

Chapter 2 - Story 37: Display of Special Courtesy

T/N: Title is "Sankonorei" - see previous chapter for the title's meaning. I tried to localize it, sorry if I failed.

Having finished that day's governmental affairs, Souma departed into the city while being accompanied by Shyemul.

Of course it's for the sake of meeting the elderly man called Solon. As ruler of the city, Souma could have sent someone else to summon Solon. However, feeling a strong curiosity towards Solon after having heard about him from the elder dignitary, Souma wanted to meet him personally.

And, Shyemul, who followed Souma, was secretly in high spirits.

That's not only because she's going out with Souma alone for the first time in a good while. It's also because she actually felt troubled most recently.

Starting from being a guest of the Fang Clan, Souma became the lord of Bolnis immediately after becoming a guest of the clan alliance, just to become Clan King the other day. In other words, he has risen to a high position at an astounding pace.

However, that made her worry, wondering 'Compared to that I haven't changed to before, only taking care of Souma's daily necessities and serving as his guard. Is it really alright with just that?' In addition, it also plays a big role that the elven women are also participating in taking care of Souma recently.

As Souma is in the middle of fortifying his foundation within the city, the chances for him to meet various people has increased. Dealing with the visitors and choosing corresponding attires for Souma is increasingly beyond Shyemul's capabilities as she doesn't know about human manners, resulting in her having to borrow the elven women's help no matter what. That fact made her panic even more.

Moreover, in regards to her guard duty, she's well aware that her abilities as warrior are not that great either.

In addition to first-class warriors such as Garam and Zurgu, who are especially close to him, recently there's even a monster like Jahangil around, where any comparison would be the height of folly. She doesn't believe that she's on par with either of them.

But, while that might be true, it's not like she has found something she should aim for either. For now Shyemul believed that she should devote herself to her current task as his guard with all her heart.

While asking people as such spirited Shyemul accompanied him, Souma finally discovered Solon's home. It was a small, shabby and isolated house located in a district where those at the lower end of the social strata live.

"Excuuuuse meee!"

Souma calls out towards the house's interior, but there's no answer.

Once he peeks inside through the opened door, thinking that Solon might be absent, he saw an old man lying on a bed.

"What, he's in, isn't he? Alright, I will go wake him up."

Shyemul tried to enter the house after those words, but Souma holds her back.

"Wait, Shyemul!"

A certain insight hit Souma at this moment.

'I wonder, is this possibly a standard event when a hero welcomes a sage in his party?

Jiang Ziya, famous as King Wen of Zhou's strategist. It's said King Wen continued to patiently wait without disturbing Jiang Ziya who was fishing.

Moreover, there's also a famous display of special courtesy in the Annals of the Three Kingdoms.

Liu Bei personally visited three times the retreat of Zhuge Liang, who was mostly a nobody back then, to get him to join his cause. And not only that. It's said that when Liu visited for the third time, Zhuge was taking a nap. Liu continued to wait outside Zhuge's retreat as he hesitated to wake him. And both, Jiang Ziya and Zhuge Liang served their respective lords after being deeply impressed by their conduct.

Souma trembled slightly, believing that such event had finally arrived for him as well.

As excitement is swelling up in his chest, Souma looked demure and said to Shyemul,

"We visited without any previous appointment. Hence we must not disturb teacher Solon."

Due to Souma suddenly having even started to use odd terms, Shyemul said while feeling uneasy,

"...Soma, did you eat something bad?"

Even though Souma said that with the intention of becoming like King Wen and Liu Bei, he was misunderstood as suffering from food poisoning or similar, causing him to become somewhat sullen.

"Listen, we will wait here until he wakes up!"

After having been told this much, even Shyemul had no choice but to abide. Both waited in front of the house for Solon while standing next to each other.

However, Solon was actually pretending to be asleep.

In reality this was his usual trick to drive away debt collectors.

If he left the door wide open and feigned to be asleep at a place that's easily visible from outside, debt collectors, who have many ruffians amongst them, would naturally step inside the house without any permission. And just when they would try to wake Solon up, he would forestall them, jump out of the bed and scream loudly:

"Burglars! Murderers! I will be killed! Help!"

The old man, whom they considered to be asleep, would jump to his feet and scream in front of their eyes. Most people would feel daunted, and he would use that opportunity to run away through the backdoor while repeatedly screaming the same.

