

### Chapter 37: The outside world

“Mr. Zhang,” Ren Xiaosu said politely to Zhang Jinglin, “I hope that you can let Liuyuan and Big Sister Xiaoyu live on the school premises during my period of absence.”

Zhang Jinglin looked at Ren Xiaosu and asked, “Has it already been confirmed that you must go?”

Ren Xiaosu thought for a while and said, “I’m afraid there’s no way to reject them anymore. You saw the plight of Zhang Baogen. Your life and mine are in the hands of those people from the stronghold. If I take the initiative to go and face the dangers now, I might be able to avoid dying. I could even sacrifice the others to save myself when I’m out there. But if I continue to stay here and reject them, I’m afraid that they’ll start using underhand methods to deal with us.”

“Is there no better option?” Zhang Jinglin asked.

“I’m afraid not.” Ren Xiaosu shook his head and said, “But, Mr. Zhang, don’t worry. Even if they get wiped out, I’ll be fine.”

In fact, Ren Xiaosu did not want to get involved in this initially. With his current fitness and experience in field survival, he was not worried that he would not make it back alive.

However, the reward that was offered to him was unsatisfactory. It would have been better if he, Yan Liuyuan, and Xiaoyu could all get into the stronghold. Otherwise, it would all be meaningless to him.

He was very eager to get into the stronghold, but he could not leave Yan Liuyuan and Xiaoyu behind and go in by himself.

What Ren Xiaosu didn’t tell Yan Liuyuan was that after he had gained his power, he would, on certain nights, toss and turn in bed in his desire to see the bigger world.

This town was so small that he could see the other end of it in a single glance from a high place. It was so small that he could hear the voice of a widow scolding some young punks in the west from the east of town.

He had also thought of heading out to see the world.

In fact, the only thing that Ren Xiaosu was worried about was who would ensure the safety of Xiaoyu and Yan Liuyuan if he left.

If Zhang Jinglin refused to allow Xiaoyu and Yan Liuyuan to stay, Ren Xiaosu would not leave with the band no matter what.

“It looks like you know what you’re doing. Tell Xiaoyu and Liuyuan to move over this evening. I’ll clean up the house for them in the meantime,” Zhang Jinglin said with a nod. Zhang Jinglin felt that no one in town would be more experienced than Ren Xiaosu when it came to surviving in the wilderness. As such, seeing how confident Ren Xiaosu was from his point of view as a teacher, he did not say anything more.

Ren Xiaosu was relieved when Zhang Jinglin agreed to his request. "Teacher, I've recently managed to save up 5,000 yuan, so please accept it as a boarding fee for Big Sister Xiaoyu and Yan Liuyuan."

"Take it back." Zhang Jinglin shook his head and said, "I'm a schoolteacher, so I only accept payment for tuition."

"Please don't reject it, Teacher. You can use the money to buy some cigarettes to smoke," Ren Xiaosu said.

Zhang Jinglin hesitated for a moment before coughing. "I'll accept 1,000 yuan as the rent."

Ren Xiaosu did not haggle with him any further. He counted out 1,000 yuan and handed it to Zhang Jinglin. He was usually a stingy person, but he would never mull over something so important. Ren Xiaosu would never hesitate to spend money on Yan Liuyuan.

For the remaining 4,000 yuan, Ren Xiaosu's intention was to hand it over to Xiaoyu.

This money must not be handed over to Yan Liuyuan in case Xiaoyu got any ideas for the money. At most, she could take all of the money and leave, but Yan Liuyuan would not come to any harm as a result.

If the money was given to Yan Liuyuan instead, his safety would be threatened.

Even now, Ren Xiaosu still had some doubts about Xiaoyu. He might be wrong in thinking this way and Xiaoyu would feel let down if she knew about it, but this was probably the best choice to minimize any pain or regrets.

Honestly, Ren Xiaosu still felt that their time spent with Xiaoyu was too short. It was not that he doubted Xiaoyu to have any motives. It was just that he had been struggling for so long in this wasteland, fighting for each day of survival with his own hands and leaving a trail of blood every step of the way. Having led such a life, how could he so easily leave their fate to someone they had known for such a short time?

