

GUARDIAN

Chapter: 102

Chu Shuzhi closed the lid on the bottle, stuffed it back in his pocket, and turned to call Guo Changcheng: "Let's go find the next one."

Guo Changcheng scuttled after him. A few steps later, Chu Shuzhi suddenly said without turning around: "You did well."

Guo Changcheng was already originally a fool who would become resplendent with a little bit of sunlight. Caught off guard by the praise, he was almost so much like a radiant spring day that he couldn't function. For a time, his speech was rambling and incoherent, barely able to even say a "thank you."

At this moment, a few howls resounded from not far away. Some low-

level ghosts who had stayed in the mortal world saw that there was fresh meat available and immediately opened their jaws wide and rushed over.

Chu Shuzhi grabbed Guo Changcheng and pulled him behind himself, lifting his foot and sweeping it out as he did. With a muffled sound, the youchu from the ghost tribe was struck in the chest and staggered backwards, falling onto his butt.

Three or four ghosts initially retreated a few steps, and then they rushed forward at the same time, side by side.

Chu Shuizhi shoved Guo Changcheng's chest: "Stay farther away."

Then he took out his gun and talismans.

However, before the Corpse King, who had been studying Lei Feng for many days, could even show off his power to loosen up his muscles, a person's shadow had already landed in front of him.

It was a man who looked to be in his youth. With a sharp stick in his hand like the type used for tanghulu (t/n candied fruits on a stick), he accurately skewered them with each move. In the time it took to blink, he had already stuck the couple of low-level ghosts into a disgusting meat skewer.

The youth's looks were homely, but when he smiled he appeared extremely sincere. He retrieved the sharp stick and wiped it on the side before walking to stand in front of Chu Shuzhi: "Ai, friend, are you ok?"

Chu Shuzhi was an advanced stage sufferer of the "eight-grader syndrome" (t/n slang derived from Japanese term chuunibyou): he always maintained an extremely serious state of vigilance

against strangers. When he saw the person walking closer, his brows immediately started to furrow.

Fortunately, the other party was proficient at reading expressions. When he saw that his expression wasn't good, he didn't continue to walk forward but stood in place and smiled in a friendly manner: "I'm an independent cultivator. I felt that there was something weird going on over here and so I came to investigate. Brother, please don't misunderstand."

Chu Shuzhi nodded slightly, his attitude extremely haughty and cold. He turned to the side and called to Guo Changcheng: “Xiao Guo, let’s go.”

Guo Changcheng hastily ran after him. Unexpectedly, the youth also followed without an invitation. Probably because he saw that Chu Shuzhi was extremely wary and grave and did not like to acknowledge others, he switched at top speed to aim his artillery of words towards Guo Changcheng: “What were those creatures from earlier? Why is there nobody here? What happened?”

Guo Changcheng was not used to others asking him a long string of questions—

he would very easily forget the order that the questions were asked and become messed up in his head, unable to think. He could only innocently look at the other: “I’m not very sure either.”

The youth continued to ask: “Ai, brother, then what do you guys do?”

Guo Changcheng said quietly: “We’re police.”

“Ah! Is that right?” The youth sighed with emotion and naturally began to chitchat with Guo Changcheng.

Chu Shuzhi listened to their conversation and didn’t interfere. However, he continually kept part of his attention behind him. He found that the youth was actually quite good at making conversation. Within a few words, he had already discovered that Guo Changcheng had a malady of ineloquence and immediately changed his communication style to no longer nag at him with questions. I

nstead, he started easily chatting about the small town, occasionally trying to pick at their origins through roundabout means.

As they walked, they collected six or seven more souls into their bottle. The two small bottles quickly became full. In the dark of the night they exuded a brilliant range of lights and colors. Chu Shuzhi lined them up side by side in the satchel at his waist and then took out another empty bottle.

The Corpse King had an extremely cold and indifferent temperament, and the road of cultivation for a corpse was originally already an unconventional gambit, not tolerated within common customs. Chu Shuzhi was haughty and proud and never paid attention to his merits, and probably didn't even care about it.

He always thought that the so-called "morality" was always passable on the surface but had an undercurrent surge of hypocrisy: the purer and better it seemed to the naked eye, the darker it could be underneath.

However, despite holding these malicious conjectures about others, he actually endured Guo Changcheng.

Chu Shuzhi himself wouldn't be able to say why this was so. Maybe it was because he was used to him and it had already become natural.

