

The next morning I flew out to the end of the Rainbow Bridge, landing a few dozen feet from Heimdall, near the shattered edge of the glittering road. He did not turn to see who it was, but he greeted me nonetheless.

“Greetings Maker,” He said in a deep voice. “Asgard is in your debt for healing the Allfather’s eye.”

“I wanted to smooth things over after a tense first meeting,” I explained with a shrug. “I’m just glad it worked.”

At that point he turned to look at me, watching as I deployed the large repair unit I had gotten ready before setting out on this trip. I pulled out two massive cords from one side, pushing them into the glittering rainbow crystal underneath us.

“You believe this will be sufficient?” He asked, watching me work, never once pulling his hands off of his sword.

“My creations, so far at least, seem to take concepts pretty literally,” I explained, stepping up to the control screen. “It says it’s capable of repairing magic stuff, there is no reason to assume it wouldn’t be able to just because it’s especially powerful or exotic magic stuff.”

I quickly got the machine going, tabbing through the options. The list of repairs was extensive, apparently, there had been a massive building on the end of the bridge that was now completely gone. When I set it to repair everything it told me it would take just over two months, which all in all was a bit longer than I was happy with.

“Is there something wrong?” He asked, already turned back to his vigil.

“I’m not happy with how long it would take...” I explained, already trying to come up with a way to speed it up. “Oh! Of course.”

I carded the machine again, before pushing out the storage shed and grabbing a few crystals of divine essence, which I had left running for a few hours the previous night. I worked three of them into the machine, the effect of the third almost non-existent. Happy with the improvement I pushed the machine back out and set it back up, tapping on the screen again once I was done.

“Much better!” I said, setting it to repair the Bifrost completely. “Heimdall, I assume you will keep an eye on this? It belongs to your King now.”

“I will watch over it,” The serious man agreed. “Out of curiosity, how long will it take for the Rainbow Bridge and the Himinbjorg to be repaired?”

“Just over a month,” I responded, about to ask him what the Himinbjorg was before he whirled around and focused his wide-eyed stare on me, surprise written all over his face.

“A month? One of the greatest works of magic and technology, wrought from the finest materials, originally built over the span of four years, and only after dozens of years studying the Tesseract... and your machine will rebuild it in a month?”

“Just a bit more,” I responded with a smirk and a shrug. “It's going need materials too, but nothing too crazy.”

Heimdall took a moment to recover, standing back up straight and staring into my eyes.

“Thank you for your aid Maker. It would have taken many months to repair this, and the Tesseract would have been required to finish it.”

“No problem. Besides, it's not like I did it for free. I wanted to keep the Tesseract without pissing off you guys, so I needed to trade.”

“I can assure you, Maker, seeking out a trade instead of simply taking what you want is better than a great many would do with your power,” He said, still focused on me.

“I... Thank you,” I said. “I need to go tell King Odin what materials he will need to send down here, but thank you.”

The tall, gravel-voiced man said nothing, simply nodding as spread my wings out and flew away.

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Odin was back to his usual stoic self when I found him, though he seemed... almost lighter with his new eye, not to mention how many old, poorly healed injuries the armor must have fixed. I passed him the list of materials he would need and he seemed surprised it was so short. He fixed me with a stare and asked how it was possible.

“Long story short, the repair machine is based on creations that I made to build with conceptually crafted materials,” I explained. “In order for that to work, they need to be actually working with conceptually crafted materials, not just spawning stuff ex nihilo. But obviously, I didn't want to have to provide every at a one-to-one ratio. It took a lot of finicky crafting and a whole mountain of failure but I managed to make it as simplified as possible.”

“Well it's a fraction of what would have gone into rebuilding the Himinbjorg and the Rainbow Bridge,” He explained, before catching my confused look at the second mention of the

name I didn't recognize. "At the end of the Rainbow Bridge was the Himinbjorg, where the Bifrost was projected from."

"Right, well anyway the sooner you get those materials fed into the machine the sooner it can start. Once it does it will take about a month to finish."

Odin was as surprised as Heimdall had been at the time the repair machine would take, but he covered it up much quicker. It seemed like he wanted to ask more, but was holding himself back.

After a short conversation about any other requirements for the repair machine, as well as asking permission to set up a landing pad so diplomats could travel between Asgard and earth without the Bifrost, I headed back to the *Skipper*, joining Ema on her watch over the UCM's printing out the Uru ingots. Only a few more hours before they were done, but every minute started to drag on quickly. Ema immediately picked up on my impatient fidgeting.

