

## GUARDIAN

### Chapter: 88

Zhao Yunlan was almost stunned as he listened...Shen Wei and Shen Nong...how did they become irreconcilable?

At that time, Zhao Yunlan felt as if someone covered his head with a sack. As soon as he took it off, he found that he had teleported.

The scene in front of his eyes first turned black and then white. When he opened his eyes, he found himself in a place he did not recognize...at least it wasn't below Wang Chuan (lit: stream of forgettance basically one of the rivers in lore that you cross to reach the next life). He agitatedly fidgeted with his whip and looked around. Suddenly, in the vast whiteness that almost rendered him blind, he saw the back of a lonely figure walking in the far distance in front of him.

Zhao Yunlan was tall with long legs and was able to catch up quickly. He clearly saw that the silhouette was a small old man.

Even if the old man stood up straight, he would only probably come up to Zhao Yunlan's chest. His back was bent like a cooked shrimp and he carried a large basket that was commonly used by the people in the Yunnan Guizhou province for moving. When Zhao Yunlan looked into the basket, he found that it was empty. Although there was nothing inside, the old man seemed as though he was carrying something that weighed several hundreds of kilo

grams, weighing him down to a point where he couldn't even lift his head. He could only face the ground with his back to the sky and struggle to walk forwards.

Zhao Yunlan reached out, lifted the big basket, and muttered: "Is it that heavy?"

The old man finally stopped walking and wiped off a forehead of trailing sweat. When he lifted his head, he revealed a weathered and tanned face, looking like the old man carrying water in the famous oil painting "Father". He looked at Zhao Yunlan and smiled tiredly: "Come. Come with me."

"Wait. Where is this? Who are you?" Zhao Yunlan furrowed his eyebrows and asked.

The old man didn't reply, just lowered his head again and kept walking forward like an old ox pulling a plow. His shoulders sunk down from the weight of the empty basket and a pair of shriveled and protruding collarbones were revealed at his neckline.

"It's you who brought me here? Ai, what is all this? I finally cornered my wife and didn't even get a chance to say a word before you cruelly interrupted."

The old man listened to his complaints with a faint smile, neither explaining nor answering.

Zhao Yunlan continued to ask: "Where are you bringing me? What are you carrying?"

The old man suddenly hummed a phrase following the pace of his footsteps: "Suppress the souls of the living, calm the hearts of t

he dead, atone the sins of the survivors, reincarnate those who are unfinished—”

He dragged out his voice. Using a melodic, longing tone, he uttered the words one by one. No matter how many times he spoke, he only said this phrase. The sound was deep and rolling, along with these bizarre words it was reminiscent of funerals in the past where flag-

bearing people would scatter paper money while they walk, repeating the same “this family grants 120 yuan” sentence as they followed the coffin.

Zhao Yunlan saw that he couldn't get an answer from this man and so stopped asking. The whip in his hand turned into the black paper with red letters that was the Guardian Order and he rolled it into the shape of a cigarette and stuck it in his mouth to stave off his craving. He listened to the old man's voice as he silently calculated his next steps.

He suddenly had a sort of feeling as if he was walking on a road towards the heavens.

Wait...road to the heavens...wasn't that road on Buzhou Mountain? Didn't Buzhou Mountain already collapse?

As he thought of this, Zhao Yunlan's footsteps abruptly stopped. A sound of a sigh came out of some unknown location in the air. As if he was suddenly reminded of something, he stared at the old man's figure closely and blurted out: “Could you be Shennong?”

The old man's footsteps stopped yet again, he turned his head slowly and wordlessly looked at him.

The muscles on Zhao Yunlan's body immediately became tense.

Ever since he determined that the so-called "memories" in Da Shenmu (the name of the tree "big godly wood") was fake, there had been a kind of suspicion in his heart—

Mount Kunlun wasn't a place where just anyone could climb up, not to mention the people who could alter the

Da Shenmu could be counted on one hand. Later, Zhao Yunlan reflected on that memory countless times, the section about the soul fire on his left shoulder was very vague and the section about Buzhou Mountain was rigid and abnormal.

Who was it that was lying to him?

In this way, Shennong seemed to be the most suspicious. In that memory, Shennong always appeared with a type of proper and in different attitude. At first glance, Shennong seemed to be very righteous, but after careful thought, it didn't seem right.

