

It didn't take long for me to put together the upgrades to Ema's wings since I had already done it on my own. Tony suited up while I worked, stepping into a rather impressive looking contraption built into the workshop floor and ceiling, going from normal man to Iron Man in just over forty five seconds.

"Damn. Impressive." I said, watching as his face plate slapped down.

"You like? I'm working on something better but..."

I smirked and tapped the activation buttons on my armor, the plates deploying from their smaller forms into the fuller coverage in their usual almost organic unfolding. My helmet grew over my face last, giving myself a shake to get everything settled.

"Alright cheater, no one likes a show off." Tony said before rocketing out the garage, swooping out the curving entrance.

I laughed and pushed out my wings, flapping them and lifting off the ground, following Tony out. It felt easier now, precise and controlled but still instinctual. Ema followed behind me as we chased the streaking light of Tony's repulsors. The mechanical suit pulled ahead for a moment before I put on some speed, my wings flapping harder. I couldn't help but laugh as we caught up to him easily.

When he noticed we were flying alongside him he immediately dove, heading straight down to the ocean. I tucked my wings and dropped with him, flapping occasionally to keep up as he streaked down, only pulling up about fifty feet from the water. Both of us were hot on his tail, matching his sudden turn in a way that should not have been possible with wings.

Still, we kept up with him as he slowly got closer to the water. As we got lower and lower I realized I could judge just how fast we were going by the waves that were blurring under us. I could smell the salt air and feel the spray hitting me when he finally pulled away, heading straight up a two hundred feet before stopping mid air, hovering on his repulsors. His helmet face flipped up and I tapped my helmet, causing it to shrink back into the torc.

"How fast was that?" I asked, having to talk over the rumble of his repulsors.

"Around four hundred miles per hour." He said. "Not bad for wings. Was that your max?"

"No, but it was getting there." I answered, trying to puzzle it out in my head. "Maybe another hundred, hundred and fifty?"

"Let's find out."

Tony cut his repulsor for just a moment, dropping down and gunning it, rocketing away from us even faster. We both pushed ourselves, eventually catching up with him as he headed

back inland. We whipped past a beach, heading over Malibu, passing it in a moment. For the next twenty minutes we followed Tony around, trying to match his speed. It was clear he was much faster than Ema and I but we seemed to have him beat on maneuverability. Eventually, as the sky grew darker and darker, he led us back to his home, flying slowly down into the garage. His helmet flipped up once he landed.

“Not bad, especially if your last max was actually a hundred and seventy.” He said, his machine starting to strip him of his armor. “You were hitting around five hundred when you were going in a straight line.”

I pumped my fist before reaching it out and bumping knuckles with Ema.

“That is a much better speed.” I said, tapping my armor and collapsing it back down. When it was all folded up I pushed my jacket back out into my hands, putting it back on as well. “Alright Tony. It was nice meeting you, and nice doing business with you, but I need to check up on a project and get home.”

“Good, your constant breaking of physics is giving me a headache.” He said, stepping off of his armor equipping platform.

After a quick goodbye from Pepper. Ema and I headed back to the truck. Instead of climbing in I simply carded it, both Ema and I taking off into the night. We flew back out over Malibu, a leisurely flight until we were over empty land, where we landed and traveled back to the quarry. A quick check on the Destroyer armor duplicate and we traveled back to the apartment. I ordered some take out and we called it a day.

-----*The Next Day*-----

With a competitive version of flight under my belt, I started the day by heading out to the quarry to check on the Destroyer armor again. At this point it was just about halfway done, and I was beginning to realize that having access to the Conceptual Deck had a major side effect. I had become incredibly impatient.

Here I was, performing physics bending, reality fucking magic and all I could think about was that it was going to take another four days. So I sat down in my chair and attempted to distract myself with another puzzle, namely upgrading myself. I had put it off for long enough, and now I was in a position to spend some time cracking the puzzle without having to worry about a dozen different threats. I was even relatively sure that my divinity enhanced healing amulet would keep me healthy if I messed up and hurt myself by mistake. The universal scanner was the final nail in the coffin of my procrastination.

Determined to push past my hesitation I started with something simple. I bought a couple of vitamins that claimed to help clear up your mind and enhance your reflexes before stopping at a medical supply store and buying a dozen reflex hammers. I started with my reflexes for two reasons. One I could use the supplies to fix the problem with my danger sense. With a few vitamins, some hammers and a small book about enhancing reaction times helped make the sixth sense more instinctual and easier to react to.

