

Title: One Last Regret (3)

“Was that not an illusion?” Nik cuts to the chase and questions. His expression did not betray any emotion, even if the unending darkness made him uneasy.

The same voice replies to him.

“No, it wasn’t. It was an isolated reality where you lived as your echo. It’s a plane of emotion controlled by me, and the other primordials like me spanned different realities in this living plane.”

Nik understood jackshit, but that did not stop him.

“And you’re just handing me the answers on a silver platter?”

“Does your situation feel like the one on a silver platter?”

He grows silent for a while.

“Why?” He questions.

“Consider this treatment a gift from one of my parents—Death.”

“Death... again, why?”

The darkness around him returns to silence. This period of silence continues for almost four minutes before Regret voices out.

“Regret is born when death meets identity. My mother—Mother of Faces—may not have any love for you, but both my parents respect your actions enough. Don’t be mistaken. My half-siblings—Reaper and Grim—had it coming, so I hold you no ill will, either. My act upon Avatar Aang is a test. It means: he has a way out. But not your group who fell in regret of their actions.”

“You’re the one who did all this. How is this any appreciation toward my achievements?” Nik frowns.

“You think I gave you regret? Am I the one who regrets not killing those triplets? Am I the one regretting talking down on my lonely mother, who only started to enjoy herself a little bit? Or am I the one who sacrificed what I loved doing the most for my youngest sibling only to watch her grow to hate us because the other five siblings of mine and I regretted ever giving it up?”

Nik reigns his silence. It is true. Deep within him isn't regret of dying, but not acting against Esta and her customers more. And that's what he did the moment he got a chance. He killed the triplets who used to brand his flesh, cut his toes, and torment him in various manners until he called their names right.

"So... was that the same Esta?"

"Your echo is the same in that plane as in this."

"How was she so powerful? I never..." Nik thins his lips.

"Because she may be powerful in this life, too?"

"A primordial like you cannot sense her?"

"She isn't in the same realm as ours. And even if I tried... a cover of vast might protects her, the hint of which is also present on you, Traveler Nik."

Nik sighs softly and returns to the point.

"So, why are we being punished for our regrets?"

"Regret is only a punishment if you let it rot you."

"You say as if you aren't controlling their memories. You tried to control mine, so you definitely tried to control theirs."

Regret's chuckles echo in the empty vase as Nik continues.

"So they are mostly being punished, no?"

"A spirit cannot let go of its nature. I am a trial by very birth. When Mother of Faces felt anguished at the demise of her creation, she challenged Death to procure safety for her creation. In return, Death gave Mother a trial.

It said—Find me the one of flesh and blood not affected by death, and I shall grant the same curse to all your creations.

And so, the Mother began to search for such a creation. In its failure to locate such a being, Mother decided to create such a form of flesh and blood. However, Mother regretted her actions soon after. In its quest to grant her creation freedom from Death, Mother of Faces forgot the sin of immortal flesh. What she created was the first monster known to humankind. Its shell is harder than the core of the planet. Its life is beyond many young spirits. The first Lion Turtle to

ever exist condemned his creator for his birth. Even to this day, the Lion Turtle roams the living land in search of death as all his descendants have turned to the comfort of death.”

Regret takes a moment to let Nik understand every bit of it.

“I am birthed from the trial of demise and regret of the creator. It is in my nature to do what I am doing.”

“You said you left Aang a way out.”

“Only because all others failed. It is upto the Avatar to either be the master of his emotions or let go of his regrets. But I wouldn’t worry about him. I’m not the only one who will issue him trials. He has six more.”

“Could you explain it clearly?” Nik inquired while letting go of the majority of his hostility. Spirits are like addicts to their nature. Just take Mokshi as an example. It starved to leave this world from the day of its birth, going as far as confining itself to mortal flesh just to leave. In Mokshi’s eyes, it is freedom despite the human prison.

“I won’t. You just have to understand that Avatar Aang’s current pool of possibilities rid him of a great monk as a teacher to help him master his Avatar State. Until now, Aang has asked for his predecessor’s help, and they assisted understandably. But that reason is dead. It is left upon us spirits to aid Raava and the boy to attune themselves with each other.”

Nik contemplates for a whole minute.

“And my friends?”

“Some of them are either indifferent enough or tolerant enough not to regret their actions in any form. At the very least, they are at peace. It will be upto them to free you and your friends from this shackle of regret.”

“Any names?” Nik smiles to himself.

“The one called Sokka, Jin, Azula, Yue, and Suki. Believe it or not, Avatar Aang’s aid were a few stormbenders who came to respect the avatar. But they all failed.”

While not thrilled with the idea that Ursa’s impish daughter would be one of the minds to decide his fate, Nik manages to sigh and relaxes.

“So, to get this straight. Ursa, Kya, Katara, the Ty Sisters, and I are held here for our emotional issues. The ones who can help us out are those great minds. That seems appropriate. Why should my trips *NOT* be filled with spiritually charged life sentences? I need to vent. You said our minds travel to our ‘*echoes*’ in another plane, right? It means I killed the triplets in reality.”

Regret notices something amiss. But then again, it should have accepted this would be the price of not controlling Nik's mind completely.

"Yes, for all it's worth, I am blessed by Red Thread of Fate to ferry the minds of my trial takers through the pool of possibility beyond our time and let them encounter things they couldn't in their current lifetime. Would you like to see what ails the hearts of your friends?"

Nik shakes his head without skipping a beat.

"No. No way I'm cheating like this after trying so hard to understand them. Just send me back. I don't like killing, but something about squeezing the last breath out of Ishra and caving Aphrotra's skull is... damn cathartic."

Regret sighs to itself. It may keep Nik here, but the inability to control Nik's mind and to truly fuel his hate and regret only made this an actual vacation that Nik is looking forward to."

Nik's eyes exude a harsh violet glow in this expanse of darkness. For the first time, Nik's emotions infect Mokshi instead of the other way around, bringing them one step closer to understanding each other.

"What do you mean a trial?" Suki questions the moment the dark, hooded specter perched atop a small rock gives them a ray of hope. At the spirit's behest, Sokka had to go and bring others while also carrying the bodies of their friends near the temple for safety.

"Answer my riddles correctly, and you will free your beloved. If not, you will be blinded by the vast darkness between the planes of reality."

"Hold up!" Sokka frowns, "Why are you treating us differently? You said Aang is on his own but has a way out, and then he can free others on the island who fell to your wickedness. Why is it that the same is not true for us? What if Nik figures a way out?"

"He doesn't want to." Regret chuckles.

"What?" Yue frowns. That doesn't sound like Nik at all. He has always tried to overcome his circumstances in one way or the other.

"He likes what he sees. For some reason, he trusts in your ability... and for that very reason, I suppose, he is not thrilled by the idea of leaving his regrets unanswered. He will await your rescue."

"Or?" Azula crosses her arms. "Spirits usually leave a choice, don't they?"

“No. There is no ‘or.’ Sometimes there is only regret,” the spirit replies which makes the expressions of the group drop.

Jin is feeling more than anxious now.

But others have faced some spirits one way or the other.

“What’s the riddle? Am I right to assume one correct answer for one person?” Sokka questions.

“No, you are incorrect. The septuplets share one regret in a different form. Your mother and sister are the same. They need one correct answer to free them.”

“Good. Let’s start.”

Regret chuckles coldly.

The consequences of failing the trial of riddles are already known, so Regret points at Jin with its shadowy index finger.

“You will start.”

“Huh?” Jin squeaks and shrinks in on herself. “Why me? I’m not good with this type of stuff!”

“Are you giving up?” Regret chuckles, “Can you live with yourself to letting your beloved fester in his hate? Nik is willingly drowning in hatred. He has taken the same three lives 18 times already. Do you think he will be the same?”

Jin flinches in shock. She couldn’t imagine Nik enjoying killing. He has never been like that. The moment she imagines her being the cause of him changing forever, a tinge of fear and regret blooms in her for her mental weakness.

Shocking others, Jin’s body collapses to the ground.

“Jin!” Azula reaches out for her companion before glaring at the spirit and snarling, “What did you do?”

Regret calmly regards the hostile group.

“Face-stealer Koh is my sibling, Chieftain Sokka. You, of everyone present, should know what this means, right?”

Sokka’s lips part open in surprise as he instantly forms a theory.

“Even if we didn’t regret before, it doesn’t mean we won’t now. Koh could steal the faces of others for any degree of change in expression. Then you... must be able to affect us for any degree of regret we might feel.”

Regret nods in approval.

“Very good. I do not bear you ill will, mortals. But you are in a trial. As I said, sometimes, the end of the tunnel leads to me alone. Steel your hearts. If not for your cared ones, then for yourself.

Cold arctic winds blow at night as Katara returns to her igloo where her mother is already waiting. It has been years since her father left for the war with her brother, and they haven’t heard any news. With her grandmother dying in one of the previous raids, Katara only has her mother.

While it would have been hard to care for the village with just women, her gifts as a waterbender came into play. Katara developed herself through any means possible to use waterbending to bring food to the village and support other single mothers in any way possible.

“Here, you must be exhausted,” Kya thins her lips and looks a little frustrated as she helps Katara out of her coat and sits down.

“You weren’t injured, right?” Kya’s gaze falls over her daughter as the young woman rolls her eyes and smiles back.

“Relax, Mom!” Katara huffs and accepts the bowl of broth from Kya before taking a long sip.

“Aaah!” She exhales warmly and leans back in relaxation.

After a while, as the mother-daughter duo nurses their bowls of broth, Kya whispers.

“I know you don’t want to hear about this, but... the village on the western coast sent another messenger.”

“I’m not marrying anyone!” Katara scowls and interjects. Ever since the duration of their village’s men’s stay in the war increased, the men from other settlements began to offer hands in marriages.

Of course, all the other villages sent their men away, too.

The current generation of men were boys that failed to meet the cut for acceptance due to their age. And being one of the best providers for the settlement, Katara was sought by many of these young men.

“This time...” Kya sighs, “One of the men actually wanted our hands in marriage. You know, me and some other women?”

“Huh?” Katara looks at her mother with a dumb expression.

“Really?” She voices out. “Why?”

Kya shrugs and replies, “I wouldn’t know. Maybe an acquired taste of that young man.”

The mother-daughter duo did not hide many things since they confided in each other about many things starting with Katara admitting to a few of her girlish fantasies, such as marrying the toughest bender out there.

“That’s stupid. Can a man really even spend nights with so many women at once?” Katara scoffs openly. Years of struggling in the wild to develop her waterbending drove her no less rough and tumble when compared to the warriors of the other villages.

