

GUARDIAN

Chapter: 93

Shen Wei didn't reply at first. He looked in the direction where the unbearably sad little GhostKing disappeared and a strange smile appeared on his face—

as if he were a bit nostalgic, and also as if he felt a bit embarrassed. It was a little while before he gently said: "I actually really respect Shennong. More than you and Nuwa, he seemed like a real God."

"Wait wait wait wait." Zhao Yunlan raised his hand to stop Shen Wei's sentence, furrowed his brows and carefully thought for a while, "If you ask me, all this is your fault. When there are issues you don't explain them to me clearly. You lied to me in all sorts of ways with no clear overall plan; you make my brain feel all big."

Shen Wei shut his mouth. He felt as though he was waiting for Zhao Yunlan's determination of "I don't want to see you anymore", just that no matter how much he waited, it didn't come. It was like he was hanging on to the edge of a cliff by a blade of grass, not able to beg for life or death.

Zhao Yunlan glanced at him and suddenly said: "Shen Wei, do you know what the most difficult thing in life actually is?"

Shen Wei turned to look at him.

“It’s that I married an awkward and a scoundrel of a wife with too many thoughts in his head without being able to bring even one thought to light...like, in other words, sooner or later you will be overwhelmed by your endless ideas.”

Shen Wei: “.....”

Zhao Yunlan: “That’s right I’m talking about you. Right now I’m very confused.”

Shen Wei seemed to hear a hint in these words although he didn’t dare to confirm it. He fiercely looked towards Zhao Yunlan’s eyes, his gaze immediately becoming so bright it was piercing: “And so?”

Zhao Yunlan had long been trained by Shen Wei into a conditioned reflex. As long as Shen Wei was even a little bit sad, he would exhaust all efforts to coax him; however, if Shen Wei displayed a slight bit of maladaptive pressure and aggression, Zhao Yunlan would feel awful and would be unable to stop himself from trying to tease him, idly poke fun of him for a little.

So Zhao Yunlan reached out and rubbed his own chin, displaying a serious expression as if he was a wolf with a big tail (t/n: a phrase used to satirize authoritative figures): “So? What happens between us will be based on the foundations of you receiving leniency for confessing. Comrade Shen Wei, all who want to play tricks on the masses will eventually be submerged by the waves from the masses revolting, do you understand?”

Shen Wei’s lips moved a little, but in the end he wasn’t able to say anything—

he probably already lost the ability he had when he was young to be able to straightforwardly express how he was feeling.

Zhao Yunlan continued: “First let me work out the sequence, the things before that let’s stop arguing about. Starting from when the big beauty Nuwa created people in the leek spinning song*. Kunlun—who seems to be me—

appeared to have just taken off the crotchless pants at that time**. . Being the little dumb, immature, and lacking common sense type of person I was, while watching from the sidelines I said that there were things contained within the mud that was being used to make people. Because I said that, Nuwa found three corpses within the mud: greed, hatred, and obsession. From then, Nuwa foresaw those three characteristics in humankind, which eventually led to an irreparable war between gods and demons? Oh, this means...”

Zhao Yunlan paused: “Then that pretty lady had a case of persecution paranoia?”

Shen Wei was not used to his casual manner. He was silent for a while but then felt that he wasn’t wrong. He nodded with difficulty: “Yes.”

“Later, Nuwa called Fuxi over and the two built the Fuxi Great Seal together to suppress the fire of the land, thus forming The Profane Land.” Zhao Yunlan said. He then switched a topic and asked Shen Wei, “Oh, right, I actually also wanted to ask, is it true like in the legends that those two were together?”

Shen Wei: “....It’s true.”

