

Guardian Chapter: 11

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Shen is on his way back from the cafeteria, and sees the scaredy Guo standing at the entrance, with the fat, black cat sitting besides him in disregard.

“Aren’t you...” Shen embarrassingly pauses for a moment, he was too fixated on someone else earlier, “excuse me, what’s your name?”

Guo is shortly startled, but quickly recognises Professor Shen.

Guo is much less nervous when facing Shen, he doesn’t have the sense of pressure that Chief Zhao gives him.

Perhaps a well-educated gentleman has a greatly different charisma, whether he is dealing with a big figure like Zhao or a small potato like Guo, he is calm and reserved nonetheless.

“I’m Guo.”

“Oh, little Officer Guo,” Shen laughs lightly, “what brings you here?”

Guo hesitates, he isn’t sure whether he can tell his mission to someone else; he looks to Da Qing for a sign, but gets no reply.

Da Qing face-paws; does he want a cat to teach him how to talk to another human being?

The cat realises that the brave and wise Chief really wasn’t far from the truth at all, this right here is indeed a pure idiot.

Shen realises his embarrassment, and changes his tone, “sorry, I shouldn’t have asked, this is none of my business.”

Guo shamefully looks down... though he doesn’t understand why he feels ashamed.

“Have you eaten? I bought quite a lot of food, you could have some if you want.”

Guo is about to refuse, but his stomach disagrees: he hasn’t eaten ever since he came to the SIU.

Da Qing rushes forward, “come on, kitty, I bought you some milk.”

Guo was just about to turn to Da Qing, but since the cat has already surrendered to the temptation of food, Guo has no choice but to follow suit.

Shen tries to get Guo to open up and relax, "Officer Guo is quite young, around the same age as my students, you haven't been working very long presumably?"

Guo honestly replies, "it's my second day at work..."

Shen laughs, "how does it feel?"

Terrible... but Guo tries to appear presentable, "it's alright."

Shen brings along a guy and a cat, and the three walk along the corridor of the school hospital; his eyes shine beneath his glasses, and he continues naturally, "your colleagues and... the Chief are nice to you?"

"Chief Zhao is quite nice to me, oh, you've met him earlier today. As for the colleagues," Guo wears a difficult expression as he is reminded of the paper-faced Old Wu and the un-beheaded ghost Wang Zheng, but he finally says, "they.. they are not bad either."

"Chief Zhao..." Shen echoes, and asks, "is Chief Zhao busy all the time?"

Guo scratches his head, "I... I guess? I'm new, so I'm not sure."

Shen continues, "what do you think about him?"

"He's quite nice."

Guo looks at him, "then why do you seem afraid of him?"

Guo is startled, "well... he is the Chief after all..."

Shen chuckles, he knows he won't get anything about Zhao from Guo, so he leads him to Li's room.

Shen seems to be quite used to taking care of others, he swiftly sets up the food and the utensils, heats up the milk in the microwave oven, and pours the milk onto some rice and gives it to Da Qing, "come on, let's eat."

Guo has almost passed out from hunger, but he isn't eating a lot still; he gets nervous when he is eating with strangers, and when he is nervous he loses his appetite.

Li is even less interested in her meal, her entire person is incredibly troubled and disoriented, although the doctor says she will be fine.

Professor Shen realises that when he stops talking, the only sound heard in the room is Da Qing's licking the milk, and so asks Li, "where is your home, is it far away? If it's not far away you should go home for a rest, I can talk to your tutors."

Li pauses and puts down her chopsticks, and softly utters, "at home... they're having a funeral, many relatives have come, so there is no room for me."

Shen freezes.

Li picks up her chopsticks and pokes at the rice, "my grandma passed away... two days ago."

Shen apologises, "I'm sorry, I shouldn't have asked. My condolences."

Li looks down and doesn't answer; she dryly stuffs rice into her mouth.

Shen takes a pair of extra chopsticks, and picks up some food for Li, "I don't know what you like to eat, so I bought different kinds of food, at least eat some of it."

