

GUARDIAN

Chapter: 105

The hand that Zhao Yunlan had originally used to support Shen Wei abruptly tightened.

Under everyone's doubtful, nervous, or ambiguous gazes, Shen Wei finally nodded his head.

“The Ghost King used himself as a medium to leak the chaos. I used three old engravings from the Houtu Great Seal to blockade it underground.” Shen Wei continued, “Additionally, the small resort villa was slashed by the Soul-severing Blade, splitting open a wide gap. Right now, it's probably leaking a little but it shouldn't be too serious.”

“Nuwa had already dissipated for some thousands of years. The strength of the old engravings on the Houtu Great Seal is limited. How long can you block it?”

Shen Wei: “It won't be longer than half a day.”

The surrounding people fell into a deathly silence. Wang Zheng asked quietly: “What exactly is the Houtu Great Seal?”

Sang Zan gently tugged her and raised a finger next to his lips, indicating that she shouldn't say more. Although Sang Zan only understood around 70 to 80 percent of their conversation, he had helped Zhao Yunlan in looking for the Secret Ancient Records. T

through that, he heard some fragments of the whole story and, by this time, had already guessed a good portion.

Shennong Bowl stared at Shen Wei tightly, continuing to force him with questions: “Then what does Shangxian actually plan to do?”

Shen Wei calmly met his gaze, turned his hand to grasp Zhao Yunlan’s, and in a tranquil voice, said: “I will do as I promised that year.”

His peaceful and calm attitude stunned Shennong Bowl on the spot. Only after a while did his gaze land on their clasped hands. His expression changed a few times, but ultimately did not reveal anything and he looked away stiffly. With a slightly unnatural voice, he said: “What can I do for you?”

Shen Wei’s gaze swept across every person and ghost at the scene. In an even manner, he said: “That year Kunlun Jun used the four holy artifacts to seal the four pillars. When the Great Seal was loosening, the four holy artifacts were forcefully taken out and reappeared in the human world. Right now, they’re already all in my hands. I need to reseal the four pillars that hold up the heavens and earth...I hope everyone can help me hold down the front line.”

As Shen Wei was saying this, a huge bagua grid** appeared on the upper side of the antiquated street—it was square, the four corners existing side by side with shaoyin, taiyan, shaoyang, and taiyin***, pointing to east, south, west, and north respectively.

Then, the thin and long Mountain-River Awl took the lead in jumping out from Shen Wei's palms. It turned tall and long, vaguely like a precipice in a great snowy mountain, and fell on the Black Tortoise position**** (t/n north).

A deafening noise erupted from the Mountain-River Awl and a big sundial plate broke out from within, rumbling to turn to the White Tiger position (t/n west). The Ink Brush of Virtue cut from the Dashen Mu pointed its tip towards the sky, landing on the Azure Dragon position (t/n east). Lastly was the wickless Guardian Lantern. Although it was still dark without any light, it followed Shen Wei's guidance to land on the Vermillion Bird position (t/n south).

Zhao Yunlan: "Ai, wait, wait. Isn't the Guardian Lantern in the Yan King Hall?"

Shen Wei: "Earlier, I delayed for a moment and brought it along in passing. The one in Yan King Hall is only a deception."

After he said this, he seemed a bit abashed in his behavior of conveniently leading the sheep away (t/n going off with/stealing something) and lowered his head slightly: "It's a time of emergency ... The method is inappropriate. I am ashamed."

Zhao Yunlan: "..."

Shen Wei lifted up one of Zhao Yunlan's hands, and softly said: "It'll hurt a little."

After, Zhao Yunlan felt as though something pricked his fingertip and a perfectly round bead of blood emerged. The drop of blood

d immediately flew directly into the Guardian Lantern, pulling in to a very thin line.