“Heck, even gossip can be true. After a few years of peace, the first war between gods and demons happened...or in a more popular saying, it's Huangdi fighting with Chiyou. As they fought, Chiyou found that his opponent was more powerful and he could not hold out any longer. His spirit left his body and went to Kunlun Mountain to find Kunlun Jun, begging the mountain saint, which is me, to take care of his followers, the witch and demon clans. Kunlun Jun is an extremely lazy person, and of course didn't want to care about these matters. But he could not stand his constant begging as if he was begging the heavens and the earth, kowtowing all the way to the top. Plus, he raised a very gluttonous stupid cat who accidentally licked Chiyou's blood. Kunlun Jun had to come out to return the favor and agreed to help. By the way that cat was Daqing right? Fuck, I knew that fat fuck would fuck up dad's life.”

Shen Wei turned his head around, he didn't want to look at this “dad” whose life was fucked up by the cat.

“Kunlun Jun protected the witch and the demon tribes in the first big war between gods and demons. In addition, he gave them a place to live and practice and cared for them for generations. However, the peace didn't last too many years. The second big war between gods and demons began. This time it was a civil war betw

een Yandi and Huangdi. The water god Gonggong and the descendent of Huandi, Emperor Zhuanxu, worked together. The Emperor of the East, Houyi also tried to utilize this chaotic environment to gain profit. The wild war of three worlds entangled the witch and the demon tribes again. Within this war, humans, witches, and demons were stronger than before and so the amount of deaths was even higher. This created more samples for Shennong, who came to the conclusion that ‘death is chaos’ and ‘souls who are uneasy with chaos suffer more agony’. To sum it up, Nuwa created a human race that ‘lives without happiness and dies with many hardships’. And so Shennong and Nuwa came together and discussed how to forever get rid of death. It was at that time that he came up with the idea of reincarnation.”

Shen Wei smiled sharply: “Maybe it was because he had become a mortal and had to face the reality of a mortal lifespan that’s akin to cicadas that are born in the spring and die in the autumn. Maybe it was he who was afraid of death.”

“En, we can put this thought on hold, right now that’s not important.” Zhao Yunlan continued, “Shennong later used the ‘zhenhun’ name to take my left shoulder soul fire. When he arrived at Mount Buzhou, he unfortunately collided with comrade Gonggong, the first creator of suicide bombing, and thus dropped the fire.”

“I feel that he did it on purpose,” Shen Wei laughed coldly, “He was afraid that he wouldn’t be able to persuade Nuwa and so found an excuse. His original plan was exactly to establish the wheel of reincarnation in the nether world.”

“Enough, stop holding a grudge. He already met his retribution; didn’t he not succeed?” Zhao Yunlan felt for a cigarette and squatted down on the ground to light it. Like a big monkey he hung his arms on his knees, wantonly destroying the air at the top of the saintly mountain. “As a result, he accidentally discovered the ghost tribe. But you guys were inherently born missing parts: you guys had no soul. Not only were you guys unable to enter the reincarnation cycle, the moment the seal cracked, you guys came onto the surface to make trouble.”

“It was a great catastrophe. And so, together, the gods brought the creatures up the saintly Mount Penglai, the witch clan were abandoned for their ingratitude, humans and demon clans were saved, Nuwa mended the lands and the skies, Shennong died of old age and his spirit entered the reincarnation cycle, Kunlun sealed the four pillars and lastly went to guard the Houtu Great Seal.” As Zhao Yunlan reached this part, he paused slightly, “Oh, then I think I kind of get it.”

Zhao Yunlan, being constantly busy throughout the year, haven’t had the time to cut his hair. It was now a little bit long, almost covering his ear. When the mountain winds blew, the hair in front of his forehead swept the bridge of his nose. Shen Wei bent down and smoothed away the messy hair in front of his forehead. Quietly, he asked: “What did you understand?”

“At that time you were so young. As I was guarding the Great Seal, of course I wouldn’t let you escape. Why did I give you Kunlun’s divine tendon?” Zhao Yunlan grabbed Shen Wei’s wrist and lifted his head, “It was because Shennong was going to kill you, wasn’t it? I wanted to protect you and so could only do that in th

e hope that if I wasn't around one day, I could pass on the power of a hundred thousand mountains to you.”

