

H. Academy 928

Chapter 928 Aftermath

Ethan walked along the dimly lit pathways of the academy, his hands tucked into his pockets, his mind churning with frustration. The cold night air did little to cool the burning in his chest.

A reprimand and a suspension.

That was the outcome.

That was what they decided after everything.

He clenched his jaw, his fingers curling into fists in his pockets. His body still ached, his ribs sore despite the healing, but the real pain wasn't physical. It was the fact that Melanie had gotten away with it. Again.

The way she had smiled. The way Grayson had protected her so effortlessly.

They had already decided the outcome before he even stepped into that office.

Ethan exhaled slowly, forcing his breath to steady.

"They want me to take this loss. They expect me to just move on like it never happened!"

But he wasn't going to forget.

No.

He would remember every second of this.

His smartwatch vibrated.

Ethan blinked, his thoughts briefly interrupted as he pulled it up. A call. Julia.

Frowning, he answered. "Yeah?"

The second the call connected, Julia's voice came through urgently.

"Ethan, something happened."

His spine straightened immediately. "What?"

"It's Lilia," Julia said, her voice sharp. "She was attacked."

Ethan's eyes narrowed.

Attacked?

"When?" His voice dropped, low and controlled.

"Tonight," Julia responded quickly. "I just got word from her. She was found outside the training grounds-injured. She's in the infirmary now, but-"

Ethan was already turning, already moving.

"Who did it?"

Julia let out a slow breath. "We don't know yet. There were no witnesses, and she wasn't able to get a clear look at her attackers."

Ethan's jaw clenched. No witnesses? That was too convenient.

His mind was still processing when Julia's tone shifted.

"Ethan," she said, her voice serious now. "I need to know what happened with you today."

Ethan inhaled sharply, debating whether or not to get into it right now. But then, as he thought about it-

He realized something.

This wasn't unrelated.

He exhaled. "They set me up."

A pause. Then, Julia's voice came through, sharp.

"Explain."

Ethan quickly ran her through what had happened-the baiting, the illusion, the fight, the rigged disciplinary hearing.

By the time he finished, the silence on the other end of the call was tense.

Then, Julia cursed.

"That's it," she said, her voice now carrying pure determination. "We're calling a meeting. Now."

Ethan barely had time to respond before the call ended.

The room they had chosen was an old study hall-one that was rarely used this late at night. The soft glow of the lanterns lining the walls cast long shadows across the wooden desks, their presence doing little to warm the chill that hung in the air.

Julia was already there when Ethan arrived, leaning against the far wall, arms crossed, her expression set in grim determination. Lucas and Carl were seated at the nearest table, their usual relaxed postures replaced by tense alertness. Irina stood near the window, her back straight, golden eyes watching the campus grounds below as if expecting trouble to appear at any moment.

And then there was Lilia.

Ethan's gaze flickered to her immediately. She sat on the edge of one of the desks, her usual easygoing smirk absent. Instead, her face was tight with exhaustion, and though she tried to hide it, Ethan could see the stiffness in her movements-the subtle tension in her shoulders, the way she held herself just a little too carefully.

Bruises lined the side of her neck, faint but visible. There was a cut on her arm, already treated but still fresh enough that she was careful not to move it too much.

His jaw clenched.

Lilia noticed his stare and rolled her eyes. "Relax, Mountain Boy," she said, voice lighter than it should have been. "I'm not dead yet."

"You look like hell," Ethan said bluntly.

"Right back at you," Lilia shot back, giving him a once-over.

Ethan ignored the remark, stepping fully into the room. His ribs still ached, but he forced himself not to favor them. It was nothing compared to the weight pressing against his mind.

Julia pushed off the wall. "Alright. Let's not waste time." Her sharp gaze swept over them. "We need to figure out what the hell is going on."

Lucas leaned forward, resting his elbows on the table. "Let's start with what we know." His voice was calm, measured, but there was an edge beneath it. "Lilia was attacked tonight, right after Ethan got suspended for a fight that was clearly set up. Too much of a coincidence."

Ethan exhaled slowly, his mind already piecing things together. "It's not a coincidence," he said. "They're connected."

Carl frowned. "You sure?"

Ethan gave him a look. "Come on. We're not that stupid."

Lilia sighed, rubbing the back of her neck. "Whoever jumped me wasn't trying to kill me. They were just making a point."

The tension in the study hall thickened as Lilia's words settled over the group. Ethan leaned against one of the desks, his arms crossed tightly as his sharp gaze remained fixed on her.

