

# Marvel Manifestor

## Chapter 61: How Did You Solve the Freezing Problem?

"Jarvis—flares, now!"

At Tony's command, two rows of launch pods flipped open on the Mark III's back. Dozens of glowing red countermeasure flares shot out in all directions.

Each flare released false heat signatures, instantly confusing several of the pursuing missiles. They collided midair in a chain of explosions, the blast triggering the rest of the flares in turn.

For a moment, the night sky bloomed like fireworks, briefly illuminating the city far below. In that deadly lightshow, Tony was still darting desperately through the sky, with a storm of missiles howling after him.

"Jarvis, divert and intercept. Take those things down!"

"Understood, sir."

At Tony's words, compartments on the Mark III's shoulders opened, revealing infrared targeters. Red dots locked onto the nearest missiles, and—

Whoosh! Whoosh!

Several micro-rockets launched, meeting the incoming missiles head-on. The resulting explosions lit the air in a violent flash.

But before Tony could even exhale in relief, one last missile punched through the smoke and slammed directly into him.

BOOM!

The blast sent him spinning out of control, plummeting toward the earth.

> "Warning! Propulsion systems damaged—eighty percent functionality lost. Weapons systems offline. Sir, I strongly recommend immediate landing. Current energy reserves are critically low."

Jarvis's calm voice filled his helmet as red warning lights flooded the HUD. Damage reports and flashing diagnostics spread across the display.

"How long can I keep flying?" Tony gritted his teeth.

"Estimated flight time: five minutes, sir."

"Start the countdown—five minutes."

A timer appeared in his visor. But instead of retreating, Tony angled upward—straight toward Obadiah.

The Iron Monger was still laughing, convinced his opponent had already been destroyed. Then something heavy slammed onto his back, locking its arms around his shoulders.

> "You're still alive?! You stubborn little bastard!"

> "Old man, it'll take more than you to kill me!"

"Jarvis—maximum thrust! Take us up!"

The Mark III's thrusters roared to full power, a burst of white fire launching both armors skyward like a rocket.

"Sir, we've reached the stratosphere. Energy at less than ten percent. Further ascent will endanger your life."

"Keep going."

"...Understood, sir."

They broke through the upper atmosphere. The temperature dropped sharply—below freezing in an instant.

"Hey, Obadiah," Tony's voice crackled over the comms.

"What?!" The older man sounded annoyed and a little panicked.

"I've got a question for you."

"What are you—"

"How did you solve the freezing problem?"

"What freezing prob—?"

Before he could finish, frost began to spread across the Iron Monger's armor. Ice crystals bloomed along the joints, freezing the hydraulic systems solid. Within seconds, the massive suit was encased in frost—and then its engines sputtered out completely.

> "W-Wait—no—no!"

Gravity took over. The Iron Monger went into freefall, tumbling toward the ground like a meteor.

"Jarvis, reduce power. Begin controlled descent."

"Energy reserves at five percent. I recommend shutting down all non-essential systems."

"Do it."

Everything but the propulsion and life-support cut off. The HUD dimmed to a faint red glow as Tony began gliding downward, watching the falling Iron Monger trail smoke through the clouds below.

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Meanwhile, Lucas—who'd been following from a distance—spotted the tumbling armor plummeting toward the city. He knew the story well enough to realize that the fall alone wouldn't kill Obadiah.

He urged Onion into a dive, the chocobo shrieking as it folded its wings and hurtled downward after the falling machine.

Inside the Iron Monger, Obadiah was frantically trying to reboot the system, his fingers slamming uselessly on frozen controls. His screens stayed black, the ground rushing up fast.

Lucas didn't attack yet. He matched the armor's descent, simply watching.

"Come on," he murmured. "Let's see what tricks you've got left."

> "Damn it! Start! Start, you piece of junk!!"

Obadiah's curses echoed uselessly. The altimeter screamed.

BOOOOM!

The Iron Monger slammed into the ground like a meteor, carving a crater into the street. Dirt and debris rained down in a violent wave.

Lucas landed lightly at the crater's edge. Moments later, Tony descended beside him, armor scorched and smoking.

"Is he dead?" Tony asked, lifting his visor.

Lucas shrugged. "Hard to say. Probably not."

The two men stood there in silence, watching the still Iron Monger for several long minutes.

By the time Pepper, Coulson, and the rest of S.H.I.E.L.D. arrived, Tony finally tore his gaze away to meet Pepper's eyes.

The instant she saw him, she ran forward, tears streaming down her face. Tony caught her in his arms, holding her close, exhaustion giving way to quiet relief.

Lucas glanced at the pair and chuckled softly. "Huh. Gotta admit—they do make a pretty cute couple."

Onion gave a low huff, then bumped Lucas with its feathery head, as if agreeing.

Coulson and several agents moved toward the Iron Monger's wreck, weapons ready.

But before they could even take a proper look—

**WHIRRRR—KLANG!**

The suit's systems suddenly came back to life. The Iron Monger surged upright and swung a massive metal fist. The lead agent never even had time to scream before being crushed.

A second later, a micro-rocket burst from the armor's shoulder.

BOOM!

The explosion ripped through the group, obliterating everyone except Coulson, who was blown backward by the shockwave.

> "Damn you, Tony Stark! Die!!!"

Obadiah's enraged roar filled the night as he charged, the Iron Monger staggering toward Tony and Pepper.

They barely had time to react.

"Tony!" Pepper screamed, instinctively stepping in front of him, forgetting that he was the one wearing armor.

Tony raised a hand, but his repulsors were dead—he couldn't even fire.

And then—

CRASH!

A blur slammed into the Iron Monger from the side, sending it flying through a building wall.

A piercing shriek split the air.

Onion swooped down, talons flashing. The chocobo's kick shattered the Iron Monger's armor like brittle glass. It let out another furious cry, raking the metal suit with both claws like a rooster digging into dirt.

Chunks of steel flew in every direction, plates and bolts scattering across the street. Within moments, the Iron Monger was nothing but a heap of broken scrap, and Obadiah lay exposed, gasping in terror.

With a final screech, Onion lunged down, clamped its beak around the old man's collar, and hurled him to the pavement. Then it planted one heavy claw squarely on his chest.

Given the bird's sheer size and weight—even Captain America himself would've struggled to move it.

Obadiah Stane?

He didn't stand a chance.

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## Chapter 62: The Death of Obadiah

Under Onion's massive claw, Obadiah still spat curses, even as his chest wheezed from the weight pressing him into the dirt. Nearby, Pepper—shaken but alive—once again threw herself into Tony's arms.

Tony's expression darkened.

He had wanted to let Obadiah live. After all, the man had been his father's friend—almost like an uncle.

But after everything Obadiah had done—betrayal, murder, targeting Pepper and Skye—there was no forgiveness left in Tony Stark.

Whirrr...

Tony raised his hand, his palm repulsor starting to glow. What little energy he had left drained rapidly as the weapon charged.

> "Sir," Jarvis's calm voice echoed in his helmet, "I must remind you—your reactor's power is at less than two percent. Firing now may disable life support. I advise against this action."

Tony gritted his teeth and slowly lowered his arm.

He remembered too vividly what it felt like to have shrapnel inching toward his heart. He wasn't eager to relive it.

Meanwhile, Onion stood motionless, keeping Obadiah pinned. The chocobo tilted its head curiously, occasionally pecking at Obadiah's torn clothes like a child poking a broken toy.

