Really?

by Mercury_Nacht (Cetus_Above)

Summary

Bolin and Opal break up, and it doesn't go well for him. After a few months, he's ready to face the world again. Asami helps him along, and then a certain general takes an interest to Bolin. Now he has to face the world again and deal with a new love interest.

Notes

So this is my first fan fiction in a while. I like Bolin a lot and wanted to write him. He'll be in character more later. Also I am writing Iroh as being like 32 because it just fits my imagination better.
Bolin sighed. The last few months had been very difficult for him. Nursing a broken heart had left him feeling secluded from everyone. The day that had caused so much pain, the day Opal left, still stood vividly in his mind.

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A blanket was spread across the grass on a hill looking out on the ocean. Bolin had spent the morning making the perfect picnic for Opal and himself. She had dropped from the sky and settled against his side. They enjoyed the afternoon sun and the light breeze while talking and eating. Right when he thought he was going to fall asleep, Bolin felt Opal shift away from him. He looked over and noticed that she had pulled her knees to her chest and looked like she was wrestling with a tough subject.

"What's wrong Opal?" She jumped a little bit and turned to face him. Bolin noticed the tears running down her cheeks and moved over to embrace her.

"Bolin, there's something I need to do. I know that we just got back into this," she waved her arms in between them for emphasis, "but I have to go. Tenzin asked me if I would be willing to go to the Eastern Air Temple to finish training and help out with the other female airbenders. I told him yes." Bolin felt very confused as to why she was crying.

"Why are you so upset about that? I can still come see you can't I?" Opal shook her head.

"I have to focus on finishing my training and that's going to take me a little bit to finish. I'm sorry Bolin, but I think we're going to have to break up."

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That had been a very hard fact for Bolin to accept. He spent the few days until Opal left locked away in his room. When the day came, he walked down to the dock in order to give his last goodbye. There had been lots of tears.

Six months after Opal's departure, Bolin accepted that he would have to become a regular member of society again. He had been staying on Air Temple Island while the new city was built. A lot of new neighborhoods had already been planned out and started on. Asami and Future Industries were at the front of all of the newness. She had led her company in making many inventions that were improving everyday life. She also tried to keep contact with Bolin and keep him from being too depressed. She was a great friend and he really appreciated it.

Mako was in Ba Sing Sae as Prince Wu's bodyguard. Even though Wu was reshaping the government from a monarchy into something more representative, some people were still sympathetic to Kuvira and Mako had already stopped several assassination attempts. He wrote to Bolin on a weekly basis. Bolin tried to keep the conversations light.

Korra was off touring the Earth Kingdom in an attempt to restore peace to the reforming nation. Raiko had requested that she do this and she had left about five months ago. The three months following the destruction of Republic City had been hectic on everybody, especially the Avatar. She had acted as a rallying point for the returning refugees. Asami and Korra had also started dating, and Bolin was happy for the pair.
The air outside smelled better than Bolin remembered. He hadn't been outside in nearly a month, and today would be his first day away from the island in six. Asami had a rare day away from leading her company and had been persuading him to spend the day in the new city, because "You need to get back out and see the world and everyone's worried about you." He had planned on declining, but when he woke up that morning, something felt different. The sadness was still there, only instead of being a crippling burden, it was just a small reminder. So Bolin had climbed from bed and prepared for an actual day, showering and putting on light clothing meant for the spring.

He had worked his way down to the dock by the time the first ferry arrived around nine. Asami stepped off and seemed shocked to find Bolin waiting there.

"Well I thought I was going to have to drag you from your room by the hairs on your head," she called. A small smile broke across his face. "Wow, I get a smile too? What happened to the Bolin I've seen the past few months?"

"I don't know. When I woke up this morning, I just felt world's better. I still am sad, sure, but it's more of a dull ache sorta thing," Bolin explained as they boarded the ferry. Asami nodded her head.

"I think I understand what you mean. Now, how about we talk about this trip?" She pulled a map from the small purse she carried. It had notes written by multiple people on it. "So we're going to start in the first neighborhood built. It borders the destroyed downtown to the east. I thought we could go to a really nice restaurant and the market..."

Bolin stopped paying attention because his attention had been pulled elsewhere. The crumbling buildings covered in vines were beautiful, and the spirit portal was breathtaking. The base of a new statue rose from the waters in front of the area. Asami cleared her throat behind him, calling his attention back to the boat. Her arms were crossed her chest and she looked like nobody ever stopped listening to her. They probably didn't.

"Oh, I'm sorry Asami. I guess I was paying more attention to the ruins. What are they building a statue of?"

"It's going to be a statue of Korra. She's supposed to be back next month to pose for it. How much of our trip plan did you hear?" Bolin was glad that someone was honoring Korra for her work.

He admitted sheepishly, "I kind of tuned out after you said something about a market."

"Okay, you didn't miss much then. After the market, we're going to look for you a place to live."

Bolin's face crunched in confusion. "What? Why? My room on Air Temple Island is just fine!"

Asami rubbed the back of her head. "Look Bolin, you've been locked in that room for six months now. It's always going to feel tainted. I'm asking you as a friend to look into a new place. Please." Bolin sighed and slid down to the floor and rested his head against the guard rail.

"I know. It means a lot to me that you're looking out for me, really. You're right too. I'm just not sure is all." A voice came through an intercom and announced that they had arrived at the port. Asami stuck out her hand and Bolin used it to pull himself up.

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Bolin was under dressed for the restaurant. Everyone there wore very formal attire and looked likely to scoff at him. He didn't mind though because Asami was paying and it was something besides airbender food. Not that he thought that there was anything wrong with Pema's cooking.

The neighborhood was very organized and seemed to mainly be home to businesses, but Asami said that they were more in the shopping district and that the homes were a little further away. The market was more of an open square bordered by several large buildings and filled with stalls selling a wide array of goods. People were bustling on about their days and the lively feel pulled most of the remaining sadness from Bolin, leaving him feeling like his old self. Out of the corner of his eye, he saw a vendor peddling bouquets of pretty flowers. He grabbed Asami's hand and went running and laughing through the market.

"Why on earth are we running?" She questioned loudly. Bolin turned his head to answer, but instead felt himself run into something and consequently fell to the ground. He looked up and noticed it was not a something he ran into, but a someone. A very familiar, angry looking someone.

"Hey, watch where you're going sometime!" Iroh barked. Bolin's face turned a shade of crimson in embarrassment. He pulled himself from the ground and started muttering apologies. Idiot! You just had to go and make a fool of yourself, didn't you? He thought. A warm weight pressed into his shoulder from behind. Asami maneuvered him around the disgruntled general and toward the flower vendor. Bolin stared at the ground while they walked. At least, until he felt someone slip their hand under his chin and pull his head up. Asami has a kind smile on her face.

"Look, it's not that big of a deal. You bumped into somebody on accident, big whoop. Sure, you may have embarrassed yourself, but you were in such a good mood before that! Don't let general grumpypants ruin the rest of your day!" Bolin sighed and picked his head up to browse the flowers. They were all beautiful, but a bouquet of roses caught his eye. Asami must have noticed because she inquired about their price.

"Oh no, you don't have to get them. It's fine, really!" He tried to keep her from wasting money on him. Asami just waved him off and handed over the money. "It's fine Bolin! I can tell that you like them and it's not a big deal." The lowers were handed to a hesitant Bolin. "Are you ready to go look for your new place? There are a couple of places that I know are vacant. I don't know how much money you have, but I'm willing to help you out with your first few months. I heard that the pro-bending is due to start back up in the summer." Bolin thought that he might start the Fire Ferrets back up again, but remembered that Korra and Mako wouldn't be here. He just smiled and thanked Asami for the tip.

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The houses and apartments Asami had shown Bolin were all much too nice for his taste. He never voiced this though. They had spent several hours looking and had finally stopped at a tea house for a break. Asami was rubbing her temples in frustration while Bolin sipped on a cup of tea.

