

H. Academy 860

Chapter 860 - Desire

Trevor sat with a calculated ease, his fingers tracing slow, deliberate circles on the surface of the table. The low ambient hum of the restaurant barely registered in his mind—his focus was entirely on her.

Maya.

She sat across from him, her posture poised yet guarded, her amber eyes sharp beneath that composed exterior. She had always been careful, always unreadable, but that was fine.

'She doesn't need to trust me. Not yet. This is about planting the seed.'

His smirk remained subdued, carefully measured. He wasn't here to overwhelm her—he was here to build something.

Something real.

Or at least, something that she would come to see as real.

'She's never been the type to act on impulse. Everything with her is methodical, restrained. She calculates before she moves.'

Trevor leaned back slightly, fingers still absently running along the table. 'But everyone—everyone—has a moment of weakness. Even her.'

And that moment was now.

It wasn't difficult to orchestrate. The academy's forums had already been running rampant with pictures of Astron and Irina together. Speculation. Whispers. The usual nonsense that spread like wildfire in places like this.

He didn't need to fabricate anything—he only needed to redirect her perspective.

And so far, it was working beautifully.

Maya had listened, silent but attentive. She hadn't brushed him off or walked away—not immediately, at least. That was the first step.

'She's already questioning it, even if she won't admit it.'

Trevor took a slow sip of his drink before setting it down with careful precision. Every move, every word—it was all about pacing.

He had been easing her into the topic, starting light before slowly laying the foundation. A few comments about Astron. A casual mention of Irina. A quiet observation about Maya watching from the sidelines.

And now, the hook.

"You and Astron—" he gestured vaguely, as if the relationship between them was a given. "—have always had a connection, haven't you?"

He watched her closely. The smallest flicker of something crossed her face, but she didn't answer.

Trevor grinned inwardly.

'Good. That means she's thinking about it.'

He continued, voice smooth, casual, not pushing—but guiding.

"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."

Trevor let his words hang in the air before lowering his voice, just enough to sound conspiratorial.

"And you're still on the sidelines, watching."

That flicker in her expression—again.

He resisted the urge to smirk. He knew that look. The tiniest shift in awareness, the first sign of doubt creeping in.

'There it is. That moment. The crack.'

Trevor pressed forward, his tone still controlled, still measured.

"I think you should be careful, Maya."

Her eyes sharpened. "Careful of what?"

Trevor pretended to hesitate, tilting his head slightly, as if reluctant to say it outright. As if he was simply looking out for her.

"Astron isn't the kind of guy you think he is," he said finally.

Her gaze didn't waver, but the air between them shifted.

Trevor held it for a beat before continuing, keeping his voice level, persuasive.

"I think he's using you."

A pause. Subtle—but noticeable.

Trevor watched her fingers curl slightly against the table.

He almost wanted to laugh. This was too easy.

'She won't admit it. Not right now. But the thought is already in her head.'

Trevor leaned forward slightly, closing the distance just enough to make the conversation feel personal, almost intimate.

"Look at how things have been playing out," he continued, his voice dropping just a fraction, pulling her in. "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 out.

Trevor inwardly reveled in the silence.

'She can't answer. Because she knows I'm right.'

That was the beauty of it. He wasn't telling her what to believe—he was simply nudging her toward the truth.

Her truth.

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

Silence.

And then—

"Who the fuck are you?"

Trevor blinked, momentarily thrown off by the sudden venom in her voice.

His mind momentarily froze.

He had anticipated many things—hesitation, denial, even quiet acceptance—but not this.

Not Maya's voice, sharp and biting, tearing through the air like a blade.

"Who the fuck are you?"

It hit him like a cold slap to the face.

His smirk wavered. His carefully composed demeanor cracked for the first time since sitting down. His fingers twitched slightly on the tabletop, a small, involuntary reaction as he processed what he had just heard.

'Did... did she just swear at me?'

Maya never swore. Ever.

Trevor had watched her for months. She was always the same—smiling, soft-spoken, gentle.

She was the type of person who offered snacks to people who forgot their lunch. The one who helped others study even when she didn't have to. The one who comforted cadets who were struggling, who made everyone feel at ease.

Maya Evergreen was pure. Innocent.

And yet—

Right now—

Right now, the girl sitting across from him wasn't that Maya.

"What?"

Trevor barely recognized his own voice. He had meant to sound collected, casual, but there was a shake in it that he couldn't quite mask.

Something was wrong.

It started with her eyes.

They weren't the warm, sky-blue he was used to seeing.

They were—red.

Crimson.

Not a flicker of light reflecting from the restaurant's dim glow, not some trick of the shadows.

No.

Her eyes had changed.

Trevor felt something—something primal, something his body registered before his mind could catch up.

Fear.

The air around her had shifted.

A strange, unnatural pressure oozed from her very being. It wasn't visible, but Trevor could feel it, like the distant rumble of a storm about to break.

His heartbeat quickened.

'What the hell is this?'

Her lips were covered, as always, hidden behind that veil of cloth she never removed. But it didn't matter.

Because what radiated from her was pure, suffocating intensity.

A presence that made the hairs on the back of Trevor's neck stand on end.

He swallowed, realizing for the first time that he had instinctively leaned back.

Away from her.

His fingers curled into his palm beneath the table, nails digging into his skin to force himself to focus.

'Calm down. Get a grip.'

But his instincts weren't wrong.

Something was wrong with Maya.

And for the first time since he had started this conversation—since he had even come up with this plan—Trevor felt something slip out of his control.

Because the Maya sitting across from him was not the Maya he thought he knew.

Trevor felt his throat go dry as Maya leaned forward slightly, her crimson eyes boring into him with an intensity that sent an unexplainable chill down his spine.

"Who the fuck do you think you are?"

Her voice was low, steady, but it carried a weight that made his stomach twist. Her red eyes widened slightly, as if daring him to respond, daring him to even breathe the wrong way.

Trevor's fingers twitched, his nails pressing into his palm harder as he forced himself to maintain his composure. But it was slipping, cracking under the sheer pressure rolling off of her.

This wasn't right.

This wasn't Maya.

Not the Maya Evergreen he had studied, the one everyone liked.

This was something else. Someone else.

"Answer the question."

Trevor flinched.

His body reacted before his mind could tell it not to.

The restaurant felt smaller, the air heavier, the distant murmurs of other cadets in the background fading into static.

He blinked, trying to center himself, trying to push past the irrational feeling of danger clawing at the edges of his nerves.

"Wh-what? What do you mean?"

Maya tilted her head slightly, as if he had just said the dumbest thing imaginable.

"I said—" she exhaled sharply, tapping her finger against the table once, deliberate, controlled, yet filled with something deeply unsettling.

"Who the fuck do you think you are?"

Her voice, though still calm, cut into him like a blade.

And then she leaned in even closer.

"Are you retarded?"

Trevor's breath hitched.

The words—so blunt, so venomous, so unlike anything Maya had ever said before—slammed into him harder than any insult he had ever received.

It wasn't just the profanity. It was the way she said it. Like she wasn't even angry. Like she was just stating a fact.

Like she wasn't even acknowledging him as someone worth her time.