

# Autistic Coded Characters:

## Lan Wangji in the Untamed – Part 2

00:00

Intro: You're listening to the AfternoonaAsks ND squad, ND for neurodivergent, with Sarah, J, and Fran. J is Canadian, bringing up her ND family in Australia and is late-diagnosed autistic. Fran hails from Germany and is ADHD/autistic. Sarah is British-Chinese and part of a mixed NT/ND family. Standing up for representation, breaking down stereotypes, and challenging ableist perceptions: We're here to discuss all kinds of neurodivergencies in Asian dramas with a dose of scientific research and our own lived experience sprinkled on top. Hope you enjoy.

Fran: Okay, so welcome back everyone to part two of our podcast on The Untamed. Say hello, everyone.

J: Hello, welcome back.

Jie: Hello.

Kaey: Hello

Paid Subscription: Hello.

00:51

Fran: Okay. Awesome. It is actually still the same day, evening, morning, whatever it was for part one. But we had so much to say that we thought it would be better to cut it in half. So we're gonna continue right where we left off. We're ... we were at a place where we kind of established why we think these characters are autistic and ADHD. So it would be really interesting to talk about, in what ways we thought that Lan Wangji's autism, or Wei Wuxian's probable ADHD, contributed to their character arcs and the plot as we saw both of them unfold in the drama. Yeah, because we already...we mentioned last time that the place Lan Wangji grew up in like Cloud Recesses, was kind of perfect for him as an autistic person. And then the story starts with the loud chaos that is Wei Wuxian being introduced into his life and kind of like disrupting everything. And that sounds to me like the classic story where the hero gets expelled from the comfort of his home figuratively by introducing Wei Wuxian and then later, literally, and then he has to deal with the unknown, forced into an adventure that he did not plan nor was prepared for. And we get this whole like catalyst, catalysing character development and change and stuff like that.

02:09

J: I've thought about this a lot. I mean, aside from the trauma of losing his mother, and both of his parents, I think that growing up in Cloud Recesses would have been helpful in many ways for young autistic Wangji. Like the guidelines, heck, the rules for your entire life, all 3000 of them are spelled out

and they're clear and unambiguous. And what's more, everyone who lives there with you is also mandated to follow the same rules. Likewise, the place is a sensory safe zone, in a way with the precepts against making loud noises and against adornment on robes. And of course, no excessive talking. And then you just have the peaceful surroundings with the trees and the gardens and the waterfalls and the springs. And it's somewhere that would really provide the sensory and social support growing up that living elsewhere, like say, like in one of the cities, or even like Lotus Pier, it just wouldn't. And this is actually a huge deal as an autistic person, because we spend so much of our lives trying to navigate sensory issues that can be debilitating. And we also spend so much energy trying to decode the meaning of words and actions of those around us. And yet here in Cloud Recesses, like there's this atmosphere of tranquillity, and of course, the famous Lan precepts that have theoretically got you covered against acts by others with prohibitions against gossip and bullying, and frivolous words, and cliques and excluding others and behaving improperly.

03:28

Kaey: I think also that kind of environment really lends itself to helping Lan Wangji not have to mask, which is really important. But as a young child that had gone through so much turmoil with his family situation, Cloud Recesses really was the perfect place for young and vulnerable Lan Wangji to be raised. It gave him the stability and structure that he could lean into in order to find his footing while developing who he was as a person.

04:00

Jie: I completely agree with everything J and Kaey said about Cloud Recesses being a perfect environment in one sense for a young Lan Wangji. It enabled him to grow up not experiencing many of the sensory overloads that I feel the rest of the world would have caused him. But on the other hand, I think it was probably quite stifling and restricting, and stopped him from exploring and in a way understanding that other people's experiences differ so wildly from his own. Theory of Mind is a psychology concept where you understand that others' experiences, thoughts, and feelings differ from your own. And due to his intellect, I feel he absolutely understands those things on an objective level. But personally, he finds them utterly baffling. And we see it pretty frequently that he doesn't understand the actions of his peers and their ways of unwinding and having fun like drinking alcohol or running around or playing, like or play fighting. He just like... he knows they didn't have the same life as him but he still doesn't understand at all, that they don't think the same way he does.

05:07

J: Exactly. That's so true. And we can also see throughout the drama how what was once his refuge becomes more of a constant constraint on his growth as a person, as a human being, trying to understand how the world seems to work and his place in it, and his own sense of morals and ethics, and not just as a member of the Lan clan. And we see this time and time again, in the drama where he's butting up against the precepts. And especially, you know, good old number 52 "Do not associate with evil" and being punished for it: like, you know, he's made to transcribe books and to kneel in the snow for hours, you know, and then finally, of course, he's flogged, and he's in seclusion for three years. And remembering that he's a teenager during this time, I mean, look at what the other teens are doing in this drama in terms of drinking and partying. And what is he doing? And he's just questioning rules that he's experienced, and he sees them as illogical so I mean, like, you know, Wei Wuxian evil?

For trying to help the Wens? For calling out hypocrisy? For standing up to injustice? And later he even finds out that this supposed evil person suffered for two nights and a day to give his golden core to Jiang Wanyin.

06:12

Kaey: Yeah, definitely, like you both said, life confined in Cloud Recesses would have become stifling on some level for him. As intelligent and self-aware as Lan Wangji is, it would have had him or I think he would have eventually reached the point where the mental stimulation that even the huge Lan library would have given him, wouldn't have been enough. I like to think that had Wei Wuxian never appeared in Cloud Recesses, Lan Wangji would have ventured outside eventually, due to a need for mental stimulation and curiosity. And there would have discovered a very different world. But Wei Wuxian did arrive, and suddenly his whole worldview is being turned upside down.

06:55

Jie: In the book, too, we see more about how the restrictions on his childhood may have affected him. One of the things he does during the one of the drunk scenes in the book is engaging game of tag with Wei Wuxian, seeing as running is prohibited in Cloud Recesses, it's reasonable to assume he didn't get to engage very much in such silly frivolous games, and just didn't really get to be a kid, he was just kind of a little adult, the whole time under those rules.

07:27

Fran: We even get like the visual representation of the autism and the ADHD in those two characters, like in how they... how they stand, how they hold themselves, and how they move. Just like that... just because you were talking about the running ... because we get Wei Wuxian like running around everywhere, constantly, all the time, he never sits still and he's always slouching. And he's always like, you know, like doing stuff with his body and Lan Wangji, he always stays really stiffly, and like really straight and like, doesn't, you know, like, he moves very slowly and very, like gracefully and everything. Yeah, it just occurred to me that that's really funny, too.

08:07

Kaey: It's such a contrast. It's really heart wrenching to think that such an earnest child as Lan Wangji would have been... that he very likely couldn't indulge in games due to the environment in which he was raised. And the kind of person that he is, autistic people can have really incredible imaginations. But sometimes if there isn't anything to inspire them or learn to emulate, then that creativity can really be stifled. Obviously, this is not true for everyone. But in my own experience, if I don't have something tangible to inspire me to write, then I find it very difficult to do so. So it's not much of a stretch to think that in Cloud Recesses, creativity and imagination are frowned upon. Therefore, Lan Wangji's childhood would have been a very black and white existence.

08:59

Jie: That is so true. And it's also pretty clear in places that the restrictions in Cloud Recesses prevented him from being able to show his emotions and his feelings. Now, as an autistic person, I absolutely identify with that. As a kid, it definitely felt like my emotions were too big for my body, but that acting out those feelings, when they became too much to handle was just frowned upon. And of course, it's tricky

to translate the Lan rules into English, since translation is more of an art than a science. But there are rules in Cloud Recesses forbidding things like speaking too loudly, running, mourning in excess, talking behind people's backs, smiling foolishly, laughing for no reason, being unreasonable, and so on and so forth. As you can see, there are a lot of them. I know as a child, I would have broken every single one of those rules. And given the loss of Lan Wangji's mother when he's still a very small child, he certainly would have broken the rule about mourning in excess. In fact, we even see it in the way he sits outside her door once a month, even in the snow, waiting for her to call him in. It's only once he's an adult, though, and has time with Wei Wuxian to think about these rules that you really start to see him question them.