She exhaled and put her hands in her lap. "We've looked at almost every house available. There's not many because everyone is anxious to get back into the city. The only place I know left isn't as nice as the others. I'm thinking that you're just going to have to wait until they finish the next neighborhood. Are you ready to go look and then head back?" Bolin had finished his tea and shook his head yes.

The sun was hanging low in the sky as they walked down the road. The building with the apartment was no more impressive than the surrounding ones. It had three floors and a simple red paint job. The apartment was on the top floor and a decent size. It was much less extravagant, but Bolin thought it had a certain charm to it.
He turned to Asami and said enthusiastically, "This is the one."
Next Top Bender

Chapter by Cetus_Above, Mercury_Nacht (Cetus_Above)

Chapter Summary

In which Bolin has pro-bending auditions

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Bolin kicked his front door closed. His hands were full with grocery bags for his new place. He and some of his friends (basically Asami and the airbenders) had spent yesterday getting him moved in and settled. The place was conveniently located a few blocks from the market, some great restaurants, and the only open park in the city.

He kicked off his shoes and walked into the kitchen to put away his food. The flowers Asami had bought were in a vase on the small table that he had bought. Luckily, being famous in the pro-bending world left Bolin with some money to spend. He started to hum to himself while straightening up, but still managed to hear the knock on his door.

"Just a sec!" Bolin called. He walked out of the kitchen and toward the door. Probably just the neighbors looking to introduce themselves. He opened the door and saw General Iroh on the other side. The man wore his usual military attire and had an intimidating look on his face. There may have been a shriek on his behalf. Iroh looked hesitant and slightly annoyed.

"Oh, hello Bolin. I didn't know you were the one who moved in here. May I come in?" Bolin scooted out of the door frame and allowed Iroh to enter. They walked into the living room.

Bolin hit Iroh with an onslaught of questions. "Why are you here? How did you know where I lived? I literally just moved in here like two days ago!" He had grown quite flustered and was still slightly upset over the fact that he had embarrassed himself in the market the other day. Iroh sat down on the couch and placed his hands in his lap.

Iroh calmly answered, "I noticed that someone had moved in across the hall, and where I'm from, it's customary to introduce yourself to your neighbors."

"That makes sense, I guess. Would you like some tea? I'm going to make myself some."

"No thank you, I need to be leaving. I am needed elsewhere in the city."

Iroh pushed himself from the couch and let himself out. That had to have been the strangest visit he had had in the past few months. Iroh had just shown up and then left almost immediately, whereas most people usually only came for long visits. The kettle he had put on started screeching, breaking Bolin from his stupor.

After pouring his tea, he walked back into the living room. A stack of paper and some writing utensils were scattered across the coffee table. He was making posters announcing tryouts for the Fire Ferrets in a weeks time, and Asami had offered to have them copied for him. Hopefully he would be able to get some good benders.

He got to Asami's rather late and stayed for dinner. They discussed his new place and Iroh showing up randomly.

"So why is Iroh even living here? I thought that he was always off at sea?" Bolin asked after the dishes were cleared.

"Well, you missed a lot these past few months. The world leaders have ordered them here to help rebuild the city. I didn't know that Iroh was across the hall from you though. It's getting late. You can stay here if you want, but the last train to town leaves in fifteen minutes."
About twenty or so people had shown up at tryouts. Korra had arrived back in Republic City three
days ago and decided to help Bolin out. He was ecstatic that she was back. It lessened the
loneliness he felt, now the only person who was missing was Mako. She and Asami had already
reclaimed the public's eye, with Bolin in the background.

Asami had let them hold the tryouts on the back lawn. He wore a simple white shirt and some
baggy pants along with his a chest plate and a helmet that he wasn't wearing. They had equipped
all of the candidates with the chest plates and helmets as well, no one wanted to deal with injuries
even if Korra could fix it. Bolin had situated himself on a comfy spot on the grass a couple of
meters away from where she was testing them.

Since Korra was a great waterbender and firebender, she was acting as judge on their talents. The
goal was to have his team formed today. The first step was to test the speed and endurance of their
bending. It had taken her two hours to run through all of the benders and now they were reviewing
who to keep. She walked away from the group and flopped down on the ground next to Bolin, who
grinned.

"Well I think those three waterbenders and those five firebenders show the most potential bending
wise," she commented while pointing at her choices. Bolin looked them over and nodded his head.

Now came the hard part. Bolin pushed off of the grass and walked over to the tired benders, who
quickly made themselves presentable.

"I'd like to begin this with my thanks for each and every one of you coming out here today, I mean
it. However, I'm only looking for two of you. Numbers 3, 4, 7, 9, 12, 13, 17, and 19 are still in the
running. The rest of you, thank you so much for trying out," Bolin announced. There was a lot of
excitement and disappointment, which he had expected.

Asami showed up while they were taking a break. Her kitchen staff had prepared sandwiches and lychee juice for everyone.

After they ate, Bolin and Korra led the trainees through basic exercises before doing some
scrimmages. Bolin made a basic practice field in the dirt and set up some earth disks while Korra
set up barrels of water. They would act as earthbenders and would let the others take turns to see
how they performed. By the time the last match was played the sun was setting and everyone was
exhausted. They decided to go ahead and pick the team members that day though.

"So I think waterbender number 4 excelled above the others, but the firebenders 13 and 19 were
very close. What do you think?" Bolin questioned.

Korra thought for a moment before answering, "I agree about the waterbender, but I personally
think that number 19 performed the best out of the firebenders." He nodded his head. It had been a
rather simple process.

"Well we have decided on the new Fire Ferrets. Numbers 4 and 19, congratulations! Now all that's
left if for you is for you to get sized for your uniform and our practice schedule. But before all of
that, I would like to have my new team members' names." The firebender, a hulking muscular guy,
answered first.

"My name is Mongke." The waterbender looked composed, like she was celebrating her victory on
the inside.

She put her arms behind her back and coolly said, "Me? My name is Rahim."

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading still! I'm really sorry about if this chapter feels eh, the beginning of
it is filler) (Also the title is just random I may have been watching a certain show)
The Fire Ferrets' first match of the year was a success. They had managed to win the first round and get a knockout in the second thanks to Rahim and Bolin. Mongke had been knocked out by the other team's earthbender. The same bender managed to land a good hit on Bolin's side. He was pretty sure it would leave a big bruise, but he couldn't really feel it because of the adrenaline pumping through him.

"Alright, good match everyone! Don't you just love the feeling of being out there in the arena?" Bolin exclaimed while stripping out of his uniform. The air hit his mostly bare figure, making the sweat on his skin turn cold. His undershirt was soaked and his teammates were in a very similar state. Rahim's long brown hair fell from her helmet, a tangled mess sticking everywhere. She wasn't as dark as Korra because only her mom came from a water tribe.

She quickly grabbed her bag from her locker and said, "I'm showering and heading home. I'll see both of you on Monday." Bolin grabbed one of the other shower stalls and hurried up so he could go see his friends.

Korra and Asami had been present at the match, as well as General Iroh, who was apparently a big pro-bending fan. He had sat with the couple and surprised Bolin. The group had planned on going to eat dinner and invited the general along. Bolin slid into the back seat of Asami's car along with Iroh. The arena was one of the few things in the old city to still be used, so the trip to the restaurant was a long one. They had a conversation about the match on the way.

After a few minutes the conversation lulled. Bolin had started to feel the bruises from the match and was falling asleep in the silence of the car when Iroh started talking again.

"I can't believe that earthbender managed to send your firebender flying into the water so easily! He looks really big. Those disks must pack quite a punch to push him over the ledge. That waterbender on your team sure was quick to get revenge on the other team, and your combined strength was amazing to witness." Bolin gave a halfhearted smile and let his eyes clothes. A little nap never hurt anyone.

