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### **Volume 4: Chapter 23 – Battle for Kingship**

While listening to our conversation Hai Shui's face paled drastically. Her body swayed and she looked as if she was going to faint. I hurriedly went to support her. "Hai Shui, are you unwell?" I helped her sit in the chair beside me.

After she sat down she forced a smile and said, "I'm fine. Zhang Gong, congratulations on getting Mu Zi."

I proudly said, "Thank you, this is the result of my persistence. You have no idea how cold she was before."

Hai Shui's expression became even paler. I worriedly asked, "Hai Shui, your complexion doesn't seem to be good. Do you want me to bring you back to the dormitory?"

Hai Shui stood up and said, "You don't need to. I'll head back on my own. It might just be because today was hot. You guys just continue to eat. I'll head back first."

I asked curiously, "You're sure you'll be alright?"

Hai Shui smiled, distressed. "I'll be alright. See you."

As I watched Hai Shui leave, I asked Mu Zi, "What's going on with Hai Shui? Strong magicians rarely fall ill."

Mu Zi giggled and said, "Are you really that dumb or just pretending? Even the blind can see that she's like that because of you. Her previous affectionate actions didn't seem like those of a normal friend."

I apprehensively asked, "How could it be because of me? Why didn't it seem like normal friends?"

Mu Zi pouted. "She likes you, so when she saw us together and heard that I'm your girlfriend, she got upset!"

I hurriedly explained myself. "Mu Zi, please don't misunderstand! Hai Shui and I are just schoolmates from the Intermediate Magic Academy. We're just friends. I've always treated her as my sister."

Mu Zi replied. "I didn't misunderstand! Ask anyone and they'll tell you that she likes you. Actually, Hai Shui is not bad. She's pretty and from an illustrious family so she suits you better than I do."

My expression darkened. "What are you saying? If I liked her, I would have courted her already, but the one I like is you!"

After I said that, I was startled. *'It's as though what I said was really what I felt for Mu Zi. Could it be that I've actually fallen in love with her?'*

After Mu Zi heard what I'd said she looked down, blushing bashfully. "Can you lower your voice? Alright, let's not talk about that and just eat."

After dinner, Mu Zi and I wandered around school for a long time. We didn't talk much. Just having her by my side was really soothing and made me very content. I subconsciously held her hand. She tried to remove her hand from mine, but didn't put in much effort. *'The feeling of holding her hand is amazing. It's very slender, fair and tender, as if it doesn't have any bones.'* We just spent our time together until the sky turned dark and I escorted her back her dormitory. I realised that I had already fallen deeply in love with her and my initial hatred had disappeared completely. After sending Mu Zi back, I returned to my dormitory. Ma Ke was waiting in my room. Once he saw me, he exclaimed, "Boss! Where have you been? I've been waiting for a long time!"

"Oh! I was just wandering around the academy. How did the negotiations go?"

Ma Ke replied, "It's hard to say. Right now, both sides have chances of winning."

I curiously asked, "We still can't make them surrender with our current power?"

"Surrender? Why would they do that? They have four Magisters as do we; it isn't easy to make them surrender. After negotiating for half a day, we finally decided to compete against each other. The winner will have the right to control the kingdom of Aixia."

I frowned. "A competition? Isn't that just child's play? The succession of the kingdom is a very important matter. How could they just use a competition to decide?"

Ma Ke sighed. "Actually, this is already the best possible outcome. Aixia is a magic based country. If you have a lot of magic power, you'll be respected and your status will rise along with your power. If the two opposing sides really fought against each other, the one with more magic power will win. Anyway, it's still a magicians' battle so it is better to make it a competition and avoid unnecessary injuries and casualties."

I considered it and thought '*It is true that a good way to avoid unnecessary casualties is to downscale the battle into a competition.*' "It makes sense that way!"

Ma Ke smiled. "Of course it makes sense. This is Teacher Di's suggestion, and Principal Zhen supports him. After a lot of negotiations, the competition is finally set. The winner will get control over the kingdom and the party that loses must concede defeat. However, during the competition it's forbidden to harm the opponent seriously."

'*So it is Teacher Di's idea. I can stop worrying, as Teacher Di is an extremely earnest person.*' I asked Ma Ke, "How are we going to compete?"

Ma Ke explained. "Initially, our side suggested that the winner of three matches wins. However, they said it was unfair as we have Teacher Di and Teacher Zhen, whose ranks are higher than their magisters', so they suggested best of five matches instead. Since we brought up the competition, we could only agree to their request. After three days, we'll secretly compete at the palace. Teacher Di told me to tell you that after asking for a leave of absence from the academy tomorrow, you need to go find him so you can train for a while and increase our chances of winning."

I asked, "I'm also participating? Their magic experience and ability is so high! How am I going to compete against them?"

Ma Ke chuckled. "Boss, you're wrong! You're our secret weapon. Other than a handful of people, who knows that you're a Magister? You've been chosen to fight the last match, so you'll have a slight advantage over whoever is sent out to fight you. Haha. This is also why we agreed to the five matches request."

'*T his is really a good plan. However, I still have an inkling feeling that there is something amiss. Since it is already decided though, I'll just take a leave of absence from the academy tomorrow.*'

I patted Ma Ke's shoulder. "Don't worry! I'll do my best to help your father succeed the throne."

Ma Ke gratefully grabbed my hand. "Boss, I promise you that my father will definitely be a good king!"

I smiled. "You have to remember your promise! I'll keep you to it!"

Ma Ke exclaimed, "I will!"

'*The final battle to decide the fate of the kingdom of Aixia is starting. I really hope that it will be possible to determine who will win or lose by the fourth round so I won't need to compete.*'

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