

## LBG&S Shorts & Sidestories

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/27068530) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/27068530>.

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Relationships: [Jiang Yanli/Lan Huan](#) | [Lan Xichen](#), [Lan Zhan](#) | [Lan Wangji/Wei Ying](#) | [Wei Wuxian](#)

Characters: [Jiang Yanli](#), [Lan Huan](#) | [Lan Xichen](#), [Wei Ying](#) | [Wei Wuxian](#), [Lan Zhan](#) | [Lan Wangji](#), [Nie Mingjue](#), [Nie Huaisang](#), [Jiang Cheng](#) | [Jiang Wanyin](#), [Jiang Fengmian](#), [Yu Ziyuan](#), [Lan Qiren](#), [Meng Yao](#) | [Jin Guangyao](#), [Wen Qing \(Modao Zushi\)](#), [Wen Ning](#) | [Wen Qionglin](#), [Q](#)

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Language: English

Series: Part 4 of [Love Both Gentle & Sure](#)

Stats: Published: 2020-10-17 Updated: 2021-05-01 Words: 13,281 Chapters: 17/74

# LBG&S Shorts & Sidestories

by [DeiStarr](#)

## Summary

A set of shorts, oneshots, and other side stories set in the "Love Both Gentle & Sure" verse; also contains various stories about personal HCs relevant to canon & an option for further requests.

### **Titles Such As:**

1. **"Jiang Yanli At Koi Tower"** *(4 Parts)*,
2. **"Lan Xichen Vrs. The Rules"** *(12 Parts)*
3. **"Nie Mingjue & The Best Friend Thief"** *(8 Parts)*
4. **"Lan Wangji Vrs. Communication"** *(16 Parts)*,
5. **"Jiang Cheng & The Insufferable Brother"** *(4 Parts)*,
6. **"Nie Huaisang Is Greatly Entertained"** *(4 Parts)*
7. **"Wei Wuxian Is Thick As Mud"** *(8 Parts)*
8. **"Jiang Fengmian Gets A Surprise"** *(2 Parts)*
9. **"Lan Qiren Has A Bad Day"** *(4 Parts)*,
10. **"Yu Ziyuan At War"** *(4 Parts)*,
11. **"Meng Yao Gets A Lucky Break"** *(1 Part)*
12. **"Wen Qing Has A Terrible Premonition"** *(4 Parts)*
13. **"Do You Wear Your Heart On Your Ribbon?"** *(Part 1)*
14. **"If You Catch It, Will You Keep It?"** *(Part 2)*

## Notes

I'm posting this right now because I'm currently very sick, and struggling with a severe toothache.

I'm not really thinking clearly enough to write much right now, but I am willing to try and clean up some things for publishing since I hate not being able to do anything.

# Content Summary

## Chapter Summary

### This Post Contains:

1. **The Individual Story Index** *(With Clickable Links To Each Story & Individually Numbered Story Part)*
2. **Prompts/Questions/Requests Box** *(Leave A Comment With Prompts & Requests For This Series)*

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

This is a home for the various one-shots that were spawned while writing the first two stories in this verse. They're currently in varying states of completion, so I'll be posting them as I get them cleaned up and ready.

Click on the title or part number that you want to skip directly to the link for each post.

- 
- [Jiang Yanli At Koi Tower \(Part 2\) \(Part 3\) \(Part 4\)](#) (TW for Part 3)
  - [Lan Xichen Vrs The Rules \(Part 2\) \(Part 3\) \(Part 4\) \(Part 5\) \(Part 6\) \(Part 7\) \(Part 8\) \(Part 9\) \(Part 10\) \(Part 11\) \(Part 12\)](#)
  - [Nie Mingjue & The Best Friend Thief \(Part 2\) \(Part 3\) \(Part 4\) \(Part 5\) \(Part 6\) \(Part 7\) \(Part 8\)](#)
  - [Lan Wangji Vrs Communication \(Part 2\) \(Part 3\) \(Part 4\) \(Part 5\) \(Part 6\) \(Part 7\) \(Part 8\) \(Part 9\) \(Part 10\) \(Part 11\) \(Part 12\) \(Part 13\) \(Part 14\) \(Part 15\) \(Part 16\)](#)
  - [Jiang Cheng & The Insufferable Brother \(Part 2\) \(Part 3\) \(Part 4\)](#)

- [Nie Huaisang Is Greatly Entertained](#) [\(Part 2\)](#) [\(Part 3\)](#) [\(Part 4\)](#)
- [Wei Wuxian Is Thick As Mud](#) [\(Part 2\)](#) [\(Part 3\)](#) [\(Part 4\)](#) [\(Part 5\)](#) [\(Part 6\)](#) [\(Part 7\)](#) [\(Part 8\)](#)
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- [Wen Qing Has A Terrible Premonition](#) [\(Part 2\)](#) [\(Part 3\)](#) [\(Part 4\)](#)

(Extras:)

- [Do You Wear Your Heart On Your Ribbon?](#)
- [If You Catch It, Will You Keep It?](#)
- 

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There are three reasons I haven't listed a full chapter count for this:

1. Because most of these will be broken into parts when I get around to posting them.
2. Because I might think of more side stories later when writing the next fic in this verse.
3. Because I'm open to prompts and requests for this verse if anyone has anything specific that they'd like to see, or any questions they'd like to ask.

So - if there's anything **YOU** would like to see in this verse that doesn't look like it's on the list, leave me a comment with a request. I won't make any promises just yet about *when* I'll fulfill any such requests; but I *can* promise that *I will get to them eventually*.



## Chapter End Notes

Updates for this fic are scheduled for Wednesdays; about 3× per month, no less than 2×. (A 5 week rotating schedule; updates 2 weeks in a row, 1 week off, 1 week on, 1 week off; repeat.)

Updates for Feb/March:

Wednesday, Feb. 3rd

Wednesday, Feb. 10th

Wednesday, Feb. 24th

Wednesday, March 10th

Wednesday, March 17th

Wednesday, March 31st

# Jiang Yanli At Koi Tower (Part 1)

## Chapter Summary

An introduction.

## Chapter Notes

I meant to post this yesterday; but I got dizzy and had to lie down, then forgot.

I also meant to try and edit a bit more for the first JYL@KT post than this; but I'm just too sick to concentrate.

I'm thinking that I might need to go and get a covid-19 test done; I just can't think of when I could have possibly been exposed to it, so I'm still hoping this is just a really bad case of seasonal flu.

Twelve year old Jiang Yanli crept through the kitchen door, feeling strangely nervous.

It hadn't occurred to her before she got there that the servants in Koi Tower might not be as willing to accommodate her presence in their domain as the ones in Lotus Pier. All she could do was hope that they would.

She wasn't *quite* sure if she should be doing this, but- but Madam Jin *told* her to *consider herself at home*; and *this* was something she *did* at home, something that helped her feel more settled. An extended visit to Koi Tower; being allowed to stay in the family wing... it was all very exciting and flattering – and *intimidating*. Cooking was soothing and relaxing – and she really did need to relax very badly.

Standing in the doorway, watching the servants bustling about as they worked, she fidgeted.

A youth spotted her and was quick to draw one of the older women in charge of things aside to point her out discretely. Yanli flushed heavily under the gazes that turned to her, wondering feebly if perhaps this hadn't been the best idea.

“Are you lost, dear?”

There was a gentle-looking, slightly wrinkled older woman smiling at her kindly, and Yanli was quick to shake her head.

“N-no,” she stuttered, blushing again. “I was just- I hoped that maybe I could make something? Or even just help out for a bit?”

A number of the servants within earshot sent her confused or startled looks at hearing her words, and she began to despair that her face might be permanently stained bright red.

“I just meant- not if I'd be a bother, or get in the way, or- but I do know how; I often help out in the kitchens at home. It- it relaxes me, and calms me; and I like it, I really do. So the servants at home are used to me coming and helping out or working on my own recipes; but if it's too much trouble to do that here I understand.”

Several more glances were exchanged over her head or around the room, but she noticed that the looks directed to her afterwards were just a bit softer; more amused and approving – almost fond, really – rather than sceptical and resigned.

She bit her lip.

“I really do want to help,” she said, as earnestly as she could. “It would help me feel more at ease here; less out of place. And since Jin-gongzi is my betrothed, one day this will be my home. I hope to get to know all of you and work well with you then.”

She offered a respectful salute to the room at large, turning herself slowly to face first one side of the room, then the other in an effort to try to include everyone as she bowed in each direction.

“Ah, Jiang-guniang,” the older woman placed a hand on her elbow, urging her to straighten back up. “That's really not necessary. There's no need to be so formal with us. None of us have titles.”

“Yet without all of your hard work, nothing would get done around here,” Yanli asserted. “A gesture of respectful appreciation is the least I owe you for your time.”

The older woman smiled warmly at her, patting her arm.

“Bless you, child. I don't know that anyone else in your position would agree with that sentiment; but we do appreciate your recognition of our efforts. And if you truly do want to stay, you're welcome to do so.”

“So you'll let me help?”

She couldn't keep the hopeful, eager note out of her voice.

A chuckle answered her, the servant nodding her head. “If that's what the little mistress wants, who is old Qinue to argue?”

Yanli smiled, a radiant, delighted thing.

“Thank you, Qinue-furen!”

The woman – Qinue, apparently – let out a startled laugh.

“Oh, none of that young Jiang-guniang!”

She shook her head. “Just call me Qinue-po; everyone does here.”

“Qinue-po,” Yanli agreed, nodding her head respectfully; earning her another amused look from the woman.

“Come with me, young mistress; I'll help you get settled in.”

That was how Jiang Yanli was first introduced to the servants at Koi Tower.

# Lan Xichen Versus The Rules (Part 1)

## Chapter Summary

A look at how Xichen's decision to reconsider his Sect's stance on rules and punishments will impact the future.

Lan Xichen frowned to himself as he reread the old trial transcript in his hands.

Through his discussions with Jiang-guniang and Mingjue, he had been persuaded that the best way for him to identify incidences where the rules could be misapplied or upheld incorrectly and result in injustice was to research the past for cases where that had already happened.

*Technically*, he was not supposed to have access to these records yet – he was not yet Sect Leader, and would therefore have to assign himself punishment for snooping about in the full, unfiltered and unedited files which he did not yet have the authority to read. However his friends had convinced him that this was a necessary infraction if he was to fulfill his goal of bringing his Sect closer to righteousness in practice as well as claim.

