The End of An Era

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Summary

As The Earth Empire's militaristic dictator makes her final move to bring an end to Team Avatar, Korra realizes that she must make one last sacrifice in order to bring peace once and for all to Republic City.

Notes

This is my first fic for LOK, so I hope you guys like it! A bit (very) sad, but that's how I like my stories, ha! Lots of injury and blood and violence, so take heed to that. Enjoy! :)

***EDIT: TAGS HAVE CHANGED, PLEASE READ THEM***
Chapter Summary

Korra faces down Kuvira, once and for all.

The ringing in her ears is what wakes her up.

Korra pushes off the metal bar from her ribs, gasping as she hears her bones cracking. She closes her eyes and forces back bile as she feels all the knots tightening and snapping in her muscles. She’s brought back to the time when she’d been poisoned by Zaheer. Reminding herself that nothing could be as tormenting as shattering both her femurs, a good quarter of her spine, and her pelvis, all during the same time as having mercury poisoning, she draws a deep, pained breath, and forces herself to move. Muster ing up whatever strength she has left in her reserves, Korra jerks her eyes open. Spitting out a wad of blood to the dusty earth beside her, she rises stiffly to her wobbly feet. She favours her right side as a screaming pain shoots up her left.

“Definitely broke a few ribs,” she mutters under her breath as she straggles forward, her footsteps clumsy and misplaced from the disorientation. She falls to her knees a few times before she rises once more, looking up to the metallic robot that now lay wasted in the middle of the street.

“Where are you, you son of a bitch?” Korra growls through her crimson stained teeth, turning her head around to try and get a look of the wreckage. A small hole in the face of the machine spots her eye and from the ground, she sees a trail of blood leading to the Spirit Wilds near the heart of the city.

“That’s it,” she hisses as she stumbles in the same direction, “no more hiding.”

Korra limps heavily into the Spirit Wilds, leaving a bleeding mess behind her. She’s clutching her right side, to which she just discovered has a giant score leading from her hip to the top of her ribs. As long as the cut may be, Korra is grateful it’s not too deep. It’s a dull, throbbing ache, but her adrenalin takes off much of the fire from the pain. Blood still pools from between her fingertips with the force of a broken faucet as she makes her way deeper into the Spirit Wilds. Using a bit of air-bending, she vaults over a few of the long green weeds before falling roughly onto her injured side.

Letting out a piercing shriek, she holds her torso harder, her vision blurring from the pain. Fire strikes at her veins, her frame trembling with agony. For a moment, she considers giving up right
there and then. Maybe Zaheer, Amon, Unaloq, and Kuvira had been right. Maybe the era of the Avatar is over. Maybe she wasn’t needed. She’d been fighting so hard this entire time and she was in so much pain. Spirits, her body felt like she was melting in lava. Crimson blood is pouring out of nearly every orifice in her system, and yet she is still alive somehow. Korra remembers the words of Aang and of Raava. She remembers Yuan and the other past Avatars. They hadn’t given up, so why should she? Korra lets out another scream as she reaches forward, now resorting to crawling on her hands and knees until she gains some bearing. Her taut abdomen slithers through the dirt and moss as she moves with uncoordinated pushes and stumbles. Raava whispers inside of her to keep strong, to hold on for a few moments longer, and so she does. The Avatar lifts herself up with a pained grunt, her body now leaning on a tree. Her breathing is unsteady and heavy, breaths barely making it through her weary lungs. She feels faint and dizzy, her throat dry and bitter with dried blood. Her eyes fight to stay open and focused, but she feels her life draining slowly.

“Look at you!” Kuvira's voice calls out in a mocking tone, causing the Avatar's head to hazily snap upwards.

Ice blue eyes meet sea green depths as the two nemesis’s meet each other’s furious gazes. Kuvira is standing atop the gun of the Mech, her hair frazzled and all over the place. Her eyes are wild with anger and anguish. Korra can’t help but feel just as infuriated at the very sight of her. When she sees Kuvira, she thinks of Asami and her father. A new strength floods through her as the image of the inventor’s broken face as her seat had been ejected burns through her mind. All she can think about is Asami, about the love for the woman that ran unparalleled to any love she’d ever experienced, even for Mako. Korra lets go of her side and stands up straight, her eyes alight with power and determination to bring and end to this, once and for all.

“What about me? What about you?!” Korra shouts back, her fists beginning to burn as fire seeps into her veins, preparing a strike upon the woman that tried to take all of her friends away. Kuvira doesn't flinch as the Avatar growls intimidatingly.

“You created concentration camps! You starved your own people! You manipulated your soldiers into believing you were doing good when they'd been at the hand of causing genocide. You talk so much about helping everyone when so far, from what I saw, you’ve only helped yourself,” Korra snarls back, throwing her hand up in a disapproving gesture, her fingers tightly clenching into fists at the sight of the captain.

“Someone had to take charge,” Kuvira howls, gripping onto the gun with a tighter grip. She winces as one of the vines tangles around her ankles, almost tying her to the machine. She kicks at them with a frustrated stomp of her foot, but it's no use, they don't budge. Korra groans as her side aches harder.

"I-It… it doesn't have to be this way, Kuvira," the Avatar wheezes as convincingly as she can, "you can still fix this." The former captain of Zaofu's eyes flash with rage as she shakes her head with
malice. Korra straightens her back, refusing to let her physical injuries stand in the way of her battle.

“You imbecile,” Kuvira stutters as she coughs out a hack of blood, “you deserted the people when they needed you the most… you, you were nothing but a cripple! You couldn't even wipe your own shit without someone's help, bitch.” On any other given occasion, Korra knows she would stiffen and take offence to the statement, but understanding that Kuvira was using her past injuries as a sharpened dagger prevents her from taking the woman seriously.

“I got lost trying to fix myself, you're right,” Korra says through gritted teeth, "but I came back and I am putting an end to this." The Avatar winces as her eyes flash around in an effort to find a way to get the machine away from the delirious officer. She tries to think of a plan, but her mind blanks.

“You're a pathetic excuse for an Avatar!” The captain bellows, swinging the mouth of the gun to face Korra. The dark skinned girl looks undeterred as she stands her ground, only jutting her head up dominantly as Kuvira scowls at her, angered tears burning at her eyes.

“You took it all away from me! I was going to bring a new light to these people. I was going to give them hope, to give them what they so rightfully deserved. I was going to show them that they didn't need to rely on a damned shell of a legend to help them. I brought a new change and you took it all away!” Kuvira screams as her hand reaches for the control switch. She powers it on, the purple light accumulating within the mouth of the machine. Korra freezes for a moment before Kuvira cranks the intensity. A loud, foretelling shriek emits from the machine, and Kuvira laughs sinisterly.

“Now, I’m going to put an end to you, Avatar,” she spits the words out with pure hostility, her hand pressing down on the switch to fire the gun.

At the exploding sound, Korra manages to break free of her trance and switches the fire in her fists into a large puff of air, sending her careening away from the blasting purple photons. Kuvira screams in frustration as she barely misses her target, instead tearing a fiery path of destruction in the forest. Flames run thickly as the forest catches fire, illuminating Kuvira's rage in those green eyes. Korra lands rather ungracefully, rolling out of the way as she dodges another attack. Her ribs burn and break with her fall, but if this is to be her death, then she will die doing all she can to stop this madness.

No matter her outcome, she will bring peace to Republic City, and to the world.

She has to.
Dazzling purple light flashes over the skies of Republic City, drowning the world in brightness.

Asami stumbles into a small side street as dust shoots out from behind her, taking cover by the shelter of a large building that hadn’t been destroyed in Kuvira’s rampage. Her lungs burn from running to evade the explosion left by the falling machine that Kuvira had piloted. Her ankles are chaffed from the ties of the ejection seat, but other than that and a few scratches and bruises, she is physically fine. The inventor draws shallow breaths as the ringing sound in her head slowly diminishes with the sound of crumbling rubble coming from not too far away. She slumps heavily against the wall, holding a palm over her mouth as she relives the final moments before her seat had ejected from the Hummingbird.

I love you, Asami.

Her father’s voice repeats over and over again in her mind as she remembers those final moments before his imminent death. Asami cries, a loud, strangled sob as she struggles to contain her feelings. Everything hurts, and not just the physical cuts and bruises, but the loss of her father, of her friends, of her innocence. So much had changed as a result of the formation of the United Earth Empire and the dictatorship installed by that bastard former captain, Kuvira. So many alliances had been forged, but at the same time, so many ties had been broken. The world had fallen into a state of unrest, and now, as Asami thinks of the giant metal beast that had nearly killed her, she doesn’t know if it will ever get better. Suddenly, something in her heart comes to a thudding stop as a single name runs through her mind.

Korra.

Asami stands immediately, wiping her tears as she crawls back to the entrance of the building, only to see more erratically firing lights of purple coming from the Spirit Wilds. She can sense something is wrong, terribly wrong, and not just from the display of fire and purple blasts in the distance. The tropes of flame and spattering of rock seem to be thrown erratically, with no connection to the direction of the purple flares. It’s understood immediately by the inventor that the Avatar is not fighting properly, and she deduces it instantly to injury. She had seen the Mech go down. She knows that it would be impossible that anyone in the ship had walked away without a bare blemish.

“Korra,” she breathes out as her eyes follow another trail of fire coming from the forest.
Asami heaves herself to her feet, stumbling towards the forest to help her friend. She rubs at the caked blood along her arm from where parts of rope had cut into her skin and bites back the pain. Blood drips down her elbow as she makes her way down the street. As she runs through the now ghosted town of Republic City, she barely makes out the shadow of the fallen machine in the dust that clouds her vision. She coughs and wraps a hand over her mouth at the smell of burnt flesh, motor oil, and charred metal. She wishes for a moment that she had her biking goggles, just so that she’d be able to see through the grain. She makes out the faint signs of the Avatar's battle in the distance, but her heart twists. She knows that Korra would scold her if she’d left their friends to go after her. Reluctantly, the inventor diverts her path and heads to the fallen machine.

“Mako? Bolin? Lin? Suyin? Varrick? Zhu Li?” She calls out, her voice scratchy and raw from screaming out of the ejection. Asami coughs again as she chokes on dust, her lungs burning from exertion. She stumbles blindly through the fog, turning over rusted metal and debris that is small and light enough for her to lift. Her stomach becomes woozy as she grows further away from hearing the sounds of her friends. She can’t possibly believe that they’re dead, gone like her father. Asami doesn’t stop searching, her screaming becoming more erratic as she goes.

“Asami, over here!” Bolin’s familiar voice calls out hoarsely. Asami follows the sound of his voice calling out to her as she stumbles over the wreckage. The inventor manages to see two figures in the distance, curled over some scrap metal. She rushes over immediately, watching as her beloved friend’s face comes to view. The young lava-bender looks haggard beyond belief, but alive nonetheless.

“Bolin!” Asami breathes a sigh of relief when she sees that Bolin is holding a banged up and unconscious, but still breathing, Mako in his arms. Asami kneels to inspect the burn on her ex-boyfriend's forearm, happy to find that it’s nothing too major. The woman goes to say something when suddenly there’s a loud explosion in the distance, followed by a piercing shriek of agony from a familiar voice.

“Korra,” Asami gasps in shock, turning back to Bolin with panic. The earth-bender looks to his brother before nodding up at the frantic woman. He looks around at the empty street until he finds some suitable shelter in the building adjacent to the fallen machine.

“I’ll take care of him. Go to Korra and get out her out of there. When Jinorra and Tenzin show up I’ll send them your way. They’re bound to be here soon. Korra can’t be alone, Asami. Lin and Su had been in the gun compartment when the arm tore off, so they should be closer to her,” the calm man instructs quickly. Asami nods without hesitation as she bolts towards the sound of another one of Korra's agonizing cries.

“Hurry,” Bolin whispers as he watches Asami’s fleeting figure.
Fire spreads up and down Korra’s right arm as she’s violently thrown backwards against the trees. Kuvira had managed to clip her with that last shot, leaving one of her arms useless for bending. The Avatar bites her lips as blood cascades through the charred flesh beneath her shaking palm. She wheezes agonizingly as she clutches the wound in order to still the pain. Sweat beats down her dusty face as Kuvira realigns the gun so that it’s facing her directly. The Avatar is huffing and coughing like she's got no air left in her lungs. Her body is mangled and broken beyond recognition, and she's certain there's not a single patch of skin upon her body that isn't covered by her blood or caked in dirt. She looks to Kuvira's manic expression and with a plummeting heart, she realizes that she is losing once more. She can't help but flash back to their first encounter, in which the captain had very nearly killed her had it not been for Ikki and Jinorra to rescue her from the mayhem the seasoned veteran had wreaked upon the Earth Kingdom.

Only this time, no one is here to save her.

“Give up, Avatar,” the woman cries deliriously, her grip upon the control switch beginning to falter from fatigue. She has a deep, jagged gash running across her leg from where one of the Spirit Vines had attempted to swat her from the giant mounted gun. The pain doesn't register to her in her fury, for all she can feel is the need to bring an end to the master of all the elements.

“I… I won’t,” Korra gasps back, blood spilling down her lips as she shakily rises to her feet. She’s unsteady instantly, teetering dangerously to one side as she spits out more blood upon the floor, tainting the green a dark crimson instead. Her vision blurs and she feels nauseated once more.

“Then I have no choice than to kill you,” Kuvira growls menacingly, reaching for the lever to activate the beam.

The Avatar doesn’t - can’t - move.

Kuvira goes to hit the switch when suddenly an electric shock zaps through her body. The captain thrashes wildly upon the gun's side, swerving the mouth of it in another direction, laying waste to a few more vines, but sparing the Avatar. The current is so strong that she drops from her hold to collide against the hard floor of the earth. Something in her arm cracks, and just like that, the bones from her ulna to her clavicle snap like a pair of chopsticks. Kuvira bellows out a howl of pain as she rolls around on the ground. She hears footsteps, but before she has the energy to turn away, more electricity courses through her chest, causing her to bite through the soft flesh of her tongue, spilling blood everywhere. Her flesh burns in the misted air, leaving a disgusting stench behind. The green vines beneath her turn crimson with her blood, now glinting in the light of the pale dawn.
“No,” Asami’s growly voice rings out as her gloved hand stays pressed to the captain's convulsing chest, “not today you won’t.” Another shocking jolt passes through her as the inventor zaps the military woman relentlessly, vengeance and anger fuelling her actions.

“Asami, stop!” Korra yelps as she watches her friend squeeze the glove tighter to Kuvira's body. There's an animalistic rage in her love's green eyes, a look so foreign Korra doesn't even know if it really is the inventor, or just some replacement.

"A-Asami," Korra gasps as she stumbles off the tree, "s-she's… she's not w-worth it."

Upon hearing the Avatar's strangled voice, Asami freezes. She hesitates to pull her glove away for a moment, but when she looks up to see Korra limp-running towards her, eyes wide with fear and concern, everything in her heart shatters. As if she were a loyal polar bear dog following an order, Asami retracts her hand, leaving Kuvira a whimpering, shuddering mess on the ground. Asami looks down at her with a narrow glare, her insides so tempted to spit at her face, but the inventor holds back her frustration for the sake of the Avatar. She grumbles as she leaves the glove hovering over the older woman's face, warning her silently that she will set it upon her skin should she dare try and test her strength against the heiress.

“We need to turn that gun off,” Korra says breathlessly as she nearly collapses beside the taller woman. Asami's eyes flicker over her various wounds, noticing the never-ending trail of gashes and bruises painted upon the darker skinned woman. But before she can say anything about the Avatar's state of disarray, the machine in front of them makes a horrifying noise. Korra winces as she shares a brief glance with Asami, their worried eyes communicating in silence. Kuvira's head nods up from the ground, the fear in her pale green eyes becoming evident as the infamous, malicious grin drops into a horrified expression. Her brows knit together as she shakes her head in complete shock.

“We can’t…,” Kuvira coughs out as they watch the beams fire sporadically at the vines, “it’s not built to be turned off. It’s going to combust. The force of the blast will blow up the entire city. It's too late, Avatar. We lost.” Korra’s eyes widen as Asami grips the captain's shoulder with her bare hand.

“What?!” Asami screams, shaking the broken woman, who is now staring at the Avatar with a blank, desolate gaze. “There are still people on the island that are being evacuated! Government officials, families, soldiers, husbands, wives, children. There are fucking children here!”

"I… I have made a mistake,” Kuvira gasps, tears welling in her eyes as she makes eye contact with Korra, who looks torn beyond belief. She glances over the Avatar's shoulder to the gun and feels
"No, there has to be another way," Asami says through gritted teeth, glancing back at Korra, who still hasn't moved her eyes off the captain. The heiress frantically looks to the creator of the monster itself, searching desperately for some kind of solution.

Kuvira doesn’t say anything else, bare for shaking her head. Instead, a choked cry comes from her mouth as the Avatar continues to stare at her blankly. She hears Asami begin to sob as they all realize that all their efforts had been for nothing. It wouldn't matter if Kuvira would be apprehended. The real weapon cannot be stopped, and soon, Republic City and all those who'd created it will perish in rubble and dust. Korra feels her body begin to numb from her injuries and from the emotional pain as she realizes that she will inevitably fail the one task that she had been given her entire life. She rifles through her scattered thoughts for an answer, but only one comes to her mind, one that she knows she will not like, but one that must be done. The noises and explosions in the background are drowned out as Korra finally tears her gaze away to look to the beam, her eyes watering as she watches the nozzle begin to swerve towards them. Kuvira lets out a muffled cry and Asami shrieks, but for Korra, time passes ever so slowly.

The Avatar mournfully glances between the commander and the woman she’d spent the past three years in an unrequited love with. Asami’s face is one of peril and pure fear. In that moment, the young woman wishes she could just pause everything and reach over to apologize for leaving, to apologize for her father’s death, to apologize for what she’s about to do. Korra looks to Asami and hopes, prays to the Spirits, that she understands in that one look of just how much Asami had meant, and will always mean, to her. The inventor is looking past her, however, to the beam and their impending deaths. Korra sighs deeply, each breath like a stabbing dagger to her weary lungs. She looks down at her useless arm, before glancing back up to see that she is facing the beam directly. Taking a deep breath, she closes her eyes, clenching her fists tightly as she summons the only resort she has left - the Avatar State.

The beam fires.

Asami shuts her eyes, preparing for the darkness, or the light, or whatever comes after one dies. She waits for an inferno of pain, or maybe the cold numbness of a Spirit stealing her soul. Perhaps, she waits for the glossy kiss of death that would transcend her into the next realm. In her mind, she has so many regrets. Regrets of her father, of her friends, and most of all, of Korra. Things that she’d never said or done with the young Avatar, or had the courage to confess to her. All that repeats in her head is the Avatar’s name, and all she sees is the last desolate glance that Korra had sent her.

Suddenly, her hair bristles with a push of cool air, causing her eyes to jerk open. Asami gasps in shock and relief as she watches the purple light surround them, but not touch them. Korra’s body stands in front of her, her frame erect and strong with rippling power, alight in bursts of white and
blue. The wisps of air roll off her shoulders as she encases the three women in a protective cushion. Asami watches in horror as parts of the beam penetrate through the Avatar’s shield, burning into Korra’s skin and allowing the flesh underneath to peel away. The younger woman falters slightly at the contact, her shoulders shaking under the pressure and the fire that threatens to wrap around her body and burn her alive. Korra growls out in agony, but pushes back against the violet flames, bellowing out a larger gust of air as she pushes forward, ignoring the incinerating pain flowing through her entire body. Asami attempts to stumble to her feet as she goes to help, but the dark skinned woman’s head cocks to the side, eyes white with transcendence.

Usually, Korra looks terrifying with those eyes. All Asami had remembered of them had been from the final battle with Zaheer a few miles out from the temple. Korra had transformed from her goofy and quirky best friend into a driven beast. She’d watched helplessly from the ground as she tore through rocks and the sharp cliffside in order to dual with the newfound air-bender. She can still remember each and every faltering moment Korra had experienced as she struggled against both Zaheer and the poison. The inventor had never seen the Avatar so fixated on something so… violent. She knew that Korra’s job had been to protect the air-benders and her friends, hence the State’s creation in the first place, but that, that gore and near death from the poison and suffocation, had rattled her. The foul memories had dredged a bottomless void in her heart, but now, it's… filled.

Now, as Asami watches those eyes, she realizes that same fear she'd felt three years ago is no longer there.

If Korra’s eyes could soften, Asami would say that they did in that moment. For a second, it seems as though the young Avatar is about to break the State and return to the joyful, carefree Korra she'd come to know for the past four and a half years, but the dark skinned woman refuses the temptation, holding strong into her spiritual drive. Her eyes settle on hers before she nods her head down to Kuvira. The Avatar’s sphere is getting smaller as Korra's left knee gives out suddenly when a stroke of purple flame collides with it. A sharp gasp comes from her lips as Asami watches in horror when parts of the beam slash against her exposed chest and torso. Korra screams and pushes back harder, her jaw clenching in torment. Heat blazes around Asami's shoulders as she feels the cover beginning to falter. The inventor watches as the Avatar forces her knee to bend and straighten as she squares her shoulders once more, fighting off the power wielded in the gun's blasts. But, before long, another strong pulse sends her way, bringing her back to that damaged knee with an enraged howl of pain. Asami gasps, tears welling in her eyes as she is powerless to help her weakening friend.

The sphere of air that encase the three women dwindles again. Korra's efforts are steadily draining with the use of the State and the sheer force of the beams, and all three women know that the Avatar doesn't have the power or strength to sustain their protection for much longer. Korra’s lips purse as she holds the purple beam back with a powerful gust of air from her left arm. She sucks in a deep breath and reaches out with her fairly damaged right hand, holding it flat in front of the inventor's chest. She's not exactly touching her, but instead only hovering a few inches away, as if she were telling her to stop in midair. For a moment, Asami doesn’t understand the gesture and she is confused as to what Korra wants, but then her body automatically begins to work for her. She
watches as her own hand lifts and her fingers intertwine around those callused palms of the woman in front of her. Korra’s jaw tightens as from those whites of her eyes, a tear rolls down her ashen cheeks. Asami gasps, but before she can do anything, Korra speaks.

“I love you,” the Avatar whispers softly, her voice not totally her own. It’s such a broken, bittersweet confession; it’s a combination of words that came too late. On any other given day, Asami would call the sound of her voice in the State demonic, but right now, it’s the most beautiful whisper in the world. She purses her lips to answer, to confirm her own feelings, but Korra’s fingers are pulling away. Asami can only watch in shock as those fingers clench into a fist, small wisps of air circulating around the knuckles. So many different things happen at once, all too quick for any of the three women to recognize.

The beam lets loose one final shriek.

Kuvira screams.

Korra closes her eyes.

Asami stops breathing.

The world explodes in a flash of white.

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“Asami, wake up!”

A familiar rasped voice calls out to her softly. Had death really just taken a matter of minutes? Asami grumbles as she feels sore all over. If she were dead, wouldn’t she not be feeling pain at the moment? The woman lets out an irritable sigh.

“Asami!” A harsh slap to her face brings her to the present. The inventor grudgingly opens her eyes to see a blurry, silver-haired woman standing in front of her. It takes a few moments, but she recognizes the older woman almost instantly.
“S-Su?” She gasps roughly, her voice raw and her throat dry. Everything in her body aches like she’d been hit by a steam roller. Her mouth burns with the lack of hydration and her eyes sting. Everything is burning for Spirit’s sake. The inventor goes to close her eyes again, but then she jerks them back open when she feels water entering her parted mouth. She sips delicately, feeling relieved as the fire in her throat is put out slowly.

“K-Korra?” She chokes as soon as she is given room to breathe. She blinks her eyes for the source of the water, thinking naively that it’d been the Avatar that had saved her again. Her heart stops beating as she only sees Kya standing before her, a sorrowful expression on her face.

“I-I’m sorry,” the older water bender says, looking down as tears lace her eyes. She finds herself unable to say anything further to comfort the CEO. Asami looks around, her shoulders trembling as she soon finds herself caught in a mess of Spirit Vines. Suyin is untangling them from her legs and arms as she takes in more of her surroundings. Suddenly, something bright in the distance catches her eyes, and Asami is forced to look up, only to have the breath ripped straight from her tired and dust-filled lungs.

A… spirit portal?

“Where is she?” Asami tries to ask the question in a demanding tone, but her voice is frail with emotion. Suyin’s hand places itself upon her thigh, but Asami shakes her head. “Where is she, dammit?!” The inventor cries in despair, mourning over her lost love as the tears clawing at her bloodshot irises. As she comes around some more, she realizes that she’s nowhere near where she’d been when Korra had formed a shield around her and Kuvira’s bodies. She remembers holding her friend’s hand, Korra telling her that she loved her, and then… and then the air flowing over her bloodied fist.

“No,” Asami breathes when she realizes why there was such a dull throbbing in her chest and back.

Korra *saved* her.

The heiress throws her head down as she begins to sob, repeating quietly, “no, no, no, oh Spirits no.”

“She could still be at the portal,” another pained voice gasps. Suyin moves her shoulder to allow Asami the view of a pale Lin resting against the tree in front of her, an arm clutched around her bloodied middle. The older woman’s eyes are fading and fleeting, but she still looks somewhat hopeful. From beneath the gaps of her crimson fingers, Asami can make out the mess of flesh and muscle that threatens to spill from her hold. Some of her armour has fused into the pale complexion
of her skin. Something in the heiress' stomach flops as she watches Lin's face scrunch up in pain as Kya directs the water towards her. The water-bender's eyes are concerned and focused on the slow pulsing rhythms of the cool liquid against her blemished skin.

“Kya and I can go see if she's there,” Lin wheezes, stumbling to her feet. Kya keeps her water on the wound, sucking out as much of the metal shrapnel as she can with the waves. Blood filters into the healing water, causing Kya's heart to clench in sorrow and agony. At Lin's proposition, Suyin crosses over a few patch of tangled vines immediately, putting her shaking hands upon Lin’s shoulders to steady the older woman as she teeters precariously upon the uneven ground. The stubborn older woman swats weakly at her arm, avoiding her gaze as Suyin's lips purse into a frown.

“No, you’re bleeding out from that rupture. You need to stay put,” Suyin tries to be strict, but her words are worried and concerned as she places a hand over Lin’s own arm. The eldest Beifong coughs before she chuckles haphazardly as she nods her head at her younger sister with a knowing expression, looking over her shoulder to Asami, who's still trying to stay conscious.

“The kid’s got it worse, Su. I didn’t say you shouldn’t come, I’m just saying that it’s better if we scout ahead first,” Lin gasps, wincing slightly. Suyin doesn’t look convinced, and as Lin places her free hand upon her lightly tensed shoulder, the younger sibling begins to understand Lin’s reasoning.

“If… if there’s something there,” Lin hisses, her eyes drooping as she fights her own wounds, “I’m pretty sure the Avatar would kill me before she’d let anything happen to her. I've seen the way Korra looks at her. Wouldn't want to invoke the Avatar State when I'm a puddle like this, now would I?” Suyin’s brows furrow at Lin's attempted humour, but the eldest sister shakes her head, pulling her arm around her sibling's shoulders in a tight hug.

“I’ll be okay,” she murmurs through a heavy breath, nodding her head gently. "I've seen worse days in training, I swear."

Suyin doesn't look convinced as she grips her tightly, crying into her sister’s shoulder as she presses their bodies closer together. The youngest Beifong holds onto her sibling for dear life, knowing all too well that Lin isn't telling her the truth. Her wounds are fatal, and as her sister's blood taints her own dusted uniform, she knows that Lin is running out of time. Suyin sobs harder at the realization, and Lin lets out a stifled wheeze when she pulls back, looking over to Kya. The water-bender and the metal-bender exchange a solemn, but loving glance. Asami knows that Korra once mentioned something about the chief of police having taken up an affection for the previous Avatar's other offspring, but she'd always thought that she'd been joking. But, as she watches their interaction now, she can't help but believe the younger woman's assumptions. Kya sighs deeply as she separates herself from Asami. She nods hesitantly before coming up behind them, placing an encouraging hand on the square of Suyin's shoulders.
“I’ve mended what I can of Asami’s ribs, but she’s still in rough shape. It’ll be an hour or two before she’ll be able to move, and when she does, she'll be about as quick as a turtle-duck. Lin's right, she's roughed up pretty bad, but she'll live,” Kya instructs the younger Beifong in a soft voice, glancing back at Asami as her head lolls against one of the trees. The woman’s complexion is far paler than she’d like, but she’s done as much as she could for someone that had been air-bended directly in the square of her chest and had been sent flying across a forest at nearly one hundred miles an hour. If someone asked her, she would tell them that she's simply amazed that Asami isn't scattered into bits and pieces, let alone dead from the force of the impact.

"And Lin?" Suyin asks softly, out of earshot of her older sister, who has now turned her back on the both of them. Kya's expression darkens as she watches Lin's shoulders tense and her body convulse with a shot of pain. Suyin doesn't miss the sorrow in the water-bender's eyes as she turns to face her lover's sister with a grim frown. Suyin's chest tightens as Kya's eyes well with tears and remorse.

"I've… I've done all I can," she breathes softly, "but it… the bleeding won't stop. The only other option is cauterization, but if you haven't noticed, neither of us are fire-benders. If… if I can get her to one, maybe she will have a chance." Suyin hangs her head, the tears flowing down her cheeks faster now.

"I… Thank you," she manages to choke out, swallowing the painful lump in her throat. Kya dips her head, squeezing her shoulder in support.

"No, if you hadn't saved us from the temple three years ago…," Kya stumbles on the words, her throat growing raw as she'd remembered how Lin had picked her up and carried her in her arms to the nearest healing hut. She'd remembered how calm the usually temperamental metal-bender had been with her as she'd laid in the healing pool, screaming as her broken bones had been set. She can still feel the soothing strokes of Lin's fingers upon her cheek as she'd wiped away those tears, leaving light kisses in their wake. Kya folds her hands together and blinks open her eyes to stare at Suyin with a nod.

"You saved my life," she whispers, looking back to Lin with a solemn expression, "you both did."

“Don’t let her get carried away,” Suyin mumbles back, gazing at her older sister in concern as she watches Lin stumble through the vines towards the portal. Kya nods again and goes to leave, but before she can, Suyin places a hand upon her shoulder, stopping her.

“And if you find her…,” Suyin trails off, unsure of whether she’s talking about her former protégée or the Avatar. Kya closes her eyes, her hands beginning to shake as her breath hitches. She knows
the level of responsibility that will await her should she find either woman.

“I’ll try, Su. I promise,” she says, but her tone is unconvincing and nervous. A lot of people had been saved today because of the experienced healer's actions, but she wasn’t sure if being that close to the beam when it went off… Spirits, Kya doesn’t want to think about what she might find.

“Please,” Asami whimpers from the ground, drawing the attention of both women as her eyes blur with tears, “bring her back home.”

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It's so… quiet.

Kuvira blinks open her eyes, only to find herself surrounded by ambient greens and soft yellows. Something feels dreadfully odd. It is strangely… peaceful? Kuvira had not felt peace in so long. She sits up, surprised to find the pain in her arm transformed from a firestorm to a gentle throb. She’s laying in a meadow, right by a giant beam of light that extends into the sky. Her brows furrow as she whips her head around, trying to look for any kind of remanence of Republic City. There are no buildings, no people, no Spirit Wilds. Just an empty meadow with purple flowers dotting the luscious earth floor… if it could be considered earth at this point. For a moment, she is reminded of the orphanage she'd grown up in, of Suyin's gardens, and of Zaofu.

For a fleeting second, she is truly happy with her memories.

Then, in the corner of her eye, she spots a cloud of transparent… animals? She’s not quiet sure what they are, but they’re huddled around something. Kuvira stumbles to her feet with a groan, the sound of her heavy footsteps reverberating through the empty air. Her body slumps to one side, but she seems to be able to walk somewhat fluidly. She feels light and airy. A few of the see-through objects fly away as she approaches, and Kuvira instantly notices that they’re not animals, but Spirits. The realization hits her like a swift punch to the gut as she stares at her surroundings with fear and anger.

She’s in the Spirit World? How?

The answer to her question lies directly in front of her as the remaining Spirits are scared off by her noise. She looks down through a slitted gaze at the body splayed out in a mess of broken limbs and bleeding cuts. Kuvira's lips curl up into a feral snarl as she limps heavily towards the downed
Avatar, her fingers twitching in need of revenge. Korra’s body remains motionless as the Spirits swim around her in worry, their quiet voices rushing out murmurs of concern and fear at the approaching metal-bender. The atmosphere grows thicker with stress and tension, and Kuvira nearly feels like she’s being suffocated. Still, her rage pushes her forwards until she all but collapses at the dark skinned woman's bloodied side.

“You killed me, you bitch,” Kuvira hisses sharply, whipping out her hand in an attempt to bend the metal clasps in her shoulder's armour. The motion seems hindered, as if she'd been chi-blocked. Kuvira gasps, turning back to see that the Avatar has begun to stir into consciousness.

“Mm,” Korra mumbles thickly, her voice garbled by blood as she parts her mouth, “c-can’t bend… not h-here.” Kuvira stays silent and fuming as she watches Korra’s faded blue eyes blink open halfway. Crimson liquid trickles down the corner of her mouth as she draws a shallow breath.

“Why?” The commander spits, her fingers clenching into shaking fists. The Avatar tilts her head weakly in an attempt to shake it, her eyes drooping shut again. Her chest rises and falls slower now, causing Kuvira to feel a small twinge of regret. Immediately, she furrows her brows. She hates this woman. She’d taken everything away from her - her family, her fiancé, her kingdom, her power and control. But, she can't help but look at the countless burns that line the Avatar’s chest and upper arms from the brute force of the beam she had created. In that instant, she realizes faintly that she'd managed to walk away fairly unscathed in comparison to the young adult that lay before her, struggling to stay awake.

“Spirit world,” Korra chokes out, blinking open her eyes again as she faintly smiles at the commander.

The look on her face surprises Kuvira as the Avatar turns her glossy eyes to the sky. The shock and faint remorse only lasts a minute before rage swells through Kuvira again. She reaches into her breast pocket for the item she always had kept close to her heart the day her parents had been murdered. She can’t bend, fine, but that doesn’t mean she still can’t kill the Avatar. She’s a warrior, a true captain of the guard, not some helpless bender. Kuvira snarls frustratingly as she grabs at the younger woman’s tattered shirt and heaves upwards, before slamming her down to the ground with a harsh thud. Korra barely reacts, except for a soft gasp as Kuvira swings her legs over the smaller woman’s waist, straddling her and pinning her to the ground. In a quick motion, she pulls out the long dagger, inscribed with her family name on the blade, and holds it to the Avatar’s throat.

“Give me one reason not to take your life,” Kuvira spits lithely. Korra’s eyes are still focused on the sky, the blue in her eyes growing dimmer with each forced breath. Kuvira realizes that her focus is not entirely upon her as the Avatar remains silent. The captain's other hand tightly clutches at the collar of the dark skinned woman's shirt, pulling frantically as she tries to get Korra's dazed attention.
“Huh?! Why should I spare your life?” Kuvira asks again, a little discouraged that the water tribe girl is being so quiet. Is she dead already? No, her chest is still rising and falling. Korra’s eyes are hazy and her lips quiver slightly as her brows furrow into a faint mournful expression.

“Y-You don’t have to anymore. The job… my purpose… it… it is c-complete,” Korra stutters as more blood pools from her mouth, her gaze now slowly fixating on Kuvira's baffled visage. Korra sighs and closes her eyes as she chokes on her own blood, her body growing weaker by the second.

“I… I was created to make peace,” Korra murmurs softly, her voice carrying in the faint wind, “and I have done that. As Amon was exposed, benders and non-benders united together. From the destruction of Vaatu, the spirits and the people are connected. The tyranny of the Red Lotus has been abolished with Zaheer's capture. And finally, with the destruction of the bomb and the creation of this portal, your power has been vanquished. The world will live on, and the cycle of war stops for its respite.” Kuvira growls at the Avatar’s wise words, pressing the blade closer to the girl’s neck, faintly nicking the skin. Korra’s eyes blink open halfway, tired but somehow understanding. The compassion and empathy in her eyes chills the captain.

“You can still go back, you know,” Korra says through a strained wheeze, “but you have to work with them, not against them. You want a peaceful place for your people, and if by killing me gives you the power to do good, then I give you permission to take my life. You have saved many before you, my father and the air-benders, my friends when Zaheer had attempted my capture in Zaofu, and my own life as you’d refused to kill me the day we first fought. I trust you to do good, Kuvira. If my life, my blood, means so much to you, I will let you take it. Only if for the benefit of society and of its peace. Too many have died from internal conflicts like these. The fighting, the death, it… it has to end, now.” Kuvira has to blink a few times just to be sure that what she’s hearing is real. The Avatar, the master of all four elements, the most powerful human being in existence, is laying down her life for her.

“You'd just give up? Why?” Kuvira asks in a gasp, the grip on the blade faltering. Korra lets out a faint chuckle, much to the older woman’s surprise. The Avatar sighs again, her eyes threatening to close once more. Kuvira swallows thickly as she follows a small tear as it leaks out from the girl’s eye.

“Because,” Korra says hoarsely, “I see myself in you.” Kuvira shakes her head.

“We’re nothing alike,” she growls back viciously, her own strangled emotions coming into play. Korra stares at the older woman blankly, her throat bobbing against the cool blade of the knife as she swallows with a thick, forced push.
“But we are,” she murmurs, blinking away tears, “we are both stubborn, but want the best for our people, through whatever means necessary. We take risks, we make mistakes, but our intentions are the same, Kuvira. I know you want peace for your people. You just got lost finding it.”

“I… I…,” Kuvira tries to refute the claim, but she knows deep down, the Avatar speaks the truth. She'd never intended for so many lives to have been lost at her hands. She'd wanted to give her people what they'd rightfully deserved. Korra licks her lips, tasting the faint tang of copper upon her tongue.

“You can still fix this,” Korra murmurs, cocking her head slightly to the glowing beam beside the both of them. It buzzes a low drone in the background, like faint radio static. “You can go back there and rebuild - to help them, to care for them, to lead them through these tough times.” The Avatar coughs, spluttering between mouthfuls of blood as she fights to finish her sentence. Her thoughts trace back to Senna, Tonraq, Mako and Bolin, Lin and Suyin, Tenzin and his family, and most of all, to Asami. A faint smile cracks across her chapped lips as she draws a sharp breath.

“And… to love them,” Korra breathes, finally finishing her thought as she turns back to Kuvira with a faint nod. She chokes on the word as Asami’s face flashes before her, causing her heart to break with each shuddering breath closer to her death. Kuvira sees Bataar Jr, his smile and strong arms reaching for the woman with an always warm embrace. Oh how she longed for that comfort. Korra’s eyes glaze as she watches Kuvira's face scrunch into a frown.

“It’s not too late, Kuvira,” she whispers as she feels her chest tighten with sorrow and remorse, “you can still go back to them. You can start over again, and this time, you can do good. You can save them.” Kuvira remains silent for a few moments before she draws a shaky breath.

“And what would become of you?” She asks, looking to the injured Avatar, running her gaze over the multitude of deep scores, burns, and bruises that lace her body. She knows that the Avatar understands the blunt outlook that awaits her. Korra struggles to swallow as a clot of blood catches in her throat. She coughs it out, flecks of the liquid spitting accidentally upon Kuvira's face. The metal-bender frowns at the sight, but doesn't react. Korra's eyes are mournfully apologetic, and Kuvira can't help but feel slightly guilty; the Avatar shouldn't have to apologize for anything. For a moment, she forgets about the symbolism behind all of what Korra is meant to be, and instead focuses on who Korra is. Her face is young, but her eyes are aged beyond their years, blue eyes brimming with wisdom and authenticity. Her body is fit and scarred, but still the complete representation of true strength.

Most of all, Kuvira realizes all at once, Korra is a kid.

Sure, she is maybe more of a young adult, but to Kuvira, a soldier who'd spent Korra’s lifetime training and fighting, she’s nothing more than a mere child. A child, who'd managed to bring
down so much crime and evil in the world while trying to grow up at the same time. A child that had held the world’s burdens upon her muscled shoulders even when she hadn’t had the physical or mental strength to carry them on her own. A child that hadn’t ever received the opportunity to ask for respite without second thoughts from the changing world around them. A child that knows more of sacrifice and loss than any hardened veteran, herself included. Korra is a child that lays beneath her, drawing ever close to her last breath, without ever having experienced the true joys of adolescence, of youth, and most importantly, of innocence and love.

“You know,” Korra says softly, breaking the commander from her thoughts as she cuts around answering her question. “I’d always wanted to be the Avatar the minute I’d found out it was me. I’d heard stories of Aang and Master Katara, of their work in rebuilding the nations, of the creation of Republic City and of the White Lotus. He was… is, my hero. I mean, I always thought, if a twelve year old boy who'd spent a hundred years trapped in ice could save the world, maybe, just maybe, I could too.” Kuvira stays quiet as Korra chuckles sadly, lost in her memories of reading books on the previous Avatar's adventures, and tearing apart the small place her parents’ owned as she’d practiced the three elements in an effort to reenact those events.

“I wanted to change the world, to show them that the Avatar could still bring hope to those who'd felt like he'd disappeared,” Korra chokes as tears stream down her face, “but I never knew that it would be so hard… so painful. I didn't understand that there’d be so much loss and destruction, so much sacrifice throughout my service.” Korra closes her eyes as she remembers the gruelling rehabilitation she’d been through after being poisoned, the look on Asami's face as her father had been ratted out as an Equalist supporter, and then later the broken glance in her eyes as Kuvira had crushed him. She sees the faces of her loved ones surrounding her as she'd laid broken and bleeding in her father's arms after the dual with Zaheer. She remembers Asami tending to her for a full six months before eventually, the Avatar had worked up the courage to push her away.

Asami, Korra thinks - no, she knows - had given her the greatest sacrifice.

“I thought maybe,” Korra whispers distantly as she forces herself to focus on the present, “I… I thought maybe, I could be person that brought peace once again. I thought that it was my job, but finding peace… it's so hard when the world constantly expects more. Sometimes, I wonder if peace even exists. Some part of me did came forward for the right reasons, you know to save society and all, but the other part wanted people to recognize me as what I am, instead of seeing me for who I am. I lost a part of myself trying to figure out what being the Avatar really meant, but then I realized that it's not about bending the elements or being a diplomat.” Kuvira shivers at the desolate tone in Korra’s voice as the Avatar blinks her eyes open again.

“I realized it late, and I hadn't had a past life to guide me through the rough times,” she breathes out as she looks to Kuvira with an empty gaze. “Even today, I still don’t know what I’m doing. I… I just hope that whatever choice I make, especially right now, that it’s the best one.” Kuvira watches as Korra shivers harder beneath her, more tears rolling down her ashen face.
“Perhaps instead,” she coughs, chuckling lightly, “the next earth-bender will have a better clue.” Korra slumps deeper into the grass, enjoying the calming sensation of the dew upon her charring skin. She swears she can hear a slight sizzle, but she thinks little of the noise in her head.

“I-If you go back,” Korra whispers hoarsely, looking back to Kuvira with a pleading gaze, “can you watch over my mother and father for me? Tenzin and the air-benders? My friends, too. Mako, Bolin, Varrick, Zhu Li, Naga…, Asami…, I… I didn't get to tell them goodbye. I love them very much.” Korra begins to cry as she closes her eyes, her mind going back to that one specific person that had been there and saved her life beyond her ability to count.

“I love her so much,” Korra gasps between hiccuped cries, her heart clenching in her chest. She feels her air grow thin and more spaced out as the darkness flickers in the corners of her eyes. She doesn't know much about death or dying, but she remembers experiencing a similar light and easing feeling from just before when Suyin had bended the poison out from her system three years ago. It's… relaxing, if she can dare use the word. The breeze of the Spirit World calms her, soothing her with gentle whispers of reassurance as the grass starts to curl over her arms, wrapping her in its safe embrace.

“I… I love her,” Korra repeats again softly as she trails off, her eyes drooping as she fights to stay awake… just alive for moments longer. Kuvira pauses for a moment, knowing all too well that she should just take the Avatar’s life, for it had been her plan along. She could go back down and continue her previous agenda, but something stops her as she looks to Korra. Something halts the blade at the smaller woman’s neck from slicing the skin open.

“Take care of them, Kuvira,” Korra murmurs in a faint voice as she slips further from reality, “bring them peace.”

At those words, Kuvira, the stoic and unwavering captain, finally breaks.

The knife slips from her grip as looks down to see Korra with a slight smile painted upon her lips, her eyes now fully closed. Her chest still rises and falls as the older woman glances around at their surroundings before her eyes fixate upon the spirit portal. Kuvira sucks in a deep breath as she takes a moment to realize that what she is about to do will ruin any progress she'd made so far. The minute she thinks about it, she immediately understands that she had actually made the opposite of progress in Zaofu and across the Earth Kingdom. She glances back at the dying Avatar and sighs deeply. She reaches forward and gently cups the Avatar's cheek in her palm, her thumb grazing over the gaunt cheekbone. Tears well in her eyes as Korra's chest falls in a low, fatigued sigh. The captain bows her head, closing her eyes as she makes her decision.

“I will,” Kuvira whispers solemnly as she slips her palm under Korra's neck, “but you’re coming with me.”
"We're here," Suyin says, causing Asami's eyes to flutter open fully. She'd been dozing in and out of consciousness throughout the period in which the leader of Zaofu had half-dragged, half-supported her in their journey towards the portal, and to finding Korra.

Asami nods as she leans heavily upon Suyin’s shoulder when they enter the clearing to the giant spirit portal. The inventor lets out a whimper as she remembers Korra’s face, those white eyes bearing into hers as she’d confessed her love for the heiress. Asami’s chest tightens as she just wished she could have had the time to hold onto Korra longer, to tell her that she feels the same way, and had felt the same way for the past three years. Suyin’s grip on her waist shifts as they stumble down into the crater. From across the way, Asami spots Bolin and Mako searching with Tenzin and Jinorra. The brothers spot her first, clambering over smouldering rock and vines to get to her and the older metal bender. Suyin sighs in relief as Bolin takes her from her shoulder, instead resting the inventor’s weight against his strong side. Mako looks worried as he gazes at his ex-girlfriend’s injuries. Asami sees the fading burn mark, now lessened from Kya’s powerful healing, and winces. Mako shrugs it off and shakes his head, assuring her it’s nothing.

“What happened to you?” He asks, concern lacing his words as he eyes the bandages that wrap thickly around Asami’s midsection. The heiress gulps and chokes on air as she remembers Korra’s face once more. Tears burn at her eyes and Mako understands that maybe she’s not ready to talk quite yet. Asami shakes her head faintly as she looks to the portal over his shoulder, not bothering to answer his question.

“Korra?” She asks instead, gazing at him pleadingly. Mako looks equally disappointed and saddened as he dips his head. The fire-bender sighs, closing his eyes as he pinches the bridge of his nose with his clean hand. Bolin grimaces from beside her, his shoulders tensing with unease.

“We can’t find either of them. The Spirits came down from the portal to help us look, but they’re not finding anything either. Kuvira’s guard is threatening to open fire on the portal if we can’t find them,” Bolin explains, his voice serious for once. In that moment, Asami wishes that he’d crack a lame joke or create dynamic story as to how to find Korra. The fact that he’s as somber as the rest of them only adds to her worry that maybe she’d never see the love of her life ever again. Asami looks past Bolin to see Suyin knelt in front of a pale Lin, who is resting against an uprooted tree. Blood has tainted her armour completely crimson now. The veins in her neck are dark and prominent, showing just how much of the life has left her body. Kya is working water around her slashed midsection, but she’s shaking her head sadly at the younger Beifong as she struggles to mend the damage.

"Please," Suyin begs Kya as she holds onto Lin's hand with a white knuckle grip. Her sister's eyes
are fading with the telltale sign of release, the once strong emerald orbs now turning silver with each passing moment. Suyin's ashen face rests in the crook of her sister's neck, her tears staining the skin beneath her face. Lin is humming, her chest rumbling as she murmurs faux assurances to her fragile sister.

"Hey," Lin hushes her in a gurgled tone, "... S-Su, it's okay. We're okay. We're... we're okay." Kya fights back her tears as she bends harder, with as much focus and strength she can, but even with the rushed cauterization, aided by Mako moments earlier, Lin is still too weak.

"I just got you back," Suyin cries, squeezing her sister's hand tightly, "I'm not letting you go again, Lin. You said you'd come back into our lives to stay. You have a family now... you can't leave that behind. You can't leave me, Lin." The eldest Beifong sighs at the words, her head leaning against the rock as her eyes begin to droop with fatigue. Suyin cries harder into her shoulder, pushing her body as close as she can to her older sibling out of comfort. Kya's hands begin to shake as her strength fades and the water dissipates. Lin blinks open her eyes to glance over at the defeated water-bender, a weak but playful expression present in her gentle gaze. The chief of police winces as she reaches her spare hand up and beckons for her lover to sit beside her. Kya nearly collapses at her side, her hand looping over Suyin's to wrap around the bender's damp waist.

"A family for Lin Beifong?" Lin chuckles as she presses a faint kiss to both their foreheads. "Who'd think it'd be possible?" Kya smirks haphazardly as her thumb traces circles over the flesh of Lin's hand, her head drooping to lay upon the chest of the woman she'd spent decades pining after. She reaches up and lightly claps the metallic casings of the metal-bender's shoulder in a mock gesture.

"Maybe if you'd just gotten rid of that stick up your ass and saw which of Aang's kids was really best for you, you'd have had it sooner, dumbass," Kya tries to joke, but her voice is strangled with grief. Lin manages a low chortle at the comment before she tilts her jaw down so that her nose presses into the greying hair of the water-bender. Kya's eyes close as she stifles a cry at the sensation of Lin's soft breaths against her scalp.

"Good things come to those who wait," Lin murmurs, her voice growing weaker, "and I have waited long enough, I'd say." Suyin sighs deeply as she, too, lets her eyes close shut, her nose tucked into the soft skin of her older sister's neck.

"That you have, Lin," she mumbles through her cracking voice, "that you have."

"It's been so long since I've sat down," Lin wheezes, a faint smile playing at her lips, "since I've been at peace, since I've... been in love." She chokes on the last one, her lips quivering as her eyes well with tears from the overwhelming push of emotion. Kya bursts into a low cry, ducking her head further into Lin's neck as she tightens her hold upon the woman that has long since claimed her heart and affection.
"You deserve it, sweetheart," the water-bender whispers shakily, pressing a light kiss to the sharp line of Lin's jaw. Suyin nods her head in an agreement, sighing tiredly as her emotions and grief drain her of any energy she'd been running on. Lin's chest shudders as she feels weaker, but also... lighter.

"Thank you both," Lin murmurs quietly, her voice resonating with love and happiness, "for saving me."

Neither the youngest Beifong nor the water-bender say a word as Lin slips into unconsciousness.

“Lin’s a hardass,” Mako says distantly as he follows Asami's worried gaze. He tries to act stoic and calm, but he can't help but feel fear course through his veins as he tells her, “Lin won’t... this... it won’t bring her down. She’s going to be okay. So is Korra. We're all gonna make it out.” Asami doesn't respond as she turns away from the experienced metal-bender and her family and back to face the glowing green light of the portal. All she can think of is Korra.

Asami is not spiritual, but in that moment, she *prays* for a miracle.

Lucky for her, the call is answered.

“Over there! The portal!” Tenzin’s voice booms, jolting the three friends from their spot. Asami’s eyes widen as she watches a blurred figure shadow through the light. Something in her heart snaps as she pushes off of Bolin. The figure begins to clear and Asami nearly cries at the sight.

“Stand down,” Kuvira's voice immediately calls out in an authoritative, but slightly remorseful tone as she sees her Mechs and soldiers approaching. She stares down at her officers, who stand shocked at the sight, more specific, the sight of what lays precariously in her arms.

“Korra!” Asami screams as she lunges forward, ignoring the pain in her chest as she sprints towards her friend’s limp body dangling in Kuvira's oddly protective embrace. Kuvira stops at the sound, her eyes meeting Asami’s burning green gaze as the heiress vaults towards her. She looks down at Korra’s head, turned flat against her chest. Her breaths are barely noticeable now, as is the faint rise and fall of her chest. With a heavy heart burdened with guilt and sorrow, she kneels slowly, setting the mortally wounded Avatar down upon the earth with a gentle thud. Before the young woman’s head can hit the ground, Kuvira places her palm upon the back of the Avatar’s head, lightly laying it down upon a soft patch of moss. Asami’s frantic screams grow nearer, as does Suyin’s angered shouting. The captain closes her eyes for a moment before she looks up to an
enraged Asami.

"I am sorry," Kuvira says in a faint whisper, the words ricocheting off the metal in her chest plate until the sound reaches the inventor's ears. Asami slows down as she looks to Korra, not willing to accept the captain's apology, nor the deeper meaning behind it. Suyin had managed to pry herself off of Lin's broken, resting body and bring herself to face her former protégée with disappointment and fury. Kuvira nods at her, bowing her head in shame.

“I will atone for my charges,” she whispers as she feels Suyin’s hands grasp her shoulders. "I surrender myself into your custody, Suyin. I know it may not seem so, but I feel remorseful of my actions and the damage I've caused. Anything that I can do to help Republic City, I will gladly do. I'm... sorry."

Suyin scoffs, but part of her does feel a pang of remorse for her former student. Kuvira doesn’t dare look at her mentor as she is hoisted up from the ground and placed under arrest. Her eyes find Lin Beifong’s slouched body from the other side of the clearing and her green eyes catch Kya's hateful expression in the same time. She spies the blood on the chief's waist and hangs her head with guilt and shame. Suyin mutters to her about how much she has to fix, how much damage she has done, about the damage she’d caused to her family, to her son, and Kuvira only nods, knowing that she will do as she can to make up for her mistakes, even going as far as the length Korra had gone for her; she'd lay down her life if need be.

The once great commander takes one last look at the limp Avatar before she is ushered away to face the consequences of her crimes.

“Korra?” Asami whispers as she reaches the younger girl. She collapses to her knees weakly as she pulls Korra's heavy frame to her lap, not caring about all the blood or dirt staining her clothes. She can only see Korra, beautiful, strong, amazing, Korra laying in her arms. Asami reaches out and wipes some caked blood from Korra’s cheek, as if to erase some of the pain, but the Avatar remains still and unmoving.

“Come on,” Asami pleads, holding her closer to her chest, pushing Korra’s head to the top of her left breast, as if her heartbeat could rid the Avatar of her many fatal wounds. The inventor grips her best friend so tightly, with so much fear and anguish as she feels the love for her bleed through each vein in her body. Korra is everything to her, and now that everything is slipping away and she can't bring her back.

“I can’t lose him and you, Korra,” Asami cries out, shaking her head as she curls over Korra’s limp frame. “I... I can’t lose you, Korra. I'm not ready to say goodbye just yet. Please, just hang on, even if for a moment. Kya’s here, Korra. She can help you. She... she can fix this... fix you.”
At the mention of the water-bender, Asami jerks her head up, looking for support from Aang’s second offspring, but the older woman is watching with an aggrieved facial expression, her head tucked into Lin's shoulder as she watches in silence from a few meters away. Rage fills Asami’s frame as she glares at the bender, but once she makes out the defeat in those calming blue eyes, eyes so much like Korra, she shockingly realizes that this truly is it. Mako and Bolin reach down and support a barely conscious Lin as she grumbles out that she wants to see the Avatar again. Kya holds her lover steady as everyone begins to draw nearer to the body of the girl who’d saved Republic City, the material world, and the spirit world. Suyin returns to Lin's side, taking her from Bolin's grip. The older woman slumps against them, causing the two women holding her up to buckle under her weight. Her breaths become more spaced apart and her eyes are drooping harder. Suyin murmurs something in her ear, but Lin shakes her head, her gaze fixed on the Avatar. Asami turns her gaze back down to Korra, her eyes burning with mournful tears as she begins to sob.

“Please…, Korra,” she begs softly, “please don’t leave me. I'm not ready for you to leave. I need you, Korra. I… I’m lost without your smile. Your laugh lights up my world. Your arms are the safest place I know. You are my world, Korra. You… I, I need you, dammit.” Korra doesn’t respond, bare for a few small, and languidly spaced breaths. Asami watches as the Avatar’s face begins to pale even further with her constant blood loss. She shakes her head again, furiously denying that Korra, for the first time in her life, isn’t strong enough to recover from her injuries this time.

“You got through the loss of your bending. You survived Vaatu's wrath. You fought the poison. You saved Republic City,” Asami tries to reason with her motionless frame, but her calls fall deaf to Korra’s ears. “You saved my life. You… you saved me, Korra.” Asami bows her head, allowing her lips to brush over Korra’s bloodied forehead. Her eyes scrunch up with the threat of new tears as her lips quiver.

“I wish I could have done the same for you,” she murmurs into the younger woman’s skin. Her grip is tighter, winding the smaller woman further into her grasp. She remembers all the turmoil the Avatar had been through in the past four years and knows that despite her young age, she’d seen through so much, too much, for a woman of her age to fathom. Three years of it, she’d faced on her own, trying to survive nightmares and tainted memories.

And just like that, it all caught up to the woman in one final battle.

“I love you,” Asami states strongly, her voice full and low as she begins to cry again. She kisses Korra’s forehead, her cheeks, her nose, her jaw, her lips… oh Spirits, her lips. Asami sobs harder when her mouth grazes those gentle petals upon her face.

“I love you so much, Korra,” Asami cries out as her body begins to shake from her sobs. Korra’s
head lolls weakly against her shoulder as her mouth parts. Asami looks down, her world coming to a grinding halt as she gasps at what she sees.

Korra’s chest stops rising or falling.

Everything just… stops.

Asami watches as a few of the Spirits that had been circling the portal descend and place themselves around Korra’s body, as if they themselves were grieving the loss of the Avatar. They slip past her charred flesh and into her skin. Asami opens her mouth to scream, to shoo them away, but a hand places itself upon her forearm. The inventor turns to see Jinorra watching the event take place with a glazed expression. Her eyes are glossy with unshed tears as she looks at Asami with a knowing expression. The young heiress doesn’t understand, but she remains docile as the Spirits enter her love’s body. She simply reaches forward and brushes away the stray hair from Korra’s face, her eyes softening as she sees how peaceful her friend looks.

She remembers all that pain again, and suddenly, Asami understands.

“Rest, my brave warrior,” Asami murmurs in bittersweet defeat, “take your leave in the comfort of those around you, and be free. You fought a good fight, Korra… the best fight. You're the strongest, bravest, most courageous woman I've ever come to know. I…I’m so proud of you, Korra.” Asami doesn’t need to look up to know that everyone is bowing their heads in solemn farewell as the spirits pass through Korra’s body in silence. A single tear strolls down the inventor’s face as she sighs remorsefully, still holding her friend tight to her side.

“Thank you, Korra, for everything,” she whispers, kissing her friend’s parted mouth again with a soft peck. So much pain curls into her heart, but she pushes it away for Korra’s sake. If this is how it is to end, then she will see her friend through with a proper goodbye, not one plagued with grief.

“Thank you, for giving me a chance, for confiding in me, for protecting me,” she breathes into her almost lover’s lips before she takes a breath, “and for loving me, even if I was too late.” Asami shudders as she closes her eyes and flashes back to those eyes, that hand gripping hers, and the faint words echoed from Korra’s lips as they’d forcefully parted ways. She reaches down, grabbing for the Avatar’s hand and loosely intertwining their fingers once more. Only this time, Korra’s hands aren’t possessive or asserting their place, but limp and frail. Asami squeezes lightly, as if she were made of fine china or something delicate. The heiress almost scoffs at the idea of Korra being delicate, because she knows her friend is anything but soft like a daisy. Asami sighs deeply, her air fatigued by the past month’s events. She’s so tired and all she wants to do is fall into eternity with Korra, and to forget all this pain.
Suddenly, there’s a faint squeeze in the inventor’s hand, causing Asami to look down with wide, expectant eyes. She realizes that she must’ve imagined the sensation, because Korra is just as motionless as she’d been before. Asami goes to bow her head, but before she can close her eyes again, a whisper breaks through to her ears. She glances down at Korra, only to watch in sorrow as the moment she’d been dreading, the moment she knew would come, finally arrives. A small faint burst of yellow light flickers from Korra’s lips as the Spirit escapes from her body. Time stops running as everything around the heiress turns to black, leaving just her and the passed body of the Avatar hanging loosely in her arms. She sniffs as she watches the faint light begin to take shape as it leaves Korra’s parted mouth. Asami is still for a moment before she realizes what is happening. Her heartbeat picks up the pace nervously and she watches something she hadn’t expect, to suddenly happen.

The Spirit breaks into two.

One half transforms into the smaller version of Raava. It turns its head down to face Korra’s frame, and though it doesn’t have a face, per say, Asami can almost make out a smile upon her tiled visage. They hadn’t been joined long, the Spirit and the recent Avatar, but it had been long enough for Korra to have made a deep enough connection with the Light Spirit. Raava’s head nods up to the inventor, the checkered surface staring into her emerald eyes before the flecks of yellow dust float off to the sky. Before it disappears completely, Asami makes out a final farewell echoing from its mouth.

*Until we meet again, Avatar Korra.*

Asami looks down from the sky as Raava finally drifts away to find the next newborn earthbender. As the heiress looks down, her heart catches in her throat and the numbing ache in her head disappears. Standing before her as a pure spirit glowing beautifully in yellows and whites, is a smiling Korra.


“Korra,” she whispers the woman’s name in disbelief, and Korra chuckles warmly, a sound Asami never thought she’d ever have the chance of hearing again. She reaches out with her bare hand, but her fingers run through the Spirit’s body. Korra’s smile dissipates softly as she looks to her love’s hand with bittersweet sigh. Korra’s lips form a small, half-lipped smile as she gazes deeply into Asami’s eyes.

“Not this time, Asami. I’m sorry…” Korra whispers softly, her voice smooth and soft like the babbling brooks outside the Southern Water Tribe. Asami gasps out a choked cry at the sound of her friend’s voice. Korra’s ghost sighs as it reaches out, placing a pale hand upon the inventor’s cheek. Her thumb brushes over a straggling tear and for a moment, Asami allows herself to pretend
that she had wiped the tear away.

“I love you,” Asami blurts out in amidst a earth-shaking sob, her hand trying to cover Korra’s, but only to fail as she touches her own skin. She needs to feel her, to know that she’s here with her and not gone like her family, but she can’t. The apparition shakes her head sadly, before closing her eyes. Korra takes a minute to breathe, a few flecks of light passing over her lips as she does so. Asami almost wants to tell her to stop, to preserve whatever time with this vision of Korra that she can while it lasts. Korra's eyes blink open again, her gaze clear and pure this time.

“I love you too, Asami,” Korra murmurs soothingly as she trails her hand down until she’s able to point a finger into the heiress’ chest. Asami looks down at the gesture, catching the sight of Korra's limp body, before she nods them back up at those startling icy eyes.

“I’ll wait for you,” Korra says gently, pulling her hand away as she gives the inventor a faint broken smile. She looks back to the spirit portal before turning towards Asami once more, her lips pulling into a wider, more mischievous grin; it's one that reminds Asami of their good days together.

“But I don’t want to see you anytime soon, ‘Sami,” she hums with a gentle chuckle, her eyes scanning over the rest of the people hovering around their bodies. “Because, you know that I’m going to need someone to watch over them, and I can’t think of a better person than you.” Asami turns to see that her friends are all frozen, non-existent in the experience she’s sharing with the younger woman. She goes to face Korra because she has so many questions, so many needs and desires, some selfish and others altruistic, but Korra is slowly fading from her sight.

“One day, when we meet again, we’ll take a vacation, just the two of us, okay?” Korra says softly, her voice growing quieter. Asami stays stuck for a moment before she nods slightly. She looks back to the portal, then down to Korra’s motionless body, and then back up to Korra’s spirit.

“Sounds perfect,” Asami replies in a shaky voice, nodding her head as the tears stream down her face. Korra throws her a signature grin as she musters up the remainder of her spirit energy to reach forward and wrap her arms around her neck in a fierce, protective hug.

“I will always love you,” Korra whispers into her ear as she pulls back, eyes flickering down to Asami’s quivering lips. “Never forget that, no matter where this leaves you in the time being.” Asami takes a deep breath as she swears she can feel Korra’s warm breath on her lips.

“I promise to always love you, Korra,” she says quietly, leaning her head forward, trying to fool herself into believing that she can feel the love of her life pressing against her. Korra’s smile grows
wider and her eyes water as she nods, softly murmuring, “I promise, too, Asami.”

Just for a moment, Asami puts aside all logic and pretends it’s completely real.

The heiress loses herself in the kiss that Korra gives her. She digs deep and Spirits, she can feel Korra’s lips on hers. She memorizes every faint swipe of her love’s tongue against hers. She wants to close her eyes and absorb the memory, but she can’t out of the fear of opening her eyes to see it all become a giant hallucination. Korra’s eyes close and Asami decides that she’s never seen or felt anything more beautiful in her entire life. The kiss lasts a few more precious moments before Korra begins to pull away, the glow around her body beginning to disappear into the portal. Asami cries out and reaches for her to come back, but Korra extends her hand in the same motion she’d made earlier, just before she’d saved the heiress’ life.

This time, Asami doesn’t hesitate as she places her hand flat against Korra’s own. Their fingers intertwine and the two hands hold each other tightly, even as Korra’s body begins to fade away into the portal. Korra's eyes are trained on their hands, as if she were trying to memorize the sight and feel of their intertwined fingers. Asami squeezes them tighter together, trying to keep Korra as close to her as she can. The dying Avatar can only smile and cry at the sight as Asami holds on for as long as she can, fighting away the tears to prevent even the slightest of a blurred vision. If this is the last she will see of Korra for a long time, she will make sure she sees her off down to the last lingering speck of light.

Soon enough, Korra’s face begins to fade, but before it can, the former Avatar's eyes flicker upwards to meet hers. The expression they share is one of happiness and love. Soon, however, it fades, keeping just their hands until even that, too, is gone to leave only a few speckles of light. They linger in the air before they drift past Asami. The inventor follows their path, only to watch as they approach Lin's limp body. The heiress holds her breath as she watches the light penetrate through the gaping hole in the metal-bender's stomach. Light pours out from the wound, before Lin's skin begins to glow a bright yellow. She tries to see if anyone else can see what is happening, but they're all frozen. The chief's eyes flicker open halfway, and for a moment, there's a dash of blue that flickers in those green depths, but it's gone before Asami can appreciate it. Lin's lips form a signature Korra smile before the older woman falls back into a state of rest. Asami watches and expects to feel empty, to feel the loss stab at her like a shard of glass, but she doesn’t.

There is no void, no sadness, no regret, but peace.

The inventor glances down to Korra’s now dead body and a broken smile paints her lips as she remembers the kiss. It takes her a few minutes of silence and remembrance before she nods her head up to see her friends, her new family, staring down at her with sad eyes. The moment of transcendence has passed, and now Korra, the once mighty Avatar and bringer of peace, is dead. Asami takes a deep breath and rises, her pain extinguished as she carries the passed hero in her arms. Mako goes to try and take her, but Asami shakes her head, to which the man curtly bows his
head, stepping back respectfully. Bumi and Bolin watch as the woman limps past them, stepping in front of Tenzin, Suyin, Kya, and Lin, who glance down at Korra’s body with tears in their eyes. Lin's half-lidded gaze meets the soft one of the inventor as they exchange a knowing expression. Words aren’t necessary; Lin had felt the exchange. She knows of the Avatar's final gift and sacrifice that has allowed her to live another day. Lin folds her hands into a wrapped fist as she stumbles forward before bowing. Asami gasps, tears running down her cheeks as Lin winces when she straightens her back, her own gaze glossy.

"Thank you," she whispers softly, looking between her and the motionless body of Korra. Asami clutches her tightly, allowing the sadness and bereavement to fall down her own shoulders now that she has seen Korra off properly. She cries harshly, but even through the force of her sobs, she doesn't dare let go of the one who made all of this possible. Lin's eyes brew with tears as she, too, begins to cry softly. The sobs are universal, wracked through everyone carefully watching the body of the former Avatar when solemn expressions. The oldest air master steps forward after some time, wiping away the lone moisture that streaks down his gaunt cheekbones and into the forest of his beard.

“Asami?” Tenzin asks, his voice a low rasp. Asami sighs as she looks back down at Korra’s face, warmth and a faint hint of sadness prodding at her heart.

