

### three entries to the den

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# three entries to the den

by [Piyo13](#)

## Summary

Wei Ying dies; at the same time, elsewhere, new life is being born.

Or: Wei Ying wakes up as a Gusu rabbit.

## Notes

so many thanks to [b\\_ofdale](#) who listened to me scream about this at like 3am months ago

in the end, this just became a series of musings about wei wuxian? i don't know, don't ask me!  
this is my first (published) fic with wwx, though! so that's fun. set in novel-verse, also

title from the saying, "the clever rabbit has three entrances to its den", which i thought given that wei ying will now have 3 lives instead of two was rather apt

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

Wei Ying knows that breaking the seal worked, because as soon as the two halves crumble in his hands, he *feels* the resentful energy turn on him. Now that he's no longer in control of it, it's identified him as not only the one who tried to bend it to his will, but also—the only non-cultivator left alive, on this godsforsaken spit of hell he's been calling home for the past three years.

In other words: easy prey.

(It's not an easy death.)

The pain fades, eventually, though Wei Ying suspects that that has more to do with his nerves being completely severed than any actual end to the stream of fierce corpses doing their best to tear his body apart—can't feel pain if there's no body left to feel it, haha!—and Wei Ying closes what's left of his eyes, ready and willing to go down the road of death, whatever that will mean for him.

Truth be told, he's been ready for quite a while.

He's been so *tired*, lately. It's almost a relief to sink into the darkness, to be able to finally *let go*—

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He wakes up again. He's pretty sure he wasn't supposed to, but then again—fierce corpses, even ones who've regained sentience, don't remember what it's like *beyond*, so Wei Ying has just about as much idea as anyone else, what this whole afterlife deal is like.

It still seems pretty nice, for the afterlife. He's warm, it smells *safe*, and while everything is dark and he can't see, he knows there's other bodies pressed in close to his, even if his body feels wrong. He probably doesn't actually *have* a body, just the echo of a soul that accounts for his sensations. Wei Ying kind of wishes he had a brush and paper, to note this all down with for the future, before remembering he won't *have* a future.

The liquid food he gets every once in a while is still pretty weird, though.

It's an indeterminate amount of time later—Wei Ying is still *tired*, and he drifts in and out of what little awareness exists in this dark in-between, catching up on three years' worth of painless sleep—that Wei Ying's eyes open, and he realizes that maybe, possibly, *potentially*, he's not quite as dead as he should be.

Which would be just par for the course, really.

*Apparently* Wei Ying is just cursed to attempt the impossible, even when he doesn't particularly want to, because, unless his newly-opened eyes are deceiving him, he is currently a rabbit. He struggles to lift his head and look around him.

The—their burrow isn't actually pitch black, just dim, and Wei Ying can make out where the light starts to become more intense, probably an opening into the rest of the world. All around him are—are they his siblings? Can he have rabbit siblings? Is he the only human

here? What if *all* of them are humans, and rabbits have always been self-aware and Wei Ying has *eaten* them—

If Wei Ying gets out of this alive, he's never eating rabbit again.

The light dims even further, just for a moment, and Wei Ying's ears twitch without his meaning to. Then the darkness resolves itself into a larger rabbit, who smells *safe* and *warm* and like *food*—

Oh.

Wei Ying's been drinking *milk*.

...he's not really sure how to feel about that, actually.

In the end, he doesn't feel much at all, because the mother rabbit (*his* mother rabbit?) approaches and some base instinct takes over, and then Wei Ying is warm and fed and still so tired.

And a rabbit. Rabbits probably don't have any important events to deal with. If he lets himself sleep, it won't be the end of the world...

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It's not the end of the world. In fact, Wei Ying spends quite a lot of time just playing around with the other rabbits, learning to move his body in rabbit-y ways (which is much harder than it looks, he'd like to note) and learning how to understand other rabbits.

He also spends a lot of time sleeping, but either way—he's pretty sure that none of the other rabbits are actually people (thankfully), because he's tried scratching out characters into the dirt and no one had noticed. Or, well, one of his siblings had noticed, but then they'd peed on it, so.

