

## - Chapter 371: Escape [ 749 words ]

Suddenly, the suit expanded to full size right in front of Scott, startling him. He stared in shock at the very outfit he had worn before.

At the same time, a swarm of ants appeared from nowhere, forming a countdown on the ground—ten... nine... eight...

Scott heard footsteps approaching—the police were coming.

Realizing what was happening, he wasted no time. He quickly put on the suit, and at the very last second of the countdown, slammed the helmet on and pressed the button on his right hand.

Whoosh!

He shrank instantly.

At that exact moment, a police officer passed by the cell—only to find it completely empty.

Meanwhile, Scott had already slipped past the officer's feet and made his escape.

"A wise choice. Looks like you're finally getting it, kid."

The old man's voice guided him, directing him where to go.

Alarms blared throughout the station as soon as the officer realized Scott had vanished. Within seconds, the entire precinct was thrown into chaos.

Following the route to the back exit, Scott finally made it outside.

"I'm out. What now?"

He jumped down the steps and asked urgently.

"Not so fast..."

The old man's voice came through the earpiece.

Suddenly, a swarm of ants surrounded Scott.

Behind him, the police station erupted into activity.

"Lock down the entire building—now!"

Officers scrambled in full gear, searching for Scott.

But Scott was already on the verge of losing it.

Insects—arguably the most terrifying creatures on Earth—only seemed harmless because of their size. But now, standing among ants as large as humans, Scott felt sheer, primal terror.

"Back off! Oh hell no—!!"

He nearly broke down. The sight alone was enough to shatter his sanity.

"Scott, these are just my assistants. Relax."

The voice remained calm.

An ant with a small camera mounted on its back stepped forward, studying Scott curiously.

Around him, the ants waved their antennae, gathering his pheromones—learning his scent.

Unlike humans, insects identified allies and enemies through pheromones. It was a far more precise system than human recognition, which relied heavily on sight and could easily be deceived.

But pheromones?

They didn't lie.

Each individual had a unique chemical signature—impossible to replicate under normal circumstances.

"Well... if you say so... So where's the car? I don't see anything."

Scott assumed he'd be driving out of here—even if it was a toy car.

"A car? Useless for you. We're flying."

Before Scott could react—

A loud buzzing filled the air, like a helicopter.

A winged ant swooped overhead and landed in front of him, kicking up a gust of wind.

Scott collapsed to the ground, frozen in fear.

A giant flying ant.

That was new.

On its back was a small saddle-like device, clearly meant for riding.

"Get on. Like riding a horse. I think you'll enjoy it."

"You've got to be kidding me. Ride THAT? You've got jokes—seriously!!"

Scott backed away, refusing to get closer. The ant's glossy exoskeleton gleamed like armor, and its massive mandibles looked more than capable of tearing him apart.

"Get on it. Or do you want to go back to jail?"

The voice grew impatient.

Left with no choice, Scott forced himself—despite nearly wetting his pants—to climb onto the flying ant.

Just then, police burst out of the back door.

None of them noticed as a tiny flying insect slipped past them unnoticed.

Who would pay attention to a bug?

Especially at night.

---

Police cars flooded the streets, lights flashing as they searched the area.

Meanwhile, Scott clung to the insect as it landed briefly on the window of a patrol car.

"Why are we still near police cars? Can't this thing just fly us out of here?"

"Just catching a ride. Easier to get past the perimeter—they're looking for you."

"Alright... what now?"

"Hold tight."

"That I can do. Like riding a horse, right? Pull up to go up, left to go—"

"You're pulling too hard. 247 is losing balance. Ease up."

Scott blinked. "247? You named it 247?"

"It doesn't have a name. That's its designation. Do you have any idea how many ants there are?"

Suddenly, a gust of wind hit.

The ant wobbled violently and was blown upward. For insects, even a mild breeze could be catastrophic.

"Hold on—hold on! I think I've got it! This is AWESOME!!!"

Scott whooped with excitement, imagining himself as a dragon rider soaring through the skies.

"Just so you know—I'm controlling it, not you."

That killed the mood instantly.

"...What?! Then can I make one small request? Just one—"

"No."

The response was immediate and merciless.

The flying ant sped through the city, weaving past buses, newspapers, and even a woman swatting at it, before finally catching an updraft from a drainage pipe and stabilizing itself once more.

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## **- Chapter 372: An Accidental Intrusion**

### **Chapter 372: An Accidental Intrusion**

**[ 863 words ]**

Scott swayed wildly on the back of the flying ant like a loose ornament.

"I... can't... take it... I'm gonna puke!!!"

He was completely dizzy. The violent motion had left his head spinning, nausea surging uncontrollably.

"If you throw up inside my helmet, I guarantee you'll regret it."

The old man's voice came coldly through the earpiece.

Scott immediately forced it down, struggling to speak.

"Can you make it stop? I'm gonna pass out—I can't hold on anymore—"

Before he could finish, his vision went black. His body slumped, and he slipped off Ant No. 247, plummeting toward the ground.

247 reacted instantly, diving after him—but it was just a fraction too slow.

Clang!

Scott crashed headfirst onto a balcony, the impact ringing out sharply.

---

Inside the apartment, Skye's eyes snapped open.

Her vibration powers gave her heightened sensory perception—especially to subtle disturbances in the air.

Karl, meanwhile, was still fast asleep, completely unaffected.

Skye glanced at him, then slipped on her cute pajamas and walked quietly to the window. She was certain the sound had come from outside—sound could deceive, but vibrations could not.

She opened the window and leaned out.

Nothing.

"Strange..."

Just as she scanned the area—

Ant 247 descended from above and landed on the balcony.

Hank Pym, controlling it remotely, had assumed she wouldn't notice something as small as an insect.

He was wrong.

Following the ant's perspective, Skye's gaze shifted—and locked onto Scott, lying unconscious on the balcony.

Instantly, a shockwave spread out.

Ant 247 froze in place.

The violent disruption in the air overwhelmed its sensory system, causing it to twitch erratically, spinning in circles out of control.

---

In his lab, Dr. Hank Pym's expression turned grave as he watched through the ant's camera.

