

M. Slaying 23

Chapter 23: Painted Skin Ghost

"I was concerned that I wouldn't come across as respectable and serious while teaching in class... and so..." Song Qingyi stuttered as she explained. Suddenly, her expression shifted; she frowned and questioned, "Why am I telling you this? If you're not going to talk about the enigmatic case, you should head back!"

"I am sorry," Chu Liang apologized, a slight smile gracing his lips. He then wasted no time and delved into the pressing matter. "You must have examined the two students' corpses. Are you certain they were victims of a vengeful spirit?"

"Their corpses look dreadful and gruesome." Song Qingyi answered, "There's a strong aura of death about them. I'm certain they were killed by a ghost."

She then paused and continued, "But... I just don't think it's a vengeful spirit. It seems like a ghost of a higher level."

Vengeful spirits lacked intelligence and were incapable of coherent reasoning. They would usually appear in the same location, and despite harboring very intense grudges, they wouldn't show any complicated behaviors.

The act of luring two students from their homes to the lakeside to kill them didn't seem like something vengeful spirits would do, unless it was an extraordinary coincidence.

"But Situ Yan is just an ordinary girl with no cultivation skills," Chu Liang remarked.

An ordinary person without cultivation skills possessed a limited soul strength, and even if they harbored deep-seated grudges, they would become nothing more than a marginally stronger vengeful spirit.

If anyone could transform into a malevolent ghost, with unlimited strength, wouldn't it mean they could become incredibly powerful immediately after death?

Higher-level supernatural entities came into being as a result of deceased individuals' continued growth in strength, facilitated by a combination of luck and dedicated cultivation practices, or they

were individuals with robust spiritual power and well-honed cultivation skills during their lifetime. This was an undeniable truth.

However, Situ Yan, who had recently passed away, clearly did not meet either of these two criteria.

"Therefore, these students must have been killed by other ghosts," Song Qingyi said. "It could also be the evil work of diabolical cultivators."

Chu Liang nodded in agreement.

Certain diabolical cultivators would deliberately refine human souls entrenched in grudges, shaping them into weapons or cultivation-enhancing tools. These practices were exceedingly cruel and ran counter to the principles of humanity.

As an example, the Dark King Sect, a group that followed the diabolical path, that was currently on the upswing in terms of popularity, wields several weapons crafted through the refinement of ghosts.

Chu Liang then shared some of the stories Li Jue had told him with Song Qingyi. He deliberately avoided mentioning the incidents involving Li Jue and Situ Yan, opting to only provide her with the names of those who might be at risk of Situ Yan's vengeance.

"Chen Da and Yan Xiaohu..." Song Qingyi nodded and said, "I will visit both of them tomorrow."

Following a brief conversation, Chu Liang left from the rear side of the mountain.

He went back to the Li Residence in Yanjiao City.

"So Ms. Song is a member of the Noblemen's Hall!" When Lin Bei found out about this, he was a little surprised.

In the ranking of the Divine Nine and Terrestrial Ten, there were only two Confucian sects. The first was the Ascending Dragon Academy, closely affiliated with the imperial court, dedicated to nurturing talents within Emperor Yu's territory. The second was Noblemen's Hall, operating as a relatively independent group.

The Noblemen's Hall in Jiangnan had its origins in the efforts of a few eminent Confucian scholars. During that era, several prominent scholars would frequently assemble at the Misty Rain Pavilion in Jiangnan to engage in scholarly discussions and share their knowledge. This assembly garnered widespread recognition and admiration. Subsequently, other distinguished Confucian scholars who gained their approval were invited to join this organization, thereby transforming it into a hub for intellectual exchange.

In due course, a suggestion was put forward to christen the establishment as the Noblemen's Hall. It was decided that any Confucian scholar who received acknowledgment for their integrity, erudition, and cultivation skills could have their name inscribed at the Noblemen's Hall. This gesture aimed to ensure that their legacy would be perpetuated for posterity and endure for all time.

Since then, the Noblemen's Hall became a hall of legacy for Confucianism. Countless Confucian scholars aspired to have their names inscribed in the Noblemen's Hall as a lifelong goal. Eventually, the Noblemen's Hall in Jiangnan cultivated its unique legacy and ascended to the ranks of the Terrestrial Ten.

"The Confucian sect is dealing with the mysterious case at the academy, so we won't have to worry too much about it," Chu Liang remarked.

"Confucianism is great." Lin Bei seemed to have thought of something as a strange smile appeared on his face as he added, "I love Confucianism."

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"Chen Da died?"

The following afternoon, Song Qingyi sought out Chu Liang and Lin Bei, bearing unsettling news.

After she had completed her morning classes, she visited the home of the student, Chen Da, claiming to be fulfilling her obligation as a teacher. There, she bore witness to a scene of desolation and gloom at the Chen family residence.

"This case is rather strange," Ms. Song began with a solemn expression.

