

H. Academy 924

Chapter 924 Shifting Pillars

The academy was in disarray.

Sophomores under Trevor's influence had begun stirring conflict across the campus, instigating fights, pressuring first-years, and creating an atmosphere of tension and uncertainty.

Everything was going exactly as planned.

Almost.

Trevor tapped his fingers against his desk, his brow slightly furrowed as one of his subordinates stood before him, nervously shifting on his feet.

"You're telling me you can't find him?" Trevor asked, voice calm but dangerously cold.

The sophomore swallowed hard. "We checked everywhere—the training grounds, the gravity chambers, the gym—but Astron isn't training at all."

Trevor's fingers stilled.

That was odd.

Astron had always been predictable. He was the type to train constantly, refining his techniques, honing his skills. Trevor had expected him to fall into his usual habits, making it easy to corner him again.

But instead, he had disappeared.

"Are you saying he's hiding?" Trevor asked, tilting his head slightly.

The sophomore hesitated. "I—I don't know. He's just... nowhere."

Trevor exhaled sharply through his nose, mildly irritated.

This wasn't a major setback, but it was annoying nonetheless.

Astron shouldn't have been hard to find. And yet, somehow, he had managed to slip away from them entirely.

Trevor leaned back, eyes narrowing slightly.

It wasn't panic. Not even frustration.

Just... a feeling.

Something was off.

But before he could dwell on it, his communicator buzzed.

A call from Leontius.

Trevor exhaled and picked up the line. "Tell me it's good news."

A low chuckle came through. "Oh, it's better than good news."

Trevor arched an eyebrow. "Go on."

Leontius's voice carried a sharp edge of amusement. "Ethan has been dealt with. And this time?" He let out a slow, satisfied sigh. "He's actually getting punished."

Trevor's eyes gleamed with satisfaction.

Finally.

That righteous idiot had managed to slip through consequences far too often, his status as a Hartley shielding him.

But not this time.

"What happened?" Trevor asked.

Leontius chuckled, his voice carrying that self-satisfied edge Trevor had come to associate with him. "Let's just say we finally got the right footage. Clean, crisp, and conveniently cropped to paint our boy Ethan as the aggressor."

Trevor's fingers tapped against the surface of his desk once more, his lips curling into a slow smirk. "Oh?"

"Caught on the academy's surveillance," Leontius continued, his tone oozing amusement. "Well... not all of it, obviously. Just the right part."

Trevor exhaled through his nose, leaning back in his chair as he processed the information. This wasn't just good news—it was a significant shift in momentum. Ethan had been a constant thorn in their side, a wildcard who refused to play by their rules. He had defied them more than once, standing against their influence without any hesitation. And worse? People had started to notice.

Freshmen looked up to him. Some of them had even begun following his lead, refusing to fold under the sophomore pressure, refusing to bow their heads like they were expected to. That kind of behavior was dangerous.

So making an example of him?

It was necessary.

Trevor's fingers drummed in thought. "And Eleanor?"

"She had no choice but to go along with it," Leontius said, amusement lacing his words. "Grayson backed Melanie, and with the footage in play? Eleanor was boxed in. She let it go and punished Ethan."

Trevor hummed, considering the implications. "So he's actually facing consequences this time?"

Leontius let out a low chuckle. "Suspension from combat-related activities. Not as satisfying as I'd like, but..." He trailed off, his tone still smug. "It's a start."

A start, indeed.

Trevor wasn't foolish enough to believe this would completely rid them of Ethan, but it would weaken him. Humiliate him. And that was enough for now.

"Good," Trevor finally said, the smirk never leaving his lips. "That should keep him in check—at least for a while."

Leontius let out a sharp breath. "And while he's licking his wounds, we keep the pressure on the rest of them. The first-years are already on edge, and with Ethan out of the picture for now? They'll start falling in line real soon."