“It’s okay,” she whispers softly as nods her head, “she’s home now.”
The Aftermath

Chapter Summary

The world slowly mourns the loss of the Avatar.

Chapter Notes

Firstly, I am SO sorry this is so long (like 6.5k words longer than the last - first? - part), but it is the only way that this will work, so bear with me, haha. It's 53 pages in total. Trust me, I would split it up, but I can't because it just won't work muaaah. I'm so sorry :( 

I watched the last episode again and got super emotional once more, I'm so sorry. The song is "Mt Washington" by Local Natives - yes, I found it from Life is Strange, an amazing indie game (protect Kate Marsh at all costs, am I right?) that is really worth your time playing if you love story centred games.

Yes, Tenzin's speech is inspired by the one Gobber gave to Stoick as they did the traditional viking send-off (amazing movie, with an amazing soundtrack and cast, too).

Please, PLEASE listen to the song while reading this chapter/part/follow-up. I decided to make this into a five part short story (can I call it that?) instead. Lots of feels and heartbreaking angst.

Apologies in advance, again.

Face stained in the ceiling.

Why does it keep saying?

I don't have to see you right now.

I don't have to see you right now.
One Week Later

"Mom, why does my chest hurt?"

Pema glances up from her flower arrangements to peer at her youngest daughter staring up at her with confused eyes. Ikki’s expression is glazed, and for a moment the non-bender thinks that her daughter is in actual pain. She quickly gazes at the front of her daughter's form, running her hands over her torso and chest before breathing a sigh of relief when she finds no physical injury. Ikki still looks confused as she sits down next to her mother, curling up against her side as tears begin to well in her eyes. Pema sighs and places a hand upon her shoulder in gentle support.

"You're sad, Ikki," her mother tells her softly, "what you're feeling is called grief."

Ikki frowns as her hands involuntarily grip at her chest.

"What's that and why does it hurt so bad, Mom?" Ikki whimpers, crying again. Pema closes her eyes as she pulls her daughter closer. Ikki snuggles her face into her mother's chest, seeking warmth in the bitter morning cold. Even though they're inside their own room upon the Southern Water Tribe's chief’s grand estate, the fireplace only serves a limited amount of heat as a chill passes through their bodies. The cold, Pema knows, is partially physical but mostly metaphorical, but her children don't understand that. Ikki, never one to not be inquisitive, pipes up again, her voice soft and vulnerable.

"When will we see Korra again?" Her question is loaded, and Pema knows better than to lie to her children, especially at a time such as this. Pema takes a deep, hesitant breath before she bites her lip, turning Ikki's chin with a light graze of her fingers so that they're looking at each other, face to face.

"Not for awhile, Ikki," she says softly, her hand soothingly stroking her daughter's frazzled locks as she whispers, "Korra's gone to rest for a long time."

"So… she's asleep?"
"No," Pema replies gently as Ikki's brows raise. She's dead, and she's not coming back, she thinks, but knows that she can't say something so brutally honest to her child, who's still trying to understand what loss is. Ikki looks more confused than before as she looks to the flowers.

"Are these for Korra, Mom?" Ikki asks quietly, her eyes trained upon the cautious movements of her mother's fingers as she weaves the flowers together to form beautiful colour combinations. Pema's breath hitches as she closes her eyes. Her entire body threatens to crumble, but she sticks through the pain and sucks in a deep breath, keeping it together while in front of her child. The mother of four nods her head up slightly, opening her eyes to see her daughter gazing at the flowers with approval. Ikki smiles as she reaches for a small bundle, holding it in her hands.

"I think she'll like them," she says, looking up to her mother, "blue is her favourite colour."

Was, Pema wants so badly to tell her, we don't know what the Avatar's favourite colour is now.

"I think she would too, darling," Tenzin's voice suddenly calls out from behind the mother and daughter. Pema turns around to see the haggard face of her husband standing before her. His shoulders are drooped, and Jinora is pressed against his side. They both look like they'd walked through Hell and back with their tired gazes, but Pema knows they could look worse for two people that'd stayed up all night. Their eyes meet, and Pema can only remember the sheer sorrow and pain in her husband's gaze from when Aang had died several years ago. Her eldest daughter wears an identical expression, and something stabs at her heart. She never thought she'd see the same hollow expression again.

Pema had hoped to never see it again, more like.

"Daddy, did you come back from your meditation with Jinora, Chief Tonraq, Senna, Aunt Kya, and Uncle Bumi?" Ikki asks, a slight twinge of happiness in her voice at the sight of her father. Tenzin looks down at her, silent for a moment as he loses himself in his daughter's dark eyes, curious and innocent.

A vigil, Tenzin thinks as he nods his head, not meditation.

"Why did you take so long?" Ikki asks, cocking her head to one side in confusion. Tenzin lets out a deep sigh as he feels Jinora tense up beside him. His right hand reaches down and he rubs her back softly, earning a quietened cry from his daughter. He can feel the grief coming off her in waves.
"Daddy? Jinora? Why are you crying?" Ikki asks, her voice a whimper now. Tenzin parts his mouth to answer, but no words leave his lips. Beside him, Jinora wipes her eyes and chokes upon her breath as she puts some space between her and her father.

"We were just cold, Ikki. It's okay, we'll be fine once we sit by the fire for a bit," she mumbles quietly, nodding her head. Her voice is coarse, like a broken accordion. Tenzin squeezes her hand as a brief thanks. When he looks down, he sees a level of maturity and understanding in those dark eyes, ones that remind him of his own father before him. Tenzin gasps subtly as he realizes that now, both Avatars are gone, and so young at that.

"Daddy?" Ikki asks, drawing Tenzin's attention back to his kids. The older man, now feeling his bones grow heavy from sorrow and cold, turns towards his middle child with a different kind of stiffness. Pema's eyes flash in concern, but he shakes his head at her, turning back to face Ikki. Maybe one day he'll be able to explain to his daughter where they'd gone, and why. Ikki pulls herself up from her mother's side and runs forward, nearly tackling her father to the ground out of surprise. The force of the hug is strong, but the experienced air-bender balances himself before kneeling, pulling Ikki into an embrace. Jinora sniffles from beside him, and he pulls back far enough to invite her into the hug. From the small cot beside the fire, Meelo stirs to consciousness to see his family in a giant embrace. Without any words, he launches forward and presses himself into the hug. Pema and Rohan join after sometime, the air-benders and non-benders brought together in their moment of shared sorrow. After sometime, they pull away to give each other some breathing room. Jinora joins her mother at the fire, reaching for a few of the flowers. Ikki stays with her father, her arm holding his leg lightly. She feels tears form in her eyes as she watches them work in silence. Meelo looks up to his father, his own eyes misty with unshed tears.

"Daddy," he says softly, "I miss Korra." Tenzin winces as he bows his head, closing his eyes.

"I do too, Meelo," he whispers sadly as he meets Pema's gaze once more, "we all do."

"You can always talk to me, you know."

Senna sits, numb and still as she stares at the retreating figure of her husband as he goes off to hunt. Kya is kneeling by the limp body in the corner of their small healing hut, running her clean water over the body's frame. Kya refuses to look down at the face as she does her work. The girl is nude.
and bare, and the whole reason she agreed to do this is because Korra deserved a proper farewell. The older woman bends and twists the liquid, preserving the skin as best as she can. They'd been waiting too long for this. The literal burden of their daughter's death had created an unimaginable void.

"Talk about what?" Senna's voice is low, thick with anguish and frustration. Kya stops bending the water, allowing it to drip back into the jar beside her. She avoids looking at Korra's face as she turns to face Senna's stiff back. The water-bender takes a deep breath.

"I know you're angry-"

"Do you?" Senna's head whips around, her eyes blazed with anger. Kya shuts her mouth as Senna stands up and walks over to her, grabbing her shirt collar and heaving her to her feet. Kya doesn't react as Senna throws her against the wall, her lips beginning to quiver. The healer only gulps when she feels Senna's nails scratch at her skin beneath the fabric. The mother shakes her head, fuming with rage.

"You were there," she spits, eyes tearing with hot tears, "why couldn't you save her?! After all that she's done for you? You did nothing!"

"Senna, Korra-"

"Don't," she cuts off the water-bender with a hiss, "don't say her name."

"I'm sorry, Senna, I am, but there was nothing I could do for her!" Kya says, her voice cracking as she draws back to seeing the Avatar's body, crumpled and broken worse than when she'd fought Zaheer. Senna tightens her grip, gritting her teeth as tears seep down her cheeks to dribble off her chin.

"Sorry won't bring her back," Senna cries out, her voice shrill and high as she begins to sob, "sorry won't bring my little girl back to me."

Kya stays silent as she watches Senna fall apart before her. The chief's wife loosens her grip upon her collar as she begins to cry hysterically. Kya swallows thickly as she reaches up with tentative hands, gently wrapping her arms around the woman before her. Senna screams into her shoulder as Kya shushes her, rubbing the space between her shoulder blades in a feeble attempt to quell her sobbing. Senna's entire body feels like lava with her anger, and the water-bender can't help but
share in her rage, only her rage is pointed in the same direction as Senna's - towards herself.

"S-Sorry w-won't bring her b-back," Senna gasps between breaths, "I-I just want her back, Kya. I want my baby back. I… I want my Korra back."

"I know," Kya murmurs, her voice choked as she feels Senna's fingers clench together tightly. The younger woman lets out a bloodcurdling yell full of grief and torment as she takes to beating her fists upon the healer's chest. Kya feels no pain, bare for hesitation between each drawn breath as Senna releases her suppressed rage upon the older woman. Kya closes her eyes as she tucks her nose into Senna's hair.

"I know, Senna," she repeats softly, barely audible through Senna's heart-wrenching sobs, "I know, and I am so sorry."

"Why?" Senna asks mournfully, her voice muffled by her shirt. "Why did they have to take her? Why did she do it?"

Kya closes her eyes as she holds Senna's shaking frame closer to her body, trying to give her as much support as she can despite the bleak situation. Kya can see that Senna already knows the answer to her own question. She'd seen Korra struggling through her recovery for three years after the final attack of the Red Lotus. Senna had been the one who'd held a screaming Korra as she'd set her bones back into place. She and Asami had never left Korra's side for the first six weeks, bare for bathroom breaks and showers. The two women had stayed stoic by the Avatar's side, despite the horrid nightmares, complete with bouts of incorrigible screaming and lashing limbs. Kya had failed to heal her properly then, and now, she'd done the same thing.

Senna's heart is splintering apart inside her chest as she buries herself further into Kya's embrace. She wants to see Korra once more, to tell her how much she loves her, or how much she means to her. Each time she closes her eyes, she is brought back to her daughter's childhood, her rambunctious little girl that had a bottomless curiosity. Korra, who had been energetic and optimistic, with an insatiable eye for adventure. She wants the Korra that would wiggle around impatiently as she read her stories or helped her with her homework. She wants the Korra that wouldn't budge until she got Naga. Senna can't look behind her; she wants to believe that the body beneath that cloth is not the Korra she'd brought up, and that her Korra is still alive.

But deep down, Senna knows that the body laying naked as it came, is her Korra.

Senna pries herself off Kya and returns to her seat by the corner of the hut, her eyes staring into the fire. She forces back any memories of her child, willing herself to simply sit and stare at the flames.
with the pit that festers in her heart. Kya watches her for a few moments, heartbroken at the sight of the woman she'd always known to radiate joy and life. Hanging her head, the water-bender turns back to the window, only to watch as a figure begins to approach through the snow. Kya's eyes widen as she makes out the state of the person limping towards them. She knows they're not injured.

They're… mourning.

"Tonraq is back," Kya whispers softly, glancing back to the chief's wife with glazed eyes.

Senna looks up at the sound of Kya's voice, her eyes swollen and puffy from crying as she watches her husband walk through the door with a brand new pelt. He fingers over the material of the traditional polar-leopard fur, remembering just how much Korra had loved her childhood furs. Tears well in his eyes as he sighs deeply, walking into the den with his offering. Senna's eyes meet his, and for a moment, Tonraq believes that he's looking straight at his daughter. He can almost see Korra's signature grin, a smirk she'd gotten from him no doubt, upon his wife's face. The sight only further burrows the thorn in his side. He hadn't been there. He hadn't been able to hold his daughter one last time as she'd passed on into the afterlife.

He'd be lying if he said he hadn't murdered the animal with rage over his lost offspring.

"I'll go check if Asami wants to help," Kya says, the haggled water-bender walking away from the couple as she disappears from the house. The husband and wife stare at each other in silence and grief for a few minutes before Tonraq clears his throat, fighting back the tears.

"Where is she?" He asks hoarsely, his deep voice cracking with each word. Senna's misty eyes pool over with tears, allowing the moisture to drip down her face for the fifteenth time that day. She swallows thickly as she points to the covered body in the corner, just as Kya had left it. Still unable to even bear so much as a glance in that direction, the woman lets out a faint cry, bowing her head before the cackling flames.

"Kya removed the remaining bruises and burns from her torso," she murmurs distantly, her heart breaking with each second that passes as she stares at the cold ground. Her stomach aches, as though it can physically feel the void Korra's death had left. Tonraq hangs his head as he closes his eyes.

"You tried to get Kya to heal her again, didn't you," he mumbles back, his voice thick with emotion. Senna's eyes turn ablaze and she rises stiffly. Her bones are cold and sore from having spent so much of her time knelt over Korra's body, struggling to restart a long dead heart.
"She… she's not gone, Tonraq," Senna cries out furiously, shaking her head in denial, "she can't be gone. She's supposed to live for so much longer. She's supposed to get married, be happy, and give us those grandchildren she'd always joked about. She's not gone, Tonraq. I can't believe it."

At first, Tonraq doesn't speak. He lets his wife's words wash over him in frantic waves, wanting to believe them as much as she denies herself. He wants to look over and see Korra awake, complete with her beaming grin and wide eyes. The pulsing beat in his heart thumps out the sounds of her hiccuped sobs as the man sighs deeply. His eyes close, and his memory focuses on the one just after the final battle with Zaheer. His arms grow heavy with burden as he drops to his knees. He rolls the furs between his trembling fingers, remembering the feel of Korra's coarse hair in his palms as he'd held her so close to his body. He'd watched as she'd grown limp against him, eyes fading as she'd passed out of the Avatar State and into a bleak level of transcendence between life and death. He'd prayed in that moment, as Suyin had bent the poison out, that nothing would ever pain her again, not while he still drew breath. Now, Tonraq seethes to himself, he's about to present his daughter with a ceremonial burial pelt as a reward for saving the world.

He… he had failed.

"Why won't you rethink my offer?" Senna snarls at him, her voice lithe with hate. Tonraq feels his blood run cold at the vengeance burning in those bright blue eyes. Korra had been just as stubborn when they'd faced down Unaloq. She'd gone in with her hate first, refusing to see the situation as it had been.

"Because asking such a thing of Suyin would not benefit anyone, Senna," Tonraq says sternly, "not even Korra."

"How would you know that?!" Senna hisses, stumbling back to her feet. She clenches her fists as more tears burn at her eyes. She knows that her husband is right, but she doesn't want the truth. She wants her daughter. She wants to go back to before it all began. Senna hangs her head, her breaths coming out in short, ragged gasps as she struggles to control her aching sobs.

"We… we should have hidden her, kept her a secret," Senna whimpers as she wraps her arms around her shoulders. "If no one knew then no one would have to suffer. Korra would still be here. The world could've figured itself out. It didn't need the Avatar." Tonraq's head tilts upwards sadly.

"Do you really believe that we could have done that?" He asks, subtly reminding her that it had been Korra that'd ran away to find her own path. Senna growls, clutching her arms tighter, her sharp nails digging into her skin. She bites the inside of her cheek, tasting blood at her husband's words.
"We could have tried, Tonraq," Senna murmurs weakly. Tonraq sighs deeply.

"We did try, Senna," he mumbles tiredly, his shoulders aching from fatigue and grief as he slumps further to the floor. Even he can't bear to turn his head to face his daughter's ashen face. He'd had enough of that from watching her body being carried in by Asami as the airship had landed a week ago.

Tonraq allows a soft, bittersweet smile tug at his lips at the thought of the inventor. After meeting her in the desert, he'd known immediately from the way she'd constantly look at her daughter, that she was as every bit in love with Korra as the rest of the world had been. Mako had always stirred a different feeling in his stomach, but Asami was someone that with he would trust his daughter's life. He'd seen it first hand after Korra returned from her battle with Zaheer. He'd spent several nights coaxing the young inventor away from Korra's side, wanting her to get proper rest. Each time, she'd politely refused until finally, her body had refused for her. Tonraq remembers carrying her body away from his daughter's side, catching the faintest murmurs of Korra's name as it had passed through the sleeping woman's lips in broken whimpers.

If any light could come to the desolate situation, Tonraq would find it in Asami. Because of the heiress' noble actions, his daughter managed to die with the woman she'd loved. Tonraq knew of Korra's mutual feelings, but if he'd regret anything, it would be not having pushed them together, for them to pursue their feelings. He'd only ever wanted Korra's happiness. Tonraq knows that his daughter had found her happiness in the heiress, and with her, she was truly free. He had explicitly requested Senna and Kya to allow Asami the ability to participate in the final ritual before the burial. At first, his wife had been cold and distant, not talking to anyone, or even looking at their daughter. It had taken five days for Senna to come around, and seven days for her to agree to allowing Kya to ask Asami if she would want to be part of the ritual. Tonraq only has one regret to come from all of this.

"We… we should have been there," he whispers, tears beginning to stream down his face to catch in his beard. "We could've properly said goodbye."

"No," Senna growls, lunging for her husband. Tonraq is surprised as he's knocked over. Senna's hands claw into the fabric of his shirt, pulling him upwards so that their faces can meet, ice blue eyes connected in a whirlwind of pain and loss.

"We're not saying goodbye," Senna cries, shaking her head. Tonraq waits a moment before he takes a sharp breath and reaches up, wrapping his strong arms around his trembling wife. Tonraq murmurs something unintelligible as he begins to weep, his forehead pressing against hers. The couple lay entwined in their mournful embrace, crying out into each other's bodies as the weight of their loss bears down on them from a few feet away.
"Senna," Tonraq says after their cries quiet down slightly. He looks over to the silhouette of his deceased daughter as he sighs, "you know we have to."

It doesn't change the fact that neither of them want to.

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"How are they holding up?"

Kya's head snaps up as she looks to see Lin approaching her in a heavy limp. Kya stands immediately, reaching out to support her as she makes her way down the bank to where she sits, watching the calm dawn approaching. Lin's arm drapes around Kya's shoulders as the older woman sighs in defeat. Kya can't help but allow her head to fall into Lin's shoulder, her eyes closing as she thinks back to how devastated Senna and Tonraq had been when they'd flown to the Southern Water Tribe with Korra's limp body. She'd done everything she could to clean the battered girl up, but each time she looked at those closed eyes and blue lips, Kya couldn't help but feel her heart clench in pity and slight frustration.

"Like two parents that just lost their only child," Kya replies distantly, her voice a little sharp and cold. Lin doesn't react to the bitterness in her lover's tone, and instead, she moves closer, squeezing her arm tightly and holding her close to her chest. The metal-bender places a kiss to her silvery hair.

"You did all you could," Lin murmurs, turning her gaze back to the ocean. Kya scoffs, causing Lin to raise a brow.

"I didn't," she growls, holding her face in her hands. "I sat there and watched Asami fall apart. I watched and didn't help. Maybe if I had tried harder-"

"Kya," Lin's stern but sympathetic voice interrupts. Kya shuts her mouth and looks away, closing her eyes tightly as she bites her lip hard enough for a copper tang to run along her tastebuds. The chief of police reaches out and angles her face so that they're looking directly at each other. The water-bender chooses to keep her eyes closed, preferring to run away from the pain that the present deals her. She doesn't want to go back to the tent in a few minutes with a shattered Asami to prepare Korra for the ceremony. She wants to escape into Lin's arms and hide from the world forever.
"You knew as well as I did that she couldn't be saved," Lin tells her softly, kissing her temple. "Something tells me that Korra knew when she chased Kuvira, too. I... I'd seen them as Su and I woke up from falling into the forest. Korra chased her, broken and bleeding, into those damned wilds. If anyone didn't do anything, it was me, not you." Kya stiffens as she opens her eyes, her gaze falling to the padding around Lin's torso from beneath her coat.

"That's not true, you were injured, Lin," Kya stammers out, refusing to allow the blame to fall upon her lover. Lin sighs deeply, extending her hand to lightly brush her fingers against Kya's damp cheek. She wipes away a few tears before she leans forward, kissing the woman on the mouth lightly.

"Now you know how ridiculous you sound," Lin says gently, pulling back as she nods at her lover. Kya sighs and slumps further against Lin's sturdy frame, too exhausted and sad to argue. Lin rubs her arm gently with the hand wrapped around her shoulder before she takes a deep breath.

"Korra saved me, you know," Lin murmurs distantly, her eyes glued to the ocean. Kya cocks her head up, but Lin shakes her head. "That stupid kid gave me back my bending, she mended my relationship with Su, and she gave the last ounce of her life so that I could survive." Kya raises a brow, confused.

"What are you talking about, Lin?" The healer asks, unsure of what the metal-bender is suggesting. Lin's spare hand points to her torso faintly before it joins the hand upon Kya's shoulder, pulling her smaller body closer. She breathes in the familiar scent of Kya, allowing it to calm and reassure her.

"I was dying, and when Korra was dying, the spirit that had come from her body broke into two," Lin explained slowly, remembering the event as clearly as it had happened a week ago. "One half turned into Raava and floated up to the sky, and the other half turned into her."

"Okay," Kya says hesitantly, but nods her head for Lin to continue. The younger woman rubs the back of her head as she licks her lips nervously.

"Korra held onto Asami and I watched as she, in her spirit form, had kissed her and told her that she loved her," Lin continues in a soft, distant voice, "but then, as they held hands, parts of Korra's body began to separate into small flecks of light before disappearing into the portal. Soon enough, only a few flickers remained, and they entered through my wound. I... I think I maybe actually had died or was at least on the verge of death. Korra saved me."
"Lin…," Kya breathes softly, tears welling in her eyes as she pulls herself closer to the shivering metal-bender. The younger woman shakes her head, biting back her tears of frustration and anguish as she closes her eyes. She can picture Korra's cheery and optimistic face from first day they'd met.

"She was the Avatar, but she was so much more," Lin chokes out as she begins to cry, "she was my friend, Kya. I never got to tell her that. I never got to thank her for it, for everything she's ever done for me. I never appreciated it when she did it, but now that she's gone…"

Lin can't finish her sentence as she breaks down into a shuddering sob.

"I'm sure that wherever she is right now, she's watching over you and approving your gratitude, sweetheart," Kya murmurs gently, kissing the sharp line of her lover's jaw. Lin shivers and sighs, hanging her head as she feels her head throb with the ache of grief and pain.

"I think she knows, Lin," Kya says as she nods, holding Lin close to her, "she wouldn't have saved you if she hadn't, right?"

Yes, Lin thinks to herself sadly as Kya kisses her again, she still would have.

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The flat disk of rock spins between the earth-bender's fingers as he sits, perched upon the railing of the gazebo.

Bolin doesn't feel angry or sad. He isn't really sure of what he feels, if he's being honest. Just a week ago, he'd been speaking with Korra as they'd flown back to Republic City to warn the others of Kuvira's imminent attack. The man sucks in a deep breath, feeling fire in his lungs as he remembers Korra telling him of how she would go after Kuvira, and for him and Mako to take the to the main power source of the Colossus. He still shivers as he remembers the knowing look in Korra's eyes, a glance that he'd not known until now, meant that she wasn't coming back. How could he have been so stupid? They could have taken out the heart of the machine together and then all three of them could've faced Kuvira. Bolin growls lowly as tears sting at his eyes when he remembers dragging Mako's limp body out of the chamber and down the stairwell as the machine had collapsed. For a moment, he'd thought that Mako had died, sacrificing his life for him and those people of Republic City, but he was Mako - awesome Mako. He couldn't die.

But Korra…
The rock stops spinning and instead clatters lightly to the ground.

"Isn't it a bit early for you to be awake, Bo?" A familiar feminine voice sounds from behind him. Bolin closes his eyes and sighs as the light weight of Opal's hand rests upon his shoulder. The man turns his head away, unable to answer or look at her.

"She's in a better place, you know," Opal murmurs softly as she gazes worriedly at her boyfriend. Bolin's lips quiver, but he remains silent as he clenches his fists. Bolin's eyes suddenly flash open as he faces his girlfriend with a hurt expression.

"Is she, though? We all say it, but…, well, I mean we don't even know where she is," Bolin says, leaping off the bannister to stand in front of his girlfriend, misty-eyed. Opal places her hands upon his trembling shoulders, pulling him into a hug. The man's body threatens to buckle and he collapses, shoving his head into the nape of Opal's neck. Bolin lets loose an earthshaking sob, his whole chest convulsing with agony.

"I miss her so much, Opal," he cries, gripping her harder. "She was the best friend I could ever ask for."

Opal sighs as she remembers how Korra had helped her master air-bending, of how she had pushed her and Bolin together and helped them realize each other's true feelings. Korra had been more than just her friend, but her mentor and advisor. She looked up to her like she would an older sibling. She always knew that she could talk to the Avatar about anything, and even though she'd fallen out with her when Suyin and her brothers had been captured, she knew that as Korra had faced down Kuvira for the first time, she would've done anything to try and win them back. The air-bender remembers Zaheer and watching as Korra had plummeted to the ground, broken and bleeding. Her willpower had no limits, but her life did.

After all, Opal knows, she was just as human as the rest of them.

"You know, I had been so scared when she'd been hurt by Zaheer. I thought that I would never be able to feel such a harsh pain before in my life, but this… oh Spirits, Opal, I've never felt so empty before," Bolin cries into her shoulder, shaking with his sobs. Opal wraps her arms around his broader frame, her eyes closing as she mourns the death of her friend with her boyfriend.

"I know, sweetheart," she hums, her voice trembling as tears stream down her face. *Dammit, Korra,* she wants to scream until the flesh of her lungs burn away with exertion. Her body feels
enraged, like when she'd found out that her family had been captured back in Zaofu. Only this time, there is no redemption. She can't save Korra. She can't bring back her friend, a woman that had given her hope and courage in the darkest of times.

"I just want to wake up from this nightmare," Bolin whispers softly, his cries slowly subduing into weak hiccups as he shakes his head. They stay together, holding each other close in thick silence echoed by their whimpers. Bolin's head bows and his eyes close as he draws a deep breath.

"But how can I?" He asks bitterly, "when I'm not even asleep?"

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His eyes are liquid steel, his breath a furnace as he glowers over the railing.

"Thought I'd find you here," Suyin's voice calls out as she gazes at the lean frame of the fire-bender standing alone upon the terrace. Mako doesn't turn around as he closes his eyes. The older woman steps closer to him as she places an encouraging hand upon his back.

"You know that you don't have to be alone through this," Suyin reminds him gently as she feels the man's unease and tension under her fingers. Mako sighs as he shakes his head, gripping the bannister tightly in his grip as he lets out a low growl.

"She was alone when she died," he responds back, his voice sounding like poison. He wants to burn the building - the damned world - to the ground. He loved Korra, and a part of him will always love Korra, but his heart feels so damned guilty for not having been there to pull her ass out of the fire.

"You know that's not true," Suyin tells him sternly, rubbing the taut muscles of his shoulders as she gazes at him in concern. "Korra passed on in the loving presence of her family and friends. She went peacefully."

"Did you even see her body?!" Mako demands in a roar, turning around to face her with his amber eyes on fire from his rage. "Did you see what that bitch had done to her?! It wasn't peace, Su. It was slaughter. Kuvira maimed her, tortured her, and most of all, she fucking murdered her." Suyin doesn't falter as she nods her head solemnly. The young fire-bender is shocked at her reaction as he lets his grip upon the railing loosen.
"She died peacefully, Mako," Suyin repeats softly, "despite those injuries… and what happened with Kuvira."

"I… I want to believe that," Mako breathes out, turning his head back over the railing to look down at Opal and Bolin sitting at an iced gazebo, wrapped in each other's arms. He remembers how close he'd been with Korra. He touches his lips, remembering how her own mouth had once felt upon his long ago.

"But I can't," he sighs softly, dropping his hand as remorse washes over him, "not yet."

"It takes time, Mako," Suyin says, coming to stand beside him as she follows his gaze to her daughter and her boyfriend. Mako places his head in his hands as his shoulders begin to shake. Suyin doesn't interrupt him with words as he begins to cry into his palms. They stand there for a few moments, the only sound coming from Mako's hiccuped cries. Suyin shows him support with her presence, nothing more and nothing less. She knows that Mako needs space, but he also needs something to ground him, to remind him that there are still so many things he can remember fondly with time - an abundance of memories to cherish as his grief passes with age and experience. She knows that the two had been close, and being close hits the hardest.

Suyin would know; she'd thrown Kuvira in prison herself.

"I'd have followed her into battle anywhere," Mako whispers after sometime, his voice even now as he wipes away a few straggling tears. Suyin winces slightly, remembering how Kuvira had told her something similar before they'd taken the attack to Lahima's Peak three years ago. Her captain - former captain, she painfully reminds herself - had been so quick to lay down her life for her and the Avatar. The irony tastes bitter, Suyin realizes as she thinks about how the table had flipped, with Korra having laid down her life for her once honourable captain of the guard instead.

"I know," Suyin murmurs, but scolds herself because she's not thinking about Korra. She should be thinking about Korra. It was the Avatar that had restored balance to the world at the cost of her own life, but despite it all, nothing hurt more than knowing that it had been her former protégée, a woman she'd once been proud to even call her daughter, that had thrown it out of balance. The letter Kuvira had sent a few days prior to arriving in the Southern Water Tribe, telling her of how she wished she could take it all back and make things right, burns a hole in her shirt pocket as she silently brews in her own concoction of anger, shame, regret, and sorrow. She wants to rip it up, but can't find the strength to do so.

"I think I'm going to go for a walk," Mako mutters as he pulls away from the balcony. "I need to clear my head." Suyin snaps back to the presence to cock her head at him, but he nods assuringly, stuffing his hands into his pockets as he turns away from her.
"I'll be okay, Su," he says, but he stops before he can leave. The young fire-bender turns around and gives her a mournful, but appreciative glance.

"Thanks," he tells her distantly, "for being there. It… helps."

"I wish I could be there more," Suyin says honestly, tears clawing at her irises. Mako gives her an understanding look as he nods his head curtly.

"You're there," he tells her with a faint smile, "that's all that matters, Su."

As soon as he leaves, Suyin can't help think of Kuvira again.

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Light filters in through the cracks of slitted plastic bars, barely filling the room.

Kuvira sits in the corner, staring up at the sun slowly starting rise over the mountains that surround Republic City. The former captain doesn't rise, and instead she pulls her knees to her chest, closing her eyes. She doesn't understand why she feels so sad, so lost, so… empty. In some sense, the metal-bender almost wishes that the Avatar had not stepped in front of her. Korra could've gotten away. She fights the rage and condescension within herself as she knows that she should have powered off the weapon and stepped down. She'd been so blind, and in her rampage, had destroyed the one person that had true power. What she had was disgusting. It wasn't power, it was sick; Korra had been right, she'd been a dictator, not a saviour to her people.

After her arrest, the woman had turned over everything in her knowledge - weapons plans, blueprints, financial records; anything she had, she gave it up without protest. She'd written Suyin, but she knew better than to expect a response from her former mentor. Something in her heart ached when she'd looked up to Suyin's disappointed and angered face, emotions that she'd projected towards herself. She just wanted to make the world a better place. Outside, the guards snicker and sneer at her, muttering at how crazy she'd been, how terrible of a person she is. Kuvira feels tears begin to slide down her cheeks as she places a hand over her mouth to stifle the sob. She agrees with them. She is a monster.

"I can't believe she murdered the Avatar," one of the guards growls, his eyes glaring into her back. "She should be killed, not imprisoned."
"What can you do when the Beifongs are in charge?" The other quips, shaking his head in contempt. "She's too soft towards that bitch."

She is, Kuvira agrees defeatedly.

Suyin had always been one to show compassion. After being casted away from foster home to foster home when her real parents died, Suyin had been the one to bring her in. Everything that she knew about life, about battle, about love and understanding, had come from the youngest Beifong. Kuvira never thought that she'd have a family again, but when Bataar and Suyin had taken her in with loving, open arms, she'd never felt so at home. They'd nurtured her and allowed her to regain the trust of those around her. She fell in love with their eldest son, and both of her mentors could not have been happier. Their love for each other had been stronger than ever. He'd shown her that she could be vulnerable, that she could fall in love without aching.

And then, Kuvira threw it all away.

She doesn't know if Suyin will ever forgive her. She doesn't know if Bataar Jr will even dare look at her after she'd attempted to kill him alongside the Avatar in Asami's office. Asami. She cries whenever she feels that name roll upon her tongue. The former captain remembers the anguish upon the inventor's face as she'd walked out with a dying Korra dangling limply in her arms. Those green eyes that she'd come to respect and admire had nothing but hurt and pain wrecked through them. The Avatar's final words to the captain ring out clearly in her ears as she looks back at the sun rising through the plastic slits. Korra loved Asami, just as she had loved Bataar, and Kuvira had taken that away.

"I won't let you down," Kuvira murmurs, wiping her tears as she swallows thickly, "I won't let anyone down anymore."

Kuvira stands, still wobbly from her recovering injuries. She limps over to her small desk and reaches for the pen and the pieces of paper. She sits down and waits a moment, unsure of how to start, or where to start. Some part of her wonders if she should start. Taking a deep breath, the woman shakes her head and holds her own shame at bay as she allows the tip of the pen to touch the parchment. She scribbles down the date and her name in the top corner, her hands shaking, tempted to spill the ink everywhere. Biting her lip, Kuvira steadies her hands and begins again.

Dear Asami, she starts to write, I'm so sorry.
Asami hears Korra's final words replay over and over in her head. It feels like she has a broken record player trapped inside her mind, but for some reason, she can't find the off switch. Parts of her don't want to hear those three words, but the heiress knows that would be lost without them. Her eyes are glazed and pained, and now she's begun feeling the after effects of having broken six ribs and fractured her sternum. Kya hadn't scolded her for having carried Korra for so long, and even down the blimp ramp to Tonraq's arms, but she'd known that the water-bender hadn't been pleased she'd exerted herself. Asami grits her teeth as a stab of pain cuts through her chest, but it's not from her injuries.

"Korra…," she breathes her love's name, feeling her eyes water, "I wish you were here."

A faint nudge and a whimper replies back. Asami blinks and looks down to see Naga's big black eyes looking up at her expectantly, as if she were still waiting on her owner to come home. The polar-bear dog had been the most loyal of friends to the young Avatar, and Asami can't help but imagine what the animal must be feeling. Of course, Naga couldn't talk, but she was certain that at least Korra understood her, maybe Ikki too. She'd caught Korra several times, curled up against Naga's side, speaking to her, asking her for advice, confessing her darkest of secrets. As Asami glances down at the furry animal, she can't help a choked cry part from her lungs as she reaches down, stroking her fingers in her soft fur.

"I'm sorry, girl," she whispers, placing a kiss to the top of her head, "she's not coming back this time."

Naga whines, burrowing her head against Asami's sore torso. The young woman allows the touch, despite the throbbing ache that follows. She wraps her arms around Naga's wide neck, clinging onto her for dear life as she surrounds herself with the one thing that had kept Korra grounded all those years.

All those years.

Twenty-one years.

It hardly seems fair, Asami thinks, that Korra had such a short lifetime from all those previous
Avatars. Kyoshi and Aang both had children, a family to come home to and grow old with. She used to think that Aang had died young when she'd read all the newspapers as a child, but she can't help but feel like Aang is ancient in comparison to Korra. The lifeline of her best friend had been merely a blink. She stills remembers the first time she'd seen Korra at the restaurant, dressed in different clothes, with different hair, and realizing that she was a woman instead of a child. Asami angrily bites her lip, drawing blood against Naga's fur, as she realizes that Korra had barely begun her journey as an adult, and her life had been stolen from her. She closes her eyes and mournfully thinks back to their conversation before they had split ways to conquer the Colossus.

You're sure that this will work? Korra had asked her, icy blue eyes gazing over the Hummingbird as her father continued to attach the plasma saws. Asami had peeled off her protective mask and stepped forward, away from the noise to nod her head, eyes glossy. Korra had refused to meet her gaze, instead planting her eyes to a spot over the heiress' shoulders. Asami had known Korra was nervous. Fuck, she was about take down a giant metal machine. She still scolds herself for only giving the terrified woman a nod as a grievance for her worries.

We can try to provide you cover, Korra had told her softly, before gripping her glider tight to her body, but if things get too hot, you pull out, okay?

Korra..., Asami had replied back, her fingers itching to hold Korra in her arms, to feel her warmth in her palms, but she knew that this was not the time for a confession. The Avatar's eyes had glazed as she'd looked up to her, scared and apprehensive.

We'll take her down, Asami had whispered softly, we'll make it work, okay? We always do. We're Team Avatar for a reason. Korra had hung her head at Asami's words, her eyes clouded with grief. Now that Asami thinks about it, she realizes that Korra must’ve known her fate after she'd told her that.

Yeah, the Avatar had whimpered softly as her head finally tilted up to meet her gaze, we always make it work.

I love you, Asami had wanted to say. Instead, she'd held her tongue and nodded her head. She stood there awkwardly for a moment as Korra had shifted on her feet before murmuring about how she was to leave. Asami still feels that same pull her in her throat as she'd watched the Avatar take a few steps before stopping. She remembers how she'd parted her mouth, tempted to ask what was wrong, but then Korra had whipped around and thrown herself at her body, arms looped around her shoulders. It had taken a few moments for her to respond before Asami had hugged her back tightly, burrowing her face in the younger girl's neck. Korra had smelt like something burnt, sweat, dried blood, and the ocean. The heiress swears she can still smell that scent today, even though it's been more than a week since the passing of the young girl.
This one week feels worse than those three years, Asami thinks.

"You'll freeze if you don't wear a jacket, dear."

Asami's eyes blink tiredly as she turns around to see Katara staring back at her, arms around her back as the older woman nods down at her sympathetically. Naga whines and pushes her snout against the inventor again. Involuntarily, Asami hums the same soothing note Korra would use, thus allowing the polar-bear dog to relax slightly. Katara looks to the furry beast and smiles warmly at her. Naga nuzzles Asami's side lovingly before dropping to her belly with a huff, her gaze turned to the sea. Asam's heart sinks in her chest as she sighs deeply, sitting down next Naga and turning back to gaze at the choppy waters of the icy ocean before her. The breeze is bone-chilling, but it's good for the inventor; it means that she can still feel something besides the regret and pain. Asami doesn't cry, and instead pulls her knees to her chest. Katara shifts on her feet before walking a bit closer to the devastated younger woman. They both watch in silence as the water begins to glow a hazy pinkish-orange with the arrival of the sun from the horizon. Asami faces it with a dead stare, her body numb and lost, unable to compute the beauty of her location and timing.

"Korra meant a lot to you," Katara murmurs as she sits down next to the heiress tentatively. Asami doesn't say anything, nor does she move. She feels so many things. A week ago, she'd felt comforted by the fact that her friend (girlfriend?) had died in peace, but now she's angry. She's furious that she's had two funerals this week alone. Last friday had been her father's, and now today, it is Korra's; it's not fair, the young woman scolds, that she lost the two people she'd loved the most in the same damned day. Tears burn at her eyes as she remembers the feel of Korra's hands upon her own.

"Kya and Senna thought you may want to be part of the final ritual before the procession," the experienced healer speaks in a smooth, calm voice, reminding her that she's still standing behind her. Something in Asami breaks as she glances over her shoulder to Katara with a scowl on her face.

"Why? If it hadn't been for me, Korra would… she'd…," Asami splutters, the tears choking the words from her lungs. Everything burns and she remembers the sensation of heat that had surrounded them when Korra had placed them in that air sphere.

"She'd what, dear?" Katara murmurs wisely. "Korra must've known what awaited her. I saw the extent of her injuries before Kya had cleaned them. She may have not always seemed to have the smartest brains, but she was the Avatar. She understood her responsibility, as well as her fate."

"What do you even know?!" Asami suddenly roars, standing upright. "Korra was a kid, dammit! She just got back from trying to recover, and this is what she had to deal with? She's dead! She's..."
fucking dead and everyone else is acting like nothing is wrong. People still complain in Republic City. Don't they fucking get it? Korra gave them *everything*. Without her, Republic City wouldn't exist and Kuvira would have destroyed us all. Korra saved them!"

"She… she saved *me*," Asami chokes out, holding her arms close to her chest as she remembers the look in Korra's eyes before she'd blasted her away from the spirit weapon. The inventor wobbles slightly, still recovering from her crumpled midsection that had been exerted with her shouting. Katara doesn't even flinch as the heiress glares at her with steaming eyes. She simply sighs, sits down stiffly, and folds her hands in her lap, waiting patiently for Asami to calm down from her rage. Asami breathes heavily, taking a minute to realize what she'd said, before she bows her head, ashamed.

"I'm sorry, Master Katara, I just…," she trails off, her throat dry and raw. Katara nods understandingly, turning her gaze towards the sun.

"You're grieving, dear, it's okay to be upset. Anger is normal when we lose people so suddenly," Katara sagely tells her, though there is a hint of remorse and sadness in her voice as she speaks. Asami still looks frustrated as she kicks at some snow with the tip of her boots.

"Korra wouldn't want to see you this way, sweetheart," Katara hums soothingly, patting the snow bank next to her, motioning for the grieving woman to take a seat beside her. Asami scoffs and kicks at some more snow, ignoring Katara's request.

"Korra's not here, now is she? I hardly see how it matters how I act or feel," Asami's voice is bitter and coated with fury.

"Trust me, dear, it may not seem like it does right now, but Korra has not left you. Asami, she's always here," Katara says, her voice even and sturdy, like a strong mast holding together a ship as it weathers a daunting and raging storm. Asami stops kicking the packets of snow and sucks in a sharp breath. Her fingers twitch as she feels those ghostly hands clutching her own again. It takes everything in her to not break down in a sob. There's a moment of tense silence between the two women, so alike in different ways, before Asami blinks slowly, clearing away her hot tears.

"How do you know that?" The woman asks in a croak, her voice hoarse from being on the verge of breaking down. Katara produces a soft, but still sad, chuckle, a sound that baffles the inventor as she looks down to the aged woman with a bewildered expression. Katara sighs before she points a finger into her own chest. Her wrinkled fingers shake slightly, but she holds her hand steady as she nods at the heiress with a knowing expression.
"Because," she whispers softly, "he's always with me, too."

And with that, Asami falls to her knees and cries harder than she ever had before.

_Digging like you can bury._

_Something that cannot die._

_We could wash the dirt off our hands now._

_Keep it from living underground._

"It's been awhile since I've seen you in formal wear, Chief."

Lin nods her head wearily to see Suyin walking over to her, dressed in a Zaofu ceremonial dress. Lin looks down to her shirt, black blazer, and slim tie with no real emotion whatsoever. Suyin licks her lips as her fingers reach forward, straightening out the somewhat ruffled collar and adjusting her tie. Lin murmurs something unintelligible as she pulls her older sibling into her arms for a warm embrace. Lin hesitates a moment before she squeezes Suyin back softly.

"I never got to thank you, you know," Suyin murmurs softly, her hands rubbing soft circles into Lin's back as she takes to resting her chin on her sister's shoulder. Lin's body tenses as she pulls back slightly, gazing at her sibling with a confused expression.

"Thank me for what?" She asks with a raised brow. Suyin sighs and gazes down at the faint outline of the beige bandages wrapped around her torso with a slight grimace. Lin follows her gaze and swallows thickly, nervously playing with the hem of her blazer while Suyin sniffs.
"For rescuing me in Zaofu," she murmurs absently, before nodding her head up to meet Lin's soft green eyes, "and for saving my life in the explosion."

"The first one was because Opal convinced me to take action, what with her air-bending rules and whatever, she couldn't do it herself," Lin stumbles, not fully sure how to take the gratitude Suyin shows her, "and the second one... well, we both could've died. You just got lucky."

"Luck has nothing to do with it, Lin," Suyin mumbles as she hangs her head, "you shifted the arm so that when the rebar shot through the hull, it'd impale you and not me." Lin's breath hitches as she turns her head away, unable to look at her sister as Suyin's eyes mist with tears.

"After all I've put you through," Suyin says softly, her fingers reaching up to trail the two red lines upon Lin's face. Her touch is soft, but aching as Lin turns her gaze back to her younger sister, equally teary-eyed and overcome with emotion. Suyin takes a breath before she nods, continuing to say, "after all that pain I brought to you, all those years of not talking or reaching out, you still chose to save me. You always save me."

"We'll always save each other, Su," Lin tells her, reaching out for her younger sister as she pulls Suyin's shaking frame into her arms. Her nose brushes against her silver hair as she sighs deeply, ignoring the throbbing ache in her middle as she does the action.

"Now that's what I like to hear," an elderly voice pops up from behind them. Lin and Suyin release each other from their hug to see their mother standing before them. Toph is dressed in a traditional Earth Kingdom robe, something that neither sister had seen her wear before.

"If you're looking at my outfit, you'd better damn well not laugh," she grumbles out, stumbling towards them. Lin can't help but smile faintly at her mother's usual attitude, but she knows that there's a hint of pain in her words.

The last time she'd worn the outfit had been at Aang's funeral.

"Twinkle Toes keeps making me wear it," Toph tries to say with humour, but even her voice is hoarse. She bites her lip as she grumbles with a slight tone of grief, "I'd really wish if these Avatars could stick around for a bit longer. It would make this thing less wearable. It barely had dust on it."

"Mom," Suyin goes to say, but Toph shakes her head, cutting her off. The elderly woman takes a
deep breath, allowing her wrinkled brows to furrow as she feels her heart clench in her throat. She'd never been good with handling her emotions, especially grief or sadness.

"I know, kid," Toph murmurs in a trailing voice, "it's just, when you live to be my age, things get harder to understand. People walk in and out of our lives so many times, it's often hard to understand that they were ever there in the first place. Makes me wonder what it must have been like for Aang."

"Was... when you met her for the first time... uh, did you... feel Aang with Korra?" Lin asks, unsure of how to word the question. Toph smiles at her daughter's bumbling inquisitiveness when she remembers meeting Korra for the first time. Toph lets out a sad chuckle as she nods her head tiredly.

"Just like I did the first time I'd met him. Twinkle Toes was just as frustrated as Korra, but a little less loud and aggressive. I guess you can say Korra was an improvement," Toph humours her daughters, sighing deeply. Toph's head tilts upwards slightly, allowing the sun's rays to touch her face warmly.

"I'll meet them again soon," she murmurs wisely, "but this is the last time I'll wear this damned outfit doing it." Lin's brows raise as she steps forward, placing her hand upon her mother's shoulders. Toph can sense the unease, but she doesn't need to have her superior earth-bending power to do it.

"What are you talking about?" Lin asks incredulously, but Toph just nods knowingly. Her greying eyes grow lighter with bittersweet happiness as she tilts her head up to try and attempt to seek out the features of her eldest daughter's face.

"You know what I'm talking about, the both of you do," Toph grunts dryly, feeling Suyin approach. Their bodies tense with fear and sadness as Toph reaches forward, grasping lightly at both of their hands before she gently squeezes. She doesn't want to get emotional, but she can't help it.

"If there's anything that's made me a proud parent," Toph says softly, nodding her head to the two of them, "it's knowing that through it all, you both love each other, despite all that happened. You've given me all the enlightenment I need. I may have not been the best mother, but I had the best daughters."

Lin and Suyin are crying, fully sobbing as Toph brings them into a hug. The older woman sighs, finally content for the first time in her life as both her daughters wrap their arms around her smaller
shoulders. She closes her eyes, seeing a world of colour. It seems rather unfitting to be celebrating in a time like this, but she knows better than anyone that her Twinkle Toes wouldn't expect anything less. She makes a mental note to tell him how much of a softie he had been, and how she'd liked his attitude improvement with his reincarnation. She can't help but chuckle as she knows that the both of them are probably having the time of their life in the afterlife, racing on air-spheres or traveling the spirit world. She can't wait to see them one day soon.

But for now, wrapped in the arms of her greatest creations, Toph is at peace.

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"You've not said a word since we arrived, Varrick."

The inventor stops fiddling with the hem of his shirt and turns to face his fiancée with a solemn expression. Zhu Li looks concerned, for solemn wasn't ever in the eccentric man's vocabulary. Varrick sighs and glances over to where Mako, Bolin, and Opal are talking in soft voices. His eyes follow Huan, Wing, Wei, and Bataar Jr as they make their way over to the other young adults. Licking his lips, he turns back to Zhu Li with a grim nod.

"For once in my life, I don't have anything to say Zhu Li," he says sadly, desperately wanting the ache in his chest to disappear. He hadn't known the Avatar well, but from what he'd come to know of Korra, it had been her compassion, her altruism, her spirit - things that he thought he had, but never realized he lacked until he started working for Kuvira. A part of him, deep down in the roots of his very being, blames himself for all of this. Had he not harnessed the power of the Spirit Vines, maybe, just maybe, he could have prevented all of this.

One wrong experiment had lead to the deaths of so many, including the most important person on the planet.

"It wasn't your fault, Varrick," Zhu Li tries to convince him, but Varrick shakes his head as he takes a step back. His eyes glaze with hurt and remorse as he sighs deeply, closing his eyes. He keeps seeing Kuvira's face as she'd ordered him to increase the duration and power of the weapon. He'd just wanted clean energy, a renewable resource that could help save those that had been ruined from destruction. He had wanted the same thing Korra had wanted.

Varrick had wanted to save the world.
"It was," Varrick says quietly as he looks up to see Toph and her daughters come into the view. Everyone is here, even the two creepy twins from the Northern Water Tribe. Neither of them spoke much, and without many people noticing, they'd managed to sneak past and into the ice gardens.

"Varrick," Zhu Li says as she places a hand upon his arm encouragingly, "you can still fix this. You're an inventor after all. I'll help you do the thing."

For the first time in his life, Varrick doesn't want Zhu Li to do any thing.

"Mako, may I have a word?"

The young fire-bender turns his head to see Tonraq, Tenzin, and Fire Lord Zuko standing before him, solemn glances painting both their faces. Mako straightens his collar and nods before clapping Bolin's shoulder, letting him know that he'll be back for them soon. The young earth-bender nods before he allows Opal and her twin brothers to take him over to where Suyin and Lin are waiting with Toph. Mako places his hands behind his back and follows the three men out to the small ice courtyard near the middle of the estate. Desna and Eska are there, sitting by the edge of a frozen pool, somehow looking more full of expression than they'd ever been. As soon as they hear footsteps, their heads nod up in unison, but Mako is taken aback at the raw sadness in their eyes. Usually both of them were monotone and bland, but today, Mako sees a whole new level of emotion bearing through their stares. As soon as they see the detective, they stand up and follow in the direction of the air-bender and her boyfriend, allowing them some space alone.

"Is everything okay?" Mako asks, but he immediately regrets it when he sees Tonraq's face scrunch into a pained expression. He sighs and rubs the back of his neck nervously. Tonraq loses his grieving glance momentarily as he reaches forward and squeezes the man's shoulder gently.

"We... well I, have a question to ask of you," he tells him slowly, glancing back to Tenzin and Fire Lord Zuko, who both give him gentle nods. Tonraq sighs as he lets go of his hand upon Mako's shoulder and drops it back to his side.

"For the final rite...," he trails off as his voice gets caught. Mako stays silent, back straight and amber eyes focused as he gives the grieving man some time to adjust to his feelings. As soon as he is ready, Tonraq clears his throat and tries again, this time his voice firmer than before.
"For the final rite, would you be able to light the first arrow?" Tonraq asks, looking to Mako with clarity. The young man is startled at first. Usually lighting the arrow was a rite reserved for the first of kin when a person died, and he was not Korra's child.

Hell, he wasn't even Korra's *boyfriend* anymore.

"It's an honourable question, sir, but I don't think I am best fit for the responsibility?" Mako says, gulping nervously. Tonraq sighs again, bowing his head as he takes a step forward. He places both of his hands on the young fire-bender's shoulders now, his blue eyes bearing into his amber depths.

"You fought alongside Korra for many years, Mako. I am firing the last arrow, as it is required of a parent who's child passes," he chokes a little on the sentence, but shakes his head as he continues, "but still, someone needs to send that first shot. Fire had been Korra's favourite element, and I know that she valued your friendship dearly, no matter what fallouts you'd endured previously. I can't think of a better person, Mako. I mean it."

Mako chews the inside of his lip for a moment before he takes a deep breath, nodding.

"I'll do it," he says softly, his eyes misting with tears, "for Korra."

Tonraq can't help his own tears from forming as he sees the care and love in those glistening amber orbs. He takes Mako into his arms, bringing him into a bear hug. He'd never had a son, and though he may have not approved of him when his daughter had dated him, he had begun to see him as a son more than anything. He knew that Mako had loved Korra, maybe more than Korra had loved him, but even through their peril, the young man had stayed true to his words of doing his best to protect her. He'd served as a strong, dependable friend to his daughter, and Tonraq couldn't ask for anyone better to send his daughter the final volley of respect. He grips the man tight, rubbing his back as he closes his eyes, pursing his lips to allow a faint whisper.

"For Korra."

/ 

It's time she faces the truth.

Senna stands a few feet from Korra's limp body, still facing away from her daughter's face. Tonraq
had left a few hours ago in order to make the final preparations for the burial service they'd be giving her little girl at sundown. Cocking her head over her shoulders, the older woman glances through the cracks of the window to see that the afternoon sun is still beaming over the land, but it provides them with no warmth. The mother lets the lids of her eyes close gently, savouring the comfort the darkness gives her. She allows herself one deep breath before she opens them again, slowly turning her head back to face the body laying before her. It takes a minute for her to clear away the tears rolling down her cheeks before the woman nods.

Senna takes two steps forward and is met with death.

Korra looks so peaceful, laying there with not a blemish (bare for a few faint bruises unable to be healed by either Kya or Katara) to her beautiful face. Senna gasps at the sight of her. She'd never seen her daughter look so grown up, and instantly, she's brought to her knees, clutching her chest as she weeps. Her head hangs low over Korra's face, her anguished cries bellowing in her passed frame. The older woman wraps her arms around her middle, trying to steady her body as the sobs tear through her with the force of a steam engine. Senna weeps furiously, but cannot bring herself to touch Korra just yet. The older woman takes some time to recuperate, until finally she's able to cry without feeling the need to pass out.

Senna fixes her gaze upon Korra's motionless face, her eyes following a path down to her bare shoulders. The temporary blanket covers her nude body, and Tonraq's furs lay in the corner, folded neatly beside Korra's traditional water-tribe outfit that she was to be dressed in. Senna takes a deep breath and inches closer as she shuffles her knees, not caring about the dull ache she feels with each scratch upon her worn joints. For a moment, the woman just stops and glances at her daughter blankly. She'd taken care of Korra for ten years before they'd moved her to the White Lotus compound. At the time, she'd thought that they'd done the right thing by sending her away, but she never realized that those seven years without her daughter, to watch her grow up and mature, to turn into the beautiful young woman that was laying before her, had been robbed of her with their decision.

But Tonraq had been right, Senna knows, she would have gone either way.

A soft knock on the door interrupts her train of thought as she blinks. She calls out softly for them to come in, keeping her stare glued to her daughter's face. Several footsteps patter into the room, causing Senna to hang her head. This is it. This is the moment where she finally has to accept Korra's death. A hand places itself upon her shoulder, rubbing into the tense muscle with practiced fingertips. It takes the younger woman a moment before she can reach up and place her shaking palm over the calloused and wrinkled hands. A tear straggles down her cheek as she hears sniffles further in the back.

"We've brought Asami, dear." Katara's voice is sweet and low, a tone she'd used several times with Korra when she'd been a child. Senna holds back a sob as she remembers how many letters the
inventor had sent her daughter, of the compassion and love she'd seen her share with the Avatar. It had been Asami that had built her wheelchair and brought her medication. It had been Asami that had tended to Korra when she'd been so destroyed, physically and emotionally, to function on her own. Mako and Bolin hadn't stuck through the way Asami had; the young woman had been like glue.

Most importantly, Senna knew Korra loved Asami, just as Asami loves Korra.

"I don't want to impose," Asami's small voice pipes up from behind her in a choked whisper, "I-I know I'm not water tribe or anyone important."

Senna takes a deep breath and rises, standing up slowly. It takes a few minutes for her to focus, as her eyes can't seem to leave Korra's body. She shifts tentatively, gently squeezing and then prying Katara's hand from her shoulder. The older woman steps back and allows Senna to turn. The mother of the Avatar gazes at the love of her daughter's life, only to find those once bright green eyes dull with grief. Senna's heart breaks for the heiress as she remembers that the young girl had not just lost her best friend, but also her father in the same day. Shuffling forward, she reaches up and out for her. Asami winces at first, unsure of what Senna wants to do. The older woman shakes her head slowly as she brings Asami in for a hug, closing her eyes.

"You're family, Asami," she breathes, knowing just how much Asami, and herself too, need to hear that. "Korra would want this… for you to be here."

"I-I… I'm honoured, Senna," Asami whispers back, her arms gripping her back tightly. "She was everything to me."

"I know," Senna murmurs as she strokes the frizzled locks of Asami's hair. She's reminded of Korra again, but this time, her memory is not in pain, but nostalgia. She holds Asami closer, feeling for brief sliver of a minute that her daughter had actually never truly left.

"Come on," the older woman says as she pulls away from the embrace to wipe Asami's damp cheeks, "let's get Korra ready."

The four women make their way over to the fallen hero in silence. Senna's hand latches onto the heiress' for support, mainly for herself but also for the younger woman. Asami practically clings to her love's mother, squeezing tighter as they approach Korra. For Asami, it comes to a shock as she sees her best friend's body again. There are no more bruises or cuts; as Asami looks to her, she sees Korra for the person she'd fallen in love with. There's even a small ghost of a smile that plays upon her dark lips. Asami freezes for a second as she loses herself in the last memory she'd shared with
this body. Her mouth parts and a soft, but equally heartbreaking cry sounds past her lips, causing the tranquility in the room to break.

"You're safe now," Kya murmurs from behind her, placing a hand upon her shoulder, "she's in a peaceful place, Asami."

It takes a few deep breaths before Asami can nod her head and allow herself to believe the healer's words. Her chest feels heavy and her breathing is getting laboured, but she knows that should she have been in the same position, Korra would have stayed strong until the end. Asami puts on a brave face and steps forward with Senna, before the two of them kneel at Korra's side. Kya and Katara take their place on the opposite side. They all take a second to adjust and allow the weight of their purpose to bear down on them. Kya and Katara both look up to Senna, awaiting her instructions. The woman closes her eyes and rubs her tired face, her fingers shaking still. Asami squeezes her other hand, and she draws strength from the motion.

"Okay," Senna says quietly, glancing back to the two healers, "let's do this."

Kya and Katara both nod as they take one end of the blanket. Asami and Senna untangle their hands reluctantly as they reach for the edges of the fur on their side. Taking a collective breath, the four women gently tug the blanket downwards, revealing Korra's nude body underneath. Asami doesn't let her stare linger, and instead she keeps focused on the task before her. Finally, the pelt lays at her feet and the four women let out a gentle sigh together. Kya reaches behind her for the tribal outfit and hands the undergarments to Senna. The mother of the Avatar reaches forwards, wrapping the bindings around her chest with gentle and nimble fingers, before repeating the action with her lower abdomen.

"Korra used to hate wearing these," Senna says in a pained chuckle as she finally finishes fastening the last bit of wrapping together. "She always would try to sneak by without her underwear all the time. She'd complain that it was too restricting and that she wanted to be free, like the wind."

Kya and Katara smile briefly at the small anecdote that the grieving woman shares, but Asami stays quiet and instead focuses her eyes to Korra's face. She still feels somewhat nervous and apprehensive at being around the Avatar in this sense of bareness. Sure, she'd helped Korra change her clothes or get ready for baths, but she'd never looked at her body while it had been this vulnerable. Now, with understanding her feelings for the Avatar, she feels this new sense of prudishness. She knows that if Korra were alive, she'd tease her endlessly, rib her until her last breath at her awkward approaches.

"Asami," Senna's voice calls, causing the younger woman to gently nod, prying her eyes away from Korra to look emptily at her love's mother. Senna hands her the water-tribe bun and a few hair clips. Asami's chest tightens when she sees them.
"Korra never told you," she whispers distantly, "but she also thought you made her look beautiful that day." Asami's breath hitches as she sees that everyone else has taken an article of clothing; Senna has Korra's top, Kya has her pants, and Katara has her boots. It was the same outfit the Avatar had worn for Jinora's induction as an air master. Everyone else had seen through her brave face, but Asami had seen the tear that had rolled down her cheek as Tenzin had told her that the air benders would take the lead and do their best to protect the world, thus echoing the words of her previous foes.

_The Avatar isn't needed anymore_, Korra had told her sometime after the ceremony, as they'd sat watching the sunset fall over the mountains that surrounded Republic City. Asami had remained silent as Korra had sighed deeply, mournfully whispering, _they don't need me anymore._

_They will always need you_, she'd told her friend with the strongest smile she could put on. It had torn her apart to see Korra so beaten down, not only physically but mentally. Korra's eyes had blurred with tears, but she hadn't allowed them to fall, not in Asami's presence anyways. The broken Avatar had glanced down at her legs, bones shattered and muscles atrophied with inability of use, and she had let out the faintest of whimpers.

_Not like this_, Asami had heard her mutter under her breath, _not like this._

"Asami?"

The heiress blinks back tears and looks to Senna with a hazy expression. The woman is still holding the cloth and the pins, waiting for her response. Asami takes a minute to push down those hard memories before she nods, reaching forward and taking the items delicately into her hands. She fumbles with the pins at first before she turns to face Korra with a bittersweet smile. She reaches out automatically, her hand gently cupping her friend's cheek. Senna lets out an inaudible gasp as she watches how gentle Asami is with her daughter, and she doesn't need to be in front of the inventor to know that there's nothing but love showing in those pale green eyes. The heiress leans over, forgetting about the other three women for a moment, and presses a soft kiss to Korra's forehead. She ignores the chilling feeling of her dead skin, and instead focuses her energy on remembering her life with Korra.

"Well then," she mumbles softly as her thumb brushes across the line of Korra's gaunt cheekbone, "let's make you beautiful again, darling."

To Asami, however, Korra has _always_ been beautiful.
Soon enough, with everyone working in silence, Korra is dressed and ready. The fur pelt that Tonraq had brought lays over her waist. Her hands are folded neatly above her abdomen, limp but just as Asami had remembered them. Those rough, calloused hands had held up the world, carried billions of people to safety, but as the inventor looks at them now, they look so soft and delicate. Korra looks beyond beautiful, her hair tied up in a smaller version of her original wolf-tail, due to the shorter length she had to work with. It allows for the natural frame of her face to be accentuated by the light of the nearby fire. Asami looks at her and despite everything, she can't help herself from falling further in love with the Avatar.

A knock on the door interrupts her thoughts as the four women turn around to see Pema walking in with the assortment of flowers in her basket. She dips her head politely before Senna gestures for her to come closer. The acolyte keeps her steps slow and cautious, approaching Korra's body with tentative anxiety. But, as soon as the chief's wife reaches for her hand, her shoulders loosen and she nods, allowing herself to be led to where Korra's body lays perfectly still in the furs. Pema waits a moment, simply gazing at the woman that had long protected her family whenever trouble would arise. She'd watched the torment the young Avatar had endured since she'd started her journey in Republic City, all the way from her troubles with air-bending, with boys, with meditation and spirituality, and most of all, with growing up and dealing with adulthood. She allows a small smile to tug at her lips as she gazes lovingly at the woman she'd considered to be her own daughter, before reaching into her basket for her favourite pick.

"I brought ice-lilies," she says quietly, her eyes still trained on Korra's face.

Asami smiles faintly at that, fully aware that those had been Korra's favourites. She watches as Pema slowly turns to her, offering a gentle nod as she holds out the small bundle of sapphire flowers. Asami swallows nervously, before thanking Pema as she takes the flowers from her hands. The heiress looks back to her love and sighs softly, leaning forward to hover over her. She reaches down to Korra's hands, prying them apart to place the bundle underneath. She looks almost godlike when Asami is done. As she goes to place Korra's hand down the flowers, something makes her stop. Her hand begins working for her, as it had done a week ago when her spirit had reached out for her. Asami gives in to her body and holds her breath as she watches her fingers weave between Korra's limp digits. She'd be a fool if she thought they'd squeeze back. For a second, she allows herself the luxury of reimagining the memory and sensation of Korra's hand holding hers, just to give her a sense of closure.

However wonderful it may seem in that bleak second, Asami knows better than to lose herself over a memory.

"They're perfect, aren't they?" She asks to no one in particular. Well, Asami thinks, maybe to Korra. She wonders if Korra can see this, if she can see all of what her friends and family have done for her. Her loss had been tragic, but as she looks to Korra, surrounded by flowers, beautiful pelts, and loving family members, she can't help but feel slightly happy that her best friend didn't die in vain. An ache in her chest lifts, and thought it may be a small weight, it is still significant from where she'd started a week ago. Tears begin rolling down her cheeks, but they're not angered
or sad this time.

Without reluctance this time, Asami slowly withdraws her hand with a soft sigh.

"She's ready," Katara says gently, her warm gaze settling upon Asami's green eyes. The inventor nods, wiping her tears with the backs of her sleeves as she rises with the other women. Pema bows her head as she murmurs out that she'll notify Tonraq and the others.

Senna cries gently, cupping a hand over her mouth as she looks down to her daughter with saddened eyes. Her shoulders shake as she sees how mature Korra looks. It doesn't seem right that she'd spent so much time away, and now she has to say goodbye without ever having had the chance to get to know her daughter. As the mother of Avatar glances up at Asami, she can't help but feel a slight twinge of jealousy and anger. Not towards Asami, per say, but more so towards their relationship. She knows that the inventor probably knew more about her daughter than she'd ever hope to know. Stories, memories, events, battles, break-ups - the whole deal. Korra only ever wrote to Asami, even if it had been once. She carefully reminds herself that there's still one thing that she has to give to Asami, but she decides to wait until after the ceremony.

Asami will need it then more than ever.

"Tonraq, Mako, Bolin, Fire Lord Zuko, Iroh, and Tenzin are on their way," Pema's voice calls from the doorway, her voice shaking lightly. Senna turns around to look at the window, watching as dusk begins to fall and the sun threatens to set soon. Only one question runs through her head as they wait.

Where did all her time go?

Lazy summer Goddess.

You can tell the whole empire.

I don't have to see you right now.
"I don't have to see you right now."

For the first time, Korra is on time.

Asami stands beside Senna and Kya, watching as Tonraq and Tenzin come into view, the stretcher hoisted upon their shoulders. Mako stands behind Tonraq, with Bolin behind him. On the opposite side, Fire Lord Zuko and Iroh stand behind Tenzin to hold the other two points. They walk slowly, each step pained from the burden that they literally carry upon their shoulders. As they approach, Asami's breaths quicken. She's finally realizing that this is it.

They're finally sending her away.

"I'm not ready," she breathes quickly, panic settling in her bones. Asami wants to run away, or cry, or curl into a dark corner somewhere and never return. She doesn't want to do this. She thought she'd been okay with it all, but she's not ready. Korra's dead, she says to herself, as if it were some new piece of information, Korra's really fucking dead this time.

"Shh... it's going to be alright, sweetheart," Kya soothes as her hand clasps around her clammy palm. Asami begins to weep, drawing the attention of a concerned Opal from across her. Kya squeezes the inventor's hand harder, willing herself to be strong for the shattered young woman. Lin stares at her with an aggrieved expression, her eyes trained on Asami's shaking shoulders.

The somber notes, playing from Tanho's flugal horn, ring out as the men approach the dock.

The people gathered to witness the final farewell of the Avatar are mostly Korra's friends and family. A few ex-triad members with whom Korra had helped restore their bending are there, such as Shady Shin, Ping, and Viper. Even Toza is there, standing with his face staring out stoically at the woman being piped in. Senna can't help but wonder how such a diverse group of individuals, some not so well-liked or altruistic in nature, could have affiliated themselves with her daughter. But as she looks to those people that had come to attend, especially those with criminal pasts, she realizes just how much good her daughter had manage to do with her little time in the world. Senna's eyes turn to Tonraq, seeking his comfort.
But the moment their eyes meet, both of them begin to fall apart.

