

Revenge of the Puffy Princess

Written by x-22. Based on characters from Avatar: The Last Airbender.

With a hand on her chin and a thoughtful expression on her face, Ty Lee looks around her palace room. Standing in nothing but her underwear – surrounded by piles of clothes that do not fit – leaves no doubt of how plump she has become: Her trim abdomen has swollen into a fat gut that juts out far beyond her puffed-up breasts. Thanks to a lack of her usual exercise and an appetite heightened under Azula's ministrations a few months ago, the bloated acrobat's behind has grown to match her gut. Ample love handles bulge forth to spill out of her underwear and create plush rolls on her back. Without Azula's wide hips or Mai's well-distributed extra poundage, all this additional weight makes Ty Lee appear very rotund, well on her way to spherical.

Around the ample acrobat, every closet door is wide open and every drawer has been overturned, but to no avail:

"Nothing fits," she sighs, pouting as she looks down on her protruding gut: "When did I gain all this weight?"

Her stay with Azula at the Yasura Refuge mental hospital was certainly to blame, but the hearty appetite it had given her had not abated with the princess' escape: Accustomed to being stuffed to the gills, Ty Lee could not help but continue to overeat and it was really starting to show.

Picking up a skirt she had never worn, Ty Lee sighs and hopes for the best. She barely gets it over her knees before the struggle begins. Losing her balance, she topples backward onto her bed with a squeal of surprise. Blinking bewilderment out of her eyes, she continues to try and wiggle into the skirt.

"Come on, Skirt-I-Bought-On-A-Whim-Even-If-It-Was-Too-Big; you're my only hope!" she groans. Throwing herself this way and that makes the big ball of blubber looming over her roll and shake impressively. Finally getting the skirt over her bulging thighs, she allows herself a moment of rest before tackling the great circumference of her posterior.

"Maybe a little less delicious fruit cake from now on," she admits, letting go of the skirt to feel the size of her gut since she can't quite see around it. Immediately she realizes she is hungry for fruit cakes. All of them.

With a grunt, Ty Lee resumes her struggle. The waistband of her skirt cuts into the wobbling mounds of dough that is her rear, sending soft, malleable flesh flowing over her fingers and spilling out of her clothes. Getting stuck about halfway, she wonders what Azula would have done. In Ty Lee's mind, an imaginary Azula immediately commands someone else to get herself dressed.

"Why did I have to eat all those dumplings and cookies she made me?" Ty Lee groans, then glances over her breasts to look upon one of the biggest bellies she has ever seen: "Why did I have

to get so fat?"

The answer is tantalizingly clear to her: Because everything was so delicious. Is *delicious*, she reminds herself, still hankering for a hearty breakfast.

"Come... on, Ty Lee," she tells herself. "Get... this... up and you'll... get... fed!" *And fatter*, Azula's voice says in her mind. It does not matter: If only she can get this skirt on, she will not be too fat. If only...

"Yay!" the acrobat exclaims breathlessly as the skirt slips over the bulging curve of the top of her butt. Stuffed into the thing like a sausage, her voluminous midriff bulges several inches over the waistband. Packed so tight, little ripples shimmer across her love handles with her every move. Exhausted, she throws out her arms, her fat gut heaving with every laboured breath.

That wasn't so hard, Ty Lee thinks cheerfully, her wardrobe problem immediately forgotten.

The steps of Fire Lord Zuko are hurried as he walks down the palace corridor. At odds with his quick pace, apprehension is writ clearly on his face. Coming to a halt in front of a door, he hesitates for a long while. He closes his eyes and sighs before knocking on the door. Not daring to wait for a reply, he enters the room.

"Mai?" he blurts out, unable to keep surprise out of his voice. With his girlfriend standing before him, getting dressed with the help of a dozen servants, Zuko barely recognizes her for a split second.

