

eight million eight hundred and eighty thousand merits

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/36549172) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/36549172>.

Rating:	Not Rated
Archive Warning:	Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings
Categories:	M/M , F/E , F/M
Fandom:	天官赐福 - 墨香铜臭 Tiān Guān Cì Fú - Mòxiāng Tóngxiù
Relationships:	Feng Xin/Mu Qing.(Tian Guan Ci Fu) , Huā Chéng & Xiè Lián.(Tiān Guān Cì Fú) , Pei Ming/Yushi Huang
Characters:	Feng Xin.(Tian Guan Ci Fu) , Mu Qing.(Tian Guan Ci Fu) , Xie Lian.(Tian Guan Ci Fu) , Hua Cheng.(Tian Guan Ci Fu) , Original Female Character(s) , Yushi Huang , Pei Ming.(Tian Guan Ci Fu) , Shi Qingxuan
Additional Tags:	Belly Dancing , Friends to Lovers , dumbasses to lovers , Post-Canon , Eventual Fluff , slow burn attempt , Pei Ming is a simp , passing notes , Secret Admirer , Making Out , My First Fanfic , so don't expect it to be very good
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2022-01-20 Completed: 2022-01-29 Words: 14,290 Chapters: 13/13

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by [orphan_account](#)

Summary

Feng Xin walks into a tavern to drink his problems away, only to gain one more.

Mu Qing gets to relax for once in his life, but it's short-lived.

Notes

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

An interesting hobby

It was the umpteenth time Feng Xin has come to the Ghost City, in the hopes of finally tracking Jian Lian and Cuo Cuo. Of course, this time he's had no luck either. After searching every corner of the city (despite Xie Lian's advice to give it up, after asking Hua Cheng if he's heard anything about them), he finally got too tired to keep up the search.

He was just about to return to the Heavenly Realm when the sound of some kind of entrancing music reached his ears. He turned towards the sound and saw a beautifully decorated tavern with rows of red lanterns, which hand in hand with the music, gave the whole establishment a slightly sensual touch. After contemplating for a few moments, he decided that he could stay for a drink. Actually, a drink was more than welcomed. So, after changing into something a little closer to 'I'm just an ordinary mortal that wants to spend his evening drinking his problems', he went in.

Turns out that the exterior of the establishment wasn't just for show. The interior was even more impressive. Low tables were displayed in a circular position, creating an empty space in the middle of the room, designed for entertainment purposes. At each table, there were dozen sitting pillows of mostly warm colors, but one could spot a touch of dark blue or purple as well. Ghosts, monsters, and lots of kinds of other beings were seated all around the room, chatting cheerfully and loudly, drinking and smoking all kinds of herbs. The room was almost dark, save for the touch of some warm golden lights hanging from the ceiling.

It was a good tavern. Feng Xin placed himself at an empty table. He was still analyzing the room when a soft voice addressed him from above his head. He glanced up only to find himself looking at a beautiful woman dressed in purple silks. He paled instantly.

"Good evening, good sir. What can I bring you before the performance starts?"

"Uh, yes. The performance, I'll be happy to watch it." *That's not what she asked me though, fucking great.* "I mean, a jar of alcohol will suffice", he said without looking at her at all.

"Of course. I'll be right back", she responded with a strained smile.

She did come right back and Feng Xin did his best to look interested in the table's design. He drank his alcohol bitterly, and when he finished about half of it, he noticed that the tavern had turned quieter. There were still customers talking in the background, but noticeably less than before.

Feng Xin felt the anticipating mood. He already knew of the upcoming performance, hence the awkward 'talk' with the purple-lady. What he didn't know was what it involved. His question was answered soon enough, and to his horror, it turned out that it was a belly dancing performance. Loud, stirring music started to play. He watched as a woman dressed in a two-piece golden attire walked confidently towards the middle of the room and started to turn knowingly in circles while shaking her hips rapidly to the music's beat.

She was both graceful and strong, clearly a professional. It was a good performance. But to Feng Xin, women were extremely scary. He didn't know why he felt like this towards most of them. He suspected that what he felt towards them was intimidation. Women were powerful, and smart in ways a man wouldn't expect. So, well. He was petrified in his seat. He took another gulp of alcohol and set in his mind to leave after finishing his jar.

Another gulp, another woman dancing. Another gulp, another woman...

As he watched the one who just finished the performance leave the scene, he was surprised to see that the lights inside the room turned a redder shade. This time, silence fell all around him. Not even the guys who clapped loudly all evening and cheered and whistled continuously shut their mouths. The music was turning a little bit slower and quieter as if to arouse suspense. Faintly, Feng Xin could hear something that sounded like coins being shaken in a pouch. The sound turned louder and louder until a dancer made their appearance.

The first thing he noticed was the fact that this dancer seemed a lot taller than the previous ones. However, the second thing that caught his attention was their lean legs covered by a partially see-through skirt. Like the other dancers, the attire was divided into two parts and it was a colored dark blue, almost black. Sewn on the top of the skirt, tied on strong hips, were thin golden coins that caught the lights above the dancer, making them shine like red sparks.

The music switched suddenly to a quicker pace and the dancer started to move. Feng Xin was left open-mouthed. It wasn't like the women before hadn't danced well, it was just something

more hypnotizing about this one. The dancer knew exactly how to move his hips in a way that was meant to keep your eyes on them. And it was working.

Strong abdominal muscles moving up and down and sideways clouded Feng Xin's vision. The skirt was moving like waves in a sea storm, twisting and turning around the dancer. The sound of the golden coins made with each of their moves was messing with Feng Xin's sense of hearing. When he'd finally snapped out of it, he started to look upwards, tracing with his eyes a strong chest and visibly worked arms, then a beautifully shaped Adam apple, and finally, a face half-covered with a thin piece of silk. Only a pair of dark eyes could be seen.

He kept looking with wonder and keen interest until he abruptly paused. Adam apple? Strong chest? His eyes widened as they frantically looked back at every single detail of this dancer and all of them confirmed one thing to Feng Xin: the one dancing in front of him was a man.

He choked on his breath and accidentally hit his knee against the table, gaining a few disapproving looks from the other spectators. In his embarrassment, he hadn't noticed the dancer faltering slightly on the stage upon noticing him. Feng Xin got up and ran away immediately.

On his way up to the Gods' Realm, he kept thinking of swaying hips and blue silks while muttering profanities under his breath.

Rows of fucks and no's were spinning in Mu Qing's mind as he walked towards the damn changing room. This tavern was supposed to be his escape place. It was meant to bring him comfort and relaxation. And it was meant to be a fucking secret.

He first thought of Xie Lian, thinking of multiple ways to slaughter him (before him being murdered by his San Lang, of course) for not being able to keep a secret. But then again, Xie Lian had promised he wouldn't tell Feng Xin about his 'passion' under no circumstances.

Mu Qing jumped to the thought that it must've been the Crimson bastard who ran his mouth to Feng Xin. Although that doesn't sound plausible either, seeing as when he asked Xie Lian to talk with Hua Cheng about letting him use a place in the Ghost City for dancing, Hua

Cheng sent a butterfly to guide him to this tavern. He said he would keep his secret, and also added the fact that this would also be beneficial in case Mu Qing will wrong Xie Lian again. He would send this piece of information straight to the Heavens. On top of that, he hated Feng Xin and Mu Qing equally and he wouldn't have bothered to contact either of them.

Maybe he didn't realize who I was. With his nerves stretched to the maximum, Mu Qing made his way back to his Palace and tried not to think how tomorrow he was supposed to meet with Feng Xin at Xie Lian's place. *Fucking great.*

The dumbass trio

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Feng Xin had been waiting in front of Mu Qing's palace for thirty minutes now. They'd agreed to go together to Xie Lian's Puqi Shrine. However, Mu Qing was being late. Normally, Feng Xin would be fuming and swearing in his private communicating array by now, but because Mu Qing changes it periodically when they fight, he couldn't reach him, and also, the only thing that he has been having in his mind since yesterday, were blue silks.

He couldn't figure out if he wanted to forget about the whole affair completely or if he actually wanted to find more about the dancer. As he was going back and forth with this dilemma, Mu Qing finally got out of his palace. Feng Xin glanced at him, and he opened his mouth to complain about his lack of punctuality when he noticed that Mu Qing wasn't looking very good. And Mu Qing 'not looking very good' translates into 'he's so pissed off so don't you dare to breathe next to him too loudly'. But that applied to other Heavenly Officials. Feng Xin was an exception.

"Who pissed you off this morning?", he asked him. "Also, next time you decide to take so much time to make yourself less presentable, send me a message so I won't be forced to stay like a dumbass outside". Mu Qing stared at him with so much hate, that Feng Xin thought his eyes would fall out of their sockets.