He didn't recognize Skye—but he recognized her ability.

A member of the Avengers, known as Quake, possessed the same power.

As a former member of the Strategic Scientific Reserve and a founding figure tied to S.H.I.E.L.D., Pym was highly sensitive to anything involving superhuman abilities.

He even maintained discreet contact with Nick Fury to this day.

"Sigh... Scott, you really know how to cause trouble..."

Pym frowned.

He didn't want the existence of Ant-Man exposed.

But at the same time, he couldn't risk Scott's life.

If he stayed silent, that girl might very well crush Scott without hesitation.

He had no doubt about it.

From her track record, once Skye identified someone as a threat, she didn't hold back.

And right now, he had no control over the Ant-Man suit—only over Ant 247.

Was he really going to have to enlarge the ant?

---

While he hesitated, Skye made her move.

She picked up the tiny Scott, grabbed an empty glass, and dropped him inside.

Then she tossed the still-spinning ant in as well, sealing the top with a coaster.

Pym saw everything clearly.

If he didn't act now, Scott was finished.

Decision made—

He triggered the enlargement.

Boom!

The glass exploded.

The small table shattered under the sudden weight as Ant 247 expanded to the size of a calf.

Skye jumped back in shock—but reacted instantly, tapping the bracelet on her wrist.

Vibranium armor enveloped her body, and a shockwave locked the giant ant in place.

"Holy—!!"

Karl jolted awake from the crash.

The first thing he saw—

A calf-sized insect.

Every hair on his body stood on end as cold sweat poured down his back.

Then he noticed the saddle-like device... and the camera mounted on its chest.

"What the hell is going on?!"

Completely naked, Karl immediately grabbed a blanket and wrapped it tightly around himself.

No way was he letting himself get broadcast live.

"Not sure. It just fell onto our balcony—with a tiny person."

Skye replied without turning around, maintaining her grip on the ant with her powers.

Karl narrowed his eyes, studying the creature.

An oversized ant.

Realization hit.

So it's the Ant-Man storyline...

---

Bang!

The door burst open.

Gwen and Wanda rushed in.

The moment they saw the giant ant, they reacted simultaneously—webbing shot out, binding it tightly, while Chaos Magic formed a barrier between it and Karl.

"What's going on?"

Gwen asked, curiously examining the creature. Unlike the others, she showed no fear—only fascination.

Ever since becoming Ghost-Spider, she'd developed an unusual affinity with insects. They even instinctively avoided her.

"No idea. It just appeared outside."

Skye replied.

At that moment—

The ant spoke.

"Please don't be alarmed. I entered by accident. I mean no harm."

"Th-the ant... is talking?!"

Wanda and Skye both flinched.

"It's not the ant. It's the camera on its chest."

Karl rolled his eyes.

He already had a pretty good idea who was behind this.

"Skye, take the ant and that tiny guy downstairs to the office."

Only then did Skye realize Karl was still naked. She nodded quickly and carried both the ant and Scott out.

Her shockwave field kept them both immobilized.

---

After getting dressed, Karl headed down to the office.

The place was brightly lit.

Everyone had gathered around the giant ant, studying it—including a curious Moogle and the Cloak, which floated nearby.

On the other end of the feed, Pym was growing increasingly intrigued.

He had clearly seen—

A red cloak floating in midair... even tilting slightly, as if scratching its "head" in confusion.

---

Karl sat down on the sofa, looking straight at the camera on the ant's chest with a faint smile.

"Skye, release it. The ant won't move."

Then he added casually—

"Isn't that right... Dr. Pym?"

On the other side, Hank Pym's eyes widened in shock.

How did this young man know it was him?

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## **- Chapter 373: Awakening**

### **Chapter 373: Awakening**

**[ 779 words ]**

"That's right. I'm also curious—how did you know it was me?"

Dr. Pym quickly regained his composure. As the original Ant-Man, he had seen far too much to be shaken by a single remark.

"I have my ways. Everyone has secrets, don't they, Dr. Pym?"

Karl smiled mysteriously before continuing,

"Scott's still unconscious, right? Want me to wake him up?"

Pym hadn't expected Karl to even know Scott's identity. His tone sharpened slightly.

"No need. This is part of his test. I have my own plan—I don't require outside interference."

Karl shrugged, unconcerned.

"Suit yourself. If you ever need help, feel free to contact me. I'm always open to solving problems... for the right price."

He flicked a business card in front of the camera.

"I only need to take Scott with me."

Pym still didn't trust him—more accurately, he didn't trust any Avenger.

At the root of it all, he didn't trust Stark. Anyone with that name.

For years, Pym had believed Stark and S.H.I.E.L.D. wanted to steal his research—Pym Particles. But Howard Stark had never cared about them. He only wanted Pym to help arm the Strategic Scientific Reserve.

The real ones coveting the particles had always been HYDRA.

Neither Howard nor Peggy had ever intended to take them.

"Oh, go ahead. Leave whenever you want. You're the ones who interrupted my sleep anyway."

Karl waved it off casually. He had zero interest in Pym Particles. To him, enlarging or shrinking things was trivial—just another form of magic.

At this stage, Scott couldn't even shrink to the quantum level anyway.

"...Thank you."

Pym exhaled, his tone softening now that Karl wasn't interfering.

"And remember—if you need anything, call me. Or come by the office. As long as the price is right."

Karl added one last time.

Even if he was powerless now, that would change in two months. Pym's plan—and Darren's research—wouldn't be finished anytime soon.

Without another word, Pym shrank the ant, grabbed the unconscious Scott, and slipped out through the door gap.

---

After they left, Gwen looked at Karl curiously.

"Who exactly was that? He can enlarge and shrink living organisms!"

As a biologist, she knew how difficult that was. Manipulating size alone wasn't the issue—but doing it safely to living beings was nearly impossible.

"He's just an old man—Hank Pym. Former S.H.I.E.L.D. scientist. He created something called Pym Particles, which allow size manipulation."

Karl leaned back.

"He used them to become a superhero—Ant-Man."

"Someone actually invented something like that... incredible."

Gwen sighed, genuinely impressed.

---

Scott slowly opened his eyes.

The surroundings were unfamiliar.

