

LITTLE FAVORS

Companion Zine

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www.makeshift-miscreants.com

Portland, OR, USA

LITTLE FAVORS Publishing Information:

ISBN: 9798987144909 (print)

Library of Congress Control Number: 2022919416

Cover images: Cup of Couple (pexels.com)
and Anna Shvets (pexels.com)

Title Font: Jonathan Stephen Harris (Standard Font License)

Cover design: Adik Graves

Printed in the United States of America.

First printing edition 2022.

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This is a companion zine for the novel *Little Favors* by Adik Graves. The first section, which mimics a planner, is safe to read before or during your first read of *Little Favors*, as it provides a day-by-day timeline of each chapter as well as trigger warnings for each chapter. Any section afterward, including the annotations section, contains spoilers and should not be read until you are done with *Little Favors*.

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7 陈骏-1800 8: the first meeting 9: the client ✓	8 白雪-1830 9: the client 10: the other meetings	9 10: the other meetings 更好的 星云:2200
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CHAPTER KEY -

dub-con / dubious consent	torture
self-harm / mentions of a suicide attempt	murder
kidnapping / suicidal ideation	graphic depictions of bodily harm
hospitals	

OVERARCHING TRIGGER WARNINGS -

sex work
childhood sexual abuse
abuse

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY
<p>TO DO</p> <p>212A</p> <p>700/4B</p> <p>8697-A-41</p> <p>3421612.0</p>		
4	5	6
	19: the lover	<p>机会-1400</p> <p>胡永勤 1350</p> <p>20: the cold</p>
11	12	13
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THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
	18: the New Year	19: the LOVER	
	7	9	10
	胡永勤 1815		21: the fall
14	15	16	17
徐润身 1600		陈骏 1300	23: the inheritance
21	22	23	24
	茶海池 1820		小凯哥哥爱你啊
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<p>面谈-1800</p> <p>28: the show, pt. 2</p> <p>29: the plum blossom</p>			

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MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY
1 47912-0.0	2	3 1400-机会
8 also...	9 30: the hospital 31: the ally	10 32: the snowstorm 33: the car ride
15	16	17 1400机会
22	23	24
<p>未然一 你需要离开这地方 别为我等等 我想要去</p>		

THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
4 1920: 徐润身	5	6 29: the plum blossom	7
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ANNOTATIONS

Warning: All sections past this point, including the annotations, contain spoilers, even if you do not read annotations past your current chapter. Please only read these annotations after you've completed *Little Favors*.

Chapter 1: The Heir

And he wasn't aware of any business partners flying in—if it was a business partner, he would already know about it, and he prepared for it. He always spent the night before a meeting reviewing notes about each partner so he wouldn't say anything unsavory.

lowkey got this from the office

this exchange trying to fool you into thinking Xingyu is the nice one

"No?" Xingyu didn't seem to think much of this claim. He turned around, spotted the employee coming out of the plane with his bags. "Do you have those? I can take them if you—"

"It's his job," said Xiaokai. "Let him be."

"That doesn't mean—"

"Just get in the car. I'm sure Fuqin

Fun fact! I wrote the entirety of this first chapter as a creative writing assignment. The goal was to write something with an unlikeable character which is hard for me because I like most characters imao

Chapter 2: The Brother

"Five hours..." he murmured under his breath, and he shook his head as he started the car. Five hours? He'd never taken that long for this kind of business deal—even the longest ones had been two, two and a half hours tops, and afterward the young master would just slink back into the car, sit quietly the entire car ride back, and slink into his bedroom without a word. Each of these meetings broke him a little more. As Liu Xiaokai's personal and regular driver...he really couldn't bear to watch every time.

screaming crying throwing up etc

well that's just false

Yet, he did not reply.
He sent another message: *Is everything okay? I promise I won't cause problems.*

grabbing next. "You know they make ones with holes in the middle, so a man could fit his cock in there with no chance of the other person biting down...ah, next time. Next time. Now, Xiao-Xiao." His voice was closer and Xiaokai struggled to lift his head. He was standing at the foot of the bed. He had a whip.

can you believe my mother read this

Xiaokai whimpered and withdrew his legs.

Same deal that helps them find Bai Xue! It comes in eeeaarrrly

saliva that had been escaping from his mouth. "If you stay for one more hour," he said, "I'll take a billion off the deal. How does that sound?"

Chapter 3: The Friend

He didn't really have anything to do before he went to the office. After getting dressed, he simply went down to the garage and took a car by himself to work, stopping to get some coffee to drag out the time. In reality, he just didn't want to be in the car with Xingyu, having to hide his sweating hands and pretending to be nice. His rides to work were usually the only moments he had to himself, when he could take deep breaths and prepare himself for the day to come. Likewise, his rides on the way back allowed him to unwind and prepare to see Liu Baiyan and Sun Yue again. Xingyu would destroy that process.

Coffee orders:

LXK: iced americano with nothing else in it. says it's smooth but everyone else thinks it's bitter af
LXY: something sugary and blended. does not enjoy it but drinks it to blend in (and spite his dad)
ZWR: oatmilk latte. need I say more

king of conversation

Xiaokai referring to Liu Baiyan as Fuqin and Xingyu referring to him as Ba (and also XK just using their names) is already a big indicator of their relationships with their parents

Xingyu laughed. "No, I guess not. I guess I always tried avoiding the pictures before... Does it weird you out to see them too?"

"No." The elevator arrived. Xiaokai stepped on. Xingyu hopped in next to him.

"So what do you do all day?"

"Work." He pressed the button for the top floor.

"Ba" doesn't work in this building anymore?"

was. When people entered, he told Xingyu, any valuable information needed to be put away, and you needed to be absolutely certain of who you were dealing with. But Xiao-Xiao's secretary drifted in and out of the office without even a knock all morning, and occasionally she

Xingyu making no effort to learn her name

Chapter 4: The Artist

Xiaokai just delicately lifted one shoulder. "Fine." Then to the waiter: "We'll have something medium bodied and old world. Red. Bring the bottle."

"Yes, sir."

He was getting less charming by the minute.

"Bring me a glass as well, please." In contrast, Xinyu was perfectly pleasant as always. The charm that he exuded was genuine, touchable—Xiaokai might be moving and acting perfectly for this situation, but Xingyu

The amount of research I had for this... I know nothing about wine.

unreliable narration king

Weiran and see how exactly to get past it. Xiao-Xiao was at least that careful, but the paranoia wasn't enough to warrant Xingyu's suspicion. There were some folders left out on the desk

over and over this book is about like. The automatic assumptions we make about each other, whether that's Xingyu assuming that Xiaokai is innocent, Weiran assuming that Xiaokai is an asshole, Xiaokai assuming that Xingyu doesn't care about anyone, Xingyu assuming that Xiaokai has a boyfriend—and that's all just in this chapter!

Weiran: hoodie & blue jeans
Xiaokai:

must be the other artists. He had changed clothes since they last met; gone was the casual hooded sweatshirt and denim pants, and he'd even forgone the baseball

they were also uncomfortably honest. Xiaokai had never had to look at his brother through the eyes of someone who loved him. He'd suspected as much

baby.....

Chapter 5: The office

and there, rocked his hips down onto his hands. This wasn't necessarily enjoyable; he'd never been able to masturbate anally with any success. But from the sounds Kang Haichi was making, it was doing the job.

first clue for top Xiaokai

wild cheering

In the front seat of the car, Driver He Peilin worried his thumbnail between his teeth, his gaze steadily watching the young master through the car's mirror. He was no stranger to this

Weiran please shut up

"I don't know what he went through," Xingyu said.

"It can't be worse than what your father did, right? You said you don't see any of your father's training in him. You were being abused and you

"Chen? Does that ring a bell? The name was in one of the email addresses communicating with Xiaokai. Xingyu leaned closer. Weiran's chest seized. "Chen what?" he's so pathetic

"Yes—I'm done. I'm at the office now, but I'll head home soon. Please let Sun Yue know."

Sun Yue? He called his mother by her full name? The mother that Xingyu said adored him?

Weiran using his brain cell???

Chapter 6: The Phone

"And why should I listen to you?" Weiran would like to accredit this to strategy—say something a little more forward, hinting that he knew what Liu Xiaokai was up to, and maybe then Xiaokai would be caught off guard enough to say something incriminatory. But none of this went through Weiran's mind; the words came out as soon as Liu Xiaokai finished his sentence, and of course Liu Xiaokai was unfazed.

we know. nothing ever does.

like ok the thing about Xingyu is, he was abused by Liu Baiyan and hates him for it but he's not AFRAID of him. Versus like. Xiaokai who is terrified of each member of his family for different reasons.

city. It was also intensely unappealing to be around his father while he worked again. He knew it would just bring about a flood of memories that he usually kept tamped down.]