He didn't reply to him though, and that was unusual. They always fight, rarely on serious topics, but on daily basis, they fight with every little and insignificant opportunity. So yes, not responding back to Feng Xin was a bizarre thing that hadn't quite happened before. Feng Xin decided to hold his tongue. He didn't have the energy to deal with him today, either. He had his own problems to think about. The problem being if there was a minimal possibility that he, maybe, just maybe, felt a tiny whiny bit of attraction towards the man from yesterday.

They walked next to each other, with a meter between them, without saying anything to each other the whole time.

Xie Lian knew something was up from the moment Mu Qing and Feng Xin entered his home. They were unusually quiet, both of them. Aside from muttering their hello's and how are you doing's, they hadn't addressed him any more words. They just sat and sipped their tea silently, ignoring the other's existence. And, well, because they weren't fighting, he couldn't use the proverb strategy. Even so, with a careful smile, Xie Lian tried to ease up the atmosphere.

"So, I heard that there might be some problems in the north with a Wrath ranked ghost. I was thinking to go there with San Lang and assist General Pei Junior since General Pei Ming has some business to attend in the south." No reaction. Xie Lian tried again. "You could join us since you've both been complaining that there haven't been many incidents in your territories".

Feng Xin opened his mouth to answer, but Mu Qing caught him off. "I don't think we'll be needed if you go with your San Lang. Besides, I reckon he's told us to piss off the last time we went together", he said and rolled his eyes.

"Don't talk on the behalf of others", Feng Xin snapped. "And speaking of, where's Crimson Red Sought Flower?"

Seeing them ease up a little, Xie Lian let out a little sigh of relief. I gave him something to do for the evening, so he can't join us." *He keeps tricking me into letting him skip his writing lessons...not this time though.*

It was Mu Qing and Feng Xin's turn to sigh in relief. It wasn't like Hua Cheng sought to cause them problems after they'd made up with Xie Lian in the big confrontation with Jun Wu, but every time they did meet, Hua Cheng made sure to make fun of them relentlessly, and seeing Xie Lian's head almost popping whilst trying to hold in his laugh, most of the times without avail, was aggravating.

After a few more moments of awkward silence or forced dry conversations, Xie Lian couldn't hold it in anymore. "Alright, have you fought again on the way here? Or did something happen to you? The two of you are acting a bit..."

Feng Xin and Mu Qing shouted at the same time 'NO!' They seemed a little bit embarrassed after that, so Feng Xin being the one with a little more tough skin, tried to explain the situation. "We haven't fought. But he is acting really weird. He made me wait half an hour and he hasn't spoken one word to me. Maybe he's up to something again", Feng Xin said sarcastically.

"*You're* the one to talk!", Mu Qing pointed towards Feng Xin and looked Xie Lian in the eyes. "He looks more empty-headed today. Way more than he does normally. Maybe he hit his head yesterday when he went looking after Jian Lian and his son again in the Ghost City", he said with a sneer.

"I TOLD YOU TO STOP MENTIONING THEM!! AND, how did you even find out about that???", Feng Xin hollered.

Mu Qing paused slightly and finally looked at Feng Xin. "Please, you're doing this every month. Hua Cheng tends to remind you every time he gets that you're hopeless", he added in a hurried manner.

"..." Xie Lian watched them silently going back and forth.

He finally had an idea of what happened with them. Even though Hua Cheng sometimes mentions that Feng Xin should give up the search, he's never specified the times when Feng Xin usually goes looking. So there's a possibility that Mu Qing saw Feng Xin last night in the Ghost City. And there is an only reason for which Mu Qing would go there...

Xie Lian didn't know whether to laugh or cry. He massaged the top of his nose and thought of what he should do. Mu Qing and Feng Xin were still arguing in the background, almost throwing fists and that wasn't helping him...

"Ok, ok, stop. Let's calm down. Feng Xin, Mu Qing is tired because I asked him to help me with something through the communicating array yesterday. I had some questions about the southwest region. Also, I'll need him to stay for a bit after you decide to leave as well. Sorry for the trouble, Mu Qing." Xie Lian threw a quick suggestive glance at him.

Seeing as Xie Lian was covering for him, Mu Qing accepted the help reluctantly, clenching his jaw before speaking. "No problem, though you should announce me before you decide to...disrupt me in the middle of the night."

Feng Xin looked confused but nodded slightly. "Well, then, if you're busy, I'll just leave now..."

Mu Qing rolled his eyes while Xie Lian stood up to stop him.

"You've just arrived. Stay for a meal."

Both Feng Xin and Mu Qing paled.

"If you intend to cook something, I'm afraid that I'll be needed in the Heavens for important matters", Mu Qing said dryly.

Xie Lian laughed awkwardly and insisted a bit more on Feng Xin staying, but in the end, he still left saying he has something to take care of as well.

Feng Xin was one hundred percent sure he's gone mad.

He was standing before the source of his current headache. The tavern looked exactly like the other day, the red lights from outside making him remember the way the dancer had been enveloped by them. He was staying in the middle of the road, stuck between actually going forward and wanting to run away. Eventually, a few shouts threw towards him to stop blocking the road pushed him forward.

He got inside, with his heart beating loudly in his ears. He didn't know why he was acting so weird, and he realized that he had no plan either. *What if I actually do find him...What should I say..no..What do I want to say?*

He was still pondering on these questions that he didn't notice a lady approaching him. "Excuse me, but we're closed. Get out until I take you out forcefully."

Feng Xin snapped out of it and looked at her. She seemed familiar somehow. After staring at

her for a bit and processing what she'd told him, he responded to her. "Uh, I didn't know, I'll take my leave..."

"Stupid men. Couldn't you see the sign outside? Thinking only of alcohol do drink and women to droll at", she said full of spite.

"Yeah...uh..no, I didn't..I'm not here for that.", Feng Xin added, starting to feel a little bit scared of her. He turned towards the exit and without looking back and he gathered all his courage to ask one more question. "Can you tell me one thing though? The..uh...the man that danced yesterday...is he, um, working here? Or did he come just for that one performance? I was curious...because he was quite extremely beauti-beautifully dancing, yeah." He could feel his cheeks heating up in embarrassment and he hoped he didn't completely freak the lady.

The lady's attitude shifted after listening to his mumbling, feeling a bit of pity for him. "He's an employee alright. He comes and goes through. I don't know anything else about him", she said with a knowing smile. Then her mouth turned downwards again. "Now piss off."

"Okthankyougoodbye", Feng Xin said and ran out of the building.

What was I thinking??? What if she's going to tell him that some random stranger showed up just to ask about him and called him fucking beauti-. No. Gods. This is bad...This is very very bad.

I'm pathetic. I'll just go back and ask Mu Qing to smack me in the face. Wouldn't be more embarrassing than this.

"Care to tell me what the fuck are you doing on my territory?", a voice behind him asked coldly.

Feng Xin almost jumped in fright. *Great, this is exactly what I needed.* He looked behind him and suddenly wished he was at Xie Lian's place and eating his food. Hua Cheng was looking at him a little bit indifferently, a little bit annoyed, but mostly with some hidden amusement in his eyes. Actually, he seemed amused only after seeing the building Feng Xin was staying in front of.

"Crimson Rain Sought Flower. I am sorry to trespass again. I was looking for...Jian Lian, again", he said with a strained voice.

"Ah, yes, of course, you are looking for *Jian Lian*. Interesting place to search her in, indeed", he said with a smile, which Feng Xin has seen so many times so learn it was anything but kind. This time it was straight-up mocking.

"Yes...?" Feng Xin wanted to punch himself. He prayed Hua Cheng would let it go.

"This tavern is a good one. It has many talented dancers, did you know? I heard one is especially good...", Hua Cheng kept poking the needle.

So he knows what's up, just great, Feng Xin thought and shed an inner tear. "Ok, what do you want?", he asked impatiently.

"Want? Why would I want something from you?", Hua Cheng asked while examining his nails.

"For not go spreading...things about me...I know you don't like me, but-"

Hua Cheng caught him off with a laugh. "I do not care enough to talk about you. I will simply give you a piece of information since you seem extremely interested in this tavern. The best shows are once every seven days", he said with a knowing smile and left.

Feng Xin was once again in the middle of the street, looking like a lost child, and frankly, he kind of felt like it too.

Chapter End Notes

and for the next chapter....*drums in the background* Mu Qing's breakdown...poor Xie Lian

Nothing but shock

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Moments after Feng Xin left, and even more awkward silence had fallen inside Puqi Shrine. Xie Lian scratched the top of his nose and weighed his options on how he should proceed with this.

"...So, I'm going to guess you didn't have a good night", Xie Lian said carefully and sat at the table, in front of Mu Qing. He folded his sleeves and waited for it. Mu Qing's ears and cheekbones were turning red at an alarming pace, while his eyes were closed and brows furrowed in the middle. The clenched fists pressed on the table were shaking slightly.

