

What Makes Life Exceptional

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What Makes Life Exceptional

by [LotanLotus](#)

Summary

Dynasty Academy could never get a break, and these kids are back to bring in romance, drama, stress and so much more. With their different views and actions taking control of them, will they be able to find love in such a hopeless place? Will the Principals agree, or will everything be torn to shreds?

Notes

This is a complete re-write of the Fanfiction story "What Makes Life Exceptional", but this time, the story is doing things r i g h t. I've finally managed to be able to re-write the story for my friend the way she intended to get it done. So that means, things are gonna change and there's going to be a lot of re-working for this, but I made sure to try and give it that same feeling. If you're a big fan of the original, I hope you'll appreciate this one too.

I'll be working on an update schedule for the story so that you all can get your chapters at a good time. I hope you guys appreciate this, it was fun working with her.

- Inspired by [What Makes Life Exceptional](#) by Risus-Gaudi

The Red Swallow

Dynasty Academy, a boarding school for scholarly juveniles. Their educations were determined by the color they wore. Red, Blue, Green and Cyan. Red represents Wu, specializing in the logistics and philosophies of life, as well as strategies. Blue represents Wei, the most studious of the four, being followed closely behind by Cyan, representing Jin. Both Wei and Jin take direct approaches at teaching their students, barely leaving time for any of them to slack off or have any free time, their grades are top priority, as these two branches are the hardest to get into. Lastly, Green represents Shu, the branch that focused more on cooperation than actually being studious.

Chapter 1: Red Swallow

“Lu Xun! You agree that Gan Ning is a total pain in the ass, right?” Lu Xun turned, feeling Ling Tong grab onto his arm in a rushed motion. Gan Ning refused to let Lu Xun say a word, as he pulled Ling Tong’s bag as hard as he could to get his attention once more. The trio stood in the hallway, with Lu Xun attempting to make it to their class before it started. They were roughly about 2 minutes away, and for the past 10 or so minutes, Lu Xun found himself in the middle of the duo’s rather vulgar banter.

“Lu Xun, you can’t agree with him! Look at him,” Gan Ning pointed at Ling Tong aggressively, “he’s a total pain in the ass!” Ling Tong glared at the blonde, then glanced back to the brunette who had opened his mouth to speak.

“Ugh! No! I’m so tired of dealing with you,” Ling Tong poked Gan Ning in the chest with a finger repeatedly, “stop walking with us to class!”

“*YOU* stop walking with *US* to class!” Gan Ning retaliated.

“Guys...” Lu Xun attempted to speak up, his voice sounding like a whisper compared to the other men.

Ling Tong tossed his bag to the side, with a hard *smack* as it hit the wall. He took a deep breath before letting out his next set of words. “YOU’RE A FUCKING IDIOT!”

“WHO THE FUCK ARE YOU CALLING AN IDIOT?! YOU’RE NOT EVEN THE REASON WHY I’M WALKING WITH YOU GUYS ANYWAYS!” Gan Ning yelled back preparing to throw his own bag to the ground.

Ling Tong let out a quiet sound then gave a smirk to the blonde, “Yeah?! To see your precious little Lu Xun, right?!” His smug voice caused Lu Xun to blush, not fully sure of what to do in the current situation. Gan Ning roughly handed his bag over to Lu Xun, who had to hurry to adjust to the sudden weight in his hands. “To Lu Xun you’re probably just a liability! I’m pretty damn sure that he doesn’t care about you! Look at yourself! You’re a... Gan Ning!”

“You wanna say that shit again?” Gan Ning’s voice lowered as he raised his hands to crack his knuckles.

“Guys, if you keep arguing like this, Principal Sun Jian and Principal Cao Cao are going to reprimand us... again.” Lu Xun tried to reason with the duo, who ignored the third voice to argue with one another once more.

“Actually yes, I do. You’re a liability to Lu Xun. You’re just a *Gan. Ning.*” Ling Tong pressed, this time with his voice much lower. Gan Ning nodded, taking a few steps closer to the brunette with his fist clenched. As Gan Ning slowly raised his fist, the duo froze, feeling a sudden pinch.

Lu Xun chose to silence them by pinching their earlobes.

“L-Lu Xun? Buddy?” Ling Tong winced, reaching for his earlobe.

“If you two don’t shut up, the three of us are going to get in trouble *again*. Lu Meng doesn’t want me to get in trouble again because of the two of you, because next time that’s actually going to hurt *me* more than you think. Got it?” Lu Xun’s voice was stern, and the duo could tell that he meant business.

“It would be a lot easier if Gan Ning would just admit that he only wants to spend time with us to be near you.” Ling Tong mumbled. Lu Xun shook his head and let go of the duo’s earlobes, allowing them to rub them to make sure they were okay.

“Can we not have this conversation?” Lu Xun questioned, glancing over to Gan Ning who looked somewhat dazed as he ran a hand through his hair. The air was awkward enough as it was without Ling Tong pointing it out so frequently. “Gan Ning?” Lu Xun’s voice broke Gan Ning’s daze, and caught his full attention, “here’s your bag.” He added, holding up the blonde’s bag in his direction.

“Oh right-... yeah... thank you.” Gan Ning grabbed his bag and adjusted his clothes. “We should probably go, I think we’re already late.” He mumbled, going back to walking the path to their class.

Ling Tong sighed and went to pick up his own bag, glancing back at Lu Xun for a moment before deciding it was best to get to class as soon as possible. Lu Xun stared at Ling Tong for a long moment, feeling the gears in his head turning rapidly.

That whole romance thing isn’t... real is it? Gan Ning shouldn’t have any type of feelings towards me. Ling Tong’s just making that stuff up to mess with him, right?

“Lu Xun? We should get going.” Lu Xun stood startled, hearing Ling Tong’s voice protrude through his thoughts. Lu Xun nodded quickly and walked a little faster to keep up with Ling Tong’s rather long legs.

By the time the trio made it into the classroom, Lu Meng stared at them all in disbelief as they entered the room one by one. The moment his eyes fell onto Lu Xun, he decided to speak up. “Is everything alright, Lu Xun?” He asked, drawing the attention of the other

classmates that were already prepared for class. “You seem to have been late a lot this week. It’s expected of Gan Ning, and occasionally for Ling Tong, but... for you...”

“I-” Lu Xun glanced at Lu Meng, then at the class. “Everything is fine, I’m sorry for my tardiness as of late.”

“We should probably talk about it at some point, don’t you think?” Lu Meng questioned, raising his eyebrow as he placed a hand on his hip, “get to your seats, kids. The lesson has already started.”

Zhou Yu and Sun Ce stared at the brunette who seemed fairly distracted at the other side of the table. The trio were in charge of making a project due by the end of the week, but progress had become rather slow due to Lu Xun’s current state of disfunction. They were aware that it wasn’t just Lu Xun, but Ling Tong and Gan Ning as well. Whatever happened between that trio must have been intense for Xiao Qiao, Da Qiao, and Sun Shang Xiang to say that the other two weren’t doing to well.

Luckily, the group was placed in the library, so there should be little to no distractions while they worked on their project together. “Lu Xun, would you mind writing out the main plots in an outline form so that we can figure out the right order for the presentation?” Zhou Yu spoke with hopes that Lu Xun actually heard him. The brunette sat still, looking down at the table with a few closed books in front of him. Zhou Yu sighed and glanced at Sun Ce who could only shrug in response before deciding to call for the brunette again. “Lu Xun?” He tried again, this time a little louder.

Still no response.

“Lu Xun!” Zhou Yu hissed in a loud whisper, tapping the table. The startled brunette looked up from his book and glanced at the long haired raven who looked rather irritated with the situation.

“Y-yes?” He spoke sheepishly.

“I asked if you could write out the main plots and put them in an outline form so that we can figure out a proper order for the presentation. Sun Ce is willing to look for the books for us to use, and I will be gathering the information and setting it up in a way for you to do this easily.”

“Oh- yeah... yes, I can do that.”

“Is something wrong? You don’t seem very focused at all.”

“No- no it’s not... I’m fine, I’m sorry. I didn’t realize that this might be really hard to do with me barely paying attention, right? I’ll make sure to work with whatever you give me.” Lu Xun spoke with feigned confidence.

Zhou Yu shook his head slowly, “tell me what’s wrong. It’s not going to be easy to work on a project such as this without focusing fully on what’s in front of you. I’m aware you’re not the

only one that's acting amiss. Ling Tong and Gan Ning have been acting rather strange today as well. Did something happen between the three of you?"

Lu Xun stared in shock at how the raven was able to catch onto what could have been the problem. Lu Xun shook his head after a second of thought,

This isn't the type of conversation to have with you two.

"I'm assuming you don't wish to tell us?" Zhou Yu questioned, "we're friends aren't we? We should be able to talk about things that bother us with one another without feeling uncomfortable."

"Sometimes things just shouldn't be shared." Lu Xun spoke quietly.

Sun Ce sighed, "that's true. You don't have to tell us if you don't want to. We're just worried, that's all. The three of you are usually so close, so seeing you all like this doesn't... feel right, you know?"

Lu Xun thought for a moment, glancing down at his book then over to Sun Ce. "Have you ever told a friend to stop hanging around you and another friend because you feel like they have an interest in the other friend?"

"You're asking me this?" Sun Ce questioned, leaning back in his chair. He glanced around the library to see how many people were around. "Iunno, if a friend told me to stop hanging around another friend because they thought I liked the other friend, I'd be a little salty, actually." He looked back to the brunette who nodded slowly at the answer.

"Was it Ling Tong that told Gan Ning to stop hanging around the two of you because he feels that Gan Ning has feelings for you?" Zhou Yu questioned, leaning forward on the table. He watched Lu Xun's face give a moment of shock before returning to a moderately hard to read expression. "Was that on the nose?"

"You really do have a talent, Zhou Yu," Lu Xun complimented.

"You're not too bad yourself, Xun." Zhou Yu replied with a warm smile.

"So, don't tell me you think that Gan Ning likes you just because Ling Tong keeps saying it? I always thought that Ling Tong liked Gan Ning, I never thought it could have been Gan Ning to you." Sun Ce whispered.

"There was that short amount of time though, that you and Gan Nin--"

"Nothing happened." Lu Xun interrupted quickly, "I don't know what you're talking about."

"When you and Gan Ning dat--"

"Anyways, what do you two think I should do? I feel like I should stop this before it gets any worse than it already is." Lu Xun interrupted once again, bringing the conversation back around.

“Maybe you should just talk to each of them and figure out what they think about the situation. It sounds like the three of you just really need to talk things out and get an understanding for boundaries.” Zhou Yu answered.

Lu Xun nodded slowly, “yeah... that makes sense. I’ll be sure to do that the next time I see them. For now though, should we get back to working on this project?”

Zhou Yu and Sun Ce gave a look to one another, chuckling quietly as they looked back at their books, “yeah, we probably should.” Zhou Yu whispered.

During lunchtime, Lu Xun took the initiative to go on a search for Gan Ning. It honestly didn’t take long to find the blonde yelling and laughing with Sun Ce by the cafeteria doors. As Lu Xun got closer to the duo, the easier it was for Sun Ce to spot the brunette and quiet down to hear what the shorter male had to say. “Do you mind if I talk to Gan Ning?” Lu Xun asked, pointing his head to the now silent blonde.

“Go for it. I’ll talk to you guys later if you’re coming into the caf.” Sun Ce grinned, waving as he entered the cafeteria without missing a beat. Gan Ning stared at Lu Xun with a questioning glance.

“What’s up?” He asked casually.

“Can we go somewhere a little less public to talk? Or, at least a bit quieter, so that I can hear myself think.” Lu Xun questioned, giving a somewhat pained look by the noise coming out of the cafeteria every time someone walked by the duo to open up the door. Gan Ning nodded and let the brunette down the hallway, where there was much less noise.

Gan Ning ran a hand through his hair, “what did you want to talk about?”

“You know, I’m glad that we’re roommates, and I’m glad that we’ve been friends since middle school, just about. The thing is, I’ve only ever... I’ve always seen you as a friend. A good friend. You and Ling Tong are two of my best friends and you’ve always been there for me, and I want to be there for the both of you, you know? So-”

“Lu Xun.” Gan Ning interrupted, shoving his hands into his pockets, “it took me a while to really figure things out myself. We both know I’m not one for- being hung up on things that shouldn’t really matter, but- today- ahh... I don’t think it was ever you.”

“What do you mean?”

Gan Ning raised an eyebrow and looked at one of the walls, staring at the washed out red color painted as a guide to the cafeteria. “With all of the shenanigans that Ling Tong was going to put us through, I definitely did think about it a lot. Lu Xun I-”

“Is this a confession?”

The duo froze upon hearing the third voice interrupt their conversation. They turned to see Ling Tong with his hands on his hips and a smug-like smile plastered on his face. “Jeez, you

guys couldn't wait, huh? Had to get the confessions over and done with?"

"No- Ling Tong that's not what this is-" Lu Xun attempted to speak up.

"The hell do you mean, you piece of shit?!" Gan Ning turned fully to the long haired brunette, "I'm not confessing to Lu Xun!"

"You don't have to get so worked up about it, jeez. If you wanted me to keep quiet just tell me to go away or something." Ling Tong shrugged, "I don't mind hearing your confession to him either."

"You want to hear a confession?" Gan Ning questioned, "I'm ready to beat the shit out of you."

"Oh really? Then do it! I'd love to see your ass get kicked out for fighting!"

"Guys!" Lu Xun interrupted, finally getting fed up with all of the arguing. "For once, I'd love to have a conversation with the two of you without you two aiming at each other's heads. Gan Ning wasn't confessing to me, Ling Tong, it was something different. And- I really think that you two should talk things over, and figure things out. I don't want to be involved in this if this means that my two best friends are just going to keep arguing with one another!"

Ling Tong's smug look turned to one of concern, he sighed and looked down to the ground, "alright, let's talk then." He looked over to Gan Ning, who returned the same look back to him, as they nodded in unison.

"Promise me, no arguing? I'm leaving the conversation to you two." Lu Xun went to confirm, earning another set of nods from the duo. "Thank you." He smiled softly at the pair, choosing to make his way out of the area just in case things went wrong and he *really* didn't want to be put through another argument for something random.

Lu Xun's second favorite place for lunch is actually outside of the building, by a set of benches that are usually filled by Shu students surrounding a sakura tree with petals occasionally falling off. His favorite spot was actually a table closer to Wei's building, mainly because no one ever uses it, and it gives you a nice view of the entire Academy. Today however, seemed to not work in Lu Xun's favour, as he made his way to his favorite spot, he found an unusual looking man sitting at one end of the table, studying.

He's not from Wu, or Shu, by the looks of things.

Lu Xun chose to sit at the opposite end of the table, placing down his backpack next to him to pull out a book so that he could read. He hoped he was quiet enough to not interrupt the man from his intense studies, as he tried to find the last page read. The table was filled with a long silence that carried on for a while, until Lu Xun heard the man mutter and grumble to himself.

"This is so damn stupid." His voice was much deeper than Lu Xun could have imagined, and it caught him by surprise, but Lu Xun chose to keep most of his attention in the book, so it wouldn't seem like he was being nosey to the other man.

There was another long silence before the man spoke up again, “who are you?” he asked, making unwavering eye-contact with the shocked brunette. Piercing ice blue eyes that practically stared into Lu Xun’s amber ones, as well as his soul.

“I- my apologies, my name is Lu Xun.” Lu Xun spoke awkwardly, suddenly feeling intimidated by the bitter looking raven.

“Is that your style name?” He asked.

“Uh- um... no, no it’s not. But, you can call me Lu Xun?” Lu Xun felt like he was asking himself a question.

“No thanks.” He replied, looking back to his book.

“Well- what’s your name?” Lu Xun questioned, unsure of whether or not he should even be asking this man any other questions.

“Cao Pi.”

Oh .

“But that’s not your style name either, is it?” Lu Xun replied quickly, curious on why Cao Pi would even ask about his style name in the first place.

Lu Xun heard Cao Pi click his tongue as he replied with a rather stern “shut up.” It was clear the raven was done with conversation with the day, and Lu Xun did not want to push any other boundaries.

“Say, Lu Xun. I’m assuming the conversation between Ling Tong and Gan Ning went well. It’s been a week and the only time I ever hear them ‘arguing’ is when they’re aggressively flirting with each other.” Zhou Yu commented, leaning onto Lu Xun’s table whilst the brunette was in the middle of reading his book.

Lu Meng had decided to give the students a study period as a break for all of their hard work, and the students decided the best way to study was to talk with their friends in the classroom. Seeing as Zhou Yu sits in the seat right in front of Lu Xun in the middle aisle, Zhou Yu figured it was the best time to talk to him about the recent events that have been happening.

Lu Xun looked up from his book to acknowledge the raven in front of him, “yeah, I left them to talk things out. I actually haven’t seen Gan Ning and Ling Tong lately, but I’m glad that no one started a fire or anything of that sort.”

“*You’re* glad that no one started a fire?” Zhou Yu repeated.

Lu Xun gave a soft chuckle to the man in front of him, “I wouldn’t be *against* the idea, of course.”

“That sounds more like you. For a second, I thought I lost you to some anti-arsonist.”

“Oh no, never. All fire, all the time.”

“Well that’s good. Who would have thought that Gan Ning and Ling Tong would have had feelings for each other, and all of that arguing was just their way of trying to convey their emotions, but it *always* backfired?” Zhou Yu questioned, tucking a bit of his hair behind his ear, “their relationship is astonishing to me.”

“Well actually- you were the one that gave me the idea to talk to them about it. I... I assumed that you already knew.”

“Oh, was it? Interesting.”

“Say, Zhou Yu. What’s your style name?” Lu Xun questioned suddenly.

“Huh? What brought on the sudden interest?” Zhou Yu asked, leaning back a bit in his seat to give Lu Xun more of his personal space. “That doesn’t seem like you, for sure.”

“I met a guy that asked me about my style name, and it got me thinking... I don’t know any of my friend’s style names, and I’ve been meaning to ask but I just haven’t had time.” Lu Xun explained.

“Gongjin.” Zhou Yu said simply.

“Ah? Lu Xun questioned, unsure of what he just heard.

“My style name, it’s Gongjin.” Zhou Yu explained with a smile.

“Oh- I see. Thank you for telling me. I won’t call you that, if you were wondering.”

