

bitches be gay, mentally ill and **not**
having sex but hate ^{jiang}_{cheng} for being
gay, mentally ill and **not having**
sex 🤔🤔 mf that's YOU

welcome to my google docs. my picsart edits and i are here to prove that i like jiang cheng and that it is legal to do so



tw for neglect and abuse and violence and general mdzs things

disclaimer that obviously all opinions are my own but ur welcome to discourse with me and share ur interpretation i always think that's fun

disclaimer #2 that i tried to be organized with this logically so that it flows as an overall argument but im not being paid or graded to do this so if theres more run on sentences than is strictly comprehensible that is just the way i speak

part i: trauma & misunderstanding

this part is mainly just me going through why he is the way he is and how a lot of what he does is shaped through horrible circumstances of his upbringing and later life. not necessarily a justification of everything he does but nevertheless contextualizes a lot of things i hope

early childhood

obviously we're all gay and depressed and know what its like to grow up knowing that no matter what you do you'll never be enough for what your parents expect of you and that you'll never be good enough... (cue [team yibo & yamy on cz101's someone else's kid stage](#) because it's been stuck in my head for three months and i will link it whenever even remotely thematically relevant)

i don't think i need to explain how much that fucks you up as a person but imagine being jiang fengmian and yu ziyuan and raising your own son to have an inferiority complex by constantly reminding him that he doesnt excel as much as his brother while simultaneously also fucking his brother up just as badly by making him never feel truly at home as a child and like he owes a debt to his adoptive family even despite the bond he shares with his siblings... jiang fengmian and yu ziyuan DON'T have to imagine but let's unpack that a little

yu ziyuan

Jiang Cheng went to her side. Madam Yu squeezed his arm with her slender fingers, then slapped his shoulder loudly, scolding, "There's isn't any improvement in your cultivation at all. You're seventeen already, yet you're still like an ignorant child, fooling around with others all the time. Are you the same as others? Who knows which sewers other people will be splashing in, but you're going to be the leader of the Jiang Sect!" (chapter 51)

- jiang cheng takes after her in temperament and personality and that's at least partly a product of the harsh and aggressive way he's always been treated by her — a constructivist scholar (me)
- also more obviously: nothing like your own mother constantly berating you and telling you you're not good enough to really mess you up for life #tigermom who knows this one

also not a huge fan of the way his parents not only fought directly in front of him all the time (not a great impact on any kid) but that they would also argue *about* him and use him against each other. namely:

Madam Yu, "[...] Jiang Cheng, come over here."

Jiang Cheng was stuck between his father and his mother. After a moment of hesitation, he moved to his mother's side. Holding his shoulders, Madam Yu pushed him forward for Jiang FengMian to see, "Sect Leader Jiang, it seems that some things I have to say. Look carefully—this, is your own son, the future head of Lotus Pier. Even if you frown upon him just because I was the one who bore him, his surname is still Jiang! [...]" (chapter 56)

i definitely think this specific thing is super important to shaping his psyche. it's one thing to see your parents fight all the time but there's an extra layer of guilt and frustration built into knowing that you're a product of a loveless marriage that exacerbates their already grudging and disagreeable forced/arranged marriage just by existing as a reminder that neither of them wanted to be in this situation... even though yzy is almost defending him here in calling jfm out for his clear lack of affection towards his son it's not really not making anything better for anyone

jiang fengmian

In Jiang Cheng's memory, the total number of times Jiang FengMian picked him up wouldn't even add up to five. Every single instance was enough for him to be happy for months. A fire brewed inside of him, unable to be released. All that he asked himself was 'why, why, why'. (chapter 71)

- just fucked up in general that this is the thought process of an 8-9 year old and that the only way he knew how to deal with how upset he was was lashing out, something he carries well into his adult years... #no one in mdzs knows how to emote properly and jc's chosen method is anger#
- and it's proof that he was aware of it even before wwx was adopted into the family... which is significant to note since it's not just jfm's favouritism of wwx & jiang cheng's jealousy that made him into what he is which i feel like might be a common misconception? but a pretty significant difference since jealousy alone (while it's definitely there to some degree) is a pretty one-dimensional analysis of his character motivations at least to me

