

GUARDIAN

Chapter: 101

Hall of the Yan Kings.

Ten courts hung high.

The hall was like an azure sky, unbounded above and below. The eternal haze of the vast Milky Way was overhead and the tongue-ripping, deep-frying eighteen levels of Diyu* were underfoot, surrounded by stagnant waters.

Those who had walked in were surely treading on real ground, but it looked like they were literally stepping on a pane of transparent glass. Underneath, those who had their skin flayed and their tendons pulled, who were thrown upon mountains of knives and into cauldrons of oil—all could be seen with utter clarity, as if one might also drop down under at any moment.

The gloom-haunted sentences pronounced by the ghost messengers below and the hysterical, miserable screaming of ghosts came together in splendid contrast to form a uniquely scenic sight.

The magistrate stared. He knew this was the opened “earth-piercing eye”; and with some uneasiness, he cast a glance at Zhao Yunlan and quietly had all the ghost messengers present withdrawn.

aw and stand to one side. Normally, the earth-piercing eye wasn't open and people in the hall of the Yan Kings wouldn't be able to see matters below in the eighteen levels of Diyu. It was only when souls guilty of the most heinous crimes refused to submit that this sight was revealed to serve as a warning.

Really... this wasn't the way to treat guests.

Zhu Hong grabbed Zhao Yunlan's arm. If it weren't for his thick clothes, her ten sharp fingers would have practically pierced into Zhao Yunlan's flesh. The Yan Kings of the Ten Halls each looked down ferociously from their respective ten courts hanging high above on the wall. For no reason, it made people feel as if they had greenish blue masks with fierce fangs.

Under their feet, Zhu Hong saw a rickety man tied to a post, two little ghosts on either side pressing him down. Another one pried open the man's mouth, reaching its dry green hand into it. The little ghost's shrill laughter and the unbearable howls of pain exploded out together. Zhu Hong quivered, her palms ice cold.

Zhu Hong: "Don't, don't go over there."

Zhao Yunlan lowered his head to look at her hand grabbed onto his clothes. Patiently, he pried off her fingers one by one: "Wait for me outside."

Then, he strode in expressionlessly. Under Zhu Hong's extreme trepidation, his every step seemed to land on the heads of the countless little ghosts below. At last, he stood still in the middle of the audience hall, on top of the frying pan that was the inferno of h

ell. Zhu Hong had the illusion that the scalding oil splashing around below was about to land on his body.

She gritted her teeth, originally wanting to follow him in, but her eyes uncontrollably floated downwards to see a long and soft tongue being pulled out of the man's mouth. The blood seemed like it was about to fly towards her face.

Zhu Hong's stomach roiled. Finally, she was unable to bear it any longer and turned her head away.

Zhao Yunlan completely ignored the female ghost who was still climbing up despite her face already being cooked into big boils: crispy on the outside, tender on the inside. He raised his cold gaze to sweep around the bodies of the ten Yanluo halls, then turned to look at the magistrate pretending to be a quail on the side (the quail, the bird, is used to describe people who are cowardly/timid) and gently lifted his brows. Arrogantly, he dragged out his speech: "You guys are planning on letting me stand while I talk?"

His voice was low and cold, every word piercing through the walls emerging from the eighteen layers of hell, showing not even the slightest degree of change on his countenance.

The magistrate gave a meaningful glance with his eyes and two ghost messengers rapidly ran out, one carrying a chair, and the other serving tea. Zhao Yunlan was not polite; he plopped down on the chair, lifted his legs up, and then raised a hand to block the tea tray that was passed over. He glanced at the ghost messenger whose face was like paper in front of him, and revealed an expression that was halfway between a smile and a sneer.

“I don’t need the tea. I’m afraid that if I eat the things from the underground, it’ll be bad for my stomach.” Zhao Yunlan didn’t even lift his head up and said, “Ladies and gentlemen, you have already put on airs and displayed your power, and you have already laid out the table—

I see that everyone is busy so let’s not waste time. If you have things to say, say it, if you have farts to give, give it.”

