

H. Academy 895

Chapter 895 Attack

Harin gritted his teeth, his breaths shallow, but his mind sharp.

No matter what happens, I must make sure they don't get to Emily... I must make sure they don't reach the guild.

The pain in his body dulled for a moment as his thoughts aligned. His vision flickered with the haze of exhaustion, but he forced himself to remain standing, to keep his focus on the enemy.

I will need to use that.

His right hand trembled as he clenched his fist, steadying himself. He had known this moment would come. From the moment Azure Crest Guild had been pulled into this war—no, from the moment they chose their side—he had known his life would be on the line.

The Hartley family had warned him.

Ray, the butler of that formidable household, had personally visited him weeks ago, standing in his office with that ever-composed, unreadable expression.

"Master Anderson, I will be blunt. The path you have chosen is one that will invite calamity. The demon contractors do not forgive, nor do they forget. The fact that you have been allowed to live this long is already a mercy."

Harin had laughed back then, his usual confidence barely shaken. "I don't need your pity, Mister Ray. Azure Crest has survived worse."

But Ray hadn't laughed. Instead, he had placed a small, ornate box on the table.

"Then take this. When the time comes, and it will come... Use it. No hesitation. No second thoughts."

Harin hadn't questioned it then. He had taken the artifact, knowing that the Hartley family wasn't the kind to offer empty words.

And now... now was the time.

Without hesitation, he reached into his spatial ring, fingers brushing against cold metal. He clenched it tightly, feeling the sheer weight of the power sealed within.

A deep pulse resonated the moment he pulled it free, the air around him distorting. The demon contractors stiffened, their unnatural grace faltering as they felt it—the presence of something beyond their comprehension.

The moment Harin's fingers curled around the cold metal, the air itself shuddered. A pulse rippled outward, warping the space around him, and the alley seemed to tremble—distorting, like the world itself was shifting away from reality.

The demon contractors reacted instantly.

"Stop him!" The red-eyed man snarled, his previous amusement gone, replaced with urgency. His body blurred, moving with unnatural speed, his coat of living shadows writhing violently as he surged forward.

The violet-eyed woman didn't hesitate either. Her fingers snapped into jagged claws, veins of darkness slithering across her skin as she lunged, her mouth parting slightly—revealing far too many needle-like teeth, as if she had discarded the need for human form altogether.

But it was too late.

Harin gritted his teeth and activated the artifact.

A sharp, violent force pulled at him from within. His body felt as though it had been seized by an invisible hand and wrenched through space. A deafening, high-pitched ringing filled his ears, his vision twisting into a blur of colors that should not exist.

It's working.

It was exactly as Ray had explained to him.

A checkpoint-style artifact.

A pinpoint marker—a landmark placed in space, tying a single point in existence to another. When activated, the artifact folded space itself, forcing reality to curve around the marked location.

A perfect escape.

But— it came with a price.

Harin felt his mana drain violently, yanked out of his very core like water pouring from a shattered flask. His muscles spasmed, his breath hitched. His already battered body screamed in protest, exhaustion setting in like an unbearable weight pressing down on his soul.

His vision blurred. The world became unstable.

His knees buckled, his body losing its sense of weight, the sensation of being pulled and twisted through the fabric of reality making his stomach churn.

And in that moment, just before he completely slipped away— rage burned through him.

'Philips family!'

His blood boiled.

So they had finally cast away their pretense? They were no longer even trying to hide their collaboration with these wretched demon contractors?

His guild—his family—had been massacred under their watch, while they stood behind the curtain, orchestrating it all.

What the hell was going on?

The last thing Harin saw before the world snapped away was the twisted, enraged expressions of the demon contractors as they reached out— just inches too late.

And then—

Everything went dark.

Harin's eyes fluttered open, his breath coming in shallow gasps. His body ached all over, pain coursing through his limbs like molten iron. His head throbbed, and for a moment, he felt as if he were still spinning, like reality hadn't fully settled around him.

The scent of wet stone and oil filled his nostrils, mixed with the lingering metallic tang of his own blood. His vision swam as he pushed himself up on trembling arms, his muscles screaming in protest. He stumbled forward, barely managing to stay upright, his boots scraping against the cracked pavement beneath him.

It took him a few seconds to fully grasp where he was.

The eastern side of Arcadia City.

Dim neon lights flickered against the damp walls of the narrow street, and in the distance, he could hear the hum of traffic and the occasional murmur of late-night pedestrians. This part of the city was quieter, mostly industrial and lined with aging warehouses—far from the chaos he had just escaped.

He was safe.

For now.

Ignoring the sharp pain in his ribs, Harin reached for his wrist, fumbling to activate his smartwatch. His fingers trembled from exhaustion, but he pressed through it, his mind sharper than his broken body. The smooth glass screen flickered to life, faintly illuminating his bloodstained fingers.

With practiced precision, he navigated the interface, his breath still unsteady. He tapped into his encrypted contacts and dialed a number.

The line clicked.

"—Pick up," he muttered, barely above a whisper. His throat felt raw, his body still weak, but the urgency remained.

Each ring felt like an eternity. His vision blurred for a second, but he forced himself to stay alert.

He had survived.

But this wasn't over.

Emily sat in her academy dorm room, staring at the dim glow of her desk lamp as the evening settled in. The new semester had begun, and academically, she was doing well. Her grades were solid, and she had been keeping up with her training. Yet, despite this surface-level progress, something felt incomplete.

There were things she lacked—things she had been too preoccupied to address before. One of them was her relationship with Ethan. She had wanted to grow closer to him, to spend more time with him, but between her responsibilities with the guild and the increasing conflicts around them, she never found the right moment.

And now... she wasn't even sure if she should.

Ethan always seemed surrounded by people—whether it was his friends or someone else. There was a subtle distance between them now, a gap she wasn't sure she had the right to close. Maybe it was always like this. Maybe she had just been imagining something more. She told herself it didn't bother her, but deep down, a part of her felt strangely... left behind.

She sighed, leaning back in her chair. It wasn't like she had the time to dwell on things like this anyway. The conflicts between guilds had only intensified over the past few weeks, and Azure Crest was taking more hits than ever. Rival guilds were pressuring them, the association was barely acknowledging their struggles, and resources were thinning again.

Everything was a fight.

Emily rubbed her temples, frustration gnawing at her. She had fought so hard to keep the guild afloat, to keep the people who stayed from losing faith. But it was exhausting. It was like standing in the ocean, pushing back an endless tide.

Her gaze drifted toward her sword resting against the wall. Was this how things were always going to be? Fighting, surviving, never really moving forward?

She exhaled and straightened her posture. No. That wasn't the way to think. If she let herself be weighed down now, everything they fought for would have been meaningless.

With a quiet resolve, she stood up and grabbed her coat. If the world wasn't going to give them space to breathe, then she would carve it out herself.

RING!

Just then she got a notification.