

We landed far outside the area we believed the entrance into the bunker was, the quinjet setting down in a wooded area more than a mile out. We had been flying low for almost four miles before that in an attempt to keep out of sight. I was the first one down the ramp, my armor deploying around me as I stepped down onto the dirt. I had my hand on my right revolver, which was sitting in its holster on my hip as I scanned through the area with a dozen forms of enhanced sight.

“All clear,” I said, the enhanced, intent based comms units I passed out during the flight picking up my softly spoken words and sending them to everyone behind me.

Steve and Bucky were next off the jet, their squad right behind them with Ema being the last one off. I pulled out the tracking tablet and watched it for a moment as everyone kept a close eye on the area around us.

“Alright, he is still in the bunker,” I said, pointing in Clint's general direction. “Everyone, take one of these, they will keep Loki from affecting your mind.”

I passed out anti mind control cuffs to the squad of Shield soldiers, before all ten of us started making our way through the forest. After a few minutes of walking through the trees we reached the end, coming to a large field. I knelt next to a tree, hidden in the shade, before using my enhanced vision again to scan the clearing.

As my vision magnified I followed the other side of the field, easily spotting the dozen vehicles of various different sizes and models, all parked around the entrance to the old abandoned bunker. The entire lot was a buzz of activity, with people pulling crates and boxes from trucks, carrying them all down the singular entrance into the bunker. Of course there were also a half dozen armed guards scanning the area, their hands on their weapons as they held the perimeter. I canceled my magnified vision and retracted the armor around my face, looking back to Steve.

“This is definitely it, but they have the place on lock down. They’ll spot us the second we leave the treeline,” I explained.

“Well then we can’t blitz them, we might be bulletproof but if Loki hears us coming he might make people hold themselves hostage,” Steve said, shaking his head. “Everything keeps getting more and more strange.”

“Told you,” I said, shrugging when he and Bucky looked at me. “I said that the world was going to start getting real weird.”

He nodded reluctantly, looking over the field to the gravel lot, squinting to try and see better. “I can just make out the cars but not much else, is there only one entrance?”

“Only one I can pick up.”

“Alright... well I'm open to ideas,” He admitted looking back at his squad.

“I have one. I'll go in as bait”

“What, no-” Ema started to say but I held up my hand, cutting her off.

“With Ema as back up of course. Basically, both of us are ridiculously tough at this point. Like insanely strong, to the point I'm pretty sure Shield's estimations are hilariously low. Which means Clint is going to expect a certain level of strength...”

“Meaning that Loki won't expect you to be that strong.” Bucky said, Steve looking back at him before focusing back on me.

“Are you sure you can take anything Loki throws at you?”

“Well... magic gets a little esoteric so it's hard to say, but I'm pretty confident I can weather his first attempts at least. Beyond that I can card anything really dangerous that he throws at me. If all of that fails I can travel out and fly back. In any of those situations the distraction would still have done its job. ”

“... Dammit, I don't like it but I don't see any other option,” Steve said, cursing as he looked back over the field.

For a moment Steve just kept staring over the field. I could practically see the thousands of thoughts his enhanced brain was going over, trying to come up with an alternative. Eventually he cursed again, this time shaking his head.

“Alright, let's say we go with your idea. What's the plan?”

Thirty minutes later Ema and I were both silently flying through the air, completely invisible. Ema had her hand on my shoulder so we could stay in contact, her arm extended out by a few feet so it wouldn't get in the way of my wings. We landed on the gravel lot, just a few feet from the bunker entrance, pausing for a long moment to see if anyone noticed our arrival. When no one reacted we both made our way slowly to the large metal door frame that marked the entrance. There we waited, only moving when a woman and a man, dressed in tactical gear and carrying a large crate made their way to the entrance. As they both slowly made their way through the doorway Ema and I followed them in, my partner's hand still on my shoulder as I led the way.

We followed the pair of workers deeper into the bunker, down more stairs until they reached the end. Without a word they shifted, moving in unison to carry the crate further in, now walking down a long tunnel. The walls were tiled, making the tunnel feel more like a subway station than a bunker. Eventually the hallway opened up into a much larger area.

The underground space was busy, a chaotic mix of crates, soldiers, scientists and builders. On one end some sort of temporary clean room was just being finished, scientists already working inside. I was shocked to see Erik Selvig inside, pouring over a computer smiling and talking to the other scientists. His eyes were unnaturally blue, and his smile looked wrong, filled with joy and excitement with just a hint of mania leaking through. I reached and tapped Ema's hand on my shoulder, directing her to look at the clean room setup. She gave me a squeeze to confirm she knew what I was pointing at.

Closer to where we were standing were stacks of weapons, materials and equipment, with a few dozen soldiers going through it. They were mostly quiet, a few of them sharing the same joyful smile with a drop of mania as Erik did.

