

M. Slaying 19

Chapter 19: The New Student at South Mountain Academy

Confucianism wasn't very popular in the relatively remote southwestern region where Mount Shu was located. However, this was completely different in the prosperous northern and southeastern regions.

In the vast southwestern lands, there were only a few renowned Confucianism academies, and South Mountain Academy was one of them. Historically, it had never produced candidates who managed to get the top or second place in the Imperial examination.

However, there was one candidate who had scored third place. Unfortunately, that person was later arrested and thrown into jail, causing the South Mountain Academy to lose some of its glory.

Nevertheless, high-ranking officials and nobles still saw the South Mountain Academy as the best academy for their children in Yanjiao City.

Now, the South Mountain Academy was welcoming a new student.

"Dear students of the 37th Class, let us welcome Chu Liang."

The elderly teacher standing on the podium at the front of the classroom raised his hand. Then a finely dressed, elegant young man entered the classroom, capturing the attention of everyone present.

The young man had well-defined and dazzling facial features, giving him a neat and handsome appearance. As such, he stood out even though he was wearing the same robe as the other students. In response to the teacher's introduction, the new student walked into the classroom, giving a slight nod to the students below the podium.

Behind him was a book boy with thick eyebrows, large eyes, and copper-brown skin. He was dressed in a book boy's attire—a small black hat and black clothes. The book boy seemed somewhat disgruntled as he shouldered a heavy basket of books.

"Chu Liang, please find a vacant seat and sit down. We're about to start today's lesson," the teacher instructed after introducing him to the class.

"Understood," Chu Liang said while bowing to the teacher.

Then he walked toward the back of the classroom.

There were approximately twenty male students and ten female students in the class, each with their own desk. After looking around, he chose an empty seat toward the back. Seated on his right was Li Jue, who seemed to be spacing out.

Just as Chu Liang and his book boy were about to sit down, the teacher chided, "book boy, you are not to enter the classroom. Go wait outside. If you have an interest in learning, you may listen quietly by the window. Do not disturb the class."

The book boy behind Chu Liang froze and then put down the basket of books.

"Yes, sir..." the book boy replied before leaving the classroom dejectedly.

The book boy was none other than Lin Bei.

Lin Bei stood outside by the classroom window and peered inside. He happened to make eye contact with Chu Liang, who could tell that Lin Bei was a little angry.

Both of us came here for the mission, so why are you a student, while I'm a book boy?? Lin Bei silently conveyed his frustration through his eyes.

It's probably because we have different temperaments. Roles aren't distinguished based on class, Chu Liang responded with his eyes.

Lin Bei still couldn't accept it. I don't understand.

All right, look. It will be easier for you to gather information as a book boy. So, why don't you inquire within the book boy circle? You might pick up some clues about this mysterious case, Chu Liang suggested.

With that, Lin Bei finally dropped the topic. He turned around and mingled with the group of book boys.

The students of South Mountain Academy were mostly children of the rich and powerful or of government officials. That meant that they would, of course, be accompanied by book boys who attended to them. However, it wasn't possible for the students and their book boys to all fit in the classroom, so the book boys were given a separate space to rest in until the lesson was over. Furthermore, they could stand by the classroom window and listen from the outside if they were interested in the lesson. They wouldn't be restricted from doing anything as long as they didn't make any loud noises.

The classes at South Mountain Academy ran for quite a long duration. By the time the first class ended, the students were all a little tired. Chu Liang was the only one still in high spirits. He had been an excellent student during his school days, so being in a classroom made him feel nostalgic.

His former teachers had said that he lacked dedication. If he were to concentrate fully on studying, then no one would be able to surpass him, and he would be able to achieve limitless success. The problem was that he had been interested in too many things—all kinds of sports, board games, and video games. However, he excelled in everything he spent time and energy on.

That was why he had only ranked third in his province.

It appeared that Li Jue, who was seated beside Chu Liang, had not slept well last night as he had fallen asleep early on during the lesson. As such, Chu Liang did not feel the need to worry about him. He glanced around, looking for someone he could strike up a conversation with.

