Broken birdsong

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Summary

No matter what he does to him, Jiang Fengmian thinks- no matter what he does to him, he won't cave in, he won't beg for his life nor for mercy, he'll never lick his boots or kiss up to him.

No matter what he does to him.

But suddenly, when other people- his whole family- are added into the equation, Jiang Fengmian is forced to reconsider his choices and accept the other man's humiliating offer in spite of himself.

"The people who obey are rewarded, those who rebel suffer. Do as I say, and I assure you, no harm will ever come to them."
Chapter 1

When Jiang Fengmian saw the glint of a sword out of the corner of his eye, he was already too late. It only took a split second, the mere thrust of someone's hand, to end his life. The sharp blade sliced through his flesh like putty, impaling him on its length. His organs pierced, Jiang Fengmian could only feebly squirm, coughing up blood as his vision blurred and ugly, maniacal laughter akin to the scraping of nails on a chalkboard rang in his ears, making him wince in pain.

Everything sounded distant and his vision was blurry, and with every passing second, his grip on reality seemed to slowly loosen.

'I'm dying.'

The realisation hit him like a crashing wave. But there was nothing he could do about it. He couldn't kick, he couldn't scream, he couldn't pray. It was too late. He was only offered enough time to understand this, but not enough to regret, or say any last words. With that final thought lingering on his lips, Jiang Fengmian passed away, exhaling his last breath.

Or at least, he was so sure he did.

At first, all he could see was black. Nothing else registered but the darkness surrounding him, as well as low, dull hums of pain. His mind was too clouded to properly formulate any thoughts, so he could only sink deeper into the darkness, his consciousness fading in and out of reach.

However, this dreadful serenity was cut short by sounds, distant sounds...after straining his ears to listen, Jiang Fengmian realised they were voices, and they didn't sound all too friendly.

Suddenly, like a bolt of lightning splitting his mind, those voices snapped Jiang Fengmian to reality, and memories flashed before his eyes.

'The Wens, Yu Ziyuan, Lotus Pier-'
Violent imagery and startling thoughts ran rampant behind his eyelids as Jiang Fengmian was startled to consciousness, a sense of panic and dread overtaking him as the cogs and machinations in his mind furiously whirred in an attempt to understand what was happening.

However, before he could really get his bearings, Jiang Fengmian felt himself being picked up by his hair, a bout of nausea and searing pain ripping through his gut. He swallowed, biting back any laments, trying to pick up and piece together any fragments of conversation his pounding head managed to make sense of.

"-is him, we kept him here as you requested."  

"-won't be an issue."  

"-protocols should be followed-"  

"-dare question me?"

Jiang Fengmian couldn't recognise either of those voices, although one felt oddly familiar; the first was scratchy and hoarse, like that of an old man, and the other was deep, booming with authority, the kind that forced you to pay attention and that drew you to it, like the gong of a bell.

As he felt himself being dropped to the floor, his already pained head screaming in agony at his collision with the hard terrain, Jiang Fengmian was able to put two and two together.

He had been captured.

In fact, as the seconds inched by and the voices grew louder, he became aware of his limbs being bound and of the pressure of metal on wrists, that became more and more painful the longer he concentrated on it, until he was squirming in discomfort, his pained black eyes cracking open slightly; he was then greeted by the murky sight of flickering torches in a dark, dirty room.

"Oh, you're awake."
That deep, booming voice from before remarked, and Jiang Fengmian lifted his head slightly, in an attempt to pin point it's owner and location.

It took him a few seconds, but then everything clicked. After all, he'd never fail to recognise this man, even if a thousand years were to pass.

His large, broad shoulders framed by golden armor, his long, cascading ivory robes set aflame with a red sun motif, his deep, piercing eyes that stared straight into your soul and robbed your limbs of strength. No, there's no way, there's no way he could ever forget.

Wen Ruohan.

Standing besides him was another equally serious looking man donning the Wen sect uniform- Wen Zhuliu. Jiang Fengmian felt his heart constrict at the sight of him, the gaping hole in his body left by his core-melting hand eating away at his sanity, but nonetheless, he couldn't focus on him at the moment. His eyes were drawn to Wen Ruohan like a moth to a flame; his lips parted in a shaky breath, but no sound escaped- he could merely tremble in an attempt to stand, only to stagger down once more, the nausea hitting him full force.

At this, Wen Ruohan laughed, a sound that left Jiang Fengmian frozen in place.

"My, how far you've fallen, sect leader Jiang."

His tone was seemingly nonchalant, and yet behind it lurked a sense of dread and oppression, that made Jiang Fengmian's teeth gnash and his fists clench, nails sinking into his flesh.

"You...you-"

He tried to speak, but all that came out was a hoarse, raspy whisper, that made his throat cry out in burning pain, blood threatening to spew out of his mouth at any moment as he coughed and heaved.

At this, a few raucous sounds of laughter could be heard- most likely the prison guards. Surprisingly however, Wen Ruohan didn't seem to appreciate this, and he shot them an icy glare, not even bothering to turn his head around; the mere flickering of his red orbs was enough to send chills down the spine of everyone in the cell, and their laughter ceased immediately.
To silence everyone in a room with a mere glance, to instill paralysing fear in those surrounding you with such a small gesture, this, Jiang Fengmian thought, was true power. And it wasn't just about his actions, no, it was about his appearance, about his presence, about his *everything*: his very being seemed to be the pinnacle of a tyrant, every bone in his body so oppressive it suffocated everything and everyone around him.

But nonetheless, Jiang Fengmian wouldn't back down so easily.

Indeed, he had nothing left. No power, no status, no home to call his own, no clan to protect, and god knows what fate his family suffered at the hands of these brutes, of these dogs. The thought of his family, of his loved ones, of...it sent a dagger through his chest, tears pricking at his eyes. But nonetheless, he pursed his lips, determined not to let this show, because, in spite of all this, he still had one thing, one single thing, left.

"I may fallen, but no matter how low I stoop, I will never reach you."

His dignity.

Wen Ruohan raised his eyebrows at this, expression however not betraying a single emotion. But before Jiang Fengmian could say anything else, the holler of the other's booming laughter echoed about the dank cell once more, catching everyone by surprise. Even Jiang Fengmian had no clue what was going to happen next.

"You're so cute, so adorable, like a small kitten who believes himself to be a wolf. What lies did they feed you, to make you think you and I could ever compare, to see yourself as above me when in reality I am the one towering over you?"

For every other word he spoke, he would take a step forward, before stopping right in front of him, forcefully grabbing his chin and making Jiang Fengmian look him straight the eyes. At this, the other yanked himself out of his grasp, brows furrowed and eyes closed in disgust. To be compared to "a small kitten", truly, how shameful. This man didn't just hold him in low regards, he saw him as an ant.

"Those who are corrupted will never see the truth, for their eyes see what their sins fabricate for them. So how dare you speak of lies to me, you uncouth savage?"
Wen Ruohan appeared endlessly amused by the other's pitiful resistance, as he rasped and grit his teeth in an attempt to maintain a somewhat dignified appearance. And to an extent, he actually managed to do so: despite being bloody, beaten and broken, he still carried himself with a certain pride, a helpless, pathetic pride, but a pride nonetheless, that was etched into the very features of his handsome face.

'A face that would look way better twisted in pleasure and streaming with tears.'

Wen Ruohan chuckled at the thought, large, powerful hand moving to caress the sharp contour of Jiang Fengmian's jaw, which in turn sent shivers up the other's spine as he fought the urge to bite his fingers clean off.

"Between you and I, you are the blind one here. Blinded by your foolishness, your naivety- but I am enlightened. I have seen the world for what it is; the strong and the weak, the leaders and the followers, the rulers and the subordinates. It is people like you who believe a bird with no wings could still fly, people like you who live trapped in a fairytale..."

Wen Ruohan then flashed him a perverse grin, before grabbing him by the chin and pulling him close, twisting his head the other way, forcing him to come face to face with the opposite side of the cell.

And in front of him lay long decaying bodies, skin hanging off their dirty, broken skeletons and jaws twisted in silent screams.

