

MARVEL MANIFESTOR

Chapter 481 481: The Guardians of the Galaxy Arrive on Earth

This Quill guy really should've been sent to hang out with Peter or Scott.

They'd definitely have endless common topics to talk about—three nonstop chatterboxes together would probably drive everyone else insane.

Still, Nick Fury managed to extract some useful information.

First, the speaker was also from Earth.

Second, he'd apparently been kidnapped by aliens as a child.

If he was human, that made things easier. At the very least, communication wouldn't be difficult.

"You're from Earth? Are there any other humans on your ship?" Fury immediately asked.

The question carried multiple layers of meaning. Besides the obvious, Fury was also probing for the number of passengers aboard and where the others came from.

Clearly, Quill had absolutely no defenses against that kind of questioning.

His loose mouth spilled everything instantly.

"Oh, I'm the only Earthling. There are five of us total—a big red dude, a green-skinned hot alien chick, a tree guy, a raccoon, and yours truly, the devastatingly handsome Star-Lord."

Gamora and Rocket both covered their faces in disbelief.

As the only two people on the ship whose brains were functioning properly, they found Quill's tendency to reveal everything about themselves absolutely unbearable.

"Move aside. I'll handle this."

Gamora finally couldn't take it anymore.

Quill's intelligence was a complete mystery.

When he was dumb, he was really dumb.

Like right now.

"People of Earth, we came here looking for someone."

Gamora skipped the nonsense and stated their purpose directly.

Meanwhile, the ship had already broken through Earth's atmosphere.

Rocket gave Gamora a thumbs-up, while the navigation display in the center of the cockpit pinpointed the source of Fury's signal.

"Head straight there."

At Boss Lady Gamora's command, the spacecraft immediately accelerated toward Avengers Base.

Inside the Avengers Base, Fury had just opened his mouth to ask who they were looking for when the alien ship suddenly appeared directly above the facility.

"Earthling, so this is your headquarters? Doesn't look very impressive."

From the ship, Gamora looked down over the entire Avengers compound.

She had seen far more technologically advanced bases.

More imposing ones.

She had even seen living biological bases made of flesh and tissue.

Compared to those, the Avengers Base looked primitive and outdated.

Alarms rang throughout the facility.

Steve and the Avengers still present in the base immediately rushed outside and looked up at the hovering spacecraft overhead.

"So this is the alien ship Fury mentioned?" Steve asked Natasha.

"Yeah. Fury said there's a human aboard who was kidnapped by aliens as a child. Apparently they're here looking for someone."

"Looking for someone? Do any of you know aliens?"

Rhodey shot into the air with a burst of thrusters, attempting to approach Quill's ship.

But the next moment, the ship's main cannon unfolded and locked directly onto him.

"Whoa—hey! I'm not hostile!"

Rhodey immediately raised both hands.

Fury's orders were to make contact with the aliens—not start a war.

"Attention, Earthlings below! I'm landing the ship now, so you'd better move back. This thing crashes into stuff all the time unless you hand over the head of that tin-can guy."

Rocket piloted the ship in a crooked, wobbling descent.

Even now, his obsession with collecting weird body parts hadn't disappeared.

"The hell?! That alien wants my head? A genius brain like mine would be wasted on him. Wait, no—why should I give him my head at all?!"

Rhodey's train of thought was equally bizarre.

"Enough, Rocket. Quit screwing around and find Karl first."

Gamora's voice came through the speakers.

Everyone below immediately froze upon hearing Karl's name.

"The Karl the aliens mentioned... is it the Karl we know?"

Rhodey looked toward the others.

He had clearly heard the name, and there was only one Karl he knew.

"No idea. We'll know once they come out," Sam said while looking toward the ship's hatch.

The ship had already landed.

The hatch opened.

The first person out was a blond man who looked exactly like a human from Earth.

Beside him walked a long-haired green-skinned beauty.

Behind them came a muscular brute, a towering tree creature, and a short furry animal.

"Sorry, but I gotta ask—is that thing your pet?" Rhodey's loose mouth struck first again.

Rocket instantly exploded.

Baring his teeth, he looked ready to leap at Rhodey.

"The hell?! You're the pet! Your whole family are pets!!"

Quill quickly grabbed Rocket and tossed him toward Groot behind them.

"I am Groot."

Groot calmly spoke a single sentence while holding Rocket.

"The hell?! Even you too?! I'm the most dangerous bounty hunter in the galaxy!!"

Rocket unleashed a furious tirade at Groot while obediently sitting on his shoulder.

Quill then walked straight toward Steve.

In his eyes, Steve was obviously the leader of the group.

After all, Captain America naturally carried the aura of a born leader.

"You the boss here?"

Quill extended his hand.

Steve shook it politely.

"Hard to believe Earth still looks the same after I've been gone for over twenty years. Feels weirdly nostalgic."

Quill looked around.

There wasn't much greenery inside the base itself, but in the distance there were still forests and rivers.

"You're really from Earth?" Steve asked despite already knowing the answer.

Among the group, Quill looked the most human.

Surely it wasn't the tree guy or the raccoon.

"Yep. Used to live in Colorado. Been a long time since I came back. Planning to go visit."

Quill thought about his childhood.

His mother's death.

The father he'd never met.

And the canyon where Yondu took him away.

After introductions were exchanged, Quill and the others followed Steve's group into the base and sat down in a conference room.

"So who exactly is this Karl you're looking for? We happen to know a Karl too," Natasha asked once everyone had settled down.

The more she listened, the more she felt the Karl Quill mentioned was the same one they knew.

"Oh, his name's Karl Norman. We fought Ronan the Accuser together and stopped him from destroying Xandar..."

The moment Quill started talking, he couldn't stop.

He vividly described the entire battle against Ronan in dramatic detail.

Sure enough.

Everyone silently concluded that the Karl Quill knew was indeed their Karl.

But how had Karl even gotten involved with these people?

"As far as we know, Karl has never left Earth. So how exactly did he end up helping you save Xandar?" Steve asked the key question.

To his knowledge, Karl had never left Earth.

And even if he had, he'd need transportation.

Humans couldn't survive in the vacuum of space with their bare bodies alone.

Of course, Steve still didn't know someone like Captain Marvel existed.

Otherwise, that assumption would've fallen apart immediately.

"Huh? That's not right. I met Karl in a prison on Xandar," Quill said, equally confused.

How could these people claim Karl had never left Earth?

Could it be they weren't talking about the same Karl at all?

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Chapter 482 482: A New Mission Arrives

"Want to know the answer to that question? Simple. Just call Karl over and ask him."

Natasha spoke up directly. Whether it was really the Karl they knew, they would find out the moment he showed up.

With that, Natasha immediately called the office.

At the same time, Karl was lounging comfortably with his head resting on Skye's lap while she fed him pieces of fruit.

Wanda sat nearby with one long leg crossed over the other, Moguri curled up in her arms. The three of them were so bored they were practically growing mold. Out of the four of them, only Gwen had a proper job, spending her days doing research at Stark Industries' biological laboratory.

"So bored~~ How about..."

Karl reached out with wandering hands toward Skye's ample chest, only for Skye to shove a chunk of mango into his mouth, nearly choking him.

"Don't even think about it. Tonight."

Skye rejected him mercilessly. Full stomachs always led to dirty thoughts, and Karl was no exception.

Right as the two were messing around, Karl's phone rang. It was Natasha.

"Yeeaah~~"

Karl lazily answered, placing the phone on Skye's thigh and turning on speakerphone.

"Karl, come to the base immediately. Someone's here looking for you."

Natasha's voice was calm and steady.

"Who is it? Why do I have to go all the way to the base? It's so far away~~"

Karl clearly didn't feel like moving. Avengers Base was in DC while he was in New York. Not impossibly far, but definitely not close enough to justify getting up. Staying home with Skye and Wanda was much better.

