

VOL. 1 | SFW | NOVEMBER 2022

XiCheng

A FREE ZINE FOR FANS



ENGLISH VERSION

Disclaimer

The characters present here belong to Mo Xiang Tong Xiu from her novel Mo Dao Zu Shi, Grandmaster of Demonic Cultivation. The following content creators have free reign over their creative freedom and artistic expression under the fair use of copyrighted content.

This fanzine is by fans for fans.

All content creators' socials are linked for visibility.





Watery Silver.

Page Artists

Eiji Asuran MRialH



@EijiAsuran_IHM



Khallandra



@khallandra_art



Rowein



@Rowein_



Eriaricheria



@Ari4000



Sigma



@fluffalcat



Felix



@prideofpride_



Kyu



@kyutaur



Agushthere



@agushthere



Arcane Olga



@olgaarcane



Shweenus



@Shweenus



AbjectRemnant



@abjectRemnant



Watery Silver



@WaterySilver



Cover Artist

Artists Continued

Bee



@beedaydreams



Other Media.

SandraCiabatta



@SandraCiabatta



Tatiana



@auberginesvrn



Writers

Amystis



@Amystis_



Ellie Mellie



@ellie0mellie



Hozumi



@HozumiMe



Laurine



@LaurineAndersen



Bunsie



@Moon_bunsie



Nande



@Nande_chan



Sarai



@mockedspace



Blushin



@Blushing_Tomato



Slythmultishipper



@Slyth_watpadd



lepusastrum



@lepusastrum



Hanna



@hannahsnowg

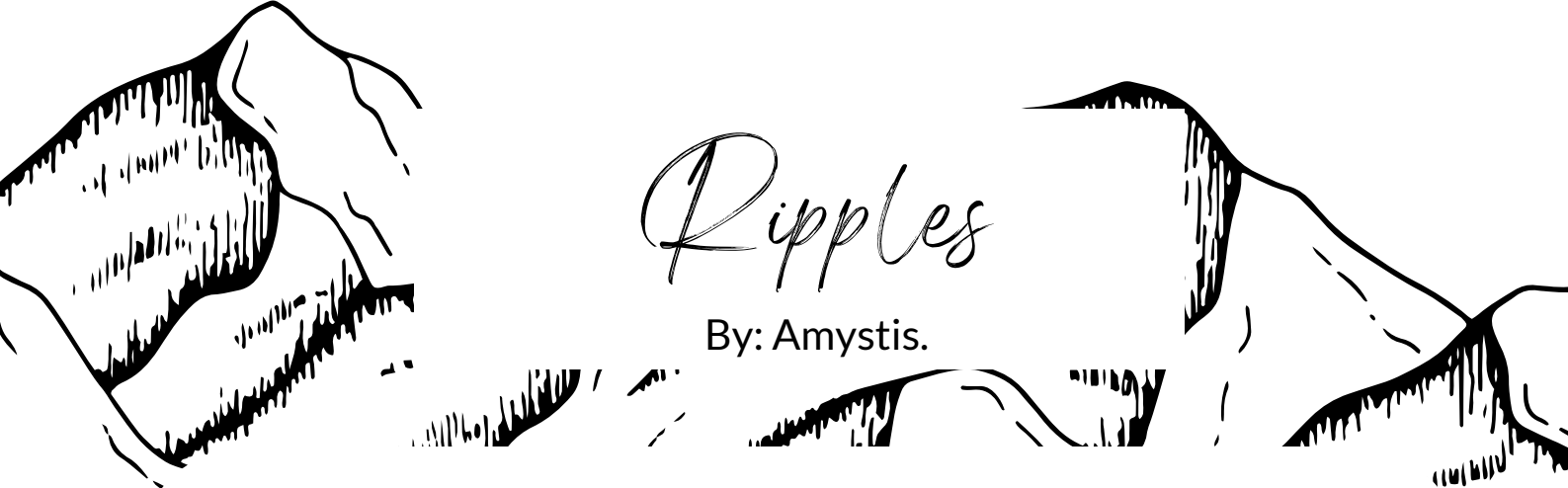


Table of Contents

Ripples...	... 10
Art by Eiji Asuran MRianIH...	... 14
Video by SandraCiabatta...	... 15
Follow me into the endless night...	... 16
Art by Khallandra...	... 23
Going home to you...	... 24
Art by Rowein...	... 31
A Diamond in the sky...	... 32
Xicheng Crossword by Tatiana...	... 37
The path to man's heart...	... 38
Art by Eriaricheria...	... 43
Yours truly, Lady Fannington...	... 44
Art by sigma..	... 50
Xicheng Maze by Tatiana...	... 51
We're Dating..	... 52
Art by Felix...	... 57

Table of Contents

Preserved Roses...	... 58
Art by Kyu...	... 64
Art by agushtthere...	... 65
Rumours...	... 66
Art by Arcane Olga...	... 75
Lotus Garden...	... 76
Art by Shweenus...	... 88
Art by abjectRemnant...	... 89
Series of Moments...	... 90
Art by Watery Silver...	... 97
Art bye Bee	... 98
Xicheng Crossword Answers...	... 100



Ripples

By: Amystis.

When the ripples form, he vanishes. So do the temple and grass, the trees growing on the hills and the clouds travelling across the sky. Distortion hits all of them. For a mere second, they are unrecognisable, like the purple blur at the center.

Then, the water calms. The pond's surface is clear again, like a mirror. In its full beauty, Gusu shines on it again. Blending into the scene a wooden pier and a man dressed in purple appear. His robes clash with the blue sky and the grass modestly circling the water. His boots are close to the reflection, but he makes sure they never touch.

No more ripples should form. He wants the pond to stay calm. It was the most beautiful that way. A peaceful place, far away from the conference, from the other sect leaders, and far away from any brothers. No black robes are here, and no flute could awaken painful memories.

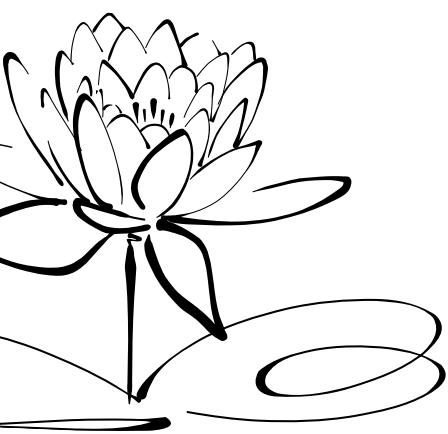
Jiang Cheng looks back into his own eyes. Even though the sun is shining, they seem too dark. His body stays still. Only his fingers find Zidian. He watches them turn the ring around and around without a real goal.

A dragonfly lands on the water's surface. Ripples form. Jiang Cheng vanishes. Even if it is for a second, the peaceful image is gone. The smallest interference can destroy everything.

A family dead, a sister murdered, a brother lost, a lifelong struggle that was for naught. The ring stops moving. Jiang Cheng's body is frozen.

The dragonfly has left, the image on the pond is restored.

The temple and grass, the trees growing on the hills and the clouds travelling across the sky.



Jiang Cheng meets his own eyes on the clear surface. Tears are welling up. Just don't let them flow, he tells himself. If the tears fall, only more ripples will form.

At the back of the pier, a piece of white cloth flares up. It is gone as fast as it appears.

The second day is just like the first. Jiang Cheng can't stop the dragonfly from landing. He can only hope the ripples disappear quickly.

Then, in a moment of tranquillity, the scene is disturbed. Boots appear at Jiang Cheng's side. They seem odd in a scenery that was dominated by colors. They only match the clouds in the sky that have grown in numbers compared to the day before.

Jiang Cheng sits straight and without movement. Yet the pair of boots makes him scoff silently. He has a perfect idea who the visitor was.

"Zewu-jun, is seclusion in Gusu handled so loosely?" he says and forces his body to stand up. The action feels weird to his muscles. He turns around and looks at a real face. White clothes flow down Lan Xichen's body, perfect as ever. A smile adorns his beautiful face, yet it can't hide tiredness in Lan Xichen's eyes. Jiang Cheng wonders if his eyes look the same. He has looked at his own reflection for so long, everything about himself seems off. Tiredness however doesn't stop etiquette. Jiang Cheng and Lan Xichen greet each other with a bow.

"Do you like this place?" Lan Xichen asks.

Jiang Cheng turns his head, "It's quiet. Good for a break."

"Do you need a break from something?"

The conference would have been the normal answer, the past, the people, the golden core. Jiang Cheng struggles. He settles for a sentence, "I need a break from the people." Lan Xichen nods, "Then we seem a bit opposite. I need a break from seclusion."

There is a long silence. Jiang Cheng's body gets into motion. He can't explain why he walks away. He leaves the pond while Lan Xichen watches him with sad eyes.

Jiang Cheng doesn't know why he returns. Something keeps drawing him to the pond. The discussions that day lasted longer.

When he could finally sit down at the pier,
his feet floating above the surface, the reflection is dyed

XiCheng
Zine

red from the setting sun. A dog barks in the distance. Youths are laughing. Jiang Cheng looks into the reflection of his eyes. In the twilight they are even darker. The old have been scarred but at least the young could stay away from the pond. They had no need to pay attention to the fragile state of peace and the ripples that could always form.

The white boots appear again. Their owner draws closer, a man in bright fabric, in his hands bottles that are as white as his robes. Lan Xichen puts the Emperor's Smile down. The laughter of the youths has faded. They are out of reach. Nothing but the clank of ceramic on the wooden pier fills the air.

Jiang Cheng doesn't look at Lan Xichen's face. He only nods in gratitude. Again, he has been still for so long, the movement felt unfamiliar. He barely turns his head to watch the boots disappear. His hand finds the only cup at his side. A distraction for one evening, but a welcome one. The alcohol flows. It flows and splashes and drops land on the pond, while the mind is too befuddled to notice the ripples.

The final evening arrives. There were no more issues left to discuss, no reason to continue with the conference. The pond is calmer than the other day, the sky's still blue. Everything on the surface seems ten times sharper, more detailed. As if the pond is trying to give Jiang Cheng a perfect last view of the image that accompanied him for days.

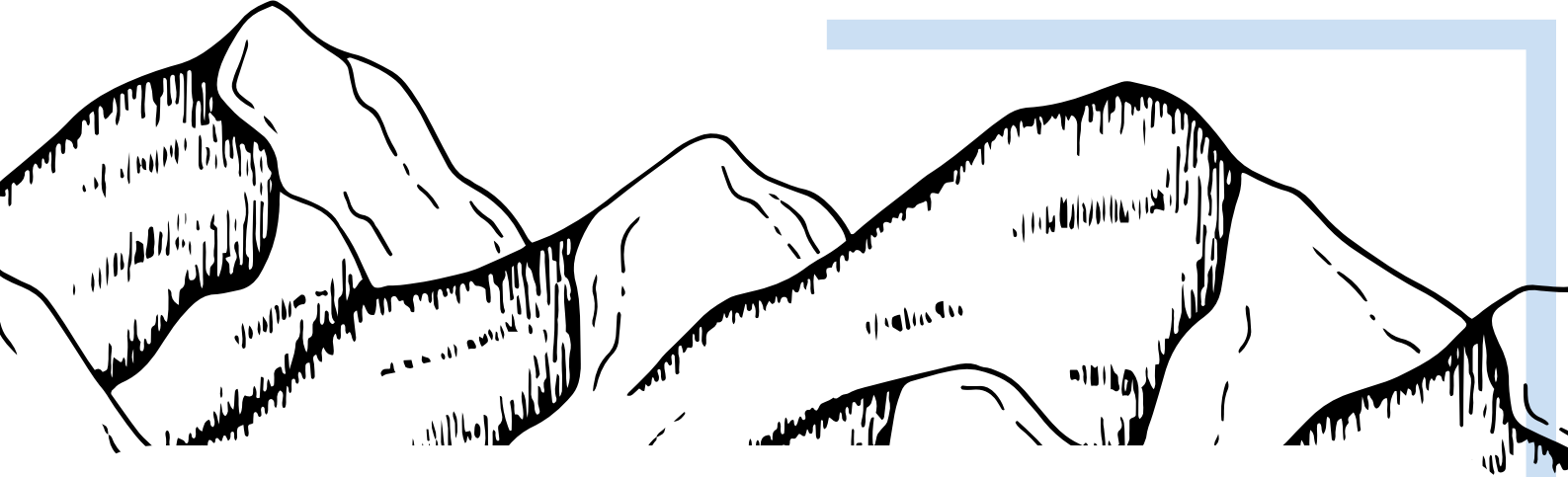
He appears again. For the first time he is so close that more than his boots are visible on the surface. Jiang Cheng keeps looking at the pond. Even Lan Xichen's features seem sharper. His face is fine as jade. Unlike his brother's however, Lan Xichen is always smiling. Even at a time like this. In the reflection, Jiang Cheng realises how that happy expression contradicts the tired eyes he had seen the other day. He watches the jade that seems as fragile as glass. Wouldn't that smile just crack one day? He fears that a single other ripple could be enough to make the smile disappear for good.

"Zewu-jun, you have been outside every night since I have come to Gusu. Is your seclusion over already?" he asks.

Lan Xichen's smile stays, "The time alone should help me make inner peace. But honestly, I can't say I can calm my mind."

Jiang Cheng ponders over an answer. Only when the ripples destroy the image of him and Lan Xichen, he realises that his boot has just touched the water's surface. The water moves and calms again.

XiCheng
Zine

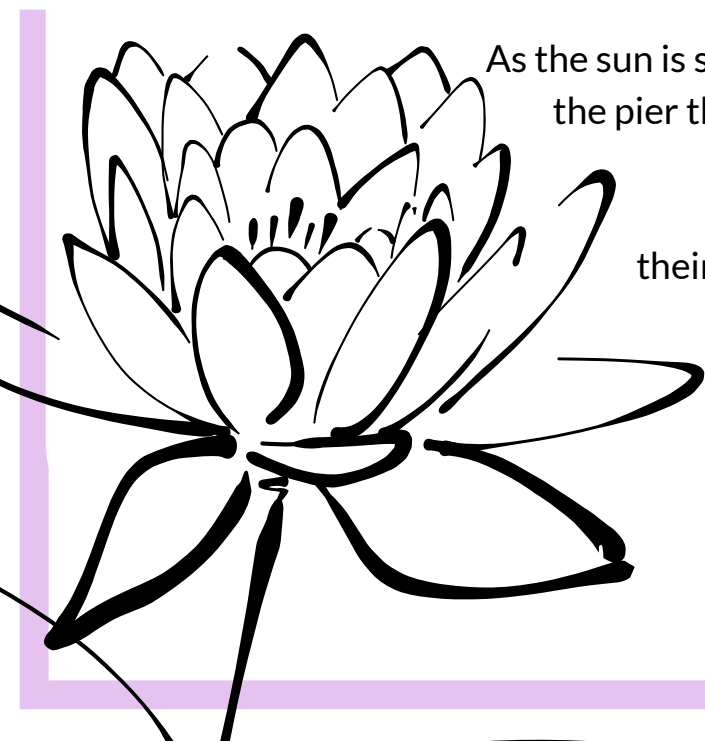


After the distortion, the image seems even sharper. Jiang Cheng feels the water that has travelled into his boots. It is cold but not disturbing. The water refreshed his mind. He has touched what he had feared to touch all week long. He looks into his blue eyes and for the first time they seem to brighten. They almost match the sky now.

“Maybe your mind is not meant to be calmed. Maybe it is supposed to be like this pond. Sometimes it’s beautiful, sometimes the smallest disturbance destroys it. But still, it always returns to its original state. And look how much life can prosper on the water,” Jiang Cheng says and for the first time he looked around the pond and saw all the things that had slipped his eyes. The flowers and plants growing on and around the pond, the insects flying, the bunnies hopping in the distance.

“May I sit next to you?” Lan Xichen asks. His voice is longing.

Jiang Cheng gestures to him to do as he pleases. Lan Xichen sits down, falls on his knees. The robes land around him without structure. They just want to dangle from his limbs. His body relaxes and finally the smile dies. His expression is harsh, stormy, and unsure. Despite the struggle in his gaze, Jiang Cheng feels relieved. Finally, Lan Xichen showed his true emotions. Forcing the surface to stay calm would ultimately destroy you after all.



As the sun is sinking and the sky changes its color, the two men at the pier thaw from their stiffness. They stand up, explore the area and watch their reflections change as the evening passes. They skip stones and dip their toes into the water and in the short moments their reflections are shown clearly, they are laughing.

All the ripples in this world are much easier to bear when you aren’t alone.



@EijiAsuran_IHM
w Yuukimihm
f EijiAsuranIHMrian
MRianIH

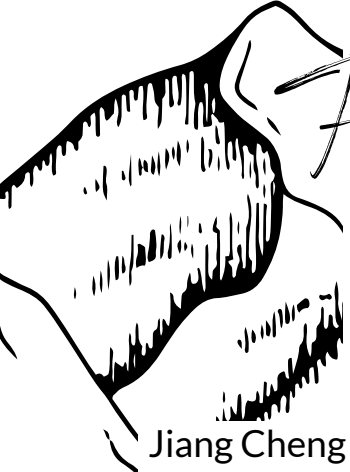
Eres
mi
Sueño
más
Hermoso.

XICheng
Zine

Stereo heart

By: SandraCiabatta





Follow me into the endless night

(Zine version)

By: Ellie Mellie.



Jiang Cheng burst into the kitchens like a hurricane. "Everyone out."

The cooks and servants all froze and looked up from their tasks in dumbfounded shock. "Y—Your Highness?"

"Do you have wax in your ears? I said, out. Why are you all still here?"

The head cook managed, "B—But, Your Highness, dinner—"

"I'm cooking dinner today."

"Y—You!"

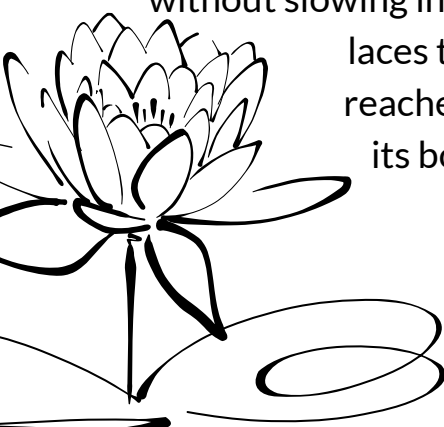
Jiang Cheng's eyes narrowed. "Yes. Me. Do you have a problem with that?"

"N—No..."

"Then beat it. I don't want anyone getting in my way."

The kitchen staff didn't dare protest any further. They rushed out before he could repeat himself, no doubt in a higher volume and accompanied with more threats.

Jiang Cheng didn't waste any time. He strode inside and, as he walked, the kitchen moved as well. Flames sprang up on the stoves, vegetables flew out of sacks, knives and cutting boards manifested from cupboards and lay on the counters, pots and pans rushed about. Jiang Cheng stretched his arms out in front of him without slowing in his steps and an apron came and wrapped itself around him, its laces tying themselves into a neat bow behind his back. By the time he reached a stove, there was already a frying pan on top with oil coating its bottom. He gave it a practiced swirl and went to tend to the meat, the sound of chop-chop-chopping vegetables already filling the kitchen.



XiCheng
Zine

As he lost himself in the practiced movements, in the smell of spice and fried vegetables, he slowly felt the storm in his head get muted, replaced by the sound of sizzling oil and bubbling water.

Here, he was in control — if nowhere else.

He let out a shaky breath, wiping his sweat on his sleeve. If there was a holiday Jiang Cheng wholeheartedly hated, it was the Winter Solstice.

All of a sudden, he felt the hairs on the back of his neck rise, like he was being watched. Jiang Cheng whirled around, ready to scream at whoever dared to disobey his orders, but—

It was just a dog, sitting on its hind legs. A beautiful, majestic dog, tall, with lustrous white fur and expressive yellow eyes. There were still melting snowflakes sparkling on its fur like tiny diamonds.

“Y—You?! How did you get in here?”

The dog stood and looked up at him expectantly, tail wagging. Jiang Cheng sighed heavily and bent forward slightly to pet his head. The dog closed its eyes in contentment as it pressed its head to his hand, the tail-wagging growing more enthusiastic. “You can’t just follow me around everywhere because I helped you when you were injured one time. How do you even keep finding me?”

“Woof!” said the dog, before rolling down on the floor, exposing its belly.

“I don’t have time for this,” protested Jiang Cheng, even as he crouched down and gave the dog its belly rubs. The dog squirmed happily, kicking its legs, and Jiang Cheng smiled and indulged it for a few moments before he stood up resolutely. “I need to finish up here. Don’t get in my way, okay? And don’t go anywhere. If Wei Wuxian sees you—”

“Woof!” said the dog, like it understood.

Jiang Cheng sighed again and returned to his work. The dog, meanwhile, stayed close to him, but not too close, avoiding getting in his hair or tripping him up. Huh. Even the dog was better at behaving itself than his brother.

XiCheng
Zine

It was... kind of nice, though. Not to be alone. Slowly, the furious surge of energy that coursed through his veins seeped out of him, to be replaced by a deep-seated weariness.

“What sort of holiday is this anyway?” he muttered. “Who celebrates the night all the magical creatures go rampant and everyone has to lock themselves inside with their families to not get eaten or kidnapped or who knows what else?”

The dog merely cocked its head to the side, as if it also found this bizarre.

“Do you have a family? Hmm, probably not. You’re always alone every time I see you.” Jiang Cheng snorted bitterly. “Trust me, you’re not missing much.”

His fist clenched around the ladle. After a moment, he forced it to relax again and continue stirring the contents of the pot. “I can just tell how this holiday dinner is going to go. Dad — he will be ecstatic to learn *everything* about Wei Wuxian’s apprenticeship with the Sky-Mountain Witch and his wonderful adventures. Mom will be even crankier over A-Jie not being able to visit because of her pregnancy, so she will make a huge deal about dad’s deep interest in Wei Wuxian’s education. She will demand, ‘*What about your own son, slaving here to run a kingdom for you?*’ I will try to calm her down of course — but that will only make her angry at me. ‘*How can you sit there, so relaxed? You’re the crown prince, and your magic is second-rate at best. Who is going to respect you? Who is going to fear you?*’”

Jiang Cheng stood motionless, ladle forgotten as he stared ahead. Distantly, he was aware that the soup had bubbled over and spilled, the fire on the stove making spitting and crackling sounds as the liquid poured over it, but who cared, really?

“What am I doing wrong?” he asked no one in particular. “Why am I never enough? I work my ass off, training and fighting monsters and helping dad run the kingdom, and— I’m *always* inadequate. What do I need to do to measure up? Is there...” He swallowed. “Is there even anything I *can* do?”

His eyes burned, and it had nothing to do with the heat of the stove.

He waved a hand and the fire burning under the pot went out in a puff of smoke. At the same time, the sizzling of oil, the chopping of knives, the clanking of dishes ceased. An eerie quiet fell over the kitchens.

It was already dark out and a harsh wind was howling outside, accompanied by the cries and growls of all kinds of creatures that could finally roam freely outside, without the danger of being hunted down by humans.

He wished he was one of them.

"What's the point?" His quiet voice barely stirred the silence. "What's the point of bending myself backwards for everyone if none of my efforts are going to be acknowledged? I don't..." His voice dropped to a whisper. "I don't even like it here."

"Then come with me."