Then, Shen Wei took off the little pendant from around his neck, the one that he refused to remove no matter what. He opened the bottle and gently poured a little. An extremely tiny spark flew out from his fingertips, landing on the tall and slender lantern wick created from the thread of blood. From within the Guardian Lantern, a faint light like a firefly's rose up leisurely.

Shen Wei lowered his head, putting Zhao Yunlan's injured finger into his mouth.

“Wait, that's it?” Zhao Yunlan, “Didn't that Yan King say he wanted to take out a tube of blood from my heart?”

“The ten fingers are linked to the heart.” Shen Wei said, “The wick of the Guardian Lantern had already been lost for some thousands of years. Difu wanted to seek a magic weapon that could guarantee peace, allowing the Guardian Lantern to burn for many years to come. I only have half a day's time to re-seal the four pillars. One thread is enough.”

As he spoke to here, Shen Wei lifted his head and addressed everyone: “Kunlun Jun, as the saint of the mountains, further sealed the four pillars. Although I inherited the 36 mountains and drivers,

I was born filthy and have no way of actually establishing any connection with the four holy artifacts.”

He displayed his original appearance: his long hair hanging down, his inborn demonic aura and his jade-like upright gentlemanly aura mixing together in a strange and contradictory manner. There was an unparalleled sense of elegance that could not be put into words.

Nobody could refuse him.

Wang Zheng and Sang Zan looked at each other, and then walked side by side until they were underneath the Mountain-River Awl. Da Qing took the golden bell on his neck into his mouth and turned to walk towards the Brush of Virtue. Lao Li, who was carrying the big bone stick, looked this way and that and finally hung a fish that was fried yellow underneath the bone. Without a word, he followed after Da Qing. Lin Jing took out a 108-bead necklace and stood still underneath the Sundial of Reincarnation.

Just as Shennong Bowl was about to go over, Zhao Yunlan suddenly opened his mouth and halted him: “Ai, um you.”

Occupying Zhao Yunlan’s dad’s body, Shennong Bowl turned his head around: “You?”

“...” Zhao Yunlan, “Don’t take advantage. You really think you’re someone’s dad—lend me a step, I have something to discuss with you.”

Shennong Bowl smiled a bit helplessly and followed Zhao Yunlan to walk to a side: “Please talk, Kunlun Jun.”

Zhao Yunlan leaned against the big pagoda tree and lowered his head to gaze down. It seemed extremely calm beneath the tree, not at all like there was something crazy suppressed...and only for half a day. His box of cigarettes was already empty. Lifting his hand, he stuck it into Father Zhao's pocket, bringing out another box. Without bothering to be polite, he took it for himself and lit up.

Zhao Yunlan only spoke lowly after a moment of silence: "Actually there is something I wanted to beg of you."

Shennong Bowl lowly replied: "I don't dare."

"Really," Zhao Yunlan said, "My parents only have me as their one son. I should have originally supported them until their old age and given them a proper burial, but I didn't think that I would be out of time. Even if I'm out of time, I don't want white-haired people to see off black-haired people. Think of a method for me." (I don't want the old to see the young die)

Shennong Bowl was silent for a while: "I...don't really understand Kunlun Jun's meaning."

Zhao Yunlan: "Don't pretend like you're confused. It looks to me like you understand very well."

Shennong Bowl gave him a deep look: "So, in the end, the Ghost Slayer would only honor his agreement without a second word because you agreed to die with him?"

“Bullshit,” Zhao Yunlan glanced at him lightly and carelessly breathed out a smoke ring, “Thesetwo things are unrelated. Do you think this master would sell his body?”

Shennong Bowl knew that he slipped up with his remark, lowered his head and was silent for some time: “I understand.”

Zhao Yunlan stared at his eyes and heard Shennong Bowl say, word for word: “If Kunlun Jun is no longer alive, I will leave your Father’s body and live under the guise of ‘Zhao Yunlan’ for you. Mountain Saint please don’t worry.”

