

Recollected Feelings

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Katara visits Zuko at his palace a few months after his coronation to see how he is. They have fun during the visit, but they are soon confused in their hearts; unsure of what they really want.

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1 - Recollected Feelings

The day was calm, skies blue as Zuko sat outside feeding the Turtle Ducks as he and his mother used to. He sighed as he leaned against the tree, his days as Fire Lord settling in the last couple of months. Zuko closed his eyes to relax, thinking about the events recently; quiet and peaceful.[br]

He shot out of his thoughts when he heard someone come near. "Who's there?" he sat up, his old habits coming into play as he almost defended himself, quickly pulling back and scolding himself when he caught sight of the blue, sparkling eyes and dark hair that was neatly styled.[br]

"Oh, it's just you," he sighed, relaxing.[br]

"Just me?" Katara raised an eyebrow, stepping toward him with her arms behind her back. She was wearing a long white and blue dress, a pair of chopsticks holding a small bun up on the back of her head, locks of hair stringing down past her face and back up toward the bun, the rest of her hair let straight.[br]

He gave a small smile, patting the seat beside him, "want to feed them?" he turned to look at the creatures that were still looking at him expectantly, eyeing the bread in his other hand.[br]

"Sure," she smiled back, settling herself down in the grass, taking some of the bread that was offered to her, tearing it into smaller pieces before then handing it out to a smaller chick in the bunch, it happily taking it from her hand, ruffling its tail feathers joyously.[br]

"They're so cute," she giggled tossing another piece to let them get it themselves.[br]

"Yeah, I know," he smiled, watching the expression on her face, "did you come here with Aang?" he asked, a little curious if the Avatar could be found in the castle as well.[br]

"Nah, not this time; he's still in Ba Sing Se at the moment. I just came to see how you were doing," she shrugged, feeding another duckling.[br]

"I'm fine," he rolled his eyes, yawning and on his back. "The sky's so blue today," he muttered in statement, not sure what else to say.[br]

"It is, isn't it?" Katara glanced at him, noticing how he had closed his eyes. She then proceeded to lift some water out of the pond with her bending, making sure to be quiet despite how she wanted to laugh before dropping the blob on his face. Standing quickly she hid behind the tree before he had realized what happened.[br]

"Katara?" he scowled, wiping the water off his face, frowning as he got up, hearing the muffled laughter of the girl. "Trying to act like your brother with jokes now are we?" he muttered, stepping lightly behind the tree, ready to ambush her with his arms up, dropping them when she wasn't there. He then turned around, flinching and stumbling backwards when she was standing right there.[br]

"Did you have to do that?" he looked much like a fluffed up cat, not as angry as he was startled.[br]

"Aw, did I scare you?" Katara chuckled as she offered him a hand up.[br]

He refused her help, getting up on his own by flipping backward, doing a handstand, and jumping back onto his feet, "no, you didn't." He started to stomp away toward the castle.[br]

She rolled her eyes at his temper tantrum, following him inside with her arms crossed, stopping once they had reached his bedchamber, him slamming the door in her face; it bothered her, but she tried to stay calm, letting it go as she waited outside against the wall, after all, she had come to see him.[br]

It wasn't until dinner when he finally came out, a servant having come to fetch the Fire Lord from his

room. By then, Katara had situated herself on the floor, frowning at him when he stepped out of the elaborate door. "Took you long enough," she muttered, standing.[br]

"I was catching up on some things, I thought *you* would have gone back to Ba Sing Se by now, but I see you haven't," he walked by her, not too thrilled to talk to her yet after the dispute.[br]

Following after him, she grabbed his sleeve to slow him down, "yes, well since I haven't, may I join you for dinner?"[br]

Zuko sighed, looking back at her, "fine, if you really feel that you must. It *might* be nice to have some company at dinner since Mai is away," he pulled his arm away, though Katara had quickly switched to walking by his side.[br]

"Is that supposed to be a compliment?" she teased, bumping into him.[br]

"No," he rolled his eyes, bumping back into her.[br]

They soon arrived at dinner, sitting next to each other rather than following the formality that should have been there.[br]

They ate in silence, the air heavy without the comedians there, although, they did continuously look at each other, wondering if the other would speak.[br]

"Zuko, what are you planning to do after dinner?" Katara asked when she was finished.[br]

"I was planning on training, why?" he watched her, trying to figure out what she was thinking.[br]

"Can I train with you?" she immediately inquired, smiling.[br]

"Why are you so persistent today?" he shook his head.[br]

"I just figured you were lonely with nobody here to baby sit you," she teased, standing up.[br]

"What makes you think I'm lonely?" he smirked, standing as well, "come on then, let's go to the training grounds."[br]

"All right," Katara got up, pushing a loose strand of hair back as she went with him to a rocky area that had a small waterfall and stream, a few flowers surrounding that spot, but otherwise was brown and gray from different types of clay and rocks.[br]

"Let's see who can beat who," Zuko smirked, stripping off his top and anything else that would get in the way, excluding his pants.[br]

