

I woke up slowly the next morning, my room already brightly lit from my window. I had clearly slept much later than I usually did. That was to be expected though, seeing as I was up so late waiting for...

I bolted upright in bed and looked around, realizing that I was supposed to pick Ema up when she arrived at Los Angeles, which would have happened hours ago. I picked up the phone and called her anxiously.

"Ema! Are you alright? Why didn't you call me to pick you up?"

"Carson, relax. Nothing is wrong." She assured me. "You needed your sleep, you were up late last night. I just spent a few hours hiding."

"You really didn't have to do that." I asked, rolling my eyes. "How long have you been waiting?"

"Not long enough for it to be a real problem." She assured me. "You know I don't get bored. Waiting like this is different for me than it is for real... Alive people."

"You are alive Ema, it's just a different type of alive." I said, before letting out a long breath. "But fine, I see your point. Is the landing pad ready for me?"

"Yes, it's all clear."

I hung up and traveled to my companion, suddenly standing in a small, heavily bushed area tucked up against a hill. I looked around for a moment before looking back at Ema, who was smiling at me.

"Where are we?" I asked.

"There is a trail that goes to a parking lot just through that thicket." She answered, pointing off to the side. "It's like a two minute walk. From the parking lot it's a fifteen minute drive to the city outskirts."

"Right, that's plenty good enough for now." I said with a smile. "Want to drive around for a bit while we talk about our next step or?"

"Well, we could, but you should probably get dressed first." She pointed out, prompting me to look down and see I was still in my pajamas.

"Ah, right. Well come on." I said, holding out my hand and traveling us back to the apartment. I collapsed back into the couch while Ema left her exosuit.

"So... We have a pad in Los Angeles... Where does Stark live in California again?"

“Tony Stark lives in Malibu, California.” She answered, floating over to the laptop and bringing up a picture of a rather impressive mansion. “We have no way of knowing if he will be home but...”

“Alright... honestly I can't think of a better idea than knocking on the front gate.” I said, shaking my head. “It's going to be hinky as hell but it beats trying to get an appointment through Stark Industries.”

“Why?”

“Do you really think he will just let us in?” Ema asked skeptically.

“Nope... Not without someone vouching for us.” I said, tapping my chin. “What are the chances that Shield has had some sort of contact with him before?”

“Probably pretty high. Are you going to call Fury?”

“No, Fury has way too much on his plate, Clint is still 'recovering' from his injury and Natasha... Well I don't want her thinking she has to help me if she wants me to help her. Which just really leaves Coulson.”

I pulled out my phone and dialed Coulson's number, waiting for it to ring. After a few moments it clicked.

“Maker? What is it?” He asked. “Is something wrong?”

“No, no everything's fine. I just had a question. I know you guys are incredibly busy... but has Shield interacted with Tony Stark at all? And if so, would you assuring him that I'm the real deal mean anything to him?”

“...Why do you want to talk to Tony?” He asked, suddenly very focused.

“He...has resources that I would find extremely useful.” I said vaguely.

Coulson was quiet for a long time, coming up on a full minute when I realized he must be talking to someone else. Eventually he returned.

“Fury says that while he hates the idea of you even being in the same state as Tony Stark, he realizes that not helping you would probably just mean you would have to be creative, which would be much worse. Coulson explained, before sighing and adding. “I will give Stark a call, and then give Pepper a call and tell her to expect you. The second one is the one that actually matters.”

“Alright, well tell her I am free every day this week, including today.”

“How are you able... You know what, never mind. Would your healing amulet help with his medical issues?”

“I mean it wouldn’t hurt him.” I said confidently. “The worst it might do is nothing, though with how it reacted to Bucky’s arm I’m guessing it would.”

“Alright. I’m going to make that offer and let them both know you are legitimate, but I’m going to leave the explanations to you. I’m short on time as it is.”

“Thanks Coulson, I appreciate this.” I said honestly. “I owe you one.”

“For what you’ve done for Shield? I don’t mind being your reference.”

