

the
butterfly
of dreams
dawn

*an annotated
xiaovenxiao fanmix*

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xiaovenxiao fanmix*



小白雪花
HuaFeiHua

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Fanmix, ANNOTATED fanmix actually. that's where all the words come from, Embedded Audio, Canon Setting, dare i say even canon compliant, some meta analysis, some things that should probably be going in a personal essay instead, Religious Imagery & Symbolism, religious trauma...?, very loose narrative going on here, Xiao | Alatus-centric, Angst with a Happy Ending

Summary:

annotated vxv fanmix.

Link:

[https://sincerelyandyourstruly.neocities.org/works/fanmixes/xv/
butterfly-dreams-of-dawn](https://sincerelyandyourstruly.neocities.org/works/fanmixes/xv/butterfly-dreams-of-dawn)

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TRACK 1:

“HURRICANE” — TRUSLOW

ANGSTING

vibrating at a speed that could shatter glass
this is. **THE CORE** xv song. to ME.

Don't come any closer now, I can hear you

like, you could argue that the lyrics are a little on-the-nose, esp when it comes to describing xiao and his ~~tsundere nature~~ "i'm a danger to myself and others with my history & karmic debts" habit of distancing himself from others.

These walls I build, I build for you

BUT i would argue back that "you wouldn't call an anime OP too 'on-the-nose' for having lyrics which perfectly describe the events of the anime, would you?"

bc that's what this is for this mixtape; it's basically the op.

They're keeping the pain from bleeding and raining

i'm also going to trust that as fellow xv fans, most of you guys can draw the connection btwn the lyrics and xv very easily

THE BUTTERFLY DREAMS OF DAWN

on your own, so these annotations won't go into convincing you of that.

down on the ones I love

instead, i'm going to take this moment to inform you that truslow is a christian band, n i'm like >98% sure this is a worship song.

which I PERSONALLY think adds an extra layer of ~*flavor*~ to the xv-ness.

But I am drowning in this blood

(*Blood, blood, blood, blood...*)

like, there's a tumblr post¹ abt 12-year-old girls hearing christian rock songs and going "this is SO sasuke and naruto" and making amvs out of it.

this song is like that to me; xv doesn't hit the same w/o the undertones of guilt & religious devotion & savior/damned.

In the night, you came

i also don't consider this to be so much of a song abt current xiao n venti as i do a song about *early/pre-canon* xiao and *barbatos*, which is a subtle but incredibly important distinction to make.

You found me in the rain

bc a very fun thing that was explored a lot in xv before we

¹ <https://rslashrats.tumblr.com/post/712065016032100352/christian-rock-band-making-a-song-i-dedicate-this>

had the "endless suffering" trailer was this question of like.

When I break

"...does he *know*?"

You stay

for both of them, really!

A lovestruck hurricane

venti → the fact that he saved xiao at all and xiao → what we are going to call "the gap moe between venti the bard & barbatos the archon"

You carry me home

there's just something *so compelling* to me (person w/a deeply religious upbringing) abt xiao reflexively viewing barbatos as something greater than himself, someone whose presence he himself is not worthy of being in.

You carry me home (×2)

like, that's *got* to be uncomfortable for venti, right?

he puts *so much* effort into understanding and passing as human and *so much* emphasis on being their equal, bc if he is barbatos, then he has power over others.

xiao in particular seems the type to *project* power onto venti, even when that is the last thing he would want.

THE BUTTERFLY DREAMS OF DAWN

These chains were cut to fit my broken bones

bc xiao is a character who was deprived of his own agency for so long — first by force, during his time under his previous master,

The steel is cold but feels like home

then later by his obligation to his contract — that i imagine being subservient to others has simply become the easiest thing for him to *be*.

If only my heart, these memories scarred

despite this, his greatest desire still remains that of *freedom*:

Could ever forget this sin

despite his loyalty and contract to rex lapis, his ultimate and most ardent devotion, *that which he holds and most carefully guards within his fragile heart, is to another god's ideal.*

Then maybe I'd feel free to run

AND WHAT MORE COMPELLING LOVE INTEREST COULD XIAO HAVE IF NOT THE VERY *EMBODIMENT* OF THAT IDEAL WHICH IS IN SUCH OPPOSITION TO THE CULTURE WHICH FIRST SAVED HIS LIFE AND GAVE HIM A PURPOSE, ONE WHICH YOU *KNOW* HAS EVEN A GOOD DOG LIKE XIAO PULLING AT HIS CHAIN DESPITE HOW DESPERATELY HE MUST SURELY WISH HE *DIDN'T* WANT TO WANT THIS **SO BADLY** and **AUGH!!!!!!!!!!!!!!**

just **AUGH!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!**

In the night, you came

sorry im obsessed w/xiao's obedience. do you still love me.

you guys can all see the dihua flute moment parallels though, right? shit's crazy.

You found me in the rain

anyway, those already familiar w/my essays know xv is boy-yuri to me², partly bc of the "devotion to someone else's ideal" (*HOMURA* behavior!!!), but also bc of those gaps which exist btwn canon xv.

When I break

there's the gap btwn xiao's perception of barbatos and the reality of venti, yes,

You stay

but also the gap in authority xiao *enforces* btwn them.

A lovestruck hurricane

there's the gap btwn what is known or felt between them and what is actually said, bc xiao is a character who struggles to accept that he even has feelings & desires, let alone parse them and put them to words, while venti is the type of character to withhold his true feelings so as not to let them interfere w/the choices of others.

2 <https://sincerelyandyourstruly.neocities.org/ships/xiaoven/yuri-zine>

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You carry me home

there's the physical distance btwn them, borne from venti's wanderlust & xiao's attachment to his homeland — sure, venti can come visit, and we see him do so in "endless suffering", but what about in those centuries spent asleep?

You carry me home (×2)

i really like the "you carry me home" lines, too

i just love love *love* the image of xiao on his last dying breaths, saved by the sound of the flute in dihua marsh, managing to stay conscious *just* long enough to see the flute player before passing out.

n then he is carried back to wangshu inn, or wherever he happened to make his base at that time....

And the sky is painted red

i like to imagine this part of the xv op as taking place during the archon war or something similarly violent and exhausting.

I can feel your heart again

like, smth-smth xiao vision story!

I can feel it in the wind

smth-smth xiao yearns for freedom and autonomy from the violence he is forced to endure and inflict upon others,

“HURRICANE” — TRUSLOW

in the wind

from the sins which may not be his own but which stain his hands in blood and his soul in karmic debts all the same, so desperately that the gods *themselves*, cold and distant they must be to force this war, *must* recognize his desire.

And you're calling out my name

and the first thing he does with it is *choose devotion*.

You're a lovestruck hurricane

doesn't that make you insane? it makes *me* feel insane.

You're the thunder in the rain

god, we should probably also talk about that "lovestruck hurricane" line.

in the rain

bc it's plainly obvious that if we were to take this song to be abt xv and the dihua flute moment, then that line is describing *venti*, in love w/xiao.

You carry me

but, if we imagine ourselves in a pre-endless suffering xv context, then we as fans don't really have any hints as to what venti's feelings towards xiao are.

THE BUTTERFLY DREAMS OF DAWN

for all we know, he mightn't even realize xiao exists.

n for all intents n purposes, that's the position xiao is in too.

and yet...

You carry me home

there's just something about how, although this is a rather xiao → barbatos song, and xiao is irrevocably in love with him, it still maintains this idea that *lord barbatos loves him back*.

You carry me home (×2)

and maybe it's just the deeply christian upbringing speaking here, but the unconditional love and devotion that implies btwn them, despite the distance and uncertainty, just absolutely *guts* me

because... **yeah!!!**

In the night, you came

in the night, venti came to dihua marsh. it doesn't matter whether his visit was a mere whim or not —

You found me in the rain

— just that he found xiao, who was dying, *drowning* in his karmic debts. When I break and venti...

“HURRICANE” — TRUSLOW

You stay

A lovestruck hurricane

he chose to play the flute, with its melancholy sound, and to forgive *every damn sin* which has sunk its wretched claws into xiao's soul.

You carry me home

for as timid and deferring a god one can interpret barbatos to be, i like to think that barbatos would slay the skies themselves to protect those who dream of freedom the way xiao does

You carry me home (×2)

that he would keep them safe, and after they emerge from their struggle, *he would carry them tenderly home*.

You carry me home (×3)

heaves dreamy sigh

You carry me home (×4)

xv really is all about those tensions btwn duty & freedom, devotion & desire, sin & forgiveness, deservedness & grace...

TRACK 2:

“求救訊號 (I'M NOT OK)” — VAST & HAZY

ANGSTING

this song was translated by my beloved tumblr mutual italiantea.

i've left a link to their translation³ hehe :3

i made some minor alterations to the translation wording here and there, n i'll try to go slower with the commentary to accommodate Reading The Lyrics

there was another vast & hazy song i was considering for this mixtape, "食人夢 [The City is Eating Me Alive]", but as a general rule, i limit artist appearances to once per mix in order to encourage musical biodiversity :)

i chose "I'm not OK" over "The City is Eating Me Alive" despite them being equally defensible picks bc i showed my friend navi the lyric translations of both, and he chose this one which is great bc i was leaning towards this one too lol

i should probably get it out of the way now that yes, xiao is my fave. he is my blorbo. this fanmix *will* favor him.

3 <https://lyricstranslate.com/en/qi%C3%BA-ji%C3%B9-x%C3%B9n-h%C3%A0o-distress-signal>

“求救訊號 (I'M NOT OK)” — VAST & HAZY

you will all end up with a solid idea of my interpretation of him by the end of this fanmix.

小小的那個我
That small, small me

this song can easily be read as being from the perspective of xiao when he's still very young, a delicate recounting of that time even before he was under the control of his old master

不太懂訴說
didn't quite understand how to speak out

xiao is innately a very shy sort of creature,

老躲在泡泡中
Always hiding in a bubble

and i think this first (and only) verse does a good job of portraying that,

靜靜看世界日升花落
silently watching the world rise and fall

as well as the innocence i'm sure he *can* remember

想找個柔軟的地方棲留
Wanting to find a soft space to reside in

but is most likely too tangled up in regrets to want to.

THE BUTTERFLY DREAMS OF DAWN

海洋
The ocean,

and there is yearning.

雲朵
the clouds,

of course there is yearning.
what else would there be?

或整個宇宙
or the whole universe

he *canonically* secretly yearns to dance in a sea of flowers all
the time.

噩夢又來過
Nightmares blow in once again

but yearning and desire are left by the wayside when forced
to enact violence.

害怕梗在喉頭
Fear lodges in my throat

do you ever think abt the intimacy of possession?

誰來接住我
Who will come catch me

how it absolves a person of their own agency?

“求救訊號 (I'M NOT OK)” — VAST & HAZY

否則我將無止盡墜落
lest I fall endlessly?

whilst simultaneously leaving *their* hands raw with stains?

所有景象中
In each and every scene,

do you ever think abt that part of xiao's fourth character story:

都在尋求
I'm always searching for

"What exactly is xiao wrestling with?"

渴望的溫暖
that warmth I thirst for...

"[U]ltimately, the one with whom xiao wrestles is himself."

在誰的懷中
In whose arms does it lie?

do you think he blames himself, deep down, for the blood
on his hands?

擁抱我 告訴我 我沒有錯
Hold me, tell me I'm not at fault

even though he knows all his violence had been forced?

THE BUTTERFLY DREAMS OF DAWN

我值得佔有
That I deserve to possess

do you ever think abt how one's Vision betrays the truth of
one's desire?

你的愛
Your love,

i do.

你的痛
Your pain

all the time.

放開我
Let me go,

an adeptus has risen above the station of humanity:

讓我想笑就笑
Let me laugh when I want to laugh

this is why "adepti have no desires."

想哭就哭個夠
and cry my eyes out when I want to cry

an adeptus acts in selfless benefit of humanity:

“求救訊號 (I'M NOT OK)” — VAST & HAZY

請你愛我

I ask of you, please love me

this is why "adepti have no desires."

擁抱我

Hold me,

do you ever think abt the fact that xiao still craves dreams?

告訴我 我沒有錯

tell me I'm not at fault

he draws solace from his current suffering by indulging

我值得佔有

That I deserve to possess

in a reminder of the suffering he once inflicted upon others.

你的愛 你的痛

Your love, your pain

how much guilt do you think he carries because of that?

