Being Human
by Feeney

Summary

A werewolf, a vampire, and a ghost attempt to live peaceful, normal lives among humans - but being human is way harder than it looks.

AU featuring Korra the werewolf, Mako the vampire, Bolin the ghost, and Asami the human that appears at their doorstep. Story inspired by the TV Series Being Human (BBC and SyFy versions). Some plot elements will be similar, but not all. There is NO need to have watched the show!
The doorbell rang. Korra winced.

“Bolin, no!” She shouted from the bathroom, desperately trying to hasten the toilet paper process. “Don’t do it!”

Mako was away at work. There was no one else but her around to stop Bolin. Korra could practically hear the *whoooosh* of air as he sped down the hall.

“Bolin!”

Too late. Korra heard the front door creak open. He must have ended up teleporting, one of his new favorite ghosty things to do. Korra stood up quickly and began fumbling with her jeans. She staggered out into the hall with her belt still undone, just in time to hear Bolin swing the door open and his chirping voice greet the visitor. Or at least, try to.

“Hi there!” Bolin smiled brightly. “Lovely weather we’re having!”

The delivery guy looked around, confused, at the empty house in front of him.

“How come your little brown trucks don’t have doors? Like, aren’t you scared you might fall out? I know you guys are in and out delivering packages all the time, but that just seems unsafe.”

Of course, the delivery guy didn’t answer.

“Um, excuse me, I need a signature? I can’t just leave the package here alone. Is anyone home?”

“Yeah, sorry! Come on in!” Korra leapt down the stairs and swatted at Bolin until he moved away. She didn’t want the delivery guy accidentally walking through him. The chill of walking through a spirit unknowingly was very disorienting, and she didn’t want to have to explain that *and* their magical opening door.

The delivery guy furrowed his brow because, obviously, he didn’t see what Korra was waving at.

“Uh, mosquito,” she said sheepishly. “Here, I’ll sign.”

“How did your door open by itself?” he asked, holding out the signature pad.

“Wind?” Korra suggested lamely, scribbling a vague ‘K’ and a squiggly line on his pad. “Okay, see ya!”

When she turned around with her box, Korra found Bolin breathing right over her shoulder, eyes wide and distinctly puppy-dog featured.
“Korra, can you pleease ask him?”

“No,” she hissed.

“What was that?” the delivery guy asked, looking back at her. “Did you say something?”

“I...said...noo...now I have to studyyy...” Korra stammered, holding up the box of books.

“Oh.” He smiled. “Sorry about that. Where do you go to school?”

“Avatar University.” She tried to discreetly inch her way over to the door to shut it. Delivery Guy needed to go away so she could yell at Bolin for answering the door yet again. Mako was going to be pissed when he heard about this.

“Wow, good school!”

“Ask him for me?” Bolin pleaded. “Please, just ask him and I won’t open the door again for a whole week! I promise!”

Korra scowled. He shouldn’t be opening the door at all, but she would take what she could get. Bolin didn't have a whole lot to do now that he was dead, so he had plenty of time to think of really dumb questions that didn't need answering.

With a heavy sigh, she asked, “Hey, I always wondered, don’t you guys feel unsafe without a door on those trucks of yours?”

The delivery guy laughed. “We get that a lot. There is a door, we just roll it back when we’re on the streets. If we’re on faster roads or highways not actively making deliveries, that’s when we close them. Want to see?”

She very much did not, but Bolin was bouncing up and down excitedly. “Yes! Yes! Yes, we do!”

“Yeah, I guess,” Korra replied, in a completely disinterested tone that the neither Bolin nor the delivery guy seemed to notice. She followed him to the truck parked across the street, but unfortunately Bolin was only able to go about the length of the front yard without touching the sidewalk. He’d never made it further than that yet, although a few months ago he could only take a few steps out the door. It was one of the many ghosty-things Bolin was working on.

He’d see enough from where he stood, though. The delivery guy flipped a latch and sure enough, a thin door rolled out of the side of the truck, concealing the drivers side.

“Cool, huh?” He winked in a way that made her uneasy.

“Awesome!” Bolin gushed.

“Yeah,” Korra shrugged as casually as she could. This whole thing really needed to end now. “Thanks. Bye."

“My name is Noatak,” he said, holding out his hand. Korra just stared at it. Oh boy.

“Hah! He’s so into you,” Bolin snickered from his perch in the yard. “Just shake his hand! Can’t hurt!”

Her mouth narrowed into a thin line. It was hard, trying to glare at someone you couldn't make direct eye contact with in front of other people.
“C’mon, I wish I could shake a hand,” Bolin said. “I miss that. Let me live vicariously through you.”

Korra sighed again, knowing full well what he was trying to do - pull the sad invisible ghost card. Again. She shook it, but chose not to introduce herself. She really, really wanted to yell at Bolin now and this guy was holding it up.

“And your name is Korra,” Noatak said. At her alarmed expression, he laughed. “I remember the name on the box. This isn’t the first thing I’ve delivered for you, actually.”

“This is the first time I’m meeting you.”

“Yeah, someone else signed for the others. Tall guy, kind of pale, black hair? Wore a red scarf for some reason, even though it’s still technically summer.”

“Oh, yeah. That’s Mako.”

Noatak looked back up at the house. Korra and Bolin even turned around to see what he was looking for, but saw nothing.

“Your boyfriend around now?”

That was a strange question to ask, and it made her uncomfortable on multiple levels. Korra raised an eyebrow, deciding that if he didn’t leave now, she was going to make him leave.

“He’s not my boyfriend,” Korra said, dodging the question of Mako’s whereabouts.

“You don’t wanna open that can of worms, buddy,” Bolin joked unhelpfully. She discreetly gave him the finger behind her back, so Noatak wouldn’t see.

“Oh, sorry, I just thought...?”

“Don’t you have other things to deliver?” Korra asked impatiently, pointedly eyeing up his truck. He looked like he wanted to ask something else, but they were so done.

He grinned nervously at her bluntness. “Right, right. Well, I’ll see you around. Good luck at school.”

“Thanks.” She turned and headed back to the house, making sure to swipe at Bolin so he followed. Korra didn't even bother to watch Noatak get in his truck and drive away.

Inside, she dropped the box of textbooks onto the couch.

“Make your head corporeal,” Korra ordered.

“Why?”

“Just do it.”

He did. Korra couldn’t tell just by looking if it was really solid, but when she smacked him upside the head, her hand connected and he stumbled forward.

“Ow, hey!”

“You can’t even feel that,” Korra reminded him.
“I know, I know, it’s just a reflex.” He shrugged. “But then why bother smacking me at all?”

“Because I get to feel it, and you deserve it,” she said angrily. When Korra took another swing, this time a little more light-heartedly, her hand went right through him. He just laughed.

“You know, that guy was nice!” He flopped onto the couch and started to rip open her package. "You were kind of rude. Didn't you think he was handsome?"

“He was like, forty-something!” Korra sniffed. “And weird! Don't try to change the subject! You have to stop answering the door, Bolin! As if we didn’t have enough to worry about with all the haunting rumors and people starting to - “

“They’re not rumors,” he pointed out, withdrawing one of her textbooks. “The house is haunted. By me.”

Korra frowned. She hated when he said that. Despite it being true that Bolin was a ghost and he was inhabiting the house, he wasn’t haunting it. If anything, she thought he brought more life to it than Mako and Korra put together.

“We just want to - “


“Mako and I just - ”

“I know, you’re just trying to help me,” he said, without looking up. “I’m trapped in this house and you two don’t want me to be alone forever so you guys are stuck here too.”

"Bolin. Come on.”

"Which means you have to make the rent every month, keep up appearances with the neighbors, and be sure not to freak everyone out and get evicted," he said bitterly. "Meanwhile, all I can do is stop being a creepy ghost opening and closing windows and doors all the time, trying to talk to people on the streets that can't see or hear me. And I can’t even do that .”

Her heart broke. Of all the people in all the world Bolin was probably the least deserving to become a ghost. Korra had never met anyone so bubbly, happy, hopeful, and alive, even in death. Just over a year ago he was the biggest nerd on campus, but in a way that made somehow made him more popular. He was the class clown, girls thought he was cute, guys thought he was funny, and he had plenty of geeky little friends. He was a motormouth, and there was little in the world that could shut him up.

To not have anyone see, hear, or even touch him was almost unimaginable. Korra wondered, not for the first time, how he managed not to go completely insane. She tried, and his brother tried, but they knew it was killing him all over again to be so lonely. And it was killing them that there was nothing they could do. Bolin was trapped on this plane of existence, dead to everyone except two people, and unable to go more than fifteen feet outside of the house he’d been murdered in.

But all three of three of them had problems. Korra sat next to him gently, knowing that she wouldn’t be able to put her arm around his large shoulders like she wanted. Not unless he let her. Instead, she rested it on the couch behind him.

“Hey. We love you. You know that.”

He shut her anatomy book. “Sorry.”
“Don’t be sorry.”

She could feel the weight of his back press against the couch. Korra smiled. He was letting her hug him, so she did. She only wished he could have felt it.

“You have enough to worry about,” Bolin said guiltily. “It’s your time of the month tonight, isn’t it?”

Korra couldn’t help but pull out their old joke.

“Which one?”

He laughed, as he always did. “The one with the howling.”

“Which one?”

Bolin smirked. “Seriously. You feel okay? It’s starting to get a little late.”

She nodded grimly. The full moon usually hit around early afternoon, contrary to popular belief. That was when her milder symptoms started. A little moodiness, a little bit more of a temper, maybe a certain impatience with chatty delivery guys. Fortunately, the real symptoms didn’t start until it got dark. Once the sun was completely set, it was showtime.

“I’m still fine right now, though.”

Suddenly they heard the clinking sound of metal scratching against the door knob, and the muttered cursing of someone whose keys all looked the same. This happened to Mako every evening.

“I told you to use those color-coded key labels Korra ordered!” Bolin shouted from the couch. Neither of them made any effort to get up and open the door for him. Served him right, Mr. Too-Cool-To-Label-His-Keys.

After several more moments of failed key-testing, he finally got the door open and stomped in, looking thoroughly annoyed.

“Key labels are for dorks,” Mako grumbled, before they could say anything.

“At least dorks can get into their own houses,” Korra quipped.

“How was work?” Bolin asked, elbowing her. Obviously he didn't want her blabbing about him answering the door. Mako didn't look like he was in the greatest mood, and they probably shouldn’t have been making him more cranky. He got even more annoyed than Korra did when his brother did dumb stuff like that. “And why’d you go in this morning? You usually do the night shift.”

“I went in this morning to empty my locker and collect my last paycheck,” Mako grumbled again. “Got fired this weekend. Spent the day looking for a new job.”

They stared at him as he pulled off his boots to set them neatly on the shoe rack in the corner, kicking Korra’s haphazardly tossed sneakers to the side so he didn’t trip on them. He then unraveled his beloved red scarf and hung it on the hook by the door, revealing the dark, angry scar on his neck.

“What do you mean you got fired?!” Korra demanded. Mako moved her box of books to the
coffee table so he could tiredly drop onto the couch next to them.

“I’ve been feeling like I didn’t fit in there for a while,” he admitted. Bolin and Korra shared a look. Mako was always weirdly quiet about his job, which he'd held down for over eight months. It was almost like he was embarrassed to work at the Avatar University Hospital Center. His night shift security job was actually a pretty sweet gig for people like him. Mostly he just roamed the empty hallways aimlessly. The life of a hospital guard offered minimal human contact and a decent night shift differential, which was always good for a vampire.

Mako had been clean almost a year. He had not bitten a single human in all that time, getting his sustenance primarily from the blood of animals he hunted. But despite his impressive vampire track record, it was still a constant struggle for him. Human blood would always be his drug, it was in the vampire’s nature no matter what his morals. That was why his job had been perfect.

And why it made no sense that he’d been fired.

"Did that guy Zaheer do something?" Korra asked. What little they did know about his job was mostly complaints about his dickhead coworker. Mako spoke more about him being a jerk than anything else at work. Apparently he was a preachy hippie that pushed his politics on anyone that stood long enough to hear.

“Zaheer…was a part of it,” he confirmed, leaning back on the couch and sighing. “But I don’t work there anymore, long story short.”

Korra made a face. His long work stories were always short.

"What about your other work friends you talked about? Ghazan? And Ming-Hua, was it?"

He shrugged. "No huge loss."

“Well...as long as you’re okay…” Bolin trailed off.

He scowled. “I’m not okay. Rent is due - overdue, actually. We can try and charm a few more weeks out of Raiko, but he’s not gonna let us keep doing this. Especially if our lease is up next month. We won’t be able to renew, at this rate.”

They sat quietly, processing the troubling realization. It was a bit of an extravagant house for people who were just barely in their twenties to be renting. Especially if one was still splitting time between college and work, the other just lost a job, and the third technically didn’t exist. Three bedrooms, two bathrooms, a remodelled kitchen and living room, and large unfinished basement. It was a home for an established family, parents with two kids and a dog. Normal humans with normal lives.

Not them.

Mr. Raiko, their landlord, was pretty decent. He was elderly and living in a small condo with his wife now that his kids had grown up and started their own families. Still, he couldn’t be expected to let them skimp on the rent, it was already ridiculously discounted due to the attack and murder that had occurred on the premises last summer.

Technically, they owed their relatively cheap rent to Bolin and Mako being killed by vampires in their living room. That was why they couldn't leave, even if they couldn't make rent. Mako was turned into an undead vampire that could move about freely, but Bolin was killed completely. As a ghost, he was trapped on the property for whatever reason. And as long as he was tethered here, they could not let themselves get evicted.
“I’ve been thinking about how we could possibly make rent...” Korra said slowly. The boys looked at her curiously and she cringed. They were not going to like this, and even she thought it was a fairly awful idea, especially after what Bolin had pulled earlier. They couldn’t ignore the fact that Mako was right, though - unless something changed, this thing they had wouldn’t last. “Look, Mako, you’ll find another job eventually, but even if you do, we were barely making a living as it is. The only reason we've lasted this long is because we've been scraping together the crumbs from Bolin's wrongful death lawsuit with the city!"

"Which, I gotta say, really weird to be living off my own death money," Bolin interjected.

“I'll get two jobs,” Mako said gruffly. “Three, if I have to.”

“In this economy you'll be lucky to get one,” Korra pointed out. And despite not needing sleep, vampires still needed to rest. Mako still got stressed out and emotional when he was overwhelmed, and that was no good for anyone. But he only really slept when he had nothing else to do, and Bolin never slept at all. It wasn't really a requirement for vampires, and a complete impossibility for ghosts. Which led her to her point. “I've actually been speaking to Raiko... Look, we have three bedrooms and only two people that need an actual bed. One, really.”

“What are you saying?” Mako’s eyes narrowed.

“I'm saying, well, you would keep your bedroom the same…” Korra slowly looked at Bolin. “But I think I should move out of the master bedroom into Bolin’s room. We could spruce up the basement for you.”

He opened his mouth to protest, just like she knew he would. She was prepared for it.

“Don't worry, we’ll stick all your little toys and dolls - ”

“Models and action figures!”

“- into all those big storage shelves. There’s way more room for all your stuff down there, anyway. All that space is just wasted. Bolin can have his own little haunted apartment down there!”

He tapped his chin thoughtfully. “That does sound like a good idea. The basement is even bigger than the master, and it's not like I can feel how warm and stuffy it gets down there because of all our soundproofing. I’d have to throw a decorative covering over the cage, but with a little clever lighting and a nice rug…”

Mako raised an eyebrow. “But why?”

Korra took a deep breath.

“So...we could get another roommate.”

The parade of expressions on their faces was almost funny, starting with confusion, melting into amusement as if she were joking, and finally twisting into horror when they realized she was dead serious.

“What?!?” they both yelped.

“No way!” Mako cried. “I am a vampire. My brother is a ghost. You are a werewolf. Are you kidding me!? You want a human living with us!?”
“I’m only a werewolf once a month,” Korra reasoned. “And I know you won’t try to hurt anyone, Mako, you’ve been so great. And Bolin will just... behave.”

“It’s not going to be that easy!”

He was right. In so many ways, Korra knew it was stupid. When she transformed, they always secured her pretty well in the basement, but there was no guarantee a human roommate would be safe. And she knew introducing a human to the household would just pile more temptation on top of Mako’s daily struggle not to fall off the wagon. Worst of all, it was cruel to ask Bolin to stay hidden in the one place he was allowed to exist, especially since he was just learning all his new ghosty tricks like teleporting and touching stuff. The house was supposed to be their haven. A place where they kept their demons to ourselves.

“But what other choice do we have?” Korra demanded. “We just don’t have the money to stay in this house without another roommate. At least not until I graduate and get a job that pays better.”

“You do have another choice,” Bolin suggested, his voice hollow.

Mako and Korra rounded on him immediately.

“Shut up, Bolin,” Mako said angrily. “We’re not leaving you.”

“Don’t you dare think that again,” Korra agreed. “I’d sooner drop out of school.”

”Not an option!” Bolin said. “Listen - “

“No,” she snapped. “Guys, come on. We’ll make it work. We have to. Just until May. It’s temporary, and we’ll kick them out after I graduate. Okay? Nine months. We can do it. We’ve come this far already, right?”

It was hard to believe that a whole year had passed since they had moved in. A whole year since two brothers were chased by a gang of vampires into this empty house. A whole year since they cursed one with the life of a vampire and turned the other into a violently murdered corpse. A whole freaking year since the newly-turned vampire ran into his ex-girlfriend, found out she had broken up with him because she was a werewolf, and invited her broke college ass to live with him and the ghost of his brother.

It was a long story. A very, very long story that was awkward on so many levels. But they’d already overcome so much, why wouldn’t they be able to handle living with a human?

“We are what we are, and we can’t help that,” Korra continued. “But we’re still here. We’re still okay. As far as the outside world is concerned, we are human. We just need to be... extra human now.”

“Nine months...” Bolin said uneasily.

“Nine months.”

Mako took a deep breath, meeting both their eyes.

“Okay. Maybe...there’s a slim possibility we could pull it off.”

Korra started to smile. “We put them up in her big master bedroom. That way, we can charge them a larger portion of the rent. And they’ll have their own attached bath, so maybe we won’t even need to see them all that much. We’ll try to find that quiet stay-in-room type, you know? Or one of
those always-out-the-house people with busy social lives. Although we should enforce a strict rule about no guests. One human will be enough to deal with.”

Mako was nodding slowly.

“Ooooh, I’ll write the listing!” Bolin gushed. “This’ll be fun! I’ll have to take pictures! Gimme your phone, Mako - “

He snatched his brother’s phone excitedly and opened up the camera, immediately holding it out and looking for good angles. Mako repressed a grin and grabbed it back.

“All right, we’ll give it a shot. But we can do all this later. Korra, it’s your time of the month. The sun goes down in an hour.”

She nodded, acknowledging the goosebumps on her arm. It wasn’t just because of this whole roommate thing. Soon, she would feel her system flooding with whatever the hormones and chemicals were that caused her metamorphosis. Her breathing would get faster, her heart would pound harder, and she would break out in a cold sweat.

“I’m still okay,” Korra said, heading to the kitchen. “I should have some dinner, though. You know how I get if I wolf out on an empty stomach.”

She always tried to keep it light, as if she was used to it all by now. Like it was just a minor inconvenience. The boys knew better.

They followed her and watched as she stuck her head in the fridge, packed full of food. There were also a few blood bags that Mako had scored after stealing from the blood bank’s rejection bin. Blood-transmitted diseases didn’t affect vampires, so whenever he got the chance, he swiped what was screened as unusable. It tasted awful, he told them, but it still felt a little better than raccoon or goose blood. Those stayed in the drawer at the bottom of the fridge, far from Korra’s dinosaur-shaped chicken nuggets.

She pulled out an entire package of mozzarella string cheese and a jar of tomato sauce. From the freezer, she removed a frozen sausage lasagna and threw it in the microwave.

“Raiko was totally okay with the idea of us getting a roommate, as long as it was just one person without children,” she said, dunking a stick of cheese into the sauce and chomping it in two bites. She immediately started to open another one.

“No arguments here. Kids are awful,” Mako said, sitting down across the table from her. Bolin hopped up onto his usual place on the countertop.

He snorted as Korra started on her third string cheese. It had been a whole two hours since she’d snagged a couple burritos and an ice cream sundae on the way home from work. She was starving.

“And that’s just on other reason we broke up. What kind of jerk thinks kids are awful?”

“Bro, you’re a monster,” Bolin agreed.

“You’re practically a kid, Bo.” Mako rolled his eyes. "A ghost trying to learn how to hold things, dropping and breaking everyone’s stuff in the process?"

“I apologized like a thousand times about your goldfish!” he cried. “And the old TV, but our new TV is so much better! You should be happy!”
“You too, Korra. A werewolf eating everything, all the time, everywhere, leaving a trail of sauce and crumbs in her wake?”

“Hey, shut up, you try burning like six thousand calories a day,” she purposefully flicked some of the marinara at him. It was probably even more calories than that during a full moon, when she got ravenous. “I can’t help it if I need to eat all the time.”

Korra topped off her fourth string cheese and returned the rest of it. Bolin moved aside so that she could reach past him into the cupboard and pull out a can of Spam and a party-size bag of Doritos. Mako looked on in disgust as she started slicing out little pieces of the meat and sandwiching them between the chips.

“And there’s another reason we broke up. I get that you have to eat a lot, but you can at least eat normal things!”

“Like that raccoon you had last night?” she asked cheekily.

“I don’t care what she eats, it all looks delicious to me,” Bolin said. “You never eat boring stuff like a salad or like, pretzels. It’s always something interesting!”

The microwave beeped.

“Finally, thank God!” Korra groaned, pulling out the lasagna. “Want some, Mako?”

“What kind of lasagna is it?” he asked. He got zero nutritional value from regular food. It just went straight through him, so to speak, but he did still have sense of taste that he liked to exercise on occasion. His food preferences were ironic, though.

“Meat.”

“Pass,” he said. “Remind me to get us some lasagna florentine later.”

Bolin laughed. “I still can’t believe you are a vegetarian vampire.”

He shrugged. “I drink blood because I have to, not because I want to. I like the taste of a good garden salad with croutons. Pita chips and hummus. Beans with seasoned rice and quinoa - “

Korra proceeded to make gagging noises into her lasagna. “Yeah, you and I never would have worked.”

“This is going to a special kind of person that’s gonna have to tolerate living with you two,” Bolin snorted. “I wonder what she’ll be like?”

“She?” Korra asked.

“Yeah, I figure it should be a girl to balance things out,” he shrugged. “You need a nice gal pal!”

Mako’s eyes darkened. “The point is to keep our secrets to ourselves. I don’t think becoming pals with the new roommate is a good idea.”

“You’re the one that keeps saying we have to blend in - “

“For survival. We have to be human out there because if we aren’t, they won’t understand. They’ll fear us, and then they’ll fight us, because that’s just how people are. Making friends with humans in the outside world is fine for appearances, but don’t forget the real reason we’re playing this game.”
Korra frowned quietly. Her heart rate rate was picking up and she could feel herself getting breathless. It could have been because Mako was making her anxious, or maybe even because she hadn’t let her lasagna heat up long enough in the microwave, but it was most likely because of that sun being bullied out of the sky by the full moon.

“Way to ruin the dinner conversation.”

“I just don’t want us to get so complacent about the idea of having a human in here,” he said. “They’re dangerous to us, just like we are to them. Out there, we’re nice normal kids. In here, this is where our secrets come out. Once we have one of them living with us, we’re going to have to work really hard on making sure they have no idea what we are. We have to be really good at being human.”

The telltale beads of sweat began popping up on Korra’s brow. Her hands quivered as she dropped her fork in the half-eaten family-size lasagna.

“Korra?” Bolin noticed.

“I...think it’s time.”

Despite all she ate, Korra was starting to feel empty. Her stomach grumbled, as if her human food wasn’t satiating enough. At least she’d gotten some down, though. When she transformed on an empty stomach the wolf was even more out of control than usual.

Mako came around to help her stand up, but Korra pushed him aside. Her feeling of self was starting to slip away, but she could still walk. This was far from her first full moon, but it never got any easier.

“I’ll catch up with you guys downstairs!” Bolin said. “Gonna grab the laptop!”

Typical Bolin. Korra managed to roll her eyes fondly as he poofed away upstairs.

“Ever since he learned how to teleport,” she shook her head as Mako followed her to the basement. “I hope he remembers he can’t teleport things with him. We can’t afford a new laptop if he breaks that one like he did your fishbowl.”

The basement was mostly unfurnished other than industrial-looking storage shelves, with a concrete floor and oddly pristine-white padded walls. That was because they’d soundproofed the entire space, a massively expensive endeavor, but it mostly worked. Korra’s screams and howls were kept private and none of the neighbors could hear. When the construction company asked what they had needed soundproofing for, they’d told them it was going to be a home recording studio. Bolin sometimes called it that jokingly, "Time for Korra to record her album".

With some decorating, though, it would be okay for Bolin's new room. Well, except for the cage. Seven feet on each side of reinforced steel. Mako refused to tell them where he’d gotten it, but Korra did notice that whenever they walked past the window of the “exotic” sex shop on 67th, the owner would wink at him.

“Ugh…” Every part of her head began to ache, from the dull throb at the back of her skull to the sharp pain in her forehead. An incessant ringing began stabbing at her eardrums.

Mako helped her remove her clothes and folded them for the morning. With their history, there wasn’t much need for modesty. Their lives were weird for plenty of reasons, and them being exes was the least weird of all. He took the leather straps, which funnily enough came with the cage, and bound her wrists together without batting an eye.
“We’ll be all right,” Korra said, noting Mako’s sad expression. The boys hated her time of the month almost as much as she did. “You, me, and Bolin. We’ll take care of each other no matter who else is here. That’s all that matters.”

“I know,” he said. Korra went into her prison for the night and sat down hard. Her muscles were burning so painfully she could barely stand it anymore. All Mako could do was tie her legs, and then reinforce the leather bindings with chains that had also hilariously and conveniently come with the cage.

“I’m okay.”

“I’m not.” Mako attached the chains to the loops he’d installed into the cement floor.

Korra fell to her side, new chills wracking her body. Mako and Bolin used to try covering her with a blanket at this point, but the wolf always ripped it to shreds in seconds. Eventually, she managed to convince them not to bother. It was pointless, and kind of expensive.

“I never wanted you to have to see this.” That was the main reason she’d broken up with him in the first place. It was the reason Korra broke up with everyone, really - previous boyfriends, family, and friends. This didn’t have to be anyone’s problem but hers.

Still, she was grateful every single day for Mako and Bolin.

“Well, you’re stuck with us whether you like it or not.” He put on a stern face, but she could see his worry. He got up and backed out of the cage, beginning the usual process of locking it.

“And we’ll never leave you, either. No matter what,” Korra assured him gently. “Thank you.”

Bolin swept into the basement, laptop clutched in his hands. “You started without me!”

Her grin was really more just baring her clenched teeth. It was getting very close to the unimaginably painful part.

“Not the kind of thing I could hold in, Bo.”

He set the laptop down and scooted over to sit on the floor by the cage. Even if Korra did try to attack him, it wasn’t like she could hurt him. Mako had a chair by the stairs, so he could sit further away.

“Okay, Korra?”

“Yeah,” she lied, curled in a fetal position. She looked at the clock. It was 7 in the evening. The sun didn’t completely set until almost 9. They still had a long way to go. She could only hope this time she’d get lucky and pass out earlier.

“Large Master Bedroom W/ Attached Bath In Charming House,” Bolin said through the bars. “The title for our ad.”

“D-Don’t forget to mention the sh-sh-shower/tub combo.”

“You loved that tub,” Mako said.

“Yeah, w-well, you have to share your b-b-bathroom with m-me now, buddy.”

“Ugh, your hair gets everywhere!”
“Well, all your girly hair products take up so much space by the sink!” Korra countered. The cramping began. This was it.

“Sorry for being shiny and volumized!” Mako retorted, trying to keep the banter going. But they could see they were losing her.

“I’m gonna mention we have an extra spot in the driveway for another car,” Bolin said, his voice strangled as spasms jerked Korra’s muscles violently, her fingers clenched and eyes squeezed shut. Tears rolled down her cheeks and hit the floor as she started to gasp.

“That’s a good idea,” Mako said. “And make sure to say we’re only a five minute walk to the bus line.”

“Easy commute,” Bolin agreed. At some point he had turned around. He could never stomach the sight of her transformation. He could barely even handle the sound - the cracks, the squishing, the scratching. He was staring at the laptop now, his fingers quaking as he typed. Any second now, Korra would start to scream, and that was the hardest part for him.

The change was beyond excruciating. It could take as long as three hours sometimes, during which Korra felt every bone break, every tendon and ligament stretch, and every organ tear apart and reform. Korra felt her heart stop and restart again, her lungs mutate, her intestines twist inside her gut. Fangs tore through her gums, thick fur erupted and spread like fire across her skin, a tail burst from her back like someone trying to rip out the bottom of her spine. She felt everything, as if there were hundreds of surgeons tearing her apart and sewing her back together for hours without anesthesia. She felt like she was going to die, and she begged the wolf for death, every single time.

Korra used to ask Mako and Bolin to leave her alone. They didn’t need to stay and keep her company, and she didn’t want them to hear her. It wasn’t her anymore, anyway. There was a point where the girl they were trying to comfort was just gone, and only a wild animal remained.

They never budged.

“Quiet neighborhood,” Mako continued. He reached into the crevice between the washing machine and dryer and pulled out his rifle, resting it on his lap. “Living room furnished with couch, TV, and coffee table. Remodelled kitchen with pots and pans…”

“And the best roommates ever,” Bolin said, just as Korra’s first tormented screams pierced through the basement, changing back and forth between cries of agony and howls of rage.

“And the best roommates ever,” his brother echoed.

Chapter End Notes

Obviously Legend of Korra and Being Human are copyrighted/trademarked/etc by their respective owners and this work of fanfiction if purely for personal entertainment blah blah peace out homies.
I wasn't sure what I expected the reception to a Being Human/Legend of Korra AU would be but it definitely wasn't this, lol, thanks guys! I knew there had to be a few other people that liked both, despite them being like polar opposites :-P

Also, you may have noticed, but I switched to third person from first person for...uh, reasons. I went back and fixed the first chapter too. Hopefully that transition isn't so bad.

“Ow! Watch it!”

Mako and Bolin were trying to carry Korra’s bed sideways through Bolin’s bedroom doorway. It wasn’t a struggle to get it out of her old room, but they hadn’t realized his door was so much smaller.

Mako had his super-human vampirey strength, and Bolin was plenty strong even as a ghost, but Korra still would have been able to maneuver better. Especially since Bolin was spending most of his ghostly energy just making himself solid enough to get a good grip on the bed frame. He was still mastering the art of making himself corporeal, which meant picking and choosing which body parts to solidify, and concentrating his energy where it mattered. This time, it was all in his arms, holding up the stupid bed.

“If you two would just let me help,” Korra said irritably.

But it was only eight hours post-transformation and she was still in recovery mode. She never remembered her time as the wolf, but Mako and Bolin had been her werewolf prison guards for a year now. They were able to describe to her why, even though she was safely enclosed in a cage, she always woke up battered.

The injuries happened during the change back. It was all the same - the crunching bones, the distorted muscle, the strained organs. The difference was that the wolf had to feel it this time, not Korra. It thrashed in the cage with her partially human body, tossing itself violently into the bars, tearing and scratching at her human skin as it stretched across its oversized skeleton. The agony sent it into madness, and the wolf could do a lot more damage than she could. One time, it had broken some of her ribs and she hadn’t even completely healed by the next full moon. They re-fractured and the cycle continued for three months.

Luckily, Korra escaped this transformation with relatively minimal damage. Some bruises and a long, deep cut in her arm, which was just enough to be delegated the job of light sweeping and folding.

“I don’t think it’ll fit,” Mako sighed. “We may have to take the frame apart first.”

“Mr. Handyman over here,” Bolin snorted. Korra scowled impatiently.

“Come on, all it needs is one...good...SHOVE !”
She lowered her shoulder and threw her entire body’s weight into the bed frame. It popped right through the door like a cork, toppling cleanly through Bolin and loudly on top of his brother.

“Arrghh!” Korra fell to the ground, clutching her arm and the bruises she hadn’t realized were there.

"Ahhh!” Mako echoed.

“You guys okay?!” Bolin gasped, going back and forth between them.

“I’m fine,” Korra groaned, visibly not fine. She waved away his attempts to help her up. “I’m fine, I just...need a breather here. Let me lie down a sec.”

“What the hell, Korra?!” Mako demanded, as his brother pulled him to his feet.

“That was admittedly ill-advised,” she said from the floor. “But at least the hardest part is done. Thank god moving your stuff was so easy, Bo.”

His room was considerably smaller than her old master bedroom, and even a smidge smaller than Mako’s room, but all it had housed were Bolin’s collection of comics, video games, action figures, models, and a single armchair. It was easy to move his junk to the basement. It barely took three trips, and the boys at least let her carry a box of vintage space alien figurines.

Korra’s stuff was harder. Other than her bed, she had her clothes, tons of sports and exercise equipment, her boxing bag, assorted school supplies, her desk and chair, and the biggest textbooks ever.

“Do you just, like, go out of your way to own the heaviest things in the universe?” Mako wheezed. “Jesus.”

“I’m gonna get you some ice,” Bolin said, disappearing abruptly.

Mako came over to help her up. “All we have to do now is flip the bed over and get the mattress on it.”

“I’ll fix everything up myself later,” Korra said, wincing as she pushed away his extended hand like she had his brother’s. She eased into a sitting position by herself.

Mako scowled, crouched down next to her, and gave her a good poke in the ribs. She howled and pushed him away. When she took a peek under her shirt, she saw a dark, angry red bruise. Soon it would turn blue, then green, then yellow, before returning to her skin’s normal tan color. Just in time to start the process over again at the new moon.

“I saw that before we got your clothes on. You’re still all messed up, so you’re not doing anything,” Mako said firmly.

“Asshole.”

“That’s a yuan in the Swear Jar, you brat.”

“You owe the Swear Jar like, fifty!” Korra accused.

Bolin returned, handing her a bag of ice that she alternated between her ribs and shoulder.

“I heard Swear Jar!” Bolin crowed, grabbing the long-suffering old peanut butter container off his shelf. He had implemented it a few months ago to try and curb their bad attitudes, but if anything, it
made them more annoyed. Korra shoved in a yuan, speculating that at this point it was very likely they could make rent with its contents and nip this whole crazy roommate thing in the bud.

She watched grumpily as the boys moved around her furniture. They managed to ease the bed down from it’s sideways position and threw the mattress on top. Then they fell on top of it dramatically.

“This is a whole new reason to never move out of this house,” Mako groaned. “Moving sucks.”

“You couldn’t be interested in 6-inch action figures and Blu-rays like me?” Bolin whined. “You had to be into weight-lifting and boxing?”

“And yoga,” Korra pointed out. “Not everything I own is heavy, my yoga mat barely weighed anything.”

Although she was the one who got to carry the yoga mat. On their insistence. Korra was sure she could have at least carried her punching bag without problems either. The textbooks, too. But her roommates were stubborn macho men, convinced that she was completely incapacitated after a change. She loved them dearly, but sometimes she could just as easily knock their heads together.

“You can’t even feel pain!” Mako rolled his eyes at his brother. “Or fatigue. Or anything. What are you complaining about?” He punched him in the side of the head.

“Ow!” Bolin yelped, even though his fist sailed through his head harmlessly

“You can’t feel that!”

“It hurt emotionally!”

Korra laughed and dragged herself back up to her feet. “So, all we need to do is take pictures of the empty master bedroom, so we can add them to the listing.”

“Oooh, oooh! Dibs! Dibs!” Bolin grabbed her phone from her pocket and took off.

They let Bolin run around the house snapping pictures of the room, the bathroom, and new ones of the living room, kitchen, and driveway. They even allowed him a few group selfies to get him to shut up. Neither of the brothers showed up in the pictures, of course, but Korra figured he just enjoyed the action of taking pictures. Mako always said he was the artsy one.

Korra started preparing some lunch in the kitchen as Bolin updated the photos on their online listing at the table. Mako was hunched over next to him, reading over his shoulder.

“Hey, wait. Bolin, go back to that last site.”

“What, this one?”

“Click on that.”

She looked up from her pile of Ramen packages to see them both frowning at something. “What are you guys looking at?”

Mako looked at her grimly and read aloud from the laptop.

“Few people think twice about the Bau Ling, a fairly nondescript neighborhood of Republic City. Sandwiched between the rough-and-tumble of Dragon Flats and the more popular White Falls, Bau Ling often lacks a distinct personality that most other Republic City areas boast.”
"Please tell me you’re not reading our listing,” Korra joked.

“It’s an article we found about the house,” Bolin said quietly.

“While having little in the way of nightlife and entertainment, Bau Ling does have an extremely low crime rate that makes it a perfect home to many young families,” Mako continued. “In fact, only two major violent crimes have been recorded in the neighborhood’s hundred year history.”

She shrugged. “Okay, so our neighborhood is lukewarm and boring at best. It’s a good studying environment! And look at that, we’re safe. ”

Mako frowned. “However, Bau Ling’s two murders received widespread coverage across the United Republic, due to their extremely graphic nature, the unsolved mystery surrounding both cases, and the fact that they occurred at the same residence - now known to many as the Slaughterhouse.”

“What?! ” Korra yelped. She abandoned her ramen and wedged herself between Mako and Bolin to read the article herself. “The most recent murder occurred in the summer of 2016, at 257 North Spirit Street. On the night of June 28th, a 20-year-old male college student was found severely mutilated in an unoccupied house. Some witnesses claim the young man had a companion, but no other victims have been recovered.”

Upon waking up as a new vampire, Mako had been disoriented, unable to even recognize the mangled remains of his younger brother. Panicked, he’d left the scene, before anyone else had discovered Bolin. Korra remembered the night he told her that story, right there in the same living room they watched TV in. Even a year later, hearing the story still gave her chills.

Mako continued. “Only a few witnesses were available, but all agreed that the young man was chased into the house by several other men. Strangely enough, the scene and the body were all clean - free of DNA samples, fingerprints, or any other identifying evidence could be recovered from the scene by forensics experts - without telltale signs that evidence had purposefully been purged.”

Vampires didn’t leave evidence. They didn’t shed hair, their hands lacked the chemistry to leave distinct fingerprints, and they moved with the strength and quickness of an apex predator.

“The discovery shocked the residents of Bau Ling, who had enjoyed the peaceful quiet for seventy years. Coincidentally, in 1945, a woman was violently killed and gruesomely dismembered in the exact same house, by equally mysterious circumstances.”

“Wait, really?!” Korra’s eyebrows shot up. Another person had died in this house? She looked over at Bolin, but he just shrugged.

“I’m the only ghost here that I know of.”

“Rumors that 257 North Spirit Street is haunted have been renewed of late, many neighbors claiming to see windows and doors opening on their own - “

They glared at Bolin, who grinned sheepishly.

“Oops.”

“ - and occasional strange noises that some residents claim emanate from the house’s basement.”

It was her turn to blush. Before they’d completed the soundproofing for Korra’s “studio”, they had
gotten more than a few complaints.

“Police have been dispatched on two occasions to the house, which is now home to a pair of innocuous young roommates that apparently enjoy watching television loudly, and taking advantage of the relatively low rent - ”

Bolin scoffed. “Not low enough.”

“ - but no foul play was ever discovered. A calm may have settled over Republic City’s Bau Ling in the past year, but there is no doubt that residents have lingering thoughts of the Slaughterhouse at the back of all their minds.”

All three of them fell silent for a moment.

“I wonder what the chances are that any prospective roommates looking at our online listing don’t know how to use the Internet,” Korra said.

“We are never going to find a roommate,” Bolin grumbled. “They call us the Slaughterhouse!”

“Our rent is lower than other places in the area,” she pointed out. “And we have a parking spot, we’re close to the trains and buses, the master bedroom is amazing, I mean, we have a lot of things going for us.”

“Despite being a haunted Slaughterhouse,” Mako said dryly. He pushed the laptop back at his brother.

It probably was going to be a little harder for them, but they would have to deal. There was a lot riding on this hypothetical roommate. They had only been able to afford the house because of Bolin’s murder, the cash from the lawsuit, and the fact that Mako and Korra both had been working. But the bottom line was, it was still a nice 3-bedroom, 2-bathroom house made for a family that had way more money than them. The time to renew their lease was coming up and Raiko wasn’t going to let them sign unless they could prove they could afford it.

“Once I find a couple jobs - “

“ If you find a couple jobs,” Korra reminded him. Predictably, Mako was still trying to pull them away from the idea of a new roommate. “We can't wait, we need money right now. There's no choice.”

He let his forehead hit the table dramatically. “Fine. Just list it, Bo.”

“Aye, aye, captain!” Bolin typed and clicked with gusto.

Korra returned to her cooking, quietly telling herself that everything would be okay. They would find a roommate, manage to keep all their secrets, renew the lease, and make it another year. Mako would find a job or two and she’d graduate with her degree and find a full-time position that paid well. Bolin would have them, none of them would ever be alone, and they’d keep each other sane. They’d keep each other human, just like they had been.

As long as Mako, Bolin, and Korra stayed a family, they could keep going like that until...whenever. Whatever came next.

“What godforsaken concoction are you making now?” Mako asked, breaking her out of her thoughts.
“Um. Ramen with eggs, salami chunks, and the extra cheese powder from that popcorn thing. Want some?”

He made a face. “I’ll stick with the last of the O-Neg in the fridge, thanks.”

“Do you have to be so annoyingly conservative with food,” Korra complained as she dumped the ramen in the boiling water and set to work chopping up chunks of salami.

“A Food Prude!” Bolin exclaimed. They both raised their hands up across the kitchen from one another, slapping each other an air-high five. It drove Mako crazy when they did that. He rolled his eyes.

“You’d better hope werewolves can’t get hypertension, diabetes, or high cholesterol.”

“Why don’t you - oh, crap.” As Korra was dumping salami bits into the ramen, the piece of gauze that Bolin had used to dress the long laceration on her arm began to dangle. It dropped into the pot before she could catch it. “Aw c’mon.”

She fished the gauze, crusted in dried blood, out of the ramen and tossed it into the trash. Then, Mako watched in horror as Korra continued to stir the noodles and tasted a spoonful.

“That is disgusting, Korra. And I’m a vampire.”

“What, like I’m gonna dump out the whole thing?” she snorted. Korra was the only one eating it, anyway, and it wasn’t like her arm had hemorrhaged into the pot. “Don’t be a baby.”

“I hope our listing is good,” Bolin interrupted wisely, before their bickering became a stupid fight and the Swear Jar got another deposit. “I tried to talk the house up as much as I could, so hopefully no one dwells on the whole my gruesome murder thing.”

“God, you didn’t mention it, did you?” Mako scooted over again.

“No, but I did wonder...should I?”

“No! Of course not!” Korra squawked. “Are you kidding!?”

Bolin looked uncomfortable. “It feels like something that should be disclosed. Slaughterhouse?”

“Listen, if they see the house and ask about it it, of course we’ll tell them. We won’t lie. But at least let’s have them see the room and make that judgement for themselves. It really is a good deal in a decent neighborhood. If you really think about it, we’re kind of doing them a favor.”

Bolin squirmed. “We’ll have to be extra careful. If we can, maybe we get the human out of the house when Korra changes. And we keep an eye on you, Mako, just in case. You’ll tell us if you’re feeling...vampirey, right?”

“Obviously,” Mako said, sounding offended. But Korra’s monthly changes and Mako being tempted weren’t the only liabilities. Bolin couldn’t hurt a human, but he could spook them pretty well, even if by accident.

“Obviously,” Mako said, sounding offended. But Korra’s monthly changes and Mako being tempted weren’t the only liabilities. Bolin couldn’t hurt a human, but he could spook them pretty well, even if by accident.

“Bo, I get that you’re worried,” Korra said. “But we’ve been through tougher things than this already. No one will get hurt. We won’t let that happen. We have no choice.”

He still looked a little skeptical, but he shrugged. “Okay, well, it might be a moot point anyway. I just did another search on this place. We’re kind of popular online. A lot of people might recognize
the address and pictures."

After a full week passed with no response to their ad, and no new job prospects for Mako, Korra begrudgingly admitted Bolin was right - none of it might work. He used his artistry of words to spruce up the post and added a few more pristine photos of the room and house, but they still got nothing. They even lowered the portion of the rent to the point that it was just barely helpful.

In all honesty, Korra couldn’t really blame anyone for steering clear. If she was a normal human that had read all the things on the internet about the house and its haunting, she would probably want to avoid it, too. Her brilliant idea seemed more and more silly as the days went by, and their bank accounts were getting emptier and emptier. They were already late on rent, as per usual, but it was so late that Raiko was probably going to be forced to action soon.

So when Bolin popped in front of Mako and Korra while they were watching a zombie movie on TV telling them that someone had responded to their ad, they thought he was messing with them.

“Bolin, not now,” Korra said grumpily. “I think Ginger was infected with the virus but isn’t telling Nuktuk.”

“No, I’m serious! Someone’s interested in the room!”

Mako snorted. “I thought you changed our email settings so we would stop getting spammed by bots.”

“It’s not a spambot!” he cried. “You guys!”

He turned the TV off and Mako and Korra both jumped off the couch.

“The fuck do you think you’re doing?!” She grabbed the remote.

“Swear Jar!”

“Have you lost your mind?!” Mako demanded. “Nuktuk was about to tell Ginger how he feels about her!”

Bolin took his phone and opened up the email.

“There’s this girl, a student at Avatar University like you, Korra!” he read from her phone. “She’s looking for a cheap place off campus to live for the semester, if not until she graduates in May. I guess she’s a senior like you, too. Twenty-one years old.”

Korra stared at him incredulously. “Wait. You’re serious? Someone’s interested in the room?!”

“Yes!”

“A co-ed?” Mako made a face. “No, thank you.”

“Excuse you,” Korra sneered. “No one calls them co-eds anymore except old people and perverts. Also, I’m a co-ed.”

“But not, like, a co-ed co-ed.”

“Shut up.”

It was perfect. College students kept busy. They were always studying, working, or partying. If she was the shut-in type, she’d just stay in her room with her private bath and not even need to go into
the common areas much. If she was a party girl, all they had to do was enforce a strict no-visitors policy and she'd spend all her time away from the house. And most college kids went home on weekends or holidays, so she'd be out of their hair. Perfect.

“What if she’s like you,” Mako asked. “The kind of college girl that studies on the coffee table instead of her room and then yells at us for watching TV too loud?”

Korra ignored him. “Tell her four-thirty tomorrow afternoon, Bo. And make sure she brings proof of employment or a guarantor form co-signed by her parents or whatever.”

“Oh, come on,” Mako whined. Korra pushed his shoulder lightly.

“I’m sorry, but no other fish are biting. We have to take what we can get. Write her, Bolin.”

He typed the message as his brother sulked. “Okay. Things are officially weird. This time next week, it may no longer be just the three of us.

“It will be,” Mako said firmly. “Whoever they are, doesn’t matter. It’ll always be just the three of us.”

Korra nodded. “Just the three of us.”

“We have a visitor!” Bolin called from where he’d been watching from Mako’s bedroom window, waiting for a glimpse of their prospective new roommate. “She’s got this cool red car. She parked it across the street and is walking over right now! Wow, she’s pretty!”

“Shut up, Bolin!” Mako shushed him and pulled him away from the window. “Remember - you stay in this room, okay? You do not come out until she’s gone.”

“Oh, come onnn,” Bolin whined. “You know she can’t see or hear me!”

“We can’t have you accidentally knocking things over or whatever,” Korra said sympathetically. “We can’t have anything haunted house-y happen.”

“I’ll be completely noncorporeal, I swear,” he promised, holding up both his hands. “Won’t be able to touch anything.”

“ We can still see you, and we can’t risk you distracting us. She won't rent from us if she's thinks we're weird.”

“I’ll stay quiet!”

Mako had to snicker at that. “Sorry, little bro. Just stay put, all right?”

He pouted and while his brother seemed to have developed a resistance to it, it still tugged at Korra’s heartstrings to shut the door on him.

“We’ll play XBox when she’s gone, okay?” she called through the door. Bolin only grumbled back.

The doorbell rang, signalling the official start of Operation: Being Human. Mako prodded Korra
forward and they made their way downstairs to let the new girl in. She noted he still looked hesitant about letting a stranger into their home.

“Be cool,” she hissed.

“I was born cool. You’re the dork here, remember?”

She punched his arm. He poked her. She elbowed him. He gave her hair a tug.

“Stop it!”

“You stop it!”

“Um…” a timid voice said from outside. “I can hear you.”

They quickly composed themselves and Korra opened the door.

“Hi, there!” she greeted, immediately putting her charm on full blast.

The young woman at their doorstep smiled awkwardly. She was really tall, Mako’s height, and calling her pretty like Bolin had was an understatement. She was gorgeous, with thick, flowing jet-black hair and ruby red lips. Her eyes were somewhere between Mako’s deep amber and Bolin’s vibrant green, like honey in steaming hot tea, both soothing and searing. Her gray skirt and button-down top made Korra feel like maybe she should have worn something nicer than track pants and a t-shirt, and maybe done something different with her plain brown hair.

She was struck silent for a moment, taking her all in. Whatever confident charm and swagger she’d saved up for this moment just sort of dripped away.

“Hello,” she said, holding out her hand. “I’m Asami.”

“Oh. Uh, I mean, hi!” She shook her hand. It looked soft and well-manicured, but she was surprised to feel some hardened callouses in her palm.

“I’m guessing you’re Korra?”

“Yes!” Korra exclaimed, too enthusiastically She wanted to sink into the floor at that point. God. “That’s me. Sorry.”

“Don’t be sorry. I’m glad it’s you, it’d be weird if he was Korra!” Asami joked. Korra could feel her entire goddamn body blushing.

“I mean, sorry I’m being awkward. I...didn’t have enough coffee this morning?”

“Ooh, a caffeine addict. We’ll get along.”

Korra barked out too loud of a laugh and pulled Mako forward so he could say something. Anything.

“And I’m Mako.” The asshole looked thoroughly amused at her floundering. He hadn’t bothered to shake her hand, instead keeping his hands deep in his pockets. Korra gave him a look. He had to try a little harder than that. Asami had to like them as much as she liked the house, if this was going to work.

“Why don’t you come on in?” Mako decided to try a tentative smile.
Asami grinned back. “Thanks.”

She walked into the house and cautiously took a look around. From the entryway she had a pretty good line of sight into the kitchen and living room, both of which they had scrubbed so clean it looked like a photo from a magazine. It had never looked that great before, and it probably never would again.

“How was the trip here?” Korra asked conversationally, trying to start things over as a competent, normal, non-crazy person. “We saw you drive up, I hope there wasn’t too much traffic.”

It was Asami’s turn to laugh, a very pleasant sound. “Well, it’s Republic City.”


“Close, it’s a ’75. You’ve got a good eye for cars,” Asami said, impressed.

“And you’ve got good taste in cars. How does it still look so good?”

“Well, I’m partial to Satomobiles. You could say it’s my hobby. I like restoring the classics,” she said, a coy glint in her eye. Mako nodded thoughtfully. Why the hell was he so good at small-talk, all of a sudden?

“Luckily, we don’t have to do a whole lot of driving,” Korra said, almost feeling like she was butting in on the conversation. “Like our listing said, we’re a five minute walk to the bus and then it’s like, ten minutes to the subway right into the downtown area. But we do have that parking spot for you if you really want to drive.”

“I’m definitely hanging onto my car for mostly sentimental reasons,” Asami said. “Honestly, your parking spot is the main reason I wanted to see this place. Right now I live on campus and the monthly for parking on campus is a little ridiculous.”

Korra knew parking in the city was a trial, but not firsthand. Mako had his car, the dilapidated old death trap he’d inherited from his parents after they died, and he always had trouble parking it anywhere. He’d given up his space next to the house for their new roommate, and the only open spot he found to park his beast of a motor vehicle was five blocks away.

“Well, then it’s yours. But just so you know, I go to Avatar University like you, and via public transit I’m there in half an hour no matter what the traffic is like.”

“That’s right, you’re Fire Ferret too!” Asami grinned at her. “What year are you?”

“I’m a senior. I’ll hopefully be getting my bachelor’s degree in May,” Korra said. “Kinesiology with a minor in Exercise Science.”

“Cool. I’m in the last year of my Masters. Engineering and Physics.”

“Oh, your email said you were twenty-one,” Mako said, eyebrow raised.

Asami nodded. “I am. I graduated high school and undergrad a little early.”

“Wow,” Korra found herself saying pathetically.

She looked over at Mako. “What about you? Are you a student?”

He shook his head. “Never had the time.”
“Oh, okay. What is it you do?”

“Security,” he said, carefully neglecting to mention that he wasn’t working in security at that very moment. “Maybe someday I’ll try going back to school, though.”

“It’s a big investment, but it pays off in the end.” She shot Korra a playful glance. “At least that’s what we hope, right?”

She grinned at her. “It better. Here, let’s go look at the kitchen.”

Mako and Korra stood at the entrance and watched as Asami inspected the countertops and appliances. She asked permission before opening the cabinets, which Korra knew gave Mako some peace of mind. At least she was respectful of privacy. That would be important if she was going to live with a secret vampire, werewolf, and ghost.

“It’s not much,” Korra admitted. “Small table, four chairs, but all the appliances are only a year old. Plus we have all our own pots and pans and stuff so you don’t need to bring much, but if you want your own stuff we can make room.”

“Can you cook?” Asami asked, pointing at the pots set on the stove.

“Yes I can,” Korra said, at the same time Mako answered, “No, she can’t.”

She laughed. “What about you, Mako?”

“Sometimes, but I don’t really eat a whole lot.”

“Well, I’m a pretty good cook,” Asami grinned as she inspected the stove. Korra pulled Mako aside.

“She’s interested!” she whispered. “She’s talking about how she can contribute. She likes it!”

“Yeah, well.” Typical Mako.

“Remember - we need her,” Korra hissed, before turning back to Asami. “Hey, you want to get a look at the living room?”

It wasn’t much to look at, just a TV, tiny coffee table, and couch, but Bolin had amassed a ludicrously large pile of DVD’s and Blu-Ray’s that Asami excitedly went to look at. Korra had to smile at how delighted she was, pouring over the nerdy movies and TV shows, and Mako noticed.

“What?” he asked.

“Nothing. Shut up.”

“I don’t understand you.”

“Ooooh, which one of you is into Battle Stars: Galaxy?” she gushed, spotting the box set of Bolin’s beloved sci-fi TV series.

Mako pointed at Korra as she pointed at him. Asami blinked at them, confused.

“We both like it,” Korra lied.

“Oh, and Flamefly? You guys have really good taste,” she said. They just smiled cluelessly.
“Yeah, it’s...yeah. We have Netflix, too,” Korra said.

“How’s your internet?”

“Uh, good?” She guessed that was the appropriate answer.

“I mean, how fast is it?” Asami clarified, amused.

Mako and Korra shared a blank look.

“It’s the lowest package,” he said finally. “Whatever speed that is.”

Asami wrinkled her nose, an action Korra couldn’t help but find endearing.

“Would it be okay if we were to upgrade to a higher speed and I paid my share plus the
difference?”

That was way over their heads. Bolin was the one who handled that kind of thing, so they just
nodded.

“That would be fine,” Korra said. “I mean, I don’t get it, but it sounds fine.”

“Wanna see the room?” Mako asked, obviously wanting to move things along.

“Lead the way!” Asami said. When they got to the top of the stairs, Korra noticed she faltered
before going forward. “Okay, I’m gonna be honest. I wasn’t sure what to expect when I came here.
I read the stories about the murders, and all the rumors about ghosts. This house doesn’t have the
greatest reputation, you know. And frankly, I kinda had doubts about the kind of people that would
choose to live in the Slaughterhouse in the first place.”

“I’m hoping there’s a but after that…?” Korra grinned nervously.

Asami laughed. “But you two seem really nice. By the way, are you guys...you know…” She
pointed back and forth between them. “Together?”

They both blanched.

“No,” Mako said quickly.

“God, no,” Korra added.

“Hey!”

“I mean - “ Korra looked at Asami, who seemed embarrassed for asking. “We used to date. That
ended like, years ago. But we’re still really good friends, just housemates now. Separate rooms and
everything. That’s actually Mako’s room right here.”

“Door’s closed because it’s a mess,” he said quickly. Hopefully Bolin found the strength within to
sit tight. They knew he could hear them in the hallway.

Asami still looked sheepish. “Sorry, I didn’t mean to - “

“It’s fine,” Mako said hastily.

“More than fine,” Korra assured her.
“Why do you guys have a three bedroom house if there’s only two of you?” she wondered. “I imagine it's kind of expensive for two people, even at this price. Why not just find a smaller place?”

Mako and Korra shared a panicked look.

“We just really like the location. Can’t beat it,” he said. Korra swooped in to change the subject. “This is the bathroom Mako and I share, and that’s my room next to it.”

They had decided to leave her room open, so Asami wouldn’t get weirded out by a hallway full of closed doors. Korra had spruced up Bolin’s old room as best she could and was pretty pleased with the results. Asami looked impressed, at least.

“I’m guessing you’re a fitness enthusiast?” she commented, looking at her punching bag, weights, and various other sports equipment.

“I like keeping active,” Korra said mildly. It wasn’t like she had a choice. Being a werewolf meant she was constantly brimming with an almost animalistic-level energy, even when it wasn’t lose to the full moon. It was annoying at first, made her hyper, careless, and impatient, but she’d long since embraced it. Thankfully, she’d found a way to channel it all into physical training.

“Whoa…” Asami’s eyes widened at her trophy display. “Coral belts in Judo and Jiujitsu?!”

Korra’s eyebrows shot up. “You know what a coral belt is? Most people just know, like, black belts.”

“I’ve trained in martial arts since I was little. I’m a black belt in Judo myself.”

It was her turn to be impressed. “Wow, really?”

“Yeah. My dad made sure I’d be able to take care of myself after…well, he was a little over-protective. Made me take a bunch of classes, although I did end up loving them. Have you been doing it since childhood too?”

Korra noted her hesitation when talking about her dad, but chose not to pursue it. She was entitled to some secrets just like they were. For example, she wasn't about to tell her the only reason she practiced martial arts was because becoming a werewolf meant she’d had to expend inhuman amounts of energy every day or else she'd go absolutely insane.

“Um, no, it’s a relatively new hobby,” she said. “Like, just the past couple years.”

“Jeez, you got all these honors in a few years?” Asami looked at her with admiration that made her ears heat up again. “I’m so jealous. And maybe a little afraid of you, heh.”

“I’m a lot afraid of her,” Mako said dryly. Korra gave him a shove.

“Anyway, your room is this one across from us…”

They led her to the master bedroom. The bedroom was considerably huge, plenty of room for a queen-sized bed, desk, and other kinds of furniture, but it was the private bathroom that they hoped would win a roommate over.

“Wow, it’s bigger than I thought,” Asami commented, walking around her former room. “I’m almost not sure if I even have enough stuff to fill this place!”
“We would be charging you a larger part of the rent for it,” Mako said, all business. “But we figured it would be worth it.”

She wandered into the bathroom, nodding appreciatively at the beloved tub that Korra had to sacrifice.

“I think it might be.” Asami stepped back out and peeked into one of the closets. “It’s actually a great deal, in this neighborhood close to all the transportation. Although, I guess that’s because of the whole murders and ghosts thing.”

“Are you...worried? About the murder thing?” Korra wondered.

“I don’t know. Have you two seen any ghosts?” She smirked at them.

Mako snorted. “Yeah right.”

“Don’t tell me you believe in those things,” Korra chuckled anxiously. “Ghosts. Oh, please.”

“I don’t, I just wanted to make sure I wasn’t going to live with people who did,” Asami chuckled. “In addition to being paranoid and overprotective, my father was religious and superstitious. I left home for many reasons, as you can imagine.”

“Oh, well, you don’t have to worry about that here,” Korra said. “We think the idea of ghosts or whatever is just - “

Suddenly Bolin popped into existence by the doorway, grinning widely. Mako and Korra had to bite their lips between their teeth to stop themselves from yelling at him in shock.

“Sorry you guys, I couldn’t help it!” he said quickly, confident at least in the fact that Asami couldn’t see or hear him. “Stay cool, I just wanted to see her. Wow, she’s pretty!”

Mako and Korra struggled not to stare directly at him, so Asami wouldn’t think they were freaks gaping at nothing.

She, however, had no problem looking.

“Oh, why thank you!” Asami smiled, right at Bolin. “And who are you?”
Everyone froze. It seemed like entire minutes were ticking by while they all just stood there, stunned.

“Wait...I know your face from somewhere,” Asami said, wrinkling her nose in thought. “Do you go to Avatar University too?”

Korra felt goosebumps. Even if she hadn’t looked up the house and saw Bolin’s picture online, his murder had been all over the news for weeks last summer. They had shown his picture nonstop on every channel, every newspaper, every homepage. The innocent, loveable youth with a bright future, murdered by an unknown gang of thugs in a really good neighborhood. It had been a big deal.

“Hello? What’s wrong with you guys?” She waved her hand at them.

Bolin’s eyes were wide as saucers. He gaped at Korra and Mako, completely at a loss. It had been a year since anyone but them had spoken to him. A year since anyone had even looked in his direction. Now, probably for the first time in his life, he had no words. This girl was just standing there like everything was normal, making eye contact and asking questions.

They had no answers.

“Um...” Korra cleared her throat. “I...just...you can see him?”

Asami didn’t even need to say anything. The quirk in her eyebrows said it all. That was a weird-ass question to ask.

It took a moment for Korra to register that Mako was grabbing at her shoulder. The expression on his face startled her - it had been a very, very long time since the vampire had actually been afraid of something. When you were literally the thing of nightmares, you were generally the one that did the scaring. And yet, there he was, nervously pulling her behind him for safety.

“Who are you?” he snarled.

“What?” Asami asked blankly.

“Ignore him,” Korra said quickly, pushing him off and pressing a hand to his chest to calm him. “Mako, would you chill out, please?”

Easier said than done. They had no idea why this stranger could suddenly see and hear Bolin, when literally no one else could, and that made this “normal” human girl the most terrifying thing in a house full of monsters.

Granted, no other vampires or werewolves ever really had the opportunity to come to the house and see or hear Bolin, so their assumption that only supernaturals could see him may have been largely untested. But among the endless parade of passerbys, delivery guys, and other people that loitered around the neighborhood, there was never a single human who noticed him, no matter how much he didn’t shut up.
Bolin scampered behind Korra and whispered into her ear.

“Abort! Abort!”

Whatever Asami was, they needed to shut down Operation: Being Human and get her out of the house before she realized what she was actually looking at. A line of freaks.

“This is just Mako’s little brother,” Korra said hastily. “We told him to stay in Mako’s room. We were trying to hide the fact that he, uh, lives here too. He’s, um, he’s really obnoxious and rude and likes listening to 80s pop really loud in the middle of the night, so…”

For just a second, Bolin managed to stop looking terrified and looked thoroughly insulted

“...it gets super crowded and loud in this house sometimes. Lots of Duran Duran. Sorry, this must not be what you were expecting. We’re awful and deceptive, oh well! Let me show you to the door! Sorry for wasting your time!”

Asami stumbled as Korra forcefully tried to usher her out. She was already in the hallway before she managed to whirl around.

“Wait! What’s the matter?” she demanded. “I like the room!”

“We have cockroaches,” Korra said.

“What?”

“And rats.”

“What is going on here??”

Mako was still seething suspiciously. “Did someone send you here?”

“I saw your ad on Craigslist. I emailed you guys and you said I could come. What is your problem??” Asami scowled and turned back to Bolin. “And you, why do you look so familiar? You must go the the university too, right?”

“He does!” Korra yelped, at the exact same time Mako said, “He doesn't.”

But Asami was ignoring them now, peering at Bolin with her brow knitted in concentration. “Have we met before?”

“Don’t answer her,” Mako hissed. “Get back in my room, Bo.”

Asami suddenly snapped her fingers. “Bo! As in Bolin, right?”

Korra was just about ready to pass out at that point. Mako grew even paler. Asami didn’t seem to notice either of their reactions, instead squinting her eyes to scrutinize the poor, speechless ghost.

“Bolin. That’s your name, isn’t it?” she asked him. “Why do I know your name? Where do I know you from?”

“It’s a small campus!” Korra practically yelled. Avatar University was actually the largest university in the United Republic, but she was desperately grasping at straws. There had to be a way out of this. “Everyone knows everyone somehow, right?”

Now it was Asami’s turn to be suspicious. “Seriously, what’s going on here?”
Bolin swallowed hard, a purely vestigial reflex that he apparently had been saving for this exact appropriate situation.

“I, uh, I should probably go,” he squeaked finally, his voice tiny and very un-Bolin. But Korra could see the wheels turning in Asami’s head. Slowly, a look of horrified realization dawned on her face, and she knew it was all over. The jig was up.

“Wait a minute... Bolin... are you...?” she gasped. “You’re the boy from the news. Last year, last summer, the boy that was chased into...”

_The Slaughterhouse._ He looked stricken. She had finally pieced it together.

“A-Asami...” Korra began, although she had no idea what to say after that.

“No way. No fucking way,” she whispered. “How can...you’re the boy that was murdered!”

“Okay, that’s enough. Get out of here, Bo,” Mako tried to move his brother away. Unfortunately, his efforts to defuse the situation went south as his arms went right through him. Asami staggered back.

“What the fuck. What the fuck?!”

Korra held up her hands cautiously and slowly inched towards her, as if Asami was a frightened pet and she was just trying to get her back in the carrier so they could go to the vet.

“Okay, wait. Listen, this isn’t - I mean, we can explain - “

But she wasn’t interested. She bolted down the hallway, towards the stairs from where they came. Mako was, of course, faster. He snagged her by the arm, but to everyone’s surprise, she grabbed his hand and crouched over, leaning all her weight forward and sending the mighty vampire toppling over her back and into the staircase. He tumbled to the bottom, stunned by the decorated black belt.

They all took a moment to be somewhat impressed by that.

“Korra, move!”

“Right, right - “ She took off after her, but despite her peak fitness and physique, Korra wasn’t an all-powerful vampire. Asami had a head start and was already opening the front door.

Bolin, however, was becoming quite a powerful ghost. He teleported in front of the terrified girl and allowed her to pass completely through his body. Korra knew firsthand that for whatever cosmic, supernatural reason, moving through a spirit was unsettling. The only time she’d done it was an accident - she had stumbled in the kitchen and Bolin had instinctively tried to catch her. She fell through him and the entire experience took maybe half a second, but for Korra it had felt much longer. She was just falling through an endless dense fog, unable to see or breathe. At some point she blacked out, and when she woke up feeling like hours had passed, Bolin had to convince her that it had just been a moment, and that she was in fact still in the kitchen with a stew just starting to bubble on the stove.

Asami staggered, falling to the floor in a daze.

“Sorry!” he apologized. He reached down to take her arm, and she just stared blankly, unable to regain her composure. She tried in vain to shove the ghost away, but her arms were just flailing aimlessly. “Sorry, I don’t want to hurt you. I - oh, stop trying to hit me. I can’t feel it. Stop that!”
He wrapped his arms, suddenly solidified, around her and she cried out in fear.

“Where am I!? What’s happening?!”

“Bolin, I’ve got her,” Korra said, quickly subduing the confused girl in a less frightening bear hug.

“What - how did - what is going on!? ” she demanded, struggling against her strong arms. Asami may have been crafty, but when it came to brute strength, Korra had the advantage. Gradually, though, she began to come to her senses. She could see her start to remember everything. “Oh my God!”

“Asami, don’t - don’t freak out!” Korra tried to say softly as Mako joined them. He was the strongest out of all of them, so he took her from Korra and restrained her. She wished he’d be just a little gentler, but the girl was starting to thrash harder. “Just - just, please, calm down…”

“Calm down!?” she shrieked. “Help! Help!”

“The basement!” Mako said quickly. If it could muffle the sounds of an outraged werewolf, it would quiet her screaming enough. Someone would call the police if she was heard, and there was absolutely no way they could explain any of this away.

Mako clamped a hand over her mouth to stop her shouting. She bit him hard and he howled, pulling his hand away. Bolin used his own corporeal hand to replace it. Asami bit again, but Bolin didn’t even flinch.

“Mmmmpphh! Mmmph!”

“I told you, I can’t feel it,” he said. “Just relax, you have to quiet down!"

The three of them dragged her down into the basement and Bolin slammed the door shut behind them.

Korra pulled on Mako’s arms. “Okay, let her - let her go! Stop dragging her around!”

He released his grip, but Asami immediately dove for the stairs. Mako grabbed her again, this time time lifting her up off the floor. She bravely punched at his head, shouting at the top of her lungs.

“Get off me, asshole!”

“Get the cage open!” he ordered his brother. Bolin looked reluctant, but did as he was told, throwing aside the tarp they’d used to cover up Korra’s cage. Asami’s eyes widened.

“We can’t just throw her in there!” Korra protested.

“No choice,” Mako said harshly, shoving the kicking and scratching girl inside. He locked the door and fell back, still kind of in shock.

“You can’t do this!” Asami shouted angrily. “I don’t know what kind of gang-related shit I walked into here, but if you don’t let me go - !”

“Asami, calm down - ” Korra tried again.

“No! Fuck you !” she cried. “You and him and… and-and-and that guy that’s supposed to be dead, what the fuck is going on here?!”

“Ummm - “
“No. No! I don’t want to fucking know!” she clamped her hands over her ears. “Just...just let me out, and I won’t say a word. I swear, I won’t tell anyone anything. I don’t care about any of this. I don’t fucking care, I just wanted to rent a room!”

“What do we do?” Bolin whispered, as if still afraid of Asami hearing him. He had forgotten how to talk to someone that wasn’t her or Mako. “Why can she see me?”

“Until we figure that out, we can’t let her go,” Mako said firmly.

“What?!” Korra yelped. “What do you mean, you want to keep her prisoner!?"

“We don’t know who she is. Who she’s working for.”

“Working for?!” Asami cried. “What the hell are you even…!?"

“What are you talking about, Mako?” Korra demanded. “We know who she is, just some college girl!”

“Do we really know?” Mako glared at her. “How can she see Bolin? She’s not like us, not one of us. Her blood smells like regular human blood, I know you can smell it too.”

Asami was staring at all of them now, struck silent and her eyes wide. She couldn’t have understood. She didn’t have that taint of death Korra could smell on vampires, and she didn’t have the smell of werewolf blood that turned away vampires. If anything, Korra could see the familiar look of discomfort in Mako’s eyes. She saw it whenever they were together on the street or in large crowds. He wanted to bite her, pretty badly. Asami was very, very much human.

“We don’t know what this is,” Mako said. “It’s not safe to just let her run off. Not with all she knows. She’s seen Bolin and knows who he is!”

Korra rounded on him. “So we hold her hostage? Are you insane!?"

“Then what do you propose we do?!” Mako demanded. “Let her loose to tell everyone?! Get us on the news? Let her come back with her people to attack us? What if whoever she’s working for - “

“I don’t know,” Korra said, tugging at her hair in exasperation. “But she’s not - God, she’s working for anyone, Mako! Why do you keep saying that?!”

He fumbled for words. “I’m...I’m just saying, there has to be a reason she can see Bolin! She can’t be a normal human. Normal humans don’t see ghosts!!”

Korra glared at him suspiciously. He was hiding something again, and something was telling her that it had something to with losing his job. Working at the hospital was the only thing he was ever quiet about with them, it was the only part of his life he kept Bolin and Korra from. There had to be a reason for that.

It bothered her that he refused to open up, even more concerning to her than this girl that could see dead people.

“Mako, who would she be working for?”

“No one! I don’t know!” He threw up his hands and averted his eyes from her. “We just have to be careful!”

“Careful about what?”
“You don’t think it’s a little fishy that she’s the only one to answer our ad?”

“I think you’re being fishy.”