Tonraq glances at his wife as tears roll down his face. His shoulder buckles at first, but he shakes his head and grits his teeth, forcing himself to continue. He tries to not to think about how the body that is hoisted by his strong arms is his own flesh and blood. He keeps his gaze glued to his trembling wife, allowing himself to share in her pain in an effort to cleave it in half. He feels suffocated, seeing all these people standing and watching them walk towards the beautifully carved canoe he'd crafted as a gift to his daughter when she'd turned seventeen. Tonraq blinks slowly as he stares at it hollowly.

Seventeen, he thinks mournfully, the age where this all began.

Beside him, Tenzin is murmuring prayers under his breath. He hopes that wherever his father is, that Korra is with him. He'd always thought that Aang and Korra would have gotten along well. It would have been a relationship similar to the one he'd shared with Toph. Perhaps that's why she'd taken an immediate liking to the new Avatar. As they draw closer to the boat, Tenzin feels memories of all their training, failures and successes both, fill his mind. Korra had started off headstrong, but he had never been so proud of anything, than to see Korra mature into the woman she'd become in her final moments. Tenzin knows that she'd made the full one-eighty from selfish to selfless in a span of four years.

Korra had so much potential and she uncovered it with his guidance, but also on her own.

"Wait!"

The high-pitched female voice draws their attention. Tonraq and Tenzin stop to see Asami step forward as they go to pass the young woman. Tonraq's eyes raise with concern, but even Senna has stepped forward, too. The chief gazes to his wife painfully, but Senna shakes her head, looking to a sobbing Asami. The inventor feels guilty for having stopped the ritual, but she can't help herself. Her insides are screaming with agony and her lungs feel like they're on fire, but it's not the physical pain that hurts her the most. Her sorrowed green eyes stare into Tonraq's soul as she folds her hands together.

"Please," she begs through her cries, "just let me see her one more time."

Tonraq pauses for a second, but he nods, forgetting about tradition. Korra had never been traditional, so why should he? Tonraq turns and motions to the other men, telling them to hold Korra's stretcher at waist-level instead of their shoulders. Immediately, they follow his order and before long, the water-bender is staring at his resting daughter again. Asami can see him watching
her love and decides to allow him and Senna, who has now joined her husband's side, looking upon their resting daughter with tears streaming down her face, their final moments with Korra's body. Tonraq's free hand places itself upon her shoulder, squeezing at the tense flesh underneath with soft, supportive pressure. His own chest aches as he, too, begins to cry.

Bolin gazes over Mako's shoulder, catching the first glimpse of Korra since she'd been whisked away by Tonraq the minute the airship had landed. The young earth-bender is surprised at first to see the bruises completely healed and her face as pure from before the fight with Kuvira. His gaze softens when he realizes that Korra looks just as beautiful as when he'd first laid eyes on her. Though their love had stayed purely platonic, he'd always had a soft spot for the young Avatar. There had been something about Korra, and as Bolin glances to Asami, he realizes that everyone in Team Avatar had been in love with her at one point or another. He takes one last glance at the Avatar's still form, thinking it's better to remember her as the woman who'd changed his outlook on life, a martyr for a cause that had saved the world. Korra was, and always will be, his hero.

Mako watches with a stony expression as Senna parts away slowly to allow Asami to come into view. She stands next to Tonraq as the man whispers something into her ear when she goes to apologize for her actions. Asami only cries harder, burying her hands into her face for a few seconds before she wipes her tears and leans over Korra's body. He looks on silently as Asami's hands gently cup Korra's cheek. No words leave the inventor's mouth, only choked sobs. He feels jealous at first, because of all the people to love Korra, why did it have to be Asami? But, as he watches the soothing stroke of her nimble fingers upon the gaunt of Korra's cheekbone, he knows that it has to be Asami. It hits him, driving a pit into his gut, that Asami and Korra made sense together - they should have been together. In a way, he almost wished he could rewind time and fix it. Maybe Asami should have hit Korra with her motorbike instead of him. Maybe that way, he'd never break either of their hearts. Mako realizes that maybe he had not been the perfect match for the woman he'd fallen for, but he's happy that Asami is. He can practically hear Korra in his ear, telling him that he'd better watch over her, and he will.

Asami doesn't care about anyone else besides Korra in that moment. Her eyes are narrow and focused, blinking away tears furiously as she attempts to memorize the Avatar's face. She won't get another chance, so she stares into those close lids. Something inside of her desperately wants her to open them, to gaze at the inventor with those striking blue eyes and a lopsided grin. There's a void in Asami's heart that she knows cannot be filled by anyone else. She continues to rub her thumb over Korra's cheekbone, lost in her motions. After a few more strokes, the inventor stills her hand, simply cupping Korra's soft skin in her palms as she fights to regulate her breathing. She decides that she is going to keep one memory locked away forever, should she forget the others with age or Spirits forbid, death. Looking to her lost love, she settles upon the time in which they'd met for the first time at the restaurant after Korra's three year disappearance. She keeps the sensation of Korra's strong arms around hers as they'd embraced in a hug that probably lasted too long, but not enough for either of them to care. She'll forever remember the blush on Korra's cheeks as she'd complimented her hair, and the fuzzy feeling in her stomach as Korra had nervously told her that she looked snazzy as ever. Once Asami knows that she's got everything about that memory secured away forever, she takes a deep breath. Her hand begins to retract, her eyes clouding over with tears. This time, she allows the crystal droplets to fall. She bends over, pressing one final kiss to her love's forehead, before she steps back into Senna's arms.
"Goodbye, Korra. I love you," she whispers as she watches the men slowly hoist her up, carrying her down to the boat. Asami holds her hands over her chest as they set her down into the canoe, placing the paddles, her favourite toys from her childhood, and her glider into the boat with her.

Boilin, Mako, Fire Lord Zuko, Iroh, and Tenzin step back, making their way over to the crowd of people. Tonraq stays standing on his own at the dock, waiting for a few moments as he mentally says his final goodbyes to his only daughter. The world watches as the experienced water-bender, chief, husband, and parent brings himself into a water-bending stance. His legs stand strong, his gaze clear and focused, and his arms angled perfectly. Then, with long-practiced movements, he starts to create small waves around the canoe. His blue eyes are harrowed by grief but he fights the temptation to break down; instead, Tonraq continues rolling water under the boat, casting it towards into the open ocean.

Senna clutches onto Asami, who has begun to shake again. The chief's wife is supported by Kya, who places a hand upon her shoulder. But, when she begins to cry, Lin is there with her, a hand placed upon her shoulder. Suyin steps forward and touches her own sister's shoulder with her hand. Bataar Jr, the twins, and Huan link to her through Bataar Sr's shoulder. Opal reaches out and touches her eldest brother's shoulder, letting out a soft sigh when she feels Bolin's calming hand upon her own. Mako joins his brother, eyes fixed on the boat slowly floating from the bank. Varrick and Zhu Li are there behind him, and soon enough, everyone has linked one way or another. Asami looks around at all these people, these humans brought together from all different corners of the Earth, to love and cherish, and bid a final goodbye to the woman who'd made their relations all possible, and she lets out another sob. She looks to the woman before her, blue eyes staring back at her with a knowing, saddened expression, and she reaches out slowly.

Asami's hand lands softly on Katara's shoulder, and both of them suddenly know.

While the water-bender and non-bender are locked in an empathetic expression, Toph has placed her hand on Katara's shoulder. Tenzin's hand is on Kya's other shoulder, with Bumi and Pema on either side of his. The air-bender's family is doing the same, and though not all members fully understand the meaning behind the gesture, all four of them feel it. The crowd of connected people watch as Tonraq gives one last gentle push before he lets out a soft breath, bowing his head. There's a moment of silence, in which no one even dares to move or breathe. Then, Tonraq opens his eyes and turns around, staring at the interconnected people with glazed eyes. He sees all of what his daughter had manage to accomplish and he beams with sorrowed pride. His joy, however tainted by pain and grief, is still present as a warming feeling in his chest.

Korra, he thinks as he casts a final glance at the retreating boat, I'm so proud of you.

"Today, as the full moon creeps beyond the mountains and the sun sets below the Southern Pole,
we bid a fond farewell to Korra, daughter of Tonraq and Senna, and proud member of the Southern Water Tribe family," Tenzin's voice rings out as stands straighter, allowing his eyes to mist as the boat is slowly carried out further into the awaiting, calm waters of the ocean. He clears his throat of the riddled sob and continues his speech.

"May the Spirits welcome you, and lead you through to the afterlife in safe arms. May they sing your name with affection and pride, as you are the saviour of their world and ours. May they call it out with such adoration that we can hear it from the depths of all reaches of our vast Earth, to bind together nations and clans into harmony. Allow us to send your body there in peace, while you carve your own path with your immortal soul."

Bolin's breath hitches as he turns his head away from the sight of the boat creeping further into the waters.

"As your name bellows out to the farthest corners of our land, we are reminded that you have taken your rightful place amongst the stars. We know, as we gaze up under the light of the moon, that you are continually looking down upon us, a watchful guardian through all times. We will carry your story for generations to come, and though dawn may arise, we will know you are always there, waiting for the day in which we will meet you once again."

Mako closes his eyes and bows his head, feeling a faint snap in his heart strings.

"A great woman has fallen, a woman that has seen through the very fires of the underworld and lived to tell the tale. A woman, who's strength is outmatched by any army or weapon. A woman, who's eyes like sapphire, brought light to a world of darkness. All of what you represent is shown in the actions of those around you as they carry your sacrifice with understanding and gratitude, for you have given them the chance to live once again."

Senna chokes upon a stifled sob, but Kya squeezes her shoulder supportively.

"You were more than just a woman," Tenzin says, tears starting to roll down his face as he takes a deep breath. "You were a warrior, a leader, a student, a teacher, a daughter, a friend…, an Avatar." The man stops for a moment as he turns around to look at his sister and Korra's parents.

Asami's head nods up slowly to meet Tenzin's mournful gaze as he murmurs sympathetically, "…and a lover."
The heiress chokes as she keeps her eyes glued to Tenzin's gray-blue depths, slowly nodding her head.

*A lover,* the word rings out in her head as she looks back to the boat, *an* almost *lover.*

*My almost lover,* Asami thinks sadly, allowing a few tears to roll down her cheeks.

"And so we are gathered here to say goodbye," Tenzin draws his eulogy to a close, drawing a deep breath, "to send you away with a hero's burial. You have done the world a great service many times, young Korra. Your rest is well earned. You have fought your battles and won them, for us and for you. May you find peace in your eternity. Thank you for your support, your courage, your wisdom, your strength, your bravery, your love, and your tenacity."

"Thank you," he says with a gentle sigh, "for everything, Korra."

A silence befalls the crowd as they mourn the death of the late, great Avatar.

When he sees Fire Lord Zuko and Tenzin step forward, Mako nods his head up and removes himself from Bolin to join Tonraq. Bolin watches with misty eyes as his brother stands beside the Fire Lord's Grandson with a respectful and stoic posture. Tenzin slings the arrow and bow into his hands, knowing this is the only time he will operate a weapon of this caliber. For a moment, the experienced air-bender chuckles sadly as he pictures what Korra's reaction would have been. Possibly awe, maybe a bit more tease. He sighs deeply, shaking his head as he focuses on Tonraq. The chief looks to Mako, nodding his head firmly. The young fire-bender lights his arrow and takes a deep breath, before drawing it back.

"I love you, Korra," he whispers as he fires the arrow, "may you rest in peace."

The flame starts out small, like the child Korra had once been. Then, as Fire Lord strikes the canoe, the flame grows into something more boisterous and erratic, like her adolescence. Tenzin fires and the fire spreads, accumulating more, similar to when Korra had learned different lessons in empathy and maturity from her early adulthood. Finally, when Tonraq raises the bow and shoots the final arrow, the fire consumes the boat, just the way Korra had made her final sacrifice, and achieving something nobody had done in a long time - *balance.*

The flaming canoe drifts into the sunset, to be taken on one last journey to the end.
"That's it, I'm tired of sitting around all depressed like this."

Everyone who is perched around the fire looks up at Bolin's expression. The young earth-bender stands up and gazes at Korra's family and friends with an empathetic but tired expression. Pabu skitters up from the chair and rests his small body upon his owner's shoulder. Bolin draws another breath before he walks over to the side of the living room. He flicks on the radio and turns to Korra's favourite station. The familiar jazz music starts to pour out, and Bolin walks back over to the grieving, and rather confused, group of people.

"Korra would want us to rejoice and celebrate her, not sit around and cry over her loss," he says gently, looking up to the framed photo of his friend upon the chief's wall. Bolin shakes his head as he sees no one moving. He looks to Opal, his green eyes watering as he extends his hand.

"Dance with me," he proposes quietly, "for Korra's sake, Opal. Give the woman something to laugh about up there. Spirits know how much she bawled her eyes out watching me attempt at dancing." The air-bender is hesitant at first, but then she sees the genuine honesty in Bolin's eyes and she knows, despite the solemn situation, that he is right. Korra wouldn't want them to sulk and cry. If there was one thing Korra hated, was watching people cry.

"Okay," Opal says softly, taking his hand.

As soon as the two get started on their dance, Zhu Li prods Varrick's shoulder tentatively. The inventor bites his lip but he nods, putting his grief aside for another day. He starts swaying his fiancée to the beat of the tune, losing himself in her beautiful eyes. Ikki and Huan join with Kai and Jinora after a few moments of them being on their own. Senna and Tonraq look around to the dancing friends, who'd just seen their daughter off not even two hours ago, but instead of feeling anger, Senna only feels happiness. They're smiling, laughing, reminiscing over memories they'd shared on the road with her daughter. Suyin and Bataar Sr join the dance, coming to shuffle beside her twin sons, who are dancing with air-master's kids. Pema and Tenzin are beside them, laughing sadly as the acolyte looks at her husband's awful dance moves.

"What do you say, Toph?" Katara asks, raising a brow mischievously at her old friend. "A dance for the Avatar, like old times?" The earth-bender snorts, but she feels the energy in the room beginning to shift into something lighter. She sighs as she feels Katara pat her shoulder with a friendly brush.

"Fine, but this is the last ridiculous thing I'm doing for Twinkle Toes," she says as she begins to
shuffle slowly beside the aged water-bender. Katara lets out a soft chuckle, her eyes misting as she
glances to her sons, Bumi and Tenzin, trying to have a dance off. Beside them, Kya has managed to
pull a grumbling Lin to her feet. Her daughter laughs as Lin mutters something under her breath,
before Kya throws her arms over her lover's shoulders.

"Nice feet, Chief," Kya chuckles, watching Lin struggle with her coordination. The metal-bender
huffs out something unintelligible, adjusting her hands upon Kya's waist as they bop out of sync to
the lively music. Lin's eyes ghost upwards, her gaze meeting the gray-blues of her love.

"Kya," she breathes out softly, bringing them closer. The water-bender smiles faintly, reaching out
with a hand to curl a piece of her hair behind her ears. Lin's eyes grow misty again with emotion,
but this time, her tears are made of joy, not sorrow.

"I love you," she murmurs, leaning forwards to allow their foreheads to touch, "I love you so
much." Kya wraps her arms back around Lin's neck, drawing them into a hug as Kya lets out a low,
raspy chuckle through her chapped lips.

"I love you, too," she whispers compassionately, pecking Lin's ear, "always, Lin. You're mine, and
I'm not letting you, or your awful dance moves, out of my sight again, you hear me?" Lin laughs at
that, nodding her head as Kya pulls back, throwing her a playful wink.

Tonraq smiles at the people around him, pushing aside the pain for a few moments to enjoy the
beauty that Korra had brought to these wonderful individuals. He tugs upon Senna's hand, gazing
at her with a knowing expression. His wife hesitates at first, but soon she rises, allowing herself to
be swept into her husband's arms. Her head rests lightly against his strong chest, her eyes fluttering
shut slightly. For some reason, in those arms, she feels safe for the first time since discovering the
death of her only daughter. She can hear Korra in the back of her head, gushing about how cute she
was being with her father, and a smile paints her tired lips. Tonraq pushes his nose into her hair,
inhaling her familiar scent, grateful that they have this connection again. The week had been
trying, pushing them both to their wits end, but now, he feels like he is finally at home again.

"Got a partner?"

Asami blinks from where she stands in the corner of the room to see Mako approaching her
tentatively, hand extended. She glances down at it before looking up at his soft amber eyes. Once,
she'd loved those fiery orbs, she remembers as Mako gives her that signature smirk. His eyes are
different this time, however. They're not passionate with love or lust, but calm and understanding.
He'd never really attempted to kindle their friendship, but she can tell that right now, Mako knows
there's no better time to start. She sighs deeply, putting aside her guilt and sorrow to take his hand,
allowing him to lead her to their makeshift dance floor. He's just as sloppy as ever, and Asami can't
help but faintly smile at his inability to coordinate his moves.
"I'll get it one day, I swear," he mutters, shaking his head as he looks back at Asami with gentle eyes. He squeezes her hand and nods his head, silently telling her all the words that she needs to hear. Asami sighs again, allowing her head to drop upon the fire-bender's shoulder.

"We'll get through this, Asami," Mako murmurs as he places a gentle kiss to the top of her head, "one day, it won't hurt like it does now."

Asami doesn't respond, and instead she simply pushes herself further into his embrace. Despite wanting his strong arms to be Korra's strong arms, she can't help but feel slightly grateful of his stoic presence. Mako never was one for words, but Asami always knew that the words he chose spoke louder than essays or books. She doesn't feel any romantic feeling towards the man, but she allows herself the comfort of experiencing empathy with the detective. He'd lost his love just as much as she'd lost hers; there's a familiarity in their pain, and with him holding her as gently as he is, Asami feels slightly eased knowing he understands her agony. She takes in his familiar charred scent and relaxes her shoulders slightly.

"She'd be so happy to see this," Mako murmurs as he gazes into the crowd. "She was terrible with sad people. She never knew how to handle them without hurting their feelings further. For a woman who could breathe fire, she sure was a giant softy at heart, huh?" Asami nods faintly as she recalls all the times she'd witnessed Korra attempting to help someone with emotional problems. It had always resulted in panic with the young Avatar. It was only ever with children that Korra could negotiate peace between their issues and sentiments. Korra always had a way with kids.

She would have made a great mother, Asami knows.

"Hey, Mako! Come over here and help me show Opal the dance we used to do as kids, you know, the one that we did for Toza to distract him so we could steal his cookies," Bolin calls out from across the space. Toza stands beside him, a flicker of amusement in his hardened eyes as he nods to the earth-bender's older brother. Mako looks up to see that there is a circle that has formed, with Bolin waving him over with happiness he'd not seen in weeks. He glances down at Asami in concern, but the heiress places her hand on his chest, giving him an encouraging nod.

Mako reluctantly untangles himself from his ex-girlfriend and makes his way over, shaking his head in embarrassment as he joins his brother.

"Kids these days," Toph grumbles as she senses their terrible dance through the ground. Katara covers her mouth and giggles, causing Toph to laugh as well. The water-bender looks down at her friend, feeling elated that they'd managed to squeeze in a final reunion. Both of them were getting old, and Katara would be lying if she said she didn't think about what would await her soon.
"Still better than Sokka," Katara replies, chuckling as she remembers her brother's terrible dance from her wedding night. Toph chuckles and nods in agreement, her sides aching as she cackles loudly. Katara shakes her head at the older woman, mischief dancing in her blue eyes.

"Nothing was worse than Aang, though," Fire Lord Zuko's voice interrupts them as the older man chuckles, coming to stand beside his friends. Katara flashes him a playful frown, but Fire Lord Zuko only smiles at her teasing expression. Toph reaches out and punches his shoulder, causing the older man to wince. Toph chuckles as she shakes her head. Even Katara can't stop the giggle from escaping her lips as she laughs.

"You mean nothing was worse than you, you mean," Toph rattles, laughing harder. "I don't what it is with you fire-benders; you're all so damned heavy-footed, and that's coming from an earth-bender." Fire Lord Zuko frowns as he looks to his feet with a raised brow.

"I am not heavy-footed," he grumbles, but then his eyes catch sight of Mako bumbling about beside his brother and he winces, gulping nervously. Always sensitive to emotions and changes in dynamics, Toph catches Fire Lord Zuko's harsh swallow and produces yet another teasing chuckle.

"Whatever you say, Scarface," she says in good humour. Fire Lord Zuko shakes his head and sighs contently, happy to be able to rekindle old ties with his friends. He felt the loss of Aang come again with the death of Korra, but this display of celebration over her life helped ease the pain of losing the Avatar twice. Korra had given him so much in her short amount of time. She'd saved his grandson, but also Aang's progress in Republic City. The old man sighs as he raises his glass to no one in particular, taking a sip for the fallen hero.

Because of her, the world is whole again.

/  

Asami sits on the edge of the cliff looking over the ocean, her eyes trained to the horizon.

The flaming boat had long since passed her line of sight, but Asami can't bring herself to go back into the estate, where the others are busy recounting tales of the deceased woman. She'd snuck out when Bolin had started telling the story of how he'd first met Korra. The first time she'd met Korra… Asami can't bring herself to draw upon the memory. It's too fresh, too raw for the young heiress to handle. The first time she'd met the young woman hadn't been the most lovely of experiences. The young inventory sighs, pushing her knees up against her aching chest. Naga sits at
her side, wary as always. Her head leans against the woman's shoulder, her gentle breaths causing the small furs in her jacket to sway with the air. Asami absentely, unwinds a hand and places it upon Naga's furry skull, patting the whimpering polar-bear dog as she, too, mourns the loss of her owner.

"It's a bit colder than Republic City, huh?"

Asami cocks her head to see Tenzin approaching her stiffly, his movements slow with age and grief. Asami tries to smile, but the action falters before it can reach her lips. The woman licks her lips and turns back to face the soothing waves of the ocean. The moonlight spills over the water, but despite how beautiful the scenery is, she can't enjoy it. Her life has turned from colour to black and white. She doesn't taste anything when she eats. The only time she experiences joy is when she sleeps, because that's the one time that she'll fall into the painless abyss. Maybe, it's because sleep had always seemed like preparation to death for the young inventor, instead of a moment of rest. But Asami knows that's not why she loves sleep the most.

In her dreams, Asami sometimes can see Korra, and in her illusions, she doesn't feel so alone or lost.

"It was a good speech," the inventor chokes out as Tenzin sits down beside her. He bows his head and murmurs a quiet thank-you. He follows her gaze, trying desperately to ignore the growing pit in his stomach as he realizes that he's now bid farewell to two Avatars in one lifetime.

"Korra deserved the best," he stumbles upon his words as he scratches his beard, "and I hope I gave it."

"You did," Asami says gently, causing Tenzin to turn and face her with a soft gaze. The heiress nods, her eyes clear with respect and admiration. He sees a forced smile trying to tug at her lips, but the inventor is too tired to break it in. Tenzin sighs as he reaches his arm around, pulling Asami into his chest. The young woman doesn't move for a second, but then when his hand rubs her shoulder, she gives in, crumpling against his side.

"I feel so empty," Asami cries against his chest, "like there's this irreplaceable void in my chest. I miss her so much, Tenzin. She was gone for three years and then she came back for what, a month?" Tenzin's breath hitches as Asami brings up the absence Korra had taken. It's a thorn in his side, a growing infection of internal conflict; he should have been there for Korra more, instead of focusing so much on Republic City.

"A month," Asami chokes, clutching his robes in her fingers. She feels like a small child, weeping in the older man's embrace, but she needs it.
"A month, she was gone," she repeats through heaving breaths, "and now she's gone forever, Tenzin. This time I know she won't come back and it hurts. Spirits, it hurts so damned much. I just want her back, for a second even. I had so much I needed to say… so much I needed to do, and now I can't."

"You gave Korra more than enough, Asami," he murmurs gently, holding her closer as Naga watches them with big, sad eyes. Tenzin looks to the polar-bear dog, an animal he'd once thought was a nuisance, and he reaches out, scratching behind her ear as Korra had always done.

"She loved you, and you loved her," he says gently, "I think that's all that matters in the end."

"I still love her," Asami says, breaking their hug so that she can look into Tenzin's comforting eyes, "and I always will, Tenzin. She… she was different from everyone else, from Mako. She… she was… she…” Asami can't explain what Korra had meant to her, but another person can.

"She was your soulmate, sweetheart," Senna's soft voice breathes out from behind the air-master and the inventor. Both of them turn stiffly to see the mother of the Avatar step closer towards them, something clutched tightly in her hands. Tonraq is at her side, a hand placed on her shoulder in support.

"S-Senna," Asami cries in a heart-wrenching sob. Tenzin takes a step back and allows Asami to vault from their position and into Senna's open arms. Tonraq wraps his own strong arms around his wife and his daughter's love in a protective embrace. Asami's sobs are harsh and erratic, but Senna is there, being the maternal figure she'd always been to all of her daughter's friends. She holds Asami as she'd held Korra so many nights after her awful terrors - with love and affection. Tenzin stands, his eyes meeting the sad gaze of Tonraq. The two nod at each other before Tenzin steps back towards the house, knowing that his place is not with the three of them at the moment.

"Ssh, darling, ssh. You need to breathe, okay? Just breathe, Asami, just breathe," Senna hums soothingly, rubbing the crying woman's shoulder with expert touch. Her emotions boil with the loss, but she manages to stay calm for the devastated heiress. Soon, after a few more harsh howls of pain, Asami listens to the comforting tone of Senna's whispers, allowing her chest to quell the fire that brews within her.

"I-I'm s-sorry, I shouldn't…," Asami goes to say between hiccupsed breaths, but Senna shakes her head. She places her hands on either side of the young girl's face, her heart twisting as she sees the raw love and pain in those striking green eyes. The older woman wipes away her tears with her free hand.
"Asami, do not apologize," Tonraq says from behind her, his voice warm but guarded. He places his hand upon her shoulder, rubbing it gently as Asami recovers from her attack. The heiress ducks her head again sheepishly, ashamed to have been so vulnerable in front of the chief and his wife.

"We know that what you lost that day went beyond Korra alone, sweetheart," Senna whispers, drawing Asami's attention back to the non-bender. Senna cups her cheek in her hand, her thumb gently tracing over the gaunt of her cheekbone.

"But you must know, that you did not lose all your family," Senna says, glancing to Tonraq, who nods solemnly in approval. He knows that Asami is not his daughter, and he wouldn't dare call her a replacement, but he'd always seen the heiress as one of his own. He squeezes again, giving her an encouraging smile that doesn't make his eyes as he tells her strongly, "we may be smaller than when we we'd started, but we're still a family, Asami."

"I-I," Asami stutters breathlessly, but with gratitude in her voice, "I… thank you, sir."

"And Asami?" Senna says her name softly, like she's cooing to a babbling child. Asami wipes a few more straggling tears as Senna gives her a supportive nod, before reaching down for her hand. She places the envelope in her palm, causing the heiress to look up at her with a confused expression.

"She may have only ever sent you one letter, but Korra had written to you more times than you know. She'd always burn the letters and get frustrated. She'd never even tried with Mako and Bolin, but with you…," Senna murmurs, her voice trailing off as she looks down at the paper with misty eyes.

"But with you," she says again, glancing back up to see Asami staring at her with a less cloudy expression, "with you, she'd try until she couldn't take anymore. You're the only one she hadn't given up on, herself included. Korra… she wanted to talk to you, Asami, to seek your council and comfort during those hard times, but her mind had been so trapped, she could only deal with sending one letter." She squeezes the small item in Asami's hand, pushing it further towards the heiress as she smiles faintly, fully aware of its contents.

"This one was the only one I'd found that hadn't been torn up or destroyed," she says softly, her other hand reaching for Asami's empty one. She weaves her fingers between her own before tugging lightly. Her smile grows warm and genuine, the first one she'd not had to fake in a week.
"I'd like to think that she would've given it to you one day," Senna tells her, glancing back up to Asami with a clear expression, "when she was ready."

Asami stares down at the envelope, unable to keep the bittersweet smile from forming at her lips. Senna and Tonraq put some space between themselves and the young woman. The chief sighs as he gazes down at the younger woman with pride. Senna tucks herself into his side as they nod their head, silently letting her know that they'll give her some space, and should she need, they would be inside with the others. Asami watches their bodies retreat into the house before she glances down at the letter, her heart racing for the first time in a week. She flips the envelope over and over again, unsure of what could be written inside. A million thoughts fight through her head, and for a moment she doubts herself on opening it.

Suddenly, Naga's snout pushes her side, and Asami knows she must.

Her fingers tremble as she looks to the crease of the flap. Her touch is light and delicate, as if the smallest move would tear it to pieces. She handles the contents with extreme precaution. She draws the paper out before the envelope, running her hands over the creases underneath where the writing lay. She takes a breath, closing her eyes and allowing herself to understand that Korra had touched this paper. Korra's fingers had grazed over the parchment she was now holding. It's a strange thing to think, but Asami feels connected to her love for the first time since she'd died. She closes her eyes and opens the letter, as if it were a birthday gift and she wanted it to be a surprise. She pauses, knowing that once she looks down, the uncertainty and doubt, the raw anxiety and apprehension swelling in her stomach, will be lifted.

Taking a deep breath, Asami opens her eyes and begins to read.

__________________________________________________________________________

_ I don't have to see you right now. _

_ I don't have to see you right now. _

_ I don't have to see you right now. _

_ I don't have to see you right now. _
Recovery

Chapter Summary

For some, time doesn't heal all wounds.

Chapter Notes

Slight alcoholism, some violence, and a bit of swearing - but nothing too major.

This was heavily inspired by the song, "Day Old Hate" by City and Colour. It's a great song, and I really think it fits this chapter. I also just lost a really close friend and that may or may not have influenced parts of this chapter with the angst. The song didn't help either, tbh.

Thanks so much for all the kudos and reviews, guys! I'll get back to each of you soon, I promise. You've been incredibly supportive of this fic, despite how sad it is. I swear to you, I won't make the ending sad. It'll be worth all the angst and pain you've been feeling thus far :P I'm sorry it's so sad and angsty all the time, but I can assure you that it has a bittersweet (but more sweet) ending!

Last thing - I'd just like to apologize for the lengths of these chapters. I know that it may be really overwhelming to read 25k+ words in one sitting, but I'd rather keep it to five chapters, because I want them separated into five different parts - each part its own story almost? Kind of, I guess. I dunno really, I'm just rambling again. I do that a lot, I think. Yup.

Anyways, thanks again for everything and enjoy! :)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

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So let's face it; this was never what you wanted.

But, I know it's fun to pretend.

Now blank stares and empty threats are all I have.
"And so we would like to congratulate the CEO of Future Industries on winning the United Republic's inventor of the year award; this is Ms Sato's fourth nomination and third win for this prestigious engineering accolade, and she has no doubt shown us that she's not only a powerful business woman, but a brilliant mind, too. Ms Sato has kindly donated three quarters of her funding towards local orphanages and bending schools. The Sato name has been rebuilt from ash, and with the help of Varrick Industries, has created a leading edge in technology for the world to follow. Unfortunately, she isn't here to accept the plaque, but on her behalf, her trusted business partner, Iknik Blackstone Varrick and his wife, Zhu Li Moon have come to accept the award."

Asami shuts off the radio and slumps down at her desk in her office. She looks outside her windows to the blanketing evening sky, a dull ache throbbing in her chest. She'd sent her workers home to celebrate their win, but she doesn't feel the same joy they do. Future Industries is at the apex of modern technology, outstanding any other company by a substantial lead. Her team is smart but small, and together, they've managed to create some of the world's most unique and useful machines and technology. She just wrapped up her latest project which involved patching together Republic City. With the end of today's final construction, the city has officially been rebuilt like nothing had ever happened. But... something did happen.

*Everything* happened, five years ago.

Standing up from her chair, the heiress walks over to her cabinet beside the mahogany drawers. Her fingers tap over the wood like they do each time she falls victim to this merciless routine. It's as if parts of her mind wills her to believe that she has some sort of choice as to how the events will proceed. The inventor lets out a long sigh and shakes her head, reaching inside for the scotch before whipping out two ice cubes and a clear glass. She pours half a glass full before she returns to her desk, sipping from the burning liquid with tentative draws. Her eyelids are heavy with lack of sleep and her head pounds, but she can't be bothered to return to the mansion. She scoffs as she downs another gulp of the potent liquid, thinking about how she hadn't been to the house in four weeks. Maybe, she thinks, this is what it had been like for Mako when he used to work and sleep at the police station.

Her telephone rings, jolting her from her thoughts.
"Hello?" Asami asks in low rasp, setting down the glass.

"Asami!" Bolin's excited voice practically shouts through the wire. Asami winces and attempts a smile, but she quits kidding herself and closes her eyes. She has not smiled in five years, four weeks, and three days.

"Hi Bolin," she replies with less enthusiasm than the earth-bender, "what brings you to calling at this hour?"

"It's only ten, Asami, the night is young! And besides, I was calling to congratulate you on the award! We all knew you were gonna win it… again," Bolin laughs, emphasizing the last word. Asami opens her eyes and parts her mouth, but no words come out. She wants to feel grateful that her friends have supported her through the past few years, but she can't feel thankful.

In fact, since Korra's death, she hasn't felt anything.

"Thanks," she manages to choke out. There's some rumbling and then static upon the line, before she hears Bolin sigh.

"Asami…," he trails off, his tone growing somber. The woman shakes her head and snarls, reaching for her drink as she ignores the pity and worry that flickers in his voice. She doesn't want to be concerned over. She doesn't want help.

Asami just wants one thing - one person - but she's never going to get them.

"Listen," Bolin says, dropping the concern and instead opting for a more light-hearted tone, "Mako, Wu, Opal, Jinora, Kai, and I were heading out for dinner tomorrow night at Kwong's Cuisine. J and K have a break from their air-bending duties and both Wu and Mako are here on visit from the Earth Republic. Even Ikki and Meelo are coming. We figured we could have a reunion. It's been so long since we've seen you… since anyone's seen you, Asami."

_I hope you haven't been waiting long._

Asami gasps when she hears Korra's voice whisper through her mind. The woman nearly shatters
the glass with the amount of force she uses to slam it down. She feels tears burn at her eyes when she remembers that memory she'd locked away replay in her mind like a broken mover. Her grip tightens around the telephone, her teeth gritting with frustration and anguish. It's been five years but it still feels like just yesterday when she'd been holding onto the love of her life, watching as her spirit broke away and disappeared on her permanently.

"Only five years," she murnurs, bowing her head.

"What?" Bolin asks, confused as he catches the small mutter from the inventor. Asami takes a deep breath and shakes her head, as if Bolin were in the room with her. The inventor downs another mouthful of the liquid, enjoying the soothing burn as it trickles down her throat.

"Nothing," Asami snaps before she lets out a huff. She knows Bolin doesn't deserve her short temper or her brash attitude. She sighs again and licks her lips, tasting the faint twinge of alcohol. The woman places a hand to her forehead, massaging the aching muscles beneath the tips of her fingers.

"So… will you come?" Bolin asks again, his voice softer than before. Asami downs the last of her scotch, her eyes now burning a hole into the picture of her and Korra upon her desk, back from when they'd lived together on Air Temple Island awhile after the defeat of Unavaatu. Her heart clenches when she sees Korra's beautiful, radiant smile and bright eyes. Her arms are thrown over Asami's shoulder and she looks so damned happy.

A small whine interrupts her gazing, causing the heiress to glance down. Naga is at her side, nudging her snout against her thigh as she looks to the inventor with wide, polar-bear puppy dog eyes. Ever since the death of her best friend, she'd taken Naga back to Republic City to live with her. It wasn't much of a choice, since Naga practically followed Asami everywhere. The loyal animal had been grieving, and at first it had been too painful to have the polar-bear dog around as a constant reminder of what she'd lost. After awhile, she began to understand that maybe Naga wasn't following her because she needed support, but because Korra had always taught the dog to protect her friends.

Asami had needed more protecting than anyone at that point.

The heiress watches as Naga's snout lightly rubs against her side, the polar-bear dog sighing as she begins to purr, a deep rumble in her fur-covered chest. It soothes the inventor as Asami reaches out and starts to scratch lightly at the top of her head. A content whimper purses from the animals mouth as Naga closes her eyes and licks gently at her hand. Asami feels tears well in her eyes as she glances up, catching another hallucinating glance of Korra's spirit standing and smiling down at her and her other "girlfriend", as she'd once called Naga. Asami feels harrowed by guilt and sorrow as she blinks, the vision disappearing instantly. Naga whines again, causing Asami to glance
downwards at her adopted pet with a broken smile.

"Asami?" Bolin calls out again, "you still there?"

No, she wants to say, *I haven't been 'here' in five years.*

"Yes," Asami bitterly replies instead, swallowing thickly as she stands and reaches for the bottle of scotch again. Naga barks softly, whining again as Asami pours herself another glass. The inventor slumps back upon the office chair and downs a large sip, drowning her sorrows in the potent alcohol.

"You don't have to come," Bolin sighs softly, "I know things are still rough. We're just…, well…"

"Worried?" Asami growls, her voice sharp. She doesn't have to be in front of the earth-bender to know the probably flinched at the sound of her tone. Gripping the glass in her hand tighter, she closes her eyes. The woman regrets it immediately, because all she sees is that limp body in her arms.

*I love you, Asami.*

"Fuck," she mutters inaudibly, jerking her eyes open again. Tears form again, but this time out of anger and not sadness. The warmth of the scotch is like fire in her belly as she downs more of the dark substance, wishing that her throat would burn out and incinerate, thus killing her. Naga picks up on the mood shift and presses her giant body closer, licking at the back of her free palm with tentative and calming strokes.

"I guess I'll just say that you're sick or something," Bolin murmurs sadly, his voice cracking. Asami sighs, rubbing her temple as she foretells another massive headache coming on. Her chest, back, and neck hurt from crying at her desk when she's not got interviews or work to do. The only thing that comforts her is that alcohol, that sweet scotch that acts as a better medicine or healer than even Master Katara.

"No," she mumbles quietly, hearing Korra's voice linger in her mind again, "don't."

"Asami?" Bolin sounds hopeful, and for the first time in months, he's genuine with his tone.
Asami swallows another bitter sip of the liquid before she leans back in her chair. Her eyes fixate a blurred stare to the locked drawer upon her desk. She knows what's in there, but just thinking about it makes her want to punch a hole in a wall or crawl into a corner and sob until her body no longer draws breath. Her fingers slowly reach out, tracing the mahogany. She can make out the different scratches from her own nails when she'd drunkenly tried to pry open the drawer with her bare hands. Her fingers quiver with the memory, with the burden that lays in that small space. Her mind floats back to the funeral and to the events that followed after. Her emotions are disorganized and chaotic, riddled by grief and mourning as she remembers Bolin's words.

She wouldn't want us to sit and cry over her loss.

"I'll come," Asami breathes out, retracting her hands and reaching again for the scotch. Naga woofs lightly, a bit of happiness playing at the gentle sound of her voice. Asami almost smiles at her adopted companion's more than elated reaction, but the action doesn't make it past her lips. It stays lodged in her throat; it's an incomplete action, a misfire, a failed attempt at something that once used to come naturally.

"Really?! Asami, yes!" Bolin practically screams, cheering her on enthusiastically. "Man, Mako is going to be so happy to hear this."

"It'll be good to see all of them," Asami forces out half-heartedly. She'd not seen any of her friends in five years, bare for Bolin occasionally when the loyal earth-bender would force her to leave the office; he'd claim that 'it was animal abuse to leave Naga cooped up day after day in an office even though that office was the size of Air Temple Island'. Bolin chuckles and the heiress knows that he's grinning ear-to-ear.

"Finally," he says warmly, "the crew is getting back together after so long."

Get ready Republic City, you're about to be patrolled by Team Avatar!

It's still a ridiculous name, she hears Korra say with a playful scoff.

Her head jerks up, her back stiffening as she glares around the room for the source of the sound. There's nothing but emptiness, in the room and in her heart. The heiress grits her teeth, shaking her head with fury and frustration as she slumps over again, bringing the rim of the glass to her lips, aching to soothe the pain that flutters in her chest. She barely replies when Bolin bids her a fond goodnight and hangs up. Naga pushes her head upon the woman's lap, purring again. Asami gasps
lightly when she feels Naga shove her roughly, indicating for her to move to the couch so she can rest. Reluctantly, she finishes off the rest of her drink and allows the polar-bear dog to guide her to the leather couch before she plops down and stares at the ceiling. Naga places her head upon her torso and purrs as she begins to curl into her own sleep. Asami places a hand on her furry head, sighing.

"Korra," she painfully whispers her friend's name for the first time in years, "where are you?"

/I

"I hope you still like rice."

Kuvira shivers awake, her sides aching and her lip split from the previous encounter with the guards. She gazes at the door to see that sentry has a smirk on his face as he carelessly tosses the food through the slot. Kuvira doesn't move from where she is crouched in the corner. The former captain clutches her arms around her stomach and turns her face away, her eyes closing from fatigue and pain.

"Ungrateful bitch," the guard snorts as he closes the hatch and returns to his post. Kuvira shudders again, coughing. A small tang of blood tinges her lips and she knows that she must've broken something in that last beating she'd received. Taking a few more moments to orient herself, the woman rises, wobbly upon her feet, and makes her way over to the desk. She picks up the pen and starts to write again.

She finishes her two letters in what she thinks is three hours. Kuvira doesn't really know what time it is, actually. She'd been ripped of every necessity - social interaction, basic human freedoms, and even a proper bathroom. All she has is her desk, a few pens, some parchment, a bed, and a dingy toilet. To the former guard captain, it's more than she deserves. After what she'd done with her 're-education camps' (the name still makes her shiver), she knows that this is considered a royal treatment. She may feel like she's going insane, but when had she not been insane?

The metal-bender ignores the spilt rice on the floor as she hobbles to her bed. She sits slowly, criss-crossing her legs and lowering her arms so that her hands rest in the crooks of her knees. If anyone had asked her about her thoughts on meditation and spirituality five years ago, she would have tossed them in a garbage chute and called them a pathetic Avatar cultist. Spirituality, after the disappearance of the Avatar and the destruction of Ba Sing Se, had meant nothing to her. She used to think that if Spirits, if something of higher power were real, then none of this would have happened.
But then Kuvira remembered, as she'd taken a nasty beating by a man who'd lost his wife to her siege, *she* was the one who caused all of this.

Kuvira takes a deep breath and closes her eyes. At first, it's all the same - the usual horrifying flashbacks from her childhood, when she'd seen her mother and father ripped apart by fire-bending bandits. Then it stretches into the fight in Zaofu against Zaheer, of Suyin and Lin yelling at her to find Aeiwei and the Red Lotus. It's the failure that digs into the pit of her stomach when she'd watched Korra be whisked away while she held onto the Avatar's father. Soon, the memories bleed into far more recent ones, of her corruption and sickness that she'd wreaked upon the world. She stumbles on the flashback of firing the spirit beam at Asami's office, of Bataar's voice and his distraught, final 'I love you, Kuvira' he'd uttered before she'd made the choice to throw all of their life and love away. Kuvira reaches the final battle between her and Korra, of the blood and gore shed between the both of them.

Finally, she lingers upon the memory in which she'd carried the near-dead Avatar back to the world she'd saved.

Just like every time, Kuvira begins to shiver and her eyes burn from beneath the closed lids. Her hands shake violently and sweat beads down her forehead with the pain. Korra had given her, of all people, a second chance. Korra, the woman she'd nearly killed. Korra, the Avatar that had been hell bent on avenging the death of Hiroshi and the near death of Asami. It had been Korra that had saved her, all because she had hope that there was still something good inside of the broken heart of hers. Kuvira tries to steady her breathing as she fights off the memory of Korra's soft voice and pale skin. As she begins to calm, she finds her body starting to relax into a state of numbness. Somewhere in the back of her mind, Kuvira knows that going to prison hadn't been the real punishment for her crimes. Anyone could go to prison - solitary confinement even - but she is here for a different reason.

Kuvira is here because if she goes anywhere else, she'll be *killed*.

*You can save them*, Korra's voice drifts through her empty mind, *you can still bring them peace.*

Kuvira blinks open her eyes slowly, her gaze shifting over to the slitted plastic walls that resemble her window. Her tongue runs over her chapped lips, grimacing as it reaches the deep ridge in the middle, now caked with blood and swollen from the hit she'd taken. She wonders if the White Lotus has found the next Avatar, of whether or not he's anything like Korra. Kuvira sighs and hangs her head, closing her eyes again as she feels guilt run through her. The metal-bender removes one of her hands to rub her face, trying ease the throbbing of her pounding headache. Her eyes shift to the spilled rice, but once again, she's not hungry. She hasn't been hungry in five years, and she doubts she ever will be anytime soon.
"Inspection!"

Kuvira winces as the word rings out from behind the plastic walls. She rises to her feet stiffly, stumbling over to the opposite wall and placing her hands as high as she can above her head with her battered ribs. Tears jerk at her eyes as she bites through the pain, cracking fresh blood from her mouth wound. The door slams open and the guard walks in, inspecting her room before stepping towards her. He grabs her forearm and whips her around, slamming her back against the wall. Kuvira doesn't react, physically or emotionally, as the guard spits at her feet and snickers. He glares at her as he crosses his arms, looking up and down at her like she's a piece of meat and he's an animal ready to feed.

"Anything you need, oh Great Uniter?" He sneers sarcastically, cocking his head up. Kuvira's gaze floats to the desk, where her envelopes lay closed and ready to be sent. The guard follows her stare and laughs, a bitter low chuckle as he shakes his head.

"You're not getting any responses, you do know that right? Why do you keep trying?" He asks with masked curiosity while he snatches up the letters. Kuvira doesn't take her eyes off the names upon the paper. Her gaze blurs with tears for a moment before she takes a sharp, quick breath.

"Because I made a promise," Kuvira utters her first words in weeks, "and I can't break it."

"You've been doing this for five years, you stupid bitch," he laughs in her face, waving the letters around, "clearly your promise is a failed one. No one wants to see or hear from you again, so why do it?" Kuvira doesn't respond at first because the blow is low and harder than any physical punishment. She wants nothing more than to start cleaning up the mess she'd made, even if the consequences are as brutal as the isolation in which she's currently placed. She keeps trying, despite the agony and the rejection, because she owes it to the world, to the Avatar, to own up to her mistakes.

"I'll do it until I can't write anymore," Kuvira murmurs, her voice weak and cracking from being so parched. "I will do it until I die."

"Well then," the guard snorts as he shoots her a glare, "you better come up with some better conversation topics, I suppose."

Kuvira doesn't respond as the guard lets got of her collar with a rough shove. He exits the room and slams the door shut behind him, leaving the former captain of the guard alone in her cell. Kuvira listens to the echoing footsteps of the sentry before she slinks down the cool plastic, burrowing her face in her hands as she begins to cry. Her puffy eye stings with each tear shed, but nothing could
compare to the pain in her chest. She doesn't even know if she wants to see either of the two women she'd been writing to, but she just wants to get rid of the festering guilt that riddles her with an unforgiving ache. Kuvira's sobs wreck through her body, threatening to further crack a few of her damaged ribs.

It takes her almost half an hour to calm down before she manages to return back to her bed in a limp. She crosses her legs under her again, biting the soft flesh of her cheek as she begins the arduous process of meditation once more. She breathes deep and long breaths, forcing every single thought and emotion out of her mind as she begins to slip into that desolate place that comes with frightening memories. She fights with the demons that rage a bloody war inside her head. She battles every scream, every firing purple blast of light, every fading heartbeat as she struggles to get towards entering the peaceful void. Her body aches and cries out for her to stop, but Kuvira digs deeper, unsure of what she's going to find. Bolstering her stamina in a deep draw of air, the metal-bender closes her eyes and breathes in through her nose and out through her mouth steadily.

Finally, there's nothing but silence and darkness.

Kuvira stays frigid, afraid to move in the case that she wrecks the tie she'd been able to make thus far. Instead, the woman focuses more on her breathing, upon keeping it steady and rhythmically even. Kuvira feels nothing but numbness, and as she begins to lose sensation in her body physically, she realizes that she can no longer feel her emotions as well. She feels truly empty, ridden of any kind of attachment to the material world. It's a strange feeling, if she can call it that, to feel like air itself. She wonders briefly if this is what Zaheer had intended to achieve when he'd mastered air-bending. The thought frightens her instantly, because she remembers having seen the devastation he'd incurred upon the young Avatar. As soon as she thinks about that day, she feels her heart plummet when she realizes that she had done so, so much worse… to everyone. Kuvira anticipates the pain, but nothing comes to face her. She's still just as emotionless as before, feeling as unbound as she'd been moments ago.

Then, a slight breeze interrupts her thoughts.

The metal-bender opens her eyes to see a flash of bright purple light blocking out her sight. Kuvira's heart jars to a halt inside her ribcage at the sight. She's there again, she's in the Spirit Wilds, but this time, there is no Avatar there to save her. Her chapped lips curl up to part as she attempts to birth a terrified scream, but no sound leaves her mouth. Her throat doesn't even bob. All she can see is the light. Kuvira can't even move. The light is so blinding, the former captain wonders if she's dead now, if she'd passed through some existential form of mediation that allowed her death. Zaheer learned how to fly, so what was stopping her from learning how to die? Kuvira actually doesn't mind the thought of dying. It… calms her.

Just like that, the light begins to fade.
The breeze blows again as a meadow comes into view. Purple and red flowers dot the surface of the vast fields. At first, Kuvira's confused, but then she recognizes the colour of the petals, the sensation of peace, and the soothing warmth in the breeze. The former captain gasps as she looks all around her, finally able to turn her head. She looks down at her feet to see them bare and touching the soft grass. She steps forward, feeling no pain as she begins to walk through the grassy pasture with surprising ease. The sensation is all too familiar, and Kuvira blanks for a moment as to why. She doesn't understand what is going on until she looks up ahead, only to see a giant beam of yellow light extending into the sky.

Kuvira's in the Spirit World.

"But… how?" Kuvira says breathlessly, confused beyond reason. The only way to get into the Spirit World was by the portals or through death, she presumed. She didn't think that she'd be able to meditate into the alternate universe, especially considering how harboured she is to the past.

Kuvira watches with wide eyes as the world and its dynamics around her begin to shift drastically. The sky grows a lighter shade of orange and the meadow's flowers being to shift from purple into crimson red. She furrows her brow in confusion and fear, unsure of how this is all happening so quickly. For a moment, she simply deduces it to lucid dreaming or nightmare; perhaps she isn't meditating after all, but instead is trapped in some cruel hallucination. Could she be delirious from an infection or her injuries? Kuvira watches the ground change beneath her feet, and before she knows it, she's in an entirely new place. The world she sees now is one of fire and blood, of death and despair. Kuvira gasps, feeling fear run her blood cold.

"Kuvira," she hears her name being whispered. She whips her head around as she stares into a face she'd never forget.

"Mother," Kuvira breathes as her mother approach slowly. Her eyes are green and dull, her head and body covered in blood. The only memory Kuvira had of her mother had been of the day she'd died, burnt alive by a fire-nation guard before her eyes. Kuvira shakes her head as she backs away in sheer terror. Behind her, the heat and fire from the volcano roar, spitting hot fumes and magma everywhere.

"No," Kuvira rasps as her skin begins to ache with a burn, "you're not real. You're dead."

"Kuvira," her mother calls out again, her charred hand reaching up and out for her, "Kuvira, come here."
Kuvira come here, her mother says to her as she crawls across the burning rubble of an Omashu temple. Her father is hovering at her mother's side, pulling her ashen body into his arms and crying. She bawls at the sight, ignoring the pain of her chaffed knees and palms as she makes her way over to her parents. Her mother's face is barely recognizable from the countless burns and cuts that line her visage, but beneath it all, rests her beautiful smile.

Kuvira, she murmurs softly, you must go with your father to Zaofu. You will be safe there.

No, Kuvira pleads, shoving her pudgy hands into her mother's smouldered coat, no, I won't go. Not without you. Get up, Mom. Get up!

Kuvira…, her mother trails off as her eyes flicker between closed and open, you have greatness within you. Your spirit is strong, my darling. You have the bravery of a knight and the courage of a lion-turtle. You're destined for great things, little one. You must go to them, seek them out, and accept them.

Mom, no, come on! Kuvira sobs as her mother's gaze grows softer, more distant than before, Mom please, no. Dad, come on we have to help her! We… we have to help. Her voice cracks on the last word as she looks at her sobbing father frantically, but he doesn't move or even look at her.

Go, Kuvira, her mother rasps out as her heart slows and her breaths become shallow, go seek your future. You can do this, Kuvira. You're my little girl, my brave little girl. I love you, Kuvira. I will always love you. I'll be waiting for you, my dear. We'll meet again, with time and age. Goodbye, my love.

Kuvira's mother's eyes close loosely, a faint smile pressed upon those chapped lips. At her mother's final mournful confession, Kuvira sorrowfully shove her face into her mother's chest, not caring about the flesh that tickles her skin or the smell of charred everything. She sobs into those arms, that embrace she'd once thought of as the safest place in the world, and she doesn't stop until her mother's chest no longer rises or falls.

"Kuvira," her mother's voice calls her back, but this time, as Kuvira looks up, she sees a different scene.

Her mother stands before her, unscathed and pure. It had been so long since her passing that for a moment, Kuvira forgot what her mother had looked like. As she gazes at her now, identical green eyes gazing warmly at her, she feels her breath hitch. The volcano and fire are gone, and they are back in that meadow again. Kuvira steps forward, feeling the same lightness from before as she approaches her mother. The older woman can only smile harder, tears streaming down her face as
she opens her arms, inviting her daughter into an embrace. Kuvira takes a deep breath and reaches forward.

In the arms of her mother, Kuvira, for the first time since her death, feels safe.

"Oh Spirits… M-Mom, you're… I…," Kuvira stammers between cries as she buries her head deeper inside her mother's shoulders. The older woman only smiles and sighs bittersweetly as she hugs her daughter closer to her. The metal-bender sobs harder, her breaths uneven and erratic with emotion.

"It's okay," her mother coos softly, "you're okay, Kuvira. You're okay now. I told you we'd meet again."

"Am I dead?" Kuvira asks in a soft whisper, her voice getting caught in the soothing warmth of the breeze. Her mother shakes her head as she pulls away, her hands grazing upwards from her shoulders to cup her cheeks in her palms.

"No, my darling," she murmurs lovingly, "just wandering." Kuvira wipes the last of her tears as her mother lets her hands fall back to her sides. They both glance around at the Spirit World, taking in the beauty and serenity of the alternate world. Kuvira furrows her brows, puzzled.

"Then, why am I here?" She asks, confused. Her mother only offers her a faint smile before she nods her head to something behind the metal-bender.

"That is not for me to tell you," she murmurs as Kuvira turns around to follow her gaze, gasping at what she sees, "but for her."

"You gonna go visit her or no?"

Suyin glances up to her chef as he pours her a tall glass of his famous kalenutsco. The matriarch sighs and rubs her forehead, shrugging her shoulders as she leans forward in her chair. Her eyes ghost over to the open letter on her desk. It's one of many that she's received over a period of five years. She'd read every one but never would she write back. Something is still raw about their relationship, and Suyin is unsure if she can ever forgive the former captain of the guard for her
crimes. The chef clears his throat and crosses his arms, but still manages to keep his gaze respectful and kind.

"You want to, don't you?" The chef says, his voice sympathetic. Suyin flinches slightly, reaching out for the glass instead. She downs half of the contents with a long sip, before setting the glass back down rather roughly. Her shoulders tense as she furrows her brow.

"I don't know what I want, to be honest," she says in a choked voice, "it's been so long. I… I don't really know what to do."

The chef hums under his breath, trailing his fingers down his moustache, looking between the opened letter and the confused woman in front of him. He sighs softly and moves himself around the table to the metal-bender's side. He sits down on the opposite chair, exhaling deeply as he does so. He places his forearm on the wooden surface, leaning inwards to gaze at the tears building in Suyin's eyes. The woman looks more than distraught and it pains him. All of this should have ended five years ago, but he knows that the wound of Kuvira's betrayal is still flesh for his boss.

"You know," he says softly, reaching out to graze her hand, "I think you should do it." Suyin tenses, cocking her head over to him with a frown.

"Why?" She asks, aghast that he would suggest such a thing. The chef shrugs, crossing his hands under his armpits again.

"Because sometimes the easiest way to deal with pain is to just accept it," he says, leaning back, "and to accept that she's changed." Suyin snorts.

"You really think that she's changed?" The matriarch growls lowly, her fingers clenching into tight fists. The chef doesn't waver his glance as he nods, keeping his gaze fixed on the angered green eyes of the metal-bender. Suyin scowls as she hisses, "you think that a woman that single-handedly destroyed her own nation and nearly blew up the fucking world has changed? You're fucking delirious. She hasn't changed. Some people can't change."

"You did, didn't you?" He challenges respectfully. Suyin snarls at him, rising from her seat in her fury.

"I am not her," she seethes, shaking her head at him as she turns her head away. Her frame quivers with frustration, but the chef remains stoic and calm. He simply scratches his beard again, letting
his fingers comb through the coarse hairs with tentative strokes.

"You are not, but that doesn't mean that she's not capable of changing," he says wisely, "and you know that she had changed the minute she came out of the portal with the Avatar. Something happened up there that opened her eyes. She surrendered into your custody completely, Suyin."

"She nearly destroyed Republic City, my son, my sister, and most importantly, she killed the Avatar," Suyin refutes in a shout, slamming her fist down on the table as she turns her shoulders and pierces the chef with a glare. He doesn't flinch; instead, he takes a deep breath and leans forward.

"That's the past, Su," he urges calmly, glancing at the letters. "I'm not saying you forget about it. I'm just saying that you talk to her… for closure."

"I don't need closure," Suyin spits, waving her hand at him with a flick of her wrist. The chef rises, sighing deeply. He places his hand upon her shoulder and squeezes the tender flesh underneath with a supportive gesture. Suyin doesn't say anything as he pulls his hand away slowly.

"You say you don't need it, but yet here you are - troubled," he tells her, sighing slightly. Suyin hangs her head and allows her body to relax slightly.

"I don't know if I can face her or not. After what she did…," Suyin trails off, her voice quieter than before. The chef shakes his head as he points to the letter upon the table with a stern, but empathetic gaze. Suyin doesn't react as he takes the letter, not reading the contents, and hands it to her.

"You won't know unless you find out," he says wisely, "and I think it's time you find out, Su."

"Coming to bed, Chief?"

Lin glances up from her paperwork to see Kya standing in the doorway of their living room, dressed in a pair of comfy pajamas. Her face is haggard, exhausted from countless late nights spent trying to convince Lin to retire from her job. The police chief has been in the business long enough to know that this city is nothing if not hers to protect. Especially since the death of the Avatar - of
her friend - Lin wants nothing more than to stay in the position and carry out the duties of keeping her city safe. The metal-bender sighs, rubbing the back of her head and glancing back at her papers.

"I…," she trails off, her eyes scanning a few more reports. A soft hand upon her shoulder stops her from picking another report up. Lin tenses slightly under the touch as she sighs, closing her eyes and rubbing her temples. Lips press lightly upon the top of her head as gentle hands ease her upwards, nudging her towards the bedroom. Lin sighs as she gives in, allowing Kya to push her gently into the mattress before following suite.

"I think we need a break from this place," Kya murmurs sleepily, tucking her head into Lin's neck, "maybe we could get out of Republic City for a bit?" The metal-bender winds a strong arm around the shoulders of her lover, pressing a tight kiss to her forehead.

"This better not be your way of trying to convince me to go to the South Pole again," Lin grumbles with a good-natured tone, "because I hardly consider the tundra a romantic get-away location, Kya. Not all of us have hot blood like you do, you know."

"You have a hot head," Kya smirks, tapping her girlfriend's temple as she grins against the skin of her shoulder, "I'm sure that's good enough."

"That was almost funny," Lin replies in a huff, squeezing Kya's arm. The water-bender, always sensitive to emotions and moods, picks up a subtle sense of distress from her partner. Raising herself unto her arms, Kya peers down at the grey-haired woman with a raised brow.

"What's wrong?" She asks, her tone concerned but still light. Trying to get Lin to talk about her feelings is like trying to get a baby bison to stop chewing on air-bender robes. Kya's stubborn, though, and she keeps to her vow of standing by the equally hard-headed metal-bender.

But, for the first time, Lin isn't resistant.

"I'm just worried," Lin mutters, rolling over in the bed so that they're facing each other. Kya immediately picks up on the fear that washes over the nervous chief. Kya reaches out, squeezing lightly at her hand as she nods apprehensively. Lin swallows anxiously as she licks her lips.

"Kya," she starts, but her voice gets choked up immediately, "I… well, I'm not getting any younger, and I know you keep telling me that it's time to turn in the towel, but being a chief is all I
know. It's all I've ever known." Kya's gaze softens as she reaches up to cup the younger woman's jaw in her hands.

"Sweetheart," she murmurs gently, "you're not just a police chief."

Lin avoids her gaze for a moment, but Kya shakes her head, pulling her face back towards her. The water-bender inches closer, running her hands down to the flat, muscular plane of her collar bones. The metal-bender grunts softly as Kya smirks at her, pushing slightly to roll Lin under her body. Straddling her lover's waist, the healer keeps her hands planted upon Lin's stiff shoulders, her striking blue eyes never leaving that dazzling emerald gaze. Lin only manages to bring her hands up to Kya's hips, squeezing lightly as tears mist in her eyes.

"Then what am I?" Lin asks, her voice quieter than the storm raging outside. Kya's lips turn up into a bittersweet smile as she leans her body downwards. Her hands leave Lin's shoulders to grip the sheets beside her girlfriend's head. Lin gulps, but Kya continues her path until their foreheads press together.

"You're my lover, my partner, my amazing chef, my shoulder to cry on, my annoying, but adorable sleep-talking night owl," she lists, smirking a bit at the last one. Lin rolls her eyes, but there's a playful expression in those clouded green eyes. Kya allows herself the happiness of enjoying the moment; she's laying atop the woman of her dreams, a woman she'd spent decades pining over, and for once, she can love her without the fear of war or death.

"But most of all," Kya murmurs, leaning in to place a chaste kiss upon Lin's lips, "you're my best friend, Lin."

"Do friends do this?" Lin breathes as she kisses Kya back, with more passion than the water-bender had used. Kya grins against her lips as she feels Lin's hands skirt up into her nightshirt to caress the soft skin of her abdomen. Talented fingers run lines over the faint muscles on her lean stomach, causing Kya to let out a sharp gasp into the younger woman's mouth. Something in Lin's stomach knots with anticipation as she kisses her girlfriend harder.

"You're going to be the death of me," Kya mutters after awhile, shaking her head as she subtly rocks her hips. Lin can't help the throaty chuckle that leaves her lips as she pulls Kya down further, allowing their bodies to mesh together. Outside, the thunder cackles and booms, but they don't flinch.

"As long as I'm the one to see you off, that's all that matters," Lin mumbles, her tone distant suddenly.
Kya stiffens slightly, and Lin feels that solemn, gut-wrenching sadness grip at her heart once more. Kya nuzzles her neck and sighs into her skin, her arms looped around the back of Lin's neck. They lay in silence for awhile, thinking and not thinking at the same time. Kya's lips trail gentle butterfly kisses upon Lin's jaw and neck, but the older woman barely reacts, bare for the occasional gasp or hitching of breath. Her stomach churns and her mind spins with a faint headache. Lin's hands continue their absent exploration of the other woman's body, but she's almost certain she's ruined the mood.

"It's okay to still miss her, Lin," Kya whispers after sometime, pulling back to glance at Lin with a nod, "I do, too. We all do."

"I… I don't… I guess, miss her, exactly," Lin says, sounding confused herself. Kya pauses her gentle pecks to frown.

"Then what do you feel, Lin?" Kya asks, shifting her body back to Lin's side to give them a bit of space. The metal-bender sighs, her mood shifting from mournful to confused and somewhat… sheepish? Kya raises her brow suspiciously as Lin takes another deep breath before she takes Kya's hands and squeezes them lightly. Lin leans over and presses a kiss to her lover's mouth with a soft brush of her lips.

"I feel…," Lin says, trailing off as she glances down at her torso. She lifts her tank top and runs her fingers over she scars neither Katara nor Kya could heal. Kya lets go of one of their hands to touch the scars, eliciting a gentle gasp from her girlfriend. Lin's face grows dark, but hopeful in the same.

"I feel her, Kya," Lin says, her voice quivering slightly, "I feel her inside me."

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The feel of fresh dew upon grass - it's perfect.

Toph sighs in content as Katara hands her a cup of tea. The both of them are sitting outside in the gardens of Air Temple Island. Jinora and Tenzin are teaching Ikki, Bumi, and Meelo how to perfect their air-bending stances, though both children and former general seem uninterested in learning from the masters. Katara smiles warmly at the sight of her grandchildren. The earth-bender beside her shares the same sentiment, grunting in approval. From afar, Katara sees the ferry carrying the remainder of their children - Suyin, Lin, and Kya - approaching the docks.
"I'm happy that we're gathering up a reunion," Toph hums, feeling relaxed as her toes flick and curl in the grass. Katara nods, even though she knows that Toph can't see the motion. The women allow themselves the chance to breathe in the peaceful air, enjoying the sounds of domesticity that surround them. Katara's smile is addictive, because soon enough, Toph is grinning as well.

"You know, I kept an eye on you when I was in the swamp," the earth-bender admits, her voice thick with happiness she's desperately trying to conceal. Katara glances over to her and nods, reaching out and squeezing her hand tightly.

"I sensed it with the spirits," she says back, "I didn't know if you'd get my messages."

"I got every one of them, don't you worry," Toph chuckles, rubbing the back of her neck as she senses her children disembarking the boat. Katara turns her gaze towards the front of the steps watching as Suyin, Bataar Sr and Jr, Opal and Bolin, Wing and Wei, and Huan make their way towards the gardens. Kya and Lin follow in behind, arms locked together. Toph stumbles to her feet with the help of Katara's still sturdy hands. The two elderly woman make their way over to greet their offspring slowly, their bones aged but not yet void of energy or life.

"Mom!" Kya says warmly, leaving Lin's side for a moment to embrace her mother in a warm hug. Katara smiles into her shoulder, looping her arms around the taller, stronger woman with a gentle response. Kya pulls away slowly, donning a giant grin upon her face as she kisses her mother's cheek.

"You look beautiful as always, sweetheart," Katara beams, reaching up to cup her cheek. Kya sighs and places her hand over her own wrinkled one, smiling harder at her mother's soft voice. The experienced water-bender's eyes well with tears at the sight of her only daughter, seeing so much of her own mother in those identical features. Memories tug at her, but Katara pushes them away to focus on the present.

"Mom, it's so wonderful to see you," Suyin says in a happy tone, giving her mother a hug. Toph smiles and hugs her back, before taking the time to hug her five grandchildren. Lin bounces on her toes as she finishes, always awkward like her mother when it comes to social events.

"Chief," Toph grunts in a bemused smirk. Lin raises her brow and nods.

"Chief," Lin responds back. Suyin elbows her roughly in the side, causing Lin to wince before rolling her eyes. The metal-bender extends her arms and wraps them around Toph's shoulders. The
minute she latches on, both women are overcome with emotion. They hold each other for a few moments, to which Suyin quietly tells her family that they should give them some more time before they silently slip away with Kya and Katara.

"You look a bit pale, Mom," Lin whispers as she pulls away, "you sure you're okay?"

Toph's chest aches as she nods her head disarmingly.

"You trying to insult me already, kid? It's barely the afternoon," she jokes back, her voice slightly strained. Lin sucks in a deep breath and rolls her eyes at her mother's humour, not catching the reserved tone that lingers in her words. Lin places a hand upon her back as she leads her mother into the house.

"How are you and Kya?" Toph asks teasingly, washing away whatever negative vibes that had been around them before. Lin blushes, coughing slightly. Toph only laughs as she nudges her eldest with her boney hip, causing the younger woman to grumble something under her breath.

"Well? Look, I'm not asking you for grandkids because we both know that's not gonna happen," Toph says, but there's no hint of disappointment or anger in her voice as she speaks. Despite knowing that her mother is joking, Lin still flinches. Toph nudges her again when she picks up on the hesitancy flowing off of Lin's aura in rippling waves. There's anticipation, anxiety, and one other emotion she can't seem to understand.

"What's on your mind, Lin? You're not falling for Bumi now, are you?" Lin actually laughs at that one, easing some of the experienced metal-bender's apprehension. Lin chuckles and shakes her head before gazing into the hallway that leads to the kitchen. She makes out Kya and Katara beginning to prepare dinner with Tenzin's daughters and Opal. Her heart swells out of joy as she takes a deep breath, turning back to her mother.

