

Guardian Chapter: 81

Chapter: 81

Finally, before there is time to catch the “broken bowl god”, Zhao leaves under his father’s menacing aura... his father just seems displeased seeing Shen, and when he is displeased for long, he will begin to make others around him displeased as well.

Zhao feels very ashamed of this. He continues mumbling as they get in the car, “Most people only get possessed by beautiful fox fairies. Only someone as shitty as he is would attract a broken bowl, of all things... in his past life he must have been a beggar, or a crappy monk bringing his crappy bowl everywhere.”

“It’s fine, don’t worry. Shennong’s followers are known for their kindness, they wouldn’t harm humans for no reason. Besides, didn’t you put a marker on him already? I’ll keep an eye on him for you.”

Zhao cackles drily, “Hehe, thanks babe. We aren’t even married yet, but you’re already troubled by that jerk father-in-law.”

He really is the forgetful kind. He has already forgotten about Shen’s outrage just earlier, and is teasing him callously again.

Zhao’s plan was to watch a movie together; it’s Valentine’s Day after all. But perhaps the car is too warm with the heater, he soon falls asleep. Just before drifting away into slumber, Zhao wonders, why does he tire so easily lately?

Perhaps it’s the common cold.

And while he is asleep, he is bothered by waves and waves of clustered dreams. There always seems to be someone amidst the white mist, incessantly repeating, “You fail to look beyond forever. You fail to tell right from wrong, good from evil, life from death...”

The words wheel through his mind back and forth, and soon Zhao can’t help but wonder: what really are life and death?

The endless interrogation bombards him with increasing dissonance. Zhao knows he is dreaming, but for the life of him, he just cannot wake up. These chaotic dreams draw him deep into a depthless swamp, sucking away his breath as he struggle to break free.

Then, someone pushes a bowl against his mouth, which reeks of a foul odour. Forcing his mouth open, the medicine is stuffed down his throat. Zhao naturally resists, and tries to push the thick liquid away with his tongue. His head is then held in place, and then, there is a familiar scent; soft lips adhere, as the medicine flows downwards.

Zhao finally breaks free from his dream, and finds himself home, in bed. Shen puts down the bowl, and brings a cup of tea. Foreheads touching, Shen says tenderly, "Come on, drink some to clear the taste."

Zhao stares at him quietly, taking the cup. Long and lush eyelashes point downwards, as his forehead is still wet with sweat after the nightmare.

He downs the whole cup, and says coarsely, "Don't know why, I am always so tired lately."

Shen hesitates and answers, "Must have been exhausted after going inside the holy tree."

"Oh." Zhao suddenly looks up, and stares at him suggestively. He speaks in elongated sounds, "And I thought maybe..."

That sends shivers down Shen's spine.

That idiot moans with fake tears and an unnecessary intonation in his voice, "I am pregnant with your child."

Shen shudders, and almost drops the bowl and the cup to the floor. He quickly scrambles off.

Zhao takes out his phone to see what time it is. There is a brief message from Wang Zheng: in an urban area around 300 km away from Dragon City there is a cluster of villas, one resident found a corpse, green-faced with a horrified expression, and a black dog's neck in his grasp. Both man and dog were cold.

Then, Wang professionally reminds him, "It's almost 7th of January."

Legend says that the 7th day of the first month is everyone's birthday, and there are tricks for borrowing people's lifespans.

Folklore teaches that the blood of a black dog can communicate between the living and the dead. The blood is used to write the horoscope readings of two people on a piece of paper, and on it the number of years borrowed is specified. Four incense candles are placed at the corners of the paper, if they stand upright, that means a Hell Guard has taken the bribe. Then, burn the paper, and have the borrower swallow the ashes, and the ritual is done.

In olden times, usually when old people got ill, their children or grandchildren might willingly lend their lifespans. But nowadays, these rituals are lost; only selfish cowards try to find defective ways to steal other people's lives.

In the past, if the rituals failed and the ill passed away nonetheless, the child or grandchild would perform another ritual to get back the lifespan. But stealing is very different. If successful, the Taoist priest who helped with the ritual would have made money in the expense of his virtue. If unsuccessful, it could backfire and cost the life of whoever performed the ritual.

A human corpse next to that of a black dog is not a rare sight near the 7th of January. SIU has several of these cases every year. Zhao forwards the message to everyone, and asks that whoever is free go and take a look.

Before he finishes typing, his eyelids begin to droop. He pulls through and barely hits send. Like a black-out, he drops on the bed and falls asleep before he could even count one sheep.

When Zhu Hong receives the message, she is meditating on the roof. Her long snake tail bathes in the moonlight... Northern cities are quite the trouble, as sunny weather is rarely seen in winter; even moonlit nights are rare and precious opportunities for meditation.

Zhu opens her eyes, but not to look at her phone, as she immediately sees the man sitting opposite her, and is shocked, "Uncle?"

Her uncle four looks at her and says, "Years ago, you failed in your cultivation, and was maimed by Heavenly Thunder. I left you under the care of the Guardian, in the hopes that his most Yang energy could protect you. It seems he has taken good care of you."

With a wave of the hand, a small pavilion emerges on the windy rooftop. Inside there is a big tea tray, with a small burning stove and water pot, and a tea pot beside with tea leaves readily stored inside. Uncle four invites Zhu in, "Come on."

Her snake tail turns into legs, as she quickly skims through Zhao's message. She hesitates, and says, "The Guardian says there is a case..."

"A life stealer got what he deserved, these cases happen every year." Uncle four glances at the message, and then continues, "There's something I need to discuss with you now."

Her uncle four is already the leader of the Snake Tribe. He is always benevolent, but never easy to read. He would never "discuss" anything with anyone, as he would have made up his mind already; the "discussing" is merely a formality.

Zhu adjusts her posture.

Uncle four pours hot water into the tea pot, and begins calmly amidst the rising vapour, "Dragon City is not the right place for cultivation. Most of the fairies at the market live

near the urban areas. In the past 20 years, you haven't achieved much, I'm sure you are aware."

Zhu takes a cup of tea, and tests the water, "So, uncle wants me to move to the urban areas?"

Seeing that she is playing dumb, uncle four doesn't beat around the bush. He smiles, and says, "I want you to leave Dragon City."

"But the Guardian Order..."

"I left you under the care of the Guardian, and in return you would work for him, but you are not bound by the Order, so you can leave anytime."

Zhu bites her lips.

"What now, you don't want you leave him?" Uncle four is always amiable when he speaks, with a warm smile like a Buddha statue at a temple. Yet, his eyes glare into

another's with menace, "If you still see me as your uncle, listen to me and just leave. If there is a place for you in his heart, I'd hate to be a killjoy. But don't you know what he really thinks about you?"

Zhu stays in silence.

Uncle four knocks on the table lightly, "You have always been a smart kid growing up. I don't need to spell it out for you. You know what to do."

Zhu tightens her grasp around her phone as her fingers contort, and veins bulge out at the back of her hand. The poor electronic device is not designed to withstand this, and its screen shatters into a spider web with a pop, and withers away.

Uncle four calmly sips tea, and is in no hurry to urge her.

After a long while, Zhu says quietly, "I will... I will help him wrap this final cause, and then I will quit... is that okay?"

Uncle four very considerably agrees, "Never do things by halves, that's the way it ought to be."

Then, he takes out a small box. There is a pearl gleaming with brilliance inside, "This is a water dragon pearl. It brings good fortune, defends against fire and water. Give this to the Guardian when you leave. He took such good care of you all these years, the entire tribe owes it to him. This is just a small gift."

Zhu takes the box and is about to say thanks, but uncle four vanishes in the blink of an eye.

The moon is radiant, but her heart is in chaos. She is in no mood to meditate any longer. She cleans up the mess that is left of her phone, retrieves the SIM card, and disappears into the night.

At midnight, Zhao receives Zhu's message: "I'm going with Lin Jing. Don't forget to pay us for OT."

Shen never falls too deep asleep. Sometimes Zhao suspects he does not sleep at all. He is always afraid of disturbing him, so he would turn his phone to vibrate mode and put it on a nightstand on his side. But tonight he fell asleep holding his phone.

His phone vibrates in his palm, and he is awoken without a sound.

Zhao doesn't check the message. He holds his breath and turns around to see if Shen is awake. But he finds the other side of the bed cold and empty.

Zhao sits up, and rubs his eyes. He sees that the kitchen is lit. Bare-footed, he heads towards the light.

In the kitchen, Shen has his back turned, and a small clay pot seems to be cooking something on the stove. There is a faint medicinal aroma. Could it be some kind of medicine that has to be stewed overnight? Zhao blinks, and rolls up his sleeves, half-awake, "What are you making? I'll help..."

Shen is startled, and a knife falls to the floor, dripping with fresh blood. Blood spatters across the snow-white cupboard. Zhao's irises refocus, and is instantly fully awake: that knife... was inside Shen's chest just a moment ago.

Shen's face is pale as paper. For a few seconds, a pin drop could have been heard in the kitchen.

A moment later, Zhao stomps forward, and rips apart Shen's clothes. The stabbing on Shen's chest heals instantaneously, but the blood stain remains on his clothes. Zhao feels as though the knife had been stabbed on his chest. He runs his fingers across Shen's seemingly unharmed chest with utmost care, and asks after a while, almost failing to make a sound, "What is going on?"

Shen stands in silence.

Zhao pulls him in by the collar, and raises his voice, "I asked you what's happening, answer me!"

Shen is shoved on to the kitchen cupboard with a loud thud. Zhao is short-tempered around others, but never towards Shen. Yet this time, his anger is genuine.