After a few more minutes of scoping the area out I spotted Clint, standing right next to who I could only assume, between the rather nice looking green and gold armor, the staff in his hand and the holier-than-thou smirk on his face was Loki. He was talking to another soldier, who was nodding along eagerly. Clint was standing beside him, scanning the room as he answered Loki's questions.

With them spotted I reached up and gave Ema's hand the double squeeze, the signal that I was ready to go. I could almost feel her reluctance to let me go, but after a moment she did. After a few deep breaths to psych myself up I stepped further into the large room, making my way closer to the clean room, walking between aisles of crates and equipment. When I was just about there, only a dozen or so feet from Loki, I took another deep breath and reached out, putting my hand on a stack of equipment.

I gave another quick look around before I deactivated my stealth field and shoved the stack of gear to the side, cursing and pretending to stumble. Suddenly, every single eye in the room was on me.

"Intruder!" A voice called out clearly from behind me, and I felt a slight brush from my danger sense before a bullet hit my shoulder and sparked off my armor.

Using the hints I was getting from my danger sense I stumbled from the hit, before another one hit, once again sparking off my armor this time on my arm. I drew my revolver and fired at where the first bullet came from, my shot purposely going wide and shattering a crater into a far wall.

More bullets slammed into me and I continued to ham up their effect, stumbling as I tried to find cover. Before I could slide behind another box my danger sense activated again, this time more intensely than the bullets. I could see the outside flares of pale blue energy as I was launched over the box I had been moving towards, rolling and laying flat on the ground for a moment.

Almost immediately I could feel something wrap around my arms and myself, like an invisible rope tying me up. The force yanked me a bit until it lifted me off of the ground, slamming me into the ceiling hard enough to crack the tiles, ceramic shards falling to the ground before I was slammed down as well. The force wrapped around me more, lifting me into the air a final time, holding me up with my feet dangling. The call to cease fire came from Clint, echoing through the large underground room. A few more bullets pinged off my armor before stopping completely.

Loki and Clint stepped out of their own cover, the latter's head on a swivel as he checked every angle for danger. As they moved I could feel myself moving as well, a gesture from Loki bringing me to the aisle I had previously walked down.

"My my, it looks like you were right," Loki said, giving the mind controlled shield agent beside him a look. "It seems like he *can* track you. And I see you've been trying to replicate the Destroyer armor. A... interesting attempt."

Loki smirked as he stepped even closer, hand reaching out to touch my armor, examining it with the look of a adult humoring an incompetent child.

"Your friend Barton here warned me that you had ways of tracking people down, and some impressive stealth capabilities," Loki said, walking back around into my visual range. "Well done by the way, it's not often I see stealth that can fool me."

"...of course not, if it fooled you then you wouldn't ever see it," I said, almost reflexively. I could see a spark of annoyance in Loki's eyes before it quickly faded.

"So, Maker was it? What exactly was your plan? Sneak in, save Barton, defeat me?" He asked, shaking his head. "This is why humans belong under the thumb of their betters. When you're left alone you convince yourself of the most idiotic things."

"Oh yeah, because your people are known for their even tempers and well thought out plans." I shot back, making sure to keep him focused on me. "It's a miracle you dress yourself."

"What did you say to me, worm?" Loki said, his anger quickly rising.

"I said, between your fake parents and your real ones it's amazing you can dress yourself. The intelligence of frost giants and the cunning of an Asgardian? Truly you must be a beacon of-

Blue energy fired from his staff and slammed into me, tearing me free of whatever spell he was using to hold me up. I skipped on the floor once before hitting again, tumbling for a moment before slamming into a crate. I was, of course, fine inside my armor as it easily absorbed the impacts and energy. I pretended to be stunned and hurt though, weakly trying my best to move and stand before another blast of energy drove me through whatever crates I had

slammed into. This time I slammed into the wall, which cracked under the impact, tiles falling to the ground. He hit me twice more with the energy blasts from his scepter, slamming me into the wall with each blast before he gripped me in his magic, yanking me violently back to the center of the room.

Every ounce of self control and smooth confidence was gone, his face a rictus of anger. I could see the tremble in his hands as he held back his rage.

“Care to repeat that you worthless broken man?” He shouted, spittle flying from his lips. “So high and mighty in the face-”

“Thor is better than you in every way.” I said, hitting well below the belt. “You’re nothing compared to him, but then again you’re not much compared to anyone. Lady Sif-”

The scream of anger that boiled out of him was apocalyptic. He slammed me into the ground with his magic again before firing his scepter at me. He alternated between slamming me and blasting me for a full minute, digging a furrow of crushed and blackened concrete. By the time he was done, standing over me as I laid in the crater, he had managed to get through the newly installed, sorcery based energy barrier and hit my actual armor a few times.

Not that it made a difference, the only marking on me was dust and soot.