"No, fortunately I think I've found the right one in Kya," she says, but the nerves come back as she thickly whispers, "and that's why I'm so anxious."

"You? Anxious? You've never been anxious before," Toph guffaws again, but Lin can barely manage a strangled chuckle.

"Yeah I know, Mom," she admits somewhat embarrassingly, "but right now… I kind of am."
"Why?" Toph asks, perplexed as to why her daughter - a woman who lives and breathes steel - is afraid. Lin sighs and turns her head away for a moment, only to catch Kya gazing at her lovingly from the kitchen. Something sparkles in her blue eyes, and the metal-bender stops breathing for a second. Her heart catches in her throat and her head spins. Toph senses the rush of love, and a little something else, before she begins to grin proudly.

"Never mind," Toph smirks in understanding, nudging her daughter again, "I think I know."

"No," Lin says hastily, her voice straining once more, "I don't think you do, Mom."

"You've brought the rings, right? What are you waiting for?" Toph asks, causing Lin to tense up. The metal-bender tenses up and whips her head back down to her mother. She glances again to a somewhat puzzled Kya before she hurriedly drags Toph down the hall and away from her girlfriend's eyes.

"How the flameo did you figure it out?" She hisses under her breath, her cheeks growing red. Toph only laughs and punches her shoulder weakly. The elderly woman curses herself for a moment for not having more strength, but pushes that thought away to focus on her bumbling daughter.

"Not only am I the inventor of metal-bending, you buffoon," she grumbles playfully, "but I'm also your mother, Lin. I know everything."

"You don't know everything."

"Try me, kid."

Lin mutters something under her breath about her stubborn mother, but Toph only smiles harder. Her smirk turns teasing as she ribs the younger woman with another boney elbow. Lin winces and glares down to her mother's greying eyes with a teasing expression. Lin watches as Toph places a hand upon the skin of her exposed forearm, reading into her daughter's energy. She retrieves her information, grinning widely.

"For someone so stubborn, you sure are susceptible to submission frequently," she snorts, fully aware that Lin has now turned into a furnace. "Kya has definitely got you… how do those kids say it… ah, yes…, she's got you whipped." Lin pulls her arm away in complete awe that her mother would dare utter something so private (and damned, stupidly true) about her with such nonchalance as if she were talking about the weather.
"Mom, what is wrong with you? I… why… what… why would you think that is a good idea?" Lin splutters, shaking her head as she places her hands upon her red, scalding cheeks. Toph only chuckles harder as she sighs contently, patting Lin's back with a gentle tap of her palms.

"Look, Lin, all that aside, I don't care what you do with Kya as long as you both make each other happy. After you lost Tenzin, I was worried you would be alone and miserable for the rest of your life. Trust me, I'm grumpy and miserable most of the time, but you were taking 'following in mother's footsteps' a little too far. Kya's good for you. She keeps you grounded," Toph says, her voice bright with acceptance and love. Lin can't help but smile and nod, thinking of how many fond memories she'd shared with her partner over the years since they'd taken up with one another.

"You're not getting any younger and those rings aren't going anywhere, I'm assuming," Toph grunts, raising a brow, "so what are you waiting for?"

"I… I just don't know when to do it," she murmurs, reaching into her jacket pocket to finger the rings, "I don't want to screw it up. I want it to be perfect."

"You'll know when it's time," Toph muses, reaching up to gently squeeze Lin's shoulder, "and when you do, it will be perfect."

"Do you think she'll say yes?" Lin asks in a quieter voice, the anxiety deciding to pay another visit. Toph smiles as she looks up to Lin's worried gaze.

"Do you think she'll say no?" Toph asks back rhetorically, cocking her head to the side as she smirks at the younger woman. Lin chuckles as she allows her fingers to part ways with the platinum rings inside her jacket pocket. Toph smiles harder at Lin's silent assurance and growing confidence.

"Thanks, Mom," Lin says, her voice genuine and filled with love, "for being there, even when I was an ass and clearly didn't deserve forgiveness."

"Everyone deserves forgiveness," Toph murmurs as they begin to walk back. She traces Suyin helping Kya and feels her heart grow heavy as she senses disarray within her youngest's aura. It's not a recent feeling either, the metal-bender remarks. Lin scowls as she thinks of Kuvira, before shaking her head in disagreement. She feels anger burble through her as something churns in her stomach, her thoughts fleeting back to Korra.
"Not everyone," she mutters under her breath. Toph shakes her head, pausing in their walk as she halts Lin in her path. The younger woman looks confused as she watches Toph's hand reach up to place upon her shoulder again, squeezing the muscle underneath.

"Yes, everyone, Lin. You do not have to like the person you forgive. Time changes all of us. You were not the same person you were six months ago, let alone five years ago. What makes you think that the same does not apply for others, Kuvira included?" Toph asks, her sage words sinking deep into Lin's thoughts. For a moment, she wants to defy her mother, but then she remembers all that Kuvira had done to Republic City - to the Avatar.

"It doesn't excuse what she did," Lin growls bitterly, "she's still a murderer in my eyes. Nothing can change that."

"But it has," Toph says as she begins walking again, "and change will continue. It never stops, Lin. You must accept that."

"Accept that she's a ruthless murderer incapable of understanding human rights?" Lin retorts, her voice rising slightly with agitation as she growls, "because I can do that. She deserves so much more than just prison, but Suyin refuses to understand that. If it were me, I wouldn't have hesitated."

"Would you?" Toph asks in a voice void of any specific emotion. Lin goes to answer, but something in her chest swirls, causing her glance down and think. Toph doesn't move as she stands still for a moment. Lin waits, shifting her weight on her heels as she watches her mother turn slowly.

"Lin, this fight ended long ago. It's over, and it's time for you to recover," Toph says with a serious voice. Lin lightly closes her mouth as she watches Toph walk over to her in a hobble, before poking a hesitant finger into the cloth of her jacket, lingering just above the scars on her torso.

"You know you've got to do it," Toph murmurs wisely, a knowing gaze flickering in her eyes, "and so does she, kid."

She? Lin thinks, her heart starting to beat wildly in her chest, can her mother feel Korra, too?

"Of course I can," Toph answers for her, pulling her hand away as she smiles sadly, "I always can."
"B-But how? I don't even understand it myself," Lin says, her brows furrowing together in pained confusion. The pit in her stomach churns again, as the spirit inside of her is answering her question. Lin looks equally terrified as well as awed as she watches Toph's eyes light up with happiness.

"You don't have to understand," her mother says wisely, her eyes gently looking up to meet hers, "you just have accept, Lin."

"Can you pass me the butter?" Katara asks her daughter, nodding to the small container by the fridge. Kya nods and grabs it, handing it to her with a wide smile. Katara looks knowingly at her second born as she adds some of the ingredient to the pot.

"I assume that you're doing quite well judging by your aura," Katara smiles, patting her daughter's shoulder as she catches Kya blush. The younger water-bender only shrugs her shoulders and avoids her mother's peering gaze with a nervous twirl of her hair.

"Yeah, I guess you could say that," she says, beaming as she flushes again. Katara places her hands on her daughter's forearms, squeezing the flesh beneath her fingertips lightly as she nods with approval at the bright, radiantly happy face that stares back at her.

"I'm so proud of you, my darling," Katara says sweetly, her own eyes misting proudly with tears. Kya pulls her mother in for a hug, pressing her head into the crook of her neck as she sighs contently. Her heart thumps wildly against the cage of her ribs as she nods.

"Thanks, Mom. It means so much," she murmurs softly, squeezing her mother's back. Katara only lets out a deep breath of approval as she pulls away, reaching up to cup her cheeks in her wrinkled hands. She rubs her thumb over the bone of her cheek before she nods once more.

"You've all done so well," Katara whispers, glancing at her two sons now engaged in a friendly banter at the kitchen table. "Your father would be proud."

"I miss him," Kya says softly, looking away from her mother for a few moments. "I miss his stories, his humour, just... everything, I guess."
"He's still with us in spirit, darling," Katara murmurs with a teary-eyed smile, "and he'll never leave you, always remember that."

"I will," Kya says as she feels a shift in the energy within the room. Her heart feels fuller, and she knows her father must be with them somehow. Katara only smiles again, before pulling Kya into another hug. The water-benders embrace in silence, until the creaking of floorboards causes them to pull apart. Kya's tension eases as she sees Lin enter the room, a bittersweet smile painted upon her face as she approaches the two women with Toph in tow.

"Hey," Lin says, her warm green eyes sparkling with love and mischief. Kya can't help but poke her shoulder as she approaches.

"Hey yourself, Chief." Lin grins as she feels Kya loop her arms around her shoulders and pull her in for a hug. Katara watches on quietly, a beaming smile etched across her face as Toph comes to stand next to her, sensing her daughter embracing her lover through the earth.

"Get a room, why don't you?" Toph grumbles teasingly. "I may be blind but I'm sure as hell not deaf."

"We might," Kya whispers in a voice that only Lin can hear as she winks at her girlfriend, "later."

Lin blushing and glances back to see her mother smirking at her with a knowing expression. The younger metal-bender gulps nervously, feeling like a teenager all over again. Toph only laughs harder, and as Kya follows the source of the noise, she can see that her own mother's laughing as well. Lin goes to say something, but Kya's lips meet hers in a firm, but assuring kiss to shut her up. Lin gets flustered immediately, but tries to not show it despite the red blush spreading from cheek to cheek. Kya begins to chuckle as she pulls away, grinning at her baffled girlfriend.

"Definitely later," Kya hums, watching as Lin practically melts with embarrassment. Toph makes a strange cracking noise, causing Lin to glance at her.

"Told you," her mother says with a teasing wink, "whipped."
"Ms Sato, you have a guest waiting in the lobby."

Asami nods her head up wearily as she looks to her secretary, standing sheepishly in her doorway. She sighs and straightens her back, stiffly standing from her seat. She waves her hand in a noncommittal fashion, signalling for him to bring her guest up. She leans against the desk and rubs her temples, feeling another headache coming on. Her stomach spins as she feels hunger and nausea wash over her. The heiress growls and closes her eyes, trying to ward off the negative feelings coursing through her veins. Sighing, she shakes her head and moans lightly out of pain.

"When was the last time you slept, Sato?"

Asami opens her eyes to see Mako standing in the doorway, peering at her with a curious but concerned gaze. Asami can't help but smile faintly at the sight of her old friend. She leans off the desk and they meet halfway, arms wrapped around each other. Asami digs her head into her ex-boyfriend's shoulder, feeling comfort and familiarity in his embrace as they hug it out for a few more moments. The inventor pulls away first, straightening her clothes and offering him a small smile. She beckons for him to join her at her desk. Mako follows slowly, eyeing her frame with subtle concern.

"I can't remember," she replies in a light-hearted grumble, "but it sure as hell wasn't anytime soon."

"You look..." Mako trails off when he catches Asami's eyes starting to harden. There's almost a flicker of a dare in those dull emerald orbs, but Mako doesn't want to start their reunion off with an argument. Coughing and clearing his throat, he says nervously, "you look great."

"Charming as always," Asami deadpans, shaking her head as she reaches for the cabinet. She pulls out the scotch and nods at Mako, who shakes his head, more worry filling those warm amber eyes.
Asami ignores his stare and pours herself a glass before plopping back down on the chair.

"How's Wu?" Asami asks after sometime, her finger trailing the mouth of the glass. Mako smiles and visibly relaxes at the question, and Asami knows the look in his eyes. It is the same look he had when he'd been dating Korra. The fire-bender even blushes a bit, avoiding her glance. Asami can't help but smirk, raising a brow in a teasing fashion as she senses her friend's embarrassment and prudishness.

"That good, huh?" She quips, taking a sip of her scotch. "I'm glad you've got him."

"He's a handful," Mako says, his face returning to its natural colour but the goofy smile still remains, "but he's my handful, I guess."

_I'm the Avatar! You gotta deal with it!_

Asami blinks, gazing past Mako's shoulder to see a young Korra standing over his shoulder with a grin. The heiress' heart stops beating as she lowers the glass. She gasps slightly, causing the fire-bender to turn around out of confusion. Asami glances at him and then back to the spot, only to find the overgrown plant in her line of sight. Something in her heart cracks as she lowers her gaze in defeat. Mako turns back around to see a downtrodden Asami. He sighs deeply and shifts in his seat, unsure of what to say in order to comfort the still grieving woman. All he offers is silence, but Asami takes it gratefully. They don't look at each other, but soon enough, after her glass has run dry with nothing but two ice cubes, she clears her throat.

"You sure you don't want a drink?" Asami grumbles out the question in a somewhat agitated tone, reaching for the bottle. Mako winces.

"It's two in the afternoon," he replies thickly, "on a Tuesday."

"So?" Asami says, sitting back down and taking a sip, her mind growing fuzzy again. Mako opens his mouth to say something, but the man thinks better of it when he sees Asami's grip around the glass harden with frustration. A pit forms in the detective's stomach and for a moment, he almost feels small as he stares at the heiress' frown and piercing glare. He rubs the back of his neck and sighs, closing his eyes for a brief second before looking to her.

"So... I'm worried. Bolin's told me that you just work all day and drink," he explains softly, deciding to pitch his gaze to the line of her eyebrows. "He says that you're not sleeping or eating
well, and that you refuse to talk to anyone. It's scaring him - me - damn, it's scaring all of us, Asami. It's been five years. This isn't right." Mako's voice is slightly shaky by the end of his comment, but he keeps his stare fixed on Asami's glowering emerald gaze.

Asami goes to answer when there's a knock on her door. The heiress grumbles as she excuses herself from Mako and walks to the door. Swinging the heavy frame open, she's met with the frightened expression of her secretary. The man holds up a letter in his shaking hands, already anticipating the heiress' reaction. Asami scowls at the letter, crossing her arms as she stares at it with a furious gaze. The man sucks in a deep breath and licks his lips, gazing over her shoulder to the confused look plastered on Mako's face. The secretary gulps as he shifts his eyes back to Asami's frown.

"Put it with the others," she orders in a low growl, turning away from him and stalking back towards the chair. The secretary nods and hastily makes his way over to the drawer by the door, placing the letter in a neat stack with the hundreds of others that are identically unopened. Mako watches the man slink out of the room, murmuring a quiet apology as he goes. Mako turns back to see Asami scowling over her scotch, shaking her head.

"What was that about?" He asks, though parts of him dread Asami's answer. The inventor glares at the drawer with seething eyes.

"That bitch keeps trying to contact me," she snaps, shaking her head, "like I want to fucking talk to her after all that happened."

"Have you seen her?" Mako asks, glancing at the drawer full of letters. Asami gives him the stink-eye, her face nearly growing red with rage. She stands, gripping the scotch glass in her hands as she growls, low and feral at her ex-boyfriend.

"Do you fucking think that I've seen her? If I see her, I'll kill her, Mako." The words are sharp and to the point. Mako flinches at them and sucks in a deep breath, avoiding her heated glare for a moment. The heiress glowers, muttering more obscenities under her breath as she turns away from the man.

"Korra wouldn't want that."

Mako's voice is so quiet, Asami almost misses it over the sounds of her heavy, raged breaths. The woman jerks her head up as she slams her glass down on the table. Reaching across, she violently grabs at the fire-bender's collar, hoisting him up from his seat. Asami hisses as she clenches her fists tighter around the material, her nails close to ripping through the cotton of his jacket. Mako
just stares at her with such a desolate and somewhat… disappointed expression, but Asami shakes her head, baring her teeth as anger consumes her fully.

"Don't talk to me about what she would or would not want," she snarls, shaking him to emphasize her point, "you… you don't know what she'd want."

"Do you?" Mako asks again, his voice soft and disarming. Asami freezes for a second, her eyes glued to his as they begin to mist with tears. The question feels like a dagger to the heart, and the heiress actually has to look down to confirm that she's not bleeding out upon the mahogany. Her eyes find Mako's again, but this time, her anger is replaced by sorrow and guilt. She lets her friend go and slumps back into her chair.

"Korra saved her," Mako murmurs, hanging his head. "As much as you hate her, Korra saved her. You know how she'd felt about Kuvira, especially after all that she'd done to Su and her family, not to mention the woman nearly killed her before she even got to say hello to us." Asami takes a deep breath, her fingers quivering as they trace the mouth of the glass again. Her stare is distant and cold, but she still manages to ask a question.

"Where are you going with this?"

"Korra must've seen something in Kuvira," Mako says, pursing his lips into a tight line, "something that made her worth saving."

"Korra saved everyone," Asami retorts bitterly, taking a sip of the scotch, "it was her job remember?"

"I know she saved you," Mako whispers softly, leaning forwards so that he's closer to Asami's stiffened figure, "I know what she did, Asami. I know that you're hurting still, and that you miss her. I know that you feel awful, but you can't let it destroy you. You… Korra loved you, Asami. She really loved you."

The last sentence is said with a slight pang of jealousy, Asami notices. She shifts her gaze upwards to see that Mako's eyes have hardened and he's looking down to his feet, gritting his teeth as he recalls the final day her friend had drawn breath. Mako swallows thickly and stands, rubbing the back of his head as he finally manages to meet her eyes with a saddened expression. The fire-bender dips his head respectfully before he turns around and grabs his coat, slinging it over his shoulder. He takes a deep breath and looks out the window, to the faint statue of Korra and Aang at the front of the bay.
I've never really had a girlfriend to hang out with before... except for Naga.

Asami closes her eyes and allows a few tears to seep through her bloodshot eyes. Why can't you get out of my head for a second? The thought runs through her mind as she shakes her head. I just want to have one second in which I'm not thinking about you, hearing you..., feeling you. Is that too much to ask, Korra? Is it too much to ask for you to leave me to grieve in peace? Why must you keep haunting me? The inventor's hands begin to shake as her eyes land upon the picture on her desk again, her tears falling faster now. She sees the love in Korra's eyes, a love only reserved for her and her alone.

"I'm sorry," she breathes out, causing Mako's head to swivel. She takes a deep breath and wipes her eyes and nose before she nods to him again.

"I'm sorry I've been acting so... cold," she says genuinely, glancing back to Korra. "It's just that this... the loss, the years without her..., it just hurts, you know? I keep hearing her, like she's here with me. It's driving me insane and I can't tell what's real or not. I... I just want this to stop killing me. I bury myself in work and in alcohol because those are the only things I have that allow me to ignore my problems. I know it's not healthy, but what other choice do I have, Mako? If I ever had problems, Korra was the first - the only - person I'd talk to. It's hard to open up to someone who's dead."

Mako simply watches her in silence, his eyes growing blurry with his own tears. He offers Asami a faint, bittersweet smile as he walks around to her desk, leaning upon the edge slightly. Asami sighs and sets her emptied glass down before she looks up at him, haggard and weary. Mako doesn't make out the Asami he'd once dated from eight years ago. He doesn't see the exuberantly full of life and brutally honest engineer that inspired him for days. He doesn't hear the excitement and awe in her voice. He doesn't even feel the warmth of friendship and care that Asami always brought to Team Avatar.

As Mako looks at her now, all he sees is a broken woman.

"I'm not the best listener, nor am I anything close to how amazing Korra had been," he starts, his voice a little nervous and shaky, "but I'm here. We're all here for you, Asami. We're a team, and we'll always be a team, no matter what happens. Family sticks together. Always. Korra would deny me access to whatever awesome, spirited place she's in now if I didn't comfort you or try to help. I'd rather be able to enjoy the afterlife in one piece, you know."

Asami chuckles faintly at the last part, her head dipping as she sighs. Mako allows his lips to curl into a crooked smile at the sight of Asami's reaction. For the first time since before Kuvira's last
stand, he sees his friend again. Somewhere in those dull emerald orbs is Asami, needing to be rescued from her grief and loss; he may not be the Avatar, but he is still her friend, and he means what he says. Mako reaches out and puts a hand on her shoulder, squeezing the flesh underneath his palm gently as he nods. Asami looks up at him and smiles again. They both look to the photo on Asami's desk and sigh simultaneously. Asami reaches out, grazing her fingers over the glass with intense delicacy.

"She's always looking out for you, Asami," Mako says gently, "wherever she may be now."

As she hears soothing Korra's whispers return, Asami finally allows herself to believe him.

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"Is that all she does?" A new guard asks one of the sentries with a puzzled look. "Write letters and meditate?"

"Well, I'd guess that if she was physically able to do it, she'd work out," the other guard huffs with a slight chuckle, "but we took care of her... mobility problem, ha. That bitch can no longer do a push up without cracking a rib, I bet."

"But sir, isn't that considered exercising our power?" The younger guard is confused as she glances into the slit of Kuvira's cell, her brows furrowing together as she watches the former guard in a lotus position with her eyes closed. Her co-worker snorts as he grabs at his water bottle, taking a sip.

"After all she's done, it's nothing," he replies with a jeering tone, "Lin doesn't seem to care anyways."

"And her sister?" The younger guard asks, her brow raised. The man's face turns into a scowl as he glares at Kuvira through the bars. Her body remains still and unwavering, completely disregarding them. He rolls his eyes and scoffs at her, thinking a woman like her could never meditate.

"Suyin Beifong is nothing more than a pushover. It's that woman that has managed to keep her alive. If anything, Kuvira is lucky," the guard grumbles, picking at something between his fingernails as he scowls. "Besides, we need to spare the abuse for today; the Beifong sisters are coming in to visit later in the evening. Spirits know why. They've waited five years, I don't see why they care now. Kuvira is nothing more than garbage at this point. Hell, I think even garbage
"Everyone's valuable in their own way," the female guard says back softly. Her eyes never leave Kuvira's form. She still looks hesitant as she peers curiously at the metal-bender in the cell, her heart twisting in a strange sense of pity and sadness. The older guard scoffs again.

"You feel bad for her? Do you know what she did?" He snorts, growling at the door. He hopes that Kuvira will react, but throughout the five years he's worked as a guard at the prison, never once has the metal-bender attempted to fight back. The woman nods slowly, her gaze growing dark.

"She captured my family and killed one of my best friends," she murmurs softly, "so I guess I do know what she did." The guard looks confused as he stares at her with a strange expression, his brows furrowing with bewilderment at her comment.

"Well, if you know, and all that stuff happened… why do you feel bad?" The woman takes a deep breath. She doesn't really know why… or at least she can't explain why she feels that way. Instead, she turns to face the guard with a solemn expression. She fidgets on her feet as she looks to the ground. Her eyes mist as she remembers her mother's final words to her as the world around her burned to the ground and they'd been separated.

"Because sometimes good people, caught in a bad time, can do bad things," she murmurs absently, glancing back at Kuvira. The older guard suddenly tightens up, his lips curling into a nasty, defensive snarl. The woman doesn't wince, and instead, her gaze stays planted upon the former captain.

"You think she's a good person?" He sneers. The woman shrugs, folding her hands in front of her as she sighs deeply.

"Depends," she says softly, "are we inherently good or bad?"

"What are you? A philosopher? You're like a kid," he retorts, stepping closer to her. He grabs her jacket and spins her around, causing the younger woman to tear her gaze away from Kuvira and look up at him. He pauses when he sees some familiarity in her face. He lets her go and bites his lip.

"Wait… what did you say your name was again?" He asks, his voice suddenly dropping low and becoming more reserved. The woman straightens her back, wiping a stray tear from her cheek as
she sighs deeply. Her eyes dart between Kuvira and the man before she nods her head slightly.

"Opal," she whispers, watching his eyes grow wide, "Opal Beifong."

Kuvira always used to love the feel of fresh grass beneath her feet.

When she'd been younger, her mother and father would take her to a vast open field a few miles from their old house in the countryside. There, under the careful eye of her parents, she'd practice her earth-bending. She'd start with digging her toes into the dirt and getting a feel for the Earth. She'd wiggle them around in the cool, moist substance. She still remembers squealing out of shock the first time, before running into her mother's arms. When she bended her first rock, and accidentally hitting the farmer's barn in the process, she'd never felt more accomplished in her life. She still remembers her father's face and her mother's smile as she'd run to them, exclaiming in joy at how she'd managed to overcome her fear.

"It's a lovely memory," a soft voice calls out.

Kuvira turns slowly, only to see that she's in that exact field. A sunset paints over the horizon of the mountains. The metal-bender can't help but smile as she sees the farm in the distant, complete with the semi-damaged barn. Her heart swells with an unknown emotion as she sighs. The air is warm and humid with that familiar summer breeze. It's comforting, a feeling Kuvira has not known for quite sometime. She inhales the sweet scent of fresh cooking and bonfires, catching the faint scent of barbecued meat in the distance. It reminds her of her childhood… of her home.

"I didn't think I could still remember it," Kuvira responds in a warm voice, turning her head over her shoulder to see the person she'd been visiting come into view. Her face relaxes and her lips purse into a small, welcoming smile as she greets the younger woman with a dip of her head.

"Memories may fade, but they're always there," Korra says to her as she approaches her side, gazing at the scenery, "sometimes, it's all we have to keep us going. We value and treasure them more than we think." Kuvira nods, sighing deeply as she curls her bare toes into the dirt. Korra smiles as she watches, placing her hands into the pockets of her navy slacks. Her sky blue tunic lays semi-tucked in her waistband, and her hair is in its usual wolf-tails. Kuvira gazes at the spirit of the younger woman, feeling happy that she looks as free and weightless as she does now.
"Is that what you had when... you know," Kuvira says, her voice trailing off to a whisper. Korra turns her head to give her a wry smile, nodding her head as she gazes back at the setting sun with a content sigh. She folds her arms over her chest and smiles harder, her eyes misting with nostalgia.

"When I was recovering in solitude, memories were the only things I had that reminded me of my journey, of my friends, of my life that I had to come back to," Korra explains gently, her fingers rubbing over the space in the crook of her arm. She feels (if she could call it a feeling, considering she isn't exactly alive), her cheeks grow warm and her chest expands with happiness as she recalls all the fond memories she'd shared with her friends and family.

"When did you know that you loved Asami?" Kuvira asks, though she knows it's a loaded question. Korra pauses her breathing for a moment, not that it would matter should she stop, though; the younger woman bites her lip softly and sighs deeply.

"I guess I'd always loved her," she starts with a raspy voice thick with emotion, "but I didn't know I loved her until I told her to leave the South Pole, without me. I didn't know that I was in love with her until moments before the portal was created, however. I was a bit dumb on trying to figure it out."

"I'm sorry," Kuvira says, looking down at her dirt-covered toes with a solemn expression. Korra raises her brow and looks to her slacked shoulders and slumped frame. The younger woman cocks her head to the side, releasing the lip from her bite with a soft pop.

"For what?"

"For taking it away from you," Kuvira says, nodding her head back to display her shimmering green eyes, "for taking you away from her. She... she hates me for it. Everyone does, actually." The metal-bender says the last part in a sad, but understanding scoff. She shakes her head and kicks at the dirt.

"I hate me, too. I'm surprised you haven't kicked me out of the Spirit World, to be honest. I ruined everything for you. I killed you for Spirits' sake," Kuvira growls condescendingly. Korra chuckles half-heartedly, causing Kuvira to peer at her in bewilderment. Korra sees the confusion and quickly stops her previous soft laughing. She gazes at the older former captain with a gentle and loving expression, nodding her head slowly.

"I know what you did, but I don't hate you. The Avatar doesn't hate people," she explains. Kuvira rolls her eyes at her.
"You're not just the Avatar. You're Korra, too. A human," she says, raising her hands to emphasize her point. "You have feelings, too."

"Yeah, I do," Korra agrees, nodding her head, "but I still don't hate you."

Kuvira is silent for a few moments, just listening to the crickets and wolf-bats before she hoarsely asks, "…why?"

"Because I was gone. Because I left when the world needed me the most. Because I left those who loved me behind without a second glance. You had to do something to stop Ba Sing Se from falling to pieces. You didn't want your people to suffer like you had when your mother died," Korra tells her in a soothing tone, her voice steady and calm like a babbling brook. Kuvira looks astonished that the Avatar knows such an intimate detail about her, but the look in those cerulean eyes lets her know that Korra must know every minute detail about her, since the Spirit World does tailor to her emotions.

"Still," Kuvira mumbles with a self-loathing growl, "I killed you."

"And I died," Korra says matter-of-factly, "but then I was reborn. Life goes on, Kuvira."

The metal-bender glances up, aghast at how nonchalant the dead Avatar is currently behaving. Korra only shrugs and plops to a sitting position, curling her legs under her bum and laying back in the grass. She pats the grass next to her, beckoning for Kuvira to take a seat beside her. It takes a few moments before Kuvira allows her legs to crumble under her and for her to relax into the soft earth. Korra's gaze is fixed on the mountains, this time a bit more thoughtful and cloudy. The sky overhead begins to darken as the former master of all four elements sighs deeply. Kuvira shakes her head, still confused. She had expected rage, burning buildings and flashbacks to the beam nearly murdering them in the Spirit Wilds, not this.

"I don't get it," she says bitterly, glancing back to Korra with a desperate gaze, "why aren't you angry?!"

"I wanted to die," Korra says bluntly, shutting the older woman up. Korra makes out the confusion and sorrow on the metal-bender's face as her own grows flushed. She waves a hand in front of her face as she shakes her head, grunting softly.
"Let me explain," she says softly, and Kuvira nods. Taking a deep breath, Korra clears her throat and begins to explain.

"After Zaheer poisoned me, everything changed. It was different than Amon and Unavaatu. I mean, with both of those guys I felt useless afterwards, but with Zaheer, I was physically immobile. I couldn't leave the bed for six months… I mean you were there for three of them. You saw what I went through. I'd been broken mentally and physically. I couldn't sleep, eat… damn, I couldn't even use the bathroom on my own. I was useless, Kuvira. I realized it at Jinora's induction ceremony, when Tenzin told me that I could rest. An Avatar is not supposed to rest. They're supposed to be a beacon of hope, a symbol of peace, a… a hero. I didn't feel like a hero after I fought Zaheer. I mean, I nearly killed him. What kind of Avatar kills people?

"I fell into this dark pit of desperation and depression. I pushed people away… people I loved and cared about, people who felt the same and more about me. Asami tried her best to be there for me, to be patient with me, and to love me despite my scars; but, I had been so wrapped up in my own memories and trauma to notice it. I began to hear things, voices and requests. They told me nasty things, like to kill myself or my friends and family, that I wasn't worth it, and that the world didn't need me anymore. I almost believed them. I tried four times to end it, but I never did it right. At least… that's what I always believed at the time. Now when I think about it, I don't think I'd actually been trying to die.

"So, that's when I left. I decided that I needed to figure myself out. I travelled all around the Earth Kingdom, searching for answers to help recover the parts of me that I'd lost in that fight. I did things I'm not proud of, things that people would want me in jail or killed for. I abandoned the world, and myself. I lied to my friends and my parents, and most of all, I lied to myself. I saw the past me… the Avatar that had been poisoned. I saw her everywhere. I went crazy, running from her, thinking she was real when really the entire time I was running from myself.

"But then, I met Toph in the forest," Korra says, her smile beginning to return as she remembers the elderly woman fondly, "and when I met her, she taught me things I never could have learned on my own. It was funny, though, because she never told me them. She… she let me find them."

"With Toph's help, I became reconnected with myself and with Raava. I wasn't fixed completely, but I'd healed the worst scars. It was after I fought you in Zaofu… after I saw Suyin and the twins taken hostage, in which I realized how badly the world needed me. I still hadn't been ready fight, but I knew I was ready to try, if that makes sense," Korra says, scratching the back of her head as she furrows her brow. Kuvira lets the Avatar's words sink in before she cocks her head up at the younger woman, her self-loathing exchanged for curiosity and anticipation.

"What made you go back?" She asks softly, picking softly at a few blades of grass. "You know, besides the world needing you."
"My family, my friends…, Asami," Korra says, her face lighting up with the last name. The dark-skinned woman can only smile harder as she turns to face Kuvira with a nod. "Love is what kept me going. Asami was my reason to keep fighting. It took me three years to realize that she was my only reason to keep fighting, or at least the one that motivated me the most." Kuvira smiles slightly at that, thinking back to Bataar Jr. Korra sighs as she looks to the sky. Her eyes trace the constellations and the few spirits that hover and float in the calm summer air.

"I think… I think that I realized something that night Asami came to talk to me at the gazebo on Air Temple Island," Korra murmurs, drifting off slightly. Kuvira swallows thickly as she pulls out another strand of grass, turning it over and under her fingers.

"What's that?" She asks, somewhat apprehensive and a bit nervous. Korra only smiles, her eyes misting as she gazes at the metal-bender.

"I'd rather have a life full of 'oh wells' rather than one filled with countless 'what ifs'," Korra tells her wisely, smiling again.

The words drift in the air, causing Kuvira's breath to hitch. In that moment, suddenly everything falls into place. Korra doesn't have to ask, because she knows. She can feel the change in the air, and she grins harder. She looks back to the stars, watching as the night sky lights up with the familiar rays of green and blue light from both the South and North pole. She loops her arms around her knees and just breathes in the light, tension-free air. Kuvira takes a minute to recuperate from the epiphany she'd just experienced as she looks to the former Avatar with an understanding expression.

"I think I know what to do," she says softly, and Korra nods, her gaze warm and gentle as always.

"I know," she says softly, reaching out to lightly graze the other woman's hand, "but it's not going to be easy. After my loss…, well, some of them still haven't recovered. I can see them… I'm with them, but they can't see me or hear me. Only… only a few can. Trying to repair this damage won't be fixable with a few tools and a handful of luck, you know. This work is far from easy." Kuvira, for the first time in a long time, manages a good-natured scoff as she grins at the younger woman. Korra raises her brow teasingly as she sees the flicker of challenge in the former captain.

"Life isn't easy," Kuvira says, nodding her head, "but not even life can keep me from fulfilling my promises."
Korra's eyes water as she hears the true message ring clear in her mind. The metal-bender rises to her feet, taking one last glance at the beautiful open skies before nodding her head back down at the former Avatar, her purpose now shining purely in those glittering emerald eyes. The older woman places a hand upon the native woman's shoulder supportingly, sending her a knowing smile.

"I'll bring her back to you," Kuvira whispers, fully able to see the hope sparkling in those blue eyes.

"Thank you," Korra replies back, her voice quivering with emotion as she stands shakily.

Korra doesn't have to ask whom the former captain of the guard is talking about. She knows. She's been watching Asami, feeling Asami's despair, hearing her cries and watching her succumb to the grief of her loss, but she's powerless in her current state. Her hand rubs the back of her neck as she allows her emotions to take over. Kuvira places her other hand on the younger woman's shoulder and Korra can't help but pull her into a warm hug. It's awkward at first, but soon they both put their pasts behind them as Kuvira rubs the Avatar's back, ducking her own head into her well-muscled shoulder.

"No, Korra," she murmurs, closing her eyes slowly, "thank you…, for helping me find myself."

When Kuvira opens her eyes to face the dank walls of her cell, she immediately goes to her desk and begins to write.

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"So, I guess we finally have some time alone, huh?"

Jinora glances up to see her boyfriend of eight years leaning against the doorframe of their small apartment. His eyebrows wriggle playfully and Jinora can't help but roll her eyes at the gesture. She sets down her paperwork and walks over to him, placing a hand upon his muscled chest. There's a teasing glance sparkling in her dark eyes, but the woman remains silent as she stares him down.

"Ikki and Meelo will be here soon with Asami," she tells him sternly, "we don't have time for that, Kai." The air-bender sighs, waving his hands disarmingly at his girlfriend's strict voice. Jinora only raises a brow as she takes her hand off his chest, crossing her arms in response to his actions.
"Fine, fine, no funny business," he says with a pout. Jinora smiles and pats his shoulder encouragingly, throwing him a smirk and a wink.

"I'm not saying we can't later...," she murmurs, trailing off with a knowing glance. Kai raises his brows and blushes, flustered as always whenever Jinora takes the reigns on their intimate relations. The woman only laughs harder, tears springing at her eyes as she shakes her head. Kai goes to retort, but a knock upon the door interrupts them. Grumbling, he stalks away from his girlfriend and swings open the frame to see Ikki, Meelo, and Asami.

"Hey, guys," he says, the teasing irritation void of his voice as he beckons them to enter the house. "It's been awhile!"

"Sure has!" Ikki exclaims excitedly, rushing forward to embrace Kai with a tight hug. The air-bender sighs and rubs her back, smiling gently as she reluctantly lets him go. Meelo gives him one of their signature handshakes, a grin forming upon the younger bender's face.

"Man, Meelo, you're getting taller," Kai says amicably, ruffling his hair. The teenager grunts and fixes his hair, but the playful expression in his eyes never leaves. He moves aside to greet his sister as Asami steps forward, reaching out to shake his hand. Kai takes it and gives it a firm tug, nodding at the heiress, his gaze somewhat guarded as he spots the dark, swollen circles forming under her bloodshot eyes.

"Asami Sato," Kai greets her warmly, dipping his head again, "always a pleasure."

"You've turned into a fine gentleman, Kai," Asami says, giving him a once over and a faint smile that doesn't reach her eyes.

"Thanks," he murmurs shyly, rubbing the back of his head, "I think."

Kai winces inwardly as she looks over his shoulder to Jinora. His girlfriend looks concerned at the state of the heiress, but decides not to press upon the issue as Meelo and Ikki remind her of their presence. The air-master can sense the distraught vibes pooling from the inventor's shoulders; it's so overwhelming that she has to take a deep breath and step back from the woman's hardened stare. Asami is smart, Jinora knows, and she notices that the non-bender has picked up on her inquisitiveness. Brushing off the odd feelings, she takes a deep breath and smiles at Asami with a kind nod.
"It's really good to see you, Jinora," Asami says blankly, trying to smile again but failing. Jinora steps forward, and Kai takes it as his cue to start loading her siblings in the car. Jinora nods appreciatively as they exit in silence, leaving the two women together alone.

"It's wonderful to see you again, Asami," Jinora says, opting for a light-hearted tone.

Asami doesn't respond, bare for looking at her feet. Her once luscious and noteworthy onyx locks look like haggard black seaweed as the hair falls down upon her face, covering her forehead and eyes with a curtain of self-doubt and infinite insecurities. She's not usually this unkempt, especially on a business casual level, but this had been her best attempt. Jinora can tell by the subtle waves of frustration that Asami had tried to dress up, but her depression is something unlike she'd seen before… only ever having bore witness to such sadness with Korra.

"You're keeping alright?" Jinora asks, not really aiming to start a conversation. She wants Asami to take the lead, wherever she may choose to go. The heiress stiffens and stands up straight, a wall coming back up as she masks the glare she sends to the young air-master.

"I'm fine," she mutters, and the bender doesn't have to be connected to spirits to know she's lying. Asami sighs, bowing her head and holding her forehead with a callused palm. She's not sure why she's lying. There is no point. Jinora is almost a truth-seer with her spiritual abilities.

"It takes time," Jinora chooses to say, placing a comforting hand upon her friend's shoulder. "For some it's sooner than others."

"What about you?" Asami growls defensively, tears springing to her eyes as she steps back. The younger woman takes a deep breath, but doesn't get startled by the subtle movement. She senses more tension and something deeper…, something far darker than the pain she'd read into earlier.

"I'm not alone with my grief. I have Kai and my family, sometimes Opal, and if I'm Zaofu, I have Suyin, too," she tells her earnestly. Asami's eyes flare with rage as she curls her lips into a snarl. This isn't how she'd hope to start their reunion, but Jinora won't ignore the agony she feels from her friend.

"So, you're saying I'm alone?" She snaps, but then her face falls. "You're… you're not wrong. I am alone. They all left me. She left me, Jinora."
"No, she hasn't," Jinora says, sensing the aura in the room shift.

A small smile curls up at the corners of her mouth as she looks past Asami to see Korra's spirit in the corner, watching them both with concern and love in those faded eyes. Korra manages a sad wave, but her gaze is glued to Asami's back. The heiress notices the light return to the air-bender's eyes and whips her head around. She looks frantically for Korra's figure, but Jinora picks up immediately that the non-bender can't actually see Korra, despite the fact that she is indeed with them spiritually. Jinora hears Asami growl as the older woman cocks her head back at her with a menacing snarl.

"Stop playing tricks on me," she hisses, pointing her finger angrily at the younger woman, "it's not fucking funny. I know I'm going insane, okay?"

"You're not going insane," Jinora whispers softly, placing her hand upon the rigid shoulder in front of her, "you just can't see her."

"Why?" Asami half-screams, shoving Jinora off of her. "Why can't I see her but you can?!!"

The room is silent as tears begin to stream down Asami's face. Jinora doesn't respond straight away, as once again, she turns to face Korra, now standing with her hands clutched tightly over her chest. Her expression is more than distraught, but the former Avatar's spirit can't do anything. If Asami isn't connected to the Earth in the way she is, nothing about that will change. The young air-master sighs as the sobbing increases. She can hear Korra whispering to her, telling her to save what's left of Asami's shattered heart. Jinora looks pleadingly at her old friend, but Korra only hangs her head, her spirit beginning to fade out of sight. The energy she'd felt before slowly dissipates and Asami stops crying slowly.

"She's gone," she barely croaks as she nods her head up, "isn't she?"

_Not forever_, Jinora wants to say, but instead she hoarsely whispers, "yeah, she's gone."

"I don't get it, Jinora," Asami whimpers, clutching her head as she leans against the drawer, "why… why does it hurt so much? Why can I feel but not see?"

"Because," Jinora says strongly, reaching out to squeeze her arm, "you're stuck in the past. You can't accept that she's dead."
"I…," Asami goes to fight, but the younger woman's knowing expression stops her from continuing her refuting claim. Instead, the heiress sighs and nods, silently letting the master air-bender know that she's right, that she hasn't accepted it, despite the amount of time that's past. It's tearing her apart, and Jinora knows better than most the effect of a broken soul can have upon one's mind.

"You will," Jinora tells her weakly, squeezing again, "with time." Asami snorts and looks up to her with a desolate expression.

"Yeah," she mutters bitterly, in a volume that indicates the response is meant for herself mainly. "But…, how much time?"

Just this once, Jinora doesn't have an answer.

/ 

"You're sure about this?"

Suyin takes a deep breath as she glances at her sister, who stands before her with her arms crossed in apprehension. The younger sibling takes a deep breath before she nods, furrowing her brows together in a tight frown. Her chest swells with anxiety she has not felt in years, her heart thundering against the wall of her cage like a beast desperate for freedom. Lin walks beside her briskly as they make their way up the stairs and towards the top cell in the tower. The sky is beginning to darken outside, indicating the arrival of dusk.

"I'm here now," Suyin mutters, "I may as well just get it over with."

"You don't have to do this, Su," Lin replies in a low growl, stopping them both with an extended arm. "You don't owe her anything."

"She owes me an explanation," Suyin snaps back, shoving away her sister's protective grasp. Lin doesn't react, bare for a small snort and shake of her head. Suyin rolls her eyes and taps her foot in irritation like she'd used to do when she was a child.

"I didn't ask you to come, you know," she whispers, averting her gaze as Lin looks up, "I don't need you to babysit."
"I'm not babysitting," Lin replies in a huff, lightly clenching her forehead as her temples pound. Something inside of her stomach swirls and she feels strange again. She considers going to Tenzin for an explanation, but she figures that if Toph gave her limited information, he'd be just as useless.

"You look pale, Lin," Suyin's voice brings her back with a concerned whisper. The chief of police blinks to see opal eyes staring at her with worry. Lin shakes her head and brushes her off as she sees the face of her highest ranked guard approaching them.

"I can explain that later, just... let's get this over with, okay?" Lin suggest softly, her voice lowering to another whisper.

Suyin sucks in a deep breath and hesitates a moment before she nods reluctantly. Lin leads her sibling upwards towards the cell entrance. They pass through a barrage of security measures in order to just reach the door of the cell. Two guards step inside with them, metal bending the elevator up a few more floors towards the top room. Suyin is shaking beside her older sister, apprehensive of what she's about to see. The matriarch keeps it together, instead choosing to focus on the purpose of her trip as the doors shift open and a few more guards approach them.

"This way," one of them grumbles respectfully, "we have cleared her room."

"Has there been a shift in the guard?" Suyin asks, her eyes peering around for her daughter. The man before her nods, sheepishly bowing his head, much to Lin's disapproval. The man winces as he salutes them both, straightening his back politely as he takes a deep breath.

"Your daughter was relieved of duty a few hours ago, ma'am," he informs her strictly. "She said she was heading home for the day. In fact, she was really only needed today. The White Lotus has dispatched a few more guards from their organization; among them is another air-bender that will take Opal's position. You needn't worry, she's not going to be working here from now on. She can resume her air-bending duties once more."

"Did Kuvira harm her?" Suyin questions immediately, the back of her neck prickling with fury and apprehension. The guard shakes his head quickly, allowing some of the knotting tension in her chest to relax slightly.

"No, she didn't go inside the room. Kuvira hasn't caused any problems we know of so far," he tells her in a formal tone. Suyin nods and sighs, gazing back to Lin. The older Beifong only grunts as she flicks her fingers in a classic sign for the man in front of her to move. He nods and side steps,
allowing them to pass. Both sisters thank him quietly as they approach the cell door.

"Ready?" Lin asks, looking to Suyin. The younger woman grits her teeth and clenches her fists.

"Ready," she mutters back.

Lin opens the door and they walk in, only to see Kuvira sitting in the corner of her room, staring at the wall. The minute Suyin makes eye-contact with her protégée, her heart breaks like a shard of glass inside her chest. She gasps inaudibly, tears pulling at her eyes as she runs her gaze over each swelling bruise and infected cut upon the once impenetrable captain of the guard. Kuvira looks nothing like she had years ago. She's broken and worn down, not just from physical injuries but also age and stress. Suyin can't help but feel pity for her, somewhere deep down, buried amongst the anger and hate.

"I didn't think you'd come," Kuvira rasps, her voice raw from lack of proper hydration. Her weary eyes shift to the Beifong sisters, her shoulders shaking with fatigue from the last beating she'd taken from a guard not too long after Opal had left. Her ribs crack as she attempts to stand, but fails miserably.

"What did they do to you?" Suyin gasps, much to the dismay of her older sister. Lin only mutters something condescending and bitter under her breath, but Kuvira doesn't bother to retaliate. She only sighs and bows her head, ashamed.

"They do what I did to them," Kuvira replies in a distant tone, "and I deserve it."

"You do," Lin growls out of anyone's earshot, but her stomach churns again. Kuvira's head snaps up, feeling the shift in the room. She looks to the eldest Beifong with a puzzled expression, crawling to her feet. She sways lightly, but manages to make her way to the bed to sit down unsteadily.

"Why… why now? After all these years that I've written," she croaks, clutching her ribs in order to ward off the fiery pain, "why did you pick now to come and visit me?" Lin goes to throw a snappy response, but Suyin's hand places itself over her sister's shoulder, holding her back.

"I never replied to your letters," she replies shortly, her voice void of any specific emotion. Kuvira stifles a small cry at the words.
"I didn't expect you to," the former guard whispers, closing her eyes as more pain washes over her. Suyin only sighs, stepping forwards as she approaches the bed cautiously. Kuvira doesn't move, and even if she wanted to, her body is in no shape to do anything but curl into itself.

"I read them all, you know," Suyin murmurs, sighing again as she takes a seat upon the bed. The two of them block out an overly protective Lin standing guard by the door and instead focus on each other. Kuvira looks to Suyin and she sees her friend, her adopted mother, and the most important person in the world. Tears claw at her irises as she shakes her head, gasping again as she feels a ripple of sharp pain jut upwards through her ribs.

"I'm so sorry," Kuvira begins to sob, "I'm so sorry, Su. For Zaofu, for your family… for Korra."

"How dare you?!" Lin seethes, springing up from where she stands to grab a fistful of Kuvira's prison rags. More tension knots in her gut but she ignores the feeling, instead choosing to stare Kuvira dead in the eyes with a furious expression. The younger woman doesn't even wince once.

"Why can't you leave my family alone?!!" Lin asks, practically breathing fire as she shoves Kuvira into the hard cot. Suyin calls out for her to stop, but Lin shakes her head furiously. This woman nearly killed her sister and she murdered one of the most genuine people on the planet.

"I've changed," Kuvira whimpers like a polar-bear dog that had just gotten its tail stepped on. "I'm not how I used to be. I have so many regrets."

"Regrets don't change the past," Lin growls, shoving her once more before letting go. "You were a monster then, and you're a monster now, bitch."

"Lin, that's more than enough," Suyin says roughly, pulling her sister away from the injured woman. Lin only grunts, but with a final glare to both women, she stalks away to a corner of the room, ignoring them as they reunite. Kuvira flinches as Suyin's fingers trail over her fresh cuts upon her face.

"Why do you say that you've changed?" Suyin asks, her voice quiet and soft. Kuvira stumbles back into a somewhat decent sitting position as she avoids her former mentor's gaze for a few moments. It takes sometime, but Kuvira finally musters up the courage to tell her truth.

"I've been meditating," she says, swallowing the nerves as she hears Lin scoff something from the corner.
"So? Have you achieved some sort of fucking enlightenment?" Lin scowls, the twisting in her side indicating that she's being unnecessarily harsh. She doesn't want to listen to the spirit trapped inside her, however. She wants this moment of fury. She needs it off her chest... now.

"No..., but also, yes," Kuvira answers cryptically, furrowing her brows. Suyin cocks her head, confused as she peers at Kuvira.

"That's not a straight answer, Kuvira," the younger Beifong mutters, frustrated. Kuvira sighs and hangs her head, closing her eyes.

"Listen, you're not going to believe me, but what I'm about to say is the truth," she says through gritted teeth. She looks at the two sisters, feeling for a moment like she was a child being scolded by two parents. Lin looks disinterested and pissed, whereas Suyin's eyes are gentle but guarded.

"Well, tell us then," Lin mumbles, her voice shaky. Something shifts and for some reason, Lin already manages to put the information together with her detective skills and newly discovered spirit senses before Kuvira can even open her mouth. She simply stares at the metal-bender as she speaks.

"I can meditate into the Spirit World," Kuvira tells them hoarsely, "and... I found Korra."

"To say that you've changed," Suyin snarls suddenly, standing up as her eyes lit with hurt. Kuvira goes to reply, but it's Lin that beats her to it.

"She's telling the truth, Su."

"What?" Suyin reels on her sister, baffled that she'd managed to change from unforgiving to stoic and calm in a matter of moments. She stalks her way up to the older woman and shakes her fist angrily in Kuvira's direction, unable to look at the woman directly.

"She's fucking crazy! Only the Avatar and Jinora could meditate into the Spirit World, besides Zaheer, who was, might I remind you, fucking crazy." Lin and Kuvira both stay silent for a few minutes, allowing the angered words to float through the air thick with tension and despair.
"She's…, she's not crazy, Su," Lin sighs, bowing her head, "because I get it. I mean, I don't meditate, but…, but, I think I found Korra, too."

"This isn't funny, Lin."

"It's not a joke!" Lin shouts suddenly, grabbing at Suyin's shoulders. She shakes her sister with a tight grip, watching with a broken heart as the tears begin to fall from her sister's emerald eyes. Everything inside of her burns, but it's a bittersweet sensation.

"What I'd told you the day of the funeral…. it was true, Su. Something happened to Korra's spirit when that portal was formed. I…, I don't think she's gone. I know that I can feel her, in fact I feel her more strongly now than ever before. Kuvira's not lying. I felt it the minute we walked in," Lin says seriously, her eyes pleading for her younger sister to believe her. Kuvira is still silent behind her, but Suyin can't look at her.

"Why?" is the only word she can breathe out.

"I don't know," Lin says truthfully, glancing over her shoulder to see that Kuvira looks just as torn, "but I'm ready to find out."

"I'm not," Suyin says abruptly, spinning away from her sister and towards the door.

Kuvira only follows her with an empty gaze and a barely beating heart. The younger woman slumps back down against the hard cot, trying to ward off the tears that won't stop flowing. Lin sighs and goes to follow her sister, deciding not to cast even so much as a glance towards the young bender upon the bed. She may believe Kuvira, but she doesn't forgive her. The metal-bender doesn't seem to fight the sudden decision for the two women to leave, and instead she simply closes her eyes, parting her chapped lips as she speaks one last time.

"Your suit has metal on it, Su," Kuvira murmurs, causing the younger Beifong to stop in her tracks. She turns her head, but doesn't look at Kuvira.

"What did you say?" Suyin's voice is a mere sharp whisper.

"Your suit, alongside many of the other guards here," Kuvira mumbles hoarsely between ragged gasps, "has metal on it."
"Why does that matter?" Suyin growls, finally turning to face her. Kuvira's expression is blank and lifeless as she swallows thickly.

"You know why it matters," she says in a soft, but distant voice, "because I've been here five years and you've come here once."

"What are you trying to say, Kuvira?! Spit it out," Suyin snarls, fed up of the metal-bender's antics. Kuvira only closes her eyes and breathes deeply.

"What I've been trying to tell you for the past five years," she whispers drowsily as fatigue succumbs her. "I've changed, Su."

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"This is just like old times," Bolin beams as his brother and Wu enter the car, hopping to the back. Opal leans over to press a soft kiss to his cheek as she nods, though her gaze is slightly guarded. Wu loops his arm around his boyfriend and lets his head rest upon the taller man's shoulder.

"It's good to be back in Republic City," the prince says with a wide grin, feeling Mako's muscles tense up underneath his light grip. The fire-bender smiles warmly at him, despite trying to mask his own excitement. He gets lost in his lover's eyes, feeling his chest swell with happiness.

"You guys were gone awhile, huh?" Bolin asks, looking in the rear view mirror at the couple with a raised brow. He pulls the car out of the hotel parking lot and into the street, driving towards Kwong's Cuisine. Mako shrugs, smiling contently as Wu nuzzles further into his neck.

"We were travelling around here and there, fixing stuff like we always do," the fire-bender tells his brother, turning his gaze back to the front of the car where Opal and Bolin are holding hands. Mako sighs contently, thinking about how life could be so hard, but also so beautiful.

"Are Jinora and Kai meeting us at the restaurant?" Wu asks, removing his head from Mako's shoulder to glance at Opal. Mako lets out a faint gasp of disappointment from the lack of pressure, to which Wu can only smirk playfully. Mako averts his gaze, trying to remain stoic and composed.
"Yeah, Asami is going to hitch a ride with them," she says, her voice somewhat distant. Bolin glances at her worriedly, his brow raising as the grip upon the steering wheel tightens. Mako senses something off with them, but he opts to say nothing and instead busies himself with Wu's company.

"You okay, babe?" Bolin asks softly, squeezing her hand. "I know you've been uptight since you'd been asked to be a temporary guard."

"Yeah," Opal replies distantly, looking to their hands, "I'm just… thinking."

"A yuan for your thoughts?" Bolin asks with a bright, humorous tone. Opal cracks a faint smile as she shakes her head at him slightly.

"Just… it's been so long since we've all seen each other, that's all," she says, not completely a lie. She hasn't told her boyfriend that the woman she's temping for is Kuvira, nor does she think that she could ever tell him. Her boyfriend was always uneasy about his former boss, and tonight is supposed to be a good night. They're all getting back together for a reunion. She won't ruin the moment for him, or for anyone.

"That's all?" Bolin asks, his voice suggesting he thinks otherwise. Rolling her bottom lip between her teeth, Opal nods hesitantly, offering a smile which he sees through because of his attention to following the road. He sighs deeply and holds her hand tightly, his eyes lighting up as he looks at the restaurant.

"Well, here we are!"

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Toph sits at the dinner table when she first feels the spiritual shift.

"… and basically that's how we lost the buzzard-wasps," Bumi finishes his tale in an excited voice. Toph blinks, and though she can't see him, she can tell that the old air-bender has a grin plastered upon his face. She smiles and nods at the anecdote, but her energy is transfixed on Katara. The aged water-bender hums and nods, gazing at her children knowingly. Kya is sitting next to Bumi, her warm gaze watching as Tenzin's face screws up.
"That's ridiculous, Bumi. There's no way you evaded a hoard of buzzard-wasps," he mutters, throwing his arms up in frustration. Kya goes to throw a playful jest when the doors whip open, causing the group of people to turn their heads.

Suyin and Lin walk through the doors, looking haggard and weary. Suyin doesn't smile as her sons and husband stand up, but instead simply collapses into her husband's arms. She loops her arms around the man's shoulders, pressing her face into his neck. Toph senses the unease as she stands, making her way over to her daughters. She places one hand on Suyin's arm and the other on Lin's elbow. She sends a light tap of energy through the floor in the direction of Katara, who immediately understands. She turns to Kya, Bumi, and Tenzin, smiling at them sadly.

"Bumi, Tenzin, Kya," she says softly, "can we take a walk around the shore?"

Kya feels something off about her mother's voice, but she doesn't question her as she follows the experienced water-bender out the door with her brothers, leaving the Beifongs alone in the kitchen. Kya loops her arms around her mother's arm, pulling her close as fear starts to build in her chest. Katara only hums as she rubs the length of her daughter's arm with a gentle stroke. Bumi and Tenzin raise their brows, unsure of where their mother is taking them. The two men merely shrug as they sigh deeply, following the older woman to the shore of the island.

"My beautiful children," Katara hums proudly, gazing at her offspring, "I love you all so much."

"We love you too, Mom," Bumi responds with a grin, looping his arm around his mother's shoulders. Katara smiles into her eldest son's shoulder as she sighs contently. Even Tenzin smiles slowly, nodding his head in agreement. Katara stops walking, turning to face all three of her children.

"Your father would be so proud to see all that you've accomplished," she says with a warm smile, "he would be so happy for each of you. I know that I am. You may be all grown up now, but you will always be my little babies." Tears well in her eyes as she looks to each of them with a genuine smile.

"Mom?" Kya asks, her voice worried, "is something wrong?"

"Nothing's wrong," Katara says, though her voice does quiver. She reaches up and wraps her arms around her children with a long embrace. They stay together, holding each other tightly as the sun dips behind the mountain side. Katara closes her eyes, memorizing the feeling of her children in her arms, locking it away in her mind forever. The spiritual energy shifts, and she can feel Aang with her, gazing on proudly from wherever he may be now.
"Well kids, I know that I've not always been around that often," Toph begins with a rough cough, "but I sure hope that the time I've spent with you over the past five years can help make up for my absence. I know it's not nearly enough, but I hope it's something."

"Of course, Mom," Suyin says gently, standing up and cocking a brow, "but why are you bringing that up now?"

"No reason, kid, just… I just needed to say it," her mother replies, her tone guarded. Lin's stomach curls again as she feels strange. She cocks her head at her mother, who only manages to give her a somewhat knowing look. The younger Beifong remains oblivious to their eye-contact, as she's now wrapping Toph in a giant embrace. Lin looks on, misty eyed as Toph dips her head in a faint nod.

"Grandma?" Wing asks, standing with his brother. Toph lets go of her daughter to beam at her grandchildren. Bataar Jr, Wing and Wei, and Huan all stand and come to surround her in a giant group hug. Toph chuckles as she nuzzles in their loving and supportive embrace.

"You're best damn grandkids anyone could ask for. Better than those air-babies," she jokes in a low rasp. Bataar Sr comes to stand next to his wife, holding her tight to his side as he gazes happily at his children and his mother-in-law.

"Go on, you goof," Toph grumbles, voice muffled by Huan's shirt, "say it, then."

"I love you," Bataar Sr says with a smirk, "… Mom."

Lin's chest swells with pride and anxiety as she watches Toph's eyes well with tears. She hides her face in Huan's coat, sighing deeply as she removes herself from their group hug. Bataar Sr senses the need for the earth-bender to have some time alone with her daughters, so he quickly ushers his sons out of the room and towards their rooms. Suyin and Lin stand, side by side as they gaze at their mother, older and wiser than ever.

"Well," Toph says warmly, "I… I just want you to know I'm proud of both of you."
"Mom, what's wrong?" Suyin asks, but Lin somehow knows. She can't explain it, but she knows what's wrong. Or maybe that it's Korra's spirit within her that knows what's wrong. Lin shakes her head as Toph steps forward, cupping her youngest's cheek with a gentle, open palm.

"Nothing," Toph whispers gently, her voice slightly shaky, "I… I just wanted to tell you how much I love you, and how happy I am to have been able to have the best kids a woman could ask for. I… I'm sorry I left all that time ago."

"It's okay," Lin says, intervening as she steps forward. Toph looks between them, and though she can't see them, she knows she will soon. She grins as she grabs them both and hugs them. The younger Beifongs are surprised, but after a few moments, they give into the embrace. They spend about a minute just holding each other before Toph pulls away to give a nod to both of them.

"Thank you, girls," she says with a slightly bittersweet tone, "for all you've done. I've never been happier… or at peace."

"Chief?"

Lin looks up to see Kya walk into her room, a guarded expression upon her face. Lin nods for her to come in, her gaze softening when she sees how distraught the water-bender looks. She can only assume that she must have experienced something similar with her own mother. The minute Kya steps foot into the room, Lin is there for her, wrapping her arms around the older woman. Kya starts to cry softly into her shoulder, sensing the familiar distress from Lin. Something between them clicks, and suddenly, sadness hits her harder than a bullet train.

"I don't want to see her go," Kya whimpers, clutching onto Lin harder. The metal-bender's stomach clenches as she nods, biting her lip against the fabric of Kya's water tribe garb. She only grips the older woman flush to her front, peppering soothing kisses to her neck as she closes her eyes.

"No one does, sweetheart," Lin says with a distant tone, "but… but I think it's time. It's their time."

"I… I know," Kya sighs, her head growing heavy with fatigue and sadness.

At first, Lin doesn't know what she's doing. She knows that she's not exactly following her original
plan, but seeing Kya like this - so bare and vulnerable - ignites a spark in her heart. The younger woman gently removes herself from their hug as she takes a minute to just take in the sight of her lover. Tears spring from her eyes as she cups Kya's face in her palms, leaning forward to place a passionate, but tender kiss upon the older woman's lips. Kya gasps but Lin swallows the sound as she cradles her further into her arms, intensifying the kiss with a dominant swipe of her tongue.

"I love you," Lin whispers between kisses, "I love you so much, Kya."

"Lin…," Kya trails off as Lin's kisses trail down her neck. She clutches the younger woman by the elbows to hold the both of them steady. Lin pulls away softly to gaze once more at her girlfriend and forever girl with a smile. Something twists in her stomach again, but this time, it's a good feeling. The metal-bender knows that this is it, and though it may not be what she imagined or dreamt of, this is… this is perfect in its own broken kind of way.

Reaching into her uniform pocket, Lin takes a deep breath. She pushes away and doubt and fear when she sets her jaw and nods. Kya doesn't know how to react as she watches Lin drop down to one knee, plucking a small navy blue box from her pocket. Her hands fly to cup her mouth as tears drip down her cheeks. Lin forces herself to stay strong as she takes a deep breath, opening the case to reveal a half green, half blue pendant sitting atop a silver ring. Lin swallows the remainder of her nerves before she clears her throat, slightly distracted by Kya's hiccupsed gasps.

"This isn't how I'd originally intended to do it. I was originally planning something more romantic, like maybe a dinner or a vacation or something, but now, when I look at you, I know I can't wait any longer. I wanted it to be perfect, because you're perfect, Kya. You're stubborn, loving, opinionated, full of life and love, and you give me hope everyday. It's been nearly most of our lives in which we've danced this dance, but baby, I want to dance with you until our knees grow weak and we can't stand straight. I want to spend the rest of my life with you, and… and even if that isn't that long, I still want whatever time we've got left, Kya. I love you. I'm in love with you, and I doubt I'll ever stop being in love with you. You complete me."

Lin's voice doesn't stumble as she speaks the words, her eyes lit wit determination and sincerity. Kya's crying harder now, but her tears are of happiness, not sorrow. Her eyes keep flashing back from the ring to Lin, and then back to the ring again. The metal-bender gets lost in those beautiful cerulean eyes, but her knees soon remind her that she's not as young as she'd once been. Grunting, Lin shifts some of her weight upon her foot before she nods back at her girlfriend, still somewhat nervous, but more confident than she'd been before.

"Kya," she asks softly, "marry me."

It's not a question, but a pleading cry. Kya nods and flings herself downwards, pulling Lin's body under her own in a crushing hug. Lin's face meets hers in a searing kiss, their arms wrapping
around each other as they embrace upon the floor, uncaring that there are other people in the adjacent rooms. Kya and Lin only see themselves, their new lives as fiancées, and each other's forever girls. The water-bender squeezes Lin's free hand, indicating for her to put the ring on. Lin nods and quickly slides the metal upon her third finger, crying once more with the overwhelming love she feels for her lover. As Lin pulls her to stand and then wraps her in a hug, she looks up to see Toph in the doorway, smiling knowingly at her daughter. Lin stops breathing for a moment as she watches Toph's smile grow wider before it turns into a teasing smirk.

'I told you so', she mouthes, winking before she turns away. Lin smiles and ducks her head into Kya's shoulder, feeling like a school girl. Her fiancée is murmuring sweet nothings into her ear, and despite watching her mother walk away for maybe the last time of their life, she can't help but feel like the luckiest woman in the world. Her stomach flips, as if Korra's spirit is agreeing with her. Lin smiles harder, feeling a few tears leak out with joy.

You did, she thinks as Kya's mouth meets hers in a sweet kiss, you always do, Mom.

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"Man, I haven't been here in forever."

Jinora shakes her head at Kai as they pull up to the restaurant. Her siblings and Asami get out of the car, straightening their clothes. Kai locks up their Satomobile before extending an arm for Jinora. The young air-bender blushes and takes it gingerly, grinning ear to ear as Kai pecks her cheek. Asami glances away as her heart wrenches inside her chest. She's not jealous of their relationship per say, but that their relationship is so real. Jinora senses her discomfort and immediately puts a bit of space between herself and her boyfriend. They take the lead as they enter the restaurant. It doesn't take long for them to spot Bolin and Opal at a wide, round table. Wu and Mako sit across from them, the former prince nestled in the crook of the fire-bender's arm.

"Asami! J and K! Meelo! Ikki!" Bolin nearly screams as he stands up out of excitement. Kai rushes forward and the two 'brothers' meet in a crushing hug. Bolin lifts the younger man off the ground with a wide grin before setting him down. He gives him a once-over, chuckling as he claps his shoulder.

"You've grown taller, haven't you?" Bolin asks, to which Kai nods. The earth-bender only smiles harder as Kai steps out of the way to allow Ikki, Meelo, and Jinora to hug him. He's more gentle with the women, and when he gets to Asami, his grasp is protective but comforting.

"I've missed you," Bolin murmurs, looping his arms around the taller woman's shoulders. Asami
sighs into his neck as she nods, overcome with emotion. Bolin rubs her back and hums soothingly, quelling a few of her nerves with the soft noise. After sometime, they pull apart and walk over to the table.

"It's so nice to see you, Asami," Opal greets her warmly, though she seems a bit hesitant. "Congratulations on that award. You deserve it."

"Yeah, we totally knew you were gonna kick butt and win it again," Bolin adds as he plops down next to Opal. He takes a sip from his glass as he nods over to the heiress with a knowing grin. "We're all beginning to think that you're gonna be better than Varrick in a few years."

"Thanks," Asami says, offering a faint smile as she sits down politely. Mako watches on from across the table with concern in his eyes, but she gives him a nod, letting him know that she's okay. The man only smiles gently and squeezes Wu's shoulder as the former prince begins talking about their recent work in the Earth Kingdom with the new government they'd been implementing in the past five years.

Asami doesn't speak much, bare for adding a few commentaries and words of support to her friend as he tells them of how much good they've done to the citizens that had once been under the tyrannical rule of Kuvira. The heiress notices Opals discomfort whenever that retched woman's name is brought up, but she deduces it to past memories. Hell, Asami thinks, even she still feels uncomfortable whenever the former 'Great Uniter' is mentioned. The night goes on, and as more fire-water is dosed out to those who are legal to drink, the night becomes even more loose. For a moment, with the alcohol in her glass and the food in her stomach, Asami can attempt to tuck away that constant, festering pain. She laughs at a few of Bolin's awful jokes and chimes in with Wu's teasing ribbing of his boyfriend. It almost seems like tonight is going to be a good night.

Almost.

"Hey, hey!" Kai slurs, tapping the table to draw the people away from one of Bolin's stories and back to him. Kai, a little giddy from the alcohol, wraps his arm around Jinora and grins. The eldest of Tenzin's children is no doubt inebriated as well, as she nods at her boyfriend with a goofy grin.

