## H. Academy 879

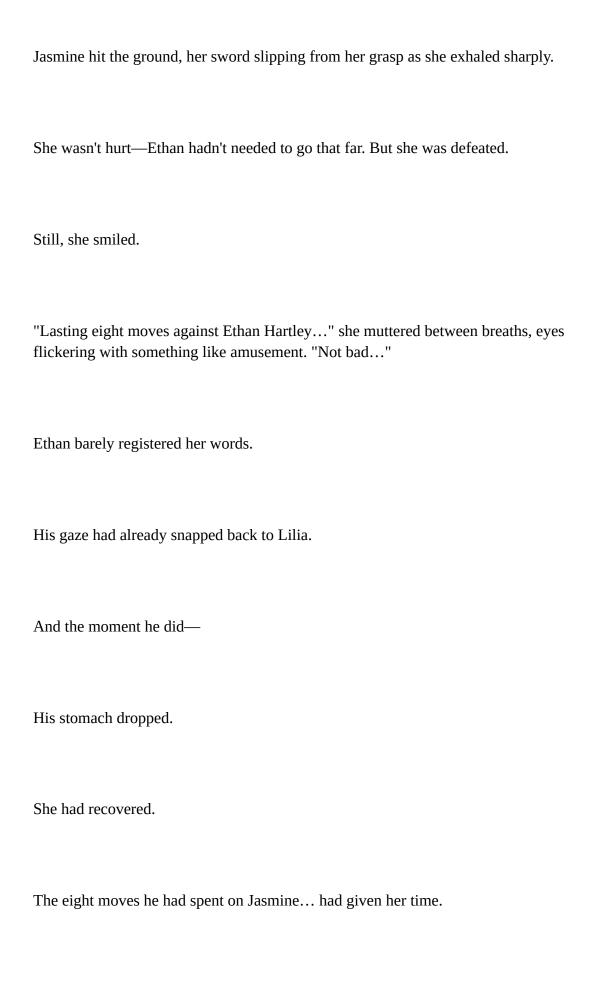
Chapter 879 - Artifact Training
TAP! TAP!
Ethan moved. Fast. His body cut through the battlefield like a blade, Lilia's form drawing closer with every second.
She was already adjusting, repositioning atop the ruined structure, bowstring pulled back—but something was off.
Her aim wasn't on him.
It was on Sylvie.
Ethan's eyes narrowed.
'So she realized it too.'
Lilia wasn't just a sniper—she was an intelligent one. She had figured it out. Sylvie was the problem.

She was the reason Ethan was still in the fight.
And now Lilia was about to take her out.
Ethan gritted his teeth.
'Not happening.'
His feet pushed harder against the ground, the distance between him and Lilia closing in
an instant—
Then—
A figure appeared between them.
CLANG!
Sparks flew as a sword blocked his spear mid-thrust.
Ethan's momentum stopped abruptly, his eyes flicking toward the new obstacle in his path.
L

A girl stood before him, blade raised, feet planted firmly. She had been waiting for him.
And she was smiling.
"Oh Who would have thought I'd be against Ethan Hartley?" she mused, tilting her head slightly. "But I guess I can't complain with this team."
Her voice was casual, almost amused—like she wasn't standing in front of one of the highest-ranked combatants in their year.
Ethan's mind worked fast.
Jasmine.
That was her name.
He had seen her before. She was always near Sylvie. A swordsman, quick-footed, capable—but not someone he had considered a major threat.
Not until now.
She shifted her stance, blade gleaming with a faint trace of mana.

