

“Holy shit!” Tony cursed, both of us recovering from my sudden dive. “Thanks for the save!”

I scanned the area, taking in the situation. The destroyer was sinking, sailors jumping off into the water. My vision clicked in and I could see my droids helping pull people out of the sinking boat. I quickly lifted my hand and shouted into my communicator.

“Squads five and four! Battle bots, focus on the sinking ship! Evacuate and transport all survivors to nearby vessels!”

Even as I gave my orders I could see the destroyers and Helicarrier shifting away from the portal, trying to get out of the firing line of whatever was responsible for that beam of energy. As Tony, Thor, Ema and I landed on the Helicarrier the ships opened fire on the portal, having head time to realign and shift to keep clear of firing lines.

“Haha! Finally, a proper fight! HAVE AT THEE!” Thor shouted, jumping clear over some deployed cover, smashing an alien with his hammer.

Natasha, clad in her enhanced armor, stood from her own cover, firing the pistols I had made for her while Clint picked off any aliens who targeted them. An arrow even whizzed by me, punching through the skull of an alien aiming at Tony.

Meanwhile, the aliens pumped blasts of energy at us, all of them splattering harmlessly against the energy shields my behemoths were creating. They were cycling through different behemoths to keep the shields from falling for even a second. More and more aliens landed on the deck of the Helicarrier, but none of them lasted very long.

Even the massive space whales were being taken out, the slower moving monstrosities getting eviscerated by conventional missiles and my own droids firing their combo cannons. What had at first seemed like an extremely dangerous and tense fight was actually completely one sided.

I made my way to Fury, who was standing back behind the full sized cover nearest to the bridge. He was yelling commands into his radio, keeping in contact with the captains of the other destroyers. He saw me enter the cover and nodded.

“We can handle the troops, we can even handle those big flying fucks but we can’t compete with whatever is on the other side!” he shouted. “We need to-”

Another beam of blue energy tore through the air, this one aiming at the Helicarrier, though it was aimed at the bridge, not the hull. It slammed into the energy shield, a glowing dome of energy absorbing it. Even as the beam ended the behemoth responsible for the shield started to glow bright orange, melting slightly and collapsing from the incredible strain. Fury’s eyes widened and he looked to me, opening his mouth to talk, but I was already shouting into my communicator.

“Squads four and five, focus your behemoths on the portal side of your ships! Squads one two and three, send two behemoths out to the other ships!”

Two behemoths immediately took off from the deck, flying slowly across the gap, while a slight shimmer appeared on the remaining destroyers, only on the side facing the portal. Confident my orders were being followed, I turned back to Fury.

“That should give us some time, but not a lot of it,” I said, Fury nodding in agreement.

“Better than nothing.”

“Has there been any reports of any other activity?” I asked, standing out of cover to fire my revolvers, taking out a few aliens before turning back.

“No, there hasn't been anything,” Fury said, shaking his head. “They are focusing on us entirely.”

“Well that's good, at least they aren't... I'm not going to tempt Murphy.” I said, shaking my head. “We-”

“The portal is moving!!”

Fury and I shared a look, both of us rushing outside. I vaguely noted that most of the fighting had already petered out with no more reinforcements from the portal. Looking around I could see that the portal had shifted higher into the air, this time not bothering to shrink first. It rose about three hundred feet into the air before massively growing, the massive hole in space dwarfing the Helicarrier.

“That's.... That's not good,” I said, mouth hanging open.

Another beam of energy fired through the portal, slamming into the shield of the nearest destroyer, the dome glowing brightly, flickering out after the blast of energy was over. I could just make out a red hot bundle of slag falling over the side of the ship into the water.

That was just on my periphery though, because the vast majority of my attention was focused on the massive fuck off ship slowly pushing through the portal.

The ship was shaped vaguely like an “X” with four massive arms jutting forward from the end of each line. Each of those arms was slightly larger than a destroyer, while the central hub connecting them was a solid match for the mass of the Helicarrier.

“Hit it!” Fury shouted into his radio. “Hit it with everything you got!”

