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**Not Quite There**

by **Branch**

**Summary**

Two summons that Wei Wuxian ignores, and one he doesn't quite. Drama, Angst, 1-2

Yanked toward the edge of manifestation (again), Wei Wuxian dug in his immaterial heels (again) and reflected that he might actually have made it to the underworld if it weren't that humans had an apparently unending need for someone to blame for everything. Other people's ghosts, the weather, the price of vegetables, he'd even had a couple floods blamed on him. If resentment actually had sufficiently overcome him for him to desire catastrophe and destruction, he'd very likely have been able to accomplish quite a lot of it purely on the strength of the representations and stories passed around among peasants, lords, and cultivators alike. They were almost as good as an ancestral tablet, if far darker in the sustenance they offered.

Their influence would have been a lot easier to resist if he'd had an actual tablet.

Well, wishing wouldn't do him any good, and dwelling on that right now could do a lot of harm. So failing a proper anchor, he thought hard on the memory of a nice, long breath and focused himself on more personal talismans instead.

Lotus seeds.

The sensation of drawing back his bow.
Lan Zhan's exasperated expression, which was all in the tilt of his brows and the faint thinning of his lips.

The notes of Clarity.

He leaned on the memory of Clarity a lot, these days (whatever days these were). It wasn't as good as feeling the resonance of the actual music, but it helped. The memory that someone had cared enough to play it for him helped to block the dark current of too many people shaping his name toward hatred. He knew that, if he truly needed the help, even now, he could probably (probably) find Lan Zhan and hear this song again. He was trying to be less trouble for his few surviving friends, though, so instead he focused his will and kicked away the rich current of resentment trying to coil into him.

Besides, he was way more stubborn than anybody who needed someone else to blame for the resentment they'd probably roused themselves.

Wei Wuxian, perched on top of a mountain to enjoy a summer storm, which was a very different experience as a wandering ghost than it had been as a living person, felt a tug on the fabric of his spirit and curled his lip. That was pathetic. It felt as if he'd maybe gotten a lady's scarf blown against him by a strong wind.

Honestly, was it just him or were the spirit summoning rituals that happened for him a few times every year getting weaker? Half the time, they were using arrays he'd designed himself; surely they could do better than this!

Admittedly, he hadn't let himself be dragged close enough to check the arrays for a while now. It was only entertaining the first handful of times, to flirt with the drag of other spirits and wills on his own, to prove to himself that he was still stronger than the idiots who feared him.

He sighed, letting the energy of the storm crackle over and through him, sharp and heavy, distracting him from the tug of summoning. The ones trying to summon him were never anyone he actually wanted to see.

(The time he'd seen Jiang Cheng there had been the last time he'd let a summoning draw him close.)

At first he wasn't even sure what it was. It didn't feel like a summoning. It felt like someone calling his name, but not the way pretty much everyone called it these days.

More like the way Wen Qing had once said it, desperate and furious and terrified and out of any other option.

That was probably why he turned toward it instead of pulling back, as was pretty well reflex by now.

And then there was darkness and heaviness, and opening his eyes. For the first time in probably quite a few years...

He opened his eyes.

End
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