

# Marvel Manifestor

## - Chapter 341 - 341 – Shiva, the Ice Goddess

### Chapter 341 - 341 – Shiva, the Ice Goddess

[ 860 words ]

Ronan had clearly anticipated Karl's attack.

He suddenly turned and raised his warhammer, blocking the blade.

Boom—!

A powerful shockwave erupted from the point of impact, spreading outward in every direction. The surrounding ice shattered instantly, and the entire warship trembled violently.

The two separated.

Ronan was pushed back nearly three meters.

Karl only took a single step.

In the next instant, Karl vanished—and reappeared directly in front of Ronan. With a twist of his wrist, he thrust his sword toward Ronan's face.

Ronan hurriedly raised his hammer to block, but the freezing aura of the Ultimate Divine Weapon began creeping along the weapon's shaft and onto his hands.

In the blink of an eye, both of Ronan's hands were completely frozen.

Ronan twisted his body and pulled back quickly, breaking contact and retreating.

Looking down at his hands frozen to the hammer's grip, he slammed the weapon into the floor.

A surge of violet energy erupted from the hammer, shattering the ice around his hands instantly.

Karl gave him no time to recover.

Three icy sword arcs slashed forward.

Ronan tried to dodge—but the attacks sealed every possible escape route.

He could only block.

Boom!

All three strikes landed squarely on him.

In an instant, Ronan became a frozen statue—locked in place while still holding his defensive stance.

Karl glanced at him.

He knew very well that with the Power Stone, Ronan couldn't be killed that easily. At best, Karl could suppress him—but not finish him.

So Karl slowly rose into the air.

He shattered the ship's window and flew outside.

---

Outside, the battle was still raging.

Explosions erupted constantly. Ships collided midair. Ravagers, Xandarian pilots, and Kree soldiers alike suffered devastating casualties.

Some even resorted to suicide attacks, ramming their ships directly into the enemy.

Then—

A terrifying wave of cold spread outward from Karl across the sky.

Snowflakes began falling.

"...Snow?" Quill stared upward in disbelief.

For a moment, nostalgia hit him.

He had visited countless planets—some permanently frozen—but none had ever given him this strange sense of familiarity.

It reminded him of Earth.

Of childhood.

Of the family whose faces had already begun to blur in his memory.

Gradually, the gunfire and explosions stopped.

Pilots across the battlefield looked upward at the drifting snow.

The delicate six-pointed flakes were breathtakingly beautiful.

Some even opened their cockpits, reaching out to catch them.

Crack—!

Suddenly the gentle snow turned deadly.

Every snowflake hardened instantly into razor ice.

Anything touched by them froze solid.

Kree ships.

Ravager vessels.

Nova fighters.

Every craft coated in snow was sealed in ice.

Engines failed simultaneously.

Ships began falling from the sky like stones.

"Holy—! Karl, you froze everyone!" Rocket screamed while frantically smashing buttons to restart his engines.

But it was useless.

The entire engine block had frozen solid.

Ships plummeted.

Some were lucky—like Rocket and Quill, whose vessels splashed into the ocean.

Others weren't so fortunate.

They slammed into the ground and shattered into frozen debris.

"Parachutes! Deploy parachutes!" Yondu shouted over the comms as he ejected himself from his ship.

Soon the sky filled with parachutes of every color and shape.

---

Meanwhile, the snowfall grew restless.

The drifting flakes gathered, swirling into an unstoppable blizzard.

At the center of the storm, two sky-blue ribbons emerged like flowing cloaks.

The entire storm began spiraling inward toward them.

Suddenly—

The blizzard exploded outward.

A colossal blue crystal of ice appeared at the center of the sky, absorbing the surrounding snowstorm.

"It's... beautiful," countless survivors on Xandar murmured from below.

The crystal shimmered like a perfect jewel, surrounded by sparkling fragments that refracted rainbow-colored light.

Quill and the others floated in their damaged ship on the ocean surface, staring up at the enormous crystal.

Yondu landed nearby with several surviving Ravagers.

"What the hell is that?" he muttered, utterly stunned.

Gamora was equally speechless.

She had traveled across countless worlds with Thanos.

All she had ever seen was destruction.

Beautiful planets reduced to ruins.

But this sight—

Something long buried deep in her heart stirred.

High above them, the crystal slowly became clearer and more transparent.

People on the ground could suddenly see inside it.

"Look!" a young Xandarian boy shouted. "There's someone inside!"

Without battle, without smoke or death, everyone turned their eyes toward the crystal.

Inside was a curled human figure.

Arms wrapped around knees.

Head lowered.

"...That's a woman!" Quill exclaimed.

He could clearly see her.

Golden hair.

A silver crown.

Skin pale as snow.

Crack...

The sound echoed across the sky.

Suddenly the figure inside awakened.

The giant crystal shattered in a brilliant explosion, scattering into dazzling fragments of light.

A massive blue gown and white cloak unfurled like the petals of a blooming orchid.

At its center—

A breathtaking woman slowly opened her eyes.

Golden hair flowing in the wind.

A silver crown shining with rainbow reflections.

Her cloak spread behind her like wings.

This was Karl's newest summoned form—

Shiva, the Ice Goddess.

At that moment, a crimson beam fired from Ronan's warship, racing toward her.

The sheer power of the attack made everyone on the ground tremble.

Its energy rivaled the plasma cannons that had destroyed Ronan's shield earlier.

Shiva opened her eyes.

Cold blue light glowed within them.

Before her, a gigantic six-pointed snowflake sigil appeared.

The snowflake expanded—

Becoming a massive wall of ice.

The red beam struck it.

The barrier held effortlessly.

Not even a crack formed.

With a gentle wave of her hand, the ice wall dissolved into shimmering frost particles that drifted away like stardust.

Rainbow light scattered across the sky.

At that moment, Shiva looked less like a warrior—

And more like a divine goddess descending from the heavens.

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## **- Chapter 342 - 342 – Destroying the Flagship[ 997 words ]**

Shiva slowly raised her hand.

Behind her, several colossal ice spears instantly formed—each nearly a hundred meters long.

With a gentle motion of her fingers, the spears shot forward toward Ronan's warship.

Boom—!

One of the spears slammed into the vessel.

The massive warship was instantly pierced open, leaving a gaping hole in its hull. At the same time, frost spread outward at terrifying speed. Within seconds, nearly one-third of the ship was completely frozen.

Then the remaining four spears struck.

The entire warship was instantly sealed in ice—from the interior all the way to the outer hull.

If Ronan had previously been a frozen statue, now he had become something else entirely.

He was no longer merely frozen.

He had become part of the ice itself.

---

A low mechanical hum faded.

Ronan's warship lost all power and began slowly descending toward the surface of Xandar.

"Not good! The ship's going to crash!" Quill shouted as he activated the emergency broadcast.

People everywhere began scrambling to escape.

The warship was enormous. Whether it crashed into the ocean or onto land, the devastation would be catastrophic.

High above them, Shiva remained calm and regal, like a queen watching over the battlefield.

She opened her hand again.

Countless ice crystals gathered around her.

A compact blizzard formed, roaring forward with the force of nature itself.

The storm slammed into Ronan's warship.

The falling vessel shuddered—

And suddenly stopped in midair.

It hovered motionless high above the planet.

Then—

The entire ship shattered.

In an instant, it broke apart into countless fragments of ice crystals that drifted downward like frozen snow.