As they stared each other down, Bolin walked up to the cage, where Asami had at some point fallen on her ass. She was gaping at all of them with expression of horror, mixed with disbelief and confusion.

“Sorry about all this,” he said to her sheepishly. “You’re right, I’m Bolin. That Bolin. Mako’s brother. I’m dead. I’m a ghost, or, I don’t know, like a spirit or something. Um, Mako’s dead too. Kind of. Un dead, really. He’s a vampire. And Korra’s a werewolf. But like, not right now. She only turns into one of those on full moons.”

Korra and Mako’s argument fell flat as Bolin spoke, for the first time to someone that wasn’t them. At least, to someone that actually could hear him. It was strange to witness another person react to his words.


“Yeah. I...you’re the first person in a year that can actually see or hear me since I died, other than these two,” Bolin explained. “We thought only supernaturals - vampires, werewolves, ghosts, and whatever else is out there - could see me. Forgive them for freaking out a little.”

“A little?! I’m in a cage!” She cautiously climbed to her feet.

“Yeah, I know. This isn’t our greatest moment,” he looked over at them. “I say we let her out.”

“No,” Mako said firmly.

“Mako!” Korra refused to be as big a dick about all this as he was, but at the same time she did see his point. If she was wrong and Mako was right, they could possibly be in danger. Also, he would never let her hear the end of it.

Still, they couldn’t just imprison Asami forever. She was a person, and Korra got absolutely no bad vibes from her to indicate she was lying or hiding anything. She just seemed like a scared and pissed off girl that did not mean to get this in over her head.

Asami bit her lip uncertainly. It seemed she had decided to be more comfortable with Bolin than the rest of them.

“You’re...you really got murdered? You’re really that guy?”

Bolin nodded. “Yeah, I’m that guy. Or just the ghost of that guy. I’m not sure if there’s a difference. It doesn’t feel like there is, I still feel like me, but evidence has proven otherwise.”

He reached out and swiped a hand clean through the bars of the cage. Asami gasped, stumbling back a little.

“Sorry, I know it’s weird.”

She shook her head, as if trying to shake the memory out of her brain. “I don’t know how you people have me halfway believing this shit, but...God, how did you do that?!”

“Um, I just did it? It’s actually harder to not do that.” Bolin demonstrated by solidifying his hand and grasping the same bar she was clutching. “Doing this actually expends more energy. Way
more. Like, one time I held onto my XBox controller for so long I passed out. At least, I thought I passed out. According to these guys I actually kind of...ceased to exist for a couple hours. Completely disappeared, with no memory of what happened.”

Korra bit her lip. She hated thinking about that night. He’d been gone for seven hours, and she and Mako had turned the entire house inside out looking for him. It was the middle of the night and she’d stayed up the entire time until dawn, when he’d reappeared exactly where he had been - in front of the TV. Bolin only remembered feeling very faint. They still had no idea where he’d gone, but forbid him from doing it ever again.

“I always come back, though. The universe won’t let me move on. Hence...ghost.”

For whatever reason, this seemed to resonate the most with Asami. If only for just a moment, she seemed contemplative. Almost content, as if none of this was actually possible, until Bolin told her about that.

Korra had to give the girl credit, despite everything, Asami seemed to be taking this whole thing a lot better than anyone could be expected to. She still remembered her moment, the moment the world as she knew it ended for her. Years ago, not long after she was first bitten but before her first change, she’d met her first ghost. It was an old man, well-dressed in old fashioned garb that hinted he’d died some time in the ‘70s. He was her first acquaintance in the supernatural world, though she definitely couldn’t have called him a friend. He babbled and raved gibberish, and Korra thought perhaps he was lost, or worse, homeless. But when she tried to touch him, her hands went straight through, and that was when she realized nothing was at all what she thought.

Ghosts were real - mostly harmless and depressing - but very real beings that no one else could see. The angrier spirits she could see seemed to sense her fear and tormented her, followed her and howled, pretending to grab her even though none of them really could. Korra could also smell death’s touch on some people who were definitely alive and not spirits, but Mako would soon teach her that those were vampires. Actual, real undead creatures that drank blood and killed people to survive. The vampires could sense she was a werewolf as well, though they mostly kept their distance. Having unappetizing werewolf blood kept her safe, but she knew that this was reality, not a creepy urban fantasy. All her life she was surrounded by so-called “evil creatures” of myth and she’d never known. It was all overwhelmingly maddening.

“I’m...sorry,” Asami said finally.

Mako’s nostrils flared angrily his eyes flashed red. He was going into “vamp mode” as Bolin called it.

“He doesn’t need your pity ,” He snarled, baring his teeth at her as his fangs descended. That scared her all over again. She jumped back, into what Korra recognized as an impressive martial arts defense stance.

“Hey!” Korra made a point to push him away, to show her that he was all show and wouldn’t actually hurt her. His tough guy act was completely unnecessary. “He’s just really protective of his brother. Forgive him for being fucking rude.”

She turned and pushed at him again. “Put your face away, asshole.”

“We can’t let her go. Bo just put all our shit on blast!”

“I feel like having your hand go through him earlier kind of gave us away first, dumbass.”
“I knew this was a bad idea. We should’ve never tried this!”

“Shut up, Mako,” Bolin said. He looked at Asami apologetically. “My brother was with me when I was attacked. I was killed by a group of vampires. That’s how I was murdered, but they didn’t kill him. They turned him into one of them.”

Asami barely looked like she was listening, instead keeping her eyes focused on Mako, who was glaring right back at her with blood-red pupils.

“He doesn’t hurt humans, though,” Bolin continued, helping Korra push his brother backward. “Right, Mako? You don’t hurt humans.”

Sometimes when Mako went into “vamp mode” like this, it was harder for him to control his temper. Regular Mako wouldn’t hurt a fly - he was a vegetarian for God’s sake - but once he got his fangs out, he had a harder time keeping his cool.

"It’s been hard for all three of us. So, just please, understand our...aggressive overreaction here. Also, Korra owes the Swear Jar two yuans and Mako owes it one.”

“This is not the time for that shit, Bo.”

“Two yuans.”

Korra frowned. “I thought we decided ‘ass’ wasn’t a swear? We say it too much.”

“Ass counts, if only just to stop us from saying it so much. Why do we say it so much?”

“We have an ass problem.”

“Maybe you guys have an ass problem. Mine is fantastic, thank you very much.”

“Oh my God, you guys, we’re going to need another jar.”

Asami suddenly cleared her throat.

“And what can you do?”

They all turned to her, startled. Did she seriously just ask them a question as if she were genuinely curious about the insanity of their lives?

“Uh. Huh?” Korra asked eloquently.

“What can you do?” Asami repeated cautiously. “You...turn into a wolf?”

“Uh, not on command,” she shrugged nervously. “I can’t show you, but that’s probably for the best. That cage you’re in is actually mine. They lock me up in there every full moon so I don’t go running around Republic City eating people.”

Asami looked alarmed.

“No, I make them do it!” Korra said quickly. “That’s only once a month. I have no control over it, and I’m not conscious of it when I’m changed. Otherwise I’m just me… I mean, I have a really good sense of smell? Like, I know you had chicken salad for lunch, and cold-pressed juice. From the juice bar on campus, right? And you drink a lot of coffee. I do too, and so does Mako, even though it’s not really a caffeine thing for us. We just likes the taste.”
Korra was babbling, she could hear herself. But this afternoon was becoming a lot more than she had thought it would be. When she couldn’t do anything, she said anything.

“Uh, I was bitten by a werewolf not long after high school graduation. A couple months before I met Mako, actually. Um, that’s a long story.”

“I didn’t know she was a werewolf,” Mako felt the need to add.

“No. And he wasn’t a vampire at the time, either.”

“Apparently being a werewolf made her feel like she was a danger or something to me, so she broke up with me.”

“That’s not the only reason - but this is, uh, may be a little too much information for one time,” Korra rubbed the back of her neck anxiously. “You know, you can tell me to shut up any time. Why are you people letting me talk?”

Bolin grinned at Asami. “Imagine living with these two. Or, well, I guess you were, for a little while there.”

Asami made a weird, incredulous, sardonic “Psh” noise.

“Also, for the record, she’s the one into Duran Duran, not me. Hungry Like The Wolf, get it?”

“I like the one song!” Korra said heatedly. “And I only like it ironically!”

“But you see, the reason they freaked out is because no one can know about us. The human world wouldn’t be able to handle us. We have to stay a secret.”

“So you put out an ad for a roommate on Craigslist!? ” she squawked.

“Not my idea,” Mako said unhelpfully.

“We needed the money,” Korra explained sheepishly, although it was all starting to feel more than a little stupid now. “Bolin has been trapped in this house since the murder. We don’t know why or how, but we need to stay here with him until we figure it out. We can’t abandon him. But a nice house like this, in this neighborhood? It was only a matter of time before money became an issue.”

Asami stared at the three of them for a moment, unbelieving, before turning just to Bolin.

“Look,” she said gently. “Just let me out. Let me go home, and I’ll leave you guys alone. I won’t tell anyone about...whatever is going on here.”

“There’s nothing going on here,” he insisted. “We’re just a regular vampire, werewolf, and ghost living together in this house, trying to be normal. That’s all.”

“Normal? Do you even know what that word means?”

“No,” Bolin admitted. “Do you?”

Asami opened her mouth and sputtered, but no actual words came out. Korra didn’t know what she was thinking, but her guess was that her life wasn’t all that “normal” either.

“That’s what I thought. Maybe we’re...different. But they’re my family and nothing is more normal and human than family. We’d do anything for each other. And we’d do anything to protect each other from people who try to come after us.”
He said it in a friendly tone, Bolin didn’t have any other kind of tone really, but it was clearly a threat. Mako and Korra shared a look upon hearing it. They didn’t even know Bolin was capable of such a thing.

“What are you people even afraid of?” Asami demanded, pointing at each one of us. “You have fangs. You are literally untouchable. And you can turn into a wolf and...eat people or whatever! Why are you scared?!?”

Mako’s eyes hardened. “Humans are plenty dangerous. There are a lot more of you than there are of us. And you attack what you don’t understand.”

“What about me? I’m a human that can see ghosts, apparently. I’m something you ‘don’t understand’.” She waved her hands around at the cage they’d locked her in. “What do you call what you’re doing to me?”

Korra frowned and nodded. She had a point, they were attacking her. It was admirable, really, how level-headed she was being. They had basically revealed to Asami that all her wildest fears were true. Three living nightmares had just locked her in a cage in their basement. But instead of cowering in the farthest corner and wetting herself, she had gotten to her feet and clutched the steel bars that separated her from them. She wasn’t backing down. In fact, she’d pinpointed their exact weakness and she was playing it.

Their humanity. Or whatever was left of it.

“She’s got you there, bro,” Bolin said, elbowing him.

“I’m not coming after you. And I’m not working for anyone.” She cast a glance at Mako, who was still in full vamp mode. “I don’t know why I can see you, Bolin, but I don’t want to hurt any of you. And I especially don’t want you people to hurt me. I just want to go home. Please.”

They looked at her for a very long time.

“We let her go,” Bolin said, going over to the cage.

“What?!” Mako demanded. “We can’t just - Korra, come on, talk to him!”

He was depending on her to make the decision. Bolin was sweet, but often overly naive when it came to people. He trusted everyone. His brother was the complete opposite, seeing an enemy in anyone that so much as looked at them funny. Unfortunately, Korra wouldn’t really call herself a middle-of-the-road tiebreaker. On the contrary, Korra was usually quick to fight and brash with her decisions, which put her much more in line with Mako.

But this wasn’t a fight. This was a human girl who just had her mind blown and wanted to go home. It wasn’t that she didn’t bother Korra. There was something too strange about her ability to see Bolin, whether she was clueless about it or not. And there was a small part of her that did want to keep an eye on her, in case something about this weird “talent” spelled anything sinister for them.

That didn’t mean they could keep her captive in our basement, though.

“Let’s just send her home. We can’t keep her here.”

Bolin smiled at her appreciatively and undid the lock. He held out a hand to help Asami out, but she kept her arms hugging tightly to herself.
“But what _is_ she? There’s something _wrong_ with her!” Mako protested, but made no move to grab her again.

“We’re sorry,” Korra said sincerely. “Really, we’re sorry. I hope you can understand.”

Asami said nothing.

“We’re...really protective of each other. You frightened us. We believe you when you say you don’t want to harm us - “

Mako snorted.

“I believe you,” Korra amended, glaring at him,

“Me too!” Bolin added.

She took a deep breath. “I’m going. This is the last you’re going to see or hear of me. Okay?

Bolin and Korra nodded. Mako just glowered.

“Don’t come back,” he snarled.

Asami backed away, not taking her eyes off of them until she reached the stairs. Then, she turned and bolted. They didn’t follow, instead just listening to her rushed sprinting above their heads.

When they finally came up from the basement, her car was gone.

“Did all that just happen?” Korra sighed.

“Yeah,” Bolin said. “But you heard her. That’s the last we’re going to - “

“I’m going out,” Mako said gruffly, snatching his sunglasses off the coffee table and wrapping his scarf around his neck.

“Where are you going?”

“The mall.”

He stalked out the door and slammed it shut behind him.

Korra and Bolin looked at each other.

“He’s not going to the mall.”

“Nope.” Bolin shook his head. “You have to go after him.”

“Yep.”

“Don’t forget your helmet!”

“Yep.”

Korra ran out the door. She hopped on her bike and began to pedal. In any under circumstance, it would have been ridiculous to tail a pair of cars on a bicycle, but it was just at the beginning of rush hour. She could still see Mako’s car making a right turn ahead, despite having had a head start.

“Damn it, Mako,” Korra grumbled. Her bruised ribs immediately began to heat up and she
clutched at them with one hand. “Pain in the ass.”

The traffic on Main Street was absurd, so Korra was able to roll up onto the sidewalk. It wasn’t long before she was side-by-side with Mako’s old, lumbering Satomobile.

“Mako!” she shouted, banging on the passenger side window. “Mako, open up!”

He gaped at her and rolled down the window.

“Are you insane?!”

“Are you?!”

He slowed the car even more. “Damn it, Korra. Throw your bike in the back.”

The traffic was bad enough that she was able to get off the bike and walk by the car’s side, but she was having trouble shoving it in the back seat, with her rib injury. Mako groaned and put the car in park. The cars behind him honked their horns angrily and he boldly gave each and every one of them the finger as they passed.

He forced the bike into the backseat and they both climbed back into the car.

“Bolin sent me to stop you,” Korra said.

“Okay, but first let me just say that I know that girl isn’t sitting right with you, either. You want to believe that she’s just some innocent but there’s a part of you that’s afraid of what her ability to see Bolin means. You’re worried about how this might affect our safety, and you want to know a little bit more about her before you’ll be able to sleep well at night.”

She bit her lip. He wasn’t entirely wrong. Not at all, actually.

“Oh, shut up and drive.”

Mako smirked and shifted gears.

Chapter End Notes

I wrote a couple chapters ahead already, all in first person. It’s been kind of a struggle catching all my pronouns while transitioning all of it into third person, so I apologize for the bits of first person left in the previous chapters. Thanks for pointing them out! I really hope I got them all, or at least most of them.
Air Temple Espresso

“Ooooh, she has an XBox?” Bolin gushed. “Did you get her gamertag?”

Mako and Korra glared at him.

“What? Look, she’s fine,” he reasoned. “It’s been three days and we don’t have people with torches and pitchforks knocking down our door. She didn’t tell anyone. Why couldn’t I play XBox with her?”

“It’s still all really sketchy,” Mako insisted stubbornly.

“Oh, yeah, says one of the creepers who’s been stalking her since Monday.”

Mako looked to Korra for support, but she shook her head.

“He does have a point there.”

“You always take his side!”

“You need to lighten up!” she accused. “Asami isn’t going to say anything. I don’t think we need to follow her around anymore. If campus security catches me hiding behind the dumpsters at the student union again, I don’t think the ‘I accidentally threw out my retainer’ excuse is gonna fly again.”

Korra could only imagine what she looked like to security, a student hiding in trees and crawling around in the bushes with a pair of binoculars. Mako was lucky, he didn’t show up on cameras, but he would have been so busted if he was caught on campus grounds without a student or faculty ID.

“The minute we look away, she’s going to - “

“She’s going to what? Get an A in her thermodynamics class and solve the energy crisis?”

Asami was fascinating. Three days of secretly following her around on campus had confirmed this. She was definitely a loner. Every morning she woke up early and checked her phone for the weather, read some news headlines, and fiddled with a few engineering and design apps. The girl was addicted to her phone, but never called anyone, barely texted. She was disciplined, always working out at the gym before heading off to class. She was a nerd, spending her late nights on her XBox or watching weird cartoons in her dorm room. She was gorgeous, a fact not lost on her lab partners, who seemed to be in constant competition making passes at her. Not that she noticed, anyway. All Asami seemed to care about was building whatever that contraption was they were working on in the engineering shop and doing dizzyingly complicated math on whatever surface she could write on.

Because above all else, Asami was a genius. She had a large whiteboard in her private dorm room, littered with blueprints, equations, and other hopelessly complicated scribbles. There was a literal stack of academic certificates, awards, and medals on her desk. She lived for her studies and her work and nothing else.

She would have been the perfect freaking roommate.

“A week,” Mako insisted. “Let’s just finish the week, to make sure. Okay?”
On the very rare occasion she actually left university grounds, Mako would tail her from his car. He didn’t get many chances though, since they figured she was still a little spooked by their encounter and wanted to stay safe and sound on campus. There, Korra was her shadow.

But not anymore. She sighed and grabbed her books.

“I’m going to my physiology class, and then straight to work after that. See you boys tonight.”

“Korra - “

“We’re leaving her alone,” she said sternly. “Bolin, don’t let him come to campus.”

“Got it.” He saluted me. “Although if you do happen upon her gamertag - “

She shut the door behind her and headed for the subway station. Straight to class, straight to work, and straight home. That was the plan. It was her usual plan anyway, since they all tried to live as inconspicuously as possible. Other than her coworkers at the coffee shop, who were annoyingly noisy but very sweet, she couldn’t even really say she had any friends to hang with between or after classes. She was a lot like Asami, in that way.

Still, Korra really was determined never to see that girl again. Really.

So when she tripped over a loose cobblestone while running for the downtown bus from the lecture hall and suddenly found a familiar pair of honeyed-green eyes looking down at her, it was honestly an accident. Honestly.

“Are...you okay? That was some spill.”

“I, uh…”

Asami reached out an elegant but strong hand and pulled her up.

“You weren’t in the dumpster with your binoculars this morning,” she said, casually chuckling, but there was an audible tinge of anxiety there. “I was starting to feel a bit abandoned.”

Korra promptly felt herself start to sweat. “I - uh - you - um - I…?”

Asami let her stutter a few seconds more, her expression blank as she idly wrapped her hands around the straps of her backpack. Her nails were painted bright red, and Korra couldn’t help but notice the first two nails on her right hand were chipped. That was probably from all the time she spent in the lab working. She seemed like such the classy type, with red-painted lips, green-tinted eyelids, and expertly lined mascara. Not to mention the hair, which didn’t seem to grow out of her head so much as freaking cascade across her shoulders. Korra wasn’t just being embarrassingly enthralled at how attractive she was, she was making a legitimate observation - Asami was a fancy girl living a decidedly mismatched un-fancy life, for some reason, and that was strange.

Not that she was in any position to make any judgements. Korra was basically a stalker-kidnapper.

“You knew...?”

“Knew what? That you’ve been spying on me around the university since that day at your house? Or that Mako doesn’t realize following someone in their car with the headlights off at night is
about ten times more conspicuous than if they were on?"

Asami was being weirdly calm about it all. Not angry or afraid or any other kind of emotion Korra felt like a regular person should have felt. Although what did she know, she hadn’t been a regular person for a while, and she hadn’t exactly been in this kind of situation before. She wasn’t sure how anyone was supposed to respond to this, really.

“Um. Sorry.”

“Well, I suppose I appreciate the apology.”

“You didn’t, I don’t know, call the police or whatever?”

She rolled her eyes. “You know I didn’t. Can you imagine? Excuse me, officer, I’d like to file a report for attempted kidnapping. I walked clear through this one guy like he was made of air and the other one can just spontaneously grow fangs. No, I’m not drunk, I met them on Craigslist.”

Korra cringed. “Sorry.”

“Right.”

“You still could have, I don’t know, reported Mako and I stalking you? They would have believed that.”

She hesitated. “I almost did, when I saw you and Mako in the parking lot by my dorm that day. But you two seemed to be fighting in the car, and I couldn’t help but watch you for a moment.”

Mako had wanted to capture her again. Korra smacked him in the head and he had calmed down a little, instead suggesting they leave a threatening note with drops of dried blood splattered on it for effect. Of course she had to hit him again, because that was such a stupid, vampire-y thing to even think of, and he finally agreed to some simple reconnaissance. If Asami looked like she was about to ruin their lives, they’d take action, but not until then.

“Then you two sort of just sat there grumpily,” Asami continued. “You honestly looked a bit silly. It was like watching little kids fight over a brownie and then pout when mom just takes it away.”

Indeed, that just about summed the Korra-Mako relationship.

“From what I...saw...that day, I know that you could have easily just taken me back. Or even possibly...killed me, if you wanted. But you didn’t. I decided then that maybe you’re not the worst people ever.”

“We try not to be.” Korra rubbed her neck sheepishly. “Some days are better than others. Especially for Mako, it’s harder for him because of...what he is.”

She nodded thoughtfully. “But he listens to you.”

“Yeah, and his brother. The...uh, the ghost.”

“Er, yes. Right.”

“I should thank you. For keeping our secret.”

Asami frowned. “Honestly, it’s not something I feel like I could just tell people. I don’t know if you’ve noticed, but I’m an engineer. A scientist.”
Korra kept a straight face. “I did notice, yes.”

“None of it makes any sense. I don’t even think I’m really scared of you people. Maybe if either of you actually tried to hurt me, I would have tried something more, or actually been afraid. But right now I just feel...unsettled. There’s something in the universe that science apparently hasn’t explained yet, and it bothers me.”

Korra couldn’t help but grin at that.

“So...you’re not calling the cops on us because... science?”

She smirked. “You locked me in a cage, do you really think you get to call me a nerd right now?”

“Okay, okay, sorry.”

“Anyway, you let me go.” She shrugged. “When I realized all you were doing was watching me, not trying to hurt me, I figured you’d stop after a while. Letting you watch me be boring was a lot easier than trying to fight a bunch of mythological creatures, you know?”

“I guess.”

“It kind of makes it seem like you all were more afraid of me than I was of you.”

She wasn’t wrong. For all their supernatural powers, it was human beings that scared them the most.

“Mako, Bolin, and I look after each other. Whatever it takes. But none of us wanted to drag you into this, just like none of us wanted to be dragged in ourselves.”

“So you put an ad on Craigslist for a roommate in your haunted house?” She shook her head. “That was a really stupid plan.”

“Don’t I know it. But what choice did we have?”


Korra took a quick peek at her phone screen. “Speaking of the stupidly expensive house, I really need to get to work and I think I’m about to miss the bus.”

“Can’t wolves run something like 35 miles per hour?”

“You know what, I actually think that might be racist!”

Asami grinned, actually grinned despite everything. “Excuse my werewolf ignorance.”

“Shh!” Korra hissed, looking around to make sure no one had heard. Classes had just let out and the quad was full of students. Asami looked mildly apologetic.

“Oh, sorry. I guess I was kind of loud.”

“It doesn’t work like that,” Korra said softly, continuing to glance around them. “When I’m me, like I am now, I’m just me. Not like Mako or Bolin. Right now, I’m not special. I’m a little stronger, because I train so much with my excess energy, and I have that super-strong sense of smell I think I told you about. Oh, and I guess I eat a lot. That’s all.”

Asami nodded. “So you really are just a student. You weren’t lying.”
“So far the only lie I ever really told you was that only two people live in my house,” Korra said. “Technically, it’s three. Although if you’re being super technical, I guess you can argue only one of us is ‘living’ there, huh?”

“And you have a job?”

“Best barista in Republic city,” Korra bragged. “At Air Temple Espresso, downtown.”

She looked at her blankly.

“Home of Republic City’s famous fruit pies?”

More blank staring.

“We have a big stuffed sky bison out front sitting on a bench that kids take selfies with.”

“Oh! Right, next to the gas station and mini mart.” Asami rocked back and forth on her heels for a moment. “So...you’re just a person.”

“I try to be like a person, yeah,” she said earnestly. “We all try, really hard.”

Asami seemed to be thinking about something. “Right. You know, my car does need some gas.”

“Huh?”

“I need to get gas. And I’ve never tried your famous fruit pies before.”

Korra didn’t know what this was. Asami was the absolute last person on earth who should want to hang out with her, the last person to even be talking to her. Yet here she was, more or less unafraid. It made no sense.

There was a kindness in those pretty eyes of hers, though. Beyond all reason, she could tell that this girl felt sad for her. For all of them, probably. Asami pitied them, which was an entirely new thing for her. Normally, Korra would resent feeling pitied, but in this case, well, she’d take it. She’d take anything over being feared and hated. In a way, she felt like Asami reaching out with her pity was almost like being forgiven for everything they’d done.

“I suppose I do owe you like, all the fruit pies in the world.”

“For the cage thing.”

Korra winced again. “Yeah, for the cage thing.”

“And for the ride I’m about to give you to work.”

Her eyebrows shot up. “You’re seriously not even a little afraid of me?”

“You said it yourself, you’re nothing special at the moment.” Asami smiled at her, which nearly dazzled Korra right back on her ass.

“I’m not, and Mako or Bolin would never hurt you either. But still...are you really okay with hanging around me?” she asked her cautiously.

“Thinking rather highly of yourself, aren’t you?” Asami said flippantly. She started to walk past. “I’m not trying to hang. I’m just a nice person that saw someone fall over, and thought maybe she could use a break.”
Several feet ahead of her now, she still didn’t look back. Korra faltered.

“Aw, hell,” she mumbled, chasing after her. “Thank you, Asami.”

“It’s no problem - hang on.” She stopped suddenly and looked out over the parking lot. Then she waved at someone. Korra blushed furiously.

“Oh, my God, I told him to stay home!” She stomped over to Mako’s car, which was parked illegally behind some freshly trimmed hedges. Inside, he cowered under her fuming. “Mako! Mako, you get out here!”

“Korra - !?”

She yanked open his door and dragged him out by his stupid red scarf.

“I told you we were leaving her alone!”

“She can hear you!” he hissed.

“She knew the whole time, you idiot.”

Asami smiled awkwardly. “Hello. Sorry I had you follow me all the way to that lingerie store yesterday. I didn’t think you’d actually go inside with me, and I swear I didn’t think you’d scare all those ladies into beating you with their purses.”

“Bullshit. You told the manager I was a pervert trying to creep on you in the dressing room!”

Korra turned back to Asami, impressed.

“Okay, yes, but I didn’t think they’d hit you!” She paused. “And anyway, you put me in a cage!”

Mako looked to Korra for help, but she shook her head.

“She officially gets to play that card for the rest of her life.”

He frowned. “Whatever. Come on, I’ll drive you to work.”

“My offer still stands, but it’s fine if you want to go with him,” Asami said. Mako’s eyes widened.

“You were gonna go with her?! You can’t go with her, she’s basically a stranger!”

“I don’t think the people who’ve watched my every move for three days can call me a stranger,” Asami mused.

Korra snorted. “She’s right, Mako. I’ll see you tonight, just like how we discussed. You know, this morning, when I told you we weren’t doing this anymore? When you decided not to listen and come here anyway?”

“Korra, you can’t be serious.”

“Later, Mako.”

She turned away and followed Asami to her hot red vintage sports car.

“He’s probably going to follow us, anyway, isn’t he?”

“He can do whatever he wants, he’s made that much clear,” Korra huffed.
“Is it weird that I kind of admire his dedication?”

“Yes.”

“Korra!”

Opal, her co-barista, waved from behind the bar. She was a student at Avatar University as well, a sophomore international relations major.

“Hey, Opal. Um, this is Asami.”

They shook hands, the young barista looking entirely too excited.

“Nice to meet you, Asami. Gosh, Korra never brings any friends in. I was sure she didn’t have any!”

She lightly shoved her and cleared her throat to gloss over that awkward conversation.

“She gave me a ride from school.”

“Yeah, I was about to text you! I saw your bus at the corner but you didn’t get off. I thought you might have fallen asleep and missed your stop again.”

Asami snickered. “Has she done that before?”

“Three times. Once she ended up in Dragon Flats and some guy tried to - “

“Okay!” Korra yelped. “Anyway, here I am, let’s get to work. Can you get Asami a fruit pie? I owe her.”

Opal nodded. “Today we’ve got peach, pineapple, and mixed berry.”

“Mixed berry sounds lovely, thank you.”

“Have a seat wherever you like, Korra will bring it out to you once I have it ready. How do you like your coffee?”

“Oh, you don’t have to - “

“I’ll make her a cortado,” Korra said, pulling on her yellow and orange apron. Asami looked surprised and she felt a twinge of pride at having guessed her usual drink.

Opal nodded over to the armchair by the window. “That’s the best seat in the house. Better grab it while it’s open. The after-school rush is about to start.”

Asami obediently settled into the seat and pulled a textbook out of her bag. Opal kicked Korra under the bar.

“She’s cute.”

“Shut up.”

“She’s really cute.”

“Shut. Up.”
She just grinned at me. “So, how’d you guys meet?”

“We...uh...school.”

Opal poked her. “We’ve worked together for years and you’re still so secretive. What’s the big deal, is she like a dealer or something?”

“No she’s not a - God, we met three days ago! I was kind of a dick to her and I’m just trying to make up for it, okay!?”

“Kind of a dick how?”

“It’s a really long story,” Korra mumbled, topping off the cortado with a thin layer of foam. Opal slid a plate over to her and dropped a fruit pie on it.

“Your whole life is a really long story,” she said. “Someday I’d like to hear it.”

“Some day,” Korra echoed non-committedly. She took the plate and gently bumped her shoulder in gratitude before taking everything over to Asami.

“Thank you,” she said, her eyes still lowered on her book. “I suppose you know my drink because you’ve watched me order it twice a day for three days?”

“No,” Korra said sheepishly. “I smelled it on your breath, though.”

Asami blinked. “Oh. Right.”

“You sure I don’t freak you out?”

It took her a moment to answer.


She had to smile at that.

“Mako won't touch you.”

“I see his car at the far corner of the parking lot right now.”

“Yes, well, we both expected that.”

“Is he really just going to sit in his car like that until I leave?”

Korra cocked her head. “Probably. I do share some of his concerns though, not gonna lie.”

“Like how I can see ghosts, apparently?”

“ You mean Bolin,” Korra lowered her voice even more and hoped she would follow suit, if she was going to go blabbing words like ‘ghost’ and ‘werewolf’. “But yeah, it would be nice to know. Normally only people like us can see him. You know, people like...”

“Southern Water Tribe,” Asami supplied.

“Right...uh, yeah.”

“How long have you been...Southern Water Tribe?”
“About three years now. It happened just before freshman year of college.”

“And Mako? How long has he been... Fire Nation?”

Our secret code was already unraveling.

“Just a year. Same as Bolin being...Earth Kingdom. He told you about that.”

“So...an SWT, Fire National, and an...Earther? All living together in one house?”

It sounded kind of silly when she put it that way. Although, Korra supposed it was no sillier than saying it properly - a vampire, ghost, and werewolf living together in a house.

“Oh yeah, we’re super progressive.”

“And you thought a United Republic girl in the mix was a good idea?”

“I don't think we need a code word for ‘human’, do we?” Korra paused thoughtfully. “Okay, maybe in this context we should.”

“What if - whoa!”

Her mouth dropped open and Korra followed her line of sight out the window. In the parking lot, a strong-looking older guy with long black hair and a mustache was leaning into Mako’s open car window. Behind the stranger was an extremely thin woman, about the same age, with darker skin and longer, stringier hair. When she moved, Korra realized she wasn’t just super-skinny, she actually didn’t have any arms.

Mako looked angry, but she couldn’t hear what he was saying. They didn’t seem to be strangers to him at all. In fact, he was rolling his eyes at them. He started the car and pushed the guy’s head out the window so he could roll it up. Then, things went nuts.

The guy grabbed Mako by the front of his leather jacket and dragged him right out of the open window of his car, throwing him down onto the asphalt.

“Shit!” Korra threw off her apron and sprinted outside, startling both Asami and Opal at the counter.

“You think you can fucking mess with Zaheer?” the man was saying, as Mako struggled to pick himself up off the ground.

The armless woman slammed her heavy boot down on Mako’s back. Korra heard the rush of air escaping his lungs. “You think you can get away with this shit?”

“Hey, hey!” She shouted, running towards them. “What is this?! Leave him alone!”

The man looked up in surprise and sneered at her.

“You called in your guard dog to save you?”

“Leave her alone, Ghazan,” Mako coughed. The woman viciously kicked him in the face, and Korra watched blood splash across the pavement.

She threw herself at her, tackling her to the ground. The armless woman just laughed, cackled at Korra as she squirmed out of her grasp like a snake. For a second she felt bad for knocking over a disabled woman. Just for a second, until her stupid steel-toed boot connected with her cheekbone.
and had her seeing stars.

“Stay out of this, little pup!” she said gleefully. It was then that Korra caught her scent.

These were vampires. And they knew what she was.

Mako growled in anger and jumped to his feet, trying to grab the woman, but the man called Ghazan snaked an arm around his neck.

"I'm calling the cops!"

They all looked over at the entrance to Air Temple Espresso. A small crowd had gathered, mostly behind the glass windows of the shop, but Asami stood at the curb, her cell phone held high.

Ghazan hesitated.

“We’re not done with you,” he grumbled at Mako, roughly pushing him away so that he sprawled onto the front of the car. Blood streamed from his nose, dripping down the hood.

“Fuck you,” Mako spat. “You heard her, she’s calling the cops. If they get involved…”

“Let’s go, Ming-Hua,” Ghazan put a hand on her back, guiding her away from where she looked to be preparing for another kick. “He got the message, and now so did his bitch.”

Instead of getting into a another car, they simply strode off into the forest lining the parking lot, as if they had no care in the world. Korra coughed and Mako knelt beside her.

“Are you okay?”

“Dude, your nose blood just dripped into my mouth,” she gagged.

“I’m sorry.”

“Yeah, you should be, that’s the grossest thing that’s ever happened to me.”

“Not for that you - “

They heard footsteps start rushing towards them. Asami was suddenly by their side, her cell phone still out. Behind her, Opal was holding an espresso portafilter over her head like a weapon.

“I could call the cops,” Asami said quietly.

“Of course you should call the cops! Why shouldn’t you call the cops!?“ Opal yelped, scanning the trees in case Ghazan and Ming-Hua decided to come back asking for a portafilter to the teeth.

Mako looked hard at Asami before responding. “It’s okay. You don’t have to call anyone.”

“What?!“ Opal stared at him. “You’re both bleeding all over the place. Mako, your nose is broke to all hell and Korra, the entire right side of your face is like, quadrupled in size!”

Korra was watching Asami as well. She met her gaze and Korra realized that she knew. She knew that this was something that involved...people like them, and that maybe it would be better not to involve the authorities. She was asking for permission first.

“It was a dumb little fight,” Mako grunted. “He thinks I owe his friend some money. I don’t, but he likes playing thug.”
She glared at him. There was more to this, and he knew she wasn’t stupid. She’d accept this answer with Asami and Opal there, but that night they were getting answers.

Opal studied Korra. She had known Mako from back when they were dating, and when they broke up she had loyally taken her side and hated him for her sake. When they moved in together she thought it was the weirdest thing, but tried to be civil with him even though she still assumed he wronged Korra in some way. Korra could tell what she was thinking, that even as a roommate Mako was still being a bad influence.

“We’ll be fine,” she reassured her.

“Okay, but you can’t work the bar with your face like this,” Opal said. “I’m going to get you some ice, but you’re going home.”

Mako had the nerve to look a little pleased that Korra had to go home with him instead of being with Asami in the coffee shop. She scowled at him.

“You have some explaining to do, Mako.”

That wiped that smirk off his face. He quietly trudged back to his car and plopped back into the driver’s seat.

“Sorry, Opal. I know it’ll be busy this evening. Want me to work for you this Saturday?”

She sighed. “You better, jerk. Now go home. Stay safe. Don’t get mixed up in whatever bullshit Mako has gotten himself into.”

“He’d never let me get hurt.”

“Maybe not. But those other fools might.”

Korra turned to Asami and looked at her apologetically.

“I feel like I’ve spent this entire afternoon apologizing to you.”

She smiled tentatively. “Um, see you around school?”

“See you.”

Korra got in the car and stared stonily ahead as Mako drove out of the lot.

“Just gonna cold shoulder me until we get home, huh?”

The answer was yes, but she didn’t say it.
Korra and Bolin narrowed their eyes at Mako, arms sternly crossed as they stood over him. He cowered on the couch, fidgeting nervously with his fingers tugging at loose threads in the cushions.

“So... they're the reason I left my job at the hospital,” Mako admitted.

“Ghazan and Ming-Hua,” Korra recalled the names of the vampire couple that thoroughly handed their asses to them in a public parking lot. “You’ve mentioned them before. Them and that guy Zaheer.”

“You said they were your friends,” Bolin accused.

“They were. I mean, they told me early on that they were vampires,” he rubbed the back of his neck sheepishly. “Zaheer took me under his wing, kind of. Even when I told them I wasn’t going to be... killing. That I’d never do it again. He didn’t care, he just continued to help me out, even if the other two more or less kept their distance after that.”

Korra frowned. “Is he a normal vampire? Does he kill?”

Mako sighed. “Yes.”

“So how did he ‘take you under his wing’, then?”

The long pause to this question made all of them nervous.

“Bro,” Bolin prompted impatiently.

“Vampires have been around for a really, really long time,” Mako began reluctantly. “Like, really long. And we're technically immortal. We're so long-lived that... I mean, they’ve developed a system. They have an infrastructure in place. They keep a certain order. Like...”

“What, like some kind of underground society?” Korra scoffed. She didn’t like how he was saying “we”, although that might have only been because she didn’t like the idea of Mako being in a “we” that didn’t involve Bolin and herself.

“It goes deeper than that, Korra. Way deeper. It - “ He closed his eyes. “I wanted to keep this from you guys. You don’t need to worry about crazy stuff like this.”

“Is there something to be worried about?” she asked, alarmed.

“No! Not really.” Mako looked at his brother. “Not for you guys.”

“What’s that supposed to mean?” Bolin asked skeptically.


He looked vastly uncomfortable, like he wanted the couch to just swallow him whole into the cushions.

“Vampires have infiltrated society. Like, deeply integrated themselves, and it’s been that way for
centuries. The degree varies, but here in Republic City…” he hesitated.

“Please do not tell me they secretly run the place.” She was only joking, but felt a sinking feeling in her stomach when Mako refused to look up.

“None of the elected officials are vampires, no. But of the 50 or so people on the board of the Avatar University Hospital System, there are 5 vampires. The city’s head medical examiner is one, too. And a few of the police, including the chief. They also have a law firm that’s entirely vampires - Red Lotus LLP.”

Bolin’s jaw dropped. “Are you serious?! That’s Practically running the place!”

Mako shook his head. “No one in actual positions of power in government.”

“The hospital board?! Medical examiner, the police chief, and a law firm?!” Korra repeated incredulously. “Those aren’t positions of power to you?!”

“I mean, it’s just the Avatar hospitals. The Republic City General hospitals don’t have - “

“Over half the city goes to Avatar Hospitals, though!” Korra cried. “The medical and nursing school sends their students there! I have labs there!”

“Vampires aren’t interested in ruling the world, you guys. They just want to live.”

“So any kind of vampire-related crime or…murder…” she realized in horror. “You can just cover it up. That’s why they’re in hospitals and law enforcement. Something bad happens, someone dies, you can cover it up!”

Fuck. This was beyond conspiracy theories. This was already set in stone. Korra couldn’t even consider it just a threat anymore, vampires had been pulling strings all over the city and who knew where else for centuries. How many times, how many deaths over the course of - of human history were thanks to vampires that got away with it, just so they could do it again?

“Is she wrong?” Bolin asked quietly. “Mako, is she wrong?”

He gave him a pained look. “You don’t understand. You don’t understand what it’s like to be this. To have to fight this every damn day.”

Korra bristled. “You do it, though. You do it! Those other vampires are just - they’re killing!”

“Not necessarily!” Mako interjected. “You don’t have to kill a human to drink from them.”

“Oh, what, you just take a sip, then?!” she squawked in disbelief. “Oh, it’s fine, you just maim them in dark alleyways and run off so your fucking vampire infrastructure can wipe your ass?”

Bolin’s eyes were wide and round. “Mako, when you say you haven’t hurt anyone in a year do you mean...do you just mean…?”

“I haven’t bitten anyone,” he snarled, starting to look defensive for the first time. “No humans.”

“But the others, are you defending them?!” Korra demanded.

“No, I’m not!”

“They just murder, with no consequences!”
“No consequences?!” Mako’s clenched his fists angrily. His eyes flashed red, but it didn’t scare her. If her eyes could do fancy things like that, they’d be shooting lasers right back at him. “You think there aren’t any consequences?! My entire existence is a fucking consequence for something I didn’t ask for, something I didn’t deserve! It’s not like a craving. It’s not like asking you to go vegan at Narook’s on BBQ Wednesdays. This is more like an addiction. It’s like asking someone to survive on a drop of water every morning! That’s what it feels like. No amount of deer or rabbit blood can make the thirst go away. It’s constant, it’s strong, and it’s like I can’t ever focus on anything a hundred percent because it’s just always there. When a little kid skins her knee bloody falling off her bike I have to run off because every fiber of my being, everything that I am, wants to grab her and tear out - “

“Stop.” Bolin whimpered. Mako just looked at him, defeated.

“I’ve tried animal blood, preserved human blood from the blood bank, I’ve even tried drinking my own damn blood.” He rolled up a sleeve and showed them the two new puncture wounds healing on his arm. They hadn’t known it was getting that bad. “All it does is keeps me alive. I’m still just always hungry, always thirsty, always resisting the powerful apex predator instincts vampires have evolved for as long as humankind existed. I kill myself every fucking day to stay in control because...because...”

Because of Bolin and I, Korra realized. He fought everything he was because of them, wanting to still be a good friend and brother in their eyes.

“Listen, I don’t claim to know what it’s like being a werewolf, but at least that part of you disappears like 353 days of the year.” Mako sounded exhausted. “I’m a monster every day and it’s...really tiring not to just let myself be a monster. Really, really tiring.”

“I’m sorry,” Korra found herself whispering. She couldn't imagine it, being the wolf every single day. She could barely handle it exclusively on full moons, and even then it wasn't like she actually remembered the experience.

He shook his head.

“This isn’t new. This is how it’s always been, for all of us.”

What could she say? Thank him for not hurting people, even though it caused him existential torture? Korra had no idea if any of this had changed who he was. He was still her best friend, and Bolin’s big brother, that was for sure. He still loved them. He still liked all the weird things he used to like - indie rock vinyls, quinoa recipes, foreign films, vintage crap. Mako was still Mako.

Wasn’t he?

He never slept, but never looked sleepy. That was probably thanks to whatever vampire magic stuff made him immortal. In the same vein, he never lost or gained any weight, grew wrinkles, lost his hair, got dark circles in his eyes, or anything else that would indicate he was suffering. Obviously he got irritable every once in a while, but regular human Mako was always like that. Nothing had ever seemed particularly out of the ordinary. But all this time...

“Not everyone can resist the vampire instinct,” he continued. “And knowing first hand what it’s like, I honestly can’t blame any of them for giving in sometimes. I won’t hurt anyone, I’ve already gotten this far, but I can’t blame any of the rest of them for choosing not to live like this.”

They just looked at him silently. Mako wasn’t technically advocating hurting or killing people, but he wasn’t condemning those that did it. Bad guys and good guys were shaken up into this grey area
with him smack dab in the middle. Korra had absolutely no idea how she was supposed to feel about this.

“I'm gonna make some tea,” Bolin said, disappearing abruptly.

Mako let his head fall into his hands.

“I didn't want either of you to know this,” he said bitterly. “Bolin is such a good guy. He always was. He could never understand something like this. Something like me.”

“Mako…”

“I freaked you out,” he said. “I can see it on your face. Now that you know…”

He wasn't wrong, she was a little scared of the whole the vampire infrastructure thing, but not of Mako. Never of Mako. All this time, he had been suppressing everything he was. He held his rabid wolf in every single day and never said a word. All for them. If anything, Korra should have felt more proud of him, not more disgusted. Mako wasn’t a monster for this. This made him human.

Mako was still theirs. More so than ever before, really, because it was clear now that he needed them. If he wanted to cling to his humanity, he needed people to do it for. The first step was distancing himself from those thugs in the parking lot, and he'd taken it all on his own.

“I'm not freaked out, I just feel guilty,” Korra said softly. “You should have told us it was this bad. We knew it was hard for you, but I don't think we ever really understood how hard. You never showed it, so we just assumed you were okay…”

“There's nothing you can do,” he shrugged. “Better, older vampires than me have tried. Zaheer himself is over three hundred years old. He tried going clean, but his streak lasted fifty years before falling off the wagon again.”

Korra sat down and hugged him suddenly, which always left him floundering a little. She waited for his obligatory awkward pat on her back before letting go.

“Zaheer didn't have me or Bolin,” she said confidently. “We won't let anything bad happen to you.”

“That seems to be our motto lately,” he said sardonically. “But look at us. We're both still bruised and bleeding.”

“You're both still alive.”

Bolin had reappeared suddenly with two cups of steaming hot tea.

“Well, I mean, figuratively in Mako’s case. Not that being alive means all that much to me, anyway.” He shook his head. “Okay, wait, this is coming out all weird. What I'm trying to say is, you're both still here. With me. So we're all gonna be okay. Okay? That’s enough about that.”

He set the tea on the coffee table firmly and glared as if daring them to challenge him. Korra knew what he was doing, he was sweeping it under the rug. Bolin did that sometimes when things got to be too much. She imagined it was how he stayed happy all the time, although it solved nothing. Some day, it would need to be addressed. There was a possibility, slim as it might be, that Mako could fail. And there was the possibility that this vampire society thing could catch up to them, could ruin everything.
Okay,” Korra said, taking her cup. Mako didn’t immediately take his.

“Bolin, I know this isn’t - “

“I’m here for you,” he said shortly. “So is Korra. No one has anything to worry about. That’s the whole point of this, isn’t it? All us freaks under one roof? The other vampires don’t matter, whatever werewolf infrastructure might be out there don’t matter, I don’t care if the other ghosts have a fucking battleship in Yue Bay where they wage war on fucking mermaids! So drink your tea and stop acting like we should feel any different about you!”

Mako obediently took his tea and looked over at Korra, who nodded.

“That’s two for the Swear Jar.”

“You guys suck.” Bolin grumped, plopping down on the table.

Korra laughed. “Anyway, I’m glad you left your job at the hospital.”

“They got too preachy,” he admitted. “It was nice at first, having vampire friends. Like a community feeling, you know? But they would talk about stuff…”

“Like what?”

“Dumb stuff.” Mako waved his hand dismissively. “It was all just like, vampire locker room talk. Some of them kind of feel like we’re being oppressed or something. I don’t know. It was stupid. It was tolerable for a while, but then I got tired. Especially since I don’t agree and they knew I lived my life a certain way. It’s like having a bunch of racist coworkers, you know?”

Bolin shrugged. “I’m glad you got out of there when you could, then.”

“Yeah,” Korra agreed, although it did make her feel uneasy. “But, like, a vampire revolt can’t actually happen, though. Can it?”

Mako shook his head. “The entire history of vampires is literally them just trying to prevent stuff like that. They don’t even want humans to know they exist and look - we’re still only a myth after thousands of years.”

It was a good point. Vampires had an eternity to stage a coup and it hadn’t happened yet.

“Anyway, they took offense to me leaving my job. I guess they felt like I was turning my back on them. I haven’t really seen them since I left, so I guess this was their moment to show their muscle. Ming-Hua and Ghazan are basically thugs for Zaheer. That’s all that was about. Nothing else.”

Mako’s revelation about the seedy vampire underworld had gotten her thinking. Never once had Korra considered seeking out another werewolf. The very idea of it sounded catastrophic - two destructive, bloodthirsty beasts in one place at the same time? She shuddered at the thought.

Or would it be a support system, like Mako’s coworkers once were? Another person to talk to. Someone with shared experiences, maybe someone with more experience. Someone that could help her? Come to think of it, what if they could find someone to help Bolin? Another non-crazy ghost?

“Have any of your old vampire buddies met any other werewolves or ghosts like us?” Korra asked him. “Werewolves in the city, or ghosts that weren’t horrifically insane?”
Mako looked surprised at the question.

“They’ve come across them, yes, but I guess it doesn’t come up a lot. Why?”

“Just wondering,” she found herself saying. She wasn't quite sure why she didn't want to bring it up to Mako yet, but this definitely didn’t seem like the time.

Bolin rubbed his hands together eagerly, clearly more satisfied with this conversation than Korra was.

“Well, if we’re done with this emergency family meeting, my new Stellar Battles blu-ray collection should be delivered soon and I’m thinking maybe I can make you guys some kettlecorn and - “

BRINGGG!

Bolin nearly shot through the ceiling.

“That’s it! It’s here, it’s here! Korra, go, go, go!”

He shoved her towards the door and she made a show of rolling my eyes at Mako before opening it.

It wasn’t Bolin’s blu-ray delivery. Instead, a middle-aged gentleman stood at the door. He wore plain clothes and simple work boots, with a shaved head and deep wrinkles that only appeared when smiled softly.

“Hello,” he said, his voice deep and charismatic. For just a moment, Korra almost felt the impulse to smile back.

But then she caught the faint scent, a slight air of something that generally did not come from someone still walking around.

“Zaheer?” Mako asked, appearing behind her. “What are you doing here?”

Chapter End Notes

Aw, Mako.

This one is a little shorter than the other chapters, sorry. Just finished this semester though, so hopefully the rest are a little longer.
Visitors

Zaheer’s eerie smile faltered at the doorway.

“This must be your werewolf friend. I’m sorry, I never got your name.”

Korra had never spoken to another vampire before. Not really. She’d come across a good amount, but there was never anything more than a few catcalls, leers, and derogatory remarks. According to Mako, the scent of werewolf blood wasn’t particularly pleasing. He’d gotten used to her, obviously, but it was pretty clear that Zaheer was not. The older vampire seemed uneasy, as if her presence was mildly annoying.

Just as she was about to rudely answer, Mako cut in.

“What are you doing here?” he asked again coolly. “We were kind of busy just now.”

If Zaheer noted the tone, he didn’t show it. “I see that. A werewolf, a vampire, and oh, that fellow is a ghost? I don’t think I’ve ever seen such an unusual hodge-podge under one roof. You never told me about this interesting group you’ve surrounded yourself with.”

Korra felt a little bothered at how he acknowledged them. There was barely any emotion in those eyes of his, where his creepy smile never seemed to reach, but the way he listed them off made her feel like they were just objects. Things that belonged to Mako that he’d collected in his travels or something. It was getting fairly obvious that this guy had little regard for non-vampires, although at least Korra wasn’t sensing any overt aggression here either. Not like with the others.

Bolin quietly stood behind Korra, watching the exchange closely.

“Zaheer...” Mako pressed again.

“I just wanted to apologize on behalf of Ghazan and Ming-Hua. I see now that they were understating the injuries they inflicted on you and your wolf.”

“His wolf?” Korra barked. “Excuse me?”

“Apologies,” he said gently, but not at all apologetically. “Mako, please, let me clear the air between us. Those two have been nursing their bruised egos since you left your position and I’ll admit, they’ve always been a bit immature. I had no part in what they did, although I did sternly warn them that this type of thing won’t be tolerated again. Your career may have taken a different path, but I still consider us friends.”

Mako frowned. “I told everyone to just leave me alone.”

“And we intend to from this point forward.”

All three of them shared a skeptical look. Mako shook his head.

“Those two don’t even seem the type to frequent hipster coffee shops - “

“Air Temple Espresso is not hipster,” Korra protested.

“It’s so hipster,” Bolin whispered.

“Whatever. What were they even doing there?”
Vampires had the tendency to avoid social environments during the day. If they went out in public, it was usually in the safety of nightfall, to clubs or bars or other historically dark and sinister vampire haunts.

“They were just roaming, as they are known to do. You remember how those two are. According to Ghazan, they saw you driving down to the coffee shop and foolishly decided they wanted to cause trouble. Again, I’ve already spoken to them about this and you won’t be seeing them again.”

Korra scowled. Somehow, she didn’t quite believe that. A cursory glance at Bolin showed he didn’t, either.

“Sure,” Mako shrugged. “It’s fine. We’re fine. If me or Korra ever run into those losers again I’ll rip their bottom jaws out with my bare hands, but you and I are cool, okay?”

“Good,” Zaheer’s lifeless grin widened. “Aren’t you going to invite me in?”

“Um, another time? We really were talking about something important.”

The grin began to evaporate.

“Of course. My apologies one last time. I’ll leave you to it, I just wanted to make sure…”

“We’re fine, Zaheer. We’re good.”

“Very well,” he sighed. “It was nice to see you again, Mako. We miss you at the hospital.”

Mako rubbed the back of his neck awkwardly. “Yeah, well…”

“You should know,” Zaheer said, his tone darkening ever so slightly. “It is in a vampire’s nature to seek others like themselves. If you ever find yourself...wanting of our company again, do not hesitate to find us. You know where we are.”

Zaheer looked over at Korra and Bolin, simply nodding at them once.

“Good evening.”

Mako closed the door and waited until Zaheer was back on the street before turning around. Outside, Korra could see him hastily pull out a cell phone and call someone. The heated exchange stopped abruptly when he glanced back at their window and saw her watching him, which prompted him to scoot away down the road a little faster.

She quirked an eyebrow. “What a freaking weirdo.”

“Sorry,” he said sheepishly.

“Sorry for what?” Bolin asked. “Being friends with a killer that’s also racist against ghosts and werewolves?”

“‘Friends’ is kind of a strong word - “

“*He called you friends,*” Korra pointed out. She deepened her voice dramatically. “*EET EEZ EEN A VAM-PIYAH’S NAY-CHAH TO SEEK OTHAS LIKE THEMSELVEZZ! BWAAA-HAHAAHAHA!*”

“I WANT TO SUCK YO BLAHHHHHHHD!” Bolin joined in.

“He was nice to me, all right?!” Mako said, frustrated. “It’s been hard, and he helped me out. I’ll
apologize for not realizing him and his people were awful sooner, but that’s it. Anyway, I quit, remember? That’s why I didn’t invite him in. He’s not coming over again.”

He’d meant that literally. Like all vampires, Zaheer wasn’t physically able to enter a home unless invited in by the people that lived there. If the old vampire had any nefarious plans, which judging by the sheer creepiness that exuded from his every pore he did, then the worst he’d be able to do to them would be making faces in the windows. Whatever bullshit the vampires were up to, they wanted nothing to do with it.

Mako stalked back to the couch and grumpily started sipping his lukewarm tea again. Korra joined him, gently bumping her knee on his.

“So...I smell that bad, huh?”

A smile hinted at his lips. “Not that bad.”

“He was like, ready to crawl out of his own skin.”

Bolin sat on the coffee table in front of them. “What’s she smell like? Is it like, wet dog or something?”

“Hey!”

“It’s not a smell, really,” Mako said, smirking. “It’s just, vampires sense blood really well. It’s so strong, I guess for our survival. But werewolf blood is not at all appetizing. It’s like opening a stocked fridge and finding all the food inside rotten.”

“I smell rotten!?”

“No! Just, not what’s expected when you’re looking at something you’re supposed to eat.” He could tell now that they were only messing with him. This, they were all used to. “What, do you want to smell appetizing?”

Bolin laughed. “A girl likes to be desired! Jeez, no wonder you broke up with him.”

“Right?” she sniffed. “At least I don’t smell like roadkill.”

“Roadkill!?”

“Having a sense of smell must be pretty wild, huh?” Bolin commented. “I don’t even remember what that’s like.”

“I do not smell like roadkill.”

“What’s that girl Asami smell like, Korra?”

She jerked and rounded on Bolin. “Can you not?”

His expression was teasing. “I saw how you were looking at her when she was here. When she told you she was into martial arts you practically got down on one knee.”

“I did not, asshole.”

Bolin slyly poked the Swear Jar across the coffee table. Korra gave him the finger which, thanks to the Obscene Gesture Amendment of 2016, meant she owed the damn thing another yuan.
“You were awfully excited to go with her to the coffee shop instead of me.” Mako raised an eyebrow.

“Because I was mad at you and you’re a dickhole, not because I - oh, come on!” Korra grabbed Bolin’s sliding Swear Jar and shoved into it whatever change she had in her pocket. “Since when does ‘dickhole’ count? No - stop looking at me like that, we established back in January that repetition for the sake of clarification doesn’t count.”

He snatched it back from her, grinning. “You’re getting awfully cussy. Almost like you’re being defensive or something.”

“Shut up, Bo!” she tossed a throw pillow at him, which sailed right on through and hit the stairs. “Anyway, even if I did have a thing for her, I’m pretty sure we’ve nipped all of that in the bud. There’s definitely no way we’re ever hearing from her now. Not after all she’s seen.”

Mako jumped suddenly, startling them.

“Sorry, my phone was on vibrate,” he said, swiping at the screen. “I have no idea who this is. It’s local, right? A Republic City number?”

Korra leaned forward to see. “I think so, yeah. But I don’t recognize it. One of your vampire comrades?”

Bolin gasped. “Wait a minute! That’s Asami!”

“What?!” Korra cried. “Seriously!? Are you sure?”

“Why does she have my number?!” Mako demanded, holding the buzzing phone away like it was made of worms.

“She put her number in her reply to our listing, it felt weird to not give her one of ours! I put it in our response email!”

“Well, then, you answer it!” Mako shoved the phone at him, seemingly in a mild panic. He recoiled.

“What if she can’t hear me over the phone?”

“We’ve pretty firmly established that she can hear you, bro!”

“Well - but - no!”

Mako held it out to Korra. “She’s you’re girlfriend!”

“Asami is not my - shut up!”

She swatted the phone away as if she were afraid of it, accidentally causing Mako to drop it on the sofa cushions. The three of them hastily scampered away from it until it stopped ringing and the Missed Call icon appeared on the screen. They stared at it quietly for a few seconds.

“What now?” Bolin wondered from under the pillow Korra had thrown at the stairs, ten feet away.

“We don’t have to do anything,” Mako suggested from behind the sofa.

Korra poked her head up from behind the other side. “What do you think she wanted, though?”
The chorus of shrugs was vastly unhelpful.

“What if she just wanted to make sure you guys were okay?” Bolin said.

“Why would she do that?” Mako scowled.

Bolin pointed a thumb over at Korra and winked suggestively.

“Would you just…?” she got up and grabbed Mako’s phone, drawing his security shape on the grid to unlock it.

“Wait, what are you doing?” Mako reached out to take his phone back but she turned away.

“Finding out what she wanted,” she huffed. There was nothing to be afraid of and, honestly, she wasn’t going to be rude and not call back just because the stupid boys thought she had some kind of crush. They stared at her as she counted the rings. On the third, a tense voice answered.

“Hello?”

“Asami?” Korra asked.

“Korra? Oh, thank God. Listen, do you know who those people were that attacked you?”

She put the phone on speaker so the others could hear. Mako was frowning, and Bolin was pinching his lips together with his teeth, as if scared to talk.

“Yes, it’s okay. They were...um, vampires. Like Mako. But they were just thugs, they won’t come after us again.”

“They’re...vampires?”

“Yeah. Asami, are you okay?” She could hear the anxiety in her normally easy, confident voice. “Where are you?”

“I’m not sure if I’m okay.” Asami paused. “I’m on campus.”

“Going back to your dorm?”

“That’s the thing. I can’t.”

“Why not?”

“I’m in the quad now, and I can see up into the window of my room.” She took a deep breath. “The lights just came on and I can see people inside, two of them. I can’t see the bigger guy, but the woman is definitely - she hasn’t got any arms. Korra, I think it’s that couple from the parking lot.”

All eyes averted to Mako, who blinked owlishly.

“I have no idea why they’d be there,” he admitted. “That makes no sense.”

“Do not go in there,” Korra advised gravely. “Stay where you are. I’m coming.”

Asami hesitated. “You are?”

“Me and Mako.”

“What?” he demanded incredulously. “What are you - ?!”
“We have to help her!” she hissed. “These are your people, remember? We can’t just leave her!”

Static roughed up the speakerphone as Asami moved. “I...think they’re looking for something? I don’t know what they could possibly...?”

Korra’s mind went immediately to Zaheer on the street, urgently speaking to someone on his phone. The sinking feeling in her gut told her that this wasn’t a coincidence. The timing was too perfect. Bolin must have felt it too, as he shoved his brother pointedly. He sighed.

“Okay, let’s go.”

“We’re coming, Asami, stay away from there. Don’t call the cops unless they go directly after you,” Korra ordered. She hung up and glared at the others, as if daring them to challenge her. “Zaheer definitely just called Ghazan and Ming-Hua on his phone.”

Mako still looked reluctant. “Just because we saw Zaheer take out his phone - “

“ - right before his minions broke into Asami’s dorm?” Bolin scoffed. “Like, maybe it’s all just crazy timing, but that guy is super shady.”

“I don’t think it’s a coincidence,” Korra shook her head. “No way. You wondered it out loud yourself - why were they at Air Temple Espresso? It was Asami’s first time there, too, you know. Now they’re at her dorm? I don’t know what any of this means but this entire day can be made into a movie called Not A Fucking Coincidence!”

Bolin didn’t even bother with the jar.

“Why, though?” Mako wondered. “And then why would Zaheer come all the way here to talk to me?”

Bolin shrugged. “Maybe he was checking to see where you were?”

"Why?"

“To make sure we weren’t with Asami,” Korra realized. Maybe they weren't the only creepers spying on Asami lately. "To make sure she was alone?"

“Why would they be interested in her?” Mako asked, his expression serious. “I knew there was something going on with that girl. They wouldn’t be in her dorm unless she was up to something.”

“You don’t know anything!” she cried, starting to lose patience. “We’ve watched her for days, she’s innocent!”

“She can see Bolin! That was always suspicious!”

“More suspicious than people who drink human blood!? ”

“This could be a trap, Korra!”

“If the vampires wanted to take us down they’ve had their opportunities!” she shot back. “Same with Asami! If she was after us, somehow, she’s been in our damn house. She’s been with me alone. I don’t think this is about us!”

Bolin grabbed Mako’s keys and threw them at him. “Would you guys just get out of here already? Either make sure she’s okay, or find out what’s going on. This may not be completely about us, but we’re involved whether we believe it or not.”
Korra nodded in gratitude. Mako, of course, groaned.

“Bo, we’ll call you and let you know what’s going on, okay? Hold down the fort.”
Asami had migrated to the parking lot even closer to the dorm, so she was easy to find when Korra and Mako arrived.

“What are you doing here?” Korra hissed, ducking behind the same car she was hiding behind. “What if they see you? I thought you were over at the other side of the quad!”

“I needed to get a closer look,” she said, barely paying attention to them. “But they just left, literally a minute before you guys showed up. No car, they just traipsed off campus that way, probably the east exit by the Arts building.”

Sure enough when Korra looked up at Asami’s room, as she was fairly accustomed to doing after three days of stalking her, it was empty.

“Huh, so now there’s no one here,” Mako whispered in Korra’s ear. “How convenient and not at all trap-like.”

Korra stomped hard on his foot. She’d already told him a thousand times in the car that if Asami wanted to ambush them, for whatever dumbass reasons Mako was making up in his head, she’d had three days worth of opportunities to do so already.

“What were they doing in my dorm?”

“I don’t think they took anything. At least, it didn’t seem like they were holding anything when they left.” She looked at them, worried. “What were they doing in my dorm?”

Mako and Korra shared a look. Neither one of them wanted to tell her about Zaheer coming to the house, or the suspicious phone call he made that may or may not have prompted this burglary.

“Only one way to find out,” Korra said, straightening and heading for the building. “Come on.”

She led the way up to the side door, where Asami used her key fob to beep them in. At this, Korra glanced at Mako with concern. She was worried for no reason, though, as he had no problem following them inside and up the stairs.

“She didn’t have to invite you in,” Korra observed. “I thought I was going to have to leave you outside.”

“What, and tie me up to a bike rack like a puppy?” Mako shrugged. “I’ve never been in a dorm before. It’s a temporary housing situation, maybe it doesn’t count as a home? It explains how Ghazan and Ming-Hua got in, anyway.”

They followed Asami to the second floor and waited as she unlocked the door. She was first to go in, and she watched as Mako strode in effortlessly.

“So that thing about vampires not being able to enter homes unless invited...that’s true?”

Korra nodded. “Yeah, he can’t like, break into someone’s house or anything. He can get into abandoned houses though, because no one lives in them. He can bust into apartment buildings, but
not specific apartments, that kind of thing. Oh, and remember that time we went to the camping
grounds and you found out you can enter people’s tents and RVs and - ?”

“We were experimenting,” Mako said quickly, nudging her with his elbow to make her shut up.
“You know, testing out of curiosity. We weren’t trying to steal anything or hurt anyone.”

“We weren’t being creepy,” she echoed, realizing too late how weird their random trespassing
sounded. “Like, one time we spent half an hour watching Bolin stick his arm through things and
he’d ask us if we could see it from the other side. And once me and Mako spent the week before a
full moon traveling to different time zones to see if it was possible to put off one of my full moon
transformations.

Asami just blinked at them.

“...We just do stuff like that, sometimes,” Korra said weakly.

Asami looked like she had dozens of questions on the tip of her tongue, but eventually she decided
on just the one.

“What about the thing where vampires don’t show up in mirrors?”

Mako stepped in front of a full length mirror next to the door and waved. There was no reflection
to wave back.

“Nop...
This girl was hardcore physics. An engineering science major. She had schematics for unidentifiable machines and parts plastered all over her walls. Her whiteboard with mathematical equations and sketches took over nearly half the room. The desk was overrun with engineering books and scattered papers and science journals. She was someone that dedicated her whole life to studying and innovating physical, tangible things that followed laws set by nature. The existence of vampires, werewolves, and ghosts were likely strange and pretty frightening to her mind, but light having the audacity to not reflect properly? Deplorable!

“Does anything look like it’s missing?” Mako asked, inching away from Asami and the mirror to brood over a stack of her engineering awards. He kept his hands respectfully at his sides, which Korra had to appreciate.

“Not really, no,” Asami admitted absently. She took out her phone and aimed the camera at him. Nothing but her cluttered room appeared on screen. “What the fuck - I mean, sorry, but you cast a goddamn shadow! How do you not have a reflection?!”

“What am I, a fucking lab experiment?”

“Mako!” Korra scolded, although she couldn’t really blame him. Mako absolutely hated what he was, he didn’t need someone shining a light into his eyes. It was embarrassing, intrusive, and disrespectful. Still, he could have been a little bit less harsh.

Asami looked surprised. “Sorry, I didn’t realize - “

“Of course you didn’t.”

“She’s sorry, Mako, relax.” Korra put a hand on his arm to calm him.

“I am relaxed!” he said defiantly. “She needs to relax!”

“I’m just curious,” Asami reasoned. “Like how you just said - you’ve experimented yourselves.”

Mako bristled. “Except we weren’t making other people feel like freakshows!”

To her credit, she didn’t seem afraid of him. But it was Korra’s experience that bravery and curiosity needed a little balance with empathy and humility.

“He’s not wrong, Asami,” Korra said quietly. “It doesn’t feel good, especially coming from people like you who don’t have to deal with it themselves.”

Now Asami looked adequately ashamed. She swallowed.

“I didn’t think about it like that. That was stupid of me and I’m really sorry, Mako. I didn’t mean to make you feel...bad.”

He just huffed and busied himself looking around the room. Asami sighed and looked at Korra.

“I’m an asshole.”

“Nah.” Korra made a face. “Or, well, maybe just this one time. For like a second.”

“Sorry.”

“I know. Hey, undead burglars in your dorm, remember? Does it look like they did anything?”

“Right. Yeah,” Asami said, still flustered. She sheepishly straightened a stack of books. “Um, I
know the room is a little disgusting, but it always looks like this. I wasn’t planning on staying long, so I never really got too invested in tidying it up.”

It wasn’t a dirty mess, so disgusting wasn’t quite the word for it. The clothes piled on her bed all smelled freshly laundered, there weren’t any open containers of food or crumbs anywhere, and it wasn’t like the trash can was overflowing with garbage and flies. In fact, everything seemed ironically clean, just piled up haphazardly so they were out of her way.

“It’s not a disgusting. It’s just...entropy! The natural state of things,” Korra said. Asami looked at her in surprise. “Hey, don’t look so shocked. I didn’t just dissect frogs in 8th grade, y’know.”

She grinned at that as she ruffled around folders and papers on her desk.

“I can’t imagine what they were looking for. It’s literally just my school projects in here.”

Korra glanced at the whiteboard again. “Anything interesting?”

Asami shrugged. “I mean, it’s very interesting to me. I have a few things in the works but currently my biggest project is an extremely powerful rotary engine. I’ve calculated a way to make it more compact than anything on the market. It’s really exciting, but not of particular interest to anyone outside of the department. It’s all theoretical, I haven’t gotten a chance to work on application.”

“Wait a minute,” Mako said suddenly, pointing to a framed photo he’d found on her desk. “Is your name Asami Sato?”

Korra looked at the photo as well. A woman that looked astonishingly like an older Asami beamed at the camera, next to a familiar-looking classic cherry red 1975 Satomobile Stallion. Her arm was curled gently around a giggling toddler, who was plopped on the hood of the car with a melting ice cream cone clutched in her tiny fists. The woman didn’t seem to care in the slightest that her daughter was dripping chocolate all over her flashy sports car. They looked so happy.

For a moment, as she looked at the photo, Asami looked happy as well.

“Yes.”


Behind the car in the picture was a large building, with the words “SATOMOBILE WORLDWIDE, INC.” It clicked for her then - Satomobile Worldwide was now just a subsidiary of the Sato-owned parent company Future Industries, which was a worldwide business juggernaut. It had started with a guy that invented some fancy mass-produced engine, and blew up over the next twenty-five years into one of the largest multinational corporations in the world.

Essentially, Korra was staring at the richest person she’d ever met in her life.

“Future Industries and Satomobile Worldwide belong to my father, yes,” she said wistfully, still gazing at the photo. “He gave that car to my mother in ’97 after he restored it himself. She died about five years later and left it to me. My dad left it to rot in a garage until I was old enough to restore it again myself, and I’ve been maintaining it ever since. It’s still a really great car.”

Korra smiled softly. “I’m sorry about your mother. But if it makes you feel any better, literally everything in that photo is gorgeous. You, your mom, and the car.”

“Thank you.”
“If you’re a Sato, you must have money,” Mako said skeptically. “Why are you looking to rent a room for cheap?”

“Rude,” Korra warned him.

Mako winced. “Okay, sorry about your mom. Not trying to be rude. I just thought it was weird. Future Industries is famous all over the world. It’s not like it’s just Satomobiles anymore, they’ve branched out into technology, aviation, rocketry, even crazy military stuff. You must be loaded.”

It was pretty strange that the heiress to Future Industries was living in a tiny dorm room, even if it was a private room, on campus. Even stranger that she was now looking for a cheaper off-campus alternative.

“I am loaded. Kind of.” Asami’s eyes averted to the floor, as if she were a little embarrassed. “When my mother died, my father kind of fell apart. I stood it for as long as I could, but in the end I had to back away. We don’t talk, I haven’t spoken to him for three years.”

Mako looked about to say something stupid, but before Korra could stop him, it flew out of his mouth.

“What’d he do?”

“Rude, Mako!” Korra fumed. “That’s none of our business.”

