

# Marvel Manifestor

## Chapter 31: Battle with Marco

With a heavy thud, something landed hard on top of Marco's speeding truck—then came a teasing voice.

"Hey there, Mister Marco~~ you're under suspicion of armed robbery, reckless driving, and a bunch of other charges. I suggest you surrender peacefully, or I'm gonna slap you silly! And trust me, you don't want that to happen!"

The words had barely left his mouth before a red-and-blue figure flipped upside down and pressed his face against the driver's side window.

It was none other than Spider-Man—Peter Parker himself—already looking quite comfortable in his new career as the friendly neighborhood hero.

"Damn you! You just can't stop sticking your nose where it doesn't belong! I'll crush you into paste today!"

Marco's eyes blazed with fury. His bank heist had been going perfectly—until this bug-eyed brat showed up and ruined everything.

Slamming his foot on the brakes, Marco skidded the truck to a stop and unleashed his power. Sand surged from his body, wrapping Peter in a massive cocoon before smashing him into the ground with brutal force.

Spider-Man couldn't even move. Encased in solid sand, he could only watch helplessly as the ground rushed up to meet him.

"Damn you, Spider-Man! Damn you to hell!!"

Marco clenched his fist, and the sand around him mimicked the motion—forming a gigantic fist that came crashing down on the hero again and again.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

After several heavy blows, the asphalt cracked open into a deep crater, and Spider-Man lay at the bottom, dazed and coughing.

"Cough, cough—what the heck, Marco?! Trying to kill me or what?"

He scrambled back to his feet, but before he could regain his balance, another sand fist came hurtling toward him.

His spider sense screamed in warning. Peter fired a web and swung out of the way just in time, the sand fist smashing into the pavement behind him with explosive force.

"Hey, Marco! You forget your meds or something?"

Using his swing momentum, Peter launched himself forward, spinning mid-air and landing a solid kick to Marco's chest.

Wham!

Except—his foot passed straight through.

"Pffth—ugh! Marco, you jerk! That's a mouthful of sand—ptoo, ptoo!"

Peter hit the ground rolling, covered head to toe in gray dust, brushing frantically at his suit and even wiping his mask's lenses.

The moment his foot had connected, Marco's body had turned entirely into sand—dispersing on impact.

Bzzzzt!

His spider sense flared again. Peter leapt high, firing a web to the nearest wall.

Boom!

Where he'd been standing just seconds ago, a geyser of sand erupted, quickly gathering into Marco's humanoid shape once more.

If Lucas were there, he'd probably ask whether Marco had eaten a "Sand-Sand Fruit" or something—he was literally doing elemental transformation now.

As Marco's form solidified, a net of webs dropped from above, binding him tightly like a giant silkworm cocoon.

A white-and-pink figure landed beside it—Ghost-Spider, Gwen Stacy.

"This the bank robber?" she asked.

"Yeah," Peter said as he swung beside her. "But don't get cocky—he can break his body down into sand. I don't think that cocoon's gonna hold."

He was right. The web cocoon began to tremble violently, and fine grains of sand started leaking through the gaps.

Bang!

In the next instant, the entire web exploded outward, sand spraying in all directions like shrapnel. Peter and Gwen fired webs and swung away just in time.

Whiz! Whiz! Whiz!

The sandstorm ripped through the street, shredding what remained of the webs. Cars nearby were perforated with holes like they'd been hit by gunfire.

Most civilians had already fled, but a few unlucky ones lay on the ground, groaning in pain, their bodies riddled with wounds.

"This guy's a nightmare!" Peter growled, seeing the casualties. "Ghost-Spider! You handle the civilians—I'll take care of him!"

Without waiting for an answer, he fired two webs at opposite buildings, pulling them taut like a slingshot.

"Here we go!"

He launched himself forward like an arrow, slamming toward Marco just as the villain's sand body reformed.

Meanwhile, Gwen went into full rescue mode. She shot webs to stem bleeding, wove a large net in the air, and gently placed the injured inside one by one.

Her webbing was both strong and elastic, keeping the wounded stable. There wasn't time to deliver them to the cops yet; safety came first.

Soon, sirens wailed. Emergency responders and a squad of police arrived, led by Captain George Stacy himself.

The moment Gwen saw her father, her stomach dropped. Panic flashed across her face, and she swung away before he could even look in her direction—straight toward Peter's fight.

Peter, meanwhile, was getting absolutely wrecked. Marco's ability to turn into sand made him nearly immune to physical attacks. Every punch Spider-Man threw just scattered sand—doing zero damage—while Marco's counterattacks kept landing solidly.

"Damn it, Marco! Fight like a man! Stop turning into sand!" Peter shouted in frustration. Every hit felt like punching a pillow made of dust.

"Haha! Why would I? This is my power, you idiot!" Marco roared back, laughing maniacally.

"Fine! Then I'll pound you into dust anyway!"

Peter launched another furious assault, his fists a blur.

At the same time, Gwen used her web to grab a nearby manhole cover and swung it hard toward Marco.

Bang!

The metal disk flew straight through Marco's body—then crashed squarely into Peter's chest.

"Wh—"

Before he could even react, the impact launched him backward, sending him crashing into a fire hydrant.

Sploosh!

Water erupted in a geyser, soaking him head to toe. His red-and-blue suit was now caked with a thick paste of wet sand.

"Ptoo! Ptoo! Ugh, gross!"

He spat out a mouthful of grit—only for the sand to fall right back through his mask.

"I—You—Ugh!!!"

Peter stomped in place, fuming and shaking like a wet cat.

"This damn sand—wait..."

He froze, glancing down at the sludge clinging to his suit. His eyes widened behind the lenses.

"...Of course! Water!"

"Got it!!" he shouted, firing a web and swinging away at full speed.

Gwen, still dodging sand attacks, didn't have time to ask what he'd figured out. She focused on keeping Marco busy, darting in and out with precise acrobatics.

"Damn pests!!" Marco roared, shredding through yet another web that had tangled him. His patience—and his temper—were wearing thin.

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## Chapter 32: Lucas Arrives

Marco had long lost count of how many times he'd shredded through the sticky webbing that clung to him.

The stuff might not be lethal—but damn, was it annoying. And tougher than it looked.

Bang!

Marco swept his arm forward, unleashing a hail of sand bullets. He'd picked up that trick after being trapped in Spider-Man's webs—turns out it was a pretty effective way to rip the stuff apart.

The whistling barrage made Gwen's eyes widen. Those weren't just bits of sand—they hit with the force of live rounds. And she had zero defense against that.

Her only option was to dodge—her movements a blur of acrobatics and spider sense reflexes. Somehow, she managed to avoid every single shot.

"Naïve!" Marco roared.

Suddenly, sand surged from beneath Gwen's feet. It twisted and gathered into a massive hand that clamped down on her ankle.

Before she could react, sand crawled up her legs, her torso, her arms—wrapping her entire body in a crushing grip.

"Let's see you dodge this!" Marco sneered, closing his fist.

The sand around Gwen constricted violently.

"Ahhh—!!"

Bones creaked. Gwen's whole body screamed in pain. She could barely breathe, the pressure so intense that veins bulged along her forehead beneath the mask.

Marco tightened his grip even further. The web shooters on Gwen's wrists cracked under the pressure, spilling strands of liquid web fluid that mixed uselessly into the sand.

Then—Bang! Bang!

Two sharp gunshots rang out. Bullets struck Marco square in the chest—only to be pushed out harmlessly as his body rippled into sand.

Marco turned. There stood Captain George Stacy, pistol raised, smoke still curling from the barrel.

"Foolish," Marco growled.

He swept his hand, and a storm of sand bullets erupted toward George.

The police-issue vest might stop small rounds—but not this. At this range, it was practically a death sentence.

Clang! Clang! Clang!

Suddenly, a wrecked car skidded in front of George, taking the full brunt of the barrage. Sand rattled against the metal like a hailstorm.

