How the Other Half Lives

by SsorRryhpez

Summary

Korra is a protester of poverty, Asami is the heiress of the Sato Corporation. Based on the story of Jacob Riis (look it up if you're not into history). Basically, Asami is fem!Riis. Poverty is a huge issue in Republic City, and something must be done.

*discontinued because I gave myself no room for a good plot*
Lin didn't want to get back up. She really, truly could have gone without removing her boot-covered feet from the surface of her desk and dragging herself out of her brown leather lounge chair, only to answer the seemingly desperate telephone as it rang out its desire to be paid attention to. Chief Beifong was not inclined to abandon her freshly poured glass of scotch, nor did she feel a particular calling to trek across her office and attend to the phone's matters of questionable importance. So why is it that Lin stands next to the window of her office, reaching out for the wall-mounted receiver?

The reason is simple; she does it for her career. Had just about anything else decided to cut into the gray-haired woman’s personal time, she would have completely disregarded it and continued with her relaxation. But, this is work. This is what's important to the Chief, and she would do almost anything to uphold her duty. She has to admit, though, that she's getting tired of these late-night calls. The citizens of Republic City don't seem to realize that when someone calls in a disturbance in the middle of the night, the caller becomes a disturbance as well.

"Republic City Police Department, what can I do for you this evening?" Lin answers the phone in a polite and casual tone, hoping that the person on the other line will decide to spare her the torture of having to deal with a hysterical client.

"Um, hi . . . look, you people are all about keeping peace and quiet in this city, right?" The male caller speaks in a raspy voice, most likely due to years of smoking cigars in an attempt to satisfy a "classy-but-dangerous" aesthetic.

"That depends on the nature of your complaint, sir." Lin leans against the wall and stares out the window, the glass distorting the city lights as they glimmer and reflect off the placid surface of Republic City Bay. The office air smells faintly of cigarette smoke, revealing a nasty habit of Lin’s. She relishes the view from her office, often gazing across the wide expanse of water and imagining a Republic City devoid of whiny thieves and supposedly tough triad thugs.

"Um, well, there's a bunch of . . . low class knuckleheads outside o' my apartment building, yellin' and chantin' and shit like that. Uh . . . excuse my language, miss."

"I guarantee that if you call me 'miss' again, I will not be helping you with your issue. Call me Chief." Lin smirks as she listens to the man flounder around a bit on the other end of the line.

"C-Chief? Chief Beifong? I am so, so sorry about that. But, uh, seriously. These hooligans are really, um, disturbin' everybody around here. They're all over the Triple Thr."

"We'll be sure to come right over and check this problem of yours out. By the way, could you make sure to tell Zolt that Lin says 'hi'? Thanks." She hangs up the phone, leaving the gang member in his uncomfortable state. Looking down at her current attire, a white tank top and dark
gray sweatpants along with the boots from her uniform, she decides to present herself and her force as . . . overly competent in the field of "peace protection."

As she dons her full body police garb, the Chief wishes that there were some way to simply snap her fingers and instantly be ready to go. She'll utilize her connections with the big industrial corporations to start a project centered on a faster way to take the uniforms on and off. Using the mirror on the inside of her uniform closet to make absolutely sure that she looks as intimidating as possible, Lin runs her fingers along the pale scars on her cheek. She shakes her head and lets her hand fall to her side.

Chief Beifong carefully closes the closet door, pacing over to her weapons cache and holstering her twin pistols in their respective places at her hips. She also kneels down to slip a decently sized throwing knife into each of the slots on the exterior of her boots, just to be safe. She stands up straight again, completely prepared to gather a force of officers out of the people who are still awake. She takes a deep breath, grins a little, and doesn't even try to deny the adrenaline that propels her forward as she turns the brass knob on the door, pulls, and steps out into the dimly lit hallway of the station to scrounge out some night owls.

--------

"These factories are unsatisfactory!"

"Kickin' ass for the workin' class!"

Korra's feet are burning from the march, from trekking all the way across the city starting in her poverty-stricken neighborhood, but she doesn't care. She's doing something for her people by protesting the piss-poor conditions in her workplace and in the workplaces of her peers. The pain in her feet as her labor union chants and paces down the dimly lit streets of the Kyoshi district is only a minor influence on her state of mind, compared to the adrenaline pumping through her veins. The air is cold and crisp, and is laden with the indescribable fragrance of desperation and purpose. With Bumi, an aging man and an avid activist for the rights of the lower class, taking the lead along with Bolin, Jinora and herself, Korra feels as if this union can actually make a difference regarding working conditions in garment factories.

Followed by about two hundred supporters of their cause, the leaders of the march chant the loudest, rallying their people and providing them with a path to walk down. Streetlights cast a yellow glow over the tightly packed buildings that surround the crowd of people. Korra's voice is almost breaking by the time a police blockade is spotted in the distance. The cold winter air, remaining chilled ever since the last daylong snowstorm, makes the exhalations of the protesters visible. The moon and stars, clearly visible due to the empty sky, do more to illuminate the demonstration’s path than the weak streetlights as the protesters continue. Korra stops chanting momentarily and looks toward Jinora, on her left, and Bolin, on her right, respectively. They seem worried about the upcoming obstacle as well; they have stopped chanting. Bumi shows rebellion in his eyes and in his manner as he halts the procession and the chanting stops altogether.

Bumi turns to Korra, Jinora, and Bolin and shakes his head as they try to follow his lead toward the force. The cobbled street is narrow, with tall apartment buildings on both sides, so the only way to deal with the police is to interact with them. A streetlight illuminates Bumi as he speaks.

"If someone is going down for this, it’s gonna be me." He states plainly.

"No, Bumi. We're leaders too. We're proud to represent our cause." Korra argues, moving into the light to stand next to Bumi. Bolin and Jinora follow, and Bumi caves.
"Alright, alright, fine." His smile is encouraging as he sets off, leaving the other three to follow in his footsteps. The wet stones make their shoes squelch as the four approach the law enforcement squad. Korra wears a raggedy, dark blue coat that is far too large for her and goes down to her knees, a black newsboy cap over her brown bobbed hair, a sky blue tank top to match her vibrant eyes, and slightly torn black jeans tucked into black boots. Her dark skin tone disguises most of the dirt on her face, but in the end not everything can be completely hidden. The sleeves of her outer-covering are pushed up to her elbows, and the coat itself hangs open to reveal her interior clothing.

Most of the protesters are in similar clothing, not being able to afford anything else. They wait cautiously as their four representatives stop about ten feet from the blockade. A young man with black hair and an annoyed look steps out from the line, but is caught almost immediately by a woman with grey hair and thrust back to his place. Korra recognizes the woman as Lin Beifong, the chief of police and an old friend. The two had first met when Korra was sixteen through a man named Tenzin, who was Korra's teacher and Lin's . . . previous romantic interest. Lin seems to notice Korra as she nears the group; she double takes and shakes her head.

"Korra, what do you think you're doing all the way out here in the middle of the night?" The Chief asks this question in an exasperated tone, completely ignoring Bumi as he begins to address her. Korra takes a moment to breathe before replying, all too aware of how difficult the Chief could be when she was angry.

"Hey, Lin– I mean, Chief. Chief Beifong. We’re peacefully protesting the unsatisfactory conditions in the garment factories of the, uh, Kuruk district." She tries to speak as formally and respectfully as possible, but by the time she reaches the end of her sentence, Lin's hard stare has lowered her voice to a pitiful squeak.

"And . . . I'm assuming that you four are the representatives of this disruptive operation?" The Chief rakes her eyes over Bumi, Jinora, and Bolin after regarding Korra's weak speech. The four nod, and Bumi opens his mouth to speak.

"Nope! No talking, Bumi. I know that you're the real leader here, and you will be dealt with accordingly. This protest is being held after curfew and is in turn disturbing the peace of the Kyoshi district. I am going to have to take you four into custody until tomorrow afternoon, along with any of your people who refuse to return to their homes." Lin raises her voice so that the entire assembly can hear her final sentence. Some people in the protest shout their disbelief at the word "custody," but are once again silenced when their freedom is threatened as well. Members of the police force begin to make their way to the crowd, aiding its separation.

"Lin-" Korra starts to address the Chief, but is cut off.

"Korra, you know that you could have done this at any time during the day and faced little to no consequence, but you decided to do it now. So, if you four would come quietly, there won't be any more problems." Bolin and Jinora look stunned enough to comply, and Korra knows that Lin is right. Bumi, however, suddenly develops a spark of anger.

