

H. Academy 890

Chapter 890 - No title

Irina smirked on the outside, but deep inside, she was already hating this.

Why?

Because this game—this cursed, rage-inducing game—had been a stain on her pride ever since she had touched it.

She hadn't even wanted to start playing at first. But then, Julia—that smug, taunting menace—had introduced her to it.

"It's fun, Irina! It's all about strategy and mechanics! You'd like it!"

That was how it had begun.

And she had fallen.

Hard.

Not because she actually enjoyed it—no, no, no—it was because, at some point, she realized something horrifying:

She was stuck in silver.

Meanwhile, Julia? That traitor was sitting comfortably in platinum, looking down on her like some high-ranking noble watching a peasant struggle in the dirt.

"Oh? You're still silver, Irina? That's kind of embarrassing, don't you think?"

Every. Single. Time.

No matter how hard she tried, no matter how many sleepless nights she spent queuing up, something always went wrong.

Some griever would run it down mid.

Some idiot would lock in her role and int her lane.

Some useless carry would get fed, only to do nothing when it actually mattered.

And support? What support? She might as well be playing alone!

And every single match, her rank remained the same.

Silver.

Freaking. Silver.

Meanwhile, Julia just floated through her games like some divine being untouched by mortal struggles, laughing at her pain, reminding her over and over again how she had already climbed past this "low rank."

And Irina? She was suffering.

She knew she should have quit long ago, but no. Every time Julia teased her, she felt that rage, that need to prove herself, and the cycle repeated.

Queue up. Get grieved. Get mad. Queue again. Get grieved harder. Lose more rank. Rage quit. Repeat.

And now, here she was. Sitting next to Astron, holding a controller, staring at this screen.

'Why did I think this was a good idea?'

She could already feel it coming.

The tilt. The frustration. The rage.

And worst of all?

Astron was about to witness her suffering firsthand.

Irina exhaled sharply, gripping the controller a little tighter.

Yeah. This was one of the reasons she had dragged Astron here.

Because if things stayed like this—if she kept getting stuck in this silver hell, if Julia kept laughing at her misery, if her rank refused to move one damn inch—she was going to die from frustration.

And after today? Losing to Lucas like that? She needed something to feel better about.

She hated losing. She hated it more than anything. And yet, she had lost today. Badly.

That wasn't something she could just shake off.

But more than that...

She stole a glance at Astron from the corner of her eye.

The main reason she had brought him here wasn't just about the game.

It was because she wanted to spend time with him.

It was becoming harder and harder to do that.

Astron was always busy—training, scouting, analyzing everything like a machine. And she wasn't much better, always caught up in her own relentless cycle of missions, responsibilities, and ambition.

Days, even weeks, passed where they barely had a moment to themselves.

And that?

That wasn't good.

She didn't like it.

Didn't like the feeling of them growing distant, of time slipping through her fingers.

Didn't like how things felt different lately.

So, fine. If she had to use this stupid game as an excuse to keep him here for a little longer, then so be it.

If she had to suffer through one more ranked match, if she had to deal with griefers, useless teammates, and lane trolls—then fine.

At least he'd be here.

At least she wouldn't be dealing with all of it alone.

"Alright," she muttered, shaking off her thoughts as she rolled her shoulders. "Let's get this over with."

Astron raised an eyebrow. "You're making it sound like a battlefield."

She clicked her tongue. "Oh, trust me. It is."

He didn't argue. Instead, he simply adjusted his grip on the controller, his sharp purple eyes scanning the screen as if assessing the battlefield.

Irina smirked slightly.

'Good. If I have to suffer, I might as well drag him down with me.'

As the game loaded, the screen flickered with the familiar logo and background music—one that Irina had heard way too many times but still sent a pang of frustration straight to her chest.

Astron, as expected, was watching the whole thing with quiet calculation.

Then, without looking away from the screen, he asked, "Why did you suddenly decide to do this?"

Irina didn't even hesitate. "This game, you mean?"

"Yes."

She leaned back into the couch, twirling the controller in her hands before answering. "Since I lost to Lucas in a way that reminded me of you, I got annoyed." Her hazel eyes flicked to his. "And I need something to channel my annoyance, don't I?"

Astron exhaled lightly. "...Is that it?"

"What else?" she shot back. Then, before he could analyze her any further, she added, "Is it wrong for me to want to spend time with you?"

Silence.

Astron turned his head toward her, meeting her gaze directly. His sharp purple eyes studied her for a moment, unreadable as always, as if he was peeling back the layers of her reasoning.

Then, without argument, he shook his head. "No, it is not wrong."

Irina blinked.

And then—she smirked.

"Good," she said, lips curling as she leaned forward. "Then stop with the questions and boot up the damn game."

Astron let out a quiet sigh but didn't refuse, gripping the controller as the matchmaking queue began.

Irina grinned, stretching her fingers.

As the game loaded into the lobby, Irina shot a sideways glance at Astron, already anticipating what was about to happen.

He had never played before. He had no idea what he was doing.

Which meant...

She could teach him.

A rare, almost nostalgic feeling crept up on her at that thought. It had been a while since she had taught him something—since the time in the library when she had drilled the basics of magic into his head.

Back then, he had absorbed everything like a damn sponge, taking in her explanations, processing them, and then using them like he had known it all along.

It had been frustrating. But... also fun.

And for some reason, she yearned for that feeling again.

'Heh. Guess I'll have to make sure he sucks at this, then.'

As the game transitioned to character selection, she smirked. "Alright, rookie. Pick your champion."

Astron stared at the screen, silent. The sheer number of options was probably processing in his mind—he was likely already categorizing them by effectiveness, skill ceilings, and whatever else his over-analytical brain did.

Irina wasn't having that.

She reached over and quickly scrolled through the roster before selecting a random champion for him.

"There. That's yours."

Astron glanced at her, unimpressed. "I assume you picked something weak on purpose?"

She smirked. "Maybe."

His lips twitched slightly, but he didn't argue. Instead, he simply adjusted his grip on the controller as the countdown began.

Irina leaned back, a familiar competitive fire lighting up inside her.

'Alright, Astron. Let's see how bad you are.'

If he dared to be good at this game right away—she was going to lose her mind.