Then, with perfect timing, a red-and-blue figure landed atop the car—Spider-Man.

"Captain Stacy! You okay?" Peter called, gripping the crumpled hood.

George blinked, surprised but unharmed. "I'm fine. You showed up just in time."

Peter nodded. "Good. Then please—help evacuate the civilians. Leave this guy to me."

He flipped backward, webbing himself toward a still-bursting fire hydrant.

Planting both feet, Peter jammed one end of a fire hose into the hydrant and gripped the other end tightly.

"Hey, Marco!! You know what happens when sand meets water?" he yelled.

A blast of high-pressure water burst out, nearly knocking Peter off his feet.

The effect was immediate—Marco's sand body began to collapse. His once-granular form turned into a sticky, muddy sludge.

"Damn you, Spider!" Marco roared, struggling to maintain control. But even his hands melted away into muddy paste, unable to hold shape.

With Marco's grip failing, the sand around Gwen disintegrated, freeing her. She collapsed to the ground, gasping, every nerve in her body screaming.

At that same moment—

Lucas arrived.

He'd been racing toward the battle ever since the alert came through, and just as Gwen broke free, he came sprinting in, green energy faintly pulsing in his eyes.

He dropped to her side and scooped her up in a bridal carry.

"You okay? Are you hurt badly?"

Gwen looked up, still breathless. Seeing Lucas's face, her tension melted.

"I'm fine... just sore all over," she whispered, leaning weakly against him. Her body's natural healing was already kicking in.

Lucas smiled softly, then set her gently aside before turning his gaze toward Marco.

Gwen blinked and finally noticed—Lucas had a sword strapped across his back.

"Wait—you carry a sword now? Since when?"

"Oh, this?" Lucas grinned, patting the weapon's hilt. "My personal gear. You're Spider-Woman, after all. I can't let myself fall behind, can I?"

Gwen tilted her head. "Don't tell me... you've got powers too?"

"Not powers," Lucas said with a playful wink, lifting a finger. "I prefer the word—magic."

A faint emerald glow shimmered across his eyes.

"Now, sit tight. This guy happens to be one of my bounty targets."

With that, Lucas strode straight toward Marco.

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Meanwhile, in S.H.I.E.L.D. Headquarters, the whole operation room was watching the fight unfold through satellite feeds.

Agents had already cordoned off the area—some evacuating civilians, others forming a wide perimeter to prevent escalation.

"Where are Barton and Romanoff?" Fury asked, his tone sharp as ever.

Coulson's voice came through the earpiece. He was on-site, leading the field team himself.

"Director, Barton's in position. Romanoff's right beside me."

He handed Natasha a fresh bone-conduction earpiece.

"I can hear you, Director," Natasha confirmed as she pressed it behind her ear.

Up on a nearby rooftop, Hawkeye crouched with his high-tech bow ready, a full quiver of trick arrows glinting behind him.

"No one engages unless ordered," Fury's voice commanded over the comms.  
"Primary objective—record and analyze the power levels of all four individuals: Spider-Man, Ghost-Spider, Marco, and Lucas. Assess their threat levels.

With the exception of Romanoff, none of them should know we're here."

His one good eye was locked on the live feed. The power readings from both Spider-Men and Marco were nearly complete—but Lucas remained an unknown.

All they knew was that he'd once created a small-scale tornado. How powerful he truly was... that was about to be revealed.

Fury leaned closer to the monitor. "Let's see what you've got, Lucas Norman."

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Back on the battlefield—

The ground suddenly trembled.

From every direction, sand surged inward. The air thickened, visibility dropping as a violent sandstorm swallowed the entire street.

"Raaaaghhh!!"

A monstrous roar erupted from its center.

Sand piled higher and higher, swirling faster, collapsing into itself.

Then—a massive hand, ten meters wide, burst from the storm, slamming down toward Spider-Man.

"Oh no—!"

Peter dropped the hose and dove aside, firing webs in rapid succession to swing clear.

BOOM!!

The ground where he'd stood exploded into a crater several meters deep.

The hand rose again—followed by an arm, a shoulder, a torso...

And then, from within the churning storm, a colossal sand giant emerged, dozens of meters tall.

It bellowed furiously and swung its massive arm, smashing an entire building into rubble with a single blow.

The entire street trembled under its rage.

And Lucas stepped forward, eyes glowing green.

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## Chapter 33: Garuda Descends

The sand giant roared, venting its fury.

Every time its arm came down, another building collapsed—sand engulfing the entire street like a living storm.

"This... this is insane..."

Peter's voice trembled. The colossal monster towered over him like a mountain. He'd never imagined Marco could possess this level of destructive power.

"Snap out of it!"

Lucas slapped Peter on the back, snapping him out of his shock. "Leave this to me! Go evacuate everyone—get them off this street, now!"

"You sure you can handle him?!" Peter blurted, eyes wide as he looked from the giant to Lucas, and then to the sword on Lucas's back. He and Gwen had never seen Lucas actually fight.

Lucas just waved him off. "I'll manage. Better than you can, at least—now move! The longer you wait, the more people die!"

Peter clenched his jaw. "Fine—but you be careful!"

He fired his web and swung off, darting through the debris-filled streets, helping trapped civilians get to safety.

Gwen, now mostly recovered, called out, "Be careful, Lucas!" before joining Peter in the rescue efforts.

She didn't say more—because she believed in him. If Lucas said he had a way, then he did.

Now, only Lucas and the towering sand colossus remained.

Having seen movies and played games in his past life, Lucas already knew Marco could transform into a giant made of sand. So the sight didn't exactly surprise him. And more importantly—he knew he had ways to counter it.

"Tch... I really didn't want to use that form," he muttered through gritted teeth. "Why does it always have to turn me into a girl...?"

He grimaced. A perfectly good man, about to morph into something else entirely. Sure, Lucas didn't have gender hang-ups—but if Peter and Gwen found out? He'd never live it down.

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At the Devil May Cry Agency,

Skye stared at the satellite feed, her heart pounding. Seeing Lucas standing alone before the sand giant made her grip her Moogle plush tighter without realizing it.

"Kupo—!" squeaked the poor Moogle as she finally loosened her hold, gently patting it in apology.

"Boss... please make it out of this," Skye whispered.

An unspoken urge welled inside her—to fight beside him. But all she could do now was watch.

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Back on the battlefield—

Lucas took a slow breath. He'd promised that little girl he'd find her father. And besides... this was part of his system mission.

"Alright then... let's do this."

He rolled his shoulders, closed his eyes—

—and unleashed a surge of power that tore through the air.

A massive pressure wave burst outward, sweeping through the entire street. Fierce winds howled to life around him.

"W-What the hell is that?!"

Peter and Gwen froze mid-action, both turning toward the epicenter.

A suffocating aura of pure dread pressed down on everyone within range. It felt as if the very air wanted to rip their flesh apart.

The agents stationed nearby weren't immune either.

Coulson and Natasha exchanged alarmed looks—the terror was instinctive, primal.

Up on a nearby rooftop, Hawkeye's fingers twitched; before he realized it, he'd already drawn his bow, arrow aimed squarely at Lucas below. His body reacted before his mind could.

The winds intensified, swirling into a massive tornado, dust and debris spiraling into the sky.

And at the tornado's heart—a flicker of green light appeared.

It spread rapidly, like wildfire through the storm, until the entire cyclone glowed with emerald energy.

Then came a roar—deep, feral, and divine.

"ROAAAAAAR!!!"

The shockwave blasted outward. The sand giant staggered, its enormous frame buffeted by the storm like a toy boat in a hurricane.

The whirlwind expanded, swallowing the ruins, uprooting rubble and cars, sweeping across the street in a chaotic gale.

And when the storm finally began to clear—

A massive silhouette stood before the sand giant.

Taller. Broader. Radiating ancient power.

Its entire body was covered in feathers of ashen white and gray, taloned feet like those of an eagle, and behind it, two pairs of vast wings unfurled with a thunderous crack.

