

Marvel Manifestor

Chapter 71:

Marvel Manifestor

Not only Lucas and his team, but even Coulson and Barton, who were waiting outside on standby, were completely dumbfounded.

What the hell was going on? Since when were the cops this efficient? They'd barely fired a few shots, and the police had already arrived. This was Hell's Kitchen, for crying out loud!

Coulson quickly strode toward the squad cars, flashing his S.H.I.E.L.D. credentials.

> "I'm Agent Coulson, S.H.I.E.L.D. Who's in charge here?"

After a brief exchange, the officers backed off and left. Their trip had basically been for nothing. After all, S.H.I.E.L.D.'s authority far exceeded that of any local police department—they had jurisdiction over the entire United States, and their orders trumped the cops' every time.

From the squad leader, Coulson managed to extract a few details. The reason they'd shown up so quickly was that someone had called it in—and that someone wasn't just any civilian. Whoever it was clearly had some pull, otherwise the NYPD wouldn't have mobilized this fast, especially in a place known as a criminal paradise.

Coulson immediately suspected a leak, but he didn't know where it came from. So he picked up his phone and called Nick Fury.

> "Director, the intel's been compromised. I don't know how the police got word, but I've already sent them away."

"Motherf—!" Fury's trademark curse burst out before he continued,

> "I got it. Pull the team out. Let the idiots in blue deal with it."

Coulson sighed as he ended the call. Great—another all-nighter wasted, and the mission was now scrubbed.

> "You heard the Director," he told his team. "Pack it up. We're heading back."

The others nodded reluctantly and withdrew.

Meanwhile, Lucas and his group followed Blade out of the nightclub and arrived at a warehouse—one of Blade's safehouses.

> "This place is secure," Blade said, dropping onto a worn-out couch. "We need to exchange information."

It looked like the warehouse had once been a small metalworking factory—rusted machinery and tools lay scattered everywhere.

After brief introductions, they recounted the events leading up to their encounter.

> "So you got this intel from that vampire? Where is he now?" Blade asked.

> "Didn't make it," Frank replied grimly. The vampire had died under his interrogation.

Blade nodded, then explained what he knew.

He'd been tracking down a vampire leader named Deacon Frost. His current lead had been a vampire named Quinn, Frost's right-hand man. Blade had followed Quinn to that nightclub, certain that he'd eventually lead him straight to Frost.

But now that Quinn was gone, the trail had gone cold again.

Blade clenched his jaw. After chasing Frost for so long, he finally had a lead—and it slipped right through his fingers.

> "Not necessarily," Lucas interjected.

Everyone turned to him.

Lucas knew the story wasn't over yet. Quinn didn't die. In the original timeline, the burnt vampire had revived in the hospital morgue, killing a coroner and attacking a female doctor.

> "Quinn isn't dead," Lucas said calmly. "He's at a hospital right now. We should move before it's too late."

Blade immediately stood, ready to go, then paused. He didn't know which hospital. He exhaled sharply in frustration.

Lucas noticed the look on his face and smirked. "Relax. We've got Skye. This is child's play for her."

> "I'll need a computer," Lucas said.

Blade's eyes lit up with hope. He dragged out a rugged military-grade laptop from the corner—one of those bulky green-cased field computers.

> "Skye, it's all yours. Find out where they took Quinn."

> "On it."

Skye's fingers flew across the keyboard. She first breached the NYPD's internal network, then cross-referenced emergency dispatch logs and automatic backups. Within minutes, she pinpointed the hospital.

> "Got it. Hell's Kitchen General Hospital," she said. "It's the only facility in the area equipped with a forensic pathology unit."

It had taken her less than ten minutes. Even Blade looked genuinely impressed—her hacking skills left his old mentor in the dust.

The group moved fast, reaching the hospital soon after. Using his heightened vampiric senses, Blade easily located the morgue where Quinn had been stored.

Just as they reached the door, a shadow burst out. The figure was charred black, skin cracked and burned—Quinn.

Without hesitation, Blade whipped out a silver throwing knife. It flashed through the air and severed Quinn's hand before the vampire smashed through the window and hurled himself into the night.

They were on the eleventh floor. Even Blade couldn't make a fall like that unscathed—not yet. His bloodline hadn't fully awakened; he was still far from being able to face Dracula himself.

> "Damn it!"

Blade slammed his fist into the window frame, shattering it.

> "Over here! Someone's hurt!"

A shout came from inside. Blade turned and hurried back into the morgue.

The coroner was already dead—half his neck torn clean off, pale as paper. A female doctor was slumped nearby, clutching her bleeding throat, gasping for breath.

Blade knelt to check her pulse. She was alive—but bitten. That meant infection. It was only a matter of time before she turned.

Frank drew his gun. "Better end it now before she changes."

Blade stopped him with a sharp look.

> "Don't. She's still human. I can help her."

The cold, ruthless hunter suddenly sounded... gentle.

In the doctor's face, Blade saw his mother—the mother he'd never known.

His mother had been bitten while pregnant. She'd died giving birth to him, leaving him cursed and blessed as the only half-human, half-vampire hybrid.

After that, the group split up. Blade took the woman back to his safehouse, while Lucas and the others went their separate ways—but not before exchanging contact information. Their goals were aligned: destroying vampires.

Back at the agency, Lucas and Skye crashed for the night. It was nearly dawn.

The following day passed without incident—until evening, when Lucas's phone rang.

It was Matt.

> "Blade called," Matt said. "He found something—there's a blood-processing plant here in Hell's Kitchen. He's planning to hit it tonight and wants our help."

Within the hour, they were all gathered once again at Blade's warehouse, ready for the next hunt.

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## Chapter 72: The Blood Factory

"Blade, how's that female doctor doing?"

Skye asked anxiously. She couldn't help worrying that the doctor might turn into a vampire—after all, she was still a living, breathing human being.

"She's fine," Blade replied. "I injected her with a concentrated garlic serum. Turns out she's a hematology specialist—now she's working on developing a serum that could counteract vampiric infection."

Skye finally breathed a sigh of relief.

Under cover of darkness, the group headed toward the Blood Factory. From the outside, it looked like a massive warehouse. State-of-the-art surveillance systems covered every corner, and armed guards patrolled the perimeter in shifts.

"I say we go in loud," Frank suggested. "Our real target is Deacon Frost anyway. If we stir things up enough, he'll come out on his own."

Frank's logic was sound. Right now, Frost operated from the shadows while they were exposed. The best strategy was to rattle the snake—force him to make the first move.

Blade nodded in agreement. He knew Frost well—an arrogant narcissist with absolute faith in his power. If his blood facility was attacked, he would definitely take it personally and strike back.

So, the group marched straight toward the front entrance.

> "Who goes there?!"

The security guards spotted them instantly—how could they not? A small group walking confidently toward a restricted site in the middle of the night wasn't exactly subtle.

Bang!

Frank didn't hesitate—one clean shot, one kill. The guard dropped instantly, a red bullet hole between his brows and a spray of brain matter staining the ground. He didn't dissolve into ashes like a vampire—he was human.

"Damn it—half-bloods!" Frank cursed under his breath. "These damn scumbags are everywhere."

He despised the half-bloods—humans corrupted by vampiric influence. In his eyes, they weren't people anymore, just worthless trash serving monsters.

