

Yeet of Destiny

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Kapitel 1: You jump, I jump - WWX POV

Blood is dripping down from the hand that's clutching his wrist like his life is depending on it. Which it quite literally is.

"Lan Zhan..." Wei Wuxian whispers desperately.

Lan Zhan is looking at him like he's the one dying inside, not him. Teeth gritted, arms trembling. But it'll all be over soon. There's no way back. He has ruined everything. Including, but not limited to, the lives of the people he loves the most.

"Let me go..." And it will be over.

Jiang Cheng appears at Lan Zhan's side, Sandu drawn.

He's yelling his name and then something Wei Wuxian doesn't quite hear anymore.

It's comforting in a strange way. To see them this last time like they have always been around him. Lan Zhan glaring, Jiang Cheng shouting.

Sandu comes down. It misses its mark by half an arm's length, but Wei Wuxian uses the moment to pull himself free of Lan Zhan's grasp.

Then he falls. A sensation both familiar and weird.

"Wei Ying!"

Ah, Lan Zhan...

He smiles and closes his eyes. It'll be over soon.

The air is rushing in his ears. Or is it his blood?

"Wei Ying!"

Why is Lan Zhan's voice still there? So close?

Frowning, he opens his eyes. He doesn't really mean to, but it happens anyway. And his blood freezes at the sight.

Lan Zhan, stupid, noble Lan Zhan is still reaching for him. Hair whipping in the wind, robes fluttering, hand outstretched. Diving after him off the cliff.

Wei Wuxian can't get his mouth to work.

A light blue flash shoots from Lan Zhan's wrist. It's coming for him. Wraps itself around Wei Wuxian's wrist.

Before he can so much as think, "Oh, my talisman!", his fall comes to a sudden stop, pain erupting from his right shoulder and wrist. So intense it blinds him for a few moments.

He screams. So does Lan Zhan.

Then everything is quiet but for their laboured breathing and the howling wind. They hover mid-air. Lan Zhan's left hand is clutching Bichen. The sword shimmers brightly.

Wei Wuxian gulps. "Lan Zhan..."

"Shut up," Lan Zhan grits out and glares down at him.

"What were you thinking, Lan Zhan? What possessed you to...?"

He does shut up when his lips seal themselves tightly shut.

Really?! Wei Wuxian groans against the silencing spell. Lan Zhan ignores him in favour of gently manoeuvring them downwards.

It's only a few metres before Wei Wuxian's feet touch the rocky ground of the volcanic landscape. The air is hot.

He promptly collapses onto his bottom.

Lan Zhan, ever graceful, descends like an Immortal from the Heavens. At least, that's what it looks like to him.

Lan Zhan glares some more, sinking to his knees between Wei Wuxian's sprawled legs, and slaps him hard across the face.

"For not listening!"

Wei Wuxian stares in disbelief.

Lan Zhan grabs him by the lapels of his robes, gives him a wild shake.

"For being an idiot!"

Tears spill from Lan Zhan's eyes. Wei Wuxian's throat hurts, the way throats do when you're close to crying.

Lan Zhan surges forward and kisses him.

"For still being alive," he whispers against the sealed lips.

Wei Wuxian whimpers miserably.

They sit in silence for a while, just looking at each other. Hands fisted into red lapels and white sleeves. Breathing and pulses slowing down. The talisman's thread glows softly, connecting their wrists.

Eventually Lan Zhan speaks again, quietly, almost resigned, "Will you listen to me now?"

Wei Wuxian pouts. What more is there to say? What lecture could there possibly be that he hasn't heard time and time again. He's not sure he won't jump into one of the lava streams if the words "back" and "Gusu" are said anytime soon.

Lan Zhan sits back on his heels, letting go of his clothes. He pulls something out of his sleeve.

It's A-Yuan's straw butterfly.

Wei Wuxian chokes on the emotions. His heart is breaking.

How do you have that?! He wants to yell. As it is, only loud hums come forth.

Lan Zhan looks him in the eyes. Perhaps searching for words.

"I said before," he starts and takes a steadying breath.

Wei Wuxian only now notices that Lan Zhan is shaking.

"The situation changed."

Wei Wuxian makes an inquiring noise. He tries to lift his hands again, but a sharp pain reminds him of his probably dislocated shoulder.