And, both Jiang Cheng's looks and personality took after his mother. He hadn't ever been to Jiang FengMian's liking. Since birth, he taught him in many ways, yet he still couldn't change, which was why Jiang FengMian had always seemed as though he didn't favor him too much. (chapter 56)

- again ties into what i was saying before about knowing that your own existence is a product of something neither of your parents wanted and actively feeds into their hostility towards each other since you remind them of one another

basically his parents sucked at being parents dude

inferiority complex, lack of security and pride issues

it's clear that jc worked hard to be the best that he could and he WAS talented but he just wasn't as naturally gifted as wwx and no one was more aware of it than him, given that he was constantly reminded of it by zzy. to him, her approval is completely conditional on his achievements in cultivational potential, feeding into his unhealthy competitive complex and his lack of security and assurance, which made him completely dependent on external outcomes for any sense of self worth. all he ever wanted was recognition for his efforts and hard work and the only real thing that cemented his reputation with no one overshadowing his accomplishments was... eventually leading the siege that killed his brother after he had lost everything. but more on that later

side note that i just wanna make it clear how much wwx and jc love(d) each other ... i say this a lot but i think given the way wwx is as a character the fact that he sleeps in all the time and hunts pheasants when he's supposed to be training doesn't make much sense... like yes he's fun and likes to fuck around but to me it's an inconsistency that he feels like he owes so much to the jiangs for taking him in (see: zzy's last words to him being 'protect jiang cheng with your life, even if you die trying!' and him literally just being like ok bet) and yet he would 'waste' his potential like that... my take is that even as a young kid he was already sensitive and perceptive to:

- 1) jfm and zzy's arguments over jfm's alleged favouritism of wwx (i say alleged bc... a fat lot of good it did wwx)
- 2) jiang cheng's unhealthy competitiveness and pride issues

so therefore he concluded that it was better for him to be around less and bear zzy's scorn for his laziness... wei wuxian the layers to your consideration and the things you would sacrifice for your loved ones

If someone as unhealthily competitive as him found out about this, he'd be dispirited his whole life, too tortured to face himself. There'd always be something he could never overcome, reminding him that he could only reach where he was because of another's sacrifice. It wasn't at all his cultivation and his achievement. No matter if he won or lost, he'd long since lost the right to compete. (chapter 102)

post-fall of lotus pier he was not only thrust prematurely into a position of power (pretty hard to navigate as a teenager even in the best of situations that aren't in the middle of a war and complete political breakdown) but had to shoulder the burdens of 1) rebuilding an entire destroyed sect 2) avenging his parents, only amplified by the fact that they were never satisfied with him while they were alive and he becomes just *that* much more desperate for a chance to prove himself, all of which was taken away instantly by wen zhuliu and the core-melting hand. pretty fucking devastating for someone whose entire sense of self and self worth has been exogenously placed on his cultivational abilities and future as sect leader. as soon as the possibility for revenge and his contribution to the defeat of wen ruohan was taken away from him, he becomes completely lost and hopeless.

wei wuxian sees all of this, sees the way jiang cheng only sees value in himself so long as he has externalized and concrete objectives to achieve, and knows that the only way to restore him from his listless state is to 'recover' his golden core and keep the truth from him at all costs. which brings me to my next tidbit:

miscommunication and irony of twin heroes

ah yes... miscommunication dao zu shi

Jin Ling, "Just now! I saw it. You wanted to say something to Wei WuXian, and then you didn't."

After a moment of silence, Jiang Cheng shook his head, "There's nothing to say."

What could he say?

That, back then, I wasn't caught by the Wen Sect because I wanted to go back to Lotus Pier to retrieve my parents' corpses. That, at the town we passed on our way, when you were buying food, a group of Wen Sect cultivators caught up. That, I discovered them early and left where I sat, hiding at the corner of the street and didn't get caught, but they were patrolling the streets and would soon run into you outside.

That this was why I ran out and distracted them.