The gunshot threw the rest of the guards into a panic. They returned fire immediately, their weapons blazing. Their firepower was heavier than Lucas's team anticipated.

Lucas quickly realized his Judicator (the holy revolver) was useless here—it only worked against supernatural creatures. Skye, meanwhile, still couldn't project her shockwaves at range. That left only Blade and Frank on the offensive.

Lucas's eyes narrowed. "Time to let Onion stretch his legs."

He pulled out the Chocobo Whistle. His plan wasn't to use Onion as a shield, but as an aerial platform—attack from above where their enemies wouldn't expect it.

The whistle sang out, and Onion appeared from the pocket dimension. Lucas tossed it a Saghir Green, and the bird's eyes immediately burned with energy. It clawed at the ground, feathers bristling with battle spirit.

Lucas swung himself onto its back, and in one powerful leap, Onion soared skyward.

Blade froze for a moment, stunned. He'd seen some bizarre things in his time, but watching what looked like a flightless bird—half ostrich, half dragon—take off into the night sky was a first.

Even Matt and Frank were speechless. They'd never seen anything like Onion before.

Up in the air, Lucas unsheathed the Ultimate Divine Blade, the emerald energy coursing down its edge.

He slashed through the air. Wind howled violently, twisting into a raging tornado that swept across the ground below.

From the sky, Lucas had a clear advantage. On the ground, silhouettes stood out under the dim floodlights, but in the night sky, with no reference points, he was nearly invisible. That was why he'd chosen to fight from above—using the darkness as his camouflage.

The tornado struck. The half-blood guards screamed as they were ripped apart, their bodies shredded into crimson fragments scattered across the ground.

Lucas descended moments later, landing amid the carnage. Severed limbs and pools of blood painted the scene like a vision of hell.

"Let's move," he said quietly.

They pushed open the factory's main doors—and froze.

Inside, rows upon rows of human beings hung from the ceiling, sealed in translucent plastic cocoons. Men and women alike, all alive—barely. Each was connected to transparent tubes pumping bright red blood into massive collection machines. In return, the machines fed them nutrient fluids to keep them alive just long enough to drain them dry.

"Those damn vampires..." Frank's voice trembled with fury. "If I ever get my hands on one of them, I'll make sure they beg for death before I'm done."

It was like a vision straight from hell. Humans, reduced to livestock—kept alive only to provide a constant flow of blood to feed the monsters outside.

"They're... still alive?" Skye whispered. The horror in her eyes was unmistakable.

"Alive, yeah," Lucas said grimly. "But they might as well be dead. Ending it would be mercy."

He stepped forward and sliced through one of the main extraction machines. Sparks flew, and the hum of the machinery began to fade.

As soon as the system shut down, the life support for the captives failed. One by one, the heart monitors flatlined. An alarm blared throughout the factory, shrill and deafening.

Frank didn't hesitate. He swung his heavy backpack around and started planting explosives. "This place doesn't deserve to exist," he growled.

The rest of the team fanned out, destroying the remaining blood-processing systems.

When Frank finished setting the charges, he pulled out his phone and started taking photos. "I'm sending this to Fury," he muttered. "He needs to see what these bastards have been doing. The truce is over. It's time for war."

As Skye blasted apart the last active console, the factory's entire power grid went down. Sparks flashed, and the lights died completely.

> "Let's go," Frank said. "Once Frost finds out what happened, he'll hunt us down himself. That's when the real fight begins."

He looked around at the devastation. He knew exactly what this facility meant—it was a critical part of the vampires' supply chain. Without it, they'd be starving, forced to hunt live prey again.

And knowing Deacon Frost's temper, he would scour the entire city to find whoever had done this.

BOOM!

Frank pressed the detonator. The Blood Factory went up in a massive explosion, flames roaring into the night sky—visible from miles away.

Cleanup wasn't their concern anymore. Someone else would handle the aftermath.

As the firelight reflected in his eyes, Lucas exhaled slowly.

"It's time to go on the offensive," he murmured. "Those monsters don't care about reason or mercy. If we don't stop them now, they'll come for everyone we care about."

He already knew Frost's next move—sending Quinn to the museum to steal the fragments of the Book of Erebus in order to become the Blood God.

Lucas had no intention of stopping him—not yet.

Once Frost began his ritual, he'd need to sacrifice all the vampire elders—most of whom were powerful industrialists and politicians hiding behind human faces.

It would be the perfect chance to wipe them all out in one strike.

Lucas's lips curled into a faint, dangerous smile.

> "Let's see how he likes being the prey."

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Chapter 73: A Terrible Plan

The next day, Lucas immediately asked Skye to pull up information on every museum in New York—focusing on which ones had ever exhibited any yellowed scraps of paper or cloth.

The Book of Truth had never been deciphered by humankind, because no one could recognize the writing on it. Even among vampires, only a handful knew anything about the script—it was an ancient language long lost to history.

So any museum that had displayed it would definitely have promoted it with the gimmick of being "an undeciphered artifact." A simple keyword search would probably narrow it down quickly.

The comparison software was still running. There were actually quite a few museums in New York—only four or five public ones, but countless private ones.

New York never lacked for capitalists, and there were always some who loved to show off. Those people would establish private museums just to display their personal collections—some of which were even more valuable and rare than the exhibits in public institutions.

That was capitalism in a nutshell: everything revolved around capital. Presidents were merely tools to be replaced when they stopped being useful.

At that moment, Natasha walked in with a frown, looking deadly serious—as if something big had happened.

"Where have you been these past few days?" Lucas asked curiously. There shouldn't have been any major incidents recently—Tony was holed up at home every day, and the Hulk was either still on the run or hiding somewhere in Brazil. What could have possibly happened?

"Are you guys messing with those vampires?" Natasha asked.

"You already know?" Lucas raised an eyebrow. He hadn't expected S.H.I.E.L.D. to be that well-informed. He thought it would take them a few days to find out.

"Our director got word today. The vampire high council is holding a roundtable meeting to discuss your situation. From the looks of it, the outcome won't be pleasant," Natasha said, passing along the intel she'd gotten from Nick Fury. Of course, that intel was something Fury had deliberately let her leak to Lucas.

As for how Fury had learned about it—well, that was anyone's guess.

"Don't worry. They won't live long," Lucas said with a casual shrug, utterly unconcerned about what the old bloodsuckers were plotting.

"Oh? What makes you so sure?" Natasha asked curiously.

"These geezers have lived for centuries—some for hundreds of years. And you say they won't live long? That means you've already got a plan in motion, right?"

Lucas just smiled and didn't answer. Instead, he asked, "You got your intel from Frank, didn't you?"

Natasha didn't deny it; she simply nodded. "How did you know?"

Lucas didn't answer that either. What was he supposed to say—that he knew because of comic books about the Punisher and Nick Fury?

"Found it!" Skye suddenly called out. Lucas immediately turned to the computer screen.

It was the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the largest museum in New York—and one of the top five in the world. Its collection exceeded three million pieces, encompassing the full span of human civilization and countless treasures—most of which had, of course, been looted from around the globe.

In one of its galleries was exactly what Lucas was looking for—a set of Book of Truth fragments.