He finally snapped his head up and looked Xie Lian in the eyes. "NO SHIT IT WASN'T A GOOD NIGHT??!!!!", Mu Qing broke down in anger. His eyes were distraught and it looked like the veins on his forehead were ready to pop at any time.

"What happen-", Xie Lian tried to enquire carefully, but it was pointless.

"I'LL TELL YOU WHAT HAPPENED! OR *YOU* COULD TELL ME WHAT EXACTLY HAPPENED! DID YOUR *SWEET* SAN LANG TELL FENG XIN ABOUT THE FUCKING TAVERN???", Mu Qing yelled in a way that reminded Xie Lian of Feng Xin's outbursts...They were really alike, and yet complete opposites at the same time.

"San Lang wouldn't have told anybody tha-

"How can you be sure???! I know you're completely infatuated with him, but please think about this objectively! Feng Xin had seen me dancing. *Belly dancing*, for FUCKS SAKES. And I can't figure it out if that stupid ass recognized me?? What the fuck, what the actual fuck-

Xie Lian sighed internally. He'd expected this, but it was still troublesome. Mu Qing kept waving his hands around like a distressed duck and gesturing at every complaint he made.

"Mu Qing, Mu Qing", Xie Lian tried to calm him, putting his hand before him and making a 'calm down, please' gesture. "First of all, yes, I am looking at this objectively and San Lang wouldn't have said anything. I feel like you know that as well, since well...he doesn't really care about yo-about meaningless gossip."

Seeing as Mu Qing finally shut his mouth and listened, he continued his idea. "And I don't think Feng Xin recognized you. Knowing him he would've already said something about it." He looked at Mu Qing with a serious expression and waited for his reaction.

Mu Qing chewed the inside of his cheek, looking a bit calmer, but just as anxious, unfortunately. "Even if you're right about this...I won't be able to...dance there again", Mu Qing spat out miserably.

"Why not? Think of this logically. Would Feng Xin ever go in that place again? Especially if there are more dancing women than other people..."

Mu Qing finally eased up a little. He still complained about Feng Xin not being able to sit still and stop his searches, and he still overthought every little possibility that someone else might find out if Feng Xin came again and recognize him. But when he got tired, he listened to his better senses and admitted that the chances for something like that to happen were pretty low.

"I guess that doesn't sound like Feng Xin at all. And, well, it's true that he probably wouldn't come again considering his reaction from the other day", he said, expression turning with a satisfied grin.

"Reaction?", Xie Lian asked and sipped his tea.

Mu Qing laughed out loud. "You should have seen his face! I haven't seen that look on him before, not even when he's talking to women. He ran so fast, and I'm pretty sure he was almost fell three times until he reached the door."

Xie Lian puffed a little laugh and choked on his tea. "Alright, alright, let's save him some face. It's not good to talk about your friends behind their backs, Mu Qing", Xie Lian scolded him, knowing full well he was being a tad hypocritical.

"But, Mu Qing, I was actually curious. Why don't you just...tell him? I don't think he would spread it. He's not that kind of person..."

Mu Qing threw him an incredulous look. "I'm not sure about that. And even if he wouldn't, that doesn't mean I want him to know."

Xie Lian nodded. "Alright then. I've told this to you before, but I respect your privacy and I won't tell if you do not wish it."

Mu Qing looked grateful, but with his personality, it couldn't take him too long to act friendly. "Well, aren't you a saint, Xie Lian", he said and rolled his eyes.

"..."

After that, they dropped the subject entirely. When Xie Lian offered to cook something, Mu Qing told him that he should go back to the Heavens. Before he left, Mu Qing said a little 'Thank you'. Xie Lian smiled cheerfully at him, telling him to have fun in the Ghost City next week.

Mu Qing slammed the door and disappeared.

Thank goodness for San Lang and his skills, Xie Lian thought after examining if the door had been broken.

Feng Xin has been locked up in his palace for almost a week now. He knew this was bad since when he would actually get out, he would find a pile of prayers three times taller than him. This was Hua Cheng's fault, that's what he kept telling himself. Because of what he'd said to him, he was actually considering going again. Which he should not be considering. At all. Layed down onto his bed, he turned over and buried his head into a pillow. He was over 800 years old, but he was acting like a sulking teenager, locked up in his room.

Tomorrow is a week since I last went. That means he'll be dancing again...

After thinking about what he should do for a few more hours, tossing and turning in his bed, he'd come to a decision. *I will go and I'll watch him again while being one hundred percent sober; and I'll realize there's nothing special about him, and what I've felt last week was nothing but shock. Yes, nothing but shock,* Feng Xin told himself and finally decided to get the hell up take a look at his prayers. Maybe take a bath first...

Chapter End Notes

they're hopeless. that's all.
and they'll be for some time :D

Behind the scenes

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Mu Qing was looking through his dancing costumes for a piece to wear. As always, even when not on stage, he had a piece of cloth on his nose and mouth for identity purposes. It's true that he could use some spells to change his appearance, but he wanted to look like himself when dancing, even though no one else could see his face. Scattered across the room, there were many ghost women, different in countless ways, but just as beautiful.

Some had sharp angles and rose skin, and heads covered by dark silky hair, some had ivory faces painted with brown constellations, framed by fiery auburn hair, some had deeper skin tones, their bodies catching the light and making them look truly like goddesses. All in all, they were stunning.

The room was full of chattering, but this kind of noise, Mu Qing didn't mind. He felt at home. And he actually quite liked every one of the other dancers. Unfortunately, some of them seem to like him a little bit more than necessary.

Mu Qing just couldn't get female attraction or attraction in general. What's the point in wanting someone if you don't know basically anything about them? But, well, at least his coworkers weren't insisting and let him mind his own business.

Soon, he finally found a costume that suited his tastes and changed himself behind a dressing divider. The piece was black and the design impressive. The skirt was long and split into three parts allowing his legs to be seen. The top was covering his chest and a piece of material connected with the skirt, highlighting his waist. However, to Mo Qing, the most catching aspect of this costume was the sleeves. Although, calling them sleeves was a bit exaggerated.

On his arms, there were pieces of material tied starting from his biceps, intertwined around his arms until his middle fingers. He untied his hair and took one last look in the mirror he had, looking extremely pleased with himself. When he came out from behind the divider, a row of 'ayos' and cheers exploded.

"Gege, you're outshining us again...whatever will we do?", a girl asked him playfully.

Mu Qing hardly thought that was the case. She was wearing her favorite purple attire, which could glitter even in the dark, given the little precious stones sewn on it. Long brown hair was touching her hips and undulating slightly at the ends. She was the one who he has been talking to the most since he's started to dance here. He was quite fond of her, in the most platonic way, and admired her talent. He learned many things from her when he was still practicing backstage.

"Lady Miao, you're dressed just as wonderfully", Mu Qing said and rolled his eyes.

"Tut, tut. Maybe, but you're still going to steal everyone's attention."

Another lady, dressed in a red costume, with wild curly hair and golden brown skin, came from behind Miao and sneaked a hand around her waist. "I don't know how that's a problem. Let the drunkards pay more attention to him. I'll be sure to watch you dance, Miao", she said and kissed her softly on her cheek.

Mu Qing rolled his eyes at this sight. He hadn't seen a couple more disgustingly in love, apart from Xie Lian and the Crimson bastard. What he would never admit was the jealousy he once in a while felt towards them. Having someone love you unconditionally must feel nice. Not that he would want to do anything with it.

Miao put her hand on the side of the red lady's head as if to caress her, but then smacked her lightly. "Xialing, I've told you repeatedly. No touching at work~" she said, although she didn't move away from her.

Xialing removed her arms reluctantly and pouted. "Alright, alright". She leaned down to whisper something in Miao's ear, making her blush, and then left to finish her makeup. Miao mumbled something under her breath and followed her.

Mu Qing left to finish preparing himself as well. He found a piece of silk to change with the one he'd been wearing until then. When he was ready and had nothing to concentrate on, his doubts and anxiety came right back in. All he could think of was Feng Xin laughing his ass off and blackmailing him into doing all sorts of things. He really hoped Xie Lian was right with this one. He would kill him otherwise.

When the show started he waited his turn, as usual, admiring the other dancers. Well, if he was completely honest to himself, he was watching the guests more, to make sure no one unwanted came. Fortunately, Feng Xin wasn't there. Mu Qing signed in relief.

When he went on the stage he felt the familiar excitement stir in his chest with every move he made, and the satisfaction that came afterward was like nothing else.

Feng Xin knew he wasn't good at changing his appearance. He had known since the awkward incident with him and Mu Qing pretending to be Heavenly Officials from the Middle Court. But he had to try to do it again since he had made a fool of himself the first time he came to the tavern.

So he's changed his face and hair a little, and gathering all of his courage, he entered the place. The performances have already begun, but he somehow knew that *he* would be the last. He waited and waited, not paying real attention to the girls. When he finally came onto the stage, Feng Xin's breath stuttered. He was even more dazzling today. His dancing was just as breathtaking, and the costume he'd chosen this time offered him a touch of elegance, enveloping him like a slice of the darkness.