"How's that feel?"

Lucas approached, the crystalline sword in his hand glinting coldly under the streetlights. His face was like carved ice.

"You bastard, you think—"

SHHK!

A single flash of light.

Obadiah's head shot skyward, spinning once before landing with a dull thud.

Lucas flicked his blade clean and said evenly, "You talk too much. If you've got last words, say them in hell."

He didn't spare the corpse another glance. Instead, he reached down and picked up the fallen arc reactor lying in the rubble.

He tossed it toward Tony. "You really gonna leave this lying around for them to pick up?" He nodded toward the S.H.I.E.L.D. agents slowly surrounding the area.

Though Lucas respected Coulson, he knew the man still answered to his superiors—and one in particular couldn't be trusted.

Tony took the reactor, his mouth curling in distaste. "Doesn't matter. No one can crack it anyway. Even that dead bastard had to steal mine."

He gave the lifeless body of Obadiah Stane a sharp kick—more contempt than vengeance—and sighed.

The arc reactor hummed faintly in his hand, its light dim. Tony turned it over, then tossed it aside. "It's nearly out of juice anyway. I'll build a new one."

Pepper came over then, stepping carefully around the corpse. Her face was pale. "Lucas, Skye's already at the hospital. Don't worry."

She added quickly, "It's our hospital—the Stark Medical Center. Not theirs." She nodded toward the S.H.I.E.L.D. agents.

At that, Coulson walked over. He looked at Lucas with a complicated expression—half relief, half accusation.

He didn't need to speak; Lucas already understood. Fury had ordered him to collect Skye's blood samples while she was unconscious.

To "study" her.

Nick Fury, the self-proclaimed protector of Earth, loved to justify everything with those words: for the planet's safety.

But Lucas knew better. The man was a manipulative opportunist—half-hero, half-tyrant.

Coulson had planned to do the extraction quietly at the hospital, but Pepper had diverted Skye to Stark's private facility instead.

That meant S.H.I.E.L.D. had no access—no authority.

In America, money was power, and Stark Industries was the kind of capital even Fury couldn't strong-arm.

When Fury heard about the reroute, he was reportedly furious—pun intended. But all he could do was curse and drop the line.

Before disconnecting, he'd left Coulson with one last order:

> "Get Tony Stark into the Avengers Initiative. Whatever it takes."

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With Iron Monger reduced to scrap—thanks mostly to Onion—Tony treated the remains like junk. S.H.I.E.L.D., however, eagerly scavenged what was left. Even shattered, the armor and the secondary arc reactor were valuable intel.

For Coulson, it was the only "win" he'd managed tonight.

The entire battle site was sealed off, preventing leaks to the public. For a brief moment, S.H.I.E.L.D. thought they'd contained everything.

They were wrong.

Three days later, a video hit the internet.

The footage showed everything: Tony in his Iron Man suit fighting the Iron Monger, explosions lighting up the night, and—most shockingly—a man riding a massive bird of prey following the battle overhead.

It spread like wildfire.

People recognized the warehouse district. Witnesses described a full lockdown by "men in black." Reporters traced the property back to Stark Industries, tying it neatly to earlier rumors about "a mysterious flying weapon."

Soon, crowds swarmed outside Stark Tower.

News anchors couldn't get enough of "The Iron Man Incident."

S.H.I.E.L.D. scrambled to contain the fallout. The situation was officially classified, but the internet had already crowned Tony Stark as the world's newest superhero.

And somewhere in the middle of it all—

Lucas was at home, caring for Skye.

His phone rang.

"Yo~" Lucas answered casually. "Didn't expect a call from the Tony Stark himself. Shouldn't you be too busy dodging reporters right now?"

He spoke while holding a juice bottle, carefully feeding Skye—her arms still wrapped in casts.

Just then, Gwen walked in, took the bottle from his hand, and smiled faintly. "I've got it."

Lucas nodded, stepping aside.

Gwen had taken leave from MIT the moment she heard Skye was hurt. Even the professors didn't protest—she was one of their top students. Every school makes exceptions for its prodigies.

Skye had woken three days after the battle. Physically, she was fine—just exhausted and bandaged. But with both arms broken, she needed help with everything.

Having Gwen around made things easier—and spared everyone the awkwardness of Lucas, a full-grown man, helping her bathe or change.

Not that either girl would've let him.

Between the three of them, the air was... complicated.

Both Gwen and Skye had feelings for Lucas. Both knew it. And both had silently agreed not to talk about it.

As for Lucas himself?

He was hopelessly oblivious.

To him, life was still just food, games, and the next absurd mission.

Skye's awakening of her powers had been, in truth, for him—so she could stand beside him, protect him, fight with him.

But Lucas remained that same clueless fool, blissfully unaware that two brilliant women's worlds quietly revolved around him.

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## Chapter 63: I'm Iron Man

"These last few days have been driving me insane! Do those reporters seriously have nothing better to do? They've been camping outside Stark Tower and my house around the clock. I'm planning to hold a press conference to shut them up—and I want you to come with me."

Tony's voice crackled through the phone.

Lucas's eyes lit up. A press conference? That sounded like the perfect opportunity.

He agreed without hesitation.

After setting the time, Tony hung up, and Lucas returned to Skye's room.

"Was that Tony Stark just now?" Gwen asked curiously.

She'd already heard from Skye about the whole Iron Monger incident—and she'd given Lucas quite an earful for not telling her sooner. If she'd known, she would've come back to help. What, did he think she was too weak to be of any use?

Lucas, of course, couldn't admit that was exactly what he'd thought. So he quickly spun an excuse about not wanting to disrupt her studies.

After all, she was the family's one and only prodigy—couldn't risk that, right?

Gwen gave a cold snort but didn't argue further. Lucas silently thanked every god he could think of for dodging that bullet.

"Oh, right—Tony's holding a press conference tomorrow. He wants me there. You two make sure to watch the livestream, because we're about to strike it rich."

Lucas's grin stretched ear to ear; he was practically dancing around the room.

"Rich? From a press conference? What are you talking about... wait—"

Skye suddenly caught on, her eyes widening.

"That's right!" Lucas slammed a fist into his palm. "Stark Industries' stock is about to skyrocket! We're gonna make a fortune—wahahaha!"

He laughed like a cartoon villain, tongue out and everything—a perfect image of a soon-to-be nouveau riche.

Gwen's face lit up too. On Lucas's suggestion, she'd already told Helen to put all their family savings into Stark stock. Helen had thought she was insane and refused at first.

But after enough pleading (and a little guilt-tripping from Lucas), she reluctantly agreed. They were middle class, debt-free—what was the worst that could happen? If they lost everything, they could just move into Lucas's apartment; he'd already set aside rooms for them.

Now, with the stock about to soar, Helen was on the verge of becoming a millionaire overnight.

Lucas was so hyped he barely slept that night. When he finally stumbled out of the house the next morning, the dark circles under his eyes were so bad that his driver nearly panicked—thinking the young man had been up all night doing something... illicit.

The car pulled up to Stark Tower, where a sea of reporters already packed the entrance—microphones, cameras, flashes, all waiting for access.

Lucas's car went straight into the underground garage, and from there he took the private elevator to the press room.

"How do I look?"

Pepper was fixing Tony's tie, while the man himself flashed that signature smug grin—tape still visible on his cheek from healing cuts.

Lucas stepped in just as Tony turned toward him.