“Live well. Live like ‘Zhao Yunlan’,” Like committing “treason”, Zhao Yunlan patted his dad’s shoulders with force, “The things you should enjoy, enjoy them well. The things you should take care of, also do them well. I thank you.”

After he spoke, he breathed in deeply twice and extinguished the cigarette that, in his haste, still hadn’t burned to the end, and passed by Shennong Bowl.

The Medicinal Bowl walked over towards the Sundial of Reincarnation and Lin Jing. Zhao Yunlan stood solitarily beneath the Guardian Lantern.

Zhao Yunlan softly stroked the Guardian Lamp. Its inscription, unevenly carved into the lamp body, was exactly the same as the one on the back of the Guardian Order. He felt a peculiar sensation: this lamp really did seem to be as closely linked with him as flesh with bone, and the pulsating lamp light miraculously matched the beat of his heart, as if there stood two people—

he of the millennia past and he of the millennia after, without distinction.

For a moment, an unspeakable sigh welled up in Zhao Yunlan's heart. So the world was as fickle as the white raiment of clouds turning to gray hounds, as mulberry fields turning to azure seas, and it had long since turned full circle—yet he himself was like a tortoise aged a thousand, ten thousand years, and in spite of everything hadn't changed in the slightest. This really was more than enough faithfulness unto death.

Shen Wei turned his head toward the shopkeeper who kept watch over the dividing boundary of yin and yang. That old man led a long all those present of the night shift personnel from No. 4 Bright Avenue, and had them surround the large array. Bountifully wrinkled, he raised his head, humbly brought his fists together as would the ancients, and saluted Shen Wei: "This old thing has no other use than to protect the dharma for Shangxian."

Shen Wei nodded. Then he lifted his finger, and stroke by stroke he wrote in the air ancient characters from the age of gods and demons. They in themselves seemed to possess power, billowing like waves in the sky; every stroke carried with it sounds of the celestial vault from a distant time. After that, Shen Wei joined his fingers together to form an open palm, and brought it down with a heavy clap against the whole set of characters. All the strokes fell to pieces and flew toward the positions of the sixiang***** in each corner, falling upon every person's brow.

In a flash, everyone could hear that spell which had been passed down from the dawn of primeval time. Inimitably profound, it stirred in them an irrepressible urge to prostrate themselves in worship which sprang up spontaneously in their hearts.

Finally, Shen Wei glanced to the south, just in time for his gaze to meet Zhao Yunlan's in midair. He suddenly gave him an extraordinarily light smile, like flowers instantly blooming in spring.

In the pitch blackness of the Yan King Hall, Zhu Hong couldn't see anything and wandered about in a daze. The only light source came faintly from the Dashen Mu branch in her hand that Shen Wei gave her, creating an invisible protective barrier around her body that firmly separated her from the terrible ghost tribe and the all-

consuming chaos outside. Conversely, the small bud that appeared extremely delicate became increasingly green.

All of a sudden, Zhu Hong heard someone call her name anxiously. She turned around and saw Snake Fourth Uncle difficultly leaning against a crevice in the Yan King hall, carefully hiding beneath a huge scale—

Zhu Hong recognized that as the Fuxi scale, one of the sacred objects of the snake tribe.

He seemed as though he was heavily injured and was unable to even preserve his human shape, his lower body revealing a dark green snake tail.

When Snake Fourth Uncle saw her, he was initially alarmed. Then, he donned a fierce appearance and spoke harshly: "Why are you

ou here? Why didn't you leave with Ling Zhu earlier? You don't want your little life anymore?!"

He glanced at the situation outside and quickly came out from within the stone crevices. His long tail curled around Zhu Hong, pulling her into the crevice. With a bloodstain at the corner of his mouth, he turned to Zhu Hong, his whole face turning white in anger: "There isn't another child in the entire tribe who is as absent-minded as you. Don't you know how dangerous it is, stupid girl? Don't you know to run?"

Zhu Hong: "I'm worried about Fourth Uncle..."