Jiang Fengmian had to swallow his own vomit.

A few seconds of flickering torches and shaky breaths pass, the hollow faces of his "cellmates" burning themselves into Jiang Fengmian's eyelids, the nausea becoming harder and harder to fight off as Wen Ruohan leaned in even closer, his hot, warm breaths tickling his earlobe.

"But this is your wake up call. Welcome to reality, sweetheart."

Jiang Fengmian quickly pushed the other man off him, a desperate feeling gripping at his throat. He was panting, shaking, a melting pot of agonising emotions slowly eating him alive. But no matter what, he refused to give in. No matter what, he refused to let the other have what he wanted, hear what he wanted.
"You...you are the shame of your ancestors! They spit on you from the heavens! If you truly upheld the Wen family's teachings like you once said you did, then you-

He broke out into a coughing fit, his throat screaming in agony and his blood painting the filthy cell floor red.

Wen Ruohan said nothing, his gaze once again turning to stone. He "hmphed" slightly, before turning around, gesturing his men to follow him.

"It seems you still need some time for my words to sink in, so I'll let you cool off in here for a few days. Perhaps, once you're thinking straight, you and I can get along again."

Before Jiang Fengmian could say anything, Wen Ruohan and his men took their leave, their steps echoing across the empty cell after the prison bars slammed shut, gradually getting more and more distant until he couldn't hear them any longer.

And then, he was alone.

With only rats and bones to keep him company.

He didn't know what to think, he didn't know what to feel, he didn't know how to feel; he could only lay there, every inch of his body, both inside and out screaming in agony, black eyes wide, barren, and empty, yet somehow also burning with an indiscernible kind of fire.

Wether it had been rotten luck or rotten fate that brought him here -he thought, his body starting to shake and tremble- it didn't matter. Both seemed to despise him.

Chapter End Notes

Hello folks! I've had this idea for quite a while now, ever since I came across the WRH/JFM crack pairing randomly, and, well, here I am. I'm not really sure where the story is going to go, but I did want to write this in the meantime. So, I'll just go with the flow! Hopefully now that I got the prologue-y part out of the way, I can get the story up and going!

Anyways, if you've reached this point, thanks for reading, and I hope you enjoyed!
The seconds inched by slowly, agonisingly, the red glare of the torches bathing everything in a soft, gloomy light.

Jiang Fengmian didn't know if it had been hours, days, or even weeks, for here in the desolate underground he had no way of keeping track of time. There was only him and the cold, distorted stares of hollow eyes haunting him, piercing into his very soul no matter how hard he tried to ignore them.

He was tired, so tired, but he couldn't sleep. Not when his stomach felt like it was eating itself alive from the hunger, not when the pain stabbed at every inch of his body and conscious, from his parched, dry, cracking throat to his skull pounding like a hammer at his brain- it was all a constant, never ending torment. But then, it wasn't just the physical pain, no- it was also the torture of being locked away in this moldy cell, so weak, vulnerable, pathetic, images of a dark, starless night lit ablaze with the tortured screams of the dying and the flames consuming everything in their path, until the only things left were ashes and blood, they haunted his every waking moment, hiding right behind his eyelids. He tossed and turned, he coughed and hacked, his mind like a storm and his body like a fire, searing his bones and flesh as he tried not to cry, not to scream, not to give in to desperation.

Here, this, musky, dank, suffocating room, Jiang Fengmian, decided, was hell.

For what seemed like an eternity, no one came to visit him. He suffered alone, gnashing his teeth in an attempt to make no sound though there was nobody there to hear him.
At some point, however, the status quo changed.

At first, Jiang Fengmian didn't register the rhythmic stomps of someone descending into the underground, and it wasn't until the steps got loud enough for them to echo in his very ears, carried by the filthy floor he was laying upon, that he cracked his eyes open ever so slightly, realising he had company.

He didn't have the strength to crane his neck upwards, but all it took was the hem of his robe for Jiang Fengmian to recognise him.

_That man._

That man, what was he here for? To increase his agony tenfold? To end it? Or to prolong it? He didn't know, and he didn't know if he gave a damn, either. Now that he had been placed in that person's "care", he knew his fate was sealed, it had been from the get-go. Be it one way or the other, his departure from this earth was guaranteed to be a long, cruel, and agonising one. He could only grit his teeth and steady his breathing, trying not to let any of his emotions show.

Seeing the other was only barely responding, Wen Ruohan hunkered down slightly, just enough to let a few of his long, jet-black bangs to slip off his broad shoulders.

"So? How have your roommates been? Not a chatty bunch, I presume?"

Jiang Fengmian didn't answer. He only swallowed, the saliva sliding down his throat setting it aflame as he pointedly ignored him.

Wen Ruohan let out what seemed to be a satisfied grunt. "Don't you know that when someone asks you a question, you answer?" He said, his tone mocking, taking a few more steps towards the unmoving, barely breathing body clothed in dirty, torn purple robes.

"Anyways, I have something here that might interest you"

Wen Ruohan held out a cup of...something or the other. From his current angle on the floor, Jiang Fengmian couldn't exactly make out what it was. Thus, he continued to hold his tongue.
He couldn't see it, but he could still somehow sense the crooked grin forming on Wen Ruohan’s face.

"You're going to pass? Alas. I guess this water has no use."

Wen Ruohan extended the hand holding the cup as if to spill it, and almost involuntarily, Jiang Fengmian weakly raised his head, a noise of protest escaping his throat.

"Are you reconsidering my offer?"

Jiang Fengmian inhaled sharply, trying to consider what course of action to take. Should he drink it, or should he not? He had plenty of reasons both to do so and not to do so. Even the mere action of holding his head up was painful, and his body was trembling from the strain. ‘Do I accept?’ was repeating over and over in his mind like a broken record; if he didn’t accept, now that his golden core was gone, he wouldn’t last much longer without food and water, so weak and frail his body had become— a few more hours time, and he might even die. But, if he did accept, how shameful of him would that be? To beg the same man who stepped on him and destroyed all he’s ever held dear for nourishment, wouldn’t that be spitting on the grave of all who had died? And besides— there was no guarantee what Wen Ruohan was currently holding was even water in the first place. And even if it was, there was no guarantee he’d actually let him have it, either.

Offering him something to drink so magnanimously, making him cough up his dignity like a feeble lamb, only to then throw the cup away just as he was about to reach for it. That sounded like something that twisted, twisted man would do.

Thus, Jiang Fengmian solemnly lowered his head, refusing to even look at his boots. He had already accepted his fate, after all.

What was even left for him in this world anymore?

Wen Ruohan’s brows furrowed slightly— he was stumped, but he had considered this outcome as well. The corners of his lips raised once more, as he moved down to pull Jiang Fengmian by the root of his hair until he was facing him. A small whimper of pain escaped the other man at
being handled so roughly, but he pursed his lips in a desperate attempt to bite it down.

"A few days ago, I left you with some words to mull over, but it seems you still haven’t quite gotten to the bottom of them. So let me shine a light on the matter- resistance is futile."

If Jiang Fengmian could’ve, he’d have spat in his face. Resistance? What resistance? What resistance could he put up, when he couldn’t even lift a finger? If he could’ve truly "resisted", if he weren’t so damn helpless, he’d would’ve fought back a long time ago, but now, his hands were quite literally tied. So what was he even accusing him of? Not playing his games, not acting as his whims desired him to? Did he really want him to throw away what little scrap of dignity he had left before his demise? Well, if refusing to do so was what Wen Ruohan referred to as "an act of resistance", then Jiang Fengmian was afraid he’d have to play the part of the rebel.

Seeing the other man’s glassy, unfocused eyes and unresponsive body, Wen Ruohan slowly grew irked, and he inhaled sharply, in an attempt to keep his cool. Had it been anyone else who dared treat him with such disrespect, he’d have struck them down in an instant.

"Hmph. You are stubborn- you subordinates should be grateful when we show kindness. I am offering you this water- you are in no place to refuse."