"Hey~ how do I look? Be honest—I look better than you, right?"

Tony slung an arm around Lucas's shoulders, radiating arrogance.

"You look older than me."

Lucas didn't pull punches. And he was right—they were more than ten years apart.

Tony's smile froze. Then he shoved Lucas away with a huff.

"You're such a brat. You know nothing about style! Girls today love my type—mature, charming, sophisticated. That's called charisma. You, kid, are just... prepubescent fluff!"

While they were bickering, Coulson approached, handing Tony a small card.

"This is your prepared statement. Just read what's on it."

Tony skimmed it, brow furrowing. It was the same recycled nonsense: "training exercise," "weapons test," "classified project." The same bland excuses he'd used a dozen times before.

Moments later, the press began pouring in like a flood. The room buzzed with tension and camera shutters.

Tony leaned close to Lucas. "Hey, kid—you sure you don't wanna join me on stage? It's not every day you get to share the spotlight with Tony Stark. You'll be famous!"

Lucas waved him off immediately. "No thanks. I'm good staying invisible. Fame just sounds like a headache."

Tony snorted. "Tch. Waste of an opportunity."

He strutted toward the podium like a peacock, basking in the flashbulbs.

Every camera turned on him. Every journalist leaned forward.

After all, the viral video of Iron Man's battle with Iron Monger had already taken the internet by storm. Everyone wanted answers.

Tony glanced at Coulson's cue card... and then tossed it aside.

"For the record—" he began, pausing just long enough for suspense.

Then he smirked.

"I'm Iron Man."

BOOM!

The room erupted.

Reporters screamed, cameras flashed like fireworks, and the internet went into meltdown. Within minutes, every news outlet was replaying the clip in slow motion: Tony Stark declaring his identity to the world.

At the back of the room, Lucas's system chimed in his head:

> [Ding! Congratulations, Host! Mission Complete: "I Am Iron Man." You have witnessed the birth of Iron Man and the true beginning of the Marvel Universe. Reward granted: Behemoth's Zodiac Meteor!]

Lucas blinked. "Wait, what? That's... it? Just a skill? No summon? You're telling me Behemoth—the Behemoth—doesn't even get to show up?"

> [Ding~ If the Host is dissatisfied, the System can rescind the reward. We don't force compliance.]

"Whoa, whoa, whoa! Easy there, A-System! I was kidding! That was my evil twin talking. I've already exorcised him."

> [Ding~ Skill Description: Zodiac Meteor allows the Host to summon a meteor from orbit. Meteor size scales with the Host's mana output. Cooldown: 24 hours.]

Lucas's irritation vanished instantly.

Control the size of a meteor? One per day? That was beyond overpowered!

With enough mana, he could literally trigger an extinction event. A daily extinction event.

Forget Garuda—this was next-level destruction.

Lucas couldn't help but grin.

The age of Iron Man had begun.

And so had the age of meteors.

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## Chapter 64: Tony's "Brilliant" Idea

> [Ding~ System reminder: Host, please stop having unrealistic fantasies. You should know your own limits. Do you really think you have enough mana to sustain a meteor that size?]

The system's voice cut sharply through Lucas's daydream, slapping him awake like a bucket of cold water.

"Come on, A-System! Can't you ever be generous for once? Just give me infinite mana already—let me go full cheat mode!"

Lucas started whining like a spoiled kid, almost choking on last night's midnight snack from how dramatic he sounded.

> [Ding~ All rewards are randomly distributed. The host cannot specify or choose them.]

Lucas froze. "So... that means infinite mana does exist as a reward?"

The system went completely silent for a few seconds before answering again.

> [Ding~ The system refuses to answer that question—and rolls its eyes at the host.]

Lucas's face twitched. "Oh, I see how it is! You're rebelling now, huh? You don't respect your boss anymore? Believe it or not, I'll—"

He trailed off. There was really nothing he could do to that damn system. He couldn't hit it, couldn't yell it into submission, and whenever he got too mouthy, it'd threaten to uninstall itself. So, as usual, Lucas could only surrender.

"You win. You're awesome. You're holy. You're the supreme being."

He lifted his middle finger toward the empty air in front of him—which, from the outside, looked suspiciously like he was flipping off Tony on stage.

Tony immediately noticed the gesture. And that gave him an excellent idea.

"Ladies and gentlemen," Tony said into the microphone, "how about we take a short pause? Don't you all want to know who that mysterious guy in the viral video was—the one riding the giant bird with a sword?"

The moment those words left his mouth, every single reporter froze.

Standing in the corner, Coulson's expression darkened instantly. Tony's confession that he was Iron Man had already gone far beyond what S.H.I.E.L.D. had anticipated. But if he exposed Lucas too, that would cause absolute chaos.

The problem was, Lucas wasn't protected like Tony. His personal information wasn't classified or shielded. If his identity got out, anyone could track down his home, his friends, even his family.

"Motherf—! Tony Stark, you troublesome bastard! You just can't stop making my life difficult, can you?!"

Across town, Nick Fury slammed his fist on the desk as he watched the livestream unfold.

"Agent Hill! Effective immediately—lock down every single file connected to Lucas. I want it all under Level 10 clearance! No one gets access except me!"

Fury wasn't being paranoid this time. Lucas's personal circle was far from ordinary. His adoptive sister, Gwen, was Ghost-Spider—one of New York's two Spider-Women. The assistant at the Devil May Cry Agency was a newly awakened Inhuman. His best friend? Another Spider-Man. And his father? The chief of the NYPD.

With that many identities tangled together, exposing Lucas's data could unravel a whole web of people and secrets. The safest move was to bury everything—permanently.

As Hill executed the order, Lucas's name began disappearing from every government database. His records, his address, his family connections—all erased. Within minutes, it was as if Lucas had never existed.

Meanwhile, back at the press conference, Tony raised his hand dramatically, guiding the reporters' attention in one direction.

And there stood Lucas—still frozen mid-gesture, with his middle finger raised in the air—completely unaware that every single camera had turned toward him.

Click! Click! Click! Click!

The sound of camera shutters filled the room. The flashes were blinding, forcing Lucas to squint.

"What the hell—?!"

When he finally realized what was happening, it was already too late. Tony had sold him out.

"Retreat! Fall back! Evacuate!"

Lucas muttered the old adventurer's code phrase for "run like hell," and then—  
whoosh!—he vanished. A blast of wind magic carried him away faster than the  
naked eye could follow, straight out of Stark Tower.

"Tony, you bastard! I swear I'll get you back for this!"

His furious roar echoed down the Manhattan streets, though his figure was  
already long gone.

Tony smirked and folded his arms. "Heh. Kid, you still think you can outplay Tony  
Stark? Cute."

Despite Lucas's quick escape, dozens of journalists had already captured his face in perfect HD. Within an hour, his photo flooded every screen in New York.

"Wait—that's the guy who was riding the bird?! He's so young!"

"No way, he's like our age! Do you think he's single?"

"Hmph! Probably just a showoff. No way someone that young could do what that video showed."

And just like that, the internet exploded into debate. Lucas's face went viral overnight.

At S.H.I.E.L.D. headquarters, Fury once again found himself cleaning up Tony's mess. He ordered every mention of Lucas wiped from the web, suppressing trending topics and removing videos. Within hours, the story disappeared completely.

Of course, it was too late to erase people's memories—but at least the data trail was gone.

