

Marvel Manifestor

Chapter 241 - 241 – Challenging the Throne

He did not know how to face his nephew.

He knew that Erik hated him to the bone. Unwilling to rekindle that hatred, the old king had remained in his palace for the entire week. Only today did he finally come face to face with Erik.

"My dear uncle,"

Erik said with a mocking smile as he looked at T'Chaka, whose hair and beard had turned completely white.

"So you finally show yourself. You really didn't want to see me that badly?"

For a brief moment, Erik felt a strange surge of emotion. If his father were still alive, he would probably look just like this now.

The old king's eyes brimmed with tears. He had never known that N'Jobu had a son. Had he known earlier, he would have brought the child back to Wakanda long ago.

"My child,"

T'Chaka said softly,

"you have suffered all these years. As for your father... I don't wish to speak of it now. No matter how today ends, come to me afterward. I will tell you everything, and the final decision will be yours."

T'Chaka looked at Erik calmly. The queen, Ramonda, stood beside him with sorrow written all over her face—no matter who won or lost today, the outcome would not be a happy one.

Lucas and Tony stood beside Shuri. On Tony's chest was a hexagonal arc reactor—the latest breakthrough, powering his nanotech vibranium armor.

The High Priest painted ritual markings onto T'Challa's bare upper body, while Erik stood nearby holding a spear, waiting to decide the outcome once and for all.

Erik glanced at the spear in his hand, then suddenly kicked it, snapping the shaft in half. The long spear instantly became a short one—far better suited for close combat and slashing.

At that moment, the High Priest brought forward a small bowl filled with a black, unknown liquid.

"Drink this, T'Challa,"

the High Priest said.

"Once you do, your enhanced abilities will disappear. This will be a fair fight."

The liquid was used to neutralize the effects of the Heart-Shaped Herb. Since T'Challa had consumed the herb, his abilities far surpassed Erik's. For the sake of fairness, he had to relinquish that power.

The thunderous drums sounded once more, signaling the official start of the challenge for the throne.

"This is your last chance, Erik,"

T'Challa said as he stood up. The veins on his forehead bulged under the effects of the medicine.

"Lay down your weapon. We can still talk."

Erik sneered.

"I've spent my entire life preparing for this moment. I trained relentlessly. I killed countless people—all so that one day I could return here and reclaim what is mine."

He tore off his shirt, revealing a torso covered in scars and raised marks.

"These,"

he said coldly,

"are proof. Each one marks someone I've killed. I keep them so I never forget my hatred. I've killed many people—but the one I truly came to kill is you."

He raised the short spear and pointed it straight at T'Challa.

T'Challa shook his head, then looked toward the High Priest, signaling him to begin.

"The challenge begins now!"

As the declaration fell, both T'Challa and Erik raised their weapons and charged.

"Shuri,"

Lucas whispered urgently,

"take Tony and quietly go to the sacred grounds. Pick as many Heart-Shaped Herb fruits as you can and hide them."

"What? Why?"

Shuri asked in confusion.

"I can't explain it in a sentence or two,"

Lucas said quickly.

"Just trust me. Do it fast. And while you're at it, go to T'Challa's palace and take his Black Panther necklace with you."

After giving a few more instructions, Lucas watched as Shuri nodded.

"Alright. I understand."

Though she didn't know what Lucas was planning, she trusted him. While everyone's attention was focused on the battle, she and Tony slipped away. Tony activated his armor and immediately carried Shuri toward the sacred grounds.

On the platform, T'Challa and Erik were already locked in combat.

At first, they seemed evenly matched.

T'Challa wielded a short spear and shield, while Erik fought with a short spear and short sword. Erik completely abandoned defense—every strike was ruthless, leaving no room for retreat.

T'Challa was quickly suppressed by Erik's all-out, life-for-life fighting style.

Gradually, Erik gained the upper hand. His blows were heavy and relentless, each strike crashing against T'Challa's shield. T'Challa's stamina began to falter.

However, Erik's wide, aggressive attacks also exposed openings. Seizing one, T'Challa swept his shield forward, knocking Erik off balance and sending him crashing to the ground.

"Yield,"

T'Challa said, leveling his spear at him.

"You are not my equal."

Erik rose and charged again, his attacks as wild and brutal as before. Sword and spear alternated in a relentless storm, forcing T'Challa to raise his shield and defend.

Suddenly, Erik kicked forward. Caught off guard, T'Challa was knocked to the ground. Erik pressed the advantage, bringing his sword down in a deadly arc.

T'Challa narrowly rolled aside, sprang up, and blocked the blade with his spear, swinging his shield at Erik in return.

Erik took the shield strike head-on and twisted his spear, stabbing toward T'Challa's ribs.

T'Challa leapt back to defend—but it was a feint.

In the instant T'Challa retreated, Erik's short sword slashed toward his leg.

T'Challa barely avoided it. Even so, a gash opened across his thigh, blood dripping into the pool beneath his feet.

T'Chaka frowned deeply. Queen Ramonda watched in anguish. Both could see it clearly—T'Challa was being overwhelmed.

Erik pressed the attack, raining blow after blow. Sword and spear battered T'Challa's shield again and again.

T'Challa's strength was fading. He could do little more than brace himself behind the shield.

Then—

Erik slashed at T'Challa's abdomen.

This time, T'Challa failed to dodge.

The blade tore into his lower abdomen, and blood burst forth instantly.

Okoye and Nakia clenched their weapons tightly. Seeing T'Challa wounded, they nearly rushed forward to kill Erik on the spot.

T'Challa's strength ebbed rapidly. Erik hooked the shield with his spear and yanked—sending it flying from T'Challa's grasp. In the next instant, Erik's sword plunged straight into T'Challa's abdomen.

Gasps rippled through the stands.

King T'Chaka, Queen Ramonda, Nakia, Okoye—everyone covered their mouths in shock.

In that moment, T'Challa lost his ability to fight.

And with it, the throne.

T'Challa grabbed the blade with both hands. Though it was embedded in his abdomen, it had not gone in too deep. His worst wound was still the gash across his stomach.

Erik kicked him hard, sending him crashing into the water. T'Challa lay there, gasping for breath.

"Get up!"

Erik roared.

T'Challa looked up—only to be met with Erik's fist.

He was knocked down once more.

"You've already lost."

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Erik raised his short sword high, preparing to end T'Challa's life with a single strike.

Clang—!

Suddenly, the High Priest intervened, his spear blocking Erik's blade mid-swing.

"Erik, stop!"

the High Priest shouted angrily.

"It was I who caused your father's death—not him! If someone must die, then kill me!"

Erik immediately turned toward the High Priest, fury burning in his eyes, almost tangible.

"Zuri! What are you doing?!"

Old King T'Chaka stepped forward from the stands, shocked that the High Priest had interfered in Wakanda's sacred ritual.

As a former king, T'Chaka understood the consequences of such an act all too well. He was not only a father, but also Wakanda's king. The sanctity of the ritual was absolute—no one was permitted to interfere. The outcome could only be surrender or death.

Zuri looked at T'Chaka and said firmly,

"Your Majesty, I must intervene. T'Challa is innocent. I cannot watch him die before my eyes. Everything that happened back then was caused by my own hands, and so the price should be paid by me."

"You'll both die!"

Erik suddenly erupted into motion, driving his spear straight through Zuri's chest. Blood sprayed across Erik's body.

"Zuri! No!!"

T'Chaka roared and leapt down from the stands, rushing to catch Zuri as his body collapsed.

T'Challa crawled over as well, clutching Zuri's hand tightly.

"Your Majesty... I have never regretted my choice... I owed Prince N'Jobu a life... today... today I return it..."

Zuri's eyes gradually lost focus, yet a faint smile remained on his face. In his life, he had wronged no one—except Erik. It was he who had taken Erik's father away. Now, with his life, the debt was paid.