Katara did the same, ending up in the undergarments she wore, a white one strap top that showed her stomach and a long white half skirt, "ready?" she got into stance, pulling water out of her pouch that was still settled on her side.[br]

"Completely," Zuko got into his own stance, immediately shooting fire at Katara which was easily blocked by a wall she created with her element. She then turned it into a whip, running up to him as she slashed at him with it; the firebender dodge rolled out of the way, doing a handstand and landing on his feet, kicking toward her to release another fireball. This time she had only to duck, it missing her besides catching a few strands of hair; she then froze the path in front of him and made a solid lump hit him in the stomach which in turn sent him flying a couple feet.[br]

"Ow," he muttered, sitting up and feeling the lump on his head from where he hit a boulder.[br]

"Want to continue?" Katara asked, putting the water away and walking toward him, offering her hand to help him up.[br]

He scoffed, taking her hand, but instead of getting up, he accidentally pulled her down on top of him, the two blushing as they stared each other in the eye.[br]

"S-sorry," Zuko's face reddened, focusing on her eyes and lips.[br]

"Y-yeah . . . you should be," she mumbled, staring back into his yellow ones, touching his scar lightly as she leaned closer to him.[br]

He let her, their lips pressing together in a brief moment, embracing each other as they did.[br]

"What about Mai?" Katara whispered, in his ear.[br]

"What about Aang?" he inquired back, kissing her again and forcing them both to sit up, the kiss a bit

more passionate than before.[br]

Katara pulled away, feeling slightly uncomfortable now, smiling at him. "We should head inside; what do you think?" she smiled cheerfully.[br]

"Yeah, okay," he replied softly, letting her get up and retrieve her articles of clothing. Zuko fetched his own, fixing himself up quickly, vaguely confused about his feelings. He loved Mai, but had also felt an attraction to Katara for a long time, even if they were enemies at the time.[br]

"Zuko? Come on," Katara waved him over to the entrance inside, fully dressed.[br]

He glanced over at her, "I'm coming! I'm coming! Just hold on a moment, woman!" he pulled his shirt on and jogged over to her, the two heading inside.[br]

Just when they when they were in the entrance way of the palace, Katara getting ready to leave, Iroh walked by, stopping when he saw them.[br]

"Oh! Zuko, and the lovely Katara, where might you be going?" he smiled, approaching them.[br]

"Hello," Katara greeted, "I was just going home actually, why aren't you at your shop?"[br]

"Everyone needs a break sometime," he nodded, "why don't you and Zuko come have tea with me before you leave?"[br]

"Uncle, I don't think that's a good idea," Zuko frowned, crossing his arms, "she really should be leaving."[br]

"Pish posh," Iroh smiled, pulling Katara toward the tea room before she even had a chance to say anything.[br]

Zuko face palmed, following after them, he knew that he didn't have a chance if he argued with his uncle.[br]

Katara followed him politely, thinking of the kiss between her and Zuko, "I suppose tea does sound nice," she said softly, mostly to herself.[br]

"Your usual?" Iroh asked her as she and Zuko sat down next to each other, him going to get the tea ready.[br]

"Thank you, if you wouldn't mind," Katara nodded, leaning on the table, examining the design in the middle.[br]

"I'll be back soon," Iroh left them alone in the silence, Zuko shifting uncomfortably.[br]

"Should we tell them?" He muttered, not really wanting her to hear.[br]

"They should know..." she mumbled, "though I don't want them to."[br]

"Same . . ." he sighed and lowered his head in indecision. "This is difficult." Katara put her hand on top of his, "yeah . . . Aang would be so hurt . . . but I liked it . . ."[br]

"I did too," he glanced over at her, fixing his hand so he was holding hers. "I would like to do it again." He watched her closely; a sad smile and a small nod her reply to that.[br]

"I hope you two are getting along well," Iroh stepped in with a tray, Katara and Zuko both jumping and looking completely different ways than the other. Iroh set the tray in the middle of the table, placing the cups in front of their respective owners before pouring the tea slowly into each one; the dark liquid seemed calm, the sound of the liquid fixing to rest in the small containers soothing in the silence.[br]

"Thank you," Katara bowed her head to the older man before taking a drink of her tea, quickly setting it down and fanning her mouth though it wouldn't help the pain caused by the flavored leaf water.[br]

"Burn yourself?" Zuko chuckled, leaning one arm on the table and watching her.[br]

"No," she turned away, refusing to admit it, wondering why she hadn't let it cool down a little first.[br]

"Okay," he shrugged, blowing at his slightly before taking a sip of it. "It's good, Uncle."[br]

"Why thank you Zuko," Iroh grinned as he sipped at his own. "How do you like it, Miss Katara?"[br]

"It's good as always, Uncle Iroh," she smiled at him, stirring hers with her waterbending as she lightly blew on it. They all went back into an awkward silence-at least between the younger couple, Iroh simply enjoying the tea he had made.[br]