A minute frown plays over Lan Zhan's features before he gets back on his knees.

He tugs at Wei Wuxian's belt and robes, making him flush and hum loudly in protest.

A glare makes him hold still. The dark fabric is shoved off his shoulder.

Lan Zhan says, "Going to hurt. Sorry."

Wei Wuxian's mind is halfway through a thought like, "Oh, is he gonna-," before he screams behind his still sealed lips as Lan Zhan resets his shoulder.

Lan Zhan holds Wei Wuxian's arm steady while taking off his forehead ribbon.

Lan Zhan?! Wei Wuxian can barely breathe. He's getting dizzy.

Lan Zhan wraps the middle of the ribbon around Wei Wuxian's forearm a few times, then ties the ends behind his neck, forming a makeshift sling.

"Keep it still," he says and passes him spiritual energy to speed up the healing.

It tingles. And dissipates into nothingness. Lan Zhan doesn't seem to notice.

The straw butterfly is resting on his lap. Wei Wuxian picks it up, looking at it with tears in his eyes that have little to do with his shoulder.

"Wei Ying."

He looks up at Lan Zhan who is gazing at him quizzically.

"A-Yuan is safe. Waiting for you."

Wei Wuxian shakes his head desperately. This can't be. All the Wens are gone. Every last one of them.

Lan Zhan's hands gently close around his, cradling the butterfly.

"Got him. Hid him."

Lan Zhan's breath fans across his face.

Relief floods Wei Wuxian's whole body. All he wants to do is pitch forward into that chest and sob. So he does.

They sit bent over the straw butterfly, both crying.

"Lan Zhan..." His voice sounds so rough.

"Wei Ying..."

Wei Wuxian snuffles.

Lan Zhan kisses his forehead and whispers, "Let's get out of here."

Wei Wuxian huffs a wet laugh. "So casual, Lan Zhan. Just who has been such a bad influence on your vocabulary?"

"Mn." Lan Zhan raises an eyebrow a tiny bit at him.

Wei Wuxian laughs at that, before shyly asking, "Take me to him? Please?"

Lan Zhan nods and helps him stand.

Bichen carries them off, hidden by cliffs and the long shadows of early morning.

Wei Wuxian's head is spinning as Lan Zhan holds him tightly in his arms.

He wonders just where he is supposed to go next. He certainly can't go back to the

Burial Mounds.

"Anywhere is fine," Lan Zhan says.

Wei Wuxian looks up and realises, he must have mumbled to himself aloud.

"If..." Lan Zhan starts. "If Wei Ying will have me, we can go anywhere he likes."

Wei Wuxian hides his face in Lan Zhan's neck, shivering from exhaustion as much as emotion.

"We can do that," he answers. "Just the three of us."

Lan Zhan's arm around his waist tightens in agreement.

Wei Wuxian's darkened heart starts mending that day.

Kapitel 2: No coward's way out - JC POV

"Wei Wuxian! Go to hell!" Jiang Cheng yells and is about to swing Sandu.

Wei Wuxian closes his eyes like he is accepting his fate. Only... Jiang Cheng doesn't want this to be his fate.

He lowers the sword and glares down at his brother.

"Fuck you!" He spits. "Fuck you, Wei Wuxian. You and this entire fucked up mess you made!"

He wants to stomp his foot like a frustrated child, but reigns in the urge.

"Jiang Cheng," Wei Wuxian chokes out. And has the audacity to smile softly.

"How dare you, how dare-" Jiang Cheng hiccups, struggling to breathe with all the anger and grief raging inside of him. Tears prickle at the corners of his eyes. "Who gave you permission to slink away like that? Can't you for once in your life clean up your shit?"

He sheathes Sandu and kneels beside Lan Wangji, leaning down to try and grab something of Wei Wuxian's. Anything really. A sleeve, a collar, a hand. He will pull him up by his hair, if he has to.

The angry tears spill over.

"You fucking idiot!"

Lan Wangji groans in pain next to him and hastily grabs at Wei Wuxian's wrist with his left hand, too; Bichen discarded on the ground beside him. It makes him slide a couple of inches closer to the precipice.

"Give me your hand, or I swear..." Jiang Cheng growls and stretches further down.