Each joint along the wings shimmered with razor-sharp talons.

With a single flap, a violent gale exploded outward, sweeping the street once again in a wave of crushing wind.

It was the Wind Eikon—Garuda, straight out of Final Fantasy XVI.

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"Mother of—what is that?!"

In the S.H.I.E.L.D. command center, Nick Fury stared at the screen, utterly shaken.

He'd expected Lucas to be powerful—sure. But this?

The brief storm alone had generated readings high enough to level half of Manhattan. If Lucas ever wanted to destroy New York, Fury was certain he could.

His single eye gleamed with both awe and unease. "We severely underestimated him..."

Every S.H.I.E.L.D. agent watching felt the same shiver.

Even veterans like Coulson and Natasha had never seen anything like it—a human turning into something so monstrous, so powerful.

What exactly was Lucas Norman?

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Meanwhile, Peter and Gwen had forgotten all about rescuing civilians.

They just stood there, staring wide-eyed at the titanic Garuda, barely remembering to breathe.

At the Devil May Cry Agency, Skye's hands trembled as she clutched her monitor.

"Who... who is my boss, really?" she whispered, staring at the screen—at the divine creature that was once Lucas.

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"RAAAHHHH!!"

The only one not stunned was the sand giant himself.

Even Marco was shaken, but he wasn't afraid. After all, he possessed power enough to destroy New York too. Why would he back down?

With a furious roar, he threw a punch the size of a truck straight at Garuda.

But Garuda vanished in an instant—disappearing with a blur of wind.

The next moment, she reappeared behind the giant, claws glowing with green light.

In a flash, Garuda's talons shot forward, slashing across the giant's head.

The sand titan didn't even bother dodging—he swung his arm to retaliate.

**BOOM!**

Garuda's claw ripped through his head, scattering sand like dust.

At the same time, his massive fist slammed into Garuda's chest—

—but was stopped cold by a barrier of compressed wind.

The moment the sand touched the gale, it disintegrated, blown apart like snow in a storm.

Neither side had gained the upper hand yet.

Garuda spread her wings and darted backward. Green energy shimmered around her body, forming multiple wind blades that hovered in the air.

She flicked her claws.

The blades shot forward—

—and in an instant, sliced through the giant's arms, then his torso, cleaving his entire body clean in half.

The blades didn't stop there—they continued on, carving straight through two nearby high-rises, splitting them down the middle.

RUMMMBLE!!

The skyscrapers collapsed in tandem with the sand titan, both reduced to rubble and dust.

Garuda threw back her head and let out a victorious roar, wings flaring wide, her cry echoing through the shattered streets.

In that moment, Lucas felt something terrifying stir within him—

His consciousness blurring, instinct taking over.

The thrill of battle.

The hunger for destruction.

The primal ecstasy of the hunt.

Garuda's instincts were merging with his own—and Lucas could feel the beast's bloodlust igniting his veins.

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## Chapter 34: Escalating Threat

"This... this is just... unbelievable!!"

From a distance, Peter, Gwen, and every S.H.I.E.L.D. agent on site stood frozen in fear as they watched Garuda's raging form tear through the city.

That earth-shattering roar, that overwhelming destructive force—it felt like the end of the world itself. The razor-sharp wind blades had sliced through skyscrapers as though they were paper, leaving mirror-smooth cuts where steel and concrete used to be.

Every single one of them was trembling.

"Hey... guys, have you noticed something weird?"

Peter's voice quivered as he spoke.

"What weird thing?" everyone behind him—Gwen, Coulson, Natasha, and the other agents stationed on the perimeter—asked in unison.

Ever since Garuda's appearance, they'd all been called back for regrouping. At this point, sealing off the area was pointless. With two monsters of that scale rampaging through New York, no lockdown in the world could contain it.

What S.H.I.E.L.D.—or more specifically, Nick Fury—could do now was damage control: suppress all online footage and media reports before the world learned the truth. As for the eyewitnesses talking... well, that was beyond his control.

Peter pointed at the massive winged figure in the sky. "Don't you think that flying one looks like... a female?"

Everyone turned to him.

He'd seen Lucas transform into Garuda himself, right inside that tornado. Lucas was definitely a man—but the being in the sky? The proportions, the voice—it all seemed... different.

It was such a Peter Parker thought to have.

While everyone else was terrified by Garuda's godlike power, Peter was hung up on that.

The agents behind him collectively groaned. Some looked like they were ready to strangle him.

"Can you be normal for once?!" Gwen shouted, smacking him across the head before plastering a web across his face.

"Mmph—hey, I see what you're doing! But jokes on you—I've got a mask, you can't stop me from talking!"

"SHUT UP!!!"

Gwen, Coulson, and Natasha all yelled at once.

Peter stiffened like a scolded puppy, instantly clamping his mouth shut.

Coulson gave Peter and Gwen a long, meaningful look. They were both so young—too young for this kind of battlefield. Then his gaze shifted back to Garuda.

There was no longer any doubt.

Lucas's threat level had skyrocketed—far beyond anything they'd ever anticipated.

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At S.H.I.E.L.D. headquarters, Nick Fury sank into his chair, the replay still flickering across the screens.

He'd seen a lot in his career—but that? That had him ready to pull out his old pager again.

"Coulson," he said grimly into his comms, "from now on, I want a full surveillance protocol on Lucas Norman. No gaps, no blind spots. And start preparing diplomatic containment measures. After this, the military's gonna come sniffing around—and if those idiots try to strong-arm him, we'll all be in deep trouble."

His tone was heavy.

S.H.I.E.L.D. had no real authority over the U.S. military. Fury answered to the World Security Council; the military answered to the government. Two entirely separate chains of command.

And if the army provoked Lucas Norman—someone who was essentially a walking, sentient nuclear weapon—then there'd be no containing the fallout.

A mobile nuclear bomb with emotions was the last thing the world needed.

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Meanwhile, on a quiet rooftop somewhere in New York, a bald man in yellow robes stood gazing toward the battle.

Around his neck hung a pendant shaped like an eye, glowing faintly green as Garuda raged in the distance.

A brief flash of green flickered through the man's own eyes before the pendant slowly closed its "eyelid."

"The timeline's shifted..." he murmured, a faint smile playing at his lips. "Let's hope this turns out for the better."

---

Back at the battlefield—

As Garuda's triumphant roar shook the air, the shattered remains of the Sand Giant began to stir again.

The scattered grains of sand gathered, swirling together into a massive form once more.

"ROOOAARRR!!! You can't kill me! I'm invincible!!!"

The Sand Giant slammed both hands together, launching a barrage of sand bullets the size of boulders. To normal eyes, it looked like an endless storm of meteors.

Garuda didn't flinch.

With a single beat of her wings, countless wind blades erupted forward, slicing through the incoming projectiles. Then, cloaked in emerald light, she dove straight at her foe.

The street below exploded in chaos—each boulder that hit the ground struck like a meteor, sending shockwaves through the city blocks. In seconds, the entire street was a wasteland, as though bombarded by artillery.

Every stone, every projectile, every threat—

Garuda's wind blades cut them all down.

By the time she tore through the final rock, she was already face-to-face with the Sand Giant.

"RRAAAHHHH!!!"

Garuda's roar split the sky. Emerald energy gathered at her chest, condensing into a flurry of glowing talons.

The talons exploded outward—

hundreds of them.

They tore through the Sand Giant's body like divine spears, rending the colossal form apart. Waves of sand cascaded to the ground like blood from an open wound.

Within mere seconds, the Sand Giant was shredded again—reduced once more to lifeless sand.

But this time, Garuda didn't give him a chance to reform.

Her wings spread wide as she soared high into the sky. Emerald energy converged around her, bright and ethereal, like thousands of stars coalescing.

Though it was broad daylight, the green radiance illuminated the entire horizon.

A gentle breeze swept through the streets below—soft, soothing, like the breath of spring.

But that peace lasted only a heartbeat.

The wind began to snarl.

Its tone sharpened into a scream.

