

I exited the bridge, mentally going over how to get to the engineering room. As I walked I idly noted that there was a small pool of Loki's blood on the ground where he had landed. I clicked my tongue, shaking my head and wondering how difficult it would be to make a cleaning bot out here in space before I froze.

I whirled around and knelt down, studying the blood. There were two small pools of the red liquid. It wasn't a lot, probably because Loki had already lost so much, but it was enough for two sizable samples. Samples I could replicate as much as I wanted. Now Loki wasn't Asgardian, but he was an ice giant, magically powerful and ancient by human standards. Odds are it would contain some pretty potent concepts.

I stared at the blood for a moment before sitting back up on my knees and looking at the ceiling.

"Heimdall. I know you're watching, especially since I just said your name. Please understand that I am taking this so I can study it to see if there are any useful concepts inside, which I would then refine and separate," I explained, talking to the all seeing Heimdall. "Since this is a bit more than just looting a defeated enemy, I promise not to use it in any way that affects Loki, including as side effects. I will do my best to refine anything useful so it is not connected to Loki at all."

For a moment I felt a weight settle on me, as if I was under the focus of a microscope. I shifted nervously when the feeling persisted. Oddly enough I could somehow tell this wasn't just the gaze of Heimdall, nor was it Odin either. It was impossible to describe... it almost felt... feminine?

"Freyja?" I said, getting the sense of faint surprise, followed by confirmation. My mind raged as I tried to figure out what I should say. "This universe is a dangerous place, and a world like Earth, so early in its development needs all the champions it can get. Every asset, every advantage I can manage and use to create defenders of Earth is important. I... I swear that if I do not follow my promise of separating Loki from any concepts I might get from his blood, then you may revoke my protections under any treaty Asgard has agreed to. I do not wish to earn the ire of Asgard."

The feeling of being watched, of being judged stayed on me for a much longer moment before finally fading, the sense of agreement, and a promise of continued observation the last thing I could feel. I waited for a long pause before letting out a breath, feeling a bit sick as I bent down and carded each puddle of blood.

The sample was incredibly potent, much more than any blood sample I had carded so far, including when I had carded Steve's blood. I could feel his Asgardian divinity, feel the concepts of cold and ice, feel his strength and durability, his frost giant vigor. I could also feel the slight presence of the same golden concept that Thor's lightning had contained. It was even

more powerful, by just the absolute tiniest amount. Unfortunately it was also directly tied to Loki himself.

I nodded, expecting this to be the case. It was one thing to have the small sample of divine essence from an element summoned during something like Thor's return, it was an entirely different thing to have it from their blood.

This also raised an interesting question about how Asgard divinity worked, as I could clearly feel Loki's aspects of mischief, despite the fact that he wasn't really Asgardian. Either way, I had a new project, finding out how to conceptually craft this blood sample without actually using it until it was already separated.

With another long sigh I stood back up and headed down the hall, my mind already racing with possible ideas for how I could conceptually craft Loki's blood outside of the deck. I needed to get my hands on the golden or divine concept again, just a few of them massively elevated what I was capable of creating. As I got closer to my destination I took a deep breath. I had none of the tools and items that I would need to complete this project, so I needed to focus on the present.

I arrived in the engineering bay and looked around, checking out the room, refreshing my memory about what it looked like. It was a simple room, only slightly bigger than most of the other rooms with a row of UCM's on one side, along with a large UCM. On the other side was an LPM, along with a set of storage containers. I cracked one open and pulled out twelve repair tablets. I plugged them into the wall of the ship, setting each one to repair one of the shield projectors that had been damaged during our initial battle with the invading ship and the portal projecting ship. Each of the projectors was going to take about two hours to fix, so I set the tablets aside and let them run.

With that set up I got to work setting up a better workshop, starting by pushing out the storage shed in a far corner, followed by a few tables, some chairs and finally my cabinet of tricks. With everything set up I sat down at one of the tables with a pad of paper I pulled from the cabinet.

I had three main goals for this crafting session. The first one, developing a way to get home, was the most important, and really the only one that mattered for now. I also wanted to integrate the sorcery based energy reinforcement I had come up with on the hull of the ship. The *Void Skipper* was never designed to be a warship, but I needed to play the hand I was dealt so reinforcing the hull to the same ridiculous degree as my own personal armor was a must.

To further turn this ship into something that could stand up to any bullshit we may encounter, I also wanted to finally see about finally arming my ship. I had several scans of large scale weapons, including naval cannons and energy weapons from Wakanda. Combining them together should be relatively easy all things considered.