Trevor nodded to himself. That was the key. It was never just about Ethan—it was about control. The academy was a battlefield, and dominance was dictated not just by strength, but by perception. Right now? Ethan looked weak. And that meant the freshmen would hesitate before trying to fight back.

Still, Trevor wasn't entirely satisfied. Something about this felt too easy.

And easy things?

They never lasted.

"...Keep an eye on him," Trevor said after a moment. "I don't trust Ethan to stay quiet."

Leontius scoffed. "He doesn't have much of a choice."

Trevor didn't respond right away. Instead, he let his gaze drift toward the window, looking out at the academy grounds.

Trevor barely had time to process his thoughts before his communicator buzzed again.

Another call.

This time, the name flashing across the holo-screen made his smirk fade slightly.

Adrian Castillo.

Trevor exhaled through his nose, already bracing himself for the conversation.

Unlike Leontius, who at least held a basic level of respect, Adrian didn't bother with pretenses.

He wasn't an ally.

He wasn't a subordinate.

Adrian was a force of his own, a temporary asset in the grand scheme of things. Useful, but unreliable.

Trevor accepted the call, leaning back as the projection flickered to life.

The first thing he saw was Adrian's easy, cocky grin, his sharp, golden-brown eyes gleaming with amusement. His short, dark hair was slightly messy, but intentionally so, like he had just finished a training session and couldn't be bothered to fix it.

Unlike Trevor or Leontius, who commanded presence with calculated intent, Adrian's presence was something far more unpredictable.

He wasn't a tactician.

He was a natural predator—someone who thrived in the chaos, someone who enjoyed the thrill of the game, regardless of who was playing.

"You finally picked up," Adrian drawled, tilting his head. "For a guy who talks so much about control, you sure take your sweet time answering calls."

Trevor ignored the jab, his expression unmoving. "I assume you have something worth saying."

Adrian chuckled, completely unfazed. "Oh, I do. Thought you'd want to know—I fulfilled my part."

Trevor raised an eyebrow. "It's done?"

"Mhm." Adrian stretched his arms behind his head. "Lilia Thornheart's little problem has been taken care of."

Trevor kept his expression neutral. "How?"

Adrian's smirk widened. "Oh, wouldn't you love to know?"

Trevor narrowed his eyes slightly but let it go.

Adrian had his own way of doing things, and as long as the result was the same, Trevor didn't particularly care about the method.

Instead, he kept his response simple. "Good."

Adrian chuckled again. "Man, you're just so warm and friendly, Trevor. I love our little chats."

Trevor didn't react. He wouldn't give Adrian the satisfaction of rising to the bait.

Instead, he kept it clean. Simple. Detached.

"As long as you hold up your end, I don't care how you act," Trevor said smoothly. "Just know that if you ever fail to deliver, I won't be as tolerant."

Adrian grinned wider, leaning in slightly. "Ooooh, is that a threat?"

Trevor didn't blink. "It's a fact."

There was a beat of silence.

Then, Adrian let out a low, amused laugh. "Damn. You really are fun, Trevor."

Trevor didn't bother responding.

Adrian wasn't like Leontius.

Leontius was calculating. Purposeful.

Adrian was chaos wrapped in a smirk.

A wildcard.

And Trevor knew better than to expect loyalty from a wildcard.

So he tolerated it.

For now.

Adrian finally exhaled, shaking his head. "Alright, alright. I'll keep my word. We're done for now, yeah?"

"For now," Trevor echoed.

Adrian grinned. "Great talk, as always. Later, Trevor."

The call disconnected.

Trevor sat there for a moment, fingers still lightly tapping against the desk.

Adrian was an asset, but he wasn't someone Trevor could trust long-term.

If there was one thing Trevor had learned in this game, it was that people like Adrian only stayed if the game was interesting enough for them.

And if it ever stopped being interesting?

They left. Or turned.

Trevor exhaled, letting his smirk return.

It didn't matter.

For now, the board was set.

The Pentagon Families were already taking hits.

And soon?

The real storm would begin.