Certainly, not having to throw a single knife – or indeed lift a finger – for over four years, all the while being waited on hand and foot had already had its effect on Mai's waistline. He had admittedly hardly noticed at first – possibly because she put on weight so evenly – but once she approached double her original size, there was no denying his girlfriend's weight gain. However, in the months since they last saw each other, it seemed as if she had doubled in size *again*. Her robes had not kept up with her girth, leaving no doubt of how stout she was around the middle, how well-padded her hips were – or how even plumper her thighs had become.

"I-I'm sorry I could not meet you when you arrived yesterday," Zuko mumbles, knowing full well how annoying his puffed-up girlfriend will find his excuses. Of course, that only makes him sound even more insecure. "There was an emergency council meeting."

"Why even bother telling me?" Mai says sourly. An awkward silence settles over the room. Done with the lady's clothes, the servants caught in the middle look around, desperate for something to busy themselves with.

"Uh. You look good," Zuko ventures curtly.

"Yes, I *have* put on weight, thanks for noticing," Mai replies sarcastically. On the verge of babbling an angry apology, Zuko reins himself in:

"I'd love to have you accompany me at the dignitary dinner this evening."

The acidic look on Mai's face remains unchanged: "*Of course*, Your Highness. After so long apart, we should really do something *together*, after all."

In the imposing hall leading to the Fire Lord's throne room, hidden behind the enormous columns lining one of the aisles, a group of warrior women in green are doing their morning exercises. Ready to go on duty as bodyguards to the Fire Lord, the Kyoshi Warriors are clad in armour and have their blades in their scabbard. At their head, their young leader holds up a hand to call for order. As one, the young women stand at attention.

"As you may have heard, the Patriots have been particularly loud-mouthed over in the Republic lately," Suki explains evenly, though disdain creeps into her voice. "This time it's about tariffs or something, but that doesn't mean we shouldn't be on our guard. All it takes is for one confused Fire Nation supremacist to get it into his head that killing the Fire Lord will somehow solve their problems."

"We all know Zuko isn't exactly popular over there, after what he did to create the Republic in the first place, but wouldn't they take this out on the Councillors running the place?" one of the warriors chime in.

Suki shrugs: "Who knows about politics? Anyway, let's all be careful. You never know what might-"

"Hi everyone!! I've missed you!!"

The unbridled enthusiasm nearly has the whole squad draw their weapons in surprise. Only when they see Ty Lee waddle towards them in her ill-fitting clothes do they relax, though the surprise lingers on. Before any of them has a chance to say anything, the acrobat has Suki in her plush embrace. She then proceeds to give out cuddly hugs to everyone present.

"T-Ty Lee?" Suki eventually stammers after recovering from being ambushed by the acrobat's big bosom. "You're back? We haven't seen you in months!"

"I am! And I wanted to join up with you guys again!" Ty Lee declares cheerfully, hands on her well-padded hips while her belly bulges out of her clothes. Her crop top is tight across her bosom, but at least it is so short it does not have to try to cover the acrobat's sprawling midsection.

"Eh..." is all Suki can say to the sight before her.

"I'll need a new uniform, but that's okay." Ty Lee tugs at her taut skirt: "This was getting a bit tight anyway."

"Are you serious?" one of her former sword-sisters says. "I mean, you quit because you were out of shape and now you're even, uh..."

Ty Lee finds herself without a comeback to that accusation. Truth be told, she left the Kyoshi

Warriors because she got too big for her uniform, not because she was too fat to fight. That does not change the fact that she has indeed gotten quite a lot heavier since last she was at the palace. Her orders from Azula are clear, but now she cannot figure out how to carry them out.

"We never finished our chi-blocking training, though," another warrior points out to a few assenting nods.

Having recovered from trying to imagine Ty Lee trying to touch her toes, much less practice katas, Suki smiles kindly: "Of course we're happy to have you back! We're best friends forever, right?"

"Yay!" Ty Lee clasps her hands and squeals loudly, happy and relieved at the same time. "Can I start right away?"

"Sure."

"Great!" the acrobat beams, then rubs her big belly: "When is lunch, though? I'm *starving!*"

With a gentle sweep of her arm, Suki leads the other Kyoshi Warriors through their exercises. Crossing her legs, she turns left at the same deliberate pace. Behind her, the others mirror her moves, each playing out the same slow-motion fight, perfectly in synch with each other.