There's no way that the debt collectors would chase after him if he did this. If they did chase him, it would cause an uproar, causing them to be misunderstood as burglars or something similar, just as Solon said.

However, today's debt collectors were different from the ones so far. As if knowing his usual tricks, they are waiting in front of his house until he wakes up without trying to enter his home.

'Well, it's useless, you know?

Solon took them lightly, thinking that they would likely give up at some point and go away, and thus continued to fake his sleep. But, before long he fell in a doze, and finally succumbed to sleep for real. Once he came to again, the day was almost over with the sun shining through the window

being dyed in a madder red.

Solon was about to get up, thinking 'now then, I guess I should go buy some booze before it's dark outside,' but he got surprised by the voices audible from outside his house.

"Hey, Soma. Let's give up already and go back."

"No, no. I will wait until teacher wakes up."

"So, what's with that unpleasant way of calling him?"

'How astonishing. Those two are still waiting at the entrance, aren't they?

Solon was shocked that they had so much free time. 'However, the sun will set very soon. There's no way that they won't leave once it becomes dark outside. I will continue feigning to be asleep for a little bit longer.

That's what Solon planned, but suddenly he felt flustered.

He had to urinate.

It was unwise to drink booze before his nap. The urge to urinate is gradually becoming more powerful, and at this rate he would end up leaking.

Finally Solon jumped out of the bed, unable to hold it back any longer.

"Ah! Are you Teacher Solon?"

Noticing that he had woken up, the boy performs a polite bow.

However, his urge to pee has already reached its limit. 'I have to get rid of this boy as fast as possible.'

"Today, it's already dark. Come again on another day."

Solon's face as he frantically held back his urge appeared to the unknowing Souma to be extremely serious.

Souma is taken aback by that.

What Souma was reminded of at that time was the famous anecdote of Zhang Liang and Huang Shi Gong.

It's a story about the young Zhang Liang, who later on became a famous strategist for Han Gaozu, the founder of the Han Dynasty, as he tried to cross a bridge. An old man tossed his own shoes down below the bridge, and ordered Zhang to go pick them up. Once Zhang did as told, this rude old man told him to put on those shoes on his feet. However, without getting angry at that either, Zhang kneeled down in front of the old man and put on the shoes on the old man's feet.

Thereupon, the old man left after telling him to come to the bridge on the morning of the fifth day. And once Zhang arrived at the place at the promised time, the old man already awaited him. The old man scolded Zhang with "How rude to let an elderly person wait for you," and left after telling him to once again come back five days later. Next Zhang went to the place at sunrise, but as expected, the old man had arrived before him, resulting in the old man once again departing after scolding him harshly and then telling him to come back five days later.

This time Zhang arrived at the evening before the promised day and continued to wait at the location. As result the old man, who arrived after him, finally praised Zhang and awarded him with Jiang Ziya's book on military strategies.

'I'm pretty sure this is an event where a future, famous strategist will be rewarded with wisdom by a sage!

Souma clenches his fists slightly in excitement.

However, Shyemul, who stood next to him, flared up at the attitude of Solon who told her Navel Master to come back on another day without listening to any of his words after making him thoroughly wait.

"Is that the attitude of a person who makes others wait for them!?"

After stopping Shyemul who was about to get in a rage fit, Souma bowed towards Solon.

"Yes. We shall visit you on yet another day again."

And then he left Solon's house in a happy mood.

"Hey, Soma. There's a limit to being too soft hearted. You have to make those kinds of people listen forcibly."

"No, no, that's wrong. One has to accord a wise man every courtesy."

"...As I asked before, just what's with that unpleasant way of calling him?"

Once Souma and Shyemul left while talking about such things, Solon hurriedly relieved himself in the urine pot outside his house. And then, after sighing in relief, he tilted his head to the side in confusion.

"Good grief, there are sure weird debt collectors around."



A little while after that Souma visited Solon's house again.

This time Solon seems to be absent. Even when he tries calling out to him from outside, there's no reply. And even after he looks inside the house through the open door, it doesn't seem as if Solon is taking a nap inside like the other day.

"There's no helping it, if he's absent. Let's come back again another time."

Souma turned around and was about to return to the feudal lord's residence, but suddenly he noticed a figure walking along the road in this direction.

It's an old man with characteristic, long eyebrows, and a white beard that spilled down to his chest like that of an immortal mountain wizard. His face was already red, apparently due to him drinking alcohol despite it still being daytime.