“You can if you want to, Sun Ce calls me by my style name often. I think I hear Gongjin more than I hear Zhou Yu.” Zhou Yu chuckled quietly. “So, who was this person that you talked to that brought up your curiosity?”

“It’s Cao Pi.”

Zhou Yu stared at the brunette with wide eyes, shocked that he could say something like that so simply. “You spoke with Cao Pi?”

“I know that there’s all of those problems and such with talking to people from Wei, but Cao Pi really didn’t seem like that bad of a person. He was sitting at one of the tables outside, the one that I usually sit at, and I can only assume that he was studying? He looked a little stressed, but we talked for probably a minute or so and he asked me about my style name-”

“Is that the only time you’ve ever talked with him?”

“Yeah, he seemed really busy, so I don’t think he cared that he was talking to someone like me.”

“As long as you don’t go out of your way to talk to him, everything should be fine. We don’t want others to see the two of you conversing, then they go out of their way and start

spreading rumours and such about Wei and Wu. Principal Sun Jian would not appreciate that at all.”

“I understand, I know. But, what if we could change the way that the people in Wu see those in Wei, and vice-versa?”

“Lu Xun,” Zhou Yu started, giving Lu Xun a rather serious look, “I’m all for your willingness to make people like and appreciate others and such, but I don’t think you can fix this one. Don’t cause trouble for Wu.”

“I... I won’t.” Lu Xun replied somewhat confidently. “I would never want to hurt Wu’s reputation.”

“We all have family names to live up to here, don’t make your ancestors roll in their graves.”

A month as passed, with the beginning of December lifting the students’ spirits. Classes in Wu and Shu have begun to end a lot earlier than usual, as the teachers have gotten lazy and are more willing to let the students have their freedom after such hard studies throughout the year. It was nearing the break now, where the students were free to go home and visit families if they wish, or stay in the dorms and live peaceful lives. There were a few inches of snow in the courtyard with the legendary sakura tree, light, fluffy, and shimmering in the sun's soft light. Some of the students in Wu took the initiative to make a mess of the perfect snow and have a snow fight.

Not too long before Lu Xun’s current predicament, where he’s sitting on one of the many benches dusting himself off of all of the snow he was covered in, due to Sun Ce’s shenanigans that involved pushing Lu Xun into a giant pile of snow, Lu Xun was attempting to go into town, but his friends interrupted his unimportant task to have fun.

The students of Wu were now free to wear anything other than the school uniform that’s usually required in the spring, summer, and fall seasons, as the winter usually required the kids to bundle up a lot more, and Principal Sun Jian felt it was better to give the kids some leeway in the uniform sometimes.

“Lu Xun! Let’s build a snowman!” Xiao Qiao yelled holding up a small snowball in her gloved hands, “Da Qiao said that she would help, so you gotta help too, okay?!”

“Yeah, sure, I’ll help out.” Lu Xun gave the girl a soft smile as he wiped off the rest of the snow from his hair before it became too wet. “Does it matter what part of the snowman I should take care of?”

“Take the bottom! It’s the biggest and I don’t want Da Qiao to carry heavy things!” Xiao Qiao grinned, kneeling down to pick up some snow for her part of the body.

“They really are all children, aren’t they?” A woman’s voice filled the cold air, her words just as sharp as the wind. “Does Wu only teach children?” She stood with one hand on her hip, and the other wrapped around the man’s arm next to her, her facial features smug and almost selfish.

Lu Xun, Xiao Qiao, and Da Qiao looked up from their respective spots to stare at the duo from Wei, one of which was familiar to Lu Xun. “Cao Pi?” Lu Xun questioned, recognizing the man in front of them. He adjusted himself slowly, feeling the piercing gaze on him.

“The last thing I would expect from you would be playing with the snow.” Cao Pi stated, adjusting his arm to get the woman’s attention, “come, Ji. I don’t feel like dealing with kids.”

As the duo walked away, Xiao Qiao huffed from her spot, angrily poking at the snow. “There’s nothing wrong with playing with snow, those stupid stuck up Wei-jerks don’t know what they’re talking about.” She stood from her spot, glancing at Lu Xun who gave her a look of uncertainty.

“They can’t... all be that bad, right?” Lu Xun attempted to whisper.

Da Qiao shook her head slowly, fixing her hair and instantly regretting it due to the snow on her gloves. “I will always support the fact that you’re so kind and supportive, seeing the good in a person. But, when it comes to Wei... I don’t think that that should apply, you know?”

“They’re just a bunch of stuck up jerks that think that no one’s better than them. I hear they even look down on the people in Jin too. Wei is just filled with snobs!” Xiao Qiao argued.

“Cao Pi and Zhen Ji are Wei’s ‘power couple’ so to speak. The principal’s son and a woman who gets what she wants, I hear they have a lot of control over what happens in Wei. I don’t think you should be socializing with them much at all.”

“Mmm...” Lu Xun sighed, looking at his snowball, “shouldn’t we go back to making the snowman?”

The next afternoon led to Lu Xun sitting outside, pushing the snow off the bench and seat for him to relax and drink a nice warm cup of tea, in a thermos of course. He sat, admiring the sakura trees’ fluffy snow upon the branches, and the small little garden surrounding the base with rocks covered in snow at the border. The sakura tree was one of the biggest attractions in the academy, as well as the most beautiful. Lu Xun took a sip from his tea, and while he went to swallow the tea, he dug through his bag to pull out a book, careful to make sure not to get an unnecessary amount of snow on the pages. For a long while, Lu Xun sat in silence, save for the occasional page turning and tea sipping.

“Hey.” Lu Xun heard the familiar voice and turned in the direction, confused and somewhat shocked to see Cao Pi and hear the greeting.

“H-hello,” Lu Xun greeted, making use of his bookmark as he closed his book and placed it back in his bag. He watched Cao Pi as the raven wiped off a spot across from where he was sitting, making sure it was safe enough to sit down. “How are you, Cao Pi?”

“About yesterday,” Cao Pi ignored the question, “is all of Wu really like that? Just a bunch of kids playing children’s games in the winter?”

Lu Xun made an unusual face at the raven in front of him, taking another sip of tea to keep his body warm as the thought of a valid answer. “No,” he spoke after swallowing, “but sometimes we just can’t help but play around. We don’t have many classes anymore, so everyone’s getting antsy with energy.”

“So you’re basically all children?”

“Who was that woman with you yesterday? You two seemed close.” Lu Xun asked, changing the topic.

Cao Pi let out a sound, one that resembled confusion, “the woman?” He asked after a moment, “you mean Zhen Ji? She’s my girlfriend.” Lu Xun slowly nodded his head, looking down to his thermos to see how much of his tea was left. “Why?”

“No reason.”

“Are your eyes hazel or amber?” Cao Pi asked, leaning forward on the bench table, trying to get a closer look. Lu Xun looked up to make eye contact with the raven, embarrassed and confused by the question. “They look amber.”

“Its- it’s amber, yes.” Lu Xun looked down fully, feeling heat rush to his face.

“So, when are you going to tell me your style name?” Cao Pi asked, leaning back.

“Why do you want to know it so badly? We barely even know each other. I can understand if we were friends, or if we were horribly close, but... we’re not.”

“We could be.” Cao Pi replied poking at the snow playfully. “If you wanted to be close to me, that is.”

“What? I you know that I can’t-”

“Lu Xun! What are you doing out here?!” The pair turned to the voice, revealing a rather angry looking Zhou Yu who reached out to grab Lu Xun by his arm. “Didn’t we talk about this?” He asked with a stern tone, pulling the brunette up from his seat. “Come on, get your things, we’re leaving.”

“That’s pretty rude, don’t you think? We were in the middle of a conversation.” Cao Pi’s face molded to a frown, completely unimpressed with the long haired male near him. Lu Xun chose not to say a word as he grabbed and put on his bag and grab his thermos, closing it quickly.

“I’m... I’m sorry, Cao Pi. Zhou Yu is right.” He mumbled, looking up to his friend, nodding softly. “Let’s get out of here.”

“My pleasure.”

I’m sorry Cao Pi.

“We’ve talked about this before, didn’t we? You’re not supposed to be talking with *Cao Pi* .” The name came out of Zhou Yu’s mouth as if though it was venom. “Wu shouldn’t socialize with Wei at *all*.”

“I know, but I just don’t understand *why*.” Lu Xun replied, crossing his arms over his chest with a silent huff. Zhou Yu brought him to the dorm area of the Wu building, intending for the younger male to just give up on the argument and go back to his room and realize that some things just need to be done a certain way.

Zhou Yu sighed heavily, “I’m not going to get into this argument with you, Lu Xun. Please understand, that this is just the way that things have to be.”

“This is just the way that *you* guys see things. I don’t think we should be forcing people in Wu to not socialize with people aside from Shu. I believe we should be free to talk to whoever we want, whenever.”

“You really do have a free spirit, huh. Here I thought Gan Ning was just pulling my leg.” Zhou Yu looked at the wall, the at the door, with the two name tags reading “*Lu Xun*” and “*Gan Ning*”.

“Gan Ning told you that I have a free spirit?” Lu Xun sighed, placing his hands on his hips, “that’s not it. I just have my own sense of justice.”

“Even if that justice is wrong?”

“It seems pretty right to me.” Lu Xun shrugged, digging through his pocket for a card to put on the scanner to his room. “Thanks for walking me to my room, Zhou Yu.”

“*My pleasure.*”

“Gan Ning, Ling Tong, I have a mission for the two of you.” Zhou Yu stood by the doorway leading into Ling Tong’s room. Since it was easy to find the pair now that they were dating, he figured it was best to give them a job together as well.

“Go for it, what’s the mission?” Gan Ning questioned, standing from his spot at the foot of Ling Tong’s bed. Ling Tong slowly sat up and gave a hearty stretch, feeling his bones crack in various places. Zhou Yu walked into the room, closing the door behind him with a soft click.

“I need the two of you to keep an eye on Lu Xun. He’s been talking to someone in Wei, and I can’t always keep an eye on him myself, but with the extra set of hands working on this with me, it should be a lot easier. I trust Lu Xun, but it feels as if though he has gone rogue.” Zhou Yu explained, crossing his arms over his chest.

“He’s talking to people in Wei?” Ling Tong repeated, “that’s strange. He has friends outside of Wu?”

“That’s news to me.” Gan Ning shrugged, “I can keep an eye on him, but I haven’t heard anything about him meeting some new person.”

“He probably wouldn’t have said anything.” Zhou Yu replied, “that man... you can never really tell what he’s thinking until he says something to you.”

“That is true.” Ling Tong nodded. “Alright, yeah, Gan Ning and I will keep an eye out for Lu Xun and we’ll make sure that he doesn’t cause any problems or... talk to this mystery person from Wei.”

“Thank you, you two.”

“Lu Xun! Can you help me figure out some outfits for Da Qiao and I?!” Xiao Qiao grabbed Lu Xun by the arm as she pulled him through the hallways down to her and Da Qiao’s room. Lu Xun couldn’t even manage to protest before he found himself standing in front of Xiao Qiao’s bed, looking at a pile of multicolored dresses, “look! I want Da to wear one of the red dresses, and I’m gonna have one of the orange outfits over there!”

“C-can I ask what this is for?” Lu Xun mumbled, genuinely confused with the situation at hand.

“It’s just some really fancy thing that Da and I have to go to, don’t worry about it! Pick! Pick a dress for her!” Xiao Qiao pushed for Lu Xun to look at the dresses, “I asked some of the other guys earlier, but they’re really dumb and they can’t seem to figure out what a nice outfit looks like, so... they’re really no help at all.”

“Where’s Da Qiao at, then?” Lu Xun questioned, looking at Xiao Qiao even though she aggressively continued to point at the dresses on her bed.

“She’s in the bathroom, she’ll be out soon, but she won’t have a dress to wear, so you gotta choose a dress before you’re stuck looking at my sister naked!” To that response, Lu Xun felt his face heat up, turning to the bed to focus on the outfit choices in front of him. It didn’t take too long for him to decide on a long red elegant-looking dress with a few fitting accent colors for Da Qiao.

“This one looks perfect, I think.”

“Oh! I really like that one too! I was thinking either this one or the one over there!” Xiao Qiao pointed to a dress over by the head of her bed, somewhat proud of her options. “Great! Okay, now help me figure out my outfit!”

“I’m guessing yours isn’t going to have anything to do with a dress, huh?”

“Nah, I’m *supposed* to wear a dress, but dresses are gross and it’s super cold outside, so I’m just gonna wear shorts. Look at this! Which outfit should I choose?!”

“Clearly the third one.” Lu Xun answered quickly, he didn’t even take a second glance at the rest of the outfits before confirming that the third one was the most suitable for a fancy

occasion. “Now can you tell me what this is for?”

“It’s for a really fancy night out with our dad!” Xiao Qiao grinned, “we’re going out later on tonight to eat with him, then do some other super cool elegant thingies, so- it’s a way to make sure that he’s still healthy.”

“Right, because he’s been rather sick lately?” Lu Xun asked.

“Yeah, sadly. But it’s okay! He’s doing great right now, so we’re going to have a great time!”

“I see.”

“You should probably go, thank you so much for your help! Da Qiao’s probably about to get out of the shower now-”

“You don’t need to say anything else. I’ll see you two later. Have fun.” Lu Xun spoke quickly as he excused himself from the Qiao’s room. He decided, since they no longer have classes for the rest of December, to go back outside and relax with the calming frosty air. His goal was his favorite table, which for some reason happened to be Cao Pi’s new favorite spot to come and talk with him. Thinking of the incident, Lu Xun realized that he should probably formally apologize to the raven about the situation that had occurred a few days prior. Slowly, Lu Xun walked outside into the frosty afternoon air, curious on if his new companion had occupied the spot they usually sit at.

Somewhat shocked, but expecting the event, Lu Xun noticed a familiar figure sitting on the bench, possibly looking at something. It was unusual however, due to this being the first time that Lu Xun has ever seen the man wear a hat almost the same color as his hair. “Cao Pi?” Lu Xun called, cautiously walking up to the bench. He gained the raven’s attention almost instantly, piercing blue eyes watching his move as he sat at the opposite side of the bench. “How are you?”

“Should you even be here?” Cao Pi asked, ignoring the earlier question, “aren’t you just going to get yelled at again for talking with me?”

“Probably.”

“And yet, you still came to find me?”

“You’re not really hard to look for.” Lu Xun shrugged, looking down on the bench to play with the snow in front of him. “What have you been up to?”

“Studying. Wei doesn’t get breaks like Wu and Shu does.” Cao Pi pointed to his book, “physics.” He spoke simply.

“Oh- that’s right, I forget that they tend to overwork the Wei students.”

“Not particularly, but it is what we signed up for.” Cao Pi looked back down to his book, reading the words quickly. “I have ambitions, and Wei is what’s going to get me there.”

“Isn’t that also because your dad is the principal?”

“And also because my father is the principal, yes.”

“Understandable.”

There was a long moment of silence between the duo, as one chose to go back to studying, and the other chose to linger around without any real reason. Eventually, Cao Pi looked up from his book once more to make eye contact with the brunette, “why are you still here?”

“I’ve realized something, Cao Pi. I don’t think I’ve ever heard you call me by name,” Lu Xun spoke, drawing circles in the snow, “why is that?”

“I told you, I want to know your style name.”

“So you’re not going to call me anything else aside from my style name?”

“Yep.”

“Why is that so important to you though, may I ask?”

“It’s how I was raised.”

“To talk to people by using their- who would raise you to talk to people like that?”

“My father.”

For some reason, the way that Cao Pi responded to Lu Xun caused his body to tense up, the response was stern and clear that he didn’t want to continue on with the conversation leading in the direction that it was possibly going. Lu Xun nodded slowly, going back to look at the snow, “It’s Boyan.” Lu Xun said after a moment of silence.

“Boyan. Interesting.” Cao Pi nodded, staring back at his book once more. After a heavy sigh, he closed the book and stretched, giving a sound of relief. “You must not have believed me when I told you that I wouldn’t call you by your name, huh?”

“I just thought you were being an ass.” Lu Xun shrugged, looking up to the raven. “How long have you been out here, anyways?”

“An hour or so. I needed to get out of my room and get some cold air.”

“Very understandable.”

“By the way, you can call me Zihuan, if you wish.”

Lu Xun shook his head, “I’d rather just keep calling you Cao Pi.” He protested, putting his hands up in a way to deny the suggestion.

“I’ve also been meaning to tell you, you should come out here later on tonight, close to midnight. I want to take you somewhere.”

“What? That’s after curfew, I could actually get in trouble for that.”

“And? Don’t make it obvious that you left the building then.”

“You’re actually *telling* me to meet you here tonight, close to midnight?”

“And you know that you’re actually *going* to come, so I have no idea why you’re complaining.” Cao Pi picked up his book, and adjusted his body to stand up from the bench, “I have to go take a test, so I’ll talk to you tonight.”

“Wait- who ever said that I was going to come?!” Lu Xun questioned, slamming his hands onto the bench. “Cao Pi!”

“I’ll see you later.” Cao Pi repeated, waving as he walked off with his book in his hand. Lu Xun watched as the older man maneuvered through the lighter path of snow back to his dorm room. The people of Wei always interested Lu Xun, but he knew for certain that he would never want to be there on his own accord. As the raven disappeared to his right, another long haired raven came by on his left, with a long haired brunette and a blonde following closely behind him.

“Lu Xun? What are you doing out here? Isn’t it cold?” Zhou Yu asked, sitting in the spot that was once Cao Pi’s. “You weren’t... waiting for someone, were you?” He added with a suspicious eyebrow.

Thank goodness they didn’t see us talking.

“No, not this time. It’s nice to see you guys though,” Lu Xun looked over to Gan Ning and Ling Tong, smiling softly at the newfound couple. “How has your relationship been going? I haven’t asked that yet.”

“We haven’t spent much time together since Ling Tong and I started dating, huh? How about we go out somewhere and hang out for a bit down in the town? It’s cold, and that sounds like a cool thing to do.” Gan Ning suggested, putting his hand in the snow that was still on the table, “I don’t have much else to do today and I can tell you Ling Tong doesn’t either.”

“Oh- we’re inviting Ling Tong? I thought-” Lu Xun shook his head when he saw Gan Ning’s questioning face, “yeah, we should go into the town, it should be fun.”