“Maybe in your eyes, it’s stupid.” Kya smiles and shakes her head again. “But a few women are considering their options. They want children to grow in the presence of a warrior, so expect a few to leave the settlement in a week or two.”

Katara slows down when she hears this revelation.

“I see.”

The woman accepts sourly and continues, “If Sokka had stayed back, he wouldn’t have let any of them leave.”

“It’s not your fault, Katara. There hasn’t been any news about the end of the war, and some people can feel desolate, too. It’s not like they aren’t hurting.”

Kya pats her daughter’s legs to console the girl.

“It’s just,” Katara begins, “unfair. There are men out there fighting for them, but they lose their faith just because they don’t hear anything back here. I get that it is frustrating! But the least others can do is, be loyal!”

Kya furrows her brows for a moment, something Katara notices.

“What?” The prodigious waterbender questions.

“Nothing,” Kya shakes her head, “Why don’t you rest? I know you’re excessively exhausted. So—”

“No, if you have something to say, just say it,” Katara interjects with a frown. “Do you really believe I’m wrong? Do you think that this is not disloyal?”

Kya stares at her daughter for a full moment before smiling sadly.

“It’s not about right or wrong. It’s just war, Katara. Your grandmother waited for your grandad to return, but he never did return. Many other women like your grandmother raised the mothers of today. I think... the rest do not want to wait for false hope.”

“Father and Sokka will return!”

“I don’t doubt that.”

Katara gnashes her teeth in frustration. “You say that, but are you like others, too? Do you really think this is false hope?”

Kya sighs softly.

“Go to sleep, Katara—”

“I cannot believe you!” Katara stands up promptly with a shout and glares down at her mother.

“So, what? In a few years, you’re going to accept another man? Huh? If you really think this is false hope, why don’t you just marry someone else now?”

Kya stands up with a frown and bites back a hiss. “Katara. That is quite enough. You are tired, truly. First, sleep. We’ll talk tomorrow when you’re feeling better.”

Katara chews her lips in equal part outrage and frustration.

She continues to glare at her mother before uttering, “I should have gone with Sokka before hearing—”

Slap

Kya strikes Katara with a swift slap that stung both of them emotionally and physically.

While Katara’s face hurt and the pain fueled her anger, Kya’s wrist couldn’t hurt more than her heart when she met her daughter’s cold glare.

Before Kya could even regret something she did out of her maternal instincts—nothing more than a reflex—Katara hisses softly.

“Better yet, marry someone now and leave. Like others. Less mouth to feed for me. Less disloyal ones, at least!”

Not waiting for her mother’s reply, Katara dons her coat and leaves the igloo.

“Sigh...” Kya works her jaws as she sits again. The silence bears down on her heavily.

She would never be with another man as long as her husband exists, but Katara’s words tore open the memories of weakness Kya endured in silence during her lonesome. It’s a torment in its own—solitude. Not everyone is born strong enough to accept their weight. Years of silence. If she didn’t have Katara, Kya would bore death as a better outcome than the torturous solitude.

‘Huh?’

Kya feels nauseous and has a sense of déjà vu.

As if there is a reason why she finds such solitude distasteful.

But it is overshadowed by the pain of her daughter’s words.

A cold sob snivels its way out as the woman trembles and hugs herself. It’s not long after Kya hears loud shouts of her friends as their settlement’s peace is disrupted.

Katara finds the arctic wind as pleasant as an autumn breeze if she concentrates on her strength. Deciding to take a long hike to clear her mind, Katara finds herself petting an otter penguin.

But what do you know?

Even animals have parents, and this little penguin’s parent cries out softly before the little one leaves Katara’s hand.

‘I was way out of the line...’ Katara admits she let her frustration get the better of her emotions. But helping out a small village was a task more monumental than she could imagine. And it got to her nerves tonight.

“I’ll apologize tomorrow morning. It’ll be the first thing I do.”

Katara sighs and chooses to return.

Kya would be asleep by now, so slipping inside the igloo to rest wouldn’t be hard.

But the distant fire burning despite the arctic wind makes Katara’s heart thump in fear.

‘Oh, no! *No. No, No, NO!*’

Katara races towards her village—destroyed village, to be exact. Burnt corpses of different sizes line the center of the settlement. The second she nears the village, Katara does not register a score of firebenders who have already noticed her, nor does she glance at one regal-looking warrior with his hands behind his back.

No.

She stares at the corpse of her mother. Despite the gruesome stab wounds, there is no denying it.

It is Kya.

Katara controls the ice around her with red eyes. Her intent to kill her enemies is as clear as the summer day.

But what can one lone self-taught prodigy do against the score of elite warriors who arrived to end the last of the waterbender they heard frolicking at the south pole?

The regal prince—Zuko—smirks condescendingly and waves his hand.

“Kill her. We have wasted enough time.”

And Katara finds herself in the same darkness all over again.

She isn’t alone.

Kya would await her every time.

But before the two could speak to each other and end their torment of regret—before they could accept their weaknesses to each other—they would be plunged back into the same nightmare again.

Meanwhile, a dark specter stares at Suki.

“You won’t rouse any regret within me.” Suki narrows her eyes as she is the one chosen next.

“Oh, I don’t doubt that.” Regret chuckles and admits that some battle-hardened warriors can control their emotions very well.

But this wasn’t about their emotions.

Suki needs to get the answer right, too.

After a brief moment of silence, Regret speaks.

“What is moon’s equal but seven times its size?”

Suki blinks in surprise while Yue’s eyes widen.

“What is moon’s equal but seven times its size?” Suki ponders under her breath.

“It’s Tui!” Yue whispers, and Regret chuckles.

“Very good!”

Both Suki and Yue collapse to the ground.

“Hey!” Sokka growls.

“I assure you that it was implied only the ones whom I riddle must answer. Cheaters are punished, no?”

Sokka and Azula glare at the spirit.

Not affected by their emotions, Regret chuckles, “Alright, next will be the Chieftain.”

Alternate Title: A Different Nik; Killing Source of Regret; Not a Punishment But a Vacation; Steeping in Hate; Jin’s Momentary Lapse; Sometimes There is No Hope; One’s Nature at Birth; Katara and Kya’s Spat; A Fight Before the End; When Regret Sets In; There is no Tomorrow to Apologize; Zuko loving his Villain Arc; Punishments for the Cheater; Easy Bait

Title: One Last Regret (4)

Ursa always regretted leaving her first love—Ikem. That's the undeniable truth in every single pool of possibility where Ursa exists because it seems like it was always her fate to marry Ozai.

What changes in this pool of possibility open for Regret's perusal comes after Ursa is swept away from her home village in an elaborate parade to be married off to her husband.

Ursa's regret did not last with her. She married a Prince!

A Prince!

If rumors were to be believed, not just any prince but the more handsome and noble-hearted prince amongst the two royal siblings and Ozai proved to be above and beyond the gossip floating about his nature. In the first few months, Ozai was kind and gentle, but he knew how to act like a proper man and kept her safe from the political malpractices of the Fire Nation. Ozai took time out of his career to spend time with Ursa during her pregnancy. He rejoiced at the birth of their first son.

Their passion decreased after Zuko's birth, but that did not mean their life and intimacy worsened. They fulfilled their responsibility as husband and wife, but that's what it began to feel like—a simple duty. Azula's birth two years later sent Ursa's marital purpose to an all-time low. Her birth was akin to a straw that broke Hawk-Camel's back. Ozai may not spend his nights in another woman's chambers, but that did not mean she was any happier.

He did all but verbally clarify that their union as royal spouse had run its course. Ozai focused on his career by outing corrupt politicians and solidifying his name in the Royal Court, while Ursa focused solely on raising her children.

Their relationship worsened when Zuko began training and was revealed to be less than exceptional, unlike the prophecies that had blinded Azulon and Ozai. Her brother-in-law cared little for such a prophecy and treated her son as his flesh and blood. She began to recall her first love on her loneliest nights.

Years flew by her without a care for her life.

Who was she?

Nothing.

Why should the river of time stop flowing for her?

Zuko was cast aside when Azula turned out to be the prodigious talent that the royal family awaited.

She still doesn't know what drove her one night to pen a scandalous letter to Ikem. Maybe it was her vindictive bitterness for Ozai, his pretenses, and his lack of affection for *HER* son! She composed Ikem to be Zuko's true blood knowing full well her letters are monitored by the head chambermaid of the palace.

And a few nights later, she was confronted by her mistake when Ozai practically disowned Zuko as his son in front of her. He knew full well the lies she wrote in the letter. Ozai was her first experience. None other. Adding salt to her deep pain was his declaration of having Ikem killed for her audacity to even author such a letter. He was hurt, but she did not feel joy for the regretful consequences she accidentally conspired.

Ozai made Zuko's life a hellscape of royal order with all his emotional manipulation while sinking his fangs further into her Azula! But she couldn't do anything.

And the day of reckoning eventually came when Ozai requested Iroh's birthright of ascending the throne from Azulon once Iroh's son perished in a battle. An audacious demand for which Azulon punished Ozai by claiming Zuko's life—something Ozai was happy to accept.

Zuko's life meant nothing to Ozai.

And the royal family, except for Iroh and his late son, meant nothing to Ursa, who chose to assassinate Azulon once Ozai gave her the choice of the king's life or her son's.

What she regretted was leaving her children in Ozai's hand—a price for her escape.

It was her life or her escape for the price of her children being hostages, assuring her silence, and... Ursa hated her very soul for accepting the latter.

She returned to her home village to forget her royal past. Ikem was nowhere.

Who she did meet was Noren.

An intriguing fellow—so much so that he seemed to have noticed her origins!

What shocked her further was that Noren claimed to be Ikem!

Things became equally evident and confusing as he affirmed an attempt at his life, forcing him to flee into Forgetful Valley and encounter a spirit—Mother of Faces—who gave him a new identity.

She would have doubted Noren if he hadn't mustered the exact details of her first kiss with Ikem.

Encouraged by the idea of getting a new face to forever leave any subsequent pursuit from the royal family, she traveled to the Forgetful Valley with the hope of encountering Mother of Faces.

Her days since then grew simple. She lived with Noren, but Ursa hesitated to be with him more intimately. Ozai's scar was too deep in her heart, and she felt guilty for leaving her children. Noren was more understanding than she could ask. He forgave her for her folly of composing the scandalous letter that almost got him killed the first time. He soon became the anchor of her current life.

And after years, Ursa did meet the Mother of Faces, who was miffed by Ursa's act of giving her current identity.

After all, Ursa was one of the most beautiful women despite time leaving its marks on her being. As the creator of Ursa's face, the Mother of Face gave her a simple test in the form of choice.

