Summary

Yixing thought that, as a journalist, he'd be writing amazing articles of great interest to the Chinese people. Everything changes when he gets assigned to fill in for his co-worker on the Royal Family Series and has to write about their oldest son Wu Yifan and his approaching birthday.

Notes

- I am acting as if there was still an emperor in China, yes.
- There will be articles thrown your way in addition to the regular chapters.
- Updates every monday, or so do I hope
There was a unilateral rule that always applied no matter where in the world: Mondays suck. Mondays meant your weekend was over and you had to go back to your work, school or university, and you had to see all those colleagues and fellow students you did not get along with. People were in an especially bad mood, clinging to their coffees, only waiting for lunch break to begin. Whenever Monday was over, Tuesday came around, which also sucked, because the weekend was still so far away. The mood would lift when Wednesday arrived, followed by Thursday and people became light hearted and happy when Friday was finally here, only to dread the nearing Sunday on Saturday evening.

Yixing was not one of those people. Mondays weren’t any more special than any other weekday, he thought. That may result from the fact that he liked his job, more than anyone else in his department. So it was no wonder when he stepped into the open plan office of the Zhongguo Ribao, the most prestigious newspaper in China, he radiated good mood and annoyed other people that still seemed to be half asleep in front of their laptops. Yixing was one of the few employees who had an office for their own, something he got only recently because of the promotion his boss had granted him. He was still very young, graduated from college two years ago, and he was full of idealism and visions to revolutionize the work of Chinese journalists. Until now, it had worked pretty well.

When he sat down on his chair and started his Macbook, Yixing was of the opinion that this day would be dedicated to new research since he was in need of a new story. But only ten minutes later, when he just sipped on his first cup of green tea, his boss entered the room. She was a woman somewhere in her forties, but she looked like twenty. Yixing had never seen her wearing any other color than black and with her red lipstick she looked like the prime example of a Femme Fatale that never put up with attitudes of others. She was feared among her employees and famous for firing people on the spot if they did not deliver the quality that she wanted. She was a strict ruler of her little empire in the 20th floor of a building somewhere in Chaoyang. But if the job was done right, she could also be very soft, funny and generous. When she entered, Yixing’s head shot up.

“Boss! Good morning!” He exclaimed and gave her a bright smile, because he knew she loved it.

“Good morning, Darling,” she said and waved a file, “I’ve got a job for you.”

“Sounds great! What is it?”

Yixing reached for the file that Mrs. Wang handed over to him and she explained:

“I’m sure you’re familiar with the series we run on the Royal Family.”

“Of course I am! Mr. Deng is in charge of it, right?”

She clicked her tongue and then said:

“Not anymore.”

“Huh? What does that mean? He did a great job on it!”

“It’s not about his work. His health is in bad condition and I granted him a leave of absence to get better.”
She sat down on the chair in front of Yixing’s desk and took one of the two mugs that were always placed on it in case visitors came. Yixing hurried to serve her some of his freshly brewed tea.

“Oh, that’s unfortunate. How long will he be absent?”

Mrs. Wang shrugged her shoulders.

“I don’t know. It’s bowel cancer. He’s getting treatment and it sounded like he got diagnosed early enough to have a chance. It’s still going to take a lot of time for him to recover, I think.”

“It’s very generous of you to grant him the time he needs.”

The woman took a sip of the tea, then placed the mug on the desk and said:

“Cut the crap, Yixing. It’s enough if the people in the office talk like this with me. You can drop the act.”

Yixing stayed silent, but felt honored that she seemed to think they did not need to be that formal anymore. She sighed, then tapped the file in front of the young man with her perfectly manicured red nails.

“Nonetheless, he was in charge of the Royal series. The birthday of their son is coming up and it’s time to pay them a visit again.”

“… Mrs. Wang, do you mean I have to take over?”

She nodded. Yixing did not know what to say and sat in his chair, staring at his boss like she had just announced that she was going to sell the newspaper and immigrate to Vietnam to live a simple life. She smiled at him and said:

“Don’t worry. You’ll be fine. You’re familiar with Mr. Deng’s work and I wouldn’t want to give this project to one of them.”

She tilted her head in the direction of the open plan office to indicate how high she thought of Yixing and how low of the ordinary writers and editors.

“I feel honored, but… I’m afraid… I mean, my territory is politics…”

“What? The emperor announces the Prime Minister and stuff like this, it’s pretty close to your ‘territory’!” She objected fiercely.

“Well, but apart from that…” Yixing started his argumentation, but when he saw the look on Mrs. Wang’s face, he swallowed the words, “… Yes, I will do it, Madame. Thank you for giving me this project, I’ll do my best.”

“That’s my boy!” She exclaimed delighted and got up, “Thanks for the tea, Yixing.”

“You’re welcome, Boss.”

“I expect your exposé on my desk by Friday.”

And then she was gone. The white mug was stained with her red Chanel lipstick. She had barely taken three sips. Yixing sighed and opened the file to take a look at it.

The Royal Family series was one of the most famous articles that the Zhongguo Ribao published. Mr. Deng’s articles were known for bringing the isolated family close to the ordinary people. His
most famous articles were always about the eldest child Wu Yifan who was expected to be the heir to the throne, but instead of shining on official balls and shaking hands on public events, he loved to drive around in one of his five Ferraris, fly over to Hong Kong or Tokyo to party with his friends and change his girlfriends like his underwear. People loved the portraits that Mr. Deng had written about this young man who he had accompanied from his first baby steps. When Yifan had been born, the Zhongguo Ribao had managed to get very exclusive publishing rights about portraits and features and ever since, the life of the Prince had been presented on a silver platter to the Chinese people. Yixing remembered that the articles about him were the hottest thing to read when he was younger: His family and everyone else he knew would gloat over the newest pictures of Yifan, observing how he turned from a young boy to a grown man and monitored every step he made. If he made a wrong one, which happened pretty much every month, people would react shocked, but deep down inside they were enjoying the stories about money, power and glory.

Yifan’s sister, Yili, was the complete opposite. She was around a year younger and made up for the mistakes her brother made. She visited official ceremonies with her parents, was graduating at Yale University and was a well-mannered, scandal-free young woman that would go far in life. The public hardly cared for her.

The Emperor was a short tempered man that was easily offended, and therefore tried to keep his private life away from the public. He showed up to official occasions, and disappeared the moment the official parts were over. He was a mystery to the people, unlike the Empress, who had married into royalty and never forgot that she came from an ordinary household in the outskirts of Beijing. She was the woman who kept the family together, who made announcements, went to talkshows to discuss current events in China, visited hospitals and schools and worked together with the government in the parliament, since her husband was not able to have one rational discussion with the politicians without losing his temper. When government officials arrived in China, it was her who shook the hands of Putin, Obama and Co., the Times Magazine had titled her the ‘Most Powerful Woman’ just a few weeks back. It was clear that this family had everything in the world – and maybe even more.

“Oh my.” Yixing sighed when he went through the information that Mr. Deng had already collected and then he saw there was an appointment with the Royal Family set for today in the afternoon.

It seemed like he had to cancel lunch with his friends for today.

Yixing had to admit to himself that he was nervous as hell when he arrived at the side entrance of the Palace that was set in the middle of the city. Emperors of long gone dynasties had built up an enormous site, where the royal family still resided with their household and held banquets for the high ranking officials and the High Society of Beijing. Of course, the rooms and hallways had been renovated and brought to the newest standard. Still it felt weird to stand in front of the gate when one of the military guards opened up and demanded Yixing’s ID. It felt like he was about to step into a different world and he’d leave the modern Beijing behind him. After five minutes and a few calls the guard had made, he was allowed to enter.

“Wait here, the Empress will pick you up personally,” the man explained and left Yixing in a small area that looked like a garden.

“Wait, the Empress?”

But the guard did not hear his question and went back to his place at the entrance. Yixing’s grip around his bag with his camera and his laptop grew tighter and his hands started to sweat. He had expected to be greeted by some other random guard that eventually would bring him to Wu Yifan directly, but the Empress? That was something he wasn’t really prepared for. He wasn’t sure how long he had waited until she showed up.
“Mr. Zhang, I reckon?”

In the middle of the garden with old-fashioned furniture and an ancient touch she looked awkwardly out of place. She wore a red costume and black high heels, both looked more expensive than Yixing’s Nikon and his Macbook combined.

“Umm… yes… my… Empress?” He stammered and did not know what to do – bow? Shake her hand? Not look at her at all?

She smiled at him and offered her hand.

“I don’t need you to do three Kotaus when we meet. These times are long over.”

He hesitated but then shook her hand. She had a tight grip, indicating that she was in complete control of the situation while Yixing was completely lost.

“You’re here on Mr. Deng’s behalf I was informed?”

“Yes. He’s… not in good health and I shall take over his articles for the time being.”

The Empress smiled, linked her arm with Yixing’s and led him out of the garden. The journalist tried to keep his cool, but he felt heat rising up into his face. Wasn’t that inappropriate?

“I think Yifan won’t mind it at all.”

“Really?”

She nodded and the sound of her high heels clattering on the stoned floor sounded intimidating. It made Yixing feel like he was prey and she was the lioness who could kill him within seconds. Even though she smiled, there was still a hard look on her face.

“He did not really get along with Mr. Deng.”

“It seemed they were close, judging from his articles…”

The Empress chuckled.

“You won’t believe me, but even my son can be well mannered and nice at times. He figured if he got along with Mr. Deng, he’d leave sooner.”

“Oh…”

“Don’t worry too much about him though. People often get the wrong impression about him.”

She patted his arm, but Yixing couldn’t help it and started to panic a little. How in the hell did Mrs. Wang think he was the right one for this job? Yixing was led to a small hall with a garden where two middle-aged men worked on the flowers that had been planted. When they saw the Empress, they stopped their work, took off their hats and bowed.

“Continue your great work, guys,” she said and gave them a warm smile.

“My son should be here, he moved from the main house to this hall when he was eighteen,” the woman explained and took a look at her watch on her wrist, “Yes, I think he should be up by now.”

She let go of Yixing and stepped to the door. She did not knock, but opened it immediately. Yixing
followed slowly, because he had no idea what else to do.

The room was big and bright. A big bed was placed at the head of the room and other doors indicated a bathroom and a big closet filled up with designer clothes that the young man wore maybe one time in his life. To Yixing’s left was the biggest flat screen TV he had ever seen, accompanied with expensive looking leather couches. To his right he made out a big table and some book shelves, something he had not really expected.

Yifan was sitting on the bed and his little sister sat next to him. Even if Yixing hadn’t seen a picture of her before, he could have told immediately. She looked like a younger and more female version of her brother, just as beautiful as her brother was handsome. They were looking into an iPad and were laughing about something Yili showed him from her last semester at Yale.

“And this guy right here,” Yili said while she pointed at one guy in a photo, “Was totally after me. He even wrote me a love letter, can you believe that? A letter. With paper and ink. I even think he sprayed some perfume on it, it was so cliché I wanted to gag.”

“Oh god, he looks ugly!” Yifan exclaimed in disbelief.

“I know, right? I told him that I was in love with someone else, though.”

“Oh, and who would that be?”

Yili smiled like a little child and then said:

“Some random Li Xiaojiang that I made up in my head. He lives in Beijing and is the son of some owner of some company that only operates in China but he’s rich enough to be with me.”

“You are such a heartbreaker!”

Yifan laughed out wholeheartedly, while Yili shrugged her shoulders as if she wanted to apologize. When their mother cleared her throat, the laughter died and the siblings shot up into straight seating positions.

“Mother!”

“Yes. Good afternoon, my children.”

Yifan’s gaze wandered from his mother to Yixing and he raised an eyebrow in question.

“Who is this?”

“This should be Mr. Deng but he’s in bad health. This is Mr. Zhang and he’ll do his work from now on. You remember that you had an appointment with him, right?”

Yifan pouted, nodded his head slowly and turned to his sister:

“I think you need to go. Let’s talk later.”

“Sure thing!”

She took the iPad, gave her brother a peck on the cheek and almost danced out of the room, graceful as a ballerina. The Empress followed her with an examining look on her face and then turned back to the two men:

“I’ll take my leave then. Mr. Zhang, one more thing: Please show me the articles you’ve written
before you publish it.”

“I’ll make sure to let you see them.”

She smiled one more time at him, nodded in appreciation and said while she left the room:

“Yifan, get dressed, you’re embarrassing me.”

“I will, mother,” he replied.

When the door had closed behind her, Yifan grimaced and scoffed:

“As fucking if!”

Yixing wished himself dead.

“Do you mind if I just stay like this?” The Prince asked and pointed at his sweatpants that did not look like he had bought them at the next H&M store at Wangfujing.

“Ummmm, no. I mean. You’re the Prince. You can wear whatever you want.”

“You’re right I guess.”

He shrugged, then stretched his back. When he looked back at Yixing who hadn’t moved an inch, he blinked and asked:

“So, do you want to start now or what?”

“I… yes. Um. Sorry.”

Yifan cracked a smile and pointed to the place that Yili had been sitting at before.

“Please sit.”

“On your… bed?!”

“Do you want to keep standing like a kicked puppy in the middle of my room?”

Yixing eyed the sofa or the big table that would’ve been way more appropriate but Yifan just snapped his fingers.

“Ya! Get your ass over here. I told you it was okay. We’re not in one of these historical Dramas where one move in front of the Emperor gets you killed.”

The journalist took one last deep breath and thought to himself to ask for a raise. This was just too crazy. When he thought he was prepared enough for the coming hour, he stepped to the bed and sat down at the brink of the mattress.

“So?” Yifan asked and examined Yixing from head to toe, expecting something that Yixing had no idea about.

“Um. Yes. Sorry. I… I got the memo this morning, I’m not well prepared, it’s really a shame…” Yixing stammered and took out the file where he had scrabbled down some rather lame questions about the life of a royal heir. Yifan chuckled and the sound sent shivers down Yixing’s spine.

“I’ll help you out then,” the other one said, “Usually, Mr. Deng would’ve brought me a bag of White
Rabbit sweets, since I loved them as a child.”

“Oh… I’m sorry, I didn’t know that.”

“It’s okay, I hate them now. So you did right by that.”

“O..kay…”

Yixing was clearly confused why Yifan would mention this anyway, and he continued:

“Well, it does not look like it, does it?!” Yixing shot back but immediately regretted it.

His eyes widened in shock when he realized he disrespected the son of the Emperor. Yifan raised an eyebrow, then started to laugh.

“Mr. Deng used to follow me for some days, sometimes even for weeks. He accompanied me to appointments and all this kind of stuff.”

“So, I need to stick by your side for the next few days?”

“Weeks.” Yifan corrected and he eyed Yixing with a husky smile.

“How do you think Mr. Deng’s articles were so…” The prince shifted his weight and leaned forward, “…intimate?”

Something about his low voice made Yixing’s body heat up and shiver at the same time. He then managed to say:

“Oh, but wasn’t Mr. Deng way too old?”

Yixing expected a scolding, or a snarky comment, but Yifan laughed out loud and said:

“I like you. You can come around more often.”
The tension faded and Yifan threw his legs over the edge of the bed.

“I’m hungry, let’s skip the smalltalk part and move to lunch, shall we?”

The journalist made a weird noise that was something between saying ‘yes’ and ‘I don’t know’ and Wu Yifan proceeded to the dressing room.

“Give me five minutes and we’ll be ready to go.”

Then he slammed the door close and left Yixing on the bed. It felt like he finally took a deep breath for the first time since he had sat down next to the tall man and he stuffed his file and all the little notes back into his bag. He was sure now: This Monday wouldn’t be like any other Monday. And the other days to come would be a huge challenge too.
Yifan had changed from sweatpants and a white t-shirt into black suit pants and a dark blue button down. Afterwards he had told Yixing to follow him and about twenty minutes later the two men got out of a black Bentley with a personal driver and two bodyguards that looked like they were ready to kill a man any given second. The prince had decided to have lunch at the China Grill atop of the Park Hyatt Beijing. Yixing did not have any say in the choosing of the location and he felt hopelessly underdressed in his simple jeans, shirt and black cardigan. If only he had known what he had gotten himself into, he would’ve chosen a different outfit this morning. When they arrived at the 66th floor and Yifan stepped out, a man in his late thirties and a black suit approached them.

“Mr. Wu! What a delightful surprise!”

“Hello, Mr. Li. I’d like a table for two, please.”

Mr. Li threw a nervous look into the dining area and then on his wristwatch.

“I’m… I’m really sorry Mr. Wu, but our Lunch hour’s over in five minutes, I actually am not allowed to take any more customers in.”

Yifan frowned and said:

“Mr. Li, that is indeed a problem, I wanted to have lunch with my friend here.”

The employee bowed while he said:

“I am really really sorry. What about I reserve you a table for dinner? With the best view over the city?”

“Aaah, I think I don’t want to have dinner here,” Yifan muttered and Yixing asked himself why in the hell Yifan wouldn’t just drive down one floor and have lunch in the restaurant beneath them.

The employee did not dare to look up and got nervous. The Prince rubbed his head, then he reached for his purse in the pocket of his pants.

“Let’s do it like this, I’m paying for the overtime. 400 for you, 400 for the cook and 400 for the waitress. And I’m giving 200 extra if you fix us a place in five minutes.”

Yixing blinked in confusion when Yifan handed a total of 1,400 Yuan to Mr. Li who shot up and babbled:

“Of course, of course! Please wait to be seated, Mr. Wu!”

And he ran off to grab one of the waitresses to tell her she’d be working overtime for Wu Yifan and his friend. Yifan seemed content with the situation and turned to Yixing who was eyeing him in disbelief.

“What?”

“That’s… corruption.” Yixing stated and he thought of the article he had written last month about a corrupt parliament member of the Chinese Democratic Party.
Yifan frowned, looked back to Mr. Li who was now giving instructions into the kitchen, and then back to Yixing.

“Noooo, I just gave them a little extra to their wage. Trust me, they’re not earning a lot, even though this is a five star restaurant. See that waitress that is setting our table?” Yifan pointed to a young woman in a white shirt and a black pencil skirt who skillfully placed two sets of plates and silverware on a table right at the big windows, “She’s a student. I’m sure she’ll be happy about the 400 extra bucks.”

“This Mr. Li is wearing a Rolex, I doubt he’s not earning a lot.”

Yifan snorted and said:

“It’s a fake one.”

And right when he had closed his mouth, Mr. Li came back and told them their table was ready. The few other guests eyed Yifan and gasped when they realized who just walked in, while the two guards stayed at the entrance, always on alert. Wu Yifan was very tall for a Chinese man. He held his head high and when he walked his presence seemed to fill up the whole room. His body language showed that he was above everyone by nature. The second they had sat down on the chairs, the waitress hurried to serve them tea and Yixing doubted that this was the same beverage he drank at his office.

“Here’s the menu,” The young woman said with a bow to Yifan and when she turned to Yixing to bow down before him, he objected:

“Please, don’t, you don’t need to bow before me. Really. I’m not that important.”

She was startled, but nodded and went to the next table to ask the businessmen to pay at the counter and leave the restaurant. Five minutes later, Yixing found himself alone with the Emperor’s son and if it was possible, he even felt more uncomfortable than before. Yifan did not seem to notice, since he was looking at the menu, contemplating whether to get the Kobe beef steak or the Sushi platter. When Yixing took a look at the prices, he closed it immediately.

“I cannot possibly order anything off that menu.”

“It’s okay, I’m paying,” Yifan mumbled, his gaze not lifting to face the other one.

“I still don’t see the necessity to order a steak that’s over 800 Yuan. Even if you pay.”

Finally, the prince lowered the menu and looked at Yixing as if he couldn’t follow.

“So you don’t like Kobe beef?”

“What? No! I… I don’t know if I like it, I’ve never tried it?”

Yifan snapped his fingers and the waitress hurried over.

“Yes, Mr. Wu?”

“We’ll have the Kobe beef steak. Please make sure it’s medium.”

“I’ll get the information to the kitchen. Have you taken a look at the wine card already? I think a Bure Cabernet Sauvignon goes best with Kobe beef.”

“I fully trust your judgement, love.”
He patted her arm and gave her a radiating smile. The young woman blushed a little before she disappeared into the kitchen to give the chef the order.

“Did you just order for me?”

“You said you never tried Kobe, so I figured we might as well change that.”

“Have you also ordered for Mr. Deng everytime you had lunch together?”

“No, he always knew what he wanted to eat.”

Yifan shrugged his shoulders and the waitress came back with a bottle of wine and served the two men the red beverage. Yifan made Yixing clink glasses with him and after taking a first sip, he said:

“So, if you’ve got any question, now’s the time.”

“When am I getting my pictures?”

“You can take pictures anytime you want. Mr. Deng did it this way.”

“Wait, when you say ‘anytime’, do you mean it this way?”

“Yes.”

“That’s convenient…”

“Mr. Deng and I kept it simple.”

Yifan pulled out his phone, and even if it was an ordinary iPhone 6, it looked a lot more expensive than Yixing’s version. Maybe everything in Yifan’s presence looked more important, more special and more exclusive.

“Give me your number, so I can send you my schedule.”

“You’ve got a schedule?” Yixing asked surprised, but typed in his number when Yifan handed his phone over.

“Very funny…” Yifan said, took back his phone and read the characters Yixing had typed in for his name, “Yixing.”

“People tend to tell me that.”

Yifan did not react, but dialed Yixing’s phone which went off next to him. Yifan smiled satisfied.

“So, do I just save you under ‘Wu Yifan’ or do you want me to add any special titles?”

“You’re kind of cocky for your first day,” Yifan noticed and supported his head with his left hand, “That’s interesting.”

“Why is that?”

The prince cracked a naughty smile, tilted his head and said:

“It’s challenging.”

Yixing did not know how to react, so he grabbed his drink and took a big gulp. He was sure he’d never survive a dinner or lunch with this guy without getting wasted. Never in his life he had met a
person like Yifan, who was so full of himself it was disgusting. Before one of them could say anything more, the waitress came back with two plates of the Kobe beef Yifan had ordered.

“Your dishes, gentlemen.”

Yifan got served first, and his plate was more delicately decorated than Yixing’s. It was obvious the chef had put in much more effort into Yifan’s plate.

“Um, excuse me,” Yifan said when he noticed and pointed at Yixing’s dish, “Is this some kind of joke?”

The waitress, who was just about to leave, blinked in confusion and her eyes widened in panic.

“I… I don’t know what you mean, Sir.”

“His plate looks like the chef threw up on it, give him something that’s served in a proper way.”

Yixing who didn’t even mind that his dish differed from Yifan’s was shocked when the waitress mumbled a “I’m really sorry about this, Mister. I’ll take care of it!” and snatched his plate away before he could even voice his protest. He looked after her and turned to Yifan.

“What the…? The plate looked fine for me!”

“Don’t be ridiculous, it didn’t.”

Yixing sighed heavily, but sensed that an argument wouldn’t bring him far. A few minutes later, the waitress came back, with a new plate.

“Much better, thank you.” Yifan said and Yixing added:

“But it was also fine in the beginning, really.”

She gave Yixing a thankful smile, then she stated:

“I’ll be at the counter if you need anything else.”

Yixing had to admit that he was really hungry. The last thing he had eaten were two YouTiaos on the way to work, and since these only consisted of deep fried dough, it was no wonder his stomach was empty. When he put the first piece of beef into his mouth and chewed on it, Yifan looked at him in high expectations.

“And?” He asked, when Yixing had swallowed.

“It’s… beef.” Yixing answered unimpressed.

This truly was the best steak Yixing had ever tried, but he wasn’t quite fond of the idea to give Yifan that kind of satisfaction. The other one sighed disappointed, but refrained from teaching him the differences between ordinary beef and Kobe beef. While they ate, the prince showed his skillful smalltalk abilities: He asked Yixing about his work as a journalist and even mentioned some of his big articles that had brought Yixing some fame and a name in the journalistic scene, laughed at the right moments when Yixing slipped out another sarcastic statement, listened carefully while Yixing told him about how he decided on becoming a journalist and asked questions to give their talk more depth. It was rather pleasant, with no awkward silences, but Yixing had the feeling that Yifan had conversations like this every day with fifty other people. He was sure that he’d have forgotten most of it the next day. When they had finished their plates, Yifan’s cell phone rang. When he saw who
the caller was, he shot Yixing an apologetic smile and answered it, putting the phone on speaker. “My dearest cousin, what an honor you called me!” Yifan beamed.

“Am I disturbing you with something?” The other man on the line asked, his voice a little distorted.

“I just finished lunch, so we’re good.”

“Aaah, I see, I see.”

“Okay Tao, what’s up? Why are you calling me?”

“I wanted to inform you that I just got out of the airport in Beijing. I’m on my way to my hotel.” Yifan made a surprised noise.

“What? You did not tell me you were coming!”

“It’s supposed to be a surprise. But I thought I’d break the news now. – Ah, yes, thank you for taking my luggage.” One could hear the sound of car doors being opened and the caller who went by the name of Tao sighed.

“Ah. Finally. Sitting again,” he said sarcastically and Yifan chuckled.

“Is there any special occasion for your coming?”

“Jesus, Yifan, I just wanted to visit you, do I need a valid reason to do that?”

“It’s just that nothing in this family happens without reason.” Tao clicked his tongue and gave his driver the address of the hotel he was staying in and the name alone sounded extremely expensive. Yixing barely could keep his poker face. This Tao guy sounded just as spoiled as Yifan was. In the back of his mind he tried to remember if he had ever read Tao’s name in Mr. Deng’s articles before. It seemed Tao and Yifan were close, so Mr. Deng must have known Yifan’s cousin too.

“Believe me, I came solely for you. Don’t we have some parties for your birthday to organize?” Yixing froze. Parties? Plural? What was going on?

“Riiiight, Yili told me you talked some stuff through already.”

“It’s going to be amazing, believe me. We’d better set up the guest list as soon as possible.” Yixing cleared his throat to get Yifan back into reality. Yifan looked up and only then he seemed to realize that Yixing was still here.

“Ooooh, right. Tao, I’ll swing by your room around five, I’m on a date.”

“What?! Really? How is she so far?”

The third personal pronouns in Chinese were kind of tricky: They were spelled the same and only differed in their written characters. Spoken out loud it was always ‘ta’, no matter the person was talking about a male or a female. Yifan tilted his head and then said, eyeing Yixing:
“He’s quite a handful. But I like it.”

Yifan hung up on his cousin, Yixing found his voice again:

“Okay. I’ll be there. If I ever get out of this horrible traffic alive.”

“It’s Beijing, not your little province town Qingdao we’re talking about.”

“Fuck you. I’ll see you.”

“Aaaah, I see. Okay, okay. Five. I’ll be there.”

“You’ll see you.”

“I’ll see you.”

When Yifan hung up on his cousin, Yixing found his voice again:

“We are not on a date!”

“Relax, my cousin and I always talk like that.”

“I’m still not your date!”

Yifan chuckled and then called the waitress:

“I’d like to pay, love!”

The woman nodded and hurried to get the bill ready. When she came with the small piece of paper on a golden plate, Yifan placed his Black American Express on top of it without a word.

“Would you like to take the wine with you, Mr. Wu?” She asked when she saw that the bottle had barely been touched.

“If you’re not taking it, they’re going to pour it away,” Yixing heard himself say when Yifan made a face as if he was about to say ‘No’.

Yifan looked at him and then said to the waitress:

“My friend will take it with him.”

“Very well. I will be back in a minute.”

She left with Yifan’s credit card and the bottle.

“I did not mean…” Yixing started but then gave up.

Shortly after the waitress came back and handed the credit card to Yifan and a box where she had put in the wine to Yixing, Yifan handed her another 100 Yuan bill.

“For you. But don’t let the chef see that, he did a horrible job today.”

“Thank you so much, Mr. Wu.”

The money disappeared in the pocket of her black skirt and she escorted the two men to the entrance, where Mr. Li and the bodyguards had been waiting the whole time.

“Thank you for your visit, Mr. Wu. I hope you’ll be back soon,” Mr. Li said and bowed numerous
Yifan nodded and then took his leave, while Yixing turned around and said:

“Have a nice day.”

The waitress and Mr. Li smiled at him, before they turned around to tidy up the table. Yifan was already at the elevator.

“You two are taking the other one. Let’s meet downstairs.” He said to his bodyguards and they did as they were told without one single word.

“Why are you doing this?” Yixing asked weakly, grabbing his bag with one hand and the handles of the wine box with the other.

“What?”

“All of this attitude.”

They stepped into the elevator and Yifan pressed the button for the first floor.

“I don’t know what you mean.”

“Of course not,” the journalist murmured under his breath and hoped for this day to be over soon.

“Do you want to join me and Tao later?”

*I’d rather die*, Yixing thought but then he found a more valid excuse:

“I’d rather go back to my office to work on my exposé on the articles. My boss expects it very soon and it’s better for everyone if I hand it in in time.”

Yifan pouted but then he shrugged his shoulders and said:

“Good, then I’ll see you tomorrow.”

“Wait, what??”

Yifan waved his phone and grinned.

“You thought I’d let you go that easily, huh?”

Yifan gave Yixing the same feeling his mother had given him earlier - like Yifan was the predator that was looking out for its next prey and had decided that it would be Yixing. The journalist grunted and said:

“Okay, okay. Tomorrow.”

“Great!”

The doors of the elevator finally opened and Yixing hurried to get out of it. The bodyguards were already there and followed Yifan at a 5 foot distance. The Bentley and the driver stood in front of the building, ready to bring the prince wherever he wanted to go.

“Do you need a ride?” Yifan asked but Yixing declined:

“The office is just two bus stations away, I’m fine.”
Yifan looked at Yixing in surprise, as if he wanted to say ‘You’re really taking the bus?’ but he did not say anything, instead he offered Yixing his hand.

“It was nice to meet you, Yixing.”

Yixing took the hand and smiled weakly.

“I’ll see you tomorrow,” The prince added.

With a last wave Yifan got into the car and Yixing could not shake the feeling off that this was more of a threat.

In the evening Yixing crashed onto his couch and his roommate peeked out of his room. After college, Yixing’s financial resources had been very limited and he had been lucky enough to find a brand new apartment that he shared with the son of the landlord. He and Luhan got along very well, so he couldn’t even really complain about sharing an apartment.

“Oh my, was today this hard?”

Luhan hovered over to him and looked at the wine box. He frowned.

“What is that?”

“Some super expensive wine, sponsored by Wu Yifan himself,” Yixing mumbled into the pillow.

Luhan who had inspected the box snapped his eyes wide open.

“Wait, what? Are you… WHAT?!”

Yixing sat up and massaged his temple. Afterwards he explained to Luhan what happened that day and with every word the other’s eyes grew wider.

“Wow, so, you’re like friends with the Emperor’s son now?”

“Dear Lord, no! He’s the worst!”

“Oooh, come on. Everybody would be a little crazy growing up like this. This guy’s got everything without even asking for it. Maybe he really is nice.”

“Naaaaaaaa. I doubt it.”

Luhan chuckled and pulled the bottle out of the box.

“Let’s kill this beauty and have a toast to your high quality journalism.”

Luhan got up and brought two wine glasses.

“I don’t even want to know how much this bottle is,” Yixing murmured but Luhan said:

“Let’s just appreciate it. I mean, I am sick of this Great Wall Wine. It tastes like vinegar.”

Yixing snorted, clinked glasses and downed the beverage in one go. It was only after that did his body relax a little and he felt better. Great. Yifan would turn him into an alcoholic within the first week, he could feel it.
Chapter Summary

Yixing kicks off his work and maybe wishes it to be over already.

Chapter Notes

GDI I just saw that something went wrong while posting this so I had to do a re-upload with the right version (... the first part was missing before?? Why did nobody tell me ohmygod I am so sorryyyyy!).
Anyways. This is the right thing. OR AT LEAST I HOPE SO.

###

The next day Yixing found himself in a meeting with his boss and a few other colleagues to discuss the topics and articles for the upcoming week. He hadn’t heard from Yifan, but he felt like this could change any minute, so he went for a more sophisticated look today and wore the best shirt he owned.

“Okay, we’ve got the sports column covered, what about you, Mr. Zhang?”

Mrs. Wang stood at the head of the table, hands placed on it, leaning forward and facing him directly. The other people looked at him with curious looks on their faces. Yixing cleared his throat and took out his notes about his rough plan of the articles.

“Umm, well, I thought about releasing one article every second Sunday. Like, a big article, about all the preparations going on. To give a very… broad insight to the people.”

Sometimes he couldn’t even stand himself talking. He wanted to slap his face, but Mrs. Wang just curled the corners of her mouth up to give him a pleased smile, something that happened very rarely.

“You’re going all in I guess?”

Yixing suppressed a panicked laughter and just nodded. Mrs. Wang stood straight again and looked out of the window. Then she turned back to him and said:

“Very well, Mr. Zhang. I want you to bring some new color to these articles – Mr. Deng always portrayed Wu Yifan through the eyes of a mentor, it’s time to change that.”

“Ummm, okay?”

She pointed her finger at him and explained:

“You’re about the same age, right? I want you to get to know this guy. I want you to portray him as if you two grew up together. Get into the head of him and behind this spoiled-brat-facade. I want a
bunch of intimate portraits of this man. People lick their fingers after this kind of stuff.”

When she used the word ‘intimate’ Yixing felt shivers running down his spine again, but he just nodded.

“Understood. I’ll do my best.”

“Of course you will. I never expect less from you.”

The other co-workers kept smiling through the conversation, but their eyes gave away that they would love to switch places with Yixing. And they hated him for snatching away the best opportunity to get their hands on the most wanted project in the whole newspaper office.

“Good, that’s all for today.” Mrs. Wang raised her voice and clapped her hands, “Well done, I expect the articles for Thursday’s issue by six o’clock today. Not one minute less. Are we good?”

“Yes, Boss!” The twelve employees said in unison and then got up to get working.

Yixing hovered back to his office and decided to get started on his first article, since he had no idea how and when he was about to meet Yifan. When he opened the door to the room, he almost jumped back a few feet.

“What the fuck?!”

Yifan sat on his chair behind Yixing’s Macbook, swirling around on it like a child. He stopped to face him.

“Finally! I thought this meeting would never end!”

“You… what… what are you doing here? How did you get in?”

“I’m picking you up. And I obviously walked in, asked for your office and sat down here. The door wasn’t locked.”

“You can’t just walk into my office…!” Yixing revolted and looked around as if looking for evidence Yifan had gone through his stuff.

“Well, yet here I am…”

The prince did not seem to understand why Yixing was angered and got up from the chair. Then he examined Yixing’s outfit and said:

“Wow, you look hot.”

“Oh god, cut the crap.” The journalist muttered and put his laptop into his bag, “Where are we going?”

“We’re going to have brunch with Tao and Yili at the Four Seasons.”

“Are you only taking me out to eat stuff?” Yixing shot at him while grabbing his jacket and his camera.

Yifan who already stood at the door smiled, came closer and cupped the other’s face. Yifan’s hands were so large Yixing’s face looked like that of a fragile porcelain doll. And suddenly he also felt like it. Vulnerable and delivered on a silver platter for Yifan to play with.
“I promise you, darling, we’re going to have so much fun together. I will take you anywhere you want.”

“Wow that was a weak pickup line.” Yixing hissed and Yifan just laughed and turned for the door.

“Come on, Yili and Tao are already there.”

The Four Seasons was not far from Yixing’s workplace. The ride in the Bentley was rather short and about twenty minutes later he followed Yifan through the doors of the hotel’s restaurant. Yili and Tao were already seated at a table for four and when they looked up, they smiled and got up to greet them.

“You’ve made it!” Tao chirped and hugged Yifan.

Yili and Yifan shared two kisses on the cheek and Yifan turned to Yixing to introduce him:

“This is Zhang Yixing. He’s the substitute for Mr. Deng, the man who writes all these articles about our family.”

Yili was the first to grab his hand and shake it – her grip was just as strong as her mother’s, but she seemed way less intimidating than the Empress.

“I’m sorry, I haven’t introduced myself properly yesterday, that was very rude. Please don’t be offended, but I just came back from the USA and I’m still a little jetlagged, I was totally out of it.”

“Oh, please… no offense taken!” Yixing hastily said and Yili gave him a thankful smile.

When she let go of his hand, Tao grabbed it. He also touched Yixing’s elbow.

“Huang Zitao, nice to meet you. Me and Mr. Deng never really talked, but I’ve heard he’s a nice man. Why are you taking his place? Has he gotten into retirement?”

“Um, no. He’s in bad health and as long as he’s getting treatment, I do his work.”

“Oh no, what’s the matter?” Yili asked while they sat down.

She had a sincere tone in her voice, and Yixing was a little taken aback. Yifan had not asked once what Mr. Deng had exactly and he didn’t even seem to care much now.

“Bowel cancer.”

Yili’s eyes widened in shock and she looked like a kicked bunny. Zitao sighed.

“Is he going to be okay?”

“I don’t know, I haven’t talked to him. But he got diagnosed in an early stage, he might have a chance.”

“We should send our regards to him, Yifan.”

“Yeah, yeah.”

Yifan’s sister smacked his arm.

“Ya! Where are your manners?! Show some sympathy! This man is a friend of the family and he always cared for us. Visiting him is the least we could do!”
The prince sighed and said:

“Okay, okay. We will. But we didn’t come here to discuss Mr. Deng!”

A waiter came and brought a bottle of champagne along with four glasses.

“He’s right, Yili. Let’s talk about something more light hearted. Yixing will surely give you all the contact information you’ll need to get in touch with Mr. Deng later, right?” Tao threw in.

“You’d do that?”

Yili’s eyes lit up in thankfulness as Yixing only nodded, even though he had no idea how to get the info. Maybe Mrs. Wang would come out with them but he wasn’t even sure of that. He had never come to her with a request. It was usually her that requested things and got her way.

“Thank you, Zhang Yixing.”

“It’s only Yixing. I’m your age, you don’t have to be that formal with me.”

“So you’re a goat too, I reckon?”

Yixing nodded.

“Born in October.”

Yili stopped short and leaned forward.

“Which date exactly?”

“Um, October 7th.”

Yili and Tao let out a surprised gasp but Yixing did not really understand why. Yifan grunted and took a gulp of his champagne. Yili clasped her hands and cried out:

“We were born on the same day!”

“Wait, really?”

She nodded. Yixing tried to recall any event that had indicated the princess’ birthday but he had to admit that the focus had always been on Yifan. Yili kind of disappeared next to him.

“That’s so cool! Isn’t that cool, Yifan?” She nudged her brother who did not really respond, then faced Yixing again, “High Five on that, brother!”

She stretched out the palm of her delicate and small hand and Yixing felt weird when he returned the gesture.

“He’s not your brother, Yili!”

“Do you have to be the fun killer every time, my love?” Yili shot at Yifan and Tao scented an approaching argument so he pulled a stack of paper out of his bag.

“Oookay kiddos, what about getting over the stuff we wanted to talk through today?”

“Good idea!” Yifan threw in and Tao handed him one of the sheets, “We need this to be amazing. I want the whole world to talk about it.”
Yili rolled her eyes, but she was smiling, as if she took no offense that her brother made the whole matter about him once again.

“Um, wait, you are not going to throw some sort of party?” Yixing asked her and she looked up, blinking, as if she couldn’t follow.

It took her a few seconds to put Yixing’s question in perspective.

“Ooooh, yeah. No. I’m not a huge fan of being the center of all the attention. Most of the time I’m in the US anyway, so I never really celebrate. I hang out with some friends and that’s about it.” She explained matter-of-factly.

“Plus, the 25th birthday is a huge thing in our family,” Tao continued, “It’s like coming off age. But it’s more important. Yifan will be officially the heir to the throne. 25 marks the time a prince is considered to be mature enough to lead a country, since there were too many young emperors on the throne that kind of drove the whole thing against a wall. Well, nowadays it’s more some sort of symbolic act, but still a huge thing in the family.”

“Aaaah, I understand.”

“It also means that he’s in marital age,” Yili added and Yifan made a grimace, “Mother is already looking for a suitable candidate.”

“I’m not going to marry anytime soon!” Yifan scoffed.

“Well, tell that to Mother.”

“She will hear from me!”

Yili patted his arm, then they finally turned to all the stuff that needed to be organized. Tao cleared his throat and handed Yixing a paper with a rough timetable. Then he explained:

“I was thinking about kicking it off one week before November 6th. We're starting at the 31st and throw a huge Halloween party.”

Yili squealed in excitement.

“Oh, oh, let me organize this! I’ve been to so many amazing Halloween parties in the States, I know exactly what we need!”

Tao did not object and moved on to the next point.

“We’re going to have one event per day. I also minded that your mother requested to hold a benefit ball on the 5th.”

“Ugh, no, she really wants to go for the ball?” Yifan whined.

Yili clicked her tongue.

“It’s tradition, Yifan. Don’t be like that every time mother tells you to do something.”

Yifan gave up defeat but muttered something under his breath which sounded like he wasn’t happy about it. While the waiter kept serving small appetizers and snacks and more champagne, the three royals planned the whole week that would be crowned with a big birthday party on the 6th. One thing that stood out was that Yifan had decided (after Yili had come up with the idea) to do some giveaways – if people did enter them they could win tickets for the events, and Yixing suddenly
remembered how many fans Yifan actually had. Most of them were young girls and women dreaming of becoming the princess at his side. People would go crazy and would do anything to get a hold of these tickets, and the thought of it made Yifan giggle like a child. After the Halloween Party there would be some other parties and events and the guest lists contained a lot of Chinese, Korean and Japanese superstars that Yifan had or hadn’t met in his life. Yifan seemed to be content with the outcome, even though he was still grinding his teeth about the benefit ball, but neither Tao nor Yili gave in to his begging to just blow this one.

“I want an artist to perform at the 6th.” Yifan suddenly threw in after they had gone through the guestlist of the benefit ball.

Tao and Yili tilted their heads in question. Something in their looks told Yixing that Yifan was about to drop a major bomb and no matter what it was, they wouldn’t be prepared.

“And who do you want to come?” His sister asked him.

Yifan was lost in thoughts for a moment before he leaned back and said as if talking about the weather:

“I was thinking about Gaga.”

Yili choked on her champagne and when she finally was able to breathe again she asked:

“But I thought you hated her new album?”

“Doesn’t mean I don’t appreciate her existence,” Yifan answered, shrugging his shoulders.

Yixing suddenly pictured fanboy Yifan at one of her concerts to cheer for her with a lightstick in his hands. He suppressed his laughter at the thought and decided to take a picture of the three instead. They did not even seem to notice his work. Maybe they were so used to people taking pictures of them, it had become something that wasn’t even worth a gaze.

“Oh come on, guys! How awesome would it be to have an international artist performing? Tao, you always brag about your connections, now’s the time to use them. Give her a call!”

Tao groaned in frustration and Yixing let his camera sink down in disbelief – did Yifan just tell Tao to call Lady Gaga? Meaning dialing a number which belonged to Lady Gaga’s phone and have a chat with her?

“Gaga’s in Chicago right now, she’s going to kill me if I wake her up in the middle of the night!”

Yili pouted and looked at her small watch around her wrist and seemed to calculate something.

“Given the fact that Chicago’s thirteen hours behind us, it should be 9pm where she is.”

“That’s a reasonable time to call someone!” Yifan threw in but Tao was still not convinced.

And Yixing blinked confused - Yifan DID tell Tao to call Lady Gaga!

“What if she’s at a concert or something!”

“She’s not, according to her Instagram she’s chilling at the hotel.” Yili threw in and showed an Instagram picture that the artist had posted ten minutes ago.

“See, my dearest cousin? Pleaaase, call her!”
Yifan’s cousin took a sip of his champagne, sighed theatrically and asked:

“Does everything have to be this complicated with you?”

“Yes, it does!”

Tao must have had conversations like this a lot of times in his life with Yifan, so he just sighed and gave up defeat. He pulled out his phone and opened his contacts, mumbling something that sounded like he wished Yifan dead.

“Out of all the people I could hook you up with you ask for Gaga…” he muttered and opened the contact – he stopped short and looked up and tried to launch a counterproposal, “Adam Levine is pretty cool, too!”

“Naaaah, I want Ga-ga!”

Tao sighed and finally dialed the required number.

“Put it on speaker!” Yili asked in excitement and the siblings leaned over the table to stare at the phone that Tao had placed in front of him.

At first there was just the ringing of the line and right when Tao was about to hang up, it clicked and the four of them heard:

“Tao! Darling! Hello!”

“Hello, sweetheart!” Tao chirped but his face looked like he wanted to commit suicide.

“I was just thinking about my favorite guy from China!” Gaga chattered and they heard how she wandered around in the room.

“Oh, really?”

“Really! What’s the matter?”

“I’m not disturbing you with anything, am I?” Tao asked.

“Oh, no, no! You can call me at any given time, you know that sweety!”

Yili held onto her brother’s arm and was overly excited, while Yixing forgot how to breathe for a second – Tao really did give Lady Gaga a call and they even had pet names for each other!

“Aaaah, amazing, as always!” the Chinese beamed but rolled his eyes immediately.

Yifan gestured to hurry this thing up a little and Tao nodded and cut right to the chase:

“Listen, sweetheart, I have to ask you for a… little… or maybe big… favor.”

“What can I do for you?”

“Sooollllooo, you know, I have this cousin…”

“That very handsome prince of yours, are you talking about him?”

When Gaga called Yifan ‘very handsome’ he smiled satisfied as if he wanted to say ‘Yeah, that woman has taste’.
“Yes, the Prince, right,” Tao confirmed, “It’s his birthday in about eight weeks. November 6th to be more precise. You know, us Royals, we have this thing for 25th birthdays and how it has to be big and all this kind of stuff…”

“Ooooh, yeah, I remember you told me when we met in New York last month!”

“In fact, yes, I did!”

The siblings eyed Tao and raised an eyebrow in question – Tao’s face flushed red. And Yixing felt like somebody had just punched him in the face. Tao went to dinner dates with GAGA?!

“That was a very lovely dinner we should definitely do that again!” The artist cried out.

“Yeaaaaah, absolutely!” Tao threw in before she could indulge in any memories of that evening, “But I didn’t call because of that.”

“Oh riiiiight. The prince. Go on.”

Tao seemed a little uncomfortable but after taking one deep breath he said:

“He asked me if I could ask you to come over that day and perform for his birthday.”

A pregnant silence hung in the line and Yixing was sure Lady Gaga wasn’t even breathing for a moment.

“I know, it’s a really big favor that I’m asking of you, and I would totally understand if you cannot manage to squeeze in a little performance into your busy schedule…” Tao blabbered and Yili bit her lower lip.

Her eyes wandered between Tao, the phone and her brother who mouthed the words:

“I’m paying her whatever she wants!”

“Ummmm, you’d get payed for this, of course! Any expense you have to make, my cousin will cover for it!”

“Payed?! Screw this, I’m doing this shit for FREE!” Gaga suddenly cried out and it sounded like she jumped off something, maybe her bed.

“… really?” Tao asked and seemed surprised himself while the siblings silently high fived each other.

Yixing had proceeded to nonstop headshaking.

“Are you kidding me, baby? A ROYAL wants ME to sing on his birthday? This is like… Marilyn Monroe singing for Kennedy! – OH my god! Marilyn Monroe! I just had the PERFECT idea for this!”

Tao closed his eyes and seemed to count until three while Yifan was already beaming from one ear to the other.

“Okay, perfect! I’ll call you back to give you further details, is that alright with you?”

There was no answer at first because the four just heard Gaga’s excited squealing:

“Asiaaaaa, we’re going to sing for a real PRINCE, isn’t this amaziiiiiiing?”
“Did you hear me, sweetheart?” Tao tried to bring her back to reality.

“Of course! Call me back! Anytime! This is so exciting, thank you so much, Tao! Tell your cousin that I’m very happy and honored! Oooh, I need to talk to my stylists ASAP! This needs to be perfect!”

Tao wrapped up the call very quickly and when Gaga had made some weird kissing noises, he had hung up, exhaling a very long breath.

“Ooooh, Tao, she is lovely!” Yili swooned and Tao looked at her as if she had lost her mind.

“She is but once she starts talking she cannot stop and it’s getting very exhausting,” Tao explained and put his phone away “Yifan, you better be grateful, you little brat.”

Yifan beamed and sing-songed:

“Thank you, favorite cousin!”

“I’m the only of your five cousins you talk to on a regular basis, don’t give me that shit.”

Yixing had to fight the need to down another glass of alcohol, while Yili was typing something on her phone. Like her brother, she owned an iPhone 6 which she protected in a hardshell case that was covered in black, golden and white crystals. It sure made her phone stand out from all the other iPhones, but it kind of matched her, looking classy in her perfect manicured hands, but not pretentious. Yixing immediately asked himself how it was possible that the same phone from two people with the same genes could look so different. He figured it must have been Yili’s whole attitude since she seemed to be the easier of the two.

“Guys, when are we through with this?” She then asked, without looking up from her screen.

“I think we’re good as of right now.” Tao gave an answer.

“Okay, cool. Then I’d better get going now.”

Yili put her phone back into her small Chanel purse and got up. The other two guys shot up too, so Yixing figured he’d do the same. No matter how rich and spoiled, manners like these seemed still to apply to the family. If the woman leaves the scene, the men had to get up and bid her goodbye in a proper way.

“Where are you going?” Yifan demanded, after she had hugged him.

“Oh please, why don’t you just give me a GPS bracelet to check on me every five minutes?” Yili shot at him, but continued to explain, “I’m meeting with Liling to go shopping. I’m allowed to meet old high school friends, right? I mean, I already took one semester off solely for your birthday. I am allowed to have fun, am I?”

She didn’t even await her brother’s answer and pulled Tao into a big hug.

“Yili, it’s been amazing to see you again.” Her cousin beamed and squeezed her shoulders when they had parted.

“When will you leave for Qingdao again?”

“Tomorrow, unfortunately. But I’ll be back for that family shoot and I’ll be here at the end of October. We’ll stay in touch?”
“Sure. Just hit me up whenever you need something.”

With a last peck on Tao’s cheek she turned to Yixing who did not exactly know what to do. She beamed at him and pulled him in a quick hug. Yixing felt his cheeks blush when she said:

“Goodbye, my long lost twin. I guess we’ll meet again sooner or later! Yifan said you’d be with us for a while!”

“Yeah, that’s right I guess… umm…. Goodbye.”

She strode out of the restaurant just like she had left Yifan’s bedroom yesterday – graceful, and it seemed as if her Louboutins did not even touch the floor. One of the bodyguards at the entrance followed her. Of course the princess needed personal protection just as much as the prince needed. Even if Yixing believed that Yili could stroll through the streets of the city without people noticing it.

“Just so we’re clear: You belong exclusively to me.” Yifan stated when the three of them sat down again.

“Just so we’re clear: I belong to nobody but myself. You’re not even the one who’s paying me for following you around like a stalker,” Yixing responded, grabbed his camera and snapped another picture.

Tao snorted and even Yifan managed to show something that could have been labeled as a smirk. They emptied the bottle of champagne and Yixing listened to all the stories that Tao had to tell him about his cousin. Even though Tao was born and raised in Qingdao, the two seemed to be close. Tao talked about playing hide and seek in the Imperial Gardens when they were young boys and how they used to pull pranks on the royal household. He swooned when Yifan mentioned their first nights out together in clubs and bars with fake IDs and lamented about the good old days before responsibilities had taken their tolls and chained Tao to a desk at his father’s office: His father, the Emperor’s younger brother, had built up a prestigious firm for business consulting, and Tao was, as the only son, expected to follow his dad’s footsteps. He seemed to be okay with it, even if it meant he couldn’t visit Yifan as much as he wanted.

“Those were good times,” Yifan sighed with a melancholic look on his face as he relived the moments of his childhood.

“They were,” Tao nodded and emptied his glass, “But I think we cannot complain about our lives now either.”

The Prince just shrugged his shoulders in response and Yixing silently agreed with Tao. These two really couldn’t complain. They had everything in the world and if they didn’t, there surely was an easy way to get it. When Yifan had taken his last sip of champagne, Tao proposed:

“I think we should go now, shouldn’t we? What about we go and look for some clubs for your parties?”

“Marvellous idea!” Yifan cried out and when Tao had paid for the brunch, the trio left for the limousine that had waited for them downstairs.

Yixing tried hard to keep his pokerface while the other two were chatting about yet another memory of their younger days. He had been with Yifan for not even 48 hours and he physically felt like that time when he had been graduating and missing out on a lot of sleep so he could keep the deadline for his thesis. When he checked his phone, he couldn’t believe it was barely past noon. This was going to be a very, very long day.
Chapter Notes

First article! Yixing was probably gagging while writing this (I should know - I'm the author right, badumtssssss okay that was a lame joke)
The Things We Crave Most

Thoughts on the Emperor’s son, his materialism and our own voyeurism that is expected to be satisfied by every step he takes.

"We don’t know where he’s going, but we’ll surely be around to witness his development." These were the last words Mr. Deng had written about Prince Wu Yifan. I have spent two weeks with the son of the Emperor now, and I thought about good openers and catchphrases that would do these two weeks justice — but I possibly couldn’t find any. September is coming to an end and preparations for Wu Yifan’s 25th birthday are in the making as we speak. There is something important about turning 25 in the royal family: If we still lived in a complete monarchy, Wu Yifan could be considered a grown adult that had gained the needed maturity to lead a country. He would be able to be the leader of China in case of his father’s passing. And he could choose an Empress that would rule alongside him. But we’re in 2015 and the days when the Emperor was the center of our relatively small world are long gone. Which does not mean the 25th birthday of the only son and heir to the throne isn’t going to be celebrated in a great manner. I haven’t even gotten a full insight of all the events the family is going to hold to welcome the Prince’s new year of life but I can already tell it’s going to be something China will be talking about for quite a few years.

We have read about Wu Yifan a lot. Every step on his way was observed by us, the normal people. We know about all his girlfriends, his cars and his money — and we know about it all too well. He’s the incarnation of something we all long for in our lives: Money, power and glory. But not everyone can be of royal blood, not everyone can get into high paying positions at companies. Not everyone is that lucky. Not everyone is destined to be a member of the Chinese elite that has champagne for breakfast and caviar for dinner. The majority of us play smaller parts to keep our society moving. And this is where Wu Yifan gets put in the spotlight. His life seems to be perfect. With his designer clothes that he doesn’t even have to pay, his cars that he doesn’t even drive himself most of the time, his various credit cards that he pulls through card readers to pay an amount of money that would be my monthly salary — he’s got everything and even a little more.

His possessions exceed the minds of us ordinary people. None of us could ever imagine how much money the Royal family has and how much of this money is thrown out of the window solely by the Prince. Some of the
cars he owns have never once touched the streets of Beijing, except for that one time when they were driven from the car dealership into the garage of the Royal Family. He doesn’t need to ask for things – he can either just pull out his purse or gives out orders to staff members that are surely going to get him the thing he wants. I often asked myself: “Does this man have anything he loves? Anything that he truly cares about?” The question seems legit, since I came to the conclusion that if a person has everything and knows no boundaries, they are likely not to have any things they hold dear to themselves. I asked Wu Yifan once when we got stuck in traffic somewhere in Chaoyang District and we were running late for a photoshoot he attended. He laughed it off and didn’t give me a straight answer. So I started to pay more attention to him. And I think I have found the answer. He doesn’t care about his material possessions. If they get broken, he gets new ones and replaces them. He seems indifferent about enjoying the most exclusive Whiskey in the world when he sits together with friends in a bar while I was losing my whole composure over the fact that he had once considered pouring expensive wine away simply because he didn’t feel like drinking it anymore. Things he can buy aren’t of his interest. It’s other things that he holds dear to his heart that a lot of people think is made of stone. He might be annoyed by all the things his mother makes him do (who of us isn’t), but it’s the way he looks at her and the way he obliges to her requests that made me realize that out of all the women in his life, his mother is the one that he’d never treat in a wrong way. She has born and raised him and even though he might be considered the black sheep in the Royal Family she loves him unconditionally. She’s the only one who will always hold her hand above his head to shield him from bad things and he will always seek her arms for help. When she praises him for something, his breast swells and there’s a glimmer of a boy in his eyes who just wanted to get acknowledged by his parents. When she looks at him and tells him she’s disappointed him, he presses his lips together, trying to keep a poker face, but failing ever so often. He then proceeds to think about her words and reflect on them until he realizes his mistakes – only to make them again a few weeks or even only days later. He loves his mother and maybe he just needs her approval to be happy and content. And as long as this is the case, he couldn’t care less about his bad image and reputation.

There’s another woman in his life that he considers the most valuable thing in his life. His sister Yili has grown from a sweet girl into a woman with an own will, own goals and an own state of mind which nobody will ever be able to take away from her. She’s intelligent and charming, just like her brother, but ten times more humble than the Prince. She’s his antipole. When he says right, she goes left and drags him with her. When his head is in the clouds once again, she pulls him down to earth on his ankles. Yifan badly needs someone like her in his life and he loves getting the
guidance, even though he'd never admit it. He clings onto her, comes to her for advice, even though she's the younger of the two, and takes the words she says very seriously. Yili is the reason Yifan breaks up with promising girlfriends — if they do not get along with his sister, they get thrown away like the leftovers of his dinner. He defended her fiercely during their childhood days and still gets protective of her nowadays even though she doesn't have to rely on her big brother anymore. Their dynamic is terrific. Yifan's mind seems to be a little more at peace when he's with her.

His mind is also at peace when he's down at a basketball court, which might seem surprising to others in the first place. As soon as he gets his hands on a basketball the transformation from the Prince of our nation to a young man that just likes to throw some balls in his free time is completed. Down at the court, he puts down his attitude and forgets for a while that he's of royal blood with responsibilities that only lie on his shoulder. All the people that judge without knowing him, the expectations his family puts on him that he only rarely meets, the things that might keep him up at night he tells nobody — all of that seems to be forgotten during the time of the game and he almost flies across the court, skillfully handles the ball and throws it against the backboard just in the perfect angle for the ball to slip through the hoop nice and smoothly. You find yourself holding your breath every time one of his peers passes him the ball and you only begin to breathe again after he's scored. It's almost magic he's working and as a bystander, you want him to do it over and over again. You find yourself thinking that only in those moments, on the court, with his mother and with his sister, you get a glimpse of the true Wu Yifan, the person that he'd like to be most of the time, but is unable to show. You find yourself wishing that one day, he is going to be able to show that side of his, without the cocky attitude, the cars and the women. Yes, we like to see him being involved in another scandal, this is why we check the news, why we scan gossip magazines for his name, why we click on his social media accounts and even follow him. But I think that the world is ready to see a new side of him.
pictures don't count)
September 25th, 2015

Yixing tried hard to recall the last time he had gone out on a weekday and came to the conclusion that this might have been somewhere in his first semester at university. Back then, he had partnered up with an exchange student somewhere from Europe and that guy had taken him out on a night through Wudaokou’s bars. He barely remembered anything, the only clear memory had been the headache and the sick feeling in his stomach the next day while crawling to his lecture. It hadn’t been too pleasant.

So when Yifan had called him up in the morning and said “We’re going out today.” Yixing had tried to convince him that he surely wouldn’t be tagging along on a Thursday when he had to be at the office at eight the next day, but Yifan’s answer was simply:

“Great, I’ll meet you at eight. Pregame at my house, be sure to dress up.”

“Your house is the Emperor’s Palace, Wu Yifan.”

“So?”

In front of his inner eye, Yixing could see Yifan blinking as if he couldn’t follow his words so he said:

“… nevermind.”

“Nice! See you later!”

A groan had escaped Yixing’s throat when he tossed his phone onto his office desk but a few hours later he indeed found himself at “Yifan’s house”, dressed up and showered and Yifan shoved a glass of whiskey into his hand as soon as he stepped over the doorway.
“Glad you came! Come in, come in!”

Yixing found out he wasn’t the only one Yifan had called up. The friends that he had already met on that one basketball game were already gathered plus three other guys that he hadn’t met before. He was glad when he saw Yili who was filling up her glass with whatever alcoholic beverage Yifan had put on the table in front of his couch.

“Sweetheart don’t go too hard already!” Her brother cried out while he pushed Yixing onto the couch next to her.

“Shut up, I could drink all of you under the table if I wanted!”

“Tsk, what has your cute sister learned in those American fraternities?” A guy named William said.

Yixing was sure this wasn’t his actual name, but he had gotten introduced to him under that name. He was the son of a big company mogul and one of the richest kids in China, so it was almost like a natural law he associated with Yifan. Yili took a huge gulp and put the glass down to shoot him an offended look.

“Get your vocabulary right, Willy! Female students join sororities, so maybe do some research before you try to drag me! You got a degree from Qinghua because your daddy payed the chairman! I’m actually graduating because I sit my ass down and do something for my education!”

The other guys hooted and William buried his head in shame.

“Okay, sorry Princess!”

“You better be.” She mumbled into her glass and took another sip.

Then she shifted her weight and turned to face Yixing, away from the guys who kept teasing William.

“I’m so glad you came,” she said and rolled her eyes, “Some of Yifan’s friends are the worst.”

“Why are you joining them? I can imagine it’s hard being the only girl…” Yixing responded and watched a guy named Dawei who was cracking a rather sexist joke which made the other guys burst out into laughter.

“My girls are coming directly to the club,” was Yili’s answer and she held up her glass to clink it with Yixing’s, “Until then, I’ll just drink with you.”

“I’m really not a good drinker.” Yixing admitted and Yili waved his comment aside.

“Do you really think those losers are better?” She asked and pointed at Dawei whose head was already red. He looked awfully similar to a cooked lobster.

Yixing didn’t answer. Instead, he took another sip of the whiskey which tasted amazing, unfortunately. Yili giggled. After he had emptied the first glass, Yifan made sure to fix him another one and the journalist had the feeling that he wouldn’t be coming home sober tonight.

When they entered the club around three hours later, Yifan and his entourage got guided into the VIP area which had been reserved by some of Yifan’s little helpers earlier today. It was far away enough to not be bothered by the other guests (or, as Yixing had learned from William, “commonalty that we actually don’t want to associate with”) but still so close that the whole club knew within seconds who had arrived. Heads turned, phones got taken out of pockets and clutches to take photos and
some girls immediately swarmed over to dance as close as possible to the prince, hoping he’d notice them shaking their asses. A look thrown at Yifan’s smirk told the journalist the prince enjoyed every second of it. Yixing tried to blend in between Dawei and William, hoping he’d not be appearing on any pictures that’d be uploaded in the next few days. It would be just too embarrassing if one of his coworkers, or worse - his boss, found out he was clubbing with Wu Yifan and his gang. He was sure the argument “I did it for research” wouldn’t work too well.