"You pigs don't know what we have to go through every day!" He shouts, starting to run in a seemingly random direction. He is almost immediately restrained by several officers and placed, with difficulty, in the back of a prisoner transport wagon. Korra, Bolin, and Jinora follow Lin to her buggy, willingly climbing in and watching the protesters disperse as the trio is whisked away to the Roku district's police station.
"There was a disruptive and possibly violent protest in the Kyoshi district last night, over garment factory conditions in the slums. I recommend that you stay out of that area on your way to the library." Hiroshi Sato briefly glances up at his daughter from across the breakfast table, his glasses catching a ray of sunlight that filters in from one of the many windows of the Sato Apartments. As soon as he looks away, Asami rolls her pale green eyes and internally sighs. She is well aware that her father expects her to not only think about changing her route, but to do it without question.

The detour would cost her about thirty minutes, but it wasn't the end of the world for Asami. She loved riding her bicycle in the Roku district, even on cold winter mornings. Plus, the change of plans would allow her to ride along a beach road, which she always enjoyed.

Asami stretches in her chair, deciding that now is the time to change out of her pinstriped maroon pajamas and into something more presentable. Asami stands up, sliding her chair into its proper place and pushing a section of hair out of her eyes. Exiting the breakfast nook and taking a right to climb up a short flight of stairs, the heiress of the Sato Corporation crosses the threshold of her bedroom and quietly shuts the door.

Taking a little too much time to dig around in her closet than necessary, Asami selects a dark red sweater, a black jacket with red accents, and black jeans as well as waterproofed combat boots. Kneeling down to lace up her boots, she wonders about the protest of the previous night. Was it really all that dangerous to demonstrate a purpose in this city? What would it be like to stand up for a cause of that nature? It intrigues Asami, but she doesn't dwell on the issue for long. It has nothing to do with her, so she might as well continue with her routine.

Asami sits in front of her bedroom mirror, spending a short amount of time doing her makeup—after all, she has had a lot of practice. She had washed and styled her hair before breakfast, a habit developed after her father had complained about her bed head on multiple occasions. When she is finished, the engineer-in-training returns to the room that her father had occupied previously, only to find him missing. As she passes his office on her way to the main stairwell, she hears a frustrated Hiroshi on the phone with, she assumes, one of his clients.

"Well, something must be done about it, then. Wouldn't you agree, seeing as it's your job to take care of these things?"

Asami wonders what her father would say if he knew that she has been, instead of attending book club as she tells him, laboriously studying and learning all about engineering and mathematics using resources at the Republic City Archive. A library, as most people refer to it, is somewhat of an understatement regarding the grandeur and expansiveness that the archive possesses. It is rumored that the books themselves were transferred from an ancient and massive library, almost worn away by desert conditions. In order to hold all of the literature supplied, the archive was built deep into the ground, taking years to complete.

Asami fantasizes about decaying desert libraries and valiant protests as she descends the stairs of the Satos' four-story apartment and exits through the gold encrusted set of double doors. The air smells crisp and clean as Asami unlocks her bicycle from its stand, holding it up by the handlebars in preparation for her ride. The paved sidewalk is dotted with naked trees as far as the road goes, and the street is smoothly cobbled and thankfully dry, allowing Asami to choose a generally safe path regardless of which one she takes.

Pushing off with her left foot, the heiress lets her long hair wave in the ocean breeze as she pedals down her street and turns on to the beach road. Normally, she would have gone left instead of
right from her house, but that path went through the Kyoshi district and Asami is in turn forbidden to follow it. The morning is quickly turning into afternoon, so Asami speeds up her pace, switching between the sidewalk and the street depending on the presence of civilians and carriages. Her face becomes tinted red and begins to sting from the icy wind, but Asami continues.

About halfway to the archive, Asami realizes that she has forgotten her padlock, but remains confident that no one will try to steal her bike. After all, this isn’t the Kuruk district. She begins to plan out building designs and ideas for new inventions in her head, continuing her trip through the city, alongside the frigid bay.

--------

Lin was disappointed. The mad dash across Republic City in search of action and danger had ended up being more exciting than the actual “crime.” Interrogating the “captured” leaders of the operation had proven to be even more mind numbing; Jinora had been overly timid and on edge, Bolin had tried and failed to act like a gentleman, and Korra was an emotional wreck, despite Lin’s attempted explanation that protesting in the middle of the night is the worst way to get anything done.

--------

“So, disturbing the peace once again?” Lin’s snarky tone hurts Korra’s ears as the police chief steps into Korra’s holding cell, waking her from her nap. Actually, the space is more of a waiting room than a cell. Water is provided, along with comfortable couches and soft music. Korra lazily sits on one of the couches, her feet resting on the wooden table in front of her. Despite the generous accommodations, Korra could not be more irked. She had felt like she was representing her community in its most desperate moment, but the entire thing had turned out to be a complete bust. How could that strong connection have been shattered so easily by a simple threat of arrest? The girl couldn’t blame the supporters for backing down, but she was still disappointed when they gave up so easily.

“Cut the crap please, Chief.” Korra replies in a sharp tone. She tilts her head a little when she calls Lin by her title, causing her cerulean eyes to glint in the dim yellow light.

“Oh, come on, Korra. You know for a fact that I am just doing my job. Just because you’re my . . . acquaintance doesn’t mean that you’re above the law.” Lin drops the sarcastic act and crashes down next to Korra on the couch, causing the younger woman to remove her boots from the table and shrink up a bit.

“Yeah, well . . .” Korra can honestly not think of a reply that would satisfy Lin’s expectant expression. The gray-haired woman is certainly good at being . . . accurate. As the silence continues, Korra raises her hands to her face in frustration.

“What was I thinking?” She whispers to herself. “What the hell was I thinking?” She raises her voice so Lin can hear, looking over at the usually stoic police chief, tears of anger and sadness forming in the corners of her eyes. Now, Lin wears an expression of worry, her soft cheek scars distorting with her features. The Chief’s pale green eyes shine in the faint light.

“You were thinking that you could cheat the system. That, somehow, you could get through to the higher-ups about the poverty problem. Believe me, kid, I want to be able to help you with your cause, but you have to go about it in a different way. Protests, even in the largest size, either end in silence, riots, or an overthrown government, which is almost never a good thing.” Lin speaks carefully, trying not to set Korra off. “Can you promise me that you’ll be cautious, whatever you decide to do?”
“Promises aren’t something that can be taken lightly.” Korra simply replies, shaking her head and sniffling. She wipes her eyes and tries to calm down. “I can try my best to do what you say, but I’ll never promise.” She moves to stand, but Lin stops her with a strong arm.

“Korra, we’re releasing you now. You actually slept for a fair amount of time, despite your . . . previous excitement. You actually fell asleep on the carriage ride over, and Bolin had to carry you in. It’s almost noon, Thursday.” Lin pats a startled Korra on the shoulder, and the blue-eyed girl shrinks away in embarrassment a second later. The Chief stands and walks around the table to stand next to the door. “I’m also cleaning you up, free of charge. You stink. The washroom is through that door.” She points to a door on the left wall of the room and exits.

Korra waits for a moment after Lin leaves, calming herself down and preparing for the journey home to her family in the Kuruk District. Sighing, the girl stands and strides over to Lin’s supposed washroom, reaching our for the doorknob. She turns it, and is greeted with a small room adorned with a bathtub, a sink, and her clothes from the night before, freshly cleaned. Wait . . . did they . . .? Korra glances down, only to find a black tank top and black sweatpants. Wow, Lin really doesn’t know when to stop. Korra shrugs, stripping out of the foreign clothes and holding on to the hope that it was indeed Lin had who had stripped her, not some other officer. The girl draws a warm bath that she plans to stay in for a while; she may not have this opportunity again any time soon. Steam begins to fill the room as Korra sinks into the warm water, trying not to enjoy the sensation too much. She’s still in a bad mood.

After she’s finished bathing, which takes at least forty-five minutes, Korra towel-dries her hair and slips her clothes back on carefully, unaccustomed to their cleanliness. She stares at her face in the mirror for a few seconds before noticing a hairbrush resting on the sink. She tries her best to remove all the knots from her hair, only giving up on a couple. She hasn’t been this clean in months, maybe even years, and Korra admits to herself that she appreciates Lin a lot and needs to thank her for this. Glancing at her unnaturally-dirt-free face in the mirror one last time, Korra walks back into the waiting room and out into the hallway. The same officer from the night before, who had stepped out of line and was pulled back by Lin, is standing outside, waiting for her.

“You’re . . . Korra, right?” He asks, his voice uneasy.

“Yeah, I am, thanks. And you are?” Korra is brief with her introduction, not really caring to make conversation at present.

“Oh, okay. I’m Mako. I, uh, work for Lin, obviously.” He stands awkwardly, giving Korra an unnecessary, stiff salute. His insane eyebrows are infuriating to the already chagrined girl, so she turns right to walk down the hall in the direction of the lobby, following the signs on the walls.

