H. Academy 896

Chapter 896 Attack

RING!

Emily's smartwatch vibrated against her wrist, the sharp sound cutting through the silence of her room. At first, it was just a notification, but before she could even check it, another sound followed—her smartwatch ringing.

Her brows furrowed. A call? At this hour?

As she glanced at the screen, her breath caught. The name displayed sent a jolt through her chest.

Liora.

Her father's secretary. The one who handled all guild-related matters and urgent calls.

A sudden feeling of unease crept into her stomach as she swiped to accept the call. "Liora?"

The voice on the other end was frantic, distressed—nothing like the composed professionalism Liora always carried.

"Miss Emily! It's—it's bad! Your father, the Guildmaster, and Team 3—they were attacked!"

The world around Emily froze.

Her grip on the smartwatch tightened as her heart slammed against her ribs. "What…?" The word came out barely above a whisper.

"Guildmaster Anderson is alive, but barely! His injuries—Emily, his injuries are severe! The healers are doing everything they can, but it's bad. It's really bad."

Emily felt her knees weaken. The breath in her lungs vanished, replaced by a crushing pressure in her chest. Her father—strong, unshakable, the very foundation of Azure Crest—was barely holding on?

"No—no, wait, what happened? Who attacked them? How—" Her voice wavered, but she forced herself to ask.

"We don't know all the details yet," Liora said, her voice uneven. "It was an ambush. The attackers vanished before we could identify them. We just—we just need you to come. Now."

Emily didn't think. She didn't hesitate.

"I'm on my way."

The moment she ended the call, she was already grabbing her sword, shoving on her coat, her body moving before her mind even fully caught up. Her thoughts raced, her pulse thundered in her ears.

Father…

He was still alive. But for how long?

Emily practically threw herself out of her dorm, her legs moving on instinct. Her mind was still reeling, struggling to process Liora's words, but her body didn't wait for permission—it knew where she needed to be. Now. Immediately.

Her breathing was uneven as she rushed through the academy corridors, ignoring the curious glances from students she passed. She had no time to care. Her father—

A sharp pang of panic clenched at her chest, and for the first time in a long while, she felt like she was suffocating.

Her hands trembled as she reached for her smartwatch, forcing herself to focus. She needed to tell Ethan. He needed to know.

Even though she had been trying to handle things on her own, even though she didn't want to rely on him too much—this time, she couldn't.

She felt like she could collapse at any moment, and that feeling was... strange.

Emily pressed Ethan's contact, her fingers feeling clumsy despite the urgency. The dial tone rang, and for the first time, she found herself praying he would pick up immediately.

"Come on, Ethan… Pick up," she muttered under her breath, her heart pounding violently against her ribs.

The moment the call connected, she heard his voice—steady, familiar, and grounding.

"Emily? What's wrong?" His tone shifted the instant he heard her shallow breaths, the tension in his voice clear.

She swallowed, trying to steady herself, but it was impossible. Nothing about this situation was steady.

"It's my father," she said, her voice barely holding together. "He—he was attacked. He's in critical condition."

There was a moment of silence on the other end. A silence that stretched just enough for Emily to feel the weight of it.

"I'm coming," Ethan said immediately, his voice firm, no hesitation whatsoever.

And somehow, just hearing that made the panic in her chest ease—just a little.

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A dull throbbing filled Harin's head as his senses slowly returned. His body ached, the weight of exhaustion pressing down on him like an anchor. Every muscle burned, and

his ribs felt as though they had been torn apart and put back together with shaking hands.

The world spun when he tried to move, forcing him to inhale sharply and stay still. A crisp, sterile scent filled his nostrils—disinfectant, clean linen, the faint metallic tang of medicine. It took him a moment to process where he was.

A hospital.

He exhaled, his breath shaky but steadier than before. The last thing he remembered was calling Liora, his assistant, after dragging himself out of that wretched alley in Arcadia City. Everything after that was a haze, his body likely succumbing to fatigue and blood loss the moment he knew he was safe.

"Guild Master!"

The urgent voice snapped him out of his thoughts.

He turned his head, his vision still slightly blurred, but he recognized the woman standing beside his bed immediately. Liora. Her usually composed face was tight with worry, her eyes scanning his injuries as if assessing whether he was truly awake.

Harin tried to speak, but his throat was dry. He swallowed, wincing at the soreness. "I made it…" His voice was hoarse, weaker than he would have liked, but Liora's expression softened just slightly at the confirmation that he was aware.

"You're finally awake," she said, exhaling in relief. "You lost a lot of blood. The healers did what they could, but you need to rest."

Harin let out a humorless chuckle. "Rest… Not exactly a luxury we have right now, is it?"

Liora frowned, but she didn't argue. She knew better than anyone how relentless he could be, even when he was on the verge of collapse.

Instead, she adjusted the covers over him, her expression shifting slightly as she hesitated before speaking again. "I called Miss Emily," she finally said. "She's on the way."

Harin's chest tightened at those words.

Emily.

For a moment, exhaustion took a backseat to the weight of guilt pressing against his ribs. He had tried so hard to keep her out of this war, out of the mess that had swallowed the Azure Crest Guild whole. Yet, here she was—about to walk into it anyway.

He clenched his jaw. "You shouldn't have—"

"She deserved to know," Liora cut in, her voice firm but not unkind. "She's not a child anymore, Guild Master."

Harin sighed, sinking deeper into the hospital bed. She was right.

And soon, his daughter would arrive.

There was no stopping what would come next.

The doors to the hospital room swung open with a quiet hiss, and Emily stepped inside, her breath shallow, her pulse erratic.

"Father!"

She rushed forward, but at the last moment, forced herself to slow down. Don't act rashly. He was injured—severely. She couldn't let her emotions cloud her judgment.

Her eyes landed on him, and for a moment, she couldn't breathe.

Harin Anderson, the Guildmaster of Azure Crest, lay before her, covered in bandages and bruises, his complexion unnervingly pale against the stark white of the hospital sheets.

Behind her, Ethan followed closely, his hazel eyes dark with concern as he observed the scene. He didn't speak immediately, letting Emily have her moment.

Harin, despite his weakened state, managed a small smirk at the sight of his daughter. His sharp gaze flickered to Ethan before he let out a rough chuckle.

"Mister Ethan," Harin greeted, his voice hoarse but carrying its usual weight.

Ethan nodded respectfully, stepping forward. "No need to push yourself, Guild Master Harin," he said, his voice steady yet laced with worry.

"Aha… I appreciate that," Harin murmured, exhaling through his nose as if trying to suppress the discomfort radiating from his injuries. "But I've always been the stubborn type, haven't I?"

Emily clenched her fists at his words, taking in the sheer exhaustion in his voice. The father she knew never showed weakness, never let anyone see his struggles. Yet here he was—barely holding himself together.

And she wasn't going to sit back and do nothing.

She took a deep breath, pushing aside the burning emotions threatening to overwhelm her. First, understand. Then, act.

Her gaze sharpened.

"Tell me everything."