Of course, he *could* have waited until he became Sect Leader to peruse them – but his already limited time would then be even more constrained, and it would likely take him several years to complete his research.

And Xichen wanted to have at least the framework of a plan laid out before then.

So despite his guilty conscience, he was regularly breaking into secured records and making copies of any cases where the judgements and punishments seemed suspect to review at length later on. This would, in theory, allow him to identify any anomalies that needed to be addressed – or, as he was discovering much to his dismay, *patterns*.

For now, he was storing his contraband in a secret qiankun bag that he kept on his person; growing paranoid that his rule-breaking would be discovered.

It was not at all comforting to him to realise how much corruption seemed to be hiding beneath the surface of the sect which prided itself on virtue. The thought of how undeserved that reputation might actually be was as frightening as it was disheartening.

Unfortunately, it was also stirring up old questions and doubts.

He had long ago decided that he had no wish to know the details of his mother's crime; preferring to remain ignorant of the unknown facts that he could not change.

Perhaps it was cowardly of him, but he had no interest in tainting her memory with the sordid details of what she had done.

But ever since he had made the decision to prepare to make changes to the way his Sect upheld their rules after he became Sect Leader, the more uneasy he felt about that decision. The more he looked through old records and reviewed past decisions of his Sect, the more he began to feel that he was doing her memory a disservice.

While learning the unvarnished truth of what had happened back then would change nothing, and would probably only serve to make him miserable, he was beginning to suspect that there might be another purpose for looking into the case than simply reopening old wounds.

Much as it sickened him to consider it, the possibility that his mother had been wrongfully punished meant more than just leaving him disappointed and disillusioned in his Elders.

It meant that something was very, *deeply* wrong with the system of justice in the Cloud Recesses.

And as future Sect Leader, he had a duty to investigate and right those wrongs – no matter how painful or difficult the process might be for him personally.

He simply didn't know what he would do if his darkest, most dreaded suspicions held any truth.

How could he possibly live with the knowledge of his mother's fate if he discovered it hadn't been deserved?

~~How could he live with it if it *had*?~~

There were too many old cases piling up in his secret store of copies where injustice had reigned due to prejudice, favouritism or animosity, or even simple cruelty for him to dismiss the possibility that his mother had been – if not *innocent*; then perhaps guilty of a lesser crime than that of which she had been accused.

Deciding to access those particular records was now becoming something he was unhappy to realise would most likely be necessary.

At least he still had time before he reached them.

For now, he shook his head, and began to copy the transcript before him.

There was still a lot of work to do.

# Nie Mingjue And The Best Friend Thief (Part 1)

## Chapter Summary

Mingjue realises something terrible.

Nie Mingjue scowled down at the letter in his hand, fingers curling and nearly tearing the paper.

Xichen was *his* best friend; they had been best friends since they were children, and Mingjue was *very* possessive of what he considered *his*.

He was a *Nie*; it was in his blood.

Their lives were short, and their hearts were that much larger to make up for it – trying to fit a whole long lifetime's worth of passions into a shortened time frame. They fought hard, and loved even harder. They never forgave betrayal and they never forgot, and they had no tolerance for evil.

As a Nie, it was entirely expected that he would be greedy and possessive over the important things in his life. And a best friend was *quite* important.

But that meant that he was possessive over Xichen, who, *well*. Was a *person*. *Not* something Mingjue could own.

*(Unfortunately.)*

Normally he was satisfied with that; he knew he held an unassailable place in Xichen's life, and no one could usurp his place as Xichen's best friend.

The problem was, ever since Xichen had started writing to that *blasted* Jiang girl he just *wouldn't stop talking about her!* It was driving Mingjue crazy!

Every letter he got from his friend, it felt like the whole thing was filled with, "*Jiang-guniang this*" and "*Jiang-guniang that*".

It was *obvious* what was going on.

Jiang Yanli was scheming to steal Mingjue's best friend out from under him!

And of course, poor, naive Xichen was too innocent and pure-hearted to realise it!

The worst part?

It was *working*.

*This means **war**.*

Mingjue didn't care if he was being childish – *Shut **up**, Zonghui! He **was so an adult**; he was a **Sect Leader*** – and no scheming, sneaky, uppity *little girl* was going to swoop in and steal his best friend!

Not on Mingjue's watch!

He promptly began plotting how to use his status to visit Lotus Pier and take stock of the enemy himself.



# Lan Wangji Versus Communication (Part 1)

## Chapter Summary

The first of a series of snippets showing LWJ's battles with various forms of communication through the years as witnessed by his older brother.

Four year old Lan Zhan stared at his older brother, Xichen.

Xichen stared back.

He *could* do this; he *would* do this. He was the oldest, and as such he had a *responsibility* to his little brother. And part of that responsibility was teaching him to use his words.

If A-Zhan wanted something, he *needed* to learn to communicate it clearly rather than depending on Xichen to guess.

He wasn't a baby anymore, after all.

Even though Xichen *knew* what his brother wanted, he *couldn't* give in until A-Zhan *asked* for it. With *words*.

Hardening his heart, he straightened his back and turned his gaze stern.

He could *do* this, he *wouldn't* give in... no matter *how* adorable those wide, honey-coloured eyes were as they blinked up at him... those chubby, rosy little cheeks... that *teeny* little trembling bottom lip... the tiny droplets clinging to long dark lashes- *wait*.

*Oh, dear.*

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Seven year old Lan Xichen snuggled his little brother on his bed, shushing and cooing to him while he ran a hand up and down the smaller boy's back. Pulling the sniffling child closer, he murmured soft words of reassurance as he tucked them both under the covers.

The fact that the whole thing had started because A-Zhan wanted to sleep next to his big brother again and Xichen wanted him to *say so out loud* was forgotten.

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*Point to Lan Zhan.*

## Jiang Yanli At Koi Tower (Part 2)

Jiang Yanli was very confused.

The thirteen year old thought she had developed the beginnings of a very nice friendship with the servants at Koi Tower on her previous visits; but when she came down to the kitchens this time, they all gave her dark, disapproving looks. She just *didn't understand* what she must have done to upset them all so much!

So yes, she was confused; but also hurt and sad.

Finally, Qinue-po took her aside, and spoke to her privately.

“Yanli-guniang,” she said, clasping Yanli's hands in her own, weathered ones. “Please promise me you won't go anywhere in the tower alone anymore. And no matter what, that you will never, ever be alone with Sect Leader Jin.”

Yanli blinked, visibly startled and confused by the request.

“I- okay?” she replied, sounding rather lost.

“Jiang-guniang... *please*. It's important,” Qinue-po was worrying her – she appeared so worried, and I'll at ease; Yanli couldn't help but be frightened.

“I can't tell you why, and you can't talk about this with anyone else, just... please. *Promise me.*”

“Alright,” she said, trying to project more certainty in her voice than she felt. “I don't know what's going on, but I trust you, Qinue-po. I won't go anywhere alone, or with Sect Leader Jin; I promise!”

“Good girl,” Qinue-po said, smiling at her, relieved. She patted Yanli on the head, and suggested a new recipe for them to try together.

As they moved back into the main kitchen area, she noticed how relieved everyone appeared to be, and many of them smiled at her apologetically when before they had been – *worried*, she realised. For some reason, they had been worried for her.

All she could do was smile brightly at each of them in turn, thanking them mentally for their care for her, even if she still didn't know what caused them to become so concerned.

It wouldn't be until much later that Yanli would realise that thirteen had been the year her body began changing – that the servants had panicked at the sight of her small figure creeping about unaccompanied when she was beginning to develop breasts.

A few years later, the implications of the reasons for them to fear for her in such a way, at such an age chilled her to the bone.



# Nie Mingjue And The Best Friend Thief (Part 2)

## Chapter Summary

Nie Mingjue attempts to assess his rival. It does not go as planned.

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Mingjue hadn't spotted his adversary since he'd arrived, but it was still early.

He knew he'd have to be discrete about his investigation, but he was determined not to leave before he'd made it quite clear to the usurper that she would never take his place at Xichen's side.

Instead he was stuck discussing Sect matters with Sect Leader Jiang.

While he did have valid reasons for speaking with the other, the older man was nonetheless surprised at his presence. Welcoming, but still surprised.

Technically, nothing they were discussing actually required him to come in person, after all; so he excused it on the grounds of a night hunt taking him near the border and feeling it would be expedient in that case to come the rest of the way himself while he was near enough to the area.

It was a reasonable and plausible enough excuse for Jiang Fengmian to accept without question. He was relieved that the other man seemed to hold no suspicions about his motives. Though unable to keep himself from betraying a slight interest in the subject of the Jiang daughter entirely, he was quite confident that he managed to disguise his true motives.

Mingjue might not have been the most politically savvy of men, but he was still aware that the truth – *"I'm here to threaten your daughter"* – was not likely to go over well.

The opportunity he was waiting for finally arrived when Jiang Fengmian was called away to deal with an incident on the training grounds.

Jiang Yanli came into the park or where he'd been left to wait to offer him some refreshments. His eyes glittered with triumph at the perfect chance that had fallen into his lap. With poorly-disguised eagerness, he invited her to join him for tea and conversation.

Serving them both gracefully, with all the manners and poise befitting a young lady of her station, she was quite proper and formal towards him. It only served to irritate him further.

"Would you care for a mooncake, Nie-zongzhu?" she asked.

Scowling, he gave an irritated wave of his hand.

“Call me Mingjue,” he barked. “We're both friends with Xichen, after all; and I despise useless formalities.”

She hesitated.

“As you wish, then, Mingjue-zongzhu,” she agreed. “You may call me Yanli, then.”

He pretended not to see the faint reluctance and trepidation with which she extended the offer, but he was gratified that she seemed to know well enough to fear him.

*Good*, he decided, feeling rather smugly satisfied. *She should consider more carefully what sort of enemy she chooses to make in the future.*

“Yanli.”

He nodded his acceptance; deciding to be gracious in light of her apparent reconsidering of having challenged him, and not growl or snarl at her the way he'd originally wanted to.

“Mooncake, Nie-zongzhu?” she repeated. “They're fresh, and made in the Mingzhou\* style; savoury, spicy, and salty with ham and seaweed.”

Eyes widening slightly, he found himself agreeing before he could stop himself. He had never tried a Mingzhou-style mooncake made with both seaweed and ham; they were usually made with one or the other.

