Suddenly—

Woof! Woof!

A stray dog appeared from nowhere, barking furiously at the crown of a nearby tree.

The group turned toward the sound. The leader raised his gun and shot the dog dead, then activated his flashlight, aiming it into the treetop.

There, crouched among the branches, was a black silhouette—like a panther poised to strike.

In the next instant, it leapt.

Razor-sharp claws slashed across a man's throat, killing him instantly. Another was kicked away, his body flying like a cannonball into a nearby vehicle.

Boom.

The car door caved inward. Every bone in the man's body shattered on impact.

"Fire! Open fire!!" the leader screamed.

Gunfire erupted. Bullets poured toward T'Challa.

He didn't dodge.

The rounds struck his suit and bounced away harmlessly, like raindrops. He didn't feel a thing.

Then he vanished into the darkness.

When he reappeared, it was behind them—his movements fluid, lethal, and silent, just like a true apex predator ruling the night.

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With a single slash, T'Challa ripped through one man's throat. He lunged again, and before the next victim could even react, deep gashes opened across his neck. One strike—instant death.

Gunfire echoed nonstop. Muzzle flashes flickered wildly in the darkness as T'Challa, like a black specter, harvested life after life. Aside from his glowing golden eyes and the gleam of the fang-shaped necklace on his chest, his entire form was swallowed by the night.

"Your Highness, two unidentified aerial objects are approaching at high speed. Should we shoot them down?"

Aboard the aircraft, Okoye monitored the situation closely. Two red dots were racing toward the area from afar. In Wakanda, only their own aircraft could move at such speeds—but she hadn't called for reinforcements. Without the king's or prince's authorization, no one could pilot a ship. That made these intruders enemies by default.

"No need," T'Challa replied calmly. "Activate full cloaking. I want to see who they really are."

With a vicious strike, he crushed the leader's chest and tossed the corpse aside like a rag doll.

Those two red dots were none other than Lucas and Tony.

They had chased the signal for over ten kilometers before finally locating the aircraft. Even JARVIS had been unable to lock onto it.

JARVIS relied on radar reflection—just like every tracking system in the world. No matter how advanced stealth technology was, it couldn't completely absorb or deflect all radar waves; there would always be some reflection. Conventional systems simply couldn't detect it.

But JARVIS could capture even a one-percent return.

Yet T'Challa's ship reflected nothing at all—as if it were invisible at the physical level itself. In the dead of night, finding such a craft was like searching for a needle in the ocean.

Lucas and Tony had circled a ten-kilometer radius, nearly resorting to firing blindly and hoping for a lucky hit, before finally finding this place.

By now, Tony had gained a rough sense of Wakanda's technological level. Just this cloaking system alone put them fifty—perhaps a hundred—years ahead of the rest of the world. Even for Tony Stark, such technology still existed only in theory.

The two arrived overhead.

T'Challa did not hide. He raised his head and looked up at Lucas and Tony.

Beside him stood a dark-skinned woman aiming a gun directly at them.

It was Nakia—the woman who had nearly become the future queen.

"T'Challa, why are you here?" she snapped. "You ruined my mission!"

She hadn't been kidnapped at all. She had infiltrated the human traffickers to dismantle the operation from within. T'Challa's sudden intervention had destroyed every lead.

Her gun remained trained on Lucas and Tony, and she showed no respect whatsoever to the prince.

"I—uh—I thought you'd been captured by traffickers, so I—"

T'Challa faltered. He had completely misjudged the situation.

"Hey," Tony called out cheerfully as he landed in his armor with a trademark superhero pose. "Isn't this a bit late for a date?"

Onion fluttered down beside him, carrying Lucas, its small wings beating softly.

T'Challa glanced at Tony's armor. Compared to his own Black Panther suit, it looked laughably inferior. His claws could tear through that flashy metal shell with ease.

Lucas, on the other hand, remained relaxed. He simply nodded at T'Challa in greeting. After all, this was Wakanda's future king—best to stay civil if possible.

"Who are you?" T'Challa demanded. "This is Wakandan territory. Entry without permission is forbidden."

Wakanda's secrets could not yet be revealed, and these two arriving in the middle of the night clearly meant trouble.

With a flick of his wrists, vibranium claws extended, gleaming coldly in the darkness.