10:21

J: And I think that's a very autistic thing to do, by the way, like to not just take the rules at face value, but to need them to resonate with our own sense of ethics. Like we often get stereotyped as being overly honest and rule abiding. But there has to be a solid logic and rationale for set rules. Otherwise, what's the point in arbitrarily just going along with everything without it meaning something to us on a deeper level, it has to fit with our worldview, it has to make sense. There was this paper shared recently on autistic Twitter about how there needs to be more autistic people in risk management, because autistic people are more likely to identify and report on inefficient processes and dysfunctional practices and organisations, whereas neurotypical people would not speak up to the same degree and these scenes of Wangji questioning the rules fits with that, like he sees the disconnect between the precepts and what he's witnessing in real life. And while others may never question the clan principles, he does so, no matter the personal cost.

11:22

Kaey: It's like he really needs the context to understand the reasons around doing things. And once he did have that, he was really able to accept and understand it much better. I know that as an autistic person context is really important to me. And it gives me an understanding of where this fits into the map that is my world. And in Cloud Recesses, he has all these rules to act as a secure blanket, but the moment Wei Wuxian arrives, Wei Wuxian just tears off that blanket, off for seemingly no good reason. And then only once Lan Wangji leaves Cloud Recesses to look for the Yin Iron does he get to see the why of things. When that created conflict with the beliefs that he'd grown up with, that's really when he was able to...to develop his own beliefs.

12:18

Jie: Thinking more on the rules, "don't be picky with food" is also one of the rules I think a lot of us would really struggle with. Autistics are some of the pickiest eaters I know. I'm lucky because I'll eat almost anything. But some of my autistic friends have like super restricted diets. Like it's all chicken nuggets and french fries. And I do wonder how that impacted a young Lan Wangji. Did he force himself to eat things he didn't like, because of the rule? Or did he refuse to eat them and receive punishments? I can, however, absolutely imagine his brother sneaking the food he doesn't like from his bowl, which I think would have helped.

12:58

J: I absolutely love this idea. And it's my head canon now, and Xichen would totally do this.

13:05

Fran: I sometimes wonder if this is actually like, in general, more difficult in certain cultures with certain kinds of food. Like I don't like my vegetables to be like in big chunks. I like them smaller, so I can mix them all together. But there's definitely like certain Korean foods, for instance, or Vietnamese soups or things like that, which are just like big chunks of vegetables in soup or something like that, or in something. So I sometimes wonder if like, you know, like being picky with food is like more difficult in some countries than it is in others.

13:42

Jie: And some cultures have like, heavily spiced foods generally, whereas I know a lot of autistics that are like, I will eat bland food. I have had an autistic friend tell me that tomato ketchup is spicy. And I was like, oh my god, like, you would not cope in certain cultures where everything is spiced. You know, like, what do you do in those? That's a really interesting question. I hadn't actually considered it.

14:09

Fran: Maybe I should go to like...more countries with spicy food because that's like a sensory seeking thing for me. Like at the moment, I eat a lot of spicy stuff like that.

14:20

Jie: Same.

14:21

Paid subscription: Maybe that person is allergic to tomatoes.

14:24

Jie: You know, we did actually question that. We think that maybe they might be, but they're not the only autistic that have said it to me.

14:34

Fran: Spicy ketchup. Okay. Cool.

14:39

Kaey: Inflexibility is something I strongly associate with a younger Lan Wangji. But Wei Wuxian's appearance was essentially a catalyst for greater character growth, what with the early clashes. They're an interesting contrast together. Lan Wangji with the struggle to adapt quickly to this confusing new variable. And then Wei Wuxian with someone who doesn't or cannot respond quickly enough and outwardly enough to Wei Wuxian's quick mind. But by being who they are, you get the opportunity to watch an ADHDer, and an autistic person grow organically together, something that was a blessing within the 50 episodes feast. Yes, you watch them change, but it's the kind of change that has them seeing the world from the other's perspective. And given many crossovers between autism and ADHD, I do like to think that they reached harmony with each other.

15:38

Fran: Yeah, I agree. It was really beautiful to watch that and to see them understand each other when other people didn't. It was really, really lovely. Okay, so can we talk a bit about the queer coding of the drama as well, since we talked in our last podcast, which was on Semantic Error and Light on Me about the very strong overlap between being neurodivergent and being on the LGBTIQ+ spectrum. The Untamed was produced in the context of very tight censorship, like we already mentioned, and there were some serious limitations of what the writers and directors could legally portray on screen. So people do have to keep that in mind when watching it. But what were your favourite scenes that kind of push those boundaries or that explored them in creative ways?

16:33

J: It's one of my great delights that they were able to push the boundaries as far as they did in this. For our listeners who watch more Kdramas than Cdramas, they may not be aware that China has very strict morality laws about what can be depicted on screen. And this includes a prohibition on same sex relationships and among other things, like adultery and certain occult religious themes and such. The novel the live action is based upon, is unambiguous, that Lan Wangji and Wei Wuxian are a couple including some explicitly spicy scenes that would obviously never even remotely make it to air. So the challenge was to keep the spirit of the source material, layer it with so much queer symbolism and yet, there was enough plausible deniability put into it, (like if you maybe watch it with your hands over your eyes at the headband around the wrists in the Cold Pond cave or the three bows in the ancestral hall) that you could call it a bromance at a stretch. The fact that the writers and the directors were able to do this is a testament to their dedication to the project and wanting to do it justice.

17:31

Fran: I really wonder though, did they really like do the authorities really not know? Like, it's so obvious, despite the limitations, like, I don't know, I just...that that's something that really puzzles me. Like, it's still so obvious, but it wasn't censored. Like I don't know.

17:47

J: I think one of the things that amazes me from all this, because if anyone who's been in kind of like BL Cdrama fandom and stuff, knows about what happened with Guardian, and then kind of also what happened with Word of Honor, that there was a lot of controversy going around. But with Guardian, the fact that even once you'd finished production, once it had been released, it wasn't safe from not being re-edited. And the fact that Guardian had been called back, taken down from the platforms, re-edited and then and then redistributed, like, you know, after it had been released. And so I mean, this is the thing that got me was that after all these years, you know, with all the boundary pushing that The Untamed does that it's that it's still there, like that it's still there with all of the queer coding and that it hasn't been edited post-release. I mean, I'm just amazed.

18:45

Fran: And I mean, people aren't quiet about it, right?

18:49

Jie: Not at all. And to give our listeners who might not know about Chinese censorship laws, an idea of how heavy those issues can be: they weren't even sure if they would get to release the show. And at one point, they were planning to add a romance subplot between protagonist Wei Wuxian and main character Wen Qing. And thankfully, we avoided that alternate universe because "No, thank you". But there's really just so much fun symbolism in the show, including the use of rabbits. Anyone who knows me knows I love rabbits. So obviously, that delighted me. But what was really cool was learning about the rabbit God Tùershén, who represents love and sex between men. The folklore behind his story is actually pretty tragic. He was a human who was executed, he confessed his feelings to a nobleman after being caught spying on him bathing. The story says he then returned in the dream of a village elder in the form of a rabbit, which is why he's known as the rabbit God. In Chinese history, the word rabbit it's even been used as a derogatory term to describe gay men, which I wonder where that fits in the spectrum of like otter to bear you know.

20:02

Kaey: Watching Lan Wangji stare at Wei Wuxian for long, long moments is one of my favourite aspects of this drama. There is no spoken dialogue proclaiming Lan Wangji's love for Wei Wuxian, but if you watch the slight changes in Lan Wangji's staring over the course of the drama, you begin to notice the amount of emotion displayed there. The pinnacle of this is, of course, in one of the final episodes where Lan Wangji actually gives a small, soft smile at Wei Wuxian when they're in a market choosing a paper lantern, one that even has a rabbit on it! And to me, that microexpression from an autistic person is the epitome of someone head over heels in love. And it doubles as a wonderful tactic to get through the reviewers for censorship. One of my favourite fandom memes goes "Me and the bad bitch I pulled by being autistic", and I just see this as Lan Wangji staring at Wei Wuxian for 50 episodes.

