

H. Academy 930

Chapter 930 Aftermath

Irina sat on a bench near the academy's training field, arms crossed, her golden eyes locked on the dimly lit pathways ahead. The night air was cool, crisp against her skin, but the restlessness inside her burned hotter than any chill could touch.

She was waiting.

Astron would be here soon.

But until then, her thoughts refused to stay still.

Ethan's words from earlier kept replaying in her head.

Leontius Vargras.

Melanie.

Grayson.

The Hawkins.

The Frostbornes.

Everything was spinning out of control.

And no matter how much she thought about it, no matter how many angles she tried to piece together, she couldn't find a clear way forward.

The Vargras family was moving.

The Hawkins family was already involved.

And now, the Frostbornes had aligned with them.

Irina clicked her tongue, frustration building in her chest.

What the hell was their endgame?

How far did this go?

She knew academy politics could get messy, but this wasn't just about power struggles between students anymore. This wasn't just about rivalries or influence—this had the makings of something much bigger.

The Vargras family had already lost their position in Central's Pentagon Alliance.

So why were they trying to make a move now?

Irina gritted her teeth.

Ethan's family—the Hartleys— had been dealing with pressure outside the academy for months now. Could it really be connected?

Was the academy becoming an extension of that fight?

Her fingers tapped against her gauntlet absentmindedly, small flickers of embers dancing along the metal surface.

She hated this feeling.

Irina exhaled sharply, eyes narrowing at the empty path ahead.

Something was brewing.

Something big.

And it wasn't good.

She could feel it creeping beneath the surface, the way things were shifting—subtle, but undeniable. The academy was always full of power plays and backroom deals, but this was different. It was bleeding beyond simple politics, stretching its roots into something bigger, deeper, more dangerous.

And she hated it.

She hated how it was disrupting everything.

For the first time in a while, she had actually been... content.

She had spent time with Astron, settled into a rhythm that felt right. No schemes, no manipulations, no constantly watching her back for the next move. Just... normalcy.

Now?

Now that peace was threatened.

It was annoying.

She clicked her tongue, scowling at nothing in particular.

Just as she was about to shift her thoughts, something covered her eyes.

Warm hands. Firm, steady.

She didn't move.

Normally, she would have reacted immediately, breaking free on instinct—because who the hell would dare to sneak up on her?

But this...

This was different.

Because there was only one person who could slip past her senses like this.

She sighed. "What are you doing?"

A familiar voice answered, calm and unreadable. "Isn't this what other people do?"

She blinked.

"...What?"

Astron didn't move his hands. "The game where people cover someone's eyes and guess who it is."

Irina scoffed, but there was a small twitch of amusement at the corner of her lips. "Astron. You're the only person who could do this. Who else would it be?"

He paused, as if actually thinking about it.

Then, after a second, he lowered his hands. "I see."

Irina rolled her eyes, but the tension in her chest eased just slightly.

Leave it to him to pull something so random in the middle of all this.

Irina exhaled, crossing her arms as she turned to face Astron properly. His calm presence was grounding, a quiet contrast to the storm of thoughts that had been circling in her head all day. For a moment, she just watched him, the dim glow of the lanterns catching the edges of his sharp features. Then, she finally asked,

"Did you hear what happened today?"

Astron didn't react immediately. He simply studied her, his unreadable purple eyes holding a quiet calculation before he finally spoke. "The spiked conflicts between sophomores and seniors?"

Irina clicked her tongue. "Yes. But that's not all."

She took a slow breath, rolling her shoulders as if shaking off the weight of what she was about to say. Then, she told him everything.

Ethan's suspension. How Melanie had set him up, baited him into a fight, only for the entire thing to be twisted into making him look like the aggressor. How Grayson had stepped in—not just as a professor, but as someone clearly protecting specific interests, shutting down any chance for Ethan to defend himself.

And then Lilia.

The ambush. The fact that four seniors had attacked her under suspiciously convenient circumstances. The lack of security footage, the complete absence of witnesses. The way they didn't seem to want to beat her as much as send a message.