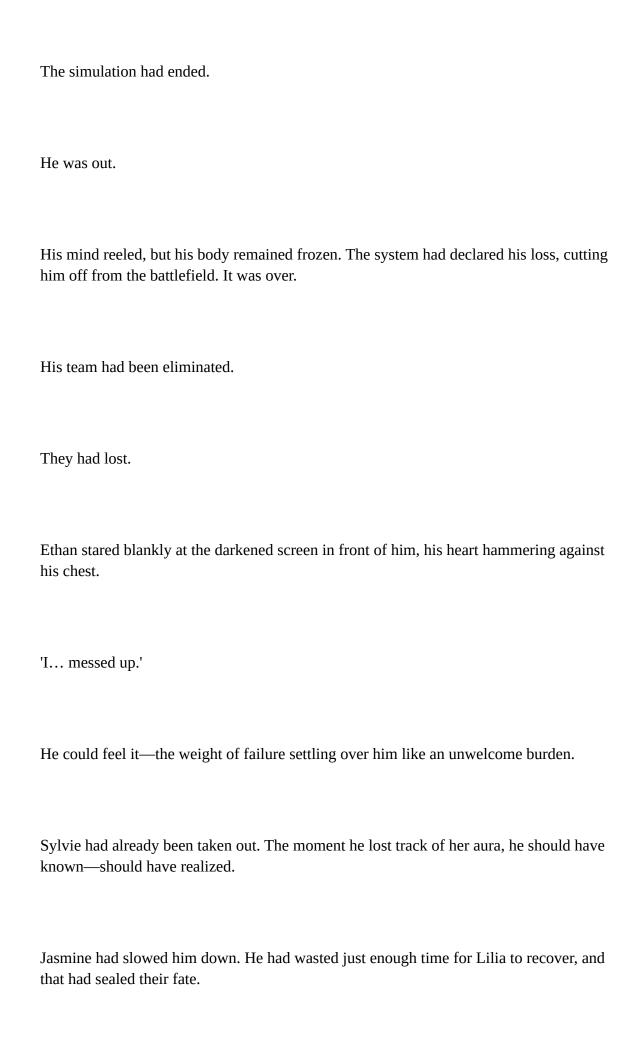
Ethan didn't hesitate.
No mercy.
TAP!
He exploded forward.
CLANG! CLANG!
Eight moves.
That was all it took.
Ethan outpaced her instantly, weaving through her defenses like they barely existed.
She parried once. Twice.
But by the third strike—she was too slow.
By the fourth—her footwork was broken.

By the fifth—her guard was open.
By the sixth—her sword was forced wide.
By the seventh—his spear was already in position.
By the eighth—she was down.
THUD!
Jasmine collapsed onto the ground, her blade knocked from her grasp, her breath heavy as she stared up at him.
Ethan didn't give her a second glance.
His eyes were already locked back onto Lilia.
And he moved again.
THUD!

