H. Academy 863

Chapter 863 Desire

Trevor sat there, unmoving.

The restaurant around him buzzed with faint murmurs, the low hum of conversation barely registering in his mind. His hands remained clenched beneath the table, his breathing shallow, controlled only by force of will.

His body felt heavy—weighted with something that churned in his chest, something suffocating.

Maya's words echoed in his head, reverberating over and over like a cruel, relentless mantra.

"You are just a nobody."

"I will butcher you alive."

His fingers twitched. Slowly, he raised his hand, covering half of his face. The other half of his lips curled—not into a smile, but something close to it, something sharp, something unhinged.

How?

How could this happen?

How did everything fall apart so fast?

'This isn't right. This isn't how it was supposed to go.'

His grip on his face tightened, nails digging into his skin. His other hand, still curled into a fist, trembled against the table. The Maya he had just seen—that wasn't the Maya he knew.

Maya was soft. Maya was kind. Maya was gentle, warm, untouchable yet bright—so bright that people were drawn to her without even realizing it. That was the Maya he had watched, the Maya he had admired, the Maya that should have been sitting in front of him.

But this Maya?

This cold, merciless creature with crimson eyes and words as sharp as blades?

This wasn't her.

That wasn't her.

That wasn't his Maya.

And then, the thought struck him like a bolt of lightning.

"That's right."

A soft chuckle escaped his lips, muffled against his palm.

Of course.

His shoulders shook with another quiet laugh, one that held no real humor. It was brittle, laced with something bitter, something resentful, something that crawled beneath his skin like a parasite.

He changed her.

His hand slid down his face, his lips twisting into something between a smirk and a sneer.

"It's because of him."

It's Astron.

The name itself burned on his tongue, filled his chest with something seething, something vile.

Trevor's mind reeled, but the pieces were starting to fit, aligning in a way that made perfect, undeniable sense.

Maya had never been like this before. Not before he appeared. Not before he became a constant in her life. It was Astron—Astron—who had infected her, twisted her, pulled her into his orbit and reshaped her into something unrecognizable.

Maya had always been strong, but she had never been cruel.

Not until he got involved.

Not until he started standing beside her.

Not until he started taking all of the attention that should have belonged to someone else.

To him.

Trevor's breath steadied, his heartbeat slowing into something eerily calm. His hand lowered from his face, and when he finally blinked, there was nothing but pure, unwavering certainty in his eyes.

It wasn't Maya's fault.

She had been tainted.

Corrupted.

Warped into something else by his influence.

And Trevor—Trevor was the only one who saw it.

The only one who understood.

His fingers curled against the table, his mind sharpening with a singular, undeniable truth.

I have to fix this.

Trevor's breath steadied, his thoughts crystallizing into something sharper, something undeniable.

He saw it now.

He understood now.

Maya was not the one to blame.

She was trapped.

Twisted. Corrupted. Warped.

Astron had sunk his claws into her, had poisoned her mind, had reshaped her into something unrecognizable. This Maya—this cold, unfeeling shadow of the girl he knew —wasn't real. This was his doing. Astron's doing.

Trevor's fingers curled tighter against the table, the wood creaking faintly beneath the pressure of his grip.

Astron.

The name itself was venom in his mind.

That thing had slithered into Maya's life, had planted himself beside her like some insidious parasite, feeding off her strength, off her presence, off everything that made her who she was.

And she couldn't even see it.

Trevor's jaw clenched, his breath slow, controlled, deliberate.

She doesn't realize what's happening to her. She doesn't see how much he's taken from her. How much of herself she's lost because of him.

That wasn't her fault.

It was his.

It had always been him.

Trevor exhaled, slow and steady, his fingers relaxing slightly as a chilling calm settled over him.

This wasn't over.

Not by a long shot.

Maya could hate him all she wanted. She could glare at him with those crimson eyes, she could tell him she didn't like him, she could threaten him with all the coldness in the world—

It didn't matter.

Because Trevor knew the truth.

Maya wasn't herself.

And that meant she needed him.

He was the only one who could save her.

His fingers tapped against the table, slow and methodical, his mind already spinning, already calculating.