But just like how the past Wei WuXian couldn't tell him the truth of giving him his golden core, the current Jiang Cheng wasn't able to say anything either. (chapter 110)

i feel like a wild fucking animal every time i think about the reason all of this started going downhill was because despite everything that happened, jiang cheng simply wanted to save his brother. and of course every single person in this series is allergic to simply having conversations with one another

it's just so ironic that after all jiang cheng's talk about wwx always having to play the hero the one time he attempts to do the same is for him, and he ends up losing the most important part of himself and sets in motion maybe the most convoluted and disastrous miscommunication plotpoint ever... he had already

lost so much and he couldn't lose someone else important to him. and by the time wxw found him he saw no point in telling him because he had already lost everything that he could have had laid out for him in his future and it just sucks because for all he said about wxw's saviour complex predetermining lotus pier's fate, he didn't fully fault wxw for what happened, even just after the fall of lotus pier when the grief was still fresh. especially after he went missing, he stopped caring about all that and focused on rebuilding the sect and finding wxw and it wasn't until after jin zixuan and shijie died that he sort of like relapsed back into the blame because it was the easiest option to retroactively relegate all the blame to him:

In his heart, Jiang Cheng knew clearly that back in the cave of the Xuanwu of Slaughter at Dusk-Creek Mountain, even if Wei WuXian hadn't saved Lan WangJi, the Wen Sect would have found some reason to come over sooner or later. (chapter 59)

There was anger within Jiang Cheng's joy. He hugged him tightly before shoving him back.

[...]

He knew that it was probably something that shouldn't be said in front of disciples from other sects and wiped the joy from his face, "Alright, then. You can tell me about it later. It's all good as long as you're back."

[...]

Wei WuXian, "I just got out, hey? I heard that both shijie and you were fine, and you were rebuilding the YunmengJiang Sect and forming an alliance, so I went to kill a few Wen-dogs first to lighten up your burden, and do some contributions. In these three months, you've been working hard."

Hearing the last part, Jiang Cheng remembered the past three months of rushing about and working day and night. He felt somewhat moved, but quickly put on a harsh face. (chapter 62)

and the new layer of irony is that wxw only wanted to 'betray' the jiang sect because he wanted to extricate himself and the consequences of going against jin guangshan from jiang cheng and yunmeng jiang, but obviously with that front he only ever ended up with a horrible ingrate reputation and an even more strained relationship with his brother because no one knows how to TALK THINGS OUT. from jiang cheng's perspective since he doesn't know the truth behind why wxw is so dedicated to protecting wen ning & wen qing specifically and has always been more concerned with protecting those the closest to him than strictly doing The Right Thing (jiang cheng is a slytherin) all his damaged insecure ass sees is ... maybe not an overt betrayal just yet but he's certainly hurt over the fact that rather than simply siding with him wxw chose the 'wen dogs.' and certainly frustrated that he's seen all these changes in wxw but he won't let him in on what's wrong. and after what happens with jin zixuan and shijie there's no way he can cope with and rationalize anything that happened without knowing the details from wxw's perspective because there's so much hurt and confusion at that point that like ... man ... maybe in the end he's too much of a politician concerned with backlash from jin guangshan to be able to help save the wen civilians but eye think since his priorities lie with his close loved ones that if wxw wasn't hell-bent on walking his

lone deviant path with his guilt complex holding him back from asking for anyone's help at all that they would have been able to cooperate on that.

part ii: complex character

i think it's important to note that i'm not here to say jiang cheng is unequivocally 100% a good person that hasn't ever done anything wrong because of course he has. does the fact that he sometimes has good intentions and always has emotional constipation make up for all the harsh things he's said to people he cares about? no! should he be nicer to jin ling? absolutely! did he have to torture and kill all those demonic cultivators and wwx impersonators? no he literally absolutely did not! you still don't have to like him but i think other than maybe wangxian there's maybe no character more complex than him and i think it's so interesting to unpack even from just a narrative perspective even if you don't like him as a person

side note that it just occurred to me that the character for chéng 澄 in his name means clear and is usually used in the context of chéng qīng 澄清, which means to clarify/clear up a misunderstanding... mxtx you sneaky bastard you really thought making wwx name his dizi after 'to earnestly express one's full story, emotions, and experience in full' wasn't enough for the twin heroes irony .

zyy/jc/jl as reflections of each other

will expand more on what the execution of this means for jiang cheng's character in part iii but basically i think this pattern is super interesting to observe because it's like a perpetuating thing within their family that as a product of harsh upbringing and expectations they become aggressive and brash personalities, but are each supposed to be an improvement of the previous generation.