Biting into the cake saw his eyes flutter shut and a moan tore its way out of his throat before he could manage to hold it back.

“*Mmm*, ” he hummed in appreciation. “You must give my compliments to your cook! These are magnificent!”

Yanli blushed.

“Thank you,” she said, strangely bashful.

“Mingzhou-style mooncakes are one of my favourites; but I've never tried them with both ham and seaweed before – your cook managed to combine the flavours perfectly!”

The deliciousness of the delicacy he was not able to indulge in nearly so often as he would like – while the cooks in the Unclean Realm had the recipe, they rarely turned out quite so well as those he'd sampled in the city of Mingzhou itself – put in him in an unexpectedly good mood.

His hostess smiled at him, a pleasant flush across her cheekbones.

“Xichen mentioned they were your favourite,” she admitted.

He was torn between irritation at the reminder of her encroachment and pleasure that Xichen would speak of him to her the way he spoke of her to him. At least they were even in that. Her next words distracted him, however.

“I tinkered with the recipe a bit, but it suits our Yunmeng palate quite well, so we enjoy them every now and then. I thought you might appreciate them since he told me you don't get to have them very often; as soon as I heard you were coming I went to the kitchen to prepare a batch.”

Shock ran through him.

“*You* made these, Yanli-guniang?” he asked, not noticing that he had unconsciously added her the more respectful address he'd intended to leave off as a subtle snub.

“Mn!”

She offered him a lovely smile, and he found himself somewhat dazed by it.

“My little brothers quite like them, so I hoped they would live up to your expectations,” she said.

From there, their conversation segued into discussing their younger brothers and the occasional difficulties of being older siblings. It was an altogether pleasant afternoon; and it wasn't until some time after he'd returned to the Unclean Realm that Mingjue realised he'd been completely sidetracked from his intended purpose.

His eyes narrowed and fists clenched as he stared furiously into the distance, manfully refraining from the impulse to shout and throw things in his frustration.

“Well played, xiao-Jiang; well-played,” he muttered. “But I won't be so easily defeated next time!”

Next time, he would be prepared for how clever and cunning his opponent was; and he would not go easy on her - no matter *how* delicious her mooncakes were.

## Chapter End Notes

I hate being in pain, and I really hate how useless pain medication makes me.

Updates for other WIPs will not be very frequent until after my dental surgery; though if anyone is willing to Beta for me at least temporarily, I'd be very appreciative.

\*Mingzhou is the former name for city of Ningbo.

# Nie Huaisang Is Greatly Entertained

## Chapter Summary

NHS's POV of NMJ's rivalry with JYL.

## Chapter Notes

Me: \*is very late updating\*

Me: \*tiptoes back onto AO3\*

Me: \*throws a chapter at readers\*

Me: \*turns around and runs away\*

\*\*\*\*\*

I just edited this, because I accidentally posted the unfinished version before. Not that this version is *much* longer; but it is a bit.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Nie Huaisang was having the time of his life.

He hadn't had this much fun since *The Great Heir Debacle* a few years back; when a bunch of the Nie Elders and advisors got it into their heads that Da-ge needed to marry and produce a suitable heir – one who had less of Huaisang's... *everything*.

(*Poor Da-ge.*)

At least, that was what Huaisang thought *at first*.

As it turned out, the ones who *really* needed pity by the end of the whole thing were the *Elders*.

(*Heh.*)

The funniest part of it all turned out to be how... *oblivious*... Da-ge proved to be to all of it. While the Elders and advisors were all convinced it was an act to torment them, Huaisang knew that it was *not*.

That was actually how Huaisang learned that it wasn't *only* that Da-ge just honestly *didn't care* about things like sex and romance; he actually tended to *forget they existed*.

They were simply too *irrelevant* to him to remember.

So while Da-ge fumed and fretted over Xichen-ge's budding friendship with Jiang Yanli, Huaisang recognised that it was the beginning of a very quiet and proper, very *wholesome* – and honestly he thought it was all rather sweet – romance; even if neither of the two involved parties had *quite* figured that out yet for themselves.

They were both just so... *soft*, and naive in the sweetest way; a romance between them couldn't be anything *but* wholesome; they were just so adorably *innocent* and *genuine*.

Not to mention that the two of them were just so impressively good and kind. He'd always thought that Xichen-ge was basically just too good to be real; *people just didn't work like that!*

But the Lan Sect heir was simply one of the most honest, and purely *good* people he'd ever known; so he was incredibly grateful that Da-ge had a friend like him. There had even been a time where he'd rather wistfully thought that if Da-ge were going to be interested in romance with anyone, it would be Lan Xichen.

But he wasn't, and Xichen-ge wasn't interested in a romance with Da-ge either – not *anymore*, at least, since Huaisang was pretty sure he'd had a crush on Da-ge when they were younger; but that had faded away when it became clear that Da-ge was not and never would be interested. While Huaisang suspected that Xichen-ge was the type who would spend years pining for someone who could never be more than a friend if his feelings were given *any* form of encouragement, Da-ge had ranted to him on the subject of romance enough for Xichen-ge to silently bury his feelings and let them die a quiet, lonely death.

So Huaisang had reluctantly accepted that a non-platonic relationship between them would *never* happen.

*A bit* reluctant partly because Xichen-ge was always so nice and sometimes spoiled him – not to mention that the Lan Sect heir's presence usually distracted his brother from forcing him through those *awful* training sessions – and partly because the idea of a star-crossed romance between the leaders (*well, the leader and the future leader; but details*) of two different sects struck him as *incredibly romantic*.

Getting a front-row seat to watch *that* kind of drama would have been *wonderfully satisfying*.

Having the opportunity to manipulate things behind the scenes to ensure they were able to get married if things seemed like they wouldn't work out on their own would have just been a bonus.

*(The detailed plans he'd come up with to ensure that Lan-er-gongzi would take over as Sect Heir for his brother and Xichen-ge could move to the Unclean Realm to live happily-ever-after with Da-ge would unfortunately never be used. He mourned the lost opportunity, and felt a bit sad that Da-ge would never provide him with the chance to witness a heart-*



*throbbing romance up close; but he loved his brother far too much to feel **too** upset over his disappointment.)*

Nevertheless, Huaisang had always privately thought that whoever Xichen-ge ended up marrying could never be good enough for him.

It shocked him to realise that there was actually someone out there who was as nice and gentle as Xichen-ge was; he wouldn't ever have believed it if he'd been told.

Actually, he *had* been told; Jiang-xiong and Wei-xiong were *very* effusive on the subject of Jiang-guniang. Huaisang had just always thought that they were exaggerating.

Meeting her had convinced him that, no; somehow, *miraculously*, there were actually *two such people* in the world.

*Especially* miraculous given that Jiang-guniang's mother was the horror known as the Violet Spider.

*(Huaisang privately thought Yu-furen's assigned name was quite fitting; given the propensity of female spiders to viciously cannibalize the males – particularly after mating – and occasionally even **their own offspring**; not to mention other young and vulnerable, much smaller specimens unfortunate enough to be in said females' vicinity. From what he'd heard from rumours – or even witnessed himself – of the Jiang Sect main family's dynamics, it was an **extremely apt** comparison. **Most of all** compared to the dynamic between Lotus Pier's furen and poor Wei-xiong.)*

However it had happened, he was delighted to discover that Jiang Yanli had a heart of gold.

It was incredibly fortunate that both of those kind and gentle souls had found each other; Huaisang felt that the opportunity to watch the romance blossom between the two of them would make up for the fact that he wouldn't be getting such a chance with Da-ge.

Upon returning to the Unclean Realm to find out that Da-ge had paid one visit to Lotus Pier and was already planning another, he had insisted on coming along to see his friends.

Da-ge attempted to point out that he had just returned from Gusu where he'd spent plenty of time with them already, and that Huaisang's time would be better spent training that now he was home.

This was quickly refuted by Huaisang saying that; firstly, Wei-xiong hadn't been in Gusu for the past *nine months*; secondly, he'd literally *just finished* a *full year* of studying and training with the Lan Sect, and since he'd actually managed to pass this time he therefore deserved a break; and thirdly, that he was much more willing to train with Wei-xiong – whose help in the first quarter of the year had been rather indispensable in getting Huaisang to pass the course. Since even after Wei-xiong had been expelled, Huaisang had continued to follow – *mostly*, anyway – the temporary studying and training plans the other boy had come up with to make the whole thing easier and less challenging for him.

Jiang-xiong had tried to help him as well; but there was a reason that Wei-xiong was the Head Disciple of Lotus Pier instead beyond his prodigious strength, skill, and powerful golden core. Namely, that Jiang-xiong's teaching and training methods were rather unfortunately similar to those employed by his mother.

No doubt they could be very effective at times; but they were hardly conducive to making Huaisang – most likely in addition to *anyone else* subjected to said methods – really *want* to learn or enjoy the process of learning.

So Huaisang only really credited Wei-xiong with helping him improve his training; though he reluctantly acknowledged Jiang-xiong had been a big help with his classroom studies. The Jiang Sect Heir was terrible at motivating people through any means other than fear and intimidation; but he was disciplined enough to work hard at his own studies and bully Huaisang into joining him.

*Of course*, the Nie Sect Leader had promptly decided that if his little brother came along he would have to spend time training with his friends.

Though he agreed with bad grace, Huaisang had privately sworn that he would spend as much of the visit having fun instead while Da-ge was too busy to notice.

Wei-xiong proved to be an *excellent* friend in both aiding Huaisang in avoiding any actual training while he was at Lotus Pier, and keeping Da-ge from finding out.

Unfortunately, part of that had involved making himself a scapegoat to Yu-furen.

The scene that followed *that* was rather... *illuminating*.

Subsequently, Huaisang had decided that he would invite Wei-xiong and Jiang-xiong to visit the Unclean Realm often and for extended stays; his poor friends deserved to have as much time away from Yu-furen's toxicity as they could get. Having that time away without being stifled by the 3,000 rules of the Lan Sect would be even better.

While he would have loved to invite Jiang-guniang as well, doing *that* would *definitely* send the wrong message.

Not that Da-ge's attempts to size up what he saw as his competition weren't *already doing so*. He wasn't *nearly* as subtle as he *thought* he was – even if he was quite *blissfully unaware* of the hilarious misunderstanding with the Jiang parents his actions were starting to foster there – but Huaisang certainly wasn't going to make the situation even *more* awkward.