"Hey, take it easy," Tony said quickly. "We're not the bad guys. We saw some fighting and came to check it out. Don't you recognize me? I'm Iron Man."

He patted his armor confidently. Surely no one on Earth didn't know Iron Man.

T'Challa, living in a highly advanced society, naturally knew of Tony Stark.

"So you're Tony Stark," T'Challa said coolly. "Good. Since you're here, you might as well stay."

Without warning, he moved.

Like a true panther, T'Challa lunged forward. Tony barely had time to raise his hand before T'Challa was already in front of him. One clawed strike ripped open the chest armor. The ultra-strong alloy tore apart, exposing the arc reactor beneath.

"Sir," JARVIS warned instantly, "armor integrity has fallen below seventy percent. You are fully exposed. I strongly recommend immediate retreat."

All power rerouted to the thrusters, ready to launch Tony away at maximum speed.

Tony panicked.

If only he'd brought the vibranium armor.

"This is such a scam," he cursed inwardly. "If I ever develop portable armor again, I'm a dog!"

"JARVIS, delete all research data on portable armor!"

He knew its flaws well. Aside from mobility, it was useless—fine for emergencies, but completely inadequate for real combat.

"Sir," JARVIS replied calmly, "satellite lock confirmed. Backup armor can be deployed immediately."

A Stark Industries satellite—launched solely for armor deployment—locked onto Tony's position.

Pure capitalist madness.

Lucas was equally startled. He hadn't expected T'Challa to strike without warning—no warning, no conversation, straight to lethal force.

That was beyond dishonorable.

Lucas instantly teleported in front of T'Challa, placing himself between him and Tony.

"We have no hostile intent," Lucas said firmly. "There's no need for this."

As he spoke, Judicator appeared in his hand. He didn't realize that T'Challa hadn't yet consumed the heart-shaped herb—at this stage, Judicator wouldn't do much to him anyway.

The moment Lucas drew his weapon, Nakia snapped her gun toward him.

"Put it down!"

The barrel was nearly pressed against Lucas's head.

At the same time, Okoye dropped from above, slamming into Tony. Her spear shortened instantly into a dagger, which she drove straight into the back of Tony's neck.

That was the final straw.

Lucas's expression darkened.

So now you're really asking for it.

Boom—!

A violent wave of heat exploded outward from Lucas's body. The invisible shockwave blasted everyone away. Nakia and Okoye were flung through the air like leaves in a storm.

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Seeing Nakia sent flying, T'Challa immediately caught her. After confirming she was unharmed, he turned and charged straight at Lucas.

Lucas did not indulge him. He dismissed Judicator, and the Ultimate Divine Armament appeared in his hand. Just as T'Challa's claws were about to reach him, Lucas flicked his arm upward—

the Phoenix wings manifested instantly, perfectly blocking the claw strike. At the same time, three scorching sword arcs burst forth from the Ultimate Divine Armament.

All three sword arcs struck T'Challa squarely.

Relying on the Black Panther suit, T'Challa was not injured, but three deep gashes appeared across his chest. The Black Panther armor—crafted from vibranium—had actually been torn open.

And it had only taken three sword arcs.

This suit had been passed down from his father. No matter what, it was still vibranium. This was the first time T'Challa had ever seen anything capable of damaging it.

In the instant of his shock, Lucas suddenly teleported in front of him, the blade resting lightly against his neck.

"Can we talk calmly now?"

Lucas looked at T'Challa. With the helmet on, he couldn't see his expression—but the shock was obvious enough.

At that moment, Okoye and Nakia rushed over. Concerned for T'Challa's safety, neither of them attacked.

"Release the prince at once!" Okoye shouted. "Otherwise, Wakanda will grind you to dust!"

As the prince's personal guard, if T'Challa were harmed, she would bear an unforgivable罪. If the prince fell, she would die with him.

Lucas ignored Okoye and looked only at T'Challa. What she said didn't matter—the decision rested with him.

T'Challa slowly removed his helmet.

"Let's talk on the ship."

At the same time, he instructed Okoye to bring all the trafficked people aboard as well, and issued a strict order: none of them were allowed to reveal anything they had witnessed tonight, or Wakanda would hunt them down without mercy.

