

We landed shortly after we took off, the distance between the palace and the landing pad melting away as we flew. We slowly made our descent, heading to the central road that seemed to connect to the rainbow bridge on one end and the palace on the other. As we got closer to the road and the palace itself, we diverted to the right side of the road, heading toward another stone mooring, this one built from stone bricks and accented with metal and gold.

As the skiff touched down in its mooring, Ema and I flared our wings out and landed beside it, getting quite a few wide-eyed looks. I was pretty sure it was my wings, rather than my ability to fly that was drawing the attention, as a race like the Asgardians surely had access to magic or tech, or both, that would allow them to fly.

My armor shrunk around me, changing back into my chest plate and leather jacket combo. When it was fully compacted I walked closer to the skiff and offered my hand to Councilwoman Hartford, helping her out of the vessel and onto the stone dock.

“Why on Earth did you do that?” She asked, more curious than annoyed. “You made a spectacle of yourself.”

“I know, and that's exactly why I did it. I'm here to make an impression and hopefully convince Odin to let me keep the Tesseract. Every bit of awe and wonder I generate is a point in my favor.”

“Unless he sees through your showing off,” Ambassador Steiner pointed out, looking much more annoyed than Councilwoman Hartford did.

“Then all I'm doing is showing off the types of things I can make,” I responded with a shrug. “Either way, flying is fun, so why not.”

Before Ambassador Steiner, who I was beginning to think I had alienated in some way, could offer up his rebuttal, Lady Sif caught our attention.

“The palace is just this way.” She said simply, leading us through the small stone dock way and up onto the central path.

As we followed behind I looked back along the road, activating my enhanced vision as I looked away from the palace. I could see where the rainbow road, a glittering, translucent path of colors that reached out over the waters, met the normal stone road. I enhanced my vision further, peering down the road and spotting a tall man standing at the jagged broken end. Dressed in golden armor and wielding a massive sword that he held with the tip to the ground, looking out over the edge of the bridge into space.

I was about to look away when he turned, looking right back at me despite the fact that I was at least a few thousand feet away, if not more. He nodded in acknowledgment before turning back and looking back out into the expanse. It took me a moment to realize who he was.

When I did I turned back to the group and half-jogged to catch up, my wordless encounter with Heimdall having caused Ema and me to get left behind.

We were led into the palace, leaving the central road behind as we entered the interior. It was a surprisingly open building, with wide, open entrances and archways, with windows that were open, without any barriers to the elements. Pillars stood on either side of us, large stone constructs that repeated every twenty or so feet. Every inch of every surface was beautifully colored, shaped, and carved with intricate details, highlights, and precision.

At the end of the pillar-warded hall was Odin, sitting on a huge golden throne. The throne was big, with two curved accents attached to a large seat carved from a block of gold. It was honestly a bit much, clearly showing off Asgard's wealth, only in a way that was over the top.

It didn't even look comfortable.

I kept my mouth shut, of course, silently following behind Lady Sif. Eventually, I when we are standing before him, Sif stopped and bowed her head before speaking

"Allfather! I present to you the warriors and representatives of Midgard, as well as the Maker, of Luna." She said, stepping to the side after she introduced us, until she was standing by the edge of the ornately carved area in front of the throne.

The white-haired, older man, dressed in golden armor and wielding a large spear even as he sat, the tip pointed into the air, watched us for a long moment, his one good eye studying us.

"It has been many centuries since humans have walked these halls," He said, his voice reaching every inch of the space despite the fact that he wasn't yelling. "I welcome you to Asgard!"

A cheer echoes through the hall, and I noticed for the first time we were very much not alone. Scores of people watched us as we presented ourselves, stepping out closer to the path we walked, clapping and shouting. I turned to focus back on Odin, suddenly feeling tense.

"I am sure we have much to discuss, words to trade, and questions to ask. While I am sure you are eager to discuss politics, hospitality must be observed! Tonight we will feast, to celebrate my son's return, even if one is in chains, as well as humanity's victory over the Chitauri!"

Another cheer echoed over the palace, echoing and thundering through the open hall. It took a moment to settle down.

“We shall eat, bond over stories of battle, and drink!” He called out, raising his spear into the air. “Let us worry about politics and questions tomorrow!”