Wei Wuxian makes a pained face at him, glances at Lan Wangji and lets out a shaky breath.

Lan Wangji groans again as Wei Wuxian's weight shifts with the movement. But they succeed. Jiang Cheng's right hand clutches at Wei Wuxian's left.

All three of them are breathing heavily by now.

"Can't you just, I don't know, kick off on the rock and jump up here?" Jiang Cheng asks, a deep frown creasing his forehead.

"I can't," his brother answers quietly. Almost as if he is ashamed of something. That

would be a first.

"Don't be daft. There's always some sort of last reserve of spiritual energy left somewhere in the body. You're still conscious, so..."

"I really can't, Jiang Cheng."

This is utter nonsense. Wasn't it Wei Wuxian himself who had loudly and repeatedly proclaimed just where exactly he had spiritual energy stored? He couldn't have spent it all, could he?

"What the fuck is wrong with you?! If you survive this, I will kill you for being so stupid," Jiang Cheng threatens.

"Bicker later," Lan Wangji grits out.

Jiang Cheng huffs but relents.

"Alright, well then." He takes a deep breath. "Let's just... pull him up on the count of three."

"Won't work," Lan Wangji says. "Have no leverage."

Jiang Cheng really looks for the first time. Lan Wangji is up to his armpits off solid ground. Balancing their weights precariously. One wrong move and he goes over the cliff, too. Those two really deserve each other. Jiang Cheng can't stand it.

"Leverage...", he mumbles to himself, thinking. Urgh, he is so not used to doing the thinking when Wei Wuxian is around. That's his brother's thing after all, the mischievous genius. Jiang Cheng just gets into trouble along with him and is shouted at more afterwards. Or used to, before.

He looks around as if the options will just spring up from the ground somehow.

He can't let go of his brother to drag the Second Jade of Lan by his boots back from precipice.

He can't yell for help. Nobody will hear him over the sounds of the battlefield behind them.

He can't use Zidian as a rope, can he? He doesn't want to do more harm.

If only there was a way to give Wei Wuxian a leg up. But just Jiang Cheng's left hand is free to move. Wait. He remembers something from long ago, before the War, before Cloud Recesses.

A wry smile tugs at his lips. "Oi, Wei Wuxian," he says, reaching around with his left hand to pull Sandu from its sheath. "Do you remember when you were twelve and broke your right arm?"

Wei Wuxian blinks at him in confusion. "I'm not sure..."

Of course he wouldn't remember. And if he did, it'd only be Jiejie's spoon-feeding and Father's comforting pats on the head.

Jiang Cheng ignores Lan Wangji's glaring and goes on, "And you got bored inside the house, so you came along to sword training with the disciples. You did the forms mirror-inverted. With your healthy left arm."

Wei Wuxian chuckles. "Wait, I think, I remember getting scolded for that."

Lan Wangji's gaze shifts from Jiang Cheng to Wei Wuxian. "Not the time for reminiscing."

"Ah, Lan Zhan, whenever else?"

"Will you stop flirting while dangling off a cliff?" Jiang Cheng grouches. "My point is..."

He focuses his spiritual energy, guides it to his left hand and commands Sandu to move.

Sandu slips shakily from his grasp and hovers. With a flick of his fingers, Sandu quivers and glides downwards until it reaches Wei Wuxian's feet.

"Oh, I get it now."

"Keep still!"

"Don't tell me you've practised since then, Jiang Cheng?"

"Shut up!"

"Wei Ying."

"..."

Of course, he shuts up for Lan Wangji.

Jiang Cheng concentrates and manoeuvres Sandu gently beneath his brother's feet. The flat of the blade carries him carefully upwards. They feel the redistribution of weight immediately.

He thinks, he hears Lan Wangji let out a tiny sigh. Or it might have been the wind.

He forces himself to focus. Pulls at Wei Wuxian's hand as Sandu keeps rising.

Lan Wangji manages to move a little, gets an elbow back on the ground.

From there it's easy to pull Wei Wuxian up completely.

They topple over with the momentum.

Jiang Cheng can't help but snort. Somehow his brother landed mostly on Lan Wangji and the picture they make reminds him of their school days.

