

## MARVEL MANIFESTOR

### Chapter 471 471: Tony Meets Fury

That's right. Clint Barton hadn't come solely to help Steve.

He also had a mission.

Nick Fury suspected someone was exploiting the relationship between Bucky and Steve to sow chaos. Fury had specifically mentioned a man named Zemo—a name obviously given to him by Karl.

He suspected Bucky and Zemo were working together, which was why he had asked Clint to keep an eye on this fake Bucky.

Sam nodded in response to Clint's question, though he felt slightly puzzled. For a brief moment, he had noticed suspicion flash through Clint's eyes, but chose not to mention it.

"Where's the other guy?"

Steve asked.

The other person Natasha had been asked to find was Scott Lang.

Although Hank Pym deeply disliked the Avengers, Scott himself didn't share that sentiment and readily agreed to Steve's request.

"He got a little too excited."

Clint shrugged before sliding open the van door.

Inside, a man was sprawled comfortably across the seats, fast asleep and even snoring.

Bang!

Clint slammed his hand against the van door.

The loud noise startled Scott so badly that he shot upright from his seat and smashed his head directly into the roof of the van.

"I think he's awake now."

Clint grinned wickedly while Scott rubbed his reddened forehead.

"What time is it~~?"

Scott asked groggily, before finally noticing Steve and Sam.

"Oh~~ Captain America, hey~~"

Scott greeted them casually. The group already knew each other fairly well after their previous encounter.

"Sorry to drag you into this, Scott. I really need the help."

Steve looked genuinely apologetic. Natasha had already informed him that Hank Pym opposed Scott getting involved, yet Scott came anyway.

"It's fine, Cap. Just point me where you need me~!"

Scott looked incredibly excited.

Back then, he had only met Steve because he'd gotten caught stealing from the Avengers Facility. He never imagined he'd one day become teammates with Captain America himself.

"Scott, think carefully. If you really join us, you'll basically become a fugitive too."

Steve felt guilty. He was the one who had pulled Scott into all this, so he believed Scott deserved one final chance to reconsider.

"No problem, Captain. I'm used to it."

Scott waved it off casually.

He used to be a thief. Going to jail had practically felt like going home. If he hadn't inherited the mantle of Ant-Man, he'd probably still be serving time somewhere right now.

"Alright then. We should get moving."

Steve patted Scott on the shoulder. Since Scott had made up his mind, there was no point delaying any longer.

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New Avengers Facility.

Tony and Peter hurried into the building, both looking tense.

Without stopping, they headed straight for the command center.

The moment he entered, Tony spotted Natasha and immediately pulled her into a nearby meeting room.

"Natasha, we just got new information. That Bucky Barnes is fake."

Tony didn't even bother grabbing a drink before blurting out what Felicia had told Peter earlier.

"What?!"

Natasha's expression changed instantly.

She quickly scanned the surroundings to ensure nobody was paying attention before lowering her voice.

"You're sure? Where did this come from?"

This was massive news.

Especially since Steve still didn't know.

That fake Bucky was basically a ticking time bomb sitting right beside him.

"Felicia told us. She said Karl personally confirmed it. The real Bucky's already dead. This one's fake. She also mentioned someone named Zemo."

Peter took over the explanation.

He personally had no clue who Bucky or Zemo even were, so he could only repeat the information exactly as he heard it.

"Natasha, something about this whole thing feels wrong. It's like there's a hidden hand manipulating everything from behind the scenes. We're all being controlled by it, and I hate that feeling."

Tony's expression grew increasingly grim.

During the drive back, he had mentally replayed the entire sequence of events. The more he thought about it, the more suspicious everything became.

Natasha's eyes moved between Tony and Peter, trying to detect any sign of deception.

But Tony looked deadly serious, while Peter looked genuinely confused. Neither appeared to be acting.

"Come with me."

Without another word, Natasha turned and walked away.

Though confused, Tony and Peter followed.

After winding through several hallways, the three arrived in front of a room labeled Archives.

"Why are we here?"

Tony asked.

Natasha didn't answer.

Instead, she knocked on the door in a rhythmic pattern, paused briefly, then pushed it open.

Inside were neatly organized rows of files.

All of them shared one characteristic:

They looked brand new.

Though considering the facility itself had only recently been established, that wasn't strange.

"I remember when I first became an agent, managing archives was where they started me too~~"

A deep voice echoed through the room.

Moments later, a Black man with an afro stepped out from the corner.

"Director, we've got new information."

Natasha closed the door and got straight to the point.

"Director? What director?!"

Peter jumped in surprise and hurriedly looked around.

But aside from the man standing before them, nobody else was inside the archive room.

"Nick Fury? How the hell did you sneak in here?"

Tony reacted immediately.

After all, there was only one person Natasha ever called "Director."

"I came here to investigate this situation. Since Natasha brought you here, that means you know about Zemo too?"

The disguised Fury looked toward Tony.

"So you already know too?"

Tony blinked before quickly glancing toward Natasha.

As expected, Natasha remained a spy no matter where she went.

Natasha simply shrugged. She was merely doing what she did best.

"Yeah. And there's another piece of information. Karl says this Bucky is fake too."

Tony pulled over a chair and sat down heavily.

"So that's how it is..."

Fury muttered quietly before taking out a file and handing it to Tony.

"This is everything we've gathered on Zemo. He's a survivor from Sokovia."

Fury only needed to say that much.

Tony instantly understood.

"So he's one of the survivors from that incident... No wonder he's capable of orchestrating something this massive~~"

Tony carefully examined the file.

It contained all currently known information on Zemo:

A Sokovian survivor. Former participant in large-scale protests. Vocal critic of the Avengers' destructive methods.

Only Tony would react this way.

If Karl had been here, he would've scoffed in disdain.

These so-called survivors still had the luxury of organizing protests and condemning the Avengers? Did they ever stop to think about why they were alive in the first place?

Without the Avengers, those "survivors" would already be dead and buried, not peacefully marching around with protest signs.

"So explain this fake Bucky situation."

Fury looked at Tony seriously.

Back then, Karl had only given Fury the name "Zemo." He never mentioned anything about Bucky.

Because Karl didn't want Steve finding out.

After all... Bucky was Steve's beloved brother-in-arms and lifelong best friend~~

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## Chapter 472 472: A Great Battle on the Verge of Erupting

"Specifically? I'm not sure either. You'll have to ask Karl about that."

Tony shrugged. Honestly, he barely even knew who Bucky Barnes was. If Bucky hadn't been involved in the bombing, Tony probably wouldn't even know Steve had a wartime best friend.

Very quickly, Nick Fury called Karl through an encrypted line. It was one of the communication channels Tony had set up for the Avengers back in the day.

"Karl, we need to ask you something."

As soon as the call connected, Fury switched on speaker mode and activated the video feed.

"Karl, it's Tony. What's the deal with this fake Bucky?"

Tony immediately asked.

"So you found out?"

Karl sounded slightly surprised, though he instantly figured out what happened. Gwen and the others must have told them. He had only mentioned it to Gwen, Skye, and Wanda—and he'd conveniently left out the part where he personally killed the real Bucky.

"We know."

Tony nodded.

"I don't know all the details either. I only know that the real Bucky is dead, and the current one is an impostor. That part is confirmed."

Karl didn't elaborate. He intended to keep the fact that he killed Bucky buried forever. Nobody had witnessed it anyway, and Bucky had been wearing a mask at the time. Who would've recognized him? Even Steve hadn't.

"We need to notify Steve immediately."

Natasha said at once. Unfortunately, they had no reliable way to contact him—not even Sharon could reach him. The only option was to find him first.

Suddenly, Natasha's communicator buzzed.

"Agent Romanoff, we found Captain America's location. Signal traces place him at the airport."

A field agent reported Steve's position.

"They found them. They're at the airport."

Natasha immediately informed the others.

"Then move out immediately. And remember—capture the fake Bucky alive. We need him to reveal Zemo's whereabouts."