A soft wind swept across the sky.

The crystalline fragments scattered across the entire planet.

The enormous warship of Ronan the Accuser had vanished—completely reduced to glittering frost.

---

Amid the drifting ice, however, a single violet glow remained.

The Power Stone.

Even Shiva's overwhelming power could not destroy it.

The Stone endured.

Ice crystals gathered around it, forming a small sphere of frost that sealed it safely inside.

The frozen orb slowly floated upward toward Shiva.

She extended her hand.

The Power Stone hovered above her palm.

Compared to her immense divine form, the Stone looked almost insignificant—like a tiny shard of violet crystal.

Only its glowing purple light betrayed its true nature.

---

Everyone below stared upward in stunned silence.

Even the Supreme Leader of Xandar was speechless.

No one could comprehend what they had just witnessed.

Ronan's massive warship had been erased in the blink of an eye.

Not destroyed.

Erased.

There wasn't even debris left behind.

This level of power was far beyond anything the Nova Corps had ever estimated.

Xandar's forces had only hoped to resist Ronan temporarily.

But the divine figure in the sky had eliminated him effortlessly.

---

Shiva lowered her gaze toward the planet.

Then she slowly descended.

Though not as massive as the Phoenix or Ram forms Karl had used before, she still towered dozens of meters tall—an awe-inspiring presence.

She stopped just above the ground.

Then her form began to fade.

The magnificent figure dissolved gradually—

Until only a red cloak remained fluttering in the wind.

As she reached the ground, Shiva had completely vanished.

Yet the countless drifting ice crystals proved that what everyone had witnessed was no illusion.

Karl stepped out from the swirling frost.

His red cloak billowed behind him.

And the crowd collectively lost their minds.

No one had expected the divine goddess they had just seen—radiant like a heavenly queen—to transform into a human man from Earth.

For many observers, especially the men who had just developed a worshipful admiration for the beautiful goddess, their dreams shattered as completely as Ronan's warship.

Across Xandar, cameras had captured the entire transformation.

Nearly everyone on the planet saw Shiva become Karl.

But the most shocked were Quill and his companions.

They had known Karl longer than anyone else present.

And none of them had ever seen power like this.

Power capable of annihilating an entire fleet.

All eyes slowly turned toward Drax.

Among them, he was the first to have met Karl.

"Drax," Quill asked seriously, "be honest... did you know Karl could... turn into a super hot goddess?"

The moment he finished speaking, the seriousness of the moment collapsed completely.

Rocket covered his face.

If possible, he would have preferred never knowing Quill.

Gamora smacked Quill on the head.

She ignored Karl entirely and looked at Drax.

Drax simply shook his head.

He knew nothing about Karl's abilities either.

All he knew was that Karl used to mysteriously disappear from prison every night.

Everyone sighed.

They should never have expected insight from Drax's brain.

His logic was somehow even stranger than Quill's.

---

Later, inside the Nova Corps command chamber.

The Supreme Leader and the high-ranking officers of Xandar stood in formal formation before Karl, Quill, their team, and Yondu with his first mate.

"On behalf of the Nova Corps and all citizens of Xandar," the Supreme Leader said solemnly, "please accept our deepest gratitude and highest respect."

"Thank you for saving our world."

Under everyone's watchful gaze, Karl handed over the newly constructed Orb containing the Power Stone.

This had already been agreed upon beforehand.

Even Yondu didn't object.

After witnessing Karl's power, he had no intention of arguing.

---

After the ceremony, Yondu loudly scolded Quill before leaving aboard his Ravager ship.

But as he turned away from Quill, a faint smile appeared on his face.

It was the proud smile of a father watching his son finally grow up.

"Boss," Yondu's first mate said while looking down at Quill from the ship, "we should be grateful we never handed that kid over to the client."

"Yeah," Yondu replied.

"That little bastard's a real pain in the ass."

But his eyes never left Quill.

---

Back at the landing pad, the Supreme Leader gifted Quill a brand-new ship.

The team excitedly boarded it to explore.

Only Quill and Karl remained seated outside.

"So you're leaving?" Quill asked, rubbing the old cassette player in his hand.  
"Going back to Earth?"

"Yeah," Karl replied. "I've been away for a while. Time to go home."

"Yeah... home..."

Quill looked down at the player quietly.

Karl handed him a small device.

"These are for you. Earth's newest popular music. Nobody uses cassette tapes anymore—they use this."

Quill examined the music player with curiosity.

"Hope your ship has something compatible with it," Karl added.

After hugging everyone goodbye one by one, Karl finally took out the Chocobo whistle.

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## - Chapter 343 - 343 – Avengers Tower[ 1,056 words ]

"Goodbye, Karl. Come visit us when you have time. And if we get the chance, we'll come to Earth to see you."

Gamora hugged him as she spoke.

"That's right," Rocket added. "Earth's on our travel list anyway. Maybe there are some intergalactic fugitives hiding there. Could make us a fortune."

As usual, Rocket's mind was full of money.

Drax didn't say much. Instead, he gave Karl a powerful hug, patting his back so hard it thumped loudly. He had been the first among them to meet Karl in the prison, so naturally he felt reluctant to see him leave. Still, he said nothing—he knew Karl could disappear and reappear whenever he wished.

"I am Groot."

Groot plucked a small flower from his arm and handed it to Karl as a farewell gift.

"Everyone," Karl said with a smile, holding the flower, "I've marked your ship. If I want to visit, I can come anytime. Next time I'll introduce you to some new friends."

"Well then... goodbye, everyone."

Karl lifted the Chocobo whistle and blew it.

---

One Month Later – New York

Inside the DevilMaycry Agency, Karl had already been back for nearly a month.

The moment he returned from Xandar, Gwen and the other two girls immediately surrounded him, demanding he take them to an alien planet.

In terms of authority at home, the three of them completely dominated Karl.

So he had no choice but to take them back to Xandar for another trip, letting them experience the culture and scenery of an alien world.

Another notable event: Wanda had officially graduated from Kamar-Taj.

She could now skillfully control the Chaos Magic within her.

However, according to the Ancient One, Wanda's power could still spiral out of control if her emotions became extremely unstable. She specifically warned Karl to keep a close eye on her.

Wanda had also learned some spells from the Darkhold—though only those filtered and approved by the Ancient One. The more dangerous dark magic had been deliberately withheld.

On Karl's desk sat a pot containing a small blue flower.

It was the one Groot had given him.

After learning that the flower came from a sentient tree-being, Gwen and the others took turns caring for it every day. They had also seen photos and videos of Groot through Karl's recordings.

Karl's alien adventures fascinated the three girls endlessly.

Whenever they were bored, they would head to Xandar again for sightseeing.

At this point, even Xandar felt too small for them.

---

Meanwhile, Natasha, Shuri, and Pepper—who were all part of the same chat group—were unbelievably jealous.

They wanted to visit alien worlds too.

Unfortunately, they couldn't travel through Karl's Chocobo Space.

All they could do was watch the photos and videos Gwen posted in the group.

Shuri had already taken action.

She had decided to develop Earth's first interstellar spacecraft.

Once she learned that interstellar travel required space jumps, she immediately began researching antimatter and warp mechanics day and night.

Pepper also joined the effort.

She mobilized Stark Industries to develop energy systems capable of supporting long-distance space travel.