"They came from another planet. They said they're looking for Karl. I assume that means you?"

Natasha replied.

Karl froze for a moment, then immediately thought of Quill and the others. They were basically the only aliens he knew.

"Quill and the others came to Earth? Why are they at Avengers Base?"

Karl quickly asked.

"So you really do know them? They're here at the base right now. Come over."

Natasha said. Everyone around her had heard Karl's reaction, confirming that the Karl Quill mentioned was indeed the same Karl they knew.

"Alright~~ I'm coming."

Karl replied lazily before hanging up.

Then he kissed Skye's thigh before finally sitting up.

"You two wanna come to Avengers Base with me? I'll introduce you to some friends."

"Friends? Those aliens Natasha mentioned?"

Skye and Wanda had both heard the conversation and were now curious about the so-called extraterrestrials.

"Yep. One of them's from Earth. The others are aliens."

Karl nodded. Technically, Quill was only half an Earthling, since he was the child of a human and a living planet, but close enough.

"Can we come? I wanna see aliens too."

Skye immediately perked up. The only aliens she'd met before were the Chitauri, Thor, Loki, and Malekith. Even though they had visited Xandar before, that was still only one planet among countless extraterrestrial civilizations.

"Sure. Good chance to introduce everyone."

Karl agreed without hesitation.

The group immediately traveled through the Chocobo Space and arrived at the base, where they met Quill and the others.

"Hey~~ Karl! Long time no see!!"

Quill enthusiastically hugged Karl. Beside him, Drax did the same. The massive brute's thought process was bizarre, but he was genuinely warm toward friends.

As for Groot, he still said the exact same sentence as always. Karl could understand the emotion behind it, though he still had no clue what it actually meant.

After everyone was introduced, Gamora was immediately dragged off by the overly friendly trio of Gwen, Skye, and Natasha, who started chatting with her about who-knows-what.

"Karl, actually, we came to Earth because we need your help."

Quill finally explained their purpose.

"Help? You guys run into trouble?"

The one who spoke was Tony.

That's right—after spotting Quill's ship via satellite earlier, Tony had rushed over the moment it landed at the base, arriving almost at the same time as Karl.

"Not exactly. We just picked up a huge job, and the few of us probably can't handle it alone. So we wanted you to come along. Of course, we'll split the payment with you."

Quill said. This mission was big enough that even after giving Karl a cut, they'd still make a fortune.

"What kind of currency do aliens use? Don't tell me it's still dollars."

Tony asked curiously. As one of America's top capitalists, he was highly sensitive to anything involving money.

"Of course not. Our currency system's pretty simple—Credits. The Galactic Federation uses unified personal credit accounts as payment. Makes management easier, and it's convenient for tracking criminals too."

Quill pulled out a device similar to a smartphone. With a tap, a string of numbers appeared on the screen.

No physical cash at all—just digits.

"Huh. So aliens aren't all that impressive either. I thought your money would be something high-tech."

Tony instantly lost interest. Turns out aliens also used digital currency. Nothing innovative there.

Though, to be fair, credits really were the simplest and most efficient system for interstellar trade—easy transactions, no physical money laundering, and ideal for tracking.

"So? Karl, this mission pays this much."

Quill gestured with his fingers.

Karl immediately understood.

This really was a huge contract.

"What's the mission exactly?"

Seeing Karl interested, Quill immediately activated a holographic projection displaying the mission details.

Sovereign Planet.

Eliminate an invasive parasite.

The mission itself sounded simple, but the name "Sovereign" immediately caught Karl's attention.

Wasn't that the golden people planet from Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 2? The place where Adam Warlock would eventually be born?

"Looks like Guardians 2 is starting..."

Karl thought to himself.

Though the timeline had clearly changed a little. During the battle with Ronan, Groot hadn't sacrificed himself this time, so he was still in his towering tree form instead of becoming Baby Groot.

[Ding~]

Suddenly, a familiar notification rang out in Karl's mind.

His expression instantly sharpened.

The long-awaited system mission had finally arrived.

[Ding~ Mission triggered.]

[Quill's Return to His Roots]

[Mission Objective: Help Quill successfully escape Ego's control.]

[Mission Reward: The Final Summon Beast – Dark Summon Beast, Odin~]

"??"

Karl mentally typed two giant question marks.

"System... what do you mean by 'final summon beast'? Did you eat Leviathan or something?"

[Ding~ Host, Leviathan is not among the Eight Summon Beasts in this category~]

The explanation somehow explained absolutely nothing.

Karl was completely baffled.

What did it mean "not among the summon beasts"?

Did DLC content suddenly stop counting as part of the game?

That was Leviathan they were talking about!

The Water Demon Beast whose size was second only to Titan, whose destructive ferocity surpassed even Ifrit's.

And the system just casually erased it with one sentence?!

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Chapter 483 483: This Is a Parasite?!

"System... you... you're unbelievable... damn impressive..."

Karl was utterly defeated. He no longer knew how to describe this cursed system of his. Worse still, the thing didn't even seem particularly intelligent—there was absolutely no room for negotiation.

"This damn dog system..."

Karl muttered unwillingly, but there was nothing he could do.

"Fighting alien parasites? Karl, I've never begged anyone in my life, but now I'm begging you—take your good bro along with you~~~"

On the other side, the moment Tony heard they'd be dealing with extraterrestrial lifeforms, he immediately grabbed Karl's hand with teary eyes.

Karl's jaw nearly dropped.

Since when had Tony become like this? This completely violated his character setting.

"Yeah, Karl, we're going too!"

Not far away, Gwen and Skye, who had been whispering among themselves, suddenly spoke in unison. Only Wanda stayed quiet, though the longing in her eyes made her intentions obvious.

"We already talked it over with Gamora."

Skye hooked her arm around Gamora's with an expression that clearly said refusal was not an option.

"We're going too. We already got Gamora's approval."

Karl instantly felt a headache coming on. Why were these three ladies joining the chaos?

He looked toward Gamora as if asking for confirmation. Quill and the others also turned toward her. After all, every extra person meant another split in the reward money.

"They said they don't want any payment."

The moment Gamora said that, Quill and Rocket immediately agreed.

No payment? Free labor?

Who wouldn't want more of that?

"I! I don't want payment either!!"

Tony practically launched himself into the air in excitement. He had zero interest in money—he just wanted to see alien planets.

Quill instantly approved.

Another free fighter.

This was the richest operation he'd ever run.

At that moment, Nick Fury, who had been observing everything from behind the scenes, contacted Natasha through her earpiece and instructed her to tell Tony to record everything he saw and heard. All of it would be invaluable information for understanding extraterrestrial civilizations.

Natasha didn't hide this from Quill's group and relayed Fury's request directly.

Tony happily agreed, and Quill's team didn't object either.

Tony excitedly rushed home to upgrade his armor. Since he had no idea whether JARVIS would function properly in outer space, he needed to optimize several systems immediately.

Afterward, everyone accompanied Quill to the home he had lived in before Yondu abducted him. The place already had new owners now—a farmer and his family.

Quill's eyes reddened.

He remembered his childhood, his mother who had died from cancer, and the father he had never met.

At the cliff where Yondu had taken him away, Quill sat silently for an entire day.

No one disturbed him.

Everyone knew he was immersed in memories—some of the few he still had of Earth and his mother.

After a brief rest period, Tony arrived at the base wearing his newly upgraded armor, and the group officially embarked on their journey to the Sovereign planet.

Inside the ship, Tony enthusiastically toured the already cramped vessel.

His genius-level intellect meshed perfectly with Rocket's.