Those women were all from neighboring countries. Upon learning that T'Challa was a prince, they didn't dare object in the slightest—nodding repeatedly, some even swearing oaths on the spot.

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Aboard the aircraft, T'Challa sat facing Lucas and the others. Okoye stood behind him, glaring fiercely at Lucas and Tony, while Nakia—seated nearby—was no friendlier.

"Prince T'Challa," Tony began, "why did you attack us? We clearly stated that we meant no harm."

Tony had already removed his armor. He now loathed the portable suit to the point that he wanted to destroy it on the spot. It lay discarded in the corner of the cabin like scrap metal.

"Because of vibranium," T'Challa replied. "Wakanda strictly forbids vibranium from leaving the country. Your armor is made entirely of vibranium. And besides you, there are five others whose equipment also contains vibranium. That is absolutely unacceptable."

With a wave of his hand, a holographic screen appeared.

The footage showed Tony unleashing weapons in every direction, repulsor blasts firing from his palms—scenes from the Battle of New York.

Split screens followed:

Skye releasing shockwaves,

Gwen and Peter swinging between skyscrapers,

Felicia Hardy fighting alongside Natasha with terrifying close-combat skill,

and Wanda floating in midair, chaos magic swirling around her.

The moment Tony and Lucas saw the footage, they understood.

T'Challa had recognized at a glance that their armor and suits contained vibranium. In Wakanda—where vibranium circulation was absolutely forbidden—this was a capital crime. No wonder T'Challa had attacked without hesitation.

"Our vibranium was purchased legally," Tony retorted immediately. "We paid for it. We didn't steal it from Wakanda."

"But your supplier did," T'Challa said calmly, tapping his wrist.

The hologram shifted again.

This time, it showed Wakanda's border—an enormous explosion flattening everything within a three-hundred-meter radius. Casualties numbered in the hundreds.

"This was done by Ulysses Klaue when he stole vibranium," T'Challa said coldly. "Over one hundred and thirty Wakandan warriors died. I only want to know one thing—where is he?"

His anger was unmistakable. Those had been Wakanda's soldiers, slaughtered by a single madman.

"I don't know," Tony answered honestly. "I'm looking for him too, but I can't reach him at all."

T'Challa studied Tony closely. Given Tony Stark's status, there was no reason for him to lie.

"Then you will come with me to Wakanda," T'Challa said. "Until your suspicions are cleared, you will be detained."

He stood up. Behind him, Okoye tapped her wrist several times. Metal bars rose from the floor, forming a cage that enclosed Lucas and Tony.

"Hey!" Tony protested. "What is this, the Stone Age? You're locking us in a cage? Are you a caveman or something?!"

Tony Stark—Iron Man—being put in a cage was utterly unacceptable to him.

Lucas frowned as well.

"T'Challa, we guarantee we won't leave. This cage is unnecessary."

T'Challa thought for a moment and agreed it was excessive. Although their motives for coming to Wakanda were unclear, he knew they weren't Klaue's accomplices. A man known worldwide as Iron Man wouldn't collaborate with criminals.

He signaled Okoye to retract the cage and dropped the matter.

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Tony immediately began wandering around the aircraft, asking endless questions and offering unsolicited suggestions. T'Challa understood none of it—he was merely a prince, after all. Technology was his sister Shuri's domain.

As a scientist, Tony's curiosity for new technology bordered on obsession. When T'Challa couldn't answer his questions, Tony insisted on meeting whoever had designed the ship.

Upon learning that all scientific research was handled by Shuri, Tony finally lost all restraint.

"I want to meet your sister," he said quickly. "No other reason—purely scientific discussion. Don't worry, I have a girlfriend, and we're very much in love."

He was starting to ramble.

T'Challa had no choice but to agree. He promised to take Tony to see Shuri, and only then did Tony finally relent.

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The aircraft moved at incredible speed, soon arriving over a lush valley. Seeing nothing but dense forest below, Tony was utterly confused.

"Where's Wakanda's advanced technology?" he asked. "Is it... these trees?"

No one answered.

The aircraft continued forward.

Suddenly, the scenery shifted.

Skyscrapers filled the horizon—nothing less than a world-class technological metropolis. Futuristic architecture dominated the skyline. Countless aircraft crisscrossed the sky, and floating rail trains streaked past at high speed.