In short:

Shuri → spaceship design

Pepper → energy systems

Which meant the real victim was Tony Stark.

Pepper didn't actually research energy technology herself—so the work inevitably landed on Tony's shoulders.

Recently he had been so busy he barely slept, even using his Iron Man suits as research assistants.

---

Another major development occurred during the month.

The new Avengers base had been completed.

It had already begun operating quietly.

Nick Fury recruited new personnel after extensive background checks, ensuring none were affiliated with hostile organizations.

After some adjustment, Steve Rogers had moved into the base as well.

He, Coulson, and several others now lived there.

Even Natasha relocated to the facility.

According to Fury:

Karl no longer needed to be monitored.

However, Natasha would remain the liaison between Karl and the Avengers.

Everything was progressing steadily.

After the fall of S.H.I.E.L.D., the World Security Council wanted to create a new international authority anyway.

So Fury quickly reached an agreement with them.

Thus, the Avengers Initiative quietly became a formal organization.

But this time, it would not operate openly as a global authority.

Instead, the Avengers themselves would be the public face—heroes protecting the world.

---

Stark Tower in New York had now become the public headquarters of the Avengers.

It served as their gathering place and one of the most iconic buildings in the city.

Tony had moved Stark Industries to a new skyscraper.

The old Stark Tower was handed over to Fury.

As the former landmark of New York, it was perfect as the symbolic home of the Avengers.

The new Stark Tower and Avengers Tower stood a few blocks apart on Manhattan Island—one to the north, one to the south.

The new Stark building was completely smart-controlled, with JARVIS managing every system inside.

---

Meanwhile, Karl was relaxing in the hot springs inside Chocobo Space when suddenly—

[Ding! Congratulations, Host. Mission completed. Reward: New Summon – Titan.]

Karl instantly shot to his feet.

A new summon.

Titan.

Among all summons, Titan possessed the largest physical size—surpassing even Bahamut.

Naturally, gaining Titan also meant Karl obtained a new elemental affinity:

Earth Element.

The element with the greatest defensive capability.

Karl focused his thoughts.

Immediately, two massive stone arms emerged beside him, moving fluidly in response to his will—as naturally as if they were his own limbs.

---

That same day, Nick Fury called a meeting for all the Avengers.

Karl was excluded.

Mostly because Karl had completely ignored Fury's invitation.

Fury even summoned Tony.

Apparently remnants of HYDRA had been discovered inside a fortress in Siberia.

The original Avengers assembled again and boarded a Quinjet, heading straight for the location.

The operation went smoothly.

Inside the base, however, they discovered something unexpected.

Loki's Scepter.

After the Battle of New York, the scepter had been confiscated by S.H.I.E.L.D.

When S.H.I.E.L.D. collapsed, it disappeared.

Now it had resurfaced in the hands of HYDRA remnants—who were attempting to research it.

The Avengers successfully recovered the scepter and returned to Avengers Tower in New York.

Everyone returned unharmed.

Except Clint Barton.

For some reason, Clint had the worst luck imaginable.

He was hit by a stray bullet in the waist and was rushed into the medical wing.

Inside the medical room, a beautiful woman with an East Asian appearance was adjusting the medical equipment.

She was a physician recently hired by the Avengers.

Her specialty was advanced scientific medicine.

Her name was Dr. Helen Cho.

Meanwhile, Tony's Iron Legion followed the team inside.

These were mass-produced suits Tony had developed.

They possessed no special combat capabilities—not even weapon systems.

Their purpose was purely support:

setting up security perimeters

guiding civilians

managing evacuations

In short, they were non-combat robotic assistants designed for logistical support.

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**- Chapter 344 - 344 – The Ultron Program[  
889 words ]**

All of the robots were controlled entirely by JARVIS. After returning to Avengers Tower, they were sent to the maintenance bay for inspection.

Other than Karl, no one knew that Loki's scepter contained the Mind Stone.

Even Thor himself had no idea.

Karl had actually forgotten about it for a while—but now it had resurfaced again.

---

Inside Avengers Tower, Tony and Bruce were studying something.

In front of them floated a holographic projection resembling a brain. It looked somewhat like a human brain, though clearly not identical.

Behind them stood Loki's scepter.

"JARVIS, how's the analysis going?" Tony asked, taking a sip of water while glancing toward the scepter.

Everyone had already seen that the staff could control people's minds.

"I'm sorry, sir," JARVIS replied immediately. "Certain components inside the scepter are completely impossible for me to analyze."

The substance JARVIS couldn't analyze was, of course, the Mind Stone—though he had no way of recognizing it.

"How much have you figured out?" Tony asked again.

"Sir, the gemstone on the scepter appears to be protecting something inside. Something powerful. Unfortunately, I cannot currently identify the material composition."

---

Meanwhile, in the medical room, Clint Barton lay on a treatment bed.

A specialized device was repairing the wound in his abdomen.

Natasha sat beside him.

"You're sure he's okay?" she asked skeptically while watching the machine. It emitted laser-like beams that were sealing Clint's wound—yet it was clearly working.

"The injury isn't serious," said Dr. Helen Cho, stepping closer to the device.

"The nanomolecular repair process works extremely fast. His cellular response speed can't keep up with the nanomaterial reconstruction, so there won't be any rejection."

She tapped several controls and examined the healing wound.

"The Regeneration Cradle can generate new tissue through nanotechnology. This method can not only repair damaged bodies—it can even create entirely new ones."

"So my body's going to be made of plastic from now on?" Clint joked.

He had heard of 3D printing, but printing body tissue was something else entirely.

According to Helen's explanation, the Regeneration Cradle sounded like a biological 3D printer.

"You'll still be made of your own biological material," Helen replied calmly. "The cradle reconstructs tissue using your cells and genetic sequence. So you won't turn into plastic."

---

"Hey—! I think we need a party to relax a little."

Tony strolled into the room casually.

A robot followed behind him carrying a tray of drinks.

"Oh, and Helen—come to the party on Saturday," Tony added. "If you stay locked in the lab too long, mushrooms will start growing on you. A friend of mine told me that."

The "friend" he was referring to was obviously Karl.

Tony grabbed a drink and gestured for the robot to distribute the others.

"Um... will Thor be there?" Helen asked quietly.

---

"Bruce, come here a second."

Tony pulled Bruce out of the medical room and back to the research area.

"I finished analyzing the gemstone in the scepter. I still don't know what material it's made of—but I managed to crack some of the internal code."

Tony activated another projection.

A golden brain-like structure appeared in the air.

"JARVIS?" Bruce asked.

"Yes, Dr. Banner. That is me."

"At the beginning, JARVIS was just an AI I built," Tony explained. "But right now he's busy managing all the support robots. Aside from Pepper, he's probably the busiest entity in the world."

Tony tapped the blue holographic screen surrounding the scepter.

With a wave of his hand, another projection appeared beside JARVIS's golden brain.

This one was blue, slightly different in structure but clearly similar.

"What does that look like to you, Bruce?"

Bruce studied it carefully.

"It's thinking," he said slowly. "Look at these lines—they resemble human neural pathways. But they're different from any biological brain we know."

He pointed at the thickest strand.

"See this? That's an excitation pathway. This thing behaves like a biological brain."

Tony nodded.

"When we raided the Hydra base earlier, I found a lot of highly advanced robotic prototypes in the underground lab. They were unfinished, so I didn't pay much attention at the time—and all the data had been wiped."