“I think he thought it was going to just be a roommate bonding session.” Ling Tong pointed out, placing his hand on Gan Ning’s hair to ruffle it up, “I don’t really want to go anywhere right now anyways, so you can just go and hang out with Lu Xun for the time being.”

“I’m not a dog that you can just release whenever you feel like it.” Gan Ning grumbled, smacking Ling Tong’s hand away from his head. “Anyways, yeah, it can just be me and you, Lu Xun. We can talk and do shit just like we used to.”

“Just don’t do drugs, I’m trying to keep Gan Ning away from drugs.”

“What?! I don’t do drugs!”

Lu Xun smiled, looking at his friends with soft eyes, “I’ll make sure to keep an eye on Gan Ning, and I’ll be sure to keep him away from drugs, don’t worry, Ling Tong.”

“Oh, thanks Xun!” Ling Tong chuckled.

Gan Ning groaned, “I don’t even do drugs, what the hell are the two of you talking about?!”

Lu Xun stood from his seat, glancing at Zhou Yu who gave a chuckle to the trio. “C’mon Gan Ning, we should get going. I don’t want to get lost in the dark.”

“It’s just a walk up the hill to get back. How bad with directions do you think I am?” Gan Ning questioned, putting his hands to his hips. “You’re not gonna just look down on me the whole time, are you?”

“No, no way.” Lu Xun shook his head, “We should go, come on. I’m hungry.” Lu Xun said with a smile, pulling Gan Ning by his arm off campus. Ling Tong and Zhou Yu said their goodbyes as they wandered back into the Wu building.

Gan Ning sighed, following Lu Xun down the hill into the small town. It was getting closer to the evening, as he could tell by the sun threatening to lower to leave them in complete darkness. It’s been a long time since Gan Ning and Lu Xun have actually hung out together as friends, but this time around, it felt a little strange.

Lu Xun stopped at a small tea house, reading the menu they showed by the front door. “I really could use some tea right now.” He mumbled to himself, looking over the whole of the menu. Gan Ning shoved his hands in his pockets, following Lu Xun inside the small tea house. The duo was greeted with a calming smell, one of various different types of tea molding into one soothing flavor that reached their noses.

“We’re gonna eat here too?” Gan Ning mumbled quietly.

“Yeah sure. Did you not want to?” Lu Xun looked over to his blonde friend, “we don’t have to, we can-”

“No it’s fine,” Gan Ning shook his head, “I’ll pay. Just go all out, okay?” Lu Xun smiled in response, walking over to the cash register to find open seats.

It’s been a week since Gan Ning and Lu Xun spent the night out in the town, and since then, it felt like they’ve gotten a lot closer than they used to be. Ling Tong was rather suspicious when he realized that Gan Ning preferred to spend the nights in to watch movies or play games with Lu Xun, even though Lu Xun would rather leave it to Gan Ning to go through all the games. Originally, Ling Tong was going to let it slide, until he decided to ask Gan Ning to go on a date with him.

I wanna go on a date Xingba.

Sorry, I can’t. We can go on a date this weekend or something tho?

“This weekend, are you kidding me?” Ling Tong groaned, texting a simple “ok” to the blonde before shoving his phone into his pocket. “He’s right down the hall, and he can’t even bother

to pay me a visit?” He spoke to himself, leaving his dorm room to look down the left side of the hall. “Literally like 4 doors down if even that many.”

Ling Tong shook his head, deciding to go and spend the day outside and as far away from Gan Ning as possible. If those two can go and spend time together to the point where Gan Ning no longer wants to spend time with him, then they can have at it. Ling Tong was never the type of person to fight for someone like Gan Ning anyways, especially not after knowing how he and Lu Xun used to be.

I'm leaving that up to fate.

Out of curiosity, Ling Tong decided to go to the spot that Lu Xun liked to sit at during the day. Since he himself wasn't fond of going outside for long periods until just now, he wanted to see why Lu Xun loved this spot anyway. However, the sight before him was rather strange. To Ling Tong's knowledge, it was the third bench away from Shu and Jin, which would be the bench that has the best seat to see the sakura tree, and also the main one in between Wu and Wei. But, the bench that Ling Tong last saw Lu Xun sitting at, was occupied by some unusual man.

Ling Tong raised an eyebrow, walking slower to the bench with his snow boots crunching as it hit a fresh patch of snow. The unusual man stopped working on whatever he was doing, and turned to make eye contact with Ling Tong. Ling Tong felt a cold chill, and he knew it wasn't from the wind, when he saw the piercing stare and the familiar face.

“C-Cao Pi?”

Cao Pi turned back to his work, completely ignoring Ling Tong calling his name. But he did however, force himself to look up when Ling Tong got closer to the bench. With his hands in his pockets, he asked the raven, “why are you here?”

“What do you mean, ‘why are you here?’” Cao Pi repeated, closing his book.

“Isn't this Lu Xun's spot?” Ling Tong questioned, “last time I checked, the people from Wei never *ever* used this spot. So we all decided that it was just going to belong to Wu.” Cao Pi sighed, slowly putting his book back into his bag. “I'm- I wasn't going to tell you to leave.”

“I wasn't *going* to leave.” Cao Pi replied quickly, zipping up his bag, “I'm certain that I wasn't going to get any work done with you around, so I'd rather not let snow fall in my book.” He explained, pointing at the seat in front of him, “you might as well sit down.”

Feeling strange with the situation, Ling Tong sat down, pushing the snow to his side farther away so that it wouldn't pile up by his leg just in case the wind blew too hard. After a moment, he looked up at Cao Pi, “so... why *are* you here?”

“You're a friend of his, I would assume?” Cao Pi replied. Ling Tong nodded slowly, “so then, you're also from Wu.”

You clearly weren't listening... were you.

Ling Tong nodded once more, this time with a skeptical look on his face, “didn’t I basically say that I was from Wu already?”

“Did you?”

“I…” Ling Tong sat in silence for a moment, recalling his thoughts. “I’m pretty sure I did.”

“Interesting.” Cao Pi stated, folding his hands on the table in front of him. “I have a tendency to ignore things that don’t interest me. So you probably did say something about it and I completely disregarded the comment and or question.”

“That’s… good to know.” Ling Tong spoke, recalling the fact that Cao Pi only really replied to him saying that the raven didn’t have to leave. “But, isn’t this where Lu Xun usually stays? That’s why I want to know why you’re here.”

“Yes.”

At the simple response, Ling Tong shifted in his spot, “so… were you waiting for someone or…?”

“No.”

“So you- you sit here too then?”

“Yes.”

“When Lu Xun is here too?”

“Yes.”

Ling Tong nodded, attempting to think of other questions to ask the man, “why don’t you study in your dorm then?”

“I like the cold weather.”

After a moment of silence, something clicked in Ling Tong’s head, recalling an earlier conversation with Zhou Yu, he slowly began to put the pieces together. “You’re the person that Lu Xun became friends with in Wei, aren’t you?” He asked, sounding more stern than before, “I remember someone saying that Lu Xun found a friend in Wei, and that the friendship was dangerous… it’s… it’s you, isn’t it?”

“And if I were?” Cao Pi responded, his tone equally as dominant, “what of it?”

“I never thought that Lu Xun would bother to have a friend outside of Wu, so when I found out, his roommate and I were really confused. We were told to keep him away from you, but to be honest… that’s a lot of work. I… don’t really care who he talks to, just as long as it doesn’t cause trouble for me, personally.”

“You’re the one that’s dating his roommate, correct?” Cao Pi questioned.

“What- he- did he tell you that?!” Ling Tong felt his voice rise, mainly of shock. “Why is he going around telling people that he barely knows about his roommate and his roommates’ love life?!”

“What are you talking about?”

“What do you mean?!”

Cao Pi let out a chuckle, even though it was quiet, Ling Tong swore that he heard it, “he never told me anything about that. But, you must be Ling Tong, yeah?” Ling Tong nodded slowly, completely confused. “He never talked to me about his roommate. In fact, I didn’t find out that information from anyone in Wu. Those in Wei are the ones that would inform me about things.”

“Are you stalking Lu Xun?”

“I find him to be interesting, but no, I would never go through that effort for anyone.”

Ling Tong looked down to the table, reaching to poke at some of the snow lingering. “What do you and Lu Xun usually talk about, then?”

“Current events. Wei and Wu drama.”

“So, never anything personal?”

“I wouldn’t say *never*.”

Pausing in his actions, Ling Tong looked up to the raven in front of him, piercing blue eyes met his brown ones. “You haven’t said his name once, have you?”

“You’ve noticed?” Cao Pi asked, now interested in the conversation, “he noticed after a while too. It took a few conversations, but he realized.”

“So what do you call him? If by anything-”

“Boyan.” Cao Pi interrupted.

“Excuse me?” Ling Tong shook his head, “what did you just say?”

“Boyan.” Cao Pi repeated.

“You call Lu Xun by his styled name? He- he told you his styled name?”

“I wouldn’t call him anything else, so yes.”

“Wow...” Ling Tong stared at the raven, completely shocked, “it took me forever to find out Lu Xun’s style name. And he just tells you?”

“It took a while, of course.” Cao Pi shrugged, “but it’s fine, in my opinion. Also, I’ve been meaning to ask you, where has Boyan been? I haven’t seen him since last week.”

“You were with Lu Xun last week?”

“That’s not the question that I asked you.”

“He’s spending time with his roommate.” Ling Tong mumbled.

“Your boyfriend,” Cao Pi clarified. Ling Tong nodded slowly, looking off to the side. “Even though you don’t look too happy about it?”

“I haven’t been able to see Gan Ning all week, because he’s been spending so much time with Lu Xun.”

“Does that upset you?”

“Yeah... I mean... I-I guess?” Ling Tong shrugged, placing his hand in the pile of snow next to him, “I was just getting used to the system that Gan Ning and I have, but then he goes right back to what he was doing before we dated.”

“So he was always close to Boyan?” Ling Tong nodded once more, “and you’re worried that he prefers Boyan over you?”

“Well- not completely but... if he goes back to liking Lu Xun-”

“Ah, so that’s what this is.” Cao Pi nodded, “you’re insecure.”

“What?! No!” Ling Tong slammed his hand on the table, “why would I be insecure?!”

“If you’re unsure about how Boyan feels towards... Gan Ning, was it?” Ling Tong nodded, “then leaving Gan Ning with Boyan would make you feel insecure. Especially if he used to like or have some sort of feelings towards Boyan at some point, there’s no way to say that Gan Ning would have stopped feeling something towards him. Spending long periods of time with people tends to spark up emotions that you’ve never really felt that you had towards a person until you take the time to bond.”

“Are- are you telling me that there’s a chance that Gan Ning went back to liking Lu Xun?”

“Yes, and no. At any point in time, it doesn’t have to be now, he could have felt something. And I’m not *telling* you anything, I’m *explaining* what I think.” Cao Pi shrugged, “but to be honest, Boyan most likely isn’t interested in Gan Ning, I’m sure of that.”

“How can you be so sure?”

“Shouldn’t you be spending your time somewhere else? Like... making sure that your boyfriend is okay, per-se?”

“Man, if Lu Xun likes you, then he’s interested in people that are hella mysterious.” Ling Tong sighed, “I should go, yeah. It... was actually nice, talking to you.” He added, standing from his spot on the bench. Ling Tong made his preparations to walk away, but before leaving, he turned back to the raven, “sometimes Lu Xun is hard to understand. He thinks a

lot about his answers. Catching him off guard usually does better when getting answers without him thinking. I don't know if this will ever help you, but if you're interested in him-"

"You should go. I need to study." Cao Pi waved Ling Tong off, going back into his bag to take out his bag once more.

Ling Tong turned to Wu's building once more, this time, to go and have a talk with Gan Ning and Lu Xun.

"Wait, wait. You met with Cao Pi?" Lu Xun asked once more.

The trio sat in the middle of the dorm room, in a triangle of sorts. They were all in Gan Ning and Lu Xun's room, in between Gan Ning and Lu Xun's beds on either sides of the wall. Lu Xun sat in the middle, directly in the walkway of the front door and the couch, where he leaned back to use the couch's support to keep him sitting up. Ling Tong's back was towards Lu Xun's bed, and Gan Ning was sitting in front of his own bed.

Ling Tong leaned back, using his arms as a way to support him, "yeah, I thought that he was going to be a total piece of shit. But I think he was actually pretty helpful."

"So, am I the only one that hasn't actually met Cao Pi yet?" Gan Ning questioned.

Lu Xun and Ling Tong nodded, with Ling Tong speaking up, "if you decided to talk to Cao Pi, you'd probably have an argument or two with him. He... it's like, he talks psychological... this guy, he gets into your head and it's just... it's confusing as hell."

"That's definitely Cao Pi." Lu Xun nodded.

"That sounds horrible." Gan Ning groaned, "well, I guess I'm glad I've never talked to him then."

"I can promise you that he's a nice person."

"That dude loves the cold, his eyes are so frosty and he looks like a demon. Cao Pi concerns me." Ling Tong pointed out, "I'm not 100% confident with this guy at all, honestly. He doesn't even call Lu Xun by name, for christ's sake."

"You noticed that too?!" Lu Xun asked, leaning over to the taller male, "it's super weird. I've talked to him a lot of times before telling him my style name, and only after I said it, he'd actually call me by *it*. I was actually concerned that he had forgotten my name or something before that, but-"

"He definitely knew, he just chose not to say."

"Damn this guy is elaborate. Is that just to get what he wants?" Gan Ning asked, crossing his arms over his chest, using his bed as a back support, "it sounds like he's just been playing the two of you actively, and y'all have been falling for it."

“He definitely hasn’t played me,” Ling Tong shrugged. “But he definitely could have played Lu Xun, at this point.”

“I’m smarter than you think, guys.” Lu Xun sighed, adjusting his body so that his knees were pulled up to his chest. He wrapped his arms around his legs and yawned, “was there something else that you wanted to talk about though, Ling Tong?”

“Well, yeah, actually. There’s something that came up in Cao Pi and I’s conversation that I think... we need to talk about.” Ling Tong cleared his throat, “you and Gan Ning and all of this... stuff that’s been going on between the two of you. I didn’t think that it would bother me as much as it did, but... I really need to know, Gan Ning, how do you feel about Lu Xun?” Gan Ning looked to his boyfriend in shock, sitting up, “it’s really hard to tell what the two of you do when it’s just in your dorm room, you know?”

“That’s... fair.” Lu Xun looked over to Gan Ning.

“I don’t have any romantic feelings for Lu Xun, Gongji.” Gan Ning shook his head, “I’m sorry, I know that I’ve been hanging out a lot with Lu Xun lately, and I should have said something, but-”

“It’s okay, Xingba.” Ling Tong nodded, “I do trust you, but I guess I just felt that-”

“If I had feelings for Lu Xun before, that I’d have those same feelings again?” Gan Ning asked, “I mean, I *like* Lu Xun, yeah. But even this whole week... “

“This whole week Gan Ning wanted to try something different, but... he was also *complaining* about how bad he wanted to see you. Like, it was *bad*.” Lu Xun groaned, “every day when I woke up, Gan Ning would be looking through his phone at the *same pictures* of the two of you. And after like 2 hours of staring, he’d go and take a shower, and honestly- god forbid whatever he decided to do in that shower, then he’d force me to play games with him, and most of the time I didn’t even play games, I just watched him play. Please- don’t ever break up with Gan Ning.”

“What-?!”

“That’s... weird.” Ling Tong raised an eyebrow to Gan Ning, “don’t ever do that again.”

“What?! You don’t want me to care about you?!”

“Do you jerk off in that shower, Xingba?” Ling Tong pointed to the shower door close to Lu Xun’s bed.

“No, if I wanted to fuck, I’d just call you.”

“Am I just a booty call to you?!”

“No! What?! No!”

“This is why we don’t have successful conversations.” Lu Xun pointed out, “is that all you wanted to say, Ling Tong?”

“No, actually...” Ling Tong cleared his throat, “how do you feel about Cao Pi?”

“What?” Lu Xun’s body tensed up, “why are you asking that?”

“You have no time to think, tell me, how do you feel about Cao Pi?” Ling Tong asked again.

“He’s- interesting?” Lu Xun responded, “mysterious for sure... but overall he seems fairly nice.”

“I see.” Ling Tong nodded, “alright. Well. I’m supposed to banish you from talking to him, but I think I want you to get closer to him. So! I’m allowing you to get closer to him.”

“You’re also a lazy ass.” Gan Ning shrugged. “Oh- wait- you weren’t-”

“What do you mean you’re supposed to banish me from talking to him?” Lu Xun’s eyes went to a squint as he looked over to Ling Tong. “Who... wait a second...”

“Oh- shoot...” Ling Tong covered his mouth, “I completely forgot...”

“God dammit Ling Tong.” Gan Ning groaned.

“You both were in charge of making sure that I didn’t talk to him?” Lu Xun asked, “who put you in charge of doing something like that?”

“We can’t say.” Ling Tong and Gan Ning spoke in unison, glancing at each other then back at the younger teen.

“Sorry Xun...” Ling Tong added, “trust me, neither of us want to get in your way.”

“But someone else does?” Lu Xun asked.

“Why are you so offended by the fact that someone doesn’t want you to talk to Cao Pi?” Gan Ning questioned, stretching his legs out. “Unless-”

“No, that’s not it. *This* doesn’t have anything to do with how I feel about Cao Pi. It’s the fact that *someone* is trying to stop me.”

“We’d honestly tell you if we could, but we’re sworn to secrecy.” Gan Ning added, “I hope you don’t hate us.”

“Never. It’s not you guys that I’m going to hate.” Gan Ning and Ling Tong turned to look at one another, feeling awkward.

Those Blue Eyes

Wei is known as the most sophisticated academy in Dynasty Academy. They are known to focus the most on their studies, and claim to know how to get what they want. Conversing with the students in different academies weren't looked down upon, unlike with Wu and Shu. They have the closest relationship with Jin and are also the hardest academy to get into. Wei is known to barely ever give their students breaks, but when they have their breaks, the students enjoy them immensely.

Chapter 2: Blue Eyes

“Zihuan, are you sure about this?” Zhen Ji spoke with her words feeling thick, “you can’t just... leave me like this.”

