

## Guardian Chapter: 17

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For a few seconds, Shen is lost in a mesmerised trance.

Shortly after, Shen looks away, and wriggles out of someone's groping hands; he adjusts his glasses, "I'm fine, thanks."

Guo desperately screams, "Chief Zhao, help me!!!"

Zhao quickly glances around in the storage room to confirm that no-one is injured; to relax the situation, he jokes in an operatic recitative, "what injustice doth you bringeth, has't thee did get an affidavit? Showeth me apace!"

Guo falls face-down on the ground.

Shen rubs his nose, and hides his faint smile.

The hungry ghost revives yet again; Shen looks up and sees its scythes slashing towards Zhao.

Zhao spins around and narrowly dodges the first, as the second scythe comes crushing down against his dagger. He grabs hold of the vicious scythe.

Behind the hungry ghost, a deep male voice chants, "Namo Amitabha..."

Bell chimes come out of nowhere, the sound wave crushes everything in its path; Guo starts feeling dizzy and the quivering Li stops moving.

The hungry ghost screams in agony as if shot on the head; endless black shadows fall from its body.

Zhao releases it, and it shrinks down to just the size of a normal human; scrawny with a big stomach, and feebly withering.

Zhao takes out a glass bottle that's the size of a hand, and opens it as a stream of light shines through the bottleneck. The hungry ghost turns around and runs, but Lin blocks the doorway, and strikes a Mudra Mahabala; a force field bounces the ghost back into the room.

Zhao points the bottleneck at the hungry ghost.

The ghost looks like Munch's painting 'The Scream'; and with one last expression of horror, the bottle absorbs it in whole.

The translucent glass bottle becomes opaque, and Zhao closes it with a cork stopper. He holds the mini prison against his ear, and shakes it a few times; he happily says, "mission accomplished."

Da Qing slowly awakens from its deep slumber, "you guys are so violent, so much noise..."

Zhao picks up the cat and stuffs it into his bag.

Da Qing moans feebly, "what took you so long?"

"Traffic jam," Zhao pats it on the head, "go to sleep, you'll get your bonus this time."

Da Qing's eyelids droop and gradually close, as it mutters, "... I wanna eat grilled yellow corvina..."

Guo is still puzzled, "so... it's over?"

Zhao impatiently frowns, but quickly puts on a smile, and says, "there is still one thing."

He crosses over to Shen, and asks, "are you injured? Sorry for dragging you into this, I will take you for a check-up."

Shen carelessly touches his hand, "really..."

Shen's face goes blank for a moment, and passes out.

Zhao kneels down and picks up the unconscious professor, with one hand on his back and the other beneath his knees, and whispers into his ear, "a female student called Li Qian attempted suicide, you sent her to hospital, but you passed out due to low blood sugar, and stayed in hospital for a day."

Lin points at Li Qian, and signals Zhao.

Zhao continues, "Li is involved in a murder case, and is brought in for questioning by the police; you don't remember anything else."

Shen unconsciously leans on Zhao's shoulder.

Zhao carries him and walks outside.

Lin picks up Li Qian and puts her on his shoulder; Guo doesn't follow, so Lin politely asks, "child, I have another shoulder, would you like me to carry you as well?"

"No no no... no need, thanks."

Lin bows holding up one hand, "Amitabha, you're welcome."

He calmly dawdles away.

Zhao carefully avoids a nurse who came out of nowhere, and puts Shen in Li's room. He takes off his glasses, sets them aside, covers him with a blanket, and turns on the air con.

Zhao takes the Professor's right hand, and draws an invisible soothing talisman on the back of it. Zhao smirks pervertedly, and kisses his hand softly, "good night, sleeping handsome."

"Let's go," he signals Lin and Guo to come, "an important guest will visit by midnight, we shouldn't have him wait for us."

Their footsteps disappear in the hallway. Shen suddenly awakens, and sits up; he doesn't seem sleepy at all.

He raises his right hand, and softly rubs the back of it; a golden talisman emerges. Shen tenderly looks at the symbol, and smiles lightly. But the smile quickly wears away.

He frowns, worried and in pain.

Shen lowers his voice and murmurs something; the golden talisman leaves his skin and solidifies into a small piece of paper. He takes the talisman and keeps it safe like a cherished treasure.

He tidies the bed, jumps off the window and disappears in the night.

When Zhao and co return to No. 4 Bright Avenue, it's almost midnight. Old Wu opens his gigantic mouth, and says, "oh, Little Guo, you're back? How was your first mission?"

Being hunted down by the hungry ghost for one whole night, Old Wu's paper face seems very approachable by comparison, so he puts on a feeble smile, "...it was... alright..."

Old Wu laughs, "it's okay, you're just starting out, you will learn along the way; you're living after all, you've got a future ahead of you!"

Guo realises he has a workplace advantage: he is alive.

Lin and Guo take Li Qian inside, and Zhao lowers his voice and says to Old Wu, "you know about this case right? We can't execute an escaped prisoner from Hell, so the Ghost Slayer will visit in a while; greet him politely."

Old Wu shivers in terror, and lowers his voice, "he... he is coming?"

Zhao nods, pats Old Wu on the shoulder, and lights a cigarette while entering the office.

Old Wu dares not to read newspaper indoors like he usually does, and instead stands upright by the door like a royal guard.

Zhao waves at Guo, and points to a working desk, "this is your desk, if there are no special cases our working hours are nine to five, if you have to take sick leave just call me. Twelve to one is lunchtime, the canteen is on the second floor, meals are free for staff. Sick leave is paid, insurance and everything has all been arranged for you, no need to worry."

Zhao hands Guo a credit card, "password is six ones, change it yourself. Salary and bonuses are all transferred here, every 15th of every month. If you need to claim work expenses, find Wang Zheng."

Guo takes the card with both hands, and forgets all about Wang the terrifying un-beheaded ghost. Salary... that means he finally has a job!

"I... I have salary now!" He stutters, eyes glimmering.

Zhao is amazed at how silly he is, "your uncle is so rich, what do you need that money for?"

Guo raises his head excitedly, "I need it! I really need it!"

But he doesn't say what for; all he does is carefully place the card in his wallet like handling a one-of-a-kind antique.

Zhao is about to say something, but he sees a white beam glimmer across Guo's body.

Zhao is astonished: this kid has a powerful aura of virtue, is it his ancestors protecting him, or is it good deeds from his past life, or is it...

He puts off the cigarette, and points to his room, "I'm usually inside, if you've anything just knock."

Zhao's eye bags deepen into a dark and heavy weight; he sits in a chair and falls flat on the desk, "wake me up when he comes."

Guo doesn't know who "he" is, but luckily Lin Jing is here, so he comfortably takes a nap for the first time in twenty four hours.

Only a while later, Guo wakes up, and feels an eerie chill.