She watched Astron's expression carefully as she spoke, but, as expected, he didn't react much—at least, not outwardly. He simply listened, absorbing every detail, his posture still and composed. But she knew him.

And she could tell that behind that unshaken exterior, he was piecing everything together just as quickly as she had.

When she finished, she let out a slow exhale, running a hand through her hair. "It's all connected, Astron. First Hawkins. Now Vargras. And the Frostbornes? They've aligned themselves with them. This isn't just some random series of events—this is a move."

She leaned forward slightly, her golden eyes burning with frustration. "And I don't like not knowing what their endgame is."

The silence between them stretched, but it wasn't empty. It was calculated, measured, a pause filled with thoughts Astron was working through at his own pace. Then, finally, he spoke.

"You've already considered the possibility that this extends beyond the academy."

It wasn't a question.

Irina let out a sharp breath. "Of course I have. Ethan's family—the Hartleys—have been facing pressure outside the academy for months now. And Vargras? They lost their place in Central's Pentagon Alliance. They've been lying low ever since. But now?" She shook her head, her gaze dark. "Now they're acting. And the timing is too perfect to be a coincidence."

Irina let out a sharp exhale, tapping her fingers against her arm as she mulled over everything. She was pacing now, unable to sit still, the weight of the situation pressing into her mind like a puzzle missing too many pieces.

Finally, she stopped and turned to Astron, eyes searching his face. "What should I do?"

Astron was silent for a moment, his gaze steady and unreadable as always. She knew he wasn't the type to rush his words. When he spoke, it was because he had already thought things through, dissected the situation from angles she hadn't even considered yet.

"It is indeed not a coincidence," he said finally.

Irina narrowed her eyes. "You're sure."

"I am."

A flicker of frustration flashed through her. That confirmed it, then. This wasn't just paranoia—something was happening. And yet, knowing that didn't make her feel any better.

"Then—" she started, her mind already racing for the next step.

"But," Astron cut her off, his voice as steady as ever, "there is not much you can do, Irina."

She hated that answer.

Irina clicked her tongue, crossing her arms. "What do you mean there's not much I can do? We already know something is moving behind the scenes. Shouldn't we—"

"Move without understanding what we're moving toward?" Astron interjected smoothly.
"That would be a mistake."

Irina scowled. She knew he was right. She hated that he was right.

"But sitting here and waiting isn't an option either," she argued.

"No, it isn't," Astron agreed. "Which is why, for now, focus on getting stronger."

Irina's fingers curled into fists. "That again?"

Astron watched her carefully, his gaze sharp yet calm, as if he already knew what she was thinking. Then, with his usual quiet precision, he spoke.

"You have already pinpointed some names, haven't you?"

Irina stilled for half a second, though she masked it well.

Of course, he would figure that out.

She rolled her shoulders, tilting her head slightly, feigning indifference. "Lilia did. She has already traced some of the ones involved."

Astron nodded, as if this was expected. "Then why are you hesitating?"

Irina scoffed, running a hand through her hair. "Oh, I don't know, maybe because the one pulling the strings is a senior? Maybe because we can't just clash with him outright?"

Astron simply looked at her, his expression unreadable.

"See. That is why," he said, his voice even.

Irina exhaled sharply. She hated how easily he cut through things, how he always had the right answer even when she didn't want to hear it.

Still, she said nothing, letting the weight of his words settle over her.

Astron continued, "I am sure tomorrow, things will change again already."

Irina narrowed her eyes. "Why?"

"This place is an academy," Astron said smoothly. "And it is protected by the strongest humans. Therefore, they will not just watch everything unfold."

Irina tapped her fingers against her arm, considering. He had a point.

The academy wasn't just a battlefield for student politics. It was a prestigious institution, watched over by powerful figures—ones who wouldn't allow things to spiral completely out of control.

But the real question was: who would step in first?

Would it be the faculty?

Would it be the families pulling strings from behind the scenes?

Or would it be someone they hadn't accounted for yet?

Either way, Astron was right.