"Sorry, sorry, Lan Zhan, I'll get off." Wei Wuxian does not. Instead he is tugged down by Lan Wangji.

Jiang Cheng averts his eyes so quickly, he might have pulled a muscle in his neck. He is not watching that. Nope.

He busies himself with picking up Sandu and straightening his robes after standing up.

Looking at that cliff makes him feel cold, so he turns and glares at the battlefield. That's not any better. The remaining cultivators still fight. Which... is weird, since that cursed flute did fall off the cliff. He's quite sure about that. But what does he know about demonic cultivation and controlling resentful energy anyways?

He doesn't check what's going on next to him, just kicks where he supposes Wei Wuxian's foot is.

"Oi! You! Get up and take care of this mess."

The two of them struggle to stand up.

"I don't care how. Just do it. And then you're coming home with me to help me with the rest of it."

Wei Wuxian looks at him oddly. A corner of his lips twitches. "No 'I'll break your legs' or 'I'll make you scrub the docks for the rest of your life', huh?"

Jiang Cheng shoves him lightly. "Don't tempt me." He jerks his chin at the battlefield. "Well? Get cracking."

He watches Wei Wuxian's face growing dark and serious. He's pale and thin. Jiang Cheng hasn't noticed before. He figures, after today, they will have to sit down and talk. His stomach turns at the thought. He was never good at talking. Or dealing with feelings. That's what they have-... had Jiejie for.

But he will be damned if he lets go of this very last piece, person, of his childhood. He will fight for his brother.

And maybe he will even have some help with that, judging by Lan Wangji's vice-like grip.

Kapitel 3: Divine Intervention - LWJ POV

Lan Wangji sees blood running down the length of Sandu's blade from the corner of his eye.

Below them Wei Ying whispers his brother's name, but Jiang Wanyin only raises his sword higher.

"Jiang Wanyin..." Lan Wangji rasps, desperate and not believing his eyes. "Stop it."

What is he doing with his sword?!

Why is he-?!

"Wei Wuxian! Go to-"

Someone pointedly clears their throat behind them and Jiang Wanyin literally growls, half turning to the intruder.

"Excuse me, boys," says a female voice. Polite but firm.

Lan Wangji stops paying attention to the others above him. He looks down at Wei Ying and tightens his grip, feels it getting numb and slippery. He won't be able to hold him much longer. He needs to pull him up!

A long pastel turquoise-coloured sleeve reaches down beside him. A pale, dainty hand grips Wei Ying by the collar of his robe and hoists him up.

Lan Wangji's mouth drops open as Wei Ying is lifted over his head - Lan Wangji barely manages to avoid getting smacked in the face by Wei Ying's feet - and deposited a couple of yards away from the cliff into a pitiful heap.

"Wei Ying..." Lan Wangji cannot summon the strength to get up, so he hastily crawls on shaky hands and knees until he reaches the other man. "Wei Ying..."

"Lan Zhan..."

With a half-suppressed sob Lan Wangji throws himself at him, arms curling tightly around the trembling mess that is Wei Ying. He cannot believe his luck.

"Honestly," says the lady with a put-upon sigh. "You, young man, better put that sword away before I take it from you."

Jiang Wanyin must have obeyed her command for the next sound that reaches Lan Wangji's ears is the tschink of a blade being sheathed.

He really doesn't care when his face is pressed into the side of Wei Ying's neck and he

can feel his rapidly beating pulse.

A hand lands on his shoulder. It's not Wei Ying's for he can feel those clutching at his back.

"It's alright, Little Bunny. Don't be frightened."

Lan Wangji feels the hysterical laughter bubbling up from Wei Ying's throat.

"Little Bu-" He snorts.

Lan Wangji pulls back without letting go of Wei Ying's waist and gives him a stern look.

"What? She said it!" Wei Ying grins at him in a way that tugs at his heart, a mixture of amusement and nerves and barely kept-together sanity. Tear tracks and eyelashes still wet.

The lady crouches beside them, squeezing Lan Wangji's shoulder. "You did well, Little Bunny. Lan Yi must be so proud of you." She smiles at him in a way that vaguely reminds Lan Wangji of his mother. Now he is as confused as Wei Ying's low "Huh?" sounds.