He didn't want anyone getting upset and claiming Da-ge had been dishonest about his intentions; *that* accusation would *not* go over well. *Not at all*.

The downside of these visits, of course, would be that Da-ge would try to rope them all into more of those arduous training sessions.

But Wei-xiong and Jiang-xiong *liked* training, and Huaisang was willing to suffer through a few extra tortu- that is, *training* - sessions in the name of friendship. That Wei-xiong tended

to either distract Da-ge from overseeing Huaisang's own training too closely by enthusiastically and effusively questioning him about the Nie Sect's sabre cultivation and drawing him into discussions about it – which allowed Huaisang to slack off without being caught and yelled at for it – or else would utilize his experience as the fun-loving Head Disciple of the Jiang Sect to offer advice and assistance to Huaisang's practicing – which was *much more* laidback and *far less* tedious and exhausting than the usual grueling training methods employed by the Nie Sect – had absolutely *nothing* to do with that acceptance. *Nothing*.

Although Huaisang hated training no matter what; he hated it *considerably less* when Wei-xiong was there encouraging him and finding ways to make training almost *fun* – *almost* – after all, it was still *training*. Having Da-ge be pleased with and proud of him for a change was *also* rather nice.

*Despite* the fact that Jiang-xiong began looking rather homicidal when Da-ge started trying to tempt Wei-xiong into leaving the Yunmeng Jiang Sect for Qinghe Nie; impressed by how much less difficult getting Huaisang to train was when Wei-xiong was helping.

*(That may have been a... **small** miscalculation on Huaisang's part.)*

However that had all come *after* Huaisang's initial visit to Lotus Pier.

In an unexpected twist of fate, the highlight of that visit for him had definitely been spending time with Jiang-guniang.

Admittedly, he only managed it by offering to serve as a chaperone for her and his brother – partly wanting to assess the girl Xichen-ge was unaware he was smitten with; but also to get a front-row seat to the entertainment of watching Da-ge attempt to intimidate her in what everyone else mistook as a strangely aggressive, exceedingly grouchy form of courtship.

*(Huaisang would have to do something about that soon; it wouldn't do to let it go on **too** long, after all. Even if the whole misunderstanding **was** one of the **most entertaining** things he'd **ever** seen.)*

After spending time with Jiang-guniang, he decided that she was actually a very good choice for Xichen-ge. The prospect of how unbearably cute the two of them would be as a couple thrilled him.

*(He was already planning the wedding.)*

Ultimately, Huaisang recognised that Da-ge had nothing to worry about from Jiang-guniang; as her relationship with Xichen-ge would eventually be *very different* from the one Da-ge shared with him, and it was *not* the kind of relationship that Da-ge wanted for himself.

Generally, he was *not at all* fond of situations that had Da-ge stomping around in high dungeon; but this whole situation was hysterical. Pretty much *everybody* even tangentially involved was misunderstanding *something* about *somebody*; and *several* people were misunderstanding *themselves*.

*(It wasn't **just** Xichen-ge and Jiang-guniang who were oblivious to their own feelings; he'd noticed Wei-xiong's rather unexpected crush on Lan-er-gonzi back in Gusu - where Wei-xiong was **both** oblivious **and** embarrassingly obvious (**how** no one else had noticed he had **no idea**; Wei-xiong was **not** subtle) as he went about trying to catch and keep Lan-er-gonzi's attention in all the worst possible ways. But he'd assumed it was a fleeting thing that would soon die down with a little separation.*

*Since Wei-xiong's rambling about "**Lan Zhan**" indicated that it was still going strong, he suspected that sooner or later he might have to meddle there. (Because he was a **good friend**, of course. It had **nothing** to do with his weakness for romantic stories.) Though the fact that Wei-xiong was writing to Lan-er-gonzi was not surprising, the fact that Lan-er-gonzi was actually **writing him back** was.*

***That** was interesting; Huaisang was rarely wrong about people, but realising that Lan-er-gonzi **actually liked** Wei-xiong enough to write to him had some **very interesting** implications.)*

While he much preferred to sit back and watch things unfold by themselves, he was not averse to offering a tiny nudge here or there when it was needed. He would leave the relationship between Xichen-ge and Jiang-guniang to develop naturally without his help; but Da-ge would need to be calmed and redirected soon, and the Jiang parents enlightened. Other people's various misunderstandings could be left alone until such time that he had reason to believe his assistance was required.

Fortunately for Da-ge's blood-pressure, Huaisang intended to clear things up – just... *not* until most of the amusement of the situation wore off.

As of now, it was all still *so very much fun*.

Yes; Nie Huaisang was having a *fantastic* time.

## Chapter End Notes

So, I ended up having *three* different surgeries; the last of which was on the 11th of December. I'm just generally sore and cranky now - very worn out physically, mentally, and emotionally from this whole situation dragging on for so long; but *finally* getting better and not having to worry about that changing suddenly anymore.

I'm going to be spending the holidays throwing myself into writing and editing as much as possible, in preparation for getting back on track with the new writing schedule I created for myself when I originally expected to get back to writing after the *first* surgery on the 26th of November. I hope to update all of my MDZS WIPs at least once before the new year.

I have a few WIPs in other fandoms I've been neglecting for longer that I worked on yesterday and this morning; but hopefully I can get back on top of my MDZS fics

enough to get them all updated over the rest of the month as well. I have a total of 20 updates planned for this month; originally I was hoping to manage to update a few stories twice so that I could finish some of my WIPs, but that's not likely to happen now. I wanted to have at least some of them finished by the end of the year; but I'm not going to make any promises right now. We'll see how it goes.

All of my currently posted MDZS fics set at a total chapter-count below five chapters should be complete by the end of January. I hope to have most of the rest finished by the end of February; I have *so many* prompts that I claimed and scribbled down outlines for that I could probably spend the whole next *year* working on them all, but for now my priority is to finish updating and completing my currently-posted WIPs.

# Nie Mingjue And The Best Friend Thief (Part 3)

## Chapter Summary

Nie Mingjue ~~broods~~ *thinks* about the Jiang Yanli Problem.

## Chapter Notes

When I was writing NMJ's mental ranting at Nie Zonghui, my brain immediately supplied the mental image of NMJ from CQL with a voice-over from Carter from South Park - "*You will respect ma author-ah-tay!*"

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(I don't even *watch* South Park; *what even...?*)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Nie Mingjue was doing some serious thinking. About his friendship with Xichen, his rivalry with Jiang Yanli – and the *irritatingly* competent cunning of the latter that continually led her to outwit him whenever he attempted to trap her into revealing herself.

(No, Zonghui; he was ***not brooding*** – he was a ***Nie***, and a ***Sect Leader***; he did ***not brood!***)

He was just spending time *contemplating the situation*. ***Manfully***.

(...He really needed to find a new second-in-command. One that actually remembered Mingjue's position and would respect his authority. Or at least, kept it in mind enough not baselessly accuse him of behaving childishly. ***Lies and slander.***)

(***That*** was the problem with having a second who used to babysit him for his father when he was small.)

Aside from dealing with Zonghui's unwelcome commentary on his preoccupation, he currently had nothing to do but dwell.

(Paperwork did ***not*** count.)

It was frustrating, having an enemy he could not simply glare or shout or thrash into submission. The inability to deal with a problem through any of his preferred means was *galling*.

*(He pointedly ignored the fact that he may have been projecting some of his fury over his current impotency against the Wen Sect onto a more convenient target with lesser stakes.)*

It wasn't good for him to be so worked up all of the time. He *knew* that. Qi Deviation was a very real and ever-present threat for members of his bloodline, and living in a constant state of anger would only increase the risks.

But it was easier to vent his rage when it was over something less monumental than the ever present threat of the Wen, and his helplessness to ensure the safety of his Sect or avenge his father. He could go out to the training field and hit things until he was spent, without being left with a crushing sense of hopelessness and defeat.

If he wanted to exist in something other than resigned apathy, he needed something less terrifying and insurmountable to focus on.

Admittedly, the prospect of losing his best and oldest friend was not *much* better; but at least that was a battle he *could* fight. Even if it involved unfamiliar strategies and manoeuvring. The alternative was doubling his efforts to force Huaisang to train, and focusing on how much time he wasted on frivolous things; which was not actually much more conducive to reducing his stress levels. It also put him at odds with Huaisang, which was *not* something he enjoyed.

He *hated* losing his temper with his little brother.

For all that his didi may have frustrated and baffled him at times, he also loved the boy deeply. Focusing on his issues with Huaisang to distract himself from the sins of Wen Ruohan and the lack of accountability Qishan Wen faced for *anything* they did, turned his upset with Huaisang's training regime – or more appropriately, the *lack* of training that went on in said regime – from the kind of occasional fits of annoyance and bouts of irritated shouting common to most older siblings who'd been pushed just a little too far, all the way into screaming outrage and destruction of property.

*(Once he'd even made A-Sang cry – **really** cry; not just the usual crocodile tears – and that was **not** acceptable.)*

So concentrating on Jiang Yanli's outrageous presumption in daring to infringe on his territory as Lan Xichen's Very Best Friend was a much more palatable alternative to spending too much time obsessing over his brother's bad habits.

At least *Huaisang* certainly seemed more cheerful these days.

Mingjue sighed, and turned his annoyed gaze back to the pile of (*evil, evil*) paperwork on his desk. He needed to get at least some of it done before Zonghui noticed him ~~slacking~~ thinking rather than working and scolded him. Again.

*(Being surrounded by subordinates who you were used to thinking of as authority figures prior to your abrupt ascension to Sect Leader before you'd **quite** reached adulthood resulted in some rather complicated dynamics. They respected him; they **did** – they were just used to thinking of him as an (**occasionally**) recalcitrant child; even **after** he become their boss.)*

(Mingjue *really* needed to find a subordinate **his own age** that he could trust. It would be nice to have a high-ranking officer that *didn't* remember him as a squalling infant.)

Shaking his head to dispel the useless train of thought, he knuckled down and started reading.

## Chapter End Notes

This is just a snippet; but I wanted to reconcile my portrayal of NMJ in these Ficlets with the way I *actually* see his character. I honestly feel like this is a totally plausible reason for him to actually react this way to the situation.

Also - re: Zonghui and his chiding of NMJ and NMJ being willing to let him get away with it (other than his mental grumbling about it). I think I managed to explain that pretty well. When your second in command once changed your diapers, it's hard for them not to reprimand you when they think you're behaving immaturely.