"Zuri... Zuri!!"

T'Chaka was overcome with grief, tears soaking the High Priest's hand in his grasp.

"Erik!!"

T'Challa roared in rage, grabbing a sword from the ground and swinging it at Erik—but he was already exhausted. He was no match.

Erik kicked him aside effortlessly and raised his arms.

"This is your king? Weak. Cowardly. Completely helpless!"

He slammed his fist into T'Challa's abdominal wound. Blood burst forth once again, and T'Challa finally collapsed to his knees in the water.

With a powerful heave, Erik lifted T'Challa up.

"The Black Panther was supposed to lead you into the world—but look at him now. He's nothing more than a pile of filth!"

In the stands, Okoye and Nakia clenched their weapons so tightly their hands trembled. They were barely holding on to their last shred of restraint. As warriors, they were forbidden to intervene—any interference would earn them the same fate as the High Priest.

Tears shimmered in their eyes. Their entire bodies shook, yet they could only watch helplessly.

The tribal elders were no different. Even though many of them did not acknowledge Erik as the true son of a prince, they were bound by tradition. The ritual was sacred, and no one could interfere.

Erik carried T'Challa to the edge of the cliff, clearly intending to throw him down.

"No! Stop!!"

Queen Ramonda rushed forward in desperation. At that moment, she was no queen—only a mother.

Erik hurled T'Challa off the cliff.

Ramonda collapsed to the ground in despair.

Whoosh—!

A flash of red streaked through the air. A massive crimson cloak swept across Erik's vision.

Lucas had moved.

He plunged down the cliff at blinding speed, summoning Onion in midair. Lucas caught T'Challa's unconscious body steadily, placed him onto Onion's back, and slowly rose into the air above the dueling grounds.

Everyone's attention was drawn to the man in the red cloak, its vast folds seeming to shroud the entire cliffside.

When they saw T'Challa alive on Onion's back, a collective breath of relief swept through the crowd. Ramonda and T'Chaka looked at Lucas with overwhelming gratitude.

"Who are you? Why did you interfere in the ritual?!"

Erik shouted up at Lucas.

"The outcome is already decided,"

Lucas replied calmly.

"I'm just saving a life."

He looked down at Erik without expression. Lucas made no judgment about Erik's suffering—he had not lived through it. Erik's vengeance was his own business. But Lucas saving someone was his choice, and no one had the right to stop him.

Erik glared at him furiously.

"Do you want to die too?!"

Lucas smiled faintly. The Ultimate Weapon slowly materialized in his hand. Instantly, a wave of scorching heat surged outward, steam rising as the surrounding water began to evaporate. Distortions rippled through the air around him.

"I can make that happen."

He then glanced at T'Chaka. As things stood, Erik—still an ordinary man—would fall to a single strike.

But T'Chaka stepped forward.

"This is Wakanda's affair,"

he said solemnly.

"I ask that you do not interfere further. We will handle it ourselves."

Lucas remained silent. At that moment, Tony's voice came through the communicator—he had secured both the Heart-Shaped Herb and the Black Panther necklace.

"Erik,"

Lucas said coldly, looking down at him,

"once you've taken the Heart-Shaped Herb, we can fight properly. As you are now, you simply don't interest me."

Lucas had no intention of stopping Erik's revenge against Wakanda's royal family. But if Erik ever dared involve Tony or himself, Lucas would show no mercy.

With T'Challa still unconscious, Lucas flew toward Shuri's research center, leaving the rest behind.

An elder stepped forward, holding the ceremonial necklace made of beast fangs—the symbol of victory—and personally placed it around Erik's neck.

From that moment on, Erik was the new king of Wakanda.

Though resentment filled many hearts, tradition was absolute. Wakanda's laws had to be obeyed.

Nakia immediately left, desperate to ensure T'Challa's safety. Okoye, however, as the captain of the Dora Milaje, was bound to her post. She clenched her teeth and remained.

As the necklace settled against Erik's chest, everyone bowed in unison, acknowledging him as king.

"Uncle,"

Erik said as he approached T'Chaka and Ramonda,

"now I am the king of Wakanda."

He looked at T'Chaka with open provocation.

"I will tell you everything,"

T'Chaka replied, his expression heavy with regret.

"What we owe N'Jobu... it is time to repay it."

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T'Challa lay inside a medical pod, unconscious.

Shuri stood frozen beside him. At her feet were the Black Panther necklace and several Heart-Shaped Herb fruits.

"We can't stay here,"

Shuri said quietly to Lucas and Tony.

"Erik won't let my brother live."

"Do you have anywhere safe to go?"

Tony asked.

Shuri shook her head, despair clouding her eyes. Once Erik was king, nowhere in Wakanda would be safe for T'Challa.

...No.

Suddenly, a place came to her mind.

A land that belonged to Wakanda—

yet one no outsider could ever enter.

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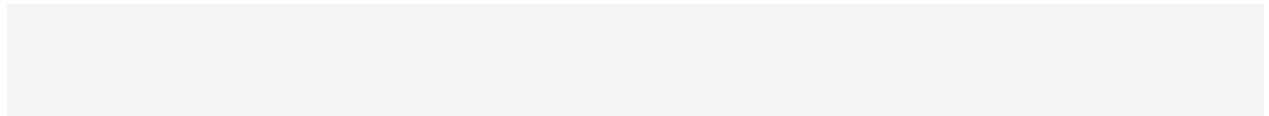
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Chapter 243 - 243 – Aid from the White Gorilla King



"Figured it out?"

Tony asked when he saw Shuri's eyes light up.

"Yes," Shuri replied. "There's a place. They never interact with the other tribes and have always watched over all of Wakanda from the cliffs. It's a good place to hide for now."

As soon as Shuri spoke, Lucas understood.

She was referring to M'Baku's tribe—the White Gorilla.

"Alright then. Are you coming with us?"

Tony asked. By "you," he meant T'Challa's family. To Erik, they were all enemies.

"No," Shuri said after a moment's thought. "You take my brother to recover. I have to stay here so Erik won't become suspicious. And take Nakia with you."

She chose not to leave with Tony. She needed to return to the palace and remain with her parents.

Tony said nothing more. After T'Challa's external injuries were stabilized in the medical pod, Shuri summoned Nakia and explained everything to her.

Soon after, they left with the unconscious T'Challa. Along with him, they took the Black Panther necklace and the Heart-Shaped Herb fruits that had been harvested in advance.

With Nakia accompanying them, it was unlikely they would be turned away by M'Baku's tribe. Although that tribe was at odds with the others, they were still part of Wakanda. Moreover, M'Baku had lost to T'Challa in ritual combat—by tradition, that meant he owed T'Challa his allegiance.

The group traveled uphill, passed through dense forest, and finally arrived at M'Baku's mountain tribe.

The settlement atop the peaks exuded a raw, primitive atmosphere. Unlike the other Wakandan tribes, advanced technology was nowhere to be seen. Life here was simple and ancient.

As expected, no one stopped them. Lucas and the others were led directly to M'Baku.

M'Baku's throne hall stood at the summit of the mountain, a bottomless abyss at its back, overlooking nearly half of Wakanda. He sat facing the chasm, while Lucas and the others stood before him. T'Challa remained unconscious, laid to the side.

"So T'Challa lost. And the new king is that outsider named Erik?"

M'Baku asked calmly. He clearly had his own sources of information.

"Yes," Nakia replied. "We hope to take refuge here for a time. Once T'Challa awakens, we will reclaim the throne."

"Oh?"

M'Baku raised an eyebrow.

"Was the duel fair?"

"It was," Nakia answered without hesitation. "I saw it with my own eyes."

"Then it was not murder, but defeat,"

M'Baku said bluntly.