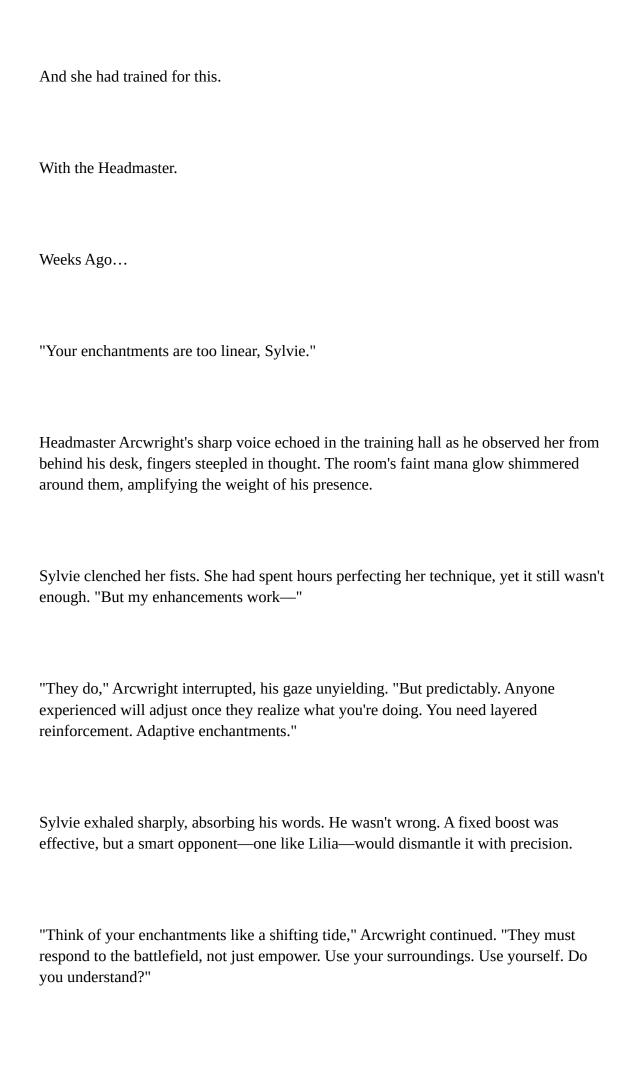


Lilia's bow was already raised, another arrow nocked, her mana rippling around it. The last one was strong—but this one?
It was worse.
SWOOSH!
Ethan moved. Fast.
His entire body reacted before his mind could even process it—his instincts screaming at him to dodge. He barely twisted his torso, feeling the arrow brush past his ribs, the sheer force of the mana surrounding it cutting through the air like a blade.
He narrowly avoided it.
Or so he thought.
—Wait.
Something was wrong.
His eyes barely caught the shift—the arrow bent.

It changed trajectory mid-flight.
"That's not possible."
But it didn't matter if it was possible or not—it was happening.
Before he could fully grasp the reality of what was unfolding, the arrow struck.
THUD!
A sharp pressure slammed into his side, a force that shouldn't have been there. His breath left him instantly, body recoiling from the impact. It wasn't pain—it was pure displacement.
His surroundings blurred.
The battlefield—the sound of distant clashes—everything faded.
The next thing he knew—
Darkness.



He had been outplayed.
Ethan let out a slow breath, forcing himself to push past the frustration clawing at his chest.
No excuses.
He just wasn't good enough.
Not this time.
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Sylvie's heart pounded in her chest, her breath steady but quick as the simulated battlefield flickered into existence around them. The digital skyline loomed over them, and the weight of mana woven into the very fabric of the simulation hummed beneath her feet.
'Stay calm. Focus. You trained for this.'
Ethan and Layla were already in motion, their stances firm, their presence commanding. But Sylvie wasn't a frontliner. She was their enchanter—the one who ensured they could push past their limits.