The ships began to shift as more of the four arms pushed through the portal, the ship slowly but surely making its way to our side. Missiles streaked from the decks of the destroyers, while their biggest turrets slammed round after round of heavy ordnance into the alien vessel. Explosions ripped along its arms hull, ranging in size. Small chunks of its hull were wrenched free, debris falling into the water below, but the explosions were hardly making dents in its armor.

The central hub of the ship, which was still behind the portal pulsed with blue light, energy feeding and gathering around a central point before it fired another beam of energy, slamming into another destroyer's shields, taking down another behemoth.

"We need to keep that thing from establishing a beachhead," Fury said.

"Can you scramble the fighter jets?" I suggested, only for Fury to shake his head, his eyes still locked onto the alien ship.

"No, it would take them too long to get to the deck," He explained. "The quinjet could make it out fine but they don't carry anything as heavy as what we are already hitting them with."

"Well... I can make something powerful, if it's portable I can combine it together and make something. But I need resources!"

"What do you need?"

"Anything you can get me access to! The most powerful explosives you can get me, some sort of firing system, maybe-"

"We can't just blow up the ship," Tony said through the coms. "Have you taken a look at what's behind it?"

Fury and I shared a look, the Director of Shield pulling a monocular out of his jacket while I looked with my enhanced vision. Sure enough, behind the "X" shaped ship there was another vessel, hiding in the darkness of space. I could see a beam of energy coming from it, heading right to the portal.

"I'm pretty sure that that second ship is the one opening the portal," Tony explained. "If we destroy this ship, then all they will have to do is close the portal, wait a few days and try again. And again, and again."

"...They fucked up," I commented, getting a slow nod from Fury. "They must not have expected this kind of resistance, they clearly didn't account for such an effective bottleneck. But if we shut them down here without the Tesseract..."

“Then they could open a new portal anywhere they want, whenever they wanted,” Tony finished, to my mounting horror. “Establishing a beachhead will be as easy as picking an empty spot and sending in the fleet.”

As we talked the massive ship crept in further, its thrusters firing hard, seemingly struggling to get a sense for flying in gravity. But it was still coming.

“So we need to get to the Tesseract,” Fury summarized. “Are you volunteering to go on a space walk, Stark? Is that suit rated for vacuum?”

“I’ll go.” I said, pausing for a moment before nodding and continuing. “I’ll push the ship back through the portal and get to the Tesseract.”

“Maker... That sounds like a one way trip,” Fury said. “There is no way to get that far through the portal and get back before it closes. And how exactly are you going to push the ship back through?”

I ignored his questions and turned, lifting my communicator up to my mouth.

“I need eight functioning battle bots, one caduceus droid and one behemoth to return to storage in trunk one!” I called out, nodding as various robots stood and jogged back to where I had left the trunks.

“Maker, what’s going on?” Natasha asked, her pistols returning to their ring shape. “You said you have a plan?”

“Yeah, I’ve got something that might let me push this ship back through the portal, and will give me a chance to stop the portal ship on the other side. I’ll probably have to go on a space walk for that...”

As we talked I watched as ten robots jumped up and into their trunks, disappearing into a space that should not have been able to store them all. Plenty of Shield soldiers watched the portal in shock, unsure as to what to do as even more explosions impacted the invading alien vessel.

“I’m coming with you,” She said simply, making me whip my head back to look at her, even as she continued. “You need back up, real back up if you’re going to be going inside that other ship.”

“I...alright, sure.” I said with a shrug, before looking over her shoulder at Ema, who was approaching quickly. “Ema, I need you to stay here.”

“No, I’m not letting you-”

“Ema, I’m one travel away from coming home, even if we don’t make it back through the portal. I’m sorry, but I need you here. Please.”

Ema, looking frustrated and upset, took a moment to nod before turning and walking away to help prepare Shield for the next wave, if it came. Natasha looked at me and held out her hand, which I took, leaned down to card the now shut trunk of robots and traveled to the *Void Skipper*. Once we were inside I turned to Natasha.

“Natasha... I need to be honest,” I said, opening the door into the bridge, the red head super spy following behind me. “I’m not actually sure I’ll be able to travel back if the portal closes. I’m confident I’ll be able to figure *something* out but... who knows how long that will take. You should travel back to the Helicarrier.”

“No,” She responded simply, focused on me. “You might be able to boss Ema around but that won’t work on me. I’m here, get used to it.”