“Champagne!” Dawei cried against the beats of Iggy Azalea’s ‘Fancy’ which had been remixed and tormented to a weird House remix.

Yixing knew exactly why he didn’t like clubs that much. He was more of the guy who went to bars to have a nice chat with his friends while having one or two drinks, not the one to spazz around on a dancefloor and getting drunk (and also maybe high) only to find himself in the bed of an unknown stranger who surely had looked better in the darkness of the club than in the brightness of the next day. Unfortunately, that was exactly what Yifan and the Gang had had in mind. At least Yifan got hopelessly drunk and maybe only didn’t order some girls to come join them on the couch of the VIP Lounge because Yili was there with her friends.

It was about two in the morning when the music finally shifted from House to R’n’B, which meant Yixing had finally a chance of maybe at least knowing one or two songs. It seemed like the people around Yixing were taking a break, slurping (because what they did to their drinks could hardly be labeled as ‘sipping’ anymore) on their cocktails and longdrinks and some were smoking their nth cigarette. Yifan sat down next to Yixing.

“Are you having fun, darling?”

“Don’t even try to give me a pet name!” Yixing answered and swirled the icecubs in his drink around with his straw.

“Aiya, you’re such a buzzkill!” Yifan pouted and clinked his glass with Yixing’s.

“Yeah, that’s what I am.” The journalist retorted.

“No, but seriously… are you having fun?”

Yifan had a very hard time with his pronunciation and slurred the words dangerously. Something told Yixing that Yifan was on that fateful last drink that might be turning him into that raging scandal machine that he was famous for. He contemplated whether or not he should step in but then he remembered that Yili had tried to convince Yifan to have a glass of water half an hour ago. And, if he hadn’t listened to her, why should he listen to Yixing then?

“Well, I guess I’m alright. I don’t want to kill anyone yet, so that’s a good thing.”

“So you don’t have any fun.”

“I didn’t say that!”

Yifan clicked his tongue and poked Yixing’s cheek, just right where his dimple used to show when he smiled. Yixing wasn’t sure if that had been intended by the royal.

“But you are thinking it! You’d rather be anywhere else than here!”

“Well, the things I do for my work…”

There was a shadow flickering across Yifan’s face and right when he wanted to say something the beat of some song came on which seemed to trigger something in him. His eyes grew wide and he
jumped up.

“YILI!! THIS IS OUR SONG!”

Yili nodded frantically while a woman started to sing something along the lines how her name wasn’t “an automatic atm, but baby it don’t matter”. The siblings sang dramatically along to it and Yixing thought that these two might have misunderstood something because the message didn’t seem to actually fit into their lifestyle. Until the drop came, the chorus started and the singer sang along to a sax – or maybe to another sort of wind instrument, Yixing had no idea about such things:

*Born rich, born rich, baby I was born rich,*
*Driving a Benz and dripping in diamonds*
*Ay, I was born rich sucker! Ay, I was born rich sucker!*

Especially the last line seemed to have woken up the rest of the crew and they chanted along to it as if it was something to be especially proud of. Yixing realized how out of place he actually was so he took another sip of his drink and decided to finally leave. He had seen enough of Yifan to write another 2K article and immediately regretted to have written some nice words about him in the first thing he had published. He asked himself if he had been high while writing this.

“Yixiiiiiiiiing, come ooooooooolllllllllloong!”

The siblings had emerged and tried to bring Yixing on his feet to dance.

“No, no, no!” Yixing responded panicky while Yili and Yifan grabbed his hands and pulled at him.

“Do it for us!” Yili begged.

“No! I don’t dance!”

“Come ON just this one song!”

“NO! I’m not even one of your rich friends!”

“Well Mr. Zhang, you’re sitting at the cool kids’ table now, so you have to dance!” Yifan cried against the next verse that started to resound in the club.

“Someone has overdosed on ‘Mean Girls’ or something!” Yixing retorted but then he couldn’t bring up enough strength anymore to work against Yili’s and Yifan’s force and he finally got up.

*Cause I know I got a heart made of millions,*
*In my mind I know I’m worth a couple trillion*

Yifan was either really lame, or drunk, or a horrible combination of the two, but when that line came on, he changed the “I’m” to “You’re” and tapped Yixing’s chest.

“Yah! What is wrong with you?!” Yixing cried out but Yifan gave him a crooked drunk smile and Yili pinched Yixing’s cheek while the next chorus dropped.

*Born rich, born rich, baby I was born rich,*
*Driving a Benz and dripping in diamonds*
*Ay, I was born rich sucker! Ay, I was born rich sucker!*

At the end of the song Yixing actually really had brought himself to at least nod his head to the beat. No matter how horribly aware the song had gotten him of the different worlds in which Yifan and
Yixing lived, it was still catchy as fuck.

And just like that, Yixing actually started to dance with the princess and the prince in one of the most expensive clubs of Beijing. He decided he’d never tell anyone about that, not even his grandkids, if he’d ever have any.

His plans to get out of the club at two in the morning at the very latest got crushed when Yixing realized that it was already four and the establishment was closing. Shocked of himself he followed Yifan, Yili and the remaining pack of friends out of the building to the cars that were waiting for them in the garage. Of course, the prince didn’t just simply catch a taxi. He had to be brought home in his stupid Bentley. Before they could get into the car, Yili took Yixing aside.

“Yixing, can you do me a favor?”

She wasn’t that sober anymore, but far from being as wasted as her brother who argued with Dawei whether or not they should hit the same club tomorrow or not.

“Depends on what kind of favor.”

“I’m going home with Liling, she’s had a little too much and I don’t want her to be alone – she’s going through some sort of boy trouble right now,” the princess explained and nodded into the direction of her friend who had clenched her hands around her phone, eyes all watery and red while it looked like she thought of typing a message to someone. “Can you make sure to get Yifan home? If he goes alone, he might end up on the highway to Shanghai or something.”

Yixing agreed, mostly because it was very hard to say no to Yili, and additionally because he had left his wallet at Yifan’s place and needed to fetch it so he was able to catch a taxi from the palace to his home. It took him a while until he was finally sitting on the backseat of the Bentley next to Yifan who was still pumped from the music and the alcohol.

“Yixing, we cannot possibly go to bed now!” He cried out theatrically but Yixing didn’t have any of his attitude.

“Well, first of all there is not a ‘we’, second of all, it is four in the morning and I for one have to be at work in four hours again and I curse your stupid ass for dragging me here!”

“Baby, come on, you had fuuuuuuuuuuu!”

Yifan scooted over and pinched Yixing’s thigh. Yixing slapped his hand away.

“Drop the pet names, I told you already!”

Yixing tried to ignore the thought that Yifan was extremely cute when he pouted and turned around to look out of the window. Even in China’s capital, the streets seemed to be asleep during these ungodly hours. Soon, that would be completely changed and they’d be filled with people again that would make their way to their jobs, fatigue still lingering on their faces. Without a warning, Yifan stretched out on the backseat and placed his head onto Yixing’s lap who got pulled out of his semi-poetic drunk thoughts.

“What are you doing?!” Yixing hissed.

“You’re actually the first guy I’m taking home after a club!”

“God you are such an idiot.”
Yifan grinned and puckered his lips to a kiss but Yixing just flicked Yifan’s forehead.

“Aiyo! Is this how you treat royalty?!” Yifan roared and Yixing responded:

“Bitch, please. Just because your name is ‘Wu’ I’m not going to pamper you.”

“You’re so lucky I’m too drunk to bother about your attitude!”

“Whatever.”

“Wow you really have no respect, Zhang Yixing!”

“Feels weird to be treated that way, right?” Yixing shot back and flicked Yifan’s forehead one more time.

Yifan whined and turned around to shield his face from another attack. When Yixing looked up he met the driver’s gaze who just raised an eyebrow in question before his attention snapped back to the street in front of him. For the rest of the ride, Yifan kept babbling absolute and utter nonsense that Yixing didn’t even pay real attention to until they arrived at their destination and Yixing dragged Yifan to his house which was harder than he thought. When he finally had maneuvered the prince into his bed chamber, it was almost five already. He was surely going to hate himself so much when he’d be getting to work. With a last curse on his tongue that he swallowed down, Yixing turned to Yifan who peeled off his blazer and fumbled with the buttons of his dress shirt.

“Okay. Good night. Try not to throw up in your sleep.” Yixing said and grabbed his wallet that he had tossed onto the living room table when he had arrived.

“Nooooooooooo, I didn’t say you should leave!” Yifan cried out and even though the alcohol gave him a hard time on his speech, he was still able to lift Yixing off his feet as if he weighed nothing.

“What are you DOING?! Let me go!!”

Yixing kicked his legs and maltreated Yifan’s back with his fists, but Yifan didn’t even flinch once. Without a word, Yixing was thrown onto Yifan’s bed and the prince followed a second after, crushing the journalist with his body weight.

“Get off me!!”

Yifan threw his impossible long legs around Yixing’s and held him tightly around his torso and Yixing let out a scream of frustration.

“Didn’t I say you’re the first guy I’m taking home with me?”

“Didn’t I say that you are an idiot?!”

“I like it when you’re angry!”

“Fuck you, Wu Yifan! Let me go!”

As hard as it was to admit, Yixing was almost as badly hammered as the other one and it was just so hard to struggle himself free. And the mattress was just so comfortable, it was like it was pulling him down on purpose to embrace him.

“Sshhh honey… it’s okay…”

Yifan started to run his fingers through Yixing’s hair and the movement was so soothing that Yixing
slowly but surely stopped his attempt to escape Yifan’s claws. He sighed heavily and said:

“If I ask nicely, will you let me go?”

“Hmmmmmmmnooooo…”

The journalist lifted his head only to see that Yifan had his eyes already closed. The rhythm he was massaging Yixing’s scalp with slowed down and eventually came to a halt. Yixing’s head sunk back onto the pillow and he let out the breath he had been holding. It could be worse – Yifan could’ve actually attempted to have sex with him but instead he just fell asleep atop of the younger. That was his chance to finally get out of here and go home, but Yifan’s body weight was still pressing him down and he was just so tired and powerless, getting up seemed to be an impossible task. The alcohol rushing through his system only added to his physical state and he decided to close his eyes for five minutes, just to rest a little, before he really would be leaving.

The annoying buzzing of the phone in his pocket woke him up. When Yixing threw his eyes open he needed a second to understand what was going on – he was still on Yifan’s bed, in the exact same position, with Yifan’s feet tangled in his who was still sleeping like a baby. The light of day was flooding the room and Yixing realized he had indeed fallen asleep. He groaned and fumbled his phone out of his pocket. Of course. It was ten in the morning. And his boss was calling. He sent another curse into Yifan’s direction and answered the phone.

“Where are you?” Mrs. Wang asked and didn’t even bother to greet him.

“I’m… um…”

“Obviously not at your office desk!”

She wasn’t yelling, but the icy tone in her voice was almost worse. Maybe he was still drunk from last night, but he decided to just tell the truth.

“I’m at Wu Yifan’s place.”

There was silence at the other end of the line and Yixing imagined his boss frowning and curling her upper lip, like she used to do when she was in deep thought over something that didn’t make sense to her.

“Why?”

“He invited me to go out. I kind of crashed here. That wasn’t really planned. I’ll be at the office immediately.”

“No! No! It’s fine. Stay there! It’s okay! Just make sure the next article is on my desk by next Friday!”

“Umm… okay?”

She babbled something about “Good job!” and how she wished to get more intimate portraits about Yifan (why in the world was she so fond of the word ‘intimate’ it only made Yixing cringe) and then she just hung up without even saying goodbye. Yixing stared at his phone and finally felt the headache emerging, the payback for downing one or two drinks too many and not getting enough sleep. Next to him, Yifan suddenly moved, but he did not seem to be waking up. Yixing slowly untangled himself, carefully moving so he wouldn’t wake Yifan up, and congratulated himself when he was finally able to stand up from the bed. He felt horrible, but at least he was free now. His first instinct was to leave, go home and take a shower, but when he was already throwing his coat over
his shoulders and was on his way to the door, his eyes locked with Yifan’s bookshelf. He had always wondered what kind of books Yifan would read or if they were mere decoration to trick people into thinking he was reading. Yixing’s curiosity won over his need to get out of his clothes that reeked of sweat and alcohol and he put his coat back over the sofa. He checked on Yifan one more time and when he was sure that he was still as out as a light he hovered over to the shelf and took a look over the assortment of books.

The first thing that caught Yixing’s eye were the Harry Potter books whose spines looked like they had been cracked more than one time. Yixing took the first part of the series in his hands and flipped through it – the paper had turned yellow over the time and there were a lot of stains that looked like ice cream, milkshake or juice. On the first page, Yifan had written “This book belongs to Wu Yifan” and judging from the way the characters looked, Yifan had still been a kid. Yixing smiled when the image of a younger Wu Yifan popped up in his head, sitting in the imperial garden on a hot summer day with an ice cream cone in one hand and the book in the other, sucked into the story J.K. Rowling had written down so many years ago. Yixing also found a children’s version of Journey to the West, which had found the same fate as the Harry Potter books, bended a million times, stained with traces of Yifan’s own carelessness while eating and reading simultaneously.

The children’s books had made way for adult books and Yixing was surprised to find a lot of stuff he had read himself – he found not only a few books of contemporary Chinese writers but also copies of modern classics like To Kill A Mockingbird, Animal Farm or In Cold Blood. He looked over to Yifan once again and couldn’t quite imagine him reading these books and actually liking them. When he pulled out one novel and opened a random page, Yixing realized that Yifan hadn’t just read the books. He had marked them and commented on some passages, something Yixing might have done when he had had to read stories for his university assignments, but never for fun. Yifan had even scribbled down his general opinions on the books, what he liked and what he didn’t like and even if he was up for a reread or not. Especially the novel by Truman Capote seemed to have a lot of lines that Yifan was fond of very much, since they weren’t only highlighted but also underlined or marked with an exclamation mark.

As long as you live, there’s always something waiting; and even if it’s bad, and you know it’s bad, what can you do? You can’t stop living.

Yixing vividly remembered reading this novel. He remembered buying it in a bookstore at Wangfujing and how he had read the whole book in one go on a rainy Sunday afternoon after the purchase. He had loved it and had admired Capote’s phrasing but seeing the sentences Yifan had picked out gave him second thoughts about if he even had read the novel at all.

You want not to give a damn, to exist without responsibility, without faith or friends or warmth.

The journalist felt like an intruder as he flipped the pages and found more phrases that somehow seemed to give more away than any lame dinner, any random text message or any annoying conversation in the last few weeks he had had with the prince about his character.

You exist in a half-world suspended between two superstructures, one self-expression and the other self-destruction. You are strong, but there is a flaw in your strength, and unless you can learn how to control it the flaw will prove stronger than your strength and defeat you.

Yifan woke up with a groan and before Yixing could close the book and put it back unnoticed, the other one asked:

“You want to lend it?”

“! Umm…!” Yixing stammered as if he had just gotten caught by his mother stealing some cookies out of the jar in the kitchen.
Yifan buried his face in his hands and let out a sigh, mumbling something about how much his head hurt. Yixing slowly walked over to the bed, still clinging to the book.

“I never thought you read books…” He admitted as he sat down next to the taller one.

“What? Do you think I can’t read?”

“I just didn’t think you’d sit down and follow a story printed on some paper, that’s all,” Yixing answered and quoted another marked phrase.

“I’ve tried to believe, but I don’t, I can’t, and there’s no use pretending – wow, am I getting a full psychologic insight on the mind of the great Wu Yifan?”

“Or maybe I’m just appreciating great literature when I read it.” Yifan blocked and rolled over. He took the book out of Yixing’s hands and tossed it onto the bedside table before he threw his monstrous limbs around the younger’s body again. Then his head crashed back down and he buried his face in the curve of Yixing’s neck.

“Get your hands off me immediately!” Yixing hissed and pinched the back of the hand that was placed on his chest – so much for thinking Yifan had something like a soul, or common sense or any other trait that might make him a decent human being.

“Ouch!” Yifan whined and pulled his hand back, “Come on, you know what they say: Being a little gay is totally okay.”

Yixing was caught off guard and couldn’t react for a second and it felt like his soul had left his body at the mere stupidity that had just burst out of Yifan’s mouth.

“You are such an…!!” Yixing started, and shot up while a fit of anger flashed through his body.

“Wow! What is wrong with you?” Yifan asked and rolled over onto his back before he sat up and watched Yixing hover over to his sofa to fetch his coat and wallet.

“With me? Seriously?! I’d rather ask what is wrong with you, you jerk!” Yixing shot back.

“Yixing, I really don’t understand… mind explaining to me what is going on with you?” Yifan said with an honest dumbfounded look on his face and Yixing bristled with anger.

“Okay, you really bother to know? I am gay and you don’t get to treat my sexuality as a joke, even if you’re the prince of this god damn country!”

Yifan’s face fell in surprise as Yixing had finished his statement. There was a moment of silence in which Yixing waited for a snarky and stupid comment, but instead Yifan said:

“Wow! Sorry! I didn’t know man!”

He got up and massaged his temples with his index fingers while he made his way towards Yixing who was ready to just turn around and leave, but somehow he stayed put and shot the older one angry looks, hoping they would only increase the pain in the other’s head.

“I apologize.” Yifan simply said and looked straight at Yixing who was startled for a few seconds.

“Wait. You… what?”

“Are you deaf? I said I apologize. You’re right, that’s not something someone should joke about.”
“Who are you and what have you done to Wu Yifan?” Yixing asked and the comment made Yifan chuckle.

“WOW you really think I’m not capable of seeing I was wrong?”

“To be honest? No.”

Yifan clicked his tongue and walked over to the minibar next to his TV and tossed Yixing a bottle of water.

“Aspirin’s in the bathroom. I’m going to order breakfast, what do you want?”

“I was about to leave, Yifan,” Yixing said who was kind of weirded out by the other’s nice behavior.

“Naaaah, you’re not, let me order some breakfast.” Yifan said and smiled when Yixing gave in and threw his coat back over the couch to go to the bathroom and get the painkillers - he didn’t really know why he was staying, maybe it was the journalist in him that sensed a story lurking behind every corner. In this case, it may have been lurking behind Yifan’s behavior.

“Why’d you apologize?” Yixing asked after he had gotten the medicine and they waited on Yifan’s bed for the breakfast to arrive.

Yixing asked himself why they never seemed to be able to move to the couch when they were together. Just to make sure, he stayed as far away from Yifan as possible this time.

“I like hanging around with you.” The prince answered and shrugged his shoulders as if there were no more words needed.

“I’m nothing like your friends. Or like you.” Yixing stated while he played around with the tag of the water bottle which had gotten loose.

Yifan snorted and said:

“I don’t even like most of these punks we went out with yesterday.”

“Huh?!”

“Oh Yixing, my sweet summer child,” Yifan said and rolled over his bed to poke Yixing’s nose (which Yixing would’ve punished at once if he hadn’t been that baffled), “Most of these people don’t even like me. It’s not about who you like. It’s about who you’re being seen with.”

“So you basically have no real friends.”

“Aiya, don’t put it that way! I like William, for example. He’s cool. But Dawei? Man he’s a douchebag. He’s like this annoying person in high school that forces themselves into a group of friends. We accept him because we feel sorry for him.”

Yixing didn’t say anything, because he didn’t know how to respond to that. He was sensing that real friendships were rare in the circle of Beijing’s high society, but hearing Yifan putting it like this made him almost feel sorry for the prince. He asked himself if Yifan actually had a real friend that wasn’t related to him by blood. He couldn’t give a definite answer to that. Yifan grinned and placed his head on Yixing’s lap without a warning, like he had done in the car on their ride back here. Yixing swore to himself that from this day on, he’d be trying to stay out of Yifan’s reach within an arm length.
“Don’t look so sad Yixing. I’ve got you now.”

“What exactly makes you think that we are friends?” Yixing asked with a raised eyebrow, because he really did not consider him and the other one friends or acquaintances in any kind of way.

Yixing was the guy who wrote cheesy articles about Yifan to be able to pay his bills at the end of the month. There was literally no other reason for Yixing to spend time with Yifan. When November 6th would be finally over, and Yixing longed for the day his life would be back to normal again, he’d most likely never see Yifan again.

“You’re rejecting me, huh?”

“I do this because you obviously mistake me for one of your model girlfriends. I’m still the guy who writes about you.”

The door opened and one of the maids came in with breakfast. Yixing didn’t dare to ask where she came from and how she had managed to bring coffee, tea, fruit, scrambled eggs and a whole lot of other stuff in such a short amount of time over to Yifan’s place, so he bit his tongue and watched her setting the table, just like Yifan had told her when she had come in. She threw a startled look over to the bed where Yifan’s head was still placed in Yixing’s lap, but then hurried to get everything on the table before the eggs would be cold. When she had left Yifan finally bothered to sit up.

“That’s true, Xingie. But if we’re being honest, I was never really serious about them. So you’re one level above them already!”

Anyone else would have been flattered, but Yixing just rolled his eyes as he got up and sat down at the table.

“You are impossible, Wu Yifan.”

“People tend to tell me that.”
Chapter Summary

Yixing gets to meet the family.

Chapter Notes

YO thanks for the kudos and the subscriptions! :D

September 28th, 2015

Even though Yixing had gotten a lot of praise for his writing skills over the years he wasn’t safe from writer’s blocks that could hit him out of nowhere and knock him out over the keyboard of his laptop. This time, a very horrible one had come around as soon as he had sat down in his office chair and opened a new document to type down the first script for his next article. Mrs. Wang’s words “Make it intimate!” rang in his ears but he couldn’t think of anything that would be of great interest to the readers.

Wu Yifan is still a spoiled brat, as usual. But I have found out that he is a spoiled brat with a taste in books. And it is very surprising that he reflects on the pieces he reads – he cried at the ending of “The Giver”, but wouldn’t give “The Hobbit” a reread. I guess Fantasy isn’t his thing, even though he has read all the Harry Potter books in his childhood. Kind of surprising, huh?

Yixing grunted at his own incoherence and stared at the laptop screen, hoping it would spit out some words that he could actually work with. The beginning. It was always the beginning which was the hardest. If he only found a way to get into a nice writing flow, his problems would be solved.

“What’s my favorite journalist doing?”

The sound of Yifan’s voice made Yixing jump in his chair and he had to prevent a whine escaping his throat when he saw the prince standing in the doorway with two Starbucks Coffees.

“Trying to work.” Was Yixing’s short answer and Yifan hovered over to the desk where he put one of the cups next to Yixing.

“What is that?” The journalist asked and tried to look very busy hoping it would make Yifan go away, even though he knew that the second the other one had set a foot into his office, he’d not go anywhere anytime soon. Not without Yixing.

“A freshly brewed Americano, what else should it be?” Yifan retorted and sat down on the edge of Yixing’s desk.

“I see that you brought me coffee. I meant why would you do this?”

“That’s what friends do, right?” Yifan shot back and when he saw Yixing’s raised eyebrow, he
added “Well, at least that’s what I read on the internet since I am not able to act like a normal person. I’m glad I have Google to help me out.”

The rather lame joke actually worked and Yixing snorted before Yifan finally proceeded to explain his appearance:

“I want you to come with me. I’m about to pick up Yili’s birthday present, and afterwards there’s this super boring annual family shoot. I figured you might want to swing by for your article. And I won’t die of great boredom, so it’s kind of a win-win situation?”

“What did you get for her?”

“Oh, just some jewelry, nothing too fancy. She said she doesn’t want anything, but there’s this set of earrings she has thrown her eyes on…”

Yixing sighed and looked at the empty document. It was no use. He wouldn’t get any writing done.

“Okay then,” he said and shut down his computer before he grabbed the coffee and took a sip.

“Yay! Amazing!”

Yifan hopped off the desk and they walked out of the building, and of course, while they walked through the open plan office, everybody’s eyes followed them accompanied with shocked whispers.

“Seriously if you keep coming walking in like this my co-workers will think we’re a thing or something,” Yixing said when they stood in the elevator and Yifan hit the big 1 to get on the ground floor.

“Are you saying we aren’t?”

“Jesus Christ you’re a prick…”

Yifan giggled but was wise enough to not overstep his line this early so he shut his mouth and took a gulp from his coffee. Yixing tried to remember when he had told Yifan that he usually didn’t drink coffee but only freshly brewed Americano but couldn’t quite pinpoint the conversation ever. He contemplated to ask the prince but then the elevator doors swung open and Yifan strode out on his long legs that stuck in tight leather pants and Yixing hated him for looking this good. He followed the older one to the car and they got dropped off at Wangfujing street where one high-end designer store after another had opened its doors to welcome the beautiful and dirty rich society of Beijing. Yixing felt awkwardly out of place.

“So what are you going to do on the 7th?” Yifan asked as they walked down the street to the store where he wanted to buy Yili’s gift.

“Nothing much. My best friend is coming over from Taiwan, so I guess we’ll just go out to eat something and that’s about it.”

“Taiwan?”

“I met him at university. After graduation he went back to Taiwan where he’s from.” Yixing explained and Yifan nodded to indicate he understood.

The older one left it at that and stepped into the store, a jeweler that sold only the brands such as Cartier, Bvlgari and other names that Yixing didn’t recognize, maybe because even those were the exclusive ones in the high society. The owner of the store already expected Yifan and the two got
right into business while Yixing took the opportunity to look around. The jewelry wasn’t of big interest for him but then he strolled along an exhibition of watches and he leaned over to take a closer look. It reminded him that he needed a new one since the one he was wearing (a rather cheap one, even though back then when he had graduated the 1,500 RMB he had spent on it had seemed insanely expensive) was way beyond its best days. Of course he could never afford one of these, but looking didn’t cost anything and maybe he could find one that somehow fit the style – just to get inspiration.

His eyes locked with a Rolex, mainly because the dial was black which Yixing had barely seen before. He instantly regretted taking a look at it because he immediately knew that this was the kind of watch he had been looking for all his life. The gold used wasn’t too much and set nice highlights, the bracelet was made of plain black leather. For a second he imagined how the watch would look like around his own wrist but he almost gasped when he saw the price set for 120,000 RMB. He didn’t even want to think about how many months he’d have to put some money aside to be able to afford it.

“I see that you have found something you like?”

Why would Wu Yifan always sneak up on him?! Yixing grunted and turned around to face the prince.

“I’m just looking around,” he answered and tried to sound casual.

Yifan was accompanied by one of the staff members who held a small gift bag in her hands. Yifan leaned over and immediately pointed out the watch Yixing liked.

“That one, right?”

“I… what??”

Yifan chuckled.

“I think it would suit you. How much is it?”

“120,000.” Yixing simply said and with that, he deemed the conversation as over.

The other one made a surprised noise.

“Only 120,000? That’s cheap!”

“Are you seriously doing this right now?” Yixing asked and rolled his eyes.

“No! I mean… well… yeah. I kind of do.”

“Let’s get to that family gathering of yours,” Yixing said and walked out of the store.

Yifan followed Yixing on his heels and the staff member carried the little gift bag to the doorstep where one of the bodyguards took it and she made a perfect 90° bow that went unnoticed by the prince because he was busy tailing Yixing.

“I can buy it for you if you want me to!” He offered.

“Thanks for the offer, Mother Therese, but no you’re not going to buy me anything.”

Yixing slipped onto the backseat and Yifan climbed into the vehicle too. When the door closed Yifan said:
“Seriously, it’s really not a big deal, if you really want it…”

“I don’t! I don’t want a watch that’s three times my monthly salary, okay? Stop it!”

“Geez, no need to get rude I was just trying to be nice!”

Yixing let out a huge sigh and decided to let it go. Yifan would never understand anyway, so why bother trying to explain? Instead, he went on to change the topic and asked about the shooting.

“Oh it’s such a nuisance!” Yifan exclaimed and rolled his eyes, “I’m pretty sure you know these photos, like, we always send some greetings after the Mid Autumn Festival? The whole family is gathered and my father is doing some stuff like blessing the whole country, whatever the heck that actually means.”

“Ooooooh, I know what you mean!”

“Exactly. These pictures. We’re taking them today. And the whole ugly family is invited. Even the Korean side of the family, what are they even doing, I see them once a year??”

“Oh come on it cannot be that bad.”

Yifan’s face was clouded with annoyance and then he mumbled something that sounded like “Just wait and see…”

“Will Tao be there?”

“Yes, but he will leave very soon after that the next morning to get back to work. I told him to at least get the day after off but he couldn’t manage to do that.”

Well. At least he knew one of the family. They sat in silence for the rest of the ride and when they arrived at the palace, photographers, stylists and the first family members where there already. Yixing got introduced as “The charming journalist that wrote that flattering article about Yifan” and got engaged in a rather pleasant conversation with Yifan’s grandmother who turned out to be a lovely lady. He really couldn’t make sense of how Yifan could’ve turned out to become such a prick when the rest of his family was so nice and well mannered. But then again – there was always the black sheep in the family. When Tao arrived he greeted Yixing like they had known each other for ages now.

“Heyyy Yixing, so nice to see you again! Are you taking good care of my cousin?” He greeted Yixing and pulled him into a hug which caught the other one a little off guard.

“Ummm, yeah, hi!”

“Tao, if anything, I’m taking care of him!” Yifan butted in but Tao just winked at Yixing, knowing very well that Yifan was the one to be taken care of.

Yixing just didn’t quite understand why he’d be considered the one to look after a grown ass man.

“When will the others come?” Tao asked instead and Yifan shrugged his shoulders.

“Maybe never. Maybe we need to do the shoot without…”

“Eyyyyyyyyyyyy, there they are!” Someone called from the entrance of the Imperial Garden which was serving as the setting for the shoot.

“…. Them.” Yifan finished and closed his eyes as a bunch of people walked into the scene, and the
one leading them waved frantically at Yifan.

“That is Sehun,” Tao turned to Yixing, “The Emperor’s second brother married a Korean business woman, he’s their son. So basically he’s our cousin.”

“Yifan seems to be thrilled to see him.” Yixing stated sarcastically as Sehun strode over, with a big and excited smile on his lips and Yixing thought that he was kind of cute.

“You should be used to it by now. He always acts like everyone around him is a nuisance. I think deep down he likes Sehun. He just never shows it.”

Yixing nodded as he watched Sehun and Yifan greet each other. Out of courtesy, Yifan held some smalltalk with Sehun and the rest of the newcomers and while his Korean aunt asked him if he had ‘any new girlfriend to show around’ Sehun’s gaze wandered over the rest and he noticed Tao. He excused himself and walked over to him. The closer he got, the more Yixing got aware of how good looking this guy was actually. His smile was boyish, almost childish, but there was just something about him that made it impossible for Yixing to take his eyes off him.

“Sehun, sweetheart, how’s it going?” Tao chirped and they hugged each other.

“Long time no see! I missed you, cousin!” Sehun greeted back.

When they parted, Sehun finally seemed to notice Yixing who tried to hide his embarrassment from staring at them like an idiot.

“I’ve never seen you around here!” The Korean stated.

“That’s because he’s never been to one of our get togethers before.”

“Oh! I see! Hi, I’m Sehun!”

He offered his hand and Yixing took it. His grip was tight, but not intimidating.

“I’m Zhang Yixing.”

“I’m thrilled to meet you!”

Yixing blinked in confusion and didn’t really know what to say so he stammered a “Thank you… me too?” – Sehun showed another smile that reached his eyes and he said:

“Pardon my Chinese. I’m a little rusty, so if I say something stupid, I’m sorry in advance!”

Yixing assured him that his Chinese was good and he himself knew the struggle since he had taken Korean courses at university.

“So you know Korean?!” Sehun exclaimed and his eyes lit up in excitement.

“I only learned it for a year. I only know stuff like Hwajangsil eodiye isseoyo.”

Sehun let out a bright laughter and said:

“Your pronunciation is great! I’m sure you know more than you give yourself credit for!”

“Well, you can test his Korean, Sehun,” Tao threw in with a wink and Sehun didn’t even ask if it was okay for Yixing if they switched to Korean, he just started to blurt out sentences.
He went easy on Yixing though and asked rather easy question like what his job was, why he was here, how old he was, what kind of hobbies he had. Yixing was very wary at first, but Sehun encouraged him with that bright smile of his and reassured Yixing he was doing great so he soon got back into the flow of the language. In the middle of their conversation, Yifan butted in.

“Sehun, your mother needs you.” He informed with a nod in her direction.

“Oh okay. Well, Yixing! I can say it’s been a pleasure, see you around!” Sehun beamed and left to check what his mother wanted who was already awaiting him.

Yifan eyed Sehun suspiciously before he turned to Yixing.

“He’s not your type, right?”

“The fucking hell Wu Yifan?!” Yixing exclaimed.

“I’m just asking man! The way you checked him out made it clear you have the hots for him!”

Tao snorted into his glass of water while Yixing had to bring up all his willpower to not take said glass and throw it into Yifan’s face – yes, the glass. Not the water. The glass. Because that would’ve hurt more.

“Oh, so, first of all, I look at people the way I want,” the journalist started, “Second of all this is none of your business. So what if I found him cute? What are you going to do about it, huh?”

“But seriously, out of all my cousins… Sehun?”

Yixing looked at Tao who was having the time of his life.

“Mind helping me out here?!!”

Fortunately, the last family members entered the garden and the conversation got interrupted by their arrival. It was Yili who brought a couple in their thirties with her. A little girl was walking next to her, holding onto her hand swinging it around. She laughed at Yili and looked overly cute in a pink dress and her braided pigtails. Everything afterwards happened so fast Yixing needed a notch from Tao to get back to reality:

Yifan turned around and saw them - and suddenly his face softened in a way Yixing had never witnessed it before and the prince cried out:

“Sophia, my sweetheart!”

She let go of Yili’s hand and dashed towards Yifan who met her halfway, picked her up and swirled her around. Sophia, as Yixing had figured, let out a squealing laughter and when Yifan came to a stop she threw her little arms around Yifan’s neck and gave him a kiss on the cheek. Yifan held her tightly, pressing her little body against his and he buried his face in her neck which caused her to giggle even more.

“I missed you so much my love!”

She tried to escape his grip, but after she wiggled her body a few times she gave up and Yifan swirled her around once more, having one of the brightest smiles on his
face Yixing had ever seen on him.

“I see you are rather confused!” Tao stated.

“How… what did just happen?”

“That is Sophia, another cousin of ours…”

“How many cousins do you guys have?!”

“Hey, Yifan’s father has four more siblings, his mother has two sisters, we’ve got a few.”

Yifan gave the girl a little room to breathe, especially since her mother had butted in:

“If you keep going at that rate her hair will be ruined in an instant! Can you two wait with that nonsense until after the shoot please?!”

Yifan and Sophia made a grimace and Yifan said:

“Come on Sophia, these people aren’t fun. I want you to meet a new friend of mine!”

“Oh god is he talking about me?” Yixing asked with a horrified expression and Tao made some incoherent noises as Yifan carried Sophia over who was so thrilled to see her cousin she placed a few more pecks on his cheek.

“Yepp, he was definitely talking about you.”

“Oh dear god!”

The duo stood in front of Yixing and Yifan said:

“Sophia, meet Yixing. Yixing, this is Sophia!”

“Are you a new girlfriend?” Sophia asked with big eyes and Tao let out a fit of laughter.

He clapped his hands theatrically and cried out:

“Sophia, always on point! I love you!”

Then he proceeded to kiss her on her forehead and the girl said after giving him a kiss back:

“But… I wasn’t joking Tao?”

Yixing felt how his cheeks reddened as Yifan bit his lower lip to suppress a laughter. Yeah. Of course. Yifan found this absolutely funny.

“Ummm, actually, you would call that a boyfriend because I am a boy…” Yixing stammered and immediately realized he had made a rather big mistake.

“Oh!” Sophia said and blinked a few times, “So… are you his boyfriend?”

“God forbid, no!” Yixing tried to save the situation but it seemed like Sophia had already made her decision.

“Yifan always brings his girlboyfriends over!”

“Girlboyfriends!” Yifan mouthed and bit his lower lips at Sophia’s new creation.
“I’m not his boyfriend. I’m here to work. I’m writing articles about Yifan, I’m a journalist, you know?”

Sophia looked at Yixing and processed the information. Then she nodded. Yixing smiled brightly at her and she placed her head on Yifan’s shoulder.

“Don’t listen to him, Sophia. He is my girlboyfriend, you saw that right!”

“YIFAN!!”

“Let’s make a run, Sophia, Yixing is mad!” Yifan cried out when Yixing was about to lash forward and ran across the yard while Sophia shrieked and laughed and clung onto him.

“I’m--!!” Yixing said while Tao kept laughing.

“Don’t take it too hard, he sees the girl once or twice a year, let him have the fun while it lasts and he becomes the human incarnation of Grumpy Cat again!”

Yixing swallowed his anger and watched as Yifan finally put Sophia back onto her feet and she started to swing her little body around him while holding onto his hands. Her own completely disappeared in Yifan’s pranks and she barely reached up to his hip.

“He likes her very much, huh?”

“He adores Sophia. From the moment she was born. Her family lives in Shanghai and when she was born, we all payed them a visit. You should’ve seen the moment when Sophia’s mother handed her over and Yifan held her in his arms. Pure magic, I’m telling you. He loves her like she’s his own.”

Yixing turned to face Yifan again who had now started to do a little dance with Sophia while the photographers made the last preparations for the upcoming shoot. His mind started to race when he got hit with a fit of inspiration on what to write as he held up his camera and pressed the release to capture the moment. That might have been just the thing he needed to satisfy Mrs. Wang’s need for 'intimate' (ew) articles.

The shoot itself dragged on for almost three hours in which every possible family constellation had to be captured. Yixing stood on the sidelines and sipped on refreshments and nibbled on snacks. When it wasn't their turn, Tao, Sehun, Yifan and Sophia would stand next to him to entertain him a little.

"Yixing, do you want to take a picture with me?" Sophia asked and gave him a bright smile.

"Sweetheart, it wouldn't be appropriate for me to be on those photos."

"Not even as the girlboyfriend?"

It was Sopia's luck that she was so cute otherwise Yixing would have lost his complete composure.

"Not even as the girlboyfriend," he said with grinding teeth.

"But you've got a camera yourself!" She said and pointed at Yixing's Nikon, "We can just use yours, right?"

So just like that, Yixing got into the possession of some selfies with Wu Yifan's cousin who soon seemed to find these photos better than the professional ones.

"Let's ask Fanfan to take one with us! Then we're like a family!" She beamed and dashed towards
Yifan whose stylist applied more powder on his nose.

"Fanfan! You need to come with me!" Sophia demanded and took his hand to drag him to Yixing who didn't dare to protest and just hoped Yifan would say no to her.

But 'no' wasn't a thing that ran in the family. As they got closer, Sophia explained that they needed to take a family picture with Yixing and Yifan agreed to it with a triumphant smile. Sophia demanded to take the selfie and Yixing held the camera for her so she could press the release when they were in perfect position.

"Sophia, Yifan, let's wrap the last photos up!" Yili cried across the yard afterwards and Sophia hopped away to her cousin.

Yifan took a look at the picture and said:

"You have to send me that picture!"

He leaned over and then added a "Don't we look like a family, Yixing?" before he went to get the last pictures taken. Yixing cursed Yifan silently but grinned and bore with the fact Wu Yifan was still a little prick, even though he could be the sweetest guy to a seven year old. *It's a trap, Yixing reminded himself, he's going to be his old self as soon as Sophia boards the plane back to Shanghai.*

After the shoot Yixing got asked to stay over for dinner and a laid back evening with the cousins. He only accepted the invitation because a) Sophia wanted him to stay and saying no to her was incredibly hard and b) Sehun was the one to suggest it and saying no to him was just as hard. Since it was late September, the temperature in the evening was still pleasant and the cousins had gathered in the garden in front of Yifan's bedchambers. They were lounging around on lawn chairs, sharing blankets and expensive wine - and even more anecdotes of their childhood days. Some of the stories made Yixing cry tears of laughter while Yifan got roasted by either Yili or Tao.

"You guys could you STOP it!" Yifan barked as Yili and Tao had just revealed that Yifan had been afraid of the dark until he was thirteen and always had to sleep with the lights on.

"I didn’t know that!" Sehun exclaimed and refilled Yixing's glass with more wine.

Yixing wanted to protest, because he had already had two glasses to many but then he figured he'd better not let the alcohol go to waste.

"Oh come ON I hardly believe Yixing will mention it in his next article, right Yixing?" Yili said and winked.

"No, it's going to go through the censorship of your mother so she'd erase that info anyways," Yixing said.

"Ooooh, he's right, cheers to that!"

Tao spoke out a toast on the Empress' reign and while the adults giggled like little children, Sophia appeared.

"Sophia, what are you doing here??" Yifan asked when she tippled over to him.

She was supposed to be fast asleep in the guesthouse, which her pyjamas gave away, but she was wearing shoes and her jacket she had been wearing this afternoon.

"I wanted to be with you, Fanfan! It's so boring in that guesthouse!" She climbed onto Yifan's lap
who was so baffled for a second he couldn't respond.

"Don't tell me you walked over from the guesthouse all by yourself?"

"I did," Sophia answered as if she was talking about the weather, "My parents didn't even notice I was leaving!"

"Darling, you could've gotten lost!" Yili exclaimed and poured the girl a glass of water.

"No, I remembered the way from the guesthouse to Fanfan's house just fine!"

Yifan heaved a sigh while the other people let out an "Awww!" and he said:

"So, do you want to sleep over at my place?"

"Yes!"

It was already around midnight, way past Sophia's bedtime.

"Okay then. You can stay. But only if you go to bed right now," Yifan said and Yixing thought that this might have been the first mature statement Yifan had said in the past weeks.

Sophia didn't quite like the idea but gave up defeat because Yifan threatened to bring her back to the guesthouse and she certainly didn't want that. So she hopped off Yifan's lap and said:

"Okay, but you've got to bring me to bed. And Yixing has to come with us."

Again, saying no to Sophia felt like a major crime so Yixing threw away the blanket and followed them while ignoring the snarky comments Tao threw after them ("They look like a little family!"). In the bedroom, Sophia threw herself onto Yifan's bed who had pulled back the blanket for her prior to it.

"Do you need anything?" He asked while he asked Yixing to set a bottle of water next to the bed in case Sophia was thirsty.

"No! I'm good!" The girl responded and snuggled into the sheets.

"Okay, great. We'll get back to the others for a while, if you need anything just let me know."

"I'll wait for you two to come back!" Sophia decided and Yixing frowned.

"Um... us two?"

"Yeah, aren't you supposed to be here too? I mean you're his girlboyfriend."

Yifan almost died of laughter and Yixing's jaw hardened as he tried to swallow down the annoyance.

"Honey, I'm not his boyfriend, I'm not staying here for the night."

"Noooo but you have to, Yixing!" Sophia retorted and pouted.

"Right! Sophia said you have to stay, so you have to stay!"

"Yifan, this is not helping!"

"I'm not going to bed until you promise!"
In the end, Yixing gave up and pinky promised to stay. In the very back of his mind, he hoped Sophia would forget about it as soon as she was asleep and he could in fact go home and spend the night in his bed. As he walked out with Yifan, the older one said:

"I should keep an extra toothbrush for you!"

"Ugh, shut up."

"Hey, I mean, it's kind of a rule to have a toothbrush for the girlboyfriend, right?"

"Stop it, I swear to god!"

Yifan stopped the teasing when they got into the earshot of the others and sat back down on their chairs. If Yixing had been clever he'd have taken the opportunity to leave but as soon as he was wrapped up in that blanket again he knew he'd be losing the fight one more time just like a few days back after that club escapade on a weekday. Sehun was the first to leave the round a good thirty minutes later and when he said goodbye he turned to Yixing, threw his blanket over him and said that he hoped they'd see each other again - in Korean. With a last wink he left the scene and Yifan said:

"So is that your secret language now?"

"You jealous?" Yixing retorted and Yili and Tao exchanged some meaningful looks.

The rest of the gathering called it a day around one in the morning and when Yixing and Yifan were left alone, Yixing started to get a hold of the mess on the table consisting of wine bottles, glasses, a full ashtray and the leftovers of the snacks they had ordered from the kitchen.

"What are you doing?"

"Doing what normal people do - cleaning up," Yixing explained.

Yifan sighed and fought himself up from the chair before he let out a loud yawn.

"You don't have to do that, we've got staff for that."

Yixing only rolled his eyes but stopped putting the empty plates together. Arguing was no use, that was one of the many things he had learned recently.

"That was actually a good ending for this day," Yifan stated and rubbed his neck that had gotten a little stiff.

Yixing made an affirmative noise and started to shudder in the air that had gotten very crisp in the last few hours. Summer was definitely over.

"I should get going too."

"Nah, you promised something to Sophia - are you really one of those persons who break promises they made to children?"

"Oh please who are you? Malala Yousafzai? Don't give me that shit."

"Jeez you always get so radical in your comparisons!"

"Sarcasm. It's a stylistic device."
"You journalists have such a magnificent way with words. Adorable."

Yixing decided to bite his tongue and swallow his comeback and Yifan stretched a little before he said:

"Let's go to bed."

"Ummm..."

Yifan rolled his eyes, blew out the candles on the table and grabbed Yixing's arm.

"Seriously, what's going to happen anyways? There's a kid in my room, I won't make a move on you!"

"This is not about this kind of stuff!" Yixing protested, "It's about the fact that this is not professional and I should go home!"

"It's past your working hours, no need to be professional. You're not going to get a taxi around this time in this area anyway, trust me. Might as well just crash here."

Yifan opened the door and with that, Yixing's fate was sealed because he surely wouldn't be starting an argument when Sophia was already fast asleep. He ignored Yifan's triumphant smile and promised to get his revenge sooner or later. Yifan was mindful enough to hand him some shorts and a shirt to sleep in, even though they were way too big for him, and when they layed down on the bed, Sophia breathing steadily between them, Yixing hissed:

"You better stay on your side!"

"Good night, girlboyfriend, I love you!"

Yixing refrained from taking one of the pillows and hit Yifan hard in the face with it because Sophia's body jerked and he was afraid she'd be waking up. The prince crooked a smile while Yixing rolled his eyes instead and turned around so he wouldn't be facing him. Then Yifan killed the lights.

Yixing woke up around six thirty and realized Yifan and Sophia were already awake. They were sitting on the couch and Yifan was braiding her hair while she watched a show on his tablet. It was an adorable picture - Sophia kept her eyes glued to the cartoon and Yifan carefully braided her long hair after she had handed him her hair tie and he managed to put her hair into a ponytail. A proud smile flickered across Yifan's face as he looked at his masterpiece. Then he put a quick kiss on Sophia’s head and she giggled.

"Sophia, Yixing is awake!" Yifan stated as he recognized Yixing sitting up in the bed.

"Finally! Can we have breakfast now?"

"Yupp!" Yifan said and the girl jumped off the sofa to the phone and ordered food that she read from a paper she and Yifan had prepared beforehand.

"Good mooooorning!" Yifan sing songed while Yixing threw the blanket aside.

At least he didn't feel as bad as the last time he had stayed here. And if he made it quick, he wouldn't get to the office too late either. This promised to be a good day since he felt like he was about to get some good writing done. While they waited for breakfast to arrive, Yifan let Yixing take a quick shower and change his clothes. When he was done and came out of the bathroom fully
dressed, his damp hair still sticking to the temples of his head, Sophia helped the maid to set the breakfast table.

"Fanfan, where are you sitting?" Sophia asked her cousin as she carefully carried three plates over, two were bigger than the third one which was obviously reserved for her.

Yifan pointed to one seat.

"I usually sit there."

"Then... Yixing has to sit here on your right."

While she set the table, Yifan noticed Yixing's confused expression and chuckled.

"Seating order. The empress has to sit on the emperor's right when they dine in private."

"But..." Yixing wanted to protest and Yifan put his hand on his shoulder to shut him up.

"Let her. It's kind of cute, don't you think?"

It was but that didn't mean Yixing had to find a liking to the fact Sophia was thinking they were married or had to obey to the court rules 24/7. He let the topic drop though and when the table was set they were finally allowed to have a seat.

Almost two hours later Yixing was back in his office and opened a new document, all shiny and white, and cracked his knuckles to get started on writing. The breakfast had been weirdly pleasant - Sophia had been a precious little girl and didn't want to let Yixing go ("You have to spend the day with me and Fanfan Yixing!") and only gave in after Yifan had told her that Yixing really needed to get back to his job otherwise his boss would be very angry with him. She didn't want Yixing to get into trouble, so she made Yixing promise to come to Fanfan's birthday party (which he had no other choice than to attend anyways) and then let him off the hook. Yixing smiled as he thought of it and then put his fingers on the keyboard of his computer. Everybody would love the story of the caring Wu Yifan. So he started to type.
Chapter Summary

For someone who claims to not like Yifan in the slightest, Yixing is making sure to defend his ass fiercely.

Chapter Notes

- THANK Y'ALL FOR THE KUDOS AND SUBS AND STUFF! VERY THANKFUL FOR THAT ACTUALLY!

- I forgot to give out the credit in the last article, the pic was taken from one of Maine's edits (TOO STUPID TO LINK I'M GONNA GET BEHIND THIS ASAP), this time I found the pictures in the Baidu Search (I'm LAME OKAYYY)

- I hope the pics aren't too small????

- IT'S SO CHEESY AGAIN EW WHAT AM I DOING.
Little Hearts and Great Impacts

Or why I started to believe there's a side to Wu Yifan one might not know yet.

I have witnessed magic. I am not one to be speechless very often, but it happened. It happened and I don't know how to put it into proper words. I feel like an incoherent infant that tries to let other people know it has discovered a new amazing thing about the world, the mind racing in excitement, but not being able to say the words, as it just wobbles up and down, clasps his hands and lets out shrieks of joy. If I was writing for any tabloid newspaper it would've been rather easy: "Female fans of our Prince rejoice! If you want to have kids, Wu Yifan might be just the perfect father!"

It's below my standards to think like that and yet I sit here and my mind starts racing when I think about the last 48 hours in which I was able to meet Yifan's family. I felt overly awkward between the Royals, but they were lovely and engaged themselves in rather pleasant conversations with me. There is his grandmother who has told me anecdotes of Yifan's childhood days. There's one of his aunts who just came back from a backpacking tour through Europe (yes she went without the luxury of five star hotels and private jets!). His family consists of different kinds of people who come together once a year for the annual royal photoshoot, every one of them being a very interesting character themselves — and then there is Sophia.

Sophia is Wu Yifan's youngest cousin, a little ray of sunshine that runs around and squeezes her small body between legs of the adults, her mother scolding her for disturbing them, but everybody just smiles at her and lets her be. Her pure laughter still rings in my ears and I am very sure that I have never encountered a lovelier child than her. Sophia is the reason I have to revise my image of Wu Yifan who everybody says has a heart of stone without a care in the world (this is a rather repetitive sentence, I know, I hope dear readers, you will forgive my incoherence). I have written that this is not the case with everyone in my previous article. I have gotten a small insight on what Wu Yifan does for the people he loves. And for Sophia, he'd fight the whole world. While I was watching the prince and the little girl playing in between shoots I couldn't even believe my own eyes. Yifan dreaded the shoot. He doesn't seem to like big family gatherings — to use the words of Huang Zitao, one of his cousins that is rather close to him: he was the human version of Grumpy Cat. This changed with Sophia's arrival. Suddenly he started to laugh, he cracked jokes, he was
like a complete different person.

I am asking myself if that is the true self that he just learned to hide from others, for whatever reason that I still have to get to the bottom of. I am asking myself if, with the right person at his side, he’d finally get rid of his snobby bad boy attitude. Yes, he is charming. Yes, he can be funny, witty, dreamy, nice and generous. But he is like this to show off, to impress his bunch of other rich friends, to pacify his mother so she’d stop nagging or to annoy me while I’m doing my work. He has made this one of his favorite hobbies, I’m afraid. With Sophia, he drops the act. He wants to treat her well, because she’s a kid that can hardly be impressed by his money. But it’s more than just that. She doesn’t care about bad images and scandals, maybe because she is only seven and doesn’t read tabloid newspapers and gossip accounts on Weibo or Twitter. She looks at Wu Yifan and sees him for what he is - ‘Fanfan’ who plays with her and showers her with love. ‘Fanfan’ who, contrary to her parents and the other adults, knows how to take a joke. ‘Fanfan’ who lets her stay over at his place to have toast with chocolate spread while watching cartoons. It’s not Wu Yifan who has yet brought home another girlfriend only to dump her a month later. It’s not Wu Yifan who got wasted in a club again.

I think this is what we should do more of: Less judging. Not only when it comes to the prince, but to other people in general. We spend hours, days, even years looking at others. God forbid our female co-worker’s skirt is shorter than usual. God forbid our neighbor and his wife have another fight during dinnertime. God forbid our friend’s kid is better at an exam than our own offspring. God forbid we let people just live their lives.

Which brings me back to Wu Yifan. God forbid we let a 20-something, born into royalty, live his life. So what if he dates a lot of girls and spends way too much money on way too unnecessary stuff? It’s none of our business in the end. In the end, we will be back to our daily tasks and the world will keep on turning as usual. I do admit, I get irritated a lot when he’s around me, but in the end, so I’ve learned, I cannot change his mindset and his opinions on things. Being the son of the emperor wasn’t his decision to begin with, so can we actually blame him for letting this high status get to his head? I think we can’t. I think we all know that barely anyone of us would be a better person than he’s been so far.

This should not be seen as an extenuation of his
actions though. With his 25th birthday, he’s going
to enter a new period in his life that comes with
far more responsibilities
than before. Wu Yifan
needs to learn that
everything he does will
come back to him sooner
or later. Scandals have
backlashes, that couldn’t
only affect his personal
public image but also
the image of the whole
court and even
ultimately the country.
He has to learn that as
the heir to the Dragon
Throne he’ll have to
grow up eventually. He
can’t live the life of the
rich and the famous
forever, but I am pretty
sure that he will realize
just that. It might take
longer, but he will get
there and he will make
the changes that he
needs to make. I do
believe, that on this day
in late September, I’ve
finally gotten a glimpse
of the potential that lies
beneath the surface. I
hope Sophia will be his
personal reminder that
he’s more than just the
star of the party.

[Here go at least 10 characters, did you know I had to remove that SOWK logo off that second pic with my crappy photoshop skills? No? Well. Now you know. I almost started crying because I'm a friggin' noob.]
October 7th, 2015

Yixing was annoyed. Not "Ugh I've missed the train now I've got to wait two minutes until the next one arrives"-annoyed or "Why's the line in front of the Starbucks store so long I'm running late for work and only want a friggin' black coffee size Venti oh god why is this person in front of me taking so long to order?!"-annoyed.

He was down right pissed off.

It was the 7th October, not only did that mean that it was his birthday (and Yili's), it also meant that his best friend Luo Zhixiang was about to arrive in Beijing, one of the only persons he actually gave a damn about and whom he hadn't seen in over a year.

And Yixing was still wind up with Yifan who didn't even seem to give one flying fuck about the whole situation. It had started this morning. Right when Yixing had sat down in his office chair, Yifan had called him to inform him he'd be picking him up in twenty minutes to accompany him to some stupid meeting. He hadn't expected a lot from Yifan, but when they had ended the call Yixing was a little peeved Yifan hadn't even slipped a 'Happy Birthday'. It wasn't like Yixing was craving for Yifan's appreciation or something, it was just common decency.

"I hope you're not in a rush," Yifan had greeted him when he slipped onto the backseat of the car, "We have to prepare a shitload of stuff."

"What kind of stuff?"

"Ugh, I've got to meet the boss of the club we're going to hold the Halloween party... get over invitations that we're going to send out now..."

Yifan ranted away and acted like he was the busiest man alive and his stupid parties had the main priority in the whole universe and Yixing just hoped he could leave around four so he'd make it in time to the airport. And he had told Yifan. He had told him that he could only stay until four because he needed to pick his friend up and Yifan had nodded and said "Yeah, of course, no problem bro" and Yixing actually had thought: Cool, this might even work.
"Eeeehe I'm not too sure about the whole... you know..." Yifan was contemplating and waggled one card in front of the other man's face, "I don't know... something's missing but I don't know what it possibly could be... Yixing, what do you think?"

"I'm thinking I'm running late for my appointment, and I don't give a shit about your stupid invitations!"

The designer, Mike or Mitchell or whatever stupid foreign name he had picked, gasped theatrically at Yixing's comment but Yifan just nodded.

"Yeah, one second, then we can go."

"You've been saying this for the last thirty minutes! Just take one god damn sample, they will get thrown away anyways, so why even waste so much paper on that stuff?!" Yixing lashed out.

Yixing's comment seemed to trigger a whole new idea in Yifan's mind and he hit his fist onto the table and then pointed at the younger one with a thrilled expression on his face.

"You are so right!! Oh my god! Yixing!" He turned to Mike who couldn't quite follow, "Forget the paper, we're doing e-cards!"

Yixing grunted. This was not what he had had in mind!

"So... my prince... you mean, we send them out via mail?"

"Yes! We're going to save the paper!"

"But... we'd need all those mail addresses... and I'd have to edit the design to make it fit for the format... and you want the cards to be sent out in two days..."

"Yeah, so?"

Yixing bit his tongue and checked his watch for the time. 5:15. Zhixiang's plane was just about to touch down. He'd be needing maybe thirty to fifty minutes to get out of the baggage claim. If Yixing made a run for the next metro he might stand a chance to get there in time.

"This is amazing!" Yifan chanted after Mike had agreed to get over the designs once again, "I'll drop by tomorrow around noon to take a look at them! Yixing, let's go!"

Mike's wide smile was clearly fake and forced. Yixing sensed he wanted to murder Yifan for making him put so much work and effort in a thing that had just been completely overthrown. Same here, Yixing thought and Yifan dragged him out of the designer's office.

"So, the only thing that's left now is to drive one floor up and get the seating order figured out."

"The WHAT?!"

Yixing had actually expected to finally leave this god damn building he had spent the whole day in already because Yifan had run from one office or studio to the other.

"What's the problem?"
"I've told you that I need to get to the airport today! I wanted to leave over an hour ago!"

They drove up one floor and Yifan made an "Oh!"

"Don't 'oh' me, why do you need me to do this together with you anyways? I don't care who sits next to each other, I don't even know 90% of the people you're inviting!"

"I need the second opinion of a media-expert!" Yifan simply answered and Yixing groaned once again to indicate his discontent.

"Yeah, second opinion my ass!" The journalist scoffed, "Just let me go already so I can pick up my friend!"

"It's not going to take long!" The prince retorted and grabbed Yixing's elbow to drag him out of the elevator.

"I hate you so much!!"

Yifan ignored him and pushed him into the office of yet another lady who was awaiting him already.

“I'll get you to the airport asap after this, okay?”

“You’ve got ten minutes, I swear to god!”

Ten minutes turned to twenty turned to forty turned to an hour and Yixing had tried to reach Zhixiang but couldn’t and really felt like taking the pot of tea they had been served and smash it onto Yifan’s head. Yifan was still discussing whether or not he could actually let two of his former model girlfriends sit together at the same table because he had left one of them for the other. When Yifan was finally done he turned to Yixing and said:

“So! Now on to the airport!”

“FINALLY!” Yixing lashed out and strode out of the office to get the elevator.

By now, Zhixiang must’ve already been standing in the arrival hall, completely confused why Yixing wasn’t there. And right when the elevator arrived at the ground floor, Yixing’s phone started buzzing. It was Zhixiang who had left a few messages that only now arrived due to the bad signal in the building.

FINALLY. I tried to connect to the airport’s WiFi wow Mainland China why so bitchy hahaha. I’m at the immigration control now, see you~~~! (05:30)

Okayyyyy made it, they let me in lmao. Baggage is arriving already, keep your fingers crossed my luggage came with me! (05:42)

Success! See you in a feeeeew! (05:55)

Yo! Where are you? (06:00)

Xingie? (06:02)

Hey? (06:07)

Still caught up at the office? (06:10)

Heyyyyy I’m going to wait at the Starbucks! (06:15)
Ew the Green Matcha Frappuccino tastes horrid! WHERE ARE YOU? (06:26)

Have you been kidnapped?? (06:27)

ZHANG YIXING ANSWER ME I’M ON MY SECOND DISGUSTING FRAPPUCCINO. SAVE ME FROM THIS HELL. (06:45)

Okay you know what I’m going to catch the next train to the city! See you at your apartment I still know where it is! I hope you’re okay! (06:50)

“This is just great!” Yixing yelled and typed a quick answer with a heartfelt apology and the message he’d be coming home as soon as possible.

“Huh?” Yifan asked as they walked over to the car, “Everything alright?”

“Everything al… you!! Jesus fucking Christ, Wu Yifan! Are you that stupid or are you doing this on purpose to make me want to commit mass murder?!”

The prince blinked and then slowly seemed to understand but anything he could’ve possibly said at that moment would’ve fueled the fire of rage burning in Yixing’s ribcage so he said:

“Just get me home already!”

“So the airport’s off?”

“YES because Zhixiang already left for my home!!” Yixing retorted and didn’t even wait for the driver to open the car doors.

Yixing was so caught up in mentally killing Yifan he didn’t notice how the Bentley took a different route from what it should’ve taken and he only realized when they came to a halt in front of the Hilton.

“What the FUCK Wu Yifan?!”

“I knowwwwwwww, but this is going to be good, trust me!”

“You--- I’m not going to calm the fuck down I’m not going to have dinner with you what the fucking hell!! I’d rather die than spend one more minute with you!!”
The hate and rage Yixing was feeling went beyond explanation. Yifan still clung onto him, and, unfortunately, kept the control even though Yixing tried to struggle himself free. When they entered the restaurant he managed to keep the volume of his cursing to a minimum but he still acted like a three year old that didn’t get the candy he wanted at the supermarket.

“You are the worst, Wu Yifan! Have you ever thought about seeing a doctor about your awful behavior?! You’d badly need it, somebody needs to fix that twisted mind of yours!!”

Right when the insults just kept rolling off his tongue like they were nothing Yifan quickly jockeyed him into the far back of the restaurant into a separate room. When a waitress opened the door, Yixing stood in the middle of a room with one big table. About twenty people sat around it and they cried out:

“Happy Birthdayyyyy!”

Yili hopped into his direction and gave him a big hug.

“Brother! I wish you all the best!”

“I… what???”