He was fucked. Feng Xin was thoroughly fucked. He couldn't tear his eyes from his arms, and the movement of his hair made Feng Xin want to run a hand through it. He wanted to run away and either hide under a mountain or dig a hole in the ground to bury himself in it. But he couldn't. Partially because he was frozen, partially because he didn't want to make a scene again.

He waited for the performance to finish, which was complete torture, and left feeling quite unsteady. *I really don't have the capacity to deal with this alone*, he thought and proceeded to

head towards the first person that came to mind to give him some advice on this. Had he been a mortal, he would've already started to lose hair because of all of this. Maybe he really was.

Chapter End Notes

let's go lesbians, let's go

next chapter: does Feng Xin finally get some advice on how to stop being stupid anymore?

A secret admirer

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Pei Ming wasn't expecting visitors. Usually, people announced before trying to reach him, unless they were crazy women like Xuan Ji. What was even more surprising was that General Nan Yang was the one waiting in front of his palace, requesting his presence.

"General Nan Yang, what a pleasant surprise. What brings you here?", Pei Ming said with a characteristic smile.

"General Pei Ming, please excuse me if I'm intruding."

"No, no. You're not intruding. I'm as idle as one can be. Although I suspect you're not here to talk about the weather?"

Feng Xin opened and closed his mouth, making Pei Ming even more curious, seeing his hesitation.

Finally, Feng Xin formulated his answer "General. Can we speak somewhere more, uh, private?"

Pei Ming was taken aback, but seeing him in such a... pitiful state, not even meeting his eyes, he led him to a room in his palace and sat him at a table.

"So, is this private enough, General?" Pei Ming asked and lifted a brow in question.

"Yes. Uh, yes", Feng Xin mumbled. He started to ask about what General Pei had been doing lately if he was well and kept purposely avoiding the real reason he came to him. Pei Ming

noticed that, but he decided to play along with him until he couldn't keep up with the bullshitting.

"General Nan Yang, although I enjoy conversing with you, perhaps is time to tell me why exactly are you here, because talking about daily shenanigans doesn't actually require a private location", he said carefully.

"I-, Yes. General Pei Ming, I was wondering...", Feng Xin paused and seemed to weigh his words carefully. He kept fumbling with his hands, making a pitiful sight. Pei Ming tried his best to hold in his laugh.

"Wondering?"

"If you do not find me too improper, could you tell me...how to...no...how does one...how do you pursue a person you're attracted to?" Feng Xin finally let it all out in one breath, looking like he was feeling a thousand years' time embarrassment.

Pei Ming was left speechless. He hadn't expected to live the day to see Nan Yang so flustered on such a trivial matter. The shock passed quickly, and now thinking seriously about his question, had he been asked this question some years back, he would laugh it off and say that one only needs some confidence and good looks to impress a lady. Now, however, since he's been trying to catch Lady Rain Master's attention for years, he's started to doubt his abilities... But even so, he was still better at the art of seduction than General Nan Yang. He firmly believed that, and he also felt a spark of pride that he came to him to ask for help.

"Ho, ho. General Nan Yang, colored me impressed. I haven't thought that somebody could catch your attention. Tell me more about this lady."

Feng Xin seemed to go a color whiter in the face and kept hesitating. Fortunately, Pei Ming was a patient man, and he was very much invested in finding more about this person.

"H-They're a dancer. And well..."

Pei Ming smiled at this. "A dancer, ey? You're in for a tough one."

"...Yes?" Feng Xin was now red as a tomato, and Pei Ming tried to calm him down a little.

"Now now, there's no shame in liking someone. The question is, how far would you like to go with that person if you decide to pursue them?"

Feng Xin seemed to think very seriously about this. "I-I do not know. They're really an amazing character, but...I feel like my hopes to even just get to know them will be in vain..."

Oh, he's in too deep, already, Pei Ming thought. "General Nan Yang, from what you're telling me it seems that you do not know how to test the waters with them."

Feng Xin looked at him and nodded slowly.

Pei Ming placed a cand under his chin, appearing to be thinking hard on a solution. "Hm, it also seems that you're quite serious about them, so I'll suggest you do this-leave them a note", Pei Ming said and watched as Feng Xin's eyes turned comically wide.

"Note??!! But, how would I even-"

Pei Ming cut him off. "Nan Yang. That's the best option there is. And you'll be sure if this person is available or not. If they ignore you, you have your answer, if they answer you, even better."

"Pardon my language General Pei Ming, but I haven't written a fucking note in my entire life. I would have no idea what say??", Feng Xin said and threw his arms up in frustration.

Pei Ming smiled. "Now, now, give it a try, General. You've got nothing to lose. And as for the writing part, just write what impressed you about them. Keep it simple for starters. Oh, and I'll wait for updates on how it'll go", he added and winked.

After a while, Feng Xin left and Pei Ming spent the rest of the day trying to help Lady Rain Master with her land, but at the end of the day, he left with his spirits destroyed because she only thanked him and said that she has no need for a helping hand.

Mu Qing had had a good month. He took care of his prayers, slew a monster or two earning a lot of merits, and he'd been able to dance to his heart's content. It was the end of the week and he was just preparing to leave when Lady Miao stopped him.

"Gege, wait for a second~! I have something for you", she said, and the smile on her face made Mu Qing very nervous.

"...What is it? If you're here to talk to me about you sweet, perfect Xialing again, I'm afraid I'll have to pass", he said and narrowed his eyes at her.

"Ha, ha! No, not this time. Here, take this. A customer gave to me to pass it to you~"

Mu Qing looked down at her extended hand and saw that she was holding a piece of paper that was tied with a golden string. He reached for it slowly and looked at Miao suspiciously.

"From a customer you say? What kind of customer? What do they want?", he asked skeptically, nerves stretching to the maximum.

"Hm, I don't know. He looked shy, though, when he gave this to me. Barely opened his mouth to tell me to give it to you."

"...I see. Well then, thank you, I'll be going now. Have a good night, Lady Miao."

"You too, see you next week", she said cheerfully and waved at him.

When he arrived back at his palace, he took the piece of paper and untied the string carefully. He spread open the paper and looked over its contents.

I have been watching you for a while now, and I must confess that you take my breath away. Your dancing is like a forest caught on fire, unstoppable, uncontrolled, and utterly mesmerizing. I wish to know more about you. I hope you do not think me bothersome. If you do, you have my word that I'll never approach you in any way ever again.

-An admirer

Mu Qing was struck stupid. He kept rereading that damn piece of paper over and over again. *What the fuck? Some bloke likes me? My dancing? And what the fuck is up with that parallel? A forest on fire? That's not something to be in awe of...* After rereading over and over again he couldn't help to let out a little laugh.

Mu Qing received a lot of praise and cheers after dancing, and he was quite used to the advances of both men and women towards him. However, whoever did come to express their attraction, tended to skip past the 'I want to get to know you' part which for Mu Qing was crucial. So he didn't pay them any mind and flipped them off every time.

But this? A note? He hasn't received something like this ever in his life... And he had lived a long life. He didn't know what to do, but he would lie to himself to say he wasn't a bit interested in playing along with this person. He searched for a piece of paper and formulated a short response. He left a little bit weirded out by the situation, but amused as well.

It isn't like it'll ever become something serious, so I'll just have some fun in the meantime, Mu Qing thought and proceeded to look for a brush and some ink.

since I've finished all the parts of TGCF (that being a long, long time ago-been rereading them ever since from time to time), I've always wanted to see Pei Ming simping, and Lady Rain Master is such a girl boss, that it makes me want to write Pei Ming struggling like a duck under the water for her attention

update: i've edited this chapter, and the previous ones as well. i worked a bit on the punctuation and I've added some dialogue and other details to some parts bc they seemed a little rushed

The response

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Feng Xin has been distraught since he gave the note to the purple lady. He remembered her from when he first came here, so he thought that she might be the best one to pass the note to. Well, honestly it was because she seemed friendly enough to approach.

Since that night, he hasn't been able to rest. And tonight was the moment when he'd find out if he could step into that place ever again.

This time, he didn't enter during the performances. He was simply too anxious and he was sure if he did go in and watched him dance, he would throw up because of the nerves.

So he waited and waited, and when he heard that the music had finally stopped, he approached the entrance. Guests were looking at him funny, them being the ones leaving the tavern and him being the only one trying to get in. He searched with his eyes the place, but couldn't spot the purple lady.

"Pardon me, but what business do you have here? The show's over", a pissed voice addressed him.

Only then did Feng Xin notice the woman on his right. He faltered when he realized that it was the same woman that shouted at him to get out of the tavern when it wasn't open. Lucky for him, that time he was in his original skin.

"I'm sorry...I was looking for someone...A lady dressed in purple", Feng Xin said carefully.