When Lucas finally stumbled home, panting and fuming, the internet was already spotless—no news, no images, nothing left. It was obvious S.H.I.E.L.D. had intervened.

"Tony Stark, you son of a—! One day, I will get my revenge!"

Lucas collapsed onto the sofa, his face red with rage. Skye and Gwen, on the other hand, were laughing so hard they could barely breathe.

It wasn't every day they got to see Lucas humiliated like this.

Gwen quietly pulled out her phone and started recording him, capturing every second of his furious rant for future teasing material.

As for the aftermath of the press conference, Lucas couldn't care less anymore. The mission was done, the reward secured—time to go full couch potato mode again. He lounged in his office chair like a puddle of melted slime, not a single care left in the world.

A month later, Skye's arms had fully healed. She'd planned to go back for a check-up, but her regeneration ability had been so remarkable that the doctors were astonished. Once the braces were off, she practically cheered in relief.

After being forced to live one-armed for a month, she finally felt human again.

Life returned to normal. Gwen went back to school in Boston, Tony buried himself in his lab tinkering with his armor, and Lucas and Skye slipped right back into their blissful slacker routine. Everything felt peaceful again.

Ever since Tony publicly declared himself Iron Man, Stark Industries' stock had soared to unprecedented heights. Investors scrambled to buy in like madmen.

Meanwhile, those who'd sold their shares earlier were collectively losing their minds—some of them literally screaming at the heavens, asking themselves why they'd been stupid enough to let go.

And somewhere, Lucas was lounging on his sofa with a smug grin, quietly counting the profits rolling in.

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## Chapter 65: Daredevil's Visit

People like Lucas—those who'd had the foresight to invest heavily in Stark Industries—were now swimming in money. But such people were rare... very rare.

Owning a large chunk of Stark Industries stock had turned Lucas into a full-fledged winner at life. As long as Tony didn't pull some world-ending stunt, Lucas could basically live comfortably for the rest of his days.

When Tony found out that Lucas was one of Stark Industries' shareholders, his face turned so dark it could rain. If looks could kill, Lucas would've been vaporized on the spot.

Granted, Lucas held the smallest percentage among all shareholders, but it still gave him the right to attend board meetings.

Lucas would never forget Tony's expression when he walked into the conference room—it was a perfect mix of disbelief and barely contained fury. Naturally, Lucas had the whole thing recorded on his phone for future entertainment.

He wasn't remotely interested in the meeting itself. He'd come purely to piss Tony off. Whatever corporate nonsense they discussed went in one ear and out the other while Lucas daydreamed happily.

After the meeting, Tony wasted no time hunting him down, offering to buy back Lucas's shares—at several times their current value.

But Lucas just laughed in his face. "Sell? Are you kidding me? I earned these fair and square. Why should I give them back to you?"

By the time Lucas left, Tony's heart reactor was practically sparking from stress. He had to swap in a fresh arc reactor just to calm himself down—he swore he could feel the shrapnel in his chest vibrating with rage.

Meanwhile, Lucas casually paid off his entire mortgage and even gave Skye a hefty raise. Skye was so overjoyed she jumped straight into his arms... then blushed and promptly flipped him over her shoulder with a perfect throw.

That move, of course, came courtesy of Gwen's "training." Skye had vibration powers but zero hand-to-hand combat skill, so Gwen had been teaching her a few basic moves in their spare time. Not that Gwen herself was an expert—most of her fighting relied on agility and her uncanny Spider-Sense.

Luckily, Natasha had been living in the apartment complex as well. Officially, she was "on vacation." In reality, Nick Fury had her stationed there to keep an eye on Lucas—though the daily surveillance reports had been toned down since the last incident.

With free time on her hands, Natasha had taken on the role of combat instructor for both Gwen and Skye.

Gwen, already juggling her demanding coursework, hadn't wanted to train at first. But after Natasha knocked her flat three times in under a minute, she decided—fine, I'm learning this. Especially after seeing Natasha's deadly scissor kick; Gwen's eyes had practically sparkled with admiration.

So now Gwen attended classes by day, and at night she returned through the Chocobo Space portal for combat lessons. Her roommate in Boston was convinced she'd gotten a boyfriend and was spending nights with him—which, to be fair, wasn't exactly an uncommon assumption in college dorms.

Time slipped by quietly. Since Lucas's "split action" plan that took down Obadiah, the Devil May Cry Agency hadn't received a decent commission in months.

There had been a few "supernatural" requests, but they all turned out to be fake—clients convinced they were haunted by demons. Lucas had gotten excited at first, carefully preparing for what he thought would be his first real demonic encounter... only to discover it was just paranoia.

After investigating, Lucas ended up telling them to call the police instead—because what they actually had were straight-up homicide cases.

"Seriously," he muttered afterward, "if you're not calling the cops, at least hire a real detective. I'm not built for this logical deduction nonsense."

And that was that. Lucas helped file a few reports, then went right back to lounging in his office chair, where he remained to this very evening.

With Gwen and Skye busy with training most nights, the agency was often just Lucas—and a perpetually sleepy Moogles.

The little furball had been sleeping more than ever lately, as if preparing for hibernation. When it was awake, it wandered aimlessly around the office with a drowsy wobble.

To keep it from bumping into things, Lucas just scooped it into his arms. The soft, fluffy creature felt so warm that it almost made his inner "cute things" side burst out. No wonder Skye was always hugging it.

The Moogle, however, wasn't particularly fond of being treated like a plush toy. It squirmed endlessly, but Lucas simply tightened his hold. In the end, the poor thing surrendered to his tyranny.

That's how the two of them spent the evening—one man, one moogle—until the creature finally lost patience and bopped Lucas on the head before wobbling back to its cushion to continue snoring, nose bubble and all.

Lucas checked the clock. "Alright, time to close up."

But just as he was about to lock the door, an unexpected guest appeared.

A man in a tight red suit, complete with tiny horns on his mask, stood at the door of the agency. It was none other than Daredevil—Matt Murdock.

Lucas blinked in surprise. He hadn't expected the guy to show up in person.

"You? Here? Come on in."

Matt stepped inside without hesitation.

"Nice place," he remarked with a faint smile. "Definitely fits the reputation of one of the best apartments in New York."

He didn't look around—naturally, since he couldn't see—but his voice carried a note of appreciation nonetheless.

"Your echolocation's improved, huh?" Lucas asked, handing him a cup of tea. During their last team-up, Matt had only just started to get the hang of his ability, and its range was limited. But now...

"More or less," Matt replied. "I can roughly make out the layout through ambient sound now."

Lucas nodded. "Impressive. You're a fast learner."

Matt tilted his head slightly. "I can tell you're alone tonight. No Skye? No assistant?"

Lucas raised an eyebrow. "You've got good intel. She's training right now."

"Training in combat?" Matt's lips curved slightly. "Interesting. I can sense something inside her—a pulsing energy, like rhythmic shockwaves."

Lucas blinked. "Wait, you can feel that?"

He wasn't surprised that Matt knew about Skye's powers; he was shocked that the man could sense them just from vibrations in the air.

"She's using that power right now," Matt explained calmly. "You'll feel it soon too."

Right on cue, the floor trembled. It felt like someone was throwing a rave underground.

Lucas sighed. "Yeah, that's Skye alright... getting carried away again."

Moments later, Skye and Gwen stumbled upstairs, covered in dust, looking like they'd been through a warzone. Natasha followed soon after—her usually perfect hair full of dirt, rubbing her lower back with a grimace.