He didn't expect that being in the house all alone would do the exact same thing.

This wasn't the first time that Xiao-Xiao had avoided him. Indeed, he'd spent most of his life avoiding Xingyu. It was difficult, when Weiran had asked Xingyu what their relationship was like—Xiao-Xiao hated Xingyu, but Xiao-Xiao was also perhaps the only person that Xingyu could say he really loved. When he was born, Xingyu was only six, but he'd immediately felt the responsibility for the little hand that grasped at his. As they grew up, Xiao-Xiao was taken under their mother's wing while Xingyu trained under their father, but whenever they weren't in those lessons, it was Xingyu who was taking care of his didi—Xingyu who made him lunches, Xingyu who helped him with his homework, Xingyu who held him when he was sobbing from nightmares. Xingyu who watched him grow up. Xingyu who avoided his eyes when he left.

Chapter 7: The Event

Weiran would say it was worth it. If Xingyu thought about it too, he would also say that it was worth it. But afterward, when everything was done, after Weiran had seen the monster he was without all the masks to hide it, would he stay?

I like these little glimpses into Xingyu's head because it's like. He does care about Weiran it's just not the same kind/intensity he has for Xiaokai

could roll down the window and give a sniper access to your head. [This particular driver had been working for Xingyu's father since before they'd even had that conversation, but he greeted and interacted with Xingyu with the same familiarity that a new employee did, which is to say he nodded and said "Yes, sir," and absolutely nothing else.]

Xingyu never learns anyone's names he simply doesn't care.

Xingyu baby you do the same thing.

The Chen estate was massive—bigger than the Liu estate, at least in size. It was swarming with employees and guests. Xingyu's father didn't look at any of them. He breezed through and expected Xingyu to follow right behind. [Xingyu's father was the sort of person who didn't look at anyone unless he deemed them worthy of his attention, and that wasn't something that happened often. He didn't even look at a good number of his employees.]

Xiaokai was standing right behind him, looking like a prince in his all-black suit. He raised an eyebrow at Weiran's attire, then at the drinks in his hands.

"Oh," said Weiran. "Ah...do you want a drink?" *this is gay*

Chapter 8: The First Meeting

Weiran was in all likelihood the strongest person Xingyu knew, next to maybe Xiao-Xiao. He could have hated Xingyu—*should* have hated Xingyu. But his hatred for the List and the anger that was constantly swirling around inside of him were both strong enough to take the risk with Xingyu. Xingyu wasn't going to let that go to waste.

also like bisexuality:

There was a strange expression on Weiran's face. "I know," he said.

"And remember to order a man. It'll be more convincing. They'll think you're going through the List so you can be more discreet about your sexuality."

The strange expression didn't leave Weiran's face—it even got stranger. "I know," he said again.

Weiran has never been discreet about his bisexuality in his life.

okay first of all Weiran's view of sex workers is so and second of all fun fact about this scene: Initially Weiran meets Xiaokai right away but like A) why would they send someone as important as Xiaokai right away and B) Xiaokai is Xingyu's brother so why would they send him at all?

Was he as nervous as Weiran was, wiping sweaty hands on his pants?

Floor three.

Was he wearing pants?

Floor four.

What did he look like?

Floor five.

A shameful thought—Weiran tried to push it down, suppress it, hide it from even himself—

Floor six.

What if he looked like Xingyu? What if he offered himself and he looked like Xingyu and Weiran lost his mind or something and—

Floor seven.

The doors opened.

Weiran stepped out.

Chapter 9: The Client

“Remember your meeting tomorrow as well.”

Xiao-Xiao's gaze, for some reason, met Xingyu's in that moment—not just a glance, either. Xingyu's little brother looked him in the eye for the entirety of what he said next, as if he was sending some kind of message, as if he wanted Xingyu to understand something he wasn't saying. “I'll remember,” he said.

I mean read this scene however you like but to me it always feels like a cry for help.

Xingyu pretending he doesn't know Weiran is soooo bisexual

“If not doing anything is suspicious, then isn't the solution, then isn't the solution obvious?” Xingyu's gaze met Weiran's, unwavering. “Next time, just sleep with him.”

Weiran's heart dropped to the floor. “What?”

“I understand it might be difficult to sleep with a man, but you can just imagine someone else and I'm sure it will be fine.”

“What do you want?”

Xiaokai blinked at him.

“What do you want?” His voice had turned quieter. He took one hand away from Xiaokai's hip and put it against Xiaokai's cheek. “Do you want me to kiss you? Do you just want me to hold you?”

Xiaokai's heartbeat, against his will, stuttered.

“Tell me, Xiaokai.”

“I want...”

“Yes?”

“I want you to fuck me.” It sounded, for some reason, especially vulgar in front of Bai Xue, and for a moment Xiaokai was overcome with embarrassment.

I'm so sad for Xiaokai he really just wanted someone to love him

Chapter 11: The obstacle

“Well, try the—try the lock from the door?”

It didn't work.

“Does it look electronic?”

“One-one-five-eight-six-four-two-two-seven.”

Xingyu froze. Slowly, he lifted his head.

Xiao-Xiao was standing in the doorway, a cardboard cup of coffee in one hand, his shoulder leaning against the doorframe. There was a thin sheen of sweat on his forehead. Lazily, he sipped at the coffee. “The password on the computer is the same number in reverse.”

Xingyu stared at him.

these numbers mean nothing

also how does he remember this

This is because he's going through withdrawal but I also find it funny to imagine Xiaokai sprinting up to the office

Chapter 12: The Deal

them at all times.” His words were troubled, but there was still no expression on Xingyu's face, and Weiran got the funny feeling that this was the way his face was naturally—that everything he showed to Weiran was not letting his guard down but rather putting his guard up, putting on a show. Now, faced with this situation he didn't know how to handle, he was no longer making that effort.

Weiran figuring out how to use the braincell

Weiran was never willing to kill for his parents but oh boy can he kill for Xiaokai

Xiao-Xiao pointed at Xingyu. "I know he's willing to die for this. He's also willing to and fully capable of killing for this. But you? Someone else's dying wish isn't enough to motivate you to go against the most powerful organization you'll meet in your life."

"How do we know you aren't going to just tell the List and get us caught?"

"Are you an idiot?" yes

Xingyu's grip tightened around Weiran, holding him down as he tried to lurch upward again. "Xiao-Xiao, please."

not even defending Weiran because he knows Xiaokai is right

Chapter 13: The Job

She didn't pretend to be upset when all the tabloids, at news of her hire, began speculating at their relationship. If the Director had seemed upset, then she would have been upset too—would have pounced on all of them and demand they remove the slander. But the Director had just smiled gently when Fei'er showed one of the articles to him, put his hand on her shoulder, and said, "I'm sorry, Meimei. I'm afraid you'll have to deal with a lot of this kind of thing if you stay by my side. If it bothers you, I'll give you the money to leave."

Idk why I loooove seeing the main characters in the eyes of those who love them.

Xiaokai just being the biggest asshole possible because disdain is easier to swallow than sympathy (which might make him confront... everything) but Weiran is too stupid to take a hint and just keeps pushing

"There's no way someone as important as you would be that reckless."

"Except," said Xiaokai, that fake smile slowly stretching wider, "I am that reckless, aren't I?"

"Are you physically incapable of giving a straight answer?"

"I might be."

Weiran glared at him.

"Don't look at me like that. You wouldn't like the real answer, anyway."

What was that supposed to mean?

Xiaokai's mouth twisted up and then dropped his papers onto the table. "I don't want to see your face after I tell you."

"You don't want to—what? What's wrong with my face?"

taking off pants you're so fucking stupid

Chapter 14: The Proposal

...what was Weiran supposed to call it? "Work hours"? He had the annoyed feeling that, if he asked Xiaokai what he called these things other than "appointments"—and used the words "work hours"—that Xiaokai would laugh and say something stupid like "Just call them what they are. Whore hours."

I can't explain it but this is gay it sounds too fond

Chapter 15: The Mistake

this is already funny but it's funnier because Weiran doesn't deny it

"Of course I do." He'd apparently toed off his shoes at the door. Xiaokai bent to pull them on. "I figured it could be my little cleansing ritual or something. And you don't have to hide in the bathroom and masturbate to the memory of Xingyu taking off his shirt or whatever, so it's a win-win."

Chapter 16: The New Year

"Because I'm making conversation?"