After a quick goodbye I went about my morning routine. I was half way through breakfast when I got a message from Coulson, informing me that Tony would be home in his workshop all day tomorrow, and that if this is a hoax then Pepper would do everything in her power to ruin me.

Not doubting the woman with the potential to become Rescue for a second I simply agreed and continued with my day. With time to kill before the meeting I filled the time making a few extras for my new cabinet. The first step was binding the cabinet to myself so that it locked and unlocked with just a touch, but was sealed shut for anyone but me.

Beyond that I worked through a bunch of simple builds that I had already done. I built a dozen simple undersuits and helmets, a half dozen healing amulets and a half dozen healing flashlights. I already had extra stamina/speed cuffs made, but I made a few low level strength enhancing cuffs to round them out. I made a few stun batons using capacitors, a baton and a single shock card from my lightning gun. I used the rest of my pistols to make eight double stacked enhanced versions, making sure that Ema knew to remind me to ask for more from Shield when everything died down. I finished off my pre-dinner crafting with six deployable shields, all enhanced to be as strong as mine, which I thankfully remembered could use a bit of repair work after it took a few blasts during the fight with the destroyer armor.

My final project of the day was a bit of a doozy, but doable considering I had already done it once before. When the Destroyer armor duplicate was done being repaired I would need armor to apply to it to make it into actually wearable armor, as opposed to whatever it was normally.

Now, I had my own armor of course, which I planned on adding in at the end because I wanted the wings, strength enhancement and stamina/speed enhancement to come through as well. But in order for that to come through clearly I was pretty sure I would need to prime the Destroyer armor first with at least one other set of armor, which I would need to make from

scratch. Which wasn't the worst thing in the world. However, since I was already making a full set of enhanced armor, I figured I might as well make more. In the end I made a full suit of armor that was comparable to my own, and two that were slightly lesser.

With my crafting done for the day, and a whole day spent, I packed up everything into my cabinet, carding it with a satisfied breath. After that Ema and I spent about an hour cleaning up the quarry and devising something to keep an eye on the Destroyer armor when we were busy in California. In the end it wasn't anything complex, just a secure phone that Ema would connect to before traveling over to Los Angeles. The fact that the phone was enhanced meant the battery life was about a full twenty four hours when in constant use. With one last check around the quarry we traveled home.

"I just had a thought." I said after plopping down on the couch. "The fact that you are looking forward to talking to Jarvis means that you plan on revealing yourself, right?"

"... Unless you don't want me to."

"It's your choice Ema, not mine. You are my partner in all this and I'm not going to restrict you like that.

"Then yes. I would like to reveal myself."

"Do you want me to card you and let you out when we are inside or do you want to go in on your own two feet?" I asked. "Hell you could float in if you want. It's up to you."

"... I think I would like to walk in and then reveal myself at some point."

"Then that's what you'll do."

----- *The Next Morning* -----

"No, we are not flying in." Ema said, already in her exosuit. "The super truck is already ostentatious enough."

"The super truck isn't ostentatious." I insisted, playing like I was offended. "It's unique!"

"It is deep green and gold Carson." She responded, looking at me with a raised eyebrow.

"... okay that's fair, but it looks good like that."

"Of course it does." She said as if she was stating the obvious. "Now are you ready?"

"Just... About... There!" I said, climbing down off of one of the chairs and looking up. "How is the feed?"

I had put one of the secure phones, now a temporary security camera, up on the roof of the tent, tucked against one of the support bars. It was partially hidden while still having a full view of the interior.

"It's good, I can see most of the and some of the area outside." She answered as I came out to join her.

"Great, let's go."

We traveled to Los Angeles and made our way through the city, driving most of the way in my civilian truck before changing to the super truck to avoid gathering too much attention. It took us just under a half hour to finally arrive at the mansion.

"You know... This is just about the least comic book thing we have done since I got here." I pointed out as we drove. "I mean we made an appointment to visit Tony Stark. We didn't show up on his front porch out of the blue or start off fighting each other only to work together to fight off the real bad guy. We just... made an appointment."