“Of course I can.” Cao Pi sighed, not even bothering to look at the raven who threatened to cry in his face, “I’ve told you before, who you decide to be with is up to you. But I’m not one for cheating, or taking back anyone that *has* cheated on me.”

“You took back Guo Jia.” Zhen Ji said with spite, “this was just a mistake, I promise.”

“Ah, is that where you’re going to go with this? That I accepted Guo Jia, but I have no tolerance for you?”

“Of course. You can’t be so hypocritical and take back one person, but not the other.”

“Don’t you think that there’s a reason why I only chose to take back one person? Like say, something didn’t go well and suddenly I decided that it’s not worth it to take back someone else that cheats on me?”

“What happened between you two?” Zhen Ji asked, reaching to grab Cao Pi’s hand. The raven male pulled his hand away, shoving both his hands in his pockets, he turned to look away, focused on the door leading to the outside. “Are you not going to tell me?”

“Zhen,” Cao Pi started, glancing back to the woman, “I have things to do.”

“So... just like that, I’m not important to you anymore?”

“Zhen.” Cao Pi repeated, “I have things to do.”

“Zihuan, I won’t give up. You know this. You thought Guo Jia was bad? I can assure you, I’ll be much worse.”

“By all means.” Cao Pi shrugged, walking away from the long haired raven woman. He walked outside, taking in the cold air, turning to leave the campus in order to go to the small town just a bit down the hill.

“Cao Pi? Where are you going?”

Cao Pi stopped dead in his tracks, turning to see the familiar brunette with his small possie following closely behind him. “Boyan.” Cao Pi greeted the brunette as he got closer, and gave a subtle nod to the long haired brunette that he forgot the name of. “I was going into town.”

“Oh, really? Ling Tong, Gan Ning and I were also going into the town. I have a craving for tea and sweets. Do you want to come with?”

“Mmm...” Cao Pi thought for a moment, “you and who else?”

Lu Xun looked confused as he spoke, “what do you mean who else? Ling Tong and Gan Ning-” he pointed to the pair behind him, “these guys.”

“Which one is which?” Cao Pi asked, squinting at the pair.

“Do you not remember me?!” Ling Tong questioned, “we literally had a conversation like-yesterday!” Gan Ning felt a grin grow on his face as the conversation continued.

“I remember your face but... I don’t seem to remember who you are.” Cao Pi thought for a moment, feeling the wind hit his face. No name seemed to click with the face in front of him, “which one are you?” He asked again.

“I’m- I’m actually... offended?” Ling Tong mumbled, “I’m Ling Tong.”

“You’re the roommate?” Cao Pi asked, genuinely confused. Ling Tong shook his head and nodded to the blonde next to him, “oh, *you’re* the roommate.”

“Gan Ning, yeah.”

“Cao Pi, do you by chance have a memory problem?” Lu Xun asked, raising an eyebrow to the raven in front of him.

Cao Pi looked down to the brunette, and shook his head slowly, “if they don’t make an impact to me mentally, I don’t remember their names. It’s a blessing, in my opinion.”

“So now I have another question,” Lu Xun replied, “do you ask for style names so that you can remember the person better?”

“It’s like putting a nickname to a person, you’re more likely to remember a person if you have a nickname attached to them.” Cao Pi shrugged.

“Wait- so you completely forgot who I am?!” Ling Tong yelled, “I thought we had a wonderful conversation!”

“Do all of you Wu kids yell whenever things aren’t right?” Cao Pi questioned, sighing. “I’m very certain you don’t wish to be seen talking to me, so we should probably go into the town.” He used his head to point in the direction of the town, suddenly turning on his heel to walk away. The trio followed closely behind as he led them to a different tea house. Lu Xun

and Gan Ning glanced at the tea house they visited not too long ago, and slowly grew concerned when they entered the expensive territory.

“Wait a second- where are we going, exactly?” Lu Xun asked, grabbing onto Cao Pi’s arm, “I usually don’t travel this far into town-”

“Oh,” Cao Pi started, stopping in his tracks as he looked around the area, “I wasn’t thinking.”

“What do- where the hell were you taking us?” Gan Ning asked aggressively. Cao Pi glanced back to the bitter blonde and shrugged. “Did- do you have no idea either?!”

“I know where *I* was going, but now that I think about it, it might be too expensive for the two of you.” Cao Pi replied, glancing between Gan Ning and Ling Tong. “Where do you usually go?”

Gan Ning felt his eyebrow twitch as he closed his eyes, crossing his arms over his chest, “we can afford it.” He spat out, glaring at the cocky looking raven.

“Wait- Gan Ning-” Ling Tong attempted to protest, instantly being interrupted by the shorter male.

“Lets go, I said we can afford it, so take us to your tea house.”

A smirk tugged at Cao Pi’s lips as he glanced over to Lu Xun who looked rather uncertain about the situation, “don’t worry, Boyan. I’ll feed you.”

“That’s... not what I’m concerned about...” Lu Xun glanced up to the raven with worry, “are you sure about this?”

“So then, how does your dad work between this whole... ‘working between Wei and Jin, as well as being a dad that likes making kids’ type of lifestyle?” Ling Tong asked, leaning forward on the table. They sat in a small booth like space, on opposite sides of the table, Lu Xun and Cao Pi sat together and Ling Tong and Gan Ning sat on the opposing side. As they’ve been in the tea house for a while, the group has ordered a respectful amount of food and drinks to keep them satisfied for the next few hours.

Cao Pi took a sip of his coffee, slowly placing the cup back onto the coaster. It took a long while for him to look at Ling Tong or even acknowledge the question that was now floating in the air. The trio from Wu was admittedly curious of the progression and system of Wei. There was a long moment of silence, as Cao Pi looked up from his cup, making eye contact with Ling Tong, long enough to make the brunette feel uneasy. He picked up his cup once more, taking another sip, one that was practically silent, and placed it back down elegantly.

“Uh... Cao Pi?” Ling Tong called. Cao Pi held his cup by the handle, moving it in a way to spin the liquid in the cup in a circular motion.

“Cao Pi, what the hell dude?” Gan Ning asked, slamming the table. “We’re asking you questions here!”

Ling Tong glanced to Lu Xun, tapping the table to get the other brunette's attention. Lu Xun, startled, looked at Ling Tong. Ling Tong tilted his head towards Cao Pi, and raised an eyebrow, hinting at something. Lu Xun turned to look at the raven to his right, and cleared his throat.

"Cao Pi?" Lu Xun spoke, catching the attention of the raven.

"Yes?" Cao Pi responded, turning to smaller man, "what's wrong?"

"Do you mind answering a few questions for us?"

"Questions?"

"Are you shitting me?" Gan Ning groaned, "Ling Tong asks you a question, and you only respond to Lu Xun? Do you want him that badly?!"

Cao Pi took another sip of his coffee, placing the cup down elegantly once more, "when did he ask me a question?"

"He asked you one not too long ago, are you serious?" Gan Ning replied.

"That was a question for me? I don't recall him saying my name, or specify who he was talking about." Cao Pi replied, clearing his throat. "It didn't seem like the question was directed at me, regardless of my position. And no, me responding to Boyan doesn't correlate with me wanting to be with him. If someone calls my name twice and doesn't give me a valid answer to respond to, the third time usually warrants a 'yes' response for them to continue. It had nothing to do with Boyan calling for me, but the premise of him being the third person to call for me to ask a question."

"Are you shitting me? You have a whole system for this type of thing?"

"It's not a system." Cao Pi shrugged, "why call my name without asking me a question? Why waste my time, as well as yours, with me having to give you an extra answer just so that you could ask your question later?"

"That's... a pretty valid point, I'd say." Ling Tong nodded slowly, agreeing with Cao Pi's argument. Gan Ning sighed heavily, sinking in his seat. "I guess he's not wrong, in that case. The amount of time that we spent calling for him... could have been used to talk to him about the question."

"By the way, when did you even ask me a question?" Cao Pi asked, turning to Ling Tong, "I don't remember hearing one."

"You probably ignored it, like everything else." Ling Tong mumbled. "I asked, how does your dad manage all the things that he does, simply put."

"He has Yuanrang help him, so most affairs that happen in Jin are worked between Yuanrang and Zhongda or Zhang Chunhua." Cao Pi explained, "he also has a lot of kids, more than what's actually in the academy. So he can maneuver through a lot and still get a lot of things done."

“Who’s... Yuanrang?” Ling Tong asked, grabbing his tea cup, “I don’t think any of us know the people in Wei well enough to know their style names.”

“Or Zhongda, for that matter.” Gan Ning added.

“My cousin and the head of Jin.”

“So... Sima Yi and- who the hell’s your cousin?” Ling Tong mumbled.

“I’d assume it would be Xiahou Dun, correct?” Lu Xun clarified, “he’s Cao Cao’s vice principal, so it would make sense that he does a lot of the work.” Cao Pi nodded subtly, going back to drink the rest of his coffee. “That’s interesting... to have so many siblings, or people to just... to be able to be near so many people all the time, it just seems amazing.”

“You know what else is amazing?” Ling Tong asked, “being able to talk with the ‘Ice Prince of Wei’ like this.” He spoke in air quotes, “I thought he was just really shitty, but... he’s really straightforward, don’t you think?”

“Is that really a positive quality?” Gan Ning muttered, crossing his arms over his chest as he leaned back in his seat. He looked off to the side, “most people would say otherwise.”

“It’s easier to let people think what they wish. All that matters to me is that I do things my way.” Cao Pi replied, setting his cup down with a smirk appearing, “If you’re done eating, I’d like to split the bill.” He spoke louder than his previous comment, glancing to his right to acknowledge the waitress who hurried over with the receipt.

Gan Ning and Ling Tong reacted in shock, as Lu Xun finished the rest of his tea and placed the cup onto the table. “Yes, of course, I will split the receipt. Which way would you like it to be split?” The waitress asked, showing the receipt to Cao Pi, who casually pointed at certain parts of the receipt for one side of the table. After a moment, the waitress nodded with a warm smile, “thank you! I will be back shortly with the updated receipts!”

“You- you were serious?!” Ling Tong asked after the waitress walked away, “you were seriously only going to pay for Lu Xun?!”

“It was roughly 1,388 yuan, and since it was split and you two ate the most, you have about 1,041 yuan to pay.” Cao Pi replied, digging into his pocket to grab his wallet.

“Are you fucking serious?” Gan Ning groaned loudly.

“Didn’t I say I was only paying for Boyan?” Cao Pi asked, “and didn’t you say that you could afford it?” He looked to the aggressive looking blonde.

“Oh, so you remember that, but you don’t remember my name?” Gan Ning questioned, digging through his pockets. “I guess- whatever. I don’t seem to have a choice.”

“You don’t. You really don’t.” Cao Pi let out a small chuckle, “enjoy the hefty bill. I need to talk to Boyan alone.” He pointed to the brunette next to him, standing from his spot to pull Lu Xun from his seat. “We’ll meet the two of you outside.” Cao Pi added, putting on his jacket and hat that he had stripped somewhere during their time in the tea house. He glanced

at Lu Xun and led the brunette outside in the cold. Lu Xun began to visibly shiver, and Cao Pi stood by the door with his hands in his jacket pockets.

“What is it that you needed? It’s super cold out here...” Lu Xun tried to warm his hands up by rubbing them together and breathing on them.

“I wanted to tell you a few things, but now that I think about it, we probably won’t have enough time.” Cao Pi mumbled, certain that Gan Ning and Ling Tong would be out shortly.

“Just ask, it’s okay.”

“Let me have your number.” Cao Pi took out his phone, “that’s the first thing that I want to tell you.”

“S-shouldn’t you be asking me this?” Lu Xun questioned, “do I even remember my phone number...?” he mumbled to himself, taking the phone from Cao Pi to put his number in.

“If you don’t know it, I’ll find it out at a later point.” Cao Pi shrugged, glancing to the side, “there was something else, but I don’t know if this is the right time for-”

“Cao Pi? No- Zihuan? What are you doing so far into the town?” Cao Pi physically froze hearing the voice coming from his right. He closed his eyes, and adjusted his hat. “Zihuan?” The voice repeated as it got closer to the pair.

“Cao Pi?” Lu Xun whispered, glancing to his left to see the source of the strange voice. “Who is that?”

“Fengxiao,” Cao Pi turned to the voice, “aren’t you supposed to be in the hospital?”

“I got better, and the treatment seemed to have been working, so I requested to leave so that I can *finally* finish being in school. I’m glad that you’re the first person from Wei that I saw, I’ve missed you.” Guo Jia smiled, reaching to hug Cao Pi. He glanced over to Lu Xun with a questionable stare, “and who is this?”

“Boyan,” Cao Pi sighed, lowering his head, “introduce yourself.”

Lu Xun gave a masked smile to cover his sudden irritation, unconsciously placing Cao Pi’s phone in his jacket pocket to greet Guo Jia with a handshake. “I’m Lu Xun, and you must be-”

“Guo Jia. It’s nice to meet you in person.” Guo Jia shook Lu Xun’s hand, “what are you doing with Cao Pi, may I ask?”

“We’re- we were waiting for-”

“Yo, Cao Pi, Lu Xun, we’re ready to go bac-” Gan Ning froze after walking out of the building, seeing the unfamiliar blonde, “Wh-”

“Isn’t that Guo Jia? I thought he was in the hospital for the rest of the year...” Ling Tong thought out loud, “did they let you out early?”

“They sure did.” Guo Jia nodded, holding onto Cao Pi’s jacket as he turned to look at the two new companions in the group. “I’m shocked that the news about my health reached even to Wu, am I that famous there?”

“I’m pretty sure the only person that had no idea who you were was Boyan.” Cao Pi nodded his head to the brunette who blushed awkwardly.

Guo Jia smiled at the raven, reaching for his hand to hold. “Well, now that you’ve finished dining with them, do you want to come walk with me back to the dorms? I don’t know if I’ll have much energy to get there by myself.”

“Oh, sure. I’ll go with you.” Cao Pi nodded, holding Guo Jia’s hand, “come, let’s go home.”

Gan Ning, Ling Tong and Lu Xun all stood in an awkward silence, watching the pair walk back to their campus. Gan Ning leaned over to Ling Tong, whispering something in his ear, as Lu Xun let out a quiet sigh.

“What’s your purpose?” Cao Pi stared at the blonde in front of him. Instead of bringing Guo Jia to his own room, the blonde suggested that he be brought to Cao Pi’s room so that they could catch up. Cao Pi sat on his bed, one leg over the other, as he placed his hands on his knees folded. Guo Jia sat in the seat across from him, which was the chair that went to his work desk. Guo Jia sat in a way, similar to Cao Pi’s, but one arm was draped over the back of the chair and the other was on his knee.

“What do you mean? I wanted to talk to you.”

“You could talk to me at any time, but you decided to do this too?” Cao Pi questioned, “I was with-”

“Mm~” Guo Jia thought for a moment, closing his eyes, “I thought that I would be okay seeing you with someone else, but... I think that just made me jealous again.~”

“Jealous? Shouldn’t you be over your feelings by now?”

“I should be...” Guo Jia mumbled, opening his eyes slightly to stare at the raven across from him, “but how can someone like me just give up on loving someone like you?”

“Fengxiao,” Cao Pi started, moving a hand from his lap to use it to lean back on his bed, “you know... I broke up with Zhen Ji this week.”

“Is it for good, this time?”

“I don’t condone cheating. Just like how I don’t support a person being in love with my father.”

“Oh~ that’s strange indeed. I wonder who did that~” Guo Jia looked up to the ceiling, “with them, do you speak vaguely? Leaving things to their interpretation?”

Cao Pi sighed, using his free hand to dig into his pocket. He thought for a moment and adjusted his body, checking his other pocket. After patting his back pockets, he turned to where his winter jacket was, checking the inside of those pockets as well. “What the-”

“What are you looking for?” Guo Jia asked, leaning forward in his spot, “I can help.”

Cao Pi turned to his shoes, looking inside them to make sure it didn’t drop, “where- where is...” He turned back to his bed, checking on top of and under his pillow, the blankets, and even under the bed. “Where is my phone?” Cao Pi looked over to Guo Jia, who gave him a questionable look. “Did I have it when I came back?”

“Your... phone?” Guo Jia thought for a moment, putting his finger to his chin, “I... actually never saw your phone yet.” He spoke, “want me to call it?”

“It should be... the sound should be on, yeah, call it.”

After a moment of the pair sitting in silence, Guo Jia called the phone.

.....

Where is my phone?!

Cao Pi sighed heavily, seeing Guo Jia hang up his own phone, the blonde shook his head in defeat. Cao Pi groaned and looked to the ground, thinking. “Did you... by chance, give your phone to *someone*?” Cao Pi heard Guo Jia ask.

“Why would I do something as stupid as tha-”

“Well, when I called,” Guo Jia interrupted, “the rings didn’t finish, so, I have a feeling someone has your phone, and they either hung up by accident, or on purpose... so... did you give someone your phone?”

Cao Pi stood, thinking of the events before he came across Guo Jia, “what was I doing before-” He looked up to the blonde in shock, “Boyan. He has it.”

“Oh, that Lu Xun kid? Isn’t he from Wu? Should we go get it?”

“We should but-”

“Don’t tell me you’re afraid? Are you afraid to go to Wu?”

“Afraid?” Cao Pi scoffed, walking to the door to grab his jacket, putting it on quickly. “Come on, we’re going to Wu.”

“Should- Wu isn’t very fond of us being on their campus, are you sure we should even go there?”

“Yes.” Cao Pi sighed, “so let’s go.” He added, opening up the door. At some point, he put his shoes on and had already grabbed his hat, slowly placing it on his head.

Not too long into the pair's walk, they were interrupted by a familiar face. Guo Jia greeted the vice principal with a warm smile, "Vice Principal Xiahou Dun, it's a pleasure to see you again." He held out a hand for the older one eyed man to shake.

"You, why are you here? Shouldn't you be in the hospital? Have you talked to Principal Cao yet?" Xiahou Dun questioned, "and you, Zihuan. Where are you going? Shouldn't you be studying for your finals?"

"I've studied already-"

"Your father has been calling you, where is your phone?"

"I'm not-"

"The two of you need to go and see Principal Cao immediately." Xiahou Dun interrupted, pushing the pair to walk in the opposite direction. Guo Jia turned his head to look at the raven to his left, giving a sheepish smile as Cao Pi could only manage to sigh heavily, knowing he wasn't going to be able to protest the older man pushing him.