Fury said while pulling out his communicator to contact Coulson.

Once Steve's location was confirmed, Tony took Natasha and Peter and headed out at once.

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At the airport, Steve and the others had already secured a helicopter and were preparing to leave when blaring alarms suddenly interrupted them.

"Looks like we've been spotted. Suit up immediately!"

Steve ordered decisively. Since a fight was unavoidable, they might as well face it head-on.

The group quickly donned their gear and rushed toward the helipad. The helicopter was still intact, but just as Steve was about to board it, a red device suddenly slammed into the fuselage.

A burst of high-voltage electricity crackled through the aircraft, and smoke instantly poured out from the engine.

In the sky above, Tony hovered in his nanotech armor. The device he'd fired was an electromagnetic pulse charge.

A moment later, Tony and Rhodey descended from the air, landing directly in front of Steve.

"Listen, Steve. The situation is critical right now. You need to come back with me. We'll sort everything out once we're back."

Tony didn't want to alarm the enemy by exposing the fake Bucky's identity too soon, so he could only pretend he wanted them back for questioning and try to lure the impostor back to the base.

Naturally, Steve didn't buy it.

"Tony, I can't surrender. None of this was Bucky's choice. He was brainwashed. The real culprit is someone else, and I need to find him!"

There was no way Steve would go back with Tony. Tony hadn't believed him before, and Steve was convinced they had to investigate this themselves.

Just as Tony was about to continue, two figures suddenly appeared, leaping high into the air before landing between Tony and Steve.

Black Panther T'Challa and Erik Killmonger.

And with Black Panther's arrival, the balance between Tony and Steve shattered completely. T'Challa and Erik belonged to neither side.

"Steve, Ross gave me seventy-two hours to bring you back. One day's already passed. I have to take you in and calm this whole situation down first."

Tony retracted his helmet. He wasn't sure Steve would trust him otherwise.

"You're arresting the wrong person, Tony."

Steve immediately replied.

"No, Captain. We're not arresting the wrong person. Trust me—your old war buddy has serious problems."

"I know. HYDRA brainwashed him. During missions, he wasn't even conscious of what he was doing. He wasn't in control. You can't blame him entirely."

Steve thought Tony was referring to the bombing incident. He never once considered that this Bucky himself might be the problem.

"Steve, Tony's right this time. You need to come back with us. All of you—including Bucky."

Natasha suddenly appeared behind Steve and echoed Tony's words.

"No. Impossible. Listen to me—you're seeing this all wrong."

Steve still refused to budge.

"Then we don't have a choice. Sorry, Steve."

Tony sighed heavily. He couldn't directly expose Bucky as a fake in front of everyone, or the impostor might flee immediately. If that happened, catching him would become much harder.

"Peter!"

Tony shouted.

A web suddenly shot through the air, snatching Steve's shield away, followed by another that wrapped around his arms.

Peter flipped gracefully through the air and landed atop a truck in a classic superhero pose. He even had enough spare energy to mimic one of Captain America's trademark stances.

"Whoa~~ I finally get to fight like Captain America! But seriously, how does this shield always bounce back? Like this?"

Peter babbled nonstop while pretending to throw the shield.

"Hmm, I don't think my stance is quite right. Does this move really work? Wouldn't it throw out your back?"

"Okay, okay, Peter~~ we got it. This is a serious moment."

Tony quickly cut him off before Peter kept rambling forever.

"Steve, you've already dragged too many people into this. Barton, Scott, Sam—they're all about to become fugitives too. Now, right now, come back with us. Once we're back, I'll explain everything."

Tony was losing patience. From the beginning until now, he still hadn't seen the fake Bucky. He was starting to suspect Steve was deliberately stalling while giving Bucky time to escape.

"Steve, stop tearing the Avengers apart."

"Tony, the Avengers split the moment you signed that agreement. Look at us now—we're fugitives. And what did we even do? Our only crime was refusing to sign that damned treaty."

"Okay~~ Steve, hand over that damn Barnes already and come with us!"

Tony had finally run out of patience. He didn't want to argue anymore. If necessary, he'd drag Steve back by force and make him see just how badly he'd been fooled.

"Cap, we found it. There's a Quinjet parked on the runway behind us."

Sam's voice rang out.

Standing beside him was the fake Bucky.

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## **Chapter 473 473: The Battle Begins**

"Cap, we found it. There's a Quinjet parked on the runway behind us."

Sam's voice rang out, with the fake Bucky standing beside him.

Hearing Sam's report, Steve suddenly raised his web-bound hands.

"Barton, Scott, now."

The moment he finished speaking, an arrow shot through the air, accurately severing the webbing around Steve's wrists. At the same time, in a spot Peter hadn't noticed, Scott had already crawled onto the shield in miniature form.

Peter's spider-sense suddenly flared violently.

"Danger!!"

Peter shouted a warning immediately.

At the same moment, the shrunken Scott suddenly returned to full size and slammed a punch into Peter's jaw. Completely caught off guard, Peter felt like he'd just been hit by a bullet and was sent flying with a single blow, while Scott reclaimed Steve's shield.

"Damn it, Scott! You almost dislocated my jaw with that punch!"

Peter got up and shouted at Scott.

Both of them were veteran trash-talkers, so they actually got along pretty well—birds of a feather.

"Sorry, Peter. You know I barely touched you. Who knew you were this fragile?"

Scott shrugged teasingly.

"Damn it, there are two people in the terminal—Sam and Bucky."

JARVIS had scanned and identified Sam and Bucky's positions.

"Barnes is mine!"

Erik immediately leaped forward, charging toward the terminal like a hunting panther.

"Don't kill him, Erik! We still need him alive!"

T'Challa shouted after him.

Before coming here, Natasha had already explained the true purpose of the mission to both T'Challa and Erik, including the matter of the fake Bucky.

Yes—Natasha again.

Nick Fury couldn't conveniently appear in public. He still needed to track down Zemo, so all communication and coordination had been handed over to Natasha. Sharon had her own assignment as well: stabilize the people back at Avengers Headquarters while covertly assisting Fury.

Seeing Erik move, Steve immediately rushed after him.

T'Challa followed closely behind and suddenly lunged, tackling Steve cleanly to the ground.

"Give it up, Captain. Don't make me repeat myself."

T'Challa rose to his feet as the claws on his gloves snapped out sharply.

"Sorry, T'Challa. I can't let you capture Bucky."

Steve was still defending him.

T'Challa sighed, then suddenly lashed out with a kick. Steve raised his shield to block, and the two instantly engaged in fierce close combat.

But Steve's shield was still no match for T'Challa's vibranium claws. After only a few exchanges, deep claw marks had already appeared across the shield's surface.

Meanwhile, Natasha intercepted Scott.

Back when Scott had first joined the Avengers, Natasha had been the one who brought him in, so the two were quite familiar with each other.

Looking at Natasha blocking his path, Scott felt rather helpless.

"Listen, Natasha, I really don't want to hurt you. You should just move aside."

"You're worrying too much."

Natasha tilted her head slightly, then kicked directly toward Scott's groin before grabbing his arm and throwing him away.

Midair, Scott suddenly shrank. Then, grabbing Natasha's sleeve, he yanked hard, instantly flipping her onto the ground.

Although the Ant-Man suit reduced Scott's size, it didn't reduce his strength—in fact, it amplified it.

Scott grabbed Natasha's arm, intending to twist it behind her back.

But he forgot about the Widow's Bite on her wrist.

Suddenly, a burst of powerful electricity exploded outward.

Scott was blasted away by the shock, slamming directly into a nearby shipping container hard enough to dent the metal.

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Inside the terminal, Peter was rapidly crawling across the exterior glass walls while Sam and Bucky sprinted desperately through the building with Erik close behind them.

"What the hell is that thing?!"

Bucky stared at Peter climbing outside the glass and shouted.

"That's Spider-Man. He can crawl on any surface."