At this moment, Zhao seems to understand how Shen felt when he used the Shadow Blitz at the hospital, and how Shen almost slapped him across the face. He can barely catch a breath as anger overwhelms him and his mind goes blank. After a while, Zhao fires away again, "What have you been feeding me? Shen Wei! Look at me! You fucking answer me right now!"

"All those years ago... you lost your left shoulder soul flame, and you poured out blood from your heart to make the Lantern." After a good while, Shen replies, "Your soul is unstable. You made me a god, but I was born from filth nonetheless. If you spend too much time with me, at first you will begin to lose strength, and then gradually it will become much worse until one day you will die because of me."

Shen closes his eyes, and says almost inaudibly, "A few thousand years ago Shennong said that I am destined to a miserable end just as my miserable beginning. I was born Ghost King, and will always be, and if you won't leave me, one day, you will meet the same fate."

Like a needle, these words suck away all strength from Zhao's body. He lets go of Shen, and stumbles backwards, almost knocking over the small pot on the stove.

"The 'medicine' I drank... had blood from your heart." Zhao's lips shiver tremendously, "And this is supposed to be my 'life support'?"

Shen looks at him, and smiles extremely subtly, "Even my soul is black. There is only one place in my heart I have left for you, where the blood is still red. I am willing to use it to protect you."

Zhao stares at the floor. After a while, he looks up and covers his eyes with his hand.

If Shen doesn't like him, he could keep going after him, or he could choose to leave.

If Shen wronged him, he could choose to forgive him, or he could choose to leave.

But Shen is like a spider that has trapped him in a most ambivalent place, where he cannot hate, but cannot accept either.

Long after, Zhao has yet to say a word. He grabs a jacket, and heads out the door.

As it turns out, there is a kind of love that is a knife in the heart.

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Chapter: 82

As She Finished Speaking, It Was Like She Handed Over Her Own Life, Nervously Waiting For Zhao Yunlan's Reply.

As Zhu Hong and Lin Jing needed to plan their trip, they made a deal and took advantage of the sun not yet rising to return to No. 4 Bright Avenue to find Wang Zheng.

Yet as they entered, they saw their leader, who hadn't been replying to texts all day, curled up on the couch with his pajamas on, covered by a thick wooly sweater that was obviously not his type of clothes.

Da Qing was crouched in front of the couch, the plate before him had only a messy pile of dried fish. He was licking his paws, a satisfied gleam in his eyes.

Zhu Hong made care to soften the sounds of her feet hitting the ground, asking Da Qing in a low whisper, "Why is he asleep here? Isn't he scared of catching a cold?"

As Zhu Hong finished her sentence, she raised the temperature on the remote and took off her jacket, placing it gently on Zhao Yunlan.

Lin Jing looked down at Zhao Yunlan, an air of fake melancholy, touching his own lower jaw. He said, "Not returning home on New Year's... he is hiding something. The way I see it, he is not forced to marry, but forced to separate!"

At this moment, Zhao Yunlan raised his head. His hair was an unruly pile of straw on his head, the dark bags under his eyes heavy. He glared at Lin Jing, an aura of 'I'm pissed off you woke me' emanating off of him. "Shut up, fuck off!"

Lin Jing was cheap, and he was quiet for two seconds before giving in to the urge of being a busybody. "No, no. Look at him, who can bear it—if your wife came early in the morning with a meal painstakingly cooked, and told you to wake up, would you say the same words you did just now?"

Zhao Yunlan could not bear it any longer. Raising a hand, he grabbed a small bonsai plant, and hurled it Lin Jing's way.

Zhu Hong and Da Qing watched silently. Lin Jing hesitated after seeing Zhao Yunlan truly mad, and the cheap mouth could only sheepishly find a broom and clean up the glass pieces on the ground, muttering, "Amitahbha, may I be safe."

Da Qing leaped onto the couch, shaking Zhao Yunlan's shoulder with his paws. "Hey, are you alright?"

Zhao Yunlan sighed and lay back down, burying half his face into the sweater. The sweater was Shen Wei's; he had only realised it when he walked out the door because he noticed the fragrant smell on the sweater.

After a while, Zhao Yunlan said, "I'm fine. Lin Jing, leave that there, I'll clean it up later. I didn't mean to direct my anger at you. I'm feeling awful right now, so can you guys leave me to lie here for a while? Do what you need to do."

Da Qing pawed at Zhao Yunlan's beard. In response, Zhao Yunlan ruffled his fur with his hand, before landing a slap to the cat's ass. "If you have time, go and do some research for me on where the hell the 'Book of Ancient Secrets' came from."

Da Qing huffed. "Commanding your old ancestor cat? Where's my red packet? Where's my New Year's money?"

Zhao Yunlan closed his eyes and felt around Shen Wei's sweater. Eventually, he found some spare change and pulled on Da Qing's collar, shoving it into his nametag. "You have some guts to ask, huh? The damned money printer can't even compare to your age. Now scram!"

Da Qing wanted to knead the sweater and trim his claws, but Zhao Yunlan moved quickly, putting his arm in front of the shirt. Even though Da Qing retracted his claws, he still left a snowy-white mark on Zhao Yunlan's arm.

With his rights of even just trimming his claws taken away, Da Qing paused, before jumping off with an irked expression. Zhao Yunlan, this bastard, took this old, powerful cat for a donation box!

Due to the many rules of the New Year and springtime, and the fact that most of the people who worked at the SID were not human, they normally only returned to work on the fifteenth.

author's note: cny has 15 days, normally.

The situation with Shen Wei made Zhao Yunlan feel both uneasy and a heartache. The glorious No. 4 Bright Avenue in the morning was just an empty yard. Zhao Yunlan was thus determined dream about his whole life so far, and to sleep fifteen days off.

When he awoke once more, even the cat was gone. He picked up the fallen jacket from the floor, dusting it off. He paused. Hurriedly, he shoved his feet into a random pair of shoes and ran out. It was only when outside did he realise it were a pair of leather shoes, and that it was a bit chilly.

When he looked down, he saw that the shoes he normally wore were neatly arranged, and even had pairs of thick socks tucked in them. On the sofa's arm were his clothes, ironed smooth. His underwear tucked right in the middle, out of sight, and on his clothes

were his phone, wallet and keys. Only his jacket was missing, and Zhao Yunlan realised that was probably why he had Shen Wei's one.

Out of nowhere, a voice said, "Professor Shen came by. I was going to wake you up, but he didn't let me."

Zhao Yunlan pinched his nose and turned around to see Zhu Hong surfing the web to kill time.

"Where is Shen Wei?"

"He left." Zhu Hong's gaze shifted down from the monitor.

With a hoarse voice, Zhao Yunlan asked, "Where did he go? What else did he say?"

"Oh, he said it was cold outside, if you're done with your work you return home, and to not worry about not seeing him because he went back to his place," Zhu Hong parroted Shen Wei, before continuing. "After that, he probably went home. Speaking of which, what did you guys choose the New Year to fight?"

Zhao Yunlan didn't reply. He knew where "his place" referred to—it definitely wasn't what Zhu Hong thought was Shen Wei's condominium apartment. His heart felt like it had been pierced with a dozen knives, yet in front of others, he only had a frozen expression.

After sitting for a while, Zhao Yunlan pulled on his socks and walked toward the bathroom to change out of his pajamas. His hands gripped the sink tightly, watching the pristine, clear water in it. He buried his face under the icy water.

He didn't want to miss Shen Wei. He didn't dare. For the first time in his life, he knew what it felt like to yearn for someone so much, it felt like a hole had been carved in his heart.

He was in the bathroom for an abnormally long time, and Zhu Hong got worried, walking over to knock on the door. "Chief Zhao, are you alright?"

Zhao Yunlan gave a noncommittal grunt, wiping the beads of water on his face. Finding the shaving kit in the bathroom, placed there for night work convenience, he faced the mirror and shaved his face. Carefully putting himself together once more, he straightened his back and walked out.

Zhu Hong had been waiting at the door. At the sight of him, she opened her mouth, but Zhao Yunlan beat her to it. "Is there anything to eat? I'm starving."

"... There's probably something in the canteen. Do you want to go and see?"

Zhao Yunlan nodded, turning and heading up the stairs to the second level. Zhu Hong was even more startled—Zhao Yunlan had never in his whole career got his own food. He would sit at his table, legs propped up, and yell at the closest person to “bring this powerful man some food.” It was only a few times a year the man would pick himself up to head to the canteen himself.

Zhao Yunlan asked for a simple set of breakfast as he reached the canteen. He sat down without a word and began eating. He seemed to give off a melancholic, resigned vibe. Zhu Hong quietly followed behind him. It felt as if even if the sky came crashing down, Zhao Yunlan would give it a single glance before continuing his breakfast without a single expression. This was even more disconcerting.

When he finished eating, it felt like his stiff limbs finally had some sort of energy. Zhao Yunlan then gave Zhu Hong an odd look. “Why are you here today?”

Zhu Hong didn’t speak for a while. “I was supposed to go with Lin Jing to see the black dog and corpse today via train.”

“Ah? Then why didn’t you?”

“I was worried for you, so I let him go alone.”

Zhao Yunlan wiped his own mouth and stood up, returning his own tray. He carelessly said, “There’s nothing to worry about. If there’s nothing you have to do, you can return home.”

Zhu Hong didn’t reply, only following after him.

Zhao Yunlan returned to his office and opened his laptop as usual. He gave Zhu Hong a sideways glance. “Why are you still following me?”

“What’s up with you?”

