

Chapter 96 - Negotiations

Through the next few hours, Odin and I negotiated over a variety of things, trading everything from basics like a dozen sets of my low-level wings, to more complicated and powerful items, like an entire crate of the same palm healers that I had offered Shield. It seemed that the idea of them being unable to hear bad people was something Asgardians could appreciate.

In the end, I traded the aforementioned equipment, plus six more Destroyer armors, three healing amulets, six ingots of ultra metal for Asgardian smiths to experiment with, and two dozen ingots of vibranium, which was apparently pretty rare in space as well as on Earth.

In return, I was given a bunch of household Asgardian stuff to mess around with, as well as several boxes of Asgardian materials, from special silk to metals, alloys, and even samples of stone they used in buildings. I would also receive crates of weapons and armor made by Asgardian smiths. I even asked for a sample of Asgardian soil, air, and water, different vegetables and meats, and several cookbooks.

That wasn't all Odin offered, thankfully. While the materials would be useful to build and experiment with, they didn't contain anything really groundbreaking. Thankfully, Heimdall had relayed my quest for new exotic things to craft with because Odin was prepared with a small selection of more exotic offers. He offered a crystal that softly glowed orange and yellow, another chunk crystal that slowly shifted through the rainbow, a branch of gnarled wood, and a small vial of clear water.

The orange crystal was called a sunstone and was capable of growing and regenerating under sunlight. It wasn't native to Asgard and was apparently quite rare, but had no useful application because it was too brittle. The second chunk of crystal was a sample of the Rainbow Bridge, and the gnarled branch had fallen from the oldest, most magically charged tree in Asgard. The small vial of water was run off from the core of Asgard, which while not having a direct use that they knew of would no doubt have impressive concepts and was difficult to get.

I was quite happy that I had managed to trade a bunch of stuff that was worth basically nothing to me for a whole slew of new materials and goodies to work with. Even so, I saved the biggest request for last.

"I would like some Uru-"

"Absolutely not! It is a finite resource and every piece is precious. The Dwarves of Nidavellir horde most of it and have only agreed to forge a handful of artifacts with it since the dawn of Asgard itself!"

“Not even for two dozen ingots of it in return?” I asked with a smile. “I know you are aware of what my UCMs can do. With a small chunk of Uru, I could make more.”

Odin looked at me again, his stare weighing heavily on me. I was beginning to think he could actually read my soul with how deeply he stared at me.

“I would have your oath. That you will not use the metal as a bartering chip. That you will not sell it to others in its pure form, and that you use it responsibly. Uru holds power beyond anything you have seen and spreading it to those who would misuse it would cause chaos. Not to mention the Dwarves would likely declare war on you if you broke their monopoly.”

“I agree,” I said solemnly.

“Then yes, I will give you a single ingot of Uru,” Odin said after another pause. “And pray that my son's judgment of you is accurate.”

“I will have your oath as well Maker,” Frigga asked, smiling as she looked at me. “I offer something just as dangerous. As both a reward for saving my wayward son, even when he was your enemy, as well as in exchange for the destruction of something you already have.”

Before I could ask for clarification she began casting a spell, one that shimmered and encircled her body, spiraling around her torso. It shone with a pale white, glittering light, with a golden streak at its core, following behind the central streak of magic. It continued to spin around her, sliding up her body and down her bicep, following her as she raised it slightly. It followed her arm, up to her hand until it reached the palm of her hand, where the magic sank into her skin. After a moment's pause a perfectly shaped octagonal bipyramid crystal, three inches tall and two inches wide, with several facets on both ends, grew from her palm. As it finished growing the center glowed with a faint sparkle of golden energy.

“It took a few days of research to find this spell, but I believe it will save you some trouble,” Frigga explained, the crystal floating from her palm over to me, resting in my waiting hand.

I looked at it for a long moment, before pulling it into a card.

It was the golden essence, the same that I had detected from Loki's blood and the sparks from Thor. But this was pure, with no connection to any person or element. The only additional concept it had was a vessel of storage from the crystal that it was contained in. I pushed it back into my hand, examining the crystal before looking back to the goddess queen who had given it to me.

“What kind of oath do you want?” I asked, doing my best to look Frigga in the eye instead of focusing back down on the crystal.

“That you use it wisely, never give it away in that form, and never try to apply it to a living creature, including with your tattoos. That is not the path to true godhood and would most likely drive the poor creature to mania and insanity.” She explained. “I would also ask you to destroy the samples of Loki’s blood. You no longer need them after all.”