“Pleased to meet you, can I leave now?” She snaps as she passes the officer. He opens his mouth to reply, but has to move to catch up with Korra.

“You know, you really don’t like to listen to people.” He says as the two reach the hub of the police station, bustling with activity. An assembly of people with complaints and problems swamps the main desk. The high ceiling is ornamented with bright lights, illuminating the white walls and marble pillars. The contrast between the dimly lit hall and the atrium itself is enough to temporarily stop Korra, allowing Mako to catch up with her.

“I was told to escort you out of the building, but you seem to have that part covered, so bye, I guess.” Mako becomes irritable and awkward at the same time, a feat that Korra had never imagined possible. Perhaps her bad mood is clouding her judgment of people in general, but she doesn’t actually care.
“Yep, see ya later, Maiko.” Korra pronounces his name wrong on purpose, reasoning that the act of passive aggression can somehow improve her current situation. The tall, dark haired annoyance just shakes his head and walks briskly down the hall that the two had previously emerged from. Korra, now completely free again, pushes through one of the many sets of double doors that run along the front of the building, exposing herself to the stifling perfection of the Roku district. The widest street in Republic City runs right past the station, and Korra heads to the sidewalk and turns left towards the library.

She walks quickly and recklessly, not paying careful attention to her surroundings. In order to get back to the Kuruk district, Korra has to cross the borderline-highway at some point. She passes the stone steps of the archive, walking for about thirty feet before darting behind a parked stagecoach and beginning to cross the street. Almost immediately, a loud gasp is heard and a high-speed projectile of a bicycle crashes into Korra, knocking her over and barely supporting the weight of the person in control.

Korra quickly recovers, managing a “What the hell are you thinking? Watch where you’re going!” before she opens her eyes to find the figure of a woman, kneeling down next to her. Her striking jade eyes look immensely concerned, frightened even. Korra immediately regrets her harsh words, her face turning into an expression of guilt and slight pain. The woman’s face, framed in dreary winter light, is pristine. What should Korra expect, walking through the Roku district? She grunts, managing to sit up, brush some dust off her clothes, and stand. The woman, more like a girl, reaches out for her shoulder, but Korra shrinks away.

“Look, I’m sorry I snapped at you. It’s been an . . . interesting day for me.” She tries to explain herself to the seemingly stricken girl, but she gets absolutely nowhere.

“Oh, oh my gosh I am so sorry! Are you okay? Is anything broken? Are you going to press charges? Um, I- shit, I’m sorry.” The girl seems on the verge of a panic attack, and Korra racks her brain to find a calming factor.

“Yes, yeah, I’m absolutely fine. You have nothing to worry about; of course I won’t sue you. Your apologies are accepted, every one of them.” She manages a crooked smile, her azure eyes crinking. “I’m Korra. Sorry for jumping out in front of you like that, I was just walking home from the, uh, library.” Korra lies to protect herself, and to shelter her newfound acquaintance. The people passing the two girls give them a wide berth, probably whispering about disturbances and reckless “kids”.

“Oh, you were at the archive? I was just heading there.” The girl visibly brightens; she’s apparently quite the bookworm. “Oh, I’m Asami, by the way.” She smiles back, and Korra is taken aback by her overwhelming . . . niceness. A breeze stirs Asami’s hair, and the Roku district girl shivers. “I probably shouldn’t just leave you here, because I, you know, slammed my bike into your entire body. Do you want to head over to Narook’s and relax for a while? I just– I can’t apologize enough. Can I buy you some seaweed noodles?” Korra has no idea where this fabled “Narook’s” is, or what seaweed noodles are, but she reluctantly gives her consent.

“Oh, sure, I’ll come, but you don’t have to buy me anything. Is your bike okay?” Asami looks momentarily confused, but then she seems to remember her transportation and glances over her shoulder at the two-wheeled battering ram, looking it over.

“Yeah, I think it’s fine. I can just walk it to Narook’s, where I will be buying you something to eat, or drink, or both.” She picks up the cycle with a pointed look, grabbing it by the handlebars and motioning for Korra to follow her down the street. The blue-eyed girl grudgingly complies, matching Asami’s pace as they cross the street and turn left. “So, what were you doing at the library?” The green-eyed girl asks as they walk. Korra momentarily freezes, and then gets an idea.
“I was picking up a book for my friend Mako.” She makes sure to pronounce the name correctly this time. “He was too busy with his job on the force to pick it up himself, so I had to run it by the station before heading back this way.” Korra feels proud of herself for not stumbling over the falsehood, looking in front of her as she strolls.

“You know Mako? We met in high school, years ago. We actually dated for a while, and . . . why am I telling you this? You don’t care about the love life of some girl who hit you with her bike.” Korra mentally slaps herself for not creating a fake friend. It figures, the girl who hits her with a bicycle and then offers to buy her noodles has to be best friends with the police officer that escorts her defectively and awkwardly salutes her.

“No, you’re fine. Although, I can’t imagine someone voluntarily wanting to date Mako.” Korra smirks, and Asami laughs a little. Korra likes her laugh, she thinks.

“I suppose I understand your point. It’s no wonder we didn’t work out; he’s too . . . irritated and awkward all the time.” Asami smiles, and it’s Korra’s turn to laugh. Upon hearing that, Asami’s grin turns soft, and she gazes at the blue-eyed girl for a few seconds, before startling herself by rolling her bike over a particularly large pothole. She snaps her gaze forward, realizing her current location.

“Here we are.” The emerald-eyed girl leans her bike up against a leafless tree, not even bothering to use a lock.

“Um, no offense, but won’t someone try to steal that?” Korra gives Asami a confused look, tipping her head slightly to the side.

“I’d be surprised if they did. After all, we’re not in the Kuruk district.” Asami chuckles a bit, and Korra’s face darkens for a second, but she immediately brightens and shrugs.

The two young women start into the noodle shop, tantalizing aromas emanating from its entrance.

Yeah, we’re definitely not in Kuruk.

Chapter End Notes

Here's the link to the music that I imagined playing during Korra's "interrogation" room scene: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6A1jadPuFDI
It's called 'Ended With the Night", which I found fitting because, you know, the protest ended with the night. The music obviously doesn't correlate (Korra-late, huehuehue) with the time period, but that was intentional. The society seems a little too accelerated to not have invented the flash camera yet, but whatever. There aren't cars yet, which helps. Let me know what you think! Criticism is always encouraged. Also, my paragraphs totally would be indented if the HTML on ao3 would work properly.
Suyin can suck my librarian ass.

A woman sits at a desk in the lobby of the Republic City Archive, her feet resting comfortably on the surface of her workspace. The foyer is musty and adorned with furniture and décor that ranges in color from tan to dark brown. Sunlight filters in through high windows and illuminates the dust particles that float and dance in the stale air. The woman completely disregards anyone who enters the library, only bothering to glance up every once in a while when she is directly addressed by one of the citizens, as they interrogate her about where they can possibly find this or that section, or whether or not the library provides catering to its guests. What kind of question is that? Kuvira internally inquires, after sending the apparently hungry visitor away with a threatening glare. She removes her shoes from the hardwood reception table, if only to roll her chair forward and put her head down on the solid surface. She sighs as she closes her eyes, yearning to escape her frustration by becoming unconscious. Sadly, sleeping is not currently an option for her, because she knows that she has a shipment to oversee today.

Suyin Beifong, Kuvira’s foster parent and leader of the Terra Triad, has decided that the best possible use for her adopted child is for her to sit in a boring library, doing absolutely nothing, until someone arrives with a package, Kuvira takes it, and someone else eventually comes in to pick it up. On some days there isn’t even a transaction at all. Kuvira grows more and more restless every day she continues this tedious and seemingly fruitless occupation. Though it feels like months to the disgruntled woman, she has only been stationed here for a week and a half. Kuvira has started to resent her so-called “mother” so much in the past week that it makes her realize how undeserving Su is of her position of power in the triad. What could she handle that Kuvira couldn’t also? Despite Kuvira being taken in at the age of seven by Suyin, the two women weren’t all that far apart age-wise. If anything, Kuvira was far more physically fit than Su, and some days the younger woman had reason to question her foster mother’s mental fitness as well. Kuvira lets out an indignant grunt, tilting her head up and resting her chin on her crossed arms. She attempts to blow a stray hair out of her eyes, to no avail. Letting the wayward strand remain in its resting place, the woman watches the entrance to the library with less-than-rapt attention.

