

I woke up the next morning feeling fresh and ready to tackle the day. After my morning routine and a breakfast of eggs benedict, precisely crafted by Alfred, I headed out into the warehouse, where Ema was waiting. She was just pulling off a paint stained smock when she noticed me.

“Morning Carson. How was your night?”

“It was fun. They invited me to.... uh never mind, I just realized I should check with Clint before I tell you about it,” I said, stopping myself before I said anything. “I obviously trust you not to say anything but it's more about not breaking Clint's trust.”

“Oh, fair enough I suppose,” Ema responded with a shrug. “Natasha was there though, right? How is she doing?”

“Yeah, talking to her was what got me the invite,” I explained before nodding. “And she is doing well.”

“Great. So what's on the agenda for today?”

“My next big challenge is tackling how I'm going to make my large object builder,” I responded, sitting down in a chair and pulling out my notepad.

“Any ideas?” Ema asked, pulling herself up to sit on one of the workbenches.

“A few. I'm pretty sure I can use a building builder as a base, maybe work in stuff used to make objects on a larger scale, like factory robotic arms and rivet guns maybe? I don't know exactly, basically stuff to pull it away from actual, attached to the ground buildings.”

I closed my eyes and went over a few ideas in my head, writing things down and scratching them out, letting out a frustrated sigh about fifteen minutes later.

“The problem is I really need the best of both worlds, which usually requires using the Deck to force things to work,” I explained, tapping my notebook with my pen. “The building builder is great because, by design, it takes conceptually enhanced materials and builds with it, meaning that my structures are ridiculously tough. But its also stupid, the system can't build things that arent normal. An ultra metal refrigerator is fine, a couch is fine, but it can't make an interior expand, automatically refilling smart fridge, or a comfort adaptive couch.”

I explained, mostly talking out loud to bounce ideas off Ema. She nodded along, used to this stage of building large projects by now.

“Even worse, the things I'm trying to make don't exist. If I use a bunch of stuff off of a car assembly line or something then I'll probably get access to tires and engines, but there's nothing I could use to get me access to my life support system or the shield system.”

“You're getting bogged down with things you think you can't do again, Carson,” Ema pointed out, pulling me from my slowly building rant. “The only reason this hypothetical device can't do what you want is because you already think it can't.”

“I... Dammit your right. You would think by now I would have stopped doing that,” I said, rubbing my face for a moment before flipping to a new page of my notebook. “Okay, so I need a device that can build conceptually enhanced stuff, how do I make that?”

“Your building builders already can if you really think about it.” Ema pointed out after a pause. “Sure they use conceptually enhanced materials that you provide, but you're only feeding them a fraction of what they would actually need. Its still building enhanced stuff, and from nothing too.”

“...That's a really good point,” I said, slowly standing from my seat, starting to pace back and forth. “They are already making conceptually enhanced materials...I just need a way to feed them new parameters, new options to build with!”

With new inspirations I began furiously writing down my ideas, in case I forgot anything during my material gathering and prep phase. A few more bits of inspiration hit while I was writing and I couldn't help but laugh.

“Careful, that was dangerously close to a maniacal laugh,” Ema pointed out, smiling as she watched me excitedly write.

Ignoring my snarky partner I took one last look at my plan and nodded, putting the notepad on the counter and getting to work. I headed over to one of my UCM's and started cutting off chunks, setting up a dozen and fully enhanced repair tablets, fixing new ones into existence as well as repairing the original. I did the same for a spare building builder, the larger constructs scheduled to be finished the next morning. Once I was satisfied that they had enough space in an empty portion of the warehouse I pulled out my phone and called Tony.

“Hey Tony, how's it going?”

“Not bad,” He said, the sounds of metal tools on metal in the background. “Pepper wanted me to thank you for the new security features.”

“It was the least I could do, and the results were just what I needed for my own buildings. I already have a wardstone set up at the warehouse,” I responded, pausing for a bit before continuing. “So... how would you like another half dozen ingots of vibranium to play with?”

“I would be very interested in that, now that the security system is up.” Tony replied quickly, clearly eager. “What's the price?”

"I need your help with a shopping list. Some of it is factory equipment I don't really know how to get my hands on. All of it is expensive."

"That... should not be a problem." He said after a short pause. "Why don't you come down and share the list and I'll get my people working on it."

"Alright Tony, I'll see you in a minute."

I hung up before looking around for Ema, spotting her back up at the fall mural before making my way to her.

"Ema, I'm going down to talk to Tony about some things I need, want to come?" I asked my partner.

"No, Jarvis is busy with stuff and I don't want to distract him."