I card the crystal again and pull out all of the samples of Loki’s blood, tearing them easily, the cards turning to dust.

“Done.”

As the dust from the destroyed cards drifts away I settled back into my seat, resisting the urge to flourish the card back into my hand.

“You stole the blood of my son?” Odin asked, his eyes boring into mine.

“I wasn’t going to use it until I could separate his essence from what I wanted,” I explained, shaking my head. “I have no interest in messing with your son. Besides, it’s hardly stealing if his own actions led to him bleeding all over my floor.”

For a moment I thought he would continue to push, the anger in his eyes clearly visible. Before he could say anything though, Frigga reached out and put her hand on his arm, giving it a squeeze. He looked at her for a moment before nodding and looking back at me.

“I believe that is the end of our business,” He said tersely. “Your goods will be delivered to your ship.”

I stood with a nod, Peggy, Steve, and Bucky standing as well. Without another word I turned and left the room, the other three following behind me. I made it to the end of the hall, turning down the next before my legs started to give out. Ema grabbed me, seemingly expecting it enough to be ready.

“Maker... are you alright?” Steve asked, all three of them looking a little pale. “You...”

“Now you know why I made sure everyone knew I wasn’t representing Earth,” I said with a weak chuckle. “Now if you’ll excuse-”

I could feel my body heave, and I traveled away to the *Void Skipper* before losing my lunch on the metal floor.

“You did great Carson,” Ema assured me as I sat back against the hallway wall. “I almost cracked too.”

“Holy fuck Ema... I just... Fucking hell...” I said, shaking my head and slowly catching my breath. “One of the most powerful mother fuckers... around and I asked him if he was out of his mind.”

“Thank god Frigga was there,” She said. “I’d hate to see what he would be like without her.”

It took a long minute for me to recover, a cleaner bot coming by to clean up my mess before I was ready. It was early, but I was too exhausted to do anything other than head to sleep early. I stayed in my room, with four battle bots and a behemoth outside my room, the *Void Skipper’s* shields on full.

I woke up the next morning and immediately got to work preparing everything for the trade-off. I set up UCMs to print off the standard things, pulled the vibranium out of storage, and moved the mostly repaired Destroyer armor down to the garage bay. It didn’t take long for everything to finish, especially with the spare UCMs I had brought with me.

Once everything was done I set up the UCMs in the garage bay as well, deploying the ramp and moving everything down to the landing pad so that they could gather it at their leisure. It was then that Thor and a few of his people stopped by. A dozen or so crates of materials, a few crates filled with weapons and armor, were set down on the stone platform, my own stuff taken away.

“Maker, how do you fair?” Thor asked. “Our meeting with my father... It was not something would wish on a friend.”

“It was a little tense,” I admitted. “But it was a business meeting of sorts, they aren’t supposed to be fun.”

“I suppose not,” He reluctantly agreed, watching as two Asgardians lifted the crate filled with palm healers. “You should be proud, not many people can say they stood the brunt of my fathers... negotiating.”

I bit back several retorts. From what I saw last night, Odin was as big of a dick in this reality as he could be in the normal Marvel continuity. Well maybe not quite that bad, but he didn’t exactly leave me with a good impression. Despite that, I didn’t want to take it out on Thor.

“Thank you,” I said simply, before turning to watch as Ema led a few battle bots, loading up and carrying our new stuff into the ship. “Is someone going to be along to drop off everything else? And does your father want me to fix the Destroyer armors now?”

“I believe my father will be handling the armor himself,” Thor explained. “The repairing part that is. Apparently, he will have to rework the enchantment slightly now that he could have twelve running in a single battle.”

I simply shrugged, not really caring about it beyond him keeping his side of the bargain.

“And the other stuff?”

Instead of answering Thor simply gestured to a final crate being carried in, this one accompanied by four armored guards. They placed it by the end of the ramp and hurried away, leaving me along with Thor again. I bent down to one knee and pried the box open. Inside was a large chunk of the Rainbow Bridge, just under a foot wide. It glowed softly, running through the rainbow of colors. Next to that was a slab of foam that had the softly glowing orange and yellow sunstone, the vial of pure water from the core of Asgard, and the two-foot-long branch of Asgardian wood.