"The new king inherited Wakanda lawfully. On what grounds do you speak of reclaiming the throne?"

According to Wakandan tradition, Erik's ascension was legitimate. T'Challa was expected to acknowledge him—not scheme to seize power.

"Listen, you gorilla—"

Tony began impatiently.

"Roar—ROAR!!"

M'Baku suddenly let out a thunderous, ape-like bellow, cutting Tony off.

"This is not your place to speak, outsider!"

he snarled.

"Say one more word, and I'll feed you to my children in the mountains!"

By "children," he meant the gorillas that lived in the highlands.

Tony shrugged and fell silent. Truth be told, he wasn't particularly concerned—he had his armor and wasn't afraid of anyone here.

"White Gorilla King,"

Nakia said solemnly,

"we have come seeking your help. In exchange, I am willing to offer this."

She took out a Heart-Shaped Herb fruit. In reality, Tony and Shuri had harvested more than a dozen—this was only one of them. The rest, along with the Black Panther necklace, were stored safely in Lucas's spatial pack.

"An outsider has taken the throne,"

Nakia continued.

"And his intent is to spread vibranium and Wakanda's weapons across the world. Now that he is king, only your tribe has the power to stop him."

M'Baku did not immediately answer. He rose from his seat and turned toward the cliff, gazing out over Wakanda.

Night had fallen. A thin mist blanketed the land, through which countless lights and technological glows shimmered like neon, breathtakingly beautiful.

"We are a tribe of the deep mountains,"

M'Baku said slowly.

"For generations, we have watched over Wakanda. Who sits on the throne has never mattered much to us..."

He paused briefly, then spoke again.

"Follow me."

He strode out of the hall, with the others close behind.

They climbed along the cliff path until they reached a cavern high in the mountains.

"Place T'Challa inside,"

M'Baku ordered.

Two men carried T'Challa and laid him into a snow-filled pool at the center of the cave.

The pool was packed with pure white snow—completely opposite to the crimson sand of the royal ritual grounds. Ice and fire, mirroring the nature of the two tribes.

As T'Challa was partially buried, a thin layer of frost immediately formed over his body.

"Now feed him the Heart-Shaped Herb,"

M'Baku said.

"Whether he awakens depends on his own will."

Unlike T'Challa, M'Baku's tribe worshipped the White Gorilla. He could not aid T'Challa directly—only hope that the Black Panther God would answer him.

Nakia hurriedly crushed the Heart-Shaped Herb fruit with a pestle.

"O Black Panther God,"

she prayed softly,

"please save T'Challa and grant him rebirth."

She then fed the crushed herb to T'Challa.

"Bury him,"

M'Baku commanded.

The attendants immediately covered T'Challa completely in snow, just as the High Priest had once buried him in red sand.

T'Challa suddenly opened his eyes.

He found himself once more upon the familiar plains—but this time, he wore robes of pure white. The land was no longer cloaked in night, but bathed in twilight. Even the aurora shimmered faintly across the sky.

"You've returned again~"

The Black Panther God leapt gracefully down from a tree, instantly transforming into a beautiful woman.

"You're the first to come here twice without dying,"

she teased lightly.

In Wakandan belief, the dead eventually return to the Black Panther God's embrace. Most people come here only once in their lifetime. Each Black Panther, however, arrives twice—once upon becoming the Black Panther, and once more upon death, when their soul returns to the plains.

"Am I... not dead?"

T'Challa asked. He had believed Erik had killed him.

"Do you want to be?"

the goddess countered.

T'Challa shook his head. He could not die—not while Erik remained in Wakanda, threatening to plunge the nation into war and destruction.

"Then go back,"

the Black Panther God said gently.

"This is not where you belong yet."

With a wave of her hand, T'Challa vanished.

"Hey, you big gorilla—how long are you planning to watch?"

the goddess suddenly called out, turning toward the treetops.

There, a snow-white ape sat leisurely on a branch, munching on fruit.

"This is my territory,"

the White Gorilla replied lazily, tail swaying as he took another bite.

"You borrow my land and won't even let me watch?"

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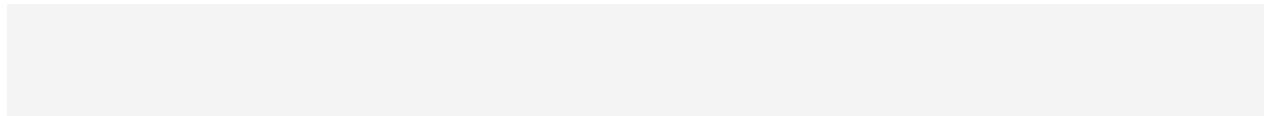
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Chapter 244 - 244 – Burning the Heart-Shaped Herb



"Hmph!"

The Black Panther Goddess turned her head away, no longer paying attention to the White Gorilla. She leapt into the trees and vanished. At the same time, the surrounding scenery shifted abruptly—

the endless grasslands transformed into towering mountains that pierced the clouds. At the mountain peak stood a colossal, ancient tree, upon which the White Gorilla sat steadily. Several other white gorillas surrounded the area.

T'Challa jolted awake, realizing he was buried in snow. Nakia was the only one by his side.

"T'Challa, you're finally awake!"

Nakia threw her arms around him, tears streaming down her face. For a moment, she had truly believed she had lost him—lost the love of her life.

Meanwhile, Lucas and Tony were outside, sitting by a bonfire with M'Baku, devouring roasted meat.

"The barbecue up here tastes way better than the stuff down below,"

Lucas said, eating heartily. From morning until now, he had barely had time to eat, let alone drink water.

Tony wasn't doing much better, equally focused on eating.

M'Baku remained silent. He had never been a talkative man, but the fact that he was willing to share food with Lucas and Tony already showed that he had accepted them—perhaps even accepted T'Challa as well.

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At the same time, a similar ritual was taking place in the royal sacred grounds.

Erik consumed the Heart-Shaped Herb and was buried in the crimson sand. In a haze, he found himself back in his childhood home, facing his father, N'Jobu, seated on the sofa.

"Father..."

Erik murmured, his eyes reddening.

"My son,"

N'Jobu said with a gentle smile.

"It seems you've finally found your way home."

"I gave you that ring so that one day, you could return to Wakanda. That is where our true home is."

Erik said nothing, quietly staring at his father.

"I only feared that you would not be accepted because of me,"

N'Jobu continued softly.

"That you would be punished for my existence."

"Why, Father?"

Erik asked emotionally.

"Don't you hate them?"

"Hate?"

N'Jobu shook his head.

"No, my son. I was wrong. I should have taken you back long ago. T'Chaka was right. I was too naive."

He spoke calmly, having realized the truth at the moment of his death.

"I believed Wakanda's weapons and technology could bring equality and peace to our people. But I ignored human nature. Once people gain power beyond all limits, they become mad—cruel. They will use that power to dominate others. That darkness exists in all of humanity."

"Go, my son,"

N'Jobu said gently.

"Do not repeat my mistakes. Wakanda is still your home. Do not take the wrong path."

With that, N'Jobu faded away.

Erik awakened, gasping for fresh air just as T'Challa had once done.

The attendants pulled him from the crimson sand, helping him steady his breathing. Once calm, Erik looked toward the Heart-Shaped Herb garden.

"Are all the Heart-Shaped Herbs here?"

he asked.

"Yes, Your Majesty,"

an attendant replied respectfully.

"When the next king is ready, they will mature."

Erik stared at the field.

"Burn them."

"Your Majesty, you cannot!"

the attendant cried out in shock.

"The Heart-Shaped Herb is required for every king's ascension. It is Wakandan tradition!"

Erik seized the attendant by the throat and lifted them off the ground.

"You will do exactly as I say,"

he snarled.

"You don't need to speak beyond that."