Jiang Cheng nearly knocked the boiling soup all over himself. He whipped around, purple sparks of electricity dancing at his fingertips, ready to unleash hell, only to be faced with...

A naked man.

An extremely *handsome* naked man.

One he *knew*.

"Y—Y—You?!! Wh—What—?"

Zewu-Jun, King of the Snow Wolves and one of the most powerful magical creatures known to man, was currently standing butt-naked in his palace's kitchens, in all his dazzling glory. With skin white as snow, frost clinging to its planes and contours, he looked as if he'd been carved by the finest ice sculptor... if you ignored the sharp fangs. And the claws. And the bright, yellow eyes. And the—the—th—

Jiang Cheng shook himself and lifted his gaze straight up, face flaming hot. Why was he here?! How had he come in? And where was the do—

...*Oh, you've got to be kidding me.*

The dog he had rescued during that blizzard... that had been *Zewu-Jun*?

True, it made sense to take a smaller form while he was injured to conserve his energy levels, but still. He'd— He'd given that dog treats! And petted him! And given him belly rubs! And now you were telling him this whole time, he'd been the King of the Snow Wolves?!

"Leave with me."

It took Jiang Cheng a few moments to register that he'd been spoken to, and a few more to process the words. "H—Huh?!"

Lan Xichen stepped forward until he was standing right in front of him; Jiang Cheng pressed back against the counter, but there was nowhere to run. "You dislike it here," he said, like that explained everything. "You are not treated well and your skills and contributions are not appreciated. If that is so, then leave with me for the Ice Kingdom."

"...As what?!"

Lan Xichen blinked down at him as if it was obvious. "As my mate."

Jiang Cheng finally did it. As he reached back for something to hold onto, he grabbed the edge of the pot and knocked it over.

The scalding splash of boiling soup over his back he'd been expecting, though, never came. Nonplussed, he turned around and found the pot covered in frost and the soup, already halfway out of it, frozen solid in midair before it ever reached him. Turning back to Lan Xichen, he barely caught the white glow in his eyes before it disappeared, leaving them a sparkling, dazzling yellow.

"Are you alright?" asked Lan Xichen, eyes searching him for any sign of discomfort.

"Y—Yes!" Jiang Cheng shook his head, trying to shake off the feeling that this, being cared for... was nice. "C—Can you go back to— to that— mate thing?"

"Is there something wrong with that?"

"I barely know you!"

“Oh,” said Lan Xichen, as if it had never occurred to him before. “But I know you.”

“Well, yes, because you were following me everywhere!”

Jiang Cheng slammed his mouth shut. What was he doing, mouthing off to the King of the Snow Wolves?! Zewu-Jun may be extremely friendly to the kingdoms of humans, but he could still obliterate him in seconds if he was angered! But Lan Xichen did not look offended at all — just pensive.

“Hmm. Then you could come to the Ice Kingdom as my apprentice? That would give you the opportunity to get to know me and, also, to learn more about magic than you could have ever dreamed of.”

Jiang Cheng *stared*. “Just because I saved you that one time?”

“Saved?” Lan Xichen tilted his head to the side in confusion. “No. Because you are kind and skilled and loyal and hard-working. Because you’re full of spirit and resolve and the desire to protect those you love. And, also—” Here, he smiled, fangs sparkling and eyes curving like half-moons. “Because you give the best belly rubs!”

Jiang Cheng’s eyes were so wide. Then, he burst out laughing. “You...” he wheezed. “You are *insane*.”

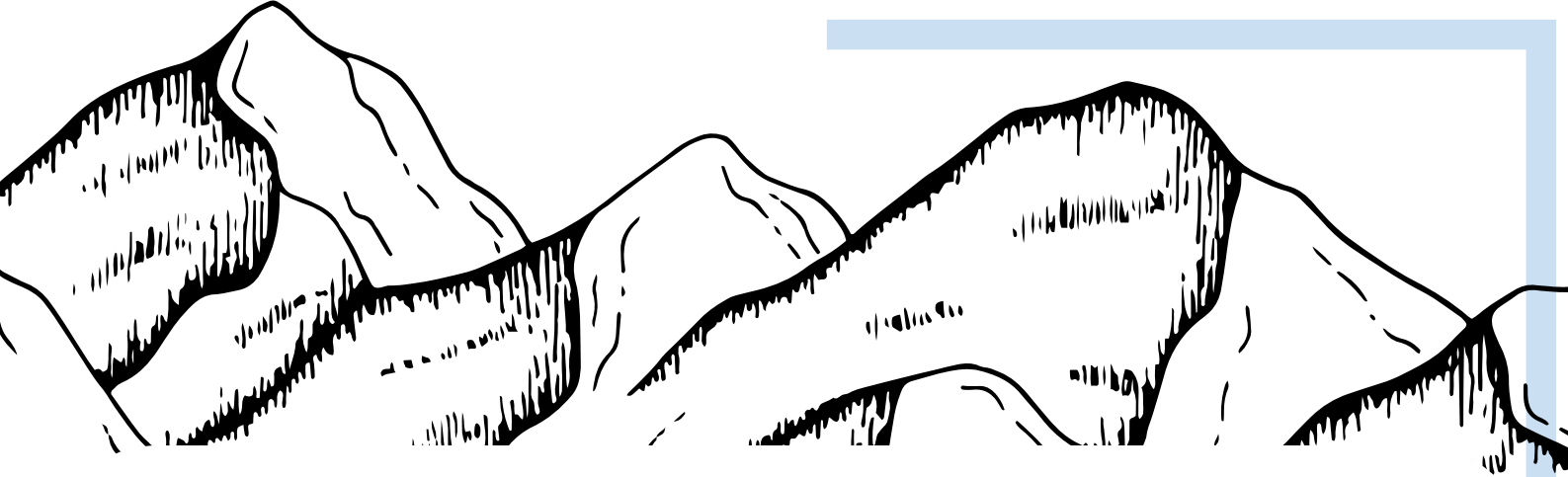
Lan Xichen leaned in, eager as a puppy. “Does that mean you are coming?”

He faltered. “I—I can’t. My family—”

His stomach plummeted. He thought of the dinner ahead. Of the tensions, the unresolved arguments, the endless bitterness... He suddenly felt the walls close in around him, claustrophobic, suffocating—

Something cold and smooth lay on his cheeks and snapped him back to the present. “Your Highness?” questioned Lan Xichen, worry evident in his eyes.

Jiang Cheng covered the hands that cupped his face with his own. Then, he laughed. “Your Highness? You were just asking me to be your mate, and you’re still calling me *Your Highness*?”



Lan Xichen looked confused, but Jiang Cheng just grinned, pulling his hands down and holding them in his own. “When are we leaving, then?”

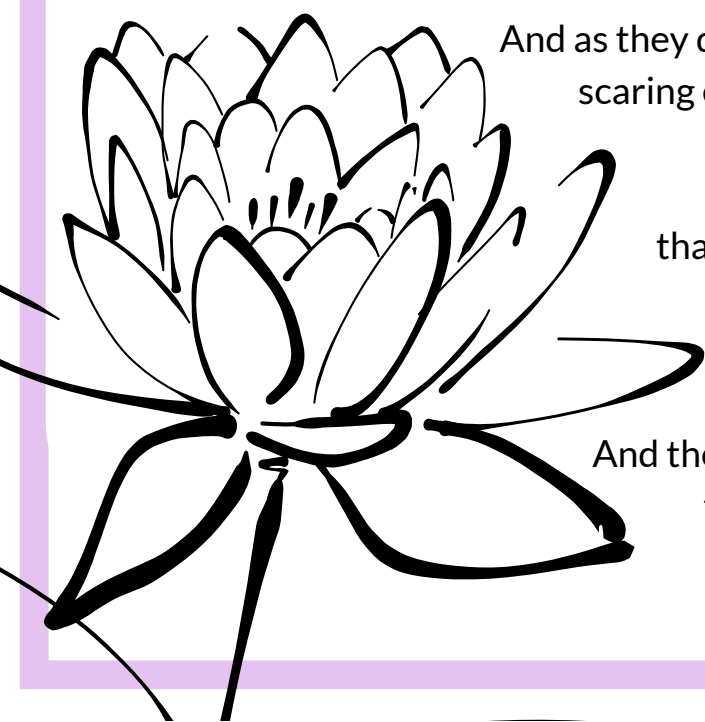
It didn’t seem like the words registered at once, as Lan Xichen was still giving him that lost look. But then, slowly, his face lit up so bright that it nearly knocked the wind out of Jiang Cheng. “Right now!”

Before Jiang Cheng could process what the fuck that meant, he was swept off his feet and tossed high in the air.

He didn’t even have time to scream! By the time he realized what was going on, he had landed on something soft and furry and alive. Strong, lean muscles shifted underneath the coat of thick, white fur and, in front of him, a majestic white head with bright yellow eyes and strong jaws that could snap a man in half turned in his direction. Those eyes were burning with their excitement, the question obvious in them. “Ready?”

Jiang Cheng grinned wildly in response, grasping at the fur to keep himself steady. This was *insanity*.

The Snow Wolf sprang forward.



And as they dashed madly down the wide hallways of the palace, scaring every servant and guard and maid they came across *out of their wits*, dodging his mother’s lightning strikes and attacks, yelling at Wei Wuxian that he would explain everything soon and hoping he’d heard before he fainted at the sight of Big Dog, Jiang Cheng thought, *totally worth it*.

And the two of them leaped outside into the longest night, to join the other creatures in celebrating being free.



By: Khallandra.

XICheng
Zine



Going home to you.

By: Hozumi.

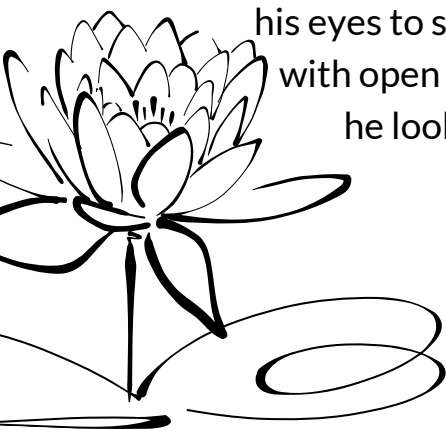
It may have been the usual day, meetings here, paper works there, and other tall files of paper works everywhere, well this month has a lot more work considering the partnership and new branch they are trying to establish overseas, which Lan Huan himself will personally see in the next few days.

Lan Huan who is currently buried in the files of paper that needed his immediate attention, looked up just to see his wall clock glaring at him with the big 1:24 AM written on them, "I want to go home" he mumbles to himself as he continue his work, nose deep in the files of what should be read, and where to sign. Being in the office from 8:30 am to 1 am... one may not believe he is the COO of this company, but what can he do? Responsibilities are responsibilities, and work is work.

Around 2 AM he finally decided that this would be enough for today, he must eat and sleep if he want to be somewhere near functioning later, he drove home with a tired and sleepy smile, thinking of his beloved Jiang Cheng in their bed sleeping peacefully, oh god knows how much he wants to cuddle with A-Cheng right now.

Arriving home, he heads straight to the kitchen, makes himself a sandwich and warm tea, takes a warm shower and heads to bed, where he indeed sees the most adorable being on earth, and thanks whatever god above for making him so lucky to be able to call the said man His. He decided to just kiss his beloved's forehead and sleep while hugging the other.

Soft nudges and wet licks wake Lan Huan from his slumber, he immediately open his eyes to see Jasmine giving him his morning kisses, so he welcome the dog with open arms and ruffle her fur before burying himself to it, after a while, he look up to see a smiling Jiang Cheng, who is leaning against the door frame.



"Love! Good Morning!" Lan Huan bent a bit, scoping Jasmine, and tucking her securely in his arms before making his way to A-Cheng and getting his morning kiss and cuddles.

Jiang Cheng closed their distance and leaned to kiss him and bop Jasmine's nose, "G'morning. You're up early, considering how late you got home yesterday."

"Is 6 am early for a working individual my love?" he smiled at Jiang Cheng who just raised an eyebrow at him.

"No, nope, not really, but for someone who sleeps at 3 am, It is early, right Jas?" Jiang Cheng coes at their dog who barks as an answer and nussle close to the arms that is holding her, as if defending Lan Huan, which made the two grown men giggle despite the obvious fact that they would be late, if they continue this phase of walking down stairs.

Lan Huan put jasmine down after they reached the end of the staircase, and let her run towards the kitchen.

Seeing that food is already laid on the table, he thanked his Fiance, who just grabbed his hand and led him to the table, what a good day.

"The launching event shall happen by the set date, guaranteed unless a major incident occurs" Lan Huan confirmed to the CEO who nodded at him.

"You do know that you are required to leave the country every other month to make sure that there won't be any of those '*major incidents*' you've mentioned, yes?" The CEO, Wen Qing looked at him, expecting an affirmative answer.

"Of course, I am well aware."

"You sure are, yes you are, but does ChengCheng know? Does he know that you'd be leaving the day after tomorrow and that depending on how efficient people around you are, you won't be back here for an unknown amount of time? Xichen, you know that could have taken a year, several months if you're lucky enough." Wen Qing let her pen down, with a sigh.

"I haven't really-"

XiCheng
Zine

The sound of the chair rolling back, and dull tud, from the fallen documents and folders which are now scattered around the floor shocked Lan Huan that he hadn't been able to react when Wen Qing asked.

“Why?!”

The CEO Wen Qing, for a bit of a background grew up with the Jiang's with her brother after being disowned by the only remaining relatives they had after both parents dies and had been deprived of what is rightfully hers, so of course, yes of course she'd react strongly when it comes to Jiang Cheng whom she treat as her own little brother.

“It's not like an intention of mine to hide it, We are busy, and A-Cheng will obviously be stressed about it, and I might not even go there knowing how it will turn out after he-”

“Xichen, you are babbling! You are just making excuses! Just tell him! Don't wait until you have to leave and not be able to talk it out with him! You are dismissed, Think. This. Through.”

Well if, and only if Lan Huan was any wiser of a man, then he would do what Wen Qing told him to do, but to disappoint everyone including himself, he waited till the night before the departure. And like any other person would expect, yes. Yes. He was kicked out, not only outside their room, he was kicked out of their house, with his suitcase, in pajamas no less.

To put it simply, He came home the earliest he ever did for the past few months, A-Cheng himself wasnt home yet. 4pm as the clock says, so without further ado, he put his essentials in the suitcase, his documents, several shirts, some pants, tons of undergarments, his chargers, and toiletries, after zipping the suitcase, he takes out a neck pillow and put it in a tote bag with his laptop, tablet and phone. Now he is all set! It was only 6:30 pm by the time he was done since there weren't lots to pack anyways, so he headed down stairs, cooked dinner, yes dinner, like steak, mashed potatoes and all that, plus a simple caesar salad. By the time Jiang Cheng arrived he was already setting the table up, yup. With candles and all those quote, end quote, ‘unnecessary stuffs’. He had to prepare these to at least for the last dinner they'll share in a while.

“So? What is the wrongdoing you’ve done this time A-Huan?” Jiang Cheng Clears his throat, pushing the now empty plate, with a deadpan face, looking like he is ready to cook Lan Huan alive.

“My heart, you’ve wounded me...” He said with a sheepish smile.

“Xian-ge offers much more convincing bribes than this, A-Huan. And I know you, so tell me.” keeping a steady stare at his face, A-Cheng put both of his hands on the table, and clasped them together.

“Well, you know how much big of the deal is the task that was given to me for months right?” Lan Huan, took the clasped hands in front of him, and slowly rubbed circles on them.

“Yes?” A-Cheng nods, there are no movements made to retract the hands that he is holding, so Lan Huan allowed himself to smile a little, “So? What of it?” A-Cheng continues.

“Apparently, it requires me to, well, to be outside the country for quite a while...” He saw how A-Cheng’s expression slowly shifted and darkened by each word that he said.

“How. Long?”

“6 months a most-” Jiang Cheng slaps his hands away.

“WHAT?!” Blue eyes turning cold stares at him

“3 months—”

“LAN HUAN?!” Jiang Cheng shakes his head, looking incredibly pissed off

“1 mon—”

“LAN XICHEN?!” Lan Huan never knew how growl from his beloved would sound so scary.

“2 weeks. My heart. 2 weeks...”

“And when are you leaving?!” His dear fiancée is looking at him incredulously,

“T-Tomorrow... At umm- six in the morning—”

“Lan Xichen. Don’t you dare talk to me.” Jiang Cheng had enough.

He wasn't able to say a thing after, Jiang Cheng got up, pushing the table to stand up, and storms up stairs, Lan Huan was about to take a deep breath, when he heard a loud ‘bang’ upstairs, so he immediately look up, only to see a beet red Jiang Cheng, with Lan Huan’s suitcase and a barely hanging tote bag in hand. He saw his fiancée take a deep breath before dragging his luggage downstairs, walk past him, and head outside the door, he of course chased after the said fiancée, whom he found standing outside their gate?

“A-Cheng!”

“Don’t you ‘A-Cheng’ Me. Lan. Xichen.”

Jiang Cheng pushed his suitcase outside, rolled away and nearly fell down. Lan Huan ran after it. He saw a glimpse of a smile, a smile that got chills running down his spine. Because as soon as Lan Huan ran after his luggage, his beloved fiancée closed the gates, immediately followed by a loud tud, a sign that their front door was now locked.

Now, he did try to climb over the insanely high gate, but to no avail, he tried calling A-Cheng only to notice that he is now officially blocked by his beloved. So? He wait there the whole night. Outside their house, sleepless, relentless, and crying. The pitiful man only realized what time it was when a car from their company, sent by Wen Qing, picked him up, saying that it's time to go. Of Course he doesn't wish to leave.

“President Wen wants me to tell you that Mr. Jiang told her to take you away from here” is what made him slowly stand up from the floor.

Lan Huan promised to finish this as soon as humanly possible.

Lan Huan arrived at their home after five days of business trip, tired and sleep deprived. The gates finally decided that the codes he typed were correct and let him in, now he was looking around their house for his fiancée.

"A-Cheng~" he called upon entering the front door, and nothing answered him.

He was pretty sure his fiancée was on day off today... So why isn't he home? It is possible that he is still mad at him, sure... but he let him in, so that means something right?

He slowly unbutton his vest, removing it as he stride his way upstairs to their room. He took a deep breath, so scared to find no traces of Jiang Cheng in their room upstairs.

He prayed and prayed as he slowly reached the second floor, A-cheng was still nowhere to be found, not in their bedroom, though he allowed himself to calm down a bit after realizing Jiang Cheng hadn't left him yet, 'Okay not upstairs, not downstairs... where could he be?' He looked around for a bit and noticed that the balcony door was open.

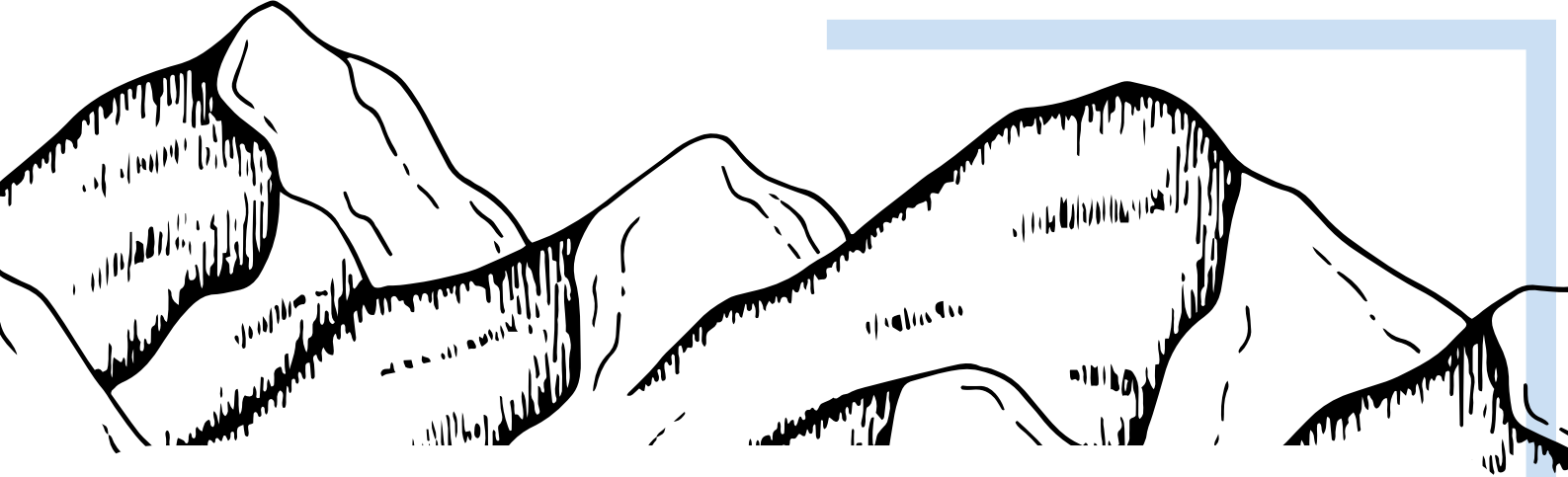
His hand venture around his tie, loosening it before pulling down, he was about to unbutton his shirt when a bark was heard.

'Oh? A-cheng is in the garden?' He thanks every god he knows! Because Thank God! The love of his life hasn't decided to throw him away and break up with him... well not yet at least.

So he changed his clothes immediately, changing into his loose pants and plain tshirt, gathered his suit, folded them neatly and placed it in the laundry bin.

He then starts making his way to the garden, as he opens the sliding door, the reflection of the sun in their pool catches his attention, that's where he finally sees his fiancée, sleeping in that floating- What is that? A floating water mat?

His fiancée is sleeping peacefully in a floating mat in their pool, hugging a pillow. How he got in the middle of the pool is a wonder, why his fiancée decided to sleep in the pool is a question he is about to ask.



He walks towards Jasmine who looks concerned about her father. He pats her head, "Hahaha, it's fine, your Pa is just sleeping, Let's get him out of the water first!" He managed to scoop Jiang Cheng out of the water, and is now being carried bridal style.

The movements mayhaps wake A-Cheng up, because he hasn't gotten inside the house yet when he hears his beloved mumbles "It hasn't been a week yet? Why are you here A-Huan?"

Oh how happy he is to hear his name from Jiang Cheng! Relief overtook him, and he let out a content noise as he leaned down to pepper his fiancé's face with kisses.