Tony stared in stunned silence.

This was a city of the future—eerily similar to concepts his father had once imagined.

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As a scientist, Tony immediately became excited. It had been a long time since he had felt this kind of thrill in the field of science. Even when developing new suits of armor, he had never been this energized.

Soon, the aircraft landed on the royal-exclusive landing platform. A group of female guards had already been waiting.

T'Challa stepped off the aircraft. The guards standing on both sides saluted him in unison. Every one of them was a woman, all with shaved heads—their appearance identical to Okoye's.

"Queen Ramonda. Princess Shuri."

Nakia stepped forward and bowed to the Queen and Shuri.

Queen Ramonda reached out to steady Nakia.

"Nakia, it's so good to have you back."

After that, Lucas and Tony came forward. The moment the guards noticed outsiders, they raised their weapons and aimed them at the two of them.

Because of vibranium, Wakanda was extremely xenophobic. They had no intention of letting the outside world learn what Wakanda was truly like.

"Lower your weapons."

T'Challa raised a hand and gave the order.

The guards complied, lowering their weapons, though their gazes remained wary as they watched Lucas and Tony.

"Am I really that unwelcome?" Tony pouted. "I'm Iron Man, you know."

Wherever Tony Stark went, he was usually the center of attention. Yet in Wakanda, he had somehow become a detainee instead.

Lucas smiled but said nothing.

At that moment, Shuri suddenly rushed up to Tony and grabbed his hand excitedly.

"Tony Stark! Wow—so it really is Tony Stark! Where's your Iron Man suit? Hurry, take it out and let me see it!"

Her enthusiasm was completely at odds with the image of a princess, but clearly, everyone present was already used to her lively personality. After all, the throne would pass to her brother—she was free to do whatever she liked.

Tony froze, then turned to look at Lucas.

"See? Your 'Iron Man' title isn't completely useless after all."

Lucas chuckled teasingly. Shuri herself was a technology fanatic and had always been deeply interested in Iron Man's armor. In fact, when designing T'Challa's new Black Panther suit, she had even referenced certain details from Iron Man's armor.

"Oh, right—forgot to introduce myself," Shuri said cheerfully. "I'm Shuri. T'Challa's my brother."

Her straightforward, lively personality made it impossible not to like her.

"Enough," T'Challa said, stopping Shuri just as she tried to drag Tony away. "We can talk later. For now, I'm taking them to see Father."

Under the escort of the royal guard, the group headed toward the palace.

Along the way, Tony was repeatedly stunned by Wakanda's level of technology. The palace alone was far more advanced than Stark Tower, leaving him in awe.

They soon arrived inside the palace. In the grand hall, King T'Chaka sat upon the central throne, with several elders seated beside him.

"Father, I'm back."

T'Challa crossed his arms over his chest and bowed. Everyone around him followed suit—except for Lucas and Tony.

Tony, arrogant as ever, would never bow to anyone. Lucas didn't either. As someone from another world, the belief in equality from his previous life made it impossible for him to perform such feudal gestures.

Queen Ramonda naturally took her seat beside the throne. Shuri stood obediently behind her—though her eyes darted around restlessly, clearly unable to sit still.

"T'Challa, are you hurt?"

T'Chaka's voice was aged, yet powerful—nothing like that of a frail old man.

"Are these your friends?"

T'Chaka looked at Lucas and Tony behind his son. He recognized them immediately. While Lucas was virtually unknown, T'Chaka had watched the Battle of New York—via satellite—start to finish.

With Wakanda's technological capabilities, even S.H.I.E.L.D. could not detect their satellites. And even if someone noticed a satellite passing overhead, who would ever suspect Wakanda? To the outside world, Wakanda was still nothing more than a poor agricultural nation.

The scene of Lucas transforming into Ramuh had deeply unsettled even T'Chaka. Wakanda's technology was indeed formidable, but he had no confidence that it could rival a being who commanded thunder itself.

He then looked at Tony Stark.

This was a man he knew very well—constantly featured on the front pages of global tabloids. A classic playboy. And the title of "Iron Man" had elevated him to an entirely new level.

T'Chaka held Tony Stark in high regard for his promotion of clean energy. Wakanda itself had risen through the use of clean energy, and T'Chaka understood its advantages better than anyone.

