When The Stars Align

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Summary

He is the soft swing of a door closing shut at the end of the road; the sharp snip of a life thread being cut short. Cloaked in darkness, he is the one the Underworld calls to. His name is Wei Wuxian.

As long as Lan Wangji can remember, there has only been light, and creation. He does his job as well as any god of life would, flawless and without mistake, and every breath he takes he feels the earth sing along.

/OR/ the mythological au that spawned from a midnight chat
Black Roses

Chapter Notes

I actually did not know of this fandom but PotterheadAvengerDemigod dragged me in, so I'm in hell now. -A
You're welcome :) -P

See the end of the chapter for more notes

He is the soft swing of a door closing shut at the end of the road; the sharp snip of a life thread being cut short.

Cloaked in darkness, in robes of dark grey and a black deeper than the night, he is the one the Underworld calls to. Wei Wuxian, their voices ring, shouting roaring screaming pleading crying praying howling shrieking - always desperate, always clamouring for his attention. Ghostly hands claw and reach out for him, so much so that if he is just the slightest bit careless, they turn real, bone reaching out through soil to clutch at him.

But he closes his ears and hardens his heart, even if he can feel it crack just a little more with every life he reaps, because this is his duty, his geas, and one that he has to carry alone. He is the chosen god of the Underworld, and this is his fate. So he smiles and laughs, and lets no one see.

It doesn’t mean he’ll just roll over and behave, though.

(The reactions of the other gods when he wears white for a day are absolutely priceless. Death dressing in black? It’s so cliche that he could laugh - has laughed, in fact - but it is tradition, and he must adhere. He is a god, and gods are built on tradition.)

Wuxian bounces from place to place, blinding everyone with his smile, taking pride in unsettling those stuffy old gods, because who says death can’t be cheerful? Following his siblings when they roam around is his favourite past time, and it something only he can do, because he is death and death is everywhere.

He spends his days in summer teasing Jiang Cheng, riling up the prickly god of war and watching the aftermath. It’s usually trees that suffer the divine lightning of Zidian, but sometimes Jiang Cheng takes to the field himself, and his anger is awe-inspiring.

(He prays that no one will stifle his brother, because he knows, he knows that underneath that anger and competitiveness is a spirit of love. For his family, Jiang Cheng is capable of doing anything, and Wuxian prays that he will never be pushed that far.)

They are war and death, always together, brothers till the very end. He follows in the shadow of his younger, crabbier brother - Jiang Cheng rages and razes and burns with a righteous fury, Zidian flaring purple and clearing the field in moments, and as always, Wuxian has to clean up the mess left behind. But that’s fine. For him, seeing his brother in his element is reward enough.

(Because like Jiang Cheng, he too is a god capable of doing anything for his loved ones, even if it means giving up even himself.)
Winter is when he’s most busy, but he still makes time to drop in on Jiang Yanli. His precious older sister, the goddess of home and hearth. She is the warmth he misses when he goes out, the comfort he seeks every time his load gets too heavy to bear. She isn’t his the way she is Jin Zixuan’s (that damn god of archery, she’s too good for him!), for they are betrothed, but she is family. Their domains don’t match up, but there is the occasional case of an elderly mortal dying in peace by the fireside, either alone or surrounded by loved ones, and he might meet her there.

She welcomes him during the cold months of his domain, with a warm hug, gentle kindness, and a bowl of her famous lotus root soup. From her, he hears tales of the other gods and goddesses of the various realms. Most of them feature their family, or the trifecta of knowledge, vengeance and cunning - Lan Xichen, and his sworn brothers, Nie Mingjue and Jin Guangyao. Oddly enough, Lan Xichen is also one of the Twin Jades, half of the most beloved pair of gods. The other Jade is his younger brother, Lan Wangji. The young god is light, life and creation, his polar opposite, the yang to his yin, and Wuxian isn’t sure how he feels about that.

The ever-virtuous Han Guang-Jun, as Lan Wangji is worshipped, is said to be like finest jade - without flaws, without imperfection, with an unmoving expression carved from what could be the finest marble. Why was a god of life so still? Wuxian sighs, but listens to Yanli’s stories with a smile all the same. Maybe he didn’t understand, being unable to touch life without it withering away around him, but it seemed to him that life was something to be celebrated.