The second reason was that my completely average reaction time was something I had noticed holding me back several times. I could run almost twice as fast as a normal person, between my armor and my cuff, I could drive at around two hundred miles per hour in my super truck and now I could fly at around five hundred, but doing that anywhere other than a completely open and empty area was extremely dangerous. If I was going to be moving around at those speeds I needed to be able to react at those speeds.

I started by adding a few hammers and another book to two dozen pills, working the combination back down to a normal looking vitamin. I scanned it with my universal scanner and cringed at what it read. The vitamin, which was only going to last a day, would also make my reflexes more obvious, meaning I would be overreacting to everything. It would also download the book in its entirety to my brain without a filter.

Unhappy with the results I carded the pill and tore it immediately before trying again. This time instead of adding anything weird I simply combined and quad stacked the pills themselves, resulting in a singular pill. A quick scan showed that while it would in fact improve my reflexes, the temporary concept, which was just as strong as the concepts I actually wanted, had stacked together and as a result it would only last a few hours. It would also put a slight strain on my kidneys and liver. Still, the effect was what I was looking for, so I made three more and stored them in a small container, which I labeled carefully.

Ema, who had been flying around the quarry, patrolling and enjoying her wings, returned and stepped under the tent.

“Any luck?” She asked as her exosuit returned to its dormant form and she hovered closer.

“Kind of?” I responded, leaning back in my chair. “I have a vitamin that improves my reflexes and doesn’t have any major side effects, but it only lasts an hour. I need something permanent, or something that changes the body permanently that I can attach it to without stacking a dozen side effects.”

“Like a tattoo?” She said casually, floating above the table I was working at. “The ink is permanent and you could apply effects to that.”

I nearly fell out of my seat, instead putting my head in my hands, letting out a long sigh.

“Yeah, that would work.” I said eventually, looking up at her and shaking my head. “I was stuck on swallowing a pill and suddenly being a super soldier like Steve. That’s a really good idea.”

It really was. The ink for tattooing was permanent and didn't need to be ingestible, so no need to worry about overdosing or putting strain on my body. Plus, in the event that I needed to return to base human they could be removed, either by normal tattoo removal methods, something I made or, in a worse case scenario, physically cutting it off. The only things I needed to worry about was imbuing simple functions into the ink itself without contaminating it with other concepts and the possibility that my healing amulet would reject the ink as foreign and remove it.

With a new lead I did a bit of research before rushing off to do some shopping. My first stop was a book store where I bought a half dozen books on tattooing. I bought two tattoo guns next, along with a bunch of supplies and a ton of ink in a variety of colors before traveling back to the quarry. I quickly combined all of the books into one ring, not bothering with a class ring as there was no reason for anyone to permanently learn this. I also added in the instruction manuals for everything I bought. As I was going through one of the kits I realized something.

This was going to need electricity.

With a sigh I put everything down and left to go shopping again, returning this time with five generators, a bunch of solar panels and car batteries. I quickly worked everything together into one unit, working a dozen magic rods as well, this time leaving electricity in them instead of letting it drain out. The result was a generator pulling electricity from essentially nowhere. I didn't even have to put any gas in it to start it up. I quickly set up an extension cord and a surge protector before finally sitting back down at my workbench.

It took me a bit to set everything up, but eventually I was ready to test the first thing, whether or not my healing amulet would react poorly to tattooing and tattoo ink. I clicked on the gun and put in some black ink, giving myself the tiniest dot of a tattoo between my fingers, down by the knuckle before turning everything off, emptying the machine and putting it to the side.

“Alright, I need to let that sit for a while to see what happens.” I explained to Ema, who had been watching over my shoulder. “I’ll be back in a bit, hold down the fort.”

When I was done with lunch I traveled back to the quarry and examined the tattoo, happy to see that it was still there. I pulled out a couple of ink bottles, before pulling out the four pills I had made earlier. I combined all four of them into a bottle of ink, then combined that with two more ink bottles. I scanned the result, carefully reading the information it revealed.

The ink, which the scanner now called reflex enhancing ink, had several additions to it. It would in fact enhance my reflexes and cut down my reaction time. It had plenty of other information from the scan, including a detailed analysis of what it was made out of and a ratio

and severity level of concepts it was being modified by. After skimming through everything I carded the bottle of ink again, before spending fifteen minutes going through the process of making a magic liquid by combining a magic rod with a couple gallons of water, combining it down into a few cups. I took some of that and added it to the ink, which enhanced its enhancing abilities. I then went through the whole process over again, creating a second bottle of ink, which I immediately combined with the original.