“It’d rather not talk about it,” Asami replied, seemingly unoffended. “Anyway, my mother left me a fortune in a trust fund, but I can’t touch it until I’m thirty. I think she wanted me to learn the value of hard work. You know, making myself into something instead of just being given everything. But I’m allowed to access a limited amount for my education and expenses. I’ve splurged a little more than I probably should have on a few of my projects, so the funds are running a little lower than I’d like. This private dorm is really expensive, but I needed the space and didn’t want to disturb a roommate. So I’m looking for other options so I can stretch my education cash to the end of the school year.”

It made sense. Asami Sato carried herself with an air of confidence, a hint of arrogance, with perfect hair, and perfectly done lipstick. The clothes she wore were respectable, but not extravagant. Her room wasn’t neat, but clean. Everything about her indicated someone with a privileged upbringing, but without all the bells and whistles.

Mako rolled his eyes and continued looking around the dorm, and Asami silently followed suit. As they searched, Korra came upon an old photo album. The cover had another photo of Asami and her mother. They were older, and judging by Asami’s age, it must have been shortly before Mrs. Sato died.

“You look just like her,” Korra commented.

“Thanks,” Asami smiled. “That’s a compliment.”

“Sure is.”

She was pleased to detect just the slightest blush in her cheeks.

“You can look through it if you want. It’s just photos of me as a kid,” Asami said, busying herself with sorting through a box of old notebooks.

Korra helped herself, flipping through the album. Infant Asami and her mother in the nursery,
presumably just after she got home from the hospital. Mrs. Sato feeding baby Asami in a high chair. Asami’s first steps. Asami and her mother in the school hallway on her first day of preschool. Asami and her mother at her kindergarten graduation.

“Why isn’t your dad in any of these?” she wondered out loud.

“Oh, he was always busy at the company,” Asami replied dismissively. “I mean, he was there for all my important stuff. He was a good dad, but he had a company to run.”

“But he’s not here at all,” she observed, looking at a page of photos that must have been the same day as the one framed on her desk. Asami was wearing the same red dress, skipping through the Satomobile Worldwide parking lot with her mother in tow. It was Mr. Sato’s office building. Why wouldn't he be in these photos?

“Well, he did take most of those. Someone had to be behind the camera, right? This was pre-selfie stick era. You know, the dark ages.” She laughed, as if remembering something fondly. “He was super-obsessed with paintings though. He much preferred getting family portraits painted, rather than photographed. Every year on my birthday up until my mother died, I had to pose with my parents for fucking hours just to get painted by a professional. All those paintings are still hung around the estate. It’s almost creepy!”

Korra said nothing, and glared at Mako so he would do the same. He bit his lip and looked away, because they knew they were both thinking the same thing.

A vampire wouldn’t show up in photos. A vampire would avoid cameras at all costs. And maybe, a vampire would get their daughter all mixed up in vampire business and have something to do with other vampires searching their college dorm.

Of course, it also didn’t necessarily mean anything. Maybe Mr. Sato really was just a painting enthusiast. People had much stranger hobbies and preferences, especially if they were stupidly rich. Mako had gotten her werewolf cage at a sex shop, after all. To each their own.

Still, though, this was not the time to bring it up to Asami. It clearly hadn’t occurred to her at all, probably because she hadn’t lived the past three years of her life as a monster and despite all her genius, it wasn’t her instinct to think random stuff like that.

“Hey, what happened here?” Korra asked suddenly, holding up the album. It looked like a photo was missing. There was even a rectangular outline from where it had been pasted.

Asami frowned.

“Huh. It must have fallen out.” She came over and looked around on the floor. “That album is pretty old, some of the adhesive has been coming loose. I’ve had to reinforce some of those with tape. I meant to scan them all so I have digital copies, but never got around to doing it.”

She checked the bed, moving around her clothes to see if the missing photo was underneath.

“What was the picture of?” Mako asked, taking the album from me and checking out the page. The photo before it was of Asami and her mother in the front lobby of Satomobile Worldwide. The one directly after it was Asami perched on an executive’s desk with a pen in her mouth, probably in one of the offices.

“It was in my dad’s office,” she said, straightening and looking somewhat worried. She took the album and traced the faint outline of the missing photo. “Obviously I was too young to actually remember that day, but I know we had tons of pictures in the offices and hallways of the building.
It was the day my dad opened the Satomobile Worldwide Headquarters, so it was a huge deal, but I can’t remember exactly which one this was.”

“Do you think...maybe that’s what Ghazan and Ming-Hua came for?” Korra mused.

“I can’t see why that would be,” Asami said, her brows knitted in concentration trying to recall what the picture was. “Like I said, all these photos were just to commemorate the Satomobile HQ. They were all kind of the same. Just me and my mom sitting and posing in different spots, I think.”

Mako looked around at the rest of the room. “Well, nothing else seems to be missing. There is the possibility, though, that they could have taken photos with their phones of something. If they wanted one of these formulas or were interested in you schematics, they didn’t have to take them. All they needed was to snap a pic and sneak away.”

“My engine?” Asami asked, putting the album down. “I mean, I’ll admit it’s cool, but what do vampires need with an engine?”

Korra shrugged. “Vampires are weird.”

“Vampires are ambitious,” Mako said, looking concerned. “I don’t even want to know what some of the bigger assholes would do with advanced technology.”

“That’s a little generous,” Asami said humbly. “It’s never been done before, sure, but it’s still just a school project.”

They fell silent, trying to think. Nothing was physically removed from the room, other than maybe some random photo from an old album. It was possible they’d taken something else, but they couldn’t figure out what. Asami had also said they’d had plenty of time to root through her things, so whatever it was, they weren’t rushed and they likely already got what they came for. That meant they probably wouldn’t return. Still...

“Are you comfortable sleeping here tonight?” Korra asked. Mako’s eyes widened and he shook his head violently behind Asami.

“I mean, I'm sure they're not coming back. They've got no reason to anymore,” Asami said, clearly not at all sure.

“That would be my guess,” she said. “But I know this is a little unsettling. And while I know that it’s probably even more unsettling that Mako, Bolin, and I locked you in a cage and then stalked you for three days straight...”

“Well, I think I’d put those two things pretty close together.”

“...our house is safe.” Korra scowled at Mako, who was still vigorously waving his hands at her, trying to get her to shut up. “The only vampire that can enter it is Mako, and all things considered, he’s completely harmless.”

“I am not.” He scowled.

“Harmless to you, I mean,” Korra amended, to preserve his fragile vampire masculinity. “Just like me and Bo. So, if you’re not still too freaked out by the cage thing, and the stalking thing, and the existence of mythical creatures existing beyond the teachings of science thing, I mean, you’re still welcome to rent the room.”

Mako audibly let his head fall back and bang dramatically against the wall behind him. But he was
just being a jerk. In the span of three days, this poor girl just had her entire world blown apart. She needed a safe place to stay, and frankly, they needed her money. There was also the fact that somehow, Asami was involved with vampires, whether she realized it or not. And she was definitely involved in the supernatural, with her ability to see ghosts. Korra felt this indescribable urge to protect her, for some reason. Maybe it was because they were Asami’s first introduction to this seedy underworld, or maybe it was because she felt guilty for putting her in a cage. But either way, she felt responsible for this girl. It wouldn’t have felt right to just cut things off now.

“You want me to live with you,” she repeated.

“I’m just saying, it’s safe with us,” Korra said. As a joke, she added. “And if anyone tried to get you, the cage will protect you!”

Too late, she realized it wasn’t funny. Mako shook his head in pity.

_Dumbass._

Despite the frown, though, Asami seemed to be considering it.

“Thank you. I think,” she said. “I’ll sleep on it, okay?”

“Yeah, sure, no worries,” Korra said, trying to put just the right amount of swagger in the statement. Mako rolled his eyes.

“Let’s go,” he said, ushering Korra out of the room.

“Wait!” Asami said. “I also wanted to thank you for coming. It was really nice of you to help me out.”

“No problem-o,” she grinned nervously, trying to wriggle out of Mako’s grasp. “Think about it and shoot us a text-o.”

*No problem-o? Shoot us a text-o?*

“Um, right.” Asami smiled awkwardly.

Mako dragged her away as she tried to melt into the floor and cease to exist.

“Smooth, Kor. Real smooth.”

“Fuck off, Mako.”

Chapter End Notes

_lol sorry again for long times between updates but I been having a GREAT summer :-PPP_

_Hope you all are having the same!_
The next day, Korra went to extreme measures to avoid Asami on campus. She avoided her usual shortcut through the physics building in case she was between classes, and instead added ten minutes to her walk to the lecture hall by taking the path around the massive Beifong dorm complex.

“Ohhh, we were wondering why you left so early for class! You worried us when we realized you weren’t in your room!” Bolin laughed on the phone. It was a recently discovered development, that ghost voices could travel over cell phones. Also recently discovered was the fact that if he called and a normal human picked up, they could not hear him. Asami would have gotten a kick trying to work that one out.

“It’s just the scenic route,” she grumbled, speeding up to a brisk trot. Korra hadn’t exactly thought it through. Being out of the house earlier didn’t mean her train was going to arrive earlier. Which, of course, it didn’t. Now she was probably going to be late.

“Really? More scenic than running into Asami and her long wavy tresses, enchanting green eyes, and ruby red - “

“I’m almost at my lecture.” Korra cut him off. “I’m hanging up on you now. Give Mako his phone back.”

“Okay, shoot us a text-o after class!”

“Fuck you.”

“Swear Jar!” Bolin sang before ending the call. She shoved her phone in her pocket. The boys were never, ever going to let her live that one down.

“Ooooh. Swear Jar.”

Korra jumped and whirled around to find Asami standing two feet away. She was grinning, holding a school bag on one hand and a large cortado in the other. There was a strong end-of-summer breeze that Korra wished would just stop for a second, because while it was blowing her own short brown hair into a frenzied mess, it was somehow making Asami’s jet black mane billow perfectly like in a goddamn photo shoot.

“A-Asami?” She smiled anxiously. “I promise, I’m not following you. In fact, I’ve been trying to avoid you.”

“You’re trying to avoid me? Why?”

Shoot me a text-o.

“I don’t know, it’s been a long week for you. I figured you’re getting real tired of us.”

Asami’s pleasant grin faltered. Her hand came up, and stopped midway to Korra’s face before she awkwardly dropped it again.
Korra blinked at her.

“Your face still looks awful from yesterday,” Asami said quickly, putting her hand on her own cheek. She mirrored her action and winced at the sharp pain at her cheek bone. She’d forgotten about all the bruising.

“It’s okay.”

“Do you have, I don’t know, an expedited healing process or something?”

“What? I’m a werewolf, not Wolverine!”

Asami blushed. “Anyway, speaking of things that make absolutely no sense - I remember what was in that photo that was missing last night. I need to talk to you guys.”

Korra’s eyebrows shot up and all plans for the rest of her day disappeared from her brain.

“What was in the photo?”

“More like who. I’ll tell you about it later.”

“What? Wait, no, you can tell me now!”

Asami looked uneasy, glancing at the clock tower on the building behind them.

“Oh, my God,” Korra said incredulously. “Are you that hung up on being late for class? Really? Like that’s more important?”

“I mean, kinda! I have an aeronautics quiz coming up!”

“So? You’re a genius, you’ll catch up. Come on, let’s go - ”

Asami made a face. “But I love aeronautics.”

“Wow. Nerd.”

“I’m not going to let you peer-pressure me into skipping class, Korra. You shouldn’t do it either.”

“But I have three classes in a row! I can’t wait that long!”

“I can drive you home, if you want, and we can talk then.” She looked around discreetly. “I’m not all that comfortable talking about it here, anyway.”

They were surrounded by students all hurrying to the lecture hall for their morning classes. In all the mad rushing about, it was awfully suspicious of them to be standing around exchanging hushed whispers.

“Fine. My last class ends at three, and it’s a good thing I’m off work today.”

“My classes are done by one, but I had laser lab booked for this evening. I’ll see if I can change the time - what?”

Korra was gaping at her. “What the hell is a laser lab?”

“The laboratory for laser energetics?” Asami clarified. “You seriously don’t know we have a laser lab? That’s basically the whole reason I wanted to come to this school.”
“You get to use lasers? That’s so fucking cool.”

“Well, if you want, I can - “

Someone suddenly bumped into her as they rushed to the lecture hall.

“Watch it!” Korra called angrily. She gently pulled her closer to avoid another running student.

“Are you okay?”

“Of course. Um, anyway, I was just trying to tell you I can get you into the laser lab, if you want,” she smiled. “It’s actually kind of fun. I can show you some Lissajou patterns, total internal reflection, maybe a little beam modulation…”

Korra swallowed. If she didn’t know better, it would almost, almost, sound like she might be possibly proposing a nerdy laser science date with her.

Yet another person pushed past them rudely.

“Sorry!” he called, clearly not sorry. “I wanted to see the body before they took it away!”

He disappeared into the lecture hall. It was only then that they realized a lot more people were running to the lecture hall than was expected at 8 in the morning on a Friday. It was a universally known fact that college kids avoided 8 AM classes like the plague, and if it was unavoidable, they usually just sort of trudged. But through the windows, they could see a crowd forming in the hallway, outside of room LH11.

“I’m gonna be honest with you,” Korra said. “I really, really wanna pretend that guy didn’t just say the word ‘body’ to us.”

“What on earth...?” Asami slowly started towards the commotion, then broke into a trot as more kids came rushing over.

They got to the lecture hall together, but there were too many people to actually get a good look. Police were just arriving, trying to fight through all the students.

“Move, move!” A strong-looking female officer with graying hair and a formidable scar on cheek roughly shoved past them. “If you kids don’t move I’m throwing all your asses in jail for obstruction of justice!”

That got maybe three people out of the way, but the woman and her squad just managed to push through. They grasped the partly open doors of LH11 and pulled them all the way open.

“Oh, my God,” Asami whispered.

At the very front of the lecture hall was a massive pool of blood. Korra almost didn’t see the body it had come from, there was so much spreading across the floor right before their eyes. It was a woman, as pale white as the linoleum floor used to be. She was very obviously dead, but that wasn’t what spooked her the most.

The woman’s neck was torn apart. There didn’t seem to be any other wounds on her body, just the gaping wound and shreds of flesh that used to hold her head to her body. Her head was practically hanging by a thread. And if the scene wasn’t already gruesomely horrible, the kids that held out their cell phones trying to take pictures made everything overwhelmingly worse.

As a werewolf, Korra had to deal with a whole other level of awfulness aside from the visuals - the
smell. The smell of vomit wafted around her as a few people threw up in front of them. Others made faces or held their noses, but they didn’t have her sense of smell. It nearly knocked her over. She could smell the corpse from all the way outside, the hint of decay, the metallic tinge to the liters of blood creeping across the floor.

Korra gagged, having to turn away and pull her t-shirt over her face.

“I know, this is…” Asami swallowed. “Is this...from a…?”

It was. It absolutely was. The lingering scent of a very specific type of death was still there, hovering over the body like a dark cloud.

“I think so. I think a vampire did this.”

“Listen up!” the female officer shouted. “This is an active crime scene. All you kids back off, do you hear me!?"

A balding man that Korra recognized as a calculus professor spoke up. “Chief Beifong, can you tell us what could have done this? It almost looks like it was done by an animal!”

Chief. This was the police chief Mako had told them about. The one that was a vampire. She could smell it on her.

Korra felt a burning in her veins as she realized what was about to happen. They were going to cover it up, hide evidence. There would be no justice for that poor woman who was violently mauled to death. Whoever did this was going to get away with it, for the sake of vampire infrastructure.

“I promise you that we will find whoever or whatever did this. But for now, everyone needs to GET. OUT.”

Korra stormed out of the lecture hall before the rest of the crowd began to disperse at the insistence of the armed police. Asami stumbled after her.

“Hey, are you okay?”

“No.”

“I know. My God, I’ve never seen anything like that. I can’t believe…”

“I can’t…” Korra bent over, hands on her knees, gasping for breath. She was sweating profusely, as if she’d just run a mile. Her heart was pounding. The sickening stench was still surrounding her, as if clinging to her nose and refusing to let go. “I’m sorry, I…”

“No, it’s fine,” Asami said, concerned. She crouched down, holding her hair back, in case she actually hurled. “Wait...it’s the smell, isn’t it? You have a really good sense of smell. You can smell all of that, can’t you.”

Korra nodded weakly. The murder scene was disgusting. The police that were about to cover it all up were disgusting. But the smell? That was beyond anything conceivable in any nightmare.

“Come on. Let’s get to the library.”

It was a good idea. Asami ushered her into the main campus library and the crime scene was immediately washed away by the scent of old moldy books and too-strong coffee. Korra sighed in
relief.
“Wow. Thanks, that was…”
“A lot.”
“Yeah. Um…” Korra suddenly bolted towards the bathroom by the coffee stand. It was thankfully empty as she dove headfirst into a stall and released the inevitable.

As she heaved pitifully into the toilet, she heard the door open and a light step come towards her. A gentle hand gathered her sweaty hair again and held it back patiently. Korra was so busy emptying the considerable volume of her werewolf stomach into the toilet that she couldn’t even spare a thought to be embarrassed by all this. She was throwing up at a frightening velocity. But when it finally ended and she thought maybe she’d lost her spleen and a kidney in the process, she turned around in shame.

Asami was holding a water bottle in her other hand. She let go of her hair and flushed the toilet.
“You should wash your mouth out.”

Korra gladly took the water and stumble weakly to the sink, her dignity too long gone for her to care that Asami was tying her hair into a short ponytail with a rubber band she’d had around her wrist.

After a few deep breaths, she looked at Asami behind her in the mirror.
“Sorry.”
“It’s okay. Feel better?”
“Yeah, I think so.”
“Um, you can keep that.”

Korra realized she was stupidly holding the water bottle out, for some reason, as if Asami would want it back after it was used to rinse vomit.

She turned around. “Sorry.”
“Stop saying sorry. Are you sure you’re okay?”

When she didn’t answer, Asami guided Korra out of the bathroom and back onto the benches of the library, where they sat wordlessly. More students filed in, thoroughly spooked at what they’d just seen. Quiet murmurs traveled across the library atrium.

“That was Professor Yangchen,” Asami said quietly. “My physics professor last year. She was my advisor this year. Super smart, well-respected in the academic community, and one of the kindest people I’ve ever met.”

A new onslaught of thoughts barraged Korra’s blanked mind. Why would a vampire attack her? Were they after something? Had she seen something? Why make it so high-profile and obvious? Was this connected to Asami somehow? Was it connected to her father?

What would she do if it was?
“I’m sorry for your loss,” she said finally.
Asami swallowed. “I’m okay. But she had kids. She had a grandchild on the way.”

That hung heavy over them for a while, until Korra couldn’t take it anymore.

“I can’t stay here,” she said, starting to feel queasy all over again.

“Let me drive you home,” Asami offered. “I think it’s safe to say classes will be cancelled for the day, and...we should to talk with your friends, anyway.”

“Right. Okay. Yeah.”

Mako looked stricken.

“No. This is wrong. That’s not how to do it.”

“Is there a right way to kill a person?!” Korra demanded, still somewhat pale. Bolin sat next to her, trying to force a cup of tea into her hands. “Bo, I said I’m fine.”

“I’ll take it, if that’s okay,” Asami said. She had been sitting on Korra’s other side on the couch. Bolin shyly passed it over to her. “Thank you.”

“Um. You’re welcome.”

“Yes, there actually is a right way,” Mako said, pacing. “It’s Vampire 101. Zaheer taught it to me when I still worked at the hospital. You don’t...kill...in public places like that. You don’t kill prominent figures like a professor at the biggest university in the United Republic. And you definitely don’t leave a mess like that for all to see, especially a bunch of kids with cameras on their phones. There’s a system set for a reason.”

Asami raised a hand.

“I’d just like to say that I both do and do not want to know what you’re talking about.”

Korra sighed. “Long story short: vampires have an ‘infrastructure’, like, people in positions of power that help cover up stuff like this. It’s how they managed to stay a myth for all these centuries.”

“Oh. Well, I guess I really didn’t want to know that.”

Mako ran a hand through his hair in frustration.

“You said the police chief was there?”

Asami nodded. “Middle-aged lady with an attitude and crazy biceps like Korra?”

Korra coughed. Bolin elbowed her in the ribs, grinning.

“That’s Chief Lin Beifong, yeah,” he sighed. “She, the medical examiner, and the Red Lotus lawyers will fix this. They probably will pin this on some kind of wild animal attack. I wouldn’t be surprised if later on tonight we hear on the news the cops shot some big dog or something on campus. They’ll make a big show, evacuate the dorms and all that.”
Asami’s eyes widened. “Wait. The vampires have the cops and lawyers in their pocket?!”

Bolin mimed quotation marks with his fingers. “Infrastructure.”

“Sort of,” Korra tried to explain, although she wasn’t sure she was okay with the answer yet, either. “Apparently, the vampires don’t want to run the place. They just want to live their blood-lusty lives. Occasionally, someone dies, and they clean up their messes.”

She put her tea down, looking cautiously at Mako. “So...oh. Oh.”

“Not everyone is like Mako,” Bolin said, quickly coming to his brother’s defense. “It’s hard for them, not everyone can pull off not drinking human blood, but Mako does.”

Korra felt like she should have said something for him as well, but she still couldn’t shake the image and smell from her brain. Bolin hadn’t been there. He didn’t understand what exactly this vampire had done. It was unforgivably evil.

“Okay…” She recognized the uneasy expression on Asami’s face. It was the same one she had when Mako had told them. The difference was, she didn’t know Mako like they did.

“So what was this, then? A rogue vamp?” Korra asked, trying to shift the subject.

“It happens,” Mako said. “Most vampires go for people with no connections, you know, without families or friends that would miss them. Sometimes there’s like, a vigilante thing going on or whatever, going after criminals and stuff. No matter what, though, the bodies are quietly disposed of. I don’t know what this attack was. It was excessively violent - you don’t have to maul a victim, we can only drink something like half a liter at a time and that can last us for days. Weeks, maybe. There hasn’t been a gory, publicized attack like this since...well…”

“Us?” Bolin said.

“Well, yeah. Zaheer said they found the vampires that did this to us and...I don’t know.” He shrugged. “He told me I didn’t want to know what the Elders did to rogue vampires that risked exposing our secret.”

“Oh, there are Elders now,” Korra threw up her hands. “Of course there are Elders, how could there not be Elders with you people?”

“So they do face justice,” Asami said, her voice cracking.

“They do.”

“Although, I guess it’s more for being obvious about it and not so much for the actual taking of an innocent person’s life, right?”

Mako stopped pacing to look at her. “Not everyone is innocent.”

“And who are these vampires to judge? Are you guys gods now?”

Korra stood up hastily. “Asami, he’s not defending the vampire for what they did.”

“It sure sounds like he is,” she replied, a little bit more confident.

“They can’t help who they are,” Mako said through gritted teeth. “I know this was wrong, I know there are really dangerous vampires out there that shouldn’t be, I know all sorts insane, evil, horrifying things. It’s you that doesn’t understand.”
“I understand that a good person is dead right now.”

“I’m dead right now!” he snarled back. “So is Bolin. So was the vampire that killed that professor. So are a lot of people that were robbed of that chance to ever be ‘good’ again, but you don’t know shit about that so why don’t you shut your - ”

“Mako!” Korra and Bolin cried.

Asami swallowed hard, but she didn’t look afraid. She looked contemplative.

“I’m sorry for what happened to you. And you, Bolin. But - “

Mako flared. “But what? What do you, some girl that just walked in off the street and into this life for like four days, have to say about all this?”

Korra grabbed his hand.

“Hey. That’s enough. You’re right, she doesn’t quite get it yet. That’s no reason to jump down her throat.”

“She thinks - !”

“I know what she thinks,” Korra said quietly. “But I think it a little bit, too. And so does Bolin, and so do you. We can’t blame her, right?”

Mako shook her away. “Why did you even bring her here?”

In all the commotion, even Korra had forgotten why Asami had wanted to speak to them in the first place. The missing photo.

“I remembered what was in that picture that was missing from my album,” Asami said quietly, pulling the album out from her bag and flipping to the page. “All the photos from that section were from my Sato Worldwide HQ’s grand opening, so it wasn’t just me. There were lots of pictures of me with my dad’s employees and stuff, too.”

Bolin peeked at the album. “Aw, look how cute you were! Did you guys see this!?”

“Yeah, she was adorable,” Korra admitted.

“She was okay,” Mako grumbled.

Asami continued. “The picture that’s missing was one of those with my dad’s employees. They might have been business partners or something, actually, because they wore fancy suits and stuff. I was sitting on a desk, and a woman was sitting next to me smiling, with a guy behind the desk putting little bunny ears on me with his fingers.”

“Classic,” Bolin said. He’d taken the album and seemed enthralled at all the cute baby pictures.

“I never knew their names or anything. I probably never saw them again after that photo was taken, I mean, my dad had lots of people working with him. I don’t recognize anyone else in all the other pictures, after all. That’s why I didn’t realize at first.”

“Realize what?” Korra asked, although she was starting to get a sinking feeling in the pit of her stomach.

“I didn’t realize that the two employees in the photo were the two vampires that attacked you in the
parking lot of Air Temple Espresso,” she said. “The vampires that broke into my dorm.”

Everyone just stared at her.

“I mean, they were just about the same age in the twenty-year-old photo as they are now, but they were cleaner cut and, well, much nicer-looking. Better dressed and happier,” she explained. “That’s probably why I didn’t recognize them immediately. Also, uh, the woman still had arms back then.”

More silent staring.

“And to make things even stranger, they must have recognized me. Maybe it was in that parking lot or whatever, but they had to have known I would make the connection. Why else would they go out of their way to steal the photo? To make sure I never realized it was them. And why would they do that? I’m just some human girl, right? Who cares if I recognized some of my dad’s old coworkers twenty years later?”

Korra was the first to say anything, although it was just a soft, “Uhhh…”

“So, last night my mind went a little wild. I started thinking about my dad, and how he only ever took photos, and was never in them. There are other photo albums at the house, but I can’t remember my dad being in a single one of them. I always chalked it up to him being weird and loving paintings, but now after all this I’m just… I meant, you said vampires don’t show up on camera right? Am I being completely crazy?”

Mako and Korra shared a look. They’d come upon this exact thought last night.

“Maybe not completely,” Korra said. “We did wonder why those vampires were at Air Temple Espresso in the first place. They weren’t following either of us, they made it pretty clear that stumbling upon Mako was an accident.”

Asami closed her eyes. “So you’re saying they were probably scoping me out.”

“I mean it could have been a coincidence that they broke into your dorm shortly after they realized you’d seen them and might recognize them,” Korra said. “But…”

“But probably not,” she said softly. “Probably, I’ve been living in this world even longer than you guys have.”

Bolin put a hand on her shoulder and squeezed.

“Welcome to the club, buddy. Let me make you more tea.”

He took the cup into the kitchen. Mako frowned.

“Why do they care about you? What do they want from you?”

“It might be a good idea to maybe talk to your dad,” Korra suggested. Asami shook her head.

“Absolutely not.”

“He may have answers.”

“I can work the answers out on my own,” she said firmly. “I’m not speaking to that man. Or vampire. Or whatever he is.”
“Hey, guys?”

They looked over at Bolin, who was staring out the window over the sink.

“What is it, Bo?”

“I think…I think this guy can see me.”

Korra and Mako darted into the kitchen with him and the three of them leaned over the sink. Outside was an old blue car with heavily tinted windows. They could see through the windshield, though, and Mako’s eyes darkened.

“That’s Ghazan. Even if I couldn’t see him, I recognize his car.”

Ghazan seemed to sense the jig was up. The car tore down the street before Mako could even get outside. Korra and Bolin followed him and watched from the stoop as the car disappeared.

“I wonder what the heck that was all about?” Bolin said.

“I hate to make it like everything revolves around me,” Asami said, joining them on the front steps. “But, it was probably about me?”

“It looks like you have a new set of stalkers,” Korra joked. “Uh, sorry. I don’t know why I keep thinking that’s an okay thing to bring up.”

“Still don’t want to call your dad?” Mako asked.

“No. But I’m considering making a different stupid decision,” Asami took a deep breath, looking mostly at Korra. “Is that room still available?”

She jerked. “Wait, really?”

“I’m not sure I feel particularly safe in my dorm anymore, and here at least I know only one vampire is allowed in. Right?”

“It’s a home,” Bolin nodded. “Vampires can’t enter a home uninvited.”

“I just…I think I can find my answers here. With you guys.”

“We’ll definitely try to help,” Korra agreed. “The room is yours if you want it.”

Mako slapped a hand to his forehead. “I honestly can’t believe any of this.”

“Shove it, bro,” Bolin said. “You were on board last week, remember?”

“Yes, but I didn’t realize our roommate would be able to see ghosts and have some kind of weird connection to vampires!” Mako insisted. “I mean, no offense, Asami, you’re probably not awful. You seem kind of nice. But this is a big hot mess you’re getting into.”

“I’m already in it,” she pointed out. “Maybe I always have been.”

“Yes, but…” he sighed. “Okay, fine, I’ll say it. I’ll be the asshole. We’re not here to protect you from anything. I’m not gonna risk Korra, Bolin, or myself for anything. Not even you.”

“Harsh, Mako,” Korra said, scowling.
“I’m looking out for me and mine,” Mako insisted again. “I don’t know you, Asami. You’re not our responsibility. Okay?”

Bolin threw a pillow at him. “Dude!”

Asami held up her hands. “I just want to live in a vampire-repelling house with people who know more about this stuff than I do. I won’t ask anything except questions you’re comfortable answering. You can kick me out whenever you want for whatever reason. I don’t need your protection. I just need a little help getting used to all this.”

He still looked skeptical and Korra was just about ready to push him upstairs and lock him in his room for a timeout, but Asami was way ahead of her.

“Did I mention I can cook?”

“This still doesn’t seem like a good idea - “

“You can drive my car.”

“Fine!” Mako threw his hands up in defeat as he stomped up the stairs to his room.

Chapter End Notes

I meant for this to go up Friday the 13th but in typical Friday the 13th fashion, I got some bad luck and forgot! lol anyway, here you go. And please, take my monthly apology with it - I work full time and am a part time student, so it’s been hard for me to keep up with this.
Professor Yangchen

Jinora emerged from the kitchen balancing two dangerously lopsided stacks of Air Temple Espresso-branded mugs. She was the owner’s daughter, and as sweet as the fruit pies she baked back there. She was also only sixteen and still in high school, so Korra sometimes felt overprotective of her. Especially since the girl didn’t look a day older than twelve.

“What are you trying to do over there, join a circus? Give me some of those.”

She gently took one stack of teetering mugs and together they began to stock them back on the shelves behind the counter. Opal followed them with a wet mop. They were closing in two hours, but she always tried to start the clean-up early, so they could all go home early. It never seemed to matter to her that everyone was carrying around fragile objects and she was making the floors all slippery.

“So, I heard that professor that got killed the other day was actually mauled by a pack of coyotes or something - ” Jinora began.

Opal scowled. “Wow, we really need to work on your conversation skills, kiddo.”

“Coyotes?!” Korra cried. The others looked startled by her enthusiasm, so she toned it down a bit.

Wasn’t she...uh, murdered?”

It had been three days since Professor Yangchen was discovered with her head barely attached to her neck, and it had been a frustratingly long three days of unanswered questions. Mako had been keeping his ear to ground, but as far as he knew, no one had come forward. No one had been punished for the crime yet. She remembered his words that day, though, about how the vampire infrastructure was somehow going to blame everything on some kind of animal attack, no matter what vampire actually did it.

The media had been virtually useless. News reports were repeating the same thing over and over - the attacker was unknown, the professor was eccentric but well-liked, autopsy was pending, Avatar University was holding a memorial on Saturday, classes would resume the following Monday after being closed for the investigation, etc, etc.

Jinora shook her head. “No way. The preliminary autopsy report was leaked online this morning. I read there were teeth marks in her neck. It was something with really sharp teeth, not a human.”

She’s not wrong.

“So they’re still awaiting final forensics, but they’re pretty certain it was some kind of canine. You know, with fangs.”

Still not super-wrong.

“What about vampires!” Opal suggested jokingly.

Ding, ding, ding!

“Right, because we need vampires back in the mainstream,” Jinora scoffed. “As if we weren’t enjoying a golden age of movies without sparkly vampires and shirtless werewolves.”

“Hey, I liked those movies!”
As her coworkers bantered, Korra started drying the portafilters and drifted off into the thoughts that had been plaguing her since that day on campus.

Animals weren’t monsters. That automatically excluded coyotes from the list of suspects, because what happened to Professor Yangchen was the act of a monster. She wasn’t killed for food. An actual predator didn’t leave that much behind - animals ate right down to the bone, no meat wasted.

But Professor Yangchen’s body was wasted, abandoned for a purpose. Mako suspected the vampire hadn’t even drank their fill, judging by how inefficiently gory the bite was. That wasn’t a feeding. It was meant to spill, be messy, and cause an uproar. She was meant to be found. But by whom? And why?

“Radio silence from Kor over there.” Opal waved her hand in front of her face. “What are you thinking about - *hah*!”

“What do you mean ‘*hah*’?”

She realized too late she’d been gazing blankly in the direction of the doorway. It opened, but she could already see who it was through the glass. Asami, with her stupid perfect flowery-scented hair and a sweater that showed off her stupid perfect collar bones, came over to the counter with the worst timing imaginable.

“Gosh, no wonder you spaced out,” Jinora whispered. “She’s gorgeous.”

“I wasn’t - I wasn’t spaced out!”

“You so were. Have you hit that yet?”

Korra tried to shove Jinora back into the kitchen where she belonged. “You are *sixteen*, you’re not allowed to say that! Go finish up the rest of the dishes!”

Opal snickered as Jinora ignored her, using her tiny frame to easily duck Korra’s arm. It was only then that they noticed Asami’s expression. She looked panicked, barely even noticing the other two girls as her eyes frantically locked on Korra’s.

“Hey,” she said tightly.

Korra furrowed her brow. “Uhhh, are you all right?”

“Remember when I called you last night and we were talking and I told you I was fine?”

She squinted at her. Since the day Professor Yangchen was discovered, Korra and Asami had taken to texting frequently. Asami had applied to end her room assignment on campus and get some of her money back, so she hadn’t been in any extreme rush to move into the house until that happened. Especially since Korra checked in with her so often, making sure everything was okay. She asked every day if Asami had noticed anyone still following her around. Every day the answer had been ‘no’ - Ghazan and Ming-Hua seemed to have dropped off the face of the planet, as promised by Zaheer.

“Oh, right,” Korra said slowly. “Yeah. You’ve been okay, right?”

“Not today,” Asami said, her voice strained.

“You mean…?”
“No, not them.”

“Huh? Then who?”

“Whenever you get a chance,” Asami said frantically through gritted teeth. “I think I could use some assistance.”

Opal and Jinora were staring back and forth between them.

“What are you guys talking about?”

Asami was gnawing on her own bottom lip and wringing her hands like someone was pointing a gun to her head and forcing her to rob a bank. She cleared her throat anxiously.

“Do you think you can take just, I don’t know, a minute to come outside with me and chat?”

“Sure, sure.” Korra removed her apron and tossed it at Opal. “I’ll be right back.”

They went outside, Asami wordlessly walking across the parking lot to her car. Korra followed curiously.

“Hey, what’s going on? I can’t leave, I have 2 more hours left on my shift.”

“I need to show you something.”

“Asami, what’s…?”

Korra trailed off as she pulled open the passenger side door of her red Satomobile.

She didn’t recognize her at first. The woman in Asami’s car looked just as confused as her. She was older, in her late sixties. Her hairline was thinning and receding ever so slightly, but she had long, greying brown hair that hung youthfully below the shoulder. Her eyes and mouth crinkled at the edges like someone who’d spent a better part of her life smiling. She had a kindness and serenity to her that calmed Korra, and made her feel less on edge.

Then, she noticed the smell. Or rather, a lack thereof. Korra’s knees almost buckled when she realized that she’d seen this woman before. Only that time, she had turned a pale blue and her neck was wide open, spilling a pool of dark red blood across the lecture hall floor.

“Oh...f*ck.”

Professor Yangchen’s face twisted in distaste.

“Language.”

“Oh, um, sorry, Professor.”

Yangchen cocked her head. “I don’t believe you were ever one of my students. I never forget a face, even in the huge intro classes.”

“It’s true. She remembers everyone,” Asami agreed. Korra stared at her incredulously.

“Okay, Asami, it’s very important that you understand what I’m about to tell you. Professor Yangchen is a - “

“Yes, yes, I know what she is,” she said quickly, rolling her eyes. “Obviously. She, however, does
not."

Professor Yangchen looked impatient. She sighed loudly. “Why are we here, Miss Sato?”

Korra gulped. “She doesn’t know she’s a - ?”

“No.”

“But - “

“I know.”

“She - “

“Korra, I know,” Asami sighed. “I got into my car to move the last of my stuff to your house and I saw her in my parking lot just wandering around like she was lost.”

“Everything just seems a bit off, lately,” Yangchen said, almost bitterly. “I suppose it’s because I haven’t been getting much sleep. But no one has been paying a lick of attention to me. It’s a bit rude, come to think of it. No one’s ever treated me like that before.”

“But she saw me and came over,” Asami said. “Because, well, I could see her.”

“You were always a very attentive pupil, Miss Sato.”

“Thanks. Anyway, she doesn’t remember anything. She was looking for her car so she could drive home.”

“Couldn’t find the bloody thing. I know I parked it in Lot C, by the Fire Ferrets Gym. I always park there.”

Asami swallowed. “So I...kind of just put her in my car and told her I’d drive her home.”

Korra didn’t say anything for a very long while. She kept looking back and forth between the completely normal-looking physics professor who she’d seen just days ago practically decapitated and decomposing on the lecture hall floor, and Asami, who’d basically just adopted herself a clueless ghost grandma.

“I’ve got to get home,” Professor Yangchen fretted. “I have to feed Pik and Pak.”

“What?”

“Her cats,” Asami explained. “She has two cats.”

“Umm…” Korra swallowed. “I’m gonna go back inside to get Opal to cover the rest of my shift. Then…I think we should head to the house.”

“My house,” Professor Yangchen said.

Asami sighed. “Professor, we want to take you to some of our friends. You know, so we can help you deal with…things. We actually have a…uh, friend that’s just like you.”

“Do you stop him from taking care of his loved ones as well?”

“Professor - “
“No, Miss Sato, I think I’ve had enough of your games,” she huffed, making a move to get out of
the car. “Thank you for offering me a ride, but it’s proven more of an inconvenience than I thought
it would.”

Korra jumped in front of her, although with her being a ghost, she supposed it shouldn’t have done
much. Lucky for them, Yangchen had no idea. The old professor stopped and rolled her eyes.

“Young lady, get out of my way.”

“Look, I’ll join you and Asami to take you back home. Your home. Okay? I’ll be right back. Give
me two seconds.”

Yangchen pursed her lips. “We can’t wait too long. Pik and Pak are always fed at this time. I don’t
want them to worry about me.”

Korra looked over at Asami, who was still blinking owlishly at her dead former professor.

“Asami?”

They locked eyes, and Korra hoped that she could get the message. They could not let Professor
Yangchen wander around haunting random parking lots alone. This ghost could not leave until
they got answers - a lot of freaking answers.

“That’s my house. Right there on the left, with the red door.”

Asami slowed the car to a stop and Yangchen jumped out and scooted through the front door in a
hurry. Literally, launched herself right through the car door and through the heavy wooden door of
her house.

Korra made a face. “How the hell does she not know she’s a ghost?”

“Dissociation?” Asami suggested.

“But she just flew through two doors! That woman is a scientist! She doesn’t stop to think, like,
‘Hey. Are my molecules supposed to do this?’”

Asami bit back a laugh. “Stop it. I’ve read about dissociative states happening with traumatic
events, and you can’t get more traumatic than murder, right? My first semester I entertained the
idea of being a psych major, and I remember reading about how traumatized people could just start
eating their own arms and stuff.”

“How. That’s incredibly disgusting. I’d have switched to physics, too,” Korra whipped out her
phone. “Let’s call Bolin so we can have a ghost’s take on this - and yes, he can talk on the phone.”

Asami nodded sheepishly as Korra dialed Mako’s cell. Bolin could technically use one, but it
never seemed financially reasonable to get him a phone, despite the fact that even dead he’d
probably get more use out of it than his brother.

“Mako, could you put Bo on - no, I’m fine, I left work early - it’s a long story, I’ll tell you later -
not now, I’m kind of - can you just - I’m in the middle of something, Mako! Just get Bolin - oh,
come on! - “
Korra groaned into the phone dramatically. Asami gently plucked it from her hands and put it on speaker.

“Mako? Hi, it’s Asami.”

“What are you guys up to?”

“I found the ghost of Professor Yangchen at school so I drove her to Korra’s job. Yangchen is confused and can’t answer our questions right now, so we took her home to feed her cats and hopefully get her mind together. Korra’s trying to talk to Bolin to see if a similar kind of dissociation happened with him.”

“Wha - but - wha - huh?!?”

“Bolin, please.”

They heard a distinct change in static as Mako’s phone was changed to speaker as well.

“Hey, Korra? Why is my brother sputtering like a broken robot?”

“Bo! Ugh, finally! Me and Asami are here at - “

“Oooooh, hi Asami!”

“Hey, Bolin.”

“So you guys are just, like, hanging out?”

“Bolin!” Korra shut everyone up and re-summarized the situation. The boys were silent for a moment before Bo spoke up.

“It was three days before Mako came back to the house and found me. In those three days - yeah, I was like Yangchen. I thought I was alive and didn’t understand why no one could see or talk to me. I tried to leave the house, but couldn’t go out the door. I even tried climbing out the windows and banging on the walls. I was screaming, but no one heard me.”

Korra felt her throat constrict. She always assumed it was like that for him, waking up scared and alone, invisible to the world until Mako returned. She had never wanted to hear him talk about it, though, in that solemn, hollow voice.

“But like, I literally watched them take my body away. I saw it, how my body looked after the vampires were done with it. I watched them mop my blood off the floors, even. But I still didn’t get it. I think that’s what Yangchen’s going through. I couldn’t connect the dots about what was happening, even though I could see it right in front of me.”

Korra looked away, back at the Professor’s house. As she tried to tell herself that it was fine, that Bolin was okay now, something else occurred to her.

Bolin had always been trapped at the house. How come Yangchen could move around at will?

“What brought you back?” Asami was asking. “How did you manage to connect again?”

“I saw Mako. It all came rushing back to me, the second he found me.”

That made some sense. Mako and Bolin’s parents died when they were very young. They were all each other had for almost half their lives. Seeing someone they loved that much again should have
been strong enough to pull Bolin out of whatever haze he’d been in.

“So, maybe that’s all Professor Yangchen needs,” Asami mused. “To see her cats, Pik and Pak.”

“She’s a crazy cat lady?”

“She is not a “

“AIIIIIIIIEEEE!”

They jumped as a shrill scream burst from the second floor of Yangchen’s house.

“What was that!?” Mako demanded. They had heard the shriek over the speakerphone.

“It was her,” Asami said, jumping out of the car. Korra followed her.

“We’ll call you guys right back.” She hung up, despite his protests, and silenced the phone in case he tried to call them back. They needed to focus on Yangchen.

When they got to the front door, it was still locked. Of course - the ghost had never unlocked the door. She didn’t need to.

Korra pounded on it with her fist. “Hey! Let us in!”

“Are you okay?” Asami called.

The response was frantic sobbing and a little bit of a wail.

“We have to get inside,” Korra hissed.

“How?”

“Uhhhh...who are you two yelling at?”

They swiveled around to find a man looking at them curiously from the street. He had a tiny dog on a leash with him.

“Yep,” Korra said nervously as the crying from inside got louder. The man obviously couldn’t hear the ghost’s sobbing, but they could and it was profoundly distracting.

“You know the lady that lives in that house is dead, right? That professor that was mauled by wolves or whatever? That’s her house.”

“Oh, yes, we know.” Asami said quickly. “We’re just here to...feed her cats. Make sure they’re okay and stuff.”

“You were shouting at her cats?”

“They’re smart cats,” Korra said impatiently. This guy needed to go.

“Well, you don’t need to. Her family came two days ago and took the them away someplace. Cats are fine.”

Korra and Asami shared a look.

“Oh. Then...I guess we’ll go.”
He nodded. “Okay, then.”

Nobody moved for a few seconds, and it became obvious that this guy was nosy as hell and would not leave until they did. So they begrudgingly made their way back to the car, where the tiny dog nipped at Korra’s ankles and began to bark.

“Sorry, he’s a little misbehaved. Never got him fixed,” the guy said sheepishly. “Although he normally only acts like this when he sees other female doggies. Don’t know what’s gotten into him. Bruno, stop that!”

Bruno did not, and Korra tried not to be extremely humiliated by it. Asami had the decency not to say anything about it either, at least. As the guy left with his gross, yappy dog, she made a show of waiting for the car to warm up.

“I hate the suburbs,” Asami said.

“Me too.”

“So her cats are gone. I guess that explains why the Professor is so upset.”

“Does it?” Korra listened as the loud sobs continued. “This seems a little much over a pair of cats.”

“She really liked her cats.” Asami squinted through her windshield. “Okay, I think Mr. Asshole-Who-Doesn’t-Fix-His-Pets is gone. How do we get in the house? We need to tell Yangchen that Pik and Pak are fine.”

Korra shrugged. “Through one of the windows? In the back, though. I don’t want to deal with people on the street being dumb and nosy.”

They tried to casually and unsuspiciously cross Professor Yangchen’s considerable yard, which smelled faintly of cat urine, and make their way around to the back of the house. There were two first floor windows, but they appeared to be locked and Korra wasn’t interested in breaking any of them. The second floor, though, had one small window that looked like it was open just a crack. That was all she needed.

“I think I can climb up to that window.”

“Climb on what? That’s vinyl siding.”

The yard was devoid of anything that could be remotely useful for breaking into the house. Professor Yangchen was apparently a gardener, and her small yard was accented with an actually quite pretty flower bed, as well as some kind of vegetable patch and stone walkway. There was an old shed, but it’s rickety doors hung open and all they could see inside was a wheelbarrow that was too short to reach the window, and a couple of gardening tools.

“I can boost you up,” Asami offered.

“No, I’ll boost you up.”

“You’re lighter than me.”

“I am not! I’m shorter, but I’m super dense!”

She snorted. “So am I!”
Korra looked at her skeptically. Asami wasn’t exactly one of those weak-looking elvish, waify college girls, but she also didn’t look as strong as a werewolf who could bench press over twice her body weight without breaking a sweat.

“Okay, now I’m offended,” Asami said, squatting down and holding out her hands. “Come here. I’m boosting you up, you werewolf elitist.”

“Um, make sure to put your weight through your legs and watch your back - “

“Come. Here.”

She defiantly grabbed Korra’s foot and heaved her upwards so fast she nearly toppled over.

“Holy shit - !”

“Grab the window!”

“Okay, okay, jeez!” Korra curled her fingers around the windowsill. “You’re stronger than you look!”

“And you’re heavier than you look!”

Korra pulled herself up and looked down as Asami staggered backwards, rubbing her quads. “I mean, I told you so. But good, you didn’t use your back. Do you lift?”

“Maybe. Owww. Just go through the window, would you? And don’t forget to let me in down here - ahhhh!”

Asami jumped as Professor Yangchen just suddenly appeared in the yard in front of her. Her yelp startled Korra, and one of her hands lost their grip.

“Korra!” she cried.

“I’m fine! Although, what the fuck?”

Yangchen glared. “Language. Why are you dangling off the side of my house, young lady?”

“Kind of a long story - ”

“Oh, never mind that,” the Professor began to tear up again. “My cats are gone. They’re gone.”

“Listen,” Asami said calmly, despite the fact that she was trying to comfort a murdered ghost as Korra still hung by one arm from a second floor window. “I think your daughter might have taken your cats. We just need to swing by your daughter’s house and - “

“No!” Yangchen sniffed. “We don’t have to go there.”

“But she probably - “

“Min won’t have taken in Pik and Pak. She’s pregnant and a bit of a worry wart. She read all this propaganda about how cats spread toxoplasmosis that can harm her baby and won’t have anything to do with the cats. Can you imagine? They’re her siblings and she won’t come near them until after the baby is born.”

“I’ve heard about toxoplasmosis too,” Korra said unhelpfully.
“Well, at the very least, Min can tell us where she had the cats sent,” Asami reasoned. “Tell us where she lives, and we’ll take you there. It actually might be good for you to, uh, to see your daughter.”

Korra hoped that maybe the old woman would get over her cats for long enough to see her daughter, and maybe that would pull her together like Mako’s appearance had done for Bolin.

“Min lives not too far down the road,” Yangchen sniffed. She looked uncomfortable. “She and her husband moved there so I could be nearby to help with the baby.”

Very softly, she felt her heart break.

“We’ll take you there,” Korra said.

“Okay.”

“But first, Asami, can you help me down?”

“Oh!”

It only took them five minutes to drive to Min’s house, since there was no traffic or anything else remarkable in the bland Republic City suburb. Somehow, it seemed the perfect place to be either an old cat lady and a young couple expecting a child. There was absolutely nothing concerning about the place. That made it even stranger for Yangchen to be so insistent on staying in the car.

She squared her jaw indignantly. “I don’t want to speak with her.”

“Did you guys have a fight or something?” Korra asked, perhaps less than tactfully. Yangchen looked affronted.

“Of course not! She’s my daughter, and she’s having my grandchild!”

“So what’s the problem? You want to find out where your cats are, don’t you?”

When she didn’t budge, Asami eyed her old professor carefully. “We’ll go in, then. Korra and I. Promise you’ll stay right here and wait for us?”

Yangchen just scowled. “Fine.”

“What’s going on?” Korra protested as she allowed Asami to pull her towards the house. “She wants to find her stupid cats so bad, why doesn’t she want to go inside?”

“I think she figured it out.”

“Figured what out?”

“That she’s dead.”

Korra stopped. “Oh...”

“I think something at her house, maybe a picture of her kids or her cats or something, brought her
back. Bolin said seeing his brother did it for him… Well, something did it for her. That’s why she was carrying on like that back there.”

“Right. But that doesn’t explain why she doesn’t want to come with us.”

“Her daughter is expecting and grieving, Korra. If I were her, I couldn’t bear seeing that, either.”

That had never occurred to her and she felt very foolish. If the woman cared so much for her pets, of course she loved her daughter too much to handle seeing her in pain. Korra averted her gaze to the perfectly manicured grass.

“Damn it. I don’t know if we’re close enough yet, so you’re gonna have to turn around because I don’t want you to see my cry all over this woman’s lawn.”

Asami actually smirked. “Once you’ve accidentally grabbed a girl’s butt as she falls from a second story window, I think you’re considered pretty close.”

That threw Korra off-balance a little bit as she watched her make her way to the door and ring the doorbell. She’d thought she’d felt accidental butt contact back there.

When she looked back, Professor Yangchen was slouched down in the car, determined not to look at the house.

“Hello,” Asami was saying as a heavily pregnant woman who did look astonishingly like the Professor answered the door. “My name is Asami. I was a student of your mother’s.”

Min was maybe in her late twenties or early thirties, but the dark bags and puffy redness around her eyes made her look much older. She had very obviously been crying not long before answering them. Her nose was pink, the result of a hurried nose-wipe in an attempt to look presentable.

“Hello,” she said, choking up. Korra couldn’t take it. She had no idea how Asami was able to look woman in the face.

“I’m very, deeply sorry for your loss,” Asami managed. “She was a treasured professor at the university. She meant a lot to me.”

Min swallowed, and then nodded.

“Thank you,” she paused. “I’m sorry, did you say your name was Asami? Asami Sato?”

“Yes. Has she mentioned me?”

“Absolutely. You were her favorite student. She would go on and on about your engineering designs. Said you’d be greater than your father one day.”

“That’s...really flattering.”

“Would you and your friend like to come in?” she asked.

“That’s kind, but we don’t want to trouble you,” Asami said. “We actually wanted to ask you something. Your mother mentioned she had two cats.”

“Pik and Pak?” Min nodded. “Yes, we made sure to rescue them. It’s a shame - I know mom loved those cats, but I can’t have them in the house while I’m expecting, and I don’t know if I can take care of them and a new baby.”
“I totally get it. Where are they now?”

“Are you interested in adopting?” she brightened slightly. “That would be perfect! We dropped them off at the local animal shelter. We’ve been crossing our fingers that they’d be adopted soon.”

“Uhhh…”

“The one on Roku Street. It’d be wonderful if they could be adopted together, that was one of my worries. Pik and Pak are inseparable. They could really use a nice couple like you two - “

“We’re not a couple!” Korra said quickly. “Uh, hi. I’m Korra. Just Asami’s future roommate.”

“...okay.”

“You said Roku Street?” Asami continued, unphased. “I know where that is.”

“That’s awesome. Thank you,” Min gushed. She wiped away a tear. “That’s really great.”

“Honey?” A tall, gangly-looking man appeared behind her. “Everything okay?”

Min smiled at him. “Lou, this is Asami Sato, one of mom’s students. She’s gonna adopt Pik and Pak!”

“Uhhh…” Asami repeated.

“That’s wonderful! That really makes us happy.” Now Lou was the one to start with the waterworks. He sniffled and put a hand on his wife’s shoulder reassuringly. “Her mother would love that. This is the best news we’ve had in...it feels like forever.”

“It does,” Min agreed, putting her hand on his and squeezing it. Both their other hands went around her swollen belly.

Oh, no. Oh, no, no, no.

Korra coughed loudly, as if that would stop the tears from spring into her own eyes.

“Okay! Awesome! It was nice to meet you guys!”

Asami was already lost. Her cheeks were already wet. “It really was a pleasure. Please, if we can do anything to help you. Literally anything.”

“You’ve done a lot already,” Lou assured her. “Thank you.”

They practically ran back to the car as the young couple went back inside. Asami tumbled into the driver seat and grabbed a wad of tissues from the glove compartment.

“Oh, my God. Oh, my God that was torture,” she whimpered.

Korra tried to swallow that heavy lump in her throat. “Damn it, I don’t even know them and my heart is in fucking pieces.”

“Young lady, you really need a language adjustment.”

They’d almost forgotten that the ghost of Professor Yangchen was sitting right there in their back seat.
“Professor, your daughter and son-in-law are the sweetest,” Asami said.

“I know. Are they okay? Did Min’s face look too thin?”

“No. She looked healthy. Just...sad.”

Yangchen was still staring stonily forward. The unspoken acknowledgement - that she knew she was dead, that she knew she was a ghost - hung heavily between them.

“The last time I saw her was the day before. I told her I’d come over after work to help decorate the nursery. Min was excited. She always had a fire in her eyes whenever she focused on something, and I’d never seen her more focused than she has been preparing for this baby. She was in the military, you know. That’s how she met her husband. Everything about her is systematic. Step-by-step, by the book.”

They let her continue without interrupting.

“It’s stressful, having a baby, but they’ll do wonderfully. Her and Lou. He’s a dear thing. I’m lucky. I know he’ll take good care of her and their family, even if I’m not able to. That’s why I didn’t want to see them - I want to remember them like that. Her smiling, him taking care of her, both of them so hopeful. That’s the last thing I need to remember about them. That they’ll be fine without me.”

“They are gonna be fine,” Asami agreed. “Definitely.”

“It’s just...Pik and Pak. I don’t know what’s going to happen to them.”

Before she knew what she saying, Korra spoke up.

“We’ll adopt them.”

Asami abruptly turned to her.

“What? Really!?”

“We’ll adopt the cats,” Korra said firmly. “Both of them. And you’ll come stay with us at the house. You can still be with them. We actually have a friend thats a - just like you. It’s working out for us. We’ve made a home. You and Pik and Pak are welcome to join us.”

For the first time, Yangchen looked at them. Really, truly, looked at them.

“Thank you. But I won’t be joining you, I don’t think.”

“Why not?” Asami asked, alarmed.

“Because of that.”

Yangchen pointed at something outside. They followed her gaze and gasped.

Standing on its own, right in the middle of the street, was a door. It wasn’t supported by any walls, and there was nothing in front of or behind it. But it was a heavy-looking wooden door, just suddenly there. The knob shiny and well-oiled, the wooden smooth and finished.

“That’s...that’s weird, right?” Asami whispered at Korra.

“Yes, Asami, it’s fucking weird for a door to appear out of thin air. Even for me.”
“Just checking.”

“I don’t know what it is, but I think that’s where I’m going,” Yangchen said softly, coming out of the car. This time, she actually opened it and stepped out. Asami and Korra followed her until they were standing right in front of it.

Korra could feel it then. There was no actual temperature change, but she could only describe the feeling as a warmth. A tingling electricity on her skin. There was a faint glow emanating from around the frame of the door. It was inviting, almost welcoming. The mysterious door felt...good, somehow.

“Do you feel that?” Asami asked

“Yeah.”

“What is that?”

“I have no idea.”

“That’s because it’s not for you,” Yangchen said serenely, not an ounce of concern in her voice. “It’s not your door. You feel it, but not like I am. I know this...this is my door.”

“How do you know?” Asami demanded, sounding nervous. She was reaching out, as if to hold the Professor back

“I just know.”

“Where did it even come from, though?” Korra demanded. Whatever calming effect the door was having on her was slowly being replaced by fear.

“I’m not sure. But it appeared the exact second you said you’d adopt Pik and Pak,” Yangchen said quietly. “I felt better, and then suddenly, there it was. My way out.”

“Out of what?!” Asami was almost sounding panicked at that point. Korra took her hand and squeezed it.

“Out of this place, I think.” Yangchen noted her tone as well and tried to smile at her. “A doorway to whatever comes after this.”

“You want to go through it!?" Asami cried incredulously. “But - but you don’t know what’s behind it! You don’t know!”

The Professor ran her fingertips along the polished wood.

“When you come to the end of all the light you know, and it's time to step into the darkness of the unknown, faith is knowing that one of two things shall happen…”

Asami took a deep breath. “Either you will be given something solid to stand on, or you will be taught to fly.”

“Excellent. You were always my best student.”

“But you can’t just…”

But she could. The feeling that emanated from the door was powerful. To Yangchen, possibly overwhelming. It was frightening for sure, a mysterious portal to somewhere just appearing out of
thin air, but the door seemed to know that. It was completely insane, but the door seemed to realize it was scary, and whatever was behind it was trying to make them feel better. The fucking door was comforting them. And out of all the things Korra had seen already, she supposed this was just another thing she was going to have to accept as reality.

She squeezed her hand again. “Asami. This feels right. This feels like it’s supposed to happen.”

Yangchen sighed. And then, all of a sudden, she spoke firmly. Almost angrily.

“It was a man. At least, I thought he was a man at first. I was afraid of him the moment I lay eyes on him. He wore a mask, you see. A white mask with a red circle on the forehead. He also had a hood on his sweatshirt, so I couldn’t see anything. Didn’t say a word. But then he took off the mask.”

Her breath hitched as they gaped at her silently.

“I never forget a face, but I wish I didn't remember this one. His eyes were black, pitch black. There was nothing there, no emotion. He looked Southern Water Tribe, dark hair, maybe forty years old. I asked him who he was and what he wanted. He was surprisingly well-spoken. He said his name was Amon. And he said he wanted...everything.”

“Amon?” Korra repeated.

“He said he wanted everything, and that he was going to take it. Then...well, I suppose you know what happened to me afterwards.”

“I’m so sorry,” Asami whispered.

“It’s...all right,” Professor Yangchen said, as if she were only realizing it in that moment. “For me, at least. I’ll be all right. But everyone else...I have no choice but to leave that to you.”

She opened the door and they had to shield their eyes from the brilliant white light that seemed to exploded before them. They could barely see as Yangchen stepped into the door, into the beyond that neither of them were yet meant to understand.

“Wait! Professor!” Korra called abruptly. “Please, one last thing! How were you not trapped on campus? You died there, but were able to travel around to the coffee shop and other houses and - our friend, Bolin. He’s like you, but he can’t do that. He’s trapped in one place. How did you leave the lecture hall?”

At first, she thought it was too late. That Yangchen had already moved on. But then...

“Sweetheart, I just really, really wanted to.”

Her voice faded, and without another word the door slammed shut and vanished without so much as a puff of smoke.
Two days later, Asami was fully moved into the house. A day after that, Pik and Pak made their own house debut. And later that night, Mako sat on the living room couch looking completely miserable about everything.

“I cannot believe this,” he said, watching the two mind-numbingly adorable cats loiter innocently on the rug.

“They’re cute,” Bolin insisted. “I love them already!”

“You’re just happy because they can see you.”

Once they were carried into the house, the first thing they did was lock eyes with Bolin. Everyone had heard the old urban legends before, that when cats stared off into space for minutes at a time, they were really staring at spirits no one else could see. As it turned out, that was all true. They had seemed mystified by Bolin at first, just staring at him with an unreadable expression as cats generally did. But once he showed he was able to pet and play with them, they were huge fans. It was a paradox that also confounded Asami to no end, but the poor girl was just going to have to get used to stuff like that.

“Yeah! So? They love you, too!”

To Mako’s vast displeasure, they did. Pik and Pak adored him for some reason, to the point that they had identified which room in the house was his and started napping in there. Pak in particular loved to rub up against his ankles and purr. Korra joked that it was because he smelled like old cat food, but in reality she was just a little bitter that the cats seemed to hate her. Whenever she walked into a room they hissed and darted away to hide, either behind one of the others or just upstairs in Mako’s room.

“Well, hopefully Korra’s done bringing strays into the house,” Mako muttered.

“What was that, now?” she called from the kitchen. She had eight hot dogs boiling in a pan for dinner, but was more than willing to sacrifice some to see if a vampire could get third degree burns. “Did someone fart? I thought I heard an asshole making noises.”

“Nothing. I’m going to work.” Mako wrapped his scarf around his neck, grabbed his keys, and scurried out the door. He’d just started orientation as a night shift security guard at Ba Sing Se Fashion Mall, an establishment in downtown Republic City that thankfully had no known vampire ties. It was a part time gig with little opportunity for more hours, but it was better than nothing, and it wasn’t like he needed retirement or benefits anyway.

“Yeah, that’s what I thought!” Korra shouted out the kitchen window as Mako headed to his car, which was parked a block down the road. Almost on cue, Asami’s Satomobile rolled up into his former parking spot. She appeared at the door and shook off her coat.

“Were you just yelling out the window?” she asked. “Why was Mako looking so grumpy?”

“That’s just his face.” Bolin said, petting Pik. The cat purred and Bolin looked absolutely delighted before moving on to Pak.
“Oh. Anyway, I got dinner!” She held up a bag of seal kebabs. “One for me, and two for Korra. I remembered you mentioning that because of some weird werewolf thing that doesn’t make any sense, you have to eat a lot.”

“And you think two seal kebabs is a lot for her?” Bolin’s sputtery giggle caused a coughing chuckle that eventually became full-body bellowing laughter. He fell over on his side and startled the cats, who darted off in alarm to their safe haven in Mako’s room.

“What’s so funny?” Asami asked, setting them on the kitchen table. “Wait, are you cooking an entire pack of hot dogs? I texted you that I was bringing food home.”

“I know, but I figured you didn’t know what ‘a lot’ meant,” Korra said. “I didn’t want you to spend all that money, anyway.”

“How much can you possibly eat?”

Bolin’s guffaws got louder.

“What’s wrong with him?”

“He’s seen me eat,” Korra said sheepishly. “Ignore him. How was class?”

“Fine. Everyone’s still really shook up about Professor Yangchen, but the world’s still turning, I guess.”

She sighed. She’d noticed the same on her first day back on campus after they shut it down for the investigation. Despite the fake news that a pack of wolves were discovered in the nearby forest outside the campus nature preserve and euthanized, most students and staff were still on edge. It appeared that no one really believed the official story. Probably most irritating was the fact the Yangchen’s body had been photographed so many times that it had gone viral, and everyone was apparently an expert in forensics. She’d heard rumors ranging from gang activity to escaped platypus bear.

Asami took a seat at the table. “Any progress out of the house today, Bolin?”

He shook his head, frustrated. “I have no idea what Professor Yangchen meant by ‘really wanting to’. Because believe me, I’ve really, really wanted to leave this place for over a year now.”

“You’ll figure it out.”

“And she got a door! How come I never got a door?”

Korra barked out a nervous laugh. “So desperate to leave us already?”

She was happy that Yangchen found passage out of the mortal plane or whatever, but the idea of losing Bolin to that bothered her. She could tell it had bothered Mako too, when they told him about the surreal experience.

“Of course not.” Bolin shook his head. “But it means I have unfinished business, right? Yangchen’s was for someone to take care of her cats and stuff, but then we resolved that for her and boom - she gets a door. What’s my unfinished business?”

“I don’t know, Bo.”

“I mean, I don’t have any loved ones anymore other than you and Mako, and I know you’ll be
fine. I’m not worried about that.”

Korra was, but she didn’t want to say it. “Uh-huh.”

“I was twenty years old. What kind of business do twenty-year-olds even have? Do I still have to turn in that Fire Nation Literature paper I had due? Because in that case I’ll be haunting this house forever.”

“Avenge your death, maybe?” Asami shrugged.

“Well, fat chance of that,” Bolin grumbled. “I don’t know who specifically killed me. We know the description and the name of the guy who killed Yangchen, and we still haven’t found him.”

They’d tried researching the name “Amon”, but only came up with two mildly hilarious articles. One was about some obscure prophetic demon known as the Marquis of Hell, Prince of the Infernal Legions. Korra had laughed that one off at first, but Asami was quick to point out that nothing was ridiculous anymore. Mako had decided it made more sense that someone had just named himself after the demon, but it still wasn’t all that reassuring. It probably wasn’t unrealistic at all, to think the actual Marquis of Hell was coming after them with an Infernal Legion.

He was definitely more likely a suspect than the other Amon they had found - Kid Amon, a washed-up rapper from Zaofu.

“What if Amon killed you too?” Korra suggested flippantly, trying to lighten the mood. “It’d be nice and convenient if we could blame this all on one guy.”

“Honestly, wouldn’t it be kind of flattering?” Asami joined in. “The Marquis of Hell himself took the time to do you in.”

“Or Kid Amon, the mastermind behind the hit summer jam ‘Droppin’ Yuans On Ya Ho’.”

Bolin and Asami stared at her.

“What? You don’t remember that?”

Bolin tossed one of the cat toys at her, smirking. “Well, I’m gonna go outside and see if I can make it out to the street. Wish me luck?”

“Good luck!” Korra smiled encouragingly. “Go through the door, please. Don’t open it.”

Bolin looked over at Asami and rolled his eyes dramatically.

“Hey, I saw that. If we get another article in the paper about being haunted, I swear - ”

“Enjoy your dinner!” Bolin cut her off gleefully as he disappeared out the door, as was his plan all along - to leave Korra and Asami together alone.

Asami seemed none the wiser as she started to unwrap the kebabs at the table. Korra tried to casually roll her hot dogs onto a plate, spilling a small puddle of juices on the floor as she did so. She resolved to mop it up later, because she was absolutely starving.

“Want one?” she asked, secretly hoping she didn’t.

Asami wrinkled her nose. “Do you even know what’s in those?”

“Like you know what’s in those seal kebabs.”
“Seal?”

“You certainly hope so,” Korra said, dropping down into her chair and defiantly dipping a hot dog into a small bowl of hot sauce she’d poured earlier.

Asami snorted. “That’s so gross.”

Korra noted that she’d chosen to sit in the chair next to her anyway, rather than across the table. Was that weird? She felt like it was weird. Although, admittedly, it was probably weirder to have an inner monologue about it.

As they ate, she noticed Asami was having trouble trying to eat the seal off the skewer. Her mistake was trying to be neat about it - seal kebabs were a cheap and messy Southern Water Tribe street food, probably not something the privileged daughter of a billionaire was accustomed to having all over her face. Bolin must have let slip to Asami at some point that Narook’s had her favorite takeout.

“Does the prissy rich girl who never ate anything off a stick before want a fork and knife?” Korra asked innocently.

“Shut up,” she grumbled. “...but yes. I’ll get them.”

She started to get up, but Korra motioned for her to stay put. “No worries, I got it. I need more hot sauce, anyway.”

As she went over to the tableware drawer, she glanced outside the window. Bolin was on the lawn, trying to stretch his foot out onto the pavement, his face twisted in concentration.

“He’s trying so hard. I really don’t get it,” Korra said sadly.

“I understand all of this even less than you do.”

“It would be cool if he made it off the lawn eventually. He could go around town, see some new things, anything but stay cooped up in here.”

“I believe in him.”

“Yeah.”

She was still watching outside as she grabbed the bottle of hot sauce, along with Asami’s cutlery, so she didn’t notice her neglected puddle of hot dog grease from earlier.

“Aaah!”

“Korra!”

Her foot slid out from under her and she pitched forward, landing on one hand while the other slammed against the floor, squirting bright red hot sauce everywhere. Asami was at her side in a second, gingerly trying to help her up.

“I’m fine, I’m fine!”

“You are not fine!” she tried to take the bottle from her hand. “Let go, you’re squirting it everywhere!”

Bolin popped into the kitchen.
“I thought I heard someone yell - oh my God!” His eyes widened at the sight of the red-splattered kitchen. “What happened?”

“It’s just hot sauce, Bo,” Korra said, wincing as she climbed to her feet.

“That’s not just hot sauce.” Asami pointed at her hand. The knife she’d been carrying must have slipped as she fell, and the impact caused it to cleave gruesomely between the left thumb and index finger.

“That...that is a whole lotta blood,” Korra commented in mild shock as she watched dark blood pour from her hand and run down her arm, in contrast with the thin, bright hot sauce.

“I think I’m gonna pass out.” Bolin announced, his voice high-pitched and terrified. “Is that even possible? I’m gonna pass out.”

“Towel!” Asami ordered, her eyes scanning the kitchen. Bolin disappeared and reappeared with several towels from the upstairs bathroom. She pressed one of them down hard onto the deep laceration.

“Ow!”

“I have to apply pressure, Korra. You’re bleeding too much. We need to get you to the hospital!”

Bolin nodded, visibly disturbed at the gory scene before him. “Avatar University Hospital is right down the - “

“No!” she cried.

“What do you mean ‘no’?!” Asami stared at her. “You need stitches. That’s not just going to heal on its own.”

“There are vampires at that hospital, remember?!”

“There are doctors there too,” Asami argued. “Come on, you can smell a vampire, we’ll run if one comes after us. I don’t think we have time to get to Republic City General. Especially now, the traffic is going to be crazy!”

“I can’t go to any hospital, though!”

“You can’t stay here,” Bolin had turned away from them. “You need help. Also, I might actually throw up. I’m a ghost, and I’m gonna throw up.”

“But I’m a werewolf!” Korra cried. “They’re going to do a set of vitals on me or something. Have you felt my heart rate? They’ll think I’m having a heart attack.”

“I think I’m having a heart attack,” Bo said, actually starting to look a bit green.

“Who knows what my other vital signs are normally. And what if they test my blood or whatever and see something in it? Like, werewolf stuff?”

Pik and Pak took that opportunity to curiously rejoin them in the kitchen, sensing all the commotion. One whiff of the hot sauce and blood, and they began to screech loudly in alarm.

“See? They probably smell something in my blood, too. I’m not all human, Asami. If someone finds out, it could be all over for me and Mako and - oh my God, Bo, could you get those fucking cats out of here!”
Their screaming was getting distracting. Bolin gathered them up in his arms and glanced back at them. He was still avoiding looking at her bloody hand.

“Asami, take her to Avatar Hospital. We don’t have any choice. She’s still bleeding.”

“I won’t let them do vitals on you,” she assured her. “Or draw any blood.”

“How?”

“I’ll figure it out, I promise. Just please, can we go? I’m worried.”

Korra swallowed hard. They’d tried so hard to stay under the radar, to just be human among all the other humans. And in one literal fell swoop, everything they’d worked for was in danger of being exposed.

But Asami’s eyes were pleading with her, as she held tightly to the quickly-saturating towel on her hand.

“Okay, let’s go.”

“Can you apply pressure here?”

“Yeah, sure.”

“That’s not pressure,” Asami said skeptically.