Occasionally, Nie Huaisang drops in with some gossip of his own, always with an elaborately painted fan as befits his status as god of the arts. “I heard that the Wen tribe worshiping the sun is going crazy,” he whispers by way of greeting, hiding the lower half of his face behind his fan as is his habit. “Not sure how true it is, though.” The other god is much appreciated, bringing news from around in order to bring him up to speed on celestial affairs. (After all, gossip too was an art form, albeit a lesser known one.)

Wei Wuxian knows he could just fish for the information himself, but he is death, and death is not particularly welcome anywhere. Just as few mortals pray to him for a similar reason, his aura darkens the corners of whatever domain he ventures into, and so he prefers to stay away.

It’s easier, and few people question his behaviour in any case.

The first half of the year is when Wei Wuxian rests. Spring marks the beginning of new life, and summer the peak of vitality - neither of which have anything to do with him. The fact that the dominions of death and life aren’t meant to cross has been well and truly beaten into his head, and so he makes his hasty retreat when he feels winter giving way, the last vestiges of cold buckling under the freshness of spring. During those six months, he stays mostly in the Underworld, travels the world every now and then to sightsee (and drop in on Jiang Cheng during the season of war), fulfilling his duties to ease the passing of a soul as and when he is called.

The heat of summer dies down slowly, and as the leaves turn orange, he makes his return. The dead never stop whispering to him, but their voices quieten down a little during the months when life reigns - their hold a little less stifling, their touch a little less chilly. Chenqing never leaves his side, a quick tune easing the restless spirits that linger. Carved out of a single piece of obsidian, it is the product of centuries of work, and his greatest masterpiece. As the ruler of the Underworld, Wuxian’s job can never truly be done; every moment, there is another dead soul awaiting collection and judgement. And when winter falls, another duty is added to his ever growing list: to erase most of life’s work in the mortal world, resetting it to a blank canvas, ready for spring’s arrival. The cold is bitter, harshly biting and consuming, but it is his duty and it must be completed.

Often, he wonders if the god of life hates or resents him. If it were him, it would hurt to see his
creations withering away under the touch of another.

Spring comes, with a flurry of flowers and greenery and sunlight. It’s much too bright to go around in dark colours, and Wuxian attempts to hide under a tree for some much needed shade and a nap. It’s well deserved, he thinks, after six months of ceaseless work and slogging, ignoring the browning of the grass and the groaning of the tree as its leaves yellow. Those are normal occurrences anyway. While he normally drops in on Jiang Cheng during these months, the god of war is currently busy, preparing and training his new warhounds for the upcoming fights.

(Dogs are a breed he will never, ever love, even if he could reduce them to dust and bones with a flare of power. Jiang Cheng can prattle on and on about his dogs, but it didn’t change the fact that they are terrifying little beasts. One cerberus in the Underworld is more than traumatizing enough, thank you very much!)

He’s about to fall asleep when a faint cry reaches his ears, and while he could ignore it, it’s so soft and in pain - longing? Yearning? - that he has to go. Wuxian can already tell it’s not from a human, but that changes his opinion none. Every being deserved someone there at their passing, human or otherwise. And who better than the god of death himself?

With a flare of power, he tracks the location from where the call came, and he teleports himself there. Bending time and space is a power he uses often, and one that comes in handy considering that he is needed everywhere. It takes him less than a moment to arrive.

Immediately, he can see what the call was about. A rabbit limping, struggling to cling to the last vestiges of life, and a nest nearby with young ones. Blood coats matted fur, and while he wishes he could give this mother more time with her children, it’s not within his power to grant.

All he can do is to ease her passing, and so he does.

Wuxian reaches out to the rabbit, slender fingers, stroking the soft pelt, uncaring of the blood. “Ah...” This was the only time he could touch something living - after all, they were practically an inch away from death. From him. This tiny bit of warmth was something he would always treasure, but the fact that it was derived from another’s passing was a point that stung. “This is always the worst kind.”

Separating a mother from her children was something that hurt deeply. The young ones often didn’t survive for long, and he would have to reap them soon after. A story that ended in tragedy - how many times had he watched such a thing? It was a repeating tale that occurred every time.

(Not every death was gentle, and not every death was peaceful. Ironically, just as life was both kind and cruel, so too was death. They truly were but two sides of the same coin, weren’t they?)