"I finished everything as soon as I could. Sorry A-Cheng." his knees gave up on him, as he slowly sat down with Jiang Cheng still in his hands,

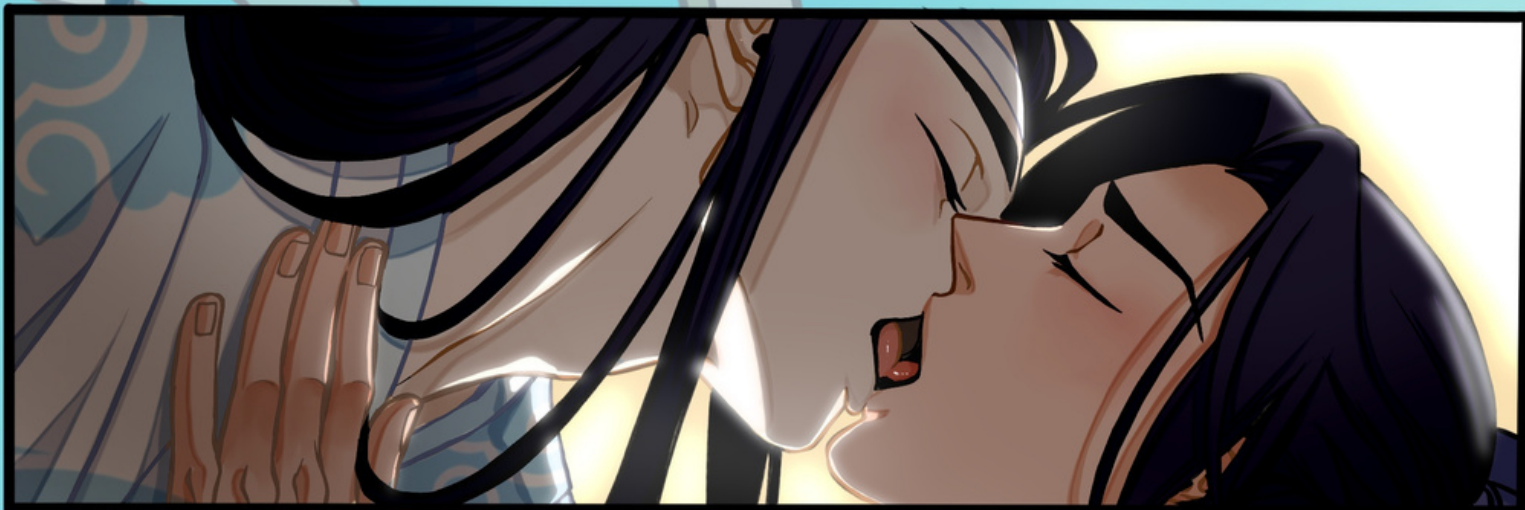
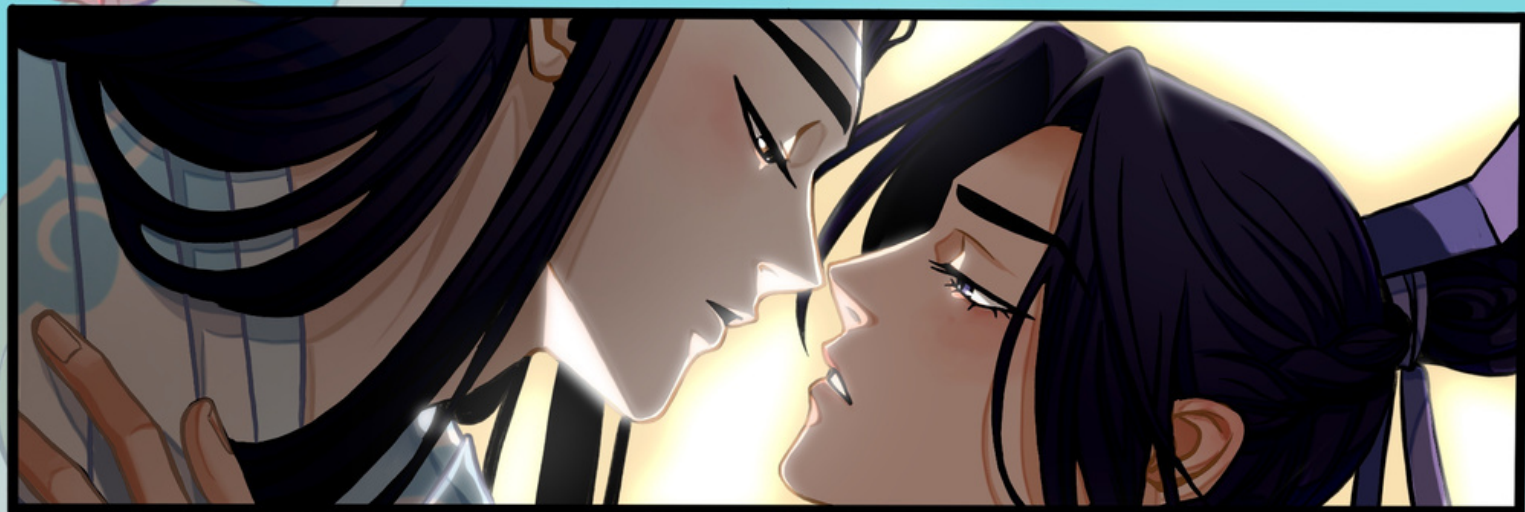
"Sorry, I am sorry, My heart... please forgive me" he froze when he felt Jiang Cheng wiping his tears, with one hand and the other hugging him close.

"Okay, I'll forgive you, just this time, okay? Aist, look who would have thought, my A-Huan, My six feet, tall, strong and scary A-Huan is crying?" His beloved is now fussing over him, patting his back for comfort.



"A-Cheng, I am home" He smile as he buried his nose, snuggling to his beloved hair

"Welcome home, A-Huan."





Jiang Cheng turns around several times, trying to examine his clothes from all directions until he ends up getting dizzy. His reflection stares back at him wide-eyed, like a fawn in the headlights of a car, urging Jiang Cheng to ask the intelligent system in his apartment to remove the holographic mirrors around him. However, he instantly regrets it, as Wei Ying is waiting for him on the other side and there's no hiding his growing nervousness from him.

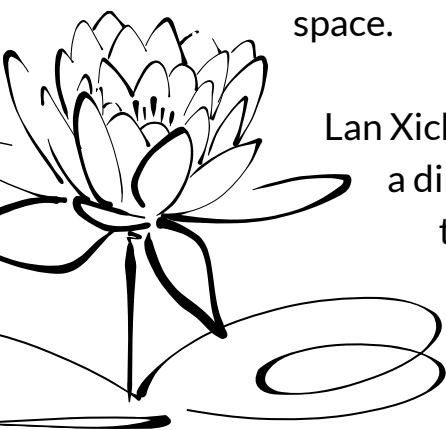
"It's just a date, A-Cheng! Why are you so pale?"

Jiang Cheng shakes his head. He doesn't feel like explaining to Wei Ying that this isn't just any date, since he's sure Lan Xichen will propose to him that night, and instead he growls.

"C'mon! Looks like you're headed to your funeral. What's with that face, did you fight with Xicheng-ge?"

To tell the truth, Jiang Cheng wonders what's up with him too. He would be lying if he said that he hadn't dreamt of that day almost from the moment he started dating Lan Xichen three years ago and that he already knows the answer to the question that Lan Xichen will ask him later, so why? Why are his legs shaking uncontrollably and his hands sweaty?

Jiang Cheng leaves his apartment unable to find an answer for himself or Wei Ying, who shrugs, already used to his younger brother's mood swings. Then he heads to the spaceport, where he boards a private Lan family ship headed for space.



Lan Xichen didn't reveal the coordinates of his destination when he sent a direct message to his wristwatch, urging Jiang Cheng to think that their engagement day had finally arrived, and Jiang Cheng didn't

ask when he finally entered the ship. Instead, Jiang Cheng allows himself to admire the scenery from one of the panoramic windows located on both sides of the ship.

The stars are luminous points of various sizes scattered in the dark velvet of space; they come in all colors, although white predominates, giving them the appearance of gently pulsating fireflies, calling travelers home. In the distance, Jiang Cheng sees a spiral galaxy curling in on itself until it gets lost in its luminous golden center, and a pair of shooting stars pass by the side of the ship (far enough away not to cause structural damage), greeting him before following their path through the universe.

It's not the first time that Jiang Cheng has seen such phenomena, after all, he's the captain of his own ship. However, such a special day prompts him to keep each of the beautiful images that space offers him in his memory, so that, years later, he can examine them like precious stones in his hands whenever he pleases.

The stars stretch out like colored lines as the spacecraft takes a quantum leap, spanning several light-years in a matter of minutes before reappearing in another part of the Milky Way yet unknown to Jiang Cheng. There, another much smaller ship awaits him, and Lan Xichen invites him to board it by bowing to him with an outstretched hand.

Jiang Cheng accepts the invitation just as solemnly, especially since he doesn't think he can utter a word when his heart is pounding in his throat. However, Lan Xichen is not bothered by his silence and, already used to it, dedicates himself to filling it with the common talk as they cross the glass bridge that separates the two ships.

There's no one inside Lan Xichen's private ship but them, fueling Jiang Cheng's certainty that the day he has been waiting for has finally arrived. In fact, Jiang Cheng is so sure that Lan Xichen will kneel in front of him at any moment, that he refuses to take a seat in one of the overstuffed armchairs when his boyfriend gestures to them. He's already seen space ad nauseam, it's time for the main event—except there doesn't seem to be one.

Lan Xichen offers him a cup of tea which Jiang Cheng declines before Lan Xichen launches into a long monologue about the solar system they are visiting that day. In other circumstances, Jiang Cheng would very much enjoy the explanation, coming from one of the best astronomers in the Galactic Empire, but this time the words don't make any sense to him.

"A-Cheng, is something wrong?" Lan Xichen asks, interrupting his explanation when he notices how Jiang Cheng's leg trembles. "You look upset."

"It's nothing," Jiang Cheng says, jumping to his feet before heading over to the panoramic window as if he were suddenly very interested in the huge rocks floating in space. He feels like a fool having gotten his hopes up about just another date and angry at himself for screwing it up with his nervousness and expectations.

"Come on, A-Cheng, you can tell me," Lan Xichen says, stopping beside him. "If I did something that upset you... If I bored you with my talk, you can tell me. I won't get angry."

Jiang Cheng clenches his jaw so hard it hurts and closes his eyes to avoid seeing his pathetic reflection in the glass in front of him, nor Lan Xichen's furrowed brow and trembling lips.

"It's not that."

"Then..."

"I'm stupid, Xichen. Please forgive me," Jiang Cheng says, hating himself even more when his voice breaks on the last word. Finally, all his nervousness has exploded, turning him into a mess of unshed tears and self-criticism. "I'm not angry with you, but with myself. I made a whole story in my head and I got angry when it didn't come true. Sorry."

"I don't understand, A-Cheng. What are you talking about? Tell me, please."

Jiang Cheng shakes his head as a sarcastic smile spreads across his face.

"I thought you were going to propose," he says, reddening to the roots of his hair.

"Oh."

Jiang Cheng looks away, focusing on the nearest planet, a beautiful silver hue that reflects the rays of the sun in the form of prisms. He's about to apologize for his outburst when Lan Xichen speaks again.

"Yes, that's the plan. How did you know?"

"Sorry?"

"I brought you here for that, A-Cheng," Lan Xichen says, dropping to one knee on the rug under his boyfriend's surprised look. "And we're right on time."

"What...?"

"Jiang Cheng, will you marry me?" Lan Xichen asks, taking his hands.

Jiang Cheng frowns, wondering if he's still tangled up in his blankets, dreaming of the day ahead. That would explain why nothing is going as it should, because he expected a romantic dinner in one of the best floating restaurants in the galaxy and to find his ring stuck in the dessert, not the deafening silence of space as the setting for such an important moment in his life.

"Where's the ring?" Jiang Cheng asks, raising an eyebrow, giving in to the absurdity of his dream.

"There you have it, my heart," Lan Xichen says, pointing beyond the window.

Jiang Cheng can no longer doubt that he's dreaming since there's nothing on the other side of the thick glass that separates them from space except the planet he saw moments before. The ship has come so close that it has doubled its size, almost completely covering his field of vision, allowing him to appreciate the iridescent color of its otherwise smooth surface. It's beautiful, like a stone set on black velvet.

Jiang Cheng gasps.

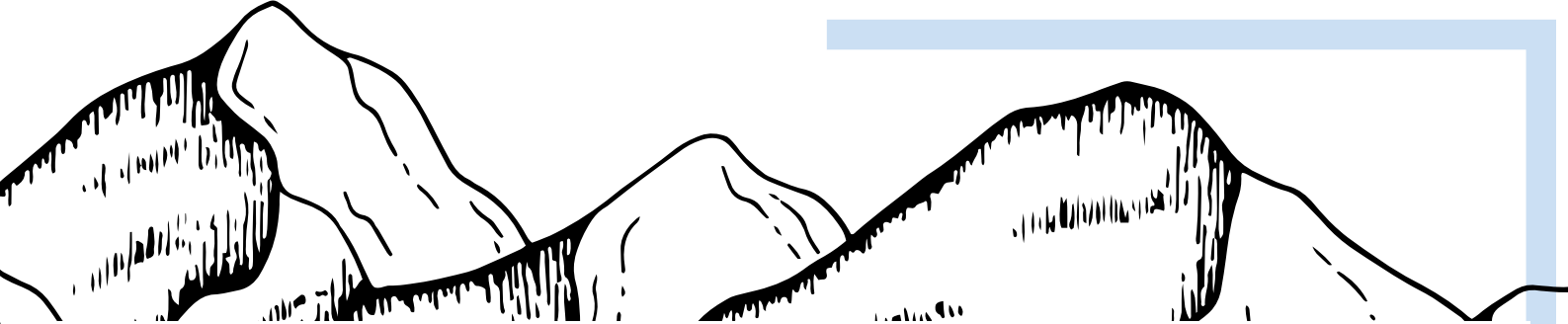
"This is the biggest diamond I could get, A-Cheng," Lan Xichen says, gently squeezing his boyfriend's hand. "It's the least you deserve."

"What?"

"This is 55 Cancri e, a planet made entirely of diamond, and it is yours if you wish to accept it—accept me," Lan Xichen says with a slight tremor in his voice. His eyes are full of fear and hope, giving them a sparkle that makes his brown color stand out.

"Am I not dreaming?" Jiang Cheng asks with a frown. "Are you serious?"

XiCheng
Zine



"I've never been so serious before, A-Cheng. I want to spend the rest of my life by your side if you decide to accept me."

"Yes," Jiang Cheng says immediately, throwing his arms around his now-fiancé's neck.

"Yes, I'll marry you. I've been waiting for you to ask me all night; I thought you wouldn't."

"Really?" Lan Xichen asks with an amused smile, and immediately he understands Jiang Cheng's behavior that night. However, instead of upsetting him, it only makes Lan Xichen love him even more.

Jiang Cheng nods.

"Although perhaps a planet made of diamond is too much..."

"Don't worry, A-Cheng," Lan Xichen says, misunderstanding his fiancé's words and pulling a black case from one of his suit pockets. "You'll have a ring to wear, but first I wanted you to see the original."

"You are so foolish," Jiang Cheng says with tears in his eyes. "Thanks. I am sorry."

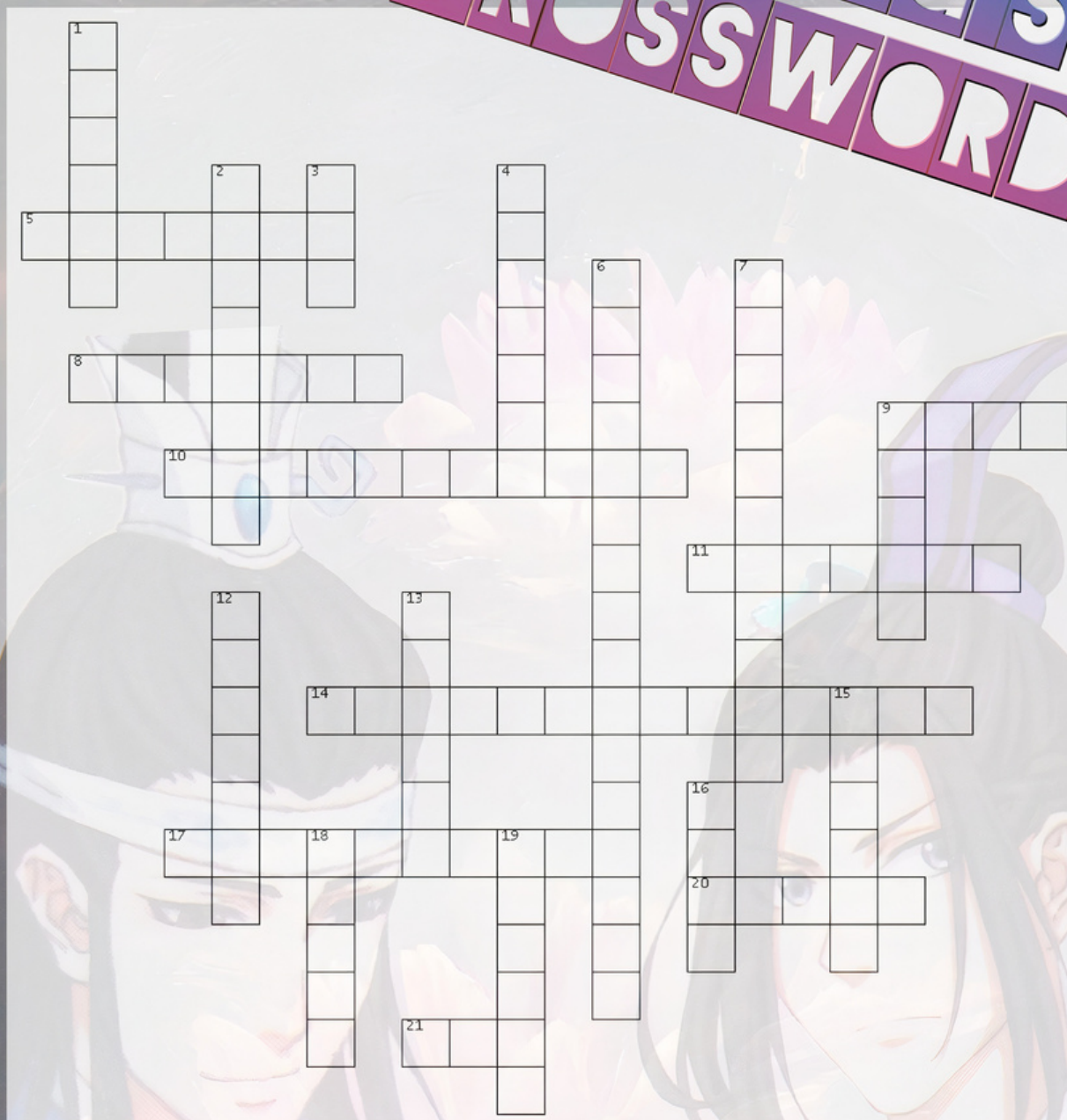
Lan Xichen shakes his head before opening the case to reveal a miniature of the planet before them made of diamond and set in a gold ring, which he slides onto Jiang Cheng's ring finger with a triumphant smile. Later they can laugh at the misunderstanding that almost led them to not get engaged, but for now, any words are unnecessary.



They both stare at the immensity of space that stretches out before them, so infinite that they are nothing more than two specks of dust in the stellar mantle. However, instead of feeling scared by the idea, they feel grateful to have found each other among all those stars. Of course, there will always be problems, arguments and small misunderstandings, but the bond that unites them will always be stronger.

XiCheng
Zine

XICHENG'S CROSSWORD



Down

1. XiCheng's lovechild
2. Title attached to Jiang Wanyin after marrying into the Lan Family (2 words)
3. abbr for 'ship'
4. Zewu-jun's #1 antifa
6. XiCheng's personality trope (2 words)
7. Lan Qiren's favorite nephew
9. a favorite flower
12. Lan Jingyi's favorite
13. Half color of the ship
15. a Jiang Wanyin hair essential
16. abbr for a must-read XiCheng fanfiction
18. The number of dogs Jiang Cheng will always have
19. Mythical creature in Chinese folklore

Across

5. a favorite endearment (2 words)
8. Shuoyue's owner
9. a body part Jiang Wanyin would likely break
10. Lan Wanyin's favored title (3 words)
11. The better Jiang Fengmian
14. a Lan's engagement ring
17. XiCheng's favorite position (2 words)
20. 'three poisons'
21. abbr for a kink trope where individuals have defined biological roles



The path to man's heart.

By: Bunsie.

Here's the thing – Jiang Cheng doesn't do relationships.

He witnessed His parents' disastrous marriage and how it crashed and burned so spectacularly that he still feels the heat years later. His charming personality doesn't mesh with a long-term relationship either, or how his "exes" called him – a grotesque mess of daddy issues and inferiority in a handsome meat bag. They're right, but punching them hurts.

Jiang Cheng is fine with his "sex and next" lifestyle. Then Lan Xichen came along and made Jiang Cheng waver like a baby tree in the middle of the storm.

That charming pretty man somehow sneaked into Jiang Cheng's prison cell of a heart and built a comfortable home in it. At first, it was a purely physical attraction for him. Slowly and naturally, Jiang Cheng found himself laughing at Lan Xichen's lame joke and seeking out his warmth in his sleep.

So it shouldn't be surprising that in a moment of post-coital enlightenment, Jiang Cheng is horrified that he is enjoying Lan Xichen's company without the bed rolling. Which is fine. Crush passes. Jiang Cheng goes on with his life. The usual.

The problem is Lan Xichen, unsubtle as hell, doesn't mind being with him without all the bed rolling either. So Jiang Cheng does his best to ignore how Lan Xichen's embrace got tighter when it's time for Jiang Cheng to leave.

Everything comes crashing down when Jiang Cheng gets a text from Lan Xichen. "Come over", it said. "I made dinner".

Lan Xichen never asks him to stay for dinner. That's how he knows he must be a bad guy and breaks Lan Xichen's heart for their own good.



It's easier said than done. Jiang Cheng curls his clammy hand into a fist, his eyes bore a hole into the familiar door. He doesn't feel well, the guilt is eating him inside.

A moment after Jiang Cheng rings the bell, Lan Xichen appears with all of his blinding angelic smile and a blue apron. "Wanyin, you came!", he exclaimed.

Jiang Cheng squints at the shining halo that somehow has gotten brighter today, a bit tongue-tied. Lan Xichen ushers him into his house, takes his coat off, and leads him straight to the dining table. It's what Jiang Cheng expected, a candlelit table full of food.

"That's a lot of food for two.", he jokes lamely. "Do You want to fatten me up?"

Lan Xichen chuckles, and a gleam of amusement appears in his eyes. "Ah yes. I'm trying to fatten Wanyin up so I can eat you."

Jiang Cheng's cheeks bloom red. This is going to be difficult.

He sits down and finally takes a closer look at the dishes. A cold chill runs through his spine as Jiang Cheng realizes all the dishes on the table are his favorite. The fried pork, the steam fish, those little dim sums. There is a giant bowl of Rib and Lotus root soup in the center of the table, for fuck's sake. And they all smell good.

Lan Xichen finally sits down on the opposite side of him. Scattered flecks of light get lost in his eyes and twinkle hopefully.

Jiang Cheng swallows down a lump of guilt. He has to do it now. Staring straight at Lan Xichen's honey eyes, be a cruel bitch, and stops whatever affection Lan Xichen is giving him for free.

"Hey, so I thought..maybe we..."

A bowl of soup appears in front of him. Lan Xichen smiles gently. "No talking while eating"

Jiang Cheng huffs but is secretly relieved. Surely, basking himself under Lan Xichen's attention for the last time won't hurt.

He takes the steaming bowl and chopstick, then drinks a small sip of broth.

XiCheng
Zine

Why the fuck is it so good??

Jiang Cheng eats a piece of rib. Then a bite of lotus root. Then another. He can't fucking stop. The familiar aroma explodes inside his mouth, drowning him under a wave of nostalgia for home. When he raises his head, the bowl is empty, and Lan Xichen is watching him so adoringly that his heart aches.

Jiang Cheng coughs, a bit embarrassed.