After staring blankly for a moment, he suddenly felt a gaze fixed on him.

He looked up—

A beautiful woman in a black suit stood before him, staring silently while holding her phone.

Scott jolted upright.

"Y-you... who are you?"

She didn't answer, still focused on her phone.

"You've just been standing there watching me sleep?!"

"...Yes."

"Why?!"

She finally looked up, expression cold.

"Because the last time you were here, you stole something."

Scott froze, glancing around.

Recognition hit.

"Hey—look—I'm really sorry about that—"

He threw off the blanket and tried to get out of bed—

Then froze.

The floor was covered in a dense swarm of ants. Not a single place to step.

He immediately scrambled back onto the bed.

"These are giant tropical bullet ants. Ranked number one on the Schmidt Pain Index."

She smiled faintly.

"They'll be watching you while I'm away."

Scott swallowed hard.

"Dr. Pym is waiting downstairs."

She turned and left without another glance.

"Hey! How am I supposed to get out of here?!"

No response.

---

With no choice, Scott cautiously lowered one foot—

To his surprise, the ants parted, forming a small clearing around his foot.

"...Oh."

Step by step, he carefully made his way out.

Eventually, he reached the living room downstairs.

---

"I can hack the servers. Darren won't notice. We don't need him."

Hope spoke quietly.

Scott entered just in time to hear it.

"I assume you've met my daughter, Hope."

Pym folded his newspaper.

"Oh—yeah. I did. She's... very pretty."

Scott answered awkwardly.

"She believes we don't need you."

"Yes. We absolutely don't."

Hope crossed her arms.

"I went through a lot of trouble to get him to steal the suit, and you let him get arrested."

Pym said, though his gaze was on Scott, the words were directed at Hope.

"Fine. Your call. Let him try. But if he fails—I'm stepping in."

Her tone left no room for argument.

Pym poured Scott a cup of tea.

"Now that you're here, I think you'll find the task I'm about to propose... interesting."

"Task? What task?"

Scott frowned, feeling like he'd been caught in a carefully woven trap.

"To be honest, Scott, I've been watching you for a while—ever since the VistaCorp incident."

Scott immediately raised a hand.

"Let me stop you right there. It's theft, not robbery. I don't do robbery—that's for amateurs with no skill."

He said it with absolute seriousness.

For Scott, there was a clear distinction.

He was a professional.

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## **- Chapter 374: The End of a Thief's Days**

### **Chapter 374: The End of a Thief's Days**

**[ 821 words ]**

Dr. Pym simply shrugged. "Want some sugar?"

Westerners always seemed to add sugar to their tea—an odd habit.

"Oh, sure..."

Scott nodded blankly.

Then he saw two sugar cubes sliding across the table on their own. Looking closer, he realized two ants were pushing them forward.

Scott's expression instantly turned to disgust. "On second thought... I'll just drink it plain."

As soon as he said that, the ants turned around and pushed the sugar cubes neatly back into the jar.

"How did you do that?"

Scott's curiosity flared. Ants that small obeying commands so precisely—it was unbelievable.

Hope, meanwhile, remained unfazed, calmly sipping her tea and scrolling through her phone.

"Ants can carry up to fifty times their own body weight," Pym said.

"I know that. I'm asking how you make them listen to you."

Scott wasn't asking about strength—he was asking about control.

Pym nodded in realization and pointed to his ear. Scott looked up and saw a device resembling a hearing aid.

"I emit electromagnetic signals that stimulate their central nervous system. It's essentially direct communication."

He tapped the earpiece.

"With this, I can go anywhere, hear anything—even see through their perspective."

There was a hint of pride in his voice. Alongside Pym Particles, this control over insects was one of his greatest achievements—almost like a modern, streamlined version of the Aburame clan.

"And yet he still doesn't know anything."

Hope set down her teacup, grabbed her briefcase, and stood up.

"I'm meeting Darren. If I don't leave now, I'll be late."

With that, she turned and walked out, long legs carrying her away without a second glance.

"Uh... Dr. Pym, I have a question."

Scott raised his hand like a student.

"You don't need to raise your hand, Scott. I'm not that old."

Pym rolled his eyes.

"I only have one question."

Scott held up a finger.

"Who are you? Who is she? What is all this? And can I just go back to jail now?"

He fired off a barrage in one breath—apparently counting multiple questions as one.

Pym stood up.

"Come with me."

---

They descended into the basement—the same one Scott had broken into before.

But this time, Pym led him to a different section. A wall stood before them. Pym tapped it twice, and it slowly slid open, revealing a hidden control room.

"Forty years ago, I accidentally discovered a formula—one that can alter the distance and size between atoms."

Pym's words were explosive.

"And the suit you stole... uses that formula."

Scott was stunned into silence.

Inside, the room was filled with monitors, instruments, scattered equations, and incomprehensible devices.

"Later, I realized how dangerous this discovery was. So I hid it."

Pym took the Ant-Man suit from a nearby rack and laid it on the table.

"To better conceal it, I founded my own company."

He placed the belt and helmet beside it.

"Pym Technologies. I know that one."

Scott finally got a word in.

"Correct."

Pym nodded.

"I also took on a protégé—Darren Cross."

"I know him too. Big name."

Scott gestured.

In New York's tech world, there were two giants—Stark and OsCorp. Beneath them, Darren Cross's company was among the most prominent.

Pym scoffed lightly.

"Before he became famous, he was my assistant. I valued him greatly—like a son. He was brilliant."

Holding a diagnostic device, Pym examined the suit.

"But as we grew closer, he began suspecting I was hiding something. Somehow, he learned about Pym Particles and became obsessed with replicating my formula."

He inserted a vial of red liquid into the belt.

"So he conspired with the board to vote me out of my own company."

Scott blinked.

"You founded the company. How could they remove you?"

"Simple. The board chair is my daughter, Hope. She cast the deciding vote."

Pym shrugged, picking up the helmet.

"Now she's come back to me because Cross is close to cracking the formula. Without a specialized helmet, the particles will cause irreversible brain damage."

His tone darkened.

"Cross hasn't realized that yet. And he's... not the most stable person."