I resisted the urge to card everything and start forming plans, knowing that if I did I would be exceedingly distracted. Instead, I flicked out a card, my storage shed popping out. I resecured the crates cover and brought it into the shed, quickly recarding the shed when I was done.

“Great, now the Uru?” I asked, Thor nodding in response.

“I’m under orders from my father not to let it leave my sight,” He said, reaching behind himself and under his cape, pulling out a small wooden box. “So I would appreciate it if you carried it normally.”

“Sure buddy. C’mon, I’ve got my stuff set up in the garage bay,”

I lead him back into the *Skipper*, showing him where to put the ingot. He reverently pulled it from its box and placed it on the first UCM, and I started it up, cursing under my breath when I saw the time.

“Alright, so this is going to take a while,” I said shaking my head. “It’s gonna take the rest of today and into tomorrow morning to get them all printed out.”

“That is incredible! A single day and a morning to turn twelve ingots of Uru into twelve!” Thor said with a smile. “Truly, you an incredible artificer Maker!”

“Thanks, Thor, but I’ve got a pretty potent shortcut,” I said with a chuckle, double-checking the timer before turning back to Thor. “You can go ahead and take that ingot back if you want, so you don’t have to hang around.”

"I would not mind spending more time discussing our adventures, but I would feel better having the original ingot back in my father's vault," Thor admitted, taking the bar and stashing it back inside its box, which he tucked back under his cape. "Perhaps later tonight you could join My friends and I at one of our favorite taverns? I believe I will invite the Midgardian Trio as well."

It took me a disappointingly long moment for me to figure out who he was talking about.

"Steve, Peggy, and Bucky?" I asked, eyebrow raised. "How did they get that name?"

"Companionship is as solid as theirs is hard to miss," Thor explained. "And they are the first Midgardians to set foot on Asgard in literal ages. It took only a day for their moniker to arise."

"What am I, chopped liver?" I asked, nodding to Ema as she re-entered the garage bay.

I had asked her to travel the crates of Asgardian materials home with the battle bots. I didn't want to fill up my storage chest with Asgardian materials until I had a chance to go through all of it. When I turned back to find Thor looking confused I explained.

"It's a colloquialism, it is like asking if I matter or not."

"Ah, of course!" He responded with a nod. "You went through the effort of separating yourself from Midgard's delegation. My father understood your intention fully."

"Good. I needed to drive a hard bargain, every advantage I get is more power I can bring to bear in protecting Earth," I answered. "Doesn't mean I liked the process."

"Fair enough Maker. I would also like to say that my father... is a stern man. He wears a heavy crown, and is responsible for much more than the lands of Asgard," Thor said, looking off the edge of the garage bay, and out into the landing pad. "While your negotiations were tense, to say the least, you should know he respects your tenacity, as well as your courage."

I was silent for a moment, chewing the inside of my lip. I gave Ema a look and she simply shrugged. The truth was, pissing off Odin, or even just annoying him, was obviously a bad idea. Asgard could be a powerful ally for Earth, and being on their shit list could cause a lot of problems. It was better the devil you knew than the one you never saw coming. I let out a sigh and nodded, mostly to myself.

"Thor, does your father have any spare armor?"

"I... I believe so, why?"

"If you get it, I would use it to make something for him," I explained. "A peace offering of sorts."

“Truly? That is a generous offer Maker,” Thor said with a smile. “I will fetch it for you, then I would like to watch you make it if you would have me.”

“Sure, I’ll set up my workshop down on the landing pad,” I said with a smile. “It’s been a while since I have worked outside.”

Thor left with an eagerness in his step. Once he was clear of the *Void Skipper* he spun his hammer and flew away, disappearing into the sky. As he left I quickly set up a workspace, setting down tables, and pushing out the storage shed and my cabinet of tricks. I grabbed the six remaining sets of the Destroyer armor I had prepared, as well as pulling vibranium, ultra metal, and sorcerous damascus stock out, as well as energy cells and magic rods, so that I wouldn’t have to take up UCMs printing out more. When that was all set up I made my back into the garage bay, took most of the UCMs out, and set them up in the temporary workspace.

I grabbed the sunstone crystal, the vial of water, and the branch of magic steeped wood and set them up on their own UCMs, keeping the others clear for armor parts. Thankfully they weren’t going to take nearly as long as the Uru was, though the crystal of divine essence was close.

By the time Thor returned, carrying a large fancy-looking chest, I was ready to go. Ready to make a set of armor that would hopefully impress a literal god.

No pressure.