With my goals set I started working on the most important one, a portal deployment system that the Void Skipper could use, similar to the one the invaders had set up. This similarity was good, as it meant I could utilize the system they were using on the strange circular ship as a base.

Essentially this project had two parts. As the tesseract was an incredible way to generate essentially free energy as well as a way to generate portals, just keeping it floating in the portal generator was really a waste. So part one was a Tesseract containment system, one that would mask its location while also letting me draw power from it. Part two, which would come after, was the actual portal creation system, which would probably be attached to the nose of the *Void Skipper*.

I called the battle bot that was carrying around the Tesseract down to engineering, the mechanical soldier taking a few minutes to arrive. While I waited I gathered a bunch of tools from my storage shed, including some steel stock. Once the Battle bot arrived I instructed him to place the Tesseract on the table, only to shout at him to pick it up again immediately. Apparently the ultra metal enhanced hands of the battle bot had been resisting the energy of the Tesseract the entire time, because it almost immediately started melting through the workshop table.

A quick combination of a few ultra metal sheets to the table and we repeated the process, this time the surface of the table held. I took some measurements and designed a simple steel box, drawing meticulously detailed blueprints, which included labeling everything.

Once that was done I started putting it together, focusing completely on it being a box to hold the Tesseract. It was basic, had simple but beefy hinges, with handles on both sides and a latch to lock it closed. It even had a brass plate riveted to the top, hand engraved with the label "Tesseract Container." It came out decent, though my welding skills were middling at best and my engraving skills were worse. When it was done I immediately set up a few UCMs to print out a whole pile of them. They only took about ten minutes each to print, so I used the opportunity to grab some food from the cafeteria before heading back down.

Once I had a few boxes to work with I started layering in ultra metal, some diamonds, some well made jewelry and some extra lead. In the end I had a high quality, gem encrusted box that was as strong as I could make it and was conceptually clearly designed for the sole purpose of carrying around the Tesseract. I cleared the UCM and set them up to start copying the new version of the box. These took significantly longer to copy, so I started preparing for the second half of the project, the energy draw.

I pulled up the plans for the portal projector on the LPM, looking through and trying to make heads or tails of it. Of course I had absolutely no success as it was clearly so hilariously out of my league that I couldn't even see the parking lot, never mind the starting line. I could, however, set up an effective cheat with what I had on hand. Starting with parts closest to the containment field I printed chunks of the device, marking off each group that ended up being related to power draw. It took hours and by the end of it I realized I really could have saved all

that time by just making vaguely educated guesses. The device was broken up into three parts, the bottom was drawing in energy, the arms, spine and part of the base was energy containment and most of the top directed the energy up, directing it to open the portal.

Frustrated to have basically wasted so much time I got the UCM's going printing out a few copies of all the parts, dragging the small pile of ornate boxes into a separate pile. With the UCM's printing out more copies I started experimenting, throwing together mixes of the containers, the energy drawing parts and the containment parts, mixing in things like vibranium ingots, electric generators and current converters.

I failed a few times as the design got away from me, usually from the parts and pieces becoming too much of an amalgamation to function or, in one case, a promising attempt just melting into slag when I pushed it out of the card. Finally I had the idea of converting and mixing in ultra metal and extra vibranium to strengthen the construct, as well as energy cells to integrate the parts to Tesseract energy. The result was a raised plinth-like cylinder about two feet wide and three feet tall. It was segmented around the outside circumference, almost like the cylinder for a revolver but more frequently. It had a sealable slot on the top, where the Tesseract would live and allow the ship to draw power. It was also useless without attaching it to something, like the *Void Skipper*.

I scanned it into the LPM, before programming it to add it into one of the empty rooms, connecting it directly into the floor. I also quadruple reinforced the room, added four security turrets inside and linked it to the rest of the ship. I queued that up before starting the second half of the project, the actual portal projection part.

This part turned out to be incredibly simple. With a few scans of different parts, a couple copies from the UCMs and some extra reinforcement and attunement through ultra metal and energy cells, I had a portal projector. I queued that up in the LPM next, adding a small protrusion from the nose of the ship, tucked under its chin. It was barely noticeable in the grand scheme of things, but to make sure it was protected I added several shield projectors around it to add a few layers of extra protection.