Either way, he looked at the bottles hanging in his satchel and an indescribable feeling emerged in his heart. Therefore, although he said that he disliked Guo Changcheng as a “person who is bloated from being full” (t/n meaning having nothing better to do), he still silently followed him in the middle of the night gathering the scattered souls.

There were many members of the ghost tribe wandering the small town. The unfamiliar youth continually helped them with clearing up the ones blocking their way, leaving Chu Shuzhi without time to make a move himself at times.

The strange youth moved quickly and ruthlessly; Chu Shuzhi instinctively became more defensive towards him. As such, when he asked about the Guardian Order, the Corpse King was unable to refrain from coldly reminding him: “Mister, there are some things that, if you shouldn’t ask about them, you shouldn’t keep talking. Why would you make people become sick of you for no reason?”

Guo Changcheng, however, laughed in extreme embarrassment: “Sorry, my Chu ge is a very good person. He actually didn’t mean it that way, it’s just that we have rules...”

The youth was stunned for a moment, and then immediately nodded very amiably: “Ah, haha, it’s ok. It’s me who over spoke. Excuse me, brother, I don’t have a lot of consideration. I’m just straightforward and quick to say what I’m thinking. Sometimes it could be annoying...you’re not annoyed with me are you, little brother?”

Guo Changcheng immediately said: “How could I be? Big brother helped us a lot. When we get back to the county town we’ll treat you to a meal. You’re a good person.”

The youth instantly nodded in agreement, but right at this time, they passed by a small shop. The young man’s side was facing the window, smiling resplendently and talking to Guo Changcheng. However, Guo Changcheng inadvertently swept his gaze over at the reflective shop window...

He was horrified to see that the reflection of the kind and enthusiastic big brother in the shop window was a creature that he’d never seen before: its entire body was jet-black, from time to time surging to form the appearance of a head. In the shop window, it ferociously aimed its wide-opened jaws towards him, its mouthful of tusks like ancient torture devices.

Before Guo Changcheng could yell out, the electric rod in his pocket had already reacted. A string of sparks rushed towards the pure appearing youth. Chu Shuzhi whipped his head around in shock and saw that Guo Changcheng was standing there at a loss, whereas the youth had leaped back more than ten meters in the space of a moment. As if it didn’t take any effort, he landed on the roof of a small cottage.

Chu Shuzhi knew that the electric rod was not under Guo Changcheng’s control; it was an inevitable reaction resulting from him feeling frightened. He put the glass bottle in his hand back into his satchel and squinted up at the person standing high up on the roof: “What’s going on?”

The youth on the roof was no longer smiling. He looked down at Guo Changcheng coldly from his vantage point: “Yes, friend. What’s going on?”

Guo Changcheng: “He...he, he...shadow...”

Chu Shuzhi turned on his flashlight. The young man’s lonely shadow had nowhere to hide under the light. However, despite looking at it for a while, nothing strange could be seen. The youth squatted on the roof, allowing him to shine the light on him however he wanted. In an easy-going manner, he asked: “What’s wrong with my shadow?”

Chu Shuzhi looked at Guo Changcheng with a puzzled expression. Guo Changcheng was at a loss for words.

The youth shook his head and sighed: “I’m really doing a thankless task. I helped you guys this whole way. If you guys don’t thank me, that’s fine, but just now if I didn’t dodge quickly, would I have died in the hands of this small brother who looks honest and kind?”

Chu Shuzhi stuck both his hands into his pockets and furrowed his eyebrows. At this time, the whistle hanging around his neck suddenly stopped making noise. A rustle of footsteps could be heard in the distance, a sound causing one’s hair to stand up on end in the darkness. Goosebumps erupted along Guo Changcheng’s neck. Following, was heavy breathing sounds. After a moment of silence, a massive head of a youchu suddenly emerged from underground, directly in between Chu Shuzhi and Guo Changcheng, and stared right at Guo Changcheng.

It seemed as if the Great Seal's strength was decreasing more and more. The ghost tribe wandering amongst the human world followed the smell of fresh flesh and blood, drawing ever closer. Within the county town, not even 50 kilometers away, the people were still unconscious of this fact, their lights ablaze.

King Qinguang lifted his hand and erased the image reflected on the yin yang mirror*. With a heavy expression, he spoke to Zhao Yunlan, the bandit who had abducted the magistrate with a gun: "Ling Zhu, have you not yet realized? The Great Seal is already broken. These years, the

Great Seal had always been guarded by the Ghost Slayer. At present, he is nowhere to be found, and it's unknown whether he's even alive or not. The little oil lights on Huang Quan road are only slight buffers. The first to suffer disaster will be Difu, and after that will be the mortal world. Please calm down first. If it wasn't for these extraordinary circumstances, we most definitely would not have sounded you out like this. At this moment, we should be uniting together to survive this great calamity."