Weiran was never going to get used to the way Xiaokai talked. Hell, the way he just existed. Being around Xingyu was difficult because Weiran was in love with him—being around Xiaokai was difficult because he was Xiaokai.

But, yeah. He didn't mind Xiaokai, not much. Not anymore. Even if his most tolerable self was when he was writhing around Weiran's dick.

...also because you have a giant crush on him.

oh my god shut up

Chapter 19: The Lover

he said. "When your parents contacted me, I wanted to say no. I think you and I both felt that our appointments with each other were a sweet respite from the rest of our lives. You really are the most pure part of the List."

so sad that Bai Xue was the ONLY client that didn't make Xiaokai feel like shit... even Weiran is specifically to make him hurt

Chapter 20: The Cold

What happens here is really up to the readers interpretation, but if you want the official author answer... he wasn't just getting beat up.

the List? Have you ever had thoughts of betraying the List? And Xiaokai kept saying no, no, no—and Bai Xue nodded and pressed his lips together and nodded again, and then the other people came in.

Xiaokai couldn't see their faces. They were all wearing masks.

Afterward, Xiaokai panting and broken on the cold floor, Bai Xue came and sat with him and stroked his hair and pressed sweet kisses to his face. And he asked him again.

Are you a traitor?

Chapter 21: The Fall

Weiran woke up feeling more rested than he had since his parents died.

He was in bed, wonderfully comfortable even beyond the ache in his back. The sheets smelled freshly clean. He was warm.

mmmm...something about how Sun Yue's love for Xiaokai only shows up when it doesn't matter versus Xiaokai's budding feelings for Weiran only showing up when it matters most, but also when Weiran isn't looking

Chapter 22: The Reasoning

MMM ok so funny story I wrote this scene in an airport while I waited for my plan and when it was time to go I saved, closed my computer after shutting it off, and got on the plane. only to discover after landing that in fact none of it had saved. I even contacted computer support and he couldn't find it... it was all completely gone. I had to write this entire chapter from memory

Chapter 23: The Inheritance

Liu Baiyan—dead. By Xingyu's hand. Slowly the smile slid off Xiaokai's face. He took a deep breath and closed his eyes, concentrating everything on not just hanging up, hunting Liu Xingyu down, and shaking him by the shoulders. "How are you handling it?"

He's so cute the worst he can think of is shaking him by the shoulders

A prequel of Sun Yue's story would be so fucking tragic she didn't have a Xingyu or a Weiran. She had to marry Liu Baiyan. She had to even give her children to the List.

The most alarming part of this was not just that Sun Yue was normally put together. It was that it was *Sun Yue*.

Like Xiaokai, Sun Yue's fate had been decided at birth, and she had been raised to become the perfect doll for whatever rich business tycoon wanted to use her. The perfect doll didn't cry. The perfect doll didn't get upset. The perfect doll always acted perfect, looked perfect. But something had broken in Sun Yue, and she was no longer maintaining what had apparently been an illusion.

"What Baiyan wanted," whispered Sun Yue fiercely, "was for the two of you to become the best that you could be."

"Are you going to claim that he's a good father? I don't know if I want to stick around for that."

Sun Yue didn't answer him.

"Look," said Xiaokai, impatient now. "What do you want me to do? Do you want me to handle the press?"

Their relationship is so interesting because Xingyu always said Xiaokai actually got to be a kid but really Xingyu was the only one who was ever treated like a son

Chapter 24: The Lie

exposed. Shirt and suit jacket and socks and shoes all still on, absolutely naked in between. And Weiran hadn't looked at him with even the smallest hint of desire.

Well, maybe he wasn't into him anymore. Maybe he and Xingyu had finally hooked up in this room and Weiran didn't have any use for his crush's second-rate brother. Well, good for him. Xiaokai could just get off all on his own, if he wanted to.

Xiaokai thinking Weiran doesn't find him attractive because for once Weiran isn't being unstoppably horny

Weiran just took the ice socks away from him and went to toss them in the bathroom sink. Then he came back and opened the first aid kit he'd brought. "Let's put a compress on it, then. I have some cream we can put on it, and then I'll wrap them."

"I can do that myself. When I get home."

"Just hold still. Please?"

Xiaokai groaned and held still while Weiran very deliberately applied cream, and then just as deliberately wrapped each limb with cloth bandages. "Why don't you just listen to me? You don't need to do all this just because you think you're in love with me."

He's so resistant to being taken care of... he doesn't feel like he deserves it...

Chapter 25: The Confession

The truth was, no matter how Xiaokai spun it, and no matter how much he teased and pretended to take it lightly, Liu Xiaokai had ruined Weiran.

This scene of Xiaokai feeling like he's ruined Weiran by making his love move from Xingyu was one of the initial ideas that I built this book around

See this is what I mean like. Sun Yue loves him but here he is terrified that he has to face Bai Xue again and she's doing nothing to help or comfort him.

"Why, because he'll hold me captive and beat me within an inch of my life again?"

"Because he's more powerful than you know."

Chapter 26: The Prince

He just loves Xingyu so much but doesn't ever want to admit that either to Xingyu or himself.

He wasn't resigned to any of that. It still tore him up inside. He still wanted to prove himself, not just to his parents, but to Xingyu. Prove that he couldn't be hurt anymore. Prove that he didn't need his love, didn't want it, no matter if it was real or performative. Prove that he could take his place if he really wanted to, if he had the opportunity.

I think something clicked with him then—he could have an heir who had the same training and capabilities that I did, but he didn't have to worry about them getting pregnant, getting distracted, getting attached to their children like I did.

Xiaokai blinked a few times, and then understanding dawned—his mouth dropped open.

A Sun Yue prequel would truly just be a horror novel

This would have taken Weiran another 3 hours

Weiran was suddenly reminded of that conversation they'd had early on in their arrangement with Xiaokai—his clueless, anxious question; Xiaokai's flat answer: We can handle whatever they give us. He didn't know how many more times he would have to mess up before he finally learned how to stop hurting Xiaokai.

Just like? Stop assuming things?

Chapter 27: The Show

Xingyu wasn't going to bother saying that he really had no moral qualms against the practices of the List, just that he hated his father and wanted to destroy everything Liu Baiyan stood for. If there was no one to stop him, he

yeah that about sums it up

stories in their heads. He wanted to kill the host, wanted to set fire to the crowds, wanted to destroy them all for even thinking about his brother.

yeah that seems normal

"Who cares about my reputation?"

Liu Xingyu looked a little baffled. "You should."

Truthfully, Xiaokai did care quite a bit about his reputation, otherwise he wouldn't have put so much effort into maintaining it. But he knew there was no saving it at this point. "And if I don't?"

*Xiaokai: Whatever. I don't even care.
Narrator: But he did care. He cared very much.*

Chapter 28: The Show, Pt. 2

ever find attractive: the darkness behind Liu Xiaokai's gaze that would at times consume his eyes entirely, furious and fiery and devastatingly lonely all at once. It was a pleasure and a privilege to see those eyes underneath you, yielding to you, even as they burned with something powerful enough to swallow you whole. Bai Xue knew that Liu Xiaokai had already been broken, that he'd broken first when he was sixteen years old and had to be patched together, that he'd been broken again and again later on in the appointments that marked his body, that he'd found some semblance of comfort in Bai Xue but that Bai Xue was not the one who could put him back together. Not that he wanted to, of course; if Liu Xiaokai was in any sense of the word "fixed" then he would lose much of what made him valuable.

I know I wrote this but this is truly just so horrific

all of this laughing she was doing. "I'm sure we'll be able to figure something out for you." And then she laughed again, and Xingyu laughed with her, and Weiran rolled his eyes.

Bold of him to be all disdainful when like a month ago he was giggling and twirling his hair if Xingyu so much as glanced at him.

Chapter 29: The Plum Blossom

He just wanted to be loved and to feel like he was worthy of it!!!!

"Yes. I knew."

"Then why wouldn't you want to come with me? You'll have the power you always wanted."

"I never wanted power. I wanted recognition."

"And I can give that to you."

Xingyu sighed, and then the couch cushions next to Weiran were dipping down from Xingyu's weight and Xingyu was dropping his head onto Weiran's shoulder. "What if Bai Xue has him?"

Past Weiran losing his mind over this.

"He has an orbital rim fracture, a nasal fracture, a broke arm, a broken leg, three broken ribs, a concussion, and his hands...someone pulled his fingernails off." **ow**

Xingyu's knees buckled.