"Atmospheric Burst!"

Garuda's voice thundered through the heavens.

Instantly, half of New York was consumed by a violent tempest. The gale was so intense it was visible to the naked eye. Down by the coast, the ocean itself responded—waves boiled, crashing against the shore in towering bursts of white foam.

Before long, a massive tornado formed before Garuda—vast enough to blot out the sun. Within the swirling vortex, countless emerald talons flashed in and out of sight, glinting with lethal beauty.

Coulson's voice screamed through the comms:

"Everyone evacuate! Get off this street—NOW!"

The S.H.I.E.L.D. agents didn't hesitate. They piled into vehicles and sped away as fast as they could.

Peter and Gwen moved even faster—firing webs through the howling winds, swinging to safety in a blur.

They landed on a nearby rooftop, breathless. Gwen stared anxiously at the raging storm in the sky.

"Peter... do you think Lucas will be okay?"

Her voice trembled.

Peter shook his head slowly. Honestly, he had no idea. This kind of fight was way beyond their pay grade.

But he managed a faint smile. "Don't worry. Lucas is strong. He'll be fine. And right now, he's clearly got the upper hand."

Gwen knew he was just trying to comfort her.

But in that moment, she didn't care.

She just needed to believe it.

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## Chapter 35: Mission Complete

The raging tornado seemed to connect heaven and earth into a single roaring line, and within it, the emerald energy was even more violent than the storm itself.

Then—suddenly—everything stopped.

The entire half of New York fell silent. Not a single current of air moved, as though the wind itself had been frozen in place.

BOOM!!!

In the next instant, the massive tornado before Garuda came crashing down, slamming directly into the half-formed Sand Giant below.

The entire street vanished beneath the spiraling storm. Every pane of glass in every building shattered in an instant. Towering skyscrapers were stripped bare, leaving nothing but skeletal steel frames.

The Sand Giant didn't even have time to scream before he was completely torn apart by the wind.

The storm howled, whipping up sand and debris, the wind's roar peaking in a deafening crescendo.

Then, with a single motion of her hand, Garuda directed the tornado toward the coastline.

The ocean erupted. Seawater was drawn into the vortex, twisting into a colossal water dragon that roared toward the heavens.

As the sand collided with the seawater, it turned into thick, muddy sludge—only to be shredded again by Garuda's claws and storm.

Finally, Garuda spread her arms wide. The tornado detonated outward in a massive explosion. The shockwave and countless blades of wind tore through the beach, leaving it utterly devastated.

When the winds finally subsided and the sea calmed, the Sand Giant's form had completely vanished.

On the battered shoreline, a wounded figure lay sprawled—Marco, now returned to his human form.

Garuda's massive body slowly descended to the ground before dissolving into a thousand motes of green light.

From within that fading light, a human figure stepped forward—

Lucas, back in his normal form.

His face was pale. Maintaining Garuda's form drained an enormous amount of magical power. From the moment he'd transformed to the moment he dispelled it, barely ten minutes had passed... yet he was already running on empty.

His body felt heavy, his muscles stiff. Even holding his sword would be difficult now.

"Ugh... damn it, Atum," Lucas muttered under his breath. "I think you scammed me again. My whole body feels like it's turning to stone... even walking hurts."

He tried to stretch his limbs, but they barely responded. Moving one step at a time, he shuffled toward the unconscious Marco.

Lucas could tell the man was still alive. Through his magic, he could sense faint life signs—weak, but stable. Give it a month or two, and the guy would recover.

You had to hand it to him—Marco was one tough bastard. Even after being torn apart by Garuda, he was still breathing. That elemental body of his was practically cheating—Logia-class resilience at its finest.

> [Ding~ Reminder: Using magic or transforming into a summoned form has no side effects. The current condition of the host is merely due to mana depletion and mental fatigue.]

The system's calm voice chimed in his mind, as if smugly reminding him.

Lucas exhaled in relief and plopped down beside Marco.

"Hey... I made a promise to a little girl to bring her father back. So don't you dare die on me, got it?"

He lightly smacked the unconscious man's shoulder.

The feeling of mana exhaustion was truly awful. His entire body was sore, and his head pounded like a drum.

Before long, Marco groaned and slowly came to. His vitality was downright monstrous—after being shredded to bits, he was already regaining consciousness.

"Your daughter's name is Camilia, right?" Lucas said, glancing down at him. "She asked me to find her dad."

At the mention of his daughter, Marco's eyes flickered. He turned his head with difficulty to face Lucas.

"I'm... not a good father," he whispered weakly. "She'd be better off not finding me..."

"Whether you're a good father or not isn't my problem," Lucas replied evenly. "I accepted Camilia's request—to bring her father home. So that's exactly what I'm doing."

As far as Lucas was concerned, Marco's moral track record wasn't his concern. He had a job to do, and he intended to finish it.

He sat quietly on the ruined beach for about ten minutes—until a group of armed agents surrounded them in a tight circle.

Every single one of them was in black combat gear, weapons raised.

Lucas immediately spotted Coulson and Natasha among them.

Moments later, Peter and Gwen dropped from above, landing protectively in front of him, standing shoulder to shoulder.

"What do you think you're doing?!" Gwen snapped, eyes sharp. "Lucas saved all of you!"

Her stance said it all—one wrong move and she'd start swinging.

"I think there's been a misunderstanding," Coulson replied with his usual disarming smile. "We're not here to hurt anyone. My agents are just... a little on edge after what they saw."

He gestured subtly for his men to lower their weapons.

Behind them, Lucas rolled his eyes. S.H.I.E.L.D.—always the same song and dance. Talk smooth, act dirty.

"Relax, Ghost-Spider. I know him."

Lucas stood, stretching his still-stiff body. His mana hadn't fully recovered, but the soreness and heaviness were gone.

"Alright, Coulson. I'll leave the cleanup to you. I trust S.H.I.E.L.D. can handle the rest, yeah?"

He grabbed Marco by the collar and hoisted him up effortlessly.

"This guy's my client. I'm taking him back. What happens after that isn't my concern."

And with that, he turned to leave—with Natasha silently falling in beside him.

Lucas knew exactly what S.H.I.E.L.D. would do with someone like Marco. A guy with his kind of power? They'd never let him walk free. Best case—they'd study him. Worst case—they'd brainwash him into one of their assets.

Either way, Marco wouldn't die. So Lucas didn't care to interfere further.

Bringing Natasha along was mostly for appearances—it made for a convenient excuse to "hand Marco over," and S.H.I.E.L.D. would handle the paperwork. Besides, with the chaos Marco had caused, his arrest was inevitable. The whole city was talking about it; every news outlet was already on fire.

Before long, Natasha drove them to Camilia's home.

The little girl was already waiting by the door, her mother beside her. Lucas had asked Skye to notify them in advance.

But when Camilia saw her father—bloodied, bruised, barely recognizable—she burst into tears.

It took Lucas quite a while to calm her down, patiently explaining that her dad would be okay. Only then did she stop crying, sniffing softly, her big teary eyes tugging at everyone's heartstrings.

She knew her father had done bad things, but she didn't throw a tantrum or beg him to stay. For someone so young, she was astonishingly mature. Even Natasha found herself moved.

After promising Camilia that her father would be fine, Natasha escorted Lucas and Marco back to the car.

As they drove away, the system's voice chimed again in Lucas's mind:

> [Ding~ Congratulations, host! Mission complete. Rewards have been deposited into your system inventory. Please check at your convenience.]

"...!!!"

Lucas's body shot upright in the seat, startling Natasha so badly she almost swerved.

"Jesus, Lucas—what's wrong with you?" she snapped. "You trying to give me a heart attack? Do I need to take you to a hospital or what?"

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## Marvel Manifestor

Lucas realized his reaction just now had been a bit over the top, so he quietly sat back down.

Now wasn't the right time to check his new system reward anyway.

"No need," he said after a moment. "I wouldn't dare step into one of S.H.I.E.L.D.'s hospitals. I'm afraid if I went in, I'd never make it out alive."