The museum's webpage detailed the origins of the fragments, as well as current attempts to study and decipher them. They were to be displayed for a month as "unsolved mysteries of art."

"That's it!" Lucas recognized the tattered scraps sealed behind glass instantly. The writing on them was almost identical to the symbols tattooed on the Ha Ghost tribe—strange, arcane markings that made no sense at all.

"Skye, keep eyes on this museum for the next few days."

"Is this thing really that important?" Natasha and Skye asked at the same time.

Lucas nodded. "Very. The vampires are all after it."

"Need my help?" Natasha offered. She knew Lucas didn't like dealing with S.H.I.E.L.D., so she meant it as a personal favor—not an official mission. After all, she had been living in the same apartment for months now, had grown close to Skye like a sister, and had come to see Lucas as a friend. Friends help friends, after all.

But Lucas shook his head. "Not for now. I'm using this thing as bait. What I really want is the location of their nest."

He didn't mention the real objective—the sacrificial site where Deacon Frost would soon attempt to ascend as the Blood God.

Natasha had only come to warn Lucas, and since he already knew, she soon left to resume her mission—keeping an eye on the vampire elders to prevent them from doing anything reckless, and quietly gathering evidence so that S.H.I.E.L.D. would have a reason to step in officially.

She and Barton had been monitoring the vampire council for days. Once they learned that the council planned to discuss how to deal with the person behind the blood factory, she came to warn Lucas.

After instructing Skye to keep a watch on the Met, Lucas headed to a law firm in Hell's Kitchen.

As soon as he entered, a tall, beautiful blonde woman greeted him.

"Sir, do you have an appointment? Are you here for Mr. Nelson or Mr. Murdock?"

The woman's professional attire, light makeup, and simple ponytail gave her an air of elegant competence.

Lucas recognized her at once—Karen Page, a woman with a life as tragic as it was turbulent.

"I'm here to see Matt Murdock. Just tell him Lucas Norman is here."

Karen asked him to wait and went to Murdock's office. Matt was currently meeting with a pro bono client.

"Please wait a moment. Mr. Murdock will be with you shortly," Karen said, offering Lucas a seat and a cup of coffee.

It was Lucas's first time here. He looked around curiously. It was a typical apartment-style office, the kind common all over New York.

The firm had three rooms—Matt's and Foggy's offices, plus a lounge that doubled as a records room. There was also a small kitchen and a bathroom, while the front area was Karen's domain, where she handled clients.

Before long, Matt personally saw his client out. In Hell's Kitchen, few people could afford lawyers; most relied on legal aid.

"You're here. Come in," Matt said with a nod, then turned to Karen. "No more clients for now."

Inside his office, Matt sat behind his desk, idly rubbing his cane as he always did.

"Got news?" he asked.

"Yeah. I've found out the vampires' next move. Skye's monitoring the location. I'm planning to go there myself," Lucas replied, then explained about the Book of Truth fragments being displayed at the Met.

"Then those fragments should probably be destroyed," Matt said gravely. "If something like that ends up in the hands of vampires, it'll spell disaster for humanity."

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Matt's expression grew grave. If those vampires really managed to complete the ritual and summon their so-called Blood God, their power would grow exponentially—and with that strength, they'd slaughter humans without restraint. Those fragments had to be destroyed. The vampires could never be given a chance to obtain them.

"I have a plan," Lucas said. "I'm going to use those fragments to find the place where the vampires will hold their final ritual—and when they're all gathered together, we'll wipe them out in one go."

Matt frowned deeply. "No way. That's too risky. Even if that ritual can't be completed, the number of vampires gathering there alone will be more than a few of us can handle."

But Lucas was confident. He knew that the doctor Blade had once saved would soon develop a serum capable of countering vampires. He also had faith in his own

strength—after all, Garuda could obliterate that sacrificial site the moment it appeared. Not to mention, he still had Bear Grylls' Zodiac Meteorite, something as devastating as a miniature nuke.

"Relax," Lucas said with a smirk. "I've got this. Besides, we'll have you, Frank, and Blade. Our main targets are the vampire elders. The rest aren't worth worrying about."

Matt still wasn't convinced. The plan was too dangerous. He didn't know that by the time the ritual began, all members of the vampire council would themselves be part of the sacrifice. The only true threat would be Deacon Frost.

"I'll go to the museum first, take a look around, and plant some surveillance cameras. Once there's movement, I'll call you and Frank," Lucas said.

"I'll go with you," Matt offered, getting to his feet—only for Lucas to stop him.

"Come on, Matt. A blind man visiting a museum? You sure that won't raise eyebrows?"

Matt paused—then let out a wry laugh. He got the point. A blind man wandering through an art exhibit would indeed be... suspicious.

"Fine," he said at last. "Just be careful."

Matt decided to stay behind.

"Frank told me the vampires' top brass are holding a meeting. After what we did to their blood factory, they're out for blood. You and Skye should be careful—these bloodsuckers don't play fair."

It was clear that S.H.I.E.L.D. had passed the same intel to Frank.

Lucas nodded. "I know. Those old fossils are good at arguing, but they'll never agree on anything useful. They're too ancient to be a real threat. The only one worth worrying about is Deacon Frost—the guy Blade's been hunting. He's the real danger. Be careful on your end, too. They might target your friends."

Matt grunted softly. Foggy and Karen were ordinary people; if they ran into vampires, they wouldn't stand a chance—that was exactly what worried him.

"If things get too dangerous," Lucas said, "have them come stay at my place for a while."

He wasn't exaggerating—the apartment's defenses were impregnable. Even a nuclear blast wouldn't chip the paint, and the magical wards cast by Moguri the Wise could block any force of evil.

"I'll let them know," Matt said after a moment's thought. "Thanks, Lucas. I might have to take you up on that."

He didn't know what made Lucas's place special, but he'd seen enough of Lucas's magic to believe it could be extraordinary.

"By the way," Lucas added, "fill Frank in on this. I'm heading to the museum now. It'll be closing soon."

It was already past noon.

Leaving the law office, Lucas took a cab straight to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, located beside Central Park.

It was the busiest time of day. Lucas entered with a museum guidebook in hand, blending in with the crowd.

As expected of one of the world's top five museums—without a map, he would've gotten lost.

He walked through the galleries until he reached his destination: the Book of Truth exhibition.

The vampires called it the Book of Truth, but humans had never deciphered the language on those fragments and had no idea what it really was.

At this hour, the sunlight was at its peak. No vampire would dare appear outside, no matter how much sunscreen they wore. So Lucas wasn't worried about running into any of them.

He wandered the hall like an ordinary tourist, casually examining the displays while subtly studying the room's layout—every camera, every sensor.

After circling the exhibition once, he confirmed that the writing was completely incomprehensible—no wonder it had never been cracked.

When closing time neared, Lucas left and returned to the office.

Skye was glued to the museum's security feed, fascinated by the exhibits.

"You sure the vampires will come for this stuff?" she asked skeptically. "You're betting on them stealing a few scraps of ancient cloth?"

"They'll come," Lucas said firmly. "Just wait and see."

He flopped down on the couch while Skye kept watch over the monitors.

"Then we'll take turns," Skye said. "They only come out at night anyway."

Since Lucas wasn't sure which day the vampires would strike, they had to play the waiting game—taking turns monitoring the live feeds day and night.