I let out a long sigh, before eventually nodding with a small smile.

“Fine. Find a seat then, and strap in, this is going to get bumpy.” I said, hopping into the primary pilot seat, strapping in myself. “And thank you.”

She nodded in response, before finally taking a look around, to where I had traveled us to. When I suggested that she buckle up, being the intelligent person that she was, she quickly strapped in securely to the copilot’s chair before starting to ask questions.

“Where the hell are we?” She asked, looking around and spotting the display screens, her draw dropping in response. “Are we... in space? Maker, what is going on?”

“Welcome to the *Void Skipper* Nat,” I said, tapping the control panel in front of me, a shiver running through the ship as I took back control from the autopilot.

I double checked the shields were on max before diving, pushing my controls down and nose diving the ship into earth atmosphere. We dropped like a rock, the shields almost immediately compressing the air in front of the shields as I pushed us down. I could hear Natasha cursing in Russian, the whole ship vibrating, the roar of the air getting louder and louder. I tapped the control panel, the roar going silent as I turned on the sound blockers before I locked on to Ema, who was on Earth below us.

“Carson, Carson are you about to do what I think you're about to do?” Natasha asked, voice a little tense.

“Probably!” I said, pushing the thrusters harder as we got closer and closer, the ocean coming up to greet us.

The controls beeped a warning and I decelerated, evening out and coming around in a large curving sweep, wanting to do this at the perfect angle. We were a couple thousand feet away, the bottom screen showing off the ocean below us, which was white and roiling from the downward facing thrusters. The alien ship was almost completely through the portal, its "X" shaped hub just starting to push through.

With a grim smile I tapped a few times on my controls, adjusting the first few layers of shielding into a forward facing cone, one with a nice pointed tip.

"Alright, HOLD ON TIGHT!" I shouted, pushing the controls forward, the ship leaping away.

I wasn't quite redlining it, but we were still able to pick up an impressive amount of speed as we beelined towards the alien ship. It fired its blue beam of energy at us, the first cone shaped shield glowed blue for a moment before it faded back, my much more expansive onboard shielding system able to tank the shot with no internal damage.

I did my best to not tense up as we smashed into the massive spaceship, which was considerably larger than the *Void Skipper*. The shield spear plowed completely through the ship, with a wide enough hole that Natasha and I could see through to the other side.

Or rather we could once we both recovered from the impact.

Both of us shook our heads and focused on the view screens around us, our enhanced chairs and safety harnesses handling the collision incredibly well all things considered. The alien ship had seen better days, with dozens of fires burning, shooting out from seemingly random hatches and viewports.

After a moment of making sure the *Void Skipper* was fine save that ten out of our forty five shield generators were now slag, I pushed the ship forward. I could hear the crunch and screech of tortured metal as I pushed the thrusters as hard as they could go. The ship shook and vibrated despite the vibration dampeners already turned on.

But we still moved.

The *Void Skipper* slowly but surely pushed the heavily damaged massive alien ship back through the portal, quickly picking up momentum as more and more explosions happened inside its black hull. The more we pushed, the more damage we did and the easier it was to move. My eyes constantly checked the back end of my ship, waiting until it was finally all the way through the portal.

When we were finally through I all but slapped my console, the cone shaped shields expanding, opening the hole we had made even more, until the ship fell apart and exploded, a

massive shake hammering the ship as our thrust drove us through the explosion and out the other side.

Free of the now shattered alien ship we sped up, hurtling towards the shield projecting ship. This ship was a large ring, with a single corner on one end. The beam of energy, which was now much easier to see on this side of the portal, was coming from the front end of the corner.

Suddenly the beam cut out, and the ship started to turn, slowly angling away, trying to run from us. I grit my teeth and pushed the engines back to full, the *Void Skipper* jumping forward again, heading directly for the ship. The ship got bigger and bigger as we got closer and closer. As it turned away it started to speed up, only for the ring to crack as *Void Skipper* smashed into the back end of the massive ring.

Its spinning parts tore into itself, breaking the ship into three large chunks as it tried to shift under what little power it had left. Eventually it went dead, the lights and moving parts flickering and twitching before it finally stopped, the second ship unmoving and dark in the vacuum of space.