He tossed the attendant into the herb field and roared at the others.

"Burn it all!"

Under his oppressive presence, the attendants had no choice. Torches were lit, and flames began consuming the Heart-Shaped Herb garden. Only then did Erik nod in satisfaction.

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Back in the palace, Erik donned ceremonial robes and strode toward the throne. He sat down, surrounded by the royal guard and W'Kabi.

T'Chaka, Queen Ramonda, and Princess Shuri were seated nearby. In Shuri's hands was a golden fang necklace—the backup Black Panther suit T'Challa had once dismissed as too flashy.

"My sister,"

Erik said, beckoning to her.

"You will personally place this necklace on me."

Shuri glared at him with hatred, but she had no choice. He was the king now.

After placing the necklace around his neck, she returned to her parents' side.

"When our people rose up across the ocean,"

Erik declared,

"they had no weapons, no resources to resist those in power—no way to fight the oppression of white rulers."

He swept his gaze across the hall, where everyone wielded vibranium weapons, yet none had lifted a finger to help their own people.

"That ends now. I know Wakanda has spies embedded across the world. We will use their methods against them."

His voice grew colder.

"Send vibranium weapons to those agents. Arm the oppressed. Let them rise up, kill those in power—their children, and every accomplice they have."

A chill swept through the hall. No one had expected that Erik intended to declare war on the entire world.

"The global order will be rebuilt,"

Erik continued.

"And this time, we will control it. Wakanda will become a new empire upon which the sun never sets!"

"The reason Wakanda has endured for so long,"

T'Chaka said gravely,

"is because we only take up arms when absolutely necessary—not to provoke war."

He looked deeply at Erik.

Erik's twisted nature was his own responsibility, and T'Chaka knew he had to guide him back before it was too late.

Before Erik could respond, W'Kabi spoke first.

"That may have been true before,"

W'Kabi said calmly,

"but times have changed. Wakanda's technological advantage is being challenged. The outside world is catching up."

He glanced around the hall.

"You all saw those two outsiders. One of them wears armor no weaker than the Black Panther suit. Soon, it will be conquer or be conquered. I refuse to be the one who is conquered."

His words stunned everyone—especially T'Chaka and Okoye. No one expected W'Kabi to openly support Erik.

"You've heard the command,"

Erik said coldly.

"Carry it out immediately."

"No!"

T'Chaka shouted, stepping forward.

"We cannot recklessly start a war. That will plunge Wakanda into flames and lead only to destruction."

His authority still outweighed Erik's, and the elders nodded in agreement.

The hall fell into a tense silence.

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Chapter 245 - 245 – Preparing the Counterattack

Erik turned to look at T'Chaka and spoke calmly.

"T'Chaka, I am the King of Wakanda now. You have no right to speak here. Our reckoning is not over yet. After I kill T'Challa, you and the rest will be next."

T'Chaka maintained a composed expression as he looked at Erik, as though he had long foreseen his own fate.

"You cannot drag Wakanda into war. This is not what your father would have wanted."

"You have no right to mention him!"

Erik suddenly erupted. He seized T'Chaka by the collar and yanked him forward.

"Carry out the orders. Anyone who says one more word dies."

With that, Erik released T'Chaka and strode out of the hall without looking back, W'Kabi following closely behind.

"Your Majesty, are you all right?"

Okoye and the elders hurried forward to check on T'Chaka.

"I'm fine,"

T'Chaka murmured, staring in the direction Erik had departed.

"Wakanda is about to fall into darkness."

High in the mountains, everyone gathered once again inside M'Baku's great hall. Nakia had returned with the latest intelligence.

"After becoming king, Erik has secured the support of the army,"

Nakia reported as she stood beside T'Challa.

"W'Kabi has brought the Border Tribe fully under his command."

She paused, then continued gravely.

"More importantly, all the Heart-Shaped Herbs have been burned. Only the dozen or so fruits we have left remain."

As she spoke, she looked toward Lucas. Tony turned his gaze to him as well.

"How did you know Erik would destroy the Heart-Shaped Herbs?"

Nakia asked in confusion.

"If it weren't for your foresight, the herbs would've been completely wiped out."

"Don't ask,"

Lucas replied calmly.

"Just call it... magical intuition."

He then took a black necklace from his system pack and tossed it to T'Challa.

"You'll need this now. The gold one is probably already hanging around Erik's neck."

The gold necklace was the flashier Golden Jaguar suit.

T'Challa accepted the necklace and placed it around his neck. With the Black Panther suit once more at his disposal, he finally had a weapon capable of fighting back.

Nearby, M'Baku looked as though he were about to fall asleep. Strategy and discussion had never been his forte—he preferred direct action.

"Are you people done yet?"

he said, propping his chin on his hand.

"I'm about to doze off."

"T'Challa,"

Lucas said,

"perhaps you should speak with M'Baku alone."

T'Challa nodded. All others, including the guards, withdrew, leaving only the two of them.

After the hall emptied, T'Challa spoke.

"Thank you, M'Baku. I must return to stop Erik. You know that your tribe is also part of Wakanda."

M'Baku understood his meaning immediately and rejected it outright.

"I will not have the Jabari people die for your personal struggle."

"But this concerns all of Wakanda."

"Us?"

M'Baku scoffed, rising to his feet.

"You say 'us'? You are the first king in centuries to step foot in our land. Past kings never even acknowledged our tribe—some even excluded us from sacred ceremonies. And now you speak of 'us'?"

He stepped closer, towering over T'Challa, his presence imposing.

"You're right,"

T'Challa said steadily.

"I cannot speak for past kings. But now Wakanda is ruled by a madman. You and I both know what vibranium represents. If Erik gains total control over it, what do you think will happen to your tribe?"

M'Baku frowned and turned toward the cliff behind him, gazing into the rolling clouds below.

"I said we will not help you."

With that, he dismissed T'Challa and said no more.

Elsewhere, Erik was accelerating the production and packaging of vibranium. Crates upon crates were stacked across the landing platform, with dozens of aircraft waiting to depart.

Everyone worked frantically, loading vibranium onto the ships.

Okoye followed closely behind Erik, her expression rigid. As captain of the guard, she had no choice.

"Have all the agents overseas been notified?"

Erik asked W'Kabi.

W'Kabi wore the Border Tribe's vibranium-woven mantle, capable of storing vast energy and deploying a protective shield.

"They've all been informed,"

he replied.

"Some agents oppose the new orders, but those in key cities are ready."

Erik nodded.

"Then we start with those locations. The rest will eventually abandon their outdated thinking."

He picked up a spear glowing with blue energy, its blade gleaming in the sunlight.

"Weapons that even metal detectors cannot detect. Thousands of these supersonic energy spears exist. The world will finally understand our true power—and kneel before it."

He looked up as one of the aircraft lifted off.

But it had barely traveled a hundred meters when it suddenly exploded, shattering midair.

Erik rushed to the edge of the platform. Amid the flames, a black figure leapt onto the wreckage—agile as a panther.

It was T'Challa, clad once more in the Black Panther suit, standing within the inferno like a reborn king.

Everyone saw T'Challa's return. Aside from Erik and W'Kabi, the crowd erupted in cheers, welcoming their true king.

"Erik!"

T'Challa's voice thundered as he advanced.

"So you've recovered,"

Erik said, walking forward as well.

"I've been waiting for this moment."

Two kings of Wakanda.

Two Black Panthers.

Their final confrontation was inevitable.

"Continue the launches,"

Erik ordered coldly.

"The mission proceeds."

The royal guards hesitated, but the Border Tribe obeyed without question. Crates were loaded, and the aircraft took off like swarming bees.

"W'Kabi,"

Erik said, watching the ships rise,

"stop T'Challa."

"W'Kabi! You dare?!"