That night, Lucas took the first shift, letting Skye rest. The cameras showed nothing unusual—just security guards making their regular rounds.

Three days passed. The museum remained calm. Skye began to doubt the plan altogether, but Lucas stayed resolute.

Then, on the fifth day, Lucas got a call from Matt.

"Blade's got a lead," Matt said. "Tonight, the vampires are hitting the museum—for the fragments you mentioned."

Lucas froze. How the hell did Blade know that? If he'd had that intel earlier, there would've been no need for this stakeout. He'd lost several nights of sleep for nothing!

Skye, who overheard every word, exploded. She lunged at Lucas, kicking, punching, and even biting him in her fury.

"This was your stupid plan! I've been staying up for days because of you! I told you this wouldn't work, and you made me waste my time! I'm gonna bite you to death, you jerk!!"

Like a furious tigress, Skye unleashed her wrath while Lucas, completely guilty, let her vent without resistance. He knew better than to fight back—if he said one wrong word, she might just blast him into pieces with her vibration powers.

After ten solid minutes of abuse, Skye finally calmed down. Lucas sat huddled in the corner of the couch, teary-eyed and utterly defeated.

Later that night, at Blade's safehouse, everyone gathered. The moment they met, Lucas couldn't help asking how Blade had gotten his information.

"I planted a tracker on Quinn," Blade said flatly. "The idiot never noticed."

Even Blade sounded surprised. He'd stuck the tracker on Quinn back at the hospital when the vampire escaped. The signal had dropped out once, and Blade assumed it had been discovered—so he hadn't thought much of it since. Turns out, Quinn really was that stupid.

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No one expected it—the tracker signal suddenly came back online today, and its location was none other than the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The moment Blade saw it, he immediately connected the dots. Matt had mentioned Lucas's "wait-and-see" plan a few days ago—the utterly ridiculous stakeout scheme—so Blade instantly called Matt and the others.

"If I'd known, I wouldn't have bothered with all that work... I got beaten up for nothing," Lucas muttered under his breath. Skye shot him a sharp glare in response.

Blade glanced at the palm-sized tracker display. The red dot marking Quinn's location hadn't moved an inch—it was still inside the museum.

"Their target must be those fragments Lucas mentioned," Blade said coldly, strapping his sword onto his back and shrugging into his signature long leather coat. "We can't let them get them."

Frank Castle said nothing as usual. He just kept methodically cleaning his weapons.

"Let's move."

Blade had somehow procured a black van that looked heavily modified. The group piled in and drove from Hell's Kitchen all the way to the museum. Throughout the ride, Blade kept an eye on the tracker's signal—it stayed fixed at the museum the whole time.

When they arrived, the museum looked calm and peaceful from the outside. No alarms, no signs of forced entry. If not for the faint metallic tang of blood in the air—something only Blade and Matt could pick up—they might have thought nothing was wrong.

Carefully, they approached the main doors. Lucas reached out and pushed—the doors swung open easily. Not locked. No alarms. Not even a single security guard in sight.

"Looks like the guards are all dead," Matt said grimly. He tapped his cane against the ground, sending out a pulse of sound. The vibrations mapped the interior of the building in his mind.

"Let's go straight to the exhibition room."

The group rushed toward the gallery where the fragments were kept.

Meanwhile, inside the Book of Truth exhibit, Quinn and a group of vampires were leisurely strolling among the displays—as if they were simply browsing rather than stealing.

Quinn casually smashed a glass case and picked up one of the yellowed fragments.

"What's even written on this junk? Can't believe the boss cares about this crap," he scoffed, utterly unimpressed. Orders were orders, though.

Around him, other vampires crouched over fallen guards, draining their blood. Quinn wasn't interested in such low-quality fare.

Suddenly, a flash of silver light sliced through the air—cleanly severing a vampire's throat. The arc of light curved gracefully across the hall before being caught by a gloved hand.

"Quinn," a cold voice said. "We meet again."

Blade stepped out of the shadows, his boomerang still gleaming, his sword already in hand.

"The Daywalker! Kill him!" Quinn shouted, panic flickering across his face.

Bang! Bang!

Gunfire exploded across the hall. The vampires charging ahead turned to ash mid-step as Frank appeared, shotgun in hand.

"Didn't finish you last time," he growled. "Guess I'll fix that today."

He racked the shotgun and fired again—silver-coated rounds blasting another vampire's head apart.

From above, Matt dropped into the fray. The blades hidden in his batons snapped out with a metallic click, and he moved like an acrobat—swift, fluid, lethal. Wherever he passed, clouds of ash rose in his wake.

On the sidelines, Skye remained hidden. Lucas had told her to use the chaos to photograph the fragments, so while the others drew attention, she quietly snapped picture after picture.

Then—another flash of light. A bullet punched straight through a vampire's skull, then tore through a second one behind him.

The muzzle of Lucas's revolver, The Adjudicator, still smoked faintly. He flicked his wrist, and six more shots thundered out in rapid succession—each one a clean, instant kill.

Frank glanced over at the weapon, eyes burning with admiration. He could tell at a glance—this was no ordinary gun. Lucas hadn't even used silver rounds, and he hadn't reloaded once.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

The gunfire intensified. The Adjudicator's power grew with every shot, one round even cutting a vampire clean in half. The sheer firepower broke the vampires' morale. They scattered, terrified, too afraid to even face Lucas head-on.

Aside from Quinn, only about ten vampires remained. Lucas decided to end it all at once.

"Blade! Go get Quinn! The rest are mine!"

He leapt into the air, kicking off a display case to launch himself higher into the open space above the hall. From there, he could see every vampire clearly.

"Sin of Origin!"

He whispered the invocation and pulled the trigger.

The revolver roared—dozens of glowing bullets erupted, forming a burning blue six-pointed star in midair. The magic circle blazed hotter and hotter, until the entire hall shimmered under its heat.

"Amen," Lucas murmured, and fired the final shot.

BOOM!

The explosion of light swallowed the hall, the brilliance as bright as noon. A searing wave of heat tore through everything.

When the light faded, the exhibition room was a wreck. The once-pristine fragments were scorched black, still smoldering faintly. The vampires were gone—nothing left but ashes and a giant, charred six-pointed symbol burned into the marble floor.

"Phew... checkmate."

Lucas blew the smoke from the revolver's barrel. The Adjudicator spun elegantly in his hand before he slid it back into its holster.

Everyone—Quinn, Skye, even Blade—stared at him in stunned silence. None of them had expected that kind of power from a revolver. It was practically a handheld rocket launcher, and against vampires, it was devastating beyond reason.

Quinn's only thought was escape—run, get out, and report everything to Deacon Frost. These people were monsters, especially that young man with the gun.

But before he could move, Blade's sword flashed—slicing both his legs clean off. Quinn collapsed to the floor with a scream.

"Going somewhere, Quinn?" Blade said, crouching beside him and pinning him to the ground with a silver spike. "Where's Deacon Frost?"

"Daywalker, you'll get nothing from me," Quinn spat, eyes blazing with hate. "You filthy, half-blood abomination!"

Even in agony, his loyalty to Frost was unshakable.

Meanwhile, Skye approached Lucas, camera still in hand, though her gaze kept drifting to the gun at his waist.

"What are you looking at?" Lucas asked.