"There's no doubt that it's the old man — Solon, who took a nap in this house the other day.

Being sure of that, Souma waited for Solon to arrive while being excited.

However, the instant Solon saw Souma and Shyemul, he became startled. And, just as they thought that he was checking the situation due to him exposing his vigilance for a while, he suddenly turned around and started to run while pretending to not have seen them.

"Eh! Ah? Eeh!?"

Solon showed that he's a good runner for his age. Souma ends up dumbfounded due to Solon trying to run away at a considerable speed.

"You shitty old geezer! You think I will let you get away!?"

Shyemul, who bore a grudge over being sent away the other day after that long wait, became four-footed and started to run as if chasing after someone who's escaping. However, immediately after she breaks into a run, Souma's voice reaches her from behind.

"W-Wait a moment, Shyemul!"

Shyemul stumbles a step or two forward due to his voice and comes to a halt. Even if it might be right in the city, it's not an era where one could describe the public order as good. Especially recently it's said that many outlaws, who dream of getting rich quickly and rising in social status, stream into the city. It was impossible for her to leave Souma, who's unable to fight because of his blessing, behind in such a situation.

"Gaaah! Hurry, Soma! He's going to get away!"

Shyemul pulled Souma's arm reluctantly and chased after Solon.

"H-Hey, Shyemul! My arm hurts!"

"Bear with it, Soma! If you have the time to waste your breath on talking, then run faster instead!"

Souma complained about the pain, but after receiving an answer with a very angry look as she had apparently lost her temper quite a bit, Souma had no choice but to keep his mouth shut. Even if she might not be able to run on four legs, the other party is an old man. However, contrary to her expectation of catching him right away, that didn't come to pass. Solon seems to be well versed in the geography of the lower city and the slums. Even when she thought she had cornered him into a blind alley, he slipped away through small holes, the spaces between houses, or passed through other people homes. She was unable to seize him while always being one step late.

"If it's this place!"

The chase of Solon reached the street along the river flowing through the city's center. That street's straightness is the most suitable for making use of a zoa's leg strength. Moreover, there are no suspicious people in visible range and thus it will likely pose no problem to leave Soma alone for a short while.

Believing so, Shyemul lets go of Souma's hand, and immediately begins to run after going down on all four.

She shortened the distance to Solon in a flash and just when she was about to leap upon his back to push him down, Solon perceived Shyemul's fast approach and suddenly jumped into the river. When Souma wondered, 'is he risking to drown for his resolve!?', Solon's head bobbed to the surface. And then he smoothly swam over to the opposite shore. Having safely arrived there, Solon wrung his dripping wet clothes like a wet rag, and ran off again.

"Wait, you damned geezer!!"

Shyemul jeered at him, but Solon naturally didn't wait. She grabbed Souma's arm once again, and had to run back to the bridge in order to cross over to the other side.

When she finally managed to corner Solon, the day was nearing its end.

The three, who had continued the chasing game within the city, were completely exhausted. Even Shyemul was drenched with sweat and her shoulders were heaving up and down as she breathed roughly.

The one in the worst state among them was Solon. Because he escaped on all four at narrow places with his wet clothes, it wasn't clear anymore whether he's wearing clothes or tattered rags. With him lying sprawled on the street in such a state, it was inevitable that one would believe he had died at the roadside, if not for his rough breathing.

"It will be dark soon. Come back on another day."

Souma answers Solon, who's speaking in a broken voice due to his rough breathing, while likewise breathing heavily,

"We shall visit...you on another day again."

The worn-out Souma didn't even possess the strength to get angry.



Then, the third visit.

Around that time even Souma realized that something was amiss. 'Isn't there some kind of ridiculous misunderstanding?' While thinking that, he visited Solon's house, just to run into him at the entrance door.

As soon as Solon saw Souma's face, he screamed and ran away as fast as he can.

"How tenacious, you damn debt collectors! You shitty money mongers!"

Souma got surprised by Solon's angry yelling.

"W-Wait a moment! You're wrong! It's a misunderstanding!"

However, Solon didn't stop. At once Souma retrieved his purse from his pocket, and threw it over to Shyemul. Shyemul immediately understood Souma's intention, and grasped it tightly with her right hand to ascertain its weight. And then she took a large step forward with her left foot, and threw the purse at Solon by nimbly swinging her right hand while rotating her waist. The fast moving purse precisely hit Solon's back.