It didn't take long for the pair to be shoved into Cao Cao's office, where the older man sat in his chair with his hands crossed under his chin. Guo Jia gave the older man one of his best smiles as he walked into the office and sat in one of the two chairs opposite of Cao Cao's desk. Cao Pi was a little slower with his actions, having no choice but to sit in the other chair.

"The two of you," Cao Cao sighed, "I believe it's important for me to know whether or not you're healthy enough to even come back to class. The doctors called me today, and told me that you've been released temporarily, but I'll need to keep a close eye on you. But, these days, I haven't been very healthy these days, so I've been calling *my son* here, in hopes that he'll be able to watch over you to make sure that you'll be okay while you're studying."

"So that's why you wanted to see me?" Cao Pi asked, adjusting his body in the seat, "you want me to take care of Fengxiao?" Cao Pi watched as Cao Cao nodded, sighing heavily. "Since there's no way that he's going to leave my side, then I can only assume that I won't have any choice but to."

"Aw~ I get to have Cao Pi watch over me while I get better.~ Suddenly, I'm happy.~"

Cao Cao shook his head, "this means that the both of you need to go and *study*. Guo Jia, you will be free from taking the finals, but that doesn't mean that you won't be doing work to make up for all that you've missed, and I can't have that in my academy. Zihuan, you will be studying your best, and you better have some impressive grades this time. I've let you slack off before, but now? That's not happening again. And also, pick up the phone when I call for you."

"I- I actually need to find my phone." Cao Pi admitted, "I've been searching for it, so I was about to go and retrace my steps-"

"No matter, you can search for it some other time." Cao Cao shook his hand, waving off the comment, "as a matter of fact, I could just give you a new ph-"

“I’d rather my old one, I’ve grown accustomed to it.” Cao Pi shook his head, “I’ll find it on my own time, but for now... I’ll... help Fengxiao study.”

“I appreciate it. Good luck.”

“Stay as healthy as possible, Cao Cao.~” Guo Jia smiled, “Cao Pi wouldn’t like it if something bad happened to you again.”

“I’m attempting to do my best.” Cao Cao nodded, “now get out of here, I have work to do.”

“So... about getting that phone back.”

“I have a feeling that Lu Xun feels that he shouldn’t answer my phone, or there’s a good chance that he probably doesn’t even remember that he has my phone. I actually- my phone probably isn’t even making noise-”

“No, that phone definitely could have been picked up. He’s probably busy doing something.” Guo Jia shrugged, “I’ll call again later and try to see if he’ll answer. If not... we’ll just have to invade Wu and get your phone back.”

“I say we do that now, I don’t know how much more I can suffer waiting for my phone back.”

“You usually don’t even live by it.”

“I usually don’t use my phone, you’re right. But this time around-”

“You want something from him, don’t you?”

“From him?” Cao Pi shook his head, “no, I just... I don’t know.”

“When did you break up with Zhen Ji?”

“This week.”

“Ah, right, you said that earlier, didn’t you?”

“I did, yes.”

“How do you feel about her? After everything that you’ve done to bring her here?”

Cao Pi sighed, adjusting his legs. He sat in the same spot on his bed, but this time with his legs crossed indian style. He leaned back and looked up to the ceiling. “I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

Guo Jia shrugged, turning to the work desk behind him as he adjusted his chair. “I guess I should be getting to work, gotta study and do all of that stuff. The good stuff.”

“Yeah, of course.”

Cao Pi and Guo Jia sat outside in the cold air, notebooks out and on the table. The pair sat quietly, with the only sounds coming from them writing on their papers or inside their books. The pair had been studying for what seemed like an hour, but the comfortable silence was enough for them to get some much needed work done.

Their hard work was soon interrupted by a familiar man from the academy of Jin. “Zihuan, Fengxiao... It’s been a long time since I saw the two of you together. Since... before Luo’s time?” The pair paused upon hearing the voice, turning to the source.

“Sima Shi, it’s been quite a long time, hasn’t it?” Guo Jia smiled, “how have you been? Is Wang Yuanji treating you well?”

“I’m not-” Sima Shi stopped talking, shaking his head, “she’s fine, from what I know. What are the two of you up to? When did you come back?”

“I came back yesterday afternoon.” Guo Jia chuckled, “you should sit with us, we haven’t spent much time together since... you know.”

“She really was an interruption, you know.” Sima Shi spoke, sitting in the open spot next to Guo Jia. Since it was sunnier than usual, some of the snow was moved from the benches to give the students more space to sit, if they wished. Sima Shi glanced over to Cao Pi, who had yet to speak to him. “I’m talking to you, Zihuan.”

“Ziyuan, it has indeed been a long time since we’ve talked. How is Zishang?” Cao Pi asked, placing his pencil in the nook of the book, closing the book and pushing it to the side. “Has he been healthy?”

“He has been, yes. Zhao and Yuanji have been closer than usual, but it makes sense.” Sima Shi nodded, “how have you been?”

“I’m actually not interested in this small talk.” Cao Pi cleared his throat, “I have a problem, actually.”

“Yeah?”

“It has to do with... emotions. You’ve been very good at helping me keep them at bay, and I was hoping you could help me do it again.”

“Emotions? Are we talking about the same type of emotions that you’ve had once before? With Luo?” Sima Shi looked at Guo Jia who shrugged in response. “Are you going to try and go for another relationship?”

“I’m not too sure yet, which is why I want you to talk me out of it.” Cao Pi sighed, “I’d... rather not have to deal with this. Especially not yet.”

“I’d say it’s too soon for you anyways. Whatever you feel towards whomever this person is, it might just be your sense of rebounding, and I don’t think that’s safe.”

“A rebound, huh.”

“When did you start falling for this person?”

“Before I broke up with Zhen Ji, I’d believe.”

“Interesting...” Sima Shi nodded slowly, “yeah, okay, I’ll see just how well I can help you.”

“Are you going to hypnotize him?” Guo Jia questioned, “I think that would work well for Cao Pi.”

“Zihuan, how serious are you about this, this time around?”

“I’m not sure.” Cao Pi shrugged, “we shall see.”

“Cao Pi, we should get back to studying, I haven’t finished the last two chapters yet.” Guo Jia pointed to his book, “if anyone sees us slacking, I think they’re going to blame you for it.”

“It’ll be fine, Fengxiao.” Cao Pi shook his head, “Ziyuan, are you busy? You should join us.” Sima Shi nodded, choosing to assist Guo Jia as they went back to studying.

After an hour or so more of intense studying, Guo Jia groaned and stretched, feeling the stress from staying in the same position for so long. “Geez~ my body hurts so much.” Guo Jia’s groan sounded fairly close to a moan as he dropped his arms down onto the table, looking at what Cao Pi was reading. “Are you done yet, Cao Pi?”

“Just about. I have a final tomorrow, so I wanted to make sure to study this now.” Cao Pi spoke as he closed his notebook and textbook, stacking the smaller book on top of the other. “It’s probably like, 3 or 4 pm now, and it feels like it’s so late.”

“Mm~, I’m just glad that Sima Shi decided to study with us.” Guo Jia smiled to the other raven, “this might have taken me much longer to understand if I was looking at it on my own.”

“I think it was much easier because you understand things fairly quickly.” Sima Shi pointed out, “I just had to jog your memory and things went pretty easily.” Guo Jia chuckled, “say, how was the whole hospital situation going for you? Did you see Principal Cao when he was there?”

“I actually... couldn’t, no.” Guo Jia looked off to the side, “I heard that he was there, but... when he was there, I was under heavy treatment. I did however, ask them just how he was doing, and they told me that he’ll be fine for now, but he and I are suffering similarly.”

Cao Pi eyed the blonde across from him, “what do you mean? Similarly how?”

“We don’t... have the same disease, and... I’d assume he’s much farther along in a treatment... but, they *say* that he may have been diagnosed with scleroderma.” Guo Jia answered, suddenly feeling awkward about the conversation. Cao Pi’s concern was visible on the raven’s face, and Sima Shi was doing his best to make things manageable so that the conversation could continue.

“Scleroderma?” Cao Pi repeated, “what is that?”

Guo Jia opened his mouth to talk, but Sima Shi interrupted, feeling that it was better he talk instead of the blonde, “like ALS, there isn’t any notable way to cure it. They say it affects women more than men, but it also affects those usually starting in their 30s up to their 50s. Most of the symptoms are visible, you’d be able to see them on your hands or feet during cold temperatures or during extreme emotional situations. Though, it could easily be life threatening, I think Principal Cao has been living fairly well.”

“It might be easier to not stress him out or cause any trouble for him.” Guo Jia added, “but they have said that he’s been getting worse, not better. His digestive system hasn’t been doing very well, and they’re pretty sure Cao Cao is... prepared.”

“Prepared...” Cao Pi looked to his books, “my father isn’t the type of person to give up, you both know that.”

“Oh, trust us, we know.” Sima Shi gave a small smile to the raven, “knowing him, he’s done something to make sure that you’ll get the most out of this. I’m pretty sure you’re his favorite son, Zihuan.”

Cao Pi let out a quiet chuckle, “this actually angers me. It angers me that I know he’s sick, and I’m completely incapable of doing *anything* to help him.”

“You should know to make sure you make your father feel comfortable-”

“Don’t.” Cao Pi put a hand up to stop Sima Shi from speaking, “never *ever* say that to me again.”

“Hey- Cao Pi?” Guo Jia called for the angered raven, “there’s someone that seems to be looking for you.” He pointed past the raven, who turned to follow the direction, leading his eyes onto a rather cautious looking brunette. “Wanna go to him and we’ll wait here-”

“I don’t think he’s here for me.” Cao Pi stood from his seat, picking up his books and pencil to place inside his bag, “come on, we should leave.”

Guo Jia gave Sima Shi an uncertain look as they both stood in unison from their spots, Guo Jia dusting off his pants as he picked up his own books. He handed off the books to Sima Shi who placed them into the blondes’ bag and handed the bag back to him. Guo Jia put on the bag and looked back to Cao Pi, “are you... sure that we should leave without you talking to him?”

Cao Pi sighed, with his bag comfortably on his back, he turned to face the brunette once more. “I’ll talk to him, go ahead, I’ll meet you by my room.” He waved for Lu Xun to come over to him, which the shorter man obeyed and ran up to the man. “What’s wrong?”

Lu Xun looked past him and at the table, “wasn’t that Sima Shi that was with you? You’re friends with him too?”

“You should have expected that, Wei and Jin are more likely to be friends than with anyone else.” Cao Pi shrugged, “what do you want?”

“Mm, well... I wanted to give you something, but I guess you don’t really need it. You seemed to have been doing pretty well without it.” Lu Xun sighed, shoving his hands into his pockets, “you know, it’s really cold.”

“I’m not in the mood for your games, Boyan.” Cao Pi’s eyes lowered to a glare, “I’d prefer not to get angry at you.” He added, holding onto the straps of his bag, “what is it that you have?”

“Your phone.” Lu Xun pulled out the familiar looking phone from his pocket, “I never got the chance to give it back to you, but I also figured you were busy because... your phone was going off a lot last night.”

“Why didn’t you come to bring it to me then?” Cao Pi asked, taking the phone from the smaller man, “that would have been helpful.”

“I don’t know how to get inside Wei’s building, and I couldn’t really... *call* anyone using your phone, I wouldn’t know what to do or say.”

“What about when Fengxiao called?”

“Fengxia- oh, Guo Jia? When he first called, I was with Gan Ning and Ling Tong, and the second time I was trying to take a nap.” Lu Xun smiled awkwardly, “sorry about that...”

“Interesting.” Cao Pi nodded, “I need to go.” He added, turning to the Wei building.

“Um- wait- Cao Pi?” Lu Xun called, grabbing onto Cao Pi’s arm, “there were still some things that you wanted to tell me, right? Can I... ask you something too?”

“What is it?”

“Your relationship with Guo Jia-”

“Don’t worry about it. He’s a friend of mine.”

“What else was it that you wanted to tell me?”

Cao Pi turned to look at Lu Xun, eyes seemingly lifeless, “you already asked me something.”

“I’ll leave you alone if you answer this too then.”

Cao Pi sighed, “I can’t ask you that right now. It’s not the right time.”

“The right time?”

“Now you’re just-” Cao Pi pulled his arm out of Lu Xun’s grasp, “you just asked me two questions now. I seriously need to go.”

Lu Xun nodded slowly, “alright... I’ll talk to you some other time then.” Cao Pi nodded, walking off into Wei’s building to where he went back to find Guo Jia and Sima Shi whom he assumed to also have stayed for some more socialization.

“How was it?” Guo Jia asked when Cao Pi came into earshot of the trio. “Did you ask him out?”

“No, rather, I’ve decided that I want nothing to do with him.” Cao Pi responded, unlocking the door to his room. He allowed the pair to walk inside before entering and closing the door behind him. “It’s easier this way.”

“Are you sure this just doesn’t have to do with you finding out about Principal Cao’s condition?” Sima Shi asked, taking off his shoes and jacket to leave by the door. Guo Jia was following suit, then soon placed his bag on the all too familiar desk so that he could sit in the chair. Sima Shi chose to stand close to Guo Jia, by the door. “Are you just using this as a way to escape from-”

“I’m not escaping from anything.” Cao Pi interrupted, “and my father’s condition has nothing to do with this.”

“C- Zihuan, you’re interested in someone in Wu?” Sima Shi asked, earning a nod from the other two, “and you have the audacity to ask me to help you? I told you that the only time I’m ever going to help you is if they’re still in Wei, or if they’re in Jin.”

“It’s okay, I don’t want to be with him.”

“Are you going to take this one slow?” Guo Jia asked.

“More like,” Cao Pi cleared his throat, digging through his pockets to pick up his phone, “I’m going to ruin my chances so that I won’t have to think of him as an option anymore.”

Guo Jia gasped, leaning back in his seat, “you’d risk that? How long have you been working on this relationship?”

“Not long enough to really care about it.” Cao Pi shrugged, “anyways, I should probably study some more, the tests tomorrow aren’t going to be easy.”

“Father, I would like to talk to you about some things.” Cao Pi stood in front of Cao Cao’s desk, placing his hands on the edges of the desk in a demanding type of way. “Would you like to listen?”

“This depends on what you want to talk about, but… go for it, I have time to listen to you.” Cao Cao leaned back in his seat, using the arm rests to support his elbows as he intertwined his fingers and used both of his index fingers to touch his beard, “go for it, my son.”

“What are your current views on Wu?” Cao Pi asked, staring into his fathers’ eyes, “I personally believe that they’re just hyperactive children that need to be introduced to sophistication.”

“Wu? They seem like the type that listens to Shu the most, and if something happens, they’re quick to blame everyone but themselves. I’m not interested in those types of people. They’re a hindrance to my success.”

“I see...” Cao Pi nodded, “and if I were to fall for someone in Wu? What would you do?”

Cao Cao gave his son a smirk, one of which that was hard to judge. “First the Others, now Wu. What next? Shu? Jin? Someone from town?”

Cao Pi shook his head, “it’s not like that. I was asking hypothetically, I don’t... have feelings for anyone right now.”

“Zhen Luo ruined romance for you?” Cao Cao questioned, “you know she left the school yesterday evening? She cleared out everything in just a few hours, thanks to her hired help.”

“She always had a tendency to buy her way out of problems.”

“Was your question simply about my feelings towards Wu?”

“Actually, I wanted to ask you if you could hold a meeting with the other principals, to see if we could get some of these rules rewritten.”

Cao Cao leaned forward in his seat, moving his hand so that he could write something down on the paper in front of him, “I’ll look into it, but I’m not going to promise anything.” He gave a subtle huff as he leaned back in his seat, “by the by, I have something I need you to do for me. If you do this for me, I’ll take into full consideration your request to get these rules rewritten.”

“Really?” Cao Pi asked, watching Cao Cao nod, “then what is it? What do you need from me?”

Cao Cao pressed a button on the side of his desk, then spoke specifically for the intercom, “send him in.” he stated never looking away from Cao Pi. Ice blue eyes on ice blue eyes. There was a moment of silence before the pair’s staredown was broken by Cao Cao’s office door opening. For the two of them, it revealed a familiar man with a high ponytail. Cao Xiu stood by the door, overwhelmed with the feeling of joy and anxiousness as he walked up to Cao Cao’s desk, his hands behind his back as he stood in a military-like style. “Wenlie here also needs some help with his studies. However, his grades aren’t far off from yours, I’m hoping he can do much better. Not only that,” Cao Cao looked over to Cao Xiu, “he’s been looking forward to spending time with you.”

“U-unc- Principal Cao! You didn’t need to say that!” Cao Xiu spoke in an awkward panic, trying his best to keep his position. “I would love to spend time with my cousin,” Cao Xiu said as he looked over to Cao Pi, who crossed his arms over his chest and gave him an amused look, “but my studies are the most important part of being here, so... I want to get better.”

“You want me to tutor him with as much as I know? My grades aren’t perfect, you know.”

“I’m aware, I have your records.” Cao Cao shrugged, “it would be great practice though, helping someone else study. And besides, you’ve already done that with Guo Jia, and that man decided to take some of his finals today, regardless of how much he’s actually missed. He seems confident.”

“If he wants to learn from anyone, it *should* be Fengxiao.” Cao Pi pointed out, “Fengxiao is capable of getting perfect marks even with the bare minimum of studies.”

Cao Cao nodded in agreement, “yes, Guo Jia is a natural talent, that I would hate to lose. He would make this academy prosper.” Cao Cao sighed deeply, coughing quite a bit in a struggle to catch his breath. Both Cao Pi and Cao Xiu made an attempt to reach for him, but he held up a hand to refuse the assistance. After a moment of silence, Cao Cao cleared his throat and continued his earlier thought, “which is why I need more people like him here, natural talents. Teach Cao Xiu and I will do my best to put it in your favor.”

“Of course, father.” Cao Pi nodded, lowering his head, “I, too, will do my best.”

“Good, now get out of here, I know the both of you should be studying.”

“Take care of yourself un-Principal Cao. Please be sure to drink a lot of water.” Cao Xiu bowed respectfully to the older man.

“Wenlie,” Cao Cao called, catching the attention of the long haired brunette, “call me uncle.”