Zuko stood when he was finished, "I'm retiring for the night," he stated, sparing Katara a look, "it's getting late, are you sure you want to get back to Ba Sing Se tonight? We can get you a room . . ."[br]"Oh, well," Katara paused, looking into her cup, "well as long as Appa is fed, I'm sure I could spare to stay the night here. Aang and Sokka will understand," she stood, smiling weakly at him, not sure that it was really right for her to do so.[br]

"Well come on then . . ." he vaguely offered his hand, feeling like a fool when she didn't take it. "Good night, Uncle, I'll see you in the morning."[br]

"Good night, Zuko. Both of you have pleasant dreams!" he waved after them, Zuko leading Katara to a free room that was close to his.[br]

"Here you are," he opened the door for her, the room inside fancy like his own.[br]

"Thank you," she smiled softly, her sadness showing again despite her efforts to look happy for his sake.[br]

"You're welcome," he waved at her, walking to his own bed chamber. He was distressed now that Katara was feeling guilty, more than likely regretting their actions. Mai would be angry if she found out, and he tried to care about that, but he could only think of how it affected Katara. "I hate this!" he yelled when he got to his room, slamming the large door shut, flames shooting out of his hands.[br]

"I just cheated on my girlfriend and I can only think about *her!*" he stormed over to his bed and flopped face first into it. *Though she's thinking about Aang . . . this is the worst predicament ever.* He covered his head with a pillow, his emotions mixed up more than they were before he thought he figured out who he was and what he was about.[br]

Katara was lying in bed in her undergarments, just staring at the ceiling as she tried to go to sleep. She kept seeing Aang's face, it then replaced with Zuko's and then vice versa. "What am I doing?" she covered her face in her hands, thinking of the time when she and Zuko were locked underground, and how she was about to heal his scar. It still angered her a little how he had betrayed her, but then again he helped her get over most of her anger toward the man who killed her mother. Aang had done a lot for her as well, but what Zuko did for her seemed to stand brighter than his.[br]

"Just go to sleep," she muttered, removing her hands and rolling over, closing her eyes and forcing the thoughts back-to disappear for the night at least.[br]

Zuko stirred out of his sleep sometime during the night, his bedroom doors opening and closing as softly as they had ever before. "Who's there?" he called out, sitting up with a fighting stance.[br]

"I-I'm sorry," Katara hesitated, stumbling over the words. "I . . . I don't think I can sleep alone," she admitted, "I dreamed of my mother . . ." she looked down, a dim shadow in the dark.[br]

"Oh," he lowered his arms and got up. He was only in his pants again. Katara could only hear the patter of his feet on the floor as he walked to her; she looked up at him when he put his hand on her shoulder, the other hand quickly giving the room a little light so she could see the apologetic smile on his face. "I'm sorry about that . . ." he lightly tugged her toward his bed, not wanting to ask if that's what she wanted in case he was to just embarrass himself.[br]

Katara followed him without complaint, sitting beside him on the soft surface, welcoming the arm that went around her. She leaned against him, closing her eyes in comfort.[br]

"Want to talk about your dream?" Zuko whispered into her hair, rubbing her shoulder lightly to try and comfort her.[br]

She shook her head, putting her face onto the side of his chest, "no . . ." her voice cracked a little, her own arms wrapping around him in a hug.[br]

"Let's go to sleep then," he moved his body to face her, hugging back as he pet her hair gently, it being down along her back now.[br]

"Not yet . . ." she mumbled, a few droplets of salt water traveling out of her tear ducts and ending up on Zuko's skin.[br]

"It'll be all right," he kissed the top of her head, not minding holding her close at the moment, wanting to help her feel better.[br]

She forced a nod, making herself look up at his face though it was hard to see in the dark. "I'm so confused right now . . . and I wish my mom was still here to give me advice . . ." she whispered, pleadingly, almost like it would bring her mom back. "I'm supposed to be the strong one though . . ." she looked down, more tears rolling down her face.[br]

Zuko thought about what to say for a moment before lifting her head up by her chin, making her look at him. "Katara, you *are* strong. But you don't always have to be strong . . . I'm sure my uncle would say the same thing . . ." he wiped her face with his thumb, smiling at her hopeful, blue eyes. He leaned down and kissed her, noticing how she kissed back, clinging to him tightly. It was he who pulled away. "We really should go back to sleep now," he brushed his lips against her forehead, pushing hair out of her face as well.[br]

"Yeah," a few sobs left her mouth, but she regained control, smiling as she settled down on the other side of his bed, him settling down next to her, putting his arm around her.[br]

"I . . . love you," Zuko whispered, sure of it-having gone to sleep by that thought.[br]

Katara was silent, so he assumed she had dozed off already, or simply didn't feel the same when she tried to vocalize her thoughts, it coming out choked. She tried again, succeeding this time, "I love you too. Let's talk about this tomorrow."[br]

"All right," he agreed softly, closing his eyes to sleep once again, succumbing to his dreams rather than what might happen in the future.[br]

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