

A Moment's Hesitation

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*Sokka tells Aang what happened to his mother during the night the fire nation attacked his tribe
[OneShot]*

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The cool air of the evening seemed to drift slowly along with the moving clouds. Fifteen-year-old Sokka was comforted by this. He hadn't felt this relaxed in the longest time. There had been times back at the village when he and his sister, Katara, had actually gotten along. Those days were never forgotten. He and Katara would lie down next to each other and watch the clouds part until their clothes became so wet by the snow, they had to run back home to change their furs. It was awkward...Sokka's life seemed fine until the fire nation attacked. That day haunted his mind ever since.

Sokka had fallen asleep or was on the edge of doing so, when a loud voice had interrupted his thoughts. "HI SOKKA!". Out of nowhere, a bare head with a blue arrow tattoo had shifted itself in front of Sokka's face, causing him to yelp in surprise.

"Nice to see you, too."

"Watcha' up to?"

"I was thinking."

"What were you thinking about?"

"How peaceful it was until you appeared."

"Oops. Sorry..."

Sokka sighed and rolled over onto his stomach. "So...um..where did Katara go.?"

"She went to the village to buy more food."

"Why?"

"You ate it all."

"Heh...oh yeah..."

There was an awkward silence. Sokka yawned and broke the quiet presence by saying, "I'm bored."

Aang took this moment to try and get Sokka to confess.

"What were you really thinking about, Sokka?"

Sokka was hesitant to this question, but gave in to Aang a few moments later.

"You really like prying into my personal life, don't you?"

"Yes."

"Okay. If you must know, I was thinking about my family," Sokka responded in the flattest tone possible.

"Oh..." Was Aang's response. He wasn't expecting an answer that personal.

Sokka altered into a position against a tree and crossed his legs. He stared blankly into Aang's opposite direction, avoiding as much eye contact within reach.

Aang sat up more straightened now, raising an eyebrow.

"Why are you always so grumpy?"

"Why are you always so damn cheerful?"

"Why not? It's not like there's anything to be upset about."

"You would know."

"What happened to your family, Sokka?"

Sokka shot his companion a dark glare. Aang had had touched a raw nerve. A very raw nerve. There was much about Sokka that Aang didn't know. Then again, no one ever knew how Sokka felt. Either he was giving a sarcastic remark or simply didn't care.

"I've never talked to anyone about it but Katara...but I guess if I don't tell you, I'll regret it."

The weather was cold and frigid. Bitter air pelted rapidly against Sokka's neck as he tried desperately to start a fire before his mother returned with food. No matter how hard he rubbed the two sticks, there was no sign of sparks.

"Okay...well screw that." Sokka spat, through clenched teeth. He threw the two sticks as far as he could in his confined tent.

Sokka wrapped his arms around himself, hoping to relieve the icy pain his body was receiving. There was no such luck.

"Sokka!", Came a voice from outside his tent. Sokka didn't have to look for himself to know who it belonged to; the voice belonged to his sister, Katara.

"Come in."

Katara entered the tent, smiling. Why was she always so happy? Katara placed a hand on her brother's shuddering shoulder, and let out a suppressed laugh.

"Sokka, you're freezing! What have you been doing the whole time I was gone?"

"Trying to light a fire. And not succeeding."

"You could of asked for help."

"I don't need help."

"You are so stubborn."

Sokka couldn't help but grin. "Y'know...it's kind of hard being the only boy in this tribe. I don't have anyone my age to talk to."

"Well...you could always talk to dad."

Sokka shook his head and stared up into the ceiling. This bothered Katara. Whenever something was wrong with her brother, he sought neither help or guidance. Instead, he just acted as if his problems were no concerns. It's as if...he wanted to be lonely.

"Dad...he's a warrior. He doesn't listen to me. I'm just there...I'm too much of an annoyance to him."

"Don't say that!" Katara automatically stood up and narrowed her eyes towards her brother. Her fists clenched, causing Sokka to look up in surprise.

"Dad loves you. He may not always speak to others but he loves you. That's why you look up to him. That's why he gave you that boomerang."

Sokka looked over to his sleeping mats and eyed his most prized possession: his father's boomerang.

"Just because he won't express his feelings by speaking, doesn't mean he doesn't care about you. Dad just shows his love differently. That's why he trained you to be a warrior."

"Thanks Katara..."

(A/N: coughtoomuchsiblingfluffcough)

"Do...you smell something burning?", Katara asked, her eyes shifting towards the exit.

"I'd like to say those two sticks over there magically lit themselves but I can't."

The distinct smell of smoke and fire filled Sokka's nose and alerted his instincts that something was going wrong. He reached his hand out near his bed, his hand feeling for his boomerang. Katara instantly felt an uneasy feeling churning the insides of her stomach. She squeezed her brother's hand and the two siblings left the tent to witness something they never had expected to see.

A thin trail of flames circled the tent. Katara gasped and clung to her brother.

"Sokka, what's going on?"

Sokka didn't need to think twice.