jumping straight forward to jin ling, to quote his wiki page:

However, beneath his haughty and angry demeanor, Jin Ling was acutely sensitive to the fact that he was an orphan. He loathed Wei Wuxian and Wen Ning for killing his father, yet slowly began to warm to Wei Wuxian after his aid in the Stone Castles, Yi City, and the Second Siege of the Burial Mounds, to the extent that he sought Wei Wuxian out after he left Lotus Pier, demonstrating his large capacity for forgiveness, one of the traits he did manage to inherit from his mother. Furthermore, After Wen Ning saved his life along with Jiang Cheng's, Jin Ling released his long-lasting resentment, reflecting that he did not know who to hate anymore. He likewise refused to believe that Jin Guangyao's kindness and good intentions were all a lie.

[...]

After inheriting the position of sect leader, Jin Ling displayed a great deal of maturity and self-sacrifice. He was cautious not to involve Jiang Cheng in many disputes, lest he be considered a target by conniving cultivators. He insisted on caring for the common people and continued his friendships with the other juniors, including Lan Sizhui, Lan Jingyi, and Ouyang Zizhen.

after all, jin ling is his mother's son and has a greater capacity for forgiveness than holding grudges and is quick to see the best in people as soon as they are presented as such to him. which is interesting to see when he was first seen to be so similar in jiang cheng in temperament and has been noted as such multiple times by wwx. idk i just think he's a great kid who has so much potential for greatness despite

growing up surrounded by a bitter uncle who lost everything in life and another uncle who is. well a twink in a ratatouille hat. im joking about jiggy but i dont need to talk about him here so i wont

and i mentioned before how much jiang cheng takes after his mother when i talked about how that was a point of contention between yzy and jfm because jfm saw her in him and didn't like it, where yzy saw that and could only get angrier because of it. and we see more than anyone how deeply jiang cheng cares (about his siblings, his parents' expectations of him, his *dogs* from when he was a kid) but how much he's incapable of verbalizing it at all. we get brief glimpses of moments of hesitation and tenderness before he defaults back to anger and lashing out, but it's there. i think the saddest thing about jiang cheng (like a lot of others in this series tbh) is that he feels everything so deeply and devastatingly, including both love and hate, but only one of those is easily accessible to him and only becomes more all-consuming of his psyche misunderstanding after misunderstanding and tragedy after tragedy. but again more on that development and execution later

twin heroes

ah my favourite dumb siblings who care about each other more than they know how to say and so who try to make up for the gaps with actions that keep getting misconstrued to the point where neither of them actually know. what a classic

i think i already unpacked a bit of this and theres a lot more to unpack in addition to that so i'll only talk about the relevant parts to how it constitutes and supports jiang cheng's personality

despite the fact that jiang cheng has been made to feel inferior to wwx all his life from the moment he was brought in and he realizes his father was already more affectionate to wwx than he was to him, he cared so deeply about having someone closer to his age who could play and mess around with him even as a kid. and sometimes i think about the pledge of twin heroes in a world where nothing went wrong and wwx never had to defect to save jiang cheng's reputation and i don't know if i can see it because i see them working in such fundamentally different ways with different priorities that there would have been a disagreement somewhere along the way either way, especially with both of their terminal lack of ability to communicate. but they're brothers and they understand each other and they grew up together and they're on their way to reconciliation. it probably has to do with the fact that jiang cheng is a deeply insecure person who defaults to being a dick when he feels threatened but you know what... wwx and jin ling are his only living relatives now and i just don't see them giving up on that. i actually see jin ling being helpful to this because back then it was yanli who bridged the gap between the things wwx and jc couldn't say to each other and resolving conflicts that arose because of that and i definitely see jin ling forcing his dumbass uncles talk to each other. its my sleepover and its MY twin scorpios of yunmeng with their scorpio nephew dynamic

part iii: i am smarter than mxtx

this section is the last one i promise and its self-explanatory i think. mostly i think being smarter than mxtx is more of a state of mind than a concrete measure of intelligence but this is significant to tying my argument together

you may have read everything i said and still been unconvinced and that's real and that's your truth like okay nicole. say that you're right about all these things and he is just wildly misunderstood since the story is told from largely wei wuxian's ~~damaged and never willing to be secure in the fact that people care about~~