He knew full well what kind of "research enthusiasm" those S.H.I.E.L.D. scientists had.

If he really walked in there, he'd probably end up a dissected specimen before they let him leave.

Natasha just smiled faintly without denying it.

She knew those lunatics in the lab better than anyone. Even a healthy man would go insane after a round of their 'tests.'

"So what are you going to do with Marco?" Lucas asked curiously.

He didn't actually know much about S.H.I.E.L.D.'s methods—his only reference came from his previous life's movies, and those mostly showed HYDRA's brainwashing or mad experiments. S.H.I.E.L.D.'s facilities were rarely shown in detail.

"Well..." Natasha said with a teasing tone. "Standard examinations are unavoidable. If his abilities can't be replicated, he'll probably be detained

somewhere secure. As for where exactly, that's classified—unless, of course, you decide to join us~"

Lucas chuckled dryly. "No thanks. The last thing I want is to be at Nick Fury's beck and call—doing whatever that bald man tells me, pretending it's for 'the greater good.'"

He refused instantly. He knew what S.H.I.E.L.D. really was—just HYDRA with a better PR team. No way was that a place for sane people.

Lucas also knew plenty of things about them that he hadn't shared.

Why should he? He wasn't some self-sacrificing saint. If S.H.I.E.L.D. wanted information, they could damn well pay for it.

When he finally returned to Devil May Cry, Skye and Gwen were already waiting anxiously by the door. Gwen was still wearing her Ghost-Spider suit.

The moment they saw him, both girls rushed forward.

"That guy named Coulson is inside," Gwen whispered. "He says he wants to talk to you. Be careful."

Because of her mask, her voice came out a little muffled, like someone speaking through a cold.

Lucas nodded and walked straight into the shop.

"Mr. Norman, allow me to introduce myself. I'm Agent—"

Before he could finish, Lucas cut him off.

"I know. Agent Coulson. Just call me Lucas."

Lucas walked behind the bar, opened the fridge, and took out two servings of chestnut parfait along with a cup of Savina milk tea, setting them in front of Coulson.

"Try these. They're house specials—you won't find them anywhere else."

Coulson, ever the gentleman, didn't refuse. He scooped a small bite of the parfait and placed it in his mouth.

Instantly, the rich, nutty sweetness of chestnut spread across his tongue. The cold, creamy texture cleared his mind, leaving him strangely refreshed.

"Delicious," he said sincerely. "Truly exquisite."

He casually took another spoonful, then sipped the milk tea. The bold milky flavor, laced with a hint of cinnamon, filled his senses.

"Alright, Coulson," Lucas said, leaning back slightly. "What does Fury want this time?"

By now, Skye, Gwen, and Peter had all settled on the couch nearby—though both Gwen and Peter were still suited up.

"The Director just wants to understand your abilities," Coulson explained. "After what happened earlier, you scared the hell out of him. Actually—you scared everyone."

Lucas didn't bother hiding anything. "You can think of it as magic. I'm a demon hunter."

The room fell silent.

Even Gwen, Peter, and Skye froze in disbelief.

Gwen especially—she'd grown up with Lucas, even shared a room with him before starting school—yet she'd never had a clue he could do magic.

She was practically glaring at him under the mask, though no one could see it.

"Whoa~~ Magic? That's so freaking cool, dude!!" Peter exclaimed, circling Lucas like an overexcited puppy.

Coulson didn't react outwardly but leaned in slightly. "So... there really is magic in this world?"

Lucas grinned. "Your Director's listening in, right?"

Coulson nodded without hesitation.

"Good. Then I'll make this clear once, so you don't have to ask again."

Lucas paused, then spoke evenly:

"My magical ability wasn't learned—it was bestowed. I call people like me 'Manifestors.'"

"'Manifestors'?" Coulson echoed, curious. "And what do you mean by 'bestowed'? Who gave it to you?"

That question clearly came straight from Fury himself. The old spymaster wanted to know if Lucas's power could be replicated—if it could be manufactured.

"Manifestors are individuals granted immense power," Lucas explained. "They can use magic without a medium and can summon powerful beings—creatures capable of wiping out everything in their path."

He didn't hide anything. His powers had already been fully revealed during the fight with Marco, after all.

"Powerful beings... like that flying creature earlier?" Coulson asked.

Lucas nodded. "That was my summon—Garuda. She controls the storm."

Coulson nodded slowly. The memory of that apocalyptic tornado still haunted him.

"And this power of yours," he pressed on, "you said it was granted—by whom?"

That was the question S.H.I.E.L.D. really wanted answered.

Lucas gave him a look that could only be described as Are you serious?

"By my summon, obviously. You saw me call her, didn't you?"

Coulson blinked, thrown off by the blunt response.

"I see... Then tell me—can anyone else summon this Garuda of yours?"

And there it was—the real question. Fury wanted to know if the power could be copied.

Lucas shook his head firmly. "Of course not. At any given time, there can only be one Manifestor."

That neatly shut down Fury's little fantasy of mass-producing super-sorcerers.

And he wasn't even lying—in the original lore, one Manifestor could only bond with one summon, and no two people could ever share the same one.

Back in S.H.I.E.L.D. headquarters, Fury was surrounded by a group of specialists, all watching the live feed.

"Well?" he asked. "Did you get a read on him?"

In front of him, a projection replayed Lucas's every word and expression.

"Director," said an elderly psychologist, adjusting his glasses, "based on his micro-expressions and tone patterns, I'd say he's telling the truth."

The rest of the experts nodded in agreement.

Fury let out a low sigh. "Understood. You're dismissed."

The team quietly filed out of the room.

"Coulson," Fury said after a pause, "I want to speak with him personally."

Back at Devil May Cry, Coulson received the order through his earpiece. He reached into his pocket and pulled out a small black case, placing it on the bar.

"This is a comm unit," he said. "The Director would like a word with you himself."

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## Chapter 37: Refusing S.H.I.E.L.D.

Lucas took the small earpiece from the box and placed it behind his ear. Almost immediately, Nick Fury's deep, gravelly voice came through.

At the same time, Coulson pulled a small cube from his coat and placed it on the counter.

"Mr. Norman, this is Nick Fury, Director of S.H.I.E.L.D. I assume you've heard of me."

"Oh, wow~~ the world-famous director himself," Lucas replied lazily. "Who hasn't?"

The cube flickered, projecting the shiny bald head and single stern eye of Nick Fury in holographic form.

"Mr. Norman," Fury began, "I want to know—how do you truly view this world?"

"How do I view it?" Lucas smirked. "With my eyes, obviously."

He couldn't help it—this guy always had to play mysterious, acting like he knew every secret under the sun.

What a joke. Lucas knew perfectly well S.H.I.E.L.D. was basically HYDRA wearing sunglasses. And Fury still wanted to act cryptic? Please.

Fury's expression darkened instantly.

"I'm not joking, Mr. Norman. The Earth we live on is just a speck of dust in a vast universe filled with countless threats."

"So what's your point?" Lucas asked flatly.

"I'm inviting you to join us," Fury said. "Or rather—to join me."

"Us?" Lucas raised an eyebrow, glancing around the room. Then it clicked—Fury meant Peter and Gwen.

"Forget it," Lucas said, leaning back in his chair. "I have no interest in joining S.H.I.E.L.D. I'm not exactly the type who likes being on a leash."

He rejected the offer without hesitation.

Work under Fury? Not a chance. Nothing beat being your own boss.

And besides, Lucas knew exactly what kind of organization S.H.I.E.L.D. really was.

Fury opened his mouth to speak again, but before he could, Gwen cut him off sharply:

"I'm with him."

Fury wasn't surprised. He already knew who Gwen and Peter were—their identities were in S.H.I.E.L.D.'s restricted archives, viewable only by him.

Peter scratched his head. "Uh... I don't really know what's going on here, but, uh, I'm still a high school student, so... yeah, hard pass."