Where’s Asami today? The unwilling librarian asks herself, realizing that she has not yet seen the dark haired girl today. The only reason she has taken into account Asami Sato’s frequent visits to the archive is because the girl interests her in some way, although the particular reason has not made itself clear. The heiress has always seemed strangely sharp to Kuvira, smarter than the average rich girl and quicker to ask questions about the world around her. Maybe Kuvira is worried that Asami may find out about her actual reason for working at the library, other than to be “protected from the triads’ dangers” in the words of the oh-so-wise Su. Kuvira’s thoughts of Asami are vanquished by returning hostility toward her parental figure. It wasn’t like Kuvira couldn’t take care of herself in the “real world” as Suyin called it. On multiple occasions she had proven herself to be combat-ready and street smart. Had Su acknowledged her even in the slightest? It sure didn’t seem like she had.
Kuvira’s long and horrifyingly boring lesson in patience drones on, and her morale continues to wither away into a deep dark pit of nothingness. In that black pit, there rests a new emotion, beckoning to the woman. This passion is not one for resignation and complaint, but instead for redemption and the bringing of order. She’ll show Beifong who really belongs at the head of the Terra Triad. Smirking, the mentally reinvigorated woman straightens her back and resigns herself to her surely temporary punishment.

-------

Mako, still reeling from what was, in his opinion, an outrageous encounter with the newly-released Korra, sits at his assigned desk at the police station, reviewing case files on numerous recent instances of armed robbery. His dark hair is disheveled due to the all-nighter he pulled, too invested in the late-night-protest fiasco to return home. Mako lives with his admittedly sizeable and extended family, in a large mansion gifted to them by one Hiroshi Sato, a well-known and savvy businessman. This had been made possible by Mako’s . . . friend Asami, the daughter of Hiroshi. The young policeman’s thoughts stray to the moments that they had shared together, when they had been a couple. He sighs, shaking his head and attempting to focus on the papers in front of him. Asami had known Mako since highschool, but was never told of his family’s living conditions in the Kuruk district. When she found out, she delved into a perpetual state of dismay, insisting to her father that they should house Mako’s family, under the excuse that the action would “secure rumors of (Hiroshi’s) charitable spirit.” Mako’s grandmother had been hesitant to accept, but eventually the rest of her family convinced her to take the offer. His family is forever grateful to the Satos, and they continue to show it with their staunch support of his company.

“Ahem.”

Mako looks up with a start, just now noticing the presence of Chief Beifong. She’s leaning against the outside wall of his cubicle, arms resting on top of it. She scowls at him, waiting for him to say something, which he does, very quickly.

“Oh, hey Chief! I mean, hello. Is there something you need?” He can feel her eyes raking over him, judging his every quirk.

“I’m glad to see that you’re taking your work seriously, Mako, but . . .”

She pauses, and Mako prays to whatever god is out there that she doesn’t do something drastic, due to his stepping out of line at the protest.

“I think you should go home and relax for a while.”

Suddenly, she melts, face relaxing and a slight grin forming on her face.

“You’ve been doing good work, kid. By the way, how did Korra treat you when you tried to escort her out?”

Her smirk grows, eyes taking on a mischievous glint.

“Oh- um, she was fine, although she apparently felt it necessary to beat me to the lobby and then mispronounce my name, on purpose.” Mako leans back in his chair as he says this, crossing his arms indignantly. Lin chuckles, then turns to head back out of the office, shared by Mako and nine of his coworkers. Pausing at the door, she calls to the policeman.

“Go home!”

With that, the Chief is gone, turning left out of sight.
As soon as she’s out of the door, Lin’s composure deflates and she grudgingly makes her way to the cell in which Bumi II is being held, which is in fact less comfortable than the rooms where Korra, Bolin, and Jinora had been placed and subsequently released from. Firstly, it’s an actual cell, rather than a waiting room used for the purpose of a cell, as had been the case with the other three. Secondly, a guard has been placed directly outside the padded door, instructed to neither interact with nor allow the prisoner to exit the cell for any reason. When Lin approaches said guard, a heavy-looking man with an unruly mess of dark brown facial hair, he seems to go rigid, straightening his back and tightening his expression.

“Chief Beifong! The prisoner is under control.” The man informs her, in a slightly-too-loud tone. Lin quickly taps his shoulder as she passes him, causing him to sway and lose his balance, throwing out a foot to catch himself to prevent his own stillness from getting the better of him.

“You can go, Shao.” The man seems relieved, and begins to walk in the direction that Lin had arrived from.

“After you give me the keys to the cell.” Lin impatiently reminds him. He jumps, bolting back to her. Shao takes his time unclipping the keys from his belt, but finally succeeds and hands them over to the unimpressed woman.

“Thanks.” Lin says harshly, signaling with her eyes for the guard to get on his way. When he has vanished from sight, she finally peers through the glass pane that shows the inside of the containment area. Bumi sits on the provided cot, a look of resignation on his aged face. Lin slides the key into the lock on the door, an audible click breaking the thick silence of the dimly lit hallway. She turns the knob and pushes the door open, keeping her eyes on the prisoner as she steps through the doorway and closes the door behind her. Bumi slightly jumps at the sound of the closing door, but this is his only reaction to Lin’s presence.

“Bumi. Why did you drag those people out there, in the middle of the night? You know that these sort of things never work out. And on top of all that, you decide to bring the kids with you? You’re damn lucky that I’m the Chief around here, or else they would be in a lot worse shape than they are now. They were released, by the way. I even cleaned them up.”

Bumi’s interest is piqued at this, and he briefly peeks up at Lin from his perch on the bed.

“I would never hurt them on purpose, you know.” He states, his voice strained from the previous night’s events. The man’s hair is it’s usual mess, his clothes remaining unwashed. Lin didn’t want to do him any favors, especially after his endangerment of his people, and his resisting of arrest. Lin chuckles, rolling her eyes as she speaks.

“Is it ever on purpose, Bumi?” He doesn’t answer, allowing a hush to fall upon the small space. A single light hangs from the ceiling, bathing the two occupants’ faces with yellow light. The walls of the cell are made from titanium, causing the luminescence to reflect off of all surfaces.

“I’m letting you go, but listen to me carefully.” Lin steps closer to the man, maintaining intense eye contact. He shrinks away slightly, but nods. “If you endanger anyone in the manner that you did last night, I will personally keep you in here until you beg to be released.”

After personally escorting Bumi all the way back to the Kuruk district, enduring the long, boring, and maddeningly noisy carriage ride back through the tumultuous city, and finally making her way through the crowded lobby and into her pleasantly-underlit sanctuary of an office, Lin strips
off the outer layers of her uniform, along with her boots. The bone-tired woman stretches out on her oversized chesterfield, but only after pouring herself a fresh glass of scotch, lighting a cigarette, and selecting a track for her record player to quietly emit. Her body relaxes against the worn leather, and she allows an exhausted sigh to seep from her lungs. She takes a long drag, allowing the slightly cacophonous melodies to fill her ears. As she sips, the alcohol warming her insides and blurring thoughts of her occupational duties, Lin’s eyelids begin to feel as if their one true purpose in existence is to aid the woman in closing herself off from the world, in the form of material dormancy. Barely managing to place her still-lit cigarette in the ashtray on the couch-side table and to finish up her scotch, Republic City’s Chief of Police drifts off to sleep, the room becoming veiled in smoke originating from the gunmetal ashtray.

--------

“Kai? Are you there? You’d better be.” Jinora’s last sentence is stern as she steps through the threshold of Bolin’s apartment, said owner following behind her, almost hitting his head against the low opening. The living space is small, but infinitely safer to live in than Bolin’s other options. It consists of three rooms; a living room/kitchen mashup, one bedroom, and one bathroom. Bolin is especially proud of the last room in particular, because it’s outfitted with actual indoor plumbing. The “kitchen” portion of the living room can hardly be labelled as such; it consists of a tiny gas stove and a barely-functional sink. On the occasion that water actually comes out of the faucet, Bolin has to make sure to boil it before using it for anything. Jinora had waited for Bolin’s release, and together they had hitched a ride on a produce cart back to the Kyoshi district.

“Yeah, I’m still here, waiting for you guys to come home from your little late-night escapade that you refused to bring me on!” Kai’s insolent reply seems to come from the bedroom, so the petite woman and the well-muscled boxer make their way across the living room and toward the sound.

“Is Opal he-” Bolin begins to ask as the two enter the space, but Kai shakes his head, rolling his eyes.

“She went to Narook’s; told me to tell you to go meet her there if you get back in time.” He informs, sitting up in Bolin’s bed.

The reason that Bolin and Jinora had refused to bring him on the march was simple: Kai had broken his leg trying to do a flip off of a roof to impress Jinora. Therefore he was mostly apartment-ridden, Jinora deeming him unfit to join the march. He had protested, saying he could easily keep up, but Jinora had insisted that he stay home. She had also originally wanted to stay with him in the apartment, but in the end she had chosen her responsibility to her friend Korra’s safety over coddling her significant other. Opal would have also gone on the march, had her mother, Suyin, not requested her presence for . . . triad things.