The memory was a complete story. If any one of the people who appeared in the memory was removed, there would be a different ending. In other words, their every word and movement were connected to various causes and consequences, with the exception of Shennong—

even if the story didn't have Shennong, the beginning and ending of the story would be the same, nothing would be affected.

Later, he met Shennong Bowl who was attached to his father, he heard Gui Mian (lit: ghostface/mask aka yezun in the drama) seemingly accidentally say the sentence “Shennong borrowed your soul fire”, all of which seemed to confirm his suspicions.

Additionally, in the stone at the Big Seal, Nuwa's seemingly right but evidently false statement: “Shennong is wrong” again stimulated Zhao Yunlan's nerves.

Zhao Yunlan clenched his fist: “So the one who messed with the Da Shenmu, is it you or not?”

The old man didn't respond, his face revealed a sense of worry. In that moment, Zhao Yunlan felt that he heard the wind of Buzhou.

As his voice fell, the snow-white world suddenly came apart and a strong piercing light appeared. Zhao Yunlan hurriedly covered his eyes, only lowering them tentatively and slowly along while later. Through his eyes that were flowing with tears from the stimulation, he saw that he had returned to the ordinary world.

Zhao Yunlan looked at his surroundings and was stunned for a moment. An incredibly weird feeling of familiarity and strangeness suddenly rose in his heart.

He didn't realize why for a long time until he saw the ice cream store on the street corner.

Zhao Yunlan's eyes opened wide—this place was near his home, only that the ice cream store across the street had long gone bankrupt. Five or six years before, it had already become a hotpot restaurant.

For a while, he was a little confused and paused in place until finally he walked over in big strides. He used what little change he had and bought a bowl of shaved ice. Like a fool (sha bi), he stood within a group of young girls, leaned against a window, stared at the big "Year 2002" displayed on the calendar hanging on the wall of a shop, and expressionlessly used a sort of very bitter method of eating to chew the shaved ice with a "ka zhi" sound.

It looked like he was there to collect fees and smash the shop.

Zhao Yunlan felt that he was either dreaming or watching a bad movie where the scenes kept switching, in one moment it's on the sky and the next it's on the ground. He was finally able to go back to the ordinary world only to find himself landed 11 years earlier.

At the moment when he'd eaten half of the shaved ice, he suddenly glimpsed a person. He immediately sat up straight, and, like a fox, extended his neck to look out from the ice cream shop window.

ow. Because the image of a “fierce handsome man eating shaved ice” was so eye-catching, several girls couldn’t stop looking at him and thus, uncontrollably followed his gaze, extended their necks, and looked outside.

This resulted in forming a basketball team of meerkats.

Zhao Yunlan saw a familiar car drive out of the little neighborhood that his house was in—the old car that had carried countless memories of his childhood that was ultimately mercilessly replaced by his dad!

Zhao Yunlan immediately threw away the food that he didn’t finish and rushed out with a speed as if he was trying to catch a cheater in the act. He flagged down a taxi along the road, pulled out a tattered work permit, and flashed the police badge in front of the taxi driver: “Please tail that car in front for me!”

The taxi driver didn’t expect that he would be able to pull a 007 in this lifetime and immediately became excited. He stepped down on the gas and the car kicked back and then shot out, turning the taxi into an F1. The acceleration flattened Zhao Yunlan against the front passenger seat.

Zhao Yunlan's dad drove all the way to the antiquated street. If he went in any more he would reach the little alley full of shops which no motor vehicles were allowed to enter. From about 100 meters away, Zhao Yunlan saw his dad park the car against the roadside, walking in sporting big paparazzi repealing sunglasses that celebrities wear.

“Shifu (master), stop here, stop here!” Zhao Yunlan's eyes were glued to his dad's back. He hurriedly grabbed his wallet but just as he was about to pay, the taxi driver sternly refused.

Zhao Yunlan: “Hurry up and take it, don't waste time...I'm going to lose track of the person.”

The taxi driver gave a heroic salute and then gave Zhao Yunlan a strong handshake. With force, he said: “Comrade, go. I won't take your money...I want to serve the people!”

Zhao Yunlan: “...”

After a second of speechlessness, he decided not to be polite any more, jumped off the car, and ran away.

