

GUARDIAN

Chapter: 103

Behind the huge stone door of the secret room, Shen Wei finally slowly showed himself. He certainly did not have this conflicted expression on his face when he instructed Lin Jing to perform those disorderly acts.

Zhao Yunlan's gaze fell upon the blood stains on his chest, and stopped there. His fists held at his sides tightened, and prominent blue tendons were revealed on the back of his hand. It looked as though he was just about to jump into action and give Shen Wei a beating.

However, in the end, Zhao Yunlan didn't even lift a single finger and only continued to remain silent. His tongue pressed up against his upper gums, forcing himself to keep his mouth shut. Then, he silently started counting, losing his place twice. This person who always mocked himself as having "low IQ" finally jinxed it just as he foretold—
he fully used up nearly 2 minutes of time, before eventually stammeringly counting to 30.

Lin Jing was quick to see his opportunity. In the moment of Shen Wei revealing himself, he covered Zhu Hong's mouth and dragged the girl, who donned a face full of uncertainty, off to the side.

The longer that Zhao Yunlan was silent, the more restless with a anxiety Shen Wei became, which dragged out until Zhao Yunlan finally opened his mouth: “Shen Wei.”

In that moment, his tone reminded Shen Wei of the aftermath of when Zhao Yunlan saw through the act of deception regarding the Da Shenmu, that one sentence with a hint of exhaustion: “If you keep acting like this, then I will really turn on you”.

Shen Wei suddenly panicked, stepping forward and wanting to walk toward him without a second thought. However, he had just lifted a foot, when Zhao Yunlan unexpectedly raised a hand to stop him.

“Don’t come closer.” Zhao Yunlan lowered his head, while he simultaneously lowered his voice, “Don’t come over for now, it’s not the time for you to show yourself at the moment.”

Shen Wei could only stiffly stop where he stood.

Zhu Hong did not understand the reality of the situation, and asked Lin Jing with her eyes wide: “What does that mean? What does he mean by it’s not the time for him to show himself? Why can’t he show himself?”

Lin Jing calmly said: “Amitabha, don’t you interfere.”

Zhu Hong: “.....”

Zhao Yunlan looked at the ripped clothes and dappling of blood stains over Shen Wei’s chest, and only asked after a long while passed: “Does it hurt?”

At first Shen Wei instinctively nodded, but then his lowered chin stuck there, and he then rapidly shook his head.

Lin Jing couldn't do anything properly, but he was exceptionally good at saying useless things like a salesman promoting products and was thus well-liked by a range of middle-aged housewives. As soon as he saw this situation, he was immediately like a dog licking at the door, revealing his sharp tongue as he said: "How could it not hurt, he fainted from the pain twice."

Zhao Yunlan took in a breath, expression livid. He didn't even spare Lin Jing a glance, only coldly flooding fire in his direction: "Lin Jing, occasionally shutting your mouth once wouldn't kill you."

Lin Jing pretended to have overflowing interest and turned his body around, grabbed Zhu Hong beside him, and pointed in the direction of the battle: "Hey, female shi zhu*, quick, look, they're going to start fighting." (*TN: benefactor)

Zhu Hong seemed to suddenly exhibit great interest in her own shoes that have already been coated in a layer of dust and fixatedly started studying it, while also silently distancing herself from Lin Jing.

Zhao Yunlan slightly turned his head, gazing towards the battle outside. He relaxed his body, leaned against the rock wall on his other side. Only after a long while does he say: "So you somehow, through some sort of method, made it so Gui Mian was pushed to desperation*..."

(*TN: 狗急跳墙 = A dog so desperate that it jumped the fence)

Shen Wei hurried to honestly admit: “I lured him to use the Stone of Three Lives as the hearthstone at Kunlun Mountain Peak. Through the Soul Refining Furnace and the Merit Brush connecting with the Reincarnation Dial, the Mountain-River Awl was used to lock in the Reincarnation Dial.”