Lucas groaned. "Seriously? You three trying to bring the whole building down? Skye, go knock on every tenant's door and tell them it's fine before they panic. And for god's sake, stop flinging sand everywhere—someone's gonna lose an eye."

With Matt still there, Lucas waved the trio away for now.

The night had only just begun—and something told Lucas that Daredevil hadn't dropped by just for tea.

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## Chapter 66: Vampires on the Loose

The three women didn't say much—though Natasha did pause for a moment to glance at the man in the red suit before quietly leaving.

"The woman in black," Matt said after she was gone. "She's with S.H.I.E.L.D., isn't she?"

Lucas raised an eyebrow. "You know her?"

Matt shook his head. "Not personally. But I've heard of her. The Black Widow of the Red Room—a double agent. My advice? Stay clear of people like that."

Lucas chuckled. "Relax. I know who she is, and I know she was sent here on assignment. But for now, she hasn't done anything against me or anyone close to me. More importantly, she's got a moral line she won't cross. That's enough for me."

He shrugged. Natasha might be S.H.I.E.L.D.'s top spy, but she wasn't a heartless puppet. Lucas had seen it—she followed orders only within reason, and he trusted her... mostly.

Matt didn't push further. If Lucas had made up his mind, there was no point arguing.

"Alright," Matt said, setting his cup down. "Let's get to business. I came here because I need your help."

Lucas tilted his head. "Trouble again? Don't tell me it's those Hand ninjas."

He remembered their previous encounter with the ancient assassins who wouldn't stay dead. Between the Hand and Kingpin, Daredevil's life was basically one long headache.

But Matt shook his head gravely. "No. This time, it's worse. We've come across something... else. Vampires."

Lucas almost choked on his drink. "What?! Vampires?!"

His voice shot up an octave. Of all the weirdness he'd seen in this world, actual vampires were still a curveball.

Matt nodded. "Yes. Vampires. The Punisher and I ran into three of them. We killed two and managed to capture one alive. The bodies turned to ash the moment they died—no blood, no traces left behind. That's when we realized what we were dealing with."

Lucas blinked. "Holy hell..."

"At first, we thought they were just lunatics playing dress-up," Matt continued. "But the way they moved, the way they smelled—it wasn't human. When the sunlight hit the first one we shot, he burst into dust. That's when we knew."

He took a sip of tea before adding, "During interrogation, the one we caught mentioned a place in Hell's Kitchen—a hidden bar that serves... blood drinks. The Punisher and I are planning to raid it."

Lucas didn't even hesitate. "Count me in. When do we move?"

He owed Matt and Frank a lot already. Friends helped each other—it was that simple.

"Tomorrow night," Matt said. "Same safehouse as before."

"Got it. I'll be there."

Matt nodded, then rose to his feet. In seconds, he melted back into the darkness, vanishing as silently as he'd come.

Lucas sighed. "Alright... you've been eavesdropping long enough. You can come out now."

From the corner of the room, a shadow shifted—Natasha stepped forward, her expression unreadable.

"So it's true?" she asked. "Vampires actually exist?"

She'd seen and survived all kinds of missions, but this was new. In her mind, vampires were just bedtime stories or Eastern European myths.

Lucas leaned back. "Oh, they're real all right. And powerful. Ask your boss—the one with the eyepatch. He knows. S.H.I.E.L.D. has a copy of the truce agreement between humans and vampires."

Natasha's brows lifted. "Fury knows about this? Then I definitely need to have a word with him. Can't believe he's been keeping something this interesting from me."

She pouted mockingly, though her eyes glimmered with genuine curiosity.

Lucas smirked. "Whether he lets you 'work properly' or not, I don't know. But go ahead and report it. In fact, that's exactly what Daredevil wants you to do."

Natasha blinked. "What do you mean?"

"You really think Matt didn't notice you spying? He sensed you the moment you moved. Hell, he probably knew you were here before you did. The guy's basically sonar with legs."

Lucas crossed his arms. "He didn't expose you on purpose. He wants this to reach Fury. If vampires are feeding again, it's not just a vigilante problem—it's a national security issue."

Natasha frowned but nodded slowly. "Alright. I'll make the report... and maybe squeeze some answers out of the Director while I'm at it."

She turned and left, disappearing down the hall toward her own apartment. A few minutes later, the encrypted line to S.H.I.E.L.D. headquarters went live.

Fury hadn't gone to bed either. As Director of S.H.I.E.L.D., paperwork and strategy never seemed to end. At the moment, he was buried in his latest obsession—the Avengers Initiative.

Holographic screens floated in front of him, displaying profiles of potential recruits: Tony Stark, Peter Parker, Gwen Stacy, Skye—and Lucas himself. Practically everyone connected to Lucas was flagged as a person of interest.

Then the comm line buzzed. Fury tapped it. "Talk to me, Romanoff."

"Sir," Natasha's voice came through, calm but firm. "Daredevil visited Lucas tonight. He reported vampire activity in Hell's Kitchen—confirmed kills, one captured alive."

There was a long pause. Then Fury erupted.

"Motherf—They broke the truce? Those bloodsucking bastards! What, did they think the treaty was a damn pizza menu?!"

His voice thundered through the comms.

"So it's true then," Natasha said. "Vampires really exist."

Fury exhaled sharply. No point hiding it anymore. If word was already spreading among the vigilantes, secrecy was pointless.

"Yeah," he admitted. "They're real. The bloodsuckers and I go way back. Years ago, there was... an understanding between our governments and their elders. A ceasefire. They don't hunt humans openly—we don't burn their nests to ash. That was the deal."

Natasha was stunned. "You negotiated with vampires? That's insane. What kind of logic is that?"

Fury gave a humorless laugh. "Wasn't my call back then. I was just a field agent. The higher-ups thought peace was cheaper than extermination."

He rubbed his temple, remembering.

"But don't get me wrong," he added. "I never trusted them. You can't reason with something that sees humans as food. It's not peace—it's containment."

And for once, Natasha agreed completely.

Humans had spent millions of years climbing to the top of the food chain—from prey to predator. The idea that another species existed above them, feeding on them, was fundamentally unacceptable.

Fury's stance made sense. Whatever "treaty" the world's leaders had signed, he'd always been on the side of eradication.

Because some monsters didn't need diplomacy. They needed sunlight—and a stake through the heart.

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## Chapter 67: S.H.I.E.L.D.'s Response

When the treaty was first signed, Nick Fury had been nothing more than a low-level agent—no power, no say. But things were different now. As Director of S.H.I.E.L.D., he had both the authority and the firepower to intervene in any war between humans and vampires.

The moment he hung up on Natasha, he dialed another number.

"What is it?" came a low, gravelly voice from the other end.

"It was you, wasn't it?" Fury said coldly. "You had Daredevil bring up the vampire issue to me."

From Natasha's report, Fury had already pieced it together. Matt's visit to Lucas hadn't been just a friendly favor. His words were far too deliberate—clearly meant to reach Natasha's ears, and through her, Fury's.

A rough chuckle answered him. "You're still as sharp as ever. You're right—it was for you to hear. Those bloodsucking leeches have broken the truce. Since war's inevitable, why not use the chance to wipe them all out? You've got the means now, don't you?"

In a pitch-black room cluttered with weapons and ammunition, a man in a black combat vest with a white skull emblazoned on his chest was speaking into a phone—Frank Castle, the Punisher. And yes, he was talking to Nick Fury.