Fury didn't press the issue. He'd half expected this outcome anyway. For now, he couldn't afford to expose his real plan.

Lucas, however, saw right through him.

The Avengers Initiative, of course—Fury's pet project. A team supposedly independent from S.H.I.E.L.D. and the World Security Council, but in reality, micromanaged by both.

They'd use you, chain you, and stab you in the back the second you disagreed. Typical politics—filthy, hypocritical, and manipulative.

"Mr. Norman," Fury said calmly, "I sincerely hope we don't become enemies. Please, reconsider my offer."

Lucas waved a hand dismissively. "No need to talk about joining S.H.I.E.L.D. again. I'm not interested."

He paused, grinning slightly. "But... there is one thing."

At that, Coulson perked up a little, while Fury kept his stoic poker face.

"I happen to run a business now," Lucas said, voice playful. "The Devil May Cry agency accepts any supernatural contracts. If S.H.I.E.L.D. ever needs help, you can always hire me. Price is negotiable~~"

He rubbed his hands together with a greedy grin. After all, S.H.I.E.L.D. was loaded. They had U.N. funding, Fury's secret budgets, and god knows what else. Lucas wouldn't be surprised if Fury had a few million tucked away in his personal account.

Fury's expression turned even darker. Somehow, he'd failed to notice before that this powerful sorcerer was also an incorrigible money-grubber.

"...Very well," Fury said finally. "Then our conversation is over. I hope we can work together in the future, Mr. Norman."

The hologram blinked out.

Lucas handed the earpiece back to Coulson. "Here—oh, and this is my business card. If you guys ever need something done, contact me. Like I said, price is always negotiable."

Coulson accepted the card, slipping it into his jacket pocket before standing up to leave.

But when he reached the door, he hesitated and turned back.

"Uh... this might sound a bit rude, but... could I maybe take one of those chestnut parfaits to go?"

He looked genuinely embarrassed—but the craving was written all over his face.

"No problem!" Lucas said cheerfully, pulling five parfaits from the fridge, along with a few servings of Soft Slime Pudding and Princess Custard for good measure.

Coulson's face lit up like a kid on Christmas morning. He thanked Lucas, then jotted down his personal phone number and handed it over before leaving.

It seemed he'd already decided Lucas was a friend, not just a potential ally.

Lucas actually respected Coulson quite a bit—professional, calm under pressure, kind yet pragmatic. The kind of guy you could trust in a crisis... and have a drink with afterward.

Once Coulson was gone, Lucas didn't even bother acknowledging the S.H.I.E.L.D. agents still covertly watching the building.

Let them try—thanks to Skye's upgrades, the entire apartment was a digital fortress.

Every single external signal passed through her filters; if she pressed just one key, every bug, camera, or drone within range would instantly fry.

That paranoia was Natasha's fault. The last incident had given Skye a wake-up call, and she'd overhauled their entire network security afterward. Now, even S.H.I.E.L.D.'s best surveillance tech was just expensive scrap metal inside their walls.

"Phew~ finally! That guy's presence was suffocating," Peter groaned, yanking off his mask. Sweat dotted his forehead.

He was still just a kid—no matter how brave, facing government agents made him anxious.

Gwen, on the other hand, seemed much calmer. She trusted Lucas completely; as long as he was there, no one could hurt them.

"Alright," Lucas said with a grin. "Crisis averted. And Peter—you were smart not to join S.H.I.E.L.D. Let me tell you something about those guys..."

He leaned forward, sharing just enough dirt to make Peter's jaw drop.

"Whoa, seriously? That bad?" Peter gasped.

Lucas nodded. "S.H.I.E.L.D.'s been infiltrated by a terrorist organization. They don't even know it yet—they're still patting themselves on the back."

Peter shuddered. "Good thing I didn't join them! But... Lucas, shouldn't we tell them? Coulson seems like a decent guy."

Lucas shook his head. "Not yet. We'll tell them when the time's right—after I've wrung a nice fat paycheck out of them first."

Peter just stared, mouth hanging open. He'd known Lucas for a long time, but somehow he'd never realized just how greedy the guy was.

"Oh, right," Lucas said suddenly, snapping his fingers. "You two interested in joining my Devil May Cry office? There are benefits~~"

"Benefits?" Peter and Gwen asked in unison.

Lucas grinned mysteriously. "You'll find out soon enough..."

In truth, there were no benefits—unless you counted the chance to pet a moogle.

Seeing his evasive smile, Gwen rolled her eyes. It was obvious he was bluffing again.

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## Chapter 38: Chocobo and the Condemner

Peter was still wearing an eager expression as he walked up beside Lucas and said, "Forget about the benefits for now—if you give me your Star Wars limited-edition figurine, I might consider it~~~"

Lucas stared at Peter like he was looking at an idiot and said nothing.

"Fine, don't give it to me then~~! How about lending it to me for a few days? Just a few days! I'll return it, I promise!!"

Peter looked utterly pitiful. He had been eyeing that figurine for a long time but had missed the limited release entirely. Lucas, the lucky bastard, had managed to snag one. Peter had been dying of jealousy ever since.

"No way~! What if you break it? That's a limited edition."

Lucas refused with firm conviction—straightforward and decisive.

"Che~~ No sense of brotherhood!"

Peter pouted, clearly disappointed, but he still didn't refuse to join DevilMayCry.

The two took turns posing for photos with the camera and pinned them up on the photo wall. Neither of them wore their Spider-Man suits—Lucas's idea. Otherwise,

anyone walking in would take one look at the photos and immediately guess that Peter and Gwen were Spider-Man and Spider-Woman.

After that, Gwen became completely absorbed in cuddling the Moogle. She had always been baffled by Skye's mysterious hand motions earlier, but after Skye explained and introduced her to the adorable creature, Gwen finally understood—and fell instantly in love.

Once again, the Moogle reclaimed its throne as the most beloved member of DevilMayCry.

Peter, too, got a little excited when he first saw the Moogle—but that excitement didn't last long. After trying to figure out whether it was male or female, he got whacked hard by the Moogle's staff and instantly quieted down.

After dinner, Gwen and Peter both went home, and Skye took her laptop back to her room, leaving only Lucas sitting alone in DevilMayCry.

"Alright, A-System, open the reward pack."

Lucas closed his eyes, letting his mind sink into the system's interface.

[Ding! Reward pack opened. Congratulations, Host, for obtaining: Chocobo Companion and Equipment-Type Innocence: The Condemner, 100% Perfect Synchronization. (As a Devil Hunter, how could you not have a gun of your own~~)]

(Level insufficient—please view image manually.)

"???"

Lucas's eyes widened. A Chocobo?! And The Condemner!

"A-System, is this Innocence the same one I'm thinking of?" Lucas's voice trembled slightly.

[Ding! Yes, Host. It's exactly the one you're thinking of—the Equipment-Type Innocence The Condemner from D.Gray-man, one of Cross Marian's two Innocences.]

Lucas immediately pulled The Condemner out of his inventory and lovingly ran his fingers over the silver revolver. The golden cross design on the barrel gleamed brightly even under the dim night light.

"A-System, I freaking love you~!!!"

As a diehard D.Gray-man fan in his previous life, Lucas could name every piece of Innocence from memory. Aside from Judgment, The Condemner had always been his absolute favorite.

Both of Cross Marian's Innocences were not only stylish but also ridiculously powerful—low-level demons usually went down in a single shot.

"A-System~~ The Condemner's power should be the same as in the manga, right?"

[Ding~ Its strength and performance are identical to the manga version. It doesn't require bullets—each shot consumes your magic power. However...]

"However..."

Lucas frowned. He hated it when the system said "however." It was never good news.

[However, this weapon has no effect on ordinary humans.]

Lucas blinked. "By 'ordinary humans,' you mean... as long as someone's not a normal human, it'll still deal damage? Even mutants?"

[Ding! Correct. As long as their genes are not purely human, The Condemner will inflict damage.]