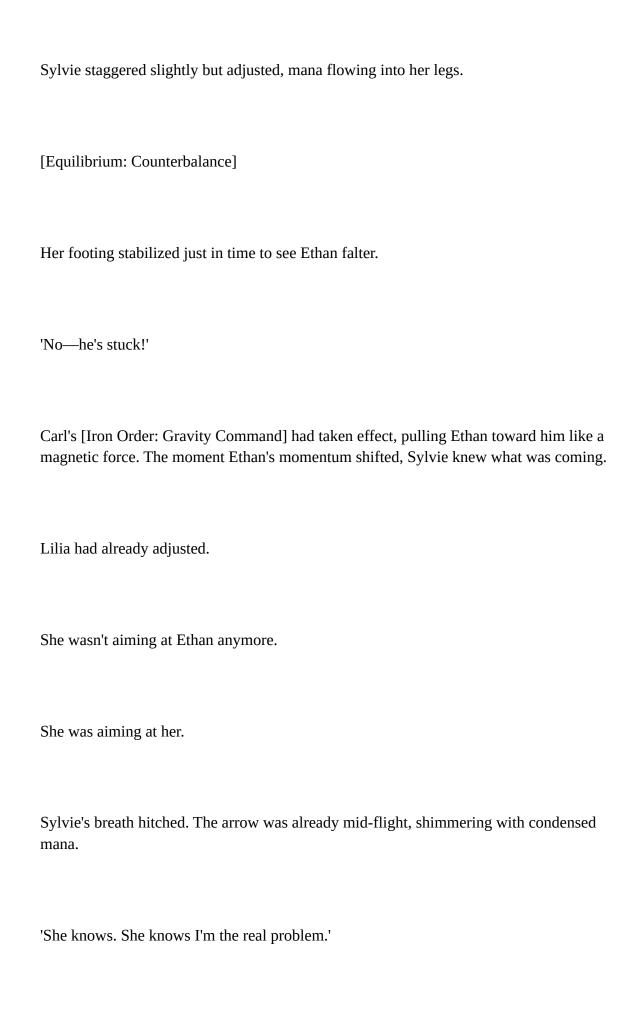


'I do now,' Sylvie thought, snapping back to the present as the battle began. BOOM! Carl's war hammer slammed into the ground, shaking the battlefield with a force that sent shockwaves through Sylvie's legs. The sheer weight of his presence was suffocating, and from above, Lilia rained down suppression fire, her arrows weaving through the air with deadly precision. Ethan and Layla were already reacting, their movements fluid, calculated. But Sylvie wasn't idle. Her mana flared to life, golden energy crackling around her fingertips as she activated her first enchantment. [Adaptive Fortification: Resonance] A golden glow spread from her hands, wrapping around Layla like a protective veil. But unlike before, this time it didn't settle into a single effect. Instead, it pulsed, shifting with each impact—hardening when Carl struck, absorbing shock when the tremors threatened to break Layla's footing.

Layla gritted her teeth, pushing forward against Carl's overwhelming strength. "Not bad," she muttered under her breath. "I barely felt that hit."

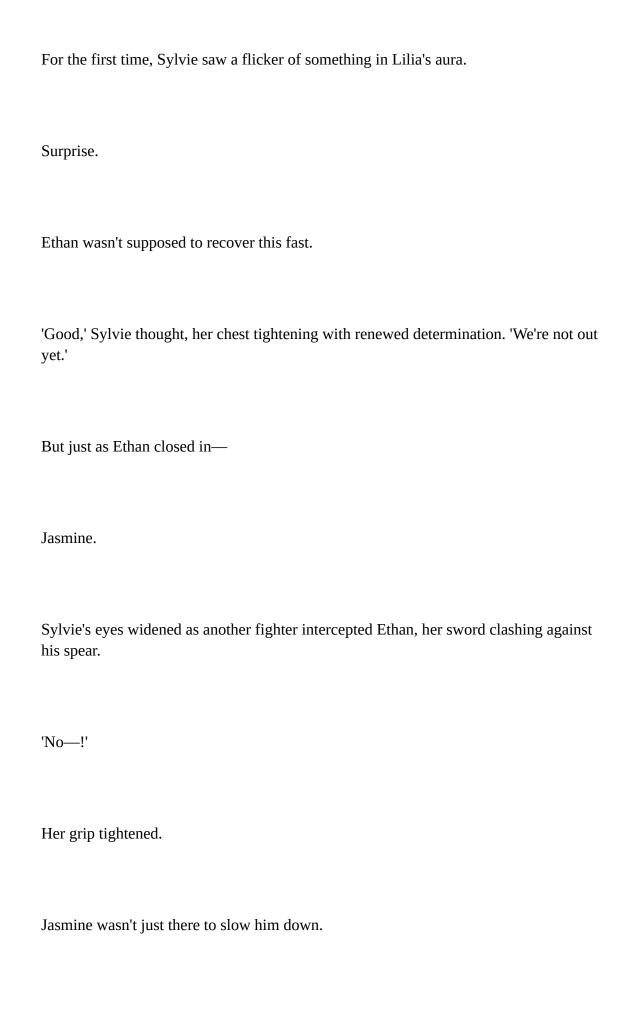
'A shifting tide,' Sylvie reminded herself, adjusting the flow.