"It was like he was hit by a truck. We've performed the necessary surgeries, so he's out of danger. Now it's just a matter of waiting until he wakes up."

that also pulled his fingernails off

Chapter 30: The Hospital

Xingyu was going to throw up again. "I—" He closed his mouth, swallowed, tried again: "I'm—"

"If you're going to say you're sorry, just save it."

Xiao-Xiao's flippancy seemed to curb the nausea some. Xingyu swallowed again. "If I hadn't left—"

You ever think about how Xiaokai is probably so flippant specifically because he knows it keeps Xingyu calm and he just...never dropped the habit

He really does need people who love him fiercely and without abandon

"It doesn't matter whether you believe me," Xingyu said. "I'm never going to abandon you again, and I'm never going to hurt you again, and I'm going to do that even if you hate me."

"I don't care," Xiao-Xiao said. "I really, really, really don't care."

Chapter 31: The Snowstorm

trunk to dispose of the wine bottle, the wine glass, the evidence that they'd ever been there. They'd drive together to the water. Xingyu would solemnly fix stones to Bai Xue's flesh, tie them with chord to each of his limbs, and then they'd shove the body into the waves, watch Bai Xue's face sink into the darkness until it was no longer visible—not to them, not to the world, and most importantly: not to Xiaokai. It would be over just like that, and the rage that coiled like a pit of snakes

He would not, actually because that's a terrible way to dispose of a body: Weiran knows nothing about murder.

It's me, I'm the gods.
And he's right.

such a thing. There was another 'of course': of course the gods would favor him, be on his side, guide the weapon in his hand to the flesh of Bai Xue's terrible body. If it occurred to him somewhere in the storm

Chapter 33: The Car Ride

"Xiaokai, I—" This time Xingyu stopped himself. His jaw worked a few times, then he put a single hand up, pressing his palm against the glass. Xiaokai just looked at his hand for a moment.

Xingyu trying to have a dramatic movie moment and Xiaokai is just like :|

pointments? Why were they judging him for not crying when he nodded at the pictures they showed him of all the terrible bruises and burns from his clients that he'd meticulously taken each time they hurt him? They didn't know anything about him. They didn't understand anything about him. All they knew was

Xiaokai was kinda making his own 'files' with these

work. In fact, Xiaokai's only interaction with the two of them had been a pair of letters he sent out to Weiran and Xingyu: the latter was of course a mystery, and technically none of Weiran's business, and the former was short and sweet—just one sentence—

me, the author: what does it say???

Your parents would be proud.

Maybe they would be.

I wrote these last lines (and some of this last scene) like: Halfway through the book and I liked them so much that I was determined to end the book with them. Then I started thinking about how I wanted a happy ending... domesticity... Kami no Ha... So obviously I had to add three epilogues

EXTRAS

A LETTER

XINGYU,

I've started this letter often in my head. When I was younger, it was less of a letter and more of a desire to make you feel everything that you'd made me feel in that moment and every moment afterward. As I became older, and as I realized a firmer grasp on every language I could possibly need to communicate these ideas to you, the proper words began to form. In my head, I wrote a thousand and one different beginnings, middles, and ends to what had been for so long an imaginary letter. I cursed you out in many of them. In others, I begged you to return, to help me forget everything that had happened between us and return to what we once were. I think, though, as soon as I stepped into the prison cell where I write this letter now, the words crystallized in an instant, and I scrambled to find the materials to pen it all before they slipped from my mind again.

Xingyu, I tried to forgive you from the beginning.

I was young, and you were everything to me. You were my world, just as much as I think I was yours. In those hours between sleep and Sun Yue's arduous lessons, I found great comfort in your presence alone. Even as you stood above me, watching as I writhed so desperately on the ground, some part of me still wanted to crawl to you and find respite in your arms, as if your touch or your words would prove an antidote to what I had swallowed

down. But Liu Baiyan towered above us right behind you, and I couldn't bring myself to move any closer to him. After that—after I had at least physically healed—I tried to go to you again, but the sight of your face alone brought back that same pain as if I was still poisoned. And you—I think you must have still loved me, but there was something in your gaze that had never been there before. Just as you were a reminder of betrayal and pain for me, I think I had become a reminder of Liu Baiyan's lessons for you; after that day, it was impossible for anything to be the same. Liu Baiyan had doomed us.

I blamed you, I admit. I knew it was Liu Baiyan, and I knew that you didn't want to hurt me, but you did, and so I did too. I think on some level I hoped that you would find a way to make it up to me—that there would be some kind of grand gesture that would make everything change. I suppose you did. You left. For the night you stood over me while I struggled to breathe, I forgave you. For leaving, I don't think I've forgiven you yet, and I don't know how long it will be until I can.

I know that you didn't know. Everything that Sun Yue did to me, everything I endured to become the List's perfect weapon—you didn't know about it. But you knew what kind of family we were in, didn't you? And you left me to it. To Liu Baiyan, who had no where else to throw his anger. To Sun Yue, with a burden so heavy on her shoulders that she couldn't help but push it to me. To the List, to the man called Bai Xue. You told me you loved me despite the pain we both held in our chests, and then you turned your back to me and went so far I couldn't reach you even if I tried. You told me you loved me and you went to go have your own life where I wasn't anywhere in sight, where you could pretend to make friends and pretend to have fun and pretend to smile at people who weren't me.

What happened to me after you left wasn't your fault. What happened when I was sixteen wasn't your fault. I don't blame you for these things. The only thing that was

your fault was that I was alone through it all. That I cried for you every night and cursed you in the same breaths.

When you returned in early December, I resisted showing you any amount of vulnerability. I was aware on some level that we were brothers still, aware that I loved you still and that you loved me, but it had been so long that even admitting that I needed help, that I was struggling, that every day felt like I was being dragged across hot coals in different directions—it felt impossible and it felt embarrassing. You had been gone so long. Did you know me still? Did I know you? Could I afford to believe that you loved me still? What if you didn't respond in the way that I hoped that you would? Or perhaps even worse—what if you did?

I was afraid of you. I was so terribly afraid of you. I still am.

These past few months, I swallowed your presence in microdoses, trying to get used to you again. Weiran helped, a little—it was easier to forget how you'd hurt me if we were both ganging up on him instead. I found that, at some point my fear of you became automatic rather than feeling ingrained; I began to think that perhaps I was only afraid of you because I had been afraid of you for so long. Did I still have a reason to be afraid? I had been through things so much worse than what you had done to me. Why was I still letting that same fear cloud my judgment every time I saw your face? You were the reason I lost my brother, but you weren't the reason I gave up when I was sixteen, and you weren't the reason I had to patch myself up after every appointment, and you weren't the reason I spent hours in the shower scrubbing at my skin. Then why did you get all of this power over me? Why wasn't I using you instead of avoiding you?

Xingyu, I thought I didn't have a way out for a very long time. What I went through every day felt endless; I thought that, if somehow I didn't prove myself enough to Liu Baiyan and secure the inheritance of his position, that everything I was going through would be endless.

I couldn't pass this position onto a child like Sun Yue had done—how could I justify that? I thought I would be entertaining the members of the List and stealing their information either until I could no longer physically keep up or until I gave up again—hid myself in a locked room and carefully ended it all before anyone could find and stop me. I thought my life would simply turn into what Sun Yue's had become: a hell of our own making, an inescapable destiny. Every day attached to a man who sucked the life from us, a slave to a system that wanted us dead. Sun Yue had no one but Liu Baiyan, and Liu Baiyan had no semblance of sympathy for her. She was only a business partner and the one who carried and birthed his heir. But I—

I had you. I hated you, but I had you, and I had Weiran, and that was what gave me an advantage over Sun Yue. We had both spent our lives in a pit, Sun Yue and I, and while Liu Baiyan only dug Sun Yue further into that pit, you and Weiran held out your hands for me and you offered me a way out. It was the first time I had ever been able to see an end to all of this. It was the first time that I saw a third ending—my options weren't just to do this for eternity or to end it all myself. If I took your hands and removed the List from the equation entirely, the infinity that I faced in every appointment turned into an infinity of possibilities. The pain of seeing you again began to morph into a reminder of those possibilities. You changed my life twice—once, to ruin me; then again to put me back together. To guide me to the exit.

When I first imagined writing this letter, I only wanted to hurt you. I imagined putting everything on paper, sending it all to you—explaining what Sun Yue had done to me, what my clients were doing to me, every excruciating detail of everything I felt when I overdosed. In other letters, I spent pages upon pages begging you to come back, to protect me from everything. Asking why you didn't take me with you when you left. But that isn't the purpose of this letter. No, part of why I'm writing this

is to say goodbye to you without any bitterness or resentment, which we hadn't managed to do so far. Another part is to say I'm sorry for turning away from you when I knew it hadn't been your fault. And lastly, perhaps most importantly—I wanted to tell you the things that I would never have the courage to say out loud. Because I could tell you to your face that I hate you, and I could tell you to your face that you hurt me and that I wished you dead. But what matters the most—and what I will not be able to tell you for a very long time—is that I love you, and I missed you, and I'm grateful that you came back, even if it wasn't for me. Even if it was just to kill Liu Baiyan.