Her gaze shifts towards Wei Ying. The lady has the guts to actually pinch the cheek of the Yiling Laozu with a fond smile. "And you are even more of a handful than your mother was."

Wei Ying shudders in his arms. "M-my mother?"

The lady nods and gestures over her shoulder at the cliff. "What did you think you were doing back there, honey? Your mother didn't die young so you could do the same."

Wei Ying cringes at that. "I..." He has no words.

Lan Wangji squeezes him slightly in what he hopes is a comforting way.

The lady huffs and looks both of them up and down. "This whole messy affair of the Yin Tie... All over again. When will it stop?" She shakes her head. "Why didn't you come to me for help? We could have figured something out. It's not like my mountain and I are hard to find?"

Lan Wangji freezes as realisation hits him just who this person is.

Wei Ying chokes.

Sandu clatters to the ground as Jiang Wanyin's legs give out under him. "Oh fuck..." He gasps, Zidian sizzling on his hand.

They can only stare at her as she rises to her feet and observes the ongoing conflict in the courtyard.

"First things first. We are getting your sister out of there and your Yinhufu taken care of. Then we go home and have a look at you, honey. All that resentful energy. So unhealthy."

All three of them are shaking now. With emotion, with exhaustion. On Lan Wangji's part, even with a tiny bit of hope. After all, there is a special little turnip waiting for them.

Kapitel 4: Where have you been for sixteen years? - WWX POV

"Wei Ying!"

That's the last thing he hears before the world goes dark and numb.

Not so bad, considering...

He feels cold, he thinks, which is weird because how is he still feeling things? He doesn't expect that of the afterlife. Huh, but what does he know anyway?

His right hand and wrist, the one that Lan Zhan had clutched, starts to feel slightly warmer than the rest of him. Weird indeed.

"A-Ying..." He hears a voice. A sad sigh. Oh damn it, can't the voices leave him alone even in death?

There's strange music, like an instrument he's never heard before. But that melody? He knows that melody. His heart aches. Lan Zhan's song! He strains to hear it better. Frowns, clenches his hands into fists. Or tries to at least.

The instrument sounds really beautiful.

Where is the sound coming from?

"A-Ying!" That voice says again, but this time somehow more urgently, panicky even. "A-Ying!"

His hand tingles and he tries to flex it to make the tingling stop.

"A-Ying. Come back to me. Please! Please..."

Then there's a beeping noise, steady but uncomfortable in his ears.

He registers the scent of sandalwood almost hidden beneath a stinging smell, a stench the likes of which he's never had the misfortune to come across.

He groans. This is his punishment coming to get him, he's sure.

He squeezes his eyes shut in the darkness that surrounds him. Light flashes behind his lids. When he opens them, blinking carefully against the glare of unnatural light, he makes out the shape of a familiar face. The song is still playing somewhere.

The face comes into focus and Wei Wuxian's whole body suddenly hurts. Especially his head. Why his head though?

He wants to say, "Lan Zhan, what's going on?" But all he manages are a couple of gurgling sounds and a light cough at the end.

"Oh, A-Ying, thank God, thank God!"

He feels something pressing against his lips, soft and warm, then something cold and wet. Water? He swallows on instinct. Yes, that's so much better. He tries again. "Lan Zhan?"

He blinks and Lan Zhan's face is back. Weird, what happened to his beautiful hair? It's short! And the forehead ribbon is gone???

"A-Ying, hey..." He smiles down at him and Wei Wuxian melts. "Good morning, sleepy head. You scared us."

"Wha'?" Wei Wuxian croaks out, confused.

"You fell out of a tree - and into a coma for three days." Lan Zhan lifts Wei Wuxian's hand to his face - He must have held it before? Was that the tingling? - and presses little kisses into his palm before nuzzling into it.

"Lan Zhan?"

Lan Zhan bolts upright with wide eyes and scrambles in unusual inelegance for something behind Wei Wuxian.

"Doctor's coming," he says quietly and takes his hand again. There's a shiny golden band on his fourth finger. What's up with that? Lan Zhan doesn't wear jewellery.

Before he can do much else, but a cursory glance around the weirdest room ever, the door bursts open and a few people come in. It's a whirlwind of poking, prodding, asking questions, most of which he doesn't know the answer to.