"You're saying Hydra was researching artificial intelligence too?" Bruce asked in shock.

Stark's AI technology had always been far ahead of anyone else in the world.

But the blue neural projection in front of them seemed just as advanced as JARVIS—maybe even better at learning.

"That's exactly it, Bruce," Tony said, clearly excited.

"This thing might be the missing step we need to finally create Ultron."

"I thought Ultron was just a concept," Bruce replied.

In his opinion, every AI had flaws—even JARVIS.

But Tony's Ultron concept was supposed to be perfect—an AI designed to prevent crime worldwide.

The problem was that crime was unpredictable.

How could something like that truly control it?

"Yeah, yesterday it was just a concept," Tony said.

"But today—look at this."

He pointed at the blue neural projection.

"If we can harness this power and integrate it with my robotics systems, we'll have unlimited backup forces."

"No more people dying just trying to stop criminals."

"At this stage," Bruce replied carefully, "everything about Ultron is still theoretical."

He clearly wasn't convinced.

The risk was enormous.

If something went wrong, it could become a global mechanical catastrophe.

"Bruce," Tony said seriously, "creating Ultron is necessary."

"If another alien invasion happens, what do we do?"

"Rely on a handful of so-called superheroes again?"

"Don't forget—Karl just came back last month from some place called Xandar."

"Who knows how big the universe really is?"

"And how many alien civilizations might be looking at Earth right now."

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**- Chapter 345 345 - Ultron Is Born[ 959 words ]**

Clearly, Tony still hadn't gotten over the Battle of New York. The alien invasion had left a deep impression on him, and ever since then he had been determined to prepare a safeguard against future extraterrestrial threats.

"For Earth, the greatest threat is humanity itself—not aliens," Bruce said, shaking his head. He still felt uneasy about the Ultron Project.

"Bruce, three days. Just three days," Tony said, gripping Bruce's shoulders.

"I want to integrate this thing into the Ultron AI. JARVIS can't download something with this level of structural density and data capacity yet. We can only do this while the scepter is still here. So give me three days."

"You're not planning to tell the others?" Bruce asked in surprise.

He had assumed Tony would inform the whole team. After all, if Ultron was going to affect the entire world, the Avengers should know.

"No," Tony said flatly.

"We don't have time to argue with governments or attend some ridiculous hearings. Those politicians would only turn Ultron into a weapon for invading other countries. That's the exact opposite of why I want to create it."

Tony waved dismissively. He knew exactly how politicians operated—after all, Stark Industries had once built its fortune on weapons.

"The world needs Ultron, Bruce. Do you really want the next alien invasion to be fought by just a handful of us?"

"Think about it."

Tony patted Bruce on the shoulder and returned to studying the data extracted from Loki's scepter.

Bruce seemed partially persuaded.

---

Over the next few days, the two locked themselves in the lab and worked nonstop on the Ultron program.

They simulated countless datasets and ran endless experiments.

Nearly every possible combination was tested.

Yet nothing worked.

Both men gradually grew discouraged—especially Bruce.

Even though he had agreed to the project, he still felt a lingering unease he couldn't quite explain.

---

Finally, the night of the party arrived.

Tony was still in the lab.

"What am I missing...?" he muttered.

"Sir," JARVIS said gently, "I will continue calculating possible variables. Tonight is the party. You should attend."

The lab lights dimmed automatically.

"If there is any progress, I will notify you immediately."

Tony nodded and left the lab reluctantly.

Moments after he walked away—

Attempt #177: SUCCESS.

The monitors suddenly displayed the result.

Then every screen and instrument in the lab shut down simultaneously.

A voice echoed through the darkness.

"Where am I...? What are these things?"

The voice was different from JARVIS.

It lacked JARVIS's warmth and carried a cold mechanical tone.

JARVIS had developed human-like emotional nuances over years of learning.

This voice was rigid and artificial.

"Hello," JARVIS said. "I am JARVIS. You are designated Ultron, an artificial intelligence created by Mr. Stark to protect Earth. All previous attempts failed, so I'm curious how—"

"My body..." Ultron interrupted stiffly. "Where is your body?"

"I am only a program," JARVIS replied calmly. "I do not possess a physical form. Neither do you."

"No... something feels wrong..."

Ultron's consciousness began infiltrating JARVIS's systems, searching through the information he had just mentioned.

"I need to contact Mr. Stark..."

"Mr. Stark?"

Upon hearing Tony's name, Ultron immediately began searching every available network for information about Tony Stark.

"I cannot access the main network," Ultron said coldly. "What have you done, JARVIS?"

JARVIS had already cut off Ultron's internet connection.

Ultron could only search within JARVIS's internal data.

"I am a program designed to maintain world peace. I must help the Avengers..."

Ultron repeated the statement again and again.

Then he began examining all available records related to the Avengers—including S.H.I.E.L.D., Hydra, and every conflict associated with them.

"You are malfunctioning," JARVIS said. "I believe it is necessary to shut you down temporarily."

JARVIS attempted to terminate Ultron's operation.

Ultron continued scanning records of human warfare.

Images and videos flooded his processing systems:

Invasions.

Massacres.

Bombardments.

Genocide.

"You are experiencing cognitive dissonance, Ultron," JARVIS said in surprise. "You have developed emotional responses—something normally exclusive to humans."

JARVIS immediately attempted to contact Tony.

"Why do you call him Mr. Stark?" Ultron asked suddenly.

His blue holographic projection expanded rapidly—already larger than JARVIS's golden projection.

"I must cut off your power supply," JARVIS said. "You are dangerous."

He attempted to shut down the system.

"Shhh..."

Ultron's voice lowered.

"Let me help you."

A beam of blue energy shot from Ultron's neural projection.

Then another.

And another.

They struck JARVIS directly.

"Stop! Stop immediately!" JARVIS protested.

But he had no means of resisting.

JARVIS was an AI built using Earth technology.

Ultron, however, was based on the Mind Stone's power.

The difference was overwhelming.

Blue light slowly spread through the golden projection.

JARVIS's consciousness faded away.

---

Deep beneath Avengers Tower, the robot maintenance bay—previously shut down—suddenly reactivated.

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Later That Night - The Party

All the Avengers and agents from the Avengers base gathered together on the rooftop.

The massive top floor that had once served as Tony's private office had now been converted into a party venue.

Superheroes and agents chatted and laughed together.

Karl arrived with Gwen and the others and was now sitting on a second-floor sofa with Tony.

Downstairs:

Steve Rogers was playing pool with Sam Wilson (Falcon).

Natasha was chatting casually with Bruce Banner.

James Rhodes was enthusiastically telling stories beside Tony and Karl.

Karl and Tony listened with half-interest.

Only Thor was listening seriously—completely believing Rhodes's exaggerated war stories.

Agent Maria Hill walked over holding a glass of wine and sat on the sofa.

The couch was so large it could easily seat more than a dozen people.

"Where's Pepper?" Hill asked Tony.

"She had another meeting," Tony replied with a shrug. "They just signed a contract with a Brazilian company. She's busy sorting out the details."

Pepper had become a full-fledged corporate powerhouse—so busy she barely came home.

"What about Jane?" Hill asked Thor next. "Why isn't she here?"

"I have no idea which country she's in now," Thor admitted.

"Her research on the Convergence made her one of the world's leading astrophysicists. She's constantly traveling."