21:05

Fran: Yeah, totally. And I actually said to J, when I was providing her with live commentary to me watching this drama over the last two months, that the whole second half of the drama is just Lan Wangji looking at Wei Wuxian and having his back, and always being there to deflect attacks on him and always being there to catch him when he falls. And it was like the epitome of my love language is acts of service and was just so beautiful. So yeah, I'm so surprised that you know, like this. It's so obvious.

21:35

Jie: Yeah, it always surprises me how much they managed to sneak past the censors. And I love telling my friends about it when they're not familiar with C dramas. And I'm like, look, they did this thing. They did this thing. The marriage chickens are an absolute favourite for me. For those who don't know, in ancient China gifting chickens was a traditional part of a marriage proposal. And in the novel, this scene is presented as one of the things Lan Wangji wishes he'd been able to get up to with other boys when he was young like misbehaving, but many of us think they put it into CQL/The Untamed as a sneaky way to point out the relationship between the two. I don't know if that's the case. But whether they did it intentionally or not, it's definitely a fun moment.



22:20

J: I love that scene. I just do. And I mean, it's ... and it has so many great memes as well. So my favourite queer coded scenes like there's so many.... I do wish that Wei Wuxian's confession scene in the temple from the novel and the audio drama could have been in there somehow. But yeah, I know, I know. Impossible. Other than that, all of the scenes were Lan Wangji is just looking at Wei Wuxian with that soft, indulgent "I'm so in love with you. And you have no idea" expression on his face. Like what we saw when he's bringing in Emperor's Smile to Wei Wuxian right in front of the sect leader in episode 43 or the way he looks at him after he finds out about Sizhui in episode 50. And, of course, the cradling of Wei Wuxian on the walkway of Lotus Pier and in the boat on the lake after the golden core reveal. Like to me the depth of that feeling and the nature of their relationship is unmistakable.

23:18

Fran: Also the carrying on his back, right. I mean, I don't know about Cdramas, but in Kdramas that's always like a declaration of love.

23:27

J: And yeah, and in the novel, it's a bridal carry. I mean, it's not it's not a piggyback. It's actually like a bridal carry.

Fran: Mmm.

23:36

Jie: I believe they even discussed doing it as a bridal carry for the show, and didn't for two reasons. And one of them is that they wanted to get it past the censors and didn't think they'd be able to, but the other one is that Wang Yibo couldn't actually lift Xiao Zhan up. If you watch that scene, you can see that like they're both giggling because Xiao Zhan's feet are like dragging on the floor because he's actually a few inches taller than Yibo and Yibo couldn't lift him properly. It's very funny.

24:12

Fran: I mean, there are actually so many scenes in this drama, where he's like, kind of like supporting Wei Wuxian's weight when he's actually unconscious, but he's not actually carrying him so he must still be walking. So I was like always like, this just looks like they can't actually carry each other.

24:30

Jie: Yeah. Yeah. But my favourite scenes, it's definitely the moment on the stairway of Jinlintai where Wei Wuxian tries to convince Jin Guangyao that he fooled Lan Wangji about his identity that whole time. Like he has barely even finished saying the sentence before Lan Wangji refutes this, stating that he always knew this was Wei Wuxian. He even draws his sword on the cultivators around them. When Wei Wuxian tries to convince him to lie, Lan Wangji tells him that the feeling of sticking to a single log bridge until it is dark is indeed not so bad, a sentence we witness him overhearing from Wei Wuxian during the flashback arc. While I think it could plausibly be viewed as a scene between two friends, it's way more of a love confession than anything else in my mind. The soft looks between them and the shocked looks on the faces of those around them show that. While we didn't get the "Lan Zhan, back



then I really wanted to sleep with you” moment from the Guanyin Temple confession in the novel, this comes pretty close.

25:31

Fran: Mmm. Yeah, it's such a moment of “I stand by you, even if I'll go down with you” isn't it?

25:37

J: It is and it's also like, I've watched that scene so many times because there's like, you know, there's rewatch scenes out of this that I'll watch over and over and over again. And I just also love looking at the expression on everyone else who's standing on the stairs, like, you know, the whole, like, shocked Pikachu face moment, and especially the two brothers who you know are witnessing all this and going “Wow.’

25:59

Jie: It really is a shocked Pikachu face, I had not thought of it that way. And now I cannot unsee it.

26:05

J: Although, like seriously, like, it's... Xichen shouldn't have been surprised, because he's been like captain of the ship from the beginning. So it's kind of like, he's the one that's kind of been secretly hoping that, you know, that gets from the start that they'd somehow like, at least end up friends or whatever. So I mean, the fact that he's like, you know, also doing shocked Pikachu face on the stairs, it's kind of like, you really shouldn't have been surprised. But anyway...

26:28

Jie: He really was the captain of the ship. There's like the moment in the Cloud Recesses arc where it's like, “Oh, that boy that you keep telling me is really annoying and you don't like him? I'm going to invite him on the night hunt. You're cool with that, right, little brother?” And it's just like, you can see the look on Lan Wangji's face where he's just like “Brother, please, don't do this to me.”

26:50

Kaey: I always believe that Lan Xichen is one of the very few people that can always read exactly what Lan Wangji is thinking at all times. This scene is really special to me as well, because it's the first time that their emotions are really out there for everyone to see. So previously, after the first siege of Burial Mounds when Lan Wangji defended it against the sects, his defence was unlikely to have been seen by outsiders as having any positive emotional connection because who would ever love Wei Wuxian, that monster? So why would anyone try to protect his home? But now as Lan Wangji defends Wei Wuxian against everyone else, it's impossible to deny that there's genuine feeling there. You can even see that understanding on Jin Guangyao's face.

27:43

Jie: 100 percent.

27:45

Fran: Okay, so one thing we always do in our pods is, we kind of try to imagine what the drama would be like if the main character wasn't autistic, or ADHD or another neurodivergency. And we usually come to the conclusion that that isn't possible and that the drama would not have been the same at all. So what about the relationship between the two leads unfolded in the way it did, because of Lan Wangji's autism?

28:14

J: I think there's so much but I'll start off just with, you know... He doesn't or cannot explain his feelings to Wei Wuxian but we know that he is affected, and so profoundly. And it's his actions that demonstrate it so well. Like he's carrying Suibian around after Wei Wuxian goes missing, and he's searching for him with Jiang Wanyin. And he's also disobeying his uncle and reading the forbidden library texts to find a way to help him. You know, doing the whole, "I'll just research the heck out of this until I find an answer." There's the cliff scene and the pining afterwards. Going to all of these places over 16 years looking for him or some sign of him. So, the series doesn't mention how he ended up with the Wen brand on his own chest as well. Or that it's canon that he has bottles of Emperor's Smile hidden under the floorboards in the Jingshi. Or even that his present day robes are basically widower ones. So I mean, we've got all these extra signs in the novel that, you know, like, he is not getting over him, like he is not getting over him. This is something, this relationship, and this person has profoundly impacted him for the rest of his life. And so I mean, and he's demonstrating that through his actions, and so I mean, that that is because he's autistic. I mean, you know, he's just, he's so profoundly...He has these deep feelings, he's so profoundly affected. It's basically changed the trajectory of his life. And, yeah, I mean, that's, that's, that's how it goes.

29:44

Kaey: And he does it in an understated way as well. Although I think to him, it's probably very loud and clear, but to everyone else, it's, it's not very clear at all. You mentioned that the robes are basically widower ones. I think they're very interesting for Lan Wangji after the flashback arc. Because I've read that the buttons on the outer robe that he wears are typically worn by married people. And the significance of this for someone who is mourning a beloved spouse really hits hard. I think also that displaying something like this would have felt more comfortable than any other kind of loud declaration for him. And making a fuss isn't something Lan Wangji likes to do, so he would make his position clear in other less overt ways. Yes, the buttons are present on the front of these robes, but they're an item of clothing and to him who would ever question an item of clothing, in his mind.