Someone tapping on his shoulder pulled Bolin back to attention. He felt something underneath his head and pulled away from it as he stretched. That something turned out to be Iroh's shoulder and Bolin felt his face heat up. The car stopped moving and Asami said something about them being at the restaurant and he took that as his opportunity to get out of the car as quick as possible. He stopped when he saw that they were at the fanciest place in the whole city.

"Woah," Bolin exclaimed, "how did you even get a table here Asami? Pri'fylmar'e is always booked, I've heard that the wait time for a table is over a year!"

Asami just laughed and threw her scarf around her shoulder. "Being one of the most powerful business owners in the city sure has its perks. They will give away our table if we don't get inside though."

They hurried up the stairs of the grand building and through the gigantic front doors. The building lived up to the image of being the best place to eat in the Republic. Upon entering, the maitre d' promptly checked their reservation and led them to their table. Bolin was forced to sit next to the general and across from Korra. He buried his nose in the menu as soon as he could to give himself a chance to get over his embarrassment. At least he doesn't look angry like I thought he would, Bolin thought to himself.

The five minutes he had to pick out food had been enough time for Bolin to forget about all of his awkwardness and get back on track. Asami had started talking about how she might have her company start funding start up companies to help the city get back on its feet. He gave his opinions
where he thought they would work well. Verrick had told him he had good business sense. Even though the restaurant was packed, their food managed to arrive rather fast. Bolin was surprised with how good his food was. He shouldn't have been surprised; Asami never went anywhere that wasn't acceptable. She also paid for everyone despite complaints from the three. They all piled into her car again.

"Hey Asami, do you think you could teach me to drive those race cars at some point?" Bolin questioned as they started toward his apartment building.

Asami responded, "Anytime I'm not busy, so in about a week I could take you out to the track. Why the sudden interest?" He opened his mouth to speak, but an icicle flew in front of his face and made him shriek. There must have been more because the car swerved to the side. Korra turned around in her seat and looked in the direction of the attack. Bolin felt Iroh shift as well and decided that he should try to help as well. The only problem was that he couldn't really bend anything without destroying it, so he played lookout.

Korra must have seen someone because a giant rush of air gusted by him. "Just get us back to the estate!" she shouted at Asami, who happily obliged. They rapidly changed lanes and rushed from the city.

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Bolin and Iroh stayed the night at Asami's. The group had been up well into the night trying to figure out why someone would have attempted to assassinate any of the people in the car. They deduced that the attack was probably meant for Korra. Several people were upset with her, but someone always was. When the conversation was over it was too late for anyone to go home. A knock on the door woke Bolin up at about ten in the morning. He groaned and rolled over, but a strong voice in a whispered tone came through the door.

"Bolin? There's breakfast and we should probably get back into the city. It's time to get up." He sighed and pushed himself out of bed before walking to the dresser against the wall. Because of how frequently he stayed at the estate, Bolin had left some clothes.

After he dressed, Bolin went to the dining room to find Korra and the general sitting at the long table. There was plenty of food, much to Bolin's pleasure. He sat down and quickly made himself a plate. The only upside to getting chased by an assassin was getting to eat at Asami's. Sure, he was a decent cook, but her chef was a trained professional. Iroh and Korra were discussing how they thought the situation should be handled. Bolin didn't care.

Iroh looked at his wristwatch and stood up from the table. He turned to Bolin and asked, "I need to head back. Do you want to go back with me? For protection, of course." The general's face had turned slightly red while he was speaking. His army uniform is definitely too warm for this summer weather, Bolin thought to himself.

"Sure. I need to clean my apartment and feed Pabu anyway."

They walked back instead of taking a car or the train. It was spent in a slightly awkward silence. It took them about forty-five minutes to get back, and Bolin wished Iroh goodbye at his building.

Chapter End Notes

Drama right? At least I hope it came across like that. The story is about to get really interesting! The name of the restaurant is from my constructed language and literally means "Pretty restaurant." I needed a name.
Bolin set the tray down on the oven. The cookies would have to cool for a while before they could be eaten. He had picked up the ingredients for some yesterday while out at the market. While there, he had seen some dirty children running through an alley. Remembering his own youth, he felt it was his duty to be kind to them, so he had picked up some bread and the cookie stuff. *Maybe I can give some of the leftover ones to Iroh.* Bolin stopped bagging the cookies in confusion. The thought had come out of nowhere.

Sure he was nice to everyone, but he was confused as to why he specifically thought of the general. Maybe it was because Iroh had kept an eye out for him since the incident a week ago. Bolin had said that he could take care of himself and that Iroh shouldn't worry himself, but the firebender had insisted on it. Bolin sighed and went to his room to change out of his flour-coated clothes. He tossed on an undershirt, a pair of green pants, some boots, and grabbed the food before made his way to the market.

The weather outside was beautiful. It was hot, but a steady breeze kept it from being unbearable. All of the people from the neighborhood were out roaming the streets. Bolin decided he would probably go to the park after giving the kids the food. He had to walk a few blocks to get to the small market square. It sure was a lively one though. There were always plenty of stalls and street performers gathered around it. People were flowing through it, some buying groceries, others just hanging around. Bolin made his way through the crowd toward the alley where he had seen the kids the other day. He spotted them sitting in the mouth of the alley and quickened his pace, but ran straight into someone.

"If this is going to become a regular practice of yours, we're just going to have to start going everywhere together," Iroh said in good humor. Bolin felt his face heat up. "Were you out getting food on a hot day like this?" Iroh questioned.

"The food's not for me. You see those kids sitting in the alley over there?" Bolin pointed to the kids. "They live here, and I thought I would be kind to them and make sure they're okay." Iroh nodded.

"Can I come with you? I'm not really doing anything today and I think it would be nice to participate in such a good deed." The red on Bolin's face returned. He hadn't really thought of it like that, he was just helping out because he could relate. They walked the rest of the way across the market and walked into the alley. The children had hid when they saw Bolin and Iroh approach.

Bolin called down the alley, "There's no need to hide, I promise! We brought some food for you, see?" Two dirty heads stuck out from behind a trash can at the mention of food. Bolin crouched down and held out the loaf of bread so they could see it better. After a moment, the girl came
closer, her hands in position to bend if need be. She appeared to be the older of the two. Before she could grab the food, however, the little boy darted out and snatched it up.

The little girl’s eyes went wide and she shouted at the little boy. "Brother, you can't be so careless! What if they had meant harm and you just ran out like that?"

Bolin answered, "Well, it seems like if that were to happen, you would’ve taken care of the person pretty fast, huh? You're a bender, aren't you? We don't mean any harm though. I saw you two running through here the other day and it reminded me of my years on the street, so I thought I would give you food." The little girl put her hands down and stepped forward to grab the cookies Bolin was holding.

"No one's ever done this for us before. It's really nice! I'm a waterbender so I make sure I'm the one who deals with things, not my little brother."

They stayed and talked with the little girl for a few more minutes and left with the promise to bring more food in a few days.

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Bolin informed Iroh that he had decided to go to the park for the rest of the afternoon. The general nodded and followed after him. The park that they were going to was the only complete one in the city and was usually filled with people. Bolin liked the feeling of not being alone though. The air smelled sweet and the sun was giving off a comfortable heat.

Their speaking relationship had become much better, so the trip to the park wasn't spent in awkward silence. The park had a lot of people in it, but most were in the shade trying to avoid the sun. Several children were splashing in the gentle river that had been rerouted to run through the area. They walked and talked for a few minutes before Bolin formed an idea. They had reached a part of the park that wasn't as heavily populated.

He took off running at full speed toward the river and hoped that Iroh would at the very least follow. A glance over his shoulder proved that to be true. Bolin leaped over the bank and cannonballed into the deep water. When he resurfaced, he saw the firebender standing on the river bank, glaring. Bolin laughed.

"Is the general too afraid to get wet?" He questioned.