"Did you cook this? Do you know how to cook Wuhan dishes?"

Lan Xichen nods and helps himself with a piece of fish. "Yes, I learned from Bilibi, and I...also took the liberty to call your sister to have some pointers, mostly about what you like to eat?"

His dear sister can be very meddling sometimes.

Jiang Cheng hesitantly puts a big pork piece in his mouth and immediately wants to moan. Sexually.

"Is it good?" Lan Xichen shamelessly gawks for his comment, looking so excited as though Jiang Cheng is the judge of a cooking competition.

Jiang Cheng can't speak. Can orgasms happen with only chewing? Can cooked animals have intercourse inside their mouth? He is experiencing intense euphoric feelings that teleport him into a world where he builds a family with Lan Xichen, has a picket fence house, and eats dinner together like this every day. Warm feelings bubble up inside him, on the verge of spilling over the table.

He mentally slaps himself out of the delusion. The food must lace with crack, almost get Jiang Cheng there. Yet he sees Lan Xichen, and all his love on the table makes him want to vomit feelings again.

"Why?" Jiang Cheng suddenly doesn't know what he should do anymore. His solid resolve broke down with just some piece of food and Lan Xichen's tsunami-like affection. He is strangely excited, yet also scared out of his wit. "Why did you go at such length?"

"For me, no less?" is almost spoken, but Jiang Cheng holds his tongue.

XiCheng
Zine

Lan Xichen looks to the side shyly and unconsciously plays with the food on his table. He chuckles to himself and then straightens his back. His brown eyes look deeply into Jiang Cheng's anxious one, still as intimidatingly gentle as ever.

"Because I like you, and I want to be your lover...official lover. I want to share with you everything—my time, my joy, my hugs and kisses..and dinner like this. I want them all with you."

Something inside Jiang Cheng cracks. The last bit of the wall falls, leaving him bare and vulnerable with all his hidden desires. Somewhere along the line, Jiang Cheng forgets how he craves to share dinner with someone. Someone like Lan Xichen.

Ah. Jiang Cheng can't do it. Can't hurt Lan Xichen, who wants him. He feels so foolish for even thinking of running away.

His eyes sting so much, so he keeps his head down and stares at the bowl instead. It looks handmade, with a purple cat print on it. Fuck. Fuck. Fuck.

"If Wanyin doesn't share the same sentiments.." Jiang Cheng hears the uncertainty laced in Lan Xichen's faux calming voice, which pulls him back to reality. However, his throat tightens, unable to say those truthful words like how Lan Xichen can.

Jiang Cheng groans, frustrated at his emotional constipation. He picks up the chopsticks and aggressively drops food into his and Lan Xichen's bowl.

"After this meal, we will fuck till I burn off the calories." Jiang Cheng growls, his shiny cheeks extending like a chipmunk.

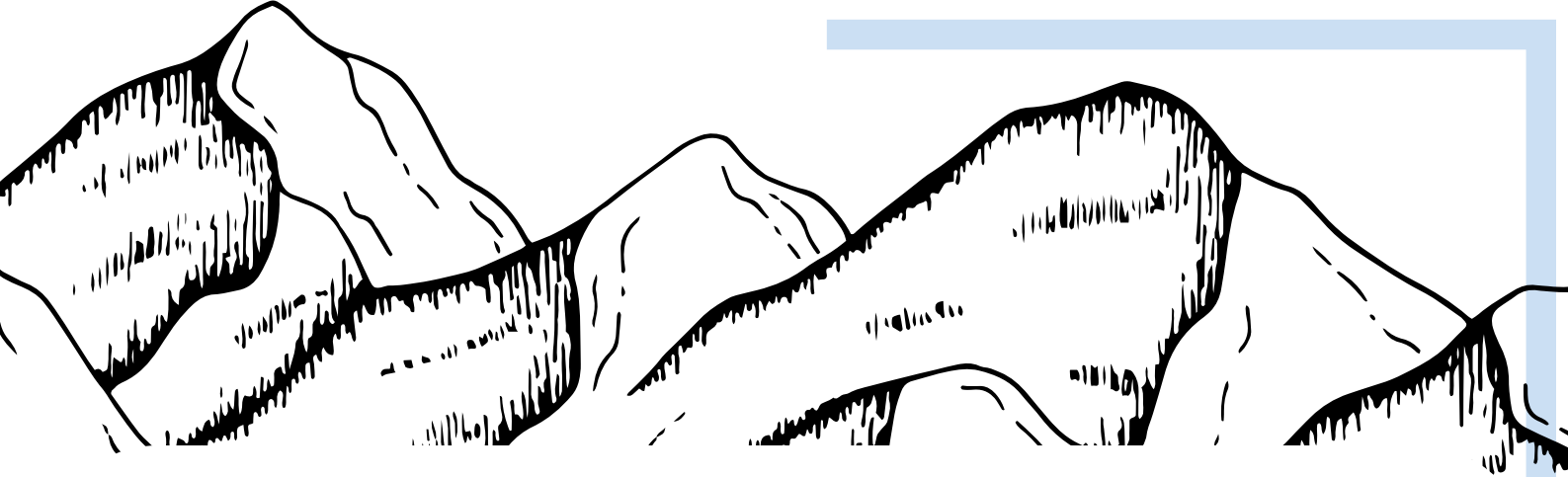
Lan Xichen chokes mid-soup and almost loses his grip on the bowl. The candlelight color his face redder than it comes off as endearing.

" Oh!? Okay, great okay...yes, that's wonderful. A good way to exercise."

"After that, I will consider being your boyfriend if your dim sums are as good as this soup."

Lan Xichen drops his chopsticks wordlessly. His mouth gapes like a fish. Jiang Cheng bristles behind his bowl and swallows all those butterflies and disgustingly floaty feelings down his throat by shoving more food. He is nervous for no fucking reason!!

XiCheng
Zine



A smile breaks out on Lan Xichen's face, turning him into a living lamp post. There is a certain lightness that oozes out of him. He picks up a dim sum and puts it in Jiang Cheng's bowl.

"I could cook all three meals for you, plus dessert."

Jiang Cheng huffs, returning the gesture by placing a large spinach leaf in Lan Xichen's bowl. His voice now carries a hesitant teasing tone.

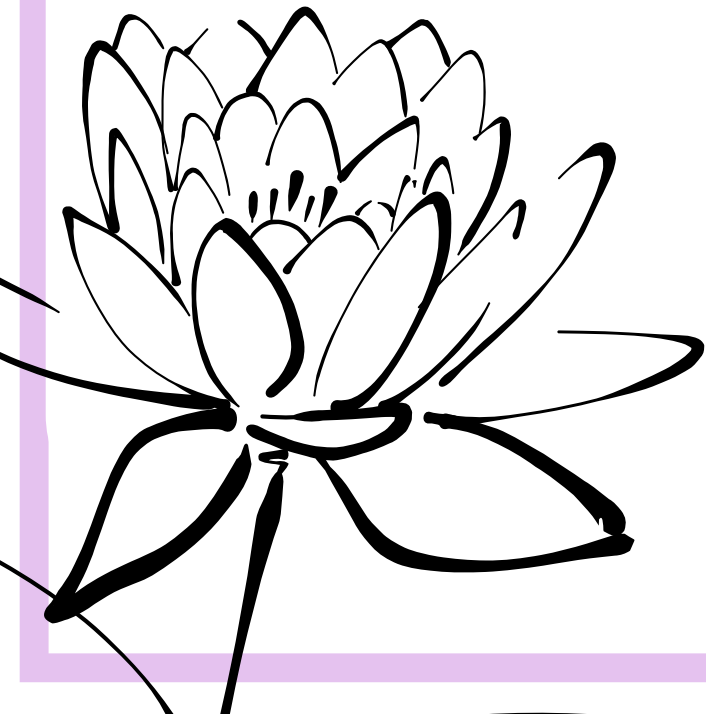
"Tell your brother to switch places with me. I'm moving here. I kick in my sleep. Be prepared."

"It's okay. I can hold you. I will cook for you every day if you want."

"Do you like spring or summer weddings? Want to have my surname that much Mr. Lan?"

Lan Xichen laughs out loud. His eyes crinkle, sending another wave of butterflies flying in Jiang Cheng's stomach. He thinks he can get used to this. He really can.

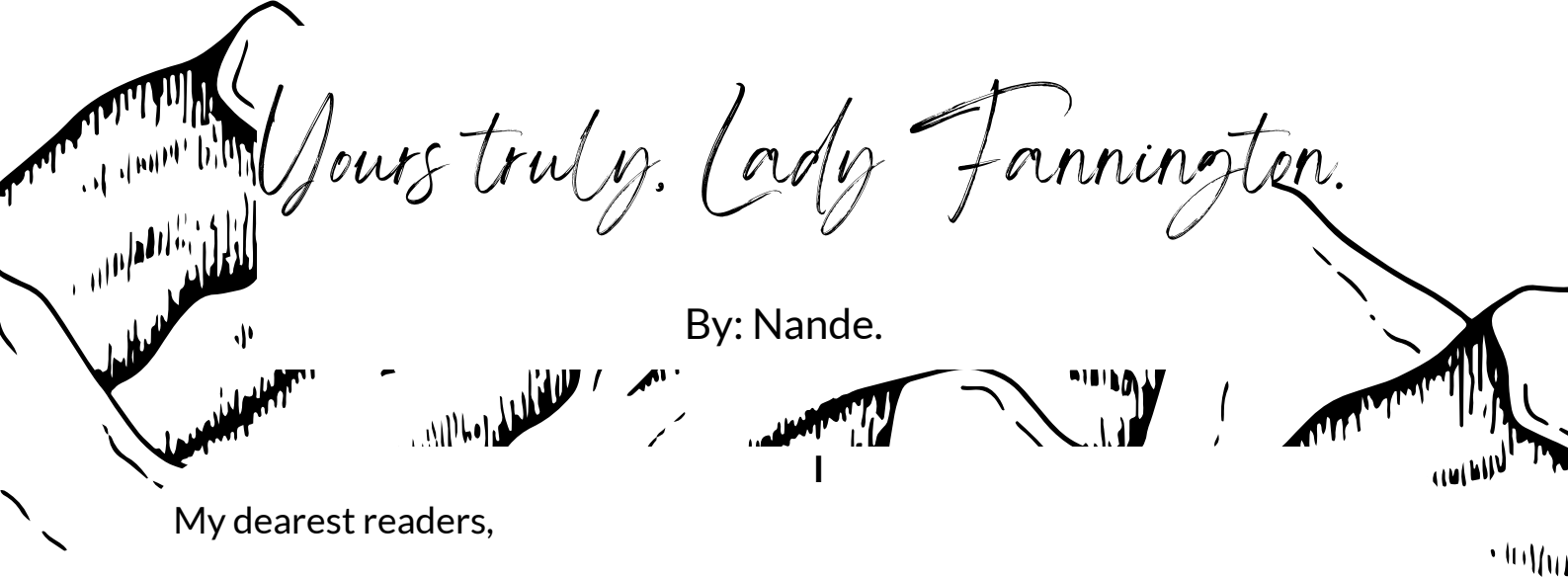
Now, Jiang Cheng feels full. In the heart. In the tummy too.





By: Eriaricheria.

XiCheng
Zine



Yours truly, Lady Fannington.

By: Nande.

My dearest readers,

A new season has begun and with it, a wave of newcomers and well-known characters walk the streets of our lovely city. But all of them pale in comparison with the youngest Lan sibling. Young Lan Wangji is a debutant this season and he has easily captured the eyes, and noses, of all the gentlemen and ladies seeking a match this season.

And really, who could be more enthralling than this young and charming creature? He has an air of mystery. We know his shy disposition, which some might call rude or even cold, is due to the overwhelming feeling of being the jewel, the jade of the season. It is a huge responsibility and Lan Wangji should bear it.

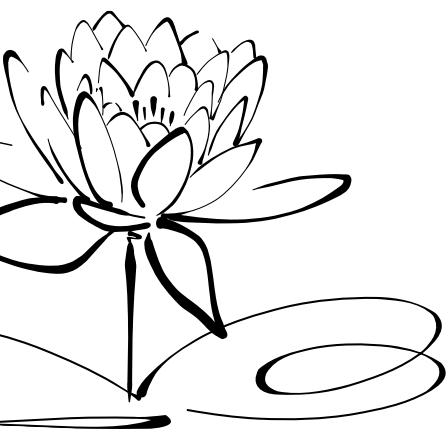
II

My darlings,

It is well known that a man in possession of a grand fortune must be in desperate need of a spouse. This is the case of Jiang Wanyin, whose mother announced at the Jins' ball that he was out at the market.

After such an announcement, all the ladies and young gentlemen of marriageable age ran down all the sixteen floors of Koi Tower to be close to the, now, most sought-after bachelor of the season.

I swear, Koi Tower had never witnessed anything similar.
It was a stampede.



And truly, my dears, who could blame them? Marrying Jiang Wanyin would mean a secure life. Nothing to miss, perhaps just a caring lover, but you would live in the beautiful Lotus Pier, surrounded by lakes and precious lotus flowers most of the year. You would also enjoy Yunmeng's cuisine, which this humble writer considers the best in the region, totally different from that of Gusu, which lacks flavour as well as colours.

With these advantages, who cares if the husband is a bachelor who was formerly black-listed on all the matchmakers' lists? As long as a pretty house, good food and beautiful dresses and accessories are provided, please, let me be the next Jiang Furen.

Hopefully, Jiang Wanyin's workaholic reputation will turn out to be true and the lucky Jiang Furen will never meet their husband after the wedding ceremony.

Or who knows? Maybe Jiang Wanyin will turn out to be the perfect husband and he'll satisfy the next Furen both in the halls and the bedroom of Lotus Pier.

III

My most gentle readers,

To no one's surprise, the most desirable bachelors have made a match for themselves. What you are thinking is true: our dear aloof Jiang Wanyin has been courting the youngest twin jade.

It has been a huge success for both families. On the one hand, Lan Wangji and his uncle, Lan Qiren, seem charmed by Jiang Wanyin's gifts and demeanour. On the other hand, the whole Jiang family is ecstatic with the soon-to-be Furen. I wish that everyone were as happy as the young lovers, but there is a grey cloud in the sky: someone is not even slightly happy for his brother's success in securing such an advantageous marriage.

The person in question is Lan Wangji's older brother, Lan Xichen. This poor writer is disconcerted by the sudden change in conduct of a gentleman who has always been kind and affable to everyone. Lan Xichen, who always used to have a gentle smile regardless of the situation, now frowns every time that he looks at the, hopefully sooner rather than later, engaged couple. It is as if he has smelt a repugnant odour from one of the alleys close to the port or the meat market.

This modest writer can only guess the source of his disgust, especially when Jiang Wanyin has proven that he can actually be a good husband. Now that the whole story of how his father bankrupted the family before dying and how he vowed not to marry until he regained their fortune and even surpassed that of his ancestors has come to light, one cannot help but wonder whether the nasty black-listing business with the matchmakers had a nefarious reason behind it.

Oh, my dear reader, so many questions, so few answers.

IV

My precious readers,

The season has been progressing as expected and now not only are we getting the wedding of the year, but of a generation. You'll see, it is not every day that two powerful families unite through marriage. The last time it happened was with Jiang Yanli and Jin Zixuan, and we can all agree that both are lovely: Jin Zixuan is as handsome as he is wealthy and Jiang Yanli is probably the kindest spirit out there, but... there were just so many buts around that event.

You might not remember, but at the time, the Jiang family were in a huge predicament, since all the rumours around Wei Wuxian's parentage provoked a nasty succession for Jiang Wanyin. We should now give Jiang Wanyin more credit, as he never disgraced the good name of that useless father of his (quoting Madam Yu). The point is, thanks to bad business decisions and Jiang Fengmian's sudden death, the Jiang family were at their lowest state in generations. They had a genuinely rough time.

However, the Jin family were no saints. The scandal surrounding all of Jin Guangshan's illegitimate children had just exploded. It wasn't the best time for a wedding between those two families, but then again, it was the best time to celebrate after such a gruesome war.

For all the aforementioned reasons, Jiang Yanli and Jin Zixuan's wedding wasn't the one they deserved, but it was the one we needed.

Now a truly grandiose wedding is being planned while I write and you read this unimportant magazine of mine. As many of you must have already guessed, Jiang Wanyin and Lan Wangji are getting married.

Prepare your best gown, buy a gorgeous wedding present, and enjoy. The wedding of our generation will be celebrated and believe me when I say that it is going to be unforgettable. People will talk about it for years to come.

V

Greetings, dear readers,

This text has come earlier than expected because there is some news... Oh, and what news, my lovelies!

It was meant to be the event of the season, perhaps the most lavish wedding of the next ten years, the one that would live in the memory of an entire generation.

Memorable it was, for sure. Though not because of the beautiful wedding attires or the decoration. No, my darlings, and if you don't know by now that the wedding was cancelled, it is because you are living in total isolation and your only way to communicate with the outside world is through this little magazine written by me. In which case, let me tell you that I'm honoured to be the only link between you and this crazy world.

The wedding was cancelled. Everyone knows that, but no one knows why. I am ashamed to tell you that I have little more information than you, and for that, this poor writer shall apologise. But do not despair! For I am Lady Fannington and I will find the truth. You, my beloved readers, deserve only that. The truth and nothing but the truth.

Everything was in place: the music, the altar, the guests and the grooms' family. The only thing missing was the grooms themselves. After a long wait, the guests began to murmur: maybe Jiang Wanyin wasn't so admirable and his previous reputation had some truth in it. Perhaps Lan Wangji was not as virtuous as everyone thought and Jiang Wanyin didn't know how to get out of the engagement.

By that time it was obvious that one, if not both of them, was second-guessing this whole enterprise. Family members kept coming and going. One valiant but dreadful attempt at entertaining the crowd was made by Wei Wuxian and the adorable Jin Ling. Fortunately, Madam Yu appeared before things went south.

Suddenly, the music began and the grooms appeared accompanied by their siblings. Jiang Yanli's face gave nothing away, but Lan Xichen... his expression was a poem. He certainly looked like he would have preferred to be bitten by little Jin Ling's dog while enjoying Wei Wuxian's performance rather than be there. His disapproval was palpable, it didn't matter how much he tried to conceal it, for better or worse, he had always possessed an honest face.

It might have been that displeasure that obliged Lan Wangji to call off the wedding right then and there, as it is well known that the twin jades are quite close and such disapproval of his fiancé was insurmountable. Filial piety won over good fortune.

Still, dear readers, nothing is certain and this business has more layers than Wang Lingjiao's dress, which everyone knows had close to zero layers, if only for decency...

VI

My fairest readers,

I hope this news finds you well and sitting down. Particularly sitting down, and maybe getting the smelling salts ready, as you will need them in a minute. Because oh, my, what news.

You'll see, this is the stuff that makes me go forward, that inspires me to never abandon you and to never give up the search for truth.

After the wedding fiasco, we all were prepared to move on with our lives and embrace the disappointment that even the relationships between the wealthy and handsome do not work. What can we expect, then, for our own relationships? Oh, the agony!

But here we are now, beholders of the grand spectacle this season has been.



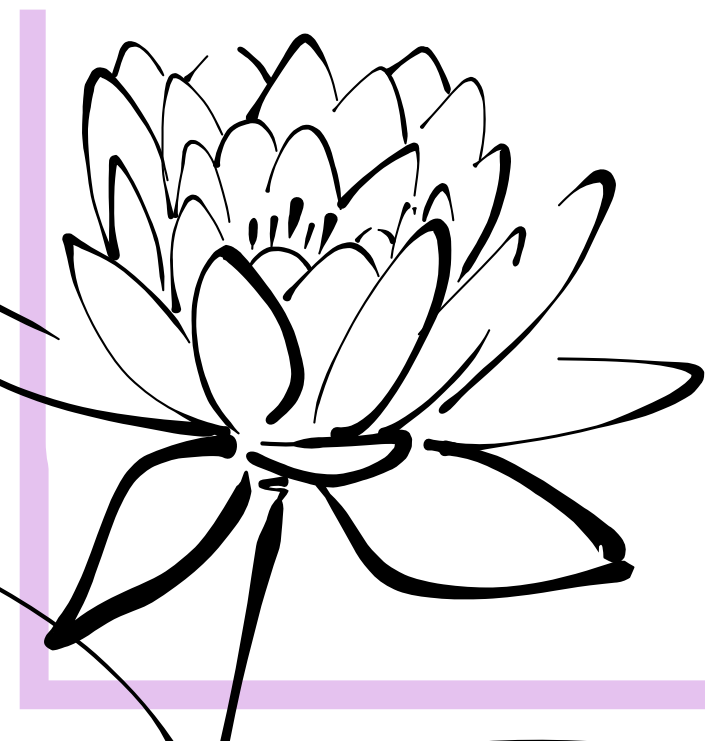
Please, prepare a chair, and bring the smelling salts and the fan. You'll need them, trust me on this.

There is a wedding after all. A magnificent, exquisite, tell-tale wedding. It is just not between whom you thought.

Turns out, that the tale as old as time came to life once again, the enemies became lovers and we became spectators of Jiang Wanyin and Lan Xichen's wedding. Who would have thought that Lan Xichen's distress during his brother's almost wedding wasn't because of a lack of approval of his future brother-in-law, but rather because of too much approval?

What a time to be alive, my lovely readers. What a way to end the season.

Yours truly,
Lady Fannington





By: Sigma.

XICheng
Zine

XiCheng's Maze

Help Jiang Cheng locate his Happily Ever After!

aka Lian Xichen



Tatiana / @auberginesvrn

XiCheng
Zine



We're Dating.

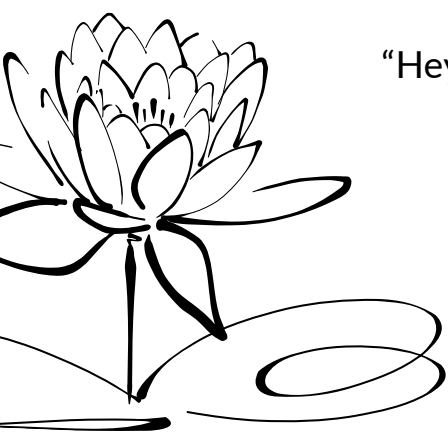
By: Sarai.

It had been a while since Lan Xichen had been on a date, well an official date. Not that he was complaining, it just struck him as odd when he took the time to think about it. Now when he went out to dinner or lunch he was always with Jiang Cheng, his roommate. What seemed even more odd to him was the fact that no one bothered to ask him about the change. No one asked him about Jiang Cheng joining him everywhere. Not his shifu, not his brother, no one at work. It was starting to concern him that no one cared about his lack of a dating life.

Before Jiang Cheng moved in they would constantly ask him when he was going to settle down like his younger brother, Lan Zhan, if he was going to have a wedding or if he thought about children like Wei Ying and Lan Zhan. Wei Ying was usually, the one that initiated the questions, always the inquisitive partner to his silent brother. Yet even he remained silent and no longer inquired who Lan Xichen was dating, and no longer bothered with wedding questions, or pressuring him with the children's talk.

He was starting to get concerned and worried that his family had given up on him. Did they no longer think he was interested in dating or worth asking about?