The rabbit shudders at his gentle touch. Even now, it instinctively attempted to cling on for just a little longer, but the thread had long since been cut. I’m sorry, Wuxian wants to say, but cannot. The words refuse to leave his mouth, and he can only sigh. A small tug has the soul materialising as a glowing orb, extracting itself from the cooling body. Catching it in both hands, he offers up a quiet prayer, before sending it to his domain, where it could rest until the cycle of rebirth came to claim it once more. That much was fine, right?

It’s then that he realises - there had been a solemn gaze watching him. Turning around, Wuxian blinks in surprise at the other divine presence in the clearing. When had the arrival been?

The god standing there could be no older than he. Dressed in robes of white and pale blue, the
other is the very picture of serenity and grace, a wrapped parcel strapped behind his back. Dark hair the colour of a raven’s wing was pushed back neatly, leaving two long locks to frame the cloud patterned headband across his forehead.

Who was this god again? Many celestial beings were identifiable by colours, but a lot of godly domains were associated with white. Knowledge, light, life, purity, mercy, and abstinence, among others… better ask then get it wrong, perhaps? He didn't particularly want the other to take offence.

(That would be too much of a pity, because they really were pretty and he did like pretty things.)

Still, judging by the silence, the other god seems disinclined to start a conversation. Instead, he offers up his most brilliant smile. "I haven't seen you before! I'm Wei Ying, courtesy name Wuxian, god of- well, you can probably guess, I'm the god of death and the Underworld!"

The other god inclines his head in greeting, and for a moment, Wuxian's brain stops functioning. “Lan Zhan, courtesy name Wangji.”

This was the god of life? Those golden eyes weren’t expressive by any means, but like the stories his beloved sister tells, this god was immaculate. Perfect. This god was truly beautiful, and despite the fact that there wasn’t a smile on that pale face, the way his aura flares and pulses with power (with life) draws him in. He can see the grass perk up at his feet, and the patch of flowers that have bloomed nearby.

He wants to touch, but he is death, and he cannot. He is forbidden, and the divine laws would never allow such a thing. The grass around him is withered and cold and dying; if he could hear their voices, they would probably be screaming and crying also, and he cannot do this to the god who nurtured all life. But he wants, and he yearns, so he acts.

(Even if it is silly, he wants to see how far he can push the other god. What kind of expression would he make if teased? What sort of reaction would he have? Was he able to enjoy life, treasure existence, appreciate death? He wanted to know, and that longing burnt.)

"Lan Wangji? As in, one of the Twin Jades? God of life? Han Guang-Jun? Ahh, I've heard so much about you, Lan Zhan, Lan Zhan, you really are as beautiful as they say! You're my opposite aren't you?” He’s not sure if the other god is overwhelmed by his words, but Lan Wangji’s face shows little change. It should be fine, right? Probably.

Then it hits him, and his smile widens, because he just had an idea and this was going to be good. Death and life were opposites, so if they met, then theoretically, they should cancel, right? Could he actually be able touch life?

“Oh, this is amazing, what will happen if your aura meets mine, do you think flowers will still bloom? Will the grass still wither? Lan Zhan, aren't you curious, come on, come nearer, we should find out-"

He didn’t wait for the other god to respond, bouncing close to test it out almost immediately. Oddly enough, Lan Wangji doesn’t react - is that permission? Is that a yes? - and Wuxian moves in even closer because now he really wants to find out what will happen. How close could he get? Would there be an explosion of light, of sound, of aura?

The difference between their heights is a mere inch. It’s close enough for him to be able to look Lan Wanji in the eye if he just tilts his head up a little, and so he does. Because he can, Wuxian decides to drape an arm around the second Jade’s shoulders also - it’s a familiar gesture, yes, but
it’s one of camaraderie and friendship, and he does it so much with Jiang Cheng that it’s practically habit by now.

(But Lan Wangji is not Jiang Cheng. He remembers this too late, having already invaded the second Jade’s personal space. His expression unchanging, Wuxian feels his heart freeze over just a little. Had he pushed too far? Did the other god actually really harbour hate for him, and was waiting for a moment to retaliate?)

Instead of pushing him away roughly like he expects, Lan Wangji stumbles backwards, long fingers twitching beneath the long sleeves of his robe. “Shameless-!” The look on his face is one of shock, but lack of hate or anger in those liquid gold eyes makes Wuxian think that the god of life isn’t too unhappy.

Maybe just a little bit more?