I feel it also provides a totally believable reason for NMJ to have promoted MY to such a high position so quickly in Canon - *yes*, MY was incredibly competent and not getting the respect he deserved where he was. But it's one thing to give a guy you notice is being wasted where he is a promotion and some recognition; it's another thing to appoint him to be your *deputy* - *especially* when you have a plethora of options for the position that include people you've known all your life that you *know for a fact* are trustworthy.

Sure, *nowadays* nepotism isn't considered a valid consideration in hiring; but *back then* it was basically the number one criteria. And while NMJ might have valued skill over connections; between his position, the time period, and the circumstances, his deputy *needed* to be someone he could trust *personally*, not just professionally.

Which was part of why he felt so betrayed by MY - because he wasn't just a subordinate; he was a subordinate whom NMJ had offered a great deal of personal trust to, and he betrayed that. I feel that this is something that most people who watch or read the story with a modern perspective tend to overlook; just how unusual NMJ's elevation of him was, how much of a chance he took on him, how much he must have trusted and respected him to risk that, and how deep and personal his subsequent betrayal was.

In light of that, NMJ's treatment of and attitude towards him afterwards was totally understandable and justifiable; beyond just, "He killed some of my men in a time of war and I thought he was better than that".

It *especially* sucks because NMJ was the kind of leader who was willing to move away from nepotism when he felt a person's skills showed that they deserved it; but then he gets betrayed so badly by someone he took a chance on - what are the odds that he'd *ever* be so accepting of someone he didn't have a long personal history with again?



# Lan Xichen Versus The Rules (Part 2)

## Chapter Summary

Xichen learns a revolting piece of his family history, and for the first time finds himself completely disillusioned in his sect.

## Chapter Notes

TW: mentions of rape, drugging, kidnapping and imprisonment, corruption, and suicide. Madam Lan Stuff.

Also - in the End Notes I posted a rough update schedule for the rest of the month for my stories; as well as a request to any fluent Chinese readers.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Staring at the scroll lying on the table before him, Xichen tried to convince himself to open it and read the contents.

It was cowardly of him to keep putting it off; he'd already reviewed everything else from the same time period, and used himself with other duties for the last few days since he'd finished that. He couldn't really justify delaying any longer.

Fingers trembling, he opened it and began to read.

There were more details in the transcript than he had been expecting – the scribe had added several annotations to the record.

While carefully written in a manner to avoid being censured by the Elders, it was obvious from the scribe's decision to include the relevant background information that he had not agreed with the proceedings, and protested them in the only way he could – by clearly describing the situation and everything relevant; regardless of how the truth would reflect on the Lan Sect.

After roughly a quarter of a shi, the scroll slipped from his limp grasp and fell to the ground. He didn't notice; sitting stock still, face bloodless in shock.

Then the words he'd read registered and he lurched to his feet rushing out the door of the Hanshi; falling to his knees outside and promptly vomiting.

Though she did not deny killing Lan Deming, his mother had claimed it was justified. That she had caught him while he was violating a woman, and had killed him after rescuing the other from his depravity.

The Lan Sect Elders had refused to believe it; claiming that even if the Elder she killed had given into lust, he would never have touched a woman who was unwilling. And that even if Zhang Ahmei's story was somehow true, that she had no right to take the Lan Deming's life over it.

She had insisted that she had a right to vengeance; but they refused to acknowledge the relationship she claimed to the man's victim. The trial was very obviously skewed, and they had already decided her guilt and her sentence prior to even beginning. As a rogue cultivator, having killed a member of one of the Five Great Sects in defense of another rogue cultivator, there was no one willing to speak for her and demand that she be judged fairly.

Instead, Qingheng-jun had taken the opportunity to claim her and marry her by force, when she would never have lain with a man willingly.

His mother already had a cultivation partner – a woman she called her wife.

Because they were both women, however – beautiful, intelligent, and talented women at that – most men refused to acknowledge them as married. Despite the fact that they had indeed taken their three bows together. Jealous, lustful men claimed their marriage was invalid; and attempted to woo them anyway.

Qingheng-jun had been one such man.

Xichen's mother had been unequivocally thorough and quite vocal in expressing her disgust at his interest, her lack of appreciation for his disregard of her repeated requests for him to leave her alone, and her deep resentment of his continuing efforts despite her many refusals.

For all his determination to have her whether she wanted him or not, Qingheng-jun was given no opportunity to take what he wished until the lovely rogue cultivator he was obsessed with had killed his teacher.

How he had justified taking a woman against her will to himself, Xichen wasn't sure; but he suspected that his father had regarded it as payback for her slaying a teacher he cared about.

Perhaps the worst thing about it was that Xichen understood that had the victims been anyone else, with any political standing whatsoever, the killing of Lan Deming would have been accepted as a justified retaliation to a heinous crime.

Not only that; but had his mother been a man, no one would have questioned her right to kill her wife's rapist.

Zhang Ahmei had left her wife sleeping alone in their room at an inn after a successful night hunt. She left in order to retrieve some medicinal herbs to brew a restorative tea for her partner, who had exhausted her golden core the previous night.

Upon returning, she discovered that Lan Deming had entered the room while she was absent, and taken advantage of her spouse's weariness to assault her while she was too weakened to defend herself properly.

She had attacked him, and killed him for what he did to her now-traumatized, weeping wife.

However the Lan Elders refused to believe that a respected teacher of their sect such as Lan Deming had done such a thing, that Zhang Ahmei and Shen Bai were married, or that anything Shen Bai might say to defend her wife's actions might be true. Claiming that her friendship with Zhang Ahmei was well-known, and thus she would of course lie to defend the other.

Therefore, Zhang Ahmei was sentenced to death, while Shen Bai was disciplined for lying and promiscuity.

Afterwards, Qingheng-jun had drugged Zhang Ahmei, and proceeded to abscond with her; marrying her by using a hen as a substitute for her inability to bow whilst unconscious, and consummating the marriage without her consent – all before the sedative wore off and the rogue cultivator woke up.

By the time she did wake, she was imprisoned in the Gentian House, and had become Madam Lan without her consent or even her knowledge.

Shen Bai took her own life after learning of her wife's fate.

First she had attempted a rescue; but without her sword – and whilst still recovering from both her ordeal and the subsequent punishment she was given by the Lan Elders – the disciples guarding her easily prevented her from accomplishing anything.

It was only after her defeat – and learning that she herself was being held captive until it could be determined whether she might have become pregnant by Lan Deming or not, as the Elders had decreed that any resulting child would belong to the Lan Sect – that Shen Bai had given up in despair.

Learning of her wife's death broke Zhang Ahmei's resistance, and left her a shell of herself.

Overall, the entire tale was one of corruption and abuse of power; and the non-consensual method of his parents' marriage convinced Xichen that neither he nor his brother had been conceived through anything but rape.

Between the deep, visceral horror and revulsion he felt towards the treatment of his mother and her wife; along with the unquestionably dishonourable behaviour of his father and the despicable actions of his own sect, the Lan Sect Heir was filled with disgust and loathing. Along with a fierce sense of outraged fury.

Panting, straining to get his normally absent temper under control, Xichen knelt on the ground outside the Hanshi with his palms pressed over his eyes.

Reeling from disbelief, devastated at learning the truth behind his mother's 'crime', her punishment, and his parents' marriage.

He felt betrayed, in every possible way.

Shushu, the Elders; even the disciples who knew the truth and went along with such injustice and immorality anyway – he was sickened and infuriated by each and every one of them.

What happened to his mother was one of the most blatant violations of the principles the very violators of them had raised him to uphold. The people he'd been taught to respect and hold in esteem were utterly depraved, and he felt violated himself at both their actions and their utter lack of repentance.

Xichen had no idea what he was going to do, but he knew that he couldn't let this stand.

## Chapter End Notes

If anyone reading this speaks/reads Chinese well enough to help, I have some poetry-related linguistic questions for you; if you're willing to give me a hand. It relates to my story *"Jin Zixuan Vrs. Consequences"*.

Basically, I wrote some (terrible) poetry for JZX to send to JYL - it was intended to be unintentionally humorous;

**\*SPOILER FOR JZX V. C\***

Because it was meant to be something that would seem insulting if you didn't know they were meant to be love poems - basically poems that could be taken in one of two different ways; but considering JZX's past attitude towards her, JYL would assume he was insulting her in poetic form.

This is partly due to the plot, and partly due to my private HC about the love letters JZX sent her after they were engaged. I can't remember if it's Canon or fanon that JC complained that JZX was sending her awful poetry; while it's 100% possible JC would have just said that because it was JZX, it's also possible that he really was bad at coming up with poetry.

Considering his habit of foot-in-mouth disease with regards to JYL, I theorize that the reason his poems were terrible is that they were accidentally subtly insulting while he tried (badly) to express his feelings.

In other words, they're love poems that involve word play - I thought I was all set; until I remembered that they speak Chinese and things don't necessarily translate the same. So I want to check with someone who actually knows enough to point out my mistakes and can maybe offer me some suggestions for changes.

**\*END SPOILER\***

+++++++

This particular fic should be updated going forward for 2 Wednesdays on, 1 Wednesday off. In other words - this week, next week, skip a week; repeat.

The following is my MDZS update schedule for the rest of the month:

### **JANUARY Weekday Updates**

#### **Monday January 11th:**

*Pounding Madly* (2/7)

*Pretty For You* (2/3)

#### **Tuesday 12th:**

*Somewhere Between Want & Need* (3/5)

*Jin Zixuan Vrs: Consequences* (2/5)

#### **Wednesday 13th:**

*The Abyss Also Gazes* (2/?)

*LGB&S One-shots & Short Stories* (9/?)

#### **Thursday January 14th:**

*Heat* (2/3)

*The Secret Life Of Lan Wangji* (12/25)

#### **Friday 15th:**

*It's Just Me & You (& Of Course, Me Too)* (2/4)

*Accidents Happen* (4/5)

#### **Monday January 18th:**

*Lan Wangji & The Horrible, No-Good, Very Bad Idea* (3/3)

#### **Tuesday January 19th:**

*Jin Guangyao & The Worst Plan Ever* (2/?)

#### **Wednesday January 20th:**

*Chaos Which Must Not Be Named* (4/?)

*LGB&S One-shots & Short Stories* (10/?)

#### **Thursday January 21st:**

*Sensory Learning Experiences & Other Touching Explorations* (3/?)