Sure enough, Zhao Yunlan thought, this was them first hitting and then giving a sweet date, first fighting and then being polite. (t/n basically good cop bad cop)

He lowered his gaze and released the magistrate without changing his composure, but he did not let go of his gun. He then looked at the Guardian Lamp that was emitting an immortal air once again.

“Then what is the meaning of King Qinguang?”

Outside was in complete disorder. Even now that it's right at their doorsteps, this King Qinguang still stood still like a mountain. If a “heavy butt” could go into the Guinness World Record, he would probably be the only one in the three worlds. (t/n someone who sits and does nothing)

Asked like this by Zhao Yunlan, King Qinguang immediately heaved a great sigh. Using a tone like an old gentleman in Chinese operas, he spoke: “The Guardian Lamp was transformed from the body of the Primordial Mountain God, Kunlun Jun. It calms the spirits and drives out the evil ones, and is the last of the four pillars as well as the greatest source of protection. However... Ai, Ling Zhu take a look.”

As he spoke, he wanted to lead Zhao Yunlan to the side of the pool where the Guardian Lamp was stored. However, Zhao Yunlan didn't move a single step, gazing at him coldly. King Qinguang felt a bit awkward and so made a hand gesture. The Guardian Lamp slowly emerged from the water surface, turned to them, and tilted slightly so that the people below could see clearly—the Guardian Lamp did not have a lamp wick.

“Now that we've reached this point, let us speak frankly. This small God was very disrespectful to Kunlun Jun, yet still invite the Mountain God to be a bit more tolerant for the sake of devoting to the safety of the three worlds, as this small God is too low in ranking.”

Zhu Hong was shocked and turned her head to look at Zhao Yunlan. However, the man's expression didn't change even a little, maintaining an appearance like he already clearly knew all these things.

Zhao Yunlan looked at King Qinguang silently: "My IQ is a bit low and I didn't understand. What do you want to probe out from me?"

King Qinguang's words were choked in that moment.

Zhao Yunlan suddenly laughed. His laugh was very strange, a little mocking, and even more seeming to result from being in an awkward situation where he couldn't help but laugh uncomfortably: "Why did you stop the magistrate from bringing me to see the Wheel of Reincarnation? King Qinguang knows so many secrets, but you didn't know that my memories and my powers were sealed by Shennong? Shennong's body transformed into the Wheel of Reincarnation. I wanted to find a way to recover my powers so that I could maybe help you take care of the aggressive Ghost King outside once again. Why would you stop me? Additionally... small, small Yan King, what gave you the confidence to treat me the way you did just earlier?"

King Qinguang didn't think that from just one wrong statement, he would attract so much trouble, and quickly said: "This small God used improper wording..."

"Seems to me like it's not a problem of using the wrong words," Zhao Yunlan interrupted him, "Actually you knew that that year when Shennong sealed me, for whatever reason my memory and powers could never be recovered, right?"

King Qinguang's eyes moved rapidly: "This...This is true. At this juncture, we didn't want the Mountain God to waste his time ..."

"You haven't said what you wanted to find out from me yet." Zhao Yunlan once again interrupted his sentence.

Zhu Hong seemed to sense something from his attitude, and stood behind Zhao Yunlan in silence, glaring at King Qinguang opposite them.

Not waiting for the other to reply, Zhao Yunlan donned a fake, malicious smile: "Since you're notable to say it, let me say it for you. You wanted to find out if 'Kunlun Jun can never recover his powers' is true or not, right? 'Disrespect' is much less than the offense you wanted to commit, isn't it?"

King Qinguang: "How could Ling Zhu think that..."

"I was also originally very perplexed, up until I saw the Guardian Lamp that you guys always kept hidden here." Zhao Yunlan lightly raised his eyebrows, "In particular...King Qinguang keeps trying to remind me that the Guardian Lamp was created from 'my' flesh. Did you also want to remind me that the wick of the Guardian Lamp was Kunlun Jun's heart blood?"

With his words laid out until this stage, it was equivalent to him directly stopping all pretenses. King Qinguang was finally silent.

"You brought me here because you wanted to draw a tube of blood from my heart?" Zhao Yunlan squinted and gave King Qinguang a once-over, "My whole life I've behaved like a hoodlum towards others. I thought that I have already cultivated

into an invincible old hooligan. Inever would have thought that t here were actually people who would play me instead.”