"So... what do you want me to do?"

Scott still looked lost.

Pym turned to him.

"I believe everyone deserves a chance at redemption. Help me, and I promise—you'll reunite with your daughter."

Scott's eyes lit up instantly.

"I've been ready for that. My days of breaking into people's homes are over. I've turned my life around. What do you need me to do?"

He spoke with absolute conviction.

"I need you to break into someone's home... and steal something."

Scott's expression collapsed on the spot.

He had just declared he was done with theft—only for this seemingly upright old man to immediately ask him to steal again.

---

Meanwhile, in Darren's laboratory—

A group of researchers in white coats surrounded a sheep sealed inside a glass chamber, running tests and recording data.

Darren stood nearby, staring intently at a tablet.

Above them, behind a glass window, Hope watched.

Her arms crossed, her gaze fixed on Darren's increasingly erratic behavior.

Regret crept into her expression.

Driving her father out of the company... might have been a mistake.

Without Pym to restrain him, Darren had spiraled—his ideas growing more dangerous by the day, with no one left to stop him.

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## **- Chapter 375: We Should Ask the Avengers for Help[ 858 words ]**

Below, Darren dragged over the device and aimed it at the sheep inside the glass chamber. Without hesitation, he pressed the button. The yellow liquid was injected instantly, followed by a flash of golden light.

This time, unlike before, the sheep did not turn into a puddle of mush. Instead, it—and the glass chamber—were successfully shrunk down to the size of a thumb.

Darren had actually succeeded.

The surrounding researchers stared in shock at the tiny sheep on the platform. Darren picked it up, his face filled with excitement and madness as he watched the miniature sheep still bleating inside the chamber.

He knew it—he had done it. He had finally replicated Hank Pym's formula.

Upstairs, behind the glass window, Hope stood frozen in disbelief. She never expected Darren to succeed—especially not with incomplete, fragmented data.

A deep sense of unease and a looming premonition welled up inside her.

---

In the basement, Dr. Pym switched on a monitor and began playing a video while explaining things to Scott.

On the screen was a middle-aged man with a gloomy demeanor and a hooked nose—someone who looked untrustworthy at first glance.

"This isn't the first time someone has tried to get their hands on this technology," Pym said, pointing at the screen. "Many have wanted to weaponize it."

"This man—Mitchell Carson. Former head of S.H.I.E.L.D.'s Defense Division. Now he travels the world, destabilizing third-world governments. He's been after my research for a long time."

Pym turned to Scott.

"The only way to stop this is to break into the facility, steal the Yellowjacket suit, and destroy all the research data. Otherwise, Darren Cross will unleash chaos on a global scale."

This wasn't exaggeration. Pym knew Darren better than anyone—brilliant, but reckless and utterly indifferent to consequences.

Scott's mouth hung open as he let out a long, uncertain hum.

"I think the first thing we should do... the main thing... is call the Avengers."

Pym shot to his feet instantly, furious.

"I have spent my entire life making sure this technology never falls into the hands of the Stark family—and I'm not about to start now!"

His voice rose sharply.

"This is not flashy tech like Iron Man suits. This can reshape the world—no, the very fabric of reality."

Pym had always been at odds with the Starks. Back in the day, Howard Stark funded S.H.I.E.L.D.'s predecessor, and now Tony Stark backed the Avengers. To Pym, the Stark name had always stood at the center of everything he distrusted.

"I'm not handing this over to Stark."

He snorted.

"And besides, didn't the Avengers just drop an entire city out of the sky? You think they have time to deal with us?"

The Sokovia incident had spread across the globe. While the public didn't know Ultron was responsible, everyone had seen the footage—including the colossal Demon Titan.

Scott shrugged.

"Then why not just send your ants? They're smaller—harder to detect."

"They're ants, Scott," Pym said, exasperated. "They can do many things, but they still need a leader. Without one, they act purely on instinct."

"I need someone capable of infiltrating a heavily fortified facility with advanced countermeasures."

"If ants alone were enough, I wouldn't be sitting here talking to you."

Scott spread his hands helplessly.

"Being skilled doesn't mean I can pull off something this insane. I'm just a thief—not Iron Man, not an Avenger."

At that moment, Hope walked back in, still dressed in her sharp black suit.

"He's right. You know it too."

She placed a stack of blueprints on the table.

"You've seen the footage. You know exactly what Cross is capable of. I raised objections months ago—and now we're out of time."

She unfolded the plans, revealing the full layout of Cross's facility.

"I'll wear the suit. I'll do the job."

"Absolutely not."

Pym snapped immediately.

"Why not? I know that building inside and out. I understand Cross better than anyone here. I'm the most qualified for this mission."

"I need you to stay close to Cross. Without that, this operation won't work."

The argument escalated quickly.

Scott paced back and forth behind them, unsure what to do—or perhaps just tired of their constant conflict.

"We don't have time for this!" Hope snapped. "He's just a criminal—and I'm your daughter!"

"No! I said no!"

Pym suddenly roared.

Hope froze, staring at her father in disbelief—her expression filled with disappointment.

Pym seemed to realize he'd lost control. He sighed, turned away, and sat down in silence.

Hope said nothing more. She shook her head, deeply disappointed, glanced at Scott, then left the basement.

Scott watched the stubborn father and daughter, then said:

"She's right. I'm not the right guy for this. Why don't you wear the suit yourself?"

"It's not that I don't want to," Pym said quietly. "I can't."

After a pause, he continued:

"I've worn that suit for too many years. There are... side effects. You're the only option left."

Scott sighed and sat beside him.

Pym glanced at him and went on:

"Back when Hope still had her mother... she used to look at me with admiration. She thought I was the greatest man in the world."

He paused.

"But now... all I see in her eyes is disappointment."

He looked directly at Scott.

"This is your chance. A chance for your daughter to look at you the same way— with pride."

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## **- Chapter 376: Training in Progress**

### **Chapter 376: Training in Progress**

**[ 725 words ]**

Dr. Pym's voice softened, losing its usual authority and confidence.

"Scott... I need you to become Ant-Man."

---

In the days that followed, Scott began training in the Ant-Man suit under the guidance of Pym and Hope.