Right then, the girl sitting on his left, who had small freckles on her face, turned toward him.

Her eyes sparkled as she asked curiously, "Chu Liang, where are you from?"

Students were always curious about attractive transfer students.

"I'm from Xingzhou City," Chu Liang answered, sharing part of the profile that he had prepared in advance.

"Xingzhou City? In that case, why did you enroll here?"

"It's because of family reasons. My whole family moved over to this region, so I had to transfer to this academy," Chu Liang replied with a smile.

Upon seeing Chu Liang smile, the young lady giggled and said, "Hehe, South Mountain Academy is quite nice. It's one of the best academies in this part of the southwest."

"I thought so too before coming here, that perhaps it would be good for me to enroll here," Chu Liang expressed with slight concern. "But now, I'm a little worried..."

"About what?" the young girl asked at once.

"I heard that there have been sightings of ghosts here recently," Chu Liang said quietly.

"Ah..." the young lady uttered. Her expression quickly turned grave. She glanced around before lowering her voice to say, "Yes, there have been such incidents, but you don't need to be afraid. It's only those troublemakers who—"

"Li Chunxia!" a loud reproving voice suddenly rang out nearby. "Are you gossiping again?!"

Li Chunxia, the young lady who had been talking to Chu Liang, quivered in fear. She quickly shook her head, not daring to say a word more.

The person who spoke up was a muscular and robust young man. He was standing by his seat and glaring at Chu Liang and Li Chunxia with a hostile expression.

Despite his seat being a few rows away, he had somehow overheard what they had been talking about, and it seemed to be a very sensitive topic for him.

The robust young man pointed at Chu Liang and warned him, "New guy, if you want to study here in peace, don't ask around about that. Got it?"

Faced with this aggressive warning, Chu Liang merely smiled and nodded without saying anything in response. It was as if nothing had happened.

At this moment, a gentle voice rang out behind them, "Yan Xiaohu, why are you being so aggressive again?"

"Ms. Song..." the robust young man, Yan Xiaohu, uttered.

As soon as he heard the gentle voice, he immediately became docile and turned around to sit back down.

Then a woman, the owner of that gentle voice, walked in.

Her tall, graceful, and rather slender figure was draped in a plain blue dress, with a short green coat over the top. She had her hair tied up in a simple hairstyle, revealing her porcelain-white ears and neck. Her face was made beautiful by her well-defined facial features and skin as fair as snow, completed by a stunning pair of glossy black eyes.

The woman wore a serious expression and put on a front to appear older than she was, but it was obvious at first glance that she was quite young.

"She's a teacher at this academy...?" Chu Liang muttered in surprise.

This woman looked much too young to be a teacher.

Ms. Song walked further inside the classroom and stopped by Li Jue's seat. She shook him gently to wake him up.

Once Li Jue was awake, Ms. Song slowly walked up to the podium.

She said softly, "Let's begin the lesson."

Li Jue had a rare moment of alertness as he gazed at this female teacher.

The elderly teacher from the previous class had tried his best to wake his students by speaking at the top of his lungs, but it had been to no avail. Compared to him... Ms. Song's voice was soft, gentle, and soothing, almost like a whisper. Yet, her voice made all the students, male and female alike, more alert; none of them were dozing off.

"I heard we have a new student today," Ms. Song began. She looked at Chu Liang and continued, "So, let me introduce myself. I'm Song Qingyi, and I teach poetry and literature here at the South Mountain Academy."

When Chu Liang gazed directly into Song Qingyi's gentle eyes, he felt something was a little off.

Despite her young age, Song Qingyi was deeply knowledgeable about poetry and literature. She delivered the material in an interesting and engaging way, by breaking down complicated concepts into simple terms.

Once the class was over, it was time for a lunch break.

Chu Liang met up with Lin Bei on the way to have lunch.

"How did the investigation go?" Chu Liang asked.

"I've found out everything," Lin Bei answered excitedly. "That teacher, Song Qingyi, is a native of the Jiangnan region. Like us, she's new to the South Mountain Academy and arrived just a few days ago. She seems to be eighteen or nineteen years old, so she's around our age... and she's unmarried!"

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