"That's it for forms today," Suki announces calmly, bringing herself back to a relaxed stance. "How are you holding up so far, Ty Lee?"

"Huh?" the acrobat squeaks. Strawberry jam smeared on her lips, she looks up as her teacher turns around. Resting against one of the hall's massive pillars, she licks dumpling filling from her face and smiles sheepishly:

"Sohwy!" she exclaims before realizing her mouth is full. Chewing hurriedly, she tries to explain before resuming her apologetic grin: "I was *sooo* hungry and then someone came by with this delicious food cart and..." Trailing off, she looks guiltily at said cart and its much diminished contents. Under the disbelieving stares of the other Kyoshi Warriors, the acrobat nips the napkin from her neckline and puts a defensive hand on her heavy belly.

"Did she even last a single move?" one of the warriors whispers.

"W-well, we're going to start sparring now." Still taken aback, Suki invites the acrobat to rejoin them.

"That's great!" Ty Lee replies with the smile back on her sugar-coated lips. "You guys go on without me..." Instinctively giving her plump gut a little pat, she blushes slightly. "...I think I'm a bit too full for practice right now."

Not sure of how to handle the situation, Suki just stands there staring for a moment, eyes blinking once or twice in her frozen face. A slight frown begins to creep into her perplexed mask just before she nods and turns back around. The rest of the Kyoshi Warriors follow suit and training

resumes. Left alone, Ty Lee remains idle for a split second, then pops a finger full of whipped cream into her mouth.

"Well, if you aren't having any..." she says to herself, intent on not letting any of it go to waste.

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Ty Lee yawns sweetly as she pads down the palace corridors. At long last she has gotten out of bed. She is late, as usual, but she tells herself she can't help it: *I'm just so sleepy in the morning*. And sluggish in the afternoon... Getting out of bed is such a chore. Going somewhere is such a chore. Everything *is such a chore!* To the bubbly acrobat, the sensation is alien and a bit confusing – and, in her mind, completely unrelated to anything else that might have happened to her. Thinking about it reminds her of her waddling gait, however, which in turn makes her aware of the tremors it creates in her doughy midsection.

Bulging out over clothes so many sizes too small, her love handles quiver. Her gut wobbles with every step, too big to be covered or restrained by a short skirt barely able to cover her rear – and even that only because of the splits on each side.

A grumble rises from the acrobat's bulging belly, but she tries to ignore it. Ty Lee knows that if she stops for a quick bite, she will inevitably overindulge and then she can forget about training with the Kyoshi Warriors today.

"I think I might have been eating a bit more than I should," she admits to herself and pats her well-fed tummy. Just as she is about to enter the training hall, her face suddenly brightens: "But I'm exercising, so I guess it's okay!"

Stealing in among the training warrior women to find her place, Ty Lee does her best to catch up. Half-heartedly imitating those around her, she eventually gets into the rhythm of the kata. Sweeping her hands as if holding the Kyoshi Warrior's signature fans, she moves slowly, nearly in synch with the women around her. Following the others, she makes a small jump to land in a wide stance. The landing sets her big belly bouncing up and down, sending ripples through the former acrobat's flabby body.

"Whew!" Ty Lee breaths and puts a hand to her quivering gut. It's a brief pause, but enough to throw her off the rhythm of the forms. Skipping stances to catch up, she keeps going. Her breath is laboured now, even if she does not have the time to put her full strength behind her moves.

Panting heavily, the ample acrobat's strikes gradually become as limp as noodles. Gasping for air, she breaks off to put her head between her knees – or as close to it as her interposing tummy allows. Hanging down, Ty Lee feels as if her heavy gut is about to touch the ground, especially as her gulping breaths inflate its already significant circumference.

Staggering away from the crowd, Ty Lee rests her back against a massive column and slips down onto the floor. Leaning back with her eyes closed, she allows her doughy ball of a belly to pool into her lap.