The Yanluo Ten Halls all came down, each one of their colorful clothes fluttering airily, like abunch of descending parrots. They continued to use the method of combining their voices: “LingZh u is exemplary in conduct and noble in character, we hope You will always focus on theoverall situation.”

Zhao Yunlan looked at them with a shadow of a smile, but Zhu Hong exploded first. The bottomhalf of her body transformed to a gigantic snake tail, encircling Zhao Yunlan within. The corners of her elegant eyes were drawn out long, exposing the vertical p upils of the cold-blooded animalwithin: “Do you guys realize that he is only a mo rtal?”

Zhao Yunlan calmly replied for them in this pressured environm ent: “They aren’t blind, of coursethey know.”

The scales on Zhu Hong’s body were bright red like blood. She spat out her scarlet forkedsnake tongue in fury: “Why don’t you guys just say you want his life?!”

Zhao Yunlan quietly let out a sneering laugh: “Wouldn’t that sou nd so bad if they said it outloud?”

The Yanlou Ten Halls opened their mouths together in a chorus: “Mortals will all be born, age,fall ill, and die. This is common in reincarnation.”

Zhao Yunlan burst out in laughter.

Another violent tremor came from underground. When the people looked out, they could see the little ghosts in Ghost City running around chaotically with virtually no order. The shadow beneath Wang Chuan shook more and more violently and the little lamps next to Huang Quan swung to and fro. Some panicked little ghosts even tried to rush into Yanluo Hall without rhyme or reason.

The ox-headed and horse-faced demons** guarded the doors tightly, one on each side. Horse-face turned its head around: “My Lord, we can’t guard it for much longer!”

“The Ghost Slayer and Shennong Shi agreed to guard over the Great Seal, replacing Kunlun. They wouldn’t kill for no reason. Is it that you guys were certain he could bear it and so were similarly emboldened in front of him?” Zhao Yunlan sighed and quietly said: “Sirs, I really want to speak out of turn and offer a piece of advice. ‘Conduct yourself modestly and you will have room to be given favors in the future.’”

Zhu Hong’s entire body transformed into a python. Her scales were bright red in anger and she abruptly snapped at King Qinguang who was standing in the very front. A few ghost messengers hurriedly rushed forward, lifting their steel forks and huge blades to block in front of the Yan King.

King Qinguang raised his hand and pointed at Zhao Yunlan: “Take him!”

A voice abruptly cut in, coldly inquiring: “Take who?”

In front of their eyes, the yao (t/n previously titled as “demons” but it isn’t necessarily the same so we are switching to yao. It refers to the tribe of shape shifters aka crow tribe et c.) tribe burst in, each one of them leaders or elders of their clan. Amongst them, Snake Fourth Uncle’s eyes scanned Zhu Hong’s body for a moment. Snake Fourth Uncle, who had originally wanted to withdraw completely and force Zhu Hong to go along, surprisingly did not scold her. The Snake Fourth Uncle of this tribe, currently in his zodiac year, stepped out of the crowd, first solemnly saluting Zhao Yunlan: “Mountain God, this small yao has eyes but did not recognize Mount Tai.” (t/n did not recognize a great figure)

Even the crow tribe knew whose reincarnation he was. It was hard to say whether the leader of the snake tribe really “didn’t know Mount Tai” or was only pretending. Zhao Yunlan didn’t expose him on the spot, only nodded with a smile like he was watching a good show.

Snake Fourth Uncle said in a serious and reasonable manner: “Difu controls the Wheel of Reincarnation and were always insolent and rude to the Taoist brethren. I won’t argue about common sense with you lot for the rest, but Kunlun Jun has the great favor of harboring the yao tribe for thousands of years. No matter how useless the yao tribe is, we cannot allow your rude treatment of the ancient sage to go unchecked!”

King Qinguang took the lead and opened his mouth: “What is the meaning of this, yao tribe?”

It was unknown why the crow tribe elder, who had clearly separated from the yao tribe, had returned to follow them at the very end, but he hoarsely said: “If we were to blame someone, the blame should fall on the Yan Kings’ treachery... Too insincere and rude.”

Snake Fourth Uncle’s eyebrows abruptly furrowed. He originally didn’t want to be this straightforward, but it was directly pushed out by the other, causing him to feel like he was a little bit unable to back down with good grace.