Either she accepts a less brilliant face, or Ursa will leave the Valley with a promise of never seeking the spirit out.

Ursa accepted a less beautiful face and identity.

Ursa did not care for beauty. She wished to spend her new life with Noren. Somewhat touched by Ursa's apparent affection, Mother of Faces kindly offered to give her a new identity and a new set of memories free from the scars of her current life—and she accepted.

Regretfully.

She forgot about her past and lived with Noren, who knew everything. They sired a daughter of their own and lived a peaceful life until...

The Ursurping Queen Azula attacked their village for some reason. She burned down the forests and valley, angering Mother of Faces to unleash her wolf and wasp spirits, but nothing stopped Azula.

The Mad Queen Azula razed everything in her path, and the spirits, especially the Mother of Faces, who never attacked personally despite her impressive stature. Eventually, the Mother of Faces relented to Azula's demand and pointed at one of the imprisoned villagers kneeling in the village's empty space.

"There. That woman is your mother."

She never knew why Mad Queen looked at her with such hate. Noren jumped in front of Ursa only to be burned alive before Azula slit her throat in front of her crying daughter.

Ursa's eyes snap open to the infinite darkness. Memories fill her consciousness as she grows calm eventually. The first time she cried her heart out, screaming she would die before giving up her children, but not now.

She's lost count of the times she experienced death at her daughter's hands but it...

"It no longer bothers you. Why?"

Ursa thins her lips and exhales softly.

"What good would it come from hating the most brilliant theater for me to experience?"

Regret stares at the silent woman floating in the empty space as a fond smile blooms on its *'face.'*

"A theater?"

"A theater that gives me all the things I need to understand about myself. A theater that lets me know my regrets without leaving me with the final consequences. Whatever this is... it's a blessing. Regret, thank you."

"Pray tell what you learned."

"I gave up... everyone has regrets in one life or another. I may let the blame fall on me for being weak to give into Azula's persuasions, but the truth is that I wanted to feel loved. And when I did, I tried to end it out of fear for the future. I almost gave up when Nik told me the truth. I feared that... when our relationship runs its course, he would leave me stranded again. This time in a foreign land."

"I constantly seek anchors and let them go, too. I will never give up on my children. I won't fear leaving my home because it only exists wherever my children are. I... don't want to give up on Nik. He never gave me up, after all."

Regret's chuckles echo in the darkness.

"A theater, huh? That is an appropriate judgment, I suppose."

"Why?"

"Hmm? Is something wrong?" Regret questions.

“Why are we having this conversation?” Ursa questions calmly.

“I cannot send you back to that theater. Besides the fact that my mother, as you would call her the Mother of Faces, is miffed with my antics, you are no longer tormented by your regrets.”

“What does that mean?”

“It means that not all regrets torment a living being. Some turn into lessons and take a different meaning. I have no power over lessons.”

“Am I free to leave?”

“Yes. Not because you learned your lesson... but because a chieftain got a riddle correct.”

Ursa’s consciousness fades as she hears Regret’s whispers.

“Let’s meet again before my father claims you.”

“Congratulations. Lady Ursa will be waking soon.”

Regret informs, but Sokka exclaims before Azula leaves everything to dash back to the temple.

“Don’t leave willy-nilly! I’m sure not leaving the trial is one of the implied rules this kindred spirit failed to mention.”

Azula stills and glares coldly at Regret, who chuckles.

“These rules are implied for a reason. Let us begin with the next riddle. Are you ready?”

Sokka inhales sharply before nodding.

Ty Lee has many regrets. Born the eldest of the septuplets, Ty Woo being the second elder, Lee struggled with her desires and apparent responsibility. She sought her Baba’s approval just as intensely as her younger siblings but all seven of them knew this couldn’t go any longer. They needed a gimmick unique to themselves.

Ty Lee felt she wouldn’t regret her actions as she gave up acrobats for the flute. Woo decided to adopt a sailor’s mouth. Lum accepted the alternative of dancing. Liu took to the water and decided to swim for fun. Lao became an elegant woman by practicing the art of Origami. Lat

accompanied the notion by equipping her talents with a harp. And their youngest—Ty Lin happily accepted being the only acrobat of the family.

But Ty Lee and others felt envious of Ty Lin reflexively. They loved acrobatics, especially Ty Lee. She was a natural! Better than all her sisters! But Ty Lee made a choice and decided to stick with it. When her younger sisters decided to stay clear of Ty Lin out of envy, Ty Lee firmly put her foot down, making the remaining five apologize to Ty Lin as they admitted how they envied Ty Lin for being the only one who could continue acrobatics.

The nightmare began that day.

The six of them began to spend time together. At first, Ty Lee was visibly happy. As their elder sister, she resolved their conflict before it could spiral out and even received her Baba's well-deserved praise. But she soon realized that the six of them were tight-knit with no place for their eldest sister.

Ty Lee was left alone. It didn't matter for long as Ty Lee sought affection outside her family by forming friendships with the Princess and Mai. They weren't strictly sisterly, but there weren't many things Ty Lee wouldn't do to keep friends with Azula and Mai.

For what it's worth, Baba's death hurt them all equally, but nothing came close to the letter she received a few days later, alongside the lack of her sister's presence.

They left the family... and only provided her with one letter.

The truth came out.

The six of them continued to practice acrobatic routines away from her eyes.

She never had any sisters. All her siblings had each other to comfort for their Baba's loss, but not her.

Ty Lee was alone.

Mai was married in one of the colonized Earth Kingdoms to a boring schmuck named Kai. It was only with Azula's assistance that she could keep the family business going on. Ty Lee wasn't given any time to grieve her losses as she chose to seek affection elsewhere. Not that it ever worked.

Almost every man she encountered had the desire to marry Ty-Siblings. Things should have been easier with six identical faces leaving with a circus to spirits know where, but they weren't.

The business was stressful. Azula was stressful. Everything but acrobatics was stressful.

She broke.

Ty Lee sold her business to Azula and used the assets to hire an aspiring and creative crew to form her circus.

And *THAT* was helpful!

She loved living her days from that point onwards.

Sure, their crew did not attract enough viewers at first, but word soon passed as Azula decided to help again by setting a royal escort for the Fire Lord to view their performance. Ozai was a cold man, but Ty Lee did not mind the attention she garnered from this stunt—she was indebted to Azula.

But the Avatar happened.

Ty Lee rarely followed the news, but this one affected Azula and herself, so Ty Lee knew what was going on, and even if her Baba might hate her for the thoughts that brewed in her mind—Ty Lee wanted a pound of flesh from her sisters who decided to assist the avatar and his crew.

Azula called for Mai, too, and the three of them snuck into Earth Kingdom in disguise as Kyoshi Warriors to figure out the Avatar's plan.

They wanted to attack the Fire Nation on the day of the Black Sun.

And the Fire Nation was ready.

As Avatar and his small army of misfits invaded the land past the Gates of Azulon, Ty Lee quickly followed her sisters from a distance and isolated them in a grassy opening.

They hurled insults at each other angrily. One side blamed the other as the other side explained their actions. In the end, they were sisters. What could have been resolved years ago was left to stew due to poor communications and a distinct lack of emotional maturity. The two sides felt bitter and lonely after hanging out their dirty laundry. They did not make up with each other. But Ty Lee knew they could move past it. One day... they would apologize to each other for their reasons and regrets.

Maybe not tomorrow, but undoubtedly the day after tomorrow. They always had a knack for these things about each other, which was ironic given their situation.

The royal family's beef with the Avatar did not have to rot their relationship any further.

But things rarely go so favorably.

Something happened to the young avatar.

He snapped.

And he left a wake of destruction and corpses in his wake. What happened to Aang, what losses stirred such a reaction from him did not matter. That was his life. What did matter to the Ty-Sisters was that their next day never came.

They were the collateral damage to a war nobody asked for.

They died next to each other, but the truth is—they were far from being the loving group of sisters they once were.

Ty Lee's eyes snap open as she bites her bottom lip and quivers in darkness. She can feel her sisters' quiet sobs.

They shared the same vision, and Ty Lee is now aware of what they did... and why they did it. But that doesn't make her feel less regretful, or her sisters, for that matter.

"Lee," Lin gasps. "Listen before we are sent into that world again. I—We never meant to shun you off. We were just... envious. That continued in this strange world, but we never hated you! Never!"

But Ty Woo has other plans as she interjects and curses aloud!

"You bastard! I'll kill you and feed you to your mum's cunt if you don't let us out now!"

"Woo!" Lat hisses, "Stop pissing it off and quickly say your piece before we're forced back—!"

"We all fucking know how we feel! Okay? Lee regrets running away. We regret giving up acrobatics! That's it! That's fucking all! Could have done this over tea time but nooooooooooooo! Lin had to have the perfect timing or show her emotions by doing the same performance Lee used to do to show her we always admired her talents. Fuck! Let me out now!"

Ty Lin, Lat, Lao, Liu, and Lum grow silent as Woo continues to rage with a mouth better than any sailor worth their salt!

"Wait," Lao musters with a sigh. "We aren't being forced back into that screwed-up world... huff, I was tired of Sokka trying to flirt with all of us!"

Liu scoffs and pouts.

"I don't know Aang personally, but I'll slap his bald head the moment I see him!"

"I second that," Ty Lum sighs.

"So... are we good?" Ty Lee gulps.

"If you wanna keep apologizing for something so ridiculously stupid, go on!" Woo scoffs.

"Show some affection!" Ty Lin berates the second youngest of their group.

"Is that how you talk to your second eldest sister, you acrobatic thief?" Woo shoots back.

"Made-up world doesn't count! I'm the eldest!" Lin retorts.

"Pfft... hehehehe!" Ty Lee's giggles interrupt their rants as her sisters grow silent.

"It's just... I missed you all so much! Woo is right. And if Azula and others find out that we kept our stupid fight even in made-up worlds we'll never hear the end of it... I... I love you all. Truly!"

"More than Nik?" Lat chuckles.

"Of course!" Lee replies without missing a beat, something she should have regretted, but didn't for some reason.

"Oh? For real? Awesome! Then I call dibs as the second eldest sister, bitches!" Woo grins.

"I'm the second eldest in this world, so the dibs transfer to me by the law of existence," Lat hums.

"Pffft!" Ty Lee snorts a chuckle again.

"Lee... are you really okay? I'll never let them try anything stupid like that again." Lin mutters worriedly.

"Oh, I was so pent-up about the situation between us. Believe me, it doesn't matter. He will go through all of you like a hot knife through butter! I saw it with my own eyes! But... please... let's just practice our routines together."