"A-Cheng?" He turned to see the other man gnawing on his bottom lip as he scrolled through something on his phone. Jiang Chen's feet were tucked up underneath his thighs, a purple blanket draped over their legs. It was a typical evening at their home and Lan Xichen felt himself relax a little while he waited for Jian Chen's response. When he didn't hear anything he tried again, "A-Cheng." A soft hum was the response.



"Hey," he tugged softly at Jiang Cheng's sleeve. "I need your help for a second." Immediately Jiang Cheng put his phone away and looked at him eyes wide waiting. "What's wrong Ge?"

"Nothing is wrong per say, I was just thinking that none of our relatives have asked about us recently." He tried not to smile at Jiang Cheng's frown, a sign he was thinking deeply about it. Lan Xichen bit the inside of his cheek to keep from smiling as the other shook his head suddenly. "Yes, they did at the family dinner just last night. They asked how we were doing, they asked about your project. My mom and shufu asked about our garden and then gave us whatever that monstrosity is?" Turning they looked at the statue that Madam Yu had given them for their place. "I'm still not certain where she wants us to put it let alone what it is."

"Can we put it in storage and bring it out when she comes to visit?" Jiang Cheng shook his head, "no you know she likes to just randomly pop by for visits or to bring us lunch since we work from home now. It's too big of a risk. And I'm not willing to risk it." Lan Xichen sighed.

"Well, fine, we can figure out a corner for it to go in. But, I meant more like our relationship." He stopped when Jiang Cheng blushed and started stuttering about dating, "and you know how uncomfortable it made me so mom agreed to not ask."

"I'm sorry A-Cheng I didn't mean to upset you." He squeezed his ankle. "I'm going to make some tea. Do you want me to bring you some?" At Jiang Cheng's nod he smiled. Getting up he brushed the hair off Jiang Cheng's forehead before heading into the kitchen to make two cups. Jiang Cheng preferred milk with honey in his tea while Lan Xichen just liked it plain. Settling back in he turned on the TV, "there's a new show out with your favorite actor do you want to start it with me?" It took a few minutes of repositioning, with Jiang Cheng snuggling up next to him and straightening out the blanket before they fell into a comfortable silence as the show played.

Looking around their shared apartment Lan Xichen couldn't help but wonder if maybe their parents misunderstood their roommate status. Later that night while Jiang Cheng was in the shower he called his brother. "Lan Zhan, how come you never ask me about my dating life?"

"I didn't know I was supposed to?"

"Well, you're not but you don't ask me if I've been on any dates recently or if I've met anyone, or when I am going to settle down. How come?"

"I assumed you had." He stared at his phone for a moment, blinking slowly, "assumed I had what Lan Zhan?"

XiCheng
Zine

“Settled down.”

“With who?”

“Jiang Cheng.” Before he could respond Lan Zhan was talking to Wei Wuxian and the next thing he knew the other was on the phone. “Now listen here Gege you and Jiang Cheng are adorable together. There is absolutely no reason for you to be seeking out other people behind my didi’s back.”

“I’m not, I didn’t, we’re not dating!” Wei Wuxian’s laughter caused him to jerk the phone away. “Of course you’re not. You grocery shop together weekly on the same day, pick up each other’s favorite items when out. Go for daily walks in the park for a break from work. Get breakfast out every Sunday together, come to family dinner every Friday night together, buy flowers for each other. Cook dinner together, watch TV together, text each other when apart constantly. Oh and let us not forget the most important item: you sleep in the same bed every night.”

“That’s because we live together as roommates and we had to use his room for an office when we both started working from home.”

“Right,” before he could respond further Lan Xichen heard Jiang Cheng clearing his throat. Turning he saw him standing in a towel by the door. “I think we should probably talk about your earlier question, Lan Xichen. I may have misunderstood what you were asking.”

“Oh, that doesn’t sound good, he only uses your full name when he is upset. If you hurt him it won’t matter that you’re the love of my brother’s life I will kill you.” Lowering the phone he ended the call as he swallowed hard. Lowering himself down to sit on the edge of the bed.

“I’m not upset with you Lan Xichen, I just want to clear up some things. And I think that maybe we might not be on the same page.”

“Okay.”

“I was under the impression when you asked me to sleep in here that maybe you wanted to move our relationship from roommate and friend status to something else.”

XiCheng
Zine

“Something else?” Jiang Cheng sighed and looked away. “I should put pants on for this conversation. Yes, something else like a deeper relationship, like dating.” He blinked at him, “like a boyfriend relationship.”

“Oh,” It was Lan Xichen’s turn to blink slowly. “Oh, oh my God we’re dating!”

“Well apparently not.”

“Wait, no. I’m not opposed to that. I just didn’t know you wanted that.” They stared at each other, “don’t roll your eyes at me how was, I supposed to know you wanted that. You never said that was part of the deal!”

“I sleep with you every night.”

“So, Lan Zhan did too until he was ten.”

“Please, tell me you did not just compare me to your younger brother.” Lan Xichen blinked a few times and shook his head. “Bad example. But you never kissed me.”

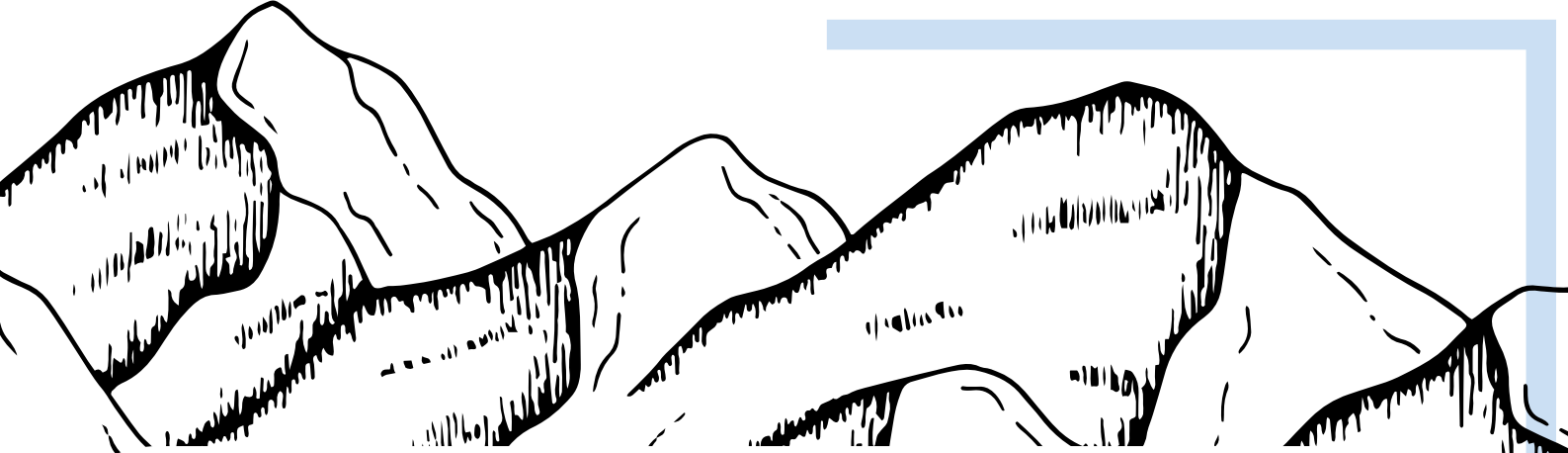
“Why would I do that when you didn’t kiss me?” Raising his hands up, Lan Xichen took a deep breath and shut his eyes. “Okay wait let’s take it a step back. So, you thought when I asked you to give up your bedroom for a shared office space it was my very unromantic way of asking you to be my boyfriend?” Jiang Cheng shrugged, “Well, I just thought that you couldn’t figure out how to say it.”

“So, us shopping together suddenly, cooking and going everywhere was your attempt at showing me that we were dating.” He nodded, “and I held your hand. Plus my mother bought us a statue.”

“A weird one that neither of us know what it is.”

“Still, that means she knew we were dating and your Shufu gave us plants.”

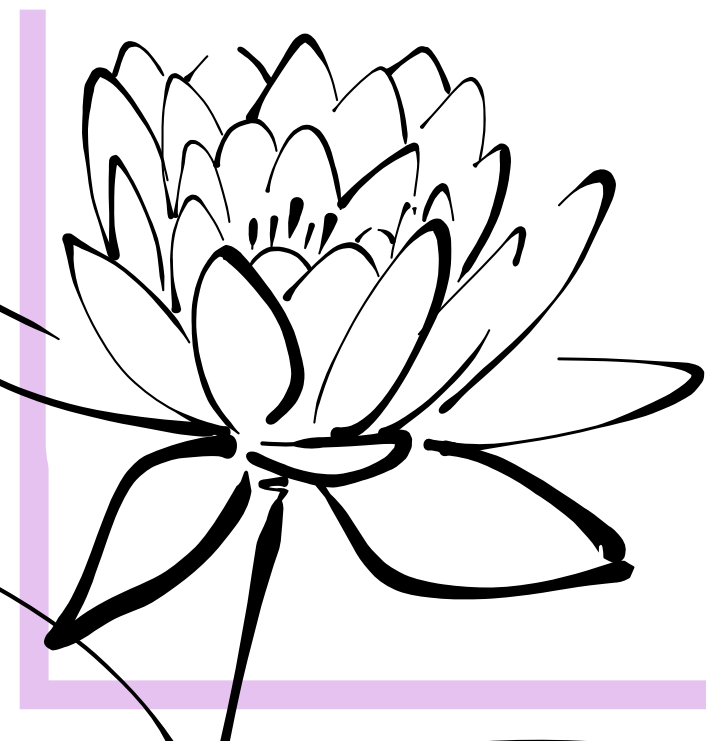
“Okay, that’s fair.” He rose slowly and took a step forward, “so you mean to tell me this whole time I could have been doing more than holding your hand and cuddling you?” Lan Xichen watched as Jiang Cheng swallowed hard before nodding slowly, his eyes never leaving his lips. “I could have kissed you?”



Brown eyes darted up, “yes.” Leaning in he whispered against the other’s lips, “could’ve been doing more than kissing?” The whimper the other let out let him know that they had wasted a lot of time.

“Well I guess now would be the time for us to rectify that.” Pulling Jiang Cheng in he pressed their lips together, sighing as he relaxed into the kiss. They moved together softly learning the shape, taste and feel of each other as if they had all the time in the world. Pulling back Jiang Cheng leaned his forehead against his panting. When he opened his eyes he saw the other smiling, “finally.”

Lian Xichen had to agree.





By: Felix.

XICheng
Zine



Preserved Roses.

By: Blushin.

Warning: Major Character Death

The odor of humidity caused by the rain and the long ago burned sandalwood incense permeates through the room. Clouded moonlight shines through the opened wall and chilly air grazes his skin, creating goosebumps in its wake.

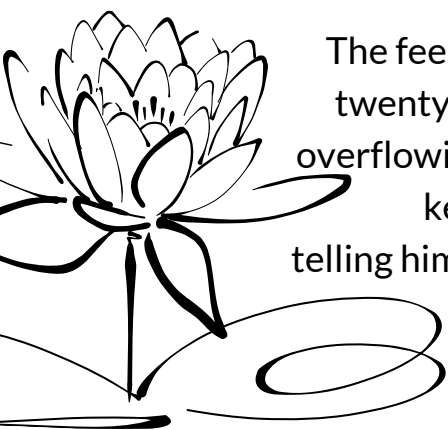
The paleness of the moonlight reflects his dry, sickly white skin. The faintly red glow from the incense reflects his red rimmed eyes.

"Jiujiu, please stop secluding yourself in his room, you haven't gone out or eaten in days, everyone is so worried... Including me." He can still hear Jin Ling's begging voice, almost strained with unshed tears. Yet nothing could get to him, it sounded like a distant whisper, gone the next instant, when it had in fact been just next to him. Nothing could go through that buzzing noise in his mind, screeching at him so loudly and for so long that he was actually getting used to it.

Because Jiang Cheng hated, he hated and he hated oh so much. It was the thing that had kept him going for this long, shaping him entirely.

But he also loves, he loves oh so dearly and oh so painfully that it's the only thing keeping him from breaking altogether.

Still, he can't move. Hasn't been able to for the past twenty-four hours. The calves that have been supporting his whole weight feel numb, painful, and shaky, but it is nothing compared to the agony of his heart.



The feeling is so familiar, a deep wound he has been carrying for the past twenty years or so, and yet so different, so new. A fresh stab oozing with overflowing blood cutting through his heart and every inch of his body. He keeps smelling the sandalwood incense, hanging to it like a lifeline, telling himself that there was no way it could be over. It smells just like him

after all.

Alas, the comforting and soothing presence linked to this very room isn't here anymore. Only the ghost of a silhouette Jiang Cheng could still see when he was struggling between sleep and awakeness. Sleep is his biggest enemy, the refuge of all his inner demons and fears. He refuses to close his eyes, even if his body is begging him to get some rest. He would not. He didn't deserve any. He was tired of having the same recurring nightmares the moment he drifted asleep.

Instead, he remembered those words now embedded forever in his mind.

"Wanyin, my love, look at you, you are working way too hard. Come here and get some rest, alright? How about we meditate for a bit together, to calm your mind."

"I didn't know you could sing that well, Wanyin. Your voice is lovely. Why did you hide this talent from me?"

"I know getting married is going to be more complicated since we are both sect leaders, but can I dare hope? Let's become husbands one day, promise me."

"I love you, Jiang Cheng..."

At the fond memories, the loving voice he knows too well wrapping his body in a bittersweet warmth, Jiang Cheng can't stop the muffled, broken sound of a sob escaping his lips. His throat is dry, thirsty, and it hurts. But this kind of hurt is way more manageable than the excruciating pain of grief he has been living with ever since he can remember. However, this time it had increased tenfold.

Jiang Cheng hates the world with deep, fiery wrath, but he hates himself even more. The same, solemn voices ring in his mind, like a broken tune. He just wants to snap at them to leave him alone, but he can't. He can't get them out of his head.

"Zewu-Jun has died after two years of seclusion. Nothing could improve his physical condition. May he rest in peace."

What can he do to make them leave? Does he really have to rip out his brain to let it end? He knows already for fuck's sake!

Jiang Cheng knows that Lan Xichen would never want him to grieve his death the way he is doing right now: pathetic, dirty, eyes red from tears, throat dry from screaming and Zidian glittering in the darkness from anguish. He knows he would have wished for Jiang Cheng to be happy and to keep going, to smile when he remembers him instead of breaking. But he can't, he just can't when the only person he has ever loved with his whole heart, body and mind has left and there was nothing he could have done to prevent it!

He can still feel the last kiss they shared on his lips, warm but also desperate. He can still feel the lingering, burning touches against his skin the last time they entangled together. In those kinds of moments, nothing could get through that deep happiness he felt. Not the vivid memories of his home burning down, memories of betrayal and endless death all around him. At that time, he felt desperately alive.

But now, his soul went along with his lover. Like when his golden core had been ripped out of him. The difference is that now, absolutely nothing could give him back his beating heart and soul. There is only numbness remaining.

It isn't the same as when Wei Wuxian died. He knows he can't do like Lan Wangji did, desperately hoping for his beloved to come back for over ten years, wishing for his soul to come back. Jiang Cheng doesn't need any proof to know it.

At that, Jiang Cheng lets a pained groan mixed with hatred. He can't bear to look or even think of them. How can they get their happy ending when Jiang Cheng can't even get his?

The truth is, when Jiang Cheng starts to love, he loves to oblivion. Pure, endless. And it's self-destructive when that object of his love leaves.

He wishes he could just join him in the next life this instant, but he can't. He is still tied to this earth. Like every time he has lost someone he holds dear.

The tears crash on the wooden floor, and Jiang Cheng clutches the piece of cloth in his hands, the silk soft against his calloused fingers. A memory starts to play in his mind, at a time where he was still hopeful that everything would end well.

Despite the tiredness written all over his face, Lan Xichen's ethereal smile decorates his lips. It looks even a bit bashful, and at that, Jiang Cheng's heart seems to pick up speed. His lover's black silky hair pools around his face, making his beautiful, light brown eyes shine even more. Even after all those years, Jiang Cheng still can't believe he has the right to say that this man in front of him was his, and his only.

Lan Xichen seems to have taken some time to find the right words. When Jiang Cheng stares some more, he realizes that this smile also hides some melancholy to it. "Wanyin I... I've been wanting to give this to you for a long time now, and I think this is the right moment."

Before Jiang Cheng can process it, he sees Lan Xichen raising his arms behind his head and tug at the pristine white ribbon always sitting on his forehead. Jiang Cheng's heart jumps in direct understanding, and in a swift motion, reaches for Lan Xichen's arm in panic, face red. He wasn't a fool, he knew the meaning of it.

"Wait, Lan Huan, you can't just think of-"

The look Lan Xichen gives back is so sincere and loving it freezes Jiang Cheng mid-sentence. This gaze was given to him only. The knot is undone and the ribbon falls into his hands. Jiang Cheng stares at it like it's the most wonderful thing he has ever seen and he gulps. "Darling, I've never been this sure in my life before. Please accept it." Lan Xichen's hands reach forward.

So many words are unspoken, but Jiang Cheng knows. This ribbon speaks for itself. He has to accept and he will. Nothing could compare to this. With shaking arms he receives the immaculate ribbon, an undying proof of love, and brings it to his chest, against his thundering heart, then looks back at Lan Xichen who is staring at him like he's the only thing that ever mattered.

Through glossy eyes, Jiang Cheng smiles, uttering a broken 'thank you' and falls in Lan Xichen's arms, kissing him as if to pour all of his feelings for him into that feverish action. The ribbon lays between their touching chests.

Devotion. Hope. Happiness. Love.

Such things don't exist anymore because Lan Xichen isn't here. Clutching the ribbon into his hands with brute force, Jiang Cheng stops himself from screaming in despair and destroying the whole room. He thinks he was already past the time for that, but he knows time isn't enough to heal his wounds anymore.

His life has been broken from the start and nothing could be repaired. His few years of happiness was the only peace he could have had. He should have known that Lan Xichen's sworn brothers meant so much more to him than he had thought.

He should have known.

This ribbon is the only token of love left by the man that has meant the world to him. Unable to support himself further, Jiang Cheng falls on the side, curling himself into a ball, the force of his balled fists drawing blood from his palms, the sound of his hiccups and sobs the only noise filling the room.

He doesn't know how he will get through that. He is lost, and he already feels dead. He thinks about Lan Xichen's pale face and dark bags, his pained breaths and his waist that grew thinner by the day- and he should have known.

Jiang Cheng hates himself.

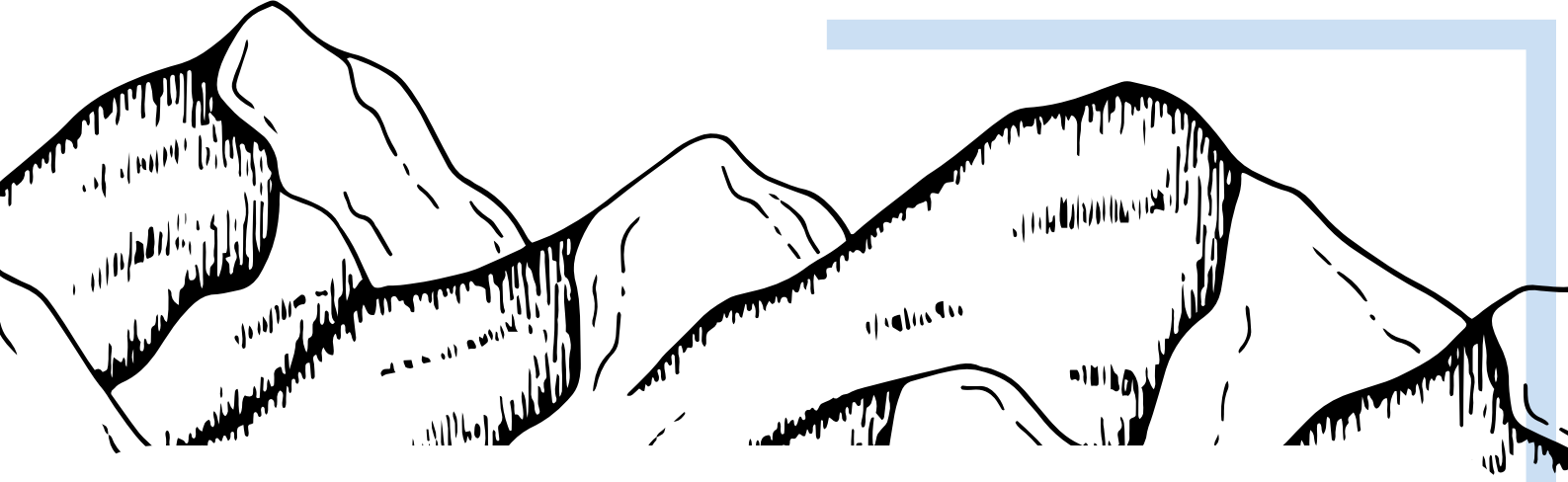
He hates, and he hates. And blames the world. And blames himself.

This love is gone. Forever, and will never come back. He doesn't know what will keep him alive. He closes his eyes, tiredness taking over like a numbing blanket, kissing the ribbon against his red, chapped lips. He can hear a distant voice; it's probably Jin Ling crashing in his room, the only other person who could help him from getting out of here. He still needs to see him grow.

He made promises, but he doesn't know if he's capable of keeping them.

Yet, he can hear Lan Xichen's soft voice against his ear, faint and ephemeral. *"Wanyin, live for me. Please do that for me, let me become your strength."*

He can feel another, smaller body hugging him, but there's only darkness. He cannot hear, cannot see anything anymore.



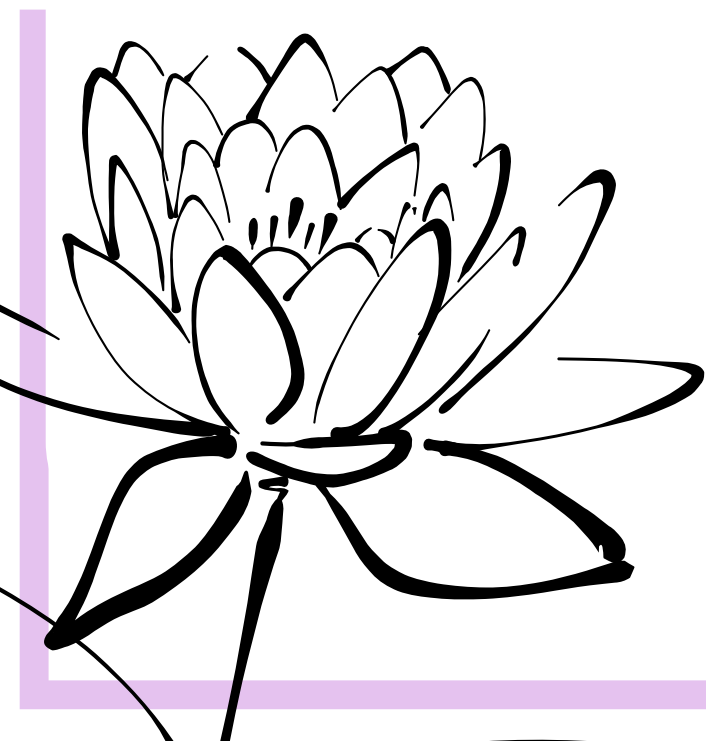
Jiang Cheng can't promise this time, but he will try. Lan Xichen always believes- believed in him.

