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In Love, Never Say Never Chapter 983

I nodded. My mind was still a wreck.

By the time the children finished eating, the sun had long disappeared below the horizon. The matriarch lay down some mats in the small house. Brandon explained that this situation could not be helped and urge us to make do. We were going to return the next day.

Boris was afraid that I could catch a cold at night. He forced the woman to bring out all the blankets in the house. Alas, it was still not warm enough and I snuggled next to the children.

In the middle of the night, my freezing feet kept sleep at bay. I curled into a ball. At this moment, a young girl's voice called out. "Ma'am!"

I wondered if my mind was playing tricks on me and did not react immediately. But I soon heard the little girl's voice again. "Are you asleep, Ma'am?"

This time, I was sure that the child was addressing me. I got over my astonishment and replied, "No. What's up?"

I sat up and noticed that the little girl was squatted next to me. "Mommy told me that I have to go with you tomorrow. She said we'll have delicious food in the city. Can you bring my sister too? She also wants to go to the city," she said.

Her words took me off guard. I pulled her closer to me and wrapped her cold body with a blanket. "Why do you want your sister to come with us?"

The child did not move. Although she felt frightened, she responded, "Ma'am, you smell so good. You smell much better than Mommy."

I could not help but smile as I waited for her reply.

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However, she seemed wholly distracted by my scent. I asked again, "Little girl, why does your sister want to go to the city? How old is she?"

She focused on my question this time. "She's seventeen years old. Mommy says that she's old enough to get married. She buried herself in her education, but Daddy won't let her study anymore. He wants her to get married but she doesn't want to. Mommy locked her up in the barn because of this. I feel so sad for my sister. She hasn't eaten in days. But, Mommy will starve her to death if she continues to reject the marriage proposal."

The child's words stunned me and I did not know how to respond. Soon, I collected myself and asked, "Can you take me to see your sister?"

She nodded and stood up. Despite being barefooted, she seemed ready to walk out. I pulled her back and whispered, "It's cold outside. You should put on more clothes and wear shoes."

She seemed blasé as she replied, "It's fine. I'm not cold. My siblings and I have gone barefoot in colder winters than this. Mommy says that we won't be cold once we get used to it."

I pursed my lips but did not comment further. I followed her out and she pulled me towards a door. She removed the lock and whispered, "Are you asleep?"

Sounds of rustling could be heard from within, followed by the voice of a young girl. "Not yet."

The little girl pushed open the door. It was pitch dark inside but she stepped in without hesitation. I was slightly hesitant, and she turned to say to me in hushed tones, "Don't come in. It's very dirty in here and is full of poop."

She turned back and said into the darkness, "I brought the lady as you wanted. Beg her to take you to the city too. Then, you won't have to get married."

I fished out my phone and turned on its flashlight. I swept the room with the light and was stupefied. It was just as the little girl had said. The small hut was full of poop and hay. Puddles of rainwater could not be discerned from puddles of urine.

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The girl that was locked inside was dressed in thin clothes. All she had on was a short-sleeved shirt and black track pants. She must have worn it for years because the knee area had been patched up multiple times. The pants were too short as they rose above her ankles. The girl was leaning against a cow but when she saw us, she retreated even further. She shielded her eyes against the light and whimpered, "Don't force me anymore, Mom. I'll die!"

The little girl next to me hastily said, "She's not Mommy. She's the lady that came to our house and said that she's going to take me to the city. She's really pretty!"

The captive girl narrowed her eyes. Her youthful face was pale and her lips were chapped from dehydration. She gaped at me and said with unexpected composure, "Are you the one who wants to take my sister to the city so she can sacrifice her organs for your daughter?"

The way she put it was distasteful. However, upon further pondering, she was right. I pursed my lips and nodded. "Yes. Please don't worry. I'll take good care of her."

She sneered at me. "Of course, you should. They might not be aware, but I am. Amy is only five years old, but you're making her give up her organs. She might even die under the knife. Since you're spending tens of thousands to trade her life for your daughter's, taking care of her is the least you should do."

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The girl's words cut deep. I pressed my lips together silently. I did not see a point in rebuking her. Initially, I was confused as to why Brandon would bring us here. But now, I was starting to see the light.

After a while, the girl looked at me and continued, "I know my sister can save your daughter. So, let's make a deal. I want you to promise me something."

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I knitted my brow and replied, "I'll consider it if it's reasonable. Otherwise, I'll have to refuse."

"Take me along with my sister. I can't wait for my death here. My mother wants to marry me off to a moron and I don't want to live a life like that. I don't need you to do anything for me. As long as you take me to the city, I'll leave you alone and you won't have to see me ever again. I just want to get out of here. I don't want to spend my life here."

There was ambition and earnestness in the girl's eyes. I could tell that she was truly desperate. My younger self would have pitied her and immediately agreed.

But, I hesitated. After all, this place was utterly alien to me, and so was this girl. I had no idea what went on between she and her parents. Before I could figure out why they were keeping her prisoner, I could not interfere recklessly as an outsider. The consequences could be dire.

I looked at her and said calmly, "I can take you. But, I have to know why do you want to leave this place and why are you being locked inside here? One more thing, will your parent allow you to go off like this. Without your parents' permission, I could be causing trouble for myself by taking you with me. If you really care for your sister, you shouldn't use her as a bargaining chip. You know that we'll pay for your sister's sacrifice. This is a fair transaction. However, you have requested my help and my moral side would likely oblige. If everything is in check, I'll agree to that!"

She hugged her bony body and smiled coldly as she scoffed. "You city folk sure know how to extol morals. You disregarded a life once you ascertained that it'll be able to save your daughter. How cruel is that! Fine, drawing the lines clearly shows that you're a rational person. I'll tell you everything."

I was not an unreasonable person. However, once I finished hearing what the girl had to say, I was rather shocked. Her name was Ann and she was the eldest daughter in her family.

In this remote mountain village, there were not many other ways to earn money other than tending to the fields. However, four or five years ago, the country's plan to increase led the villagers to come up with a new way to earn money. They would pad their pockets by having more children.

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At some point in time, a few outsiders came to take some children away. In return, they paid the parents tens of thousands in living expenses. Since they were all village children, many did not have identification documents. However, some children were sent back, while others were not.

Those that came back were considered lucky. Even though their health had deteriorated, at least they were back. The families of those that did not return would receive a few hundred thousand. It was as though they were paying for the life of that child, but the fate of that child remained a mystery.

Every family had about seven or eight children. Hence, the loss of one or two did not make much of an impact because they could always give birth to more. As such, no one cared about the children if they returned and fell sick or found out from them about what they had been through.

Several families moved away from the village after they made more money from this trade. The families that stayed either had not met a generous buyer or the wives could no longer give birth anymore and they did not have the heart to trade in their healthy children for money. Thus, it was easier to spend their days tending the field.

As I listened to her explanation, my heart went out to her. She sneered at me and derided, "Don't you think those people are ridiculous? You saw for yourself. My mother had nine children and I'm the oldest of the lot. The older ones like me are of no use for the trade, which is why she wants to marry me off and gain a small sum of dowry. She served me up to a moron for a measly amount of money. If I hadn't gone to school and seen how children from other places lived, I might have resigned myself to my fate. But, I have seen how the other children of my age live, and the kind of families they have. I can't stand it. It's not fair that she gets to decide how the rest of my life goes and seal my fate by sending me to my doom. I want to leave this place and never come back."

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