The first focus was reaction speed and agility.

According to Pym, shrinking and enlarging happened in an instant—without sharp reflexes and precise coordination, it was useless.

The exercise was simple in theory: sprint toward a door, jump at the last second, shrink mid-air, pass through the keyhole, then return to normal size inside the room.

Scott was confident.

Years of being a thief had given him excellent escape skills and quick reactions under pressure.

"This is easy... run, jump, shrink, pass through the lock, then grow again... come on, Scott—you've got this..."

After hyping himself up, he charged forward.

Jump.

Shrink.

Bang!

A loud thud echoed from outside the door.

Inside, Pym and Hope looked completely unsurprised.

"I-it's fine... that was just a test run... now the real attempt—"

Bang!

Another solid collision.

Scott's confidence was as stubborn as the door he kept slamming into.

---

Beyond agility, there was combat training.

As Ant-Man, speed alone wasn't enough—if he got caught, it was over.

Hope personally trained him.

At first, Scott didn't take it seriously—until Hope slammed him with a shoulder throw so hard it nearly knocked the soul out of him.

From that moment on, he took it very seriously.

Of course, close combat meant physical contact... and that contact gradually brought them closer.

Right at that moment—

Pym wandered in, completely oblivious.

Scott and Hope instantly separated like they'd been electrocuted.

"So? Hope's skills are pretty good, right? She's trained in combat and martial arts."

Pym didn't notice anything.

"That started... after my mother died."

Hope said calmly.

"Yes. She died in a plane crash."

Pym lowered his gaze.

Hope immediately frowned.

"Not telling me the truth was bad enough. But you're still lying? You don't need to make things up."

She had heard that excuse for years.

---

Scott's life soon became miserable.

Training. More training. Endless training.

One day, he was in the basement tinkering with the suit, trying to remove the buttons on the gloves.

Pym walked in just in time.

"I don't think these buttons are very convenient."

"Don't touch those!"

Pym stopped him immediately.

"If they break, you'll shrink to subatomic levels."

"...What does that mean?"

"It means you'll keep shrinking. Forever. You'll enter the Quantum Realm—where time and space don't exist. Everything you know... everything you love... will disappear."

Pym's expression turned somber, as if recalling something painful.

Scott froze.

"...You know what, these buttons are perfectly fine. No need to fix them. Honestly, they match the gloves pretty well."

He immediately backed off.

---

The final major training: controlling ants.

Without that, Ant-Man was just a name.

In the garden, Scott shrank and followed Pym's instructions into an anthill.

Under Hope's guidance, he observed a species of yellow ants.

As he reached out to touch one—

Suddenly, hundreds of ants surged toward him like a tidal wave.

"AH—!"

Panicking, he instantly enlarged—

Boom!

He burst out of the ground.

---

In their spare time, the three studied the blueprints of Cross's building—memorizing layouts, server locations, and security systems.

"The Yellowjacket suit is stored in a sealed glass chamber," Hope explained, showing footage.

"The only entry point is a pipe about five millimeters wide at the top."

"It's protected by laser grids. We can only shut the power off for fifteen seconds."

"You have to get in and take the suit within that window."

Scott's eyes widened.

"Fifteen seconds? That's not even enough time to pee!"

"I'm not done."

Hope continued calmly.

"You'll also need to command the ants to destroy all servers and erase all research data."

Scott gave up resisting.

At this point, he was just along for the ride.

---

Next came the aerial ant squad.

The moment Scott saw the lead ant under magnification, he recognized it instantly.

"That's the one! The one that broke me out of prison!"

He pointed excitedly.

"I'm naming him... Anthony."

"Great. Now learn to control them."

Pym tossed him an earpiece.

---

There were also specialized weapons—disc-shaped devices the size of coins.

Red discs shrank objects.

Blue discs enlarged them.

Scott adapted quickly to most aspects—combat, suit operation...

But controlling ants?

No progress.

They ignored him completely, acting purely on instinct.

"You need focus," Hope said patiently. "You're distracted. You think too much."

"You have to clear your mind and concentrate."

Pym echoed her advice.

"Focus on what you want them to do. Remove all unnecessary thoughts."

---

In the end, Pym had chosen correctly.

Scott had talent.

With enough training, he gradually reached the baseline of becoming Ant-Man—

And finally began to command the ants.

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## **- Chapter 377 377 – Avengers Facility[ 833 words ]**

"Before we head to Cross Technologies, there's one more thing we need," Dr. Pym said, pulling a worn sheet of paper from a pile of blueprints and spreading it open. "Getting this will be your final test."

The diagram showed a device made up of interlocking metallic rings.

"What is that?" Scott asked curiously.

"A signal scrambler," Pym replied. "I invented it back when I was with S.H.I.E.L.D. It masks and blocks transmissions. We need to install it in the lab's vault to disguise our communications."

Hope, already very familiar with it, immediately explained its function.

"Where is it now?" Scott asked. If this was the final test, it definitely wouldn't be easy—he needed to know what he was walking into.

"It's currently stored in an old warehouse in northern New York," Pym said, handing him a few photos. "The warehouse belongs to Howard Stark."

"So you want me to steal from Stark?" Scott nearly lost it. "First a high-tech suit, now this? You want me to break into the most heavily secured company in the world? Are you out of your mind?!"

"It's not Stark's," Pym snapped. "It's mine. It's just being stored in one of his warehouses. What, do I need Tony Stark's permission to take back my own property now? Who does he think he is?!"

Pym had never liked the Stark family. Back then, Howard Stark had tried to take his Pym Particles by force. Now he was supposed to ask Tony Stark for permission? Absolutely not.

Left with no choice, Scott relented. The old man looked ready to kick him if he refused, so for the sake of Pym's health, Scott gritted his teeth and agreed.

---

"Don't you think this is a bit extreme?" Scott muttered.

He was wearing the Ant-Man suit, standing inside a narrow crevice. Behind him was a swarm of flying ants—his personal mount, the one he'd named Antony, among them.

They were thousands of meters in the air, clinging to the side of an airplane.

"You're above the target, Scott. Prepare to deploy," Pym said, ignoring the complaint.