Iroh groaned and replied, "No, I just don't want to get my clothes wet!" Iroh wasn't wearing his uniform. In fact, he was wearing the most casual clothing Bolin had ever seen him in. Bolin splashed up at the general and got his shirt.

"There! Your clothes are already wet. Now you might as well get in the water!" He saw Iroh sigh in defeat before reaching down to take off his shoes. The general jumped in and left only a small splash. Bolin was impressed for about a minute. Then he became worried because Iroh hadn't yet resurfaced. He swam over to where Iroh had landed and was about to go under when he felt something come up beneath him. He was forced out of the water and let out a yelp.

"Totally not cool dude! You scared me!" Bolin complained. Iroh started to laugh and left Bolin dumbstruck. He had never heard the normally withdrawn man laugh before and it made his heart beat in an all too familiar manner. Just go with it. There's no harm in that, he thought to himself. Memories of how his last relationship had ended came to mind and managed to make Bolin knock himself off of Iroh's shoulders. In order to hide his sudden sorrow, Bolin laughed along with the general.

He sighed and floated gently on his back. The heat combined with his sadness made him feel tired. Something moved under his back, but Bolin brushed it off as just Iroh.

"Bolin! Look out!" Iroh shouted at him, and Bolin opened his eyes. The water had moved above
him and was turning into ice. He went to roll out of the way, but the spear still managed to strike him in his side. "Gah!" Bolin called out in pain. He tried to swim away, but the water wouldn't let him move. It raised him into the air before tossing him on to dry land. Someone ran over to where he landed and put a shoulder on his hand, but Bolin shoved it off.

Bolin went to stand, but the pain in his side was unbearable. Before he blacked out, he felt himself be lifted and swung over a shoulder.

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"We were swimming and someone formed icicles and tried stabbing at him. Do you think you can heal it?"

"I should be able to keep him healthy, but it's going to leave a nasty scar. This leads to some shocking evidence about who the assassination attempt was for."

Bolin had come back into consciousness long enough to realize he was on something hard and that his side felt funny. The pain was too much though, and he fell back under.

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The next time he woke up, it was in a cold sweat and panic. Bolin tried to ascertain what was going on. His midsection was bandaged and it was dark. He seemed to be in his bed, which was a good thing. Someone had pulled up a chair beside his bed. He tried getting up, but the quick motion hurt his side. He slowly crawled his way across the bed and moved his way closer. Just when he got close enough to see who it was, they woke up.

"Good morning, Bolin," Iroh said.
Healing and Goodbyes

Chapter by Cetus_Above, Mercury_Nacht (Cetus_Above)

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Bolin jumped backwards, a moan rising in his throat. The sudden movement had shown how tender his wound still was. He hit the wall before bouncing back and landing on the bed. Iroh shot from the chair and moved to where Bolin had hit the bed.

"Oh spirits, I am so sorry! I didn't mean to startle you. Do I need to go and get you an ice pack or something?" Iroh questioned the injured earthbender. Bolin moaned something close to sure. Iroh nodded and left the room. Bolin hadn't even been awake for five minutes and had added a new injury to his growing list. On top of that, he was pretty sure the general could feel the embarrassment radiating from him. He tried to scramble under the discarded sheets, but he had irritated his injury too much to move a lot. Sighing in a mixture of pain and defeat, Bolin just fell on his back and waited for Iroh. Pain radiated from his injured side. I'm probably lucky that I'm not dead if I still hurt this bad after Korra got to me.

Iroh walked back into the room and gently shut the door. He moved to beside Bolin and reached over to place the ice pack on his side, but Bolin stopped him. He had felt a growing discomfort in his bladder since he had woken up and needed to take care of it.

"Can you help me up? I've gotta go," Bolin said. Iroh gave him a look of confusion. He folded his arms across his chest.

"Where do you think you're going to go when you can hardly move without causing yourself pain?" "Not go, but go." The general seemed to understand that and helped Bolin up. It was relieving to stand up and stretch out his legs, but his side still complained. They made their way from the bedroom and to the bathroom down the hall. Bolin noticed that his apartment was a lot neater than he remembered.

"How long have I been out for?" He questioned Iroh as they reached the bathroom. He closed the door and went about doing his business.

"Well it's been almost two days since the attack, but you've only been completely out for about a day. You kept waking up at first," Iroh shouted through the closed door. Bolin caught a glimpse of himself in the mirror above the sink. His hair was a matted mess and his skin a lot paler than he remembered. He definitely needed to bathe.

"How long have I been out for?" He questioned Iroh as they reached the bathroom. He closed the door and went about doing his business.

The next few days passed in a very similar manner. Bolin would sleep a lot and Korra would show up every other day to heal his side. It looked a lot better than it felt because most of the gash had been forced to scar already. The nasty bruises that surrounded it were what was causing Bolin pain.

By Sunday, a week after the attack, he was moving around on his own. Iroh stuck around to make sure that he didn’t over exert himself. Bolin had finally been allowed to bathe that morning and now was in the kitchen making food. Something that very few people knew about him was the fact that he could cook. He hummed to himself while he moved about the kitchen. Iroh had left earlier that morning to run errands.
"Important United Forces business. I'll be back in time for lunch, I swear!" He had said. Bolin felt a small smile spread across his face. The general had been very helpful and nurturing while he was held up in bed. His feelings had grown, but Bolin had practiced suppressing them.

The front door shut quietly as Iroh called out, "I'm back! You didn't injure yourself, did you?"

Bolin laughed and answered, "I'm in the kitchen!" Iroh walked in looking very disheveled.

"So how went your 'important' business? It looks like it was tough." Iroh sighed and sat down on the table.

"Well it was a pain in the butt as you can see. We had to reassign some of our forces to the northern borders of Republic City. Some gang of bandits are trying to raid the encampment of people waiting for new housing. These people are already out of their homes, we have to keep them safe," Iroh said. Bolin grabbed the food and brought it over to the table. He made a face at the man sitting on the table. The general grinned before hopping down and sitting in a chair.

He had just sat down when someone knocked on the door. Bolin made a face and went to stand up, but Iroh stopped him.

"I'll get it." Bolin settled back into his chair and started to eat. The door opened and he heard a familiar voice.

"Oh, I must've got the wrong address. Sorry Iroh. Do you know where-" Mako was cut off by a heavy earthbender charging as fast as he could in his state. Before he could object, Bolin had gripped him in a bear hug.

"Mako! I've missed you so much! Why didn't you write and tell me you were going to be in town? Come in, I've made lunch!" Bolin was absolutely giddy about Mako being home. The firebender hadn't been home in months and hadn't written in at least two. Bolin led his brother into the small kitchen and forced him to take a seat. Mako sat down awkwardly and gave Iroh a questioning glance.

"Are you sure he got hurt? Because he's acting like I remember him to," Mako said to the general. The man in question went to speak, but Bolin cut him off.

"If you consider an icicle going straight through your side as getting hurt, then I definitely did. I've been stuck in bed for the past few days, but Iroh here has been keeping an eye out for me." After he had said it, Bolin realized his words contained some hurt. Mako had just up and left him in a time of need and the feelings that he had repressed for several months were welling up. Calm down.

***

Mako spent the next week at Bolin's place. He told his younger brother all about being in Ba Sing Sae. The tales were great and being in the presence of his brother made Bolin feel better. Iroh stuck around to make sure he was getting better, but the glares Mako was giving him were quite obvious. Bolin thought to question, but didn't bother with it.

On Mako's last day, Bolin woke up early. His brother had to leave early to catch the train. He snuck out of his room toward the living room, where Mako had been sleeping on the couch. Instead of finding him though, Bolin saw a glowing light from the kitchen. Being as quiet as he could, he tip toed to it. Two voices spoke in whispered tones, so he couldn't make out what they were saying. He tried leaning closer so that he could hear, but lost his balance and fell to the floor.
A chair scraped across the floor and footsteps quickly approached. Iroh rounded the corner and instantly assisted Bolin up.