Zhao Yunlan did not look at him. His speech was very slow, almost as though he was using this chunk of time to think while he spoke: “Kunlun Mountain Peak... I wouldn't have remembered if you didn't mention it. It was during that time that you left a track on every person that was there right? Thinking back and forth, it can only be you. The underworld wouldn't have gotten the way it is now if they managed to secretly get to this point without anyone knowing.”

Shen Wei unfurled his hand, revealing a single long strand of hair in his palm. Then, he closed up his hand and the strand of hair disappeared in the blink of an eye. After a moment, it landed in front of Zhao Yunlan, the inky black long hair that the man once loved so much that he couldn't let go was suspended in mid-air in front of him. A hint of an extremely obscure black energy slowly diffused from it...that was the same as the black energy that was let out from Gui Mian collecting the chaos.

Shen Wei reached out with a hand and with a pinch, he retrieved back the strand of hair. The hair shattered into a few segments after landing back into his hand. He was extremely cooperative in his attitude of admitting to his crimes: “The mark was this.”

Zhao Yunlan nodded: “Oh, actually at the little village, when you split the ground open I should have already thought of it. You are actually the guardian of the Great Seal. If even I could tell that it was a Shadow Blitz, then how could you have no idea.”

Shen Wei: “Gui Mian isn’t at his grandest time*. A part of his power was sealed in the Houtu Great Seal, so he doesn’t know that my senses are somewhat keener than his. I felt it at the time, that the broken pieces of the chaos were just under our feet.”

(*TN: as in, he’s not at his best, or this isn’t the time when he flourishes the most)

Zhao Yunlan: “And yet you still let him give you a smack, what is wrong with you?”

Shen Wei: “.....”

“Don’t play dead with me, say something!”

“At the time I...” Shen Wei’s voice gave out for a moment, he rapidly cleared his throat, “This was indeed not my initial plan. I wasn’t initially that impatient, even though the string was already buried, but...there was still time after all. I didn’t plan on acting this quickly. It was Gui Mian who was pushed to the edge of desperation*, he used the broken shards of the chaos to set up an ambush to lure me in. I actually also was suddenly inspired to want t

o use the opportunity and push all the consequences onto him. Afterwards, when I was collecting the shards of chaos, I didn't want to get to the end with no achievements, so..."

(*TN: 狗急跳墙 = A dog so desperate that it jumped the fence)

Zhao Yunlan leaned his head against the rock wall, and smiled sourly: "Right, how intellectual you are, you heard me say two sentences on Kunlun Mountain so you made up a half-real flooded world—

so you used 'cut off my arm' to test me out, realizing that indeed you couldn't afford to mess with me...so you resolutely included me into your lies too?"

Shen Wei's voice lowered: "You wouldn't have agreed..."

There was a slight tremor of his lips. Lin Jing watched neutrally from the side, and, in that moment, he actually couldn't differentiate between whether he was pretending or if he was genuine—regardless, Lin Jing felt that Shen Wei's expression was as though he knew that he was caught committing a grave mistake, as uneasy as though he was a criminal standing in court waiting for the judge's sentencing.

Zhao Yunlan went quiet once again.

Shen Wei suddenly disappeared on the spot. Zhao Yunlan acutely felt a person sidle up close, carefully using their two hands to prop up on the rock wall on either side of his body. Then, his fist was held by an ice-cold hand.

Shen Wei softly said by his ear: “If you’re upset, just hit me, I won’t dodge.”

Zhao Yunlan withdrew his hand, pulling it away.

With one move, Shen Wei embraced him, pressed him tightly against the rock wall.

Zhao Yunlan’s brows furrowed: “Let go, don’t stroke the fire, I’m warning you.”

Shen Wei didn’t let out a single sound.

Zhao Yunlan raised his hand and it came into contact with Shen Wei. He turned sideways and shoved him away off to one side. However, Shen Wei lowly let out a hum in pain. Zhao Yunlan felt him slightly tremble for a moment and immediately stopped applying pressure. He slowly felt around to Shen Wei’s chest, touching the dried-up blood stains on his clothes.

After a while, Zhao Yunlan retracted his hand, saying with a neutral, even tone: “What do you plan on doing next?”