The affront was enough to make Jiang Fengmian open his mouth as he tried to speak, but only a sorry choked, raspy sound escaped, the pain of this action making tears well in his eyes. This man, how dare he! His sect may have fallen, but to treat him like this- it was humiliating, it was unforgivable, it was-

"Hmmfh-!"

While Jiang Fengmian was internally lashing out at him, Wen Ruohan had brought the cup to his mouth, taking a swig of the drink before pulling the other into a kiss, their lips crashing together, as he pushed his tongue inside the other's own mouth.

Jiang Fengmian was so shocked, he had no clue how to react. He could only writhe pitifully, wide-eyed, accidentally swallowing the clear liquid; it's coolness somehow setting his throat ablaze as he gulped it down, a single drop trickling down his chin and spilling onto his clavicle. Once Wen Ruohan was sure he had swallowed, he retracted, a string of saliva connecting their lips. Licking the corners of his mouth, he wasn't surprised to find he tasted blood.
"Wha-! Hng...haa-

What the hell, you madman!?" is what he wanted to say, but all that exited his throat was a rasped, low whine. He...really had no shame, did he? And he didn’t want to leave him any, either. He wanted to strip him of what little pride he was desperately clinging on to, he wanted to humiliate him in every manner possible. Jiang Fengmian felt so ashamed and disgraced, he could only clench his teeth and fists, in a futile attempt at not letting any tears fall.

Wen Ruohan smirked slightly in response, the display greatly pleasing him.

"If you had been obedient from the start, I wouldn’t have taken drastic measures-" Wen Ruohan said as he lifted his chin up, looking him straight in the eye "For the weak to submit to the strong is only natural. The fact that you cling on to your pride even now...is both precious and bothersome. But I assure you..." at this, his red orbs flickered with a strange light, his expression somehow both hardening and softening simultaneously “…those who accept the way things are, are those who prosper. The weak need the strong, but the strong also need the weak, after all- but the weak need us especially. And you are weak, Jiang Fengmian. You need us, you need me- stay by my side, where you were meant to be all along. It is your place."

Those words stabbed at his heart like a blade, ten times sharper than the one he was impaled on mere days ago.

Weak...he was...weak.

The word repeated in his over and over and over again. Weak. Weak. Weak. He had been weak, at the end of the day. He had been so weak, in fact, he failed at doing every single task expected of a clan leader: he hadn’t managed to protect his home, to protect his people, to protect his family, or to protect his wife. He was...a failure. In every way, he was a complete and utter failure. And Jiang Fengmian was disgusted with himself for this- perhaps even more so than he was disgusted with that bastard standing right in front of him. Because, indeed, he was a sick, twisted man, but Jiang Fengmian was somehow even worse. Because he was weak, he was hopeless, a useless, inept failure of a human being, father, and clan leader. But-

Blood and saliva splattered on Wen Ruohan’s face. His eyes widened in shock.

"I...don’t...need...you..."
He wasn’t a coward.

Perhaps, his courage was meaningless; after all, it hadn’t saved his family from peril, it hadn’t rescued him during dire times. But yet, right now, he felt it was all he had, all that was keeping him sane, all that gave him the strength to utter those words, no matter how painful and agonizing enunciating was for him. So, with all the intensity he could muster, he glaring at him, glaring at him as if his eyes were swords stabbing at his innards.

Wen Ruohan’s eyes had widened like saucers. For a second, he stared on in complete and utter disbelief, before grabbing Jiang Fengmian by the hair of his scalp, slamming him to the ground, uncaring of how he cried out in pain.

Never, never in his whole life, had somebody lower than him treated him with such disrespect. It made him furious, it made his skin crawl with rage, and if that person wasn’t him, then he’d have killed them a long time ago, ripped them to shreds and fed them to the dogs.

Nonetheless, he thought to himself, running a hand through his hair- he had prepared for this worse case scenario as well.

"Hmph. Very well then. It seems your hard-headedness borders on stupidity. Force is the only way people like you learn."

Wen Ruohan waved his sleeve with a flick of his hand, snapping his fingers. A mere split-second later, a platoon of men came rushing down, all donning the Wen sect uniforms, swords fastened tightly to their waist; most definitely soldiers.

But, those men were the least of Jiang Fengmian’s worries- no, what made his heart lurch and his eyes nearly burst out of their sockets, was the person walking in the middle surrounded by them, wearing a long, tattered and torn purple dress and long, raven bangs cascading off her shoulders like a waterfall; one of the men forcing her to keep her head down as they lead her downstairs, her hands bound by iron and her ankles chained.

Jiang Fengmian would recognize that person anywhere.

"Ha..."
He tried calling out to her, but he had nothing left. He tried lifting a hand, but he had no strength in his upper body, or anywhere in his body. He desperately, somehow, anyhow, tried to reach her, to look her in the eyes, tears now unashamedly streaming down in stress, relief, and pain.

Pathetic, pathetic, pathetic.

The men forced the woman to kneel down, her knees colliding with the hard pavement at such a speed and velocity Jiang Fengmian felt it in his bones. They held her down, so he couldn’t even make out her lips, or the countour of her jaw. He was glad, he was so glad, unbelievably grateful that she was alive, that she was here, even if the two of them couldn’t talk in spite of their relatively short distance. But then again...her presence made Jiang Fengmian feel wary. Why was she here? Certainly, not for any good reason that he could think of. Then-

"Let’s do this the hard way, then. Perhaps you’ll listen to what she has to say."

Chapter End Notes

Hello everyone! Here we are with chapter two. Hopefully I can pick up the pace from here on out.
Also, it's official, unless it's midnight, I just can't get my creative juices flowing. Does this make me a night owl? I don't know. All I do know is I consistently make bad choices with my sleeping schedule in spite of knowing they are in fact, terrible. Alas. I apologize if this chapter is a little shorter than the previous one- I felt I'd be over-doing it if I tried to stretch out any more. Hopefully the next ones will be fairly longer! I apologize for any typos as well, I'm writing this at an ungodly hour as per usual, so I'll be spellchecking later in the morning. I also had to re-upload it, because for some reason, the fic wasn’t showing up...? Weird. So, if you got a spam of notifications, Sorry! My bad. Ao3’s draft system is a pain.

Anyways, thank you for reading!
Her once modest yet gorgeous purple robes torn at the seams and stained with dirt and blood, her ink-black hair all tangled in knots and crowned with filth, and her skin, the pearly white now brused in ugly patches of black and yellow...

He had never seen Yu ZiYuan in such a pitiful state.

From the first time Jiang Fengmian had met her, she had perpetually carried herself with an air of nobility, often bordering on arrogance, her head always held high and her posture impeccable. And now? Now, seeing that old image shattered to pieces by the reality in front of him, Jiang Fengmian felt sick to his stomach. He didn't know what to do, how to react, what to think- his heart had already been torn to shreds, and now, those shreds were being mercilessly stomped on. Tears rolling down his dirty cheeks, his hand extended towards her, he called her name-

"Hn...hagh..."

The mere act of opening his mouth and attempting to sound out words was so excruciating, the pain left him paralyzed, the inside of his throat like a wildfire.

Wen Ruohan smirked slightly at this. Seeing him in such pain pricked at his heart, but it was what he deserved, and there was nothing he could do about it. Now, perhaps, he would finally understand.

"As you can see, your whole family is safe with us. So far, they have cooperated-

"-Hmmph!" Yu ZiYuan tried to say something, but going by the muffled sound that escaped instead, Jiang Fengmian soon realised she was gagged. Seeing her getting kicked in the head by one of the soldiers as a repsonse, falling to the ground like a ragdoll, Jiang FengMian involuntarily reached out to her. However, because of the little strength left in his limbs, he toppled over, not falling to the ground only thanks to Wen RuoHan extending an arm out to catch him. Jiang FengMian panted, sweat dripping off his chin, that small action leaving him completely drained. The other seemed slightly amused by this, the expression on his face akin to that of an owner watching their small pet struggle to reach something.