Sam kept his explanation brief. He didn't want to waste energy talking.

With a loud crash, Peter punched through the terminal window and leaped directly toward Sam and Bucky.

He kicked Sam to the floor, then immediately threw a punch at Bucky.

Bucky countered with a punch of his own.

But he had seriously underestimated Peter's strength.

Peter caught the metal fist instantly. No matter how hard Bucky struggled, he couldn't overpower him.

"Holy crap! You've got a metal arm?! That's awesome, dude! Where'd you get it? What's it made of? Is it external armor or a prosthetic?!"

Peter unleashed a barrage of questions so fast that the fake Bucky was momentarily stunned.

He hadn't expected the person in front of him to be such a curious chatterbox. Judging from the voice, Spider-Man sounded pretty young too.

Peter forcibly twisted Bucky's arm aside while still nonstop questioning him about the metal arm.

What he failed to notice was Sam charging toward him from the side.

By the time Peter's spider-sense finally screamed loud enough to warn him, Sam had already grabbed him and launched into the sky.

"Hey! Hey! Sam, don't take this so seriously! Put me down!"

Peter smacked at Sam's arm.

Not wanting to be dropped, Peter wrapped himself completely around Sam like an octopus.

"Buddy, I'm a straight man. This is getting inappropriate~~"

Sam rolled his eyes.

He hadn't expected Peter to lock onto him so tightly.

"There's a platform up ahead. I'll toss you there. Get ready~~"

Sam flew toward a platform and shoved Peter off.

Peter immediately landed on it dramatically.

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Unlike the strangely harmonious atmosphere between those two, Erik and Bucky were fighting like the end of the world had arrived.

Erik had completely abandoned defense. Relying on the Black Panther suit's ability to absorb kinetic energy, he simply tanked Bucky's punches head-on while beating him down relentlessly.

Bucky, meanwhile, fought with careful precision.

Unlike Erik, he understood how to avoid his weaknesses and maximize his strengths. Time and time again, he dodged or blocked Erik's attacks before counterattacking at just the right moments.

But his raw power still couldn't compare to Erik's.

Beyond the enhancement from the Heart-Shaped Herb, the Panther Habit itself provided tremendous physical amplification.

Under overwhelming force suppression, even Bucky's disciplined combat style gradually started failing him.

This wasn't part of his plan.

His real objective was to publicly expose the fact that Bucky had personally murdered Howard and Maria Stark, forcing the two pillars of the Avengers—Iron Man and Captain America—into complete conflict.

But now, he hadn't even had the chance to meet Tony Stark.

Instead, some random man out of nowhere had completely suppressed him.

Boom! Boom!!

Outside the terminal, Tony and Rhodey maintained aerial fire suppression.

Rockets, mini-missiles, and repulsor blasts rained toward the ground like they were free.

Still, both men were deliberately holding back. They weren't trying to hurt anyone—only block movement routes and prevent Steve's group from advancing.

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## Chapter 474 474: The Battle Erupts (2)

On the ground, Barton was fleeing helplessly at full speed.

Ahead of him, Steve was tied up fighting T'Challa, Natasha was locked in combat with Scott, and Peter and Erik had gone after Sam and Bucky. Barton alone had to deal with the two flying tin cans in the sky—Tony and Rhodey.

"Rhodey, go after Steve," Tony said.

Cut off the leader and the rest would fall apart. As long as Steve was restrained, there'd be no need for everyone else to keep fighting to the death.

"OK. Perfect chance to test my new weapon."

A compartment opened on Rhodey's armor, ejecting a short baton crackling with electricity. He gripped it like a short sword and dove straight toward Steve with a brutal overhead slash.

"Looks like retirement life really doesn't suit you, Barton. Get tired of golf already?"

Tony hovered two meters above the ground, palm repulsor aimed at Barton, while Barton calmly drew his bow in response.

"You know me. Sports with clear targets are way too easy."

Barton shrugged.

"Eighteen strokes. Hole-in-one every time."

For a master marksman who never missed, golf was basically child's play.

"That honestly sounds boring." Tony shook his head. "You already know what's going on, right? Now's the time to bring him back. If he escapes, finding him again will be a pain."

Tony understood Barton well. As Natasha's longtime partner, there was no way he hadn't already heard about the fake Bucky.

"I know," Barton replied. "But how exactly are we supposed to explain that to Steve? Do you think he'll believe it?"

A wartime brother-in-arms from WWII returning from the dead—Steve was emotionally invested far too deeply. Convincing him this Bucky was fake wouldn't be easy.

"As long as we bring him back to the base, there'll be plenty of ways to prove it."

Tony didn't seem worried at all.

Even if Hydra brainwashed him, so what? With modern technology, reversing brainwashing wasn't exactly impossible.

Inside the terminal, the four combatants were fighting fiercely.

Sam and Peter had entered a bizarre contest of mobility—one relying on flight, the other on agility and overwhelming physical power.

Peter swung around the terminal using webs, weaving through the structure with incredible flexibility, while Sam continuously swooped in and out with aerial hit-and-run tactics. Neither side could gain the upper hand.

Then suddenly, Peter fired a web that stuck to Sam's wing.

With a violent yank—

Sam instantly lost balance and crashed through the glass floor below.

Peter immediately leapt down after him, firing webs repeatedly until Sam was pinned tightly to the ground.

"Just take a break for a bit," Peter said as he sat beside him.

"We're not enemies anyway. Once Mr. Stark and Captain America settle things, I'll let you go."

As an ordinary human, Sam simply didn't have the strength to break free from Spider-Man's webs without his wings.

"Sam," Peter lowered his voice, "you've been around that Bucky guy for days now. Did you notice anything strange about him?"

He deliberately spoke quietly so the fake Bucky wouldn't overhear him.

Not that it mattered much right now—the fake Bucky was currently getting beaten around and had no attention to spare.

"Strange?"

Sam thought for a moment, then shook his head.

"No. Why?"

"Karl said that Bucky is fake. The real Bucky died a long time ago. Mr. Stark came here specifically to bring him back, but Captain America's being too stubborn. They can't explain the truth to him, so things turned into this mess."

Peter didn't hide anything. The more people knew, the sooner this pointless fight could end.

"A fake Bucky? That doesn't make sense."

Sam frowned.

"He knows a ton about Steve. Even extremely private stuff. Nobody except the real Bucky should know those things."

Just like Steve, Sam had never doubted Bucky's identity.

Along the way, Bucky and Steve had talked endlessly about the past, reminiscing together. Nothing he said had seemed wrong.

"I don't know the details," Peter admitted, "but I trust Karl. He wouldn't joke about something like this."

Outside, Steve narrowly dodged Rhodey's attack.

Unable to stop his momentum in time, Rhodey slammed face-first into the ground, and the electrified baton snapped in half.

"Damn it! I knew this thing was unreliable!"

Rhodey tossed aside the broken weapon and shot back into the air. A Gatling gun unfolded from his armor and immediately unleashed suppressive fire around Steve, restricting his movements.

"Cap, catch!"

Scott suddenly ran over and handed Steve a toy truck.

Then he pulled out an enlargement disc.

"Throw it at them!"

Steve followed instructions and hurled the toy truck into the air.

The moment it left his hand, Scott threw the enlargement disc.

The tiny toy instantly expanded back to full size and came crashing down toward Rhodey and T'Challa.

"Holy shit! Scott, that's cheating!!"

Rhodey shouted as he blasted upward into the sky, while T'Challa sprinted away at top speed.

BOOM!!

The truck exploded the instant it hit the ground.

The massive explosion instantly drew everyone's attention.

Up until now, everyone had been holding back, but this blast was clearly on an entirely different level.

"Damn it! I thought it was a water truck! I just grabbed it from Pym's collection and stuffed it in my pocket!"

Scott looked horrified.

He didn't carry pockets himself, so he'd randomly taken one of Hank Pym's miniature vehicles. Who knew it would turn out to be an oil tanker?

