

## Last System 414

### Chapter 414 Observation Gives Meaning

"Here goes nothing," one of the cultivators muttered right as he pushed his leg forward and placed it on the bridge. He then slowly transferred his weight from his left leg on the ground to his right one on the bridge, testing whether or not the entire thing would collapse under his weight or not.

'So far so good,' I thought, watching the proceeding with extreme focus.

In all honestly, it wouldn't matter much to me if one or two or even ten of those cultivators were to lose their lives. Yet, the same couldn't be said about the effect such deaths would have on the morale of everyone else.

As such, I didn't have much choice but to be as attentive as possible, ready to jump in and intervene the second any signs of looming disaster were to appear.

"It seems to be somewhat stable," the cultivator called out, slowly hastening his steps. Bit by bit, he moved faster and faster, all the way to the point where his speed reached the point of a leisurely stroll.

For the next two tense minutes, everyone watched every step of the man who volunteered to go first. And once he placed his legs on the solid ground on the other side of the river, everyone shared a long sigh of relief.

'Nothing happened,' I thought, feeling how most of the tension lifted from my mind. I allowed myself to close my eyes for a second, allowing the darkness to calm my thoughts. 'No, it's too early to say that,' I quickly corrected myself, opening my eyes back up and turning them towards the mass of cultivators all gathered at the edge of the river.

They were cheering, enjoying the fact that all the precautions I took before crossing proved to be unnecessary so far. They were cheering... instead of crossing the bridge.

"Everyone!" I called out, unwilling to let such a blatant waste of time go on. "You can be happy all you want, but I need someone to be crossing the bridge at all times!"

My words were akin to a bucket of cold water thrown upon everyone's mood. Yet, there wasn't a single person who found it in themselves to argue with me.

"Form the line!" someone shouted amidst the crowd, volunteering for a quasi-leading position. "Don't push and wait your turn!"

The cultivators started to organize themselves. And before I could even start getting annoyed, the next person stepped upon the bridge before making his way out to its other end.

Just like before, the first few steps were filled with hesitation, doubt, and fear. Yet, as the initial hurdle of the fear of the unknown came to an end, the second to pass the bridge quickly regained their confidence and picked up the pace.

"Next!"

"Why do you look so tense?" Mia asked once she got bored of watching the mundane event of people crossing the bridge. "Everything worked out nicely, didn't it?" she pointed out while leaning her head to the side and throwing a curious glance at my face.

"Ehh..." I released a small sigh. "It's kind of hard to explain," I said before pursing my lips into a thin line.

Mia didn't bother to press the topic. Instead, she simply took a step closer to my side before wrapping her hands around my arm and resting her head on my shoulder.

"We have time," she whispered before pushing her chin forward and nodding it towards the bridge.

At that point, there wasn't a single soul in this world that could deny it.

It took only two or three minutes for a single person to pass the bridge. Yet, counting the total of roughly one hundred and seventy people, it would take at least five hours before everyone would find themselves on the other side of the river.

"It's hard to accept if you didn't experience it firsthand, but I've noticed something weird about my life," I stated, lowering my head as I immersed myself in my thoughts. "It's like..." I hesitated, struggling to find the right way to put my thoughts into words. "It's like anything that happens in my life always leads to something else."

Once again, Mia proved to know me well enough not to press the topic. She simply brushed her cheek against my shoulder, patiently waiting for me to gather my thoughts.

"If I notice strange fires, they will never turn out to be an illusion or a coincidence. If I pay them any mind, you can bet they will turn into some sort of evil ritual. A random conversation I will hear while dining in an inn will always turn into some sort of a scheme encompassing half the continent," I escaped to examples in order to better explain what I had in mind.

"So the fact that this river changed means that there has to be something greater going on with it, something that will inevitably end up involving you in it," Mia muttered. She then leaned forward while still handing onto my shoulder, only to turn her head sideways and give me a playful look.

"Did I get it right?"

"More or less," I said, unable to stop a plain smile from emerging on my lips.

No matter how much I interacted with this girl, even things as tiny as a small, cheeky smile of hers were enough to affect my mood.

"It's like I'm in some sort of story where anything that I pay actual attention to ends up used by the author to mess with me even further," I muttered once this weird idea appeared in my mind. "Wait, this theory actually works pretty well, since the author wouldn't make me pay any mind to things of no importance, would he?"

"Arty..." Mia muttered, her eyes widening a little. She then broke off from my shoulder, taking a step to stand right in front of me. She then brought her hands up before resting them on my cheeks, locking my head in place as she stared deep into my eyes. "I've known you for a while already, but you still manage to catch me off guard."

We stood just like that for a moment. With Mia's face so close to mine, there was nothing else I could possibly look at.

Mia's expression quickly changed from a serious and amazed one to her usual playfulness. She then brought her lips closer before giving me a quick peck on the mouth. Then and only then did she take a step back, pulling her hands away from my face and locking them behind her back.

"But this is not a bad thing," she said, her lips curving up in a huge smile.

Mia then shook her head before turning her eyes away from me and towards the river.

"Do you think some sort of aquatic monsters will attack, then?" she asked, before turning her head over her shoulder and giving me a curious glance.

"There is no way to know for sure," I said with a shake of my head. "But it's better to be ready for it than it would be to get caught with our pants down."