Okoye shouted, her spear leveled at him.

W'Kabi glanced at her, then resolutely raised his curved blade.

"Border Tribe—charge!"

At his command, W'Kabi rushed toward T'Challa, the warriors of the Border Tribe surging forward behind him.

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"Nakia, you can start on your end."

T'Challa brushed his fingers across the bead bracelet in his hand.

"You—! You'll drag Wakanda into the abyss! You're completely unfit to be king!"

Okoye spun her spear and pointed it straight at Erik.

At the same time, the Dora Milaje behind her raised their spears, all aimed at him.

Erik smiled. He drew his short sword and spear from behind his back, and golden light spread across his body as a brand-new Black Panther suit enveloped him.

This suit was primarily black, etched with dark-gold patterns across its surface. A distinct golden band wrapped around his waist like a belt, and the helmet was adorned with subtle golden markings.

If T'Challa's armor resembled a black panther, then Erik's suit was more like a lightning-fast predator of the plains—a golden jaguar.

"I'll handle this. You go protect the king!"

Okoye tilted her head, signaling the others to move.

The remaining Dora Milaje immediately turned and rushed toward T'Challa, while Okoye stayed behind to face Erik alone.

She struck first. Her spear shot forward like a silver dragon, thrusting at Erik. He blocked with his short sword and twisted his body to redirect the force, then countered with a sudden stab of his own spear.

Okoye spun to block, sweeping her spear in a wide arc. The spearhead flashed past Erik's abdomen—but the Golden Jaguar armor absorbed the blow completely.

---

On the other side, the Border Tribe warriors had already closed in on T'Challa.

"Defensive formation!!"

W'Kabi roared.

The warriors halted at once, flinging their cloaks outward. In an instant, rows of energy shields materialized, blocking T'Challa's path. These shields were capable of absorbing vibranium-based energy attacks.

As energy surged through them, the shields grew taller and taller—nearly three meters high.

But T'Challa simply leapt.

He cleared the shields effortlessly, and the moment he landed, a pulse of purple energy erupted outward from his body.

The shockwave blasted through the formation, hurling every Border Tribe warrior into the air. Their combined energy shields shattered instantly.

T'Challa didn't waste time on them. He sprinted straight toward Erik.

Ahead of him, members of the Dora Milaje had already arrived—but instead of staying with T'Challa, they charged into the remaining Border Tribe soldiers.

The Dora Milaje were the royal guard of Wakanda.

They served only the king and obeyed only him and their general, Okoye.

And the king they served was not Erik—but T'Challa.

Every member of the Dora Milaje was female, by tradition, but their combat ability far surpassed any other military unit in Wakanda, both in skill and weaponry.

One decisive charge was enough to suppress Border Tribe forces that outnumbered them three to one.

Without their energy shields raised, the Border Tribe soldiers were completely overwhelmed. Within a single exchange, many were already down.

"Raise the shields!"

W'Kabi shouted.

The Border Tribe warriors immediately activated their energy barriers, finally halting the Dora Milaje's advance.

Meanwhile, W'Kabi chased after T'Challa. With vibranium-enhanced strength, he actually managed to catch up and slashed at T'Challa's back.

T'Challa felt a heavy impact, as if someone had shoved him forward. His suit flared with purple light—he'd been hit.

He turned, saw it was W'Kabi, and responded with a flying kick that sent him crashing to the ground. W'Kabi was no match for him.

"W'Kabi, stop this madness!"

T'Challa shouted.

Only W'Kabi could halt the Border Tribe now—because they no longer obeyed T'Challa's commands.

W'Kabi looked up at him... then pulled out a rhinoceros horn.

"Stop, W'Kabi!"

T'Challa knew exactly what he was about to do—but it was already too late.

Woooo—Wooooooo—

The horn sounded.

Every warrior stiffened. That horn meant only one thing—the arrival of Wakanda's most fearsome weapon.

Boom—Boom—

The ground began to tremble like an earthquake. The vibrations grew closer and stronger as massive shapes thundered forward.

The wreckage of the downed aircraft was crushed instantly as dozens of colossal war rhinos, clad in vibranium armor, charged onto the battlefield.

The tide of battle turned in an instant.

The Dora Milaje were scattered by the initial impact. Already outnumbered, they were pushed into a dire disadvantage.

Border Tribe warriors leapt onto the backs of the rhinos, their combat strength skyrocketing. The beasts rampaged through the field, unstoppable—no Dora Milaje warrior could stand against them head-on.

Just as the Dora Milaje were beginning to lose ground—

Heavy metal music suddenly blared across the battlefield.

A gold-and-red streak tore through the sky, thrusters blazing.

Tony Stark had arrived.

"Ohhh—man! Gotta love nanotech armor. Practically zero air resistance!"

Repulsor blasts poured from his palms like a storm. With his chest wound fully healed, J.A.R.V.I.S. no longer needed to divert power to keep him alive—every ounce of energy went straight into combat.

The barrage hit the ground like suppressive fire from a heavy machine gun, leaving scorched trails in Tony's wake.

"Let's try this next!"

Tony shouted as two drone cannons unfolded from his back.

Brilliant blue beams fired in rapid succession. Tony alone pinned down the majority of the Border Tribe forces.

At the same time, a dark green figure burst onto the battlefield.

Skye.

Wearing her vibranium combat suit, she charged forward, shockwaves rippling beneath her feet. With every step, the ground cracked and shattered.

With a thunderous leap, she launched herself more than ten meters into the air—

**BOOM!**

She slammed down, and a massive shockwave erupted outward for dozens of meters.

Every war rhino in the radius collapsed, howling in pain. Their vibranium armor fractured like brittle cookies, breaking apart and scattering across the ground.

With that single strike, Skye crippled the Border Tribe's greatest advantage.

She drew her fists back and thrust them forward, unleashing wave after wave of compressed force—air cannons that blasted soldiers off their feet.

"Defensive formation!"

Someone shouted.

Border Tribe warriors quickly raised their energy shields.

"Energy shields, huh? Interesting..."

Tony hovered above, observing.

"J.A.R.V.I.S., record the data on those shields immediately."

"Yes, sir."

Tony fired several repulsor blasts—but every shot was absorbed. One even ricocheted straight back at him.

On the ground, Skye faced more than a dozen overlapping energy shields without hesitation.

The Dora Milaje didn't know who she was—but seeing her attacking the Border Tribe, they instantly recognized her as an ally and moved to her side, spears leveled and ready.

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Chapter 247 - 247 – It's Time to Settle Accounts, Erik

The battlefield had split into two clearly defined sides.

On one side stood the Border Tribe warriors, energy shields raised high.

On the other were the Dora Milaje, led by Skye, their spears gleaming with cold light.

Tony hovered in midair. Several aircraft had already taken off and were now flying in different directions, each one packed with vibranium, destined for destinations all over the world.

"Tony, you can't let those ships escape!"

T'Challa's voice rang out. If that vibranium truly spread across the globe, the entire world would be plunged into war.

Tony immediately accelerated toward the nearest aircraft. The drone cannons behind him fired twin beams that struck the ship's propulsion system with pinpoint accuracy. The engines failed, and the aircraft dropped out of the sky.

At the same time, more than a dozen additional ships took off. Their speed was incredible—Tony alone couldn't stop all of them.

Rumble—!!!

Suddenly, dark clouds began to gather across the sky. In the blink of an eye, the heavens were completely overcast. Sunlight vanished, thunder rolled, and lightning flashed.

High above, a red cloak expanded dozens of meters wide. Beneath the storm clouds, the sky was stained a deep, ominous crimson. The cloak billowed like a pair of colossal wings.

Lucas's eyes glowed with violet light. Raising both hands, he summoned a black spear-staff into his grip.

"Judgment of Thunder—!"