"Alright... teams, get ready. Move out!"

At Scott's command, the flying ants poured out of the plane in an orderly formation. Just as Pym had said—a commander made all the difference.

Scott climbed onto Antony.

"Easy this time, Antony. Don't drop me again."

He patted the ant's head before leaping off.

Buffeted by violent air currents, Scott and Antony spun wildly until they descended to a lower altitude and regained control.

Insects didn't usually fly very high—being so small, even slight turbulence could throw them off balance.

"Stay calm, Scott. You'll see the target soon," Pym said, watching through the feed in his basement lab.

"Hank, you said this was just an old warehouse! This is not a warehouse—you old liar!"

Scott's eyes widened in shock.

Below the clouds was not some abandoned facility.

It was a brand-new complex.

On both the landing pad and the rooftop was a large "A" encircled by a ring—the unmistakable symbol of the Avengers.

This was one of the Avengers' bases.

---

"Scott, you need to get out of there. Mission aborted!" Hope shouted immediately.

If this were just a warehouse, no matter how tight the security, Scott might still pull it off.

But this was an Avengers facility.

If they decided to track down an intruder, he wouldn't stand a chance.

"Abort the mission now!" Pym added firmly.

He wasn't reckless enough to push forward after seeing that symbol.

"I don't think that's necessary," Scott said after looking around. "I don't see anyone. Place looks empty."

After a moment, he guided Antony down onto the rooftop.

"He's going to lose my suit," Pym muttered anxiously.

"He's going to lose his life!" Hope snapped. "And you're worried about the suit?!"

---

Scott had just landed when a sudden gust of wind swept across the rooftop.

Through the ants' camera feed, a massive shadow passed overhead.

"Scott, something's coming!" Hope warned.

A figure descended from the sky.

Metal wings spread wide, clad in a sleek black suit with red wing markings across the chest—

Falcon. Sam Wilson.

"What's the situation up there, Sam?" came a voice through his comms—Clint Barton, Hawkeye.

"Whoa... it's Falcon himself," Scott whispered in awe, staring up at him like a giant.

"A sensor was triggered," Sam said, scanning the area. "But I'm not seeing anything."

"Wait."

His visor suddenly locked onto a target.

"Scott, get out now! Immediately!" Hope and Pym shouted in panic.

But Scott remained relaxed.

"It's fine. He can't see me."

He sounded completely confident.

Unfortunately—he was already being tracked.

"No," Sam said calmly. "I can see you just fine."

Scott nearly jumped out of his skin.

In a panic, he reverted to full size.

"Hi! I'm Scott!"

He opened his helmet, revealing a very awkward grin.

"Scott," Sam said, eyeing him carefully. "What are you doing here?"

Scott raised his hands.

"First of all—I'm a big fan."

"Appreciate it," Sam replied flatly. "Now who are you?"

Anyone who could sneak alone into an Avengers facility was either a spy... or something worse.

"I'm Ant-Man," Scott said, striking a pose.

"Ant-Man?" Sam chuckled, clearly amused by the name.

"Alright, Ant-Man... what exactly are you doing here?"

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## **- Chapter 378 378 – Captured[ 878 words ]**

"Alright, Ant-Man... what exactly are you doing here?" Sam asked.

"Uh... I'm here to borrow a piece of advanced tech for a few days," Scott said, gesturing roughly to its size. "It's been sitting here for decades. Don't worry—I'll return it."

"I need it to save the world. You know... the kind of thing you guys do all the time."

"Yeah," Sam replied dryly, stepping toward him while activating his comm. "I know exactly what you mean."

"Found the intruder. Bringing him in."

Scott immediately realized what that meant—he was about to be arrested.

He shrank instantly, dodging Sam's grab.

Then he leapt up and punched Sam square in the face.

The impact felt like getting hit by a bullet. Sam recoiled and quickly activated his wings, taking to the air.

Meanwhile, Barton had been watching everything through surveillance. He immediately grabbed his bow and left the control room.

"All units, be advised—intruder detected. Target can change size at will. Equip trackers. Repeat—equip trackers."

Within minutes, agents swarmed the building, surrounding it completely. Each of them wore specialized visors—tracking devices.

---

Scott was blown off course by the gusts from Sam's wings and crashed into the lawn below.

"Scott, what are you doing?! I told you to retreat!" Pym shouted, nearly losing his mind in the basement.

Scott hadn't just ignored orders—he'd picked a fight with an Avenger, on their home turf no less.

Sam hovered in the air, locking onto Scott through his visor. Zooming in, he could clearly see Scott scrambling through the grass with frantic little steps.

Sam descended and stomped down hard.

He wasn't trying to kill him—just force him to reveal himself.

It worked.

Scott leapt up again and threw another punch—but this time Sam was ready. He grabbed him mid-air.

A sharp pain shot through his palm, and Sam instinctively hurled Scott back to the ground.

The impact forced Scott back to full size.

In the next second, Sam swooped down, grabbed him by the throat, and shot into the sky.

Scott struggled free and tried to shrink again—

—but an arrow came flying straight at him.

Just before it hit, Scott shrank in time.

Sam landed, and Scott burst out of the grass, growing mid-motion. His legs wrapped around Sam's neck in a deadly scissor hold, slamming him to the ground.

Sam reacted instantly, taking flight again while dragging Scott upward—then diving straight down.

The ground rushed closer.

At the last second, Scott let go and tried to shrink—

—but this time, Sam flapped his wings hard, sending a powerful gust that disrupted the transformation.

Thud!

Scott hit the ground hard.

Right then, Barton arrived.

An electrified arrow struck Scott directly.

The surge of electricity paralyzed him instantly.

Within three seconds—he blacked out.

---

When Scott woke up again, he was already locked inside an interrogation room.

It was a transparent glass chamber—similar to the one designed for the Hulk on the Helicarrier during the Battle of New York.

He was still wearing the Ant-Man suit.

But his helmet was gone.

Scott quickly stood up, scanning his surroundings.

The door opened.

Steve Rogers, Sam Wilson, and Clint Barton stepped in outside the chamber.

"Whoa—Captain America! Hawkeye!! I actually get to meet the Avengers!"