"Well we haven't met them yet." Ema pointed out, smirking as I cursed.

"Fuck you're right! Alright keep your eyes open."

Despite tempting Murphy, we made it to Stark's mansion just fine, stopping at the front gate, a terminal along the wall lighting up as we pulled in. I rolled down the window and leaned out a bit.

"Good day sir, How may I help you?" Said a voice from the terminal. It had a slight mechanical twinge but otherwise sounded like a British butler.

"Hello, my name is Maker, Ms Potts may have mentioned we were coming?"

"Ah yes, you are expected. Let me open the gate. Please pull up, you may park alongside Ms. Potts vehicle. Oh and the first left is the helicopter pad, please drive past it."

"Will do, thank you!"

The gate unlocked and swung open and I pulled up the long driveway. The landscaping was immaculate and the house itself, which was already partially visible but was completely revealed as we drove closer, was futuristic and stylish, all clean curved lines, concrete and glass. We parked and hopped out of the truck, leaving it uncarded for the first time in a while.

As Ema walked around I pulled my leather jacket straight and let out a long breath. I had decided to go as non threatening as possible, which meant leaving my guns out of my outfit. My

undeployed armor was still on under my jacket though, and I still had my utility belt and holsters, they were just empty. Ema forwent her normal armored look and instead went for a more smooth and sleek style. It was still green though, and her "skin" was still very much blue.

We walked around to the front door, again all glass. While we were looking for a doorbell the door opened for us. Ema and I shared a look and I gestured forward.

"Ladies first."

We walked into the mansion, stopping just a dozen or so feet in, stepping down a single marble step. We barely had time to notice that some recent repair work was just being finished when a tall red headed woman turned a corner and greeted us.

"Hello? You must be-oh my gosh." She started, only to stumble over her words when she noticed Ema's very much not human coloration. "Umm... You must be M-maker and Emerald?"

"That's right, it's nice to meet you Ms Potts." I said, stepping forward with my hand out. My movement seemed to shock her out of confusion and she took the last few steps to me, shaking my hand. "I apologize for the alias, I'm not quiet at the point where I'm ready to throw my name out."

"It's alright, I wish Tony had put a bit more thought into admitting he was Iron Man." She said, now shaking Ema's hand. "He is downstairs in his workshop. I should warn you, he... Well he is being extra Tony today."

Pepper led us around to another set of stairs, leading us down into a little glass walled off area. We came out in a large workshop, with a row of cars on the far side and a lot of tech in between. This area also looked like it had undergone recent construction. There was a lot of stuff in wooden boxes, looking ready to be carted off. Pepper put her hand on a panel and pressed in a code before pushing the door open.

"Tony? Maker and Emerald are here."

"One second!" Said a voice, causing all three of us to turn and look. A pair of legs stuck out from under a car, before the person they were attached to rolled out on a creeper. "Alright, who is this and what do I have to say to get them to leave? I'm in-"

The sentence died in his mouth as he looked at us. He was of average height and build, had short dark brown hair and a mustache and goatee. He looked at us for a moment, his mouth open just long enough to know he was stunned before he closed it.

"Alright, I'll admit it." He said, wiping his hands with a greasy towel. "I wasn't expecting that. Did we forget to pay the heating bill? Pepper, maybe find a blanket for her?"

“I’m sorry.” Ema said, looking between Tony and Pepper. “I know my looks are a bit shocking. I’ll switch to something a bit less abnormal.”

I couldn't help but chuckle as Ema's exosuit melted, forming down to its default state, a large metal cube. Pepper yelped and took an involuntary step back as I noted that her teardrop shaped flight pack was still attached to one side of the cube. She pulled off of her mount with a flourishing swoop, flying in the air around the workshop before settling into her usual place, right above my shoulder, floating and bobbing slightly.

“Right... that’s a lot less abnormal.” Tony said, having watched her flight with wide eyes before focusing on both of us. “Alright kid. You got my attention.”