Kai has lived with Bolin for as long as he can remember, tagging along on his foster brother’s street fighting escapades. There are only so many ways to make money in Republic City, and Bolin had simply chosen to follow his physical calling, beginning his fighting career when he was seventeen. He also occasionally works for the Triple Threat Triad, the Kyoshi District’s gang. Now, at twenty-four, Bolin has compiled enough income to afford this apartment and be able to feed himself and Kai, who is eight years younger. Bolin and Kai are basically physical opposites; Kai has mocha-tinted skin while Bolin has tanned white. Kai is lanky and tall while Bolin is stocky and shorter. They get along well; their personalities are generally compatible. They’re both very humorous, to say the least. Kai does his part by stealing whatever necessities they can’t afford, or he would be had he not felt the need to trash his leg.

“Are you alright? Any pain anywhere?” Jinora approaches the boy, first sliding her fingers over his make-shift cast and then holding the back of one hand against his forehead. “You’re not
running a fever, that’s good.” She says as she pulls away, giving him a small smile. Bolin coughs from the doorway, giving Jinora a look.

“Aren’t you going to tell him what happened?” He asks, in a small voice. As he says this he gestures to a confused Kai.

“Something happened? Are you okay?” Kai scoots closer to Jinora, who has plopped down on the bed beside him.

“. . . We got arrested.” Jinora admits meekly, after a pause. Kai looks shocked for a moment, but his face soon melts into a pout.

“And I didn’t get to see the look on your faces? Lame.” He laughs, and Jinora punches his shoulder. He barely notices, still chuckling.

“It’s not funny! I got scolded by Lin. Do you know how scary she can be?” Jinora asks in an exasperated tone. They continue to squabble, and Bolin begins to feel a little out of place. Third-wheeling had never been his strong suit. Jinora and Kai had been together since half way through their freshman year of highschool, where they had met. Jinora’s father Tenzin was a teacher there, so their relationship had been a little secretive at first. When the two finally summoned the nerve to tell Tenzin, he was exasperated. Eventually, though, the man had opened up to Kai, giving the couple his reluctant blessing. Bolin had been happy for Kai from the start, and had forged a quick friendship with Jinora.

“I’m, uh, gonna head to Narook’s now.” Bolin informs the two, backing out of the room. They barely acknowledge his absence, and after crossing the living room the boxer hits his head on the doorframe, cursing under his breath as he steps into the hallway and shuts the door behind him.

--------

By this time, Asami’s face feels as if it is practically frozen solid, but she has almost completed her journey to the Republic City Archive. She speeds up, switching from the sidewalk to the road to avoid a mass of oncoming civilians. She starts to pass a line of parked carriages, but suddenly there is a figure before her, barely having the chance to glance up before Asami gasps and her bicycle barrels into the unsuspecting person. The heiress’ heart jumps to her throat, and she leaps off of her bicycle and allows it to fall to the ground behind her. Asami kneels down next to her accidental victim, her face knit with worry. The girl’s eyes are closed, and she spouts a few words of dismay.

“What the hell were you thinking? Watch where you’re going!” After this outburst her eyes snap open, blinking, her face changing when she sees Asami. The grounded girl’s eyes are bright blue, contrasting nicely with her brown skin. The heiress is frozen with guilt, embarrassment, and something else that she can’t quite put her finger on. She remains silent as the young woman sits up, brushes herself off, and stands. She seems to be clean, but her clothes look slightly worn. She wears a blue tank top with a dark blue jacket tied around her waist, with black ripped jeans and mangled boots. Her tank top exposes blue tribal tattoos on her arms, an uncommon trait in Asami’s eyes. She carries a black newsboy cap in her right hand. Asami assumes that this girl is from either the Kyoshi or the Yangchen district; Roku district people wouldn’t wear ripped jeans, and the Kuruk district didn’t leave room for its people to stay necessarily clean. Her eyes move from the girl’s clothes to her face. Asami’s hand inexplicably reaches out for the young woman’s shoulder, but her new acquaintance takes a step back.

“Look, I’m sorry I snapped at you. It’s been an . . . interesting day for me.” Her blue eyes seem apologetic, and Asami finally summons the will to speak.
“Oh, oh my gosh I am so sorry! Are you okay? Are anything broken? Are you going to press charges? Um, I- shit, I’m sorry.” The use of profanity in her language is a bad habit that Asami tries to suppress, but in these kinds of situations she tends to lose control of herself. Her breaths become quick and shallow as she awaits a response.

“Yes, yeah, I’m absolutely fine. You have nothing to worry about; of course I won’t sure you. Your apologies are accepted, every one of them.” This calms Asami down slightly, but when the stranger crookedly smiles, her heart begins to beat faster in a different way. This sensation is new to Asami, but it’s not necessarily a bad feeling. She is concerned about why this is occurring, but she pushes the thought to the back of her mind.

“I’m Korra. Sorry for jumping out in front of you like that, I was just walking home from the, uh, library.” Asami perks up at this, glad to know the girl’s name and to know where she had been walking from. Oblivious to her surroundings, the heiress makes conversation with a girl that she hit with her bike.

“Oh, you were at the archive? I was just heading there. Oh, I’m Asami, by the way.” Asami shivers at a sudden gust of ocean wind. “I probably shouldn’t just leave you here, because I, you know, slammed my bike into your entire body. Do you want to head over to Narook’s and relax for a while? I just– I can’t apologize enough. Can I buy you some seaweed noodles?” Korra looks slightly incredulous, but answers affirmatively.

“Um, sure, I’ll come, but you don’t have to buy me anything. Is your bike okay?” The heiress is temporarily confused, but finally remembers the entire cause of this mess. She peeks at the bike over her shoulder, assessing it for serious damage. It seems to be okay, luckily enough for her. Without her bicycle, she would have to make the trek home much earlier than planned; she had to be home for dinner.

“Yeah, I think it’s fine. I can just walk it to Narook’s, where I will be buying you something to eat, or drink, or both.” She states unyieldingly, picking up her transportation and motioning with her hand for Korra to follow her.

--------

After leaning her bike against a tree, Asami leads Korra into her favorite noodle shop, sniffing the fragrant air with a smile. Korra does the same, but she seems slightly apprehensive of her surroundings. The girl takes in the restaurant, scoping out every corner with those cerulean eyes. It’s actually quite busy, most of the actual tables filled up. No one sits at the bar, though. The design of the space is uncomplicated and mostly wooden, which the heiress has always appreciated. She likes the simplicity of the place; not many places in the Roku district are like this one. Asami shakes her head, grabbing Korra’s arm and basically dragging her to a couple empty wooden barstools. She is surprised by the warm feeling she gets when she touches Korra’s tattooed arm, but she once again brushes it off, grinning as she hops up onto a stool. Korra walks around her and sits to her left, a pout gracing her face after being dragged.

“I was just looking around,” She informs, crossing her arms on the bar in front of her. “You could have just said something.” The girl finishes with a huff. Asami chuckles, signaling to the bartender. Korra’s pout melts, replaced with a small smile.

“Hey Zhan.” Asami greets the mustachioed man, giving him a smile. He returns it, leaning against the other side of the counter.

“Asami, nice to see you again. What can I get for you . . . two ladies?” He asks, acknowledging Korra with a strange look. The dark-skinned girl gives him an indignant stare, appraising him as well. Asami understands his apprehension; she has never been here with someone else before. The heiress jabs her new acquaintance in the ribs, forcing her to cease her glaring. Korra giggles, then
immediately tries to regain her composure, seemingly embarrassed. Her face turns slightly pink, and she turns toward the bartender.

“Hi, I’m Korra. Asami hit me with her b-” The accused girl jabs her again, but his time Korra forces down the laugh.

“I met her on the street, she was on her way from the library.” Asami tells Zhan, and he slowly nods.

“So. . . what can I get you?” He asks again, retying his apron behind his back. He is a skinny man, bespectacled and tall.

“Oh! Right. Can we just have two bowls of seaweed noodles, and two glasses of lychee juice? Thanks.” Asami orders for Korra, not giving her the opportunity to object to being fed. Zhan nods, writing down her order on a notepad. He then disappears into a door labeled “Employees Only.” Asami glances over at Korra, finding the blue-eyed girl already looking at her. She smiles shyly and thinks about starting a conversation, but Korra gets there first.

“So, what were you going to do at the library?” The tattooed girl asks, leaning her face against her left hand, her elbow resting on the counter. She looks shockingly cute to Asami, her short hair framing her face and her eyes inquisitive-

Wait what? Stop thinking, and focus on the conversation.