30:49

Jie: I also, I feel like him being autistic just... it really impacted the relationship in so many ways. Partially because it made it very hard for Wei Wuxian to understand him. You see these miscommunications really frequently throughout the series. And I think we've all experienced that. While Lan Wangji might not outright confess his feelings, I do think there are times where he feels his actions should express more than they actually do. Like he thinks it's much more performative than it is. Such as when he steps back in Qionqiong path to allow Wei Wuxian and the Wen remnants to pass. Meanwhile, because Lan Wangji presents as quite a cold person, and Wei Wuxian as very performative, Wei Wuxian doesn't necessarily see those actions as anything particularly extraordinary.

So it's a really interesting juxtaposition between this like very performative person who you don't like... necessarily like ... his... his actions don't necessarily have meaning, because he's very performative, generally, like when he flirts just for fun. Whereas Lan Wangji is like, I have been incredibly obvious. And I don't understand why you're not seeing that. But to everybody else, he's just like the emoji with the straight line mouth. And like, nobody else is getting it except for like his brother, I think.

32:18

Fran: Although I do think like, there were so many scenes, where I got the impression from just watching it once... I've only seen it once, so I might be wrong. But I got the... I got the impression a lot that Wei Wuxian actually also was one of the few people who kind of like, could read him quite well, and could like interpret his silences and was kind of like being patient with him and kind of like trying to include him in stuff, even if he wasn't like, you know, like pushing himself forward. So...

32:48

Jie: Absolutely, yeah, that's true. Wei Wuxian could read a lot of that stuff. But I think when it came to Lan Wangji's feelings about Wei Wuxian specifically, like, it just never even occurs to him, that this person might have any kind of romantic feelings for him. Like, it's just not even a possibility as far as he's concerned.

33:11

Fran: But how can we say that if that's like, never actually discussed in the drama, because of the censorship? Is it just me who's confused?

33:21

Jie: Yeah, I think it's that he doesn't understand the idea of Lan Wangji having an affection towards him. Rather than him not understanding Lan Wangji generally, it's just, it's only when it comes to his own being that he has a mental block, I think. Like, "I don't... why would he like... No, he doesn't like me, Jiang Cheng has been telling me this whole time."

33:45

J: I think the fandom like talks about that a lot too, about this kind of obliviousness to the...the depth and the you know, the state of Lan Wangji's feelings about him, and that he seems to have this blind spot. That he can read him so well, like on...on everything else, but just on this one issue... Like it seems like he just... meanwhile, the rest of us are kind of like "it's apparent from space, we can see how much he just adores you. Like, it's so obvious to all of us." And like for some reason, he just.... like we kind of speculate in fandom kind of like, What's the reason behind this? Is it you know, he feels unworthy? Is it past trauma? Is it like all these other reasons that you know, he can't fathom that somebody would...would have this much faith in him and love him this much? Like what's the reasoning behind it? And I don't know if we've ever kind of come up with some kind of rationale or explanation but I just know that it is discussed quite a bit and I mean, it appears in so many fics as well. So I mean, it's... it's just it's something that we discussed that, you know, he's able to read him so well and on so many other things, but just this one area, like just the depth of his love, it just seems like he misses it.

34:53

Kaey: Yes, definitely. I know that during the Cloud Recesses arc, you did have Jiang Cheng telling Wei Wuxian, "Oh Lan Wangji hates you, why do you keep bothering him? He doesn't want anything to do with you." And so he's got that early on mindset that, oh, well, Lan Wangji doesn't think of me in any way other than maybe I'm just a bother.

35:20

Jie: It might also be like, what you have to bear in mind is during the Cloud Recesses arc they're meant to be like the 15, so that they're kids, and then by the time Wei Wuxian dies, he's only meant to be like 20/21, I think. And he's spent all that time since he was like 15 in survival mode because of the Wens attacking and then Lotus Pier falling, and then he's thrown in the Burial Mounds and then the whole cultivation world's out to get him and now he's got to save the Wens, so he doesn't have time to stop and think about romance, that is just not a thing in his brain. He's like, my focuses are survival, and survival. That's all he has space for in his brain.

36:04

Fran: But I think that's like something that a lot of neurodivergent people can empathise with, right, that we see our own struggles and our own faults, and maybe everyone in the world can empathise with that, that we see, you know like, our own flaws, more than we see our own strengths, and that our perspective on ourselves is quite different from how other people see us. So maybe it's got nothing to do with him not understanding Lan Wangji but more his self-perspective and his self-perception.

36:38

J: Yeah, that's true. It is true. I was just thinking as well, like, just if you want to get back to a little bit of like, Lan Xichen and being able to read him, and he goes through this explanation bit in Episode 43. And, again, where he's like standing, I think he's in front of the Jingshi, with Wei Wuxian and he says to him, you know, like "I went to see him once during his imprisonment. And he said you were his zhiji," which like often gets translated as soulmate. But if you've read some posts on this, it's actually with the translation. It means so much more than soulmates. It's really like "the one who knows me best." And it has all these connotations to...kind of like, to bleed into debt into loyalty and selfhood and devotion. Like it has a much more deeper meaning in Chinese than the English translations that we're trying to use for it. And so there's of course like the scene in the forest back in episode 25, as well, where Wei Wuxian is saying to Lan Wangji, "I'd once thought you were my zhiji," and Lan Wangji replies "I still am". And so there's this thing in Episode 43 where Xichen is telling him that although he didn't say anything, like although Lan Wangji didn't say anything, you know, he kind of like had this depth of feeling that he considered him like his zhiji as well. And then also that he knew the pain and the confusion that Lan Wangji felt in his heart while watching Wei Wuxian's unorthodox cultivation method and that this stirred up the same feelings that he had when he lost his mother. Like he goes through this whole explanation of kind...of this...the trauma and the grief and kind of like how this was analogous to what he was watching kind of replay out with what Wei Wuxian and what was happening with him with his cultivation and like what was going on. And so I mean, I think as well like again, we have kind of this depth of feeling and it's kind of just so understated with kind of like this, you know, like, bad English translation of like, you know, "I'm your soulmate," or "I took you to be my soulmate" or whatever, but there's so much more going on.

38:42

Jie: Another perfect example of their miscommunication is the “Come back to Gusu with me” argument, which you see come up repeatedly. While Lan Wangji actually wants to take Wei Wuxian back to Gusu with him to... both to protect him and to heal him from the harmful effects of his cultivation method Wei Wuxian believes that Lan Wangji wants to take him back to punish him. And in the book during the present day scenes this misunderstanding it's clarified, showing that Wei Wuxian continued to believe that Lan Wangji would punish him in Gusu all the way up to his death.

39:20

Fran: I wonder if there's like a like again an autistic ADHD meaning behind that that kind of like ADHD people might you know, view rules more as restricting whereas autistic people view rules more as like a protective sort of thing.

39:38

Jie: Hmm It's an interesting thought. Yeah, I hadn't considered that. Wow.

39:41

J: So like we have these massive feelings here, and they're not really spoken to on both sides and like wow, there's so many fics that really make use of this and I think the depth of feeling and the difficulty communicating it, and this whole feeling of loss and pining and not being able to let go of Wei Wuxian so easily. All of this is so very autistic. And if you think back to like, the very first episode like now, I mean, because Franzi has watched all the way to the end and like go back to like episode one. And you look at that first sentence of like “Wei Ying, is it you?” I mean and you just like it's such a simple sentence but I mean what is conveyed in that as well is just like it's there's depths in there knowing like, you know, how their whole story plays out. I also giggled at that scene in Yunping City when he pulls a 16 year-old butterfly talisman out of his sleeve and gives it to Wei Wuxian to ignite to help Wen Ning out and it's like, of course, you're hanging onto this still.

40:42

Jie: I mean, canonically as well in the book we know he hangs on to things to do with Wei Wuxian. Like we have the bottles of Emperor's Smile you mentioned under the floorboards. But also, there's a scene where the girls are like throwing flowers to the men and Wei Wuxian throws a flower to Lan Wangji and then he keeps it and presses it and uses it as a bookmark. And we know like canonically he kept that which also I think is kind of a bit of an autism thing. Because ... damn, if I don't have a lot of collections, like I feel like a lot of us collect things that have to do with something we care about.