The woman clenched her fist as if she wanted to punch him. She glared at him and showed her pointy teeth. "You're looking for who now?", reaching forward to grab his collar.

Feng Xin stepped backward and tried to explain himself. “Nononono, you misunderstand!!!”

However, the woman didn’t seem to listen and kept advancing towards him. Feng Xin thought that he might just run for it since he couldn’t start a fight in here.

“Xialing!! What are you doing????”

Thank the Heavens, Feng Xin thought. The lady in purple finally made her appearance. Feng Xin relaxed, if only just one bit.

“Miao, this bastard is asking for you, so I’m trying to make him understand that this is not a brothel and he is not welcomed here. And I am a strong believer that punches can do a lot of talking”, Xialing said and crossed her arms under her chest.

“You-you! Always jumping to conclusions! I’ve told you to stop scaring our customers away!! Repeatedly!”

So now Feng Xin was facing not one, but two raging women. Even though one’s anger wasn’t directed at him, it was still making him dizzy.

“I’ll just leave! Sorry for all the trouble!”, Feng Xin blurted out and reached for the door.

“Wait! Wait, don’t listen to her. She’s just...uh, never mind. You’re here for this, aren’t you?”, she asked. Feng Xin noticed the piece of paper in her hand and felt like the whole sky fell onto his head.

“Go on, take it. I’ve told him to give it to you himself, but he said that by doing that he would ruin the purpose of a secret admirer”. She smiled kindly at him, and noticing his hesitation, she took his hand, which normally would have Feng Xin swearing, but he was too shocked to react. She then placed the note into his palm.

He looked at it, and he felt fear, excitement, and happiness that he at least received an answer, no matter what it would be.

He bowed in front of both of them, thanked them, and went outside. He left the Ghost City and searched for a quiet place. Finding an empty alley between houses, he leaned on a wall and gathered all of his strength to open the paper.

I cannot say that this is the first time someone has taken a sudden interest in me. But your way of reaching me is sincere, so I won't say I won't receive your notes anymore, though I must warn you that I am an easily bored person. So impress me.

-F.Y.

Feng Xin almost dropped it. *So, he is available and willing to give me a chance. What the fuck am I going to do now...*

Easily bored? Feng Xin dropped in a cold sweat. He was already thinking about how could he impress such a person, thinking of words of flattery he could write and flowers he could give him, but then, he remembered Pei Ming's words. *'Keep it simple.'*

For the first time in a while, a lazy smile rested on Feng Xin's face and he wasn't feeling afraid anymore.

Okay, maybe just a little.

Chapter End Notes

it's a really short chapter, but next one will be a thick boi

One step forward

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

They have been passing notes for weeks now. They started slowly, in the beginning, each of them being careful with their words. It was a new thing for both of them, but as the days passed, so did their hesitation. Their conversations started to flow like mountain rivers, the notes becoming longer and longer.

They weren't writing about personal details like backgrounds and families, mainly because they couldn't reveal the fact that they were gods, neither of them knowing this about the other and just assuming that they've come to an unwritten agreement to not cross this line.

Feng Xin was still flustered when he received a note, whereas Mu Qing was still telling himself that it wasn't anything serious, even though each time Miao brought him his admirer's response, his eyes would light up in the same way they did when he danced.

They were both confused about their interest in the other, feeling that if it didn't stop, it would turn into something more. And that was frightening for both of them. But even if they knew they should stop, they couldn't. It became a routine, something neither of the two could let go of.

So they kept writing and writing, with big smiles and beating hearts, not being aware they were already falling for each other.

Xie Lian was looking over San Lang's calligraphy practice sheets he left him to complete, feeling helpless once again. Cheng was hugging him from behind with his head placed on his shoulder.

“Gege, let’s cook something to eat and then go to bed”, San Lang told him and lifted his head just to press a lazy kiss on Xie Lian’s cheek.

“San Lang...I have to look over these and then make some more for you to practice on. Stop distracting me”, Xie Lian replied and reached back to stroke Hua Cheng’s hair slowly.

“Then, can His Highness give me a reward for practicing so hard?”, his voice came out muffled, his face being pressed against Xie Lian’s robes.

“...” *He’s doing it again but...* Xie Lian turned over. Hua Cheng straightened up and raised his hand to hold Xie Lian’s face. Xie Lian reached for red robes and pulled San Lang forward. Their lips barely got to touch when they heard a knock at the door.

Hua Cheng’s face twitched in annoyance. Xie Lian got up, straightened his clothes a bit, and went to see who was at the door.

Turns out it was Feng Xin. Xie Lian was surprised since he usually announced before he visited, especially alone.

“Well, if it isn’t General Ju Yang! Welcome, welcome!”, Hua Cheng said and made a gesture for him to take a seat.

Feng Xin’s brow twitched twice but he didn’t argue back. Xie Lian smiled kindly and pushed Feng Xin towards the table.

“What brings you here?”, Xie Lian asked curiously.

“Well, I’m actually here to speak with Crimson Rain Sough Flower...”

Hua Cheng smiled at that, and seeing the look on his face, Xie Lian had a feeling that he was missing something.

Hua Cheng sat leisurely in his chair and kept playing with the red pearl tied in his hair. “General, did you perhaps put my information to good use?”, Hua Cheng asked with a raised brow.

Xie Lian was thoroughly confused. When did San Lang and Feng Xin meet, and why were they both acting so weird?

“Whether I put it to good use or not is not that important”, Feng Xin snapped at him, cheeks red in embarrassment.

Hua Cheng didn’t seem to mind. “Ah, so the answer is yes. There’s no shame in taking interest in the locals from my city. They’re quite lively.”

Xie Lian couldn’t stay silent anymore. “Wait a second, San Lang. What is going on here?”

Feng Xin tried to answer him, but Hua Cheng was quicker.

“Nothing major, Gege. A few months ago, this one was in my territory and looked quite interested in a *tavern*.”

Xie Lian’s eyes widened. He couldn’t help but sweat thinking about Mu Qing. *Did Feng Xin figure it out and kept it a secret until now?*

“Oh, and I might have mentioned when the best shows are”, Hua Cheng added nonchalantly.

Xie Lian sighed internally. “...San Lang. How should I say this...You’re too much. I’m giving you some extra work this evening”, Xie Lian said and folded his sleeves to give himself an air of seriousness.

Hua Cheng's smile faltered for a second there. "Ge--"

Feng Xin butted in before they could change the subject. "It's alright, Your Highness. The first time I went it was the night I had failed to find Jian Lian. The second time, well...I was curious about something and I met Crimson Rain Sought Flower."

"Curious about what?", Xie Lian asked as normally he could under the circumstances.

Feng Xin chewed on his lip before responding. "One of the dancers there."

Xie Lian almost choked on air. Hua Cheng seemed to try to hold in his laugh.

"Well, long story short, we...kind of started to write to each other and it's been really, uh, nice. So I was wondering if...Crimson Red Sought Flower could tell if there's a time when the tavern closes. I want to leave this person something as a...gift", Feng Xin said and looked his face was on fire at this point.

Hearing this, Xie Lian and Hua Cheng shared a look.

"What? Feng Xin. Passing notes? To whom?", Xie Lian inquired rapidly.

"To lady Miao. She's been so kind to put up with me", Feng Xin said with a smile.

Xie Lian sighed in relief, but Hua Cheng's brows were lifted as he was surprised by something.

"The tavern usually closes two hours after the performances", Hua Cheng said and narrowed his eyes.

“Thank you!” Feng Xin bowed before them and sprinted outside before they could stop him.

“Gege, I couldn’t care less why he’s acting like that, but I know one thing for sure. Lady Miao and her *lover*, Lady Xialing are very happy together.”

“ ... ”

Xie Lian needed a break.

Feng Xin has taken great care to put the costume he had bought a few days ago in a beautifully decorated box. Now that he knew when he could deliver it without being seen, he was prepared to take the next step.

On top of the box, there was a note that took Feng Xin three nights only to decide to write it and a few more to actually do it. But he was ready now.

A gift, and a question.

Here goes nothing... Feng Xin thought as he put a hood over his head and entered the Ghost City once again.

Chapter End Notes

we’re close to the moment of truth~~~

Almost a success

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Mu Qing was walking in the mortal world. In one of the notes he received from his admirer, it was specified between the lines that he liked water lilies. Now, Mu Qing has never given anyone a flower before, therefore he was searching desperately for one at the moment.

Little did he know that water lilies weren't for sale, and if you wanted one you had to search in the wild to find them.

So Mu Qing kept searching but didn't want to ask anyone for help because he was very capable to do finding them himself, thankyouverymuch.

When he realized that he wouldn't find them in the richer part of the village he was walking around, he ventured to the poorer one.

The smell hit him first so he quickly took out a handkerchief and placed it over his nose. It was where the beggars lived, and it was a truly depressing sight. He was already regretting his decision when a voice called him from a crowd of people.