I'll be out eventually. Please don't wait for me. Please go out again, abroad, away from all of this. Please protect Weiran. Please learn how to smile for real again. Please find something else to put your heart into, whatever's left of it. Forget about me for as long as you can. I'll contact you when I'm out again, and we can go out together, and we can share a meal without all of those secrets hanging above our heads, without a mountain of files to comb through, without those underhanded questions we threw out to test each other. We can figure it out after that, the two of us. Together. As brothers, as friends.

Until next time,
Xiaokai

2

DRIP

WEIRAN WOKE UP to a strange sensation on his wrists.

He was quite a bit disoriented, waking up to that feeling. There wasn't any light coming in through the bedroom window, so he knew it was early—sometime before four in the morning. He tried moving his wrists. There was something tight around them, not so tight to be painful but tight enough to keep them in place.

“Stay still.” Xiaokai's voice curled into his ear, and then teeth fastened around his earlobe.

“Xiaokai, what—when did you get home?” He'd still been out on business with Xingyu when Weiran had gone to bed.

“Just stay still, baby.” Xiaokai kissed his mouth now, slow and languid, his tongue curling around Weiran's before, cruelly, he leaned back. In the darkness, Weiran could vaguely make out that Xiaokai was smiling. “Tell me if you get scared, okay? You can tell me if you want to stop.”

“Mn...okay.” He tried leaning upward to capture a kiss again, but his wrists caught, stopping him a mere inch from Xiaokai's lips. Xiaokai was unmerciful, and just smiled wider.

“Are you ready?”

“Xiaokai, please.”

“You know the rules.”

Those words sent a shiver through the entirety of

Weiran's body. He felt the blood rush to his groin. “Yes. Yes, I'm ready.”

Xiaokai slid down the bed, away from Weiran. There was silence for a minute, then a kind of popping sound—Weiran knew it well. The lube. He didn't know if he was going to be the one receiving or if Xiaokai was but—

Something foreign pushed into him, and Weiran couldn't help the choked sound that escaped from his throat. “Agh—Xiao—” It wasn't Xiaokai's finger, he could tell that much—it was something plastic and long, something that—

Xiaokai pushed a button and that object in Weiran began to quietly buzz. From the sound alone, it didn't seem like it would be very effective, but it felt like it was sending shockwaves through Weiran's body, making him writhe on the mattress, unintentionally pulling away from Xiaokai. Xiaokai let out a laugh, took Weiran's knees, and brought them back toward him. “Stay still, my love.”

Weiran was still shaking, but he tried to keep still anyway. “Xiaokai, I want—a kiss, please—”

Xiaokai obliged, crawling over Weiran's body just far enough to give him what he wanted, soft and sweet and brief and nowhere near enough.

“Xiaokai.” His name came out in a whine.

“Just hold on. I'll give you what you want.” His hand found Weiran's cock and he gave a few gentle strokes, his grip loose and casual. Weiran tried lifting his hips to meet Xiaokai's touch, but his legs were trembling too much, and he could only manage one thrust before he was collapsing back on the mattress and panting. “Patience. It's okay.”

There were two kinds of Xiaokai when they had sex. There was the Xiaokai that came out when Weiran took control, all smiles and gasping breaths and clinging to Weiran until the skin of Weiran's back split—and there was this Xiaokai, deadly calm and in control, using every bit of the skills he'd gathered over the years, expertly teasing Weiran until Weiran couldn't take it anymore.

When they'd first started having sex all those years ago—before they'd started dating, before they'd brought down the List, before Weiran had even started liking Xiaokai as a person—Weiran had been out of his mind because he was imagining Xingyu. Xiaokai must have liked something about the mess he turned into then; now he seemed to purposefully bring Weiran right back to that state of delirium.

Xiaokai's hand released. There was a rustling. Weiran could feel Xiaokai's thighs straddling him and he felt a moment of relief—the vibrator was coming out and Xiaokai was coming in. He ached for that familiar warmth, the pressure of Xiaokai's length, the way Xiaokai held onto his hips as he drove in, the relentlessness even as Weiran squirmed beneath him.

And then—

—Weiran's mouth opened in a scream, but Xiaokai smothered any sound with his palm—

Xiaokai slowly, agonizingly, slid onto Weiran's cock.

The constant vibration of the toy inside of him, the sudden tightness of Xiaokai around him—for a moment, Weiran felt like he was actually losing his mind. His vision went white. He strained against the bedposts he was tied to and kicked out his legs involuntarily, and then Xiaokai's hands were pressing down on his thighs, holding him down as he began to move, back and forth, pushing further and further, impossibly, onto Weiran's cock. Weiran, not wanting to vocalize too loudly for fear that Xiaokai's hands would leave his thighs and he would lose control again, could only let out a muffled moan, his teeth digging into his bottom lip so the pain could at least keep him somewhat grounded. Xiaokai was there in an instant, prying open his mouth and then capturing it, never once stopping the movement of his hips.

"Fuck—*fuck*—Xiaokai—" He could feel Xiaokai's smile in their kiss, could taste his amusement. "I can't—fuck—"

"Baby, you're fucking just fine."

"I'm going to—you didn't—condom—"

"It's okay. Come inside me."

As soon as he had permission, Weiran was gone. He gripped those restraints around his wrists until he was sure his knuckles turned white, threw his head back, and released into Xiaokai, who let out what sounded like a strangled laugh and took it all.

"God, Xiaokai, you need to—before you get a stomachache—"

"Not yet." He slid off Weiran and reached down. The vibration in Weiran's ass disappeared, and then so did the toy. "I want your cum to drip out of me while I fuck you."

"Oh." Weiran suddenly felt like he was suffocating in the heat that had all at once poured into his body. "Oh fuck."

Xiaokai's laugh was deep and throaty. He lifted Weiran's legs and pushed a pillow underneath the small of his back. "Hold still, gorgeous."

"Xiao—*fuck*."

Xiaokai slid home.

He fucked Weiran just like Weiran liked—deep and fast, pushing Weiran's legs almost into his chest, not stopping even when Weiran whined and cried and struggled beneath him. Both of them knew—if ever Weiran showed a hint of wanting to stop, and especially if Weiran ever said any version of 'no', everything would stop. Xiaokai would back off immediately. He would untie him, find him clothes to wear, make sure he was comfortable and had something to drink. But Weiran didn't want to stop, and Xiaokai knew it. He knew by now that Weiran liked to be helpless beneath him, to be Xiaokai's plaything, to take everything Xiaokai gave him. It was one of the ways Weiran found assurance in their relationship; Xiaokai, even now, wanted Weiran. *The Liu Xiaokai wanted Weiran.* He found him desirable and he found him lovable and he chose him even though he could have anyone in the world.

Xiaokai fucked him, and then he came in him, and then he kissed Weiran again, messy and desperate like he was starving for him. Weiran could taste tears, but he

didn't know if they were his own or if they were Xiaokai's. They kissed until they were hard again, and Xiaokai relieved them both half through handjobs and half through simply thrusting against him, and then and only then, at last, he untied Weiran.

"Ah..." Weiran wanted to speak, but nothing would come out but air. Xiaokai was laughing again—Weiran had no idea how he had the energy for it.

"Do you feel okay?"

"Mn."

"Shall I clean us up?"

It took a while for Weiran to be able to speak again. "No. Just lay down with me."

Xiaokai dropped down obediently into Weiran's arms, snuggling into his embrace, tangling their legs together.

"Did you just get home?"

"A bit ago. I had to grab some things to get ready and then let my eyes adjust to the dark."

"Best way to wake up. A little early, though."

Xiaokai's laugh rumbled against Weiran's chest. "I wanted to surprise you."

"Mn...thank you." He pressed a kiss to the top of Xiaokai's hair. It was getting a little long, almost to his jaw now. Xiaokai had to push it away with a little bunny-eared headband Weiran had bought for him when he was washing his face. "I love you."

"I love you too." Xiaokai kissed him back, right on Weiran's shoulder. "Sleep now, gege."

WEIRAN WOKE A little after noon. Xiaokai, while he'd been sleeping, had gone and opened the curtains to let the sunlight in, had wiped Weiran down, and changed the sheets and covers. He'd done this kind of thing several times before, but Weiran was always impressed. Was this something he'd learned as part of the job? It didn't seem like it. Weiran liked to think Xiaokai learned how to do it just for him.

