

## Aftermath

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# Aftermath

by [farawayanddreaming](#)

## Summary

He couldn't afford to dwell on what happened, not with the future so uncertain and Wen Kexing in such a fragile state of mind.

## Notes

Please mind the tags/warnings.

I'm sorry. I'll make it up to them. Promise.

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

Wen Kexing took one look at him after everything had settled down and he *knew*. Of course he did. Zhou Zishu did not doubt that he would have recognized it as well if their roles had been reversed - fuck, he *had* seen the signs, even though they were weathered and half-buried under an avalanche of other shit, while his own were as fresh as the gaping holes under his collarbones.

Bones Wen Kexing had admired and gently traced with reverent fingertips not too long ago and now could barely look at without throwing up.

Zhou Zishu frowned. "Lao Wen," he chided without much bite, "you've seen worse. You've *done* worse, even to yourself. Stop looking at me like that."

A downright desperate look was Wen Kexing's reaction. "A-Xu," he whispered, once again reaching out only to shy away at the last moment before he touched Zhou Zishu's skin.

Zhou Zishu, who had seen it coming, quickly snatched his wrist and pressed Wen Kexing's hand against the wound on the right side of his chest. He could barely feel the pain anyway and this was so much more important than feeling somewhat uncomfortable.

"It's still me, Lao Wen," he said gently. "I still desire your touch."

Great, now he'd made him tear up. He was really useless at this whole being comforting thing; Wen Kexing had much more natural talent for it.

"How?" Wen Kexing asked.

Zhou Zishu sighed and tugged him closer. "You let me touch you as well, don't you?" He made sure to make his voice as gentle as possible to soften the blow. "How could I not do the same?"

He'd barely finished speaking when he was gathered in the most careful, gentle embrace of his life. "Oh, A-Xu. I'm sorry. I never meant to... of course I still want to touch you, in whatever way you allow me to."

The gentle touch and the heartfelt words proved to be his undoing. The tears came too suddenly to swallow them back down and a moment later he was a crying mess with his face pressed against Wen Kexing's neck. "Don't let go," he managed to get out somehow and the hold around him tightened to an almost unpleasant degree; Wen Kexing's need to protect him stronger than any desire to coddle him.

That was okay. More than that. He had, almost brutal hold was what Zhou Zishu needed anyway to not completely fly apart.

"I'll kill him," Wen Kexing whispered against his hair. "After I've dismembered and skinned him. Prince or not, nobody touches you against your will and lives." The fierce determination in his voice made Zhou Zishu smile, despite everything. Wen Kexing would do it, if given the slightest chance, and he would succeed.

"No, Lao Wen," he murmured, swallowing down the last of his tears. "He can't die. I've already dealt with him anyway. He's not going to do anything like that ever again. To anyone."

"I don't care about anyone else! He hurt *you*!"

Zhou Zishu could sympathize, he really could. If he could reach into the past he would drag the old Valley Master and all the others who had hurt his Lao Wen into the present to extract revenge on his soulmate's behalf.

Besides, compared to what he suspected had happened to Wen Kexing before he ascended to his own throne Zhou Zishu's treatment at the prince's hands had been more than gentle; almost reverent even. It had been something the prince had long wanted, after all, but only this time Zhou Zishu had finally lost all his power to argue or fight against it. Helian Yi, for all his faults, wasn't a brute in the bedroom and he would never have allowed anyone else to touch Zhou Zishu in an intimate way.

The torture and the injuries had come after, courtesy of Duan Pengju, and Wen Kexing was free to do to *him* whatever his heart desired as far as Zhou Zishu was concerned.

Re-directing Wen Kexing's rage into a more fruitful direction would come later, he decided. For now he was too tired and too comfortable in Wen Kexing's tight hold to waste valuable brainpower on that particular problem.

"Take me to bed, Lao Wen," he murmured drowsily - only to kick himself a moment later when he felt Wen Kexing going stiff as a board against his body. He replayed his absent words one more time and cursed himself for his stupidity. "To sleep," he clarified while carefully disentangling himself from Wen Kexing's suddenly very loose hold and moving towards the waiting bed. "I'm tired and I want you to hold me." So, that was better, right?

"A-Xu," he tried, "your injuries..."

"Have been cared for by Da Wu," he replied firmly. He was as good as he was going to get until those damned nails could get removed from his body - something that would happen sooner rather than later, no matter what Wu Xi might say now. Zhou Zishu didn't have the time to wait, he had a soulmate to support and protect while he extracted his long overdue revenge, and a sect to rebuilt. He couldn't afford to dwell on what happened, not with the future so uncertain and Wen Kexing in such a fragile state of mind.

He'd heard three different accounts about Wen Kexing's behavior after Zhou Zishu's capture and every one had chilled him down to his very soul. He needed his body back at its old strength *now*.

Bei yuan's story, or course, had been the longest and most fanciful one, but also the most brutally insightful:

*"Take care of yourself and keep an eye on that Zhiji of yours,"* had been his advice. *"He does not care about his life outside of yours. If you die he will burn down the whole world to avenge you and slit his own throat with a laugh afterwards."*



The truth of the statement was unquestionable, the burden of knowledge not a new one.

Lying to Wen Kexing had been out of the question even before that, Zhou Zishu now only had to figure out how to bring it up. Thankfully, Wen Kexing had divined what had happened, keeping Zhou Zishu from having to say it out loud. Now he only had to do damage control while he healed and Wen Kexing's plans moved forward.

"Lao Wen," he called softly and held out his hand in invitation. "Don't let me wait." He made sure to keep his voice soft but he would not tolerate Wen Kexing trying to distance himself from him now. Or ever again.

Wen Kexing came to him slowly and unsure in a way he never had before. It hurt to see him unmoored like that.

Zhou Zishu had always prided himself on his composure, his ability to keep standing tall no matter what. It was hard to go against his innermost instincts but he finally allowed himself to give in and let go of the tension that usually kept him upright. He'd barely breathed out and allowed his shoulders to fall, to finally consciously acknowledge the pain coursing through his body and soul, before Wen Kexing was back at his side, carefully supporting him with an arm around his waist.

He allowed his head to rest on Wen Kexing's shoulder and closed his eyes.

"Don't ever let go of me again," he breathed, hating himself for the show of weakness, but unable to hold it back any longer.

"Oh, A-Xu." His voice was weak, shaky, full of tears. Zhou Zishu had no more tears for himself, so Wen Kexing must weep for both of them. "I promise. Never again."

He could feel the wetness on his face as he was carefully gathered up and held in strong arms. He pressed his face against Wen Kexing's chest and allowed his weary mind to drift off even before he was carefully and reverently laid down on the bed.

"I'll take care of you, A-Xu," Wen Kexing promised through his tears. "You're safe now. I'll defend you until my last breath and beyond. I promise that I'll kill you myself before anyone else gets to hurt you."

What a vow. Zhou Zishu smiled and forced himself back to consciousness. "Deal," he whispered, reaching out with his right hand. It was quickly caught in a strong grip. "We live and die together."

"We live and die together," Wen Kexing repeated dutifully before arranging himself around Zhou Zishu to hold him through the night.

As far as wedding vows went it was far better than Zhou Zishu could ever have imagined for himself.

## End Notes

Cue the morning after of episode 31. (And, very probably, a massive divergence from canon after that because no way Wen Kexing can leave Zhou Zishu in the dark now. He'd rather tear out his own heart. Good job, ZZS, aka the most manipulative bastard that ever lived, who is also a master at shoving everything he doesn't want to think about far, far away into another dimension. The guy has such great coping mechanisms. /sarcasm)

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