"-however, everyone must do their part. I can guarantee their safety, but only if you're willing to collaborate. It is the way of the world, and the fate of the weak; the people who obey are rewarded,
those who rebel suffer. Do as I say, and I assure you, no harm will ever come to them.”

Jiang FengMian stared at the dirty, flame-lit soil in front of him, eyes unfocused and black spots dancing in front of his vision.

What...what should he do?

He... didn't know. What did Wen RuoHan want with him? What was the meaning of all of this? He didn't know that either. But he did know this- his family was here, and they were alive; it wasn't just him anymore. It wasn't just him and whatever scrap of life he was left with, him and his battered pride- there were people here too, his family, his family! Suddenly, his whole worldview collapsed. There was no longer him, there was only them. Jiang Fengmian may have been weak, he may have been a failure, his life may be worth less than nothing, but if he had a chance- no matter how small- of protecting the people he loved, then he would take it. His life didn't matter, his well-being didn't matter, he didn't matter. Nothing else mattered.

Panting, nauseous, light-headed and in so much pain, there wasn't an inch of his body not aching and throbbing, Jiang FengMian slowly nodded his head. It was a small gesture, so small, it would be easy to miss if one blinked. But it spoke a thousand words, it carried more meaning than any grandiose speech or promise ever could. And it didn't escape Wen RuoHan's scrutinising gaze. At first, the other man said nothing, as if the action were taking some time to register. Then, the corners of his mouth started lifting, until they twisted into a gleeful, ecstatic grin, a feeling of unease churning in the guts of everyone in the room.

"See? Was that so difficult to accept? Had you not been stubborn, we could've avoided all this..." Wen RuoHan's words stirred into a mumble, his expression similar to that of an excited child. Hearing his words, Yu XiYuan tried to lift her head, long fingernails digging and clawing at the ground in a desperate fashion.

"Hmmph! Mmph-"

"Oh-shut up-!"

Her muffled groaning was cut off by a boot landing squarely on her head, courtesy of one of the soldiers, burying her face deeper and deeper into the dirty soil with each repeated stomp. Jiang FengMian was exhausted, so exhausted, every passing second would rob and eat away at his strength; he could only watch on helplessly, pathetically, eyes pleading.

Seeing this, Wen RuoHan looked somewhat miffed, but all in all, was still in a good mood; thus he waved at the guard, who stopped immediately, albeit donning an odd expression.

"Cease. There's no more point to this."
Afterwards, Jiang Fengmian wasn't entirely sure what happened. Less and less started registering as one by one, his senses began to slowly abandon him: from his sight, the world around him becoming black, to his hearing, the noises and voices becoming muddled beyond recognition, to his feeling, the pain seemingly fading until only a distant, dull throb remained. And along with his senses, his mind started shutting down as well, his thoughts broken and incoherent, the temptation of letting go growing stronger. And JiangFengMian was tired, so tired, he welcomed this sensation, relished in it; with one final prayer and one final wish, he abonded himself to the call of the void, letting himself be enveloped in the sweet release of nothingess.

And to Jiang FengMian, that became, undoubtedly, the day he truly died.

When he awoke again, his circumstances where considerably different compared to his previous one- in a variety of ways.

He was no longer wearing his old, tattered robes, but a new, immaculate white satin garment, so light and feathery it was nearly transparent. Quondam sprawled on a dirty, hard soil, but now on soft, smooth sheets, warm and comfortable to the touch, so comfortable in fact, he didn't even want to move. Well, then again, even if he did want to, it's not like he could- it didn't take much for Jiang FengMian to realise the entirety of his body was bound by a thin, yet sturdy red rope. It tied his wrists together, it looped underneath his arms and legs, intricately tightening around his chest, and, much to his furious embarrassment, trapped the more private parts of him too: his mounds were spread apart, his length was tightened painfully, the rope squeezing at the base. His body didn't hurt nearly as much as he was afraid it would, but it all rubbed against his skin uncomfortably, and the situation as a whole horrified him to no end.

Just...just what was he planning-!?

Jiang FengMian swallowed, a slight sense of panic blooming in his chest, that he desperately tried to fight down- whatever that maniac wanted to do to him, he would have to accept, but nonetheless, why this? Why? Just why? Why would he do this to him, why would he want this from him? Did he hate him that much, or was Wen RuoHan just that...sick, perverse kind of man...

Any and all inquires were placated at the sound of boots echoing down a hall, growing louder and louder with each stomp. Jiang FengMian squirmed- attempting to look presentable was futile, but at the very least, he could try and collect his thoughts and bottle his dread.

Soon enough, a door slid open, and in came the person he was dreading the most; Wen RuoHan
himself. Donning his usual flame-motif robe, yet any hair ornaments missing; his long, black locks were left to freely cascade on his shoulders. What with his impressive physique, coupled with sharp, cutting features, he made for quite the handsome man, or at least would’ve in his eyes, had he not been the most vile human to ever walk this wretched earth.

Wen RuoHan took a few steps inside the room, sighing slightly. He paused for a second, staring Jiang FengMian down...he looked...absolutely gorgeous.

Those white robes hugging his body, the tight ropes keeping him bound and stretched, his muscles tense and shimmering underneath the fabric, his flawless, smooth, pearly white skin that contrasted with his ebony hair- and his face, his face, his soft, delicate features, his gentle yet determined black eyes glistening like stars reflected in a sea...He was- he was stunning, unreal, like a work of art, priceless, inimitable, one of a kind.

Truly, he had waited far too long to see him like this.

Wen RuoHan sat down next him, the bed sinking with his weight. He moved a hand towards the other man, to brush back the stray strands of hair on his face; his touch was different, it wasn't like the one from before, harsh and forceful, but delicate and ginger, as if he were afraid of breaking him. This kind of touch, however, it unsettled Jiang FengMian far more than before, than when he had slammed him to the ground and pulled his hair. A strange feeling crawled up his spine like an insect, a sensation of disgust and shame he couldn't shake. He pulled his head away, trying to escape that touch.

This action greatly irritated Wen RuoHan, who grabbed the other's chin with a strong, swift movement, forcing Jiang FengMian to look at him.

"We have established this already. You are mine. Stop resisting."

"Who agreed to be yours-!

Jiang FengMian struggled, before a pair of lips came crashing into his. He groaned in protest, but that only appeared to egg the other on further, as he pried his lips apart and stuck his tongue deep inside- and, Jiang FengMian realised- he was kissing him.

As his wet, intruding tongue explored every inch of his mouth, his hand moved downwards, first to cup his face, and then down, further down, before laying it on his chest, a finger resting on that pink nub, the robe so thin, it even showed off the color.

"Hmm, hmmph-!"

His mouth occupied, Jiang FengMian couldn't say a word- he wanted to fight back, push him, scream at him, kick him, bite him- but...but...
That same finger pushed down on his nipple, and a small, soft sound involuntarily escaped Jiang FengMian's throat. His eyes widened in horror once he realised what had just happened.

Wen RuoHan appeared amused by this; he pressed down and harder, and a strange, painful yet also pleasurable sensation ripped another moan from his throat.

"What's this-? You seem to like this. Are you sensitive here...?" Wen RuoHan started rubbing and twisting at those two pink nubs, trapping them between his fingers. Pleasure bursted wherever he pinched and squeezed, and Jiang FengMian squirmed, eyes shut and lips pursed- he couldn't believe, he couldn't believe it! Him, a man, being touched like this, like a woman, by another man! And what man, of all people-!

"Sto-stop..."

"Why would you want it to stop when it feels good?"

Wen RuoHan moved to open his robe; however, since it was caught underneath the ropes, it snagged and eventually tore, until Jiang FengMian's chest was bare and exposed.

"No-!"

"Are you in any place to tell me that?"

Wen RuoHan dipped downwards, long, raven hair falling like a fountain, rippling as his mouth moved towards the pink nubs at his chest, lips parted, lapping at them gingerly with his tongue.

