

When I was done getting Loki back in the *Void Skipper's* cell, and sending up some basic food for him, I headed back down to the warehouse. I shot Tony a text asking if he was around and got an invite down to Malibu. Not long after that, I was stepping into his basement workshop garage combo.

“Hey Maker, I’m naming my firstborn after you.” He said, looking up from whatever he was working on. “The face Fury made when the *Void Skipper* came flying down from orbit! It was a masterpiece. I’m not sure I’ll ever be able to catch up.”

“Won’t keep you from trying though,” I said with a chuckle.

“Not for a second.”

I nodded and plopped down into one of the few chairs he kept around the workshop. He kept tinkering for a minute before putting down his tools and swiveling in his chair.

“So, how was space?” He asked like he was a mom asking how school was. “Did you make any friends?”

“No, pretty sure I made at least one enemy though.”

I spent a while telling Tony what had happened once we were through the portal. He was surprised to hear Loki’s condition, though what little sympathy he had for him disappeared when I explained what his plan would have been.

“Son of a bitch,” He cursed, shaking his head. “Where is he now?”

“On the *Skipper*,” I answered. “I’m holding on to him for Thor.”

I continued with the story, going through the upgrades that I made to the Skipper, including the two different versions of the portal project. I obviously skipped over the... moments I had with Natasha.

“Anyway, I can’t really be angry with them. Yes, they kind of ambushed me, but it’s understandable that they are freaking out.”

“Yeah... I won’t lie Maker-”

“Carson,” I said, cutting him off. “It’s Carson. This is my actual face.”

“Oh...I’m trying to not be insulted that I’m the last one you’re doing the face reveal to, but okay.”

I flipped him off as he stood and headed over to a counter with decanters filled with alcohol. He poured one for himself and turned to look at me, grabbing his glass and walking back when I shook my head.

“As I was saying, I can’t say that I don’t understand where your coming from,” Tony said, taking a sip from his glass. “There was definitely a ‘what’s the point?’ moment after I realized just how to bullshit your schtick is.”

“How did you get over it?” I asked curiously.

“I got drunk, Pepper dope slapped me and I realized that my drive to build and create didn’t stem from being the best.” He said with a shrug, underplaying the significance of what he just admitted. “Besides, you might make reality-breaking bullshit, but you’re only one person, and you’re making that reality-breaking bullshit with my stuff.”

“Fair enough,” I said, letting Tony gloss over his admittance before continuing. “Anyway, I’m going over to Asgard tomorrow to drop off Loki, the Mind Stone, and barter for the Tesseract. Wanna come to check it out?”

“Come with you? To Asgard?” Tony asked, his eyes going wide before he recovered. “That sounds entertaining. But the questionable time period makes me think Piper will kill me if I say yes...”

“Well I could always open a portal and you could fly through it if you want to come home before I’m done,” I assured him. “I could open it up on your front lawn if I wanted, though we might panic some people. We would do it over the ocean or something?”

“...I’ll ask,” He said after a long pause. “I’m still kind of in the dog house for not mentioning the original invasion.”

“How did she even find out?” I asked, before quickly adding. “Not that keeping it from her was a good idea in the first place.”

“Jarvis tattled on me! I programmed him with my own two hands and he sold me out.”

Tony and I talked some more, and I mentioned that shield and the WSC would be sending some people as well, which got him a little more interested to go. When we were done chatted I said goodbye and traveled up to the warehouse, taking a short break before getting to work. I was already mostly prepared, as much as I could be for any sort of exchange anyway, with the destroyer armors already being formed and the large repair unit being finished, so I moved on to working on the *Void Skipper*.

The *Skipper* had been just a proof of concept but had rapidly transitioned into something that I was relying on to a growing degree. I would still like to re-make it eventually, but for now, I would stick with it and improve it so it would be serviceable.

After a quick brainstorming session with Ema and I got to work. Ema immediately went down to Earth, heading to California, to get a very important scan. While she was gone, I was working on getting the ship stocked. I copied a dozen Alfreds to staff the kitchen, as well as make a quick and dirty cleaning model that would keep the ship clean.

When I was done with that I started working on the garage Bay, which up until now had been empty. With a few scans and a half dozen UCMs, I set up thirty robot storage trunks, all attached to one of the walls so that I could deploy three-hundred robots out of the garage bay and down its ramp. I also set up a series of bays for the few different ground vehicles, which I then filled by getting one of the LPMs to print out the ATVs, and buggies. I also printed out a row of behemoths, the first one, belatedly renaming the massive vehicles a crawler since I had already introduced the shield bot behemoths to more people.

I texted Ema and told her to remind me to make a list of everything I had made and their names. It was getting hard for me to keep track.