"That gun of yours... how the hell does it have that kind of power?" she said, wide-eyed.

"I'll explain later. Did you get all the pictures of the fragments?"

Skye patted her camera proudly. "Of course I did. But seriously—what do you even want those photos for?"

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Chapter 76: The Vampire Council

"Don't worry, I got every shot," Skye said, handing over the camera. "But seriously, why did you want me to photograph those fragments anyway?"

"To decipher the text, of course," Lucas replied with a grin.

"But didn't you say no human could decode that language?"

Lucas nodded. "Yeah, no human can. But a vampire might."

Skye's eyes widened. "Oh, so now you're playing word games with me?" She shoved the camera into his hands, annoyed, and walked off toward Frank, clearly done talking to him.

Lucas shrugged. "Hey, I didn't lie."

Meanwhile, Blade pressed his boot against Quinn's face.

"Quinn, my patience has officially run out," Blade said coldly. "Last chance. Where's Deacon Frost?"

The tip of his silver sword hovered a breath away from Quinn's eye. The vampire could feel the holy metal searing his skin just from proximity.

Quinn stayed silent. He knew all too well—betray Deacon Frost, and his end would be far worse than death.

"Then you're useless."

With a shhk of steel, Blade drove the sword straight through Quinn's eye socket. The vampire didn't even have time to scream before his body burst into flames and crumbled to ash.

With Quinn dead, the lead on Frost was completely gone. Blade sank onto the floor, sword still in hand, lost in thought and frustration.

Lucas walked over and said, "Don't lose hope. There's still a chance."

He tossed the camera to Blade. "These are photos of the Book of Truth. I'm guessing you know someone who can read this stuff. There's a clue in there—something Frost wants."

Blade stared at the camera for a moment, thinking. He did know someone who could decipher ancient vampire script—though calling that person human would be inaccurate.

"...Thanks," Blade said quietly. For once, the stoic Daywalker acknowledged it. Lucas and the others had been helping him this whole time, after all.

On the way back, Frank couldn't stop asking about The Adjudicator. Anyone could see how much he coveted the gun.

For Frank Castle, firearms weren't just tools—they were extensions of his soul. And The Adjudicator looked like the ultimate weapon, a masterpiece forged for divine judgment itself.

Still, he wasn't the kind of man to take what wasn't his. He just admired it—openly.

Lucas, seeing that, handed the revolver over. "Take a closer look."

Frank held it reverently, running his calloused fingers along its flawless surface as if caressing a lover. Every line of the weapon was art—the elegant curvature, the golden cross pattern etched along the barrel, the weight that hummed with restrained power. He wished, just for a moment, that he had one of his own.

"Lucas," he asked finally, "how the hell do you reload this thing?"

He had examined every inch and found no chamber, no slot, no mechanism for loading rounds. The gun was seamless—almost alive.

"Oh, it doesn't use bullets," Lucas said lightly. "It's powered by magic."

Frank blinked. "Magic. Right."

Lucas grinned. "It's not your standard sidearm. Think of it as a divine weapon—made to fight demons. It's been upgraded, too, so no need for ammo."

Frank could only shake his head in envy. For a man without magic, The Adjudicator might as well have been a museum piece—beautiful, but useless.

At that same moment, in a secluded manor deep in the countryside, a group of ancient vampires in tailored suits sat gathered around a long table.

At the head of the table sat an elder with silvery-white hair, dressed in a spotless black robe. A blood-red ruby pendant hung from his neck, glinting like a drop of frozen blood. Every gesture radiated old-world nobility.

"Silence," he said softly.

The command wasn't loud, but the effect was immediate. The previously noisy chamber fell utterly still.

"You have all lived for over a thousand years," he continued, his voice calm but sharp. "And yet you squabble like those filthy humans. Have you no dignity?"

Not once did he glance at the others. His presence alone was enough to make them lower their heads.

"Now, have you investigated the humans involved in this affair?"

Before anyone could answer, the heavy doors burst open with a loud bang.

A young man swaggered in—casually dressed, looking more like a street punk than a noble.

"Deacon Frost," the elder said icily. "You are interrupting a meeting of the Council. You have no right to be here, you ill-bred mongrel."

His words were cold, but the disgust in his eyes was unmistakable.

To him, bloodline was everything. The pureblood vampires considered turned ones—like Frost—to be filthy, impure mockeries of their kind. The fact that this "half-breed" dared step into the Council's sanctum was an outrage.

Frost smirked. "Heh. Still clinging to your medieval garbage about 'pure blood'? Wake up, old man. This is the modern world. Power rules now. No wonder you fossils hide in your coffins while humans run the planet."

"You dare—!" One of the elders slammed the table and stood. "You insolent half-breed! Get out at once! Guards! GUARDS!"

Their outrage filled the chamber. To them, Frost wasn't even a person—just a stain on their lineage, a reminder that vampires had fallen from grace.

But Frost didn't flinch. He leaned casually against the table, watching them rant as if it were a stage performance.

Then, slowly, the elders realized something was wrong. The manor was always heavily guarded. No one outside the Council should've been able to enter. Unless...

They paled. Even after centuries, fear still ran deep in these ancient creatures. One by one, the shouting stopped.

"What's wrong?" Frost said mockingly. "Why so quiet all of a sudden?"

He strolled behind one of the elders—a bloated vampire in a velvet suit—and laid a hand on his shoulder.

"A moment ago, you were all so loud. What happened?"

Frost's tone dripped with contempt. These relics of the old world clung to their titles and ceremonies, too blind to see the world had moved on.

"The age of your kind is over," he said softly. "Your medieval aristocracy is dead. Your time is up."

"You filthy half-breed!" one elder roared, leaping to his feet. "You dare challenge us? You are nothing here!"

Swish!

A flash of steel cut through the air. Frost's dagger pierced straight through the elder's heart before the man even realized he'd moved. The vampire turned to ash instantly.

The remaining elders froze, terror painted across their faces.

"Listen well," Frost said, voice low and venomous. "I've shown you respect only because of your age. Keep talking, and I'll burn this entire council to the ground."

He slammed both hands down on the table, the impact echoing like thunder through the hall. The fat elder beneath his hand didn't dare make a sound—not even a whimper.

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## Chapter 77: The Blood Serum

Deacon Frost sauntered over to the Grand Elder, his earlier arrogance suddenly replaced by feigned humility.

"Grand Elder," he said smoothly, "someone destroyed our blood-processing plant. What's the Council planning to do about it?"

The Grand Elder's body was trembling like a leaf, though he did his best to maintain the dignified façade expected of his station.

"Now is not the time to wage war with the humans," he replied weakly. "Besides, the Covenant still binds us, so—"

Bang!

Frost slammed his fist onto the round table, his voice rising with fury.

"The Covenant? You mean that pathetic pact you made with our food? You senile fossils actually signed a treaty with livestock! We are vampires! We are the predators—superior beings who feed upon humanity! They should fear us, not the other way around!"

He spat the words like venom. Frost knew the terms of the treaty well enough, but to him, it was a farce. Humans were nothing more than cattle. What kind of predator begged its prey for peace?

The Grand Elder's lips quivered. "Then... what do you intend to do?"