放開我

Let me go,

even if his life depends on him not bearing any grudges

讓我想笑就笑

Let me laugh when I want to laugh

do you think that some of the guilt and anguish

THE BUTTERFLY DREAMS OF DAWN

想哭就哭個夠

and cry my eyes out when I want to cry

has simply seeped and melded into his daily burdens?

我會等候

I will wait

...do you ever think abt how xiao always cuts himself off
when the subject turns to venti?

that's **REPRESSION**, babey!!!!!!!!!!!!

噩夢又來過

Nightmares blow in once again

i suspect xiao was kind of living on loop for much of pre-
canon

害怕梗在喉頭

Fear lodges in my throat

his duty, in a sense, a nightmare of his own choosing

誰來接住我

Who will come catch me

yes, he chose it of his own free will

否則我將無止盡墜落

lest I fall endlessly?

but that was at a time when he had others to work with

“求救訊號 (I'M NOT OK)” — VAST & HAZY

所有景象中
In each and every scene,

while it is true that our choices are often meaningless if not
bound by obligation

都在尋求
I'm always searching for

is it not similarly meaningless to continue when obligation
ends?

渴望的溫暖
that warmth I thirst for...

unfortunately, it seems the last time xiao trusted himself to
make his own decisions

在誰的懷中
In whose arms does it lie?

he was subsequently possessed by his old master.

擁抱我
Hold me,

considering all the anguish he caused in that time

告訴我 我沒有錯
tell me I'm not at fault

he probably struggles to trust himself now

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我值得佔有
That I deserve to possess

and considering how many lives he's had to end in his service

你的愛 你的痛
Your love, your pain

do you really think he'd find himself worthy of grace?

放開我
Let me go,

讓我想笑就笑
Let me laugh when I want to laugh

this song is a confession of sorts, i think

想哭就哭個夠
and cry my eyes out when I want to cry

not of love, but of *guilt*.

請你愛我
I ask of you, please love me

because *damn* would xiao have catholic guilt if they had catholicism in teyvat.

告訴我 我沒有錯
tell me I'm not at fault

he's finally admitting that he's *struggling* with something.

你的愛 你的痛

Your love, your pain

放開我

Let me go,

do you ever think abt that part of xiao's fifth character story:

讓我想笑就笑

Let me laugh when I want to laugh

"What does Xiao fight against?"

想哭就哭個夠

and cry my eyes out when I want to cry

"He fights to defend Liyue."

我會等候

I will wait

"But who will defend him?"

when this album, also entitled "I'm Not OK" was released, Vast & Hazy had a special concert to commemorate it:

they called it "I'm Not OK – but will be OK one day".

TRACK 3:

"FIRST LOVE / LATE SPRING" — MITSKI

ANGSTING

yeah yeah a mitski song everyone puts a mitski song on their
blorbo/ship playlists these days. there goes my cred with trying
to use songs people have never heard before in an attempt to
avoid pre-existing associations.

but SOMETIMES. things are cliché. for good reason.

The black hole of the window where you sleep

that said, this has honestly always felt kind of like a xiao-
struggling-with feelings sort of song to me.

which is Exactly why i placed it after the "xiao is finally con-
fessing to experiencing *A Feeling*, catholic guilt style" track!

you kind of get it, right?

like, the scene has been set:

his love is asleep (*for who knows how long now?*)

The night breeze carries
something sweet, a peach tree

yet, there remains something sweet on the breeze (*not that xiao pays attn to such things*)

as an illuminated beast attuned to the wind, it's impossible for him to ignore.

despite this, he does his damndest to push it from his mind.

after all, he has work to do.

remember: adepti have no desires, and even if they did, he is still a monster.

Wild women don't get the blues

monsters can't get hurt; they haven't any *feelings* —

xiao would never admit it, but i *do* think there's a childish side to him deep down, perhaps as a consequence of his own robbed youth.

But I find that lately, I've been crying like a tall child

smth-smth connection btwn outwardly, pridefully viewing humans as all being silly n childish with their ~**feelings**~ n whatnot, but deep down craving that which may very well be the most childish thing of them all:

the desire to be loved, unconditionally. needing it so badly that it can become painful.

and then, of course, how silly and childish it is to weep about

THE BUTTERFLY DREAMS OF DAWN

something so trifling as *pain*.

So please, hurry, leave me, I can't breathe

it's interesting that we've since seen glimpses of the other yakshas' personalities, bc it seems that xiao is more emotionally subdued by nature, rather than his line of work.

Please don't say you love me

like, they're *dead* if they give in to despair.

胸がはち切れそうで
My heart seems to burst

so why is xiao the sole survivor?

(like. aside from the dihua flute moment.)

repression has been a vital survival strategy for xiao for literal centuries.

(i am very close to making a *frozen* (2013) joke here so please applaud my restraint.)

One word from you and I would
jump off of this ledge I'm on, baby

compared to numb survival, the pain of being alive stings much more keenly when falling from the heights of hope into the depths of despair, especially when dealing with a perpetual blanket of background loathing.

it's not the fall, but the *impact* that kills you.

“FIRST LOVE / LATE SPRING” — MITSKI

Tell me, "*Don't*," so I can crawl back in

therefore: hope is dangerous.

venti gave it to him anyway.

and that's the scary part, isn't it? bc now he can't stop dreaming of something he, a mere weapon, could never deserve: *a better life*.

one where he is free that duty which he once chose with his own free will, which he wants, so desperately, to believe he is still *completely, utterly, and fully* willing to lay down his life to serve.

bc what is he supposed to *do* with this? dance in a sea of flowers???

and, like, for *what*?!??

that *stupid* little organ which beats within his ribs is now *weeping* with *longing*.

remember what i said back in "hurricane", abt the implication of xiao being in love w/lord barbatos and *lord barbatos loving him back*?

i think xiao is aware of the fact that barbatos, *or at the very least the wind*, loves him.

but that love is impersonal; that's the love a god is *obliged* to have for all their followers —



(...since when did he become a follower?)

THE BUTTERFLY DREAMS OF DAWN

And I was so young when I behaved twenty-five

and xiao was raised on duty and obligation, lives his life shouldering the grievances of others: he knows not to take things personally.

so then why does *this* feel like it *should* be?

Yet now, I find I've grown into a tall child

surely he is just feeding himself fantasies.

he can't be doing that, or it will kill him.

are you guys familiar with the difference between "grace" and "mercy"?

And I don't wanna go home yet

my mother, who got her degree in philosophy before becoming an ordained pastor, explained it to me thusly:

both are forgiveness and a second chance, but it's "mercy" when the recipient "truly deserves" it.

no one who is given grace can ever deserve it; yet still, they receive it.

Let me walk to the top of the big night sky

that's what makes it "*the grace of god*."

Please, hurry, leave me, I can't breathe

xiao, unable to accept venti's affections for him bc he's *barely* worth receiving mercy, let alone **grace**.

Please don't say you love me

he's a monster! he has devoured the dreams of so many of
those humans barbatos loves so very much!!

he could never *stand* to hear of someone loving him.

胸がはち切れそうで

My heart seems to burst

bc if he is loved, then maybe he's not actually a monster.

maybe he can be human.

and forgiveness is what is offered to humanity, is it not?

and he must *never* forgive himself for his sins. it would go
against the principles of "fairness" that run beneath those ideal
"contracts" which govern liyue.

remember what i mentioned before abt xiao craving dreams?

One word from you and I would

there's smth to be said abt the overlap btwn monstrosity
and desire, bc the fact that xiao still craves smth from the time
when he was at his most monstrous...

Jump off of this ledge I'm on, baby

doesn't that mean he's still a monster, deep down inside?

Tell me, "*Don't*," so I can crawl back in

he craves unconditional love and forgiveness.

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that's not smth he can get from rex lapis, no matter *how* devoted a servant he is.

he can get it from barbatos, though. that night in the marsh proved it so.



but that would mean he *wants* it.



oh, desire, you wretched, *wretched* thing!!

don't you know that the hearts of the adepti are supposed to be as clear and empty as the pure skies that rule the lands from above?

how are you supposed to keep the prosperity of others at the center of your actions otherwise?

(♪♪ my heart feels like it's about to burst right from my chest... ♪♪)

One word from you and I would

as an obedient soldier, xiao is able to deny himself these feelings of love and hope and desire *if ordered of him*.

Jump off of this ledge I'm on, baby

but venti would never do that.

Tell me, "*Don't*," so I can crawl back in

xiao is now faced with the reality of his own agency, and *god*,
is he struggling with it.

SUCKS, doesn't it?!?! >:3

he craves venti's love more than anything.

if he wants it, he can have it.

but he has to swallow his pride and accept the enormity of
his emotions first.

Please, hurry, leave me, I can't breathe...

and oh, don't we have a long way to go before xiao can
manage such a terribly selfish thing...

TRACK 4:

“YOU ARE THE MOON” — THE HUSH SOUND

ANGSTING

ALL RIGHT and now after ~*three*~ whole tracks angsting from the pov of xiao → venti, we finally have what feels like venti's response to xiao regarding all those feelings

which are obviously **a lot** to be on the receiving end of, bc xiao takes everything, so seriously. and i'm sure that venti knows this, which is what can make xiao's feelings towards him feel almost *gross* if you think about it too hard. (or maybe only if you're aromantic like me idk)

like. you are the god of freedom. you take this ideal so seriously, you cannot bear to give your corrupted dragon friend an order, even though you know you might have to kill him for it to save the rest of town.

now you have this damned man who views himself as a monster, as nothing more than just a weapon for others to use, *confessing* to you.

“YOU ARE THE MOON” — THE HUSH SOUND

Shadows all around you
as you surface from the dark

not necessarily out of love! (or at least, not a love you feel comfortable accepting) but bc you saved him, he now feels *indebted* to you.

you are the god of freedom.
no one is supposed to be indebted to you.

but at this very early stage in their rlshp, xiao sees venti as an archon first; freedom is secondary to all that. xiao is like teyvat's most devoted attack dog: no matter how many times venti rejects the leash, xiao keeps putting the damn thing back in his hands.

Emerging from the gentle grip
of night's unfolding arms

xiao's self-loathing has left his self-image so *wildly* out of skew with how venti sees him, and xiao is perhaps one of the stubbornest bitches on the planet. however, venti would likely outright refuse a relationship of *any* sort w/someone who could not view him as an equal.

Darkness, darkness everywhere,
do you feel all alone?

this isn't to say, "i think venti would end up with 'i *could* fix him' disease abt xiao" no. absolutely not. i feel like if anyone understands *The* tenant of getting better as a person, "you have to want it for yourself first," it would be venti.

he can't *force* xiao to be better, and he knows this!

THE BUTTERFLY DREAMS OF DAWN

The subtle grace of gravity,
the heavy weight of stone

and this applies even if xiao tries to argue he's a monster bc of all the people he hurt while under the control of his previous master, too! bc be *real*, here: who in teyvat would *blame* him for actions he didn't even choose??

no one!!!

and so the question venti must pose to xiao is simply, "so why do *you* blame yourself?"

You don't see what you possess,
a beauty calm and clear

the answer is as obvious, of course, but can xiao say it?

(can he *really* admit to someone like *barbatos*, "because i hate myself"?)

that's a *harrowing* thing to realize about one's self, and what's more is that when confronted with this sort of truth, in all its barefaced simplicity, is that it can make you feel so *self-centered* to confess out loud.

It floods the sky and blurs the darkness

that's so shameful, isn't it? esp. when you've made your life and your identity around serving others. so you pretend that you don't, and it just is what it is, and no one around you seems to care enough to question your lies, and —

like a chandelier

(hey, couldn't this apply to someone else, too?)

“YOU ARE THE MOON” — THE HUSH SOUND

All the light that you possess
is skewed by lakes and seas

but that's what makes it so agonizing when someone else comes into your life and is somehow able to *see* you through all that, *and then they put in the effort to engage with it.*

to engage with *you!* even though you feel so *much* like just an empty shell for all your stupid problems to walk around in, sometimes. that's so embarrassing; why are they engaging with 912,084,170,361,385 problems in a trench coat???