Among the Guardians of the Galaxy, Rocket possessed the highest IQ. Spending all day surrounded by idiots would drive anyone insane eventually, no matter how smart they were.

Tony's arrival perfectly complemented him.

One sat in the pilot seat while the other occupied the co-pilot seat, the two diving headfirst into discussions about physics, quantum mechanics, and spatial folding.

Other than those two, nobody else on the ship understood a single word they were saying.

Skye was a genius in electronics but only vaguely understood physics.

Gwen specialized in biology and likewise had limited knowledge in the field.

Wanda and Karl were both complete academic disasters.

The difference was that Wanda never had the opportunity to properly study, while Karl simply wasn't built for school.

He slept harder than anyone during class and played harder than anyone afterward.

Soon, the ship arrived at the Sovereign planet and reached the mission site: the Sovereign energy plant.

After landing, Tony was the first to step out.

Looking at the ultra-advanced energy facility, Tony marveled at the planet's technological level while simultaneously analyzing the Sovereign energy source.

"JARVIS, scan these materials."

Tony had already suited up in his armor and ordered JARVIS to scan the golden liquid.

"Sir, this is an unknown organic substance containing enormous energy reserves. Preliminary estimates indicate its energy output is several hundred times greater than your chest reactor."

"What?! What the hell?! Several hundred times?! If this stuff explodes, wouldn't the whole planet disappear?!"

Looking at the massive quantities of the substance before him, Tony's eyelids twitched uncontrollably.

"Sir, your concern is unnecessary. This organic material is significantly more stable than your arc reactor. It is essentially non-explosive."

JARVIS immediately dismissed Tony's fears.

"Hoo~~ That's good... that's very good~~"

Tony definitely did not want to arrive on an alien planet only to get vaporized instantly.

At that moment, everyone else disembarked from the ship, interrupting Tony's train of thought.

"Quill, where's this parasite?"

Gamora asked. Quill had accepted the job, so she didn't actually know what the parasite looked like. She had assumed it was some ordinary insect.

"Should be over there."

Quill checked the monitoring device in his hand. A red dot appeared on the nearby energy storage plaza.

"Then what are we waiting for? I'm already pumped!"

Tony excitedly blasted into the air and flew toward the plaza.

But moments later, his horrified voice exploded through everyone's communicators.

"Motherf***er~! THIS is what you call a parasite?!"

Tony stared at the gigantic alien creature before him, his scalp going numb.

The thing was impossible to look at directly.

Its entire body was made of exposed crimson muscle. Massive octopus-like tentacles writhed everywhere. Its oversized head had no visible facial features, only a giant maw filled with razor-sharp teeth.

Tony had become so shocked he forgot to breathe.

The others quickly arrived at the plaza as well, finally seeing the "parasite" the Sovereign Queen had mentioned.

Quill's group barely reacted. They had seen far too many alien creatures before. Compared to some of those, this thing wasn't even that disgusting.

But everyone else—including Karl—momentarily stopped breathing.

Karl had seen it in the movie during his previous life, but seeing it in person was an entirely different level of impact.

As for Gwen, Skye, and Wanda, the grotesque alien lifeform caused immediate physical discomfort simply because it was their first time seeing something so horrifying.

Still, the three quickly adjusted.

"So what are we waiting for? The bounty's right in front of us!!"

Rocket shouted immediately, charging forward with his gun raised.

At the same time, Drax followed close behind, leaping high into the air as he hurled himself toward the monster.

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Chapter 484 484: It Exploded

"Let's go too!"

Karl looked at Gwen and the other two beside him. The Ultima Weapon instantly appeared in his hand, and with a sweep of his cloak, he charged toward the creature as well.

The monster noticed them immediately and smashed a massive tentacle down at the group.

Suddenly, a crimson force froze the tentacle in midair. Scarlet energy erupted violently, and the appendage exploded with a bang. Thick slime poured down like a torrential rain, drenching everyone below.

"Ptooy! Ptooy! Wanda, take it easy! This is disgusting!"

Gwen and Skye, who had just been showered in slime, immediately turned and yelled at Wanda. No one escaped it. Every single person had been baptized by the creature's sticky bodily fluids.

Tony shot into the air at once. His gauntlets transformed into massive energy cannons, unleashing a barrage of firepower at the creature.

Unfortunately, the monster's hide was absurdly tough. The explosions only slowed it down slightly. The cannons were nowhere near as effective as Wanda's Chaos Magic.

A flash of sword light streaked through the air, followed by countless wind blades roaring forward. Two tentacles were severed instantly and flew skyward before crashing heavily to the ground.

The creature let out a shriek and opened its giant maw, spewing out a cloud of pink mist while its remaining tentacles lashed wildly at everyone. Every strike shook the entire plaza.

"This is what you call a parasite?! What the hell is it parasitizing?! This is obviously a monster!"

Tony dodged the attacks while continuously firing energy blasts, specifically targeting weak points like the creature's wounds and mouth.

"How should I know? That's what the mission briefing called it! Damn it! I'm definitely charging extra for this!"

Quill fired nonstop while cursing loudly.

"Skye! Get ready!"

Wanda suddenly shouted. The three girls had already come up with a plan. Gwen would use her webbing to launch Skye above the monster, Wanda would forcibly pry its head upward with Chaos Magic, and then Skye would blast straight into its mouth with her vibration powers.

In theory, the plan was perfect.

But reality quickly threw them a curveball.

For some reason, Gwen's webbing had been affected by electromagnetic radiation. Its durability and tensile strength dropped dramatically, making it impossible to restrain the creature properly.

"Karl! Help me pin down those damn tentacles!"

Seeing her webbing fail, Gwen immediately called for backup.

Although Karl had no idea what the girls were planning, he still waved his hand. A biting cold wind instantly swept across the plaza, followed by the appearance of a breathtakingly beautiful giant ice flower.

Bzzzt—!

The ice flower pulsed rhythmically.

In an instant, white mist spread outward, freezing everything it touched. The creature's tentacles were immediately frozen solid against the ground.

"Everyone back off!"

Gwen shouted.

Karl instantly teleported aside, while Quill and the others instinctively retreated.

Then Gwen fired a strand of webbing around Skye's waist.

"Wanda, now!"

At Gwen's signal, Wanda unleashed a massive surge of Chaos Magic that formed into a gigantic crimson hand in midair. It grabbed the creature's head and violently forced it upward.

The monster struggled frantically, but with all its tentacles frozen, it could only thrash helplessly.

Chaos Magic wasn't something it could break free from so easily. As Wanda exerted more strength, the creature's resistance weakened and its head was gradually forced higher and higher.

"Skye!"

Gwen shouted again, then swung her arm violently. The webbing launched Skye high into the air, directly above the monster's open maw.

Bzzzzzt—!!

Skye thrust both palms forward. Endless vibration waves erupted from her hands and blasted straight into the creature's gaping mouth.

The violent vibrations instantly shredded its internal organs. Its body began swelling and distorting as the tremors spread through it.

The monster's struggle became even more violent.

Wanda gritted her teeth and maintained her hold, but the creature thrashed harder and harder. Every convulsion sent massive amounts of fluid spewing from its fang-filled mouth.

"Not good! Everybody move!!"

Tony instantly flew to Skye's side, grabbed her, and shot upward into the sky.

Karl teleported in front of Wanda and Gwen and waved his hand, instantly erecting a towering wall of ice before them.

Quill and the others weren't nearly as fast. Only Gamora, who happened to be closer to Wanda, managed to dive behind the ice wall in time.

BOOM—!!!

A deafening explosion erupted.

The creature's body was completely torn apart from within by Skye's vibrations, bursting apart into chunks as yellow-green fluids sprayed in every direction.