After that explanation, Lucas understood—aside from ordinary humans, anyone else would be fair game. Mutants, altered humans, hybrids like Peter and Gwen, even enhanced humans like Captain America—all could be harmed.

The system also thoughtfully provided a holster so Lucas could carry The Condemner at his waist.

After admiring the weapon for a while, Lucas turned his attention to the second reward.

A white Chocobo Whistle sat quietly in his inventory. Without hesitation, he used it.

[Ding! Please name your Chocobo. Once named, you may ride it on land and in flight.]

"Wait—it can fly?" Lucas perked up immediately.

He hurried out to the empty space behind the apartment and blew the whistle.

As the clear tone faded, the air beside him rippled—and a majestic white Chocobo appeared.

It stood a head taller than Lucas, its feathers a pristine white, clad in silver armor. A purple diamond-shaped gem gleamed inlaid in its chestplate and helm, shimmering with flowing light.

The Chocobo scratched impatiently at the ground, talons digging into the earth with every stomp.

[Ding! Please name your Chocobo quickly, or there is a risk of it going berserk.]

Seeing the increasingly restless creature, the system urged him.

Lucas tried to calm it down, but the Chocobo suddenly lunged forward, snapping at him with its beak. He barely dodged in time.

"Wark!! Wark!!"

The bird flapped its wings angrily, clearly growing more agitated by the second.

"Hmm... I'll call you Onion! Yeah, that fits!"

Lucas quickly chose the name. Onion had been the name of his dog in his previous life—it felt oddly perfect for his new companion.

[Ding! Naming successful. Bonus rewards granted: Gysahl Green Seeds and Chocobo Habitat. The habitat includes both a Chocobo stable and farmland for planting Gysahl Greens, which will grow automatically once planted.]

Gysahl Greens—classic Chocobo fare, and also handy for summoning Chocobos to battle. Plus, Chocobos had their own combat skills.

"A-System, you're still as thoughtful as ever~ I seriously love you~~~" Lucas said with a grin.

[Ding! Please behave, Host. The system is not that kind of entity.]

"Damn~!"

Lucas's face darkened. Getting rejected by his system—how humiliating!

By now, the newly named Onion had calmed down completely. It affectionately nudged Lucas with its big feathery head, eyes half-closed in bliss.

As Lucas petted the Chocobo, he could clearly feel a new bond forming between them—a faint mental connection linking their hearts.

"If not now, when? Time to fly!"

Flight—humanity's oldest dream. Since ancient times, people had longed to soar through the skies like birds.

Lucas had always wanted to experience it himself. In his previous life, he hadn't even been on a plane—much less flown for real. Now that he had the chance, how could he possibly resist?

He jumped onto Onion's back and shouted, "Onion! Let's fly~!!!"

"Wark!"

With a powerful beat of its wings, Onion launched into the night sky.

"Woaaaaahhh~!!! Hell yeah!!!"

Lucas screamed in delight as the city lights shrank below his feet. The feeling was intoxicating—pure freedom.

A gentle breeze brushed past him, cool and refreshing. Onion's flight generated a protective field that shielded him from harsh wind and turbulence, leaving only the quiet thrill of flight beneath the stars.

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## Chapter 39: The Chocobo Space

High up in the sky, Lucas rode Onion freely through the clouds, trying every aerial maneuver he could think of. There was no fear of being flung off by inertia—thanks to the special energy field surrounding them, his body stayed firmly attached to Onion's back.

"Onion, straight up! Let's see how high we can go!"

Lucas patted the Chocobo's neck excitedly.

"Wark~~"

Onion chirped, flapping its wings and shooting upward in a straight climb. Its speed didn't falter even once until they finally broke into the stratosphere—only then did Onion stop ascending.

"This... this is your limit?"

Lucas was stunned. He hadn't expected they could actually reach the stratosphere—and the fact that Onion wasn't affected by the lack of oxygen or

freezing temperatures was even more incredible. Clearly, that invisible energy field was doing its work.

"Wark~~ Wark-wark~~"

Onion flapped its wings and called out twice.

Because of their mental link, Lucas could understand it perfectly: It could go a bit higher, but it couldn't leave the planet's atmosphere—it couldn't enter space.

"That's already plenty! Let's test how fast you can fly next!"

Onion nodded, and then—like an arrow released from the bow—it shot forward. The air around them warped into concentric rings of white vapor.

"Holy—! You just broke the sound barrier!!"

Lucas didn't know the exact speed, but the sonic boom was clear as day. And Onion was still accelerating—this wasn't even its top speed.

He had no idea what their maximum velocity was; all he knew was that it was insanely fast.

After more than two hours of high-speed flight, Lucas finally returned to the DevilMayCry office, exhilarated but satisfied.

"A-System, how do I plant the Gysahl Greens? Can I actually go into the Chocobo Space?"

[Ding~ The Host may freely enter and exit the Chocobo Space.]

Receiving the confirmation, Lucas didn't hesitate. He and Onion entered together—the method was simple: blow the Chocobo Whistle twice.

"A-System~~ this is what you call the Chocobo Space? This is practically a home! What the hell!"

Lucas was dumbfounded. He had thought it would just be a simple pocket dimension—but inside, spring was in full bloom. There was even a two-story villa nestled among trees!

A gentle stream circled the house. On the left side stretched a neatly tilled patch of farmland; on the right stood a row of Chocobo stables. At the far end of the yard

was even an open-air hot spring pool. This wasn't just a pocket space—it was a miniature world!

[Ding~ The Chocobo Space contains a two-story villa with complete living amenities, a Chocobo stable, and a small field for cultivation. Time flow within the space matches the outside world—please take note, Host.]

"You mean... I can actually live here?" Lucas asked in disbelief.

[Ding~ Yes, Host. You may reside in the Chocobo Space. It is also bound to DevilMayCry—meaning all registered members of the agency may enter as well.]

Lucas was speechless. The reward was simply too good—it felt surreal, like he was floating in a dream.

Then, five palm-sized light-blue crystals suddenly appeared in his inventory, labeled Chocobo Space Crystals.

"So... these crystals are for other people? And why do they get crystals while I get a whistle?"

[Ding~ Correct. The crystals may be given to DevilMayCry staff only; they will not function for outsiders. Your Chocobo Whistle already carries this function, so no separate crystal is issued to you.]

"Got it~~"

Lucas nodded. Perfect—he could give the crystals to Gwen and the others.

Onion obediently trotted into its stable, its silver armor magically removing itself and placing neatly to the side.

Lucas scattered the Gysahl Green seeds gifted by the system into the field. The moment they touched the soil, they burrowed in and began sprouting right before his eyes.

"A-System, do I need to water the crops?"

[Ding~ No need. The Gysahl Greens will grow automatically.]

"Oh~ So considerate~~~"

Satisfied, Lucas headed into the villa.

The exterior had a European design—white walls, blue roof tiles—just like the buildings in a fantasy RPG.

Inside, the first floor featured a spacious living room with a huge fireplace and cozy sofas, while the other side held a kitchen and dining area.

There was even a basement—currently empty—but Lucas immediately decided he'd turn it into a gaming room. He'd move all his collectible figurines and consoles here, maybe even install a giant projector. Gaming paradise, incoming.

"A-System, does this place have power and internet?"

That was the key—without those, his game room dream was doomed.

[Ding~ Affirmative. Power and network access are provided by the Hydaelyn Crystal, the core energy source sustaining the Chocobo Space.]

"Whoa—Hydaelyn Crystal? That's seriously next-level!!"

Lucas was amazed. The Hydaelyn Crystal was the mother crystal that powered the entire Final Fantasy world—a source of endless energy.

Checking the basement again, he noticed all the light fixtures in the villa were crafted from glowing crystal lamps.

Climbing up the wooden stairs, Lucas explored the second floor. There were six rooms, all identical in layout and furniture.

He entered one—the air was fresh and carried a faint lemon scent.