Cao Xiu’s eyes seemingly lit up in what Cao Pi assumed to be joy, “y-yes! Of course! Take care of yourself uncle. I’ll come check on you later.” He spoke his parting words, turning to leave with Cao Pi leading the way out.

“Well, Wenlie, do you want to kill time before our final, or do you want to study?” Cao Pi asked.

“I feel that we should probably study- but... if we study too much, we might end up forgetting things.” Cao Xiu spoke loud enough for Cao Pi to hear, but most of the reply was to himself as he mumbled. “Maybe he would like us to study more... but our grades aren’t too bad so-”

“Wenlie,” Cao Pi started, “I was looking for a simple answer.”

Cao Xiu shook his head, “yes- we should probably study some more. Just for about a half hour or so, then we can kill time and eat outside. I heard the weather was great today.”

“That sounds like a good idea, let’s do that.” Cao Pi nodded, leading Cao Xiu to his room so that they could do one last round of studies before their finals.

Cao Pi and Cao Xiu sat outside, basking in the cool winter air. In a week and a half, the Wei and Jin students would be free from their finals for a month, but until then, the pair continued to study diligently. Not too long into their studies, Guo Jia, Sima Shi, Sima Zhao and Wang Yuanji joined the table. The group decided to do a group study session, and with the two hours spent, managed to get a large amount of work done. After a while, Sima Zhao had fallen asleep and Wang Yuanji walked away to get food for the group, but the rest of the group had decided to play a game of cards while waiting for their last final of the day.

“You want to place a bet, Ziyuan?” Cao Pi spoke confidently as he placed a green 3 on the deck.

Sima Shi gave the raven a smirk, “a bet? I feel like if I do a bet with you, I’d be signing my life away.” He spoke, placing a color changing card down, “color’s red.”

Guo Jia groaned, picking up a few cards from the deck until he picked out a red card and placed it down, “betting with Cao Pi is like betting your life.”

The group nodded as Cao Pi shook his head, “trust me,” he said, watching Cao Xiu place his red 4 down, “I just want to make sure that Ziyuan knows that I’ll beat him confidently.” He spoke, placing his own red 3 down. “That is, if he’s up for it.”

“You’re not winning, Zihuan.” Sima Shi let out a chuckle, “I’m never going to be up to signing a contract with you.”

“But~” Cao Pi watched as the cards were placed, “if you do, you could win something amazing.”

“I’d love to win something amazing.” Guo Jia smiled, placing his cards face down on the table so that he could focus fully on staring at Cao Pi’s face, “if it has to do with that beautiful face, I’d be more than happy to.”

“Aren’t you just love-struck with my cousin?” Cao Xiu spoke, placing a draw 4 on the pile.

“He says as he intentionally tries to screw over Zihuan.” Sima Shi pointed out, watching Cao Pi place down his own draw 4.

“Oh dear, please tell me you have one too,” Guo Jia asked, looking over to Sima Shi, “because this is just going to be super unlucky.” Guo Jia added, picking up his cards to place a draw 4 on the stack. Sima Shi gave the long haired brunette a sly smirk, slowly placing the last draw 4 on the pile. “Oooh~”

Cao Xiu’s eyes widened as the deck was pushed towards him and out of habit, he pulled the respective number of cards out of the deck, sighing heavily. “Does Xiu ever vocally stress out?” Cao Xiu heard Sima Shi ask.

“He has mid-life crisis type things multiple times a day.” Cao Pi chuckled, “what’s the color?”

“Blue.”

Cao Pi drew a few cards from the deck before placing a blue draw 2 down, glancing at Guo Jia who looked at him with disbelief. “What?” Cao Pi asked, “it’s not like I could have drawn anything else.”

Guo Jia shook his head, placing a red draw 2 on the stack. Sima Shi sighed, drawing the cards from the deck. “Mid-life crisis, huh?” Sima Shi asked.

“I don’t have multiple mid-life crisis... es?” Cao Xiu mumbled, placing a red card on the stack, “I’ve been pretty sane, and... I’d say co-Zihuan has worse crisis type things than I do.”

“I can see that.” Guo Jia nodded, “he panics by using anger as a defense mechanism.”

Cao Pi shook his head slowly, placing down a card, “I’m never angry, what are you talking about?”

“Weren’t you angry just last night?” Cao Xiu asked, raising an eyebrow. Cao Pi quickly glared at his cousin which made the long haired man place his cards face down on the table. “Or not... that must have been my imagination.”

“The two of you are like a comedy act.” Guo Jia pointed out, “one is bitter and more stern about doing things his way, and the other is kind and empathetic, but also *very* concerned on doing things right.”

“The thing that draws these two together though, is that neither one of them want to let Cao Cao down.” The group froze, hearing the extra voice interrupt their conversation. Sima Zhao had woken up and stretched for a long time. “My bones feel like they’re breaking, ugh...” he groaned to himself.

“Zhao, I told you to just go back to the dorms and sleep.” Sima Shi spoke up, looking at his brother.

“I wanted to spend time outside, even though it’s super cold.” Sima Zhao sighed, “did Yuanji come back yet?”

“You come, interrupting our conversation for you to talk about that woman?” Cao Pi asked, placing his cards face down with a smirk. “She’s been gone for quite a bit, and we’re actually... pretty hungry now, I’d assume.”

“Yeah- I’ve been waiting for a good minute now, and now I’m getting impatient.” Guo Jia sighed, “she’s taking forever.”

“She could have gotten into a conversation with someone while she was getting stuff for us,” Cao Xiu tried to reason, “she has other friends so she probably just went to talk to them for a moment.”

“That- doesn’t sound like Yuanji at all.” Sima Shi shook his head, “she’d dismiss her friends so that she could finish her task.”

“I apologize, I must have stepped out of line-”

“Regardless of the fact,” Cao Pi placed a hand on Cao Xiu’s, startling the man, “we should go and find her then, right? If she’s been gone this long, either something happened or she doesn’t know what to get.” He added, “Wenlie, would you mind cleaning up the cards? I’ll help you.”

Cao Pi, Cao Xiu, Guo Jia, Sima Shi and Sima Zhao were all wandering around the cafeteria. Though the cafeteria was usually empty, the sight of extremely attractive men inside the building seemed to have tipped off a lot more people than usual. Sima Shi and Cao Pi were slowly growing angry with the large amount of people interrupting, while Guo Jia fell back into his old habits, telling the rest of the group to look for him later. Cao Xiu stayed guard behind Sima Zhao and made sure that no one interrupted his search.

Not too long into their search and severe distraction, Sima Zhao found a familiar head of long blonde hair and ran through the posse to get to her. “Yuanji!” Sima Zhao yelled as he ran with Cao Xiu following close behind.

Wang Yuanji turned around slowly, in the middle of chewing, she nodded in greeting as the pair ran up to her, looking somewhat panicked. Slowly, Wang Yuanji swallowed her food and placed her bowl down, “Zhao, Xiu? What’s wrong?”

“We’ve been waiting for you, and since you never came back, we-” The sounds of screams distracted Sima Zhao as the trio turned to see where the source was. Cao Pi and Sima Shi were caught in the middle of a group of women, and the pair themselves were notably very unimpressed with the amount of noise in their ears.

“I should get them-” Cao Xiu spoke quickly, attempting to run into the conglomeration of students. Sima Zhao grabbed Cao Xiu’s arm, shaking his head furiously at the comment.

“*If* you can even make it in there... If they fully process that you’re here too, they’ll be all over *all* of us.” Sima Zhao pointed out, “we need to get Yuanji out of here, Pi and Shi know how to deal with them.”

“But-”

“I never thought I would say this, but Zhao is right. I apologize for causing so much trouble.” Wang Yuanji sighed, gathering the food, “I actually... picked up a lot of food and- I wasn’t able to carry it all.”

“You could have messaged one of us.” Sima Zhao mumbled, crossing his arms over his chest as he raised his eyebrow questionably.

Wang Yuanji shook her head, reaching for Sima Zhao’s pocket to pull out her phone, “I didn’t want to leave to tell you guys to come inside, because if I looked away for even a moment... they would have spiked the food.”

“I’ll help you carry the food out.” Cao Xiu offered, not even waiting to help pick up the food on the table.

“What happened to Guo Jia?”

“Oh, oh no. That man went right back to doing what he’s good at.” Sima Zhao grumbled, “we’ll see him again later.”

“I still feel disgusting.” Cao Pi groaned, throwing his towel onto the bathroom floor. “They wouldn’t stop touching us.”

“I feel like it’s gotten worse since they found out that you’re now single again.” Sima Shi sighed, dabbing his neck with his own towel, “I appreciate you allowing me to take a shower in your room. I’ll be sure to return your clothes whenever-”

“Don’t bother. I gave you clothes that I don’t wear anymore. Besides, it fits you a bit better than it fit me.” Cao Pi shrugged, looking off to the side. He soon looked at the blonde who he mentally blamed to be the cause of this, and decided to speak, “so, can you explain this situation to me? To give me a valid reason as to why I should burn my clothes tonight.”

“You shouldn’t-” Wang Yuanji sighed, looking at Sima Shi then over to Cao Pi, “I picked up too much food. After having the conversation with your mother, she gave me a large amount of food for all of us, but... I realized I wasn’t going to be able to eat it all, so I tried to decline, but your mother was rather adamant about me taking the food for free.” Wang Yuanji shook her head, “I would have called but I realized I left my phone with Sima Zhao, so, I decided it was best for me to eat some of the food. I felt if I left the food on the tables and went to call for you guys, then they would have-”

“Done something to the food.” Cao Pi finished her sentence, “I get it. Alright.”

“Will burning your clothes be in vain?” Sima Zhao asked with an awkward smile.

“I’ll definitely be agitated, but whenever I wear it, I’ll think about how they decided to put their disgusting paws on me and my clothes. So, I’d say it won’t be in vain, but I’ll be losing a good outfit.”

“I’m sorry I couldn’t help you, Zihuan.” Cao Xiu stood from his spot on the couch, “I really wanted to, but since I was with Sima Zhao-”

“Don’t worry about it. I would have preferred for you to help her too.” Cao Pi shook his head, taking a few steps to get closer to his cousin, “I don’t want to be the reason why you can’t help others. That’s what you do. Taking charge and causing trouble for others is what *I* do.”

“That is true.” Sima Shi agreed, “you keep doing what you’re doing, Xiu. Pi will take care of what you can’t.

“By the way, where did Guo Jia go?” Cao Pi asked, earning a few chuckles from the group.

“Do you really want to know? I figured you would know better than anyone what happened to him through all of that.” Sima Zhao chuckled even harder, “he actually took a good handful of those people away so that he could... y’know.”

“That man is sick, in more ways than one.” Cao Pi groaned, “yet he still has time to do this...?”

The Cyan Light

Chapter Summary

I know! It's been a really long time since I updated this, but there's a great explanation. My friend and I have gone through a lot of serious thought about how the rest of the story was going to go, following her original story layout is pretty much my skeleton for the story and all, BUT with new characters come new changes, so we've been adjusting a lot. I've also tried to add more for the cyan chapters, since there's a few of them that pop up, but they're usually the shortest set of chapters.

There's a few requirements that I definitely have to follow as well, but yes, as I've said, this story has been going through a lot of serious development. Soon enough I should be able to post up chapters of this every week or so.

For those that have read my other story, I've been working hard on the Kingdom Hearts one as well, but I've had a lot of time restraints because of college. Now that I've graduated, I'm prepping to move to Japan to continue studying art. So I hope you're all patient until I'm able to update the story regularly like I want to!

Thank you so much, and I hope you enjoy the new characters written in this chapter!

Chapter Notes

PS! This chapter has a lot of info that should have been involved in the original story, but it was skipped over. Such as, the rankings of the schools, which is actually pretty important?? Or it should be anyways.

The next two chapters are going to be the last things that are really 'closely' following the original story, after that is where the story starts to change a lot more. The romance is also a lot slower, which is killing me inside, but I feel like it's making the story better, in a way.

I hope you look forward for it! You're now free to read the actual story and not my rambles!

Jin, like Wei, focuses on studies more than anything. Most of their rules goes through Wei's judgement before being placed. Jin, being led by Cao Cao's board member, Sima Yi, has many similar rules due to Sima Yi's acceptance of the way that Cao Cao is in charge. The main difference is that Jin does not overwork their students like Wei does, but the students

also rarely have breaks. Jin is also the only academy that you cannot directly apply to, you must apply through Wei, and if you're not accepted into Wei, you receive an invitation to Jin. This however, leaves the academy of Jin rather small, and sometimes even leaves a bitter taste in the students' mouths.

Chapter 3: The Cyan Light

“Xin Xianying, your grades have been astonishing this year. You're one of the best.” Deng Ai congratulated, lifting the paper in the air. He searched through the rest of the papers slowly, looking at the rest of the grades, “Wang Yuanji and Sima Shi, you two are back with the highest scores, it seems.” He nodded slowly. “Right, well,” Deng Ai placed the papers on his desk, “if you all are ready, I'd like to give you one last bit of information before you all go for your breaks. I realize some of you are still going to be here, but I'd like to wish you all a great break. Most of you have done well, and for those that haven't, you'll be getting messages and a visit to the principal. Please, take care of yourselves out there.”

Xin Xianying stood from her seat, picking up her papers and her bag walking to the front of the room to pick up her test paper from Deng Ai. She passed him a few other papers and smiled a soothing smile to the old man. “I hope you have an amazing break as well, Professor.”

“You can just call me Mr. Deng Ai... Professor seems so strange, don't you think? Makes me feel much older than I actually am.”

Xin Xianying nodded, “I'm so sorry. I'll make sure to call you by your name properly next time, but the hope still stands for your short vacation from this place.”

“I still have a lot of work to do,” Deng Ai shook his head, waving to a few students that walked out of the classroom. “I don't really have much else of a choice though. There's a lot of work to do before your next semester starts up, and there's a lot of people that I have to take care of. But, I too hope that you have a great vacation, Xianying.” Xin Xianying smiled her warming smile, waving to say goodbye to Deng Ai as she slowly made her way out of the classroom.

“Xianying, are you free for the rest of today? We could use an extra pair of hands and a good judgement for our final project.” Xin Xianying paused hearing her name, listening to the question. She turned to see Sima Shi, Wang Yuanji, Zhong Hui and Sima Zhao staring at her questionably. After a moment, and through the process of elimination, she fully stared down Sima Shi and gave him a warm smile.

“You need my help? With what exactly? You all are some of the smartest in Jin, how could I possibly be of assistance to you?” Xin Xianying asked politely.

“It's a rather simple assignment, so I'm sure even you could do it.” Zhong Hui shrugged, “we don't particularly need you or anything, so-”

“I wonder, what if we make both you and Yuanji the important parts of the project? People are bound to pay attention if we have the two beauties of Jin in our project.” Sima Zhao grinned, “not only would our project get noticed so much quicker, but we’d probably even get cool points from the rest of the class.”

“You just want someone to take all of the focus off of the fact that you barely did anything. If we make them fully lead, there won’t be much else for you or Zhong Hui to do, Zhao.” Sima Shi shook his head slowly, “which is why I would love for you to step up to your-”

“So you want me to help you all figure out what type of assignment you should do for your final project?” Xin Xianying questioned.

“What did you do for your final?” Wang Yuanji asked, tucking a piece of hair behind her ear, “was it just a paper?”

“Yep!” Xin Xianying nodded, “I just turned it in to Mr. Deng Ai not too long ago. I felt it was easier than doing this group assignment thing. It seemed like it was going to cause a lot of trouble with making decisions with people that aren’t so like minded as I am.”

“That makes sense, you’re not exactly the easiest person to work with,” Sima Zhao rubbed the back of his neck, “before the assignment even starts you’re already criticising the other person for something they didn’t even manage to do yet.”

“Are you still upset that I told you off for not doing your part of the assignment that we had to do last month?” Xin Xianying asked, looking at the tall male, “I appreciate having good grades, you know. And you were the one that decided to sit next to me that day because Yuanji decided to work with Shi.”

“I’m still upset about *that* too.” Sima Zhao glanced over to his brother, “when the hell did the two of you get so close?”

“We’re just friends, Zhao.” Wang Yuanji spoke.

“She’s much smarter than you anyways, I wasn’t going to let you bring her down.” Sima Shi shrugged.

“So you let him work with *me*?” Xin Xianying asked, sighing heavily. “No matter, we still got a great grade on that assignment.”

Sima Zhao sighed and Sima Shi shook his head once more, “regardless, do you mind helping us with this assignment?” Sima Shi asked again, “having you with us could help us finish this much faster. I’ll even pay you if you want.”

“Nah, I don’t need money, but I’ll help ya.”

Two weeks to Christmas, and the start of Jin and Wei’s vacations have led the students to wanting to do elaborate things as they were able to have their month long break. Some of the Wei students, specifically the Cao family had actually traveled overseas to visit another

company for an amount of time for the break. Sima Yi was offered to go to the same remote location, but turned it down due to wanting to spend time with his kids without school or jobs being in the way.

Most students from Jin had actually traveled home to spend Christmas with their families, and some others chose to stay home just to spend time with friends, some of which that secretly had friends with people from the other academies, Wu or Shu.

Sima Shi and Sima Zhao were two of the Jin students forced to stay on campus, even though Sima Shi had wished to travel with the Cao family to spend time with Cao Pi and Sima Zhao wanted to travel with Wang Yuanji to be able to spend time with her and possibly be able to make a move for Christmas. The two brothers were cursed having to help their mother with a few tasks on campus to improve the academy before the rest of the students came back.

Sima Shi was rather disappointed with the whole ordeal, but he and Sima Zhao knew that it was best not to go against what their mother wanted from them, and finished their tasks rather quickly. It was maybe a week or so before Christmas time before they managed to finish upgrading the small problems that Jin seemed to have.

Sima Zhao soon stood in front of his father, hands behind his back military style, as he listened to Sima Yi talk about small situations or problems that could come up in the future. "I just want to know if you'll be okay with these new assignments. Your mother says that this is hard enough for you all to stay up to date with what they're doing in Wei, but... I know some of you kids don't really do what you're supposed to."

"Father, I can promise you that I probably *won't* do any work, but this lesson plan for the year sounds perfectly fine to me." Sima Zhao shrugged, "why are you asking me anyways? Shouldn't you ask Ziyuan? I feel like he would have... a lot more criticism for this."

