

# Mystical Journey

## Chapter 5: The Outing

Jaderipple Lake. Clear blue waters, lush green mountains, and glistening yellow stones. A few white birds slowly glided above the lake. A cool wind whistled through, making the surface of the azure lake ripple, blurring the reflection of the endless mountain range on the water.

The boys walked along the stone-filled riverbed and soon found a great spot for a picnic. Then, they began taking out tools and food from their backpacks.

Garen looked at the girls seated in the shade. Aside from the ones they already knew were coming, there was also a gorgeous surprise in the form of a girl named Felicity. This dazzling beauty's white dress fluttered in the wind, and her blond hair was tied together and hung over her left shoulder. Her crystal clear skin was gleaming with a halo, and her eyes were filled with aloof loftiness, like the clearest sapphire in the world.

Withdrawing his gaze from her, Garen looked at himself, Kalidor, Fayne, and Jake. None of them knew how to dress up. Their attires were completely mismatched, comprising solely of various dull colors like beige, gray, white, and black. On top of that, the clothes they were wearing were cheap, making them look like a ragtag army of bandits. He had not felt this way before, but after comparing the boys to the girls on the other side, he could not help but acknowledge the significant difference.

"That girl is Felicity. Fayne's friends invited her to come. She looks so elegant..." Kalidor said in a low volume while stacking the firewood together.

"Tsk, tsk... I haven't seen anyone with an aura like that in the academy." Jake lowered his voice and added, "Imagine if you could have a girlfriend like that."

"She's my cousin's friend, so I don't know her either. You guys should keep it down," Fayne explained on the side. "I didn't know my cousin would invite her, I told her to come with her other friend." He shrugged.

Garen smiled and squatted down with them, fixing the messy firewood. Compared to the pure and spotless Felicity, the boys who were working with muddy firewoods were from a completely different world.

"Want to play poker?" Kalidor leaned over and asked. The poker he mentioned was a game loved by children from poor families. The cards were made by folding paper and pinching holes on them. The rules were very similar to the game Garen knew on Earth.

Garen, Jake, and Fayne saw him pulling out some old poker cards and they got excited. "Let's go, what do we use for stakes?" said one of them.

"Let's use these roasted fish and kabobs! One per hand."

The few kids sat on the ground in a circle and began playing atop a white rock. It wasn't long before they became heavily immersed in their game.

Felicity stood in the shade, watching the boys playing poker in the middle of the muddy riverbed. Her sapphire eyes did not have any trace of discrimination, but they still put her on a level above everyone else. She was from a different social class compared to the students in this small city. Originally, she was just passing by, but after the invitation of her friends and classmates, she agreed to come out for some fresh air.

A girl with short red hair came up to her and watched the boys together. "Fayne is my cousin, albeit a very distant one. The students here like to come out at night and set up a campfire to have a barbeque. Are you interested? I could introduce you to them."

"No thanks, that looks dirty..." Felicity frowned. "I'm just here to get some fresh air, it would be great if I could have some quiet time alone."

Garen was playing poker with the guys and noticed their eyes unconsciously wandering off towards the girls. He thought it was funny, so very discreetly, he took an extra card when it was his turn. He glanced at them but they were oblivious. He repeated this a few times until he finally showed his hands. "Sorry boys, I won."

"Wha...?" The others looked confused, their mouths agape.

Garen smiled and carefully stacked the cards together. Seeing his friends' expressions, he thought of the old Garen in his memory. Before he traveled here, Garen used to get into arguments with his sister all the time. Furthermore, he would get knocked on the ground in just a few seconds every time, without any chance of retaliation.

Ying Er was not as fragile as she looked. She was great at all sports, martial arts and archery. He had been bullied by Ying Er ever since their parents married. He was three years old at the time, and Ying Er was only two.

However, Garen used to fail at everything, be it playing cards or anything else, because he doubted himself and didn't understand how to be flexible. And these failures continued to destroy his self-confidence, forming a downward spiral. Part of the reason why he decided to practice martial arts was because he couldn't best his sister in fights.

Going back in his memory, he remembered he had cried once after Ying Er had beaten him in middle school. Garen's smile convulsed.

“Beaten to tears by his own sister when he was already ten years old... This is a whole new level of shame... And he secretly wept in his room... No wonder the two had a bad relationship...” Garen was suddenly regretful of possessing this body.