*I Was A Teenage Alpha* (3/4)

#### **Friday January 22nd:**

*Lan Sizhui & The Inconvenient Condition* (1/3)

*Once Upon A Discussion Conference* (9/22)

#### **Monday January 25th:**

*Lay All Your Love In Me* (3/4)

*New Things Everyday* (3/4)

#### **Tuesday January 26th:**

*The Author Of His Own Tragedy* (2/3)

*The Wrong Mr. Right* (1/?)

#### **Wednesday January 27th:**

*As The Sun Goes Down* (3/15)

*More Than These Ashes* (5/18)

#### **Thursday January 28th:**

*The Corruption Of Lan Xichen* (3/15)

*The Secret Life Of Lan Wangji* (13/25)

#### **Friday January 29th:**

*It's Just Me & You (& Of Course, Me Too) (3/4)*

*Accidents Happen (5/5)*

(Yes; I'm already behind - however I *have* worked on the stories for the 11th, 12th, and 13th on the days they were scheduled to go up; I just haven't had time this week to finish getting them done and posted.

It's why next week's schedule is much lighter - I intend to catch up on everything that's fallen behind. I have one week each month with a light update schedule, so that I can be sure I have more time to catch up whenever I fall behind; this schedule is not 100% set in stone, however - it's more of a goal than a promise.)

# Lan Wangji Versus Communication (Part 2)

## Chapter Summary

To speak, or not to speak - LQR Vrs. LWJ, Round 1. (Snippet)

## Chapter Notes

Just a snippet.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Shushu stared at A-Zhan.

A-Zhan stared at Shushu.

Shushu glared disapprovingly.

A-Zhan blinked, and kept staring.

Shushu frowned.

A-Zhan waited.

Shushu closed his eyes.

A-Zhan kept waiting.

Shushu sighed.

A-Zhan was patient.

Shushu opened his eyes, and sighed again.

“Very well,” he grumbled. “Go work on your calligraphy.”

A-Zhan's eyes sparkled.

He *knew* if he just waited long enough, Shushu would get tired of trying to get him to speak.

And A-Zhan was *very good* at waiting.

---

*Point to Lan Zhan.*

## Chapter End Notes

Reference picture for bb!LWJ:

[Teeny-Tiny A-Zhan](#)

For Little LWJ (Older than a toddler; but still bitty):

[Smol A-Zhan](#)

In this outfit:

[The Bittiest Swordsman](#)



# Lan Wangji Versus Communication (Part 3)

## Chapter Summary

Lan Zhan battles with communication again.

For the first time, he loses.

He just doesn't know how to explain why he can't stop waiting.

A-Zhan knelt in the snow outside his mother's house.

It was very cold, and he was very tired.

But he couldn't give up.

Uncle said that as long as he was good, he could visit his mother each month. He *promised*.  
And lying was forbidden.

So he was always good, and always followed the rules. Then, once a month, he got to visit A-Niang. That was the way it had always been.

Until recently.

Recently, he was told that he couldn't visit her anymore.

A-Zhan didn't understand.

He had been good. He was *always* good.

Being good was important.

Following the rules was important.

Visiting A-Niang was the *most* important.

And he knew that she would never turn him away.

A-Niang loved him. She told him so all the time.

A-Zhan loved A-Niang, too.

Everyone kept telling him to stop thinking about her. She was gone.

But A-Niang never left her house, so A-Zhan knew she must still be inside.

If he waited patiently enough, surely she would realise that he had been good, and open the door.

No one was happy about the way he kept coming here and waiting; but for the first time, A-Zhan refused to listen.

They always said bad things about A-Niang anyway.

Lying was forbidden, but A-Zhan knew it couldn't be true. He *knew* that A-Niang was *good*.

She was the *most* wonderful.

So he wouldn't believe anything they said about her.

Even if no one understood why he didn't believe them, he didn't know how to explain.

Words were *hard*.

Now that A-Zhan was getting older, he was expected to speak sometimes. When adults wanted him to talk, he had to force himself.

But A-Zhan didn't like it.

The only one who never tried to make him talk was A-Niang, which was why she was the only one he ever felt completely comfortable talking to.

Because no matter how long it took him to find his words, she was always patient with him. A-Niang was always willing to wait for him.

Waiting like this was hard, but A-Zhan could be patient, too. He could wait for A-Niang like she always waited for him.

And it was worth being patient, and cold and wet and tired; as long as he could wait long enough for A-Niang to open the door and let him in.

Just because he couldn't answer them when they asked why he was doing it, didn't mean he could stop; no matter how many times they told him to.

None of them understood; not even Huan-ge.

Maybe if A-Zhan was better at speaking, he could make them understand how important this was. But he didn't know how.

For the first time, A-Zhan wished he had learned how to talk to people.

Yet even if he tried, A-Zhan didn't know how to make them listen. No one ever listened. Only A-Niang, and sometimes Huan-ge.

Only A-Niang always listened to him, even when he couldn't speak.

Giving up on A-Niang was impossible.

Which meant that he had to stay there, kneeling in the snow outside the Gention House.

Kneeling there in the cold and the wet, even when he was sore and tired

A-Zhan couldn't give up.

He just didn't know how to make anyone listen to him, so all he could do was come here and wait.

Soon, A-Niang would let him in.

She promised she would always let him in.

No matter what anyone else said, he knew that if he waited long enough, he could see her again.

---

*Communication Vrs. A-Zhan: 1/0*

# Lan Wangji Versus Communication (Part 4)

## Chapter Summary

Eight year old Lan Wangji meets a bully.

Wangji was seated in the library, diligently working on his studies.

While he had already finished all of the material being covered by his classmates, there was always further study to be done; always more to learn. He was far ahead of the other children his age – had actually already been moved up a year. But his current progress was such that soon he would have to be moved up again.

He didn't mind. In fact, he preferred it.

Xiongzhong was worried for him; concerned that if Wangji kept being moved further and further from his age group, that he would struggle to make friends. He didn't have the heart to explain that it would never happen. No one wanted to be his friend, and that was *fine*. He really wasn't interested, anyway. That was something he'd already given up on, and come to terms with; eventually realising it was better this way, anyway.

Friends would expect him to talk with them, and would be put off by his reticence.

Children were *hard*.

Adults were easier. They never minded how quiet he was. They *preferred* him that way.

Other children expected him to chatter at them and respond to every inconsequential thing they said; even if he couldn't think of anything to say. He tried listening politely and just humming or nodding to acknowledge them, but they always got upset and accused him of ignoring them.

It was tiresome.

Friends might have been nice, and there might have been a time where he hoped to find some; but he had since learned not to care about any more.

Honestly, they seemed like more trouble than they were worth.

“*Ahem.*”

A shadow stopped in front of him, blocking the light. Wangji's eyes narrowed as he lifted his head to frown at the intruder interfering with his studies.

One of his classmates – Lan Qixue, he thought the boy was called – stood there, smiling insincerely at him.

“Wangji-xiong!” he exclaimed.

The younger boy's left eye twitched at the unwelcome familiarity. He wasn't particularly familiar with the other boy, and he didn't want to be, either.

Lan Qixue was undisciplined, lazy, and from what the small second heir of the Lan Sect had observed so far, seemed to have something of a mean streak. Though he refused to listen to gossip, he couldn't help overhearing mutters about the boy's tendency to bully his classmates and force others to do his homework for him.

Whatever his purpose in confronting Wangji right now, no doubt it could be nothing good.

Staring at the other boy coolly, he sat there calmly, waiting for him to state his purpose in bothering him and interrupting his studies.

Fake smile widening, the other boy leaned over in a way that he supposed was intended to look casual and menacing. Wangji was *not* intimidated by the larger boy. He attempted to convey as much in his dispassionate gaze, and for a moment, the older boy faltered, before rallying and puffing himself up once again.

“Wangji-xiong, surely you aren't ignoring me? Not when I'm just being friendly?”

An obnoxious, grating laugh rang out, and Lan Qixue gave him an over-exaggerated wink.

Upon being faced with the same blank stare from the eight year old in front of him, the older boy became uneasy. He shuffled in place.

Squaring his shoulders, he offered another insincere smile.

“Anyway; since we're friends, I figure you won't mind if I borrow your notes, right?”

Not waiting for a response, he snatched the notebook Wangji had been writing in and began to paw through it carelessly.

“Thanks, Wangji-xiong!”

Lips pressed together tightly, Wangji stood.

“Return it,” he ordered, holding his hand out expectantly.

“Sure, sure; after I'm done with it, yeah? You always get good grades; I just wanna know your secrets!”

“I read.”

With a snort the other boy's lip curled.

“Yeah, yeah; little know-it-all, we *know*.” He rolled his eyes.

Scowling at the notebook, he glanced back up, shooting Wangji a dirty look.

“Hey, this doesn't look like the stuff we're learning in class!”

“It is not,” Wangji replied. He held out his hand once again, adding in a more insistent tone, “Return my property.”

“Tch! What a loser!”

Sneering at him, the other boy threw the booklet at his head and stomped away.

Catching his notebook, Wangji checked it for damage; and finding none, smoothed out the pages where they had wrinkled slightly. He was unharmed, and his notes were intact. The other boy had been quite rude, but other than that did not seem to have truly done anything against the rules.

Though his reflexes prevented him from being injured, something cold and unpleasant wiggled in the pit of Wangji's stomach. He wasn't entirely sure why the encounter felt so upsetting to him.

Bullying was not allowed, but Wangji was stronger and more skilled; so he did not believe he had been bullied. Feeling hurt was irrational. All the other boy had done was be rude and discourteous, after all.

Silently, he promised himself to report the other boy for his violation of the rules.

Despite this, it took a while for his hand to stop trembling.

# Jiang Yanli At Koi Tower (Part 3)

## Chapter Summary

Jiang Yanli learns how the female servants at Koi Tower manage around Jin Guangshan.

Please read Trigger Warnings for this chapter.

## Chapter Notes

TW: implied rape/non-con, dub-con; references to past rape/non-con; ongoing issues with power imbalances forcing dub-con; references to past and/or potential underage.

Basically - Jin Guangshan, folks.

This is my actual HC for how the servants at KT managed to deal with him in canon. I HC that the ladies who chose to step up and take one for the team were very appreciated and respected by their fellows; because they were very well-aware that it was only because of those girls' sacrifices that they themselves could remain untouched.

Over the past few years, Jiang Yanli had become quite well-acquainted with the servants at Koi Tower. Many of them, she even considered friends.