Frost's eyes gleamed with madness. "The Covenant is null and void. From this day forth, vampires will hunt again. Humans are prey—and prey are meant to be slaughtered."

His tone was calm, but the hatred burning behind it made the elder shrink back in terror. The Grand Elder wanted to object, but the deranged look in Frost's eyes silenced him.

At that moment, a young vampire hurried in and whispered something into Frost's ear.

"Boss, Quinn's dead. There are heavy signs of a fight at the scene. It was the Daywalker."

Frost's expression darkened instantly. Though Quinn wasn't the brightest, he was loyal—one of Frost's most trusted lieutenants. To lose him was infuriating.

"What about the fragments?" Frost asked coldly.

"They were burned, Boss. Nothing usable left."

The underling spoke cautiously, terrified of provoking Frost's wrath.

"Damn that Daywalker!" Frost roared, his voice echoing through the hall. "I should've killed him long ago! Gather every man we have. Bring him to me alive—I'll tear the flesh from his bones myself!"

With a furious punch, he shattered the massive marble table in front of him. The elders cowered in their chairs like frightened children.

"Keep an eye on them," Frost ordered his subordinate, jerking his chin toward the Council. "No one leaves the manor. Not a single step."

He turned sharply and stormed out, his expression as dark as the night outside.

---

Elsewhere, Lucas and the others were preparing to go their separate ways. Before leaving, Lucas pulled Blade aside.

"Blade," he said quietly, "when you get those fragments translated, don't kill the translator. She'll help us lure Deacon Frost out."

Blade froze for a second, then nodded. He didn't need to ask for details—Lucas's tone told him enough. The translator must be connected to Frost, and using her would be the perfect bait.

It was risky, but it was also their best chance to track Frost's movements.

After the group parted ways, Blade returned to his safehouse. Whistler was hunched over a black vintage car, a cigarette dangling from his lips as he tinkered under the hood.

"How'd it go?" Whistler asked without looking up.

"Not bad," Blade said, stripping off his gear. "Quinn's dead."

"So the trail's gone cold again, huh?" Whistler grunted, tossing his wrench aside.

"Not exactly," Blade replied, shaking his head. "I got photos of the Book of Truth. Planning to use them to draw Frost out."

He tossed the camera to Whistler.

"Then we've got something to work with," Whistler said, pulling out the memory card and discarding the camera.

Before they could say more, the voice of the female doctor—Karen—rang out from the lab.

"You two need to see this!" she shouted, barely able to contain her excitement.

Blade and Whistler hurried over. Karen motioned for Blade to look into the microscope.

He leaned in—and his eyes narrowed. The vampire cells under the lens were dying rapidly, consumed by a swirling substance that devoured them from within, triggering violent division and collapse.

BOOM!

The microscope exploded, shattering into pieces. Blade's reflexes saved him from taking a face full of shrapnel.

Smoke filled the air. Whistler's cigarette fell from his mouth as he gawked at the wreckage.

"I thought you were working on a cure, Doc! Since when do cures explode?"

"I was trying to develop a curative serum," Karen said sheepishly, brushing glass off her coat. "I don't know what went wrong—it sort of... mutated into this."

Whistler stared at her in disbelief. "Lady, are you sure you're a hematologist and not a weapons engineer? That thing packs more punch than a UV grenade!"

Blade, however, looked pleased. He didn't care that it wasn't a cure. Whatever this serum had become—it was lethal to vampires.

Injected into a vampire's bloodstream, it would devour cells from within, triggering a chain reaction that ended in a biological explosion. A living bomb at the cellular level. Not even Dracula himself could withstand that.

"How much can you make?" Blade asked coldly, ignoring the ruined microscope.

"With the materials I have right now... maybe two hundred milliliters," Karen said after a quick calculation.

"And how much does it take to kill one vampire?"

"About twenty-five milliliters per dose."

"That's eight shots total," Blade said. "Good. Start making them. I'll need them soon."

Karen sighed, shaking her head as she started cleaning up. Then, rolling up her sleeves, she set to work. Synthesizing the serum wouldn't be difficult now that the formula was established—it would just take time.

By the time the clock struck midnight, Blade was already preparing to leave again. There was one more thing to do tonight—find the vampire who could translate the Book of Truth.

After a brief word with Whistler, Blade hopped on his motorcycle and roared off through the neon-lit streets, stopping in front of a crowded nightclub pulsing with bass.

He had deliberately left his sword behind; it was too recognizable. Tonight, he wanted to move unseen.

Two massive bouncers blocked the entrance. One of them lifted a thin metallic plate toward him.

"Symbol," the guard grunted.

Blade glanced at the plate and said evenly, "Horse."

The guard nodded and stepped aside. "Go on in."

This wasn't an ordinary club—it was an exclusive den for vampires to indulge their darkest pleasures. No humans were allowed inside, not even half-breeds like the Hakkui.

That metal plate wasn't decoration either—it was a scanner. It used heat transfer to display random patterns that could only be seen through a vampire's unique thermal vision. Anyone unable to read it would be turned away—or worse.

And since Blade was half-vampire himself, he had that same heat-sensitive perception. Passing the test was effortless.

He stepped through the doorway, swallowed by the pulsing red lights and the heavy scent of blood and desire that filled the club.

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Chapter 78: Setting the Bait

You had to admit—Blade truly was fate's chosen one.

As a half-human, half-vampire hybrid, he possessed every strength of the vampire race, while his human blood had purged all their weaknesses. In short, he was a perfect being—just like Dracula himself. He could walk freely under the sun, had no maddening thirst for blood, yet retained all the supernatural power of his vampiric lineage.

Inside the nightclub, chaos reigned.

Depravity and hunger filled the air—vampires had cast off their human masks, letting pure animal instinct take control.

The pounding bass and writhing bodies all around made Blade frown as he climbed to the second floor.

From a dark corner, a man the size of a small truck stepped into his path.

"You can't go in there."

The man's black suit looked painted onto his massive frame—his arms thicker than a normal man's thighs. He was a walking fortress.

Blade silently handed him a card.

The giant glanced at it, then nodded and stepped aside, opening the door behind him.

"Ohhh, the famous Daywalker..."

A deep, hoarse voice echoed through the room. "Didn't think you'd come looking for me. Should I be honored?"

At the center of the room lay a mountain of flesh—so massive she nearly filled half the chamber. The creature—technically a woman—had to weigh at least seven or eight hundred pounds.

Her enormous, bloated body sank into a bed creaking under the strain, surrounded by monitors and computer rigs that blinked and hummed in the dim light.

The woman's short, stubby arms reached for a keyboard. She tried to turn her head toward Blade but couldn't—her face was buried in her own flesh, trapped by her own body.

Blade didn't bother moving closer. He pulled out a memory card and tossed it toward her.

"I need you to decrypt the data on this."

The woman let out a wheezing laugh. "Wow~~ the legendary Daywalker actually asking me for help? Now that's rich!"

Blade's face didn't change. His next words wiped the smirk right off hers.

"It's a fragment of the Book of Truth."

Silence.

The mocking grin froze on her face, replaced by raw astonishment.

Among vampires, the Book of Truth was akin to humanity's original Bible—an ancient, sacred text. Everyone had heard of it, but few had ever laid eyes on it. No one truly knew where it came from. Some said it was written by Eve, others by Cain—or even by Dracula himself. Whatever its origin, its existence was undeniable.