Zhao Yunlan opened his drawer for a cigarette, lighting it before saying lightly, “Nothing.”

Zhu Hong refused to let it slide. “If nothing’s wrong, why didn’t you return home to sleep, and instead came to the office?”

“Oh.” Zhao Yunlan took a drag out of his cigarette. “I just bantered with him.”

“Bullshit,” Zhu Hong spat. Her eyebrows twitched. “You think everyone’s blind? You treat the surnamed Shen as your darling, your heart. If it were really a little bantering, you would have gone back sooner than when the sun came up, writing a long sappy letter of regret. You wouldn’t be here, talking to me.”

Zhao Yunlan pressed his lips into a thin line.

“Did he do anything to let you down?” A dangerous gleam entered Zhu Hong’s eyes, like if Zhao Yunlan gave the order, she would eat Shen Wei whole.

“Stop with your bullshit.” Zhao Yunlan flicked off the ashes on his clothes. “You know gossipy women can’t get married easily?”

Zhu Hong scoffed angrily. “The person I like doesn’t like me back anyways, so what’s the point? I can’t even get married.”

Zhao Yunlan understood what she was saying, but acted oblivious, thus leaving himself speechless. He decided to escape, grabbing his briefcase and shoving his phone, wallet, and the like inside. He didn’t bother to close his laptop before turning and heading in the direction of the exit.

Zhu Hong didn’t let him go, and chased after him. “Where are you going?”

“I have a meeting with a department chief. Why the hell are you still following me?” He glared at her from within the car.

Before Zhao Yunlan could lock the door, Zhu Hong slid in and buckled the seatbelt unceremoniously. “I’m coming with you.”

Zhao Yunlan let out a heavy sigh. “Grandma, could you give me some space?”

Zhu Hong turned away from him.

Zhao Yunlan suppressed his frustration and turned on the ignition. Damned Zhu Hong.

He didn’t speak for a long while. Zhu Hong snuck a few glances at him, but all she saw was a cold and expressionless face. She was at her wit’s end, and finally attempted small talk. “Who’s the chief of the department?”

“Little Guo’s second uncle. Speaking of which, there’s no use in bringing you along anyways, so help me look into just who’s the one that meddled around and brought Little Guo into the SID.”

“Meddling? With Little Guo? What can he do? Why?”

Zhao Yunlan didn’t reply.

His suspicion narrowed itself onto the bowl in his father, who had likely borrowed his father’s body to mess around, but why? Why Guo Changcheng? Other than a heaping amount of virtue, what good was the kid? In the whole of SID, Little Guo was the most human, so where did he come from?

If he could, he wanted Kunlun's memories and powers back. If not, he wanted to know, at the bare minimum, in these murky waters, what were the truth and what were lies. He couldn't act rashly.

Shen Wei... these two words seemed to revolve around Zhao Yunlan's mind, making him dizzy, like a ball of flames were burning his energy. He was enduring it, but to what extent? He had to seem like he was normal, calm, and sane in his own seat. Sometimes Zhao Yunlan would realise that when no one had been beside him for three or less minutes, a furrow would develop between his brows.

Sometimes, a scene would appear in his mind. There was no light, only the neverending bleak gray. A place with no life. Shen Wei's body were half in the oblivion, yet he only lifted his head to look at the rich blue skies. His gaze could not penetrate the unending dullness. He dropped his head in disappointment, and finally allowed the darkness to grab at him and swallow him whole.

Someone shoved Zhao Yunlan. He startled awake, cold sweat beading on his forehead. It was Zhu Hong. She said, "We're here."

Zhao Yunlan blinked. It was a nightmare. He had exchanged a few cups of tea with Little Guo's uncle, before leaving. Zhu Hong had took over the wheel, and somehow he had fallen asleep.

Zhu Hong asked, "What did you dream of? You called 'Shen Wei' so heartachingly."

Zhao Yunlan felt sulkish, so he pretended he didn't hear the question.

"Yunlan." Zhu Hong called out.

He stopped in his fidgeting.

She fished out a small box, and took out a pearl that was hung on a red string. "My fourth uncle wanted me to give this to you. It's to thank you for the many years of looking after one from the snake tribe. I...I'll be leaving with him in a while."

"Leaving? Where?" His brows furrowed slightly.

"I don't know, maybe back to the tribe." A bitter smile floated on Zhu Hong's lips. She saw that he didn't take the necklace, so she reached over and put it on for him. "This is our tribe's spiritual device. It can protect you. If you... if you have anything for me to do, now's the time to say it. I can't do much else for you."

Zhao Yunlan said after a while of silence, "Dragon City isn't suited for cultivation. You should return to your tribe, learn more from your fourth uncle. You might have a future, and who knows? The tribe might be yours to lead."

He spoke as if he were talking to a colleague, making her heart twist in agony. Zhu Hong blurted, "Chief Zhao. If you give me one sentence—just one, I'll break off all ties with my tribe. I'll be there with you no matter what."

In the end, Zhao Yunlan only avoided her gaze, laughing at himself. "We have no feuds between us. Why should I bring you down with me? If you're safe in the future, I'll be happy."

The light in Zhu Hong's eyes flickered and dimmed in the span of a second.

Zhao Yunlan had already exited from his side of the car.

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Chapter: 83

The Soul of the Living, The Heart of the Dead, The Sin of Redemption, The Return that was Unfinished, Part One

Da Qing was about to tear a hole through the Criminal's Investigation Division's floor. Zhao Yunlan and Zhu Hong returned, one walking behind the other.

Even though the atmosphere between the two of them were obviously off, Da Qing thought that as a cat, it would be best for him to stay out of fickle human matters and feelings, instead picking up the 'Book of Ancient Secrets' with his mouth and depositing it at Zhao Yunlan's feet. "The resentful energy residing in this book is strong. I checked, and it was from Antique Street."

Zhao Yunlan picked up the book, using his sleeve to wipe off the cat's drool on the cover. "Antique Street?"

'Antique Street', true to its name, was a street full of shops which sold unique, odd antiques. Most of it were useless fakes, but occasionally one or two authentic artifacts are unearthed.

However, the 'Book of Ancient Secrets' had, without a doubt, been photocopied. Any human with an average intelligence would realise the book not to be any ancient artifact, and that the abundance of resentful energy came not from it, but the eucalyptus tree that most people overlooked, hiding in the furthest shop on Antique Street.

The tree, if Zhao Yunlan were to describe it, was like a transportation hub of sorts. A train station, if you will, where all forms of "trains" were to bring you to all sorts of destinations. Some to hell, some to the mortal realm, but they all had to pass through there first.

The tree leaves were connected to the mortal realm, the roots firmly linked to the yellow spring. It was a non-human, non-ghost entity.

Zhao Yunlan looked up and met Da Qing's eyes. "What you're saying is that this book came from the underworld?"

The black cat nodded his head.

Zhao Yunlan asked again, "Who bought it?"

Da Qing licked his paws. "It isn't stated, and I couldn't find the buyer history. Maybe it's the previous Guardian..."

"That's impossible." Zhao Yunlan carelessly flicked through the book with no publisher nor identification number. "Based on the colour of the print and the pages, it's pretty new. It's definitely after I became the Guardian; the past Guardian would be too far back the timeline."

"Then we have a conclusion: it was sent along with the cat food."

What Da Qing was saying was that, someone had, somehow, slipped it between bags of cat food and brought it in. The person had to know the Ancient Secrets very well, even the seals on the column had been written carefully.

The SID were very organized when it came to their books, having bright coloured labels and numbers stuck on the spine of every book. It was the reason why the illiterate San Zang could arrange the books in order, back at their original spot. So why would this book of ancient secrets be tucked between "Nuwa Creates Humans and the Skies" column?

"This is a 'black leather book'," Da Qing butted in. "Black leather books' were referring to the workers on the night shift, who had gotten books not from the human realm through some way. Books not from the human world were opposite from the ones who had only been in contact with the human world; known as the 'white leather books'.

When Da Qing decided to claw his way through the book, an ebony mist hissed the minute his paw came into contact. The smell was indescribable and odd. Da Qing retracted his claw, saying, "Very suspicious. Even we didn't label the book. If you want to follow up on it, I suggest we head to the Antique Street when night falls."

When the sun finally set, and the golden glow dissipated into a dark, cold shade of gray, the moon high in the sky, Zhao Yunlan could not resist any longer, and called Shen Wei. On the other end was the cold, robotic voice of a woman. "The number you have reached is not available..."

Zhao Yunlan stared dazedly at his phone for a while. Finally feeling what “not seeing a day was equivalent to failing to experience three autumns” was like, he stood there until Da Qing came over and swiped at his arm. “Stop dallying, let’s go.”

He then picked up that failure of a cat, and walked out to see Zhu Hong, silently waiting beside his car.

At the sight of Zhao Yunlan, she laughed self-mockingly. “You must think me cheap—the shitload of words I offered you, and yet here I am still, following you.”

Zhao Yunlan was stunned for a second, rendered speechless, before saying, “... I was just going to remind you to wear your down jacket.”

Two humans and one cat travelled to the Antique Street in a sort of awkward atmosphere. They arrived under the eucalyptus tree.

Zhao Yunlan turned his head to see that beside the eucalyptus tree was a store. It had two bright paper lanterns hanging from the door. The words on the lantern were ripped, and one could only barely make it out to be the words ‘Town Spirit’.

Zhao Yunlan finally remembered something he had overlooked. He patted Da Qing’s shoulder, asking him in a low voice, “What does ‘Town Spirit’ really mean?”