“This time you're wrong. He didn't want to kill me; he wanted to exterminate all of the ghost tribe. Shennong could not believe that there were things in this world without a soul. If they didn't have a soul, how could they be considered living? It was him who started the birth of the ghost tribe and of course he wanted to take responsibility for it and 'make up for' his mistake.” As Shen Wei said this, he suddenly started shaking, “If you didn't give it to me, if you didn't...you wouldn't have left me so early.”

Zhao Yunlan laughed gently: “Not that early but still sooner rather than later”

“If I had a little time, maybe....”

“The little beauty is now grown into a big beauty. Do you have any ideas?”

Shen Wei was unable to respond.

“And then?”

“...And then I attacked you and confined your spirit. I went down to the wheel of reincarnation to beg my enemy Shennong.” Shen Wei said, “The only time I begged in my life—was to beg him.”

“At that time, the cycle of reincarnation was already established, the governing body of Difu had been formed and a complete set of laws had been created. I begged him to allow you to enter the reincarnation cycle like a mortal. That way, even if you don't remember me in your every lifetime, you will at least still be there.”

Shen Wei said, “But he didn’t agree. Ancient gods cannot enter reincarnation because reincarnation began with the support of Shennong’s own spirit. Although it could accept the spirits of different humans, demons, and ghosts, it could not withstand a real mountain saint. The only exception was...if he personally suppressed all your godly powers and washed your soul to become one of a mortal’s. In that way Shennong would scatter and die...it would be equivalent to a life for a life, him using his life in exchange for yours.”

“What did you promise him for this?”

“I must forever protect the Great Seal. If the Great Seal exists, I exist. If the Great Seal is broken, then I must die along with all of the ghost tribe.” Shen Wei’s fingers were icy cold, “And...I can never see you. If I couldn’t bear it, then your essence would be drained by me and you would die with your soul scattered.”

Shen Wei suddenly broke away from Zhao Yunlan’s hand. He stroked Zhao Yunlan’s face with his palm and then grabbed his chin, forcing him to look up. He spoke carefully: “I already kept this promise for thousands of years. Now the Great Seal is breaking; I have arrived at my ending. Originally I wanted to come quietly and leave quietly, but through serendipity I met you and was not successful. From that night you really belonged to me...no, from that day you told me for the second time that you will give your sincere heart to me, I could no longer let you go.”

“I deliberately left false memories in the Da Shenmu to mislead you, and then I deliberately let you see me take out the blood from my heart for you. I also purposefully left you so that you would come down Huang Quan to find me and purposefully showed you the edited memories within the Houtu Great Seal...all this was so that you would feel guilty, make you unable to leave me, and make you decide in the end to willingly accompany me to death.” Shen Wei’s hand turned more and more cold. The more agitated he became the tighter his grip became, until Zhao Yunlan’s chin started hurting.

“Even now, after you’ve seen through everything, I am still trying to force you.” Shen Wei’s voice was very low, so much so that the sound was almost broken, “Will you choose to die with me, forever belonging to the chaos, or will you choose to let me take out the memories of your life, leaving it so that you don’t recognize me—
you won’t remember me and you and I no longer have anything to do with each other?”

Because he refused to be deceived, these two roads were finally clearly displayed in front of him.

While Shen Wei and Zhao Yunlan were at the foot of Mount Penglai in Shen Wei’s memories, Wang Zheng and Sang Zan came up empty handed and called No. 4 Bright Avenue. Wang Zheng probably subconsciously felt that it wasn’t a big deal for the Ghost Slayer and their leader to be together and so in a light tone reassured everyone.

Despite that, Guo Changcheng put down the phone and held his face anxiously: “But how do we find her?”

He lowered his head and looked through his cellphone. After a while, he found a big group photo that was so blurry the faces almost couldn't be seen. Then, Guo Changcheng used 5 minutes and came up with a very simple and crude idea: “What if I enlarge her photo a bit and then post it to the internet and the newspaper under missing persons?”

Chu Shuzhi said: “That would be enough time for the swindler to sell the girl once around the human trafficking market already. Why don't you go to Carrefour to look for her, it'd be quicker. (in a retail store)”

Guo Changcheng looked at him perplexedly.

