

## H. Academy 861

### Chapter 861 - Desire

Trevor swallowed hard, forcing himself to regain control of his breathing. The weight pressing down on him wasn't something he could see, wasn't something tangible, yet it suffocated him all the same.

This wasn't supposed to happen.

He had planned everything. He had calculated the right words, the right setting, the right pace. Maya should have hesitated, should have doubted, should have let his words linger in her mind like an uncomfortable truth.

But this?

This was not hesitation.

This was absolute rejection.

And Trevor didn't know how to handle it.

"I—I was just trying to warn you," he finally managed, his voice unsteady, trying to grasp at something, anything to regain control of the conversation. "I thought you deserved to know. That's all."

Maya's expression didn't change.

She just stared at him, her crimson eyes gleaming in the dim light of the restaurant.

And then, she tilted her head slightly, the movement eerily slow.

"Why?"

Trevor blinked. "What?"

"Why do you think you're in a position to give me advice?"

There was no hostility in her tone—that's what made it worse. It was casual, almost bored, like she was genuinely confused by his very existence.

Trevor clenched his jaw, shaking his head. "I—look, I don't have to be close to you to see what's happening. It's obvious to anyone paying attention. Astron is—"

Maya tapped the table once, cutting him off.

"Are we close?"

Trevor frowned. "What?"

"Are we close, Trevor?"

The way she said his name sent a shiver down his spine.

"I—" Trevor hesitated. "No, but—"

"Then why," Maya continued, leaning forward slightly, resting her elbow on the table, "do you think I should give a single fuck about your opinion?"

Trevor opened his mouth—and nothing came out.

Maya exhaled, shaking her head slightly, as if disappointed.

"You don't know me," she stated, voice flat. "You don't know what I think. You don't know what I feel. And yet, here you are, sitting in front of me, talking like you have some sort of authority over my life."

Trevor's hands curled into fists beneath the table. "I was just trying to look out for you."

"Why?"

The question came again, swift and precise, stabbing into him before he had even fully processed his own words.

He hesitated. "Because—"

"What makes you think you know better than me?"

Trevor flinched, as if he had been struck.

Maya's voice never rose, never turned angry—but that was the problem.

She was cutting through every single one of his words with ease, as if he were a child grasping at straws.

Trevor tried to straighten his shoulders, to not let himself be cornered. "I just wanted to help. As a classmate."

Maya let out a breath, something close to amusement flickering in her crimson gaze.

"Help?"

Trevor nodded. "Yes."

"Ah," Maya said, nodding once, slow and deliberate. "I see now."

Trevor felt something was wrong the moment those words left her lips.

She tilted her head again, her voice dipping into something deceptively soft.

"Tell me, Trevor..." she exhaled, propping her chin against her palm. "How many other classmates have you pulled aside for a talk like this?"

Trevor stiffened.

Maya smiled under her mask, a small, knowing curve of her lips.

"I mean, since you're so worried," she continued, her tone light. "You must be talking to a lot of people, right? After all, so many cadets get involved in things they shouldn't. Surely, you must have pulled aside dozens of people to give them your special advice."

Trevor's jaw locked.

Maya's eyes narrowed slightly.

"But no." She exhaled. "You didn't do that, did you?"

Trevor didn't answer.

He felt like the very air had been pulled from his lungs.

She was dismantling him.

Piece by piece.

Trevor clenched his jaw, trying to form a response, but the words wouldn't come. The air around him felt heavier, pressing against his lungs, making it harder to think.

Why was he doing this?

But under Maya's piercing gaze, none of them felt real.

His fingers twitched against the table as he finally forced something out, his voice quieter than before.

Why had he gone through the trouble of pulling Maya aside, of carefully constructing this conversation, of pushing this hard?

The answer should have been easy. He should have had a dozen logical reasons lined up—about Astron, about how he was just looking out for a classmate, about how he was only doing the right thing.

But under Maya's piercing gaze, none of them felt real.

His fingers twitched against the table as he finally forced something out, his voice quieter than before.

"From the outside..." Trevor hesitated, eyes flickering toward the drink in front of him before settling back on Maya. "From the outside, I just thought... that guy was taking advantage of you. And I didn't want that."

Maya didn't move.

She didn't scoff, didn't sigh, didn't roll her eyes.

She just watched him.

Trevor exhaled, rubbing the back of his neck. His confidence had taken a hit, but there was still something there—something he could hold onto.

"Maya, you may not know how guys work..." he started, his voice gaining a little steadiness back.

Maya blinked, but her expression remained unreadable.

Trevor leaned forward slightly. "You're... different from most girls here. You don't really see how other guys act around you. The way they—" He hesitated, choosing his words carefully. "The way they look at you."

Something shifted in Maya's eyes.

Trevor didn't notice at first. He was too focused on trying to salvage this conversation, to pull it back into his control.

He shook his head, exhaling sharply. "They see you as... something else. You're always nice, always smiling, always helping people. But guys—" He let out a short, humorless chuckle. "Guys don't just see that. They want something from you. Even if they don't say it outright."

He leaned back, running a hand through his hair. "Astron's no different."

Trevor let those words settle, watching for any kind of reaction. He knew he had taken a risk, pushed further than he should have, but maybe—just maybe—it would stick.

Maya was silent.

Too silent.



And then, she laughed.

It was soft at first, just a breath of sound behind her mask. Then, a little sharper, almost mocking.

Trevor's stomach twisted.

That wasn't a pleasant laugh.

It was a laugh that told him he had just made a terrible mistake.

Maya tilted her head slightly, her crimson eyes gleaming with something indescribable.

Maya's laughter continued, soft at first, then growing, her shoulders shaking slightly as if she had just heard the funniest thing in the world.

Trevor's stomach twisted into knots.

This wasn't normal.

This wasn't her.

Maya barely laughed in front of people, and when she did, it was light, controlled, polite—the kind of laughter that made people feel at ease.

But this?

This was mocking. This was amused in a way that made Trevor's skin crawl.

"It is so funny..." Maya exhaled, her voice barely above a whisper, but then she let out a sharper breath, her fingers curling against the table. "So fucking funny."

Trevor's fingers twitched. "What the hell are you laughing at?"

Maya let the last remnants of laughter settle before tilting her head, her crimson gaze locking onto him again.

"You think Astron is the one taking advantage of this body?"

Trevor blinked, something in his mind snapping at the way she said that. "This... body?"

Maya didn't acknowledge the confusion in his tone. She simply leaned forward slightly, her voice dipping into something quieter, something dangerous.

"You're wrong."

Trevor felt a chill run down his spine. "What?"

Maya's lips curled behind her mask, a small, knowing smile.

"It's the complete opposite."

Trevor couldn't look away from her eyes.

"This body... I..." Maya exhaled, tilting her head slightly, almost as if she was revealing a secret.

"I am the one who took advantage of him the most."

Trevor's mind blanked for a moment.

What?

Maya's eyes remained locked onto his, completely unwavering.

"Astron is the one that I took advantage of the most," she repeated, as if she were stating something as obvious as the weather.

Trevor's hands curled into fists beneath the table. "What the hell are you saying?"

Maya didn't answer immediately. Instead, she lifted her hand and pointed at Trevor's forehead with her index finger, the motion slow and deliberate.

Trevor froze.

Her finger didn't touch him, didn't press against his skin, but it might as well have been a dagger.

She was pointing at his head—at his mind.

"And you..." Maya murmured, tilting her head slightly, crimson eyes still gleaming with that unnerving amusement.

"You should stop projecting."