“It hurts!”

“I know, I know, I’m sorry,” she looked around until she found a roll of duct tape on top of the fridge. “Okay, just hold still. I’m going to wrap this around the towel.”

“Sure, just be careful - ahhhh!” Korra yelped as Asami tightened the tape around her hand viciously. The cats echoed her cry, squirming in Bolin’s arms.

“Sorry! Sorry! There needs to be pressure.”

“Ugh, don’t take this personally, but I hate you so much right now.”

Pik and Pak wailed even louder, trying to scratch at Bolin as he held onto them.

“I have to take these guys to the basement until they quiet down, they’re gonna freak out the neighbors,” he said. “One of you leave your phone, to keep me updated.”

“Don’t call Mako,” Korra said firmly. The stinging scent of hot sauce and coppery blood saturating hers and Asami’s shirts was starting to make her eyes water. The blood made her a little nauseous, bringing to mind the morning they’d found Professor Yangchen.

“I won’t, as long as you call me in half an hour. If not, I’m going to assume the worst. Okay? Call me.”

Asami tossed her phone onto the table for him, since he didn’t have one of his own and the house had no landline.

“We will.”

Asami grabbed another towel and wrapped it over the bloody old one around Korra’s hand. She
looked at her questioningly.

“What? You’re dripping! I have a really nice car and don’t know how to get blood out of leather upholstery.”

Dr. Kimura nodded sagely at Korra’s x-rays, but didn’t say anything. Then he looked over her chart and nodded again. He’d been doing that since the moment they arrived and it was starting to piss her off.

“What?” Korra demanded.

He looked offended, but answered her anyway.

“I suppose you’re lucky. There’s an artery in your hand where the knife cut, but you just barely missed it. It went deep, though, so you sheared a lot of other vessels. Thankfully, you didn’t get any ligaments or tendons either. And the bleeding has stopped, so I think those sutures are all you’ll need.

Asami breathed a sigh of relief. When they’d barged into the emergency room, splattered in red, everyone in the department freaked out. The nurse at the station rushed at them and ushered them to a stretcher behind a curtain, paging the doctor to come right away. That didn’t do much to alleviate their anxiety. But once everyone realized that most of the splatter on the two girls was actually hot sauce, they seemed kind of annoyed. As if someone who’d nearly just amputated their own thumb was an inconvenience or something.

“That’s good, right?” Korra said hopefully, looking at the gross-looking jumble of scabbed black thread holding her skin together.

“Yes. However, there are still a few unanswered questions…”

Korra and Asami shared a look.

“You lost a large amount of blood quickly, too much for just a venous bleed. It’s surprising, and I’d thought that you might have a clotting disorder. I am glad, though, that we were able to stop the bleeding fairly easily.”

“Easy for you, maybe,” Korra said dryly. He wasn’t the one that had his arm waxed, removing all of Asami’s fucking duct tape.

“Also surprising, your skin at the site didn’t pale, and your extremity never turned cool to touch. It’s unusual, with this type of trauma, for your body not to react like that. It’s a natural defense mechanism, you see. The body shunts all the bloodflow away from the extremities to reduce blood loss, and diverts it to your center, to prevent organ failure. All things considered, this was a relatively minor injury, but significant enough that your body’s lack of reaction might be worrisome.”

Korra vaguely remembered learning something like this in class. She wasn’t a doctor, but she’d always theorized that the agonizing transformation she dealt with every month made her body different than a normal human’s. After all, no normal human could physically survive the hormone surge, breaking bones, organ failures, and everything else that happened all at once during a full
moon. It made sense that her metabolism was insane, her heart could work harder, her lungs had better capacity, her blood was different, and maybe so was her reaction to trauma. She didn’t need the same evolutionary body defenses everyone else had. She had better ones.

“Did we get a set of vital signs on you?” Dr. Kimura asked, glancing over at the nurse.

The nurse, whose ID badge read “Lai”, shook her head. “There was something wrong with the machine.”

Korra had Asami to thank for that. While Lai was scrambling to stop the bleeding, she’d seen her go behind the monitor and mess with something back there. If Asami was a wizard with machines, she was probably pretty good at messing them up, too.

“Well, let’s check them. And some labs as well. CBC, BMP, coags, and a hormone panel.”

“What, what, and what?” Korra demanded. She knew what those were from school - various diagnostic blood tests. She was just in disbelief that her worst case scenario was actually happening.

Dr. Kimura jotted something down in her chart. “It’s likely nothing, but I’d like to be sure we’re not missing anything. Once we have the specimen, our lab will have the results within the hour. It won’t be too long.”

Korra swallowed and shot a nervous look at Asami, who bit her lip.

“Uh, okay.”

“Well, I’ll have your nurse over here do all that. Let me know if you need anything.”

Lai nodded and looked back at Korra after the doctor slipped out around the curtain of their medical bay.

“I guess I should get that set of vital signs first. If I could figure out what’s wrong with this stupid machine…”

She pulled the monitor from the wall and turned it around to remove the back panel. Korra had no idea if it was supposed to look like that, or is Asami had completely sabotaged it. Lai didn’t seem to either.

Asami leaned into Korra’s ear.

“I think I have an idea, but I feel really, really bad about it.”

“You know what’s going to feel really bad? When this nurse sees my resting heart rate is in the 150s and the doctor sees my *werewolf super blood under a microscope!*” Korra whispered back. “Whatever it is, we gotta do it.”

Asami sighed, but nodded. “Fine. Just play along.”

She straightened. “Ahem, ma’am?”

“Yes?” the nurse said absently, trying to figure out what the hell Asami had done to the probably extremely expensive machine.

“Are you sure you know what you’re doing?”
Lai looked up at that and quirked an eyebrow. “Excuse me?”

“I mean, when we first got here you were pretty frantic, and it honestly kind of freaked us out,” Asami said matter-of-factly.

“I thought you two were covered in blood. I thought it might have been an arterial bleed.”

“It’s also kind of troubling that you don’t know the visual differences between hot sauce and blood.”

She was keeping a straight face, her only tell being the blush across her neck. Korra kept her eyes averted down. Her ears were heating up in embarrassment. She had figured out what Asami was trying to do, but that didn’t make it any less uncomfortable for everyone involved.

“What are you trying to say?” the nurse scowled.

“And you couldn’t get vital signs on my friend. You still can’t.”

“There’s something wrong with the machine!”

“Honestly, we’re a little concerned.” Asami crossed her arms haughtily. “Is there any chance we can get another nurse to do everything else? No offense.”

“No offense!?” Lai scoffed. She glared at them angrily as she tore the curtain back to storm off, muttering “no offense” as she left.

Korra coughed. “That was, uh. That was cold. Stone cold.”

“I can’t believe I said all those things... to someone trying to help you!”

Asami pulled the curtain closed again and pushed Korra off the stretcher.

“Ow, hey!”

She climbed onto it herself and grabbed Korra’s arm.

“What are you doing - !?”

“She probably thinks I’m horrible. I bet she’s telling everyone else out there how we’re the worst,” Asami grumbled squeezing Korra’s patient ID band from her wrist and slipping it onto her own.

“What do you think you’re - ?”

“We better hope neither of us gets injured again and ends up in this ER.”

She reached behind her grabbed a roll of gauze bandages from the supply basket. Then she unraveled it and proceeded to wrap it around her own left hand.

“Asami, could you just tell me - ?”

“Stick your hands in your pockets, Korra. Don't say anything. I'm pretending to be you, and this will be easier if only one of us does the talking.”

She did as she was told, just as a new pissed-off looking nurse barged into their bay. She had a portable blood pressure cuff and vitals machine with her.
“Lai told us all about you,” she said, almost like a threat. “Said you didn’t want her to touch you, so now I have to be away from my own patients to deal with your nonsense.”

“Uh, sorry,” Asami said weakly.

“Let’s just get this over with. State your name and date of birth.”

She recited Korra’s information perfectly. The new nurse roughly wrapped her arm in the cuff and inflated it, probably to a higher pressure than was actually necessary, judging by the expression Asami was making. But she didn’t say a word.

“Your vitals are fine,” she said gruffly. “I’m gonna draw blood now.”

“Great,” Asami said through gritted teeth.

Korra frowned, grabbing Asami’s hand. “Hey are you sure - ?”

“Yes. It’s fine, I promise,” she smiled. “I’m not scared of - ow!”

The nurse set up all her supplies and without any warning, stuck Asami with the gigantic needle. To her credit, she didn’t budge as blood flowed out of her into the tubes. When the nurse was done, the tubes were labelled and she them carried off.

“Dr. Kimura will let you know when you can go,” she said as she stalked away. “You can wait in the waiting room out front. We need this bay open for other patients.”

The ‘who aren’t jerks’ didn’t have to be said. The two of them trudged over to the waiting room.

“So, yeah, we can never come here again,” Korra said, plopping into one of the uncomfortable waiting room seats. Over their heads, a night time talk show blared loudly. “Thanks, Asami. You didn’t have to do that for me.”

Asami held up the arm where they’d drawn her blood and took off the bandaid. “What, you mean literally give you my blood, sweat, and tears? No problem!”

Korra grinned. “No, really. That was above and beyond, you know? I really appreciate it.”

“Honestly, I was happy to do it.” She pulled her sleeve down. “Initial missteps aside, you’ve been really kind to me. I genuinely like you.”

Korra could feel the heat behind her ears.

“And Bolin, of course. I even have a healthy respect for Mako. If I had the chance to help any one of you, I’d do it.”

Korra didn’t quite know what to do with the silence that followed, but she felt the urge to give Asami something. Literally anything.

“Let me get you a snack from the vending machine!”

She wasn’t quite sure why she went with that.

“You don’t have to do that!” Asami said quickly. “Also, I’m not so sure about us running around the hospital at night all bloodied up. You said it yourself - vampires are around right now. It might be best to stay put and keep our heads down.”
Korra bounced her knee impatiently. She had this overwhelming urge to do something nice for her after everything that had happened, and at that point all she could think of was getting her a snack cake from the stupid vending machine in the hall. It was no more than thirty feet away, right in front of the doors that led to the main hospital hall.

“What are the chances we’re going to run into a vampire at the vending machine? It’s right over there! Come on, you can pick whatever you want.”

“Well...all right. I guess that’s okay. We didn’t exactly get to finish dinner.”

“Yeah!” Korra took her hand and pulled her up out of her chair. Together, they made their way to the vending machine and perused its contents.

Now that they were away from the loud television they could actually hear how loud the crowded waiting room was. There were nearly two dozen people crammed into the small space, some of them crying babies and whining children. Like the TV, which no one seemed to care about enough to turn down, every was loud - on their cellphones, to each other, at their kids. It was a madhouse.

Closer to the vending machine, though, Korra spied two adults sitting quietly, speaking in hushed tones. The woman seemed upset. That was weird.

“Oooh, I love those little lychee cakes!” Asami said. “Definitely D6 for me.”

The sharp smell of blood and hot sauce had lessened considerably as it dried and crusted on their clothes. Korra could actually smell other things now, aside from her own shirt. There was something strange...

“Korra? Can’t decide?”

She refocused on the machine. “I think I’m gonna go for the extra cheesy sizzle-crisps. C2.”

Asami made a face. “Has anyone ever spoken to you about your cholesterol? Maybe I should have let them check you out.”

Korra punched in their choices indignantly and slid the money in the slot.

“Just for that, you don’t get any.”

Asami snickered. “Well, I wasn’t going to beg.”

It hit Korra suddenly. The two people whispering in the corner. The woman who was sobbing quietly into a tissue, and the man sitting next to her, trying to comfort her.

The man was a vampire.

She held up a finger. “Shhh. Wait.”

“Wait for what?”

“Shhh!”

Korra crept to the other side of the vending machine and pressed herself against the wall. When Asami didn’t immediately join her to hide, she tugged on her shirt.

“What the hell are you doing?”
“I’m trying to listen!”

The vampire had his back towards them, facing the upset woman. He wore a dark blue ski cap pulled down low, and what Korra realized was a security guard’s uniform. Mako used to wear one just like it. She wanted to walk around to get a look at his face, but she didn’t want him to see her.

“Your diagnosis, I understand it’s terminal,” he was saying.

The woman nodded sadly. “I didn’t even know. It was just a routine exam. They said the cancer has already spread to my lungs. Inoperable and untreatable. I can’t believe it, I don’t even feel it.”

“That happens sometimes. Trust me, I’ve worked here long enough to have seen things like this. How long?”

Korra could swear that he’d heard his voice before, but she couldn’t place it, and the man wasn’t turning around.

“What?” the woman asked.

“How long do you have?”

“Oh. The doctor said six months. I can get a second opinion, but…”

“But no matter what they say, it will never be long enough.”

“No,” the woman wept. “I’m 45, no kids, divorced. I was always scared of growing old, because I’d be alone, but you know what? I have friends. I have money. I can travel the world. I was afraid of middle age, but now that’s all I want. I don’t want anything more than just...just to…”

She broke down, and Korra felt for her. She was blonde and pretty, looked even younger than she had said, and very healthy. It was hard to believe that she was dying.

The man leaned forward to hug her.

“I know. I know. Listen, what if I told you I had a way.”

The woman sniffed. “What do you mean?”

“What if I told you that I knew of a way you could live. Not just through middle age, but much longer. You could travel the world. You could see everything you never got to see. You could be a part of something greater than just yourself. You can change the world.”

“I...don’t understand.”

“No, but you will. Here is my card. We have a group for good people like you, and our next meeting is this Thursday at 7pm. It’ll answer all your questions. Just come to this address, or call that number. We can help you. There are no obligations, but I promise you won’t be disappointed.”

“I...thank you.”

“You’ll be fine. Just keep your head up, all right?”

“Thank you. You’re so kind.”

Suddenly, out of nowhere, Korra’s phone started to ring. She and Asami jumped out of their skin as the loud ringing echoed down the hall.
Korra silenced it, but it was too late. The woman looked up for a moment at the vending machine, nearly catching Korra and Asami staring at her. The vampire, however, didn’t move an inch.

“Will you be there? At the meeting?” the woman asked.

“I don’t go to all of them, but yes, I’ll be there on Thursday if it means you’ll come.”

“I will.”

Korra assumed he smiled as he got up. He put a hand on her shoulder and squeezed reassuringly. But just before he walked off, he stopped with his back still turned to them. For some reason, Korra felt like he was smiling even wider.

“Oh, and please - no dogs allowed.”

She felt a chill run down her spine as the vampire walked out the automatic sliding doors into the parking lot. Asami grabbed her wrist.

“Korra -

“Asami. That was one of them.”

She blanched. “I figured. That last thing he said - ‘no dogs allowed’ - did he mean…?”

“Yeah. He knew I was here.”

"Fuck. Wait - Korra, where are you going?!"

Korra rushed over to the woman, who had gathered her purse and looked like she was about to leave as well.

“Hey! Hey, ma’am?”

The woman blinked at her. “Yes?”

“I’m sorry to bother you - I was just wondering. Who was that man you were talking to?”

She shook her head. “He’s a security guard here. We’d met before at one of my doctor appointments, but I never got his name. He’s very nice, though.”

Korra eyed the business card in her hand. “Yes, I know. I’ve, uh, I’ve spoken to him as well. I lost the card he gave me, though. It’s for a - um, family member. I don’t suppose I can take a picture of yours? I’m a little embarrassed to tell him I lost mine.”

The woman nodded kindly. “Of course. Here you go. I should tell you though, if you end up going, he said no dogs allowed. I don’t have one, but I guess if you do…”

“No dogs,” Korra repeated through her clenched teeth as she snapped a photo. “Thanks so much. I hope you...uh...feel better. Have a good night.”

“You too.”

The woman left. Asami peered over Korra’s should at the picture she’d taken.

*The Red Lotus*
“Korra, am I crazy, or was that vampire just trying to...uh...?”

“Coerce that scared, depressed cancer patient into becoming a vampire by luring her to this place and promising her eternal life? Yeah, I fucking think so.”

“I don’t think she’s the only one,” Asami fretted. “He mentioned that they have a group. They might have been doing this for a while. Who knows how many vampires they’ve recruited this way?”

“Yeah.”

“Do you...I mean, I know Mako used to work here. A security guard, like that guy. Do you think he knew?”

She didn't have to say anything. They both knew the answer to that. Korra swiped on her phone to her missed calls and found the one she’d silenced - Bolin, of course, calling from Asami’s phone to check on them. She called him, and he answered at the first ring.

“Korra!? Thank god, are you guys okay!?”

“We’re fine. But I am going to wring your brother’s neck.”

Chapter End Notes

HAPPY HOLIDAYS!!!

This was a little bit of a rush job, since I'm going away for a week and wanted to update before I left. Please excuse whatever mistakes you find, lol. I hope everyone is well, and for those that aren't quite so great at the moment - theres a new year around the corner!
Mako got home around half past midnight, to his three very angry housemates standing at the door.

“Uh, what’s going on?” He asked, unraveling his red scarf from his neck.

Before anyone could say anything, Korra stepped forward and punched him hard in the stomach. He crumpled over, knees hitting the floor.

“Korra!” Asami wrapped both arms around her and pulled her back. “Korra, stop it!”

“No!” She tried to break out of her bear hug, but she was taller. She had comparable martial arts expertise, but with all leverage. “No, he is a lying piece of shit.”

Bolin didn’t even mention the stupid jar.

“She’s right, bro. You’re a piece of shit.” He helped him up and shut the door. “Tell me you didn’t know.”

“What’s going on!?" Mako gasped, still clutching at his gut. “Didn’t know what!?”

“Didn’t know that the vampires are trying to recruit dying patients into their ranks,” Korra hissed. “That the vampires are preying on the hospital, promising innocent people a way to cheat death without telling them that they’ll become bloodthirsty monsters in the process!”

He didn't need to answer. They all knew, just from the expression on his face.

Bolin looked stricken. “I don’t believe it.”

“How did - why were you at the hospital?”

“You do not get to ask the questions,” Korra spat, nearly throwing off Asami that time.

“Hey, your stitches. Be careful.”

Mako’s eyes widened as he reached out to see her hand. “What happened?”

Asami grabbed his wrist and pushed it away. “I think you’d better stop avoiding it and tell us everything you know. No lies, or I’m letting her go.”

Mako eyes traveled over each of them slowly. Guiltily.

“Yeah, I knew.”

Korra felt like she was being slapped in the face. She had never actually felt betrayal before. Not like this.

“How could you? How could you do this?”

Mako had spent every waking hour of the past year struggling with who he was, both emotionally and physically. They knew he hated it. He didn’t like to talk about it anymore, but Korra distinctly
remembered a time near the beginning, when he wished he’d just died like Bolin. In a way, it was definitely easier. No insatiable hunger tugging at every corner of his mind and no violent blood lust. There was even a ray of hope in the form of a mysterious doorway, an eventual way out for ghosts. As unclear as that whole situation was, the fate of a vampire was even less certain.

It was unimaginable, that Mako would stand by and let innocent people get misled into the same fate.

“I didn’t! I swear, I never - you have to believe me,“ he pleaded. “I never even spoke to a patient before. That’s why I quit! I could never do something like that, turn someone into something like me. That’s why I left them!”

“And you just let them?” Asami accused. “You just knew and you let them keep turning people into vampires?”

“What was I supposed to do?” he asked. “Tell the hospital? Tell the cops? They’re both part of the vampire infrastructure, remember?”

“So much for vampires just wanting to be a secret,” Bolin said darkly.

“They do! At least, they did, historically.” Mako shook his head. “Now, I don’t know. Something new is going on, and once I got wind of it, I noped right out of there.”

“You could have told the patients!” Korra said. “At least told them that what being a vampire really was and warned them to stay away from this!”

“Be realistic, Kor. With vampires, you have to keep your head down. Don’t bother them, and they won’t bother you.”

Korra managed to shake Asami off just enough to pull out her phone. She shoved the picture of the Red Lotus business card in his face.

“I was keeping my head down, but they’re still bothering me .”

Mako read the card and sighed. “I know this seems really bad.”

“Are you saying its not really bad?” Asami demanded.

“Look, they don’t lie to these people,” Mako said. “At least, not really. They tell them outright that the plan is to turn them into vampires. Immortality has a strong draw for people that are dying, though. From what I’ve heard, no one ever turns it down.”

“But what if they did?” Asami asked. “I’ll bet they don’t just let them go on home and live the rest of their lives in peace. Not with how secretive vampires are.”

“No one turns it down,” Mako repeated. “They’re really stringent in their interview process. They go for people who will consent without question. All those vampire security guards, transport assistants, janitors, etc - they are a screening process. They don’t want to have to kill people for no reason.”

“How thoughtful,” Korra said sarcastically.

“The goal is to recruit, right? The best way to do that is to have a willing participant. Doing something against someone’s will would just complicate things. There’s no point in making things harder.”
"You’re making it sound like you approve,” Korra accused.

“No! No, I swear - I left them because I think it’s wrong!”

“But you think the right thing to do is turn your back to it?” she challenged. “Let people become vampires?”

“Listen, I don’t want more vampires. I don’t,” Mako said. “But those people want to live! Don’t you get that? Those people are dying!”

“Then they die!” Asami cried, her eyebrows practically leaping off her forehead in disbelief. “I can’t even believe this is part of the argument. People die! That’s part of being human! How are you so sure that what they want is living as a vampire?”

"You say yourself that it's a curse like, every day,” Korra added.

“Not everyone is like me!”

Asami frowned. “The vampires don’t get to play God here.”

“Oh, and what are you doing, then?” Mako pointed out. “Are you gonna be the one going around telling people they have to die? How is that not playing God?”

Korra glowered at him. It was different. It was absolutely different. And when she could precisely articulate why, she was totally going to tell him. She kind of figured Asami would have a brilliant comeback for that one, but Asami looked just as lost as she felt.

“Fine, wait, let's take the choice of life or death out of the equation for a minute.”

"How convenient, that you can do that so easily," Mako said dryly. "If only everyone had that choice, huh?"

"We’re talking about a vampire factory ,” Asami hissed, ignoring the burn. “The fact is, vampires are recruiting other vampires. Vampires that have been known to murder without consequence are looking to increase their numbers. I feel like that is really bad.”

Mako curled his fingers in his hair in frustration. “This is why I wanted nothing to do with this. It’s too much to deal with, so I decided to focus on what matters to me - keeping us safe. What exactly do you propose we do?”

“Not look away while an army of vampires takes over the city?” Korra suggested.

“That’s not an answer! We’re just four kids. Three of us aren’t even human, and I don’t know, the jury’s still out on whatever the fuck is going on with you ,” he said, glaring at Asami. “What do we even do about it? How do you think we’re going to take down a vampire conspiracy?”

“We’ll figure it out,” Korra said. “We’ll figure it out because we care. We’re not selfish.”

“I literally do everything for you and Bolin!” Mako exploded. “Everything!”

“There is more in this world than just us!” she shouted back.

“Not to me there isn’t!”

Korra had to actively restrain herself from hitting him again. She took several slow, deep breaths.
“I don’t know what to do about all this. I know it’s scary and crazy to think about. But you want us to live our lives? You want us to just pretend to be happy, normal humans? No one is going to get that chance if we don’t do something.”

“No. Not this time, Kor,” Mako said firmly. “You are so - God, why do you always have to try to save everything!? The stupid cats, Professor Yangchen, Asami, Bolin and I? What is with you? Have you forgotten that it was your fucking hero complex that got you turned into a werewolf in the first place and - !?”

Korra clenched her fists and Bolin abruptly shoved his brother back.

“We are not going there. You crossed the line, bro.”

Asami looked bewildered, but she at least had the sensibility not to ask. It was glaringly obvious that what had happened to Korra was a taboo subject in the house. They never talked about what happened to her.

“She needs to understand - “

“Don’t,” Bolin warned him. “Just don’t.”

“Oh, let him talk!” Korra crowed. “Let’s see what amazingly insightful thing he has to say now!”

Asami literally stepped in there, before it all blew up any more.

“Okay, stop.” she said, separating all three by forcing herself between them. “Everyone, just chill out.”

Mako practically snarled at her, but instead of responding, he just kicked his shoes off violently and stormed up to his room. Pik and Pak emerged from under the couch and followed closely at his heels, hissing at the rest of them as they went.

Bolin sighed defeatedly. “I’m gonna go talk to him.”

“Do you think he just needs to be left alone for a while?” Asami wondered.

“No. I’m sick and tired of his bratty emo vampire crap.” Bolin disappeared.

Korra flopped stomach-down on the couch and buried her face in a throw pillow. A moment later she felt Asami try to sit on the couch with her, so she shifted her hips to allow her room. A gentle hand found its way to her back and began to rub circles between her shoulder blades.

“I hate him,” she said, her voice muffled in the pillow.

“No, you don’t.”

“No, I don’t,” Korra conceded. “But I can’t stand him and his misguided, idiotic, overprotective papa bear bullshit.”

“Well, he wasn’t completely wrong. I’ve only known you a couple weeks and I have noticed you like protecting people. You and Mako are the same, that way. Only he’s hyper-focused on keeping just you guys safe, and you’re more...an all-inclusive type.”

“Fine, he gets points for that for caring about us. But come on, there are more than just the three of us in Republic City. Last I checked there was like, eight million other people to worry about.”
Asami’s hand stopped.

“Yeah. But honestly, before my mother died, I had a happy family. It’s been so long, but I do remember what it’s like to have something like this. Mako knows he’s beyond lucky to have you. If I were in his place, if my family was on the line…”

“You wouldn’t let the whole city burn, though. Not just for three people.”

When Asami didn’t answer, Korra rolled over to face her. She was gazing wistfully into space.

“Asami? Seriously?” Korra’s eyebrows shot up. This was kind of a surprise. Would she really consider saving just her family - or at least, what her family used to be - over countless others?

“It’s not a question of who I want to save, because of course, the answer is everyone. I want everyone to be happy,” Asami said. She had an edge of doubt in her voice, which was rare. “But I absolutely would love my family more than I would a complete stranger. That’s part of being human, isn’t it? Loving people more than you thought you could. Finding those choice people out of all the billions of us in the whole world, and somehow making that meaningful connection. Humanity is what makes family and love possible. It’s what makes that question so hard to answer. If it was only a numbers game, I mean, we’d all just be robots, right?”

Korra watched her. Her other hand hadn’t moved from when she was rubbing her back, and when she’d turned over, it rested gently on her ribs.

“I knew it’d be nice to have a human in the house,” she said.

Asami grinned and met her gaze. It was then that she must have realized where her hand was resting. Blushing, she started to withdraw it, but Korra held it in place with her own.

They stayed that way for a moment, just looking at each other quietly as their hands rose and fell with Korra’s breaths.

“Your breathing is kind of fast,” Asami noticed awkwardly. “It’s a good thing the people at the hospital didn’t notice.”

“Yeah. It’s even a little quicker now, with the full moon so close.”

Worry suddenly darkened her expression, like someone splashing water on a fresh painting, and Korra immediately wished she hadn’t brought it up.

“Oh, my God, I completely forgot. It’s this coming Friday, isn’t it?”

“Yeah, but I’ve had it all planned out now for a while,” Korra assured her. She always orchestrated the day of a full moon perfectly, with as little outside world interaction as she could manage. “My last class ends at two, and I got the evening off work. I’ll be home in plenty of time to lock myself in the cage.”

Asami’s hand tightened slightly around hers.

“Is there anything I can do to help?”

Korra shook her head. “Nah. All I really want is for you to not be there.”

“Oh.”

“That came out wrong,” Korra said quickly, heat rising in her ears. “I just meant, in terms of
keeping you safe and keeping me, well, private. It’s really not a fun thing to watch. Or listen to. If you can’t be out of the house, I’d feel much better if you just stayed locked in your room. Preferably with noise cancelling headphones on.”

Asami looked at her sadly. “Is it that bad? I’d been wanting to ask more about it for a while, but never really found the right time. I already feel like I’m stepping on boundaries everywhere as it is, especially with Mako. I didn’t want to do the same to you.”

“I wish ‘bad’ was a strong enough word for it.” Korra sighed. “There isn’t much to say about it, anyway. I change into a monster. It hurts, it’s disgusting, and I’m just...embarrassed to have a new person witness it. That’s all.”

Asami nodded. “I get it. Say no more. I’ll stay away.”

She couldn’t help but smirk. “Really? Your scientific curiosity won’t compel you to sneak into the basement with a laptop and camera so you can take notes and attempt to use astrophysics to explain werewolf metamorphoses and the lunar cycle?”

“I’m kinda sensing I’m supposed to say no, but that’s exactly what I want to do.”

Korra laughed and sat up so that their hands remained clasped between them on the couch. She hoped she wasn’t toeing the line, but Asami didn’t seem uncomfortable in the slightest.

There was really no point in denying it now - their feeble hand-holding was only making her want more. Korra had been downplaying her little crush for weeks. Those piercing eyes and that disarming smile of Asami’s had hooked her on day one, and had been reeling her in little by little ever since.

But that train of thought had to end there. She was a fucking werewolf and she’d broken ties with literally everyone else in her life - including Mako, at one point - for that exact reason. Korra was dangerous, abnormal, and an unpredictable threat to anyone that wanted to live a long and happy life. Up until this beautiful woman showed up on her doorstep, she had made up her mind not to get close to anyone, other than her resident vampire and ghost.

Asami smiled, a little confused as to why Korra looked like she was going to say something, but wasn’t saying anything.

“Kor?” She squeezed her hand again. “Something wrong? I was kidding, you know. I won’t sneak into the basement.”

Korra slid her hand away.

“No, yeah, I know.”

Asami stared at her. “What? Did I say something wrong again?”

“No, you’re fine.”

“So...we’re not doing the hand thing anymore because...?”

Korra blushed and was charmed by the fact that she was blushing, too.

“Okay, just tell me what’s going on here, because I’m totally not used to feeling like this much of an idiot,” Asami said anxiously.
“You’re not an idiot.”

“So I wasn’t wrong?” she asked. “In thinking...you and me...?”

Korra grabbed the throw pillow and proceeded to bury her face in it again.

“Oh, my God,” she moaned.

“Yeah. Same.”

“No, okay, wait, wait,” Korra removed the pillow and cringed at Asami’s bewildered expression. “Look, I do like you. Okay? You’re pretty and smart and wow, you’re super open-minded and brave and stuff. I mean, wow. You know?”

“Thanks? Same to you?”

“Ugh. We shouldn't even be having this conversation.”

Asami pulled the pillow away from her face and forced her to look her in the eye.

“Why not? Is it because of the stalking thing? Because I’m totally over that. Or is it because we just became housemates? Because we have separate rooms, it doesn’t have to be a big deal. Or - “

“I feel like the fact that we have an actual list of reasons why we shouldn’t even start this is probably the most important reason,” Korra pointed out. “But the first thing on there should be - I’m a werewolf. Even if I did have a thing for you, it’s not like anything could come of it. I can try as hard as I can to just be human, but at the end of the day, I’m not.”

Asami frowned. “Well, in case you might’ve forgotten, I’ve been stalked by vampires, may or may not have one for a father, and can see dead people. I’m not exactly normal either.”

“I know, but you aren’t trapped. Not like the three of us. We can’t stop being what we are, but you... You can live with us until you finish school, then go to another city and just move on. None of this needs to affect you or your whole life. You can escape.”

Asami pursed her lips.

“Well, if that isn’t the absolute stupidest thing I’ve ever heard you say,” she scoffed. “Escape?! Literally just minutes ago we were fighting with Mako about how we can’t just keep our heads down like that. What’s wrong with you?”

“I don’t know. I’m just saying, I wouldn’t blame you, and neither would the boys. You’re just a human.”

And it was all the more evident when Asami had suggested ”taking life and death out of the equation” earlier. Mako's sarcasm was a bit much, but his point was made. She had the luxury of being firmly on one side. Being alive and human, with a rigid point of view. But to people that were dying, to people like Mako, Korra, and Bolin, life and death was the most important question - the only question, really, that mattered. She saw the world in a relative black and white. All that intelligence, limited by inexperience.

“Where is this even coming from, Korra?” Asami shifted a bit, a little further away from her, so she could glare properly.

“We would give anything to have what you have,” she insisted. “A way out of all this. You don’t
“You guys like saying that, don’t you?” She scowled. “I don’t understand? I don’t get to join the pity party? Newsflash, Korra: you’re only a monster one night a month. That’s twelve nights a year. If you live another fifty years, that’s what, 600 nights? Out of 18,250? That’s only like, three percent of the time.”

Before Korra could marvel at her astoundingly precise mathematical ability, Asami ruined it.

“And all those times, you’re locked up safe and sound! I’ve met bus drivers that are more dangerous than you are!”

“I’ve been a werewolf for three years,” Korra reminded her. “Do you think I had a basement with a cage for all three years? Every single time I changed?”

“I…”

“No, I know how it looks to you,” she said sharply. “It’s easy to joke about, and pretend it’s like some innocent little secret I have. But imagine - one loose hinge, one open door, one curious neighbor. One tiny thing goes wrong in my routine and…”

Korra closed her eyes. Memories of the past came rushing to the front of her mind. Waking up in the snow, covered in blood that wasn’t hers.

“What happened to you?” Asami asked quietly, evidently unable to help herself. Korra’s first reaction was to bristle in self-defense. They’d made it clear that this was not a subject they talked about, and Asami really needed to rein in her compulsive, insensitive question-asking.

“Wow. Really?”

Asami flinched. But the look she was giving her was so earnestly innocent that it made something inside her ache. It was similar to what Korra felt when she broke up with Mako after dating him for three months. Yet somehow, after less than a month of knowing Asami, something told her she wasn’t going to buy the same generic “it’s not you, it’s me” speech quite so easily.

“Sorry.”

“Well, I - “ Korra hesitated. “I mean, I guess if you’re living with us you have a right to know.”

“It’s a personal question, and I was dumb to ask. Never mind.”

“No, you should know. It’ll help you...understand,” she said dully. At the very least, Asami should understand the dangers she faced living in the house. It wouldn’t have been fair to accept her rent checks if she didn’t. And maybe, if she heard her story, her mind would open up a little more to what they had to deal with as monsters. “A little over three years ago, I had just graduated high school and was preparing for my first semester at SPU - South Pole University. I’m from there. Southern Water Tribe.”

Asami chanced a tiny grin. “No offense, but a person in a coma could tell that from like a mile away.”

“Shut up, I’m telling a story,” Korra was fighting her own amused grin. This was definitely not the time for light-hearted banter. “I had a best friend growing up. Naga. We met when we were eleven and basically became as close as any two people could be. Even our parents were friends with each other. They kind of had to be, since we got into all sorts of mischief and they were constantly
Korra had to smile at the thought of her. Naga was always bigger than her, and much more intimidating to look at. She was, however, the kindest, gentlest soul she had ever met. She was quiet in class, and easily picked on by bullies for her size. Korra was always happy to bloody the nose of anyone that made Naga’s timid smile disappear. She wasn’t all cuddly innocence, though. Naga had an adventurous streak under all that saint-like demeanor, and big dreams for the both of them. Korra never felt like just a person when she was around Naga. With her, Korra was a future doctor, a future professional athlete, they even fancied themselves future astronauts once. She never doubted that with Naga, they truly could clone dinosaurs and open a real life Jurassic Park.

“Anyway, right after graduation, Naga had this idea that we go on vacation. Just the two of us.”

Asami eyed her carefully. “Best friends, huh?”

“Don’t get ahead of the story,” she warned. “Although fine, no, we weren’t just best friends. I told you to shut up!”

“Sorry.”

“Anyway, we went away for a few days to see the Glacier Spirits Festival. Neither of us had ever gone, despite having lived our whole lives in the South Pole, so we splurged on a pair of scenic train tickets. It was really cool, like a two-day ride that stopped at all these South Pole landmarks,” Korra said. “Anyway, we got off at one of the stops to stretch our legs. The train was stopped for a full hour, and it was the middle of the night, so we went to this pub that was still open by the station.”

She paused. “The South Pole is a little more traditional than the United Republic, as you can probably imagine. Have you ever been?”

“No.”

“Well, it’s the most beautiful place on earth, but I wouldn’t rush over or anything,” Korra said dryly. “Lots of people who think lots of old-fashioned things. The guys at the pub didn’t exactly like looking at two girls holding hands, rubbing knees, looking into each other’s eyes, and all that. And they weren’t shy about it. One person threw a beer can at us, called Naga and I names. You don’t even want to know.”

“Oh, my God.”

“I was ready to punch that guy in the teeth,” Korra said, her heart pounding in her ears. “But Naga talked me out of it. She made us leave and get back on the train. I was a hothead, but she always managed to cool me down.”

Asami smiled. “She sounds wonderful.”

Korra swallowed hard. “Yeah. But the name he called Naga...it really killed me, you know? Naga was perfect, but I could tell it hurt her. It drove me a little crazy. I wasn’t done with him. I wasn’t able to just leave it so easily, like she could.”

“Oh, no. Korra.”

“So while Naga was using the bathroom on the train, I hopped off and went looking for that guy. I just wanted to give him a piece of my mind, you know? I went back to the bar and he was still there, with all his cronies. I picked a fight, which I’ll admit was not the best idea - “
“Korra.”

“I just wanted him to take it back,” she whispered. “I wanted him to apologize. Made him come outside, in case it became a real fight. That was my second mistake. His goons grabbed me and dragged me out into a truck that was parked outside. They beat me to a pulp in there. Like, really bad. As in, they broke both my legs. I could barely even see - there was blood in my eyes or something, I don’t know. I tasted it in my mouth…”

She trailed off for a moment. The only other person she’d ever told everything was long gone. She’d never even really told Mako or Bolin in this much detail. At first, it was because she didn’t want to scare them away. Later, it was that she didn’t want them to worry too much because they were such brothers to her now. Brothers that would never really get what it was like. There were no such qualms with Asami. She was still paying rapt attention, despite the horror in her eyes, and Korra didn’t feel like anything could scare her anymore at that point. Living with the background fear of someone hating you for being a queer woman was something she could relate to, something she might actually have dealt with herself. Unlike being inhuman, that was a common thread they shared.

“So yeah, he was a werewolf. I remember him screaming as he changed. I mean, I scream too. The agony is unbearable. But for me, it’s always just that - screaming from pain. No words. But for him, he was shouting about me. At me. Saying people like me deserved this. That he’d find Naga and kill her too. Just...I don’t know, somehow for him, his hate was more powerful than the pain. I tried to get away, but they’d roughed me up too much. I couldn't even drag myself within view of the road. It took him maybe 2 hours to change completely, but he started to attack long before then. He got me. And he wasn’t even all the way werewolf when he did it.”

Asami never broke eye contact. She just nodded.

“Long story short, I woke up a couple days later in the hospital. Naga was there,” Korra’s voice wavered. “I’d been out of it for a week. Severe injuries, but I’d lived. I was lucky. The werewolf actually killed someone else. Some poor fur trapper by the lake. I told my parents about the werewolf, but no one believed me. The Southern Water Tribe has lots of stories about shapeshifters and stuff, you know, like myths and legends. They just said I’d been listening to too many of those. The official story is that some unidentified suspects committed a hate crime and left me to die, and then a pack of regular wolves showed up. No one believed me, except Naga.”

Korra swallowed, blinking back tears. “We spent the next few weeks researching werewolf legends and shapeshifter stories passed down by our ancestors and whatever. I wasn’t so sure about the the curse being passed on to me, but Naga was worried. Our town was small, but densely populated. Just to be safe, she thought we should get me away from so many people for the next full moon. So we went away again, this time to an old cabin in the woods that used to belong to her aunt. She said she’d tie me up and lock me in the shed, while she locked herself in the cabin. It seemed like a great plan at the time…”

Korra had to stop for a moment. The sob caught in her throat.

“It’s okay. Listen, it’s okay,” Asami said. “You don’t have to.”
“I do,” she whimpered. “I do, because I want you to see. I changed in the shed, but the ropes we used were nothing. I ripped them like floss. It might have taken a while, but the wolf eventually broke out of the shed, too. And Naga...she’d heard my screaming and wanted to check on me. She didn’t stay in the house like she said she would.”

“Korra…”

“This time, I woke up in the snow covered in blood, two miles from the cabin. The police found Naga’s body right outside the shed. She’d never even gotten the chance to run.”

Asami reached out, but Korra moved away.

“She was everything to me,” she said, through tears. “Everything.”

“I know. It was an accident.”

“That’s the problem,” Korra sobbed. “It’s always an accident. I just can’t control it. There have been too many accidents. Naga was only the first.”

“Korra, you had no control - “

“It doesn’t matter. It doesn’t. Each and every accident was my fault.”

“No.”

“Yes,” Korra said fiercely. “Yes, it’s my fault. Every minute I walk around, knowing what I’m capable of, is a minute that I am responsible for the time bomb inside of me. I’ve considered it, you know. Just like Mako. I’ve considered just offing myself.”

“Stop, Korra…”

“But I’m not brave enough. And eventually, the thoughts were just kind of pushed to the back of my mind as my last kill gets further and further away in time. It’s been two and a half years, and I have four people on my conscience that I know of. I’ve been lucky since then, but it’s only a matter time before my luck runs out.”

“No,” Asami said. “No, you’re not lucky. You’re smart. You have a system. You stick to it.”

“Horses have been domesticated for centuries and they still hurt people sometimes. Same with dogs, and they can still attack their owners without warning. We’re all still animals. The difference is, I can kill much more easily.”

“You’re not a horse! You’re not a dog!” Asami cried. “You’re you.”

“I’m not just me,” Korra insisted. “I’m not. I’m someone that was handed a ticking package on a crowded subway platform at rush hour, and instead of doing something about it, I’m just standing around pretending I don’t hear it.”

Asami stared at her for a moment.

“This doesn’t change how I feel about you.”

“All this time, I thought you were so smart.”

“I am,” Asami said. “I’m an actual genius. And I’m telling you, you’re wrong. You’re a person, Korra. A beautiful, amazing person and this world is lucky to have you. The wolf is just that - a
wolf that is separate from who you are. A wolf that you protect the world from every full moon.”

“We’re - “

“Don’t say ‘we’ like that!” Asami said forcefully. “You and the wolf are not a ‘we’. You aren’t the monster, the wolf is. And you fight it every month, you stop it from killing more people every month. And those times it slipped out through the cracks, you did everything in your power that you could. That can’t be blamed on you.”

“I’m not some hero, Asami.”

“Yes, you are, and that’s the problem.” Asami said. “Mako was right - you’ve got a hero complex. But that is your only fault. Not Naga, not the other victims, not being a werewolf. Your only fault here is that you can’t forgive yourself.”

Korra snorted bitterly. “How cliché.”

“Nobody’s perfect,” she shrugged. “If you had a completely stable mental state and a butt like that? It would have been so unfair.”

The comment came so completely out of nowhere that Korra was shocked into laughing. She wiped whatever tears were left in her eyes with her sleeve and held her arm there.

“Oh, God, you’re crazy,” she said into her sleeve.

“Hey, you’re not the only one with emotional baggage, buddy,” Asami pulled her arm down and tugged her into a half hug on the couch. “Just you wait.”

“Yeah? I’m all ears.”

“No, no. I think I’ll wait for our next big moment. I get to ruin that one, okay?”

“Heh. Okay, sure.”

Chapter End Notes

Sorry as always for long delays between chapters. Hope you enjoyed these almost 6000 words of pure dialogue! lol
Mako's Room

Chapter Notes

This chapter wasn't originally planned, but people in the comments mentioned they wanted to see what Mako and Bolin were talking about. I figured it was a good idea, so here's a bonus chapter while I work on the next one lol.

Bolin punched the air quietly in triumph as Korra and Asami smiled at each other. He’d been eavesdropping on their conversation, just to make sure they wouldn’t ruin their whatever - their thing . He’d found lots of ways to keep himself busy in his living purgatory, but shipping people was one of his favorite pastimes. And Korrasami was way more interesting than their neighbors, Lady Next Door Who Didn’t Recycle and Weird Earlobe Guy Across The Street.

When Bolin finally appeared in his brother’s room, Pik and Pak leapt to Mako’s defense, meowing loudly at the ghostly intruder.

“Hey, hey, relax,” he told them. “I’m not gonna yell at him. Why are these cats so dramatic? No wonder they like you so much.”

Mako glared at him from where he was sitting on the bed, arms and legs crossed like a defiant child, literally just scowling at the door until someone followed him up to his room.

“How am I the dramatic one? Korra sucker-punched me as soon as I stepped into the house!”

Bolin shrugged. “Okay, ambushing you probably wasn’t our best move. But in her defense...you’re immortal?”

“You’re always defending her!”

“Nuh-uh! We just have a little more in common. Except about this stuff. I mean, I’m actually on your side with this.”

“You are?” he asked suspiciously.

“Yes, stupid, sometimes people are on your side. Stop being so emo, c’mon,” Bolin rolled his eyes. “Don’t get me wrong - we gotta do something about the vampire mill just churning out new vamps. But we have no plan. Without one, four misfits versus an army of centuries-old super humans that drink blood probably means we're going to be taking the L.”

“Well, what the hell? Thanks for all the support back there!”

Bolin scowled. “First of all, I was still mad at you for not telling us. Second of all, I was going to say something until you brought up how Korra became a werewolf! What is wrong with you?!?”

“You know how she is! She finds a cause to fight for and just dives in head first,” Mako insisted. “She doesn’t think, just blindly follows whatever misguided notion of justice pops into her head. Someone’s got to watch out for her!”
He wasn’t completely wrong, of course. One of Korra’s most consistent personality quirks was identifying a cause worth fighting for, and then getting in trouble because of it. But Bolin had seen enough of the world in his young life and death to know people that good and that brave weren’t so common. He wasn’t going to yell at Korra just because she was impulsive about it.

“Her heart is in the right place.”

“Her heart is gonna get her killed. It’s already gotten her hurt,” Mako said sourly. “I’ll admit I was an ass for bringing it up, but what happened to her in the South Pole is the perfect example. And I’m gonna be honest, I’m still not a big fan of Asami.”

“Gosh, really?” Bolin said sarcastically. “Never would have guessed.”

“She feeds into it. She keeps putting her into risky positions. What the hell even happened to her hand tonight?”

“That was technically Korra’s fault. It was a hot dog/hot sauce accident.”

“I honestly don’t even know how to respond to that.”

Bolin eyed him carefully. “You’re not jealous of her or anything, right?”

Mako visibly recoiled, scooting back further in the bed.

“Not like you’re into Korra,” he clarified. “I meant jealous that Korra has someone else now she seems to genuinely like, outside of us.”

He snorted, but didn’t respond. Typical Mako. Bolin sighed.

“You’re the one that wanted to do this. I didn’t want to hold anyone back, so I told you to leave me here in this house. I told you to forget about me, and act like I was dead because I was dead. Korra wanted to leave too, have you forgotten that? Before moving in, she was about to quit school and become some hermit in the Earth Kingdom swamps.”

His brother barked out a bitter laugh. “As if she could live without seal kebab trucks.”

“You’re the one that knocked some sense into us and pulled us together. You’re the one that said I could be happy here with you guys around, that you could control your urges with us to ground you, and that Korra can finish school and have an actual life with us to support her. You’re the one that said maybe three monsters can be kinda normal, ‘just adjacent to actual humanity. Not quite human, but close enough.’ Remember saying that?”

“Things have changed, though.”

Things certainly had. Korra was nearly done with school, she actually talked about her work friends, and now there was Asami. Suddenly, she was a little more than just humanity-adjacent. But Bolin wasn’t about to fault her for that, either. What exactly was bothering Mako so much?

“Listen, bro, we both really appreciate how much you do for all of us, but she doesn’t need it anymore. You gotta let her live, you know? Being human, it’s what we’ve always wanted, isn’t it?”

“So you’ll be fine when she leaves us?”

Bolin frowned at his sour expression. “Uhh…?”

“Seriously, you never thought about it?”
He shook his head vigorously, but it was a lie. He’d considered many, many times what it would be like if Korra or Mako ever decided they didn’t want to stay at the house anymore. Or if they just couldn’t afford it anymore. But these were thoughts he was used to. This had been Bolin’s greatest fear for a year now, and he’d had a year to come to the conclusion that it didn’t matter - he wanted his brother and Korra to be happy. And no matter what, no matter how insane with loneliness he got, he never doubted that if they were okay, he’d be okay.

Mako clearly had a different philosophy. It was obvious that Mako wouldn’t be okay if he was alone. They were both cursed to walk the earth for whatever an eternity was, but they had very different eternities. Both were isolated, Bolin literally and Mako with a self-imposed isolation to prevent him from hurting anyone. But Bolin didn’t have to live with the constant thirst and never-ending desire to feed on humans. Bolin didn’t have blood on his hands. It was much easier to live with yourself forever, if you were innocent.

He always understood that about his brother. But it was only now that he made the connection between that and his attitude of late. Especially since they discovered through Professor Yangchen that even ghosts had a way out. Alone, it was too easy for Mako to lose that last bit of humanity he had left. It was too easy for him to become a true monster.

Mako noted his non-answer and sighed.

“Whatever. It’s fine. Korra can move on, and you can move on. It’ll just be me, sitting around with nowhere to move on to. That’s fine.”

As a ghost, Bolin had mostly gotten rid of the habit of sitting down. It was completely unnecessary when you didn’t have a body to rest anywhere, and frankly, it always felt like more of a show for Mako and Korra’s sake whenever he did do it. But this moment seemed like a good moment to sit on the bed with him. He’d finally gotten to the root of what made his big brother Mako.

“We’re all afraid of being alone. Ironically, it’s a really human thing to be afraid of.”

Mako ran a frustrated hand through his hair. “You ever wish we could just be all the way one thing, and none of the other? Like, wouldn’t it be much easier to give up humanity completely and stopped straddling the line? You could just become some malevolent spirit, I could start killing humans again, and Korra could become a werewolf full time. We’d bring a reign of blood upon the city. A new world order of terror.”

“You certainly have high aspirations for our Evil Alternate Selves,” Bolin laughed. “It’s probably more likely that I’ll be some clumsy Poltergeist flickering lights and stacking some chairs in the kitchen, you’ll get staked by some random old lady with a coat rack, and Korra will live out her days peeing on trees to mark her territory.”

“You know that your foster family was abusive, but mine was okay. It wasn't our family, but it was
okay. They might have adopted me. I would have graduated high school anyway. I probably would have gotten into college too, no problem. And you knew that. But you wanted me with you, right? You wanted me to succeed with you, not with them."

"Bo - "

He held up a hand. "I'm not mad at you for it. I'm so glad that you did it. I'd take growing up with you over any other life I could have had, absolutely, no question. But it wasn't all for me, it was so you could keep me. It's totally normal to fear loneliness, I get it. But you can't keep thinking like this. You have to be okay with people having lives outside of everything you give them. Bro, we'll love you even if you didn't do all that stuff for us. Stop trying so hard to keep us, man. You're doing fine just doing whatever. Just being you. Okay?"

There was a very long silence in which Mako refused to look up at him. But when he did, he was smirking.

"Did you just big brother me? "

"Well, when you're being such a baby, somebody's got to do it!" He nodded. "Listen - you, me, and Korra have got nothing except right now. This world isn't ours, and every moment we spend in it is stolen time. I'm not going to give any of that up being afraid of stuff we can't control. So we just gotta see what happens and go with it from there."

"See what happens..." Mako echoed thoughtfully.

"Yeah." Bolin squinted his eyes at him. "What? What are you thinking?"

"That's the first thing we've got to do, to stop this vampire mill thing. We see what happens first, then go from there."

"You're about to take your big brother card back, aren't you?" Bolin grinned. "Still think it's stupid, us versus the vampires?"

"Oh, I think it's extraordinarily stupid," Mako corrected him. "But you're right - we have only what we have. If vampires are trying to take over the city, we could lose it all."

It was a slightly more selfish take on the situation than Bolin would have wanted, but at least he was thinking in the right direction.

"Okay...?"

Mako rolled his eyes. "And for the good of Republic City, of course. Obviously."

"That's more like it."

"So instead of just doing whatever dumb thing Korra wants to do, I say we start with a little reconnaissance."

"Reconnaissance?"

"Like, spying."

"I know what recon is, you jerk," he rolled his eyes. "If you're talking about spying on that meeting on Thursday, how do we do that? Vampires would know you, they'd be able to tell Korra is a werewolf, and they might actually know Asami, too."
Mako stood up to open the door, looking extremely reluctant doing it.

"I have a feeling Korra's little girlfriendy-thing-person might actually be able to help with that. Come with me, you're better at talking to them better than I am."

Chapter End Notes

P.S. It was brought to my attention that a fanart was made for this fic by tumblr user nikoniko808 and commissioned by the Korrasami fanwork positivity campaign. It's amazing and you're amazing for making it happen. It really, really made my day! I made a tumblr just to thank the people who did that, but I thought I'd do it here too.

I also started a new fic yesterday that takes place in a canon-compliant universe, which I've been stewing in my head for a super long time. I hope you like that one, too!
“This is it?” Mako asked, looking at the tiny device smaller than a baby aspirin that was resting on the tip of his finger. Asami looked around the crowded deli nervously. The idea was to blend in and act natural, but Mako was standing by a potato chip display glaring at his own finger.

“Yes. I built it last semester.”

He squinted at it harder. “And what, exactly, possessed you to build a voice recorder small enough to accidentally inhale?”

That thought hadn’t occurred to her. She carefully moved Mako’s hand further away from his face.

“For fun, mostly.”

“For fun,” he repeated dubiously.

“Yeah,” she shrugged. “Getting technology small and efficient is pretty much engineering’s favorite thing. We love when we get something small enough to fit on the head of a pin. Makes for an eye-catching article headline. Also, really cool Instagrams.”

“You really are a nerd.”

“Not quite. It’s not small enough to fit on the head of a pin yet.” Asami grinned. “And you think that makes me nerdy? It all started because my professor last semester didn’t allow recordings in class. He thought it would reduce absences or something, even made us leave our phones in a bin at the door. I basically broke the university policy so I could record my class lectures in secret.”

“Wow.”

“Yeah.”

And that, Asami realized, was the longest conversation she’d ever had with Mako. Since Bolin wasn’t able to leave the house yet and Korra still had work, the two of them were left to handle with the first part of their mission. No one had to point out the awkwardness of the situation. It was glaringly apparent before they even set foot out the door, passive-aggressively arguing about who was going to drive. She’d let him take that one, though. She was just happy that he seemed to have a change of heart. Whatever Bolin had said to him worked. It was Mako’s idea to spy on a vampire recruitment meeting first and see what they were up against, and frankly, it was the best first step that they had.

Glancing outside, she decided that she was glad she didn’t drive for another reason - this wasn’t really the best neighborhood. Her red Satomobile would have stuck out like a sore thumb on the streets outside. At least, it would have for the few minutes it took before someone stole it and broke it down for parts. Mako’s car blended in much better.

“Where the hell is Korra?” he grumbled, glancing at his watch. The plan was for her to meet up with them at the Kuruk Street Deli after work. She was supposed to get out at 6:30, and then hop a 10 minute bus ride to meet them.
It was exactly 6:31. They were already starting to break, being alone together without Korra or Bolin as a buffer.

“Wait, is that - I think that’s the woman!” Asami said suddenly, looking over the catering menu she’d been pretending to read. “Oh shit, it is her. The blonde one in the red blazer. I can’t believe it. Korra was right about the pastrami!”

The Red Lotus meeting was due to start at 7, and it was coincidentally located near the best pastrami place in Republic City. Korra had sworn up and down that she’d smelled it on the teary cancer patient’s breath that night, and she had been absolutely certain the woman would stop by before the meeting down the same street.

“Korra’s nose never lies,” Mako said. “Okay, commence step one of the mission.”

Asami snorted in amusement. “Yeah. Let us commence.”

“Your tone is vastly unhelpful. Where should we plant the voice recorder?”

“It would record okay from inside her purse, I think,” she said. “But to really get good reception, I think that tossing it into breast pocket on her blazer would be the best place. I’m not sure how we can pull that off, though. Can you toss it? I don’t suppose vampires have impeccable aim as one of their superpowers?”

“Oh yeah, sure, because vampires have evolved to throw their fangs at people’s necks like darts.”

“Your tone is vastly unhelpful.”

Mako rolled his eyes. “Don’t worry, I’ll get this in her front pocket. I just have to get in close...watch.”

Asami did so dutifully, as he made his way over to the blonde with what he must have thought was swagger. She felt compelled to stop him right there as he tried to casually lean on the deli counter, but it was like watching a train wreck. She couldn’t stop gaping.

“Hey,” Mako said, in a deep, creepy voice that was definitely not how normal people greeted others. He was tightly grasping the tiny recorder between his thumb and finger, which somehow made things look even worse. Asami cringed.

“Uh, hello,” the woman said. She had just gotten her receipt slip and was waiting for her order to be prepared.

“You’re a big pastrami fan, huh?”

“I am, yes...”

“Me too. Love the stuff.”

“Okay...”

They just stood there, awkwardly, for the longest five seconds Asami had ever endured in her life.

“You’re awfully pretty,” Mako blurted.

“Okayyyy!” Asami rushed between them. “Hi, sorry about my, uh, brother. Has he been bothering you? He’s been weaning himself off his meds and just isn’t himself lately.”
Mako scowled. “What - “

“You remember what the doctor said, right? You can’t just quit cold turkey like that,” Asami grabbed him by the hand, plucking the voice recorder from his fingertips. “Come on, let’s get you home. And sorry again, ma’am. Mom told me to keep an eye on him and, well, sorry.”

Asami patted her on the shoulder, discreetly dropping the recorder into her front pocket as she did so. The woman just stared at them, bewildered, as Asami steered her “brother” away and out of the store.

“I almost had it!” Mako complained.

“Of course you did. I never doubted you,” Asami stifled a laugh as they made their way across the street. “You’re awfully pretty.”

“It’s been a while!”

“Since you’ve talked to a real live person?”

“The.. flirting thing.” Asami detected the barest hint of a blush in his cheeks, which was baffling given his undead status, but charming all the same. “I don’t do it a lot.”

“Clearly!”

“I swear, I used to be decent at it,” he insisted. “I got Korra once, didn’t I?”

“Right. You’ll have to tell me about that some time,” Asami said. Before Mako could respond, she grabbed his arm and hastily pulled him behind a bicycle rack. “Look, she’s on the move. I guess she’s saving her sandwich and just going to the meeting early.”

“You sure we’ll get the signal all the way from the car? The meeting is four buildings over.”

Asami gave him the withering look of an all-knowing genius.

“Okay, okay. Sorry for asking.” He looked at the bank clock behind them. “Seriously, though, where is Korra? She would have at least called us by now to tell us she’s getting on the bus.”

Asami took out her phone, since Mako had left his at home with Bolin, and called Korra. It rang twice before going straight to voicemail.

“Do you think she’s running late at work?”

Mako looked at her phone grimly. “She would have texted us.”

Asami frowned and texted her.

*Where are you? You on your way?*

To her relief, Korra’s response was immediate.

*Sor*ry, stuck at work. *C*atch up with you soon!

“She’s okay,” Asami said. “Just late, apparently. But…”

Something wasn’t sitting right with her. She couldn’t quite place it, so she handed the phone to Mako. He stared at it.
“Korra never uses punctuation. Her 12-page term paper last semester was basically one long sentence.”

Not another word needed to be said. They took towards Mako’s decrepit car, which was parked inconspicuously around the corner. Asami nearly knocked Mako over as he stopped abruptly on the sidewalk.

“What are you - oh.”

Ghazan and Ming-Hua casually sat on the hood of the car, grinning at them.

“What a pleasant coincidence!” Ming-Hua crowed, in a not-at-all sane manner.

“For the record,” Ghazan said, matter-of-factly. “The deal was for us to stay away from you. You’re the one that came here to us.”

Mako steeled himself. “Get off my car. We’ve got somewhere to be.”

“Oh, I’m sure you do,” Ghazan snorted. “But as soon as we saw this shitmobile on the street, we thought - we know that shitmobile!”

“When Zaheer gets word of this…” Mako warned.

“We just gave Zaheer a call, and guess what? He’d like a quick chat with you, and the little Princess Sato over there.”

He blew a creepy little kiss at Asami, who winced.

“What could he possibly want from me?” she demanded.

“You’ll see. How about we all get in the car? We’ve got a long drive ahead of us, and Zaheer’s a busy man. He doesn’t have a lot of time to waste waiting on you guys.”

Mako glared. “You’re not giving us a choice, are you?”

Ghazan grinned. “Well, either you’re driving, or you’re unconscious and I’m driving.”

Just then, a third vampire emerged from the alley shadows, just out of view. She was absurdly tall, Asami guessed close to six and a half feet, and sported a long braid starting at the top of her head and ending mid-back. But it wasn’t just her impressive height that had her staring. At the center of her forehead was a tattoo of a red eye. Something about the eye just radiated something. A powerful, frightening feeling that made Asami feel like they should just do whatever they said.

One look at Mako told her he was feeling the same thing. They had to comply.

The tall vampire’s voice was sharp and cruel, as she ran a sharp-nailed finger across the door of Mako’s car distastefully.

“It’s hard to tell looking at this junk heap from the outside, but I do believe this thing seats five?”
so she couldn’t see what time it was or long she’d been out. There was a large steel door along one wall, but she was going to take a wild guess and say it was locked from the outside. Her phone was gone, along with her wallet, keys, and everything else that she’d had in her pockets.

It took a moment, but eventually it all came rushing back.

*Fuck.*

The espresso machine had started burping smoke, and the espresso machine repair guy was Opal’s ex, so she was the one who had to make the call and wait for him to show up. Korra had tried to explain she had somewhere to be, but Opal kindly reminded her of the many hours she’d spent covering her ass for leaving early all those other times.

By the time she darted out to the bus stop, it was already driving off. Instead of waiting an extra ten minutes, she decided to jog two blocks down to the city rent-a-bike racks. There was another one conveniently right by the Kuruk Street Deli, where she was supposed to meet Asami and Mako. In the rush hour traffic, riding a bike would probably have gotten her there quicker than the bus, anyway.

She never noticed the ice cream truck following her. When the back doors blew open and she smelled the vampire stench, momentarily disguised by the spoiled-sweet odor of melted ice cream, it was too late. A strong pair of arms wrapped around her neck, and she was knocked unconscious.

*But for how long?*

Judging by the quickening of her heartbeat and painful rumbling of her stomach, she had to have been there a while. She’d eaten a bit before leaving work - about half a dozen pastries that they weren’t going to be allowed to sell the next day - so her stomach shouldn’t have felt like this unless it was really late Thursday night. Or worse, early Friday. Full moon day.

Werewolf Day.

The wolf was coming. She could feel the fire in her veins already, in the squirming of her gut. The worst of it wouldn’t start for many hours yet, but she had to make good use of what time she had.

At least she seemed to be in a secure location. It wasn’t that much different than being at home, actually, except instead of locking herself up, she was being imprisoned by an unknown group of blood-sucking ice cream retailers.

Suddenly, the door opened. Korra recoiled and scrambled backwards.

“Who’s there?” She choked out, not even realizing until then how dry her throat was.

Three vampires entered, completely unphased. She didn’t recognize any of them, but they seemed very enthusiastic to meet her.

“Take her,” one of them ordered. One vampire flew towards her before she even had time to blink, and a fist like a cement block connected with the side of her head. Korra went down, dazed, as the other put her in a hold that she couldn’t break free of even if she could see more than just blurry colors.

“What do you want?” Korra demanded through a thickening lip. “I’m going to turn tonight, you know. You have to know that. You’re all in danger, keeping me here.”

“Oh, we know what we’re doing,” the first vampire, seemingly their leader, smiled an unnerving
smile. “Come on, you two. We don’t have much time to waste.”

They dragged her to the door, where a giant steel cage was waiting in the cold, grey corridor. There weren’t any windows there, either, but Korra could sense that they were underground somewhere. A basement, maybe. Was she in the same building as the Red Lotus meeting? Was she even still in Republic City? It was impossible to tell, with only dirty subway tile, old fluorescent lighting, and concrete floor in every direction.

“What do you want from me?” Korra repeated, as they forced her wrists into manacles and chained her to the bottom of the cage. Squatting was the only comfortable position she could take, and it felt extremely degrading to do so. Then, they pushed. The cage was on large metal wheels.

“Oh, just a little help with something,” the leader grinned as he strolled alongside her cage. The lights in the corridor flickered menacingly.

“If you think I’m helping you people with anything, you’re crazy.”

“Not just you,” he said plainly. “Don’t flatter yourself. We can use you, but you’re not that important.”

They stopped at another door and to Korra’s surprise, another trio of vampires dragged another woman out. This one was several years older than Korra, and seemed to have been kept in captivity a few days longer than her, but she could smell it.

This person was a werewolf, too.

“Get the fuck off me!” She cried, her mouth full of blood. The girl spat out one of her own teeth. Apparently they’d been just as polite to her. The vampires threw her into the cage with Korra and chained her down the same way. The poor woman was doused in sweat and had bruises all down her arms. She had never stopped fighting them.

The vampires conversed amongst themselves as they moved the cage along, something about what bets were being placed. She tried to listen more, to figure out what was going on. but the other werewolf was glaring at her.

“What do these bloodsuckers want from us?”

“I have no idea. I was just leaving work. I think they were following me.”

The woman scowled. “Same. It was Tuesday when they go me. They were in a food truck, so I didn’t smell them coming.”

“Mine was an ice cream truck.”

She sighed, her expression softening. Her body remained tense though. In a squatting position like Korra, but somehow more vigilant. It looked like she was getting ready to pounce.

“I’m Kuvira. Originally from the Earth Kingdom, but I left there a couple weeks ago. I was attacked last winter, and just couldn’t stay there.”

“Korra, from the South Pole. My story is the same as yours, except I was turned three years ago.”

Kuvira shook her head grimly. “Wow. Three years? You look awfully young.”

“Well, I was eighteen when it happened.”
She frowned. “That’s a shitty deal. Sorry, kiddo.”

“Yeah, me too. But neither of us is doing so great right now.”

Kuvira nodded, her eyes darting around, even though there was nothing more to see. Korra couldn’t help but think that she carried herself almost like a wolf, even in human form. She wore simple black pants, likely a work uniform, and a long-sleeve button down shirt that was stained with sweat. Her sleeves were rolled up, exposing arms that were all long, lean, tightly coiled muscle. Her constant awareness and unwillingness to relax made her look even more like a wary animal. She wondered if she looked the same.

“I’m fucking starving. I mean, I’m always fucking starving during full moons, but this is pretty extreme. I think it’s Friday morning, and I haven’t eaten since they threw me some scraps yesterday.”

Despite her rigid stance, there were dark bags under her eyes. She was exhausted.

“Thirsty, too,” Korra said, noting her dry, cracked lips.

“Yeah.” Kuvira coughed and pounded the bottom of the cage with her bound fists in frustration. “Where the fuck are you leeches taking us?!”

Her voice echoed off the dark walls of the corridor, and bounced ineffectively away from the vampires ears. They were completely uninterested.

“I think the bitches are getting mad,” one of the vampires said. The other cackled as if it were the funniest, most original joke ever told.

Suddenly, the cage stopped. Korra looked up and saw a big double-door in front of them. Behind it, she could see bright light leaking around the hinges.

“What do you think, guys? We can’t let our pets stink up the place before the big show, can we?” the lead vampire snickered. “There are going to be some big names here tonight.”

The others laughed in agreement.

“They smell like wet dog!”

“Clean ‘em up, Tarrlok!”

“Yeah, rinse them off!”

Korra shared a look with Kuvira as the one called Tarrlok opened a glass emergency door in the wall and started unraveling the long, white fire hose.

“This is probably gonna hurt,” Korra warned her.

“Probably? You ever been sprayed by a fire hose, kid?”

“Oh, no. Have you?”

“March on the Earth Kingdom Palace in Ba Sing Se, seven years ago. Protesting the Earth Queen’s racist, classist policy changes.”

“Whoa, cool.”
“You won’t think so, in about three seconds.”

She didn’t. The vampires cranked the valve and an icy burst shot out of the hose. It felt like Korra was in the middle of a South Pole avalanche, as she was deluged and beaten repeatedly by the freezing cold water. She couldn’t even open her eyes as the high-pressure streams nearly blew her to the other side of the cage, her shackled arms the only things keeping her planted firmly.

Just when Korra was just about ready to succumb to drowning, the assault stopped. She lay on the floor of the cage unmoving, except for the heaving of her chest. Kuvira lay the same way next to her. Neither of them could spare a breath to speak.

“I think that’s better.” Tarrlok grinned. “Let’s bring them in.”

They opened the double doors and Korra had to squeeze her eyes shut from how startlingly bright it was. Their cage jolted forward, prompting her to chance easing one eye open.

It looked like a high school gym. Rows of bleachers lined all four walls, although they were still eerily empty, and the ceilings were high enough that she couldn’t quite see them through her squinting eyes and the bright lights. At the center of the basketball court-size room, another massive cage. This one didn’t look like it was meant for circus animals. It was too big, its bars too thick and curved, almost like a dome. Each beam looked like it was double- and triple-reinforced with steel and tightly wound cables.

“Oh, shit,” Kuvira murmured. Her eyes were wide open. Korra followed her gaze to the bottom of the giant cage.

It was a ring. Like for boxing, or wrestling.

For fighting.

“Oh, shit,” Korra agreed.

Their suspicions were confirmed when the vampires lined up the opening of their cage with the opening of the other. They pulled a release, and suddenly their wrists were freed.

“Get in,” Tarrlok said, still grinning.

“Fuck you,” Korra spat.

“We don’t have time for this,” he sighed. “Boys?”

A few of the vampires poked what looked like three-foot metal poles into the cage. Korra recognized them immediately.

“Uh, those a cattle prods.”

Kuvira raised an eyebrow. “You play with a lot of cattle prods in the South Pole?”

“Protest at the Southern Water Tribe Council five years ago, for LGBT rights,” Korra said. “You’re not the only one with a cool resume.”

“They used cattle prods on protesters? On kids?!”

“South Pole is a different place. We should move, Kuvira.”

They staggered into the ring and watched as the door shut. The vampires locked it, snickering all
the while. Tarrlok winked at them, and without another word, disappeared.

They sat in silence for several minutes just looking around them, outside the ring. Korra imagined the stands, filled with vampires egging them on as they tried to rip each others throats out. Two werewolves, locked in a deathmatch for their entertainment. Two young women, trapped to die in bodies not their own.

“Think they’ll at least feed us?”

Korra shook her head. “I bet they think that’ll make the show more interesting. Imagine how violent we’ll be if the wolves are hungry.”

“Fucking assholes.”

“Yeah.”

Kuvira looked at her. “What’s up with you? I feel like you’re not freaking out enough. You know we’re going to try to kill each other, right? I don’t want to, obviously, you seem nice. But we are going to rip each other apart. It won’t be two of us walking out of this cage in the morning. Hell, I don’t think they’ll let either of us go, even if we did survive.”

“I know.”

“So what the fuck are you looking for out there?” Kuvira demanded. “Why do you keep looking around?!”

Korra finally met her gaze. “I’m just trying to figure out, when my friends foolishly try to save me, how they’re going to do it.”

That seemed to confuse her. Kuvira started to say something, then stopped, lost in thought. It seemed like she had several questions to asked, but eventually settled on one.

“You have friends?”

“Yeah. Two. Uh, three.”

Her eyebrows shot up. “You have your own pack?”

“A pack?”

“Like, a pack of wolves. A group.”

“Werewolves do that? Wouldn’t we all kill one another?”

“Oh, we’ll definitely kill each other. Our wolves are strangers to each other. With no pack around, we’re going to instinctively fight for dominance,” she confirmed. “But it’s just like regular wolves in nature. Wolves fight to become the alpha, and the rest become subservient to it. From then on, they fight everything outside their pack, but not each other, unless someone is trying to challenge the alpha for dominance. Didn’t you say you were a werewolf for three years? How do you not know this?”

Korra stared at her, shocked. “How do you know this?”

Kuvira frowned. “I guess there are more werewolves in the Earth Kingdom. More forests for them to roam, and all that. I had a four-wolf pack, back there. I lost a fight to the alpha and almost died. But that was before I ended up in Republic City. I imagine most werewolves in the big city are
lone wolves, like you. And me, now."