Ren Xiaosu returned to the clinic with Yan Liuyuan to pack their belongings. He did not expect that their recently acquired "new home" would be vacated again. Wang Fugui said, "Don't worry, I'll look after the yard for you and will absolutely not let anyone else move in."

"OK, much appreciated," Ren Xiaosu said.

"Actually, you don't have to insist on letting them move into the school. With me around, what's there to be afraid of?" Wang Fugui laughed.

"Aren't I also guarding against you?" Ren Xiaosu mercilessly rejected Wang Fugui's suggestion. In this town, the school was the safest.

Wang Fugui was not angry. He knew what kind of person Ren Xiaosu was, so he expected Ren Xiaosu to guard against him as well.

Xiaoyu and Yan Liuyuan did not talk at all throughout this, merely looking down and packing their stuff. Only when they finally packed everything did Yan Liuyuan ask in a whisper, "Do you have to go?"

"I'll come back. It won't be dangerous as long as we take the correct route. If it really gets dangerous, I'll leave them behind and run back here myself," Ren Xiaosu said. Instead of answering Yan Liuyuan's question, he just stuffed the money into Xiaoyu's hands. "Anyways, I won't be able to spend any money when I'm out in the wilderness, so keep this money safe with you."

"OK," Xiaoyu agreed. "You should bring more dried food with you. It's too much hard work to depend on luck when you're looking for food in the wilderness."

"There's no need for that." Ren Xiaosu shook his head and said, "Not taking into consideration the taste and my tolerance for it, it'll still be very easy to find food once we get dozens of kilometers away from the stronghold."

But Xiaoyu's words reminded Ren Xiaosu of something. Since he could place the medicine vial into his mind palace at any time he wanted, could he do the same with other items?

Since the medicine vial was a real object with mass, it meant the palace was in a peculiar dimension.

If that were the case, Ren Xiaosu would also like to secretly bring along the town's well with him on this trip. After all, the water outside town was not exactly safe for consumption.

This was probably what "being uprooted" 1 meant.

Thinking of this, Ren Xiaosu took a cornbread bun 1 next him and secretly tried to store it away into the palace. Then something strange happened. The cornbread was still in his hands.

The voice from the palace intoned, "Storage rights have not been obtained."

Ren Xiaosu was stunned. So he really could store things into the palace, but he wasn't qualified to do so yet!

He asked in his mind, "How do I obtain the rights to access the storage?"

"Unauthorized to answer." The palace went silent and did not answer Ren Xiaosu's question.

Ren Xiaosu suddenly felt that the palace did not seem to have its own consciousness. It was just assigning specific quests to Ren Xiaosu based on a certain logic. Its role... seemed only to provide guidance to Ren Xiaosu on how to act.

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After Ren Xiaosu lodged both Xiaoyu and Yan Liuyuan at the school, he turned around and left without hesitation. Xiaoyu and Yan Liuyuan stood at the school's entrance and looked at Ren Xiaosu's receding figure as he walked off into the darkness. Yan Liuyuan suddenly asked, "Big Sister Xiaoyu, you know why he handed all the money to you, right?"

"Mhm," Xiaoyu acknowledged quietly.

“Will you blame him?” Yan Liuyuan looked at Xiaoyu.

“No.” Sister Xiaoyu started smiling.

Ren Xiaosu walked far away before finally looking back in the direction of the school. He could also see the vast galaxy spreading out across the sky overhead, a sea of stars.

He turned around and marched with conviction to the clinic to welcome the arriving guests.

A lot of the time, when people looked back on their lives, they might remember a minor decision that they made at a certain point in time. However, that decision could very well turn out to be the crossroads where they experienced a great change in their life.

Going left or right took a momentary thought, and once they made that decision, they would have to leap into the unknown without hesitation.

But at that moment in time, they would only think of it as a normal day in their lives.