This was something Frank and Matt had agreed upon beforehand. Vampires were far beyond what two street-level vigilantes could handle. Matt might not have known the political backstory, but Frank did.

As a former Level 10 agent, Frank knew all about the existence of vampires—and the ancient treaty. He also knew which side Fury had stood on back then: the hardliners, the ones who had wanted them exterminated.

Fury hadn't had the power to do anything about it before. But now? As the head of a UN-sanctioned organization armed with helicarriers, S.H.I.E.L.D. could easily make the old truce irrelevant.

"So," Fury said after a pause, "what's your plan?"

That alone was enough to show his tacit approval.

Frank smirked. "Heh. You really haven't changed, Fury. Still the same man you were back then."

Fury frowned. "No. I'm not the same."

Frank's voice dropped, quiet but firm. "We both know I'm not talking about that. You're still you, and I can count on that."

The two men fell into silence, a heavy understanding hanging between them.

"I interrogated one of the vampires," Frank finally said. "They've got a nest in Hell's Kitchen. I'm planning to hit it—flush out the rest of those parasites."

Fury leaned back in his chair. "What do you need from me?"

"Keep the cops off our backs. Handle cleanup after. And..."

"And cover for you, right?" Fury finished dryly.

They both knew the game. Officially, S.H.I.E.L.D. couldn't break the truce. The existence of vampires was still off the books, and if S.H.I.E.L.D. openly moved against them, it would mean open war. Fury couldn't risk that.

But unofficially? He could—and would—pull the strings from behind the curtain.

Frank didn't deny it, just gave a short, knowing laugh.

"Location?" Fury asked.

Frank rattled off an address, then added, "Not confirmed yet. We move tomorrow night. I'll send the signal when we've got visual."

The line went dead on both ends—two men who didn't need to say more.

Fury pressed a button on his desk communicator. "Get Coulson and Barton in here."

Moments later, Agent Phil Coulson and Clint Barton—Hawkeye—walked into the office.

"Tomorrow night," Fury began, "you two will lead a covert op in Hell's Kitchen. Mission's classified. No outside communication, no leaks."

He pointed to a red-marked spot on the holographic map. "This is your position. You'll stay put until you get the signal."

The two agents exchanged a brief glance, then nodded. They both recognized the location.

"I need you on cleanup duty," Fury continued. "No witnesses, no press, no local law enforcement. No one gets in or out."

"Understood," Coulson said simply. Barton gave a silent nod beside him.

They didn't ask for details. If Fury said "classified," they knew better than to dig.

"Go get ready," Fury ordered.

The two agents left without another word. Fury remained seated, staring down at the old-fashioned pager on his desk—the same one that had once called Captain Marvel back to Earth.

For a long time, he sat in silence.

---

The next morning, Lucas opened up the office as usual. Skye was there too, tapping away at her computer. She didn't have combat training with Natasha today, so she decided to spend the day helping with paperwork.

"Where's Natasha?" Lucas asked casually. "She's skipping fight class now?"

"She said she's got a mission." Skye didn't even look up, her eyes glued to the screen.

"What's got you so hooked?"

Lucas leaned over her shoulder—and saw the headline splashed across the news site:

> "Mysterious Night Creatures Sighted — Two Corpses Found Drained of Blood!  
Are Vampires Real?"

Lucas snorted. "What kind of tabloid garbage is this?"

The article read like a bad horror novel—no facts, no evidence, just pure clickbait.

"Do you think vampires are actually real?" Skye asked, her tone half joking, half curious. The way she was staring at the screen, you'd think she was reading a thriller.

Lucas smirked. "You want to find out?"

Her eyes lit up. "Yes! Absolutely!"

"Alright," Lucas said. "Then tonight, I'll take you to see for yourself."

"Wait, seriously?" Skye jumped to her feet, so fast her laptop nearly went flying.

"Relax," Lucas said, chuckling. "But you'll have to follow a few rules first."

"No problem! Lay them on me—I can handle ten, twenty, whatever you've got."

"First: safety comes first. Second: follow my lead at all times. We'll have two more people joining us tonight. And third..."—he smirked—"don't freak out."

Skye crossed her arms. "Pfft. Come on! I'm an Inhuman, remember? You think I'm scared of some bloodsuckers?"

Then her confidence wavered slightly. "...They don't actually look like the monsters in movies, do they? With the fangs and the wings and everything?"

Lucas grinned. "You'll see soon enough."

Truth was, vampires in this world didn't look that different from humans—at least, not the smart ones. Only the mutated breeds, like the Reapers from Blade II, had those split jaws and grotesque features.

But he wasn't about to spoil the surprise. Tonight, Skye would find out what real monsters looked like.

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## **Chapter 68 - 68 – The Operation Begins**

The entire day passed in a blur of excitement for Skye.

She had spent every waking hour glued to her screen, digging through every article and archive she could find about vampires—even going as far as reading dusty old research papers. She was determined to know everything there was to know.

The answers she found were, of course, predictable: sunlight, garlic, crosses, holy water—every cliché that ever existed.

But in reality, things weren't that simple.

Garlic could inhibit a vampire's healing and the flow of the virus in their blood, acting more like a slow-acting poison—but it took a lot of it to work.

Then came silver and sunlight—or, more precisely, pure silver and ultraviolet light.

Both burned vampire flesh, though sunlight was far more lethal.

While the two were chatting, Matt called.

He told them to meet at the safehouse.

Lucas immediately grabbed Skye, and the two headed out.

Thanks to weeks of training, Skye's control over her shockwave powers had become much more refined. She could now manage her energy output without harming herself—though she still couldn't risk using her full strength.

Lucas, on the other hand, had his own headache to deal with—vibranium.

No matter what he tried, he couldn't find anyone with access to it. The Wakandan defector he'd heard of had vanished completely, slippery as an eel.

He sighed. If all else failed, he'd have to ask Tony for help. If anyone had the right connections, it was him.

It didn't take long before they arrived in Hell's Kitchen.

Skye, unsurprisingly, knew the area well—she used to steal here all the time and was on friendly terms with quite a few street punks.

Inside the safehouse, Matt and Frank were already waiting.

Matt sat quietly with his head slightly tilted, listening to the room's subtle vibrations.

Frank, on the other hand, was methodically cleaning a rifle.

The entire place looked like an armory—guns, grenades, knives, even a shoulder-fired missile launcher.

Skye froze in place the moment she walked in.

Is this guy a terrorist or something?

The firepower here was enough to start a small war.

"You brought a kid?" Frank's gravelly voice broke the silence.

"Skye," Lucas replied calmly. "My assistant. She's gifted—with powers. Trust me, she'll be useful."

He pointed to the others. "That's the Punisher, and the other is Daredevil."

Skye's jaw practically hit the floor.

The Punisher and Daredevil—two living legends in Hell's Kitchen, the names every thug whispered about.

Especially Frank—the man was a walking apocalypse. Wherever he went, bodies piled up and nothing was left intact.

"You know them?!" she gasped. "Wait—they're helping us?"

Frank's lip twitched.

"You've got that backwards, kid. You two are helping us."

Daredevil retracted his batons, his crimson suit fading into the darkness like blood into water.

"Whoa, that's so cool!" Skye squealed, reaching out to touch his armor just to see what it was made of. How could something that red blend into the night like that?