With a shout, Lucas hurled the staff skyward.

The weapon flashed with purple light and vanished into the clouds. Instantly, countless bolts of lightning churned within the storm before crashing down in unison.

Every aircraft attempting to flee was struck. Explosions blossomed across the sky, and the ships fell like rain, plummeting one after another.

Tony and Skye were long used to scenes like this, but the people of Wakanda were utterly stunned. Even Erik froze, momentarily forgetting the battle, staring in disbelief at the dark-red figure suspended in the sky.

Seizing the opportunity, Okoye attacked at once. Her spear shot toward the stunned Erik. He failed to dodge in time, and the weapon struck his abdomen—but the Golden Jaguar suit blocked it yet again, golden light rippling across the armor.

Erik grabbed the spear shaft and yanked hard. Okoye couldn't match his strength and was pulled toward him.

In a single motion, Erik spun around and seized her, pressing his short blade against her throat. The remaining three Dora Milaje rushed in immediately, spears leveled at him.

Erik suddenly smiled. Without hesitation, he began to slash downward at Okoye's neck—

A blast of energy slammed into his back.

Though the armor absorbed the energy itself, the kinetic force still sent him stumbling forward. Okoye was forced out of his grasp.

In the distance, Shuri stood with both arms raised. Panther-shaped wrist cannons were mounted on her forearms—the very weapons that had fired the shot.

"Now! Lock him down!"

Okoye shouted.

She lunged back in with her spear, and the other three followed. Four spears crossed and connected around Erik's body, forming a containment field that froze him in place.

Erik struggled violently, but the energy field held him fast.

Then, suddenly, golden light surged through the Golden Jaguar armor.

A powerful shockwave erupted from Erik's body, instantly shattering the containment field.

They had forgotten—

The Golden Jaguar suit shared the same core function as the Black Panther suit: absorbing energy and releasing it as devastating force.

Okoye and the others were blasted away, hurled more than ten meters and crashing down among the Border Tribe forces below.

Erik turned toward Shuri, pointing his blade at her before charging forward.

Panicking, Shuri fired her wrist cannons again. The blasts were useless against the armor—only slowing Erik slightly through raw impact, but dealing no real damage.

Suddenly, a circular weapon flew in from the side and struck Erik squarely in the back, making him stagger. A second ring followed immediately.

Nakia rushed in, caught the first returning ring, spun, and smashed it into Erik's back once more.

Erik slashed at her, but Nakia blocked with her blade. The ring twisted around his arm, forcing his grip open. His short sword slipped free and was seized by Nakia.

At the same time, the spear in Erik's other hand was blasted loose by a precisely aimed shot from Shuri.

Now disarmed, Erik was forced onto the defensive as Nakia attacked relentlessly with both rings.

Relying on the suit's overwhelming performance, Erik endured the barrage. Then his claws snapped out, raking across Nakia's thigh.

Four deep, bloody gashes appeared instantly.

Erik grabbed her arm and flung her away with brute force. She, too, fell into the chaos of the battlefield below.

Seeing this, Shuri increased the output of her wrist cannons, trying to pin Erik down with sheer firepower. But the Golden Jaguar suit absorbed it all.

Erik advanced through the barrage, seized the wrist cannon with one hand, and crushed it. Deep cracks spread instantly, and the weapon went dead.

With no weapons left, Shuri was defenseless. Erik shoved her to the ground, picked up his spear, and slowly approached.

"I was going to kill your brother first," he said coldly.

"But since you're offering yourself now, I don't mind sending you to your Panther God ahead of him."

He raised the spear, preparing to strike.

Suddenly, a flash of red appeared.

A soft, silk-like fabric wrapped tightly around Erik's arm, stopping the spear in midair with overwhelming force.

Lucas descended from the sky.

The cloth restraining Erik was Lucas's cloak.

With a flick of the cloak, Shuri was lifted gently into the air, suspended safely above the ground.

"I'll lend you the cloak for now," Lucas said calmly.

"Go get yourself some armor and help T'Challa. I'll handle things here."

Before Shuri could respond, Lucas waved his hand. The cloak carried her away at high speed toward the research center.

Lucas turned back, spreading his hand. The Ultimate Divine Weapon appeared in his grasp, its blade engulfed in blazing flames.

"Erik," Lucas said evenly,

"it's time to settle accounts."

Erik stared at him warily. He could clearly feel the terrifying heat radiating from the sword—even through his vibranium armor, the scorching intensity made his skin prickle.

"Wakanda has fallen so far that it needs to ally with white invaders like you," Erik snarled.

"T'Challa has completely forgotten who his ancestors were!"

His face twisted with hatred. More than anything, Erik despised the white oppressors who had enslaved and brutalized his people—and now one of them stood right in front of him.

"Hey—don't lump me in with those idiots," Lucas shot back dryly.

"I can't stand what they did either, alright?"

He muttered inwardly that he'd been reborn as a white kid whether he liked it or not. If reincarnation were a choice, the underworld would've collapsed from chaos long ago.

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Erik froze for a moment.

This was the first time he had ever seen a white man openly calling other white people "idiots." Weren't they always arrogant, self-righteous, and convinced of their own superiority? Yet this man standing before him seemed completely out of place among them.

"In that case, you should support my plan even more," Erik argued forcefully.

"Only this way can the world become truly equal. Only then will Black people no longer be oppressed by whites!"

Erik had never believed his actions were wrong. In his mind, Black people deserved to dominate, and white people had to pay for centuries of oppression.

Lucas looked utterly baffled. From his perspective, Erik wasn't fighting oppression at all—he was trying to conquer the world. This had nothing to do with justice. It was a complete distortion of his so-called original purpose.

Erik's ideas—no, his father's ideals—were fundamentally impossible in this era. Racial discrimination among whites wasn't something that could be erased through threats or force. It was ingrained, almost instinctive.

In fact, whites didn't just discriminate against Black people—they discriminated against everyone who wasn't white. That ugly reality couldn't be changed by a single law or a few condemnatory headlines.

"Alright, sure. I believe you," Lucas replied calmly.

"So... what next?"

He had no interest in debating Erik. Arguments never solved anything. If words were enough, the world wouldn't need weapons in the first place.

Erik hadn't expected that response and was momentarily at a loss for words.

"Enough talking," Lucas said flatly.

"If you've got nothing else to say, then come on."

He leveled his sword straight at Erik.

Erik's gaze hardened. He lunged first, claws slashing down toward Lucas's head, his movements agile and savage—no slower than T'Challa's.

Lucas flicked his sword upward, blocking Erik's path. Then he pressed the blade down and slashed across Erik's shoulder.

Lucas clearly held back. The strike didn't cut into Erik's body—but it did slice open the Golden Jaguar armor.

Agony exploded in Erik's shoulder. A fierce burning sensation seared his nerves. He leapt backward at once.

The vibranium at his shoulder had shattered, revealing scorched, blackened flesh beneath.

"You... you actually cut through vibranium?!"

Erik stared at Lucas in disbelief. Vibranium had always been synonymous with invincibility in his mind. Yet today, he had encountered something that could break it.

"What is your sword made of?" he demanded.

"Hmm... probably crystal," Lucas answered casually.

He genuinely had no idea. The Ultimate Weapon looked like dull crystal, so crystal it was.

Lucas stepped forward and thrust his blade toward Erik's chest. Blazing flames surged along the sword, forming the phantom image of an undying phoenix.

For the first time, fear overtook Erik's face.

Years of bloodshed had honed his instincts—especially his instinct for death. He knew with absolute certainty that if that phoenix-shaped strike hit him, he would die instantly.

This was not an attack he could afford to block.

Faced with the scorching inferno, Erik instinctively turned to flee.

But Lucas had no intention of letting him escape.