Again the room filled with cheer and shouting. Odin nodded and thumped the floor with the butt of his spear, before catching my eyes with his. The gold eyepatch that he wore, connected to his face with no straps, matched his armor perfectly, as well as the aesthetics of the throne room itself. His look was serious, harsh, and openly analyzing, running counter to the words he had just said. I realized after a moment that this was likely a show for his people, a speech prepared to excite and stick in his people's heads.

The excitement churned over and we were escorted to our rooms, plenty of warriors slapping our backs and shaking our arms, congratulating us on our success. Lady Sif ended up escorting us through the crowd, though a palace guard escorted us after that. We were led to lavish-looking bedrooms with incredible views of the city. Everything from the rugs to the drapes was well-made and appeared to be handcrafted, and massively detailed. Our guides promised us that someone would be along with clothes for the feast, and before we could respond, we were alone.

“I get the feeling we were rushed through that,” I said, standing in the middle of my room, looking around and feeling a bit lost.

“Odin must have wanted to see his sons as well.” Ema guessed.

I nodded and turned around, looking at the furniture and decorations that lined my room. I made my way up a short set of stairs, leading to the open balcony.

“This place is incredible,” I said, watching people walk around several floors below the balcony, leaning on the balcony railing. “I love the open-aired aesthetic.”

“Maybe when we make the moon inhabitable we could design something like this?” Ema suggested, getting a look from me. “Oh please, you've been trying to figure out how to do that since Tony assumed you gave the moon atmosphere.”

“... Yeah... It would be an interesting challenge.” I said, turning away and watching a skiff fly in the distance. “But not something I would try any time soon.”

I pushed off of the railing and stepped back into the room, my feet on the last steps when there was a knock on the door. I called for them to come in, and two Asgardians entered, a seamstress and her apprentice, bowing low and explaining that they were here with my clothes. I spent the next hour getting several Asgardian outfits fitted, including one outfit that was intended for tonight's feast. Most of them were simple, light robes, with multiple light layers. Thankfully they understood that I needed to keep my chest piece on and worked around it. The outfit intended for tonight was a dark red, with gold cloth highlights that worked pretty well with my chest piece.

Ema insisted that they fit her in the same room as me, ignoring my own insistence that I was fine. They agreed to fit her behind a pull-out divider, even after Ema proved her body wasn't really humanoid by default.

They dressed her in a red and gold gown that matched my own outfit, though hers was unarmored. It was much more flowing than mine, but still had at least two layers that I could see, a dress and a shawl-like addition on top. The dress has a v-cut in the front, small enough that it would have been considered conservative on Earth.

When the seamstress was done fitting it to her, Ema shifted her skin color to better match the gown, ending up a darker blue, almost purple. The seamstress's eyes went wide when she did but she clearly appreciated the shift. She also added a couple of inches to her height, making her slightly taller than me.

No more than an hour later, Fandral arrived at my room to escort us to the feasting hall.

"You look simply amazing Emerald," He said as we stepped out of my room. "This shade fits you well, and you look enchanting in that gown."

"Thank you," She responded simply, smiling politely. "The seamstress is an incredible craftswoman."

"She is, I have bought a few things from her myself," He said with a charming smile. "She makes wonderful work and they make great gifts."

We continue on, heading deeper into the palace before eventually reaching a massive hall. It was as open as the rest of Asgard, though it did have a lower ceiling than most of the sweeping arch and vaulted ceilings we had seen so far.

There were dozens of long tables set up in the hall, each at least thirty feet long, laden with food, though it seemed to be finger foods for now. On the far side of the hall was a thinner table, set up on a raised stone platform. It was empty so far, and I had to assume that this was where Odin, Frigga, and Thor would sit.

Down on the normal level, hundreds of people walked around, from table to table, some sitting down, some standing. There were also dozens of staff walking around as well, refilling cups, taking away empty platters, and bringing in full ones. The smells were amazing already, and it seemed like the main course wasn't even out yet.

After a quick scan of the room, I immediately spotted Peggy, Steve, and Bucky sitting at a table that was very close to the raised table at the end of the hall, the diplomats at the table next to it. Sif, Volstagg, and Hogun sat with them as well, making idle conversation.

"I assume you would wish to sit with your friends?" Fandral asked, smiling when I nodded. "Fantastic!"