The shattered surface, so imperfect,
is all that you believe

but i think that if xiao is able to tell venti smth like, "*one word from you and i would jump off this ledge i'm on; tell me don't, so i can crawl back in*", then he'd be like, *committed* to telling venti his true feelings, no matter how excruciating.

and that includes smth as disgusting and burdensome as, "i hate myself."

which is good, bc now venti knows that xiao is willing to be honest with him. he can work with this.

hence, this song, which says it all in the title: "you are the moon"

he is saying to xiao, "you are shrouded in darkness, this is true, but that doesn't make you inherently evil, or subhuman, or anything like that. to work with the wicked does not automatically make you wicked in turn."

i feel like this song kind of implies that venti has been keeping watch over xiao for all these years, even if he kept quiet abt

THE BUTTERFLY DREAMS OF DAWN

it and never interfered simply bc it's not his place to interfere w/other people's lives and free will.

and i feel like there's room for xiao to believe that, too, bc rex lapis likely gave off the impression of omniscience and omnipotence for centuries, which is why i think xiao would be able to *believe* venti when he tells xiao he's not a monster.

there's a difference btwn knowing smth and believing it to be true, and it's only when xiao *believes* in his own humanity that he can start coughing up all the dehumanizing shit he's spent ages internalizing, like a cat choking on hairballs.

and that's smth venti *can actually* help with.

I will bring a mirror, so silver, so exact

basically: this is the "xiao gets over his inferiority & subordination complex" song, which is why it's the last in this opening clump of "angsting" songs. the next (and last) angst track won't be for a while, and even then it rather blurs the line btwn "angsting" and "yearning" lol

So precise and so pristine, a perfect pane of glass

like, maybe it's just bc i heavily romanticize those moments of clarity and understanding, wherein someone realizes *the truth* about, like, themselves or the world or someone dear to them, but i *do* think that xiao seeing how barbatos, this divine being whom he trusts more than anyone else alive except perhaps rex lapis, actually sees him would apply enough shock to his system that he starts snapping out of that habit of self-loathing.

“YOU ARE THE MOON” — THE HUSH SOUND

I will set the mirror up to face the blackened sky

again, i don't think this would be venti *"i could fix him"* disease-ing xiao out of self-loathing.

"i could *help* him", absolutely — what was the dihua flute moment if not the most literal version of venti helping xiao let go of his demons? — but the beautiful thing here is that xiao stops feeling like shit abt the very fact that he's experiencing desire.

You will see your beauty
every moment that you rise

this is a song i chose for how straightforwardly applicable its lyrics are once you understand how it fits into the playlist's narrative context, so there's not much left for me to say w/o feeling like i'm overexplaining

but.

i'm sure most of you are familiar with the concept of a "sun/moon dynamic" for ships, where it's like complimentary opposites and also one is bright and the other is dark. even if you're somehow unfamiliar with the concept, the lyrics should have done a lovely job conveying the associations and imageries for a moon-coded character for me.

i've already written an essay regarding my thoughts on sun/moon dynamic xv⁴, so if you're familiar with that, then you may be thinking that i've left an entire avenue of potential commentary for this track, esp in how it can pertain to venti (not just xiao) as a character, just completely unexplored

which. don't worry about that. :)

4 <https://sincerelyandyourstruly.neocities.org/ships/xiaoven/sun-moon-and-truth>

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i will talk about that a bit in the next track :))

but all right i guess since i have a bit of time here i might as well prepare you all like a nice, fresh-caught deep-sea tuna for my point in the next song :3

this is going to seem like Venti 101 to some of you people, but we must always keep in mind that venti maintains a façade of cheerful stupidity and innocence around almost everyone almost all the damn time.

i do believe he often experiences genuine carefree happiness, but —

actually. there's a bojack horseman quote that i wrote down a long time ago that should hit the spot here:

season 3, episode 5:

"One day, you're gonna look around, and you're going to realize that everybody loves you!"

"...But nobody *likes* you."

"And that is the loneliest feeling in the *world*."

TRACK 5:

“SHOW ME WHERE IT HURTS” — JUKEBOX THE GHOST

HEALING

this is a song i've been listening to for many years now, and i think it really nails that liminal space when a rlshp starts to form btwn two people who have each been hurt very deeply inside.

Her turn signal blinked to the East

like, there's a *reason* why this is our first track categorized under "healing" on the playlist: as i mentioned in "hurricane", there's a lot of potential in early xv to explore a xiao who comes to realize that venti \neq barbatos and everything that comes with that.

towards the long, wooden pier

for now, though, i'd like us to simply bask in the way the song sets our scene.

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that hangs over the beach

it's quiet. intimate, even.

She took off her dress,

it's definitely the california ~~bitch~~ beach kid in me, but i've personally always imagined it taking place at night, bc there is just *smth* about midnight beach trips, often made on impulse,

and she walked towards the sea

that has the potential to carve out a space between your soul n someone else's that is then forever only accessible to the two of you alone...

And thought, *maybe it could sweep away me...*

and i think that the story this song tells is a scene that would be of fundamental importance to any sort of partnership xv might form, wherein for the first time, venti allows himself to be vulnerable in front of xiao

His engine turned off with the keys.

he lets xiao in on this knowledge that venti, the single wisp of the thousand winds still at the core of barbatos, is small.

that he is in fact, so very weak he could not even save the bard who taught him to be free.

As he ran towards her, he fell to his knees

and that by his nature as one of the original archons, he has most certainly done unspeakably terrible things, foul and ugly and the furthest thing from that image of sacrosanct purity which those who were damned *love* to project onto their saviors.

He said, "*What have I done wrong?*"

and i *do* think xiao would struggle to reconcile his image of barbatus (his savior) with that of venti (the human bard). he's spent his whole life being subservient to others, first by force and then by will.

to *him*, a life belongs to the one who saves it.

She looked away,

and she wept.

obviously, it's important for xiao to accept this side of venti, because, well.

He said,

that's the side of him where the *core of his identity* is stored.

"Why don't you show me where it hurts?"

that's the side of him he doesn't show other people.

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that's the side of him which craves love and connection the most.

Why don't you show me where it hurts?

for xiao to be able to *let go* of the facade venti puts up of this beautiful, carefree bard whom everyone likes, but whom none have the ability to truly *love*, to ask to know more and not look away from the less palatable parts of venti, which he has had to keep hidden for so long

He said, "Why don't you show me where it hurts?"

whether that be because he doesn't want to mar the image of the nameless bard by wearing his face while confessing his sins, or because celestia would smite him with a nail if he did —

where it hurts,

of *course* that's going to be an integral part of the road xv have to take for their rlshp to last!!!

the most?"

venti's deeply-rooted insecurities and identity issues would never let him lower his own guard in love otherwise.

She said, "It follows me wherever I go."

i don't really know what else to say here, just that i think this song resonates really well with the fact that venti isn't the sun-type character so many people archetype him as.

“SHOW ME WHERE IT HURTS” — JUKEBOX THE GHOST

he's the moon.

and this isn't to say that xiao is the sun here

"I wake up each morning,

like, we JUST had a whole song of like venti → xiao comparing xiao to the moon as well like just read the essay i linked in the footnotes so we don't need to have that conversation a second time

and the darkness unfolds.

but the *point* of xv being a moon/moon, pairing, lies in the fact that they are fundamentally similar despite initial appearances.

Yeah, I just can't fake it;

there's a darkness they both hold inside themselves, whether they hide it (venti) or not (xiao).

everything's like a chore,

xiao needs to understand and internalize this in order to start dismantling that tricky habit of his where even if he's granted smth beautiful, he doesn't feel like he really deserves it.

and I can't live like this anymore."

so in a sense, *he* needs to be having this conversation too,

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or else his own deeply-rooted insecurities and inferiority complex would never let him lower his own guard in love otherwise.

He said, "Why don't you show me where it hurts?"

venti's already aware of xiao's ten million billion Issues™, but that's not the point.

the point is that despite xiao's *fabulous* inability to communicate his own feelings through words, this *could* be the start of him trying to do so, albeit strugglingly

He said, "Why don't you show me where it hurts?"

because it helps to know that you're talking to someone who *understands* how you're feeling ***because they went through it themselves.***

He said,

and the fact it's framed as a question,

"Why don't you show me where it hurts,

an offer to be *let into* someone else's inner world which can be gracefully denied, is really nice here, too.

where it hurts, the most?"

xiao's always pushing people away; cautiously poking at the tender hidden sincerities of other people has to be, like, *agonizing* for him and his fears of hurting other people again.

I guess it'd be easier

but this habit of theirs is also what maintains the gaps btwn them, keeps their rlshp more distant than the proximity of their desires would otherwise suggest.

just to keep it all buried beneath.

it's like yuri, except classical yuri is often about the tragedy of maintaining that distance forever: such is simply the fate of yuri schoolgirls.

if we consider xv to be on a yuri trajectory, then this song marks the point where they begin to break away from that fate.

He said, "Why don't you show me where it hurts?"

bc for the first time, venti offers xiao a glimpse of his own true and vulnerable self.

Why don't you show me where it hurts?

for the first time, xiao dares reach across the gap he otherwise keeps btwn them, meeting venti halfway.

He said,

and to me,

"Why don't you show me where it hurts,

that's the moment where you really feel,

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where it hurts

for the first time,

the most?"

like they can have a happy ending.

TRACK 6:

"BETTER" — REGINA SPEKTOR

HEALING

ah, yes, regina spektor. another staple of my playlists.

the last song was about vulnerability, abt carefully pulling back a bit of the veil which hides your barest weakness to test the waters and see, *"will you still love me? even if i am more fragile than i pretend to be?"*

and so *this* song is obviously the reply to that, about honoring the trust it takes to show someone that side of you.

it's recognizing that there's smth sacred happening btwn the two of you, now, n that is a precious thing.

so you better do right by them, y'know. you better not hurt them, bc you're not a monster.

though it's still just the barest glimpse from venti's end, xv are able to see the humanity in each other's hearts now, w/all the faults and flaws which that entails.

it's like peeping into a bird's nest to greet the fledglings hidden there. the mother bird is still nearby, watching like a hawk; but if you take this seriously and give it the delicacy and respect it's due, then you just might get to witness something beautiful and new take flight.

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If I kiss you where it's sore

and you might be tempted to think this is another venti → xiao song, and it most certainly could be, if you'd like to interpret it that way! (i know i do hehe)

If I kiss you where it's sore (×2)

however, xiao whump/hurt/comfort is the Obvious Route, so we are going to have some fun here first discussing this song from the pov of xiao → venti

Will you feel better, better, better

bc xiao is *such* an acts of service bitch (affectionate).

it's all he can really do when he still needs an outlet for the fact that he feels so *much*, but is still so unpracticed w/his words.

Will you feel anything at all?

and i like this lyric here, too, "*will you feel anything at all?*", bc xiao depression is obvious, but we're only just now scratching the surface of venti depression. and xiao, despite probably also living w/depression for a very long time, doesn't really know quite how to engage w/it in others.

Will you feel better, better, better

he's testing things out; he's trying not to fuck this up. he's not going to beat himself up, and he's not going to be a pessimist abt everything bc i think despite it all, he still wants to live.

Will you feel anything at all?

he's trying to believe what venti told him earlier — that he's not a monster, n he won't taint everything he touches by virtue of being himself.

Born like sisters to this world

is it working?

who's to say right now, but at least it doesn't look like it's outright *failing*. at the very least, he's not making it worse.

In a town where blood ties are only blood

partly bc i think despite the struggles n the inner conflict n the mountains of grief, venti still wants to live, too, but also bc i think xiao's wordless devotion is what venti *needs* —

If you never say your name out loud to anyone

WAIT **LITERALLY PAUSE** I HAVE A LOT TO SAY ABT THESE TWO LYRIC LINES SPECIFICALLY BC OF THE NUANCES AVAILABLE TO XV THROUGH NAMES AND ONLY 7.4 SECONDS TO SAY IT —

like yes, the incredibly common hc of xiao operating on european fae logic where knowing his true name grants control over him (love that hc btw), but i *also* briefly mentioned back in "hurricane" that there's a subtle, but important, distinction to make btwn "venti" and "barbatos".

in my interpretations of genshin (bestowed upon me by my bff nat, The Venti Understander), "barbatos" tends to be his more serious side: it's the side of him which shoulders the heavy

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responsibility of archonhood, and it's what you see at the end of his part i character quest. it's also the name **he doesn't want to be called**, bc of the power it symbolizes over others.