Seeing his son return with these two men, T'Chaka already had a general idea of the situation. Though he didn't yet know Tony's true intentions, Wakanda only had a few things capable of attracting someone like him—technology and vibranium. And during the Battle of New York, T'Chaka had clearly seen Iron Man's vibranium armor.

"Have seats prepared for our guests."

With a wave of his hand, two guards brought over chairs.

Lucas and Tony sat down without ceremony. If you could sit, why stand? Neither of them was the type to stand on formalities.

Despite the age gap of over a decade, the two had become good friends largely because they were alike in many ways—most notably, they were both thick-skinned and overly familiar with everyone.

"You've traveled a great distance to Wakanda," T'Chaka said calmly. "This isn't merely a sightseeing trip, is it? You came for vibranium."

He went straight to the point. Vibranium was the only thing that could truly tempt Tony Stark.

Tony didn't bother hiding it. He had come to buy vibranium, not steal it.

"Yes. I want to purchase some vibranium for research."

T'Chaka nodded. His猜测 had been correct.

Stark Industries was famous worldwide—even Wakandans knew of it. In the past, Stark Industries had offered aid to Wakanda at a United Nations conference, but T'Chaka had refused. Wakanda had never accepted assistance from any country or organization—there was no need.

"You already possess a vibranium suit," T'Chaka said. "Is that still not enough?"

He did not ask about the source of Tony's vibranium. He already knew—it was from the batch stolen by Ulysses Klaue.

"It's not enough," Tony replied. "Vibranium has an extremely high melting point, and once it's formed, it's incredibly difficult to re-melt. I want more for further research."

As someone who had personally witnessed the process of smelting vibranium, Tony understood its properties well. Small amounts mixed into other metals—like Captain America's shield—were manageable. But pure vibranium was another matter entirely. At present, Stark Industries simply did not possess the technology to repeatedly re-smelt it.

"Vibranium is not for sale," T'Chaka said firmly. "What you obtained before was stolen by a villain. I'm afraid I cannot help you."

He rejected Tony's request outright.

Vibranium had never been allowed to leave Wakanda—this was a rule passed down through generations. Moreover, vibranium was the material of the Black Panther armor and a symbol of the royal family. It was absolutely forbidden from being exported.

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Chapter 220 - 220 – An Invitation to Witness the Ceremony

"This... well, you name the price. I'll—"

Tony stopped halfway through his sentence.

From the moment he entered the palace, everything he had seen was cutting-edge technology. Could Wakanda possibly be short on money? That was a joke. To Wakanda, money was probably meaningless—especially to a king like T'Chaka.

T'Chaka smiled faintly as he looked at Tony. Tony's words struck him as genuinely amusing. Wakanda lacked many things, but money was certainly not one of them.

"Alright then," Tony shrugged. "What exactly will it take for you to sell me some vibranium?"

Money had always been Tony's greatest leverage, but now that it was useless, there was no point beating around the bush.

T'Chaka shook his head.

"I've already said it—vibranium will not be exported. In addition, you must tell us where Ulysses Klaue is. We still have a debt to settle with him."

"Ulysses Klaue?" Tony snapped irritably. "I want to find him too. If I could get in touch with him, do you really think I'd be here in Wakanda trying my luck?"

T'Chaka said nothing, simply staring at Tony. It wasn't until Tony was almost uncomfortable under the scrutiny that T'Chaka finally spoke again.

"Very well. Since the two of you have come to Wakanda, you are our guests. Stay and enjoy yourselves for a few days. After all, you came here as travelers, didn't you? In a few days, it will be T'Challa's coronation ceremony. You are welcome to attend as honored guests."

With a wave of his hand, T'Chaka dismissed them from the hall, instructing T'Challa to escort Lucas and Tony out.

Shuri's eyes darted around twice before she quietly followed them as well.

Once outside, Shuri immediately grabbed T'Challa's arm.

"Brother, I'm taking Tony Stark with me first. Your new suit will be ready in a few days—come try it on when it's done."

Before T'Challa could object, she dragged Tony away toward Wakanda's research center.

"Mr. Norman, I'll take you to your accommodations," T'Challa said gently, his demeanor calm and approachable, much like his father's.

