

H. Academy 914

Chapter 914 News Spread

"The Hartley Guild was hit hard. Twelve of their dungeons were attacked yesterday. Twelve."

Julia's eyes widened slightly, but it was Irina who reacted first. "Wait, what?"

Ethan exhaled, letting his gaze drift across the room before speaking again.

"Marin Kont. Royce Grant. Valencia Marlowe." He said their names one by one, letting the weight of them settle. "All three are gone."

Julia leaned back slightly, crossing her arms, trying to absorb the information. "Damn..."

Irina frowned, deep in thought. "I know those names. They weren't just strong—they were pillars in your guild's leadership."

Lilia, who had been quiet, finally spoke. "I met them," she said, her voice subdued. "During the joint operations between the military and Hartley's guild. Marin was in charge of coordination for high-risk dungeons. Royce handled strategic security, and Valencia... she was an iron wall. No nonsense, no hesitation."

Carl, who had remained his usual unreadable self, finally gave a small nod. "I met them too," he said simply.

Olympus Vanguard, Lilia's guild, was a direct ally of the Hartleys. They had worked together before, in large-scale operations where the military and elite guilds needed to coordinate efforts. Losing three executives of that caliber wasn't just a loss—it was a statement.

"I hope everything's under control," Lilia murmured. "If things are escalating this quickly, the capital might not stay safe for long."

Ethan ran a hand through his hair. "It's worse than that."

Julia raised an eyebrow. "There's more?"

"Yeah." Ethan leaned forward, resting his elbows on the desk. "Emily's guild was attacked too. Azure Crest."

That got their attention.

Emily wasn't close with anyone in this group—except for Ethan—but they all knew her.

As if on instinct, their gazes shifted toward the chestnut-haired girl sitting a few rows ahead.

Emily's posture was stiff, her fingers curled tightly around the edges of her book. She wasn't part of the conversation, but she had clearly heard them.

Even from this distance, it was obvious—she was stressed.

Her shoulders were tense, her focus absent.

Lilia sighed softly. "Figures."

Ethan sighed, running a hand through his hair before continuing. "It was a full-scale ambush. Azure Crest sent a team into a dungeon, but the whole thing was a setup. Three rank-8 demonic humans were waiting for them—completely wiped out Team 3. Harin Anderson barely made it out alive."

Julia let out a low whistle, shaking her head. "Three rank-8s? For a mid-tier guild?"

"It wasn't just an attack," Ethan said, his voice quieter now. "It was an extermination attempt."

Lilia exhaled through her nose, her arms crossed. "So they were trying to wipe out Azure Crest completely."

Ethan gave a small nod. "Yeah. And it almost worked."

"This doesn't make sense. Didn't you say, Azure Crest isn't small, but it's not exactly a major player either. They don't warrant this kind of aggression. Unless—"

Ethan's eyes flickered toward Emily again. She still hadn't moved. Hadn't spoken.

She was holding everything in.

Lilia followed his gaze, her expression softening slightly. "She's not gonna talk about it," she said.

"Yeah," Ethan muttered. "I know."

And then—

The door to the lecture hall swung open.

The shift in atmosphere was immediate. Conversations quieted, postures straightened, and the weight of the topic hanging between them was pushed aside—for now.

A tall man in formal attire strode in, carrying a sleek tablet in one hand. His presence alone commanded attention, the room settling into place as he approached the podium.

"Good morning," the professor said, his voice crisp as he tapped something on his tablet. The screens at the front of the room flickered to life, displaying a series of diagrams.

"Today, we'll be discussing strategic combat formations in high-risk dungeon environments. I trust you've all reviewed the required readings?"

Ethan leaned back in his chair, exhaling quietly.

For now, the conversation was over.

But the tension?

It wasn't going anywhere.

I had been listening.

From the moment Ethan walked in, from the moment his tone didn't quite match his usual demeanor, I had been listening. Every word, every shift in body language, every flicker of unspoken tension between them.

And as I processed what I had just heard, one thought settled in my mind.

'So it has started.'

The Conflict Escalates.

This was one of the defining moments in the game—a sequence that marked the beginning of one of the most dangerous storylines. The guild wars were no longer just isolated skirmishes or political maneuvers behind closed doors.

It was becoming a full-scale war.

'Indeed.'

The Hartley Guild and the Philips Family had begun their direct clashes. Their hostility had already been simmering for years, but this? This was different. This wasn't a warning. This wasn't posturing.

This was blood.

This was a declaration that neither side would back down.

And I knew exactly how we had gotten here.

Because I had played a role in it.

The Azure Crest Guild.

The catalyst.

The reason the Philips Family had finally stepped forward, pushing the conflict into the open.

It wasn't an accident. It wasn't fate.

It was intentional.

I had made sure of it.

When I decided to finance the Azure Crest Guild, it hadn't just been for their survival. Even with Ethan's backing, they wouldn't have risen as quickly as they had. They wouldn't have garnered this much attention.

I had ensured their growth. Their expansion.

And in doing so, I had forced the Philips Family to react.

From the game itself, I knew that Azure Crest Guild's operational point—the territory they were expanding into—determined their fate.

Because in that very same area, two other guilds were operating in secrecy.

Philips Family's undercover factions.

The moment Azure Crest grew large enough to threaten them, the Philips Family had to act. And their first move had been a direct strike against Emily's guild, targeting her team and Ethan alongside her.

That attack had served two purposes.

First I killed that executive.

The InfernalCovenant's executive had made a fatal mistake—targeting Ethan, knowing full well he wasn't just an ordinary cadet. They had considered him a nuisance, a talented outlier, but nothing more.

That was their miscalculation.

Because I hunted their executive down.

Because I made sure he didn't live past that night.

His elimination wasn't just revenge. It was a signal. One that forced the Hartleys to respond in kind.

That was the second purpose of the attack.

The moment an executive was removed and Ethan got attacked, the Hartley Family was dragged into the conflict.

It was no longer just a territorial dispute.

It was war.

Now, with the Emberhearts fighting Hawkins and the Hartleys fighting Philips, the polarization of power was accelerating.

It was happening earlier than expected.

In the original timeline of the game, these conflicts wouldn't have reached this scale yet. The power struggles would have simmered longer, more pieces moving before all-out war erupted.

But my actions had changed that.

And I had long since accepted it.

This conflict wouldn't remain contained between the guilds. Wars never did.

It would spread—through commerce, through politics, through the very foundation of power itself.

And I could already predict how the pieces would fall.

Economic Impact

The trade routes controlled by both the Hartleys and the Philips Family would become battlegrounds.

The Hartleys, as one of the dominant forces in trade and resource distribution, had a near-monopoly on enchanted goods, dungeon materials, and alchemical supplies.

The Philips Family, with their network of hidden black-market operations, controlled rare artifacts, underground dealings, and the circulation of illicit magical substances.

With open warfare between them, their supply chains would fracture.

This would trigger widespread shortages:

Alchemy ingredients would become scarce, impacting potion production.

Blacksmithing materials, especially high-grade enchanted ores, would see a dramatic price surge.

The dungeon economy would destabilize as high-risk locations were no longer properly managed.

Smaller guilds and independent adventurers who relied on these supplies would be the first to suffer.

Prices would skyrocket.

A black market would emerge stronger than ever, with third-party factions exploiting the instability for their own gain. And soon, even those uninvolved in the war would feel its weight.

This wasn't just a guild war. It was an economic disaster waiting to unfold.