"Eager to get home?" She asked.

"Yeah... I'm taking Natasha out on a date," I admitted, giving Ema a look, who turned to me with wide eyes.

"A date? That is... delightfully mundane," She said with a laugh. "What are your plans?"

"I was thinking of setting up a shield bubble somewhere on the moon and watching an earthrise," I answered, hopping up to sit on the hood of a buggy. "Maybe set up a picnic."

"That... I take back the mundane comment," Ema responded, shaking her head. "It's certainly very... you. Jarvis and I just go to the closest sunset."

"Wel... I haven't decided yet," I admitted. "Part of me wants to go crazy while another just wants to do something basic. I'm keeping an open mind."

We talked a bit more before I hopped off the buggy's hood, and dusted off my hands. The truth was that while I was nervous about the date, I wasn't nervous about what we would be doing. If anything came out of the two of us dating it shouldn't have anything to do with the dates being crazy and intense. I was half tempted to just go to dinner and see a show or movie or something.

"You'll be fine," Ema assured me. "Just don't do anything stupid and I'm sure you will both enjoy it."

When Ema and I were done chatting I quickly used the garage bay space to whip up a pair of linked landing pads and travel bracers. I made eight bracers in total but weaved in a modified morality sensor that I had used in the palm healers. It took a bit of work but after an

hour I managed to set all eight vambraces to only work if you meant no serious harm to Asgard or Earth. It would have been no harm at all but Ema pointed out that that might get in the way of bartering, because what was the trade if not trying to get someone to pay more for something than it was actually worth? At least with this, no one would be able to knowingly bring over a briefcase bomb or something.

I also included a control system linked to something similar to what the detaining bands used. I would know when anyone traveled back and forth, I could toggle the landing pads and bracers on and off, and activate the bands remotely. I planned to keep that little tidbit to myself and put the controller in my cabinet of tricks.

I dropped off one of the landing pads and four of the bracers with Odin, who was in the process of getting the workers organized to feed the repair machine the materials it would need. He was surprised that I was already done making the teleporter. He seemed to appreciate the sentiment of the “do no harm” ability of the bracers but explained they would set up a secure room to put the landing pad permanently. I assured him that Shield would likely stick it at the bottom of a bunker to keep it as easy to contain as possible.

When I was done explaining everything I was about to leave him to his duties when he asked me to return later when the sun was setting. I agreed before leaving, flying through Asgard to reach the *Void Skipper*, and enjoying the short break. I managed to resist the urge to start working on my own projects, but it was a close thing. I had a lot of interesting stuff to work with, and the fact that I had just handed a named artifact to Odin, even if it was his own blood, hair, and fingerprint that had pushed it over the edge, made me desperate to improve my own gear. I was pretty sure I could make a named artifact for myself.

To keep from losing myself in other projects I quickly whipped up a care package for Mr. Steiner and Ms. Hartford, including a set of deployable underarmor and helmet, as well as a minor healing ring to keep them in good health. I carded their stuff, which they hadn't touched at all during the trip, and delivered it to them, binding their new gear to them. They were thankful for the equipment but Mr. Steiner was annoyed that I had dropped off their bags in the middle of some sort of meeting. He didn't expect the fact that I was eager to get home as a good reason.

By then Ema contacted me and explained the Uru was finished, as well as three extra bars. I traveled to the *Void Skipper* and carded the twelve ingots that I owed Odin, before putting one of the spare ingots in my cabinet of tricks, and two in the storage shed. I left the UCM's going though, sealing up the ship when I was done. I needed as many ingots of Uru as possible to start mass-producing it when I got home.

Ema went off to find Steve, Peggy, and Bucky, to inform them that we would be leaving by the end of the day, while I flew across Asgard again, heading down to Odin's office to meet him, finding him and Thor waiting for me.

“Greetings Maker,” Odin said, still in his stoic persona.

“King Odin, Thor. I assume there is something you wanted to talk about, but before that...” I pushed out the stack of Uru ingots onto the table, smirking as both of the Asgardians openly stared. “The Uru is finished.”

“I... Yes, Good,” Odin said, his facade cracking for just a moment before he regained control of himself. Thor just openly gaped. “This... must be stored in the vault at once.... Could you?”

I chuckled and carded the stack of miracle magic metal. Odin and Thor led me through the palace, eventually reaching a massive underground chamber. It threw off my sense of scale entirely, making me think there was some sort of magic going on, but I simply focused on following Odin.