"We wouldn't let a talented bitch like you slip again even if you begged!" Woo grins.

Their consciousness slipped away before they could muster anything else.

"Well... that took a surprising turn. Maybe it was a bit much to displace seven lives in another shared reality at once."

Regret sighs and then chuckles to itself.

“So, only their hero remains, eh? Should I call him a Hot Knife? With how he deals with the triplets, he should be a Butcher’s Knife instead.”

Alternate Title: Blessed Play; When the Sisters Share a Single Brain Cell and it’s a Menace!; Azula’s Villain Arc; The Terrifying Avatar; Aang’s Bald Head is in Danger; Sokka’s Awareness is on Point!; Implied Rules Need No Explicit Explanations; Understanding Ursa; The Vow of Never Giving Up; A Mother Who Didn’t Give Her Children Up; An Unworthy Grudge Between Siblings; Sometimes Tomorrow Never Arrives; Annoyed Mother of Faces

A/N: As I said when Azula and Zuko were introduced, they are similar to their previous counterparts but with chaotic-good alignment only because Ursa came to clutch and fled the Royal Palace with her children. And the Ty Siblings’ arc comes to an end. Fuck, I don’t know how many times I have already posted such a notice, BUT hopefully, I’ll end the avatar arc soon. Even Kya’s arc is almost complete. I just... shiver at the thought of Ember Island Arc.

Title: Freedom to Feel and Indulge

“What do you mean he isn’t coming back? I answered correctly!” Azula snarls.

Sokka and Azula tackled every riddle for hours to bring their friends and family from their comatose state. Ty Lee soon discovered them on the hill before leading others alongside the unconscious Nik. But Regret pulled the rug off them at the last juncture.

“Yes, you did. Well done.” Regret’s face is still not visible, but his chortle annoys Sokka and Azula. However, the rest of the group who woke from Regret’s manipulative world holds complicated emotions toward the Primordial Spirit. They have better emotional stability that could have equipped them after some heart-to-hearts, Regret’s method was no less effective. Katara holds her grudges but continues to sneak glances at her mother to talk instead. Her priority isn’t to give into her petty feuds but to talk with her mother.

After rescuing Nik, of course.

“But what if the other party refuses to leave?” Regret questions.

“Impossible!” Suki narrows her eyes.

Forced to be the most level-headed in this situation, Sokka raises his voice, “Did Nik explicitly tell you he does not want to leave?”

“No, he did not say anything. As he is now, Nik is squatting in the realm he shouldn’t be in and using his freedom... to take mine hostage. A bitter turn of events, if I may add.”

“What is he doing?” Ursa questions quickly.

“It is his secret.”

“We will solve another riddle for an answer.”

Regret stares at the group before stating in a cold tone.

“No. Nik’s regrets are his to share. What I will say, however, is that Nik is in a deeply indifferent condition.” Turning his face to gaze at the setting sun as dusk sets in, Regret proposes, “If I were you, I’d pray that a distant sibling of mine, Indifference, doesn’t approach us. He will grant you no riddles and afford you no breather.”

Freedom is a paradox. So, Mokshi's existence is contradictory to its origin. It chose to seek other worlds by restricting itself to a fleshy body of a traveler. Nothing can be more contradictory than this.

For instance, Mokshi is allowing Nik to satiate his hatred. Nik may be unable to do anything about Regret, but Mokshi has many options in this spiritual state. Instead of freeing Nik from his hatred, Mokshi wrestles away Regret's control in this particular plane of reality and allows Nik to slaughter the triplets in several manners!

In reality, Nik chose to feel his fingers dig into their soft flesh and draw their last breaths using fiery brands, toe-cutters, flays, and many more methods used on him by them!

And... Mokshi simply respected those choices.

Now, Mokshi is free to bring Nik out, but why would it?

All of it boils down to how Nik has nurtured their relationship. Their initial relationship was that of mutual benefits. If Nik survives and leaves, Mokshi will enjoy the sights of other worlds, and Nik will be passively benefited from its very existence. That's why Mokshi used to urge Nik to leave this world as soon as possible once they survived their encounter with Koh.

But Mokshi does not pester Nik now.

Nik will depart when he wishes to. He did not have a choice in bonding with the spirit, but eventually, the Primordial Spirit of Freedom came to acknowledge others' freedom of choice. And similar to Nik's effort in trying to communicate with the spirit better, Mokshi decides to indulge Nik's hatred.

For once, Mokshi makes an effort aside for some well-timed warnings. And there is a reason why they don't communicate all that much.

Apart from the minimal boost in its host's chi and spirit, Mokshi realizes how weak Nik is to communicate with itself and wield its strength. And that's saying something when Mokshi alone is one of the weaker Primordials due to its contradictory nature, unlike Ra and Raat.

But while Mokshi believed its efforts to be secretive and not rest on its host's consciousness, it quakes in surprise within Nik once he looks at the bloody pile of flesh in front of his bed with a soft, desolate look.

"Thanks for letting me vent, pal."

It's the same situation with Zhao all over again.

Nik enjoyed the first few moments of killing the triplets. After having his ass handed down by this world's Esta, he only kept his efforts on the triplets.

As much as he hated Esta, truthfully... he was kind of over her for many weeks now. It did not reduce his dislike for the woman, but Nik simply understood that as helpless as he was, he had no freedom. And when he did have the freedom, he chose to rebel! That's a fucking win in his books.

But the triplets?

Oh, they were his suppressed memories brought back like a tide when Regret set them loose!

Esta was his trainer. His body never received any damage from that woman, but these three?

Nik went as far as branding every inch of their bodies with red-hot brands until no spot was left untouched. It was gruesome. He melted their lips shut before doing the same to their other orifices, including stuff down below. He only melted their eyes in the last moment before they suffocated to death.

And this was merely one example.

He has been treated too poorly in the past. Most of the stuff is something he would never like to think about—be Nik wasn't kind to his enemies.

A lesson taught to him by Zhao.

His choice of weapon demonstrates his nature too well—a sturdy stick.

A tool that doesn't kill accidentally, but one of the most gruesome ways to end a life nonetheless.

Seeing their spread corpses in front of him, their once beautiful skin stripped off their bodies, Nik exhales heavily and sets his knife on the nearest bench.

Blood drips from his dainty hands.

His body was still thin and effeminate before he began working out in the World of Spirits.

Nik finally acknowledges the... friend assisting him all this time.

It wasn't hard to feel Mokshi's presence. He used the same method of connection of the heart-mind-spirit taught by Dhi to communicate with Mokshi, so he could sense its movement from the very first moment.

“Thanks for letting me vent, pal.”

He feels the spirit’s surprise rather expressively, causing him to wipe his hands with a towel and chuckle.

“Don’t act so surprised now. You’re acting like a child caught doing a crime.”

He then picks another towel to wipe his face and brush his hair back slickly.

“Can you... hear me well?”

“Surprisingly, I can. For the first time, your voice doesn’t feel broken or cut.”

Mokshi grows silent before mustering.

“I’m glad. And your mind? Do you feel... yourself?”

“It’s the same situation as Zhoa all over again. No matter if you serve it hot or cold, revenge is not satiating at all. But if you’re asking about the acts I performed here, I believe in the simple rule of thumb—Once a killer, always a killer. Not like I will ever need to hide anything from you.”

“Your trust will not be broken.”

“I’m surprised you didn’t wear my ear off about leaving this world the moment we started conversing.”

Nik wraps the corpses in the bedsheet as he hears Mokshi’s reply.

“I would like you to take your time. If it ends up with me being stranded again, I will accept it as a consequence of my choice.”

Nik stills and questions.

“Your choice? When did my choice end up being yours?”

“When I decided to trust you a bit more... just a few moments ago, once you let go of your hatred and regrets. I should warn you this spiritual growth will reflect positively in your... status, was it?”

Nik smiles slightly and calmly asserts his approval without saying anything.

“What are you doing?” Mokshi inquires, already knowing the answer. “If you wish to leave, dying at Esta’s hand is not the only way out.”

“Oh, even better. I won’t have to see her ugly mug again!” Nik sighs in relief. He didn’t change at all. Maybe that, in itself, is something wrong. But in the grand scheme of things, despite feeling empty, Nik refused to feel sour about the triplets.

It wasn’t like they were hurting him accidentally.

The bitches strode into a whorehouse to hurt while parading in charmingly cruel innocence!

“Before we leave... I must caution you. I believe you won’t hear from me this well for some time.”

Nik frowns and sits on the springy bed.

“Why?”

“When we communicate, it is a transfer of spirit. You can communicate with me because my capacity is vast, but the opposite is inaccurate. This event should assist your growth, but it’s simply a drop in the vast ocean.”

“So I have a long way to go, huh?”

“Very long.”

“I’ll miss your voice as clear as it is now.” Nik smiles and lies on the bed, not minding his back getting covered by the blood.

“I suppose this is where I suggest you leave this world as quickly as possible. But—”

“Yeah, I feel you loud and clear, Mokshi.”

“Mokshi is what you have heard from others. All spirits have true names. Mine is ---.”

“I didn’t catch that.”

“I know,” Mokshi whispers as Nik’s vision changes, and he finds himself in the dark world with Regret awaiting his presence.

“Did you enjoy yourself?”

Unlike Katara and others who chose to prioritize their relationship with their loved ones over petty feuds, Nik had nothing else.

Their regrets are for them to solve. He cannot mediate in everything, even if one may assume he has the emotional capacity to do so in the first place.

But Regret?

Oh, Nik felt more 'light' than ever as he accepts Mokshi's words for truth in the sensation that he is closer to the spirit. It is an achievement several months of meditation and communication would fail to achieve.

It's spiritual growth.

And he must show his appreciation to Regret if his wicked smirk represented anything.

He finally has something from Mokshi aside from a passive Paradox implied to have averted some type of crisis during his evolution in the form of some Bloodline Shackles.

"Is that mischief I sense?" Regret chuckles as if facing a toddler, and he may as well be right to have such a reaction. Nik couldn't hope to be anything more than a toddler in front of a primordial spirit.

"Spirits like you and Reaper won't have such effects on me ever again."

Nik exhales as his sclera turns into a sharp violet glow that covers the rest of his eyes, creating a shimmering violet mist around his body that doesn't seem to be affected by the abysmal darkness of regret.

He feels his chi reserves dropping to half as his spirit forcibly rips through this prison.

One of Mokshi's energybending skills it comprehended while getting devoured by Koh one odd day. True, alone, Mokshi is rather weak in comparison to other spirits.

But with a host that isn't bound by the same rules as spirits, their strength shines brighter.