41:22

Kaey: I do think that Lan Wangji definitely has that little box of treasures and everything that Wei Wuxian might have touched in the past is sitting in that box.

41:34

Fran: Okay, the problem is just when you're AuDHD you've got all these collections of things, but they're in a box and they're in a mess.

41:41

Jie: Wow, that's a mood.

41:43

Fran: Okay, so *The Untamed* covers some really hefty themes, the nature of love, of ethics and morality, redemption, justice, individualism versus collectivism... among many others. So how do you see an autistic-coded character like Lan Wangji articulating these themes? Was there anything that struck you the most?

42:08

Jie: Lan Wangji's devotion to both Wei Wuxian and seeking justice for what happened to him I think speak very strongly to those themes, as well as the nature of love and morality. For example, after Wei Wuxian's death, Lan Wangji adopts the little boy Wen Yuan, which I can only imagine would have been frowned upon by the Lan Clan at large. Remember, the entire Wen clan gets labelled as evil due to the actions of a few, and the majority of them were slaughtered, which means if anyone had ever found out about Wen Yuan's past, the Lan clan would have seen huge repercussions for sheltering any member of the Wen clan, even a child. The fact that Lan Wangji is so willing to take that risk and give Wen Yuan his own surname, making him Lan Yuan, and later Lan Sizhui, speaks so much to his sense of justice, love and morality. Sometimes I think people paint his adoption of Lan Yuan as being about his love of Wei Wuxian, but I really don't think that's fair to Lan Wangji, at all. I think from the very beginning, he's genuinely fond of this little boy. But he's also seen firsthand the way that the Wen remnants were living in the Burial Mounds, and he knows that Lan Yuan has lost everything he ever knew, which is probably a feeling he knows well from losing his mother when he was a very small boy. Taking Lan Yuan in is just a wonderful example of one of his early acts of rebellion against his own upbringing. And I really love that.

43:47

J: I'm so glad you said this. I read a few character analyses before this and some of the ones that bothered me the most, they argued that he wasn't a dynamic enough character or that he was basically just responding to Wei Wuxian's actions all the way through like he's some kind of sidekick or something who didn't actively make choices of his own. And it's an insult to this incredible character, one who in part keeps us coming back to the various incarnations of the story.

44:12

Kaey: I do believe that Lan Wangji has suffered quite a lot in a very quiet way throughout his whole character development, particularly in response to a lot of these themes. We've got this character who's been brought up very strictly to see the world in black and white, which is further reinforced by his autism. That world that he's grown up in is safe and uncomplicated and he understands it. But when the world intrudes, he's forced to acknowledge that his little world in *Cloud Recesses* is not the norm. And given the turmoil in the world, he now needs to hurry up and understand it so he can fight for what he believes in, that being the survival of *Cloud Recesses* and Wei Wuxian and to maintain justice and good in the world. His black and white thinking would have made this a huge struggle for him. And the fact that he managed it as quickly as he did is pretty impressive to my mind. I do think, though, that his

growing affection for Wei Wuxian definitely helped this. After all, he watched someone he respected and cared for really highlight issues that he might otherwise have struggled to grasp. Seeing someone tackle an issue first can really help an autistic person understand how to approach it themselves. And in this, I think Wei Wuxian acted as a spotlight on things Lan Wangji had never really had any concept of, like going against orthodoxy when there was injustice, or, conversely, who gets to decide what is good and what is evil. In watching Wei Wuxian fight, he was able to learn how to be strong as well. And that included developing his own strong morals and ethics, independently of what his sect decided that they should be.

46:01

Jie: Yes, absolutely. Like, while Lan Wangji is an incredibly intelligent guy, he's grown up in such strict conditions that I feel like, at least when he was younger, if he doesn't have a rule for how he's meant to react to something, he would really struggle there. Seeing someone else, someone that you respect, specifically, reacting to things really helps when you're autistic. It gives you kind of like a guideline for how to react yourself. And it also gives you a secondary angle rather than your own knee jerk instinctual reaction. I know I ask my husband, who is neurotypical, to sanity check for want of a better term, all the time when I can't decide if my reaction was the correct one. Like, if I've said something to someone, and I feel like they reacted negatively, I'll be like, "Did I upset them? Because I can't tell," and so he'll like sanity check what's going on for me.

46:57

J: I think I do that as well. It's just so much a part of our lives now.

47:05

Fran: I've got an assignment due for university, and I couldn't get...I couldn't understand one of the questions. So I asked in my study support group and funny enough, like 90% in its studies, it's like, long distance study. So 90% are neurodivergent folks, and they all said, "Yeah, I asked some of my neurotypical friends and four out of five came back with this answer." It was just so funny because everyone did the same. Everyone has like their support people who are neurotypical people who they can ask if they you know, like don't know anymore.

47:39

Jie: This is my emotional support neurotypical. Let's get them a little harness.

47:49

J: There's this beautiful archived post of hunxi-guilai on Tumblr, where they mentioned that even though Wei Wuxian was the first one to really perceive Wangji and the one who quote, "listened close enough to hear the melody of his heart." And there's that scene with the lanterns where they both pledged to live their lives, asking their hearts and holding the regrets as it's translated. Wangji already had the basis for this before Wei Wuxian came along, it's just that they realised it in each other. And as the author of the blog post notes, even at 16 Wangji had this surety of step and this confidence in himself and conviction of his beliefs and his actions. And this was also all of him before Wei Wuxian. This reflection on his character sums him up so well and I'm just going to read it to do it justice. So this is the quote: "This isn't to say that Lan Wangji doesn't have doubts that he doesn't deal with conflict and



setbacks and regrets and mistakes because he does: 13 or 16 years of it. No matter what version of his story, Wangji endures over a decade of purgatory of watching his life slip slowly back into grayscale in the absence of Wei Wuxian. He settles back into the life that he knew he would live at 16, cultivating, meditating, night hunting, and he packs away all of those terrifying hopes and dreams and joys and fears left behind in the wreckage from the whirlwind of Wei Wuxian tearing through his life. He doesn't move on per se if there's one thing we know about Lan Wangji is that he'll never move on from Wei Wuxian. But he builds a life out of the ruins of what could have been. He teaches the juniors, he watches over A-Yuan, now Lan Yuan, now Sizhui. He brings light to dark places. He brings order to chaos. He goes where he is needed because there will always be a need for someone like Lan Wangji because even if Wei Wuxian is no longer in this world, Lan Wangji will live their principles for both of them, fulfil a vow entrusted to a floating lantern to eliminate the wicked and aid the weak, and to ask one's heart and find no regret." And I think that this whole character arc through the drama as an autistic character is just such an accurate illustration of those themes and that his understanding and experience of love and of being true to himself, and his refinement in his comprehension of ethics of morality, like all of this is demonstrated through his actions. While many might argue that Wei Wuxian is the main character of The Untamed, I contend that the story would not be what it is without Lan Wangji.

50:17

Jie: I absolutely agree. And I also want to call back to the bit about Wei Wuxian being the first person to really perceive Lan Wangji. I don't think anyone from outside of Lan Wangji's immediate family had ever really tried to know him, you know? It's almost no wonder that he sort of fell as hard for Wei Wuxian as he did. Suddenly, this guy comes into his life. And while all the other people have decided he was stuck up or arrogant or cold, Wei Wuxian wanted to get to know him, like even down to figuring out he likes rabbits. I don't think anyone had ever bothered caring about his interests before. Like the way Wei Wuxian goes out of his way, despite being an absolute pain in the arse, to learn all of the things that Lan Wangji cares about is just really beautiful.

51:11

Fran: It really is. Yeah. Okay, as we mentioned in the introduction, all three of our guests, I was just counting...is there really three? All three of our guests have written fanfiction with Lan Wangji as an autistic character. So does anyone want to tell us a bit about the work you've published, of course, only if you want to, why it was important for you to create your own renditions with him as an autistic character, and if maybe, you know writing those, those things, those fanfictions if that made you understand him better as a character?