The ten voices within the Ten Halls superimposed together to form a unique harmony, indignantly denouncing him: “This Small One is impolite.”

Ever since Shen Wei was taken away by Gui Mian right in front of him, Zhao Yunlan felt there was a block of ice weighing down his heart, particularly freezing over all his internal organs. The things other people said or did all seemed to reach his ears only through a layer of film, appearing both fake and meaningless.

Only until just recently was he impacted by the extreme visual images presented. Although his expression didn’t change, his heart became inexplicably clearer, and his rage rose belatedly.

Zhao Yunlan’s arms were folded in front of him, covering his chest which was violently undulating due to his deep breaths. His rusty mind turned a few circles in difficulty—If the Ten

Halls still had their brains, they would know that the Ghost Slayer was brought away by Gui Mian. Whether it was that Gui Mian injured him, or that the Ghost Slayer fell to Gui Mian, for Difu it was all extremely unfavorable. What’s more, the situation at the Great Seal was not clear at present. Through the mixture of truth

s and falsehoods created by Gui Mian, it was obvious that it looked like it was going to break.

At this time, the Ten Halls made such an unfriendly opening, not even caring about their appearance. According to Zhao Yunlan's 30 years of experience collaborating with Difu, these idiots were obviously seeking something yet they still weren't willing to set their ego aside and lose face. Either that or they did not think much of him as a mortal being and planned on coercing and intimidating him.

Then he also...didn't need to be polite.

Without the least bit of hesitation, he lifted his head. On his handsome face was extreme looseness and carelessness. An indescribable arrogant expression seemed ready to burst out at any moment. Zhao Yunlan laughed coldly: "Oh, then you must all pardon me. My mom and dad didn't raise me right...I'm just trash without a good upbringing. What do you all plan to do?"

For a moment all the ghost messengers held their breaths. Some were unsure of the situation and thought that it was evident this man only came to find fault and to throw down the gauntlet. The Yanluo Ten Halls was the place to judge the sins before and after death. No matter if you were the Monkey King or if you were a general, everyone came in vertically and came out horizontally. T

hey've seen plenty of people crying and calling for their parents but...but they've never seen somebody like this.

As if he didn't have to reincarnate in the future!

The Ten Halls roared with the same ten voice ensemble: "Zhao Yunlan!"

Zhao Yunlan had thick skin and, extremely obstinately, added: "That's Guardian Order Chief to you."

He slapped his own face without hesitation (t/n figuratively, not literal). The hand in his coatpocket gently rubbed the butt of his gun. Similarly, a fire burned in his heart. He had a mind to be like a fighting House Sparrow, taking out these ten assholes who were pretending to be cool one shot at a time. However, at this juncture, he still couldn't afford to completely break off relations with these pig-like comrade-in-arms and so could only fucking bear it.

At this moment, the ground suddenly began to shake. At first, it was sporadic and small, and then it became more and more severe. The sands and rocks in Yanluo Hall were nearly flying.

Zhao Yunlan looked down. He saw that every one of the oil pot underworlds had practically become "shake before drinking"; big pots of hot oil were shaken enough to spill out. The previous awe-inspiring large and small ghosts all scattered in many directions, fleeing the scene. A crack appeared in the pillar of hell and the steel knives

buried in the Daoshan Hell**undulated up and down, like in Whac-A-Mole, endlessly...

Suddenly, a ghost messenger pushed open the grand door of the Ten Hall of Yanluo and fell onto his knees with a “putong” sound : “Oh no! The Great...The Great Seal is broken!”

As he spoke, the door of the audience hall opened wide. All the people present looked over at the same time to see the waters of Wang Chuan boiling. Every ferryman abandoned their boat to stand on the teetering Naihe bridge***, and the narrow Huang Quan road was already submerged underneath the boiling waters. A massive black shadow visible to the naked eye slowly rose up from underground until it was level with the water, then stopped suddenly.

Faint lights like fireflies shone on the two sides of the submerged Huang Quan road, and the bean sized lights formed a line— Zhao Yunlan remembered that those were the little oil lamps on the sides of the road, which were also seemingly called “Guardian Lamp.”