They leave the nest a few times, too, as they all get increasingly large and staying in the burrow, while safe, is starting to get a little cramped. Wei Ying doesn't like the way he tenses up every time a bird flies overhead, though. Dumb rabbit instincts. He used to *hunt* birds, and now look at him! How the tables turn, indeed.

But all in all, it's not too bad an existence. Definitely not bad compared to the Burial Mounds, with their, you know, shambling fierce corpse army and overabundance of radishes.

Ah, that thought makes him sad. They're all dead now, Wen Qing and Wen Ning and Granny Wen and Uncle Four and even little A-Yuan, Wei Ying's personal radish.

He misses them.

He misses them, and he misses shijie, and Jiang Cheng, and even Lan Zhan, even though Lan Zhan probably hates him still. And Jiang Cheng hates him, too.

Shijie probably wouldn't hate him, but then, she's dead.



She's dead, and Wei Ying's to blame, and is it really any wonder everyone *else* hates him?

He shakes his head.

Rabbits can't even cry, apparently.

Wei Ying sort of wishes he could.

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It's a while later—Wei Ying's not entirely following the passage of time correctly, he'll admit, but he suspects it's been on the order of two or three months, judging by how large he and his siblings have gotten compared to their mother—when Wei Ying's explorations take him outside the nest near midday rather than dusk or dawn.

He freezes, because there's a *person* in the meadow, a *person* who is huge, and tall, and clad head-to-toe in white and wearing a forehead ribbon and—

The person turns.

Wei Ying breathes out, his heart thumping rapidly in his chest for all that his rabbit body has frozen solid at the threat. It's not Lan Zhan; it's Zewu-jun, and he's smiling kindly at Wei Ying, cooing gently as he holds out—

Is that a *carrot*?

Wei Ying's nose twitches, Lan Xichen's smile broadens, and Wei Ying decides that yeah, okay, Lan Xichen probably just thinks he's a regular rabbit, so he can go ahead and take the *carrot*, of all things. It's fine.

He *desperately* wants something that isn't grass and hay to eat, now that he knows it's an option.

And so he bounds forward, taking the carrot as delicately as he can, and before he knows it he's been scooped up into Zewu-jun's arms, cuddled against him, and it would be embarrassing except that one, Wei Ying has never had a single ounce of shame to begin with, and that hasn't changed; two, Wei Ying is currently a rabbit and Zewu-jun has no idea so it *can't* be embarrassing; and three, Wei Ying now has a *carrot*.

It's *so good*.

It's so good, in fact, that Wei Ying only realizes Lan Xichen is talking to him when something gently ruffles behind his ears.

“That's a good little rabbit, I bet you were very hungry, hm?” Lan Xichen says. Wei Ying pauses his chewing, well aware that his cheeks are full of carrot. The hand behind his ears starts stroking down his back and—yes, that's quite nice, actually. *Really* nice. “Good, eat up, you're still growing!”

Wei Ying keeps chewing, and Zewu-jun keeps petting him, and Wei Ying's pretty sure he takes a nap or blacks out or something because next time he's aware, Mother Rabbit is

nudging him back towards the safety of the nest.

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After that, Wei Ying starts to pay more attention to time of day—Zewu-jun, if he comes, will almost always come when the sun is at or near its peak, and usually he only brings more of the hay but sometimes he has carrots or lettuce or something else that *isn't hay*. And, okay, his pets are very good.

Occasionally, even Lan Qiren himself will show up—he never comes at predictable times, though, and now that Wei Ying's over the shock of knowing that *Old Man Lan* of all people is sneaking around to feed rabbits in his spare time (that's gotta be at least three rules broken, right there, and oh, Wei Ying *wishes* he could tell someone about this), he has to acknowledge that Lan Qiren isn't actually awful company.

Which is to say, he sits in the meadow and pets whoever's near him, and then, as if he's got appointments to keep, he leaves. He does always give everyone a perfunctory bow on the way out, which Wei Ying appreciates. Even if it's only out of habit.

And then, one day, someone arrives who is neither Zewu-jun nor Lan Qiren, and at first Wei Ying doesn't recognize them. The person is limping, strongly, bare feet flashing above the grass and stone pathway, dressed in simple white underclothes that are loose around them. They're clearly a Lan because they're wearing a forehead ribbon—

Wei Ying freezes.