The explosion affected Natasha and Barton as well. Even Tony got caught in the blast radius.

Boom!

Tony descended from the sky and stared blankly at the burning wreckage.

"What the hell happened?!"

He'd thought this was still just controlled skirmishing. How had things escalated into a blast this huge?

"It was Scott," Rhodey answered helplessly.

"He pulled out a toy truck and enlarged it."

Even Rhodey hadn't expected it to be an oil tanker. He'd nearly been blown straight out of the sky.

"You know what? He officially pissed me off."

Rhodey glared toward the direction Scott had run.

Meanwhile, Steve, Scott, and Barton sprinted toward the terminal to support Sam and Bucky.

But suddenly—

Bucky came flying out of the terminal and crashed hard onto the ground in front of Steve.

Steve immediately rushed over to help him up.

At the same time, Sam flew out from inside as well. Somehow, he'd managed to break free from Peter's webs.

"Get to the Quinjet!"

Steve shouted.

Everyone immediately sprinted toward the Quinjet's location.

But both Sam and Barton kept their eyes fixed on Bucky the entire time.

"There!"

Bucky spotted the Quinjet and quickly urged everyone forward.

Then suddenly—

A beam of light blasted down, cutting off their path.

"Steve, you need to surrender immediately and come back with us."

Tony and Rhodey descended from the sky once more.

At the same time, Natasha, Erik, T'Challa, and Peter quickly caught up as well.

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## **Chapter 475 475: Exposing the Fake Bucky**

One side was led by Steve.

The other stood behind Tony.

The two groups faced each other clearly divided, tensions sharp as drawn blades.

"Cap, what do we do?"

Sam looked at Tony's side.

Their combat strength was obviously far greater. Aside from Natasha, every single one of them was equipped with high-tech armor—even Peter was wearing a nanotech suit.

Steve's gaze hardened as he tightened the straps on his shield.

"We fight."

With that, Steve took the first step forward.

The others immediately followed.

"Well, here we are," Natasha sighed. "Looks like we really have to settle this the hard way."

She moved first.

Tony and Rhodey slowly rose into the air while T'Challa, Erik, and Peter advanced behind them.

Walking turned into running.

Running became a full-on charge.

Just as both sides were about to clash head-on—

The surrounding temperature suddenly plummeted.

White mist appeared in everyone's breath.

An enormous wall of ice erupted from the ground, blocking the path between the two groups.

Thwip!

A web shot through the air, and a nimble black-and-white hooded figure landed lightly atop the ice wall.

Immediately afterward, waves of vibration burst outward, forcefully pushing everyone back.

Then a scarlet figure descended from the sky.

The newcomers were Gwen, Skye, and Wanda.

At the same time, a silver-haired figure in black rushed straight toward Peter and threw him over her shoulder onto the ground in one clean motion.

"F-Felicia?"

Lying on the ground, Peter finally recognized her in the sunlight.

It was his girlfriend—Black Cat, Felicia.

"Well, well," Felicia teased as she sat on top of him, "weren't you supposed to be helping Captain America? Why'd you end up in a giant superhero brawl?"

"Uh... c-could you get up first? Everyone's watching..."

Peter's face turned bright red beneath the mask.

Being pinned down by his girlfriend in front of this many people was unbelievably embarrassing.

Felicia obediently stood up and pulled him to his feet.

At that moment—

Crack!

The ice wall shattered.

Gwen landed gracefully on the ground as Karl descended from the sky, landing where the ice wall had stood, separating Tony's side from Steve's.

"Steve," Karl said calmly, turning toward him, "hand Bucky over. Then you'll understand everything."

At this point, everyone except Steve already knew the Bucky beside him was fake.

The problem was that nobody had hard evidence—they only trusted Karl's word.

"Karl, Bucky isn't the killer. The real culprit is someone else. I'm trying to find that person right now. Every second we waste puts more people in danger."

Steve was still trying to defend the fake Bucky.

Little did he know, Karl knew the truth better than anyone.

After all, the real Bucky had died by Karl's hand.

There wasn't even ashes left.

"The Bucky beside you is fake."

Karl spoke bluntly, exposing him outright.

He wasn't worried about alerting the enemy.

With this many people here, if fake Bucky still managed to escape, they might as well all retire in shame.

"Fake?! Impossible!"

Steve froze for a moment before immediately rejecting the idea.

"What proof do you have?"

"He is the proof."

Karl pointed directly at fake Bucky.

The fake Bucky said nothing.

Internally, he was desperately trying to figure out where he'd slipped up.

His plan had been flawless.

He even possessed Bucky's memories.

There should have been no way anyone could tell.

"No," Steve insisted. "Bucky knows everything about our past. Things only the two of us would know."

"Steve," Karl said, "you want proof? Fine. I'll show you."

The moment Karl moved, fake Bucky instantly sensed danger and tried to flee instinctively.

But how could he possibly be faster than Karl?

Karl teleported directly beside him and reached for his face.

He was gambling.

Betting that fake Bucky was using the same kind of high-tech disguise mask Natasha once used—a thin, skin-like facial overlay.

And he won the bet.

Karl tore off a nearly transparent mask.

Beneath it was fake Bucky's true face—

A face horribly scarred by acid burns.

"This... this is impossible!"

Everyone was stunned.

Steve himself stood frozen in place.

"Steve, it's not what you think!" fake Bucky shouted desperately.

"I had to wear the mask because I was disfigured! I really am Bucky! Your comrade! Your best friend!"

"Remember when we used to get into fights in the alleys? Enlisting together? Going on missions together?"

"And when I fell from the train—"

He kept trying to defend himself.

Maybe he could still fool Steve.

But there was no convincing everyone else.

"Steve," Tony said at last, "now you understand why I was so determined to bring both of you back."

"He really was the one who bombed the UN building."

"He just happened to be wearing Barnes' face."

Now that the truth was exposed, Tony no longer bothered hiding anything.

"You already knew?"

Steve turned slowly toward Tony.

Thinking back carefully now, everything Tony had said earlier suddenly carried a completely different meaning.

"Yeah," Tony admitted.

"We didn't want to tell you directly. If we exposed him too early, he might've escaped. So we tried hinting instead and getting you back peacefully."

"Who the hell are you?!"

Steve grabbed fake Bucky by the collar and lifted him clean off the ground.

"I... I..."

Suddenly—

Fake Bucky punched Steve square in the face.

Caught off guard, Steve was sent flying backward.

The fake Bucky immediately turned and sprinted toward the Quinjet, intending to escape using its superior speed and mobility.

Boom!

Scarlet energy exploded outward.

Chaos magic instantly wrapped around his entire body.

In an instant, fake Bucky froze completely in place.

Aside from his eyes, he couldn't move a single muscle.

Wanda raised her hand sharply—

Then slammed it downward.

BAM!

Fake Bucky crashed violently into the ground and blacked out on the spot.

At the same time, his metal arm was instantly disassembled by Wanda's chaos magic.

"Steve," Tony said as he walked over and extended a hand, "come back with us."

"We already have leads on the real mastermind behind all of this."

"His goal was to tear the Avengers apart. We can't keep playing into his hands."

Steve stared at Tony silently for a long moment.

Confusion slowly faded from his eyes.

Determination returned.

Finally, he reached out and gripped Tony's hand tightly.

From this moment onward, the Avengers—once heading toward division—became united again.

"What about the Sokovia Accords?"

Steve asked.

He still refused to sign them, and he had no intention of becoming anyone's obedient weapon.

"Relax," Tony replied with a shrug.

"The Accords don't really matter that much anymore."

"All this 'oversight' nonsense was mostly an excuse to begin with."

"Once we expose the mastermind behind everything, the Sokovia Accords won't have much leverage over us anyway."

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## Chapter 476 476: Ross Turns Hostile

"Relax. The Sokovia Accords don't really matter that much anymore. This so-called oversight was just an excuse from the start. Once we catch the real mastermind behind all this, the Accords won't have much authority over us anyway."