The faint lights and the massive black shadow stood off against each other, maintaining a fragile balance. However, what the end result would be, as long as a person was in their right mind, they would know clearly. Before the ghosts of varying sizes at the scene could react, another ghost messenger scrambled over: “The Ghost City! The door of the Ghost City cracked open! It’s all in shambles! They’re going to revolt!”

The Ten Halls of Yanluo who originally spoke in unison finally started to each speak their own minds from above. Like ten big ducks, they messily fought into a ball.

Zhao Yunlan sat on the chair unmoving. He reached out and rubbed his chin, lowly saying to himself: “Aiyou, now they’re all dumbasses.”

After saying thus, he stood up and grabbed the fat magistrate’s collar, deciding to no longer be polite to these grasshoppers at the end of autumn (t/n people who are nearing their end). From his coat pocket, he retrieved his hand gun. Utilizing the chaos created by the ghost messengers, he took the opportunity for his own gain and shoved the barrel of the gun into the magistrate’s mouth: “I’m not in the mood to waste words with you lot. Bring me to the Wheel of Reincarnation immediately, otherwise I’ll blow off your head!”

Zhu Hong couldn’t dare to believe that he would be this bold, shrieking: “Chief Zhao!”

Simultaneously, a Yan King suddenly called: “Guardian Order Chief, what are you doing!”

Without the harmony of the ten voices, the sound was a lot thinner and lacking strength.

“What am I doing? Doing you! (t/n aka killing you)” Zhao Yunlan laughed coldly, “I’ve endured enough of you sons of bitches.”

As he said this, he roughly pushed the magistrate: “Go!”

“Ling Zhu, wait!” This time, the ten voices finally came together again.

Zhao Yunlan heard a loud noise behind him. He turned his head to look and discovered that the tunnel opening under his feet had already closed at some unknown time. The dark audience hall from before flooded with lights and the figures of the Ten Halls were all exposed to their eyes. Like this, every one of them, with the exception of their slightly weird attires, actually looked relatively normal.

Then, the mechanism on the wall of the main hall turned. The noise of a mechanical spring peeled out and a stone door opened on the wall. Within it, there was yet another door.

One by one, the Yanluo of the Ten Halls came down from their high hanging court. Each one took out a key and, in a row, opened ten doors. Behind the ten doors there stood a vast pool emitting an immortal mist. For a moment, it did not look like Difu, but the Jade Pool****.

Zhao Yunlan fixed his gaze upon the pool, only to see a massive lamp, at least some tens of meters high. It looked the same as the little oil lamps carved with the words “Guardian Lamp” lining the sides of Huang Quan.

The last to open the door, King Qinguang, turned around and sighed. To Zhao Yunlan, he said: “I won’t hide it from Ling Zhu. This is the last of the four holy artifacts, the Guardian Lamp.”

When Wang Chuan was shaking, it looked extremely terrible from the outside. However, at a thousand zhang (t/n 3.2 meters) beneath Huang Quan, the area of the Great Seal was incredibly calm with only the occasional faint sounds like thunder traveling over. When Shen Wei heard this, he suddenly smiled.

Lin Jing looked up and paid it no mind. He circled around Shen Wei for quite a few times, and then climbed onto the Ancient Tree of Merits: “Wait for me to find it. I should have a wire that I could use to pick locks somewhere on my body.”

Shen Wei calmly said: “There’s no need. You only have to pull out the icicle in my heart.”

Lin Jing shivered for a moment: “I can really pull it out? Nothing will happen to you?”

Shen Wei: “En, nothing will happen. Thank you.”

The tone he used was as if he was talking casually to the take-out waitress at a canteen.

Lin Jing was not as calm as he was; his palms were slightly sweaty: “If you say so, Teacher Shen. It’s a shame I can’t get you to sign a letter of guarantee.”