Afterwards, Lan Zhan sits with him again and explains what amnesia means. But he has a head full of memories. Those of his life. Or past life...?

Lan Zhan shows him a curious little picture of a group of people, all in these weird clothes and hairstyles. But he recognizes their faces! That's his family, all four Jiangs. And A-Yuan. And Lan Zhan's uncle and brother. And another little boy holds Meng Yao's hand. And friends like the Wens and the Nie brothers.

"Our wedding photo," Lan Zhan says, tears in his eyes. "From last year."

Ah, that's... That feels wrong and right at the same time. Fuck. He doesn't know about any of this. "I'm so sorry... I don't...", " he trails off.

His heart breaks as tears run silently down Lan Zhan's cheeks. It makes Wei Wuxian cry, too.

He pulls him close, hugs him as hard as he can with his weak body and says, "It'll come back to me, I'm sure. And if it doesn't, you'll just have to tell me everything. And we'll make new memories together, I promise."

Wei Wuxian supposes, if it's his punishment to be stuck in this new, wonderous world and getting teased about always having had a memory like a sieve, he can deal with that.

He hums Lan Zhan's song to soothe him, and Lan Zhan joins in.

They fall asleep like that, curled into each other. And continue to do so for the next sixteen years.

Kapitel 5: A sword strike in time saves... - JYL POV

She stumbles across the battlefield. The deafening noise drowns the desperate cries for her brothers.

"A-Xian! A-Cheng! A-Xian!!!"

She dodges a falling cultivator here, ducks under a sword there. Calling out on top of her lungs.

"A-Xian! A-Xian!"

It is chaotic. It is dark.

Everybody is moving. Everybody is making noise. Grunts, cries, the clashing of metal.

She has to find them. Especially her shidi.

"A-Xian!"

She looks around, trying to glimpse a flash of purple or better yet, red.

"Shijie!"

Is that him?

"A-Xian?!" Has she really heard him call out?

She scans the crowd.

She has to find him! She has to tell him!

"A-Xian...? A-Xian!"

There is his voice again! He is yelling something?

She turns around. She spots him. There he -

Pain explodes on her right shoulder, making her gasp. The force of the blow sends her tumbling forward and onto the ground before she knows what has happened.

She lands on her forearms, blood dripping from her lips.

She feels dizzy all of the sudden. So weak. Her arms give out. The noise becomes somewhat muffled, her vision blurred.

"Jie!"

Someone moves her.

"A-Cheng...", she thinks dimly, "A-Cheng is here."
He cradles her in his arms, so gently.

Pain and exhaustion make it so difficult for her to keep her wits about her.

Her hands find his hand and forearm to hold on to as the world spins around her.

Something dark moves in the corner of her eyes. Dark and red.

A-Xian!

He reaches for her, but A-Cheng pushes him off. A-Xian slumps backwards.

"You said you can control them!" A-Cheng spits. "You said there was no problem!"

Her A-Xian looks so pale... Why is he so pale?

"It's not me!" He looks terrified. "I don't know!" Her A-Xian is trembling like a leaf. "I didn't make them kill!"

Something must be really, really wrong. She has never seen her shidi like this.

She has to get a grip on herself. Her gaze fixes on him.

"Why can't I control them? I lost control of ..."

She feels A-Cheng's hold on her tighten. Her didi must be out of his mind with worry.

"Doesn't matter...", he murmurs. "It's fine. Only a small wound."

He is right. She can do it. She can, no, she has to pull through. Not only for her brothers, but for her baby boy as well.

She fights to open her eyes, to find something to anchor her thoughts and strength to.

"I don't know why they aren't under my control. Why can't I control them!"

A-Xian is crying.

"A-Xian..." She forces her voice to work.

Finally he looks up at her, scrambling closer. Yes, that's good. That's the way to go.

A-Cheng's strong hand keeps her cold fingers warm.

"Shijie..."

A-Xian takes her other hand. Yes, finally, she has found both of them.

A-Cheng lets her hand go when she tugs slightly, helps her sit up a little so she can look at her beloved shidi.

There he is, close enough to touch, close enough to spot that mark beneath his lips.

"Xian-Xian," she whispers happily.

She has found him. She can tell him!

With effort she reaches out to pat the side of his head, the way she knows he likes it.