They can never ever call you by it

hence, there's a weight to, "*if you never say your name out loud to anyone / they can never ever call you by it*" for both of them. xiao can never speak his true name out loud to anyone without *literally* also handing over his own bodily autonomy, while venti can never ever let others call him by his archon name, lest they also implicitly hand their own power over to him in doing so. they each understand the power a name holds, and thus would use one another's with incredible delicacy and intentionality.

(which—side note—is why i don't think xiao would *actually* struggle w/calling venti "venti" instead of "barbatos". maybe a little when he's struggling with his subordination thing, but xiao is disciplined n also v protective of his own name; i think he can manage it tbh.)

If I kiss you where it's sore

PHEW okay back to our regularly scheduled annotations

so as i was saying, i think venti would benefit a lot from xiao's primary expression of love being wordless devotion, bc i think deep down, venti's greatest desire is to be **wanted**

If I kiss you where it's sore (×2)

and xiao!! can make him feel that way!!! pretty much unconditionally, bc xiao is nothing if not sincere in everything he

does

Will you feel better, better, better?

and if he thinks that venti is sad, then. yeah, he's sincerely going to try to kiss it better. at the very least bc i'm sure that's what venti would always try for him, and it's not like he's got any better ideas himself lol

Will you feel anything at all?

and venti would *absolutely* delight in this and every other way xiao tries *so hard* to make venti happy, bc of the message it sends:

Will you feel better, better, better?

that xiao thinks he is worth the time, the effort, and the memory it takes to do all this

Will you feel anything at all?

bc let's also not kid ourselves here: xiao would never do anything he truly felt was pointless or beneath him. despite his unwavering nature, *he still has free will*, and venti knows this.

they both understand that xiao is always making the *conscious choice* to tend to venti, and that's very sweet!



but sometimes, love alone is not enough.

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You're getting sadder, getting sadder,
getting sadder, getting sadder

and like. blah blah blah, shit that would be better suited for a diary entry here, but sometimes you really *can't* seem to help anyone, not even yourself.

And I don't understand, *and I don't understand* —

and that is, like, the *shittiest* thing in the world: that love, even in its myriad of ways of expression, is not always enough.

...But if I kiss you where it's sore

but just bc it's not enough on its own doesn't mean it's not valuable.

just bc it's not enough *on its own* doesn't mean it doesn't help anything at all.

And if I kiss you where it's sore

it never *hurts* to be loved through the roughest, lowest points of your life.

Will you feel better, better, better?

i like to imagine this song as portraying venti sort of wind-ing down and entering one of his long sleeps again, leaving xiao alone for the first time since they started sorting out their feelings. there's just this delicious sort of contrast n tension btwn the melody n the lyrics to give the listener this growing sense of futility underneath the yet-burgeoning hope that just can't quite be shaken.

Will you feel anything at all?

it's like a well-written tragedy: these characters were always doomed. you *still* know, deep down inside, that the happy ending they strive towards, will never come to be, *and yet* —

Will you feel better, better, better?

and *yet*.

Will you feel anything at all?

you dare to hope anyway.

(*because maybe it will be different this time.*)

Will you feel

the reason this song is classed under "healing", rather than "angsting",

Anything at all?

is partly bc i think xiao would need some time w/o access to venti to sort out his own identity.

Oh, anything at all?

he needs some room to breathe and process and quietly come to terms with everything he's learned abt himself n venti n *decide* who he wants to be, how he can fit himself into this new picture of a life w/venti

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Will you feel anything at all?

but also, i think it comes after xiao's point of no return into being a better, happier person.

ofc life would and should still go on after his maybe-boyfriend crawls into a hole somewhere all by himself and once again breaks the world record for longest blink ever. that doesn't mean he's been abandoned, nor would abandoning venti ever be a thought in his mind.

Will you feel anything at all? (×2)

xiao's abandonment issues revolve more around being *discarded* for no longer being useful,

Anything at all?

rather than fearing people will leave bc they've gotten tired of him.

Will you feel

he has the maturity to know that the world will keep turning even after he dies, but that won't stop him from playing the role of devoted watchdog over all he holds dear until then.

Anything at all?

(and i want to very explicitly include liyue in there, too, bc i don't think that venti would automatically supercede xiao's devotion to his duty just bc they're getting emotionally entangled in one another in ways that are extremely potent but difficult to describe and they have not yet really defined for themselves.)

“BETTER” — REGINA SPEKTOR

and someday, when venti wakes again and visits xiao again
for the first time in centuries...

perhaps he can dare to hope that xiao's better than before.

TRACK 7:

“WIND & ANCHOR” — THE NATIONAL PARKS

YEARNING

so a fun fact abt THIS track is that i got it from a ganqing fic⁵ and um LOWKEY i picked it for this fanmix bc of Vibes™.

severely disappointing, i'm sure, considering the track record i've had going here so far but i am not immune to vibes-based systems.

still, i think that vibe can count for a lot here, esp w/that title.

"wind and anchor"? really??? the connection is so obvious it makes me want to launch myself out the window w/excitement.

Oh, how I long for the wind

like. i know i said at the end of "better" that xiao is mature enough to understand that venti's not abandoning him just by having one of his long naps.

and he **is**.....

.....**BUT.**

5 <https://archiveofourown.org/works/46211932> — *Afterdeath*, by Velvetwastaken

It was here and blew away

i think. it's *Fun*, if xiao has to struggle w/Doubt, like, at *least* a little bit.

3,000+ years of convincing yourself people only keep you around bc you're useful still weighs on someone.

And like an anchor in the sand

even if he's past the point of no return on his journey to get better, that doesn't mean he can't still swing *dangerously* close to relapsing.

I was forced to stay

and i think that the only thing really saving xiao from *that* is the same stubborn nature which kept him trapped in self-loathing for so long.

Mhm...

this song, to me, is xiao approaching that edge.

Ooh, ooh, don't leave me like this,

yes, he's getting better, and no, he's not abandoned, but.
in a way, i don't think xiao feels like he belongs to himself anymore.

Don't leave me like this —

granted, i suppose xiao hasn't felt like he's belonged to him-

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self... basically ever, but the important difference w/his duty is that he *chose* his master, chose whom he belonged to.

I belong to you

his own emotions aren't so important when his duty to liyue is all he has, either. those were just, like, remnants of evil spirits and whatever, screaming their anger and revenge into his soul.

All Feelings Are Just Karmic Debts, basically.

Ooh, ooh, don't leave me like this,

except now they're not.

bc now he has feelings for venti.

Don't leave me like this —

but venti went back to sleep before xiao (or either of them, really) could develop a full understanding of what they *are* to one another.

I belong to you

all xiao knows for certain is that venti is important to him, and that a rlshp btwn two people cannot be decided or defined by one alone. he wasn't ready to define it before, but now that he is, he's lost.

Boy, I'll sweep you off your feet

this verse is fun to think about.

is venti back already, a knowledgeable bard with his gilded silver tongue, here to define that which xiao could never hope to articulate—their rlsph—for the both of them, with those words he knows so well?

When I am there to stay

or is xiao merely daydreaming out of loneliness (out of *love-sickness*) and a desire for certainty?

And I'll be yours to keep

has he forgotten already that venti has no desire for xiao to belong to him?

Oh, you'll never have to say

of course not. and i'm sure that xiao will feel terrible abt wandering so close to the edge of dehumanization again.

Mhm...

but that's where the fun of Doubt comes into play:

Ooh, ooh, don't leave me like this

what if venti isn't sleeping; what if he's just abandoned xiao? what if he's sleeping to abandon xiao, to leave him to succumb to his own karmic debts in time.

Don't leave me like this —

bc despite all his sincerest efforts before, xiao was still unable

THE BUTTERFLY DREAMS OF DAWN

to make venti feel better.

he was unable to make venti feel loved.

I belong to you

who's to say?

Ooh, ooh, don't leave me like this

without venti around to help anchor his emotions,

Don't leave me like this —

xiao is left to wrestle with only his own desires yet again.

I belong to you

it's different this time, now that he knows these feelings won't kill him or stain others with its darkness (hence, *yearning*), but i *did* say in "better" that xiao is one of The Acts Of Service Characters of all time, so one must imagine he'll end up feeling a bit pent-up without the object of his emotions around for him to serve.

Yes, I do



it's so restless to be filled w/longing, isn't it?



Ooh, ooh, don't leave me like this

we have a bit of time, so i might as well use it to talk a bit more abt how i prefer to define *my* ideal xv rlshp, which i don't think would be smth that can always be classed as "romantic".

Don't leave me like this —

n it's possible that's just bc i'm some sort of aromantic, but while the specific intersection of xiao's repression and devotion is *definitely* some sort of love which screams

I belong to you

"venti's place in his life is different from that of anyone else's, which no one else could ever hope to occupy", i have a hard time reading "romance" into that.

Ooh, ooh, don't leave me like this

my reading here is once again informed by my ~**deeply christian upbringing**~, too:

Don't leave me like this —

the origin of xiao's feelings towards venti lie in his perspective of them as savior & damned.

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I belong to you

he may be letting go of the subordination complex and accepting the hope of a life free of his karmic debts *now*,

(Let's go)

but interpreting his feelings towards venti as romantic from the moment he was saved reminds me of like...

Ooh, ooh, don't leave me like this

smth-smth, christianity n the whole "i am incomplete w/o the love/grace/mercy/whatever of god and jesus",

Don't leave me like this —

+ smth-smth amatonormativity and the whole "people are born incomplete, so we must find n fall in love w/'our other half' to be made whole again"

I belong to you

are you guys seeing what i'm trying to gesture at? bc i sure as hell have a hard time articulating it in words lol

Ooh, ooh, don't leave me like this

i think you can definitely read a lot of queerness into a rlshp btwn xv where some of that religiousness lingers, even after they come to consider each other true equals (and there will be a track later for that)

Don't leave me like this —

but to me, it's absolutely got to occupy a space of delicious
ambiguity where the only thing an outsider can ascertain abt
them for certain is that they are *together*.

I belong to you.

I belong to you.

(please read *quiet birds in circled flight* by windsgrandode⁶
if you haven't already.)

(i'd say, "they get it", but i can't actually take credit. they're
where i got it from lol.)

6 <https://archiveofourown.org/works/29340414>

TRACK 8:

“DREAMS” — THE CRANBERRIES

HEALING

i am going to be so real with you people. i struggled *so hard* to find a track 8 that i liked, could ascribe to xv, and also fit into the (albeit loose) narrative taking shape over the course of this fanmix.

n this spot was so *close* to being "chasing the sun" by sara bareilles, there are several burned cd copies of this playlist w/it that i mailed to friends. the only reason it lost in the end is bc it didn't fit into the mental narrative i was building, so you can think of it as a deleted scene.

the time period for this part is admittedly a bit wibbly, since xiao would never even dream (heh) of laying down his duty for even a second for as long as rex lapis still rules over his contract, so it's harder for him to instigate change in his life.

but he *does* have that dream of dancing in the sea of flowers eroding at his steadfast commitment to *that*, so...

let's just say that this and the previous song take place during the 500 years after the cataclysm~!

(that is, ofc, assuming xiao isn't just daydreaming again lol)

“DREAMS” — THE CRANBERRIES

:HuTaoSnicker:

Oh, my life

while "wind and anchor" portrayed xiao unmoored by a return to the struggling lows of his duty after being made vulnerable by the devastating exposure to His Own Feelings,

Is changing every day

as you may be able to tell from the vibe change, "dreams" represents a turning point, wherein xiao is now living in what must surely feel like past the end of the world, and it's, like. *nice!!*

In every possible way

like ohhhhhh damn... the outskirts of liyue have been quiet for ages now...

and there are *children* in qingce village again, who are... *unafraid?!??* of him????

there's still monsters to fight, mysteries to solve, and memories to record, but it's almost as if...

And oh, my dreams

the only thing keeping xiao from ~~exploring the proximity of his own humanity~~ attaining genuine peace again is ~~himself~~ his karmic debts.

obviously it's the karmic debts.

THE BUTTERFLY DREAMS OF DAWN

It's never quite as it seems

bc there's *got* to be a catch to all this, right? there's no way it can be real, bc if it *is*, then that means his hopes and dreams are within... well, maybe not his *reach*, but his sights, at the very least

Never quite as it seems

he has this moment to *breathe*.

I know I've felt like this before

it's as the lyrics say: he's felt this way before; he just wasn't quite ready at that time.

But now I'm feeling it even more

it's meeting the right person at what *should* have been the right time, only for the circumstances to blow everything to the wind.