The vault itself was in the center of the chamber, sitting on a pillar of metal, connected to each side of the chamber with supports. Odin stopped at the stairway before the entrance into the vault.

“I’m sorry Maker, but I cannot allow you to enter into the vault itself. That I let you this far speaks greatly to the respect I have for you,” He said solemnly.

“Sure, no problem,” I responded with a shrug. “I’ll be here.”

I transferred the ingot into Thor's arms, who carried them easily as he followed behind his father into the vault. I did not have to wait long before they returned. As all three of us left the massive chamber I turned to Thor.

“So... any hints on what's going on?” I asked quietly.

“I believe he was looking to surprise you,” Thor responded, smiling smugly as Odin continued to lead us through the palace.

Eventually, we exited the palace, crossing a few courtyards and walking along a carved stone path. We entered a large stone and metal structure not too far down the stone path. The building itself was made up of several smaller cylinders placed next to each other, each of them rather large.

We stepped into the building, Thor nodding to the two guards on either side of the entrance. After a minute of walking, we came to another door, which Odin pushed open and crossed through. In the center of this new room was a large golden machine of some sort, with a curved head sliding up and over, and several concentric rings floating between it and its base. There was some sort of core in the middle as well. The entire machine was just under three times my height and about the same width and long.

"Impressive..." I said. "What is it?"

"That, Maker, is an Asgardian shield generator," Odin explained. "Thor mentioned that you wish to create an energy shield that covers your entire planet. This is the closest we have gotten to a planetary shield."

"Holy hell... Wait, that sounds like energy shields are on the rare side?" I asked, looking at Odin.

"Between magic and science, creating small energy shields is common throughout the cosmos," He explained. "Creating larger barriers is by far much less common. Beyond Asgard, only the Nova Empire is making any headway in that field of research."

"Oh... Well, that makes me feel a bit better," I admitted. "I was worried that anything I could create for defending Earth would turn out to be small time compared to the tech out in space. How big does yours go?"

"This is one of our spare generators, to replace the active one beneath the Palace," Odin explained. "It is capable of covering the entire Palace, but could be pushed to cover almost two-thirds of the city once it is activated."

I looked closer at it and sure enough, I could see that it wasn't attached to the floor, instead it was resting on some sort of supporting frame.

"Damn... I have to really stack up and push the generators to get anything near that," I admitted.

"Well with this you should be able to push them even further," Odin pointed out. "If my understanding of how your crafting works."

"I... are you giving it to me?" I asked, looking at him with an eye raised before looking back at the device. "Well, it looks like it might just be small enough for me to card... maybe?"

"Good, then it is yours to use as you wish," Odin said. "Consider it a gift."

"Damn, well I won't say no, especially since it's going to help me protect Earth."

Before attempting to card it I pushed out a blueprint scanner, scanning the large device. I read through the blueprint on the screen for a moment before looking at Odin.

"This has a lot of materials I'm not familiar with."

“Everything you need to build most of the machine was included in your previous bartering,” He assured me. “Save for the core, which as far as I understand is small enough to fit inside one of your replication devices.”

“Right, alright, that’s good,” I said, mostly to myself as I put away my scanner and stepped closer to the machine. “If I pass out just get Ema, she will handle it.”

I put my hand on the golden metal and took a deep breath, before pulling. The machine vanished into a card immediately, the room looking suddenly empty. The room also spun quickly and I stumbled, managing to keep myself upright somehow. I could feel the fatigue, not physically or mentally but... I could feel it anyway.

Thor stepped closer and helped me stand straight, the room still swaying a bit before it finally settled.

“Does that happen often, Maker?” Thor asked, looking concerned.

“Only when I try and card things that are really big,” I explained.

“Were you not afraid you would do harm to yourself?” He asked, suddenly worried.

“No, I get nothing if something is too much for me to card,” I assured him, shaking my head. “Not even a twinge, it just doesn’t let me.”

“Very well... why don’t we go somewhere for you to recover,” He suggested. “Lunch wouldn’t be remiss, especially since you are leaving before long. One last chance to sit down with friends!”

I found myself agreeing, my energy quickly returning to me. That had been just as bad, maybe a bit worse than carding the full storage shed had been when I first started using it. Which was odd considering that the shield projector was much larger than the shed had ever been.

Either way, I let Thor lead me outside, eventually standing on my own. I considered deploying my armor to help but by the time we were outside the fatigue had all but faded. Odin let us go on ahead, wishing us the best as we left.