

Guardian Chapter: 8

Chapter: 8

Shen Wei's mind went blank the second he locked eyes with Zhao Yunlan. Mesmerised, his eyes seemed to be drawn to Zhao Yunlan's, locking together like magnets. Several moments passed as he gazed in stupefaction.

Shen Wei had really made a blunder today... He shouldn't have met Zhao Yunlan in the first place.

Zhao Yunlan didn't know anything, didn't remember anything... He'd already crossed the Bridge of Fate, drunk the Forgetful Water, passed the Six Realms of Existence, and completed reincarnation. His soul had long been washed clean, how could he remember anything?

With a piercing gaze, Shen Wei stared intently at the other's handsome face. He really wanted to feel the touch of his skin, the warmth of his body, just one more time...

After god knows how long, Shen Wei cleared his throat and replied bitterly, "I have met you before..."

Zhao Yunlan waited for his explanation.

Countless times, I've never had the courage to find you, yet I know everything about you... Shen Wei almost said this out loud, but restrained himself, and instead stuttered out, "In a case that you'd worked on."

Zhao Yunlan was stunned. "Which one?"

Shen Wei no longer stuttered. Perhaps after the first lie, the lying thereafter didn't feel as bad. "The twelve suicides at the Twin Tower, around five or six years ago. I was about to graduate back then, and I was looking for a cheap flat, so I chose Twin Tower. The suicides there had caused the price to plummet."

Zhao Yunlan frowned, pausing to think. "I'm certain I never saw you there."

"You didn't see me, but I was living on the top floor, so I saw you. I even saw..." Shen Wei momentarily paused, put on an astonished pretence, and said, "I even saw you pull a dark shadow from a room and stuff it into a bottle. You then said, 'The criminal is caught, our work here is done.'"

Zhao Yunlan was startled. "You lived on the top floor? You really are quite fearless."

Shen Wei dropped his head. "You can check, I'm not lying."

He naturally wasn't lying. He really did live there at the time, but all because he wanted to take a peek at a certain someone. He conveniently left this small detail out, though it pained him to lie about it.

Zhao Yunlan looked convinced and even joked, "Negligence, that was negligence on my part. We're supposed to erase the memories of normal citizens who got involved but somehow, I missed you... So, how did you feel? Did it make you question everything you believed in?"

Instead of a reply, Shen Wei flashed him a difficult smile.

After entering the hospital, they saw Li Qian sitting by the window while holding a hot cup of tea.

Gloomy and depressed, she stood staring at her shadow.

Zhao Yunlan knocked on the door, making Li Qian jump. Only after seeing that it was Zhao Yunlan and Shen Wei did she ease.

Zhao Yunlan glanced at his watch. The reflection of the old lady was still there but the watch hadn't turned red... It was too strange. This new ghost was probably gathering life energy.

Perhaps, she was about to reincarnate?

Zhao Yunlan sat on the bed beside Li Qian. "I have a few questions for you."

Li Qian looked at him, her face pale.

Since Professor Shen already knew about Zhao Yunlan's line of work, Zhao Yunlan wasn't afraid to question in front of him. "Recently, have you noticed any strange occurrences?"

Li Qian's only response was a horrified expression.

"I see." Zhao Yunlan stared at her forehead. After leaning forward slightly for a closer look, he said, "But your Third Eye hasn't opened, so you shouldn't be able to see anything strange. Is it because of your fate or did you touch something you weren't supposed to touch?"

Li Qian bit her lip, twisting her fingers uncomfortably under his gaze.

"Oh? So it's the latter." Zhao Yunlan lowered his voice. "Tell me, what did you touch?"

Li Qian refused to talk and Zhao Yunlan coldly laughed. "If you don't tell me then you can live the rest of your life being haunted by it. Haven't you heard of 'curiosity killed the cat'? Some things are better left untouched."