Because it came from you

it *becomes* the wrong time, but interestingly enough, where-as i feel "right person/wrong time" narratives often have this sense of hopelessness and despair,

Then I open up and see

i feel like venti would have to go long before they hit the point of "ignoring all the red flags out of hope n desperation"

The person falling here is me

it's not like being in a weird homoerotic Situationship where you look back a couple years later n are tempted to romanticize it despite how very **obviously abnormal** it is that you feel this weird achey lingering sadness in your chest n your throat despite your memories of that time being more fragmented sappho's poetry

A different way to be

like those are *incredibly* compelling n absolutely fascinating to study in little jars!

Ah, la-ya

i, personally, have a hard time handling those kinds of narratives, where the power of hope is used to essentially lure characters to their doom,

La la ya

but i also can't deny that the potential for xv to fall into that sort of trap, bc of both of their sincere & ardent desires to continue to hope, absolutely magnetizes me in a way few other chars or pairs have ever done before.

La-ah-ah

bc smth i like to do upon getting truly obsessed w/a pairing is figure out *exactly* what mortal flaws they have which would cause a rlshp btwn them to fall apart

THE BUTTERFLY DREAMS OF DAWN

I want more

n yeah, the possibility of xiao being unable to let go of his duty and taking his perceived life debt to venti to an uncomfortable extent, esp while venti's not around to gently remind him to reevaluate his idea of 'freedom', is absolutely one of those factors i can see leading to their fallout.

Impossible to ignore

but here's the neat part!

Impossible to ignore (x2)

i think they can escape that fate.

and, as you may have noticed by paying attn to the narrative i've been painting in these annotations, i really do think it's as simple as "convince xiao he's not a monster"

They'll come true

bc sadness doesn't linger forever, even though your depression can sometimes try to tell you otherwise. there comes a part in the healing process where happiness starts tapping at your window, n you have to choose to let it in

Impossible not to do

n to be clear, *this can be incredibly difficult.*

sometimes, i think the only reason *i* did is bc (like xiao in this case) i was told enough times during a period of relative calm that ***it gets better.***

Impossible not to do (×2)

it's a promise, it's a prayer, *it's a dream*.

And now I tell you openly:

You have my heart so don't hurt me

You're what I couldn't find

this song doesn't have to be *entirely* abt xiao, either.

venti is also a character deeply mired in grief, who has also seen his genuine hopes for others dashed and doomed by, well.

A totally amazing mind

you could call it a lot of things: lack of foresight, naïveté, or (perhaps most uncharitably of all) his own negligence.

So understanding and so kind

You're everything to me

there's this philosophical thing or w/e in christianity called "the problem of evil", which studies the contradiction btwn an

THE BUTTERFLY DREAMS OF DAWN

omniscient, omnipotent, & benevolent god, and the existence of evil in this world.

why would a benevolent god, if one so existed, *not* use His power to rid the world of evil if He so had the perfect ability to?

Oh, my life

my father, who was also a church leader and pastor for many years, told me that this is bc god gave us free will, and god *continues* to give us free will;

Is changing every day

yet, for that freedom of will to be *true*, it must also allow for the genuine choice of harm and evil.

In every possible way

as i said in "I'm Not OK", *our choices are meaningless if not bound by obligation.*

venti is, in a sense, trapped by a duty of his own, which he, too, chose of his own free will: to protect the freedom of others.

And oh, my dreams

in order to do that, he must forsake his own divine authority over them, but that's not so easy in the world of teyvat. thus, in order to do *that* n still live more or less as he pleases, he must keep his secrets and his distance from many whom he otherwise holds dear, so as not to endanger them.

“DREAMS” — THE CRANBERRIES

It's never quite as it seems

freedom is a lonely little thing: out of everyone whom venti
might have loved, how many of them could come back for him?
how many of them would wait for him?

'Cause you're a dream to me,

how many of them share his ideals?

dream to me

xiao!!!

he could, he *would*, and he **does!!!**

(*starts fucking sobbing*)

which is why watching his *own* hopes for xiao's betterment
start coming to fruition on xiao's own efforts has *got* to be very
beautiful and so wonderfully heartening for venti, bc it means
even now, after xiao has a better sense of agency and free will,
he uses it to *choose venti* as his beloved.

Ah, la-a-la-ah, la la la

not as his savior, nor as his master, but **beloved!!!!!!!!!!!!**

.....!!
!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

GESTURES MANIACALLY

THE BUTTERFLY DREAMS OF DAWN

La-a-la-ah, la-ah ah ah

the secret to capturing the wind god's heart...

Ah, la-a-la-ah, la la la

...is to love him as he is, for all that he is, with an ardent devotion which comes from the depths of your own freely-beating heart.

and isn't that just the sweetest of dreams?

TRACK 9:

“ANYWHERE” — ANDREW HUANG

YEARNING

you're lonely

okie dokiee this is about the point in the story where i imagine venti wakes up for canon as we know it to begin

and i'm lonely

like, obviously, he has Some Business to take care of in mondstadt before he can run off to see xiao again, but once he's done with that!! ofc he'll want to see how xiao is doing, if he's changed n how, and like...

'cause we're only

what *are* they, really?

a girl and a boy

i imagine that venti wouldn't be visiting liyue until sometime after the rite of descension. partly bc he'd be busy reacquainting himself w/his nation n his people, but also...

maybe he's scared.

THE BUTTERFLY DREAMS OF DAWN

i'm swooning, pursuing

like, what if xiao succumbed to his karmic debt in the past few hundred years?

or even if he didn't, what if his existence is even *more* miserable than it had been before?

and these two things

what if xiao got tired of waiting for him?

what if he doesn't *want* venti anymore?

are hard to avoid

i had to ask, i had to know

bc people change their mind abt him all the time! or at the very least, they're perfectly *free* to.

to save us the heartache, to save us the grief

he's not that great, really — like, he's an archon, sure, but definitely not even all that strong of one (i mean if he *was*, then wouldn't he have been able to protect mondstadt from the rise of slavery in vennessa's time?) — and so *what's stopping xiao*?

i had to ask,

if his ideal of freedom is doing its job, then...

nothing!

i had to know

which so begs the question:

if you could be anywhere,
would you be with me?

unfortunately, it's not an answer venti can receive w/o asking him directly, esp considering how stubborn and restrained xiao can be, but that's why this track falls under *yearning*, not healing

venti can be just as fault for the self-imposed-&-enforced uncrossable distance btwn the two of them sometimes, too!!!!

and these loooong stretches of instrumentals!!!!

doesn't it just give you the most lovely impression of venti, sitting on the edge of like, starsnatch cliff, or the topmost branches of the windrise tree, or in the hands of the statue in the city, or even the top of the tower in old mond?

he is YEARNING, babeyyyy!!!!

i'm helpless

but he's bound to visit xiao of his own accord eventually. curiosity will always draw him back.

THE BUTTERFLY DREAMS OF DAWN

and so selfish

and!! just bc xiao is allergic to self-indulgence, that doesn't mean venti is *nearly* so repressed

The Bard Would Like To See His Beloved, Please~

but what else is

n i'm sure xiao will probably be sadder than how venti left him — not as sad as he used to be!! but still sadder than how venti left him — but that's what 500-ish years of yearning And Also the death of your lord and master Whom'st Controls Thine Agency does to a man

as good as your love?

n maybe venti visits zhongli first bc they're both old friends n venti would absolutely love to avoid his anxieties, or maybe he doesn't realize that rex lapis merely faked his death and seeks to visit xiao first out of a desire for smth familiar n stable

you're perfect, unnerving

but underneath it all, i think xiao would be very happy to see venti again, like one of those cats which comes trotting up to you with the tip of its tail going *flick-flick-flick*

deserving of much more than i have

bc truly, xiao is *nothing* if not devoted, even if venti himself doesn't think he's worth all that much

i had to ask, i had to know

to save us the heartache, to save us the grief

i had to ask, i had to know

if you could be anywhere, would you be with me?



as you have quite clearly been able to gather, this is one of those songs where i feel like the lyrics really speak for themselves, painting a picture *and* giving it dialogue at the same time

oh, oh, oh, oh

and idk i just find it so lovely n touching for venti to reach out to a xiao who is finally ready for him, who has been patiently *waiting* for him, after all this time

THE BUTTERFLY DREAMS OF DAWN

oh, oh, oh, oh

yet, in classic venti manner, he dares not be presumptuous
and asks xiao yet again

oh, oh, oh, oh

bc it's his choice and always will be!

(...and also maybe, just maybe, venti needs to hear it.)

oh, oh, oh, oh...

perhaps esp. now that he's lost his gnosis and is really nothing more than a single wisp of the thousand winds inside (as he's *always* been inside)

if you could be anywhere

and i think.

would you be with me?

if you could be anywhere

it would be really sweet.

would you be with me? (x2)

if you could be anywhere

if xiao were to, like, take a deep breath and reach out to venti, crossing that eternal boundary btwn them now that he is no longer bound by his contract, and be the one to instigate the sweetest of touches btwn them for once

“ANYWHERE” — ANDREW HUANG

would you be with me? (×3)
if you could be anywhere

...would you be with me? (×4)

bc his answer is so, so obvious, is it not?

TRACK 10:

“ENOUGH TO GO BY” — VIENNA TENG

ANGSTING

okay. i actually love this song *SO MUCH* you have no idea. it makes me feel the emotional equivalent of dragging my nails down a chalkboard in search of catharsis while weeping from the sheer breadth of the human experience at the same time.

and while this is very much primarily a venti → xiao song (which should become v clear from the lyrics), i think it can be read mutually as well, esp. at the chorus

I'm at your back door

but for now, here we have venti:

With the earth of a hundred nations in my skin

showing up in liyue and waiting for xiao on the balcony rooftop of wangshu inn, perhaps after a period of wandering, but most certainly for the first time after reawakening

You wouldn't recognize me

and he returns to xiao particularly subdued from the trauma of having his god-heart ripped from his chest by one of his own children, who even reminded him of his failures as their archon and guardian as she did so.

For the light in my eyes is strange

he finds that xiao has been changed by their time apart, too, but it's important to note that at least xiao has been changed in a *good* way.

It was years ago, god knows

it means that venti has someone to lean on

When you strained to tell me your whole truth

who both knows him intimately and won't collapse upon realizing that an archon is that much more weighty than a wind sprite

That you were not mine to save

these two lines in particular are also interesting, bc it's true on some level that xiao was never *venti's* to save.

That you could not change

his affinity is to anemo, but he is ultimately a child of liyue: steadfast as the stone through his own force of will

THE BUTTERFLY DREAMS OF DAWN

Well, would it be enough to go by

but liyue itself is changing now, and venti has the opportunity to do smth perhaps a little selfish and ask of xiao:

If we could sail on the wind in the dark

run away with me.

If we could sail on the wind in the dark

lay down your weapon,

Cut those chains in the middle of the night

and leave it all behind.

That had you pulled apart

the world we once knew will never be again.

if you come with me, then we can have the freedom to roam, to love, and to be *together*, however we want to be.

Would it be enough to go by

is that enough to fulfill your most obvious, most ardent of desires?

(am i enough?)

If there's moonlight pulling the tide

please, we are more alike than we are dissimilar, remember?
(i know how you desire.)

Would it be enough to live on,
If my love could keep you alive?

[UGLY SOBBING]

we are all seeing The Vision™ here, riiiiight?

I've built a lot of castles

this song is just so devastating to me, esp. in a xv context,
bc AS YOU ALL KNOW i ♥ themes of grief and mourning. ex-
tremely well-established hua fact.

I've built a lot of blazing speed-of-light machines

and what i love most of all abt grief is the way it intertwines
with *hope* and compassion

But it doesn't matter, you know

i remember a few years ago, i was wrestling with the differ-
ence btwn "pity" and "compassion", and the conclusion that i
came to is that, while both are responses born of pathos, com-
passion drives a person to action, whereas pity does not.

They all crumble in the winds of change

you may *agree* to a request bc you pity the person asking,
but *compassion* would drive an offer to help first

THE BUTTERFLY DREAMS OF DAWN

So I turned back to breathing

one of the reasons i adore themes of grief is bc i have a religious enough upbringing for it to be an inseparable part of my journey through queerness.