Since Lan Wangji has backed away, it’s really up to him to close the distance again. Wuxian can feel himself smiling, he’s just so happy (and it is fun to tease the stoic god of life!) and he could almost touch the other god when-

There’s a flare of light and power, and Lan Wangji has fled.

“Ah?”

Wuxian is nothing short of confused, but he cannot stop laughing all the same. The poor, poor Han Guang-Jun, so virtuous and upright, truly the best type of person to tease! Still, it was unlikely they’d ever meet again, for life and death were not meant to cross. Well, it was fun while it lasted.

Glancing down at the nest of newborn rabbits, he almost reaches out to pat them- but hurriedly stops himself. They were still young, and if a fully grown adult could not withstand his aura of death, there was no way they would be able to. For their survival, he had to stay away.

“I wish you good fortune,” is the soft hum, before he too turns on his heel and vanishes with a ripple of power.

Chapter End Notes

Alright so this first chapter was written by theAbandoned_Grimoire, next chapter will be LWJ's POV and written by PotterheadAvengerDemigod!
As long as Lan Wangji can remember, there has only been light, and creation. He does his job as well as any god of life would, flawless and without mistake, and every breath he takes he feels the earth sing along. He is as good at his job as his father was before him, before his father had lost his divinity.

Lan Wangji is perfect, they say. He is without flaws, without imperfections, and he is like jade, carved from stone and chiselled to perfection. He is the role model for everyone. Mortals pray to him, above all others, for health, for longevity, for mercy. They flock to his temples and flood his altars with offerings, they build ever newer ones with grand ceremonies.

Lan Wangji is what all immortals should be, they say. Righteous and great and just. He is well-loved by his followers, devout and true, and his temples are only ever outshone by those of his brother, who is, in truth, the most beloved of all the gods. (He does not begrudge his brother this—Xichen deserves the world, he is bright and cheerful and everything Lan Wangji is not, and Lan Wangji will not deny his brother anything.)

So yes, being a god of life is... well, it is not fun, but it is full of lessons to be learnt, and it is noble, and righteous, bringing life to the world. In the autumn months, when there is naught to do but watch as death takes his work, watch as frost creeps across grass and flower and steals the life from them, Lan Wangji admires the dormant life in the bare branches of snow-laden trees, then retires to his house in the winter months, content to let whatever life survives in the cold continue on without his help.

Winter is death's domain, after all, and Wangji is content to let life and death stay separate, as they are meant to be.

Sometimes he hears about the young god of death from his brother, who has friends far and wide. He knows the young god was adopted into the Jiang family when he was still domain-less, before the underworld had claimed him as its ruler. He knows the god claims Jiang Wanyin and Jiang Yanli as siblings, a god of death brother to a god of war, and a goddess of home and hearth. He knows his name is Wei Wuxian.

Other than that, he has heard almost naught about the man who should be his polar opposite.

But he is content to know what he knows, and nothing more. Uncle says the dominion of life and death are better separate, after all, and Uncle has never led him wrong.

So Wangji goes about his job, sees the birth of animals and the growth of trees, walks the fields in spring, when flowers grow in his wake. It is a good job, one that Wangji is happy to do.

But, well, it is a little dull at times.

Then spring comes, and Wangji is on his way to welcome a litter of rabbits into the world. He does not usually have the time for such trivial events, but it is a rare day that he is done with his duties, and he has always liked baby animals.
The litter has only been born for a few hours when Wangji reaches the area, and he smiles at the small lives being nursed by their mother.

Wangji is content to just watch, as the mother nuzzles her young and feeds them, before she bounds off to, presumably, feed herself.

Wangji stays and watches the little rabbits wriggle in their nest for a while longer, before he turns away, about to leave to complete his other duties.

That is when he sees the mother rabbit returning to the nest, but- something is wrong.

The rabbit is limping, and- she's bleeding, there is blood on her white fur and her pace is slow.

She's injured, badly, and Wangji already knows she will not survive.

His heart aches for them, aches for her, but he can do nothing. It is the way of life, and death.

Then the air beside him swirls abruptly, a sudden change in the energy of the area, and there is a power Wangji has never felt before. Then a young god, probably Wangji's age, pops into existence beside him.

The young god is dressed in flowing robes of dark gray and red, his long hair tied in a high ponytail, messy and unruly, and there is a sadness in his wide, silver eyes. He has a dark flute tucked into the sash tied around his waist, and a silver bell with a long tassel hangs on the opposite side of the sash.