“General Xuan Zhen! General! Hello!”, a cheerful voice saluted him.

Ah, so it's Lor- Qingxuan.

“ Hello. ”

“What are you doing here? Did you receive a prayer? Are the people in danger again? For a free meal, I can get my friends here to help!”, Qingxuan said with a big smile.

Mu Qing glanced toward his friends, watching how the flies circled them and felt truly disgusted.

“No, I’m here for something else. Now, if you can excuse me.”

“Wait, wait, wait, General! Let me help you. It seems like your search for something hasn’t been too successful since you’ve wandered here.”

“I do not need any help”, Mu Qing said and tried to not roll his eyes.

“Okay, you don’t need any help. But! I can give some advice, no?”

Qingxuan persisted for a few more minutes, making Mu Qing remember that it was pointless to go against him on any subject.

“Okay! Fine.” Mu Qing gave up. “I am looking for a water lily.”

Qingxuan’s eyes sparkled with something Mu Qing didn’t like. “A water lily?”, he asked in wonder. “Well, you wouldn’t find one around here, that’s for sure. But a lake should be someplace not far away from here. Go north. You should reach in no time!”

“Okay...Thank you for your advice”

“No problem, good luck! I hope they like it!”, Qingxuan said and left while waving his hand.

“Wha-“

Despite feeling ridiculous, he followed the pointed path, and soon enough, just like Qingxuan said, he reached a beautiful lake. The first thought he had was that the feng shui was perfect for meditation. The second was how nice it would be to sit with *him* there.

Shaking his thoughts, he reached toward the water to grab a water lily. He plucked it easily, given his strength, and placed a spell on him to preserve it.

Now, he didn't want to take it to the Heavenly Realm, so he decided to go and place it in the tavern. It would be easier to keep it there until the next day.

He made a short distance array and in no time, he was back in the Ghost City, in front of the tavern.

Feng Xin has reached the tavern a while ago and has been trying to find an open window. Eventually, he got impatient and forced the back door. He would leave some gold for the repairs.

The room was dark so he lighted a flame in his hand and looked around. Looks like a changing room...

He spotted an empty table and he figured he could leave the box and the note on it. He was nervous and jumpy the entire time, but now that he saw the box there and imagined what reaction *he* would have... It was making him giddy.

I've done it. Time to go back. He extinguished the flame, but when he was ready to step outside, someone from behind grabbed his collar and placed a knife to his throat.

Chapter End Notes

to be continued >>

Rosemary flowers

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Xie Lian was trying to reach Mu Qing through the spiritual array, but he just had to change his password again!

He was pacing around Puqi Shrine, with a hand under his chin and he kept thinking that his hunches must be wrong.

It's simply impossible.

Or is it?

Hua Cheng was in the process of being grounded. He was slouched at the table with some calligraphy sheets in front of him. He looked like he wanted to set them on fire.

“I can’t reach Mu Qing. San Lang, could you tell me if he is on your territory?”

“I sent a message to Yin Yu earlier and I’m waiting for a response. Don’t worry, Your Highness. Even if what you’re thinking is true, this is not your problem to solve...”

“I know! But...it’s going to be bad. Why are they like this...so oblivious all the time, both of them!”

Hua Cheng tried to calm Xie Lian, even though he couldn’t be bothered about whatever the two had going on, and cursing the papers in front of him in his mind.

Pei Ming was rooting internally for Feng Xin. Since he asked for updates the day he came to him asking for help, Feng Xin had periodically come to his palace and talked for hours and hours about his *pen pal*.

When Feng Xin told him what gift he was planning to buy, he encouraged him and recommended a nice shop from where he could get it from. He was lost in his thoughts when a soft voice brought him back to reality.

“You’re quiet today, General Pei.”

Lady Rain Master was looking at him. *She’s so beautiful.*

Pei Ming finally convinced her to let him work the fields and help her around the house. Admittedly, he wasn’t very good at it, but with her guidance, he managed to get a few things done.

They were now in her garden, looking for fresh vegetables to take and share with the villagers.

“I, yes. I was thinking about something”, he said and looked at how her eyes searched his face as if to find her answer there.

“Hm” She turned around and started to pluck some rosemary, without saying anything else.

Pei Ming was surprised by how content he was with this silence. Only birds could faintly be heard and their feet touching the grass.

He noticed that a few of the rosemaries still had flowers. Without thinking he got down next to Lady Rain Master and reached for a flower. He then plucked one and, with a shaking hand,

he placed it behind her ear. She just looked at him, showing no reaction whatsoever.

“T-there. The purple matches your green robes...”, he said and felt his cheeks reddening.

Lady Rain Master turned her head away from him, and Pei Ming felt his heart drop. I’ve made a mistake. He looked the other way and pretended to be very interested in the ground. He was thinking about excusing himself and ending the awkwardness when he felt smooth fingers on the side of his head.

He snapped his head towards Lady Rain Master and lifted a hand to feel his ear. Turns out she had placed a rosemary flower on his ear as well.

His mouth was open in shock and he felt his heart flying out of his chest. No lady has done this to him before. It wasn’t a lady’s job to place flowers on a man’s ear. But it didn’t feel weird or wrong. He felt more flattered than he had felt in his life.

“Purple matches black robes, too”, Lady Rain Master looked at him in the eyes. Faintly, he could see a faint blush on the top of her ears.

This is the best day of my life. General Nan Yang, my friend, I wish you this luck as well...

Chapter End Notes

almost there :D

and you bet I listened to love grows where my rosemary goes while writing this

The intruder

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

“What the fuck do you think you’re doing?”, Mu Qing asked the cloaked man pressing the knife a little closer to the skin of his neck.

Mu Qing arrived at the tavern a few moments ago and found it strange that the back door was open. No, not open. Someone had broken in. So he entered and hid behind the opened door and waited for the opportune moment to seize the intruder.

“I asked you something. Answer or I’ll push this a little further”, Mu Qing whispered with anger and pointed the knife’s blade upward, making the intruder lift his head slightly.

Seeing that he wouldn’t respond, he grabbed their hood and pulled it down. He took a closer look and instantly froze. He lighted up a flame in his palm.

“WHAT THE FUCK?”, Mu Qing screamed and pushed the other one forcefully onto the ground.

Feng Xin got up quickly enough and on his face, there was pure shock.

“...Mu Qing?”

“No, His Highness The Crown Prince of Xian Le. OF COURSE IS ME! What the fuck are you doing, breaking in this place???”

“Me-well I was just...” Feng Xin paused. “Wait a second. Why should I explain why I’m here. WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE??? HAVE YOU BEEN FOLLOWING ME

AGAIN?”

“HA! You’re thinking too highly of yourself now, General!, Mu Qing screamed back feeling his anxiety climbing.

“I have no time to deal with you right now. I came here to...deliver something. It’s not your business. However, you should leave. This place is not for you to get involved with!”

Mu Qing laughed out loud. “*I* should leave? ME? Feng Xin, take back whatever you brought here and don’t come near this place again or I swear to you I’m going to beat you until you couldn’t return even if you wanted to!”

Feng Xin looked like he was ready to kill Mu Qing with his bare hands.

“Not leaving? FINE! I’ll help you.”

Mu Qing lit up the place and went to take whatever shit Feng Xin has brought in, already thinking of ways to rip his head off his shoulders with it.

When he almost reached the table where the thing was, Feng Xin grabbed his arm and pulled him back.

“LEAVE IT, I’M TELLING YOU, MU QING!”

Feng Xin tried to restrain him, but Mu Qing kicked back his leg backward straight up to his stomach so he reached the table first.

He was ready to set the whole thing on fire when he noticed that over the apparent box that Feng Xin brought here, there was a piece of paper.

A piece of paper tied with a golden string.

Mu Qing froze. Feng Xin who was still holding his stomach, staggered in pain towards him. Mu Qing seized his collar and brought his face to his level.

“Where did you get that note, Feng Xin?”, Mu Qing asked dangerously slow.

Feng Xin looked straight into his eyes. “I’ve said it before, it’s none of your shitty business”.

Mu Qing was so furious, his whole body was trembling. He shoved Feng Xin again, even more aggressively, and went to the table once again.

He ripped open the box and spilled its contents on the ground. Pieces of material spilled over the floor, making a dark green pool of silks.

“WHAT ARE YOU DOING, YOU BASTARD!????!!!”, Feng Xin hollered from the ground.

“What’s this? Why did you bring this here? And the note? Unbelievable...all this time...ALL THIS TIME WERE YOU MAKING FUN OF ME?” Mu Qing screamed back.

“WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? ARE YOU MAD??” Feng Xin crawled to the clothes and grabbed them from the ground. He then got up ready to punch Mu Qing when he noticed his expression.

He haven’t seen that expression on his face in a long time, and it was... Mu Qing looked torn.