I learned a few good reasons to cry

i have *very* core memories of learning that grief is smth we can experience for more than just the death of others

And I finally called home

i've had to learn to live both with and *beyond* the grief i felt for... god, so many things.
my own self, the person i always imagined i'd be.

Praying you weren't out of range

the people i cared abt, from those who worked so hard to raise me right, to those whom i fought so hard to protect

Carry the weight

and for every failure suffered along the way.

I'll carry the weight of you, I swear

xv are characters colored by grief, which in turn drives both their helplessness and their compassion.

Carry the weight

it's easy for them to be compassionate towards others!

I'll carry the weight of you

it's like *pulling teeth* for them to extend that compassion towards themselves. but then the funny thing abt that is when you pair them together, smth starts changing.

it's easy for them to offer their strengths to ease one another's burdens, bc they can each see the beauty and worth inherent in other's life.

Well, would it be enough to go by

but ofc, they themselves are a monster, so it can maybe feel a little guilt-inducing to *let* someone else into their burdens.

If we could sail on the wind in the dark

but what if, as i've proposed in "show me where it hurts", they saw each other for who they are truly, and they realized they are the same inside, actually?

Cut those chains in the middle of the night

and what if through loving each other, on insisting that they are worth it, they come to see:

THE BUTTERFLY DREAMS OF DAWN

That had you pulled apart

a monster was not such a terrible thing to be⁷?

Would it be enough to go by

and yes, i know i've been saying in all the previous tracks that the point is to convince (mostly) xiao that he is not a monster

If there's moonlight pulling the tide

but i lied, actually. just a little!

Would it be enough to live on

bc truthfully, the monstrousness itself is what compels me⁸, bc we *all* have faults and flaws and shit we should not have done. it's part of being human, even when others make you feel like it shouldn't.

If my love could keep you alive?

and so, yes, this is our final angst track, though it rather blurs the line into yearning.

like in "better", the music itself here creates a sense of tension btwn hope n futility, and in line w/the rejection of the christian belief of being incomplete (in a sense, not quite fully

7 Ref. *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous*, by Ocean Vuong

8 <https://sincerelyandyourstruly.neocities.org/essays/monsterfuckers> — further thoughts on monstrousness

“ENOUGH TO GO BY” — VIENNA TENG

human) w/o the love of christ the savior, it would be fitting if, despite everything, venti's love alone could not keep xiao alive.

it's this conflict btwn "i am a god — *i could save you*" and "*i want to be human* — i can only remind you of your free choice."

you can't have both.

So will you let me come in

i will admit, i am actually quite the enjoyer of tragedies.

The mosquitoes have found me

the really good ones are always built in such a way where if you look at all the pieces,

And they're crowding 'round my blood

at all the characters w/their histories and their circumstances, you realize that the story never could have ended any other way.

At least offer me a drink

i'm always very moved by a story that says, "no, love did not save them, but it was *there*. what matters is that it was there."

Or a breaking of the ice

most fascinating are the ones which sprout from what *wasn't* done. it's a reminder to act upon our truths, such that the world may see them, too.

THE BUTTERFLY DREAMS OF DAWN

I'm wanting your anger

BUT i don't think xv are as much of a tragedy as i may make it sound.

I only want to see if I can shake you out of sleep

as i said in "you are the moon", the first tenant of getting better as a person is that you have to want it for yourself.

as i said in "better", it doesn't *hurt* to be loved through all your worst moments

And bring you out under this flooded sky

the rejection of divine aid should also pair w/a belief in the power wielded by humanity.

(just ask keqing lol)

At any price

although i obviously love drawing attn to the potentially tragic elements built into the premise of xv,

So carry the weight

i made it very clear in tracks like "show me where it hurts" that i think that they are capable of averting ultimate tragedy

Carry the weight of me in your heart

surviving the tragic elements, weathering them together and

still choosing each other, is what would their rlshp last their life-times (which is basically forever)!!

Carry the weight

also, notice how the chorus switches from "carry the weight of you" to "carry the weight of *me*" for this reprise!!!

Carry the weight of me

if we continue to read through the lens of venti, it means he trusts xiao is not only willing to say yes, *but also able to say no*.

Would it be enough to go by

neither of them can stand to be a burden on others; yet, here they are, leaning on each other with all the weight in their carefully-guarded hearts bc the love is there!!!

If we could sail on the wind in the dark

the love *matters*,

Cut those chains in the middle of the night

and knowing that it matters will push them onward —

That had you pulled apart

the good ol' "*i would live another day just to be with you*"!!!!!!

THE BUTTERFLY DREAMS OF DAWN

Would it be enough to go by

they may both be characters mired in grief, but i'd like to think they'd never dare let each other wallow in it

If there's moonlight pulling the tide

"grief is just love with nowhere to go," as — *checks notes* — jamie anderson so apparently has said before,

Would it be enough to live on

but i don't think they'd ever leave each other *wanting* for a place to give their love

If my love could keep you alive?

.....y'know i JUST REALIZED that you could interp "would it be enough to live on" in two ways

the first one (the one i've been working with this whole time) interprets "live on" as referring to sustenance, as in a "man cannot live on bread alone, but by every word which comes from the mouth of god"

If my love could keep you alive...

the second one would interpret "live on" as meaning to continue to exist.

y'know, as in the choice to keep living; *would my love alone be enough to convince you to keep living despite the shit?*

“ENOUGH TO GO BY” — VIENNA TENG

(you guys can't see me, but i *am* laughing at the fact that i spent a whole day annotating this song and building to that exact same conclusion when it could be just as easily drawn from the lyrics themselves)

c':

TRACK 11:

"I KNOW THAT HE LOVES ME" — AUTOHEART

HEALING

it's time for the track exploring the queerness of a rlshp
btwn xv where the religiousness lingers! :D

like yeah, the parallel btwn amatonormative "no one's life is
truly complete w/o a romantic partner" n the christian belief "no
one is wholly human w/o the love of god" → interpreting xiao's
feelings towards venti as definitely romantic as a result of the
dihua flute moment, bc to be saved as a result of a cleansing of
evil and sin is in itself considered romantic

i'm not immune to finding that romantic as hell either, but
please party rock with me for a sec abt one of my theses here:

that to be human is to be flawed.

and yet, to be human is smth worth aspiring towards, worth
celebrating, n worth *loving*.

like, for all the romanticism swept up in the pov of xiao be-
ing saved by venti, has that interpretation ever considered how
venti feels abt it?

i don't think venti would want to be loved as a god, and i

don't think he wants to love xiao as his god, either.

we've already covered the "god of freedom wants people to do as they please" angle of it, but have we perhaps considered that the god of freedom would also like to maintain his own freedom?

I've been caught up in a whirlwind

this is perhaps my most controversial xv take,

I've been living in a dream

but i actually don't think xv would ever get married unless they were in very very specific circumstances.

And I'm losing all perspective

i think they'd be life partners n share in like, moments of intimacy n vulnerability,

Nothing's ever what it seems

and naturally, i think they'd feel very strongly devoted to one another

But I know that he loves me

but we have to remember that liyue is the nation of contracts: being a contract itself, marriage is probably one of The Biggest Deals around in liyue!

THE BUTTERFLY DREAMS OF DAWN

I know that he loves me back

xiao would be *SO SERIOUS* abt marriage.

I've been tripping over laces

n it's like. xiao. sweetie.

And stumbling my words

please chill.

Every move is ungracious

like i get it; he was raised on the laws of equivalent exchange,

To the point of absurd

equated his own goodness w/his obedience n then carved that obedience into his own bones as a result of the context of his duty.

But I know that he wants me

through venti, he's experiencing, for the first time, relief from what is **BASICALLY** catholic guilt

I know that he wants me back

stemming from attaching his worth to his ability to purge evil by absorbing fragments of sin literally into his soul

During the darkest of blues

with the explicit knowledge that he's not obligated to give anything back

That I am trying to fight

plus, liyue has much more rigid ideas of what rlsbps look like, esp when you give them certain names, like, oh, i don't know.

I look up to the ceiling

savior n damned.

Unravel inside

spouses.

On the edge of imploding

it would probably be **weirder** if xiao wasn't in some way deranged abt all this, but we have to remember two things:

He surrounds me with light

1. the rlsbp btwn savior n damned is different from that btwn peers

And he acts like a sedative

2. venti wants to be

THE BUTTERFLY DREAMS OF DAWN

All! Through! The! Night!

loved! as! a! peer!

I know that he loves me

I know that he loves me (×2)

He comes and he goes

consider the image happening here:

But I know that he loves me

is it xiao reminding himself that venti won't abandon him,
even if he never repays the bard for saving his life?

I know that he loves me

or is it venti, awestruck from the realization that xiao loves
him not as barbatos the god,

Yes, I know that he loves me

but as venti the wind-sprite-turned-bard instead?

“I KNOW THAT HE LOVES ME” — AUTOHEART

He's here then he's gone

i will admit, when i first set out to annotate this song,

But I know that he loves me

i expected it to be entirely from the pov of xiao,

When he comes around

as an exploration of the lightness n relief i imagine he'd experience once they start to define their rlshp

My feet don't touch the ground

but i'm realizing now it's fun to consider from venti's pov too

give that wisp some unconditional love n understanding; he needs it after all his centuries of identity issues!!!!

*(I know that he loves me,
I know that he loves me)
(I, I...)*

truthfully, i have a hard time fully and succinctly articulating my vision for the ideal xv rlshp.

*(I know that he loves me,
I know that he loves me (×2))
(I, I...)*

like i'm not going to say there's no platonic explanation for

THE BUTTERFLY DREAMS OF DAWN

what they have going on bc (again) i'm aro i can believe lots of things can be platonic.

(Know, know, know...)

but also, i think that if they kissed abt their problems, it would fix smth abt both of them!

I've been sitting in the darkness

i think that despite his capricious wandering, venti would return to xiao whenever he chooses, n i have no doubts that xiao would come every time venti calls for him.

And rocking in my chair

no, that's not smth that's written into a marriage agreement

I've been seeing apparitions

but the expectation is kind of there, isn't it?

Embodying despair

to put everything down bc your spouse is the most important thing in your life.

But I know that he's got me

bc with contracts come obligations,

I know that he's got my back

n marriage is no exception.

I know that he's got my back

(I know that he's got my back...)

it would be important to venti at least that there's an element of *choice* to it each time,

I've been everywhere and nowhere

even if they're just playing at a song and dance in the end.

By belittling myself

with abandonment issues as bad as the ones they both have,

So, I say a little prayer

i think the knowledge that their partner loves them enough to choose to return to them would mean more than *anything*

To serenity and health

there's a chance i'm just imagining a regular romantic rlshp but w/extra steps,

And I know that he loves me

but i think the choice to not call it one is meaningful even then

THE BUTTERFLY DREAMS OF DAWN

I know that he loves me back

(I know that he loves me back...)

partly as pushback against the normative expectations that others place upon romantic partnerships: no matter where you go, there will always be expectations placed upon you based on the names n labels you choose for yourself.

And when I'm losing the plot

that's kind of how language works (what makes it a useful tool *at all*).

And overthinking it all

but there's no doubt that such things can be stifling.

And my resilience falters

i even had that whole side tangent in "better" abt the meaning n importance of names to xv!

I know who to call

i imagine that marriage, as mortals treat it,

In these moments of madness

might also seem a bit trite to someone like xiao,

He knows just what to do

who razes the demonic remains of dead gods to the ground

“I KNOW THAT HE LOVES ME” — AUTOHEART

to protect liyue on the regular already.

My salvation, my pick me up

he'd do the same for venti in a heartbeat,

The voodoo he do

as would venti for him

I know that he loves me

truthfully, i've been kind of hesitant to say out loud in these annotations

I know that he loves me (x2)

that i think xv are more suited to being in a queerplatonic rlshp than anything else,

He comes and he goes,

but that's what i'm really getting at.

But I know that he loves me

bc what *else* do you call a rlshp that escapes the neat lines drawn btwn romantic n platonic?

I know that he loves me

THE BUTTERFLY DREAMS OF DAWN

Yes, I know that he loves me

(what else can i call them to describe how they'd go to the ends of the earth for each other

He's here then he's gone

w/o invoking the idea of there being "smth higher" — be that the weight of a romantic interpretation

But I know that he loves me

or divine deliverance n worship — driving them?)⁹

When he comes around,
My feet don't touch the ground

smth i also like abt this song is the way it plays so purposefully n perfectly into the way a lot of christian worship songs will sound like gay love songs

I come alive

if they're sung by a man n you think abt them for like two seconds

I come alive...

it's smth you can see very clearly in the music video¹⁰, esp.