“Enough, tell us roughly where her house is. How did they come to Dragon City?”

Guo Changcheng reported the name of the province and the administrative region: “Of course their home is not in the city. They're in a remote village called Cuijia. From the countryside, you can take a big bus for eight hours to get out of the mountains, and then once you get to the city center you can switch to the train.”

“The train is impossible,” Chu Shuzhi interrupted, “You need to have an ID with your real name to take the train. It's uncertain if the swindler would do that, not to mention it's unclear if that little girl even has an ID. It's impossible for her to steal the household registration book and run.”

Guo Changcheng was stumped.

Chu Shuzhi opened his computer and went online to check the long-distance bus schedules from the prefecture-level city to Dragon City like Guo Changcheng said. He thought for a moment and then also looked up the route: “The cars coming from that side mostly all go through National Highway 220 to get into the city. The trip is about 30 hours. If that child left home yesterday, she should probably almost be in Dragon City by now.”

Guo Changcheng’s eyes brightened: “That’s right! Chu ge you’re so smart! We can go to the highway exit to wait for her, maybe we can meet her.”

Chu Shuzhi lifted his wrist and found that it was almost 11 o’clock. How long would they have to wait for?

He thought that Guo Changcheng had problems, then looked at his elated expression and couldn’t help but to pour ice water over him: “Human trafficking isn’t even part of our obligations, can’t we just go home and sleep? It’s your fault you ran your mouth so quickly and even dare to casually agree to a ghost.”

Guo Changcheng immediately sensed the complaint within his words and was stunned for a bit. Uneasily, he rubbed his sleeves: “Chu ge, why don’t...why don’t you first go home and rest, it’s enough if I drive over by myself. Thank you for today. If it wasn’t for you I definitely would not have thought to look at the car route.”

Chu Shuzhi furrowed his brows.

Guo Changcheng instinctively thought that he did something wrong and immediately bowed and apologized: “I even troubled you to bring things for me today. I’m really very very sorry. Why don’t...why don’t I treat you to a meal when you have time?”

Chu Shuzhi “hmp”ed, grabbed his outerwear, and walked out.

Guo Changcheng fidgeted in the back and didn’t make any sound. Chu Shuzhi was already almost at the door. When he saw that Guo Changcheng didn’t follow, he turned his head and said impatiently: “What are you dawdling for? Wasn’t it you who wanted to find her? Get over here!”

Guo Changcheng immediately changed from a frosted eggplant to a newly watered sunflower, and scuttled after him.

They drove Guo Changcheng’s car to the exit at the highway and waited. Whenever they saw a car bearing the license plate from the province where the missing girl came from, they stopped the car to search.

They waited an entire night.

Although the year had passed, Dragon City’s temperature still hadn’t entered spring yet. In the morning and night, it was no different from winter. If a person stood outside for a little bit, it’s easy for them to become frozen.

Sitting in the car with the heater on, Guo Changcheng would become sleepy after a little while. Chu Shuzhi watched as his head sometimes lowered to his chest, and then he would suddenly startle awake, hurriedly wipe his face, and then get out of the car to lo

ok from side to side, only relaxing after confirming that no long-distance buses had passed. He walked around with his coat tightly wrapped around him in hopes of making himself wake up a bit. Only after he was frozen solid would he come back to the heated car to warm up slightly.

He came and left repeatedly. Chu Shuzhi didn't say anything and merely looked at Guo Changcheng thoughtfully.

The corpse king rarely directed his attention at Guo Changcheng. At this time, he suddenly felt that it was weird—

Guo Changcheng was not that old this year yet the merits on his body were so thick you couldn't see past it, like PM2.5 (t/n air quality number). Old monks who have given up worldly matters all their lives may not even be able to accumulate merit this thick.

Unless it's like Da Qing said, he did everything in secret and didn't let others find out. Due to him not seeking rewards, the merits doubled...but even if it was like this, Guo Changcheng would have had to have helped old ladies cross the road every morning, noon, and evening.