51:52

Jie: So I've written multiple fanfics with an explicitly autistic Lan Wangji, as well as a few where he was more just autistic-coded. For me, I think the lack of good representation is just a really frustrating thing. I can like off the top of my head name, maybe one explicitly autistic character that I actually identified with. I really love writing him and showing that autism is a very varied condition. And even people who mask very well and are very intelligent can struggle with things like meltdowns. I especially enjoy the fact that even in canon, Lan Wangji isn't very talkative, but he listens and absorbs a lot. It also makes it kind of fun to explore the meltdowns where he can finally let out all those big feelings he's been holding in a way where he's safe and supported by the people he loves. I especially enjoy writing modern

alternate universe fic with a strong sort of found family theme as I think many autistic people identify with the idea of found family. I don't know about you guys, but most of my friends are neurodivergent. And they certainly understand me better than my actual family. One of my fics I wrote is about Lan Wangji having a meltdown at a birthday party for a kid. And someone like spills like a sticky drink over him which...sensory nightmare. I think we can all agree. And him having a meltdown in that scenario. And I think every one of us who's ever had a public meltdown, can really identify with that like mortification of oh my god, all these people are seeing me screaming like a child or freezing or something because something fairly innocuous to them has happened to me. And I really wanted to explore that sort of feeling and that angle in a way that maybe would help other people who aren't autistic understand it?

53:57

Fran: Yeah, that's, that's a really good, good reason.

54:02

Kaey: Yes, definitely, I think being able to write autistic Lan Wangji is important to me as an autistic person, because writing has been something I use to work through my experiences. And so writing Lan Wangji has been a gift in being able to understand myself. It's also freeing in being able to show to neurotypical people a glimpse of my own experience of autism. One of my favourite things to do is to write young autistic Lan Wangji and his experiences in school, because as many autistic people know, school can be incredibly difficult for us. But if you give an autistic person a patient and understanding teacher that will make a huge difference. And so, to have a teacher provide space to Lan Wangji feels to me like being able to breathe freely after being constrained for a long period of time. I have had fellow fans comment on these works saying that my works have given them an understanding of autism that they never had before, and how grateful they are for it. And honestly, these comments live in my heart and being able to provide that understanding is so important as a first step to acceptance. So if I can do that in my little corner of the internet, then I will.

55:26

Fran: It's one of the reasons why we do this pod too and we got like a similar comment on one of the first pods we did and it just feels so rewarding. If you can make a difference for even like one person in the world like that, it's just like it's worth it.

55:41

Paid Subscription: 100 percent. Paid here. So I always write Lan Wangji as as autistic in my heart. But the first time I tagged him as such, or realised that there was a huge autistic Lan Wangji tag on Ao3 was in my mashup with the Kdrama Extraordinary Attorney Woo, which I know you've done an episode on. But just quickly, it features an explicitly autistic female lead Woo Young- Woo. So the fic is called Extraordinary Attorney Wangji. And it takes the plot of the show with the characters of The Untamed but for me, it was quite difficult to take a show that I genuinely love, and I wouldn't have written a fic if I didn't, but I still have a lot of critique for and its portrayal of, of autism. So deciding what to pick and choose from the show, and still keep to make sure that language you felt in character was was quite difficult.

56:36

Jie: I just have to say here that I love that fic. So much like I was genuinely like waiting for updates for it. I was like, no, no, you need to update this because I need to know what's, come on, come on. It's just really fantastic. I like highly recommend. It's really good.

56:54

Kaey: Yes, that fic lives in my heart. It's so good.

56:59

J: I was just gonna say as well, I think seeing is that was the first pod that Franzi and I did that started like this whole...like we were guests on the Noona's podcast and we discussed Extraordinary Attorney Woo, from an autistic perspective, kind of in honour of that we should probably put a link to it that if anyone who has watched The Untamed in order to listen to us, and I know there's a couple of you out there, I hope and who wants to read this rendition with the fic that that they'd be able to be able to find it so that would be awesome.

57:35

Paid: Oh, and same for Jie's and Kaey's fics as well? Yeah.

57:38

Jie: How dare you...this...look, this exchange was meant to be me flustering Paid, not people then talking about my fics like like...this wasn't the agreement we entered into.

57:52

Fran: From a reader's perspective, I'm currently because I only just finished a drama, I haven't really ventured into any Untamed fanfics yet, I'm mostly reading BTS fanfics. But I'm always happy when I stumble upon one that features one of them as like an autistic character...autistic-coded character.

58:13

Paid Subscription: there's a lot you can search under the tag of autistic Lan Wangji, or ADHD Wei Wuxian which is also very popular. And I think there's probably, you know, a good 1000 or so under that tag alone at this point, just because it's yeah explicit, and not just to us. But yeah, there were three main things that I left behind on just the show. One was just a pet peeve. And that was the conflation of savantism and autism, which they never really separate in the show Extraordinary Attorney Woo. So I soapbox about this, but Woo Young-Woo is very much an autistic savant, of which there are fewer than 100 in the world. But way more than 100 on TV, and I just wanted to show that being autistic and being a savant are two separate states. And personally, I feel that the attachment that TV or media has to portraying savantism and autism is basically the same, seems to smack of ableism to me. That's sort of saying, the only way they want to have an autistic character, especially in the lead, is if they make them superhuman, because otherwise it's, I don't know, a bummer, I guess, to show the downsides without some sort of massive payoff. So yeah, that was...that was a soapbox moment for me in the fic.

59:30

Jie: Oh my God. Preach though! Preach! You are so right.

59:35

Fran: Either that or the complete opposite of like, someone who can't, you know, like, who has like very high support needs?

59:43

Paid Subscription: Yes, and they do show that in the show, as sort of, there is an episode where they make some attempt to show the different sides of the spectrum, because Woo Young-Woo deals with a mostly nonverbal autistic person. But nonetheless, they just never address the savant aspect of who she is. The second thing I left behind was this really iffy concept in Extraordinary Attorney Woo that she can't learn from her mistakes. And they really sort of played that for laughs a lot. And, you know, sometimes it comes across as wholesome. I understand that's what they're going for. But I just feel that particularly autistic women or non-men do not have a choice usually, but to learn harshly, and part of Lan Wangji's character that fits with that is just, it's sort of non-negotiable, that he pays incredibly dearly for his mistakes, a lot of which he makes, in some ways due to the rigidity of his autism. And he alters his whole worldview accordingly. That's his character arc, he very much learns from his mistakes. And that feels very autistic, to me this sort of commitment to morality of structure and letting things go when you realise that they are unjust or don't make sense. So I couldn't keep that part of the show, because it just didn't make sense for him. And lastly, I won't go on too much longer, but there's sort of a part and I'll try not to make this too much of a spoiler, but in the last sort of two episodes, where Woo Young-Woo is telling her love interest that she will probably always love him like a cat...kind of be a little indifferent to him and never love him the way that he wants.

1:01:25

Fran: I hated that so much.

Jie: Mm-hmm.

1:01:28

Paid Subscription: And I see how the writers got there. But not gonna lie that rankles. Yeah, it rankled me. It sort of implied an incapability, or at the very least diminished capacity for love. And I think misunderstanding how autistic people love is a huge stereotype. I've tried in the past, mayhap foolishly to explain to friends, honestly, yeah, I do love some things like interests or hobbies of mine, more than close friends and some family members. And I realised that they were hearing that in a very callous way as, "Oh, she doesn't love people," when what I was trying to say was, "No, you don't love things. I love people as much as you. But you look at me like I'm crazy when I say you know, I cried when I moved cities and I had to say goodbye to my favourite walking route because it felt like a friend and I still miss it as much or more than some of the actual human friends I left behind." So I wanted to challenge the idea that because Lan Wangji is autistic and expresses all consuming love for his special interests that he wouldn't be able to love Wei Wuxian that much. In my frustration and sort of search for a way to describe the way I feel about love, I've ended up using the entirely made up term, expansive love, because I couldn't find a term in literature that made sense to me. Expansive love to me is the way autistics can love a million things that aren't people just as much as people and still not have that diminish how we feel about people. And there's a quote from Fleabag that I think is relevant here: "I

think you know how to love better than any of us. That's why you find it all so painful." And what better rallying cry for a group of people quite literally diagnostically defined as loving things too intensely. I don't want to shame Lan Wangji for that kind of love. Because I think the way he feels about love is very beautiful, and exactly what I've been struggling to convey my whole life. So I wanted to protect his right to feel that way and express that love autistically. And it was a privilege to write him.