"No, no, this is, this-"

Jiang FengMian squirmed about, unable to help how good that wet tongue teasing his nipples felt. He tried everything he could to contain his whines, and only weak, choked mewls escaped. The voice ringing in his ears sounded so foreign to him- was he really the one making those sounds? Was he really the one in this situation right now? Is this what the other man had wanted deep down? To unravel him completely and gut him from the inside out? Tear him to shreds like so? Jiang FengMian didn't know, he didn't know how to stop himself from feeling pleasure because of this man.

"Hm- I can't believe you're so sensitive just having your nipples licked. You're really enjoying yourself."
"No-nnhoh! I'm, I'm not, you're wrong-"

"Well, your mouth can lie, but your body can't."

Before Jiang FengMia even had the time to fully process those words, a large, warm hand pushed the bottom half of his robe aside, gripping his already half-hard cock.

"-No-!"

"No? No? You're saying that quite a lot. You're in no position to say that word- and it seems you still haven't fully understood."

Wen RuoHan started pumping up and down, grip strong and firm as the lack of any kind of lubrication made everything scathing and painful- yet also *pleasurable*. Jiang FengMian threw his head back and grit his teeth, the rope digging into his skin, every stroke of his like a fire.

"From now on, the only words I want to hear come out of your mouth are *please* and *more*. Try it, try saying it: *please* touch me more, *please* let me cum."

Hearing him say that, Jiang Fengmian's cheeks lit ablaze in shame. How dare he, how could he- how could a man like him say something so humiliating? Wen RuoHan- he didn't want him to just give up his dignity as a man, he wanted him to cease being one, period. Jiang FengMian bit the inside of his cheek, refusing to look the other in the eye, refusing to pay the pleasure that hand brought him any heed.

Wen RuoHan appeared miffed by this, his eyebrows twitching slightly at the affront. This man- somehow, he still had some fighting spirit left in him. But it didn't matter, he was going to strip him of all of it soon.

"Very well then."

Wen RuoHan let go of his pulsating member, and Jiang FengMian didn't know wether the sigh he made was out of relief or dissapointment. He saw him bring his fingers to his mouth and spit on his digits, coating them in a thick layer of saliva with his tongue, until they were glossy; only then did his hand move back there again, pulling the foreskin down until the pink head was completely exposed, before gripping at the tip, hand wrapped tightly around it's girth.

"Ah-!" Jiang FengMian couldn't help the choked sound that escaped him, the whines hanging on his every breath at having the most sensitive part of him played with so roughly. He didn't know whether it was the strain of the ropes taking it's toll or the pleasure, but his legs started trembling.
"I don't understand-" said Wen RuoHan, expression inscrutable as he milked his cock in circular motions, staring down at a moaning, squirming Jiang FengMian "-it feels good, you're feeling good right now, and yet, you still hang on to that pride. What good does it bring you? Why does it matter so much to the likes of someone like you? You've accepted your fate, but not fully. What I want is good for you."

Jiang FengMian raised his head slightly, eyes glimmering with tears and cheeks flushed scarlet.

"What the hell, could you want for me- nh, ahn- that is, good, you, you hate me-!"

Wen RuoHan peered at his expression curiously for a second or two, before the corners of his lips raised into a small smirk; he bent down, until his hot breath was ghosting on his ear, hands never stopping.

"And wherever did you get that idea, sweetheart? If I hated you, you'd be long dead."

He moved in closer, until Jiang FengMian could see his eyes reflected in the other's own, the cruel pace of his hand down there never altering, heat pooling in his cock as the need for release grew. He bit his lip, trembling all over.

"Indeed, I love you, Jiang FengMian."

Those words were enough to knock all the air out of him. Love? Love? What kind of cruel joke was this? Was this just some other way of playing with him, toying with him? He didn't know, Jiang FengMian didn't know, all he knew is that he needed to cum, god he needed to cum, the pleasure and heat of his tip being milked driving him insane.

"Hmph. Stubborn. Just say the word, and I'll give you what you want."

Jiang FengMian squirmed and writhed, that sensitive part of him trapped in the other's hand, the pleasure turning into heat and the heat becoming unbearable, painful even, his entire cock aching and throbbing, clear substance leaking from the tip.

Wen RuoHan worked it skillfully, twisting and rubbing, his thumb sliding across his slit, shit- he
whined, back arching slightly, that rope at the base of his cock becoming tighter and tighter as his member swelled.

Wen RuoHan snuck his tongue inside Jiang FengMian's mouth once more, lazily grazing his teeth, relishing in the other's barely restrained moans.

"Say it."

It was a whisper, a mere whisper, and yet something like a command, an order. Normally, Jiang FengMian wouldn't feel affected, but right now, at his weakest, being played with and tormented ruthlessly, his limbs turned to putty and so did his will.

"Ngh, ahn, nnh-"

Wen RuoHan then picked up the pace, a look of 'don't make me say that twice' flashing in his eyes- the abruptly increased speed nearly made Jiang FengMian scream.

"Nhha-mnh, haa-p-please, please, please! Please please pleasepleaseplease-"

Once to the dam burst, it all came flowing out, and Jiang FengMian let those words flow from his mouth like a stream, like a prayer, like a plea. He just didn't care anymore, he just wanted to cum-

"Hm? Should I really? You've been nothing but disobedient so far."

"No-! Please, please please please, please let me cum, please let me cum, please let me cum-"

After the word was said once, saying it a thousand times over became easy. Wen RuoHan smirked.

"Let you cum? Because it feels good, is that what you want, sweetheart?"

"Yes, yes yes yes yesyes god yes, fuck yes, it feels good, please-!"

Looking fairly pleased with himself, Wen RuoHan moved his other hand downwards, loosening one of the knots to the rope around his base- as soon as his cock felt free, it only took a few more strokes to cum into the other's hand, a white, thick substance spurting everywhere.
Jiang FengMian sanked into the sheets, panting, beads of sweat rolling off his forehead and thighs trembling. As he took a moment to recover, and the post orgasm haze began fading, the realisation of what he had just done settled on him. His chest constricted, his eyes widened in horror and a sense of disgust and shame clawed at his heart, as Wen RuoHan eyed him with a look that sent shivers down his spine and up his arms.

"You did well."

"Have you heard? They got the Jiangs, they're all dead now, ha-! Serves them right."

"Well, not all of them, or so I've been told. The sect leader and his wife are still alive, they've been taken prisoner."

"Huh? Why not just do 'em in? What's the point, then?"

"Don't know. Oh, and aside from those two, you know their three brats? They escaped, scurried off god knows where during the siege. These bastards, they're like cockroaches, so damm hard to get rid of."

Chapter End Notes

Hello everyone! This is where the real spice begins. It's pretty late here- which is standard for me at this point, so all I have to say is- apologies for the typos! I shall spell check later on when I'm not as tired.

Nonetheless, I hope you all enjoyed, and thank you for reading as always!
Jiang FengMian stared at ceiling, his gaze distant and clouded as he let the intricate patterns and motifs swirl all around him, losing himself in the maze hanging above his head. His heart was heavy—yet he couldn't focus on it. He couldn't focus on anything, his train of thought dully trudging along the recesses of his mind.

After all, what was there to even think about? What was there to focus on? The ropes digging into his skin or the torn robe exposing his body to the chilly air? He couldn't bring himself to think about that, to even acknowledge that. He was just barely clinging to what little scraps of sanity were left within him. So he merely focused on the planchement, mind numb.

Perhaps, he could've even fallen asleep, had a sudden sound not reached his ears right afterwards, making him jolt—his flight or fight reflexes were promptly kicked into full gear, but the cords tying him down reminded him that no matter who or what it was, there wasn't much he could about it. Thus, he merely eyed the door with apprehension, waiting for the other presence to manifest themselves: it turned out to just be an oh hum Wen maid. Her eyes were glued to the pavement as she wordlessly stepped inside, and in hand, she carried what looked to be a fresh change of clothes; the same thin satin robe as the one he was currently donning—was this the only thing Jiang FengMian would be allowed to wear during his...indefinite, stay here?