Of course, it was the same sort of friendship as she had with those back in Lotus Pier – a friendship that *almost* was, but not quite; simply because the differences in their status meant that they could never truly be equals. It seemed unfair to her, and she cried the day she realised it; but there was nothing she could do.

Nothing; except to be as kind, and helpful, and thoughtful towards them as she could.

To treat them with all the respect and dignity she believed they deserved.

Some of that stemmed from her opinion of people in general. But another part of it drew from the sacrifices and circumstances she learned about from them.

She was aware that not many people of her status would agree with her.

Many of her peers mocked and laughed at her for preferring the company of servants; as if it were somehow a failing that she preferred the company of honest, hard-working, good people, over that of the ones with badly-concealed mean streaks who lied, gossiped, and

belittled others. But in Koi Tower, she found that the character of the serving class was generally far more genuine and morally superior to that of those who held status above them.

While there were even occasionally vague insinuations made about her virtue, they were infrequent; as spreading such rumours falsely was one of the few topics of gossip that could actually result in severe punishment for those foolish enough to start or spread them. It was much safer for them to decry her as being dull, plain, and stupid; talentless, mediocre, and other such insults.

Impinging upon the honour of the daughter of a leader of one of the Five Great Sects – who also happened to be the betrothed of the heir to their own; and much beloved by Jin-furen at that – would be inviting consequences far too serious for anyone to be willing to risk it.

The only reason the topic was ever referred to even obliquely was because Jin-zhongzhu behaved as though the maids – or in fact any other female staff member – at Koi Tower was automatically expected to be sexually available to him at his whim, simply by virtue of their positions; and there were those among his cohort and in his sect who followed his example. Since there was always someone who was willing to serve in that capacity when called for, it led to the serving staff in Koi Tower being viewed as having little more worth than stand-in prostitutes; though it was not something that was ever openly discussed, even among the gentry.

Jiang Yanli would never forget the day she learned of this, or of the reason that the serving staff seemed to be perpetuating the misunderstanding by agreeing to serve in this manner.

Despite the ugliness and immorality of carrying out such duties, what she learned that day would stay with her for the rest of her life; and it left her with a deep and profound respect and admiration for the honourable women who had been abused in such a way.

Not because having been abused made them honourable – though she respected their strength and courage to overcome what had been done to them – but they were honorable because they chose to take their tragedies and use them to protect others. To sacrifice themselves and endure shame and dishonour, all to save other girls from their fate.

They took what should have been weaknesses and turned them into strengths.

After learning just how such things were handled by the servants in Koi Tower, Yanli could only ever view them with the deepest respect; even as she felt repulsed by the members of the gentry who failed to offer them any help or protection themselves.

Never would she degrade or look down upon those who were forced to sell themselves by circumstances beyond their control. But then, she had witnessed a very blatant, undeniable example of the cost and the intentions that could lie behind such an act.

It happened not long after she had been asked not to go around Koi Tower unaccompanied anymore, or allow herself to be alone with Jin-zhongzhu – just under a year later.

Since that day, every time she wanted to go somewhere in Koi Tower, one of the servants insisted on escorting her. Though she did not realise why at the time, her companion was



inevitably one of the older maids – not one of the elderly ones; but an adult. A grown woman.

Occasionally her escort would be a bit younger; not quite fully-grown, but always someone older than her. Those days, her escort would guide her through the paths the servants used; out of sight from the main rooms where one might encounter residents or guests of the tower. They would be quiet and careful, quickly making their way back to her rooms without being seen.

On one of those days, she was walking with Hou Lihua – a very beautiful, mature sixteen year old; one who appeared older than her years. She was also unfailingly kind and gentle.

Yanli liked Lihua-jie - she was sweet, and shy; but also very caring. As an older sister herself, Lihua made her feel as though she were a younger sibling to be protected. It was a strange reversal of her usual role, but Yanli loved it.

Lihua-jie was her *favourite*.

They were almost back to the rooms Yanli stayed in, when they heard a shriek.

For a moment, Lihua froze.

There were other sounds – a thud against the wall of the room they were passing; a young, frightened voice crying; the low sound of a man speaking in a cajoling tone.

Something strange and horrible curled within her, even if she wasn't quite sure what was happening.

An indefinable look came into Lihua-jie's eyes then, and her face spasmed.

Closing her eyes, she shuddered. Drew in a steadying breath, then opened them again; filled with resolve.

Straightening her shoulders, she adjusted her dress, and with a hurried, “Wait here, Jiang-guniang,” Lihua-jie strode forward into the room.

Though she didn't mean to disobey, Yanli couldn't resist the urge to peek. To find out just *what* was going on.

Jin-zhongzhu was in the room.

He was leaning over a girl – Chan Meilin; a serving girl only slightly older than Yanli herself – who was shrinking away from him; trembling where he gripped her arm, tears running down her cheeks. She looked terrified.

But Yanli barely noticed; her attention caught by the odd note in Lihua-jie's voice as she called to the Jin Sect Leader.

“Ah- Jin Zhongzhu! Sorry to interrupt you; but Meilin is needed to escort Jiang-guniang right now. If Sect Leader is looking for some company, however...”

Lihua-jie was... she was acting *strange*.

The way she walked was different; something swaying in her motions; the breathy note in her voice as she drew close to Jin-zhongzhu; leaning against him in such a way the her ample chest pressed into his arm. She was smiling, peering up at him shyly from under her lashes.

It was nothing like she'd ever acted before.

And it *was* an act.

Yanli might have believed it; if she hadn't noticed the way Lihua-jie trembled, just slightly. The hint of fear that had flickered in her eyes before she ducked her head. The fake smile on her lips, and the unnatural note in her laugh.

Meilin was quick to bow and excuse herself, as Jin-zhongzhu turned his attention fully onto Lihua-jie. Ducking into the passage where Yanli was waiting, she grabbed the other girl's arm and quickly began pulling her along.

"Come with me, Jiang-guniang – quickly, please!"

Her face was pale, and her fingers clutched too tightly to Yanli's arm. Her lips quivered; her eyes appeared wet. Yet her pace was swift; pulling her companion along unerringly back the way she had just come with Lihua, returning to the kitchens as fast as she could.

Uneasy from what she'd just witnessed, Yanli could not bring herself to object. Not when A-Mei looked ready to fall apart any second.

As they burst into the room, Meilin called out in a panic.

"Lihua-jie's with Jin-zhongzhu in the Butterfly Parlour!"

At once, there was a bustle, and one of Yanli's more frequent escorts; a pretty young woman named Wang Feng, hurried back through the passage in the direction the girls had just left.

"What happened, A-Mei?" Qinue-po asked.

There was no judgement in her face or tone; only concern. She laid a gentle hand on Meilin's shoulder as the serving girl began to shake and cry.

Without hesitating, the elderly woman pulled her into her arms, shushing and comforting her as the story spilled out.

"Jiang-guniang, are you still in need of an escort?"

It was Bao Xue; another of Yanli's usual escorts. They had all been out earlier, when a message arrived saying that Jin-furen was looking for Yanli; which was why Lihua-jie had been accompanying her instead.

Nodding silently, the daughter of the Jiang Sect Leader knew that she was already late to meet Jin-furen. As much as she wished for answers right now, being polite to her host was

more important.

Xue-jie led her back up towards the family wing of Koi Tower once more.

At first, they walked in silence.

“I suppose you have questions?”

Casting a furtive glance back at Xue-jie, Yanli could see a guarded expression on her face. She chose her words carefully.

“If I'm allowed to ask,” she answered cautiously. “I understand if you'd rather not answer.”

With a sigh, Xue-jie's shoulders dropped slightly.

“No... It's alright. You were bound to see something sooner or later; better you hear the facts direct from the source.”

She nodded, and waited patiently for the woman walking with her to collect her thoughts.

“A lot of the girls here... end up in situations where... where our virtue is taken from us - one way or another.”

Head up, shoulders back; Xue-jie refused to be ashamed as she spoke. “We're just servants; if the nobility want something from us we don't get a choice. Fighting back just means you get injured into the bargain; though sometimes you can't help it.”

A deep breath.

“Those of us who've already been-- dishonored—do our best to shield those who haven't been. Especially the younger ones.”

Sadness flickered in her eyes.

“Whether that's by making sure they aren't alone in any areas of the tower where they can be cornered, or by intervening when it happens despite our best efforts; we offer up the only incentive we can – ourselves. We're no longer pure, after all... the least we can do is give the younger, more innocent ones a chance to escape such things, by providing a more... *developed* target.”

She shook her head. “I suppose it makes it feel as though what happened to us means something that way. Like it can serve a good purpose; no matter how horrible and dirty it feels.”

Yanli wasn't sure what to say.

“Lihua-jie... she's sixteen.”

“Yes,” Xue-jie answered darkly. “She is. We did our best to protect her; kept her well away from Jin-zhongzhu – especially given how mature she looks for her age. But she was only

fourteen winters when one of Jin-zhongzhu's nastier relatives spotted her and made sure to track her down alone.”

Exhaling sharply, remembered anger flickered in her eyes as she spoke.

“She was really bad off for a long time after – even after she healed up; she was terrified. But she had to work - a sick mother, a dead father, an elderly grandmother and five younger siblings at home. So she couldn't leave, and she couldn't afford to go anywhere else – they were just barely scraping by as it was.”

“But she was terrified of men for a long time after that. So we never asked her to help cover for any of the others; she wasn't ready, and she was still so young. Till now, she hasn't ever served as a distraction before; but she recently offered to start. Just wasn't expecting it to actually happen so soon.”

Sighing firefly, Xue-jie, rubbed her face with one hand.

Yanli swallowed.

“Will Feng-jie be able to help her get away from Jin-zhongzhu?”

“No.”

Xue-jie let out a brief snort.

“A-Hua's beautiful, physically mature, and Jin-zhongzhu's never seen her before. He won't be letting her go till he's done with her; especially not after she offered herself up to him like that.”

Shaking her head once more, she explained, “A-Feng is going to try to keep her company. Offer to Jin-zhongzhu to join them - he'll hardly be put out to get two girls in his bed at once – so that A-Hua doesn't have to be alone with him. At least not this time. It's not much; but it's the best we can do for her now.”

She paused in the corridor, just before they reached their exit.

“Do you understand enough for now?”

Blinking back tears, Yanli nodded.

“And I don't suppose I have to tell you not to say anything to Jin-furen, right? She can't discipline her husband, so she tends to take it out on us when this happens.”