Guo suddenly says, "my grandma has always taken care of me when I was little, but she passed away when I was sixteen, and I quit school for half a year."

Shen and Li look at him.

Guo stays silent for a moment, and continues, "when I was a kid, I was always bullied at school, and when grandma found out she would tell me off for being so timid... then she would take me to buy sour milk, chocolate, sweets, buns; and she would give all the food to me, she wouldn't even eat it herself... I thought, when I grow up I will make money and I will buy her stuff she likes to eat, but... I never got the chance."

Li is touched, her eyes begin watering; Guo continues as if talking to himself, "she passed away in her sleep, and nobody even noticed at first... I always dreamed of her, from high school through to college, and she was always there to support me."

Guo is desolate like a withering plant; Shen comforts him and pats him on the head.

Guo bitterly smiles, but the smile wears away quickly, "when I graduated, I saw her one last time in a dream, and she said to me, 'you're all grown up now, I'm relieved, so I'm leaving'. I asked her where she was going, and she just shook her head, and then I never dreamed of her again; my uncle said she must have reincarnated."

Tears dribble down Li's cheeks silently.

"What I mean is..." Guo clumsily scratches his head, he is rather surprised that he managed to speak in full sentences for more than a minute, "hey, please don't cry, when my grandma was gone I was devastated as well, I even wanted to trade my life for

hers, but... uh, I really shouldn't have said anything, what I mean is, don't be sad, our deceased relatives are all watching us."

He really shouldn't have said anything; Li begins trembling and crying louder and louder, uncontrollably, until her limbs are quivering and her mind goes blank.

Shen rushes for the doctor; Guo has never seen anyone so upset before, and helplessly stands besides her.

The school doctor doesn't have experience prescribing sedatives, so he suggests sending Li to another hospital.

Guo follows Shen to take Li out of the school hospital. The three get inside Shen's car, and Guo takes care of the fragile girl in the backseat.

Shen isn't Li's tutor, he only teaches a few elective courses; Guo has never seen such a kindhearted Professor before.

Shen takes care of everything, and gets Li to the emergency room; then he tries to contact her parents.

Guo realises that something is wrong. Shen has dialed several phone calls already: Li's parents, uncles, aunties, none of them would come see her.

Even Guo is furious at this ordeal, how messed up is that?

Shen runs out of options, he crosses his arms and frowns.

His handsome figure leans against the wall: broad shoulders, narrow waist, long legs and tight shirt; this scene looks like a perfume commercial. Guo thinks he must want to swear, but Shen doesn't say anything.

A moment later, Shen is still visibly worried, but he smiles to Guo, "thank you for your trouble today, Officer Guo, how about this: you go back first, I can take care of my student alone, I don't want to get in the way of your work."

"I... I don't have work at the moment," Guo mutters, and stares at Da Qing's green eyes, "Chief Zhao told me to follow her, but didn't tell me what to do, or when should I go back..."

Guo begins to realise something about this mission: he is incompetent, but he is not actually retarded; following this girl around isn't some challenging mission, the Chief just wanted to get rid of an annoyance.

Of course, someone useless like him only got into the SIU because of his uncle... why would the Chief want him around to mess things up?

“Your Chief Zhao doesn’t think like that,” Shen helplessly assures him, though he is certain that Zhao absolutely thinks like that, “don’t think too much about this.”

Guo turns into a depressed mushroom.

After a while, the doctor comes out, and tells them that Li Qian has been depressed for very long, she is malnourished, and has low blood pressure.

Shen completes the inpatient procedure for her, and the two men and a cat stay besides Li til sunset; still not one of her family members showed up.

Guo softly asks, “Professor Shen, none of her family members are coming?”

Shen has nothing to say, and only sighs.

Guo sits besides Li on the edge of the bed, and he suddenly realises why she attempted suicide.

She had lost the only person who cared for her in the world... from then on, no-one will support her and love her anymore.

And so the night falls.