Who knew that at this time another person started to talk: “Old man Yan King, we allowed you to do whatever you wanted with the important matter of going up Kunlun to suppress the Ghost King, but you stab us in the back? What is the meaning of that?”

This time it was the Sanqing Daozong***.

“Difu is exceedingly impudent. So there was a reason we were called together last time to jointly confront the ghost tribe up on Kunlun. You secretly put a tag on our bodies, guided the chaos in the Profane Land to leak everywhere—

But as long as Difu has a little bit of conscience, wouldn’t you say this thing should be tightly constrained underground?”

Soon, the Luohan from the Western skies****, the immortals from all kinds of scattered places, and all others of involved parties had all arrived.

King Qinguang angrily rebuked: “The collapse of the Great Seal is a calamity spanning the three worlds. How could Difu take all the responsibility for it?”

This sentence poked the hornet's nest. In the Yan King Hall, the big Gods from all walks argued into a ball and nobody was left to pay attention to Zhao Yunlan. He turned to Zhu Hong, who had obediently transformed to stand at the side after seeing Snake Fourth Uncle, and lowly said: "Why didn't I bring popcorn and Coke into here?"

At this moment, the black shadow in Wang Chuan abruptly flared tens of meters, extinguishing all the little oil lamps at the same time. Some unknown source called out sharply: "Ghost tribe!"

Sure enough, a small crowd of ghost tribe first emerged from the source of chaos. The number was not large, but it jabbed into everyone's tightly wound nerves.

Who knew how it happened so coincidentally, at this time Gui Mian appeared impartially in Wang Chuan.

Although the Great Seal was tottering and crumbling, it didn't actually break—

at present only the two people, Shen Wei and Gui Mian, knew the situation clearly. In order to set a trap to entangle Shen Wei, Gui Mian had created the fake appearance of the Great Seal breaking by extracting chaos from within the cracks of the Great Seal for many years. Who would have known that the little ball of chaos would be sealed by Shen Wei, put in some unknown location.

Gui Mian was paranoid and neurotic. At first, he didn't think much of it, but when he was sitting underneath the Ancient Tree of

Merits and heard Shen Wei say such a paradoxical statement, he immediately felt ill at ease.

He didn't expect such a small ball of chaos would create such huge ripples in Difu. Gui Mian, who had followed the trail to here, just surfaced out of the water. As a result, he saw the battle on the shore and immediately realized that he had been duped. By the time he wanted to retreat, it was already too late.

In the chaos, someone screamed out: "Ghost King!"

King Qinguang immediately found a favorable step-down: "The Ghost King already came out. No matter what, must you Taoist brethren fight over who is right and who is wrong at this juncture?"

The Ten Hall chorus quickly joined to harmonize with him: "Everyone should know what the 'overall situation' is. At present, please first let go of the prejudices each small sect family holds and let us join hands against the ghost tribe together!"

In an instant, the Ghost King was surrounded on all sides. Inwardly, Gui Mian resented Shen Wei for calculating against him. However, no matter what, he thought that the things between him and Shen Wei should stay between them from beginning to end, and didn't have anything to say to this insignificant and disorderly ant-like crowd.

He swiftly rose a few zhang from the water. With a single whistle, countless ghost tribe emerged from the waters of Wang Chuan, the chaos that could engulf all creatures forming an enormous barrier behind them.

The entire inside and outside of the Yan King Hall became a battlefield.

Zhu Hong was slightly worried for her Fourth Uncle and itching to join the yao tribe, but she was held back by Zhao Yunlan: “Look carefully at the ranks of the people inside. Don’t go making trouble, little girl.”

At this time, a higher-ranking ghost tribe was driven wild by bloodlust and somehow rushed in front of Zhao Yunlan. Zhao Yunlan lifted his hand and shot, but the other party dodged it. Just as he was about to shoot again, a familiar bell sound suddenly rang from behind him. Lin Jing, who had been missing for several days, emerged and threw out multiple

卍 characters from his hand (t/n pronounced “wan”, a Buddhist symbol used since ancient times).

The ghost tribe directly melted into a wisp of black smoke.

Lin Jing dragged Zhao Yunlan over to hide in the secret room storing the Guardian Lamp: “Still not hiding away... why are you two trying to join the excitement?”

Zhao Yunlan sized Lin Jing up with an unpredictable expression: “Earlier, the two screams were from you?”

“...” Lin Jing, “I was already yelling quietly.”

“Quietly? I could even hear your voice breaking when you yelled.” Zhao Yunlan’s face was dark like an oncoming rain storm, “Shen Wei, you better get your ass out here right now!”