“Well, um. . .” Asami, for some insane reason, decides to let this stranger in on her secret. She leans in closer, lowering her voice. “I tell my dad that I’m going to a book club, but I’m really studying engineering and business. He doesn’t exactly approve of his daughter being anything but a figurehead for the company. I mean, when he found out about me learning how to drive a carriage, he went bezerk! He definitely can’t know about this.” Korra listens carefully to her story, nodding when she has finished. She seems surprised to know that Asami does these things, and is quick to reply.

“Wow, and here I was thinking that you were just another pretty Roku district girl.” She says, and Asami visibly deflates. She hates being thought of as an object, she has for her whole life. As a kid, she had often been asked by her father to “sit and look pretty,” which irked her to no end. Her mother was often the only one who appreciated her as a person, but when she was killed Asami had no one to confide in. “Whoa, I was just kidding! I’m pretty sure ‘just another pretty Roku district girl’ wouldn’t have dragged me in here and told me her deepest secrets.” Korra assures Asami of her sincerity by making a little “X” over her own heart with her left hand. It is at this moment that Asami realizes that Korra has called her “pretty” twice. She can feel her cheeks begin to burn, the mystery-feeling creeping its way back into her body.

“I guess you’re right. Sorry about that, I just don’t like being treated like an object. My dad does that enough, to be honest.” She lets out a chuckle, but Korra suddenly asks her an odd question.

“Who is this dad of yours? He owns a company?” Asami is momentarily taken aback by her question, but answers it nonetheless.

“He’s. . . Hiroshi Sato? Of the Sato Corporation?” She cocks her head to the side. Korra looks confused for a second, but then a look of shock and realization crosses her features.

“Oh- umm, wow, you’re really ri- I mean, I didn’t know he had a daughter!” She covers up her original statement with an equally odd exclamation.

“Um. . . yes, he does. Asami Sato, at your service. I’m guessing that people in your district don’t hear about bureaucratic affairs as often as people here do?” Korra’s eyes widen at the question,
“Uh, no, I guess we don’t.” She concurs. “I live in Kyoshi, by the way, with my parents, grandmother, and twin cousins.” Asami mentally pats herself on the back for previously guessing where Korra was from.

“Wow, you have such a big family! What’s it like living with more than one person?” Asami asks, genuinely interested. Korra’s face darkens a bit as she answers.

“It can be . . . complicated sometimes, with everyone’s . . . conflicting opinions on proper money making practices. I’d rather not talk about my family, to be honest. My mom and grandma are awesome, though. They’re teaching me how to be a healer, actually. They know a lot about medicine, and about helping people in general, both physically and mentally. They’re. . . kind of my role models.” Korra smiles warmly when she admits this, glancing down at her lap and back to the heiress. Asami feels a prick of jealousy when Korra talks about her mother so fondly, but pushes it down immediately. She has no right to feel jealous of anyone, taking into account her financial situation.

“That’s. . . that’s awesome, I’m really happy for you, Korra.” Asami says, trying to hide her discomfort. She is truly happy for her new friend, and she shouldn’t feel bad about her own situation.

Korra gives her a worried look, clearly seeing through her guise. Luckily, Zhan arrives with their noodles and drinks.

“Here you are, ladies.” He says politely, setting each plate and glass down in front of the girls, along with chopsticks. Asami brightens, determined to keep Korra from asking about her change in mood.

“Thank you so much.” She tells Zhan, handing him the money for the food upfront, with a sizeable tip. His eyes widen, and he smiles.

“No, no. Thank you, Asami.” Once again he’s off, heading to the opposite end of the bar.

She watches him go, but turns back toward Korra when she hears a grunt of concentration. She finds the girl struggling to hold the chopsticks, while attempting to scoop the noodles into her mouth. It’s a comical sight; she has her brow furrowed in concentration and her lips pursed, except for the occasional time that she opens her mouth in preparation for a possible noodle landing. Asami has a hard time keeping herself from laughing, and after a while Korra looks over at her and notices her amused grin.

“What?” The blue-eyed girl asks, turning back to the bowl and continuing her struggle.

“You don’t have to use the chopsticks, Korra. I can ask Zhan to get you a fork.” Asami offers, smirking.

“No, no no wait, I can do this.” This is all Korra has to say. She tries tipping the bowl toward her, only to spill a little juice on her jeans. She moves the soup bowl toward Asami, smacking her head down on the counter.

“I need a fork.” She admitted, her voice muffled by the wooden surface. Asami pats her on the back, smirk growing wider.

“Zhan?” She calls, catching the attention of the bartender at the other end of the restaurant. He makes his way over, his face showing slight amusement at Korra’s position.
“Would you mind getting Korra a fork? She can’t seem to get the hang of the chopsticks.” The heiress asks, and realizes that her hand hasn’t left Korra’s back yet. She quickly swipes it away, wondering why Korra hadn’t stopped her from touching her for so long. Once again her cheeks burn, and Zhan gives her a strange look before pulling a fork from his apron and placing it before Korra, who finally sits up and begins to eat the noodles with the fork, avoiding eye contact with Asami, as the bartender walks away.

“How does it taste?” Asami asks, watching Korra slurp up the noodles hungrily.

“Ah jusht realished-” Korra begins to answer, her mouth full. “that I’m really hungry.” She completes her sentence, swallowing beforehand and smiling widely. She finishes the bowl in record time, while Asami is only through about one fourth of hers. Korra lets out an embarrassingly loud burp, and immediately goes red in the face. Asami is momentarily shocked, but then bursts out laughing. Korra chuckles a bit too, still mortified about her lack of restraint. To hide her red face, she downs her glass of lychee juice as quickly as possible. Asami recovers from her hilarity, starting to eat her noodles again. This girl is so... so refreshing! I want to get to know her more. The heiress decides, her pale eyes peering at Korra over the cusp of her glass as she finishes her lychee juice as well.

“Hey, um, Korra?” She prompts the other girl to look up from where she had been twiddling her thumbs, recovering from her embarrassment. Her face is still glowing pink, and her eyes are apologetic and earnest and so clear and Focus, Asami. “Do you want to, maybe, do this again? I’m supposed to be at the library on Saturday. We could do something else, of course, if you want to. I mean, noodles aren’t everything. I- um, sorry, I’m getting ahead of myself. Would you even want to meet up with me then? You seem like someone I would want to know, and I’m pretty sure we can be really good friends, and I really like your tattoos, which is weird, why would I say that? I-”

“Asami.”

“Y-yeah?”

Korra gives her a shy, lopsided smile, eyes completely earnest.

“Sounds perfect. Also, you haven’t seen all of my tattoos.”

Korra winks, and Asami practically melts, face burning to cinders.

--------

After the two launch into several different conversation topics, Asami talks Korra’s ear off about engineering, and Korra ends up eating another bowl of noodles, Asami finally glances at her watch, a gift from one of her father’s business partners. Her eyes widen instantly; the hands of the clock read 5:30. The heiress glances out one of the few windows in the restaurant, surprised to find the sun completely set.

“Oh, ohmygosh I’m going to miss dinner! I really didn’t realize that it was getting so late! I- I have to go.” She says the last sentence with regret, looking at Korra with a disappointed face. Her celadon eyes look on the verge of heartbreak, and it is so cute. Korra works hard to keep from leaning forward and kissing the sadness right out of the heiress. Korra has long since discovered that she’s gay, but not this gay. In all of her days as a raging bisexual, she has never been this attracted to another woman. It isn’t just her looks, but her quirky and slightly awkward personality that make Korra want to get to know her better. Not to mention, she’s a complete genius. From what Korra heard from her about what she was learning, she can tell that the heiress is leagues ahead of her academically. When Asami had rested her hand on Korra’s back, the Kuruk district
girl had been frozen, butterflies trying desperately to destroy her insides. Before Asami had asked her to meet again, Korra didn’t think she had a single chance with her. Not that her chances now are much higher, seeing as she can’t figure out Asami’s sexuality, but a woman can dream.

Now, Korra tries her best to not immediately pull the disheartened girl into a hug.

“That’s okay. I wasn’t really getting all that stuff about elliptic springs anyway.” Korra admitted, coaxing a smile to surface on Asami’s face. Korra loves the way that the green-eyed girl lights up whenever she talks about what she loves to do.

“Haha, I’ll have to explain it to you in better detail sometime.” Asami answers, grinning mischievously.

“Oh, no, that’s okay. I think I’ll just stick with the healing stuff. It kind of suits me.” Korra replies quickly, waving her hands out in front of her as she hops down from the barstool after Asami. Out of the corner of her eye, she notices a familiar face peering at her from one of the booths lining the outside of the restaurant. Opal? Korra is confused at why her friend would be here, in this Roku district shop. She would question her once she says goodbye to Asami.