The petulant villain stood above me, breathing heavy, his face still full of rage. After a moment it shifted into cold and eager smugness.

“I think I’m going to do something special for you, Maker. Barton assured me that you will heal from even this, so you have the honor of still being useful. I’m going to make you mine, you insect! I will send you back to torture and murder everyone you have ever cared about! You are going to help me break humanity into its rightful place, beneath me! And when it’s all done, when I reign over Earth as its ruler I will have you slit your own throat at my feet. I will release you from your service just long enough to see the horrors you committed before your life leaves you!”

As he spoke he gestured, and a moment later Clint stood beside him. Loki reached down and pulled Clint’s gun from his holster, placing its barrel at his temple.

“Pull back your armor,” He commanded. “Or I will kill your friend as you watch.”

After a moment’s pause I gave the mental command to my armor to shrink, the hardened bands of metal and armored plating returning to its smallest form. I did my best to defeated. Loki smirked and reached out with his spear, placing the tip right over the top of my armor, pulling it down to get closer to the center of my chest. My under armor was still there, but because of its cloth-like behavior, it was pulled down as well.

“Any last words before you become a puppet?” Loki asked with an ugly grin on his face.

“Green really isn't your color.”

With a scowl he pushed the spear against my chest, hard enough that without my tattoo enhancements he would have definitely pierced my skin. Instead, his staff glowed and began to hum, the sound turning into a soft high pitched whine. Suddenly energy pushed into me, dispersing through my body, only to dissipate as my cuff warmed up slightly and vibrated for a moment. Loki frowned, and tried again, the same sound happening before the energy entered me and faded.

“We're here Maker! The outside is clear and we are in the tunnel! Ready when you are!” Steve said through my communicator, and I couldn't help but grin.

“Wh-”

“Now!”

With a flick I spun a card up onto Loki's chest while he looked down at me, confused as to why I wasn't under his control. The card hit his chest and disappeared, six combined blasts from my lightning gun taking its place. With a crackling explosion Loki was hurled backwards, slamming into the metal frame of the clean room, falling to the ground with a thump. His spear clattered to the ground on the other side of a stack of equipment.

I immediately deployed my armor as I quickly climbed out of my shallow crater, heading directly to Clint, who had been caught in the outer blast radius of the massive shock. I quickly slipped a healing amulet over his neck, before fastening an anti mind control cuff onto his wrist. I watched as his eyes cleared and he started to move, looking up at me.

“Holy hell, how can you still move?” He asked, slowly standing with my help.

“Please, he didn't even scuff my armor,” I assured him, turning quickly and scanning the room.

I could see Steve, Bucky and their squad tearing through the armed soldiers with ease, despite the fact that they were staying non lethal incase Loki had whammied them into helping. They had attacked as the show Loki had been unknowingly providing drew everyone's attention from the outside in. Scientists were shouting and getting out of the way, though a few of them tried to fight, immediately getting their asses handed to them.

I watched as Ema followed behind them, her stealth field now off, quickly putting on and removing a singular anti mind control cuff to each soldier and scientist that the squad took down, using a knockout ring to keep them down. Seeing that they had the random goons handled I turned back to Loki, who was starting to stand.

“You little insignificant bug, how dare you attack me! I am a god, the rightful ruler of Asgard. You should be begging for mercy you miserable creature! I will enjoy ending your short disgusting lives when-”

I leapt across the gap between us, aiming an armored fist right to his forehead. However, instead of making contact with the pompous ass and driving him into the ground, my fist passed right through the illusion of the trickster god, which faded with a shimmer of green and gold magic.

I whirled around, looking for where he really was when I spotted him on the far end of the clean room. He was standing there, glaring at me as he held the Tesseract in his hand. I took a single step towards him and a roiling cloud of dark blue energy, laced with small sparks light blue, swallowed him. When the cloud vanished, Loki was gone as well.

“Fucking goddamn Saturday cartoon villain escaping at the last goddamn minute.” I cursed under my breath as I stood back up straight.

I was cycling through all of my modes of enhanced vision, scanning the room and trying to see if this was maybe an illusion as well. Unfortunately, as far as I could tell, Loki was well and truly gone. When I was done scanning I walked back to Clint, who was leaning against a crate, quickly recovering.

“You alright?” I asked, giving him a quick look over.

“I’m fine,” He responded, pushing off the crate to stand up fully. “He get away?”

“Yeah, he used the Tesseract to teleport out.”

“Son of a bitch,” Clint cursed, turning around and kicking a box of tools before eventually taking a deep breath and turning back to me. “Thanks Maker, you-”

“Guys!” Ema called, getting everyone's attention as she bent over to pick something up.

As my companion straightened she showed off what she had found. In her hands, no worse for wear for being thrown to the side, was Loki’s scepter.

“Looks like he forgot something.”