Snake Fourth Uncle coldly cut her off: "It's not the turn for a little imp who can't even fully transform like you to worry about me."

As he said this, he scanned Zhu Hong up and down. Finding that she was flawless and intact, without even a bit of broken skin, he was finally able to relax and coldly hummed out: "Your luck is good."

Zhu Hong lifted the branch from the Dashen Mu: "His Honor, the Ghost Slayer gave this to me."

Snake Fourth Uncle squinted: "Dashen Mu? How could he just casually give that away? What did he say to you?"

"He said that if these two buds can survive, then I should find a good place to plant them."

Hearing this, Snake Fourth Uncle's thoughts took a sharp turn and he suddenly slumped heavily against the stone wall of the Yan King Hall, his brows furrowing tightly: "So it really is that the

Great Seal will break and he is now taking care of what's to come afterwards...Could the Great Seal be broken already?"

Zhu Hong's mind was full of confusion but she didn't dare interrupt his thoughts. She had no choice but to stand there silently without questioning him. Only after a while did Snake Fourth Uncle slowly say to her: "Little girl, dumb luck comes to dumb people—hurry up and take care of it well."

Zhu Hong immediately nodded to show agreement. At this time, she suddenly exclaimed "yi" and brought the Dashen Mu branch in front of Snake Fourth Uncle: "Hurry, look."

They saw a light turquoise color had pushed through the withered and coarse branch at some unknown time, revealing a delicate head—

the branch that originally only had two buds grew out a third one!

Zhu Hong said in astonishment: "What's going on? Shen Wei said that, in many thousands of years, that branch had only ever grown these two buds."

"'Shen Wei' is someone for you to call?" Snake Fourth Uncle gave her a look, and then said after a momentary pause, "Kunlun's divine tree exists together with the heavens and the earth (it lasts forever); it is the beginning of all life. That year, Nuwa wanted to borrow the branch of the divine tree to erect at the entrance of the Profane Land. She harbored murderous intentions and, as a

result, grew a tree that was never alive and already dead...Now t
his branch issprouting for no reason...perhaps it's because some
one's intentions have changed.”

Those two were relatively safe in the most dangerous of places.
However, Guo Changcheng and Chu Shuzhi, who were hanging
on the suspension bridge, were practically hanging on to life by a
thread.

Chu Shuzhi made a prompt decision, and, not caring about the m
ovements behind him, directly released the hand pulling the bow.
The incantation that spun out incurred a sudden clap of thunder b
olt, crashing down as if it was going to split the sky and piercing
through the ghost tribe on Guo Changcheng's side. He then rapi
dly turned his head. Within that movement, he used his arm, whi
ch had again turned a grayish blue, to stir up a large curtain of ra
in. The rain water solidified into a massive skeleton and dived do
wn in the air.

He only realized after he turned around that the thing behind hi
m was actually not a youchu but that red-
eyed monstrosity of a youth in human skin.

The red-eyed monster was a high-
ranking member of the ghost tribe. After it inhaled the chaos of t
he Profane Land leaking from the cracks in the ground, the whol
e person...no, the whole ghost seemed to turn the situation aroun
d for its own benefit—like switching a bird-
hunting gun into a canon. Two inborn Ghost Kings: one had alrea
dy died, and the other was bound into a partly real God through t
he immortal tendon. All the high-

ranking ghost tribes were fanatically eyeing the position, wanting to take over and become the Ghost King of a new generation.

The ghost tribe who would have originally been at a complete loss in the face of Chu Shuzhi's skeleton only lifted an arm and was able to blockade the big skeleton created from water. With a pinch of its fingers, the skeleton once again scattered into water droplets, splashing everywhere.

Following, Chu Shuzhi felt as though a strong force hit his chest, sending his thin body flying straight out from the suspension bridge. Underneath him was a cliff over a kilometer high.