"Are you ok? How did you even fall?" Iroh questioned. Mako entered the room and shook his head slowly at the display.

"That's one way to start the day. Go ahead and tell me goodbye, I gotta leave for the train in five minutes," Mako said. Bolin walked over to his brother and gave him an awkward hug and wished him goodbye.

Chapter End Notes

Whooo it only took me two weeks. The last part took me a little bit to do.
Bolin stifled a yawn. He sat at his dining room table with a cup of hot tea. Iroh shuffled by the oven and hummed. Today were the semi-final matches of pro-bending and his team had made it. He missed the last game, due to his injury, and had spent the last few days getting back in shape. It had been a tough thing to do, but Korra had managed to have time enough to help. His friends had been very supportive.

Iroh set a plate in front of the half asleep Bolin. The earthbender picked up his chopsticks and dug into it with an unmatched ferocity. He always ate a lot on match days. The general pulled out the chair next to him and sat.

Iroh looked at Bolin and asked, "Is it really that good? I know that you really like noodles and that today is a big day for you, but you're eating like you haven't seen food in days." Bolin looked over at the general, noodles hanging from his mouth. He slurped them up and gently dabbed his face with a napkin before grabbing more in a civilized manner.

"I have no idea what you're talking about, I am a grown adult!" Bolin exclaimed with a smile. The tough general let a small laugh slip as Bolin went back to slurping his noodles. Pabu climbed on to his shoulders in an attempt to grab the food. The earthbender put his bowl on the table and let the fire ferret have the food. He pushed away from the table and went toward the pot sitting on the stove.

"Don't worry about that, I can get you more," Iroh said. Bolin turned around to tell him it was fine and not to leave his food behind, but as he finished the turn, Iroh ran straight into him. The collision had been unexpected and knocked them both to the floor. Bolin felt the air escape his lungs as the full weight of the firebender landed on him. Their faces were inches apart and Bolin felt his cheeks catch fire. Situations like this had happened frequently in his dreams. He looked up at the man on top of him to notice that his face was also bright red. Feeling somewhat brazen, Bolin placed his lips on the general's. Iroh reciprocated it for a few seconds, and Bolin closed his eyes.

Just when it was starting to get good, Bolin felt the weight on top of him disappear. He opened his eyes and saw that the general standing over him.
Iroh said, "Oh spirits, why did I let that happen? I shouldn't have done that. I'm so sorry Bolin!"

The general turned to leave the room. Confused, Bolin called after him.

"Why are you apologizing? I'm the one who started it? You don't have to leave!" It was too late
though, as the door had already shut.

***

He went to Asami’s after that. Being in his apartment felt weird and he wanted to talk to someone.
She and Korra had been eating a late breakfast, but they invited him anyway. He sat at the table
and stared at a wall dejectedly until someone spoke up.

"So is there something you want to talk about, or did you come here just to stare down that wall?"
Korra questioned. Bolin sighed and turned to look at her.

"I kissed Iroh." Two sets of silverware clanged against plates and both sets of eyes were instantly
staring him down.

"And?" Asami asked.

"And he ran out, apologizing for it. I didn't mean to do it, it just kind of happened! Now I've ruined
everything. I'm a terrible friend." Bolin put his head down on the table. He heard a chair scrape
across the floor and then someone rubbing his back.

"He'll come around, it's alright. I don't think he meant to hurt your feelings," Asami comforted.

"Yea, well he wasn't wrong for running off. Who just wants their friends randomly kissing them? I
mean, I don't even think I can call myself his friend anymore," Bolin said with a sob. You really do have a way of screwing things up, don't you, he thought to himself.

"Come on Bolin, don't get too upset just yet. You've got your match today and who knows, maybe
he'll not be too upset," Korra said from across the table. He wiped his face on his sleeve and
nodded his head in agreement. She was right.

"Hey Asami, can you give me a ride to the arena? I need to be there soon."

***

Bolin pulled on his helmet. The match would be starting in a few minutes and he had to be ready.
He and his team had held a last minute practice. It had been a good distraction from the events that
had occurred earlier in the day. Mongke and Rahim ad fared well during his briefish absence, and
he wasn't doing too bad himself. The other team had only arrived around thirty minutes ago. They
weren't a team from Republic City, but they were still good. Most of the time the final matches
came down to inner city teams playing against each other.

The uniforms they had this year were particularly nice in Bolin's opinion. The Future Industries
logo was still on the sleeve, but they looked more like their original ones.

Since his current teammates hadn't been to a semifinals before, Bolin decided to give them a pep
talk.

"Listen guys, I know that you are probably nervous, but that's okay as long as it doesn't effect your
playing. We can do this though, I know we can! Now lets get out there and win us a match!" Bolin
could feel the adrenaline rushing through his veins and his teammates looked to feel the same way.
A referee stuck his head into their locker room and told them to make their way to the arena. It
was time.

***

The earth disk flew right by Bolin's head. He had hardly dodged it. It was the last round and the match was tied. His team had knocked the other team into the final zone, but the other team was trying their hardest to push them back. Mongke managed to make the other team's firebender lose his footing and slip into the water.

Bolin lifted an earth disk and flung it at the waterbender. He seemed to be the most powerful player on the team and needed to be taken out. He pulled at another disk, but the bell rang, signaling the end of the match. Bolin fist-pumped and grabbed his nearest teammate, Rahim, in a hug.

The announcer's voice came over the speakers. "They've done it again! The Fire Ferrets are going to another final!"

His team exited the arena and went to their locker room. Their conversations were all about the fact that they would be going to finals in a month. They didn't know who they would be playing yet because they were the first semifinal game. Bolin changed and showered in a hurry. He was anxious to get home and go to sleep. The day had been a long and tiring one.

Bolin went out a back exit so that he wouldn't have to see anyone. Except he did, and they were the last person he wanted to see. Iroh leaned against one of the walls with his arms crossed his chest and his face drawn. He looked over at Bolin when the door shut and several emotions crossed his face.

"Bo! I didn't know if you were going to go through here or not. I decided to wait just in case," The general exclaimed.

Bolin sighed. "What are you doing here? Why didn't you just go home after the match like everyone else?" The firebender looked hurt. That look did a funny thing to Bolin's heart and made him feel like an idiot for even saying something mean.

The general replied, "I came here to apologize for my behavior earlier. It was rude of me to run out like that. We should have sat ad talked it out like proper adults. Congratulations on your win as well. I guess I will be leaving you alone now. Goodbye, Bolin."

The formal manner in which Iroh spoke made Bolin's heart crumble. He knew he had to do something, otherwise their friendship would be ruined forever.

"Wait!" He shouted after the general. "Wait. I shouldn't have done what I did, so I apologize. I will accept your apology though. Now, it's a thirty minute walk back to the city and since it looks like you're walking back, we should walk back together." Iroh looked hesitnat for a second, but nodded his head in agreement.

"You still shouldn't be alone." Bolin rolled his eyes.

***

The temperature had dropped somewhat during their walk and Bolin had started to shiver. Iroh had insisted that he take his jacket, but he had refused. The general had put his jacket over the earthbender's shoulders anyway. Bolin had huffed in annoyance, but he was grateful for the warmth.
They had finally arrived in their neighborhood and decided to cut through the alleys surrounding the market, as it was quicker. They had stopped for a few seconds to warm up.

"So I'm really sorry for kissing you this morning. I overstepped a boundary," Bolin said out of nowhere. The general turned to face him.

Shyly, he whispered, "You don't have to apologize for that. I didn't mind." Bolin felt a smirk spread across his face.

Bolin asked, "Do you want to do it again?" The older man's face turned red, but he nodded yes. They leaned in toward each other, but Bolin stopped.

"Did you feel that?" The general cocked an eyebrow at the question.

"Feel what?"