Shen Wei fell silent for a while, opened his mouth and said somewhat desolately: “Nothing, just sit on the mountain and watch the tigers fight*—

I... I guess I have been this despicable since I was born. I don’t want to indulge these people, shamelessly acting like a pitiful dog every day, hiding away waiting for someone to protect me.”

(*TN: a proverb describing someone who watches in the safety of the sidelines while two opposing sides fight, then reap the rewards in the aftermath)

Shen Wei felt Zhao Yunlan's rejection, so he eventually still let go of him, backing away a few steps to the side: "Even though Gui Mian always saw me as his enemy, my enemy is not him. I only promised Shennong to guard the Great Seal."

Shen Wei's words were veiled, but it wasn't difficult to pick up on the unspoken meaning—
he didn't even care at all for Gui Mian who always chased behind him.

The two of them suddenly both quieted down. Zhao Yunlan turned his head around and took a look at the Guardian Lamp floating with an air of death on the surface of the water. He dug into the pockets of his pants, took out a cigarette and lit it, his brows still furrowed tight. He said to

Lin Jing and Zhu Hong: "It's none of our business now. Let's go, return to work overtime on a report."

Lin Jing touched his nose. Being forced to listen to his leader and his family cold-shouldering each other, he felt awkward in that moment, but could only do his best to joke: "We just started work and now we have to stay over time, the dragon is almost raising its head in front of our eyes*, shouldn't something be given out to us?"

(*TN: it's like 'we're almost getting to the most critical point')

"Sure." Zhao Yunlan said without even raising his eyelids. "10 kilograms of monk flesh per person."

Lin Jing: "..."

Then, Lin Jing raised a hand to give himself a smack on his own face, and placed his two hands together palm to palm: “Amitabha, that’s what you get for being big-mouthed.”

Zhu Hong, however, suddenly spoke out: “Chief Zhao, I need to stay for a while.”

Zhao Yunlan turned his head back to give her a glance.

“My Fourth Uncle is still here. If I go with you, it’s still not very suitable.....” Zhu Hong said.

“Mmm,” Zhao Yunlan thought about it. Indeed that was the right logic, so he gave a nod of his head, “Alright, keep your distance. You take care.”

After he finished speaking, he took Lin Jing and skirted the edges as he walked out. There was the occasional Ghost tribe, blinded by stupidity, that pounced over, but they were all settled by the two of them without a single sound.

Zhu Hong kept watching from behind as they left, witnessing the two partner up in their old ways, keeping a low profile as though they didn’t exist as they walked on the sides. Only now did she relax a little, and experimentally said: “Lord Ghost Slayer?”

In the void, the man responded: “What is it?”

Zhu Hong: “...”

And then she jumped up: “Fuck, how come you’re still here?”

Shen Wei was silent for a moment, and lowly asked: “Where should I go?”

Zhu Hong incredulously said: “Why don’t you go with them?”

This time, Shen Wei was silent for a longer period of time.

Zhu Hong: “Ghost Slayer? Teacher Shen? Hello, hello, hello, can you hear? Are you still there?”

“He probably... doesn’t want me to go with them right?” Shen Wei’s voice travelled over from beneath the Guardian Lamp, and Zhu Hong couldn’t help but follow him and walk inwards by two steps as well. She heard him say, “He said before, if I lie to him again, he would lose his temper with me.”

Zhu Hong was wide eyed and speechless.

“You lied to him before?” She asked, and without waiting for Shen Wei’s response, Zhu Hong still said, “No, that’s not the point—the point is you believe what he says?”

Shen Wei hid behind the Guardian Lamp, unafraid of being seen by others, so he revealed a hint of a weak outline of his silhouette. He looked at Zhu Hong, somewhat at a loss.

Zhu Hong propped one hand up on the rock wall, completely discourteous, and heavily released a sigh: “In Chief Zhao’s words, my IQ is pretty low to begin with, and don’t understand what you are all bustling about doing. Either way those conspiracies and schemes all seem to be very impressive—

but you’re the kind of person who treats a hammer like a needle.