More than anything, he can't let his beloved down.

His voice is pitiful, strained with sadness and agony. Please, wait for me, I'll join you, but not now. I still need to hang on... I still need to...

This is so hard, way harder than the last times, this grief more painful than a thousand swords struck at him, but he will try for him. He had given his ribbon for this, after all.

He will try for him, with Jin Ling by his side.

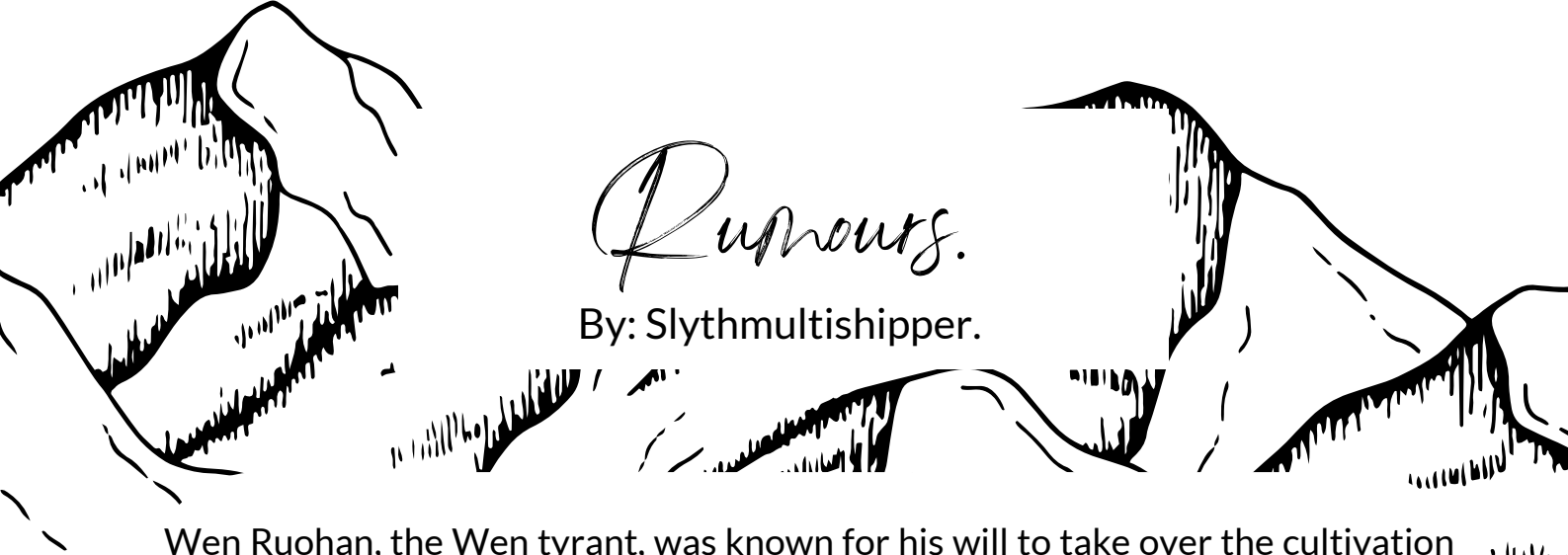






By: agushtthere.

XICheng
Zine



Rumours.

By: Slythmultishipper.

Wen Ruohan, the Wen tyrant, was known for his will to take over the cultivation world. His plans were, however, crushed when one time his powers backlashed leaving him severely injured. After that, everything anyone knows is rumoured.

Some believe that Wen Ruohan died, others believe he has only taken a step back to recover and he will come back again. But none can be sure. Except for his supporters.

You see, during his reign of power, many families joined Wen Ruohan. His strength increased due to these families. The Jins supplied him with money, the Yaos provided him with insider secrets and like that, all the families were helping him one way or another.

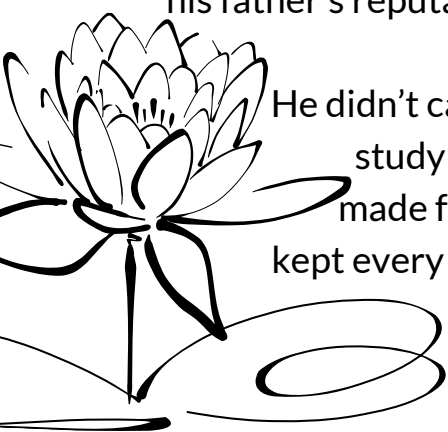
The Lans and the Nies were the only families that were believed to be on the good side.

There were some families whose involvements weren't certain. Some believed they were good, some believed they were not, and some couldn't even conclude. One such debatable family was the Jiangs.

There were countless rumours around their family and after a while, Jiang Cheng stopped caring.

The rumours were never confirmed and his parents said they were a ploy to ruin his father's reputation so he behaved like a good son and stopped questioning.

He didn't care much about his reputation. Even when he moved to Gusu to study and some students were difficult, Jiang Cheng didn't budge. He made friends with Nie Huaisang and Lan Wangji, surprisingly, and they kept every ill-intended student away. He was very grateful and his life was



going fairly normal until he realises he has developed feelings for his friend's brother. Lan Xichen.

Lan Xichen was the epitome of perfectness. Initially, he hated Jiang Cheng. As much as he tried not to be obvious, Jiang Cheng could see right through him. It made him a bit more conscious but then Lan Xichen's feelings changed somehow (It was probably Wangji, he thought) and he started spending a lot more time with Jiang Cheng. Jiang Cheng has never gotten such specific attention to him. His two friends are too busy eating each other up with their eyes to give him that affection.

And his heart fell for the first sight of affection.

He didn't like it. Not even one bit. Even avoided Lan Xichen for many days. But it all came to an end when Lan Xichen confronted him head-on and Jiang Cheng had no other choice but to confess. He was leaving for Yunmeng soon so it wouldn't matter if he got rejected. His thoughts are proven wrong when Lan Xichen tells him he reciprocates his feelings and puts forth a proposal to court.

It's been many months since they started courting.

Jiang Cheng has gone back to Yunmeng but they still exchange letters.

Their relationship was going good until one day when his father called him to his chamber.

"A-cheng, you must've studied about the war 20 years ago. There you would be known someone called Wen Ruohan. Well, he will be living with us now." his father tells him. Jiang Cheng is stunned for a while but just as he's about to protest a bright light emerges out of his father's closet and out comes a big muscular man in red with a big smirk.

"I'm back!"

The rumours about Jiangs being on Wen Ruohan's side were true but the reason they were never caught was that they were back up for Wen Ruohan. A family that will harbour him when something were to happen to him.

XiCheng
Zine

Jiang Cheng doesn't say much as his father and the man, who is Wen Ruohan himself, tell him to keep this a secret and how they were planning on starting another war to take over the cultivation world. Jiang Cheng could not process much and just heard them but then a bucket of cold water fell on him when he hears "We must target Lan Qiren's nephews! Starting with the oldest one."

He never got to write a letter to Lan Xichen about it when the war started and the rumours about Jiangs amplified.

His sister was sent to the Jins to be in a secret place to keep her safe and he was left alone.

He used to get letters from Lan Xichen but he couldn't write anything back without his father checking.

With a great struggle, he was able to pass a letter past his father, to Lan Xichen, to meet him in person and that he will explain himself then.

He is very happy about it until he reaches the meeting with Wen Ruohan and his followers.

"Why is everyone looking so happy?" Jiang Cheng whispers to his father after he sits down and notices everyone's happy faces.

"We have good news!" Jiang Fengmian whispers back.

"A good news?" Jiang Cheng questions.

"Yao Chen found out that Lan Xichen has been courting someone for many days and he is head over heels! If we're able to get our hands on them, we'll easily be able to capture him!"

Jiang Cheng freezes in his place. His father doesn't realise as he continues with the discussion.

"It's not a Lan or a Nie."

"Nor someone from a small sect."

"I highly doubt it's a Jin."

"Why?"

"Well, you know your sect leader and things..."

"So a Jiang?"

Jiang Cheng tenses.

"Probably."

Everyone turns to look at the Jiang family as Jiang Fengmian just nods and says "I will try to find them."

Everyone smiles and nods in agreement as they change the topic and discuss how to fight. Jiang Cheng doesn't say anything during everything, pretty shaken up. He has to do something about it.

'If I am unable to reach on time, I will come 7 days after that.'

Lan Xichen reads that part of the letter, again and again, reassuring himself that Jiang Cheng will turn up this time. When Jiang Cheng didn't turn up the first time they agreed to meet, Lan Xichen's worries amplified.

He was as it is worrying when Jiang Cheng stopped answering his letters after the war started, now when he didn't show up when he promised, he was even more worried.

The rumours about the Jiangs harbouring Wen Ruohan were not helping either. He doesn't want his heart to be anywhere near that man. God only knows what Wen Ruohan is capable of.

After fidgeting for over 4 hours, as the sun had slowly started setting, the door to the shed they were meeting in creaked open. He looked up and a bright smile adorned his face as he saw Jiang Cheng entering and removing the black cloak he was wearing.

XiCheng
Zine

"A-cheng!" he shouts excitedly and he immediately hugs Jiang Cheng. Jiang Cheng is a bit shocked but hugs back nonetheless. "You're here."

Jiang Cheng smiles and buries his face in the crook of Lan Xichen's face as he mumbles "Yes I am."

That would've made Lan Xichen happy if it didn't sound like Jiang Cheng is about to cry. He tries to pull Jiang Cheng away to see his face but Jiang Cheng holds on even more tightly. "My heart, what happened?"

Jiang Cheng shakes his head no, his head still buried in the crook of Lan Xichen's neck. After a bit of struggle, he can pull Jiang Cheng away to see Jiang Cheng's eyes red with unshed tears and heavy eye bags under his eyes indicating he hasn't been sleeping well.

"My heart, are you alri-" Lan Xichen's face morphs into a heavily concerned one and he is about to ask loads of questions when Jiang Cheng closes his eyes and their lips meet.

It isn't a heavy kiss like the one they shared that one night at Gusu, it isn't messy like their first kiss, and it is a sweet and tender kiss. A touch of lips in which he feels like Jiang Cheng is pouring his whole feelings. Jiang Cheng pulls away and with a sad smile he says "I love you, and I always will."

Lan Xichen feels like something is wrong but cups Jiang Cheng's face as he answers. "I love you to my heart, but please tell me, what's wrong?"

Jiang Cheng takes in a shaky breath as he keeps his hand on Lan Xichen's chest. Lan Xichen doesn't notice but Jiang Cheng is channelling some qi into Lan Xichen. "It's nothing, just always remember-" Jiang Cheng pauses for a second to look at Lan Xichen's face which has a non-convinced expression and he smiles reassuringly as he continues. "I will always love you." before Lan Xichen can say anything, Jiang Cheng closes his eyes and mutters "Bhulmatsye."

Sun shines brightly as a ray falls on Lan Xichen's face. Lan Xichen opens his face blinking multiple times to adjust to the light as he rubs his eyes and looks around.

XiCheng
Zine

He is in a shed.

He doesn't remember how he got there but he has a Qiankun pouch in his hand. He opens it with caution to see multiple documents about what Wen Ruohan is playing. Loads of information on how Wen Ruohan is planning to attack.

Lan Xichen immediately gathers it all and takes it to his uncle. He doesn't care to remember how he got there or who gave him these.

'Bhulmatsye; a spell used to make someone forget certain memories.'

Jiang Cheng stares at the script as he remembers all the sleepless nights he spent looking for something to help Lan Xichen by not being used as a decoy and how he used it on Nie Huaisang and Lan Wangji as well.

He knows if he had simply ended it then he would've seen a stubborn and heartbroken Lan Xichen and there was no way Lan Xichen could focus on the war like that.

Maybe somewhere he regrets it. But seeing how the good side of the war was flourishing and how Wen Ruohan's followers dropped the topic of Lan Xichen's beloved, he thinks he can just deal with it.

Swords at ready. Qi spiralling around. Every eye on them. The battle between Wen Ruohan and Lan Xichen begins.

Many people try to intervene but the power surrounding them is too strong.

Everyone holds their breaths as their Qi bursts into a bright light that blinds everyone for a few moments. Everyone opens their eyes after a while to see both Wen Ruohan and Lan Xichen unconscious on the floor, heavily injured.

Everyone rushes to their respective side.

Lan Qiren immediately channels qi through Lan Xichen and Jiang Fengmian does the same to Wen Ruohan. Jiang Cheng is standing stunned looking at Lan Xichen and silently begging Lan Xichen to wake up.

He can't go to his side, even if he wants to. He closes his eyes tight and mutters all the healing spells he could remember from the book. Just as he was about to give up, Lan Xichen takes in a sharp breath and opens his eyes.

He is immediately rushed to the healer's chamber while Wen Ruohan is pronounced dead. Jiang Cheng tries to follow Lan Xichen to see if he's alright but the cold eyes of everyone on the good side remind him that he is their enemy. Even if he didn't hurt anyone and tried to help whenever he could, they didn't know that. He worked for Wen Ruohan, he will always be associated with that. Jiang Cheng stares at the ground with unshed tears when he feels someone put a hand on his shoulder. He jumps up in surprise and looks up to see his father.

"You can meet him after everything settles down," he says with a reassuring smile. Jiang Cheng's eyes widen as he tries to stutter out something to tell him it is not like that when Jiang Fengmian just pats his back and says "You weren't exactly slick with the meeting letter."

Jiang Fengmian guides him away from the battleground as Jiang Cheng was too stunned to move or speak.

Jiang Fengmian remembers how he was the one who had found that book in his youth and how he was the one who slipped it to his son when he realised who Lan Xichen's beloved could be and he saw Jiang Cheng trying to avoid being a decoy. He didn't want the same for his son so he slipped him the book. After all-

Jiang Fengmian looked at Lan Qiren who is running to the healer's chamber to see his nephew.

-it helped him when Lan Qiren's beloved was going to be used as a decoy in the first war. And the qi he was channelling in Wen Ruohan was his demise. Wen Ruohan could've been saved but Jiang Fengmian didn't allow that. He couldn't find the courage to end Wen Ruohan when he was with them but seeing how it was causing his son and his beloved a lot of trouble, he decided he had to do something about it.

He moves to the secret place where Jiang Yanli was with his family and sect members. Yu Ziyuan pats his back comfortingly when they get the news of how Lan Qiren wants the Jiangs immediately.

Yu Ziyuan had someone else she loved. Her name was Li Fangzui. She was a rogue cultivator. She had come to stay in Yunmeng for a few days but her stay was extended when she also fell for Yu Ziyuan. They wanted to get married but the Yues were against it. And when they both had planned to run away, Li Fangzui disappeared.

After their marriage, Jiang Fengmian was somehow able to break through the hard shell and they became each other's comforts. After all, they had to have kids.

They were eventually found and everyone readied themselves for punishment but they are shocked when only Jiang Fengmian, Jiang Cheng and Yu Ziyuan are brought out. They reassure Jiang Yanli that they will be fine and they were taken to Gusu.

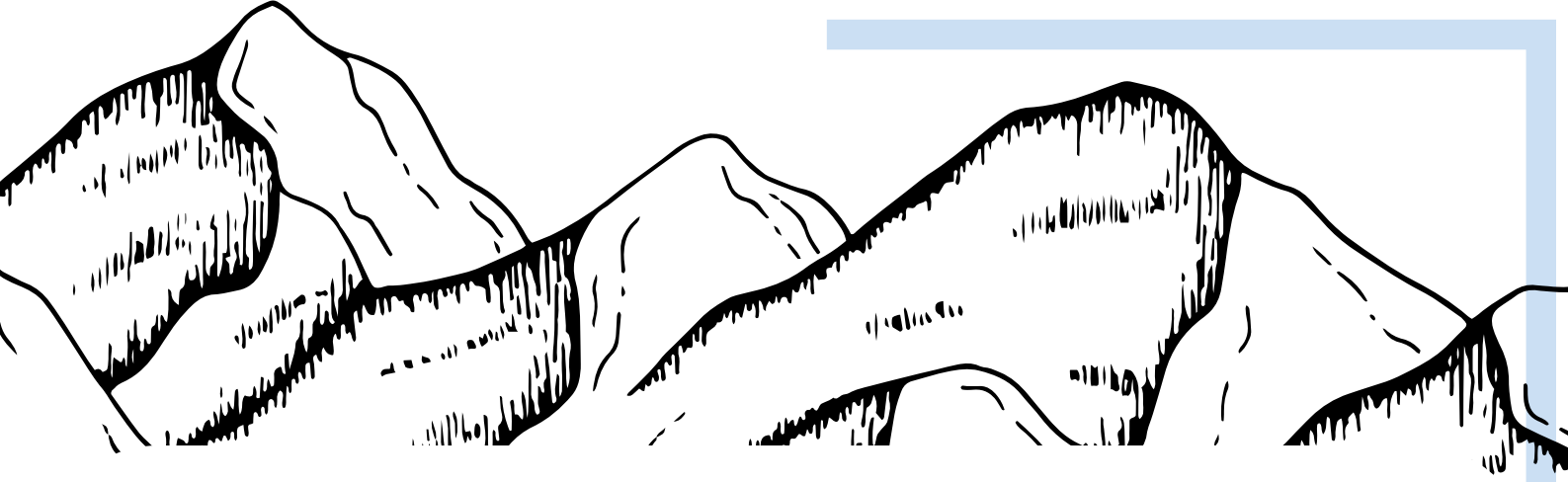
They are in three separate rooms. All three rooms contain certain Lans.

"My heart."

"You idiot."

"A-yuan."

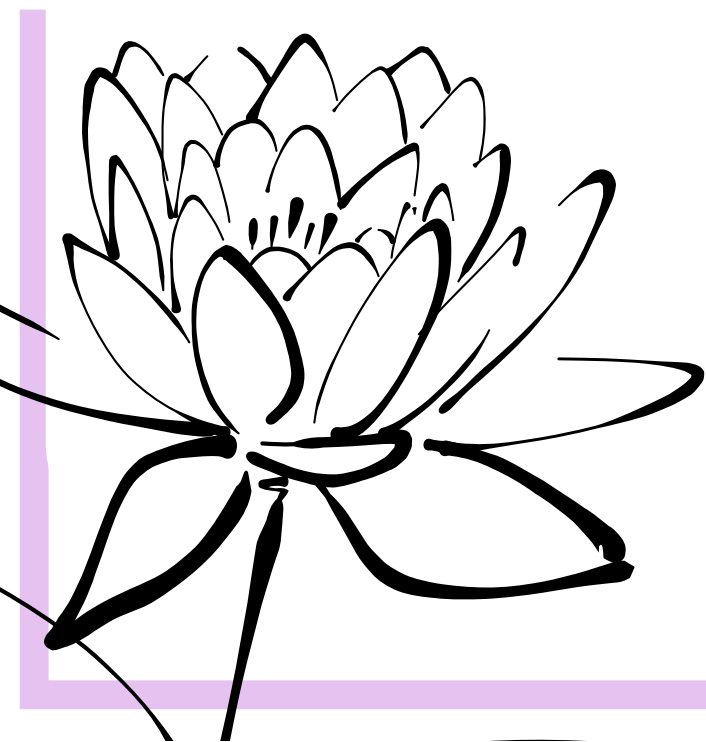
All three get the shock of their lifetime.



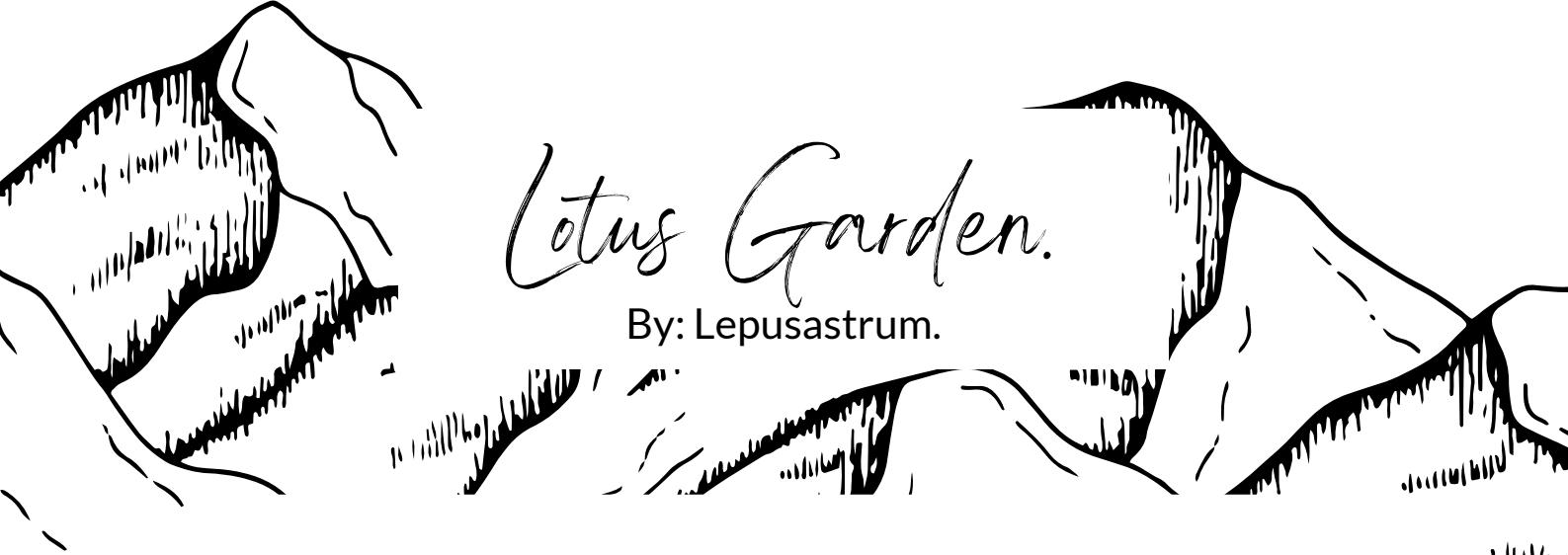
In the book, there were a few ways in which the person can remember the forgotten memories.

1. If the caster dies.
2. If the person the spell is casted on, dies and comes back to life.
3. Someone uses a certain healing spell around them.

In his panic to save Lan Xichen, Jiang Cheng mutters that spell that affects Lan Qiren as well, Lan Xichen died and came back and Madam Lan's fake death was a way for Lans to remove the black spot among them and her real name is Li Fangzui.







Lotus Garden.

By: Lepusastrum.

Since Jiang Cheng lost his golden core, he separated himself from the world of cultivation. He felt there wasn't any meaning of his life anymore. He became powerless, he lost everyone and everything. Even the will to live. Wei WuXian and Wen Qing tried their best to give it back to him or get a new one, anything that could solve this - but they didn't find anything. Then the war got nastier and nastier, Wei WuXian and Wen Qing had to fear for their lives and had to hide. Then was the point, when Jiang Cheng decided to leave. He - useless - didn't want to be a burden, so he asked them to think about him as he had died. Tell the cultivation world he died and forget about him. Wei WuXian had to accept his will. Jiang Cheng left his previous life behind.

He settled down in a small town, far from the war and far from Yunmeng, near a river - named Whist - and with years of hard work he owned a teahouse. It was a quite big building with many windows and they made the rooms light and sunny; tired wanderers could take a rest here, have a refreshing tea or a light meal. Around the teahouse there were a lot of lotus, Jiang Cheng took a lot of effort to grow them. He couldn't help himself, he was fond of those flowers. He named the teahouse Lotus Garden.