A streak of red fire flashed across the battlefield. In the next instant, Lucas appeared directly in Erik's path.

The Ultimate Weapon rotated in his hand. The phoenix vanished, replaced by an icy-blue sword. Its tip rested lightly against Erik's throat.

The chilling sharpness froze Erik in place. A bone-deep cold washed over him.

"Struggle a bit more," Lucas said indifferently.

"You know the consequences."

The frigid aura spread from Erik's neck throughout his body. He could even feel his blood beginning to freeze.

Lucas opened his hand.

The golden necklace around Erik's neck snapped apart and flew into Lucas's palm.

The moment the necklace was gone, Erik's armor disintegrated. The nanotech vibranium lost all vitality, scattering across the ground like lifeless debris.

"Honestly," Lucas continued,

"you and I don't really have a personal grudge. I just couldn't stand what you were doing. Now... can we finally talk calmly?"

The Ultimate Weapon vanished. In its place appeared a silver revolver, pressed firmly against Erik's body.

The Punisher was lethal to anything that wasn't a normal human—and after consuming the Heart-Shaped Herb, Erik was no longer one.

Lucas escorted Erik outside.

By now, the battlefield was in complete chaos.

On the ground, T'Challa led Nakia and the Dora Milaje against the Border Tribe warriors. Skye darted through the battlefield at high speed, each shockwave she released shattering vibranium armor by the dozens.

In the sky, Shuri—now wearing a vibranium combat suit—fought alongside Tony, their energy blasts raining down to suppress the Border Tribe.

At the same time, from behind the Border Tribe, a group of burly warriors clad in fur suddenly charged forward, wielding short swords and spears.

At their head was M'Baku—the very man who had once refused T'Challa.

Seeing the reinforcements, T'Challa shouted and launched a counteroffensive. The Dora Milaje had been outnumbered earlier and only

held the line thanks to Tony and Skye. M'Baku's arrival was the final blow that broke the Border Tribe's resistance.

On the battlefield, Okoye stood facing her husband, W'Kabi.

His betrayal cut deeper than any wound. The two stood opposed, weapons drawn.

"Put down your weapon, W'Kabi," Okoye said, staring straight at him.

The tide had already turned. The Border Tribe had no chance of victory.

"Are you going to kill me, my love?" W'Kabi asked quietly.

Despite everything, he had always loved Okoye.

"For Wakanda."

Tears welled in Okoye's eyes as she leveled her spear at him. She loved him just as deeply—but his crimes left her no choice.

W'Kabi looked around. Former friends, even family members, were locked in brutal combat, killing one another.

Regret flooded his heart.

Following a madman like Erik to ignite a war—how foolish he had been.

Erik's so-called plan to liberate the oppressed hadn't even begun, yet Wakanda's people were already slaughtering each other.

Only now did W'Kabi understand the peace T'Chaka and T'Challa had spoken of.

War had no victors. Only mountains of corpses and rivers of blood. In the end, everyone's hands were stained with the blood of their own people.

W'Kabi dropped his curved blade and slowly sank to his knees.

Seeing this, the Border Tribe warriors followed suit, laying down their weapons one by one.

They, too, longed to laugh and talk with friends and family. But on the battlefield, they were soldiers—and obedience came first.

Every aircraft capable of flight had already been destroyed by Lucas's lightning. The platform was now piled high with vibranium weapons.

Lucas rested a hand on Erik's shoulder and led him to the edge of the platform, overlooking the battlefield below.

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Chapter 249 - 249 – It's Time to End This

"It's time to put an end to this farce, Erik,"

Lucas said, gesturing toward him.

Erik knew he had lost. With Lucas and his allies present, his plan was never going to succeed.

"Everyone—stand down!!"

Erik roared. Amplified by the beads on his wrist, his voice swept across the entire battlefield. All eyes immediately turned toward the landing platform.

At the highest point of the platform stood Lucas and Erik. Everyone could clearly see that Lucas had completely subdued him.

"Wooo—!!"

T'Challa was the first to raise his hands high. The Dora Milaje followed, lifting their arms and shouting in triumph. They had won—successfully stopping a war that could have engulfed the entire world.

Okoye escorted W'Kabi under guard. The remaining Border Tribe warriors were restrained by M'Baku's people. Just like that, the war ended—quietly, without unnecessary bloodshed.

---

Inside the royal hall, all the elders had gathered, including W'Kabi's father, the former chieftain of the Border Tribe.

T'Challa sat upon the throne, with Shuri and Nakia standing behind him. Lucas and Tony sat off to the side, watching calmly. This was a trial—an internal Wakandan matter. They wouldn't interfere, but watching was fair game.

"How do you think T'Challa will deal with them?"

Tony whispered while eating blueberries.

This was Shuri's instruction. Tony had only just recovered and needed vitamins, flavonoids, and anthocyanins to nourish and protect his heart.

"I doubt he'll execute anyone," Lucas replied quietly.

"No one actually died in this conflict. Both sides fought for their leaders, but neither went for the kill."

Lucas popped a blueberry into his mouth, immediately wincing at the sourness. He shoved the rest back toward Tony.

"Try this instead—it's pretty sweet."

Skye said with a smile, feeding Lucas a few grape-sized fruits that looked nothing like grapes.

Skye sat beside Lucas, the three of them watching the proceedings together.

Truth be told, Skye had been bored staying at home. She decided to look for Lucas—after all, the crystal key she carried could record every place Lucas had been. Using the Chocobo space as a transit point, she could easily find him.

She just happened to arrive right before the battle broke out and was promptly drafted into the fight.

Fortunately, her abilities were a perfect counter to machinery and metal. As long as her shockwaves were powerful enough, even vibranium could be shattered—provided the force was sufficient.

When Skye heard there was a fight, she was thrilled. As the saying went, one is shaped by the company they keep—she had gradually shed her reclusive nature and become far more cheerful and outgoing.

As expected, T'Challa did not sentence W'Kabi to death. Instead, he ordered him imprisoned. Wakanda's prisons were considered the most inescapable in the world—vibranium was everywhere.

Okoye personally escorted W'Kabi away. She knew T'Challa's mercy was, to a large extent, because of her.

W'Kabi's father said nothing. In his eyes, his son's crimes were unforgivable—even death would not have been enough to atone.

M'Baku also took part in the trial. T'Challa even added an extra seat to the council specifically for him. From that day on, M'Baku's tribe was officially brought under the Black Panther's banner.

When T'Challa turned his gaze to Erik, his expression grew complicated.

Erik was the mastermind, the rebel leader. Yet T'Challa truly did not wish to kill him. His uncle had only this one son, and he did not want to be the one to spill his own brother's blood.

"Take him to my father," T'Challa said at last.

"How he is dealt with will be my father's decision."

In the end, T'Challa still chose not to execute Erik. None of the elders objected. After all, Erik was still of royal blood—his fate required the king's approval.

"See? I told you,"

Lucas muttered softly.

Tony rolled his eyes and said nothing. This trip had been immensely profitable for him—he had gained nanotechnology and fully healed his injury.

---

Over the next few days, Lucas and the others thoroughly enjoyed themselves in Wakanda.

Tony even brought Pepper over and signed several cooperation agreements with T'Challa.

Shuri guided them through nearly every scenic location Wakanda had to offer. They spent almost a full month having the time of their lives.

At a grand banquet, T'Challa hosted Lucas and his companions with the highest level of honor. After everything they had been through together, a deep friendship had formed—especially between Shuri, Skye, and Pepper, who had become inseparable. Skye even invited Shuri to visit New York.

After a night of heavy drinking, they set off for home the next day. Once again, they flew on Tony's private jet—Wakanda still wasn't ready to reveal itself to the world.

Back in New York, life returned to calm.