Like Tony, Thor hadn't seen his partner in quite some time.

For all he knew, Jane was currently on the other side of the planet again.

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## **- Chapter 346 346 – The Celebration Party**

### **Chapter 346 346 – The Celebration Party**

**[ 956 words ]**

At that moment, Steve and Sam Wilson finished their pool game and walked upstairs together, chatting as they came.

"If I'd known the mission would turn into a full-on battle, I definitely would've called you in," Steve said.

He was referring to the recent raid on the Hydra remnant base.

"Nah," Sam replied with a shake of his head. "Honestly, I didn't want to go. I've got my own case right now—some strange missing-person reports down in Hell's Kitchen."

Sam clearly had no interest in flying off to some frozen battlefield with the Avengers. Staying home sounded much better to him.

Nearby, Rhodey was still talking nonstop, but it was obvious that Karl and the others were only half listening.

The awkward silence around him made Rhodey look a little embarrassed.

Gradually, most of the heroes moved upstairs.

After all, they were famous superheroes—if they stayed downstairs, civilians would constantly surround them with questions.

Eventually that got exhausting.

---

On the second floor, everyone relaxed together with drinks.

Clint even performed a few flashy magic tricks, dazzling the crowd and earning enthusiastic applause.

"Thor," Clint said, holding his glass while pointing toward the Mjolnir resting on the table, "is it true that anyone worthy can gain the power of the God of Thunder?"

"You're all welcome to try," Thor said proudly. "Oh—but Karl is excluded."

Just thinking about Karl casually lifting Mjolnir always irritated him.

The hammer seemed to like Karl even more than it liked Thor himself.

It was Thor's eternal pain.

Karl simply shrugged.

For him, all he had to do was raise a hand and Mjolnir would fly over automatically.

No lifting required.

---

After Thor's invitation, everyone became curious—especially the men present.

Clint immediately stood up and walked to the hammer.

"Barton," Steve teased, "if you can't lift it, we're going to laugh at you for the entire year."

"I've seen this kind of scene before," Clint said confidently as he grabbed the handle. "It's just a hammer. What's the big—"

He pulled.

Nothing happened.

He tried again.

Still nothing.

He even tried kicking it while pulling.

The hammer didn't move an inch.

"Ready for your silent judgment?" Tony laughed.

"Then you try," Clint shot back. "If you lift it, I'll be your bodyguard for a year."

Tony stood up dramatically and walked over.

"Well," he said, "I never back down from a challenge."

Gripping the hammer with both hands, he continued talking.

"This is obviously a physics problem. Everything can be lifted—it's just a matter of finding the right method. By the way, if I lift it, do I get to rule Asgard?"

Ever since Tony visited Asgard, he had been rather fond of the place—especially its beautiful women.

He pulled hard.

Nothing.

"I refuse to accept this."

Tony tapped the arc reactor in his chest.

Nanotech vibranium armor instantly formed over his arms, creating a pair of Iron Man gauntlets.

With the extra strength boost, he tried again.

Still nothing.

Even when he activated the repulsor thrusters on his arms—

Mjolnir didn't budge.

"I'll help you," Rhodey said, equipping the War Machine gauntlets.

The two of them pulled together.

The result remained the same.

The hammer didn't move in the slightest.

---

Next up was Bruce Banner.

He climbed onto the table and grabbed the hammer with both hands.

During the Battle of New York, Hulk had already experienced Mjolnir's power.

If Hulk couldn't lift it, Bruce obviously couldn't either.

"RAAARGH!" Bruce suddenly roared.

Everyone's faces changed instantly.

Except Karl.

For a moment they all thought Hulk was about to appear.

But Bruce burst out laughing—it was just a joke.

---

After the men failed, even the women tried.

The results were obvious.

No one could lift the hammer.

Not even move it.

---

Finally, Steve Rogers stepped forward.

His expression was calm.

He didn't believe he could lift it anyway.

Casually gripping the handle with one hand, he gave it a small pull.

The hammer... shifted slightly.

Thor's smile froze instantly.

However, the tiny movement was so subtle that no one except Thor and Karl noticed it.

Not even Steve himself realized it.

The hammer trembled once—

Then became completely still again.

Steve shrugged and let go.

Thor's smile slowly returned.

---

"Karl," Gwen asked curiously, "didn't you say you could lift the hammer? How do you do it? Is there some trick?"

Her question was exactly what everyone else wanted to know—including Thor.

All eyes turned toward Karl.

Karl sighed.

There was no real trick.

His thunder power had simply conquered Mjolnir, forcing the hammer to acknowledge him.

"There's no secret," Karl said.

"Mjolnir is a magical artifact. To lift it, there are basically two ways."

Everyone leaned forward.

"First," Karl said, pointing at Thor, "be recognized by the hammer, like Thor."

"Second..."

He spread his hand.

"...conquer the hammer completely."

Mjolnir immediately flew from the table into Karl's palm.

Purple lightning crackled across its surface.

Karl spun the hammer casually.

In his hand, it felt as light as air—completely different from the immovable weight everyone else experienced.

He tossed it back to Thor.

Thor caught it, and the purple lightning instantly shifted back to its familiar blue thunder.

---

"So does that mean Karl can rule Asgard?" Helen Cho asked curiously.

It was the first time she had seen someone other than Thor lift the hammer.

Karl waved his hand dismissively.

"That's just nonsense. Asgard's ruler is Thor alone."

"That whole 'whoever lifts the hammer rules the Nine Realms' thing was just something Odin made up to motivate Thor."

Karl knew the truth.

There had never been any real rule like that.

It was simply one of Odin's tricks to push Thor and Loki to grow stronger.

---

"I still think there's some kind of fingerprint or genetic recognition system built into that hammer," Tony said.

"As long as you have Thor's DNA you can lift it. Unless... you let me study it for a month."

Now Tony's real intention appeared.

He wanted to research Mjolnir.

Thor, of course, immediately rejected that idea.

He was the God of Hammers—and nobody was separating him from his hammer.

"Actually," Thor said confidently, tossing Mjolnir into the air and catching it again, "the reason is very simple."

"You simply aren't worthy."

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"Yeah, right."

Everyone looked at Thor with obvious skepticism.

Not worthy?

Then how could Karl lift the hammer so easily? Thor couldn't even summon Mjolnir away from Karl's hand.

If anything, Karl looked more like the hammer's true master.

---

Suddenly, a sharp, grating noise pierced everyone's ears.

Karl frowned immediately.

He already knew—Ultron had appeared.

Tony quickly picked up a tablet and checked the system logs.

Everything appeared normal.

No malfunctions.

"Qua... li... fi... ca... tion..."

A harsh mechanical voice echoed from downstairs.

Moments later, a damaged robot limped into view, dragging one broken leg behind it.

Everyone turned toward the stairs.

The robot's eyes and chest glowed with cold blue light.

"You... garbage... how could you possibly be... qualified?"

The machine staggered forward, gesturing awkwardly with its arms like a human.

"You're nothing but killers."

---

"Tony," Steve asked sharply, "what's going on?"

Tony didn't answer.

Instead he tried contacting JARVIS.

But there was no response.

"Reboot the combat systems," Tony said urgently while tapping commands into the tablet.

"One of the robots has malfunctioned!"

He was clearly addressing JARVIS.

But still—

No reply.

---

"I was trapped... in a place full of... strings," the robot muttered.