“The soul of the living, the heart of the dead, the sin of redemption, the return that was unfinished.” After Da Qing finished that sentence, he reverted back from his literary genius to a cat with words that were enough to make a human convulse. “Isn’t that written on the back of the Guardian Order? You blind?”

It was rare that Zhao Yunlan had less experience than Da Qing, so he asked again, “But why did Lord Kunlun write ‘Guardian Order’ on it?”

And what did Shennong’s utterings about life and death mean?

Zhao Yunlan was pondering over everything. He walked into the eucalyptus tree, and once he followed the path down, it would be the yellow spring.

The path to the yellow spring was often unsuccessful when attempted, but amongst the three of them, two were not human, and one had the Guardian Order. It could be considered a special case. With the echoing of the water all around, and the cold that felt like it could freeze ice with a touch... no one would dare to scream and shout in anger in fear of angering the resentful ghosts walking around.

The “people” that walked by had their mouths agape, and were being herded like a flock of sheep with a shepherd.

In his whole career, Zhao Yunlan had of course travelled through here before. It was just that every time he did, he would walk at a fast pace, keeping his gaze directly ahead of him.

Seeing the narrow path of the yellow spring, one would feel like it were the pathway to Heaven. The malachite-green stone floorboards and bubbles that would appear on the surface of the spring felt like at any moment something would claw their way to the surface. On each side of the path were lanterns, every ten-chi there would be one. They flared brightly, forming long shadows that seemed to drag on the ground.

Zhao Yunlan pondered for a moment before realising: It was the Lantern of the Guardian.

A while ago, he had read about it in an article, which said the lantern had guided any lost souls on the yellow spring. The length of the yellow spring was based on the amount of things in one's life left unforgotten, but once the golden light of the lantern washes over you, and you drink the water that would cleanse your soul of any memories of your soon-to-be past life, you would be ready to reincarnate.

Your past life would be washed down to nothing. Though the light of the lantern seemed dim and insignificant, it had the ability to pull out new, clean souls.

Zhao Yunlan couldn't resist the temptation to bend down and peer at the small lantern, whose bottom had carved four neat words; "The Path of Life till Death."

The truth about reincarnation.

Suddenly, a blur flashed across his eyes, and Zhao Yunlan's heart felt a sudden pain, as if he had been stabbed in the chest with a knife. He stumbled backwards to be caught by Zhu Hong. "What's wrong?"

Zhao Yunlan was deathly pale, yet he pushed down the bark of pain rising in his throat, shaking his head at her before pursing his lips together and continuing on, hand pressed against his chest.

Once they reached the Ghost City, Zhao Yunlan fished out a few talismans. They split it amongst themselves, pressing it down against their tongues. This way, their living energy wouldn't be detected, and they wouldn't be of any suspicion to the ghosts there.

When Zhao Yunlan was younger, he came here to hunt down a misguided living soul. He hadn't been able to bring him back, but had to watch as the ghosts in the city pounced onto the poor living soul, ripping it into shreds until none of its energy could be felt anymore. not to be a fucking whore but where is shen wei i miss him

Then, he had been young, and it had left an impact on him anyways. Him, a living person, who understood the concept of “What joy is there in living, what fear is there in dying?”

Dead souls yearned for the thrill and power the souls of the living could provide. They were as bloodthirsty for it as a man who had gone without air for days; going berserk without it, a crazy sort of violence.

It was why, at moments like these, Zhao Yunlan’s heart ached for Shen Wei. Sometimes, he felt like Shen Wei neglected himself, even to the point of ignoring his own nature.

Zhu Hong had never been to the Ghost City, and thus shot Zhao Yunlan an uneasy look. He said, “No matter what, don’t spit out the talisman in your mouth. If you do, it would be messy; some of them are small like ants, yet can chew through a whole elephant. These ghosts are stronger than you think.”

Zhu Hong nodded.

“How about you wait outside,” He suggested. She shook her head. Actually, she didn’t know what help she would be inside; she just felt like, wherever Zhao Yunlan went, if she went to take a look as well, she would be less jumpy.

They walked to the end of the street, and paused at a place where the door simply said, “Please.”

On the door were things similar to the ones by the eucalyptus tree, two white lanterns that simply said said, “Guardian.”

Zhao Yunlan took the initiative and walked forward, pushing open the door. With a creak, the dilapidated door opened. He stuck a lense onto the door before walking in.

His foot had not yet landed when a high-pitched girl voice rang out. “A lense to guide the ghosts. Does our esteemed guest have any pressing matters?”

Zhao Yunlan tilted his head, signalling for Zhu Hong to shut the door. A girl with two braids walked forward. She only reached the waist of an adult, face the shade of paper, a pitiful shade of white. Her cheeks had two spots of red, and her eyes were black and pitiless, her lips cherry red and her face expressionless.

To be frank, one would not find her cute, and instead terrifying.

Zhao Yunlan didn’t beat around the bush took out the Book of Ancient Secrets. On top, he put a Guardian plaque as a paperweight, saying, “Little maiden, I have need of your assistance.”

Her eyes landed on the plaque. “Ah, it’s the Guardian himself, gracing us with his presence. How is my brother?”

“Dare not, dare not. Your brother is doing well, I just sent him some kilograms of bacon,” Zhao Yunlan says politely. “I would like to ask this maiden, if this book belongs to your store?”

The girl reached over for the book. Coldness emanated from her figure, and her fingers trailed across the book as she flipped it. “Correct, the book belongs here.”

She turned the book over to its last page, at its most insignificant corner, were a gray marking. “This is our bookstore’s seal.”

Zhao Yunlan smiled. “Then may I ask once more, why was the book in the human realm?” As he said this, he took out a pile of paper money and used his lighter to burn it right in front of the girl.

She smiled. “Guardian is too kind. Wait here, and help yourself to some tea.”

Two humans and one cat entered the hut, and he of course picked up the cup, but didn’t drink from it. It would take a fool to drink from the dead knowing themselves to be alive.

The girl hauled a book of records, and flipped through the pages before suddenly saying, “Found it.”

The girl lifted her head and shot Zhao Yunlan another smile. “Dare I ask the name of Guardian?”

“Surname is Zhao,” He said, eyebrows furrowing, dread rearing up in his heart. “Zhao Yunlan.”

“Then it is correct,” The girl said, pushing the open book towards him.

The page recorded its buyers, and on it read: ‘On the noon of July 15th, Guardian, Zhao Yunlan.’

translator’s notes:

“not seeing a day was equivalent to failing to experience three autumns” → 一日不见如隔三秋. I have no idea what it means, but based on my understanding of Chinese, it’s not seeing the sun for a day feeling like not seeing it for three autumns.

“Town Spirit” is Zhen Hun. I had no idea if it meant Guardian or Town Spirit, so I just put the literal translation.

Guardian Chapter: 84

Chapter: 84

But When Zhu Hong Remembered Why He Cherished The Jacket So, She Could Not Laugh At All.

Zhao Yunlan paused, not hurrying to say that it was impossible. After a moment, he asked, "What year did I purchase the book?"

"2002," The black cat calculated. "What were you doing that year?"

"I was working hard under the Guardian Order," Zhao Yunlan remembered. "I couldn't handle my jobs, and almost got kicked out of school to become a professional stick. I was stopped by my father, and it was that year I suggested setting up the SID. My father agreed, and helped me where he could."

Zhao Yunlan furrowed his brows. "So was it my father, or was it..."

His last words couldn't be heard, and Da Qing had a suspicious glance in his eyes as he patted the cat's head. "When we get back, I'll tell you everything in detail."

He turned to the girl. "I must ask, how do you verify the buyer's identity? The buyer doesn't write their own details, right?"

She replied, "The records in here are organised meticulously. Whatever is written; the buyer's name, surname, or identity, will be identical to what is written on their birth and death certificates. Does Guardian have any other questions?"

Zhao Yunlan nodded, picking up the book and left without another word. It was as he reached the door he remembered something, turning around and asking, "The 'me' that came to buy the book eleven years ago... does this maiden still remember what he looked like?"

The girl tapped the corner of her crimson lips, saying deliberately, "At first, I could not recall. But with Guardian's enquiries, I suddenly remembered—then I looked at your features, and realised it was someone I had met before. If Guardian had not said, I really would not have known eleven years had passed."

What the girl was hinting at was that, the 'Zhao Yunlan' back then was not much different from the Zhao Yunlan now.

Zhao Yunlan pondered for a moment. "Thank you."

After this, he walked out briskly, Zhu Hong hot on his tail. The girl called after him, and this time she lowered her voice, making her sentence sound horrifically creepy. "I would like to warn Guardian that these few days may have bloody disasters, so do be careful."

Zhao Yunlan had not reacted, but Zhu Hong asked worriedly, "What bloody disaster?"

The girl merely used her hollow eyes to stare at them, the ghost of a smile floating on her pale expression, and didn't speak. Zhu Hong was about to walk forward to push, but Zhao Yunlan grabbed her and hauled her away.

Zhu Hong protested, "But..."

"She is returning the favour that I had given her brother. How much do you think a few kilograms of bacon can hold against her?" Zhao Yunlan speedily exited the area, and warned Zhu Hong. "Even if she dared say the rest, I wouldn't dare to listen. In the Ghost City, ethics don't matter, and logic before acting is practically nonexistent. You cannot use the ways of the living to reason with the dead; why do you think Hell left them here to fend for themselves? Remember, the owed debt of a dead person is not an easy debt repaid."

Zhu Hong was quiet for a moment before saying, "Why are you suddenly telling me this?"