As we got closer I could see Peggy, Steve, and Bucky's outfits. Steve and Bucky were dressed in clothes similar to mine, though they weren't wearing their armor. Steve's was a navy blue with accents of dark maroon red, while Bucky's was a dark black, accented with highlights of grey. Peggy, on the other hand, was wearing a gown tangentially similar to Ema, though hers was even more conservative. Both of the soldiers waited for Ema to sit before they sat down again.

"You three look good, the seamstress does good work huh?" I said, taking my own seat, Fandral sitting on the other side of Ema.

"Seamster actually in our case," Steve responded. "But yes, they did."

"They are married," Sif explained with a smile. "Their daughter was probably with one of them, she is their apprentice. They are the royal tailors in fact."

Volstagg, who was eating steadily from a plate piled high with snacks and finger food, swallowed the mouthful he was chewing, washing it down with a gulp from his cup.

"They are rather impressive and caught Frigga's eyes a century or so ago," He added with a smile.

We continued with our small talk, Peggy eventually steering to a topic I was hoping they would forget about.

"Carson... Queen Frigga and Lady Sif called you 'Maker of Luna'," She asked. "What exactly does that mean?"

I let out a long sigh, slumping partially in my chair.

"I wish she hadn't called me that," I admitted. "My home, it's on the moon. I moved there when I was taking a break to focus on my crafting, while you guys were fighting Hydra."

"You... You live on the fucking MOON!" Bucky said, catching the eyes of many people as he stood up, sitting down sheepishly after a moment.

"Guys... you saw me smash into a spaceship with my own spaceship, get stranded somewhere in the universe-"

Ema let out a cough that sounded suspiciously like "sling ring", especially considering she lacked the parts necessary to cough.

“-and got myself back home in three days. I mean I flew us here on the *Void Skipper*,” I pointed out. “How is me living on the moon that strange?”

“I... I mean it's the moon... and your living there!” He said shaking his head. “How did you even get up there?”

“I strapped a landing pad to one of my robots and had him fly to it,” I explained. “It took a few days but he got there eventually.”

“Wait... Your home... it's connected to your warehouse, I've been there!” Bucky said excitedly, jostling his friend's shoulder. “Steve, we were on the moon!”

“Just say the word and I'll lend you some EVA suits,” I said with a smile. “You can hop around for a while.”

“So Maker lives on Midgard's moon?” Sif asked, looking confused. “Why is that so shocking?”

“It doesn't have an atmosphere,” Peggy answered. “It's too small. Living on the moon is a big deal for us, something our governments are decades, if not closer to a century away from doing. And it would be incredibly dangerous.”

“Not for me, I can survive a few hours in a vacuum at this point,” I explained. “Actually with their durability-enhancing tattoos, your squads can last for as long as they can go without passing out from lack of oxygen. The tattoos resist the worst effects of vacuum for a while. It feels weird but perfectly survivable.”

We chatted a bit more about the tattoos before Steve looked over at the raised table. Following his look, I noticed that Thor, Odin, and Frigga were taking their place.

“The Allfather will announce the beginning of the feast shortly,” Sif explained, prompting me to turn back to her. “Thor is obligated to stay at his family's table for the first portion of the meal. After that, he and Queen Frigga will likely step down and seek out conversation.”

“King Odin stays up there?” I asked.

“He stays at his seat, keeping an eye on us all, staying vigilant,” She explained. “During times of war, it is meant to be reassuring, that our strongest is watching over us while we are distracted with merriment.”

“What an interesting tradition,” Peggy commented, taking a small sip from her glass.

“Indeed. There are holidays and events where his place is taken by others, mostly Thor or Heimdall. He might call someone up to talk to them, but not about business or politics. Feasts like these are meant to be a celebration.”

We continued talking about traditions, even explaining some of ours from home, including a few of our holidays. Eventually, after a while the staff started taking away the plates of finger food, leaving the tables looking empty. Volstagg was stuck between sadness that the food was gone and the expectation that more food would soon be brought out.

When the plates were cleared a thump reverberated through the hall, pulling everyone's attention. Odin stood, Gungnir in his hand, looking out over the hall, silence covering the filled room. By now the only people who had been standing were the staff, and they had left the hall moments before Odin stood. Odin thumped Gungnir against the floor again.

“My subjects! My people! Let us celebrate the arrival of our allies from Midgard and the return of my sons!” He shouted. “Let the feast begin!”