"My Xian-Xian..."

Her breath stutters in her throat. Tears are rolling down her shidi's face.

She has to tell him. Now.

"You ran so fast," she whispers, stroking her thumb over his cheek. "That your shijie didn't have enough time to look at you and talk to you."

She hates to see her brothers cry. Especially when they didn't do anything wrong. Haven't they all been through enough?

"I want to tell you," she begins, but movement behind A-Xian catches her eye.

Without hesitation she shoves A-Xian aside with all her might.

Only to find his assailant dropping into her lap, his sword barely missing both A-Xian and herself. A bright white blade sticks in the man's back.

She gasps in surprise. A-Xian sits up, momentarily confused, before his head whips around. A-Cheng grumbles a disoriented "What the-?!"

"Lan Zhan..." A-Xian mumbles in disbelief. And he is right. She spots a figure in white several metres away, arm outstretched like he has thrown his sword across the battlefield. And just in time.

"Get off her, you!" A-Cheng hisses and forcibly rolls the body off her lap, pulls her close again.

She blinks through another wave of dizziness.

"You!!!" A-Cheng bellows enraged. "Are you trying to get us all killed, you idiot?!"

"Don't fight," she rasps.

"Save your strength, Shijie!" A-Xian pleads, ignoring A-Cheng.

"I love you both," she says, hiccupping. "I'll make soup for you and everything will be alright. Don't fight, please?"

"A-Jie!" A-Cheng protests but doesn't continue, being distracted by something.

She turns in his arms to see what is going on.

A-Xian still sits beside her, where he has landed, hands hovering mid-air, as if he is too frightened to touch her. What nonsense.

The figure in white has rushed closer, too. He kneels in front for her, while taking his sword back.

"Jiang-guniang," Lan Wangji says urgently. "Are you-?" His voice breaks off as if he, too, is too distressed to speak.

"I'm fine," she insists.

He nods and looks at A-Xian.

"Wei Ying?"

"Not wounded," A-Xian replies, still breathless from shock.

Lan Wangji swings his sword again. Another cultivator falls down next to them.

"Need to leave," he says.

Warmth spreads through her shoulder as Lan Wangji carefully touches her to transfer a boost of spiritual energy.

"Thank you..." A-Cheng finds his manners again. She pats him on the chest.

"Let's go home?" she asks quietly.

"Yes, A-Jie, yes." He sniffs between the words. "Let's get out of here and go home."

Lan Wangji helps him gather her up into his arms and get to his feet.

Between them she reaches out.

"A-Xian!"

He, unbelievably, still sits on the ground!

"Come on, Xian-Xian, time to go home."

His mouth drops and he shakes his head. "Shijie..."

Beside her, Lan Wangji makes a noise of frustration and bends down to pull A-Xian up.

"Get a grip," he says, eyes boring into A-Xian's.

"I..."

"I'm leaving," A-Cheng growls and turns before she can grab A-Xian's sleeve. Over her brother's shoulder she watches Lan Wangji fend off several cultivators as he tugs A-Xian along.

Together they make their way through the battlefield.

A-Xian is still muttering to himself. Her poor A-Xian. Something must have really thrown him off balance. She catches the occasional word, like "can't" and "why" and "control".

As they cross under the archway that leads to and from the battleground, Lan Wangji stops. "Hear that?" He asks.

A-Cheng turns, glaring. "Hear what?"

"Music," Lan Wangji says, tilting his head as if to listen closer. "Flute."

She frowns. A-Xian hasn't been playing.

A-Cheng looks at his brother. "You!"

Lan Wangji grabs A-Xian's wrist, holding it up for A-Cheng to see. The flute is held loosely in A-Xian's numb fingers.

"Not Wei Ying," Lan Wangji emphasises. "Someone else."

A-Xian looks terrible. All pale and tear tracks and trembling. He looks like she feels.

"Home," she repeats quietly, stroking A-Cheng's hair almost absentmindedly.

They get on their swords, cast a last glance back. Two persons to a sword, they make for Lotus Pier.

As their Lotus Lake appears on the horizon, the morning sun is reflecting off its surface. The new day looks beautiful.

Jiang Yanli can breathe easier. Jiang Yanli can put things right. Jiang Yanli lives.