Bolin lifted a few loose tiles and turned them into a lava blade. "Someone is running at us, and I want to be prepared this time." He could almost see what the person looked like and could tell where they were.

"Aim for that entrance of the alley and fire... Now!" He ordered Iroh. The fireball seemed to make contact because the person took off running the other way.

Iroh questioned, "How could you tell that someone was coming? I mean, I'm glad you could, but how?" Bolin shrugged.

"I don't know. It's like I could actually see them from a distance."

"You should talk to Lin about that at some point, it sounds like that thing the Beifongs do." They walked the rest of the way to their building, which wasn't very far. They stopped at Bolin's door. Iroh looked like he really wanted to ask something but couldn't find the right words.

"Well, I'm go-" Iroh cut him off.

"Do you want to go with me. Like romantically? Oh spirits I screwed that-" It was Bolin's turn to interrupt Iroh. He gently placed his lips on the firebender's before going into his apartment.
What Kind of Firebender

Chapter by Cetus_Above, Mercury_Nacht (Cetus_Above)

Chapter Summary

Date Time!

Chapter Notes

This chapter is longer and fluffier than most of the others. The title is a play off of What Kind of Man by Florence and The Machine. Next chapter returns to our dramatic tale. Also thanks to everyone who's looked at this and helped me get a thousand views!!!

It was fair season. Bolin was giddy with excitement over it. Before they died, his parents had taken him and Mako. He hadn't been back since, but he thought it was time to. Plus he had the Fire Nation prince to go with this time.

Bolin felt a smile break across his face while he thought about Iroh. They had officially entered a relationship about a week ago, though Iroh was upset because he didn't, in his words, "have a chance to give Bolin a proper courtship." Bolin hadn't particularly cared. They had kept the relationship a secret so far for some reason that escaped the earthbender.

He was broken from his thoughts by a knock at the door. Odd, he thought, Iroh's not supposed to be here for another half hour.

"I'm coming, hold your horses," Bolin shouted as a second set of knocs resounded through his apartment. The general had his arms behind his back when Bolin opened the door. "Why do you even bother with knocking anymore? It's not like I'm going to tell you to go away." Iroh's cheeks turned a light shade of pink.

"I feel like it's the proper thing to do. I also feel like giving you gifts occasionally is appropriate, so I brought you these." Bolin watched as Iroh pulled a bouquet of bright red flowers from behind his back. The earthbender squealed in delight and pecked the general on his cheek before grabbing the flowers. He placed them in a vase sitting on the end table and flopped down on the couch.

"Do you want to go out tonight?" Iroh asked. The question caught Bolin off guard, but he had an idea.

"Yes! Can we please, please, please go to the fair? It's in town this week and I haven't been in years and it's so much fun! We would have such a good time, I swear!" Iroh sat next to Bolin and leaned into the couch cushions.

"I was going to surprise you and take you anyway. At least now I know that you want to go." Bolin felt kind of bad for spoiling the surprise, but in his defense, he didn't know about it. Iroh left
shortly afterward to attend to more United Forces business, and Bolin decided he needed to pay Asami a visit.

***

A servant opened the door for Bolin and told him where he could find Asami. He charged through the house and to the pool.

"Asami! Your servant told me you were out here and I really need to talk to you!" He saw a flash of red break the surface of the water and the woman in question swim over to the ledge nearest him.

"What do you need today?" She questioned as Bolin sat down on the side of the pool, his bare feet dangling into the water.

He sighed and looked away before asking, "What did you and Korra do for your first date? Besides going to the spirit world, of course." She flipped on to her back and thought for a moment before answering.

"We went to this really nice restaurant. Then we somehow wound up wandering through the ruined city streets until the early morning hours. It was rather romantic. Why do you ask?"

He felt his face turn bright red while he muttered, "I'm going on a date with Iroh. We're going to the fair." Asami flipped off of her back and swam over to the steps out of the pool.

"I owe Korra money, she said you two would wind up by now. You're going to the fair? That sounds like fun. Going on a date there shouldn't be difficult." She towelled off and motioned for him to follow inside. They walked the length of the estate as she gave him advice.

"Play games. Eat food. Laugh. Don't do anything embarrassing. You know, the standard things. You'll have lots of fun, trust me. Now go get 'em tiger!" They had reached the front door. Bolin left feeling much more confident.

***

Bolin paced the length of his living room, nervous. Iroh was due to arrive any minute. He had started to doubt all of this because of how his last relationship had ended. He picked up a rock sitting on a shelf and made it into lava and shifted it back several times. Just when he thought he was going to curl up in bed and never leave, he heard the door open and saw Iroh enter. All of his doubts disappeared when he saw the general.

He had changed from his standard uniform into a much more casual outfit. He wore a flattering red overcoat and a golden scarf along with a pair of white pants and simple black boots.

"Are you ready to go?" Iroh asked Bolin. All the earthbender could do was close his gaping mouth and shake his head yes before taking hold of the outstretched hand. They walked hand in hand the several blocks to the pier, where the fair was. Their conversations were minor and were mainly about what Iroh had done that day.

"So what did you have to deal with today?" Bolin asked.

"I was in the meeting about breaking ground on a new neighborhood this morning. Then after I left your place I had to schedule what forces would leave the city. They're preparing us to return to the sea, but I think some of us will get left here to watch after the city."
Bolin could tell they were getting close. The smells and lights and sounds brought back memories and made him smile.

"We're here! I'm so excited! What should we do first?" Bolin chattered excitedly. Iroh laughed quietly.

"Maybe we should pay the entrance fee first," Iroh said as he pulled several yuan's from his pocket. He handed them to the person in the gatehouse and they entered the park. Bolin's eyes lit up as he saw the tents stretched the entire length of the pier. His stomach decided that was the perfect time to growl.

"I think my stomach's determined what we are going to do first," Bolin commented.

They walked over to one of the food vendors and were met with quite a line. Fall had settled in, bringing with it a cold breeze. Bolin felt himself shiver. He wore a thick coat, but didn't think that he would need gloves. Bad decision, he thought as he shoved his hands under his armpits. Iroh must have noticed because a pair of gloves were tucked between his chest and elbow.

"Won't your hands get cold?" Bolin asked.

"I'm a firebender, remember? I can just warm them up on my own." He rubbed his hands together and Bolin could see the heat radiating off of them. He leaned his head against the general's shoulder and wrapped both arms around others arm. They quickly approached the front of the line and perused the menu. There were all sorts of fried and unhealthy foods for them to choose from. Iroh tried to pay, but Bolin stopped him.

"You paid for the last thing, it's my turn. And don't even try, I'm doing this." Iroh just huffed and crossed his arms, but didn't seem to actually be angry. They got their food and went to the one free table in the area. It was the weekend and the first week of the fair, so it was very crowded. Bolin had even seen Mongke walking with a small woman. He had waved at the pair.

Iroh managed to keep pace with Bolin's insane eating speed. Must be from being in the military, he thought. He thought it was kind of funny to witness a man whose whole life was built on composure eat as if the food would disappear. Bolin couldn't help but laugh. Iroh looked up, his cheeks full of food.

"What's so funny?" He asked around his mouthful of food.


"Come on old man, let's go play some games!" Bolin shouted while pulling Iroh off of the bench.

"Old man? I'm only twelve years older than you!" Bolin pulled him along at a great speed to the first game. He had made sure to bring lots of coins so they could play everything. The first game seemed simple enough, all it was was tossing rings around bottles. He handed the man behind the counter the money and gave Iroh half of the rings. Most of their tosses missed, but Iroh made one by luck. Bolin had one ring left and wanted to get one as well. He concentrated and tried feeling for the distance. It was hard because of all of the commotion, but he could see it. He aimed and let the ring fly. It landed around the middle bottle and Bolin cheered. The vendor handed them both a handful of tickets because they hadn't scored enough for one of the big prizes. They continued down the pier until they were almost at the very end. Their was only one game left.