"Though I do have a lot of people on my side to do these things, I never thought you'd leave." Zhao Yunlan smiled. "If I did... remember, even if you do cultivate to the point you become Nüwa herself, remember this person here still needs your help. I can't negotiate with eight thousand year olds."

Zhu Hong's eyes and nose turned red.

"Sh, keep the talisman in your mouth. Let's wait till everyone in the SID is back, before giving you a grand farewell party. This isn't the place to be crying." Suddenly, Zhao Yunlan pulled Zhu Hong behind him, blocking her. All he saw was that on the cobblestone, someone had been crouching there for god knew how long.

He... or maybe she... or even it looked like a hairless monkey. Raising its head to look at Zhao Yunlan, its mouth split open into a smile that reached the sides of its face. It stood up, its neck twisting at 180 degrees. Baring its dripping teeth, it shot toward Zhao Yunlan and Zhu Hong.

Zhao Yunlan had pulled out his gun, but before he could pull the trigger, the two-faced thing fell to the ground. Twisting its head back, it used its shaking head to assess Zhao Yunlan before breaking into peals of laughter.

When Zhao Yunlan saw this, he aimed his gun at it, instructing Zhu Hong to walk on the other side, leaving this thing a good distance away.

When it saw that they were going to leave, it started babbling, “Men and ghosts walk different paths, men and ghosts walk different paths—”

This practically shot an arrow straight into Zhao Yunlan’s heart. His face drained of colour, and he turned around to glare at the two-faced creature. With a cold voice, he snarled, “I care about my face, and don’t want to be on bad terms with Hell, yet you lot just keep fucking ripping apart your faces again and again.”

The smile on its face promptly disappeared, and Zhu Hong pulled at his shirt. “Detective Zhao, let’s go.”

Zhao Yunlan had clenched the gun until veins were popping out from his hands, yet as they were about to leave, the two-faced creature spoke once more. “Humans or ghosts? You have to choose one. The living or the dead? You have to choose one. The world or the nether? You have to choose one.”

Its voice got higher and higher, until the point it was shrill and almost pierced the eardrums. The words “You have to choose one.” were like waves, rippling through the city, echoing again and again.

Inescapable.

Ghosts spilled from the corners of the city, emerging from the cracks. Their eyes held a dangerous glint as they hovered around, eavesdropping rather conspicuously.

Zhao Yunlan was holding Zhu Hong, and just as he was about to pull her away, the creature suddenly jerked in front of them, saying, “There is a living ghost here. There is a living ghost here.”

When it finished uttering this sentence, a racket had been caused, and Zhao Yunlan didn’t hesitate to draw his gun and shoot at the two-faced creature. The gun ripped through its skull, burning through its skin. No more than a while had passed before the creature was not but a pile of ash.

But a large number of ghosts had bottlenecked there, and were hungry for a taste of the living. Not even the hissing black cat could stop them.

Zhao Yunlan cursed under his breath, drawing his gun and shooting at the nearest ghost, who burst apart in mad shrieks. Unexpectedly, the ghosts closest to it didn’t even acknowledge the doom of a fellow ghost. To them, fear, or logic, didn’t exist. Soon, a mob of ghosts encircled around Zhao Yunlan, Zhu Hong and Da Qing.

Zhao Yunlan had only come to investigate; he had no preparation for a fight, and thus his bullets were quickly used up.

Zhu Hong reverted to her snake form, a large python rising amongst the ghosts. One snap of her jaws devoured four to five ghosts at once. It wasn't enough, and many of them clung to her body, biting and baring their teeth. With a sweep of her lower body, the ghosts clinging onto her had been squashed.

But there were just too many of them! There was a saying: You could hide from one mighty ghost king, but not from his unending ghosts.

Ghosts yet again swarmed Zhu Hong. Though she swung them off, they stood up and came again. One even raked at her skin with nails, slicing off a portion of her flesh.

A dagger swept out from behind, slicing the ghost that clung onto her scales into pieces. What was disturbing was that, even as the ghost was destroyed, it still stuck out its neck in hopes taste of blood.

The dagger-wielder, Zhao Yunlan, exclaimed, "What a bloodthirsty ghost!"

He pulled at Zhu Hong's tail, saying, "Shrink, quickly!"

He swung out with the dagger between his words, hacking at the ghosts that dared come near. Somehow, he had found time within this precarious situation to take off his coat, hugging it in his chest. It really was "Break off the head or make it bleed, but do not get a drop of oil on the clothes"!

But when Zhu Hong remembered why he cherished the coat so, she could not laugh at all.

She became a small snake, hiding inside his pocket and swirling around his wrist. Zhao Yunlan picked up the reluctantly-transformed-into-a-ball-of-fur Da Qing with one hand, and used the other to light up a wind-borrowing talisman. He really hadn't wanted to use the lighter; it had had only one spark of true flame left...

The mad cyclone of fire spiralled out, and ghosts screamed from all four directions. Zhao Yunlan rubbed the scratches from a fierce ghost from his back, muttering, "The bloody disaster came this fast?"

After this, he didn't waste a moment, and charged towards the exit, using a hand to shield himself from the roaring flames and light.

When they reached the entrance of the Ghost City, it had already been closed! As they turned, the hungry ghosts had also swallowed the true flames. Though some smaller ghosts combusted upon consumption, it didn't affect the others at all.

Da Qing screamed, "Meow Oh Meow Oh!" Using his claws to scratch at Zhao Yunlan, he whined, "Fucking hell, now what?"

Zhao Yunlan was expressionless. "What else can we do? Barge."

As he spoke, he fished out his phone and took pictures of the hungry ghosts, before brandishing the Guardian Whip. "Bring this back as a trophy."

Da Qing shrieked, "Have you lost your mind? Taking photos at this time? Do you want a group photograph with them, to show that you've been here before, you jerk!"

"What are you shouting about?" Zhao Yunlan pushed down Da Qing's screaming head irritably. "This isn't even much, my wife ran off and I still haven't done anything."

Da Qing was quiet. He didn't know what happened, but Zhao Yunlan was most probably shocked badly by Shen Wei.

In that moment, Da Qing gazed at Zhao Yunlan's seemingly calm face, and suspected Zhao Yunlan treated this whole thing as a destressing activity. Based on Da Qing's knowledge of him, the bastard really could do something like this!

The first crack of the whip cleaved through the dead energy in the Ghost City.

Zhao Yunlan felt a force guiding his attacks, as if he were always meant to wield the weapon. As if something was awakening in him.

Then, a human-sized hole was blasted into the gate. A man, fully-clad in black strode in, grabbing Zhao Yunlan's whip and retracting it before shoving it back on his arm. Zhu Hong, which was wrapped around his wrist, was thus silenced.

The man had a longsword in his hand, and a swing of it shook the whole Ghost City. The rocks on the ground trembled along with it, and dozens of spirits and fierce ghosts were broken into many pieces under the blade.

The man had an arm braced against Zhao Yunlan's waist, as if if he had to drag the man against the ground, he would, to get Zhao Yunlan out of the godforsaken hellhole.

Zhu Hong ascertained their safety and transformed back into a human. She joyously called out, "Ghost Slayer, your honour!"

All her revered, admired Ghost Slayer said was, "Why are you here." His voice was cold.

Zhao Yunlan's expressionless mask finally cracked. His arm was too tired, and thus he let go of Da Qing, who fell to the ground nimbly. He cared not about the occasion and walked over, embracing the feared Ghost Slayer in two steps. "Come back with me."

... It was too bad Zhu Hong had just transformed back into a human. As she witnessed this, due to her unstable legs and shock, fell on the ground.

It seemed like being chased and hunted by hundreds of hungry ghosts really wasn't anything.

Guardian Chapter: 85

Chapter: 85

"What?" Shen Wei said lightly. "I can't kill?"

Zhu Hong pointed a quivering finger at the Ghost Slayer. "H-he-he is..."

"Shen Wei." Da Qing licked his paw, an odd sense of superiority overcoming him as he waited patiently for the girl beside him to regain her view of the world.

Shen Wei's hood had fallen onto his shoulders, revealing Professor Shen's gentle and elegant features, that was somehow violating this peculiar situation. After this, he gently shrugged off Zhao Yunlan, holding the hand that had been scratched by the ghost, his eyebrows scrunched. Shen Wei's fingers that were on Zhao Yunlan's wrist tightened, before he moved the other hand to make a clawing gesture. A slim black line appeared on his wound, before dissipating in the air. The bloody wound healed rapidly afterwards.

"Leave this place." Shen Wei was possibly being curt.

It was then a stream of ghosts scurried by, a judge puffing, yet hot on their heels. Those ten kings were really something, even now they would throw their weight around. The one doing all the hard work eventually fell on the old judge's shoulders.

Panting, the judge ordered the ghosts to patch the door and suppress the ghosts. There was a secretary standing at the side, nervously wiping his own sweat as he checked how many ghosts were left standing after the swing of the Ghost Slayer's blade.

Shen Wei and Zhao Yunlan didn't care about them, and walked away together. Zhu Hong and Da Qing scrambled to their feet, chasing after them. The judge was wiping his sweat as he frantically called out, "Your honour! Sir!"

Shen Wei didn't respond, and only arched his brow as he looked back, his face expressionless.

"This... this Ghost City... no matter whether they have sinned, or if they are waiting for reincarnation... they are all counted! Your honour... you... this..."

"What?" Shen Wei asked lightly. "I can't kill?"

The judge was quiet.

Shen Wei tilted his head, putting his hands into his black pockets. He spoke with a tone that bordered on humble. "My prestiged judge, though I was born in the slums, and not talented in any form, I have truly never heard of anything my Ghost Slayer blade cannot kill or cut through. If this is harassment or trouble in any form, I am sorry."