After a long while, Li Qian finally spoke. "A sundial. It's an antique passed down for generations from my family. It's black, with lots of tiny fish-scale-like rocks on it. The elderly call it..."

"The Wheel of Reincarnation," Zhao Yunlan finished.

Li Qian glanced at Zhao Yunlan in astonishment before slowly nodding.

"The sundial completes a full circle every day, continuously. It symbolises the eternal cycle of life, death, and reincarnation." Zhao Yunlan paused slightly, then continued, "But there's also another saying, that reincarnation is a process of 'slaughtering'; the past is lost, and there is no return. When someone reincarnates, the old life is destroyed, leaving no option but to move forward to a new life."

Unaware of Shen Wei trembling behind him, Zhao Yunlan asked, "What did you do with it?"

Li Qian bit her lip.

"Alright, I'll phrase this differently. Did you do anything bad with it?"

Li Qian eyes widened instantly. "I didn't!"

Zhao Yunlan watched her silently.

"I didn't!" Li Qian stood up, stumbling backwards, defensively shouting, "Why would I do anything bad with a family antique!? You don't know what you're talking about! You..."

Extremely agitated, she started coughing violently.

Frowning, Professor Shen stepped forward to comfort her. "Calm down, there's no need to hurry."

He turned around and told Zhao Yunlan, "This kid has gone through a lot already, so could you maybe be a bit more gentle with her?"

Zhao Yunlan rubbed his nose. "Alright, I'll leave out the irrelevant questions. Just one more and I will leave."

He took out a photograph of the victim. "Have you seen her recently?"

Li Qian glanced at the picture and shook her head. But a moment later, as if she recalled something, she grabbed hold of the photo. After studying it closely, she said uncertainly, "I might have seen someone like her yesterday, looked just a... just a bit like her..."

Zhao Yunlan tensed up. "Exactly when yesterday? What was she wearing?"

"It was at night." Li Qian paused, thinking. "Last night I left only after the library had closed, so around ten o'clock. I went out of campus to buy something, and I saw her at the entrance... I don't really remember her clothes... Oh right, I remember! She wore the orientation camp T-shirt; I have the same T-shirt as well, so I noticed her."

"Did a lot of people wear that T-shirt yesterday?"

"Most of the students are in the new campus, there should only be a few in the old campus."

"Did you wear it too?"

"I didn't want to wear it directly because it wasn't washed so I wore it on top of my clothes. Then it was a little hot, so I just stuffed it in my bag."

"Oh." Zhao Yunlan hesitated, before asking, "When you saw her, were there people around?"

"Yes, quite a few people were passing by, and there were some cars as well." Li Qian, sensing something from Zhao Yunlan's expression, asked, "What's wrong?"

"No, I don't mean the main road, I'm talking about the small alley on the side. Did she go in there? Were there other people?"

Li Qian began feeling uncomfortable. "I... I don't really remember... maybe? She might have gone in there, but I didn't go in. That alley is a dead end, so not a lot of people would go in there..."

"You didn't walk over to the East side?" Zhao Yunlan interrupted her.

"Ah? Ah... I didn't..."

"Why not? Don't you live there?" Zhao Yunlan continued.

"I..." Li Qian, lacking an excuse, muttered inaudibly, before finally saying, "I took another route to go buy something..."

"Didn't you say that you came back to campus after buying something outside?" Zhao Yunlan interrupted her again, his tone turning more solemn by the second. "I'd like to be

nice to you, but you've got to cooperate with the investigation. Can you tell me the truth?"

Li Qian tensed up again and clutched her clothes. "... I'm telling the truth."

"Her name is Lu Ruomei, she's also a postgraduate student here. She died last night." Zhao Yunlan glared at Li Qian, slowly pronouncing each word. "The estimated time of death is around ten o'clock... which means, you may well be the last person who saw her alive."

Li Qian's irises contracted and the cup in her hand fell crashing on to the floor, breaking. Her lips turned pale with horror, her eyes twitched, and her fingers started to tremble.