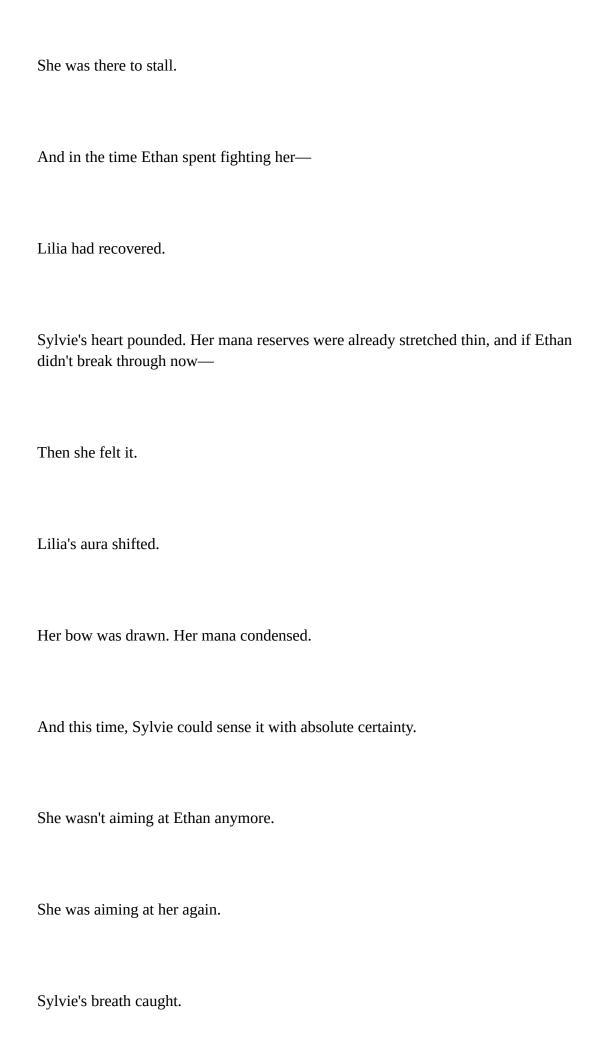
Ethan darted forward, spear in hand, dodging the initial volley of arrows. But Sylvie knew Lilia wouldn't miss for long.
'Ethan's next. He needs speed.'
Golden light flared again as she redirected her mana, sending another enchantment cascading over Ethan.
[Kinetic Acceleration: Phantom Step]
A rush of air followed as Ethan's entire form flickered, his movements growing sharper faster. His spear became an extension of his body, weaving through Lilia's arrows with movements almost too quick for the eye to follow.
Sylvie exhaled. 'This is working.'
But then—
BOOM!
A deep vibration rattled the battlefield. The ground trembled beneath them as Carl activated his [Seismic Crash], throwing the balance of the fight into chaos.



	ond, fear gripped her. Lilia was a top-ranked sniper for a reason—if this just knock her out. It would erase her from the fight entirely.
But then—	
'No. Think. Ad	apt.'
Her hands mov	ved before her thoughts could catch up, golden light surging from her
[State Purge: A	absolute Release]
-	e mana radiated outward, severing Carl's Iron Order effect from Ethan in pull on him vanished. His body was his own again.
•	egistered the sharp flicker of shock in Carl's aura. She had no time to l victory—Lilia's arrow was still flying toward her.
Too fast. Too p	orecise.
'No time to doo	dge.'
Her breath stea	ndied. Then—







Too fast. Too strong.
She had seconds.
No—less.
Lilia released.
SWOOSH!
Sylvie's body braced for impact—
Then—
Nothing.
Darkness.
Her surroundings vanished in an instant.

The battlefield faded, replaced by the quiet void of the simulation's end.
She was out.
Just like that.
Sylvie's fists clenched as she sat in the exit chamber, the cold hum of the mana-link system buzzing faintly around her.
'I lost.'