As she recounted the story, Chu Liang and Lin Bei listened attentively.

"According to the individuals in Chen's household, since the deaths of Zhang Cong and Wu Shao'an, Chen Da had been too scared to leave his room, hence why he had locked himself in the room. His parents only got to see him when they delivered food to him."

"Last night, as Chen Da's father was delivering food to his son, he witnessed his wife entering the room with a tray in hand. Chen Da's father found it peculiar because he had been instructed by his wife to bring the meal to Chen Da. Therefore, he couldn't fathom why she would be delivering the food herself.

"But as Chen Da's father returned to his room, he saw his wife lying on the bed."

"Immediately, Chen Da's father realized that something bad had happened. He ran to Chen Da's room and discovered Chen Da lying on the ground with his entire body charcoaled black. He was clearly burnt to death."

"However, there was no trace of a fire-related smell in the room, and it bore no signs of any burn damage. Remarkably, Chen Da never called for help; he was simply burnt to death, with the source of the burn remaining unknown."

"I have checked his body. There was a strong aura of death. The culprit is clearly a ghost."

Song Qingyi explained the entire situation without concealing any secrets. In her view, it was preferable for this case to be resolved sooner, and it was clearly beneficial if more people could offer assistance.

"The wife who walked into Chen Da's room, the one that Chen Da's father saw... was a ghost in disguise," Chu Liang contemplated for a moment before he continued, "There aren't many ghosts who can assume the appearance of others."

The technique of camouflage, transforming into a human, was not particularly challenging. In fact, many evil entities could accomplish this. However, it was exceptionally difficult to shapeshift into someone else's appearance.

One would either need to possess the divine talent of myriad transformations, or they would require some unique inherited ability. This ability was common among the fox demons and a type of ghost known as...

"Painted Skin Ghost!" Lin Bei suddenly exclaimed.

"Indeed. Only a Painted Skin Ghost can shapeshift into whomever they wish to be. The two students must have been lured to the lake by a Painted Skin Ghost," Song Qingyi remarked.

But how did Situ Yan, who had recently passed away, become a Painted Skin Ghost, endowed with such a potent divine talent?

If the entity responsible for these deaths wasn't Situ Yan, then why were all the victims individuals Situ Yan sought vengeance against?

The Painted Skin Ghost assumed many forms and was difficult to locate. This was a hundred times more difficult to deal with than a vengeful spirit.

Song Qingyi furrowed her brow, clearly vexed by the situation.

"Ms. Song, you needn't worry! As disciples of the Mount Shu Sect, we've always taken pride in our duty to eradicate evil and uphold justice. We won't allow this evil entity to continue its murderous spree unchecked. We'll try our best to assist you!" Lin Bei assured, patting his chest as he made his pledge.

When Chu Liang and Lin Bei returned to the Li Residence, Lin Bei fixed his gaze on Chu Liang.

"Handsome boy, brainstorm for ideas!" he implored with anxiety. "I purposely brought you along on this mission because I knew you were clever."

"But you're the one who made the promise to Ms. Song. Why are you turning to me?" Chu Liang inquired with a smile. "I thought our task was simply to protect Li Yue."

"Don't you want to see Ms. Song's beautiful and sweet smile?" Lin Bei asked swiftly.

"I just want to beat up some evil entities." Chu Liang responded ruthlessly.

Chu Liang obviously was willing to help. After all, the presence of a Painted Skin Ghost posed a significant threat to the world and needed to be eradicated as soon as possible.

After a moment of contemplation, he continued, "Regardless of the identity of this Painted Skin Ghost, its movements align with the individuals Situ Yan sought vengeance upon. Given that we understand its pattern, we can certainly capture it by safeguarding its intended targets."

With that, he rose to his feet and stated, "Keep an eye on Li Jue. I am going to see Yan Xiaohu."

"Why do you always get to go out? You went out last night and just happened to run into Ms. Song. I want to go out today!" Lin Bei protested as he stood.

Chu Liang replied, "I have a tool to identify the Painted Skin Ghost. Do you?"

Lin Bei fell silent, then settled back down and remarked, "Well, in that case, bring back some late-night snacks for me."

Chu Liang then proceeded to Yan Xiaohu's residence. He introduced himself as a friend of Yan Xiaohu's, there to inquire about his injuries. However, the servant at the Yan Residence informed him that Yan Xiaohu had gone out for some fun.

Given the severe beating Yan Xiaohu had endured the previous day, Chu Liang assumed he hadn't returned to school and was still recovering at home. Yet, to his surprise, Yan Xiaohu was already out enjoying himself.

This guy must have an incredibly strong constitution.

Chu Liang mused to himself before asking another question he probably shouldn't have.

"Where did Yan Xiaohu go for fun?"

The servant responded with a smile, "You must not know my master very well. Of course he went to the Rainbow Luna Parlor!"