9 <https://sincerelyandyourstruly.neocities.org/works/annotations/for-the-birds/chapter/threel#qpr-xv>

10 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5krylQ-Z6KY>

w/the way it portrays religious guilt surrounding queerness →
what actually saves you is letting queerness into your heart

i've already made it v clear that i think the religious flavor of
xv really elevates the pairing in my tastes, so the canonical con-
nection btwn queerness n religion in the song, paired w/venti's
rejection of veneration, of being seen as holy, a god, a *thing of*
worship by xiao, who finally understands that they are equals n
their own people n both flawed n beautiful in their own ways...

Tell me, what is it like when you're running around
all the clouds at night

there's *umami* in this!!!!

With the moonlight beating hard on your skin

but anyway, in terms of the narrative xv are having over this
playlist so far,

And the wind blowing through
the cobwebs of your mind?

i like to imagine that this is the point where they define their
rlshp w/one another as pretty much "*together*."

*Tell me, what is it like when you're running around
all the clouds at night*

like. i do think it's kind of fun to refer to them as "perpetual
boyfriends".

THE BUTTERFLY DREAMS OF DAWN

With the moonlight beating hard on your skin

it just plays very well w/venti's playful nature to refer to them so flippantly, while still acknowledging the length of their devotions

*And the wind blowing through
the cobwebs of your mind?*

— but another part of the fun to calling them that is the fact that i *do* think it's not all that accurate

*Tell me, what is it like when you're running around
all the clouds at night*

bc literally, **fuck** if i know what these weirdos are up to.

With the moonlight beating hard on your skin

(they'd have at least one wedding bc venti wants to party and have free wine tho.)

*And the wind blowing through
the cobwebs of your mind?*

(even if they don't get married, *they're having a wedding party.*)

*Tell me, what is it like when you're running around
all the clouds at night*

“I KNOW THAT HE LOVES ME” — AUTOHEART

With the moonlight beating hard on your skin

*And the wind blowing through
the cobwebs of your mind?*

this track was (unsurprisingly) a bit difficult to annotate,

I know that he loves me, I know that he loves me
(I, I...)

so i've also left links to some of my articulate thoughts in
the footnotes.

(...When you're running around)
(...When you're running around...)
(...When you're running around all the clouds at night..)

(I know that he loves me, I know that he loves me)

(I, I...)

mostly, though, i just like it when queerness shows its face
in unusual (and, well — *queer*) ways

n i think that, ultimately, the most important thing to them
is that —

THE BUTTERFLY DREAMS OF DAWN

(I know that he loves me)
((Loves me))
(*Loves me*)
Loves me

TRACK 12:

“VANILLA TWILIGHT” — OWL CITY

YEARNING

The stars lean down to kiss you

"hey isn't owl city the guy who did 'fireflies'" — yes.
and what of it?

And I lie awake and miss you

the strong beat and almost desperate repetition of "i know that he loves me" gave it a sense of, like... an overwhelming cocktail of emotions, not all of which are bad, but together definitely are confusing and strenuous on the heart

Pour me a heavy dose of atmosphere

whereas "vanilla twilight" feels almost as if you can feel your heartbeat slowing down after a moment of panic in contrast.

'Cause I'll doze off safe and soundly

owl city has a real knack for capturing the magic of a wondrous atmosphere w/his music, so i find it very suited for this yearning, bordering on healing, track

THE BUTTERFLY DREAMS OF DAWN

But I'll miss your arms around me

i also like that the lyrics are addressing a beloved who is not currently present w/the singer,

I'd send a postcard to you, dear

bc i do think xv would spend a solid amt of time separated, either physically by venti's wanderlust, or mentally by his naps

'Cause I wish you were here

and so yes, here we are again w/another song that is predominantly abt xiao && from his pov lol. blorbo bias is very real

originally, this track was supposed to be "line without a hook" by ricky montgomery; however, like "chasing the sun", as i got closer to this point, the more i felt it was getting squeezed out by the narrative being built

granted, the narrative has returned to a pretty loose state, more a collection of dreamy threads which touch and intertwine in their myriad of potential ways than anything cohesive n watertight

so like... are we in a version of genshin's post-canon where venti's gone to sleep again? has xiao learned to step foot outside of liyue yet? what does this world look like?

honestly... i don't really know LOL. but, if you're going to put me on the spot like that... hmm...

I'll watch the night turn light blue

i like the idea of it taking place during canon as we know it right now, n venti has taken to wandering around w/the traveler, his besti lumi (sorry aether but you already have a bestie in paimon).

But it's not the same without you

he's alive, awake, and happy, having adventures while xiao remains attached to liyue, his heart a home of sorts for venti to return to

Because it takes two to whisper quietly

and return to it he does, ofc; just not often in the sight of the traveler,

The silence isn't so bad

bc xiao will explode if *Literally Anyone* witnesses how much affectionate doting venti piles on him

'Til I look at my hands and feel sad

it's still difficult to balance the (very different) regular lives they prefer to lead w/the desire to be together, though;

'Cause the spaces between my fingers

i think despite frequent love letters or messages sent on the wind,

THE BUTTERFLY DREAMS OF DAWN

Are right where yours fit perfectly

it would be difficult for them to shake a sense of homesickness when the day is done n they're still far apart

I'll find repose in new ways

xiao is, like, Normal Enough abt it that he won't die of kiss deprivation or anything like that in the meantime,

Though I haven't slept in two days

and it really is in these moments of distance that a person gets a chance to really breathe, really *feel* the breeze as it cards through your hair so yearningly...

'Cause cold nostalgia chills me to the bone

i think there's a lingering sense that these peaceful days won't last forever, though, as if they both know that either the world is going to end soon, or else be forever changed by some upcoming war.

But drenched in vanilla twilight

maybe that's why xiao still can't find it in himself to truly rest after rex lapis's death and accepting venti's affections:

I'll sit on the front porch all night

he knows, deep down, that he will need to stay in peak fighting shape for the coming years.

“VANILLA TWILIGHT” — OWL CITY

Waist deep in thought because

When I think of you, I don't feel so alone



(after all, someone out there will miss him terribly if he were to be killed.)

I don't feel so alone

I don't feel so alone (×2)

((and so, his dream of dancing in a sea of flowers to the sound of venti's flute still lingers in the most carefully-guarded chambers of his heart, yet to be fulfilled...))

As many times as I blink, I'll think of you...

Tonight...

this is another track where it's nice to just let the music linger, isn't it?

THE BUTTERFLY DREAMS OF DAWN

when i first conceptualized this project, i thought i was going to do a total of three fanmixes (for a total of 45 songs), one for each category which currently exists in this playlist: angsting, yearning, and healing

n i didn't rllly have a particular narrative in mind aside from this broad idea that angsting → yearning → healing is more or less the character arc i think they'd undergo over the grand scheme of teyvāt's history, n so obviously the fanmixes would progress in that same order

I'll think of you tonight

but i had trouble finding more than like 9-10 songs per category, so i ended up cutting them all down to this one single fanmix, which jumps btwn categories as it progresses

thinking abt it now, i actually like that a lot more than if i'd maintained the strict categorical order, bc change is gradual n growth is not always linear

When violet eyes get brighter

n sometimes, we have to heal a little before we can yearn.

And heavy wings grow lighter

we must make sure that there's no huge gaping wound for all our feelings n desires to bleed out of (as fun as those are)

I'll taste the sky and feel alive again

so that we can instead let those parts of us ache from the

“VANILLA TWILIGHT” — OWL CITY

lightest, most tenderest of touches

i esp like those two lines which just passed us by — "*heavy wings grow lighter / i'll taste the sky and feel alive again*"

And I'll forget the world that I knew

bc ofc there's still room for interpretation as to whether xiao can still fly, but venti's wings are connected to his godhood.

But I swear I won't forget you

sure, they can each still use anemo to fly on the wind, but do you think they ever miss doing it as birds do?

Oh, if my voice could reach back through the past

just one of those old aches, i suppose.

I'd whisper in your ear:

it's like how grief never gets any smaller; you just grow around it as time passes, if you'll allow it.

"Oh, darling, I wish you were here."

n i said it in "better" n i'll say it again, *it never hurts to be loved through all the roughest, lowest points of your life.*

and it never *hurts* to seek comfort n solace from those who love you when those old aches strike a pang in your chest once more.

THE BUTTERFLY DREAMS OF DAWN

but as i was saying, "line w/o a hook" was intended to be a song which would've explored the hiccups that would most certainly come along w/a fresh new xv rlshp, esp one where xiao is *juuuust* starting to get to the point where he's stopped repressing his feelings enough to where he doesn't *immediately* flinch upon realizing he's experiencing A Desire, but still kind of has lingering catholic guilt n thus can't Articulate them

but as i read and reread the lyrics, the less i liked that impression, of a xiao who still held onto the internalized belief in his own monstrosity

bc damn. didn't he have all that character development over the vague narrative happening in the previous eleven tracks :/ why's he still on this shouldn't we have more to show for it by now

which is probably just my best example of how the original rigid angsty-yearning-healing phase order has influenced what i've been trying to say throughout this project

but anyway. i feel like this song has had a lovely sense of devotion to its yearning.

i think i picked most of the yearning tracks off the impression that the object of their longing was (at least seemingly) out of their reach, not just in that moment, but possibly *forever*

so i just think it's nice to have one where you *know* it's only temporary, and that they'll be reunited again soon... c:

TRACK 13:

“I WILL FOLLOW YOU INTO THE DARK” — DEATH CAB FOR CUTIE

HEALING

when i was first thinking of doing this project, i decided to look up some Wisdom From The Ancients (old posts on live-journal) to see what they said made for a good fanmix

in actuality, i ended up distracted reading a thread of people complaining abt artists who are always showing up on every fanmix ever, and death cab for cutie was one of them

idk what this says abt my age, but i have no memory of hearing abt dcfc until i somehow?? stumbled upon this song.

which to ME means that the statue of limitations for the complaint of them being "on every fanmix stop putting them on your fanmixes" has ended

this is no longer *~an overplayed fanmix artist~*; it is a **VINTAGE CLASSIC**.

but anyway, i like to imagine this song taking place on smth like, the cusp of apocalypse.

like, hoyo's been dropping hints towards a broader war/conflict sitting on teyvāt's horizon for a while now

THE BUTTERFLY DREAMS OF DAWN

Love of mine, someday you will die

and to me, there's just smth abt those quiet moments of impending doom being spent in intimacy instead of fear or panic

But I'll be close behind

esp since xiao's assumed for all his life that he will die a lonely, painful death (likely w/o even a sense of control over his own mind), a fate which could grab hold of him at any moment

I'll follow you into the dark

it's nice to have this image of venti being there w/him in these moments of uncertainty.

what will the world look like once all this is over? will xiao still be around? will *venti* still be around?

No blinding light or tunnels to gates of white

will either of them still be in a sound state of mind?

will either of them still want to remain alive?

Just our hands clasped so tight

this is probably a good time for me to talk a bit abt my interpretation of celestia, actually

Waiting for the hint of a spark

it's probably really common, but i simply do not believe that

they are the good guys!

If Heaven and Hell decide

n i just can't help but to feel as if someday, venti, alongside his people, will partake in some sort of rebellion against them w/in this lifetime

That they both are satisfied

it's possible that venti might be a sacrificial lamb in that fight, n i think it's in his nature to do so willingly, so long as it protects that which he loves

Illuminate the 'No's on their vacancy signs

so i guess what i'm imagining here is perhaps smth almost like a biblical last supper scene, wherein venti has what feels like his last goodbyes w/everyone dear to him

If there's no one beside you

n then xiao, forever loyal to his dying breath, promises venti that if he dies, then he will do his utmost to ensure that his soul is not left lonely after departure

When your soul embarks

and TO BE CLEAR i don't think this would happen in a suicide pact kind of way;

THE BUTTERFLY DREAMS OF DAWN

Then I'll follow you into the dark

i'm imagining this in a hu tao kind of "i will sweetly and somberly hold your hand as i personally walk you to the border btwn life n death before i let you go, as if giving away a bride at a wedding" kind of way

In Catholic school as vicious as Roman rule

bc if xiao survives him, then so be it.
his time will come soon enough on its own anyway.