He got out of bed and left the room just like that in search of Xiaokai. He was probably in the kitchen making breakfast, or he'd already made breakfast and was waiting for Weiran now. They had a nice routine like that—Xiaokai seemed to recognize that Weiran liked being with him while he ate. It was a kind of comfort, knowing that Xiaokai was taking care of himself. It was even more comforting that Xiaokai liked to do these little mundane things with him, smile at him across the table, reach over and hold his hand while they drank coffee.

"Xiaokai?" He was rubbing his eyes and coming around the corner when something suddenly flew at him. After he got over the shock and opened his eyes, he saw a magazine on the floor.

"Put some clothes on," Xingyu said from the living room. He was spread out across the couch, one leg folded over the other, and had a full view of Weiran's naked form.

Weiran rubbed his face. He bent over and picked up the magazine, turned it around so he could see the cover—something, something business, something. He threw it back at Xingyu. "Shouldn't you be at work?"

"It's Saturday, you moron."

"As if that ever mattered. Where's Xiaokai?"

"He went out to get some groceries. He should be back soon." Xingyu was looking irritatedly at his magazine, which had bent pages now after its brief career as a weapon. "At least put a robe on. Have mercy on my eyes."

"Oh, shut up. It's not anything you haven't seen before."

"It is, actually, since you were all shy around me when we were roommates before and didn't want me to see your constant, raging hard-on."

Weiran flipped him off, but he went back to the bedroom, found a pair of boxers, and put them on before he went back out. Xingyu had begun the slow and laborious process of trying to flatten out the creases in his magazine. "How'd the meeting go last night?"

"Oh, fine. Temple seems fine enough to work with, but I'm still wary of working with a group like Kami no Ha."

“It was just Temple there?”

“Khun didn’t show up this time. He’s got a shitton of other things to do, I’m assuming.” He glanced up from his magazine. “Come here.”

“Are you going to hit me?”

“I wouldn’t hit you.”

“You’d hit me if you thought you could get away with it.”

“Yeah, well, I can’t, so I won’t. Just come here.”

Weiran came closer and dropped onto the seat next to Xingyu. “Is the magazine that important?”

“I’m borrowing it.”

“From someone you care about?”

“From Temple.”

“Oh. Yikes.”

“I don’t think he’ll care very much, but I’m wondering if I should just get another magazine.”

“You scared of him?”

“No.” There was something in Xingyu’s eyes. Weiran poked at his side, grinning.

“Really?”

“No, I’m not fucking scared of him. I just don’t want to ruin it for Xiaokai. He seems to really like working with the guy. Do you think it’s still noticeable?”

Xingyu had smoothed the crease of the page enough to turn it into just a slight dent.

“I can still see it, but it isn’t so bad. Just get another one. How expensive could they be?”

“Yeah, I might just order one online.” Xingyu sighed, defeated, and turned the magazine right-side up so he could keep reading it. He was on some article about stocks. It made Weiran a little dizzy trying to read it. His comprehension of Mandarin had gotten a lot better when it came to things like this—he didn’t have a choice if he wanted to properly get through the Files—but he wouldn’t complain if he never had to see words like “stocks” or “revenue” again.

“What do either of you need from a business magazine, anyway? Shouldn’t both of you be experts in this kind of thing by now?”

“It’s a good way to keep track of all of the subsidiaries of List companies. Temple says most of it was swallowed by Kami no Ha, but...well, you never know.”

Weiran sighed and dropped his head onto Xingyu. Xingyu, natural, stretched out his arm so it was resting over Weiran’s shoulders. “It isn’t your responsibility anymore, you know. Liu Baiyan and Bai Xue are both dead. Isn’t that enough?”

“Mn...maybe. I just don’t want either of you—I just don’t want Xiaokai getting hurt.”

Now Weiran grinned. He tilted his head up, meeting Xingyu’s vaguely irritated gaze. “I heard that slip-up. You care about me.”

“Whatever. I already told you that you’re my best friend. But,” he said, poking one finger onto Weiran’s forehead, making Weiran laugh, “there’s only so much I can forgive. You know how fucking late it was last night? And how loud you were? Fuck, our bedrooms are across the house from each other and I could still hear your whining like you two were fucking right next to me.”

“Oh? Should we try that?”

“Gross.”

“What’s gross?” Xiaokai had come in with two armfuls of groceries. As soon as he saw him, Weiran got up from the couch to help him bring things in.

“Fucking next to Xingyu.”

“It might be a little gross. I’m sure I’ve done worse.”

“Both of you, shut up,” Xingyu said. “Just let me sleep and I don’t have a problem.”

“Poor thing.” Xiaokai handed over the groceries and gave his older brother a sympathetic look. “Is sleeping getting harder in your old age? Should we hire a masseuse?”

“One of those erotic masseuses?” Weiran waggled his eyebrows and Xiaokai laughed.

“You just want to see Xingyu all oiled up.”

“I wouldn’t complain, but I’d much rather see—”

Xingyu groaned and covered his ears. “Enough! Just put the fucking groceries away!”

3

CALL

AFTER SO MANY months, it was finally feeling like summer. Xiaokai liked the winter okay, but when it started getting colder, it sometimes reminded him of things that didn't need remembering.

The cold, settling into his skin, piercing down to the bone, the shivering that wouldn't stop—

It was nice, to start to feel the heat—to feel the sweat trickling down his back even as his only moments outside were walking from the car to the front door of the office building. There was no chance to feel anything even remotely close to a chill.

Other times—

If Xiaokai was having a bad night, and all those memories crawled up inside of him without warning, setting in a cold no matter how high he turned up the heat, then the other thing that would help was Weiran—Weiran and the heat of his mouth or the heat of his hole, the gasping words Xiaokai could drag out of his throat. That kind of heat, sometimes, was enough to drown it out. Otherwise, Weiran just did his best to hold him, cradle him, kiss the back of his neck, wait with Xiaokai as he rode it out.

It was easier in the summer. If Xiaokai could hardly remember what it was like to be cold, then it was easier to keep those thoughts tucked away. Even in the office that Temple had so generously provided for him with that almost impish smile, Xiaokai kept the AC turned

off, and only turned it back on again if someone came in to visit.

It was just warm enough now that his office, in the afternoon, absorbed all the light of the setting sun and basked the entire room in a thick, comfortable heat. Xiaokai was almost finished with his work for the day. His folders were all still spread out in front of him, scattered and disorganized in a way that would have never been possible if he was still a part of Liu Incorporated. He had been in a state of constant terror then, even if he didn't want to admit it—what if Liu Baiyan had walked through the door and told him that disorganization was the final straw? What if Sun Yue came in and scolded him for not complying with all of that rigorous training? Some of that rigidity had remained in prison, but since leaving and starting work on something that Xiaokai actually cared about, and since working with people who were a lot more laid back in these things than the Liu family or the List had ever been, it was a little easier to just be...messy. To be careless. To spread out his existence all over the office and not worry about the repercussions.

It was...good. Enjoyable, even.

He had one meeting left today—something casual over the phone, just a check-in. After that, he could go home, go to Weiran and Xingyu.

Xiaokai smiled, leaned back, kicked up his feet.

He was warm.

There was a knock on his door. Xiaokai slowly lowered his feet back to the ground. "Come in." Had Khun said that he would meet him in person? Xiaokai was sure that he hadn't. Was Khun even in the country? But then the door opened and a more familiar frame came waltzing in, and before Xiaokai knew it he was smiling and relaxing back into his chair.

"Weiran."

Weiran grinned at him. His hair had grown longer again since the haircut he'd gotten prior to Xiaokai's release—the parts that he'd shorn had more than since

gotten long enough for Xiaokai to grab hold if he really wanted to, to braid it sometimes when he was bored. Weiran came closer and took a strand of that hair into his fingers, tucking it behind his ear. "Are you almost done?"

Xiaokai lifted his phone. "I have a meeting with Khun, and then I can wrap up. What are our dinner plans?"

"Hm...take out?" Weiran, at Xiaokai's desk now, leaned one hip against the surface and poked at the half-full pencil cup. "Xingyu's been out all day, too, and I just got done with that job downtown. We can cook something if you want, but I—"

"No, takeout is fine. Why don't you look around and see if you can find a good place online?"

Weiran didn't move to pull out his phone. He just leaned across the desk, grabbed the back of Xiaokai's neck, and kissed him. Xiaokai smiled against his mouth. He accepted the kiss for a minute or two, but gently pushed him back.