Nik's eyes snap open as he bounces up before whipping his head around. His heart settles once he sees everyone circling around him and watching him intently. Their expressions are shrouded by the shadow cast through a bonfire not far from them, and he soon notices something strange in the darkness of the night.

"Aang? Why's your head have another head? And... where's Regret? I'm not done with it."

Aang glances at the seven identical faces with an extraordinary look of fear before muttering under his breath, "Regret... left. He was quite vocal about being weak in the material world and something about not meeting you after you woke up. However, Regret did invite you to the spirit realm if you wish to speak with him."

Knowing full well that the Primordials have more restrictions on them in the material world than a regular spirit, Nik huffs and looks around again. Expression of relief and awe is present in everyone.

“What?” Nik raises an eyebrow.

And then he, too, looks down on his body and sees his body bonebending in a miraculous erection.

“Let’s just call it a hate boner and leave it at that.”

Nik chose to accompany Aang for the rest of the night and chatted with Hina and Niwan about various things. Aang eventually awoke from his spiral of regret once he rationalized there was nothing he could have done in this or the other life. His awakening meant the awakening of other stormbenders.

One thing that surprised Nik was the respect the Aang had managed to attain from the third of this radical group before introducing the basic airbending culture that was bastardized by the Fire Nation.

And as expected, this temple had a rich pool of information, including some niche bending techniques that may be useful later.

But he did not plan to let his friend sleep anytime soon.

Knowing that he won’t stay on this island or this world for long, Nik relishes every chance he can to practice his airbending from a true master.

But before that, he releases Ignit for Aang to admire.

“Woah!”

And as Aang admires the beautiful lizard who sticks her head up proudly while unfurling her leathery wings, Nik glances at his stats.

[Name: Nik Faran

Age: 20 (92)

Code: GC—EHG—98034

Authority Rank: 1 (28.2→28.9/100)

Paradise: Transmigration

Title: Transmigration Intern

Bloodline: Twilight Spirit (Uncommon)

Physique: 6.9

Mental: 8.1→8.3

Energy: 67.7→98]

[Stats are relative to the most common species in the Multiverse—Humanoid Homo Sapien.]

Since his energybending skill was a manipulation of his existing strength, Nik did not gain a new skill. But that didn't matter.

All he needs to do now is train with Aang and help Ignit with the Avatar's and Appa's assistance to fly. His little beast needs to take on the air, and the more help he can get from Aang, the better.

As he made up his mind, he did not intervene with the outcome of other families. They would surely need their time to converse on some difficult topics, and his poorly timed puns may not be the best solution to the situation.

So, as Nik and Aang avoided some heavy topics from those around them, including Hina and Niwan, who would surely have their own regrets, the duo trained and laughed to their heart's content.

There was one wrinkle, however.

Nik had to explain the situation briefly to other girls as he let Suki, Yue, and other girls inside his space. He did not mind sharing a room with the Ty Siblings and told them the truth off-handedly just so they can discuss everything at once.

But boy Zuko was smug!

He had enough foresight not to hang out with Nik on another island, and it paid out better than he could have ever imagined!

"I'm sorry. As much as I may have said I understood what you're going through, I simply had no idea." Katara opens with an apology while averting her gaze from her mother. "And the idea of... sharing Nik with you freaked me out for all the wrong reasons. I felt that I would be no better than Azula. No, I felt... I would become like Azula."

"Katara..." Kya sighs softly.

"I shouldn't even be here in Sokka's stead just because I'm a girl. No. Both of us didn't have to be here."

Rena interjects with a deadpan as she works her jaw.

"May I leave?"

Kya smiles wryly at her supposed daughter-in-law and nods.

"Hmm, I hope you two sort it out. Really. If it isn't clear already, you are my mother in a sense. So, I would have liked to help you find a reliable mate eventually. If possible, from the Northern Tribe."

"Leave."

Katara retorts flatly as Rena flashes a light-hearted grin and leaves the room, possibly to deliver Sokka a beating since he sent her into this precarious situation in the first place.

"Katara, the only reason I was toying with the idea was just to tease you. That's all."

"You're lying... I could feel it in that world, too. That's the reason I got so worked up. That's why I feel worked up now."

Kya lowers her gaze and stares at her table.

"Ursa and I spoke. I... truly am lost myself. I suppose I was drawn to the only option. No, that's a lie. This world is filled with others. He wasn't my only option..."

Her voice gets weaker, and she admits.

"He was my choice since he saved me."

Katara purses her lips as an uncomfortable feeling rouses from her heart.

It was nothing like jealousy or anything else but genuine discomfort. A part of her mused about how things could turn out, and the other part felt insecure about how they will see each other later. It's a surprise how Mai, Toph, and Azula managed such a relationship while still behaving like daughters outside closed doors.

"Mom... do you remember how you acted like Ursa?"

"I do. I suppose I'm used to living long lives in other spiritual realms."

Katara licks her teeth behind her shut lips with a ponderous look.

“What if... Azula and Ursa visited Nik one of these days?” The waterbender suggests. “Azula and Ursa are comfortable, right?”

Kya stares at her daughter in disbelief. But... she cannot lie.

Azula and Ursa are indeed more comfortable... roles.

“Oh! I almost forgot how Jin simply gave up on the first try and got caught!”

“Hey, I was spooked!” Jin retorts opposite to Azula as she stuffs her face and feeds her stress away.

“Spooked? You’ve started to spar with us! Nothing should faze you!” Azula shoots back.

Meanwhile, Zuko and Ursa ate their food calmly.

Azula sensibly steered clear of ‘Zuzu’ since he didn’t even get caught in this mess while Ursa had nothing to speak. She had a clear mind, and she was happy to not unload the emotional mess about the fact that Azula was the one who ended her life multiple times in a different realm. Then again, if Azula even dares pull such a stunt in this world, Ursa will be ready with some form of ammunition in her hand. Maybe a slipper, or a rolling pin.

“By the way, Zuzu, what kind of picture did you see about Mother. Describe it for us!”

Zuko coughs and chokes on his food as he would rather never remember such a picture, meanwhile, Ursa quietly smacks the back of her Princess’ head with a fond smile of her own and continues to eat peacefully.

As fate would have it, the ‘talk’ between the Ty-Siblings was even shorter as Ty Lee quickly led her sisters around to meet with everyone. Aside from June’s rather heavy-handed compliments, they were breezed by many topics cheerfully as they got a chance to question others about Nik’s truth.

“Oh, that? Yeah, I’m leaving.” June replies carefreely. “Nothing left to tie me here anyway.”

“Of course, we are leaving.” Poppy smiles and welcomes the group while Toph walks out of her bath stark naked.

“Are we leaving already? That’s quick. Didn’t Nik say he’d ask other’s tribe to follow along?”

Poppy rolls her eyes and groans.

“Your towel, Toph.”

“Where is it?”

“You know where!”

“Heh, my eyes say something else.” She shrugs and finds her clothes instead, making Poppy stomp her way loudly with a clear intention of what’s to come. Only then, Toph rushes back into the bathroom.

“I apologize. Toph really likes you and wanted to meet your sisters.” Poppy looks at the group of girls before questioning.

“Ty Lee?”

“Here~!” Ty Lee giggles and works her way out from the crowd.

“Hey, don’t go yet! Better yet, just leave that Ty Woo here! I hear good things about her from Azula and Nik!” Toph’s hurried voice echoes from the bath as Ty Woo smirks.

“That’s me, bitches. Ah, respectfully, of course.” She nods at Poppy while others shrug and leave.

“Now that they had cleared the air between them, they weren’t all that *‘broken’* by Nik’s revelation. Instead, they discussed making a choice after looking around and seeing if they have any future here. After all, Ty Lee wants to stay with Nik for a period, which makes her sisters want to stay closer, too.

And the fact that Nik can identify them separately only worked in both parties' favor.

After the new group began to slightly settle in, they expected Nik to return.

It was a dangerous day for everyone, so they wished to meet with Nik and maybe... *‘chat.’* But he never did return. Instead, he messaged that he would be training for the entire night.

Something the girls had to reluctantly appreciate.

June, Toph, and their new addition, Ty Woo, didn’t.

Alternate Title: Nik Got the Power of Friendship; Foreshadowing Bleach?; Regret's No Longer Present... Ironic; Ignit's New Admirer; Aang's Bald Head Has Another Bald Head; Mother and Daughter's Negotiations; Clear Communication; Sokka Sent Rena as a Proxy—His Genius Continues to Astound the World; Ty Woo Fitting Like a Glove. Coincidence? I Think Not!; Taking Their Time to Make a Decision; June, Toph, and Ty Woo—Entrepreneur of the Menace Faction in the Harem

Title: No More Delays

“So, I’m the reason you cannot leave?” Iroh responds with a quirky smirk as he strokes his beard, making Nik roll his eyes.

“You didn’t expect me to leave without learning lightningbending, did you?” Nik replies with an impatient grunt as he sips his tea while looking at Zuko and Azula destroying their resurfaced cousin—Ken.

It’s barely the break of dawn in Ba Sing Se, a perfect time to train.

“Are you sure it’s not something else?” Iroh questions with a knowing smile and enjoys his tea patiently.

Nik ponders for a minute and decides to scoff.

“I’ll return your stash once you teach!”

His group bid Aang farewell three days ago before spending two more days in the Fire Capital. The Ty-Sisters insisted that they stayed with them as they wanted to tag along with Ty Lee, no questions asked... well, they asked several questions. But they wanted to try and bring their crew.

It was a partially successful task—Nik knew from experience. He took the time to explain the situation to others building a life in his personal space. In his book, they needed to know that their immediate survival hinges on his survival. His tenants were predominantly prisoners he rescued from Ozai and Reaper. Out of 900-something individuals, 609 decided against living in Nik’s personal world. Nik dropped them off on the nearby island alongside their fresh produce and other personal effects, including their houses, so they don’t have to struggle again.

The Ty-Sisters’ group was similar. Only four crewmates agreed to join, all of them young and orphaned in the war. Their maids and servants consented to follow, too, since the Sisters had no intention of leaving their estate.

Iroh narrows his eyes as he hears Nik’s proposition and parrots it back objectively.

“You will return my possession for my knowledge? If I didn’t know better, I would have thought you were being manipulated by a spirit.”

“You can cross that off the list. Ever since I can channel my inner Mokshi, I don’t think Primordials will have any spiritual effect on me. It’s the regular spirits that are a pain in the ass.”

A loud and prideful cry cuts into their conversation and training as a giant green dragon with a wide wingspan flaps her leathery wings before diving toward the ground.

“Nik?”

“Hmm?”

“Your dragon just learned to fly with Aang. Just flying, right?”