The heiress’ long, dark hair bounces behind her as she quickly heads toward the door, Korra trailing behind. Asami pauses once she’s out, standing awkwardly next to her bike.

“Um, I-”

Korra full-on bearhugs the poor girl, almost knocking her over in the process. Asami squeaks, but then leans into the touch, hugging back.

When she finally decides to release Asami, Korra steps back and scratches the back of her neck with one hand, then lets it drop to her side.

“I’m, um, I’m a huggy person.” She tries to explain herself, but Asami just laughs, shakes her head, and grabs her bike.

“See you on Saturday. Meet by the Archive?” Asami asks, and Korra nods, still standing by the leafless tree as Asami pushes off and speeds away down the thankfully iceless and well-lit sidewalk.

“Bye! Be careful!” The Kuruk district girl calls, but Asami doesn’t reply. Grinning, Korra strolls back into Narook’s, on the lookout for Opal.

-------

Despite the cold air rushing toward Asami’s face, her blush keeps her face warm as she pedals quickly, thinking about Korra’s hug. She can’t stop smiling, and it begins to worry her slightly. She shrugs off her discomfort, simply enjoying the memories of her day.

Suddenly, a different apprehension comes back to the green-eyed girl’s attention: her father was going to be disappointed about her tardiness. Guilt pulses through her, but is soon vanquished by returning thoughts of Korra.

-------

Korra sits between Opal and Bolin, who both haven’t stopped asking questions since she arrived.

“Who was that girl? She was cute.” Bolin asks, promptly receiving a punch in the arm from Opal.
“What? I’m not blind.” He explains, pouting. Opal rolls her hazel eyes, continuing to interrogate
“So? Who was she?” She asks, leaning forward, her short, dark brown hair bouncing. The couple look at Korra expectantly.

“Ugh, okay, her name is Asami.” The woman gives in, finally answering.

“Asami. . . Asaaaammiii. . . where do I know that name from? Isn’t she- Oh my god!” Bolin’s face transforms from confused to bewildered. “Do you mean Asami Sato? Like, the Asami Sato? Hiroshi’s famous daughter, Asami Sato?” The man practically quakes with excitement.

“. . . Maaaybe?” Korra replies, scratching the back of her head nervously.

“Holy crap! How did you manage to get a date with the-” Opal is cut off by an annoyed Korra.

“It wasn’t a date! I was walking home from being released from jail and she managed to hit me with her bike. She then felt really bad, and decided to buy me noodles. That was it. And. . . we may or may not have made plans for Saturday.” As she says the last part, Korra looks down at the table, her voice weakening.

“It was definitely a date, and Saturday will definitely be one, too!” Bolin practically yells, causing both Korra and Opal to shush him. He looks kind of hurt, but quiets down nonetheless. “How are you going to get here? You’re not exactly local.” Korra grimaces, realizing that he’s right. How is she supposed to get here on Saturday, be clean, and wear decent clothing?

“I don’t really know. I can probably hitch a ride on some carriage, but that leaves clothing and hygiene. I might be able to ask Lin to use her washroom again? I don’t know if she’ll let me, and I’m certainly not using either of yours. Oh, also, I told Asami that I live in the Kyoshi district. Also, I told her that I’m friends with this police officer named Mako, who turned out to be her ex-boyfriend. I also told her that I was dropping off a book for him at the station, not being released from jail.” Korra realizes as she says these things that she probably should have toned down the lying a bit.

“Korra.” Bolin says, closing his eyes and pursing his lips. “You, my friend, are in deep shit.”

“But!” Opal chimes in, grinning maniacally. “I can help with your clothing situation.” Korra groans; she had temporarily forgotten about Opal’s extensive fashion-infatuation.

“Okay, I will consent to wearing something from your closet. As long as it doesn’t make me look dumb. And this isn’t a date!” Korra exclaims as both Opal and Bolin smile widely at her.

“They shout in unison, Korra shushing them.

_I really hope Lin lets me use it._ Korra thinks, not bothering to correct her two friends.

--------

By some complete miracle, Asami had managed to sneak into the apartments, past her father’s office, and into her room, completely undetected. As she had passed by the office, she had been relieved to hear Hiroshi on the phone, talking with some client and/or business partner. Asami now stands with her back to the inside surface of her bedroom door, thanking everything that is holy that tonight was a busy night for her father. She waits for a while, then proceeds to pull her gridded sketchbook and several engineering books that she rented from the library out of a chest in her closet, spreading them out on the floor in front of the entrance to said space. She begins to work on a, in her opinion, more efficient model of carriage than the ones currently being produced by Carriage Corp. She decides to label it as the Sato Coach, after herself, not her father. She had
of course brought this model into conversation with Korra, talking mainly about her new-and-improved elliptical springs. The poor girl had endured her entire speech, nodding and smiling at what seemed to her the right times.

The shorter girl’s face seems to seep into whatever Asami does, and eventually she finds herself drawing Korra’s face in the corner of one of her designs. Asami finds comfort in the arts, and has been drawing since her early childhood. It not only helps her with designing things, but allows her to spend time perfecting a hobby as well. A grin worms its way onto Asami’s face as she sketches out Korra’s smile.

There is a knock at her bedroom door. The heiress’ hand freezes on the paper.

“Asami, are you in there? I apologize for missing dinner. I assume that you have fed yourself already?” Hiroshi’s voice is muffled through the wood. Asami springs into action, closing her sketchbook. She gathers up all of her books, starting into the closet.

“Yes, I did. I’ll be right out!” She informs him, placing her forbidden materials in their proper places and exiting the closet, closing the door. She strides across the room, only to notice too late a forgotten book lying in the middle of the floor. *Shit!* Asami internally screams, already opening the door for her father. She opens it only about a foot, and stands in the crack.

“Hi, Dad. Um, I think I’m going to head to bed, actually. The discussion at book club today was slightly harrowing.” She smiles nervously, waiting for a reply, praying that he doesn’t come in.

“Oh, yes, that’s fine. I just wanted to make sure that you remember that there is a formal dinner on Saturday at the Mayor’s mansion and that I expect you to be there at 7:30 sharp.” He pauses, bespectacled eyes seeming to appraise Asami as she nods. “Goodnight, Asami.” He says, backing away from the door slightly.

“Goodnight, Dad!” She replies quickly, shutting the door and rushing to return the offending book to its hiding place. Sighing, Asami decides to actually stay true to her word and get ready for bed. After quickly changing into a white tank top and burgundy shorts, switching off the overhead light, and taking care of various hygiene necessities, the heiress slides underneath her dark red satin sheets after turning off her bedside lamp. The frazzled and exhausted woman places her head on one of her soft pillows, staring up at the ceiling. Thoughts of Korra fill her mind as she begins to drift off. She finds herself completely forgetting what Hiroshi had told her to remember, but she assumes that it hadn’t been very important. Her mind moves away from the subject to think about more important things. What should she wear on Saturday? Would it be formal or casual? Should she wear a dress? What if she overdresses? Under? *Is this a date?* Asami is shocked by this thought, and immediately brushes it off. Her intentions toward Korra are purely platonic. Right?

Asami has never considered bisexuality, for herself, before. It’s a very interesting topic to her, but she has never actually thought of herself as anything but heterosexual. She has definitely felt attraction to men before; she knows that for a fact. The sensation that Asami feels when she is around Korra is different from the attraction that she feels when around certain men. The feelings are like two different sounds, or two different colors. Asami enjoys both of them, but she is not sure that she is ready to accept that she feels sexually attracted to another woman. The heiress knows for a fact that her father does not support same-sex relationships, even in the slightest.

A sigh escapes her lips, dissolving into the bedroom air. With thoughts of seaweed noodles and spunky blue-eyed bicycle ram victims buzzing in her subconscious, Asami Sato falls into the clutches of sleep, winter moonlight shining through her bedside window.

---

Chapter End Notes
The song that Lin plays in her office is called Liquid Negrocity. It's from Homestuck. Don't bother me about it QQ (also I kind of imagine this as her theme song? at least, the melody of it. The song Black from Homestuck also uses it.) Haha, did you catch Carriage Corp? Been waiting to reveal that one. The lightbulb is invented, apparently. I really suck at accuracy. Oh well! This may or may not be updated in the next six months!!!!!!!

*Don't forget to leave a comment! I like talking to people ;-;*
Cuckoo

Chapter Summary

have this late update
it has no substance
I am an asshole

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

“Do you really want to do this?” Korra asks, smirking and gazing at Asami. They sit on the same barstools that they had occupied the first time they’d visited Narook’s. The soft, almost ethereal yellow light bathes Asami’s visage, making her seem even more beautiful to the Kuruk district girl. The playful challenge and defiance in the heiress’ eyes makes Korra feel silly, and young, and alive.