Tony spoke slowly.

At first, he had genuinely believed the Accords were a good thing.

Superpowered individuals needed oversight. They needed restraint. They needed to stop causing collateral damage, spreading fear, and hurting innocent people.

But now Tony realized something—

The moment power fell into the hands of specific people, neutrality and fairness vanished.

The agencies supposedly meant to supervise the Avengers had never truly cared about justice.

They cared about themselves.

About power.

Take Ross, for example.

As Secretary of State, he had directly installed a loyal member of the Ross family into the oversight structure. The man contributed absolutely nothing except throwing his weight around and making idiotic decisions.

It was obvious.

Ross had planted him there to monitor and restrain the Avengers.

Tony couldn't help but question himself now.

Did the Sokovia Accords really need to exist?

Did the Avengers truly need oversight?

If another world-ending crisis happened, would those oversight agencies stand with them?

Or would they abandon the Avengers to protect themselves?

Would they launch another nuclear missile like during the Battle of New York?

Tony didn't know the answer.

But he did know one thing—

Those so-called oversight organizations would never value civilian lives, peace, or humanity the way the Avengers did.

To them, peace was only tied to profit and authority.

Without benefits involved, peace itself was meaningless.

The group returned to the New Avengers Facility aboard the Quinjet.

The moment they entered the main hall, waves of heavily armed soldiers flooded in, rifles raised at every Avenger present.

Outside, dozens of armored vehicles had already surrounded the plaza.

Advanced electromagnetic weapons and sonic cannons all locked onto the Avengers simultaneously.

"Steve Rogers. Tony Stark."

Ross stood behind the military lines holding a loudspeaker.

"You have violated the Sokovia Accords. As Secretary of State, I order all of you to surrender immediately!"

"Ross," Tony snapped, "you were the one who told me to bring Steve back. Now he's here. What exactly did we violate?"

Nanotech instantly spread across Tony's body into full armor mode.

At the same time, every Avenger entered combat readiness.

"You destroyed an airport and caused severe property damage. Furthermore, you cooperated with wanted fugitives. That is absolutely unacceptable."

Ross sneered coldly.

"I told you to arrest them—not join forces with them."

It was obvious now.

Ross was simply inventing charges.

Whether age had finally rotted his brain or not, the old man had openly gone back on his word.

"See?"

Steve looked toward Tony.

"This is exactly why I refused to sign the Accords."

"These people can't be trusted."

Steve had known the true face of politicians since World War II.

The compromises.

The deals.

The betrayals.

Everything was done for利益—personal gain.

They would even sacrifice soldiers bleeding on the front lines if it benefited them.

To people like Ross, human lives were just bargaining chips.

"Tony," Steve said quietly, "you were too naïve."

Tony fell silent.

His original intention had been good.

He'd wanted the Accords to restrain dangerous superhumans and prevent reckless destruction.

But now he finally saw the truth—

The Accords had become a political bargaining tool.

The Avengers themselves were nothing more than chess pieces in the games of the powerful.

Just another expendable part of their play.

"Ross," Tony asked coldly, "what exactly do you want?"

"Simple."

Ross no longer bothered hiding his intentions.

"All of you will surrender immediately and accept UN judgment."

"The Avengers will be officially disbanded."

"You will then be reassigned individually across the world for operations while remaining under twenty-four-hour surveillance."

At that moment, everyone—including Tony—finally understood.

This wasn't merely manipulation anymore.

Ross had completely shown his hand.

The goal from the very beginning had been to dismantle the Avengers.

A concentrated group of superhumans terrified the people in power.

So they wanted to scatter them across the globe.

Separate them.

Weaken them.

Control them individually.

Turn them into obedient weapons working for political interests.

"Hah."

Erik laughed mockingly.

"Same old garbage."

"You politicians really do have that many dirty secrets, huh? So scared people might find out?"

Erik knew this game all too well.

He used to be one of America's covert blades.

He'd carried out enough black-ops assassinations to know exactly how ugly things behind the curtain really were.

"You are no longer a citizen of this country," Ross replied icily.

"We will arrange transport for you and King T'Challa back to Wakanda."

"At the same time, the United Nations will formally review Wakanda's membership status."

It was a direct threat.

Ross was using Wakanda's UN position as leverage.

"You really think the United Nations belongs to America?"

Erik scoffed.

"Don't overestimate yourselves."

Beside him, T'Challa remained silent, but his eyes had become sharp as blades.

With Wakanda's current technological and military power, flattening the United States wasn't difficult at all.

Even nuclear missiles posed little threat.

Wakanda possessed the capability to detonate them before they ever left American airspace.

Neither T'Challa nor Erik took Ross seriously in the slightest.

"Ross."

Karl's cold voice suddenly rang out.

"I'm giving you five minutes."

"Write a will to Betty."

"Consider it my way of honoring Bruce."

"Five minutes from now, no matter where you are—you die."

Karl's expression remained utterly calm as he looked at Ross like a dead man walking.

He'd already spared Ross multiple times.

Yet the man simply refused to learn.

Since Ross insisted on courting death, Karl was more than willing to oblige.

"Karl Norman!"

Ross shouted fearlessly.

"As Secretary of State, I order you to surrender immediately!"

"You have severely violated anti-terrorism laws and national security regulations!"

"If you continue resisting, I will authorize lethal force on behalf of the United States!"

Ross looked completely confident.

Clearly, he had a trump card prepared.

Karl merely glanced outside indifferently.

"Your confidence comes from those things out there?"

His gaze swept over the armored vehicles and the electromagnetic and sonic weapon systems mounted atop them.

"They are America's latest cutting-edge weapons," Ross declared proudly.

"They were specifically designed to counter monsters like you."

"Your abilities are useless against them."

The military's weapons division had analyzed vast amounts of data from Avengers members before pouring enormous resources into developing specialized anti-superhuman weaponry.

And according to testing results—

The weapons had performed excellently.

"Specifically designed to counter me?"

Karl smiled faintly.

"Like this?"

A flash of light appeared in his eyes.

Magic power erupted instantly from his body.

High above the sky, a massive vortex suddenly formed.

At its center, an orange-red glow began to emerge.

The light grew larger and larger—

Then a gigantic meteor slowly pushed its way out from the swirling portal.

The Zodiac Meteor.

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## **Chapter 477 477: Ross Loses an Arm**

Because the tower's lobby was surrounded by glass walls, everyone could see the meteor clearly.

"Damn it! Open fire immediately! Kill them all!!"

Ross flew into a rage and instantly ordered the troops to shoot.

Ratatatatat—!

Bullets poured down like rain, but they all lost momentum about a foot away from the Avengers, freezing midair as if blocked by an invisible crimson barrier.

Wanda's eyes glowed scarlet as Chaos Magic erupted from her body, forming a shield that stopped every single bullet.

Then—

BOOM!!

The Zodiac Meteor crashed down from the sky.

The armored vehicles outside the tower were swallowed whole by the impact. A massive explosion shattered every pane of glass around the lobby, leaving only a twisted steel framework behind. Towering flames reflected across the faces of every soldier inside.

"M-Monster!!"

No one knew who shouted first, but panic immediately spread through the ranks. Some soldiers even tried to flee on the spot.

Bang!

A gunshot rang out.

Ross held a pistol in one hand and fired into the air to restore order, instantly drawing everyone's attention.

"Soldiers! Do not forget your duty! Raise your weapons and fire immediately!"

As he spoke, Ross personally fired another shot—this time directly at Wanda.

The bullet still froze in midair before reaching her.

"Ross, you're courting death!"

The moment Karl saw Ross aiming at Wanda, fury exploded in his eyes.

A green wind blade shot out instantly.

"AAAGH!!!"

Blood sprayed everywhere.

Ross let out a miserable scream as the wind blade cleanly severed the arm holding the gun straight from the shoulder.

The severed limb spun through the air before landing nearby with a wet thud.