"Not now, baby. Phone call, remember?"

Weiran made a face.

"Don't do that. It won't be very much longer. Go—the couch is comfortable." The phone was ringing and Xiaokai couldn't pay much more attention to Weiran without making an important man like Khun wait, so he tapped on his cellphone and lifted it to his ear. "Hello?"

"Xiaokai." Khun's voice was smooth and calm, exuding a confidence that Xiaokai couldn't even fathom ever being able to replicate. "How is everything?"

"Just fine. Everything is holding up well. How is vacation treating you?"

Khun let out a small laugh. "I've been informed I'm a workaholic."

Another thing that Xiaokai could hardly understand—the relationship between Yamashita Daichi, who had been a leader in Kami no Ha for so long, and Khun Eryu, who had just begun—the level of respect Khun had already garnered was both admirable and incomprehensible. And all without using the same fear-inducing tactics that men

like Bai Xue or Liu Baiyan ever employed. "Tell Yamashita hello from me, as well."

"Oh, call him Daichi, will you? He's getting antsy. He thinks you don't like him."

Xiaokai doubted that Yamashita cared about anyone who wasn't Khun, but he wasn't about to tell his new boss that he was wrong.

"Anyway. I know Temple started that new housing project—how's that going?"

"Oh, th—" Xiaokai stumbled on the next words at the feeling of a hand at the zipper of his pants—Weiran was kneeling at his feet, one hand on Xiaokai's leg, the other tugging his zipper open. Xiaokai covered the phone's speaker with one hand. "Weiran," he hissed, and Weiran just looked up at him and gave him a half smile.

"Xiaokai?"

"Sorry. I thought I heard something." Xiaokai swatted at Weiran's hand and tried to continue without letting the new sensation of Weiran's nose pressing against his cock color his voice. "It's going well so far. It seems like the residents are having a hard time trusting the"—he swallowed the sound that crawled up his throat as Weiran mouthed wetly at Xiaokai's rapidly hardening length—"terms of the agreement, but the retention rate so far is still in the—ngh—the nineties."

There was a pause. Then Khun said, his voice a little wry, "Is it a bad time?"

Xiaokai pushed his palm against Weiran's forehead without any real force. "No. Sorry. I know this is the only time you had free."

"Yes, well, it was the only time that Daichi would be out—are you sure?"

Weiran had taken Xiaokai out from his underwear, and was beginning to kiss at the desperately leaking tip. "Yes, it's fine. The retention rates are...ninety-four percent."

"Ninety-four? We predicted eighty-five."

"Yes, well it's—" Weiran was putting his lips over Xiaokai's cock, sliding down, agonizingly slow. Xiaokai

had to bite his own lips hard before he could continue. “The eight-five percent was more of an acceptable minimum than it was a prediction. Still, the—the results are better than we...thought.” He raked his fingers into Weiran’s hair, grabbing hold at the roots, but still he didn’t pull Weiran’s mouth off of him. He couldn’t refuse this—Weiran was at his cutest when he was giving blowjobs, his eyes big and wet and glazed, his hand pulling feverishly at his own cock like sucking on Xiaokai was the greatest turn-on for him. Sure enough, as he sank further and further down Xiaokai’s cock, he was pulling himself out of his pants and starting to fuck into his hand. “I think... if things continue like this for the next six months, we’ll be good to build the next set of buildings.” He stroked his thumb across Weiran’s cheek. Weiran, mouth still full of Xiaokai, looked up at Xiaokai through his long eyelashes and the corner of his lips twitched upward. Fuck, Xiaokai wanted to bend him over the table and slam into him until he cried.

“What’s the plan for getting back that six percent we lost?”

Weiran pulled off of Xiaokai and pressed his face against his cock, nuzzling into it. Was he trying to kill Xiaokai? “It’ll be difficult to...to find them again, but Temple said he’ll spare some men and help me look.”

“I can form a team of people, myself, and tell Daichi to do the same. Things are stretched a little thin since everything, but I’m sure between all of us we can form some kind of dedicated task force. They’ll answer to you, of course.”

“My own—?” The next words were choked out of him, but Khun continued as if Xiaokai’s unfinished sentence had been the result of hesitance.

“If that’s too much responsibility, I understand. I’ve seen the endless responsibilities you had under the List. I know Xingyu’s already against you having, well, any work at all, but if you think it’s also too much...”

“No, I can handle that much.”



“Then I’ll make some phone calls. It shouldn’t—fuck, I think Daichi’s back. I’ll have to let you go. Say hello to Weiran for me, will you?”

Xiaokai didn’t have the patience or the wherewithal to dissect this last statement; as soon as the farewell reached his ears, he dropped the phone, seized each side of Weiran’s face, and pushed his way in, deeper than Weiran had been taking him before—deep enough that Weiran’s nose pressed against the skin of Xiaokai’s groin and his throat was convulsing, struggling to adjust to the sudden assault. Instinctively, the hand that had been jerking himself off reached up and grasped instead at Xiaokai’s leg, like he was going to push Xiaokai away, but, coming to his senses, he stopped the moment he applied even the slightest amount of pressure and put the hand right back where it belonged. Xiaokai held Weiran’s face for a good ten seconds, even pushing further in and shuddering at the pleasure of the tight wetness of Weiran’s throat, before he finally pulled back out and then fucked his way back in. Weiran let out a low groan, and the vibration made Xiaokai throw his head back and fuck Weiran’s face even harder and faster. They came almost at the same time—Weiran into his fist and spattering against Xiaokai’s pant leg and shoes, Xiaokai deep into Weiran’s throat until Weiran fell back, coughing and gasping for breath, cum dripping from his lips.

“Shit,” Xiaokai said. He leaned forward and caught Weiran’s chin in one hand. “Are you okay, baby?”

Weiran’s face was wet with cum and tears and saliva, but the smile he flashed at Xiaokai was blinding all the same. “You should do that more often.”

“What, mercilessly face-fuck you?”

“Merciless?” Weiran’s smile got wider and he leaned back, resting against the drawers of Xiaokai’s desk. “Baby, you let up every time you felt me choking. How’s that merciless?”

“Forgive me for worrying about my boyfriend’s health.”

“Maybe if you stick it up my ass, I’ll forgive you.” Weiran lifted his hips a little off the ground and pulled

his pants and underwear down to his knees. “Won’t you?”

“Didn’t you say you wanted to top next time? I was prepared to go to work with a plug in and everything.”

“Prepared, or you have a plug in now?”

Xiaokai just rested his elbow on the arm of the chair and smiled.

“You’ll fuck me, right? Bend me over this desk…” Weiran kicked off his pants and slid one hand up the length of his thigh, stopping only when he reached his groin. He pushed two fingers into his ass, his eyes still fixed on Xiaokai’s face. “...make me cry?”

“I’m supposed to make you cry, I’m supposed to bend you over the desk, I’m supposed to fuck you...at what point are you going to make an effort?” Xiaokai didn’t really mean it, and he knew that Weiran knew that too, but they were playing a game right now—Xiaokai unforgiving and cold, Weiran desperate and submissive.

“Xiaokai, please?”

Xiaokai tilted his chin up. “Climb on,” he said. “If you can ride me well enough, maybe I’ll give you what you want.”

Weiran did as he was told carefully, slowly—he put one leg on either side of Xiaokai, braced himself against the back of the chair and Xiaokai’s shoulders, and lowered himself. Xiaokai let out a hiss of a breath and gripped the arm of the chair. He wanted more than anything to reach up and grasp at Weiran instead, but it was Weiran’s turn now, not Xiaokai’s. Weiran’s turn to pretend to prove himself, Xiaokai’s turn to sit back and—

Xiaokai let out a moan as Weiran rocked forward.

“I’m going to get your suit all dirty, baby,” Weiran murmured into his ear, and Xiaokai, overwhelmed, sank his teeth into the bend of Weiran’s neck. “Ah, well, maybe it was too late for that anyway.” He was moving his hips to some sort of silent rhythm now, clenching his ass every time he lifted up so he was gripping suffocatingly tight to Xiaokai’s dick, dragging it up with him. “Am I doing okay, sweetheart?”

Xiaokai let out a gasping breath. “Fuck, you—” He pushed him back suddenly, crashing him onto the desk. For one terrible moment, the movement pulled Weiran off of his dick, but he wasted not a moment getting up, gripping Weiran’s hips with bruising force, and pushing in so hard again that Weiran slid even further up Xiaokai’s desk. Weiran mouth dropped open and Xiaokai’s hand pressed against it in an instant, muffling the scream. “Quiet, baby.” The words came out between the shallow pants. “You don’t want someone to come in, do you?”