“You’ve been laughing at me all this time, I bet...And you still have the guts to lie to my face? Get out. GET OUT OF HERE!”, Mu Qing cried out.

“I don’t- What are you talking about??” Feng Xin asked, his anger turning into confusion. He stepped back and felt something under his foot. He looked down and saw a crushed water lily. “...Mu Qing... You?”

Mu Qing looked like he had no energy left to scream. “Stop pretending. Was it fun? Fucking with my head with all those notes.” He took the one that was placed on the box and crushed it in his hand.

“I didn’t do anything! For all I know, you’re the one who’s been messing with me all of this time! YOU saw me on the first night, didn’t you?! I DIDN’T RECOGNIZE YOU!”

“I did see you! But I thought you wouldn’t come back here! *WHY DID YOU COME BACK HERE?*”

“DON’T YOU ALREADY KNOW WHY?”

They both were breathing hard now, and with the adrenaline of the fight gone, they were left with an unbearable silence. They looked at each other and both of them were waiting for the other to say something about it.

In the end, neither of them said anything else.

Mu Qing left first.

Feng Xin left moments later, after dropping the clothes right where Mu Qing had thrown them in the first place.

However, he did tuck the crushed water lily in a pocket close to his chest.

Chapter End Notes

noticed what I did there at the end :)))) my book 4 ptsd is showing

Nice to meet you

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Mu Qing refused to talk with anybody. He came to the tavern to gather his things, claiming he was set on never returning.

Miao and Xialing were watching him with worry. The two of them tried to talk with him, but couldn't get anything out of him. What was even stranger, was the green costume they had found. Mu Qing told them to throw it out, but...it would be a waste since it was gorgeous and made from an exquisite material.

Mu Qing was packing at an alarming pace. Miao was the most considerate one and accepted that Mu Qing needed space, but Xialing was not having it.

“Ok, so this is it? You came here and start to pack without telling us anything? I mean, I get if you don't like me since we haven't talked much and frankly I don't like you that much either. But ignoring Miao? I'm not accepting that!”

Mu Qing still had his back turned. “Whether you accept it or not, is not my problem. I'm leaving. There's no point in staying anymore.”

Xialing was pissed off but tried to contain her anger to not make the situation worse. “No point? You've been dancing here for months and I've seen the look in your eyes when you're on the stage. This doesn't make any sense!”

“Gege, what happened last week? You missed the show and all we found was that costume on the ground and a broken door”, Miao asked him, lips curling downward in worry.

“...Nothing happened. I paid for the door. It's fine.”

“It's not fine! You don't have to keep everything to yourself! We get that you don't want us to find your identity, but you can tell us about your troubles!”, Xialing said and grabbed his shoulder lightly as to comfort him.

Miao walked to his side as well. “She's right, Gege. It's fine to confide in us. We've known each other for a long time now, haven't we?”

“...Mu Qing”

“Huh?”, Xialing and Miao let out at the same time.

Mu Qing turned to face them, with his arms crossed. “My name is Mu Qing”.

“Well, uh, nice to meet you?”, Miao said with an unsure smile.

“That name sound familiar somehow...”, Xialing muttered to herself. “Well, never mind. Mu Qing. Nice name or whatever, but that's not what we asked?”

Mu Qing closed his eyes and let out a big sigh. “Last week I've come here to leave a flower for...him, and well, he was here too. He's the bastard who broke the door. He's got a pea for a brain, I swear”.

“What? Your secret admirer was here?? Oh! He's the one that brought the costume, isn't that right?”, Miao asked excitedly.

However, Xialing noticed that Mu Qing's face was stiff. “I assume that it wasn't a pleasant affair. Why?”

“Let's say I already knew him and haven't figured it out until now.”

“What?”

“That doesn’t sound too bad! Isn’t it better if you know the other person, even if you, well, haven’t known until...”, Miao said.

“It isn’t if you’ve known them for eight hundred years”, Mu Qing said and closed his eyes.

“...WHAT? Gege, I thought you were a mortal???” Miao exclaimed, her eyes opening comically wide. “You don’t look like a ghost either!”

“...Aha! Mu Qing! Miao, I’ve heard some ghost talking about the southwestern region at some point, and guess which god’s is it???” Xialing asked with a wide smile on her face.

“No way, Mu Wing gege, are you really a god?”

Mu Qing was looking like he was regretting his decision already. But since he’s already done it, he took off the piece of cloth from his face and nodded.

“Holy shit. Now I see why you’re so set on leaving. I’m guessing your admirer is also a god. Now isn’t that something else!”, Xialing said, smiling mischievously.

“Your guess is right”, Mu Qing said through his teeth. “But it’s not just that. We’ve known each other since we were mortals! This is all a sick joke. And he was probably just fooling around with me!”

“I don’t know... I don’t personally know him, but every time he came to deliver a note, he looked very flustered and excited...”

“I’ve seen him once too and he looked head over heels for you”, Xialing said.

Mu Qing sat down in a chair. He grabbed his hair in his fists and did his best not to let angry tears roll down on his cheeks. “It doesn’t make any sense. We hate each other! I mean, I hated him for a long time, but then...some things got solved out and I thought of him with respect, well almost, but he sure hasn’t forgiven me for all of the shit I did once! So it really...doesn’t make..”

Miao sat down on her knees and took Mu Qing’s hands into hers. In normal circumstances, Mu Qing would have probably smacked her one hundred meters away, but he needed some comfort.

“Mu Qing, we’ve already told our point of view. The next line of thought is yours and it is in your right to make a decision, but do not make one you will regret.”

“Miao’s right, Mu Qing. And besides, did all of this affair, at any point, felt like a joke?”

Mu Qing remained silent after that. He excused himself and walked out of the tavern saying he needed to clear his head.

He didn’t finish packing, though. Miao and Xialing let out a sigh of relief at the same time and decided to hope for the better.

Chapter End Notes

next up: Feng Xin’s therapy session

A Golden Thread

Feng Xin's pacing from one room's corner to the other made Pei Ming dizzy. He hasn't told him what happened, but judging from his behavior, it was nothing good.

"So, are you going to calm down and talk? Or are you planning to make holes in my floor with all that walking around?", Pei Ming asked.

Feng Xin looked him dead in the eye. "I'm sorry General Pei, but it's either this or screaming until my head explodes", he said without a trace of sarcasm.

"Well then, I'm sure you can still talk while moving around?"

"I! I don't know where to start. I don't know what's going on..."

"If you don't tell me what happened, I can't help you. And if you don't start speaking any time soon, I'm afraid I'll have to leave. It'll be time for me to go help Lady Rain Master with the farm", Pei Ming said with a dreamy smile at the end.

Eventually, Feng Xin told him what happened, skipping over some *details*.

"I don't understand why would she have such a reaction. You're not a bad-looking man!"

"It's more complicated than that..."

"What's complicated? It was working wonders until yesterday. She hasn't shown any sign of discomfort from what you've been telling me all those months of passing notes!"

“...*He*...he hasn’t”, Feng Xin muttered.

Pei Ming was surprised for a short second, but it passed quickly enough. “Ah, so that is the real problem. Which it shouldn’t be? Didn’t he know you were a man? Was that the reason he was angered?”

Feng Xin approached him and placed his hands on Pei Ming’s shoulders.

Pei Ming lifted his arms in surprise. “General Nan Yang! I am flattered but I’m not available at the moment, unfortunately!”

Feng Xin watched him with a serious expression. “General Pei... There’s no time for jokes. If I tell you this, you must swear on your godhood that you won’t tell a soul.”

Pei Ming nodded once, and Feng Xin let him go and took a step back. He clenched his fists and said something under his breath that Pei Ming didn’t catch.

“What was that?”

“Mu Qing! General Xuan Zhen! It was him all along. Fucking signed his notes with F.Y. What name had he chosen when we were pretending to be Middle Court officials? FU YAO!” Feng Xin put his hands over his head and started pacing around the room again.

“...” Pei Ming was silent for a few moments, but the more he thought about this information, the less he felt surprised by it. “General Nan Feng, can I be honest with you?”

“What?”

“Him being General Xuan Zhen is not that surprising.”

Feng Xin looked at him like they weren't speaking the same language.

Pei Ming raised his hand before Feng Xin could respond. "I am not referring to the dancing part. *That* is surprising and impressive. I'm talking about you two fancying each other."

"WHAT?! ARE YOU MAKING FUN OF ME, PEI MING?", Feng Xin screamed, formalities forgotten.

Pei Ming smiled. "By no means. I am just stating the obvious. There's a lot of tension between the two of you. It was time you'd do something with it besides fighting."

Feng Xin was left open-mouthed. He was utterly speechless.

"...You...Pei Ming...that it is not true", Feng Xin said although his voice was shaking unsurely.