"What's up, bro!" Bolin asks, smiling harder as he watches Kai and Jinora gush over each other. Kai forgets what he's about to say for a second, causing everyone to laugh, but then he quickly remembers. He leans forward, eyes growing wide with excitement.

"Did you guys hear the news?" He asks, looking specifically to Mako and Wu, and then to Asami and Bolin. The four of them shake their head, confused as to what the young air-bender is talking
about. Kai grins and laughs as he takes another long drink from his beer.

"They found the new Avatar," he says with a hiccup, "we got told when we stopped by Omashu."

The table turns silent, and at first Kai doesn't understand. It's only when he glances to Asami, that his drunken state vanishes. The heiress looks crushed as she stares down at her drink in silence. Tears begin to sting at her eyes, but she fights them off. Kai grinds his teeth in embarrassment and shame as he leans forward, trying to salvage the situation. He parts his mouth to speak, but at first no words come out. He didn't know the first thing about comforting someone, especially someone as powerful and as hurt over Korra's death as Asami.

"I… I'm sorry," he manages to say through a croak, "I thought you knew."

Asami doesn't respond.

Instead, the heiress stands up and politely excuses herself from the table. Jinora's heart plummets as the spirit energy shifts in the room. She glances up to see Korra staring at her from across the wide space. Her blue frame sits in one of the empty booths, eyes trained on the retreating figure of her love. It takes sometime before the spirit can look in her direction mournfully. Jinora hears Korra's voice whisper in her ear, words of regret and sadness. The once friendly and amicable mood soon dissipates as she bows her head with sorrow before standing. She goes to follow Asami, but another voice clears its throat, drawing her attention away from the closing door down the hall.

"I'll go talk to her," Opal says, nodding her head with a knowing expression. "You guys wait here, okay?"

The group nods and Jinora sits back down. Opal excuses herself and goes to follow Asami out the doors. Jinora glances back over to the booth, but it's empty now, just like the sensation of her presence in her heart. Kai has his eyes glued to the mahogany table, and Meelo and Ikki are talking amongst themselves. Wu and Mako hold each other loosely, while Bolin looks on towards the door, to where his girlfriend had just disappeared. Concern flares in his chest, and not just for Asami, but for the air-bender as well. Something had been off about her all day, and he can't help but be worried.

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"Asami, wait!" Opal screams after her fleeing friend. "Just let me talk to you for a second."
"I don't want to talk," Asami growls back as Opal catches up to her. Tears flow down her cheeks as she glares at her friend. Opal is taken aback by the sheer pain and hurt in those glossy emerald eyes, but she doesn't let it deter her from her mission.

"I know you don't want to, but it's better if you do. We know that this is rough, but it was bound to happen, Asami. You couldn't have kid yourself for that long. They would've found him sooner or later," Opal says, and though her tone isn't exactly rude, Asami can't help but feel hurt by her words… by the truth. Opal sighs as she places a hand upon Asami's shoulders, squeezing gently as she looks to the ground.

"Listen, I know that you're still grieving over Korra. We all are, in our own ways. Her loss was more to you than to anyone else," Opal begins to say, wincing when she sees Asami's glare harden, "but Korra would want you to be happy, Asami. Korra wouldn't want to see you like this."

"Telling me that won't make me stop feeling like shit, Opal," Asami snarls, shoving her hand off her shoulder. Opal grimaces and mentally kicks herself for being so upfront. Asami doesn't need to be told something she already knows. Sighing, the bender simply bows her head, defeated.

"I… I know. I just don't know how to help you. I hate seeing you like this, too. You were so full of life and positive and… well…, alive," Opal says in a bare whisper, her throat closing up from emotion. Asami crosses her arms but doesn't say anything, allowing Opal to continue.

"Okay, this is going to sound crazy, and you may think that I'm overstepping my line, but I don't care," Opal says, her voice firm as she juts her head up to stare directly at a furious, but equally bewildered Asami. The heiress doesn't show any kind of reluctance to the air-bender, so the younger woman takes it as a sign to continue. She takes a deep breath, pushing down the nerves that float around in her stomach like a pack of buzzard-wasps.

"I think you should see Kuvira," Opal says, watching Asami's eyes widen, "… I-I know she's writing you because I saw her today."

"What makes you think that I want to see that bitch?" She asks, her lips curling into a cruel snarl. Opal has to muster up all the strength in her body to keep herself from quivering under the smouldering gaze of the inventor. She stays stoic as she swallows harshly.

"Because…," she says, trailing off lightly, "it… it might help."
"She took everything away from me!" Asami roars, shoving Opal back slightly. "She took my company, my city, my father... she took Korra!"

"I know," Opal says strongly, standing straight again, "but maybe she can give some of that back to you." Asami pauses, her eyes narrowing as she watches Opal step closer to her, the younger woman reaching out to hold her at the rough edges over her shoulders.

"And how," Asami whispers in a low, sharp voice, "do you think she could possibly do that?"

"I don't know, 'Sams, but I think she can... somehow," the air-bender replies, looking away. Asami is reminded of her previous conversation with Mako back at the office, but she doesn't want to accept his words or her Opal's own. She puts some space between the two of them and begins to pace. Opal watches as the heiress seethes in silence, her fists clenched tightly and her brows furrowed in fury and frustration. She takes a deep breath and sighs.

"I think you should go, Asami," she tells her friend, who stops pacing, "because you need to let go."

"I can't," Asami whimpers, her anger replacing itself with sorrow. "I can't let her go, Opal."

The younger woman's eyes mist as she softens her gaze. Reaching forwards, she pulls Asami's shaking body flush to her own. She hugs the taller woman with a fierce embrace, listening to her heart break with each pained repetition of 'I can't let her go' that is birthed from Asami's broken voice. Eventually, the Beifong manages to hear the phrase being tapered off into silence, though the meaning of the words still lingers in the cold dusk air. Opal licks her chapped lips, rubbing Asami's back in light circles until the older woman's sobs soon fall away into gentle hiccuped cries.

"You don't have to let her go," Opal says softly, "you just have to let go of what happened. Enough hiding, Asami."

"What do you suppose I do? I... I'm so scared, Opal," Asami whimpers, clutching her friend tighter. Opal only sighs and closes her eyes.

"I know, sweetheart, but you know what you need to do," she murmurs softly, squeezing the slender frame in her arms. Asami sniffs as she cries once more into Opal's strong shoulder. Her eyes are close to sealing shut with how puffy and sore they've become.
"I-I don’t… I d-don't know what you're talking about," she cries, shaking her head. Opal opens her eyes and pulls back from the hug to stare at her best friend with an understanding gaze. Asami's eyes widen as she watches Opal's mouth part and her expression grow serious.

"Asami," Opal says strongly, "you need to face the truth."

Now you still speak of day old hate.

Though, your whole world has gone up into flames.

And isn't it great, to find that you're really worth nothing?

And how safe it is to feel safe.

"Well, here we are."

Toph grunts in acknowledgement as Katara bends the water to a stop upon their boat. The two women simply sit in the small dingy in silence for a few minutes. One is staring at the statue of Aang and Korra standing majestically, and the other is looking directly ahead. Katara lays a hand upon her friend's shoulder, helping her up and out of the bed. Katara grabs the small backpack from the back of the boat and sighs, following Toph as they slowly stumble up to the outlook at the top of the monument. The elderly women sit down upon the bench, sighing as their bones sink into a relaxed state.

"Just you and me, huh," Toph murmurs, folding her hands in her lap as Katara pulls out a few items for them. Toph takes a small cup of noodles and draws the steaming bowl to her lips, smiling
faintly at the sensation of the steam against her skin.

"Zuko and Aang must be having a blast up there," Katara muses, her smile wide and elated as she leans back into the bench, clutching her cup closer to her. Toph grunts a small chuckle as she takes a bite of her noodles, savouring the taste.

"For two people who started off hating each other, they sure did get along well," Toph says, setting her cup down upon her lap. A slight breeze blows through her grey hair, causing the old woman to sigh contently. Katara smiles over at her friend, misty-eyed as she takes in her presence.

"I guess you could say the same about us?" Katara asks, nudging Toph lightly. The earth-bender nods and chuckles again, shrugging her shoulders in a noncommittal fashion. Katara smiles as she looks up at the night sky. Clouds gloom over Republic City, but they seem to be passing towards the mountains. The fresh air and the smell of the ocean reminds her of the Southern Water Tribe.

"So… tonight?" Toph asks, speaking the words both of them had been silent on for the duration of their trip. Katara takes a deep breath and reaches inside her backpack, pulling out another item. Her fingers run over the material, her fingers tracing the cracks and paint chips.

"Tonight," she breathes, almost bittersweetly. Toph simply nods, leaning back into the bench as well.

"It'll be good to see them again," the earth-bender says with a faint smile, "I've missed all of them for too long."

Katara's eyes pool with tears as she holds up the object to her chest, pulling it into her side as she allows a few drops of moisture to roll down her cheeks. The aged water-bender closes her eyes and remembers the fond memories of her childhood spent with her brother in the Southern Water Tribe, before the Fire Nation had attacked. Sokka had grown up so much during their adventures, to mature into a strong, dependable man. There had been not a single day that had gone by since his death in which the healer had not missed her sibling.

As she looks to the boomerang, Katara smiles because she knows she'll see him soon.
I found Korra.

The words stare at her from the page and repeat over and over in her head as Asami paces in her office, a glass of scotch delicately balanced in a shaking palm. She drinks like she's stranded in the desert and in need of replenishment. The mere thought of a desert transports her back to the time in which she'd been held captive by the Earth Queen's forces after trying to evade the Red Lotus. Asami furrows her brow in frustration as she realizes that she couldn't save the Avatar then, and she sure as hell can't save her now. Asami draws a long sip from the burning liquid before shaking her head.

Kuvira's most recent letter remains open upon her desk, but the heiress wants nothing more than to burn it after all she'd read. How could that woman make a joke like that? Meditating to the Spirit World? Finding Korra? Even for Kuvira, that's low. There's no way that it can be possible. She refuses to believe it. This woman had taken not only her father, but the love of her fucking life. She wished for Kuvira to feel the same burning agony she feels every single waking moment of her life. It's not fair that she just sat in a cell while she rebuilt the world from her bare, cracked hands. It's not fair that she lived to see another day while Korra, sweet and gentle Korra, had to die as a martyr for her - for all of them.


Trust her, Asami. She can help you.

"Get out of my head!" Asami screams, violently chucking the empty glass against the wall. She clutches her hair as she begins to sob in hard, uneven breaths. Tears stain her cheeks as she curls into herself, feeling nauseas and lightheaded.

Asami...

"No!" Asami howls, jerking her head up to face her body-length mirror, only to see Korra's reflection staring back at her. Asami curls one of her hands into a fist and launches a powerful punch straight through, causing the glass to shatter instantly. She reels her hand back to see that shards of the mirror are stuck in her knuckles and palms, but the inventor can't feel the pain, nor could she care less.

"You made a fucking promise, Korra!" Asami screams, clenching her hand into a fist again. "You told me you wouldn't give up on me or leave me. You said that you'd always be there for me, but where are you now?! Where are you, Korra? I've been calling out to you for so long. I... I just want you back." The inventor sobs again, falling to her knees upon the hardwood floor. She ignores the
dull ache in her knee caps as she shakes her head.

"Why…, why did you have to go?" She whispers the question like she's trying to keep a secret. "Why did you leave me alone?"

*You're never alone, Asami.*

"Shut up!" Asami shouts again, jerking her head up as angry tears flow down her cheeks. She lets out another scream, clutching her head as the whispers inside her mind are clouding her every judgment. A pit swells in her stomach, and her sobs wrack through her frame harder than before. She curls forward, landing upon her forearms and pressing her face against the floor for a few moments. It takes a few moments, but she finally pulls herself up to a sitting position, slumped against the wall in defeat. It's quiet, but only for a second before that familiar voice returns.

*I'm here, Asami.*

"Where?" Asami growls, wiping the tears from her burning cheeks. "Where the fuck are you? I can't… I can't see you." The tension in the room grows thicker. The pit in her chest grows larger with another emotion she can't recognize. The sorrow returns with her frustration. She just wants Korra.

"You don't get to disappear and then come back like this, Korra," she seethes, although her tone isn't entirely angered. "You don't get to just fucking die and then haunt me for the rest of my fucking life. I have never hurt you like this, Korra. I have never wanted you to feel like death. I… I hate you."

It's silent again, but this time, it's not heavy with tension.

All Asami can hear is the slow dripping of blood upon her floorboards and her unsteady breathing. The heiress takes a few minutes to sit in the tranquility before she uncurls and stands straight. Her eyes glaze with tears immediately, her lips curling down from the snarl and into a quivering line. She whips her head around frantically, a new fear washing over her. Her hand's starting to hurt now, the pain reminding her of the time she'd nearly been burned at the hand of a fire-bender the day her mother died protecting her. Asami gasps and clutches at her heart; it feels… empty.

*Korra is gone.*
"No," Asami breathes, realizing with a sharp gasp that a haunting Korra is better than no Korra at all. She used to feel something, but she'd always thought that it was some strange breeze that followed her constantly. Little did she know that it had been Korra all along, standing beside her even though she'd not been visible. Korra had been right, she thinks sadly as she remembers their conversation at the gazebo, she's always been here.

"I'm sorry," Asami cries as she collapses to the ground, "I'm sorry, Korra. Please… come back."

There's no response, no voice murmured in the darkness. The air is stale and thick, only further suffocating her in her own guilt. Asami slowly draws her hands up to her face. The blood smears upon her lips and cheeks, the copper tang throwing her back to when Asami had kissed Korra's lifeless lips five years ago. The inventor shakes her head, her tears now meshing with the crimson liquid as her sides quake with the sheer force of her sobs. Her heart aches with longing, with regret, and most of all, with anger. It's a frustration that's directed towards herself mostly, but she can't fight her emotions.

"Korra," she whimpers her love's name again, "please."

Asami tries to ignore the growing pit in her stomach, but she knows Korra isn't going to answer.

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"Are you scared?" Toph asks, her voice gravelly as she feels the cold begin to sweep over her body. Katara doesn't break her stare from the boomerang as she shakes her head. Toph doesn't expect an answer, but she can feel that Katara doesn't feel fear.

"I've said my goodbyes to my children," she replies, happiness and slight sorrow pulling at her heart. "I think Kya knows, but not Tenzin or Bumi."

"I think Lin understood my last goodbye, but not Su," Toph murmurs, shivering slightly. "That aside, it makes me happy that they have each other. I was worried for Lin, but she seems to have found fondness and love with Kya. I'm glad she's finally got someone. Took damn near long enough."

"I never would have imagined our kids would date each other," Katara chuckles, glancing over at her friend. Toph makes a strange, playful frown.
"Spirits, I hope Lin sticks to Kya," Toph grumbles, "I don't know how I'd be able to handle if she ended up dating Bumi, too." Katara laughs and shakes her head as she gazes back out over to the ocean. Her smile grows wider as she feels a familiar draft in the wind. Even Toph looks somewhat excited.

"So… this is it, huh?" Toph asks, her fingers twitching with anticipation as she closes her eyes. Katara nods, looking to the sky once more, enjoying the sight of the stars dancing and sparkling above her. She places the boomerang on her lap and fingers the betrothal necklace around her collar.

"It's time," she murmurs, glancing back to Toph with a slight smirk, "do you think I look good?" She reaches out and places one of her hands upon her friend's own. Toph takes a deep breath, her shoulders shaking lightly before she allows the nerves to pass and for peace to come. The earth-bender turns to face her, opening her eyes and gazing lovingly at her friend with a warm smile.

"Yeah," Toph says gently, her voice nostalgic and thick with memories, "I think you look perfect."

"I'll see you on the other side, friend," Katara says, squeezing her hand softly. Toph just nods and allows her body to slink against the bench. Her bones stop aching and her muscles loosen with relaxation. The breeze drifts over her again. Katara simply watches, holding her friend's hand, until she sees a faint smile paint itself upon the earth-bender's worn lips. Toph closes her eyes for the last time, allowing the comfort of darkness to embrace her as she makes one last journey. The night air is calm and soothing, complimented by the small chirping of crickets nearby.

Then, after a few moments, Toph is still.

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Asami finishes wrapping a cloth around her damaged fist as she takes a seat upon her office chair. As soon as the job is done, she extends her good hand and pulls at the bottle upon her desk, swinging it to her lips. She downs a few sips of the bitter, warm liquid before she sets it down softly. After having cried for a solid thirty minutes, she had gotten up and decided to deal with her hand. The woman sits, slumped and defeated as she gazes at the rain slowly pounding outside her window. Her tongue licks over her chapped lips as she sighs deeply. Her eyes gaze at the statue of Korra and Aang on Avatar Island. For a second, she thinks she sees two figures sitting underneath the statues' feet, but decides alcohol has taken its toll upon her mind.

Asami turns away from the window and looks back to her desk. It takes a few minutes, but eventually her eyes wander down to the locked drawer. Her good hand releases its grip from the
bottle and reaches up to trace the thin chain around her neck. She swallows thickly as she follows
the platinum down to the curve of her cleavage, to where the key rests. She rolls the smooth metal
over and under her fingers, her anxiety starting to brew like a nest of buzzard-wasps trying to
escape. Her hands begin to shake, but she bites her lip as she mentally steadies them. Her eyes stay
fixed on the keyhole in the drawer, but she remains frozen, simply lost in her own thoughts and
grief.

Finally, Asami moves.

It's a slow approach, but slowly she pulls the chain from around her neck to over her head. She
holds the key delicately, gazing at the blue finish upon the ornate design of the metal. She'd
designed it after the message in Korra's letter. Her fingers trace over the small red gears at the base
of the key, feeling her breath catch in her throat as she touches the smooth metal. Shaking her head
lightly, the woman clears her thoughts and brings the metal piece towards the entrance of the lock.
She inserts it, twists lightly, listens to the soft click, and then pulls the drawer open hesitantly.

"Korra," she whispers softly as she stares down at the letter. She's hesitant at first, as she looks to
the parchment, now yellowed and ashen with dust from age. It almost seems like it had been
abandoned, but Asami knows that would never be the case. This is all she has left of her love. Her
fingers shake like they'd done back at the South Pole when she opened it for the first time. Asami
takes a deep breath as she reaches forward and lightly plucks at the envelope. With gentle caress,
she tugs the letter free of its casing, holding the contents delicately in her hand.

In silence, Asami gazes at the words Korra never had the courage to say.

This is the first time she's read the letter Korra had written her since the day Senna had given it to
her. She'd read it five times the night of her friend's funeral, and each time she sobbed just as hard
as the first one. Her fingers shakily reach down and touch the writing that is beginning to fade. Her
breath catches in her throat as she struggles to breathe through her pain. The pads of her slender
digits graze over a particular bump, and Asami knows that this smudge, this faint scratch upon the
withered paper, is where she loses herself every time.

Asami glances up to the photo of her and Korra on her desk. Her eyes mist with tears as she sets the
letter down gently, as if it were some ancient scroll. Korra's words are invaluable to her, and even
if Future Industries burned to the ground, she'd only ever come in to save this one item. She'd made
photocopies, five to be exact, but she treasures the original more than she does her own fortune.
Asami sighs as she glances to her bandaged hand, wincing as she feels the slight throb and heat
coursing from underneath.

"Korra," she murmurs slowly, gazing back to the letter, "I don't know if I can do what you ask."
There's only more silence, and Asami hangs her head. A million different thoughts are whirring through her head, but she can only hear one ringing clear in her mind. She remembers how she'd only gotten a chance to forgive her father mere days before his death. She doesn't care for Kuvira, but she cares about Korra. In fact, all she cares about is Korra. She could lose her job, her wealth, her life for Spirit's sake, and still all she'd pine for is the Avatar. Asami takes a deep breath as she wipes her tears with her good hand before she stands up, reaching for her phone. Her fingers begin dialling for her, leaving the woman numb as the tone sounds. It takes a few moments before a gruff, sleepy voice picks up the phone.

"Err, hello?"

"Mako," Asami says softly, her voice still shaky, "I need a ride."

"It's… two thirty," he mutters, not with a tone of distaste but of confusion, "where do you need to go at this hour?"

"The prison," she tells him in a firm voice. "I have some unfinished business to deal with."

"Are you sure that's a good idea, Asami?" Mako replies in a concerned tone.

Asami stays silent for a moment, simply gazing out the window and to the statue of Korra. For a second, she sees her friend staring back at her, blue eyes lit with joy and freedom. Her heartstrings tug and snap, but she feels that familiar breeze. A small smile tugs at her lips, and however bittersweet and fucked up the sensation may be, she still appreciates it. She feels Korra there again, and she knows that as much as she fears seeing Kuvira's face again, she also knows that there is no other way to bring an end to her constant agony. Asami takes a deep breath, glancing back down to the letter.

"I'm sure," she says, "I need to do this… now."

/  

"Goodbye, old friend," Katara says gently, nodding to the motionless body of Toph. A breeze flows through her hair, gently playing with the greyed locks upon her scalp with a soothing warmth. Katara senses a shift in the aura of the air, her heart swelling with bittersweet happiness.
"It's a great night, isn't it, my dear?" Katara says as she turns to face the empty night sky. A calm whistle from the wind answers her back and the experienced water-bender hums gratefully. Her shoulders relax as she breathes deep, slow breaths.

"I've waited too many years for this," the elderly woman murmurs, "but my Spirits, was it a good wait."

Grey-blue eyes peer out at the calm waves, watching as the rainclouds begin to disappear from Republic City and leave for the snowcapped mountains. Katara sighs, enjoying the silence and tranquility as she takes to enjoying what's left of her life in material world. Her body no longer cracks or aches with pain or old age. She feels young again for a few moments. It's a wonderful feeling, to have such ease again.

"Our children have grown up to be quite the amazing people," Katara speaks again, her voice proud and jovial as her eyes begin to mist with happy tears. "Kya and Lin will be married soon, Tenzin has finally mastered the art of connecting with the Spirits, and Bumi is an air-bending master. I'm sure Korra has told you all of their antics and the multitude of stories that have passed since your departure. She's done quite a lot for Republic City, dear."

Another faint breeze responds back, causing the water-bender to smile harder.

"I'm ready, Aang," she whispers to the wind as she stares up at the sky, "I'm ready for our next adventure."

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"Earth-Bitch, wake the fuck up. You have a visitor."

Kuvira is not asleep, but simply staring outside her window to the bay of Republic City. Her body turns slightly to see the guard open her door gruffly, not happy at all to have been woken up at such a late hour. She doesn't need to ask who it is, because no one else would show up at this time. Kuvira stands, leaning to one side roughly as she nods at the guard to let her visitor through. There's a bit of commotion on the outside, but soon enough, heels clatter down the hall and in the direction of her cell. Kuvira watches as Asami enters the room, her face red and her eyes slightly glossy.
"Take me to her," she orders sternly, her voice cold and steady. She doesn't care for pleasantries as she growls, "take me to Korra, Kuvira."

They stare at each other in silence before Kuvira motions to the bed. At first, the inventor is confused and somewhat apprehensive because the former guard hasn't asked her why. It's almost as if Kuvira understands. Asami wants to say that she can't possibly understand, but then she remembers who had been in the Spirit World with Korra during her final moments, and the heiress thinks, maybe she does. Asami turns and promptly tells the guard to not disturb him, and he simply mutters a 'whatever you want', before he shuts the door in a rough slam, leaving them alone. Asami hesitates a moment, but Kuvira nods again from the bed, causing the younger woman to take her place on the bed, crossing her legs like the metal-bender has done.

"Close your eyes and relax," Kuvira murmurs as her own eyes close.

Asami takes a deep breath and copies her moves, drawing her mind to a blank. Her body twinges and she allows the darkness to succumb her. Painful memories and flashbacks, all the way from her mother's death to Korra's last goodbye burst through her like a spray of bullets, but Kuvira is there, murmuring for her to fight the pain and continue to relax her body. It's hard and each time she feels a particularly sensitive remembrance flash through, she wants to cave in and cry. She wants to give up, but something is there, pushing her. Something is providing her relief from the constant ache.

Finally, there is nothing but darkness and silence.

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Dawn is beginning to creep up behind the mountain peaks, bathing the world in beautiful pale orange and pink hues.

"It's beautiful, Aang," Katara whispers, glancing back to the motionless Toph still seated beside her.

Katara smiles and turns away, her eyes bearing upon the calming ocean once more. Her hand never leaves Toph's as she closes her eyes, too. At last, her body grows limp with relief. Her senses are keen, listening to every small sound and crackle. The wind blows through her hair and for a moment, Katara feels something that hasn't been felt in nearly four decades. The smile on her face grows as she feels herself becoming lighter than air itself. Her soul untangles from her body as freedom of pain and loss cascade over her. Her heart beats strong and pure for the first time in too long.
Katara lets out one last soft exhale before she opens her eyes. Light flickers in, casting out the scene of the ocean and city before her. It's blinding, but the water-bender doesn't tear her eyes away. It's a comforting sense of blindness, something that Toph had spoken about just after Aang had defeated Ozai and they'd been sitting around the table at their cabin in Ba Sing Se. Katara sighs comfortably as she allows the final part of her mind and spirit to leave its physical tether, and to be absorbed by the energy of the Earth and sky. She feels a hand place itself upon her cheek, the pad of a thumb grazing her gaunt bone in soothing, familiar strokes. Her chest stops rising and falling because there is no longer a need to sustain her body.

Tears gather in her greying eyes as the light parts and his face is all she sees.

Asami feels a slight breeze and furrows her brows. She's not outside, and the windows in Kuvira's cell barely allow for any kind of ventilation. The woman sucks in a deep, nervous breath as she opens her eyes. There's a bright purple light that blinds her for a few moments, but then the sight before her clears. She's in a beautiful meadow, surrounded by violet fire-lilies and a starry sky. Her breath catches in her throat in awe; she's never seen such a beautiful place in her life. All around her, she sees faint spirits floating and keeping to themselves, all while taking the time to look at her.

"Where…?" Her voice trails off; she already knows the answer.

"She's been waiting for you," Kuvira's voice sounds, causing Asami to whip her head around. The inventor glances over to see Kuvira, free from any injury or blemish, standing before in her in an ivory tunic and green steampunk jodhpurs. The broken former captain of the guard has lost her desolate expression, and instead, she looks completely at peace. A small smile even tugs at the metal-bender's lips as she nods at the heiress.

"This way," she murmurs, turning around to lead them to a small cave.

Asami can see a flame flickering inside, and a shadow moving around. Her heart starts to beat faster, the sky turning lighter and a brighter pink. The inventor is confused for a moment, but she soon turns her head back to the cave, only to gasp at the sight before her eyes.

Her heart stops beating and air ceases to exist as she sees her face.
"Aang," Katara whispers warmly, her final word in the material world.

Aang's spirit grins as he reaches down and holds her hand, squeezing it lightly.

"Korra," Asami says in disbelief, her heart exploding in her chest.

Korra's smile is radiant and beaming, and for the first time in five years, Asami feels alive.

"Hello, sweetheart."

The things we do just to stay alive.

The things we do just to stay alive.

The things we do to just keep ourselves alive.
I hope you guys enjoyed that small ATLA reference in Toph and Katara's final section :) Also, thanks for bearing with me on this extremely long chapter. I promise the next one will be shorter - I swear!
The Start of Something New

Chapter Summary

Sometimes in blind desperation, new wounds open while trying to close old ones.

Chapter Notes

Sorry this took so long. Each book took roughly three to four days to complete, and as you can see, it is the longest chapter thus far, lol. It's roughly 107 pages or 40k+ words in total. If you can stick through that, kudos to you :P I know I promised that last chapter would be the longest but I actually know this one is, and when you read it, you'll understand why. I just wanted to cover all my bases and I figured it would be better this way. This one is also a little more dark when it deals with emotionally abusive relationships and alcoholism. If you have triggers towards that, please be forewarned.

This also has some Kuvira/Asami, so I'm sorry if that turns you away. Korrasami is endgame, don't worry, but for this chapter, I just thought their relationship made sense. There are a few graphic scenes in this story that involve adult content, so that's a small heads up.

The song recommendations for the different books (the element definitions come from Iroh in ATLA, except for the one on life) really fit the sequences they represent (a lyric in italics per heading):

Book 1: EARTH - Not Good For Me by Hayden Calnin (listen on Soundcloud)
Book 2: FIRE - When You Break by Bear's Den
Book 3: AIR - Down to the Second by Zach Berkman
Book 4: WATER - 'Till My Heart Stops by Too Far Moon
Book 5: LIFE - Carry You Away by Us and Our Daughters

Grab a tissue box, settle down, and enjoy! :)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Book 1: EARTH
She feels like rain, crying her eyes out all the time; speak a little louder, I can help you out if you want.

Ten Years Later

Chunks of rock fly out from the mountainside, covering the expanse between the two duelists in dust.

"Is that all you've got?!" The younger voice calls out through the brown fog, a shimmer of arrogance in his voice.

"A rule of thumb, young man; cockiness will get you nowhere."

The young male, who'd been pressed up against the side of one of the rocks in the giant valley, suddenly pales as he feels the surface crumble. The boy quickly readjusts, springing backwards and hurdling more rocks in the direction of the shift. Unfortunately for him, he can't seem to target his opponent. The older voice rings out again, but the sound reverberates off all of the space, leaving the young man dazed.

"We've been training for years. You must be ready to adapt to whatever situation," he says, his voice booming off the rock walls, "use your senses, become one with the earth. You move in the same way it does. Find me."

The young boy takes a deep breath and closes his eyes before slamming his foot against the ground. He listens, feels, senses as he gets in touch with the earth. He feels the slow thrum of the earth shifting beneath him. Holding his breath, the male tracks the shifts until he sees the shadow of the man he is seeking. The male only allows a small curl of his lips in a faint smirk as he opens his eyes and clenches his fists. Through the fog, it still seems impossible to find the one he searches, but he doesn't need visibility anymore. The earth is his visor.

"As you wish," he says with a grin, "master."
Before the older man can grunt something out about the title, the ground beneath him crumbles away, leaving him suspended on a narrow strip of rock. He could easily bend the earth back, but before he has the chance to raise his fists, the boy is flying through the air and landing upon him. They tussle and spar for a few moments before the older man concedes with a grin. Sweat beats down his dusty face, matting his coal hair to his skin. The young male flashes him a smirk as they both rise and bow before each other. The older man shoves the young boy before ruffling his hair, much to the disgruntled reaction of the younger male. The older earth-bender only smiles proudly, his heart swelling.

"Not bad, An," he says as he bends the earth back into shape, "you've learned well. Your seismic abilities have improved greatly. You've really come a far way from where we started. You just need to remember to use it more often." The boy nods and wipes his brow, his grin faltering with seriousness.

"Is it enough for me to start my test?" There's a flicker of desperation in his voice that doesn't go unnoticed by the older earth-bender. An stares at him with a pleading gaze, his fingers twitching with anticipation. The older earth-bender sighs and scratches at his faint beard.

"I'll talk to Riku, but you know how he is, An," the man says, rubbing the back of his head. An rolls his eyes and pushes past him with a scowl.

"Whatever," the boy mutters, "I just don't understand why I have to stay cooped up here when I have so much training to do."

"They're not cooping you up, An. They're just worried; the… the last."

"I know, Bolin," An says as he turns, his turquoise eyes sparkling with understanding. Bolin feels his chest tighten every time he looks into those eyes, so similar to Korra's own. The earth-bender sucks in a deep breath and pushes away the memory of his friend as he steps forward, placing a hand upon An's shoulder. He gives the tender flesh underneath his palm a soft squeeze as he nods slowly.

"I'll see what I can do, okay? I'm sure the White Lotus will be able to come to some sort of agreement."

"Thanks, Bo'. I know it's hard," An says softly, hanging his head. "I've been reading up on what happened to her and… well, it's sad. But once I can get into the Avatar State, hopefully I will be able to communicate with her for guidance. I can feel sparks of her spirit, but not enough to converse."
Bolin flinches when he remembers Korra's experience with Unavaatu and the erasure of her past lives. He knows how hard it'd been for the last Avatar to make decisions without guidance of her past lives. It had broken Korra in ways unimaginable, most of which she chose to hide away. Though she'd been plenty happy before Zaheer had captured her, Bolin knows that she'd hidden quite a few of her traumas and doubts from the world in order to protect them. As he looks to An now, he begins to understand that the young boy is scared as badly as he had been when he'd been brought into the police station in the Earth Republic. He'd been wandering the streets, feeding off what he could and doing what he had to in order to survive.

"You'll get to her eventually, An," Bolin says as he wraps his arms around the boy's shoulders, leading them back to the mouth of the valley where Opal and Suyin wait for the two of them to finish their session. "And when you do, make sure you tell her hi from us, okay? We miss her a lot."

An hears the crack in Bolin's voice in the last sentence, causing the boy to flinch. The boy nods slowly, biting his lip. He lightly punches Bolin's shoulder with a playful jest, his eyes hinting with a teasing tone. The older earth-bender smiles at him but doesn't speak. His eyes well with tears as he hangs his head and sighs. The man takes a minute to recuperate and shake the memories off. He leans back up and offers An a smile before he claps his shoulder.

"Come on, let's get back before it gets dark," Bolin says, his brow lifting teasingly as he whispers, "Avatar."

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"Those shipments have made it to Ember Island, ma'am. Fire Lady Izumi sends her regards."

Asami glances up from her sketching tables at her assistant. The heiress smiles, the lines on her face crinkling as she completes the action. The woman nods at the younger female before pointing to the desk, where a stack of envelopes wait. She lifts the glasses off her face and slowly leans off the drawing table. The inventor limps lightly back towards her desk, grabbing the stack before handing them to her assistant with a warm smile.

"Thank you, Chen. Can you send these to Wu? He's in town talking to President Liu about some Earth Republic things. You can find him at the old council chambers. I'm sure he's still there, and if he isn't, leave them with the president." Asami's orders are sweet and to the point as she nods at the documents. The assistant smiles and she nods before turning away. The woman lingers at the door before remembering something.
"You've also got a visitor, Ms Sato. It seems Kuvira has returned from her work in Omashu," the woman says nicely. Asami's brows raise, but she doesn't do much besides sigh and nod, mumbling a quiet, "let her up in about five minutes. I just need to finish something."

The click of the door sounds from behind her, leaving the heiress in silence. The inventor sighs as she goes back to her main desk, clearing up all of the scattered papers before she neatly stacks them in the filing cabinet on the opposite side of the room. Asami trudges back to the window, glancing outside at Avatar Korra Park with misted eyes. She never realized that she'd built the statue so that it'd face her office, that way, no matter where she ended up, she knew she could count on Korra to watch over her.

There's still not a day that goes by in which Asami doesn't think about the Avatar. Since Kuvira had taken her to the Spirit World to see Korra, the heiress has had mixed feelings about the former 'Great Uniter'. After she'd spoken for what seemed like days (but had really been a mere fifteen minutes) with her love, Asami had managed to be convinced of rallying towards Kuvira's early release. It had surprised everyone, herself included, when the trial passed and the remainder of Kuvira's sentence was served in community service, repairing all that she'd destroyed in the Earth Republic. It had been ten years since she'd last seen the metal-bender, and also ten years since she'd last seen Korra.

"You did a great job rebuilding it, you know."

Asami freezes at the low voice, but doesn't turn just yet. The heiress takes a deep breath, bowing her head as she pinches the bridge of her nose. The whispers of Korra's voice bleed through the air, as they always did whenever she felt distress. Asami glances back up at the statue, surprised to see a flare of blue in the stone eyes. Her heart flutters, but it's gone before she can make a comment. The air feels warm and comforting, despite the person who's standing right behind her. Asami takes a deep breath and lowers her hand before she parts her mouth.

"Well, someone had to clean up after your mess." The comment is a bit more snarky than she'd intended, but Asami thinks it's perfectly suitable to still be mad at the metal-bender for taking her family away, even if she brought a piece of them back to her for a few moments.

Slowly, Asami turns around to face Kuvira. The two green-eyed women lock gazes, but Kuvira stands straight, her neck slightly exposed to show understanding. Asami doesn't move as she watches those mossy eyes flicker from the floor and then back up to her. Kuvira clears her throat nervously as she rubs the back of her neck. The younger woman sighs and steps back, motioning for the ex-convict to enter the room. Kuvira mumbles her appreciation as she takes a seat at Asami's desk. The heiress reaches into her cabinet and pulls out her assortment of liquor and spirits. She grabs at the scotch, the best friend she'd made in the fifteen years since Korra's passing.
Kuvira flinches, winding an arm around her stomach.

"Not much of a drinker? I could have sworn that I've seen you knock back some fire-water shots at Opal's farewell party," Asami snorts bitterly as she pours herself a tall glass before slumping down in her chair. Kuvira shakes her head, licking her lips as she reaches for the bottle.

"Not that, it's…, uh…," Kuvira fumbles with the cap, glancing between Asami and her glass. The heiress catches her drift as the words die upon the earth-bender's shaking lips. Setting the glass down, Asami leans forward and sighs, chuckling sadly.

"I'm not an alcoholic if that's what she's wondering," Asami replies softly, glancing back up at Kuvira. "I just drink to take the edge off, now. I swear."

"Were you before?" Kuvira asks in a gentle, yet prodding tone. Asami's brow raises inquisitively.

"Was I what?"

"An alcoholic," she practically chokes on the word. "You know, before I took you to Korra."

There's a stirring in the air as the tension builds. Asami can feel her presence in here somewhere. She glances to the side of the room, only to see Korra's blue silhouette leaning up against the drawing table. The ghost of a woman throws her a faint smile and she waves, causing the heiress' eyes to well with tears. Korra glances at the glass with a pitiful and hurt expression, and in one look, Asami's heart shatters. The woman draws a deep breath as she returns her gaze reluctantly to face Kuvira once more. Her fingers trace circles around the mouth of the glass as she shrugs tiredly.

"Maybe not an alcoholic. I was more so just dependent on something to make the pain go away, to numb me from loss. I thought it would get easier through the years, but I… I don't really think that was all that true. Whoever said time heals all wounds is a bastard if you ask me," Asami mutters before taking a slower, more hesitant sip. The liquid burns down her throat, but this time, it's not as comforting as it had been so many times before.

"Korra loves you a lot, Asami," Kuvira says quietly, taking her own gulp of the warm alcohol. Asami's eyes flash with anger and sadness.
"Then why'd you do it?" The heiress growls the question with venom in her voice. "Why did you take her away from me?"

"I made a mistake!" Kuvira shouts through a cracked voice. The metal-bender sobs as she holds her arms tight around her shoulders. If anything, she looks less like a previous dictator and more like a terrified child as she softly repeats, "I made a mistake. I didn't mean to hurt all those people. I didn't mean to kill her, Asami. You have to believe me. I didn't mean for any of it to happen. I went too far and I lost control. I'm sorry."

"Sorry? Sorry won't mend the wounds that you left upon the city and its people. Sorry won't change Bataar's mind as he gets ready to marry his new wife. Sorry won't give Senna and Tonraq the chance at a proper goodbye. Sorry won't bring her back, Kuvira, so I'm sorry if your apology means shit to me," Asami spits with a hostile tone. She throws her hands in the air and shakes her head, snickering as she continues to rant, "I mean, can you imagine how her parents feel? The last time they saw their daughter was eight months before she died. Senna didn't even look at me when I brought them her body. Korra saved the city from your destruction and irresponsible actions and all I have to show for is a mangled, dead body."

Kuvira is trembling like a frightened dog at the way Asami is chuckling sadly. The heiress reaches for her glass as she downs more of the fiery liquid. Something twists in the metal-bender's side and she grimaces. Korra stands behind the heiress with a worried expression plastered to her spirited face. Asami doesn't pay her attention as her rage continues, billowing out in ragged breaths from chapped lips. The heiress slams the glass down and stands, cowering over failed dictator with a furious glare. Her fingernails scratch and the wood upon her desk as she shakes her head. She holds the stare until she makes out the faint blue reflection in Kuvira's glossy orbs. Her shoulders slump and she bows her head, her hair blanketing her face like a curtain.

"They thought Korra would come back," Asami says, her voice dropping as she turns slowly to face the ghost of her love. Her eyes glance over Korra's form, her pained expression, her hands reaching out for her but never quite grasping what they seek, and she sighs. A tear rolls down her cheek as she closes her eyes, fully aware that when she opens them, the hazy mirage of something she once knew so well will be gone.

"I thought she'd come back," Asami whispers brokenly between a hushed cry, "I thought that I… that we…"

Kuvira is silent at once, her eyes glazing as she looks away when Asami trails off. Sitting back down with a huff, the frustration returns to the inventor, coursing through her veins to meld with her blood. The heiress reaches for her scotch, downing a few more gulps before she pulls the receptacle from her lips. She clenches the glass tighter in her palm as she bites her lip hard enough to draw blood. In the back of her mind, Korra is there with her, murmuring the same words she'd said to her back in the Spirit World ten years ago. Asami tries to block it out but as she looks to the
broken, empty shell of a woman sitting before her, she can't help but hear the truth in Korra's words. Kuvira trembles as she watches Asami's hardened stare turn towards her once more. There's nothing but raw pain and sadness in those peridot eyes.

"The sad thing is, we... we had something," Asami tells her in a quiet voice, "we could have been more. She could have been the one that never left. No one ever stays, you know. Not my mother, not my father, not Mako, and now, not even Korra. The world takes what it thinks it deserves, but what happens when there's nothing left to take? What happens when the hands that reach fall empty?"

"Asami-"

"I am empty," Asami says bluntly, glancing up with an expression void of any emotion. "I have nothing left to give."

"That's not what Korra thinks," Kuvira replies softly, dipping her head as tears burn at her eyes.

Asami's breath hitches as her own eyes glaze. A few tears roll down her cheeks and she scolds herself for believing that she'd had a chance at moving past this. It's been fifteen years, she wants to scream, you have to move on. Korra is dead. She's not coming back, not now, not ever. The heiress has been repeating the words like a mantra for the past decade, yet she hasn't ever willed herself to believe it. Faking it until you make it seems to be an inefficient way of dealing with grief, she realizes with an inward, bitter scoff. She shoves the bottle of scotch in Kuvira's direction and glowers.

"Why don't you tell her this, then," Asami growls as she clenches her fingers back into a fist, "I don't give a fuck about what she thinks."

"You're absolutely certain that he's ready?"

"The boy's fifteen, Riku, there's not much he couldn't be ready for."

The White Lotus leader scratches at his jaw as he looks to the earth-bender before him. Bolin sighs as he sees the older man thinking thoroughly about his proposition. It takes sometime in silence, of
which Bolin manages to fill with the rolling of his thumbs around each other. Finally, the White Lotus leader glances behind at the lanky boy with shaggy coal hair and piercing turquoise eyes. Something stirs in the aged leader, as for a second, he sees a flash of Korra in those eyes. Though the new Avatar's eyes are a shade darker than Korra's sapphire depths, they're uncannily similar. The boy gives him a lopsided smile and a shrug, but his eyes are pleading him to say eyes. Riku sighs before looking back to Bolin.

"Fine," he grumbles reluctantly, "his earth-bending test will be in exactly one week. I will have to find a fire-bending master in the time being."

"No need," a voice sounds from behind Bolin and An. Riku lifts a brow as he watches Mako walk in, his hair slightly greying and a warm smile playing at his lips. He nods at his brother and at the new Avatar with a respectful gesture.

"If I may, Riku, I'd like to teach him fire-bending. I may not have the same qualifications or reputation as Izumi or General Iroh, but I think that it would be better coming from me. With all due respect, sir, An has great potential to be a quick learner, but he needs a master that best fits his personality," Mako says gently, his eyes meeting the hopeful gaze of An Ning. The boy grins as he turns back to Riku with his hands crossed pleadingly.

"Please, I want Mako to teach me," he says excitedly, "I mean, the guy can bend lightening. Surely that warrants something, right?"

"An Ning-"

"It's An," the earth-bender mutters, his eyes narrowing, "I've told you so many times, it's just An."

"An," the White Lotus member accentuates the name with a bit of annoyance, much to the nodding head of An, "we have to deliberate Mako's candidacy with the core table of advisors before we can make a decision. We will put his name in, but there's no guarantee he can be your master." An rolls his eyes as he crosses his arms with a growl playing at his lips.

"Look, what would the last Avatar want? Mako was her ex-boyfriend and everything." The boy speaks with such nonchalance that Mako almost thinks he's hearing Korra speak. Though the Water Tribe girl had been fairly more tempered and even a bit rash before she matured, An still resembles parts of his previous life's spirit. This doesn't stop the fire-bender from still wincing, however, as their past relationship is brought up.
"An," Riku sighs as he rubs his forehead. He can hear flickers of Korra's personality seep through his incessant pleading, but he knows that if this is the boy's true desire, then he must abide by his wishes. Though Korra had not lived long enough to detail what she'd want to become of the next Avatar, there's a nagging feeling in the minister's gut that suggests this would be one of those decisions.

"Fine," he agrees in a reluctant mutter, watching An and Mako's eyes widen with happiness. "He may train you. One slip up, however, and it's the Lotus' job to take you in, understood?" An nods his head so fast that Riku is surprised it doesn't just fly straight off his neck.

"Bolin, prepare An for the test. One week, Avatar," Riku says, glancing between the earth-benders, "you better be ready."

"Please, sir," An says with a smug grin as he crosses his arms, "I was born ready."

Kuvira laughs drunkenly as the clearly wasted inventor throws her hands up with mock jest. The alcohol has long since settled in their systems and now the two were bantering back and forth. Korra's spirit has long since gone, but neither of the women seem particularly interested in delving into those raw emotions. The liquor serves as a distraction to their problems, and for once, they allow themselves to lose their minds in the chaos.

"You lost the deal over arrogance?" Kuvira asks, slurring as she drags out another shot of the scotch. Asami throws her head back and laughs manically, shaking her head as she clutches at her sides. The metal-bender grins with a hazy expression as she watches Asami wipe a tear from her eye.

"Nah, I didn't lose the deal, I broke it off with him. He was a shoddy businessmen," the heiress hiccups before she winks and says, "not to mention a terrible lay, too." Kuvira's brows raise. For a second, she thinks about Korra because of the twist in her side, but then she thinks better of it and instead leans forward in her chair. The bender rests her hands upon the mahogany desk and narrows her gaze curiously at the drunk inventor.

"What, was he unable to get it up?" Kuvira snorts, chugging back some more of the warm liquid.
Asami chuckles and shakes her head.

"More like there was nothing to get up. I could reach deeper with my own damned fingers," she mutters, swiping at the bottle. Her mind is a bit fuzzy from drinking, but this is the first time she's made herself vulnerable around someone, and it baffles her slightly that someone is Kuvira.

"Ha, at least you got some action," Kuvira responds with a grumble, leaning back in her chair with a huff. "I've been getting comfortable with my own hand for the past fifteen years." Asami chortles as she sips some more of the potent liquid. She leans forward and points at the woman.

"Hey, a woman's hand can do better than a man's dick. At least you know where to touch and what you like," Asami roars with a drunken laugh. She holds her sides again as she wheezes out, "I've been with a few men that didn't even know the clitoris is a female sex organ. One guy thought it was a type of food."

"Ah that's terrible," Kuvira laughs, shaking her head. She takes another sip before she nods her head to say, "but I completely get it. Bataar was useless the first few times we did it. I had to practically help myself out." Asami stops laughing slowly as she rests back in her chair, looking over at her with a lazy, stupid grin. Her eyes are glossy and her tongue feels thick and heavy in her mouth, causing her giggle again.

"Did he have good enough equipment?" She asks back, still stumped that she's ludicrous enough to be talking about intimacy with her enemy. Kuvira only sighs and fumbles with her glass as she shrugs. She flickers her glance upwards to catch Asami staring at her inquisitively.

"He was decent, I suppose. He may have not had the best tools, but you engineers know how to make use of what you've got," Kuvira chuckles, drinking again. She thinks of Bataar and tries to ignore the ache in her chest as she remembers their many nights together. Asami sighs and leans back in her chair again. She nods at Kuvira's response and takes a few more gulps of her drink until her glass is empty.

"I feel like Korra would have fumbled around like a lost puppy the first couple of times," Asami says, her voice trailing off as she stares at the ceiling. Tears mist in her eyes as she continues with a strangled laugh, "she'd be too patient and careful at the start. Her touches would be nothing but love and affection and she'd constantly check in to the point of endearing annoyance. I feel like she'd apologize a lot, but once she got going, she'd be amazing."

"Did she ever do it with Mako?" Kuvira asks before cupping her hand over her mouth. Asami's brow cocks up and she laughs at the flustered metal-bender with a shake of her head. "Korra was
too hesitant to start something so intimate so young. Doesn't mean that she hadn't done it before she… before she… before…"

Asami cuts herself off and represses the anger in her chest before she continues, "I mean, she said she'd slept around during her six month absence."

Kuvira stays quiet as Asami wipes a few trailing tears before she gulps. The inventor sits up straight and grabs at the near empty bottle, pouring them both the remainder of the contents before haphazardly tossing it behind her. Kuvira swallows the drink, grateful to have something to distract herself with other than the reminder of her mistake. Asami sips slower than before, some of her drunken stupor replacing itself with mournful nostalgia.

"Her first time had been a woman in the Earth Kingdom," she murmurs distantly. "Don't remember her name, don't care. Korra said she didn't remember much of it because she'd been drunk. Actually, she didn't remember much of anything because she usually drank before she fucked around."

"Don't we all?" Kuvira whispers, tipping her glass to allow more scotch to pool down her throat. Asami gazes at her with a slight smirk.

"Liquid courage, am I right?" She snorts with a shrug. "It's bullshit if you ask me. You drink to forget. Love shouldn't be something to be forgotten."

"You saying that Korra loved that woman?"

"I don't know. If she were here, I'd ask her," Asami says, her stare glaring into Kuvira's glossy eyes. The metal-bender sucks in a sharp breath at the heat flickering upon the heiress' tongue as the words slash through her chest. Kuvira looks to the rim of her glass before glancing back up tentatively.

"I can't bring her back, Asami. I'm sorry…, I mean it." An apology can't fix the mess she's made, but Kuvira knows better than to try and use words with her current disposition. Asami looks at her with a teary gaze before she lifts herself from the chair. She wobbles over to Kuvira, who stands as well. The heiress goes to step forward and nearly slips, but Kuvira wraps her arms around the younger woman's waist, pinning her to the desk for support.

Now, with Asami's hot breath panting on her neck, Kuvira begins to wonder if she has any decency
"So, it's been you and your hand for the past fifteen years," Asami hisses as her lips ghost over her skin. Kuvira stifles a groan as Asami places her hands on the metal-bender's strong shoulders. Her fingers claw into her uniform as she pulls the older woman closer until their noses are touching. Fiery green gazes lock with each other, lost in lust and in the heat of the moment. There's no recognition for either of them; they're too far gone.

"Yeah," Kuvira manages to choke out as she feels Asami's hands skirt lower down her front. She knows this isn't right, but she can't ignore the pulsing feeling that runs hotly in her core. She subtly wedges her knee between Asami's legs, pleased to hear a sharp gasp tear from the inventor's chapped lips.

"Why don't you show me how skilled you are, then?" Asami asks in a low growl.

Kuvira groans as her lips suddenly meet the soft petals of the woman standing before her. It's not a passionate or loving kiss, however. It's a kiss filled with hate and pure desire to simply rid themselves of the misery they face. Asami shoves Kuvira backwards and onto the crimson couch with a harsh push. The two of them tumble down upon the cushions, writhing and clawing at each other. Kuvira remains cautious even in her drunken state, but Asami is ruthless, tearing off the metal-bender's clothes with steely determination. Kuvira allows her rough touches, even if it's something she's not used to, because if this is how Asami wishes to heal, she will give her best. Drunken hate-fucks aren't something she's too familiar with, and as she feels her bra being unhooked and the warmth of Asami's skin upon hers (when her shirt came off, Kuvira will never know), she's lost to the sick pleasure. A hot, wet tongue circles over her nipple while a hand scratches down her abs, careless of the fresh scars.

Somewhere in the midst of the heated confusion, Kuvira manages to return to reality. She glances down through narrowed vision to see Asami's hands fumbling drunkenly with the clasp of her belt. The metal-bender sucks in a sharp breath before she reaches down and tugs on the heiress' arms, drawing her up for a crushing kiss. She flicks her fingers and her belt flies off, causing Asami to moan. Pale hands pull away the hair tie upon her scalp and fingers weave through her hair, tugging and pulling ruthlessly. Asami's buttons are open and her fly is halfway undone as she grinds shamelessly upon the older woman's taut abdomen. Kuvira kisses her harder, despite the aching twist in her stomach.

Will you take care of Asami for me?

"Wait!" Kuvira gasps suddenly when Korra's voice whips through her head. Asami pulls back with a growl, obviously frustrated and pent up that the former captain has abruptly halted their make-out session. Kuvira struggles to catch her breath as she gently shoves Asami's bare shoulders. Her eyes
ghost down to the hanging breasts and pert nipples grazing her own chest and she swallows hard.

"For what?" Asami hisses as she attempts to kiss the woman beneath her. Kuvira turns her head so that Asami's lips meet her neck. With a low snarl, she nips at the sensitive flesh and causes Kuvira to stifle a pained scream. Nails claw into her shoulders and push her further into the couch as Asami pulls back from the nasty welt upon her neck with a mournful but equally hateful glare.

"I just want one night for the pain to go away," the heiress snaps, gasping as she feels the guilt coming over her. "I just want to feel normal again."

"This isn't the way to do it, Asami," Kuvira whispers, reaching up to brush a lock of hair from the vixen's face. Asami's hurt expression disappears and the rage returns as she grabs at the hand and slams it back to the couch relentlessly, her eyes on fire with need and lust.

"This is the way I want it, Kuvira," she practically spits her name, "now are you going to lay here like a pathetic turtle-duck or are you going to fuck me?"

Kuvira doesn't respond with words; instead, she leans up and takes Asami's lips in hers again in a bruising kiss. The heiress moans and rakes her nails back down the metal-bender's chest. Faint red lines are left in her destructive path, but neither woman seem to care. The remainder of their clothes are shed quickly before Kuvira reaches down and feels for the wet folds between the inventor's thighs. Asami's breath hitches and she cries out as Kuvira curls a finger inside her with her thumb circling over her clit in dizzying circles. She bites down on Kuvira's neck again, her hips thrusting down.

"More," she seethes, her voice thick with desire and that same rage from before. "I need more and I need it harder… faster, Kuvira."

The metal-bender obliges, pumping her harder with an additional finger until the heiress is bucking in her grasp. Their lips never meet again after Asami gives her those orders. Instead, she hides face in Kuvira's neck, biting and clawing at the woman beneath her. Her hips practically slam into Kuvira's fingers, and with the pace she's setting, the metal-bender is shocked her hand hasn't broken from the sheer force of each push. Sweat links their bodies together like a strong adhesive, and soon the only sound in the room is Asami's gasps and the slapping of their slick flesh. It doesn't take long for Kuvira to reach the point that Asami'd been seeking this entire time. Her pace increases and she ignores the cramp in her arm as Asami tightens above her. Her shoulders sting as the long nails rake long lines of fire down the bronzed flesh.

"Oh… Spirits, I'm coming, oh fuck I'm coming," Asami draws out through barely muted screams.
Kuvira remains silent as Asami tenses before letting loose an earth-shaking scream. Her heart breaks inside her chest as she hears agony, not pleasure come from those lips. The heiress shudders as a sob takes over and she collapses down on Kuvira’s body. The woman cries hard and loud, her pain finally released with her orgasm.

"K-Korra," Asami breathes between hiccuped breaths as she closes her eyes, "oh Spirits, Korra. I… I'm so sorry. I… I'm so sorry, Korra."

The words keep repeating over and over until they're muffled by Asami’s harsh sobs. Kuvira remains frozen, her own eyes glassy with remorse and sadness as she thinks about how Korra had entrusted her to take care of the love of her life, and how just seconds ago, she'd fucked her. Kuvira is about to ask the heiress to kindly get off her, but then she feels the barrage of tears and snot upon her bare shoulder and she knows that the last thing Asami needs is to be alone. She may not be the person to give her that comfort, but she's the only one here.

That, in some sick and twisted sense, has to count for something.

"Ssh," Kuvira whispers soothingly, though her own voice is shaky, "I… I've got you, Asami."

The heiress doesn't struggle as Kuvira winds her arms around the trembling body above her. She places one hand at her back while the other gently cradles her head into her shoulder. The crying doesn't die down, but it doesn't worsen either. Kuvira allows a few of her own tears to fall before she glances to the side, only to see Korra's hurt spirited face staring back at her. Her breath catches in her throat and she freezes as she sees how heartbroken the previous Avatar looks. Kuvira opens her mouth to say something when Korra looks down and her spirit fades out of view. Only one question runs through her mind as she turns her head back to glance up at the ceiling desolately.

What has she done?

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**Book 2: FIRE**

The element of power.

*Tell me another beautiful lie, tell me everything I want to hear; won't you lay here by my side, I want to fuck away all my fear.*
"Get your arms straighter and breathe through your mouth."

"I thought fire-bending was all about quick movements and strong attacks," An mutters as he reluctantly follows Mako's advice. The fire-bender only chuckles as he watches An struggle with the forms. His arms tremble and ache to get them done quickly.

"You know," the boy says with a slight wince, "I would've definitely thought that fire-bending was more about fast paced, blasts of flame. Something with more, I dunno, explosions?" Mako raises his brow at the pleading expression of the young Avatar. He shakes his head and laughs.

"Not even remotely close, An," he says as he produces a flame from his fist. He focuses on narrowing the flame into a sharp dagger. An's eyes light up, his mind lost with the thought of practicing actual technique as he blurts out, "see! That's the kind of stuff I'm talking about."

"I needed seven years of training to perfect this," Mako says, even though it's a total lie. One of the triad members had taught him the nifty trick when he was a boy, but An doesn't need to know that. An rolls his eyes and groans in exasperation as he plops down on the couch.

"This Avatar training is so boring sometimes," he mutters, rubbing his head as his shoulders slump in exhaustion. "I want to be helping people, not standing like a tree for ten hours before I can move again. Fire is supposed to be the fun element."

"Fun?" Mako echoes, sitting beside the young boy, "there are no elements that are fun, An."

"Earth was kinda fun," An says cheekily as he grins at Mako, "but that's only because Bolin actually let me practice earth-bending instead of making me impersonate a damned flamingo." Mako narrows his gaze, his amber eyes flaring with strict authority. The boy groans again and bows his head.

"Look, I just…," he says, stumbling on his words as he glances at Mako timidly, "Korra was good at every element. Fire especially. I feel that. I want to blast tropes of flames at my enemies. I want to destroy evil. I want to be the best Avatar I can be."
Mako stays quiet for sometime, mulling over An's words as he watches the Avatar rise, pulling his fists into flames. He throws a few punches of fire into the evening sky with a growl. Mako makes out Korra's frustration in the young reincarnation and sighs. He dips his head, pushing his emotions aside for a brief moment before he rubs at his chin. An turns back, glancing at Mako pleadingly as he sits by his fire-bending master once more. Mako is quiet for a second before he, too, summons a ball of flame in his hands. The fire flickers in his amber eyes as he glances back at An wisely. "Fire is not born from destruction, An. Fire is about life, about reincarnation. It's purpose is not to destroy, but to rebuild. Yes, it is the element with the most power, but with great power comes great responsibility - a responsibility that many people abuse," Mako explains to him, holding out the flame. "You see, it is not fire that causes wars and gives us the ability to destroy, it's the people who lost their own fire within themselves and make the wrong choices to sate their grief. An Avatar is not meant to hold possessions that would cause them to lose balance with all four elements, let alone one. It's a sacrifice made for you. I know you want to help, An, but you must understand that, much like controlling a burning flame, this is all a part of the process." An stares at the flame and lets the words sink in. Mako waits for him to digest his words before the Avatar sighs and shakes his head.

"The three elements, earth, fire, and water came easy to her. The White Lotus trained her hard, and maybe I need that," An says softly. Mako frowns slightly, but An shakes his head, asking for him to wait until he's finished to speak. Raising a brow, Mako allows the young boy to continue. "Look, this slow paced business doesn't work for me. I already know I have to get that when I air-bend. I… I just want to do good, okay? I feel like, with you and everyone else, there's a lot of pressure," An confesses, his voice cracking as he bows his head, "you know, to be like her."

"Korra started off just as you did," Mako tells him gently, rubbing his arm, "so no one expects you to be perfect, okay? We all need our time." "Time to do what?" An asks, tears in his turquoise eyes as his emotions overwhelm him. "I mean, I've tried contacting her, but I've never been able to dig deep enough. Bolin suggested using the Spirit Portal to visit her, but I can't help but feel like that's cheating." Mako digests the shamed confession from the young man with silence and a pensive gaze. His lips curl downwards in a slightly tight-lipped line. An bows his head again, feeling useless.

"Everyone keeps thinking I'm her, but I'm not," An mutters sadly, "I'm not heroic or brave. I didn't have family or friends or comfort. I grew up on the streets without fancy guards until they found me ten years ago. Even then, it was because the woman who found me wanted a reward. I'm nothing but a trophy to these people. I… I didn't want to be the Avatar, you know. I didn't ask for any of this."
"I don't think any of the Avatars do, An," Mako replies softly, folding his hands upon his lap. "It's a responsibility you're given that you can't break."

"What if I want to break it? What if I don't want to be the Avatar anymore?" An refutes bitterly, his tears starting to drip hotly down his face. "Even when I was training in the Earth Republic with Bolin and Matriach Suyin, everyone kept thinking I was her, like they expected me to carry on where she left off. It's just overwhelming, you know? Some of them don't even like me because if it weren't for me, Korra would still be there. That's what people want. They want Korra, not some half-baked bum who came from the middle of nowhere. I'm not Avatar material, Master Mako. I'm nothing."

Mako allows An the silence in order for him to sniffle and attempt to hold himself together. The older fire-bender sighs, mostly because even during his relationship with Korra, he'd never been one for words. He didn't know how to comfort people, except for Wu. A small smile paints upon his face at the thought of his husband, before he turns to An with an encouraging expression. An wipes away some tears before he hiccups. Mako rests a hand upon his shoulder and squeezes the muscle beneath his fingertips as he nods at the young Avatar.

"We all start out as nothing," he tells him warmly, "it's up to us to become something."

Future Industries' CEO Asami Sato wins Republic City's Engineer of the Year Award for the seventh consecutive time. More details on page eight.

Kuvira looks at the paper and takes a deep breath. The woman reclines in her seat, nursing a glass of whiskey and puffing from a cigarette. She doesn't quite know where she'd picked up either habit, but at the same time she does. It'd been four weeks since she had sex with the heiress. She vaguely remembers the pounding headache and the nagging guilt as she awoke the following morning, tangled with the pale beauty. She'd felt sick, and not because of the nasty hangover. She'd ran out of the building just like she ran from most of her problems.

Kuvira wished it'd ended there, with that one hate-filled fuck, but unfortunately for her, nothing seems to ever go her plan. Kuvira had returned a week later to apologize, only to get in another drunken night with the vulnerable CEO. It's been an on-going process since then; Asami would call and tell her a place and time (usually her office or the Sato Mansion) and Kuvira would show up with the booze. It's unhealthy and each time she brings the vixen to a release, a part of Kuvira twists with agony. The sad, fucked up part of their entire push and pull of a relationship, is that Kuvira enjoys Asami's company. She'd been helping with a few contractors from the Earth
Republic and she'd gotten several chances to sit in on meetings. The prowess and sheer determination in the CEO is something she reveres and finds herself at a loss for words with; she's smart and courageous, strong willed and brave.

Kuvira doesn't know when or how it happened, but she'd fallen for the heiress.

She knows it's stupid and one-sided, though. She won't kid herself; Korra's name is the one she hears Asami mutter under her breath as falls apart in the unraveling that comes with desire. Kuvira always gives and never receives, but she doesn't complain. She allows whatever touch and minute of company she can get with the heiress. Her heart is cracked from so many years of wear and tear, and Kuvira's almost certain that she's numb to any kind of pain. Years of imprisonment, abandonment, and torture can have that effect on a broken warrior. But, when she's with Asami, there's something that she feels, something that isn't all agony and horror. It's something mournfully beautiful and raw, but also twisted, like a dagger to the back.

The phone rings, startling her from her thoughts.

"Hello?" Kuvira asks in a gravelly voice. She drags on the cigarette until she cannot breathe. There's a cough on the line before a voice replies.

"Shame, I thought you'd be the first one to call me."

Kuvira smiles faintly at the scowl. She lets herself to believe that it's a playful jest, when really it's a prod to her tightly wound emotions. She sips from her scotch and puffs out a breath of smoke. The older woman leans up and sighs, looking up at the ceiling before glancing at the paper.

"I was about to. I just got a copy of the paper now," she replies softly, not bothering to hide her happiness, "congrats, Ms Sato."

"How many times have I told you to never call me that," the heiress quips back shortly. Kuvira stifles a chuckle and shakes her head.

"Fine, Ms Future Industries," she exaggerates, "what can I do for you?"

There's a pause, and then some shuffling.
"I've sent the maids and butlers home for the weekend," Asami replies, her voice strained. "Come by in ten minutes." Kuvira feels something in her chest tighten as she coils the wire of the phone around her finger absently. Her heart is screaming for her to stop, to understand that even someone as lost as her has limits too, but she cannot resist. She licks her lips and swallows thickly before she takes another drag from her cigarette.

"I'll get some champagne," she mumbles softly. Asami lets out a grunt before the phone line goes dead. Kuvira holds on the cool plastic, trying to absorb the last echoes of the inventor's voice in her ear before she sets the phone down.

The metal-bender stiffly rises, putting out the last of the cancer stick and downing the remainder of her whiskey before she grabs a jacket, keys, and wallet. The woman locks up her small flat before dashing down the street to the local liquor store. As she reaches her destination, she sees the flower stand out of the corner of her eye. Her lips curl into a tight smile as she jogs over and picks up some fire-lilies. The cashier gives her a wary look, one that she's more than accustomed to now, before she hesitantly takes her money and hands her the flowers. After picking up the champagne, Kuvira catches a cab to the Sato Mansion, her heart jumping about like a cricket inside her chest.

Kuvira doesn't bother asking for the change from the driver as she runs up to the entrance of the giant complex. She knocks twice and waits patiently before the door opens to reveal a tired and frustrated looking Asami. Kuvira smiles at her, even though she knows Asami won't return it; she's never returned the smile, not sober at least. The heiress allows her friend inside the house and grunts in welcome as the metal-bender kicks off her shoes. Nervously, Kuvira reaches behind her for the bouquet of flowers, holding it out for Asami to see.

"What are those?" Asami asks with a raised brow.

"Flowers, because of your win," Kuvira replies gently, holding them closer to the inventor. "You know, to congratulate you."

"Thanks," Asami mutters, grabbing the champagne bottle instead before turning towards the kitchen. Kuvira pretends like the action doesn't completely break her heart as she follows, setting the flowers down on the counter. Asami pulls out two glasses and pours them to the brink. Kuvira graciously takes hers and raises it, but Asami doesn't seem to follow the gesture as she downs half of her drink.

"Come on," Asami grumbles as she wipes her mouth, "I've got the spare room ready."
"Wait," Kuvira says nervously, causing Asami to turn. The inventor looks frustrated still, but her eyes have softened slightly. Kuvira feels grateful that she knows Asami would stop their solely sexual relationship if it wasn't consensual. As much as her feelings were strictly desire driven, she still respected that both women should consent to their activities. It would just mean no more stress relief for the CEO.

"What is it?" Asami asks, crossing her arms impatiently. Kuvira shuffles her weight from heel to heel as she bites her lip.

"Can I ask you something?"

"No."

"Why don't we..., you know, do it in your bedroom?" Kuvira asks the question anyways, despite the mild irritation present in the glaring green eyes in front of her. Asami stiffens and crosses her arms tighter to her chest as she rolls her eyes.

"Because I sleep there? I don't conduct business where I sleep," Asami sneers as she reaches for the bottle. Instead of pouring it into the glass, she just drinks from the opening. Kuvira tries to deflect the hit, but the score is deep. She lets out a soft gasp as she steps back slightly. Asami raises a brow as she takes a giant swig from the champagne with a smirk. Kuvira tries to hide the hurt from her voice, but it still shakes when she speaks.

"So... that's all I am to you?" It's a quiet, innocent question. Asami rolls her eyes and laughs, taking another swig of her drink.