Skye video-called Shuri every day and even introduced Gwen to her. Since Wanda was staying at Kamar-Taj, Shuri had only chatted with her in their small group chat and hadn't met her in person yet.

The group was created by Gwen. Besides the three of them, it included Felicia, Pepper—and even Natasha.

Natasha seemed to have been quietly "converted." Logically, as a S.H.I.E.L.D. agent, she should have reported Wakanda's advanced technology to Nick Fury. Yet she never mentioned it at all, as if she had forgotten. In the group chat, the girls talked about food, shopping, and private topics. Natasha never tried to extract information from Shuri—she genuinely treated her as a friend.

A few days later, Shuri and T'Challa arrived in New York. Tony waved a hand and booked them into the finest hotel under the Stark name.

Shuri went on a wild spree with the girls—eating, shopping, and playing her way through New York and its surroundings. No one worried about money. Natasha even found all kinds of excuses to get Nick Fury to reimburse her expenses.

Finally, T'Challa and Shuri came to the place where their uncle had once lived.

Standing on the basketball court below the building, Shuri looked up at the modest six-story structure.

"This is where Uncle used to live? It's surprisingly simple,"

she said curiously, glancing around at the Black children playing basketball and skateboarding nearby.

"Yes," T'Challa replied.

"I've bought this building—and the two next to it. This will become a Wakandan Outreach Center, to help homeless Black communities and children."

He looked up at the sky. The deep blue above New York was no different from Wakanda's.

Whether in New York or Wakanda, everyone lived beneath the same sky. There should be no division—and no war.

On the news, reporters were covering the latest United Nations assembly. Wakanda and Stark Industries had jointly announced a multinational partnership. The decision boosted Stark Industries' reputation once again and brought Tony Stark's name back into the global spotlight.

In an unknown villa somewhere, a blond man watched the news with a faint smile.

Around his eyes, an orange-red glow began to spread—like molten lava rolling beneath the surface.

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Chapter 250 - 250 – The Iron Patriot

Lucas returned once again to a thoroughly laid-back life.

Gwen, Peter, and Felicia had all gone back to New York to begin their internships. All three entered Stark Industries. In truth, calling it an "internship" was mostly a formality—Gwen and Felicia were there in name only. Pepper had set aside a private laboratory just for the three of them, giving them free rein to experiment however they liked.

Peter and Felicia were particularly passionate about biotechnology, while Gwen focused on medical technology. Overall, their specialties all revolved around biology, which happened to be one of Stark Industries' weaker areas.

Back in New York, Gwen no longer needed to live in a dormitory. She only had to submit a monthly internship report to her professors. After all, among the entire MIT student body, only the three of them had secured internships at Stark Industries. MIT placed great importance on them.

Felicia also came clean about her background.

Her father was an infamous international thief, known as Black Cat. She had inherited his legacy—not in the sense of theft itself, but in skills. From a young age, she had been personally trained by her father. In addition to thieving techniques, she had undergone extensive combat training and physical conditioning, including flexibility and agility.

Those months when she had been leaving early and returning late were simply the final phase of her training. Otherwise, there was no way she could have possessed the combat ability necessary to kill so many Chitauri during the Battle of New York.

No one was particularly surprised by the revelation. Lucas had always known about Felicia's past. She had already told Peter as well—this was merely filling Gwen and the others in.

"Your father is Black Cat, the master thief?"

Natasha asked, lounging lazily on the sofa, clearly intrigued.

"Yes. You've met my father before?" Felicia asked.

Natasha nodded. "I once had a mission to capture him, but he escaped. I have to say—his combat skills and agility were incredible. We had dozens of people involved, and not one of us could catch him."

She drifted into memory. Black Cat was infamous worldwide, specializing in priceless gems and cultural relics. Yet once stolen, these items seemed to vanish completely, never appearing on black markets or at auctions. Natasha had even once suspected that Black Cat was simply a collector with an obsession.

Over the next few days, Lucas was so idle that he practically melted into his chair, dozing off daily.

That was the normal state of his agency—everything except clients. He had no idea whether the place had bad feng shui. Even the dessert shop across the street was packed every day, while his agency gathered dust.

With nothing else to do, Lucas passed the time watching Skye work. In the entire office, she was the busiest one. Lucas, on the other hand, was completely useless, sprawled out all day.

Natasha was unusually free as well. She spent most of her time sitting in the agency or dragging Skye out shopping. She was so bored that she even started helping clean the office.

That alone was enough to make Lucas uneasy.

Just imagine it—an elite spy casually tidying up your place. No matter how you looked at it, it felt like a conspiracy waiting to happen. Chilling.

"Why don't you just turn this place into a restaurant?"

Natasha said, sitting idly at the bar.

"Your food would definitely be popular. Why cling to this useless agency and stare into space all day?"

"A restaurant is exhausting," Lucas replied lazily.

"I'm not short on money. Isn't lying flat the ideal life?"

What he didn't say was that the damned system simply wouldn't allow him to remodel the place—it had to remain an agency.

Natasha thought about it and found it reasonable. Lucas owned one of the most luxurious and secure apartment buildings in all of New York, located right in the city center, with long-term tenants and full occupancy. He also held a large number of Stark Industries shares and was even a minor shareholder.

With those conditions, who would still want to work? If it were her, she'd lie flat even harder than Lucas.

That calm routine was broken by a piece of news on television—one that instantly put Natasha back to work.

On the screen stood a bearded man wearing sunglasses, positioned in a public square. Armed terrorists surrounded him. Against a wall nearby, a line of hooded hostages knelt on the ground.

"Some people call me a terrorist," the man said calmly.

"I prefer to think of myself as a teacher."

As he spoke, the terrorists behind him opened fire on the kneeling hostages.

"America—are you ready for your lesson?"

"You all know who I am," the man continued,

"but you never know where I am. Meanwhile, I know exactly where each of you is."

He removed his sunglasses. The screen immediately cut to static, replaced by an emblem: two crossed blades, encircled by ten rings.

Moments later, all television signals were restored. News outlets erupted with nonstop coverage, and Congress convened an emergency meeting to discuss the incident.

Three days later, a congressional spokesperson held a press conference.

"In response to this terrorist incident, Congress has decided to deploy newly developed military assets. Please welcome Colonel James Rhodes."

The spokesperson gestured forward.

Colonel Rhodes stepped onto the podium, wearing a steel battle suit painted with the American flag—the War Machine armor Tony had once given him.

"Colonel Rhodes will now serve as a publicly recognized protector: the Iron Patriot!"

Cameras flashed wildly.

Another armored superhero had emerged after Iron Man—and this one officially represented the United States government.

The announcement caused a nationwide uproar. Some believed Congress was finally getting serious about combating terrorism. Others scoffed, calling it pure spectacle. Slapping an American flag onto a suit of armor didn't magically make it represent the nation.

Many dismissed it as yet another routine political show. After all, the U.S. government put on displays like this every year—nothing new.

At that very moment, Rhodes sat inside Tony's home, the two of them silently watching the broadcast.

After a long pause, Rhodes spoke first.

"Overall, the market response is positive, isn't it?"

"The Iron Patriot?"

Tony scoffed.

"Who came up with that name? It sounds like something from a child's game."

He didn't even want to start criticizing it.

"They said 'War Machine' sounded too violent," Rhodes argued.

"This name is supposed to feel more approachable."

Tony snorted. "And the paint job—don't get me started. It's even flashier than Steve's uniform. He looks like a clown. I gave you that armor, Rhodes, not so it could be butchered like this."

Tony found the garish red-white-and-blue suit on screen almost comical.

"Hey—no personal attacks," Rhodes said helplessly.

"You think I wanted this? Everything was decided by the people upstairs. I didn't have any say in it."

His tone was resigned. Tony's armor had become a military asset, and now even its name and appearance were completely out of his hands.

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