1:03:41

Jie: It is really interesting you saying about like moving away from your city and like your walking route and stuff like that. I just moved house like literally right before Christmas. And I hated that house so much like...I hate...it was it was cold and it was damp and it was awful. And yet for some reason, on one of our last days there, I cried about the fact we were leaving that house and if that isn't the epitome of the autistic experience of "But I don't even like this thing, but I'm attached to it and I don't want to lose it," like I don't know what is..

1:04:16

Paid Subscription: Yeah, you can have a toxic relationship with objects just as much as people.

Jie: Oh so much!

1:04:21

Fran: Yeah, but what a good way to use writing fanfics to kind of fix certain things from a show or show certain things that were missed out or that couldn't be portrayed like we have for The Untamed due to the restrictions. From time to time posts spring up wishing that there was a sequel to the novel or a season two of The Untamed. I think we all know that feeling in all our favourite dramas. And while we know neither is a possibility as a fan and as fic writers, can you imagine for a second, just for fun, what you've got on the inside scoop on what your beloved characters have been up to, since we parted ways with them, like as a canon-compliant continuation, where do you see them? And what are they doing besides the "everyday means everyday"?

1:05:10

Jie: "Everyday means everyday" is one of my favourite quotes from the book. It's just so funny to me, Wei Wuxian is teasing Lan Wangji that he wants to have sex every day. And Lan Wangji, an autistic king, takes this at absolute face value. Every day really does mean everyday for them. And Wei Wuxian should mark his words, and there's like instantaneous regret when he's like, "But no, I didn't think you were gonna take that at face value," and we're all like, "Nope, everyday is everyday."

1:05:46

Paid Subscription: In a shocking turn of events, Lan Wangji took that literally.

1:05:50

Jie: For real though! Um, but anyway while in the novel we, we get it very clearly laid out to us that yes, they're in a relationship, we get their love confession and we have the first time they have sex in a bush on the side of the road because, okay, it's left a lot more open in the show. Because of a lot of the censorship issues. We see Wei Wuxian leaves to go on his own travels while Lan Wangji takes up the

role of Chief Cultivator. And I've seen a lot of people complain that this ending breaks them up. And it's like they kind of forget that the very last shot is Wei Wuxian standing on a hill playing Chenqing, and he hears his name spoken by Lan Wangji, and he turns around to shoot the most dazzling smile. And so they do reunite and I firmly believe that love confession comes not long after. I've always imagined that Lan Wangji's sort of main goal as Chief Cultivator is to abolish that role, because it puts too much power in one person's hands. And it was actually only invented by the like power mad leader of the Wen clan. And then it passed down to Jin Guangshan, who also was kind of power mad. So it's a really bad role to have. So I think he...after he does this, and Lan Xichen comes out of his seclusion, and is sort of ready to leave the sect again. Then Lan Wangji and Wei Wuxian get to go on their travels. And they night hunt and they explore and they sort of see how the world has changed in those 16 years and see all the things that Wei Wuxian sort of needs to catch up on. And I'm sure they take the juniors on more night hunts too. Sizhui might be all grown up now and going on his own travels. But I 100% think as he remembers more of his childhood, he would want to spend more time with them and get to know the first man who raised him alongside the second man who raised him.

1:07:58

J: Hmm, I love this. And I could just picture it and I think you're right about the Chief Cultivator position, and how he would be thinking, "I want to be the last one in this role, and there's a better way to do things." And I imagine they're featured very much as you do but it also you know, I hope, I see a time after they're travelling that they come back to Cloud Recesses with Xichen back in place as the sect leader and the lure of teaching the next generation of cultivation students is too great to pass up. At least I hope so given all of those memorable scenes with Wei Wuxian and his little duckling juniors, I can still see them going on night hunts where they're needed but maybe the chaos needs to be actually at home for a little while. And with Xichen turning a blind eye to the amount of Emperor's Smile going into the Jingshi and the sight of experiments gone wrong in the name of Wangji being happy and Cloud Recesses getting a brilliant, if somewhat unconventional, teacher.

1:08:50

Jie: I love that we call them the duckling juniors...that the first time when we see Lan Wangji arrive and they just all go flocking out going "Hanguang-jun! Hanguang-jun!" It's so cute. I love them.

1:09:04

Kaey: I have so many ideas on what our pair could be doing post cannon. And yes, I do believe that Lan Wangji will organise the cultivation world in a particular way so that neither he or anyone else needs to take up the position of Chief Cultivator. He'll probably ruffle some feathers while doing so but one peep from any of the other sect leaders and he will just stare at them until they piped down and fell into line. He's the powerful Hanguang-jun after all. But once he does manage to offload his responsibilities, I do see him and Wei Wuxian settling down close to Cloud Recesses in a cottage, after everything that pair have been through Lan Wangji would want Wei Wuxian to have the chance to live a quiet life with the option of night hunting whenever they want to. Lan Wangji will also raise rabbits. That is without question. And I think you can often find him sitting in a meadow with them, just being. It will be quiet, it will be serene, and yet he'll still welcome his loud and cheerful husband with open arms when Wei Wuxian comes looking for him. This kind of life will be a very happy one for him, I think.



1:10:15

Paid Subscription: Well, my first ever fic was in some ways, constructed or conceived, if you will, in a sort of fit of autism, because I just got to the end of The Untamed and I couldn't handle that it was over. And I find that when I get obsessed with...get obsessed with any piece of media, my mind immediately goes to like post-canon and filling in any gaps in canon and I can't leave it unresolved. And I can't rest until I sort it all out. So this fic was like my red string on a cork board of me waking up for about six months in a row at 3am every night, reaching for my notes app and being like, "Well, that part didn't make sense. I have to make it make sense. And then connect it to this other part that didn't make sense." So particularly in Wind Rose, it focuses a lot on the Yin Iron plot. Because I think if anybody is a fan of other iterations, especially the novel, they'll know that the Yin Iron plot is unique to The Untamed and has some holes in it. So I couldn't couldn't let that slide and the fic just basically picks up where they meet on the cliff again, ties up the Yin Iron plot and a few other unresolved threads like what actually happened to Wei Wuxian's parents. But yeah, similar themes to what everybody else has said, I agree with the fact that Lan Wangji as Chief Cultivator would struggle a lot with power that he doesn't really want. And Wei Wuxian would probably struggle with grief and trauma. And also, he has all these relationships now with Jiang Cheng, Sizhui, and Jin Ling and people that he expected to never be able to build anything with ever again. So yeah, I think you'd focus a lot on that. And of course, romance.

1:12:02

J: It's interesting that you mention that...I think when you got to the end of watching, Franzi, and we kind of did all the big...like the golden core reveal and the temple scene with Jiang Wanyin. And you remember, you're like, "So what's the deal with their relationship now?" You know, how are they...how are they going to work this out? Because like, we still have Angry Grape like, really, really Angry Grape, and everything's so awkward. And so I remember like, we were kind of like, "You know, I think it's a work in progress."

1:12:32

Fran: I hated their ending. I hated it so much. I need to read some fics that resolve it. It's just like, Ah.

1:12:42

Jie: Angry Grape by the way is my favourite fandom nickname. Like I love the fact we've dubbed him Angry Grape.

Paid Subscription: Yeah, that...

1:12:51

Jie: The universal accord.

1:12:53

Paid Subscription: Just by universal accord. Yeah, there was no vote...there didn't need to be.

1:12:56

Jie: It's like, it's like the blue robes that Lan Wangji wears are the slutty blue robes and we have all agreed they were slutty.



1:13:04

Paid Subscription: These are science facts.

1:13:05

J: Oh, gosh. Thank you so much for for this for today and for sharing your perspectives and being a part of this. It's...I realise it's like really late for you now in Europe. And yeah, it's also like, yeah, it's kind of like mid-morning. Now over here, Australia and New Zealand. Well, just after I think...gone past noon, yeah.

