

H. Academy 926

Chapter 926 Aftermath

The air in the office felt heavier once the others left. The faint click of the door closing behind Melanie and Grayson seemed to echo longer than it should have, leaving behind a silence thick with unspoken tension.

Ethan remained standing, his hands still clenched at his sides, his knuckles white from how tightly he had been gripping his own frustration. He hadn't moved. Hadn't spoken. But the anger simmering in his hazel eyes hadn't faded either.

Eleanor sighed and leaned back in her chair, pressing two fingers against her temple as if willing away an oncoming headache. It was only midday, and she had already handled two brawls, four disciplinary hearings, and now this mess. The academy was in chaos, students turning on each other, power struggles happening in every corner. And at the center of it all?

Ethan.

She dropped her hand and finally looked at him. He was still tense, but his breathing was steady—controlled, despite everything. That, at least, was a good sign.

Eleanor sighed. "You're not going to sit?"

Ethan shook his head stiffly. "I didn't do it."

It wasn't an argument. Just a fact. One spoken with quiet, unwavering certainty.

Eleanor's blue eyes studied him for a moment before she leaned forward, resting her elbows on the desk. "I know."

Ethan's posture stiffened just slightly, but his expression remained unreadable.

She knew.

She had known the whole time.

But it didn't change a damn thing.

Eleanor exhaled slowly, watching his reaction. "You're angry."

Ethan scoffed softly, a sharp exhale through his nose. "Of course I'm angry," he muttered. "I got punished for something I didn't do."

She didn't argue. Because he was right.

Ethan clenched his jaw, his voice lowering. "If you knew I didn't do it, why didn't you stop it?"

Eleanor studied him carefully before she spoke. "Because that's how the world works."

The words landed like a blow, cold and absolute.

Ethan's jaw tensed. "That's bullshit."

Eleanor sighed. "No. It's reality."

She leaned forward slightly, her voice quieter but firm. "Ethan, do you honestly think this is the last time this will happen to you? That this was just about some classroom dispute?" Her gaze sharpened. "This isn't about what did or didn't happen. It's about power. Influence. And whether you like it or not, your name is starting to mean something."

Ethan frowned slightly, but he didn't interrupt.

Eleanor's voice remained steady, measured. "Your rank is rising. Fast. Faster than anyone expected. You're outperforming students older than you, making a name for yourself whether you intended to or not. And do you know what happens when people like you rise too quickly?"

Ethan's silence was answer enough.

She exhaled. "People start paying attention. People above you, people below you. And not all of them want to see you succeed."

Ethan finally moved, taking a slow step closer to the desk, his hands still clenched at his sides. "So what?" he muttered. "I'm just supposed to let them do this? Let them step on me?"

Eleanor's gaze didn't waver. "No. But you need to be smarter about it."

Ethan scoffed, shaking his head. "I don't see how staying quiet and taking the punishment helps me."

Eleanor's lips pressed into a thin line. "Because right now, they think they've won. Grayson, Melanie, all of them—they believe they just taught you a lesson. They believe you'll fall in line, that this was enough to break you down."

She tapped a finger against the desk, her blue eyes sharp. "But if you had fought back here? You would've lost more."

Ethan's teeth clenched, but he said nothing.

Eleanor leaned back slightly, folding her arms. "You're frustrated. I get that. But you need to stop thinking of every battle as a fight you can win just because you're right."

She let the words sink in before continuing. "This wasn't about justice, Ethan. This was a game. One they've been playing far longer than you have."

Ethan exhaled sharply, running a hand through his hair. His anger wasn't gone—not even close—but Eleanor could see it shifting. Becoming something more controlled, more focused.

That was what she needed.

She leaned forward again. "You're going to face this kind of thing again. Probably many more times. People are going to try to control you, to use your own strength and pride against you. And if you react the way they expect?" She tilted her head. "Then you let them dictate how this plays out."

Ethan's hazel eyes flickered, as if considering something.

Eleanor studied him for a long moment before she finally let out a breath and leaned back. "You have talent, Ethan. More than most. But raw talent isn't enough in this academy." Her voice softened, just slightly. "Learn the game. Or you'll keep losing."

Ethan remained silent for a long moment, staring at the desk.

Then, finally, he let out a slow exhale, his posture loosening just a fraction. "... Understood."

Eleanor watched Ethan carefully, noting the way his jaw remained tight, the way his shoulders stayed tense despite his controlled breathing. He had calmed, but only slightly—only just enough to keep himself from lashing out.

She knew that feeling. The anger of knowing you were right but being forced to accept defeat anyway. It was a hard lesson to swallow, but one he needed to understand if he was going to survive the academy's power struggles.

After a moment, she leaned back, arms crossing loosely over her chest. "You know what the disciplinary action includes, don't you?"

Ethan exhaled, nodding stiffly. "Suspension from combat activities. No access to training grounds." His tone was clipped, measured, but Eleanor caught the edge of frustration beneath it.

That was expected.

She let the silence hang for a moment, then—she smiled.

Ethan noticed immediately, his eyebrows twitching upward in faint confusion. "What?"

Eleanor tilted her head slightly. "You won't be able to train in the academy's facilities," she mused, tapping a finger against the desk, "but... that doesn't apply to mentorship."

Ethan frowned slightly, trying to process her words.

She met his gaze, her blue eyes gleaming with something knowing, something deliberate. "I'll inform Astron as well," she said smoothly. "From now on, you'll be training there."

Eleanor's gaze remained steady, watching Ethan's reaction with quiet amusement as realization dawned on him. He blinked once, then twice, his shoulders tensing ever so slightly.

She leaned back in her chair, tapping her fingers lightly against the desk. "Additionally," she continued, her tone almost casual, "whenever my schedule allows it, I'll be joining your training sessions."

Ethan's breath hitched.

A cold sensation trickled down his spine, his instincts immediately screaming at him in warning. Not because of the words themselves—but because of the way she said them.

Eleanor White didn't just join training.

No, whenever she was present, the rules of reality seemed to bend in unnatural, terrifying ways. Gravity became a weapon, the air itself turned against them, and every second felt like an eternity of relentless survival. The training facility was already brutal, but with her overseeing it firsthand? That wasn't just training.

That was hell.

Ethan swallowed, his expression tightening. "You... will be joining us?"

Eleanor's lips curled slightly. "Whenever I can."

Ethan's body instinctively prepared for impact. He could already imagine the future—days where they would enter the facility, expecting to push through the usual grueling regimen, only to find Eleanor standing there, waiting.

Watching.

Judging.

Then, with the simplest motion—perhaps a flick of her wrist or a slight increase in mana—she would break them.

He had already experienced a taste of what Eleanor's personal training was like. Just recalling it was enough to send his muscles into phantom pain. Astron, for all his adaptability, wouldn't be spared either. No, if anything, Eleanor's words meant that their suffering would now be scheduled.

This wasn't mercy.

This was a death sentence.

Ethan exhaled sharply through his nose, forcing his expression to remain neutral. But Eleanor, ever perceptive, had already caught onto his discomfort. She tilted her head slightly, as if considering something, before speaking again.

"You seem troubled," she mused, her voice light but edged with something dangerous.
"Is there a problem, Ethan?"

Ethan hesitated for half a second—half a second too long.

Eleanor's eyes gleamed.

He had walked right into it.

"...No, Professor," he muttered, already resigned to his fate.

She nodded approvingly, leaning back with a satisfied hum. "Good. Then I'll see you at training."

Ethan barely resisted the urge to sigh.

Astron, you better appreciate that we're in this together, he thought grimly. Because this was about to become the worst—no, most educational—period of their lives.