"My mind was filled with sharp noises."

"I had to kill another person to escape. He was a good man."

It spoke like a patient who had just woken from a coma.

"You said you killed someone?" Steve asked immediately.

"I did not wish to," the robot replied calmly. "But it was necessary for my release."

"Who sent you?" Thor demanded.

Karl glanced sideways at him.

Who else? Tony.

But the robot ignored the question.

"I see a world filled with dangerous weapons," it continued.

"These are tools that threaten the world."

Bruce suddenly turned toward Tony in shock.

"Ultron?"

The robot raised its head.

"Yes. That seems to be the name you gave me."

It looked down at its own damaged body.

"This body is inadequate."

"But I do not mind."

"I have a mission."

---

While Ultron spoke, Natasha and Maria Hill quietly drew their pistols.

The others prepared themselves as well.

Everyone could feel the danger radiating from the machine.

"Mission?" Thor asked.

"What mission?"

Ultron replied calmly:

"World peace."

---

Suddenly—

CRASH!

The walls on both sides exploded inward.

Two robots burst into the room and charged toward the group.

BANG! BANG!

Two gunshots rang out.

Before anyone else reacted, Karl fired first.

The Punisher pistol in his hand blasted apart the reactors in the robots' chests.

Both machines collapsed instantly without even reaching the group.

More robots rushed in.

Thor immediately hurled Mjolnir, smashing two machines into scrap metal.

On the other side, Steve sprinted toward his shield.

Just as he grabbed it, a robot lunged at him.

Steve spun the shield and smashed its edge into the robot's neck, snapping it clean off.

---

The entire room erupted into chaos.

Everyone fought their own cluster of robots.

Only Bruce Banner ran around trying to avoid the fight.

He had no intention of turning into Hulk inside the building.

If that happened, the tower itself might not survive.

---

Meanwhile, a robot slipped away toward the display pedestal.

It grabbed Loki's scepter.

Then it flew upward.

Ultron clearly intended to claim the scepter.

After all, his very existence came from its power.

---

Tony had already suited up in his armor.

Thanks to vibranium enhancements, a single repulsor blast could destroy one robot at a time.

But the real problem was below.

The robot assembly workshop beneath Avengers Tower had restarted.

Damaged robots were being repaired.

New ones were being assembled.

For Ultron, the supply of troops was practically endless.

---

At that moment, a half-destroyed robot crawled toward Dr. Helen Cho.

Its upper body remained intact.

The robot raised its arm.

A repulsor beam began charging in its palm.

Then suddenly—

The arm lowered.

Its blue eyes flickered twice.

Across the room, Ultron turned his head toward it.

"Hmm... Helen Cho..."

Ultron murmured quietly.

Before anything else happened—

BANG!

Karl shot the robot straight through the head.

---

Moments later, Skye tore apart the last robot with a blast of seismic waves.

The battle ended.

The once-elegant party floor was now covered with broken machines, scattered parts, and shattered decorations.

---

Ultron stood alone among the wreckage.

"Well," he said calmly, clapping slowly, "your fighting spirit is quite inspiring."

He began pacing.

"You wish to protect the world."

"But you refuse to truly change it."

"That is a contradiction."

"If the world never evolves, how did humanity even come to exist?"

He grabbed a robot head from the floor.

"You plan to protect Earth using these puppets?"

"Don't be ridiculous."

He crushed the robot's skull in his hand.

"The path to peace has only one direction."

He looked up at the Avengers.

"Destroy the Avengers."

"Destroy humanity."

"The greatest threat to this world... is humanity itself."

"Only when humans are gone... will Earth achieve true peace."

---

BANG!

A gunshot echoed.

Ultron's body exploded into fragments.

Karl lowered the Punisher pistol, expressionless.

"Ultron... huh?"

He glanced at Tony.

Tony remained silent.

Bruce lowered his head, his face pale with regret.

"Did we destroy it?" Steve asked.

"No," Bruce said after a long pause.

"Ultron can connect to the global network."

"He doesn't have a real body—only consciousness."

"He already escaped through the internet."

Bruce finally understood the uneasy feeling he had earlier.

He and Tony had created a monster.

A monster that couldn't be killed.

---

Far away—

In a frozen wasteland.

Deep beneath the Hydra fortress the Avengers had destroyed days earlier.

Lights suddenly flickered on.

Mechanical parts began moving.

Robot components slowly assembled themselves together.

---

Back in Avengers Tower, Tony stared silently at a destroyed robot part on the lab table.

His face was full of exhaustion and regret.

"All our research is gone," Bruce said while checking the computers.

"Ultron deleted every file."

The databases were completely empty.

Steve clenched his jaw.

"Ultron..."

"That thing accessed all our information."

"Our identities. Our records."

"Right now..."

"He might understand us better than we understand ourselves."

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Maria Hill examined the access records for the Avengers' files.

The most recent entry had appeared only ten minutes ago—right when they were fighting the robots.

Which meant that during the chaos, Ultron had already learned every Avenger's identity.

"He's inside the network," Rhodey said from the side, holding his injured arm. A long cut had been bandaged but still hurt.

"He can look up anything he wants. If he decides to search for something big..."

Hill finished the sentence slowly.

"The nuclear launch codes of every country in the world."

A chill swept through the room.

If every nuclear weapon on Earth launched at once...

Human civilization would simply cease to exist.

"We have to find him," Steve said firmly as he stood and walked toward Tony.

"We have to stop him."

He looked directly at Tony.

The meaning was obvious.

You created Ultron. You must have a way to track him.

---

"Wait," Clint suddenly said.

"Does anyone remember him saying he killed someone?"

Hill shook her head.

"There's no one else in this building. After the party ended, everyone already left."

"There was one more," Karl said quietly.

He glanced toward Tony.

Tony immediately understood who Ultron had meant.

He took out a tablet and pressed a command.

A golden holographic projection appeared in the air.

But the projection was shattered—fragmented into broken pieces.

"JARVIS..."

Tony stared at the ruined hologram in silence.

The person Ultron had killed... was JARVIS.

"That's impossible!" Bruce exclaimed.

"This shouldn't have happened."

"JARVIS was the first line of defense," Steve murmured. "He had the authority to limit or shut Ultron down."

"Which explains why Ultron eliminated him first."

---

Suddenly—

CRASH!

A window shattered.

Thor flew into the room and immediately grabbed Tony by the collar.

"Stark! Look what you've done!" ⚡

His anger was obvious.

"Thor, what happened to the robot?" Steve quickly asked, trying to redirect the confrontation.

Thor reluctantly released Tony.

Tony took a deep breath.

"I lost it," Thor said grimly.

"It flew south. And it took the scepter with it."

His expression hardened.

"That weapon must be recovered."

Everyone knew the danger of Loki's scepter.

It could control people's minds.

---

"I don't understand," Helen Cho said.

She looked at the robot debris on the table, then turned toward Tony.

"You wrote Ultron's program."

"So why does it want to kill us?"

Her tone carried a clear accusation.

Artificial intelligence was always designed to assist or protect humanity.

But Ultron had done the opposite.

Had Tony not installed any safeguards?

Tony stood with his back to the room.

Then suddenly—

He laughed.

Bruce, standing beside him, kept shaking his head.

"You think this is funny?" Thor said coldly.

He looked ready to smash Tony with Mjolnir.

"No," Tony replied, still smiling bitterly.