"Do I need to remind you of what you did, or who you killed?" Kuvira shakes her head sadly, fighting back tears as she looks down. Asami grunts, but her own stomach churns with guilt at the sight of the distraught woman standing before her. She chooses the same coping mechanism and turns away from the pained face. She swallows her remorse and hides the self-deprecation in her voice as she sternly says, "good. Now, are you coming or not?"

"Yeah," Kuvira says softly, wiping away the tears, "let's go."

Asami leads them to the bedroom and undresses quickly. She finishes the rest of the alcohol and chucks the bottle in the trash. Kuvira follows slowly, removing her clothes with languid tiredness that comes from being trampled on for far too long and often. The woman's hands aren't rough as
they usually are as they explore Asami's nude frame. They both tumble onto the mattress with a soft thud, but Kuvira keeps herself pressed against the heiress, as if she were the anchor holding down her ship during a storm. Asami tries to seek out her mouth for a heated kiss, but Kuvira's face is burrowed in her neck. Her eyes are closed tightly as tears fall. Asami doesn't know how to react as Kuvira moves her hand slowly down her front. Her strokes carry the finesse of love, not lust. Her fingers are exploratory, not rushed. Her teeth are gentle against her neck, not animalistic.

What Kuvira is doing is not something Asami wants - she's not ready for this.

Asami's not ready for love.

"Stop," Asami says, and immediately Kuvira freezes. The metal-bender pulls back in fear of having hurt the heiress. Asami turns away, pretending to not have seen the care and affection in those opal depths. She places her hands on Kuvira's toned shoulders and pushes upwards slightly.

"Did I hurt you?" Kuvira asks, her voice shaky with nerves. Asami tries to ignore the guilt that festers through her, but Kuvira's soft touches are sobering her up too quickly. She cannot allow herself to feel guilty. *Kuvira killed Korra and her father; she deserves this pain,* she keeps telling herself, but the mantra's stopped working. She feels something in the air shift and she knows that the justifications she'd dosed herself with will never work again.

"No," Asami murmurs as she pulls away from Kuvira. She sighs and grabs her shirt, tossing it on as she painfully thinks, *I hurt you.*

/ 

"I want to try again."

Mako looks up from his book to see An standing before him, wearing his fire-bending gear. A determined look is plastered on his face as he nods down at the older man. Mako sets his book aside and leans forward on the bend, scratching at his chin absently.

"I thought you were bored?" He asks, a small smirk playing at his lips. An sighs and rolls his eyes, trying to deflect the low blow.

"I wasn't ready before," he says, brushing off the embarrassment and replacing it with tenacity,
"but I am now." Mako stands and checks over the rigid stance of the young Avatar before cocking his head and raising his brow.

"Why now?"

"Because, I thought about what you said the other day," An says softly, easing the tension in his shoulders. "I guess… well I realized that I don't have to pretend to be someone I'm not. I'm the Avatar, yes, but I'm my own Avatar, if that makes sense?" Mako refrains from chuckling at the scowl that scrunches up on An's face as he tries to convey his message. An takes a breath and attempts his confession again.

"Look, I just… I realized that I have my own pace and boundaries. I have my limits, but my power is limitless. I just… I needed time to see that." An's voice is steely with courage and determination as he speaks. Mako remains silent for a minute before he parts his mouth, clearing his throat.

"To see what, exactly?" Mako asks tentatively, eager to hear the boy's response.

"That I…," An trails off for moment before his eyes light up again. "That being the Avatar doesn't meant that I have to give up who I am. Being the Avatar is just a part of me; it doesn't define who I am. I am not just the Avatar. I'm also me - I'm An."

"Well then, An," Mako says, rising from his spot, "shall we begin?"

"You've been avoiding me."

"I haven't been avoiding you," Asami mutters as she looks at her blueprints. Kuvira stands at her doorway with her arms crossed, her eyes strained on the hunched body leaning over her desk. Kuvira sighs and rubs her head with her fingers, trying to relieve the ache that lingers there. There's a half-opened bottle of whiskey on her desk. The working woman pays the metal-bender no attention as she dryly takes a sip before setting the bottle back down.

"Don't you think you need a bit of a break?"
Asami looks up with a glare, causing Kuvira to cringe.

"From work, I mean," Kuvira corrects herself, although she worries for Asami's health. Bags line the undersides of the heiress' eyes as she feebly shoots her another glare. The metal-bender sighs once more, looking back to the ground, trying to think of a good conversation topic.

"Why are you here?" Asami asks, beating her to the punch with a sharp question. Kuvira gasps slightly at the angered rasp that lines the inventor's words. Kuvira shakes her head and hastily replies, "I just came by to check up on you. We haven't talked since… you know."

"Who says we needed to talk again?" Asami shoots back, ignoring the twist in her side at the pained expression on Kuvira's face. A part of her feels horribly guilty for playing with the heart-strings of the former captain, but a larger, more prominent part of her craves the desolation she's facing.

"Sorry," Kuvira mumbles, rubbing the back of her head apologetically. "I guess I misunderstood."

"What do you want, Kuvira?" Asami growls lowly, standing up from her desk. Her nails claw into the wood as she scowls at the older bender. "Do you want more from this? If that's what you want, you're looking in the wrong place. I can't do that with you. I can't do that with anyone."

"So, I'm just some meaningless fuck, then?" Kuvira suddenly asks angrily, her voice snapping out of frustration and pain. Asami finds arousal igniting at the fight in those green eyes. She walks around the desk and grabs at Kuvira's collar roughly, pulling the woman closer to her.

"No fuck is meaningless if it makes you feel good," Asami whispers thickly, her breath pattering upon the older woman's lips. Kuvira waits a moment, almost tempted to give into those familiar peridot eyes. This time, however, she holds strong and pushes Asami away.

"I know I've fucked up a lot of things in your life," Kuvira whispers shakily as she points between them, "but I don't deserve this."

"Then what do you deserve?!" Asami roars, shoving the older woman. Kuvira winces at the piercing noise as Asami steps closer. The heiress places her hand on her chest. Even though her eyes are glistening with hot, angered tears, Kuvira can make out a semblance of guilt lying underneath it all.
"I gave you the second chance, Kuvira." Asami's voice is like lead as she speaks, her eyes bearing deep into her own. "They were going to execute you and you know it. You caused so much pain to this city, to the world, to me, and I gave you a second chance. I did it because I thought that if I let you die, I'd let everything I ever fought for, everything - everyone - I ever loved, die with you." Kuvira keeps quiet, but the tears fall from her eyes as Asami's voice begins to tremble with grief and betrayal. Kuvira desperately wants to reach out and hold her and tell her that she lo-

The word falls short in her mind.

"Do you regret it?" Kuvira whispers, her tone filled with fear and sorrow. Asami takes a deep breath and hangs her head, letting her palm drop from her chest as she closes her eyes. The metal-bender waits anxiously, desperately hoping her answer and the one in her head are the same.

"I don't know," Asami murmurs as she glances back to the bottle on her desk, "I don't know if it was worth all this torment, keeping you alive."

Though Asami doesn't physically lay a hand on her, Kuvira still feels like she'd been slapped in the face from how hurtful the comment had been. The metal-bender has nothing - no family or friends. All she has is this twisted fuck-fest with the woman who hated her guts more than anyone in the entire world. Of course she could still meditate in the Spirit World, but she's chosen not to; she doesn't want to know how much Korra hates her, too. Kuvira trembles and hastily pushes herself away from the heiress, trying to hold back her harsh sobs. Asami feels guilt harrow deeply in her bones at the sight of someone once so powerful be reduced to a sobbing mess right before her - because of her - but she doesn't have the strength to reach out.

"I guess I should go then," Kuvira barely chokes out as she pushes past her, "so that you can figure it out."

"Avatar An, you may commence."

An looks one last time at Mako, who gives him a nod before he begins his exam. The Avatar nods at his sparring mates and quickly gets into a ready position. He breathes deeply, connecting with his patience. Mako had taught him all he needs to know to pass this exam. The young boy takes a deep breath as he reigns in his energy. When he flashes open his eyes, he begins to move with the grace and agility of the fire-dragons themselves. He doesn't choose to attack first, and instead he dodges each move fluidly. His feet glide over the grass and he tunes himself with the Earth, as Bolin had taught him. One of the spar mates hits him with a fire-ball, but he catches it and draws in
its momentum before shooting it back in the square of his chest.

The man goes sprawling back instantly, down for the count.

At this point, An would celebrate with a fist to the air and a grin on his face, but he suppresses his joy and focuses back on the remaining two White Lotus members. He can feel Mako's amber eyes on him from across the arena and he squares his shoulders. He dodges another blow to his side, kicking up his leg to redirect the flame into the bender's legs. The man goes flying out of the circular ring, leaving the final spar mate standing.

The two men circle each other for a few rounds, waiting for the first move. An feels his patience wearing thin, but he keeps remembering what Mako had told him. He sets his jaw and continues to circle, his feet light upon the dewed grass. The man in front of him sets his gaze determinedly, a faint smirk playing at his lips as he expects the young Avatar to break. An remains strong-willed and unmoving as he refuses to send a blast of flame against him. The man soon looses his tolerance for the evading and vaults forth a trope of flames. An grins, ducking under the line and rolling to the side before bouncing upwards, using the arm behind him to twist the flame. He lands back on his feet, extending his other hand before beginning the transfer.

*Remember what Mako said,* An hums to himself as he glues his stare to the fire-bender, *it's all inside you.*

With a loud grunt, An closes his eyes and transforms the fire into lightening through his chest. As he opens his eyes, he catches the surprise on the fire-bender's face as the bolt strikes him dead in the chest. The man shakes violently for a few moments before An lets go. He waits a moment, breathing heavily as the man before him slowly falls to the ground with a deep huff. An's chest heaves as he lowers his arms and glances around the arena. He sees Mako's proud eyes watching him as the older man nods his approval. Beside him, Riku looks on, astonished that he'd learned lightening-bending.

"Thank you, ministers of the White Lotus," An says respectfully before clasping his hands together and bowing.

"Thank you, Avatar An," Riku says slowly, "we will deliberate amongst ourselves and reveal our decision shortly."

An fights back the urge to throw him a witty retort and instead turns around, heading back to the benches to where Mako is waiting for him. The young boy grins as soon as he sees his fire-bending master. Mako smiles proudly at him, squeezing his shoulder gently as he sits beside An. The
Avatar is beaming from ear to ear as he practically vibrates in his seat. Mako shares his excitement, but conceals it a bit better for the sake of the White Lotus.

"You did great, Ko-," he stumbles on the word before nodding encouragingly, "kid, you looked like a natural out there."

"Thanks, Mako!" An says, throwing his arms around the fire-bender. Mako is immediately taken aback as he's suddenly thrust with a vision of Korra wrapping her arms around him when they'd first seen each other after she'd lost her memory. Mako's breath hitches as he feels An pull away, ashamed.

"Sorry, I meant Master Mako," he says sheepishly, rubbing the back of his head. Mako bites back tears as he nods, bowing his head. Though he's now married to Wu and has moved on, a part of him will always be devoted to Korra. An notices the discomfort and puts some space between her.

"Can I ask you something?" An asks, his voice a little less excited than before. Mako glances at him and hums, nodding.

"What… what was she like?" An asks, fiddling with his fingers. "What was Korra like?" Mako is quiet for a few moments, trying to figure out how to compress five years worth of memories into a few words to describe his ex-girlfriend.

"Charismatic, funny, kind, compassionate, selfless, beautiful," he chokes on the word before he clears his throat, glancing back at An with a smile. "She was imperfectly perfect, if that makes sense." An smiles at the last sentence, nodding his head as he looks to his hands.

"You must have loved her a lot," An says softly. Mako nods, keeping his head bowed as he sadly chuckles. "Yeah, I did."

"Did she love you?" An asks, a little hesitate. Mako stiffens slightly and for a moment An thinks he's hit a wrong nerve, but then Mako takes a deep breath and gazes at him with a sympathetic, but sadly nostalgic expression in his glistening amber eyes.

"Korra loved everyone," he replies distantly as he hangs his head, "she just didn't love her like I loved her."
"But you were together?" An's voice is tentative, as if he were walking on eggshells. Mako only shrugs as he looks at the ministers, slowly making their way in their direction. Mako only smiles as he remembers the small, good parts of their relationship.

"It was a lot like fireworks," he says, scratching his chin. An smiles at the metaphor, but still hears the distance in Mako's voice.

"Isn't that supposed to be a good thing?" He asks, slightly confused as to why Mako seems so reluctant to feel joy.

"Our love was explosive, even if from afar it looked beautiful," Mako explains softly, "we blew up and fell apart more than staying close."

"Oh," An says, cringing lightly, "I'm sorry."

"It happens, kid. I wasn't the one for her," Mako says with a genuine smile. "But that doesn't mean we weren't still good friends afterwards."

"That's good. I'm glad that you guys worked things out." Mako raises his brow as he sees An's face light up.

"An," he says his name carefully, "why are you asking me about my relationship with Korra?" An shrugs before looking to him with a smile.

"I feel naturally drawn to you," An says with a shrug, "like I'm meeting a friend after a really long time and we're just picking up where we left off."

Mako remains silent and stunned at An's easy confession. The boy made it seem like it was no big deal, but his words mean more to the fire-bender than An would ever know. The older man goes to open his mouth when Riku strides over, a satisfied and proud smile on his wrinkled lips. An nods his head up excitedly and grins at him, eagerly waiting for the results from his exam. From the look on the White Lotus Minister's face, he can already somewhat predict what the verdict is, hence the bouncing of his knee. Riku sighs contently and hands him a scroll.

"The Ministry deems you fit for the continuation of your training," he says with a nod, "you may now leave for Republic City to master air-bending."
Book 3: AIR

The element of freedom.

Show me the house I was raised in, the woods where I used to play; steady little boat, take me home because I'm far away.

"It's so... bright."

An looks at the city, marvelling at the golden hues and tall towers. In the distance, he sees Avatar Island; it's a place he'd learned about in his Avatar studies, but had never gotten the chance to see. He gazes at the twin statues, one of Aang and the other of Korra. The two previous Avatars stand side by side, looking almost protectively out over the city. An smiles as he grips the edge of the railing harder. Beside him, Mako and Bolin both watch silently, their hearts beaming as they observe the reincarnation of their friend happily watching as the boat comes into the dock of Air Temple Island.

"He's so much like her," Bolin muses as An races off and down to the deck when the boat comes to a halt. Mako nods and nudges his brother's shoulder. Bolin smiles at him, tears welling in his eyes as Mako winds an arm around his shoulder and pulls him in for a side hug.

"It's been so long since we've spent some time together, little brother," Mako says with a longing voice. Bolin nods, ducking his head into his sibling's shoulder as he lets out a long sigh. Mako gives his tender shoulder a squeeze before he lets go, pushing them towards the hull.

"Come on, let's go down and make sure he doesn't get lost." Bolin nods and follows his brother down the hull and to the loading bay, watching as An walks up to one of the White Lotus guards, chatting excitedly about meeting his air-bending master. A warm smile spreads across his lips as An makes wild, animate gestures to show his glee. Mako steps closer until he's standing beside the boy, catching the tail-end of their conversation.

"Do you know if I'll get tattoos like Avatar Aang? That would be pretty wicked," An says with a
grin, flipping his hair slightly to the side. The White Lotus guard cocks his head and chuckles at the question, but before he can reply, a voice sounds from behind him. The guard immediately steps aside and allows the two people dressed in the yellow and red robes to pass forward. One is a woman, with a slightly swollen belly and blue air-bending tattoos, and beside her walks a taller, middle-aged man with sparkling green eyes. An’s grin trades itself in for an awed expression as they both stop before him.

"Avatar An," the taller person says with a slight glint in his eyes, "we’ve heard quite a bit about you."

"Good things, I’d hope," An replies softly, rubbing the back of his head as he stares between them nervously. The woman beside the man smiles, her tattoos shining in the pale evening light. She steps forward and places a hand upon the boy’s shoulder, tapping into his energy.

"Hmm," the woman murmurs with a knowing grin, "it's good to see you again."

The young boy goes to say something about how they’ve never met before, but suddenly, something inside of An churns; it's not an all too unpleasant feeling. An looks down at his body, his arms wrapping around his sides as a sudden burst of joy spreads from within him, causing the woman in front of him to smile harder. She gazes at him with her dark eyes, her face softening as she pulls her hand back. She folds her two hands together and bows slightly, causing An to blush partially from embarrassment and partially from shock. The woman nods at her partner with a knowing grin.

"Welcome back to Air Temple Island, Avatar," the woman says warmly, "it's been too long."

"Master Jinora, Master Kai," the words leave An's mouth without him realizing it. He frowns as soon as he says it, glancing back down at himself before glancing up at the woman, who only offers him another warm smile. He has never met this woman, but something deep down tells him that he has.

"I-I don't get it, I've never been able to get in touch with her," An says with an excited, but anxious tone, "how do I know you who both of you are?"

"Love allows us to remember the oldest of memories," Jinora says wisely, reaching out to squeeze his shoulder again. "Even those that aren't our own."
"Wait…," An trails off as he looks between Jinora and Kai beside him. Then, it all clicks. "You're Master Tenzin's kid. You're Aang's granddaughter!"

"Yes," Jinora says gently, nodding her head. "That is how I'd bonded so well with Korra, too."

"So… you can feel them, you know… inside me?" An splutters out the question awkwardly, blushing again. Jinora only laughs, because she remembers the many times she'd joked with Korra about how strange it was that they acted like sisters when technically, part of her was a remnant of her grandfather.

"Sense them might be a better way to put it," Jinora replies in a calm voice, "their spirits are strong within you. Korra's especially."

"So why haven't I been able to talk to them?" An asks, his excitement fizzing out as he glances down dejectedly. Kai takes a few steps forward with a mischievous grin and a warm tinge of anticipation in his green eyes. Jinora smiles at him, looping an arm around his own as he nods.

"That's why you're here, An," he says in a gentle voice, "to find her spirit… and yours."

Silence hurts more than words, Kuvira decides.

The woman paces in her room, smoking another cigarette. Her heart thumps wildly in her chest as she feels her stomach churn. She'd been ignoring the feeling ever since she'd fought and walked out on the inventor several weeks ago, but Kuvira knows that she cannot put it aside for much longer. Kuvira feels tears stream down her face as she takes a deep breath. Putting out the cigarette with a frustrated shove of her fingers, she walks over to her bed and settles down atop it. She crosses her legs under her and closes her eyes, fighting back more tears as she slows her breaths and begins to meditate.

This time, the pain and anguish she endures when making the journey to the Spirit World is something she's never experienced before. Tendrils of haunting memories, some recent and others she thought she'd buried years ago surface and flash beneath her lids. Kuvira's chest heaves as panic settles within her frame, the numbing feeling spreading through her as she delves deeper. Sweat beads down her forehead until the inferno of guilt and agony subside, leaving her limp. Kuvira waits a few moments in the darkness until she feels a slight breeze.
Then, the woman opens her eyes.

It's a bit gloomier in the Spirit World, but Kuvira already knows why. She's surprised it's not as dark as she thought it'd be. The metal-bender sighs as guilt crashes over when she sits down upon the grass. She plucks at a few strands of the moist blades, trying hard to contain her emotions for the sake of the Spirit World. She bites her lip hesitantly when flashes of Asami's face and Korra's expression fly through her mind. Kuvira slams her eyes shut and trembles as thunder cackles overhead. She feels the soft pattering of rain upon her skin as she pushes away her sobs.

"I was beginning to wonder if you'd ever come to see me again."

Kuvira winces at the hurt voice. The woman does everything to just keep her eyes and mouth shut, to ignore the voice of the woman whom she'd betrayed for the past several weeks. But, guilt eats away at her like a festering wound, causing her eyes to open halfway into narrow, timid slits. She doesn't look at Korra's eyes, but instead at her moccasins and blue pants. There's a pregnant pause before Kuvira swallows the shame and glances up at Korra's face. Her breath hitches as she sees tears in those dazzling blue orbs, which causes more guilt to weigh down upon her heavy heart.

"You don't have anything to say?" Korra asks flatly, her eyes still glistening with unshed tears. Kuvira bites her lip harder as she hangs her head, shaking her head bitterly. Anger and self-deprecation course through her veins as she takes a deep breath.

"Korra," her voice cracks on the name, "I... I'm sorry."

"Sorry?"

Kuvira nods her head up at Korra's sharp voice. The older woman flinches and shrivels up under the teary gaze before her. Korra's lips tremble as the tears cascade down her cheeks. The previous Avatar shakes as she steps forward slowly until she's standing before Kuvira. Korra takes a minute to wipe a few stray tears away before she kneels and swallows thickly. The woman stiffly sits in the grass across from Kuvira and hangs her head.

"You have nothing to be sorry for," Korra whispers, much to Kuvira's shock.

"W-What?" Kuvira's voice croaks out as she cocks her head in confusion. Fear still washes over her, but when Korra's desolate sapphire gaze meets hers once more, she already knows that the
previous Avatar isn't angry with her. Korra attempts to smile, but it breaks before it can begin.

"You know what for, Kuv," Korra chokes as she hastily pulls at a few blades of grass. The rain patters harder now as Korra sadly murmurs, "please don't make me say it. I... I don't know if I can." Kuvira only nods and gulps, wiping a few drops of moisture from her face as her hair begins to dampen.

"But…," Kuvira trails off as she tries to read into Korra's emotions, "why?"

"Why, what?" Korra asks back in a low voice. Kuvira swallows thickly as she leans forward.

"Why are you okay with this?"

"I'm not," Korra snaps as a lightening bolt flashes in the distant. The previous Avatar holds her breath a moment, biting her lip harshly as more tears spill out. The woman hastily wipes them away before she sighs, calming slightly to barely whisper, "I'm not okay with it, Kuvira. There's just nothing I can do."

"What do you mean?" Kuvira asks tentatively. The fury and hurt returns to Korra's eyes as she glares at the metal-bender with a hiss.

"You damn well know what I mean," she snarls harshly, causing Kuvira to wince. Korra sees the trepidation in the older woman's eyes and closes her own, placing a shaking palm to her forehead as the pounding in her head intensifies. There's a silence as unspoken words settle in a quiet conversation.

"Do you care about her?" Korra's voice is steely as she opens her eyes, but keeps her stare to the ground. Kuvira's breath hitches at the question but she doesn't hesitate to nod and quietly murmur, "I do. I promised I'd take care of her for you-"

"So you thought fucking her was the best decision?" Korra interrupts roughly, her eyes once again meeting Kuvira's glassy expression. The metal-bender recoils anxiously and gulps, sweat mixing with the pounding rain against her face. Korra only grunts and clenches her jaw tightly. There's a flash of some kind of unreadable in Kuvira's eyes when Korra speaks, bitterly chastising the woman as she snorts, "when I told you to look after her, I didn't mean that."
"She's drinking, Korra," Kuvira pleads as she wrings her hands together, "I just want to keep her out of trouble, to keep her safe."

"Yeah? With sex? Great plan, oh Great Uniter," Korra snarls angrily, bearing her steely gaze into the older woman. Kuvira's eyes water once more as guilt threatens to drown her in the crashing storm overhead. For a moment, she wonders if she can die in the Spirit World and not come back in the material world. That thought seems more appealing than living, than dealing with the years of mistakes she has made, and apparently, can't stop making.

"Korra, I told you I'm-"

"Sorry," Korra cuts in once more, waving her off, "yeah. I know."

"Korra…," Kuvira whimpers, her voice strained from the sadness that keeps crawling up the back of her throat. Korra'd been the only one that would talk to her in prison, that would keep her company and hold her strong through her darkest nights. The previous Avatar had turned into the most important comfort and now she feels like she's throwing it all away over an old wound she thought she'd closed long ago.

"You know what hurts the most?" Korra asks softly, her voice losing the anger and instead picking up sorrow. Korra glances up sadly and cracks a half smirk that causes Kuvira's heart to shatter like fragile glass in her heart. "What hurts is that you can do it, and I can't. I love her, and yet, I can't love her."

"Asami loves you only, Korra," Kuvira says, somewhat distantly. Her heart aches as she remembers the few good moments she'd had with the heiress in Zaofu before Zaheer had poisoned Korra. She thinks of their time spent together, however toxic and sick it may be, and her heart can't help but lurch in her throat. Butterflies roam around in her stomach when she pictures Asami's face, her smile that she'd not seen in eighteen long and mournful years, and she feels happiness soar through her. Kuvira feels selfish and greedy for feeling good when thinking about her friend's love, but she can't help it.

The storm around them eases slightly, and in that moment, Korra's heart drops as she understands everything.

"You love her."
Kuvira stares on blankly, even if it hadn't been a question. The metal-bender hides her face from her friend as she sniffs, holding back tears. She's not been able to say it out loud yet, because she knows that once she does, there's no going back. Korra's voice trembles as she leans forward and whispers, "do you love her, Kuvira?" The question leaves Kuvira numb, and the woman continues to be silent. Finally, Korra loses it.

"Dammit, Kuvira! Answer the fucking question," she seethes as she pounds her fist down in the moist dirt. "Do. You. Love. Her?"

"Yes!" Kuvira practically shouts as she snaps her eyes back to stare at Korra with vision blurred by tears. The metal-bender leans forward as she sobs out, "yes. I love her, Korra. There, I said it. Are you happy now? I love the one person I shouldn't love and once again, I fucked it all up for you. Both of you."

Korra stays quiet as Kuvira curls into herself and cries. The storm around them harshens and the wind picks up with a scream. Inside her spirited chest, something is chipping away at the barriers around her heart. Korra takes a deep breath and leans back, still stunned by Kuvira's confession. Her emotions are a mix of positives and negatives, some dark and some light, others confusing and muddled; but in the haze, Korra can make out a heartbreaking, but equally uplifting realization. Tears well in her eyes as she gathers up the remainder of her anger and lets it disperse, instead replacing it with acceptance.

"Okay," Korra whispers shakily, licking her chapped lips as she nods. "Okay, you..., you love her."

"I'm sorry, Korra," Kuvira sobs violently, choking on hiccuped breaths, "I'm so sorry I fucked up again."

"Stop," Korra murmurs in a soothing voice. The woman leans forward and slowly extends her arm, letting her hand gently rest upon the metal-bender's trembling shoulder. Kuvira's cries dissipate slowly, but she still recoils out of fear with Korra's soft touch.

"W-What are you d-doing?" She says in a rough stammer, her breaths still choppy and uneven. Korra closes her eyes and pushes down her own selfish desires and instead focuses on the present, a present that she cannot ever be part of. It hits her with the strength of a gale force wind.

Korra knows she must let go.
"Take care of her," Korra breathes out shakily as she nods at Kuvira with tears in her eyes, "just please, promise me you'll take care of her."

"Korra, what are you-"

"Promise me, Kuvira," Korra tells her softly, "promise me that you'll take care of her, for me."

"But what about you?" Kuvira whispers, her voice cracking on the last word. Korra releases her hand from her shoulder and sighs, looking away sadly. She wipes a few more tears away before she takes a deep breath and looks back up at Kuvira with a mournfully understanding expression.

"I'm eternal now, Kuvira," Korra says sadly, "I'm nothing to anyone anymore. I'm a figment, a false hope. Asami..., Kuvira she can't love me anymore."

"Asami has been mourning you for fifteen years, Korra. I don't think she'll stop anytime soon," Kuvira says with a raised brow, still confused as to what Korra is trying to hint at. Korra only sighs and nods, fully aware of Asami's bad habits and problems she'd picked up in her absence. A pit swells in her heart before she realizes that she must do the one thing that she would never do; it's something she'd fight to the death for, but no longer can.

"Then you must make her stop," Korra whispers as the rain begins to ease. Kuvira glances up at the clearing sky, silently noting how the grey lingers. Still, confusion lingers in her opal eyes as she turns back to the previous Avatar with a cock of her head.

"How?" Kuvira choked out, her voice cracking as she sees the sheer pain in her friend's eyes. Korra sighs once more as her hand reaches out and squeezes her shoulder again, this time with more reassurance than before. Korra's eyes glisten with tears, her lips trembling as she parts her mouth to speak.

"By loving her, Kuvira," Korra tells her softly. "Love her so she won't love me anymore."

"Air-bending is about patience," Jinora says as she goes through the motions of her air-bending stance, "not about speed or power."
"Right," An says as he follows her moves with ease, his body twisting and gliding freely upon the grass. Jinora watches him, pausing her own movements to simply observe the young man as he copies her bending forms with the grace of an experienced bender.

"You're good at this," she murmurs with a slight cock of her head. An finishes the forms before bowing. He pauses a moment before he nods up at her.

"You sound like you're shocked about that," An chuckles, readying himself for the next form. Jinora leads him through it, mulling the words over in her head. Inside her mind, she feels Korra's presence linger in and out, providing her with some warmth and reassurance.

"Korra's worst element was air," Jinora muses as she twists her body with the slight wind, "she was too impatient and hot-headed."

"I'm pretty easily frustrated, too," An laughs as he finishes the last form. "But, I wouldn't say that I'm too bad. My hardest element is water, oddly enough." Jinora raises a brow at his confession, but An only shrugs and folds his hands together before jutting them forward, producing a small sphere of air.

"Air reminds me of fire, I guess," An says softly, remembering the training with Mako from a few days before. "It's like you have all this power, but it's up to you to do good with that power. I guess that's why they're air nomads and not soldiers. They choose to bring peace, to work with the universe."

"You think that air possesses qualities to harm someone?" Jinora asks curiously as An flicks some dirt off his shoulder. The boy furrows his brows as he puts out the small ball of air with a flick of his fingers. He's silent, thinking of his answer, before his eyes flash with understanding.

"Air is essential for life, isn't it? Surely, that makes it the element with the most potential to hurt someone?" An asks, glancing up at Jinora with a soft, but bittersweet smile. Subconsciously, An's hands massage his throat, as if he could feel his air leaving his lungs. Jinora cocks a brow and gazes at him.

"Air is what nearly killed Korra," she remembers sadly, bowing her head slightly. "You are more in tune with her than you know."
"I just wish I could talk with her," An says, his voice growing distant as he takes a seat on the ground. "I just want to know what I'm supposed to do, you know? I feel so lost without anyone to guide me. I just want to find my purpose not just as the Avatar, but also as me, An."

"Trust me," Jinora mumbles as she takes a seat beside him. "She's trying just as hard to get through to you, too."

"How can you tell?" An asks quietly, picking at some grass. Jinora smiles and chuckles sadly as she glances over at him. She reaches out with her hand and places her palm upon his slightly trembling knee. She senses the fear and anxiety crawling through the young man as she sighs deeply.

"I've kept in touch with Korra ever since she died. She means quite a lot to me. I've always been spiritual, achieving more in eleven years than my father could in forty, all before I'd even been a teenager. I can project my spirit, as well as convert the energy for other uses," Jinora says with a quiet voice.

"Harmonic Convergence?" An asks and Jinora nods. "I aided Korra in defeating Vaatu and retrieving Raava from his enslavement."

"That's pretty cool," An says with a slight grin. "I heard she turned into a giant blue spirit."

"Yeah," Jinora chuckles as she blushes slightly, "but something worse happened that day; Korra lost the connection with her past lives."

"And she never recovered them," An finishes for her sadly, bowing his head. Jinora nods again, but her eyes glaze as she sighs heavily.

"You know, in all my years, I never thought I'd be an air-bending master to the Avatar," Jinora whispers distantly. A slight breeze drifts through her hair, carrying the scent of the ocean and salt with it. A smile curls at the edges of her lips as she feels that familiar warmth back in her chest.

"You'll get through to her when the time is right," Jinora says as she starts to get up. "But until then, we have some training to do."
"Faster!" Korra screams as Asami brings the Satomobile around a close corner, "woohoo, yeah Asami!"

"Hang on tight," Asami grins as she slams on the handbrake and jerks the car hard to right, causing the tires to screech and smoke to billow up around them as they spin around at the finish line. The car comes to a grinding halt and Korra laughs in joy, unbuckling her seatbelt and leaping out of the car.

"Damn, Asami! That has to be a new record!" The Water Tribe girl grins as she reaches down and pulls Asami out of her seat. The inventor smiles as Korra's arms wrap around her waist. She throws her own arms over the girl's shoulders and grins, pressing their damp forehead's together.

"You're so smart, you know that?" Korra mumbles as her eyes subtly dart between her eyes and her lips anxiously. Asami chuckles, swaying them both lightly as she closes her eyes in bliss. Korra's arms are so warm and protective around her, and for the first time in so long, the heiress feels safe.

"You get some credit too, you know," Asami murmurs back as her eyes open halfway, "you gave me the idea for the miniature propulsion tanks." Korra laughs and slides her head down until her forehead is pressed in Asami's strong shoulder, her smile spreading into the fabric of her riding jacket.

"I still have no idea what that means but I'm glad I could help," Korra admits in a muffled voice, causing the heiress to laugh again. Something in her heart bursts free at the sound of Korra's raspy voice. The arms around her middle tighten and their swaying comes to a soft, slow halt.

"Thank you," Korra murmurs softly, "for taking me out racing. We haven't done since we first met." Asami feels tears tug at her eyes, but she pushes them down. She's cried over Korra for three years, and now that the woman is here, she won't be crying over her anytime soon. Korra is here, and she's not leaving her again. Her hold on the Avatar tightens as she reigns her in closer, her nose pushing into those choppy chestnut locks.

"I should be the one thanking you, Korra," Asami murmurs back as she peppers a loving kiss to her friend's forehead. Korra pulls back from her shoulder and cocks her head in confusion, though a smile is present on her face. The small expression of happiness brings an inexplicable amount of joy to the inventor, for the last time she'd seen Korra, smiles were something of a rare occurrence. A warm smile of her forms at Korra's happiness, and suddenly, Asami realizes that she may not always be happy, but when she's with Korra, everything else disappears.
“For coming back, Korra,” Asami whispers as she tucks a strand of hair from her cheek, "for not giving up on us... on me."

“I'd never give up on you," Korra breathes back, her face leaning closer. "I could never leave you behind. You're the reason I'm here now."

"Mm?" Asami mumbles as she loses herself in Korra's eyes. A blush paints her pale cheeks as Korra cups her cheek and leans in closer. Her nose grazes the older woman's own with a faint nuzzle, and Asami can feel the soft, warm breaths upon her lips. Korra's eyes are misting with tears as she speaks.

"You're the reason I'm staying, Asami."

"Asami!"

The heiress jerks her head up at the sound of her voice. Asami looks around through blurred vision and a pounding headache. She's slumped against her desk. She'd apparently fallen asleep at work once more. Outside, the pale morning sun beams in through the windows and irritates her sensitive eyes. The woman groans as she closes her eyes, willing her dreams to come back so that she can lose herself in those few happy moments and memories that she has left. Tears track down her already damp cheeks, allowing Asami to realize that she'd been crying in her sleep again.

"Asami!" Her name is called out again, startling her from her thoughts. Grumpy from lack of sleep and a terrible hangover, Asami nods her head up slowly, growling as she rubs at the ache in her head. At some point, she wonders how she'd allowed herself to become this way. She looks up to see Mako standing in the doorway with a worried expression on his face. The heiress grumbles and lets her head droop back down.

"What are you doing here?" She grunts painfully. "I thought you'd gone to Zaofu to visit Bolin and Opal."

"I came back with...," Mako trails off, deciding against telling Asami the truth quite yet as he watches the woman's eyes meet his again, sad and desolate. "I came back with Bolin. I just wanted to stop by and see how you were keeping."

"I'm fine," Asami mutters, waving him off as she closes her eyes again. Her mouth is dry and her throat feels like there's a fire lit at its base. Mako steps forward and reaches her side as she stands,
teetering heavily as the alcohol from the previous night still impairs her judgements.

"Spirits," Mako breathes as he catches a whiff of the scotch from her breath, "have you been like this the entire time I've been gone?"

"What's that supposed to mean, Mako?!" Asami demands, eyes lit with fury as she shoves him off. "I'm not an alcoholic, I'm just trying to relieve stress."

"Surely there's a better way to do that than this, Asami," Mako murmurs, gazing at the dishevelled woman. Asami only snorts and chuckles sadly as she reaches for the water jug on the drawer behind her desk. She pours herself a tall glass and pulls out a bottle of painkillers from the drawer. She downs two of the white powdered pills with her water before turning to face Mako once more.

"My previous stress reliever backed out," she chortles sarcastically, causing Mako to cringe, "so I guess it's me and the bottle."

"Asami…," Mako murmurs sadly, devastated to see his friend in such a rough state. It's not fair, but he knows that Korra was everything to Asami. No matter what help she'd seek or the temporary relief she'd get, the previous Avatar's loss was like a permanent poison in the heiress' veins; it constantly tore her apart and the fire-bender's almost certain that there's little to no trace of the real Asami left in the hollow shell of the woman before him.

"Have you considered maybe just attending an AA meeting?" Mako asks, trying not cringe as the words leave his mouth. Asami laughs again, shaking her head at him as she settles back down at her desk, pulling up a few blueprints she'd been working on the previous night.

"I told you, I'm not an alcoholic," Asami mutters as she reads over her notes. Mako rolls his eyes and feels frustration build within himself.

"You're in denial, more like," he mutters under his breath as he shakes his head. Asami stops reading and jerks her head up, glaring at her friend.

"What did you say?!" She snarls viciously. Mako doesn't flinch as Asami rises and leans over the desk, fixing him with another piercing stare. Her peridot eyes are lit with rage as she clenches her nails upon the mahogany surface with conviction. Mako remains stoic as he keeps his calm glance.
"I said you're in denial, Asami," he tells her as he turns towards the door, "and you're only hurting yourself by refusing to accept your problems."

"What problems?!" Asami growls out as Mako lingers in the doorway. The fire-bender pauses and cocks his head, his eyes brimming with tears as he parts his trembling lips. The two glance at each other for a few moments longer before Mako finally finds the courage to speak.

"You know what problems, Asami," he says coldly, "and no one can fix them but you."

"And what if I don't want to fix them, huh?" Asami challenges him with a glint in her eyes. Mako's determined stare falters and grows weak with hurt. The man takes a step into the hall, his hand lingering on the door as he bows his head, defeated.

"Do whatever you want, Asami. I'm just tired of trying to be there for you when all you do is push me away. We're all trying to help you through this, but you can't seem to let go of Korra. It's been fifteen years. You have to stop torturing yourself over her death. It's not worth this pain," he tells her softly, glancing back up in hope that she'd change her mind and finally break out of the decade-long trance she'd put herself in. But, when his amber eyes meet the defiant glare radiating from those pale green eyes, Mako can only take a step back and sigh.

"I hope you find peace one day, Asami," Mako whispers in a cracked voice, "I mean it."

The door shuts behind him softly, leaving the heiress alone once again.

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And with the use of the Avatar State, Avatar Korra saved Republic City from Kuvira's wrath, at the cost of her own life.

An reads the last line of the text over and over again, his eyes welling with tears. He closes the text and leans against the long shelf of the library. He wipes away a few rolling tears. He folds his arms over his chest and pulls his knees up, trying to make himself as small as possible. He doesn't quite understand why he feels so empty, for he has no words. He just feels so void of life and emotion. Grunting, An rises and makes his way over to the door, taking one last glance at the few books he'd read on Korra's past, before stepping out and into the courtyard.
"Oh hey look it's Ko-, I mean An!" Ikki's excited voice calls out. An turns and Ikki grins at the sight of him, pulling her hand back to punch his shoulder amicably. An smiles half-heartedly as he rubs the ache out of his arm. Ikki frowns and cocks her head in confusion.

"I didn't hurt you, did I?" Ikki says with a smirk. An tries to smile, but it doesn't reach his eyes.

"Nah," An replies in a muffled voice, "just wasn't prepared, that's all."

"You're stressed out about something," Kai's voice comes into the clearing, causing Ikki and An to turn. The man smiles, stroking his beard as Jinora walks, arm looped around his, towards them. An tries to hide his face from his air-bending master, but Jinora can see straight through it.

"Sweetheart," Jinora murmurs to Kai, squeezing his arm. Kai nods as he pecks the woman's forehead, his lips lingering on her blue tattoo. Jinora smiles warmly as Kai's hand presses lovingly against her slightly swollen abdomen as he pecks her cheek again. "Yes, my darling?"

"I will need a moment alone with the Avatar," the air-master whispers to her husband before glancing knowingly at Ikki. The younger air-master rolls her eyes and pushes past the married couple, grunting out a sarcastic farewell to An. The boy smiles timidly as she skips over to Meelo and Rohan standing and chatting with a few White Lotus guards. Kai smiles and nods at An before pecking Jinora's lips and leaving her alone with the Avatar.

"You're pretty far along," An muses as he watches Jinora's hand rub over her stomach. Jinora's smile grows wider as a blush spreads over her face. She gazes down at the small bump and nods. The woman takes a deep breath and sighs contently.

"It's a girl," Jinora murmurs warmly, her smile growing wider, "we're going to name her Korra."

Something inside An churns and he bites his lip, holding back tears. Jinora's eyes meet his again as she steps forward, placing a hand on his shoulder. The Avatar follows silently, his eyes glued to the ground as Jinora leads him to the gazebo overlooking the city. The sun is setting beyond the mountainside, leaving a golden glow over the city skyline. Something in his heart flutters, pulling him to explore the place where the previous Avatar had spent so many active years of her life becoming a fully realized Avatar. An's eyes settle on the glowing yellow and orange double helix coming from the Spirit Portal in the centre of the city and his lungs tighten with quick, anxious breaths.
"You're ready," Jinora says, pulling him back to the present. An looks over, confused as he cocks his head.

"For what?" An asks back, although a part of him knows the answer when Jinora's hand clasps his shoulder.

"To find yourself," she tells him as they both look at the portal, "and to find her."

"The new Avatar has arrived in Republic City, so it seems."

The man scratches his beard as he rereads the letter in his hand. He gazes over at the woman huddled by the fire, eyes empty and face wrinkled from age. The sound of his voice causes her head to perk up immediately and she stares at him with a set jaw. The look in her eyes is steely and guarded, but the man knows better than to question her. They've spent too many years asking questions that have no answers. The man rises stiffly, coursing his old age and creaking bones. As he reads the last line of the letter, however, there's a new strength in his step.

"Are you ready, my love?" The man asks, even though his voice cracks. The woman breathes out slowly, turning her gaze back to the fire. Her fingers press into the fabric of her parka as she takes her time to process the first statement, let alone the question.

"I don't think I'll ever be ready," the woman whispers back, her eyes watering. The man sighs and takes his place beside his wife, wrapping a long, worn arm around her shaking shoulder. The woman trembles in his grip, realizing that he isn't as strong as he had been once before.

"We've been holding out from them for too long," the man says, letting the letter in his hands fall into the fire. There's a new, tenacious spark in his eyes as he glares at the paper combusting from the flames. The cackling drowns out the tense silence between the married couple.

"You're sure there's no one else that can do this?" The woman asks, breaking the silence with a hoarse croak. The man takes a deep, shuddering breath as he squeezes her tighter to her. The smaller woman pushes her face in the crook of his stubbled neck, placing her trembling hands on his chest.
"It's got to be us, I can feel it," the man replies, shifting so that he can see his wife. The woman's eyes harden and she looks away.

"You're just saying that because you want some sick redemption," she snarls, although both of them can tell she doesn't mean it. Her voice is tight with both desperation and fear, as if she's afraid of facing the truth, the bleak reality that they've been hiding out from for fifteen years. The man shakes his head and reaches for her small hands, holding them tightly in his own and squeezing lightly.

"Senna," he says, his voice cracking, "we can't keep running from her."

"Don't you get it?!" Senna screams as she stands up abruptly, pointing to the crumpled, burning parchment. "He's not our daughter, Tonraq!"

"But he is the Avatar," Tonraq growls as he stands, too, "and so was our daughter. Just like Tenzin taught Korra, we must teach An."

"Why?! It's not fair. Aang died from natural causes," Senna seethes as she spits the words. "Our baby died because we couldn't protect her."

Tonraq remains silent as Senna bursts into a sob, the cries quaking through the room as she collapses on the floor in a heaping mess. The Water Tribe Chief takes a deep breath and runs his hands through his thick air. The sounds of her heart breaking reverberate off the walls, reminding the two old people just how much loss they'd both endured in the past fifteen years. Tonraq sighs as he squats next to his wife, closing his eyes as he pulls her flush into his side. Senna only clutches him tighter, crying harder as she thinks of her last memory of their daughter. Tonraq's hands smooth her frazzled and greying hair, placing gentle kisses into it and to her forehead to ease her sobs. Finally, his eyes open, staring deep into the fire, an element that represented his daughter thoroughly. Tonraq pulls back slightly, angling Senna's face so that they're looking directly at each other.

"We couldn't protect her, you're right," he whispers as he wipes her tears away, "but we can try to protect him."

"Will this work?"
An looks skeptically at the gazebo’s ground, scratching the back of his head as he glances up at Jinora. The air-bender smiles at him and shrugs, though her eyes say something else. They’d been trying these meditations for the past few weeks with little success, but something in the pregnant air-master feels right about today. The wind is light and warm, the air smells of ocean spray and summer, and everything feels peaceful. The stars begin to dot the sky above them as Jinora gently pushes on An's shoulder, urging him to sit amongst the candles and ice-lily petals laid out on the ground.

"Just clear your mind and lose yourself to the chi paths running through your body," she instructs him softly, "it will work. You are ready, An."

"I know I'm ready," he murmurs as he sits down, crossing his legs, "but is she?"

"Yes," Jinora says sweetly, patting his hair with a loving stroke. "You're both ready, Avatar."

"Okay," An says with a deep breath. Jinora smiles at him, removing her hand and backing away before making her way over towards the courtyard. She quietly lets An know that if he needs anything, there are two White Lotus guards standing by in the vicinity. An only nods nervously, biting his lip.

"Here goes nothing," he mutters under his breath as he closes his eyes.

An tries to loosen the knots in his body, to relieve the tension that courses through him, but all he can think about how much of a failure he is. The world needs him to come back and give them hope that the Avatar can keep the balance that had been made fifteen years ago. The world needs him to pull through like Korra had pulled through so many times for her friends and family. Tears burn at his closed lids as he fight back his urge to sob at the thought of Korra sacrificing her life for the ones she’d love, for the city she'd come to be a part of; he keeps seeing those lines from the book, repeating over and over again in his head. Was he to give up his life for the world as Korra had done?

*Could* he give up his life?

"You know, I found thinking really hard actually didn't help."

"Look, Master Jinora, I'm try-" An stops talking as soon as he turns around. His jaw drops as he
makes out the image before him with awe.

"Avatar Korra," he breathes in disbelief. Korra gives him an earnest smile as she plops down next to him in the gazebo.

"Hey," she replies back, grinning lopsidedly. An has to shake his head like a wet dog just to convince himself that he isn't simply imagining things.

"You're… wait, but…, how?!") He stutters, looking past her shoulder and to the courtyard, only to see that the two guards have frozen. In fact, everything around the young boy and the previous Avatar has come to a standstill, as if time had halted for the sake of their presence.

"It's complicated," Korra opts to say, shrugging sheepishly as she turns to An. "Even I don't really understand it."

"Wow," An says, still in awe that he's talking to the previous Avatar, the saviour of the world four times over. Korra only offers him a warm smile as she reaches out and pats his shaking knee with a comforting hand. An swallows his nerves and gulps anxiously.

"I have so many questions," he says, choking up a bit. "I just..., I don't know where to start, how to begin, or what to say, Avatar Korra-"

"Korra," the woman interrupts softly, squeezing his knee once more, "just call me Korra, An. I know you don't like the title either."

"How do you know that?" An asks with a raised brow. Korra only smirks at him and chuckles, causing An to blush as he realizes his mistake.

"Right," he mumbles awkwardly, "that was pretty obvious, I suppose."

"Eh, wasn't too terrible in comparison to some of my 'realizations'," she says, putting air quotes up to make An laugh and ease up a bit. Korra's warm smile returns again as a sympathetic expression takes over her face. An's smile droops when he thinks back to why he's really here.
"I'm not like you, you know," An mutters, glancing back at the frozen image of Ikki and Meelo arguing by the front pillars. "I feel so out of place here. They all want to get to know me because they think they'll remember you better. It's like they forget who I am, sometimes."

"And who exactly are you, An?" Korra asks, her brows furrowing as she curls her lips down into a tight line. An already figures out that he prefers Korra with a smile on her face, not an expression of confusion. Hurt tugs at the young boy's heart as he shrugs desolately, tears welling in his eyes.

"Beyond my name and title, I don't know," he admits shamefully, "that's… that's kinda why I wanted to talk to you. Maybe you could help me."

At this, Korra frowns, bowing her head in her own shame. An looks confused, and a little scared as he shifts forward in his seat. Korra leans back a bit, her eyes glazing as she takes to gluing her stare to the wooden banister of the gazebo. Memories of her and Asami standing in the same place wash over her and she's immediately overwhelmed by her emotions. She allows a few tears to drop before she realizes that she's not alone. An has tears in his own eyes as he glances to the top of the wooden beam, understanding just what had gone down in the same spot where he sits.

"Look, kid," Korra whispers, her voice hoarse, "I'm not the best to offer advice." An's eyes flare with rage as he grinds his teeth.

"Then why are you even here?!" He cries out in frustration and sadness. Korra's eyes flash as she leans forward again, grabbing at his shoulders.

"Because I'm the only one you have left," Korra chokes out sadly, "I'm sorry that you couldn't speak to Kyoshi, Roku, Aang, or Kuruk, even."

"It doesn't matter. No one needs me," An growls, turning his head away. "I'm not the Avatar they want, Korra. You are."

"You're right," Korra says flatly, causing An to stiffen with shock. He cocks his head in confusion as Korra's words wash over him.

"I-I am?" He stutters, utterly baffled the woman would say such a thing. Korra squeezes his shoulders and offers him a bittersweet smile as she takes a deep breath. Her heart flutters with need to reach out and get through to the young boy, because she knows she'd been him when she'd lost her bending at seventeen. She'd been there, alone on that cliff contemplating her existence and role
"You're not the Avatar the world wants right now, An," Korra reaffirms her thoughts. An bows his head sadly, his shoulders slumping in defeat. He parts his mouth and is about to say something when Korra's voice comes through again, her tone strong with pride and understanding.

"You're the Avatar it needs," she says, making An's gaze meet hers once more. "People often confuse what they want with what they need. I know that the world still hasn't recovered from losing their previous Avatar so young, and that's why they're so protective of you. They want to love you, An, but they just don't know how yet. This doesn't mean they don't need you. They all need you. Some more than others, kid." An remains silent as Korra continues to tell him, "just…, don't give up. I know you feel alone, and you have every right to feel that way. Spirits, I felt that way for three years of my life after Harmonic Convergence. I had no idea what I was doing, or if I was making the right decisions. I made them the same way Avatar Wan did, on my own.

"Look," Korra says softly, pausing to take a breath. "What I'm saying is this; don't give up when you're so young. You have so much of the world to explore. You have friends to make, family to cherish, and people to love. You can't just throw it all away because you don't know what's right. An, you have to understand that right and wrong, these are subjective feelings. You are the Avatar; to you, there is no right or wrong, there just is. You hold the power to do something, and one thing about being the Avatar that sucks, is that not everyone is gonna like that something."

"But you left a legacy!" An interrupts, tears streaming down his face. "You left this…, this reputation I'm not sure I can fulfill or even meet. I don't want to let anyone down, Korra. I just want, for once in my life, to not screw things up. I just want to help people."

"Then you're already halfway there," Korra says with a smile, nudging his shoulder encouragingly. An still looks doubtful, but Korra sighs and rubs the back of her head, trying to figure out a way to word her feelings in a direction that would motivate An, not demoralize him.

"Listen, people may expect big things of you, but you must know that I wasn't perfect. People expected me to be like Aang; I was supposed to solve things peacefully, but instead I charged into everything head first without thinking of consequences. Spirits, I even got exiled from Republic City! I was far from the perfect Avatar, and to be honest, I don't think a perfect Avatar exists, An," Korra says gently, her tone even and strong. An keeps quiet waiting for Korra to finish as she softly murmurs, "I spent fifteen years of my life locked up in a compound for 'my own protection'. You've spent six years of your life on the streets getting by. We've both come from places where finding yourself isn't a priority."

"Yeah," An agrees in a low mumble, bitterly shaking his head. Korra sighs as she reaches out, squeezing his shoulder once again.
"Hey," she whispers, drawing his attention back, "that doesn't mean that it isn't a priority, because it is."

"Why?" An chokes out, tears welling in his eyes again. Korra gives him a sympathetic, but equally wise smile as she nods.

"Because," she says softly, "you're human first, then Avatar. You can't save the world if you can't save yourself."

"But what about the world? They won't wait for me to find myself," An replies with an edge to his voice. Korra shakes her head, understanding the poor boy's frustration. Korra rubs her forehead with her index finger and thumb, alleviating some of the pressure that's accumulated there.

"The world doesn't wait for anyone, An, Avatar or otherwise," she tells him wisely, "but in the same way you can't ask a blind man to see, you can't be ready before you're supposed to be. The world has waited fifteen years for you to come along, they can stand to wait a few more for you to get ready."

"Really?" An asks, a slight twinge of hope in his words. Korra smiles, her heart fluttering in her chest at the excitement in the young boy's eyes. She nods and reaches out, squeezing his hand tightly as they both begin to cry with happiness.

"Really, An, and I'll be here to support you the entire way. This is my first time as much as it is yours," she swears honestly, giving him another assuring nod. An grins weakly as he chuckles at Korra's haphazardly lopsided smile. They lock hands and pull each other into a half-hug, smiling.

"We're in this together, kid," Korra whispers, her voice calm like water. "That's a promise."

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**Book 4: WATER**

The element of change.
"My love, where have you gone? I turned around and now I'm alone; will I ever understand it? Will I make it to the other side?"

"It's been awhile since we've been here. So much has changed."

Senna glances up slowly to see Tonraq smiling half-heartedly at the city lights shining in the distance. The woman can't bring herself to smile, for the pit inside her stomach churns knowing that they're going to the place where her daughter had been killed. Tonraq turns back to look at his wife with a bittersweet smile as he takes to sitting beside her. Senna's shoulders tense and she holds her breath, fighting back another sob.

"Sweetheart," Tonraq murmurs, winding an arm around the smaller woman. "It's going to be okay. We can do this."

"What if he's nothing like her? What if he's this completely different person and he doesn't know who we are?" Senna snaps, crying as she folds into his arms, seeking protection and love. Tonraq exhales deeply, allowing his breath to mist slightly in the cool evening air. The water around them ripples calmly, and although he seems collected and well-kept on the outside, he's just as nervous and anxious as his wife on the inside.

"He isn't Korra, Senna. I understand that. I know you're still hurting over her passing, but honey, Korra's gone," Tonraq tells her, his voice steadily climbing higher as he, too, fights back tears. Senna's small hands beat against his chest as she shakes her head defiantly.

"I... I can't think about him, Tonraq. How do you think I can look at him?!" Senna practically shouts as she shoves him backwards in her mournful rage. Tonraq doesn't flinch, but his gaze wavers as he looks down sadly, sighing. They are silent once again, a wall of tension building with each second spent staring into the nothingness of Republic City. Senna's heart feels empty, but then Tonraq spots the top of Sato Industries' tower and he feels something in his heart clench with guilt, causing him to turn back to face his wife with a grim expression.

"Asami had to deal with it alone," Tonraq speaks, his voice low and his eyes watering with remorse. Senna's shoulders slump disarmingly at his words and she looks away, feeling her own guilt washing over her. Tonraq turns back to her, jaw set and lip rolled between his teeth in frustration.
"The love of our life lost the last thing she had that reminded her that the world is worth the pain, and we didn't comfort her. Sure, we called, we wrote letters, sent her packages, but we never came to actually visit her. We let our fear or reliving Korra's loss keep us from taking care of our other daughter," Tonraq says, trying to keep the bitter self-loathing out his voice but failing miserably as tears stream down his face. He bows his head in shame as he barely chokes out, "her love for Korra surpassed anything we could give her, and we let her wash away in this mess on her own. She lost her father and the love of her life in the same day, Senna. She was just a young woman, and now, I just hope that she's not as fucked up as we are." Senna remains silent, lost in her own thoughts as she mulls over her husbands words. Tonraq takes a deep breath, wiping his cheeks away before making a decision.

"I can arrange a boat back for you, if you wish," Tonraq whispers shakily, glancing down at Senna's teary eyes. The woman stays silent for a few moments, just trying to digest her feelings and their choice. She could run away, but Tonraq had been right a few weeks earlier; she cannot keep running away.

"No," she breathes as steadily as she can despite her still wavering nerves. She sucks in a brave breath and allows her gaze to once again meet the bright lights of Republic City. Tonraq squeezes her shoulder and the woman turns, reaching up to hold his chin in her palms. She presses a kiss to his lips, and however soft and chaste it may be, it's more than what they've exchanged in the past fifteen years. Tonraq smiles softly as she pulls away and nods.

"You're right, Tonraq," Senna murmurs sadly, brushing away a strand of her hair as she sighs. Tonraq's arms squeeze around her once more as he places a feather-light kiss upon her wrinkled forehead. Though they're aged beyond their years, for the first time, they feel young again.

"We owe this to Korra and Asami," Senna tells him, though her voice still shakes, "today, we stop running. Today, we face the truth."

"Kuvira? You still awake over there?"

Kuvira's weary face snaps up as she sees Mako stride into her makeshift office in the council chambers with a package in his hands and a smirk plastered on his face. The metal-bender doesn't crack as much as a smile as Mako sets the package down on her desk, alongside an envelope. Sighing with exhaustion, Kuvira reaches for the envelope and reads the address attached to it, frowning slightly. She looks up with a cocked brow, confused. Mako crosses his arms and looks at her, almost knowingly as the former captain swallows the pit in her throat.
"The President wants you to send this to Asami. Something to do with the new renewable energy project she and Varric had founded awhile back," Mako explains, nodding his head down at the package. Kuvira cringes at the name, a gesture that doesn't go unnoticed by the fire-bender. Kuvira bites her lip, avoiding his gaze as her face begins to burn with a raging, nervous blush.

"You couldn't send Ling or Xiao from accounting? Aren't they more focused on this stuff? My job isn't to be a bus-boy," Kuvira attempts to snarl the statement, but her voice comes out cracked and fragile. She winces once more, and Mako has to hold back from rolling his eyes.

"Yeah, but they don't need an excuse to talk to Future Industries' CEO," Mako growls lowly, his eyes speaking the words he refuses to say. Kuvira flinches and leans back in her chair, attempting to look away from the police chief. Mako slides the package forward a few more spaces, nodding his head.

"She works until five tonight," he says, glancing at the clock on the wall, "so, I suggest you get moving, Kuv."

"What if I don't want to see her, huh?"

Kuvira attempts to fight back, but her jaw slacks as the words come out. Inside, she's nothing but dying to see the heiress again. She'd be lying if she said that she hadn't spent one second thinking about the inventor since their fallout. Guilt-filled nights kept her awake night after night, reducing her to a paranoid and remorseful insomniac. As much as she'd hate to admit it, she wants to see Asami and this 'job' is like a gift sent in from the Spirits themselves. Mako sees the look in her eyes and immediately, Kuvira knows she's defeated. Half-heartedly grumbling to make it as though she had no choice, Kuvira stands and swipes the package from the desk and makes her way to the door, brushing past him without a word.

It takes her a maximum fifteen minutes for her to speed across the city to Asami's office. She rides the elevator up to the top floor, her foot tapping anxiously against the tiled floorboards as she watches the numbers tick by too slowly. Inside her chest, her heart beats like a kick drum bound too tightly, one hammer away from snapping. Sweat beads at the back of her neck and her stomach churns when the elevator dings. The woman steps out, clutching the package hard in her arms. Just as she enters the hallway to Asami's office, the inventor's receptionist flags her down with a hand on her arm. Kuvira glances at her, only to see worry pooling in her grey-blue eyes as she office worker parts her lips anxiously.

"Ms S-Sato is b-busy at the moment," she stutters worriedly, glancing at Kuvira and the box in her hand. The metal-bender picks up on her anxiety and feels her own stomach churn. She holds the item in her hand tighter as she shakes her head firmly.
"Look, I was given a schedule. Ms Sato needs to take this package now," she says authoritatively. A flash of fear washes over the young receptionist and she cringes. Something within Kuvira instantly aches because it's been far too long since she's spoken in that tone of voice.

"I'm sorry Great-"

"That's not my name," Kuvira cuts her off, immediately shrinking up as the receptionist makes the slip up. The young woman looks even more terrified than before, and Kuvira decides that she cannot wait any longer. She can sense something is wrong, because Asami never prevents anyone from entering her office, even in the middle of a meeting. The receptionist looks hesitant, but when Kuvira glances at her again, she timidly moves out of the way and mutters under her breath, "I'm not getting paid enough to do this."

"I won't be long," Kuvira tells her gently, easing some of her tension. "It's just a drop-off, I swear."

"Fine," the receptionist grumbles, pointing towards the door, "just don't let her know I sent you in."

"You have my word," Kuvira says gratefully before slipping past the woman and jogging over to the door. She spends a minute lingering outside the wooden frame, thinking of what she could say, but soon decides to fuck it and enters without even knocking.

But, as soon as her eyes fixate on the sight before, every word she'd ever known flies right out of her brain.

Asami is crumpled up on the corner of her couch, sobbing hysterically into herself. Kuvira nearly drops the package when she sees how hard the woman's shoulders are shaking with the force of her cries. The metal-bender's heart shatters and finally, the box in her hands drops, clunking loudly against the floor. The sound draws up Asami's head and a set of furious but bloodshot peridot eyes glare into hers. At the sight of her, Asami's face softens slightly, but her hostile snarl still curls up at the corner of her lips at the sight of the metal-bender. Kuvira shivers when she sees the sheer hurt and devastation in those green eyes that once held so much life. Asami goes to say something when another cry rips through her, causing the heiress to tilt her head back in a silent, mournful scream of pain. A deep, shocking hiccup rattles through her frame, leaving her breathless.

Kuvira steps forward tentatively, not wanting to scare off the already emotional Asami. Her footsteps are light and her movements are slow, as if she were preparing to capture an enemy. Her eyes are trained in on Asami's damp, tear-stained face. She makes sure to stay calm and cool, for
right now, Asami is like a bomb with a nearly fried fuse. At first, she's confused and scared, because she'd never seen Asami like this. Sure, she'd seen Asami angry and sad and depressed and completely apathetic, but this, this was a whole new level of sadness. Just as Kuvira manages to creep closer, she makes out a small photo laying delicately in the heiress' lap. Kuvira's breath hitches when she makes out just who the people in the photo are.

"They would have surpassed their fiftieth anniversary," Asami sniffs, breaking the silence. Her lips curve up in a slight smile as she reminisces, telling the older woman quietly, "each year that passed, they'd take me out on a picnic at the mountainside. After a hike, Dad would pull out the blanket and tell me the same story of how he'd met my mother. I'd cringe and groan each time, but secretly I loved it. Mom would serve up her traditional sandwiches and we'd watch the sunset, only coming home when I'd fallen asleep in Dad's arms." Kuvira freezes at first, because she'd never even realized that the inventor had stopped crying. Asami now glances blankly at the door over Kuvira's shoulder, her eyes still red from countless tears shed.

"Those were such simpler times, they were moments in which the world was bursting with colours and happiness, real happiness," Asami says, shaking her head bitterly. "They would be disgusted to see me now, in my state." Asami sighs, shifting her gaze to meet Kuvira's equally misty eyes. Her lips quiver as she begins to cry again, but this time, she can't find the urge to stop as she stammers out, "I b-bet they h-hate me. E-Everyone hates m-me."

"Stop," Kuvira hushes her, taking a seat on the couch beside the frail woman. Asami shakes her head and cries harder. Kuvira ignores the pounding in her chest and wraps her arms around Asami's shuddering frame, drawing her into a tight hug. The inventor sobs mercilessly as she latches on to the taller woman involuntarily, her arms feeble and weak around her waist. Kuvira holds her closer, weaving her protective arms around her like a shield.

"They'd be so proud of you, Asami," Kuvira murmurs into her greasy hair, "they're probably looking at you now, wondering how they ended up with a daughter as smart, brave, capable, beautiful, loving, and gifted as you." Asami's shudders ease slightly, but the crying doesn't stop. Kuvira rubs her back in languid, soothing strokes, all the while peppering loving kisses to her hair and forehead.

"I'm not the same Asami they knew. I'm none of those things anymore," Asami growls through gritted teeth as her fingers clench in the metal-bender's clothing. Though she's a powerful martial artist and could very well hold her own in a fight, she feels so utterly useless and small in Kuvira's arms.

"That's not true," Kuvira whispers, squeezing her lightly once more. Asami snorts with discontent as she pulls away slightly. The woman wipes away a few drops of tears that linger upon her cheeks as she sighs deeply. Each breath she takes is laced with agony and remorse, with touches of self-deprecation.
"I fuck around with people I don't know, I drink away my problems, have few friends, and the few that I have I push away, and the few that I let in have died." Asami’s voice is thick with angst and pain, but she still shakes her head. "I'm not that Asami, Kuvira. The daughter they had, she was sweet and innocent. My mother once called me her shining star, but now I know that shining stars are just supernovas; stars die before we even know they exist. I never knew that my mother, a woman who's voice I barely remember, had been so right about one thing; I'm nothing, Kuvira. I will never be anything."

"You're not nothing," Kuvira mumbles shakily as she stares deeply into the heiress' eyes. She leans down and lightly presses a soft kiss to her friend's forehead as she sighs a low and deep breath. Asami's tremors still as Kuvira's hands slowly reach up and grasp at her cheeks, wiping more tears away.

"You're not nothing," she repeats gently, her eyes glazing with affection as she offers a weak smile to Asami. "Not to me, at least."

"I can't give you what you want," Asami growls as her fingers latch onto the older woman's wrists. Her nails attempt to dig into the soft skin, but her grip is too slack from lack of energy and strength. Kuvira shakes her head lightly, giving her another sad smirk as she lets her forehead rest against Asami's own. Their breaths meld, one set quick and anxious while the other is languid and slow.

"I'm not asking you for anything," Kuvira replies gently. Asami's features soften, but she doesn't move as Kuvira winds her arm around her back, pulling her close. The heiress' head falls forward instinctually, landing with a soft thud against the metal-bender's shoulder. Her fingers idly play with the corner of the picture in her lap. Her mind is swimming with various thoughts, but somewhere in the silence, Asami finds Kuvira's heartbeat, strong and steady.

"Why?" Asami chokes out after some time. Kuvira sighs and presses a soft kiss to the inventor's forehead, her eyes closing as she thinks of an answer. A free hand strokes through the tangled onyx locks, smoothing out the curls and as much as she'd like to ignore it, the action soothes Asami.

"I don't know," Kuvira murmurs softly, holding her close once again. "I guess I came here to figure it out."

"Well, is this a good enough answer to your doubts?" Asami spits condescendingly, but makes no attempt to move from the former guard's hold. Kuvira only chuckles sadly as she takes a deep breath, feeling the inventor shrivel up in her grasp. Then, after some time, she shakes her head.
"I know that so many people expect you to just pick yourself up and move on, but I know it's not that easy," Kuvira tells her, a twinge of remorse and hurt playing at her cracking voice. "You got hit with so much and you had so little. It was like fighting a war against ten thousand people with an army of just yourself. I've been there before, you know. It's not the same thing, but I know what it's like to lose people and to never see them again."

Asami only sighs bitterly, clenching her jaw as a fresh wave of tears wash over her. They cascade down her cheeks and Kuvira feels them soak through the material of her coat. The metal-bender only winds her arms around the woman tighter, pulling her head to rest in the nape of her neck as her other arm holds her tightly around her waist. Asami cries harder at the motion, ducking her head further into the older woman's skin. Kuvira hums lowly, her quiet rumble soothing the emotional woman in her arms until all her tears have been shed and her eyes run bloodshot and dry. As Kuvira glances down at Asami, the shell of a woman that is held upon a pedestal, she sees just how little Asami has to offer to anyone, herself included. An idea flies into her mind, and as much as she doubts its success, she knows it's worth a shot. She did make a promise to Korra after all.

"Come on," Kuvira tells her as she tugs upon her arm, "we're going out."

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"Chief Tonraq," Jinora smiles as she walks forward with her father's arm looped around her own. "It is so good to see you again."

"Please," Tonraq says with a nod, "Tonraq is fine, sweetheart. We've been friends for too long for you to be calling me a chief." Jinora's smile widens as she lunges forward, wrapping her arms around the man. At first, the Water Tribe Chief is taken aback by the gesture, but slowly he winds his arms around her, trying to ignore just how much she feels like Korra in his arms. Beside him, Senna shifts awkwardly from foot to foot.