“You tried to be alpha of the pack?”

“Apparently. I have no control over my wolf’s instincts. None of us do. But the morning after that battle, when I woke up completely alone, I knew what had happened. There was no reason for a pack to abandon a wolf, unless it lost a fight. I knew that if I found them again, it didn’t matter what the people thought. Once we changed again, I couldn’t be there. The whole pack would try to kill me, not just the alpha.”

Korra was having a hard time understanding this. Actual groups of werewolves? Were there communities out there of people like her? It seemed like a dream too good to be true, and judging by the look on Kuvira’s face, it was.

“But when you weren’t wolves, why couldn’t you just stay with them? You could leave before the full moon, if you’re worried about fighting. Your human selves didn’t fight, right? Didn’t your pack try to find you?”

“No.”

That was her entire answer.

“Oh. Uh, okay.”

“So I left and came here. I’ve only been here a short while. This is my first change outside of the Earth Kingdom.”

Korra was still curious about the packs, but it was clear that Kuvira didn’t want to talk about her experiences anymore. Up until then, she and that asshole from the South Pole bar were the only werewolves she’d ever known to exist. The idea of there being so many werewolves that they formed actual groups was mind-boggling to her.

“With all those werewolves around, don’t innocent people get hurt?”

Kuvira shook her head. “I mean, maybe it happens sometimes. But there’s enough wildlife up there that the wolves usually hunted other animals. Deer, bears, birds, whatever they could find. We always made sure to change far enough from civilization that it was unlikely we’d come across humans. I suppose that’d be hard to pull off in Republic City. I was going to change in the sewers tonight.”

Back in the day, Korra had considered losing herself in the Earth Kingdom forests. She wondered what would have happened if she hadn’t settled down with Mako and Bolin. Would she have joined a pack? Would it have been better, or worse?”

“Where do you go to change?” Kuvira asked her.

“I have a cage in a basement.”

“Where’d you get a cage?”

“My friend Mako got it from a sex shop. Don’t ask me anything about it, he won’t even tell the rest of us.”

Kuvira looked skeptical. “These ‘friends’ of yours, they’re not werewolves?”
“No,” she said, being extra careful not to mention the fact that they weren’t all human, either. Kuvi…
Oh boy, I started this fic almost exactly 1 year ago to the day! I missed the anniversary by 3 days, which is frustrating because I probably could have updated on the anniversary if I'd known :-(

ANYWAY, thank you to all the readers that have stuck with me for so long. A lot has changed for me in the past year, but I'm determined to keep this up, even if I've only been able to update monthly!
The vampires forced Mako to drive them uptown, over the bridge, and out of the city, into a smaller town in the north of the United Republic. All together, it was the longest three hours of Asami’s life.

“There,” the obscenely tall woman with the eye tattoo said sharply. She sat in the front passenger seat. P’Li, they called her. “Take that exit and make a left.”


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“There,” the obscenely tall woman with the eye tattoo said sharply. She sat in the front passenger seat. P’Li, they called her. “Take that exit and make a left.”


The sign pretty much spelled out everything Asami knew about the village. Mount Makapu was an inactive volcano, fourth largest in the United Republic. Other than that, and the fact that virtually no one lived in the tiny town, there was absolutely nothing remarkable about the place. She had no idea why vampires would take any interest in it, but arriving at their destination finally broke her mind away from what it had been obsessing over for three hours - *Where was Korra? Was she okay? She needed to find Korra.*

The exit sloped down towards a tree-lined road with no streetlights. Every minute on the path felt menacing, as the paved street gradually became loose with cracked asphalt and gravel. Soon, it was all dirt and pebbles, although they could barely see it as the sun went down.

“I guess it’s a good thing we took your car,” Asami whispered to Mako from the center seat in the back. “All this gravel would have wrecked my new paint job.”

Ghazan laughed. “The Princess has a sense of humor. Did you hear that, P’Li?”

“Yes.”

Ming-Hua seemed more delighted about it. “She called his car a shit-stain!”

“I understood.” P’Li didn’t bat an eye, staring stonily ahead until she directed Mako to switch lanes. She’d been like that the entire drive - quiet and undistracted, like a viper preparing her strike

Frankly, Asami wished the other two were more like her. They’d been cracking jokes and smug remarks for the entire ride and she’d been tempted more than once to just push them both out of the car on either side. Sure, she probably would have been killed in an instant, but at least they’d have stopped leering at her.

“Go down this road here - now make a right. That’s it. You’ll pull over by the door.”

It was a abandoned old-fashioned schoolhouse, by the looks of it. Asami remembered her father’s guest cottage on the estate being just about the same size. Another building just slightly larger was right behind it. If she had to guess, she’d think it was a gymnasium. There were skylights and windows high off the ground that revealed bright lights on the inside. None of them were low enough for her to look through.

“Why are we at a school?” she asked.
“You’ll see, Princess,” Ghazan said cheekily, as Mako brought the car to a halt. They exited the car, and when Ghazan tried to grab her arm, she wrenched it away. He snarled.

“Come here you little - “

Mako quickly jumped in front of her and punched Ghazan in the cheek. Ming-Hua kicked him in the stomach and he staggered back into Asami, who caught him under the arms and buckled under his sudden weight. They fell to the ground, where Ming-Hua got another kick in at him for good measure.

“Stop.” P’Li stormed towards them and violently pulled Ming-Hua back by the hair. She immediately backed off, whimpering like a scolded dog. Ghazan took her arm and pulled her closer to him.

“I was just trying to guide her into the building,” he said sourly. “In case she tried to escape.”

“If you harm a single hair on her head,” P’Li threatened.

“I didn’t even - Mako got in my face!”

“I don’t care. Help her up. Cuff the boy, if you have to. Idiots.”

Begrudgingly, Ghazan stepped forward and extended a hand. Asami indignantly ignored him and got up herself, pulling Mako up with her.

Mako stared at her, the obvious question in his eyes.

Why the hell are they treating you so special?

She shook her head. She had no fucking clue what was going on here either. At first she’d assumed the “Princess” thing was to taunt her about her wealthy upbringing, which they’d obviously known about if not from the stalking, then from the fact that they probably freaking knew her as a child when they worked for her father.

But now the whole situation was bringing to light a world of disturbing implications. What the fuck was going on?

“Take Sato to the room in the main building,” P’Li ordered. “I don’t care what you do with the other one. Put him in a holding cell or something. I got word that they’ve already moved our performers to the ring for the night.”

Asami saw a twinkle in Ming-Hua’s eye that probably meant she had no intention of doing something as benign as simply imprisoning Mako. She swallowed.

“He stays with me,” she said firmly. Mako raised an eyebrow, but she stood her ground. It seemed that she was important to them, for whatever reason. She was going to swing around any clout she had. If they were going to get out of this, they had a better chance if they stuck together.

Also, she didn’t want to be the one to explain to Korra and Bolin that Mako was captured and killed by a bunch of crazy vampires on her watch.

P’Li’s mouth tightened for a split second, before twisting into a cruel smirk. “Fine. Throw them both in a holding cell. Sorry, Princess. If we’d known you were bringing a plus one, we would have gotten you better accommodations.”
The tall vampire disappeared through the front door of the school. Ghazan grabbed a bag from the backseat. Before they’d started driving, Asami and Mako were forced to relinquish their cell phone, watches, wallets, and anything else they’d had on them. He reached in and pulled out two pairs of handcuffs he’d apparently kept in there as well. Ignoring P’Li’s orders, he cuffed both of them.

“All right, follow us. No funny business. Watch ‘em, Ming-Hua.”

They led them to the bigger building. There was a set of double doors that Asami could tell led to the school gym, but Ghazan forced them through another door, which led to a cement staircase. The hall downstairs was underground and unfinished, clearly meant just for storage. It was all cement blocks and flickering fluorescent lighting, and smelled damp, like water, mildew and something else. She looked at Mako, whose eyes had gone wide.

“What?” she whispered.

He didn’t answer, but he suddenly looked a little more frightened.

Asami turned to Ghazan. “How’d you know we were going to be on Kuruk Street? Were you still stalking me, or are you guys just really big pastrami fans?”

“We didn’t,” he said gruffly. “Get off that high horse of yours, Princess. You’re no longer a concern to any of us. We were in the neighborhood for another reason, but when we saw you and Mako lurking around, P’Li made a call to the boss. All of a sudden we had a new mission.”

“And what was that?”

He rolled his eyes. “Shut up. God, you really are an entitled brat, aren’t you?”

Mako barked out a laugh. “Looks like, someone’s a little testy after being told off by their mommy back there.”

He got a swift fist to the nose for that one. Blood trickled out around his mouth.

“Wow,” Asami said. “You really are just like Korra.”

Mako glared. “Shut up. You really are a brat.”

“Both of you shut up and get in.” Ghazan opened one of the giant metal doors. She could see another one further down the hall. On the floor were black track marks, as if something heavy on wheels had just been dragged along. The room itself look just like the corridor. Big, cold, grey, and windowless.

“Sorry, dinner isn’t included,” he sneered. “I hope you enjoy your stay, anyway. Good night.”

He shoved Mako inside roughly, and Ming-Hua couldn’t help herself. She lowered her narrow shoulder and slammed Asami into the room as well.

“Sleep tight! Don’t let the bed bugs bite!” she cackled madly. The door slammed shut.

Mako sighed. “Well, I hate to be the guy that says ‘I told you so’, but I did kinda fucking tell you all you guys so.”

“Really? You knew Korra would go missing and then some vampires would kidnap us and take us to Bumblefuck’s School for the Undead and Deranged?”

“No, but I knew something would happen. Your sarcasm isn’t helping.”
“Oh, and your sarcasm is just a beacon of light on a dark, lonely sea, huh!?”

“Okay, okay, no more sarcasm,” Mako conceded. “Everything we say from now on, we mean.”

“Fine.” She fell silent because everything she could think of at the moment was all creatively mean things to say to Mako.

“So... Korra was here.”

Asami jerked. “What?! You’re kidding.”

“What did I just say?”

“How can you tell?”

“Remember how I like to tell Korra she smells like a wet dog?”

“Uh, no, but that’s awful, by the way.”

Mako rolled his eyes. “Well, Korra’s blood is faintly canine, so she does kind of smell a little bit like a dog. The smell is stronger right now, probably because she was in here recently. Like, really recently. I’d guess no more than an hour or two ago.”

“Oh, God. That’s why you were acting weird earlier,” Asami realized. Her heart pounded at the thought of it. She didn’t know if it made her feel better or worse - at least now, she knew where Korra was. At least she knew she was alive. Presumably. “She’s here?! What would they want with her?!”

“I don’t know.”

“Is there like, some kind of centuries-old war between vampires and werewolves that’s been fought in the darkness just outside the periphery of human gaze or something?”

Mako just stared at her and appeared to be taking multiple slow, calculated breaths before responding.

“No.”

“Are you sure?” she pressed. “I mean, you’ve been in this world only a year and I guess Korra’s been here three years but that’s still not a long time. What if there is something going on between vampires and werewolves that you just don’t know about yet?”

“There isn’t anything going on.”

“But you are the two supernatural creatures that actually can physically fight,” Asami reasoned. “Is it really weird to think that even just occasionally there would be fights for dominance?”

“Yes, because we’re not a fucking sci-fi movie series, you dork.” Mako snorted. “God, you’re just like my brother. Vampires and werewolves don’t mix. I’m sure there’s some animosity, but it isn’t like there are blood wars going on. Vampires don’t see werewolves as a threat. They’re human enough that they see them as still pretty inferior. They don’t care about werewolves. It’d be like being at war with hamsters or parakeets or something.”

There had to be a reason that they had Korra, though. And since these were vampires they were dealing with, Asami couldn’t think that it was anything nice.
She leaned her back against one of the stone walls and let herself slide down until she was sitting. She stared at the blank wall opposite her and tried to think, wishing she had a marker so she could write all her thoughts out like on a whiteboard.

“Okay, so - Ghazan, Ming-Hua, and P’Li work with Zaheer,” she started saying out loud, hoping that could help her think. She envisioned the names written inside a circle. “Those four vampires were loitering around before the Red Lotus meeting, and I guess we just had the bad luck of walking into them.”

“How did they get Korra?” Mako wondered.

“Not just how. Why?” In her mind, she wrote Korra in another circle and connected them with a line.

“And while we’re at it, how about we add you to the list of mysterious shit going on,” Mako said, his eyes narrowing. “I’m starting to think they aren’t calling you ‘Princess’ because of your fancy car and makeup.”

Her own name went into its own circle, although she added another connecting line because she already knew the other name floating around all this.

“My father,” she said simply, trying to edge all emotion out of the word. “Hiroshi Sato. There’s literally been no one else in my life, it’s got to be him.”

The look in Mako’s eyes confirmed that he’d been thinking the same thing. Maybe for some time now.

“So you think he’s some kind of vampire lord or something?”

It was Asami’s turn to give him a look. “Now who’s being all sci-fi?”

“Listen, it makes sense,” he said. “I know you see it. You want to tell me everything that’s happened so far has been one big coincidence?”

It absolutely wasn’t. Asami wasn’t stupid. First, the vampires went to all the effort of stalking her to steal that baby photo. Then she realized the vampires worked with her father, once upon a time. That came along with the realization that her father may in fact have been a vampire himself. And now, after several years of not speaking to him, she was here. Mako didn’t even know the best part yet.

“You want to know why I stopped speaking to my father all those years ago?”

He looked startled. “Uh, Korra made me promise not to ask ever.”

“It’s because I think he might have killed my mother.”

Several long seconds ticked by as Mako stood over her, eyes as round as saucers. When he didn’t immediately respond, she continued.

“Back when I was about eighteen, I discovered some files in my dad’s office at our estate. Crazy stuff,” she said. “I know Sato Worldwide is enormous, and some aspects of the company I never had any interest in. I enjoyed cars, ships, helicopters, jets, all that. I only ever focused on those, and never really cared about the other stuff. Like, I knew the company dabbled in consumer goods, military stuff, and whatever, but I never really looked at all that. But that day, I found plans and prototypes for...other things.”
Mako was still staring at her. “Vampire things?”

“I - no, what?” she scoffed. “Seriously? I didn’t even know vampires existed. Besides, what’s a vampire thing?”

He blushed. “I don’t know, I was getting into the story, okay? Keep going.”

“It was weapons. Not like normal weapons, like automatics or even missiles or cannons or anything. They were weird weapons. I can’t remember all of them, but he was using material like mercury, drones, silver projectiles, ultraviolet energy beams, and...thermite.”

“Sci-fi.”

“Minus the -fi,” Asami said bitterly. “Finding those documents took me way back to when I was a kid. My mother died when I was seven. The official ruling was death by smoke inhalation. There was this huge fire in the east wing of the main house, and my mother was trapped inside for some reason. When they found her, her body was so charred they needed dental records to identify her. The inside of her lungs, though, were tar black. She at least had died before she burned.”

Mako looked away. “Wow.”

“Yeah,” she swallowed. “Anyway, I did a little investigating and found the official detective report. They said the fire was caused by an oven that was left on, but that never made any sense to me. Our mansion was covered in fire alarms, carbon monoxide detectors, the works. How did the fire happen so fast that it didn’t give the sprinklers a chance to douse it before it got bad?”

“Like, a bomb or something maybe?”

“Something like that,” she said. “A bomb or something might have caused such a big fire that the alarms could have been damaged and the sprinklers couldn’t handle the sudden blaze. It would explain my mother being charred to a crisp before firefighters could even get inside. But there were multiple witnesses that said they never heard a sound. I was in the house at the time, on the other side obviously in bed, but I never heard anything either. Something that could cause that much damage should have been loud.”

Mako looked puzzled. “Like a flamethrower, then?”

“Even flamethrowers can’t burn that much that fast.”

“So...what?”

“Have you ever heard of thermite?” Asami asked. “It’s metal powder, basically, that when ignited can cause a flash of heat that burns so hot it can smelt ore. And it can be as silent as a flickering candle.”

Mako bit his lip and came over, sliding down the wall into a seated position just as she had.

“Thermite, like what you found in your father’s office.”

“Yeah.”

“Oh.”

“But no, official police report says it was an oven accident. It’s an obvious lie, but now that I know about who really runs the police department...”
Mako sighed. “Fuck.”

“I know.”

He closed his eyes and rested his head against the wall.

“Whelp. Welcome to the Fucked-Up Life Club. You’ll get your badge in the mail.”

They sat there quietly, deep in thought. Asami had spent her whole life distancing herself from her father, trying to live her new life and leave her old, broken one behind. It seemed like it was all coming to a head now. She couldn’t run from her past anymore. As cliche as that was, Asami had to admit she never could have predicted running would lead to this. Vampires, werewolves, and her father somewhere at the center. Did her mother know? Is that why she was dead?

"Bolin and I lost our parents when we were young, too,” Mako said suddenly. Asami quirked an eyebrow at him.

"I had you pegged as the type that enjoys brooding in silence.”

"I’m trying to be nice, okay?” Mako said sheepishly. “Korra and Bo want me to like you, so I’m trying.”

"You want to bond over our dead parents?” she asked, amused. It did seem like a very Mako-relatable thing.

"Our dad worked at a factory down by the docks. He died in an accident there, ten years ago. Two years after that, our mom got cancer. She never told us, so we only really knew for the last six months. She’d been living with it for a year at that point, getting treatments in secret until they stopped working. I was fifteen, and Bo was thirteen. We got put into separate foster families." Asami frowned. "I'm so sorry."

But Mako shook his head. "As soon as I turned into a legal adult, I got him back. I never had to do any of this alone. Especially after Korra wormed her way into our lives. Also, nobody was secretly murdered or anything, I guess, so that's...nice."

"That's always nice." She grinned. "I've always tried to steer clear of murder."

More awkward silence. Jeez, it was really hard to talk to Mako.

"Korra's killed people," he said suddenly.

"I know."

He cocked his head at her curiously. "She told you?"

"Yes."

"Then you either really like her, or you're just really crazy."

A slow smile appeared on her face. "Both, actually."

"Great. There's no way that could ever go wrong. Not at all." He rolled his eyes. "Although, I suppose you having the hots for Korra is a pretty good motivator to help me rescue her."

"You're gonna be helping me."
He smirked. "Finally. Something to bond over."

It felt like Korra’s stomach had grown its own set of teeth and started gnawing at her insides. She’d never in her entire life felt this kind of hunger and thirst. Her throat actually felt as if it were cracking and filling with dust.

“Do you have any brothers or sisters?” Kuvira asked.

Korra shook her head. “No. Just me. That’s what made it so hard to leave my parents in the South Pole, but at least they have each other. Maybe they got a polar bear dog or something. They used to talk about it all the time.”

“Ouch. Replaced by a dog.”

“Eh, it kinda happens every month. I’m used to it.”

Kuvira’s hacking laugh sounded painful. “Your turn to ask a question.”

They’d been playing this game for an eternity, trying to forget about their being starved to death. The both of them had managed to get some sleep, and Korra had woken up long after daylight started to stream into the school gym, but night eventually fell again. With it, the full moon rose into the sky, seemingly even brighter than normal in whatever town they were in. A regular person would have been extremely hungry at that point, but the werewolves were quickly nearing a point of madness. The random questions were getting harder and harder to think of.

“What did you used to do as your job?”

“I was in the Earth Kingdom Army for eight years. After I was discharged, I started following my passion - dancing.”

Korra gaped at her. “You’re shitting me.”

“What? I enlisted right after high school, and I was deployed to - “

"No, no, not the army stuff,” Korra said. “That’s not hard to believe. The dancing thing!”

“What do you mean?” She looked affronted.

“Like...I mean...what kind of dance?”

“Ballet.”

“No. Way.”

“Fuck you, kid,” Kuvira croaked. “Zaofu Dance Company for 2 years. I’m graceful as fuck.”

“Do a plié right now!”

“I’m not a circus monkey, you asshole.”

The two of them dissolved into dry, raspy giggles. They’d officially lost their minds.
Suddenly, the doors to the makeshift arena opened. The two women sat up straight, instinctively jumping to their feet, despite their extreme exhaustion. They’d been left alone for hours, and Korra guessed it was nearly show time. Still, there was a small part of her that thought maybe some food and water was coming.

Of course, it wasn’t. Tarrlok entered, still grinning that same plastic grin as if it hadn’t fallen from his face all day.

“Good evening, ladies! I hope you’re ready to meet the guests you’ll be entertaining tonight?”

They didn’t need to ask what he meant. They could smell the acrid stench of death in the hall outside.

“I’m gonna barf,” Korra whispered.

“If you aim it in their direction, I’m all for it.”

The vampires streamed into the arena, in a strangely orderly fashion. Korra didn’t know why she’d just assumed they’d rush in like barbarians, climbing over each other and frothing out the mouth like a mosh pit at a metal concert, but it wasn’t quite the case. At least, if you just looked at them and didn’t listen.

“What, are those the werewolves?”

“I didn’t know there were hot werewolves!”

“Why are they wearing clothes?”

“It’s not that kind of show, man!”

“Take it off! Take it off!”

Korra and Kuvira were at the bars, gripping them tightly as vampires filed in, just barely out of reach. A few of them jumped back in alarm, but the braver ones continued to taunt them.

“Look, they wanna give us a private show!”

“I’m a sucker for blue eyes. Why don’t you take that top off, sweetheart?”

“Fuck that one. I’m taking the feisty green-eyed one home with me!”

“I bet you’d have to house-train her.”

“Oh, I’ll train her all right.”

That greasy-looking vampire made the mistake of leaning in too close for that one. Korra’s hand shot out between the bars and snatched a fistful of matted brown hair. The vampire yelped as she pulled him head-first towards the cage and slammed his face against the side.

“Take it back,” she snarled, even as guards arrived with cattle prods aimed right at her.

“Korra, let it go,” Kuvira sneered. “He’s not worth it.”

“Did you hear what he said?”

“Yeah, but these guys are about to - “
A guard jabbed Korra right in the ribs and she hit the ring, twitching.

“ - do that.”

“I changed my mind. Blue Eyes is mine.”

“I’m putting all my bets on her, holy shit.”

Korra felt herself being dragged away from the bars like a heavy sack. Kuvira collapsed beside her and they both rolled onto their backs, as vampires continued to fill the arena around them.

“I hate them.”

“Me too. And if we get out of this, I’ll find that greasy motherfucker and slice his balls off with rusty garden shears.”

Korra winced. “Ew.”

She rolled her head to the side and watched. They’d counted five entrances, four at the corners and one at the center that divided a set of bleachers. All were open and letting in the audience, except the center one. It was lined with rope that seemed to lead to one of the rows.

Guests of honor, she suspected. Best seats in the house.

“Just stare at the ceiling, kiddo. Block ‘em out.”

Kuvira was just blankly gazing upwards. Korra joined her.

“Have you ever been in love?” Kuvira asked abruptly. It caught Korra so off-guard, she swallowed painfully.

“What?”

“It’s my turn, remember? Have you ever been in love?”

It was hard to concentrate as the calm and controlled entry of vampires started getting more rowdy. They were yelling, shouting obscenities, and laughing. She smelled alcohol. She smelled other chemical substances being passed around. Drugs were never really her thing, but she guessed immortal vampires had a lot more leeway to experiment than humans.

“Right. Right. Uh…” Korra sighed, trying to filter out the background noise. “Yeah, I have. It didn’t end well, though.”

Kuvira nodded slowly. “Well, they say it’s better to have loved and lost, than to never have loved at all.”

“I’m not sure whoever said that ever loved and lost,” Korra said grumpily. Although it was oddly fitting, in what were likely her last hours, that she start thinking about home. About her parents, and about Naga.

“I don’t know, but I’m in the other camp, so I guess I’ll never know.”

The way Kuvira said it, bitter and hopeless, was like getting hit with the fire hose again. Never knowing. It brought her back to the other night, with Asami. It would be silly to say she loved her at that point. They were barely even a thing yet. But the idea of never getting the chance to see what happened, even after she was so hesitant to take it in the first place…
It hurt. It actually hurt, leaving things so open-ended. Korra wanted to turn back time, all the way back to that night on the couch. She wanted to hold Asami’s hand and say yes, despite all her fears and insecurities, she wanted to take her out. Maybe a walk in the park, and a ride in one of those little turtleduck boats in the lake. Nothing too much, too fast. Maybe a seal kebab and a smoothie from the food truck. Maybe a foot race over the bridge, as rain started to pour. Piling into a cab as thunder rumbled. Maybe a wet kiss in the backseat as the driver rolled his eyes and reminded them that they’d never told him a destination.

A beautiful evening of maybes. A perfect coulda-been.

“My turn,” she said tightly.

“Yeah?”

“If we make it, will you join us? Me and my friends?”

Kuvira turned to her. “You serious? You adopting strays, now?”

Korra shrugged. “It’s what I do.”

“Then yeah. Yeah, sure. We’ll be friends, you cornball.”

She smiled, despite what was happening all around them, and what was happening inside them.

“Good. Um, I think we’re gonna have to put the game on pause for the night.”

“Yeah, I think so too.”

Korra curled into her usual fetal position on the ring. Suddenly she could hear the cries and taunts of the vampires again. The smell of death was overwhelming - dozens and dozens of vampires, monsters out for blood.

It was starting.

The agony was worse somehow. She’d never really realized how much transforming in the comfort of her own home made things better. There was no Mako or Bolin, and no reassuring restraints. Her clothes stuck to her skin, soaked with her sweat. She’d never gotten a chance to tie her hair back, and it clung to her neck and face, tangling in her gasping mouth. It was so much harder to breathe.

She’d never seen another werewolf change before. Kuvira lay next to her, body curled and tense, like hers. Her eyes were squeezed shut, and her mouth was wide open in a silent scream. Her fingers and hands were scrambling running over her arms. She knew what she was feeling. The burning of her skin had already started.

“I’m sorry!” she gasped, as the invisible fire started to burn her, too. “I’m so sorry, if I...if I...I’m sorry.”

“Same here,” Kuvira said, through gritted teeth.

“Remember - if we somehow...both make it - ”

“We won’t, kiddo. But honestly...thanks for thinking it.”

She could hear Kuvira’s bones begin to break. A howl escaped her lips as her spine bent at almost a right angle, causing her to flip over, away from Korra.
They were both done talking.

Chapter End Notes

As per usual, life got in the way of this. But I'm moving it along again!
Welcome to the Thunderdome

Chapter Notes

I got a little indulgent with the gore in this one. I'm sorry!

Asami was startled awake by the lock turning in the door. After blinking a few times, she realized her head was resting cozily on Mako’s shoulder.

“Sorry!” she yelped, self-consciously wiping her mouth in case she’d drooled. If she had, Mako was doing a good job of pretending she hadn’t.

He shrugged. “It’s fine. At least you got some sleep. You were out a good three hours.”

She was a bit disoriented. They had been up all night, likely well into the morning, trying to think of ways they could make their great escape and find Korra. Obviously, they’d come up with very little, since they were trapped in a concrete cube with nothing in their possession. A lot of their half-baked plans were heavily reliant on the condition that the vampires eventually remembered they existed and opened the door.

Which appeared to be that exact moment. The door opened and they shared a look. Be cool.

It was Ghazan, because of course it was, but he had someone with him. The other vampire had a darker-skinned complexion similar to Korra, but with a sharp, creepy smile that seemed almost painted falsely on his face. Asami looked at Mako, but he didn’t seem to recognize him either.


“Oh, right! That bitch is yours, isn’t she, Mako?” he said gleefully. “Don’t worry, we’ve put her to work. We know how to make dogs useful.”

Mako lunged, but Asami grabbed him by the middle to stop him, causing them both to hit the floor. The other vampire took Asami by the wrist and helped her up.

“I don’t believe we’ve met. Forgive me for not introducing myself sooner, Miss Sato,” he said. “My name is Tarrlok, and I told our leader that it would be my pleasure to escort our guest of honor to the arena myself!”

“Zaheer?” Mako snapped, scrambling back up. “He’s here, isn’t he?”

“Obviously.” Tarrlok hadn’t let go of Asami, and when she tried to pull away, he clamped his fingers around her wrist in a painful iron grip that almost brought tears to her eyes. They made no move to take their handcuffs off. “Come, we’re wasting time. The main event is starting now. They’ve already opened the doors.”

“Who else is here?” Asami asked, more quietly. She almost didn’t want to hear the answer.

Was she ready to face her father?
Tarrlok just looked at her with the same grin as he tugged her along. Behind them, Ghazan was wrestling Mako forward as well.

“Oh, we have a long attendance list for this match. We usually have no problem finding at least one werewolf for the arena, and pitting it against a team of armed vampires is always a hoot, but it’s different tonight. We’ve tracked down two werewolves and, well, you can imagine how excited we are about that!”

Asami felt her brain go dark for five whole seconds.

“No,” Mako whispered, his eyes wide.

“Yes!” Ghazan crowed, shoving him ahead.

“They’ll...no, you don’t understand,” Mako made a move towards Tarrlok, but Ghazan trapped him in a headlock. “No, they’ll kill each other!”

“And hopefully give us quite the spectacle before doing so,” Tarrlok agreed. When Asami stopped moving, he pulled her violently, the metal cuffs around her wrists drawing blood and likely causing bruises. It seemed play time was over for them. “This has never been done before in modern history. There are legends, of course. Stories passed down about glorious werewolf matches. But the werewolf population has been dwindling for centuries. Eventually, vampires got tired of hunting them down two at a time before a full moon. But someone was smiling down on us, this month!”

“We have reserved seating,” Ghazan chirped. “Zaheer made sure to have some extra seats available.”

“Best seats in the house,” Tarrlok said. “Just down this way. We have our own private entrance, no need to share one with commoners. We’ve got a Princess among us, after all!”

Ghazan went ahead and pulled open the double doors before them. Asami flinched at the sudden light flooding her senses. It was so bright, and loud.

They’d been right in guessing the building was a school gymnasium. The bleachers lining the walls and the high ceilings were reminiscent of Asami’s awful adolescent years at the Fire Nation boarding school where her father had basically imprisoned her. She spent nine months out of the year for nearly a decade at the all-girls academy after her mother died. There, she found little sanctuary from her spoiled classmates whose wealthy parents also didn’t want them around. One of her safe spaces was the gym late at night, where she’d sneak in and read on the bleachers, sometimes using all the open space for physics experiments.

Definitely not reminiscent of her school years was the massive, dome-shaped cage made of reinforced steel at the center of the basketball court. Or the throng of drunken vampires clamoring for bloodshed.

“Welcome to the Thunderdome!” Ghazan said, waving his arm at the sight.

Mako shot him a withering look, unable to help himself. “You must have been saving that one all day.”

Predictably, the vampire gifted him with a suckerpunch to the gut.

The two of them were roughly guided towards seats that were clearly set aside for important figures. There were already people sitting there, being served drinks and behaving awfully. Asami
recognized Zaheer immediately, the only one serenely waiting.

“There you are. Just in time for the main event,” he said, jabbing a thumb behind him, indicating that Ghazan and Tarrlok take a seat behind them. They obeyed, notably choosing to still not remove their handcuffs. “Hello, Mako.”

“Hey, Zaheer,” he greeted bitingly. “Sooo, do you remember that chat we had about leaving us alone?”

“Frankly, circumstances have changed,” he said calmly. Puzzlingly. “I had offered you a chance to be a part of something bigger than yourself, and you passed it up. As far as we are concerned, you are nothing now. No one. What you want is insignificant.”

They were forced down into their seats. Ghazan kept his firm hands on Mako’s shoulders, keeping him seated. No one restrained Asami, but she had a feeling she didn’t quite stand a chance against them, anyway.

A piercing, spine-tingling scream echoed around the arena, prompting refreshed cheers from the crowd. Asami felt her stomach twist in knots.

“Fuck,” she said, realizing just who exactly that was. Another anguished voice howled alongside Korra’s. “Oh, no. Oh, God.”

“Try not to listen. Or look, if you can help it,” Mako advised quietly, though his own gaze was locked on the ring.

Korra’s twisted face was barely recognizable, but not because it had lost its humanity yet. Her arms and legs cracked loudly as they broke and reversed direction at the knees and elbows. A tail grew from her lower back, not by sprouting quickly, but in short, staggered segments as vertebrae were stretched, ripped, and mutilated from the base of her spine. Her shirt tore as her ribs spurted outward from her chest, like they were opening from the inside like a giant oyster. Her cries grew more and more stifled as whatever was happening to her internal organs made it harder and harder to breathe. On the contrary, the agony stretched across her expression was the only gut-wrenchingly human part of her left.

But soon, even that was gone as her face pushed outward so severely that her jaws expanded too quick for the soft tissue in her mouth to keep up. They tore, spilling her blood into the ring.

Asami’s heart hammered in her chest. “She’s...she’s dying! We can’t just let her - !”

“She isn’t dying,” Mako said dully. “This is just how it is. She always survives the change.”

“But...but look at her!”

She could literally hear Korra’s bones cracking inside her body. They were fracturing and reforming and Korra howled with every snap. She could feel it. She could feel all of it.

“Her body was built for this. It’s why she’s so strong, she has so much energy, and her metabolism is so fast.”

The other werewolf was howling as well, her voice now more wolf than woman. She, at least, might have been free of the pain as the wolf began to replace her.

“But no human can tolerate that much trauma.”
Mako glared at her. “We aren’t human. You seriously don’t get that yet?”

Korra last cry was high-pitched. This time, she was clawing at her mouth. Literally clawing, as wolf claws forced themselves through the bloodied tips of her still-human fingers. It was her teeth, she realized. Wolf fangs burst from her gored gumline.

Asami felt like she was going insane with helplessness. Korra wasn’t screaming anymore. It was just heavy, hopeless gasps. The animal was trying to take over, and in all honesty, she wanted her to just let it. Stop fighting, and let the wolf feel all the pain.

*Please let go, Korra. Please. Rest.*

“We’ve still got to do something!” she hissed into Mako’s ear. “They’re not even fully changed yet, and I can already tell that the other werewolf is way bigger than Korra. She could lose! We need to get her out!”

Korra was far more wolf than human already, but the other werewolf seemed to be even further along. It had reddish-brown fur, in contrast to Korra’s light grey. It was definitely broader, probably not as agile, but absolutely more powerful. It’s paws alone were almost double the size of Korra’s, and it wasn’t like she was small. Werewolves looked considerably bigger than regular wolves, with very wide shoulders, more muscular legs, and proportionally larger jaws. On all fours, Korra wouldn’t quite come up to Asami’s shoulders, but she had to be close to three hundred pounds of muscle. The other werewolf, on the other hand, probably outweighed her by another 80 to 100 pounds. It reminded Asami more of a prehistoric bear, than a wolf.

“We can’t do anything,” Mako said, glancing around them. “We can’t. Look how many vampires there are. Look at that cage. I see the doors and the locks, but how can we - we can’t. I see cattle prods and guns out there. They’ll take us down before we could even get close!”

Both werewolves were still writhing in the ring, as their torturous transformation finalized. Various plans flew through Asami’s mind. A distraction. Fire? She could get to some wiring and cause one, maybe, but then what? Would they be able to get a hold of a gun? Unlikely, with the handcuffs on. If anything, they’d get the receiving end and be useless.

Zaheer eyed her carefully.

“I would advise against doing anything foolish. You are quite literally surrounded, and if you make enough trouble, I don’t think anyone would care who you are, Princess.”

Asami glared at him. “Is he here? My father?”

His eyes narrowed. “Child, what is it you think you know about your father?”

“I know he’s one of you assholes,” she said defiantly.

Zaheer looked taken off guard for a split second, before he laughed a frighteningly deep and powerful bellow that shook her. But before he could say anything, an even louder roar sounded from the crowd. Her eyes were torn away to the ring, where two fully transformed werewolves were at each other’s throats.

*“Korra!”* Asami gasped. The brown, hulking werewolf snapped its jaws first, just missing Korra’s neck as she dodged. But if it had gotten its teeth around her, Korra would have been dead immediately.

The other werewolf took another devastating swipe at her, and Korra again avoided the blow,
countering with a swift nip on the tail that got her a mouth full of blood and brown fur. With every lunging, Korra refused to back away, instead ducking between legs or spinning to the side trying to get her own bite in. It didn’t matter that the other werewolf was so big, Korra refused to stay on defense. She was on the offense, stubborn and angry.

“If she just runs,” Asami said, frustrated. “If she just uses her agility to dodge, she can tire the other wolf out. She doesn’t need to attack so much. She’s not going to win by brute force!”

“Korra would know that,” Mako said grimly. “But that’s not Korra. That’s a wild animal, and its pissed off. I think it’s like an alpha wolf thing. Wolves fight for dominance all the time in nature, don’t they?”

He was right. Wolves were fairly smart creatures, but they weren’t human. They relied more on instincts than tactics, and their instincts were clearly telling them that the other needed to die.

The crowd cheered as the brown werewolf managed to snag the nape of Korra’s neck in its jaws. She howled.

“No!” Asami leaped from her seat and raced towards the cage, without even thinking.

“Asami!” Mako cried, but it was too late. Three vampires jumped on her and pinned her to the floor. “Get off of her!”

He jumped into the fray and succeeded in throwing off one of the vampires, but all that earned him was a cattle prod to the ribs. He hit the ground, twitching. The other two hauled Asami to her feet as she struggled, trying to twist herself out of their grasp.

“Let them out!” she shouted. “You have to let them out and separate them!”

“Get her back here,” Zaheer told them, his voice even and controlled. They dragged her back and forced her into a seating position. One of the vampires remained behind her, holding her shoulders in place and forcing her to watch as the werewolf tossed Korra into the walls of the cage like she was a stuffed puppy.

Korra hit the steel bars and landed on the floor of the ring in a heap. She was down, but not out, as she struggled back on all fours, growling weakly. Defiantly.

Not for the first time, Asami wondered just how much of Korra was truly left in there.

“I told you not to do anything stupid,” Zaheer said.

“You’re fucking monsters,” she spat.

“Such a subjective term, isn’t it?” he said, almost amused. “Monsters. Are those werewolves also not monsters?”

“You know what they are!”

“But do you?” he wondered. “Those things cannot control themselves. They fight each other on pure instinct, and your friend would eat you alive if she had the chance. If we let them loose, right now, they could probably wipe out a significant fraction of this town’s population before sunrise. Probably even a good amount of vampires, too. They are killing machines, nothing more and nothing less.”

“They’re human. This isn’t them!” Asami insisted, not even sure why she was arguing. This man
was insane. There was no bargaining with him.

“And what is humanity, to you?” Zaheer asked, and the crown went wild. Korra had managed to clamp her jaws down on the enemy’s tail and she wasn’t letting go. The bigger werewolf couldn’t reach her. “Let me guess. Love, isn’t it? That’s humanity’s big thing, right? Love?”

Asami said nothing, ignoring his rambling as Korra literally bit through the tail and tossed it aside. It stuck wetly between the bars of the cage, were some of the vampires were clambering over each other to snatch it. She felt sick.

“That werewolf, your friend? It loves’ Mako, doesn’t she? I know they live together. I’m not even going to venture what that relationship is about, but I know there is some ‘love’ there. Them and that ghost boy. They fancy themselves a quirky little family, don’t they?”

Zaheer nodded at Ghazan behind him. He looked utterly delighted as he got up, rallying three more vampires with him. Together, they picked up the stunned Mako from the floor.

“What - what are you doing?!” Asami demanded, starting to get up again, but she was forced back down.

“I think it’s time you learned what ‘monster’ means, my dear.”

He got up and followed them as they haul Mako over to the cage. His eyes fluttered, still in a daze.

“Mako!” Asami cried. They wouldn’t. They wouldn’t.

Zaheer’s powerful voice silenced the crowd.

“Friends. This man is a traitor to our cause. He refuses his birthright, refuses to drink human blood, and lives his life isolated from us. Ashamed of us!”

The throng shouted obscenities as the vampires worked on the cage locks. Inside, the werewolves hadn’t even noticed. They were still clawing at each other, drawing blood and howling.

“What do we call vampires that spurn their own kind?”

“Traitors!” the crowd screamed.

“So what should we do to this traitor?”

“Throw him in! Throw him in! Throw him in!”

“You heard them, Ghazan.”

The vampires got the cage door open and shoved Mako inside. He clumsily fell to his knees, his hands still cuffed, as the crown continued to chant.

“Don’t do this,” Asami begged. “Please, don’t do this! You can’t!”

Zaheer leered down at her. “Tides are changing, child. Our patience is wearing thin.”

“What are you talking about?! Please, just stop this.” Asami pleaded.

In the cage, Mako seemed to finally be gathering his wits.

“Oh, shit,” he said, when he realized where, exactly he was. The werewolves finally took notice of
him. They were both bleeding, with patches of fur torn from their skin. Korra seemed to have lost an ear, and the other werewolf had one bloody eye socket.

But they had both stopped fighting, and were staring at Mako curiously.

“Oh, shit, shit, shit,” Mako pressed his back up to the cage. He stared at Korra, directly into her eyes, and she stared right back. Her eyes were still blue. They looked intelligent. Calculating.

Cold.

Korra pounced, targeting Mako’s neck as Asami cried out helplessly.

“Wha - ahh!” Bolin yelped as the werewolf sailed through his ghost body.

The arena fell silent, as if all the air was sucked right out of the building. Everyone gaped.

Korra hit the floor on her side, looking utterly bewildered. Asami knew the feeling, remembering not so long ago when Bolin had done the same to her. The other werewolf tried to get at Bolin and passed right through him the same way. It also went down, weak and disoriented.

Mako stared.

“Bo!?”

“Bro!” Bolin greeted him excitedly. “Oh man, I can’t believe I did it! I haven’t heard from any of you for like a whole day and I was so worried and - oh, fuck are these vampires? Fuck, that’s Korra - who’s the other - where’s oh, hi, Asami - shit, that’s Zaheer and - wait, what the fuck is going on?! ”

Asami took a deep breath. They had absolutely no time.

“OPEN THE CAGE!”

Bolin looked startled, but teleported next to one of the vampire guards that had locked Mako in, grabbed the key he was still holding, and unlocked the door. Mako burst out of the cage, just as the werewolves started to come to.

“SHUT IT!” Zaheer bellowed. “SHUT THE DOOR!”

Pure pandemonium erupted in the gym. One of the guards, in his panic to shut the door, dropped his cattle prod and Mako wasted no time in scooping it up. It was too late.

Korra and the other werewolf exploded from the cage, their rage even more palpable than it had been before. It was like they understood on some level that they were finally free, and these were the people that had imprisoned them.

“RUN!” Mako shouted, although no one needed to be told twice. He’d been talking to Asami, but no one wanted to stick around and find out what two pissed off werewolves could do to a bunch of vampires in a confined space.

The vampire holding Asami down booked it, and she looked around to realize Zaheer and everyone else were already gone, hauling ass out of the arena through their private entrance. Everyone else barreled to the few doors that were available, causing a literal stampede.

Gunshots cracked the air.
Mako found Asami and pulled her low. “Get down!”

“They’re shooting at Korra!”

“She’ll be okay.”

“She’s not invincible!”

The brown werewolf snatched a vampire mid-run and swung its head sharply. Blood spurted from his abdomen, and with one more sharp movement, the vampire fell to the floor in two pieces.

“Fuck. Ohhh, holy shit,” Asami’s eyes widened as Korra pinned a pair vampires to the floor and proceeded to rip their heads from their bodies as if their necks were made of spaghetti. Three vampires wielding handguns fired point blank at her side. That only seemed to make her angrier.

“You guys have to get out of here,” Bolin said. None of the vampires cared about Mako or Asami anymore. All they cared about was getting out of the gym before the werewolves disemboweled them.

“The cage!” Asami jabbed her finger at the giant dome. The gym windows were high up on the wall, nearly touching the ceiling, but the cage might bring them high enough to escape. “Climb the ca - aghhh!”

One of the vampires wrapped an arm around her neck.

“I’ve always wondered what Princess tastes like!”

She felt two sharp fangs press into her neck before Mako jabbed the cattle prod deep into his stomach. The vampire fell from the bleachers.

Mako pulled on the neckline her shirt. “You’re fine. He didn’t draw any blood. Let’s go!”

As they ran to the cage, Asami watched in horror as a vampire with a rifle managed to hit the brown werewolf in the flank. The little ones were barely an inconvenience to them, but the big guns seemed to be doing actual damage. The werewolf howled in rage and snatched it from the vampire, along with one of his hands.

She wondered if this werewolf was anything like Korra. Just someone trying to live a normal life, and keep out of anyone’s way.

When they made it to the cage, Mako boosted her up the side so she could get a good grip. The sound of gunfire made her knees weak - at any moment, she expected to hear Korra go down. Every howl and yelp made her cringe.

Together with Bolin, they climbed to the top of the dome and looked up. The gym windows were still too far.

“Now what?”

“The basketball hoop,” Asami said. “Bo, can you unfold them?”

Bolin was looking down at the crowd. Most of the vampires had escaped, but the few that remained were trampling each other for the doors. The werewolves were causing an utter bloodbath below them. Korra had a screaming vampire by the leg and the other werewolf had it by the opposite arm. Together, they ripped him apart, still screaming.
The gunfire had ceased. Human weapons weren’t slowing them down enough, so everyone was just trying to get away. Clearly, no one had counted on the werewolves actually getting out.

“Bolin!” Mako snapped. “Bring the basketball hoop down so we can climb onto them and reach the windows!”

“Oh, right! Uh, right!” He managed to look away from the massacre and teleported to the hoop, disengaged the latch, and gently eased the backboard down. They’d gotten the attention of some of the remaining vampires, who were starting to follow their escape route.

“Asami, you go first,” Mako said, aiming his cattle prod at them as they approached. “Jump!”

She did, aiming for the backboard, but falling short and only grabbing the netting. It creaked and bent dangerously from her weight, but she managed to pull herself up and climb over the top. The window was right in front of her, but the open part was still a full body length above her. If she was lucky with her next jump, maybe she could climb -

“Wait, I’ve got this,” Bolin said. “Cover your eyes.”

“What are you - ?”

Bolin balanced himself carefully on the backboard and then suddenly leapt, completely solid, through the closed part of the window. It shattered as Bolin disappeared outside.

“Bo!” Asami cried. “Oh, my God, Bo! Are you okay?!?”

He reappeared in front of her again, rolling his eyes.

“I don’t feel pain, remember?”

“But the broken glass - “

“Come on!”

He wrapped his corporeal arms around her and jumped. Together, they landed outside of the gym, Bolin’s solidified body softening her landing and protecting her from any shard of glass that might have cut her.

“You okay?”

“I’m fine!” Asami said scrambled to her feet. She knew he was a ghost that couldn’t get hurt, but it didn’t stop her compulsion to check him anyway. “Are you okay?”

Bolin laughed. “Yeah, I’m just...wow. Exhausted. All that used a lot of energy. I...I need a minute…”

He lay on his back, staring up at the sky suddenly very quiet. If Asami didn’t know better, she’d think he was asleep with his eyes open. He didn’t breathe, didn’t move. He looked...dead.

Then he disappeared into thin air.

“Bolin!”

“Ahhhhhh!”

Mako flew out of the broken window and landed painfully beside her. He rolled, gasping for
“God damn it, that was farther than I thought it was.”

“Are you okay!?” Asami checked his leg, which he was favoring. Shards of glass had embedded themselves into his skin, but he just brushed them off.

“Yeah, yeah, I’m fine. Vampire, remember?” He winced when Asami found a place that hurt more than he let on. “Ow, hey!”

“I know you’re all strong and immortal or whatever, but you still sprained your ankle and now you’re bleeding from glass lacerations.”

“Yeah, well. Immortality only counts if something isn’t actively trying to kill you. Where’s Bolin?

“He just disappeared! I don’t know, he said he used a lot of energy? He’s gone!” Mako swallowed. “Oh, right. He’s, um, he’s fine.”

“He didn’t look like he’s fine. You don’t sound like he’s fine!”

“Just give him a minute!” Mako said anxiously. “No time to explain now, but he’ll be okay. I need to stay here until he recovers and comes back, though, can you…?”

“I’ll find the car,” Asami said. “I’ll meet you right back here, okay? Don’t move!”

“Take this.” He gave her the cattle prod. “Go!”

Asami darted towards the old school building where they’d left the car, and prayed that it was still there. The school grounds were littered with vampires, but most seemed fairly focused on getting the hell out of there.

“Where do you think you’re going, Princess?”

It was the one called Tarrlok, not nearly as enthusiastic as he had been. His hair was disheveled and he had a splash of blood across his front. Asami quietly hoped it was Zaheer’s. Or better yet, Ghazan’s.

“Sorry, I really do not have time for this.” She rammed the cattle prod right into the side of his head and quickly hopped over his crumpled body. Mako’s car was still as junky as ever, but like a shining white stallion at the moment. It wasn’t locked, and when Asami stuck her head under the steering wheel, she had no trouble hot wiring it to start without the keys. Finally, a little bit of luck.

Suddenly, the car jolted under something very heavy. Asami looked through the windshield in shock, right into the eyes of the brown werewolf.

Feebly, she locked the doors.

“RAHHHHHHHHH!” the beast roared as it slammed one of its giant claws into the windshields. Its claws just barely pierced through the glass, sending spiderweb cracks throughout the entire thing. One more strike like that, and the werewolf would be inside the car with her, chewing on her face.

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It raised its other paw, but just as it was about to come slamming down, Korra flew out of nowhere and knocked the werewolf off the hood. The force of the animal’s claws ripping away from the windshield caused it to shatter all over Asami.
“Fuck!” It didn’t get in her eyes or mouth, and windshield shards were designed to be harmless powder when shattered, but there was still something extremely unsettling about having a pile of dusted windshield in her lap.

Not ten feet away, Korra was fighting the other werewolf again, evidently trying to get at her other eye. The brown werewolf decided it’d had enough and tossed Korra aside, fleeing into the nearby woods with a noticeable limp. It disappeared from view, but Korra was very much still there. Asami was tempted for a hot second to see if Korra was okay. She’d saved her, after all. Maybe there was a little bit of her friend still in there.

Korra rolled onto her feet and snarled right at her.

“*Nope! Nope, nope, nope!*” Asami took that as her cue to stomp on the gas pedal and tear out of there. In the mirror, she saw Korra relinquish her chase and head into the woods herself.

Asami swerved when she got to Mako and Bolin, who had re-appeared as if nothing had happened.

“Bolin!” she exclaimed. “What was that? Where’d you go?”

“Oh, when I expend a lot of energy, I sort of cease to exist for a little bit,” he said nonchalantly. “At least this time I was back in a couple minutes.”

“What?!”

“I said we’ll tell you about it later,” Mako said urgently, jumping into the passenger seat and cradling a shotgun he’d somehow procured.

“Where’d you get that?!”

“You don’t wanna know,” Bolin told her as he hopped into the backseat. “But if you’re wondering why that vampire is there, and his head is over there, I mean, I guess you sorta already know.”

Asami swerved the car and aimed it at the woods where she’d seen Korra run off, in the opposite direction of the brown werewolf. She stomped on the gas.

“How’d you know where we were?” she asked Bolin.

“Oh, Korra keeps her phone GPS settings on because she’s a technological idiot. When no one was answering, I used Mako's to track Korra’s phone here. Well, to that old school next door. It took me a really long time, but I finally figured out how to make it out of the house!”

“You couldn’t have picked a better time for that,” Mako said gratefully.

“Oh, I don’t know. Probably before the werewolf deathmatch started would have been better.” He shrugged. “But what can ya do, right?”

*Thwock thwock thwock thwock thwock.*

“What the fuck is going now?” Mako groaned.

“Sounds like a helicopter’s incoming,” Bolin said, eyebrows shooting up. “Also, *swear jar*.”

“It’s a B95 Satocopter, actually.”

“What? How do you know that?”
“Because,” Asami sighed. “There’s only one in existence, and it belongs to my father.”

They stared at her.

“Yeah. But I’m so not in the mood for a family reunion right now,” Asami said. “We need to find Korra before she hurts someone. Or someone hurts her!”

They barreled into the woods in Mako’s wreck of a car, just as floodlights from a black helicopter began to pierce the night.
Korra woke up in her room.

No, not her room. This was Asami’s room.

She shot straight up in the bed and immediately regretted it.

"Arrrggggh!" Stars exploded before her eyes and she fell back, gasping. If she hadn’t broken her ribs during her last full moon, she definitely had during this one. Her own chest stabbed at her so sharply that it was hard to take a full breath.

“MRREEEEEEEEOWWWRRR!”

Startled, Pik and Pak howled right back at her from the foot of the bed, where they had been licking at her toes.

“Aaahhhhh! What the fuck!? ”

“MRRROOOWWW!”

"Get off me!"

"MMMEEEOOORRRWW!!"

“Korra?!” Asami appeared at the door, holding a several bottles of water in her arms. “You’re awake!”

“Korra’s awake!?” Bolin’s excited voice echoed up the hall. He popped abruptly into the room. “She is! Oh boy, are we glad to have you back!

“What is happening?!” she gasped. Even talking hurt, never mind all the yelling she wanted to do right at that moment. "Why are these stupid cats trying to eat me!?"

Asami looked sheepish as she set the water down on the nightstand. “Uh, no, they’re not. They’re just...nothing. Shoo! Pik! Pak! Shoo! Go play somewhere else and let Korra rest!”

The cats meowed begrudgingly, but obeyed her as they hopped from the bed and sauntered off, probably to go terrorize some innocent children or something. Asami leaned over her and opened one of the bottles she’d been carrying.

“Drink this. You’re dehydrated.”

Korra was determined to hold the bottle on her own, but her muscles were too weak and she could tell that Asami was discreetly tilting it into her mouth for her. She gulped it all down in seconds, letting the cool water quench her parched throat.

“What time is it?!” she croaked.

Asami checked her alarm clock. “Just past one in the morning. Saturday night - wait, technically Sunday morning.”
It was a full day later. Just over twenty-four hours ago, she was still in that prison, transforming in front of all those monsters. Her arms and legs were sore as hell, but that was pretty normal and would improve by the morning - just a simple side effect of having your muscles pulled back and forth like saltwater taffy. Breathing was the main problem. She’d definitely fractured some ribs this time around. Every breath felt like knives were being twisted into her chest. Her friends had evidently propped her up on some pillows, but eventually she was going to have to sit all the way up to let her lungs expand properly. Korra was just not in the mood for pneumonia today.

The smell wasn’t helping with her breathing either. With every painstaking inhale, her senses were flooded with a violently horrific smell. She was caked in something sticky, dry in some places but still wet in others. If she wasn’t so disgusted by herself, she might have felt a little shame for laying on Asami’s bed like a wheezing side of rotten beef. But she knew the smell of blood, and she was covered in it. It was between her fingers. Smeared over her chin. Clotted in her hair. That, she realized with disgust, was what Pik and Pak had been licking off her feet.

“Sorry, you’re all gory,” Bolin said. “Asami got weird when I suggested we clean you up.”

“It is weird to...to handle a naked person when they’re unconscious!”

“Weirder than leaving her covered in blood for a whole day?”

“Well obviously we’re lacking in ideal scenarios over here,” Asami said. “But at least we put her in my room so it’s closer to the bathroom for when she finally - !”

“- Whose blood is this?” Korra interrupted, feeling a pit form in her stomach. A new wave of nausea hit her - blood meant the wolf had killed someone. Maybe more than one someone. Kuvira? Some other innocent humans in that wooded village? What new stain was splashed onto her conscience now?

“Um, when we finally tracked you down in the woods this morning, you were kind of sandwiched between two big deer,” Bolin said awkwardly. “You’d just had yourself a deer buffet and must have just fallen asleep there, because we found you kind of...cuddling them in a pool of their own blood.”

Korra paled. “But...I didn’t kill any humans? What if I killed someone before you found me?”

“Mako said he didn’t smell any human blood on you,” Asami said quickly. “You took down a bunch of vampires, though. To be honest, they kind of deserved it?”

"Have there been any reports?"

She shook her head. "The news this evening said there was a disturbance at the abandoned Makapu schoolhouse, but didn't go into any details. It was the middle of the night in the woods, Korra. There wasn't anyone out there to kill, don't worry."

Korra didn't feel completely satisfied by that, but it'd have to do for now. She had one other concern at the forefront of her mind.

“Did I kill Kuvira?”

They both looked at her blankly.

“Huh?”

“The other werewolf. Kuvira,” Korra repeated quietly. She braced herself for the answer.
“Oh!” Asami realized. “No, you didn’t.”

She released her breath slowly. “Thank God.”

“Bolin appeared and let you both out of the cage just in time - that's a story he's probably going to want to tell you,” she looked over at him and he nodded his head vigorously. "The other - um, Kuvira - ran off into the woods too. I don’t think she was recaptured, she got a decent head start on us and we managed to get away...so...”

She lay there silently for a moment to stew on that. So Kuvira might have made it out of there alive. But how could they be sure? What if Kuvira was recaptured, and was imprisoned in that hellhole for a whole month until the next full moon? Or something even worse, somehow?

The wheels in her brain turned. In their inevitable death conversations they had gotten to know each other pretty well. When you thought you were going to die in a few hours, it was kind of hard for chats not to get deep. Korra knew vaguely where Kuvira lived, in the Dragon Flats district all by herself. If Kuvira had escaped, she had nowhere left to go but back there. She didn’t know her actual address, but the other werewolf had talked about a bakery she loved that was close to her apartment. A great Earth Kingdom pastry shop that reminded her of her mother’s cooking.

Wherever Kuvira was, she knew she was all alone.

“We have to find her,” Korra croaked, starting to get up again. “Kuvira doesn’t deserve to go through all this alone. And we could - we can learn from each other. I’d never met another werewolf before.”

“Whoa, whoa, whoa,” Bolin said quickly. “That is not a good idea.”

Asami gently pressed a hand to her shoulder to keep her still. “We understand you’re worried about her, but you can’t do anything right now. I...saw what happened to you, when you changed. Your body is not in any state to go searching for your friend.”

“She’s hurt, too,” Korra insisted. “Maybe even worse than me. Or what if they did find her and took her back to that place?”

“Listen, we promised Mako that we’d take care of you. Don’t make a liar out of me, I just got on his good side,” Asami tried to joke. “We’ll start looking for her in the morning, okay? We swear.”

"First thing," Bolin agreed.

Korra sighed. “She lives here in Republic City, somewhere in Dragon Flats. I don’t know where, but I remember she mentioned that Earth Kingdom bakery, Lava Cakes? I bet we can track her down if we start there.”

“Okay, but first, let’s make sure you’re good,” Asami said gently. “You’re kind of having a long weekend.”

She looked at them witheringly, but as Asami adjusted the pillows behind her causing an excruciating pain in her chest, she consented that maybe looking for Kuvira right then might have been a little too hard.

“Are we safe, at least?”

Asami and Bolin shared a look.
“We think so,” she said. “We weren’t followed at all as we drove back - not even any cops on the way back to the city, and that was like 3 hours driving without a windshield and half the car falling off piece by piece on the highway. The car finally broke down as it pulled up in front of the house.”

“Mako had it towed to a garage this afternoon.” Bolin rolled his eyes. “Not sure what he expects they’re gonna do. That thing is so done.”

Korra frowned. “Wait, so no one is watching us?”

Asami shook her head. “Bolin has been keeping a lookout every hour, making a perimeter around the house. No one. But we at least know the vampires can’t come inside without us inviting them in. We’re definitely safe as long as we’re inside.”

“What’s Mako?”

“Uh, he went to work?”

“He said he couldn’t miss work, since he doesn’t get paid if he calls out,” Bolin told her. “But he got there safely, and I told him that if he doesn’t check in frequently for his entire shift we’re going in on a rescue mission whether he likes it or not. I’m making him call us every half hour from their landline. He’s super annoyed, but so far so good. He should be calling soon, actually.”

“I really don’t think they’re going to come after us,” Asami said. “I mean, they know where we live, we figured they’d have at least tried to scare us by now if they were going to. It’s been a whole day.”

It made no sense. Granted, they probably weren’t a huge threat as they were, but it was clear they’d caused a big mess for them. Korra would bet on vampires having a lot of stupid pride, there was no way they would just let them off this easily.

“We do have a theory as to why…” Bolin said, glancing at Asami, who sighed.

“My father. He might be keeping them off our backs.”

“Excuse me? You saw your dad?”

So they explained to Korra everything she’d missed. Mako and Asami’s capture. Their peculiar treatment of her. The big fight. Bolin’s triumph. The even bigger escape. And finally, the possible appearance of Asami’s father before they drove off to chase Korra into the woods.

She just stared at them, her heart pounding in her ears.

“I...think I need another drink.”

Asami gave her another water bottle that she emptied even quicker than the first.

“So that’s it, then. We know for sure now that your father is some kind of...vampire lord? Vampire king? Whatever.”

“It sure does appear to be something like that, yeah.”

Korra bit her lip. “Are you okay?”
“Honestly, at this point if he’s keeping us safe because of some lingering affection for me or whatever, then I’ll take it. I really don’t care about him right now. Just you.” At Bolin’s smirk she added quickly, “And Bolin, and Mako.”

“What do you want to do?” Korra asked. It wasn’t just about evil vampires trying to take over the city anymore. For Asami, it was personal. They had to take that into consideration before they decided anything else.

“For now? Nothing. We have to regroup, and rethink everything. I don’t know that everything is as it seems.”

“You think there’s more to this?”

Asami paused and looked away, crinkling the plastic water bottle in her hands nervously. “During the fight, Zaheer kept saying things like ‘tides have changed’, for some reason. I wish I knew what that meant. And he questioned me on what I knew about my father, as if the obvious ‘Vampire Lord’ answers were too easy. As if it wasn’t nearly that simple. I just don’t know, anymore.”

She looked visibly uncomfortable talking about her father, so Korra decided to change the subject. She reached out and squeezed her hand weakly. “I guess there isn’t any point dwelling on it right now. But at least there’s one good thing to come out of this.” She looked over at Bolin. “So, you did it, huh? You finally left the house!”

Bolin beamed. “I teleported right into that old schoolhouse, and then into your cage. Saved everyone’s skin. You’re welcome, I accept gift cards.”

“He was a superstar,” Asami confirmed. “I’m proud of you, Bo.”

“Me too. Turns out all it took was for everyone I know to be in grave peril and poof - I’m Super Ghost!”

“Have you tried it again?”

“A little. Not far, though. You think I’m gonna spend my first night on the town in over a year without my best buds?” He swung an arm around Asami and gave her a side hug. "We're going out on the town together!"

“We will,” Korra agreed. “We’ll do something really fun.”

“I’ve already started looking up all the places I’ve wanted to go since I died! I have a list!”

“It’s three pages long,” Asami said, amused. “And it’s awesome! Let me go get it - ”

Asami cleared her throat. “Before we spend the next two hours reading Bo’s weird reverse-bucket list, I think we should get some food in you, Kor. You haven’t eaten since...well, I don’t know if the deer count, but I’ve never seen you go so long without a meal!”

Korra was starting to feel the now-familiar pangs of hunger. It was at least part of why she felt so weak - she supposed werewolves weren’t meant to go so long without food. However, she wasn't
nearly as starving as she had been back at the school. That probably meant that what she ate as a wolf did linger in her stomach as a human. For a very brief moment, she hated Asami for putting that idea in her head. She swallowed hard, knowing full well that the wolf had filled her up with deer and vampire bits last night.

“I can't eat now. I’m definitely about to throw up,” Korra gagged. "And my smell isn't helping. I need to get this gunk off me."

"Bath time, then!" Bolin declared. "Finally. I can't even smell, but I can imagine what you smell like and it's pretty gross."

"Thanks, Bo."

Her clothes had been torn to shreds of nothing during her transformation. Her friends were nice enough to wrap her with a blanket, but Asami brought over another to cover her with.

“How am I gonna shower with two blankets on?”

Asami’s cheeks actually colored. “It’s just to get you to the bathroom.”

“Then what, you’re gonna close your eyes, unfurl me into the tub, and run away?” Korra snickered, thoroughly enjoying the embarrassment on her face. It wasn’t often she got to be the tease, and it was clear from the beginning that Asami was the cool one between the two of them. “Bo, didn’t she already see me naked when you guys found me?”

Bolin was grinning smugly. “Naked and lying in blood and intestines, yeah.”

“Okay, I’ll admit this is so not how I would have imagined the first time you saw me naked,” Korra said bluntly, causing Asami’s cheeks to go even redder. “But it doesn’t have to be weird. I’m awkward about literally everything else, but not nudity. It’s like a monthly occurrence, I honestly don’t even care anymore. Tell her, Bolin.”

She was full on blushing now, and Korra was having an absolute ball. Bolin leaned over to whisper in Asami’s ear.

“She is cool with the nudity thing, but she’s not usually this smug about it. She’s just having fun making you blush.”

Asami winced. “Oh, I’ll bet.”

“What are you muttering about over there,” Korra said, trying to move and cringing at the attempt. She had to stop because between the pain and the smell, she was definitely about to vomit and she was terrified of what could possibly come up. "You guys, if I throw up an antler or vampire fang or something just kill me on the spot, okay?"

“Yeah, yeah, come on,” Bolin snorted. “Up we get.”

It actually would have been easier and less agonizing for them to just carry Korra into the tub, but she insisted on trying to walk. They ended up half-dragging, half-carrying her into the bathroom, where Asami started the water and ran it until it was warm enough. Bolin removed the blankets from Korra’s body without a second thought, and Asami kept her eyes averted as much as she could, to everyone’s vast amusement. Together, they carefully lowered her into the tub. She immediately sighed under the shower’s steaming-hot spray.

“That feels so good,” she murmured. Asami was holding the shower head to help Korra get clean,
but focusing her eyes upwards.

Bolin laughed. “Okay, while Asami does, uh, that, I’ve got to check in with Mako and tell him you’re fine. He told me to tell him the minute you woke up.”

He disappeared, leaving them alone. Korra chuckled.

“You’re spraying the wall over there, buddy.”

“Sorry!”

“Aaand that’s the bathmat.”

“Oh, shit…”

“Asami, you can just look at my face. You don’t have to look at the rest of me if you don’t want to, okay?”

She sheepishly glanced back at her. “I’m sorry. Do you think you can hold onto this yourself?”

“Not really, I couldn’t even hold those water bottles. But even if I could, I really am getting a kick out of you doing it,” Korra said gleefully. “You know, it’s honestly super refreshing that you’re the one being awkward and I’m the one being cool.”

Asami scowled. “As cool as you can be covered in entrails as I literally hose you down like a circus elephant.”

“That’s pretty cool, for me.”

They shared a giggle. Asami playfully splashed her face with the shower head and Korra coughed, causing her vision to go red from pain in her chest.

“Aggghh!”

“Oh, my God! I’m so sorry!” Asami cried. “I was just playing around because you were getting me all flustered!”

Korra carefully eased back into the spray and forced a smile. “No regrets.”

She rolled her eyes. “Anyway, it’s not like I don’t want to look. I mean, some day, sure. When you’re not all bruised and blood-caked, obviously - “

“So you’re not into deer innards?”

“Would you just shut up?” she said, exasperated. “I’m trying to be respectful.”

Korra smirked. “Thanks. I’m feeling super-respected, don’t worry.”

“Good.” Asami kicked her empty trash can upside down and moved it next to the head of the tub to sit on it. “I’m going to try and get these chunks of...whatever...out of your hair. It’s a good thing you keep it on the short side. If we tried to get this out of my hair, you’d need to run me through a carwash like five times.”

“Oh, how sad I feel for you and your thick, luxurious raven locks.”

Asami stuck her tongue out at her before taking a seat on the overturned trash can and trying to
rinse her hair, gently running her fingers through it to separate the strands. Korra closed her eyes and thought, if she died at that exact moment, she’d probably have been okay with it.

“That...actually feels really good,” she breathed, as Asami’s fingers massaged her scalp.

“I’m not doing it too hard?”

“No, that’s perfect.”

Once Asami decided her hair was mostly guts-free, she reached for her shampoo and began lathering it into her hair.

“What - oh god, that’s amazing!” Korra gushed. “What the hell is that?”

“The shampoo? Lavender.”

“Fuuuck, I love lavender!”

“I’m glad. So do I,” Asami said. “I don’t know why I’m so attached to the scent. For as long as I can remember, I’ve used this shampoo.”

“Your mom could have used it, and it reminds you of her,” she suggested.

“Maybe.”

“Do you think my hair will look like yours when we’re done?”

Asami snorted. “Maybe.”

They fell into a comfortable silence as Korra began to visibly relax. Asami hadn’t even realized her neck was so tight until she finally began to rest head against the curved edge of the tub.

“Bolin left us to give us a moment, didn’t he?” Asami said. Korra laughed.

“I’m not complaining.”

“Neither am I.”

“So, you know how my day went,” Korra started conversationally. "Mostly unconscious, mostly stinky. How was yours?”

“Pretty terrible, actually,” Asami admitted. "I kept thinking you might die, for some reason, even though we’d gotten you home. Mako and Bolin were pretty confident you weren’t, they're more used to your transformations I guess, but I couldn’t shake the awful feeling that you wouldn't come out of this. I was worried out of my mind literally from the moment I realized you didn’t text us after work on Friday, until just now when you woke up.”

“Oh. Uh, sorry.”

“No, it’s fine. You didn’t actually die at any point this weekend so, I mean, good job.”

“Thanks!”

“Close your eyes and stop talking for a second,” Asami said gently. “I don’t want to get shampoo in your eyes or mouth.”
She complied, with a silly grin on her face. “You just don’t want to talk to me while I’m naked.”

“When you’re naked, talking isn’t what I want to be doing.”

The shit-eating grin evaporated from her face, replaced by a furious blush of her own. Asami snickered.

“What, you’re the only one allowed to tease?”

“Well, it’s not really fair if you’re so much better at it,” she said grumpily.

“You’re better at plenty other things. Having abs, for one.”

“I knew you looked!”

“Yeah, yeah, whatever,” Asami reached for the towel rack on the wall and grabbed one to wrap around Korra’s clean hair. Her brow furrowed.

“What is that?”

“What? The head wrap?”

“It’s like, the perfect size just for hair!”

“That’s...that’s the point.”

“Wow! Towels come in sizes?!”

Asami shook her head fondly. “Your hair’s finished. I can fill the tub, now that most of the blood has been washed off. Do you...do you want me to just leave you to soak and scrub a little? That’s a brand new loofa over there, and it has a wand so you won’t have to struggle too much. Just reach where you can, and the bath will take care of the rest. I can drop some lavender bubbles and bath salts in there too, since you liked it so much.”

“Jeez, what are you, some kind of bath wizard?”

“Have you never taken a bath before?”

Korra shrugged. “Not a fancy one like this!”

“How is this fancy? What did you used to do, just sit in soapy water?”

“Yes!”

Asami just rolled her eyes and pulled the lever on the wall, closing the drain so the tub could fill with water. She set the shower head back where it belonged as the faucet below began to run.

“Let me know if it’s too hot.”

“My core temperature is like, a 101 degrees,” Korra reminded her. “Let it go as hot as it can get!”

“You got it. I’m going to go grab the bath salts in the room while that fills.”

“Wait. Just...come back here for a second.”

She did, leaning forward on the trash can. Korra guided her chin lower with her hand and softly pressed her lips against hers.
“I’m glad you’re okay,” she said. “I knew you guys would find me, but I was worried what would happen to you when you did. I’ve got a complex about getting my friends killed, you know.”

“I felt like I could just about lose my mind, if something happened to you,” Asami admitted, finding her hand and squeezing it.

“I’m fine, though. We’re fine.”

“It was terrifying. Korra, I don’t know how you - how do you do that every month? The physical stress alone - “

“I’m fine,” she repeated. “A little battered and bruised, but I’ve been here lots of times before, and I’ll be here lots more times. Just, hopefully with less werewolf death matches.”

Asami cracked a smile. “You have such a good attitude.”

“I’d go nuts if I didn’t.” She hesitated. “But I know it’s different for you. Are you...is it too much for you?”

“You can’t scare me away that easily, loser.”