Tony and Skye were far enough away to avoid it. Karl's group was protected by the ice wall. Groot quickly transformed one arm into a shield.

Only Quill, Drax, and Rocket got hit full-on.

"Damn it!! Damn it!! You people are unbelievable! Damn it all!!!"

Covered head to toe in foul-smelling slime, Quill and Rocket immediately started jumping around and swearing furiously.

Both of them actually had jetpacks, but neither had realized the creature would explode, so they got caught completely off guard.

Drax, on the other hand, didn't care at all. After wiping slime off his face, he burst into loud laughter, utterly unconcerned about the disgusting fluids covering his body.

Tony descended with Skye, while Karl's ice shield shattered at the same time.

Everyone who'd managed to stay clean instinctively kept their distance from Quill's trio. Even Groot looked unwilling to get close to them.

"So what exactly is this thing?"

After Quill and the others finally cleaned themselves up, the group gathered around a giant battery-like device. Tony was the first to speak.

"Harbulary batteries."

Quill answered casually.

"?? What kind of dumbass battery name is that?"

Drax replied without even looking up, still wiping down his knives.

"Were you even listening to me? Harbulary batteries!"

Quill was speechless. Sometimes he genuinely wanted to crack Drax's skull open just to see if his brain was even larger than a peanut.

"One tiny battery like this is worth tens of thousands of credits. That's why the Sovereign hired us to exterminate the parasite and offered such a huge reward."

Rocket casually pried one battery loose. It was about the size of an ordinary AA battery, but the golden liquid inside contained absurd amounts of energy.

Tony secretly pocketed several of them and immediately stored them inside his armor. The nanotech sealed itself shut instantly afterward.

Aside from Karl, no one noticed what Tony had done.

And Karl already knew Tony would definitely steal a few, so he said nothing. After all, Rocket was the same kind of person—he'd secretly taken several too.

"You've gotta be careful dealing with these people. They're insanely sensitive and can't take the slightest insult. Offend them, and we're finished."

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Chapter 485 485: Nebula Captured

"You've gotta be careful dealing with these people. They're insanely sensitive and can't take even the slightest offense. Say the wrong thing and we won't be welcome anywhere in their territory."

As the group walked back toward the ship, Quill gave everyone a reminder.

He'd dealt with the Sovereign before. These people were not only arrogant, but absurdly thin-skinned. Say anything remotely questionable and they'd somehow twist it into an insult against themselves, then immediately fly into a rage.

Back on other planets, that had merely been annoying.

But now they were standing in the Sovereign's homeworld. One wrong sentence might cost them their lives.

Soon, the group arrived at the royal capital of the Sovereign—a gigantic golden sphere that resembled a jewel set atop a crown.

"How was architecture like this even built? It completely defies structural physics."

Looking at the absurdly impossible construction, Tony once again felt his worldview being rewritten.

"This isn't a backward planet like Earth. The Sovereign's technology is incredibly advanced. Anti-gravity suspension tech is already common throughout the galaxy. For them, this stuff is child's play."

Quill had traveled to countless planets under Yondu and knew very well how advanced the galaxy truly was.

Compared to them, Earth was practically primitive.

Most advanced civilizations wouldn't even bother invading Earth—the place was too underdeveloped to interest them.

Ironically, back on Earth, countless people were still enthusiastically broadcasting signals into space in hopes of contacting aliens, completely unaware that doing so might attract catastrophic consequences.

The group entered the palace.

A queen with golden skin that looked as though it had been coated in liquid metal sat upon a throne, surrounded by equally golden guards. The place resembled an Oscar statue showroom.

"We thank you for your service, Guardians of the Galaxy."

The queen spoke from above with supreme arrogance.

"I cannot allow the citizens of Sovereign to risk their lives. Every one of them is born according to the perfect design of our species. Their bodies and minds are flawless."

"So all Sovereign people are artificially engineered?"

Tony immediately grinned.

"I still prefer the traditional way of making babies."

Apparently, he wasn't too fond of test-tube babies. Or perhaps he just preferred the process itself.

"I completely agree~"

Quill instantly chimed in.

He certainly wasn't some innocent saint. Across the galaxy, he'd probably slept with half the known species already.

Karl shrugged as well.

Back in his previous life, he'd heard all kinds of rumors about test-tube babies—claims that they lacked emotional connection with their parents, suffered emotional deficiencies, and so on. Whether any of it was true, he had no idea.

But in traditional Chinese culture, people generally held resistance toward children conceived through such technological means. To put it bluntly, many believed test-tube babies weren't truly "born" from the mother and would therefore lack emotional warmth.

Karl never really understood that logic, so he'd always just treated it as idle gossip.

"Alright, alright~"

Gamora finally couldn't listen anymore.

If they kept going, the topic would spiral completely out of control.

One Quill was already unbearable enough. Now there was another Earth-born idiot who shared the exact same sense of humor. If left unchecked, the two of them would probably end up hand-in-hand at some alien nightclub.

"Your Majesty, can we receive the payment you promised us now? We'll depart immediately afterward."

Gamora stepped forward.

She didn't care how people reproduced. She cared about getting paid.

The queen raised a finger slightly.

One of her attendants nodded, and moments later a notification sound rang out from Rocket's wrist device.

"The money's here. Time to go."

Rocket sounded anxious.

After all, he'd secretly stolen several Harbulary batteries. If that got discovered, they'd never make it off this planet alive.

"Not so fast. I've prepared an additional gift for you."

The queen glanced toward one of the guards.

The guard immediately departed and soon returned, accompanied by subordinates dragging along a cloaked prisoner.

The hood was yanked away, revealing a blue cybernetic face.

Nebula.

The same Nebula who had escaped after the battle on Xandar.

Somehow, she'd been captured by the Sovereign.

"Nebula?! How did you end up here?"

Quill exclaimed in surprise before immediately glancing toward Gamora.

"Family reunion~"

He even softly hummed a tune under his breath, trying desperately to ease the awkward tension.

Tony and the girls quickly noticed that Nebula wasn't entirely organic. She was more machine than flesh.

Especially Tony.

His sensitivity toward machinery was on another level.

"JARVIS, is she synthetic?"

Tony whispered.

"Yes, sir. She possesses highly advanced cybernetic architecture. However, portions of her body still retain organic tissue. She appears to be a fusion of biological and mechanical lifeforms. Frankly speaking, Earth technology is nowhere near capable of replicating something like this."

After secretly scanning Nebula, even JARVIS sounded impressed.

Most of her body was mechanical, with only fragments of flesh remaining.

Gamora remained silent, staring steadily at Nebula.

Nebula stared back just as coldly.

"I understand she is your sister. Consider her a gift."

The queen's tone remained entirely emotionless.

Honestly, she sounded more robotic than Nebula herself.

"To me, she's merely a bounty from Xandar."

Gamora replied expressionlessly, though she still reached down and helped Nebula to her feet.

Her words weren't genuine.

She simply didn't want to expose her true emotions.

More importantly, she was putting on a show for the Sovereign.

You never knew who might exploit a weakness. She needed them to believe she and Nebula were irreconcilable enemies.

"That one attempted to steal our batteries and was caught by our soldiers. You may dispose of her however you wish."

The queen rose from her throne. As she moved, her regal robes transformed into an elegant golden dress.

Gamora said nothing more.

She grabbed Nebula and turned to leave.

Nebula struggled violently the entire time.

And unlike Gamora, she wasn't pretending.

She still genuinely hated her sister.

"Thank you very much, Your Majesty."

Quill bowed politely and prepared to leave as well.

But the queen's next words stopped him.

"Do you understand your own origins, Mister Quill?"

Quill paused.

"My mother was from Earth. Terra."

"And your father?"

The queen's expression became strangely complicated.

Part curiosity.

Part fear.