His query wasn't answered, as all the young woman did was place the object on the bed, never making eye contact, never even by accident, before leaving just as she came: quietly, without uttering a word. In some sense, Jiang FengMian felt relieved— he wasn't feeling particularly talkative, to say the least. But nonetheless…

His head tossed to the side, long black hair spilling down the sheets. His heart and mind were at a stalemate, at an impasse: every thought was snuffed out before being born and his rib cage beat alongside the empty feeling in his chest. He couldn't move if he wanted to, he couldn't think, but he didn't know if he wished he could. He only took deep breaths in, deep breaths out— the ropes tightening around him as his bosom rose, loosening as it fell. He couldn't say he was growing accustomed to the feeling, but he couldn't say it was aggravating him like before, either.

Perhaps it was minutes later, perhaps it was hours later, but eventually, the door slid open once more—ah. Who else could it be?

Jiang FengMian didn't bother moving, didn't bother looking his way as he took slow strides towards him. But as he got closer, the dam inside mind broke and all the events of earlier flooded his brain, replaying in front of his retinas. He could only swallow, ears and cheeks turning scarlet from the shame. Wen RuoHan noticed his discomfort, noticed how he outwardly winced and shifted, lips tightening into a line eyes scrunching up.
Cute...to Wen RuoHan, in a way, his reactions were cute- adorable even, not unlike a small animal’s. Indeed, he couldn't understand the other's mortification, his repulsion towards him; he saw it as charming embarrassment, a stubborn critter who was far too prideful, far too huffy to admit the things he liked and the things he didn't- but that wouldn't be an issue for much longer.

Jiang FengMian was dogged in his refusal to look him in the eye. Face flushed red, he said nothing as the other sat down next to him, tensing up at the large hand being placed on his chest.

“Y-you, what are you planning-”

“Don't be so fearful. I'm merely going to change you.”

Jiang FengMian swallowed, glaring at those long fingers tracing the length of the ropes with unease. They moved to caress his flesh, fingertips gliding over the smooth skin. Jiang FengMian made a strange noise, feeling a shiver crawl up his spine as Wen RuoHan grazed the pink nubs on his chest once more, rubbing circles into them gently. He blushed even harder, the delicate action bringing back recent memories- how could he, how could he react so wantonly to something so immoral, so disgraceful? He refused to pay any heed to his shaky breath, to how his nipples stood erect, almost as if longing for the other's touch. Jiang FengMian wished to crawl into a hole and die, but Wen RuoHan appeared endlessly amused by his reactions.

“I can't help it, wanting to touch you...just like your body can't help it, reacting to me…” he dipped his head downwards, mouthing at the naked flesh of his bosom, biting, kissing- the tender touch, his honey laden words, Jiang FengMian wanted to retch. He just couldn't understand, he couldn't-

"I love you, Jiang FengMian.”-

...verily, he still couldn't. It was all some sick, twisted ploy, it had to be, there was no other explanation. How could he love him, was this man even capable of something so selfless as loving? No, no, it wasn't that, it couldn't be that. There was some other reason for his desire to toy with him, ruin him; and perhaps, that's all it was. The man's own childish whims to trample and conquer.

Jiang FengMian audibly protested, squirming in place. Wen RuoHan let out an odd sound at this, something between mirth and annoyance. He harshly pinched the pink perkiness on his chest one last time, not missing how Jiang FengMian whimpered at the rough treatment, before moving to undo the knots tying him down.

Jiang FengMian nearly moaned in relief, basking in the feeling of freedom as the restraints came falling down, and he could finally move, limbs unhinged. He slowly sat up, taking a moment to
observe the angry red burns wrapping around his wrists, up his arms, all the way down to his waist, rubbing them in an attempt to soothe the scathing marks.

Wen RuoHan stared on, quietly watching him: he had ordered doctors and healers to take care of his more critical wounds, and after a few days of rest, he was once again in good shape, albeit a little weaker and thinner than before. But that was okay—nay, that was perfect.

Wen RuoHan couldn't decide if he liked those cherry bruises, those red streaks wrapping tightly around his body, tell-tale signs of his careful, meticulous job. He couldn't decide because on one hand, they were proof of his possession, proof that he belonged to him, and he wanted to sink those ropes even deeper into his flesh so he could never escape from them, never escape from him. But on the other...he loved his smooth, unblemished, pearly white skin. He could adore every inch, worship every nook and cranny. And that's what he did, clutching the Jiang sect leader’s wrist, pressing his lips against the soft surface.

“-You-!” Jiang FengMian retracted his arm, but Wen RuoHan’s grip was firm, he couldn't break away. Well, not like there was anywhere to run away to, anyways- his back ended up banging against a wall, and he pressed himself against it, as if trying to put as much distance between him and the other man as humanly possible.

“Hmph.” Wen RuoHan inched closer, until he was looming over the smaller man, pulling his wrist towards him and seizing him by the chin, until the two were staring into each other's eyes, purple losing itself in red.

“Why do you keep running? Must you continuously compel me to use violence? This game of cat and mouse is unnecessary…” the distance between the two thinned, until Wen RuoHan's warm breath was ghosting over Jiang FengMian's face“...unless, of course...you enjoy this. Do you relish in being taken by force, in putting up a fight-?”

“ No-! ” Jiang FengMian floundered and writhed about, looking away, the pressure exuding from the leader's very being too much for him to bear: he wanted him to go away, to unhand him, to just leave him to die somewhere no one could gaze upon his pitiful form.

But...he couldn't die...not when…

“...Why are you doing this…” the syllables slid out of Jiang FengMian's parted lips, who hid from the other man's gaze, his doleful expression invoking pity, but Jiang FengMian wasn't looking for that “-you already took Lotus Pier. You set fire to every building and impaled every heart, you burned every body and every stalk of grass. What else do you want? What else could you possibly want from me, want me to give you?”
As soon as he uttered those words, the room fell into silence. Nothing stirred and nothing moved, it was only the roaring of Jiang FengMian's own heartbeat and Wen RuoHan's ember orbs carving holes into his heart and soul.

Then, the larger man was overcome by vexation, and he grew irritated, grabbing his chin and forcing Jiang FengMian to once more look him in the eye, the action harsh and exasperated, barely contained feelings flickering in his scarlet eyes.

“ You-” the word was breathless, desperate almost, fingers digging into his skin “-I want you. I've never cared for Lotus Pier, not as much as I've cared for you. All these years, you're the thought that accompanied me to sleep and greeted me in the morning. The thought of having you, embracing you, taking you. Ever since the day we first met, ever since we were young. You were different, you were different- you had something nobody else did. You cared for me, Jiang FengMian, and it hurts me to see you push me away like this-”

Jiang FengMian...was left absolutely speechless. All his years of having known the other man, he had never heard such raw emotion in his voice, never heard him speak in such a lugubrious tone.

‘I love you, Jiang FengMian . ’

Those words, those three damn words, replaying in his mind over and over like a broken record. ‘I love you. I love you. I love you . ’

“You- you're not the same person I used to know-!” Jiang FengMian squirmed, breathing laboured “-I accepted that, I accepted that the boy I met died years ago. You're a stranger- you're a monster! You-”

His contentions were swallowed by hungry lips, and he audibly protested, writhing, groaning, fists clenched around skin and fabric and limbs tangling together, violent feelings crashing against each other in a storm of fervour, of bites and curses, sobs and whines, Jiang FengMian's white satin robes ripping further, beyond recognition as Wen RuoHan tore them off his being with a single vigorous movement.

“ Mine -” he spoke through grit teeth, panting “-you're mine. Your heart, body and soul- it's what's right.”

“ What's right!? What kind of nonsense are you- spewing…” Jiang FengMian's words of protest
were cut short by teeth sinking into his neck, by a mouth sucking on skin and a warm, wet tongue running over the indentations he had left behind, angry and passionate, the other's hands unconsciously tugging at the hair of Wen RuoHan's scalp. His body- his body was starting to react again. The heat pooled in his stomach and his back arched: he longed for the other's touch, but it simultaneously disgusted him, left him tasting bile every time they roughly kissed. He couldn't do this, he couldn't do this- he couldn't sink this low, for the sake of everything he has ever stood for- but-

“Ah-!” a hand grips around at the base of his cock. Not again, not again, Jiang FengMian couldn’t help the tears pricking at his eyes-

“Every word of mine is an order, every phrase a parable. This world revolves around the sun, Jiang FengMian, and I am that sun, I am the law of the land. So if I want you, that means you belong to me, that your place is next to mine.”