"You're not exactly wrong, but I wanted to see the standpoint from a slacker. Your brother does a lot of work and he's quite talented with studies, and you... aren't. I just want to know what you're capable of, and if this works for you."

"So are you worried about me not doing well this year?"

Sima Yi moved close to his son, placing his hands on his son's shoulders roughly, "if you don't do well this semester... your mother will."

"Wait- mom?"

"She'll hunt us both down. I can't- I can't have my life threatened because of you."

"Your life?"

"Zishang, please. Make this semester work well for the both of us."

Sima Zhao shrugged, looking off to the side to figure out what else to say to his father. His father's office was one of the cleanest places he had ever laid eyes on, and it was probably his mother's doing. Sima Yi's desk was off on the right wall from when you enter the room, there

were a few chairs scattered against the other walls, and some rather soothing paintings on the walls. Immediately next to the desk, there was a bookshelf filled with various amounts of records, files, and other physical documents. Sima Zhao sighed, glancing back to his concerned but now somewhat upset father, “alright, I’ll do my best.” he mumbled.

Sima Yi gave a subtle smile to his son, patting Sima Zhao’s shoulder before he turned to move back to his desk, adjusting the computer screen for his son to see what was on it. “Look at this, and tell me what other assignments would be interesting for the rest of the year.”

“Should I really be helping you with this? I feel like I’m... cheating... or something.”

“Would you rather it be a complete surprise to you? I don’t mind doing that.” Sima Yi raised an eyebrow, “just as long as you do your work, I guess I shouldn’t really worry.”

Sima Zhao sighed heavily, groaning as he adjusted his stance, “why do I even need to do any of this? Why can’t you just kick me out or something...”

“How do you think it would sound if the principal of Jin’s own son failed out of *high school*. For me, that doesn’t sound like the best reputation. Not only that, your mother would work you twice as hard as you’ve been currently.”

“I guess the reputation is important...”

“I’d even make sure to send you to the military. One that would work you to the bone.”

“Oh no,” Sima Zhao whispered, “no thank you. Nope. Nada.”

“So you’ll be doing the work?”

“I’m not going to the military.” Sima Zhao nodded, “I guess there’s only one way to go then, don’t you think?”

“I’m glad you’ve come to your senses, now get out of here.” Sima Yi turned his computer screen back to face him as he waved off his son so that he could get back to work. Sima Zhao sighed, placing his hands on his hips, soon making a quick escape from the office to do something else with his break.

“I’m glad that father has decided to make things *easier* for you, so to speak, but doesn’t that just mean that the rest of us are going to suffer because of a sudden decrease in difficulty?” Sima Shi asked his brother as he sat at his work desk doing a math problem. It had something to do with trying to see if he could make a new math equation that would work with every math problem known to mankind.

“Well- no,” Sima Zhao sighed, leaning back on his brother’s bed. He glanced over to his left where his brother was working, and mumbled, “I don’t think he’s actually going through with it.” Sima Zhao shrugged, “he said something about sending me to the military, and honestly, that was enough for me.”

“So what I’m hearing is that you’re actually going to do your work now?”

“I’m gonna do enough work so that I don’t fail and make dad look like a bad parent.”

“Yeah, maybe now you’ll get things done.”

Sima Zhao sighed heavily, turning to his side to look fully at his brother, “what are you even doing over there, Ziyuan?”

“Finding a new math equation. These current ones are far too extra to find some simple answers, so I plan to make one that’s even more difficult but will give you answers to every problem given.” Sima Shi turned in his seat to grin at his little brother, “one day, I’ll figure it out.”

“That sounds like something you, Guo Jia and Cao Pi would do.”

“Speaking of Guo Jia, is he on campus still?”

“Uh, I think he might still be here.” Sima Zhao shrugged, “I can’t remember. I really only ever see that guy if Cao Pi is around.”

“Guo Jia is also sick, so there’s a chance that he was forced to go back to the hospital while we’re on break.”

“Should we go see if he’s on campus first before searching the hospitals?”

“No,” Sima Shi spoke quickly, he turned back to his desk and began writing once more, “he’ll be okay. I’m not particularly close to Guo Jia anyways. He really only seems to care about the Cao family, so I’m sure he’s off somewhere doing something strange.”

Sima Zhao closed his eyes, “well... alright then.”

Xin Xianying sat in the cafeteria eating a small meal. As it was nearing Christmas, the weather outside was rather cold, and Xin Xianying wasn’t fond of wearing super warm clothing if she can just stay inside for most of the year. She watched as a few Jin students walked by making jokes and causing trouble within their own groups. Slowly, using her chopsticks to eat one of her last pieces of pork, she smiled subtly. Most of the students were able to go home and spend time with their families and not only that, even students in Wei were gone so that they could be with family.

For a lot of students this was long awaited and they left the moment their last class was done. Her one concern however, was for the mother who worked in the cafeteria. For those who didn’t know, the Wei and Jin buildings were connected by the cafeteria since Jin didn’t have too many extra students to add to the mix, and with that lead to the question of... why didn’t Cao Cao take his former wife Ms. Bian to their family outing? Was she no longer considered a part of the family even though her children were still heavily relevant? Xin Xianying turned to the woman working in the kitchen, smiling and greeting all of the people who either walked by or asked for foods.

Xin Xianying sighed, gathering her items off the table and stacking them neatly together so that she could place them with the rest of the used dishes. After ridding herself of the last of her items, she walked over to Ms. Bian with a warming smile, placing her hands on the glass container so that you could view the food in the counter. “Ms. Bian, may I ask you a question while you’re still here?” She called for the raven haired woman who turned quickly upon hearing her name.

Ms. Bian smiled as she walked over to the glass, looking over the food to make sure everything was still edible. “What’s wrong Ms. Xianying? Did you not like the food?”

“Oh- oh no it’s not that,” Xin Xianying shook her head, “I was wondering why you weren’t with your family. Shouldn’t you be spending this break with them?”

“I decided to stay here.” Ms. Bian chuckled, “no one else is working for the break, and there’s still a good handful of kids that are roaming around, and they need food.”

“You gave up your vacation to take care of us?”

“I never had a vacation, honestly. I would have only been free for about a week or so.”

Xin Xianying gasped, “does Cao Cao not take care of you? Aren’t you his ex wife?”

“It’s what I wanted.” She smiled warmly, “Cao Cao does more than enough for me. I wanted to make sure that you all were okay and well fed.”

“So the rumours are true...” Xin Xianying mumbled, “you really are a modest woman. You take care of them... no, you take care of us and you love us all. Have you also adopted some of Cao Cao’s other children?”

“Some of the younger ones? Yes. They all deserve a mother.” Ms. Bian nodded slowly, adjusting her short hair to tuck behind her ear. “Cao Cao has long said that he favored me the most.”

“Would you ever marry him again?”

“I’ve learned a lot about that man from when we were married, and when we were dating. Cao Cao is a very kind man, but I only wish to be around long enough to take care of my children.”

“Amazing.” Xin Xianying’s tone was one of awe as she looked at the older woman in front of her, “to learn from someone like you- nay, to learn from you would be amazing. I feel like I would learn so much.”

“Are you kidding?” Ms. Bian shook her head vigorously, “I hear about your instincts and your own intuition all of the time, and that is something to be respected. You need to remember that you have your own talents, and those instincts of yours is almost at the level of that Li Dian. Please, remember that.”

“Me? Almost as good as Li Dian?” Xin Xianying looked down for a moment before meeting Ms. Bian’s eyes. “You must be joking, surely...”

“I’m very serious, love.” Ms. Bian smiled, “remember your own talents and embrace them, please. That talent is something to be feared.”

Xin Xianying nodded slowly, “I will be sure to... remember that. Thank you Ms. Bian.” Ms. Bian nodded, “I should get going. It was wonderful talking to you.”

“You as well, enjoy your break.”

Xin Xianying slowly made her way outside. It’s been a few days since she last decided to step outside to take in the fresh cool air. There however was a huge difference in the courtyard where all the academies looked at the large tree. Unlike before where it was covered with heavy snow, it seemed as if though someone shook off all of the snow and covered the tree with lights. Rainbow lights.

Xin Xianying smiled at the sight. Whoever decided to do dress up the tree must have really felt the Christmas spirit. She decided to move closer to the tree, to get a better look at the lights and to get a nice picture. Pulling out her phone and activating the camera, she took a quick picture and smiled at it.

“Ah... so pretty...”

“Isn’t it? I was just wondering about the person who spent their time clearing away all of this snow.”

Xin Xianying turned quickly, looking at the raven haired man standing behind her. It took her a moment to process the man’s name before she spoke, “Wen Yang?”

“Yes, who else would it be?” Wen Yang asked, taking a step back. “Did I startle you?”

“A bit, yes. I didn’t expect to see anyone here.” Xin Xianying nodded slowly, “how have you been?”

“Fine.” Wen Yang spoke softly, “I’ve been looking forward to Christmas.”

“Oh? Really? Why is that?”

“I’m not too sure myself. It just feels nice to think that a lot of people will be spending their Christmas with people they know and love, you know?”

“At a time like this, you’re still thinking of others?”

Wen Yang gave Xin Xianying a glance, “why did you decide to spend Christmas here? Wouldn’t it be nice to spend time with your father?”

“I wanted to but... something told me to stay here for the break.” Xin Xianying spoke as she put her phone back in her pant pocket. “I’ve been wondering why, but when I told my father, he understood.”

“We all know how your intuition works.”

“Oh please! I’m not amazing like you think.”

Wen Yang shook his head, “Xianying, we’ve definitely talked about this before.” He put his hands into his jacket pockets, “are you cold? Should we head inside?”

“Wen Yang, you’re about to graduate from here, aren’t you?” Xin Xianying recalled Wen Yang being one of the older seniors in Jin who were inching closer to their graduation date. He and a few others that she weren’t too familiar with.

“I am graduating at the end of this year. I’m surprised you remembered.”

“I have a feeling that I’ll miss you.”

“I don’t see why you would, you can barely remember me, Xianying.”

Xin Xianying gasped, “I remember you!” She argued, grabbing Wen Yang’s arm, “I remember you well!”

“Is that so.” Wen Yang’s comment sounded more like a statement than a question. “That’s good to know then, I guess.”

“Is it really?”

“No.” Wen Yang cleared his throat, “we should go inside before it actually gets cold... well, much colder than before.”

Xin Xianying smiled and nodded, following Wen Yang into the building.

Sima Shi sighed as he leaned back on his bed. He was waiting for Jia Chong to come visit him for some unknown reason. Occasionally Jia Chong and Sima Shi had their moments of deep conversation, some of which was much different from his conversations with Cao Pi, Sima Zhao and Wang Yuanji. Sima Shi glanced at his phone waiting for the familiar name to appear on his phone. He decided to close his eyes for a bit, to take a rest before their meeting.

When Sima Shi opened his eyes, his phone was placed on the nightstand next to his bed. He leaned forward on his bed, startled that the blanket was now covering him instead of being beside him where he remembered leaving it when he laid down before. Sima Shi let out a yawn and turned to his right, by the front door. He noticed an extra two pairs of shoes by his door, and a familiar looking jacket hanging on a hanger near his closet.

“Who in the hell...” Sima Shi moved the blanket off of his body and stood, looking around his room a bit more for the source of the person intruding in his home. “At least they had the decency to take off their shoes at the door.” He mumbled to himself, looking at the ground.

“Are you awake?” Sima Shi froze, hearing the voice come from the bathroom from the other side of the room. He watched as Jia Chong emerged from behind the door, drying his hands. “You were asleep when I entered, so I just took a shower and did a few other things.”

“Other things?” Sima Shi asked, crossing his arms over his chest. “Why didn’t you wake me up first?”

Jia Chong stared at the younger man as he continued to dry his hands, “we should go out to eat today. Since it’s fairly close to Christmas, there’s bound to be something good to eat.”

“You’re just going to ignore my question?”

“Why don’t you get ready? I’ll be waiting out here.”

“Jia Chong, I’ve been meaning to ask you...” Sima Shi put a hand in his pocket as he eyed the older man who gave him a look of question, “if you had to choose between Zhao or I, who would you choose?”

“What do you mean ‘choose between’ the two of you?”

“If it was a life or death situation, which one of us would you choose?”

“I’d rather die than have to choose between the two of you.”

“I guess that’s reasonable, but I’d like a more definite answer.” Sima Shi shook his head, “I’ll go change, but when I come out of the bathroom, you better give me a better answer than that.”

“Sure.” Jia Chong watched as Sima Shi gathered a few pieces of clothes then went to his bathroom to change. It didn’t take too long for Sima Shi to come back wearing an outfit almost painfully similar to the outfit he already had on. “You-” Jia Chong let out a scoff, “you look you didn’t change one bit.”

“Of course I did.” Sima Shi held up the shirt in his hand, “this shirt is *turquoise*, the shirt I’m wearing now is *teal*, it’s quite the difference.”

“The same black colored pants and everything too.” Jia Chong mumbled, “alright, whatever. Come on, I want to take you out to eat today.”

“Of course you do.” Sima Shi let out a sigh, placing his clothes in a bin. “Alright, I’m just about ready to go.” Jia Chong nodded and went to where he placed his jacket, tossing it on effortlessly, then pulling his boots on. Sima Shi followed his actions and soon the pair was off into the town. “So, where are we going?”

“Restaurant.” Jia Chong answered simply, taking large strides to gain more distance between him and the slightly shorter male.

“Right.” Sima Shi nodded slowly, doing his best to keep up with the pale male, though he didn’t mind leaving a space between them. They continued their walk for another few minutes before Jia Chong suddenly stopped in front of a shop that Sima Shi wasn’t too familiar with. “What is this?”

“I’ve been craving Japanese food for the past two weeks. I haven’t had enough time to ask you to come here with me, but they have dumplings like the ones you enjoy.” Jia Chong

glanced back to Sima Shi, who's eyes seemed to light up slightly at the mention of dumplings. "Shall we enter?"

"Japanese food? In China?"

"International food isn't very unusual for us, don't you think?"

"I guess not." Sima Shi shook his head, "alright, I'm fine with this. I'll accompany you with your sudden craving."

"It's not very sudden, it's been there for a while."

"Yes, of course."

As the pair walked into the restaurant, they were greeted by a rather kind woman who almost immediately offered them a seat in a booth in the corner of the restaurant. Sima Shi had figured out that Jia Chong had actually made a reservation at the restaurant without actually telling him about it first. Though, Sima Shi wasn't mad about it, he was pretty impressed with the place so far. Now all that was left was to taste the food, and more specifically, the *dumplings*.

Jia Chong took the initiative to order a few different meals for the both of them to try, and as the pair waited, they sat in silence. Sima Shi wasn't too sure of what to say, but he honestly was much more focused on the atmosphere surrounding him. It felt like he belonged, even though he had little to no experience with anything *Japanese* up until now. Apparently this must have been important enough for Jia Chong to feel the need to drag him along for something so *different*.

Jia Chong then turned to Sima Shi, looking him up and down before finally speaking, "how's the violin practice going? Have you gotten better?"

"I've been able to play that score you've been so interested in. Almost perfectly now, actually."

"Oh? I'd love to hear it one day."

"There are other parts of the score, isn't there? Like, a guitar or piano? Why would you want me to play it on the violin?"

"The violin is the most beautiful part." Jia Chong stated, "I wanted to be able to hear you play the most beautiful part."

"Interesting." Sima Shi nodded slowly, "I think a piano is equally as beautiful, if played properly."

"I know you already know how to play the piano, that's no surprise. I wouldn't be shocked if you still played it perfectly then too, but... I want to hear it with something you've just recently taken the time to learn."

“As someone who hasn’t practiced the violin for as long as the piano, this score isn’t exactly the *easiest* thing you’ve given me to try.”

“Yes, but you have breaks.”

“Over a five minute timeframe.”

“Trust me, if you learn it section by section, it’ll all flow easily.”

“Endurance is something that I’d need for this, the violin tires my arms out quickly.”

“You’re just not used to it yet, once you figure it out, you’ll be playing the score perfectly without any complaints.”

Sima Shi shot Jia Chong a bitter look, but refused to say anything as he noticed the waitress come back with an arsenal of food. They thanked her in unison and began to eat from random plates and bowls, trying everything out. Once they figured out their favorites, aside from the dumplings that Jia Chong insisted was strictly for Sima Shi, they ate in silence, enjoying the meal in front of them.

A half hour and some idle chatter later, the men received the bill, to which Jia Chong paid for, and they were once again off, this time heading back up to the campus.

“Even though this school prepares you all for college, just *what* college would take such stuck up kids?” Jia Chong asked, glancing back to Sima Shi who was focused on keeping his final dumpling warm in his hands. The workers allowed him to have an extra dumpling for the road, which Sima Shi thanked them for. But that also meant that Sima Shi was going to have to put in extra work in order to keep said dumpling warm in the freezing cold weather. “You should have wrapped the thing up more if you were going to be like this.” Jia Chong mumbled.

“It was perfectly wrapped inside.” Sima Shi mumbled in response, “but now the wrapping is messed up because of the wind- it’s going to freeze in my pocket. I don’t want to have to warm it back up.”

“Relatives really do have weird traits, don’t they?”

“What do you mean?” Sima Shi looked up to Jia Chong, who was now once again focused on the road ahead of him.

“You and Zhao both are addicted to dumplings. Then there’s Cao Pi who loves grapes, and Cao Cao who loves tangerines. Is it something in the bloodline? Or am I missing out on something.”

“Maybe you just haven’t found something that you liked yet.”

“Mm.” Jia Chong went silent, which Sima Shi was thankful for so that he could spend his time keeping the dumpling warm. Once they were close to the campus, Jia Chong turned back to Sima Shi, who was still *quite* dedicated on staying on task. Jia Chong could feel a

smirk pull at his lips as the man continued to walk, now going past him and fully onto the campus. “Don’t get lost, Shi.”

“Mhmm.” Sima Shi answered simply, eyes trained on the dumpling. His hands were constantly rubbing around it in a rapid-fire circular motion, trying to keep as much friction going as possible. Sima Shi hadn’t actually stopped his legs from moving, so he continued walking forward. Jia Chong shook his head and walked in stride to catch up to the other man effortlessly. Grabbing Sima Shi by the shoulder, he guided the man to the Jin building.