Julia exhaled, tilting her head slightly. "Alright, let's start from the beginning. Tell us exactly what happened."

Lilia rolled her shoulders, wincing slightly at the stiffness still lingering in her muscles. "I was training at the archery grounds when I sensed some people approaching. At first, I ignored it-students come and go there all the time. But then the door to my section opened, and before I knew it, I was dodging a mana strike."

Irina frowned, stepping away from the window. "A direct ambush? In a public training space?"

Lilia let out a dry chuckle. "That's the thing-it wasn't public at the time. The security cameras were 'coincidentally' under maintenance"

Lucas and Carl exchanged a glance.

Julia narrowed her eyes. "So they planned this."

Lilia nodded. "It was a setup. Four of them-all seniors, all skilled. They didn't come to test me or pick a fight. They came to make a statement."

Carl frowned. "Did you recognize them?"

Lilia's expression darkened slightly. "Yeah. Two of them were from Olympus Vanguard

-Renald Voss and Elara Nox."

"From your guild? Are you sure?"

"Yes."

Julia's brow furrowed. "This wasn't just some internal guild squabble, then. Someone orchestrated this."

Lilia smirked, but there was no humor in it. "Oh, I know exactly who."

The room stilled.

Ethan's eyes narrowed. "Who?"

Lilia leaned back slightly, her crimson eyes cold.

"Selene."

A pause. Then-

"Selene? Your sister?" Carl asked, blinking.

Lilia nodded. "Yeah."

Lucas frowned. "Since when is she involved in this?"

Lilia exhaled, rubbing her temple. "She's been watching. She showed up at the Archery

Club recently, acting like it was just to 'observe! But after tonight, it's obvious-she's

not just watching. She's interfering."

The weight of Lilia's words settled over the room like a lead curtain. No one spoke immediately, but the unspoken tension between them was clear.

They had all been keeping tabs on Olympus Vanguard's internal shifts. The guild was constantly shifting, aligning itself based on power, strategy, and influence

But this?

Selene had crossed a line.

"She really doesn't hold back, does she?" Lucas muttered, rubbing the bridge of his nose.

Carl scoffed. "We knew she was making moves behind the scenes, but sending four trained seniors after Lilia? That's more than just maneuvering for power. That's a warning"

Irina's golden eyes darkened. "She's setting the board her way. Trying to remove a piece before it can become a threat."

Ethan's fingers curled slightly against the desk, his expression unreadable. "Then we should-"

"No."

Lilia's voice cut through the rising tension, sharp and deliberate.

They all turned to her.

Julia frowned. "What do you mean, no?"

Lilia exhaled, sitting up straighter despite the lingering soreness in her body. "We don't have proof." Carl blinked. "Lilia, you were beaten. How much more proof do you need?"

Lilia shook her head. "Selene's not sloppy. If we try to bring this up now, without evidence, do you know what'll happen?"

Lucas let out a frustrated sigh. "She'll act like she had nothing to do with it."

"Worse," Lilia corrected, her tone bitter. "She'll make it look like I'm trying to put dirt on her. That I'm just being paranoid, bitter over a loss, stirring up trouble where there isn't any."

A silence stretched between them.

Carl let out a breath. "You're right."

Lilia leaned forward, her crimson gaze unwavering.

Lilia leaned forward, her crimson gaze unwavering. "Aside from that," she continued, her voice even but carrying weight, "I already informed Father."

A hush fell over the room. Ethan's eyes narrowed slightly. Julia straightened. Even Carl and Lucas, who had been

fuming moments ago, paused at her words.

"Wait," Irina spoke first, tilting her head. "You told your father?"

Lilia nodded. "Of course. It doesn't matter if there's no direct proof. This attack wasn't

small. It wasn't just a brawl between students. It was a calculated ambush. Father isn't the kind of person to ignore something like that."

Lucas exhaled. "So, even if we can't pin this on Selene directly..."

Lilia smirked faintly. "Someone is still going to get punished."

Julia crossed her arms, considering. "If your father gets involved, things might escalate quickly."

Lilia's gaze darkened. "That's the point."

Ethan finally spoke, his voice quieter than before but still sharp. "And what exactly do you expect to happen now?"

Lilia exhaled, glancing toward the window, the campus bathed in the soft glow of night. She already knew.

"I assume," she said, her voice calm but certain, "that we'll be seeing some drastic changes very soon."