On that day the sun is shining brightly and all of the Spring flowers want to show their colourful beauty. The pale blue sky is ornamented with veil-like, thin clouds. The dawns are still chilly a little, but the Spring has already started easing the Winter.



Lan XiChen bypasses the area because of a night-hunt. It's far from Gusu, but he followed the trail of the creature. The night before he managed to slaughter it and the world became a more peaceful place. He's heading back to Gusu when he notices the lovely teahouse - Lotus Garden - in the small town. He decides to have a rest there and go in.

He sits to a table next to the window. He could see the lovely garden from there. There is a magnolia tree leaning above the other flowers and there are lotus near the building. He smiles wryly as the lotus reminds him of a great cultivator, someone who was special to him, someone he... He looks up at the person who serves his jasmine tea.

Ebony hair partly tied in a bun, the rest covering broad shoulders, almond shaped, grey eyes, slight frown between the thin eyebrows, pale violet and grey robes, flawless skin. "Jiang WanYin," he whispers.

Jiang Cheng stills. He stares at the man. He's tall, beautiful, his features are perfect, his skin is pale, like he would be carved from the most perfect jade, his silky hair dark. His robes look radiant, silver, his sword resting next to him, leaned to the table.

"ZeWu-Jun," he says surprised, eyebrows raising. Lan XiChen is just staring at him, eyes wide. He's searching for words.

"I thought..." He lowers his gaze. He mourned this man. Losing him opened a bleeding, aching wound on his heart. It was painful and during the war he did hideous things out of revenge. The years passed and he tried to live with the loss, he told himself he would have a chance in their next life. "Wei WuXian said you..." he tries again, but he still couldn't say it out loud.

Jiang Cheng sighs. He puts the tea down on the table.

"I asked him to do that," he says softly. Lan XiChen finds himself eager. Eager to know more, eager to be initiated. He wants to grab Jiang Cheng's wrist to make him stay, but that would be desperate and impolite. His fingers curl into a fist around his outer robe instead to steady himself.

"Sit down, please," he asks him and he moves away to make room for the other. Jiang Cheng looks around and since it is a slow day, he could afford himself to join Lan XiChen. Jiang Cheng sits down, places a cup in front of Lan XiChen then himself, and he's pouring tea. XiChen is watching him, how peaceful he looks, how beautiful he is. He wants to show Jiang Cheng he still respects him, he still thinks of him as someone equal. Someone he cares for.

Lan XiChen is not able to tear his eyes away from Jiang Cheng. He's afraid if he does so, the other will disappear and it turns out he's not real just an imagination from his dreams. Slowly he reaches out and his fingertips gently touch the back of Jiang Cheng's hand. His skin is warm. Alive.

Worn. He feels Jiang Cheng's eyes on himself and he looks up. He tilts his head, question in his almond shaped, grey, beautiful eyes. XiChen slowly moves his fingers, softly caressing Jiang Cheng's skin.

"I...", he tries. He feels so lost. He wants to say a lot of things, he wants to ask a lot of things, he wants to know... yet he cannot form the words. Jiang Cheng doesn't pull his hand away.

"I'm sorry, ZeWu-Jun," he says softly, eyes dropped. No, please, look at me. Look only at me. It's nearly a whisper full of guilt. Guilt, but not regret. Finally he lifts his eyes and XiChen can breathe again. He didn't notice he was holding his breath. "I asked Wei WuXian to tell everyone I died. I felt so useless, I hoped I could find the will to live again, but not for my sect. Without a golden core I'm not a cultivator anymore, I'm not part of the sect anymore. I was a nobody and I didn't want to be a bother for m-- the sect. I had to go away. It was hard. Bad and worse days followed each other. Then somehow I managed. Day by day, with small steps. And now I have this teahouse and I like it." He offered a soft, reassuring smile.

"Ten years, WanYin," XiChen whispers. "There was not a single day during ten years when I haven't mourned you."

He did things... awful, unspeakable things, he was covered in blood and ashes, tears drew warm lines into the dirt on his face as he was screaming and fighting like a beast. He didn't know he could feel such grief and pain, he didn't know WanYin meant this much to him. Then he got tired. Years passed and he started to go on night-hunts again to be useful for his sect. He doesn't blame Jiang Cheng for the things he had done. He doesn't want to tell him any of these. He wasn't that pure anymore, he got dirty - and he is afraid Jiang Cheng wouldn't like what he became, he couldn't forgive him. First in his life he felt shame.

Jiang Cheng's fingers - under XiChen's hand - curl into a fist as he is fighting with emotions.

"I'm sorry," he repeats. He can't look into XiChen's eyes. His lowered eyes notice something familiar on the sect leader's belt. A clarity bell. He looks up, curious eyes scanning Lan XiChen's features.

"The bell," he says. Asks.

"Sect Leader Jiang gave it to me. She said it was yours." It helped him to stay sane. Literally and figuratively.

Jiang Cheng feels more and more guilty. The feeling pushes his shoulders down, slight regret is pushing up on his throat. If only he had known.

"I'm--" XiChen's fingers curl around Jiang Cheng's.

"Don't say it again. It's no use living in the past. If you're looking at the past, you're showing your back to the future. I'm blessed I met you here."

Jiang Cheng offers a soft, thankful smile.

"Tell me about your everyday as we drink the tea," Lan XiChen asks. He's eager to hear everything. He wants to drink in the other's presence.

And Jiang Cheng tells him how much time it took to repair the building before he could open the teahouse, how he enjoyed the work with his bare hands, how it felt he built something, how he took care of the lotuses and the flowers, how he got the teapots and cups, how he picked the sitting pillows; and Lan XiChen listens. Listens to him like there wouldn't be more interesting stories in the world - and that time there really aren't. He falls in love again. He was relieved Jiang Cheng had found peace. He seems happy and content and there's nothing more XiChen could wish for.

Then the bitter realisation comes. It creeps up on his throat, making the tea sour. There is one thing he wants more: sharing all this with Jiang Cheng. Being part of his life.

They make tea 3 times, talk on a low tone. Then a young woman appears, a tray in her hands with snacks.

"Gongzi, I thought you and your... company must be hungry. Please accept these meals," she says on a soft tone, places the dishes then leaves. XiChen notices the fond smile in the corner of Jiang Cheng's lips.

"She's your wife?" he asks. His voice is not betraying him. But Jiang Cheng laughs. Softly, but real laugh.

"No, she--"

"Mei Ling, I told you not to bother WanYin!" They hear a scolding voice from another young lady.

"But I was curious, A-Qing! They were talking all day! They must be good friends, but didi has never told us about his past!"

"He has his own reasons."

"But!" A soft thump added.

"Not another word, MeiMei. Be a good girl and stop stalking."

"She has a wife," Jiang Cheng finishes. "Sorry, they are very noisy, but really kind. They help me a lot. I'm grateful for having them in my life." So Jiang Cheng found sisters.

"What about your... old family?"

Jiang Cheng goes silent. He doesn't answer immediately, he's thinking how to form his words.

"Wei WuXian is still looking for a solution to give my core back."

"Are you still in touch?"

Jiang Cheng is silent for a short again. "I asked him not to come here anymore." He looks up, raising his chin. "He reminds me of what I have lost, what I had once. It's painful. I finally found peace here and accepted my situation. I'm not a cultivator anymore, I have no business with their world. He stopped visiting as I requested, but for time to time he leaves... donations he thinks we're in need of.

He doesn't show up, but I know it was him.

We have everything, thank you."

XiCheng
Zine

Jiang Cheng still has his pride. That makes XiChen smile. He lifts his cup to his lips and takes a sip. Then he glances at the other.

“Do you not want me to come again?”

Jiang Cheng knows he should say no. He doesn't need to open an old, aching wound that just started to heal. But XiChen doesn't try to remind him of the past. He tries to reassure him. It feels nice.

“Do as it pleases you, ZeWu-Jun,” he answers finally. XiChen just nods. Soon he leaves since the night slowly crept on them and covered the town into her soft, dark robe. Lanterns' glowing light shows the way.

“You can stay,” Jiang Cheng says a little shyly. XiChen raises his eyebrows. The Lotus Garden doesn't have rooms to rent. “It's dark and in the middle of the night,” he explains himself. XiChen could just fly to Gusu on his sword. “So you can stay.”

“Thank you, WanYin.”

He says farewell in the morning, Jiang Cheng smiles at him and waves. His smile is bittersweet and it makes XiChen's heart ache.

As he turns he sees in the corner of his eyes the two lady sneaks closer to the Jiang Cheng, who is still standing in the door, arms crossed, leaning to the frame, simple, beautiful, soft gaze following XiChen. He stops in the shelter of a shadow nearby to listen to them. He knows it's not right. But he's too curious.

“Do you think, didi, he would visit again?” One of the young ladies asks.

“I don't think so.” Jiang Cheng's tone is soft, full of hope he's not right. XiChen's heart breaks - again.

And then he thinks he should leave this all behind. He should not bother Jiang WanYin. He should be grateful for the fate he could meet him, he could spend time with him, he could see he is doing good, he's healthy and content, but... It doesn't matter if he has a golden core or not. XiChen still loves him and he longs.

He's not strong enough. He's a weak man in love. So he visits. Firstly Wei WuXian and asks him about the research of the golden core. He offers his help and sources. He's willing to do everything that is needed. Not because he thinks Jiang Cheng is less without it, but because that would make him happy. And he wants Jiang Cheng to be happy. But they couldn't find anything.

He visits Jiang Cheng too. Not too often at first. Once in every two weeks. Then once a week. Then every other day. He's afraid of himself. He wants more and more, he can't be satisfied with the crumbs.

They talk, have tea, XiChen helps Jiang Cheng carry the goods he buys at the market, he paints, and sometimes plays music. Jiang Cheng is on his side, and it feels matching, perfect.

One day they are at the market looking for teas and brushes.

"Come here, gongzi," an old merchant calls XiChen, he even waves. "Take a look at my goods, please, gongzi. Buy something for your fiancée." And he glances at Jiang Cheng. Jiang Cheng looks away and his cheeks warm up. XiChen thinks he's cute.

XiChen smiles at the merchant softly. He opens his mouth to refuse the offer when he feels a pull as Jiang Cheng steps to him and grabs his arm. He presses his chest to his arm.

"Buy me plum, please," he asks.

"Buy him plum, gongzi," the old man repeats. XiChen rolls his eyes, he sighs, but he smiles.

"You really want plums?" he turns to Jiang Cheng. The young man tries to tame his smile and nods. XiChen buys him a basket of plums. He'd rather buy him silk, paper, tea, ink or brushes. But if Jiang Cheng wants plums, he gets plums.

They are in the garden, among the flowers Jiang Cheng grew, under the magnolia tree's shelter. Tea on the small table they are sitting by, next to it XiChen's easel - abandoned at the moment -, the basket on the ground. Jiang Cheng reaches to pick a fruit from it.

"Do you like plums?" XiChen asks
watching the other to tear the fruit in half.

XiCheng
Zine

“Actually yes,” Jiang Cheng answers and he throws a half into his mouth. XiChen is watching him eating it. He wants to taste the plum, but on Jiang Cheng’s sweet lips.

“Loquat?” He asks to distract himself.

Jiang Cheng remembers after they fought with the water ghosts and the waterborne abyss by Caiyi Town, Wei WuXian got a basket full of loquats and he shared it with him and Lan WangJi. Later he visited Lan XiChen and offered the half of his share. They spent a few hours together, eating loquat and talking. He felt special and he cherished the memory. He didn’t know XiChen felt the same way.

Jiang Cheng smiles. “I like that too.” He elbows on the table and drops his chin into his palm. His other hand is searching for another plum. His eyes on XiChen, he’s leaned close to him. “Do you want one?”

XiChen gulps. His eyes drop from Jiang Cheng’s eyes to his lips. He licks his own. He doesn’t answer.

He doesn’t dare to give any other gift beside that, the plums weren’t real gifts anyway. And how he wants to flood Jiang WanYin in everything, he wants to give him everything he lays his eyes on or names, but Jiang WanYin made it clear he feels humiliated by them. Until one day. He reached his limits and couldn’t stop himself.

They are having jasmine tea, the sunshine is warm. Jiang Cheng closes his eyes and with a faint smile he dips his face into the warm breeze. It makes his hair dance. XiChen places a small package wrapped in violet silk on the table and slides it to him. Jiang Cheng frowns slightly, he glances up at XiChen curiously, then opens the gift. It’s a comb. It’s made of peach tree, the Gusu Lan symbol is carved into its spine. Not an expensive piece, but a pretty one. His frown deepens and he tilts his head. He knows what it means. What could it mean. His cheeks become rosy and warm. XiChen finds him adorable.

“I should have told you eleven years ago in Gusu.” Lan XiChen starts. “As I grew, I remembered less and less about my mother. The memories faded, but a few details remained clear and glowing, like she had a gentle voice and soft touch, she had flower fragrance and soft smile. When I first saw you, Jiang WanYin, my mother’s gentle voice was echoing in my mind: find what you’d die for . And I knew. I just knew. I knew you are the one who makes me complete, my other half, to whom I belong.

XiCheng
Zine

And then live for it . Suddenly I understood the meaning. Yes, I will live to make you happy and do everything to make you safe and content. At that time I didn't feel right to court you and it seemed WangJi needed my guide and I tried my best. Then the circumstances became worse and worse." He goes silent. "I made mistakes, I have regrets, I feel guilty to not be there when you would have needed me. I was fortunate to find you again, and from now I will always be there for you, I belong, I support, no matter what."

Jiang Cheng lowers his eyes, they are resting on the carved comb. He reaches out and he softly places his palm over the comb, then a fingertip gently outlines the cloud pattern on the spine. Then he curls his fingers around the comb and cages it into his hand. He looks up, straight into XiChen's eyes.

"I accept." He reaches out with his free hand and with that he gently cups XiChen's face. He smiles at him. XiChen closes his eyes and he pushes into the palm. He lifts his own hand and he places it over Jiang Cheng's. Then he hears clothes ruffle, then something soft and warm pressing to his lips. He quickly opens his eyes. Jiang Cheng is still only an inch far from him.

"I always wanted to do this," he whispers, cheeks flaming, eyes shining. "But never dared."

"Let me clear this for you, WanYin," XiChen says, he doesn't move. "You're always free... no, You're always welcome to kiss me."

They move at the same time to taste each other with tender and sensual kisses. Curious, discovering. Then the kisses become more and more eager. Jiang Cheng growls softly into XiChen's mouth before he gives up the fight with himself and he climbs on the table to get closer. His hand moves, touches XiChen's forehead ribbon and his ear, then his fingers slide into his hair. XiChen reaches out and he pulls Jiang Cheng onto his lap.

"WanYin, would you be willing to come to Gusu with me?" XiChen asks a few days later, while they are in the garden. He's painting a landscape with lotus while Jiang Cheng is gardening. He takes the view in. He never thought he would see Jiang WanYin like this. Relaxed and muddy. Jiang Cheng stops. He wipes his forehead with his arm - XiChen thinks it's attractive. Jiang Cheng tries to hide the pain on his face.

XiCheng
Zine

"I don't want to go back to that world," he answers softly. XiChen doesn't reply, he just nods in agreement. He doesn't want to force it.

After that XiChen stops visiting. During the first week Jiang Cheng is full of waiting and hope. Then he gets back to his everyday, his smile fades. Mei Ling and her wife are worried, but eventually Mei Ling words it.

"That handsome rich bastard broke our didi's heart," she pouts, then she shakes her fist. "I'm going to kill him!" A-Qing pats her shoulder.

"Everything will be fine, don't worry."

"How could you say that? He's suffering!"

"MeiMei, didn't you see how that man looked at our didi? I'm pretty sure he wants to come, but can't. He loves him!"

Mei Ling gasped. "He didn't die, did he?!"

"Oh, Meimei." A-Qing pets her wife's head. "Everything will be fine."

A month passes when Lan XiChen appears again. Jiang Cheng is polite with him, but he's not smiling. He's upset and angry, but he doesn't shout, he doesn't ask. XiChen doesn't sit down. He looks serious.

"Can we talk alone?"

Jiang Cheng thinks for a short, then finally he nods. He leads XiChen to his study. It's not a big room, but there are a few cabinets, books, papers, inks, brushes and a table.

"What can I do for you, ZeWu-Jun?" he asks and he crosses his arms in front of his chest. Lan XiChen places his sword down, leaning it to the table. He won't need it anymore anyway. He made his decision.

"I have to apologise for disappearing for a long time, but I had to settle and arrange some things. The ceremony is done, the Lan Sect is officially led by WangJi."

"What?" Jiang Cheng is surprised.

"We discussed it. WangJi is a good leader. I decided to live on my loved one's side. I want to be with you. My home is there where you are."

Happy smile blooms on Jiang Cheng's face. XiChen thinks he's beautiful and it makes him smile too. Jiang Cheng takes a step closer. It's obvious he wants to touch XiChen, maybe an embrace, maybe a kiss - or anything. XiChen swallows and holds back. Just a few more minutes. He needs to tell everything to Jiang Cheng before he allows himself to immerse into their life together.

He takes a small box out of his robes. He opens it, then places down on the table. He extends his hand, an amethyst ring on his palm.

"Zidian," Jiang Cheng whispers. He's looking at the ring and fights the urge to put it on. He misses Zidian, he misses... His chest tightens and he feels unshed tears are burning his eyes. He lifts his gaze at XiChen. He's a little offended. "You know I--"

"She wants you. She didn't accept Sect Leader Jiang as her master, so she gave her to Wei WuXian. She didn't accept him either, so he contacted me and asked me to bring her to you. She still thinks you're her master."

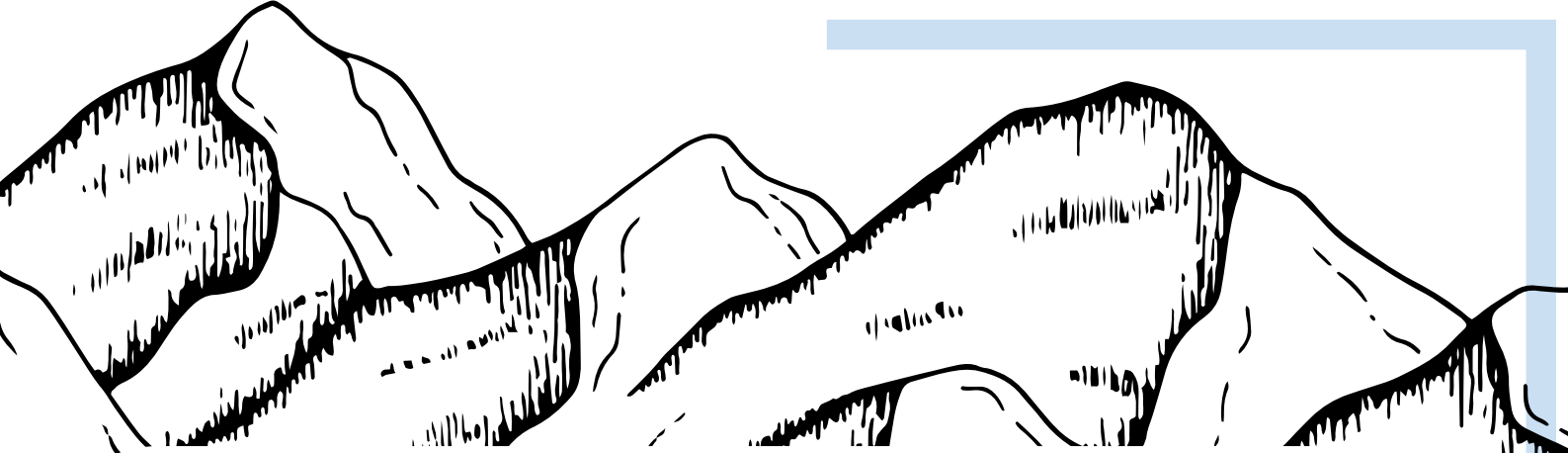
Jiang Cheng takes Zidian. It's nice to feel her weight in his hand again. Then he reaches out for a small wooden box and opens it. He gently places the ring on the soft padding.

"Thank you," Jiang Cheng says eventually. Then XiChen unties the clarity bell from his belt and he gives that to Jiang Cheng too. The man takes it and places it beside the ring. Finally XiChen takes off his forehead ribbon and places it into Jiang Cheng's hand then gently folds his fingers around it. Jiang Cheng squeezes it. He looks into XiChen's eyes.

"Are you sure?"

"I have never been more sure in my life. Only you matter."

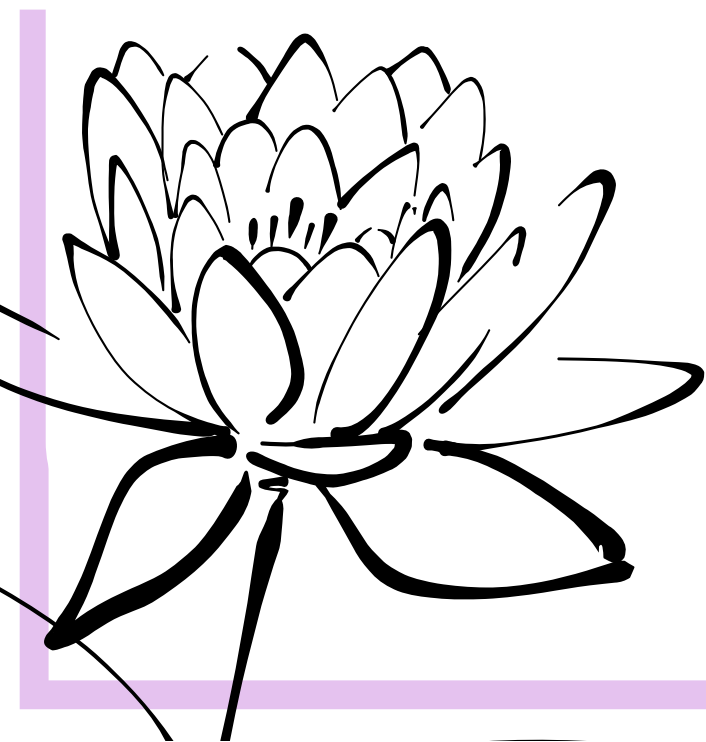
Jiang Cheng's cheeks turn rosy. He nods, then he folds the forehead ribbon and places it next to Zidian and the bell. He closes the box. XiChen gently takes his hands and he breathes a soft kiss on his fingers.