I scanned it one final time, making sure to read every single bit of information the scanner provided. After I was sure that it wouldn't negatively affect me I called Ema over.

"I'm gonna need you in your exosuit Ema." I said as she floated closer. "The ink is ready and I don't want to tattoo myself."

"Alright, but we need to design it first." She said, landing on her exosuit, her metallic body forming around her. "I'm not going to be responsible for a tribal armband on you of all people."

I chuckled and nodded in agreement, both of us sitting down and looking on the internet for tattoo ideas. After a while I sat back and showed Ema something I had found,

"What do you think about something like this?"

"...It looks good." She said, taking my phone and zooming in. "Are you sure you want something that big?"

"It needs to use a certain amount of ink to take effect." I explained, passing her the tattoo ring, which she slipped on. "Plus it's on my back. And besides it would take me like an hour max to make something that instantly removes tattoos."

"Fair enough." She said with a shrug. "And you want this on your back?"

"Just on my right shoulder. Should leave plenty of room for more later."

It took about forty minutes for her to get everything ready, including getting the tracing lines on my back. Soon she was slowly but surely making progress, the tattoo gun buzzing as she 'permanently' marked my back. It hurt slightly, but in all honesty I had had much worse.

About three hours later the tattoo was complete. Ema wiped and washed my back, my healing amulet instantly healing any damage, sealing the ink in my skin. I stood when she was done and went to the mirror, turning so I could see.

There on my shoulder was an eight pointed compass, done in solid black lines. Behind the compass was a detailed set of clockwork, gears and pulleys, shaded and blended perfectly. The whole thing gently faded into my skin, meaning we could add to it later. In all it was six

inches across. It looked great, the tattoo itself almost perfectly done with no mistakes that I could see.

“I like it.” I said, moving my arm around to see how it shifted and moved. “Not bad for your first time, right?”

“It was interesting, that's for sure. I don't have muscles so I am unusually steady, so that probably made it easier.” She responded. “Are you going to try and make a second one right now?”

“No, I want to let this set in for a day or two.” I explained, pulling my clothes and undersuit back on. “I think a strength and stamina tattoo will be pretty easy to come up with, but I don't want to overload myself right off of the bat. Let's put this stuff away and we can test if it even actually worked.”

We quickly sterilized the equipment and cleaned up, storing everything in the storage shed. When everything was put away I scanned myself with the universal scanner, reading the information until I found a new tab called “Enhancement Tattoos”. I clicked and it opened to a new page, reading through its only entry.

“Alright, so according to the universal scanner the medium sized reflex enhancing tattoo decreases my reaction time by thirty percent and strengthens my reflexes by twenty.” I said, reading off of its description. “Not bad, the size descriptor makes me think that a bigger one would have pumped those numbers up a bit.”

“We could always add on more later.” Ema pointed out, and I nodded in agreement.

“Alright. Let's test this out.” I said, carding the scanner. I sat down and rolled up my pants, pulling off my danger sense band, putting it on the table. “Go outside and collect a bunch of small rocks. We are going to play some dodge ball.”

Five minutes later I was standing a few dozen feet away from my partner, who was holding a small pile of rocks at the ready. My armor was fully deployed as Ema refused to throw anything at me without it on and activated.

“Alright, I'm ready when-”

A rock hurtled at me, barely missing me as I dodged to the right. Ema chuckled, throwing rock after rock at me, hurling them faster and faster, eventually turning her arm into a more liquid slinging device, absorbing all of the rocks she had collected to fire them out even faster. Eventually she caught me a few times in a row, but I had done incredibly well, dodging chunks of rock that would have absolutely hit me without the tattoo.

“What does it feel like?” Ema asked mid throw, almost catching me off guard.

“Not much. I can tell the difference but it’s not like a new feeling, everything is just easier to follow and react to.” I answered, breathing a bit harder but unduly so. “Almost like I have more time to move out of the way.”

The experiment continued on for a while longer before I finally called it. I made my way back to the tent and collapsed back into my chair, a big smile on my face.

“That worked incredibly well! Thank you so much for suggesting tattooing Ema, it was a brilliant idea.”

“You would have gotten it eventually.”

“Maybe, maybe not.” I said with a shrug, bending over to put my leather band back on. “Either way, mission accomplished. Now I just need to design some more enhancing ink when I’m ready to add more.”