This isn't *just someone*, this is Lan Zh—

Lan Wangji.

But... the Lan Wangji that Wei Ying knows is nothing like this. This Lan Wangji is stumbling, like he's drunk, and his expression (he has an expression!) is... distraught. Pained, maybe.

And then Lan Wangji *collapses*, and Wei Ying's sprinting over as fast as his tiny paws can carry him, which is actually quite fast after all.

When he approaches, the cause of Lan Wangji's collapse is immediately clear—the entire back of the loose white robe he's wearing is soaked through in red, the sharp tang of blood filling Wei Ying's nostrils and urging him to *run run run* even as he forces himself closer, placing a paw on Lan Wangji's shoulder and pushing as hard as he can.

Lan Wangji doesn't so much as stir.

Wei Ying's dimly aware that he's making some sort of noise, frantically running around Lan Wangji and being stupidly, utterly incapable of helping. Like this, he can't even see what the cause of the blood *is*—only that there's lots of it, staining the tips of his toes and the pads of his feet dark where he's touched Lan Wangji.

Finally, *finally*, just when Wei Ying's certain he's about to lose his mind, Lan Wangji's fingers twitch, and his eyes open long enough to see Wei Ying. His fingers jerk, and Wei Ying takes that as his cue to get closer; he brushes his head against Lan Wangji's fingers, because he's a *rabbit* and *Lan Zhan likes rabbits* and as long as Lan Zhan doesn't know it's him, he won't refuse, right?

And—

And—

And oh, no, Lan Zhan's crying. He's crying and tears are rolling off his nose into the grass and Wei Ying *doesn't know what to do*—

And then Lan Zhan passes out again, his eyes rolling backwards in slow motion, and before Wei Ying can freak out again there's a clamor from down the path and then suddenly there's five Lan disciples led by none other than Zewu-jun in the field.

Dimly, Wei Ying's conscious of the fact that all the other rabbits are hiding, and that if he doesn't want to blow his cover he should probably join them, but in practice? It's only Zewu-jun's gentle hands picking him up and moving him to the side that get him away from Lan Zhan long enough for the disciples to pick him up gingerly, avoiding his back.

They start to walk away, and the second Zewu-jun sets him down, Wei Ying makes a run for it, only for a spiritual barrier to pop up out of nowhere and stop him in his tracks. Zewu-jun steps neatly through a gap in it, off to Wei Ying's left, and then shoots him a sad look when Wei Ying tries to follow.

He seals the enclosure Wei Ying didn't even realize he was in with a flare of spiritual energy, and Wei Ying can do nothing but watch as Lan Zhan is carried away, unconscious and bleeding, into the depths of the Cloud Recesses.

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The next time Zewu-jun visits, Wei Ying makes a point to ignore him.

Given that Wei Ying is one of almost three dozen perfectly white rabbits in the meadow, the odds of Lan Xichen even having noticed this are slim to none, but it makes Wei Ying feel better anyways.

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The next time *Hanguang-jun* visits, he looks much better. It's several months later, in fact, and the broad-leaved trees of the Gusu mountains have seen their leaves fade from green to brilliant gold to scarlet, and then come to rest against the ground. It's colder, too, and even Wei Ying's thick winter fur struggles to ward off the most biting of winds.

Lan Zhan is dressed still in pure white, layers that look thick and warm even from the ground. His movements are still stiff, and there's a certain *something* about his face that looks tense, but at least he's moving with purpose and the back of his robes aren't completely soaked through. An improvement from last time!

Also he's got a little qiankun pouch that he's slowly but surely pulling dried grasses and hay out of, so, you know. Thoughtful man. Wei Ying approaches, ostensibly to nibble at the grass but mostly because... it's Lan Zhan. And Lan Zhan may have hated Wei Ying and possibly even been glad he died, but Lan Zhan doesn't *know* that it's Wei Ying in front of him right now.

It's fine.

It's still fine when Lan Zhan sits down in the lotus position and holds out a small bundle of grass in Wei Ying's direction, a clear enticement for Wei Ying to come closer.