At this time another long-distance bus came. When it got closer and Guo Changcheng saw the license plate, he leapt up excitedly from the car, readied his license, and stood in the middle of the road, jumping and waving to stop the bus.

“Tch, stupid.” Chu Shuzhi muttered and then looked at Guo Changcheng's back again before calling Da Qing, “Hey, night owl, you haven't slept yet right? If you haven't slept, I have a question for you.”

Da Qing was in the middle of a dream. In the dream, he was floating on the ocean gnawing on a big whale in his grasp. In his heart he thought that this was enough food to eat for a year and a half. However, he only ate two bites before the big whale flopped and splashed his face with icy cold water.

Da Qing woke up abruptly. He looked up and saw Sang Zan who held an icy phone receiver against his face. Beaming, Sang Zan said: “Cat Stutterer. T-telephone.”

Sang Zan obviously already knew that “stutterer” wasn’t anything good and had long since stopped using this phrase—now it had become Da Qing’s exclusive nickname which he pronounced like “dick” (the slang for dick sounds vaguely similar to stutterer and SZ is pronouncing it wrong).

“Cat dick” raised his head in a bad mood, put his ear against the receiver, and heard Chu Shuzhi’s voice. Nastily, he said: “Get lost, old man. You wanna die?”

Chu Shuzhi didn’t care for his nasty habit of saying rude things the moment he opens his mouth: “You sleep right after you eat, be careful you might get up to a new level of tonnage by the end of the year. At that time forget little female cats, even dogs won’t look at you. Old man are you not afraid of high blood pressure?”

Sang Zan calmly watched as Cat Stutterer used his sharp claws to scratch a line through the table and then left, holding his book.

“If you have something to say, say it now, otherwise leave— stop saying fucking nonsense. Chu Shuzhi what do you want so late at night?”

Chu Shuzhi asked: “I wanted to ask, have you seen orange colored merit before?”

“I have,” Da Qing said nastily, “I’ve seen it in all colors of the rainbow. If you collect all seven you can summon the godly dragon to perform bow-tying air acrobatics for you.”

“I’m not joking with you,” Chu Shuzhi lowered his voice and peeked over at the bus parked outside the window, “It’s not always orange. Normally it’s white, just that occasionally it’s like it’s on fire and it would flash like a flame.”

Da Qing was silent for a moment: “Where did you see this?”

“On Guo Changcheng’s body.”

“That’s impossible,” Da Qing firmly stated, “I know the type you’re talking about. That’s not small merit, that’s great merit. Do you know what great merit is?”

Chu Shuzhi raised his eyebrows: “Hm?”

“I haven’t seen it with my own eyes, but I heard that at the time when the saint Nuwa created people, she was surrounded by fire which represented the great merits of heaven. Now the merits and faults of creatures are all written in the book of life and death. If we’re talking more advanced, at best it’s what’s left over from the Brush of Merits from the Ancient Tree of Merits and cannot possibly reach that level. You’re bullshitting meow. It’s impossible.”

Chu Shuzhi was stunned. At this time, Guo Changcheng had already come out of the bus. From far away, he could already be seen sighing; he most likely wasn't able to find her.

Chu Shuzhi lowered his voice and quickly said to Da Qing: "Xiao Guo is really human?"

"En, he's human," Da Qing said, "Wang Zheng even has his identification registered."

"I need to check his birth certificate. The kind from the hospital that says 'male baby born on x year x month x day'." Chu Shuzhi said.

Da Qing: "Ah? Fuck, humans have too many distinct things they like to do. They even have this!"

"I'm not going to waste words with you anymore, I'm busy over here. Gonna hang up first. Remember to look into it for me." After Chu Shuzhi said this, he hung up before Guo Changcheng got back into the car.

*When Nuwa made people from mud she apparently grabbed grass and dipped it in dirt and flung it around...zyl is making a reference to Hatsune Miku's leek spinning song as that is the imagery that comes to mind

**babies wear these in china...basically onsies with either a hole at the butt or a flap that can open. He's just saying he was super young.