Yifan leaned forward and murmured:

“Just… trust me for once, and your blood pressure will thank you. Happy Birthday.”

“My dearest!”

Yili let go of Yixing and in that moment he saw how Zhixiang stood in front of him.

“What are YOU doing here?!”

“Surprise, surprise!”

Zhixiang’s bright smile paired with his boyish facial expressions never failed to light up Yixing’s day and when his best friend pulled him into a hug all the negative feelings were completely forgotten.

“I thought you…”

“Yeah, that was a hoax,” Zhixiang explained and pointed to Wu Yifan, “I was really shocked when I got the call from none other than the Prince.”

“It’s a surprise birthday party!” Yili cheered, “And we’ve gathered mine and your friends to celebrate!”

“But...?”

Yixing turned around to face the guests. A good twelve people were strangers, most likely Yili’s friends, the other ones were his own friends and even Luhan was there and waved at him.

“I do not understand.” He had to admit and looked at Yifan.

“It was his idea actually!” Yili said and patted Yifan’s shoulder who just scoffed, “He came to me and said ‘Yili, I think it would be nice to organize a little get together with your and Yixing’s friends on your birthday!’ So we contacted your friends to surprise you!”

“It was kind of hard to get a hold of Zhixiang though.” Yifan threw in.
“Ey, but you found me!” The Taiwanese said, still smiling from one ear to the other, “Our plan was pretty cool! I got picked up by Yili at the airport while I was sending you these texts.”

“Yifan had the mission to keep you busy long enough until dinner,” Yili explained.

“You people are the worst…” Yixing exclaimed in shock and suddenly felt awful for saying all those things to Yifan.

“Let’s sit down!”

Yili was so pumped and excited she infected everybody else with it and they spent the evening with a lot of expensive alcohol and exquisite food. For a second Yixing was afraid it would get awkward with his friends and the rich kids but soon the whole seating order was mixed up and everyone was having a marvelous time. Yixing excused himself for a second and walked over to the window which held a magnificent view over the city that had taken on the coat of the night. As much as he didn’t like the thought of it, but he might had to apologize to Yifan. He had the feeling he had stepped way over the line, minding that Yifan had only tried to not let this surprise blow up.

“What are you doing?”

Zhixiang stood next to him and they leaned into each other, Yixing placing his head onto his best friend’s shoulder. It was rather crazy how in a short span of a few semesters they had grown so comfortable with each other. But Yixing was glad to have him. Even though Zhixiang seemed like a childish and rather careless person, he was sincere at heart and one of the only people that made Yixing drop his sassy and witty attitude.

“What are you doing?”

“Yeah. I see that. What are you thinking about?”

Yixing sighed and took a sip from his Whiskey (why had he grown so fond of this stuff).

“I think I need to apologize to Yifan. I’ve been a nasty bitch today.”

“… and you’re usually a kind sweetheart around him?” Zhixiang joked, because he had to endure Yixing’s rants over WeChat and Facetime about the royal on almost a daily basis.

“That’s not it! I said really awful things today because he was flying me off the handle.”

Zhixiang nodded and Yixing understood that his best friend thought he was right. They often went without words and Yixing exhaled a long breath.

“We kind of heard your ranting.”

“Oh my god! Really?”

His friend made an “uh-huh” sound and Yixing whined.

“How embarrassing! Now I feel even worse!”

“Don’t worry, everyone will act like nothing happened, if that calms you down.”

Yixing made some incoherent noises while the other one patted his back.

“You know what I think?” Zhixiang said and threw a look over his own shoulder before he turned to Yixing again, “I think Yifan kind of likes you.”
“Okay, now you’re completely mad!”

“Well, tell me what you want, but he’s coming over and he’s killing me with his looks. That guy’s jeaaaaaalous!”

“Shut the hell up, would you!?”

“Yixing, we need a minute.” Yifan butted in and Zhixiang sent his best friend a meaningful look before he turned around and joined Luhan who was in deep conversation with one of Yili’s friends.

The journalist looked at Yifan who looked into his glass and kept the other hand behind his back. Yixing wanted to say something but then Yili appeared with a big present under her arms.

“Present time, Yixing! Let me start Yifan, my present is way better than yours!”

“We’ll see about that, sister!”

It was only now Yixing realized she was already wearing the jewelry Yifan had bought for her. When she shoved the package in blue wrapping paper into his hands, he said:

“But… you shouldn’t have! I don’t have anything for you either!”

“I wanted to!” The princess responded and added, “It’s okay, I don’t need anything. I’m happy you’re here!”

He believed her because she was giving him a sincere smile and he slowly opened the packaging while the siblings watched him in anticipation.

Yili had gotten him a book. The Elements of Eloquence.

“It looks lame, yes, but you have to read my devotion!” Yili threw in as Yixing had raised an eyebrow in surprise so he opened the book and read Yili’s message she had written down on the first page.

Her handwriting was nice and clear, like the handwriting of an empathetic and honest woman who had considered her words thoughtfully. It fit her.

Dear Yixing,

First of all: Happy Birthday! I’m wishing you all the very best for your next year of life, a lot of achievements and no hard obstacles to overcome.

I am very thrilled to share my day of birth with such an interesting man whose presence is a delight every time he’s coming over to see us. I know for a fact Yifan feels the same, even though he is never vocal about it. I do hope that even when your job is done and you will get back to your normal ways of working (I am very sure my brother –and me- have shaken up your daily routine immensely) we’ll still stay in contact. I’d feel honored to consider you one of my friends. People like you are hard to find and need to be held onto once you found them. (My goodness, this sounds like I’m a fifteen year old writing a love letter to her secret crush in school, but I’m a rather sappy person, so please bear with me.)

I’ve found it relatively hard to think of a good present for you, since you are not one to be impressed by material goods. All I came up with was this book that I have read myself and I think it might appeal to you. Mark Forsyte’s humor is gold and makes reading about stylistic devices very entertaining, which was the reason I got it (I don’t think you need to learn more about how to write
a text, I’ve read your works and I’m a big fan of your phrasing). I hope you will enjoy it as much as I did.

I think I need to stop now with all these cheesy stuff I just vomited over that page. Once again, Happy Birthday! Please enjoy your day and always try to live your life to the fullest!

Love,
Yili

“Oh my god, Yili, you are the cutest!” Yixing exclaimed and Yili sent her brother a triumphant smile while she hugged Yixing.

When they parted, Yili turned to her brother and said:

“Well, my job here is done!”

“God dammit Yili, what did you write down again!”

Yifan suddenly seemed to have second thoughts on his gift but Yili urged him to finally hand it over, so he grunted and gave Yixing a smaller package than Yili had.

“I’m kind of afraid,” Yixing admitted as he opened the wrapping but he received no answer as Yifan was downing the rest of his drink.

Yixing gasped as he opened the box that had appeared beneath the paper and he saw the exact same watch he had taken a look at barely two weeks ago.

“I…! No, I cannot accept this!” He drowned Yili’s screams of enthusiasm as she saw the watch herself.

“But Yixing! It’s so pretty oh my god!” She threw in and leaned over to take a closer look.

“It is, but it’s too expensive, I cannot possibly…”

“Why? How much was it?” Yili asked.

“120,000!” Yixing gasped and felt a little dizzy.

The princess frowned and then said:

“But that’s a good deal for a Rolex!”

“That’s what I said!” Yifan said and seemed glad someone finally was on the same page as him.

“Okay, maybe it’s not a lot for you guys,” Yixing admitted, “But I still cannot accept this, Yifan, that’s way too much!”

“No returns! I did not keep the receipt anyway!” Yifan said and took off to get another drink.

Yixing was left confused next to Yili who wanted him to try the watch on immediately.

“No, seriously…” Yixing blabbered, and he didn’t know what to do or to say.

Now he was feeling really bad. I’d rather die than to spend one more minute with you. You are the worst. And yet he was still giving him that watch, the one Yixing had liked. Yifan had actually bothered and thought of what to get him. He had actually remembered a detail about Yixing and had
gotten that god damn Rolex because he wanted to do something nice for the younger one.

“You heard my brother: No returns!” Yili chirped but realized Yixing was uncomfortable so she pulled him to the table to join the round again.

Yili’s friends had gotten Luhan hammered and it was around two am (because the prince and the princess can stay at a restaurant as long as they want as rules for normal people never applied to them) when Yixing and Zhixiang finally decided to bring him home. They were, in fact, the last people to leave except for Yili and Yifan who were wrapping up the bill with one of the poor staff members who had been forced to stay until the party was over.

“Zhixiang, you get the elevator, I’ll be right back.” Yixing ordered and Zhixiang nodded and dragged Luhan with him who mumbled something about “Best evening everrrr”.

Yili had gone to the counter with the staff and Yifan was sitting alone at the table and poured himself a ‘quick glass’ of Whiskey before he had to go. Yixing sat down next to him and the prince looked at him with raised eyebrows.

“Yes?” He asked and supported his head with one of his hands while the other one was clinging onto his drink.

“First of all – thank you. You really didn’t have to do this.”

“Yeaaaah, don’t mention it. Yili was involved in the matter too. You’re welcome.”

His semi-drunk smile was only half-hearted. He wasn’t buying it.

“Second of all I am really, really sorry.”

“About what exactly?”

“Geez, do you really want me to say these things again? Everything I said today. All the insults. I went too far. I’m really sorry.”

Yifan leaned back in his chair and looked at Yixing for quite some time before he asked:

“So you wouldn’t rather die than to spend one more minute with me?”

Repeating the sentence in his head had already been bad. Hearing Yifan say it was even worse and it felt like his conscious had just slapped Yixing in the face.

“I wouldn’t. That was… really stupid, and I was angry… I didn’t think it through, and I didn’t mean it like that. Really.”

“Well then,” Yifan exclaimed, “I guess we’re even now. I’ve been an ass. You dragged me for it. We’re good now.”

He grabbed one of the glasses that had stayed unused and poured a small amount of Whiskey into it to hand it over to the other one. When Yixing had taken the glass, Yifan raised his own.

“Truce?”

“Truce.” Yixing affirmed and they clinked their glasses before they downed the alcohol.

“Yiiiiixing, hurry uuuuup!” They heard Zhixiang call from afar and Yixing sighed.
“I’ve got to go.”

“Hmm,” Yifan mumbled and nodded, “Make sure to get Luhan some water or he’ll be feeling this tomorrow.”

“I will. Goodnight.”

“See you around.”

Before Yixing left the room he took one last look over his shoulder. Yifan looked incredibly lonely sitting at a table this big while he waited for his sister to return. Yixing asked himself whether Yifan also felt like he looked.
Even though they had come home extremely late at night – or very early in the morning – Yixing and Zhixiang were already up around nine. After leaving the restaurant Luhan had insisted on going to McDonald’s to get something to eat which had delayed their return home for about an hour more. The rather weird thing was that Luhan seemed to be up already because they heard someone preparing some breakfast in the kitchen.

“Morniiiiing!” Zhixiang mumbled next to him and rolled over to face Yixing.

“Why aren’t we asleep,” Yixing asked and covered his face with his hands.

“Because the sky is awake!” The other one responded and made a theatrical hand gesture, “So I have to be awake too!”

“God Damnit Luo Zhixiang, did you actually just quote ‘Frozen’?”

“Yes, because I know you’d be the only one who’d get the reference.”

Yixing snorted which then turned into a heartfelt laughter. That’s what he’d been missing all the time. His best friend and his bad puns and pop culture references that were absolutely lame. Zhixiang placed his head on Yixing’s shoulder.

“Aaaah, I missed you so much Yixing.”

“Tell me about it. Every day without your bad puns is horrible.”

The answer was Zhixiang pinching Yixing’s sides. Yixing flinched but barely tried to escape and after a moment of silence the younger one asked:

“Sooottooo, how are things going with Yangqing? Is she able to bear living with you?”

“Aaaah, yes!” Zhixiang exclaimed and shot up.
He waddled over to his bag and pulled out a big and heavy looking envelope where he had written Yixing’s name on it. Zhixiang threw himself on Yixing’s bed again and handed the thing over to his friend.

“This is a love letter from me to you, my love!”

“Ugh could you stop it. What is this?”

“Open it!”

Yixing sighed and opened the envelope while Zhixiang watched him carefully as he pulled out a big card that read

Beautiful Bride. Handsome Groom. Drinks, bites, and bad dance moves.
You don’t want to miss this, so save the date when
Zhou Yangqing and Luo Zhixiang
tie the knot on
September 17th 2016 in Taipei.
Invitation to follow!

“You…! You are getting MARRIED!” Yixing yelled and almost threw the card away in excitement.

Right in that moment the doorbell rang but both of the men decided within an instant that Luhan should answer it. Zhixiang let out a snorting laughter and yelled back:

“I’m getting married!!”

“How…! Wow! What did you do to trick her into saying yes to such an idiot like you?!”

“I guess what they say is true: Birds of a feather flock together!” Zhixiang answered and Yixing sat up to give his best friend a hug.

“My god, congratulations!”

His friend returned the hug and when they let go of each other, he said:

“You need to be my best man for this!”

“Of course! Anything! Wow! I’m so happy for you, Zhixiang!!”

Yixing threw his hands around the other once again and gave him a big smooch on the cheek, because he really didn’t know how to express his own excitement. He felt like his heart was beating faster and his stomach fluttered, it was almost as if he was the one getting married.

“I’m glad you approve of this, that was the most of my concerns,” Zhixiang admitted.

“Are you kidding me? Why would I oppose this?! This is great! I finally can lean back and relax because your wife will have an eye on you!”

Both of them giggled like little girls and Zhixiang patted Yixing’s head before he started to play with a strand of his friend’s hair.

“You are truly my best friend. I love you, man.”

Right in that moment Yixing’s bedroom door flung open and Yifan stood in the doorway. Yixing let out a surprised squeal and Zhixiang blinked confused.
“What are you doing here?!” Yixing exclaimed and untangled himself from Zhixiang’s grip.

“I called you – you’re supposed to pick up when I call you!” Yifan grunted behind grinding teeth as he eyed Zhixiang as if he was about to smash his head in.

“You… what?!”

Yixing turned for his phone that had been charging over the night and indeed, there were several missed calls and all of them said “Wu Yifan” – he had forgotten to unmute it so he hadn’t heard.

“Okay, so?”

“So?! You-!”

Before Yifan could go on a rant on how the world had to revolve around him once more, another thought came to the journalist’s mind:

“Hold on a second… what are you doing here?! How do you know where I live?!”

The newcomer heaved an annoyed sigh.

“That is not even the point I’m trying to make here, Zhang Yixing!”

“No, fuck this! How did you find out where I live?!"

Yifan bit his lip and supported his hands on his slim hips, as if contemplating whether or not he should speak the truth. He didn’t even have to say anything, Yixing had already made up his mind.

“Leave my house!”

The younger one got up from his bed and pushed Yifan out of his room and into the hallway.

“You are throwing me out?!”

“I’ve had enough of your manipulative ways! Fuck man, can’t I have like one fucking day to myself?! Leave! And don’t even think about showing up on my doorway ever again, you stalker!”

“How are you talking to me?!”

There was a struggle as Yifan tried to shake Yixing off and Yixing shoved him to the exit. On their way, they almost ran into Luhan who was peeking out of the kitchen. His facial expression gave away that he regretted opening the door for the prince.

“I’m talking to you however the fuck I want! And now go! I don’t want to see you anymore!” Yixing yelled as he opened the apartment door and gave the taller one a final push out of the apartment, “I’ll resign from this job tomorrow, fuck this man! You can terrorize someone different from now on, it won’t be me anymore!”

“You CAN’T, Yixing!” Yifan finally yelled back.

“Oh I can’t? Just watch me!” Yixing responded and tried to slam the door shut.

“NO!”

The next few seconds went by in a weird slow motion montage that was still too fast for anyone to prevent the happening – Yixing took all his energy and tried to close the door in front of Yifan’s
nose with more force than he had intended to. Yifan tried to avert just that and in a little fit of panic he placed his foot in the doorway. Since the apartment door was made of heavy metal and the momentum of it falling shut was so immense, Yifan’s subtalar joint made a weird cracking noise and he screamed in pain.

It only dawned on Yixing what had happened when Yifan went down on his knees and held his ankle.

“Fuck! Yifan? Are you okay??”

Startled from the noise, Luhan and Zhixiang emerged into the hallway and watched as Yixing squatted down to take a look at the mess he had made. Yifan whimpered something about how he clearly was not okay and it was Luhan, the one with the biggest hangover, who seemed to be the only one with a functioning brain:

“Man, you’ve got to get him to the hospital I’ve heard that ankle cracking from like a million feet distance!”

So that’s what Yixing and Zhixiang did. They heaved Yifan up on his feet (or rather, the other foot) and after throwing on the next best clothes they brought him downstairs where Yixing had to find out that Yifan had actually driven here by himself in his Ferrari FF. Zhixiang offered to drive while Yixing tried to prevent Yifan’s ankle from swelling by draping a cold wet towel around it. On their way Yixing apologized a billion times but Yifan didn’t really respond to that because he was too busy playing the dying swan.

Around an hour later, Yixing sat next to Zhixiang in the hallway of the nearest hospital and anxiously waited for Yifan to come out of the doctor’s office. He was a dead man.

“Fuck.” He exclaimed and rubbed his face in frustration.

“He’s not dying, he’ll be fine.”

“I made the ankle of China’s Prince turn into ugly mush, Zhixiang! That’s like committing a major crime!” Yixing retorted at his best friend’s comment.

“Maybe it’s not as bad as it looks like, Yixing.”

“The bones CRACKED man! I’m so dead. Fuck!”

“Language, Darling!” Zhixiang scolded and patted Yixing’s back, “It already happened, you can’t change that anymore.”

“It’s still super unnecessary! I really didn’t need that!”

He wanted to have a nice day with his best friend before he’d be leaving for Taiwan in the evening again. Like visiting their favorite restaurant when they had gone to university, for example. Now he was wasting precious time in a hospital, just because he had let his temper win over.

Yixing went on in throwing himself into a dark pit of self-hatred until Yifan came out, walking on crutches while a nurse and the doctor walked out after him.

“You’ll be fine in a few weeks,” Yixing heard the doctor say and the men shook hands.

The journalist and his friend stood up and Yixing was somehow relieved that it didn’t sound that bad. Yifan’s ankle was madly patched up though.
“Thank you doctor!”

“We’ll be sending the report to your personal doctor so he can go on with the treatment. Until then, go home and remember to rest a lot, put ice on it, compress it and elevate it.”

“I will, thank you very much.”

They shared laughs and smiles until the doctor and the nurse disappeared into the office again and Yifan turned around to face Yixing. His smile died down within an instant.

“So?” Yixing asked but Yifan didn’t answer and tried to waddle away as fast but as graceful as possible on his crutches - it failed horribly.

“Hey, would you please talk to me here?!”

The others had caught up on Yifan pretty quickly, but Zhixiang stayed in the background while Yixing demanded some answers.

“How bad is it?! YA, Yifan, are you seriously ignoring me?!”

They got out of the entrance hall onto the parking lot where the Ferrari had been exchanged for the Bentley and Yifan’s personal driver. Yixing wondered for a second how that had happened, but he had no time to reflect on that because Yifan finally decided to let him in on his diagnosis:

“It’s not completely broken, it should be fine in a few weeks.”

“So that’s… good?”

Yifan’s cold look shut Yixing up right on the spot. They stood there for a mere second and Yixing said:

“Listen, I am really sorry, I didn’t mean to…”

“Yeah, whatever.”

Without one more word Yifan turned for the car and his driver opened the door for him.

“Your Ferrari has been driven back by Mr. Wang, my prince,” the man in his forties informed and Yifan just nodded.

For an awkward moment the driver expected Yixing to get in too, like he usually did, but Yifan pulled at the handle and closed the door, clearly showing Yixing wouldn’t be joining him. The driver blinked confused and looked at Yixing, it was almost like he expected an explanation - or like he wanted to ask if everything was alright between them. Yixing heaved a sigh and then said:

“Thanks for picking him up.”

“It’s my job,” He shrugged his shoulders and wished Yixing a nice day before he sat behind the steering wheel and drove away.

Zhixiang joined him in that moment.

“What an asshole!” Yixing scoffed, which was directed at Yifan, of course, not the driver.

“Let him cool down for a day,” Zhixiang said and dragged Yixing to the main street to catch a taxi, “Let’s go and eat something, I’m starving.”
Yixing dragged Yifan for the rest of the day and Zhixiang tried to pacify him until they went to the airport and parted ways again for the time being. After the check in Yixing followed his best friend to the security check where he couldn’t go through, even though he wished he could. Getting a time off seemed too alluring right now.

“I’ll miss you,” he said while they hugged each other tightly.

“I’ll miss you too,” Zhixiang responded, “Don’t let that prince of yours annoy you too much.”

“Pff, I’ll resign first thing tomorrow, he won’t be getting on my nerves anymore.”

The man from Taiwan just smiled and pinched Yixing’s cheek.

“Do you think he was jealous?”

“Huh??”

“I think he was jealous,” Zhixiang voiced his thought while he swayed back and forth, “I’m actually pretty sure. He didn’t want you to be alone with me.”

“You are being ridiculous now. He just wanted to pull another I’m-the-prince-I-can-do-whatever-I-want-scene, that’s all.”

“If you say so!”

The older one hugged Yixing one more time before he finally let go of him and took his cabin luggage in his hands.

“I’ll see you, and I’ll send you a proper invitation for the wedding. And you have to come over someday, okay? Promise?”

“Cross my heart and hope to die.”

Zhixiang ruffled Yixing’s hair and with a last wave he disappeared to the security check and for the departure gates. The journalist sighed and went home, still a little irritated, but at least a little tamed. When he came back home there was another person sitting on the couch next to Luhan waiting for him.

“Yili!” He exclaimed and felt like someone had punched his stomach.

“Xingiiiiiee!” Yifan’s sister cried out and gave him a big hug and a radiant smile.

“How come everybody knows where I’m living?!?”

“Yifan gave me the address,” Yili answered with a shrug and sat back down onto the sofa.

“Didn’t know you were coming…” Yixing said and took a seat on an armchair.

“It’s okay, it was more of a surprise visit. Luhan kept me amazing company!” The princess said and patted Luhan’s knee who turned red at the touch.

“You’re here because of Yifan, right?” Yixing asked and slumped into the armchair.

She nodded and Luhan said:

“Okay, that’s a thing between you two, I’m going to leave.”
Yixing’s roommate got up and took his glass of water with him. While he left the living room, he
said:

“You know Yixing, if you ever get fired at the Zhongguo Ribao, just start at OMG! Magazine, you
have so much insider knowledge about Yifan now, your articles would be even something I would
read then.”

“Shut up Luhan and get lost!”

Luhan snorted and when the remaining two heard his bedroom door close, Yixing turned back to
Yili.

“Yili, I didn’t do that on purpose, I’ve apologized but I think he’s not accepting that!”

“Yeaaaah, I know it was an accident, don’t worry, I didn’t come to sue you for compensation for his
injury.”

“Then what’s the reason for your coming?”

Yili took a sip from the orange juice Luhan had offered her prior to Yixing’s arrival. She kind of
looked out of place in their living room. The Princess of China, sitting on an old sofa Luhan had
found on a flea market in her perfectly coordinated outfit while her surroundings were a horrible mix
of furniture that didn’t fit together. She heaved a sigh and flipped her hair back before she eyed
Yixing.

“You weren’t serious about actually quitting, right?”

“Umm…?”

“Listen,” Yili said, “I know my brother isn’t very easy to handle…”

“Yili, he intruded my privacy…”

“What? Because he showed at your doorway? Does that make me an intruder too then?”

“No, that’s a different thing. You sit here and actually talk to me in a civilized manner, while Yifan
stormed into my bedroom and made a scene like a jealous girlfriend catching her boyfriend sleeping
with another chick!”

“Believe me, I already told him that was a dick move.”

“Great!” Yixing scoffed sarcastically and then added, “I don’t think Yifan wants to see me, he gave
me the cold shoulder at the hospital.”

“Oh, I think he does though!” Yili retorted, “He’s actually very anxious you might not come back
after what he pulled on you today.”

“Well, I’m glad he starts to reflect on his actions and the consequences!”

“Yixing… Yifan is not a very stable person to begin with…”

“Yepp, he’s an absolute sociopath, nice to know I’m not the only one who sees that!”

“That is a little too harsh!” Yili threw in and frowned, a glimmer of hurt flickering across her pretty
face.
“Yili, this guy tries to control every aspect of my life. He flips his shit when I simply don’t hear my phone ringing when he calls and stalks me to my home! On the only free day I had in a long time, by the way!”

“Hey, try to walk in his shoes for a while – you also wouldn’t know how to behave if you had grown up like him. He’s never been shown any boundaries. He doesn’t know any better,” Yili tried to defend her brother but Yixing wasn’t having any of that.

“Well, so did you! You grew up in the same household and you’re smart, charming and well mannered! So what went wrong with him, huh?!”

“I just had him showing me how you could downright ruin your own life because you hang around with the wrong people so I decided to do it differently!”

“Those fake friends of his? Yeah. Amazing.”

“William and the others? Pff, no, believe me, they are hardly as bad as those other bastards who ruined him.”

Yixing tilted his head in question and Yili sighed.

“I swear to god if you tell anyone, you’re dead.”

The man nodded while the princess shifted her weight to check if Luhan could possibly be hearing them. Then she turned back to Yixing and said:

“Yifan has a history with drugs and depression. He met the wrong people at the wrong time that sucked him down that road when he was around twenty. Long story short, when he was twenty three we had to give him into rehab and therapy, he cut ties with all those people and has been trying to get back to normal ever since.”

Yixing blinked in confusion.

“What…?”

“It’s the family’s best kept secret, actually. And I just passed it on to a journalist, amazing!” Yili said and threw her hands up in horror when the realization had hit her.

“I… I won’t tell anyone.” Yixing reassured and the princess took another big gulp from her drink.

“Believe me, the Yifan we’re dealing with now is an improvement to what he has been a few years ago. He’s getting better and he’s trying. But it’s hard for him.”

Suddenly, Yixing remembered the highlighted lines in In Cold Blood. You are strong, but there is a flaw in your strength, and unless you can learn how to control it the flaw will prove stronger than your strength and defeat you. He truly had gotten an insight on Yifan’s mindset. If only he had known back then already. He might have reacted differently.

“That’s why I really need you to come back.” Yili pulled him back into reality.

“What exactly has that to do with me?” Yixing asked.

“Oh Yixing!” Yili cried out and rolled her eyes, “My brother likes you and thinks very highly of you! And I cannot deny that ever since you appeared, he’s never been better actually. If you leave now, he might fall back into old habits.”
“Wow, are you trying to shame me into supporting him?”

“I’m not shaming anyone, what horrid allegation!” The princess exclaimed. “I just want you to come by tomorrow and talk to him. I talked to him already and he doesn’t want you to leave. Give him a chance to explain himself. And when you’re still mad at him, which is your absolute right to be by the way, you can still decide to talk to your boss and resign.”

“Jesus Christ…”

Why hadn’t anyone warned him about this job beforehand? Yili looked at Yixing, trying an encouraging smile, almost begging him to consider her offer. The journalist thought about the past weeks and had to admit that Yifan had had his good moments, spoiled brat attitude put aside.

“...okay… I’ll do it.”

Yili smiled and leaned over to hug him.

“Thank you! It means a lot!”

So the next day, Yixing made his way through the palace (the guard actually had stopped asking for his ID since he came by almost every god damn day) to Yifan’s bedchambers where he knocked at the door but didn’t wait until someone told him to come in.

Yifan was lying on his bed, his injured foot resting on a few pillows while he seemed to be reading something on his iPad. When he looked up and saw Yixing, he pressed his lips together.

“Hi.” Yixing said and Yifan nodded.

He’s still acting like a bitch, Yixing thought as he approached the prince whose attention snapped back to his tablet. When he stood next to Yifan he pulled a book out of his bag which he had gotten on his way here. It was a copy of Gillian Flynn’s Gone Girl – Yixing had chosen it mainly because it was over 500 pages and Yifan would surely have enough time to do a lot of reading while resting his ankle. Plus he had read it himself and liked it very much.

“Here, I thought you might like it.”

Finally Yifan put the tablet aside and looked at the book. He took it into his hands and asked:

“Is it good?”

“Yeah, it’s a pretty smart book. Big plot twists. Great writing. I think you’ll like it.”

Yifan looked at the cover and said:

“Gone Girl. Wasn’t a movie made out of that book?”

“Yes, but I’ve never seen that one actually.”

Yifan nodded and skipped through the pages before he looked up and thanked Yixing. There was an awkward silence following in which Yixing refused to be the first to apologize. After all, he had apologized already. Now it was Yifan’s turn.

“So? Do you want to talk or…?”
“Yili has visited you, hasn’t she?” Was Yifan’s counter question.

“Well, yes.”

“Otherwise you wouldn’t be here, I reckon.”

“Can you hold it against me?! You just storm into my apartment and make a scene out of nothing. You might have gotten your way with your girlfriends like that, but you can’t act like this with me!”

“Okay, okay, I’m sorry!” Yifan threw in before Yixing’s rant could drag on, “I apologize. Sorry. I just – I don’t know what was going on with me.”

“Man, the day started out so good with Zhixiang’s marriage news and then you bursted in…”

“Wait, what? Marriage?”

“Yeah, he told me he’d be marrying his long time girlfriend next year and asked me to be his best man. And then – boom – you came in and just ruined the mood,” Yixing explained and watched as Yifan’s face fell in surprise and the prince kind of facepalmed himself.

“He’s getting married,” The older one repeated and shook his head, “I’m so stupid…”

He had muttered the last sentence under his breath but it was loud enough for Yixing to understand.

“You’re not actually telling me that you were jealous? For real now, Yifan??”

The other one didn’t answer but slightly blushed, trying to find a smart way to talk himself out of the situation but then Yixing started to laugh, and he didn’t even know why. It was too ridiculous.

“HEY, what was I supposed to think when you two sit half naked on your bed and he tells you he loves you??”

With that, Yifan only made it worse and Yixing let out a howl of laughter before he had to support himself on the mattress the prince was laying on. The tall man realized how wrong all of this sounded, so he bit his lower lip in frustration and massaged his temple.

“I’m--- oh god, YIFAN!” Yixing had to go down on his knees and catch his breath. While he wiped away some tears caused by his laughing fit, he giggled, “Zhixiang and me are just best friends. I love this guy and he loves me. But that’s 100% platonic. Like, are you capable of grasping the concept of ‘friendship’??”

Yifan rolled his eyes.

“Okay, I GET IT, I was stupid! Can we put this to rest now please?!”

Another laugh threatened to escape Yixing’s throat when Yifan’s phone went off and reminded him to change the bandages on his foot. Yifan grunted but was happy about the distraction. Clearly ashamed of his own stupidity he turned the alarm off and sat a little straighter to grab the phone on the desk next to him and call someone to help him with that. Yixing stepped in:

“I’ll do it.”

“Huh??”

“I mean, I did that,” Yixing said and pointed to Yifan’s bandaged foot, “Let me change that for you.”
“You don’t need to…”

“Let me.”

Yifan sighed and put the phone back onto the desk before he pointed at some new bandages and some ointment he was supposed to put on the grazed parts of the injury. Yixing took his coat off and tucked the sleeves of his shirt up. When he revealed his left wrist, Yifan grabbed it and said:

“Ey? You’re wearing the watch!”

He was right. Yixing had indeed taken the Rolex out of its box and put it on this morning before leaving the house.

“It would be a waste of money if I didn’t wear it,” he explained matter of factly and Yifan’s lips finally curled up into a smile.

“It suits you. I knew it.”

“Yeah, whatever.”

Yixing started his task and when he saw the blue and red shades on Yifan’s swollen skin around his ankle, his heart sunk. That looked like it hurt immensely.

“Is it very bad?” He asked while he carefully put the medicine on the maltreated skin.

Yifan flinched at the beginning but his muscles eased after a while as he watched how Yixing put a new bandage around his foot.

“It’s okay. I won’t die. Don’t worry.”

Yixing nodded and excused himself to wash his hands. When he returned to the bedroom, he sat down next to Yifan, unsure of what to do next. Yifan looked at him with a soft facial expression.

“Thank you.”

“Don’t mention it. I’m glad you won’t sue me.”

Yifan snorted.

“I’d never even dare to think about that,” he retorted and patted Yixing’s knee, “I’m sorry again. I’m a fuck up, you know.”

“… I know.”

They looked at each other and there were no words needed. Yifan somehow knew what Yixing meant and he accepted that fact in squeezing the other’s knee.

“I’ll get better, I promise.”

“Well! I do hope so!” Yixing responded and tickled another giggle out of Yifan.

“So… can we be good again? Please?”

It was the “please” and the sincere look on Yifan’s face that let Yixing give in once again.

“The last time we said that wasn’t even 48 hours ago.”
“I know, but that one doesn’t count then!”

“Oh, really?” Yixing asked, eyebrow raised while Yifan curled his lips into a pout that gave him the look of an overly cute puppy.

“Yes?” The prince responded and tilted his head hoping it would do the trick.

“You really will be the reason for my high blood pressure. But okay. We’re good again.”

“Awesome!”

Yifan scooted over to give Yixing a little more space and they sat next to each other on the bed, barely an inch apart and Yifan placed his head on Yixing’s shoulder before he sighed in content.

“One question remains though… how did you find out my address?”

“I didn’t…” Yifan admitted, “I… okay, so, remember two weeks ago when I asked you to connect our phones via GPS so you could see when I’m on my way from the Palace to that appointment? So you could calculate the time better when to leave your office because of the horrible traffic that day?”

“Umm… yeeees.”

It slowly dawned on Yixing.

“Yeah. That’s how I knew.”

“You fucking tracked my phone.”

“It’s not tracking when you still got your GPS on and your phone connected to mine!” Yifan defended himself hastily and lifted his head, fearing he might flip Yixing off right after they had buried the hatchet.

Yixing grunted. He couldn’t actually be that mad. He had, in fact, connected his phone to Yifan’s, but he had already forgotten about it.

“I’m just going to turn off GPS in the future.”

“Suit yourself.” Yifan shrugged and placed his head back on Yixing’s shoulder.
Chapter Summary

Yifan tries to impress Yixing with a trip to Hong Kong and maybe has a teeny tiny chance of Yixing liking it. Maybe. Eventually. Perhaps. He's just really trying to get into his pants.

Chapter Notes

- Because the Disneyland pictures were too good (*sheds a tear while thinking of that day*) to NOT incorporate Disneyland into this fic I mean DUHHHHHH!

- Sorry for the rather short chapter again man I used to write longer ones but... well. Sorry.

October 22nd, 2015 (pt. I)

“I cannot believe this,” Yixing said as he sat down on one of the cozy seats and tried to look as unimpressed as possible by the interior of the private jet he had just boarded.

“What exactly?” Yifan asked next to him and flipped through a magazine.

“I cannot believe Mrs. Wang let me do this.”

Yifan chuckled but said nothing and buried his nose in an interview the magazine had done with Fan Bingbing. Yixing shook his head and looked out of the window, thinking about how he had ended up on a short trip to Hong Kong with Yifan and his entourage.

Of course it had been Yifan’s fault. He had stormed the Zhongguo Ribao’s office declaring he’d be going on vacation and he’d be taking his favorite journalist with him. When Yixing had told him he’d not be going anywhere because he surely wouldn’t get the days off, Yifan had strode into Mrs. Wang’s office like he owned the place, did some sweet talking and Yixing’s boss had approved of the trip as a “business trip”, thrilled by the prince’s charms and giggling like a little girl when Yifan had said he’d be taking Yixing right with him. Yixing had never seen her like that before which still scared him when he thought about it. Yifan let him fetch some stuff (“Our private jet is leaving in two hours, you better hurry while packing!”) while he had joined Luhan in the kitchen for a quick smalltalk (“My sister thinks you’re kind of cute.” – “Oh my GOD really?!”) and then, just like that, they had set off for the airport where they met Yili and the other people who kind of tagged along – but Yixing didn’t even really know them.

So now, he was doomed to spend two nights and three days with the prince. 72 hours. Nonstop. No escape possible. The first thing he ordered from the flight attendant was a glass of red wine to cope with that thought. This whole job was suicide for his liver.

“Aiiiii, Yixing, we’ll have so much fun!” Yili chirped from the seat in front of them but Yixing
wasn’t too sure of that – the only advantage that would be coming out of this was a good story for Yixing’s next article, and Yixing questioned if a good story was worth all the stress ahead of him.

Approximately two hours later they touched down in Hong Kong, and as hard as it was to admit, the flight had been extremely pleasant, the wine had been extraordinarily good and Yifan had even been funny and Yixing had laughed about his jokes. Something was completely off here. He had fun, how was this possible?

“Which hotel are we staying at again?” Yifan asked Yili while all of them left the plane and got greeted by a tuxedo wearing airport staff that opened the door to a limousine.

The journalist should’ve gotten used to this entire extravaganza when he was around Wu Yifan but a limousine at the airport looked extremely stupid and over the top. Nevertheless he swallowed his sarcastic comment and acted like he did this every day. Or something. Well. He only followed Yifan and Yili on their heels and didn’t say anything.

“Ritz-Carlton,” Yili answered and gave the guy in the tuxedo a radiant smile.

After the baggage claim (and a lot of people losing their whole chill when they had seen the royal siblings and had taken a bunch of pictures) there was another limousine that brought them to the hotel located at Victoria Harbour. The weather was lovely and Yifan said:

“That’s good. The Ritz-Carlton is only great when the weather is good.”

“Why’s that?” Yixing asked and Yifan sighed, patronizing Yixing once again.

Yixing immediately regretted asking.

“Because it’s the highest hotel in the world. And if the view is bad, what use does it have?”

Of course, something always had to be put into superlative. The highest. The best. The most expensive. Yixing remembered that he had gone to Hong Kong a few years before. His hotel had been one of the cheapest deals he had found on the internet. He had the feeling that this trip would be completely different from the last one.

“I like the Ritz-Carlton… better than the Hilton or something…” Yili shrugged her shoulders while they left the airport behind and rode into the city.

“The Hilton is o-kay,” Yifan voiced his thoughts, “But the suites at the Ritz-Carlton are by far the best out of all the hotels in Hong Kong.”

“That is true!”

“Oookay guys!” Yixing butted in and brought the siblings back into the reality, “Every time you’re slipping into rich snob talk I’m just going to make weird sounds. Starting now!”

Yili giggled and even Yifan cracked a smile.

“You’re going to love it, Yixing!” The woman said.

“We’ll see.”

“Yixing, always acting like he doesn’t care about these things…” Yifan sing-songed and ruffled the younger one’s hair who just grunted.

“I really don’t care! I could spend two nights at a youth hostel and I wouldn’t care!”
“That’s because you don’t know it any better.”

“Well I’m sorry, I wasn’t born with the right name!”

“It’s okay, we’re here now!” Yili joked and patted his arm, “Believe me, after one night at the Ritz, you will never want to sleep somewhere else.”

“You’ll want to move in there!”

“Okay, stop exaggerating.”

The siblings kept bragging about this god damn hotel the whole ride and Yixing tried his hardest to keep his cool and maintain his poker face when they entered the lobby and checked in. It was only then Yixing learned that the siblings had booked two suites separately (“Sorry Yixing but I will not be sharing a room with you two”) and the rest of their following was scattered across the Deluxe and Grand Harbor rooms the hotel had to offer.

“Okay but why suites?” Yixing asked when they reached the floor where Yifan’s suite was located.

“Why the fuck not? Why settle yourself for less when you can have more?”

“Why am I not learning that having discussions like this never work out with you?”

“Trust me for once, Yixing. You’re going to love it.”

Yixing heaved a sigh. To be honest, that was exactly what he was dreading. That he was slowly turning into one of Yifan’s kind – he had grown to like all the five star restaurants and the rides with a personal driver already, even though he really didn’t want to admit it. He followed Yifan through the corridor and the prince took the keycard out of his pocket. The door clicked and with a hand on the handle, Yifan said:

“Welcome to the Ritz-Carlton, Mr. Zhang!”

“Ugh, you are fucking lame!”

The taller one snorted and threw the door open to let Yixing get in first. The journalist hovered into the first room and his face froze. He had imagined a lot, but not a giant living room, two sofas and arm chairs and a lot of detailed decoration which gave the whole thing a sophisticated look that wasn’t tacky. The big windows gave a significant view over Hong Kong’s skyline and even the Victoria Peak. Keep your cool, Zhang Yixing!

“How big is this thing?” Yixing asked because he was already overwhelmed by the size of the living room alone.

“Ummm, I think it’s… 360 square meters or something,” Yifan answered who had caught up to him and watched Yixing whose eyes grew bigger and bigger by the second, and he enjoyed every moment of it.

“That!! That’s more than twice the size of my apartment!!” Yixing didn’t mean to say it out loud, but it slipped off his tongue anyways and Yifan laughed.

“Not even the Presidential Suite over at the Four Seasons is this big.” Yifan shrugged his shoulders as if it wasn’t such a big of a deal.

“For how many people is this designed?”
“Two.”

“Of course it’s only for two… why the hell am I even asking…” Yixing muttered and Yifan chuckled and the journalist turned for the next room which was the bedroom.

“A KING SIZE bed of course!!” He grunted.

“You will survive!” Yifan retorted and threw himself onto it, “I love it. So comfortable.”

He rolled over to the pillows and took the smallest with a blue pillow case. He checked it for something.

“Okay, you’re sleeping on this side.”

“Huh?”

Yifan tossed the pillow over to Yixing who still needed some time to adjust to the whole thing. When he had the pillow in his hands, he saw that someone had sewn his initials onto it.

“Are you FUCKING kidding me?!”

“It’s their service. We’ve also got bathrobes and towels with our initials.”

“You’ve got to be kidding me.”

This somehow felt like he was married to Yifan now. Oh god. No. Yixing hoped this trip would soon be over. This was way too much.

“Oh!” Yifan cried out and got up again, “You have to see the bathroom, it’s amazing!”

He took the pillow out of Yixing’s hands and threw it back onto the bed. Yixing was taken aback from the fact that Yifan didn’t care about putting it back neatly and took all of this for granted when it clearly wasn’t. Before he could’ve possibly said something, Yifan turned him around and led him by the shoulders into the bathroom.

“Noooo, no, no, no!” The younger one whined when a full marbled bathroom appeared in front of his eyes, the bathtub filled up with water, inviting the guests to jump right in.

“Yeeees, yes, yes, yes! And we’ve got a Jacuzzi too!”

“Of course there’s a Jacuzzi, how could I have ever expected anything else?”

Yixing gave up. This was amazing. This was too great. It was way too good and the thought of ever leaving this suite hurt his heart.

“You liiiiiike it!” Yifan chirped and threw his long arms around Yixing.

Yixing was still too shocked by all of this so he let him.

“No, I don’t…” He tried one last time, “I don’t… it’s too much… it’s not necessary… I…”

“Ssshhhhhh, it’s okayyy, you can drop the act.”

Another sigh escaped his lips and Yixing closed his eyes to accept his fate. He just shouldn’t allow himself to get used to it. This was a once-in-a-lifetime-experience. It would soon be over.

They stood in the middle of the bathroom for a while and Yixing breathed in the smell of fresh
flowers and warm water before Yifan said:

“You know, this is actually the moment when I usually have sex with the person I bring here for the first time.”

Yixing’s muscles grew tense as images flashed in front of his eyes that were so not appropriate. If he’d said he had never imagined what it would be like to get fucked against a big window in a luxury hotel room of a high storied building, he’d be lying. Heat rose in his body as his brain vomited one smutty scene after another, all of them in which Yifan made him scream and whimper and he had to remind himself that this should never ever happen.

“Nope, thanks!” He proclaimed and wriggled himself out of Yifan’s grip.

Then he fled the bathroom. When he was back in the living room Yifan joined him again.

“I was just saying…!”

“Yeah no, I appreciate the offer, but no thanks.”

“Your loss!” Yifan shrugged and walked over to the mini bar, “But you’ll at least have a drink with me, right?”

He grabbed the Moet Champagne out of the small fridge and two glasses. Yixing plopped down on one of the sofas and watched Yifan pouring them the beverage. It looked like Yixing would be working up to keep a certain alcohol level throughout the day. After the first few sips Yifan pulled out his phone.

“Right, I forgot to connect to the WiFi.”

“Such a shame…” Yixing scoffed into his glass and took another gulp.

He asked himself if the sofa was actually comfortable enough to be escaping that King sized bed. Maybe if he would be drunk enough at the end of the day, he also could sleep on the thick and comfortable carpet without caring too much about it.

“Do you want to connect too?” Yifan asked after setting up his phone and he offered to do it for him with a small hand gesture.

Yixing saw no harm in that so he unlocked his screen and handed the phone over. It was the same model anyway so Yifan knew what to do and where to go. It took the prince a few moments and then Yixing’s phone started to buzz since he hadn’t been connected to the internet in the last three to four hours.

“Huh. Yao Yao is asking if you’re going to open mic night,” Yifan said and turned to Yixing.

“What?! Are you reading my messages?!”

A fit of panic woke Yixing from his trance and he snatched the phone away.

“The message popped up on the screen, you really need to get some chill man!” Yifan defended himself, “Who is Yao Yao?”

“Nobody!” Was Yixing’s answer that came far too quick and he knew immediately Yifan wouldn’t let it go.

“Yeah, that explains why you’re reacting like this! Are you cheating on me?!”
“You are such a cocky motherfucker!”

So much to “truce” and “let’s be friendly with each other”. He felt another wave of anger and annoyance rushing through his body.

“No seriously, who is he?”

“It’s none of your business!”

“So are you seeing him?”

“Why would you even care?!”

“I’m just curious, I’m allowed to be curious, right?”

“Not with my private matters!”

“You’ve become my private matter a long time ago, Zhang Yixing.”

“Oh shut up, would you!?”

Yixing opened the chatroom and typed a quick ‘Sorry, I can’t, I’m in Hong Kong for a few days. I’ll call you when I’m back.’ and Yifan leaned over to steal glances.

“Back off!” Yixing hissed and tried to push the prince away.

“Just tell me who that guy is, my god! Don’t act like a kid!”

“ME?! Who is reading my messages and freaks out over a text from another guy, huh?!”

“Only because you made a big deal out of it first!”

Yixing hated Yifan for twisting words and situations like this. This guy always had to get his way and he had perfected his tactics over the last 24 years. Yixing grunted.

“Okay FINE, Yao Yao is a guy I met in August this year during an open mic night in Houhai. We’ve been seeing each other occasionally and I’m pretty sure if I hadn’t have to follow your ass around everywhere he’d be my boyfriend by now, so there you go. Thanks for nothing!”

Yifan’s face hardened for a second, then he snatched Yixing’s phone back and opened Yao Yao’s profile.

“What are you doing oh my god, stop it!!”

“I’m just checking him out, relax!”

Yixing had climbed onto Yifan’s lap to get a hold of his phone again but it was no use – the prince had already opened Yao Yao’s gallery and he swiped through the pictures, keeping Yixing at a distance with one arm.

“He doesn’t look like Sehun at all.”

“I never said Sehun was my type!!” Yixing screamed in frustration and slumped down, lying across Yifan’s lap, head buried in one of the sofa pillows.

“Oooh, he likes to snowboard!”
Yifan acted like one of those best female friends who checked the Facebook profile of her best
friend’s crush.

“Could you please just give me my phone back? Please.”

The other one ignored him. Yixing groaned to indicate his discontent and then Yifan said:

“I think you two aren’t a good match.”

“The fuck Wu Yifan! You don’t even know him!”

“Judging from the photos… he’s an ass.”

“You do realize what you just said, right?”

Yifan handed the phone back and said:

“Trust me on that one, Zhang Yixing. You two aren’t meant to be.”

“Okay, thank you for that elaboration, Amor.”

“You are very welcome!”

Yixing sat back up to face Yifan and give him an annoyed look. Yifan smiled and supported his
head with his hand that he had placed on the sofa’s backrest before.

“You’re impossible.”

“I’m just very diligent.”

“Jesus, that doesn’t even make sense – do you actually know what ‘diligent’ means?!”

Yifan clicked his tongue and leaned forward, eyeing Yixing like he was a wolf about to make a kill.
Yixing was the prey, of course.

“Diligent as in I diligently work in getting what I want.”

This was a game. A stupid game to toy with Yixing, and the younger one was very well aware of
that. Their faces were only a few inches apart, but Yixing refused to back off. Whoever would be
looking away first was the defeated one and he had sworn himself he’d never give up defeat against
a snobby and stuck-up prince.

“If only you took this energy and make something useful with it,” Yixing said and raised an eyebrow
as Yifan bit his lip and crooked a smile, probably the one that always has gotten him laid with his
girlfriends before.

No. That wouldn’t work with Yixing. Ever.

“Define useful for a moment, please.”

He didn’t get to the things Yixing deemed as ‘useful’ because somebody knocked at the door and
Yili emerged. She had changed her airport business look for a leisure one that seemed more
appropriate for the still very high temperatures in Hong Kong.

“So, you guys settled in?” She asked as Yixing scooted away from Yifan.
“Yixing loves it!” Yifan cried out.

“Of course he does!” Yili said and threw herself next to her brother. When she saw the champagne on the table, she said, “Yifan, are you going to offer me a glass too, or am I going to have to die of thirst?”

Yifan sighed and patted her knee before he walked over to get another glass for her.

“So, what are we going to do now?” Yixing asked before Yili could demand his opinion on the hotel.

“Well,” Yili huffed and took the glass of champagne Yifan offered her, “For a moment, I was tempted to ask you guys to go to Disneyland…”

“Disneyland!!” Yifan yelled and nodded frantically, “Yes! Such a great idea!”

“… but then I remembered that Yifan’s ankle is still causing problems,” Yili finished her sentence, ignoring her brother who suddenly seemed to be a little boy.

“But! It’s fine!” Yifan protested and lifted his foot, but his ankle was still far from being completely healed, the swollen part around the joint being evidence for it.

“It’s not, obviously. And with all the walking we’d be doing…” Yili considered, but Yifan had already made up his mind.

Disneyland. It took Yifan exactly ten minutes to convince his sister that there’d be possibilities to rest his foot well (“And besides, I’ve got Yixing, he’ll take care of my ankle at the end of the day!” - “The fuck I will!”) so in a rather spontaneous decision the whole group went off to Disneyland which took them about forty minutes by car. Yixing didn’t know what creeped him out more – Yifan who just really wanted to go to Disneyland, him, the Prince of China, notorious for drinking a lot of alcohol on Friday evenings and having maybe fucked models worth a whole runway show, or how fast people crowded around them the moment they had stepped into the amusement park. Yixing was glad he had a face mask somewhere in his backpack so he almost immediately pulled it out and covered his mouth with it. He didn’t want to imagine the outcome of pictures of him and Yifan at Disneyland appearing on the websites of blogs and tabloid newspapers. Yixing just really preferred being behind the camera rather than in front of it.

“So what, you’re not going to rent the whole place just because you feel like it?” Yixing asked as Yifan decided he wanted to ride the Big Grizzly Mountain Runaway Mine Cars – why the name had to be that long wasn’t something Yixing could answer but it was rather amusing how Yifan had gurgled it out in excitement after reading the map.

“It’s called populism, Yixing,” he answered with a wink and made the other one roll his eyes.

“Yeah. Sure. Populism.”

They made their way through the park and the attractions, always accompanied by other people trying to steal glances at Yifan and Yili who tried their best to ignore them. When they stopped for some Churros, Yili couldn’t hold back her sarcastic comment though. After biting into the fried breadstick she had ordered with extra sugar she said:

“Okay, let’s play a game, I call it ‘Guess the headline on the internet’!”

“I’m in,” Yixing said with a smirk and she patted his back, gesturing that she knew she could count on him.
“Possibility A: ‘Prince Yifan and Princess Yili enjoying their time at Disneyland Hong Kong!’ – Possibility B: ‘Exclusive photos of our Royal Siblings having fun together! We can finally put rumors of a huge fight between them to rest!’ – or possibility C: ‘Brave!! Princess Yili munching on a Churro without a care in the world, still maintaining her amazing shape! Her diet secrets revealed!’ – Guess please, my dear!”

Yixing snorted.

“Possibility A is something we’d post on our online site. Possibility B is something OMG-Mag would write. Possibility C is a headline that will most likely be appearing on the cover of the next Cosmopolitan issue.”

“Woar, Yixing, you’re such an expert!” The woman giggled and took another big bite of the sweet treat.

“Making headlines is my job, Yili, I should be an expert of some sort,” Yixing answered and then Yifan appeared.

He handed Yixing the bottle of water he had asked him to buy, interrupting the happy chatter between Yixing and Yili.

“How’s your foot doing?” Yixing asked after he had thanked him and took two big gulps of the water.

“It’s fine,” Yifan answered with a shrug but Yixing didn’t believe him.

He had spent the time to watch Yifan closely and he could have sworn to see him start limping in the last hour. When Yifan saw the other one’s skeptic look he squealed.

“Yixing! You are worrying about me that is so cute!”

“Oh GOD shut up!” Yixing said and dodged Yifan’s hand that had reached out to pat his cheeks, “And back off, people are watching us!”

“When will you ever return my undying love, baby?” Yifan pouted as Yixing grunted and Yili snorted.

Instead of helping Yixing though, she took the last bites of her Churro before she walked over to a wastebin and threw the paper the Churro had been wrapped up in away. The journalist screamed internally as he realized Yili would be of no help and Yifan just approached him to nudge his side, lean into him saying:

“So? Ready to ride the tunnel of love?”

“Fuck. You. So much!” Yixing hissed and fled the scene.

Yifan laughed half the way to the next ride he wanted to take (the Space Mountain) and just couldn’t stop with his suggestive statements that drove Yixing crazy. He was pretty sure the people who followed the group to film mainly Yifan had been gasping when the prince had announced he wanted to sit next to his ‘Girlboyfriend’ and Yixing was close to throw something at the other one.

Fine. He wanted to play? Yixing knew how to play. He knew it very well. So he stuffed his water bottle into his backpack and walked over to Yifan who guided the group. When he reached him, he grabbed his arm and snuggled into him.
“Huh! What’s that going to be?” Yifan asked and raised an eyebrow in surprise.

He couldn’t hide a smile though at the touch and kept walking on, dragging Yixing with him as their group advanced further.

“I just need to tell you something,” Yixing whispered and Yifan leaned in a little more to fully understand the younger one, “Which is: Stop fucking around. You’re annoying. It’s not funny and I don’t want to be dragged into some dating rumors with you or whatever crazy stuff your crazy fans will make up when they put up all those pictures they took today on the internet. And I swear to god, if you don’t drop the pet names, I’ll kick your ankle!”

Yifan made a grimace as if disapproving of Yixing’s threat, ran his fingers through his blond hair and heaved a sigh.

“Okay then, I’ll stop if it makes you happy.”

“Thank you!”

Yixing let go of the taller one. Instead of leaving Yifan be the younger one kept walking beside him though, because he felt the tiniest bit bad for phrasing his disapproval of Yifan’s behavior like he had just now.

“I mean, it’s just not appropriate Yifan,” he tried to justify his rather harsh words. “People might get talking and I just don’t really want my face to be plastered everywhere just because you were cracking some jokes.”

“It’s okay. Maybe you’re right. I’ll show my affection in our bedroom then if you want to keep things private, love.”

“I hate you so much!”

Yixing dashed away from the prince while Yifan laughed out loud wholeheartedly. Yixing was happy the mask he was wearing covered most of his face. He scared himself when he wasn’t sure for a second if the heatwave flushing his cheeks was because of anger or something else he’d rather not think about. Only three more weeks. Only three more weeks had to be endured before his life could finally get back to normal again.

Yixing took a deep breath and met eyes with one girl that had been tailing them ever since she had seen the prince and his gang getting on the rides in Adventureland. Her phone camera was pointed on Yifan, but she gave Yixing a bright smile when she saw him. Then she started to giggle and turned to her friend next to her. Yixing didn’t understand the Cantonese they were talking but the realization hit him hard when the other friend’s eyes grew wide, she leaned over to catch a better glimpse at Yixing and then turned back to her friend to burst into childish giggles once again. God damn it. It was already too late. Thank you for nothing, Wu Yifan.
October 22nd, 2015 (pt. II)

After a rather exhausting afternoon at Disneyland, Yixing thought that everything they’d be doing afterwards was having dinner and then call it a day, but he got proven wrong right after their dessert a personal maid had served Yifan, Yixing, and Yili who sat at the dining table in Yifan’s suite.

“So!” Yifan exclaimed and threw his napkin over the emptied plate, “Where are we going tonight?”

Yili and Yixing raised their eyebrows in unison and made Yifan roll his eyes.

“Guys, if you think I’m spending my evening in this hotel you are wrong.”

“Well, I’d stay…” Yixing mumbled and Yili giggled.

“I think you should go slow, honey,” Yifan’s sister said, clearly trying to be his moral compass once again, “Think about your ankle.”

“I’m fine though!”

“You’ve been limping, you’re not.” Yixing shot at him and sipped on his wine and felt the alcohol numbing his face.

He already felt like one of these wine moms that clung to their glasses because their kids were
especially stressful. Yifan was his kid. And he was stressing him out so much right now.

“Both of you are real party-poopers!”

“Or we are just trying to be your voice of reason because you obviously don’t have one yourself,” Yili suggested but Yifan just scoffed and shot up from the chair.

“I’m fine. Besides, I’m almost 25, I’m old enough to make decisions like that!”

While he went to the minibar to get some water, Yixing said:

“Decisions that are followed by statements like these are mostly decisions one comes to regret later.”

“Wow, wise words my friend!” Yili chirped, but Yixing just shrugged his shoulders while he supported his head with one hand.

“I’m just drunk and that leads to me spilling out some weird word vomit.”

“Guys, FOCUS!” Yifan cried out. When Yixing had emptied his glass, he poured him some water from the bottle he’d just fetched before he downed one painkiller, “I don’t want to stay at home like a loser, okay? I didn’t come to Hong Kong to sit around like an idiot.”

Yixing downed the water but it didn’t really help. His wit and sharp thoughts had been drowned by the wine already.

“Okay, so what do we have to do to make you stay?” He asked.

Yifan smirked and then answered:

“Well, I know some things. And all of them include you being naked and bent over some kind of furniture.”

Yili’s throat escaped a gagging noise and she cried out how bad this pick up line had been while Yixing looked up to Yifan and blinked at him in complete and utter disbelief. He acted like he thought about the prince’s words, then he turned to Yili and said:

“Shit, Yili, we have to go out, I’m not going to sacrifice myself for that!”

The woman nodded and patted Yixing’s arm.

“I completely understand, Yixing. I wouldn’t want you to make that sacrifice either.”

Yifan was too busy getting excited to be offended about the words of the other two and Yili proceeded to ask where Yifan wanted to go. When he blurted out the name PLAY Club, his sister frowned.

“You know very well what kind of people roam there Yifan, do you think that’s a good idea?”

“Honey, I don’t want to go because of the people, I want to go because PLAY Club is just lit!”

Yixing rolled his eyes at Yifan’s slang terms but bit his tongue. Lit. Okay then, you idiot, he thought and poured himself some more wine. If he was going to be drunk today, he better made sure he’d be shit-wrecked.

“I’d rather go to Kee Club or something...”
“Yiiiiiiiiiiiiii!” Yifan whined “I PROMISE, okay? I just want to go for the fun!”

“Yeah, fun at PLAY Club used to be popping pills and snorting white lines in the bathroom!” Yili blurted out and Yixing choked on his drink.

“Wait, was that where he used to get high?” The journalist asked the princess as if Yifan wasn’t even standing next to them.

“Past tense!” Yifan butted in and sat down on the chair next to Yixing, “Seriously, I haven’t been there for two years now, I’m good, nothing will happen! I’ve got Yixing, he’ll keep an eye on me!”

“Huh, wait, what? Since when did I become your babysitter?!”

Yili snorted at Yixing’s comment, but she immediately got serious again to voice her concerns. Yifan wasn’t taking a no for an answer though and she finally gave in to her brother’s request after making him promise to stay beside her or Yixing the whole time so they could keep track of his actions. Then she excused herself to get changed since she was still in her sneakers, crop top and high waist jeans she had worn for the Disneyland trip. When she was gone, Yifan patted Yixing’s thigh and said:

“Let’s get ready, baby!”

“Yifan, do you really think that is a good idea?”

The prince cocked his head, giving away he couldn’t quite follow Yixing’s words. The younger one sighed and then said:

“Isn’t this going to trigger something? Like, shouldn’t former addicts stay away from any kind of temptation?”

Yifan didn’t react at first but then his lips parted into a bright smile and he said:

“Aaawww, listen to you, you’re truly concerned about my well-being!!”

Yixing couldn’t find a witty comeback to that so he just rolled his eyes. Then he stood up and Yifan got on his feet too to cup the younger one’s face. Yixing grunted at the touch and the grip around his glass got tighter, just in case he had to pour the wine into Yifan’s face.

“Then let’s just do it like this: Every time I feel like taking some shit, I’ll just kiss you. You’ll be my drug then.”

“Jesus FUCKING Christ could you finally stop with this bullshit you’re not even funny!” Yixing blurted out and shoved Yifan out of the way to get changed.

When he stomped into the bedroom, he heard Yifan’s deep laughter carrying over and he had to empty his drink. He deemed the heat rising up in his body the result of the wine cursing through his system before he shook his head and started to curse the prince while he exchanged the tank top he had been wearing with a simple and white dress shirt.

By the time all of them had finally changed into their party attire, they got to the club after a rather short car ride. As they got out of the vehicle, Yifan led the way and greeted the security guy at the door like an old friend who had to double check when the prince dashed towards him with open arms.
“You haven’t visited us in centuries, my prince!” The guy said and they shared a manly hug with a lot of shoulder patting, which caused Yili to roll her eyes.

“I haven’t been to Hong Kong in centuries, maybe that’s the thing!” Yifan winked and Yixing could’ve sworn to hear Yili grunt next to him, but he refrained from side eyeing her.

“I’ll let the rest of the staff know about your arrival. They’ll fix you the VIP area!”

“Thank you man! Yili, Yixing, come on!”

Yifan was pumped, Yili was skeptical and Yixing – well, he didn’t know what to do anyways so he followed Yifan into the club. It took about ten minutes until one of the staff members led them to the VIP area and left them with drinks and snacks. Yixing scanned the crowd, looking for a face that maybe Yifan was hoping to see, but Yifan just grabbed the champagne and poured them three glasses.