Not long after I finished filling out the garage bay Ema returned. I excitedly used the new scans to print out a bunch more large-scale guns, just like I had for the medium-sized cannons. The only difference was that instead of the scans being of a few types of hundred-and-twenty-seven millimeter guns naval cannons, they were of the massive sixteen-inch cannons that were usually mounted onto the Iowa- Class battleships. Turns out that the USS Iowa was moored in Suisun Bay as a part of the National Reserve Defense Fleet. Basically, it was mothballed but in general working order.

Because the massive cannons were way too big for me to card, I used the Octopit to print them out in chunks, coming up with around a half dozen pieces that held incredibly powerful concepts. I took those pieces and carded them, working them into some medium-sized cannons as well as extra Wakandan weapons, magic Ultra Metal, and ridiculous amounts of energy cells.

The process took a few hours but by the end of it, I had a scan of a heavy cannon, something that was just short of three times the size of the medium cannons and just over four times the power. The only real difference besides the size was the fact that the heavy cannon sported three massive barrels instead of just one. I traveled back to the *Void Skipper* and added ten of the heavy cannons to the hull, two on the top plate along the centerline, one on top of the forward structure, also along the centerline, and finally two on the top and one on the bottom of the hangar and garage bays. The three along the centerline and two on the bottom of the hangars had full three hundred and sixty degrees of range, while the four on top of the hangars had a slightly more restricted firing arc.

I quickly tied them to four more gunnery stations on the bridge, which was at that point was just starting to get a bit full. It wasn't quite crowded yet, but I would quickly start running out if I kept adding consoles and workstations.

With my heavy cannons now being built and worked into the network, I checked in with Ema about what we still needed to get done.

"You need to design some sort of landing craft, as well as a fighter craft." She said, pausing for a long moment before continuing. "I also had a thought... didn't the Ancient One give you a sling ring?"

"Yeah, it's somewhere in my cabinet of tricks," I said, looking at her curiously. "I kinda just threw it in there, I was rushing around to get back to the *Skipper*. Why?"

"Because... it's a device used for travel... with an infinite range... that's intent-based, not coordinate-based."

I looked at my partner for a long moment before letting out a long sigh, and my head hung in defeat.

"Fuck... how the fuck did I forget that?" I asked myself. "That would have solved so many problems."

"Well... at least I know I'm still needed," She said, before breaking down and laughing herself silly.

When she was finished making fun of me for my poor memory, I spent five minutes going through my cabinet to find it, tucked up alongside a row of repair tablets. I set it through a UCM to make a few dozen copies while I went through and gathered all of the spare vambraces and the enhanced tattoo ink I used to give myself the ability to travel without one. I quickly worked together a combination of the sling ring and the vambrace, which I then copied and used to make a new ink. Ema removed the old invisible tattoo using a conceptual crafted tattoo removal tool and replaced it with an improved version. And just like that, I was pretty sure that my traveling had no limits, at least not as far as I could conceptually tell.

Then again I hadn't been able to feel the previous versions' limitations either.

I had removed the intent-based concept as best as I could, as I was worried it was too attached to the talent and ability to tap into eldritch energies, which I knew I couldn't do yet. I would still depend on my landing pads. I would try and work out a solution when I had more time to think... and recover from the embarrassment of forgetting the ring.

Between the heavy cannons and the work in the garage and kitchen, it was getting a bit late. Originally I had plans to test out the range of the travel system by making incremental

portal jumps further and further from Earth, but with Ema's timely reminder that was null and void. Instead, I headed to bed early.

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The next morning was a lazy start that quickly got much more active. I spent the morning checking up on the *Void Skipper's* weapon systems. I hadn't gotten to spend any time with the medium turrets after I installed them, so Ema and I took a quick portal jump to the asteroid belt, which the portal projector let us do since it was in sensor range, to get a feel for them.

"The fire rate is decent for the medium cannons," I said, sitting at one of the medium turret controls, with Ema sitting in the one beside me. "And by the way these asteroids are coming apart, I'd say it's got decent power as well."

"I think the linked fire idea is handy, especially when you are working with a small crew, but you need to come up with a way to fire them individually," Ema commented, raking her energy blasts across a much larger asteroid. "And if you're going to do that, you need to reduce the total number of medium cannons."

When I was putting together the firing controls for the medium cannons, I had locked them in groups, each station controlling one of those groups. At the time it had just seemed like the best option, but as Ema and I played real-life Asteroids, I was realizing she was right. There were too many small targets to hit when all of the guns in one arc were shooting at a single target.

"I agree that I need to set up individual control, but why would I need to remove some of the cannons?" I asked, looking over at her.

"Because there are a dozen places where their barrels can hit each other, and twenty where they can hit the heavy cannons."

I frowned and activated my armor, scanning the floor and looking at the blueprint of the *Void Skipper* the scanner pulled up for me. After a few moments let out a sigh, nodding in agreement.

"Yeah, your right. How did I not notice that earlier?" I wondered, Ema chuckling.

"Because I wasn't there to point it out." She answered with a smirk.