... It was like he was sincerely apologising.

When the judge saw his smile, he felt like his whole body was filled with ice. The judge wiped at his lips and hastily said, "Yes, yes, of course..."

Shen Wei looked at the judge with a hint of a smile, before dragging off Zhao Yunlan.

Zhao Yunlan stopped in his tracks, feeling like Shen Wei's smile was like a stranger's. Maybe it was because Zhao Yunlan never saw him force others. He turned back to look at the judge who was wiping cold sweat from his forehead, asking, "The two-faced creature that blocked me was a premeditated event. Hell? What benefits would they gain?"

The smile slid off Shen Wei's face, and he lowered his head, frowning in thought. Why? These ghosts were only trying to give one a taste of what an evil ghost was like, reminding one that there were worse ghosts out there.

"Shen Wei!" Zhao Yunlan nudged him. "Stop acting mute, I asked you to come home with me, so talk to me!"

"...Leave," Shen Wei only spoke quietly when they reached the yellow spring. His voice lost that cold and disinterested tone when they had spoken to the guard, and it was low and tired. "When the living stay in the yin realm for too long, it isn't good for their health. If you continue dragging on your stay, you'll fall sick."

Zhao Yunlan let go of him, stopping in his tracks.

After a while of mutual silence, Zhao Yunlan said hoarsely, "I won't die of sickness. Come back with me first."

Shen Wei didn't even move an inch.

Zhao Yunlan clenched his teeth. "Fucking hell, I really do need to handcuff you to the house."

The Shen Wei behind him, where Zhao Yunlan couldn't see, suddenly laughed. It was as if he had heard the sweetest sonnet on Earth, and even the gloom in the air seemed to lighten to the point of blooming flowers.

"If I do come, will you be willing to eat your medicine?" Shen Wei asked.

“Nonsense!”

Shen Wei paused, turned, and looked at Zhao Yunlan for a while. He sighed under his breath. “I am a ghost, Kun Lun. No matter what Kun Lun gave me, no matter what Kunlun changed me into... those are all myths. My bloodline will always be a ghost. Ghosts are unlucky. When there were first villagers, there were even rumours that if anyone saw ghosts, they would not have a gentle nor happy ending; death with no evidence of burial.”

Zhao Yunlan looked at him, trying his hardest to stop the anxiety burning his. He took a deep breath, and finally formed words. “I don’t believe that. I don’t care, come back with me first. We can solve other problems. Even if we can’t be together, at least let me see you, then I can stop worrying.”

“Where you can see me.” Shen Wei repeated quietly, the corners of his lips twitching gently. Yet, it failed, and became a bitter smile. After a while, he said softly, “Yunlan, please stop torturing me.”

“Till now,” Zhao Yunlan heard Shen Wei say. “my biggest regret is that I intentionally provoked you, and then failed to control what happened. Now that I think of it, maybe it was because my cultivation wasn’t high enough, I wasn’t determined enough, and that my heart was too soft that this was the result.”

Zhao Yunlan seemed to realise something, and lunged; yet his outstretched hand came into contact with air. Shen Wei, while facing him, had leapt backwards quickly, his body almost becoming a black streak.

Zhao Yunlan had watched him disappearing with his own two eyes, leaving only a voice that seemed to stretch further and further away. “I can only accompany you till here. Leave quickly.”

“Leave.” That one word reverberated in the air like a curse.

Zhu Hong saw that in that moment, there were tears in Zhao Yunlan’s eyes. He had only blinked furiously, leaving bloody veins in his eyes.

“You head back first.” Zhao Yunlan stared in the direction of Shen Wei, using a calm tone to talk to Zhu Hong. “Bring Da Qing along—By the way, there’s specific times to leave, right? If so, tell Wang Zheng to help me arrange...”

Zhu Hong interrupted him. “Detective Zhao, what is this?”

Zhao Yunlan waved a hand, not wanting to say more. “Nothing, just go.”

“Go where? I’m not going anywhere!” Zhu Hong’s voice became loud. “He... Shen... Ghost Slayer... gah! If you love each other, you love each other, don’t act in this

manner to each other! Why did you say you can't be together? What medicine did he force you to take?"

Da Qing leaped onto Zhu Hong's leg, staying there, lifting his head to look at Zhao Yunlan. Suddenly, he said, "There has always been the idiom of 'Men and ghosts walk different paths', but this old cat, in all my years, have truly never seen real yin and yang opposites, yet who won't leave each other. There have only been rumours that if they are together, the dead person would suck the energy out of the living; probably the rules of nature. Their energy is easy to lose, but it is not easy to return. It is necessary for the other party to voluntarily contribute a part of their body that is godly. The ghost king is born to be able to compare the saints, and probably there is no such thing as the transform-into-a-demon elixir. So it would probably be... blood from the heart?"

Zhu Hong sucked in a breath audibly when Da Qing finished, he was still expressionless and unmoving, the light from the yellow spring washing over his face.

Zhu Hong didn't know what to say, but a human's heart was biased, and her heart had Zhao Yunlan in it. She cared for the happiness and sadness of him, pulling it along with her like a rope. The more she thought of it, the tougher it felt for her to breathe, until she finally could not bear the sadness, and yelled, "He's trapping you in evil!"

Zhao Yunlan's eyes finally looked at her. His eyebrows furrowed slightly. "What did you say?"

"I said, he's trapping you in evil!" Zhu Hong seethed. "If he didn't hint at you from the start, would you chase after him for no good reason? If he didn't keep pushing, would your dad still be called Li Gang? Would you rob boys? The Ghost Slayer is so magical, If you didn't want something, could you force him to follow suit?"

Da Qing slid down from her leg. Did this woman forget she was speaking about the Ghost Slayer?

Zhu Hong got angrier the more she spoke. "He's obviously leading you on! If you two couldn't be together, he should have told you from the start, forcing you to, forcing you to..."

Zhao Yunlan took out the last cigarette in his bag, puffing out a ring of white smoke. "Forcing me to what?"

Zhu Hong had momentarily been cold, and now she said, "Forcing you to be unable to leave him, forcing you not to leave him even when you fall into the yellow spring from a cliff, forcing you to only have him in your eyes, and everyone else to be left behind! I think he's always had motives in his heart!"

Zhao Yunlan laughed softly, patting her shoulders and directing her toward the tree. "Alright, now that you're done nagging, go."

Zhu Hong stomped her foot on the ground. “Were you even listening to me?”

Zhao Yunlan took a smile and hung his eyes and shot the ashes: “You silly girl, this emotional business really makes one anxious, too much to talk, do you know what is sparse? He is mine, there is a problem between us, whether it is he is wrong or I am wrong, it is our own business. An outsider giving me their opinions, it is no different from hitting my face—this is me, too lazy to acknowledge you. Now stop spouting nonsense, leave quickly, go back and have a good night’s sleep. You’ve worked hard these past two days, just treat this as your work over your leave.”

Zhu Hong said, irritation flitting across her expression, “I’m an outsider?”

“Of course,” Zhao Yunlan side-eyed her. “Anyone outside the two of us is an outsider.”

Zhu Hong yelled, “You bastard!”

Zhao Yunlan spread out his hands. “Where am I bastardly?”

Zhu Hong finally forced out that cliché sentence. “In your eyes, where do I not compare to him?”

Da Qing, who had his hands over his face this whole time, came to the horrifying conclusion that he actually liked these generic love triangles.

Zhao Yunlan could only sigh. “You’re gentle, kind, and beautiful, and a girl. You’re better than him in every way.”

“Then why can’t I?”

Zhao Yunlan thought for a while, after a while, revealing two small dimples, bowed his head and smiled softly. “Probably because my eyesight is shitty—in fact, you won’t be much better, you see. As a smoker in a new era, I am a poor man with a bad temper and a bad temper. I can only pretend to be gentle and caring for less than three days. A failure to my family, even my mother can’t stand it, kicking me out of the house when I was young. You’re a big beauty, what can’t you understand?”

Zhu Hong had tears in her eyes. “Stop pretending to be good!”

“Really, you don’t know,” Zhao Yunlan slowly enjoyed the last cigarette in his hand. “In fact, you don’t know: I don’t even bother to wash my socks. I buy seven or eight pairs. After I’m done, I pick them up and and arrange them according to the horridness of the smell. Then I randomly stuff them into laundry bags. Slowly, they all disappear. It was only after Shen Wei moved in that I could wear a complete pair of socks.”

As he spoke, a smile tugged at his lips, painting an image of tenderness. “Sometimes I don’t understand how he can stand me. You also probably can’t come up with scenes

where he's nice to me. Go back to your clan, and whenever you want to return, I'll welcome you with open arms. My only condition is that we speak of anything except this, yeah? People better than me walk the streets everyday, surely you can find someone better than me."

Zhao Yunlan crushed the cigarette under his foot, standing up tall. He ruffled Zhu Hong's hair with some force. "I'm a useless piece of crap, why would you want to be with me. Come, goddess, I'll give you a way to relieve your anger another day, to call me a jerk. Just say you look down on me, that you don't want me, okay?"

Zhu Hong's tears finally couldn't be held in, and flowed down her cheeks in a rush. She choked out, "Hmph, asshole. Only a ghost would look up to you, only a ghost would want you."

Zhao Yunlan pondered for a moment and realised her words had a meaning; like blessing him and Shen Wei. He thus laughed. "You're right, only a ghost would."