“Do you think that’s a good idea? You’ve taken painkillers today!” Yixing yelled against the music and realized he sounded like a broken record, repeating the same stupid question over and over again.

“Yixing, you keep asking for my well-being, you can drop the act and admit you like me!” Yifan shot back with a smug smile and handed him one glass.

“Well, it’s definitely not a good idea to mix painkillers and alcohol, that’s all I’m trying to tell you!” Yixing said, but as expected, Yifan didn’t care about those kinds of concerns and downed his glass before he gave the journalist a smooch on the cheek.

“You’re so cute!”

“Yifan, I mean it…”

“So do I! Now let’s get to the fun part!”

After a while, a few others (mostly those of the people who had followed the three to Hong Kong) had joined them in the VIP area. Yifan was totally turnt up, ignoring his ankle that he should actually go easy on and dancing the night away with the others after Yixing had turned him down when he had tried to drag him onto the dancefloor. Yixing decided to be the party-pooper for the night and stood at the sidelines to eye Yifan, just in case. Sometime around two, Yifan had disappeared but Yixing figured he’d just gone for the bathroom – all the alcohol he downed surely had to get out of his body in some kind of way. Yixing sighed and sucked on the straw of his orange juice since he had decided it might be better to sober up a little. Suddenly a woman in maybe her late twenties appeared next to him. She wore a flashy silver cocktail dress with a black clutch in one hand and a can of Red Bull in the other. She had gotten her hair dyed blonde but her hairline already showed the black of her natural hair color.

“You look depressed, sweetheart!” She chirped and gave him a warm smile.

“Well, I’m just not in the mood.”

“Aaaaah, I see!” She said and leaned against the wall, “I know that feeling. Like, everyone around you is drunk and turnt up and you’re like the only sober person at the party.”

“Something like that, yeah,” Yixing chuckled.

“I’m Becky, what’s your name?”
“I’m Yixing.”

“You’re one of Yifan’s friends?”

He considered for a second but decided against telling her the truth. Not everybody had to know his life story. And the more often he told himself he only hung around Yifan this much because he wanted to write good articles, he realized that this was a stupid excuse. He didn’t have to tail Yifan’s ass 24/7, yet he did it. Eighty percent of the things he experienced with Yifan didn’t even make it into his articles, blog entries or Weibo posts. It frustrated Yixing, because he didn’t know what to do with the situation.

“Yes, sort of.”

Becky snorted.

“Sort of? You know that not everyone can just go and hang around with the prince in VIP areas of clubs – you surely have to be his friend.”

Yixing just shrugged his shoulders while Becky took a sip from her drink, eyeing him from head to toe.

“So where do you know Yifan from?” Yixing asked to shift the focus to something else because he was getting a little uncomfortable.

“Ooooh, you know. High society of Hong Kong and all that. When he came around here more often we occasionally ran into each other.”

When she saw Yixing’s skeptic look, her eyes grew wide.

“Nooo, no, no, no! I’ve never done anything with him! Everything we did was have some drinks in some clubs, we never… ugh, no! He’s not my type at all!”

Her comment made Yixing laugh which kind of broke the ice between them. They spent some time doing smalltalk and Yixing lost all of his sense of time. Somewhere between a lot of half-drunk giggles with Becky, Yili appeared.

“Yixing, I cannot find Yifan!” She proclaimed without a warning.

“What do you mean you cannot find him?”

“I looked for him everywhere. He’s vanished!”

Her face read immense worry and then she saw Becky – and her face fell in horror.

“What the fuck are you doing here?!”

Yili grabbed Becky’s Red Bull can and smashed it onto the floor. Some of the others stopped short and watched how the tin rolled under one of the sofas.
“Umm, what is going on here?” Yixing asked as Yili snatched Becky’s purse and started to search it, snapping something at the other woman along the lines of “Tell me, what did you give to him this time?!”

“She’s one of Yifan’s former dealers!” Yili threw at Yixing, frantically searching Becky’s purse for any kind of evidence.

Becky tried to snatch her purse away, but Yili wouldn’t let her.

“Give that back to me, I’m done with that shit! I haven’t sold anything in over a year!”

Yixing was so dumbfounded he didn’t know what to do, so he watched helplessly as Yili pulled out something that looked like an LSD ticket, but Yixing couldn’t make it out correctly in the flashing light of the club. Plus, he really had no idea about these kinds of things. It could’ve been anything.

“Oh. Really! I’m telling you Becky, I’m going to fucking end you once and for all!”

“Give that back to me!!”

Yili tossed the drugs into Becky’s face and Yixing’s brain finally gave out the order to his body to move. Shocked by the fact he had been having a nice chat with a drug dealer, he grabbed Yili’s arm and told her he’d help her find Yifan.

“I’m not done with you Becky!” Yili yelled at the other one as she got dragged away by Yixing whose brain came up with one bad scenario after another, all of them kind of ended with Yifan laying somewhere choking on his own vomit.

“I cannot believe this!!” The princess cried out as they walked out into the hallway that connected the main floor with the bathrooms and the other floors, “That…whore!! Did she try to sell you something?”

“No… I … we just talked…?”

“Yeah, that’s always the case. ’No, Yili, we just talked, we didn’t do anything, promise, she didn’t sell me any shit!’” Yili was so furious tears started to dwell in her eyes and Yixing began to fathom the amount of hurt she had gone through while Yifan was on the high of his addiction, almost literally speaking.

“Hey, hey, hey… Yili, calm down,” Yixing said and patted her shoulders, “Have you checked the men’s bathroom already?"

“No.” She admitted while her lips started to tremble.

“Alright then, I’ll go and check. Just wait here. Don’t try to kill Becky, okay?"

Yili nodded and gave Yixing an additional push into the right direction. When Yixing stumbled into the bathroom, the drumming of the bass vanished. The room was brighter than the club or the hallway, but the light was very soft – it was almost like stepping into an oasis of silence after you’ve wandered through one of the circles of hell. Another partygoer left the bathroom, not even looking at Yixing and then he was alone. Yixing heaved a sigh.

“Yifan? Are you here?”

Yixing thought he’d made out movements in one of the bathroom stalls so he walked over and knocked at the only door that was locked.
“Are you in there? Yifan?”

No answer. Yixing grunted and squatted down to peek through the space of the cabin and the floor. He clearly made out someone sitting on the floor and judging from the shoes he was positive it was the prince.

“Yifan, Yili’s worried about you, could you please open up and tell me you’re okay? I’m kind of worried too, so I’d really appreciate it if you let me in.”

Finally, Yifan reacted and unlocked the door which Yixing flung open.

“God, Yifan. What have you done?” Yixing asked as he looked at him.

Yifan was a wreck. There was no other way to put it. He was shaking, almost as pale as the white wall behind him and hiding his face in his hands while making incoherent noises that sounded like he was fighting against a fit of panic.

“Yifan!”

Yixing forced him to take his hands off his face and Yifan stared at the other one with dilated pupils and Yixing sighed.

“Are you high? Don’t tell me you’re high…”

“I… I feel so bad…” Yifan whimpered, shaking even though his body temperature was higher than usual, cold sweat breaking out on his forehead.

“God damnit…” Yixing mumbled as Yifan crashed into his arms and let out a dry sob.

“Please… I…”

“It’s okay, I’m here.”

Yixing had no idea what to do. He had no idea what Yifan had taken, no idea how he could treat a drug trip turned bad, no idea how long such a state lasted. He proceeded to hold Yifan, patting his back while the other one rambled some weird sentences about people that were out to get him, about things he’s been seeing, about stuff that scared the shit out of him so he had to lock himself up here.

“Nobody’s out to get you, Yifan,” Yixing said, but Yifan didn’t believe him, so he added, “I’ll take you home, okay? You’re going to be safe there.”

“Are you real, Yixing? Please tell me you’re real, I don’t know…. What’s going on here…”

The question threw Yixing totally off track. Of course he was real. How could Yifan not realize that?

“Yes, I am. Now come with me, okay? Please, I’ll take care of you. Nobody will hurt you.”

To undermine his statement, Yixing’s grip around Yifan got tighter to give him the physical reassurance that he was, in fact there, real, and here to help. Then he heaved Yifan up and dragged him out of the bathroom, struggling to hold him upright because Yifan’s legs did not cooperate with the rest of his body. When they stepped back out, Yixing heard a house remix of Sia’s Chandelier blasting from the main floor and in that moment he thought some higher entity was making fun of them. Help me, I’m holding on for dear life.

Yili saw them and when she did, she just shook her head, a gesture that met somewhere between ‘disappointed’ and ‘jaded’. In that moment, Yixing and her shared a moment of silent communication.
in which Yixing promised to take care of her brother. While he dragged Yifan to the exit he hoped the people around them were too shit-wrecked themselves to notice how awfully out of it Yifan was. Only when he had finally jockeyed Yifan into one of the cars that had brought the whole group to the club he allowed himself to take a breather while Yifan crashed down on the backseat. He pressed his face into Yixing’s lap and the other one hoped he’d not be throwing up while the driver brought them back to the hotel.

“i’m going to die Yixing,” Yifan announced with a sob and the certainty in his voice made Yixing’s stomach turn.

“You’re not. I won’t allow it.”

Because Yixing was still clueless about what to do, he let Yifan ramble away and reassured him over and over again nothing would happen as long he was there. The fifteen minutes drive felt much longer than that and when they finally arrived at the hotel, Yixing was thankful that Yifan seemed to have at least calmed down a little, even though he still seemed honestly freaked out by whatever his brain made up under the influence of the drug he had taken. It took Yixing awfully long to bring Yifan into the suite and Yixing sighed in relief when Yifan finally fell face down onto their bed.

“Okay, now, maybe, I don’t know, I’ll get you some water.” The journalist mumbled while Yifan sat up with a long moan.

“Stay with me please,” he begged while his hand searched for Yixing and Yixing obeyed and grabbed it.

Yifan leaned against the other one who started to run his fingers through his hair, hoping it would have a soothing effect on the other one. They stayed like this for a while, Yixing standing in front of Yifan who held onto his hand like a drowning man to a piece of wood and the younger one started to hope that the worst might be over already. But then Yifan started to whimper again, and Yixing couldn’t even react as he shot up, let go of his hand and stumbled into the direction of the bathroom. The journalist let out a sigh, not because he was essentially annoyed, but because he just didn’t know what he could do to put an end to this. Sleep? Water? Anything? But his mind stayed blank so he followed Yifan after hearing some rather ominous gagging sounds. When he entered the bathroom, Yifan laid on his back next to the toilet sink, still gagging.

“My fucking god…” Yixing whispered and tried to make Yifan sit up again, “Yifan, please, don’t lay on your back, okay…?”

While he managed to get Yifan into a seating position, the prince said:

“Don’t look at me, please…”

“Yeah I already did, no need to play pretend here,” Yixing answered and when another gag made Yifan’s body cramp Yixing bent him over the sink again, then he went behind him to keep him in that position until Yifan was finished turning his insides out, “Let all of it out, maybe that’s best for you anyway…”

The downfall of the great Wu Yifan, Yixing thought while he held tightly onto him with one hand and the other one pushed the hair back that fell into Yifan’s face. For a split second he thought about that sensational headline forming in his head, but then he shook his head, disgusted by the mere thought of writing even one single line about this night. It took Yifan a while to end his vomiting - and when he did, he just stared at the wall in front of him, while he supported his head with one arm. Yixing kept his arms around the older one’s torso, giving him some sort of support, not only physically because he would surely fall over immediately, but also mentally, showing Yifan that
someone was there to take care of him. The prince’s other hand started to search for one of Yixing’s and held onto it before he let out a sob and then said:

“I’m such a failure…”

Yixing didn’t know what to say so he didn’t. Receiving no answer at all made Yifan’s small sobs turn into legit tears and pitiful weeping. Yixing remembered that one time he had taken care of a drunk friend who had reacted similarly. But this was ten times worse, because his friend had cried because of something stupid like a cute kitten video she had seen. Today, Yixing had the feeling that Yifan’s dark side had won over again after it had been suppressed for some time.

“Yifan, stop please, take a breath. It’s not that bad…”

“It is though…!” Yifan squeezed out and Yixing worried that he might fall back into vomiting if he kept sobbing like this and didn’t allow his body to finally rest, “I’m so bad… I can’t do a single thing right…!”

“What happened happened,” Yixing said while he tried to sway Yifan back and forth like a child “There’s no use to dwell on it. You need some rest.”

“How will you ever be able to look at me again…?” Yifan sobbed.

“I’m sure I will be able to, now let’s go to bed, okay?”

Yixing was surprised how well Yifan cooperated with him and allowed him to bring him back to bed. The smaller one helped him to get rid of the shirt and pants he was wearing and while Yifan spread himself out on the whole bed Yixing went back to the bathroom to throw Yifan’s dirty shirt into the marbled wash basin to fill the sink up with water so the shirt could soak over night. After cleaning up the bathroom, because Yifan had left a mess behind, he went back to the bedroom.

“Don’t lie on your back, Yifan, I told you already,” he said and when he had changed into a different shirt and some shorts he pushed Yifan onto his side and pressed his body against the taller one to make sure he wouldn’t roll back.

It must’ve given a weird impression to bystanders – Yixing spooning Yifan and telling him he’d be alright. Yifan intertwined his fingers with Yixing’s, which was like a silent expression of honest gratitude, and somewhere along Yixing’s promises to keep taking care of him, Yifan finally fell asleep. Yixing knew he wouldn’t find any himself.
A new Royal couple?
Shoker! Wu Yifan might swing both ways! Male fans of the royal heir,

We have all been going on about the crazies that revolve around the preparations for the birthday of everybody’s favorite royal Wu Yifan, but between all the exciting news about the parties, the possible presents and the invited guests (no other than Lady Gaga has announced on her Twitter account she’d be singing for him!) we might have missed another groundbreaking news!

It’s been a while since Wu Yifan has been seen going out with a girl (his last girlfriend called it quits in August this year) and suddenly, another person appeared at his side. This person is not another supermodel hanging on his arm, it’s actually a guy! And a pretty handsome one on top of that!

We have talked to one of our insiders of the royal court who has told us that Wu Yifan’s new companion is called Zhang Yixing and is currently working for the
Zhongguo Ribao. “They’re inseparable,” our insider said. “They see each other every day. Wu Yifan is very fond of him, there is really no appointment he attends a - Does that mean that our prince might not be exclusively into girls?

It seems like it, judging from photos that have appeared yesterday even Yili and his friends going on a trip to Disneyland Hong Kong. Yixing was seen with and a lot of people who have run into the two tweeted about how “fond” they are of each other. One user points out in her tweet:

“Wu Yifan & Zhang Yixing seemed super close, the prince even calls Yili ‘baby’, he bought him snacks & never left his side.”

Not only did they appear ‘close’ as in being seen around each other, but they also appeared super close in pictures posted on social media. The screenshot on the right for example shows Yili holding Yixing’s arm as they were uploaded by fans.

Of course the pair have been friends for a while but given the fact they have only met in September, the way they interact with each other makes it seem as if they have been close for much longer. Judging by the articles Zhang Yixing and Wu Yifan, the young man from Hunan seems to adore the prince just as much as the prince adores him. Our insider could tell us that the prince has organized a party for his friend who turned 24 on October 7th – you read that right! – the prince threw them a birthday party with our Princess Wu Yili who is said to like Zhang Yixing as much as he does. “It’s like they are siblings!” Our insider said. “They get along very well and Yili already calls Yifan ‘brother’ mostly because of their shared birthday!”

Unfortunately, we couldn’t reach out to Wu Yifan to get a personal st
Unfortunately, we couldn't reach out to Wu Hian to get a personal update. His Instagram, Twitter, and Weibo pages have stayed silent ever since yesterday on Weibo and Twitter. We'll stay tuned and keep you guys posted! Please consider subscribing to our newsletter to not miss out on any new information about his couple!
Videocredit: CLICK HERE
The picture is somewhere from Weibo I AM SO SORRY I've been having this pic saved to my computer for ages and I have no friggin' idea where it's from tell me if you guys know thankssssss.
2015年10月23日

Chapter Summary

Yifan wakes up and Yixing has to deal with a prince that needs to sober up again.

Chapter Notes

- wooooh are you guys okay after that horrible and mean chapter
- if yes i’m glad
- if not i hope this will fix it
- thanks to the ppl leaving kudos and bookmarks and the cutipies who left comments
  thank you so much i love every single one of you!

October 23rd, 2015

His assumption had been right. Or at least, Yixing felt like his assumption had been right because
when he heard someone knocking at the door of the suite, it was like he hadn’t found even a minute
of sleep. When he opened the door, Yili was standing in front of him with a paper bag in her hand
she shoved into his while she walked to the dining room.

“Egg tarts from Yifan’s favorite store,” she informed while Yixing followed her, “How is he?”

“Umm, well, he’s been sleeping after a lot of crying.”

Yili let out a long sigh and sat down, head buried in her hands. Yixing was unsure what to do so he
kept waiting for her to say something. Yifan was still in some sort of coma – Yixing had been so
paranoid the whole night he had even checked on his pulse sometimes. Considering Yifan had not
only mixed some synthetic drugs with alcohol but also painkillers prior to getting to the club, his
concerns rooted in serious and logical reasoning. It felt like a miracle Yifan hadn’t had to be taken to
the hospital.

“Thank you.” Yili said after a moment of thinking and put her hands down.

She looked like she hadn’t gotten any sleep herself. Her hair was done in a messy updo while she
hadn’t even bothered to put on any make up. Her slumped shoulders gave away how jaded she felt.

“It’s nothing.”

“No, really. Thank you. I couldn’t have done it. Not this time. Not again.”

Yixing sat down next to her which she took as an invitation to continue.

“It’s just… I’m so tired, Yixing. I am so tired of him breaking all his promises over and over again.
I’m supposed to love him unconditionally, despite all his ugly flaws. And I do, I really do. I’d fight the world for my brother. But… it’s draining me.”

“That’s okay though,” Yixing tried to comfort her but Yili only snorted disdainfully.

“I could’ve easily taken classes at Peking or Qinghua University. I only went to Yale because I wanted to get out,” she confessed and looked straight at Yixing, “I left the country because I wanted to get away from my brother. Not because I didn’t love him, I just couldn’t do one more sleepless night in which he called me over to help get through another bad drug trip. I couldn’t stand the thought of seeing my brother one more time laying on his bathroom floor with vomit all over his shirt. So instead of staying in Beijing I fled. Sometimes he called me while he was in rehab, and I knew he needed someone to talk him out of trying to get his hands on anything, but I ignored him on purpose. And then I told him that I didn’t pick up because I was in class or asleep. And then he eventually stopped calling all along.”

Yili waited for Yixing’s judgement and played with one of the rings on her hands while doing so.

“I don’t think you should beat yourself up because of this. We’ve all got our limits and if that’s what you needed to do, then so be it. You can’t forget to look after yourself, after all. It doesn’t mean you let Yifan down.”

“He begged me to stay. I left anyway,” she retorted, almost as if she was trying to make Yixing say what a horrible person she had been. Yixing sighed and tried to find some words of comfort for her.

“You’re human, Yili. Yes, not an ordinary one, because you’re the Princess of China, but human after all. You can allow yourself some mistakes or selfish decisions once in a while. Yifan does it all the time and is forgiven anyway. Don’t try to make up for the things he lacks of. That is something nobody in this world could do.”

Yili stared at Yixing with big eyes, processing what he was saying and then she blurted out:

“What did my family do to be blessed with your presence, Zhang Yixing?!”

“Now, let’s slow down a little, you’re giving me way too much credit here,” Yixing responded while she got up and kissed his forehead, not to make a move on him, but to express her gratitude.

“No, you’re giving yourself not enough,” she mumbled against his hair before she stood up straight again and pulled a pair of sunglasses out of her bag. While she put them on to hide the dark circles under her eyes she explained, “I have to run some errands for the Halloween party. May I bother you to keep an eye on Yifan? I’m not expecting him to wake up any time soon, but… you know.”

“It’s not like I’m planning to go anywhere anyways,” Yixing said and cracked a smile.

Yili managed to return the smile before she said:

“You’re such a lovely person, if only you were my type now. And maybe straight. Or at least bi.”

“Well, I guess you’re more into types like Luhan?” Yixing teased and Yili let out a squeal.

“Tell me when Yifan woke up, I have to go now!” She tried to get rid of Yixing and dashed towards the door while Yixing giggled at her really blunt try to escape him.

When she had left, Yixing got up to check on Yifan who hadn’t moved an inch and was still curled up in fetus position on the side of the bed where the younger one had left him earlier. Yixing sighed and sat down next to him. Poor boy, he thought, and actually meaning it. He couldn’t shake the
feeling off that Yifan would be able to do great things. Yixing was convinced that Yifan could be brilliant, that he could be what people expected of him. If only someone had shown him how. The journalist wondered if it was actually too late to try get Yifan back on track. The younger one huffed and then laid down besides the prince, running his fingers through Yifan’s blond hair. The touch made Yifan’s body flinch in a fit of panic and he threw his eyes open, a frightened expression on his face, grabbing Yixing’s hand as if wanting to shove it away.

“It’s just me, Yifan, relax,” Yixing said and it took the other one a second to collect his thoughts.

When he actually recognized Yixing, he sighed in relief and his tense muscles relaxed again. Then he grunted.

“Fuck man. That was the worst.”

“Hm,” Yixing retorted since he wasn’t quite sure what Yifan actually meant, so he added, “Are you okay?”

Yifan let go of Yixing’s wrists and squinted his eyes.

“I feel like someone has chewed me up and spat me out again.”

Yixing scoffed at the comment, a sound that somehow indicated he found Yifan’s metaphor quite funny.

“You’re lucky you’re alive.”

Yifan didn’t respond to that, only the way he pressed his lips into a thin line indicated that he had heard Yixing’s statement and somehow knew he was right.

“You saw some really weird shit, you know,” Yixing continued but didn’t dare to ask if any of those hallucinations were still present, he didn’t dare to ask if he could finally take a breather and stop worrying.

Yifan opened his eyes again and looked straight at the smaller one.

“I’m only seeing you now.”

Yixing mumbled a ‘Good’ before he rolled onto his back and Yifan snuggled into his chest. Under normal circumstances Yixing would’ve told him to stay in his lane. But the way the prince clung onto his shirt told him to drop the attitude for once and just let him. Yifan wasn’t trying to be an obnoxious asshole this time. He just really needed some cuddling right now. They stayed like this for some time before Yifan voiced one of his thoughts:

“You pulled me out of there, you know.”

“Yeah, you’re kind of heavy for such a lanky guy like you.”

“No, I don’t mean that,” Yifan retorted, ignoring Yixing’s attempt to fall back into his sarcasm to lighten up the mood, “I mean… okay, yes, I meant that too. But I was so out of it… I couldn’t distinguish between what I really saw and what that Acid let me see. And then you came. You pulled me back.”

Yixing didn’t know what to say about that but he felt like he didn’t even need to. Yifan sighed and placed his head back on Yixing’s chest that felt like bursting at the touch.
“I cannot believe I used to take that shit like candy… I went on for days like this…” Yifan sounded a little disappointed, but mainly shocked and he shook his head in disbelief, “You know, you grow tolerant against LSD and I didn’t think one dose would throw me off track like this…”

“So it was Becky.” Yixing stated.

“Eh? How do you know her?” Yifan asked and lifted his head once again to eye the other one in surprise.

Yixing told him how she had started to talk to him right before Yili had realized that Yifan was gone and how Yili had snapped at her and outed her as one of Yifan’s former dealers.

“Be honest with me, did you deliberately look for her? Was she the reason you wanted to visit that club?”

“No!” Yifan answered, “I really just wanted to go there because it has been the most fun. But I eventually found out that PLAY is pretty average… only my drug drips have made it so amazing. When I realized that I thought about leaving, actually. And then I ran into Becky. And we talked and it was like back in the old days and… she was so charming, so witty and funny and before I knew she offered me a five strip. I refused, I really did. But then she took one blotter off that ticket and shoved it into my hand and said that she’d be giving me that one for free.”

The more he talked, the guiltier he sounded. He stopped his report when he realized how stupid he had been but Yixing felt like Yifan really needed to talk about it.

“Go on, if you want to,” Yixing said and started to caress Yifan’s shoulder which seemed to give the older one the needed courage.

“I went to the bathroom and I was really close to tossing it away. I really really tried, Yixing. But… it just… I don’t know, instead of tossing it I put it on my tongue and… damnit…” Yifan cursed himself and Yixing continued running his fingers over Yifan’s skin that was still sticky, “I just… when it started to work I felt so amazing, I felt alive… and then everything went bad.”

Yixing clearly made out the trembling in Yifan’s voice and he thought hard about any words that might prevent Yifan from crying, because he surely couldn’t handle that. A drugged crying Yifan was bad, but an Yifan that started to cry in the wake of sobering up was worse.

“It’s over now, Yifan.”

“It’s not. Two years of rehab. Gone to shit in the blink of an eye, I’m back to square one. I was doing fine, and then I got careless and… I’m just horrible. I’ll forever rebound to that awful habit.”

“Okay, I may not have first hand experience when it comes to recovery or any sort of addiction, but I do know that recovery isn’t a progressive line up the scale. There will always be relapses. Just… I don’t know, take this as a reminder. You might not be fully recovered and you’re triggered rather easily, but that’s okay, we’ll just keep going.”

Right when the words had fallen off his lips, Yixing wanted to bite his tongue off for blurting out that last sentence. Yifan didn’t try to get into more detail on the ‘we’ though and buried his nose in the curve of Yixing’s neck, pressing his whole body against the other one.

“Thank you,” he simply said and the breath ghosting over Yixing’s very sensitive skin made him shiver.

It was still rather early, and Yifan was still rather beaten up, so they dozed off for another hour or so,
before Yixing had to get Yifan’s weight off his left arm to make sure it wouldn’t fall off.

“I should take a shower…” Yifan mumbled after Yixing had apologized for pulling his arm away and waking him up.

“Yeah. And maybe brush your teeth.”

Yifan clasped one hand over his mouth and sat up. Yixing’s skin somehow missed the bodyheat already, but he banned that thought into the far back of his brain immediately.

“Oh shit, I’m so sorry…!”

“Seriously, I saw you throwing up and crying like a baby already… no need to apologize for reeking of alcohol and vomit. I’ve got a strong stomach.”

Yifan’s answer was a grunt and then he slowly got up to scuff his feet into the bathroom. Yixing proceeded to give Yili an update on her brother’s well being, but didn’t receive an answer so he grabbed his laptop and sat down at the dining table to get some work done.

Yifan had decided on soaking in the bathtub for almost an hour in which Yixing mostly roamed the internet and had to realize that the Disneyland trip hadn’t gone unnoticed, especially not the moment when Yixing had whispered threats into Yifan’s ear which got horribly misinterpreted by the tabloid newspapers and Yifan’s fans. As Yifan stumbled out of the bathroom to join Yixing, the journalist decided to swallow down his annoyance and not say anything though since Yifan still looked like shit and probably felt like it. When he saw the bag of egg tarts next to Yixing, his facial expression hardened.

“Yili was here,” he stated the obvious and let his fingers run over the shop’s logo on the paper bag.

“She was,” Yixing confirmed and went through the latest pictures he had taken.

Yifan sat down next to the younger one and looked at the food Yili had brought over.

“Man, I’m such an ass.”

“Okay, could we stop the pity party now, Yifan? I almost wish you’d get back to your old self, I don’t know how to handle that self-reflective side of yours!” Yixing snapped but tried to prevent any further damage in adding, “She’s fine, and she still loves you. Now eat those egg tarts.”

Yixing didn’t realize the long look Yifan was giving him before he reluctantly opened the bag, his stomach still a little funny from last night’s activities.

“Do you want some too?” Yifan asked and offered the bag while he carefully took a bite off the first pastry.

“No, I’m good. I don’t like these things that much. Thank you though.”

While Yifan nibbled on the egg tarts, Yixing suggested staying in for the day and he was surprised that Yifan agreed almost immediately on it. They spent the early afternoon in the suite, zapping through several TV channels and shows before they decided to relax at the swimming pool of the hotel. It felt awfully couply to lay down next to Yifan on one of the sun loungers but Yixing told himself that it was only for this day and that they’d be leaving tomorrow and then he could finally get a little distance between them again. For now, he decided, he’d be going easy on Yifan and wouldn’t put up a fight every time he suggested something. After basking some hours in the October sun that was still strong enough to cause some serious sunburns (and Yixing had had to talk Yifan into
“I’m hungry,” Yifan finally proclaimed.

“Oh, that is a thing today, yeah?” Yixing said but smiled, indicating that Yifan getting hungry and actually having an appetite was a good sign.

“Do you want to stay in or shall we go to a restaurant?” Yifan responded with a smirk.

“Since we’re already here, just order in.”

Yixing let Yifan choose and order their dinner, since he figured it might be best to just let Yifan have what he felt like eating. And besides, Yifan had never ordered bad food. Even though he didn’t quite like the thought of Yifan taking charge of such simple things, deciding for Yixing like he was his little wifey that had to obey to his likings, he had to admit that the older never let him down in the choices he had made so far, starting from that goddamn Kobe beef steak on his first day. When the food arrived, Yili had messaged Yifan that she’d be meeting a friend from last semester at Yale who was in Hong Kong for an internship. Yixing almost wanted to ask if it was common for her to act like this when she was on vacation with Yifan, but he didn’t feel like an eligible person to be in the position to ask so he sat down and grabbed his chopsticks while checking the table.

“Oh my god!” He let out in excitement when his eyes locked with the braised pork belly which made Yifan chuckle.

“Scored once again!” The taller one said as he watched Yixing picking an extra large pork cube and putting it into his mouth.

The meat was so tender he barely had to chew it. It had been ages since he had last eaten that dish, and the slightly sweet taste of the soy sauce brought back memories from his childhood.

“That used to be my favorite dish as a kid – which kind of explains why I was so chubby in Middle School…” He heard himself chatter.

“Your mother used to make it?” Yifan asked and put some of the vegetables into Yixing’s bowl.

The gesture was so casual, it was almost like Yifan had been doing this half of his life already – providing Yixing with the stuff he liked, making sure he was eating well. For a split second Yixing imagined how this might look like to bystanders and shook his head to get rid of the thought. It was his luck Yifan had asked a question so his head shake could be easily connected to that.

“No, I grew up with my grandparents until I was twelve. My grandmother made that once a week because she knew I loved it. We couldn’t afford a lot of meat, but she made sure I’d get my favorite dish.”

The news made Yifan grunt in surprise.

“Why’s that?”

“Ugh, my parents worked in the city but had no money to raise me back then, so I stayed with my grandparents in the countryside for the time being.”

A silence followed Yixing’s words and Yifan forgot the chicken he had put into his own bowl for a moment. He blinked confused and then said:

“You know what, Yixing? I know nothing about you. You know everything about me, but I don’t
even know anything about you. I thought you were from Changsha?"

Yixing rolled his eyes and snatched another piece of pork belly off the plate in the middle of the table.

“Technically, I am from Changsha. When I was twelve I was able to live with my parents in the city because they had saved up enough money to take me in and send me to a rather good school. So. Yeah,” he explained but Yifan’s look told the journalist the other wouldn’t let him off the hook that easily, “And there is nothing to know about me. Nothing important or of great interest at least.”

“Well, it’s of my great interest, so tell me.”

“Ugh, you won’t let it go, right?”

“Right. So you better get it over with.”

Yixing rolled his eyes and decided to let Yifan in on the essentials of his life, not too much to be pouring his whole heart out to him – just as much to satisfy his curiosity.

“Okay, so here’s the thing: My grandparents had some fields and some cows but it wasn’t enough to provide for the whole family, especially not when I came around, so my parents decided to go to the city to find work and earn some extra money. Because they couldn’t afford taking me with them, I stayed with my grandparents. I saw my parents once a year for New Year’s.”

“What…?”

“Yeah, our village is like three car hours away from Changsha. My parents didn’t have a car back then, the train took ages, so they barely made it apart from New Year’s to come around. My grandparents didn’t have a phone either, so… yeah, I didn’t really know my parents in my first twelve years of life.”

Yifan blinked, struck by shock. Yixing chuckled, because he could imagine how hard it was for Yifan to comprehend that concept.

“So… what did you do…?”

“Well, imagine: I went to school like any other kid. They do have that where I’m from,” Yifan snorted in embarrassment as Yixing’s comment made him realize how stupid his question had been, “But actually, my school was in the next village so I had to walk there every day. Took me about an hour.”

“Wait WHAT!”

“It was cool. At least in summer, because me and my friends often stopped by the lake on our way home,” Yixing shrugged his shoulders, “I mean, it’s not like I had anything better to do anyways. When I came home from school I’d help my grandfather in the field or had to watch the cows or something. I liked the walks. Sometimes I dragged them on to avoid my responsibilities, which mostly resulted in my grandmother scolding me because she had started to worry about me.”

Yixing looked at Yifan who eyed him with a mixture between pure shock and admiration.

“You… but… how?”

The younger one laughed.
“I didn’t know any different. It was normal for me,” Yixing said and Yifan had completely forgotten about his food, staring at Yixing in awe, silently begging him to continue, “Sometimes I even miss it. Life was so much simpler back then… it wasn’t easy, but nice and simple. I barely make it to see my grandmother ever since my grandfather passed five years ago.”

“So she’s alone now?”

“No, my uncle and his family live with her. She’s not able to work that much anymore, but she keeps herself busy, mostly playing Majiang with her neighbours.”

Yifan laughed at the comment.

“She’s actually a big fan of your family,” Yixing suddenly recalled, “She reads everything about you guys. She thinks you’re a very handsome man.”

Yifan rolled his shoulder back and put his nose up in pride, making Yixing avert his eyes against the ceiling once again.

“Well, then I think I should pay her a visit, huh?”

“Oh god please don’t!”

“Why though? She sounds lovely! Raising such a charming man like you!”

“You’d give that poor woman a heart attack! You’d cause a riot in the whole village!” Yifan retorted but Yifan didn’t seem to see the problem.

“So what? Wouldn’t that be a nice change for once?”

“You would not survive one hour there! You’d be running away screaming as soon as you’d step one foot into the kitchen of my grandmother!”

“Oh come on it can’t be that bad!”

“Yifan, you grew up in the Palace. While you were running around playing hide and seek with Tao in the Imperial Gardens, I was milking cows with my grandmother. While you got tutored by private teachers, I had like one pencil that I wrote my homework down with in the middle of the night after my grandfather dismissed me from field work, and nobody could actually help me because neither of my grandparents was literate. While you got dinner served, I had to cut vegetables for my grandmother to prepare dinner after I had picked them from our fields. It’s like you and me grew up on different planets. You’d be traumatized for the rest of your life.”

Yifan couldn’t really say anything against that. He curled his lips and seemed to think of a good comeback, but he never stood a chance when Yixing started to vomit his thoughts that he expressed in sometimes really clever rhetorical devices that defeated him every time. The perks of being a writer, proven to be effective once again.

“Well then,” the prince said and leaned forward and their noses almost touched, “Why don’t you just try me?”

Yixing wanted to say something, but his mind went blank and he cursed himself for it. The staring game was back on. Yifan didn’t even seem to blink as he pinned him down with his gaze and Yixing inhaled the air around him sharply and with it the scent of Yifan mixed with sun screen lotion and the shampoo he had been using. It clouded Yixing’s rational judgement, and Yixing hated it. And then he made the one big mistake that you should never do in a situation like this – his gaze shifted to
Yifan’s lips that were slightly parted, slightly curled, alluringly inviting the other one to seal them with his own. When their noses touched Yixing realized that Yifan was leaning in for a kiss and in the last second he was able to pull his head away from him and he let out a long deep breath. Yifan slumped back into his seat with a frown on his face, looking disappointed. Before Yixing could explain himself, the older one asked:

“ITs that other guy, right?”

“Jesus, are you really doing this right now?”

“I’m just asking!”

Yifan acted like he didn’t care, but he did. The way he ground his two chopsticks in his right hand against each other and his hardened facial expression gave him away.

“It’s just not appropriate!”

Why didn’t Yifan see this? Yixing had overstepped the line too many times already. The Disneyland snapshots flashed in front of his inner eye and he didn’t even dare to think about what Ms. Wang was going to say about these as soon as he stepped back into his office on Monday. People were talking already. And Yixing wasn’t sure what was actually going on with him, if he actually wanted this to be over already so he could go back to his own life or if he wanted it to be over because he kind of felt the need to explore this thing without work nagging in the back of his brain.

“Yeah, pretty sure that’s just an excuse,” Yifan muttered and the vanquished tone in his voice made Yixing’s guts churn.

“Yifan, it’s…” Yixing begun and massaged his temples for a second to prepare himself for the next sentence that had been ghosting in his mind over and over again recently, “You could be so great, you really could… if you just acted like a normal person for maybe five seconds.”

The comment startled Yifan, something the other one had expected. He frowned and tried to find the right words, but he couldn’t. All that left his mouth was an offended scoff and a weak try to convince Yixing that he was acting normal.

“Normal Normal, Yifan. Not Royalty Normal, because that is something entirely different,” Yixing explained as Yifan bit his lower lip in frustration and he looked like a kid that got wrongfully scolded by his teacher for something his classmate next to him had done – he just didn’t understand.

It was unfair what he had said, Yixing knew that. How could Yifan possibly know the regular standards for a ‘normal person’ when his heritage had never made it possible for him to experience such life?

“Very well then,” the prince finally said as if making a decision and looked at Yixing again, “Tell me what I have to do. I’m willing to do it.”

These words astonished the younger one and everything he was capable of doing was to stare back at the older one who patiently waited for an answer. Fortunately, his journalistic brain came up with an idea that he might even be able to incorporate in his next article, because that was what he was and he needed to remind himself almost every day now. You’re the journalist. You’re the writer. Not the girlfriend hanging on his arm and you’ll never be.

“Okay then, try to go without all your indulgence for 24 hours.”

Yifan tilted his head, clearly not able to catch up on what Yixing was saying.
“Spend one day with me without your driver, your credit cards or your phone,” the journalist explained.

“Like… now?”

“No, as soon as we get back. The moment you’ve dropped off your luggage, we’ll leave the Palace and you’ll leave your title and money behind then. Just for one day.”

The prince gave it a thought and rubbed his chin. Then he nodded and said:

“Okay. Done.”

Yixing was surprised by how easy it had been to get Yifan to agree to this and he stammered:

“Umm… okay. Then… you better enjoy all of this extravaganza while it lasts.”

The older one ignored the comment as another thought hit him that seemed to be very much to his liking.

“Does that mean this is going to be some sort of date?” He asked and the old smug smile reappeared on his face and Yixing immediately knew Yifan wouldn’t even need one more day to recover and get back to his old ways again. The thought was somehow comforting, and the younger of the two only reluctantly allowed this thought to form in his head.

“Eat your chicken, it’s getting cold!” Was everything Yixing shot at Yifan before he turned his attention back to his own bowl, clearly feeling a hot flush in his face and he hoped he wouldn’t turn red which might give him away.
Chapter Summary

Yifan tries so hard to be normal it’s almost tragic.

Chapter Notes

- Hi, I decided to update today because I will leave for Beijing tomorrow and I don't know if I will make it to update on Monday, so have this as an apology in advance.

October 24th, 2015

Yixing already expected Yifan to try and chicken out of the situation so he was especially hard with him when they stood in his bedchambers after coming back to Beijing and the prince put his suitcase down.

“Like, okay, I said I’d do it,” Yifan started and Yixing didn’t even give him one second to explain and cut him off right away.

“Yes, you said you’d do it and there’s no way to back out now. Put down your shit and let’s go. We’ve got a subway train to catch.”

“… but… even my phone?” The taller one whined while he held onto the device in his hand like Gollum gawked over The Ring.

“Even your phone, maybe that’s even the best thing you could do now,” Yixing responded and reached out his palm to indicate Yifan should hand it over.

Yifan nibbled on his lower lip with his teeth, then groaned and placed his cell in the other one’s hand.

“See? Not that hard, right?”

The prince looked longingly at his phone that Yixing put on the table to finally leave it behind.

“Wait, Yixing, can you do me a favor actually?” He suddenly said and the younger one nodded, so Yifan continued, “There’s… there’s Becky’s number on my phone. She’s been texting me since yesterday and… can you please delete or block it for me?”

“Are you telling me you can’t do it yourself?”

Yifan rubbed his neck and looked down to the floor in shame.

“It’s just… hard, okay. Please.”

Yixing sighed and reached for the iPhone once again.
“What’s your code?”

“9 – 1- 1 – 0 – 0 -7”

“Are you for real now, Yifan?” Yixing asked and shook his head in disbelief as the screen got unlocked and Sofia smiled at him from the background picture.

“Ey, it’s also my sister’s birthday, okay. Don’t drag me all the time!”

Yixing decided to let the topic drop and opened iMessages and saw Becky’s texts right away. His curiosity won over so instead of just deleting and blocking her, he skimmed the texts and he was disgusted how she didn’t seem to care that Yifan had actually gone into rehab or that the stuff she had given him had resulted in a bad drug trip.

[+852 6589 5555, 15/10/16 10:06 am] Wow can you believe the last time we’ve chatted was over two years ago? It was nice to see you again, I hope you’ll be back soon to come and hang around again. For old times sake. :) ♥ Becky

[+852 6589 5555, 15/10/16 06:53 pm] By the way, if you liked my stuff, I’m getting it from another guy now, Dean got busted unfortunately and sits in jail for drug possession. But the new stuff has much better quality. Things have changed a little in Hong Kong but I’ll always be there to provide you with the best things for your needs, you know that, right? ♥

[+852 6589 5555, 15/10/17, 02:15 am] Ya, don’t ignore me! That’s not how you treat your good friends! Especially not those who stuff your royal ass with the best drugs you can get your hands on!

“Jesus fucking Christ, this woman has nerves!!” Yixing lashed out and before he knew he activated the reply field to type an answer.

Hello, this is Yixing, maybe you remember me. Stop that shit, there’s a reason he stopped talking to you two years ago. You’re not a friend of his, you’re a fucking LSD whore and if you won’t stop harassing Yifan I’ll fly back to Hong Kong to drag your ass personally to the police so they can lock you up with this stupid dipshit Dean and you can rott in prison together. Deleted & blocked, don’t even try to contact him again.

“What are you--- Yixing, was that necessary?”

Yifan was too late and by the time he was able to get his hands on his phone Yixing had already hit sent.

“Of course it is! Yifan, she doesn’t care about you in the slightest!”

His hands clenched around his phone as Yifan listened to Yixing’s words and he nodded slowly.

“Yeah. She probably doesn’t.”

Yixing leaned into him and reached to block Becky’s number while Yifan held the phone. The taller man didn’t do anything to stop him and when the chat feed was deleted and nothing but a white screen stared back at Yifan, he took a deep breath which he held for a few seconds. When he had exhaled as if getting rid of Becky’s number symbolized a cleansing of his body, he turned to Yixing and placed his lips on the smaller one’s forehead. It wasn’t a kiss per se, since Yifan didn’t pucker his lips into a kiss or a peck – he just put them on the part of hair that fell into Yixing’s face and mumbled:

“Thank you.”
After Yixing lingered a tad bit too long at the touch, he reminded himself what his actual mission was and he jerked away. While doing so, he grabbed Yifan’s phone, shut it down and put it back onto the table.

“I’m always down to drag drug dealing bitches for you. Now let’s get to the subway, I’m curious if Luhan has managed to survive on his own.”

With a last whine Yifan got pulled to the exit by Yixing and he finally gave up defeat. Riding the subway resulted in rather comical scenarios, starting from buying a god damn ticket at one of the machines. Yifan slipped he had never seen a five Yuan bill in his life but when Yixing shot him a very harsh and judging look, he tried to save his reputation by stating it had been a joke (which Yixing didn’t buy). When they went through the barrier Yifan almost got stuck and needed a second try stuffing his ticket into the barrier so he was able to enter the station (“Stop laughing at me, Yixing!”). When they entered the train, Yifan held onto Yixing’s elbow under the excuse to not want to lose him (it wasn’t peak hour and only them and two others had entered the cart).

Besides Yifan being a dorky idiot and confirming Yixing’s apprehensions he also seemed to be genuinely interested in that new challenge. Wearing a facemask and a hoodie made it possible for him to blend in and nobody bat an eyelash at him as he looked around the cart and watched the passengers hunched over their phones or books. Yixing would’ve loved to know what the other one was thinking while he saw how Yifan’s eyes darted around the wagon but he remained silent until they had to get off at Shuangjing Station. As they made their way out of the station in which Yifan was proud of not getting stuck at the exit Yixing’s phone went off.

“Ey, I’m not allowed to have a phone either!” Yifan muffled under the fabric of his mask and Yixing really thought about ignoring the caller when he saw Yao Yao’s name light up on the screen.

On the other hand, there was no reason to do so. It wasn’t like he and Yao Yao were something official so it was unnecessary to act like he didn’t exist around Yifan. He also wasn’t on some sort of date with Yifan, so feeling guilty for getting a call from someone else seemed out of place too. So he picked up the call and held his phone to his ear, ignoring Yifan’s scoff.

“Hey,” he said but hoped silently Yao Yao wouldn’t talk so loud that his voice would carry over to the guy next to him.

“So you’re back! I missed you! Open Mic Night was really boring without you man…” Yao Yao chattered away – hearing his voice was kind of bittersweet and Yixing only managed to lift up one corner of his mouth into a crooked smile.

“How did you know I was back already?”

“I didn’t, I just thought I’d give you a call. And voilà! Here you are! I’m good at this mental thing, am I?”

“You’re amazing, as always,” Yixing scoffed but Yao Yao had never been the type to take his sarcastic comments personally.

If only, they made him laugh and he didn’t let himself get irritated at them, which was probably why Yixing liked him this much. He was just so nice.

“Yixing, I really want to see you. I haven’t seen you in three weeks or something.”

Yixing pictured the other man at the end of the line lounging around on his couch, playing around with his pitch black hair and having his typical pensive look on his face, the one where he’d show a
small frown and his lips would curl up slightly, looking awfully good while doing so. Because, besides being so overly nice and funny and charming Yao Yao was also very handsome. Luhan got frustrated by Yao Yao on almost a daily basis because no matter how hard he tried, his roommate just couldn’t find one single flaw and that creeped him out. He used to say “Something is off with that guy - or you are just a very lucky person!” - Yixing believed profoundly in the second part. He was just very lucky to know him.

“I know, but… work, you know. It’s been crazy.”

“I do! Don’t get me wrong! I do understand how wind up you are but… pretty please? Do you really have to work on weekends? Even if we just meet for one or two hours, that’d be enough for me, really.”

Yixing threw a quick glance at Yifan who had grown extremely attentive and clearly tried to eavesdrop.

“I think I can manage to get some free time tomorrow.”

Yao Yao let out a laugh, something he always did when he got excited and he cried out:

“Amazing! Thank you!”

“We’ll text again for details, I really have to hang up now.”

“Sure thing! Bye, baby!”

Yixing tried hard to control his smirk when he thought about Yao Yao’s bright smile that surely had been flickering across his face and then Yifan cleared his throat.

“So who was that?”

“Do you have to know everything?”

“Hey, you’re pretty cocky for being super rude and taking a call while you’re out on a date with me!”

“We are not on a date Yifan!”

Yixing couldn’t see it but he felt the other’s smile under the mask and Yifan linked his arm with Yixing’s.

“You didn’t say no when I asked so…”

The journalist grunted as an answer and decided to not take Yifan’s babbling too serious. He could hardly believe Yifan really meant what he said most of the time so he shot back:

“Just so we’re clear, I don’t fuck on the first date.”

“I see, you’re rather the traditional type of guy,” Yifan nodded and tightened his grip around Yixing’s arm, “I like that.”

“Aren’t I a lucky one…”

“So what are we going to do today? I’d be down for some Netflix and Chill…”

“Wu Yifan, what are you? A sixteen year old guy who hit puberty and suffers from too much sexual
frustration because his acne face can’t get him laid with one of the hot girls at school?!” Yixing yelled and when Yifan started to laugh the other one hated himself for getting riled up at his teasing once again, “I don’t even have a Netflix account!”

“We can use mine! Or we just skip these obligatory ten minutes of the movie and start making out right away, your choice.”

Yixing was glad they reached the apartment building he was living in so he could start looking for his keys and stop that conversation before it had the chance to escalate. It took Luhan exactly five seconds to greet him at the door after opening it and stepping into the apartment.

“You are back oh my god!!” Luhan cried out and pulled Yixing in a hug, “I almost DIED Yixing! Don’t ever do this to me again!”

“Don’t be such a melodramatic prick, Luhan!” Yixing nagged but returned the hug.

“Seriously, I lived off take out and chips in the last three days!”

It surprised Yixing every time how incapable Luhan was when it came to living on his own. He had moved out of his parents’ home two years ago but he still wasn’t able to take care of himself when being alone for not even a week. Yixing almost felt like his mom that needed to make sure her child wouldn’t accidentally die because it stuck its finger in a plug socket. The journalist sighed, then Luhan’s eyes locked with Yifan behind his roommate.

“Wow, Yifan, are you moving in here now?”

“God forbid NO he’s not!” Yixing answered for the prince because he feared Yifan’s comment more than anything, “It’s more like a social experiment we’re doing.”

“What? How long you can sit on each other before one of you kills the other one?” Luhan asked with an innocent look on his face and Yifan chuckled.

“He won’t let me sit on him though, I’m afraid,” the prince said and Luhan giggled.

“Jesus Christ, both of you are so annoying, I can’t even handle it!” Yixing shot at them and put his luggage down in his room.

When he got back he checked the fridge only to discover it being empty except for a very old package of soy milk and two eggs. Luhan mumbled an apology, but actually Yixing was thankful for the situation because it meant he could take Yifan out for some grocery shopping. That would maybe take the other’s mind off the whole Netflix and Chill idea.

“It’s okay, Yifan, put your shoes back on, we’re going shopping.”

Yifan grunted, and suddenly Luhan seemed to understand.

“Oh my god, are you forcing him to do commoners’ stuff? Like shopping and all that?”

“My god Luhan, aren’t you a genius!” Yixing said and pushed Yifan out of the apartment after he had put on his slippers again, “See you later!”

“Yixing, serious question here,” Yifan said when they stepped back onto the street and Yixing decided to take him to the nearby market – of course there was a supermarket just around the corner, but Yifan didn’t know that and Yixing was curious to how Yifan would react to a big square of stands with vendors yelling to lure customers to them and people shoving each other out of the way
to get their god damn groceries.

“Yes, my darling?”

Yifan stopped short at the pet name and raised an eyebrow, as if trying to connect the dots between Yixing and the word ‘darling’. He didn’t find a correlation so he just shook his head and then asked:

“What am I getting out of this?”

“I don’t know. A life lesson? I mean, you’re going to rule this country some day… more or less… you have to know what your people are up to.”

“No I mean. What am I getting out of this?”

Yixing knew very well what Yifan meant when he put an emphasis on the question word but he decided to play dumb and dodge the flirting. Not today, honey.

“Well, first of all, we’re getting food out of this so move your ass!”

Yixing liked his neighborhood since it was the perfect combination between a suburban flair and the perks of living in a big city. The newly opened bars and restaurants weren’t too expensive and offered great times with friends while a nearby park made sure one was able to escape the buzz for a while. Surely there were better places, quieter ones, and maybe a college student didn’t quite like the limited possibilities to get drunk on a weekday, but Yixing didn’t really mind. Yifan kept nagging and tried to trick Yixing into falling for his teasing and flirting until they reached the entrance of the market and the words got stuck in his throat. Since it was a Saturday and the weather was rather lovely a lot of other people in the neighborhood had come around to do their weekly grocery shopping here and the market was filled with people and a buzzing noise carried down the whole street.

“Are you kidding me, Yixing?”

“What? It’s just a market, don’t poop your pants because of that.”

“Is there something for free because so many people are here?”

“Honey… it’s just… people need food. And Saturdays and Sundays are usually the days when people have enough time to buy food. Because they usually work during the week. Can you grasp that concept?”

“Why are you always talking to me as if I am a retard?”

“Because you’re acting like one right now, that’s why,” Yixing said and walked towards the entrance while Yifan mumbled something inaudible into his mask and caught up to him.

The smaller one let out a surprised squeal when Yifan’s hand first grabbed his elbow but then wandered further down to intertwine their fingers.

“What’s that supposed to be?”

“You are too small for your own good and I am not taking any chances on losing you in that pit of hell we’re about to step in.”

“This is such a lame excuse to hold my hand…”

“Well, you wouldn’t let me hold it just because, so there’s that. I’ve got to seize every chance I’m
getting.”

Yixing looked down on their hands, his own almost disappearing in Yifan’s. How in the world were his hands this large?

“Let’s go or we will never get anything done,” he finally said and started walking again, cursing his hand for squeezing a little tighter around Yifan’s knuckles.

Usually Yixing didn’t take long for weekly grocery hauls because he always knew exactly what he needed for the next six to seven days but with Yifan, it was something different. Yifan was exploring a whole new world and needed to stop at several stands only to keep staring at the old man selling tea leaves in big plastic bags and wondering who on earth drank that much tea. He spent minutes inspecting fruits and vegetables up to the point the vendors asked him if he wanted to taste test their stuff. Yixing had the feeling Yifan would’ve said yes if that hadn’t meant to take off his mask and blow his cover. He acted grossed out when they went through the meat and fish department but couldn’t take his eyes off the fish tanks where trouts swam around. The prince was astonished when Yixing negotiated prices skillfully and they came out of the market with several bags of veggies and meat and had only spent a rough 200 RMB on it.

“Only 200…” Yifan mumbled while he swung two bags in his right hand, “Unbelievable.”

“Yeah, I know, hard to grasp for you. I used to live on way less when I was still at university.”

“Really?!”

Yixing nodded and shrugged his shoulders, deeming the conversation as over, and Yifan got the hint so he changed the topic and brushed the back of his hand that was carrying bags with Yixing’s.

“It’s actually quite nice.”

“What?”

“I don’t know. This? It’s almost like vacation. Nobody keeps bothering me.”

“Except for me though,” Yixing said with a smug smile and the way Yifan’s eyes squinted told him the older one was smiling too.

“You never bother me.”

“Ugh, fucking cheesy.”

Yifan bumped Yixing’s shoulder for that comment as they neared the gate and got back to the apartment. When they unpacked the groceries Yixing didn’t even give Yifan any time to sit down for a minute and shoved a cutting board into his hands. Yifan looked at it and then at Yixing as if the younger one had lost his mind.

“Umm… okay?”

“We have to prepare dinner. You’re cutting vegetables.”

“I…?! But?” Yifan stammered as Yixing pulled out a big kitchen knife out of the knife block.

“It’s not that hard, I’ll cut some samples and you’re just going to go according to those.”

“Yixing, I don’t think I’m fitted for that task…”
“Believe me, you are.”

Yixing’s tone didn’t allow any further discussion so Yifan accepted his fate and watched how Yixing cut some cucumber into thin slices, starting slowly, then becoming faster until Yifan howled:

“StoppPPP! I can’t follow anymore!”

The smaller one smiled and handed the knife over.

“Your turn, my prince!” He said and made a formal curtsy which caused Yifan to grunt in disapproval.

Yixing helped in cutting up the meat and sometimes he stole glances over to Yifan. He was pleasantly surprised when he saw how serious Yifan took his task. He was awfully slow, taking almost thrice the time Yixing usually needed, but he didn’t start complaining and concentrated daintily on getting the slices evenly thin. Sometimes Yifan’s tongue slipped out between his lips and Yixing had to force himself to take his eyes off the other to at least get the meat done. When Yifan was done cutting the cucumbers, Yixing told him to do the same to the carrots after peeling them.

“You really show no mercy!” Yifan complained but when Yixing just nodded and confirmed his statement, he had no other choice than to do as he was told.

By the time Yifan had cut up the carrots Yixing had already started to cook the rice and was putting the wok on the stove.

“Jesus, you are far too fast!” The older one complained and hurried to cut up the last vegetable.

When he was done he put the knife aside and exhaled a long breath as if he was a surgeon that had just finished up an open heart surgery. Yixing rolled his eyes and walked over to check on Yifan’s masterpiece.

“Wow! That’s… actually good!”

Yixing was extremely surprised with the outcome. The slices weren’t too thick and relatively even.

“It really is?” Yifan asked and seemed to be as startled as the other one who nodded.

“Yeah. Man, I think I’ve finally found your talent! You’re a little chef!”

“Pffff I literally cut up one cucumber and two carrots…”

Even though he tried to play Yixing’s praise down, there was a light blush on Yifan’s cheeks indicating he was flattered.

“Well then,” Yixing said and pushed Yifan gently towards the stove, “I guess we’ll have to explore that talent a little further.”

“Yixing, really, don’t get me near stoves or heated oil, I’ll just fuck up big time…”

Yixing didn’t listen and just turned on the stove.

“Just tryyyyyy it.”

“Aiya… how annoying…”

“It’s not like you’ve got anything better to do anyway so you can also make yourself a little useful.
When the oil’s heated put the cucumber in.”

The smaller one leaned against the counter and gave out orders to Yifan who only slowly got used to the heat of the stove and the sizzling oil he was afraid of. He somehow managed to only get burned two times and when the dinner table was set with bowls and food Yifan looked at it like he was beholding Da Vinci’s Mona Lisa. When Luhan joined them, Yixing’s roommate smiled wildly.

“Finally, world order is restored!”

When they took their seats Yixing said:

“You have to try the cucumbers. Yifan made those.”

“All by his own?!”

“Yixing helped,” Yifan immediately threw in as Luhan snatched some slices off the plate with his chopsticks while Yixing handed out some rice.

Luhan chewed a little longer on the food than usual, because he was an awful fast eater and basically inhaled the stuff he was eating, and Yifan leaned over to eagerly wait for his judgement. Even Yixing forgot about his own bowl that still needed to be stuffed with rice to not miss this moment. Luhan swallowed his bite and looked at Yifan, then he said:

“Not bad, actually! It’s good, give yourself a pat on the back!”

“Like… really?” Yifan asked and flung his eyes open in surprise.

“Try for yourself, it’s really good!”

So he did and when he realized Luhan was right he leaned back in his seat and looked at Yixing in shock who just chuckled.

“Well, who would’ve known that Wu Yifan is able to make some cucumber with eggs. If that Emperor thing isn’t for you, why don’t you just change professions and become a chef?”

“Don’t be ridiculous,” Yifan said and then put some of his cooked meal into Yixing’s bowl, “But if you like it, I’ll gladly cook for you every day, my dear.”

“Thanks, I’m good.”

Luhan nibbled on some chicken bone and watched the other two on the other side of the table with a knowing grin. When he was done eating off the meat he threw the bone into the extra bowl Yifan had set on the table (he usually just threw them on a pile next to his bowl, but it seemed like he tried to be extra neat in Yifan’s presence) he said:

“Wow, who would’ve thought I’d ever get a dinner from the Prince of China and his boyfriend who happens to be my roommate. My life is so crazy!”

“Ooooh no no no, slow down Luhan! This,” Yixing threw in and pointed his chopsticks to Yifan and then to him, which was actually a very rude thing to do, “is not a thing and will never be a thing.”

“So no Netflix and Chill later on?” Yifan asked nonchalantly as he got some carrots, knowing very well he’d flip Yixing off.

His comment made Luhan snort into his bowl while Yixing just felt like letting out a cry of
frustration.

“No, no Netflix and Chill later on. You got that right.”

“Man, then what is even the point of all of this if I can’t get into your pants?”

Luhan let out a roaring laughter and Yixing wanted to smash his head onto the dinner table. His own or Yifan’s, he wasn’t really sure about that.

“Stop laughing Luhan, I have to endure this on a daily basis!” He hissed but Luhan just high fived Yifan.

“You surely get an award for being persistent!” Luhan giggled.

“Can you guys just fucking eat your dinner?!” Yixing barked because he felt a dangerous alliance forming between the two and needed to let that die before it could even be born.

Luhan and Yifan exchanged another look and some winks before they went back to eating, making Yixing the bad guy for spoiling the mood. When the plates were empty and their stomachs full Luhan offered to do the dishes so Yifan followed Yixing into his room and threw himself onto his bed without even asking if it was okay. Yixing slowly started to regret his idea.

“You know I could actually really use some Netflix and Chill,” Yifan said and rolled on his back to face Yixing who was about to lash out once again, “I mean just… really watch a movie and chill. Seriously.”

“I swear to god, if that is just another stupid trick of yours…”

Having Yifan spread out on his bed like that was awfully alluring so he grabbed his laptop and pushed him aside to have some space himself.

“No, really. No cheap tricks. I’m full and just want to hang around.”

“I’m going to cut your dick off if you try anything, I mean it!”

Yixing opened the page for Netflix and handed Yifan his laptop so he could sign in.

“I have to admit, your anger kind of turns me on…” Yifan held up Yixing’s laptop as a shield while Yixing’s hand flung up into the air, threatening to hit the prince, “… but I also like my dick so I guess I’ll call it a day now.”

Then he went back on signing in and asked what kind of movie Yixing wanted to watch. In the end, they decided to watch Gone Girl since Yifan had finished the book already, which shocked Yixing to a certain degree (“What, the book was good, okay? If a book is good, I don’t put it away until I’m done reading!”). And indeed, Yifan kept his promise. The laptop was placed between them and Yifan was sucked up in the story, so he didn’t even think of scooting over and get touchy with Yixing. There was a solid eight inches distance between them throughout the movie and when the ending credits rolled, Yifan said:

“You know, I really don’t… I don’t like the ending. It just doesn’t do the trick for me.”

“Why’s that?” Yixing said and watched as Yifan went back to the list of recommendations Netflix gave him.

“I don’t know, it just… it doesn’t feel right to let it end like that. It’s like the story isn’t over but I’m
pretty sure we’ll be left hanging with this open ending and I hate that.”

“So you’d rather have Nick kill Amy?”

“What is it about you writers that you always get to the most dramatic conclusions?”

“It’s our curse I guess.”

Yifan clicked his tongue and gave the movie a four out of five star rating while he continued:

“No, not kill her. But it would’ve been way more satisfying if Amy went to jail in the end. I mean, she’s the villain in the story, right? And isn’t the villain supposed to get punished? Like, the whole good vs. bad thing?”