Guo Changcheng didn't think. In that instant, he didn't know where his bravery came from, nor did he have any what he was thinking, only that he suddenly flipped over from the safety rails. As if it was an act of suicide, he jumped from the bridge and leaped towards Chu Shuzhi. The waist satchel that he was originally holding in his arms fell onto the bridge surface, the soul-bottles scattering across the ground.

Another dull sound, like thunder, rumbled from underground.

The four holy artifacts were linked together by the incomprehensible ancient inscriptions. With Shen Wei as the center, they gradually and smoothly started circulating. Every person who acted as an anchor for the array could feel the connection between the inscriptions Shen Wei pressed into their heart and the four holy artifacts nearby—

they were seized with an irresistible impulse to silently recite those words that they could neither read nor understand.

Lao Li, who was carrying the big bone, seemed to have been agitated by the ancient inscriptions. Lowering his head, he looked at the laughable yet indescribably serious fat cat and listened to the ringing stemming from the gently shaking cat bell. Suddenly, he spoke in a low voice: “Three hundred years ago, there was a person with an incurable disease on his bones. When it was activated, the pain was such that you couldn’t beg to live...and death wouldn’t come even if you begged for it. If you think about it in the present time, it was probably bone cancer. My family members burned incense to invite the gods without consulting me...”

Da Qing was abruptly shocked and raised his head in disbelief.

Lao Li already had a head full of white hair and he reached out a shaking hand, wanting to once more pet the cat head that he’s petted innumerable times before. However, this time, the black cat dodged him. This old man, who seemed to have a strange obsession with bones and who was always little known at No. 4 Bright Ave, seemed to have aged 10 years in the space of a moment. His lips quivered for a moment: “Later, we didn’t manage to invite a god but we invited in a black cat who loved to eat fried fish. That person’s disease had already been regarded as hopeless and he was unable to go out all day long. Every day, he was utterly bored...so when he saw a living, breathing creature, he was thrilled. He treated this black cat as a godsend little friend. Not being able to leave the court gate, he felt that he might as well stick together with the cat through the difficulties.”

The edges of Lao Li’s eyes were slightly wet, as if he was about to cry. However, his eyes were already murky and no tears could escape: “But that person later found out that the black cat wasn’t

actually an ordinary cat, but a godly cat. It could communicate with Yin and Yang, and could travel between heaven and hell. One day, the black cat broke into the wine cellar, fell into a jar of wine, got drunk, and shared the secrets of the golden bell around his neck. It said that the bell was bestowed by its former master, containing half of his primordial spirit inside. It could bring the dead back to life and reverse reincarnation...death was at that person's door and that person was so scared of death that he was almost crazy.”

Da Qing said coldly: “And so he cheated the bell from me. Thank you for your blessing, giving me such a good lesson. The stupid cat only realized at that time what it meant to guard itself against others. I heard that in the end you died a natural death on your bed. How was it to live those few more decades? Did it feel good?”

Lao Li quietly said: “It was like a fishbone stuck in my throat, like maggots stuck to the bone.” (t/n first one indicating that there were words he could not say and he felt awful about it, and these cond means that there were bad feelings that he could not get rid of)

Da Qing twisted his head around: “That’s a pity— what are you doing mixing into the Special Investigations Department? You even went undercover for several decades. That year, the well-respected scholar felt wronged in watching over the gates and doing chores for us— I only found my bell recently...at that year when you came in, I a

ready didn't have anything on my body that you could scheme for, right?"

Lao Li suddenly bent his knees and dropped into a kneel—
Three hundred years later, he began a new cycle of reincarnation, yet carried with him the poison buried within the crevices of his bones from that life. Guarding the doorway of No. 4 Bright Ave as an inconspicuous doorman, he hoped that every day at the end of work he could feed a few of the little crispy fried fishes to the black cat who was becoming more and more portly. He thought that this lifetime would belived out like this and the next lifetime would be the same, but the Ancient Brush of Merits was overhanging high above his head and every bit and piece of his past was lined up...ultimately all boiling over like an explosion within his heart.