Korra swallowed nervously, all her insecurities once again rearing their ugly head. “No, but honestly, I’d understand. It’s awful. That’s what I was trying to tell you, the other day. We aren’t - it’s not easy, to be with me. To be with any of us, really. Especially when you don’t have to be.”

Asami reached out to gently rub away a spot of red left on her chin.


When she returned, the pensive expression on Korra’s face was gone. Instead, she was holding the loofah curiously, like it might shoot lasers out of one end or something.

“The squishy part is what you use to scrub,” Asami pointed out. “The handle part if where you hold.”

“Ha-ha. Very funny. I’m just wondering who the lucky bastard was that thought ‘let me put a spongey thing on a stick’ and is now probably a millionaire.”

“Sari Wana, from Omashu. I called her ‘Auntie’, she was a friend of my dad’s a long time ago. She’s actually a billionaire now. You know, the Wana Bath Company?”

Korra just stared at her.

“Yeah. She's the real bath wizard. Could you close your mouth, please? You wouldn’t like how these suds taste.”

Asami dumped her bath salts into the tub and waited as the bubbles finally made it so she couldn’t see Korra’s body anymore.

“It’s...wow, it’s tingly!” she exclaimed, putting the loofah back down. Korra didn’t quite have the strength and maneuverability to use it at the moment, but her bath was already going amazing.

“You’re welcome to come in here and bathe whenever you want.”

“I can’t believe I’ve lived over two decades without ever trying this!” Korra sighed, enjoying the
effervescence. “I’ve changed my mind. I want my room back.”

“Okay, but I have to warn you - the rent is kind of high.”

Korra snickered, until Asami held up what looked suspiciously like a healthy granola bar.

“What the hell is that?”

“You know what it is.”

“But is that supposed to be for me?”

“Well, now that the blood smell is gone, I don’t want you to eat a ton of food all at once. You’ll make yourself sick. We have to start off small and work our way up.”

“Okay, but that still doesn’t explain why your trying to put styrofoam in my mouth.”

Asami sat on the trash can, opened the bar, and held it out patiently until Korra finally took a bite. She knew she must have been starving because even the whole grain oats tasted good. She finished it into two chomps, not even caring that she felt a burn in her chest as it went down. Asami beamed at her proudly.

“Next up, a banana. Then I promise, when you’re done here we can take you downstairs and you can eat whatever junk you want. I’ll even make it for you.”

Korra slid down in the bubbles and just tried to slow her heart. It always beat a little quicker when Asami was around, but it was fluttering now. She was so...perfect. And gorgeous, even more so now that a thin sheen of sweat was starting to coat her skin from the steam in the bathroom. God, even the way she peeled the banana for her upside down from the blunt end like a weirdo was so endearing.

“Let me take you on a date,” Korra said abruptly, the words spilling out of her forcefully before she lost her nerve.

Asami looked startled. “What?”

“I mean, I want to start looking for Kuvira ASAP tomorrow, and I know you've got class all day and a late lab on Monday, then I've got class half of Tuesday and work the other half, but...Wednesday?”

"Wednesday," she repeated. "You want to go on a date."

"Yeah."

“You can’t even walk right now, Kor, will you be okay by then? Can you even go to school and work this week?”

She looked worried. Korra was well aware that she was in no state to do anything but sit in a bath, but she’d never had a transformation where she couldn’t walk on her own by the next day. Especially with the right motivation.

“I’ll be better, you’ll see! I mean, my ribs will take some time, but I don't do anything particularly strenuous at school or work so it'll be fine!”

Asami raised an eyebrow. “Okay. If you’re actually well enough, then I’d love to. What restful, safe, and leisurely activity did you have in mind?”
“I was thinking we can go to Avatar Park. They’re closing down the boathouse soon, so it’ll be our last chance to get out on the lake for the season. We could use one of those turtleduck paddle boats!”

“That sounds perfect.”

“Then, I mean, I remember you said you lived in the Fire Nation for a while, so I know this restaurant - “

“ - I didn’t really live in the Fire Nation,” she corrected her. “I lived in a stuffy, conservative private school in the Fire Nation.”

Korra winced in her bath bubbles. “Just kidding. Did I say Fire Nation? I meant Northern Water Tribe restaurant. Yeah. I know a great one. We’ll go there.”

“No, no, it’s fine! I only meant that I’m not sure I have any idea what real Fire Nation cuisine tastes like. All we got to eat was generic, healthy slop. I’d love to try your place!”

“Flameo, it is, then!”

Asami’s eyes brightened. “Oh, I’ve heard of it! Never got the chance to go, though. It’s one of those charming, romantic restaurants and it’s not like I’ve been on tons of dates lately.”

“Well, mark my words,” Korra promised. “You are going to get charmed and romanced and dated.”

They were interrupted by a squeal at the door. They jerked around to find Bolin standing there, his hands clasped in front of his chest excitedly.

“You guys are so cute!”

“What the fuck, Bo?”

“Swear Jar.”

Korra could have strangled him.

“Fine! Just go, I’m doing awesome and you’re ruining it!”

He bounced excitedly a couple more times before disappearing. Asami snorted.

“I think we have a fan.”

“He’s a fan of everything. You’ve seen his DVD collection.”

“Well, you are right, though. You are doing awesomely,” she said. Asami sat back down next to the tub and leaned forward, carefully unwrapped Korra's hair and letting it fall to her shoulders. She combed her hand through it, as she had done before, and Korra couldn't stop the hum coming from her throat. Asami let her fingers trail down her neck, across her collarbone, and over her jawline. It caused a tingle in Korra that made her completely forget about her lavender bath. When a finger found its way behind her ear, that was when she finally lost it.

She ignored the sharp pain in her ribs as she lurched forward and captured another kiss. Asami gingerly put both hands behind her neck and guided her back down, leaning over her in the bath as her tongue pushed against her lips. The front of her shirt got soaked, but she didn’t care as she curled her fingers in her hair again. Korra moaned into Asami at the feeling.
It was only when Asami couldn’t breath anymore, several minutes later with the hot steam rising from the bath, that she broke away.

“Whoa,” she gasped.

“Yeah,” Korra agreed, trying to control her own breathing so her chest didn’t hurt. “Wow.”

“You’ve probably guessed this already, but I feel compelled to tell you anyway - I’m really, really attracted to you.”

“Same. Very much the same,” Korra said. “Also, since we’re sharing, I feel compelled to tell you that you’re soaked and I can see your nipples through your shirt.”

Asami looked down.

“Didn’t we agree last time that I was supposed to be the one that ruined our next moment?”

Chapter End Notes

Two updates in one month lol WOW IT'S LIKE I'M PROCRASTINATING ON A RESEARCH PAPER OR SOMETHING
“Owww. Ow!”

Mako sighed heavily. “Okay. This was a bad idea.”

Korra noted that Asami, who was helping her out of the car on her other side, was visibly biting her tongue to keep from agreeing. She was definitely in better shape than she was last night, even walking on her own with little pain. But bending over and going up or down stairs was still fairly excruciating.

“Sorry my car is so low,” Asami said.

“Nah, I’m good,” she grunted. “I mean, at least getting out was easier than getting in!”

Korra had spent the entire morning trying to convince everyone she was well enough to go search for Kuvira. Mako had even tried to coerce her to stay home while the rest of them looked for her. She squashed down that suggestion real quick - Kuvira was her friend. She’d never forgive herself if anything happened to her. And there was no way she was going to turn back just because their only car now was a stupid lowrider.

“I know this area,” Asami was saying. “There’s an RC Wireless store around here. We can finally replace the cell phones we lost!”

She’d been griping about her lost cell phone almost as much as Korra had been obsessing over tracking down Kuvira. It wasn’t even like she was a social media butterfly or anything, Asami was anything but. Leaving the house without the unlimited knowledge of the internet and a suite of nerdy apps at her fingertips, though, was like leaving the house naked.

Mako rolled his eyes. “Millenials.”

“We’re the same age.”

“I’m not the reason older generation hates us.”

“Listen, we have way more reasons to hate them than they do us. Look at all the...”

Korra had to roll eyes. After the werewolf cage-fighting incident, it really did seem like Asami and Mako had gotten a little closer. Breakfast was an interesting affair, where the two of them held a regular conversation and Korra and Bolin just watched in shocked silence. Mako even snickered at a joke Asami made, and though she was surprised at first, she smiled back.

But it wasn’t a perfect peace. Their new civil relationship brought about a new dynamic - pointless bickering about unimportant things. He made a throwaway comment about a morning news reporter’s hair on TV, and she lectured him on sexism. She walked out the kitchen to go shower, and he whined about how she didn’t rinse her plates before putting them in the dishwasher. Now that any true animosity was behind them, there were all new things they were now comfortable squabbling about. It hadn’t driven Korra or Bolin completely crazy yet, but they’d only just begun.

“Has any other generation relied so heavily on their predecessors?” Mako challenged.

“It’s not about reliance, it’s about our ’predecessors’ taking some economical, political, and social responsibility!”
“Is this really important to talk about,” Korra interjected witheringly.

“Oh, of course it is. It affects the future of this generation!” Asami said. “Not to mention the next one!”

“Yeah, come on, these attitudes have a huge impact on politics,” Mako nodded at her. “Korra doesn’t really pay much attention to stuff like this.”

“That’s awful. You should, Kor, it directly affects us whether you pay attention or not.”

She didn’t know which was more annoying, when they bickered or when they stood together with their arms crossed like that and agreed on something.

“I meant is it relevant right now?”

Bolin, thankfully, got everybody back on track.

“Is that it? That’s it, isn’t it?” he pointed at a storefront excitedly. “That sign says Lava Cakes! That’s it! We’re here! Let’s go!”

“Calm down,” Mako said wearily, but his brother paid him absolutely no mind. As soon as Asami pushed the door open, he swooped in.

“Wow!” Bolin exclaimed, immediately running around the bakery to look at every little thing. It was only his second outing from the house and no one had the heart to tell him to stop. It didn’t really matter, anyway, since the only other person in the bakery couldn’t see or hear him at all. “I wish I had a sense of smell, I’ll bet this place smells amazing!”

The girl behind the counter, who looked even younger than them, eyed them cautiously.

“Are you guys okay?” she said, looking at Korra’s slight limp and pained expression as she favored her left side. “Should I call someone?”

“No, no, I’m fine!” Korra said brightly. “How are you?”

“Uh, I’m okay. Are you sure you’re fine? You kinda look like everything hurts.”

“I worked out a little too hard yesterday,” Korra said dismissively.

“Ooooh, is that a black forest cake?!” Bolin blathered on, peering into one of the cases. “Hey, look at those, I wonder if those fruit pies are better than the ones at Korra’s job?”

“Hah. Doubtful,” Asami said, then blanched as Mako and Korra glared at her. She still wasn’t used to ignoring Bolin in front of humans yet. The cashier looked at her curiously. “I mean, haha, doubtful you worked out that hard! You...uh...you never work out.”

The bewildered cashier looked back and forth between her and Korra’s toned biceps.

“So...did you want to buy something?”

Korra realized it would probably be strange if they didn’t, and they were already plenty strange. Especially with Mako just sort of lurking in the corner and avoiding eye contact by glaring at a rack of cookies and Asami swiping at Bolin to stop him from spinning the cupcake display. The girl was staring at her swipe at air.

“I saw a fly,” she explained weakly.
“Actually, I mean, that black forest cake looks pretty good,” Korra said, a little too eagerly, trying to get the cashier’s attention away from her idiot friends. Bolin looked overjoyed, despite the fact that he couldn’t really eat it.

“It sure is. You want me to box it up for you?”

“That’d be great, yeah.” She waited as she assembled the white box before striking up conversation again. “So, we were told this place was really good by a friend of mine. She lives in the area, I don’t know if you know her?”

The girl shrugged. “I might. What’s her name?”

“Kuvira.” Korra hoped she wouldn’t ask for a last name. “She’s from the Earth Kingdom. She loves this place because it reminds her of home.”

She bit her lip thoughtfully. “Kind of a strong-looking lady?”

“Yeah, actually!” Korra said excitedly. “Black hair, taller than me, mole on her right cheek, really pretty?”

Bolin snorted loudly and elbowed her.

“But, I mean, not as pretty as this one,” Korra corrected herself and pointed a thumb at Asami, who’d been looking at cookies with Mako and had barely even been paying attention. She felt her ears heat up almost painfully as everyone smirked at her.

“Yes, I do know her,” the girl said, an amused expression on her face. “Not personally, but she’s kind of a regular here. I haven’t seen her in a couple days, though.”

“I think she’s been busy,” Korra lied. “She lives so close, I’m sure she’ll stop by soon.”

“Yeah, right around the corner in the building with the red door, right? I think I saw her there one morning coming to work.”

“Yes!” Korra said, way too enthusiastically. “I mean, yeah. That’s the one.”

The girl raised an eyebrow, but rang up the cake in the register anyway. “That’ll be fifty-two yuans.”

“What!?” Mako, Korra, and Bolin yelped.

“Yeah, sorry, our 10-inch cakes are the most pricey. Your friend had the same expression on her face when I first told her. I think that’s why she only ever gets the rock pies or individual lava cakes.”

Asami reached into her purse and pulled out her credit card. “No problem, I’ve got it.”

“You don’t have to,” Korra whispered.

“I mean, it does look really delicious. I kind of want it anyway.”

Korra gave them all an embarrassed look when they left.

“Sorry we had to drop 52 yuans on a little cake.”

“We? Let’s all acknowledge that this is my cake.” Asami grinned as she walked down the block
with the white box. The neighborhood seemed pretty quiet, especially for Dragon Flats, which was fairly famous for being a pretty loud commercial area. It was still only Sunday morning, though, so Korra wasn’t too surprised that people weren’t bustling in the streets yet. “You know, I looked in this neighborhood for an apartment. Rent here is super high for the square footage.”

“And getting higher every year,” Mako grumbled.

“I bet it’s those darn millennials fault.”

“Oh, my God,” Korra gave Asami a playful shove. “Can we go back to when you guys didn’t want to talk to each other?”

“Do you think she meant around this corner?” Bolin wondered as they came to an intersection. But Korra and Mako didn't need to think about it. They sensed her immediately.

“What?” Asami asked, noticing their distraction.

“Werewolf,” Mako said grimly.

“It’s her,” Korra realized. “It has to be.”

She hurried after the familiar scent and her friends had no choice but to follow her around the corner.

It didn’t take long to find the building with the red door - it was only the second building on the block. Kuvira was there, lying on the stoop in front of it. The clothes she wore were way too big for even her sturdy frame, and they were tattered, streaked with old, brown blood. There was a bruise on her cheek and one of her cool green eyes was swollen shut, but the other was trained angrily on Mako.

As was the handgun she had pointed directly at his forehead.

“**Kuvira!**” Korra cried out. She came to a halt abruptly, causing Mako and Asami to crash into her comically. Bolin barreled right through them and froze.

“Okay, there is no way you people don’t know that is a **vampire,**” Kuvira said, her voice raspy as if she hadn't spoken in a while. "I could smell him coming from around the corner!"

Korra shook her head frantically, holding up her hands instinctively. She realized Mako and Asami had done the same, although they were carefully staying quiet.

“No, wait, wait, he’s my friend! Mako is a **good** vampire!”

“Bullshit. And what the hell is **that**!? ” Kuvira glared at Bolin, who raised his own hands innocently.

“T’m just, uh, your friendly neighborhood ghost!”

“You’re a **ghost**!? ” she demanded incredulously. She looked at Asami. “So what are you, a fucking **mermaid**? ”

Asami laughed nervously. “No, just a human. You know, the kind of human that can easily be killed by guns? So if you can maybe point that thing somewhere else?”

Kuvira just stared back at Korra, who grinned.
“These, uh, these are the friends I was telling you about.”

“You didn’t tell me two of them were dead and the other one was Asami Sato.” At their startled expressions, she explained, “I was in the army and your father is a famous weapons and vehicle manufacturer. I’ve seen a photo or two of you in Future Industries newsletters and stuff.”

Asami bit her lip, but said nothing more. She clearly did not want to discuss her father with someone who was still a stranger to her.

“Yes, well, regardless of our...quirks...they’re still the ones that got us out of that hellhole,” Korra reminded her.

“Why would this vampire do that for us?” she asked suspiciously.

“I told you - he’s a good vampire.”

“Forgive me if I just find that very hard to believe right now.”

“I totally get it,” Korra conceded. “But for real, though, can we not shoot him for now? Come on, put that away.”

“Please?” Mako added dryly.

Kuvira glowered at him, but lowered the gun, to everyone’s relief.

“Are you okay, Korra?”

“Yeah. I mean, it’s kinda hard for me to move, obviously, but I see you know what that’s like.” Korra took her chin in her hand and turned her head to inspect the damage to her cheek and eye. “Ouchies.”

“Yes.” Kuvira winced as she lay back down against the hard stairs. “But seems like you had it worse. Fractured ribs?”

“Yeah. What about you?”

“Pretty sure I just bruised mine, this time. I’ve broken them before, though. That’s a bitch, huh?”

“God, yeah.”

Asami came forward beside Korra to get a better look.

“Did you...you didn’t just get back from there, did you?”

“Oh, nah, today I just decided to wear my Sunday best.” She patted her bloody shirt.

“Kuvira,” Korra said sharply.

“Yes, I just got back,” she sighed. “I woke up in the woods last evening. I think I killed a bear or something. Anyway, I stole some clothes from one of those clothing donation boxes in some parking lot, but the blood and dirt on my skin still kind of seeped through. I didn’t have my phone or wallet or anything, so I started walking back to Republic City until a trucker found me drinking out of a gas station bathroom faucet and felt sorry for me. She drove me as far as White Falls because it was on her route, and I just walked the rest of the way. I got here like, half an hour ago but this is a fifth floor walk-up and I needed a break.”
“Oh, my God.”

She shrugged. “It sucks, but like I said, I’ve been way more banged up than this after a full moon before. At least I didn't break my damn ribs.”

Korra made a move to sit on the stoop next to her, but struggled with the pain in her ribs. Mako and Asami had to help ease her down onto the low stairs.

“I was worried about you. I remembered what you said about that bakery, so we went to Lava Cakes and the girl there told us which building you lived in.”

Kuvira smirked. “Stalker.”

“I prefer to think of it as detective work,” she said. “Wow, you stink. Did I smell this bad when you guys found me?”

“Worse,” Mako said. Asami nodded in agreement.

Bolin looked at Kuvira sympathetically. “Come on, let’s help you into your apartment. Mako can probably just carry you -”

“Uh-uh, no way.” She shook her head vigorously. “Listen, Korra, I appreciate you checking in on me. It was sweet, but I am not inviting a vampire into my apartment, I don’t care how ‘good’ you think he is!”

Mako scowled at her. “I wasn’t exactly hoping to volunteer myself, anyway!”

“Okay, okay. Kuvira, we want to help you, but I totally get the vampire thing.” Korra was trying to keep the peace, and she looked apologetically at Mako. She hadn't anticipated how freaked out Kuvira would be, but she supposed she should have. They'd just escaped from a compound full of crazy vampires that wanted to watch them kill each other, among other things. “Sorry, but maybe just this once you should stay here? Only until I make sure she’s settled in her apartment.”

“And leave you alone?”

“No,” Korra said. “Asami can stay with me. Two of us together should be plenty safe, and you can take Bo with you so I know you’ll be okay too.”

Mako glared at Kuvira, who glared right back, just as acidly.

“Take my car,” Asami said, reaching into her purse and tossing him her keys. His eyes widened at the prospect of driving a Satomobile classic. “You can go over to the mechanic while you’re at it and check on your own car. Korra and I will just take a cab home.”

Mako still looked like he might argue, but Bolin plucked the keys from his hands and jingled them in his face.

“A cherry red SM Stallion, Mako! You’ve been wanting to drive her car forever! They’ll be fine!”

He snatched them back grumpily. “If we don’t hear from you in an hour, we’re coming back.”

“Fair enough.”

“Can I drive it?” Bolin begged, his eyes round and hopeful. Asami cleared her throat nervously.

“Um, maybe in a deserted parking lot?” she said. “So no one can see a car driving itself, I mean.
Not because I’m concerned that you haven’t driven in a year and you randomly pop out of existence every once in a while, or anything.”

“Yes!” Bolin whooped and followed Mako as he trudged back to where they’d parked. Before they turned onto the cross street, he turned to wave. “It was nice to meet you! Feel better!”

Kuvira watched them go, the slightest hint of amusement in her expression.

“You people are so fucking weird.”

“You think that’s weird, you should hear about my first meeting with these three,” Asami said. Korra bumped her shoulder. This was definitely not the time for that story.

“I’ve met a couple ghosts before, but that’s the first one I ever met that wasn’t all cranky and ghoulish. You guys sure he’s dead?”

“Either that, or he’s a very convincing hallucination we’re all having,” Korra joked. “Come on, we might as well start up these stairs now. I hope your rent is at least kinda low, living on the fifth floor of a building with no elevator?”

“A little, yeah. But I normally wouldn’t have a problem with it.”

“Well, we will today. I have a feeling this is gonna take a while.”

It did. Between Korra cringing every step she took and Kuvira huffing and puffing like she’d been a chain smoker since birth, it took Asami nearly twenty minutes to drag them both upstairs. When they finally got to her door, Kuvira groaned.

“I don’t have my fucking keys.”

Asami handed Korra her cake box and dug around in her purse again. “Should be no problem, I just need to see if I brought a...there we go!”

She brandished a small hair pin, and in seconds made short work of the locked door. They heard the click, and it just fell open as if Asami had asked it politely. Kuvira blinked at her.

“Okay, you have to be something. Like a wizard, maybe?”

“Of sorts!” Asami smiled as she took back the cake box and held the door, so the two werewolves could stagger inside.

Kuvira wasn’t kidding when she’d said she moved to Republic City only recently. The studio apartment was almost completely bare, save for a mattress with a single blanket, and a table with two chairs. It wasn’t dirty, but definitely dusty, as if Kuvira only used those two pieces of furniture and never bothered to set foot on any other portion of her living space.

“I’m gonna take a quick shower,” she said, dropping her gun loudly on the table and then throwing off her clothes before Asami even got the door closed behind them. Her hand flew to her eyes.

“What is it with you people and the nudity?!” she complained.

Kuvira snorted and looked her up and down. “You’re the last person that should be hung up about nudity, sweetheart.”

She disappeared into the bathroom and Asami rolled her eyes.
“She seems like a ton of fun.”

“Nothing wrong with being a free spirit!” Korra chirped, helping herself to searching Kuvira’s cupboards for a fork. As she had suspected, there was nothing in her kitchenette but half a bottle of bourbon and two dirty glasses. It was all hilariously consistent with everything she knew about her. “Although if she checks you out like that again, we might have ourselves another deathmatch.”

“I’m...flattered? Are all werewolves this awkward with compliments?”

“Could be!” Korra abandoned her search for cutlery. Kuvira had nothing, and frankly, she wasn’t opposed to just shoving the cake into her face with her hands. “Aw, man, I really wanna dig into this cake.”

“You have to share with Kuvira. My cake, my rules.”

“I didn’t want to eat the whole thing, just taste it!”

“Uh-huh.”

“Listen, mom, I know how to be a grown-up!” she stuck out her tongue playfully. “Although, sorry in advance for the cake carnage you’re about to bear witness to.”

Asami laughed, something Korra was never, ever going to tire of.

“Despite cake carnage actually sounding kind of cool, I saw a deli next door. I can grab forks and stuff from there really quick, but would you be all right if…?” She looked hesitant.

“Hey, I spent one of the worst days of my life with this woman,” Korra said sincerely. “She’s good people, okay? I trust her. You don’t have to worry about me.”

“Okay. I’ll be back in a few minutes.”

Asami smiled and leaned over to give her a quick peck on the cheek. She left the apartment and Korra just sat there, basking in the glow of the fact that they could do things like that now. Kisses on the cheek for no reason, thoughtless touches on the arm. When she caught Asami gazing at her, neither of them had to look away in embarrassment anymore. Korra just sat in one of the chairs, smiling to herself.

In the bathroom, the shower faucet squeaked and the water stopped. Korra heard the shower curtain get shoved aside.

“Did you guys just leave me hanging?”

“Asami did,” Korra called. “She’s getting us forks and whatever for the cake.”

“Aw. That’s nice of her,” Kuvira said, to the sound of a towel flapping and rubbing against skin. A moment later she emerged from the bathroom, predictably naked, with the towel wrapped tightly around just her hair. She opened the closet without a second thought and pulled out a sweatshirt and a pair of jeans.

“Asami is really nice,” she agreed.

“Yeah?” Kuvira threw on her clothes and shook out her hair, evidently not caring if stray droplets hit Korra in the face. “You and her...?”

She blushed. “We’re working on it.”
“Not just a pretty face, huh?”

“I mean, she is a lot of other things, too,” Korra mused. “But I do like the pretty face.”

“Nice. It’s gonna be a damn shame when Mako murders her and drains the blood from her body.”

Korra jerked, unsure that she’d heard what she thought she did.

“Excuse me?”

But Kuvira’s expression was dead serious. She stood in front of her, arms crossed, and lips pressed into a stern line.

“You cannot trust a vampire, kiddo.”

“I can trust that one!”

“No, you can’t,” Kuvira repeated, pulling out the other chair and sitting in it to face her. “Listen to me, I don’t know what you know about vampires - “

“A whole fucking lot,” Korra said sharply. “More than you, probably. I’ve lived with Mako and his brother for a year!”

Kuvira paled and leaned back. “Shit. Korra, that’s so dangerous. Maybe not for Casper the Friendly Ghost, but - please don’t tell me Sato is ever in your house when Mako’s there.”

Korra didn’t have to say it. Kuvira could tell, and she pressed a hand to the bridge of her nose as if a headache was coming on.

“No. No, Korra. She lives in that house with you? Are you kidding?!”

“It wasn’t exactly planned, but she has her own room and everything. It’s been working out for weeks - “

Kuvira shook her head incredulously. “You need to get that poor girl out of there. Have you lost your fucking mind?! She’s human!”

“Mako hasn’t touched another human being for a whole year!” Korra argued angrily. “He only drinks animal blood!”

“Which is all well and good,” Kuvira said. “Until he cracks. They all crack. It’s unavoidable. Vampires are vampires, and they can’t fight that forever.”

Korra was starting to get angry, like a slow burn in her veins. Her fists were clenched so tight, her fingers were starting to tingle. If she didn’t cut this stupid conversation off soon, they’d both regret it.

“I shouldn’t have come.” She started to get up. “I should go.”

Kuvira grabbed her arm urgently. “Wait, look, there were two vampires I learned about, back in the Earth Kingdom. They tried to go without human blood, and they did it together. The buddy system, you know? They supported each other, thinking that’s all they needed to succeed. They even developed a little bit of a following. Other vampires tried joining in. Some could, some couldn’t, but they envisioned it as spearheading some kind of movement. Together, they pulled it off for fifty years.”
“So? That sounds awesome.”

“Imagine going fifty years without food. *Fifty years* without the one thing your body wants more than anything else,” Kuvira said. “They cracked. They cracked in a big way.”

“They killed someone?”

“Killed *someone*!?” Kuvira laughed harshly. “Have you heard of a little thing called the Omashu Tunnel Massacre?”

It had been many years ago. She was only a small girl in the South Pole at the time, but it had been international news. One night, the last train from Omashu in the Earth Kingdom never arrived at its destination, Senlin. Authorities found the train stopped in one of the tunnels, and all eighty-seven of its occupants very, very dead. Their bodies had been mutilated, virtually ripped apart. At first, news outlets reported it was some kind of animal, probably native to the caves in the area. Later, though, the final report stated that it was done by people, armed with knives and other sharp objects. There were no suspects, and to date it was still one of the world’s biggest mysteries.

“Are you saying that was vampires?” Korra realized. Even though she was so young, she remembered how terrible it was, when word got out. Even all the way in the South Pole, it was a huge deal. There were so many farfetched theories and rumors - cultists, terrorists, government conspiracy. But vampires? That was pretty much all of the above.

“Vampires are violent, kiddo. They aren’t like you and me. They’re like that *all the time*.”

She thought of Professor Yangchen, and the grotesque scene that had been left on purpose in the lecture hall. That crime had been covered up, too. Blamed on wild animals instead of the rightful murderer. And who the fuck knew how they handled the Makapu situation. Those vampires had very nearly killed them all for sport. For fun.

But Korra could never ever, even at the farthest reaches of her imagination, picture Mako doing something even remotely that horrifying.

“Mako can handle it. He has been,” she insisted. Kuvira’s fist came down on the table in frustration.

“You’re not listening to me. I know that he’s probably a good guy. Hell, he’s probably fucking saint. It doesn’t matter. He’s still a monster. The only difference is that after he kills someone, he’s gonna feel bad about it afterwards!”

“He’s not going to kill anyone!”

“Vampires spend every minute of every day thirsting, Korra! They’re always hungry. They’re never satiated. Animal blood to them is like, living off bread crumbs every day. It’s not enough. Eventually, they’re going to need more. They can’t take it. You don’t understand - “

“No, you don’t understand,” Korra snapped. “You don’t know him.”

“I think it’s *you* that doesn’t know him,” Kuvira hissed. “You’re telling me he’s never made you nervous? You don’t think he’s ever kept anything from you?”

She faltered. Mako had killed before, although technically his kill count was lower than hers. It was in the beginning, before he’d gotten control of himself, and before he found Bolin again. Since then, he’d been totally clean and on the wagon.
But it wasn’t so long ago that Mako revealed the vampire infrastructure to them for the first time. She remembered how she and Bolin knew he was keeping secrets from them about work before he quit. How everything he’d tried to shield them from was biting them all in the ass now.

How there was something, deep down inside her, that suspected he still might be keeping things from them.

His secrets were all only ever meant to protect them, though, not hurt anyone. He had her, Bolin, and even Asami, now. They be would enough to keep him in line, to help him if things got too hard. He’d tell them, if that ever happened, and they’d be there. The two vampires in Kuvira’s story may have had each other, but Mako had more than just that.

“I trust Mako,” Korra said firmly. “He sacrifices so much for us.”

“Well, it sounds like something a good guy would do to ease his conscience, given he’s a natural killing machine.”

Korra pulled her arm away fiercely and almost blacked out from the pain in her ribs. Kuvira quickly got up to support her.

“I’m sorry. I’m sorry it sounds like I’m being mean,” she pleaded. “But you matter to me, okay? I think you’re a really nice person and I wasn’t kidding when I said I want to be friends with you if we both survived. I’m just worried about how much you trust that guy.”

“He would never hurt me.”

“Well, no, he has no reason to,” Kuvira conceded. “Vampires can’t drink werewolf blood. But what about Sato?”

Korra practically snarled.

“Sato is human. He can smell her blood every day, all the time at home. It’s like a buffet to him, and he’s starving if he hasn’t had human blood in a year. There is no way he won’t lose it, and your little princess is going to be the one to suffer for it.”

“Shut up, Kuvira.”

“I can understand you wanting to be friends with him,” she said. “I get that. It isn’t his fault he is what he is. But he is a vampire. And Sato is food to him. If you want her to be safe - “

“I said shut up!”

The door suddenly opened and Asami stood there, arms laden with sandwiches, a giant party bag of chips, and a gallon of lemonade.

“I got us some early lunch because I figured two werewolves aren’t gonna be happy with just half a cake each,” she said warily, glancing at Korra’s white-knuckled fists. “But, uh, is something going on here?”

“I was just saying bye,” Korra said sharply, walking towards her. She took the bags of food and set them on the floor. “We’re leaving.”

Kuvira started to come over. “No, wait, I’m sorry - “

“Keep the food and the cake. Enjoy it,” Korra said acidly. “Consider it thanks for helping me keep
my sanity that day.”

“Please, kiddo - “

“Bye.”

Korra marched past Asami. She took her cue and shut the door on Kuvira before rushing to help Korra down the stairs.

“What happened?” she asked. Korra didn’t respond, just tried to make her way down as quickly as she could, causing her chest to heave painfully. “Whoa, hey, would you slow down? You’re going to hurt yourself!”

“I just wanna get out of here.”

“Did she do something to you?!”

“No,” Korra assured her. “No, she didn’t. But she’s not who I thought she was.”

Asami nodded and patiently helped Korra make it all the way back to the street. When they got there, strands of Korra’s hair had stuck to her sweaty forehead from the exertion. She took a minute to gently brush them away.

“I’m sorry that didn’t work out. I know you were excited for all of us to get along.”

“Yeah, well. Whatever. Life doesn’t always work out.”

“No, it doesn’t,” Asami agreed. “But you know, you do have a lot of other things going for you. Other people in your life that are working out, for example!”

She was trying to cheer her up, but when Korra looked at her, she couldn’t help but feel just a little bit guilty.

“It’s working out for you, too, right? You like Bolin? And...you’re okay with Mako?”

Asami frowned. “Why?”

“You’re not...afraid...?”

“Afraid of what?” Asami’s eyebrows knitted together in concern. “What did Kuvira say to you?”

Korra couldn’t lie to her. Not when she looked at her like that. “She was worried that Mako might try to hurt you one day.”

Asami let out a breath. “Oh.”

“The thought doesn’t seem to surprise you all that much,” Korra noted.

“Well, obviously, that was a concern of mine too, at first,” she admitted. “I mean, he said it himself - he fights his instincts all the time. And let’s face it, I’m probably delicious.”

“Asami …”

“But I’ve been alone with Mako. He never threatened me,” Asami assured her. “He saved me, really. And he doesn’t look at me any different than he looks at you or Bolin. I’m not getting a predatory vibe off of him, you know? Not like I was with all those other vampires up in Mapuku.”
“If that feeling ever changes,” Korra said, her heart aching even just at the thought of the possibility. “If you ever feel like Mako might - “

“I can take care of myself,” Asami said. “But even better, I know I have you and Bolin. I’m not scared, Korra. I trust Mako now. And even if he did get tempted to bite me, I know just thinking how disappointed you and Bolin would be, that would hold him back. I trust this family you’ve made for yourself.”

Hearing her say that didn’t do much to ease the weight on her chest. Those two vampires that tried to go clean, they’d done it for fifty years. Fifty fucking years, and they still failed in the end.

Korra swallowed. “All right, well, we should probably get us some new phones.”

Asami’s face brightened, and for just that brief moment, Korra’s spirits were lifted into the stratosphere.

“Finally! Korra, I’m not kidding when I say I’ve been suffering without one!”

She let Asami hurry them over to the RC Wireless store, but she still couldn’t shake the pit Kuvira had planted firmly in her stomach.

Something told her she’d be keeping a little bit closer of an eye on Mako and Asami for a while.
Opal looked at the clock on the wall and slapped Korra's back excitedly, nearly causing her to drop her portafilter.

“Hey!”

“Look at that! It’s three o’clock and you actually worked an entire shift without major incident! You didn’t even try to leave early for mysterious reasons or anything!”

Korra made a face. “I haven’t been that bad.”

But she had. She’d missed several shifts, for obvious reasons, and taken off early quite a few times in the past month. It was through the pure goodness of her boss Tenzin’s heart, and Opal’s generous covering of her ass, that she wasn’t actually fired. The myriad of excuses for her unexplained absences - getting beat up in the parking lot, finding the ghost of a dead professor, getting kidnapped by vampires to fight in a cagematch, being unconscious and covered in deer guts, etc., etc. - probably wouldn’t have gone over very well, anyway.

On top of that, Korra’s school performance was taking a hit. She had an exam coming up and a project due, but she was missing both those class lectures that morning to make up for some missed hours - to Asami’s vast displeasure.

“Oh, you’ve been that bad,” Opal countered. “What is up with you lately? I don’t buy all that ‘I was sick’ crap. You never get sick.”

Being sick was definitely a weak excuse, but lying was never really Korra’s strongest suit.

“Just getting old, you know?”

Opal pursed her lips. “You know you could tell me if you’re in a secret fight club, right?”

She barked out a laugh at how close she actually was to the truth.

“First rule of Fight Club is: You do not talk about Fight Club.”

“Uh-huh. If you’re not gonna tell me the truth about that, then can we talk about why you’re wearing your nice jeans, clean sneakers, and that cute button-down under your apron?”

Jinora suddenly emerged from the kitchen, grinning widely. No doubt she was going to change the topic of conversation into something inappropriate and not about Korra.

“Guess what, guess what, guess what!”

“You’re ready to admit Diva cups are gross and you’re going back to tampons?” Opal suggested.

“That bitch Mei is plotting to be Kai’s date to the prom?” Korra teased.

“No, fuck you both. I just saw a certain bright red Satomobile come around the corner from the back window!”

Korra could have strangled her. Opal’s eyes widened excitedly.

“Is Asami coming to pick you up?”
She didn’t need to answer that. Asami pulled up into the parking lot, right in front of the shop. They watched from the stupid floor-to-ceiling windows as the car door opened and Asami stepped out, swinging her hair out of the way in seemingly slow motion like a goddamn movie star.

“Are you two going on a date?! ” Opal gushed. “I knew you were dressed nice for a reason! You’ve been avoiding espresso dust and milk splashes like the plague all day!"

“Kor, oh my God,” Jinora whispered, as if Asami could hear them from outside. “I really, really hope you’re hitting that. Like, every night.”

“Jinora!” Korra scolded the sixteen year old daughter of her boss, but only half-heartedly this time, because damn.

Asami was wearing leggings. She’d gone to class early, so Korra hadn’t seen her before she left. Honestly though, she probably could have used a head’s up before being blindsided in front of her coworkers by the sight of Asami in leggings. It was the first time Korra had ever seen her in them and she swore she was starting to get palpitations. Her sweater was nice too, but…

“I’m with Jinora,” Opal said, whistling. “Look at that - “

“- okay, both of you can shut up, now,” Korra hissed, as Asami pushed the glass door open. The little bell tinkled brightly, announcing the arrival of an angel and the departure of any dignity Korra had hoped to retain that evening.

Goddamnit.

“Hi!” Asami greeted them. “How are you guys?”

Korra pulled off her apron and all but leapt over the counter. She’d prepared a to-go cortado for her specifically just to minimize her interactions with Opal and Jinora. They did not need this stress on their very first date. It had already been postponed for a whole week, thanks to the both of them having to catch up at work and school. She’d been aching for this evening for so long and if those two ruined it even a little bit...

“They’re great. Let’s go! Have a good evening you two!” she yelped, tugging Asami out of the shop.

“Have fun!” she heard Opal call, in the dirtiest-sounding voice she could muster.

“Use protection!” Jinora added unhelpfully.

Korra pulled the door shut and gave them each a good look at her middle finger, before dragging Asami back to her car. She looked at her sheepishly.

“I don’t suppose your ears just stopped working.”

“Oh, yeah. Went totally deaf,” Asami pretended to stick a finger in her ear. “It’s all back now, though. We’re good.”

Korra swallowed, her mouth dry as she stole another glance at the leggings that would ultimately be her undoing.

“I, uh, cortado?” she shoved the coffee cup at her and Asami laughed, taking it and leaning over to put it in the car's cupholder. Korra very nearly died at the sight.
“So, you look amazing,” Asami said, sticking a finger in one of the belt loops on Korra’s best jeans and giving it a playful tug to get her closer. “That’s a nice top. Blue looks so cute on you.”

“You look cute on you,” Korra blurted back at her. She blushed. “Or something that actually makes sense. I don’t know. Let’s start over - Hi, you look really good and I made you a cortado because I thought you might be tired after school.”

She laughed again, making her blush even harder. “Thanks. I’m not that tired, but I’ll never say no to your coffee. How was work?”

“Fine.”

“I wish you didn’t have to choose between work and school, but I have so much respect for you pulling off both, plus the whole werewolf thing.” She turned to walk to the other side of the car and opened Korra’s door for her. “After you!”

“How chivalrous,” Korra croaked, her eyes still firmly enthralled with the way her backside and long legs moved as she walked.

“Well, one of us has to be,” she said slyly. Startled, Korra glanced up and knew she’d been caught. Asami had been looking over her shoulder. She fucking knew how those damn leggings looked on her. She’d done it on fucking purpose.

“You’re evil, you know that?”

A coy grin. “Are you getting in or not?”

Korra got into the car and Asami shut the door, sticking her tongue out in the window before going back around to the driver’s seat.

“How was school?” she asked, determined to be cool for the rest of the date.

“Educational. You know how I feel about rotary engines.”

“Huh, I actually really do.”

Asami pulled out of the lot and headed down the road, where the park was only a few minutes away. There, a romantic turtleduck paddleboat ride awaited them. The idea had been a total brain fart, a delusional fantasy that just fell out of her mind as she lay immobile in a tub of hot, muddy deer soup. But the way Asami had made her feel in that moment made it so hard to think with anything but the cheesiest, most embarrassing part of her mind. Still, she was totally on board, which meant that Asami was just as much a romantic loser as her.

“I hope you didn’t miss too much in your classes this morning.”

Korra shrugged. “I took a look at the powerpoints at lunchtime, after the professors uploaded them. Just a little neuroplasticity here, and a little musculoskeletal adaptability there. You know, the usual.”

She peered over at her, impressed. “Sometimes I forget that you’re just as big a science nerd as I am.”

“I’m not just a cute butt, you know,” Korra scoffed.

“Well, you’re mostly cute butt.”
“But also a kinesiology prodigy.”

“With a cute butt.”

Because of the cooler weather, and the fact that it was a Wednesday afternoon, the lake wasn’t very crowded. Only a few turtleduck paddleboats were out on the water, mostly parents with their kids. They had no problem securing a turtleduck of their own. The kid that was launching them from the dock was barely even paying attention as he held the paddleboat steady for them to board. He didn’t bother fully stabilizing the boat as Korra climbed in, so the aggressive bob under her weight took her by surprise. She grimaced, trying to discreetly clutch at her chest as she settled into the seat. Asami gave the kid a dirty look as she carefully eased her way in.

“I saw that,” Asami said. “Are you sure you’re okay to do this? You told me you were all better.”

“I’m as fine as I’m going to be for the next month,” she insisted. “This date has been delayed long enough. I feel like I’ve been waiting forever to finally take you out, I’m not about to wait another minute!”

Asami smiled. “Well, in that case, I’m going to do all the paddling. You just sit there and enjoy the sights.”

“I can - “

“You can not.”

“What about steering?”

“Nope.”

“Ugh, fine.” She leaned back and watched as Asami placed her feet on the pedals and grabbed the steering rod. “Since you’re the only one with a car now, you’re already our chauffeur. You might as well be my turtleduck chauffeur, too.”

Asami snorted and took them out towards the center of the lake, where they could see the city’s Spirit Tower looming over the park. It wasn’t dark yet, but they’d both seen what it looked like when the sun set and the lights went on. All they had to do was imagine it.

“It’s so nice and quiet,” Asami said. “I never get to come here enough. It’s almost like we’re not even in the city anymore.”

“Yeah, that’s another reason why I wanted to come here. I think we need some peace and quiet,” Korra said, trying to be subtle as she watched a soft breeze blow Asami’s hair over one of her shoulders.

“I can almost take a nap, right here.” Asami stretched comfortably. “These little waves and ripples are like being rocked to sleep!”

“Go ahead. I’ll make sure none of these kids around here mow us down in their boats.”

Asami chuckled. “I wouldn’t be much of a date if I did that.”

“Are you kidding? Come here.” Korra reached around Asami and guided her down, to rest her head in the dip between her shoulder and the side of her chest.

“Is this okay?” Asami asked worriedly. Korra wrapped her arms around her and smiled to herself.
She smelled like lavender.

“It’s pretty perfect, actually.”

They let the turtleduck drift, just listening to the lapping of the water against their boat, the distant giggles of children, and the sound of each other’s breathing.

“See? If we fell asleep right this second, it’d still be the best date ever.”

“I can’t fall asleep, you just made me chug your espresso,” Asami grinned. “Sing me a lullaby, maybe.”

“Trust me, you do not want me to sing. I sound like seals during mating season.”

She snickered. “Come on, I dare you.”

“There are innocent children here, Asami.”

“Have you heard the music kids listen to these days?”

Korra smirked. She thought for a moment of the many Southern Water Tribe lullabies her mother and father sang to her as a child. Most predictably involved the wilderness, ice and snow, or the ocean. None really fit the mood at the moment, with Republic City bidding goodbye to a long summer and preparing for a brisk fall. Back home in the South Pole, seasons weren’t really a thing. Spring colors meant the sun was set lower on the horizon, so the orange and purple hues reflected more brightly in the cracked ice. Summer heat was just the sun staying in the sky a little bit longer, so children could play in the snow later into the evening. And fall was just the winter before more winter. It was nothing like in the United Republic. Fall happened like clockwork in this hemisphere, but it never ceased to amaze Korra. In the next few weeks, the green leaves on the trees ringing the lake around them would crinkle and brown. Then, as the wind picked up and a chill bit the air, they’d fall into the water, making the lake look speckled orange.

“Leaves from the vine, falling so slow... Like fragile tiny shells, drifting in the foam...”

Asami stiffened, for some reason. Korra gently rubbed her shoulder and continued.

“Little soldier boy, come marching home... Brave soldier boy, comes marching home...”

Asami sat up, staring her.

“What? Come on, I’m not that bad.”

“No, no, I just...” She looked flustered. “Why are you singing that?”

“It’s a lullaby,” Korra said, puzzled. It was fairly well known around the world, she thought. “You’ve never heard it?”

“Yeah, but not as a lullaby,” she said. “It’s a mourning song.”

“What?!” Korra shook her head. “No, in the South Pole it’s something you sing to get kids to sleep! You know, some peaceful imagery? A little boy coming inside from playing soldier to go to bed?”

Asami made a face. “Wow. Talk about cultural divides.”

“What do you mean?”
“Here in the United Republic - and in the Fire Nation, actually - it’s used to mourn the fallen,” Asami explained. “Literally about like, the madness of sending young men and women that are basically children into battle and losing them. The ‘peaceful imagery’ is about them finally being at peace. They sing it at funerals.”

Korra let her head fall back and bump the back of the boat.

“Okay. I made this date morbid. Sorry.”

“No, no,” Asami smiled softly. “It’s actually kind of cute that you have this whole other meaning to the song.”

“The death song.”

“Oh, stop. It’s meant to comfort,” she insisted. “My dad sang it to me, to try and comfort me after my mom died. It actually did make me feel better sometimes. Like my mom had another home somewhere, where she was safe. At peace…”

Korra’s scowled. “You mean the dad that might have murdered your mom and is probably like, the king of all vampires?”

“Okay, now you made it morbid.”

“Sorry again,” she said sheepishly. “Maybe we should have just taken that nap.”

They giggled to themselves. A minute later, Korra sighed.

“What are we going to do about all that now?”

“What can we do?”

Korra frowned. “Mako’s been rubbing off on you.”

“No, that wasn’t a hopeless ‘what can we do’,” Asami clarified. “That was a sincere question. If our main objective is to shut down all vampires, I mean, clearly that’s not going to happen through brute force. And even our reconnaissance mission went really badly.”

Korra had been thinking it a while now, but telling Asami she thought she should try to make contact with her father would definitely, definitely ruin their date. Granted, Asami was the one that brought up her father that time. In any other situation, it would have been the perfect segue.

“We don’t have to talk about that now,” she said. “Sorry for bringing it up. This is supposed to be about us, not all that.”

“Taking a break would be nice,” Asami said, settling into Korra a little closer. “Do you think - “

“BEEP BEEP!” someone shouted.

They were nearly thrown from their boat as two teenage boys in their own turtleduck rammed the side of theirs. Korra cried out in pain and Asami held her.

“Hey!” she shouted at them. “Watch it!”

“Sorry! You were going too slow!”

They sped off, or at least they sped off as fast as a turtleduck paddleboat could let them speed.
Asami squeezed Korra’s arm.

“Are you all right? Should we dock? Let’s dock.”

“No,” Korra grumbled, hands on her ribs. “I’m okay. Fucking kids, though.”

“Seriously,” she agreed, watching as they laughed to themselves, having a grand old time being hooligans. She grabbed the steering rod and put her feet back on the pedals.

“Asami? What are you doing?”

“Tighten your life vest,” she instructed. “And give yourself a hug, arms across your chest like you’re bracing yourself.”

Korra did as she was told, slightly afraid of the mischief in Asami’s eyes.

“Okay? What are you doing?”

“Taking those little jerks back to school.”

Asami put the pedal to the metal, so to speak, as she paddled them towards the kids as vigorously as she could. Korra would have been lying if she said she wasn’t enthralled by the muscles in her thighs pumping under those leggings, her calves clenching with exertion.

*God, if I somehow die by slow-speed turtleduck paddleboat chase, I’d be totally okay with that.*

The teens heard the violent churning of water and turned to see Asami practically spitting fire. Terrified, they started to paddle together.

“Back to the dock, back to the dock!” one of them cried.

Korra smirked. “As much as I’m enjoying this, because believe me I really am, they have too much of a head start. I don’t think you can beat them.”

“I’m not trying to beat them.” She had no idea what Asami was talking about, until they were only about two feet behind them, to the right of their turtleduck. How she’d managed to maneuver the boat so fast, she had no idea. “Okay, Korra, brace yourself like I told you. Hold on tight!”

She did, and Asami yanked the steering wheel forcefully to the right, giving the pedals one last good thrust. The boat tipped sideways sharply, causing their back left corner to swing out of the water, cascading lake water all over the teenage boys, soaking them.

“Aww, *ew!*”

“I think it got in my *mouth!*”

Asami smugly paddled away from them. She put a hand on Korra’s knee.

“You okay?”

*Okay!* Korra yelped. “You’re the coolest person I’ve ever met in my *life!*”

“You should have seen me in my street racing days.”

“Your *WHAT*?!”
“Kidding!” Asami shrugged. “Well, mostly. I mean, I guess I’m not. There wasn’t a whole lot else to do in the rural countryside of the Fire Nation Academy for Girls, and you’ve seen my car.”

Korra shook her head in disbelief. “Asami Sato, you are a wild one.”

“That’s what they called me.”

“Shut up. No they didn’t.”

“Sure did. I had a leather jacket with ‘Wild One’ bedazzled on the back.”

Korra didn’t even care if she was joking or not. She just laughed and laughed until she had trouble breathing and Asami had to bring her back to the dock.

Their hostess sat them across from each other at a very cozy corner booth that Korra worried wasn’t big enough for the quantity of food she usually ate for dinner. The table was set with tiny plates, three different kinds of glasses and an assortment of redundant cutlery placed on folded silk napkins. Flameo, despite the bright name, was also pretty dark. Korra could barely see much other than the light from the small candle on the table glinting off the gear-shaped pendant on Asami’s necklace. The was also an ornate golden torch, unlit at the end of the table, but she wasn’t sure what that was about.

The restaurant was very obviously expensive, and Korra was starting to think may she should have researched it a little more. It was another part of her ludicrously romantic first date with Asami, and once she'd expressed interest in coming to Flameo, it wasn't like Korra could back out of the suggestion.

“Have you ever been to Flameo before?” the hostess asked.

“No,” Asami said, seemingly unphased at how fancy it was. She’d already placed the folded napkin in her lap. "It's the first time for the both of us."

“Well, then you may of course take a look at the menu, but my suggestion would be to try the five course special,” the hostess said, reciting her lines like she must have done dozens of times that evening. “It’s a favorite for new patrons. When you’re ready to order, just use the candle there to light the torch at the end of your table and someone will be right over to help you. Have a wonderful evening!”

She left them to just kind of stare at the menu.

“Wow,” Korra couldn’t help but say. “Do you think this food will give us superpowers or something?”

“This is the most expensive steak I’ve ever seen.”

“Maybe it’s like, a special cow.”

“Special how?”
“I don’t know, maybe it’s one of the Fire Lord’s personal royal cows?”

Asami snorted. “We don’t have to eat here, Korra. This place is pretty up there.”

Korra was not about to let being poor stop her now, though. “It’s fine. I made good tips today.”

“Then I’m going to make it clear right now that we’re going halfsies,” Asami said firmly.

She was proud, not stupid. “Yeah, sure. No five course special, though.”

“Absolutely not.” God, she was beautiful in the flickering glow of the candlelight. Frankly, Asami would have been gorgeous in any lighting, but the shock of white as she grinned at her made something that wasn’t just her ribs ache.

“Oh, man,” she whispered, chuckling to herself. “I think the people in that booth over there are getting a little handsy.”

Korra tore her eyes away from her for just a moment. After letting them adjust to the darkness she saw that the couple barely ten feet away was indeed going overboard on the PDA. Asami was snickering like a child, but Korra couldn’t help but feel extraordinarily embarrassed by it.

“We should order drinks,” she croaked abruptly, taking the candle and using it to light their torch. The flame burned bright purple.

"Oooh, potassium? And maybe a little strontium?" Asami marveled at the torch. "Potassium chloride makes it purple, but this is really leaning towards pink, so they've got to have added some kind of red oxidizer..."

Korra stopped listening. She’d been so distracted by the fanciness of the restaurant and her date with Asami that she hadn't noticed before. Now, as their waitress approached the table, she was noticing the hell out of her before she was even close enough to make out in the dark.

“Hi, my name is Kuv - oh, shit.”

Asami gasped. "Kuvira?!

“You work here?” Korra said incredulously. “I thought you were a dancer!”

Asami blinked at her. “You’re a dancer?”

“Yeah, I’m graceful as fuck,” Kuvira huffed. “But I left Zaofu Dance Company when I got the...curse, and this is the first job I could get after moving here. I've been helping in the kitchen most of the night and it smells so strong in there that I didn't even realize you were - fuck.”

Several awkward seconds ticked by.

“So...was that cake any good?” Asami wondered.

“Uh, yeah, it was great.” Kuvira looked between the two of them. “Are you guys...?”

“Yes,” Korra said confidently grabbing Asami’s hand and squeezing it. She looked surprised for a second, but didn’t object.

Kuvira glared at her, then at Asami.

“You seem really nice. I hope you know exactly what you’re getting into with these guys.”
“I’ll be fine,” Asami said tightly.

“I used to think that too,” she sighed. “Listen, let me get you a new waitress. I guess you two should enjoy all this while you can.”

Kuvira disappeared into the kitchen and Korra sighed.

“I swear she was cooler in our cage.”

“She’s just looking out for us,” Asami assured her. “For me in particular, I guess because I’m the resident human around here. Her heart is in the right place.”

“Yeah, well she can learn a little trust.”

“Trust is a luxury these days, unfortunately,” she sighed. “I don’t think I can blame her, Kor.”

Korra frowned. “Can we talk about something else? I don’t want this great evening ruined.”

Asami squeezed her hand back in reassurance. “It’s not, I promise. Let’s forget she’s even here.”

They perused their menus, Korra settling on the Komodo Sausage and Asami choosing the Apple and Purpleberry Salad. They also asked their new waitress for some extra sides of bread and several orders of Gourmet Sizzle Crisp and Hot Cakes, under the guise of taking the leftovers home. In reality, Korra was probably going to kill all of it at the restaurant, but at that point they’d be able to leave quickly without too many stares.

There was at least one waitress at the restaurant that would understand.

“I can’t forget she’s here,” Korra admitted.

“I figured not.”

“She’s like me. We should be friends. Why is she making this so difficult?”

Asami’s foot gently rubbed at her ankle under the table. “Korra, I understand where she’s coming from because she’s like me, too - alone and cautious. The Mako situation is pretty dangerous, imagine how I felt in the beginning. I was kind of forced into this - “

“ - you feel like we forced you?” Korra’s face fell.

“No! Not you guys. Just, my life circumstances, you know?” Asami said. “I basically just dropped into your laps, but you’ve also opened my eyes to a ton of things that I had the right to know all along. I’m grateful for that. I’m grateful to you guys, despite all that’s happened, and I want to learn more. That’s why I’m accepting the Mako risk. Kuvira doesn’t have anything on us other than whatever her pre-conceived notions of vampires are. And believe me, after what I saw in Makapu, I don’t blame her one bit.”

Korra couldn’t help but smile. “I can’t believe you can look back at these past few weeks and think the word ‘grateful’.”

“I’m a little crazy, maybe.”

“Maybe,” she agreed. “I probably am too.”

"Probably?” she snorted. Asami waited quietly until the server put their Sizzle Crisps and Hot Cakes in front of them before laughing out loud. “Let’s see, you put an ad on Craigslist for a human
roommate to live with a vampire, a werewolf, and a ghost. You locked me in a cage - “

“Still not over that one, huh? You know I got my karma for that already, right?”

“ - you stalked me for three days. You babysat a ghost professor. You adopted her whiny cats. You…”

At some point during Asami’s list of her achievements, Korra grew increasingly distracted at the way her lips moved as she talked. She had so much expression in those ruby red lips and it was captivating, watching as they formed words and twisted into smirks and smiles and small ‘o’s of surprise. They were never chapped or dry, never not moist or soft or…

“...Korra?”

“Huh?”

Asami was grinning. “What are you staring at?”

“Um…you?”

She shook her head in amusement. “Come here.”

“You mean like, slide over or - ?”

“I said come here,” Asami scooted closer herself and captured Korra’s lips with hers.

It was easy, Korra realized, as she settled into the kiss and moved forward, her tongue hungrily searching for more. Kissing Asami was as easy and natural as anything she’d ever done. Asami’s hands found their way to Korra’s waist and tried to tug, to pull them as close together as they could possibly be.

The kiss deepened, and Asami moaned quietly into her mouth, spurring Korra on. Her hands traveled under the sweater and slowly made its way up Asami’s soft, smooth stomach. She squirmed, trying to make her go faster, but Korra paused for a moment. She knew Asami could feel the smirk in her lips as her fingers toyed with the underwire of the lace bra she was wearing.

Asami gasped and pulled away slightly, their foreheads still touching.

“Damn it, Korra.”

“What?” she asked innocently.

Impatient, she grabbed Korra’s hands by the forearms and thrust them higher under her sweater. Korra chuckled into her lips as she kissed her again, her hands now resting firmly atop Asami’s clothed breasts.

Just as Korra was about to let her fingers succumb to their urges, the servers arrived with their main course. They flew apart, embarrassed, but the staff didn’t seem to care in the slightest. They were sure it wasn’t the first time they’d watched someone round second base in the dark lighting of Flameo.

“Thank you,” Asami said weakly as they sped off, likely trying to give them more privacy.

“Uh...um…” Korra stammered.

“This place is like, hanky-panky central,” Asami said quickly. “The atmosphere here is so - no
wonder they call this place Flameo.”

“I’m not the type to sleep with someone on the first date,” she found herself babbling, for some completely idiotic, nonsensical, inappropriate reason.

“No, no way, me neither,” Asami hastily agreed. “I’m sorry, I made you - “

“No, shut up, I wanted to,” Korra said. “Obviously.”

“But - “

“I know. I’m sorry. Uh - “ Korra cleared her throat and tried to collect her thoughts. “I mean, you should know that I really, really want to.”

She was making it all immeasurably worse by talking. Thankfully, Asami didn’t seem to realize this and nodded in agreement.

“Same. Uh, same.”

“So...so when?”

She raised an eyebrow. “When do we...do it?”

Korra wanted the floor to melt away and the earth to swallow her whole.

“Oh, my God. Please, you’re welcome to just shut me up at any time.”

“...Maybe after a couple more dates?”

If they weren’t sitting in a tight booth, she would have fallen unceremoniously off of her chair and expired right there on the floor. As it was, she was fairly sure she could still kind of pass out and slide under the table.

“Not to sound embarrassingly thirsty or anything,” Korra said, throwing all caution to the wind. She’d fucked herself up pretty badly already, how much worse could she get. “But...what’s ‘a couple’?”

“I actually read somewhere once that eight dates was optimal before sleeping with someone.”

EIGHT?!” Korra’s hands flew to her mouth as the low hum of murmuring other patrons fell silent for a few seconds. “Oops. Sorry. I’m sorry. Sorry.”

Asami snickered. “But, I mean, I’m open to decreasing that number.”

“To like...five?” Korra covered her eyes and let her forehead hit the table, causing the little candle to nearly tilt over. Asami caught it just in time. “Oh my God, I’m so sorry. I swear I’m not - we can do eight. That’s totally fine. Eight is great!”

Eight is great?! Her own brain was screaming at her. This was it. This was how her life was going to end.

“I was thinking three.”

Korra gaped at her. “Three, including this one?”

“Absolutely including this one. Hell, I’d count this as two dates if I could.”
They stared at each other for just a moment.

“Just kidding,” Asami said sheepishly.

“No, yeah, this is just one date. Totally.”

“We are a damn mess, Korra.”

They laughed together, not even caring that some of the other patrons were trying to shush them. In retrospect, Korra would realize that Asami was floundering with her head barely above water, just like she was. But in that moment, she was just glad Asami hadn't decided punched her in the throat and stormed out, leaving her with the whole exorbitant check. She was giddy and honestly, it was the best feeling in the world. Once they’d managed to calm down, they set to work on their dinner. Or rather, Asami casually picked at her salad while watching Korra shove impressive amounts of food down her throat.

“Are you even chewing?”

“Yeah! No point in eating if you can’t taste it. Savor it, you know?” Korra winked.

“No teasing,” Asami said, plucking a purpleberry from her salad and rolling it around with her tongue wickedly.

“Same goes for you.”

“I’m just trying to enjoy my - “

The door to Flameo suddenly burst open. With the quiet ambience of the restaurant, it didn’t need to be loud for it to catch everyone’s attention.

It was two men and a woman. One of the men was in his late twenties or early thirties, with short black hair that was shaved at the sides. A thick pair of glasses rested on his stern, angular face. The other was a bit older, but smaller and more slender, with a thin mustache that Korra might have thought was hilarious in any other circumstance. The woman was very slight and almost easy to miss, compared to her companions. She also wore glasses, and her plain brown hair tied up in a tight bun.

Asami was watching oblivious just like everyone else, but Korra smelled it on them right way.

They were werewolves.
No one else at the restaurant seemed to realize anything was wrong, other than three people rudely interrupting their intimate night out, but Korra was watching them like a hawk. The three werewolves abruptly turned their heads towards her to stare back.

Of course, they could tell she was a werewolf too.

"Korra," Asami hissed. "Are they vampires?"

“No. Werewolves.”

“Oh.” She did not seem any less alarmed. “Should we...should we go?”

“Wait, no, I don’t think this is about me.”

The werewolves blinked owlishly at her in surprise, but did nothing else. They looked at each other, unimpressed. Korra swore the mustached man just kind of shrugged. They weren’t there for her at all, she was just a mildly interesting discovery on the way to what they really wanted. She didn’t need three guesses for what that was.

“We’re looking for someone called Kuvira,” the man with the glasses said to the nervous hostess by the door. Even she was able to sense that something was not right with these people.

The hostess hesitated before answering. “Um, she’s working right now - “

“Tell her Bataar would like to see her.”

“And Varrick and Zhu Li!” The mustached man exclaimed, pointing at himself and the small woman beside him. “Don’t let her freak out or anything. Oh, and you shouldn’t freak out either, we just want to talk!”

Korra and Asami shared a look. If someone needed to be told not to freak out, it probably meant they had good reason to.

“Uh...sure, okay.” The hostess got up and disappeared into the kitchen. Moments later, there was a clanging of dropped glasses, a startled gasp, and then silence. The hostess came back out looking extremely flustered.

“She ran,” the woman, Zhu Li, said. She sounded almost bored, as if she’d known that was going to happen all along. “Probably out the back exit. I saw an alleyway there earlier.”

Varrick pointed out the door and declared loudly, "I'll bet she's run into the alley!"

Zhu Li sighed. "Right."

“We can’t lose her again,” the one called Bataar stressed. “It was hard enough to track her down this time.”

“Zhu Li, let’s do the thing!”
She just stared at him for a moment. “Oh. Wait. You mean chase after her?”

Varrick didn't wait as he led the charge out the door while Bataar and Zhu Li followed, hot on his heels. The hostess just watched in bewilderment.

Asami was eyeing Korra cautiously from across the table.

"Oh, jeez, Kor, are you about to - "

She shot up from her seat. The fact that Kuvira had run at just the sound of their names meant they were up to no good. Korra no longer cared about the fight they'd had at her apartment that day. She couldn't let those werewolves hurt her. Not after everything they'd been through.

“Those guys seem like big trouble. I have to find them, I can't let them get her!”

“But we don’t even know - “

“Listen, just stay and wait here,” Korra said, squeezing Asami’s shoulder. “I’ll be right back.”

Asami looked like she wanted to say something for just a second, but then swallowed whatever it was and stood up, tossing a stupid amount of cash on the table. She glanced over at one of servers, who was frozen in confusion.

“Sorry, we’ve got to go. Keep the change, okay?”

Korra reluctantly conceded to letting her come along, although it was more to not waste time arguing with her than anything else. They barged into the kitchen, where the Flameo staff all still appeared taken aback.

“Where did Kuvira go?” she demanded. A frightened line cook pointed at a half-open door that led to the alleyway. She ran and Asami followed her, sheepishly thanking the cook on their way out.

“That way,” Korra said quickly. Wherever Kuvira had been trying to run, she wasn’t going to make it far. She could detect the scent of where the werewolves had gone, and they all seemed to be heading in the same direction.

She sprinted at least five blocks, and to her surprise, Asami kept up the entire way. Unfortunately, they were far enough from the restaurant that they were entering unsavory territory. Despite being just a few minutes walk from the outskirts of Yue Bay, the Black Quarry neighborhood was renown for gang activity and corrupt law enforcement.

“I’m getting a really bad feeling about this,” Asami said, barely even sounding out of breath. She did, however, sound slightly afraid. She had experience in the supernatural world now. She knew what horrors it was capable of, and she was appropriately wary of whatever came next. There was clearly no way of stopping her from tagging along to help, but Korra still felt a pang of guilt.

“Me too,” Korra agreed. “I know Kuvira has been a dick about Mako, but I can’t just let them - “

“I know,” she said tolerantly. “I understand.”

Korra hesitated. “Asami...“

But she set her jaw. “Shhh, I think I can hear their voices. We must be close.”

“We are.” She'd lost their scent in the foul smell of littered moldy trash that seemed to coat the ground of Black Quarry, but she could definitely hear Kuvira's voice. Korra abruptly pulled them
behind a dumpster by the side of the street. Asami scowled in disgust.

“Uh, what the hell? What is it with you and hiding in dumpsters?”

“They might smell us coming, and I don’t want them to know we’re here yet,” she said. “Nothing masks a scent better than decomposing garbage.”

Asami just shook her head. “It’s fascinating, how you are so incredibly impulsive about some things, and yet have such admirable forethought about others.”

“Thanks. Shhh!”

Korra chanced a peek around the edge of the dumpster, but withdrew right away. In the alley directly across the street from their dumpster, the three werewolves had Kuvira cornered. She was looking at them in defiance, her hands raised in what looked like mock surrender while the other werewolves stood with their backs towards them. They would intervene if they had to, but they both just really wanted to know what the hell was going on.

“We don’t want to hurt you, Kuvira,” the one called Bataar said. “We can let you on your way. Just give it back.”

“I don’t have anything, Junior,” she snarled back.

“Kuvi, please,” he said, suddenly sounding more soft spoken and less intimidating than he had in the restaurant. He looked at her sadly. Pleadingly, almost.

“Fuck off,” Kuvira sneered. “We aren’t a pack anymore, you’re all supposed to leave me the hell alone.”

“I still care about you. I still - ”

“The hell you do!” she cried. Varrick visibly winced at that, as did Zhu Li. Korra got the feeling that they’d been witness to arguments between those two before. “If you ever cared even a little bit about me, you would have left. You would have left and not become Amon’s little bitch like the rest of them!”

Korra tensed and Asami bit back a gasp.

_Amon_. The mysterious rogue vampire that killed Professor Yangchen. What did he have to do with Kuvira’s old pack?

Bataar looked stung. “It’s just how it is, Kuvi. You lost the fight, lost the title of alpha. Joo Dee won. We have to follow her, even if she decided to form an alliance with a vampire. We can’t just go against _instinct_. That’s the literal definition of instinct!”

“Well, it’s clear you’ve only ever had the one instinct,” Kuvira said bitterly. “Idolizing your alpha, whoever it may be. Sucking up to the boss to get ahead.”

“No. My feelings for you never changed, even after Joo Dee took over, I swear - “

“- shut up. Just shut up and do whatever you want. Kidnap me, kill me, feed me to to your new vampire overlord, I don’t fucking care anymore.”

Varrick laughed nervously. “Okay, first of all, none of those things need to happen.”

Kuvira barked out a nervous laugh. “Oh, that’s really convincing coming from the guy holding a -
“- let’s all calm down,” Zhu Li interjected. “Varrick, can you point that somewhere else? Just relax.”

“I am relaxed! Super relaxed!” he said, a slight edge of hysteria in his voice. “But I won’t be, if we have to go back to our alpha empty-handed!”

“And Amon,” Kuvira reminded them. “Let’s not forget the undead murderer your alpha is probably fucking.”

“It’s a temporary partnership,” Bataar said, still trying to reason with her.

“With a vampire,” she sneered. “You’re all wasting your time. I don’t have anything, and even if I did, I wouldn’t do anything to help a vampire.”

Korra’s head was spinning. Kuvira had lied - she hadn’t challenged the alpha and lost. She was the alpha that had lost. And her successor was working with a vampire that had caused recent chaos in Republic City. What could possibly be the reason for such a partnership?

“We’re looking out for our kind,” Bataar said. “If a peace can be made, wouldn’t you want to take advantage?”

“It isn’t peace they’re looking for, and you know it!” Kuvira cried. “Amon and his brood are up to something. I don’t know what, but I know they’re slowly building ranks somehow. We all know how deep the vampire presence is in this city alone. At best, he wants to use werewolves like pawns for his own ends. We’re nothing to them. I know, better than any of you. We’re just guard dogs, not partners.”

“Bataar, I think we should just grab her,” Varrick said, sounding defeated. “We should just take her back. She’s better than nothing.”

Zhu Li sighed. “Maybe. Or maybe they’ll just decide to kill all four of us. Kuvira - ”

“She isn’t going to cooperate!” Varrick spat impatiently.

“Don’t do anything crazy,” Zhu Li hissed back. “I told you to put that away, Varrick. Calm down!”

“I told you, I am calm! But we know there are vampires everywhere in this fucking town, and not all of them are loyal to Amon, so forgive me for being a little on edge!”

“Kuv, come on,” Bataar began again. “If we can just work together, nothing has to - “

Pinggg!

To Korra’s abject horror, Asami’s cell phone received a text message. It was in her purse but it was hanging wide open, so the light of the screen was blindingly bright in on the dark street. The sound seemed to echo so loud she was sure all of Republic City heard.

Pinggg! Pinggg!

Two more echoing messages came through as Asami tried in vain to mute her phone. She fumbled it out of her hands and it hit the pavement with a startling clatter. Without thinking, she lurched out from behind the dumpster to grab it back.

“Wait, Asami!”
They realized then that Kuvira hadn’t been holding her hands up to mock the other werewolves, and they realized why Zhu Li had been repeatedly trying to calm Varrick down.

He had been holding a gun.

Korra watched in what seemed like slow motion as surprise registered briefly on Asami’s face. Her hands sluggishly moved to clutch at her side. Then she slumped on the ground, blood trickling from between her fingers.

“Asami!”

Her cry felt like it was being ripped from her throat. She dove towards her, not caring what was going on around them. Asami was looking at her hands, as if unsure why they were slicked red. Korra wrapped both arms around her and pulled her into her lap, applying more pressure to the wound. The blood was spreading across her sweater and starting to pool on the ground.

“Korra?!” Kuvira’s eyes widened.

“What the fuck?!” Bataar yelped. “Varrick, you shot someone!”

“I...I didn’t see her,” Varrick stammered. “I just heard the noise and thought - “

“You shot a girl - oh God!” Zhu Li gasped. “I told you to chill with that thing! I told you not to even bring it! You idiot!”

Kuvira rushed over to help them, but Korra ignored her. All she could see was Asami rapidly going pale.

“You’re okay,” Korra whimpered. “You’re okay, Asami. You’ll be all right.”

Asami’s eyelids fluttered, as if she were having trouble keeping them open.

“Did I...just get shot..?”

“Here!” Kuvira whipped off her waitress apron. She grabbed it, refusing to make eye contact as she pressed it against Asami. She gasped in pain.