“So you say Nick is the hero here? I don’t know, but I think you can’t just put the two on opposing sides here. He’s just as awful as Amy in my opinion. I didn’t even feel sorry for him in the entire movie. They deserve each other.”

“Yixing, she framed him for murder and actually killed someone! Are you putting cheating on the same scale as murder?”

Yixing sat back up straight and felt like someone had woken his brain up again after he had fought the urge to sleep in the last fifteen minutes of the movie. Yifan did the same and turned to fully face the younger one. And then they started to discuss. They discussed not only the ending, but the whole storyline and even went that far to go back to certain scenes in the movie and when they got riled up about one specific scene, Yifan demanded to compare the movie sequence with the part in the book. It was a super nerdy conversation in which they completely forgot the time and when Yixing’s eyes locked with his alarm clock on the night desk he was completely startled it was already past midnight.

“Amazing, I missed the last train!” Yifan chirped and laid back down on Yixing’s mattress and checked his wristwatch, “Guess I’ll have to crash here then. The 24 hours aren’t over anyway… It’s only been nine hours so far.”

“You are taking the 24 hours in a literal way?”

“Um… yes? You said 24 hours?”

Yixing snorted but couldn’t help himself to find Yifan’s innocent counter-question rather cute so he closed his laptop and said:

“I’ll get you a blanket and a pillow.”

When he came back with said bedding Yifan asked if it was okay to take off at least his jeans.

“Knock yourself out.” Was Yixing’s answer and he threw the blanket and the pillow into Yifan’s face.

Then he went on to brush his teeth in the bathroom. He contemplated on offering Yifan the extra toothbrush he still had in its original packaging but that would’ve been like asking Yifan to be his boyfriend so he didn’t and went straight back to his room. Yifan was already snuggled up in his blanket and looked like a giant burrito.

“So000… good night then?” Yixing said when he threw his own blanket over his body.
“Yepp. Good night!”

The journalist killed the lights and laid next to Yifan with tense muscles, somehow expecting him to roll over and try to get one of his overly large hands into Yixing’s boxers but when none of that happened, Yixing blinked surprised and rolled onto the side, which was his usual sleeping position. Yifan seemed to be fast asleep already.

It was kind of weird to have Yifan around after a strange night in which Yifan magically had found his way into Yixing’s arms which he only seemed to realize when he had woken up. Somewhere in between them tossing and turning in their sleep, the prince had snuggled into the smaller one and Yixing couldn’t even remember allowing himself to open his arms and pulling him closer, yet it had happened.

Yixing was very well aware of the fact that he had gone too far. He should’ve been handling the situation in a professional way, not inviting his “job” over for one of the most awkward Netflix and Chill sessions in the history of mankind. Yixing swore to himself he’d never speak of this in front of his boss, because he was sure she’d fire him on the spot. Yifan, on the other hand, seemed to be in a rather good mood.

“So what’s for breakfast?” He asked as he dashed into the kitchen where Yixing was making some coffee.

“I don’t know, check the fridge.” Yixing answered, obviously confused about Yifan’s high spirits.

“There is nothing in the fridge.” Yifan proclaimed and closed the door, “At least nothing you could make breakfast out of.”

“Well, then it’s going to be coffee,” The journalist said and pushed the coffee machine’s power button and the monster came to life.

Yifan stayed silent which Yixing took for a good sign and after setting two mugs next to the machine he turned around. Yifan stood in the middle of the room, only wearing his boxers and his plain white shirt and for one split second Yixing’s eyes locked with those long legs of his. He forced himself to look up again. This fucker!

“Yixing.”

Yixing hoped Yifan hadn’t noticed his staring so he tried to put on a rather annoyed face and asked:

“Yes, what? Sorry my fridge is not supplying your royal ass well enough.”

Instead of nagging and whining, or replying with a sassy comment, Yifan took a big step forward, cornering Yixing between the kitchen counter and himself. Yixing mentally prepared himself to escape the scene any given second, but his body wouldn’t cooperate. Yifan looked at him with an unreadable expression on his face which made Yixing nervous because he couldn’t estimate what the other one might do next.

And then, out of nowhere, the older one leaned over and placed his lips on Yixing’s, very careful and very soft, as if he was afraid Yixing might get scared away at a too sudden move on him. The kiss was short, barely a peck on his lips, but it was enough to make Yixing freeze and let a weird sensation take over his whole body. He knew he needed to stop right there and make Yifan take a few steps back into his lane again but his head subtly jerked into Yifan’s direction to get more of whatever just happened. He hated his body. Why did it do that?

There was another kiss following which was much more demanding yet wary and Yixing felt his chest swell with desire for more as he allowed his hands to wrap themselves around Yifan’s neck to keep him close. This was wrong. So so so so wrong.
It needed Yifan to press his body against Yixing’s to bring him back to his senses – the journalist withdrew and pushed Yifan away to look at him. The older one was breathing heavily, his lips were slightly parted and his cheeks were reddened with excitement, and god damn, why did he look so good in that moment?

“This is not what we should be doing, and you know that!” Yixing exclaimed, “I mean… I’m… you’re… you know what I mean!”

A few seconds went by and Yifan nodded slightly.

“Yes. Yes. You’re absolutely right… umm… sorry… I guess…”

This should’ve been the moment they let go of each other, but they didn’t move, instead they stared at each other and held their breaths to wait for the other one to move first. Yixing tried a lame attempt at easing the tension:

“So… umm… coffee?”

Both of them knew very well that this was not going to work. Coffee was not going to happen here.

“Screw that, Zhang Yixing.”

And with that, they banned the last bits of rational thinking aside into the far backs of their minds. Their lips crashed against each other while Yifan lifted Yixing onto the counter and the younger wrapped his legs around his hips to pull him closer. This would not be tender and sweet love making – this would turn out into plain and simple fucking, a result of days, if not weeks, of sexual tension that got finally released as Yifan pulled up Yixing’s shirt and sucked at the soft skin around Yixing’s collarbones, occasionally sinking his teeth into it. When Yixing gasped at the stimulation, because he had never been the type for slow and cute sex to be honest, Yifan licked over the marks and moved on to the next spot until his tongue was twirling around one of Yixing’s nipples whose throat escaped a moan. He pressed his body towards Yifan’s and when he felt the other’s very present bulge rubbing against his own he immediately knew that he was about to get fucked by the son of China’s emperor in his tiny shabby kitchen - and even though it ought to have been a thought he should have loathed he stripped Yifan off his shirt and bent his body into the directions where Yifan’s hands were going. Fuck. This. Guy. So much!

They shared another heated kiss in which Yixing tried to regain a little of the control when they heard a knock at the apartment door. Yixing broke away and Yifan breathed:

“Ignore it.”

He went down on Yixing’s neck, teasing his skin with his teeth while his hand finally grabbed the bulge in Yixing’s boxers and rubbed it through the thin cloth. Yixing made an “Uh-huh” sound to indicate he was on one page with Yifan on that but then the knock got louder.

“God damnit!” Yixing exclaimed and didn’t know whether he should concentrate on the person in front of his door or Yifan’s hand that was about to work some great magic on his already leaking cock.

“Don’t answer it!”

Another knock. And then a voice.

“Yixing, I know you’re in there, can you open up please?”

“FUCK!”
Yao Yao’s voice was the metaphorical cold bucket of water being poured over Yixing’s pre-sex heated body. He shuddered and pushed Yifan away from him. Right when Yixing asked himself what Yao Yao was doing in front of his door on a Sunday morning, he remembered the phone call. Fuck. Yifan didn’t seem to care much though and tried to press his lips against Yixing’s one more time but the smaller one wiggled himself free.

“I have to get rid of him first,” he breathed between some small kisses, “Just stay here.”

Yifan groaned, but obeyed and let him go. On his way to the door he put his shirt back on and pulled it as far down as possible and hoped Yao Yao wouldn’t notice right away. He flung the door open and tried to hide his lower body behind it. Yao Yao was leaning against the doorframe and smiled while lifting a bag of the nearby bakery.

“I brought breakfast!”

“I thought we’d talk about some details first?” Yixing asked and ignored the nice gesture.

“I was in the area and thought I’d drop by!” Was Yao Yao’s explanation and Yixing would’ve thought that guy was the greatest man if only Yifan wasn’t standing in the kitchen, half naked, half erected and all hot and bothered.

Yao Yao moved past Yixing whose mind went blank.

“Yao Yao, that’s very sweet of you, and I’d love to have you here, but I really don’t have the time now, I need to get work done, there’s this really urgent deadline and I couldn’t finish yesterday… it’s really really stupid but maybe we could just meet for dinner or something?”

“Well, if you’re this stressed, then you really need to eat, right? I won’t stay long, I promise! Maybe the break will help you a little!”

He went right for the kitchen and a fit of panic shot through Yixing’s body.

“NO, really, I need you to…” He wanted to say as he reached out for the other one but it was too late.

Yao Yao opened the door to the kitchen and his bright smile froze when he saw Yifan leaning against the kitchen counter to wait for Yixing’s return.

“Fuck me sideways!” Yixing cursed under his breath and wished himself dead.

There was an unbearable silence in the room until Yao Yao turned to Yixing.

“You need to get work done, huh? Yeah, looks like someone’s getting ‘done’ here…”

“Yao Yao, I can explain…”

“Oh cut the bullshit we both know you can’t!”

Yao Yao was right so Yixing pressed his lips together and had to watch how his flirt from a few weeks ago looked at Yifan, then back to Yixing, back to Yifan and finally said in such an icy tone it almost scared Yixing:

“Wow Zhang Yixing, you are such a fake slut, you told me you hated that guy, that he’s the biggest asshole alive and now you’re spreading your legs for him! Fuck that.”

He threw the plastic bag with the bought pastry into the corner where Yixing was standing and the
sheer possibility of Yixing getting hit by it made Yifan lash forward, grab the collar of Yao Yao’s
ejacket and shove him to the side, making the other guy stumble against the kitchen counter with such
a force his head crashed into the wall cupboard above it. Yixing was so shocked he could only stare
and watch how Yao Yao struggled himself free of Yifan’s grip. And to be honest, he didn’t know
what shocked him more – Yifan’s physical violence or Yao Yao’s behavior, since that didn’t fit into
the whole image Yixing had of him.

“Are you fucking CRAZY?”

“That was for calling him a slut, now fuck off!”

Yao Yao rubbed the back of his head and shot Yifan a hostile look.

“I’m going to expose you, you asshole!”

The thread made Yixing’s face lose its color, while Yifan seemed to be rather unaffected.

“Yeah, you go ahead. Tell some tabloid newspaper I’m fucking the guy you’re after. And then
expect mail from my personal lawyer. I’m going to end you.”

“You wouldn’t!”

“Oh, you have no idea. You say anything, I will make your life a living hell. Personally.”

Yifan was about the same height as Yao Yao but Yifan’s cold and dominating demeanor made Yao
Yao look small and helpless. He seemed to contemplate on going on with their argument, but then he
turned around and left without a comment, not without bumping into Yixing’s shoulder on purpose
though. When he had left the apartment, Yixing let out a breath he hadn’t known he had been
holding. Yifan turned to face the younger one.

“I’m the biggest asshole alive, huh?”

“Yifan, that was…”

“Yeah, whatever, you might be right anyways.” Yifan cut him off and left the kitchen to get the rest
of his clothes in Yixing’s bedroom.

Yixing followed him.

“Hold on, where are you going?”

“I’m going home, I should’ve done this yesterday already!” Yifan explained while he put on his
jeans.

“Yifan, could you at least let me explain…?”

“There’s nothing to explain! Everything is clear as day!”

The way Yifan interrupted Yixing all the time made the journalist’s chest burn in annoyance, and
then he saw the older one’s face which didn’t even show anger. He was hurt. And it made Yixing
feel bad all of a sudden.

“There is! Please, we were at a bar and I had that one drink too many when I talked to Yao Yao
about you, I wasn’t even thinking straight!”

Yifan was about to leave the room and Yixing tried to hold him back. It was almost like a déjà vu,
only that this time Yixing wasn’t trying to get the older one out of the apartment, he actually tried to keep him inside.

“You know what they say about drunk people – they always speak the truth.”

They gradually made their way towards the front door and Yixing babbled something about how this didn’t always have to be the case.

“It doesn’t matter,” Yifan retorted and stopped for a second, “If you were saying it only to impress that little fucker, then you’re not better than anyone else who has used me for their own gains. But that’s okay. I’m despicable, I know. I’m a fucking spoiled brat that does deserve rejection and needs to get put back into his lane. Thank you. I know, I know perfectly well that people don’t like me. I wish it was different, but that’s how it is, I’m going to accept it.”

Yixing could’ve sworn to see some tears of bitterness dwelling in Yifan’s eyes so he dashed towards the front door and blocked the handle with his body. He couldn’t let Yifan leave his apartment. Not in that emotional state. He couldn’t let him leave again being angry at him like the last time.

“Let me go now, Yixing.” Yifan demanded and tried to push him aside, but Yixing did not move an inch.

“I’ll let you go if you listen to me! Just for one minute!”

The prince heaved an annoyed sigh and put his hands on his hips to show he was granting Yixing that wish. Yixing took a deep breath.

“Okay, yes, I absolutely loathed you a few weeks ago. But that was back then. Past. It happened. But things have changed. I’ve gotten to know you more and you are really not that kind of asshole I thought you were.”

If anyone had told him he’d be saying those kinds of words in the span of not even two full months, he’d have given that person into therapy. Yifan didn’t look very convinced either.

“Can you please look at me?” Yixing requested and only continued when Yifan was finally looking up and right into his face, “I apologize for saying those things about you. I’m sorry for any bad words. I’m sorry for my behavior. So please, do not leave like this and be angry at me. I don’t want to hurt you, actually.”

Yifan stood there for a while and fiddled with the sleeves of his jacket like a little kid. It didn’t look like he was about to rush out of the apartment anymore so Yixing allowed his muscles to relax again but he did not step back from the door, just in case. The older one was in deep thought and then he seemed to snap back into reality. He looked straight at Yixing who was about to tell him to at least say something and then leaped forward to pull the other one closer and kissed him. Yixing sighed, but he wasn’t sure if it was in relief, as he wrapped his arms around Yifan’s body and somehow hoped Yifan would take off his jacket again and stay. He actually wanted him to stay. Yixing couldn’t believe it.

It was Yifan who ended the kiss with a last peck on the corner of Yixing’s mouth, then he reached over him to the door handle.

“I’ll see you tomorrow.”

And then he disappeared through the door. Yixing was left in his apartment with some curses on his lips while he stomped back into the kitchen to throw the pastry brought by Yao Yao into the trash. When he turned around, Luhan was standing in the doorway. The look on his face gave away that
he had heard everything and his friend said:

“See? I told you something was off with that Yao Yao guy!”
October 26th, 2015

It was weird to get a text message from Yifan with a short notice to be at the HIT FM Radio Station around two o’clock, because Yifan usually made sure to send cocky comments and winking emojis along with his schedule. This time, he didn’t and he didn’t even give out the address. It almost read like a huge ‘Fuck You’ to the journalist and it irritated him to a great extent.

Yixing spent the morning working on possible articles, but nothing worked out, because no matter how hard he tried to be professional, his brain got flashed with pictures of him pressing his body against Yifan’s and he got so hot he actually thought of turning on the AC in late October. He didn’t know what to do about the situation. It didn’t seem like Yifan was up for a clarifying discussion on what was actually going on. Neither did Yao Yao. Luhan had pressed Yixing to cut ties with him after Yixing had told him that the other guy didn’t even call him a ‘fake slut’ but also tossed food at him.

“See?! I knew it! He acts all nice and flirty and perfect and now he showed his real face!” Luhan had cried out, “If he’s acting like this already, what do you think will happen if you two are going steady and you won’t act like he wants you to? Seriously, this sounds like he’s some kind of abusive asshole. Stay away from him! Lose his number!”

Yixing wouldn’t go that far and call Yao Yao an ‘abusive asshole’ though, maybe just a plain and simple ‘asshole’. But thinking about Luhan’s words made him realize that his roommate was probably right. It was just utterly shocking to see how the man Yixing had deemed as soft and loving could turn into this. And maybe there was an even part of the blame to share – making out with another guy while kind of seeing another one wasn’t morally correct either. The situation was, to put it bluntly, fucked up. Yixing had tried to contact Yao Yao to talk this through, but he wouldn’t pick up and he had the feeling that Yao Yao wouldn’t ever pick up any call from him again. So before he got up to catch the subway to get to the radio station, he decided to write a message:

_I see that I did you wrong and you have every right to be mad at me. I would’ve liked to talk to you about this like adults but you are not picking up your phone. So I guess a message has to suffice for_
now. I think we both know that this needs to end. You probably lost your faith in me and I have to admit I’m taken aback by your hostility and I don’t want to be with someone who calls me a slut and tosses things at me. I don’t think we should keep this going. Sorry this didn’t work out.

Afterwards, he deleted Yao Yao’s contact and stuffed his phone into the pocket of his coat. With that being somehow dealt with, he could concentrate on what to do with that annoying prince of his who seemed to be pissed at him too. But even after riding the subway for a whole hour he hadn’t thought of anything useful and his heart sunk when he neared the building where the radio station was located in and Yifan was already waiting for him at the entrance. He tried a smile and Yifan cracked one too, but it was super awkward.

“So what are you doing here?” Yixing asked and tried to get back to business.

“Just some interview… giveaway stuff for the parties… me acting like I actually care what people think of me… the usual stuff.”

“And I have to come with you and hold your hand?”

They stepped into the building and walked over to the elevator. For a second Yifan’s face lit up, but then he remembered he had to be grumpy again, so he pulled himself together and pressed the button to get the elevator.

“It’s not like you have anything to do anyways.”

“Wow, that’s my line. Copyright, you know?”

“I’m pretty sure you don’t own that line, writer or not.”

“Seriously, are we back to square one here?” Yixing asked in a rather bitchy tone when they got into the elevator and Yifan pressed the 19 to drive up.

“What do you mean?”

“Your stupid attitude!” The younger one lashed out, “Are you trying to punish me for what happened yesterday? Seriously, I’m sick of that. It’s not like I deliberately told Yao Yao to show up on my doorway! And by the fucking way, I cut him off.”

Yifan raised his eyebrows in surprise.

“What was that?”

“I told him nicely to fuck himself and deleted his number. So there’s that.”

“You did?”

“Do you want to check?!” Yixing retorted and handed Yifan his phone, “Here, check my contacts, he’s gone and he probably won’t bother me anymore.”

Yifan took Yixing’s extended hand with the phone and pulled him a little closer, then he shook his head and his lips parted into a smile.

“No, I believe you.”

Then he leaned in for a kiss but Yixing jerked away.

“Don’t do that! Cameras!”
Yifan rolled his eyes and looked up into the corner where the red light of the camera blinked at them, almost like a wink telling them ‘I see you’.

“So what?”

“So… Yifan, people are already talking, okay? My co-workers judge me hard already and I’m just waiting for my boss to call me into her office to drag my ass.”

The prince tilted his head and shot Yixing a questioning look. The smaller one sighed and shook off Yifan’s hand to show him that horrible OMG! Magazine article that boasted over those Disneyland pictures and a possible relationship between the two men. There was a surprised sound escaping Yifan’s throat as he took Yixing’s phone and read the article.

“You didn’t know?”

“No, I hardly care about what is being said about me. Most of the time it’s nothing nice anyway,” Yifan explained and scrolled down to the end.

When the elevator doors opened Yifan handed back the phone and whispered with a smug smile on his face:

“I’ll get that kiss today though.”

“Ugh.”

Yixing followed Yifan with an epic eye roll and caught himself getting petty at the thought that Yifan might haven’t even read his articles. How rude of him to say most of the stuff wasn’t nice anyway when Yixing had outdone himself on finding positive things to write about the prince, to the point he thought he might have been high during the writing process! Yifan strode to the recording studio and knocked against the glass door. The female VJ looked up from a paper she had been reading and when she saw him, her face lit up in joy and she dashed forward to open the door.

“My prince! I’m so glad you made it!”

She bowed numerous times and Yifan stepped in, taking her hand and patting the back of it.

“I’m glad I got invited, Liqian. It’s been a while, right?”

She nodded. Yixing guessed she was in her late thirties, her body too skinny for her head, indicating she had maltreated it with countless diets to keep her 45 kilos. When she saw Yixing, her smile froze for a second and Yixing had the feeling she knew him from that article.

“Oh, yes, this is Zhang Yixing,” Yifan introduced him, “He’s tagging along too, I hope you don’t mind.”

“I will just wait outside, I won’t bother you too much,” Yixing threw in and Liqian called over another VJ going by the name Max to take care of Yifan’s company.

There was a small office next to the studio with a big window showing the table where the VJs did their work at. Yixing got offered some refreshments and he sat down next to Max who eyed him curiously, but he didn’t dare to talk to him.

“Okay, do I have to address the big elephant in the room?” Yixing asked after a minute of being stared at.
“I don’t know what you mean!” Max tried to talk himself out of the situation but Yixing shut him up with one glance.

“I guess you’ve read that OMG Magazine article, right?”

“Who hasn’t? It’s been trending on Weibo for two days now.” The other one finally admitted with an apologetic smile.

Max seemed to be a rather cool guy so Yixing explained while he watched how Liqian put headphones on Yifan’s head and prepared him for the interview:

“That was what I feared. But seriously, nothing’s going on between us. I’m just doomed to tail his ass 24/7. Do you want to know what I told him back then?”

The VJ shifted his weight and looked attentively at the journalist, eager to get exclusive information nobody else would.

“I told him to fuck off.”

Max’s mouth dropped open and he pointed to the studio where Yifan got some last minute instructions from his co worker.

“You…? Talk like that to him?”

“Yeah.”

Yixing shrugged his shoulders and Max looked at him as if he couldn’t decide if Yixing was super cool or just downright crazy. The song that was playing came to an end and Liqian hurried over to her place to put her own headphones on. Then she activated her microphone. Yifan was seated on the other side and Yixing had a perfect view on his side profile. The prince looked over to them and gave Yixing a thumbs up. Yixing didn’t know what for, but he played along and put his own up too.

“Do you want to listen?” Max asked but didn’t wait for an answer.

He pushed a button and the background noise got louder. The last tunes of one of the newer pop songs blasted out of the speakers, then Liqian started to speak:

“Hello everybody, this is your VJ Liqian and you’ve just tuned in right in time to welcome our special guest at ‘Afternoon Hits’! I’m actually very very nervous,” She let out a girlish giggle and Yifan scoffed too but his microphone wasn’t activated yet so that went unnoticed, “Thank you very much for coming over, my prince! Yes, everybody, you heard that right, we’ve got none other than Wu Yifan with us in the studio today!”

She hit the power button for Yifan’s microphone and Yifan said in a lower voice than usual:

“The pleasure’s all mine Liqian, thank you for having me.”

That asshole did this on purpose, and Yixing knew it. The journalist bit his tongue to prevent a frustrated groan escaping his throat. Liqian and Yifan shared a heartfelt laughter before the woman got back to topic:

“My prince, we’ve heard that the preparations for your birthday are in the making as we speak, how’s it going so far?”

“Oh, it’s going pretty well, actually. We’ve got some great things planned out, starting with that
Halloween Party. Which we will actually give away some invitations for, am I right?”

“Aaaand there he let the cat out of the bag, my dear listeners!”

“Ugh, Liqian is so fake sometimes, he is just following the concept she’s sent him prior to that interview…” Max scoffed and Yixing giggled at his comment.

Liqian told the listeners to stay tuned for more information on how to win invitations and referred to their official Weibo, Twitter and Facebook account where listeners could leave their questions for the prince.

“Of course you can also just call us in the studio and have a little chat with our charming boy over here!” She beamed and gave out the number for the studio.

“Would you actually try and call in? Like? Having a chat with Wu Yifan?”

“Probably not. He’s horrible when it comes to holding conversations on a phone,” Yixing answered, triggering another giggle out of Max.

Liqian started Lady Gaga’s “Do what U want” and turned the microphones off. Max checked the radio’s social media accounts on the laptop in front of him and sighed.

“Aaaand there we go…” He said as he skimmed through the comments and mentions, “Man, Zhang Yixing, most of the people are asking about you actually.”

“Oh god, please… that’s what I dreaded.”

Max gave him a pitiful look and then read out one question out loud:

“I’d like to ask if the rumors are true that you are seeing the journalist Zhang Yixing? Are you two dating? I’d be super glad if you did! I guess you have to get used to it… I mean, not that I have anything against gay people, but the prince being rumored to be in a relationship with a man has got some folks riled up.”

Folks. Okay. Try harder to be cool next time, Yixing thought but swallowed the comment. Instead, he said:

“Well, after his birthday I’ll be gone so I just have to sit this out for two more weeks and I’m a free man again.”

Max nodded and sent some questions over to the studio and Liqian told Yifan to take a look at the questions he wanted to answer. They usually didn’t do that, Max let Yixing know. But nobody wanted to step on the prince’s toes, so they had decided to let him choose the final questions that would make it on the show.

“But you can’t filter the callers though,” Yixing said.

“Well, we cannot prevent everything, can we?”

Before they could continue Liqian got back on air to shoot the first fan questions at Yifan. Yixing was glad Yifan had only chosen innocuous questions like “What do you like to do in your free time?” or “If you were emperor already, what would you want to change immediately?” (“I like to play basketball with my friends, actually. I don’t want to brag, but I’m pretty good at that.” and “Hmmm, maybe I’d change something about our educational system, it’s a mess. Sorry grandfather, but your decisions don’t work for modern society anymore! May you rest in peace!”). The journalist
relaxed when the first round of questions went by without any mention of Yixing and the next three songs got played.

“Next is the phone call round, it’s going to be interesting!” Max informed.

“I suddenly feel a little sick,” Yixing admitted and the VJ laughed.

“I can just cut them off if they get too nosy.”

“That’s a rather weak comfort, but thanks.”

“Anytime, man!” Max retorted and when the phone rang he wiggled his eyebrows and picked it up putting the caller on speaker, “Hello, this is Max from HIT FM, congratulations, you’re going to have a little chat with the prince!”

“Oh my GOD really?! Fuck! I didn’t think I’d get picked?!!” A shriek girl voice squealed.

“Well, here you are though sweetie! Have you prepared your question?”

“Umm… oh god, oh god, oh god! Umm, yes, of course! Oh god, is this really happening?!”

Yixing shook his head in disbelief because he just didn’t understand how Yifan could’ve had the same effects on teenage girls as Justin Bieber or one of those Kpop boybands that flooded over from South Korea on almost a daily basis.

“It is! Just hold the line, I’ll connect you to our studio in one minute and Liqian will take care of you!”

“Jesus fucking Christ!”

“Yeah, maybe keep the swear words out please.”

“Oh! Um! Sure! Oh god!”

Max rolled his eyes and when a rather old Chinese pop song had finally found its end, Liqian introduced Yifan once again and saw there was a caller in the line.

“I see we have a caller! Are you ready, my prince?”

“Of course I am!” Yifan answered with a smirk and a wink that flustered the woman.

She took the call after biting her lips and Yixing frowned at her and almost wished to tell her that Yifan was surely not flirting with her:

“Hello! This is Liqian and you’re live on air, my dear! What’s your name?”

“Uuuh… My name is Wang Xuxian…” The girl stammered.

“Hi Xuxian!” Yifan greeted and when she heard him, she barely could keep her cool and tried to drown another squeal of hers.

“How old are you, Wang Xuxian?” Liqian asked.

“I… I’m 19!”

“Are you done with school?” Yifan asked and Xuxian swooned once again.
“Um, yes, I’ve graduated and I have just started my freshman year at university… I major in engineering.”

“Wooooooow, this is amazing!” Yifan exclaimed and added, “To all the girls out there: Wang Xuxian should be your role model, don’t be afraid of things that are deemed as ‘boy stuff’, you can rock this stuff just as great!”

“The fucking hell man he is such an idiot,” Yixing muttered and Max tried to hide his smile.

Not that the message wasn’t a good one, but it just wasn’t genuine coming from Yifan who probably had never even thought about matters regarding gender norms.

“Oh my god, thank you my prince,” Xuxian breathed.

“Wang Xuxian, what question do you have for our prince?” Liqian said to not let the conversation get out of hand.

“Oh, yes! My question is: Are you really dating Zhang Yixing or is this just a rumor?”

“Ooooh dear lord, here we go,” Yixing whimpered and closed his eyes, as if that would change his fate.

When he opened his eyes again Yifan just sat in his chair grinning before he said:

“Someone’s been reading OMG Mag recently, huh?”

“We… well, it’s the hottest topic on Weibo too!” Xuxian defended herself.

“No, my dear, we aren’t dating. It’s just rumors, but I have to admit, this rumor is one of the more entertaining ones. And I don’t blame people to think that, Yixing is a really handsome man and has a great personality, no matter who gets to date him is a very lucky person. I kind of feel honored people think he wants to be with me.”

Xuxian and Liqian let out an “Awwww!” and even Max thought Yifan’s statement was cute. Yixing was just glad the older one didn’t try to pour oil into the fire by making smug comments and somehow confirming these horrible rumors that could end his career with the blink of an eye.

“So you’re just friends?” Xuxian asked.

“Hmmmm, I haven’t asked him, but what about we’ll do right now? Yixiiiiiiing…!”

“Just a little explanation: Yixing is here too, he tagged along for his article,” Liqian threw in while Yifan turned his chair towards the window to the office and Yixing buried his face in his hands.

So much to that. No smug comments. No bullshit. When would he ever learn that being with Wu Yifan was a constant battle to remain sane?

“Come on, Yixing, thumbs up if we’re friends, thumbs down if we’re not!” Yifan cried out and Yixing was very close to give him a thumbs down like Caesar used to do in Rome after a Gladiator match, but he put it up which made Yifan clap.

“He says yes! We’re friends! I’ve leveled up!”

“Is he always like that?” Max asked.

“Oh, you have no idea. It’s horrible.”
“Man, I really don’t envy you.”

“Thanks?”

Liqian said goodbye to Xuxian and then she decided to stay with the dating topic.

“So, you’re single?”

“Yepp. No strings attached to anyone.”

Even though Yixing was glad Yifan didn’t chatter away their awkward make out session, he felt a knot in his stomach when he heard those words. He scolded himself to stop being a petty idiot and Liqian asked:

“So what are you looking for in a girl? You seem to have a type for models.”

“Yeaaaah, I just appreciate beauty when I see it,” Yixing and Max let out a gagging noise in unison and had to laugh at each other, “But I think my taste has shifted a little. It’s not too much about looks anymore. I think personality is more important.”

“Then what should your future girlfriend’s personality be like?”

Yifan leaned forward in his chair closer to the microphone.

“I think I need someone who’s very down to earth. Someone who brings me back to reality and doesn’t care about my title, because that’s the only thing that matters to most people. I really just want to look at them and think ‘Yes, this is it, I want to be with you for the rest of my life’ – oh yeah, and wit. I love people with good comebacks. It’s challenging, I like that.”

Liqian laughed at Yifan’s last sentence and Yifan stole a glance in Yixing’s direction which made the other one hope it went unnoticed by both Liqian and Max. When the next three songs were announced, Yifan got up and walked into the office.

“I really hate you,” Yixing said.

“Oooh, come on! Don’t be like that! We’re friends now, you said so yourself!”

Instead of commenting to that, Yixing said he’d be going to the bathroom. Yifan voiced that he was just about to do that too and followed him. Yixing hurried down the corridor and dashed into the men’s bathroom, hoping he’d be able to escape the taller one but right when the door closed Yifan pushed Yixing into one of the bathroom stalls and him against the tiled wall.

“Don’t!” Yixing hissed but Yifan crashed his lips against Yixing’s already, drowning the protest of the smaller one.

“Are you fucking crazy?!” Yixing managed to jerk his head away from Yifan’s seductive lips, “You just denied any rumors between us and then you shove me into this bathroom stall?! What if someone sees us?!”

“I know, isn’t that absolutely thrilling?” Yifan responded and pulled Yixing closer, one of his large hands grabbing Yixing’s behind with a naughty smile on his lips.

“Fucking weirdo, let go of me! This isn’t a game, okay?”

He did, but Yifan’s look gave away that he wouldn’t give up that easily.
“You know it wouldn’t hurt you to relax for five minutes.”

“Relax?!“ Yixing scoffed and grabbed Yifan’s shoulders to shake him a little, “Yifan, wake up! This isn’t just you risking your image of a straight privileged rich male, this is also involving me and my life. It affects me. And my work! I just want to write, and I don’t want my cheesy articles about you to be the last thing I’m publishing.”

The words seemed to get through to Yifan in a way. He nodded, put his own hands on Yixing’s and squeezed them.

“Okay… then I guess I’ll have to step back. I wouldn’t want you to suffer because of me.”

“Ugh, Yifan, I didn’t mean it like that, for god’s sake!” Yixing slipped and wasn’t even sure how exactly he had meant his words, “I just want you to be careful for once. Think before you speak. Show some common sense.”

Both of them stood still for a beat, then Yifan showed a relieved smile, looking unbelievably cute while doing so.

“Then I’ll get going first, huh? To not make them suspicious?”

“Wow, you’re finally using that brain of yours. I’m proud of you.”

Yifan chuckled and pressed his lips against Yixing’s forehead before he left the bathroom. Yixing leaned against the wall, rubbing his tingling forehead and exhaling a long breath. In that moment, he just knew he was done for. He was way too deep to back out now and had the premonition that this wouldn’t just be over after Yifan’s birthday. He got out of the bathroom stall and stepped forward to the sink to get some cool water on his face while he asked himself if he did want everything to end in two weeks. He tried to talk himself into thinking that yes, he wanted this to be finished already. He wanted his old life back. But then again, he knew that this was going to be a rather luckless effort. A little disgruntled Yixing retreated to the office and sat back down next to Max while Liqian had another caller in the studio who got picked to get one of the first ten invitations. The girl screamed into the phone while Yifan just smiled, clearly enjoying the effect he had on others.

“I bet she’s now going to imagine how she meets him at this party and he falls in love with her…”

Max grunted and rolled his eyes.

“Well…” Yixing started and then shrugged his shoulders to stop himself from saying “No, he won’t fall in love with her.”

Liqian told the listeners that during the next few days, others will have a chance to get their hands on some invitations too and explained how they could enter the giveaway. Then she proceeded with some more questions and happy chatter with Yifan, before she announced the end of the interview.

“Unfortunately, our time’s up my dear prince,” she said and Yifan pouted.

“It’s been an amazing time, Liqian, thank you very much! I’ll gladly come back if you want me to!”

“Oh, I’d love that. Maybe you can start here as a VJ, your voice is very suited for the radio,” she responded with a wink and Yixing suppressed another grunt.

This lady was actually really flirting with Yifan, even though she was almost ten years older than him and so clearly out of his league. The audacity!

“You know, if the whole governing thing doesn’t work out for me, I’ll come back at you and your
“Offer,” Yifan said and made Liqian laugh.

“Do you have anything you want to say to our audience? Or do you have a song wish?”

“Hmmmm…” Yifan made and added, “Be nice, people. Stay in school, don’t do drugs,” Yixing scoffed and Max raised an eyebrow at the guy next to him, “Do your thing, no matter what others say about it. Oh yeah, and can you maybe play ‘Lady Killers’ by G-Eazy? It’s kind of my jam right now.”

“Not that fucking song oh god,” Yixing moaned in agony and rolled his eyes.

“So, you heard it people, listen to our prince! And of course, we’ll play the song for you!”

Yifan said goodbye, turned his microphone off and took his headphones down to place them on the table. Liqian first played Kesha’s ‘Die Young’ while she looked Yifan’s wish up and put it into her music queue. Yifan dashed back into the office and swung himself on the table next to Yixing.

“So, how was I?”

“Do you really want me to pat your back now or what?”

“Oh I could really use that, I’m a little stiff around the shoulders.”

Max chuckled in between the song lyrics he jammed to in accent free English and said:

“You know, I don’t want to offend anyone, but you two are really like an old married couple.”

“That’s what Yili says all the time, too,” Yifan admitted with a bright smile.

“Yeah too bad gays can’t marry in this country,” Yixing retorted with an annoyed tone in his voice.

“Hey, that would be an agenda!” Max threw in and Yifan looked like his suggestion was something to think over.

“Oh please, don’t give him ideas, he’s got a whole lot of other things to sort out first.”

Yifan slapped Yixing’s shoulder for that comment and then the first tunes of Ladykillers came on which distracted Yifan so much he let Yixing off the hook. It was like someone had pulled on a switch and Yifan let out his secret Gangsta. Yes, with an A.

“Got on my leather jacket, thriller, there sure ain’t nothin’ iller
Man I’m a lady killer, if I want her I’mma steal her!
I promise I could make her fly away like caterpillars,
So if you don’t know by now then you should probably get familiar.”

“Stop it Yifan, you’re embarrassing…” Yixing muttered while Yifan jammed along as if he was G-Eazy himself as the first lines of the verse came on.

Max started to laugh and Yixing whined:

“Don’t encourage him, okay? It’s just going to get worse from this point on!”

Yifan didn’t seem to mind that Yixing thought he was an embarrassing douchebag and by the end of the song in which Yifan proclaimed along with Hoodie Allen that whoever’s girls was “on some Romeo and Juliet ‘cause she would rather kill herself than ever be with you again”, Yixing grunted, Max laughed and Liqian who had joined them in the office praised Yifan for his rapping skills.
Yixing hated her.

“Okay, time to go now!” The journalist said when the song had finally come to an end.

After Yifan promised Liqian to come back one day he followed Yixing to the elevator, still mumbling song lyrics.

“So, lunch?” He asked Yixing who fetched the elevator.

“I need to get back to the office, but thanks though.”

“Boooh, you won’t even let me take you out for lunch?”

“I have to get work done, okay?”

Yifan clicked his tongue and then said:

“Then let me at least drop you off at the office.”

Sitting in the Bentley was much nicer than taking public transportation, so Yixing accepted the offer. When they were seated in the car and the driver maneuvered it onto the main street, Yifan said:

“That was actually nice for a change. I like Liqian.”

“Yeah, except for all her annoying flirting, that was actually super embarrassing to witness.”

“Aiii, Yixing!” Yifan cooed and put an arm around the other one, “Are you jealous?”

The driver sighed and rolled up the partition to the driver’s seat to give them privacy. Yixing wasn’t sure if he should be happy about the discretion, because it somehow implied he believed the dating rumors.

“Jealous my ass! It was just super awkward, she’s like ten years older than you.”

“Don’t worry my dear, I only got my eyes on you!”

The answer was another eye roll and Yifan kissed Yixing’s cheek softly. Then his lips searched for the other’s who pressed his lips together, not willing to give in that easily.

“No need to be mad at me, baby. Did you even realize I was talking about you when I said what I was looking for?”

Yixing was sold with those words.

“You are so sappy it’s disgusting!” He hissed through his teeth and pulled Yifan closer by the neck to seal their lips.

Yifan smiled into their kiss and after a forty minutes ride Yixing’s lips were numb from all the smooching and biting and he was also sure Yifan had left a rather visible hickey on his neck. God, why did Yifan have that kind of power over him?

“Thanks for the ride,” Yixing said and let go of him when the car got to a halt in front of his office building.

“I’ll call you.” Was Yifan’s answer and he brushed their noses together, the movement so cheesy it made Yixing’s stomach turn.
Or at least that’s what he said it was. Overly cheesy. Disgusting. Not what he wanted, when he clearly liked it. It was horrible how he couldn’t bring himself to enjoy this, because Yixing felt that he had to prevent himself to fall hard back down on the floor of reality after Yifan’s birthday when he wasn’t able to be around him anymore. In two weeks, everything would be back to normal and he knew that he didn’t stand a chance with Yifan. He was convinced that he wasn’t partner-material for the Prince of China, mostly because he was a man and China was still overly homophobic. Rumors could be handled, but he didn’t want to even think about what would happen if rumors turned out to be true.

“Hmmm,” he just answered and finally got out of the car.

When he walked through the open plan office, he put the collar of his coat up to not let people see Yifan’s bite marks on his neck.
2015年10月31日

Chapter Summary

Fanxing are slowly but surely "getting there".

Chapter Notes

- I still suck so much at summaries hahahaha oh my god this chapter killed me.
- THANKS FOR KUDOS, COMMENTS AND BOOKMARKS AND ALL THAT :D
- Some NC17 Stuff for y'all
- Next update might take a while since I got two fics for some ficfests and the deadlines are making me cry actually and I am still adjusting to my life in China and yeah everything is crazy right now.

October 31st, 2015

On some days, it was better to just stay in bed. Yixing knew such a day had come right when he woke up and felt a slight headache creeping up his temples, for no apparent reason other than to be annoying. He didn’t like to take painkillers that much so he had tried to stay overly hydrated throughout the day and rest a lot, but when he arrived at Yifan’s place around five the slight numbing pain in his skull was still present, not too strong to be knocking him out cold, but strong enough to make him all grumpy and ill-humored.

Yixing found Yifan sitting at the dining table while a makeup artist fixed his hair for the party. The prince had decided to dress up as a vampire, which sounded rather lame, but the stylist had outdone herself on Yifan’s face. While others would smear a ton of white foundation over their faces and make themselves look super ridiculous, she had somehow managed to make it look like Yifan’s skin was naturally this pale, radiating in undying youth. Yixing would’ve loved to throw a mean Twilight reference his way, but his brain wouldn’t let him. Plus, Yifan looked really really good.

“Wow, you look horrible, are you already wearing makeup?” Yifan greeted him when the stylist had done her last corrections with his hair that she had pushed back into a small ponytail.

“No, I don’t and I won’t dress up either,” Yixing answered in an annoyed tone and the woman turned to Yifan:

“So… I shouldn’t do his makeup then?”

Yifan looked at Yixing who slumped down on one chair and supported his head with his hands.

“No, let him be. Thanks darling.”
“I’ll get going then,” she nodded and put her stuff together, “Mr. Zhang if you change your mind, just let me know.”

“Yeah.” Was everything Yixing answered and when the stylist was out of the door, Yifan asked:

“What’s wrong with you?”

“Headache,” the younger one answered and buried his face in his hands, “That’s soon going to become a migraine.”

The thought of joining a party with loud music and bad air conditioned rooms almost made the pain worse immediately. Yixing kept his eyes closed because even the dim light of dusk creeping into the room was too much to handle at the moment. He jumped a little when he felt Yifan’s hand caressing his shoulders. Then he heard the older one pulling his own chair closer to sit directly next to him.

“Is there something I can do for you to make you feel better?”

Yixing only heaved a heavy sigh and shrugged his shoulders. He’d rather go home and barricade himself in his room with the blinds put down, but he didn’t get to do that.

“Aspirin maybe? Hm?”

Yifan squeezed his shoulder and then moved to his neck where his thumb circulated over his skin. Yixing let one hand sink down onto the table and he looked at the older one.

“Yes,” he gave in in the end, “That’d be nice.”

“Coming in!”

The prince got up and fetched the pills which Yixing downed with some water. He hoped the effects of the Aspirin would kick in soon but he somehow knew it was too late for that already. He should’ve been smart and take one right when he had gotten up. Yifan stood behind him and started to massage his temples – his index and middle fingers wandered from there over his forehead, to the bridge of his nose and back. Yixing leaned back into him, clearly enjoying it.

“Would you rather want to stay away from the party?” He heard Yifan ask while he closed his eyes and concentrated on Yifan’s fingertips leaving invisible traces on his skin.

“I have to go,” Yixing answered, “My boss expects a blog entry about that party.”

“Jesus, she sounds like a pain in the ass. Now you even have to write blog entries?”

“Well, ever since our little dating rumor surfaced, our online page received a shitload of clicks and my number of followers on Weibo increased – she took the bait immediately and wants me to put more content online so more people will buy the issue with my articles. It’s all about selling numbers.”

“Speaking of your articles, I finally read them.”

“Oh.”

Yixing opened one eye to look up to Yifan who stared out of the window while he still massaged his skull.

“I liked them. Thank you.”
“That’s all you have to say about them? God, Yifan, I really tried hard with these ones!”

Yifan’s fingers stopped moving and the prince looked down on Yixing.

“Would you rather have my entire make up smeared over your face because I kissed you to express my gratitude?”

His question threatened to part Yixing’s lips into a smile so he pressed them together, shrugged his shoulders and crossed his arms.

“No. Don’t ruin it. It looks pretty good.”

“Really?!”

Yixing nodded.

“Edward Cullen ain’t got shit on you!”

Yifan grunted and the smaller one giggled.

“Keep massaging, it’s actually kind of helping.”

“Sure.”

They had half an hour until they had to get to the venue. Yixing expected Yifan to give up trying to caress his headache away after ten minutes, but he actually pulled through until it was time to go, not even whining once about how his fingers might hurt.

“Wow, I owe you.”

While they grabbed their coats, Yixing felt indeed a little better and he had no idea why. He was just glad the pounding pain was going easy on him for now.

“It’s nothing.”

Yifan gently pushed him out of the room and Yixing frowned.

“Wait? No cocky comment? Nothing like ‘So are you going to repay me with a blowjob?’ Because that’s what I kind of expected.”

They made their way through the garden that slowly withered away due to the dropping temperatures and the coming winter that usually hit Beijing rather mercilessly. Yifan chuckled and explained:

“You don’t feel well. So I’ll be nice and caring for a change,” Yixing scoffed which caused Yifan to raise his eyebrow, “Besides, if anything, I owe you. You did so much for me already. The least I can do is to make sure you’re feeling better.”

“I’ve got to confess, this is confusing my wit.”

Yifan let out a roaring laughter, grabbed Yixing’s hand and placed a quick peck on the back of it. Then he let go immediately as they walked to the garage. Yixing could walk that way with his eyes closed now, which felt weird especially when he thought back on how out of place he felt on his first day, not daring to look left or right. As they got into the car, Mr. Wang, a different driver from the usual one, greeted them. When he saw Yixing, he mentioned that he looked like he wasn’t feeling well, but the journalist wouldn’t listen to the concerns the man in his forties voiced. He had to pull
through with this, come whatever may.

Four hours later Yixing had officially crossed the line between a simple headache and a migraine. Amazing. While he was making his way through a pile of people, he could’ve sworn he accidentally knocked over one of China’s rather famous actresses but didn’t even bother to apologize because he needed to get out, otherwise he might have a breakdown right on the dancefloor between people dressed up as more or less scary creatures. Somehow he managed to get out of the raging bunch of partygoers and walked into the direction of the bathrooms, hoping that if he got some water into his face he might feel better. He didn’t make it there though and while the astonishing pain took over he pushed open one of the doors in the corridor which led to one of the KTV rooms the club provided but were off limits for today. How nobody had bothered to lock them up was beyond Yixing’s understanding but he was glad about it as he crashed onto the big leather couch and pressed his face into the cold material. When the door closed shut, the roaring bass and screeching electro sounds vanished, leaving him with only his pounding head. It felt like someone had kicked his skull open. Not only that, he also felt like he’d vomit all over the place any given second and he groaned into the sofa. It had been a horrible idea to come here nonetheless. Neither had he taken a lot of pictures, nor had he sent some Weibo posts which he had actually promised to his followers. He wasn’t fit for this social media stuff.

“Fuck…”

He rolled onto his back and felt like crying at the thought that he still had to get home somehow, at the latest when some staff member discovered he had snuck in here and would kick him out of his hideaway. He played with the thought of sending Yifan a quick message to help him get out, but then again he didn’t want to spoil the mood. Yifan had loads of fun on the dancefloor with Yili (who had shown up with some really horrifying Zombie makeup that had literally grossed Yixing out – it was glorious) and Yixing was glad he did. If he whined about his stupid headache he might ruin the night, so he kept his phone in his pocket and his whining to himself as he tried to take a deep breath and relax his body. He didn’t know for how long he was laying there trying not to die until the door swung open and carried Rihanna’s ‘Disturbia’ into the room. Yixing grunted and prepared himself for some random staff member reminding him that KTV rooms weren’t open to the partygoers.

“There you are, I’ve been looking for you!”

It was Yifan and Yixing exhaled a breath before he opened his eyes and looked at him. In the dim light of the room his makeup was almost glowing and it somehow creeped Yixing out.

“I’m trying not to die, thank you!” He snapped, because he was horribly bitchy when fighting a migraine.

Yifan didn’t say anything and went over to the phone on the wall which he used to order a bottle of water to the room they were in. When he hung up he sat down next to Yixing and eyed him in worry.

“Has it gotten worse?”

“I just want someone to shoot me to end this already. So yes, it’s gotten worse.”

Yifan didn’t say anything until one waitress arrived with the water and some glasses, clearly confused why Yifan was sitting in a dark KTV room and ordered a non alcoholic beverage but Yifan didn’t even let her enter, took the bottle and one glass and closed the door on her without further explanations. When he poured him some water Yixing only accepted because he knew Yifan
was just trying to help. He took some gulps, before he placed the glass on the table in front of them and sunk back onto the couch. The prince watched, then he laid down beside him, threw his arms around Yixing and placed a kiss on the crown of his head.

“My poor baby.”

“Your makeup,” Yixing reminded him.

“That’s not important now. Plus, I think it’s fucked up anyways. And I lost my fangs.”

“Sounds like you,” the smaller one mumbled and snuggled a little more into Yifan whose fingers once again started to caress his head.

“They were pretty annoying though. Glad they’re gone.”

“Please don’t talk. It hurts my head.”

Normally, and Yixing was aware of that, Yifan would’ve revolted. But the other one stayed silent and kept running his fingers through the smaller’s hair instead. Yixing enjoyed the gesture and the fact that Yifan was with him. Being held like that was somehow comforting – it didn’t make the migraine go away but it made it somehow bearable. Yixing knew though that they couldn’t stay like this forever, because people expected Yifan to be present at the party and if anyone had seen him enter this KTV room after Yixing these god damn dating rumors would never die down. Yifan seemed to have read his mind, because he whispered:

“I’ll make sure you’ll get home, okay? You need proper rest.”

“Okay, yeah…”

Yifan loosened his grip around Yixing and got up, then he grabbed Yixing’s hand and pulled him onto his feet. Yixing felt a little dizzy and grunted as the movement of getting up felt like someone had stabbed a hot needle into his right eye. The pain was excruciating and he knew that the only thing that would help now was his bed and at least ten hours of sleep. He let Yifan lead him out of the KTV room and the loud music felt like a slap in his face and the flashing lights on the dancefloor could’ve also been daggers thrown in his direction, the pain would’ve been the same. Yixing let out a rather pitiful whine and Yifan put an arm around him.

“I’ll get you out of here!” He assured and jockeyed him through the club towards the exit in the back of the club.

When they stepped out of the backdoor Yixing took a deep breath of the cold air and he felt like crying. They walked over to the main street where Yifan tried to catch a taxi, but the streets were somehow empty, even though it was barely past ten.

“Yifan, sorry for blowing this.”

“What are you talking about? You didn’t blow anything,” Yifan retorted and looked up and down the street, “What the fuck does a person have to do to get a god damn taxi in Beijing at ten pm?!”

Even after five minutes none of the official taxis showed up and Yifan muttered some insults under his breath while he pulled out his phone. Yixing watched as he dialed a number and then said:

“Yes, hello Mr. Wang. Could you please drive the car over to the main street and take Yixing home? – No, he’s still not feeling well and it seems like every taxi in this fucking city has vanished. – Yes, right at the corner of the crossroads. – Thank you.”
“You don’t have to get your driver…”

“Well, you can’t fly over to your home, can’t you? My mind would be more at rest knowing my driver got you home anyways.”

“Ugh, I’m not even going to discuss that with you…”

They kept themselves at an arm lengths distance and while they waited Yifan said:

“Oh my god, did you actually know that those invitations also said the winners would be invited to the VIP area for an hour to party with me?!”

Yixing only managed to crack a smile.

“So? You’re going to be surrounded by some hot chicks, isn’t that your field of expertise?”

“Wow. You look like you’re about to pass out and you still manage to be a little shit. I don’t know if I should be amazed or furious!”

The younger shrugged his shoulders and wrapped his arms around his torso, since he had forgotten his coat in the car. When Yifan saw that he made a displeased sound, then he said:

“What the hell man, screw this, come here.”

Yixing wanted to protest as Yifan threw his arms around him.

“Seriously, if I cannot even take care of you as my friend in public then this country has serious problems.”

There were a lot of questions running through his aching mind but Yixing only closed his eyes and tried not to think too much. Every word seemed to trigger more pain anyways so he decided to refrain from asking ‘So what exactly am I? Your friend? Your boyfriend? Your girlboyfriend?’ and just shut his mouth. When the car approached Yifan let go of him and opened the backseat door for him. Yixing got in and the prince said:

“Take a good rest, okay? I’ll see you tomorrow.”

“Thank you, Yifan.”

The older one gave him a soft smile before he closed the door, trying to shut it as silent as possible.

Mr. Wang recalled Yixing’s address in the GPS and while the program was loading the route, he turned around to eye the other one.

“You really look horrible Mr. Zhang, maybe bringing you to the hospital would be better?”

“No..! Really, it’s… just a migraine, I just need my bed.”

“Oh. I see.”

He fixed his eyes on the road again after the female voice of the GPS told him to drive straight down the road for 3 miles before turning left. Yixing pressed his head against the cool window and said:

“Sorry for being a bother.”

“It’s alright, Mr. Zhang. This is my job. And the prince won’t need a ride until the end of the party anyways.”
“Hm.”

Their eyes met in the rear view mirror and the driver cleared his throat before he said:

“You know, the Prince really cares about you.”

“Mr. Wang, please, I’m tired of those dating rumors.”

“I’m not here to offend you, and I would never have the audacity to judge the relationship you have with the Prince, that is something between you and him. It’s just what I observed. I cannot recall a time anyone of us chauffeurs has driven any of his friends home because he’s told us to.”

The man realized Yixing wasn’t up for a chat so he shot him an apologetic smile and concentrated on the road again. Twenty minutes later they arrived at Yixing’s place and Mr. Wang offered to walk him to his apartment door.

“I’m good. Thank you very much, Mr. Wang.”

“My pleasure, Mr. Zhang. Get well soon.”

With a last nod Yixing got out of the car and fumbled his keys out his coat. When he entered his apartment, Luhan was sitting in the living room and made a surprised sound. His roommate only needed one look at Yixing’s face to swallow down his question why Yixing was back this early and just said:

“Go to bed, you look like hell. I’ve got some migraine pills in the bathroom. Knock yourself out.”

“I love you, Luhan.”

“Don’t let your prince hear that, he’d be throwing me out of the window.”

Yixing rolled his eyes, too beaten up to start another conversation. He stumbled into the bathroom, not turning on the bright neon lights and searched for the painkillers in the dark which took him awfully long. After swallowing one of them down he shuffled into his room, managed to somehow peel himself out of his dress shirt and his pants before he crashed onto his bed and buried his face in his pillow.

He didn’t know what time it was, but he woke up due to a loud knocking sound and Yixing wasn’t sure if his drugged and tired brain made things up or someone really punched their apartment door repeatedly. Yixing did not have the strength to get up though and hoped whoever it was would go away. They didn’t, but Luhan woke up too and Yixing heard him coming out of his room and cursing his way to the entrance.

“Whoever this fucker is… it’s four am for god’s fucking sake… I’ll fuck them up!”

Yixing closed his eyes again, relieved Luhan’s pill had worked some wonders in the last five to six hours and he didn’t feel like the pain would make him turn his insides out anymore. Actually, the headache was gone, he was just feeling really beaten up. He heard Luhan’s steps down the hallway again, but he seemed to have company.

“Seriously, even though you are the prince and all that, you’re a motherfucker for waking me up in that ungodly hour and I will never forgive you!”
“I’ll make up to it.”

“Yeah, fuck you and let me sleep. If you decide to get laid tonight, don’t moan too loud okay I have no interest in hearing that.”

Luhan threw his door shut and Yifan opened the one to Yixing’s room. He closed it silently and tiptoed over to his bed. When Yixing grunted, the prince jumped.

“Fuck, you’re awake!”

“Luhan’s bitching and your knocking woke me up,” Yixing yawned, “What are you doing here?”

Yifan came closer and sat down at the edge of the mattress.

“Ummm. Well… I needed to check on you.”

“In the middle of the night?”

Yixing’s words were all jumbled up and muttered into his pillow, but Yifan seemed to be able to understand what the other one was saying.

“Yeah, I’m a weirdo.”

In the dark, Yixing made out Yifan’s silhouette and he heard himself ask:

“Do you want to stay?”

“I’d love that, actually,” Yifan said and laid down, “Don’t worry, I’ve taken off my makeup already. Party was over around half past two. Then I went home and I couldn’t really sleep, so… well.”

“Then you woke up poor Mr. Wang to get you here.”

“No, I’ve driven here myself,” Yixing hissed at Yifan when he heard that but let the older one hold him while he said, “I only had one drink the entire night, the rest was water. I’m very sober. I think I’ve never come back this clear headed from a party before.”

“How were the girls?” Yixing asked while sleep pulled his eyelids down again and he took a deep breath and Yifan’s scent made him feel a little lightheaded.

“They were nice. None of them compared to you though.”

“Shut your mouth.”

Yifan’s chest vibrated as he let out a chuckle. He didn’t listen to Yixing’s command though and asked:

“How’s your headache?”

“I’m good.”

The older one shifted his weight and rolled to the side, fully facing Yixing. The other one had his eyes closed again and felt Yifan’s breath on his face while his hand searched for Yixing’s and held onto it. It was kind of odd how well their hands fit together, given the fact how impossibly large Yifan’s were and how small and delicate Yixing’s looked compared to them.

“So you only came over at four in the morning to ask if my headache has gotten better?”
There was no answer for a while and Yixing wasn’t even sure if he had actually asked this question or if he was already dreaming, because his limbs felt heavy and he only needed two more deep breaths to fall fast asleep again.

“That and I realized I haven’t kissed you yet today.”

Yixing’s upcoming judgement on how lame Yifan had proven himself to be once again didn’t even have the chance to be heard as the older one leaned forward and his lips searched for Yixing’s. The touch brought some life back into Yixing’s body but he kept his eyes shut while he allowed Yifan to come closer and let one of his hands dance over his arms, shoulders, and chest. Their kiss was somehow messy and involved a lot of nose bumping because none of them could really tilt their heads to the side. Yifan was the first to break away and his hand stopped over Yixing’s ribcage who hoped the older one would not notice that his heart started to beat faster.

“Why aren’t you wearing a shirt though? That’s super unfair…” The blond asked as his fingers traced down his skin.

“Wearing clothes was surely the last thing on my mind when I went to bed,” Yixing mumbled against Yifan’s lips and sealed them once again, this time pulling the older one over him.

There was no ‘We shouldn’t do this’ hanging in the air, no voice in Yixing’s head to stop Yifan’s hands from moving over his skin, no sign of restraint when Yixing felt Yifan moving his tongue over the younger’s lower lip in one smooth, swift motion and he reciprocated by opening his mouth. Yixing had kissed several guys in his life before, but Yifan’s lips made him feel special in some kind of weird way. It was almost like Yifan knew exactly how much pressure and pace to put on the other, when to let their tongues touch and when to retreat to leave Yixing wanting more until he let out a long pleased sigh edging to become a moan. Yifan broke away at the sound and even though it was dark around them, Yixing saw the older one looking at him before he asked:

“How thin are these walls here?”

“Very.” Was Yixing’s answer and then he pulled Yifan down again to silence him before he could say anything more.

He didn’t want another discussion with him. He wanted to keep this going, to keep Yifan close to him, pressed down into the mattress by the taller’s weight. Yifan’s hands took their time to get to know Yixing’s body until they stopped above the waistband of his boxers. The way Yifan’s thumbs circled across Yixing’s skin, hesitant to move forward made Yixing shift his weight to reach for the reading light on his night desk. The light was very soft, yet both of them blinked for a few seconds to get used to it and when they could handle the brightness without squinting their eyes Yifan sat up straight, heaving a sigh. Yixing supported his upper body with his arms on the mattress and looked up to him.

“Are you alright?”

Yifan huffed and bit his lower lip, his gaze avoiding Yixing’s and he focused on a spot on the bed sheets. The younger one wasn’t sure if the slight blush on the other’s cheeks was just a trick the lighting was playing on him or if Yifan’s face really reddened in embarrassment.

“I… umm… it’s…” The prince stammered and rubbed his neck, still not looking at Yixing while he was struggling to find words.

Yixing sat up fully and kept his feet tangled around Yifan’s hips, then it dawned on him.
“Oh my god, you have no clue what to do with me because you’ve never done it with a man!”

“Jesus, you really know how to beat people up with their own words!” Yifan spat out and made Yixing giggle like a girl.

The smaller one gave him a few light kisses on the cheek and while he traced the outlines of the other’s jawline with his fingertips he said:

“It’s okay. It’s actually kind of cute.”

“That wasn’t my intention here…” Yifan groaned but jerked his head into the direction of Yixing’s lips.

“Then what was it?” Yixing asked, searched for Yifan’s hand and squeezed it, indicating the other one to speak his mind.

“Aaaah no, forget it!” Yifan retorted and he fell to the side onto the mattress to bury his head that was now the color of a ripe tomato in Yixing’s sheets.

Yixing sensed it would be no use to push him so he kept sitting and looking at the older one until Yifan noticed, peeked back up to the younger one and sighed, before he said:

“Okay, okay, FINE. I wanted to be super smooth, alright? I heard that orgasms help with headaches – don’t you dare to laugh at me now, Yixing! – and I don’t really know, now we’re here, but I’m far from making you cum and I am super awkward, oh my god, can you please make me stop talking this is so embarrassing!!”

Yixing snorted and swallowed his comment – anything that came to his mind, like ‘Awww look at you, getting flustered by the mere thought of touching another man’s dick!’ or ‘That is the stupidest thing I’ve heard about orgasms ever!’, seemed to not be getting them anywhere. So instead his hand reached for Yifan’s neck, because he somehow sensed the other one liked it when he let his fingers run over the sensitive skin. Yifan flinched at the touch but relaxed when Yixing’s judgement never came.

“You seemed so sure of yourself last week though,” Yixing voiced his thoughts when he thought back to the day they had exchanged some heated kisses in the kitchen - only god knew where this would’ve gone to if they hadn’t gotten disturbed by Yao Yao.

“That was something different, I was just really horny.”

That comment made Yixing chuckle while Yifan was still trying to hide his embarrassment in Yixing’s blanket.