"How is that going by the way?" I asked, looking up at her.

"It's... slow. He is slowly becoming more independent from Tony and Pepper as he grows." She responded, her platform shifting so she could face me. "I mean we only started dating a month ago, but it's slow even taking that into account. He is still much too focused on his role of serving his creator."

"Well don't forget Ema, you had a pretty large metaphysical leg up in terms of true independent sentience," I reminded her. "Let him change at his own pace."

"I know... It's just that his first changes happened so fast, it's frustrating to see him slow down so much."

"Just try and be patient. I know that's easier said than done but it's the best advice I can give."

"I know, and thank you Carson. I'll be here painting if you need anything."

I nodded and without any more fanfare, traveled to Malibu. I was greeted at the door by Jarvis, who escorted me down into the workshop, where Tony was elbow deep in one of his hot rods.

"Hey Maker, give me a second."

Tony spent another minute finishing what he was doing before he stood up straight and grabbed a rag, cleaning the grease off of his hands. He spent a minute or so going over my list, whistling at some of the more expensive things.

“Damn Maker, some of these things will be hard to get, not to mention incredibly expensive...”

He trailed off as I pushed a stack of six vibranium ingots onto his workshop table. He stared at them for a moment before nodding.

“Yeah that's fair enough. Okay, I can get most of this stuff by tomorrow night. Where do you want it?”

“Anywhere, I just need you to get your hands on it. I don't have a problem running around for a bit to card everything and bring it to my workshop myself.”

“I guess shipping isn't really a problem for you huh? Well in that case I can get everything on this list, my people will get to work on it.” Tony said, shifting his estimate with the new information. “What are you making anyway?”

“I'm trying to make something that will let me make bigger things.” I explained with a shrug. “I'm getting tired of being restricted in some ways by how much the Deck can hold.”

“Oh, that's it? Just getting rid of one of the only drawbacks your cheating has?” Tony asked, rolling his eyes. “Well when it's done I want to see it.”

“Don't worry, I'm going to be pretty eager to brag when I figure this out.”

“Goodie. Now get out, I have some calls to make and your smugness is distracting.” Tony said before looking at his new stack of vibranium. “Thanks for the metal.”

“No problem.” I said with a smile. “Say hello to Pepper for me.”

I traveled back up to the warehouse, not even bothering to go outside first. With the more difficult things on my list taken care of I spent some time making a more basic list before spending the rest of the day shopping all across America. I picked up dozens of tools designed for large projects, industrial versions of anything I could get my hands on. A lot of them ended up being used or damaged, which wasn't a problem for me. By the end of the day I had another once empty chunk of the warehouse filled with machinery being repaired to functionality and into existence. My UCM's were pumping out magic rods and other necessities, some of them creating pallets of ultra metal, saving them up to build with when this project was completed.

Eventually I had nothing else to do but wait for the following day and cross my fingers that Tony's people managed to get everything that I wanted.

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The next morning was much slower than the previous day. I went through my morning routine like usual, had breakfast with Ema and checked to make sure nothing had gone wrong in the warehouse overnight. When nothing seemed to have gone wrong I went outside into the vacuum to see how the dry dock was shaping up.

The structure going down into the ground was finished and lined with enhanced concrete, enforced by Ultra metal supports. The tunnels leading out were also finished, though they were completely dark as the builder hadn't gotten to the lights yet. The dry dock was absolutely massive, looking way bigger than I had anticipated. Still, with some of the things I had planned it was necessary. I couldn't wait to start using it to build things.

I was just coming back inside when Tony called to tell me everything I wanted was ready, giving me a list of addresses where I would have to pick everything up. Thanking the inventor I once again promised to invite him to check the building out when it was done and ready to use.

The rest of the morning and into the afternoon was spent traveling to a few different cities, carding the large pieces of equipment and returning to the warehouse. I picked up various pieces of large factory equipment, including a few different types of robotic arms, massive welders and presses as well as a massive CNC machine that pushed the limits of what I could card. I brought some of the equipment back to the warehouse immediately to get the larger UCM's going on making copies. By the time I was done it was getting dark in Chicago, the last place I was picking stuff up from. After making sure everything was set up, and leaving Ema with instructions to move things around once their copies were done, I headed to bed.

The next day I eagerly left the apartment, ready to start the final parts of this project. After a quick read through of my original plan I got to work, carding eight UCM's and eight builders into two stacks before combining them together. The hope was that by making eight copies in one card, the concept of being a group that I had used in making my travel pads, as well as a few other things, would allow the machines to work together on one project, which would hopefully increase the construction speed.