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“Shoo!”

The black-feathered arrow launched from the bow accurately pinned itself on the edge of the bullseye. Ying Er was wearing a white archery robe. She slowly lowered the bow and sighed. “My form is still not steady enough...”

“You are already doing quite well from this distance,” said the girl with blue hair standing next to her. “If you can keep this up, the next Vice President of our archery club will be you.”

“Thank you, senior sister!” Ying Er answered her with respect.

Each of Shengying Academy’s student organizations worked differently. Students from higher grades were allowed to partake in the academy’s administrative positions, and they were not only the head of student organizations, but also in charge of managerial decisions within the academy.

The girl in blue hair nodded. “Also, about the fight last time, I’ve taken care of it. You should try not to let that happen again. At least, don’t hurt people that badly, since it’s hard to keep these things under control.”

“Thank you so much, president, I’ll try to keep it down.” Ying Er apologized again; she knew that the president had great expectations and constantly took care of her. Ying Er was someone who could be persuaded by reason but not cowed by force. She had always felt guilty towards the president. She knew that if it weren’t for all her fights with the other students, she would have already been promoted to vice president of the archery club by now.

“But the fight last time was because...”

The blue-haired girl heard her response, nodded, and left to check on the other members.

Ying Er continued to practice on her own. After a few minutes, a brunette girl came by and whispered something to her.

Ying Er’s face turned red. “It doesn’t matter how useless he is, he’s still my brother! Whoever dares touch him is disrespecting me as well! Let’s go!” She put down her longbow and fiercely ran out of the archery dojo still wearing her white robe. The

tomboys that were inside all followed her out, almost as if she were the Don of an all-girls mafia.

The president of the archery club saw this and shook her head helplessly. “How many times has it been... I wonder if she has a brother complex... everytime someone mentions him... Ling, go watch her and don't let her get into trouble. She's our best hope for the competition that's coming up. Don't let her beat them up too bad or she might get disqualified.”

A short girl with red hair next to her nodded and jogged out without saying a word.

Other members of the club were well used to this and thus went back to practicing. A few of them shook their heads and smiled. While obedient and cute in front of her seniors, she was a violent and terrorizing figure to strangers. Ying Er's temperament was well-known among senior members of the club.

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The sky was clear and blue, with only a few plumes of cloud hanging on the edge of the horizon.

Garen sat on a white rock with a handful of kabobs turning in his hands. The delicious smell of spice permeated over the fire. Some oily bubbles flopped on the golden and crispy surface of the roasted meat.

He laid the kabobs on the barbeque racks and looked at the others. They were all busy sprinkling spices over their kabobs. He stood up and strolled towards the lake, then squatted down and scooped a handful of water. He smeared the water on his face to wash off the soot from the fire.

As the cold lake water splashed on his face, his spirit lifted.

Garen looked behind them, but the girls had wandered far off. They were gathered far away on the riverbed, and were putting down some snacks and beverages over a white picnic blanket.

He exhaled deeply. “So many days have passed in the blink of an eye...” He glimpsed at the attribute pane at the bottom of his vision. Agility and Vitality were increased by 0.01 each, but this was the result of his own exercising, since his potential meter was stuck at 89%.

“Only 11% short. I'll see if Fayne's jewelry is effective. If not, then I must find another way... Jewelry with potential is too rare. I wonder what kind of background the black pearl the etiquette teacher brought, to be able to fill the potential meter by a whole 100%.”

As the cold wind howled, Garen felt the chilliness on his back. He decided to go back near the bonfire.

“Far ahead on the river bank is the paper mill, where my uncle works. Do you guys want to go visit?” Kalidor pointed to the river by the lake.

“What’s so interesting about paper mills...” Fayne was saying something when suddenly, a scream came from afar and lingered in the air. The girls seemed to have encountered something horrific.

The boys looked over to where the girls were supposed to be having their picnic. Two of them were on the ground, slowly backing away from something. One had already run off, too scared to get close to whatever was there. Felicity was one of the girls who fell.

“Something must have happened, let’s go!” Garen was the first to react, but the others followed a second later, throwing their kabobs away as they rushed over.

Among the pebbles of the yellow riverbed, a black and purple snake held its head high, spitting its forked tongue. Two girls lay on the ground, backing away in complete terror, one of them with a bloodstained bite wound on her calf.