"It is. Do you want my advice, Feng Xin? Man the fuck up. It is not as dramatic as you two make it and nobody cares. So for Heaven's sake, please solve this like the capable martial gods you both are. I'm feeling embarrassed just listening to you overreacting like this."

Feng Xin's head fell into his palms. "I-I'm trying. But it is so confusing. And he despises me."

Pei Ming shook his head. "If you truly believe this, you're either blind or slow. The thing you've got going on with the meaningless fights is simply the way you grab each other attention because you're not used to something else."

"..."

“Now it is your chance to change that. Think about it, Feng Xin. That’s all I have to say.”

“...A-Alright?”, Feng Xin said, trying to assimilate all the information Pei Ming has given to him.

“Good. I’m afraid I have to leave. Lady Rain Master awaits me. Goodbye!”, Pei Ming said and disappeared through a distance shortening array.

Feng Xin returned to his palace. He took out the flower he had in his pocket. A few petals were missing, but it was still beautiful, imperfect as it has become.

One week later, Mu Qing had made his decision. Feng Xin did too.

One entered the tavern, one got onto the stage, both holding to a single thread of hope. A golden thread.

What we always do

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Mu Qing had to admit. The costume was the most comfortable and most beautiful thing he's ever worn in his life. The thought made him roll his eyes.

Miao and Xialing were ecstatic to see him putting it on and deciding to dance.

They weren't much so when he mentioned that it was probably his last performance in this place. This made him miserable too, but if things wouldn't work out tonight, he wouldn't be able to keep dancing here. It would...hurt.

Even though he was feeling poorly, he held his head high and gathered all his confidence to walk to the stage. He got into his starting position.

Until that point, he had his eyes closed. When the music started to play, he opened them and looked at the audience.

His heart climbed to his throat when his eyes caught another pair. Mu Qing smiled under the green veil tied over his mouth and decided to do his best this evening.

He put everything into his performance and not once did he break eye contact with Feng Xin. If there was one thing that he wouldn't do in front of him was to give up on a challenge.

Feng Xin was mesmerized. Besides the fact that Mu Qing was very much wearing the costume he had given to him, he was adamant in looking at him.

He knew him too well to not know what that meant, so he kept his gaze locked on him too. It wasn't like it was hard. He was dancing his best tonight, making Feng Xin feel hot all over.

When the show was over, Feng Xin felt the nerves taking over him. Mu Qing was still looking at him with the corner of his eye while walking away from the scene.

"Come outside to the back door. You already know where it is", a voice made itself heard in Feng Xin's head, making him yelp.

He got out as quickly as he could and circled the building to get to the back door. Outside it was quiet. Only a faint murmur from inside the tavern could be heard and the soft tune of a song.

Feng Xin gulped as he approached Mu Qing who was leaning against a wall with his arms crossed. He stopped, keeping some distance between them, and kept stealing glances at him.

"You know, I've said this a dozen times already, but your dancing is something else...", Feng Xin said, trying to break the silence.

"No shit. I know I'm good", Mu Qing responded and rolled his eyes.

"... What the- I know you're enjoying compliments even though you want to seem indifferent when you receive them! You could fool anyone but me, Mu Qing."

Mu Qing clenched his jaw. "Oh, really? What me to say something too? In your notes, you tried so damn hard to look cool and collected when in reality you're a mess! You almost fell on your ass the first time you saw me!"

Feng Xin's cheeks turned red. "I was just...not expecting that! I've never seen such a mesmerizing person until then!"

Now both of them were starting to resemble tomatoes. They were silent for a while, but this time it wasn't uncomfortable. It felt safe.

“Feng Xin, I don't know what you think of this, but I do know that you don't like me so I'll cut straight to the point. This doesn't have to be embarrassing. I won't tell anyone about this, so you don't have to worry about your reputation-“

“Wait a second. I don't like you? It's the other way around, Mu Qing! And with good reason. I had treated you like garbage for years because it was easier than blaming myself for what happened to His Highness...”

“As if I behaved any better! And you treated me like that with good reason! I was the selfish one! I was the one that left first and I can't even regret it. But I do regret what I've done to His Highness after...”, Mu Qing said and exhaled shakily. “I am selfish. I have always been. So you deserve someone who-“

“Shut up!”, Feng Xin screamed and placed himself right in front of Mu Qing. “You don't know what I deserve or what I feel!”

“Well, you don't either!”

“So tell me!”

“Why should I tell you anything???”, Mu Qing asked and poked Feng Xin's chest making him take a step back. “Why should I say something and make a fool of myself?”

“Well, with this logic, why should I?”, Feng Xin's said back and pushed Mu Qing as well.

“Why the fuck, you-!”

Mu Qing grabbed the front of Feng Xin's clothes like he's done a thousand times before. However, the difference from all those times was that now, he leaned forward and slammed, not his fists, but his lips against Feng Xin's mouth.

Feng Xin froze. He had his eyes still opened, not quite believing what was happening. When Mu Qing saw his hesitation, he made a move to pull back, feeling ridiculous, only to feel a hand on the back of his neck pulling him right back.

Feng Xin caught his lips again and kissed them gently. His hand started to move through Mu Qing's hair, feeling the softness of it all.

They were still pushing and pulling their lips together when Mu Qing pushed Feng Xin against the wall he was previously leaning on. He put his hands on the other's hips and pulled him close. He licked his lips and looked into Feng Xin's eyes for permission.

When Feng Xin nodded, Mu Qing leaned forward once again and kissed slowly, then run the tip tongue over Feng Xin's lips to test the waters.

Feng Xin's breath stuttered and he opened his mouth, not before biting Mu Qing's bottom lip, hard. Mu Qing fisted his hair in return and pulled it downward angle his face perfectly.

They started to kiss more deeply, losing themselves in the heat. Hands were roaming everywhere, just feeling, discovering. And it felt good, it felt right, and it felt like they've waited for ages for this to happen.

When they run out of breath, they broke the kiss and Mu Qing let his head fall on Feng Xin's shoulder.

"So, does this mean that you, um, like me, too?", Feng Xin's said through shaking inhales and exhales.

Mu Qing lifted his head to look him dead in the eyes. “No, Feng Xin. I kissed you because I was too tired to punch you”, he said and rolled his eyes.

Feng Xin laughed at that, making Mu Qing’s mouth twitch for trying to stop him from smiling.

Feng Xin took Mu Qing’s hand in his and said softly. “I do not hate you, Mu Qing. There was indeed a time when maybe I did, but I hated myself just as much. But they’re all bygones.”

“It’s...it’s the same...for me”, Mu Qing struggled to get out.

“Well...since this is m-mutual, what do we do now?”, Feng Xin asked.

“What the fuck should we do? We do what we always do. Do our jobs, fight together occasionally, and well, I suppose there will be some *other* moments in between all of that...”, Mu Qing said and felt his ears heat up.

“I guess you’re right”, Feng Xin said and moved his hand up to place a strand of hair behind Mu Qing’s ear. “By the way, you’ll keep dancing, won’t you?”

“I guess I will. You’re not invited anymore though”, Mu Qing said feigning a serious tone.

“What??? Why??”, Feng Xin asked, alarmed.

“Every time I dance, at the end of the performance the audience throws me flowers or coins. You’ve never thrown anything. It’s quite disappointing...”

Feng Xin looked mortified “You can’t be serious! I haven’t thrown anything before because I didn’t want to risk you recognizing me!”

Mu Qing tried to hold in his laugh seeing him struggling.

“And! You’ve even mentioned in one of your notes that those are inconvenient since you have to gather them after closing!”

“That’s true...” Mu Qing couldn’t keep his laugh in anymore.

Feng Xin was shocked by this sight. He didn’t remember to have seen Mu Qing truly laugh before. He was beautiful.

“Well, since flowers and coins are inconvenient, next time, throw me eight million eight hundred and eighty thousand merits”, Mu Qing said and got back into the tavern.

Feng Xin shook his head feeling ridiculously smitten. He was thinking of all the things that would change from now on, but he found himself looking forward for it.

As he was waiting outside for Mu Qing to change, feeling ridiculously happy, Xie Lian’s voice thundered in his head without any warning.

“Feng Xin! Do you know where Mu Qing is??? I’ve been trying to contact him for days!!”

Feng Xin placed two fingers against his temple to respond. “It’s alright, Your Highness. Actually, could we come to your place today? I’m currently waiting for him to change”, Feng Xin said.

“ ... ”

“You’re highness? Did you run out of spiritual powers again?”

“ ... ”

“You Highness?”

Xie Lian didn't know whether to laugh or cry.

Chapter End Notes

so,i've done it, this is the official ending of the story

but! i do want to write one or maybe two extra chapters with all the characters and give those two dumbasses a few more fluffy moments

that being said, thank you so much for reading!

End Notes

saw this tik tok that was like: Mu Qing would nail the belly dance challenge so I've kinda had an impulse to start writing this
also, this is my first fanfic so I have no idea what I'm doing

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!