I started layering in manufacturing equipment and magic rods, occasionally adding in energy cells as well. When I was done working a huge fraction of that equipment into the eight devices I worked on a half dozen max stacked repair tablets. After examining the result I wasn't happy with how large the repair concept was, so I added in another two builders, as well as a second massive CNC machine and a dozen more pieces of equipment..

Once I added all of the manufacturing equipment I flourished the card back into my deck, ready to start the second part of this build. I was hoping this would push the final product fully into a large scale production machine instead of just another builder.

I pulled a droid chassis from my storage shed and started augmenting it. I took the arms from a second droid and welded them onto the frame before modifying and conceptually

enhancing it. Each of its four arms were combined with a tool, a grinder, a welding torch, an all in one power pneumatic hammer, and a multi tool that could switch between a hundred different styles and sizes of screwdriver and wrench. I enhanced the frame itself, making it stronger than the caduceus droid but not as armored. The final addition to the newly created builder bot was the knowledge of a few dozen different production types. Books on how to build space stations and shuttles, naval ships, tanks, ground vehicles, supertankers, a dozen different types of aircraft, trains and even submarines. The books varied in detail but putting them all together was a potent combination. All of this was shoved into its memory card and combined into the builder bot.

After setting it up on a UCM with instructions for Ema to move the copies to other UCM's to make as many as possible in a short time, I began on the final portion of the project. First I worked up a pair of connection crystals, which was really just two azurite chunks in the same card, mixed with cellphones and various types of computer cables and wires. I set that back into the deck and started working on a scanner. At first I was planning on starting with a universal scanner and going from there, but after a bit of experimentation I realized that doing so would force me to fight against some already pretty strong concepts. So instead I started from scratch, adding a few different types of scanners to everything I could find about making and reading blueprints, including a few books on using CAD and technical drawing. It took me a few tries to get it right, but the end result was a device that could scan something and store a perfect blueprint of it. Unfortunately it didn't take into account any conceptual crafting or enhancing that the object it was scanning had undergone. In the end I ended up making ten of the blueprint scanners and combining them all to a single universal scanner, which finally seemed to let the scanner take enhancements into account.

By now I had blown past midnight without a thought, determined to work through the night to get this done. I did take a break to eat, mostly because Ema got Alfred to make chicken fettuccine alfredo and I couldn't not stop for that. When I was done eating I gathered the four parts of my project, the group reinforced production machines, sixteen builder bots, a universal blueprint scanner and a pair of wireless connection crystals.

The builder bots got layered into the large production devices, working them in with energy cells and magic. When that was done I combined the eight machines with a connection crystal, adding the second to the scanner. It was then that I realized that production machines were all S ranked, the third one I had managed to build. I finally pushed the devices out of the card for the first time since I started building.

Each of the eight machines looked similar to the original building builders, though they had fewer random appendages. They were still CAT yellow but also had some detailed filigree that seemed to have come from the UCM's. They were slightly larger than the original building builders as well, though it was hard to tell without the large attachments the originals had. Each of the production machines had two builder bots, each with a small housing for them on opposite shorter sides. On one of the longer sides was an intake hopper where materials could

be fed in. All said and done the machines were around eight feet tall and wide and a dozen or so feet long.

I carded one of the devices and combined it with a communication crystal, combining the crystals pair with a blueprint scanner before finally combining them both together. The result was almost completely identical to its seven connected machines, save a small housing for the scanner, which I could easily pull free to use.

With the making process done, I began testing my latest creation. The first thing I tried it on was the larger scaled UCM's, which had been a pain to make since I couldn't push them out of their card until I was sure they were done. I scanned one with the scanning device before returning to the builders. A quick check of the computer terminal attached to all four of the machines showed that they could make a large scale UCM in half an hour. I celebrated for a full minute before testing the other feature.

I shifted a carpet in the lounge area, letting me access the life support system I used for the warehouse. A quick scan from the blueprint scanner allowed me to build a large cube with a door and a life support system tucked into a corner. I quickly confirmed and fed the machines all of the materials it would need. I watched as the production machines built a eight foot by eight foot cube with a simple door in just under ten minutes, all eight machines working together. When it was done I opened the door and used a universal scanner to confirm that the life support system was fully functional and had the same capabilities as the original.

Again Ema and I celebrated, though this time didn't last nearly as long as my exhaustion finally caught up with me. I had been running around for almost two days in a row, and now it was four AM. Despite my excitement and the temptation to immediately start designing a proper challenge for the machines I knew I needed my sleep. After leaving instructions for Ema to wake me up the second the dry dock facility was completed I crawled into bed and fell asleep almost instantly.