Yanli shook her head vigorously.

“No... I won't tell.”

“Thank you, Jiang-guniang,” Xue-jie relaxed, and offered her a weak smile.

“No, I- thank you for trusting me.” After a moment's hesitation, she added, “I think you're all very brave, you know.”

The look of startled disbelief on Xue-jie's face made her look younger, more vulnerable than Yanli had ever seen her before. Then her face softened, and she smiled again. Small, but genuine.

“You're a rare gem, Jiang-guniang,” she said. “I've not met anyone quite like you before.”

# Lan Wangji Versus Communication (Part 9)

## Chapter Summary

In the wake of the revelations of his mother's innocence and the injustice done to her and her wife revealed to him by Xichen, Wangji has no idea how to ask the questions churning in his mind and weighing on his heart.

## Chapter Notes

I have a couple of notes at the end about this particular series (LWJ Vrs. Comm.) to answer any questions that may come up. Such as why this chapter is labelled as Part 9.

The short answer is that it's to do with the timeline in which these parts occur rather than the order in which they are written/posted.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Wangji sat in his room, struggling desperately to meditate and calm his raging Qi.

It was difficult. The truth Xichen had revealed to him had unbalanced him; leaving him adrift, unmoored. Questioning everything he once believed in. Horror filled him; rattling his bones, throwing his mind into turmoil, and leaving him shaken and uncertain in its wake.

His mother... what had been done to her and her wife had been unequivocally evil and unrighteous.

There was no justice; no goodness in the actions of his sect.

Only unadulterated selfishness; the basest sort of self-indulgence and greed – cruel and unmerciful wickedness. Casting aside all that was right and good to defend unpardonable crimes; enabling further injustice and monstrous actions, and placing the illusion of propriety over evil.

The respected teacher his mother had murdered unjustly – a vile man who had attacked an unarmed woman in her sleep; choosing to disregard her refusals and her loyalty and love for her spouse, to slake his lusts upon her willing flesh while she was vulnerable; until he was slain in the act by the defense of her devoted spouse.

The righteous fury and judgement of the Lan Sect – nothing but hypocrisy and fear of losing face; choosing to ignore the reality of a loving, devoted marriage and the crime committed by

one of their own; intending only to punish the innocent to preserve the memory of the guilty and salvage their own reputation.

The marriage of his parents which had been enacted to save his mother's life despite her crimes – a farce forced upon an innocent, unconscious woman without her consent; disregarding her existing spouse and vows, betraying their own principals and violating her autonomy in every way; upheld only to uphold their own image and the illusion of righteousness that was nothing but a lie.

The leader of his sect; his own father – a rapist who took advantage of a horrible injustice to lay claim to an already married woman and further the crimes committed against her and her wife by his sect for his own desires.

Everything Wangji thought he knew was now in doubt.

All of it had been taught by those same people who had partaken in the travesty perpetuated upon his mother.

How could he ever believe in anything they said?

Feelings so powerful, so desperate and broken, flowed through his heart and screamed to burst from his soul. He knew no way to express them. No way to demand an accounting from those who were responsible for the suffering of the parent he had loved and longed for the most.

Mourning that had never truly ended awoken once more with the knowledge that everything which had been done to her was undeserved; unforgivable and unjust.

Realising that filial piety to his father and his sect could only be upheld at the expense of filial piety to his beloved mother.

After all, if Shufu and the Elders could have been party to such injustice; such evil, and not once experienced any guilt for or doubt about their choices, how could he trust *anything* they had ever taught him?

If they were so willing to make a mockery of the rules they were meant to uphold, how could he trust anything they said or did to be true or righteous?

What *was* righteousness, if they could not be trusted to define or uphold it?

Could Wangji even trust his *own* mind to adequately judge such things, when his thoughts had been shaped by their teachings?

Was there even any point to striving to be righteous in the first place?

*He didn't know.*

In the wake of these revelations, he felt like he knew nothing at all.

Who could he ask?

Who could tell him?

Did the words to express his confusion; his grief and desolation even exist?

How could he know what was right?

What could he do?

What *should* he do?

*Wangji didn't know.*

He didn't know, and he didn't know how to *begin* to ask anyone; even if he could find the words.

Instead, everything he was no longer certain of felt trapped within his breast; the questions he couldn't voice caught in his throat, weighing heavy on his uncooperative tongue.

Sitting still and quiet in the silence of the Jingshi, he appeared tranquil and unbothered in the light of the setting sun.

While in the darkness of his heart, Wangji wept and screamed; lost and alone, and so very, very uncertain and afraid.

## Chapter End Notes

Two things: first, a quick reference to LWJ Vrs. Communication Part Four.

That part wasn't meant to show that LWJ failed to communicate to his bully so much as that he failed to recognise what was being communicated to him by the bully. His difficulty communicating with others prevented him from realising that he was being bullied, or understanding why he felt hurt and upset the way he did. After all, he's stronger, smarter, and more skilled than the older boy – how can he be bullied by him?

The other boy was rude and took something of his without asking; but he did return it eventually. So he'll report to his uncle to see to it that the other boy is lectured for his unpleasant behaviour; but he won't be truly punished, as LWJ missed a lot of the context of their interaction.

It's mainly to show why he's so withdrawn from and uncomfortable interacting with his peers as he grows up; as it implies that there will be more encounters of the sort in the future, and he will continue to fail to recognise the degree of his mistreatment in them. It also leads him to become more strict and determined to report rule-breaking infractions, because he sometimes misses nuance and only knows that he feels hurt and upset without knowing why. Reporting everything at least drives his peers to avoid him rather



than making him deal with uncomfortable and unpleasant encounters he's not quite sure how to react to.

Second, is about this being Part 9 of the LWJ Vrs. Communication series rather than Part 5.

Yes; I know this says "Part 9" when the last LWJ chapter posted in this collection was "Part 4" – that's intentional; because this update is being posted out of order. The parts for each character are labelled chronologically; so this part occurs after the outlines for parts 5-8. However, it is a precursor to chapter 4 of "As The Sun Goes Down", showing LWJ's reaction to learning the truth about his mother's imprisonment; and giving us an insight into the emotions and mental processes that started him down the path that led him to choose to react the way he did in that story.

There will be at least six parts dedicated to the lead-up to and outline of the rebellion, plus at least one of the immediate follow up. The wider consequences will be explored more at length in the fic that follows ATSGD; but for the initial rebellion itself I will only really be going into detail in LGB&S. I'm simply posting this before parts 5-8 because it was on my mind enough that I finished it prior to finishing the other outlined parts chronicling the evolution of LWJ's experiences with communication and socialization.

The missing pieces will be posted later; they essentially provide character development and growth as you track the way his relationship and struggles with communication unfold as he grows up. This is out of chronological order; but there's no problem with reading it now. I simply labelled it the way I did to indicate the chronological timeline.

# Lan Xichen Versus The Rules (Part 3)

## Chapter Summary

Xichen tries to adjust to living in his sect with his new knowledge.

Since learning the truth behind his mother's punishment, everything and nothing had changed.

Outwardly, all was the same as it always had been; yet inwardly, Xichen felt as though everything he knew had been overturned. He found himself questioning everything and everyone around him at all times, and it grew harder and harder for him to keep his uneasiness to himself. Harder and harder to smile and act as though nothing was wrong.

Lost, confused, and heartsore; he threw himself all the more fervently into combing through the records for incidents like the late Madam Lan's.

But it was a long, difficult task to accomplish on his own; especially if he wanted to keep it a secret.

Knowing what he did now, he no longer harboured any doubts that he was doing the right thing; the righteous thing.

He had those he could talk to about it; not in person, and he had to be careful about what he wrote, but he could still send letters to Mingjue and Jiang-guniang. They were a great comfort to him as he struggled with his self-appointed task.

Yet he could not deny that he could desperately use someone to help him.

This led him to consider something he would have approached far more carefully if he had not been blinded by fatigue and worry, and a desire not to withhold the truth from those who deserved to know.

At the next opportunity he had to spend a few hours with Wangji, he called for his little brother to join him in the Hanshi and told him everything. Pouring out the story, showing him the records he'd secretly kept which told the tragic tale.

Looking at his didi's pale, seemingly-expressionless face, he could tell his precious little brother was devastated. Heart-broken and shocked to the core.

Bringing out the copious notes Xichen had taken about the history of such things in their sect, he clearly explained to his didi what he was doing and why. Expanding on his goals, his hopes and plans for their Sect. Asking his little brother to stand with him and first help him

identify all of the problems in the records, then later aid him in ensuring their sects values were properly upheld by everyone; regardless of lineage or rank.

Wangji didn't hesitate to agree.

As they finished up for the day, however, the younger boy paused by the door before leaving with an uncertain look in his eyes.

“Xiongzhang?” he asked. “You spoke a lot about what you plan to do to prevent further injustices and violations of our principles from occurring, but what do you plan to do about the ones that have already happened?”

Xichen flinched.

Staring miserably at the floor, he could only respond, “I don't know.”

# Lan Xichen Versus The Rules (Part 4)

## Chapter Summary

There's been a spate of mischief taking place in the Cloud Recesses. Xichen has suspicions.

## Chapter Notes

Just a snippet, but I thought it was cute. 😊

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

“Didi.”

Xichen paused, unsure of how to word his question.

After all – Wangji had always been so respectful and well-behaved. The very idea of his rule-abiding and self-discipline little brother being involved in the incident in any way was absurd. Pranking was beneath the younger boy; and something he greatly disapproved of as well. To say nothing of pranking the Elders!

And *yet*...

The identity of the victims lined up quite suspiciously well with the names of everyone who was involved in their mother's trial and punishment, along with those connected to the confinement of her partner.

Petty revenge was against the rules.

*But*...

Staring into his little brother's guileless eyes, Xichen felt like a terrible person for even thinking about accusing the other boy.

Even if Wangji *had* been the one to dye all of the Elders' clothing, Xichen couldn't say that they didn't deserve it. In fact, they deserved far worse.

How could Xichen possibly blame him for lashing out against such horrific injustice?

“Didi,” he repeated, making an unexpected decision. He continued firmly, “Don't get caught.”

Wangji brightened visibly to Xichen's eyes. Which is to say, his eyes lightened a shade, and there was no other change to his expression.

“*Mn*,” the boy agreed peaceably.

## Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading!

Comments and kudos make a writer feel loved~! ♥

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