They both had won minor prizes, nothing spectacular. Bolin was having a good time though, and
he could tell Iroh was as well. They came upon the last game and Bolin pulled money from his pocket, only to realize he had enough for one person.

"You play this one. Win me something big!" He said to Iroh. The general nodded before picking up one of the balls he had been handed. The game's objective was to knock down the towers of bottles. Iroh pulled back his wrist and tossed. The first tower fell with ease. Bolin watched as he went on to the next tower. The results remained the same. The earthbender clapped and noticed the vendor clench his hands in a peculiar way, like he was earthbending.

Iroh tossed the last ball at the last tower and knocked down all of the bottles but one, which teetered like it would fall, but almost stood back up. Bolin realized the vendor was keeping it from falling, so he decided to correct it. He put his hand inside of his coat pocket before giving a gentle shove at the bottle. He was a stronger bender than the bender because he was able to knock it right off of the stool it was on.

The vendor looked stunned, but sighed and turned to Iroh.

"What prize would you like sir?" He questioned. The general turned to Bolin for his opinion, but he just shrugged. Iroh pointed at a giant stuffed animal tucked into the corner of a net hanging from the ceiling. The vendor grabbed a hook and pulled down the giant stuffed purple pentapus, which he then handed to Iroh. The general gave it to the elated Bolin, who pecked his cheek.

"Thank you so much! You're the best," he cooed as they walked to the end of the pier. The full moon had risen above the horizon and seemed larger than normal. The young earthbender thought it looked pretty and it reminded him of the story Korra had told him, about Katara's brother who fell in love with a girl who became the moon spirit. He leaned on to Iroh's shoulder and stared out at the ocean.

Bolin felt the firebender wrap his arm around his shoulder. "This has been so much fun," Iroh whispered. Bolin smiled and turned to face him.

"I agree," he said as he leaned in to place a kiss on Iroh's lips.

***

The pair crept up the stairs to their apartments. It was around midnight. They had left the fair about an hour ago but had stopped for tea at the place downstairs. The owner had finally chased them upstairs and both were tired. Bolin reached into his pockets to find his keys, but Iroh stopped him.

"Do you want to stay at my place tonight? I don't mind." Bolin's face heated up, but he nodded yes anyway. Iroh unlocked the door and ushered Bolin inside. The layout was very similar to his apartment, but it was messier. That surprised him.

"Sorry for the mess, I haven't really been home long enough to straighten up anything. The bedroom is down the hall and to the right. I'm going to take a shower before bed." Bolin gave a thumbs up before going to the room. He slipped out of his heavy jacket and jeans before crawling into the sheets. The pentapus came with him. Right before he completely fell asleep, he felt Iroh wrap his arms around him.
Bolin discusses seismic sense with Lin Beifong.

***

I'm sorry this has taken a month, March was so hectic for me. I'm on spring break and might post another chapter this week though!

The cool autumn air had swept in from the ocean. The sudden instability had brought severe thunderstorms that hadn't let up in two days. Bolin hadn't seen such strong storms in several years, as the weather in Republic City was generally mild. He sat on a window sill and watched the rain pound the sidewalk below. The only people brave enough to be out were waterbenders.

He felt worried about his pro-bending team. Their practice had been cancelled, and Bolin feared that it could cost them the championship. Someone put a hand on Bolin's shoulder and broke him from his thoughts.

"I thought you would like some tea," Iroh said before he handed the earthbender a warm cup. Bolin flashed him a warm smile and hopped off of the sill. They were in Iroh's apartment, something that happened frequently since their first date.

"Do you want me to make lunch?" Bolin questioned. The general nodded and Bolin walked into the kitchen. He had been appalled to discover that Iroh ate out most of the time and set out to correct that. They had gone to the market the day before the rain settled in. While he prepared lunch, Bolin thought about the morning after their first date.

Bolin woke up later than normal. He went to roll over and go back to sleep, but bumped into something warm instead. He let out a yelp of surprise before noticing that he had hit Iroh's bare chest. The general started to wake up and Bolin felt his face heat up and his heart race. He had never been this close to another person before. It was a nice feeling, a comforting one.

"Good Morning," Iroh said before kissing the top of Bolin's head. The younger man went to answer, but his stomach growled and interrupted him. He wiggled out of Iroh's arm and dangled his feet over the side of the bed. He let out a hiss as his feet hit the chilly floor.

"I really hope you have food!" Bolin shouted as he left the room and went into the kitchen. Searching the pantry yielded nothing to eat. The general entered the kitchen at some point, and Bolin questioned him as he shut the cabinet door.

"How can you have no-" The rest of his words died in his throat at the sight of Iroh. The firebender had apparently slept in only his underwear and not deemed it appropriate to get dressed before leaving the room. Then again, Bolin was in a similar outfit, the only difference being his undershirt. Iroh seemed to notice Bolin's staring. The older man's pale body started to turn a nice shade of red.
"I'm going to run over to my apartment and grab some stuff to make breakfast," Bolin stuttered as he made his way out the door.

***

That had been about a week ago. Now he always made sure to cook extras so that Iroh would have something to eat.

"Finally!" Bolin heard Iroh shout from the other room. Confused, he left the kitchen and went to the window where Iroh stood. He saw why the general had shouted before asking. The rain had finally stopped. The streets were still covered in water, but the rain was over. Bolin went back into the kitchen to grab the noodles he had made and brought them to the small table by a window.

"So what are your plans for tomorrow? I've got an important meeting about some trouble brewing over an island. My forces may be necessary." Bolin let out a small laugh. Iroh had never been good at small talk.

"I guess I could go over to Lin's place and ask about this whole seismic sense stuff. Then I may go outside of the city and do some training. The championship is in two weeks, I have to be in shape for it." Iroh nodded in understanding.

***

Bolin knocked on the door of the address Mako had given him. He stood outside of a modest home on the edge of the rebuilt city, near the new police station.

"What do you want?" He heard someone ask in an annoyed tone from the other side of the door. Her gruffness didn't really have an effect on him anymore, in fact he expected it.

"It's Bolin! I need to ask you something kind of important." A lock clicked on the other side of the door and Lin swung it open. She motioned for him to enter and led him into an orderly living room. Suyin sat on one of the couches pushed against a wall.

"Oh, hello Bolin! I didn't expect to see you while I was in town," the younger sister said. He rubbed his arm nervously and sat on the same couch as her. Lin flopped into a chair and turned to face Bolin.

"Why are you here? You don't make random visits," Lin attested. He put his hands in his lap before answering.

"I was on my way home the other night, and you know how I've had someone coming after me for a little bit now, well they came after me then. Except I could see them before they were anywhere near me. It was weird, but it reminded me of the thing your mom did while we on the rescue mission." The sisters exchanged a glance before turning to Bolin.

"You mean you used seismic sense?" Suyin questioned. Bolin nodded and Lin got up and left the room. She returned after a few moments carrying a blindfold. She tossed it to him and told him to put it over his eyes. Bolin felt nervous, but did it anyway.

"This should be a good way to see if you can see or not. Oh, and take off your shoes. This is easier barefoot," Lin stated. He slipped his shoes off and stood up.

"Su and I are going to go outside. We aren't going too far, but you need to manage to find us in a hurry. Give us about a minute before you start," she instructed. He tried to keep up with where they went, but they went blurry after they left the house. The house was full of stuff that he didn't want
to break, so Bolin stepped carefully. Focusing on seeing his surroundings took a lot of concentration, but he could do it. The area immediately around him was clear. After a few feet though, things got blurry.

His first step was shaky, as was his second. When he felt like he had entered the front hallway, his confidence swelled. The front hallway had been empty if memory served right. Bolin sped up and had almost reached the front door when he saw something that hadn't been there before. They must be trying to trick me, he thought. The thing he saw was blurry, but he managed to sidestep it and get to the door.