The antiquated street from 11 years ago wasn't as standardized as it was now. In the narrow road, stalls were everywhere: from jewelry and jade to antiques and paintings, the alley contained all sorts of things. As long as it looked lively, it didn't matter if the items were real or fake. Thus, the road seemed to become narrower and was incredibly not conducive to trailing a person.

Zhao Yunlan dry swallowed a concealed piece of yellow talisman drawn by Chu Shuzhi. Chu Shuzhi was so poor that all he had left was self-



confidence, and he thought of himself as incredibly cool. He claimed that this talisman would be more than effective even if it was to be used to investigate the romantic relationships of the great ancient gods.

Even though Zhao Yunlan thought he was full of bullshit, he couldn't help but put his hopes on the talisman. However, he didn't dare follow too closely.

As such, he lost his dad as soon as he turned the corner.

Zhao Yunlan carefully poked his head out at the door of each store but still didn't see him. His gaze landed on the big pagoda tree that connected with the netherworld. He knew that the person he was following was not his pompous father but a scum who dared to use the body of a living person to go down to Huang Quan (basically where souls cross over, lit: yellow spring).

Zhao Yunlan took a deep breath. This would be his second time going down Huang Quan today. In his heart he wished he could beat up that broken bowl.

There was sense in Shen Wei's recommendation that he leave as quickly as possible. It definitely wasn't a great experience for a living person to walk the Huang Quan road. Even for someone like Zhao Yunlan who dared to walk downstairs barefoot in the cold winter months, the bone penetrating chill could still be clearly felt on this road.

"Father Zhao" waited on Huang Quan road for a bit. He consistently rubbed his hands and his brows continually became more furrowed. It seemed as though he was waiting for someone.

Huang Quan road was thin and narrow and the people and ghosts on it could be seen clearly. Zhao Yunlan didn't dare to reveal himself, so he could only suffer through crouching in the big pagoda tree, feeling as though he was trapped between the two worlds of yin and yang.

Just as he thought he would become paralyzed from crouching, a familiar person suddenly walked over from the other side of Huang Quan road. That person was very eye catching; everywhere he went he seemed to leave behind a sense of disaster (idiom: 寸鬼不留 changed from 寸草不留... basically a sense of no ghost is spared), even the ghosts who calmly gambled

their lives couldn't help but to lower their heads and back away, giving an effect of Moses parting the sea.

At a glance, Zhao Yunlan's mood immediately became conflicted. Anyone who found out that their own "wife" already met their father-in-

law eleven years ago would probably be unable to restrain themselves from having this feeling.

Shen Wei wore the long cloak of the Ghost Slayer and didn't show his face. He walked up to five paces away from Zhao Yunlan's

dad and stopped without uttering a word. The chill emanating from his body was even more unbearable than the desolate Huang Quan.

Zhao Yunlan's dad also stopped walking and rubbing his hands. The two stood there silently in a suppressed and heavy atmosphere.

After a while, Zhao Yunlan's dad opened his mouth and said: "The evening paper that Yunlan brought home has Your Honor's scent."

Shen Wei didn't explain, only emitted a quiet, cold laugh.

Zhao Yunlan had never heard this kind of cold laugh from Shen Wei before. In that instant, he suspected that the person within the black cloak wasn't Shen Wei at all but the enigmatic Gui Mian.

Although a powerful soul had taken over father Zhao's body, the body was still made of flesh. Not long after he was on Huang Quan road, the cold made his lips turn pale and purple. On closer inspection, they were even gently trembling. However, his voice did not falter at all: "Don't forget what you promised when you insisted on sending Kunlun's soul into the reincarnation cycle all those years ago."

"Huh?" Shen Wei finally slowly opened his mouth. "I only looked at him from very far away. When he approached I hid. Even if this immortal can't believe my character and worry that I will not follow my word, do you also not trust the valuable contract with Shennong?"

His tone sounded as warm and polite as ever, but Zhao Yunlan was used to listening to his words and his tone. He sensitively picked up on a sense of belittlement and an indescribable sarcasm from this short sentence.

Zhao Yunlan's dad furrowed his eyebrows: "But what is going on with The Great Seal? Why would the Houtu Great Seal become loose?"

This time, Shen Wei was silent for a while and then his voice became slightly lower: "If this Immortal still remembers, the Fuxi Great Seal was only a few hundred years old when it was broken by the sky pillar. You can say it was destroyed and then erected again. Since Nuwa's fall, the newly established Houtu Great Seal already lasted for who knows how many thousands

of years. Water droplets can erode stone...the Great Seal loosening under our eyes is something no one can prevent. Even I am helpless."