“I’m sorry, babe, but I’ve got to stop this bleeding,” Korra forced her voice steady, but in her head she was screaming. There was so much blood, how much blood did people even have? It was so much, and Asami was going limp in her arms. She was nearly as white as the apron.

Kuvira picked Asami’s phone from the ground. “I’m going to call an ambulance!”

“No one told you to bring a fucking gun!” Bataar was yelling at Varrick. “What if you - what if she dies?! ”

“We...have to get out of here,” Varrick said. He grabbed a shocked Zhu Li by the arm.

“Varrick...!”

Bataar shook his head. “We can’t just - “

Varrick grabbed him, too. “If we don’t leave now, the police will show up. Do you know how many vampires are in the RCPD? Not even Amon would be able to get us out of this.”
That shut them up. Bataar took one last look at Kuvira, who was glaring murderously at him as she told the emergency dispatcher the closest street address, before running off with Varrick and Zhu Li. They disappeared around the corner.

“That...really hurts...” Asami managed to gasp.

“I know. I know. I’m sorry,” Korra said desperately. “I’m so sorry.”

“Am I bleeding a lot...?”

Her blood was staining Korra’s clothes now. She felt it coming through her jeans, warm and sticky.

“No, it’s fine. Just keep talking to me. Keep talking to me, Asami. Help is coming.”

“Getting really tired...”

“Ambulance will be here soon,” Kuvira said, putting Asami’s phone carefully next to Korra. “I...I don’t know what you guys heard, but those were members of my old pack. Their new Alpha - she’s crazy. She must have - fuck, they were never supposed to find me!”

Korra finally acknowledged her, taking a deep breath. “Well, they did.”

“I’m so sorry. But look, Sato is really strong. I think...they’ll be able to help her at the hospital. She’ll be okay, once they find the source of the bleeding and stop it. She - “

“You were their alpha? This Joo Dee person usurped you?” Korra interrupted. Her mind was shattered, and all she could do was keep talking to hold it together. She couldn’t just sit there and dwell only on the idea of Asami dying in her arms on their first date.

“I guess you heard a lot.” Kuvira bit her lip. “But yeah. I lied to you because it sounded less pathetic somehow, but I was the alpha. This other werewolf, her name is Joo Dee, she's the alpha now.”

“And Amon?”

“Amon is a vampire lunatic,” she said. “Joo Dee is going to get the pack killed if she keeps working with him.”

“Why are they working together?”

“Who the fuck knows, really,” Kuvira sighed. “Whatever it is, it’s not good. There’s something going on in the vampire world. I’m not sure what, but it seems like they’re about to do something. Something big. Something so insane that they’ve even begun forming factions. Vampires versus humans, vampires versus werewolves, even vampires fighting other vampires and shit. I’m not sure what kind of deal Amon cut with Joo Dee, but I do know that they’re being used to get Amon and his followers ahead.”

Korra had no time to process all the information, all she knew was that she needed it.

“Did you actually take something from them?”

Shame threw a shadow over Kuvira’s face. “Yeah. Money, but it wasn’t just that. I went over to the place our pack used to stay, this dump of a house we shared, after I was overthrown. They weren’t around, so I packed up my things, took my share of the cash plus a little ‘severance package’, and came upon this big folder. It was like a portfolio. There was a bunch of plans for stuff - crazy stuff.
Weapons and shit. I didn’t know what it meant, since we were always a peaceful pack. We never got involved with anyone else. But the second I was out, Joo Dee let some vampire in and all of a sudden there are weapon schematics in our fucking house. It had to be all Amon’s influence. Anyway, yeah, I took them. I didn’t want him to have it.”

Asami’s eyes fluttered, but it was clear she wasn’t listening anymore. She was barely there, quickly losing consciousness.

“Amon is here,” Korra said quietly.

“What? What do you mean?”

“He’s here. He killed one of Asami’s professors a couple weeks ago.”

Kuvira blinked. “That…the physics teacher on the news…?”

“Yeah. It was Amon that killed her.”

“How do you know?!”

“It’s a long story. But - “

Kuvira stood up abruptly. “Listen - I’m sorry. I can’t stay here, kiddo.”

“No, wait,” Korra shook her head. “Just stay with us. It’ll be safer if we stick together.”

“You don’t get it. Amon is crazy,” Kuvira said anxiously. “And so is Joo Dee. If he’s here, and my pack managed to find me in this city, I need to go. Tonight.”

“You’re just going to leave?” she demanded incredulously.

“I have to. If they find me again...“

Korra felt tears sting her eyes. She didn’t think her heart could break any more than it already had, but Kuvira was grinding the last shards into the ground with her boot. She couldn’t deal with it.

“Fine. Get the fuck away from us,” she snarled.

“If things were different...if I just…”

“Go!” she screamed. “Just fucking go!”

Kuvira swallowed. “I’m sorry. I really am.”

She left. Asami suddenly grasped her hand.

“I’m falling asleep…”

Korra held her tighter.

“I know it’s hard, but stay awake, okay? Just stay awake…”
The next hour was a blur. The ambulance arrived, along with the police and a fire brigade - not a vampire among them. Vampires were probably a little less prone to gun violence, since they were capable of so many other kinds of violence on their own, so Korra figured the “infrastructure” didn’t deem it necessary to send any over. Whatever the reason, she was at least happy for some kind of lucky break.

Asami was taken to the closest trauma center, which thankfully was not Avatar University Hospital. Republic City General wasn’t such a great hospital in comparison, but at least Korra didn’t sense any vampires nearby. The paramedics rushed Asami into the ER, where she spent a good five seconds before they threw her into an operating room for emergency surgery.

In the waiting room, the police questioned Korra. She had very few answers, other than Bataar, Varrick, and Zhu Li’s names, a description of their physical appearance, and the direction they’d fled.

For reasons unknown to her, she left Kuvira out of it.

“So you two were on a date, just walking by?”

“Yes.”

“In a dark alley. In Black Quarry. At night,” the policewoman said skeptically.

“We’d just had dinner nearby. At the, uh, Ling’s Fried Chicken. Asami drove us there and parked on the street, but we couldn’t remember where.”

“So you heard them fighting and hid, because you didn’t want to get involved,” she pursed her lips as she read from her notes. “But Asami’s phone went off and blew your cover. That’s when the one called Varrick shot her. Did I get it all correct?”

“Yes.”

“One last question ma’am,” she said, holding up Kuvira’s bloodied kitchen apron wrapped in a plastic evidence bag. “Where’d you get this?”

Korra coughed. “It...it was on the ground. By the dumpster, I guess. I just grabbed anything I could reach to stop the bleeding.”

The policewoman nodded. “I see. We’ll contact you if we need anything more for the investigation. Until then, I hope your friend recovers quickly.”

“Yes. Me too.”

Then she was alone, the whirlwind over. Asami was in surgery, the police were gone, Kuvira was God knew where, and she was so very alone.

Pinggg!

Korra finally looked down at Asami’s phone, to see who’d been texting her. It was from Mako’s number.

*Hey, it’s Bolin! How’s the date going?*

*You’re kissing aren’t you?*

*You’re totally making out.*
Hey, we haven’t heard from you guys in a while. Are you okay?

Korra swallowed the thick lump in her throat, then forced herself to regain composure. She dialed them back, and it only rang once.

“Hey, Asami!” Bolin answered brightly.

“No,” Korra said, in a hollow voice.

“Kor? What’s the matter?”

“Something happened. Asami was shot. We’re at Republic City General.”

There was just a moment’s silence, and then suddenly Mako was on the phone.

“Asami?”

“No. It’s Korra.”

“My brother just teleported somewhere, what’s going on? You sound like you’re about to cry or something.”

Bolin suddenly appeared out of thin air, standing right next to her in the waiting room. Korra was so startled she nearly fell off her chair.

“Hello?” Mako was saying over the phone. “Kor? You still there?”

But Bolin reached down and hugged Korra to his chest. She couldn’t speak. She just buried her face in his chest and broke down, not caring if anyone saw.

Chapter End Notes

As per usual, I got busy with work and school, so updates may be a little further in between. Sorry againnnnn.
A doctor emerged from the operating room and sauntered over to them. He looked curiously at Korra and Mako, who had arrived as quickly as he could with a clean outfit for Korra to change into.

“Are you the family of Asami Sato?”

“Ummm - “ Korra started.

“Yes,” Mako interjected. “I’m her...brother. And she is…”

“His wife,” she blurted. Bolin made a face and Mako coughed loudly into his fist.

He and Asami being siblings was at least kind of believable. They shared very similar Fire Nation-esque fair skin, jet black hair, and lean builds. The hospital would probably be less inclined to ask for identification. Korra looked nothing like her, so she had to stick herself into that “family” somehow.

“I see. Your sister’s surgery went about as well as we could hope. We retrieved the bullet without any issues and it didn’t damage any major organs.”

Korra let out a huge breath of relief.

“It did hit a major blood vessel, however. We were able to repair it and stop that bleeding as well, but she required two blood transfusions during the surgery and will be receiving at least one more overnight. She’s in the recovery room now, stable, and I don’t think she’ll require a stay in the ICU. She’s actually doing very well, considering.”

“Can we see her?” she asked quickly.

“Well, she’ll be in recovery for a while, and there’s a strict no visitors policy there. But later on tonight, we’ll find a bed for her upstairs and transfer her there. You can see her then. I suggest you go home and get some sleep. Come back in the morning. She’s in good hands.”

Mako put a hand on Korra’s shoulder as if to guide her out, but she shook her head.

“I’m not leaving her.”

“Ma’am, your sister-in-law won’t be able to have visitors until morning - “

“Then we’ll wait here,” Korra said firmly. She sat down on one of the waiting room chairs just like she had for hours since she’d arrived. The doctor shrugged.

“That’s up to you. I’ll let the nurses station know you’d like to be notified once Miss Sato is transferred. Have a good night, you two. I’m sorry you have to deal with all this, but she’s really quite strong. I’m very optimistic.”

He nodded at them and disappeared behind the double doors.

Bolin gave Korra another squeeze. He’d been hugging her on and off for since he’d shown up.

“She’s gonna be okay.”
“I know. But this is all my fault, so I’m still not leaving.”

Mako cleared his throat. “I, uh, I kind of have to.”

Bolin looked at him. “Your shift doesn’t start for another hour.”

“I know. I just...I can smell the operating room from here.” He swallowed dryly. “The doc wasn’t kidding - Asami sure did a lot of bleeding in there.”

Korra took a good look at him for the first time and realized that he was sweating. There was a vein bulging in his neck, and his clasped hands were shaking. Mako was struggling.

She took a step towards him sympathetically, but he backed away. She raised an eyebrow.

“What - ?”

“You can go home, Bro,” Bolin said quickly, stepping between them. “We’ll call you with any updates.”

“Yeah,” he said nervously. “Yeah. I’m sorry this happened, Korra. Tell Asami I hope she feels better soon. I’ll meet you guys later. Uh, tomorrow, probably.”

He shoved Korra’s new clothes at her and all but ran back to the elevators. She looked at Bolin curiously. There wasn’t anyone else in the waiting room so late at night, so she wasn’t overly concerned about anyone seeing her engaging herself in conversation.

“What was that?”

“You can go home, Bro.”

“What about my - ?” she looked down and realized she was still splattered in Asami’s blood. “ - oh.”

“Maybe you should wash up and change in the bathroom,” Bolin suggested. “Then you can get some rest here. We can push two chairs together, so you can put your feet up...”

Korra did her best to be slightly less gross, and made some effort to clean off the slightly bloodied sink when she was done, but in the end she was too tired to care. She followed Bolin’s advice and made herself a tiny bed with two chairs. The waiting room TV didn’t seem to have a remote to change the channel, but not even the drone of late night infomercials could lull her to sleep. After a while even Bolin seemed to run out of things to say, at one point getting way too invested in the idea of buying a Slap Chop. As he murmured to himself about how useful it would be in the kitchen, Korra let her mind wander.

She’d almost gotten Asami killed. Bolin had been fretting for hours about how responsible he felt for texting her in that alley, but Korra knew he was just doing it to make her feel better. They both were well aware that texting wasn’t what got her shot, and his pathetic attempts at shouldering the blame weren’t working.

Asami had known what they were doing was dangerous. Korra replayed her expressions over and over again in her mind. There was no fear. Definitely, there was no resentment or anger there either, as she all but dragged Asami out of the restaurant. She’d gotten the air that Asami was slightly bothered by their cutting the date short, but the Kuvira situation had just seemed too urgent to ignore.
Asami said she understood why they had to go, but had Korra? To save what she could of a potential friendship? To just help someone in need? To learn more about other werewolves? Which of those reasons now felt worth putting a bullet in Asami?

Korra was too impulsive. She always had been, even Mako had called her out on it not too long ago, but it just hadn’t been affecting her life as much as it was now. The last time she truly regretted her impulsiveness like this was…

She swallowed. What happened to Naga had cast a shadow over her life for three years. In those three years she had mostly withdrawn from everything. She’d pressed the reset button on her life and hoped things would change, but nothing had. She was still just as much of an idiot as she had been then. She was still putting people she cared about in danger.

At some point during her brooding, Korra must have drifted off to sleep, because she was suddenly startled awake by Bolin’s jostling.

“Wha - ?” She rubbed at her eyes and glared at him in annoyance. He just pointed and she turned to look.

“Oh good, you’re up.” The nurse in front of her grinned. “I didn’t want to wake you, I was about to leave and give you a few more minutes.”

“No, no, I’m awake!” Korra said quickly. She checked the clock - it was just after five in the morning.

“I left for about two hours,” Bolin told her. “I didn’t want to leave you while you slept but I was getting...well, you know. I could feel myself running out of energy, so I popped back home for a breather. When I got back, I saw this nurse heading over. Thought you’d want to hear what she had to say.”

The nurse cocked her head. “Miss Sato was transferred to the inpatient unit and is okay to have visitors, but family-only at this hour. Are you her family?”

“Sister-in-law,” she lied, still feeling extremely weird doing so. “Her brother was here but he had to go to work, so I stayed.”

“Oh, okay.” The nurse pointed at a set of double doors. “If you go through there, the elevators will be to your left. Take it to the fifth floor - that’s where Miss Sato was transferred.”

“Thank you!”

Korra and Bolin made their way up to the unit, where the receptionist directed them to room 505. She hesitated, almost afraid to see what state Asami was in, but Bolin egged her on and she opened the door.

Asami wasn’t nearly as white as she had been, but she was still too close to the color of her sheets on the scary-looking hospital bed. That was the first thing Korra noticed. The second were the various machines, one of which was slowly dripping a bag of blood into one of her IV lines.

She was wearing a mask that fogged with oxygen, but her nurse at the station had said she was breathing just fine on her own. She’d regained consciousness briefly in the recovery room, but went out again after they gave her pain medication, so the oxygen was just a precaution. Korra hoped she at least enjoyed that.
“Sorry,” she croaked, taking a seat on the stool by the bed. She took her hand, the one with the least amount of hospital equipment stuck or taped to it. “I’m so sorry.”

“S’okay.”

Korra jerked.

“Asami?”

Her voice was muffled through the oxygen mask, but she had definitely woken up. Her eyes were still half-lidded, but there was a distant smile in there, somewhere.

“Hey, Kor.”

“Oh, my God,” Korra gasped. “I thought I’d lost you. I thought you were dying. I thought - “

“I’m great.”

“You’re not great!” Korra insisted. “You have a blood thingy hooked up to you!”

“I have a...whoa, cool!”

“You got shot.”

Asami looked like she was trying to shrug.

“My rap career is finally gonna take off.”

“Stop it. Stop acting like this is nothing. This is all my fault.”

“You stop it.”

“No!” she blurted. “I shouldn’t have followed them. I shouldn’t have dragged you with me to that alley. I don’t know what I was thinking.”

“You were thinking that you had to help a friend, Korra...” Asami trailed off, blinking a couple times as if her eyes had gone out of focus. “Haha. My brain is all...fuzzy.”

Bolin tapped Korra’s shoulder and pointed to a medication pump attached to one of her other IVs. The sticker on the front read “morphine”.

It occurred to her that maybe this wasn’t the time to be swinging her giant sack of guilt around. Korra took a deep breath and gently ran her fingers through Asami’s hair, still shiny black and perfect, even splayed across a hospital pillow.

“Look - just rest, okay? You can go back to sleep if you want.”

“You’re upset. I can tell.”

“Don’t worry about it. We can talk later.” Korra swallowed. “I mean, if you still want to talk.”

Asami looked confused, but then brightened as she only just noticed Bolin.

“Bo! Bolin is here!”

“Hey, Asami!” he said brightly, his hand still reassuringly on Korra’s shoulder. “Feeling okay?”
“Suuuper okay!”

“Oh, I’ll bet,” Bolin snickered. “Morphine can do that.”

“This is morphine? It feels so good! You guys want some?”

Korra grinned in spite of herself. “That’s nice of you, but Bolin won’t feel it and I’d rather wait for my own calamitous injury. Thanks, though.”

Asami paused for a moment, deep in thought as her mask fogged a few times.

“Wait...where’s Kuvira?”

“I don’t care,” Korra said sharply. “I don’t care about her, and I don’t care about anything else. Just you, Asami. You’re all I care about, right now.”

Her distant smile became more visible, even through the mask.

“I care about you, too. But where - ?"

“She ran off,” Korra said abruptly. “She left us in the dark with you bleeding on the ground because she’s an asshole. That’s all.”

Asami stared at her, puzzled. “She just...?”

“So... kissing?” Bolin dutifully interrupted, pointing between the two. “Was there or wasn’t there any?”

Korra smiled at him in appreciation for changing the subject. Kuvira was the absolute last thing she wanted to talk about, and it would only stress Asami out. If her heart rate started racing, those monitors at the nursing station would go off and cut their visit short.

“There was some.”

“There was lots,” Asami corrected gleefully. “Lots of making out, and cuddling on a turtleduck boat, and then Korra got all handsy at the restaurant.”

“I knew it!”

“Ooookay, maybe we need to dial back these pain meds a little.” Korra blushed. “Although if I recall correctly, you got a little handsy too.”

“I totally did!”

Korra grinned. Loopy and weird Asami was quickly becoming her favorite kind of Asami, even if she did need to take lots of extra breaths after each sentence.

“We’re gonna have sex after like two more dates!”

Her grin dropped right off her face and she coughed loudly. Bolin snorted, clapping her on the back in amusement.

“Two more dates, huh?”

“Yeahhhhh...I’m definitely gonna go ask the nurse to turn down that morphine a bit.”
Bolin grabbed her elbow, laughing. “Why? This is fun!”

Asami suddenly stirred in the bed and made a face.

“Am I peeing? ...I feel like I’m peeing. Could someone see if I’m peeing?”

Bolin and Korra just blinked at each other.

“Well, that took a turn. I’m gonna go, uhhh, look for a magazine she might like!” Bolin abruptly disappeared.

“Coward!” Korra called at the space where he had been. Then she worked up the courage and peeked under Asami’s covers. Her brow furrowed in confusion and she tilted her head down to look under the bed. There was a tube emptying directly into a bag.

“Uh, I don’t think you need to worry about peeing.”

“Why?”

“It looks like the nurses are taking care of that for you.”

“They can do that?! Awesome!”

Korra smirked. She doubted Asami’s life would ever be as easy-going and lighthearted as getting a blood transfusion with a morphine drip ever again, but at the very least she seemed to be having a good time. She took a seat on the stool again and took her hand. This time, Asami squeezed hers.

“You’re still feeling guilty.”

“Yeah. Very.”

“You know what would fix that? Morphine.”

Korra barked out a laugh. “I’m really starting to worry about you and that pump.”

“I know. You like to worry. I guess it makes sense, after Naga and everything.”

“Whoa, whoa, whoa,” Korra let go of her hand. “We are not talking about this.”

"About your fixation on blame and forgiveness? Yuh-huh."

"They are giving you way too much medication."

She ignored her. “I forgive you, for whatever you feel guilty for, all right? Consider it a blanket forgiveness, for all things you do, past and future.”

“I don’t think that's a thing. You can't do that.”

“Oh yeah? Try and stop me!” Asami challenged. “I’ll always forgive you, no matter what.”

“Asami - “

“I also forgive you for Naga, since she’s not here right now to forgive you herself.”

Korra felt her throat tighten. For a split second, she felt something like anger flare inside her.

“Now, wait a minute - “
“Nope. I can do that.” Asami made a show of trying to snap her fingers, though she couldn't quite make the sound. “Boom. Morphine powers, bitch.”

“What are you even - ?!”

“What are you even?”

“That doesn’t make any sense!”

“No, you don’t make any sense!” Asami declared. She was staring up at the ceiling, as if Korra were dangling from the fluorescent lighting and not sitting right next to her. “You’re brave, you’re selfless, and you care so much with your whole heart. Then something bad happens, and suddenly you’re a bad person? You load everything on your back like a lion turtle, everywhere, all the time, forever? What is that about?”

“I haven’t learned a damn thing, in all this time,” Korra said regretfully. “I’m still making all the same dumbass mistakes. I’m basically a curse on everyone I’ve ever cared about.”

“Then be smarter,” Asami chuckled, as if it were the easiest thing in the world. “Be smarter, think ahead, ask your friends for help. Use all the great things you have and accept that you can’t fix it all. Do that. Don’t just stop being you. Don’t beat yourself up for being you. You’re the best thing about you, you know!”

Asami was morphine-rambling, as if Korra wasn’t even there, but she couldn’t interrupt. It was something she’d needed to hear for a long time.

“Okay.”

“You don’t need forgiveness from people who love you, anyway. Naga loved you. She forgave you for everything, ever, the minute she realized. But if you need to hear it every single time, I can do that. I’ll do that for you because now I love you.”

It felt like being struck by lightning. A sudden shock that felt like her hair was standing on end, that radiated through her with the most comfortable warmth she’d ever felt, leaving her tingling from the back of her neck to the tips of her toes.

“Asami…”

Her eyes slowly tracked back towards her in surprise. “Oh, hey!”

“Um, hey?”

“Can you do me a favor?”

Korra swallowed thickly. “Anything.”

“I...think I’m peeing. Am I peeing?”

Bolin suddenly re-appeared in the room, looking frantic.

“Uhh, you guys? Sorry to cut this reunion short, but I think we have a situation.”

“What now?” Korra demanded impatiently. There were a lot of things she needed to say to Asami, and she needed a lot of time to do it, to make sure Morphine Asami understood every single word of it.
“There’s a guy at the nurses station. Apparently when they were looking up insurance stuff for Asami, they found her information from Avatar University and called her emergency contact.”

“Who?”

“I mean, I could be wrong,” Bolin hesitated. “But he’s middle-aged, wearing a fancy business suit, and has Asami’s exact nose and cheekbones.”

“Dad?” Asami gasped.

“What?!” Korra yelped, tensing up. She hadn’t been paying much attention to anything other than Asami, but she swore she would have known if a vampire had just strolled onto the unit. She didn’t smell anything.

“He can’t be here,” Asami whimpered. “I don’t want him to be here.”

“Bo, stay with her,” Korra ordered, swinging the door open. “Let me handle this.”

She shut the door behind her, muffling Asami and Bolin’s protests, but it was too late. Not fifteen feet away stood a man that was without a doubt Asami’s father.

He was taller than Korra, but probably no taller than his daughter. He was overweight and his hair was streaked grey, but his business suit was expensive and well-tailored, and he carried himself with the confidence of someone younger and more handsome than he was. His face boasted one of the most impressive handlebar mustaches she had ever seen, and just like Bolin had described, a perfect nose and cheekbone structure that Asami had definitely inherited.

Mr. Sato straightened his round, gold-rimmed glasses as he looked at her curiously.

“Hello.” He smiled at her, and Korra was shocked at how genuine it seemed.

She didn’t have anything clever to say to him, so she blurted out the first thing that popped up in her brain.

“You’re not a vampire.”
Hiroshi Sato was completely human, just like Asami.

His smile faded slowly. “Oh. You must be that werewolf I’ve been hearing about. They did mention she was a young woman about the same age as my daughter.”

“Asami doesn’t want to see you,” Korra said with the deepest conviction she could muster. “She hasn’t wanted to see you for years.”

He ran his hand through his thick hair tiredly, as if she were already starting to annoy him.

“Yes, I’ve figured that out on my own, believe it or not,” he huffed, in the exact same way Asami liked to huff about things. “But I think we’re overdue a chat, and seeing as she waived her university health insurance to save some money for her extra lab privileges and a private dorm at school, she’s going to need my insurance. That is, unless she wants to pay a good fifty thousand yuan she doesn’t have for this hospital stay.”

Korra clenched her fists. “We’ll figure it out.”

Mr. Sato smirked, another expression Asami had definitely inherited from him. It was starting to get a little creepy, how many things she’d noticed they had in common in just a few seconds.

“Aren’t you a part-time barista? And your vampire friend, Mako, he’s just got a few security jobs, right? Bolin is a ghost, so he can’t make any money, and my daughter is...well, all her money is tied up in her education for now. Even if she does get some kind of part-time job, you will be hard-pressed to foot a hospital bill. Especially since my understanding is you all are having a difficult time as it is. That is how you met Asami, isn't it?”

Korra felt a chill run down her spine. It shouldn’t have been that much of a surprise that he knew everything about them. The man probably had a lot of power. But hearing it all summarized by someone she’d learned to hate through Asami and their various unsavory vampire experiences was extremely unsettling.

“You’re...not a vampire,” she stated again. “You keep some very interesting company for someone who isn’t a vampire.”

“I could say the same about you.”

“You shouldn’t be saying anything about me.”

The smile was back, but with considerably less warmth. “Funny, isn’t it? How much I know about all of you, and how little you seem to know about me? Perhaps, if you let me see my daughter without too much of an incident here, I can tell you a bit more about myself.”

*That* was a game changer. She’d been dying to know more about Mr. Sato for what felt like forever. He had all the answers. Or at least, he had more than they did. If he wanted to exchange a chance to see his daughter for some information on literally any of the batshit crazy things that had been happening...
It was Asami’s decision, not hers.

“I’m going to ask Asami. If it’s okay with her, then we’ve got a deal.”

Mr. Sato laughed, a jarring sound that reminded her of an ancient South Pole church bell tolling at midnight. It echoed down the empty corridor menacingly. For a non-vampire, this guy had a super-vampirey laugh.

“Young lady, there is no deal to be struck here. I am visiting my daughter.”

The transparent threat just made her more indignant.

“What, do you have some kind of vampire mob hiding at the nurses station ready to kill me at your signal? Because that’s the only way you’re getting through me if she doesn’t want to see you.”

“I think everyone would agree that if I wanted to kill you, you’d be dead already.”

“Well, yeah, probably!” She crossed her arms over her chest, which didn’t make her feel quite as intimidating as it usually did. "Which is why I’m kinda confused as to why you’re even bothering with the formality of talking to me at all.”

Mr. Sato rolled his eyes. “Please. I’m not a monster.”

Korra laughed bitterly. Even after everything that had happened, all the other monsters they’d met, it was actually true. Hiroshi Sato technically wasn’t one of them.

“You’re not taking her away.”

“Again, if I wanted to take her, I’d have her already.” He held up his hands peacefully. “I just want to talk to her. To help her.”

She infused her glare with every ounce of attitude she had, but he didn’t even flinch. He just peered down at her with the unwavering patience of someone untouchable and unafraid.

“Stay here, for now,” she growled anyway.

Mr. Sato nodded tolerantly. “She can have five minutes to collect herself, if that’s what she needs.”

Korra backed into the room, defiantly maintaining eye contact until the door closed in front of her.


“Honestly, I have no idea,” Korra breathed. “But, uh, he’s not a vampire.”

Several long second ticked by as Asami and Bolin processed that information.

“He’s not a vampire…?” Asami repeated dubiously. “What is he, then? He’s human?”

“As human as you are, yeah.” she confirmed. She understood the look of disbelief on their faces. It seems almost impossible that such a mysterious figure in the background of all the insanity they’d been through was something as simple as a human being.

“Huh, well that’s…” Bolin paused. “Not under-whelming, but...just whelming? I feel whelmed.”

“Not word, Bo.”
“It is a word,” Asami sighed. “Just not what he thinks it means.”

“Whatever!” Korra made her way back to the stool by Asami’s bed and plopped down on it tiredly. “He’s so...I don’t know. I don’t know what to make of him. But he wants to see you, Asami. He just wants to talk. He won’t touch you, he said.”

“No,” Asami said firmly. Her eyes were wide open now and she was sitting up in bed, her hands gripping the side rails to keep herself upright. She looked considerably less medicated than when she’d first stepped out of the room. Next to her, she noticed the light on the medication pump was shut down.

“Did you...?”

“She made me turn it off,” Bolin whinged. “She said if I didn’t do it then she would, and I didn’t want her to get all tangled in her cords and lines and stuff.”

“Asami.”

“I’m fine,” she said. “It’s fine, I want to be at 100% in case I need to tell him to fuck off myself.”

Korra hesitated, one eye on the monitor above her bed. The numbers had gone from green to yellow. She’d been in a hospital after her first transformation long enough to know that when her heart rate or any of her other vital signs went out of range and turned red on the screen, the nurse would come in to check on her. There did not need to be any more innocent humans involved in this.

“He says you need his health insurance, or else you’ll be stuck with a fifty thousand yuan hospital bill,” Korra said as she tucked a pillow lower behind Asami’s back so she didn’t have to hold herself up.

“I’ll handle it!”

“Babe, you need to calm down,” she hissed. “Your blood pressure and heart rate are very close to making that machine beep and if that happens, we’re gonna have a bunch of nurses in here stuck in a very unsavory situation.”

“I am calm!”

Her heart rate beeped red for a split second and Korra cringed. When nothing happened after a few moments, she decided it was okay.

“Just turn that one off, too,” Asami ordered Bolin in exasperation. He looked to Korra, conflicted.

“Obviously, don’t do that, Bo.”

“I know, it’s just really hard to say ‘no’ to someone in a hospital bed. She gave me these big puppy dog eyes to get me to turn the morphine thingy off!”

Bolin always was a sucker for puppy dog eyes. Korra sighed.

“No one is turning off any more machines.”

“You guys are the worst.”

“We are not - ” she rubbed at the bridge of her nose impatiently. “Listen, your father also says he wants to explain some stuff!”
Asami hesitated. “Like...the vampire stuff?”

“Yeah,” Korra nodded. “It’s totally up to you, but I feel like it’d be nice to actually know something for a change.”

“What if he tries to kidnap me? Or hurt you?”

“He’s made it really, really clear that if he wanted to do anything to us, he would have done it by now,” she admitted. “He has the upper hand here - he always has. I don’t think we have a choice. All we can do right now is react.”

Asami groaned in frustration. “This is all so much. I just…”

Bolin held out his hand. “Give me your phone, Kor. If this goes bad, I’m going to call Mako.”

“Don’t tell him anything until after,” she said, handing it over anyway. Having a backup plan couldn’t hurt, but Korra wasn’t overly excited about telling Mako they were about to have a chat with Hiroshi Sato without him. “We don’t need him flying out of work to get here. It’s not like he can do anything but put himself in danger, too.”

Suddenly, the door opened and Mr. Sato strolled in casually as if he were entering his own home.

For a moment, he looked genuinely happy. The corners of his mouth and eyes crinkled in a warm smile when he looked at his daughter for the first time in years. He stepped towards her bed, his hands spread as if he thought a hug might actually be a possibility.

He faltered, though, when he finally registered the acidic glare Asami had fixed on him. His expression softened and he dropped his arms to his sides, almost humbly.

“You are so beautiful,” Hiroshi Sato said, the smile not quite gone from his face. “But of course you are. You always were.”

Asami pulled off her oxygen mask, a sudden movement that made Korra jump.

“Cut the crap, Dad.”

For some reason, that just made him smile again.

“I was going to say something about how you look a little more like me as you’ve gotten older, but when you’re angry you look exactly like your mother.”

Asami’s fists clenched and Korra had to gently place a hand on her shoulder, for fear of her just jumping out of bed to strangle him.

“You don’t get to talk about Mom!”

“Ooookay then, how about we just put this little guy back on...” Korra carefully replaced the oxygen mask as Asami started coughing. She also hoped it would discourage her from yelling too loudly.

Bolin inched over Asami’s other side and whispered in her ear. “Just get him to say what he has to say. The sooner he’s done, the sooner he’s out of here.”

Mr. Sato smirked. “Young man, it’d be best that you don’t presume you have any power over anything I do.”
They jerked. Korra wasn’t sure why she was surprised by *anything* at that point, but at least she wasn’t the only one that didn’t expect that. Bolin squinted at him.

“You can see me, too?”

He let loose a bellowing laugh.

“That’s another thing you got from me, Asami. The Satos have been able to see and communicate with the deceased for generations.”

Korra remembered how her own father, once upon a time in the South Pole, was similarly delighted when his daughter displayed something she inherited from him. Whenever she lost her temper or did something impulsive, he gleefully pointed out that she was just like him. It was a weird kind of pride - Dad Pride - that was so purely human, it felt starkly out of place in the hospital room. She couldn’t help but feel a pang for the parents she’d cut out of her life. If there was any chance she could safely return to her parents, she wouldn’t think twice.

But Asami’s situation was very different, and she was keen on finding out just how different it was.

“How?” Asami demanded. “Why? What connection do we have with the supernatural?”

Mr. Sato chuckled and looked over at Korra. “What have you all been telling her? Supernatural? There is nothing *super* about vampires, werewolves, or ghosts. They are all as natural as trees, sharks, and mosquitos. Nothing is supernatural.”

“But other humans can’t see ghosts,” Korra pointed out. “Why can you?”

“Our family is special that way,” he mused, slowly pacing closer towards Asami’s bed. Korra and Bolin bristled, but he didn’t make any other sudden movements. “We come from a long line of people, going as far back as the history of humanity. Many have just called us ‘gifted’, but over centuries and across civilizations, we’ve been named different things. Magi, alchemists, sorcerers, diviners, enchanters, shaman...wizards.”

They all just gaped at him, mystified. Asami started rubbing at her forehead as if she was starting to get a headache.

“Wait, no, shut up. Wait. Fuck.”

“Language, Asami,” Mr. Sato scolded.

“I keep telling them,” Bolin agreed, then winced. “I mean, uh, never mind.”

“Have I completely lost it, or did he really just say you people were *wizards*?” Korra said incredulously.

“What does that even mean!?” Asami demanded. “I can’t, I don’t know, wave a magic wand and make things float in the air!”

Her father quirked an eyebrow. “Can’t you? I’ve heard you have a knack for rotary engines. There are many uses for those, including literally making things fly.”

“That’s not *magic*. ”

“What is magic, but harnessing the power of the natural world and manipulating it for your own purposes?” Mr. Sato challenged. “It is certainly magic that Bolin can teleport from one place to
another, but what about your ability to call someone halfway around the world in an instant via cell phone? What about microwaves? Airplanes? Bombs?"

Korra at least knew the answer to that. “Uh, science? We can explain how bombs work, but not how Bolin’s ghost tricks work.”

Mr. Sato pointed at Bolin. “Do you understand how to disappear and reappear in another place?”

“Well, yeah,” he nodded. “Obviously. I do it all the time.”

“Why don’t you get into the finer details of it right now. Describe it to my daughter. She’s a genius - if anyone could understand, it would be her.”

Bolin looked at her sheepishly. “No offense, but it’s really something you would only understand if you were a ghost. It involves a lot of... feelings you don’t have as a human.”

He nodded. “Like describing color to a blind man, or smell and taste to...well, a ghost.”

Asami’s mouth opened as if she were going to dispute her father, but she came up short.

“Okay, fine, I get it,” she grumbled.

“Just because you don’t have the capacity to perceive something, doesn’t make it any less natural,” Mr. Sato said. “And just because you can understand how something works, that does not make it any less ‘magical’ for someone else. It would be arrogant to think that any one person can pick and choose what is magic and what is not.”

Asami’s drive to learn and understand was one of her strongest qualities and something Korra admired very much, but there was occasionally a slight air of selfishness or arrogance in her dedication. No one was perfect, but she did wish Asami didn’t have to struggle so much with that answer. To Korra and Bolin, the only word they needed to hear was “gifted”, because they’d never truly understand what that meant. It was just another quirk in the universe that just was, a weird fact of life, and that was okay.

Not the case for Asami.

“That doesn’t explain anything - that’s crazy,” she complained. “There has to be something! It’s in our DNA, our chromosomes, maybe. We have a susceptibility to whatever it is ghosts are made of, and that’s - there’s an explanation there! Somewhere! There has to be!”

Mr. Sato was looking at her with all the smugness of someone who probably drove himself insane thinking the same thing, once upon a time, and eventually gave up on trying to figure out the universe.

“It probably is in our DNA. That would make sense.”

“But...but...” she stammered. “Then are ghosts made of an undiscovered form of matter? Why is it not only visual, but auditory as well? How can - ?”

“One question always leads to a dozen more, Asami,” he shook his head, almost amused. “It’s a labyrinth of questions. I’ve learned to focus my queries on things that actually matter.”

“Speaking of things that actually matter,” Korra cut in, a little impatiently. “Sorry to change the subject from wizardry and whatnot, but I’d like to know what the hell is going on with you and the vampires. Uh, please.”
Mr. Sato’s expression hardened. Again, he focused more on speaking to Asami than the rest of them.

“You need to stay out of it. All of it.”

“We know how they’re recruiting from Avatar University Hospital,” she said. “We know they were stalking me, at one point. And we know you’re involved. You were there that night, when they kidnapped Korra to fight another werewolf.”

“I know all about Makapu,” he said regretfully. “Unfortunately, I take full responsibility for what happened to you there. They targeted you because of your relation to me, but I’ve seen to it that will never happen again.”

“They’re turning cancer patients into a vampire factory,” Asami sneered. “How long do you think you can protect me from that?”

He sighed. “Not long. This is a war, Asami. It’s a war that’s been stewing for centuries, and we all have the deepest misfortune of living here and now, as it starts to bubble over.”

The simple-three letter word made them all fall silent. War? None of them had ever lived through a war. The most recent war of note was when the Fire Nation decided to flex its muscles on both Poles and the Earth Kingdom for more territory outside their archipelago, but that was over seventy years ago. Their grandparents would have been old enough to remember it, but the world had been in relative peace since then. At least, humans had been.

“A Vampire-Human war?” Korra guessed. It made some morbid sense. Two intelligent species were coexisting for such a long time with lives in direct opposition, perhaps they were all long-overdue for a conflict.

“No, it’s worse,” Mr. Sato said. “Vampires versus vampires.”

Asami balked. “What?!”

“How is that worse?” Korra wondered. “Vampires kill other vampires, maybe wipe each other out in the process? That sounds better for us.”

“No,” Bolin said quietly. He’d been quiet for so long, they’d nearly forgotten he was there. “If vampires kill each other, they’re going to need more vampires. So they make them, turning more humans into more of them. More die in the war, more humans are turned. They fight and they fight…”

“Until the city is literally bled dry of humanity.” Mr. Sato nodded.

“What the fuck are they even fighting about?!” Korra demanded.

“The same thing they’ve fought about since the dawn of history,” he said. “Vampires have superior strength and immortality. If they truly wanted to, they could have taken over the world. Have you ever asked yourselves why they never did?”

Korra and Asami shared a look. Population? But vampires could turn plenty of human to their side. Technology? Everything humans had to leverage, vampires could have access to as well.

“They need humans,” Bolin answered. “Without humans, vampires would be stuck with animal blood, and the vast majority of vampires can’t tolerate that.”
Mr. Sato turned to him. “You’ve thought about this before.”

He frowned. “You think about a lot of things, when your brother is one of them.”

“Bo…” Korra started, but didn’t quite know what to say.

“I did wonder why vampires lived with so much secrecy when they technically didn’t have to,” he went on. “Humans talk about ‘survival of the fittest’, but they aren’t really the most fit, are they? They aren’t even the smartest, anymore. Maybe never were. But vampires know better than to hunt their only food source to extinction, I guess the question is how to go about cultivating that food source. Do they free-range it? Like, let them thrive all over the world so they can pick them off as they see fit with barely anyone noticing? Or do they…”

“…Or do they capture, breed, and control the population like livestock before slaughter,” Mr. Sato finished for him. “You’re right, especially about vampires being smart. They’re very human about their intelligence, right down to their ambition. Just like us, you have the vampires that want things to stay the way they are - keep casualties to the minimum and just live in harmony and all that. And then you have the ones that feel like they deserve more. That they’ve been oppressed for thousands of years and want to thrive...just like humans have.”

Everything Korra thought she knew suddenly felt thoroughly insignificant. This was much bigger than they ever dreamed.

“So...that’s the war,” she croaked out.

Vampires weren’t inherently evil, but they had instincts not even a good person like Mako could always control. For whatever reason, be it just some vastly unfortunate biology or the curse of some vengeful god, they craved human blood. In most cases they needed it, and the lust consumed almost their entire lives. It was cruel and unavoidable fact. Did that mean they deserved to live out their immortal lives in the shadows? There were legitimately evil human beings living out in the world, killing not to live but just because they wanted to. Why did they deserve such freedom?

“Well, they can’t be allowed to do any of it,” Asami said firmly. Korra and Bolin just looked at her wordlessly. “What? Vampires shouldn’t get a free license to kill, like they had all this time!”

“Maybe that’s true, but they really can’t help it,” Bolin said.

“It doesn’t matter,” Asami insisted. “I know Mako struggles, and he’s been doing amazingly so I’m not talking about him, but what vampires do is murder. I mean, can humans and vampires even coexist peacefully? It’s like expecting sharks and seals to coexist peacefully!”

“But they do,” Korra pointed out, her voice sullen and unsure. “Sharks and seals do coexist. Maybe not ‘peacefully’ in our sense of the word, but world is able to sustain both of them. Neither one of those species is dying out because of the other.”

Asami rounded on her, stunned. “Are you seriously saying this is some kind of circle-of-life food chain thing!?”

“She’s saying...maybe your dad is on the right track,” Bolin said. “This is...nature.”

“It is not nature!” Asami argued. “Your brother is proof that vampires have the intelligence, the willpower, the emotional capacity to not murder other sentient beings! They can even physically feed on animal blood instead of human blood. If it was nature, that’d mean there’s no other way, but...but...”
She was looking at Korra, almost pleading with her to agree, but she couldn’t. A werewolf was an animal with bloodlust too, but it was also a human being. Korra had the privilege of having those parts of her separated, but Mako and the other vampires did not. That was really the critical difference between werewolves and vampires. Still, both of them had little control over the overwhelming instincts that came with being a monster - Mako could exert some ‘willpower’ and she could put up safeguards during full moons. Lately, it had been enough. Historically, not always.

So it was difficult to understand how Asami could tell Korra that she wasn’t responsible for the people she’d killed as a wolf, while at the same time blame vampires for the people they’d killed. It was also hard to think of a way to convey this to her without explicitly calling her a hypocrite. The fact that vampires were more conscious of their violence while werewolves were virtually unconscious when the wolf took over, that was true enough. But where Korra saw a fuzzy grey line, Asami saw black and white. Yet again, it was the simple fact that she was human. She wasn’t one of them...and maybe she’d never truly get it.

“I just...this is a lot. This is a fucking lot,” Korra said, frustrated.

Asami gazed at her, her expression unreadable. “Yeah. It is.”

Mr. Sato had been looking back and forth between them curiously.

“Agreed. Which is why I proposed you all stay out of it for your own safety and sanity. This city will be the spark. The center of this war. Asami, you need to leave.”

“Wha - no!”

“You must leave Republic City.”

“You mean run ,” Asami said angrily.

Mr. Sato didn’t hesitate. “Yes.”

She scowled. “I can’t believe it. I can’t believe - actually, you know what? Yes I can. This is exactly how you’d respond to this. Just let vampires suck all of the United Republic into their war.”

“You’re being extremely unreasonable,” he told his daughter. “There is nothing you can do.”

“And what exactly are you doing?”

“I’m giving one side advanced technology to strengthen their war effort so that they might beat the other side.”

He said this so matter-of-factly that they were momentarily shocked silent.

“You’re...you’re, uh, what?” Korra asked stupidly.

“There are two factions in Republic City,” Mr. Sato explained. “The first wishes to create all-out vampire anarchy in the city. He’s already started. I know you’ve heard of Professor Yangchen? She was the first. A warning, meant to taunt.”

“Amon,” Korra whispered. Mr. Sato stared at her.

“You know Amon?”

“Not personally, no,” she said bitterly. “But we know enough.”
Mr. Sato looked at his daughter worriedly. “Amon is insane. He is recruiting vampires from all over the continent, even in the forests of the Earth Kingdom, to fight for him and take this city. He wants to make Republic City the capital of whatever absurd vampire nation he has in his head. You need to keep your head down - if you know about Amon, it’s very likely he knows about you. He is dangerous.”

Korra rolled her eyes. "Well, who the fuck isn't at this point?"

Asami pursed her lips, eyeing her father suspiciously. “I’m taking a wild guess that’s not the side you’ve chosen?”

He shook his head sadly. “No. I'm working with the vampires that want to stick with the status quo. They want to stop Amon’s group from recklessly ripping into humanity.”

“The ones that run the con at Avatar University hospital,” Korra said.

“The ones that recruit willing people and give them a choice.”

Asami scoffed loudly at that.

“The world is not perfect, Asami, and it never will be,” Mr. Sato said. “All we can hope is for it to be livable, and that is what I am fighting for. Everyday day I am doing everything in my power to bring all of this back to the quiet stalemate its been since the beginning of humans and vampires. That is the goal. Not eradication or rehabilitation of vampires. That will never happen.”

Korra swallowed. "It kinda feels like Amon and his followers are getting pretty powerful, though."

"Yes," Mr. Sato said. "Some key vampires have defected to Amon’s side recently, and it’s caused a huge problem."

“Mako’s old coworkers...” Bolin realized. “Zaheer, Ghazan, and that nutty lady with no arms. They kidnapped Asami and Mako!”

Mr. Sato eyes flitted shamefully to Asami for a moment, just long enough for her to remember.

“You had them spying on me, didn’t you?” she accused. "Before, at the beginning of the semester. That was you?"

“For your safety, yes,” he admitted. “Before they defected. When I heard you ran into Ghazan and Ming-Hua during that fight at the coffee shop, I was worried you’d find their photos in your old photo album.”

"They worked for you, all those years back when you first opened the headquarters for Satomobile Worldwide?"

“That is where we all originally met.”

“What happened?”

“A lot, Asami. Too much to get into today,” Mr. Sato said. “But I knew, the moment you recognized them, that you wouldn’t let this go. You’d look for answers and stumble into everything I’ve been trying to shield you from and end up, well, here. Like this. What happened to - ?"

Suddenly the cellphone in his pocket rang loudly. He impatiently pulled it out and looked like he was about to turn it off when his eyes darkened at the number.
"What?" he answered sharply. Whatever the person on the other end said was not good news. "I'll be there in a few minutes. No - don't you dare. Not until I'm there. Wait for me."

Mr. Sato hung up and looked at his daughter.

"Are you in pain?"

"No. Who was that on the phone?"

He ignored her and looked at Korra. "You'll take care of her?"

"Of course," she said automatically.

"I'll extend what protections I can to all of you, even Mako, in exchange for looking after my daughter."

"Are you serious? You don't have to pay us."

Mr. Sato placed a slip of paper on Asami’s side table. “That’s our insurance policy and your ID number. I settled everything at the nurses station, so you should be fine, but just in case you should have this. I have to go, but please - please, Asami - stay out of this war and get as far as you can.”

“Dad, I’m not going to - “

“I will remove you from this city if I have to, Asami, so don’t force me,” he said harshly. “We all know I have the power, do not make me use it.”

Mr. Sato gave his daughter one last long, hard look before turning to leave.

“Wait,” Korra called as he pulled the door open. “How long until this war starts going public? They won’t be able to hide it from Republic City for much longer. We can’t be the only ones noticing all the strange things going on lately.”

He faltered.

“I’m sorry. I’m doing my best, but Republic City is already lost.”

Chapter End Notes

I'm really, really flattered that people still read this and want more even so long after I updated. Dead fics make me just as sad as the next person, but I want it to be clear that this will NEVER be abandoned. I know exactly where its going and when this fic ends (around chapter 30 I think!) I'm ambitiously planning on continuing in this universe with one-shots or a sequel or something. Being Human was a pretty deep TV series and even though I'm not following their plot so much, it's given me a lot of ideas.

That said, SORRY OMG LOL. I'm wrapping up my masters degree in June and I've been picking up some overtime at work because I want to buy a condo. I'll have more free time in the latter half of the year but until then updates will continue to be sporadic. Thanks to those of you for keeping up with this so long and for everyone's patience!
And Happy Easter!
Korra jerked her head upright. She’d dozed off in the middle of her lecture. A quick glance at the clock told her that was twenty whole minutes of class she was going to have to learn on her own.

She hadn’t gotten much sleep in the past few nights. Asami had been doing so well after her transfusions that she was discharged the following evening. Korra obsessively spent the better part of the week making absolutely sure she was following doctor’s orders, and even when Asami banished her from ‘hovering’, she found herself unable to sleep unless she double-checked that Asami’s unlabored snoring could be heard outside her door.

Thankfully, Asami seemed to be getting stronger by the minute and to everyone’s relief, she was allowed to go back to school the following Monday. None of them were entirely sure they could stand another few days of her grumbling to herself about midterms.

It was bizarre to think that after all that had happened, the world was still turning. Midterms were still coming up. Korra still had to sit in that lecture hall as the professor continued to drone in front of his giant powerpoint presentation about muscle groups. All around her, things still chugged along, normal and unbothered. It didn’t matter that her mind was reeling with vampire wars, werewolf packs, ghost doors to the beyond, and freaking wizards, now?

So when the lone vampire strolled into Korra’s lecture unannounced and interrupted her professor, frankly, she was too exhausted to have any other reaction.

It was Chief Lin Beifong, the stern vampire police chief she’d first seen when they’d discovered Professor Yangchen’s body in that very lecture hall. She spoke briefly with the professor before locking eyes with Korra directly. She was the only werewolf in the class, so she must have stood out like a sore thumb the moment she walked into the room.

The professor adjusted his glasses awkwardly.

“Erm, is there a Miss Korra - ?”

She stood abruptly. The sooner she got this vampire out of the room of innocent college kids, the better. She felt her classmates’ eyes follow her down the stairs and met Chief Beifong at the door. Not a word was said until they were outside in the corridor.

“Follow me,” Beifong said.

“I’d rather stay in a public place, if that’s okay with you, Chief,” Korra said dryly. “I’ve had a really long week. A really long month, actually, so if you can do me a solid and just assure me you’re not going to kidnap me or kill me or threaten my friends or whatever, that’d be great.”

She sighed. “At least keep your voice down. There’s an empty staff office right there where we can talk.”

“Are you alone?”

“Yes.”
“Listen, you can’t blame me for asking.”

Korra let Beifong lead her to the office. It was a grad student TA office, so there was barely room for the desk and two chairs that were in there. While she took the seat closest to the open door, Beifong made a point not to draw the window shade.

“What is it you think I came to speak to you about?” the chief of police asked.

“I don’t know, there’s about a bajillion different possibilities, each one worse than the last,” Korra laughed. “But I know there’s some stupid vampire faction war or whatever going on, so I’m not getting into it because I’m not sure where you stand.”

Beifong looked startled. “What do you know about - ?”

“I told you, I’ve had a really long month.”

She shook her head. “Okay, wait, how about we start over? I gather you already know who I am, but I’m Lin Beifong, chief of the RCPD.”

“I gather you know who I am too, but I’m Korra.”

“Pleasure,” Beifong said, her pursed lips indicating that it wasn’t so much. “I need to ask you what you know about a woman called Kuvira.”

It was Korra’s turn to be surprised. “Huh?”

“And her connection with the shooting of your housemate, Asami Sato.”

“Oh,” she said, almost relieved. Out of everything taking up space in her head, that was actually the least complicated. “Wow, okay. That’s all you wanted to talk about?”

“What else…?” At her expression she rolled her eyes. “Yeah, okay, I get it. ‘Long month’."

The circumstances surrounding Asami getting shot obviously meant a lot to her, but in the crime-riddled Republic City it seemed like such a minor thing for Chief Beifong to have been working on.

“They have the vampire chief of police on a non-fatal assault case?”

She looked a little bit uncomfortable at the word “vampire”, although that was likely because the door was open and there were people starting to roam the hallways between classes. “First of all, lower your voice. Second of all, despite what I am, I am still an officer of the law. This is still my job.”

“This particular case, though?” Korra asked skeptically. “I mean, I was there. No vampires made an appearance.”

Chief Beifong studied her closely for a moment before continuing.

“We have the apron that you used to stem the bleeding after Miss Sato was shot. We tested it and did find some other DNA on it, connected to a former lieutenant corporal of the Earth Kingdom Army.”

Korra bit her mouth shut. If they had DNA, there was no way they didn’t know that Kuvira was a werewolf now. But that still didn’t explain why Beifong was getting herself involved in a simple shooting that didn’t involve any vampires.
“Kuvira didn’t shoot Asami, if that’s what you’re asking,” she said.

“Your statement said you didn’t see who did it.”

“It wasn’t her. She was with us.”

“On your date,” Beifong stated, looking down at a little notebook that probably had the notes written down from that night.

“No, not on our date, obviously,” Korra scoffed. “Why are you wasting my time? You have her apron, so you know that she worked at the restaurant where we had dinner. You have her DNA sample, so you know she was a werewolf. This still had nothing to do about vampires.”

“A crime was committed, kid. I’m a cop.”

“You’re police chief, and there are tons of regular cops in the force that can deal with it,” Korra pointed out. “So why are you here? Don’t you have something better to do? Deal with a secret vampire war, maybe?”

Chief Beifong ignored her. “Another eyewitness that night stated that there were other people there. Two men and a woman, and there was a verbal altercation with Kuvira before you and Asami showed up.”

Korra stared at her. If she already knew everything, then why was she there?

“What exactly are you asking me?”

As a boisterous child and similarly insufferable adult, Korra was very used to people being annoyed at her. But she’d never experienced a look as intensely bothered as the one the RCPD police chief had just given her.

“Fine. No more bullshit, I can see you already know more than you should,” Beifong said exasperatedly. “And that’s just a whole different kind of pain in my ass, but I’ll deal with that later. We just need some information about Kuvira and the other people she was with. You must know something about them.”

“Why do you need to know about them?”

“Why are you making this difficult?”

“I told you, I’ve had a long-ass month and now I’m stressed out about the paper I have due for the class you just yanked me out of, so excuse me if I’m a little uncooperative!”

“Were they werewolves? From the Earth Kingdom, like Kuvira?”

“What does it matter to you?”

“Holy shit, kid. I predate the invention of the telescope, yet somehow you are the most annoying person I’ve ever met in my life.”

“You’re not my favorite either!”

Beifong closed her eyes and took a few more deep cleansing breaths. “Okay, one more time, let’s start over.”

“Hi, I’m Korra.”
“That’s not what I meant, you - ugh!” The chief threw herself back in her chair. “You know about the vampire war? Fine. I’m asking you about Kuvira and the others because we have reason to believe one particular vampire is rallying others to his cause in the Earth Kingdom - not just other vampires but maybe werewolves too.”

Amon. She remembered Asami’s father mentioning that Amon had been looking for followers in the Earth Kingdom. Korra only just then connected that with the fact that Amon had struck some kind of deal with Joo Dee, the alpha of Kuvira’s old pack. Amon had recruited the werewolves to fight in the fucking vampire war. What if that wasn’t the only pack he’d allied with? What if there were more? What if the army that wanted to overthrow humanity consisted of vampires and werewolves?

Holy actual shit.

“Whose side are you on?” Korra asked quietly.

“Side?”

“The vampire war,” she clarified. “Whose side are you on?”

“That has nothing to do with this.”

“If you want anything from me, it has everything to do with this,” Korra hissed.

Chief Beifong scowled. “If given a choice between enslaving humans and treating them like cattle, or picking them off like fruit from a tree, I’d choose the latter.”

“So you’re not with Amon?”

Even with her already-pale skin, Beifong seemed to go even whiter.

“You know Amon?”

“Who the fuck doesn’t by now, honestly. My point was, you’re on the other side.”

“The Red Lotus?” Beifong mused. “No, I’m not on any side. I’m not participating in this war.”

“You think you can be neutral while your people fight all around the city?”

“Yes,” Beifong said fiercely. “Some of us do the best we can with what we’ve got. Some of us have spent the better part of three centuries just trying to mediate all of this shit.”

“What do you mean, ‘mediate’?”

She glared at her thoughtfully before responding. “You might have been too young, but do you remember the Omashu Tunnel Massacre?”

Kuvira had been the one to enlighten her on that. “You mean how like eighty people were killed by a bunch of vampires?”

“Eighty-seven, and there would have been over two hundred if I hadn’t taken control,” Beifong said. “We did the best we could, but we couldn’t save everyone.”

“You’re a vampire that fights vampires?” Korra asked, skeptical.

“I’m a vampire that controls vampires,” she corrected. “Or at least I try.”
“How do you control actual monsters?”

“It’s not the inhuman parts of a vampire that make it difficult,” Beifong said wisely. “There’s the human parts - the greed, the pride, the ambition - that’s always been more dangerous. Probably even more so in the past few decades.”

Korra wasn’t entirely sold on that idea, despite having a long and colorful history dealing with entirely human assholes. She was too agitated and exhausted to think too deeply about the philosophy surrounding goodness in vampires and humanity’s monstrosities at that point, but the bottom line was that innocent humans were actively being murdered by vampires. The “how” and “why” vampires were the way they were had to be put on the back burner until their victims were safe.

“I’m so not into having a moral or ethical conversation about how you think humans are as bad as vampires, because - “

“That’s not what I’m trying to say” Beifong said tightly. “Look, I’m held in high regard by many for what I do.”

“Covering vampire asses.”

“So vampires are more inclined to do what I say. More inclined to work with me and reduce human casualties. There’s some level of respect there, and with respect comes obedience,” she said. “I’ll fight if I need to, but I do what I do to keep order, Korra. Without order, there would be literal rivers of blood in the streets. I need to keep vampires complacent and humans ignorant.”

Korra felt her commitment to being salty at Chief Beifong start to crumble.

“Not gonna lie, that still doesn’t sound particularly great.”

“That’s because you’ve never seen entire villages and towns wiped out. Entire populations just struck out of the history books. You’ve probably never even heard of the Northern Air Temple.”

There was no such thing as the Northern Air Temple. Just the Eastern Air Temple in the Earth Kingdom, the Western Temple in the Fire Nation, and the Southern Temple back home in the South Pole. Air Temple Island in Republic City was the only other temple, but it wasn’t far enough north to be considered “Northern”.

“Uh, no?”

“Well, that’s a shame. Thousands of people and an entire culture were reduced to a bloody pile of flesh and bone at the center of the oldest Air Temple in the world.”

“But...the Eastern Air Temple is the oldest temple.”

“Only after my squad and I burned the bodies, demolished the entire Northern Air Temple, and struck it from every historical document distributed at the time,” Beifong said. “It was a lot easier back then. Isolated as it was so close to the North Pole, the Northern Air Temple didn’t exactly have a lot of literature on it. But they were happy and thriving, probably the most scientifically advanced culture at the time. They already knew about microscopic bacteria back when people in the Fire Nation were still shitting in the streets.”

Korra made a face. “No way. If they existed, we would have - we should have heard about them. You can’t just wipe them out of history. I can’t even delete a 10 year old picture of myself with chopsticks in my nose that someone tagged me in.”
“This was hundreds of years ago. Everything was still on paper. Some shadow of what the Northern Air Temple was might still exist somewhere in an obscure text we missed or local word-of-mouth traditions, but every brilliant thing they wrote, every miraculous advancement they made...it was burnable. Just like the people were, in the end.”

She didn’t respond for a moment. For all she knew, Beifong had pulled every word of that right out of her ass, but if she hadn’t? The chief didn’t seem like a liar, and Korra had no reason to not believe something so crazy. An advanced ancient civilization just destroyed without a trace? Given the current state of her life, it might actually have been stupid not to believe it.

“Did you kill them?”

“No,” the chief said quickly. Fiercely.

“What happened to them, then?”

Beifong looked haunted. She didn’t look at her or speak, as if a video had started playing before her eyes and she had to see it through to the end.

“Let’s just say...nothing new,” she finally said. “It had happened before. It will happen again, for as long as violence is in all our natures. If you had seen what I’d seen, you’d know that this is the better alternative - being the cleanup crew is the lesser of two evils for me. It’s the closest we can get to real peace. It isn’t ‘great’, but it’s all we’ve got.”

Any last desire Korra had to be ornery just evaporated away. Beifong noticed the change in her expression and recoiled.

“Listen, I’m not trying to be your friend. God knows, I have no patience for a snivelling teenage werewolf.”

“I’m 21!”

“I’m 373. Everyone is a teenager to me,” she said dismissively. “What I need from you, Korra, is whatever you’ve got on the werewolves that are working with Amon. He wants to declare war on humans and if he’s gotten werewolves involved in this, that could mean big trouble. If you know anything…”

Korra had never met anyone like Lin Beifong before. An actual, true neutral grey. A vampire that both placated vampires and helped people.

“Do you drink from humans?”

Chief Beifong’s face hardened, and Korra got her answer. She knew better than to hope.

“I told you, I’m 373. I’ve tried everything,” she admitted. “Only from the worst of the criminals now, though. The murderers, the rapists, the violent ones…”

Korra swallowed hard.

“Humans are humans.”

“I never doubted what I am,” she said simply.

“You mean the judge of who gets to live or die?”

Beifong held up a hand. “Save it. I have a few centuries worth of existential crises on you. You’re
Korra tried again. “But people - “

“Humanity isn’t people,” she said. “Humanity is something people can have. I can tell you right now, kid, it would be easier for you if you stopped thinking like that.”

It made some sense, but Korra couldn’t help but shake the idea that Chief Beifong was a killer - a weird vigilante justice type, but still a killer. Everything she said was exactly how one might justify several lifetimes of murdering. Maybe it was true, and maybe her victims deserved their fate. Maybe the work she did to “mediate” vampires and humans was better than any alternative.

But also, maybe she was just a poor old woman trying to make herself and her miserable existence feel better.

The lesser of two evils. Korra wasn’t happy about any of this, but until a better answer revealed itself, she didn’t have much of a choice anymore.

“They are Bataar, Varrick, and Zhu Li,” Korra said quietly. “Their alpha is a werewolf named Joo Dee. Kuvira defected from that pack after Amon basically took over. She tried to escape to Republic City, but they found her. She’d taken stuff from them, and they wanted it back. Asami and I got caught in the crossfire, and that’s how she got shot. It was Varrick holding the gun. After they shot her, they got scared because they knew there were lots of vampires in Republic City, and that not all of them were followers of Amon. They were afraid you’d find them. I don’t know where they went, but I imagine they ran back to the Earth Kingdom.”

Chief Beifong had clicked her pen open and wrote everything in her notepad.

“What did Kuvira take from them?”

“Money, she said. And plans for weapons”

“Plans for weapons?” Beifong repeated. “God, what kind of weapons?”

“I don’t know, but they were bad enough for Kuvira to know that Amon shouldn’t have them. Bad enough that they tracked Kuvira all the way here to get them back.”

“Describe the three werewolves to me,” Beifong said, still scribbling in her notes. “Physical descriptions, voices, whatever you’ve got.”

“You’ll leave Kuvira out of this?”

Beifong stopped. “What?”

“I want you to leave Kuvira out of this. She took weapons out of Amon’s hands, so she’s not a bad person. She’s trying to run from all this. I want you to let her.”

“What if she took the weapon plans for herself?”

“She didn’t,” Korra said, the finality in her tone surprising even her. She didn’t actually know Kuvira wasn’t a bad person. It had become very evident that they didn’t really know each other well at all. Technically she was a selfish asshole...but was she evil?

The chief of police nodded reluctantly. “Fine. You have my word.”

“I don’t know what that’s worth, but okay.” She told her all she remembered about Bataar’s weird
haircut, Varrick’s slimy goatee, and Zhu Li’s round glasses. She told her what they said, which
direction they went, everything she had. When she was done, Beifong put her notebook back in her pocket.

“Thank you for trusting me.”

“I don’t trust you.” Korra snorted. “Not completely. But I trust you more than I trust them.”

Beifong smirked. “You’re lucky to be so young and already know how the world works.”

“Yeah, lucky me.”

“At least trust that this is all off the books. No one from the police will bother you about this case
any longer. You were a help.”

“If you say so.”

Beifong nodded as she strode over to the door. “Keep your head low, kid.”

“Before you go,” Korra said suddenly, the thought randomly just popping up. “Can I ask you, I
know it’s a common name, but are you related to the famous Beifongs? The ones that helped found
the United Republic?”

She actually smiled. “The original Beifong was my mother, Toph.”

“Wow.”

“You think that’s cool? I’m actually the third descendant of Toph Beifong you’ve met.”

“Who else? Not...not Opal Beifong!!”

She nodded. Korra’s eyes widened.

“Do you...talk to her?”

“No, of course I can’t,” Beifong said regretfully. “But I’ve been watching over my family line for
generations. She’s my great-great-something niece. I never had children, she’s a descendant of my
sister.”

“Who’s the other one?”

Beifong looked at her wistfully before turning and leaving the office.

“Bataar.”

Chapter End Notes

Hope you enjoyed my little consolation chapter so people believe this story isn’t dead lol

Haha can you believe I’ve gone this many years without ever giving Korra, Mako, or
Bolin last names?
Asami gritted her teeth as Korra placed her hands firmly on her hips.

“Okay, now slowly turn your upper body,” Korra directed Asami. “Nope, don’t move your lower body. Just your shoulders.”

She made a valiant attempt, but her facial expression betrayed her. “I guess it still hurts a little to do that.”

“A little, huh?”

“I don’t twist like that when I drive! I know the doctor said not to drive for another week, but I feel great. Maybe I just healed up more quickly than he thought I would!”

Korra looked at her skeptically. “Uh-huh. Fine. Have a seat.”

Asami gifted her with a beleaguered expression and started to sit in one of the kitchen chairs. As she lowered herself, Korra abruptly held an arm out, practically swinging it into the side of her neck.

“Hey! What was that for?!"

“Your car is this low and has a low ceiling about this high. You can’t get into your stupid Satomobile just sitting down like that. Try again”

She was glowering so hard Korra could feel the waves of discontent radiating from her, but Asami complied, this time making a painstaking effort to lower her head under Korra’s outstretched arm. Before she could sit, Korra used her other hand to pull the chair away.

“What the hell are you doing now?”

“Like I said, your car is really low.” Korra grabbed the stepstool she used to reach the high cabinets in the kitchen and moved it to where the chair had been. “Okay, now go ahead. Try sitting on that.”

Asami had the steely, defiant glare of someone who would bust her own surgical incision open just to spite her. She leaned forward and made a move to lift her leg into the imaginary car. Predictably, she twisted and cried out in pain.

“Owww, shit, fine you’re right, I won't drive. Asshole.”

“You knew I was right and you still didn’t listen to me,” Korra snorted. “How am I the asshole?”

“You just are. Asshole.”

“Well, you can’t drive.”

“Neither can you!”

“Wha - it’s not because I got shot!”
Bolin poked his head into the kitchen. “I am hearing a lot of money in the Swear Jar this morning.”

Asami sighed and motioned towards her purse on the counter. Korra put a few dollars in Bolin’s jar on her behalf.

“I’m sorry. You’re not an...a-word. I’m just tired of being like this.”

“At least you’re getting better.” Mako said, sauntering into the kitchen and pulling open the fridge. “Two days ago you couldn’t stand being in a sitting position at all. Hey, where are those feta spinach thingies you made?”

Asami’s injury had made it difficult to bend her body at the waist for the first few days, so she had spent most of her time either flat in bed, or else standing straight up. This led to her spending more of her medical house arrest asleep or, to everyone’s delight, cooking in the kitchen. In turn, Korra had spent most of the past few days eating. It was an arrangement that worked out swimmingly.

Usually. She looked to the ceiling sheepishly.

“Uh…”

He scowled. “She made those for me! The sausage ones were for you!”

“But I finished those the first day!”

“It’s not my fault you’re a werepig!”

“I actually need food for sustenance, unlike some people!”

“Oh, please. We could attach a horse bucket to your face and you’d be just as happy,” Mako scoffed. "I actually appreciate the culinary artistry and nuances of Asami’s cooking!”

Asami looked pleased. "Aw, thanks, Mako!"

“Just because you sniff a plate for like twenty minutes before you eat it, doesn’t mean you’re some connoisseur.”

“It’s pronounced ‘connoisseur’.”

Pik and Pak had wandered in, as they tended to do when people started yelling. Bolin picked Pik up and pet him thoughtfully.

“You know, I think Korra’s version sounded right.”

Before Mako could turn on his brother, Asami stood between everyone and waved her hands. “Okay, everyone relax. I can make more spinach puffs.”

“Connoisseur.”

“Connoisseur.”

Pak fussed at Mako’s pant leg until he picked her up, and she hissed viciously at Korra, making it clear whose side she was always on.

“You stay out of this, you brat,” Korra snarled. Pak snarled right back before purring gently against Mako’s chest.
“Okay, why don’t we just look it up?” Bolim snatched Mako’s phone from his pocket and swiped at it.

Asami sighed in exasperation. “You know, I just came down here to grab a yogurt. I’m not sure how my morning descended into World War III but it’d be awesome if, I don’t know, maybe all you crazy people got out of my way so I could get a yogurt?”

“Oof,” Mako looked at her sympathetically and patted his own stomach. “Having some issues down there?”

“No! Some people just like yogurt!”

Korra raised an eyebrow. “What people?”

“Seriously? You want to start our fourth argument before breakfast?”

“Hey - what’s this?” Bolin said suddenly. He held up his brother’s phone, showing the most recent web search in the browser was about the Republic City Police Academy. Specifically, it was listing the entry requirements and deadlines.

Korra’s eyebrows shot up in surprise.

“Mako...? Wait, is this about Chief Beifong?”

“Give me that.” He snatched the phone back from his brother.

After her conversation with the vampire RCD chief of police, she had ditched her last class and rushed home to tell the others. Mako had seemed particularly interested by her story and in retrospect - of course he was. How could he not b

“You admire her,” Asami said, very neutrally.

“Well, kind of. Yeah, actually. I guess I do,” he sighed. “I get that she drinks from humans, but I’m a little short on vampire role models, okay? Give me a break.”

“You know, she’s really not all bad,” Korra agreed, choosing her words with care. Asami’s opinions weren’t exactly opposite to theirs regarding vampire cops, but it was a very touchy subject. “She’s trying to help. She’s been trying to help for three centuries.”

She could see Asami respectfully biting her tongue. She deserved a lot of credit for that - Asami had been very cautious about voicing her opinions on vampires of late. Even if Mako hadn’t noticed, it was glaringly obvious to Korra and Bolin. It was an inelegant solution that certainly wouldn’t last, but they appreciated her attempts to keep the peace.

“Incidentally, I did see that they were recruiting.” Mako seemed embarrassed. Pak licked at his arm encouragingly. “The academy looks really involved, though.”

Bolin’s eyes widened excitedly.

“Wait, are you really considering it?”

“I don’t know…” He frowned. "I didn't even want any of you to know I was looking. I knew Bo would get all...Bo."

“Well you were right about that!” Bolin declared. "We need some good vampires on that squad! I saw, let's do it!"
“I’d have to get a high school diploma first,” Mako fretted, looking like every man that had ever forgotten to delete their browser history. “Then there are even more hoops to jump through after that.”

Korra took the phone from Mako and scrolled down the page.

“You get your GED, then apply to the police academy, pass the entrance exam, spend six months there, take a final exam, and then boom, you graduate as a cop?” She couldn’t help but feel her grin getting wider and wider as she read down the list of requirements. “Okay, I’m trying to stay cool, but I can totally see you doing this.”