"He wasn't from Earth. That's all I know."

Quill looked increasingly confused but still answered honestly.

"I sense an extraordinary bloodline within you. The feeling it gives me is... primal."

The queen stared into Quill's eyes as if trying to uncover something hidden there.

But all she found was confusion.

Among everyone present, only Karl knew who Quill's father really was.

A planet.

"I heard your people were all arrogant assholes," Rocket suddenly interrupted.

"But honestly, that description still isn't enough."

He had completely forgotten that Sovereign people were born with glass hearts and hair-trigger egos.

Several Sovereign citizens immediately frowned.

Even the nearby guards raised their weapons.

Karl sighed internally.

Just like in the original plot, if they wanted to leave Sovereign alive, they were probably going to have to fight their way out.

Rocket's mouth was every bit as dangerous as Quill's.

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Chapter 486 486: Sovereign Pursuers

"Apologies, Your Majesty, but we really must be going."

Quill hurriedly cut in, then shot everyone a meaningful look before turning to leave.

Drax grabbed Rocket by the collar and practically dragged him out as well. Better to run before the Sovereign decided to open fire.

The group successfully boarded the ship. Rocket immediately powered everything up and launched the vessel the instant the flight route was set.

Only after entering jump space did he finally relax.

Once the ship stabilized in hyperspace, everyone settled into their own activities.

"Hey, buddy, you stole batteries too?"

Rocket noticed Tony studying a Harbulary battery and immediately grinned.

Then he proudly pulled out the ones he'd stolen himself. The two even shared a perfectly synchronized high-five.

"JARVIS, analyze the molecular structure inside."

Tony casually placed the battery on the table. His nanotech helmet separated from the armor and hovered before it, glowing lights scanning continuously.

"What the queen said about my father... it sounded like she knew something."

Quill sat at the table holding a cup of coffee.

Actual Earth coffee.

Before leaving Earth, they'd gone on a massive shopping spree—and naturally, Nick Fury had footed the bill.

Gamora walked past him while dragging along Nebula, whose wrists were still cuffed.

"Don't think too much about it. She was probably just talking nonsense."

Meanwhile, Gwen, Wanda, and Skye stood at the rear of the ship, gazing through the glass at the flowing river of stars outside.

Technically, there wasn't much to see. While in jump space, all they could observe were endless streams of streaking lights.

Even so, the three girls watched with endless fascination.

It was their first time traveling aboard a spaceship. Everything felt new and exciting.

Karl, on the other hand, remained the exact same lazy bum as always. He found a sofa and sprawled across it comfortably.

"Guys, we've got ships coming up behind us."

Rocket suddenly warned everyone.

At the same moment, the holographic display above the central table projected the situation outside.

"What the hell?! What can chase us inside jump space?!"

Quill stared in disbelief.

Once a ship entered hyperspace, it essentially traveled within a subspace dimension where time and space operated independently. In simple terms, they were currently flying through a private dimensional corridor.

So what the hell could possibly be tailing them?

They got their answer quickly.

A golden energy blast slammed directly into Quill's ship.

The vessel was violently forced out of jump space and thrown into an unfamiliar star system.

"It's Sovereign ships! Those bastards can actually invade subspace?!"

Rocket stared in horror at the swarm of ships behind them.

The vessels were entirely golden, resembling an enormous swarm of mechanical hornets.

And there were no Sovereign pilots aboard.

These were unmanned fighters, remotely controlled from a Sovereign command center back on their homeworld.

"Motherf—!"

Quill instantly transformed into Nick Fury.

He rushed into the co-pilot seat beside Rocket, and the two began weaving the ship through dense barrages of energy fire.

"This won't work forever. We need to fight back!"

Rocket shouted while frantically piloting.

The problem wasn't their firepower.

It was the sheer number of enemy ships.

Tony immediately equipped his armor.

His latest suit had already been upgraded for long-term space survival. Staying alive in vacuum for an entire month was no issue anymore.

"Open the hatch. I'm going out there."

As Tony spoke, eight floating cannons deployed from behind him.

His nanotech armor transformed continuously—massive thrusters, plasma sword hilts extending from his legs, and high-output energy cannons forming over both arms.

At this point, Tony looked less like Iron Man and more like a Gundam.

"Portable space suits are in the rear hatch. Drax will show you how they work!"

Quill shouted over his shoulder while still operating the ship's weapons nonstop.

Karl headed toward the rear hatch alongside Tony.

Drax was already waiting there with a blaster rifle in hand.

Wanda and Skye were there too, already suited up.

"What are you two doing here? Go back inside."

The moment Karl saw them, he immediately tried sending them away.

Especially Skye.

Her vibration powers were basically useless in vacuum.

Everyone knew vibrations required a medium to travel through. In the vacuum of space, there was no medium—meaning her powers would be nearly ineffective.

As for Gwen, she hadn't followed because she understood perfectly well that she'd be useless in space. No surfaces for web-swinging. No flight capabilities. Going outside would only create problems.

"Skye goes back. I'm coming with you."

Wanda's tone was firm.

Chaos Magic didn't care about space or vacuum. Just like the Phoenix Force, it remained one of the strongest powers in existence no matter the environment.

Skye understood her own limitations. Though unwilling, she still removed her portable suit module and attached it onto Karl's back.

The portable suit was simply a fist-sized magnetic device.

Once attached to someone's back, it generated an invisible protective field around the body, isolating them from vacuum and freezing temperatures while supplying oxygen and other life-support necessities.

"Fine. Wanda comes with us. Skye, go help Quill. This ship should have more gun turrets."

Karl already knew Quill's ship had multiple weapon stations.

Right now, Gamora and Groot were already operating some of them.

After securing their safety tethers, Karl, Wanda, Tony, and Drax opened the hatch and launched out into space.

Thanks to the tether cables, they didn't drift aimlessly.

And the counterattack began immediately.

Karl held Terminus Est and continuously pulled the trigger.

Empowered by Bahamut's strength, the gun's firepower multiplied several times over. Every shot pierced through multiple enemy fighters at once.

Tony released his floating cannons, letting them fire autonomously while his arm-mounted energy cannons unleashed explosions large enough to destroy clusters of nearby ships.

Drax's approach was much simpler.

Like Karl, he just kept shooting nonstop.

As for Wanda...

She was even simpler.

With casual waves of her hand, scarlet Chaos Magic swept across space like the apocalypse itself, annihilating entire swaths of Sovereign fighters.

Among the four of them, Wanda's destructive capability was by far the most terrifying.

But no matter how powerful they were, four people could only do so much.

A tiger still couldn't defeat a pack of wolves forever.

The swarm ships were simply too numerous.

And soon, enemy fighters appeared not only behind them, but ahead of them as well.

Countless ships filled the starfield in every direction.

"Damn it!! Did we assassinate the Sovereign Queen or something?! Did these lunatics send their entire planet's fleet after us over a few batteries?! I'll give the damn things back, okay?!"

Rocket's fur stood on end as he stared at the endless sea of ships.

He looked completely puffed up in terror.

For the first time in a long while, he genuinely felt death closing in around them.

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Chapter 487 487: Emergency Crash Landing

"Carl, I've got a way to wipe out all these ships at once."

Tony moved closer to Carl as he spoke.

"What kind of method?"

"EMP cannon. But you know how it works—it doesn't discriminate between friend and foe. Once I fire it, our ship's systems will get fried too, so..."

"No need, Tony. Save your EMP cannon."

Carl immediately rejected the idea.

"We're in space. If the ship breaks down, we'll all be stranded out here."

"I'll handle it instead. Just don't forget to pull me back afterward."

As he spoke, Carl unclipped the safety tether around his waist.

Tony instantly understood what he intended to do and nodded.