After speaking, he wrapped both hands around the icicle in Shen Wei’s chest. With the principle that short-term pain is better than long, he yanked out the cone abruptly with a loud shout. Lin Jing heard the sound of ripping flesh. Shen Wei’s body followed the momentum of the ice cone upwards but was ultimately firmly held down by the locks around his four limbs.

Lin Jing broke out in cold sweat for his pain, but Shen Wei didn't make a single sound.

The five chi long cone of ice was pulled out of his chest and blood gushed out for a distance.

With a face covered in blood, Lin Jing hurriedly examined Shen Wei's situation.

At the moment when the ice cone came out of his body, Shen Wei seemed to have reached the apex of his endurance. The hair on his forehead was wet with cold sweat, and his eyes clearly lost focus for a while.

Lin Jing was afraid that he would faint again and so reached out to pat his face. However, when he remembered that this person was the Ghost Slayer, he was too scared to land his claw down and so could only gently tug on Shen Wei's clothes: "Teacher Shen? Can you hear me talk? Endure it, just endure it a bit more. I'm going to let you down as quickly as possible."

Because of the blood loss, Shen Wei's lips were dry and cracked. In his extreme blurry state, he gently moved his lips and hazily called out in spite of himself: "Kunlun..."

Lin Jing: "Huh? Kunlun? What about Kunlun?"

With this abrupt interruption, he was finally able to pull Shen Wei's consciousness back from the edge. Shen Wei's gaze became slightly clearer and he swept it over Lin Jing wordlessly. Following, Lin Jing saw the ferocious wound on his chest healing little by little. If it weren't for the bloody hole left behind on his clothes

s, the wound would seem like it had never been there. Shen Wei said quietly: "Please give that icicle to me."

Lin Jing hurriedly held up the large icicle with both hands. Shen Wei had mentioned that the thing was created from the waters of Wang Chuan. Perhaps it was because of this that the coldness of the ice was more biting than normal.

The icicle in his hand suddenly dissolved into a ball of dark black mist, carrying with it the color of blood. In an instant, it was sucked into Shen Wei's mouth. In this short amount of time, the cracks in his lips seemed to heal a great deal and his eyes regained some of their luster.

A couple soft sounds resounded. The shackles tied around Shen Wei's four limbs fell off, leaving only a few small wounds as if they were cut open by a sharp tool. Shen Wei's feet landed on the ground soundlessly.

Lin Jing hastened to climb down after him: "You're ok now? Then what should we do now? Where are those you chu and that guy wearing the mask from before?"

Shen Wei laughed lightly: "Him? He went after the bit of chaos that I caught... I imagine the Ten Halls of Yanluo will give him a surprise."

Lin Jing thought for a moment and then truthfully said: "Amitabha, Benefactor, I didn't understand."

Shen Wei glanced at him with a faint smile, turned, and disappeared under Lin Jing's eyes.

Lin Jing was stunned and blurted out: "Fuck! I lost the Chief's family member! I can say goodbye to this year's year-end bonus!"

An invisible hand rested on Lin Jing's shoulder. He heard Shen Wei's voice next to him say: "The waters of Wang Chuan are above us. You must think of a way to swim up. When you've reached Difu, Yunlan is around there somewhere. I will follow you in looking for him together, just don't expose my movements."

Lin Jing: "Ah, why?"

Shen Wei seemed to laugh lowly: "If I came out, how else would I enact this drama of misdirecting the blame?"

Lin Jing shuddered for a second, silently reciting the Buddha's name in his heart. He felt as if his leader was about to make a fatal error resulting in thousands of regrets.

At this time, it was already deep into the night in the human world. Chu Shuzhi and Guo Changcheng were currently carefully holding flashlights, searching the small resort town yet again. A whistle hung around Chu Shuzhi's neck and, with their every movement, the little whistle would emit tones of varying pitches on its own—that was for attracting the souls of the deceased.

Chu Shuzhi thought that in bringing Guo Changcheng along, he'd practically become a pacifist. It didn't matter to him who was fighting with who; concealing himself in the day and coming out at night, he was completely following Lei Feng's***** footsteps

whether it was blocking the girl who ran away from home at the highway exit or searching for missing souls in the depth of the night.