“Well then,” The younger one said and tugged Yifan’s shirt to make him turn around on his back. His hands slipped under the fabric and traced the faint outlines of Yifan’s abs which made the taller inhale a deep breath, “I could show you a thing or two. So next time you know just what to do.”

“Ummmm…”

Yifan was clearly confused by the lack of mean and sarcastic comments and his dazed expression grew stronger when Yixing came closer and sat down on his thighs. Yixing’s hands wandered from his abdomen down his hips until they grabbed the buckle of his belt.

“Only if you want me to,” Yixing added and watched Yifan who looked at him like a lost puppy.
It took the older one a few moments until he managed to show a hesitant nod. Yixing smiled and leaned over to place a kiss on Yifan’s lips while one hand supported his body to not fall over and one hand opened the buckle in one effortless movement. He felt Yifan’s nervousness as the other’s muscles stiffened when Yixing unzipped his black pants.

“Relax,” Yixing mumbled against Yifan’s lips, “You don’t need to do anything. Just enjoy.”

Yifan nodded again to show he’d understood and even lifted his hips to make it easier for Yixing to get him out of his pants. Afterwards he took off his shirt so both of them were only clothed in their underwear. Yixing leaned back to have a full view of Yifan’s body and after appreciating his slim figure with his eyes, he pulled Yifan up and guided him back to the headrest of the bed so the older one could put his head on one of the pillows to get more comfortable than just simply being spread out on the mattress. It was obvious Yifan wasn’t used to be the one to follow someone’s lead. Yixing imagined the prince to be one of those guys in bed that just took what they wanted. If Yifan wanted a blowjob, Yixing would bet his life he’d just put his pants down and tell the other person in front of him to suck his dick, pulling their hair to guide them down his already half hardened cock. The younger one tried to get rid of these thoughts and dived down again to lock their lips. While doing so he rolled his hips and Yifan let out a whimper when he felt Yixing rubbing himself against his cock that started to swell at the new sensation.

“When I said relax I meant that – let me know what you like, don’t hold back,” Yixing ordered and felt his own dick hardening while he ground his hips against the older one’s and Yifan reciprocated in spreading his legs a little more, a movement that may not even have been intentional.

“But… Luhan…” Yifan breathed and held on to the wrist of Yixing’s hand that had started to caress his chest.

“Oh, he’ll survive,” Yixing said and kissed Yifan’s collarbones, “When he dated that Korean exchange student I had to endure their fucking all the time. I even caught him and that Minseok guy once in the living room jerking each other off. He will endure this.”

The older one was too shocked for an answer and Yixing showed a smug grin before he went down on Yifan’s body and kissed away his last doubts and worries to make him finally relax. When he teased the skin above Yifan’s groin area with his lips, he slid his fingers under the cloth of the other’s black boxer briefs to stroke his thighs. He heard the man under him hum in approval and got encouraged to bolder moves when he felt the bulge in Yifan’s lap become bigger as the seconds passed. He was somehow proud to be that one guy that got no other than Wu Yifan himself off with just a few moves, so he pulled down the last bit of cloth covering the older one. Yifan didn’t really expect to lose his underwear this early and this fast so he grunted in surprise but swallowed his comment down when Yixing beheld his rising erection, resting his head on Yifan’s knee.

“I’m going to have loads of fun tonight,” Yixing stated and made Yifan shiver in anticipation.

Without further warning, the younger one grabbed the base of Yifan’s cock firmly but gently and felt the heat rising up in his own body just from looking at Yifan who closed his eyes at the touch and grabbed the sheets when Yixing started to move his hand up and down his shaft in slow and teasing movements. It didn’t take long until Yifan’s hips started to twitch to get more friction and Yifan himself let out a disapproving groan when Yixing let go of his hard and fully erected cock that was curling up against his stomach now after the younger had touched him.

“Don’t worry,” the journalist breathed and tormented the older one with a few more kisses on his inner thighs, “We’ll get there.”

A hoarse ‘Okay’ broke from Yifan’s lips when Yixing’s own ghosted over his erection. His hands
grabbed the older one’s hips and his thumbs drew circles over the spots he had handled with his lips and sometimes his teeth before, then he added:

“Fun fact: I’m very good at controlling my gag reflex.”

“You—“

Yifan forgot whatever he wanted to say as Yixing slowly took him in, inch by inch and pressed his head down into the pillow while his back arched in pleasure. When Yixing couldn’t go down any further, he lingered for a second before he gradually lifted his head back again until his lips were only placed around the head of Yifan’s twitching dick. He looked up to check on Yifan and he smirked when he saw the prince was biting his lower lip while one hand was buried in his own hair and the other one was still holding onto the sheets. That wasn’t enough for him though, since he aimed for some vocal approval of the things he was doing to Yifan, so he twirled his tongue around Yifan’s erection and hummed against his cock as he went down again, as if it was some delicious lollipop. Yifan’s breath got shorter and harder when Yixing’s head began to go up and down on him and when Yixing gently glided his teeth over his shaft, the first whimpering broke from the prince’s lips. Yixing smiled and let go, only to use his hand again to stimulate the older one so he was able to pay some extra attention to the sensitive skin in Yifan’s lap. When their gazes met, Yixing licked his lips and Yifan finally moaned – after the sound had escaped his lips, he buried his hand in the hair of the other one because the sheets weren’t enough to hold onto anymore. With an opened mouth and shortened breath Yifan watched how the younger one licked his dick from the base to the tip and the sight of Yixing’s tongue lubricating his pulsing erection made him spit out one curse after another in between moans that got louder by the second. The journalist felt Yifan’s impatience in the way he pushed his hips forward so he decided to finish him off – when he went down on him with his mouth again, Yixing picked up the teasing pace and bobbed his head up and down in accordance to the sounds of pleasure coming from Yifan. The hand that pulled harder at his hair told Yixing how close Yifan was and the thought of getting him over the edge aroused the younger one to such a degree he felt his own cock getting hard again even without any further stimulation. He contemplated on touching himself, but then decided against it and pushed Yifan’s hips down with one hand while the other one grabbed the other’s testicles and gave them a gentle tug.

“Oooh, fuck, Yi… xi…” Yifan cried out and clasped one hand over his mouth at the additional stimulation which animated Yixing to go faster and suck harder.

It took maybe thirty seconds more and Yifan was unable to even give out a prior notice. His orgasm made him cry out Yixing’s name like a mantra giving him spiritual growth. Although taken by surprise, Yixing didn’t try to dodge Yifan’s cum and swallowed, still sucking the older one even after Yifan had climaxed and was lying flat on his back to catch his breath. When he felt Yifan’s cock go limp again he let go and looked up to him but Yifan just kept staring at the ceiling. Yixing slowly went up to give Yifan a kiss on his neck, still cupping Yifan’s balls which made the older one sigh in pleasure.

“Shit Zhang Yixing,” Yifan said after his breath had steadied again.

“So you liked it?”

Yifan pulled Yixing up so their eyes met and Yifan answered:

“You literally made me tear up while I came, I… fuck man, I cannot believe it!”

Yixing laughed at the comment and kissed him, before he said:

“You owe me now, you know.”
The prince answered by squeezing Yixing’s butt and giving him a long kiss. Yixing was still riled up from giving head and pressed his hip against Yifan’s, somehow hoping the other one would get the hint. It seemed unfair to not be getting any fun time himself so he withdrew from Yifan’s lips and gently nibbled on his earlobe.

“Please, Yifan…” he whispered and took the hand that was still firmly grabbing his behind to guide it into his boxers, “…just…”

Yifan’s hand froze at the touch of Yixing’s skin but it also didn’t jerk back which the younger one took for a positive sign. While he directed Yifan from his ass over his hips to his cock he said:

“You still want to make me cum, right? I know you do. Make me, please.”

The older one didn’t say anything and only inhaled sharply as Yixing breathed these words into his ear in a tone that made Yixing literally beg to get fucked into the mattress, even though the younger knew that this would be too much to be asking. When Yifan’s hand slowly wrapped around his swelling cock he smiled and kissed the prince’s sharp jawline while he used his own hand to guide Yifan into a slow rhythm that he actually enjoyed. He only let go when he felt Yifan moving his hand on his own accord and filled the older’s ear with low moans and words of praise to encourage him. Yixing’s vocal response and the rising erection in his hand gave Yifan enough confidence to tighten his grip and go faster up and down the other’s shaft, gradually teasing louder moans out of the younger. When he experimentally flicked his thumb over the head of Yixing’s leaking cock, the younger one gasped and started to grind his hips against Yifan’s stomach for more friction. With the other hand Yifan pulled Yixing’s boxer down to have better access and the man above him moaned as he felt his balls rubbing against Yifan’s skin.

“More… please… Yifan… ugh…”

Yifan went faster, unable to deny Yixing any of his wishes, and started to breathe heavily too as Yixing rolled his hips in accordance to Yifan’s big hand wrapped around his length, the feeling being so fantastic Yixing didn’t even mind it was only a simple handjob he was getting. His own hands grabbed Yifan’s shoulders and as he buried his nails in the other one’s skin he said:

“Do that… thing again…”

He really hoped Yifan would understand what ‘that thing’ was because forming clear sentences wasn’t in the range of possibility anymore. Yixing just wanted to cum already and his whole body shivered in pleasure when Yifan rubbed his thumb and then his whole palm against the head of his erected dick before he worked his hand down his cock again, smearing Yixing’s pre cum all over it.

“That thing?”

“Yes, yes, yes!”

Yifan chuckled and kept up the rhythm of pumping Yixing’s cock a few times before stimulating the tip while Yixing whimpered and wriggled his body on top of him. The younger one felt his orgasm build up in his loins and fucked himself even harder against Yifan’s hand.

“Keep – going – that’s – perf… aaaaaaaaah…!”

He didn’t even get to finish his statement as his climax took over him and all he could do was to let out a long moan. His whole body jerked and he dug his nails even deeper into Yifan’s skin, leaving visible marks he was surely going to feel sorry for the next day. Yixing’s orgasm left a mess on both their stomachs and after the younger one had taken a few calming breaths, he rolled over to the night
desk to grab tissues.

“Messy,” he said with a disgusted facial expression and cleaned himself up before he took care of Yifan who just kept staring at the white stains on his stomach and in his hand.

When the traces of their act were gone Yixing threw his blanket over them and Yifan finally moved and pulled him close to his chest. The younger one listened to Yifan’s heartbeat that was still a little faster than usual and couldn’t stop the stupid grin creeping on his face. Yifan held tightly onto him, even threw his legs around Yixing’s to be as close to him as possible.

“Was that okay though?” Yifan suddenly asked and made the other one snort into his chest.

“You’ve got great talent,” the younger one answered and pinched Yifan’s sides, “The question is if you want to advocate that talent any further.”

The prince let out a long hum, then he reached for the lamp to kill the light. When darkness surrounded them again, Yixing heard him say:

“Only with you as my mentor.”

Hearing this made the his heart flutter and he placed another kiss on Yifan’s bare chest before he snuggled back into him to finally go back to sleep.
Chapter Summary

The next day holds some surprises for Yixing.

Chapter Notes

- Sorry peeps. My life was crazy (with a lot of "Shit my landlord kicked me out and I need to find a new place to stay before the middle of September lmao") and my Google Docs didn't work because my VPN didn't work and then my Beta moved and everything was so shitty omg sorry sorry sorry.

- THANKS for your nice comments though, they really made my mostly shitty days and reminded me of why I'm doing this. :) yay!

November 1st, 2015

The shrill alarm of Yixing’s clock woke them up at half past six in the morning. While Yixing just rolled over to silence the alarm with a practiced hand movement, Yifan almost jumped up with a shocked expression on his face.

“What the FUCK is this!” The prince exclaimed and held his hand over his chest to feel his racing heartbeat.

“My alarm clock, obviously,” Yixing yawned and turned around to face the other one.

“I almost died having a heart attack!”

“Don’t be so dramatic!” The younger one retorted and Yifan fell back into the pillows, scoffing at Yixing’s comment.

The morning routine of the journalist consisted of checking news and his Weibo feed in the first fifteen minutes after the alarm woke him usually up. And even with Yifan at his side, he didn’t break that ritual. His hand automatically grabbed his phone and unplugged it from the charger as he opened
the news app he usually checked everything that’s been going on in the world over night. Yifan grunted and mumbled some weird sentences into his pillow which sounded like he didn’t approve of the fact that Yixing seemed to be more interested in his phone than in him. The younger one only rolled his eyes but then opened one arm to let Yifan huddle into his chest. His eyes didn't leave the display of his phone though. Turkey returns to single-party rule in boost for Erdogan. French president heading to China to promote climate talks. 'Martian' tops North American box office. The ugly, the scary, the creepy: Celebrations for Prince Wu Yifan's birthday start a week early and gather China's high society.

"Oooooh, check that article!" Yifan butted in and didn't even wait for Yixing to say anything and tapped the hyperlink of the headline.

"You were there, why would you even bother to check that gallery?" Yixing asked with a grunt as the pictures loaded.

"I'm just curious. Do you think they took pictures of us?"

"Highly unlikely because I spent eighty percent of the time hidden in a KTV room." Was what Yixing had to say about this and they watched as the first picture of the gallery appeared on the phone's display.

It showed Yili's Instagram update which was a selfie of her and her brother in their Halloween costumes. Yixing asked himself how she had actually managed to look like a Zombie had eaten off half her face and still look cute and stunning. This woman could hardly be human. Yixing swiped to the left and in the next picture, Yifan was shown with William and Dawei who had appeared in relatively uncreative Michael Myers costumes. Another swipe, and another celebrity smiled into the camera with Yifan. This concept remained present until the pictures of Yifan and the "lucky ones who had won an invitation" appeared and Yifan let out a whine. The picture showed him talking to one of the girls wearing a Catwoman costume who had linked her arm with Yifan's. The prince was obviously saying something into her ear as his face was turned away from the camera while she showed a toothed smile. The first comment Yixing saw said 'Okay but what is Zhang Yixing going to say when he sees his man flirting with another girl? Why wasn't he there to prevent this?'

"Yes Yifan, what do you think I'm going to say about this?" He slipped and wanted to slap his own face for acting like this once again.

"Hey, I didn't go home with her, haven't I?"

"Wow. That is exactly what you SHOULDN'T say, Yifan!" Yixing cried out and pushed the older
The prince grunted while Yixing sat up straight to throw a sour look his way. Yifan blinked in confusion and watched how the younger one closed the news app and tossed his phone back onto the night desk.

"I really didn't flirt with her, Yixing."

"Yeah, whatever. Do you want to take a shower or something?" Yixing scoffed, being annoyed with himself for getting so petty at a simple picture.

Maybe that was mostly because that Catwoman had been a gorgeous girl. And Yixing knew he couldn't compare with gorgeous girls. There were enough things he couldn't offer as a biological man and he wasn't really sure how Yifan saw all of this - it could be possible that Yixing was just some sort of experiment and that mere thought was enough to leave a bitter taste on Yixing's tongue.

"Yixing, oh my god, aren't you the Media? You, out of all people, should know how pictures can look when they're taken out of context - take that OMG article where everybody thinks you were flirting with me at Disneyland while you actually told me to fuck off!" Yifan cried out and grabbed Yixing's arm so he couldn't get up from the bed.

"Okay, so what was the context?" Yifan hesitated for five seconds at the question. Five seconds that were enough for Yixing to snort disdainfully and try to get rid of Yifan's hand holding him back. "Okay, don't even bother!"

"It's my father, okay?" The older one blurted out.

"What in god's name does your father have to do with you getting touchy with other women?"

Yifan let out a long groan and heaved a sigh before he sat up himself. He didn't even really bother when the blanket slid down his upper body and revealed his skin. Yixing's eyes tried to look at something else so he focused on a point at the wall behind the other one.

"My father came over yesterday," Yifan started his explanation, "And he never comes over to talk to me unless it's something urgent. 'Urgent' as in telling me that I have proven to be a disappointment once again. So when he came I just knew I fucked up again in his eyes."
"No offense but that sounds like your father is a big reason why you went to rehab."

"Oh, that is exactly what my therapist has told me too," Yifan commented and shrugged his shoulders, "We really don't have a good relationship. I cannot remember him praising me ever. I think I haven't even gotten a hug once as a child."

He frowned as if thinking hard, but then he seemed to remember why he had started talking about the Emperor, shook his head to refocus and continued his explanation:

"Anyways, he came over to talk to me about 'recent happenings' and it took him like five minutes to finally cut to the chase and tell me that he has heard about the rumors regarding us two."

"Oh, so it took him almost a week to notice," Yixing said in such a sarcastic tone he made Yifan snort hard.

"Yeah, he's slow."

"Let me guess, he didn't really approve of anything he's read."

"Well... he didn't put it like this but he told me that he's wishing for everything to 'get back to normal after your birthday'. And my father doesn't wish for things. He commands them."

"He wants me gone, don't beat around the bush." Yixing stated and Yifan clicked his tongue.

The older one scooted over and threw his arms around Yixing before he put his head on his shoulder.

"Technically, he's wanted everyone in my life who's not related to me by blood gone, so..." Yifan's words were a weak source of comfort but Yixing stayed silent. The prince tightened his grip around the other's shoulders. "I just thought that if I let one of them dangle off my arm and someone took a picture of it they'd let you off the hook. Including my father. I really didn't flirt with her. Forgive me? Pretty please?"
Yixing sighed and felt how he grew weak again at Yifan's words, even though he really didn't want to. His father interfering should be taken as a sign to stop and deal with a minor collateral damage instead of risking a total write off if anything got noticed by the public. When Yixing still refused to answer, Yifan tried another small speech:

"Look, I'm sorry, okay? But I don't know how to deal with this any better than you probably do. I am horrible at handling the public attention. I just thought I'd give them something else to talk about, I left her alone the moment I realized someone had taken a picture. And to be very honest, after you left I wanted that party to be over as soon as possible. I just wanted to be with you."

"Why are you so stupid all of the time?!" Yixing whined and felt how Yifan smiled against his skin as he buried his face in the curve of the younger one's neck.

"Don't act like you don't like it."

"I should kick you out, and you know that!"

"Yet I'm still here."

"Yet you're still here," Yixing echoed while he shivered under Yifan's touch, "I hate myself."

There was another alarm going off in the room next to them and they heard Luhan grunt in annoyance. Hearing his roommate shuffle around behind the wall next to them made Yixing realize he still had to go to work somehow.

"Shit, I need to take a shower before Luhan blocks the bathroom for an hour."

"Why? We're supposed to arrive at the hotel around ten."

The next bigger event was a brunch with the royal family and friends held at the Yi House Art Hotel which was closed to the public. Yixing was actually one of the only two journalists that were allowed to enter, but Yixing had the feeling that he was only on the list because Yifan wanted him to be there, not necessarily to do his job.
"We have a weekly meeting at nine, I can't miss that. Just imagine: There are people with actual jobs in this world!"

Yifan rolled his eyes and let Yixing finally go. He got up himself and put on the pants he had been wearing at his arrival and said:

"But you're coming, right?"

"Yes, I'll catch up. I'll leave the office right after the meeting."

This statement seemed to pacify the prince and he threw his shirt over his head. While he fumbled his arms through the sleeves he walked over to Yixing and kissed his forehead.

"I'll see you there, love. I'll walk myself out."

Yixing still followed him to the door though and right when they stepped out into the hallway, Luhan opened his door to go to the bathroom. When he saw Yifan, he threw him an angry look.

"Yixing, run for the shower, I'll distract him!"

Before Luhan could react, Yixing jumped into the bathroom - when he closed the door and locked it, he heard his roommate yell:

"Wu Yifan! You are so annoying how does Yixing put up with you?!!"

"What can I say, Luhan - I have good arguments!"

"Yeah, I am very well aware of that."

"Anyways, Luhan, Yili wants you to tag along to my birthday party, are you interested?"
Luhan’s screech drowned in the running water of the shower that Yixing stepped under. He washed his body and hair in an amazing speed because he knew Luhan didn't like to be kept waiting in the morning. When he stepped out, Luhan just gave him a judging look while pushing himself past his friend.

"You're lucky I'm too tired to hit you!"

"I love you, Luhan!" Yixing chirped but fled the scene as soon as he heard Luhan mumble something like 'I'm going to kill your whole family!'

Yixing made it to the office in time but barely followed the content of the meeting which somehow went unnoticed by his boss, but when she dismissed everyone, she told Yixing to stay. He swallowed hard, preparing himself for a scolding because he hadn't handed in any content of the party yesterday.

"Yixing, do you have time to talk for a few minutest?" Mrs. Wang asked and waved at the chair he had gotten up from to show him he should sit down again.

"Ummm, yeah, I was actually planning on going to that brunch thing..." He said but sat down again, because you just didn't disobey Mrs. Wang's orders.

"It won't take too long, I promise."

"If this is about the online entry about the Halloween party, I'm really sorry! I was having the worst migraine and left early, I promise to do a better job from now on!"

"Oh! No, no, relax, it's okay," she said and shook her head.

Yixing didn't quite understand and frowned as she heaved a heavy sigh. Then she folded her arms in front of her chest and looked straight at him.

"It's about Mr. Deng."
"Is he getting better?"

The look she gave him told him that his colleague wasn't getting better.

"I received a call from the hospital this morning. He's been getting chemo which has been working out to a certain degree, but he cannot afford further treatment because his insurance will not cover for him anymore."

"I'm... but... why would you get informed?"

"He doesn't have any family and listed me as the contact person," she answered and for the first time he knew her, a sad look flickered across her face.

The news sank in slowly and Yixing felt like someone had punched him in the guts. Mrs. Wang sat down next to him and handed over a piece of paper where she had written down some visitation information of the hospital Mr. Deng was staying at for his treatment.

"Maybe you want to tell the prince about it. Mr. Deng would appreciate it."

With a heavy heart, Yixing took the paper and nodded.

"I'll surely do."

"Thank you," she said softly and patted his hand, then she immediately snapped back into her business demeanor, "Now let's go to that brunch, I need some nice photos of the royal family!"

The Yi House Art Hotel was located in the art district of the city, which Yixing actually liked to frequent, but had barely found the time to do so in the last two months. When he strolled through the streets, he got reminded of the long days and nights he had spent here with his friends. He wasn't someone to understand art a lot, but he appreciated it and had even visited several vernissages before. When he arrived at the entrance of the lobby, it was almost quarter to twelve because the traffic had been hell once again. Yixing stepped into the building that was a weird fusion of classy luxury chic and hip art character. When the door opened, a young woman looked up from the counter and one of Yifan's bodyguards stood up from the chair he had been sitting on.
"Hello, Sir, may I help you?" The woman asked with a practiced smile as Yixing neared her.

"Hello, I just need to get to that brunch," Yixing said, "How do I get to the restaurant?"

"Of course, do you have an invitation?"

Her question threw Yixing off track. Of course he didn't have an invitation. He didn't need one, because he was usually around Yifan anyway. Yifan was his invitation in some sort of way.

"Umm... no?"

"I am sorry, but I am not allowed to let anyone in without an invitation."

Yixing exhaled a long breath and for a split second he wanted to ask her if she knew who was standing in front of her, like he was some super important person. The thought scared even himself and he tried to remind himself that this girl was just doing her job and obeyed orders.

"Okay, I'm surely on the guest list or something, maybe just check that?"

"Sure, what is your name, Sir?" She required and pulled out a long list of names.

Yixing saw the bodyguard nearing them and he got nervous.

"Umm, it's Zhang Yixing."

The staff looked at him for a second, but then got back to being professional. She flipped the pages to the section with names starting with Zhang. Then she took a long look at the listed names, even double checked, but finally said:

"I'm sorry Mr. Zhang but I cannot find your name on this list."
"Wait, but... no, that's impossible, just check again!"

The bodyguard had reached them and he asked:

"Is there a problem?"

"Yes, my name isn't on the list," Yixing said and somehow expected him to help him out here, but instead the man said:

"Well, then I guess you're not invited. I need you to leave the venue, Mr. Zhang."

"Wait, but...! Come on, you know me!"

"This does not change the fact that you're not on the list, I'm sorry."

Yixing was starstruck for a moment and his body only reacted again when the man gently but firmly grabbed his arm to get him out.

"That is ridiculous! Absolutely ridiculous! Let me give Yifan a call!"

The bodyguard sighed but let him pull out his phone and call the prince. Yifan accepted the call on the second ring.

"Where are you? I'm dying of boredom here!" He whined into the phone.

"I'm already here, but I'm not allowed to get in!" Yixing said.

"Huh? That doesn't make any sense, I put you on the list!"

"No, I am not."
"... what? That is ridiculous! Lixun is downstairs, he knows you and can just let you in?"

"He is, in fact, trying to kick me out, so maybe just come downstairs and put your watchdog on a leash again?" Yixing spat out but regretted his words immediately as Lixun lifted one of his eyebrows.

"Oh my god, what is going on... I'm coming downstairs, wait for me."

"Sorry about that, I didn't mean to insult you," Yixing mumbled after he had put his phone back in his pocket and an awkward silence emerged between the three.

"It's okay, I've been called worse."

The joking comment didn't do much to lighten up the mood and Yixing felt like he had never been more happy to see Yifan coming out of the elevator. He had changed into a navy blue suit and had his hair pushed back, just like Yixing loved it most, but the younger one wasn't sure if Yifan was aware of that. When Yifan had caught up to them, he asked:

"So, what is going on here? Lixun, you know Yixing, why are you kicking him out?"

"My prince, I have the order to show everyone out who cannot show an invitation. Mr. Zhang doesn't have one," the bodyguard explained matter of factly, "Order of the Emperor."

Yifan looked at him as if he had lost his mind.

"My father, huh?" He scoffed and shook his head, "So are you serving him now or me?"

"I am just doing everything to ensure your safety, my prince."

"That is fucking ridiculous, Yixing isn't a threat and you know that!"

Yixing heard Yifan's frustrated grunt and had to hide his victorious smile as Yifan grabbed his arm and told Lixun that he'd be taking it from here. Before Yifan led him to the elevator, he turned to the
woman at the counter.

"Darling, can I take a look at your guest list for a moment?"

She was so shocked to be directly addressed by the prince, so she handed the papers without a word and a startled expression on her face. Yifan flipped through the pages and furrowed his eyebrows when he couldn't find Yixing's name.

"This is not the list I told my staff to send to you." He finally gave his statement and sent her a confused expression.

"I am so sorry, my prince, this is the list we've received this morning by a staff member of yours and I reckoned I use this one," she explained with a few bows.

Yixing didn't understand why, but Yifan bristled with anger and tossed the list onto the counter. When the woman behind it flinched at the move, he said:

"I am not angry at you, sorry. Thank you for telling me."

Then he pulled Yixing to the elevator and started to mutter some incoherent sentences under his breath.

"Yifan, what's going on?"

"That was my father!" The older one snapped, "He's doing this to keep you out! God! He is such a fucking asshole! See? That's why we never get along, he always needs to control my life, it's so fucking annoying!"

"Oh, ummm..." Yixing was so bummed he didn't know what to say about this.

When they got out of the elevator the buzzing from the party carried over from the restaurant to them. Yixing heard people clinking glasses and sharing laughs, accompanied with some classical music. It was surely everything Yifan hated combined in one big event.
"I will talk to him about this, don't worry," Yifan said and squeezed Yixing's hand, "I'm sorry this happened. Let's just get this over with, shall we?"

"Umm, actually I think I need to talk to you for a second."

The smile that had crept on Yifan's face now that Yixing was here faded.

"You're not breaking up with me, right?"

"What?? God, you are impossible!" Yixing blurted out and hit the other's shoulder, dodging the question in a more or less elegant way, "This has nothing to do with you or me."

"Oh. Okay..."

Yixing had wrecked his brain how to break the news of Mr. Deng's health situation as psychologically useful as possible, but sometimes it was best to just say the things that needed to be said without taking detours.

"It's about Mr. Deng," Yixing started and then explained what Mrs. Wang had told him earlier.

When he was finished Yifan didn't say anything for a moment. He just stood there, his fingers loosely intertwined with Yixing's, until he said:

"So. We're going to visit him, I guess?"

"If you want to, I'll go with you."

Yifan nodded in appreciation and then tried to get back to the actual reason why they were here - Yixing reckoned this was some kind of self protection, to get back to business as soon as possible and not dwell on bad news.

"Okay, prepare yourself for the lamest thing on earth, this whole thing sucks big time. Tao couldn't make it because he's wind up in Qingdao and has to take care of business, it's such a drag..."
"Oh, I see," Yixing said and followed Yifan to the entrance of the restaurant.

The older one squeezed Yixing's hand one last time before he let go and opened the door. Some heads turned, but their arrival didn't seem too cause too much of a fuss. Yifan handed Yixing a glass of champagne that one of the waiters carried around and offered the guests, before he said:

"I will talk to Yili about Mr. Deng for a moment. Can I leave you to yourself?"

"Yes, mommy, I won't break anything."

Yifan rolled his eyes, but cracked a smile as he made his way through the room towards Yili who was talking to her mother. Yixing watched as the siblings retreated to the balcony to have a private conversation. In that moment, the Empress saw him and walked over. She gave Yixing a flashing smile and the grip around his glass got tighter the nearer she came.

"Mr. Zhang, it's nice to see you!" She greeted him and they shook hands.

"It's great to see you too, my Empress."

"Mr. Wang told me you haven't been feeling well, are you fine now?"

"Yes, I'm better, thank you."

She lured him into some pleasant small talk when suddenly her husband appeared next to her. The Emperor was a tall man with sharp looks that Yifan had inherited from him but while Yifan also had some soft features of his mother, his father's facial expression was the hardest Yixing had ever seen. Or maybe he was just under the impression since he had every reason to believe that he had something against him.

"Darling, may I bother you to check in with one of the staff to resolve their questions? They’ve been annoying me with the menu and I cannot handle any more of their incompetence," he said.

"Of course, honey," the Empress retorted and turned to Yixing, "I'll see you later, Mr. Zhang."
Yixing only nodded and felt a rush of adrenaline shooting through his body as the Emperor eyed him from head to toe.

"I see you've made it, Mr. Zhang." He stated the obvious and Yixing swore he could hear the icy tone in the Emperor's voice.

"Yes, I was busy at the office but could manage to get off my boss' hook."

"I see how it is."

They eyed each other carefully and Yixing decided to mention the list, trying not to get intimidated by the other one.

"You know, my Highness, it's rather weird," he started and forced Yifan's father to look back at him, "When Yifan made the guest list, I was sitting next to him and I remember clearly him putting me on that list. Now I had to find out I wasn't listed. Isn't that unusual?"

"Oh it isn't, in fact. Sometimes people make mistakes and forget to type down a name, especially when my son lists all his friends. I guess the staff who forwarded the list simply forgot you, also, it's easy to forget to type down your name on a guest list since you never seem to leave my son's side."

His answer sounded rehearsed but Yixing didn't feel like it was his duty to bust the Emperor's scheme. So instead, he ignored the passive aggressive remark at the end and took another sip of the champagne.

"Yes I guess that's it. An honest mistake."

"We all make them sometimes," the older man said and curled his lips into a cold smile, "Take my son, for example, and his awful bad taste when choosing his... partners. Mistakes happen, but I'm willing to look past his horrible choice of people because I know they are never here to stay."

Yixing's pulse started racing and he hoped he was able to control his face properly.

"Isn't that generous of you," Yixing squeezed out behind grinding teeth.
The Emperor gave him a smile, one of the kinds that read like a big 'fuck you' to the one it was addressed to.

"I'll see you, Mr. Zhang. If you'll excuse me now?"

"Of course! Go ahead, my Emperor!"

There wasn't even a proper nod to bid Yixing goodbye and the monarch turned around to get back to his seat. Yixing closed his eyes and took a deep breath to calm himself down again. While he was thinking that, yes, the Emperor was working against him, someone else appeared at his side.

"Look at my favorite journalist making it to save the day!"

The man opened his eyes and saw Sehun standing in front of him. He had recognized his accent right on the spot.

"Oh my god! Sehun! I didn't know you were here too!"

"Of course I am," Yifan's cousin said, "I arrived yesterday, but I am not a fan of Halloween, so I didn't attend the party. How are you doing? Was the Emperor a meanie again? He uses to intimidate people..."

Yixing didn't know what to say because he felt like telling Sehun the Emperor had just indicated to keep him as far away from the royal family as possible wasn't really a thing he should do. Sehun gave him an encouraging smile and then said:

"You know, no matter what he's saying, he's often just a dog that barks a lot, but never bites. When I was a kid I used to cry when we had to visit him, because I was so scared of him. But he has good sides."

The journalist could hardly believe those words but just as he wanted to respond to them Yifan and Yili entered the room again and walked over to them.
"I see Sehun's kept you company, how nice!" Yifan said and Sehun just nodded as if not hearing his cousin's sarcastic tone.

"I thought I'd save him from my dearest uncle," Sehun explained.

The mention of his father made Yifan's head cock to Yixing.

"My father talked to you?"

"It's nothing, really." Yixing muttered, knowing very well this wasn't going to work.

"What did he say?"

Yili squeezed her brother's shoulder.

"Yifan, please don't start a scene right now."

"Shut up Yili," Yifan hissed and his sister rolled her eyes in annoyance, before he turned back to Yixing, "What did he say to you?"

"It was just stupid talk, nothing important. He was just... I provoked it. I mentioned the guest list and he said that it probably was a mistake and a staff member forgot to put my name on it."

"He is such a fucking liar!"

"Yifan, watch your language, we're not at home!" Yili cried out and looked around to check if anyone had heard.

The people around them were too engaged in their conversations and food to notice though and she exhaled a breath.
"No, seriously, this is the only reason why our family ascended to the throne - because our great grandfather lied and cheated and manipulated people. He's inherited that from him!" Yifan fumed and prepared to stride right over to his father.

Yixing grabbed his elbow to hold him back from doing so.

"Please, listen to Yili. Don't start a scene. It's not worth it."

Eventually, Yifan gave in, but he swore to confront his father about his behavior. Yixing wished he hadn't because it felt like that was exactly the thing that would make everything worse. Yixing tried to act like he didn’t really mind about the whole thing, especially since he’s been trying to convince himself that disappearing after Yifan’s birthday would be best for the both of them, but his eyes kept darting back to the Emperor who mostly sat at his place and eyed the party. And more than often, he was staring straight back at him and Yixing pretended to focus his gaze on something behind him. It was ridiculous, but the cold shiver running down his spine when those sharp eyes pierced right through him was too real to be trying to convince himself he was making all of it up.

Yifan’s father, the Emperor of China and probably one of the most powerful men in the world, hated him.
Chapter Summary

It's like a day before THE DOOM'S DAY.

Nah joke it's just the day before Yifan's birthday.
OR IS IT?!?

Chapter Notes

- Sorry it took so long I am so bad at this chaptered-fic stuff lmao anyways HERE WE GO

November 5, 2015

Thursday was the day of the benefit ball and somehow, even though Yixing should have been used to all of the fuss by now, he was nervous as hell, mostly because Yifan’s father would attend too. After getting some blogentries done (entries that had been sitting on his desk for ages and he felt like his boss would’ve killed him if he hadn’t finally posted them) he quickly changed into a suit and caught a taxi to Yifan’s place. He tried to be as casual as possible at his arrival, to look like he was doing the usual business, even though there was this nagging voice in the back of his brain telling him that everything would be over tomorrow. When he stepped into the room, Yifan was sitting on the couch and looked up.

“Come in, come in!”

He was already wearing the dress shirt he had decided to wear for the ball and tapped the space next to him. Yixing sat down and saw a rather big wooden box on the table. The emblem of the Wu family was engraved on the lid.

“What’s that? Did your birthday come early?” Yixing asked after Yifan had given him a casual kiss on the cheek which made Yixing’s heart want to burst.

“No, that’s not for me,” Yifan answered and pushed the box into the direction of the younger one, “It’s for you.”

“Huh?”

“Just open it.”

The prince tapped the lid with his fingers and watched Yixing in infantile anticipation, but Yixing wasn’t sure what to do.

“What is that?”
“Well if you opened it, you wouldn’t need to ask.”

“I’m scared. Last time I opened something you gave to me it was that god damn Rolex…”

“That you still wear, so don’t play hard to get.”

Yifan was right and that was what Yixing annoyed to no end. He grunted, then he leaned over the box and opened it. He furrowed his eyebrows when he saw a suit appearing underneath the paper it was additionally wrapped in.

“You’re giving me a suit?”

“Hey, I made this one especially for you!”

“I hardly believe that it was you who sewed it…”

“Prick. The family’s tailor made it. But I told him to do it in the first place.”

When Yixing’s fingers touched the cloth, he felt the difference between the suit he had bought in a store next to the Beijing Zoo where all the cheap tailors where to find and this one – he lingered on the heavy material of the dress shirt, then he asked:

“And how in the world do you know my size?”

“Oh, that was mostly an educated guess… and you shouldn’t underestimate our tailor’s skills! He can work real magic!”

Yifan grinned like a child that had brought home a good grade in a subject they were actually bad in and Yixing couldn’t help but to smile back, even though he felt a lump in his throat because of the gift. He’d never be able to return a favor like this.

“I want you to wear it tomorrow.”

“God, this sounds like you’re preparing for our wedding,” the journalist slipped.

Yifan let out a roaring laughter and threw himself back into the couch before he patted Yixing’s back.

“Baby! I haven’t even given you a ring yet!”

“Shut up!”

Yifan’s hand lingered on Yixing’s back after his giggles had finally died down. Yixing leaned into the touch and took a deep breath.

“You need to try it on.”

“Ugh. So much stress…” Yixing responded but removed he jacket of his suit. Then he got up and unbuttoned his shirt – he was very well aware of Yifan’s gazes, but he tried to ignore them and to undress in the most unsexual way possible.

Unfortunately, Yifan was a raging hormone machine and when Yixing stood in front of him with a naked upper body, he said:

“Now that I think about it… naked is fine by me too… on my bed…”
“I’ll pass on that, thanks.”

“Fine, be like that!” Yifan responded and pouted, but when Yixing had changed into the new suit, he went back to business, “See? He worked magic!”

The prince got up and jockeyed Yixing in front of his mirror to let him see for himself. Yixing had no real idea about couture and that kind of stuff, but he was surprised himself how well the jacket and the suit pants fit him. Suddenly, it felt like his own suit was extremely ill fitted and way too big for him.

“I think we need to do something about the sleeves,” Yifan mumbled while he inspected the other one from head to toe.

Then he called the tailor who appeared after ten minutes with all of his utensils. He was an old man and he took small and careful steps while he ordered Yixing to extend his arms so he could take proper measurements. Yifan leaned against the backrest of the couch and watched while he had a chat with the tailor.

“You’ve outdone yourself with that one, Mr. Li.”

“Yeah, yeah, yeah,” he grunted while his measuring band twirled around Yixing who was completely lost, “Next time though, maybe let me take his actual measurements, this suit is a trainwreck!”

“I… I think it’s good?” Yixing asked but the tailor just snorted and looked at him as if he had lost his mind.

“Mr. Li is very self critical of his work, don't mind him,” Yifan explained.

“Well, my prince, I have to, otherwise your honored father would be firing me on the spot.”

“That's one way to put it..." Yifan retorted and the mentioning of the Emperor sent shivers down Yixing's spine.

Mr. Li left with the suit and the mission to get it ready by tomorrow at noon and Yixing put his other suit back on. It really felt like it didn't even fit him anymore.

“So, how are you feeling on your last day as a 24 year old?” Yixing asked and Yifan just shrugged his shoulders.

“I don't know. Good, I guess?”

“You're really not good at words and such.”

“You're making up for what I lack.”

Yixing wanted to remind him that he wouldn't be there 24/7 to do the talking for him, but on the other hand, he didn't really see the use in it so he remained silent.

"Why are you giving me a suit?" He asked instead.

"I felt like it."

"That is your answer?"

Yifan grinned and extended his hand to indicate Yixing to come closer. The younger one slowly
approached him and took the presented hand and the moment Yixing's hand laid in Yifan's, the older one grabbed it firmly and pulled at it to get rid of the last remaining distance between them. Yixing stumbled into him but before he could protest, Yifan said:

"Yes. That's my answer. I felt like giving you something."

"You know I hate expensive gifts. How could I ever return the favor, huh? A Rolex and a tailored suit, what do you want in return for that?"

"I know a few things, but for now I'd be satisfied with a kiss."

"You IDIOT!"

Yixing silenced Yifan's laughter with his lips, because, he had to be honest, that comment had been very smooth. Even though it really edged on Yifan's usual lameness.

During the Benefit Ball, Yixing had barely any time to talk to Yifan. Yifan was busy engaging with more or less important people who left donations for a school project in the rural parts of the country, and Yixing tried to get as much material as possible. He watched from afar as Yifan and Yili had to open the ball with a dance and he was actually impressed by Yifan's ballroom dancing skills - he could only give him a thumbs up though because Yifan got dragged away by his mother to say hello to Fan Bingbing who had arrived with her boyfriend. Plus, he was pretty positive Yifan's father was watching all of the steps he took in the room, so Yixing reckoned it was better to solely play the role of the journalist. Occasionally, he talked to Sehun and also Tao who had finally arrived in Beijing, but they were rather busy too, so he spent most of the evening by himself. It was around nine when he stood a little offside and went through the pictures he had taken as Yili stood next to him.

"So busy doing his work, I don't even dare to ask you for a dance!"

"Oh, believe me, I don't want to step onto your expensive Gucci shoes, I'm better kept at the sidelines of a dancefloor."

"I'm wearing Louboutin's," Yili corrected with a wink, "And I'm sure you'd master a simple waltz."

They quarreled a little but in the end, Yili gave up and contented herself with a casual talk and not a dance. Yixing's gaze shifted to Yifan who greeted a woman he had never seen before - she was gorgeous, with wavy brown hair and a petite figure. Yifan seemed to be delighted to see her and he pulled her into a big hug. Then they proceeded to kiss each other on the cheeks, before the woman squeezed his hands. Seeing them sharing such rather intimate gestures with each other felt like somebody had rammed a rusty knife into Yixing's stomach. Yili followed Yixing's gaze, since he clearly wasn't listening to her words anymore.

"Oh! That is Jessica!" Yili said, "She's a fashion designer from Korea. Yifan endorsed her brand once and ever since they're close."

"I see that..." Yixing muttered and tried hard to keep a pokerface.

"Mother would love it if she'd become her daughter-in-law."

"Oh."

That was everything Yixing could bring himself to say as he watched Jessica and Yifan having a little smalltalk and both smiled widely and giggled like little children. Not only was Yifan smiling a
lot, his whole body language had changed. He'd been very stiff the whole evening, bowing and shaking hands, but with Jessica, his shoulders had relaxed and he reciprocated her movements when she leaned into him or patted his arms.

"He likes her."

"Of course he likes her, they're like... besties," Yili said and shifted her gaze back to Yixing.

Yixing really wanted to, but he couldn't take his eyes off the two. And it felt weird, but for a split second, he thought that maybe this was what it was supposed to be like. Gorgeous, smart Jessica at the side of Prince Wu Yifan.

"Oh, Yixing," the princess clicked her tongue and nudged his shoulder, "Don't worry. First of all, she's got a fiancé."

"And second of all?" Yixing asked when Yili didn't continue and finally looked back at her.

She gave him a wide smile which then turned into a knowing grin.

"Second of all: I see the way he looks at you. He's never looked at someone like that before."

"... bullshit!" Yixing retorted and Yili's laughter filled his ears that surely were turning red at her words.

"Do you want to know something, Yixing?" She asked and wiggled her eyebrows, hoping to get his attention with it.

"What?" He sighed and tried to sound unimpressed but nevertheless he listened up.

"It’s good you happened. You’ve put him in the best place he’s been for years."

"I… no. I didn’t do anything!" Yixing stammered, "I just… no, really… I was… no! I did not put him in any place. I just…"

"Oh, just shut up, would you? Cut the crap and accept that fact, the sooner the better."

Yixing whimpered and looked back at Yifan and Jessica who had proceeded to take some selfies. They seemed to get involved in a little play fight as Yifan took her phone out of her hands and she protested, her mouth forming the words “Give that back, I look horrible in that one!”

"But it doesn’t hold any substance.” He suddenly heard himself say.

Yili squealed in surprise and furrowed her eyebrows. She expected an explanation, so Yixing said:

“We… I mean, it’s not like there’s a realistic chance…”

“Ooooooooooh,” the princess made and nodded, “Really, do you think? Ever since I can remember my brother was good at getting and keeping what he wanted. I don’t think it’ll be any different this time.”

“This is different.”

Yili wanted to say something but then Yifan dragged Jessica over to them and they looked like a fashion magazine couple and it made Yixing’s heart sink. He caught himself thinking that he’d never be able to hold Yifan’s arm like that. He’d never be able to get even that close as Jessica was right now. And just like that, he got angry at her, even though he didn’t even know her.
“Yili!!” Jessica cried out and the two girls hugged each other tightly, then Jessica kissed Yili’s cheek, “I’ve missed you so much!”

“I’ve missed you too, love!” Yili answered and the two women shared a girlish squeal.

“Your dress is so nice, please turn around for me!” The designer said and Yili did as she was told.

While the skirt of her dress twirled around her legs, Jessica said:

“That is such fine work! I wonder what designer you’re wearing?”

“Oh god you are lame!” Yifan said and rolled his eyes.

Yixing didn’t quite understand but then Yili said:

“Ooooh wait… let me think… it’s from that one Korean girl… gosh… what was her name again?? Yifan, tell me…!”

“I am not playing along with this idiocy.” Yifan retorted.

“Oh, oh! Wait! It’s my dress!”

The two girls started to laugh their asses off and Yifan just turned to Yixing and shook his head, as if giving up believing those two were actually sane human beings. When Yili and Jessica had calmed down, the designer turned to Yixing. It took her two seconds, and then her eyes grew wide and she gave him a radiant smile.

“You must be Zhang Yixing, right?!?”

“Ummm… yes. Hi.”

She took his hand and squeezed it with just the right amount of pressure before she said:

“I heard so much about you already!”

“Oh, you did?” Yixing asked and looked at Yifan.

“Yifan never shut ups about you, to be honest, it’s almost annoying.” Jessica said.

“Oh, tell me about it,” Yili threw in, “Ever since Yixing appeared on our doorstep he’s all over him.”

“I know, right?” Jessica said and the two girls started to mimick Yifan:

“Yili, do you think Yixing is a handsome man? Because I think he is!”

“He’s so nice all the time! I don’t even know how he does it!”

“He’s effortlessly beautiful!”

“He’s so smart and talented!”

“Is it weird if I get jealous at other people when they talk to him?”

“Okay, that is ENOUGH!” Yifan roared, his head red like Reindeer Rudolph’s nose and silenced them with an angry expression on his face.

“Oh oh, Yili, let’s get out of here!” Jessica squealed and grabbed her hand and before she dragged
her away from Yifan’s wrath, she turned to Yixing once again, “It was nice meeting you, Zhang Yixing. Maybe tomorrow we’ll have more time to chat.”

“Get lost now, both of you!”

They retreated to the dancefloor for some Discofox and they started to argue who was going to take the male’s lead. Yifan’s head was still red and he didn’t even dare to look straight at Yixing.

“Effortlessly beautiful, huh?”

“Please, don’t… just… I’m a sappy idiot, okay?”

Yixing would’ve loved to tease him a little more, but he just grinned and said:

“Okay then, my sappy idiot.”

“Huh? What was that?”

“What?”

Yifan leaned in a little more and Yixing tried to do some steps back but his back touched the wall behind him. He hoped Yifan wouldn’t do anything stupid and held up his camera for some protection.

“My sappy idiot? Are you stating that I’m yours?”

“You’re making things up!” Yixing cried out, “Are you drunk already? At nine in the evening? God, where I’m from we call that ‘alcoholism’!”

Yifan snorted and leaned against the wall next to Yixing to let his gaze wander over the party.

“I’m pretty sure I heard just fine.”

“Yeah, whatever.”

“Let me see some pictures you took,” Yifan asked and changed the topic, but Yixing somehow sensed it was just a lame excuse to get closer to him since the older one immediately leaned into him to get a better glimpse of the photos on Yixing’s camera.

Yixing obeyed though, because he kind of liked being that close to Yifan, and he figured that if he kept showing him pictures nobody would interpret too much into their body language.

“These are nice,” Yifan said after he had taken a closer look at a picture of him and his sister doing the opening dance, “You’re good at writing… you’re good at photography… is there anything you’re not good at?”

“Math,” Yixing retorted and laughed when he saw Yifan’s dumbfounded expression, “I suck at math so badly. It was my worst subject, I think I only didn’t fail my final exams by one point or something.”

“Math isn’t that important… I’ve never really got taught in Math.”

“Well. You are not like everybody…”

Yifan ignored that comment and said instead:
“I was taught in things like how to sit properly at a table… I had a subject called ‘Court Rules’, can you believe that?”

“Sounds like fun,” Yixing commented, “I think I was better off with Math.”

“I also had a lot of ballroom dance lessons.”

“Well, I saw that.”

Yixing tapped the picture Yifan had just looked at. The prince grinned and took Yixing’s camera out of his hands.

“What are you doing?!”

“Hold on a moment!”

Yifan called Lixun over and shoved Yixing’s Canon into his hands with the command to keep it close, then he grabbed Yixing’s elbow and lead him to the dancefloor.

“What are you doing?!” Yixing cried out and tried to get rid of Yifan’s hand.

“I’ll show you some moves, it’ll be fun!”

“Yifan, are you out of your god damn mind?!”

Hot panic shot through Yixing’s body as Yifan pushed him further onto the dancefloor where some people were still going strong with their Discofox movements (Jessica and Yili had finally come to an agreement and took turns).

“Come on, it’s super easy!”

“We can’t just dance together, what if….!” Yixing protested and looked around like a scared bunny.

“Of course we can, I’m just teaching you some movements, relax!”

He didn’t listen to Yixing’s dissent and grabbed his hip to pull him a little closer.

“You need to be the woman for the time being, but you’ll just need to mirror the movements when you’re the man.”

“I… no! Yifan!”

“It’s always step-step-tap. You’re starting with the right foot and go backwards.”

“YIFAN!”

“Ready?”

“NO!”

Yifan started and Yixing only went along because he didn’t want to get stepped onto his toes. The prince also used the hand lingering on Yixing’s hips to guide him through the steps and Yixing wanted to die as he eyed the other dancers that turned to face them and Yifan just kept on ordering what to do.

“No, no, no! Left foot, Yixing!”
“I’m trying, okay?!”

“Don’t look at your feet!”

“How am I not supposed to look at my feet?!”

“You need to look at me!”

“Screw you, Wu Yifan!!”

When they were halfway through the song, Yifan said:

“I think you’re ready for some figures, I’m going to turn you around!”

“DON’T!!”

Yixing got twirled around and stumbled over his own feet and Yifan took him back into the basic position, laughing whole heartedly.

“You are an ass!”

“You looked so adorable! Let’s try again! Don’t get caught up in your own feet!”

“It’s not that easy, okay?!?”

Yixing was eager to show he wasn’t a complete disaster, but he also just wanted this to end, because the two clearly drew too much attention and he already felt the disapproving look on the Emperor’s face who was still present. It felt like an eternity, but eventually the song ended and the dancers started to clap. Yixing took a deep breath when Yifan finally let go of him.

“That wasn’t bad for your first dance!”

“Oh shut up!”

“Yixing!” Yili cried out, “You turned me down but now you’re dancing with my brother? I’m heartbroken! You need to make it up to me now!”

She grabbed Yixing’s hand and positioned them for another round. Yifan wanted to protest but she cocked her head into the direction where their parents were sitting, telling him to just go along with it. Yixing and Yifan looked over where the Emperor eyed them carefully and the Empress just kept giggling like a little girl.

“Screw him,” Yixing heard Yifan mumble, but then the prince turned to Jessica, “Come on girl, let’s get this party started!”

“Finally, I thought you’d never ask!”

Yixing felt shy when Yili placed his hand on her hip but when he looked up to her, she grinned and said:

“Step, step, tap, right?”

“Yeah. Something like that.”

Even though Yili kept praising him for being a natural, Yixing wasn’t too sure if he really was made for ballroom dancing or any of the like. Nevertheless, he kept dancing with her until the music
stopped, leaving the dancers in slight confusion. Yixing let go of Yili and looked to Yifan who didn’t seem to understand what was going on either. Then the Empress stood up and held a microphone in front of her face.

“Yifan, my dear son, are you aware that it’s almost midnight?”

A sound of enlightenment went through the whole room and people started to clap while Yifan’s lips curled into a smile and he just shook his head. It was almost midnight, and Yixing was shocked how fast the time had gone by. Not only the last two to three hours, but also the last two months. While a staff member of the hotel the ball was being held at appeared and brought in a huge birthday cake for the prince, Yixing felt a lump in his throat that made it hard to breathe for a second.

It was almost over. What had started back in September when he had stepped into the Palace for the first time, was going to be over in 24 hours. It was weird to think back and remember how this time couldn’t have come any sooner for him. Now, Yixing just wanted time to stop because it went by too fast and he felt hopelessly helpless when he started to clap along with the other people and someone cried out there was only one more minute left until November 6th.

The whole room started to count down from ten and the closer the people got to zero, the more excited they got. Yifan on the contrary stood in front of his cake and his eyes locked with Yixing’s who was standing a few foot apart, close enough to not miss out on anything, but also far enough to not make people suspicious. When the clock struck midnight, the whole room started to cheer and sing, but Yixing just managed to crack a smile and mouth a simple ‘Happy Birthday’. Yifan returned the smirk before he leaned over and blew the candles out. It was rather weird – blowing out candles wasn’t a really hard thing, yet everybody went crazy when a birthday child managed to blow out all of them at once. Yixing still applauded with the other people and watched how Yili gave her brother a big kiss on the cheek and held him tight. Then it was Tao who hugged him, and afterwards his mother had finally fought herself through the pile of people to wish her son the best for his next year of life. Yixing didn’t really know when it was appropriate for him to say his congratulations but the decision got made for him when Yifan walked just straight over, ignoring the hands offered to him and the people who wanted to be next to wish him a happy birthday.

“I cannot believe I made it alive to 25,” he joked and Yixing just rolled his eyes.

“Dramaqueen,” he scoffed and Yifan told him to be nice, since it was his birthday.

Yixing sighed and awkwardly opened his arms, because all he wanted to do in this moment was to kiss Yifan, but he didn’t get to do that. It was weird and it asked a lot of self-restraint from the journalist.

“Happy Birthday then. I hope you’ll have a blessed year.”

“Thank you,” Yifan said and then pulled him into a hug.

For a split second, Yixing forgot the people around them and indulged in the feeling of Yifan’s arms being wrapped around him. He felt the prince’s breath at his ear and heard him say:

“I’m glad you’re here with me.”

Yixing responded in hugging the older one a little tighter and a little longer than necessary. And after they finally let go of each other, there was a lot of cake to be eaten. After the cake, there were some more drinks to be drunk and about two hours later there was the car and the driver who rolled up the partition once Yifan had told him to drive Yixing home first and then Yifan claimed his first stupid ‘Birthday Kiss’. And Yixing just obeyed, because no matter who he was trying to fool - probably himself - he had grown addicted to Yifan and his kisses and touches.
“Ew, you taste like whiskey and cream…” Yixing said after a while and Yifan snorted into the curve of the younger’s neck.

“So do you, don’t you even dare to complain.”

“Touché I guess.”

They stayed silent for a moment and then Yifan dived down again to place kisses on Yixing’s jawline and his hand between his lover’s legs. Yixing immediately jumped at the touch.

“No, stop that!”

Yifan looked up and furrowed his eyebrows, obviously confused about the rejection.

“Baby, you’re breaking my heart!” He whined and his hand wandered up the other’s inner thigh.

Yixing shuddered at the touch, even though he was still fully clothed and he grabbed Yifan’s wrist to stop him from going further.

“I can’t do this now.”

“Well, there are still ten minutes left until we reach your apartment so we don’t have to start right now.”

“Ugh, Yifan!” Yixing hissed and tried to look the other way when the older one made his infamous puppy face, the one he had grown weak to, “I can’t have you around tonight! I really need to get some shit done before I go to bed. And with you, I’m never getting anything done!”

Yifan seemed to be thinking about his words and then he said:

“You definitely are getting me done though.”

“YIFAN!”

“Oh, okay, okay! I get it! You need to get work done! At like… half past two in the morning, but that is okay.”

“Oh believe me you don’t have fixed working hours as a journalist.”

Yifan smiled and kissed Yixing’s cheek.

“You’re the expert on that.”

The car turned into the street where Yixing’s compound was located in and got to a halt before the main gate.

“I’ll walk you to the door.”

“Oh please I am not a kid…”

“Just let me be nice man!”

Yixing sighed, sensing that this was just another cheap trick of the other one to get his way but he didn’t protest when Yifan got out of the car with him and followed him into the apartment complex. The way that was usually filled with people who were strolling around the compound in the evening to get some grocery shopping or some running done where empty and Yifan seized the opportunity
to search for Yixing’s hand in the dark and intertwine their fingers.

“It’s weird how I always need to touch you.” The prince suddenly said and it made Yixing’s stomach do little summersaults.

“UGH you’re sappy!” He said though to not give Yifan the satisfaction of his stupid statements having that effect on the smaller one.

“I know.”

They came to a halt in front of the entrance door and Yixing knew that if Yifan could set one foot into the building, he’d have won so he swiped his entrance card over the lock and only opened the door a few inches before he said:

“So, get back now, don’t let your poor driver wait too long. He deserves to finally get off work.”

“Can I get one kiss goodnight though, please?”

Yifan did not wait for an answer but locked their lips and Yixing grew weak once more. When they parted, he needed to remind himself that he really had to get some work done. He couldn’t make one more stupid decision like letting Yifan in now.

“I’ll get over as soon as I can.” He heard himself say and Yifan’s answer was a kiss on his forehead before he finally let go of him.

“I'll count the hours until you’re back with me.” He said with a wink and a smile and made his way back to the main gate.

Yixing watched him go until he turned around a corner where he couldn’t see him anymore. Then he dashed into the building and through the door of his apartment. Luhan’s sleep was way too deep to let him wake up from the noise of the door falling shut and Yixing’s grunt that he tried to muffle in his hand. He was sure now – he was having deep and profound feelings for Yifan. But while there was this little seed of hope growing in his chest to assure him that the whole thing wasn’t one sided, the last rational thinking part of his mind tried to keep him alert of the sheer impossibility the whole thing was about to face.
Yixing kept his promise and arrived at the palace somewhere around ten in the morning. He wasn’t too sure if that was quite a desperate move, but the way Yifan had opened him the door and pulled him into his arms told him the older one hadn’t minded him coming back this early at all.

“I have to ask you to do something for me,” Yifan said as soon as Yixing set one foot into the room.

“Huh? What’s that?”

“Come with me and Yili to the hospital.”

“You really want to do this today?”

The look on Yifan’s face told Yixing that no, he didn’t want to do this today, maybe he didn’t even want to do this at all. But then Yifan explained that Yili had pushed Yifan to go, because Mr. Deng would always spend time with Yifan on his birthday – and if Mr. Deng couldn’t be at the party, Yifan had to pay him a visit, simple as that. Yixing wasn’t too sure if the prince’s reluctance to go stemmed from the dislike for his senior that he had displayed more than once in the last weeks, or because he didn’t feel ready for visiting a man that was most likely about to die. He didn’t want to know the answer though so Yixing squeezed Yifan’s shoulder and tried a smile. Fifteen minutes later, they were on the way already, Yili carrying a big bouquet of sunflowers (wherever she got them from in November) in her arms while Yifan stayed silent the whole ride. His sister tried to lighten the mood a little with some smalltalk, but Yifan didn’t pounce on her attempt of engaging him in a conversation.

“I hate hospitals…” Yifan said when they stepped out of the car and walked to the entrance of the facility.

“Nobody likes them,” Yili said while she strode over to the elevator.

Some heads turned when they walked through the entrance hall but they had caused bigger buzzes elsewhere so the siblings didn’t really realize the looks some people threw their way. Yixing, on the other hand, was overly aware of them and tried to hide his face a little more in the collar of his jacket.
“Well, I do,” Yixing responded while they waited for the elevator to get down to the first floor.

The prince and the princess looked at him as if he had lost his mind.

“They reek of disease, death, and sterilizer, and people only go there when they are in a bad place, what’s there to like about it?” Yifan shot Yixing’s way.

“Well, that’s one way to put it,” Yixing said with a provocative smile, “But you guys have to look at the bright side: People also come here to visit mothers and their healthy newborns. When people get out of hospitals, they are usually better and cured from whatever they had. I’m pretty sure that, even though people also die here, the majority is getting saved or even put into this world. So hospitals are actually good places.”

Yili and Yifan were so perplexed, they forgot the elevator whose doors opened with a bling. It was Yili who spoke up:

“God damnit, Zhang Yixing, always finding beauty in the ugliest things. How do you do that?”

“Oh come on, that is just common knowledge.”

Yixing pushed both of them into the elevator and deemed the conversation as over. Yili looked like she wanted to retort, but as soon as they arrived on the floor where Mr. Deng’s room was located at, her attention snapped back to the reason they came here. Now even Yili got awfully silent while they walked down the long corridor. They came to a halt in front of room 713 and the woman turned to her brother.

“Be nice, Yifan,” Yili said and then it was like someone had pushed a button – she put on a bright smile, one of those that she plastered over her face on every official occasion, and knocked at the door.

She didn’t wait for a sign to come in and pushed down the door handle before she flung it open and strode into the room.

“Mr. Deng! Hello!” She cried out in glee and fell into the arms of the man who seemed to be genuinely surprised to see her.

“Yili, my girl!”

Yixing was the next to come in and when he turned around to check on Yifan, he was still standing in the doorway, staring at Mr. Deng with a stone hard expression on his face. Yixing had to admit that Mr. Deng looked bad – he had always been a tall and handsome man for his age. He used to be a well-built and strong guy with a sharp jawline and muscular arms. When he had entered the office of the newspaper, people had turned their heads for him and watched how he strode through the room with a warm smile on his face.

Now, the skin around his arms was loose and wrinkled. Yixing was sure that he could grab Mr. Deng’s wrist and his thumb and middlefinger could touch each other. His full and wavy black hair was gone because of the chemo. He was smiling, but he looked drained, like someone had sucked his vigor out of his body. It wasn’t the man that had left the paper two months ago. Laying on the hospital bed was barely the shadow of the man he used to be.