It's more than fine when Lan Zhan gently scoops Wei Ying into his lap, holding him loosely enough that if he wanted to make a run for it he could; Wei Ying considers it, but in the end, Lan Zhan's careful hand is stroking him gently, head to tail, and Lan Zhan's lap is warm and soft compared to the frozen ground, and Lan Zhan's feeding him sprigs of grass, like this is some sort of one-stop-shop bathhouse, or something. Without the bath, obviously, but the warmth suffuses through him anyways.

Wei Ying stays put where he is.

He'll have plenty of time to regret his life choices and the fact that he's essentially *lying* to Lan Zhan's face... later.

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Winter melts back into spring, and Lan Zhan abruptly stops coming. Wei Ying doesn't think it's his wounds, because he was finally starting to move with less stiffness as the days started to grow longer; but now the first of the migratory birds are returning and Lan Zhan *isn't coming anymore*.

It's been a week, already; even in the deepest winter, Lan Zhan had never been absent more than two or three days.

Wei Ying still hasn't figured out how to tell Lan Zhan that it's *him*, that's *he's* the bunny who so firmly competes to be in the one that Lan Zhan picks up, that he—that he'd understand, if Lan Zhan wanted to take back every single pat he'd ever given him...

In a fit of desperation, Wei Ying starts dragging bits of hay around in the meadow, trying to form characters in the soggy field. He gets halfway through 'where' before, turning back, he sees that his siblings have started eating his painstakingly-arranged first character.

Angrily, he chases them off, but that further scatters the bits of hay he was using, and when he returns there's already someone else eating the remnants. Wei Ying huffs and flops over, thinking menacing thoughts about how good rabbit stew tastes at everyone in the meadow.

They don't even care.

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He gets his answer a few days later, when Zewu-jun comes back to visit, bag full of something green and leafy that Wei Ying probably eschewed when he was a human and able

to choose his own foods, but that smells mouthwatering now, especially compared to the dry hay they've been surviving on for so long. He and all the other rabbits make their way over; Wei Ying's a little offended that Zewu-jun picks up someone else, but no matter. He's still within earshot.

"His seclusion started this week," Lan Xichen says absently, stroking the other rabbit. "The healers finally proclaimed his back healed enough that he could withstand it."

So! The great Hanguang-jun was in seclusion! Wei Ying hops a little circle. *He's not dead!*

Truthfully, that doesn't answer any of Wei Ying's other questions, such as 'how the hell did Lan Wangji end up with so many wounds that it took him on the order of months to recover', but at least he's not dead.

Not that Wei Ying has any right to be happy about it, but, you know. Lan Zhan's disappearance and now proof of life are the most exciting things that have happened in this little meadow for ages.

Zewu-jun looks very contemplative, his eyes unfocused even as he tilts his head down towards the rabbit in his arms. "I'm still worried about him, though. He hasn't—he seems—" Lan Xichen pauses and draws a deep breath, and Wei Ying can hear, over the soft crunch of fresh leaves in his mouth, the way that breath shudders its way back out. "He's so distant. Like a—"

He falls silent, then, and Wei Ying is left to wonder what and how Lan Xichen meant to finish that sentence. Like a what? A statue? The jade that they're likened to so often? A ghost?

Lan Xichen provides no more answers before leaving.

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The seasons change, several times, and at some point Wei Ying forgets to count so he'll just have to live with the uncertainty of the passage of time. Lan Wangji hasn't come back yet, but Lan Xichen still visits, and today Wei Ying is even awake for it.

He jostles a few other rabbits out of the way, happily taking the proffered carrot. If he thinks about it too hard, he really has sunk low, delighted about *carrots*, of all things.

But Wei Ying's also pretty good at ignoring inconvenient thoughts, so he munches away happily, and after a while, Lan Xichen pets him a few times. Wei Ying wiggles his tail. There's just something so *nice* about having his back stroked like that. Warm and comforting.

"I'm glad that he has you, at least," Lan Xichen says, out of the blue, and Wei Ying abruptly can do nothing but laugh, silently and hysterically, at the sheer irony. If only Zewu-jun knew the truth!

Wei Ying half-heartedly wishes he *could* speak, for all he knows that it's impossible, simply to disabuse Lan Xichen of his ideas. If Lan Wangji knew...!