"Don't worry. I'll drag you back myself. Besides, Wanda's here too. With her powers, you'll be fine."

Carl nodded.

Then the cloak behind him suddenly spread wide as he flew toward the swarm fighters.

Only now did he remember that the cloak itself allowed him to fly through space.

My brain really got kicked by a donkey...

A scorching aura suddenly erupted from around Carl's body.

Thermal radiation could travel through space without any medium, just like light radiation.

A silent wave burst outward.

From the flames emerged a gigantic Firebird over a hundred meters long. Blue flames danced along its rainbow-colored tail feathers while countless fireballs lit up around it like stars.

"Drax, get Wanda back!"

Tony immediately flew over, grabbing both Drax and Wanda as he retreated toward the rear hatch.

At the same time, everyone inside the ship saw Carl's transformed form.

"T-That... that's Carl?!"

Inside the cabin, Gamora stared blankly at the massive Firebird outside the window.

Behind her, Nebula involuntarily shivered.

She remembered the scene on Xandar—the elegant yet terrifying figure standing amidst the ice and snow.

Only now, the elegance remained, but the danger had escalated far beyond before.

"Carl can turn into a hot woman... and now he can turn into a giant bird too?!"

Quill's thoughtless comment immediately made Gwen and Skye laugh.

He had only ever seen Carl transform into Shiva, never the Firebird.

"He can turn into other things too."

Gwen smiled.

Everyone was communicating through the comms while stationed in different parts of the ship. Gwen and Skye were manning the upper wing cannons, while Groot operated the lower gun emplacement.

Outside, the Firebird soared through space trailing blazing flames.

Wherever it passed, countless Sovereign drones exploded like fireworks celebrating its arrival.

At the same time, meteor-like fireballs continuously shot out from around its body, streaking through space before plunging into the drone swarm and erupting into brilliant explosions.

"T-This... what is that thing?! Could it be... the Phoenix Force?!"

Inside the Sovereign command chamber, countless pilots stared at Carl's Firebird form in shock.

Their drone fleet was being annihilated without resistance.

In their understanding, only the ancient Phoenix Force could display such overwhelming might.

And although the Firebird wasn't exactly a phoenix, the resemblance was enough for them to mistake it as such.

"Commander, what do we do now?"

One pilot turned toward the commanding officer.

The meaning was obvious.

The Phoenix Force is here. What are we supposed to fight it with? Our heads?

Just as the commander hesitated, the battlefield suddenly changed dramatically.

Two beams of light suddenly shot out from the distant sea of stars.

In an instant, every Sovereign drone ship was obliterated.

They turned directly into cosmic dust without leaving behind even a single fragment.

The Firebird abruptly lifted its head toward the distant starfield.

Then another beam appeared—

This one aimed directly at the Firebird itself.

"SKREEEE—!"

The Firebird let out a piercing cry.

No sound could travel through space, but the flames around it exploded violently.

A miniature sun-like fireball condensed before it and shot toward the incoming beam.

A silent explosion illuminated the deep darkness of space.

However, everyone had underestimated the blast radius.

Quill's ship was instantly swallowed by the shockwave.

The entire vessel crumpled under the pressure as its outer metal plating twisted and warped severely.

In a single instant, all power was lost.

"Holy shit! What the hell is Carl doing?! The ship's completely dead!"

Rocket shouted.

The control panel before him sparked violently as though it were burning out.

Not only that, the ship's power systems flickered erratically, clearly on the verge of total shutdown.

"Rocket, we've gotta manually restart the systems below!"

Quill yelled.

"You keep the ship steady—I'll go restart it manually!"

After shouting that, Quill unbuckled his harness and staggered toward the lower deck.

The explosion's aftereffects finally faded, and Carl reverted from the Firebird form.

At that moment, crimson energy wrapped precisely around his body.

He didn't resist.

He knew it was Wanda.

Then, guided by the scarlet energy, Carl slowly floated back toward the rear hatch.

Drax struggled several times before finally managing to shut the outer hatch door.

But the second door leading into the ship refused to open no matter what he did.

"Quill, what's going on?"

Drax asked bluntly, completely ignoring the fact that the ship itself looked like it had been crumpled into a paper ball.

At that moment, the ship's power completely died.

The vessel had lost all functionality.

"QUILL! What the hell are you doing?!"

Gamora finally stopped caring about Nebula and rushed into the cockpit, shouting furiously.

Inside, only Rocket remained, frantically working the controls while trying to restore power.

"Quill went to manually reboot the power systems. Right now we're basically in free fall."

Rocket remained unusually calm.

Not far ahead of them was an unfamiliar planet, and the damaged ship was already drifting toward it because of the explosion.

Suddenly, the power returned.

Rocket immediately restarted the engines and did everything possible to stabilize the ship.

RUMBLE—

But in the very next second, the power died again.

This time, there was no sign of recovery.

"Fuck!"

Rocket slammed a paw against the control panel, causing another shower of sparks.

"Everybody hold on! We're going down!!"

One minute later, they entered the planet's gravitational field.

The ship accelerated rapidly toward the surface.

Rocket immediately strapped himself in and shouted through the comms.

At the same time, an egg-shaped spacecraft flashed past them.

A man stood atop the strange vessel, waving at them.

But no one had the attention to spare.

Everyone tightly secured themselves in preparation for the violent impact of atmospheric entry.

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Chapter 488 488: A One-Inch-Tall Little Man

At a glance, the planet clearly possessed a complete atmosphere.

Cloud layers, continents, and oceans were all plainly visible.

In truth, life-bearing planets were countless throughout the galaxy. The Milky Way was simply too vast. Intelligent civilizations were everywhere, and habitable worlds were equally abundant.

At the rear hatch of the ship, Tony's body was tightly magnetized to the wall by his nanotech armor like a giant magnet.

Meanwhile, Drax clung onto him without the slightest dignity.

Since there was nowhere to secure himself, the two looked utterly ridiculous.

Carl, on the other hand, was holding Wanda in his arms.

The pair were encased within a thick layer of solid ice, like sculptures frozen inside a glacier.

Yet the freezing temperature didn't affect them in the slightest because Carl himself had created the ice.

The massive block had frozen itself firmly to the floor of the ship.

Despite the violent shaking of the crashing vessel, the two of them felt nothing at all, and the ice itself remained perfectly intact without a single crack.

"I wonder how Gwen and Skye are doing... I'm worried about them..."

Inside the ice, Wanda spoke through telepathy.

"Don't worry. They'll be fine."

Carl comforted her.

And honestly, he really wasn't worried.

He knew exactly what the two girls were capable of.

With Gwen's agility and spider-sense, as long as she stayed focused she could avoid nearly any threat.

As for Skye, under the current circumstances her vibration powers would actually be extremely effective.

If she wanted to, she could probably shatter the ship itself.

The vessel tore through the atmosphere at terrifying speed.

Because its shields had failed, multiple sections of the ship were already on fire, while the outer metal plating was continuously ripped away by the airflow.

"Brace yourselves! We're landing!!"

Rocket shouted.

The ship slammed headfirst into a vast forest.

Countless trees were flattened in its wake, and the ground itself was plowed apart.

After nearly a full minute of violent sliding, the ship finally came to a stop.

At this point, however, it was essentially totaled.

Near the rear hatch, Tony was still plastered against the wall—

Then the wall behind him finally gave way with a loud crash.

Drax, who had been holding onto him, fell directly on top of him.

"Come on, buddy. I already have a girlfriend and I'm not looking to switch anytime soon. Also, my orientation is perfectly normal, so can you get the hell off me?!"

Tony's voice rang out through the suit's electronic filter.

Only then did Drax realize what had happened and slowly climb off him.

Crack—!

A series of cracking sounds suddenly echoed behind them.