There were very few vampires left who could read it—and this grotesque woman was one of them.

Blade already knew she worked for Deacon Frost, which was precisely why he'd come. She couldn't refuse.

After a few moments of silence, she finally spoke.

"Come back in three days... and I want five hundred thousand."

Blade nodded once and turned to leave. He had no interest in staying in that stinking room—the stench of sweat and rot made his vampiric senses ache.

As soon as he was gone, the woman pressed a button embedded in her rolls of flesh.

Moments later, the burly guard from before entered.

"Tell Deacon Frost what happened," she ordered coldly. "Inform him I'll need three days to decrypt it."

"Yes, ma'am."

The man bowed slightly and left.

"Daywalker..." the woman croaked, a wicked grin spreading across her face. "In three days, it'll be your death day..."

Her laughter filled the room—ugly, guttural, toadlike.

Outside, Blade took a deep breath of fresh air, pulling out his earpiece. He'd heard every word exchanged between the woman and her bodyguard—word for word.

The moment he entered her chamber, he'd planted a listening device just a few feet from her bulk.

"Yeah," he murmured under his breath, straddling his motorcycle. "Three days... That's when you die, Frost."

The engine roared as he sped off into the night.

Three days.

That was all the time Karen needed to finish the serum. When it was done, the final confrontation would begin—and only one of them would walk away alive.

Meanwhile, Lucas had returned to his apartment. Without hesitation, he entered his Chocobo space. After harvesting a new batch of Saghir Greens, he sank into the warm onsen, his thoughts drifting to the coming days.

He remembered that Frost's ritual took place in a castle-like fortress—inside a circular tower where the vampire elders' blood was used to summon the so-called Blood God.

In his past life, the movie version had made that "Blood God" look pathetically weak—battling Blade evenly, even overpowering him at first, only to be killed by a few doses of serum. Lucas knew that portrayal was nonsense. A being like that should have been far stronger.

What puzzled him was why the system hadn't issued a mission for this event.

Was the Blood God Ritual not part of the official "Marvel major events" timeline?

The warm water made him drowsy, and before he knew it, he had fallen asleep right there in the onsen.

He ended up spending the night in the pocket dimension, only waking up when Skye's voice called him the next morning.

When he arrived at the agency, Natasha and Coulson were already sitting on the couch, waiting.

Lucas scowled. "What does Fury want this time? You know my fees aren't cheap."

Natasha rolled her eyes and said nothing, lounging lazily against the sofa.

Coulson sighed, offering a wry smile. "We've received intel that the Vampire Council has been imprisoned. A new leader has taken control—and they've torn up the peace treaty. It looks like the vampires are preparing to go to war with humanity."

"And that's my problem because...?" Lucas arched a brow. "I'm not a vampire. Shouldn't that be your job, Agent S.H.I.E.L.D.?"

Coulson rubbed his temples. "The issue is, we don't have much intel on them. We were hoping you could share what you know—you've fought them before."

Lucas shrugged. "Why not ask Frank? Fury loves pestering him."

"We did," Coulson said with a helpless chuckle. "Frank told us you know more than he does. Fury insisted we ask you."

Lucas muttered something under his breath about Fury's shamelessness, then waved a hand dismissively.

"I don't have any solid leads right now. We're looking for the new vampire leader too. When I have something, you'll know."

And with that, he turned away—because, honestly, if Lucas had any real intel, Blade would already be on the move.

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## Chapter 79: Trying to Use Me as a Gun?

Coulson sighed again, the weight of it clear in his shoulders. He could see the disaster coming – the new vampire leader had dismantled the Elder Council, torn up the treaty, and effectively declared war on humanity.

It meant one thing: the nights would belong to vampires once again, and humankind would become prey.

Lucas looked at him for a moment, then said calmly,

"We've already got something the vampire leader's interested in. Sooner or later, they'll make a move. You'd better be ready — it's going to be a tough fight."

Coulson's eyes lit up instantly.

"Seriously? Then I'll wait for your signal."

Lucas nodded. "Tell your bald boss to get the money ready — just think of it as a commission for Devil May Cry."

Coulson perked up at that. "No problem, but I'll need an exact amount to report to the Director."

Lucas thought for a moment, then glanced at Skye. He hadn't planned to charge much — money wasn't exactly something he lacked. But then an idea struck him.

"Five hundred thousand. And one more thing."

He raised five fingers as he spoke. The half a million wasn't even for himself — he planned to split it with Matt, Frank, and Blade. Lucas didn't need the cash, but the others did. Matt's struggling law firm barely stayed afloat. Frank was practically homeless, crashing wherever he could in Hell's Kitchen.

Only Blade wasn't short on money — all those silver-coated weapons didn't come cheap. Silver bullets alone were expensive enough to bankrupt an average merc.

Coulson didn't even flinch. Half a million was pocket change to S.H.I.E.L.D. Nick Fury could lose that much just by sneezing — and given how he liked to "negotiate" with the World Security Council, the man's slush funds were measured in the tens of millions, if not more.

"One more thing?" Coulson asked curiously. "Mind telling me what it is?"

Lucas smirked. He knew that look — the same one Coulson had worn when Lucas had asked for the Obelisk last time.

"I need vibranium."

Coulson blinked. "Vibranium? What's that?"

"The metal used to make Captain America's shield," Lucas said casually. "Also known as sound-absorbing steel."

The moment he heard "Captain America," Coulson's expression changed completely. The man was a superfan, and everyone knew it.

"Right... right. I'll report that to the Director."

Lucas nodded. "Good. Then we're agreed — I'll handle the Vampire Council and their elites. The small fry are yours."

Coulson accepted that division of labor without argument, then left the office.

---

Later that night, Natasha returned. She found Lucas leaning back in his chair, sipping coffee.

"The Director agreed to your terms," she said, "but... there's a small issue."

Lucas frowned. "Small issue? Don't tell me your egg-headed boss is up to his tricks again."

He leaned forward, his tone sharp. "And let's get one thing straight — if Fury so much as tries to screw with me or my people, I'll blow your S.H.I.E.L.D. HQ sky-high."

Natasha rolled her eyes dramatically. "You really can't stand him, can you? Look, yes — he's black on the outside and even blacker on the inside — but he's got a bottom line, okay?"

"Yeah," Lucas snorted. "A bottom line that moves wherever it's convenient. I'm not interested in being part of one of his little schemes. He should think long and hard about what happens if he tries."

With an exaggerated sigh, Natasha nudged him with her boot.

"Can you let me finish, you drama queen? The Director said S.H.I.E.L.D. doesn't have any vibranium on hand. But—" she raised a finger, "—he knows a place that does. You'll just have to go get it yourself."

Lucas narrowed his eyes. "So he's setting me up for a job, huh? Using me to clean up his mess? Typical S.H.I.E.L.D. black ops nonsense."

Natasha's eyes flashed. "Excuse me? 'All S.H.I.E.L.D. people are snakes'? You better take that back, you ungrateful little punk. Who's the one who keeps saving your ass when you mouth off at world leaders, huh?"

Lucas raised both hands in surrender, flashing a cheeky grin.

"Alright, alright! My bad. Everyone at S.H.I.E.L.D. is black-hearted – except you, Agent Romanoff."