1:13:25

Fran: I'm really glad we did this too... like I don't think if we hadn't done this pod, I would have probably not like watched this at this point in my life, just because I'm not watching anything at the moment. So I'm really glad I could...I know we were planning to do this. And I could watch it and I could like, you know, like, get all the commentary on what was happening and get things explained and get like links sent and memes sent throughout the watching process. It was very interactive and very enjoyable.

1:13:53

Jie: It is great that you had someone to do that as well to like... to like help you clarify things because I had nothing. I just went into it blind. And then I had no need to clarify anything.

1:14:05

Fran: I think it's the best way to watch this to be fair.

1:14:08

Jie: And now whenever one of my friends watches it, I'm like, "Okay, now you've started watching it. You have to DM me every episode with your thoughts and your questions and I'll fill you in. We made a cheat sheet of all the characters and their like given names and courtesy names and titles." Like it's a complicated show, sometimes.

1:14:24

Paid Subscription: There's a spreadsheet...

1:14:26

Kaey: And then you show them all the links for Jin Ling's uncles.

1:14:32

Fran: Yes

1:14:35

Jie: Jin Ling's uncle investigates the death of Jin Ling's uncle after being resurrected by Jin Ling's uncle in the body of Jin Ling's uncle...

1:14:43

Paid Subscription: It's more red string on the corkboard, yeah.

1:14:47

Fran: Yeah and I got all these links and with like a note "Okay, watch this after you've gotten to this episode," and I'm like this is all lost in WhatsApp like I will never be able to find this again like you have to post it when...when the time comes.

1:14:58

Paid Subscription: There's nothing autistic people love more than forcing someone to watch something that we like and being like, "Do you like it? Do you like it? Please give detailed notes on how much you like it."

1:15:08

Jie: We just sit next to them and stare at them while they're watching it, like they're watching the screen and we're watching them.

1:15:17

Kaey: Yeah it's time to make it your whole personality.

1:15:20

J: Absolutely and honestly I'm just so thankful that Franzi like stayed with it all and especially when I feel like I strong armed her into this and 50 episodes is a huge ask. And like this is your first Cdrama right?

1:15:34

Fran: If you don't want to call Whirlwind Girl 2 which I only watched for Ji Chang-Uk and which wasn't very good then you know like first and a half maybe.

1:15:45

J: Wow and so I mean like this is a great introduction and it was also just like yeah like I...I think when we kept talking about on the pod that we're gonna do this and yeah like it's inevitable because you know J's just so fixated on The Untamed and will not let this go kinda like Lan Wangji.

1:16:05

Fran: The problem is...the problem with these things is and it's the same thing why I kind of like, what's the word, why I tried to resist getting into BTS is because there's such a huge fandom there's so much stuff and I just know I'll get pulled into the rabbit hole and I'll dedicate my whole life to it. And I'm just you know, you have to manage your time. You can't get into every fandom. So you have to kind of like, you know, like, beware of what you're signing up for.

1:16:35

Jie: I did that with BTS too. And now if my friends recommend other Kpop groups, like after the couple that I'm into, I'm like no, that I don't have room in my brain for any more of this like, please I don't have the time or the money or the brain.

1:16:49

Paid Subscription: Yes. I used to fight it. It didn't work. Didn't work out at all.

1:16:56

Fran: It usually doesn't work.

1:16:58

Paid Subscription: Damn you, Taemin.

1:17:00

Kaey: It's time to make it your whole personality.

1:17:03

Jie: Wow. Yep. Yeah. Time to make it my whole personality really fits.

1:17:06

Paid Subscription: The spirit moved me and that spirit was Lee Taemin.

1:17:10

J: Oh gosh, so, okay, so once again, thank you so much. It's been an absolute pleasure to deep dive autistic Lan Wangji and to geek out and to collaborate with some of my favourite people. So thank you, thank you, thank you. We usually end off with asking about what people are watching. I'll throw it open to whatever you want to share that you're watching, reading, writing you know just maybe briefly.

1:17:35

Fran: Yeah, maybe we restrict it to one thing because we're like already like one and a half hours into the second part so we're doing two and a half hours so far.

1:17:46

Jie: I...like I said I've just moved house and for a while all of my MXTX like physical books were all in a box. So now they're all out and displayed on a shelf and I'm going to sit and read every single one of them. That is my goal now I am comfortably in a new house.

1:18:04

Kaey: I am currently on holiday and binge watching the new Cdrama The Last Immortal and I'm about halfway through and enjoying it quite a lot, so can highly recommend. It's very beautiful.

1:18:20

Paid Subscription: And I have been watching 911 because my brain was desperate for a somewhat well done procedural and then to my surprise it turns out there's a gigantic ship fandom for two of the main characters that I have been sucked into against my will and I have now written fanfiction for so again the spirit moved me...

1:18:40

Fran: I actually...not well since I finished that I haven't started anything new. I've got a long list of dramas that I've started and then abandoned so maybe I'll go back to one of them but you know if I can remember what they were.

1:18:57

J: And I also have a really long list of stuff to be watched that also like I think I'm kind of got a similar thing going on where I'm watching like the first one or two episodes of something not getting into it and then just abandoning it and not sticking to it. And honestly I think I just really want to do a rewatch of Blue Eye Samurai because I really loved it and I just I really want to do a rewatch because it's just so visually beautiful.

1:19:22

Franzi: Yeah, my problem is always I start a drama, but I watch it relatively slowly compared to Sarah and then Sarah posts on her social media that actually it's not worth watching. So I'm like, alright, and then I start a new drama and the same thing happens all over again. And I'm like, I can't do this...

1:19:44

J: That has happened to me too and it's because of Sarah's posts...

1:19:46

Jie: Oh no...oh no...that's the worst...

1:19:50

Fran: Sarah's not here. We can blame her for everything.

1:19:52

J: But, but she's doing us a favour because our time is valuable. So she's saving us this time. But I mean, the same thing is happening...

1:19:59

Fran: Yup. We're very thankful.

1:20:00

Jie: Sarah's not even here. And she's being called out, man. She's gonna listen to this back and be like, "Oh my God, how could they?"

1:20:10

Fran: Okay so, I think it would just be interesting to quickly say what we're planning next for those podcasts. So we're obviously going to release this. We're planning a podcast on autistic characters in Asian dramas that maybe were problematic, or maybe not very perfect. So if you've got any suggestions, or any examples you can think of or any autistic characters from Asian dramas, where you maybe weren't quite sure if they were good portrayals or not. Let us know contact us on our social media. And we'll be very happy to hear from you. We're also planning a podcast on ADHD characters in

Asian dramas. So same for that, if you have any suggestions, get back to us. And we definitely want to do the podcast on autistic-ADHD friendships. So yeah, contact us, message us. Comment on this episode. We'd love to hear from everyone. And with that, I think we're done for today. Tomorrow, whatever day it is today.

1:21:15

J: Exactly. Happy weekend. Bye. Annyeong.

1:21:21

Fran: Happy weekend. Bye. Bye.

1:21:22

Jie: Bye.

Kaey: Bye.

1:21:24

Paid: Happy weekend, everybody.

1:21:27

Jie: Thank you. Bye.

1:21:32

Paid Subscription: Thank you for having me, bye.

1:21:33

Fran: Annyeong.

1:21:35

Outro: Thank you for listening. We hope you've enjoyed our pod. Follow us on our Instagram at Afternoona Asks, or our website, [www.afternoonaasks.com](http://www.afternoonaasks.com). To get more Kdrama content from a writer's lens, follow our sister pod Afternoona Delight. For any BTS fans out there, our other sister pod Afternoona Army is here for all your needs. If you want to hang with us and other kdrama fans, do consider joining us on our Afternoona Delight Patreon. There are different levels for you to access. Go to [www.afternoonadelightpodcast.com](http://www.afternoonadelightpodcast.com) to sign up. Finally, if you have any questions for us, please feel free to contact us via socials or our email, [afternoonaasks@gmail.com](mailto:afternoonaasks@gmail.com). We look forward to hearing from you. Until next time.