There were tears spouting in Weiran’s eyes, streaming down his cheeks, and Xiaokai could feel saliva gathering in his palm where he was pushing against Weiran’s lips. But there was no resistance in Weiran’s gaze, and Xiaokai knew the way he clutched at the edge of the desk and rolled his eyes back meant he was enjoying every time Xiaokai pushed into him. The streak of cruelty in Xiaokai’s heart suddenly seized; he pushed away and lifted his hand and left Weiran sprawled on the desk, his poor little chest heaving, his legs trembling.

“Xiao—Xiaokai?” Weiran lifted his head a little and reached his hands out, seeking. “Baby—”

“Turn over.” Even Xiaokai couldn’t recognize his own voice. It was low, commanding. Weiran’s knees curled in and Xiaokai could see that expression in his gaze flicker with something. “Turn over now,” Xiaokai said, and this time Weiran moved, so quickly his hands scrambled against the desk, until he was laying with his stomach flat on the desk and his feet braced against the floor.

“Xiaokai.” Weiran’s voice was thin, reedy. “Please. Okay? Please.”

Xiaokai traced the lines of Weiran’s ass with his fingers.

“Xiaokai. Liu Xiaokai.” Weiran’s face pressed against the desk, his mouth open, saliva pooling below his lips. But he did nothing to physically urge Xiaokai to do anything—he simply waited, panting, his asshole fluttering expectantly.

Xiaokai moved his fingers over Weiran’s hole, gently. Weiran shuddered, but Xiaokai’s hand kept moving up, moving up Weiran’s spine, to his neck, curling into the strands of Weiran’s hair.

“Xiaokai,” Weiran whispered.

Xiaokai pulled.

Something between a gasp and a whine burst from Weiran’s chest, but Xiaokai showed no hesitation. One hand still yanking Weiran’s head back, one hand gripping Weiran’s hips, he fucked back into Weiran’s hole. As he pushed in, he pulled at Weiran’s hair a little harder, enough that he could fasten his mouth to Weiran’s and push his tongue in. Weiran trembled against him. When Xiaokai released him from the kiss, Weiran tried leaning forward again for another kiss, but the hold Xiaokai had on his hair prevented him from moving any closer. The next time Weiran said Xiaokai’s name, which was composed of likely the only two remaining characters in Weiran’s head, it came out in a long pouting whine.

“Hush.” Xiaokai put his teeth against Weiran’s bent, exposed neck and gently nipped him. “Hold still and take it. Good boy.”

“Xiaokai.”

Weiran was incredibly warm.

“F—Xiaokai.”

His skin, his hole—he felt hot enough to burn.

“Xiaokai.”

His cheeks wet with tears, his hair soft and tangled around Xiaokai’s fingers.

“Xiao—”

Xiaokai sucked bruising kisses into every inch of skin he could reach without letting go of Weiran, without stopping the movement of his hips.

“Ngh...”

Weiran slumped suddenly in Xiaokai’s arms, his eyelids fluttering, and Xiaokai immediately let go of his hair and caught him before he could fall against the desk again. “Weiran?”

Weiran's eyes opened. He smiled, weakly. "Baby, you stopped."

Xiaokai felt dizzy. "Fuck," he said. "I love you."

Weiran turned his face into Xiaokai's touch. "I love you," he said.

"You're going to make me lose my mind."

"Lose it in my ass, okay?"

"I'm going to fuck you until you can't stand anymore."

"Fuck that. Fuck me until I pass out." Weiran leaned his back into Xiaokai's still clothed chest. "Baby, make me forget everything but you."

Well, Xiaokai wasn't going to refuse a demand like that.

SOME HOURS LATER, Xiaokai woke to a faint buzzing in his side. It took him a moment to come to, but he woke up enough to find his phone in the jacket pocket pressed against his back and answer the call.

"This is Liu Xiaokai."

"Fuck. Are you still at the office?"

It was Xingyu. "Yeah, we..." His voice faded. He didn't have a good excuse. Xingyu knew the kind of work that Xiaokai was doing these days, and he knew that Khun Eryu was on vacation—there would be no reason for Xiaokai to be staying late at the office.

"What, did Weiran go in and suck you off or something?"

"Ah..."

"Fuck, really?"

"Well, I also—"

"I don't need to know the details. What was for dinner?"

"My c—"

"No. Nope, not hearing it. I'll get takeout. If you two want to clean up and come home and Weiran figures out how to keep his mouth off of you for five minutes, you're welcome to whatever's left."

Xiaokai laughed a little. "Okay. I'll wake him up and let him know. We should be home within the hour."

"I love you."

"Yeah, I love you too. I'll see you soon."

After hanging up, Xiaokai reached over to Weiran, who was sound asleep on Xiaokai's chest, and prodded him on the shoulder. Weiran just grunted. Fuck me until I pass out, Weiran had said. Xiaokai couldn't help but laugh.

COMICS



WEIRAN'S REASONING! ♡

小凯 + 伟然 = 小伟 THINKS HE'S A GENIUS

XIAOKAI + WEIRAN = XIAOWEI!

JUST SO BISEXUAL →

XIAOKAI & XINGYU'S DEDUCTION:

= 小 + 伟

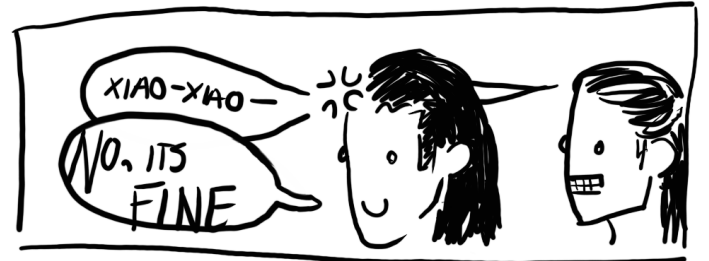
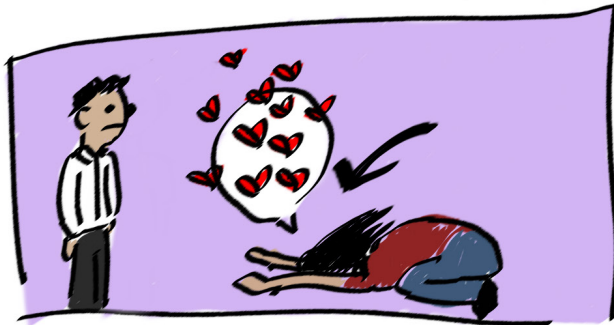
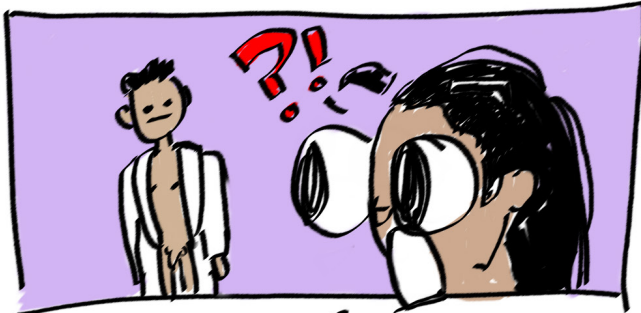
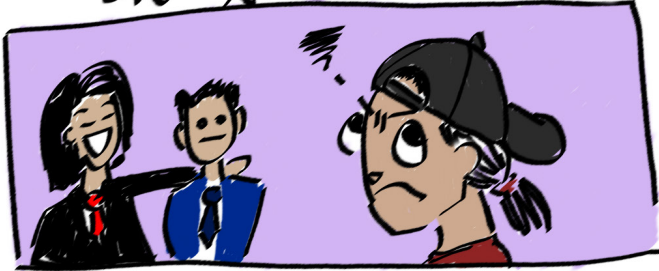
小伟 (SMALL) (WEIRAN)

↳ COULD ALSO BE A DICK JOKE?



STAGES OF KNOWING LIU XIAOKAI

By Zhang Weiran



XINGYU'S NORMAL (AFFECTIONATE)
REACTION TO THIS
SITUATION:

I HOPE XIAOKAI DOESNT NOTICE US WE DONT
KNOW FOR SURE WHOSE SIDE HES ON AND
EVEN IF HE ISNT INVOLVED IN THE LGBT,
WEVE PUT OURSELVES IN A VERY
INCRIMINATORY POSITION -



WEIRAN'S HORNY (DEROGATORY)
REACTION:

HIS LEGS ARE
TOUCHING ME
HIS LEGS ARE
TOUCHING ME
HIS LEGS ARE