Are you sure you can deceive him like this? Then what he has for you is really true love.”

Shen Wei: “.....”

“Zhao Yunlan said the words about making Da Qing into a big pot of stew about 99 times, if not 100 times. That dumb cat still is living extremely comfortably isn't he, getting fatter and fatter?” Zhu Hong would have never dared to imagine that there would be a day where she could boldly teach the Ghost Slayer like this, and this Ghost Slayer was even a love rival that she just couldn't win against. As soon as she thought about this, she was both sour and exhilarated, the feelings in her heart could not be summarized using human language at all.

“When I got there, I was just in time to see you wrapped up and taken away by Gui Mian. His appearance at the time was really like he wished to slice Gui Mian up into ten thousand pieces with thousands of knives—

I've been following him for all these years, I can tell in one glance whether he is truly angry or just putting on an act of annoyance. Do you think it feels good for me deep down?” Zhu Hong didn't know what she was thinking either, but she straightforwardly pushed out the conflicts in her heart just like that. “Why would he be angry with you, just because you lied to him? Shen Wei I really want to...never mind, I don't want to anymore, I don't dare to anyway—

For example, if you run away from home and your mother goes crazy in panic, after she finds you she gives you two smacks, and you still feel wronged by that?”

Shen Wei used a kind of inexplicable gaze to peer at her.

He and Zhu Hong silently stared down each other for a moment, before she suddenly turned her face over, blankly saying: “Sorry I forgot you don’t have a mother.”

Shen Wei: “.....It’s alright.”

Zhu Hong did not know how to follow this sentence, and the two of them paused out of awkwardness. Only after quite a long while, Shen Wei suddenly opened his mouth and asked: “You...really like him, don’t you?”

This sentence spoken out clogged up Zhu Hong’s heart. Stiflingly, she said: “Yeah.”

Shen Wei thought about it: “Then why would you say these things to me?”

Zhu Hong rolled her eyes at him: “I only want you to upset him less.”

A slight hint of confusion fleetingly flashed across Shen Wei’s face, he seemed to be somewhat lost in thought, his brows gently pinched together. The shining of the rippling pool of water below the Guardian Lamp were reflected in the bottom of his eyes. It was unknown how much time passed, Zhu Hong almost thought that his soul floated away, before Shen Wei abruptly pulled his gaze away, and nodded his head towards her.

“What you said was right.” He said genuinely, “Many thanks.”

After he spoke, Shen Wei stood up, concealing the outline of his body. Zhu Hong heard his footsteps walk to stand beside her: “Miss Zhu please extend your hand for a moment to receive this.”

Zhu Hong did not understand, yet stretched her hand out. Shen Wei placed a little tree branch that was hardly longer than her palm in the middle of her hand, with two extremely small new green shoots on it. Its weight was not significant of course, but this little tree branch that did not appear particularly shocking felt abnormally heavy to Zhu Hong for no reason.

“This is.....”

“This is a branch from the Da Shenmu on Kunlun Mountain,” Shen Wei said, “Ever since the sky opened and ground split, only Nuwa’s ever chopped off a branch from the Da Shenmu, planting it in the thousand feet of Huang Quan*, to become the current Ancient Tree of Merits. This is the second branch, keep it well.”

(*TN: where souls cross over, literally: yellow spring)

With a stagger, Zhu Hong nearly didn’t manage to hold onto it, and flailed to cup it in both of her hands. With fear and trepidation, she lifted it before her eyes, looking a lot as though she wanted to set up a shrine for it.

“The branches of the Da Shenmu became a dead tree as soon as it reached the entrance of The Profane Land...most likely it’s naturally against our tribe. These years I took over for Kunlun, spent a lot of effort, but still could not take care of it. It’s been a couple thousand years, and yet it could only grow these two new shoots. I always felt somewhat guilty.” Shen Wei said, “Your Fourth U

uncle may not be able to attend to you. You stay here and hide well away from them. In case you run into danger, the two new shots can save your life twice.....”