I got my knuckles bruised by a lady in black

n if we're going to talk abt biblical allusions here, then i think there are at *least* two ways to get out of this:

1. venti parallels jesus and is resurrected after three days and nights; or

2. venti parallels isaac, from the book of genesis.

I held my tongue as she told me,

if you're not familiar w/the story of abraham n isaac, the gist is that god orders abraham to use his only son isaac as a burnt offering in an act of worship.

"Son, fear is the heart of love."

abraham obeys, but moments before he slaughters isaac, bound upon the altar, an angel appears and is like, "WOAH."

hey. god says sike abt the sacrificing your son thing; there's a ram over there you can use instead."

So I never went back

If Heaven and Hell decide

notice how i categorized this song under "healing"

That they both are satisfied

this is bc we're once again entering a space of extreme vulnerability for both characters (n i suspect for most of the audience, too).

they've both worked so hard to not only survive this long, but also to *want* to stay alive

Illuminate the 'No's on their vacancy signs

the realities of death n dying are, like, a *huge* cultural taboo in america,

If there's no one beside you

but i think it's important to remember that teyvāt is not america, and xv have each seen more death in their lives than we may be able to fathom.

THE BUTTERFLY DREAMS OF DAWN

When your soul embarks

i think that their ability to talk normally abt death n form contingency plans surrounding it is a *good* thing!!!!

Then I'll follow you into the dark

and who says they're going to die for sure anyway, hmm?
maybe they'll both live!!!

it never hurts to plan ahead, n that doesn't make these promises of loyalty any less meaningful!!!!!!

You and me have seen everything to see

i think it's also sweet to consider this song as a promise from xiao to venti, too. bc yeah yeah the horrifying levels of "i would die for you" devotion he initially showed to venti, transformed into "i would live another day just to be with you", now perhaps transformed again into smth new:

From Bangkok to Calgary

you will never be alone again.

And the soles of your shoes are all worn down

the catch to freedom lies in its loneliness, so isn't that one of the greatest reassurances you could give to its god? esp since it's a promise made sincerely out of *love*, not obligation or indebtedness

The time for sleep is now

i just feel like this song marks a good endpoint for both of their development as characters,

But it's nothing to cry about

as it showcases how they've changed from the start, yet retain that same core sense of self underneath, through a situation which mirrors moments where they struggled before:

'Cause we'll hold each other soon

xiao has learned devotion does not have to come at the cost of one's self;

In the blackest of rooms

venti has a sense of faith n security in his place in the world

If Heaven and Hell decide

i know it's obvious that this song is meant to be read as abt death n dying, but if that bums you out, i *could* see another interpretation of this song

That they both are satisfied

where, rather than being abt xv acknowledging the possibility of either of them dying in a war against heaven, venti is simply tired out after the war and needs Yet Another Long Blink

THE BUTTERFLY DREAMS OF DAWN

Illuminate the 'No's on their vacancy signs

n xiao has dream powers to some extent, right?

If there's no one beside you

i think it's possible that, with the world saved in the wake of the traveler's final battle, he could utilize those to visit venti as he pleases -w-

When your soul embarks

that really is the nice thing abt art, that if you place it in the right context, look at it in the right light, it really *can* be smth new.

Then I'll follow you into the dark

for as much as i do love studying n staying true to a canon, i also enjoy committing acts of interpretation to transform it as i see fit

Then I'll follow you into the dark (×2)

regardless of which interpretation is chosen for the loose narrative, i think it's nice to imagine xv as capable of handling it.

TRACK 14:

“LOVER’S OATH” — YU-PENG CHEN

YEARNING

and now, for our well-chosen instrumental.

and yes, ofc i chose "lover's oath" bc the song is associated w/xiao, playing when you first meet him in-game.

remember what i mentioned at the end of the last song, abt how you *could* read ambiguity into whether xv are still alive after all is said and done?

this track does nothing to clarify anything abt their alive/dead statuses, bc it doesn't matter at this point. that's not what this song *is*.

we're past everything now, in a very particular point in the fairy tale:

the fated reunion.

it's emotional, heartfelt, and just a little bit somber

there's perhaps a slight undercurrent of grief, as there always is after a war

but i think mostly, there's a sense of joy, of faith rewarded and hope triumphant, as they find each other again, far, far

THE BUTTERFLY DREAMS OF DAWN

away, in some way, from the long, rotten war that was waged
over teyyat



the stars above are fading from sight as the pale, grey light
of dawn approaches

through the darkness has at last come the dawn

and there is the comfort of knowing that they are free —
truly, genuinely, and *forever* free —

to be together forever as they please



.....and live happily ever after

TRACK 15:

“DANDELIONS” — RUTH B.

YEARNING

and now it's time for the track everyone's been waiting for :D

you could say it's a ~saving the best~ for last kind of situation, but this was actually the opening track up until i found "hurricane", at which point i floundered a bit abt the order

ultimately, i put "hurricane" first bc i wanted to surprise people with a song they'd probably never heard of before, but i think this works for the best, actually.

Maybe it's the way you say my name

like, if we consider "hurricane" to be the OP of Xiaoven: *The Anime*™, portraying the feeling of xiao's inner struggle w/freedom leading into/during the turning point dihua flute moment, then "dandelions" would be the ED, representing that which unfurled in his heart after it: the dream of dancing in the sea of flowers to the sound of venti's flute once more.

THE BUTTERFLY DREAMS OF DAWN

Maybe it's the way you play your game

everyone knows that the three primary xv emotions are "angsting", "yearning", n "healing", and this song is so very yearnful...

But it's so good,
I've never known anybody like you

bc i suspect that, despite harboring the wish in his heart for so very long, xiao never *really* believed he could have this sort of happy, peaceful ending

But it's so good,
I've never dreamed of nobody like you

how long has it been since he danced for the joy of it, and not to vanquish demons anyway?

before the archon war, perhaps?

how many human lifetimes ago was that?

yet, here he is, experiencing what might as well be a *miracle*.

And I've heard of a love that comes
once in a lifetime

if we take "dandelions" to be the ending theme of xv, then that means we can look at it outside of the direct narrative built across the thirteen song-episodes in-between, while still considering what it says in reflection of the characters n their desires

And I'm pretty sure that you are that love of mine

like "hurricane", it centers around smth very specific that we
already know abt canon

'Cause I'm in a field of dandelions

n its implications can inspire a great many daydreams; yet
whereas "hurricane" at the start reminds us of how we started,
grounds us in this idea of "*this is where we are right now*", "dan-
delions" is, at first, our time to hope n dream

Wishing on every one that you'd be mine

bc yeah at the start, it really *is* just some idle wish, a
daydream xiao would constantly fight to repress, all while still
desperately yearning for it to be true.

Mine...

it was, in a sense, as out of reach as a dandelion on the breeze.

And I see forever in your eyes

but as we move farther away from "hurricane" n the way it
worked with *barbatus* as the unattainable, unreal object of the
dying yaksha's affections and closer to *venti*, the very real bard
n beloved of the very much still *alive* xiao,

I feel okay when I see you smile

the feeling of hope just becomes more and more surreal as
the line btwn truth n fiction grows blurrier n blurrier.

THE BUTTERFLY DREAMS OF DAWN

Smile...

is this some nasty delusion sent by an old god to curse xiao
w/hope before he falls in battle?

Wishing on dandelions all of the time

or is this something real and beautiful that even a monster is
blessed to hold in his hands?

Praying to God that one day you'll be mine

who's to say?

Wishing on dandelions all of the time

but perhaps, if a dandelion happened to fall into xiao's
hands when no one was watching him...

All of the time...

I think that you are the one for me

there's just smth abt how this song portrays desire that gets
to me.

i think it's bc wishing on dandelions is one of those child-
hood things that most people grow out of, one of those things
early xiao would most likely have scoffed at.

Cause it gets so hard to breathe

but it's also exactly *bc* of that childlike sense of wonder n whimsy n full-hearted *sincerity* of hope that it would appeal to *venti*.

When you're looking at me

like yeah yeah over the course of the story, xiao drops his cynicism

I've never felt so alive and free

n the audience starts to realize he's starting to make these dandeline wishes more and more earnestly as the rlshp starts to develop into smth *he doesn't want to lose*.

When you're looking at me

but at the same time, as we get to know venti, we start to realize that his habit of wishing on dandelions isn't always mere childish frivolity, no —

I've never felt so happy

instead, we start to see the weight *he* must be putting — *must have **always** been putting* — into his *own* repressed yearnings

And I've heard of a love that comes
once in a lifetime

THE BUTTERFLY DREAMS OF DAWN

and maybe that's a reason why xiao lingers on the border
btwn old habit n new action when it comes to venti, bc for a
long time, he lacks first the emotional intelligence, then later
the self-confidence, to say,

And I'm pretty sure that you are that love of mine

*"this is how barbatos is feeling, what he is thinking, at this
moment. i know what he wants me to do."*

to claim to understand someone as human as the anemo
archon would be hubris.

'Cause I'm in a field of dandelions

n of course, for as long as xiao subconsciously puts him on a
pedestal (or at least lets that pedestal curtail his own freedom)

Wishing on every one that you'd be mine

venti can't do much but hope that xiao hears the silent
wishes of his heart...

Mine...

And I see forever in your eyes

i like these lines a lot, too: *"i see forever in your eyes / i feel
okay when i see you smile"*

I feel okay when I see you smile

“DANDELIONS” — RUTH B.

it's abt the experience of unconditional love n goodness for the first time in your life, developing a *craving* for it, n then eventually — albeit outside of the scope of this ED — learning to love yourself bc whoever made you feel that way loves you, too.

n you want to keep moving forward, despite the struggle.

Smile...

maybe it's just me, but

Wishing on dandelions all of the time

the feelings *i* experience upon watching a banger anime n having its banger ED play you out (esp towards the end of the series)

Praying to God that one day you'll be mine

tend to be similar to how i feel looking back on the struggle periods of my own life now that i've managed to come out the other side of them

Wishing on dandelions all of the time

which is probably why i don't really feel like i have much to say abt the actual lyrics (aside from the fact that, as xv fans i can trust you all to make the connections w/o me spelling them out for you).

All of the time...

the story i wanted to tell here has already been told.

THE BUTTERFLY DREAMS OF DAWN

Dandelion, into the wind you go

OKAY that's not actually entirely true. i actually do have very specific xv imagery in mind for the bridge.

Won't you let my darling know?

venti, gently releasing a dandelion into the breeze w/his thoughts of love.

xiao, wandering the peaks of jueyun karst, only pausing to look up at the sky n clouds as the seeds float past him.

Dandelion, into the wind you go

does he know who is sending them?

Won't you let my darling know?

does he know who is sending them?

does he know what they're saying?

Won't you let my darling know that...

(is this ache from the knowledge, or the denial?)

I'm in a field of dandelions

while we're here, i might as well also make mention of the fact that i did find this song via xv (in this case an artwork by

“DANDELIONS” — RUTH B.

evercelle¹¹), making it the only song on this fanmix to have Prior Xiaoven Associations (to my knowledge).

Wishing on every one that you'd be mine

Mine...

n i think it's interesting that the art is from early 2022 (ergo, a *pre-endless suffering trailer* time period), bc this fanmix n its internal narrative was definitely put together with that period of fanon in mind

And I see forever in your eyes

i think i completely forgot it existed while annotating all these songs, hence why i don't even mention it past "hurricane"

I feel okay when I see you smile

Smile...

the "endless suffering" trailer goes hard, ofc, but...

Wishing on dandelions all of the time

what i really wanted to focus on with this project was the sense of ambiguity happening btwn xv that i've mentioned time n time again in these annotations

Praying to God that one day you'll be mine

bc i find there's smth compelling abt being left in the same limbo as the characters themselves.

11 <https://evercelle.tumblr.com/post/678763631373123584/dandelion-into-the-wind-you-go>

THE BUTTERFLY DREAMS OF DAWN

Wishing on dandelions all of the time

like, ambiguity is perhaps one of the greatest strengths of true, unmitigated freedom, is it not?

All of the time...

it could be anything; it could be *their* everything.

I'm in a field of dandelions

it could also just be nothing.

Wishing on every one that you'd be mine

we won't know until we reach out and touch it, just as we as children don't *really* know if making a wish on a dandelion will make our wishes come true.

Mine...

but sometimes, it's the making of the wish that inspires you to act.