“You think I don’t stand a chance against you? I can do... some pushups.” As the green-eyed girl’s final statement passes through her lips, she blushes slightly and grins. Korra laughs, placing her elbow on the counter between them, awaiting Asami to do the same. The topic of arm wrestling had made its way onto the table, literally, after Korra told a story about Kai breaking his arm whilst trying to beat Bolin. Asami had naturally wanted to have a friendly competition. The only reason that Korra had reluctantly agreed was because it would give her the chance to more-or-less hold hands with the determined woman. Asami rests her elbow on the bar, staring her opponent down. Time seems to slow as the undercover-undergraduate’s fingers reach out for Korra’s. It’s as if the space between their hands keeps dividing itself in two, always growing nearer but never reaching zero.

“Korra...” With her name on Asami’s lips, the dark-skinned woman looks up to meet her eyes. The poor girl looks uncharacteristically terrified, her face pulled into an expression of dismay. Asami’s eyes are bloodshot, and her body trembles.

“Asami? What’s wrong? I-I don’t-” Asami clears her throat, but it sounds more like a sob. Moisture begins to form at the corners of her eyes, and soon tears roll down her now-pale skin. Just a moment ago her cheeks had been pleasantly flushed, her eyes warm and her features jovial. Korra tries to move, to reach out and comfort her, but she is rooted to the spot. Now, Asami begins to cough, sputtering, her tears mixing with her small bodily spasms. The hand that had been oh-so-close to Korra’s is now torn away, covering her mouth as her coughing becomes more frantic, her eyes opening wide in panic.

Korra’s entire world is distress. She tries, tries to move her limbs, her fingers, anything, but her efforts are in vain. She tries to scream, to shout Asami’s name, but her lips remain still, her eyes simply watching as Asami slips off the bar stool, falling for what seems like forever, until she hits the floor with a thump, and Korra sees nothing.

--------

“Asami!” Korra jerks out of unstable slumber, sitting bolt upright and throwing her arms out in front of her. She sees nothing but dark gray shapes, unmoving and cold. Her body is freezing, her terrified form shaking as she pulls her knees to her chest, hugging her legs tightly. She slowly
becomes aware of her location, letting out a shaky breath and a slight sob that seems to fill up the small, enclosed space. At her sides, her twin cousins Eska and Desna sleep, their identical faces appearing to be hollow, exhausted even in sleep. As her eyes adjust to the nonexistent lighting, Korra begins to make out the sleeping forms of the rest of her family; her parents, two sad figures lying side by side, and her grandmother. Katara, the grandmother mentioned, begins to cough and hack again, screaming out her illness to the filthy walls, broadcasting her desperation to the rotting wood floorboards.

Korra lets a pitiful, trembling sigh escape her, needing to get out of the toxic apartment. Just as the girl stands on shaking legs, her father Tonraq stirs, sitting up and observing Korra.

"Heading out?" the massive man inquires, removing the thin blankets from his factory-worn body and standing, careful not to wake the woman who sleeps beside him. He silently makes his way over to his daughter, who still shakes, wrapping his giant arms around her shoulders and pulling her in for a hug. Korra nods, trying not to cry as she thinks of Katara, of all the things that her grandmother would teach her if she ever recovered, and of all the knowledge that would be gone from the world should the sickness choose to claim her life. Senna, Korra’s wonderful mother, has had to give up her job at the garment factory to care for Katara, carrying her out of the cramped room to urinate, cleaning her up when she has accidents, giving her what water and food she can come up with. The routine is exhausting for the woman, but she refuses to leave her mother to her own devices. Eska and Desna help when they can, but more often than not they are away, making money by running a small opium den. The twins have never used the harmful drug themselves, but they feel as if they need to do this to support their family. Tonraq strongly disapproves of this practice, but can do nothing to stop them; he knows that the family needs the extra monetary push to survive.

Breaking the bone-warming embrace, Korra meets her father’s eyes, the two wordlessly communicating their distress and worry. By this time, the sun has begun to seep in through small cracks in the walls, lighting up the dust particles and mold spores with white light as they linger in the air.

"We need more blankets." Korra unnecessarily observes, glancing at the barely-covered bodies of their family, curled up on the hard floor. The blistering cold reveals their exhalations, steam exiting their mouths and noses with every breath. Tonraq nods solemnly, taking two steps to stand at the tiny counter on the opposite side of the room from Korra, who now makes her way to the apartment’s threshold; there has never been a door, only a hinged, yawning hole in the wall, leading to the shadowy and narrow hallway. Many other people live in this tenement, four floors with ten rooms each, all connected by one single spiral staircase.

With a fleeting glance at her father, Korra exits the room, even more enveloped in shadow. She wears the same clothes she did the previous day; they’re the only ones that she owns. The blue-eyed girl wonders what Asami is doing right now. It certainly must be better than carefully padding down this narrow passage, keeping an eye out for loose floorboards that might cave in and send her straight down to the first floor. Her family lives on the second floor of the building, in the second farthest room from the staircase. Korra notices that the hall smells differently this morning than usual, but it is not an unfamiliar stench to her. Most days, the smell of unwashed bodies solely permeates the freezing air, but sometimes there is a distinct difference. The new scent lingering in the air reminds Korra of the rotten meat that sits untouched at the local butcher, but it seems more pungent, almost biting. It has always seemed to be more prominent in the winter, leading Korra to associate this smell with bone-chilling temperatures.

Reaching the end of the hallway with no incident, Korra remembers that she will not be able to clean herself today; the rainwater collected by the people of the tenement to use for this purpose has been frozen solid for a while, leaving the residents to give up on their strainingly meager
hygiene routine. Korra cranes her neck, making sure no one is coming down the staircase, which goes up all the way to the roof of the building. A circular opening allows winter light to splash in, becoming dimmer as it journeys to the first floor through the grated spiral staircase. Korra’s brown skin is dappled by the shadows as she peers upward, one hand on the sloped railing. Deciding that her path is clear, she begins her descent, delicately stepping down the steps in a counter-clockwise corkscrew. She reaches the first floor and steps out into the dreary alleyway that she has known for her entire life, surrounding herself with transparent faces and pitiful morning silence.

--------

Cuckoo, Cuckoo

A pleasant chorus sounds, filling the hallway outside of Asami’s bedroom. A polished bronze phonograph rests in a window nook, its record relaxed in its rotation. The lighthearted tune propels itself out of the gleaming horn, successfully making its journey to the heiress’ ears. A contented sigh escapes the woman’s lips as she stirs, bringing her knees up to her chest. Slowly, she opens the eye that is not currently being squished against her satin pillow. The room around her looks blurry at first, but the scene develops as Asami blinks away her sleep. Warm, amber rays of sunlight criss-cross in the air, on the floor, and on the various furnishings. This phenomenon is rare as of late; winter mornings usually go hand in hand with harsh white light, courtesy of dense, snow-carrying clouds.

In April, I open my bill

In May, I see night and day

A reminiscent grin spreads across Asami’s face as she recognizes the melody of the song that Hiroshi had no doubt selected to begin their morning. Despite his rigid appearance and businesslike aura, her father has always had a soft spot for music. When her mother was still alive, Asami’s parents would often sing together, encouraging her to join in. The girl had been shy at first, but had eventually warmed up to the family tradition. This particular song is one of the first ones Asami had learned, and a frequent lullaby sung by her mother in hushed tones.

The heiress turns onto her back, stretching out her limbs as far as they can go. She lets out several noises of satisfaction as she reaches, before sitting up. Her sleep had been dreamless and warm, resulting in her current happy mood. Forever a morning person, Asami hums along to the ancient, mellow refrain, swinging her feet off of her bed and onto the floor. Standing, she stretches again before heading to the bathroom that conjoins with her chamber, removing her pajamas and stepping into her shower. Asami finds herself appreciating the recent invention more and more each day.

Water cascades down over Asami, her hair flattening itself against her head. She smooths it down, closing her eyes and basking in the liquid comfort. Snapping out of her slight daze, the woman proceeds to wash her hair and scrub her body. She thinks, as she often has during these past hours, of Korra. Having finished her lathering and rinsing, the heiress stands absentmindedly under the spray. Without noticing, Asami allows a small smile to surface on her face, recalling Korra’s adorable chopstick troubles.

She wonders how different her life will become due to these feelings surfacing within her, and how these might change Korra’s life as well. Surely only good can come from positive beginnings. Still smiling, Asami stops the flow of the shower, stepping out and continuing to prepare for her day.
Yet another long wait, but this time for a dry af chapter
Song playing in Asami's house is this: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e5ZwTYSo-aw

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!