Even though the purse with its coins was small, it still had a considerable weight. Solon, who got directly hit by it, unsteadily pitched forward and was about to fall, but still managed to stay on his feet somehow.

However, at that moment a series of metallic sounds reached Solon's ears.

"Money?!"

It was the sound of the bronze and silver coins falling out of Souma's purse due to the impact of hitting Solon's back. At once Solon turned on his heels, about to go back in order to pick up the money. But, immediately coming to his senses that this is not the right situation for doing this, he tried to further turn on his heels to make a full turn. However, that radical braking brought about a bad outcome, resulting in him losing his footing.

Solon pitched forward and fell down with his face first, knocking his forehead heartily against the ground which resulted in him seeing stars. A furred foot with claws growing out of it stomped down on the ground in front of Solon who was about to faint due to the excessive pain.

"Finally caught you, shitty geezer!"

Shyemul's appearance as she looks down at him while crouching seems as if she's going to devour him at any moment. Meanwhile Souma looks down at him while laughing dryly, not knowing what he should do next.

"Please spare me, kind sir! Please show mercy to this miserable old man! I don't have any money to give back right now, but I shall work my whole life as your manservant to pay you back, so please, just my life...!"

Souma sighed deeply due to Solon begging for his life without any shame or honor.



"Weeell, sorry about this. I'm really sorry. I completely thought you guys are debt collectors."

Accompanied by Solon, who was still begging for his life, Souma headed to a nearby bar to explain the circumstances. Once Solon learned that Souma and Shyemul are no debt collectors, he demanded wine with a nonchalant face, despite having just pleaded for his life in such an unsightly manner, breaking any limits of shamelessness.

"Look, Soma. What's with the 『According a wise man every courtesy』, eh?"

Souma couldn't do anything but smile bitterly at Shyemul mimicking him. Even though he believed that it's finally an event to usher in a sage, he cannot help but smile wryly since all of it was actually Solon running away because he misunderstood him as debt collector.

"Sage? You talking about me? Hoho, you have quite the discerning eye."

Shyemul, who had teased Soma from the side, bares her fangs threateningly.

"What's with your attitude!? Soma is this city's lord!"

Solon's behavior completely changed upon Shyemul's remonstrance. Even though he seemed to be in a good mood up to that moment, he now frowned and was sulky.

"What, his Lordship, eh? —So, just what kind of business might you have with this old, senile fool, oh great Lord?"

Holding back Shyemul, who was about to have an anger fit once again due to Solon's hypocritical courtesy, Souma informs Solon about the reason of his visit.

"I was actually looking for a teacher to pass on his knowledge."

Solon laughed it off with a small "Hah!" as though being a fool.

"Excuse me, excuse me. Being the teacher of his exalted Lordship is impossible for a silly old man like me. Please look elsewhere."

He casually waved his hand as if chasing stray dogs away. Souma reveals a strained laugh at that.

"I'm troubled because there are no people who are willing to do it."

"If you're the lord, you just have to pile up a mountain of money in front of them, right? If you do that, you will find as many willing fellows as you like."

He implicitly indicated that he would still not do it even if Souma piled up a mountain of money in front of him. Furthermore, Solon said in an aggravating tone,

"Before I'm going to teach Your Lordship, I would much rather teach the orphans around here."

To say that he would prefer the orphans, the city's parasites, was a terrible insult. But for Souma it was rather convenient.

"That fits just fine then. In fact I'd like you to teach those orphans."

Solon was taken aback for a short while after hearing Souma.

"Teach the orphans? What am I to teach them?"

On the Seldeas Continent in those times the influential and wealthy people donate money to beggars and orphans as duty of the rich, but it's rare for those in power to do so. Much less if it comes to education - leaving aside the donation of food - it's already an act going beyond common sense. However, Solon's astonishment doesn't stop at just that.

"...? Writing and calculation, I'd say?"

For Souma, who lived in modern Japan, reading, writing, and calculation are no more than the basics of basics.

However, for this world those things belong in the category of sophisticated education limited to nobles and government officials. To teach those things to the city's parasites, the orphans, was something truly startling.

"But, for what reason...?"

Even Solon had heard rumors about the lord gathering the orphans. However, he believed that they had just been gathered as workforce. And it's not just Solon who is under that impression. It was the

same for many of the city's residents.
That's because it's the common sense of this world.

"Allowing children to get education is the foundation for the development of a city and country, isn't it?"