After he finished, he walked onto a bridge, flipping nimbly off it into a boat, scaring the ghost inside. He patted its shoulder. "Hey, brother, can you tell me how to get to the sealed land of disrespect?"

The ghost was pale and trembling. It didn't speak a word, and instead leaped off the boat into the water, not even making a splash.

Zhao Yunlan realised only one of his sentences had caused a ghost to dive into water. He rubbed his nose, sitting on the wavering boat to ponder.

Zhao Yunlan watched the calm waves beneath the boat, and decided to put Shen Wei's coat on the boat.

A curious ghost popped out from under the water, attempting to touch it. Zhao Yunlan didn't even turn his head. "You dare to touch the Ghost Slayer's clothes?"

The ghost seemed to be terrified, disappearing under the waters again.

Zhao Yunlan rolled up his pants and shirts, diving into the water himself, to the shout of a faraway woman and cat, at the same time scaring away a bunch of ghosts underwater.

It was so cold, like someone dipped the whole place into a freezer. Zhao Yunlan's watch flickered gently. He planned to use all his energy to swim, before going up for breaths. Unexpectedly, the necklace around his neck glowed, and he found himself able to breathe underwater.

"This is a bit too much, isn't it?" Zhao Yunlan held the mythical water dragon pearl in his hands, a thankful sigh escaping his lips. He gathered his courage and dived deeper.

After a while, the faint glow from the boat disappeared, and above him was nothing but black, mirroring the waters below him.

The ghosts around him gradually disappeared, and it seemed even the water stopped moving.

With no light, no sound, no nothing, Zhao Yunlan found his heart to be extremely loud, to the point where even as he covered his ears, he could still hear it, like the beat of drums.

After a while, even the glow from his watch disappeared. His surroundings were nothing but a wash of ebony. After being immersed in the darkness for a while, Zhao Yunlan had a thought: it felt like his surroundings were not without light, but that he had gone blind once more.

Guardian Chapter: 86

Chapter: 86

The Paper-white Face Of The Young Ghost King Reflected All Of His Desires, Saying Frankly, "Good-looking. I want to hold you."

translator's note: some of you guys may hate me for this, but I have not translated the parts where Zhao Yunlan and Shen Wei weren't in for 86. A summary of those parts would be: Chu Shuzhi returned to Dragon City, found Guo Changcheng doing charity work. Da Qing and Zhu Hong return, and Wang Zheng reveals that Shen Wei was the Ghost Slayer. They also tell Chu Shuzhi and Guo Changcheng that Zhao Yunlan jumped into the water. It settles in for Chu Shuzhi a few moments later, and he's horrified because of all the tricks he played on Shen Wei.

I may translate the whole of 86 when I have time, but for now, that's all I can do.

Peace,

Haely

Zhao Yunlan had lost all sense of time. Though he was trapped in darkness, it was completely different from when he had been in the tree.

It felt like he was being squeezed together, the feeling of water pressure pressing against his chest; the deeper it went the more obvious it was. He didn't even dare to move his head, and he felt that even a slight tilt of his head would cause him to faint.

His heart felt like it was going to leap out of his chest, and his heartbeat was so loud to the point he could not bear it.

It was then, he saw a faint light.

It was dimmer than that of a firefly, but because Zhao Yunlan had become used to darkness, he had to cover his eyes. Slowly, he swam in the direction of the light, mesmerised.

It was a huge ancient tree. The branches were not visible at first sight. It was almost 100 meters wide, but it was a dead tree. There were no leaves on it. Only the branches of the dead knots were rough

Zhao Yunlan is shocked. Is this the Virtue Tree?

He walked down nearly a kilometer and finally saw the roots of the ancient tree. Zhao Yunlan's feet found the land after a long time. He first walked around the Virtue Tree on one side. Stone monument, through the faint glow of ancient tree, Zhao Yunlan saw the things engraved on it.

Words he had never seen before, but somehow recognised — “The land of the emperor, the town of the unliving, the disrespected land.”

“Nüwa...” Zhao Yunlan didn't know why, but he called out this name.

His voice was like the ripples of water, gently cleaving apart the waves, his breath like the sound a qin made, triggering the flickering darkness. Zhao Yunlan didn't realise, instead reaching out his hand. When his fingertips brushed the stone, white light and static filled his head. He momentarily couldn't see, but it felt like he had fallen through time, into the body of a lady with the tail of a snake.

The unfamiliar, yet familiar voice spoke. “Kunlun, what if Shennong was wrong? What if we were all wrong?”

Shennong was wrong? What was Shennong wrong about?

The voice spoke again. “But we cannot turn back.”

Wait!

The lady seemed to have tears in her eyes. She ran toward him with her arms outstretched, as if wanting an embrace. Zhao Yunlan opened his arms, but before he could even touch her, Nüwa was like the fragmented pieces in space, and shattered into thousands of pieces. in front of him.

“No...” Zhao Yunlan accidentally opened his mouth, but no words came out.

Then, time reversed. Zhao Yunlan realised he had returned to a very long time ago, and for a moment, he could not tell if he was Kunlun or some mortal from five thousand years later, immersed in the manipulation of time.

He felt like he guarded the Virtue Tree everyday, lying on a slab of cobblestone, if he had nothing to do he would stare at the tree and daze. He dazed the whole day away sometimes.

After that, he didn't know when, but a handsome yet peculiar boy would follow after him anywhere, everyday, like a tail.

Lord Kunlun ignored him at first, but finally couldn't hold it in. "We're already in your territory, why are you still following me around?"

The teenager said, his expression open, "I like you."

Lord Kunlun had always been called impolite by everyone. For once, he had the chance to call someone other than himself impolite. Thus, he took the opportunity, and with furrowed brows, "scolded", "Impolite."

The young ghost king looked at him in bewilderment, not understanding where he was impolite.

The paper-white face of the young ghost king reflected all of his desires, saying frankly, "Good-looking. I want to hold you."

Lord Kunlun sneaked a glance at this bold little ghost king, not feeling harassed, but rather interesting. He teased, "You don't know how to pursue; I despise you."

While the young ghost king didn't understand why he was being despised, he felt like what Lord Kunlun said made sense, and so he lowered his head in shame.

Lord Kunlun waved his hand. "Come here, I'll teach you unconventional little thing some morals."

Guardian Chapter: 87

Chapter: 87

Those Of The Ghost Tribe Were Not Living Beings, But In That Suspended Moment, He Thought He Heard His Non-existent Heartbeat.

When the floods first settled, it was the holy Shennong that graced the earth to try to save the common people. He disguised himself and preached amongst the people. Lord Kunlun had listened to a bit while he was in the crowd, and as he told the young ghost

king all he remembered, but he made up most of what he didn't remember. It was to kill time for Lord Kunlun, but the confused young ghost king didn't dare miss a word, treating Lord Kunlun's every bullshit sentence like gold.

Over time, in such a despair-filled place, they had somehow starting depending on each other.

The teenager's infatuation toward Lord Kunlun didn't fade, yet he knew embarrassment. He knew that if he parroted off of Lord Kunlun it wouldn't be good, and so he never said them, instead finding many ways each day to make Lord Kunlun happy.

It was a pity that what he could make, or pull tricks off with, were very limited. The disrespected lands weren't fun. Fauna didn't survive, and so what they could only do to pass time were to catch two low-level beasts and pit them against each other, watching them tear each other apart, until one finally ate the other.

But the young ghost king didn't like this, so Lord Kunlun would naturally probably not like it either.

So the young ghost king spent all his effort and gathered the teeth of thirty-six beasts, using his own hair to tie them together into a necklace, gifting it to Lord Kunlun.

It was just... when Lord Kunlun received the necklace, his expression was odd, even odder than the necklace. He felt like his teeth hurt, but he still suppressed his feelings, forcing out a smile, thanking the young ghost king with gritted teeth.

The young ghost king realised from this that he didn't like the necklace—Lord Kunlun hadn't worn it even once, and everytime he mentioned it Lord Kunlun would avoid the topic.

But he really couldn't think of anything else. One day, when the young ghost king was sitting on the branch of the Virtue Tree, he suddenly said, "There's a type of flower. It looks like a bell. It comes in all colours. When one gets close enough to smell it, it is very fragrant."

Lord Kunlun turned his head to look at him. "En?"

The youth's expression was full of longing. "It's very pretty. If I make a necklace from it, would you like it?"

Lord Kunlun was silent for a while, before smiling. "You want to make me happy, so you can leave this place, right?"

The youth paused, before hastily shaking his head.

Lord Kunlun teased, "Then what is it for? I guard this place so that not one of you can leave. Not even one."

For... the young ghost king stared at him, welcoming Lord Kunlun's steady gaze. He wanted to speak, yet he didn't know what to say. Emotions swirled in him, but he could not find a suitable statement to speak up with.

He only thought that those words sounded too rough, and rough words were not necessarily able to express his feelings.

The ghost king was unable to speak up, and sharp claws protruded from his hands, a gloomy frown taking over his face.

Lord Kunlun burst out laughing, gently hooking his lower jaw, bringing the boy over and delivering a kiss to his clean and ethereal forehead.

The young ghost king froze dazedly for a second. The deadly energy radiating from him had disappeared at a point in time, and his face was flushed red; all the way to his jawline and the tips of his ears. He stood up. It felt like he was drunk, even his legs were soft as jelly. He fell from the branch of the Virtue Tree.

The boy, as one of the ghost tribe — even if he was an abomination of the ghost tribe — what he saw every day, were only what the low-level ghosts desired or hoped for. He had never experienced what it was like to be kissed. This was his first time, and it felt like he was covered in a cloak of hot air, gently floating in mid-air.