The atmosphere instantly froze.

Aside from Ross rolling on the floor screaming in agony, the entire lobby fell into dead silence.

No one even dared go help him.

The Avengers certainly had no intention of helping. At this point, they practically wanted Ross dead. Everyone understood now—they had been played like fools, manipulated from beginning to end.

As for the soldiers, none of them dared move.

Who knew if the next person to twitch would be sliced in half? The armored convoy outside had already been turned into scrap metal.

Meanwhile, Fake Bucky's thoughts became active again.

This chaos was the perfect opportunity to escape.

With that thought, he quietly began backing away. His hands were cuffed, but it didn't stop him from moving.

Unfortunately for him, Clint noticed everything.

Without hesitation, Barton pulled out an arrow and fired it directly into Fake Bucky's body.

Crackle!

Electricity burst out instantly.

Fake Bucky's eyes rolled back as he collapsed unconscious onto the floor.

"You have three minutes left."

Karl calmly looked at the writhing Ross.

He had already shown the man enough mercy.

"Soldiers! Put down your weapons immediately!"

Steve suddenly shouted.

He was trying to save them.

Everyone could tell Wanda was merely holding the bullets in place for now. But with her abilities, reversing their trajectory would be effortless. Once that happened, how many soldiers would survive?

And no, body armor wouldn't save them.

Bulletproof vests could stop ordinary bullets—but bullets empowered by magic?

The soldiers exchanged uncertain looks, completely at a loss.

The armored division outside had been annihilated. Secretary Ross was rolling around bleeding to death. Without orders, they didn't dare lower their weapons.

"Right now, your priority should be getting Secretary Ross medical treatment," Steve continued loudly. "If this drags on any longer, he's really going to die."

He was giving them a way out.

Karl truly intended to kill Ross if this continued.

And if the U.S. Secretary of State died in front of them, these soldiers wouldn't have a good future waiting for them either. Better to get Ross out of here immediately.

"Sir... what do we do?"

Unable to decide, one captain finally asked Ross for instructions.

Ross gritted his teeth through the pain. Blood continued pouring from the wound. In barely over a minute, his face had already turned deathly pale.

"T-Take me... to... the hospital..."

His voice was barely above a whisper, but the captain heard him clearly.

"All personnel, retreat immediately! Escort Secretary Ross for medical treatment!"

The soldiers obeyed instantly.

One after another, they lowered their weapons and hurriedly carried Ross out of the building.

None of them wanted to stay there another second.

Only after Ross and his men left did Sharon finally appear.

Earlier, she had been the one ordering all the agents not to act rashly.

"Follow me."

She said only those two words before pressing the elevator button.

Everyone followed Sharon all the way to the command center.

Inside the conference room sat a disguised Nick Fury, casually fiddling with a holographic projection device.

Once everyone entered and took their seats, Fake Bucky was dumped into a chair as well.

Natasha walked over and slapped him hard across the face.

The pain jolted him awake.

"Who are you? Why are you impersonating Bucky? And where is the real Bucky?"

Steve was the first to speak.

What he cared about most wasn't the impostor's identity—it was the real Bucky's whereabouts.

Fake Bucky grinned.

The acid-scarred face twisted into a horrifying smile.

"The Winter Soldier has no name. As for the man called Bucky... as far as I know, he's already dead."

Steve frowned deeply.

He had mentally prepared himself for that answer long ago. Back before he was frozen, he had already believed Bucky died once.

"When did Bucky die? And how do you know so many secrets between us?"

Steve pressed further.

"I... I don't know..."

Fake Bucky suddenly clutched his head in agony.

Every time he tried to remember, splitting headaches overwhelmed him. He genuinely could not recall how he knew those memories.

Whenever the Winter Soldier carried out missions, his memories would be wiped clean, leaving behind only mission-related information.

That was exactly the case with this Fake Bucky.

The only things he remembered were his mission and the events of the 1991 operation—because those memories had been forcibly implanted by Zemo, together with the real Bucky's memories.

Seeing that he wasn't faking it, Steve's brows furrowed even tighter.

"There's no point asking further, Steve. He's been brainwashed."

Natasha finally spoke.

She had seen this kind of condition before—in agents assigned to special operations.

The Red Room had its own brainwashing system, and the symptoms were all more or less the same.

"Brainwashed? Can he recover?"

Nick Fury finally asked.

What he cared about was whether they could get information about Zemo out of him.

"It'll be difficult," Natasha replied. "First, we need the trigger words used for the brainwashing. Then we'd have to use those words to unlock the mental conditioning before gradually repairing his subconscious and making him forget the activation phrases."

She based the analysis on Red Room conditioning methods.

And from what she could tell, the Winter Soldier program operated in almost exactly the same way.

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## Chapter 478 478: Tony Learns the Truth

"This is getting troublesome. We don't know the trigger words, so how are we supposed to undo the brainwashing?"

Rhodey sighed. They had finally gotten a lead, only for it to hit another dead end.

"What mission did Zemo give you?"

Natasha asked. Even if the Winter Soldier had been brainwashed, the mission itself would remain intact in his memory.

Fake Bucky pursed his lips.

At first, he didn't want to say anything, but then he remembered the secret tied to the 1991 mission.

Now was the perfect time to reveal it.

"My mission was to divide the Avengers. To make Captain America and Iron Man completely turn against each other—even force them to kill one another—and destroy the team from within."

He did not hide anything. That truly had been Zemo's assignment.

"And?"

Natasha knew missions were never that simple. A single Bucky Barnes wasn't enough to make Steve and Tony completely fall apart.

"There's more... I was supposed to tell you something. A piece of information that must reach Tony Stark. Only once he learns it will he truly break with Captain America and go to war with him."

The moment those words left his mouth, Karl's brows furrowed sharply.

He already knew what the "information" was.

The truth behind Tony's parents' deaths.

"What information?"

Now everyone was curious. They all wanted to know what could possibly drive Tony and Steve to become enemies.

Karl hesitated.

He truly wondered whether Tony should hear this at all.

The reason he had killed the real Bucky in the first place was precisely to keep Tony from learning the truth.

...Forget it. If Tony finds out, then he finds out. The real Bucky is already dead anyway. Tony isn't going to fight Steve to the death over a dead man.

That was Karl's conclusion.

If the real Bucky were standing here, Steve would never sit by and let Tony kill him.

But this was a fake.

If Tony killed him, then so be it.

Call it venting his anger.

"It was a mission in 1991. Bucky Barnes, acting as the Winter Soldier, was ordered to retrieve something... and kill the people transporting it."

Fake Bucky spoke clearly.

Those memories had been implanted into him, so he remembered them perfectly.

"1991?!"

Tony froze.

Then a certain thought immediately surfaced in his mind.

"What is it, Tony? What happened in 1991?"

Natasha asked as everyone turned to look at him—except Karl.

"My parents died that year."

Tony stared fixedly at Fake Bucky.

His suspicions grew stronger and stronger.

The only thing capable of making him and Steve completely break apart had to be something deeply personal to him.

And nothing was more important than his parents.

"Was that mission related to them?"

"...Yes."

Fake Bucky nodded.

"Bucky's mission was to kill Howard and Maria Stark... and take the Super Soldier Serum from their car."

"H-How could this..."

Steve went completely blank.

Howard Stark had once been his comrade, one of the key figures of the Strategic Scientific Reserve.

Steve's shield had been created by Howard himself.

Howard, Peggy, and Steve had been the closest of friends.

And now he was learning that Bucky had been the one who murdered him.

"That really would've torn Tony and Steve apart. Zemo's plan was vicious."

Rhodey couldn't help sighing.

As Tony's oldest friend, he knew better than anyone how obsessed Tony had always been with his parents' deaths.

Tony acted like he didn't care, but secretly he had investigated the incident countless times.

"Once Tony learned the truth, he would definitely try to kill Bucky to avenge his parents," Natasha analyzed calmly. "And Steve would do everything in his power to protect Bucky."