“You came too, Yifan!” Mr. Deng said and his smile widened, “I’m sorry I cannot make it to your party tonight. Happy Birthday, my boy.”

These words seemed to finally make Yifan realize what was going on. He jumped at the last words
and then, Yifan just turned around and left the room. His sister got furious:

“YIFAN! How incredibly rude, come back here at once!!”

She was about to get up and follow him, but Yixing held her back.

“I’ll check on him. You stay with Mr. Deng.”

He found Yifan at the end of the hallway, his face turned to watch out of the window and down into the garden of the hospital, which would have been nice, if it hadn’t been withered away already. Yixing caught up to the prince and asked:

“Are you okay, Yifan?”

The other one didn’t answer but his shoulders started trembling which Yixing took for a rather bad sign. He let out a sigh, then, after taking a quick look over his shoulder down the empty hallway to make sure no one was around, he placed his arms around Yifan and hugged him. The prince tried hard to calm himself down with a few breaths and then he turned around. His eyes were wet with tears that he tried to suppress and Yixing pushed him onto one of the chairs the hospital had placed in the hallway. Yixing didn’t mean for it to sound rude, but his question came off like that when he said:

“I thought you didn’t like Mr. Deng that much?”

Yifan shot a glance at him, then he wiped away the tears from the corners of his eyes and said:

“Of course he annoyed me! With all his advice and stuff! But isn’t family supposed to annoy you?”

Yixing refrained from a comment and sat down beside Yifan to caress his back. When Yifan seemed to have gotten a hold of his emotions again, he continued to explain:

“He’s always been there and… he was more of a father figure to me than my actual father. I mean… you met him. He’s not the nicest person and very cold, even to his own children. Like I said, I have never gotten a hug from him ever in my life. And then there was Mr. Deng who made up for that.”

Yifan looked like a lost little kid in his chair fiddling with the hem of his shirt. He didn’t wait for Yixing to respond to his words.

“I mean, yes. Every time he came over I got rather annoyed, but that was mostly in the last years… he knew about my addiction and he tried to help me, way before my parents even realized what was happening, but I never took his advice. But as a child… the hours I spent with him are some of my favorite childhood memories…”

“I see,” was everything Yixing said and pulled Yifan a little closer to comfort him.

They sat there for a while, their temples touching and then Yifan said:

“He really is a good man. He does not deserve this.”

“That is life, Yifan,” Yixing said and pulled away to look at the other one, “It’s never fair. And people who deserve no harm in the world have to endure the most hardship, usually. It’s the curse of the good.”

“It’s fucked up,” Yifan announced like a stubborn four-year-old.

“You know, you could make it a little less fucked up and get back there to spend some time with
him. I think he needs that right now.”

Yifan whimpered. Yixing knew he didn’t want to go back there and see Mr. Deng like this, but Yifan was an adult and couldn’t be shielded from all evil in this world anymore, and the prince probably knew that. So he took another deep breath, nodded to give himself a little more courage and got up to walk back to the room. Yixing followed him with a few reassuring pats on his back. When Yifan opened the door, he tried to hide behind the same kind of smile Yili had put on before, but it wasn’t as convincing as his sister’s.

“Sorry about that, I’m an ass,” he said as he came closer and while Yili nodded to indicate she thought the exact same thing, Mr. Deng just snorted.

“It’s okay, I know I must be looking…,” he started and stretched out his hands that looked like those of an 80-year-old rather than a man in his fifties, “… horrible. There’s no other way to put it. I, sometimes, even scare myself when I’m forced to look into a mirror.”

He heaved a sigh and let his arms flop down onto the bed. Then he leaned back and stared at the ceiling.

“This disease is truly letting my body rot away.”

“You don’t look that awful…” Yili started but the senior journalist shushed her immediately.

“Let’s not speak about this for the moment, please. These so called doctors talk about it all the time, I’m getting tired of listening to them.”

He turned from Yili to Yifan and then he finally seemed to realize Yixing was here too.

“Zhang Yixing! My successor!”

“Oh, no, no, no! I’m not your successor!” Yixing shot back right away.

“Oh, but you are!” The man grabbed a copy of the newspaper he used to write for and held Yixing’s article up in the air, “Isn’t that your work?”

“It is, but…”

“So that makes you my successor!”

“As soon as you’re back in the office, I will gladly let you write these again,” Yixing answered and Mr. Deng tried a smile, but the short silence that followed told Yixing that Mr. Deng didn’t quite believe he’d be returning.

“They’re good though,” Mr. Deng said, “Reminds me of my early days when I was still a volunteer at the Shanghai Daily…”

Yixing was flustered, because Mr. Deng had always been one of the people in the office Yixing looked up to. He mumbled a thank you and tried to hide his blush, while Yili grabbed Mr. Deng’s hand.

“Are they treating you well, Mr. Deng?”

“Well, it’s a hospital…” the patient said, “It’s a rather dreary life I’m leading right now. Almost makes me happy that my insurance stopped covering for my treatment. I might finally get home and die in peace.”
The last sentence caused the siblings to riot. Mr. Deng silenced them with another rather harsh hand movement.

"I mean it, kids. I’ve been fighting this for way too long now. I got the diagnose over a year ago, and…"

"Wait, you’ve known this for over a year already?" Yifan cut him off and his mouth dropped, "Why didn’t you tell us?! We could’ve done something earlier!"

The man crooked a smile then answered:

"For the very same reason, my dear Yifan, why you didn’t tell me about your addiction. Because I didn’t believe it at first… because I denied it… because I didn’t want this to make anyone else’s problem. You and me, we’re not so different after all.”

Yifan wanted to protest and probably argue that a drug addiction was nothing like a cancer diagnosis, but he remained silent.

"I’ve given this a long thought, because, let’s face it, you do a lot of thinking here,” Mr. Deng went on, “And… what is life, exactly? What is it that we cling so much to it?"

He looked at Yili, then at Yifan and lastly at Yixing. None of the three had an answer for him, so he sighed.

“Life… of course, I like to live. But sooner or later, we all die. I’ve done so much and seen so many places, it almost feels like the life span of a centenarian. Maybe I have lived too fast and this is the result. It is how it is, and it’s nothing anyone has power over, not even the doctors,” he said and Yili pouted, still holding on to his hand, “Besides, this body of mine… it’s not really useful anymore, the cancer has eaten away most of it.”

Even in a situation like this, Yixing couldn’t hold back his admiration for Mr. Deng’s way with words. The way he wrote was exactly like the way he spoke and somehow, Yixing always felt goosebumps covering his skin when he read his words or heard his voice.

“Bodies can recover,” Yifan retorted.

“Yifan, I’m forced to urinate into a plastic bag attached to my hips. It’s really nasty.”

Yixing couldn’t help but to snort at Mr. Deng’s comment and the siblings looked at him as if he had lost his mind. Mr. Deng though said:

“See? At least one person in this room still has a sense of humor.”

The younger journalist tried to hide his grin behind his hand and said:

“Sorry, I’m just as big an ass as Yifan…”

“Never change, Zhang Yixing,” his senior said with a smirk and a wink, then he turned to the royal siblings again, “Kids, if there’s anything that I learned from this is to appreciate the time we’ve been given. I’ve seen you two grow from little kids into young adults and I couldn’t be more thankful for that.”

He squeezed Yili’s hand a little tighter and grabbed Yifan’s who only slowly wrapped his fingers around Mr. Deng’s. Silence broke out between the four in which Yifan seemed to be in very deep thought, before his head shot up and he said:
“Yili, a word.”

His sister nodded and followed him out of the room after he had told Yixing to stay with the patient and just like that, Yixing was left alone with Mr. Deng.

“Wow, awkward…” he mumbled.

“Oh, believe me, there are much more awkward things than this,” Mr. Deng said and shifted his weight a little, folded his hands together and looked at Yixing.

“Yeah, I think the first time I met Yifan can be categorized under ‘super awkward’…”

Mr. Deng giggled.

“He can be intimidating, right?”

“He was just so…”

“… rude?”

“… such a brat!” Yixing closed.

“And he’ll forever be… his parents have spoiled him too much. All hope is lost with that one.”

He leaned back and exhaled a long breath. Then he grunted in pain, maybe because the morphine slowly lost its effects and he got reminded of what was actually happening with him and his body.

“Yixing, mind helping me out for a second?”

He lifted his head and pointed to his pillow – Yixing got up and fluffed it up. When Mr. Deng laid his head down again, he sighed in contentment.

“Much better. Yifan has proven to have developed a better taste in people than he usually had.”

“Oh dear lord… so you have read that too…”

“Of course I did! Reading is the only way to somehow participate in the outside world from this hospital bed! Especially the articles in the tabloid press light up my days!”

“And you truly believe what they write in those magazines?” Yixing asked and thought of a good argument to convince Mr. Deng it was all just a PR gag that was cursing around and would hopefully die down sooner or later.

“What are you afraid of exactly?” Was Mr. Deng’s counter question and it threw Yixing off track.

“I… I don’t understand what you mean.”

Mr. Deng chuckled and slowly sat up – Yixing hurried to help him, but he waved at him to keep him from pulling him up. When he was seated properly he folded his hands again and looked at the other one with a sad smile.

“Yixing,” he started, “Why is it that I had to state Ms. Wang as my emergency contact? Why the person that has been my boss for the last ten years, and not my wife or my kids?”

“Umm…”
“It’s because I don’t have neither.”

The answer was simple and it hung in the air like the smell of cold cigarette smoke. Mr. Deng looked outside the window next to his bed and seemed to be thinking, then he turned back to Yixing.

“And why is it that I don’t have any family?”

“I don’t know,” Yixing admitted and felt his hands get sweaty.

“Oh, I think you do.”

It was the look on Mr. Deng’s face that made it slowly dawn on him and Yixing let out a surprised sound.

“Wait, you’re..?”

The other one nodded. Then he shrugged his shoulders.

“I guess women were never my thing.”

“But… then… don’t you have… a partner or something?”

Yixing was highly confused and he knew he sounded like a complete moron but his brain had just shut down, so that was all he was capable of.

“That’s the other thing… Back when I was your age, everybody believed that the whole concept of homosexuality was a choice and abnormal. So instead of admitting to what I was, I kept it hidden. It’s not what I’d recommend to you, Yixing.”

Yixing felt sorry for Mr. Deng, because, unlike him, he had grown up in a rather welcoming environment regarding his sexual orientation. He surely had had encountered people who loathed him for not liking women. He had experienced discrimination in more or less obvious ways because of it. But at least he was outed, and didn’t have to hide, which was a privilege he only understood now.

“There’s something you need to promise me, Yixing,” Mr. Deng pulled Yixing out of his thoughts and the younger one snapped back into reality, “Promise me to be brave – and you will probably need enough bravery for the two of you.”

Mr. Deng nodded into the direction of the door where Yifan had gone through a few minutes before. Yixing stared at it for a moment, then he turned around again.

“Umm… okay…?”

“I mean that. That boy’s soul is too sensitive. He cannot handle obstacles very well. I mean, yes, he’s a brat, and like I said, all hope is lost with him, but as soon as you peel off that layer you have nothing but an emotional bundle of nerves. So please, take good care of that boy.”

“What if he doesn’t want me to?”

Yixing had supported his head with his arms that he had placed on the mattress of the bed. Mr. Deng tilted his head in question, so Yixing had to elaborate further:

“What if, one day he wakes up and decides: ‘That’s it. No more dick.’ – what am I supposed to do then?”
Mr. Deng burst out into roaring laughter for the first time since Yixing had stepped into the room and for a moment, his old senior came back through the laughs. He laughed so hard, tears started to stream down his face and it was so contagious, even Yixing had to laugh along.

“What makes you so sure he’s going to say that?”

“Well… he’s had girlfriends?”

“Who most of the time didn’t last longer than a month,” Mr. Deng cut him off.

“That’s not a real proof for anything. He’s a notorious player.”

“Oh, believe me, I’ve seen this boy grow up,” the older one said, still wiping away the tears off his face, “He’s so not into girls. As a kid, he and Yili used to play with Yili’s Barbie dolls a lot, very much to the dislike of their father. Yifan once suggested to have two Kens taking care of Shelly instead of Barbie and Ken. Because, and I quote him on that, ‘why shouldn’t two Kens have a kid too?’ That was the moment when I just knew.”

“Huh!” Yixing made and leaned back in his chair, folding his arms, “That is indeed very interesting!”

“I don’t think he’s really aware of the concept of any kind of sexuality though… otherwise he would’ve reflected once on why he never really liked being with his girlfriends. He would always complain about how they always needed kisses and cuddles and sex.”

“I feel like my whole world view is getting destroyed with what you’re telling me!” Yixing cried out and felt like someone had run him over with a car – was Mr. Deng actually talking about the same Wu Yifan Yixing had gotten to know?

“He treated that mostly like a ‘necessary evil’ that came along with relationships. I mean, not that he has any idea of how a proper relationship works…”

Mr. Deng winked and grinned amused when Yixing just kept shaking his head in disbelief. They could really hardly be talking about the same person. It's weird how I always need to touch you. Yifan’s words were still ringing in his ears and now, seeing it from this point of view, Yifan’s statement made more sense than a few hours ago when he had said it.

“Hmmm, looks like you’ve experienced other things…” Mr. Deng said and Yixing blushed, suddenly reminded of that make out session in the kitchen or the night on Halloween. The patient grinned and leaned back to lay down again, “I wonder why that is… hm…”

Yixing knew the comment was supposed to be sarcastic but before he could answer, Yifan and Yili came back. Mr. Deng threw Yixing a last knowing look, before his attention went back to the siblings.

“So? The royal council has come to a decision? What conclusion has Your Highness come to?” The man asked.

The siblings rolled their eyes in unison, and then Yili said:

“We’ve talked to the doctors. We’re taking you home.”

“Huh…” The patient made, “Home?”
“To us,” Yifan added, “Where we can take care of you.”

“Yifan, my boy, no offense, but I hardly believe you will be there to change the plastic bags of urine at the end of every day that dangle from my leg.”

Again, it was Yixing who started to laugh and even Yili chuckled for a second. Yifan started to stammer incoherent words and kept looking for a way to defend himself, but soon had to give up, because everything he’d be saying would make him sound stupid.

“Anyways!” He roared and silenced the other three, “We only need you to sign some papers and you’ll be released after this weekend.”

“And we invite you to stay with us until… umm… well…” Yili added and pressed her lips together.

“Aren’t they cute, Yixing?” Mr. Deng said and smiled, “They almost make me want to try a full recovery.”

“We could also cover this!”

Yifan’s comment made the man chuckle and then he nodded to show he agreed on the sibling’s proposal. Afterwards, a nurse knocked at the door and brought in some lunch that consisted of tasteless Zhou, a few apple slices and a cup of yoghurt. She left with the notice that he still had an appointment with his doctor to run a few more tests in about an hour.

“Yes, we definitely have to get you out of here,” Yifan wrinkled his nose when he saw the lunch.

“The yoghurt isn’t even that bad,” Mr. Deng said and slurped on the watery rice, before he made a grimace, “The Zhou though… it really takes the crown for ‘worst thing I’ve ever eaten’…”

He put the bowl back on the tray and sighed. Then he looked back to the other three.

“What? Are you really going to stay and watch me slurp this stuff? You’ve got a party to prepare!”

“But… we’ve been here for barely an hour!” Yili said.

“Kids, believe me, this hour was good enough. You heard the nurse, I’ve got this appointment soon anyways. Until then, let the old man rest for a bit.”

The siblings only reluctantly gave in to his request, maybe because they saw that Mr. Deng had indeed grown tired over the last thirty minutes. Yili walked over and gave him a kiss on the cheek.

“We’ll pick you up on Monday.”

“I’ll be here, it’s not like I’m going anywhere else.”

Yili huffed and rolled her eyes, not believing Mr. Deng was still capable to crack his jokes, but Yixing found it rather amusing and also fascinating how he had still managed to keep his humor even though he knew he’d soon be dying. Yili was right, Yixing really saw beauty in the most horrendous things. Yifan joined Yili and took Mr. Deng’s hand, patting the back of it with the other.

“I hope your party will be fun, boy.”

“I’ll try to. You’ll be missed.”

“Oh come on! You’ll have fun, I know you! Just go easy on the vodka, it does weird things to you.”
Mr. Deng’s words seemed to trigger some bad memories in Yifan and he whimpered, while Yili laughed.

“I promise.”

The senior journalist smiled and patted Yifan’s arm before the prince let go of him and turned with his sister for the door. Mr. Deng turned then to Yixing who got up and nodded awkwardly in his direction.

“Don’t forget my words, Zhang Yixing.”

“I won’t, that is my promise.”

“Huh? What kind of words?” Yifan butted in and turned around to face them again.

“Oh, Yifan, I guess that is a thing between me and your man,” Mr. Deng said with a grin on his face and placed his hands under his head, “You don’t need to know everything.”

Yixing hurried for the door and before Yifan could demand an explanation, he pushed him out of the room. With a last look over his shoulder, he saw Mr. Deng looking out of the window, still smiling. There was somehow a look of relief plastered on his face, like someone who leaned back and took a look at their finished project. Oddly content – tired and drained, but happy.

When they got back, Yifan and Yixing spent most of the day lounging around on the couch where Yifan had tangled up their feet and Yixing was caught between the older one and the backrest of the sofa, but for the first time in weeks, he didn’t really mind and even came to enjoy how the other one threw his arms around him and kept him close. Yifan was unusually pensive and ignored calls and messages from family and friends wishing him a happy birthday. Sometimes he’d voice one or two thoughts he had on Mr. Deng and had tried to make Yixing tell him what the two men had been talking about while he was gone with his sister, but Yixing decided to let him hanging in the air a little more. It felt wrong to blurt out what seemed to be the senior’s biggest secret, even though he probably would not mind if Yifan knew.

“I’ll tell you another time,” Yixing said and tried to shift the focus on something else, “I’m proud of you, actually.”

“Huh?”

Yifan furrowed his eyebrows in question when he heard these words.

“Yeah. You kind of adulted today. That’s good.”

The prince snorted and rolled his eyes while Yixing giggled. The younger one expected a comeback, but instead Yifan turned his head to him and said without even blinking:

“Kiss me.”

“Huh?!”

Now it was Yixing’s turn to let out weird noises of surprise. Yifan’s mind seemed to spit out another weird reference and Yixing needed a second to collect himself.
“Oh, how does that song go?”

“What song? Are you high, Yifan?”

He clicked his tongue to negate the answer to the second question while he hummed the melody of a song that Yixing might have heard once in his life, but he didn’t quite catch it.

“God, it’s that Marilyn Monroe song…”

“…. The hell…?”

“Oh! Yes!” Yifan’s face lit up in enlightenment, then he sung, “I wanna be kissed by you, nobody else but you…”

“Oh my god, if that isn’t the cheesiest shit I’ve ever heard!” Yixing cried out and felt his ears burn up – why was Yifan so lame?!

“Come on, it’s a good song! A true classic!”

“I’m not even going to ask why you know Marilyn Monroe songs…” Yixing said and shook his head.

“Well, then don’t,” Yifan changed their positions and pressed Yixing down into the couch with his weight, “It’s not that important anyways.”

With that, he kissed Yixing and drowned the younger’s last cocky comments about Yifan’s weird taste in music. Yixing sighed in pleasure when their lips touched, outing himself to be just as needy for affection as Yifan himself – but before Yifan’s hand could even slip under the other one’s shirt, the alarm on his cellphone got off and reminded them to get ready for the party.

“UGH!” Yifan cried out and rolled off Yixing to silence the phone – Yixing seized the opportunity and got up himself.

“Well, let’s go get ready, tiger!” He cried out.

In the following hour Mr. Li came along with the fixed suit for Yixing and another one for Yifan that he had been getting ready especially for the party in the evening. They changed their attire quickly and Yixing was ready way before Yifan who could not seem to decide on a proper hairstyle. A look on his watch told the younger one they should get going in about ten minutes, but Yifan was still standing in front of his bathroom mirror and grunted whenever something he tried did not work out.

“Just go like you go usually?” Yixing suggested but Yifan protested, arguing that it was his birthday and he had to look perfect.

Yixing rolled his eyes and then the door opened and Yili stepped in.

“Wooooooh, it’s so coooooold!” She exclaimed and shivered while closing the door.

When Yixing saw her, he choked on his own saliva. In her green Zuhair Murad gown (Yixing only knew the designer because she had been overly excited to wear it and had started bragging about it weeks ago) Yili looked like one of those fairytale godmothers that lost kids in stories met in the woods. She looked absolutely gorgeous and Yixing slipped a “Wow, are you trying to turn me straight?” which Yili answered with a snort.

“Nah, I’d rather you stay with my brother.”
She nudged him and fixed the short sleeves of her dress that barely hid her shoulders. No wonder she had been freezing on her way over to her brother’s bedchambers.

“Okay, okay, I think I’m ready!”

Yifan came out with the usual hairstyle but Yixing’s comment got drowned when Yifan saw his sister and gasped. He clasped his chest and said:

“Yili, why are you so gorgeous?”

“Probably because of this dress,” she answered and shrugged her shoulders while her brother gave her a hug and a kiss, “Ugh, you’re embarrassing me in front of your boyfriend!”

Yixing wanted to protest but once again, his words weren’t heard because Yifan told them to get moving.

“Isn’t that great how my two favorite people are with me today.”

“Are you drunk already, Yifan?” Yili asked while they got into the car and the driver brought them to the venue.

“Nope, he’s been sober the whole day actually,” Yixing said nonchalantly while checking his phone and ignoring his Twitter and Weibo mentions that told him to make sure to get Yifan a “big birthday surprise”.

“Oh! Now that’s what I call an achievement!” Yili answered and Yifan rolled his eyes but did not try to retort with some sort of comeback – his party was about to start, after all. And even though the day had had a rather bitter start, he wanted to make the most of it.
Chapter Summary

PARTYTIME KIDDOS

Chapter Notes

- First and foremost I want to apologize. It took ages. I know. I KNOW. I'M SO SORRY. Thing is, I wanted to post on Yifan's birthday okay but then I -was- at Yifan's birthday in Shanghai and it kind of slipped my mind (lol guys I missed him by ten seconds at the fucking airport like if I had walked a liiiiiittle slower and I wouldn't have looked into the other direction at the baggage claim I WOULD'VE SEEN HIM my life is so tragic). After coming back to Beijing I had a busy busy life and a shitty internet connection, an even worse VPN which meant I couldn't use Google Docs and so I decided to take a break until I had to leave China in January because I didn't get my visa extended (FUUUUCK YOU man I just want to live there why are y'all making this so hard on me). Then I wrote 夏天之天 and this shit sucked the life out of me I swear. I wasn't able to write anything after posting that and then I started to work and I am still trying to find something better and I am really not good at all this adulting shit and I still am trying to find my way into some sort of life?? Idk how to say that. So yeah. It took ages. And I had a very big writers block ISTG I opened the document for this so many times and immediately went "NAH THIS IS BULLSHIT" and closed it and I was frustrated.

- So. Now that I whined about this let me apologize for a crappy chapter that hasn't been beta'd yet because Google Docs is still a bitch (turns out, it wasn't the VPN's fault LOOOOOOOOL) so please ignore any mistakes because English is hard man. Also why did I come up with that fucking Lady Gaga idea in Chapter 2 I hate myself now I had to write her into this somehow and I think it sucks a lot. But hey when I heard her newest song I was like "THIS IS AHMOM!!" and I actually listened to it while I wrote most of the chapter. LOL. OKay.

- We still got some chapters to go but I don't know when I will post them. I will try to finish everything asap, I have a few things written out now, I just need to string them together.

- Don't worry. Smut is on the way. Next chapter. *eyebrow wiggle*

- Thanks for all the comments that I have received in the meantime, you are all so lovely and understanding, I'm in tears.

November 6th, 2015 (pt. 2)
There was a big buzz when the prince arrived with a lot of people waiting for him to greet him in front of the venue. Yixing knew it was better to stay away from the craze of photographers so he disappeared silently and walked into the building to find his place. Some of the guests who had already escaped the flashlights of the press that weren’t allowed to get in were already there too. Suddenly, Yixing remembered that Lady Gaga was supposed to be there and that Tao was supposed to be picking her up from the airport today. He didn’t find her though, although he believed that Lady Gaga wasn’t a person who had to be found when she entered a room, she was present, so he concentrated on finding his seat instead. The handpicked journalists that had gotten the permission to attend the party had a table for themselves so that was naturally his first stop. He saw one or two familiar faces that he had met during the last years, but he did not spot his name card.

“You sure you’re actually invited?” A stranger joked and Yixing’s mind popped to the Emperor and his blood froze for a second.

“Yixing!”

He turned around and saw Luhan running towards him. He looked amazingly handsome in his suit, like a poised businessman strolling down the business district in Chaoyang to get to his next meeting, but the fit of panic on his face destroyed that illusion immediately.

“Hey there,” Yixing greeted.

“I cannot find my place and so many weird rich people are talking to me what do I have to do?!” Luhan hyperventilated and the second Yixing was within his reach, he clung onto him.

“First of all, take a deep breath. Second of all, I cannot find my place either, so let’s just stand around in the middle of the room like idiots together.”

Luhan let out a weak laugh but he relaxed hearing this. Yixing complimented him on his looks and Luhan whined about how nervous he was and then the royal siblings found them.

“You should find your seats, sweethearts, we’re about to start!” Yili cried out.

“Well, we’re both too stupid to find our seats so there’s that,” Yixing answered and Luhan looked at Yili from head to toe only to exclaim a:

“Wow, Yili!”

She grinned at Yixing’s roommate and then nudged him.

“Right back at you, handsome! Let me show you to your seat, you’re going to share the table with Tao and Sehun…”

“Have fun!” Yifan chirped while his sister grabbed Luhan’s elbow who sent out panic fueled looks into Yixing’s direction while being dragged away.

Yixing enjoyed Luhan’s confusion and nervousness a little too much so when he waved him goodbye, he kind of felt sorry for him.

“So, where do I sit? Did your father kick me out again? I remember clearly that I was supposed to sit with the press.”

“Oh, no,” Yifan said and grinned knowingly. “You’re seated with me. Changed it last minute.”

The proud smile curving around Yifan’s lips made it hard to be mad at him so Yixing just sighed and
rolled his eyes before he followed him to the table.

“I think your father will not like this,” Yixing said when he saw that he was seated right to Yifan’s left.

“Oh, he won’t be present,” Yifan said nonchalantly and Yixing let out a surprised squeal. With shrugging shoulders, Yifan added, “Not his kind of jam. He’s never attended any birthday party that was celebrated like this.”

“But… you’re his son…”

Yifan scoffed and sat down. While he did so, he pulled Yixing down with him.

“I don’t think we have to elaborate this any further, don’t we?”

The younger one sighed and sat down himself while Yifan’s mother and a few other close relatives joined them at the table. Yixing felt hopelessly out of place and it felt kind of inappropriate to be sitting at a table that was clearly reserved for the closest family. The Empress lifted her eyebrow in question when she saw him. The journalist immediately tried to clear the situation:

“I have nothing to do with this awful seating order, my Empress! Yifan did some last minute changes!”

“It’s my party, I decide who sits where!” Yifan butted in.

The Empress chuckled as she sat down next to her son.

“Of course, darling. It’s your day.”

Her son nodded like he wanted to thank her but then a small petite figure jumped on his lap. It was Sophia, wearing a pink dress that made her look like she was a bridesmaid throwing petals down the aisle before the bride.

“Fanfan!!”

“Sophiaaaaa!”

Seeing her lit up Yifan’s heart and he gave her such a big and wet smooch on the cheek, she tried to escape his lips.

“Ewwwww, Fanfan!!”

“I cannot help it, little one, you’re way too cute!”

“Yixing, make him stop!” She cried out and climbed over onto Yixing’s lap, “Tell your girlfriend to stop!”

A giggle went around the table while Yixing tried to not let the others see how jumpy he was at the word.

“I don’t think he listens a lot to me, Sophia!”

“Sophia, my darling, I think it’s time you get back to your seat. The party is about to start soon!” The Empress threw in and the girl pouted, but gave in.

“Are you going to dance with me later, Yixing?” She asked and bat her eyelashes, immediately
unarming the journalist.

"Of course, my princess!"

She took her leave with a satisfied grin on her face and Yifan turned to Yixing:

"The moment you said you'd be dancing with her was the moment you sold your soul to her."

"You make it sound like she's a crossroad's demon rather than your seven year old cousin."

Yifan chuckled. After a quick check on the other people who slowly found their seats, he leaned closer and lowered his voice so only Yixing was able to hear him:

"It only means I won't get the chance to dance with you because she won't let you go the whole evening."

Yixing didn't have a chance to reply to that, because suddenly the lights got dimmed and the attention of the room shifted from shallow conversations at the tables to the stage at the head of the room. The curtain wasn't lifted yet but the spotlight focused on the middle of the stage indicated that something was about to happen soon.

"Great, we're starting just in time..." the Empress muttered and Yili whose seat next to Yixing had been empty until now sat down and exhaled a long breath.

"What's wrong?" Yixing asked her and she took a big gulp from her water.

"Oh, nothing really, I showed Luhan his seat and introduced him to Sehun," she chattered away and Yixing followed her gaze to his roommate who was still talking to Yifan's cousin, looking way more relaxed than he had a few minutes before, "And I mean, you know Sehun, once he starts talking you can't really get away from him."

Yixing giggled and nodded.

"Yeah, I know."

Yili looked up to the stage and when the room had turned completely silent, it was Tao who stepped into the spotlight from behind the curtain and the guests started to applaud. He fiddled with the microphone and tapped it to check whether or not it was on.

"Huh! Great!" He then said into the mic and Yifan snorted at the rather clumsy beginning.

Tao put one hand leisurely into the pocket of his tailored suit and he said with a smile:

"Man! Had I known I'd be doing the hosting of this party I would have prepared myself better!"

The Empress, who had been very tense the whole evening because she wanted the party to be perfect in every aspect, sighed heavily and shook her head but Yifan didn't seem to mind. If anything, he was enjoying Tao’s entry up there because he was smiling and made a hand gesture to indicate it was fine.

"Anyways! I want to give all of you a very warm welcome to this party! I'm glad all of you actually came, I think I even saw some of Yifan's Exes here?"

Tao turned into the direction of a table that got put into the spotlight and two of Yifan's last girlfriends jumped when the attention snapped to them. One of them tried to hide behind her clutch while the other one just started to laugh and flipped her perfect wavy model hair over her delicate
"You two are the only ones though, do the other ones hate him that much?"

The one who was laughing yelled something into Tao's direction and the table burst into fake laughter.

"Did anyone actually understand what that girl said?" Tao asked but when no one seemed to be able to answer, he continued with the program, "Okay then. Thanks for coming to this very special birthday for this very special person."

He turned back to face Yifan's table.

"Yifan, your birthdays are always legendary. I mean, not that I really do remember a lot from those parties because most of the time we were hopelessly drunk..." he stopped to let the audience laugh along with Yifan, "... but maybe that is just evidence to proof that it never gets boring with you."

"Yeah, no, boring isn't something Yifan has in his vocabulary," Yili whispered and Yifan side eyed her with a wink.

"I've known Yifan ever since I can remember. Trips to the capital to visit this part of my family were always super exciting because I knew I'd be seeing my favorite cousin again - and all of you know that we've got a bunch of cousins."

An 'Awwww' went through the rows of people and Yifan's smile grew even a little wider. Yixing wasn't sure if that was because Tao was so cheesy and purred the words into the microphone that the Prince wanted to hear, or if Yifan was just really happy to be here in this very moment. Yixing looked around and found that everyone was focused on Tao and the things he was saying rather than on Yifan, so he dared to put his hand on Yifan's thigh. The birthday boy didn't turn to look at him but put his own hand over Yixing's without a word.

"And I know, Yifan has a long ass list of scandals and parties and girlfriends, and maybe some of you in this room won't believe me when I say this, but: Yifan does have other sides to him. He can be super caring, for example. And that might sound weird but I've had the deepest and best conversations with that guy. He cares a lot about his people, and he's got a real big heart."

"Wow, now he's exaggerating!" Yixing scoffed and Yifan nudged him.

Yili giggled and even the Empress grinned at the comment before she ran her fingers through Yifan's hair and said:

"He's right though. I raised a good kid, after all."

Yifan and Yixing let go of each other the moment she had turned to her son and Yifan said:

"You've worked hard on that, mother."

Tao seemed to think about what to say next and after a short break he continued while he shifted his weight a little and started to wander up and down along the curtain:

"So yeah, today we come together to celebrate your birthday, Yifan. 25 years. The age you're considered to be mature enough to succeed your father. And I know - you're not really into politics and all that stuff. I'm pretty sure the thought alone is intimidating. Heck, I mean, I will inherit my father's company someday and that freaks me out already. You're getting a whole damn country to rule!"
The guests, including Yifan, started to laugh at the comment but while the other people were still laughing, Yifan turned silent.

"The problem is that he's right and it's just really freaking me out..." He admitted and Yixing patted his shoulder.

"Don't worry about that. At least not for now."

Yifan nodded, but still heaved a sigh.

"After a quarter of a century, you're officially getting the title as the heir to your father. I know what a lot of Chinese people say. That you're still not mature enough. That you're still a kid. You won't be able to lead this country like your grandfather or your father did. Apart from the fact that you can't even rule the country like your grandfather anymore because we've undergone a lot of political changes, but I'm sure that if you take the 25 years mark as a turning point, you can prove all those critics wrong. You've got that in you. I've seen that side of yours. Yili's seen that side of yours. Your mother believes in you. And hey, Zhang Yixing has probably written the most positive articles about you in years, you've got the base now!"

"I'm getting paid to write that shit!" Yixing threw in and made his table laugh.

Since their table was the closest to the stage, Tao had heard him too and he said:
"Come on Yixing, just play along. I'll give you your last cheque afterwards, okay?"

Yixing laughed and put his thumb up to show he was alright with that before Tao got back to the topic:

"Long story short, Yifan: I wish you a happy birthday. I wish you all the best in whatever you'll do. And I'm sure that no matter what you'll do, you'll do great. I love you very much, and I just want you to know that whenever you run into trouble, I'll have your back. Because you had my back ever since we were kids. And it's time to return the favor."

The room broke out in applause and Yifan got up from his chair and with only a few steps he strode over to the stage, got up and pulled Tao into a tight hug. The microphone rustled when Tao returned it but the sound drowned in the continuing applause of the guests. After they had parted, Tao kept one arm around Yifan's torso while Yifan held onto his shoulder and when the applause had died down, Tao put the mic one more time to his lips:

"So. I've been thinking about what to get you, but it's actually hard to get you something because you've got everything already... But I thought, well, I'm already making one of your wishes come true..." Yifan started to grin like a little boy and even wiggled his body in excitement while Tao continued, "I think you know what I'm talking about, I'm not sure if the other people here know though..."

Yifan squealed and asked:

"Is Lady Gaga behind that curtain?"

"You can go and peek behind it if you want."

He didn't need to think twice and jumped over to pull the curtain a little to the side. Nobody saw what was behind it but Yifan's loud fanboy scream was heard without even a microphone.

"She's not wearing a meat dress though, just for everyone's information!" Tao threw in while Yifan walked back to his cousin both hands clasped over his mouth, eyes thrown wide open in shock.
Tao put one hand back around Yifan and then said:

"Enough of that boring talk now! Let's get back to our seats and leave the stage to the one and only Lady Gaga to sing you some songs!"

As they got back to their seats, the crowd started cheering, partly because they were glad Tao had finally stopped talking, partly because they got excited just hearing the words 'Lady Gaga'. When Yifan sat back down, he cried out against the noise:

"Guys, she is here and she is looking absolutely gorgeous!! Her dress!!"

"I know," Yili said while she casually clapped along with the others and winked at her brother.

"Of course, my sister would see her before I do..." Yifan grunted but then the curtain pulled aside and the woman herself was seated at a piano, wearing a simple white silk dress, her hair falling over her shoulders in long waves. Yixing had almost feared that she'd pull another meat dress outfit or stuck some plush frogs onto her body, but she looked classy and absolutely gorgeous.

Obviously, she started off with her very own interpretation of Happy Birthday, before she greeted everyone, stating that she was overly honored to have been invited and that she decided to do an acoustic set of her songs for that special occasion. Every time she hit the keys of the piano and the familiar tunes of 'Pokerface', 'Bad Romance' and 'Hair' came up, Yifan cried out:

"This is my favorite song of hers!"

"You said that about the song she's sung before already..." Yili said but Yixing found it extremely cute, because for as long Lady Gaga was singing, Yifan completely forgot about trying to be cool and reserved.

He forgot about being the Prince of China. He forgot about Mr. Deng's health, forgot about his relapse a few weeks ago, about all the other things that bothered him. He was just enjoying the moment and he smiled like a little boy getting a cute puppy for Christmas. Yixing had to force himself to look back to the stage and not stare at Yifan's smiling face because in that moment, he thought that Yifan had never been more beautiful.

"So, I don't want to interrupt the festivities any further. I'll leave this last song as a little birthday present for the prince," the artist finally said after the applause for her third song had died down.

"I love my life!" Yifan giggled and made Yixing and Yili roll their eyes with his fanboying.

Yes. It was cute. But only to a certain degree until it would become slightly annoying.

"This is a song that hasn't come out yet... I'm not even sure if it will be on the next album, but I liked it so much, I wanted to let you hear it. It's still very raw and will probably undergo a lot of changes until I'll release it. But I hope you'll like it anyway. And maybe, someday in the future, you'll hear that song on the radio and then I hope, my dear Prince, that you will remember this day."

A short but enthusiastic applause emerged, then she put her hands on the keyboard of the piano and started the song. It sounded like a rather upbeat song and Yixing was sure that it would make a good pop-dance song once it would be finished.

_I'll undress you, 'cause you're tired_
Cover you as you desire
When you fall asleep inside my arms
May not have the fancy things
"Ooooh, I like it!" Yifan exclaimed and Yixing was very close to sew his mouth shut so he wouldn't ruin the song with his constant commenting.

If I can't find the cure, I'll
I'll fix you with my love
No matter what you know, I'll
I'll fix you with my love

After the first chorus, Yixing felt Yifan's hand on his knee under the table, gently squeezing. It was like Yifan was trying to send him a message and while everyone else was enchanted by Lady Gaga's piano skills and her raw singing voice that wasn't distorted by a heavy amount of autotune, Yixing reached out for Yifan's hand and his fingers slipped in between the others'.

And if you say you're okay
I'm gonna heal you anyway
Promise I'll always be there
Promise I'll be the cure

It was kind of crazy how a woman was able to enchant a whole room with just the tunes of a piano and her voice, and yet she did just that. Her words danced through the room and reached not only the audience's ears but also their hearts as she went on to the next verse and the bridge and her fingers flew over the black and white keys of her instrument.

So baby tell me yes
And I will give you everything
I will be right by your side

It was basically just another sappy love song, Yixing knew that, and he usually wasn't a big fan of pop music, but something about the whole situation made him hold tighter onto Yifan's hand and his heart started to flutter when Yifan's thumb drew a random pattern on his skin.

If I can't find the cure, I'll
I'll fix you with my love
No matter what you know, I'll
I'll fix you with my love
And if you say you're okay
I'm gonna heal you anyway
Promise I'll always be there
Promise I'll be the cure

She ended with another promise to heal her loved one and when the last note had faded, the room exploded in applause and standing ovations for her. The singer got up herself and bowed several times, before Tao came back on stage and gave her a kiss on the cheek and thanked her for coming. Then both of them disappeared backstage and the lights in the room went on before the band booked for the rest of the evening started playing some light lounge music.

"Could'n't we have booked her for the rest of the evening too?" Yifan whined, but more in a joking way and he told Yili and Yixing he'd be looking for her to thank her for the show.

Yixing spent the next ten minutes talking about how gorgeous Lady Gaga had been with Yili before Yifan reappeared with said artist. Before the singer had a chance, the Empress greeted her and
thanked her for her performance, and even Lady Gaga who usually made other people swoon and lose their composure was starstruck by her. After Yifan's mother finally let her off the hook to check in with the staff about some other points on this evenings' agenda, Yifan said:

"I need you to meet Yixing."

"That handsome guy over there?"

"Yupp!"

She offered to shake hands with Yixing with a bright smile on her face.

"In that case it's even nicer to meet you!" Yixing's English was mediocre at best, so he just took her hand and smiled, stammering something about "Thank you, the pleasure is all mine", even though he knew his pronunciation was a little off. Yifan immediately reacted and started to introduce him as a journalist and a very good friend of his and when he told her about all the stories that Yixing was known for here in China, she let out a surprised sound.

"Wow, you know, the world needs more of that journalistic work, not those so called writers who type down made up stories for some tabloid newspapers, they're truly annoying and put that hard work other people are doing to shame."

"Tell me about it. According to one of our biggest gossip magazine in the country I am dating Yixing."

"Oh!" She exclaimed and looked back and forth between them, "Well, you two would make a cute couple, to be fair."

"Oh, I absolutely agree! I'd marry that guy on the spot if he only let me!" Yifan said and made Yixing roll his eyes, hoping nobody capable of speaking English was listening right now.

The singer laughed and said:

"Well, he can't marry you if you never propose to him in the first place."

"Don't say this, please!" Yixing cried out, because he feared that Yifan might be getting ideas from that statement.

Not that that was ever bound to happen, but the mere thought of Yifan getting on his knee and holding a ring up into the air made Yixing want to turn into a gooey mess. That was the last thing he wanted to think about right now.

"Okay, then I'll give him another idea - because I'm kind of thirsty."

"Say no more!" Yifan said. "Say what you want and I'll get it for you!"

"Whiskey would be great."

"Got it!"

So without any warning Yifan disappeared to the bar and Yixing was left alone with that woman who had just sung on stage. Awkward was an understatement to how he was feeling and he quickly downed his own drink only to avoid starting a conversation.

"How long have you known Yifan?"
"Uuuuuh... not very long... two months..." Yixing mumbled and apologized for his barely existent English.

"That's okay! Your English is way better than my Chinese," she said with a wink, "Don't worry."

He had the feeling that she really didn't mind but he was more than relieved when Yifan reappeared with her drink.

"Baby! Your glass is empty too!" He then observed.

"Don't call me that!"

Yifan clicked his tongue and threw an arm around him, then he turned to Lady Gaga:

"See? I'm always trying to be such a caring boyfriend and he just rejects me over and over again."

The singer took a sip of the Whiskey, then she concluded:

"He's playing hard to get!"

"I am still here and I can hear you guys...."

The other two giggled and then Sehun and Luhan crashed the scene. Sehun immediately busted into the conversation and tried to get Lady Gaga's attention, while Luhan kept staring at her like he's never seen another human being before. Then he met Yixing's gaze and mouthed:

"This is crazy! My life is crazy!!"

Yixing lifted his glass and replied:

"Welcome to my world. Need some alcohol to deal with it?"

His roommate nodded frantically so he took Luhan with him to the bar where they got some hard alcoholic drinks and clinked glasses. While they took a first gulp and Luhan made a grimace while the alcohol burned its way down his throat, Yixing let his eyes wander over the merry gathering.

"I didn't really think she'd be coming," Yixing then said while he watched Yifan and Lady Gaga (it still looked weird seeing them and repeating her name all over again in his head) drinking and talking.

"You knew that?!"

"I did, I sat next to Tao when he gave her a call."

"Dude! Fuck! Keep dating that prince and make sure to keep inviting me for parties like these. What's next? Michael Jackson rising from the grave and performing for his coronation?"

"Okay, tone it down a notch, we are not dating."

Luhan put his glass down onto the counter and eyed Yixing suspiciously.

"Are you sure though? Because I ..." Yixing knew exactly that he was about to blabber about that night on Halloween, but he knew how to make him shut up with a threatening death glare, so he just cleared his throat and added, "... think you'd be cute together;"

"Could we maybe just stop talking about this? It's annoying!"
Luhan patted his shoulder and took a long look at him before he said:

"Okay, I'll stop. But allow me to say that I have the feeling that this won't be over after tonight. That prince won't let you go anywhere."

Yixing didn't respond to that. Instead, he inhaled the smell of his drink, feeling the alcohol getting into his head and took another sip. The really bad thing was that Luhan was probably right. And Yixing wasn't sure if he even wanted Yifan to let him go.

Dinner was served half an hour later and afterwards, Yifan told his guests to start the party and the band began their first set of music in which Yixing was forced to dance with Sophia, just like he had promised. In between short dance breaks, Tao, Sehun, Luhan, and Yifan downed shots with him and he only got off his dancing duty around ten when Sophia had to leave with her parents to go to bed. Lady Gaga had excused herself rather early, blaming the jetlag and the alcohol to make her more tired than she'd normally be at this time of the day.

“Okay, that’s it,” Yixing finally said after the clock struck eleven and he had downed more than enough drinks with the others, “Time for the press to leave.”

“Um, no?” Yifan said and looked at Yixing as if he had lost his mind, “You’re not going to leave just like that!”

“It’s not that I don’t want to stay, but I have a deadline in the morning and I need to get an article done on this whole shit.”

“Then don’t meet the deadline!”

“Yifan, shouldn’t you act like a grown up now?” Yixing asked and got a little annoyed that Yifan still did not understand that there were people who had responsibilities and jobs and a normal life.

The prince did not answer, but instead he juggled his glass of whiskey in one go like it was water. Then he put the emptied glass on the table, turned back to Yixing and said:

“Okay, give me five minutes, then I’ll let you off the hook.”

“Ugh,” was everything Yixing could say and then Yifan grabbed him by the arm and dragged him along with him.

Yixing was a little drunk himself so he just followed him through the whole room, then through a side door and long corridors that probably were off limits for guests but Yifan walked down them like he owned the place.

“What are you doing?”

“Getting lost, obviously!” Yifan retorted and opened a door which turned out to be a storage room. He kept staring into the room for five more seconds, then he decided, “Nope, not what I was looking for.”

“Jesus Christ, Yifan, where do you want to go?!”

Yixing still followed Yifan on the heels and then the older one saw the exit sign above their heads.

“It’s getting warmer!” He proclaimed and followed the sign to a big metal door that he could only push open after throwing his whole weight against it.
The cold November air was like a slap in the face after spending hours in a room heated up by other bodies swirling around on the dancefloor and clinking glasses at tables. Suddenly, Yixing felt very sober. The door fell shut behind them and the last noises from inside vanished. Yifan had led them right to the employee parking space which was empty except for a few parked cars.

“Okay, so. I guess you already took five minutes to get me out here.”

“Okay then give me five more! It’s my birthday after all!”

Yixing’s sigh told Yifan his wish was granted. But Yifan also knew that Yixing would take those five minutes literally so he ran his fingers nervously through his hair while thinking of proper words to express himself.

“Ummmmmm, yeah… wow shit…” Yifan paced back and forth while he only dared to glance a few times at Yixing. The younger one was almost about to lash out and tell Yifan to spit it out already, because he realized that the longer this dragged on, the higher he got his hopes for something he didn’t even know what exactly it was he was hoping for, then the other one said, “I don’t want you to go.”

“Wow. If that is all, I’ll just stay for another hour, you didn’t have to drag me out here for that.”

“NO, I don’t mean that, Xing!” Yifan groaned and Yixing felt his heart pounding against his throat as Yifan came closer to cup his face, “I mean… don’t leave me. Don’t… I just… oh shit god damn it Xing! Look, I know, I’m a wreck and I’m so far away from being a fucking normal person… and you probably deserve someone better, like, maybe someone who isn’t such an idiot and can actually take care of you, but… I just really need you, okay? You’re the only one who’s keeping me together. I can’t just lose you.”

Maybe it was the cold that crept under their dress shirts and tweaked their eyes, but Yifan sniffled and Yixing could’ve sworn he was seeing tears in the taller one’s eyes. Yet, he couldn’t see too clear either. He blinked heavily to get back a little control over his face.

“It’s crazy, I know, but I really like you.”

Those words had barely been a whisper but they almost knocked Yixing out cold because he knew he had wanted to hear those words all along. Because it really was crazy, yes, but Yixing really liked Yifan too, even though he had had such a huge dislike against him in the first weeks.

Yet, there were still a lot of doubts that Yixing had to get rid of first, because his mind would always win over what his heart wanted which had saved his ass more than a few times, but also had made him miss out on some great opportunities.

“Your father…” he begun, but got cut off right away:

“Fuck him!”

“No I’d rather not.”

His comment made Yifan snort and even Yixing chuckled a little before the taller one pressed his forehead against his own. Their breathes danced along their cold faces and Yixing felt heat rising up in his body, even though the mild autumn days had gone some days ago and now it was time for winter to take its toll over the city.

“You know, I saw you with Jessica yesterday,” Yixing began hesitantly, “and I thought that we’d never be able to be together like that in public. Ever. Jessica took your arm and you both looked so
good together.”

“She’s not…” Yifan started but Yixing didn’t even let him catch another breath to continue.

“I know. She’s got someone already. You two are just friends. But yet there I stood thinking I’d never be able to be like that around you even when I want to. And you are just such a physical person… I’ll never be able to give that to you, at least not when you’re under supervision of someone else. Which you are most of the time.”

“I don’t care about that,” Yifan stated after saying nothing for a few moments.

The earnest tone in his voice made Yixing lose his own and he only looked back up to the prince, completely baffled, and he didn’t even know why exactly. He didn’t know anything exactly. The only thing he knew in that moment was that maybe, after all, his worrying had been for nothing.

“As long as I know I’ve got you, I don’t care about anything else. Really.”

Risks weren’t things Yixing liked to take too much. Dating the Prince of China has definitely never been on his bucket list. All he wanted was a normal life like anyone else. But he also wanted Yifan. He couldn’t have both, so he had to make a decision.

“Okay.” He simply said which made Yifan take a step back to have a better look at the younger one.

His hands were still holding on to Yixing’s cheeks as if losing contact meant the end of his world.

“Okay…?”

“Yes. Okay. I won’t leave. You’ll have to endure my nagging until the end of your days. Or until you’ll get tired of it.”

Yixing really had the talent to destroy the slightest romantic situation, but Yifan didn’t seem to mind as he chuckled and said:

“Oh, right now I don’t think I’ll ever grow tired of you or your nagging.”

“Yeah, we’ll see about that.”

Yifan grinned and then dived down to finally kiss Yixing. The tips of their noses were awfully cold as were their hands that buried themselves in hair and clothes, trying to find warmth through the other’s body. Yifan broke away first with another sniffle and the question:

“So does that make us boyfriends now? Like, officially?”

“Boyfriends… girlboyfriends… whatever you fancy.”

“I think girlboyfriend has a nice ring to it.” Yifan grinned and he looked so adorable in that second, Yixing couldn’t even bring himself to get mad at him even in a joking way.

“Okay then. Can we still get back inside again please? I’m freezing to death.”

Yifan nodded with a radiant smile on his lips and kissed Yixing one more time before they went for the door and got back in. Yixing decided to stay, something he would come to regret later but in that moment, he just felt the need to stick with Yifan, even if they tried to act like they were pulling off the usual business.

“There they are!” Sehun exclaimed when they finally got back to their table that was filled with
snacks and emptied glasses, “You two been fucking?”

“You jealous?” Yifan shot back and made Yili along with Luhan and Tao giggle.

“Jealous of some ten minute sex? Dude... I’m used to better things.”

“That’s it!” Yili cried out and ordered one of the waiters to come over to them, “I think we need more Tequila at this table!”

The next two hours were spent with a lot of drinking, a lot of laughter and a lot of dancing once the last people from the older generation had left the venue, including the Empress. Yixing had decided to leave somewhere between twelve and one, but that intend had drowned after Yili’s second round of tequila and he ended up in Yifan’s Bentley around three o’clock in the morning, caught between the backdoor and Yifan who showered him with kisses and affection the whole way back to the palace. In that moment, Yixing knew he wouldn’t be meeting the deadline tomorrow and it surprised him how this did not bother him the slightest as they stumbled into Yifan’s bedroom.
Chapter Summary

Quoting my tweet from this morning: istg the words "dick" and "cock" are spread all over this document like nutella on toast wtf happened last night --- so yeah I think you know what will happen.

/wink wink
Yifan bottoms, ikr WHAT A CONCEPT!
/wink wink

Chapter Notes

I actually managed to finally write -that- scene. That -one- scene that I had in my mind the moment I started to write this whole shit. It took me long enough, right, lol omg. And it took me actually THREE DAYS of whining and bitching how I'm not able to write smut to actually finish this. So have fun. Or not. Whatever. I don't even care anymore I'm just glad it's OVER. (Like, not the story, obviously)

ALSO chapter is not beta'd bc Google Docs is still a bitch (anyone having a tip/an alternative for me and my beta? If yes pls tell me)

November 7th, 2015 (pt. I)

The room was filled with noises of audible kisses and heavy breathing as they tried to get rid of their coats and shoes without having to break lip contact. Being in their semi-drunk state, that task was harder than it had seemed at the beginning and Yixing couldn’t hold back his hysterical giggling as Yifan stumbled over his own two feet in an attempt to slide off his shoes.

“You think that’s funny?!” He whined, yet there was a slight sign of a smile on his lips.

“You would’ve laughed too if it were me!” Yixing responded and placed a gentle kiss on Yifan’s cheek to pacify him, before he snuggled into his chest and took a deep breath.

Yifan mumbled something Yixing didn’t quite catch and he didn’t bother to ask him to repeat his words. He contented himself with listening to Yifan’s heartbeat for a second, before the prince said:

“You know, I’m still kind of waiting for your birthday present.”

“You little shit!” Yixing exclaimed and looked up to Yifan who had a sheepish grin on his face. “I kind of agreed on becoming your boyfriend, isn’t that enough already?”

“Oh, that is everything I ever wanted!” Yifan purred as his hands wandered down Yixing’s sides and came to a halt over his butt. With pointed lips as if he was about to give Yixing a small peck, he muttered, “I just want to fool around a little?”
“Lame.”

Nevertheless, Yixing pushed him towards the bed with gentle force. Yifan let him take the lead and when his legs collided with the bed base, he sat down and crawled into the middle of the mattress backwards, his eyes set on Yixing who followed him and seated himself on his hips once Yifan was able to rest his head on one of the pillows. The prince placed his hands on Yixing’s thighs and looked a little lost, which reminded the younger of that one night over at his apartment and the little flashback made him giggle. Yifan must have picked up on it, because there was a slight blush flushing his cheeks.

“Don’t laugh, Yixing!”

“Sorry!”

The situation was kind of absurd, even more so because Yixing oddly felt turned on by Yifan who was always so eager to get Yixing into his bed, but then turned into this insecure dork within seconds because oh god, I don’t know what to do, you don’t have a vagina. He had been with more or less experienced guys, but he had never come across a total newbie. The thought of being able to take the lead and show Yifan what he liked and make Yifan explore his likes in return was extremely arousing.

So Yixing decided to let it go and rolled his hips a little, rather subtle and slow to make Yifan forget he had laughed. After all, he was probably just as horny as Yifan, and fooling around didn’t sound too bad, even though both of them were very exhausted from the whole day and the festivities.

“What do you want me to do, Yifan?” Yixing asked and while he kept pressing their hips together, he bent over and placed soft kisses on Yifan’s jawline.

Yifan’s hands slid up from Yixing’s thighs again to his butt to hold him closer. There were still layers of clothing between them, but Yixing felt clearly how Yifan’s dick started to stiffen which motivated him to grind a little more. When Yifan wouldn’t answer, Yixing sat up again and slowly unbuttoned Yifan’s shirt, eager to lay bare the skin beneath for him to explore.

“Did you like what I did to you last time?”

While he asked that, he kept unbuttoning the shirt in slow and teasing movements. Yifan’s chest started to tremble when he thought of ‘last time’ and he squeezed out:

“Yeaaaaah... a lot.”

“So, do you want me to do that again?”

Yifan bit his lower lip and then nodded very slightly, as if admitting that he wanted his dick inside Yixing’s mouth was an inappropriate thing to do. It made Yixing smile though and while he slid the shirt off Yifan’s shoulders, he said:

“Well then, your wish is my command, my prince.”

“Wait, you never called me that!” Yifan exclaimed and made Yixing snort.

“Maybe that’s going to be my kink... instead of calling you daddy,” he said and opened the buckle of Yifan’s belt.

Yifan’s face lit up in excitement when he heard that and for a second, he forgot about the whole blowjob thing.
“Babe, we can definitely talk about that!”

“Wu Yifan,” Yixing roared. “Do you actually want me to suck your dick or do you want to walk me through all of your kinks?”

Yixing hoped the answer wouldn’t be the latter so he slid his hand right into Yifan’s pants and underwear to grab his crotch. Yifan gasped when Yixing got a firm hold of his base and gently tugged at it, making his dick start to swell.

“Oh god, suck it, please...” Yifan said with a slightly whiny tone in his voice.

Without any further ado, Yixing took off Yifan’s pants and briefs in one movement aided by Yifan lifting his hips. Then Yixing spread Yifan’s legs apart and positioned himself on his stomach before he buried his face in the other’s lap, beginning to gently lick over his balls and his cock. He definitely took things faster than last time, but he still waited for Yifan to relax completely before he moved on and let his tongue slide over the slit and the head of Yifan’s now half-erect length. When he did that, Yifan’s legs fell even wider apart, showing Yixing how good he was feeling. Yixing smiled and wrapped one hand around the cock he was working on. Only then he wrapped his lips tightly around it and slowly went down on Yifan coating him with a good amount of saliva. The slurping sounds made Yifan shiver and he arched his back with a few low moans – he didn’t hold back, since nobody was able to hear them anyway as Yixing was bopping his head up and down, additionally pumping with his hand what he couldn’t fit. Like that, he brought the older one into full erection and Yifan’s whimpers and moans filled the air.

“Uuuh... Yixing... more...”

Yixing let go with a popping sound – his lips were reddened and swollen and he licked over them to sooth the slight sore feeling. Yifan’s gaze followed his tongue, mouth hanging wide open as his chest was raising according with the rapid breaths he had to take to not completely lose it.

“Watch me,” Yixing demanded as he stroked over the skin of Yifan’s thighs.

When he was sure that Yifan’s eyes were glued to him, he looked back up to the older one, not breaking the eye contact as he licked once from the base to the top, twirled his tongue around the head of his dick and then deepthroated the prince who let out a scream and needed to get up on his elbows. Yixing repeated that move – licking over Yifan’s twitching cock, over that one pulsing vein at the side, before diving down and taking his whole length in.

“Fuuck, yes... uh...”

When Yifan’s hips jerked to the ceiling, Yixing knew that he was close, so he picked up the pace, bopping his head up and down and letting out some moans himself as Yifan buried one hand in his hair and slightly tugged at it. He also jerked his hips every now and then, which Yixing tried to prevent in pushing his hips down into the mattress. While doing so, he hollowed out his cheeks and kept sucking and bopping his head, moaning and humming against the dick he was sucking.

“I’m going to...!” Yifan breathed and Yixing took one of his hands to work Yifan’s balls additionally to the mouth that was sealed around his cock.

When he felt Yifan’s balls tightening and his body trembling, he pulled his head back a little, his lips still wrapped around the head. With a last tug at Yifan’s balls and a moan and a lick over the slit, Yifan’s throat escaped a whimpering sound and he shot his load into Yixing’s mouth who didn’t think too much about it and swallowed as much as possible. Yixing kept sucking until the last wave of Yifan’s orgasm was over, then he released his cock to catch a breath. Yifan laid there, spread out
on the mattress, staring at the ceiling until he said:

“Fuck me.”

“Yeah, that’s one way to say that I gave you good head,” Yixing said and started fumbling at the buttons of his own dress shirt.

He was only now realizing that he was still fully clothed while Yifan was completely undressed and vulnerable.

“No. I mean, as in: Fuck me. Like... I-want-your-dick-inside-of-me-fuck-me.”

He was so shocked about these words, Yixing needed a second to collect himself. He blinked a few times, forgot about his shirt, then he said:

“Okay, Mr. Bi-Curious, slow it down a notch. Are you aware of what you’ve just said?”

Yifan sat up to meet Yixing’s eye level. He carried a confused look on his face, as if he asked himself if he’d said something wrong.

“Yeah. I am?” He responded and tilted his head in question.

“Okay then, let me ask you: Have you ever even entertained the thought of getting something shoved up your ass? Because that is literally what you’re asking for right now.”

Yifan groaned which then turned into some whining before he scooted closer to Yixing. Then he ran his hands over his face and said:

“Okay, listen, this is going to sound embarrassing.”

“I’m kind of used to that already, so continue.”

Yifan peeked through his fingers with a scolding look for his now-boyfriend, then took his hands down and put them on Yixing’s thighs.

“So. I may or may not be entirely new to the whole things-up-one’s-ass-thing.”

Yixing frowned for a second, but when Yifan got so flustered his cheeks started to blush, he understood.

“Oh! Looks like you had a rather kinky girlfriend once!”

“Yeah...” Yifan huffed and rubbed his neck with both of his hands, “She made sure to properly introduce me to the world of sex toys... and she... well, she also liked to get ‘more active’, if you know what I mean?”

“Say no more, because I’m afraid that I will be haunted by those pictures forever.”

Yifan snorted, then looked back to Yixing.

“So yeah. I actually had things up my ass, and I... liked it. So... pretty please?”

Yixing thought about it for a moment. Okay, so Yifan had some experience with all of this after all which meant that he might be a little more prepared for what he was asking than Yixing had given him credit for prior. Still...
“Ugh, this is going to be some lame boyfriend-talk,” Yixing groaned and rolled his eyes, but then pulled himself together and put his hands over Yifan’s which rested on his thighs again, “But I really don’t want you to rush anything. Like… I’m fine if you need time. I’m actually very patient regarding this matter, you don’t need to feel like you need to prove anything to me.

“Listen, before I had proper sex with a guy I thought I was well prepared for everything, and it still turned out to be the most horrible experience in my life, mostly because I didn’t tell that guy how uncomfortable I was and how weird everything felt. I want to spare you with that. So yeah, please, take it easy. Sucking your dick is fine with me if you feel like that’s everything you can do right now.”

After ending his little speech, Yifan looked at Yixing for a second, before he broke out into a smile and kissed his lips.

“You are so cute, it’s disgusting,” he then mumbled against Yixing’s mouth.