If she's fallen this far, if he's already poisoned her so deeply…

His lips curled into a quiet smirk.

Then I'll just have to take my time fixing her.

A savior's path was never easy. He had to be patient. He had to be careful. Maya wouldn't believe him now—not when she was so far gone, not when Astron's influence had wrapped around her so tightly.

But it wouldn't last forever.

Astron would slip.

Astron would fall.

And when that happened, Trevor would be there to show her the truth.

He would save her.

And he would make that bastard pay.

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Maya walked through the academy grounds, her steps slow and measured. The air was crisp, carrying the lingering hum of mana that always drifted through the campus at night. The usual chatter of students had long since faded, leaving only the distant echoes of footsteps and the occasional flicker of artificial lights illuminating the pathways.

She exhaled softly, her breath steady, but her mind was anything but.

"Why did you do that?"

Her voice was quiet, spoken not to the empty air but to the presence lingering within her.

For a moment, there was no response. Then—

"Do what?"

Maya's eyes narrowed slightly. "Don't play dumb."

A low chuckle.

"Oh, you mean the part where I put that worm in his place?" Her other self's tone was light, almost amused. "Or was it when I told him exactly how insignificant he is? Hard to say, really."

Maya stopped walking, her fingers curling slightly at her sides.

"You took control."

It wasn't a question. It was a statement.

Her other self hummed. "And? You weren't handling it properly."

Maya's jaw tightened. "That wasn't for you to decide."

"Wasn't it?" The voice slithered through her mind, wrapping around her thoughts like smoke. "You weren't going to do anything. You were going to sit there and let him keep talking like he actually mattered."

Maya exhaled sharply through her nose. "He was just talking."

"No, he wasn't." Her other self's voice dropped, turning sharp, cold. "He was trying to manipulate you. He thought he could twist your thoughts, make you question him. Make you doubt him."

Maya pressed her fingers to her temple, rubbing slow circles against her skin.

"And what?" she muttered. "That justified revealing my red eyes? Threatening him in public?"

"Tch." A noise of irritation. "I was careful."

Maya scoffed. "You were reckless."

"I don't like that guy."

Maya stilled.

Her other self's voice, usually dripping with amusement or mockery, was different this time. There was something almost... visceral in the way she said it.

Maya didn't respond immediately.

"And I certainly wouldn't tolerate how he spoke about him."

The moment the words left her other self's mouth, Maya knew.

She had already suspected, but now, there was no doubt.

This wasn't just about Trevor.

This was about Astron.

Her other self—she never let anyone else get under her skin like that. But when it came to him, when it came to Astron, the rules were always different.

Maya closed her eyes, inhaling deeply.

"This is getting worse, isn't it?"

Silence.

Then—

"Depends on how you look at it."

Maya opened her eyes again, staring up at the artificial night sky projected over the academy dome.

"You should stop doing things like that," Maya muttered, rubbing her temple as she walked.

"And why would I do that?"

Her other self's voice came instantly, sharp and biting. "You act like you're in control, but you're the one who let him talk that much. You were going to sit there and take it, weren't you?"

Maya's jaw tightened. "I could have handled it."

A scoff. "No, you wouldn't have. You would've danced around it, chosen your words carefully, made sure not to step on his delicate little ego—because that's what you do, isn't it?"

Maya didn't answer.

"You're always so careful, so hesitant. You don't want to hurt anyone's feelings. But guess what?" The voice in her head sneered. "I don't give a fuck."

Maya inhaled slowly, trying to keep her thoughts steady. "That's not the point."

"Oh, but it is." Her other self's voice slithered through her mind, taunting. "You don't like confrontation. You think things through too much. But me?" A low chuckle. "I'm not playing that game."

Maya clenched her fists.

"Trevor deserved every word I gave him. And if I have to take control again to handle things properly, I will. Especially if you keep handling things like you did before."

Her steps slowed.

Especially if you keep handling things like you did before.

Her fingers twitched slightly at her side.

"I don't need you interfering."

"You sure about that?"

Maya stayed silent.

"Heh." Her other self laughed, a dry, knowing sound. "Can't answer?"

She didn't respond.

She just walked.