"For Steve, Bucky is too important. He already watched him fall to his death once. Now that Bucky's back, there's no way he'd let anything happen to him again."

"But for Tony, someone who murdered his parents is an unforgivable enemy. He would never let Bucky live."

"And that creates the conflict."

"Tony would attack Steve if Steve protected Bucky. Steve would fight Tony to save Bucky."

"In the end, both sides would destroy each other."

Tony said nothing.

He simply stood up and walked out of the conference room.

Natasha instinctively tried to stop him, but Karl raised a hand.

"Gwen, call Pepper. Tell her everything and have her come here."

"Right now, she's the only one who can pull Tony out of this."

Just like Superman needed Lois Lane, Pepper was Tony's Lois Lane.

Gwen nodded and immediately called Pepper.

The moment Pepper learned the truth, she boarded her private jet and rushed over.

Fake Bucky watched Tony leave and immediately realized the plan had failed.

Everything depended on nobody discovering he was an impostor.

Originally, Zemo believed Tony Stark would direct all his hatred toward Steve Rogers.

But things had turned out completely differently.

"Where's Zemo?"

Nick Fury finally spoke.

At this point, Fake Bucky had already revealed nearly everything.

All that remained was the whereabouts of the mastermind himself.

"I don't know."

Fake Bucky shook his head.

He was only the one carrying out orders—a disposable tool.

Who reports their movements to a tool?

"Think carefully. Did he ever mention any location? Anything at all."

Fury pressed further.

He knew this Fake Bucky probably had nothing useful left to give, but he still refused to give up.

Fake Bucky simply shook his head silently.

"Send him to the Raft."

Fury turned to Natasha.

She nodded.

The Raft was a prison built specifically for super-criminals—packed with advanced technology and hidden deep within the Pacific Ocean.

Even if someone escaped their cell, they'd still have to survive the crushing ocean pressure and cross an endless sea.

"So what now? We still have no clue where Zemo is."

Everyone looked toward Fury.

Now it was his turn to deliver results.

"We wait for news. It won't take long."

Fury maintained his usual mysterious demeanor, as though everything remained under his control.

Everyone eventually dispersed to rest.

Karl and the others didn't return to the Devil May Cry Office either. Instead, they stayed at the base.

At this point, the highest-ranking person in the facility besides Tony was Sharon.

Tony was emotionally wrecked, and Sharon worked for Fury.

Which basically meant Fury had just freeloaded himself an ultra-advanced Avengers base.

In the end, he was the one profiting the most from all this.

An hour later, Pepper arrived at the facility in a hurry.

After asking where Tony was, she immediately entered his room.

It wasn't until the next day that the two finally came out.

Tony wore massive dark circles under his eyes—clearly he hadn't slept all night.

His mood was still terrible, though better than before.

Now Tony felt a crushing frustration.

He finally knew who had murdered his parents...

...but the real culprit was already dead.

That feeling alone nearly drove him insane.

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## **Chapter 479 479: The HYDRA Fortress**

"Sir, the investigation results are in."

Everyone was eating in the cafeteria. Tony looked completely uninterested, absentmindedly chewing on bread and drinking milk when JARVIS's voice suddenly rang out.

Tony pulled out his phone, and a holographic projection immediately appeared.

The image showed a man sitting in the corner of a hotel lobby reading a book, a cup of coffee placed in front of him. He looked perfectly relaxed, while outside the hotel was a world of snow and ice.

"Helmut Zemo. Formerly employed by Sokovia's intelligence department. He once led an assassination squad known as Echo Scorpion. After Sokovia was destroyed, he disappeared without a trace."

JARVIS's voice echoed through the room as Zemo's appearance was displayed in the hologram.

"Where is he now?" Tony asked.

"Moscow. However, he purchased a sightseeing train ticket bound for the Siberian Plateau."

JARVIS immediately displayed the ticket information.

"Siberia? I heard the fake Bucky mention before that the Winter Soldier base was somewhere in Siberia," Steve said at once.

"Then there's a good chance Zemo is heading there. But the fake Bucky also said the place had already been destroyed. Could there be another hidden fortress?"

"JARVIS, use the satellites to track the target. I want the exact location."

Tony viciously bit into his bread.

After breakfast, everyone immediately gathered in the conference room.

"Zemo has shown himself. Once JARVIS tracks his final destination, we move out immediately," Steve said first as everyone took their seats.

"I've also had Shuri use satellite positioning to track him. He won't get away," Erik said while rubbing the vibranium beads around his wrist.

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Moscow.

Wearing a heavy coat and hat, Zemo boarded the train heading toward Siberia in a deliberately low-profile disguise.

His destination wasn't the final stop.

He planned to get off midway, then use a snowmobile to reach the location.

The plan went smoothly.

Zemo disembarked halfway through the journey and arrived at a rundown warehouse, where a snowmobile was parked inside.

Driving the snowmobile across the snowfields, he eventually reached the HYDRA fortress.

From behind him, Zemo pulled out a large backpack stuffed with more than a dozen high-explosive timed bombs.

He intended to destroy the entire place.

Whether it was the Super Soldier Serum or the Winter Soldier test subjects, all of it would vanish from the world forever.

Zemo hated superpowered individuals.

They were the ones who destroyed Sokovia.

Destroyed his homeland.

Ever since then, he had sworn to eradicate all superhumans and everything capable of turning humans into superhumans.

And this HYDRA fortress was the first step toward fulfilling that goal.

Skillfully opening the massive gate, Zemo slipped through the gap, and the doors slowly shut behind him.

Not long afterward, a Quinjet suddenly decloaked and slowly descended in front of the fortress entrance.

The hatch opened, and everyone stepped out.

"Looks like we found the right place. He got here before us," Tony said, pointing at the snowmobile beside the jet.

Judging by the snow accumulation on it, the vehicle had clearly arrived only recently.

"Be careful. Who knows what kind of traps he set inside," Steve warned as he removed the shield from his back and cautiously approached the door.

"Password lock. Even if we smash it apart, the door won't open without the code."

"Easy."

Tony walked over and extended a finger. A device resembling a lockpick popped out and violently jammed itself into the keypad, instantly destroying the screen.

A string of numerical combinations appeared before Tony's eyes while his helmet rapidly analyzed every possible password sequence.

Only a few minutes later—

Click.

The giant metal doors slowly opened.

"Let's move. Stay alert."

Steve immediately stepped inside first.

This wasn't his first time infiltrating a HYDRA bunker. These underground fortresses were massive mazes where it was easy to get lost.

Fortunately, neither Steve nor Tony had any trouble navigating them.

"JARVIS, deploy the micro-bots. Scan the entire facility."

"Yes, sir. Deploying micro-bots now."

At Tony's command, a compartment opened on the back of his armor, releasing countless insect-sized micro-robots that rapidly scattered in every direction.

At the same time, a detailed map of the fortress gradually formed before Tony's eyes.

"Follow me."

Using the scanned map, Tony led everyone toward the central control room.

Most fortresses followed the same design philosophy—the most important facilities were always located in the central control room, protected by layers upon layers of defenses.

The HYDRA fortress was enormous, practically a labyrinth.

Following Tony through countless twists and turns, Karl felt dizzy from all the winding corridors.

After more than ten minutes of navigating the maze, they finally arrived at the control room.

But the entire room was pitch black.

Only one area remained illuminated—the office on the upper level.

Then suddenly, every light in the control room switched on at once.

Rows upon rows of incubation pods appeared before them.

Inside each pod lay a person.

But every single one of them was already dead.

These were all Winter Soldiers.

And the bullet holes riddling the pods made it obvious they had all been executed by Zemo.

"This... this is—?!"

Everyone was shocked.

They had guessed the pods contained Winter Soldiers, but none of them expected there to be so many.

"Their deaths came while they slept. Winter Soldiers remain in prolonged hibernation until activated."

Zemo's voice rang out.