Yixing held back his comment threatening to roll off his tongue and tilted his head to the side instead as Yifan leaned in to seal their lips again. What started out as a rather innocent smack on the lips soon turned into something more heated as their tongues started teasing each other and Yifan sometimes dug his teeth into Yixing’s bottom lip with just the right amount of pressure to make Yixing’s skin heat up. His clothes started itching on his skin and he felt the need to take them off, so he pushed Yifan back into the mattress and started unbuttoning his shirt. He did it slowly though and looked at Yifan who followed his hand movements, his mouth curled into a satisfied smile. While Yixing threw the shirt down onto the floor, the older one swallowed heavily and couldn’t help but to spread his legs again, presenting himself to Yifan in such a lewd way the younger felt his dick harden just by watching him. He proceeded to unzip his pants and pulled them down, struggling a little to get them off completely before he kneeled between Yifan’s legs again. Yifan took a long look over his body and when his eyes locked with the bulge in Yixing’s briefs he started stroking his inner thighs as if he wasn’t sure if he could start touching himself. Even though it still seemed a little sensitive, his dick would’ve definitely loved it, given the fact it slowly started to swell again. Yifan lifted one hand and waved Yixing to come closer who obeyed and leaned over the prince. The older slipped his hands inside Yixing’s underwear and caressed his bare ass while pushing him down a little further and closer.

“But seriously, please… I’m literally begging you…” He breathed against Yixing’s lips before he kissed him again, absolutely needy for more, even though his hands were still a little shaky, outing him to be more nervous than he would ever admit. “I trust you… I know you wouldn’t want to hurt me…”

Yixing shivered as Yifan pressed his tongue into his mouth and his hips against Yixing’s, his swelling cock rubbing against his own bulge. Then Yifan let one hand wander from the back to the front and grabbed Yixing’s dick which immediately reacted to the touch. Yixing’s breath shortened as Yifan lazily stroked up and down his shaft.

“I’ve been going crazy these past days,” Yifan admitted and looked down between them, watching as Yixing got rid of the last piece of cloth covering him to give him more access.

He let go of him until his briefs had found the same fate as Yixing’s shirt and pants, then he reached out again and let his thumb circle over the head of Yixing’s cock that was curling up against his stomach. Yixing leaned his head back, still on his knees between Yifan, while the other worked his hand over him in slow, twisting motions. He pushed his hip a little forward to get more friction. Yixing wanted to ask what Yifan had been going crazy about but the words got stuck in his throat when Yifan slightly tugged at the base of his cock, making his whole body tremble.
“I want to... no... I need to know what it’s like... to have that dick of yours inside of me... please...”

He squeezed his hand a little harder around Yixing’s more than prominent erection and Yixing’s last doubts of ‘maybe we shouldn’t move this fast’ disappeared when he asked:

“What’s the lube? And do you want me to use a condom?”

Not even the point of eventual STDs was valid anymore since Yixing had swallowed Yifan’s cum prior, but he still felt like asking. If Yifan felt more comfortable using one, he’d not dare to do it without one.

“Drawer,” Yifan said and watched as Yixing leaned over him to open the first drawer of the sideboard next to Yifan’s bed.

After a short while, Yifan silently admitted that he felt better if they used protection so additionally to the lube Yixing also searched for a pack of condoms which he found after a while of fishing blindly for it with his hand. When he had found everything he needed, Yixing placed the utensils next to them onto the bed before he turned his attention back to Yifan who was still spread out over the sheets. Yixing let his fingertips wander over Yifan’s torso with delicate pressure to get a feeling of what his skin felt like.

“So... you’re absolutely sure?”

“Jesus, Yixing, yes!”

“Just checking in again!” Yixing defended himself before he dived down and placed some first small pecks over Yifan’s collarbone.

Yifan immediately took the bait and threw his arms and legs around him to hold the younger close. Both of them let out a low moan when their dicks touched and Yifan’s hips instantly jerked up.

“Slow, we’ll get there,” Yixing mumbled against the skin of Yifan’s chest as he left small traces of affection with his lips and tongue.

“Uuuuh...”

Yixing didn’t know if that was supposed a moan or a complaint but since Yifan didn’t say anything more, he went a little further to tease one of Yifan’s nipples with his teeth. The other let out an approving hum and put one hand on Yixing’s neck, his thumb caressing across his skin.

Yixing took his sweet time exploring Yifan’s body with gentle kisses and teasing tongue dips that made Yifan bend into the direction Yixing was going. He sometimes even went down to lick over the pulsing erection in Yifan’s lap, just to tease him a little bit more which made Yifan start whining in disapproval every time he lifted his hips to get more of that and Yixing retreated to place a kiss on Yifan’s stomach or his inner thighs instead. He eventually started to use his hands and stroked over Yifan’s dick while he went up again and demanded another open-mouthed kiss which Yifan melted into. They parted with an audible kissing noise while Yixing circulated his thumb around the area where Yifan’s balls ended and his base started and Yifan grunted.

“Please, don’t tease me so much!” He whimpered and bit his lip when Yixing’s hand slowly wandered beyond Yifan’s balls and slid his middle finger up between his ass cheeks – just a little, maybe a few inches, not even touching Yifan’s hole, but the older winced at the movement and wiggled his ass closer.

To say that he liked the power he had over Yifan was an understatement. Yixing absolutely loved
how Yifan was melting into the bed because of the way he was touching him. His own cock twitched at every moan Yifan let out, begging for any kind of relief while it was pressing against his own stomach. Yixing grinned and retreated his hand, causing Yifan to let out a groan but that groan turned into a moan as Yixing rolled his hips again and rubbed their dicks together. Yifan’s head snapped back at the touch and his fingernails buried themselves into Yixing’s lower back, right where his hips started. Yixing kept moving until he found the rhythm and speed he deemed comfortable for the both of them and breathed in between his thrusts against Yifan’s skin:

“That’s the speed I’d like to do you...”

Yifan’s mouth fell open into a silent moan and his eyes fluttered as Yixing kept going and their bodies heated up.

“Yesyesyes...!”

The lust and excitement in Yifan’s voice made Yixing’s body shiver in anticipation and he grabbed the lube, flicked the cap open and put a good amount of it over his fingers. Yifan watched him closely, breathing heavily. While Yixing coated his fingers, Yifan adjusted his angle a little to give Yixing better access, then he had a different idea:

“Um... do you... want me... to turn around?”

He was blushing again after having proposed to be presenting his bare ass to Yixing who had to suppress a squeal to not kill the mood. He dived down again and gave him a hard kiss, the sort where he just smacked their lips together and bared his teeth against Yifan’s lips before he said:

“No, I want to see your face.”

“Do you get off to that?” Yifan asked, clearly trying to regain some control over the situation, when in fact he’d lost it the moment Yixing had shoved him down the mattress.

Yixing chuckled and sucked at the other’s bottom lip while he spread Yifan’s butt cheeks apart with one hand and ghosted the middle finger of his right hand coated with lube over Yifan’s entrance. Yifan inhaled sharply, probably because the lube felt cold against his heated skin.

“Yes... let’s say that the thought of seeing you getting off to me fingering you is... alluring.”

“Kinky...!” Yifan exclaimed but rolled his head back as Yixing finally started to circle one finger around his hole with a proper amount of pressure.

Yifan took the first finger easier than Yixing had thought. When he slipped the first digit in, his hole clenched around it as if it tried to prevent him from going further, but soon Yifan relaxed enough to let Yixing easily slip in and out of him until Yixing added a second one. Yifan held his breath for a second and Yixing started to caress Yifan’s thigh with the other hand to distract him a little.

“Relax.”

It was probably the worst advice ever, but Yifan didn’t complain and guided Yixing through the speed that was manageable for him with his hands that still lingered on Yixing’s back and put more pressure on it every time he wanted Yixing to go further.

Yifan was so hot and tight, Yixing didn’t even want to think about the feeling of having his cock inside of him. It was twitching violently enough as it was already, and he didn’t want to get himself off just by the mere thought of fucking the older one. When his two fingers were buried deep inside of Yifan, he made shallow movements to let Yifan get used to the stretch, then he started to work
him more open in scissoring movements. In between, he shoved his fingers back into him down to
their knuckles, fingers slightly bend to look for Yifan’s prostate which he found after a few tries.
Yifan flung his eyes open and let out a high-pitched moan as the surprise took over him and made his
body tremble.

“Yeah. Did your girlfriend find that spot?” Yixing asked with a smug grin, pulled out his fingers and
pushed them back in, and Yifan winced.

“I... I...” he stammered and Yixing decided to try a third finger since Yifan was already very
comfortable with two.

Yifan’s muscles tightened once again, nevertheless he started to move his hips according to the pace
Yixing had been setting, successfully fucking himself on Yixing’s digits. The initial slightly pained
look on Yifan’s face had faded and now his mouth was hanging open and he watched how Yixing
kept pushing his fingers into him through half-lidded eyes. The wet noise his lube coated fingers
were doing every time they slid in and out of Yifan was so lewd Yixing let out a low moan himself.
He felt that if they kept going like this, he might even just come by simply fingering Yifan open, and
he really couldn’t have that. Even though had been advocating the thought of taking their time and
not rush things, the way Yifan willingly took him in made it impossible not to want to bury his dick
inside of the hole he was now abusing. His other hand searched for the condom and he ripped the
package open with his teeth.

“Uugh, finally...!” Yifan breathed and pushed his hips a little further down, getting his prostate
stimulated once again, “Do me!”

Yixing had to pull out his fingers to be able to put on the condom, and just in case, because he really
didn’t want to hurt Yifan more than necessary, smeared more lube over his erection to be able to get
in as smoothly as possible. Yifan whimpered at the loss of Yixing’s fingers filling him up but stopped
when he felt Yixing positioning himself at his entrance, only teasing with the tip of his dick.

“You set the pace, Yifan...” Yixing said and leaned over to kiss him gently, “Tell me when to stop,
tell me when to move... tell me if it’s too much...”

Yifan only managed to nod and pressed their foreheads together as a sign he understood. Yixing
sealed their lips once again, working his tongue into Yifan’s mouth who immediately took on the bait
before Yixing pushed the head of his cock into Yifan.

The older one let out a scream and their lips parted and just when Yixing was about to retreat again,
Yifan slapped his hands onto Yixing’s ass to hinder him from doing so and said:

“No, don’t! I’m okay!”

“Are you sure?”

“Yes! Oh god! Yes!”

Then he pushed Yixing’s hips down, inhaling sharply as Yixing stretched him a little further apart.
Yixing bit his bottom lip and needed to bring up all his might to move slowly. Yifan was even hotter
and tighter than he had thought, which only made it harder to give the man beneath him the time he
needed to adjust. To speed things up, he wrapped one hand around Yifan’s forgotten erection and
stroked it lazily to distract Yifan from the pain in his lower back.

“Yi... x...xing...” Yifan breathed as Yixing kept pumping his cock and smeared precum all over it.

“Almost there, Yifan...” Yixing informed.
“So... much... ugh...”

Yifan’s eyes started to water and Yixing stopped again to give him a breather.

“Should I pull out?”

“No!”

It was weird how Yifan was clearly in pain, evident from the look on his face and the way his walls clenched around Yixing’s dick, but he also refused to let this end. Yixing wouldn’t be mad, though if Yifan asked him to stop. He’d understand completely.

“You’re so tense, Yifan...”

“I... ugh... your dick...” Yifan whimpered and finally pushed himself a little more onto Yixing, “Give it to me!”

Yixing pushed farther, inch by inch until he was finally buried completely in the other. It was hard not to move as Yifan’s muscles clasped around him, embracing him fully, but he stayed put while Yifan kept breathing audibly to make himself relax.

“You’re doing great,” Yixing encouraged him and got back to twist his hand around Yifan’s cock, his body shaking in desire to finally get moving, “Fuck, you’re so tight... it’s amazing...”

These words of praise, paired with Yixing’s hand working his hard cock seemed to do the trick, as Yifan stopped furrowing his eyebrows in pain and he relaxed notably.

“Move... slow though... please...”

Yixing nodded and tried some very shallow and slow thrusts while he adjusted his angle to make sure he’d get Yifan’s prostate later on. The movement seemed to make it better and Yifan finally let out some voices of pleasure again which encouraged Yixing to try more movement. Yifan flinched as Yixing pulled out half his dick and pushed back into him, but he moaned, so Yixing did that again.

“... more...”

Yifan started to get more active and moved his hips accordingly to Yixing’s thrusts and met him halfway, probably to find out which position was the best for him to fully enjoy the situation. When Yixing had pulled out almost completely and thrusted right back in, he seemed to have hit that spot that made Yifan arch his back in pleasure and let out a long moan.

“There?” Yixing asked and slowly rolled his hips back again.

Yifan nodded, whimpered, wiggled his ass to beg for more and held onto Yixing’s shoulder to not lose it completely. The younger one thrusted back into him again, hitting the same angle and Yifan rolled his eyes up. Yixing kind of completely forgot about Yifan’s leaking cock in his hand since he was enjoying Yifan’s hole a little too much but Yifan didn’t seem to care as Yixing kept hitting his prostate in movements that became more and more erratic and harder. Yifan’s moans got louder and he tried to let Yixing know what he wanted even though he was so far gone he couldn’t string one complete sentence together:

“You... faster... ugh... make me... I... can’t— YES!”

The last thrust was especially hard and hit Yifan’s prostate dead on which made Yifan’s whole body
shiver but it wasn’t quite enough to get him off yet.

“Again, please, just like... that...”

Yixing felt his own orgasm building up and he started moving his hand again to help Yifan a little more who just kept screaming and begging for more as he thrust into him, almost frantically, to finally get over the edge himself.

“Yi... xiiingga...” Yifan squeezed out as his orgasm took over him and his cum coated Yixing’s hand and his own stomach – his whole body jerked and his hole clenched tighter around Yixing’s cock which was just the thing Yixing needed to come himself.

His back arched in pleasure and he felt his orgasm shooting from his dick to his back, into his legs and even his toes, but kept rolling his hips until he couldn’t bring up the strength to move anymore and just crushed into Yifan beneath him. He placed his head on Yifan’s chest and breathed hotly against the sweaty skin before he scattered a few lazy kisses on it. It took both of them a minute to catch their breaths, Yifan even more so since he had come a second time and barely had the strength to even wrap his arms around Yixing. When Yixing felt their breath becoming normal again, he asked:

“So? What do you prefer? A dildo or a real dick?”

Yifan grunted, but then answered:

“Your dick. Obviously.”

The statement made Yixing happy in a really weird way and he looked up to give Yifan a long and soft kiss before he pulled out to get rid of the condom and Yifan’s cum that had been smeared over his hand and his stomach. Yifan groaned in displeasure, but let Yixing clean himself up with some tissues before he got himself clean.

“You really don’t like that messy stuff, huh?” He asked when Yixing had thrown the tissues and the condom away.

“Yeah. I don’t know why exactly, but I hate dried cum,” Yixing said and felt how exhaustion was hitting him out of nowhere.

His body was at its limits and needed a few hours of sleep badly. So he lifted the blanket and put it over both of them before he snuggled into Yifan’s arms.

“You want to sleep?”

“Yifan, it’s like... half past four in the morning and we just had frantic sex, I’m beat,” Yixing sighed and then a first yawn parted his lips that still felt sore from the blowjob and all the kissing.

“But don’t you think that... me coming twice and you coming once is a horrible... orgasm disparity?”

Yixing moaned and almost immediately regretted all of his life choices that had lead to this specific point in his life.

“Baby,” he started and patted Yifan’s cheek who started to grin widely at the pet name, “I want to sleep. We can work on evening that disparity out tomorrow.”

Yifan still pouted but then nodded and killed the lights. In the dark, Yifan searched for Yixing’s lips once again for a very lazy kiss.
“Actually, I really like morning sex,” Yixing said into the darkness and Yifan burst into laughter, but pulled him closer.

“I’ll remember that.”

“Good night now, Yifan.”

“Good night, Darling.”

Yixing usually hated pet names with every fiber of his being, except for maybe when they were meant to be sarcastic. Still, he had slipped a ‘baby’ himself and he felt his stomach flutter upon hearing the word ‘darling’ and it felt like his whole body melted into a gooey mess.

Yixing felt like he had not slept at all, even though he had fallen asleep instantly. Maybe that was because he really hadn’t slept that long, three hours top, which just wasn’t enough for his body to recover from the stressful day he had experienced and that night he just spent with Yifan, who still was the son of the freaking Emperor of China.

He also would’ve probably slept until noon, if a weird tingling sensation in between his lap hadn’t woken him up and he needed some time to realize what was going on. He blinked confused against the dim light of dawn creeping into the room and looked down his body. He choked on his on saliva when he saw Yifan’s head buried in between his thighs, kissing their insides and burying his nose in his groin. Yixing realized he was already sporting a semi, but his sleep-deprived brain couldn’t make a decision if he found the situation absolutely embarrassing or absolutely hot. He let out a gasp and forced Yifan to look up. He grinned like a young boy which made Yixing’s thighs tremble because it wouldn’t fit together with what Yifan was doing to him right now.

“Good morning!” The older one chirped while Yixing’s dick kept swelling and brushed against Yifan’s cheek.

“I... you...?”

“You said you like stuff like this in the morning. Thought I’d give it a try.”

Yifan seemed super proud of that idea and Yixing was too shocked, and also too aroused, to say anything so he watched as Yifan averted his gaze back to Yixing’s area down there, placing hot kisses over the skin. It occurred to Yixing that Yifan probably never had given somebody else a blow job yet, so when Yifan’s mouth ghosted over his dick, obviously a little unsure about what to do with this thing dangling in front of his face, Yixing said:

“Just do what you’re fine with... and watch your teeth please.”

Yifan looked up and their gazes met. Yixing let out a soft moan when Yifan put one hand around Yixing’s cock while his lips slowly wrapped around its head. It was like Yifan was testing at first if he was okay with that and tried to get used to the alien feeling of having the dick of another man entering his mouth. While doing so, he kept looking at Yixing, silently asking if what he was doing was right and Yixing buried his hand in Yifan’s hair.

“Good,” Yixing said and licked his lips as Yifan’s own went a little further down his dick and Yixing decided to close his eyes and just enjoy – he trusted Yifan enough to be sure he’d like whatever Yifan chose to do.

Yifan was probably just trying to imitate what Yixing had done to him, so he went down Yixing’s
erection within his own comfort zone and moved his hand over the rest of the dick. Every time he pulled his head back and put it down again, he was able to reach a little further, while his tongue slid along the bottom side, hot and wet against the sensitive skin and Yixing inhaled sharply.

“That’s good...” He sighed and spread his legs a little wider to give Yifan more access.

Those words seemed to give the other one more confidence, so he pulled his head back completely, making a slurping sound when he let go of Yixing’s cock. The younger looked up and saw a thin string of saliva still connecting Yifan’s bottom lip to it and he swallowed heavily, probably because he didn’t want to drool all over Yixing. Yifan bit his lip at the sight and arched his back when Yifan started to move his hand up and down before his face neared his dick again and he swirled his tongue around the head. He was definitely imitating what Yixing had done to him, but in a more careful way to test and see Yixing’s reaction.

Yixing let out a low moan and his breath shortened as Yifan buried his dick in his mouth again, deeper than before. He gagged a little though when he got too bold and Yixing patted his head.

“Easy, babe.”

“Hmmmm,” Yifan hummed and the vibration made Yixing’s body tremble and caused him to gasp.

“Maybe... though... can you... go a little... faster?” He then asked as he realized how awfully slow Yifan was sucking him and even though he said Yifan could take all the time he needed, he kind of felt impatient as his orgasm was faintly noticeable but he lacked the friction to actually get off.

It felt like being left hanging, and Yixing hated that. Yifan didn’t respond but started to move his hand faster and Yixing needed to get himself together to not move his hips. While Yifan kept moving up and down on him, Yixing kept moaning his support and he pressed his head back into the pillow. The faint feeling in his lap grew stronger and then Yifan started fondling Yixing’s balls, something that he hadn’t even reckoned with – it caught him a little by surprise and a wave of pleasure shot through his whole body into his dick that started twitching in Yifan’s mouth.

“Uuuuh,” Yixing huffed and Yifan kept going, having long since given up on not drooling and he just kind of accepted the fact that his spit was all over his hand and Yixing’s hard cock. “Keep doing that...! I’m close!”

It would have been even more intense if Yifan had allowed to let him cum in his mouth, but Yixing gave out another warning after Yifan had audibly sucked at his dick again which brought him over the edge. Yifan pulled his head back as Yixing came, dodging his cum only by a few inches and kept pumping with his hand while Yixing jerked through his orgasm and moaned Yifan’s name. The older one slowed his movements down after Yixing came over his hand and eventually stopped moving altogether when Yixing laid still and looked down to him. With his hand still wrapped around his cock, Yifan asked him:

“Was that okay?”

“Can you make me wake up like this every day?” Was Yixing’s counter question and Yifan let out a relieved laugh before he let go of him, got his hand and Yixing clean and pressed his naked body back against him, since the room was cold and the warm sheets and Yixing’s body were much more comforting.

“I can try.”

There was nothing sexual going on when they snuggled in together and their bare skin brushed
against each other. Yixing listened to his heartbeat that was still going faster than usual from what had just happened and he kissed Yifan once more – it was like since they were officially together, he couldn’t get enough of his lips.

Gross. Absolutely gross. Yixing shuddered when that thought crossed his mind and decided to never tell Yifan, otherwise he’d be whipped for the rest of this relationship.

“I’ll take care of you,” Yifan said out of the blue without any context and made Yixing snort.

“Are you sure it’s not going to be the other way around?” He asked with a wink – Yifan’s answer was pinching the other’s cheek for that comment.

“You’re lucky you’re so cute!”

Yixing rolled his eyes, but let it go and turned to the alarm clock next to them. It was still early in the morning and if he managed to get up and leave within the next ten minutes, he still wouldn’t meet the deadline, but he could wrap up a quick text for his blog so his boss would be at least a little pacified. He didn’t even dare to take a look at his phone, because he had the feeling that it had a shitton of missed calls and unreplied messages on the screen, none of them Yixing wanted to really face. A feeling of guilt overcame him in that moment – if he hadn’t given in last night, he might not have to deal with a raging boss later and he cursed himself for doing what he did. Mostly because sex with Yifan was probably going to be a regular thing now, but keeping his job wasn’t.

“I have to go.”

Yifan supported his head with one arm and gave Yixing a long look before he smirked and said:

“But baby, it’s cold outside!”

“Fuck NO Wu Yifan, we’re not doing this!” Yixing cried out at yet another lame pop culture reference of the man he now officially called his boyfriend.

Was there a trial period? Could Yixing give Yifan back after thirty days because he couldn’t handle his lameness?

“No, I mean it, it’s really cold outside...”

The clear answer was: no. Yixing escaped another sigh as Yifan snuggled into him and placed a kiss on his shoulder.

“Okay, five more minutes, but then I really need to go!” Yixing finally gave in, despite the dark premonition in his stomach that this day was going to go south within seconds and Yifan let out a happy squeal, which the other one commented with nothing but an eye roll.

“You could also just work from here you know, I mean, you’re connected to my WiFi already...” Yifan mumbled against his shoulder.

“Oh right, because you’d let me work in peace,” Yixing scoffed. “It’s better I do this alone in my room and get it over with. The sooner I’m done, the better.”

“Ugh, how annoying...”

While Yifan buried his nose in the nape of Yixing’s neck, somebody knocked at the door. Without waiting to be let in, Yili opened it and strode into the room, wearing a coat over her sweatpants and UGG boots, which was a rather weird combination. She also carried her iPad with her. Yifan let out
"I already guessed I’d find both of you here,” she greeted with a dry tone in her voice and waved her iPad with a grim expression on her face.

The two men sat up, Yixing somehow being embarrassed and trying to hide his naked upper body under the sheets. The weird feeling in his stomach grew stronger, and he was very sure that this neither stemmed from the alcohol nor from his previous orgasm.

“Huh?” Was Yifan’s incoherent question and Yili bristled with anger while she activated her tablet and typed in her password.

"Of course you wouldn’t know,” she muttered under her breath. “Because my dear brother is as woke as a rock.”

Something in her voice made Yixing’s stomach turn and when she tossed the device onto the bed the bad feeling made his whole body go numb and his face got flashed with the hot white feeling of panic.

She had opened the homepage of that horrible OMG! paper, the same tabloid newspaper that had started all the dating rumors a few weeks back. The whole landing page was plastered with news from Yifan’s birthday party - “The Lady sings for the Prince! Check out the Gallery of Lady Gaga’s birthday performance!” and all the whole shebang you’d expect from a paper like this. Usually, the most commented and liked post was the one getting the headline spot on the landing page and when Yixing laid his eyes on it, he wished himself to be dead immediately. That was him with Yifan on the header picture. Standing at the back exit of yesterday’s venue.

Hugging. Kissing.

“Shit,” Yifan mumbled and when he clicked on the headline and got directed to the article, even more images of them appeared.

They looked like they’ve been taken from a phone as they were a little grainy but it was undeniably them. The article itself was written in a lot of caps and exclamation marks, nothing what real journalism should look like and if Yixing hadn’t been caught up in this thing, he would’ve snorted and made a snarky remark about the non-existent rhetoric abilities of the author. But when he read lines like ‘Prince Wu Yifan caught kissing a guy’, and his name plastered all across the article, he just wanted to shoot his brains against the ceiling.

“Father’s seen them already. He wants to talk to you,” Yili said, not giving them too much time to linger on the photos or the article.

Of course. To make everything even worse, the Emperor had seen these pictures. Judging from Yili’s hard face, he wasn’t too pleased about them, which shouldn’t have come off as a surprise. He’s made it very clear already what he thought of Yixing, and it wasn’t anything good to begin with.

Nothing was happening for a moment - Yifan kept looking at the pictures that someone had taken without them noticing, while Yixing felt like he was about to vomit any given second. Yili finally sighed and stuffed her hands into the pockets of her coat and her shoulders slumped down.

"Guys, seriously, it's not like I'm opposing any of this. In fact, I'm very happy that you two idiots finally got a move on... Yifan, your pining after Yixing was absolutely horrible in the last few weeks. But couldn't you have checked for a second if there might be any one around who'd expose you?"
"The parking lot was empty, Yili!" Yifan said to defend himself and tossed the device over the bed before he rubbed his face with his hands.

"Well, brother, it clearly wasn't. Otherwise we wouldn't have a homosexual dating scandal on our hands."

"How is dating even considered a scandal these days?!" Yifan barked.

"It's not about the fact that you are dating, it's about who you are dating!" Yili responded. "On top of that, you are not a regular internet celebrity or an actor or a singer. If so, it would probably only affect your career, but you are the Prince of China, which kind of involves politics too."

Yifan's answer was a displeased grunt which came off like the behavior of a stubborn four-year-old. Yixing still wasn't sure what to do or to say so he kept staring into the void while his mind circulated around what to tell his boss about this mess.

He was so dead. Now, he hadn’t even handed in any kind of work, he had down right broke one of the most important rules in jobs like this, he had overstepped the professional line. It was now clear that, no matter what he’d be writing about the Prince or the party or anything regarding matters of the royal household, he wouldn’t be able to give an objective opinion. He’d be biased, and people would be asking if any of the articles he’d published so far wasn’t just him swooning over his boyfriend. Angry reader’s letters would be coming in, and his boss would surely kick him out if he ever dared to come back into his office again.

"You better go and talk to father as quickly as possible. Maybe both of you. He's having breakfast in the main house."

With those words, she tried an encouraging smile before she turned for the door and left the two alone. When the door was closed Yixing finally found his voice:

"This is an absolute disaster!" He got up within seconds and fetched his clothes. While he put them on, he kept on rambling. “This is the worst thing that could’ve possibly happened! I’m going to lose my fucking job, oh my god. You’ll be in the crossfire of the media even more than you are already... I just... No! No! This is going to be the end of me!"

"Yixing," Yifan spoke up but he didn't listen.

"No, seriously, Yifan, this is a problem!" The journalist said as he put on his shirt. "Yili is right, this also involves politics. God damn, Yifan, your parents will meet some politicians from the Middle East next month, where gays get killed if they get exposed. What do you expect to come out of talks when they know your parents have a son who sleeps with a man, huh?!"

"Don't talk like that!"

"It's the truth though!"

Finally, Yifan stood up and it looked like as if he was about to reach out for Yixing. In the last second, he realized he wasn't wearing any clothes either and quickly put on his underwear, sparing Yixing the embarrassment to actually ask him to cover up.

"Listen, okay, yeah, it's bad, but I will fix this, I promise!"

"How?"

Yixing knew it wasn't fair to be asking that kind of question in that moment. But he still needed
something to hold on to, not only Yifan's hands that were cupping his face now, but also any kind of reassurance that this might find a not-so-disastrous ending.

"I... I don't know. But I'll figure this out, I promise. Just trust me."

Maybe the whole thing was a sign to not even try at all, but Yixing huddled into Yifan's arms and held onto him.

"Wow, I guess that 'taking care of each other' thing might come sooner than expected..." Yixing scoffed, a weak attempt at lifting the low mood and Yifan managed to let out a chuckle that lasted for about a second while he patted Yixing's head and held him close.

They didn't say anything for quite a while, until Yixing let go and said:

"You should go to your parents."

"Ugh."

Yifan knew that Yixing was right so he shuffled over to his own pile of clothes that were scattered across the floor. Yixing was busy buttoning up his own shirt while Yifan admitted:

"Man, I'm scared shitless actually. As a kid, I once accidentally smashed a vase dating back to the freaking Song Dynasty and my father went madshit crazy on me. That was the only beating I ever received in my life and he made sure I'd never forget that one."

"I doubt he will do the same now," Yixing responded.

"Well, he might not whip my ass like he did back then, but I somehow imagine that he's found worse ways to punish me."

"Maybe it's not going to be as bad as you're thinking right now."

It only took Yifan raising one eyebrow to make Yixing realize that he had chosen some rather stupid words and he probably would've laughed if the situation hadn't been so serious. To be honest, Yixing hadn’t believed his own words the second they had left his mouth.

"Well, okay, then let's rephrase that: No matter what he'll do or say, I'll have your back."

Hearing that, Yifan lifted one corner of his mouth and he grabbed their coats. After they had put them on, he reached for Yixing's hand and while he intertwined their fingers, he said:

"That's all I need to know."
Chapter Summary

Meet the inlaws, Yixing!!
They love you!
(Maybe)

Chapter Notes

- Sorry for taking so long I'm horrible
- Literally.
- I'm a piece of trash lol.
- Okeyyy have fun (or not idk???)

November 7th, 2015 (pt. II)

So they made their way to the main house, and the nearer they came, the sicker Yixing felt. He also felt how Yifan's hands got sweaty and when they entered the part of the palace where his parents and his sister resided, it needed an affirming squeeze around his hand from Yixing to make him set one foot over the doorstep.

A staff member greeted them, trying to keep up a neutral face when he saw both of them entering.

"They're in the dining room, my Prince," he said with a long look at him and Yixing and offered to take their coats, but Yifan declined.

"We won't be staying long."

He walked past the guy and dragged Yixing with him into the direction of the dining room. While they kept walking, Yixing felt his phone buzzing in the pocket of his coat, but he didn't dare to check who was calling him. His mind jumped to his boss - it was weird how he was more worried about what she had to say about all of this than what his parents or friends might be thinking right now. Probably because his family and friends were used to him dating a guy, even though this time it was a little bit different because he had never actually brought home a high ranking or famous person. With his boss, he wasn’t too sure – he wasn’t really outed to her, since the topic had never come up before between them. He wasn’t too sure how she’d react because she seemed to be an open minded person, but on the other hand, there was basically confirmation that he was fucking the person who kind of was his job which seemed to be a bigger crime in her eyes. If there was one thing she couldn't stand, it was her employees being unprofessional and this clearly fell into that category.
In front of the door to the dining room, Yifan stopped for a moment and turned to Yixing. Both of them probably felt as miserable as the other one, but turning around was out of the question now. The only way was forward through the door, facing whatever was waiting for them behind it. With a last assuring nod from Yixing, Yifan exhaled a long breath and finally pushed down the door handle.

When they stepped into the room, the Emperor, the Empress, and Yili were seated at the dining table and looked up. Another guard was standing next to the door and Yixing wondered if he was usually there too or if that had been a precautious order by the Emperor. Yili was still wearing her coat, her arms crossed in front of her while she was only sitting at the brink of her chair as if she was ready to jump up any given second. Her mother was wearing simple jeans and a fluffy sweater, her hair tied up in a ponytail. She wasn't wearing any make up and suddenly looked a lot older than usual. Her eyes jumped nervously between Yifan and her husband who had one arm supported on his knee, while the other elbow was placed on the table. When Yifan and Yixing entered, he was leaning forward, dominating and aggressive in his body language. He was still wearing a set of pajamas and a bathrobe and looked like he was fighting a very bad toothache. His eyes rested on Yifan's and Yixing's interlaced fingers before he looked up to his son, completely ignoring Yixing. Yixing wasn’t too sure if that was a good or a bad sign.

"You summoned me, father."

A very uncomfortable silence emerged while the word 'father' kept hanging in the air like fog in late autumn. The longer nobody said anything, the more nervous Yifan got. It was Yili breaking the silence in the end:

"Jesus Christ, father. Stop your sick mind games and talk to your son, for fuck's sake! We don't have all fucking day for this bullshit!"

"Yili!"

The Empress tried to silence her with a stern face but her daughter shot back:

"What? Should I watch my language, mother?!"

"I didn't raise you to have a foul mouth like that!"

"Both of you shut up."

The Emperor's voice was very low, which was weird since Yixing somehow expected him to start yelling the moment they'd step a foot into the room. Nevertheless, he was still intimidating, and maybe even scarier like that. With a last look at the two women next to him at the table, he turned back to his son. Being a traditional man who also kept himself away from technical devices like smartphones and tablets as much as possible, he grabbed the morning paper which, of course, had one of the pictures printed on the front page. He waved with it and said:

"Have you seen these already, son?"

He tossed the paper onto the floor right in front of Yifan's feet. The gesture was so degrading, it made Yixing's stomach turn. Yifan's grip around his hand got tighter.

"I have, yes."

"So you are also aware of what they say?"

"I am. Sort of."
Yixing felt Yifan's confidence fading, if he ever had any of the like to begin with, so he started caressing the back of his hand with his thumb, hoping it would somehow help. There wasn't anything else he could do because he felt that if he spoke up, he'd only make matters worse.

"Sort of..." The Emperor repeated, then scoffed and smashed his fist onto the table making the chinaware clatter, "Sort of, he says!!"

The Empress and Yifan jumped at the noise while Yili bit her lower lip in frustration as the tea in her cup spilled over its saucer. She looked up and crossed Yixing's gaze, then she rolled her eyes as if she was trying to say: Here we go, kids. Buckle your seatbelts.

"So you are telling me that you sort of know what this actually means to us? That you sort of know about the consequences this has for our family? Our country?! Do you have ANY idea?! Your mother and me are scheduled to meet the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia next month how am I supposed to look that man in the eye after THIS?!

"So what, did I finally make you lose your face?! Like, taking drugs and almost choking on my own vomit wasn't bad enough but kissing a guy is?!" Yifan snapped.

"He’s got a point," Yili chipped in but got silenced with one glance from her father.

"Yifan, that had no influence on outer relations..." The Empress spoke up, but Yifan cut her off right away.

"Oh yes, right, because we bribed the hospital that took care of me after I almost died to not leak anything to the outside. You couldn't control this though so now you're mad!"

His mother didn't have anything to say to this anymore so she fixed her eyes on the table.

"Yifan, I am sick and tired of your games! Our whole lives have revolved around fixing you, we've done nothing but to pull your ass out of scandals and bad situations and THIS is how you treat us in return! This is not how an heir and my son is to behave!"

The Emperor threw another look at the paper spread in front of them and the picture facing him made him so angry he grabbed his teacup and smashed it onto the floor. The porcelain smashed and Yifan jerked at the sound while the tea that was still left in the cup stained the floor and the newspaper with their picture.

"You disgust me!"

Even if that sentence wasn't directly meant for him, Yixing felt like someone had slapped his face. This wasn't what you should tell your child ever. Especially not in a situation like this. Not even his own father had reacted in this manner when he had come out a few years ago – he’d been angry, yes, because he hadn’t understood anything about this, but he had come around very quickly. Alarmed, Yixing turned to Yifan who kept his eyes fixated on the floor and the smashed pieces of the teacup, blinking heavily as if trying to hold back tears.

"Father," he finally managed to say and looked back up, "Sorry for being such a disappointment."

"That’s what you say over and over again, Yifan," The Emperor said in an icy tone.

"I know. I mess up over and over again."

Yifan standing in front of his other family members looked more like a trial and it made Yixing's heart clench. Yili shifted her weight nervously in her seat, the only evidence to her discomfort about
the whole situation. Yixing sensed she wanted to help, but couldn't think of anything to do so. The Empress had her two elbows supported on the table while she kept fiddling with a necklace, not daring to look into either the direction of her husband or her son. Her eyes were kept on the table.

"But this time... I just... I don't feel like this is messed up, you know? He's... I mean, I'm surprised myself, and I didn't plan on liking him in the beginning at all. It just happened, father, and I don't want to fight that. I don't want to fight anything anymore. And I also don't want to fight you, or mother, or Yili. I just hope that you can accept this, because this is probably the first time that I feel like it's supposed to be this way."

His mother finally reacted and looked up as if she wanted to say something, but she stayed silent. Yifan heaved a heavy sigh and lifted the hand that was holding on to Yixing's.

"I apologize. For everything I've done. You probably won't believe me, but I am trying so hard to be better - and Yixing helps me so much. I know this sounds awful, and ungrateful for everything you have been doing for me, but I think he's what I needed all this time."

When he ended, the room was filled with silence. Yili showed a smile, and even the Empress' lips curled up. Yixing felt that if it was for them, the whole thing would take a different direction, but they were not the ones to be making the call. It took a while until the Emperor reacted again and he lifted his right hand to snap his fingers. The guard at the door stiffened his shoulders and lifted his head, as if someone had pushed a power button.

"Show Zhang Yixing out," he said when the tall man in his suit asked what the monarch wanted him to do.

"Father..." Yifan started and even Yili lifted herself from the chair in protest.

"Father, banishing Zhang Yixing won’t make any of this situation better!" She said, but her father ignored her and turned to the guard instead:

"And make sure he's not getting access again. I can't have him around here."

"Are you kidding me?!" Yifan cried out, but when the guard neared them, Yixing sensed it would be best to not make a scene.

"Yifan, let it go," he said, "I'll catch up to you, okay?"

"No," Yifan protested and his grip around Yixing's hand got tighter, "No, I can't have that."

"I said: He needs to go," the Emperor said one more time in a roaring tone and even the guard flinched and hurried to grab Yixing's elbow.

"Mr. Zhang, if you please."

"No, he doesn't please!" Yifan cried out, then turned his gaze back to his father, "I've never begged you for anything in my life..."

"Because I gave you everything when you asked for it!" The Emperor interrupted his son with an angry look on his face, "Maybe that was the mistake - it's time you learn that you can't have everything you set your eyes on, starting from today! So now! Show Zhang Yixing out, at once!"

"Yifan, I'll get in touch with you, it's better if I leave..."

Yifan clung to his hand but it was so sweaty Yixing's fingers slipped out the farther he got dragged
away by the guard.

"No, Yixing..."

"I'll call you..." Yixing mumbled, hoping Yifan would hear him while he was shown out of the room like a child out of class to receive a scolding from his teacher.

The guard didn't even give him a chance to gather his stuff and walked him right to one of the side entrances. While Yixing got dragged out, he felt the tight grip around his arm and said:

"Ouch! Seriously! I will follow, no need to be so brutal!"

There was no reaction from the other man and Yixing grunted.

"For real though, I still have stuff in Yifan's room, I need that."

"I'm sure the Palace will be sending your belongings to you," the guard answered matter-of-factly when they reached the exit.

Another guard opened the small gate and Yixing got pushed out onto the street.

"You heard the Emperor. Coming back won't be any use, we won't let you in again."

He didn't look too happy about his words either, or Yixing just misinterpreted his hard face.

"Oh come on, we both know it's bullshit."

"You better take your leave now, Mr. Zhang," he said without responding to his remark, "Before the Paparazzi that are lurking at the main entrance find out you're here."

Yixing stood put like a stubborn kid, not because he wanted to provoke the other one, but because he just felt so lost. He didn't really know how to get home because his wallet was still in Yifan's room. All he had was his phone and his jacket, and he didn't even have any spare change for a taxi, let alone a subway ride home.

"Leave the property before I call security," the guard said finally.

"Aren't you supposed to be the security?"

"Go. Now."

"Jesus Christ, fine!" Yixing barked, utterly pissed about the nonsense the guy was spilling and turned around for the main street.

He grabbed his phone and dialed Luhan's number while he tried to catch a taxi.

"Oh my god, Yixing!" His roommate greeted and a car stopped in front of Yixing to take him in.

"Hi Luhan, listen, I'm taking a taxi home and I have no money, can you maybe help me out?"

"Ummm... sure... what exactly is going on, boy? Everyone is going crazy!"

"I know... shit... wait..." Yixing held his phone away and gave the driver his address who looked at him with squinted eyes for a second, before he turned his attention back to the street and rolled the car down the main road east wards, "I'll try to explain later, okay? I just need your help to get me some change... I think the drive will cost around 20 Yuan."
"Sure, I'm home and I have some spare change with me, I'll cover for you."

"God. Thank you. You're my lifesaver."

"Rough day, huh?"

"Shut up."

"I'll see you!"

Luhan kept his promise and even waited at the entrance door to their compound to jump right to the driver and pay the bill. Then they got into their apartment as quickly as possible since Yixing had gotten so paranoid, he thought everyone eyeing them just knew. He even tried to hide his face in the collar of his coat, just in case.

“Man, fuck, what happened?” Luhan asked the moment the door fell shut behind them and Yixing threw himself onto the couch, not even bothering to take off his shoes.

“I... ugh...” Yixing grunted and rubbed his face with his hands.

All of a sudden, it was like the extend of this horrible thing going on finally reached him. He felt the exhaustion from the night before, and tears shot up his eyes that threatened to roll down his cheeks any given second. Luhan squealed and jumped to his side.

“Yixing, are you okay?”

“Do I look okay to you!?” Yixing snapped, throwing himself to the side before he buried his face in one of the pillows.

“Wow... shit...” Luhan mumbled and started patting Yixing’s shoulder, clearly not knowing what to do. “I mean... umm...”

“You’ve seen the pictures, right?”

“Yeah, sure, I mean, it’s everywhere... I actually tried to get around them, but it’s impossible. My friends have even sent me some and asked if that is my roommate making out with the prince.”

“Ugh!”

“Oh come on, it can’t be this bad. I mean. Okay. He’s the prince and all that but are we seriously going to burn you at the stake? It’s not like this is the Fifties or something. We’re living in 2015, come on!”

Luhan didn’t really help with his rambling about LGBT matters and his appeal to the enlightened people of the 21st century. Yixing knew that he was just trying to lift his pretty shitty mood, but nothing he would say in this very moment could make the situation any less shittier.

“I got kicked out.” Yixing interrupted Luhan’s speech and his roommate looked at him in confusion.

“Kicked out?”

He didn’t make any sense of the words. Yixing took a deep breath when he felt the anger and a good portion of sadness swamping his body, then he explained:

“The Emperor kicked me out. I’m not allowed to return. I’m not allowed to see him again.”
Luhan’s face froze in disbelief for a second before he shook his head and said:

“Wait WHAT? What kind of cheap-drama-bullshit is this?!”

Yixing didn’t know what to say so he just shrugged his shoulders and hugged his pillow while the tears that have been gathering in his eyes started to roll down to the sides over the bridge of his nose and his temple. Oh yeah. Oh shit. The dam broke. All the emotions bottled up inside of him that he tried to cover with his sassy attitude threatened to finally break out of his system.

“Fuck the Emperor, like... seriously!”

Luhan laid down next to Yixing and threw his arms around him.

“Yixing, don’t worry.”

“How can I not worry, Luhan?! I'll probably get fired the second I step into my office, and Yifan, he’s... ugh! Just kill me please!”

"No, come on. This will be resolved."

"Yeah, probably only if I disappear!"

His roommate clicked his tongue in disapproval and snuggled a little closer to him.

"Don't say that. I don't think he would want you to."

"But... what if that's the only solution?"

Yixing really didn't want to, but at this point, he just kept crying when thinking about Yifan. Not only because he really didn't see how this could ever get right again, but also because he had looked so severely hurt when Yixing had to leave the palace. How his father had reacted the way he had reacted was absolutely beyond him. Surely it probably wasn't the best news to wake up to, and surely it would be a little awkward when meeting certain kind of politicians. But it had felt like the Emperor had put political matters and the reputation of his family before the feelings of his son and had deliberately stepped on them. Yixing wished he was able to reach out to Yifan and make sure he was okay - it didn't matter to him that he got basically prohibited to ever near the palace again. He just wanted to make sure that Yifan wouldn't fall back into old habits because of this.

"Yixing, really, I'm sure Yifan will find a way. You don't need to disappear or something. Ugh, I wish I knew how to help you..." Luhan whined and Yixing shook his head, his face all wet from his tears.

"It's okay... not your fault anyways..."

"I think you should sue that person who uploaded those pictures. I mean. They invaded your privacy!"

"Yeah sure, I'm going to sue OMG!Mag for doing their fucking job..." Yixing scoffed and sniffled, "... we were both pretty stupid to think nobody would notice."

"Hey... don't beat yourself up, Yixing."

Luhan was helpless, Yixing knew that, but he was also glad he stuck around to comfort him, even to a very small extend. He ran out of positive vibes that seemed to bounce off Yixing’s negativity infesting his mind though and eventually stopped talking altogether, letting Yixing cry and complain
about the situation.

Suddenly, right when Yixing was still being spooned by his roommate and crying angry tears, someone knocked at the door.

“I swear to god...” Yixing grunted but Luhan was up already.

“I’ll go check!”

Yixing sat up again and rubbed the tears off his face while he listened to Luhan’s footsteps nearing the entrance door. With a click of the lock, he greeted the person at the door.

“Oh! Hi!”

“Hi darling!”

Yili’s voice carried over and within seconds, she stood in the doorway of the living room, putting down a black bag next to her.

“I brought your stuff!” Right when she had put the bag down, Yifan rushed past her – he was still wearing his coat and almost literally threw himself over Yixing, and she added, “Oh yeah, and your boyfriend.”

“Baby! I’m so sorry about all of this!” Yifan exclaimed against Yixing’s shoulder who didn’t even have a chance to react and only managed to throw his arms around Yifan’s waist.

“You should’ve seen him once you got dragged off by that guard,” Yili said with a smile on her lips, leaning against the doorframe, “It was better than in any drama.”

Yifan grunted but still clung onto Yixing, as if fearing that he would be gone again if he let go of him.

“Oh why, what did he say?” Luhan asked as he had joined them again and stood next to the princess.

“I quote: 'Why do you have to destroy everything good in my life?! Do you really hate me that much?!' - Oh, and my absolute favorite was his statement: 'If he needs to go, I’ll leave too!'”

"You're an idiot,“ Yixing mumbled into Yifan’s shoulder, but hugging him even tighter.

"He truly is, my brother. Because he clearly didn’t mind eventual consequences like father making him choose between his boyfriend of a day or the family."

"Oh my god, please tell me you didn’t chose the first,“ Yixing stated and looked back up to Yifan who inhaled sharply through his teeth and tried to avoid an answer - luckily, Yili was so eager to share this family drama, she gladly told the other two guys what Yifan’s decision had been.

"Of course he chose you. Which now kind of makes him homeless, because father said if he walked out the door with that decision, he best never come back again."

"And he walked out!“ Luhan concluded, which caused Yili to nod.

"Strode right out of the room without looking back, that really gave me chills!“

"Are you fucking kidding me?!“ Yixing cried out and felt his eyes water immediately again - so much for thinking the crying would’ve stopped.
Yili giggled and Yixing didn't see why she would be so amused about this matter. She turned back to the hallway and returned with another travel bag, much bigger than the other one containing Yixing’s stuff and placed it next to it.

"We kind of hoped you’d offer him a roof over his head until the old man calms down enough."

"Will the Emperor ever calm down though?“ Luhan asked, “Like, I mean it. It sounds like he’s disinherited him."

"Ooooh, yeah, no,“ Yili responded, "After all, Yifan is his son and he cares about his family. In his very special, tyrant way, but he cares. I just think he needs to calm down, I mean the pictures appeared out of nowhere. We usually get hints from our PR people in the palace when another scandal is coming our way but this hit us all like a train on the track. Just... let some time pass, and he’ll come by. Until then, Yifan needs a place to stay. And I mean, we could also rent a hotel room for him, but I thought why not bringing him here?"

"Well, I surely have no objections as long as these two lovebirds keep their sex noises down,“ Luhan said and shrugged his shoulders.

"Wow, really Luhan?“ Yifan asked and frowned, “That’s your biggest concern?“

"Yeah, my beauty sleep is holy to me!“

"I mean it works,“ Yili said and tapped Lu Han’s cheek with her finger, "Your skin is making me jealous!"

"Oh, I have this great skincare routine, I’ll show you if you want!“

While the two started rambling about skincare and skin types, Yifan faced Yixing again and rolled his eyes. Yixing had long started to cry again, something he found very embarrassing, but he also couldn’t just make it stop. It had always been like that, once he started to cry, there would be no end in sight for the next hour or so.

"Baby, why are you crying?“ Yifan asked and wiped Yixing’s tears away with his thumb.

"I can answer that, Yifan. Yixing is hiding behind a very very thick wall of sarcasm and sassy attitude but sometimes, all his bottled emotions need to get out of his system which then leads to him being this mess,“ Lu Han explained, "He once had a breakdown because he found cilantro in his food when he clearly had told the restaurant owner to not put it into his dish. He just downright put the bowl down in our living room and started bawling like a baby."

"Listen, I had a very rough week back then and I hate cilantro, okay?!“ Yixing tried to defend himself while he put Yifan’s hands down and wiped his own over his eyes.

"To be fair, cilantro is disgusting,“ Yili said.

Yifan showed a weak smile before he placed one hand in Yixing's neck and pulled him close again. With their temples touching, he said:

"I got you, Yixing. We can get through this."
in this very moment. The whole room fell silent for a moment, then Yili sighed and said:

"Luhan, let's go."

"Eh? Where are we going?"

The princess rolled her eyes, then she turned to the other one.

"We're going to have some coffee."

"But I don't drink coffee?"

"Then we'll have tea."

"Umm... I also don't really drink tea..."

"Jesus Christ, what kind of Chinese are you? Then I'll take you out for cake or whatever else, even a bottle of beer is fine by me!" Yili snapped and when Luhan still didn't get what she was up to, she nodded into the direction of her brother and his roommate.

It took a few more beats until Luhan understood and his face lit up.

"Ooooooh! I see! Just let me change my pants!"

When he left the room to exchange his grey sweatpants for something one could wear when hanging around with the princess, Yili looked at Yixing and asked:

"Is he always this slow?"

"Actually, his IQ is pretty high..." Yixing admitted.

"Huh!" Yili was clearly processing that information, then her attention snapped back to her brother "Okay, Yifan. So you'll stay here for a while. I'll talk to father. And we'll figure the rest out. I think mother and me will hold a press conference or something of the like about this matter."

Yifan nodded and mouthed a 'Thank You' before Luhan came back, this time wearing a pair of black jeans.

"Nice! So, see you guys around!" Yili cried out, grabbed Luhan's elbow and dragged him away.

When they had left and the door was closed behind them, Yifan leaned back and pulled Yixing with him, who just went with it and snuggled into the other's chest.

"This is so embarrassing," he then said with an annoyed huff, meaning his crying.

He was pretty sure his face was puffy and red and his eyes kept itching from all the salty tears surging. He'd probably be feeling totally drained and exhausted for the rest of the day.

"I think vomiting all over oneself because of drugs and alcohol is a little more embarrassing, so you're good."

Yifan's attempt to cheer him up made Yixing indeed chuckle for a second, before he buried his face again in the fabric of Yifan's coat.

"Yixing, listen," His voice vibrated in Yifan's chest and Yixing made an affirmative sound to indicate he was listening, "I'm sorry this happened."
"It's not your fault, why are you apologizing?"

Yixing looked up again. There were at least three or four people that came to his mind that might had to make the apology - starting from whoever the fuck took those pictures and sold them to a magazine, to the person who actually posted those pictures online, to the Emperor who abandoned not only him but his own son. Yifan wasn't in that list of people.

"I don't know, I can't help but to feel sorry. I should've been more careful yesterday. Yili was right, I should've checked if anyone was around."

"We both thought nobody was around. And whoever did this invaded our privacy. So I don't see why you should be apologizing!"

"Just let me, please." Yifan said and intertwined their fingers only to give Yixing a kiss on the back of his own hand. When he looked back at Yixing, he added, "I really want to make this work, Yixing."

These words felt like soothing balm for his soul. Yixing finally managed to show a soft smile that only indicated his dimple before he squeezed Yifan's hand and said:

"So do I."

"You know, when you're actually being nice and sort of romantic, my heart does this little weird thing where it skips a beat..."

"Jesus Christ!"

Yifan's comment did the trick though and finally, a faint laughter broke from Yixing's lips but he immediately shot up and bumped Yifan's shoulder.

"Get rid of your ugly coat, I'll see if I can make some space in my closet for your stuff."

While Yixing walked to his room, he heard Yifan shouting:

"I love you, baby!"

"Don't throw that phrase around like that!" Yixing shouted back while he started to move his clothes around so Yifan could put his into one drawer and the left side of the closet.

"Oh come on, don't be like that after what we just went through!" Yifan said when he came into Yixing's room, without his coat but carrying his travel bag.

"Still. You can't say you love me when we've been together for not even 24 hours."

"Suit yourself. I'll repeat my words later then."

Yixing rolled his eyes that were still burning and stepped aside when he had made some space so Yifan could put his clothes in. Watching him hanging his dress shirts into his closet felt weird, but besides that weird feeling, he also felt at peace in some sort of odd way. Yifan was here with him, and he had made the choice to be with him, not minding the current situation. Yixing decided to leave him for a while and went back to the living room to check on his stuff that Yili brought over - his wallet, his camera, and his laptop. When he checked his wallet if he had enough change to repay Luhan for the taxi, his cellphone went off again. To his surprise, it was his mother calling him, and not his boss. He heaved a sigh, because he didn't really know if he wanted to actually talk to her, but answered nevertheless and put her on speaker because he usually understood her thin voice better.
like that on the phone.

"Ma, hi," he greeted.

"Yixing. I'm going crazy!! You haven't answered any of my calls!"

"Wait... you've been calling me the whole morning?" Yixing asked with a surprised squeal and slipped into his local accent.

"Of course I have! I got up around nine today and our neighbor has been sending me some weird pictures on WeChat that look like Wu Yifan is kissing you! What is going on?!"

"Ummm..."

"I swear to god Yixing, you better answer me right now!"

"Ma... you know that I've been writing about him, right?"

"Yes."

"Yeah. So. I don't know. Yeah. That is me on the pictures..."

There was dead silence on the line and Yixing didn't even hear his mother breathe for a second. When he was about to ask if she was still there, she yelled into the phone:

"You better NOT BE KIDDING YOUR MOTHER!"

"I'm not! He's... my boyfriend."

Saying those words out loud was easier than he had thought and he felt the corners of his lips curling into a smile. Maybe that was the only good thing coming from this - to be able to openly call Yifan what he was. His boyfriend.

His.

"I need to sit down," his mother babbled, then she said, "How, Yixing? I always thought that this man is only into girls..."

"I know. I was surprised too, Ma. But... he's really different from what everyone thinks. He's got a lot of good sides."

She sighed and Yixing heard her shuffling around in the room, even though she had claimed to take a seat prior.

"Have you any idea how many people have knocked on my door and asked me if this is true?"

"I'm sorry you're being dragged into that... that wasn't planned."

"I figured. It doesn't look like you two were aware of any of your surroundings," she said dryly, reminding Yixing who he got his sassy attitude from, "I just... okay, listen, boy. I'm not shocked that you're seeing a man. It's just... who it is. He's trouble."

"He's..." Yixing started and tried to find a way to defend Yifan, but he realized that no words would ever make her change her mind for the time being.

In the end, Yifan was known to play with people, to party hard every day of the week and being
good for nothing. It was clear why his mother, who had only met one of his boyfriends ever, was reacting this way. If he wasn't involved in this matter like he was, he'd probably not understand either.

"I just want you to be happy, love. I don't want anyone to hurt you."

"I am sure he's not trying to hurt me."

She didn't respond to that and sighed once more.

"God, when your grandmother finds out, she'll surely go into cardiac arrest... and if she'll ever survive, she won't stop bothering us until you bring that prince down to visit us."

"Please, don't. He's already hinted he wants to see her in our village."

"Can you IMAGINE? She still lets all her chicken run freely in the house, he'd probably die of shock... or, I don't know... the thought of Wu Yifan setting foot into our village is just so weird..."

"It really is," Yixing snorted when the image flashed in front of his inner eye.

"Oh boy. When you came out to us I never thought we'd end up like this..." His mother whined and kept walking up and down in the room.

"I didn't think so either, really."

"What did... oh my god... do the Emperor and the Empress know?!"

"Oh Ma, that didn't go that well... and I don't really want to talk about it."

"Where they mean to you?!!"

"Let's just say a lot of things happened and I'm still trying to wrap my head around this. Everything is weird. I'm also not sure if I can keep my job, Ma. I'm just... so confused about everything."

"I see. But honey, no matter what's going to happen, you've got our whole support, you know that, right?"

"I know. And I'm thankful for that."

Yixing's mother didn't know what else to say and right when another moment of silence broke out between them, Yifan peeked into the room with a grin on his face as if he had overheard the whole conversation.

"Ma, I think I need to hang up now."

"Oh. Sure."

"Hello, Mrs. Zhang!" Yifan then cried out as he let himself plop down next to Yixing on the couch.

"Yifan!" Yixing scolded and his mother let out a squeal.

"He's WITH YOU?! Has he heard what we said?! Oh my! Oh my! Why didn't you TELL ME HE WAS WITH YOU?!"

"He wasn't in the room when you called!" Yixing defended himself with an angry look shot towards Yifan who kept grinning and said:
"I just kind of busted into the conversation, Mrs. - I'm rude like that, excuse that behavior please!"

Yixing's mother let out a stammer when she fully recognized Yifan's voice.

"I... My prince..."

"No no no, please, I'm just Yifan! And I know that you're worrying about your son and I totally understand. But... I'm asking you to trust me that I would never dare to hurt him. I promise!"

"You... I... I need a moment to process that..."

"I'm serious. I see why you are rather skeptical. But... um... actually... my parents do not really approve of him and me. And it would be great if you gave your son and me your blessings. It would make it easier... knowing that at least his family supports him."

"They don't?" She asked and Yixing heard that certain tone in her voice when a thing hit her hard.

She's never been a very affectionate woman when it came to physical things like hugs or kisses or cuddling. Yixing had never looked for her arms when he had been feeling sad. Kisses between them had always been rather awkward. They had never had that deep and profound bond since he spend most of his childhood with his grandparents. Yixing has the theory that because of him spending his childhood away from her, both of them missed a lot of opportunities to bond like a mother would with her kid. Despite all of this, she was a very emotional woman that would do anything for her son and she would never dare to disapprove of his choices.

"No. They don't. It's messy," Yifan said and Yixing patted his shoulder when he realized that admitting that his parents failed him seemed to be harder than he had imagined.

"... I'm sorry to hear that, dear," she said, "... that must be hard for you."

"Yeah, we had a rough morning, Ma," Yixing chipped in, hoping she'd get his hint.

A moment passed in which his mother seemed to be thinking, then she said:

"Very well then. Yifan. I've decided to take any of Yixing's boyfriends in as one of my own kids, I'm not going to make an exception for you. Just make sure to treat him well."

"I will do my best."

She let out a noise that sounded like she was approving of Yifan's words, then she cleared her throat and said:

"Well. Maybe it's best if I check on your grandmother, Yixing. See if she's still alive or if she's died already because of all the things that happened over night."

"I hope she's fine!" Yifan yelled and Yixing smacked his thigh.

"Stop trying to play perfect son-in-law," the younger muttered and shut him up with those words.

"Yeah, I hope she's fine too..." Yixing's mother mumbled, then she added, "Okay, I'll hang up now. You two... um... well... go ahead with whatever you wanted to do..."

Yixing rolled his eyes because his mother was clearly trying too hard to be 'the cool mom', but when they hung up, Yifan said:

"She's lovely!"
Yixing didn't answer and looked at Yifan whose spirits seemed to be lifted after this call. He showed a crooked smile, then Yifan voiced his thoughts:

"It's nice to see that she supports you. I mean. We've seen the total opposite just a few hours ago."

"Ugh. That was really horrible, actually."

"Hm."

They leaned back into the couch again and Yixing leisurely threw one leg over Yifan's knees.

"What now?" Yifan asked and started to run his fingers over Yixing's thigh.

"I think I really need to write something. Like. A blog entry. Or that article. And hand that in, even though the deadline is long over."

"Do you think that would pacify your boss?"

"Absolutely not," Yixing responded, "But it would keep me away from Twitter and Weibo."

Yifan chuckled, then he leaned over and gave Yixing a kiss on the cheek.

"Then go ahead. I'll just watch Netflix or something until you're done."

The fact that he didn't try to be a prick made Yixing smile and he kissed Yifan's lips before he said:

"If you promise to not bother me you can also just stick around."

So just like that, Yixing had gotten out his Macbook and his camera to get the deed done, while Yifan fetched his iPad, put earphones on and continued watching the next Orange is the new Black episodes he needed to catch up on, sitting next to Yixing and leaning against him with his back turned to him. Completely ignoring how all hell broke loose around them felt oddly comforting to Yixing who tried to be as professional during his work as possible. When he was done with his article about the party and sent it to his boss, who still hadn't tried to reach out to him, Yifan was done with two more episodes. Yixing decided to give him another hour for the next episode and dared to check his blog. The comments were a clusterfuck of all sorts of people telling him to either go kill himself or that they were happy for him - it was all sorts of extreme opinions. Maybe because he was used to the discourse on the internet and he knew how media, and especially social media, worked, the very crass and negative comments didn't bother him too much. He started another entry and decided to write down some sort of explanation, hoping it would help to settle the situation.

Hi btw I made a twitter account for my writing so if you want to follow my petty ass feel free to do so. Sometimes I'm even funny on there!!

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