Shen Wei said that, then paused: “If you don’t use it up, wait until everything wraps up and settles. Then, please go to the trouble of helping me find a place with spirited mountains and picturesque bodies of water, and plant it there.”

For some reason, Zhu Hong felt like his words were almost as though he was handing over something, and couldn’t help but ask: “Where are you going?”

Shen Wei: “I’m going to chase him.”

“Does he need to be chased?” Zhu Hong put aside her own uncertainty within her heart for a moment, pursed her lips, and sourly said, “Don’t pay attention to how quickly that bitch walked away. Now that the fire’s gone down, who knows how regretful he is in his heart. He’s definitely waiting for you, don’t worry.”

The invisible Shen Wei did not respond again, and it was unknown if he had left already.

Zhu Hong did not say a single wrong word. Indeed, Zhao Yunlan did not go too far. He found a hidden spot just at the entrance of Huang Quan road and paced back and forth. Cigarette butts subsequently covered the ground.

These obvious menopause symptoms made Lin Jing stay well away from him, knowing well to reap benefits and avoid danger. He silently squatted off to the side, and used a telescope that he g

ot from who knows where as he crouched and watched the battle as it reached its climax.

When Zhao Yunlan lit the twelfth cigarette of the day, suddenly a hand reached out from nowhere, forcefully extinguished it with a pinch, and snatched it right out of his mouth.

Zhao Yunlan paused, and inclined his head to the side to see Shen Wei hesitantly standing there, with a look like he wanted to say something but did not know how to start talking.

After a while, Shen Wei avoided his gaze and slowly lowered his head. He was covered head to toe in blood stains, looking battered to an extreme, and his glasses had fallen off who-knows-where ages ago. The hair in front of his forehead was slightly long, and hung over his nose bridge and nearly covered his eyes, in a descriptably wronged and pitiful.

Zhao Yunlan was silent for quite a while, then eventually tiredly let out a sigh, reaching out a hand towards him: "Come here."

In one move, Shen Wei roped him into his arms.

"I've been blinded.*" Lin Jing, who was treated as though he didn't exist, silently thought in his heart.

(*TN: 'blinded dog eyes' is internet slang for when you see something that shocks you or grosses you out or something similar, it's a self-

mocking term where you refer to yourself as the dog. Often used when people see PDA etc.)

He gazed over from a distance, and only saw that the tribes seem to have already finished discussing. The various ghost messenge

rs of the underworld have basically become gunpowder; everyone came to a silent agreement and squished them all in a place that restricted the line of sight of Gui Mian and other associated ghost tribes. At the moment, it almost seemed as though over half of them had died.

Lin Jing watched impartially, and felt especially that the opera-like costumes of the Yanluo Ten Hall Kings, all the flowery and greens, were key to effectively making them hated and despised.

The chaos was extremely powerful even if it were in shattered pieces. Regardless if god or ghost, everyone avoided its edge. From time to time, there were ones that could not avoid it, and were swallowed into it without a sound, not even leaving behind a single strand of hair. The chaos seemed to be able to make anything seem as though it never existed in the first place.

Lin Jing only watched as King Qinguang was forced to an extreme by the shattered pieces of the chaos, and with a “plunk” he fell into the water of the Wang Chuan* in front of his very eyes. The gigantic sleeves of his robes forcibly caused him to be afloat, looking just like a rainbow candy that was soaked until it expanded.

(*TN: stream of forgettance)

At this time, a huge net floated up out of the Wang Chuan, like a great big fish net, and dragged King Qinguang in his entirety right out of the water. He was drenched head to toe and frantically

rawled in a flail of limbs onto the shore. The elites of the various tribes went and stood in the positions of the Fuxi Eight Trigrams *. They took the chance when people from the underworld were distracted, and had put down this large net at some undetermined time.

(*TN: 8 Trigrams: 8 patterns/diagrams of divination origin, the 8 being symbolic for 8 kinds of natural imagery (e.g. sky, earth, thunder, wind, water, fire, mountain). The Trigrams are comprised of symbols for 'yin' (shadow "--") and 'yang' (light "—"). The sky and earth are meant to represent 'parents' while the others are 'the six children' and in total it's meant to be the origin of the world.)