Lao Li's murky tears finally fell. As if the still and silent Ancient Brush of Merits had heard something, it abruptly moved—
little by little, it turned in a half-circle, exposing its red and black brush tip.

Then the sixiang answered as one—

Wood bears fire: the Guardian Lamp suddenly shone bright and clear.

Fire bears metal: the Sundial of Reincarnation was in a sunless state, yet the shadow on top slowly moved on its own.

Metal bears water: the vein lines on the Mountain River Awl started to wander like living things.

The earth was trembling violently, until the trilinear seals on the Houtu Great Seal finally ruptured. Vicious currents from fathoms deep below the Seal broke through the earth and emerged, as if ready to engulf the whole world. The bright lamps and fires of all the cities and villages were utterly extinguished; the light of the living world was like a frail mirage. With a sweep of the north wind there'd be no traces left.

At last, a calm and unhurried voice recited the words of sealing: "With the stone of three lifetimes, seal the white mountains of the west."

Stone, not yet old but eroded.

Lin Jing and Shennong Bowl simultaneously felt as if the pits of their stomachs had emptied. Just then, an inscription carrying the distinctive gold seal of the true dharma and the breath of the descendants of Shennong's followers plunged into the Sundial of Reincarnation. The Sundial revolved thrice at lightning speed, and faded away in midair.

From the west there came a loud sound, as if a great nail had pushed down through the ground to a place millions of miles deep. The black air shrouding the earth forcibly pushed open a clear and distinct crack; and then the dark turbulence was sent scattering, unexpectedly dissipating to a miraculous degree.

"With the essence of mountains and rivers, seal the black waters of the north."

Water, not yet cold but frozen.

“With the root of good and evil, seal the jade expanse of the east
.”

Body, not yet live but dead.

One by one, the three Hallows faded away within the sixiang bagua grid, till only the Guardian Lamp was left in the end.

“With the soul of the god, seal the great fire of the south.”

Everything suddenly transformed upon the sixiang bagua grid: the Four Pillars all rose, as the Guardian Lamp moved to the center. Zhao Yunlan was too late to react as he felt the inscription flowing out in a torrent—

but the connection between himself and the Guardian Lamp had been severed.

A pair of hands embraced him from behind. Zhao Yunlan suddenly turned his head back. At some point, Shen Wei had appeared behind him unawares, and in the instant he turned his head Shen Wei kissed him deeply.

It was an intensely tender and lingering kiss, until Zhao Yunlan felt something flowing swiftly from his own heart. He suddenly, violently began to struggle—

but the hand that Shen Wei had clasped around the back of his head was like iron, unable to be thrown off no matter what. Zhao Yunlan’s heart turned ice-

cold; from his first acquaintance to later familiarity with Shen Wei...even all the trifling bits up until the present flashed before his eyes like flickering lights and passing shadows, and let him sen

se with utter clarity a hand that was ruthlessly erasing them, little by little.

Shen Wei's whole body caught on fire. Only until his long hair and robes were swept up together into the fire did he let go of Zhao Yunlan, who was already unconscious, pushing him away and sending him off through the air to land far away in the arms of an astonished Shennong Bowl.

Finally, he gazed deeply at Zhao Yunlan—after which he was consumed at last by the great fire, never to be seen again.

So it turned out that the person he'd wanted to obtain, by any means necessary, was pushed away by his own hands in the end.

So it turned out that the promise to live and die together, which he had schemed so hard to gain, was a promise first broken by himself in the end.

“No death, no extinguishment, no godhood”—he really was naturally stupid. For only at the end of the road, in the instant when life and death flashed before him amidst flint sparks and lightning, did he suddenly understand it all.

Shen Wei didn't know why, but his heart was unexpectedly at ease; all of a sudden, he had the feeling that he “could now be worthy of him,” but...

It was a pity he'd never see him again.