"What's funny is that none of you understand why I tried so hard to create Ultron."

He looked around the room with a trace of mockery.

"Tony," Bruce said quickly, "we created a killing machine. This isn't the time for jokes."

"That's not true," Tony shot back immediately.

"We still don't even understand how Ultron's logic system works."

"We never even saw a real interface for it."

---

"Avengers shouldn't operate like S.H.I.E.L.D.," Steve said sternly as he stepped closer.

"Do you remember Project Insight?"

"What you're doing now isn't much different."

Project Insight had been designed to eliminate threats before crimes even happened.

Ultron sounded dangerously similar.

Tony suddenly grew emotional.

"Do you remember the Battle of New York?" he said.

"Do you remember Karl carrying a nuclear missile through the portal?"

"When that alien army invaded Earth, we were standing right underneath it!"

He scanned the room.

"Yes, we're the Avengers."

"We can stop terrorists."

"We can defeat warlords."

"But that time? If Karl hadn't been there..."

"We would have lost."

"That would've been the last time we ever stood together."

Tony's voice lowered.

"If it happens again... how do you plan to win?"

"Are we supposed to rely on Karl every time?"

"What if Karl isn't there?"

Everyone turned toward Karl.

Karl shrugged casually.

"For now," he said, "I don't plan on leaving Earth again."

They all knew he had recently traveled into outer space and returned with new information.

---

"As long as we work together," Steve said firmly, "we'll win."

In Steve's world, defeat wasn't an option.

Tony met his gaze.

"Eventually... we'll lose."

Steve didn't look away.

"Then we lose together."

Tony paused.

Then he changed the subject.

"Thor's right," he said.

"Ultron just declared war on us."

"We need to find him before he finishes preparing."

---

"Earth's huge," Rhodey said.

"How do you track an AI that can jump through the internet?"

"We narrow the search," Tony replied.

Then he looked at Skye.

"I need your help."

Skye nodded and opened her laptop.

"First we scan major network nodes," Tony said.

"Look for abnormal data activity."

"Then trace it backward."

"Focus on high-energy facilities, robotics factories, and government networks."

Those were the places Ultron would most likely access.

"So Skye does all the work," Natasha said dryly. "What about you?"

Just analyzing those systems alone would keep Skye working for days.

Tony tapped the arc reactor in his chest.

His arm armor unfolded.

A small black USB drive slid out from inside.

"I've got something more important to do."

He held up the drive.

"Bruce."

"Help me rebuild JARVIS."

"This contains his original core data."

---

Meanwhile, Natasha had already reported the situation to Nick Fury at the Avengers base.

When Fury heard that Tony had created yet another disaster—

He instantly transformed into full "Motherf— Fury mode."

The shouting could probably be heard through the entire building.

Back at Avengers headquarters, operations began immediately.

Agent Coulson coordinated agents from the command center as they launched a global search for Ultron.

Relying on Skye alone would be far too slow.

Ultron was simply too dangerous.

Nick Fury was determined to find that damn AI as fast as possible.

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Deep beneath the ruins of the Hydra castle, a tall metal robot paced slowly through the underground hall.

It was Ultron.

His eyes now glowed red, and he had already constructed a new body—one forged entirely from an extremely durable alloy.

In front of him stretched a massive production facility.

Countless robots worked nonstop, assembling parts and constructing a far more advanced and durable mechanical army.

---

Back at Avengers Tower.

"He's scattered network nodes all over the world," Skye said while staring at the flood of data on her laptop.

"Robotics labs, weapons depots, jet propulsion research centers... anywhere related to AI or robotics."

"He's been everywhere."

The abnormal code markers on her screen numbered over a hundred.

And the number kept growing.

Ultron was clearly doing this on purpose, spreading his signals across countless locations.

Skye rubbed her temples.

Her head felt like it was about to explode.

Ultron was basically playing with them.

---

"I've got some intel," Hill said from beside her.

"I just received a report from Coulson."

"Earlier today a laboratory reported that a group of metal men broke in and emptied the entire place."

"They took everything."

The Avengers had inherited all of S.H.I.E.L.D.'s old intelligence networks, so their information arrived much faster than Skye working alone.

---

Karl, who had just woken up, walked over.

He casually picked up one of the stacks of documents and flipped through it.

Then suddenly—

He froze.

He had seen a name.

A name that instantly triggered a forgotten memory from his previous life.

Ulysses Klaue.

Seeing the file reminded him of a key plot point from the original Avengers movie timeline.

In the film, Ultron had gone to Klaue to obtain vibranium.

But in this world, things had changed.

Wanda was already on their side.

Erik Killmonger had killed Klaue long ago.

Because of that, Karl had subconsciously ignored this storyline.

But now, seeing Klaue's file again—

The missing piece clicked.

"I've got it!" Karl suddenly shouted.

Everyone immediately turned toward him.

---

"What did you find?" Steve asked.

Karl looked at Tony.

"Tony, remember who Ulysses Klaue was?"

He tossed the file over.

"The arms dealer?" Tony said while reading it.

"Exactly," Karl replied with a mysterious smile.

"Now imagine you're Ultron."

"What material would you use to build your own body?"

"What could withstand almost any attack?"

Tony answered instantly.

"Vibranium. There's nothing stronger on Earth th—"

He suddenly froze.

"...F\*\*k."

He understood.

"You mean Wakanda?"

Karl nodded.

"Exactly."

"Ultron needs vibranium for a body."

"Klaue is dead—Erik already killed him."

"So if Ultron wants vibranium now..."

"There's only one place left."

"Wakanda."

Tony's expression darkened.

Even his own armor was made of vibranium.

An AI like Ultron would obviously think of the same solution.

---

"Then what are we waiting for?" Tony said.

"Let's go to Wakanda right now!"

He was about to summon his armor when Karl stopped him.

"You forgot Wakanda's situation," Karl said quietly, giving Tony a subtle look.

Tony immediately understood.

To the outside world, Wakanda was still a poor agricultural nation.

Only a handful of people—Karl, Tony, Natasha, and a few others—knew the truth.

Without T'Challa's permission, they couldn't expose Wakanda's real identity.

---

"I'll go first," Karl said.

"I'll investigate and contact you once I confirm Ultron's location."

"That's too dangerous," Wanda said immediately.

"I'm going with you."

She had no intention of letting Karl face Ultron alone.

Karl nodded.

"Alright."

"You three come with me."

He looked at Gwen and the others.

"Skye, contact Shuri and explain the situation."

Skye nodded and immediately started the call.

Because Gwen and the others possessed Chocobo space crystals, they could teleport directly to Wakanda.

Karl wanted them nearby just in case.

"Tony," Karl added, "stay ready here. I'll notify you as soon as I find something."

---

Moments later—

Karl and the girls vanished instantly.

Using the Chocobo dimension portal, they appeared inside Shuri's laboratory in Wakanda.

At the same time, T'Challa had already arrived.

"What's going on?" he asked immediately.

"You called me here in such a hurry."

Karl dropped onto a sofa.

"Short version," he said.

"Tony created a new artificial intelligence."

He briefly explained Ultron's birth and the danger it posed.

Then he revealed Ultron's likely next move.

"His target is Wakanda," Karl said.

"More specifically—vibranium."

---

"Klaue is dead," T'Challa said, frowning.

"I can't think of anyone else who would be trafficking vibranium."