"Show me what you can do," Frank said, voice low and cold. "Vampires aren't your average thugs. I need to know you can at least keep yourself alive."

"Oh! Sure thing."

Skye walked right up to him and poked the pistol in his hand with one finger.

The moment her fingertip made contact, a silent shockwave rippled out.

The gun instantly shattered into fragments, scattering across the floor.

"..."

Frank's expression didn't change, but the vein in his temple twitched.

That was my gun.

He stared at her flatly. "Five hundred bucks."

"What?! For that little thing? You rob people for a living?" Skye protested, eyes wide.

Frank didn't bother explaining. He simply held out his hand toward Lucas.

Lucas sighed. "I'll transfer it later, alright? Stop looking at me like that—you're terrifying."

Frank's dead-eyed stare didn't waver. Cold. Lifeless. Exactly like the man himself.

"Time's up," Matt said, running his fingers across the small tactile clock beside him—a model made for the blind.

Frank packed up his gear and slung a duffel bag over his shoulder.

The other three traveled light; there wasn't much for them to prepare.

The team slipped quietly through the streets and arrived at the location the vampire had mentioned.

The place was eerily silent. Nothing about it screamed "nightclub."

"Are you sure this is the right address?" Skye frowned, pointing at a sign. "It literally says Frozen Meat Storage. What kind of nightclub is that? A rave for cold cuts?"

Lucas took one look and immediately recognized it—from Blade.

This was the club—the one that opened the first movie.

"It's right," he said. "The dying vamp gave this address."

Frank nodded. "He didn't lie. Nobody survives my interrogations."

"Definitely the place," Matt murmured, tilting his head. "I can hear the music—it's loud and horrible."

"Then let's check it out," Frank growled, loading his weapon and stepping forward.

"Wait, you're just gonna barge in like that?" Skye whispered, horrified.

"Shouldn't we, I don't know, sneak in or something?"

"We're not vampires," Frank replied flatly. "They'll smell us the second we walk in. Only way's through."

"Not necessarily," Skye countered, grinning. "If the club's full of vampires and we're human, doesn't that make us walking snacks? What kind of vampire refuses free food?"

Lucas laughed. "She's got a point."

Just then, a convertible pulled up outside the warehouse.

A man and a woman stepped out—the exact pair from Blade's opening scene: the female vampire and her unlucky human date.

"Wait till they're inside," Matt said quietly. "Then we move."

Moments later, the two greeted the burly doorman and disappeared inside.

Lucas and the others moved in immediately.

"Who the hell are—"

The guard didn't finish. Matt struck first, a precise jab that paralyzed the man's throat.

Before the poor guy could even gasp, Frank's knife plunged into his thigh.

Blood poured freely.

"He's human," Frank muttered, frowning.

"Human?" Lucas echoed, eyes narrowing. "A human guard... working for vampires."

The four of them exchanged looks.

Whatever was waiting inside this "club" just got a lot more interesting.

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## Chapter 69 - 69 – The Vampire Nightclub

Lucas crouched down beside the fat man's body and started searching him.

After a few seconds, he found a strange marking behind the man's ear—something that looked more like a symbol than a tattoo.

"This guy's a ghoul," Lucas muttered.

"Ghoul?" the others echoed, confused.

Lucas glanced up. "Yeah. Humans who want to become vampires. They work for them—guard their lairs, deliver victims, clean up their messes—hoping that one day their masters will 'reward' them by turning them. Basically... vampire groupies."

Frank's face twisted in disgust. "You're telling me there are people who choose to be like that? The world's gone to hell."

Matt's expression remained unreadable behind the red mask, but even he tilted his head slightly. Skye, however, looked utterly dumbfounded.

"There are actually people begging to turn into bloodsucking corpses? That's insane!" she said, staring at the tattoo with wide eyes.

Lucas continued, "There are more than you'd think. Ghouls are marked so vampires know which faction they belong to—sort of like gang tattoos, but for undead crime families."

Frank's lip curled. "Trash like this doesn't deserve to breathe."

Without another word, he drew his knife and slit the man's throat in one clean motion.

The ghoul didn't even blink before his life ended—his dream of becoming a vampire dying with him.

"I'll never understand why anyone would want to be one of them," Skye muttered, watching the lifeless body.

Lucas raised a brow. "You're really just gonna stare at a dead guy like it's nothing?"

Skye shrugged. "Why not? I've seen worse. Gangs stabbing each other to death in alleys, shootouts over drug turf... one dead body doesn't shock me."

Even Frank glanced her way, slightly impressed. The kid had grit—more than he expected.

Lucas sighed and gave a wry smile. "Guess that explains why you know Hell's Kitchen like the back of your hand."

"Of course," Skye said with a faint grin. "I used to run these streets for years."

Lucas could see a flicker of nostalgia in her eyes—oddly enough, she seemed to miss those rough old days.

"Alright," Matt said coldly, standing. "Let's move. This ghoul was no saint. Working for vampires earns you your ticket to hell."

Even though Matt's moral code usually forbade killing, he had learned to... bend the rules.

Vampires aren't human, he reasoned. So, killing them didn't count.

The team advanced through the hanging rows of frozen pork carcasses in the cold-storage warehouse. At the far end, behind a heavy steel door, they could hear it—thumping bass, the roar of a crowd, and the sharp grind of industrial metal.

"This is it," Frank said, cocking his shotgun and pushing the door open.

Dim red lights flickered through the smoky air. They could barely make out human silhouettes writhing in rhythm with the pounding music.

The four slipped in quietly.

Skye stayed close behind Lucas, her fists clenched. The faint shimmer of vibrating air flickered around her hands—her anxiety leaking through her powers.

"Easy," Lucas said, gently touching her wrist. "If you lose control, you'll level this whole place."

His calm voice steadied her, and the vibrations faded.

"Ladies and gentlemen!" a DJ shouted from the stage, his voice echoing over the crowd.

"Let's drink, let's feast, and let the night burn! ARE YOU READY?!"

The crowd howled in response.

Bodies pressed together, moving wildly, frenzied, animalistic. Some weren't even dancing anymore—they were devouring each other in lust.

Lucas grimaced. He'd seen chaos before, but this kind of depravity still made his skin crawl.

He was, after all, a man raised on more modest values.

Skye's face flushed with embarrassment. She quickly looked away.

Then, suddenly—

With a loud hiss, the sprinkler system came on.

A rain of crimson liquid poured from above. The metallic stench of blood filled the air.

"ROOOAAAR!!!"

All around them, the dancers began to convulse and snarl, their faces contorting as fangs erupted from their gums. They lifted their heads in ecstasy, bathing themselves in the scarlet rain.

Matt flinched, his heightened senses overwhelmed by the reek of iron and death.

The smell burned his nose and throat.

"This... this is blood," Skye gasped, staring at her blood-soaked hands.

She gagged, bile rising in her throat.

Lucas's voice was grim. "Human blood."

Matt's tone turned icy. "To get this much... they must have slaughtered hundreds."

"Human!" a voice suddenly hissed.

One vampire in the crowd sniffed the air and spun toward them. "There are humans here!"

The entire club froze.

Even the DJ stopped the music.

Frank didn't hesitate. "Move!" he barked, and pulled the trigger.

BOOM!

The silver-infused slug tore through the vampire's chest, and the creature ignited, turning to ash mid-scream.

The silence shattered.

A horde of vampires shrieked and lunged at them, claws flashing like knives.