Scott completely forgot about his missing helmet and rushed up to the glass, practically vibrating with excitement.

"Can I get your autographs?"

"Autographs can wait, Scott," Steve said calmly. "I want to know why you're here."

Barton stepped forward with a tablet.

"Scott Lang. MIT graduate. Master's in Electrical Engineering. Ex-wife Maggie Lang. One daughter—Cassie Lang, eight years old. Former inmate. Currently... a professional thief."

He waved the tablet in front of Scott's face, filled with detailed records—practically his entire life laid bare.

"Hey! That's an invasion of privacy! I'm not here to steal anything!" Scott protested immediately. He was trying to turn his life around—he wasn't that guy anymore.

"We already know what you came here for," Steve said. "I want specifics."

He wasn't in uniform—just his old brown leather jacket. It made him seem less imposing, but no less authoritative.

"Alright... I'll tell you," Scott said after a pause. "But you have to let me go. I've got a world to save."

He looked straight at Steve.

Among the Avengers, Steve was always the leader—even Tony deferred to him in critical moments.

"If you're not a threat, and everything checks out, we'll release you," Steve replied.

Satisfied, Scott nodded.

"I'm here for a signal scrambler. It's been stored here for decades. I just need to borrow it—briefly."

He repeated what he had told Sam earlier.

"What do you need it for?" Steve asked.

Barton quickly searched the device on his tablet and found it.

Steve glanced at the image. He didn't fully understand it, but anything stored here counted as classified. How did Scott even know about it?

"It can mask and spoof signals," Scott explained. "I need it to destroy something... something that could wipe out the world."

He kept it vague, deliberately avoiding details. The mission required secrecy—too many people knowing could ruin everything.

"This device has been here for over thirty years," Steve said, eyes narrowing slightly. "How did you know about it?"

Scott hesitated.

He wanted to tell them. If they verified his story, they'd likely release him.

But that would expose Hank Pym and Hope.

And Scott wasn't the kind of person who sold out his friends.

"...I..."

"We're already tracking the signal from your helmet," Steve said evenly. "Even if you don't tell us, we'll find the source."

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**- Chapter 379 - 379 – Ant-Man[ 855 words ]**

Scott said nothing.

He simply walked back to the small bed, lay down, and continued playing dead.

Steve didn't press him. He left with Barton and Sam.

Meanwhile, in the surveillance room, Scott's feed was being displayed in real time. Coulson stood behind the monitors, watching thoughtfully. Beside him sat the Ant-Man helmet.

Soon, Steve and the others entered.

"Coulson, any progress? Have you traced the signal?" Steve asked.

Coulson shook his head.

"Not yet. The helmet uses extremely advanced encryption—we haven't cracked it. But..."

He paused.

"But what?" Sam asked.

"The suit Scott is wearing... I feel like I've seen it before. I just can't place it."

Coulson frowned, trying to recall.

"He said he's Ant-Man. Does that ring a bell?" Sam added.

"Ant-Man? He said that?" Coulson's expression changed instantly.

"Yeah," Sam nodded.

Without hesitation, Coulson grabbed a nearby tablet and began searching. Moments later, he pulled up a file and projected it onto the main screen, drawing everyone's attention.

"Ant-Man," Coulson began, "was once an agent of S.H.I.E.L.D. His real identity was a scientist—Dr. Hank Pym. Back then, S.H.I.E.L.D. was still the Strategic Scientific Reserve. Pym worked alongside Howard Stark and Peggy Carter."

"However, due to an incident, the three of them had a complete falling out. Pym left the organization shortly afterward."

Steve studied the image of Hank Pym on the screen.

He didn't recognize him—by that time, Steve had already gone down with the plane into the Arctic. But judging from the records, Pym would be quite old now.

"During an experiment, Pym accidentally discovered a particle capable of shrinking or enlarging matter at will," Coulson continued. "Later, S.H.I.E.L.D. tried to acquire his research. He refused. That became the breaking point."

"The security director at the time intended to use the particles to arm an entire army."

Coulson brought up more detailed files.

"After leaving, Pym founded his own tech company. He also developed a suit that could harness the particle's abilities. Eventually, he created a device to control ants—hence the name 'Ant-Man.'"

"So Scott inherited Pym's suit and became the new Ant-Man?" Sam asked, looking at the schematics now displayed on screen.

"Very likely," Coulson nodded. "And Scott's reluctance to talk probably stems from Pym being behind all this. Pym has never had a good relationship with S.H.I.E.L.D.—there's... history there."

"Then it's simple," Sam said. "We go straight to this Dr. Pym."

"It's not that simple," Steve interrupted.

He had already pieced together part of the situation.

"Scott mentioned they're carrying out some kind of mission—something that could affect the fate of the world. If we approach Pym directly, we might alert the wrong people."

If Darren Cross caught wind that the Avengers were involved, he would become far more cautious—or disappear entirely.

"Coulson, keep tracking the signal. Let me know the moment you get anything."

With that, Steve turned and left.

He already had someone in mind—someone who could approach Hank Pym without being detected.

---

Late at night, Hank Pym and Hope sat in the basement, both at a loss.

They had watched Scott get captured by the Avengers. Without the Ant-Man suit, they had no way of stopping Darren Cross.

"What do we do now?" Hope said, staring at the frozen frame on the monitor—Sam and Barton dragging Scott away.

"We never should have trusted him. You saw it yourself—he doesn't follow orders. I told you from the beginning, I should be the one wearing the suit."

"I doubt the Avengers will harm him," Pym said, rubbing his forehead. "What worries me is them getting their hands on the Pym Particles. If they use it recklessly..."

His worst fear might already be coming true.

If the Avengers had the suit, they essentially had access to the particles.

"Don't worry, Dr. Pym. We won't do anything to your suit."

A voice suddenly sounded behind them.

Both Pym and Hope spun around instantly. Hope dropped into a combat stance without hesitation.

They were shocked.

The house was heavily secured with advanced alarm systems—yet nothing had been triggered.

Worse, neither of them had noticed when this person appeared.

"Relax," the woman said calmly, stepping forward. "I entered quietly because I didn't want anyone else to notice."