"So…, is he here?" Senna asks, breaking the silence between them. Jinora pulls away from a stiffening Tonraq and nods, her eyes gentle but guarded as she catches a small flicker of fear in the older woman's eyes. Tenzin clears his throat and hobbles forward with a smile on his face.

"An is waiting for you in the courtyard," Tenzin murmurs, his voice gravelly from age as he sighs contently. "The boy seems nervous to meet you."

"Nervous?" Tonraq asks, bewildered, "why would he be nervous?"
"Well, all things considering…," Tenzin trails off, his voice scratchy as images of Korra's dead body flood through his mind. The older man shivers and sighs, looking away for a brief moment to collect himself. Tonraq senses what he had meant and feels a pit in his stomach. Hesitantly, he glances over at Senna, who appears to be just as apprehensive as the master air-benders. Jinora holds her father's arm closer to her side and sighs softly.

"An has been through quite a lot. He was orphaned from a young age and grew up on the streets. For years, no one knew who he was or his importance to the world. All of the sudden, everyone and their neighbour wants to meet him, to see if he lives up to what the last Avatar - to what Korra had managed to do. He's still trying to come to terms with who he is; being the Avatar doesn't help with that," the pregnant woman explains with a sympathetic expression upon her face. Tenzin nods, letting out a soft breath as he begins to shiver in the cool evening air.

"An has presented much more patience and understanding, however, he's still struggling with finding himself," Tenzin explains. He coughs lightly and Jinora rubs a soothing hand along the traverse of his arm. Tenzin sighs again, cursing his old age. Tonraq only offers a meek half-smile.

"I suppose that's where we're supposed to come in, besides trying to help him with water-bending?" Tonraq guesses, though he's already aware that is answer is rhetorical. Senna stiffens beside him, pressing her small body closer to her husband's frame as she seeks out his comfort. By habit, Tonraq's arm winds around the woman's shoulders, pulling him into her side protectively. Senna takes a deep breath, trying to quell the churning in her stomach.

"Has he…, you know?" Senna asks nervously, shifting from foot to foot as she continues to whisper, "has he…, has he found her?"

"Yes," Jinora replies softly, trying not to wince as Senna's eyes well with tears. "An made contact with Korra several days ago. Though, I believe they have not spoken since the exchange. Korra's spirit follows him strongly. She's very… protective." The air-bender says the last sentence with a half-lipped smile and a hazy expression, enjoying the warmth that spreads through her stomach. Her free hand slowly places itself upon the swell of her torso as Senna hides her face in Tonraq's neck, crying into his skin as the Chief pulls her in closer.

"I'm glad," Tonraq murmurs, though he's unsure quite yet of whether he is happy or upset that An has spoken with his daughter before he has; the man has so much he's been wanting to say for so long now, but he's never seen Korra's spirit the way Jinora or Tenzin had long ago. It had been one of the main reasons why the Southern Water Tribe Chief ceased communication with the air-benders. It was just hard, too hard, to live knowing other people could see and speak with his own daughter, but neither his wife nor could he do the same. Tonraq knows he'd give his life just to see his little girl smile again, let alone have the chance to speak with her. Tears well in his own eyes at
the thought, but he represses his emotions for the sake of his wife.

"Well," Tonraq chokes out, desperately hoping that neither air-bender would hear the crack in his voice as he speaks, "can we meet the boy?"

"Right this way," Tenzin smiles as he turns slowly, shuffling on his aching feet as Jinora leads him out of the docks. They make their way up the newly paved ramp, and towards the main courtyard. Tonraq immediately notices two small, white stones sticking out in the grass under the tree beside the gazebo. There's something etched on the stones, but the water-bender can't quite make them out just yet.

"What is that?" Tonraq asks, though the clenching of his heart tells him exactly what they are. Jinora stiffens slightly before she turns to face the father of her best friend with a grim smile. Senna's breath hitches as she watches Jinora's lips tremble and the younger woman sighs slightly.

"When Korra, when she… when she died…, well we just wanted a part that allowed us to keep her in our memories," Jinora explains, glancing over at the two tombstones with a heartbroken expression. Her eyes water and a few tears roll down her cheeks as she lets out a heavy breath. Tonraq nods, though he can't help but notice that there are two gravestones, not just the one. At first, he thinks it could be Katara, but then he thinks back to how the woman had a memorial back in the Southern Water Tribe, not in Republic City.

"What about the other? The one beside… hers," Tonraq asks, his voice hoarse. Jinora's eyes darken as she bows her head slightly.

"It's for Naga."

Tornaq and Senna both snap their heads up at the small whisper from the younger woman. Naga had been Korra's lifeblood, her best of best friends, the one true love that had never deserted her side. Their hearts break simultaneously and they cannot bear to look at the air-benders; instead, their eyes are glued to the the stone erected in the ground resting beside the memorial of their daughter. Tonraq and Senna step forward, closer to the stones as their breaths quicken and their grips on each other's hand tighten with sorrow. Naga had protected their daughter through everything, thick and thin.

"When?" Senna breathes out, the only question and word she's able to form from shock. Tenzin sighs as he scratches at his long, greying beard.
"Four years ago," he answers softly, ignoring the sadness that pulls at his weary heart as he tells them, "Asami found her in the backyard, right under this tree. Her snout had been laying atop Korra's grave and she'd just been whimpering. Asami… well, she stayed by Naga's side until it happened. After Korra passed away, she'd taken Naga in, instead of sending her back to the Water Tribe. It was more or less Naga opting to stay here, however. The dog wouldn't leave Asami's side. I think she knew that the CEO meant a lot to her owner, and Naga was protective of her. The two of them were close until the bitter end. Asami hasn't been the same since losing her faithful companion. Naga's death hit her hard; we've not spoken with her since."

"Is she still in the city?" Tonraq asks, voice shaky from having processed Tenzin's explanation. Jinora nods and sighs sadly, bowing her head.

"Yes, though she has put some distance between herself and those who love her," Jinora says in a soft whisper, her eyes casting downwards to stare at the dew reflecting off the distant stars in the sky. The evening skylight bathes over them in pale pinks and oranges as silence takes over. Senna rolls a lip between her teeth and bites down, thinking about everything they've spoken about thus far, and the boat ride conversation from earlier.

"We'll talk with her," Senna says, allowing a small smile to curl up at Jinora's lips. The woman doesn't have to speak for Senna to know that she's thankful for the concern and help. Asami had been like a daughter to the Water Tribe Chief's wife, and she wasn't sure she was able to lose another child just yet.

"But first," Tonraq says, gaining some strength back to his voice, "where is An?"

"Through those doors," Jinora says with a bigger smile upon her face. "He's been waiting for you."

Tonraq and Senna clasp their hands together and nod at the air-benders before they make their way towards the doors that lead to the back courtyard. They hear the father and daughter move to the kitchen part of the estate, leaving them both alone. Tonraq's chest heaves as he hears movement and muttering from the other side of the door. Senna's hand squeezes tightly around his as they both exchange an anxious glance. This time, however, it's Senna that gives her husband an encouraging nod, pressing herself closer to him for their joint support. They take a minute to breathe in the moment, of taking in the understanding of their soon-to-be action. The moment lasts for a few seconds before they both muster up all their courage.

They hold themselves close to each other, take a deep breath, and push open the door.

Senna and Tonraq both gasp lightly as they see the teenaged boy standing in front of them. His
stands straight, though his shoulders tremble lightly. The young man draws a hesitant breath as he steps forward and nods his head up. The two Water Tribe members' jaws hinge slightly as they make out the blue flash in An's turquoise orbs. For a moment, they're reminded of Korra. The Avatar sucks in a deep breath as he extends his hand. They stand in silence, both Tonraq and Senna in shock and An in a wreck of nerves. Neither of them seem sure of what to say or think of the other person.

"Chief Tonraq and Lady Senna," An says shakily, bowing his head in respect, "I am honoured to finally meet you."

"Where are we going?" Asami asks as Kuvira drives through the winding roads of the mountainside.

"It's a surprise," Kuvira replies, shooting her a giant grin as she swerves the car to the right. Asami holds her breath and pulls her knees up to her chest as she watches the blurring lines of Republic City's skyline fade out of view. She exhales deeply, keeping her stare glued to the world outside. Kuvira watches her from her peripheral vision, her eyes darkened by sadness but also in some lewd sense of hope that maybe today could change Asami.

"I don't like surprises. I'd think you'd have figured that out by now," Asami growls under her breath. Kuvira raises her brow. Well, at least she's talking, she hums to herself. The entire car ride thus far had been nothing short of Asami's steely gaze and tense silence.

"How so?" She counters with a lighthearted question. Asami's head turns slowly and the metal-bender is met with a piercing glare.

"Well," Asami says through gritted teeth, "you killed my father and my almost girlfriend."

Kuvira is shut up immediately, the dagger slicing far too close to home. On any other day, she'd fall into the trap and loathe herself for her past mistakes, but not today. No, today is about Asami, and Kuvira knows that the only way for Asami to make peace with herself is through facing the truth. With a bite of her lip and a tighter grip on the steering wheel. She veers off the road and to an outlook, roughly pulling the car to a stop. Dust clouds around the open seats of the convertible as Kuvira kills the engine and hops out, walking around to open up Asami's door to tug on her arm. The heiress' eyes shoot up as Kuvira reaches down to click off the seatbelt and hoist Asami out of the car.
"What the fuck do you think you're doing?!" The inventor demands angrily. Kuvira tugs the woman to the wide overlook and strips off her coat, leaving her in just a sleeveless tank; it's a sight that painfully reminds the heiress of her previous love, and it stings her. Kuvira shakes her head at her expression, her eyes narrowing with determination as she draws up her fists in a sparring stance. Asami cocks her brow, looking around.

"Fight me," Kuvira tells her, beckoning towards her with a curl of her finger, "get it out, Asami. You keep blaming me for all your pain, and I've taken the blame and apologized, but it's not enough for you. I don't know what you want, but you need to snap out of it."

"I thought you said I could take my time," Asami snaps back, recalling their words from before. Kuvira grits her teeth and steps closer.

"This is different. You finally have the chance to stand toe-to-toe with the woman who single-handedly ruined your life," Kuvira growls, her voice growing higher in pitch as remorse touches the last few words. She curls her fingers again, feeling tears burn at her eyes. Asami stays standing, her shoulders tensing as Kuvira continues to yell at her, "come on, Sato! I've seen your moves. This should be an easy win for you. Fight. Me."

"I'm not going to fight you," Asami says back in a snarl, crossing her arms defensively. Kuvira shakes her head as she reaches forward, giving her a shove. Asami doesn't react, bare for another raised brow and a slight curve of her lips in a faint frown. The metal-bender's eyes grow wider and mistier.

"I want to fight you! It's what you want, Asami. You talk about how much I've taken from you, how much I've fucked up, so come on, lay it on me," Kuvira seethes, though her anger is not directed towards the heiress. Flashbacks of the destruction of the city, of the Spirit Cannon, of Korra dying in her arms, of Asami's face filled with betrayal and hate; they all rush through her mind and her breath begins to shorten.

"Kuvira, stop." Asami's voice is thick and concerned, but Kuvira's gone. Tears cascade down the older woman's cheeks as she keeps lightly shoving the heiress, craving a reaction, something that with machismo, will alleviate both their anguished pains. Again, Kuvira pleads with Asami, shaking her head.

"F-Fight me, Asami. You're livid because I took everything from you, so take something away from me. Fight me," she choking out as her breath draws even shorter. The space is closing in on her and darkness creeps up on her eyes, but she dares not lose focus with the woman in front of her. "I can take it! Hit me, Asami. I've been beaten, raped, starved, neglected, abused for ten years in
prison - I can take it. I can take you."

"Kuvira," Asami says, her voice cracking as she watches Kuvira crumble before her. Her fists are shaking and her shoulders are pressed together, making her seem far smaller than what she actually is and it suddenly hits Asami with a deafening slap to the face.

The Kuvira that had killed the two loves in her life is not the Kuvira standing before her.

"I-I c-can take y-you," Kuvira stutters as she breaks into a fresh round of sobs. Asami freezes, her eyes glazed as she watches Kuvira drop to her knees, curling into herself from the force of her cries. The woman clutches her head and cries harder, shaking her head. Asami can barely make out the many repetitions of 'I'm sorry' that are hiccuped out between ragged, deep breaths. It breaks her heart, but Asami doesn't know why.

"Kuvira," Asami whispers, her voice low and hushed as she kneels beside the metal-bender, wiping her eyes. Kuvira shakes her head as she looks up furiously, her green eyes brimming with multiple shades of hurt and regret. Asami's heart stops beating as she watches Kuvira's lips tremble.

"Don't you get it?!!" The metal-bender sobs hysterically, "you're the only person I have left, Asami! You have Mako, Bolin, Opal, Su," Kuvira stumbles on the last one as a new round of cries break through her frame. "You have so many people that you just… you just shove away. I don't have anyone! I don't have people checking in on me, asking me if I'm okay. I don't have people to defend me or keep me safe! You're the only person I talk to and I'm sorry that I ruined everything. I am trying to change, to gain your trust, because I…," the former guard captain trails off, her voice growing hoarse. Asami recognizes the tightening her chest as she bites her lips anxiously. Everything in her body screams at her to not ask the question, but she can't help it.

"Because you what, Kuvira?" Asami asks, her voice low and soft. Kuvira swallows thickly as she bows her head in shame.

"Because, Asami," she whispers softly, "I love you."

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"He seems nice."
Senna's voice breaks Tonraq's train of thought as the Chief keeps his gaze glued to the back of the Avatar's head, watching carefully as he walks to his training bag to pull out a few wrist wrappings. Senna's heart lifts as she watches Ikki come by and chat with him amicably. The two of them talk for a bit before An makes a gesture pointed towards Tonraq and Senna. The Water Tribe Chief's wife smiles half-heartedly as she moves closer to her husband. Tonraq hasn't said anything since the boy had introduced himself a few hours ago. The man deduces it to shock, for it seems as through the years since Korra's passing, the water-bender had done nothing but fill the void of his daughter's loss with repressed memories.

"Honey," Senna murmurs, her hand drifting up the side of his arm. "What's the matter?"

"Korra's dead," Tonraq says bluntly, turning to face Senna with blurry eyes. The woman's breath hitches at the slight crack in her husband's voice when he speaks. Tonraq shakes his head, suddenly frustrated as he sees An staring back at him with a lopsided grin that reminds him too much of his little girl.

"You said it yourself, Tonraq," Senna tells him softly, ducking her head into her neck again, "we couldn't protect her, but we can protect him."

"We couldn't protect her," Tonraq whimpers, the tears falling from his eyes as he pulls Senna into a wide embrace. His shoulders shake violently as he lets out a heartbreaking sob, "we couldn't protect our little girl. She's gone, Senna, oh Spirits, she's really gone. Why? Why did they take her away from us?!"

"Tonraq," Senna breathes out, trying to calm her husband down, but the sobbing grows uncontrollable. "Sweetie, you need to take deep breaths. It's okay, Korra's in a better place now. You know that, honey. Korra's okay, and she wants us to be okay now, too."

"How?!!" Tonraq demands, pulling back from the embrace with angry eyes. "How can you know that?!"

"Because she never left you," An's soft voice cuts in. Tonraq and Senna both whip their heads up to see the Avatar walking over to them slowly, his gaze mournful but also wise. He reaches out and gently places his hand upon the shoulder of her predecessor's father.

"Korra has walked beside you the minute you let her go, Chief Tonraq. Your daughter has never abandoned you, and though you may not see her, that doesn't mean that she's not there," he explains softly, feeling that warming sensation in his gut. Tonraq growls at him, removing his hand quickly.
"You lie," Tonraq seethes as he glares at the young man. An flinches, his eyes welling with tears as the churning in his stomach turns into tiny daggers slicing into the flesh beneath his skin. A hand clasps over his stomach involuntarily as he chokes back a cry. Senna's brows shoot up worriedly.

"Stop it, Tonraq, you cannot take out your anger on An, he's not our daughter," Senna says, reaching for his arm and attempting to pull him back. Tonraq shakes his head and looks away, growling under his breath as more tears roll down and catch in his greying beard.

"You're right," he mutters, shaking his head, "but he's also not our son."

With that, the grieving man turns and stalks away, leaving the saddened Avatar and Senna behind. An crumples into himself, hurt that he'd failed at the intervention. Senna sees the genuine compassion, the same look she'd seen on Korra's face one too many times, and immediately steps forward. Her hand grazes his arm and she sighs softly, bowing her head in spite of her husband. She knows that Tonraq had not properly dealt with his grief since Korra's death, but she'd never imagined it to be this bad. The stirring in her chest quickens as she holds back her own panic.

"He's not wrong with what he said," An mumbles sadly, looking up to face Senna with glazed eyes. "I'm not your daughter, and for that, I'm sorry."

"Why should you be sorry, An?" Senna chokes out shakily, her hand reaching forward upon instinct to wipe away the tears that glide down his cheeks. Reflexively, An's hand clasps over hers, causing them both to gasp out of shock. An sniffles and takes a deep breath, trying to push down his nerves.

"That I'm here and she's not. Korra misses you so much. She's shared so many stories of her childhood, of your love for her. It's just hard to not be jealous of it sometimes. Everyone wants Korra here, Lady Senna," An murmurs dishearteningly. His gaze falters and he sniffles again as he quietly says, "I wish that I could bring her back and make everyone happy, but I can't. I've tried, believe me. Korra's a spirit now, one that doesn't remain tethered to anything metaphysical. Her emotions are wound tightly with mine at times. This whole time I've spent with you, I've wanted nothing more than to get close with you and with the Chief. I want to feel what she got to feel, growing up with you all those years ago."

"Sweetheart," Senna softly cries out, rubbing her thumb over the gaunt of An's cheekbone. The Avatar shakes his head and shrugs his shoulders in defeat. Senna's heart breaks piece by piece, agonizingly slowly inside of his chest as she watches the boy crumble apart before her. She flashes back to when Zaheer had poisoned her daughter, remembering how Korra had felt the same kind of uselessness then.
"It's stupid," An mutters as he pulls away from her, "but for once, I thought I could have a family, too."

They don't talk after Kuvira's confession.

Instead, their time consists of watching the sun slowly dip towards the edge of the mountainside. They're not sitting close to each other, but they're still close enough that they can sense the other breathing. Kuvira's got her knees pulled to her chest, her eyes glued to her feet as she allows tears to steadily roll down her cheeks. Asami's got her hands behind her, holding her weight up as her legs stretch out. Inside, her body is craving for some sort of drink, and it's in that moment that the heiress realizes just how deep a hole she'd dug with her addiction to alcohol. Though, she dare not voice it out loud, she knows Kuvira is right. She's being selfish by pushing people away. Her thoughts linger back to Mako, Bolin, Opal, and Jinora, of how much they'd tried to help. Eventually, they all gave up because progress had been minimal, if any. It's a bitter realization, but after watching the woman who'd taken the lives of both of her loved ones break down into a sobbing mess, she knows that she must change.

"What was your surprise?" Asami asks, breaking the silence between them. Kuvira doesn't move or answer for a moment, and this time, Asami is patient as she waits for the older woman to answer. Kuvira sniffs but doesn't wipe her tears as she sighs, shaking her head.

"It's stupid," Kuvira mumbles into her knees, "I'm stupid."

"C'mon," Asami murmurs, turning to face Kuvira with softer eyes, instead of her usual piercing glare. Kuvira glances up, catches her expression, and somehow manages to find her heart start beating rapidly against the wall of her chest. Asami inches closer subtly, glancing back at the sunset.

"You know, I don't believe that you dragged me out here just so we could get into a boxing match," Asami muses with an attempted chuckle, looking over at Kuvira. The older woman is now staring at her, still guarded and wary, but also vulnerable. It's been so long since Asami had seen someone so exposed. Kuvira shrugs again, biting her lip apprehensively like a nervous child, instead of a middle-aged adult.

"It's in the back of the car," Kuvira whispers, her voice croaking as tears well in her eyes again.
Asami watches as Kuvira's hands tremble and clutch her knees tighter. She's trying to make herself as small as possible. Asami rises slowly, heading to the back of the car. She pops the boot and gasps lightly.

Inside the boot is a picnic basket, a classic checkered cloth, and a few spare blankets. The heiress is reminded instantly of their conversation this afternoon and her heart twists. She reaches inside the pocket of her riding jacket, slowly and carefully pulling out the picture of her and her family. She looks to the faces of her mother and father, feeling tears well in her eyes. She's lost in thought when Kuvira's voice interrupts her softly.

"I'm sorry," the older woman rasps as Asami glances up to see her standing and watching nervously, "I thought it was a good idea at the time."

"Oh," Asami says to her gently, offering a forced smile. Kuvira nods half-heartedly, dipping her head and looking away. The woman looks dejected as she turns back to face the city. Asami looks back at the contents of the boot and then Kuvira's back, biting her lip. Her eyes ghost over the picture of her parents once more; she knows through the strong, steady beat of her broken heart, that she must make the first step forward in her recovery.

"It's perfect, Kuvira," Asami murmurs, catching Kuvira's attention. Suddenly, the desolate and hopeless shell of a guard captain has a spark of life in her opal eyes as she nods her head upwards. The metal-bender smiles sadly, to which Asami nods back, bringing the basket and cloth to her arms.

"Come on," she says as she takes a step forward to nudge the other woman, "I think you owe me a picnic."

Kuvira smiles again and Asami's heart skips a beat. She tries to ignore the flutter in her chest as they both set the cloth down. Asami fishes inside the basket for the two sandwiches and the bottles of water. She subtly makes note of how there's no alcohol in the woven kit. It hits her slowly that this would be the first interaction she's ever had with Kuvira in which she'd been sober. The heiress mulls over the thought with each delicate chew of the sandwich. It's not the same as her mother's, and nothing ever would be, but it's a damn good shot - one that is appreciated by the heiress. Together, the duo eat in silence, watching the sun go down over the mountainside, wrapped in their own small conversations.

"… and so that's how Su found out I was a metal-bender," Kuvira finishes her story, shaking her head as she laughs. Asami chuckles whole heartedly, her smile reaching her eyes as she throws her head back into a laugh. She wipes her eyes and holds her sides as she asks, "you really tied Bataar Sr to a mast using Su's cables? And that too, on the pole atop her own estate?"
"It was an accident!" Kuvira responds defensively, her voice playful as she says, "I was six, Asami! Su grounded me for four weeks."

"Oh gosh you were a terror," Asami laughs as she shakes her head. Kuvira watches her, losing herself in the sheer, natural beauty of the woman laughing in front of her. Asami settles down from her laughter, soon finding herself glancing at a staring Kuvira. The heiress smiles and rubs at her cheek.

"What? Do I have something on my face?" She asks with a jest. Kuvira gives her a soft smile as she shakes her head slowly. Asami's eyes grow a little softer with the gentle breath that parts through Kuvira's lips. Her heart thumps again, but she doesn't try to ignore it this time.

"I never thought I'd live to hear your laugh again, or to see you smile," Kuvira whispers, trailing off as her eyes glance at her lips. "It's truly the most beautiful sight in the world. You can light up a nation with your laugh, and the world with your smile." Asami flushes, nervously tucking a strand of hair behind her ear at the compliment. She hardly feels as though she deserves them, but she shyly ducks her head, smiling again. Kuvira's grin widens as she laughs at how Asami acts, her heart blooming with the notion that she had caused such a reaction in the heiress.

"I just think you're beautiful, Asami," Kuvira tells her in a quiet whisper. "You're really, really beautiful."

The two of them spend the next fraction of a second lost in each other's glances. Time goes by slowly as gazes flicker; lips to eyes, eyes to lips, like they're in a trapped dance. It's uncertain who reaches forward, who's hand grazes whom's cheek. Before they know it, they're leaning in, foreheads pressed together, eyes staring into each other as if they were the last thing they'd ever see. This time, however, as Kuvira's thumb traces a soft and gentle line over Asami's lip, it's clear that the feelings they thought were only exclusive under the influence of alcohol are actually real. It's terrifying and exhilarating at the same time, but both women have spent too many years in pain and anguish.

This time, as Asami closes the gap and the sun sets behind them, they cast a sliver of happiness back into their lives.

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"Chief Tonraq, I do believe that you must be with the Avatar in order to teach him water-bending."
Tonraq stirs at the sound of Tenzin's throaty grumble, turning around to face the aged air-bender with a shameful expression. He bows his head and looks back out at the waters from where he stands at the gazebo. His eyes are stinging from crying, but he shakes his head and wipes away the sadness that lingers deep within his chest. The ache is uncomfortable and sizeably painful as even a single breath causes him to wince. Tenzin hobbles closer, relying on the use of an old wooden cane to draw him closer to the water-bender.

"I'm sorry. It just…, it hit me all at once, I suppose." The words are frail as they leave the younger man's chapped lips. Tenzin sighs softly, nodding his head as he comes to stand beside Korra's father with a slight limp. Tonraq glances at him, but his eyes don't quite meet the blue-grey irises of the older man. The Water Tribe Chief only grips the banister of the gazebo tighter in his hands, trying to suppress his internal rage.

"It's just not fair, you know? Everyone got to her know her, to be close with her in those few months that she was here. How was I supposed to know that those three months were the last I'd ever see of her? How was I supposed to know that she'd go off on her own and run away for six months? That's half a year, Tenzin. I let my baby go off alone in the world for half a year and I didn't even know. What kind of father was I?" Tonraq begins to sob again as he clutches the wooden railing tighter than before. His knuckles grow white from the stress, but he continues to speak, letting out the repressed guilt.

"I was supposed to be there for her, Tenzin. I should have come up to help her defeat Kuvira, and yet I'd been so mad she'd left without us knowing that I never came up. I made the biggest mistake of not being there for my child and as penance, I ended up losing her," Tonraq mutters, shaking his head in disapproval. "I'll never forget the feeling of watching Asami limp down the ramp of the airship with Korra in her arms. I'll never forget the feel of her cold skin as I'd cradled her in my arms. I'll never forget the look of… of peace," he stumbles on the word, "on her face as we took her back to the hut."

"Yes, peace," Tenzin says, his voice a warm rumble as he shifts on his feet. Tonraq stops talking and glances up at him, confused as to why the air-bender would interrupt him by just repeating a word he'd said. Tenzin gives him a warm, but bittersweet smile as he nods at the younger man.

"That is what you must remember, Tonraq. Korra's life ended in peace," he explains slowly, reaching out to place a hand upon the Chief's shoulder. Tonraq slinks under the touch, his shoulders buckling as he lets out another heart-wrenching sob. The pain aches harder now, but behind the stabs of agony chases flickers of relief and reassurance that Tenzin is telling him the truth. The air-bender smiles at his sadly as he nods his head, continuing to say, "Korra would never have attained that without you, Chief. Her life revolved around making sure her friends and family were safe. She knew that she had hurt you. She'd spoken to me about it right here, actually. Your daughter always put herself behind the needs of others; it was one of the few qualities that allowed her to become a fully-realized Avatar at such a young age. My father hadn't even been fully-
realized until his mid thirties."

"But I thought Aang was fully realized when he fought Ozai?" Tonraq asks with a raised brow. Tenzin sighs and shakes his head, replying, "Aang thought he was fully realized when he spared the Fire Lord's life, but it was just a stage. When Kuvira had informed me of Korra's actions, what with bending the portal and saving her life and the lives of her friends, coupled with her sacrifice to save the air-benders, she'd already become fully-realized before her even knowing it. Korra's too humble to have noticed something like that. Aang was powerful in his own ways, but Korra had excelled faster."

"What are you trying to say, Master Tenzin?" Tonraq asks, raising his brow. Tenzin reaches up with his free hand and scratches at his beard, reminiscing over how Korra had once asked him the same thing in the same place, fifteen years ago. It all seems like yesterday when Korra had been talking with Asami, telling her of all the deepest fears and regrets she had on the eve of the battle for Republic City. In a way, the air-bender feels guilty for having interrupted their conversation, but at the same time, he knew that Korra had needed some assurance that she was doing the best she could do.

"All I'm trying to say is this; everyone has their own race in life. Aang's race was long and drawn out," he explains with a content sigh as the waves of the water crashing against the cliffside ring out in his ears. "Korra's race was shorter but no less significant. Both of them went through similar pains, but you must understand, the two of them both finished their race. Korra just happened to be a bit faster than my father. And, knowing her competitive streak, it doesn't surprise me that she was quick. Korra had no regrets as she went into battle, Chief Tonraq. It's what allowed her to leave in peace.

"That's something to give you a piece of mind, I hope," he murmurs wisely, flashing him another smile. Tonraq nods after sometime, sighing again as he turns back to watch the sun dipping below the shimmering horizon. He sucks in a deep breath and glances at the stars and the full moon overhead.

"It's a perfect night for water-bending," Tonraq says with a slight smile. Tenzin grunts and chuckles softly, nodding his head in approval.

"That it is, my friend," he says to himself as Tonraq excuses himself and walks towards the opposite courtyard, "that it is."
For the first time in thirty-seven years of her life, Asami Sato makes love.

Kuvira and Asami return home late and even before they reach the bedroom, their clothes are scattered along the floor. The two women never break their kisses as they take the time to truly explore and find each other within their heated, slick exchanges. Their touches are hesitant and careful, their kisses slow and sweet. Their skin melds together, pressing and yearning for more contact. The last few articles of clothing are shed at the frame of Asami's bedroom door before they tumble inside with hushed giggles. Asami's hand snakes up the front of Kuvira's bare chest, her fingers tracing the countless scars and hardened muscles upon her bronzed skin. Kuvira's hands are on Asami's waist, rubbing soft circles into her hips as the heiress walks them backwards until the metal-bender's knees catch at the frame of the bed, sending them tumbling down upon the mattress with a soft thud.

"Asami," Kuvira whispers softly as she breaks the kiss. There are tears in her eyes as she looks up and sees Asami in her natural beauty. Her hands find her cheeks, smoothing two clean lines over her gaunt cheekbones. Asami waits a moment, and for a second Kuvira's breath hitches in fear that she's about to break herself open and be ripped apart again, but then a pale hand clasps over hers, squeezing gently. A tear falls to her cheek from Asami's glittering eyes, and Kuvira can see the raw emotion in the woman's eyes as she leans down, kissing her softly again.

"Kuvira," Asami murmurs into her lips amidst a lazy kiss, "let me take care of you."

A hand slips between her legs and Kuvira lets out a gasp. She'd never beenpleasured by the heiress, neither sober or drunk. As she feels the spark of fire lighting up from her core and to her heart, she realizes that no one has ever made her feel this way before. There's so many different sensations going on she can hardly see straight. The tears keep falling, but they're not sad or mournful this time. Instead, they're filled with so much more hope and happiness. Asami's fingers are like magic, and Kuvira swears she'll never worship something as much as the heiress' touch upon her body. Sober Asami is tender and slow, but knows where to keep the pace and add the pressure to build her up to a ragged peak that leaves her breathless. Whimpers leave her mouth and more tears leak out because she's so close; she's right there, but she can't get over the edge.

"Let go," Asami whispers as she rubs harder circles with her thumb and plunges her fingers deeper, "I've got you."

That's all it takes for Kuvira to come undone.

Asami stifles the noise of her scream with a searing kiss. She'd never in a million years expected to be topping a past dictator, but she soon finds she's losing herself in the present instead of focusing on the past as she always does with Kuvira. She sees her for the woman she is now, and the woman she is now is broken and in need of support and care. Asami's arms wrap around her and tug her
Asami finally stills her fingers and lets her hand rest. Kuvira is still crying and before she knows it, so is the inventor. As the tears mix upon the older woman's face Asami's there to kiss the small droplets of moisture away, humming soothingly until the metal-bender's sobs ease. Her own cries quieten as she feels Kuvira's warm breath upon her cheek.

"Ssh," she whispers into Kuvira's ear, "you're not alone anymore, Kuvira. You can fall apart. It's okay, let it out."

Kuvira eventually cries herself into sleep, her body curled around the inventor's like a coiled snake. On any other day, she'd be repulsed by the thought of sleeping with the woman sober, let alone sleeping with her in her bedroom. But, as she sees the sheer peace on Kuvira's lax, exhausted face, all of the previous hate flies out the window and guilt seeps in, instead. Asami finds herself chewing her lip and trembling, because she's starting to get those feelings she'd been fearing ever since Kuvira had brought her flowers for her celebratory win. It's the same feeling that had prevented her from sleeping with the woman that day. Being sober makes the emotion even more real, but Asami realizes, as Kuvira whimpers and she finds herself pulling the heiress closer, that maybe ignoring her feelings hasn't served her so well after all. And so, she lets her eyes rest, keeping her arms wound around the metal-bender in protective embrace. Her nose lays nestled in Kuvira's choppy black hair and she submits to the land of dreams.

For once in her life, Asami feels safe and warm and happy.

An waves his arms over the small pond of water, trying to bend the stream to no success.

"Dammit," he growls as his arms drop and his head droops to his chest. "Fucking useless piece of-

"Water-bending is about control; you mustn't be easily frustrated," Tonraq's voice calls out. An freezes and stands upright, his shoulders tensing as he watches Korra's father make his way over to her. His eyes are dark and his hands are crossed behind his back as he observes An's stature.

"Sorry, s-sir, I was just trying to figure it out," An says with a stammer, glancing hastily back at the water, "I guess I'm not cut out for this."

"Water is the element of change, of movement. It's all about using your opponents strengths to
target their weaknesses in battle, but it has healing capabilities, too. Some may argue that fire is the most powerful element, but water carries the ability to destroy and also to rebuild," Tonraq says as he approaches the young boy with a more confident stride in his step. His voice is strong and causes An to sheepishly look away. Tonraq stops and stands before him, watching as the Avatar practically shakes in his boots. The experienced water-bender takes a glance at the moon overhead and smiles dimly.

"When I was a boy, my father had been so insistent on training me to be a warrior," Tonraq tells him in a gentle tone. "I'd gone on expeditions just to live up to his expectations, but fighting had never served me any sort of pleasure. I hated it, the violence and the sadness that came with war. I'd been just a boy when Avatar Aang had taken away Yakone's bending in Republic City. I remember hearing it on the news, that the water-bender had committed the crime of blood-bending, something that Master Katara had outlawed in both tribes. It was so scary to know that one person could have so much power to take someone's whole life away, only to leave the bare essentials. When my father got word of what happened, he'd told me that Water Tribe must stick together to ensure that no one else's bending would be taken. He'd felt betrayed by Master Katara and the Avatar. He instilled his hate for the master of all four elements upon me, and I grew up thinking that the world would be better off without someone like that; someone with that much power."

"You did?" An asks quietly, his voice cracking with fear. Tonraq nods solemnly as he takes another breath, continuing his story.

"It turned out that he'd been a blood bender. After my brother had betrayed me, I left the Northern Water Tribe in search of my own destiny. That's where I met my wife and Master Katara. Senna had been serving as a healing acolyte under the Avatar's wife. At first, I'd been enraged at the thought of living in the same space as the great healer, but then I came to know her and I understood that the purpose of the Avatar was not to dictate the laws of life, but to bring balance and peace to the world. Through Katara's stories, and watching Kya, Tenzin, and Bumi grow up, I learned the hard way that the Avatar did not carry the life of luxury that you hear about through the stories and fables." Tonraq chokes up a bit as childhood memories flash through him. An stiffens once more, but doesn't dare interrupt. Tonraq clears his throat and looks down at his feet, his eyes glued to the glint of the dewed grass.

"Aang sacrificed so much of his time with his family to help save the world. He'd been travelling with Zuko and Sokka when Senna fell pregnant with Korra. Katara was the known healer, alongside Kya and a few others. It was her that delivered children; she'd never turn down the role to help someone. I remember her telling me that she'd once pretended to be an ancient myth to save a starved town during her adventures with Aang," Tonraq says softly, his eyes misting as he continues, his voice cracking slightly. "When it came time for Senna to give birth, word came from Republic City that Aang had fallen ill. Of course, Senna and I knew better than to hold Katara back from seeing her husband, and so we didn't mind her leaving. A few days after she left, Senna went into labour at the estate. Luckily, one of the healers had been there to help, but we no doubt missed Katara's presence."
"Did you know?" An asks slowly, shifting awkwardly from foot to foot as he watches Tonraq's face soften. "Did you know Korra was the Avatar then?"

"No," Tonraq murmurs as he glances back up at the boy, "we never would've thought our little girl would have been the reincarnation of a man I'd been taught to despise. In a strange way, it was as if the universe were trying to teach me a lesson about judgement. When Katara had returned with the news of Aang's passing, we'd been too aggrieved to make the connection between his death and our daughter's birth. It was only when Korra began fire-bending instead of water-bending that we made the realization. At first, Senna and I had been terrified. The Avatar's life is one of pain and at times, loneliness. Our daughter would have a target on her back forever, and even if we pooled together the entire tribe's army, we couldn't protect her."

"So, you put her in a compound." An's voice doesn't contain any kind of anger or bitterness. It's blunt and to the point. Tonraq sighs and rubs his chin thoughtfully, swallowing thickly as he tries to piece together a coherent answer to give to the inquisitive young boy.

"It's what we thought would be best for her safety at the time. We just got scared, An. We were parents to someone who didn't belong to us, but to the world. I guess we wanted to keep her to ourselves as long as we could before news got out that the new Avatar had been found," Tonraq tells him before his face scrunches up in a crooked, half-hearted smile as he sadly chuckles, "but Korra was stubborn. That girl embraced the role of the Avatar naively. She'd run off to Republic City on her own to train, and though she'd been told not to, my daughter decided to take her fate into her own hands."

"Are you mad at her for doing that?" An asks, raising a brow worriedly. Tonraq waits a moment before he shakes his head.

"No, because I know that I couldn't hold her back any longer. None of us could, really. Korra's bravery went beyond anything I'd ever seen before. In her twenty-one years as an Avatar, she'd been through the ringer and back. My girl faced through things I'd never wish upon my worst enemy, but she found a way to fight through it. She gave her life for the people, because she knew it was the right thing to do. Sometimes it's hard for me, especially as her father, to recognize that the hardest thing and the right thing are quite often the same thing," Tonraq muses as he feels a strange warmth in his side. An senses the difference in the man's aura. He glances over Tonraq's shoulder to see Korra beaming at her father with a bittersweet grin on her face.

"It ended up reigning true, that we couldn't save her," Tonraq says, his voice growing softer once more, "but in the end, I know that Korra made the right choice. I love my daughter, and no matter which path she chooses, I will support it in spite of my disapproval. Family sticks together. Always."
An flinches sadly at the last statement, feeling an empty thud in his heart as he tries to think of friends or family he could count on to stick by his side. Tears well in his eyes as he realizes that not a single name so far comes up on his list. The boy shudders and shrivels, but then a soft gust of wind blows through his hair. An nods his head up to see Korra smiling at him encouragingly beside Tonraq's body. Her aura is encircled with dazzling blues, yellows and whites, a scene that he'd never seen before. The boy watches with wide eyes as Korra nods, her lips parting and her eyes glowing white. A voice suddenly echoes in his mind, a mixture of Korra's and another woman's that An can't quite put a name to yet.

_We will be together for all of your lifetimes._

"Raava?" An gasps, causing Tonraq's head to shoot up. He gazes down at An, puzzled by the sudden outburst. The warmth in the Avatar's chest swells as suddenly he feels power run down his veins. He looks up to see the white leaving Korra's eyes and seeping into his skin. The boy is silent as the transfer of Raava to his soul is completed. When the spirit is finally within him, his heart bursts with a newfound energy. Tonraq sees the expression in An's eyes and suddenly he understands. The man takes a step back and nods at the water in the pond. An glances back at the water-bender curiously.

"You're ready," Tonraq says, gesturing to the water. An takes a deep breath and nods, getting into a bending stance. Tonraq watches with a set gaze as An raises his arms, closes his eyes, and draws in a long breath of air. The world stops spinning for a moment as the Avatar connects himself to his spirit.

When he opens his eyes, they're no longer turquoise, but blindingly white.

Tonraq stares in silence and awe as An moves his arms around fluidly, with the grace of an experienced water-bender such as himself. Tears mist in his eyes as An begins to circle around the pond, flicking his fingers up and down slowly. He dips low enough to graze the water but not touch it. Around him, people start to emerge from the buildings at the sound of air gushing around the young boy. Tonraq spots Senna standing with Pema and Tenzin, her eyes wide open and staring at An as he begins to bend fire and earth around his frame as well. The Avatar does one final twist, facing Tonraq.

Then, with one flick of his wrist, water bursts from the pond and pools in a stream around his shoulders.

An holds the elements for a moment longer before he lets go of the Avatar State. The water disappears back into the pond and the earth crumbles to the ground. Both the fire and air disintegrate, leaving a slight charred scent in the air. The boy is panting as he looks at his hands before running them over his chest. With an excited cry, he leaps up into the air and pumps his fist.
in joy. Tonraq watches on in silent happiness, watching as the boy grins at him. Tonraq stays silent for a moment, which causes An to stiffen. As the boy goes to part his mouth, Tonraq steps forward, embracing him in a wide hug.

At first, An is shocked that he's being hugged, but then he realizes just who is hugging him and he immediately latches on. The two men embrace, both of them crying in joy and happiness. Tonraq lifts the teenager and twirls him around, laughing like he used to when he'd hold Korra. As he sets An down, he ruffles the young boy's hair and nods approvingly at him. An grins again, but then a voice whispers something in his mind. He glances up to see Korra grinning at him, shooting him two thumbs up. The boy's smile softens and he dips his head slightly to show his respect. Korra's eyes glaze at the gesture as she dips her head back. In her eyes, An makes out an unreadable expression and suddenly, he understands what he must do.

An has one last piece of the puzzle to complete.

"Chief Tonraq," An says softly, turning back to Tonraq as he swallows his nerves. "I need to speak with Ms Sato."

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**Book 5: LIFE**

The element of purpose.

*No more living in the past, hiding in your pain; let your tears turn to rivers and carry you away.*

It's been so long, and at the same time, not long enough.

*The Avatar is here and requests your audience.*

Kya's words from a few days ago ring clearly in Asami's ears as the sounds of water churning against the side of the boat drown out her thoughts. The heiress stares at Air Temple Island, rolling her lip into her mouth before biting down hard. There's a part of her that's nervous and scared at the same time. When Tonraq and Senna had come with Kya and Lin to inform her of the Avatar's
presence, she'd been reluctant at first to meet him. Some part of her remained locked away after Korra's death, and much to her resistant efforts to block out the new master of four elements, her spirit felt compelled to meet with him. Perhaps it's Korra, but perhaps it's the nagging pull in her chest that keeps telling her that it's over, that it was over long ago.

Perhaps, it's both.

It's a strange juxtaposition of feelings when the inventor thinks about it. Asami scoffs as she remembers the meetings allowed by Kuvira's guidance. It still seems bizarre as she thinks about it; ten years ago, she'd intimately reunited with Korra in a world made up of Kuvira's thoughts and emotions. Though the metal-bender had been gracious enough to give them space and not disturb them, Asami still thinks that it's awkward that she knew about their estranged relationship. It's twisted in a way, that they push and pull each other in this realm of existence and non-existence. Asami can be naive, the inventor will begrudgingly admit, but she's no Shrödinger's cat. She's an analyst and pessimist.

"We're nearly here," Kuvira's voice sounds from behind her. Asami takes a deep breath as she watches the red robe of Tenzin and the blue parka of Tonraq descend the steps in the distance as the ferry comes into the docking bay. Licking her lips, the heiress nods and turns.

"Are you ready for this?" Kuvira asks gently. Asami glances up at the metal-bender with a scowl, but Kuvira doesn't flinch. Softening her gaze at the lack of retaliation, Asami shrugs her shoulders and looks back at the island with a grimace.

"I'm about to meet the reincarnation of my not-so-girlfriend, girlfriend," she mutters with a scoff, "how do you think I feel?"

"It's hard. I can't imagine how you must feel," Kuvira says coolly, causing anger to tingle down Asami's spine. The heiress turns slowly, her eyes trained on Kuvira's opal gaze. On any other day, she'd have reached forward and clawed at the older woman out of frustration, but as she glances at her now, she can't help but think about the night they'd shared just a few weeks ago. Neither of them had talked about the events, but both of them know what had transpired. That night hadn't been some mindless, drunk and angered fuck, but actual lovemaking. Guilt travels down Asami's frame and she shudders, turning away. She can hear her heart cracking, the strings snapping within her chest as she fights to steady herself.

"Why are you even here?" Asami spits as she glares back at Kuvira. The older woman sighs and bows her head, her shoulders slumping in defeat as the words hit her hard. Asami sees the same self-deprecation evident in those dull opal eyes as Kuvira wrings her gloved fingers together.
"I thought that you could use the support," she murmurs distantly as she fumbles with her hands, "and after that night-"

"We're not going to talk about what happened that night," Asami growls, though her voice doesn't contain as much hostility as before. Kuvira's eyes shoot up instantly, hurt lacing those dark green depths as she takes a staggering step backwards. Asami's guilt thickens in her chest, but she ignores it.

"Are you saying you regret it?" Kuvira whispers, her voice barely audible over the calming waves of the water around the boat. Asami bites her lip at the expression worn on the metal-bender's face as she sighs and looks down, running a hand through her hair.

"I was vulnerable and in a bad place," she says, but as she sees Kuvira's eyes narrow angrily, she bites back her fear and bravely tells her, "but I don't think I regret it. Not now, at least. I'm just trying to figure everything out, Kuvira. Right now, a relationship, especially one with you, is not something I need." Kuvira's face falls at the last sentence, but she doesn't speak as she folds into her pockets. A small whimper bursts from her lips, the sound not going unnoticed by Asami as the heiress winces. She's tired of hurting everyone, herself included.

"It's just hard, knowing what you did - knowing what I did with you," Asami whispers remorsefully, blinking back tears. "I don't think I'm ready to accept it, Kuvira. It's just too much to take in." Kuvira flinches as tears well in her eyes. She snaps her head upwards, expression glazed with mournful sorrow.

"I made a mistake, Asami," Kuvira whimpers, her voice cracking, "I'm trying to fix what I've broken." Asami goes to say something in return, but thinks better of it when she feels something stir within her. Scolding the faint flicker of Korra's spirit floating between them in the dim blue speckles of light, Asami turns towards the island once more. Tears burn at her irises as she bites her lip once more, drawing the familiar taste of blood upon her tongue.

"I know," she mutters under her breath, "so am I."

"Is it weird that I'm nervous?"

Tonraq stares at An with a faint grin as he watches the boy readjust his tie and collar in the mirror.
He twists and turns, frowning as he tries to flatten the small wrinkles upon his pant legs. The boy stops and hangs his head as he groans. Beside the Water Chief, Senna chuckles and steps forward, placing her hands upon the broad shoulders of the Avatar before turning him to face her. Senna bites her lip as tears brim in her eyes. She places a hand upon his cheek and softly strokes up the gaunt of the bone. An smiles at the gesture and nods as Senna sighs softly.

"You will do fine, An," she consoles him, a pang stabbing at her heart as she realizes she'd never get the chance to do this with Korra. "You have nothing to be worried about. Asami will love you." She already loves you, Senna wants to say, but she holds her tongue and nods instead. Tonraq squeezes her shoulder and agrees with a barely audible grunt. An smiles at the two of them before he launches forward, nearly barrelling them over in a bear hug.

"Thank you," An says in a whisper, squeezing them harder. Senna raises her brow in confusion as he releases them sheepishly. She ruffles his wild mop of chestnut hair with a warm smile. Even Tonraq looks somewhat intrigued. The water-bender pats his shoulder with a gentle clap.

"What for?" He asks in a soft chuckle. An stares at the both of them, his eyes flashing a bright blue for a millisecond. It wouldn't be noticeable to the average person, but to people like Tonraq and Senna, who'd spent years without seeing those blues, it's like time has stopped.

Suddenly, they know.

"She misses you a lot. She shared a few of her memories with me, too," An says with a slow nod and caring smile, "she loves you so much." The two parents remain silent for a second, overcome with emotion as An's face grows serious and a bit solemn. He sighs, hugging them once more.

"I've never had a real mum and dad before," he says with a voice thick with emotion. "I may not be Korra, but I feel like I've got a family with you. It's..., it's really nice. You know, to feel loved." Senna's breath hitches as she hears An's voice tremble.

"You always have a family here, with us," Senna says gently, squeezing An as she pulls him into a hug. An holds her the way Korra had once done when she'd been a young child. Senna closes her eyes, feeling tears drip down her cheeks and off her jaw as she holds him closer. Tonraq watches from afar, his face mottled by grief; but, as he watches Senna's arms relax and the woman lose herself in An's embrace, he can't help but smile. Tonraq goes to say something to the two of them when something blue flickers out of the corner of his eye. He looks straight ahead and his jaw drops. His eyes glaze immediately as he whispers the name inaudibly.

"Korra?"
The spirit of his lost daughter smiles back at him, her eyes gazing warmly between Senna and An, and then back to Tonraq. The Water Tribe Chief feels his tears collect in his goatee as he stays frozen to his spot. Korra grins at him, her own silhouetted eyes glazed with unshed tears. The woman smiles and nods before she places her hand over her chest and taps it twice. Tonraq is still for a few moments before he repeats the gesture upon his own chest. Korra grins harder as she glances at her mother now, who is still hugging An with loving embrace. Korra's smile grows wider until it can no longer expand upon her face. She turns back to her father and nods again, mouthing the words, 'I love you."

"I love you too, my darling," Tonraq breathes out as Korra's spirit begins to dissipate in the air, leaving a faint mist of blue. When nothing remains, Senna pulls away from An and turns back to Tonraq, her brows scrunching together in confusion as she sees the tears in his eyes.

"Tonraq? Is everything alright, dear? You look like you've just seen a ghost," Senna jokes, her voice airy and light. Tonraq shifts his gaze to his wife, his eyes welling with tears. Senna sees the hidden emotion in those identical blue eyes of their daughter. Beside them, An stirs as he looks between them. Tonraq looks past his wife and takes a step forward towards the boy, his hand reaching for his shoulder as he pulls him into a tight hug.

"Thank you," he says as he begins to cry. An's face softens and he smiles against Tonraq's shoulder, unable to feel anything but comfort. He internally thanks Korra before he nuzzles further into the water-bender's embrace. Tonraq pulls away slowly to gaze at him proudly.

"I spent fifteen years thinking our daughter had left us forever," he says amidst a choked cry. An doesn't flinch like Senna does. No, he remains stoic and calm as he smiles and nods, communicating the words he knows Tonraq wants to hear without every saying them. Senna understands what Tonraq had seen and she bursts into a happy cry, placing herself between the Avatar and her husband as they hug again.

"Thank you for bringing her back," Tonraq says softly before pausing to say, "son."

An closes his eyes and bites back tears as he sighs, leaning closer into the man who'd once been a father to his reincarnated soul. He hears Korra in the back of his mind, whispering to him about how proud she is of him, and the boy grins harder. He smiles as he feels his chest warm up with Raava's approval as well. An pulls away after a few moments when there's a knock on the door. The three people turn to see Tenzin standing in the doorway with a smile upon his face. The master air-bender nods at them and An feels a jolt of excitement run through him.

"She's here," Tenzin tells him warmly, "and she's ready to meet you."
"You're nervous."

Asami glances up at Kuvira from where she sits beside her. The heiress frowns at the metal-bender's remark and sighs. She shrugs her shoulders, but she doesn't protest because she agrees. She shouldn't feel nervous, but she is. The boy that she's about to meet holds something in common with her love. Kuvira doesn't say anything more, as from the simple glance in her eyes, she can make out the understanding look in those pale greens.

"I don't know how I'm going to be able to face him," Asami mumbles under her breath, wringing her hands together nervously. Kuvira sighs and sits up straighter. The metal-bender reaches over and lightly grazes her arm. Asami tries to be hostile, but she can't help but revel in the small comfort.

"You've gotten through so much, Asami, you can get through this, too. I have faith in you," Kuvira tells her gently, her voice soft and reassuring. Asami glances up to see Kuvira staring at her, teary-eyed and slightly trembling. The younger woman bites her lip as she gazes at the metal-bender.

"I insult you and treat you like dirt. Why are you so nice to me?" Asami asks, her voice sharp with pain and bottled rage. Kuvira sighs and rubs the back of her head with her free hand as she looks away. The older woman allows a few more tears to drop from her glazed eyes before she answers.

"Because, even though you may not consider me a friend, or even an acquaintance, you're the only one that hasn't turned me away yet," Kuvira answers with a soft gasp. "My own family deserted me, and they have every right to do so. I should be alone, Asami. Maybe it shouldn't be you asking me why I'm so nice, it should be you asking yourself why you bother to stick around." The confession jars the heiress to a standstill as she gazes at Kuvira's honest opal eyes bearing back into her own water gaze. The metal-bender nods and offers her a cracked smile as she sighs again, leaning back into the chair.

"Despite your flaws, you're a good person, Asami," Kuvira murmurs sadly as she looks back to the floor, "I can see why she loves you."

Asami goes to open her mouth when suddenly, there's a creaking sound in the distance. The sounds of footsteps fill the air, causing the heiress' chest to tighten. She fidgets upon the seat as she sees the shadows creeping up from the hall. Her lungs wind up and she's almost certain she's being
suffocated with the stress of the coming confrontation. She runs over what she wants to say in her head like a mantra. Each clap of boots upon wood cause her heart beat to increase tenfold. The CEO sucks in one last deep breath when a voice interrupts her thoughts.

"Asami," Tenzin's voice calls out calmly as he steps forward into the room with Tonraq in tow. The inventor stands up straight, gulping nervously as she nods. Kuvira rises slower, but keeps her space behind Asami warily. Tenzin offers them both a guarded smile before he steps to the side.

Asami's breath hitches when she sees the boy standing behind the air master. The young man's eyes are a flashing turquoise and his skin is lightly tanned from constantly training outside. He's somewhat lankier than what Korra had been, but in his young, bright face, Asami can make out the similar, happy-go-lucky characteristics of her love. The Avatar's gaze softens and becomes tender with affection as he steps past Tenzin and runs forward. Asami doesn't know how to react as long arms wrap around her shoulders and she is hugged tightly.

"It's so good to finally meet you," he grins into her shoulder before letting go. He sees the blush upon Asami's face and immediately rubs the back of his neck anxiously. The inventor bites her lip as she recognizes the habit from so many years ago. The boy sighs and looks away sheepishly. Asami smiles as she extends her had and he shakes it politely, though his eyes are lit with mischief.

"I'm Asami Sato, but please, call me Asami. It's a pleasure to meet you, An Ning. I've been told a lot about you from Master Tenzin." Asami's voice is a bit strained, mostly from shock and a little from awkwardness, but An laughs and crosses his arms with a grin.

"Funny, he didn't mention anything about you."

Asami freezes and chokes a little. An only glances at her with knowing smile. The heiress' eyes glisten with tears as she takes a small step backwards. An is there, his hand reaching out as he pats her shoulder with care. His smile says more than words could describe. Asami feels her heart thundering in her chest as she looks up and past An to see Korra's ghostly silhouette leaning up against the frame of the door. The spirit of her past love gazes on proudly, throwing her a wink and a subtle nod before training her gentle stare into An's back. The Avatar steps forward and squeezes her shoulder.

"I've been waiting a long time to meet you again, Ms Sato," he says gently, smiling.

"Again?" Asami breathes out inaudibly. Luckily no one but her and An catch the faint echo. The Avatar nods and smiles again, turning his head over his shoulder to gaze at Korra's spirit with a grin. The native woman nods encouragingly before smiling once more at a teary-eyed Asami.
"I've trained in the four elements, but something brought me here," An says, turning back to Asami with a curious smile. "I think that my past life wanted me to learn more than just bending. She told me many stories of your role on Team Avatar from many years ago."

"She did?" Asami croaks, looking up to see that the room is now empty bare for An and Korra's spirit. She doesn't know when everyone had left, but she's grateful (but also terrified) to have the room alone with the reincarnation of her friend. Asami scratches the back of her head and furrows her brows in confusion. She glances back at Korra, to see that the woman has now come to stand next An, her hand loosely draped upon his shoulder.

"She wants me to learn hand-to-hand combat, and I agree with her. Bending only goes so far sometimes," An says with a chuckle, glancing at Korra. The spirit smiles warmly before she gazes at Asami with love and affection. Asami's heart twists as she looks between the two Avatars.

"And you want to learn from me?" Asami asks, slightly bewildered. There are so many non-benders in the world, and Asami is surprised the young boy would go to the Kyoshi Warriors or Ty Lee and Mai's successors from the Fire Nation. Why, of all people, would An choose her?

"Yes, because Korra says you're the best non-bending fighter she knows," An says, causing Asami to blush and tear up slightly.

Korra nods at her, before glancing down at An with a proud expression. Her spirit is growing fainter, and Asami almost wants to reach out for her, to tug her back and tie her down so she'd never be able to float away again. Korra only smiles at her knowingly, giving her another gentle nod. Asami takes a minute to think about it, but she realizes that she didn't need the full moment of silence. Her decision had been made since An asked her; Korra had meant - still means - so much to her, and if this is a way she can help the woman who'd saved her life ten times over, she'd do it.

"I'll teach you everything I know," Asami tells him softly, reaching out to squeeze his shoulder. An breaks into a wide grin as he launches forward, throwing his arms around her in a wide hug. Asami waits a moment, her eyes glued to Korra's as the spirit smiles back at her. The ghost of her love mouthes, 'thank you', before she slowly fades out of sight. Asami sighs and winds her arms around An, thinking for a moment that she's hugging Korra.

"Thank you," An says, pulling away before bowing respectfully, "Master Sato."

Asami freezes up for a second at title. An only remains still, staring determinedly at the heiress,
ready for his first lesson. Asami swallows nervously as she looks into his turquoise eyes. She catches a flash of Korra's blues in that steely gaze. Her chest tightens upon noticing the subtle change, but she remains stuck. The two stay in silence for awhile before An takes a hesitant step forward. Asami sighs and blinks back tears when she realizes that she cannot train the young boy until she takes care of some unfinished business. An understands what she needs to do the minute he meets the inventor's gaze. He steps forward and takes her hand, nodding understandingly as he draws them to the couch.

"She's been waiting for you," An tells her softly. Asami nods, wiping away a few more tears. The realization of what she's about to do weighs a burden of guilt down upon her shoulders. She remains silent for a few seconds, mulling over her decision, trying to figure out if this is what she wants. After this, there's no going back. Asami closes her eyes, letting a few tears roll down her cheeks as she sighs again.

"Hey," An's voice calls her back, causing her head to draw upwards slowly, "you're ready."

Asami wonders how An could possibly know what she's thinking about, but then she realizes that he's the Avatar. He is partially Korra. For a brief moment, she wonders if Katara had felt the same way she had whenever she'd talked to Korra. Just thinking of the passed water-bender gives her an epiphany of different truths. She knows that Katara had to have the conversation with Korra sometime. Asami wants to think that she's rushing this, but then she understands that she's spent fifteen years since Korra's death in complete limbo, floating around without a tether to the ground.

At some point, Asami realizes sadly, she must come down.

"I...," Asami chokes out hoarsely as she clears her throat. She takes a deep breath steadies herself. She squares her shoulders, as if she were preparing for battle. In some strange way, this is like a battle in her never ending war. She'd fought many fights with the previous Avatar, both physical and emotional, but this fight will be her last with Korra. Asami sets her jaw and stares at the Avatar directly as she strongly tells him, "I'm ready."

The last thing Asami sees is the flash of white that takes over An's eyes.

"Are we just going to stand here in silence?"
Asami stares at Korra through blurred vision. Korra's voice is as full of life as always. Asami takes the time to drink in the woman she'd been burning herself over. The previous Avatar hasn't aged in the past ten years, but then again, the heiress supposes that as soon as one dies, age becomes rather irrelevant. For a moment, she ponders how she'll look once she'll pass on. It causes her to scoff, because as she manages to sneak glances at herself in the mirror on the off chance as she gets ready, she sees how time has wreaked havoc upon her body. Her face is a map of wrinkles across her forehead and heavy, blackened bags under her dull green eyes. Her skin no longer carries that same rejuvenated look as it did when she was younger. Asami bites her lip as she feels a few tears roll down her face as she realizes at how much life has passed her by.

"You know," Korra says, shoving her hands into her pockets, "you still look as beautiful as the day we first met."

The comment snaps her from her thoughts as she looks back up to Korra. The previous Avatar sighs and steps forward, reaching out for her with a calloused hand. Asami gasps and defensively steps back as she flashes back to the day she lost the young woman. The world around her begins to darken and storm clouds begin to roll in with the thundering boom of lightening following suite. Korra winces as she glances up at the sky before she pulls her hand back tentatively. Asami wipes a few more of her tears away as she struggles to control her breathing.

"Hey," Korra whispers gently, trying to get her attention. "It's okay, Asami."

"Okay?!" Asami's voice cracks as she shrieks, her eyes widening in anger. She steps forward aggressively, but Korra doesn't appear fazed. Other than the slight raise of her left brow, the Water Tribe girl remains unaffected as Asami's outburst as the heiress continues to yell, "what part of this is okay, Korra?! Is it the part where you fucking left me on my own, or maybe it's the fact that you promised me you'd stay and proceeded to break it. I don't know much anymore, Korra, but I know one thing for sure; this is in no way okay. I'm not okay, Korra. I haven't been okay in fifteen years."

There's some silence from Korra as Asami's words hang in the air. The heiress' chest heaves as she glares at the younger woman. Korra's eyes are glazed, and suddenly Asami feels the anger get replaced by remorse. The clouds crackle and the thunder booms overhead as the rain begins to fall. The water pelts against the non-bender as she stands, waiting for a response, an answer to her pain. Korra keeps her stare for a few moments before she hangs her head in shame and pain. Asami watches her through a blurred sight as the rain mixes with her tears in the cold air.

"I know," Korra murmurs after sometime, "I'm sorry, Asami. I mean it."

"Thanks," the inventor growls sarcastically, despite the ache in her chest. Korra flinches as she stands straight again, gazing back at the older woman with a distraught expression. Asami's breath hitches as she watches Korra wipe her own tears before she shakes her head and sniffs.
"I love you," Korra whispers, her hands gripping lightly at the fabric of her sky-blue tunic. It's almost as if she's clawing at the material in order to get to her heart (which at this point, she isn't certain beats, let alone even exists). Asami glances at her tiredly and quietly, unable to intervene or say something back. Korra sees the emotional shift in her eyes and hangs her head once more, defeated. Asami takes a deep breath, rubbing her neck.

"Korra, you're not even real," Asami says in a low voice, her frustration levels rising again. "You can't give me what I need."

Korra gasps as though she'd been stabbed by a dagger to the back, and her facial reaction depicts just as much. She's not mad at Korra, or at least not completely mad at her. She's angry with herself, for falling too deep and too hard for the deceased woman standing before her. It's easy for Korra, Asami thinks as she stares at her best friend with a scowl on her face. She doesn't have to live without the love of her life, and she definitely doesn't have to go through the most hated person on her list in order to simply speak with them. Korra has no idea of the pain she's gone through these past years.

"I'm talking to a spirit, a vision of who you once were. I lost you a long time ago," Asami cries as she turns away from the shattered gaze that follows her lips. "I'm not… I can't keep doing this. It hurts so much, to wake up without you. Korra, you left me. Nothing can change that, not even love."

"I tried," Korra says in a croak, her voice cracking, "I begged with the Spirits to give me more time. I tried to get through to you, to reach out to you and comfort you. Asami, I may have left physically, but I have always been there beside you. I told you, I love you. I will always love you, Asami."

"I loved you," Asami says softly. Her heart breaks with each letter of the statement. Korra's breath hitches as she steps back, her eyes watering. Hurt stabs at the heiress as she shakes her head at Korra with a mournful gaze. She cups a hand over her mouth as she stifles the sound of her sobs.

"I still love you so much, and I shouldn't. It's fucked up that I do," Asami's voice is bitter and Korra winces with the profound statement. Asami glances back up with a hardened glare as she mutters, "you're not even real, Korra. How can you love someone who isn't even real?"

Asami begins to sob as she steps back from the dark skinned woman. Korra stares at her for a few seconds before she takes a deep breath and summons whatever spiritual courage she has left to step closer to Asami. The heiress doesn't move as Korra reaches out, grasping at her cheek. Asami's breath hitches as she feels the brush of her thumbs against her cheekbone, tracing soothing lines
upon her calloused skin. Asami can see Korra moving closer. She can feel the younger woman's breath upon her chapped lips. She can smell she sweet ocean scent that once gave her comfort.

And then, after ten years of waiting, it all connects.

The inventor's cries grow louder as Korra leans in and lets their lips touch ever so lightly. It's a barely there kiss, but Spirits, it's a kiss. Asami chokes up as Korra's other hand grazes her jaw, bringing her closer. Asami’s close immediately upon impact, willing herself to get lost in her thoughts and in the kiss. Korra lets out a soft whimper when she feels Asami's mouth still against hers. The older woman hesitates a moment before she parts her mouth with a sharp gasp, allowing Korra's tongue to slip through and caress her own in loving prods and swipes. The tears continue to fall, but Korra's there to wipe them away. Slowly, the previous Avatar pulls away to give her a sad smile and a teary gaze as she nods slightly.

"I'm as real as you want me to be, Asami," she whispers softly, brushing away a few more tears. Asami's tears keep falling as she stays silent. The two women simply lose each other in their bittersweet expression. Asami knows that she shouldn't do this; she cannot still her entire life for a mirage, even if that mirage is her soulmate. She's been living in the past for fifteen years. She's been miserable for fifteen years. Asami takes a deep breath and tries to get herself to believe it, but she can't; not while Korra is standing before her, holding her face like she's made of delicate china.

Asami knows that this is wrong, but as she watches Korra's eyes glaze, she can't help but feel like it's so right.

The inventor places her hand upon Korra's chest and lightly pushes her backwards, causing the Avatar to trip and land softly upon her back. Asami tumbles down upon her and the two collapse into the damp blades of grass. Korra's tears are falling faster and the sky around them begins to darken and the rain picks up. Thunder booms overhead as they both grow drenched from the cold liquid pouring down around them. The younger woman's hands stay glued to Asami's face as she watches her beloved sob alongside her. The tears and rain mix to drip off her angled chin and onto Korra's face. Asami folds into her arms, pressing her face against the sharp collarbone of the shorter woman's chest. Korra's arms wrap around her tightly, protectively, as if the moment she let go, Asami would disappear. The heiress only cries harder at the sensation of being wrapped up in her love's arms. She doesn't know what hurts more, the fact that all of this is a mirage, or that this is what she could have had if she'd only been faster, closer, stronger.

"I love you, Asami," Korra whispers, stroking her hair as she plants more kisses to her damp cheek. Asami shudders with each feathered press of her lips against her skin. Asami reaches down and places her hands on Korra's tunic, clenching the material in her fingers as she pulls herself closer. Korra holds her tighter, and Asami takes a minute to just take it all in. For a moment, she allows her to wash away the pain she feels.
For a second, Asami wills herself to be normal.

But the moment doesn't last long as she feels reality finally sink back in. Asami is angry at first, mostly at herself because damn her if for once in her sorry life, she had felt some sort of warmth and love. The heiress grits her teeth as she feels the words she desperately wants to say flicker upon her tongue. Her jaw clenches shut harshly, trying to prevent the inevitable, but Asami knows she cannot run from this any longer. Korra's hands slide down her back and she takes the last few seconds to revel in the beauty and security of the love of her life. Korra pecks her cheek again, the simple gesture causing the dam she'd built around her insecurities and delicate emotions to suddenly collapse like dominoes.

"Korra," she whispers hoarsely as she chokes back a sob, "love isn't supposed to hurt like this."

"Asami?" Korra breathes out, though her tone doesn't carry any anger or resentment. The lack of fight in the previous Avatar's voice brings a sudden rage to the heiress as she clenches the material of Korra's tunic harder in her hands. She can feel the muscles rippling anxiously beneath her grip. Korra's crying again, but she's nodding in sorrowful understanding. Asami closes her eyes and pulls back before gazing down at Korra's sympathetic expression. She takes a deep breath and lowers her head, pressing their lips together.