Yet, the modern Japanese Souma has a completely different common sense.

Souma knew about the "One Hundred Sacks of Rice" of Kobayashi Torasaburou, who used the rice as funds to establish a school, saying "Even a hundred sacks of rice will be gone in no time if eaten, but if they are spent on education, they will turn into 10,000 or 1,000,000 sacks in the near future" while not distributing those hundred sacks, which were given to him as donation for the Nagaoka Domain that was suffering from poverty after the Boshin War, to his retainers. Even without understanding the real meaning behind it, Souma grasps the importance of basic education as foundation for the advancement of a city or a country.

For Souma it was only natural to provide basic education to the orphans.

Solon, who had that explained to him, folded his arms and groaned.

He can certainly understand what Souma is saying.

However, it's not like the city or country will immediately grow just because the orphans receive education. For that investment to bear fruits 10 or 20 years are necessary until the orphans become adults.

Right now there's no sign of Holmea coming to attack, even so, Holmea will definitely raise a punitive force again under some kind of pretext. The current situation of Souma and the others is so precarious that it wouldn't be strange even if they were to be attacked and overthrown by Holmea at any time.

Due to Souma investing into something, where it's unknown just when to expect results, while being in an unstable situation, Solon was utterly perplexed whether he should be amazed or full of praise.

Souma uneasily asks Solon who had sunken into silence,

"So, could you do me the favor of taking over this task?"

For a while Solon silently fiddles around with his wine jar.

It's easy to refuse here. Besides, he had enough of getting involved with the authorities. However, rather than dismissing it, he feels a throbbing curiosity due to Souma's proposal, a feeling he hadn't sensed in a long time.

At the time when Shyemul started to grind her fangs as she was gradually losing her patience due to Solon not readily answering Souma's question, Solon finally said,

"...I'm only going to teach orphans, right?"



Souma taught the children in one of the orphanage's rooms

There also were boys around the same age as Souma among the the orphanage's children, but all children's eyes sparkle with pure curiosity as they are staring at him.

"If a fire burns, the oxygen in the air and the carbon in the wood combine, resulting in what is

called carbon dioxide."

Souma puts a lit candle inside a small jar and puts a lid on it. After a short while when he opens the lid and takes out the candle, the fire has disappeared.

"Is there anyone who knows why the fire vanished?"

The children yelled loudly that they don't know or gave some absurd explanations.

"It's because there was no oxygens left inside the jar. Once the oxygen vanishes, fire can't burn any longer."

Souma shows the jar's interior to the children.

"Right now this jar is full of carbon dioxide. But you can't see it as it's colorless and transparent. However, there exists a method to find out about its existence."

What Souma took out is transparent water he had drawn from a small cask. Once he pours that into the jar with a ladle, he put the lid on the jar, firmly held it with both hands, and began to shake it intensely.

"Water that had been mixed with burned lime powder is inside this cask. If you put it inside the jar and mix it properly. —Then..."

Souma removed the lid and tilted the jar above a wooden bucket. Thereupon, the water, which had been transparent, ran down as white, muddy sludge. The children cheer merrily as if having witnessed magic.

"Ooh! What's this? What's the theory behind this, youngster? Explain, give us an explanation!"

Souma explains, overwhelmed by a conspicuously loud, hoarse voice.

"Umm, the water I poured in is called limewater. It's water with dissolved burned lime powder. Once it absorbs carbon dioxide, it turns into a white, muddy sludge."

The children scream "Ooh!" in admiration.

"And, carbon dioxide is also contained in a person's breath."

Saying so, he uses a piece of wheat straw as straw, and blows his breath into the limewater. In response the limewater gradually becomes white and clouded. The children shouted in joy once more.

"Now then, let's all of you have a try as well?"

Souma places straws and small jars, which he had prepared in advance, on the table. The children rush over, all of them attempting to be the first to have a go.

"Move aside, brats! After me! Let me try first!"

Pushing the children aside, he steps in front first, snatches a straw out of Souma's hand, and immediately blows his breath into the limewater.

"Ooh! It's true! It became a muddy white!"

Souma said to the old man who was grandly frolicking around over the change in the limewater due to his breath,

"...Say, Mr. Solon. What are you doing?"

"Isn't it fine!? It's fun. Creating the thing called 『hydrogen』 by mixing iron into heated sulfuric acid the other day was truly interesting as well!"

Solon laughed loudly while shaking his long, white beard.