All of a sudden, the whistle around his neck increased in pitch, creating a sound similar to the birdcall of a thrush. Chu Shuzhi lifted his hand to halt Guo Changcheng's footsteps. The two stood in the middle of the small rusted path listening to the sound of the whistle becoming louder and louder—high and low, with a long trailing ending sound, like a siren leading the way.

Guo Changcheng's eyes that dripped cow tears opened wide. At the end of the small path he saw a young man wearing the work uniform of an express delivery man walking towards them with a hazy expression, following the sound of the whistle.

Guo Changcheng gently tugged Chu Shuzhi. Quietly, he said: "Is that a person or..."

Chu Shuzhi: "A ghost."

Guo Changcheng gave a start. However, in the next moment, he saw the young man's vacant expression and, for some reason, suddenly became unafraid. Instead, he felt a bit sad.

The young man was attracted by the sound of the whistle all the way until he stood in front of the two. He looked at them strangely and scratched at his hair: "Why are you two gentlemen still outside this late? It's so cold...you should hurry up and get home."

Chu Shuzhi replied: "What about you? You should be going home soon too, right."

The young man laughed slightly: “That’s right. The doorkeeper had already signed for the package and I don’t have to do any pickups today. I can get off work early and go home.”

From his pocket, Chu Shuzhi took out a small bottle. He opened it and brought it in front of the young man: “Then come in here. I’ll bring you home.”

The young man was stupefied for a moment, and the smile on his face gradually faded. In that moment, he seemed to have understood something.

Guo Changcheng suddenly opened his mouth to ask: “What’s your name?”

The young man slowly raised his head, stared at him for a while, and then said bewilderedly: “It seems like...I can’t remember anymore.”

“I remember.” Guo Changcheng said quietly, “I looked at your ID card. Your name is Feng Dawei. You were born in 1989 and even have an older brother at home, right?”

“I remember it all.” As he spoke, Guo Changcheng took out a notebook from his carry-on bag and opened it to show him. On it were detailed recordings of many types of information about each missing person. “Your big brother said, if you weren’t here he will take care of your mom and dad. Right now, they’re very sad, but they will be okay eventually.”

Within the young fellow's, Feng Dawei's, eyes, tears suddenly burst out.

Chu Shuzhi didn't say anything, waiting for Guo Changcheng to continue.

"Come inside and we will see you off. If you keep wandering, it will be daylight." Guo Changcheng said, "The sunlight is not good for you guys."

Feng Dawei lowered his head and wiped at his tears: "Then I'm dead, right?"

Guo Changcheng hesitated for a moment, and then nodded.

Feng Dawei: "How did I die? Did someone kill me? If you catch the culprit, could you avengeus?"

Guo Changcheng didn't know how to reply. Chu Shuzhi lowly spoke up: "The net of heaven is vast but the guilty can never escape its justice. Rest assured."

With his head lowered, Feng Dawei stared at the opening of the little bottle for a long time. He wiped another handful of tears: "But how could I just die like that? I haven't lived enough yet..."

"Come inside. In your next life we'll let you have a good life."

Chu Shuzhi started to become annoyed.

Feng Dawei laughed bitterly: "Next life...let's wait and see in the next life...Could you pass a message to my parents and my older brother for me?"

Chu Shuzhi furrowed his brows. Right as he wanted to say something, Guo Changcheng hurriedly took out his notebook and wrote

e down the word “message” carefully in his childish handwriting, underneath the page titled Feng Dawei. “Go ahead.”

Feng Dawei sniffled and prattled on about a bunch of trivialities. Without missing a single word, Guo Changcheng recorded it all. At last, he turned it for Feng Dawei to see. Holding his hand, the young fellow read the page word for word and then finally smiled with difficulty: “Ok. I can rest assured now— even if I can’t be rest assured I have no choice. Brother, you’re a good person. I thank you.”

With that, he took a deep breath and plunged into Chu Shuzhi’s bottle.