With my most important project progressing on its own, the LPM making its way through their construction, I pulled out the armor plate that had the sorcery based reinforcement infused into it. I made twelve copies of it, put the original away and combined the remaining ones into a single version, layering in plates of electrum, platinum, ultra metal, energy cells and just a few pieces of ancient oak I had gotten from Kamar-Taj as I did. I then made five copies of the resulting metal plate and combined them together, the change for the final combination barely noticeable. The final product was an inch thick square plate of metal as tall as I was. It was primarily the color of ultra metal, but with lines of golden metal running through it like wood grains, like a giant plate of pale gold and ultra metal damascus.

Satisfied that this reinforcement was the best I could get, I pushed out the two LPMs I had grabbed shortly after learning that Clint had been taken. I was glad I had too, because not

only would the ships permanent LPM be busy for the next several hours, it was also one of the few LPM's I had that wasn't upgraded with the ability to work with sorcery. I quickly scanned the sorcerous damascus and pulled up the blueprint of the ship on the two separate LPM's, quickly instructing it to add a two inch layer of it over the entire ship. I connected the new ablative esque plating to the Tesseract room, hooking up its controls and readings to the same console as the shield and thruster enhancements.

Before confirming the eight hour project I spent some time working on the ship's look as well. I changed the color of the sorcerous damascus to the same green as the super truck, highlighting the ships lines and edges in the same manner. The result was a gold highlighted ship with dark green armor. It was tremendously ostentatious and impressive looking. I would have liked to keep the look of the sorcerous damascus, but it really didn't look good on such a massive scale. When I was done I hit start, the project's timer immediately starting to count down.

With that finished, and with several hours before the three new retrofits to the ship would be complete, I started on my final goal. Turning the *Void Skipper* into an armed vessel.

While I was relatively limited, I was lucky in that Ema was incredibly forward thinking. When I had sent her out to scan boosters and rockets from the space shuttles, to use when I was building the *Void Skippers* thrusters, she had made a short detour. Specifically, to a naval yard.

She claimed that she had told me that when she had returned, but that I had been too distracted by the building and crafting process to hear her.

Either way, I had access to a few larger guns, though none of the massive cannons that were the mainstay of the "bigger is better" generation of naval weapons that existed during World War II. Unfortunately, what I did not have access to was any more LPMs, meaning that any production would have to wait until later, as I couldn't start experimenting with anything physical to card and combine if I didn't have a way to print those things out.

Realizing that I would just have to be patient, I packed up my stuff, leaving the workspace mostly set up before carding the storage shed and my cabinet of tricks. When I was done cleaning up I ordered the battle bot to pick up the Tesseract and store it in one of the leftover ornate boxes. I grabbed it by one of the box's handles, carrying it easily as I gestured for the battle bot to fall in behind me.

I wish I could have kept it safe in the deck, but not only was I almost a hundred percent certain I wouldn't be able to, I was pretty sure that doing so would really fuck everything up. In the comics messing with the infinity stones had some really negative side effects and I wasn't about to risk any of them.

I made my way through the ship and back to the bridge, stepping in to find Natasha in the same spot as before, looking out into space through the view screens. She looked over her shoulder at me as the door closed behind me.

“Done already?” She asked.

“Sorry... How long was I gone?” I asked, wincing as I realized I hadn't really been keeping track.

“Five hours.” She said, standing up from the seat and stretching.

“Sorry... I guess I've got a bit of a dependency on Ema stopping me for breaks and reminding me I've been at it for too long,” I admitted, rubbing the back of my neck. “The good news is that I've got the portal system finished. The retrofit should be done in a several hours.”

“And then we go home?” She asked.

“Umm... then it is possible to get home,” I responded, her face shifting to an expression that said get to the point. “These kinds of systems are touchy. I might end up having to make adjustments or rebuild the whole system because it did not integrate correctly. It's definitely progress though. Solid progress.”

“Progress is good,” The red head said, nodding her head. “I think it's time to switch places though. I've been up for two days now and sleep deprivation training can only do so much.”

“Sorry, I should have realized you would have been running on empty by now,” I apologized, shaking my head. “The sleeping quarters are just down the hall, they should be easy to find.”

“When was the last time you got some sleep?” She asked as I climbed into the pilot's seat.

“When you told me to,” I responded with a smile. “Sounds like you didn't take your own advice.”

She only shrugged before making her way out of the bridge, stopping in the doorway.

“You should try and get some sleep too, unless you think taking shifts is necessary?”

“... No, probably not,” I admitted, checking the sensors before turning back to look at her. “I'll get a few hours in a bit.”

The super spy nodded before stepping fully into the hall, the door soon closing behind her, leaving me alone on the bridge.