"The Houtu Great Seal is created by Nuwa's sacrifice and it is also from Kunlun's painstaking effort. Of course I'm not implying you did something you shouldn't do to it, but if the Great Seal completely collapses, what do you plan to do?"

"Yes," Shen Wei paused and then lightly continued, "what do I plan to do? I am very slow-witted and only now I am finally understanding what the immortals meant by 'no death, no extinction, no godhood.' In fact, I wasn't originally meant to be born from the sky and raised by the earth, or be a God respected by the people."

“Don’t think that Shennong’s agreement can’t restrain you on the day the Great Seal breaks. If my son...”

Father Zhao’s voice got to this point and then suddenly came to an unnatural stop, as though it was a movie that had its speakers break down halfway. He opened his mouth but no sound came out.

Shen Wei’s face was hidden behind a black fog but Zhao Yunlan could sense that he was smiling.

He heard him slowly say: “Son? Immortal you must be too immersed in the play. If ‘Ling Lang’ (t/n honorific for son of the other party aka ZYL) knew that you are giving up your role of an immortal to attach yourself to not just any mortal but his dad’s body, do you think he would acknowledge you or not?”

Father Zhao’s throat emitted a cackling sound. He used both hands to clasp his throat and his eyes were full of anger but he couldn’t say a single word.

Shen Wei looked at him calmly for a bit. Finally, he laughed lightly and waved his hand. As though someone punched him, Zhao Yunlan’s dad backed up many steps before steadying himself: “You...”

Shen Wei folded his hands into his long sleeves and nodded his head slightly: “So Immortal please be careful about what you say. Some things everyone know but are better left unsaid. What do you think? The sage Shennong is a noble character of high prestige, of course I also highly respect him. But respect is respect, if he was still alive, I would still be unable to reconcile with him. I still don’t think much of the three ancients of the past. This Immortal is born as Shennong’s treasured bowl...I’m afraid that you haven’t cultivated the same level of power as him yet?”

Father Zhao’s whole body was shaking but Shen Wei only continued indifferently: “I don’t want to do anything disgraceful either. I’m willing to peacefully talk sense with you. Hopefully Immortal

you can also conduct yourself well, don’t stretch your reach too far, manage too wide—  
if there is nothing else, I won’t see you off.”

When he finished speaking, he didn’t even spare a glance at Zhao Yunlan’s dad. He turned and walked down Wang Chuan (lit again: stream of forgettance), further into the depth of HuangQuan.

Zhao Yunlan was almost stunned as he listened...Shen Wei and Shennong...how did they become irreconcilable?

No wonder that day Shennong Bowl ran away before he could clearly say what he wanted to say. Shen Wei was there so he didn’t dare say it!

How did his gentle, graceful, easy to bully lover become a commanding terrorist in front of his cheap dad?

What was going on with Shennong's valuable contract?

Right...if Shennong was the one who borrowed the soul fire in his left shoulder, if the things that happened in the Boulder of the Great Seal were true, then how did the ghost tribe get a hold of the soul fire after?

What happened in the middle?

If the memory within the Da Shenmu (lit again: Great Godly Tree) was manipulated by Shennong, what was he trying to hide?

Seeing that Father Zhao had almost come up, Zhao Yunlan hurriedly climbed up the pagoda tree and hid amongst its leafy branches. He only stuck out his head once Father Zhao was far away.

He went back down to Huang Quan and stared at the direction where Shen Wei disappeared off to. He pondered for a long time and still felt that things weren't true. He was becoming used to being lied to to the point where he was almost developing a persecutory delusion, suspecting that nothing was real.

At this time, Zhao Yunlan suddenly got a flash of inspiration and thought of the "Secret Ancient Records" rolled up in his arms. He hurriedly took it out to look at it only to see that the book had already become blank. The pages within and the cover were all empty; the words disappeared without a trace and left nothing behind.

Zhao Yunlan's gaze became heavy—  
eleven years ago, which was to say 2002, was also the fabled "Renwu" year (t/n 60 year cycle...so 1942, 2002, 2062).

If the scenes he saw today were true, then if he were to go to the store at the end of the GhostCity and buy the “Secret Ancient Records” would that be the book that appeared at No. 4 BrightAve?