"That's better." She smirked, crossing her arms.

"Anyway, I don't know the details. But if Fury says it's there, it's there. Just... don't expect it to be easy."

Lucas scoffed. "Tell your precious Director this – if he wants to use me to 'take care of' someone, he'd better show some real sincerity. I don't do jobs for free. And as for vibranium? I can get it myself. I just didn't want to bother."

He wasn't about to play Fury's game. If the man wanted to manipulate him into doing dirty work, he'd have to pay up. In full.

Natasha exhaled, rubbing her temples. "Fine, fine. I'll tell him. Seriously though, what is your problem with him? You two could probably save the world twice as fast if you'd stop glaring at each other."

Lucas shrugged. "Because your Director's a schemer, and I don't like being on anyone's chessboard. Simple as that."

He grabbed his coat and headed for the door.

"When you're done reporting back to your egghead, lock up for me on your way out."

Natasha shouted after him, "What do I look like, your intern?! You little brat!"

But Lucas was already gone.

---

At S.H.I.E.L.D. headquarters, the sound of Fury's furious bellow nearly broke the comms.

"MOTHERF—!! You tell that little bastard he's not getting a damn thing out of me! He thinks he can blackmail me?! Not a chance! If he doesn't want to cooperate, fine! I don't need him! And that vibranium lead? He can forget about it!"

His voice echoed through the speakers of Lucas's now-empty office.

Natasha held the phone at arm's length, wincing at the volume. Even then, she could hear him ranting loud and clear.

She sighed. "Okay, okay, I'll tell him. But I'm guessing he'll still take the first deal. The half-million won't be a problem, right?"

Fury paused mid-rant, clutching his lower back as he sank into his chair with a grunt.

"Yeah, fine. Give him the damn money. But the vibranium? Over my dead body!"

He scowled, rubbing at his side.

It wasn't just his patience wearing thin — it was his kidneys, too.

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Chapter 80 - 80 – Blade Is Captured

Natasha relayed Nick Fury's words to Lucas, who only gave a dismissive snort. In his eyes, Fury was the type who judged everything by convenience—helpful when it suited him, two-faced when it didn't.

With S.H.I.E.L.D. cutting off the vibranium lead, Lucas was forced back to the drawing board. Skye had improved her control over her powers, but her shockwaves still lacked output strength. Without vibranium to stabilize and amplify her resonance, her abilities couldn't reach full potential.

Since the S.H.I.E.L.D. route was closed, Lucas decided to bide his time. Maybe Tony Stark would have some connections... and if not, he could always wait until another opportunity surfaced.

Three days passed quickly—and tonight was the day he'd arranged to meet Blade.

Night fell. Blade once again arrived at the nightclub. According to their agreement, the decoding of the Book of Truth fragment should have been completed by now.

Everything went smoothly—too smoothly. Not a single obstacle stood in his path as he reached the obese hacker's private office. The massive woman was hunched over her monitors, fingers moving rapidly across her keyboards.

"Got results?" Blade asked, keeping his distance.

"I've cracked it," the woman said with a smirk, her voice oily with mockery. "But someone doesn't want me to tell you, Daywalker~~ so... my hands are tied."

Blade's brows furrowed. He knew the moment he walked in that something was off. Too quiet. Too easy.

Without a word, his eyes flicked around the room—corners, shadows, ceiling vents. Then, in one smooth motion, he pulled his pistols and opened fire.

The instant the first shot rang out, eight vampires appeared from the darkness. Their movements were unnaturally fast; each one dodged the bullets with ease.

Blade dropped his guns and drew his silver-edged sword, steel flashing under the strobing club lights. The cramped space exploded into chaos.

Eight vampires against one Daywalker.

The room was too small—Blade's speed was stifled, his swings restricted. Even with his skill, he was gradually being pushed into a corner, steel clashing and sparks flying.

His body was already marked by cuts, but his opponents fared no better—charred wounds from silver burns that refused to heal.

Then, Blade struck. His sword flashed in a blur of light—one vampire didn't even have time to scream before turning to ash.

But before Blade could react, another figure lunged from behind—the same one he'd seen earlier writhing on the dance floor.

A chain tipped with hooks wrapped around him, yanking tight with brutal force. The next instant, he was slammed to the ground.

The remaining vampires swarmed, pinning him down.

Blade struggled, his fingers brushing against the grenade clipped to his chest—specially made silver dust inside. One pull, and the explosion would vaporize every vampire in range.

He was just about to pull the pin when a sharp sting pierced his neck. His world spun. His strength drained in seconds. He barely registered the sensation of falling before darkness claimed him.

Upstairs, the obese woman watched the scene unfold through her monitors. A satisfied smile spread across her greasy face.

"Daywalker's been captured. The last sacrifice for the ritual is ready," she said, dialing a number. "It's all yours now, Deacon Frost."

Below, seven vampires hauled Blade's unconscious body onto the back of a pickup truck and drove away. None of them noticed the faint red light blinking beneath his jacket.

"Signal's live," Whistler said in a low voice, staring at his computer screen. "Looks like Blade pulled it off."

In their hidden safehouse, Lucas, Skye, Matt, and Frank were already assembled, while the female doctor worked feverishly at a lab bench, mixing the final batch of serum.

Things had played out differently from the movie Lucas remembered. In this timeline, the vampires hadn't attacked Whistler or kidnapped the doctor—instead, they'd gone straight for Blade.

Lucas adjusted his gear. "Let's move."

They grabbed their weapons and vials of serum, preparing for battle.

Blade's "capture" was no accident—it was their plan all along. Lucas had known that obese hacker worked for Deacon Frost; Blade would never have gotten real intel from her. The only way forward was to bait the enemy.

If she cooperated, perfect. If not—and Frost's men were waiting—then Blade would pretend to be taken, letting them track him to Frost's lair.

And now, their Plan B had worked perfectly.

Whistler and Frank took the lead in one car while the others followed the tracker signal. The doctor stayed behind—combat wasn't her field, and against vampires, she'd be more liability than help.

After a long drive, they arrived at an isolated estate on the outskirts of the city. The property sprawled across acres, with a gothic tower rising ominously from its rear.

Lucas studied it through his binoculars. "That's the place."

They parked a few hundred meters away and moved in on foot. Skye carried a portable computer, scanning for surveillance feeds—but the area was technologically barren.

"Figures," she muttered. "Bloodsuckers and their antique aesthetics."

Still, the estate was heavily guarded. Dozens of vampires patrolled the perimeter, their heightened alert showing how crucial the coming ritual was to Frost.

Frank attached a silencer to his rifle, scanning the terrain. After a moment, he pointed toward a small ridge near the forest. A perfect sniper nest.

He and Whistler took position there, rifles ready—cover fire for the infiltration team.

Lucas, Skye, and Matt crept up to the perimeter wall. On the other side lay the estate grounds—crawling with vampires.

Once Frank gave the ready signal, the three vaulted the wall—only to land face-to-face with a patrol of three vampires.

"Ah, hell—whose genius idea was this?!" Lucas swore as the vampires' eyes flared red.

"Damn it!"

With a snarl, he swung his sword in a silver arc—

Bang!

A silenced shot rang out from the ridge. One vampire's head exploded like an overripe watermelon.

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