Jiang FengMian gulped- he was trying, oh so desperately trying to not let any tears fall, sniffling and trembling, but it was all too much; from the obscene, suggestive clothes he was donning, to how his pulsating member was being held tightly in the other's hand- what was he- a bitch, a prostitute!? And the man who trampled all over him, no less? The man who had ravaged all he's ever had, who turned his back on him and lied to him, wanted to now ravage and consume him, to leave behind a shell of a man, and Jiang FengMian didn't know whether he felt more disgusted at the Wen RuoHan or himself, at his own wanton, depraved body somehow craving more and more. What was this, what even was all of this-!?  

Trembling, shaking, shivering, teeth digging deep enough into his bottom lip to draw blood, he broke out into choked sobs- it was too much, it was too much, it was all far, far too much…

Wen RuoHan saw, he saw how he buried his face in his hands, the tears spilling down his cheeks and onto his open palms. His heart and guts twisted at the sight- he had always been so prideful, so ostentatious, of course it hurt him to admit his place. But he guessed it couldn't be helped; Wen RuoHan lifted his chin, catching a falling tear on his finger, wiping it away with unprecedented tenderness. Rough and gentle, hot and cold, pleasure and pain, they all became one with this man. Jiang FengMian didn't even try to tear his gaze away this time, and merely let him. A voice in his head screamed at him to bite that index, to chop it clean off...but he couldn't bring himself to do it. He couldn't bring himself to do anything but let those salty tears fall and fall, watching as Wen Ruohan tucked a raven lock behind his ear.

Worthless, worthless, pathetic, pathetic, pathetic pathetic pathetic pathetic-

“You're so weak, so hopeless, Jiang FengMian. But don't worry, you have me by your side: I'll protect you.”
And at that, Jiang FengMian felt as if he had been punched in the stomach, all the wind knocked out of him.

Wen RuoHan leaned in, it was for a kiss- and Jiang FengMian let him. He felt himself being picked up, placed on the other's lap- he let him do that, as well. And continued to do nothing, as the larger man's tongue lazily slid against his own, the kiss growing deeper, groans of contentment escaping Wen Ruohan, whereas Jiang FengMian only whined and sobbed, not even bothering to hold in the embarrassing noises, the wet, dirty sounds of their mouths reverberating in his ears.

Soon after, he felt a pair of hands grope at his ass, fingers sinking into the supple flesh, and Jiang FengMian moaned, unabashedly, at those large hands treating him so callously. Mouth still occupied, they kept kneading into his ass, and he could feel himself getting harder, his cock twitching every time the other rubbed and squeezed, that part of him that had never been touched. He squirmed, small 'ah's kept falling from his mouth, but he had yet to stop crying. His heart had yet to stop aching, the shame and humiliation had yet to cease.

Wen RuoHan noticed, but he pressed onwards, pulling those hips closer to his own, until Jiang FengMian's cock was pressing up against a large bulge. He shivered, he had never been so close to another man's, and yet now, their cocks were pressing together, the fabric of his white robes roughly tugging at that sensitive, delicate part of him.

Wen RuoHan licked his lips, before giving an experimental grind, holding Jiang FengMian's hips firmly in place- he couldn't run if he wanted. He then began thrusting in earnest, taking delight in Jiang FengMian's sobs, how the friction hurt him yet ripped those sweet, rich sounds from his throat, those short, smooth whimpers. He felt drunk, high off his voice, high off something as simple as frottage. Oh, how he wanted to flip him over and fuck him raw, fill him until he came screaming his name. But that had to wait, that had to wait….

"Hey, sweetheart-" he moved aside his robe, exposing his own pulsating member, its excitement discernible from the sheer amount of thick, clear liquid dripping from the tip. Jiang FengMian's eyes fixated on that long object, considerably bigger than his own- but what affront, what embarrassment could this ever amount to after all he’s had to deal with?

"...lend me your hand."

Jiang FengMian figured what his intentions were almost instantaneously. Lend you my hand- lend you my hand? Touch your cock, pleasure you? He wanted to laugh, he wanted to cry, he wanted to scream. But he did none of those three.

He slowly presented a long, slender hand towards him. It was shaking slightly, but it's path was dejectedly resolute. Wen RuoHan wrapped his own, fairly larger hand around it, before gripping
their two cocks together. Jiang FengMian couldn't help the shiver- the sensation of that hot, wet shaft against his skin, of the veins rubbing against his palm and of the object's weight and girth...it disgusted him. Of course it did, but his own cock didn't seem to heed what his mind thought, jumping with elation, oozing precum as Wen RuoHan began to guide their hands up and down, working their shafts together, skin rubbing against skin.

Jiang FengMian moaned, incomprehensible pleas spilling from his parted lips, hips stuttering and legs trembling- but what was new, what was new? Gradually the sensations overtook him, but the shame never went away.

Chapter End Notes

Oh boy, it is LATE, as usual, and I am probably going to pass out right after I type this. Typos galore, I'm sure, and I apologise- but I am just too tired to properly spell check right now.

Felt inspired to write this all down in one go, am suffering the consequences. Alas, I hope you enjoyed anyways!
The bright midsummer sun hung in the sky, casting everything below it in a dazzling golden hue; the distant callings of birds rang in the air, alongside the sound of leaves being stirred and that of branches being rustled by the tiepid winds. And underneath this illuminated canopy, creviced in between green mountaintops and blue skies was a river- of neither particularly large nor of particularly small size, it's clear waters that spilled from distant peaks rushing along the rocky pathway nature had devised for it. And yet, it was not the only clear liquid cascading down on that summer day, because alongside the cool stream ran the salty tears of a young boy: he was dressed in a limpid white robe, red flames licking at its hems, at which two pairs of trembling fists were grasping. From the way he bit down on his bottom lip and furiously blinked, it became obvious he was giving it his all to not give in to whatever emotion was currently upsetting him. Alas, he only meagerly succeed at this task, because in spite of his best efforts, a few salty drops still spilled down his cheeks and landed on the grassy terrain he was bent over.

The sounds of the running stream muffled his sniffles, but they could not hide a pair of rhythmic footsteps approaching from behind: from amongst the tall trees emerged yet another young boy, this one however dressed in violet robes, his black brows furrowing even deeper in concern upon spotting the white-clad boy.

He was unsure whether or not the other had registered his presence, so he took a few tentative steps forward, letting go of the bark he had been holding onto and making his way into the sunlit canopy.

Arm extended, he wondered to himself, should he call out to him-?

"Wen-"

"Go away-!"

The voice cracked on the last syllable, betraying his inner turbulence, and above all, how hard he was trying not to cry-and how poorly he was managing his emotions.

The boy in purple couldn't help how his heart twisted at the sight-he felt, he felt sorry-for him. He also felt angry-but not at him. But he knew, he knew the other boy wouldn't appreciate these sentiments of his, that he'd only shun them, because-

"Didn't I tell you to go away-! I don't want your pity-"
Knees deep in the muddy grass, a position that would most likely leave his otherwise immaculate ebony robes sullied and filthy, his small shoulders stuttered and heaved with each word.

...Somehow, the other's rejection of his feelings made the purple boy want to manifest them even more. He wanted to scream these feelings to him until he realized that it was alright, that he was alright, that it was all alright-

"...What are you doing? What do you want-!? "

"I'm not going away, Wen RuoHan!"

"I told you to go away, so you must!"

"Make me, then!"

And then, his eyes flew open.