At the same time, his figure appeared behind the window of the office above them.

Bang!

A gunshot rang out as Sam immediately drew his pistol and fired at the window.

But the glass remained completely unharmed—not even a scratch appeared.

"Bulletproof glass?!"

Sam exclaimed in surprise.

Realizing his guns were useless, he holstered them again. Against that kind of reinforced glass, his dual Scorpions were meaningless.

Zemo ignored Sam entirely and continued speaking.

"Did you truly think I would allow people like them to continue existing? This world has no need for superhumans. Your existence only disrupts the natural order of the world. You are the source of violence and slaughter. You are the root cause of crime itself."

Zemo's voice echoed through the loudspeakers.

"But I'm grateful to these Winter Soldiers. They led all of you here."

"And all of you will die here together with them."

Zemo raised a hand and wiped the glass in front of him before lightly tapping on it.

"Oh, and one more thing. This room was specially designed by HYDRA. It can even withstand missile strikes."

"Missiles? My firepower's stronger than that."

Rhodey scoffed.

The weapon systems on his armor were far more destructive than ordinary missiles.

He was even carrying two thermite bombs—and a compact thermobaric bomb.

If necessary, he could vaporize the entire fortress without difficulty.

No defensive structure could survive a thermobaric bomb detonating point-blank.

Thermobaric weapons were widely recognized as the most devastating non-nuclear weapons in existence, second only to nuclear arms.

If Rhodey fired one in here, the entire fortress would be erased from existence.

Not even ashes would remain.

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## Chapter 480 480: Zemo Meets His End

"I believe you, Colonel Rhodes," Zemo said calmly, "but if you do that, all of you will die with me."

As he spoke, he pulled out a remote control and pressed one of the buttons.

Beep... beep... beep...

A faint sound echoed through the fortress.

Everyone's expressions immediately changed.

"Bombs!"

Steve frowned deeply and quickly scanned the surroundings, searching for the explosives, but found nothing.

"No need to look," Zemo said as he waved the remote in his hand. "I've already planted bombs at every structural node throughout the fortress."

"The moment I release this button, everything here will be reduced to dust."

"You killed all those people in Vienna just to lure us here?" Tony seemed to realize something as he slowly floated into the air, meeting Zemo's gaze through the glass.

"For over a year now, the Avengers have consumed my every thought. I studied each and every one of you obsessively—all for the sake of avenging my family."

"You already know who I am, don't you? That's right. I'm Sokovian."

Zemo's eyes gradually turned cold as he pointed downward at Karl.

"It was him. He destroyed all of Sokovia. I lost everything—my family, my friends, my wife, my daughter. And now, all of you will suffer the same fate."

Zemo stared at Karl.

Even now, he still remembered that colossal figure that blotted out the sky—the giant that resembled an ancient demon god.

That monster had absorbed the entirety of Sokovia... along with everyone still on it.

Karl merely sneered before slowly floating up beside Tony, directly facing Zemo.

And Zemo returned the stare without fear.

Karl raised a finger.

A white light slowly gathered at the tip, violent and overwhelming magical power surging outward.

In an instant, the entire control room was engulfed in a raging magical storm.

Million Flare—the weakened version of Bahamut's Billion Flare.

More than enough to blast through mere bulletproof glass.

"Wait! We need him alive!"

Tony immediately tried to stop Karl.

If Karl killed Zemo now, they'd lose all leverage with the United Nations.

Karl flicked his finger.

The white light erupted instantly.

The supposedly missile-proof glass melted open in a massive hole, and along with it, Zemo's arm holding the detonator vanished completely.

"AAARGH!!!"

Zemo crashed to the floor, clutching his charred shoulder and screaming in agony.

His entire arm had disappeared.

The wound at his shoulder was completely blackened from cauterization.

Tony immediately flew inside and injected him with a sedative.

Zemo's head tilted to the side as he passed out cold.

"There. Done and dusted."

Karl clapped his hands.

He had no interest in wasting words with someone like Zemo.

If violence could solve the problem, then there was no point arguing.

Because the detonator had been vaporized along with Zemo's arm, the bombs never exploded.

The group exited the fortress and boarded the Quinjet.

"What about this place?" Sam asked as the jet lifted off, looking down at the fortress below. "Someone's bound to discover it eventually. It's a potential threat."

"Simple," Tony said as he nudged the unconscious Zemo with his foot. "Didn't he already come up with the solution for us?"

"JARVIS, did you find the signal?"

"Yes, sir. Detonation is available at any time."

"Then what are we waiting for?"

Tony looked down at the fortress through the holographic display.

**BOOM!!!**

A towering explosion erupted below.

The location of the HYDRA fortress was swallowed by a gigantic fireball.

Moments later, an avalanche thundered down from the surrounding mountains, burying the flames beneath endless white snow, leaving only thick black smoke curling into the sky.

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After more than a month of endless negotiations and political wrangling, the Avengers finally broke free from United Nations control.

They became a completely neutral organization once more.

Subject to global oversight—but oversight only.

Including the Security Council, the UN retained only the right to supervise and make recommendations. They possessed no actual authority or control over the Avengers whatsoever.

No one really knew how Nick Fury managed to convince the entire world to agree to such terms.

But in the end, the Avengers once again became an independent organization dedicated solely to protecting the world, free from the control of any nation or individual.

As for the former Avengers facility established by the United States, it officially became the new Avengers Headquarters.

After all, free was free.

True to his philosophy of never wasting free resources, Nick Fury shamelessly declared himself the new owner.

Likewise, the agents previously stationed at the base were reassigned and resumed intelligence operations across the globe.

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At the very top floor of the base, Nick Fury sat leisurely in the enormous office, quietly admiring the view outside the window.

Then suddenly—

A black dot appeared in the sky.

And rapidly grew larger.

At the same time, shrill alarms blared throughout the entire Avengers base.

"Motherf—! Which bastard is causing trouble now?!"

Fury's good mood instantly vanished.

He slammed a hand onto the communicator.

"What happened?"

His voice was cold and harsh. Anyone would be furious after having their peace interrupted.

"Director, we've detected a spacecraft entering low Earth orbit. It's rapidly approaching Earth."

An agent's voice came through the communicator.

"A spacecraft? What spacecraft? Are the Chitauri back?"

The memory of the Chitauri invasion immediately surfaced in Fury's mind.

He practically launched himself out of his chair and hurried to the window.

Thankfully, there was no giant portal in the sky.

"No, Director. This appears to be a small spacecraft. These are the images returned by the satellites."

A projection appeared on Fury's communicator.

The ship resembled a giant bird of prey, colored in bright orange and blue.

"Patch me through to their signal. I want to know why they've come to Earth."

Fury spoke immediately.

The ship's signal was unusually open and easy to locate. The agents connected to it almost effortlessly.

The moment the connection went through—

LOUD ROCK MUSIC exploded through the entire Avengers base, nearly causing Fury to throw off his headset.

"This is Earth's Avengers Base. Unknown spacecraft, state your purpose. Repeat, state your purpose."

Fury's voice was low and icy, devoid of emotion.

"Woow~! Quill, Earthlings can actually connect to your ship's signal? Looks like your junk heap needs an upgrade."

A snarky voice came through the speakers.

If Karl were here, he would instantly recognize Rocket's voice.

"Oh, shove it! Stop messing with my ship! I'm the captain here! Rocket, put those wires down right now!!"

Another voice immediately followed, accompanied by a chaotic barrage of banging noises and loud laughter.

On Fury's side, his face darkened completely.

So the aliens on the other side were all idiots.

"Oh right! Hey there, Earth people! You can call me Quill. Haven't talked to Earthlings in ages. I'm from Earth too, actually—got kidnapped by aliens as a kid. Man, coming back here feels really weird..."

Quill rambled nonstop, his mouth never stopping for even a second.

Fury was speechless.

What the hell was this group?

Was there not a single normal person among them capable of having a proper conversation?

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