Carl walked out from the shattered ice while carrying Wanda.

Neither of them even had the slightest trace of cold on their bodies.

At the same time, the others crawled out from the wreckage one by one, all covered in soot and dirt.

Gwen had even activated her nanotech suit.

"Where's Skye?"

Gwen looked toward Carl and Wanda and immediately asked.

Suddenly—

BOOM!

The left wing of the ship exploded open with a massive hole.

The already unstable wing snapped apart instantly as Skye jumped out from inside.

"No! My ship! My baby!!"

Quill wailed dramatically as he ran toward what remained of his ship—

Or rather, the half that was still left.

He bent over miserably, inspecting the damage with pure heartbreak written across his face.

"Quill, what are you looking at? The ship's already become a pile of scrap metal! Hahahaha!!"

Drax walked over and wrapped an arm around Quill's shoulders before bursting into loud laughter.

The murderous look in Quill's eyes could no longer be hidden.

Right now, he genuinely wanted to pull out a gun and shoot the bastard.

Nearby in the wreckage, Gamora and Nebula shoved aside a massive piece of twisted metal and climbed out, both looking filthy.

"Look at the mess you idiots caused!!"

Gamora stormed over and immediately started unloading on them.

Behind her, Nebula looked completely stunned.

She had never seen her sister this utterly furious before.

"What does this have to do with me?! It's all because Rocket stole those stupid batteries!"

Quill finally snapped as well and immediately redirected the blame toward Rocket.

"They're called dumbass batteries."

Drax added fuel to the fire.

"Why the hell are you people still talking about batteries?! Some tiny little guy instantly wiped out all those drone ships earlier!"

Rocket finally exploded too.

Was liking to steal stuff really enough reason to pin everything on him?!

"They're always like this?"

Tony walked over beside Carl and nudged him with his shoulder.

"This is how they bond."

Carl had long since gotten used to it.

"Relax. They won't actually start fighting."

These idiots were always complaining about each other and acting like they couldn't stand one another.

But when things truly mattered, they'd still entrust their backs and lives to each other without hesitation.

"A little guy? How little?"

Quill immediately changed the subject.

Everyone's attention instantly shifted to the "little man" Rocket mentioned, as if the previous argument had never happened.

"I dunno. About this small?"

Rocket gestured with his thumb and index finger.

That particular hand gesture would instantly lose him the Korean market.

"You're saying a one-inch-tall little guy saved us?"

Even Gamora looked speechless.

Among the Guardians, she was probably the closest thing to a normal person.

"More or less. If he got closer he probably would've looked bigger..."

Rocket genuinely sounded unsure whether the crash had damaged his brain.

"That's called perspective, you dumb raccoon."

Quill immediately stabbed him with that remark.

Rocket's fur instantly stood on end.

"DON'T CALL ME A RACCOON!!"

Quill rolled his eyes.

"Alright, fine. That was my mistake."

Then he suddenly changed tone.

"I should've called you a trash raccoon instead."

Rocket froze before turning toward Drax and Gamora.

"What does that mean? Is that supposed to sound better?"

Drax answered seriously.

"I don't know."

Nearby, Nebula looked like she wanted to smash her own head into something.

What kind of freaks am I traveling with?

Will my IQ start dropping too if I stay around them long enough?

At that moment, Gwen suddenly noticed something approaching in the distance.

"Something's flying over here... Is that a boiled egg?"

Everyone immediately followed her gaze.

Sure enough, a white oval-shaped spacecraft descended from the sky.

The group instantly drew their weapons and stood alert.

Tony even deployed the floating cannons behind him.

"You people should untie me already. You need my help."

Nebula suddenly spoke up.

Gamora didn't even look at her.

"Do I look stupid to you, Nebula?"

The group instinctively formed a defensive circle.

Even Nebula silently joined them.

"I bet it's the one-inch little guy."

Drax stared at the descending egg-shaped ship overhead.

Soon, the ship landed completely.

The hatch opened.

A man and a woman stepped out.

The woman wore dark green clothing, had long black hair, black eyes, and a pair of antennae on her head.

The man, meanwhile, had graying hair and a beard and looked no different from a human from Earth.

Among everyone present, only Carl knew the truth.

That man was Quill's father.

The planet.

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Chapter 489 489: Ego

"After all these years, I've finally found you, my child."

The man looked at Quill with a warm, fatherly smile.

Meanwhile, Quill stood there holding both blasters, completely on guard.

"Who the hell are you?"

"You're practically the spitting image of me when I was young. Just look at my handsome face—that alone explains everything."

The man wasn't lying.

He really was handsome in the classic "distinguished European old man" sort of way.

"My name is Ego. I'm your father, Peter."

Ego accurately called out Quill's name.

Quill clearly remembered that he had never met this man before.

So how did this "Ego" know his name?

And now he was claiming to be his dad?

Quill didn't even know what his real father looked like.

At this point, he seriously suspected the guy was another child trafficker like Yondu.

"Wait a second—you're saying you're his father?"

Tony retracted his helmet and stared at Ego in surprise.

"Wouldn't there be reproductive barriers between aliens and humans? Just because you say you're his father doesn't make it true."

Tony immediately spotted the flaw in Ego's statement.

Human genes weren't particularly dominant. Most foreign genetic material would directly destabilize human DNA, eventually causing total cellular collapse.

Just like Tony said, even humans and Earth animals had genetic barriers, much less extraterrestrials.

But Ego merely smiled.

"You seem to be one of the smarter people on Earth."

"You're correct—genetic incompatibility does exist. However, I can alter my own genetic sequence, allowing it to adjust its aggressiveness according to the strength of the other party's genes."

"So your concern doesn't apply to me."

Tony was immediately rendered speechless.

Genetics wasn't his field.

He was a physicist.

So he turned toward Gwen beside him.

After all, she was the biology genius here.

The moment Gwen saw Tony looking at her, she understood what he meant and shook her head helplessly.

She had never researched anything like this either.

There was no way for her to know whether aliens could truly alter their own genetic structures.

While Carl's group was still debating alien reproductive compatibility—

Far away on an ice-covered planet, Yondu sat outside a tavern in the middle of a frozen wasteland.

This place served as one of the Ravagers' gathering points, where members from every Ravager faction gathered.

One of his subordinates waved at him from outside, prompting Yondu to put on his coat and head out.

The entire world outside was buried beneath endless snow and ice, as though trapped in an eternal ice age.

Everything on the planet was frozen solid.

Yondu's expression was gloomy.

Earlier, he had gotten into a heated argument with one of the respected Ravager leaders.

That leader wanted him expelled from the Ravagers entirely.

The reason?

Child trafficking.

Among the Ravagers, that was absolutely forbidden.

But Yondu had his own difficulties.

At first, he genuinely hadn't known he was helping traffic children.

He thought he was merely locating missing kids.

Then he encountered young Quill.

Later, someone used Quill's life as leverage against him, forcing him to continue participating in the outlawed trade.

What Yondu didn't know was that even his own crew had already split into two factions.

One believed he was no longer fit to lead because he had let the traitor Quill escape.

According to Ravager law, traitors were supposed to be executed.

Yet Yondu had secretly spared Quill.

The other faction remained fiercely loyal to Yondu, believing him to still be an excellent captain.

Yondu walked down the steps, but before he could speak to his men—

Solemn music suddenly echoed through the area, sounding almost like a sacred hymn.

Moments later, a group of golden-skinned people approached while escorting a woman dressed in flowing white robes.

Every time the woman took a step, two attendants immediately rolled out more carpet before her feet, ensuring she would never touch the filthy ground.

If Carl and the others were present, they would instantly recognize them as Sovereign.

And the noble woman was their queen.

Like a holy angel descending from the heavens, the queen slowly approached Yondu.