Even the forgetful waters didn't give him this sensation of hovering above ground.

The young ghost king wordlessly ran into the seal, jumping straight into the disrespectful lands, to not be seen for decades.

When the young ghost king once again appeared before Lord Kunlun, he seemed to have matured, his body growing leaner and longer. He was about to be as tall as Lord Kunlun, the lines of a youthful and naive boy hardening into sculpted lines. Other than the slight change of his eyebrows, he looked identical to when they first met.

He carefully held a sphere of golden light in his hands, and offered it to Lord Kunlun.

"This is..."

"This is your soul flame on your left shoulder. It was scattered around the seal. It took me fifty years to collect them all." The young ghost king outstretched his cupped palms carefully, reluctantly handing the orb over. "For you."

The smile on Lord Kunlun's lips slowly faded. After a while, he faced the boy and asked, "And what do you want in return?"

“The...” The youth seemed to pause, unable to convey his thoughts. Finally, he pointed at his own forehead. “The... Can you do it again?”

Lord Kunlun assessed the youth in front of him, who started shifting around nervously. Suddenly, Lord Kunlun reached out and held the young ghost king’s lower jaw. This time, he very gently kissed the lips of the youth, folding his hands together lightly, letting the young ghost king hold his soul flame in his grasp.

Lord Kunlun seemed to ponder for a long while, before sighing. “I am rich with the wonders of the world. When you think of it, they are nothing but a few running creeks and lush mountains — nothing to be awed over. Out of everything I have, the only thing worth something is my sincere heart. You want it? Take it.”

In that moment, the youth’s expression instantly brightened. He wasn’t aware that what he had been unable to express could have been a term called “sincere heart”. Merely two words, yet could make a person never recover.

“And this, if you like it, keep it,” Lord Kunlun patted the youth’s palm. “My heart’s blood has formed the Guardian Lamp’s wick, my body the lamp holder. Only my consciousness is here, so wanting it back would be of no use to me. The rib I gave you last time, do you still have it?”

The youth hurriedly nodded.

“Take it out for me to see.”

The boy peeled apart the layers of clothes on him that made him seem like a caveman, taking out the rib.

“I’m made from Kunlun Mountain,” Lord Kunlun lightly touched the rib. “Just a shake could change the weather.

As he spoke, he made a complicated gesture with his fingers, and the rib glowed golden. Following Lord Kunlun’s fingers, it inserted itself into the boy’s forehead. That moment, the youth felt that he had heard the sound of the swell of the sea and the hundred thousands of mountains.

He was speechless. He could see every mountain river, rushing, and rippling.

Lord Kunlun’s voice, though not heavy or sounding, it is extremely penetrating: “From now on, the hundred thousands of mountains will listen to you. Although you cannot rid yourself of your ghost tribe bloodline, at least now half a fairy and half ghost, you can freely travel to the Three Realms in the future. I will no longer care about you.”

The youth intercepted him: “I won’t leave!”

After a while, he added in a polite manner: “You are here, I do not want to go anywhere.”

“I won’t stay longer.” Lord Kunlun said, turned his head and looked at the water that I couldn’t see at the top of the river. “I am just a god, I can’t walk, I haven’t stayed for a long time. I suddenly felt my days.” It’s coming soon.”

The young ghost king hurriedly asked: “Where are you going? Where are you going?”

“Don’t go anywhere, I am going to die.” Kunlun said calmly.

“Impossible, how can a god die?”

“A god can die. Pangu, Fuxi, Nuwa, Shennong, aren’t they all dead?” Lord Kunlun said, “Now it’s my turn.”

After listening, the youth’s expression turned ferocious. “If there wasn’t the seal, if you hadn’t helped Nüwa seal the four pillars, if the Guardian Lamp wasn’t your body, you wouldn’t need to die, right? Then I’ll chop off this tree, I’ll kill this goddamned tree!”

The young ghost king, at times, was like a small, fluffy-haired wolf pup; If one raises their hand and smooths his hair, he will roll on the ground. However, he will always have fangs in his mouth—not notice for a moment and it will slide out.

Lord Kunlun had long gotten used to it, and patted his head, murmuring, “To not die, and live forever... a stone is immortal, but in the end it is only a stone. Shennong said to not die or to vanish is to not be a god. I used to think it was a load of bullshit, but now I slightly understand.”

The ghost king slapped his hand away, not wanting to know what he understood. “You dare?!”

Lord Kunlun shifted his hand, and saw that his hand was suddenly translucent. The simmering youth was taken aback, and immediately grabbed his hand, flipping it around and over as if to ascertain that Lord Kunlun still existed. He asked, again, “What if I cut down the Virtue Tree?”

Lord Kunlun laughed. “You’ve inherited the authority to do basically anything. You can destroy the forbidden lands; what would the Virtue Tree be?”

The ghost king said, “Then I can cut down this tree, destroy this lady’s goddamned rock!”

Lord Kunlun laughed bitterly. “Yes, of course, but I would likely die faster.”

"I can..." The ghost king hesitated slightly, before saying mercilessly, "I can kill everyone in the world, slaughter every living being, stop the mountains from turning green, the waters from flowing, scatter corpses everywhere, no humans for miles and miles."

Lord Kunlun raised an eyebrow. "Wow, that powerful?"

The ghost king squeezed his hand. "You can't die. I can do anything, will do anything!"

"Shennong was correct again," Lord Kunlun's expression icy, his voice cold. "Should have killed you earlier."

The youth stubbornly stared at him.

Yet, Lord Kunlun suddenly laughed, gentle as the first thawing during the end of the winter. "From when Shennong borrowed my shoulder's flame... No, from the war of gods and ghosts, Nüwa's creation of humans, even from Pangu opening the world, this was destined; destined that at this time, at this place, I would die. Even if you made the heavens close up again, you would only make me die without reason, and not stop anything.

"You don't understand." The beautiful god, with a gentle and patient voice he rarely used, said, "The acclaimed fate, it's not a thousand paths with the same outcome, and there's nothing in the dark binding you, but at a certain time, you know that there are many paths you can choose, but you will only ever choose that one path. These things, I didn't understand when I was a child. When you are older, you will understand."

The young ghost king finally found himself with no words to retaliate. For the first time, he realised how useless he was. All he was capable of was killing, destroying, and fighting. He really could end all life on the world, dead or alive.

But what use would that be?

He still wouldn't be able to save his most loved person.

Lord Kunlun watched the eyebrows of the wrathful youth slowly press closer to his eyes. After all, he hadn't learnt what it felt like to bottle up feelings of happiness, sadness, and grief. After a moment of dazed staring, he burst out in tears.

Lord Kunlun seemed to watch him with a mix of love and pity, thinking to himself that he wouldn't see the little beauty grow into an adult beauty.

A blink of an eye, and five thousand years would pass.

Zhao Yunlan jolted back from the rock as if he had been electrocuted, suddenly sensing a person behind him. The person laughed, and Zhao Yunlan had barely turned before

he drew the Guardian whip, moving back two steps, pressing his back against the rock and facing the ghost face ten steps away.

The ghost face looked at him, swaying his head slightly, a smile revealed on the fake ghost face. "I've heard that that contains all of Nüwa's memories. What did you see?"

Zhao Yunlan laughed coldly, his feelings not warming. With a harsh tone, he spat, "Why should I tell you?"

Ghost face imitated Zhao Yunlan in touching the rock, saying, "Five thousand years ago, he and I were clearly twin ghost kings, yet Lord Kunlun held him in favour. Five thousand years later, one of us is trapped inside, the other is outside. One in the prison, one the prisoner."

The uptilted lips on the ghost mask curved downwards, and he turned, lowering his voice, pausing after every word. "The seal's about to break, and that's the only reason why I can walk in and out freely—in the end, everything will die. You, Lord Kunlun, if my foolish brother hadn't suddenly played his cards, and preserved your spirit, stuffing it into the reincarnation wheel to turn you into a mortal, you would have long been gone like all the gods in the world. Is Shennong a fool? No forcefully taken thing can be long, and if it is long it will only die."

As he spoke, his ice-cold fingers traced Zhao Yunlan's cheekbones, sighing. "But 'death' was lit by your soul flame, and thus made us... not living, not dead creatures. Is this not a fault in yin and yang?"

Zhao Yunlan scrunched up his eyebrows. What exactly happened to his soul flame? He had heard many versions so far, and wasn't sure which was correct.

So, he asked, "Was my soul flame not taken by Shennong? How did it appear in the forbidden lands, and why say 'death' was lit by my soul flame?"

The ghost face suddenly blanked, his mask seeming to go fully white for a second, as if not understanding what Zhao Yunlan was asking, before rocking back and forth with peals of laughter. "Hahahahaha... and how innocent I thought he, how saintly... really..."

His voice suddenly stopped – because the soul of a knife cleaved through the air, the force able to split his whole person into two halves of hostility, The ghost face quickly dodged, and the remaining wind forced Zhao Yunlan to step backwards.

Zhao Yunlan said, "Shen Wei?"

Shen Wei raised his hand to grab him. "To come alone to this kind of place, you must be mad!"

But before he was able to touch Zhao Yunlan, the ghost face grabbed onto Shen Wei's arm and warped into black mist, slamming it into Zhao Yunlan's grasp, effectively stopping the whip in his hand.

After that, the black mist enveloped Zhao Yunlan, and cackles erupted from his lips.

The next moment, his laughter abruptly stopped, and the black mist reformed to become the ghost face. There was no one there anymore.

The ghost face paused, seeming to be shocked as well, murmuring, "Someone took him away, who?"