“Six months!?” Mako’s jaw dropped. “I missed that. No way. I can’t be away from you guys for six months! There’s a vampire war going on! And we can’t afford for me not to work for that long. Forget this. There are too many things that can go wrong.”

His dumb insistence on being high guardian and lord protector of their realm was consistently hard to argue with. Mako made being selfless and loving an abhorrent personality trait, somehow. Korra was always ready to fight, though. She preemptively squished a dollar into Bolin’s already-full Swear Jar.

“Why do you always have to be such a fucking tool about this? This isn’t about us. It’s about you.”

“I…”

“Shut up, don’t try and turn this around. If you’re scared or nervous about it, just say so. Don’t make it about us, we can make it work.”

“How?”

“Korra graduates in May,” Asami, who had at some point made it to the fridge and gotten her yogurt, was sitting calmly at the table. She pointed her spoon at Mako. “You could just study and get your diploma before then. That way by the time you go off to the police academy, Korra will have had time to find a full time job and cover the bills until you come back. Also, new cadets start in June - I saw some flyers on campus. It’s not like you can run off to the academy tomorrow even if you wanted to.”

They stared at her.

“Sorry, sorry, everyone can keep fighting if you want.” She shrugged. “Just saying.”

“This is so awesome!” Bolin said, practically bouncing. Pik grew impatient in his arms and leapt back to the floor, sauntering over to Asami’s legs and trying to seduce her into dropping some yogurt. “I’ve been trying to make you get your high school diploma for so long, anyway. I’ll help you! I have four years of high school under my belt!”

“Me too!” Korra said brightly.

“Me too,” Asami said, resisting Pik’s meows for attention. “Well, two years of high school. But, I mean, I could help out, obviously.”

“Obviously.” Korra teased.

“I didn’t mean to say it like that.”

“It’s okay, we know she’s not all that bright,” Bolin patted Asami on the head fondly. “She woke
up this morning thinking she could drive the Stallion.”

Mako rubbed at the back of his neck anxiously. “I don’t know, even with a know-it-all like Asami -“

“- I’ll just never speak again, that’s fine -”

“- how do I learn all of high school in a couple of months?”

“I bet we can find you a study plan online!” Bolin teleported to Mako’s side and grabbed his arm. “We can totally get you a high school diploma by the time you need to apply for the academy! They’ll love you. All those security jobs on your resume? You’ll be a shoe-in!”

“Bro…”

“One thing at a time,” Korra reminded him gently. It had been a very long time since Mako had goals and objectives, other than making rent, and it was probably getting overwhelming for him. She didn’t want him to quit before he even started. “Just get your diploma. Focus on that first, okay? Don’t let Bolin get ahead of himself.”

Bolins pumped both fists in the air. “TOO LATE! TOO EXCITED!”

Mako still looked hesitant. “This just feels so… It’s been so long since I…”

“Thought about yourself?” Korra smirked.

“I mean…”

Asami reached up to touch his shoulder. “Part of being human is holding out hope. Investing in yourself and trusting that in time, things will work out. My understanding is that vampires have all the time in the world, but none of the rest of it. What you’ve been missing was hope, a future for yourself. Being a cop - helping people - might actually give you that.”

He was startled by her sincerity, but that didn’t stop him from awkwardly patting her hand.

“Uhh…thanks.”

Korra laughed. “Okay, take him, Bo. They’re making it awkward.”

Bolin jumped between them and dragged Mako out of the kitchen. He dropped Pak on the floor, where the cat hissed her displeasure.

“The laptop’s in the basement, come on!”

When it became apparent that Asami was not going to share her yogurt, both cats darted after them. Korra listened to Mako nearly stumble down the stairs as Bolin tugged him along, then glanced over at Asami.

“Thanks, babe.”

“What for?” she shrugged. Korra plopped down on the chair next to her.

“For being so cool with Mako. I know your feelings on all this must be pretty complicated.”

She didn’t have to confirm it. Asami cared about Mako. She would certainly trust him more than any other cop in the RCPD. But she would never aspire to be like the Chief of Police as Mako
probably did. Even if Beifong did claim to only drink from violent criminals, people were still people. It wasn’t on any human, vampire, or whatever else was out there to pass that judgement. Her position of power, and potential abuse of it, made the whole thing even worse.

“Murder is wrong. Just because it feels like it’s a better kind of murder, it still is what it is. You get that, Kor. Right?”

Korra leaned in to rest her head on her shoulder.

“I do.”

She felt her tense up.

“Do you? Because it didn’t seem like you did the other day at the hospital. It seemed like you agreed with my father.”

Korra tried to think of how to say what she thought without ruining the feeling of Asami’s body warmth against hers.

Asami frowned. “Yeah, you did that. That quiet thing, trying to think of ways not to offend me.”

Korra took her hand and squeezed it. “You’re thinking about this wrong.”

She pulled away. “Oh, here we go again. ‘You’re human, you don’t understand, blah, blah, blah’ - I’m not wrong!”

“No, no, I know,” Korra said quickly. “But you’re not right, either. I mean, you think Mako is the ideal. A vampire who doesn’t drink human blood, who doesn’t give in to his cravings.”

“He is the ideal!”

“How can you say that?” she asked, her voice losing a little bit of calm. “By now, you’ve seen how hard he works just to keep his head above water.”

“I have. I know it’s indescribably hard and I wouldn’t wish his life on my worst enemy. But Korra, he can do it. He’s been able to maintain a human life, whose only purpose isn’t just to kill people.”

A tense quiet fell over them. Korra had nothing more to say about it. She’d come to know now that Asami’s biggest flaw was the thing she liked most about her. Asami wanted to build a perfect world. She wanted to harness all her skill and ingenuity and kindness and just make everything better for everyone. But her perfect world had to be meticulously calculated, calibrated to the highest degree, and had no room for shades of grey.

There was no room for the world of vampires, ghosts, and werewolves. Korra’s world broke all Asami’s logic. It broke all her rules. And one day, it would probably break her.

Asami put her empty yogurt cup on the table and sighed.

“How do you do it, then? How are you able to reconcile the thoughts ‘Vampires can’t kill people’ and ‘But vampires have to kill people’ in your head?”

“Aren’t you trying to create a tautology? Because sorry, Asami, I don’t think mythical creatures vibe so great with propositional logic.”

She looked at her in surprise. “I know we’re kind of in a fight right now, but I was reluctantly turned on by that.”
“Noted,” Korra smirked. “But those aren’t the thoughts I have in my head. It’s more, ‘Vampires shouldn’t exist’ and ‘But I care about Mako’.”

“You think vampires shouldn’t exist?”

“Of course not. It’s not fair. A living hell that no one deserves. And it’s not fair to their victims, either.”

Asami toyed with her spoon, sucking on it thoughtfully. Korra was just about to complain that she wasn’t allowed to do anything sexy in the middle of a serious talk, when she suddenly spoke again.

“Have you heard of paraconsistent logic?”

“Um, I feel like I’m about to.”

“It’s a way to get around what are effectively deductive explosions. Statements that disastrously blow apart any semblance of real truth or falsity. Scientists use paraconsistent logic to calculate around contradictions in quantum physics, semantics, artificial intelligence, even philosophers use it. Basically, the world is unpredictable, inconsistent, and often contradictory, but you can still make logical inferences off those individual sets of chaos.”

“Damn, now I’m turned on.”

“It’s my least favorite logic system.”

“Gosh, no way, really?”

That earned her a light shove.

“Results are weaker, imperfect, and fewer, but it’s all about reasoning. Revision. Parallels. It’s almost like you’ve got to negotiate the conclusion for yourself. It can be heavily biased and individualized, but it can also be useful.”

“Are you telling me you think you can science your way through the vampire war?”

“I’m telling you I’m going to try,” Asami said. “Although I don’t even know where to begin, now.”

“Well, I know I’m done doing anything stupid,” Korra said darkly. “Not anymore. I don’t want to risk anything happening to the people I...care about.”

Even collectively including Bolin and Mako, Korra felt awkward saying it. Asami had no idea. No freaking idea that she’d dropped the “L-bomb” that day in the hospital while she was high on morphine, and that Korra had been thinking about it every day since.

“Oh, actually, speaking of something potentially kinda stupid...” Asami said slyly. “I was, um, bored yesterday...”

“I’m shocked.”

“...I called the manager for Kuvira’s old building,” she said. At Korra’s surprised look, she quickly added, “I didn’t tell him who I was or anything, relax. I pretended I was looking to rent an apartment. He told me there would be a studio available by the end of the month. A tenant had to skip town quickly and they were just going to clean the place up.”

“Sounds about right,” she said bitterly.
“I asked if something happened, and he said the tenant had to go rushing back to the Earth Kingdom for family reasons.”

Korra scoffed. Family reasons, indeed.

“Yeah, he was kinda pissed about it, so he was quick to blurt out an interesting fact,” she continued. “He was angry she wasn’t even going to come back to clear her stuff. Get this - he said she was already in Zaofu when she called him.”

“Zaofu…” Korra echoed. “Wait a minute. She’s from Zaofu. She’d been trying to get away from there!”

“I know.” Asami rolled her eyes and mimed air-quotes with her fingers. “Zaofu Dance Company. I’m graceful as fuck.”

“Why would she go back to the place she was running from?”

“Maybe she’s done running?”

For a split second, Korra believed that. She thought for the briefest moments that maybe Kuvira might have finally gone home to face her fears and maybe put a stop to her pack and whatever they were doing with Amon.

But unfortunately, she knew Kuvira fairly well at that point.

“No, she’s not.”

“What do you mean?”

“The cops will probably do exactly what you did,” she said. “And her landlord will probably feed them the same story. Meaning everyone is going to be looking for her in Zaofu.”

She watched as disappointment appeared in Asami’s eyes.

“Oh. You think she’s misdirected everyone so she could keep running.”

“Yup.”

“I...guess that does sound more like something she’d do…”

“Yup.”

Asami squeezed her arm. “Sorry. Do you think she might’ve stayed in the city?”

“I wouldn’t rule it out. It’s the last place Amon, her pack, and the cops might look for her at this point. But I think it’s safe to say we’ve seen the last of her.” Korra shrugged. “And I don’t blame her. Staying out of all this is probably the smart thing to do.”

Asami hesitated. “Like my dad said.”

“Yeah.”

“Do you want to stay out of this? Leave the city?”

Sometimes Korra wished she was a different kind of person. The kind of person that could run away from something, turn a blind eye, or selectively forget. She was angry at Kuvira for sure,
especially after she just ditched them in the alley as Asami bled out. But for someone who had no one else on her side, what else was there to live for but self-preservation? Korra's life was different. She had people, there in her household, outside at work and school, and beyond in the South Pole she had ran from. If the vampires took the city as easily as Mr. Sato had claimed they could, it was only a matter of time before they spread.

“No,” she said quietly.

Asami had no answer for that. She just ran her hand through her still-fucking-gorgeous-even-when-unkempt hair and propped her chin up on her hands to think. Korra knew, though, that she wasn’t the type to just turn away either. Not by a long shot.

“Okay. So, your argument is that vampires are who they are. The vast majority of them need to kill humans. That’s not going to change. And even though I have several objections to that, you’re saying that’s how it is and in general that’s how vampires see it.”

“Yeah?”

“And there is no achievable scenario where vampires and humans can live side by side without humans sacrificing their lives for vampires.”

“Honestly? Unless every single one of them are like Mako? No.”

“And you’re saying that even if we try, we cannot help vampires become more like Mako.”

“Asami…”

“No, Korra, help me out. You’re saying that could never work? Vampires converting into, um, vegetarians or whatever?”

“It’s only barely working for Mako!”

“But it is,” Asami insisted. “It is working.”

“The number of vampires who’d be willing to make that sacrifice is so small.” Korra said. “Remember what Mako said about Zaheer? Four hundred years old and he still couldn’t do it.”

“That was Zaheer. He couldn’t do it.”

“Even if we get a small amount of vampires to convert, to literally suffer for the rest of their eternal lives, what about the others?”

Asami just looked at her grimly. Again, she didn’t need to say what she thought - that the vampires who wanted to drink human blood had no place in Asami’s ideal world. They’d have to go...or be eliminated, somehow. Simply because of what they were.

“I think...this is something that we don’t really agree on,” Korra said regretfully. “Not completely, anyway.”

“You think those vampires should freely kill whoever or whenever they want?”

“No, of course not.”

“But you won’t condemn them for doing so.”
“Asami…”

She swallowed. “Then yeah. I think this is something we can’t agree on.”

Korra took a deep breath before asking what had been haunting her the most for a long time.

“Is...is this a dealbreaker for us?”

Asami didn’t respond for an uncomfortably long time. “I’m not saying I want to...to kill all vampires that don’t give up human blood. I know they didn’t all choose to be what they are. But I want to find a solution, and that’s the only solution I could think of. Convert the ones willing to convert, and all the rest...they can’t live alongside humanity. We imprison human murderers, keep them away from the general public, for the same reasons. You literally imprison yourself when you change into a wolf. I don’t know if vampire prisons can work or...I just know they need to be kept away from us. I’m not...I’m not trying to be cold-hearted.”

“I know,” Korra assured her. “I know that. I’m not trying to make you feel that way, I swear. But my imprisoning the wolf is a luxury vampires don’t have. You’re saying we have to punish the human parts of vampires just because their monster parts can’t be controlled.”

“I’m not saying that - “

“You are, and you might actually be right,” Korra swallowed hard. “But you have to understand that I can never say that myself, okay? I can’t. I have no right to make that call.”

Asami thought for a moment. “How about this: we agree that Amon is the common enemy, right? No matter what, his idea of vampires forcibly taking over the world is universally wrong and those guys need to be stopped.”

“Yes.”

“Then...I guess that’s the problem, first and foremost. The rest of the morally grey area will have to take a backseat, for now.”

Asami was worrying her lip and gripping her spoon so hard she might have bent it. She was desperately trying to hold on.

Korra kissed her on the forehead.

“Yeah, all that stuff - it can wait.”

“I’m sorry. I’m so sorry. Listen, if this is something we can’t - “

“Hey, hey…” Korra silenced her with another kiss on her lips. “Don’t get all worked up. It’s gonna be okay. We’re gonna be okay. Everything you and I are saying is true, even if they're not the same, but we found a common ground, right? We found a truth - Amon needs to be stopped. That’s all we need.”

“You know...that was, actually, a decent example of paraconsistent logic.”

“Figures, that I’d accidentally use your least favorite kind of logic.”

“Yeah, well, one of us is gonna have to get good at it.” Asami looked at her tentatively. “Are we...going to be okay?”

Korra wrapped her strong arms around her shoulders. Morality and humanity were dangerous
topics, a dizzying dance for anyone, but especially two people that were young and trying to build a relationship on chaos. But Korra would never have been able to handle everything going on without Asami by her side. And Asami was trying so hard to open her mind and reshape everything she once knew. It would be rough for Future Korra and Future Asami, after Amon was taken down and the moral gymnastics had to come into play again, but right then and there...

“Yes,” Korra said. “Yes, no matter what happens, we’ll be okay.”

“How do you know?”

“Because I have faith,” she said simply. “I know enough about you and about myself that I have faith it’ll work out in the end for us.”

Asami seemed to be searching her eyes for something. She wasn’t quite sure what, but in just a few moments was standing up, holding both of Korra’s hands and leading her to the kitchen counter.

“What are you doing?”

Without answering, she gave Korra a little push that made her hop onto the counter. Then Asami wiggled herself into place between her knees and grinned.

“I’ve been wanting to do this.”

She lunged forward and captured her lips. The back of Korra’s head hit the cupboard but neither of them noticed as she wrapped her arms around her shoulders and pulled her closer. Asami’s hands seemed to flow up and down Korra’s back, gently caressing the muscles there and trying to fill every bump and groove like a wave breaking and receding on shore.

“Mmm - is this because of my para-whatever logic?”

“Shut up and touch me, Korra.”

Her fingers found themselves in their favorite spot, the bottom hem of Asami’s top, and they lingered there politely until Asami lost her patience and forced her hands underneath.

She quickly found Asami’s wound and frowned.

“What happened?”

“Nothing.”

“I’m between your legs and your hands are under my shirt,” she reminded her. “What made you stop?”

Korra slowly lifted up the hem until the sutures in Asami’s abdomen were completely visible. The skin was no longer swollen, and barely pink anymore, and it was barely three inches long, but it was dimpled and twisted and so out of place against the rest of Asami’s perfectly smooth porcelain skin.

“It doesn’t hurt when you touch it.”

But she remembered the last time she touched her there. Korra remembered it perfectly, how blood had streamed through her fingers, hot and wet, while the rest of her got colder and colder against her body. She remembered how the paramedics had to take Asami from her arms and it felt like they were tearing away a piece of her as well. Even after they tried to stop the bleeding and loaded
her into the ambulance, the stretcher left a thin trail of blood in its wake.

“Kor?”

She shook herself out of it.

“Oh, sorry, I don’t know where my mind went just now.”

Asami was not even remotely deceived. She abruptly pulled down her shirt.

“I’m fine, Korra.”

“Yeah, I know.”

“Are you never going to grope me again? Because I have to tell you, I liked it, and on the kitchen counter has always been a thing of mine.”

Korra cracked a smile.

“Pervert.”

Asami chuckled and took a step back so Korra could slide off the counter.

“Well, thanks for reminding me to make a follow-up appointment to get these stitches out, anyway. I meant to see him again early next week, hopefully he can remove them on the earlier side.”

Korra snorted. “Why? I can take them out for you.”

She looked at her incredulously. “You can not.”

“I’ll have you know I’m an excellent seamstress. They teach you how to sew when you’re like four in the South Pole!”

“I’m not a scarf!”

“That’s knitting.”

“I’m not a...needlepoint?”

“That’s needlepoint.”

“Then what the hell do you sew?” Asami demanded, as Korra started to laugh so hard her stomach hurt. “You know what? This is irrelevant! You’re not taking these stitches out!”

“It’d be so easy! My grandmother made me embroider a whole table cloth once and I fucked up like one chain stitch and she had me pick apart the entire thing and start again from scratch.”

Her blank look sent Korra into a new fit of giggles.

“Okay, okay, make fun of the rich girl whose nanny just got her new clothes when she tore them.”

“God, Asami, you’re killing me.”

She punched her in the arm playfully.

“I’m going upstairs to call the doctor. Feel free to stay down here and continue being an ass-bag, but try not to be late for work.”
“Hang on,” Korra said quickly, grabbing her wrist as she turned to leave.

“What?”

“A second date,” she said bravely. It wasn’t as if she thought Asami might say no, it was her own reservations Korra had to squash down. She was fine. Asami was fine, and she’d make sure she would stay fine. “This weekend, before you go back to school again. You down?”

A slow smile lit up Asami’s face. “I have to say, I’m pleasantly surprised. You are absolutely the type to wallow in guilt forever over what happened to me and try to stay away despite your feelings. I thought I was going to have to be the one to drag you out."

“Yeah, well, on the kitchen counter? That’s a thing for me too.”

She shivered. “You’re terrible.”

“Also, we’re not going out,” Korra decided. “I’m not sure I’m ready to take you out again quite yet, but the date can be here in the house! If we do it on Sunday, Mako will be working in the evening and we’ll just have Bolin stay in the basement for a few hours and mind his own business.”

“That doesn’t sound like it’d be easy,” Asami said skeptically. “Asking Bo to mind his own business?”

“Hey, what did I just tell you? You gotta have some faith.”

Chapter End Notes

This one was a little chaotic lol but hey, we've all been having a rough time lately right? Hope you are all safe and as always, thanks for sticking to this fic!
The coffee shop wasn’t particularly busy, but early Saturday mornings rarely were. Korra was glad for it, since she was pulling full day shifts all weekend and she was pretty sure she had a midterm on Monday. What she wasn’t sure about was which class it was for, what was supposed to be on it, and basically anything else about where she was supposed to be for school. Opal was letting her borrow her laptop to use between customers, but for several reasons she still wasn’t able to focus.

Opal crumpled up the empty bag of espresso beans and closed the hopper. The espresso machine whirred back to life.

“Okay, I know I look real cute today, but I look cute every day,” she said. “Why are you staring at me?”

Korra broke her gaze. “I’m not staring at you.”

She leaned against the bar, smirking. “Uh-huh, sure.”

“You’re an idiot.” Korra tossed a used bar towel at her and she caught it, giggling. “I was just swimming in some random thoughts.”

"Thoughts like what?"

She shrugged and tried not to feel too stupid as she asked, "Do you think you're related to the Beifongs?"

“Which Beifongs?”

“The ones that helped found the United Republic and Republic City.”

Opal squawked out a laugh. “Oh my God, you’re serious? Korra, Beifong is one of the oldest and most common names in both the UR and the Earth Kingdom.”

Chief Beifong had mentioned as much, that Opal and her family had no idea who she was or who they were descended from. Korra couldn’t help but be bothered by it. There was so much history in Opal’s name, and a family love that spanned centuries, but she’d never know. She may never even get to meet the chief in her lifetime. It was just so strange to think about.

“Is that where you’re originally from? The Earth Kingdom?”

“Sure, yeah, I was born there and my parents and their parents live there now," she said. "But my family’s moved around so much that we’re all kind of mixed now. I mean, look at me, I could almost pass as one of your family members in the South Pole. I wouldn't be surprised if my ancestors were nowhere near the UR when those Beifongs helped found it.”

“Right,” Korra agreed. “I guess it would be really weird if you did happen to be related to them.”

“Really weird,” Opal said, amused. “Like, what even made you think of it?”

“Oh, uh, nothing. I met another Beifong recently, that’s all.”
“Yeah? I almost thought you might have met one of my brothers, I’ve got a bunch of them, but they’re all back in the Earth Kingdom.”

“How many do you have?”

She held up four fingers and curled each finger with each name. “Wei, Wing, Huan, and Junior.”

Korra thought vaguely of Bataar, the werewolf who the chief had identified as another one of her descendants. They might have just been distant cousins several times removed, and she wouldn’t have been surprised if Opal didn’t know who he was, either.

“That’s a lot of testosterone.”

“You’re telling me, why do you think I live here now?” Opal snorted. “Who’d you meet?”

“The, uh, Chief of Police. Her last name is Beifong.”

“Oh, cool! Why were you just hanging out with the Chief of Police? Did you go streaking across campus or something?” she teased.

“Nah, she wanted to ask more questions about what happened last week with Asami.”

Her hands flew to her mouth in shame. “Oh, man, I’m so sorry. I can’t believe I’m such an idiot. That whole shooting thing completely slipped my mind. Oh my God. How is Asami now? Is she recovering okay at home?”

“She’s doing great. A lot better already, actually. Just starting to get a little bit restless.”

“Wait ‘til I tell her how you were gazing longingly at me just now.”

“I wasn’t gazing!” Korra scowled.

“If she’s bored, you should probably be entertaining her.” Opal winked suggestively

“Shut up. Although we do have a home date-night planned for tomorrow.”

“Cute!”

Suddenly a new voice interjected, “It sure is!”

Korra jumped. Bolin was sitting at the bar, grinning at Opal. She, of course, had no idea a third participant had invaded their private conversation.

“Kor? Something the matter?”

“Nope!” she squeaked.

“Uh, okay. Anyway, how are you gonna get Mako out of the house for your date?” Opal asked. “I still can’t believe you’re living with that guy and your current slampiece, by the way.”

“She is not my - what even is a - ?“ She wanted to strangle Bolin, who was cracking up very loudly right in front of the both of them. “- Never mind, it’ll work out. Mako is cool and so is Asami. Anyway, he’s gonna be at work for the evening. That’s why I planned it that way.”

“That’s good. You two are gonna need some privacy.” She waggled both eyebrows at her.
“Shut up, Opal.”

“Opal,” Bolin repeated, looking at Korra’s work friend with a big goofy smile. “I think you’ve mentioned her at home a couple times. I didn’t know she was so...pretty.”

Korra pursed her lips. “We should just get back to work. You know, work. Where I should only be with my coworker.”

“Uhhh, right,” Opal giggled. “You’re so weird.”

“Sorry, I wanted to talk to you,” Bolin explained. “Privately, like, away from Mako and Asami.”

She ran her hands through her hair and pulled it in exasperation. Opal frowned and touched her arm.

“Listen, I know you don’t like to talk about your love life and I know I mess with you a lot, but I think you have something special with this girl. You’re really into each other, it’s obvious,” she was saying. “You deserve something great in your life, Korra, and you seem to have found it.”

“She’s so insightful,” Bolin said, still admiring her.

Korra was trying to patiently ignore him, until she could think of an excuse to leave the bar and chat with him privately without Opal thinking she was crazy.

“Thanks, that was actually very sweet.”

“Just be sure to wear your nicest underwear. I can tell you right now, Asami will be pulling all the stops and that girl must have a lingerie arsenal she’s going to use against you.”

“Lingerie arsenal?” Bolin perked up. “I think that was a reference from a show! Korra, ask her what kind of TV she likes!”

Korra took a very controlled breath. “I mean, we’re probably just going to have dinner and watch some TV. Any suggestions?”

“Oooh, you know what I’ve been obsessed with? This show about five gay guys who like, make people over!”

Korra made a face, but Bolin grinned at her excitedly.

“I love that show! I knew it! That’s where she got the lingerie thing from!”

“A makeover show?” Korra asked skeptically.

“Wait, no, it’s not like they only make people over in appearance. They makeover their lives!”

“That sounds...nice?”

“It’s amazing!” Bolin asserted, punching his fist in the air.

“It’s amazing!” Opal echoed, clapping her hands together.

“Uh...”

“In the first episode, there was this redneck - “
“- oh man, that’s one of my favorites - “
“- he was one of my favorites - “
“- that guy was so nice - “
“- you never would have expected - “
“- they spruced him right up - “
“- he was super cute - “
“- he had a whole new outlook on his life - “
“- and his family - ! ”
"- I almost cried!"

Korra was having a very hard time stopping herself from looking back and forth between them. Opal and Bolin were both masters at babbling on and on, but she swore, they had to have heard each other a little to be vibing at that level. They were practically having a cohesive conversation with one another, despite her not having any idea he was there at all. It was so weird.

“Cool, I’ll look into it,” she said, mostly just to shut down the unsettling situation.

"You definitely should,” Opal suggested. "Asami would love it."

“She does!” Bolin said. “She’s the one who got me to watch it. She’d love to watch it with you, Kor.”

“And it’s one of those shows that gets all the feelings running, too. You get really emotional, and then one thing can lead to another…!”

“Ooooh, she’s got a point, Kor!”

“You know what? I have to go to the bathroom,” Korra suddenly announced. “I’m going to go there, now. The bathroom.”

“Uh, okay?” Opal said.

Bolin looked around in confusion. He’d never been to Air Temple Espresso before and didn't know where the bathroom was.

“The employee bathroom,” she clarified. “In the backroom behind these double doors. Past the kitchen, the second door on the right with the calendar on it.”

Opal was staring at her. “...Sure, Korra. Go for it.”

“Ohhh, I gotcha. Meet you there!” Bolin disappeared. Kolin stormed through the kitchen and into the bathroom, where Bolin was cheerfully perched on the sink as if he wasn't an idiot and she wasn't majorly annoyed.

“Opal is really awesome!” he exclaimed. “She should come by the house!”

“No, she should not, no one should, that’s crazy,” Korra reminded him curtly.
‘Oh, yeah, I guess that’s true.”

“What was so important you needed to tell me here at work?” she demanded. “In front of people?”

“Hey, I tried to get you alone, but when you went to the gym this morning there were even more people there!”

Korra was starting to get impatient. The late morning rush would begin soon and she liked to prepare for it beforehand, or else the line of unhappy, uncaffeinated customers started getting rude - and neither Korra nor Opal dealt with rudeness very well.

“Well? Spit it out. I’m on the clock and Opal can only cover my ass so many times.”

“That’s really nice of her.”

“Bo.”

“All right, all right. Can I tell you a secret?”

She gave Bolin a look.

“Like a spoiler to a movie you just saw? Or a big real-life secret?”

“Real-life secret.”

“Fine, shoot.”

Bolin exhaled loudly. His expression suddenly grew very serious, something Korra rarely ever saw. She realized then that his incessant blabbering wasn't just a fascination with her coworker, it was nerves. When his first heavy sigh didn't seem to calm him down, he tried again.

“Well.” He hesitated, trying to choose his words carefully. That was another thing Korra didn't see often, and it was setting off a lot of sirens and red flags in her head. “I’ve, uh, been having this really weird feeling lately.”

“Understandable. There’s a lot of stuff going on.”

“No, no, not like that kind of weird.” Bolin paused for a moment, trying to think of the best way to describe it. “It’s kinda like the opposite - that everything is finally going right.”

Korra scoffed. “I have a vampire war that says otherwise, buddy.”

“I know that’s not great, but something else - it started when Mako decided to study for his high school diploma and maybe become a police officer down the line.”

“So...yesterday?”

He nodded. “At first I thought it was just pride, you know? Mako is actually looking forward and thinking about himself. It’s been a long time coming, and that’s literally all I ever wanted for him. So, obviously, I’d feel great about it. But it doesn’t feel like just that. It’s...stronger than that.”

Korra raised an eyebrow. “Of course, you’re super-proud. I am too! It’s pride mixed with some happy, and if we’re being honest, a little relief. A person with no hope or future just isn’t a person anymore, right?”

“Yeah, but I’m feeling more than that.”
“What are you talking about?”

“I don’t know if you...do you remember how you described it with Professor Yangchen and her door? The ghost door? The warm, tingling feeling of...of something good coming up?”

She stared blankly at him for what felt like a very long time.

“Yangchen’s ghost door? What - wait, what are you saying? You think…!?"

“Hearing Mako actually act hopeful about something, actually looking forward to something? I felt good. It felt like a weight was off my shoulders, in a way,” Bolin tried to explain. “But that’s not all. I wasn’t just happy, proud, and relieved. I feel comforted. Congratulated, even. I feel - warm? I haven’t felt warm like this since I was alive, Kor, but I’m pretty sure that’s what this is. Warm and calm. All the time. I feel it even now, in this what I assume is a cold, dank bathroom.”

Korra sat on the toilet. Hard.

“Did a door...is there a door?”

“No. I haven’t seen one in the house or anywhere. Well, not any new mysterious ones.”

She leaned forward, elbows on her knees and face in her hands. Her breath quickened. She could feel her heartbeat at her temples.

“So you feel like there’s a door, but there isn’t one.”

“Yes,” Bolin said. “I will say that the feeling is a little stronger today than it was yesterday. And I don’t know, maybe it gets stronger and stronger every day until...?”

“Until...” Korra trailed off. Until his door appeared, and it was time for him to go.

Was that how it worked? Did ghosts have this warning feeling before their door actually showed up? She had only one secondhand frame of reference for all this, and the professor was long gone. Korra remembered the feeling very well, though. The glowing, comforting feeling, tingling in her fingers and toes. The sense of calm, and the feeling that everything would be just fine. It was a special feeling, different from anything she had ever felt before. The feeling that something good was finally coming up. A reward, for a well-lived life.

“I don’t actually know what’s happening,” he said. “I’m not saying my door will be here today or tomorrow or whenever, I have no idea. I just...I couldn’t not tell anyone about it.”

“But you think it’s coming.”

“It might not, this might be something else? Maybe it’s - “

“It’s a really specific feeling,” Korra said. “You can try to describe it, but you really can’t. It’s so new and distinct because it’s not from here. It’s coming from somewhere else, like it can’t be from this world. Like it's coming from beyond it.”

It felt crazy to say it out loud, but Bolin was nodding in agreement.

“Exactly! That’s exactly how it is!”

She sighed. “I don’t think it can be anything but the door, Bo.”

“Oh. Okay, then.”
She had to give herself a minute. This was not at all something Korra thought she would need to think about any time soon. Not with Asami still recovering, Mako turning his life around, and fucking midterms coming up.

Bolin just rubbed the back of his neck awkwardly.

“Ever since you guys told me about Yangchen, I’ve been trying to figure out what my unfinished business was. Like, what was it that was keeping me here as a ghost? Even when I was alive, I was never very ambitious. It’s not like I wanted to achieve anything in particular - I was only 20 years old. I had dreams about traveling the world, but everyone has that, and people rarely do it. If that counted as unfinished business, then there would be ghosts everywhere and no doors. I’ve always just felt…okay. I didn’t want my life to end when it did, but I’ve always been at peace with it. Since becoming a ghost I’ve always felt like, maybe it would be okay for me to die. Like really die, just stop being a ghost and move on. I’m nothing in this world anymore.”

“Don’t say that again, Bo,” Korra said harshly. “I told you never to say that.”

“But now I realize, my unfinished business was never about me,” Bolin continued. “All I cared about was Mako. And you, of course, but Mako is who I’ve been worried about. My brother took such good care of me. He’s my unfinished business. The reason I’ve been stuck here as a ghost was because I wanted to take good care of him.”

She had to close her eyes. Tears were forming but she could not start crying. Not at work, in the bathroom, with Opal and the late-morning Saturday rush probably starting to fill the parking lot. She would not.

“I can see him happy, with his new path, and you and Asami,” Bolin said. “I can see you three as a family, just like how the three of us were a family. The first time I pictured that was when I started getting that feeling.”

Korra felt her the tears leak from beneath her closed eyelids, but she fought them back valiantly. The fucking door hadn’t even appeared yet. She still had Bolin, right there. He had made his hand corporeal and was rubbing light circles into her back trying to comfort her. He was still there, and still very much her brother. She had to save her tears for when she finally lost him.

“I…was going to ask if you thought I should tell Mako.”

She could only imagine how this would devastate his brother. They were so close, and losing Bolin would break him. Korra wasn’t sure she could fix him after that, and she could not definitively say that Mako would bounce back to where he was yesterday. Her gut was telling her that it might be better to just let him know - they were always going to lose him some day regardless.

But her gut was also churning and twisting in knots.

“I considered not telling you.” Bolin was tucking her hair away from her dampening cheeks. “I considered not telling anyone because I don’t know how this works, and why should I upset you if I’m not sure, but...“

“But it feels right,” Korra finished for him. She remembered how right it felt, when Yangchen approached her door. “It feels like this is what’s supposed to happen.”

“Yeah. Kor, I’m sorry. I’m really - maybe I should never have told you, but I was scared the door might appear really soon and I wouldn’t have gotten a chance to talk to anyone about it and… I don’t know.”
She stood up. “Let me hug you.”

He did, and she squeezed as hard as she could dare.

“I’m glad you told me, Bo,” Korra said. “As for Mako...I honestly don’t know. He’s so great right now, I don’t know what would happen if…I mean...I don’t know. He’s finally turning his life into something more.”

“I’m leaning towards not telling him yet,” Bolin said. “I mean, the feeling isn’t overwhelming like you had mentioned it was for Yangchen. It’s just definitely there, and stronger than yesterday.”

“Right. Okay.” She felt the smallest bit of relief, knowing Mako would be spared, if just for a little while. "I mean obviously, if it ramps up...or you...you see the door, then I guess…”

“I didn’t wanna make you cry.”

“If it feels like how I think it feels, then I’m happy for you,” she said. “It’s really going to hurt to lose you, but you deserve more than what you’ve had this past year. If you can escape, that's what I want for you more than anything.”

Bolin kissed her on the forehead. “I don’t want to leave you. I don’t.”

“Something tells me we all end up in the same place, in the end,” Korra choked out a laugh. “We’ll miss you something awful, but I don’t think a door to the afterlife or whatever would keep us apart for very long.”

“I really, really hope that’s true, Kor.”

They embraced each other for God knew how long. Korra didn’t know how many more times she’d get to do it. He didn’t feel the hug, he didn’t feel her warmth, but she could. It was a feeling she would desperately miss. Life had been so painful for all of them already, but at least this latest hit came with the slightest twinge of hope.

“You know, I was always going to look out for him. No matter what,” Korra said through the lump in her throat.

“I know.”

“Can you promise me one thing?”

“Yeah?”

“Don’t leave without saying goodbye.”

“I would never,” Bolin promised.

Korra told herself that she had to stop hugging him and go back to work, and that Bolin couldn’t be out of the house using that much energy for too long. She want to cling to him fiercely, and never let him go.

She always knew, though, that he was already dead. Every minute of knowing him was a blessing, just a merciful gift in their monstrous lives that she didn't deserve.

They were always meant to let go of him, eventually.
When Korra finally made it out of work, she spotted Asami’s car parked in the lot and nearly had a fit. She ran over, ready to yell at her about driving too early, but found a smirking Mako behind the wheel.

“Don’t look so excited to see me,” he said, noticing her go pale at the sight of him. She hadn’t expecting having to look him in the eye so soon.

“I, um, thought you were Asami.”

“Sorry to disappoint.”

Korra scoffed. “I was going to kill her, because she never listens.”

“Wow, Kor. I’m not even gonna bother touching that one.” Mako rolled his eyes. “I’m officially on Asami’s side for all fights from now on, by the way. She agreed to make me more of her spinach-feta thingies, and all you give me are headaches.”

“I’ll remember that,” she grumped as she climbed into the passenger seat. “Why are you picking me up? I was just going to take the bus.”

“Asami sent me a list of things she’ll need for the spinach-feta thingies.” He handed her his phone so she could take a look. “I waited until your shift was over so I could just get you on the way.”

Korra read the list Asami had given him while Mako drove them to the store. It was all in a text message, among what looked like several messages sent between the two of them.

“You guys text more than I thought,” she said, mildly surprised. She knew they had been getting along great for a while, but it looked like Asami texted him something several times a week.

“We have some things in common,” Mako said matter-of-factly. “Food, for one. She likes to ask me what I think about some of her recipes. It’s usually while I’m at work. She probably knows I get bored there sometimes.”

Work was when she knew Mako was most alone. She smiled inwardly as her heart fluttered. Asami really was the best.

“Oooh, bacon!” she read excitedly. “She's gonna put bacon in them?”

“Yeah, the bacon version will be for you. You’re not allowed to touch mine, this time!”

“Whatever.”

Her relationship with Mako was so easy that he almost made her forget it was only hours before that Bolin had dropped his huge news on her. She felt like a ticking time bomb, sitting so casually next to his brother. Learning about Asami and Mako’s secret food friendship did make her feel better, cementing the fact that he had someone other than Korra on his side when Bolin passed on, but it didn’t make holding the secret any easier.

“Is something wrong?” he asked.

“No. Why?”

“You were weirdly quiet for like five minutes. And your leg is bouncing. You’re shaking the
whole car.”

“I am not!” Korra stilled her knee and tried her very best to act normal. “So, the weather is nice today, huh?”

“No, it isn’t?”

“Opal and I had a fight,” she blurted. “I’m just a little down, okay? Sorry.”

“Opal from work, right?” He made a face. “I don’t think I ever really liked that one.”

“The feeling is mutual, believe me.”

“Well, what’d you fight about?”

They pulled into a parking space right outside of the supermarket entrance. Korra shrugged as she unbuckled her seat belt, trying frantically to flesh out the lie and hopefully just move on.

“You. She, uh, always thought it was kinda weird we live together, and now she thinks it’s super-weird that I still live with you since Asami and I are a thing?”

Mako grabbed a shopping cart and made a loud, deprecating sound. “She needs to mind her own business. We’re fine.”

“Yeah, we are,” Korra agreed quickly. “And she should. Anyway, sorry for spacing out. What were you up to all day?”

It was his turn to go suspiciously quiet.

“What? Mako?”

“You have to promise not to make fun of me.”

“I will never, ever, promise such a thing.”

She let him be mysterious all the way to the back corner of the store, before wrestling him into a display of cheeses.

"Ahh! Korra!"

"Tell me!" she insisted, bonking Mako in the face with a plastic-wrapped wad of fresh mozzarella.

"No!"

She picked up another mozzarella and drummed them against his cheeks. "Tell meee!"

"What the fuck - stop it!"

Korra grabbed a pair of salamis.

“Okay, okay!” He pushed her off of him. "Algebra. I was doing algebra.”

Korra was so surprised, she dropped the deli meats. The man at the deli counter was giving them a dirty look.

"Sorry," Mako apologized. "She has very poor impulse control. We're getting her help."
“Did you just say algebra? As in math?”

“Yeah.” He fixed Korra’s mess and began to peruse the different types of feta cheese they had.

“Is this for your diploma?” Korra asked excitedly. “Wow!”

“Don’t get too worked up,” Mako warned her. “I suck at it. It’s gonna take a lot of work before I can pass any kind of test on that shit. It’s more letters than numbers at this point. Who actually needs to know all that?”

“Spoken like a true high schooler.”

He decided on a feta and wheeled the cart to the produce section, stopping at a massive pile of leafy organic spinach.

“We can probably just get the frozen chopped spinach in the freezer aisle,” Korra suggested. “Save Asami some time cutting it up, you know?”

“Do you want spinach-feta thingies done quick, or do you want them done right?”

“Ooookay, then.”

“Also, Asami gave us her credit card and said I could splurge on something fancy.” Mako plucked a bundle of spinach from the pile. “I’ll help her chop if she wants me to. She seems to like being captain of that ship, though.”

“She’s bossy and opinionated.”

Mako laughed. “I was trying to be nice about your girlfriend, but yeah. Bossy and opinionated. Come on, we need a lot of butter.”

“You know what else Asami is? Good at algebra.” Korra reminded him.

“Oh, I know. This is right up her alley. I’ll ask her to help me out, at some point.”

Korra poked him in the back. “Do you want me to ask her?”

“No,” he said. “I can ask. I don’t know. I’m still not a hundred percent sure about all this. It just feels so...overwhelming.”

They stood in front of the dairy section, where they were greeted by an entire wall of butter.

“We want to help you, Mako.”

“I’ve never needed your help,” he admitted. “It feels weird to ask.”

“After everything we’ve been through, you think asking for help on your homework is weird?” Korra demanded.

Mako made a decision on the butter and pulled a few out of the fridge.

“I downloaded a syllabus online for the exam,” he said.

“Right, the one Bo found?”

“No, this was a different one. He said it looked even better. It was customized, so you can tell it
how long before you want to take the exam, and it tells you the best way to study over the given time period.”

“You found that? On your own?”

“Well, yeah. I feel like I learn better with more structure, you know? If I knew how much time to focus on each thing, I think it’d be less daunting.” He pushed the cart to where the meat was. “You’re gonna have to pick out your own bacon, dogbreath.”

Korra sauntered over to the pork and pretended to be deciding, but her mind was racing. Mako had actually done some research for himself? He was actually being proactive? He really and truly was considering things for his own future?

She couldn’t even remember the last time he made plans like that, plotting out a future that didn’t involve herself and his brother, or work, or paying bills. He was talking about getting help from them, he was admitting he wasn’t great at certain things and was planning ways to improve on them. Mako was planning ways to improve himself.

She was so happy for him. When she returned to the cart with a random selection of bacon, she was grinning ear-to-ear.

“What’s up with you now?”

“I...just really like that brand of bacon.”

“That’s really fucking weird, but sure.”

“How is that weird, but you spent like half an hour picking out spinach?”

Mako rolled his eyes. “All right, let’s get out of here. It’s starting to get crowded.”

As he said, the lines at the regular checkout had gotten long with Saturday shoppers. They took their chances at the self-checkout, but even there people waited. Korra could tell the throngs of impatient shoppers were making him anxious, so she tried to distract him.

“Are you excited about getting your diploma?”

A slow smile just barely managed to reach his face.

“I mean, I guess it’s been a while since I’ve looked forward to something...but I think so. Yeah, I think I am,” he mused. “It’d be cool to have that on my resume.”

“Very cool,” Korra agreed. “Hey, Mako?”

“Yeah?”

“Don’t let this get to your head or anything...but I’m really proud of you.”

“Whoa, whoa,” he gave her a light shove. “You’ve got a woman now, don’t you? What if Asami heard you were flirting with me?”

“Oh my God, why is everyone teasing me like that today?”

“Because it’s an easy shot,” Mako’s genuine smile was something Korra hadn’t even realized she’d missed so much. “Bolin said he was proud of me too.”
“Of course he is.”

“I hope I can pull it off,” he said. “And give you guys something to actually be proud of.”

Korra’s mouth dropped open as he left her to finally take over one of the registers. She chased after him.

“Hey, first of all, you will pull it off. Second of all…” Korra faltered. “I’m sorry, if you never realized how proud of you we were before. I’m sorry if that...is that the first time I ever said that? Have I never told you I was proud of you before?”

Mako looked away. “Okay, this is getting really dramatic. Let’s not get all sappy at a Shop N Go checkout line, please.”

“No,” Korra said. “We are gonna to get sappy as hell at a Shop N Go checkout line.”

“Please don’t.”

“I’ve always been proud of you.”

“Okay, okay - “

“Stop,” Korra grabbed his hand and stopped him from running the bacon barcode over the scanner. “You are the hardest working, the kindest hearted, the strongest and most amazing man I know. I appreciate you more than I can probably ever tell you in my lifetime, and if you never realized that - well, that’s my fault. I won’t make that mistake again.”

She let go of his hand, and he continued to scan their groceries in silence.

“I don’t know what I’d do without you guys,” Mako said, after collecting their receipt.

“We’re here,” Korra said carefully. “But I think you’d do just fine.”

“Well, I’m just gonna hope I never have to find out.” He handed Korra her bag of bacon and winked. “Hurry up, I want some spinach-feta thingies.”

Chapter End Notes

I guess this global pandemic got my creative juices flowing, lol.
Heads up: This is definitely an M-rated chapter, hahahahahahaahaaaaaa. It’s obvious when it’s about to start, so you can just skip it if that freaks you out.

“So, date number two!”

“Shhh!” Korra pressed a finger on Asami’s mouth. “Don’t say it out loud, we might jinx it. How about we just call it...a nice evening in?”

“Mmf fiffing ffim.”

“You look beautiful, by the way.” She lifted her red-tainted finger and playfully tapped it against her own lips.

“You fucked up my lipstick, but thanks.”

Asami had once again shown her up by being incredibly hot, even for their stay-at-home date. She was wearing an extra-large t-shirt with some obscure physics joke on it that bared one shoulder and hung loosely over her yoga pants. As soon as Korra caught sight of her, all her higher thought processes were suspended for the night.

“Why are you even wearing lipstick? I told you to stay casual and comfortable.”

“Because you’re into my lipstick.”

“Oh, right. Okay.”

Korra set the large bowl of popcorn on the coffee table and settled in next to her. Mako had gone off to work until the morning, and Bolin had sworn on his comic book collection that he would not emerge from the basement for a minimum of three hours. Additionally, he promised not to ask them his usual barrage of intrusive questions until the day after.

“Sooo, what was that all about with you and Bo?” Asami asked conversationally as she reclined on the couch.

Korra cringed. She knew Asami would have noticed, but hoped she wouldn’t ask. She should have known better than to think she would ever not ask a question.

“What do you mean?”

“When we were making him swear not to interrupt our evening?” Asami clarified. “We had a plan, remember? A begging and pleading plan that involved us promising to take him to the aquarium next weekend if he stayed out of the living room for a few hours?”

“Yeah...?”

“You were noticeably quiet, and when I said something, you said - “ She mimed air-quotes with
her fingers. "- ‘but if you have nothing to do, you can come hang out with us if you want’.”

“You know I hate making him feel lonely! He’s been through a lot!”

“I do,” she said. “And I feel the same way. But up until you came home yesterday, you were dead set on getting time alone with me. I’m not upset you invited Bolin to stay, we’d have a ton of fun! I just think it was a weird and sudden change of heart. Are you okay?”

She’d been on high alert the entire day. Bolin’s looming door was the last thing she’d thought about the night before, and the first thing she thought about that morning. She thought of it every time a customer walked through the door at work, and when she entered the house that afternoon. It weighed on her mind as she tried to study for her midterm, and it clung to her heart when Asami came to her room and said it was time to try and persuade Bolin out of the living room for their date. Korra was still concerned it might happen that night, but she swallowed that fear and leaned her head on Asami’s shoulder.

“I have...stress.”

“Midterm?”

Korra had to laugh. Of course, with everything going, Asami was thinking about midterms that week. She was very endearingly consistent.

“I guess.”

“It’s not just you acting strange,” Asami went on. Her eyes were locked onto Korra’s and wouldn’t let go. “We barely had to twist Bolin’s arm at all to give us space. And the stipulation about not asking any questions until tomorrow? That should have been impossible.”

“Bo’s always been weird,” Korra tried to say dismissively, but Asami definitely knew something was up.

“Not this kind of weird,” she insisted. “All day he’s been hanging over my shoulder, asking me so many questions!”

“That is absolutely normal Bolin behavior.”

“Not like the regular questions. He has been rapid-fire asking about my childhood, what I got to see in the Fire Nation, have I ever travelled anywhere else, what school was like, my plans for the future, my plans with you, stuff like that,” Asami said. “It feels like he suddenly wants to know everything I’ve ever done and everything I want to do. Like he’s making up for only having known me a few months…and like he’s not gonna get to know me for much longer than that.”

Korra looked away, finally breaking her scrutinizing gaze. She couldn’t lie, but Bolin was ever transparent and it seemed like Asami was already getting a whiff of what was going on. She was watching her, waiting to get an answer even though she had probably already guessed. Guessing the worst had become so easy for all of them.

“What if I told you Bolin and I had a deep talk...” she said. “...and he asked me not to share it with anyone yet?”

Asami looked disappointed for a moment, but eventually put a hand on her knee and rubbed reassuringly.

“Then I’d say I trust you both. If you can promise nothing bad is happening to either of you…”
“Nothing bad,” Korra said truthfully. Moving on to something beyond imprisonment in a world where no one could hear or see you certainly wasn’t a bad thing. Losing Bolin was going to be tough, but it wasn’t really what Asami was asking about. “It’ll be okay. I promise.”

“Then I’ll leave it alone and we can enjoy our Nice Evening In,” Asami conceded, although Korra did wonder for how long Asami could stand to be on the outside of this secret. “Unless, do you want to call Bolin up to join us? I don’t mind. He can hang out. I’d really like it, actually”

“No, no, no,” Korra said quickly. “Bo definitely wanted to give us our time, you know how invested he is in us!”

“Okay. But it’s fine if you change your mind.” Asami gingerly brought her legs up so they rested across Korra’s lap, and she lay back across the couch on some pillows. “Is it okay if I lay like this? It still feels better for me to be stretched out.”

“Of course.” She playfully tickled her feet. “Are you not ticklish?”

Asami shook her head. “Not there. I’m ticklish in other places, but I’m not telling you where.”

Korra resolved right then and there that she would not rest until she found those places. Her fingers skittered across her ankles, her shins, her knees, her thighs…

“Didn’t you want to watch something on TV?” Asami asked smugly.

“Ugh, fine,” Korra grabbed the remote and did a quick search on the TV. “We’re watching this.”

Her face lit up. “I love this show!”

“Yeah, Opal and Bolin both suggested it. They convinced me that this is the perfect thing to binge watch tonight. I still can’t really believe I’m about to watch a makeover show, though.”

She gaped at her, thoroughly affronted. “It’s not just ‘some makeover show’. Those five gay guys change entire lives!”

Korra eyed the promo images playing on the TV screen skeptically.

“If you say so.”

“Just keep your mind open.”

“Have you seen my life? How much more open can it get!”

“Bring the popcorn closer. You’re about to find out.”

She had to admit, it was tear-jerkingly inspiring to watch who Asami claimed were her “favorite people” put a down-on-his-luck redneck on a new path. Still, she’d be lying if she said she was giving it 100% of her attention.

Whenever the music came on, Asami danced her cute little toes around to the beat and it took everything in Korra’s power not to play them. Her head bobbed to the music too, resting on a pillow with that luxurious sateen hair of hers splayed out under her head like the rays of an inky black sun. She was also eating her popcorn one at a time. It was mesmerizing to watch. Korra ate her popcorn like a hamster, stuffing her mouth to the brim. But there was Asami, daintily popping a single piece into her mouth with those damn fingers of hers, chewing it purposefully, and swallowing before taking another.
“Oh gosh, look, look, they’re gonna bring in his estranged daughter!”

“I am looking.”

Asami smirked. “Uh-huh. I meant at the TV.”

“Why do you eat popcorn like that?”

“Because I’m not getting ready to hibernate for the winter surviving only on the food I’ve stored in my cheeks?”-

“Touche, but there is a middle ground between that and eating it so slow you might as well suck it through a straw.”

“Are you really going to just watch me munch on popcorn all night?”

“No.”

She slowly turned to her, every smoky look, sultry movement, and coy smile calculated meticulously by a genius whose primary objective was only to drive her insane.

“Well, obviously you’re not into watching TV right now.”

Korra gulped. “Uh, not really.

Asami legs left her lap as she swiveled back up to a sitting position. She leaned in close.

“Then what...do you want...to do...?”

She lilted each part of her question upwards, teasingly. Korra groaned.

“You’re the worst.”

“Am I...?” she asked, continuing the infuriating innocent act. She couldn’t take it any longer. She put a hand behind her neck and pulled her in, roughly capturing her lips.

Asami eagerly deepened the kiss and leaned over her, so that Korra quickly found herself on her back. Asami’s knees straddled her just below her hips but she pulled her down, wanting more of her body pressing against hers. As expected, she smiled against her lips and Korra realized that she did that a lot. Asami always smiled as they kissed and she loved the way it felt.

“Oh my God, Korra,” she moaned. “I’m so…”

“Can we pretend this is the end of our third date?”

She laughed, so hard and for so long that Korra almost thought the moment was ruined. But just as she was prepared to swallow her frustration, Asami swiped some tears from her eyes and managed to pull herself back together.

“Yes! Please, yes,” Asami said, through her laughter. Then she grimaced and crossed both arms over her abdomen gingerly. “Oooof, although I think I need a minute. Being all over you hurt a little.”

“Asami!”

“I said a little! ” she repeated, but her hand was at her wound. “It’s barely anything. Just don’t
“Make me laugh so hard like that again!”

“We don’t have to - “

“Korra,” she said firmly. “Are you thirsty or not?”

“Parched, thanks to your fucking yoga pants and your bouncy little feet - “

“- my feet?” Asami asked, amused.

“Shut up.” She blushed. “We’re not doing anything until you’re better. I’m too afraid of hurting you.”

Asami looked as though she might scream in frustration. “I shouldn’t have said anything. It was more the action of holding myself over you and laughing. I swear, it was barely anything! It’s fine now!”

They were being incredibly pathetic, and they both knew it. Someday, they would look back on this and laugh. Right then, though, Korra felt like her entire body was on fire and Asami was an ice cold glass of gasoline. In her whole life she didn’t think she’d ever wanted something this wrong, so badly.

“The doctor said no strenuous activity,” Korra sighed. “You’re supposed to take it easy.”

“Then I will take it easy,” Asami was using that voice again, the one that never failed to melt her into a puddle. “No strenuous activity. Like...maybe then...you can be on top?”

That blew the last fuse in Korra’s brain completely. She grabbed her hand.

“My room or yours?”

“Are you kidding? Your room is a mess. ”

“You know what, I’m going to let that slide for now, but I’m gonna be angry about it in the morning.”

“Morning, huh? Someone’s feeling very ambitious.”

“Oh, come on.”

They clambered up the stairs as fast as Asami’s injury would allow and barreled into her room, slamming the door behind them. Korra’s hands immediately went under her oversized t-shirt, carefully avoiding where she knew the sutures were.

“I knew you’d go for the fancy kind again,” she teased, as her fingers gently grazed a lacy underwire. “Even on a stay-at-home date.”

“I only have the fancy kind, Kor.”

“Yeah, that figures.”

“Let me guess. You wear boxers?”

“No!”

Asami boldly tugged Korra’s sweatpants to her thighs. She looked down and gave her a look
“Those aren’t boxers. They’re called boyshorts,” Korra protested.

“They’re just tight boxer-briefs.”

“They’re different! They're shorter! I think.”

“They are not.”

“Can we just move past this please?” she grumped. “Permission to get your top off?”

“Granted.”

Korra reached around and tugged Asami’s shirt up and over her head with ease. She shuddered as her fingers ran down her spine. The small wound was flat enough now that when Korra pressed their bodies together, she could barely feel it through the shirt she was still wearing.

“Why do you get to keep your shirt on?” Asami asked. “I’m the only one that gets to be cold?”

Korra was barely paying attention to anything she was saying at that moment. Two little points were poking at the fabric of her lacy undergarment. Cold, indeed.

“Hellooo?” Asami tried to snap her out of it by giving her a playful little shimmy, but that only served to black her out even more.

“Oh my God, babe.” Korra’s eyes swept up and down her body hungrily. “I...jeez, sorry, you’re just so - wow.”

“Thanks. Now I need to see you .”

Asami relished in toying with the edge of Korra’s shirt for a few extra seconds, just long enough for her to make a small sound of aching, before pulling it up and away. She savored the look of her lean, muscled stomach, arms, and shoulders. She was like a chiseled statue, a goddess of the hunt. Korra hadn’t bothered with a bra, and Asami couldn’t stop herself from cupping her in both hands. She was hard and soft, lines and curves, and Asami couldn't get enough. After a moment of circling her thumbs around her dark brown nipples without actually touching, coaxing several loud gasps, she made a move to bend over and get her sweatpants all the way off.

She winced. Korra noticed.

“Nope, not this time,” she said. She pulled Asami up and led her to the bed, where she made her lay flat. “I hereby crown you pillow princess until you heal completely.”

“Oh, come on.”

“No.”

“At least get your damn sweatpants off!”

Korra made a silly show of it, turning around and swaying her backside before whipping them off. Asami stared at her in her boyshorts.

“Wow.”

Korra smirked with all the cocky confidence of someone who knew they had the most majestic of thighs and a tight ass to match.
“Want me to just stand here and pose? I can do that.” She raised an arm and flexed it mightily.

Asami, to Korra’s surprise and mildly insecure disappointment, closed her eyes for a moment.

“Hey, what’s wrong? What did I do?”

“Nothing!”

“Is it your stitches?”

“No, shut up, those are fine. I’m just…”

Confused, Korra tentatively joined her in the bed. When Asami didn’t protest, she kissed her lightly on the forehead.

“Please tell me what’s wrong.”

“Nothing’s wrong, silly. Everything is actually incredibly right!” She opened her eyes, embarrassed. “I’m so attracted to you, I can’t even believe myself right now. But my nerves finally caught up to me... I’ve never actually done this before.”

Korra was struck temporarily silent.

“Wait, what? Really?”

“Oh!” Korra exclaimed. Intimacy was always a huge step, but the first time being that kind of vulnerable was a whole other level. It required patience and care and a tenderness that Korra would absolutely have taken the time to give her. But at that point Korra’s heart was already about to pound out of her chest, so it was with a huge amount of utter relief that she said, “You’ve just never been with a woman before.”

“No.”

“Okay, well…” Korra paused thoughtfully. “I think it’s way better.”

Asami chuckled. “I’m sensing that.”

“And, sorry to toot my own horn, but I think I’m good at this.”

“I’m...sensing that, too.”

“It’s okay, we’ll go whatever pace you want and you stop me if you need to,” she reassured her. “Some things are the same - like the fact that I want you so bad I want to die and the fact that you’re looking at me like you’re going to enjoy destroying me.”

Asami grinned nervously. “Right.”

“And some things are obviously different. Like these.” She held her breasts in her hands and bounced them a little bit. Asami looked like she might have just had a stroke.

“Uhhh. Right. Among other things.”

“Yeah.” She took Asami’s hand and placed it on her abs, gently guiding it down until her fingers were just underneath the waistband of her boyshorts. “That.”
“That’s new, yep,” she squeaked. “Very, very new.”

“Well, it can’t be that new,” Korra pointed out, putting her other hand on Asami’s stomach and sliding it down the same way until her fingers were surrounded by lace. She stopped when she heard the sharp intake of breath. “It’s probably pretty similar.”

“How are you so… not awkward about this?”

She just shrugged. Korra’s sexual history wasn’t one she liked to talk about. After she killed her best friend and first love in the South Pole, sex became more of a stress reliever than anything else. It was something that helped her forget everything she was running from, and it was pleasant enough to give her a feeling just a few degrees offset from contentment. She was an attractive young college girl, and there was no shortage of men and women wanting to sleep with her. It wasn’t until last year, when she started sharing a house with Mako and Bolin, that the trajectory of her life finally intersected with actual happiness and she stopped using sex just to feel.

Asami was looking up at her, apprehensive yet eager. She looked like she regretted asking, like she’d just ruined the moment. Korra lowered herself over her, so her breath grazed her ear.

“You’re so beautiful, so smart, and funny, and kind. I want you so bad, and to have you laying in bed under me, naked and wanting me back, it’s like I’m in a dream. I can’t believe this is my life right now. I’m confident because I’ve never been more sure that I will not let myself fuck this up.”

“Fuck, Korra.” Asami breathed. She squirmed beneath her.

“Plus, I know some pretty cool stuff. I can teach you!”

She laughed, in spite of herself. “You’d better!”

“Lesson one - how to take someone else’s bra off,” Korra snickered. “You think you know, since you wear one yourself, but it’s different when it’s someone else’s.”

She demonstrated this with the skill and efficiency of someone who was definitely well-practiced in the sacred bra arts. With a flick of two fingers, the garment popped open from Asami’s chest and Korra’s mouth went dry.

“Lesson two, uh…uh...”

“Sorry, were you trying to teach me something?” Asami asked innocently as Korra again was transfixed at her breasts, this time perfectly bare.

“Shut up,” Korra said, flushed. “Lesson two, let’s get these frilly-ass panties off without ripping them.”

She got up on her knees. Asami’s eyes watched her hungrily as Korra peeled off her yoga pants first and admired the vision of Asami’s body, fully on display save for a bit of lace that was not at all practical in any sense. She hooked her fingers into the delicate waistband and pulled them slowly down her smooth magazine-model legs. She just gazed down at her, naked, pink, and soft, biting her lip.

“Lesson three?” Asami prompted.

“Look who got their cockiness back.”

“It helps a lot that you’re gaping at me like a giant loser.”
“Sorry.” Korra cleared her throat. “I’m sorry, but fuck, Asami. Wow.”

She crawled over her, knees on either side of her hips. She took Asami’s lips like they were the only thing that would keep her from floating off into space.

Asami’s hand found hers and their fingers intertwined. Korra’s other hand couldn’t help itself, it cupped one of her satiny smooth breasts. Asami did that kissing-smiling thing again.

When they finally broke apart, they were breathless.

“You - oh!”

Korra recovered quickly and set her mouth to work on the pebbled pink tips that had been poking up at her coyly the whole time. Asami moaned.

“Shhh,” she hissed. She dragged a tongue down the valley of her heaving chest.

“Why? Bolin’s all the way in the basement.”

Korra winked. “No reason. Just want to see you struggle.”

“Ah, just wait until it’s my turn. I will murder you.”

She gave her a small indignant nip with her teeth, on the soft skin of her belly, far from the wound that she was trying so hard to ignore. It was hard - Asami was so perfect to her that anything that shouldn’t have been there stood out in stark contrast.

“You’re talking some big game for a lady-virgin.”

“Not a lady-virgin anymore.”

“Not anymore,” Korra agreed as she finally made it down her perfect, creamy white body to her destination. Asami instinctively spread her legs, but she could feel her tense. The muscles on that side of her abdomen were still healing, and moving that leg out hurt her.

“Wait,” she said. “Don’t spread them any more. Just bend your knee. The one opposite from where the incision is.”

Asami did as she was told, and she opened up like a blooming flower, granting Korra full access without causing her any more pain.

“Those muscle groups are separate from the ones we use for hip abduction,” she explained.

“Kinesiology major with a minor in Exercise Science, huh?”

“And don’t you forget it.”

She planted kisses along the Asami’s smoother inner thigh, each one causing a hitch in breath. Her eagerness was more than evident, but Asami was refusing to ask or beg. Korra wouldn’t make her.

This time.

The first gentle lap of Korra’s tongue against her nearly sent Asami through the roof.

“Are you okay? Did I hurt you?” she asked, startled.
“If you stop I will kill you! I am not kidding!”

She giggled into her center, and that just made her start to laugh more, because this was definitely the first time she’d ever laughed into that part of someone’s anatomy before.

“Korra!”

“Sorry, sorry!”

She lavished upon her, slowly at first, making sure she wasn’t causing her to make any sudden movements. Asami was a squirmer, though, and despite her injury she liked to move. Korra had to carefully place her hands on her hips to steady her, and she felt Asami’s hands lightly caress at the sides of her face. Eventually, Asami started tilting herself upwards up for her tongue and Korra gladly gave it to her, exploring her sweet and supple depths. She was surrounded by her, Asami’s skin and smell and taste and everything. In that moment, Korra decided that she would do absolutely anything for this woman. Anything at all she asked, Korra would bend every element of the universe to get it for her.

She loved her, and she would suffer anything that hell had to offer if she could just make Asami smile or laugh or make those random muffled sounds of ecstasy she was making right then.

“Ah - Korra - Kor-RA, oh my God. I’m…!”

She keened and her back arched, which definitely had to hurt a lot, but when Korra tried to check up on her, Asami forced her head back in place with her hands.

“Korra…!”

She put her mouth back to kiss her there, but stopped herself from doing anything fancy with her tongue. Asami would have torn her stitches if she’d gotten anymore, she was already trembling.

“Oh, my God... ohmygod …”

It took several long moments, but eventually, she relaxed. Korra slid up her body rolled to her side, so she could rest her head on Asami’s chest and listen to her heart rate go back to normal.

Asami’s eyes were half-lidded, but she managed a smile.

“Hey…”

“Hiya!” Korra grinned. “You’re kinda bossy in bed, you know that?”

“Shut...up…” She took her hand and squeezed it. “That was…”

“Oh, I know.”

“You’re so annoying.”

“I’ll remember you said that.”

Asami turned her head, green eyes a little more focused. She was gazing at her, trying to think of something other to say than “Wow.”

“You want more?” Korra asked sinfully, her fingers dancing on her hip.

“God, yes,” Asami whined. “More than anything. But...ugh, maybe not right now.”
As Korra’s hand skated over her pelvis, it met with Asami’s hand. It was pressing against her abdomen, where the wound was. She frowned.

“I hurt you.”

“No,” Asami lied. “But I feel like I might regret a second go around.”

Korra put her hand over hers. “Next time, when you’re healed, there will be a third, and a fourth, and - “

Asami made a strange sound that was a mixture of embarrassment and yearning.

“Let me - come here, let me get those boxers off.”

“Uh-uh,” she slapped her hand away. “First of all, they’re boyshorts. Second of all, I’m not letting you strain yourself.”

“I told you, I’m fine!” Asami said, with all the insolence of a scorned teenager. “We can - how about if you brought yourself all the way up to my - “

Korra had to laugh. “We are not doing anything that advanced yet, so how about you slow your roll over there, Kama Sutra.”

“Kama Sutra isn’t a person.”

“Who cares! I thought we agreed you get to be pillow princess this time around, anyway.”

“But I want you.”

“You have me,” Korra assured her. She held her closer and kissed the top of her head. “You already have me.”

Asami touched her forehead to hers.

“I want more of you.”

She turned to her side so they were facing each other, and the wickedly filthy expression on Asami’s face alone almost sent her over the edge.

Asami put her hand flat against Korra’s stomach and just felt the swell and dip as she breathed. Korra gently held her wrist.

“Not unless you’re comfortable,” she murmured. Asami didn’t answer, instead letting her fingers slid down the bumps of her abs and disappeared into the boyshorts. Korra swallowed. “I mean, I guess you know now, but I don’t exactly groom the same way you do down there. I hope that’s okay?”

Asami brought her lips to Korra’s and whispered, “It suits you.”

Her fingers slid lower and stopped for a moment. “Uh…”

“Here,” Korra said softly. She guided her hand where she wanted it. “Right there. Feel it?”

“I think so…”

“Is it that much different than yours?”
“No, it's just the angles and stuff are different on my end. But you know, I’m good at math.”

Korra gasped as Asami found just the right spot.

“Math isn’t all you’re good at.” She arched her body closer and Asami wasted no time in making her cry out.

Asami’s mouth went to her neck, to her shoulders, to her chest, all as her fingers worked actual magic between Korra’s legs. Her fingers didn't need any training at all, and it was hard to believe this was the first time she'd touched a woman like this. She was sure the sounds she was making were embarrassing, but she needed more.

She lifted a leg and carefully raised it to rest on Asami’s hip, so she had more room for her hand.

“Does this hurt you? Is it okay?”

Asami looked down at the absolute perfection that was inside Korra’s undergarments. “Oh, yeah, this is definitely okay.”

Her fingers reached exactly where Korra wanted, and Asami captured her startled moan with a kiss.

“Oh, fuck, Asami.”

“Tell me what you want, Korra.”

She pulled her other hand, placing it on her breast.

“Touch that.”

Asami ran a thumb over the her nipple and Korra nearly lost her mind.

“Yes, keep doing that. And that. And - ”

“You called me bossy in bed?”

Korra's hips rocked like waves on an ocean, trying to get more skin contact, but knowing it would be too hard on this side-lying position. Asami kept up the pace, though, expertly never losing her rhythm. She thought hungrily of when Asami was finally well, all the things she wanted to do to her while their bodies remained flush together.

“I’m sorry, you're so good and...I’m...so close.”

“I can tell,” Asami smirked and moved closer to her ear. She licked it devilishly and hissed. “You are sopping wet all over my fingers.”

Korra lost what little control she had left. She cried out, shivering uncontrollably and snapping her powerful legs shut. Asami’s trapped fingers still moved unrelentingly as Korra’s climax took over.

“Stop, stop, stop,” she hissed. “Asami…”

Asami was covering her face and neck with kisses, until Korra had to move away for her own sanity. Her fingers emerged triumphantly from the boyshorts, and she rolled back onto her back. Her wound ached from the exertion, but it wasn't terrible. It was absolutely something she could ignore as beside her, Korra rested her sweaty head on her shoulder.

“Korra?”
“Holy…shit...”

“You okay?”

“Uh...hah…I’m supposed to be asking you that.”

She felt Asami push the hair that had flopped onto her forehead. “You’re...gorgeous. I don’t know if I say that enough. You’re stunning.”

Korra just smiled. Nothing was really registering in her head at that point, but the sounds Asami was making, whatever words they were, felt nice.

“And you know what else? I think I’m in love with you.”

That made it through her skull. Her eyes widened.

“You don’t have to say anything back to me,” Asami said hastily. “I just...have a lot of feelings.”

“Asami, I - “

“No, wait,” she silenced her with one last kiss. “Please don’t say anything back yet. I’d be scared you were just saying it because you felt like it had to. If you feel the same, just tell me another time, okay?”

Korra put a finger on her bottom lip, tracing the outline of the mouth that had the power to both amaze her and destroy her. She felt just as vulnerable as Asami looked, her heart surrendered to another’s hands, even if she wasn’t going to say it yet. It was terrifying. She knew firsthand how love could lift a person up into the sky and just as easily drop crashing back to earth without warning. Korra had been in love before and three years wasn't long enough to let her forget how much the loss ruined her.

Laying beside her now was another chance at that happiness, and of course another chance at a devastating blow. Korra couldn't believe it, how easy it was for Asami’s hopeful expression to open herself up to all that again. Everything Asami was, everything she did, made the risk acceptable. Let Korra fall out of the sky again, she didn't fucking care. To reach those heights with her was a blessing, and she didn't want to see the world from any other place.

“Okay. But when you get a minute, I have something really important to tell you later.”

Asami snickered and let Korra scoot in closer, so she was slotted comfortably at her side.

“What do you want to do now?”

“Heal you up really fast so we can do all of that again?”

Asami buried her face in her hair. “I’m sorry I can't, but I have something nearly as good, and we won’t even need to move from the bed.”

“What?”

“I have a giant box of assorted chocolates in my nightstand over there.”

Korra’s eyes widened. “I knew it!”

“I know.”
“I told you I smelled chocolate whenever I came in here!”

“You did.”

“You said it was just one of your scented room candles!”

“I lied. I just didn’t want to share.”

Korra just looked at her, aghast, before settling back into the crook of her arm.

“I’m gonna have them in a second, I just wanna stay like this for a little longer.”

Asami nodded and closed her eyes peacefully.

“And then you’re gonna feed them to me.”

Her eyes re-opened.

“Hah!”

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