"The fire nation..."

"What?"

"Katara use your waterbending."

"I can't..."

"Do you want a third degree burn?"

"No..."

Katara reached for her canteen and with a swat of her arms, she sent the water flying. Needless to say, the water hit her brothers legs rather than the fire.

"Sorry! I didn't mean to!" Katara sputtered after she had recieved a dark glare of annoyance from her sibling.

Katara tried again; this time succeeding and breaking apart the fire that blocked their path. The two barely escaped to find the rest of the village in flames. Katara and Sokka looked bewildery upon their tribe; most of whom were clutching their children, screaming while watching their homes disintegrate.

"Katara...I need you to find dad."

"I can't leave-"

"Go find dad. I'll handle this thing myself."

Katara nodded her head knowingly and, within a moment's hesitation, she quickly kissed Sokka on the cheek.

"Come off it Katara, I'm not gonna die!"

"You never know." Katara shurgged and ran off to look for their father.

Luckily for Sokka, the snow had calmed down and his fingers became less numb. Now that his surroundings became more visible, he could see men in red armor, hurling fire at no one in particular; mainly to torment their frightened victims. Sokka remained calmed and collected, and kept peering certain corners for any sign of his mother.

Nothing, however, prepared Sokka once a hand wrapped itself tightly around his neck. With an automatic reaction, Sokka grasped the hands, trying to free himself.

A pair of lips hissed roughly into his ears, "Tell me boy...do you know where the avatar is hiding?"

"N-no." Sokka barley managed to respond

"Very well. You may not but I'm sure others will."

Sokka understood his words as soon as a female figure emerged in the distance. It was his mother!

Sokka tried to call out, but failed to do so when nothing came out from hi mouth.

Sokka's mother, looking a lot like an older version of Katara, stopped dead in her tracks when she saw her son in a deadly position.

"Commander Zhao..." She growled. "I believe the water nation is unaware of the avatar's whereabouts."

"Yes. You are correct. But how do I know for certain this tribe isn't hiding anything from me?"

Zhao's lips curled into a devilish smile as he tightened his grip aroud Sokka's neck.

"Let him go. NOW."

"As you wish..."

Sokka was released from Zhao's grip, causing him to gasp deep breathes from lack of oxygen.

"You have done enough damage to my tribe. Now leave."

Sokka crawled to his mother's side for protection, watching Zhao's expression change from satisfaction to anger. The commander thrust his arm out and, in one sudden movement, a thick trail of fire flew from his fingertips, aimed acutely at Sokka's beloved mother's chest.

It all happened so quickly. Nothing but a loud, blood curdling scream escaped from his mother's mouth before she hit the ground and was never to stand up again. Zhao simply walked away, summoning his army of firebenders to leave the pitiful tribe.

Sokka, still kneeling on the ground, stood irresolute. He reached for his mother's hand and squeezed it tighly.

"Come on mom. You're okay. It was just one attack. You'll be alright, won't you?"

There was no response. Sokka began shaking his mother's crippled body.

"Stay with me mom. You can pull through. I know you can. You are stronger than this."

His words seemed to crack as he held back his tears. Sokka was becoming angry now. He shook his mother's body harder now, through gritted teeth.

"Don't do this to me mother. Not now. I need you...Katara needs you. Don't die. Please...don't..."

The village had quieted down. Mothers and fathers held each other tightly. Some were while some were utterly speechless. Katara had succeeded in finding her father and wrapped him into a gentle hug. There was so much she wanted to say right now; how glad she was that no one was mortally wounded and how glad she was to know her father was alive. But she couldn't. Other thoughts filled her mind that refrained her from doing so. Why had the fire nation attacked? What had they done to deserve such an ambush? Was Sokka alright? Katara choose this moment to think and remained in her father's arms. "...Mom?"

Sokka had given up on the fact that his mother was alive. There was no sign of life. Still groping his mother's hand, Sokka looked away and closed his eyes shut, trying to stop his tears from falling. Crying was for the weak. At least that was what he was told. Sokka took deep, shuddering breathes until he gave in to the pain and broke down into tears of sorrow. It was no use. Nothing could stop his uncontrollable sobbing. Not until Katara and his father had come later, the void in his heart had been broken.

Silence.

Aang wanted to speak; to comfort, but a great intensity of guilt had struck him. He smiled sheepishly.

"The whole thing was kind of my fault, wasn't it?"

"Yes. Yes it was."

This made Sokka smile a bit and he wiped away at his watering eyes. Aang had never seen Sokka come this close to tears before, but the moment had been ruined due to a cold, splash of water that struck the two boys both in the face.

"I'm ba-ack!" Katara sang, cheerfully. She noticed Aang was in a silent trance and that Sokka's eyes were red and bloodshot.

"...Did I miss something?"

YESS! My first story done! Hope y'all liked it! I don't mind advice but be nice! 'Kay? Remember this is my first fic. Don't be flamin'. Actaully, I get a kick outta flames so go ahead and flame if you like XD Now comment or DIE >:D