"Alright... I'll fix that when we are done testing the heavy cannons," I agreed, nodding my head. "But I think the firing control for the *Void Skipper* is going to stay like it is. It's my personal ship at this point and I'll be likely flying it with a smaller crew, but when I finally get around to building a replacement that isn't just a shot in the dark I'll include a way to switch between. The defense fleet will definitely have that option as well as individual controls."

We spent a bit longer getting to know the medium cannons before eventually switching to the heavy ones. These were also linked together but since they wouldn't be shooting down quick-moving targets I didn't think it would be nearly as important. When I mentioned that to Ema she shook her head.

"Your thinking too big. You never know what kind of situation you might be in that might require more finesse or lower-powered shots," She pointed out. "Right now if you just wanted to take down something's shield, or hit a target that had friendlies behind it you would have to shoot from the bottom grouping since it only has two cannons, and even then your options would be limited."

"I see what your saying... and I agree that more options is better, as long as it doesn't bog the system down," I started to say before shifting directions. "But I don't think the heavy cannons will be used for finesse very often. Still, it would be good to have the option, we will work it out for the fleet designs. Hopefully, the WSC comes up with some good ideas."

I locked onto a distant asteroid, the console displaying a bit of information about the target. After a pause I pulled the trigger, the ship reverberating slightly. I couldn't hear anything, but I could feel the slight tremor as two of the ship's heavy cannons, the ones attached to the hull above the garage, fired their six-blast barrage. The energy blasts crossed the near two thousand feet distance in a split second, leaving a glowing trail. The impact sprayed chunks of rock and dirt into space, the asteroid splitting into dozens of car-sized pieces and a cloud of debris.

Ema and I spent a while getting the hang of the heavy cannons, which were definitely not as quick to rotate around, but still had some impressive accuracy. After a while of messing around, I headed down to engineering and programmed the LPM's to remove all but fifteen of the medium cannon as well as four of the heavy cannons, leaving five active. The final design looked a bit better as well, and as far as Ema and I could see there would be no conflicts with the turrets.

When we were done and the LPMs were set up, we jumped back to Earth and set an orbit around the planet. As far as I knew Shield and the WSC still didn't know about me living on the moon, so I was going to keep that charade going for as long as possible. I deployed eight battle bots, two to guard the Tesseract, two to guard the bridge, and four to guard Loki. The two guarding the bridge mainly were for emergencies, in case I needed an extra set of hands. The Deck was already emptied and organized for the trip, so all that was left were our guests.

A quick call to Fury later and I was instructed to travel down to the Helicarrier. A quick final check and I did just that, landing on the flight deck with a shine of travel energy.

The tent had been taken down and the table moved away, replaced by a group of people, all standing at the ready. Steve, Peggy, Bucky, Thor, Fury, Agent Hill, and two other individuals I didn't recognize turned to look as I landed.

"How's everyone doing?" I asked, stepping off the landing pad.

"It's good to see you, Carson, we were worried when you went through the portal," Steve said, reaching out and shaking my hand. "I wanted to say that yesterday but..."

"Yeah, I get it," I responded with a nod. "It's a lot to take in. Will you be joining us for the trip?"

"I will, as will Peggy and Bucky. Peggy wanted to go and there was no way I was letting her go without an escort, and Bucky wasn't about to let me have all the fun."

Thor was next to shake my hand, grasping my forearm in a warrior's handshake.

"Good to see you again Maker, without the constraints of official duty," He said with a laugh. "I am excited to get home and eager to see the interior of your ship. To survive such an impact with another vessel, it must be a sturdy and well-made vessel!"

"I don't think it will quite stand up to Asgardian standards, but I hope it doesn't disappoint," I said with a chuckle, looking past the muscled Asgardian to see Fury stepping forward with Agent Hill trailing behind him.

"Carson this is US Ambassador Gregory Steiner and WSC member Marian Hartford. They both accept that unknown risks might arise, but I ask that you take their protection seriously."

"I will Director Fury," I said with a serious nod, reaching out and shaking both of their hands. "It's nice to meet you both."

"It's nice to meet you as well." Ambassador Steiner said. "Before we leave, I would like to discuss a few things, just some basic rules of diplomacy and first contact."

"Well for one, this isn't first contact," I said. "Though I guess that's a bit pedantic. Fine, once we get situated we can talk, but first, let's get everyone... and everything on board."

I said, looking at the pile of luggage that I needed to bring on the ship.

"And I just realized I don't have any way for people to wash their clothes on the *Skipper*," I admitted. "So... that's something I need to get done."

Suddenly the two officials looked a lot less confident, both of them looking at Fury with questioning glances.

“Hey, don't look at me.” He said, shaking his head. “You were warned what he was like.”

“Relax, everything will be fine,” I said. “We won't be in space very long, and if something goes wrong while we are in Asgard, they will most likely help with any problems. Not that I'm foreseeing any.”

The two officials looked at me blankly for a long moment before I clapped my hands.

“Right! Well, let's get everyone loaded up and your stuff squared away!”