Her immaculate appearance formed a stark contrast against Yondu's rugged Ravager outfit.

Compared to her, Yondu looked like he had just crawled out of a garbage dump.

Yondu felt deeply uncomfortable.

The queen walked painfully slowly.

Only after the carpet was extended a little farther would she take another step.

For a rough man like Yondu, this entire process was completely incomprehensible.

When she finally stopped before him, the queen still wore that same arrogant expression.

"Yondu Udonta, I have a commission for you..."

The Sovereign Queen spoke with lofty arrogance.

As for the "commission," there was no need to guess.

It obviously concerned Quill and the others.

Otherwise, she wouldn't have traveled all the way to this frozen wasteland just to find Yondu.

She knew Quill's origins.

He had once been Yondu's subordinate.

And in the queen's eyes, Yondu would surely be more than willing to deal with a former traitor.

Meanwhile, on Carl's side, night had already fallen.

Everyone sat around a campfire while Ego recounted stories from the past to Quill.

"After your mother passed away, I hired Yondu to retrieve you from Earth."

"But instead of bringing you to me, he kept you for himself."

"I still don't understand why he did that."

Ego sighed regretfully.

He could fool everyone else present—

But not Carl.

Having seen the plot before, Carl naturally knew exactly why Ego wanted Quill.

Still, he said nothing.

Even if he exposed the truth now, Ego could easily talk his way around it.

It was better for Quill to personally witness what kind of bastard his father truly was.

"Because back then I was small and skinny."

"I could squeeze into places adults couldn't reach, which made stealing easier."

Quill looked downcast.

Ever since childhood, Yondu had constantly used him for theft.

As he grew older, he was gradually drawn deeper into Ravager operations.

But Quill didn't understand something:

Yondu was actually the person who treated him best.

The only one who truly regarded him as a son.

Everything Yondu taught him was simply preparation for surviving the brutal galaxy.

Ego sighed softly before continuing.

"From that day onward, I searched endlessly for you."

"Meanwhile, Yondu kept avoiding me."

"I always thought Yondu was your dad~"

Drax said while gnawing on the leg of some unknown animal, grease dripping from his mouth.

"What?! We've been together this long and you thought Yondu was my father?"

"You two look exactly alike."

Drax tore off another chunk of meat and sucked it into his mouth while speaking unclearly.

Quill stared blankly.

He and Yondu looked obviously different, alright?!

"Yondu is blue!"

Rocket finally couldn't take it anymore.

He knew Drax was dumb, but he hadn't expected him to literally be unable to distinguish colors.

"I know. But look at Quill's face. It's basically molded from Yondu's."

After hearing that, Rocket directly grabbed his own head in defeat.

He gave up.

"No, Yondu is NOT my father!"

Quill immediately denied it.

At the same time, he grabbed a large piece of meat and shoved it toward Drax.

"Just eat your food and stop talking."

Drax instantly tossed aside the giant drumstick in his hand and happily stuffed the new meat into his mouth..

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Chapter 490 490: The Innocent Mantis Girl

Karl and the others stayed quiet. It wasn't really their place to interfere in this matter. Still, Tony had already noticed a few suspicious details. He was doubtful, but he chose not to voice it yet.

Besides them, there was one more person remaining unusually calm—Gamora, who was sitting together with Nebula.

"How did you find us?" Gamora suddenly asked.

They had only just run into danger, and immediately afterward this man claiming to be Quill's father conveniently appeared. She didn't believe in coincidences.

"Although my information network is somewhat limited, I've still heard of the famous Star-Lord."

Ego casually dodged the question.

"So, how about we leave now?"

"Your friends are all welcome to come as well."

After speaking, Ego looked toward Quill.

"I promise you, my child, it's a place unlike anything you've ever seen. There, I can explain why you're special... and finally make up for lost time as your father."

His tone was earnest and sincere.

Gamora narrowed her eyes. The more she listened, the less she trusted this man. The fact that he deliberately avoided her question only made him seem even more suspicious.

After finishing, Ego headed directly toward his egg-shaped spaceship.

Once he had walked far enough away, Quill glanced around at everyone.

"I don't trust him."

Quill wasn't stupid. There was no way he'd believe someone was his father just because of a few words. Honestly, he'd find it easier to believe Yondu would suddenly appear out of nowhere and kick him across the face.

"Walk with me."

Gamora stood up and headed into the woods without waiting for a reply. After hesitating briefly, Quill quickly followed after her.

"What are they doing?"

Nebula looked at Karl and the others in confusion.

"Uh... well... you're still too young. We'll explain when you're older."

Tony wore a teasing grin. Clearly, his thoughts had gone somewhere else entirely.

Nebula rolled her eyes at him. Even if she technically didn't have proper white eyeballs.

The woman with antennae who had been quietly sitting nearby finally spoke up timidly.

"My name is Mantis."

Then she forced out a smile uglier than crying and stared nervously at everyone.

"Whoa... what kind of expression is that?"

Tony's mouth remained as sharp as ever.

"A smile. I heard humans like people who smile."

It was obvious Mantis was completely inexperienced with social interaction. Even basic communication seemed newly learned to her.

"Well, technically that's not wrong, but... you know... your smile kinda looks like something from a horror movie."

Tony traced circles over his own face while flashing what he believed to be a charming smile.

"I grew up alone on Ego's planet. I don't understand how people communicate, so I searched through a lot of information to learn."

Mantis still spoke in a tiny, cautious voice, as if she was afraid speaking too loudly might upset someone.

"You said you grew up alone. What about your family?"

Hearing that Mantis had grown up by herself, Gwen assumed something tragic had happened to her family.

But Mantis tilted her head in confusion.

"Family? What is that? Since I was born, I've always been alone. There wasn't anyone else on the planet. Not even animals."

Her words stunned everyone.

Karl, Tony, and Nebula immediately glanced toward Ego's ship, checking whether he was secretly listening nearby.

Karl knew the plot already, while Tony and Nebula had instantly become deeply suspicious.

A planet capable of supporting intelligent life shouldn't possibly contain only a single living being. And the complete absence of animals was even more impossible.

"You're saying Ego's planet has no other living creatures besides you?" Tony asked again.

As a scientist, he simply couldn't accept such a bizarre situation.

Mantis nodded cautiously once more.

"That's right. All the animals are gone too."

"How could that happen? Were there never any animals to begin with, or did something happen later?"

Tony continued pressing for answers. A scientist's instinct to uncover the truth was practically hardwired into him.

But this time, Mantis fell silent.

She looked visibly nervous and instinctively glanced toward Ego's spaceship again.

Nebula exchanged a look with Karl and Tony.

As one of Thanos' adopted daughters, Nebula was far from stupid. After scheming against Gamora for years, she had plenty of brains.

"This feels wrong," Nebula whispered first.

"There's definitely something suspicious about this Ego guy."

"Agreed," Tony said immediately.

"He reminds me of Obadiah. Same fake smile, same fake sincerity. Says all the right things on the surface, but who knows what he's really thinking underneath."

Ego's behavior reminded Tony too much of Obadiah Stane—the uncle figure he once trusted completely before getting stabbed in the back.

Karl simply nodded without speaking.

It still wasn't time yet.

Without evidence, saying anything now would only sound baseless. Tony and Gwen's group might believe him, but the others definitely wouldn't.

No one knew exactly what Quill and Gamora talked about in the woods, but after returning, Quill decided to go with Ego and see things for himself.

Still, he remained cautious and proposed splitting into two groups.

"What?! You're leaving me behind with that fox?!"

Nebula instantly exploded.

Early that morning, Gamora had informed her that she, Rocket, and Groot would stay behind to repair the ship.

Nebula absolutely did not want to remain here.

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