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Volume 5: Chapter 5 – A Pair of Puppets

Ma Ke continued to say, “I’ve known you for about six to seven years already. To be honest, I am a person who isn’t good at expressing himself. I can’t cheer you up with words, so I just love you silently. However, now I know what true love is. I am confident in saying that you are the one whom I love the most in my life. In the academy, just by sneaking peeks at your familiar figure, I felt very fulfilled. If I ever have the fortune of hearing you speak without blaming me, it will be the happiest day of my life. I have always thought that you’d understand me one day and then willingly fall into my arms to become my bride. However, Feng Liang appeared, and my dreams slowly shattered. I knew that my chances with you were diminishing more and more. You minded me even lesser. My heart felt as though it has been painfully pierced by you time and time again.”

Mu Zi and I were deeply moved as Ma Ke mournfully described the depths of the feelings he had for Hai Yue. Mu Zi’s tears had dampened my shoulder.

“Now, I have completely awoken from my dream. From what you’ve said, I understand that I will never have a chance. Haha. (His smiles were even harder to bear than his tears). I have awoken, completely awoken! Hai Yue, you can stop worrying. I, this piece of sticky rice cake, won’t cling to you anymore. You will not need to be troubled by me ever again. I only want to tell you this. What Boss Zhang Gong said isn’t a lie, but the truth. The Ri family leader, Si Feng Ri’s, evil nature was exposed when he was being beaten by Zhang Gong. Please don’t think I’m lying, but Boss Zhang Gong has already reached the Magister level. I was also there when they fought. Do you still remember the fight between Boss and Feng Liang? That last move by Feng Liang, that sign still hasn’t woken you up? Even though I already don’t have a chance, I still hope that you will find a good partner. Finally, I hope that you will stay happy and blissful, forever.” After saying that, Ma Ke turned and ran away.

Just as I was about to chase after him, Ma Ke’s voice carried over, “Boss, I want to calm down by myself. I’ll return by tomorrow morning.”

I sighed heavily. Hai Yue looked as though she had become a block of wood and remain seated motionlessly.

Si Wa’s voice rang out, “I can also prove that what Ma Ke said was true. My teacher was at that match. He even praised Zhang Gong’s strong magic power. Hai Yue, if you still don’t believe that it is true, you can also ask your grandfather.” He was carrying two unknown wild animals back.

Hai Yue suddenly screamed out, “Stop talking! You all just stop talking!” Turning around, she ran away. One ran off and so did the other... Mu Zi said, “She is just having a tough time accepting the truth right now. I’ll go and watch over her. You can prepare the meals first.”

In this kind of situation, who still had the mood to eat? Si Wa tossed the wild animals aside and sat down. He said, “When I just came back, I heard what Ma Ke said. I never knew that he has such strong feelings.”

I replied, “Not just you, even I did not really know the depth of his love. The wound this time is too deep. You tell me, how are we going to compete? Two are already experiencing psychological problems. Oh right! I haven’t had the time to ask you this. How was the situation like when you previously participated in the competition?”

Si Wa said with lingering fear, “To be honest, I really didn’t want to participate. Even though my abilities have increased since then, those who can’t withstand their opponents will end up helping the lunatics.”

“Lunatics?”

“That’s right! There are lunatics. You wouldn’t know, but for the sake of defeating our academy, the other seven academies have sent out their best line-up. And not just that, once they start fighting, they will be extremely reckless. Though their powers aren’t great, you won’t be able to withstand what they will do for the sake of victory. Do you know why the three from our academy were seriously injured during the previous competition?”

I asked, “Why?”

Si Wa looked frightened and said, “Those three students were injured by the opponent’s life magic.”

I was startled. “What? Life magic? They were really that desperate?”

Si Wa nodded. "I remember how the previous water mage, Magic Scholar Nan Si's serious injury was precisely caused by a Great Mage's life magic. Even though senior Nan Si won the match, his leg...."

It looked like I needed to review the competition. It was more terrifying than I had anticipated. It's fine if it were me, but the most terrifying outcome would be if Mu Zi or anyone else were to be hurt.

Si Wa continued to say, "So once the competition starts, we must fight with all our might from the start and not give our opponents the chance to retaliate. Otherwise, they will all use life magic and stake their lives just to try and defeat us. We will be the ones that suffer heavily if it comes to that."

I nodded. It could only be that way now.

"Alright! Let's stop talking about this. Zhang Gong, how shall we prepare the game?"

I sighed, "After what has happened, who will be in the mood to eat? Let's just release them. I have some rations. We should rest after eating some."

After a long time, Mu Zi and Hai Yue came back. Hai Yue looked really depressed. The moment she came back, she went to her assigned position and slept. Though before she slept, she looked at Ma Ke's empty bed.

I wanted to ask Mu Zi about Hai Yue, but she looked exhausted. After she took the food I passed to her, she ate it quickly and went straight to bed. They all fell asleep while I stayed up to be the night vigil. Throughout the entire night, Ma Ke still hadn't come back. Dawn came. Just as I was getting worried about Ma Ke, he returned. His appearance gave me a shock. In the space of one night, his originally bright red hair had dulled to an ash red."

I ran forward and grabbed his arm. He looked at me with lifeless eyes. "Boss, we should head off."

I asked, "What happened to you?"

Ma Ke faintly smiled and said, "I'm fine. You don't need to worry about me."

I frowned. "With you like this, how can I not worry?" I took out some food and water from my spatial space and forced him to eat it. After that, I woke up the team to start heading out.

Mu Zi was startled when she saw Ma Ke's appearance. I held her back and waved my hands frantically at her.

When everyone had woken up, Hai Yue saw Ma Ke's appearance and her entire body shuddered. Wordlessly, she just quietly ate the dry food.

The journey on the second day was worse than the first, as even Ma Ke didn't talk now. After walking for half a day, we reached a small town. Mu Zi, Si Wa and I discussed for a while and decided to find an inn to rest. The conflict within the team was extremely terrible. How were we going to participate in the competition?

Ma Ke and Hai Yue had become blockheads. They didn't say anything as they followed us. They did whatever they were told to, just like puppets. I had tried to persuade Ma Ke, but I soon realized that his heart seemed to have died. I could only hope that time will cure everything. It looked like bringing Hai Yue on the team for this competition is a wrong decision.

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