Lucas summoned his weapon in an instant—his magic-forged blade erupting with radiant light.

The sword slashed through three vampires in a single swing, and the trailing wave of energy exploded behind them, taking down several more.

"Wind Rend!" Lucas shouted.

A burst of green talons spun forward like a cyclone, ripping through everything within a meter. Blood splattered the walls as shredded bodies fell like paper dolls.

Unlike Frank's silver rounds, Lucas's arcane energy didn't make vampires burn—it tore them apart in the most brutal, physical way imaginable.

BOOM!

Several vampires suddenly exploded from within, showering the floor in gore.

At the center stood Skye, her hands glowing with pulsing rings of energy. The very air around her shimmered as invisible shockwaves distorted reality.

Frank let out a low whistle. "Damn. That's one hell of a punch, kid."

He pumped another shell into his shotgun and kept firing—each silver bullet a death sentence.

Matt moved like a phantom, weaving through the chaos. Every time he passed an enemy, his baton's hidden blade flashed, slicing clean through bone and flesh.

The four of them cut through the vampire crowd like a scythe through wheat.

None of the bloodsuckers even came close to stopping them.

Hell's Kitchen had seen its share of violence before—

but tonight, it belonged to the hunters.

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## Chapter 70 - 70 – Blade

Just as the last of the vampires turned to ash, a towering figure with wild, tangled hair burst out of the shadows—charging straight toward Skye's unguarded back. She hadn't even noticed the danger.

"Skye! Behind you!" Lucas shouted.

A surge of green energy flared from his palm—an ethereal eagle's claw ripped through the air, seizing the lunging vampire mid-pounce. Before the creature could sink its fangs into her neck, it was yanked backward with irresistible force, dragged directly toward Lucas.

Slash!

The Ultimate Weapon cleaved down in a silver-blue arc.

The vampire was sliced neatly in two—the cut so smooth it didn't even bleed, like a mirror reflecting its own end.

Skye spun around, eyes wide, her heart pounding in her chest. One more second, and that thing would've torn her apart.

That close call sharpened her instincts instantly. She knew she couldn't afford to lose awareness again. Eyes open. Ears sharp. Control your power.

The combat drills Natasha had drilled into her flashed through her mind, each movement replaying with crystal clarity. And for the first time—Skye truly understood them.

Theory became instinct. Fear became focus.

Lucas spun, cutting down another vampire with a single stroke—when he noticed something strange. There was someone else fighting the vampires now.

A tall man, fast, precise, utterly lethal. His body moved like a weapon honed to perfection, and on his back gleamed a single long blade.

Lucas's eyes narrowed. He recognized that figure immediately.

Blade—the Vampire Hunter.

Frank and Matt had seen him too. The stranger was cutting through vampires faster than any of them, his strikes clean and practiced, his equipment clearly specialized for the job.

Then—suddenly—Blade drew one of his pistols and aimed it straight at Lucas.

Lucas didn't hesitate. The Judicator appeared in his hand, barrel leveled at Blade's head.

Two gunmen, facing off in the chaos—like a mirrored duel frozen in time.

"Wait—!" Skye cried, throwing out a hand.

But her shout came too late.

Bang! Bang!

Two shots rang out—one silver, one shimmering blue.

Both men sidestepped at the last instant. The bullets zipped past their faces... and struck the vampires sneaking up behind them instead.

Frank stopped dead, mid-charge. He had been about to tackle Blade, thinking the man was an enemy.

Both hunters glanced back at their kills—then turned toward each other.

Lucas gave a crooked grin.

Blade's lips twitched.

Without another word, they went back to slaughtering vampires side by side.

Frank let out the breath he'd been holding. If Blade had actually meant to attack Lucas, he would've been too late to stop it.

Now, with Judicator in one hand and the Ultimate Weapon in the other, Lucas became death incarnate.

Each pull of the trigger obliterated a vampire—bursting their torsos apart, ripping limbs from bone.

The pistol's blue-white energy rounds hit harder than even Frank's shotgun shells, punching clean through one vampire and blowing another in half behind it.

Lucas had never tested the weapon before tonight—and even he was stunned by its destructive power.

"Guess I'm never going back to close-quarters again," he muttered with a grin.

But of course, that didn't stop him from using both. Sword in one hand, pistol in the other, he carved through the enemy like a storm of light and steel.

Every nearby vampire fell in seconds.

And with the gun's sleek design and that satisfying metallic ring each time he fired, Lucas felt like some futuristic warlord—Marshal Kuros Marian, reporting for duty.

All he was missing was the uniform and a half-mask.

When the last vampire exploded under Skye's shockwave punch, the nightclub finally fell silent.

Ash drifted in the air.

The dance floor was a graveyard—blood pooled on the tiles, bodies gone, only dust and the smell of death remaining.

Frank holstered his weapon and gave Lucas a nod.

"Kid, where'd you find her? That little girl's got my kind of style."

Skye, standing amid the carnage, looked both exhilarated and slightly dazed.

Lucas quickly waved his hands. "No, no, don't get any ideas. She's not usually like this. Probably just... first-mission adrenaline. And maybe her powers make her fight that way."

Frank chuckled darkly. "Vibration powers, huh? Raw, but damn effective. With the right training, she could level a building."

Lucas smirked. "Try a mountain. Give her enough time, maybe even a planet."

Across the room, Blade was busy interrogating the last survivor—a vampire pinned to the wall by a silver stake.

Smoke hissed from the creature's wounds as he writhed and screamed.

Lucas and the others walked over.

"Quinn," Blade growled. "Where's Deacon Frost?"

He drove a silver dagger deep into Quinn's thigh.

"AAAH! Damn you, Daywalker! I'll never tell you anything!"

Blade didn't flinch. He twisted the knife, then rammed another into the vampire's chest. The sizzling sound of burning flesh filled the air.

"I'll ask one last time," Blade said coldly, leaning close. "Where is Deacon Frost?"

Quinn spat a mouthful of blood into his face, grinning through the pain.

"You'll never get anything from me! Tch—!"

Blade wiped the blood away with calm disgust.

"Then you're useless."

He turned, grabbed a gas can from a supply crate, and poured it over the screaming vampire.

Then he tossed a lighter.

WHOOOM!

Flames roared to life, engulfing Quinn completely. His shrieks echoed for only a few seconds before silence returned.

Blade didn't even look back. He turned to face Lucas and his team instead, his eyes wary.

"Who are you people?" he asked flatly.

His tone wasn't hostile—but it wasn't friendly either. Hunters didn't survive long by trusting strangers, especially ones strong enough to slaughter an entire nest.

Frank stepped forward. "We're hunting vampires too. You're...?"

"I'm a vampire hunter," Blade said simply. "People call me... Blade."

He extended a hand.

Frank hesitated for a moment, then gripped it firmly. "Frank Castle."

Before they could say more—

WEE-OO, WEE-OO!

Police sirens wailed in the distance.

Blade frowned. "Damn. Cops are faster than usual tonight."

Frank scowled too. "I didn't call for backup. So who the hell tipped them off?"

Matt's voice cut through the rising noise. "Now's not the time to find out. We need to move before they see this mess."

Blade nodded. "Follow me."

He turned and led them toward a dark corner of the club. There, he pulled open a vent cover in the wall.

"Through here."

One by one, Lucas, Skye, Frank, and Matt climbed in behind him—

and disappeared into the shadows.

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