Here's the thing: Wei Ying might be a little obtuse, socially, but he's also not unaware of how he comes off. And how the things he does come off. And... yes, there were mitigating circumstances, namely an entire war going on and, well, the whole Burial Mounds experience was a *little* traumatizing, maybe, and the loss of his and his siblings' entire sect, and so on—but Wei Ying certainly could have handled it *better*.

(He winces. The bar for 'better handled' is... low.)

Telling Lan Wangji to his face to fuck off had probably been the final nail in the coffin for Lan Wangji.

Lan Wangji deserved *better* than to be senselessly yelled at by someone half out of his mind with bloodlust and revenge and pain. Like, at the very least an explanation, something about rules being stifling and Wei Ying needing to protect his family and stuff.

And, well, then the whole Wen debacle had happened, and Wei Ying had known even then that the cultivation world at large wouldn't back him, not when they were the ones to *orchestrate* those torture camps, not when he was breaking every taboo there was to break, and—

Anyways. The one dinner they'd had together in Yiling had been kind of nice.

Hopefully Lan Wangji will have remembered that, at least, and maybe not hate Wei Ying totally, even though he kept interrupting their silence to talk. Not even A-Yuan had—

Ah, but thinking of A-Yuan always makes Wei Ying sad. Best to simply... focus on eating his carrot and soliciting the largest amount of head scratches he can from Lan Xichen.

What the Twin Jades don't know won't hurt them, especially not when there's no way for them to find it out.

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Some weeks later, Lan Wangji returns.

He's pale, even for him, a pallor that verges more into sickly than jade-like; but he's alive, and he's bringing food as he always does, and he's walking normally, and his expression seems free from pain.

Wei Ying races around him in circles until he's picked up, despite everything. He's always been shameless, anyways, why should that change with a different form?

(The relief he feels at seeing Lan Wangji again is... more than he'd expected.)

After a hazy amount of time, Lan Wangji sets Wei Ying back down, and sits crossed-legged on the ground. His guqin appears in his hands, and he starts to play while Wei Ying and a few others linger close.

The song he plays is... haunting, is perhaps the only word. It's infused with spiritual power, washing over Wei Ying in ripples and waves as the song progresses, Lan Wangji's fingers flying over the strings at times, lingering tenderly at others. Wei Ying wishes half-heartedly

that he'd spent more time learning about the spiritual music of Gusu, when he'd been attending lessons—he could play the dizi well enough, but that was only resentful energy, which took a different touch than regular qi.

As a rabbit, now, Wei Ying can't tell what the song is for; just that, as Lan Zhan plays longer and longer, his shoulders drop and his face goes even blanker.

Whatever this song is supposed to do, it's not doing it, and Wei Ying is powerless to help.

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Lan Zhan always brings his qin after that. The haunting melody ingrains itself into Wei Ying's mind, echoing there even when Lan Zhan is absent; but still, the song doesn't work, and Wei Ying does his best to provide cuddles to make up for it.

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One day, one terrifying day, Wei Ying is rolling in a patch of loose dirt—it feels nice, okay!—when unfamiliar-yet-familiar footsteps sound down the paved rock path. Wei Ying rolls onto his stomach and shakes out his fur, scratching a last clump of dust out of his ear.

And then he looks out to the path, right as someone clad in purple walks into the meadow.

The clarity bell at Jiang Cheng's hip doesn't so much as make a sound, not even when he flops down into the grass. Jiang Cheng's gotten better at walking quietly, then. His bell always used to chime when he was angry... though, he doesn't look particularly angry, right now. Definitely not angry when a rabbit approaches him, and he gently scoops it up, scratching it behind the ears.

Wei Ying isn't sure he should be seeing this, but... he's a rabbit now! It's fine, right?

Besides, he does this to Lan Zhan, he can't hold double-standards for Jiang Cheng, of all people.

"He used to love you guys, you know," Jiang Cheng says, holding up his chosen rabbit and baby-talking right at it. Then he sighs, and lowers the rabbit, letting it rest in his lap as he pets it. Cautiously, Wei Ying hops closer, nose twitching. Jiang Cheng stares off into the middle distance for a while, before his eyes refocus.