Lin Jing: "Amitabha, what is that?"

Shen Wei's voice suddenly sounded from behind him: "It's the Fuxi Eight Trigrams Net."

Lin Jing was given a fright by him suddenly speaking. His hand shook, and his telescope nearly fell. He turned his head around and gave a dry laugh: "So um, you're not busy anymore?"

Zhao Yunlan "unintentionally" stepped onto his foot.

Shen Wei did not actually care about his teasing, and continued saying: "It should have been brought here by the yao tribe. Rumors say that Fuxi originated from the Eastern soil, and Chiyou only came after the Holy Seal. After Chiyou, the two tribes of witches and yao were born. After Emperor Taihao (t/n another name for Fuxi) died, he left behind the Fuxi Bow and Eight Trigrams. After that, the Fuxi Bow was taken away by Houyi and came into the

e possession of humans. Looking at it like this, the Eight Trigrams Net is basically the secret of the Yao tribe that cannot be passed down. No wonder, each tribe indeed has their own hidden treasures.”

Just as he was talking, they watched as the fragments of the chaos seemingly shrunk following the Eight Trigrams Net floating up. For the first time, it began to retreat back. Gui Mian was suspended high in mid-air, the expression drawn onto his mask distorted.

Suddenly, a burst of golden light exploded from the entire Eight Trigrams Net. Lin Jing was startled and said with a small voice: “That’s the Buddhist Golden Mark I enshrined in the West... According to legend, it’s the last magical treasure that could repress evil demons during the MoFa* time period.”

(*TN: In Buddhist terms, Mo Fa refers to the time period where Buddhism slowly began to decline)

The golden light flowed in all four directions, flooding the entire underworld. The little lamps that had been extinguished at some unknown time on the Huang Quan road were lit once again. This time the light of the flames were considerably brighter, like a fire dragon that swished its tail along the Huang Quan road, immediately encircling the surroundings.

The fragments of the chaos in its entirety, along with countless ghost tribe members, were sucked in by the gigantic net in the blink of an eye. However, it couldn’t seem to cope with the Ghost King, who arrived at the Yan King Hall at an unknown point in time.

He was indeed powerful, yet he was so powerful he ended up making himself a solitary leader.

Shen Wei gently let out a breath: “Everything has settled. Let’s go.”

This fight would not be able to continue.

Lin Jing had originally followed them. However, he constantly felt a kind of weird, uneasy feeling in his heart, as if something would go wrong. He subconsciously lifted the telescope, turned his

head to glance over, and saw an expression revealed on Gui Mian’s face, as if he wanted to cry but was smiling instead.

Suddenly, that mask was split open from the middle, dropping off as two halves. It exposed that face that was so similar to Shen Wei, but far more dismal. The robes on his body fluttered up with out wind, ruffled like a flag.

“Very good,” Lin Jing heard him rasp, “You won, I can’t fight against you. You wouldn’t even stoop to fight me—very good.”

Shen Wei halted his footsteps.

“You and I have always been identical since birth. I don’t understand where I am worse than you. You are the solitary, honorable, high and mighty Ghost Slayer. I am the Ghost King whom thousands of people yell about killing—

this is nothing.” Gui Mian let out a low laugh. “Of course this is nothing. I am the Ghost King of the heart of the Great Land, I can kill all humans and gods across the heaven and earth! I only hat

e how your nature is so despicable that even without the courage to battle with me, you get these ants to humiliate me.”

“You will regret this.” He suddenly started to laugh lowly, “You think you can win without a single drop of blood on your weapon? You will regret this, my good brother.”

Abruptly, his body grew around ten meters, like a tall mountain. Then thousands of miles away below ground came a hidden and muffled scream, travelling to ground-level with a rumble, like a clap of thunder.

Shen Wei’s expression suddenly changed.

Gui Mian let out a loud laugh. His body suddenly shattered into thousands upon thousands of pieces, and the land started to severely shake and tremble. The Fuxi Eight Trigrams Net that had rounded up the fragments of chaos broke.