Whisked away from the warm sun and the smell of fresh trees and grass, Jiang FengMian suddenly found himself stranded instead in his harsh, cold, dark reality: harsh because he was once again bound—not like before, only his wrists were restrained, but it was still enough to cause him discomfort. Cold, because the thin new satin robe he currently donned wasn't nearly enough to protect him from the night's chilly, biting winds—and neither were the flimsy bedsheets. And dark? Well, dark because it was night, quite obviously, but also dark because...he felt empty. Hollow. If before he had believed that he felt lost or desolate, no emotion came close to how he felt right now. Like someone had ripped his stomach and guts open and shovelled out his insides, from his intestines to his muscles, to his stomach and liver, and of course, all the way to his heart—and then replaced them all with slabs of stone. In fact, his body felt so heavy, it was as if he were sinking into the very mattress he laid upon; even raising his eyelids to take in the darkness surrounding him felt like lifting an anchor.

Darkness. There was nothing but darkness, inside and out. There was nothing but the darkness closing in. The few thoughts in his head were immediately snuffed out by it—by the darkness. By the all consuming, cumbersome, gravid darkness.
Well, all except one.

All except one thought. All except one thought that offered him the smallest glimmer of hope, the dimmest light, that under any other circumstance would have been outshined by everything else, but that in this overwhelming darkness, shone brighter than anything else, because it was the only thing that even glowed in the first place.

Death.

The darkest of all thoughts for most humans, that which many men had ran into trying to avoid, that haunted the living by being the only certainty they had, yet also their biggest uncertainty. If there was one thing in this world that brought darkness to the heart and soul of a human, it was death.

But not to Jiang FengMian.

That dark pathway from before had suddenly turned into a warm, soft glow, into a gentle, outstretched hand cutting apart the veil of black and offering him that which Jiang FengMian felt he no longer had: a way out.

A way out that would come at a huge price and promise nothing, but that had to be better than this life he was living: because everything else, anything else, was better than...this. This reality of his that suffocated him and robbed him of any emotion that wasn't emptiness, that wasn't the distant, dull throbs of pain of his mind and body.

And...in that moment, in that single moment, laying upon that soiled bed and bound to it by a long rope, Jiang FengMian thought-

"Miss Death, never have you appeared as beautiful as you do now."

And he wished to take her hand, to follow her wherever she would lead him—perhaps to the eternal slumber? Or somewhere else entirely—he didn't know, he had no way of knowing—but it wouldn't be here, and that would be all that mattered.

Jiang FengMian just wanted this hell to end.
But…

But he couldn't.

He couldn't take her hand even if he wished to right now, for his own were bound- and even had his wrists not been tied down, he would have been forced to refuse anyways. Because—there was something else. There was someone else.

And no matter what, no matter how tempting Death's kind smile appeared to be, Jiang FengMian couldn't let himself cross that door of no return. Because there were other people at stake, his sons, his daughter, his wife, his—

…

A breeze flew by, caressing his cheek and making him shiver. Jolting him to reality, if only for a moment.

Jiang FengMian closed his eyes, taking a deep breath in, a deep breath out.

And for a second, that sunlit canopy once again flashed in front of his eyes. And he could hear the birds and hear the wind, he could feel it on his face like he did a moment ago, feel the sun's warm rays, smell the wet grass and the midday air, and see—

See him.

That boy who died long, long ago. That boy Jiang FengMian had loved.

…

Is this what it would come to? Would he be forced to swallow this darkness and live the rest of his life hollow? In a way, it felt appropriate— a husk of a man, being swept away and monopolized by yet another husk—because there was nothing human left in Wen RuoHan. Of this, Jiang FengMian was sure.

…Or he could try. Why? For what reason? He didn't know. He could try, to get up as much as every inch of him would scream in pain, to get up in this darkness, and fumble and grope around for
Eyes fluttering closed, chest gently rising and falling, his face only barely betraying the emotion—or rather, the lack of—in his chest, Jiang FengMian decided. Because he was a stubborn, moronic, obstinate man—

That if he could not find a light, he'd make one himself.

"-Father-?"

From the long dinner table, Wen RuoHan was suddenly—and forcibly—shaken back to reality. The flickering of candles and the stares of all the people present forced him to compose himself, and raising his head from his hand, he set the pair of chopsticks he had been previously absentmindedly holding down on the table.

"Yes?"

He blinked slowly, taking in his son's...unseemly, appearance. Really—after having had the occasion to be with his Jiang FengMian, to lay his eyes upon his beauty—having to stare at all these unprepossessing faces felt like an offense to his eyes. A part of almost wanted to make them apologize for even daring to be in his presence.

"...Father, it appears you were not listening." Wen Chao cleared his throat, tone careful and polite—a sense of courtesy that really only came from the fear he felt in the other's regards.

Wen RuoHan bit down a retort, shifting in his chair and straightening his back.

"Then, it appears you have to repeat what you said." Wen RuoHan couldn't help it if his mind was elsewhere. He couldn't help it, he couldn't help those images in his mind kept replaying over and over again: of open mouthed expressions and quiet gasps, of hips rolling and of soft, supple flesh under his fingers, of teary black eyes and—
"-We still haven't found those three brats! At this, the other sects will surely-"

"Temper, Wen Xu. Is that how you talk to your father?"

A woman whose long, ebony locks were intricately woven into a golden hairpin, long nails of the same color drumming on the wooden table, looked up, stern black eyes seeking Wen RuoHan's.

Wen DaiYu was never the prettiest woman, but she was an incredibly tactful and resourceful one. Wen RuoHan also never had any interest in her, but she nonetheless became she who sired his offspring.

Wen RuoHan was suddenly made aware of his current state of mind, and he felt the slightest sense of shame—as much as he could be distracted by those thoughts, and rightfully so, he surely couldn't manifest these emotions in front of everyone. A calm, composed demeanor is always a must-to be without is unacceptable. That man, he really is starting to dig way too deep into his skin-

"...Wen Xu can have time to repent his actions later. But, the situation is still somewhat imperative—" Wen RuoHan brought a hand to his chin, stroking it as he set the cogs in his brain in motion, which creaked slowly, steadily, options forming and passing in front of him as he considered every situation and every outcome: all in all, the burning of Lotus Pier would greatly overshadow the escape of the three—but it was nonetheless a situation that had to be fixed. Otherwise, someone would get the idea, that even though small, there existed a crack in the iron fist of the Wens, and that one could weasel their way through it if crafty enough—and that sentiment had to be crushed.

"Fliers have already been distributed in all major cities. Send out search patrols near YungMeng—that is where we last saw them. They couldn't have strayed too far."

Wen Xu gave a solemn nod, arms crossed as he sunk back into his chair. Wen DaiYu merely stared on at her husband, a complicated expression etched on her face.

"All in all, the recent happenings have been positive. I assume that is a reason for contentment?"

Wen RuoHan fought off the smile that was threatening to creep up his face—of course he was in a good mood, how could he not be? Usually, Wen DaiYu could not tell, and only made educated guesses—but as of late, that man—it's all because of him, he's been digging these emotions and these passions that Wen RuoHan had long forgot he even had, ripping these carnal longings from his very heart and soul—and body.
And indeed, he didn't know how to hide his happiness, feeling the oblong jade object he had prepared just for his Jiang FengMian in the pocket of his robe, cool against his skin.

Ah, they'd finally get to have lots of fun again.

Chapter End Notes

...It is tired, it is late, and I have a headache, but hey, at least I got the chapter out amirite-because sticking to a schedule and writing things throughout the day is for chumps, writing down everything at an ungodly hour in one sitting is for real men. Jokes aside, I apologize both for any typos that I will hopefully get around to correcting in the morning, and for the lack of anything interesting happening in this chapter- today was more of an introspective look at things. (I don't think wrh had a canonical wife, so I kind of had to make one up for him, lol-her role in the story won't be very important though).

Anyways, I also felt like saying: there are a lot of things in the previous chapters I am no longer satisfied with. Soon enough, I will be skimming through them and making some changes-not changing the plot or anything in that sense, just some paragraphs and some descriptions that I feel could have been written and fleshed out either better or differently. Re reading won't absolutely be necessary, and most changes I think will go unnoticed.

Having said that, my eyes are literally burning right now and I am really tired, so I'm just gonna go get some shut-eye now. I hope you enjoyed! (And sorry for taking so long too)

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