The god shakes his head, and smiles ruefully. He does not seem to notice Wangji's presence.

"Ah," he murmurs under his breath as long fingers stretch out towards to limping rabbit in the grass. "This is always the worst kind."

As Wangji watches, the rabbit's eyes slip shut, and its tiny form slumps to the ground. The god runs a gentle finger down bloodied fur, and the rabbit shudders once, then falls still. The god sighs, then curves his palms around a small glowing orb that floats free of the body before it dissipates in his grasp.

The god's gaze falls on him then, and silver eyes blink in surprise before he breaks into a wide grin.

"I haven't seen you before! I'm Wei Ying, courtesy name Wuxian, god of- well, you can probably guess, I'm the god of death and the Underworld!"

Lan Wangji blinks, startled. The god before him is haloed in darkness, his aura powerful but dark, death echoing in his every move. Even the fresh spring grass withers around him, a circle of brown stretching out from his booted feet. But the god himself is like a beacon of light, and his smile is so blinding that Wangji is tempted to look away.

This god of death is bright.

Wangji does not know what to think. He has only ever heard of the Underworld and its ruler through others' comments, but he had not expected this. He knows this god of death is well-known for his ruthless punishment of damned souls, well-known for the way his eyes flash red with power and his aura drowns out everything else. Wangji does not like gossip, and does his best not to listen, but even he has heard of the rumours that the man in front of him is cruel and sadistic, heard rumours of the way his aura flares and suppresses everyone in the vicinity, of the way
skeletons and corpses claw at the ground, crawling at his feet and obeying his every command.

Wangji knows better than to put stock by rumours and gossip, but he admits that he had expected this god to be far more severe and serious than he looks to be. He had expected Wei Wuxian to be much more like his younger, angrier brother whom he follows so staunchly in the wake of.

But Wei Wuxian is bright and happy and he is *blinding*.

Wei Wuxian is *beautiful*, stunningly cheerful, with a smile that makes Wangji feel like flowers are blooming in his heart.

Wei Wuxian has more life in him than even some other gods of life that Wangji has met, and Wangji is *smitten*.

"Lan Zhan, courtesy name Wangji," Wangji says, inclining his head in greeting.

Wei Wuxian's eyes widen, and his smile grows ever bigger. "Lan Wangji? As in, one of the Twin Jades? God of life? Han Guang-Jun? Ahh, I've heard so much about you, Lan Zhan, Lan Zhan, you really are as beautiful as they say! You're my opposite aren't you? Oh, this is amazing, what will happen if your aura meets mine, do you think flowers will still bloom? Will the grass still wither? Lan Zhan, aren't you curious, come on, come nearer, we should find out-"

Wei Wuxian grins, bright and blinding, and Wangji is so momentarily stunned that he allows Wei Wuxian into his personal space, until the other god is pressed close to him, barely a centimeter of distance between them.

Wei Wuxian's face is *so* close to his, and Wangji's heart stutters in his chest. Wei Wuxian's arm falls around his shoulders, and Wangji feels his ears flare with heat.

He stumbles backwards, fingers twitching at his sides, and he can feel his lips moving, but isn't exactly sure what he's saying.

Wei Wuxian leans closer, lips pulled into that beautiful, *beautiful* smile, and Wangji gathers his power around him and flees.

The last thing he sees before he disappears is Wei Wuxian's face, eyes crinkled and mouth open in laughter. The sound of Wei Wuxian's laughter echoes in his ears even when he reappears back in his home.

His heart is still pounding in his chest, and he immediately settles into a lotus position, trying to sink into meditation.

It doesn't work.

Every time he shuts his eyes, he sees Wei Wuxian's smile.

Finally, he sighs and gives up.

Maybe he should-

Before he can even give the thought true consideration, his power coalesces around him, and his surroundings change to the ones of that clearing in the forest where he'd met Wei Wuxian. At his feet are the newborn rabbits, and before Wangji even registers his actions, he is already bending to scoop those rabbits into his arms, careful of the way they squirm, and encouraged by the way his aura sparks more life into them.
He has always liked baby animals, and these rabbits will serve as a reminder of Wei Wuxian's smile.

Chapter End Notes

PotterheadAvengerDemigod's Instagram
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