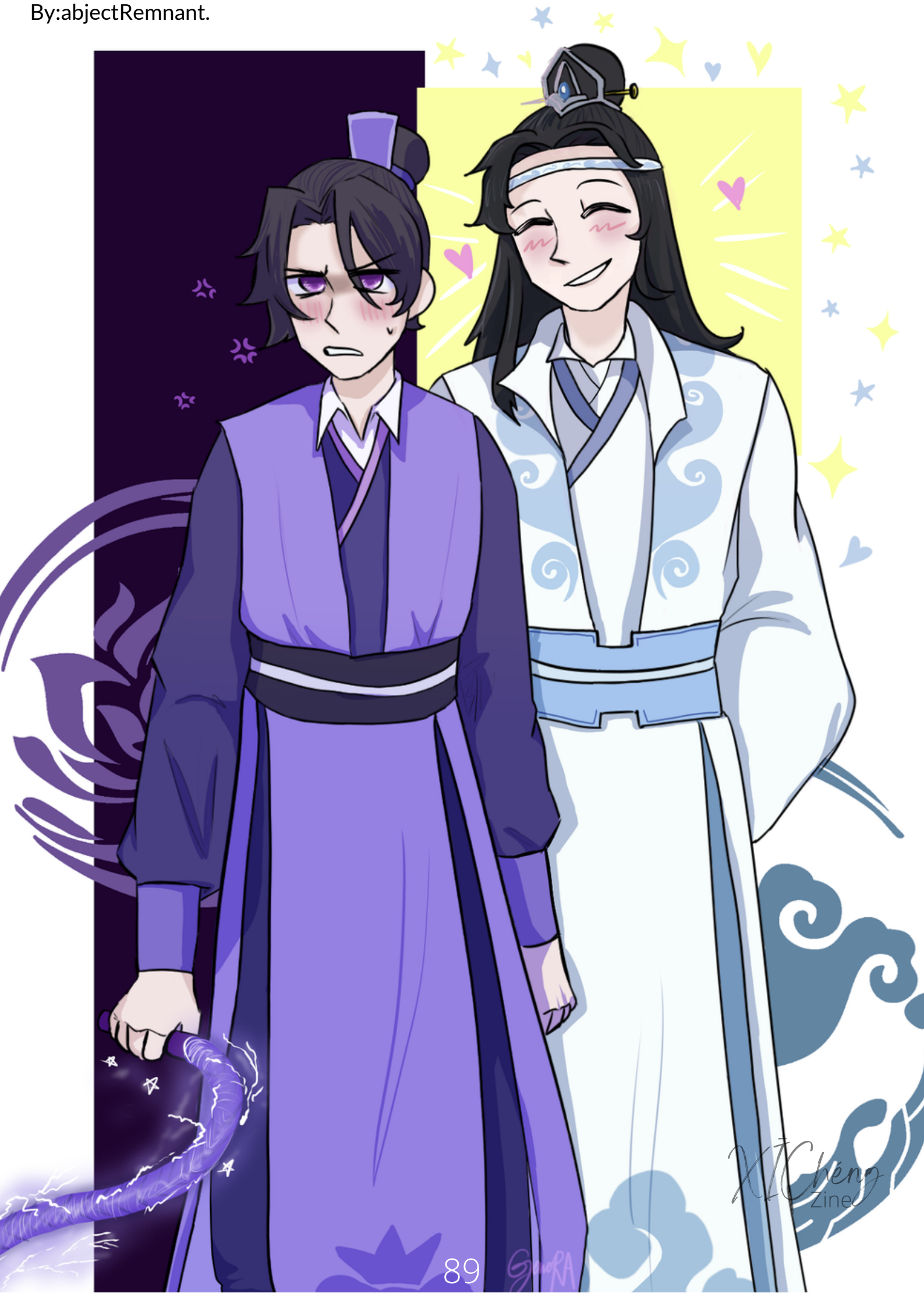
Jiang Cheng pulls away just to wrap his arms around XiChen's neck and he presses closer. Lan XiChen wraps his arms around the man to complete the embrace. He lets himself close his eyes and inhale Jiang Cheng's scent and his whole presence. Jiang Cheng rubs his cheek to his cheek. He's warm. He moves, lips brushing skin.

"What do you want to do first in our new life?" he whispers the question, XiChen can hear he's smiling happily. XiChen's voice is husky when he answers.

"You."









1. First Kiss

“For someone as graceful as you, one would think that you could walk down the stairs without tripping.” Jiang Cheng snaps, grabbing Lan XiChen by the arm and pulling him upright. They were just leaving the annual Winter Banquet held by the Jin Sect. It is the first outing that XiChen has had in a while, but Wangji had insisted he go.

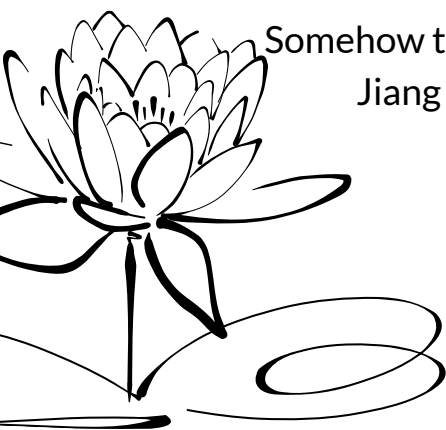
“I have never called myself graceful.” XiChen points out.

“No, everyone does it for you.” Jiang Wanyin informs him, as if XiChen is not aware of his own reputation.

“Just like everyone calls you a-shit!” Jiang Cheng has the pleasure of the watching the great Zewu-jun slip on ice and curse as he does so.

I didn’t know many people called me a shit.” He teases. “Although it’s not surprising, maybe people-fuck!” He’s pulled down by that infamous Lan strength and XiChen lets out a bright laugh, definitely loud enough to get in trouble where they are in the Cloud Recesses.

“Yes Wanyin, many people do fuck.” XiChen says and Jiang Cheng makes an oath to never let him drink again.



Somehow they end up on top of each other and their lips end up brushing. Jiang Cheng pulls himself off of XiChen and curses under his breath, of all of the things to happen.

“Could we do that again?” XiChen asks, sounding dazed.

“What the fuck?”

2. Going Public

Lan XiChen is used to pushy people; he is a sect leader, and one people tend to think highly about.

“You know Zewu-jun, you would be more attractive if you loosened up a little.” A member of the Moling Su sect says, leaning in far too close.

“I-“ XiChen starts but is cut off.

“He’s spoken for.” Jiang Wanyin interjects.

“Sect Leader Jiang, I’m sure that Sect Leader Lan can speak for himself.”

“He’s too worried about offending someone to be blunt. However, I’m sure he doesn’t mind his betrothed speaking for him on occasions?” Wanyin glances at XiChen, who nods slightly.

“I never heard any news about the first Jade of Lan being betrothed.” XiChen should intervene, but he’s too curious to figure out what Jiang Wanyin is going to do.

Jiang Cheng rolls his eyes. “Well the Lans aren’t known for gossip, are they?”

“Still an announcement should have been made.” Jiang Cheng feels a smirk tug at the corner of his lips.

“You’re right.” He says, before clearing his throat and yells loud enough to be heard over the crowd. “Sect Leader Lan and I are betrothed! If anyone has an issue with it just let me know!”

XiChen feels his face heat up. That is not what he imagined happening when he first saw Jiang Cheng. Somewhere in the crowd he can hear Nie Mingjue’s boisterous laughter.

“Wanyin!” He hisses, grabbing Jiang Cheng’s wrist, his fiancé just looks too pleased with himself.

XiCheng
Zine

"I thought we agreed to keep it discreet." He's speaking too low for anyone else to hear it, but Wanyin just smiles and XiChen feels a little breathless. Wanyin always makes him feel like that.

"Haven't you heard? Apparently I'm a very possessive man." He's referring to the rumors that started when he was a student at the Cloud Recesses. XiChen is still unsure how they started, though he has a sneaking suspicion that Nie Huaisang and Wei Wuxian were behind it.

"Do not gossip." He recites and Jiang Cheng throws his back, laughing, stepping into XiChen's space.

They are too close for a public setting, but XiChen wants to make the distance non-existent and Lan XiChen allows his lips to brush against Wanyin's forehead, ignoring the room's occupants. Just him and Jiang Cheng.

3. Wedding

XiChen feels overdressed, which is a strange thing to think about your own wedding. Wangji is braiding his hair, quiet as always.

"Wangji, what are your thoughts on this union?" He can't help but to ask, his brother has never bothered to hide the...annoyance he feels towards Wanyin, but XiChen values his opinion. He's still going to get married, the answer won't change anything, but knowing that he'll have his brother's support is nice.

"Does he make you happy?"

"Yes," the answer comes automatically, and it's the truth. XiChen has never felt so light compared to when he's with Wanyin.

"Then I will learn to be polite towards him." XiChen lets out a puff of air that would have been a laugh on someone outside of the Lan family.

"Wangji--"

"Though if he hurts you, I have word from Nie Mingjue that I will have a room in Qinghe."

XiCheng
Zine

“Wangji!” XiChen actually laughs this time, because the mental image of Mingjue and Wangji coconspiring to murder someone is simply too amusing.

“I am merely speaking the truth.”

There’s a light knock on the door and A-Yao poked his head in.

“Da-ge is still trying to scare off your husband, it might be best off us to speed things along.”

“Mn.” Wangji hums and XiChen sighs, standing up and smoothing out any wrinkles on his robes.

Jiang Cheng is about to murder, or at least attempt to murder Nie Mingjue. Zidian is sparking on his finger and he’s not going to be held responsible if the other sect leader doesn’t shut up soon.

“If you hurt him-“ A knock on the door interrupts and Jiang Cheng makes a mental note to thank whoever it is.

“Da-ge,” that’s definitely XiChen’s voice. “A-Yao has informed me that you are trying to stage a last minute intervention.” Nie Mingjue has the decency to look embarrassed. Good. “Did we not have an agreement?”

“We did.” The older man looks downright sheepish.

“This is your first and only warning.” XiChen sounds as calm as ever but something in his tone makes Nie Mingjue look like a child getting scolded.

“Okay.”

“Wanyin?”

“Yes?”

“You have permission to yell.” With that they hear retreating footsteps.

They finally are able to do their three bows and Jiang Cheng has a moment where he thinks of his family. Of Yanli, who would have approved just on the fact XiChen makes him happy. Hell, his parents would probably be pleased with him for the first time in his life. Wei Wuxian would have patted his back and made an inappropriate comment about what's supposed to happen on a wedding night.

He shakes himself, coming back to the present where none of those things can or will ever happen. XiChen grips his arm as they greet and thank everyone for attending and subtly restrains him when Nie Huaisang hands them a book, a specific kind of book, and more discreetly, a vial of oil.

"For later, I did a lot of research for those." Jiang Cheng lunges but XiChen holds him tightly by the arm.

"Thank you Huaisang. I am sure they will be very useful." His husband says before Jiang Cheng can yell in public.

4. Argument

Jiang Cheng is annoyed and hurt. It's hard to say which one is more prominent. Of course combined they turn into anger. Of course Wei Wuxian is a part of it.

"I should have known." He says, shaking his head. "It's always one thing of another."

"A-Cheng," XiChen steps forward, and Jiang Cheng takes one back.

"Don't. You knew and you didn't tell me." Jiang Cheng snaps.

"There wasn't time." XiChen explains and Jiang Cheng wants to listen, but can't.

"How long?"

"Wanyin?"

"How long have you known?" He needs to know, he need to know if Lan Wangji told him as soon as they went to the Cloud Recesses.

"I had suspicions, but did not know anything until the night in A-Yao's-" his husband flinches at the reflexive use of a nickname for the man that betrayed him. "Jin Guangyao's treasure room. Wangji didn't tell me anything." Jiang Cheng feels something in his chest loosen.

"Why are you two arguing like a married couple?" Wei Wuxian asks, striding up to stand between them. "Why would Zewu-jun tell you if he knew I was back?"

"Wei-gongzi-" Jiang Cheng cuts off the diplomatic answer.

"Because one would usually tell their spouse if their dead brother was resurrected." He spits.

"But you're both Sect Leaders!"

"It's not unheard of." Nie Huaisang strolls up to them. "Besides Er-ge and and Jiang-xiong have a good arrangement."

"Arrangement?" Wei Wuxian repeats like he's never heard the word before. "I do have to say," Jiang Cheng knows that tone. "Zewu-jun does meet most of your requirements."

"Requirements?" Now XiChen sounds amused and Jiang Cheng grabs his arm.

"Nothing, just a list I made when I was younger." He tries to drag his husband away but XiChen is unmovable.

Huaisang, the bastard, clears his throat and starts to recite

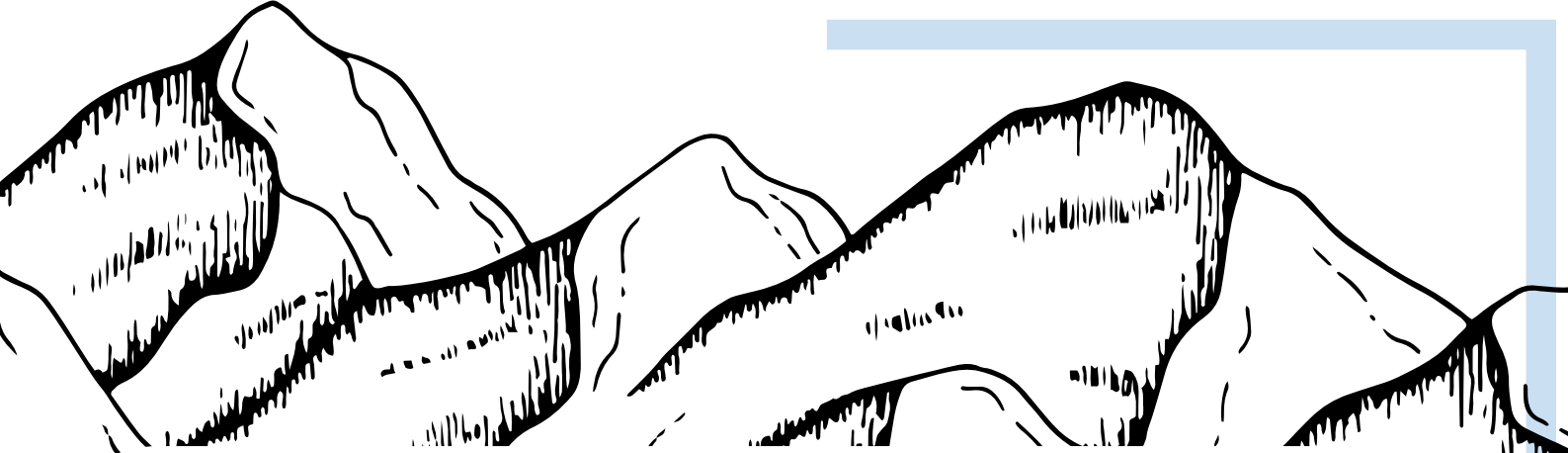
"Naturally beautiful, graceful, and obedient." Jiang Cheng flings an arm out but misses, when did Huaisang become that fast, Wei Wuxian takes over.

"Hard working, from a respected family. Cultivation level not too high, I think you missed that one Zewu-jun. not too talkative or loud."

"Wei-xiong, you're forgetting that he added one after he took Jin Ling in." Jiang Cheng is going to murder both of them and make sure it sticks this time. "Must be kind to Jin Ling." Huaisang finishes.

"JiuJiu!" Great, now the kid is going to think he's soft.

XiCheng
Zine



"I see." XiChen says, a little blankly, but Jiang Cheng can see a hint of a smile and feels some of his anger go away. They're just trying to distract XiChen from the night's events, to keep him from spiraling. Or that's what Huaisang is doing, Wei Wuxian is most likely being a little shit.

Jiang Cheng can't linger on that thought though because his husband is bowing to him.

"What?"

"Will you forgive this one for not meeting all of your standards?"

Correction, Lan XiChen is a little shit as well. Wei Wuxian lets out a laugh and Jiang Cheng can hear Huaisang snap his fan open.

"I-you're kidding right? We've been married for over a decade."

"I was unaware such a list existed until now. I am afraid I can't do much about my cultivation." He straightens and meets Jiang Cheng's eyes. "Perhaps with enough dual cultivating we can be relative equals?" Jiang Cheng feels his face heat up and he's storming down the stairs.



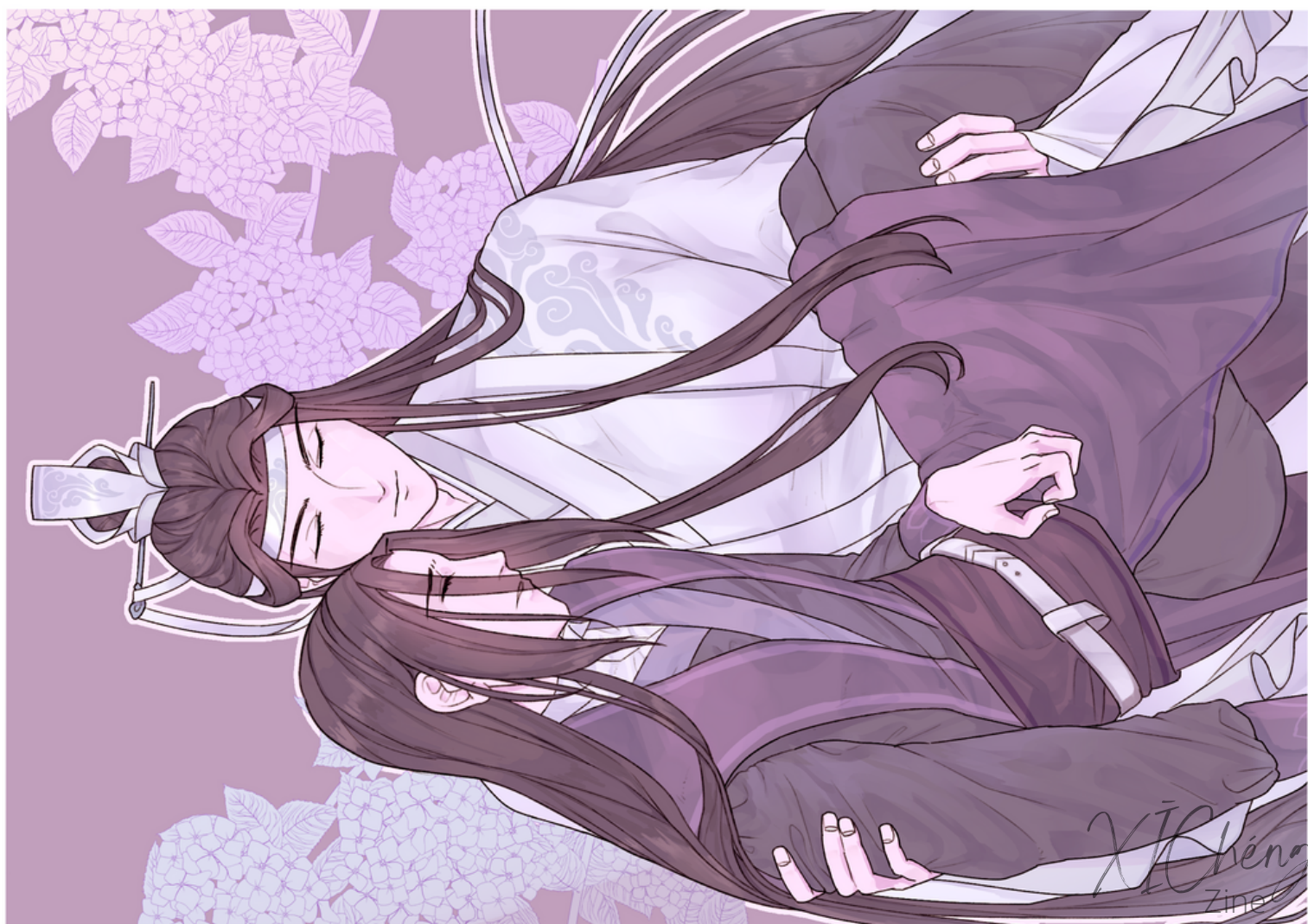
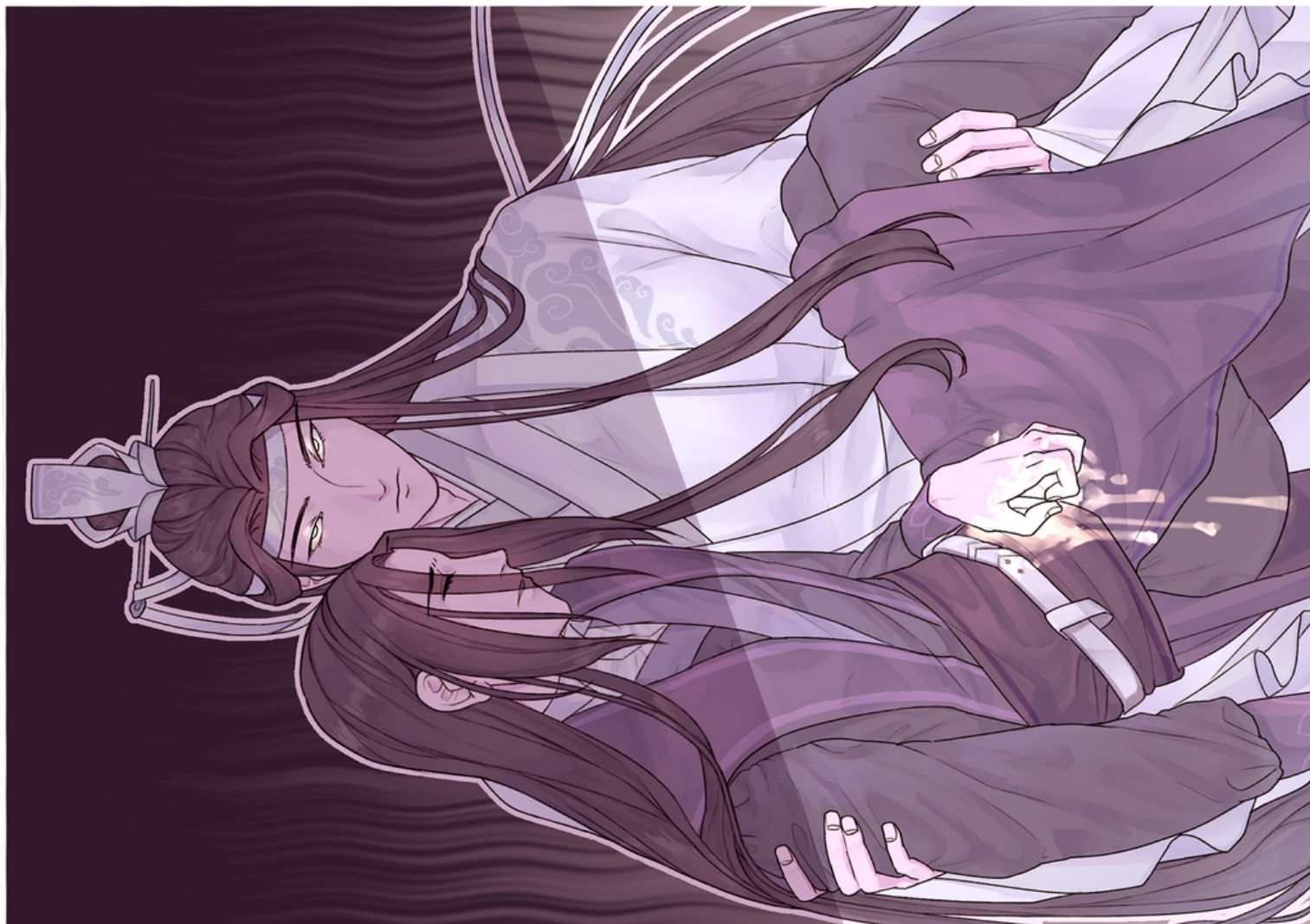
Wei Wuxian is howling with laughter now sputtering out.

"Lan Zhan! Lan Zhan! Is that allowed? Zewu-jun just-"

Jiang Cheng picks up the pace.

He's going to have words with his husband later.







Thank you!



XICHENG'S CROSSWORD

ANSWERS