Opening the glass balcony doors, he was greeted by a breathtaking view: mountains, rivers, and a tranquil lake surrounded by forest—a scene straight out of a painting.

He took a deep breath and instantly felt his body relax, his mind clear.

"Ahhh~ nothing beats nature!"

He sighed contentedly, gazing at the distant mountains.

"A-System, does this place have seasons or weather changes?"

[Ding~ Yes. The Chocobo Space cycles between summer and winter only.]

Lucas nodded. That was perfect—different scenery for different times of year. It was currently summer, lush and green everywhere. Winter would probably be a snow-covered wonderland.

Decision made—he'd stay the night here.

After soaking in the pristine, natural hot spring, he picked the room at the far end of the second floor and fell into a deep, peaceful sleep, the air filled with the gentle fragrance of nature.

He slept so soundly that even his phone alarm couldn't wake him.

When he finally got up and washed, he stepped outside—and was stunned.

The Gysahl Greens he'd planted yesterday were already budding.

"So fast! At this rate, they'll be fully grown in about a week."

After checking the crops, he headed to the Chocobo stable. The moment Onion saw him, it chirped excitedly, rubbing its big feathery head against Lucas's chest. Gone was the restless bird from before—now it was pure affection.

They played for a while, but Onion's energy was endless. To Lucas's dismay, the Chocobo had somehow learned to play ball—and was ridiculously good at it, almost like Messi. Lucas nearly got run ragged trying to keep up.

"Wait—who's playing with who here? You're gonna kill me, Onion~~~"

Lucas collapsed onto the rocking chair by the door, panting heavily, while Onion happily trotted over to the stream to drink, completely at ease.

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## Chapter 40: A Boring Day

After soaking in the hot spring and playing around with Onion, all of Lucas's fatigue vanished. Feeling refreshed and content, he finally returned to DevilMayCry.

At that moment, Skye was lounging lazily on the couch, happily petting the Moogle. When Lucas suddenly appeared out of thin air, she nearly jumped out of her seat and immediately pulled out a high-voltage taser, aiming it straight at him.

"Hold your fire, Captain! It's me—it's me!"

Lucas quickly raised his hands in mock surrender, even giving a comical French-style salute.

"Boss~?! What the hell—why did you just pop out of nowhere?" Skye exclaimed, lowering the taser. She had literally watched him materialize in the middle of the room.

"Well~~~ that's a long story~~ But hey, you can do it too, you know~~"

As he spoke, Lucas handed her a crystal—one of the keys to the Chocobo Space.

"Wow! This crystal is gorgeous! You're giving it to me?"

Skye's eyes lit up instantly. She took the crystal and held it in both hands, admiring it from every angle. A crystal that big had to be worth a fortune.

"That's a key, not a gemstone. Don't even think about selling it."

Seeing the gleam in her eyes, Lucas already knew what she was thinking.

"Che~ Even if you killed me, I wouldn't sell it! It's too beautiful to give up. And besides, I'm not exactly short on cash right now."

Skye rolled her eyes at him. She couldn't bear to part with something so pretty anyway.

"Wait—you said it's a key? A key to what?" she asked, finally realizing the important part.

"Curious where I've been? That crystal is your answer." Lucas pointed at it meaningfully.

"Oh? Tell me! Quick!" Skye leaned forward like a cat who'd just spotted a shiny toy.

"Tonight," Lucas said. "We'll wait for Gwen and Peter to come over too."

Classes hadn't started yet, so Gwen had picked up a tutoring gig—teaching middle schoolers after hours. Tutoring wasn't just an Asian thing; there were cram schools everywhere in the world, apparently.

Peter, meanwhile, had been roped into working part-time with Felicia. He ran deliveries for a restaurant, while Felicia taught dance classes at a local studio.

Yep—Peter hadn't escaped her clutches after all. They were officially together now.

And the most dramatic part? Felicia already knew his secret identity.

The story went something like this—

One day, Felicia had been surrounded by a group of street punks. Their leader, instantly captivated by her long legs and stunning figure, decided she had to "go to a movie" with him. Felicia refused, of course, and when things got physical, she knocked down three of them before Peter swooped in wearing his "Pepsi Spider" suit, taking out the rest in seconds.

Only then did he realize who he had just rescued—Felicia. What surprised him more was that she could clearly handle herself; even without his help, those thugs wouldn't have stood a chance.

Panicked, Peter was about to bolt before she could recognize him—but fate had other plans. Felicia had twisted her ankle.

His reflexes kicked in, and he reached out to steady her. That brief contact was all it took—Felicia caught his scent.

Then, without a word, she grabbed his mask and yanked it clean off. No hesitation. No mercy.

Peter froze on the spot, mortified. Run or stay—both options were impossible. He wished he could just disappear.

Somehow, that embarrassment turned into chemistry. According to Skye's later gossip-fueled "analysis," Felicia had definitely made the first move—and probably threatened him a little, too. Something along the lines of "Date me, or I'll tell everyone who you really are." Honestly? Totally believable.

And just like that, Peter fell completely into Felicia's grasp—never to escape.

When Lucas first heard the story, he thought Skye had made it up. What kind of person writes this kind of plotline? It was so absurd it looped back around to genius.

But reality often outdoes fiction. Peter and Felicia were officially an item—it was a done deal.

Lucas couldn't help but think about who Felicia really was—the future Black Cat, one of Spider-Man's famous love interests. He even started wondering whether she'd already become the Black Cat by now. That hypersensitive sense of smell... could it be she'd sniffed Peter out because... he didn't shower enough?

Anyway, the two of them had ended up together in a whirlwind of confusion. And to be fair, Felicia really did care about Peter. She never complained, even though her boyfriend often vanished mid-date to go save the city.

Peter, on the other hand, grew to love her more and more with each act of understanding and patience. Lucas had to admit—he'd been right before. Felicia suited Peter far better than Mary Jane ever did. Not to mention, Felicia's figure was absolutely killer—taking her on a date was the kind of thing that made every other man on the street jealous.

Now, the two were head over heels in love, and with college about to start—at the same university, no less—it was basically the setup for a teen romance drama.

All of this Lucas pieced together from Skye's gossip and his own deductions—and, unfortunately for Peter, every word of it was true.

That day, the office was dead quiet. So quiet even stray dogs took one look and decided not to bother.

Lucas and Skye, however, were perfectly content. Lucas had gone full "sloth mode," refusing to move a muscle. Peaceful days like this were rare, and he intended to enjoy every minute—after all, once that certain playboy got himself kidnapped, things were going to get very busy.

Skye was just as happy. No work, free internet time, and a decent paycheck at the end of the month—what kind of job could beat that?

Without realizing it, she had started treating DevilMayCry as home. And Lucas—as family.

Just then, a curvy silhouette appeared at the door—perfect body, gorgeous face, and a sultry air that could melt steel. Who else could it be but Natasha Romanoff, the Black Widow herself?

"Well, well~~ Looks lively in here. Is this your daily 'barely alive' routine?"

Natasha sauntered in like she owned the place, went straight to the bar, grabbed a bottle of melon juice, and two slices of Fairyberry Cheesecake. She handed one to Skye and kept one for herself, biting in with practiced elegance—completely at home.

Lucas and Skye didn't even bat an eye. Ever since the last incident, Natasha had basically moved into the same apartment. The rent was paid upfront and non-refundable, so Lucas had just turned a blind eye—as long as she didn't pull any covert ops behind his back.

"What brings you here? Don't tell me cue-ball Nick Fury sent you with a mission?!"

Lucas instantly perked up. Finally—something profitable!

Natasha didn't even flinch at the nickname. She thought it was hilariously accurate.

"Nope. Just bored. Thought I'd come down and chat."

She said it casually while savoring her cheesecake. Lucas's cooking had completely redefined her understanding of what "delicious" meant.

"Well, that's a letdown. Here I thought I'd get to make some money today. Don't tell me S.H.I.E.L.D. is this idle these days?"

Lucas slouched back into his chair again, the picture of laziness, as if glued there by invisible force.

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