Once the door opened, Sima Shi looked up, feeling the warmth of the building hit him. He turned to look at Jia Chong, who had just closed the door and began to dust off the snow from his jacket. “I don’t want to wait until I get back to my room to eat this.” Sima Shi admitted. “This is the seventh one I’ve had today.”

“Then eat it now, on your way back to your room.” Jia Chong offered, “It’s going to see your room somehow.”

Sima Shi took a moment to process the comment, then shook his head, “if I eat it now, I might accidentally drop a piece-”

“If you wait, it’ll get cold. So go to your room and eat it.” Jia Chong interrupted, “clearly you want to finish it now, so shouldn’t you get back to your room as soon as possible?”

“I should.” Sima Shi nodded, “okay, I’ll be going then.” Sima Shi quickly dismissed himself, heading back to his room to eat the dumpling in the comfort of his own room.

“People think that I’m high maintenance,” Zhong Hui started, shaking his head as he grabbed onto his ponytail. “It’s not my fault that they can’t take care of me the way that I deserve to be taken care of.”

“You sound like a stuck up child, y’know that Shiji?” Zhong Hui let out a scoff, looking over to his friend in green. He usually didn’t spend his time near people in Shu, but the only person he could really tolerate was Jiang Wei. “Or maybe, that’s just how you *want* people to think you sound.”

“What? No Boyue!” Zhong Hui let out a sigh as he sank in his seat, “the purpose is for you to agree that I’m *not* high maintenance. I’m easy to take care of, and I’m approachable.”

“Oh, you *want* to be approachable?”

“If people attempt to approach me, they’ll begin to lessen my IQ with their stupidity.”

“So... what do you want?”

“I wish for people to be at my level of intelligence.”

Jiang Wei gave Zhong Hui a strange look as he nodded slowly, “okay, I think I get it.” Jiang Wei slammed his fist into his palm, “you want to be difficult!”

“I’m not here for *comedy*, Boyue.” Zhong Hui let out a hefty sigh, “why are you acting like you don’t understand anything now?”

“You just went on a rant telling me that you want people to approach you, but you only want people who are smart to approach you, but how are people going to know how smart you are and compare themselves to you if they don’t know who you are?”

Zhong Hui froze in thought, squinting his eyes as he stared at Jiang Wei. “Did I tell you I wanted sass?”

“You haven’t told me a lot of things that I could realistically work with yet.”

“I’ve given you plenty to work with!”

“Uh, yeah!” Jiang Wei grinned, “okay, what else do you want to do today? Or am I going to be stuck being your personal therapist?”

“Excuse me? You’re not *stuck* being my therapist. You should be *honored* that I’ve come to *you* with my problems.”

“Of course I am. I’m glad I got to see my friend today.”

“Of course you are. You should be. I’ve blessed you with my presence today.”

“So, earlier today I spent some time with the Guan kids. They were playing out in the snow, do you want to see if they’re still out there?”

“Are you crazy?” Zhong Hui sat up from his spot, “if I go out there to play games with you *kids*, Jin will look down on me. Suddenly I’ll be treated as a child.”

“That’s not fair, and you know it. We work hard too, y’know.”

“Yeah, of course. That’s why the Shu academy has the worst grades out of all four academies.”

“To be fair, Wu is beating you guys, and that’s literally because there’s three people in there that’s just *so much smarter* than most of Jin put together.” Jiang Wei crossed his arms over his chest as his face went to a more serious one. “Or did you forget that you’re literally in third place because Wu’s in their rightful place at second? Three. People. Are beating a whole *academy*.”

Zhong Hui scoffed, “they’re *not* smarter than a whole academy. Besides, one of them dropped out, didn’t they?”

“Probably. But you guys still haven’t been able to beat his scores.” Jiang Wei shrugged, “even if you guys close the gap, it’s still hilarious to think that a whole academy is losing to another academy because of *three* people. And one of those people aren’t even in the school anymore.”

“Stop attempting to irritate me, Boyue.” Zhong Hui grumbled, “three people or not, that doesn’t mean that they’re smarter than *me* . It just means that the rest of *Jin* needs to pick up the slack.”

“Always looking for the light in the situation, huh? If you want to know their study habits, we should go and talk to them. Maybe you could share that with the rest of *Jin* and maybe *they* can all be smarter and beat Wu.” Jiang Wei offered, “or would that make you feel foolish?”

“No, that’s a brilliant idea.” Zhong Hui let out a smirk, “if I get intel from the ‘smart students’” he put up air quotes as he talked, “about what they do to study, and if I share that with Jin, we’ll for sure be better than them when the next set of grades are put in.”

“Uh, yeah, I guess?”

“Perfect, that’s the best idea you’ve had all day. Let’s go pretend to be their friends so that we can get intel from them.”

“You want me to come too? What if I give that *intel* to Shu?”

Zhong Hui was in the motion of standing up from his seat when he froze mid motion, staring Jiang Wei down intensely. “You’re right.” He stated, “you’d just make this counter intuitive. I’ll go on my own.”

“Do you even know who you’re supposed to be talking to? They’re not just going to tell *you* about what they do to study.” Jiang Wei pointed out, “they might even wonder why the heck you’re there in the first place.”

“Ugh.” Zhong Hui groaned, fully standing up, “come on, you’re coming with me.”

“Oh, okay!”

Zhong Hui felt like he should have regretted his choice of letting Jiang Wei come with him. Apparently the green clad was quite friendly with people in Wu, which would make sense since Shu and Wu were what people would consider *friends* . Zhong Hui shivered at the thought, trying his best not to look disgusted every time someone unimportant came by Jiang Wei to greet him or talk to him about some sort of show that they were apparently familiar with. After a while of waiting however, Zhong Hui had grown impatient, and began clearing his throat when Jiang Wei’s greetings went past two or three minutes.

I’m on a schedule here, and Jiang Wei just isn’t keeping up.

Why can’t he just stop talking to them? Seriously.

Zhong Hui found himself clearing his throat for the fifth time in ten minutes. Impatiently he began tapping his foot, waiting for Jiang Wei to finish his conversation about how he really wanted a pet cat so that he could name it Cocoa, or something stupid like that.

Well actually, that’d be pretty cute if I wasn’t focused on something else.

Zhong Hui shook his head at the thought, groaning and pulling Jiang Wei's arm roughly to get him to focus. "Come ON!" Zhong Hui found himself yelling.

"Woah!" Jiang Wei was unsure of what to do while the smaller man pulled at his arm to keep him moving. "One of the people are in one of these rooms you know!" Jiang Wei called.

"Who? Who am I looking for? There's so many people in this area."

"You're looking for Lu Xun in this area."

Lu Xun?

Zhong Hui could recall hearing that name possibly coming from Guo Jia or Sima Shi passing during a conversation. As strange as it is, Zhong Hui still wasn't familiar with the name. He looked along all the door tags until he found the right one, and let out a sigh, knocking *professionally* on the door, showing that he meant business by coming here.

"Yeah?" Zhong Hui froze hearing a rough voice answer the door, revealing a rather angry looking blonde, who may have just woken up. "What do you want?"

"I-"

"Hey Gan Ning!" Jiang Wei greeted, "how are you?"

"Oh, hey Jiang Wei. I'm good. What's up?"

"Is Lu Xun in? We need him for a sec."

"Uh, yeah." Gan Ning took a few steps back, opening the door fully. "Take off your shoes when you enter, doesn't matter how long you're gonna be here, I'm not tryna sweep."

"Oh wow, I didn't know they gave you guys hardwood floor! We have carpet floors for our bedrooms!" Jiang Wei looked around in shock as he took off his shoes, "this is amazing."

Zhong Hui shook his head slowly, taking off his shoes to place them next to Jiang Wei's. "My name is Zhong Hui, I'm from Jin. I'm here to talk to Lu Xun about something that's quite important to me."

"Xun?" Gan Ning looked over to the couch where Lu Xun was perched watching the TV. He turned around sometime in between Gan Ning fully opening the door and Zhong Hui's introduction with a curious look on his face. "Wanna take over?"

"Sure?" Lu Xun stood from his spot, stretching his bones until he was satisfied. He made his way over to Zhong Hui and Jiang Wei. "What did you need to talk to me about?"

"Holy shit you're short." Zhong Hui blurted out, earning a laugh from Gan Ning and a chuckle from Jiang Wei. "I- I expected someone taller. You're the same height as Xianying."

"I don't know if I should be offended or astonished that you'd think I'd be taller than this." Lu Xun raised an eyebrow, "you're also not that much taller than me, you know."

“I’m literally looking *down* at you, how in the world am I *not* much taller?”

Jiang Wei grabbed the two of them, forcing them to stand back to back with one another so that he could measure them properly. “Well, actually, there’s not that much of a difference, Shiji. You’re probably like two or so inches taller.”

“Damn Xun, they come in here and the first thing they target is your height.”

“I’ve never been bothered by my height before.” Lu Xun sighed, turning to face the pair again, “but now I’m getting offended. You’re literally like, the same height as Sun Ce. He has *never* bothered me about this.”

“I just expected someone taller,” Zhong Hui shook his head, “anyways, the purpose for me being here was to ask you about your study habits.”

“My study habits?”

“Yes-” Zhong Hui cleared his throat, glancing over to Jiang Wei. “As you know, you and two other people are currently the reason why Wu is in second place when it comes to the education system, and Jin is in third. So I’ve come here today to ask just what do you do in order to study? Is it an extensive training session? Are you studying until you can’t see anymore?”

“Well, studying works differently for different people. Some people are capable of binge studying, and some people are perfectly fine with looking over material five minutes before an exam.” Lu Xun explained, walking over to his work desk. Zhong Hui and Jiang Wei followed close behind him. “I sometimes study in segments, 30 or so minute intervals tend to work well with me. But I tend to get better grades depending on how much I was able to recall from prior tests to put on current tests.”

“The tests here must be easier, no?”

“I’m not sure what the difficulty is between the different academies, but I was offered to take an exam from Principal Cao a few months ago.” Lu Xun shrugged, “I turned it down though.”

“Wait, I didn’t know that *that* happened.” Gan Ning interrupted, “why’d you turn it down? You could have shown them that you’re hella fuckin’ smart.”

“If I took it, there was a good chance that they’d ask me to switch academies.” Lu Xun answered, not looking up from his desk, “I didn’t want to take that risk.”

“Wait- you’re confident that they would have just *asked* you to switch academies? Right then and there?” Zhong Hui asked.

“Did you look at the test before turning it down?” Jiang Wei questioned.

“Yeah, I looked through it.” Lu Xun nodded, glancing over to Jiang Wei, “I recognized a lot of it, so I decided not to take it.”

“Was it stuff that you’ve learned here?” Zhong Hui asked.

“No, some of that stuff had things that I’ve learned on my own time.”

“You study on your own time?”

“Yeah.”

“He doesn’t fucking stop.” Gan Ning groaned, “I have to stop him from studying sometimes, like, throwing the book outta his hand and shit.”

“Which damages my books, so please stop doing that.” Lu Xun’s tone turned more parental as he talked to Gan Ning.

“Interesting,” Zhong Hui nodded, “so your most effective method of studying that’s worked for you was to study in intervals. I see.” He glanced over to Jiang Wei, “that sounds like enough for me, do you have any questions?”

“Oh, um...” Jiang Wei thought for a moment, “have you ever liked someone?” He asked, staring at Lu Xun. Lu Xun gave him a somewhat shocked expression, then cleared his throat as he thought of an answer.

“I have. I’ve liked a few people.” Lu Xun admitted, “why do you want to know about that though?”

“Did you ever have a relationship with the other guy that left?”

“The other-” Lu Xun looked over to Gan Ning, then back to Jiang Wei. “No, it’s probably better that I didn’t.”

“I see.” Jiang Wei nodded slowly, “okay! That’s all from me! Thank you so much for helping my friend! Do you know where we can find Zhou Yu?”

“He should be in his room, if not, he *may* be with Sun Ce.” Lu Xun answered simply.

“Great! Thanks!” Jiang Wei grinned as he went to put back on his shoes, Zhong Hui following close behind him. The pair said their goodbyes once more and left the room, heading to their next destination that was on the next floor up. Jiang Wei guided Zhong Hui through the area, quickly finding Zhou Yu’s door, knocking on it loud enough for whomever to hear inside. After a moment, the door slowly opened, Zhou Yu stood, looking quite tired with his hair tied up in a bun.

“Jiang Wei?” Zhou Yu’s voice was filled with confusion as he looked at the green clad. He then glanced over to the left and his eyes hardened at the companion, “You’ve brought someone from Jin?”

“This is my friend, Zhong Hui.” Jiang Wei introduced, “we wanted to talk to you for a second about your study habits, do you mind helping us?”

“My study habits?” Zhou Yu repeated, “why do you want to know that?”

“You and Lu Xun definitely have similar instinctual responses.” Zhong Hui mumbled. Zhou Yu responded with a cold stare, “as you know, you, Lu Xun, and someone else from your school are the top three in Wu. I wanted to learn from at least you and Lu Xun about your study habits, to see how I could improve.”

“Everyone studies differently, my way may be most effective for me, and Lu Xun’s way may be most effective for him. I study in bulk, but I also review material from the exam prior. If I’m not studying, I’m reviewing.” Zhou Yu answered, “is that enough for you?”

“That pretty much hits the mark, yes.” Zhong Hui replied, nodding his head. “Thank you.”

“Now if you’ll excuse me, I’ll be going back to bed.” Zhou Yu excused himself, waving to Jiang Wei as he closed the door.

Jiang Wei let out a sigh and grabbed Zhong Hui by the arm, pulling him far enough away from Zhou Yu’s room before speaking, “I should have told you that Zhou Yu *really* doesn’t like Jin or Wei. I’m shocked he even gave an answer.”

“It’s probably because you were there.” Zhong Hui grumbled, “I’m done playing pretend. I wanted to yell in that guy’s face! Acting like he was so much better than me- did you see him looking down on me the way that he did? How dare he judge me like that.”

“I never knew he could make a face like that.” Jiang Wei mumbled, “well, we got the info. Ready to go back?”

“I’m going back to my room, I have a few things that I need to take care of before I forget.”

“Yeah! Of course! Take care of yourself!” Jiang Wei waved to his friend as they began to part ways just outside of the Wu building.

Xin Xianying let out a sigh as she sat on the bench closest to the Jin building. It wasn’t as cold as the other days, so she decided it would be okay to spend some time soaking up the little warmth in the cold. Though whenever she took a breath, she could still see her breath cloud float away. On days like this, Xin Xianying found herself thinking about events that have happened to or around her. But the only thing she could think of was the fact that Ms. Bian preferred to stay on campus so that she could help the other students, rather than spend time with her children. Though, Xin Xianying found out that her sons would visit her when she wasn’t working, because it was easier to get in contact with her that way and spend some time with her on their own.

She started to wonder if she were to ever do something like that to her father, or if her father would have ever done that to her mother, would she feel she would need to take an extra step to bond with her parent? Xin Xianying shook her head slowly, unsure of where her thoughts were trying to go.

“Thinking on your own in the cold again?” Xin Xianying froze, turning to look at Wen Yang as he gave her a smile, unwrapping his scarf so that he could wrap it around her. “You can hold onto that, you might catch a cold one of these times, you know.”

“If I didn’t know any better, I’d think you were flirting with me.” Xin Xianying teased, watching Wen Yang sit across from her. She held the ends of the scarf and was silently grateful that the scarf was amazingly soft and warm.

“You couldn’t be farther from the truth.” Wen Yang shook his head, “I actually enjoy spending my time out here too, I always liked looking at the Sakura tree when it was covered in snow. It’s the most beautiful then.” Wen Yang tilted his head back to where the tree stood strong.

“It is really pretty.” Xin Xianying nodded, “I’ll give you that one.”

“But if you stay out here with shorts on, you’re bound to catch a serious cold, Xianying. It’s not safe.” Wen Yang pointed to Xin Xianying’s legs. “I know you like being comfortable, but this is too much.”

“I know,” Xin Xianying rubbed her legs together, “they are getting a little cold. I was hoping since it was a little warmer that I’d be okay, but I guess not. I really, *really* have to wear pants.”

“You should care more about your health.”

“Thanks for the concern,” Xin Xianying shot Wen Yang a smile, “I just don’t really like wearing clothes, y’know? It’s a hassle to put on, and it’ll be super annoying to take off.”

“Sounds like you should be living in a nudist town.”

Xin Xianying gave the man a chuckle, “maybe.”

Wen Yang gave Xin Xianying a small smile, before turning to look back at the tree, “winter is my favorite season. Though sometimes I may not be healthy enough to enjoy the whole season, I enjoy the snow and the cold weather. I’d rather wear more clothes than less.

“Jeez, we’re the opposite then. I’d rather the summer, where I don’t have to worry about wearing clothes, and it’s super hot. And I can just enjoy going to a beach-” Xin Xianying froze as she saw Wen Yang’s face begin to redden, “are you okay?!” She jumped up from her spot, gripping the scarf, “are you too cold?! Do you want your scarf back?!”

“N-no, that’s not it.” Wen Yang shook his head, “I’m fine. I just got distracted, that’s all.” Xin Xianying nodded cautiously, sitting back in her seat. “The summer is nice too, I’ll admit. Sometimes relaxing at a pool can be enjoyable on a hot day.”

“Exactly! Now you’re seeing things my way.”

“But that doesn’t mean that I enjoy the summer all the time. I’d enjoy the summer in small doses.”

“Occasional heat spikes?”

“I guess? Yeah.”

“That’s understandable, I think. Especially if you’re weak.” Xin Xianying teased, earning a look from Wen Yang. “Here, you can take your scarf back, I’m going to go back inside before it really *does* get too cold for me. I don’t want to catch a cold.” She spoke as she took off the scarf, handing it off to Wen Yang who placed it back where it belonged around his neck.

“Take care of yourself.” He waved as she walked away, saying her thanks and goodbye. Wen Yang let out a sigh, fully turning his body to look at the frosted over tree. “Trees like you tend to be beautiful in any season, can you believe that?” He whispered to himself as he watched the snow slowly fall in front of his face.

Xin Xianying’s intuition was right again.

Wen Yang could feel himself chuckle as he stood to retreat back into the dorm himself.

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