"Just call me Lucas," Lucas replied. "We did intrude rather abruptly this time. Tony's just hit a bottleneck in his research lately."

Lucas hadn't watched Black Panther in full in his previous life, but he had seen plenty of summaries, so he had a general understanding of the storyline.

Still, events had diverged again. In the original plot, the old king died due to Baron Zemo's scheme, leading to T'Challa's ascension. But now, King T'Chaka was alive and well, and the Civil War hadn't even happened. Yet T'Challa was already preparing to inherit the throne.

Was this another butterfly effect caused by his and Tony's presence?

Ever since Lucas entered this Marvel world, many events had changed, though the overall trajectory still vaguely resembled the movies he remembered. Was it truly a case of "small events can change, but major events are inevitable"?

Lucas didn't know.

The future was completely unknown. Perhaps the Civil War would still occur. Perhaps T'Chaka would still be killed. No one could say for sure.

He could only take things one step at a time. This wasn't a movie anymore—it was real life. A very real world.

"I believe you," T'Challa said. "But vibranium truly will not be sold. That is Wakanda's tradition."

Lucas nodded in understanding. He had known from the start that Tony wouldn't succeed in buying vibranium. Coming here with him had always been a long shot.

Chatting casually along the way, they soon arrived at their residence—a two-story house rich in local character, distinctly Wakandan in style.

"Oh, right," T'Challa added. "On the day of the coronation, someone will come to escort you. You're both very welcome to witness my ascension."

"Tony and I will definitely be there," Lucas said. "I'd like to see the birth of a new Black Panther myself."

As he spoke, Lucas glanced toward a distant, towering cliff. Atop it stood a massive Black Panther statue. He knew that beneath that mountain lay Wakanda's vibranium mine.

Vibranium filled Wakanda's underground and mountain ranges. The entire nation was built atop it. Centuries of mining had still failed to exhaust the deposits—proof of just how vast the vein truly was.

After T'Challa left, Lucas took a quick look around the house. It was immaculately clean, fully equipped with modern conveniences, and steeped in advanced technology. He picked a room at random, took a quick shower, and collapsed onto the bed.

Even the bed was more comfortable than any hotel he had stayed in. In less than ten minutes, Lucas was fast asleep, enjoying exceptionally deep rest.

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Meanwhile, Tony followed Shuri to the Wakandan research center.

The moment he stepped inside, he was greeted by an array of advanced technological equipment. With just the bracelet of beads on her wrist, Shuri controlled everything effortlessly. Tony even spotted the medical pod Lucas had mentioned—the one capable of curing cancer.

Tony's enthusiasm ignited instantly. He and Shuri plunged straight into discussion and experimentation.

Shuri was working on two main projects: upgrading the bead bracelet on her wrist, and designing a new Black Panther suit for T'Challa.

Every Wakandan king received a unique suit upon ascending the throne. The previous king's suit would be melted down and recycled.

Each king possessed more than one Black Panther suit, and no two designs were ever the same. Designing the armor was a top priority—it couldn't resemble that of any predecessor. Even if the appearance was similar, the technology had to be superior.

This tradition existed to push Wakanda's scientists forward. No stagnation was allowed. Only through constant advancement could Wakanda continue to thrive.

Tony and Shuri stood before three mannequin frames.

Two were completely bare. The third wore the previous Black Panther suit—King T'Chaka's armor, which T'Challa had only worn temporarily. Only after his coronation would he be entitled to a brand-new suit.

"Well?" Shuri said. "This is the armor I designed."

Tony stared at the naked mannequins, utterly confused. All he saw were unclothed models. What armor? Was this one of those things only geniuses could see? The emperor's new clothes?

He turned to Shuri.

"What exactly are you showing me? A nude display? I'm really not into mannequins."

Shuri pointed at the silver fang necklace on one mannequin's chest, then at the identical mannequin beside it wearing a gold version.

Only then did Tony realize they weren't entirely naked—they were wearing necklaces.

"The gold one looks better," Tony said, pointing at it. "That suits my aesthetic."

After all, his armor was always red and gold. Flashy was a requirement.

"I agree," Shuri said. "The silver one is just a backup. The materials and technology are exactly the same."

She had designed two suits for T'Challa—one bold and eye-catching, the other restrained and understated. Aside from color and style, they were identical in every other respect.

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