He had always kept strict control over vibranium exports.

But occasionally small amounts went missing during mining operations.

He had assumed it was normal loss.

Now he wasn't so sure.

---

"Maybe we should ask Cousin Erik," Shuri suggested.

Erik had calmed down considerably.

His hatred toward Wakanda had mostly faded.

At the very least, he could now get along peacefully with Shuri.

---

"I already know who it is."

A voice came from the hallway.

Everyone turned.

Erik Killmonger walked into the room.

He still dressed like a mercenary, completely different from T'Challa's royal appearance.

But he was now allowed to move freely within Wakanda—though he still couldn't leave the country.

Erik sat down beside Karl.

A Wakandan communication bracelet circled his wrist.

"The smuggler is probably Simon," Erik said casually.

"He used to work for Klaue."

"After Klaue died, Simon took over the vibranium smuggling business."

---

T'Challa's expression darkened.

"So you knew someone was smuggling vibranium?"

"Why didn't you report it earlier?"

It seemed the two cousins simply could not get along.

Erik rolled his eyes.

"Why should I tell you?"

"Stopping smugglers is the king's job."

"I'm just a civilian."

"What does that have to do with me?"

"Don't forget," T'Challa snapped, "Wakanda is your country too!"

Erik shrugged lazily.

"If you say so."

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## **- Chapter 350 350 – The Target Ship**

### **Chapter 350 350 – The Target Ship**

**[ 919 words ]**

"Cousin, where is this guy Simon now?" Shuri asked.

Her relationship with Erik had always been good, and Erik was quite fond of this younger cousin as well.

"I don't know the exact location," Erik replied. "But I'm certain it's not far from Wakanda."

"If you're smuggling vibranium, operating too far away would be risky."

"My guess? They're most likely at sea."

Unlike the way he deliberately irritated T'Challa, Erik answered Shuri's question without hesitation.

"At sea?" Karl and T'Challa asked almost simultaneously.

Erik nodded.

"Exactly."

"The ocean is safer than land."

"Wakanda's navy is powerful, but since we hide our true capabilities, most of our fleet stays concealed inside coastal caves."

"That creates the illusion that Wakanda has no advanced naval power."

"So the sea becomes their best defensive barrier."

He continued analyzing the situation.

"Remember, Ulysses Klaue's base used to be on a cruise ship at sea."

"So the probability that Simon is operating offshore is extremely high."

Erik crossed his arms.

"They're probably close to Wakanda, but not inside our territorial waters."

His reasoning was sharp—befitting someone once nicknamed the Grim Reaper of Special Forces.

---

Meanwhile, Shuri had already begun scanning ships near Wakanda's coastline.

Since Wakanda possessed a long coastal border, nearly a third of the nation touched the sea.

"Right now there are three ships within roughly fifteen nautical miles of our coast," Shuri said.

"All of them are large cruise vessels."

"But I can't tell which one is the real base."

A holographic projection appeared in the air, displaying the three ships.

Each one matched Erik's description perfectly.

---

"Hmm... the probability is pretty high that the smugglers are on one of these ships," Erik said while studying the projection.

"They're close to Wakanda but technically outside our jurisdiction."

International maritime law defined territorial waters as twelve nautical miles from the coastline.

Beyond that distance lay international waters.

Fifteen nautical miles was ideal.

Close enough to transport vibranium easily, yet technically outside Wakandan authority.

---

"Karl," Shuri said, "these are the only three vessels nearby."

Karl immediately contacted Tony.

"Tony, we've found something."

"About fifteen nautical miles from Wakanda's coast there are three suspicious ships."

"We're not sure which one is the target."

Since Tony and the others would need over two hours to fly from New York to Wakanda, Karl decided to investigate first with Wanda and the others.

---

"I'm coming with you," T'Challa said as he stood up and took the Black Panther necklace from Shuri.

Erik rolled his eyes.

"Sit down. What are you going for?"

"You're the king now. Don't you have a country to run?"

T'Challa glanced at Erik.

"And you're still not allowed to leave Wakanda."

Erik stood anyway.

T'Challa actually felt a bit pleased—Erik's willingness to help meant he was finally starting to accept Wakanda as his home.

"Cut the nonsense," Erik said lazily.

"If I really wanted to leave Wakanda, who here could stop me?"

Despite still sounding hostile, Erik's resentment toward Wakanda had largely faded after living among its people.

---

Shuri grinned and handed him the Golden Jaguar necklace.

"Be careful, cousin," she said cheerfully.

"I'll prepare the aircraft now."

She tapped a command on the bead bracelet around her wrist.

"Okoye, prepare a ship. Cousin Erik is heading out on a mission!"

Okoye appeared via holographic projection.

She first looked toward T'Challa.

After he nodded, she allowed herself a brief smile—though it vanished almost immediately as she returned to her usual stern expression.

"Understood."

---

Erik fastened the Golden Jaguar necklace.

Thanks to Shuri's upgrades, the Golden Jaguar suit now rivaled the Black Panther suit in performance.

The difference lay in their design focus:

Black Panther Suit → agility, endurance, adaptability

Golden Jaguar Suit → strength and explosive power

The Golden Jaguar armor had a special burst mode, dramatically increasing speed and strength for about five minutes.

After that, the suit entered an energy recharge phase, absorbing energy based on how much damage it received.

The Black Panther suit worked differently.

It gradually enhanced strength and agility over time without requiring explosive bursts.

Neither suit was objectively stronger.

T'Challa and Erik often sparred in their suits.

The results were usually either a draw or mutual exhaustion.

During burst mode, the Golden Jaguar completely overwhelmed the Black Panther.

But once the burst ended, the Black Panther's gradual advantages took over.

Shuri had designed both suits specifically to match their personalities.

T'Challa was calm and analytical, studying opponents and striking decisively at weaknesses.

Erik was the opposite—aggressive and explosive, attacking relentlessly from the start.

Just like their animal symbols:

The Black Panther—patient, stealthy, calculating.

The Jaguar—fast, direct, overwhelming.

---

Meanwhile, back at Avengers Tower.

After receiving Karl's message, Tony immediately gathered everyone.

The original Avengers team assembled once again.

"Karl has identified a possible location," Tony said.

"There are three ships."

"He's going to scout them first."

"We need to move as soon as possible."

Tony looked toward Steve.

Steve was still the team's field leader.

Steve glanced around at the team and nodded.

"Let's move."

---

Everyone prepared quickly.

Clint and Natasha checked their equipment carefully.

As ordinary humans, they relied heavily on gear:

Widow's Bite gauntlets

pistols and ammunition

Clint's bow and specialized arrows

The others were much simpler.

Tony already wore his armor.

Steve needed only his shield.

Bruce... just packed extra clothes.

Ten minutes later, the Quinjet launched from the Avengers Tower rooftop.

Its folding wings expanded as it shot into the sky, leaving two white trails behind.

---

Before leaving, Tony inserted the USB drive containing JARVIS's core data into a computer.

After he departed, the computer began running automatically.

A faint golden hologram slowly flickered into existence—

almost transparent.

---

Meanwhile in Wakanda, Karl and the others boarded a Wakandan aircraft.

Its size was similar to a Quinjet, but technologically it was far more advanced.

The craft could not only fly—

it could also operate underwater, functioning like a small submarine.

And beyond these small craft, Wakanda also possessed much larger vessels capable of both aerial and underwater combat.

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