It's been... years, even before he was reborn as a rabbit, since Wei Ying has seen Jiang Cheng with such a peaceful expression on his face. Even when he sleeps, Jiang Cheng tends to wear a scowl, as if he's fighting a battle in his dreams, too—

Well. If his dreams after the razing of Lotus Pier and Sunshot are anything like Wei Ying's used to be, maybe he is.

But that's not the point, the point is that Jiang Cheng almost looks *relaxed*, sitting in the field with a bunny in his lap and several others curiously approaching, and Wei Ying misses his brother so much it *hurts* sometimes. This was his best friend! For almost his whole life! And then...

And then everything went to shit. But whatever. Wei Ying won't regret what he gave up, and there's no point now, anyways; rabbits shouldn't feel regret, or something. (If he hops just a little closer, enough that he can brush the Yunmeng purple robes with his paws, well, that's between him and the robes.)

"Frankly, I'm surprised he didn't try to eat more of you," Jiang Cheng continues. Just as Wei Wuxian huffs indignantly—how dare Jiang Cheng say something like that in front of the rabbits!—Jiang Cheng also snorts. "He'd've scolded me for saying that, too. But he's gone, now, so you've just got me left."

Wei Ying knows he's the one being talked about—who else?—but Jiang Cheng's tone still isn't... angry, or anything. He just seems...

Tired.

Not particularly older, cultivators never do; but there's a heaviness around his eyes, a weight on the set of his shoulders even as he slouches. Wei Ying has no doubt he's running himself ragged trying to do his best for the Jiang Sect. That's always been how Jiang Cheng has been.

Wei Ying presses closer, the warmth of Jiang Cheng's leg comforting and grounding. Jiang Cheng breathes out sharply and leans back for a second, looking up at the sparse clouds in the sky before turning back to the rabbits and meadow around him.

"Ah, you're rabbits, you won't say anything, will you?" Jiang Cheng stares at the one in his lap, as if waiting for an answer. "Mm," he says after a bit. "Alright then, I'll tell you. I..." he takes a big breath, not quite shuddering, but close. "I miss him." Jiang Cheng's hand speeds up its petting.

"I miss him, despite everything, and I hate him for leaving, but I... it feels awful to say that I missed him even before he was gone." He falls quiet, and Wei Ying listens in silence, unmoving.

This... was not what he was expecting, not in the least.

*He'd missed Jiang Cheng, obviously. But... that it was reciprocated?*

Jiang Cheng ends up not saying anything else before leaving, carefully setting the rabbit in his lap back down before getting up and dusting off his robes. He leaves with as little fanfare as he'd arrived with, though Wei Ying trails him back to the entrance, until the barrier that stops the rabbits from leaving.

He watches his brother disappear down the path, and wonders what else has been happening in all these years he's been gone.

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Sometimes Lan Zhan doesn't come alone, and those are Wei Ying's favorite times. Not that he doesn't like hearing Lan Zhan play that hauntingly sad song on the guqin, but whenever he brings company, it's usually two young boys who are loud and happy and carefree (for Lans) and so much fun to run around the meadow and play with.



Wei Ying still doesn't really have any idea who they are—they call Lan Zhan 'Hanguang-jun', but they're also the first small kids Wei Ying has seen in the Cloud Recesses like, ever, so.

They're instructed to be gentle and shown how to pick up rabbits (Wei Ying always tries to be the first), and they're funny and one is loud where the other is quiet and Wei Ying *loves* them.

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A few visits in, he finds out their names: Sizhui, and Jingyi.

Good kids.

Wei Ying wishes A-Yuan could meet them.

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Sometimes, when Lan Zhan brings the qin out, now, he plays something different—this song, Wei Ying recognizes, as if through a fever dream. Trapped in a cave with a Xuanwu of Slaughter, his head throbbing with fever and his chest aching with a burn and the rest of his body too numb and exhausted to feel anything—

Lan Zhan had never told him the name of that song, in the end. Whenever he plays it, though, Wei Ying stops, and listens, and wishes that things had maybe gone different.

---

The seasons keep rolling.

