

H. Academy 859

Chapter 859 Desire

"Can we have a talk?"

Maya's eyebrows lifted slightly.

Talk?

She studied him, her expression unreadable, but inwardly, she was already analyzing the situation. Trevor Philips was not someone who casually sought her out. In fact, he usually kept his distance, never making unnecessary contact unless required. For him to come here—directly, deliberately—felt out of place.

"For what reason?"

Her words were measured, her tone laced with a quiet skepticism.

Trevor scratched the back of his neck, his stance shifting into something vaguely awkward. "It's... a little bit private."

Private?

Maya's eyes narrowed slightly.

"I don't remember us having anything that we would need to talk about privately."

Her words came evenly, but the message was clear. There was no connection between them that warranted secrecy. No unfinished business. No ties.

Trevor, however, didn't back down.

"It's important," he said, not forceful, but insistent.

Maya didn't answer immediately. She could feel the quiet hum of irritation brewing beneath her skin—not just her own, but her other self's.

"I don't like this guy."

A whisper. Sharp. Immediate.

Maya exhaled through her nose, eyes flickering slightly before she answered in her mind.

"Neither do I. But let's hear him out."

Her other self scoffed but didn't argue.

Maya turned back to Trevor, her posture still composed, still guarded.

"Fine," she said simply.

Trevor's lips twitched—not quite a full smile, but something close.

"Thanks."

Maya didn't acknowledge the gratitude. Instead, she stood, dusting off her uniform before tilting her head slightly.

"We'll talk," she said, her tone making it clear that she was still keeping her distance. "But somewhere neutral."

Trevor nodded, seeming to expect that answer.

The two left the Elemental Chamber, stepping into the cool evening air. Maya kept her pace steady, relaxed—but her senses remained sharp.

There was a restaurant inside the academy, one designed for cadets who preferred something quieter than the usual cafeteria setting. It wasn't particularly crowded at this hour, which made it a perfect location—public enough to prevent anything strange, private enough for conversation.

As they settled into their seats, Trevor glanced around the restaurant before turning his attention back to Maya.

"You come here often?"

Maya leaned back slightly in her chair, her posture relaxed but composed. "I do," she answered, keeping her tone neutral but not cold.

Despite keeping her guard up, she wasn't about to make it obvious. Trevor was still a classmate, and she had no particular quarrel with him. There was no reason to treat him differently than she would anyone else.

Trevor nodded as if he had expected that answer. "Makes sense. This place has a quieter atmosphere. Not a lot of people, no unnecessary noise." His fingers idly traced the edge of the menu before setting it aside. "Feels like the kind of place you'd prefer."

Maya hummed in response.

Trevor tilted his head slightly. "You always come alone?"

"Sometimes," she admitted. "Depends on my mood."

Trevor let out a quiet chuckle. "Figures." He leaned back in his chair, looking around once more before returning his gaze to her. "You don't seem like the type who enjoys too much noise around you."

Maya simply lifted a brow. "Is that supposed to mean something?"

Trevor smirked, but it was faint, fleeting. "Just an observation."

Maya didn't react, letting the conversation flow naturally. Trevor, for the most part, was doing most of the talking—not in a way that was overwhelming, but rather like someone who didn't mind filling the space between words.

"You always give off this impression, you know?" Trevor continued, tilting his head slightly.

Maya didn't respond immediately. It wasn't the first time someone had pointed that out, and it wouldn't be the last.

"I don't think that's a bad thing," he added quickly, almost as if clarifying. "Just different."

Maya met his gaze, searching for something in his expression, but Trevor remained unreadable—calm, casual, but with a certain weight behind his words.

She wasn't sure she liked that.

"Different from what?" she asked.

Trevor exhaled, a small chuckle escaping. "Most people, I guess. But maybe that's what makes you interesting."

Maya remained silent for a moment before responding. "I'm not sure if I should take that as a compliment or something else."

Trevor shrugged. "Whichever way you want."

The conversation was smooth, effortless in its pacing, yet there was an underlying tension. It wasn't overt, but Maya could feel it—the slight pauses, the careful way Trevor picked his words, as if he was feeling out the boundaries of the conversation.

Despite that, she continued speaking normally, matching his energy, not giving away anything beyond what she intended to.

Maya exhaled quietly, resting her elbow on the table and propping her chin against her palm. She had entertained the small talk long enough, but Trevor wasn't the type to ramble without a reason.

She was growing tired of waiting.

"Trevor," she said, voice calm but laced with unmistakable expectation. "If you have something to say, then say it."

Trevor studied her for a moment before nodding. "Fair enough."

He leaned back in his chair, tapping a single finger against the table in thought before finally speaking.

"I came here to talk about something that I noticed."

Maya's eyes narrowed slightly. "You noticed?"

Trevor nodded. "Yeah. And it's about Astron Natusalune."

Her posture didn't change, but internally, something stilled.

Astron?

Trevor wasn't particularly close to Astron, at least not in any way that Maya had ever taken note of. He wasn't part of his inner circle, and he wasn't one of the many cadets who actively competed with or against him. So why was he bringing him up now?

She kept her voice steady. "Go on."

Trevor drummed his fingers against the tabletop once before continuing.

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"Astron and Irina." His voice was measured, casual, but there was something calculated beneath it. "Their relationship has been all over the academy forums lately."

Maya remained silent.

She had seen it, of course. The whispers, the speculation, the clips taken from nowhere, dissected and thrown into the public eye.

Trevor continued, his gaze sharp, gauging her reaction. "You've noticed it too, right? How close they've gotten?"

Maya's fingers curled slightly against the table, but she kept her expression neutral. "What are you trying to say, Trevor?"

He exhaled, leaning forward slightly. "I just find it interesting, that's all. You and Astron—" he gestured vaguely, "—have always had a connection, haven't you?"

Maya didn't answer, but Trevor took her silence as confirmation.

"But now, he's with Irina. He's standing beside her, letting her speak for him, fight for him, even take the blows meant for him." His voice lowered slightly, just enough to sound conspiratorial. "And you're still on the sidelines, watching."

Her eyes darkened for a split second.

Trevor caught it.

He smirked. "I think you should be careful, Maya."

Maya slowly exhaled through her nose. "Careful of what?"

Trevor leaned back, his smirk deepening slightly, but his words were deliberate. "Astron isn't the kind of guy you think he is."

Maya's gaze remained steady, but there was something colder in it now. "And what exactly do I think he is?"

Trevor tilted his head slightly. "Someone you can trust."

The air between them seemed to tighten, a subtle shift in tension that Trevor either didn't notice or chose to ignore. He continued, his tone calm, almost persuasive.

"I think he's using you."

Maya's fingers twitched slightly against the smooth surface of the table.

Trevor kept going. "Look at how things have been playing out. Whenever something happens, you get involved, don't you? But does he ever ask for it? Does he ever acknowledge what you do?"

Maya's lips parted slightly, but no words came.

Trevor took that as an opening.

"You step in, you fight, you get caught in the mess, and he—" Trevor let out a small, breathy chuckle, "—he just lets it happen. He doesn't stop you, but he doesn't need to, does he? Because you go to him anyway."

Maya's jaw tightened.

Trevor leaned forward again, dropping his voice to a near whisper. "That's not trust, Maya. That's manipulation."

A second passed.

Then—

"Who the fuck are you?"