“Oh, yeah.”

“Ken, Zuko, Azula!” Iroh looks at the group and gestures to them to step away as Ignit comes crashing down before dragging her slender draconic features into the earth, softened by Nik!

Snrrrrtttt

Ignit snorts dirt out from her nostrils and scoffs a peal of flames as she looks at Nik with her bejeweled golden eyes. Others may mistake this gaze for intimidation, but Nik smirks and snaps his fingers.

“You won’t learn how to land unless you practice. No praises, belly rubs, or chin scratches until you try to get better.”

“Grrrrrrr!”

A guttural growl escapes Ignit as Ken quakes in his boot while Zuko prays for his dragon to be more moderate in nature. Only Azula crosses her arms with a gaze tinted with jealousy.

If it wasn’t for a simple reminder that other worlds may have better companions, she may have tried to burrow her way into Ignit’s affection.

And Nik?

He knew what he was getting into once he decided to extend the same courtesy of proposal to her and others who wished to stick with him.

And boy, he knows how to handle her!

“I said no!” Nik narrows his eyes and barks back.

Ignit threatens her partner further by blowing a small breath of fire.

“You won’t get compliments by threatening me, dumbass!”

“Well, you should treat her patiently, or she might steal your stash of whatever you hide.” Iroh chuckles, “Oh, wait. I did just that. How foolish of me.”

“Here!”

Nik rolls his eyes again and retrieves a small sack before handing it to Iroh.

“Can we please start learning Lightningbending? I cannot spend all my time here, so I need more hands-on training before I leave. I can work on my skills later, too.”

Iroh gleefully collects his treasure into his robes and coughs as he adopts a dignified look.

“Dragons can learn Lightningbending, too. Ignit should be intelligent enough to understand the basics and practice in a manner her body allows.”

“Finally!” Azula breaths huskily and clenches her fist. She was even more excited to step her game ever since Nik revealed he could conjure blue flames and chose not to because it was a waste of energy and concentration. To him, at least. It was as easy as breathing for Azula.

“Ken, you should sit out of this training.”

“Why?” The honest-faced youth thins his lips.

“Because we are learning it only after weeks of training and results!” Azula barks before Iroh can get a chance to approach the situation more diplomatically.

“But isn’t Ignit technically a few days old as a dragon?” The youth has Iroh’s mind as his words are factually correct.

Scchhhhhffffff

Azula and Zuko step aside in time before Ignit stomps her way down in a rather elegant draconic gait. Her steamy nasal huff impacts Ken’s face and blows his hair straight back.

“On another thought.” Ken gulps as he matches Ignit’s cold golden gaze. “You guys are guests for a few weeks, right? You should learn all you can.”

“Ignit! Stop scaring my teacher’s son!” Nik whistles and claps his hand. “Come back, girl!”

“Stop treating a dragon like a dog!” Azula chews her lips in frustration. Oh, how she would shower such a noble companion with all her whims and spoil her rotten!

But much to Azula’s growing frustration, Ignit turns around swiftly, trots over to Nik, and lies on the ground, her chin resting on her crossed paws, ehm, draconic claws.

Iroh chuckles. The group was out in the open on the other side of Ba Sing Se's borders and had no distractions except Ken's grumble, who had gotten a lot more comfortable around Iroh, credit to the smooth talker's experience in relationships.

"I have taught how the four elements are connected but different. The technique to relieve your muscles and continue movement is firebending emulating waterbending's healing. But firebending is inherently different. We produce the element through chi, or energy, within us. We can manipulate fire in nature, but controlling the fire we birth is simpler."

"But like everything in life, our energy is composed of a duality. Yin and Yang. Positive and Negative."

Iroh ignores his son, who curiously eavesdrops as he practices a set of kata. This makes the boy's form more sluggish, something the remaining three notice. But they don't let it break their focus. Iroh's teaching is more important to them than screwing with Ken.

"Firebending is possible when our internal energy is combined. But Lightningbending is the opposite. A practitioner must separate yin and yang internally and point the resultant reaction out precisely through the tips of your fingers."

Iroh's body moves slowly and *'circularly'* as he instructs his students and a dragon.

"Nik... that's like..." Zuko sees the resemblance of the dragons in his Uncle as he had witnessed the dragons generate lightning from their horns.

"Yep." Nik shrugs. He tried lightningbending when facing the dragon as some last-ditch effort but failed to produce concrete results.

"What?" Azula questions as she hears them whisper.

"Haah!"

Iroh exclaims with a thunderclap shaking Azula in her seat as Ignit stares at Iroh instead of gawking at the resultant flash of lightning.

"And that's the general gist of lightningbending," Iroh remarks with a breezy smile as he shuffles his hands inside his sleeves.

"How are we supposed to learn it just like that?" Ken gasps from the sidelines. Instead of ignoring his son, Iroh explains in a casual tone.

"Like everything, boy. Training, practicing the same moment, patiently waiting for the *'feeling'* to strike, and most importantly, never getting arrogant."

Snort

Ignit stands and stretches like a lazy cat before distancing herself from the group. She takes off to the sky rather quickly and begins to coil around awkwardly. But surprising Iroh and others, she generates thin arcs of electricity for a while before flapping her wings powerfully and looking far ahead. Arcs of electricity converge in the space between her horns and snap forward in a stunning bolt of lightning that zaps to the distance... and continues.

“So she can bend lightning but not land from a flight,” Nik scoffs under his breath at envy for the geniuses around him. For spirit’s sake! He still can’t bend magma as well as Toph and Sun when the former doesn’t even practice Lavabending!

“Wait!” Iroh raises his hand and waves his hand at Ignit.

“That was great, Ignit!” He voices out as Ignit flaps her wings with a proud smirk.

“Let’s try another one, aim the lightning in my direction this time.”

Iroh’s words shake everyone as Nik instantly interrupts, “Are you sure? Even if you have some trick to teach us—”

“It’s fine,” Iroh waves his hand. “I’ll feel more comfortable using myself in the demonstration instead of you three.” He focuses on Ignit while waving to others.

“Keep your distance.”

Ignit bobs midair in one spot and considers for a moment before nodding and coiling again.

Bzzt

Bzzt

Bzzt

Charge builds around Ignit’s horn as she straightens her body midair while focusing on Iroh soon enough, who seems prepared.

Crackle

The lightning bolt reaches Iroh next instant, but he already has his right arm stretched forward as the lightning is somehow attracted to his stretched-out index and middle finger as he brings his left hand through his right wrist around his stomach and extends it to the opposite side and the lightning practically bounces off him to the direction he pointed at.

Boooooooooom

The small boulder explodes into smithereens as the spectators gape.

“Relieving muscles isn’t the only thing learned from the waterbenders. This is my personal innovation.” Iroh smirks before exhaling heavily.

“Let’s begin your training. I don’t expect you all to learn Lightningbending, but redirecting it to save yourself should be possible.” Iroh’s words brighten everyone since Ignit starts rolling in the air to emulate Iroh’s movements.

There was another reason why Nik visited Iroh first. He had to drop Ursa off.

Before leaving, Yue, Sokka, and Suki wished to see if anyone from their settlements would like to go with them. Sokka, especially, wanted to depart with his village. Since the Northern Tribe is closer to Ba Sing Se, it happens to be their next destination.

Nik traveled by Ignit.

Although it was uncomfortable as hell since her back sports dull spike-like spine extensions, he soon chose to use his staff-glider and flew beside Ignit.

“Stop with that!” Nik stares at Ignit, who makes a curious noise as if retorting she doesn’t know what she is accused of.

“So what if I didn’t get Lightningbending in one practice? There is something called acquired potential.”

Ignit gives him a sidelong glance and spits out flames that form the number ‘7’ before flying through the fire.

Gliding away and avoiding the fire lest his staff ruins, Nik scoffs and barks, “Just because Azula got it on her 7th try means nothing!”

Ignit tries to tackle him midair as if annoyed by his sore loser behavior. Nik dodges the aerial strike and continues to fly ahead, making Ignit angry as she follows with swift flaps of her wings.

He had even left Zuko and Azula with their mother, even if Azula wanted to stick with him. But you know what? Nik can do without the entire trip getting his face rubbed into Azula’s ‘superiority.’ Azula has her dear Zuzu for that.

“Hey, how about we take a break right there?” Nik points at the nearest iceberg as Ignit snarls curiously.

“I just have to do something... I can't let others see it, though.” Nik smirks and stores his glider before freefalling without a care as he soon impacts a cushiony ball of wind and bounces with a giddy giggle.

Of course, bouncing like a child isn't what he has in mind, but his fun is magnified when Ignit joins his impromptu bouncy landing as she cries awkwardly and flips over on the ice. The moment her paws, ehm, claws touch the ice, she jumps again. This is her first time feeling something this cold, after all!

She looks at the cold sea curiously and then looks at Nik for permission.

“Go ahead. But try dipping your limbs first. The water will feel colder than the snow.” Nik takes out colored stones.

Blue, red, yellow, pink, even stale grey! You name it. He had stones of almost every color and he began carving them with his hand instead of earthbending. A fond smile touches his lips as he looks at one of the two bright amber-like stones.

“Aside from this... I have something else to do.”

Nik narrows his eyes and snaps his fingers as a small peal of golden fire flashes on the tip of his index before fizzling out.

Yoki massages his forehead and smiles wryly at Yue.

{A/N: Yoki is the OC commander of the Northern Tribe that Nik rescued as the Nut Cracking Messiah.}

The two, alongside Sokka and Rena, sat in a small room as Yoki spoke.

“I'm sorry not many chose to join you.”

“If anything, I'm relieved.” Yue smiles and replies with relief apparent in her tone. To be honest, she did not go all out to convince others to leave with her. The few tens who chose to enter Nik's personal space felt they owed Nik a debt of gratitude.

Nik cleared that others did not need to do this out of gratitude. Developing his personal world should be a slow process with many rules in place to promote welfare. If anything, things are less stressful since many chose to leave Nik's personal world. But the few elderly gentlemen

and women did not listen. Even if they were one of the few experienced waterbenders, Yoki saw no reason to stop their right to choose. He simply wasn't *THAT* leader.

And the Northern Tribe has always been a tight-knit settlement. It would be another thing to convince the entire Northern Tribe to enter his Personal Space, but separating them is nigh impossible.

"Anyway, I appreciate setting this for us. But I'm sure we won't be staying for long."

"Really?" Yoki looks at Sokka and Yue. "Nik asked me to free your old room and for privacy for the night."

"What?" Yue frowns as Rena muses with a smirk.

"Well, a few things come to mind."