The rabbits are rarely left more than a day without people visiting, and Wei Ying grows accustomed to seeing Lan Xichen, Lan Qiren, and Lan Zhan regularly; the children visit occasionally and Jiang Cheng, sporadically. Every once in a while a new person will appear, stumbling into the field by accident, and some even return regularly for many weeks, but few rarely stay as long as the Twin Jades and their uncle.

Leaves change, and the children are fully teenagers now; Lan Zhan leaves his qin behind more often than not, and one day, Wei Ying wakes with the awful realization in his bones that he's an *old* rabbit, now. His joints twinge when the rain whips too sharply (though recently, Lan Xichen had built a hutch out in the field. Wei Ying makes full use of it), he's surprised more often than not when someone appears in the field, not having heard them approach, and he no longer has it in him to run around the whole day.

It's infuriating, because his mind is sharp and awake as ever (he hopes. Not being able to scribble down notes and drawings has forced him to become rather adept at mental visualization, at least), but his body...

Did he truly deserve to live two lives, watching his body fall out from under him?!

Actually, he doesn't want an answer to that. The answer's probably yes. But that still doesn't make the experience any more fun! At least it's less painful than the resentful energy was.

He can't even pray for a fierce corpse or a fox to end it quickly for him, this time—the Lans guard their field too well for that.

Wei Ying burrows his face in a clump of hay. Maybe if he doesn't move, time won't spot him.

---

The day Wei Ying dies, he wakes up in the morning knowing it.

There's a lot less resentful energy this time, a lot fewer swords and corpses clamoring for his blood, but the weariness, the general air of malaise—Wei Ying recognizes it. He gives himself all of breakfast (only the greenest of shoots, please and thank you) to mope about it.

In the end, isn't he lucky to have lived such a peaceful life? Long for a rabbit, probably. He'll be grateful for what he has, and what he's had.

He spends his time out in the field. The sun is shining, warm against Wei Ying's fur, and he luxuriates in the feel of it, in the soft whistling of the grass under the breeze, in the scents that build an entire world around him—

Sandalwood incense tinges the air, and Wei Ying opens his eyes to see Lan Zhan walking towards the meadow, his usual qiankun pouch packed with food in hand.

Wei Ying isn't sure that he understands Lan Zhan any more than he did when he was still human; he can't ask questions, now, and will never find out what the haunting melody was, or why Lan Zhan was in seclusion back at the beginning of Wei Ying's second life, or whose kids the kids are, or if Lan Zhan still hates him—

Wei Ying's spent years being greedy and shameless, stealing Lan Zhan's attention even though he knows he didn't warrant it. Getting into Lan Zhan's space and observing his reactions, the way his face—which Wei Ying had once thought stiff and unrevealing—reacts to everything, but so minutely that it'd barely be noticeable if one wasn't looking for it.

Wei Ying wishes he'd taken time to examine it when he was still human.

He forces himself to his feet as Lan Zhan sits down, and makes his way over. Lan Zhan offers him a chunk of carrot, which Wei Ying happily accepts, and he huddles close to Lan Zhan while he eats. Lan Zhan is even warmer than the sunlight, and his hand where it strokes Wei Ying's back is comforting and safe.

He doesn't talk much, but then, Lan Zhan never has. He talks with his qin, mostly, when he's here; today, he seems to not have brought it.

It's nice, just existing like this next to Lan Zhan.

Wei Ying's going to miss it.

Eventually, though, Lan Zhan gets up, gives Wei Ying one last gentle pat, and then leaves. Wei Ying lets himself stay put where he is until the grass fully springs up from the imprint of Lan Zhan sitting there, and by then, he's ready.

There's some bushes in the far corner of the enclosure, and Wei Ying drags himself under one of them, his breathing heavy and laborious. It's definitely time, and he knows it, and probably the other rabbits know it too, so he doesn't have any problems with letting himself close his eyes.

The darkness is welcoming, just like it was last time—he's not as tired, not as *broken*, but the bliss of nothingness...

How lucky, Wei Ying has been, to have lived two lives!

---

“Wake up! You think you can play dead!?”

Wei Ying's eyes flew open as he received a kick in the ribs. For a second, his limbs felt wrong, and then another kick rolled him over and his hands—his hands!—fell into view. He stifled back a groan.

A new body, *again*?

## End Notes

last bit has some words borrowed from the exr translation!

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