This part of the city wasn't particularly busy; however, things weren't in much focus. There were more things outside than inside and it was a lot for him to try and take in at once. He walked to the left and toward a park that he had seen before going to Lin's. As he got closer, he could feel the blurry outlines of two people shaped things behind a tall thing. Bolin stepped around it and stopped in front of the two people that had come more into focus. He took the blindfold off.

"You're either insanely lucky or you really could see us. That's impressive," Suyin commented.

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They went back to Lin's to discuss how he could improve his seismic sense. They mainly recommended that he try to move around only using it. Bolin realized that it was getting late and that he needed to get home. He wished the sisters well and left, only to bump into someone as he left the house.

"Oh, I'm sorry, I didn't see you coming," Bolin apologized. However, his heart dropped when he saw that the person was Opal.

"What are you doing here?" Opal questioned.

Bolin grasped for words and all that came out was a weak, "I was asking about something and am on the way home, Iroh is probably worried about me." She stepped into his path and crossed her arms.

"Really? I thought you would wait for me. I'm done with my training and thought you would still be waiting for me. Why?" Opal sounded angry and made Bolin feel tiny. He could feel his sorrow well up as he answered.

"You basically ripped my heart out when you left. Then Iroh came along and was nice to me." Opal seemed to notice that his words rang true and softened a little. She looked like she was about to say something else, but the door opened and Suyin stepped outside.

"Opal! I thought you weren't coming in until tomorrow!" Bolin used that as an excuse to slip away.

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Bolin sat in Iroh's living room. He had ran home as fast as he could, hoping that he wouldn't cry. His head was in the general's lap and he was recounting the incident when Iroh stopped him.

"How about we go to Ember Island for a few days? I know it's out of the blue, but I have business to run near there and you could definitely use a vacation. We could bring Team Avatar along, of course. We'd be leaving after your next training session." Bolin perked up a little bit and nodded his head.
The shores of Ember Island appeared on the horizon. Bolin, Korra, Iroh, Asami, and Mako had been on a boat for several days. They had set out for a vacation and Bolin already missed the earth. He had never been this long without its solidity. Rough seas had also introduced him to the horrors of seasickness. Today he felt a little better and had ventured out in time to see the Island in the distance. Iroh and Asami leaned against the railing and looked like they were in a heated discussion.

Bolin walked over to Iroh's side, careful not to be touchy feely with the general. Although he felt that his brother wouldn't mind, Bolin had yet to tell Mako about his new relationship, so he and the general had acted as if they were just friends. This left Bolin feeling hurt, but he had yet to figure out how to tell his brother.

"I'm telling you, air travel is definitely the future form of travel. Face it Iroh, traveling by boat just isn't as convenient as flying hundreds of miles in a much shorter time," Asami said. Iroh shook his head.

"How do you plan on fitting more than two people on a plane at a time? Sure, flight may be shorter, but you're gonna have to take so many more trips. Anyway, we'll be docking soon. We should all make sure we have all of our luggage."

Iroh turned around and bumped shoulders with Bolin.

"Oops, sorry love. Didn't see you standing there. It's nice to see you above deck for a change."

Bolin gave a half-smile. He still felt nauseous and was about to say so when he felt the ship slow to a halt. In a hurry to get off the boat, he placed a quick peck on Iroh's cheek and ran to his room to grab his stuff. After that, he dashed ashore as fast he humanly could, losing his shoes somewhere on the dock. His suitcase was tossed onto the sand as he flopped down.

"Oh land, how I've missed you!" He exclaimed as he grabbed fistfuls of sand. The other people on the ship filed off after a few moments. Iroh crouched down and collected the earthbender's discarded shoes. Bolin had managed to completely coat himself in sand, but somebody decided that more was necessary. He found himself stuck under a mound of sand. He let out a cry as he forced the sand off of him. The material was much harder to control than regular earth, and he couldn’t use his seismic sense as well.

Laughter behind him tipped off the culprit, none other than Korra. Bolin decided to play a joke of his own and opened a hole below her feet, which she quickly fell in. He filled it with sand.
up to her head in order to make it much harder for her to escape. She grunted and started squirming, but there was no way for her to get out. Bolin started laughing, but stopped when he saw Iroh standing with his arms crossed and eyes glaring.

“Come on Bolin, joke’s over. Go ahead and let her out.” Bolin made puppy dog eyes, but the general refused to budge. Bolin sighed and pulled Korra out of the sand. Their luggage had been brought ashore by that point, so Iroh ushered the group to where they would be staying, his vacation home.

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The house was way bigger than Bolin was expecting. Not as big as Asami’s, but bigger than he thought a vacation house would be. There were at least 8 bedrooms, a pool, several bathrooms, and 2 living rooms. There were also servants, but Iroh said they weren’t forced to be there except for when a royal was in residence. A butler led Bolin to his room, which was next to Iroh’s. A bathroom was attached, a good thing too, because he had needed to go pee for the past hour.

After he was done with that, he left the room to go and find the others and discuss the plans for the next week. The vacation came as a surprise for everyone, but it was welcomed. Asami’s business partners had been driving her crazy and Mako and Korra were always glad to escape their duties. The three of them were in the living room on the opposite side of the house, all sitting very close together and whispering. They bolted apart when they saw Bolin enter.

“Hey guys, what’s up?” He asked innocently enough, but he had the creeping suspicion they were talking about him. They all looked at each other, and finally Asami spoke.

“Oh, nothing, we were just trying to make plans for dinner,” she answered in a steady tone; however, she couldn’t hide that she was lying from Bolin. The carpet in the room made it hard to feel, but he felt the subtle change. He took a steadying breath and pretended like he hadn’t noticed. Instead, he flopped onto the couch opposite the trio.

“Man, I’m starving! Where’s Iroh, he knows this place better than we do and I want food!” Bolin whined while rolling onto his stomach. Mako glared at him.

“Well that’s because it’s so good!” was Bolin’s reply. He felt Iroh’s footsteps coming down the hall toward the living room. He sat up on his couch so that his boyfriend would have a spot to sit down. Iroh entered a second later, dressed much more casually than anyone was used to. His outfit conformed to that of the Fire Nation commoner. Bolin thought the casual look looked really good- like really good- on the general. Iroh seemed to have noticed the stares.

“What? I can dress down every once in a while, plus I’m on vacation.”

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They wound up only going for dinner that night. Everyone felt the effects of their long journey and wanted to go to sleep. Bolin took a quick bath, but not as fast as he wanted, as it was hard to persuade the servants to leave him to bathe in peace. He settled into bed around 10; however, he couldn’t fall asleep. After about 30 minutes of tossing and turning, he made up his mind to sneak into Iroh’s bed.

No one was in the hall, when he opened the door, so he darted over to the next door. It
squeaked on its hinges, but he figured no one would hear it. A lamp was on next to the bed, and Iroh was propped up reading a book. He looked up and noticed it was Bolin, so he put the book down.

“What are you still doing up? Everyone else is asleep already?” Iroh whispered. Bolin shrugged.

“Well I tried going to sleep, but it was too hard, so I was wondering if I could-” Iroh cut him off by patting the spot next to him. Bolin gleefully bounded across the room and hopped into the bed. He pulled the sheets over his mostly bare legs and rolled over to peck Iroh on the cheek. The firebender laughed at Bolin’s antics. He kissed the other on the lips, but somehow wound up on top of the earthbender in an aggressive makeout session. Not that either was complaining. In fact, Bolin was enjoying it more than most things. He felt something brush up against his thigh, and stopped the kissing.

Iroh was flushed and panting, but still managed to have a concerned look. Bolin thought that he was in a similar state, at least below the waist.

“Do you want to stop?” Iroh asked. Bolin thought for a second, and realized that he didn’t want to. He was ready for whatever happened.

“No, don’t stop.” Iroh nodded and resumed kissing him, while both worked on losing their clothes.

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