The kiss is searing, and Asami is almost surprised her body hasn't erupted in an inferno of flames. She almost screams into Korra's mouth with the force of her sob, but Korra takes the pain with a skilled breath. The woman holds her tightly, wishing to give her as much love and care as she can in the few moments that remain. To Korra, there is not a single person in the world that deserves anything less than the best, and as she feels Asami's trembling fingers clutch her cheeks, she realizes that the best no longer includes her. Korra keeps steady, despite the tendrils of despair crawling off her chest in subtle waves. She knows Asami can feel her shaking, but they're both shaking; they're both scared, apprehensive, mournful; but somewhere in that pain, there's a slim glimmer of hope that maybe now, things can start to get better, that maybe, they can start to finally recover.

"I can't do this anymore," Asami says as she breaks the kiss softly, "I can't keep holding onto you when there's nothing left to hold." Korra keeps her eyes closed for a few moments longer before she blinks them open sadly. Her heart feels like an anchor in an ocean; the sheer sadness in Asami's eyes drowns her in pain and guilt. Korra offers a sad smile and a nod as she reaches up and brushes her thumb against the heiress' lips and cheek.

"You're letting go," Korra replies in a croak, "I… I'm proud of you, Asami."
"I miss you everyday, Korra," Asami whispers back as she feels more tears well in her eyes. "There's not been a single day in which I haven't missed you, but I can't keep coming back to something that isn't there. I…, I think, no, I know I am finally ready to move on, but I'm so scared. I don't know how to live without you." Korra looks heartbroken and proud at the same time as she nods, stroking Asami's face gently once more.

"I'm here with you no matter what, okay? You can do this, sweetheart. You're not alone out there anymore," Korra tells her back in a shaky, but loving tone. The heiress can hear the words Korra isn't saying. Somehow, An's presence drifts through her mind, of that quirky smile born by Korra and those inquisitive turquoise eyes. As Korra sees that Asami has understood what message she's trying to relay, she nods with a bittersweet smirk and lazy wink.

"You're in good hands, 'Sami," Korra tells her gently, reaching down to lace their fingers together tightly. Asami hears the sincerity in her voice and for the first time since her best friend and almost lover's death, she doesn't feel angry with Korra. She squeezes back and sighs. The younger woman sends her another flimsy, lopsided smile as she leans up and pecks her lips once more. Asami sighs and presses herself against Korra one last time.

"He seems like a good kid," Asami chuckles half-heartedly, though her voice seems strangled. Korra nods, smiling as she runs her fingers up and down Asami's arm. She holds her love closer, placing her nose in Asami's coal locks, trying to absorb her scent in these final fleeting moments.

"He is," Korra replies, her voice distant. The two of them lay in silence once more, trying to absorb what little time they have left to speak and interact. Asami almost wants to turn back from her decision, but at the hesitation, Korra is there, squeezing her arm lightly as she holds the heiress close.

"I have a drinking problem," she admits softly, but instead of feeling guilty and ashamed, she feels light. The sky above them begins to clear slightly, the rain coming to a slow drizzle. Korra sighs against her side and nods, tears pooling in her eyes as Asami lets the statement sink in when she repeats, "Korra, I… I'm an alcoholic. What I have with Kuvira… it's toxic."

"She wants to get you help," Korra whispers softly. She's hesitant for a few moments before she turns in the grass to face Asami. She tucks a strand of hair behind the heiress' ear as she offers a cracked, but encouraging smile. "I think you should let her help you, Asami."

"She loves me," Asami whispers with a guilty voice, wiping a few more tears away. "She loves me and I just… use her."
"Then don't use her anymore," Korra tells her, and though her voice is strained with pain and heartache, she nods and pulls Asami closer. The heiress sighs against the strong arms and familiar scent of her love as Korra holds her protectively. Her heart is beating wildly inside the walls of her chest, partially from nerves and also from fear. Asami lets her eyes drift shut as she draws a deep, pained breath.

"I… I love her back, Korra," Asami says in a tone filled with remorse. "I keep trying to deny it, but I do. She… she gets me." Korra only sighs and nods, rubbing her hands up and down the heiress' side. Asami's eyes open and she stares back into those glossy blue depths with a pleading expression.

"I don't know what to do. I still love you, too," Asami whimpers, nuzzling closer to the Avatar. Korra pats her head and kisses her forehead as she feels the inventor sobbing in her embrace. She thinks long and hard about what she's about to say, but she already knows that her answer will always be the same. Her heart is pure like the Spirit World, and after all, she was once the Avatar. Who'd she be if she couldn't put other's needs before her own?

"Go after her, Asami. Do all the things that we couldn't do," Korra tells her through hiccuped cries, "live, laugh, and love with her. After all that's happened, you both deserve happiness. If you can find that in each other, chase it until you can run no more. Don't let it go. Don't let her go, 'Sams."

"Korra, what about you?" Asami asks as she cries harder, clutching the material of Korra's tunic tighter in her fists. "What about… us? What about our love?" Korra only lets out a deep breath of peace as she nods, kissing her hair again with a soft, loving peck.

"I'm a spirit remember? You said it yourself," Korra murmurs with a sad but understanding chuckle, "you can't love someone who's not even there."

"Korra," Asami breathes out, the tears once again welling in her eyes as Korra repeats the words she'd said back to her. Korra only shakes her head sadly.

"If you must leave me, Asami," Korra whispers, her voice cracking, "please leave knowing that your life was my life's best part."

"Oh Korra," Asami says her name again, but her voice is softer and her tears are no longer burning with sorrow. Korra smiles at her warmly, pulling her flush against her chest. The younger woman peppers kisses into that frazzled onyx hair and eases the shuddering sobs that wreak down the inventor's spine. They lay in silence for the last few minutes they can squeeze in before the inevitable. Asami's cries taper off eventually as her hands work their way under the previous
Avatar's tunic, her fingers tracing the muscles of her abdomen; she burns their feeling into her mind so she'll never forget.

"Will you still wait?" Asami barely gets the question out with a croak as she breaks the quietness between them. Korra waits a second before she nods fervently, kissing the top of her head again, then once more, and a final time before pulling her into a tighter, warmer embrace. Asami curls up in the previous Avatar's arms and sighs in bittersweet content. Her heart feels lighter than a feather, and her soul feels healed at the seams. Korra keeps her lips pressed to Asami's hair as the inventor relaxes in her protective hold. Asami's hand snakes up her front until it presses against her chest.

"Always," Korra replies, voice muffled by her onyx locks. Asami only smiles as she feels the beat of her heart beneath her palm.

"Always," Asami echoes, before the world goes black.

Asami opens her eyes slowly to see An staring back at her. The boy's eyes are misty with emotion, but he looks at peace. Asami feels her breaths flow through her like water, and for the first time in fifteen years, her body and mind feel free. Asami looks to their hands, now loosely clasped together as the last ebbing waves of energy from the connection dissipate into the air. An remains silent as he stares at their hands, confused as to why he feels the way he does. Asami cracks a smile, a genuine and true smile, as she squeezes his hand softly.

"Hey," she says with a lighthearted tone. Tears still roll down her cheeks, but they're tears of happiness, not sorrow. An glances up and sniffs. Asami reaches out and wipes away the moisture from his cheeks as she smiles harder. Her heart feels pure and for the first time since Korra's visit ten years ago, she feels life seep back into her body. Her bones and muscles are rejuvenated with newfound purpose and energy as she stands, pulling An with her. An looks between them, somewhat confused but a little curious himself as he rises to his full height. Asami shoots him another smile.

"Why are we still sitting around? Don't we have some training to do?" Asami asks, feeling excited and nervous at the same time. It's a good feeling, like when she's flying airplanes or driving fast in one of her sports cars. It's that twist in her stomach, the buzzard-wasps that spin around inside, waiting and wanting for some action. She actually grins as An's face lights up. He nods and allows Asami to point him in the direction of the gym.

"Come on then," she says, her voice strong and steady, "Avatar An."
"Thanks for the lesson, Master Sato," An mutters as he rubs the ache out of his head. Asami chuckles as she ruffles his hair and shoves him in the direction of the healing hut. The Avatar grumbles something under his breath as he limps away, leaving her alone in the courtyard.

Asami takes the time to gaze at the setting sun over the sea. Her chest is light and her body feels weightless with the release of all those years of pent up stress. Her breaths flow through her with the smoothness of water and her heart beats strong inside her chest. Her hands brush her legs as she walks up to the gazebo where she'd first talked with the Avatar after the train chase with the former prince from many years ago. Her fingers trace the scratches in the wood as the warm memories of standing close to her love wash over her.

"He looks worse for wear. I guess you don't know how to take it easy on beginners. Either that, or he can't walk his own talk. He's a bit cocky. He's a bit... like her," Kuvira's voice chuckles from behind her. Asami turns and offers her a faint smile as the older woman shifts from foot to foot. The heiress sighs and nods, turning back to the sea. She hears the tentative crunching of footsteps as Kuvira approaches her hesitantly.

"So..." Kuvira murmurs, trailing off, "I think I'm going to go back to Zaofu."

Asami is quiet for a few minutes as Kuvira fumbles with her hands. She can hear the crack in her voice, and she doesn't have to turn to know that the metal-bender is teary-eyed and sad. Asami takes a deep breath and bows her head as Kuvira clears her throat, rubbing the back of her neck with a calloused, shaky hand. Her eyes follow the horizon, watching as the sun begins to dip below the calm waters. The two women remain in that tranquility, with Kuvira anxiously waiting for Asami to say something - anything - that would make all these months worth their time. She allows a few more moments, but soon enough, the metal-bender accepts defeat and lets her tears fall as she turns away.

"I'm an alcoholic," Asami's voice says flatly, causing her to stop mid-stride. She doesn't turn around, but her heart clenches as Asami's back straightens and she takes a deep breath. The younger woman trembles, even in the warm midsummer air.

"I have a drinking problem, and I'm not perfect. I still love Korra, even though she's been... dead," she struggles with the word before she continues to say, "for several years. I lock away my feelings and I hurt people who try to help me. I've been using and blaming you for too long. I'm broken and
roughed up around the edges, scarred from fights both inside and out of my mind. I don't know if I'll ever win the battle against my depression."

Kuvira stays quiet, but turns her head to see Asami facing her with a glossy expression. Her hands are curled over her chest in an almost desperate, pleading motion as she takes a small step forward. The gravel crunches under her boots as she bites her lip. Kuvira stays frozen, watching warily as Asami takes another recuperating breath before speaking again, this time with a softer, more vulnerable voice.

"I don't know if I'll win, but I'm willing to try, Kuvira. I want to try…," she says in a shaky voice, "I want to try with you."

"What are you saying, Asami?" Kuvira breathes out, turning her shoulder now. Her heart beats out of her chest as Asami reaches out and lightly grazes their fingers until she can take the strength and courage to hold the former soldier's hand in her own soft palm. Asami chokes back a sob before she closes her eyes and simply focuses on trying to figure out what she wants to say. Kuvira remains patient and strong, holding Asami's hand.

"What I'm trying to say… what I've been needing to say, is that I… I love you, too, Kuvira."

The statement causes the wind to be knocked out of Kuvira's lungs. Asami's eyes shine with more glistening tears as the heiress steps even closer, her forehead lightly brushing against the older woman's skin. Kuvira gasps slightly at the light touch, but doesn't turn away. Everything she'd been wanting since they'd first taken up with each other is finally coming true, but she's still scared, still hurt by everything that's happened. Asami can see the doubt flickering in her opal eyes and quickly gives their hands a reassuring squeeze, easing some of the tension in Kuvira's shoulders.

"I know I've made mistakes and I've hurt you. I know that I've been tossing you around like I don't care, but I have always cared. I keep pushing you away because all I'd ever associate with you is anger and pain. I just never knew that a lot of that anger and pain was from my own internal conflicts. I blame myself for so many things, one of them being your unhappiness. You were right on the boat earlier, Kuvira. You are trying to fix your mistakes, but I've never been able to forgive you because I couldn't ever forgive myself," Asami tells her seriously, though her voice still cracks with emotion. Kuvira frowns slightly, but Asami shakes her head, silently telling her to allow the moment to finish her confession.

"I forgive you, Kuvira, for my father and for Korra," she tells her softly, squeezing her hand again. Asami sniffles before she glances away for a moment. She takes another deep breath as she turns back and asks in a trembling voice, "but… I want to know if… if you'll forgive me?"
"Do you forgive yourself?" Kuvira asks softly as she gazes deep into Asami's eyes. The heiress is quiet as she nods sincerely, though the tears still fall with the admission. Kuvira cracks a faint, broken smile as she reaches up with her free hand and wipes away the falling tears.

"Then… I guess…," Kuvira whispers as she leans in and places a chaste kiss to Asami's lips, "I forgive you, too."

Chapter End Notes

*An Ning is the Simplified Chinese name for "peace" or "balance".

Whew! One last chapter to go. It's got a bittersweet ending (more sweet than bitter, don't worry). Thank you all so much for the support, whether it be kudos or comments. Thank you so, so much! You are all lovely even though I make things way too sad and angsty and terribly depressing. Thank you for sticking through on this journey. This fic is definitely emotionally draining to write, that's for sure!
Chapter Summary

As one life passes, a new one begins.

Chapter Notes

This is it guys, the final chapter of "The End of an Era". Not gonna lie, I'm pretty emotional over the fact that this is over. This is the first story that I've posted anywhere in which it's been completely posted. Seeing that green check mark is making me so happy right now. Thank you to everyone who stuck through this like glue - through the bad and the good, the sad and the happy. Thank you for the criticisms and the comments, for the kudos and support. You are all amazing and too kind. This was one hell of a roller coaster to write and honestly, I had so much fun to write this last chapter.

I think you'll like the ending.

MUSIC CHOICES (ONE LAST TIME):

Section 1 (Bolin): "A Sky Full of Stars" by Coldplay
Section 2 (Mako): "Safe and Sound" by Capital Cities
Section 3 (Kuvira): "Something Beautiful" by Needtobreathe
Section 4 (Asami): "Oblivion" by M83 ft Susanne Sundfør

The note lay in her hand, crumpled but still legible. Darkness is creeping outside her window, bleeding white light into her room. She clenches at the parchment, her breaths coming in shallow puffs. Her eyes gleam in the darkness, her hand reaching for something that isn't quite there. Yet, in the faint hum of the street cars and pattering of snow beside the window sill, she still hears something. Her lips curl into a faint smile, her wrinkles stretching her face as she looks back at the note in her hand. She takes another deep breath and focuses her weary eyes upon the scratchy writing.

Then, as the air grows warmer and her bones grow lighter, Asami begins to read.

Dear Asami,
I'm sorry I haven't replied more often to your letters. I know that one response is measly as best, especially considering how much you've written me in the past two years. It makes me so happy to know that you have found passion in your work and are rebuilding the city. I'm so proud of you. I saw the pictures of the air-suits you designed for Tenzin and the air-benders. They look incredible, just like you.

Fifty Years Later

"San, pass me my cane, would you?" Bolin's scratchy voice cracks through the still air. San looks up to see his father's greying face glancing at him with a tell-tale look of understanding. San takes a deep breath, trying to avoid the sensation of his heart cracking inside his chest as he reaches for the stick.

"Sure, Pa," San murmurs as he hands his father the walking stick. Bolin smiles, glancing at his wife's photo on the fireplace. Outside, the snow falls slowly, sticking gently to the mantle with barely any noise. San inches closer to his father, trying to keep his hands from shaking.

"Funny, isn't it," Bolin chuckles as he gazes at San with a lopsided smirk. "I was best friends with the Avatar, and now you are, too." San smiles slightly at the comment, thinking of An as he takes a seat beside Bolin. The younger man leans into the armchair and gazes lovingly at his father.

"Mom would be ecstatic," San says, nodding as he glances up at her photo again. Bolin's eyes soften and he nods gently, following his son's gaze. The old man sighs as he allows more of his aging body to sink back into the rocking armchair. The embers at the fire flicker and spit, providing a serene cackling sound to serve as ambience as he reminisces over old memories with his loved ones.

"I'll be seeing her again soon," Bolin whispers, mainly to himself as a wide grin places itself upon his wrinkled lips. "It's been so long since I've held her in my arms... since I've told her how much I've loved her, or how beautiful I think she is. She really is beautiful, San." The younger man smiles at that fondly.

"She really is, Pa," San agrees whole heartedly, his eyes misting as he feels his father's hand lay atop his. The realization of what's to come hits him hard, but surprisingly, he doesn't feel grief as he looks into those aging green eyes - eyes so much like his own. Instead, San feels bittersweet joy.
"I'm ready to see her," Bolin whispers, his voice trembling. San waits a moment, processing his statement. Then, before he can register his body's actions, the man rises and reaches out for his father's hand. Bolin takes it with warm expression, latching onto him as if he were the anchor to his sailing ship.

"Will you tell her hi from me?" San asks as they begin to walk towards the door. Bolin laughs, a choked, raspy chuckle, before dipping his head. His arm winds tighter around his son's own. He feels the sheer power and muscle flexing underneath his feeble grip, knowing that the world has another Team Avatar to trust upon. Somewhere in the world, An is with his lover, protecting the people that Korra'd sacrificed her life to save.

"More than that, son," Bolin murmurs as they slip on their parkas and head outside. "Your mother would be so proud to know what you've done. You've got yourself a wife and two beautiful little girls, San. You're going to make a great father, I'm sure of it."

He adds the last remark with another goofy grin as he imagines the faces of his granddaughters. They're only a few years old, but they'd been born before Opal had died. Bolin's eyes mist as he pictures his wife's face as she'd slipped off into the Spirit World, finally achieving her own level of spiritual nirvana. Undoubtedly, he'd known that she'd done it to see Korra and her mother again; heck, maybe even Kya, Lin, and Tenzin are there, too.

Somewhere, in the giant yellow beam Korra'd created, his wife was waiting for him.

"Just like Jinora taught me," Bolin whispers to himself as they walk to the edge of Zaofu's gardens. San takes him to the bench where he'd first laid eyes on his wife. As they rest against the cool metal, Bolin smiles harder. Though it's cold, San can't bear to complain as he takes in the final moments spent with his father. Bolin leans his head upon his son's shoulder, gripping him proudly, his hands growing stronger than they'd ever been in years.

"I'm ready," Bolin murmurs as he closes his eyes. He sucks in a deep breath, clearing out memories and thoughts. San holds him tighter, trying to fight the sobs that hack through his frame. He'd wanted his father to stick around longer, to grow older and fonder and to just be there. And yet, as the younger man looks to the sheer peace and tranquility on his father's face, he can't help but feel happy that Bolin is doing this.

"Goodbye, Pa," San whimpers as he tucks his nose into the grey hair of his father. He clenches their hands together tighter to whisper, "I love you."
"I love you too, son," Bolin says back, his voice trailing but still strong and charismatic as ever. San smiles, closing his eyes as he focuses his hearing on the sounds of Bolin's slowing breaths. He waits until the last one leaves his breath and his body grows still. He wraps his arms around his father and cries, but holds on tightly. His father's spirit is gone now, back to become whole with his mother's, but he doesn't let go.

Only at dawn, will he bury him beside Opal's grave, where he belongs.

/ 

Bolin blinks open his eyes at the feeling of warmth on his skin. At first, his vision is bleary and blinded by yellows and greens of many different shades. The man grunts softly as the blurry expanse clears and the world becomes more sharp. The man looks down at his fingers, not expecting to see his youthful skin upon his arms. Immediately, Bolin shoots upwards in confusion. Had he done it? He asks himself as he looks around at the vast land of grass and beautiful orange skies. He's laying on a patch of soft moss. He looks back to his hands in wonder, a grin spreading on his face as he suddenly jumps up and pumps his fists in the air.

"I did it!" He cries out in his usual youthful stupor, "I made it to the Spirit World!"

Bolin steps back down on his feet, glancing around with wide eyes. He hasn't felt this energetic in so long. He reaches down and takes off his shoes, allowing his toes to curl in the soft earth beneath his soles. He closes his eyes and sighs, releasing a breath as pure and calm as the air around him. For a moment, he doesn't think about anything other than the sensation of being young and free again. It's so refreshing, so innocent, so right-

"Enjoying yourself, Bo?"

Bolin's heart stops in his chest as he recognizes the sweet sound of Opal's voice. He doesn't dare open his eyes, but his smile spreads across his face as he hears the soft padding of footsteps drawing closer towards him. He stays quiet and standing, barely acknowledging his wife's voice with the faint flick of his fingers and the wider spreading of his smile. Then, a soft hand grazes his cheek and his breath hitches. Still, his eyes remain closed.

"Sweetheart," Opal's voice coos, "open your eyes."
"Will you be there when I wake up?" Bolin asks, his voice feathery and light. There's a silence before a soft, moist pair of lips closes over his. The two of them stay standing, with Bolin's heart rocketing out of his chest. Opal is here... he's kissing Opal, his wife, his love, his everything. Slowly, the kiss fades, but the warmth and happiness lingers. Bolin lets out a content sigh, his face growing warm as Opal's thumb grazes his bottom lip.

"Forever and ever, babe," Opal whispers, causing him to shudder with happiness.

At last, after many years of waiting, Bolin opens his eyes to see Opal.

And she's just as beautiful as the day she'd left the Earth to send her spirit to a different place. Her eyes, from which she'd been given her name, glitter in the gorgeously lit sky. Her bottom lip quivers as happy tears fill her eyes and her arms reach out, looping over Bolin's shoulders. The man chuckles, unable to respond with words as their foreheads press together. A spark runs through them and Opal giggles, wiping her tears away with a sniffle.

"I've missed you so much," she breathes into his ear. Bolin only nods, choking on his words as he presses himself closer to his wife.

"Not as much as I've missed you, Kale," he murmurs, using her pet name. Opal smiles into his shoulder, taking to swaying the two of them under the brush of the tall oak tree that hangs overhead. A warm breeze filters through the air and Opal suddenly remembers something important.

"I know you've missed me, but I think there's someone else you might want to see," Opal tells him in a coo, pulling away reluctantly to offer him a chagrin smile. Bolin's eyes light up and he practically bounces on his toes. Opal chuckles and reaches for his hand, squeezing tightly.

"Hold on," she whispers before winking. Bolin sucks in a deep breath as the world shifts and he finds himself travelling at a million miles an hour. He can barely see, nor can he breathe, as the colours blend and shift around him. Suddenly, they jerk to a standstill, the motion leaving him dizzy.

"Man, warn me next time we move that fast, Ope," Bolin chuckles as he rubs his head, clearing his blurred vision. But, as he does, he sees someone standing in front of him, someone that he'd never thought he'd see again. Instantly, his heart gets caught in his throat and emotion overwhelms him.
"Korra," he breathes, his voice cracking upon her name.

Korra stands before him with her signature lopsided grin and smirk. It takes him a minute before Bolin rushes towards her, swooping her into his strong arms and lifting her up to twirl her around. He shouts in joy as Korra laughs, a sound he thought he'd forgotten long ago; it's a sweet noise, something that reminds him of years of kindled friendships and amiable stories. They'd not been friends long, maybe four and a half years, but it's still friendship. Korra's arms loop over his shoulders as he squeezes her hard, almost afraid to let go in case of losing her again.

"Hey," Korra whispers, her voice sweet like honeysuckle, "it's okay, Bo. I'm back. You're back."

"I never thought I'd get to see you again," he admits with a sniff, putting her down to wipe his eyes. "I missed you so much, Korra. We all did."

"I know," the previous Avatar says with a sad smile, hanging her head slightly. The moment of dreariness doesn't last long, however, as Bolin's eyes light up and he reaches out, placing his hand upon her shoulder in a comforting gesture. Korra's eyes shift upwards and her own expression mists with joy.

"It's so good to see you again," he tells her earnestly. "It's been too long, but I'm glad we're together again."

"Not yet," Korra replies knowingly, watching Bolin's eyes flicker with understanding. His expression grows grim for a moment, but Korra smiles radiantly, putting any fear or hesitation out of his mind as she assuringly tells him, "but soon, we will be. I promise, Bolin. Team Avatar will be reunited."

"And it'll be the best reunion ever," he says with a grin, the happiness returning as he turns to nod at Opal. "The Krew, all together again."

Dear Asami,

I'm sorry I haven't replied more often to your letters. I know that one response is measly as best, especially considering how much you’ve written me in the past two years. It makes me so happy to know that you have found passion in your work and are rebuilding the city. I’m so proud of you. I
saw the pictures of the air-suits you designed for Tenzin and the air-benders. They look incredible, just like you.

I'm leaving tonight. I've still not recovered after being poisoned, but I can walk again. Some nights, I'll think about how broken I am, but then I think about you. I remember that you'd lost your mother and almost lost your company after the Equalist revolution. I remember how it'd been you to encourage me that I would bring balance, even when you were falling apart at the idea of your Dad's betrayal. Then, he'd been murdered at Kuvira's hand. You were poisoned in your own way, and I never really got to support you the way you've always supported me.

"Mako," Wu's gravelly voice calls out from the bedroom. Mako's head nods upwards slightly, but there's an ache in his heart.

"Bolin…," the man murmurs, putting his hand over his chest. He glances outside the streets of Republic City, his aged eyes zoned in on the giant beam of light at the centre of the city. Vibrant pulses of yellow and orange shoot up towards the sky, causing the old fire-bender to smile fondly.

"Have you got everything?" Wu whispers as he hobbles up behind the former chief of police. Mako turns his head slightly to face Wu with his good eye. His left has long since gone blind after an explosive police chase that had left him too wounded to continue his job. It'd been with great hesitancy that he'd retired early and passed on the job to Rohan instead. Tenzin's child had turned out to be a non-bender, but one of the best officers he'd had.

"Mm," Mako mumbles as he looks to his small suitcase. A faint flicker of a smile tugs at his wrinkled lips.

"Remember when I used to work for you, and how many suitcases you used to haul around?" Mako asks, glancing back up at his husband and life-partner of many years. Wu only chuckles airily as he nods. He walks over with less of a limp or ache than his spouse. Though he's a few years older than Mako, the ex-Prince hadn't been through the level of fatiguing violence and turmoil the fire-bender had once endured through his life. There are a few strangled tears in his eyes as he reaches up and cups Mako's cheek, sighing with content and happiness.

"I suppose if I were to come, Korra'd bend an earth wall between us," Wu muses, shaking his head with good humour. Mako's smile falters slightly, but Wu shakes his head again, reaching down to grip his shoulders and look at him sternly. The two of them stand in silence for awhile, simply admiring each other. Finally, Wu takes a step forward, straightens his husband's collar, and then gives him a warm smile.
"I'm happy that you get to do this, Mako," Wu whispers, his voice shaking slightly. Of course, he's mortified at the thought of living the rest of his days alone, but he knows what this means to the fire-bender. Mako's eyes cloud with an unknown emotion before he reaches between them, grasping Wu's hand with a desperate squeeze. The ex-Prince raises his brow, confused at his husband's motives.

"I don't want to do it alone," Mako hums, grinning at him as his dimming amber eyes glisten with happy tears. "I want you to come, too."

"I can't…," Wu whimpers, squeezing their hands together again. "Korra."

"No," Mako tells him with a stiff shake of his head, "Korra won't care, Wu. I love you. I need you beside me."

"Ha," Wu chuckles as he allows himself to be pulled into those familiar warm arms, "there used to be a day when that statement was flipped, tough guy."

"It wasn't exactly love at first sight was it?" Mako laughs back, his eyes closing as he holds Wu closer to him. The smaller man crumbles into his embrace. Wu sighs, nuzzling his head into his husband's shoulder before he speaks again, his voice a little lower and a little more trembling.

"This isn't about us, sweetheart," Wu says into his shirt, "this is about you, dear. You've waited fifty years for this, Mako."

"I'd wait fifty more if it meant being without you," Mako tells him, his eyes misting as he holds the older man closer. "I'm not leaving without you."

There's a pause, but then Wu smiles.

"I have always wanted to see the Spirit World," Wu jokes with a faint chuckle. Mako smiles and reaches down to cup his cheeks. Wu gazes longingly into his husband's amber eyes, finding warmth in those depths that he'd missed for the past few years. Despite being half-blind, Mako sees Wu completely.
"Come with me," he whispers, leaning closer to touch their foreheads. "I want to go on an adventure… with you."

"Mako…," Wu trails off, his lips trembling as a thumb grazes over the bottom one. Mako smiles again, brighter than Yue herself.

"Wu…," Mako whispers back, his voice loving and pure.

Together, they lean in and their lips meet in the middle.

It's a soft kiss, one that isn't about passion or heat; it's long and slow, like the calming sounds of the waves lapping up against the shore. Their hands somehow find each other in the tranquil darkness of their room, holding on until their hands shake. Mako's brow furrow as a tear leaks down his cheek. Wu's mouth parts and he lets out a gentle gasp. Before long, their mouthes tire and they pull away slowly.

"I love you, tough guy," Wu mumbles to him tenderly, hugging him one more time. Mako sighs and leans his head against his husband's own.

"I love you too, Prince."

After they bid farewell to their small house by the river, Mako and Wu drive up to the Spirit Portal. It's dead quiet at night, the streets empty and the wind blowing a cool drift through their greyed hairs. The snow patters down their shoulders and to their noses, leaving them red but not frozen. Their hands are clasped together as they quietly stumble down the ravine and into the entrance. Wu giggles and swoons as Mako shows off by fire-bending cut the lock on the gate. They walk inside, peering around at the spirits that float aimlessly. Their faces are sore from smiling. Then, they reach the portal.

"This is it," Wu breathes, glancing into the beam of light with wide, expectant eyes. "Are you ready?" Mako takes a deep breath, his eyes sharpened as he glances into the beam. He squeezes Wu's hand a little tighter, mainly from excitement and joy. He gulps slightly before nodding.

"I was born ready," Mako tells him with a wink.

With one final squeeze of their hands, Mako and Wu walk into the Spirit Portal.
"Mako?"

"It's gorgeous, isn't it?" Mako says with awe as they glance around at the bright colours. Their hands are still wrinkled and their hair still grey, but neither of them seem to care. If these are the last moments they spend with each other, this is the perfect place to do it.

"Thank you," Wu tells him as they watch a few spirits float on by. "You gave me so much, dear. I can never repay you."

"You have repaid me," Mako replies softly, bringing the back of his hand up to kiss his wrist affectionately. "You married me, remember?"

"Well, it wasn't entirely my choice," the ex-Prince says with a flamboyant scoff. "You dragged me to the courthouse the minute it became legal."

"Tell me you wouldn't have done the same, sweetheart."

"I wouldn't have," Wu chuckles, earning a faux-scoff from his husband. "I don't have your muscles, tough guy. You do the lifting, I do the admiring."

"My own personal fanboy," Mako teasingly says with a shake of his head. "Lovely."

"Always for you, dear," Wu hums as he turns back to face the spirits, "always for you."

They walk in silence after that, taking in the rest of their surroundings as the light of the Spirit World grows brighter and the air grows warmer. Wu nestles closer into Mako's side, occasionally planting kisses on the taller man's shoulder as they pad through the vast forests and meadows. Their hearts and love grow more intertwined as they reach a bank overlooking a gorgeous waterfall. A whale spirit floats overhead, leaving their jaws agape with wonder. Mako's arm winds loosely around Wu's shoulders, content in spending these precious moments with the love his life.
"I never thought I’d say it," a familiar voice breaks Mako from his gazing. "You actually look pretty cute as an old man."

Wu freezes too, but he looks to Mako instead of turning around. The fire-bender has tears in his eyes and is still staring straight ahead. Inside his chest, Mako's heart is beating fast enough to send him into cardiac arrest, but he still doesn't move. Instead, he allows one shallow breath to leave his chapped lips. Words circulate into his mind faster than he can comprehend them, but only one recurs long enough for him to understand who is speaking.

"Korra," he breathes, his voice trembling on her name. A chuckle responds, but he still doesn't turn.

"I missed you, Sharkbrows," the voice replies, warm and jovial. Mako closes his eyes, the tears running down his cheeks as he tries to hold it together. Wu smiles beside him, rubbing his arm and back, whispering soothing assurances to do what he desperately wants to: turn around.

Finally, he listens.

Korra doesn't look any older than she'd been the day they'd sent her off in the boat. Mako's lungs wheeze as she smiles at him with that famous goofy smirk of hers, a hand placed on her hip and her head cocked to the side. A bolt of electricity shoots through his heart and suddenly, he can't remember how to speak or feel. He attempts to hobble towards her, but his knees give out from the shock. He lands on the soft patch of moss, his breath hitching. Korra moves slowly towards him, her clear blue eyes tender and soft like they'd been when they'd once shared something that wasn't entirely love. Wu comes to sit beside him, kissing his shoulder as he manages to crane his neck upwards to meet her smile.

"You… you look beautiful," he rasps, choking on the statement as more tears well into his eyes. "Oh how I've missed you, Korra."

"It's good to see you, old friend." Korra sounds wiser, older, smarter. It's as if she aged during her time in immortality. Korra leans down and sits in front of him, giving him a kind nod. Then, with a soft hand, she reaches out and touches his shoulder before glancing at Wu with a teasing smirk.

"He's not gonna hit on me, is he?" Korra asks, remembering their first meeting since her disappearance. Mako chuckles sadly and Wu shakes his head, looking a bit embarrassed as he tucks his chin into Mako's shoulder sheepishly. Korra's expression only grows fonder.
"Not a chance," Wu jokes lightly, though he still remains shy. The change in behaviour causes Korra to laugh and dip her head. Her other hand comes up to Wu's shoulder. The three of them look at each other before Korra smiles brightly, nodding her head.

"Well then," she says as a bright yellow light glows beneath her palms. Mako and Wu both feel something rush through their blood. Their breaths grow deeper and longer. Their bodies feel stronger and lighter. Their hands grip tightly together like glue - like the first time they'd ever touched. When they look down as Korra pulls her hand away, they notice that their sagging skin and grey hairs have gone, replaced by their youthful counterparts.

"There's that up-do I've missed so much," Korra grins as she tousles Mako's hair. She stands, extending her hands with a cock of her head.

"Come on," she whispers glancing behind her. Mako and Wu take her hands and hoist themselves up with no effort. As Wu keeps looking to his hands and thanking Korra mercilessly, Mako spies a familiar person standing a few feet behind his ex-girlfriend. Korra catches his gaze and smiles encouragingly.

"He's been waiting a full hour," Korra chuckles, nudging him. "Go, Mako."

"Bolin," Mako chokes out, his eyes glazing again. Korra smiles fondly and steps back so that he can run forward. Bolin darts from his position, arms outstretched and waiting. The two of them meet in a bone-crushing embrace, with Mako being lifted a few feet off the air. This time, however, the fire-bender doesn't mind as he's twirled around in his brother's strong arms. Instead, he clutches him tighter, sobbing into his shoulder.

"It's okay, Mako," Bolin whispers with a warm smile, "we're home now."

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**Dear Asami,**

_I'm sorry I haven’t replied more often to your letters. I know that one response is measly as best, especially considering how much you’ve written me in the past two years. It makes me so happy to know that you have found passion in your work and are rebuilding the city. I’m so proud of you. I saw the pictures of the air-suits you designed for Tenzin and the air-benders. They look incredible, just like you._
I'm leaving tonight. I've still not recovered after being poisoned, but I can walk again. Some nights, I’ll think about how broken I am, but then I think about you. I remember that you’d lost your mother and almost lost your company after the Equalist revolution. I remember how it’d been you to encourage me that I would bring balance, even when you were falling apart at the idea of your Dad’s betrayal. Then, he’d been murdered at Kuvira's hand. You were poisoned in your own way, and I never really got to support you the way you’ve always supported me.

You’ve been there for me than anyone else has; more than Mako and Bolin, you’ve stuck by my side through thick and thin. I guess I was a bit of a jerk to you at the start, but I never knew that you are more than just a pretty face and a rich name. You’re Asami Sato, genius inventor, philanthropist, and the best friend I could ever hope to have. You are so strong and inspirational; it’s you that reminds me that I can make it through this someday.

I guess that’s why I’ve decided to come back.

It's cold outside. Colder than Zaofu during the winter. It's quiet and tranquil.

It's… peaceful.

Kuvira walks along the frozen paths in Avatar Korra park, her greying eyes watching the stars shine bright above her head. She smiles at the sight of the worn statue, still standing strong and proud in the gardens. She pauses a moment, recalling the days she'd seek out the comfort of the Avatar in the Spirit World. Even after her long relationship with Asami, Kuvira knows that her end will not pass in the same way as the heiress and the Avatar. Kuvira sighs, hobbling lightly over to a bench that isn't completely covered in snow. She wipes the remainder of the white powder off with her gloved hand.

"Ah," she hums as she takes a seat, her knees aching. "That's much better."

She'd be lying if she wasn't a bit saddened to know that Asami and her would be splitting ways. They'd lasted their relationship a few dozen years, but as they grew older and their time grew closer to the inevitable, Kuvira knew that she’d have to say goodbye sooner or later. It'd been an awkward, hard partnership at the beginning. A lot of mistrust and yelling, and an insurmountable amount of hate-sex, but then, as the years grew on, they lasted with each other. It didn't take long for their relationship to simmer down from sexual to purely platonic. Their budding romance had been quick, but ironically necessary. It gave Asami time to heal; in turn, it had given Kuvira the time to
reconcile with her own inner demons, and with the woman who'd lost it all.

Kuvira closes her eyes and thinks back to their last conversation, earlier today.

"So, this is it, huh?" Asami chuckles warmly, glancing at the nervously fidgeting earth-bender.

"I suppose, yes," Kuvira replies, unable to make eye contact for too long. Sure they'd become nothing short of friends, but to Kuvira, friends meant more than just a person she could talk to. A friend - Asami - means family, and family isn't something she's had in so long. She sniffs, trying to hide her tears. Asami only sighs, stepping forward with a barely concealed limp. The metal-bender only tips her chin upwards, but doesn't move anymore.

"Hey now," Asami whispers, reaching out to wipe the trailing tear on her cheekbone. "None of that. You're going to be okay, Kuvira."

"I'm going to miss you," Kuvira blurts out, looking up and clenching her jaw. Her bones ache and her hands shake but she maintains eye contact with Asami for as long as she can before her vision blurs with tears. "I just... it's been too long since I've had to say goodbye like this before."

"Same," Asami says softly, glancing downwards with a frown. They stand in a bit of an awkward silence before the heiress nods her head up again.

"You know that I love you, right?" Asami whispers, curling her arm over Kuvira's shoulder to bring her into a hug. "Nothing can change that now. I know we've been through a lot, but I need you to know that I don't harbour any negative feelings towards you anymore. I've made peace with myself and you."

"Asami..." Kuvira chokes out, trying not to cry again. Asami smiles fondly, her other arm draping over the corresponding shoulder to bring her in closer. Their fragile bodies press together as they hold each other, accepting finally that this was the last time they'd ever see each other.

"I'm glad that you're going to see her soon," Kuvira says after sometime, the sadness from her voice alleviating. "She's missed you."

Asami pulls back slightly to glance at her with an open and kind expression. Her mouth turns upwards in a soft smirk as she hangs her head and blushes. Kuvira chuckles lightly, reaching up to
lightly squeeze Asami’s thin arm with a gentle gesture. The heiress smiles back at her fondly, curling a strand of hair behind her ear. Kuvira sighs and steps back slightly, giving them both some space as she takes in the last image of the beautiful heiress.

"Thank you," Asami tells her as she watches Kuvira slip on her coat. "For not letting me slip. For keeping me here... for her." Kuvira smiles sadly at the statement, but a warm fleck of pride settles in her as she allows herself to bask in the idea that she’d finally done something right.

"I love you," Kuvira tells her one last time. Asami only nods, her eyes misting as she watches Kuvira reach for the handle and open it.

"Until next time, my friend," Asami tells her back, watching as Kuvira smiles and dips her head. Asami sighs as she whispers, "safe travels, Kuvira."

"You too, Asami," Kuvira replies warmly, taking her first step outside. They hold a glance before she turns her back to whisper, "you too."

And that’s how she came to sit here today. Her arms are wrapped tightly around her chest, providing her with what little warmth she has left. To any passerby that may be out this late, she may as well look like a homeless woman with her ragged hair and wrinkled cheeks. Her eyes are no longer that striking green, but grey with age and hardship. Her hands don’t possess the same strength and cunning they once had when she’d been younger. Her back aches with the cold, but she doesn’t feel bitter or sad. She doesn’t harbour any negativity for her final farewell to Asami.

Instead, as she closes her eyes for the final time, Kuvira feels balanced and ready for whatever awaits her.

/ 

"Kuvira," a calm, echoing voice calls out, "open your eyes."

Slowly, the metal-bender blinks them open. The image of blackness surrounds her, and for a moment she panics. Has she fallen into an abyss; is this her karma for the war she’d raged long ago? The ex-captain feels small and vulnerable as she shivers, rapidly glancing around for a source of light. She trembles, even though she can't feel her body or see anything. She feels insignificant, bare, alone.
“Kuvira,” the voice calls to her again, more soothing, “do not be alarmed. You are not going to suffer.”

“Who's there?!” Kuvira calls out in a sharp cry. “Please, show yourself.”

“There is nothing to show,” the voice replies warmly, seemingly drawing closer to her ears. Kuvira goes to lift her arms, but she realizes that there's nothing to lift. She has no body parts; there is nothing but darkness that stretches on infinitely. Kuvira tries to wring herself free, but she doesn't move.

“W-What's going on?” Kuvira asks, her voice trembling as she continues to lose herself in the darkness. “Please, someone help me!”

“Calm,” the voice replies, its tone soothing and gentle. “You will find out soon, young one.”

“You are not young!” Kuvira replies, aghast as confusion settles in. “I'm not young, I'm old!”

“You were old,” the voice sounds, clearer and more familiar than before. Kuvira feels something jerk in her chest as she hears more words spill from the mystic soul. “You were old, Kuvira, but life is a cycle of age and youth. You will restart your cycle.”

“R-Restart… c-cycle?” Kuvira asks, her voice growing quieter. “What are you talking about? Who are you?”

Suddenly, an wispy, blue-spirited image appears in the darkness; it's a face that she'd not seen in a decade.

“Korra!” Kuvira cries out in joy as the blue spirited Avatar floats over to her, a smile wearing thin on her transparent lips. “Help me! I'm lost.”

“No, Kuvira,” Korra tells her in a voice that sounds not dissimilar to the one she'd used in the Avatar State. Korra smiles at her reassuringly, a proud expression flickering in her ghostly eyes as she lingers closer to tell her, “you are not lost. Maybe right now, things seem unclear and fuzzy, but soon you will be found. I assure you, my friend, your dues have been paid. I will give you what you've always yearned for.”
"What are you talking about?" Kuvira asks, still confused as to what Korra is telling her. The Avatar chuckles lightly as she floats closer to place both her wispy hands in an interlocking fist. Her eyes flicker with a light purple glow before the darkness around them explodes into a blinding white.

Then, in the distance, Kuvira hears the faint noise of a baby's cry.

"Korra…," she trails off, unsure if her presumption is going to be correct. Korra just looks at her with a knowing smirk as she nods.

"You saved Asami, and in turn, I will save you," Korra murmurs gently, a loving tone seeping into her voice. The baby's crying grows louder in the distance. Kuvira feels a swirling sense of giddiness and excitement, but fear and apprehension linger in the background. Korra is there, however, to ease the tension as she smiles again, her eyes flickering with happiness and pride. Kuvira swears she can see a tear glisten in those cerulean depths.

"I'm giving you a second chance, Kuvira," Korra tells her as the noise grows louder than ever. "I'm giving you what you've always wanted."

"What's that?" Kuvira breathes softly, though her heart (if she can consider the throbbing inside of her to be a heart) already knows the answer. Korra must sense the recognition in her voice because the Avatar is grinning hard now, smiling like her face can take the stretching of her ghostly lips. The baby's cries grow to be a piercing shriek, the whiteness slowly fading from her vision to be replaced with blurred objects and muffled voices.

"A family," Korra replies gently, her eyes gazing over at the image beginning to clear in front of them.

Kuvira barely has time to say one last thing before Korra's glowing spirit escapes from her view with a smile.

*Thank you.*
Dear Asami,

I’m sorry I haven’t replied more often to your letters. I know that one response is measly as best, especially considering how much you’ve written me in the past two years. It makes me so happy to know that you have found passion in your work and are rebuilding the city. I’m so proud of you. I saw the pictures of the air-suits you designed for Tenzin and the air-benders. They look incredible, just like you.

I’m leaving tonight. I’ve still not recovered after being poisoned, but I can walk again. Some nights, I’ll think about how broken I am, but then I think about you. I remember that you’d lost your mother and almost lost your company after the Equalist revolution. I remember how it’d been you to encourage me that I would bring balance, even when you were falling apart at the idea of your Dad’s betrayal. Then, he’d been murdered at Kuvira’s hand. You were poisoned in your own way, and I never really got to support you the way you’ve always supported me.

You’ve been there for me than anyone else has; more than Mako and Bolin, you’ve stuck by my side through thick and thin. I guess I was a bit of a jerk to you at the start, but I never knew that you are more than just a pretty face and a rich name. You’re Asami Sato, genius inventor, philanthropist, and the best friend I could ever hope to have. You are so strong and inspirational; it’s you that reminds me that I can make it through this someday.

I guess that’s why I’ve decided to come back.

Mom and Dad know about my feelings, so I think it’s time you did, too. I wish that I could say that how I feel is normal, but it isn’t. I don’t think I’ve ever felt normal around you. I’ve felt light and airy, like nothing can bring me down. You make me feel belonged and appreciated, something I don’t get that often. It’s about your tenacity and courage that will me to be strong. When I took my first step, all I could see was you standing at the other end, waiting for me with your beautiful smile.

Asami wipes her eyes as she finishes skimming the remainder of the letter. She sits alone in her room, holding the parchment with shaky hands. Outside, the portal to the Spirit World burns brightly into the sky, reminding her of the things that await her when her body deems fit. Stiffly, the elderly woman rises and sighs, shaking the ache from her bones as she places the letter upon her desk. She is about to crawl back into bed when there’s a knock at her door. Frowning, Asami looks at the time, unsure of who could be here at this late of an hour.

It takes a few minutes for her to hobble down the steps, but when she opens the door, her face
grows into a wide smile.

"An," she croaks with a rasp, though her tone is nothing but sweet and excited to see her star pupil. The Avatar beams at her, dipping his head politely as his non-bending master steps aside to allow him into the room. The man is tall and strong now, with a beard and defined jaw. Asami gazes up at him proudly, fully understanding how Katara had felt when she'd met Korra for the first time. She sees qualities of her love in him, and it makes her heart swell. He turns to face her with a beaming smile, showing her the same kindness and respect he'd shown the entire time he'd been beside her.

"How are Li and the girls?" She asks, closing the door softly behind her. An's face brightens at her question.

"Great," he replies in his deep voice, "Li's pregnant with the third. Xia says it could be a boy." Asami beams, pride swelling in her chest as An reaches out tenderly, extending his arm for her to take. Asami sighs and loops her own limb through the gap, allowing him to take her back to her room.

"Not that I'm complaining, but what are you doing here so late?" Asami asks as An leads her up the stairs carefully. The Avatar smiles and her, placing his free hand over the one clasped between his arm with a gentle squeeze. Asami sighs in content at the soft touch as he opens the door to her bedroom.

"I think we both know why I'm here," An says, a glimmer of bittersweet excitement and a touch of sadness to his voice. Asami glances upwards, peering into his calming turquoise eyes as she tries to correlate their understanding. As An gently lays her back on the bed, the cause becomes clear. A smile breaks out across her lips and she gasps slightly, tears brimming in her eyes as An reaches down to hold her hand lightly.

"I'd like to think that I have a bit more patience than her," An says with a soft chuckle, shaking his head as Asami giggles. Her heart pounds inside of her chest as she stares up at her ceiling. An watches her in silence, a bit of longing tugging at his heart as he takes in the older woman.

"Thank you, Master Sato," An murmurs, his voice thick with emotion. Asami nods her head at him, smiling proudly as she squeezes their hands together. The Avatar glances down, hastily wiping away his tears as he tells her, "I wouldn't be half the Avatar I am without you. I can see why she loves you."

"An," Asami whispers softly, drawing the younger man's attention. He looks at her with a bleary
gaze, but it doesn't waver as she smiles.

"Master Sato-

"Asami," she corrects him softly, feeling her breaths easing slightly with the sound of her name. "Call me Asami, An."

"Asami," he breathes out, leaning forward to grip her hand a little tighter. "I will miss you, so much. Thank you, for everything. You... you're incredible. You're strong, capable, forgiving, inspirational... damn, you're amazing, you know that? Thank you for teaching me all you know, Sifu." An bows his head respectfully, knowing this will be the last time he does so. Asami chuckles lightly, though her eyes still mist with emotion.

"No, An. Thank you for giving me hope," Asami chokes out, her voice cracking slightly as she squeezes his hand and nods again. "She'd be proud to know that you followed as her successor. You've done incredibly well, An. Your journey isn't over, son. You have much to learn, still." An smiles at the compliment as he uses his free hand to brush away the tears. He clears his throat, bowing his head again before he turns to face her once more.

"I... I do have one last thing," An tells her timidly, his eyes lifting to meet hers. "A gift, if you would."

"An," Asami hums sweetly, shaking her head. "I don't-

"Trust me," An says with a bigger smile, "you're going to like it." Asami's brow furrow in confusion as An suddenly kneels at her bedside. He takes both their hands and holds them together. Asami waits, unsure of what he's about to do. Before he makes a move, An looks at her kindly, his gaze cloudy.

"Thank you again, Asami," An whispers, giving their hands a squeeze. "Maybe I will see you again sometime, but not too soon."

Before Asami can reply, the room erupts in a bright glow of sheer white. Asami has to gasp in order for breaths to get through as wind brushes through the air, flowing through her thin silver locks. She doesn't move from the bed as she watches in complete awe as An's body lifts into the air. The whole while, their hands stay attached and held tightly together. Asami's eyes are glued to An's body as she watches it become encased with the light. It's blinding but ethereal at the same
time. It's a strange kind of warmth - once she'd felt a similar sensation back when…

"Korra," she blurts out the name of her love as she watches the light fade. An image appears before her, leaving her heart in her throat.

Korra's warm blue eyes stare back at her. Her body is strong and erect as she stands over the elderly woman. Tears well in the previous Avatar's eyes as she kneels down beside Asami's bed, just as An had done. Asami's tears spill over her cheeks before she can recognize that she's crying. She reaches out blindly, grazing Korra's cheek with a feeble touch of her hand. Korra smiles harder, placing her own hand overtop to squeeze slightly. The sensation is real, Asami notices. Her lungs wheeze with excitement, and Korra only chuckles, leaning her head down to peck her wrinkled forehead.

"Hi, sweetheart," Korra coos, her voice cracking slightly. Asami's jaw opens and closes, but only one word makes it past her chapped lips.

"How?"

"Kiyoshi did something similar for Aang," Korra chuckles, rubbing the back of her neck as she grins at her love. "Avatar stuff. Don't read much into it."

"Korra," Asami breathes, her trembling hands reaching out once more. Korra's smile only grows warmer as Asami feels her breathing slow.

"I'm here. I kept my promise, 'Sami," Korra murmurs as she watches the light in Asami's eyes begin to dim. "I've waited a long time for you, my dear."

"I… I…," Asami tries to speak, but her vision grows blurry. Korra shakes her head and takes her hand, squeezing gently.

"Ssh, it's okay, 'Sami," she whispers softly, "we're not going to be apart from each other anymore." Asami only continues to stare at her, wide-eyed but calm as Korra begins to hum a soothing note. Her free hand comes to gently pat Asami's hair back, smoothing the silvery strands and lulling her to an eternal slumber. Asami gives Korra a faint squeeze of her hand before her eyes close, a faint smile painted on her face.
"Breathe in the light," Korra whispers as her body begins to illuminate, the white glow cascading over Asami's figure, "and say goodbye."

Asami blinks open her eyes, finding herself in the middle of a tree.

It's not the craziest vision she's had so far, but it's still baffling to her. She looks down at her palms, no longer wrinkled or aged from grief and mourning. Her limbs feel refreshed and her body rejuvenated, as if she'd just woken up from an eternity of slumber. Her head nods upwards, faintly remembering the sound of Korra's voice lingering in the back of her mind. Her voice no longer causes a tense rift in her heart, but instead makes it beat faster. She grins, true and genuine, as she realizes that after fifty long years of waiting, she can finally be with the woman that had long since held her heart.

But… Korra's not here.

For some reason, Asami doesn't feel scared. Instead, she stands, still adjusting to the feel of stable feet and lean muscles. She chuckles for a moment, gazing at her slim and toned calf muscles from under the simple burgundy jodhpurs that she has on. She lifts each foot as if she were discovering them for the first time, before glancing around the tree. A warm breeze filters through the air, along with the scent of something sweet. Asami goes to move, but then, something in the energy of the tree switches. She raises her brow, still not afraid, but now wary.

Then, the images start to pour in.

Asami watches with wide eyes as she bears witness to the events of her childhood. She watches her mother and her father carrying her around the city and taking her for adventures on the mountaintops. Her eyes water as she relives the death of her mother, but she doesn't turn away. She sees through her father's struggles as he'd raised her on her own. Her heart leaps out of her chest at the first time she'd met Korra, causing the pain to ease. Everything goes through like a mover. She can hear her words as she'd joined Team Avatar in lieu of the Equalists. She watches as Varrick wrecks her company and how she rebounds with Mako. All of the sudden, she's fighting bandits with Korra and sparring with the Avatar in Ba Sing Se. Her hands fold together as she sees the pain on her face at the sight of Korra laying, dying on the ground as Su bends the poison out. Her tears as she'd spent her time alone during the three years without her best friend and love by her side. The death of her father as the Mecha crushed him.

And then… Korra's last breath.
Tears stream down her face as her memories whiz through, nothing but sadness and peril for the following year. Whiskey and scotch to drown her troubles, endless hate-sex with Kuvira to will her thoughts to stop. She watches herself spiral out of control until she meets An. A soft, bittersweet smile stretches her lips as she watches their relationship develop. She'd seen An as her own son, in a weird kind of way. She watches as he finishes his training and helps stabilize the Fire Nation after an attempted assassination. She cheers in the crowd for him when he receives his medal of honour for his work. She feels the light begin to breathe itself back into her system as the memory ends with the sight of An leading her to her bedroom.

Then, the images fade and she's left alone in the tree.

"Are you going to stay in there all day?" Asami's head jerks up at the familiar voice. She swivels her neck to see Mako standing at the entrance of the tree with a smirk on his face and a hand stuck in his pocket. For a moment, he looks like the eighteen-year-old boy she'd run over with her scooter.

"Mako!" She exclaims, running towards him before leaping into his arms. Mako laughs with a smile as she hooks her legs around his waist. She digs her chin into his shoulder and cries in happiness, overjoyed to see her friend after many years of pushing him away. Mako doesn't even seem bothered or withholding from the embrace; instead, he hugs her back harder, sighing into her white tunic.

"It's good to see you well, Asami," Mako murmurs into her skin. "I mean that."

"I'm sorry," Asami cries into his shoulder as she gets down from his hug. "I… I didn't… I-"

"Ssh," Mako whispers, reaching out to wipe a tear from her face as it trails down her face. "It's over now. We're back. All of us."

"All?" Asami asks with a slight raise of her brow. Mako smiles and nods, turning his shoulder so that she can see. When Asami manages to step forward, she looks out into the realms of the Spirit World with awe. There's a light from above that blinds her at first, but then the image comes into the clear.

At the sight, Asami gasps with surprise.
All the members of Team Avatar, even the relatively older ones, are staring back at her with a grin. Lin and Kya are holding each other, arms drawn over each other in a loving embrace. Beautiful flower crowns are worn across their foreheads, and neither of them have ever looked happier. Su and Bataar Sr are sitting under a tree, their hands clasped together. The youngest Beifong nods at her proudly. Tenzin and Pema stand beside them, grinning up at her with tears in their eyes. Their robes are gone now, swapped for tunics and loose fitting pants that makes them seem almost heavenly. Beside them, Naga and Bumi are waving to her with wide smiles. The polar-bear dog licks the air-bender's cheek amiably before woofing at the sight of Asami.

"Asami!"

The heiress looks to the side to see Bolin running up to her. With a wide grin, Asami runs down the base of the tree to her friend, arms outstretched in joy. Bolin swoops her up into a massive bear hug, rambling on about how much he'd missed her. They embrace for a long time, their foreheads pressed together as they laugh. It almost seems as the last fifty years never happened, as if... as if Korra's death never happened. As Bolin wipes a few of her tears away before taking her hand with a soft squeeze, pain ceases to exist. Bolin drags her to the edge of a cliff, overlooking a beautiful mountainside.

"Where are you taking me, Bo?" Asami asks with a laugh, noticing that Mako has joined her now. The bending brothers bring her to stand before the view, their eyes glistening with happy tears as the each of them nod at each other before clapping a hand over her eyes. Asami giggles, trying to pry them off.

"Guys! What are you doing?" Asami laughs, feeling her heart beat freely inside her chest. She doesn't have to have her eyes open to feel Bolin's chest puffing up with pride and excitement beside her. She feels something being placed atop her head, but she doesn't move her hands.

"Keep your eyes closed," Mako tells her gently. Asami goes to protest, but listens anyways. Slowly, she feels their hands being removed. She keeps her promise and refuses to open her eyes. That familiar warm breeze washes over her again, carrying the faint scent of the ocean, of pine, of...

"Korra," Asami says with a grin, without opening her eyes. Bolin tries to hide his squeal from beside her, which only causes her to laugh more. Mako grunts playfully before nudging Asami with his shoulder, causing her breath to hitch in anticipation.

"Go on then," he whispers amiably, "open them."

Asami opens her eyes slowly, trying to draw out the moment as much as she can. Slowly, her vision
clears and she sees just who is standing in front of her. Both Mako and Bolin take a step backwards as she steps forward. Her hands reach out automatically, seeking the comfort she'd just been given moments ago by the same woman. Her heart is in her throat and there are buzzard-wasps in her stomach, but she doesn't stop moving. This is it. This is what she's spent so many years drowning her sorrows over. This is the moment she'd waited for since she'd first laid eyes on her. This lean, muscular body, dressed simply in a sky-blue sleeveless tunic and blue riding pants, donned with her very own lilac and rose flower crown, this is what she's yearned for; these cerulean eyes and this wide, lopsided smile, this is what her heart has always beat for.

This… this is Korra.

"Hey," Korra whispers softly, her cheeks turning red at the sight of Asami staring. At first, Asami doesn't respond because she's so shocked.

"Hey?!" Asami asks, baffled. "Fifty years and I just get a hey?" Korra's eyes widen with fear and she immediately feels the rejection coming on.

"I know, I'm sorry-"

Korra can't finish her statement because Asami's arms are thrown over her shoulders and her lips are pressed tightly to her own. The kiss is sloppy and needy, but all kinds of perfect. Korra's frozen for a moment, but then the slight swipe of Asami's tongue has her thrown back into senses. Mako and Bolin chuckle as the women's eyes close and they hold each other close, revelling in the sheer love spreading through the fiery kiss. Tears stream down their faces as they hold each other closer. A small gasp parts Korra's lips, but Asami swallows the sound quickly, her arms winding tighter around her love with the subtle fear of nothing being there when she lets go. The previous Avatar senses the longing and reaches under Asami's waist, hoisting her up into her arms. Mako and Bolin flush at the sight.

"Uh, maybe we can come back later?" Mako asks, glancing at his brother. Bolin grins as they watch Korra and Asami continue their passionate kiss.

"Later is good," Bolin agrees with an awkward chuckle, "I like later."

"We have all the time in the world," Mako says with a smile, looping his arm over his brother's shoulder as they sneak one last glance at the Avatar reuniting with her love. "Besides, I think we have some catching up to do, right little Bro? It's been a long time since we've last spoke. I've missed you, too." Bolin nods and smiles as they walk back to the valley, leaving the two women on their own in the peaceful wilds of the Spirit World.
Only when they truly run out of air, do Korra and Asami separate.

"Wow," Korra manages to choke out as Asami's head burrows into her neck. The heiress pushes them back to lie down on the spongy grass fields. Korra's arm drapes over her back as she rests her head on the muscular girl's strong chest. She knows there's nothing to beat underneath the exterior, but she can't help but imagine the soft thudding as they lay in silence, wrapped in each other's arms.

"I missed you so much," Asami whimpers as she nuzzles closer, scared to let Korra go. The previous Avatar chokes back a soft cry as she kisses the top of Asami's head. Her nose is tickled by the thick onyx locks, but she wouldn't have it any other way. Asami is smiling against her skin, leaving her breathless. The heiress' hands run up and down her bare arms, leaving her shivering with the faint touch.

"Is this real?" Asami asks after sometime, her voice distant. Korra sighs contently, nodding her head as for once, everything feels right.

"Forever and ever, darling," Korra whispers to her, pecking her temple again. Asami leans up again, settling herself between the Avatar's legs before placing her hands on either side of Korra's head. The previous Avatar stares up at her with a glazed, but seemingly content smile as she nods her head up to place a chaste kiss on her lips. Asami hums as she allows more of her weight to settle upon her lover, kissing her deeper with more passion.

"Here?" Korra chuckles lightly, her voice airy and light. Asami nips at her jaw, nodding her head as tears glass over her eyes.

"I need you," Asami whimpers, feeling the raw emotion seep into her words. She kisses Korra again before she whispers, "I need to feel you, to know that you're here, Korra. I need to know that you're staying this time. Please, I've waited too long for this. For you." Korra can't say no to that beautiful face, pleading her to remind her of the more beautiful things in life. Korra nods firmly and flips them, lightly pushing Asami into the grass.

"I love you," Korra whispers before claiming her lips again. "More than the universe, more than the Spirit World, more than anything, Asami."

"Oh Korra," Asami gasps as she feels Korra's hands creeping under her tunic, leaving her skin burning and aching for more. "I love you so much. Take me. I'm yours, sweetheart. I've always
been yours." Korra fights to close her eyes to blink away the tears, but she doesn't risk losing sight of Asami any longer. Instead, she pulls off the tunic before peeling off her own shirt, all the while maintaining eye-contact with her lover. Asami's eyes narrow lovingly.

"Take me," Asami repeats softly, her voice growing deeper, "make me yours, Korra."

And so, with a bruising kiss that draws a cry from both of them, Korra does as she's been told.

Their love-making is slow and gentle. The grass is smooth and soft beneath Asami's skin, more delicate than any feathered mattress she'd had growing up. Korra's hands are exploratory and cautious, but carry enough love and affection in their gentle touches to make the teasing worth it. The entire time, their eyes stay glued to each other, watching as they both come to their peaks. They turn and tousle in the grass, learning each other's bodies as if they'd never aged and stayed teenagers. Their mouths burn kisses along skin that has been yearned to be touched for decades. Their tongues draw patterns and dance in each other's mouths and upon their bodies. Their eyes scour each other's depths for every ounce of life they'd missed together.

And then, when it all pours down, they come together in an explosive cry of 'we made it'.

They don't speak for sometime, content to lay in each other's arms as they watch the Spirit World's vivid and colourful skies bleed light upon their glowing skin. Asami's head is tucked into Korra's neck, her arms flung around the hard muscles of her torso, and her eyes plastered to her lover's jaw. Korra's hand slides up and down her back in soothing strokes, occasionally pulling a wide, sheepish smile from the older woman. Korra glances down at the fifth concealed giggle, her eyes sparkling with a warmth she'd not experienced in all her time roaming the Spirit World. For once, Korra feels complete. She leans down and kisses her lover softly on the mouth, still drunk and giddy with the feeling that this is something she'll get to do forever.

"I can't believe you're here with me," Korra whispers into Asami's lips, her eyes closed in hazy pleasure. "I can't believe I finally get to love you."

"As I get to, with you," Asami hums back into Korra's mouth, taking her chin with her hand softly to pepper a soft kiss to her lips again. Korra sighs contently before moving her head back to the grassy pillow. Asami's head falls back upon her muscled shoulder, smiling against the slick, tan skin.

"So..." Korra muses, glancing up at the sky. Asami follows her gaze as the previous Avatar poses the question, "what now?" Asami is quiet for a few moments, simply lost in Korra's presence. She hums again, nuzzling closer into her side as an idea suddenly pops into her head. She grins widely.
"You know," Asami says with a light chuckle, "I think I'm ready for that vacation."

Asami lets the words flow into the warm, comforting air. She sighs in content, gazing in awe at the beauty of Korra's world. A world that knows no pain or hardship, but peace and balance. It's the world she'd always hoped and dreamed for, one that she'd spend praying to the Spirits she'd get to see. Now, she's here, and she can't be more excited or happy. Yet, it's not the the realm that really makes her feel so elated, but the body beneath hers. It's that soft rumble of laughter and gorgeous smile that reminds Asami of the most important thing she's come to realize in her limited time here so far.

Korra's her world now, and Asami's not letting her go ever again.

"What do you say, Avatar?" Asami asks, reaching down in search of her hand. Korra's chest sighs and she smiles wider at the response. "Are you up for another adventure, just like the good old days? A vacation in the Spirit World - just the two of us?" Asami waits on bated breath, but it doesn't take long for Korra to respond. Her lover's lips tremble as they form an earnest smile, clearly remembering the last words Asami had uttered fifty-years ago.

Korra looks over, misty-eyed as their fingers weave together to softly reply, "sounds perfect."

Dear Asami,

I'm sorry I haven't replied more often to your letters. I know that one response is measly as best, especially considering how much you've written me in the past two years. It makes me so happy to know that you have found passion in your work and are rebuilding the city. I'm so proud of you. I saw the pictures of the air-suits you designed for Tenzin and the air-benders. They look incredible, just like you.

I'm leaving tonight. I've still not recovered after being poisoned, but I can walk again. Some nights, I'll think about how broken I am, but then I think about you. I remember that you'd lost your mother and almost lost your company after the Equalist revolution. I remember how it'd been you to encourage me that I would bring balance, even when you were falling apart at the idea of your Dad's betrayal. Then, he'd been murdered at Kuvira's hand. You were poisoned in your own way, and I never really got to support you the way you've always supported me.
You’ve been there for me than anyone else has; more than Mako and Bolin, you’ve stuck by my side through thick and thin. I guess I was a bit of a jerk to you at the start, but I never knew that you are more than just a pretty face and a rich name. You’re Asami Sato, genius inventor, philanthropist, and the best friend I could ever hope to have. You are so strong and inspirational; it’s you that reminds me that I can make it through this someday.

I guess that’s why I’ve decided to come back.

Mom and Dad know about my feelings, so I think it’s time you did, too. I wish that I could say that how I feel is normal, but it isn’t. I don’t think I’ve ever felt normal around you. I’ve felt light and airy, like nothing can bring me down. You make be feel belonged and appreciated, something I don’t get that often. It’s about your tenacity and courage that will me to be strong. When I took my first step, all I could see was you standing at the other end, waiting for me with your beautiful smile.

I asked Katara what I’d get out of this if I recovered. She told me that she didn’t know, but that it would be interesting to find out. I… I think I’m ready to find out, Asami. I’m walking again, and you best bet I’m walking back to you. I want to show you the world and tell you things I’ve kept to myself for three years. I’m taking my first steps and they’re for you, Asami. I’m coming back to you. When I wanted to come to the South, I thought I was going home. Mom told me that the reason why I didn’t feel well here is because I wasn’t home. My heart is back in Republic City with you, Asami, not here.

My home is with you - it is you.

I love you, Asami Sato.

Forever yours,

Korra

~ Fin ~
Chapter End Notes

DISCLAIMER: I know that the Spirit World is not an afterlife. But, I feel like they'd each find a way to get there to spend an eternity together. Don't hate me, lol. The only unrealistic one would be Su and Bataar, but I figured that if most of Team Avatar was there, they could join too, haha. I also think that Kuvira did her time and I feel like seeing as though the only thing that she'd ever wanted was comfort and companionship, Korra would reincarnate her into a loving family so she would get that chance. Besides, who doesn't want a super fluffy happy ending after all of that angst?? I know I sure did.

I would just like to give one last HUGE thanks to everyone who stuck with me through this story. I know that it wasn't an easy ride, nor was it a happy read. I just hope that you guys liked the ending. It's been a true blast finishing this, knowing it had been my first ever Korrasami piece. It's sad as shit, but I'm proud of it, nonetheless. If you left Kudos, Comments, or even just took the time to read it, THANK YOU. I appreciate every ounce of support!

If you're still looking for angst, be sure to check out my newest fic, "If You Love These People"!

For news on other fics, I just would like y'all to know that "The Avatar's Love(s)" will be updated shortly, followed by "The Fifth Element". Stay posted for more information at my tumblr: aclassactpresident

Thank you again, and until next time <3

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!