him perspective but there's still so many things that he should have done to make up for everything that he just didn't and there's still so many things left up in the air. and that's real!! but listen to me, and this is crucial to my argument, *YOU* are smarter than mxtx

by which i mean that mxtx, while i respect her for giving me these characters and world to work with, is a deeply flawed writer that does not flesh out or resolve a lot of the things in the story. i could write a whole separate essay on that alone but she's vague as hell with the power mechanisms of cultivation in general and tends to tell you things more than she'll show you. and it's crazy to me that she wrote like 500k words of this and yet the person the most important after the protagonist and deuteragonist has a character development arc that is just..... incomplete. not even just that though i mean if you read the novel (to me) it isn't the pinnacle of storytelling in that she has this great story but just doesn't like. emote in her writing you know. maybe i'm nitpicky but thats how i feel and anyway what i mean by this is. the best way to consume this story is that you have to EXTRAPOLATE from what she does give you and fill in the gaps of what she doesn't and tell yourself that you're smarter than mxtx for it.

character development

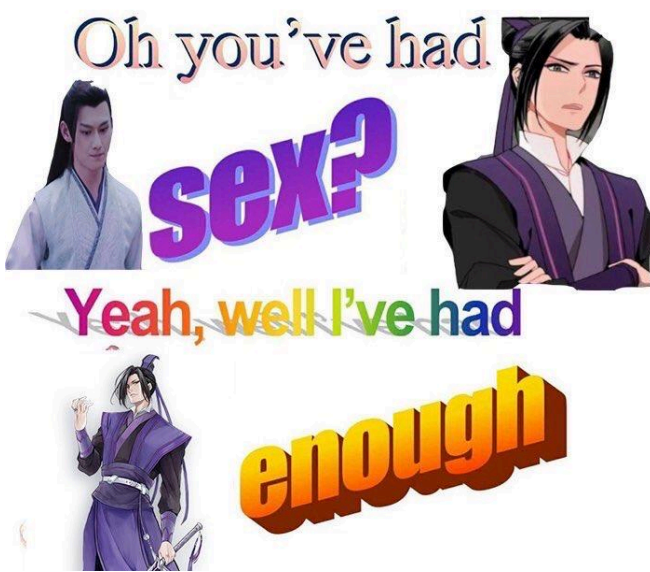
his character arc is like... it feels like with all the flashbacks and stuff that it builds toward way more development than there actually ends up being? his story pretty much ends right when he and wwx apologize to each other with so much still left unsaid (wwx still doesn't know about jiang cheng's sacrifice) and then it's just DONE. all we get from mxtx is "oh they reconcile eventually" like zzzzzzzzz...

tying back to what i was saying before about yzy/jc/jl being reflections of each other that are supposed to improve by generation like. there's all these hints dropped throughout about how deeply jiang cheng actually cares that it feels like ok mxtx have u heard of chekhov's gun... have u heard of actually resolving this character development... it just makes no sense to me personally that after everything that happened that jiang cheng would just go back to being a lonely angry sect leader it's just so... anticlimactic.

i do think that it's unrealistic for twin heroes to have gone back to the way things were before right after guanyin temple and i'm glad that didn't happen but man... i just want one extra chapter about how they're still brothers please i just want this. i think it's crucial to have a proper apology from both of them and really clear everything up and each take accountability for what's happened for them to both move on and for jiang cheng to learn to emote without yelling and unclench. and maybe it won't ever be truly the same but if there's one thing they both deserve it's to know that they both cared and still care

conclusion

in conclusion i wrote this all within like 18 hours without a laptop and i probably am still missing a lot and im emotionally exhausted just from compiling all this about jiang cheng's life and i'm not even the person who had to live through all that so that should at least say something about how hard he's had it. i just think jiang cheng is deeply tragic and also deeply flawed as a person but that's what makes him so interesting and i think he still has great potential in terms of development. here's a [rough translation of his cql character song](#) that i did because i think the lyrics are really important to understanding him if you wanna look at that and if you read this far then i thank you for your patience and once again all opinions are my own and everyone is welcome to continue this dialogue. i now leave you with my favourite jiang cheng memes



[Verse 1 - Nicki Minaj:]
 Yo, I never fucked I never fucked
 On my life, man, fuck's sake