She sat down casually in a nearby chair.

"Natasha Romanoff. Avenger. Captain Rogers sent me to speak with you, Dr. Pym."

"An Avenger?!" Pym and Hope were both stunned.

Scott had only been captured hours ago—and now the Avengers had already found them.

"Don't be so surprised," Natasha said, crossing her legs. "You're not exactly hard to find. Dr. Pym is quite famous in the scientific community."

"Finding your residence wasn't difficult."

Though she appeared relaxed, those who knew her understood—it was all a façade. A veteran spy, Natasha never let her guard down.

"Why are you here?" Pym asked.

"For Scott Lang," Natasha replied smoothly. "As the original Ant-Man, don't you have anything to say? For example... sending someone to break into an Avengers facility?"

Her gaze shifted toward Hope, noting her stance—trained, capable.

"I don't know what you're talking about," Pym denied.

But Natasha read people for a living. His reaction was transparent.

"Dr. Pym," she continued, almost lazily, "we're aware that you were forced out of the company you built. And recently... your protégé—what was his name? Cross?—has been making quite a few suspicious moves."

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## **- Chapter 380 - 380 – Scott Returns[ 873 words ]**

Natasha had clearly come prepared. For the agents at the Avengers facility, digging up this kind of information was child's play.

"Since you already know everything, why ask me?" Pym said bluntly. "Tell me—what will it take to release Scott?"

Now that Natasha had laid things out, there was no point pretending anymore. It was obvious the Avengers were already aware of Darren Cross's plans.

"Scott will be back tomorrow," Natasha replied calmly. "And we'll be intervening in Cross's operation as well. When that happens, I hope you won't interfere with our plan, Dr. Pym."

"A plan? What exactly are you trying to do?!" Pym immediately became wary.

To him, the Avengers were no different from the old S.H.I.E.L.D. If they got involved, it had to be for Cross's research. And that was exactly what he feared most.

If they obtained the results, it could spell disaster for the world.

Natasha seemed to read his thoughts and smiled faintly.

"There's no need to worry, Dr. Pym. We're not interested in Cross's research."

She didn't elaborate further.

But her words alone weren't enough to reassure Pym. His distrust ran deep. Still, the situation left him with no leverage—pushing further might only put Scott in danger.

"Fine," Pym said coldly. "Just release Scott as soon as possible."

Natasha nodded. "Of course. We don't have the budget to keep prisoners."

She stood and walked toward the door, but paused before leaving.

"Oh—and if you happen to see any Avengers at Cross's company later... I suggest you pretend not to recognize them."

Without waiting for a response, she left.

She knew Pym didn't really have a choice.

---

The next morning, Karl strolled lazily into the office.

As soon as the elevator doors opened, he saw Natasha sitting casually on the sofa, scrolling through news on a tablet.

"When did you get here?" Karl asked, slightly surprised.

Most Avengers lived in secure, undisclosed safe houses. Their home addresses were strictly confidential—like Barton's family home back in the day.

Natasha had long since vacated her old apartment. After Fury called off surveillance on Karl, even the liaison had been withdrawn. There was no reason to keep renting it.

Only Tony and Pepper still kept theirs—and Tony had prepaid twenty years of rent, occasionally dropping by for a stay.

"This morning," Natasha replied without looking up. "We caught someone calling himself Ant-Man. I paid a visit to his base last night."

"You mean Scott?" Karl asked, recalling that Scott had tried to break into the Avengers facility—only to get caught. Unlucky didn't even begin to describe it.

"You know him?" Natasha finally looked up, curiosity piqued.

"Of course I do—"

Before Karl could continue, Skye plopped down beside Natasha with a plate of cut fruit and eagerly jumped in.

"Oh! Let me tell you—"

She launched into the story of how Scott had crash-landed on their balcony.

"I nearly had a heart attack! Who has ants that big?!"

Anyone would panic at the sight of an ant the size of a calf.

Natasha chuckled softly.

"In that case... are you interested in joining this mission? Might be fun."

Her intention was obvious—she was here to recruit them.

"Stop right there. Not interested," Karl cut her off immediately.

"I'm just an ordinary person now. I need protection."

That was his trump card.

He knew Skye and the others wouldn't leave him alone to go on a mission—and they weren't Avengers anyway.

Skye had been tempted, but the moment Karl said that, she changed her mind.

He hadn't fully recovered yet. Of the three months needed, two and a half had only just passed.

"Sorry, Natasha," Skye said firmly. "I can't leave him like this."

"Exactly," Karl added, nudging Skye away from Natasha. "Go find Tony. He's definitely got a way to deal with Cross."

Natasha smiled knowingly.

She understood perfectly—Karl and Nick Fury had never seen eye to eye. Unless absolutely necessary, Karl wouldn't get involved in their affairs.

"Alright then. I'll go find Tony," she said. "What's he been up to lately? Haven't seen him in a while."

"Probably locked in his lab, tinkering with something weird as usual," Karl replied.

---

Meanwhile, Scott had returned to Pym's house.

The Ant-Man suit was intact—just as Natasha had promised, the Avengers hadn't kept it.

"You were completely irresponsible!" Pym snapped the moment he saw him. "Do you have any idea how dangerous that was? You've messed everything up!"

Scott said nothing.

Instead, he quietly placed the device on the table—the signal scrambler Steve had given him before he left.

He didn't agree with Pym's view of the Avengers. In fact, after spending time with them, Scott found them surprisingly... likable.

Especially Sam and Rhodey.

Pym stared at the device in silence.

He hadn't expected this.

Based on his past experience with S.H.I.E.L.D., Scott should've come back empty-handed—everything confiscated.

But reality had proven otherwise.

"The Avengers aren't interested in your suit at all," Scott said. "They didn't even bother looking at it. You're worrying for nothing."

And he wasn't wrong.

From Steve and the other heroes to the agents and even the scientists—no one had shown the slightest interest in the Ant-Man suit.

Of course, that was largely because they didn't fully understand it.

If they knew the Pym Particles could shrink matter down to the quantum level...

Those scientists would probably lose their minds.

After all, the Quantum Realm remained a near-mythical concept—something no one had truly reached or understood.

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