"You know something?" Yue sets her sky-blue gaze on Rena as Sokka snickers alongside his girlfriend.

"To think he'd ask us and Zuko about it... Zuko doesn't even have enough experience!" Sokka throws shade wherever necessary as Rena abruptly pouts and elbows Sokka. "What about you, Mister? Am I not good enough!"

"Hey, don't let Nik ruin us! Of course, you're good enough!"

"Just good enough?!" Rena snaps back as Sokka purses his lips and glances at Yoki.

"The best course of action is staying silent, right?" He questions, but Rena replies instead with a dark chuckle.

"You just spoke, genius!"

"Uh... come on. I don't want to do *THAT* here!" Sokka retorts before crossing his arm. "I know this place is special for you... but I choose the location, right? Nik is simply overcompensating because he *HAD* to be that guy and form a harem."

Rena blinks before standing up. Her brown cheeks grow a shade darker, and she scoffs under her breath, "Idiot! Don't you ruin my surprise!"

"Where are you going?"

"Gonna find Nik, slap the back of his head, and return to the manor to cool my head off! Got a problem?!"

“What about... drinks?” Sokka mutters as Yue and Yoki look at each other. They could almost foresee Rena’s answer. As expected, Rena exhales heavily and grumbles. “You’re a genius in shitty things. Of course, we drink!”

“Well, the joke’s on you. My genius saved our hides many times.” Sokka has enough sense to wait for the agitated Rena to leave before speaking.

“What was that about?” Yue questions.

“Nothing.”

“Like I would believe that.” Yue rolls her eyes and smiles at the equally clueless Yoki. “Well, don’t let us stop you from performing your duties admirably. And you were so adamant about not accepting this position.”

“Because Master Pakku duped me into it.” Yoki grumbles and looks at Sokka, “By the way, did you and your sister find your dad? Finding your mother should add to your luck, right?”

Sokka works his jaw before sighing. “Something like that...”

“Hmmm,” Yoki merely hums in acknowledgment but doesn’t question too much about it.

“And these two are Tui and La.” Nik introduces the two Koi spirits to Kya as Katara tags along with a casual expression. But Nik could see past all of it and sense Katara’s apparent fidgety attitude around him as if hiding something from him.

“So, these two are great spirits like Regret?”

As if offended by such a question, both Koi spirits flip their tail fins in Kya’s direction and launch streams of water which Nik bends away promptly.

“Real mature,” Nik eyes the duo and adds, “Kya meant all three of you being Primordials. Of course, I know that you two are nothing like Regret.”

As the two spirits calm down, Nik faces Kya and smiles, “That’s about it. Why don’t you two enjoy the sights? It is rather obvious you’re anxious around me.”

Katara thins her lips, but Kya keeps her composure and smiles in return, “Nothing like that. How about we return to the manor instead?”

Nik eyes the duo for a moment and nods as he extends his left hand, and the red scar-like mark under his full sleeve flashes twice before sending the two back.

Nik's vision shifts. He soon faces Tui and La's spiritual form as both of them stare him down intensely.

"You've grown closer to Mokshi," Tui concludes with an ethereal smile as La crosses her arms under her breasts and frowns. "And you consumed all my essence earlier than expected. Good for you."

"Is that a wrong thing?" Nik questions curiously as Tui chuckles. "Of course, not. La just underestimated your comprehension."

"As for you," Tui exhales and addresses a situation that Nik did not even know existed.

"Ra and Raat visited us. You can say that Ra is moderately impressed by you. And yes, before you ask, it is a bad thing. The last existence to moderately impress my sibling was the Dragon Emperor, and that attracted all sorts of problems like the Dark Water Spirit. Have... you faced any situation?"

Nik blinks, and Regret resurfaces in his mind.

"Well, Regret."

As if not needing anything else about the situation, Tui nods in understanding.

"The spirits follow a pattern. They'll use all sorts of excuses to see Mokshi's host, who earned Ra's praise. Just because you solved Grim and Reaper's existence only means that spirits in control of the aspects of the material world will search for you. Not the less controllable one found commonly in the spirit realm."

Nik groans and exclaims.

"You can't catch a break in this world!"

"Indeed." La smirks and snaps her fingers as his vision shifts again, only for him to wake up to Rena's slightly worried gaze.

"Rena?" Nik sits up and looks around.

"Another spirit?" She questions and looks around cautiously.

"Nothing like that. What happened? Where's Sokka?"

Rena huffs and taps his left hand.

“Nothing... say, Sokka didn't talk about the same stuff you asked us, right?”

Nik blinks and grins as he sends Rena away without a reply, much to her angst.

Alternative Title: Iroh Will Do ANYTHING For His Stash; Ignit's a Catty Menace; Ignit has Wonderful Paws, ehm, Claws!; Staring Ken Down Like a Draconic Gangster Boss!; Iroh: Boy! Ken: *GoW Flashbacks*; Lightning Does Strike Twice; Talent Incarnated—Ignit and Azula; Sokka's a Certified Genius; Packing Up Mansions and Personnel; When Reputation Attracts Trouble; Ignit Sucks at Landing; No Belly Rubs and Chin Scratches Until Practice!; Azula Wants to Ride the Dragon... Until Then, Nik Should Suffice!; Nik Knew What He Got Into When He Stuck it Into Crazy

Title: *The First of Many*

Back in the room where she and Nik did many *things* after sticking it to Hahn, Yue cannot help but feel more excited than usual as she observes Nik's confidence fade ever so slightly under her blank gaze hiding her thoughts. "So this is what Sokka meant about you, overcompensating things," Yue smirks shortly, not in the slightest way condescending, as her emotions start betraying her gaze.

"Sokka said that?" Nik scoffs before flicking his free hand across his hair and grumbling under his breath, "It's not overcompensating by any means. I just wanted you guys, all of you, to know I appreciate everything you're willing to do for me. And not just when our lives are in danger, although that happened one too many times than I'd like."

Yue hums, her gaze refusing to leave the article in his hand. She would like to explain how people around Nik were more than willing to do what they did. After all, he did not force them by any measure. But she realizes quickly that he needs to say all this out loud instead of her being the recipient of these words.

"What I'm trying to say is," Nik looks at her unflinchingly. "I am not doing this because I feel obligated or promised to do this before we left. This is not a token to relieve you of the future and fool you into thinking things will get better. I have no way of promising that. I am doing this because—"

"Will you make me yours already?" Yue interjects with a huff and an unbecoming roll of her eyes. Everything Nik spoke made her heart pound harder. His words are as sweet as they are honest, and his intention of providing the article in his hand is sincere and personally selfish. But she could not wait, not after staring at the slate-grey, smooth stone locked on a silver cloth band. The carving on the polished rock resting flat on one side is a simple circle. But Yue *KNOWS* this choker belongs to her.

A moon.

Nik licks his dry lips and hesitates. He actually prepared many things to speak to make sure this gesture does not come off as oily or any shady attempt at making Yue stay with him for her valued healing skills. He wanted her for the kinky princess she is. Not in those exact words per se, since this is his first time proposing to someone in a long time. The first time he professed his true love did not go splendidly well after all. But hey, if you consider your head being separated from your body a romantic gesture, then maybe Nik wasn't half bad.

He makes his way to Yue with a nod before settling behind her. His fingers wrap the band around her nubile brown neck, the silver color contrasting with her skin as well as her hair. The

surface of the round stone is cold on her neck, but it's compensated by the warm breath beside her ear.

"I have half the mind of locking you away until I present this gift to everyone," Nik chuckles as he hugs her from behind and rests his chin on her shoulder. "I think there will be many... well, only Azula and maybe the Tys raising a ruckus."

"I'd be more than happy to take it off now if that's what you want," Yue offers just to feel Nik's nasal huff. His right hand glides up her body to feel the texture of the pendant on her neck as he plants a gentle peck on her ear.

"I didn't decorate the pendant with you just for you to take it off! Besides, I was joking. You should get to rub this into others' faces, no? You only have a small window of time to feel smug."

"I would never do that to others," Yue pouts. Indeed, she wouldn't.

"And that's why I put a choker on you before others," he snickers.

"Hmm, and would you like to... have a ceremony?"

"Only if you want," Nik reveals. "I realize there is only so much I can initiate. For me, we're already... you know?"

Yue smirks comfortably as they sit on the edge of the bed, "You can say it," she encourages with a whisper.

"I'm torn between saying married and mates," Nik chuckles as he starts kissing the back of her neck. His fingers unbutton her large overcoat as Yue leans further into his touch, mewling in reply, "It's the same thing in our case, right? Or are you the kind to mate with someone with no intention of making them yours?"

Nik blinks in surprise as he recalls Mitsuko. Then again, Nik from then was a different man.

"Why would I seek simple gratification if I can have that with you?" Nik grins. "Married, it is. But, it feels underwhelming."

Yue turns around and sits on Nik's lap with a soft smile on her plump pink lips. "Others may want something more. But this." She touches the pendant hanging from her neck. "This is enough. I had my ceremonies before. Besides, it is considered quite a curse for a widow to marry again."

"So, the next time I run into some fatal situation, I can blame you and Ursa, huh? Nice to know that."

“You could blame your own actions. After all, you’re the one who marked me right now,” Yue scoffs before pecking his lips. Their kiss is gentler than before, but their bodies grow heated as their hands start to disrobe each other. Her juicy lips pull back for a short breath as she offers, knowing fully what she is doing, “But if you think I’m such an eclipse to your fortune, maybe you should leave me in this bedroom.”

“And what? Let you actually curse me? That’s the line of stupidity I refuse to cross!” He promptly pushes Yue down on the bed with a grin. “Besides, you willingly entered the mouth of the beast, remember? There is no coming back!”

She won’t have a way to come back from this. Katara knows it all too well as she stands in front of Nik’s door and knocks on it. Her breath hitches as she comes to terms with the lines she is about to cross. Things will never be the same as before... if she stays here for a second longer. But she does not move. Maybe it’s because Katara has grown a little more fond of the idea than she cares to admit ever since squaring things with Kya, or maybe Nik simply answers his doors swiftly, even if it means answering the door half-naked and displaying his well-trained body brought to its current state after months of resilient discipline.

“Hi,” Nik greets Katara with a pleased smile, “It’s a truly great morning, right?”

Katara notes his tone being chipper than usual as she nods. It is clear at a glance that her agitation does not rise from seeing Nik in this state. It’s not her first time, after all. But as she curiously peers past Nik, she finds Yue smiling back with a questionably-stained sheet around her breasts. Yet, Katara’s ocean-blue eyes fixate on the silver band around Yue’s neck, letting a greyish, polished pendant with a carved circle hang.

Her lips part.

Katara shifts between foolishly grinning Nik and an increasingly bashful Yue through her gaze as the youth eagerly supplants, “Looks good on her, right, Katara?”

The waterbender nods before scoffing a chuckle and smiling widely as she comes to be, “Congratulations!” She shoves Nik away and beelines toward Yue before pouncing on the adorable princess. Katara’s positive reaction only relaxes Yue as the silver-haired ball of kink hugs Katara in return, not the least bit caring if the thin sheet between them falls in the process.

“Ehm?” Nik clears his throat and opens his arms to welcome Katara in his waiting embrace.

“You must be really excited to forget that you dropped naked on me the moment you arrived in this world,” Katara looks back and scoffs. Just because she is happy for Yue does not exclude the fact that she is downright envious at the moment.

“Katara is right, you know?” Yue agrees wholeheartedly as Nik crosses his arms and calls out his first mate. “Oh, sure. You’re going to agree with everything others have to offer because you still get to be the first, is that it?”

Yue’s smile brightens as she chooses not to answer, but her response is clear to Katara and Nik.

“So, Katara. Did you need something?” Yue questions as she comfortably leans back on her pillow. Yue and Nik hadn’t stayed in her room within the Northern Tribe and moved back inside the manor instead.

“It can wait,” Katara informs with a smile. She already knew what she’d want for herself the second she saw the silver choker on Yue’s neck. But she also felt a little uncomfortable admitting certain things to others except for Nik.

Yue nods quietly as Nik starts getting dressed.

“Going somewhere?” Yue inquires.

“Yep, practicing Lightningbending,” Nik replies with a grunt as he belts his trousers before looking at the duo on his bed. “The two of you are going to stay here or...?”

“Well, I planned to visit the settlement and help the few residents from the Northern Tribe settle. But you’re going to be on the clock, right?”

“Not necessarily,” Nik glances at Katara, who huffs and looks at Yue again.

“Sorry, I didn’t know Nik planned this,” Katara admits, looking nervous again.

“Don’t be. I think only Sokka, Zuko, and Rena know about it.”

“You asked Sokka?” Katara whips her head in Nik’s direction as he shrugs.

“I wanted to have some input about the chokers.” Katara notes the plural as Nik continues, “Sokka helped me optimize some designs. Besides, I wanted to swing things by Sokka and Zuko before I officially asked you, Azula, and Ursa. I get that it’s what you three would want... well, not Azula, but you get the point, right? I would have asked Tom-Tom... but I got better sense than asking a child for an adult’s permission.”

Katara nods with a slump of her shoulder.

Nik looks at Yue, who shakes her head slightly and gives half a shrug. Getting the green light, Nik smiles and looks at Katara, “Come on, I think I have a good idea why you came here.”

"I doubt it," Katara mutters a little sullenly.

"You think I can get the name of Ty Lee's sisters right, but not this? Obviously, you want a dowry. But I can't give away Ignit. So, you'll have to settle for something that spits equally hotter things but isn't wrapped in scales."

"Nyla's tongue?" Katara scoffs back, ignoring the obvious innuendo.

Nik smirks and gestures to her to follow him as he waves at Yue, surprising her with, "I decided we'll have our ceremony without a doubt. I want it." He half-turns to look at her with a broad smile, "Bad Luck or not, it's you. And I have a good portion of the spirit and dragon spring here, so we can wait for everyone to regather."

Yue blinks before nodding slowly. She wouldn't try to dissuade him. After all, superstitions should not be the barrier that stops her from having a ceremony with Nik just because she had one earlier with Hahn.

Katara follows Nik quietly to her room. However, Nik stops midway and looks at her calmly with a hint of curiosity.

"So, did you and Kya get a chance to hash things out?" His question is met with an affirming nod from Katara. Her blue eyes wander around the hallway, refusing to meet his gaze as she voices out, "We came up with something... acceptable."

"Something I should know? Of course, if I'm a part of this decision?" Nik smirks, enjoying Katara fidgeting at his words. After all, the girl is usually composed and steadfast.

"I'm in no mood for your jokes," Katara mumbles and pouts. "Why... couldn't you have proposed to me first? You planned for it, did you not?"

Nik sighs, "It's where I met Yue."

"This is also where Suki, you, and I..." She doesn't finish the sentence and stares at him questioningly.

"Suki would want it beside her villagers, I suppose. I'm not sure, but I'm betting on it. And to be honest, I did want to ask you first. But... I just didn't want to push you in any way unknowingly while you and Kya are trying to smoothen things out."

Katara accepts the reasoning with a nod and replies, "Well, we have."

She stares at him in anticipation as he smiles, "Would you truly feel satisfied by doing things this way? I don't mind wrapping another one around your neck." He leans forward and traces the choker on her neck. "I've always enjoyed the idea of fixing my pendant on you. But right here? In the middle of the hall? When we have something more pressing?"

"Now, I wouldn't want to get in your training, right?" Katara snorts, "We can leave all the pressing issues for later."

"Hmm, so I should leave, is that it?" Nik wags his brows. "I should, right?"

Her stare falters as she huffs in annoyance before leaning into him and slowly wrapping her arms around him.

Nik quietly wraps his arms tightly around Katara as her tense body relaxes and her breathing eases. They stay like this for a few minutes before Katara pulls back and smiles slightly, "Thanks. I needed this." Her blue eyes light up with surety and confidence as she quietly holds Nik's hand and leads him to her room.

"Ah," Nik exhales and nods as Katara opens her bedroom door, adding, "I see. Maybe I dreamt of dropping Azula and Ursa at Iroh's yesterday."

"Woah! Lemme see!" Toph shoves past everyone with her tiny but solid build before grinning, "Get it?"

Yue smiles as she hugs the excited Earthbender. "I did," Yue chuckles when she feels Toph's face vibrating between her bosom as the blind bandit's muffled words echo, "At least, the stone feels made of some good quality."

Word about Yue and Nik's engagement spread within the manor, and their neighbors from the Ty Manor rushed in, too. Several curious, happy, and envious sets of eyes trace Yue as she barely falters in front of them. Eventually, Jin is the one who speaks for almost everyone present.

"So, did Nik say anything about us?"

"Why so eager?" June cocks her hips and crosses her arms, "Wouldn't you like surprises? Although the surprise is kind of ruined now."

"I never considered you, of all, looking forward to an engagement, June," Michi smiles from the sidelines as she stuffs Tom-Tom with a spoonful of Crusted Mango cereal. The invention of milk with cereals made out of crumbs of crusted mango solved a lot of problems for Tom-Tom's breakfast in Michi's eyes.

“Why? Because I’m a hard ass?” June scoffs.

“Pretty much.”

“Was that a question?”

“And kind of a slut, no?”

“That’s right, bitch!”

June’s smirk broadens at the unanimous agreement from the group.

“I appreciate the kind words, but a woman like me dreams of retiring from my work. And I think I worked hard enough in one lifetime chasing bounties to enjoy riches earned by my man~!”

“I just remembered,” Jin smirks mischievously, “She was a furry goat, too, for a while.”

“Woah! Really?” The news surprises the Ty Siblings as June works her jaw and stares at the busty and ‘ordinary’ village girl with the looks that bagged her a Princess and Nik.

“Moving on,” June scoffs and looks at Yue, “You wanted me to tag along with you to help your villagers settle?”

“Something like that. And Toph, if possible, to help build them a temporary house and other facilities for the time being.”

“Can we join?” Ty Lee questions and looks at her sisters, “We want to develop a schedule for our performance.”

“What’s going on?” Sokka walks out to the shared room with a yawn as Rena tags along sleepily. “And where’s Nik? We had training.”

Jin suddenly shivers as she hurriedly speaks, “Wait, I will come with you—”

“No. No, you won’t,” Suki scoffs and stares at Jin intensely, “I vowed to Kyoshi that I will build a disciplined character out of you!” Ignoring the faint Jin, Suki looks at Sokka as Rena congratulates Yue.

“Nik should be with Katara.”

“Hmm,” Sokka rubs his jaw and then exhales a groan.

“Will you be alright?” Poppy pats Sokka’s back comfortingly as he looks back at the mother of one and smiles wryly, “I think you’ve got it wrong. I was just thinking it would take us longer to return to the Southern Tribe.”

“About that,” Yue voices her opinion, “I wanted to discuss if it’s possible to develop an area for your villagers before we get to them. The same for your village, Suki.” The white-haired princess smiles, “It may just make your case for your friends to follow, right?”

Suki and Sokka look at each other as they see merit to the idea in each other's eyes.

After all, only the two of them had more extensive roles in their homes and wished to bring others along, or at least try.

“So... you’re okay with Nik doing your mom?” Ty Woo blinks. Her voice silences the room as the innocuous pretender looks around and shrugs, “What? I can’t be the only one thinking about it.”

Sokka closes his eyes and exhales a heavy sigh.

“I’m going to sleep again.”

“Would you like breakfast—” Rena sighs and shoots Ty Woo an annoyed stare as Sokka cuts in.

“OF COURSE!”

“If this manor was built from rock, I would be seeing them doing it,” Toph nods at Ty Woo.

“Oh! Tell me more!” The two of them calmly walk out of the manor as June silently works her jaw and then smiles, “I should make sure the two of them don’t do anything stupid.”

“She may need a hand,” Jin tosses a pleading stare at Suki as the Kyoshi Warrior stares back sternly, “I want you in Kyoshi colors in 30 minutes.”

Suki then looks at Michi and Poppy, “Mai already left for the flower shop early today. Would you like to train?”

“Of course!” Michi smiles as Poppy only releases a bitter sigh. Michi has always been more adventurous, be it in her clothing or decisions, unlike Poppy.

“Mom, can I go play in the village?” Tom inquires quickly as Michi nods, “Only if you return by afternoon, oh, and let me pack something for Mai before you leave.” The boy was quick to make friends in the personal space, too, as he nods eagerly and awaits Michi to prepare Mai’s breakfast.

Alternate Title: Decorating a Jewelry with Yue; Moon for the Moon Princess; Nik's Luck Cannot Get Any Worse; The First Mate; Katara's Double Reaction; A Hot Cock for a Dowry; Meeting 'Ursa and Azula' Again; Spread News; Ty Woo Bags Emotional Damage; Sokka—Why are we here? Just to suffer; Suki's Going to Straighten Jin; June the GOAT; Yue's Plan to Develop the Personal Space; Best Breakfast Cereal; Suki, the TRUE Milf Trainer; Making Kyoshi Proud; A Menace in Bonding—Ty Woo, Toph, and June; Nik Does Not Have Male Friends, He Has Stepsons!