"Gee, I'm exhausted," she tells no one in particular. When she opens her eyes, she looks up to realize she has not lasted even a single kata.

At lunch, conversation is lively against the backdrop of Ty Lee's enthusiastic eating. Grinning happily, the acrobat downs yet another bowl of beef. Purring contently, she rubs her tummy and puts the bowl on top of one of the many stacks in front of her before eagerly starting on another.

"So, how do you feel your training is going?" Suki says in a friendly tone.

"Oh, great!" Ty Lee assures her between bites. "All this sparring and stuff makes me *so hungry*, though." Indicating the pile of empty dishes in front of her with her chopsticks, Ty Lee grins: "It's a good thing I get my exercise or I might put on weight!"

"Yeah, imagine that," Suki says wryly. Between them, the low table does nothing to obscure Ty Lee's conspicuously bulging belly that looms over it.

"I know, right? Now, are you going to eat that?"

After cheerfully downing what is left of Suki's komodo chicken and chili stew, Ty Lee puts a hand on her belly and sighs happily. Before she has the opportunity to ask, another Warrior offers the acrobat her leftovers out of habit. It is not long before more half-empty plates start moving up the table and over to the hungry acrobat.

As she eats, Ty Lee sees the Kyoshi Warriors heap together their leftovers and send them her way. She sees the food coming in left and right, even as she wolfs down dish after dish with abandon. She sees her belly billow out before her, so full that it fills her lap and pushes against her big breasts, swelling with the steady stream from her companions' plates. Suddenly, she remembers what she is supposed to be doing.

"Stupid Ty Lee," she mutters to herself, channelling a little Azula in her voice. Instead of getting the Kyoshi Warriors out-of-shape and out of the way, she has been gorging herself. Looking down, she realizes where all those extra courses ended up – and it was certainly not in the Warriors' trim tummies as planned.

"What's that?"

The question brings Ty Lee to her senses: "Hey, why don't we all get some dessert?"

The rest just shrug and acquiesce, assuming it is for Ty Lee's benefit. She realizes she is likely to eat most of it, but it is a start...

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Inside the plainsland mansion of Mai's family, two servants meet at an intersection and steal away for some gossip.

"And here I thought things would quiet down once her Nagging Highness left," one of them complains.

"I'm guessing you're coming straight from the kitchens?"

The other nods: "That new girl acts as if she owns the place."

"Why is she even here?" the second maid exclaims. "What is it she does around here?"

The first girl is about to reply with words to the effect of "nothing but sitting on her ass, eating" when a cold voice interrupts them:

"Why I make sure none of you... have an accident, of course." An insidious smirk on her face, Azula steps into the hallway. Despite her considerable girth and enormous rear, the bottom-heavy princess is still graceful – and obviously light on her feet. Walking between them, she forces the two servants to step aside to accommodate her generous build. Just as she is about to leave them to their cold sweat and unsteady legs, the princess stops and raises a finger to her plump chin:

"Oh, one more thing! I really think you two should return to the kitchen." A satisfied smile forms in the corner of her mouth before she licks her lips: "I have a feeling there is going to be a lot of work to be done."

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In the barracks of the Kyoshi Warriors, Suki finds herself stirring to a strange aroma. Sniffing tentatively as she returns to consciousness, she eventually opens her eyes to see a grinning Ty Lee.

"Gooood morning, girls! I was just thinking; you've all been working so hard lately... so I thought we should have a day off and just pamper ourselves a little!"

All around, the rest of the warrior women are waking to find themselves surrounded by food.

"Go ahead! Have some!" the acrobat beams. Grabbing Suki by the neck, she crams a cream dumpling into the unsuspecting warrior's face. Allowing Suki to chew, Ty Lee lets go and pats her plump gut: "Don't worry, I had a head start."

"What's all this?" one of the Kyoshi Warriors inquires as she picks up a deep-fired rice cake.

"Oh, you've all been so good to me." Ty Lee turns to face everyone with a smile. "Too good, in fact," she jokes and squeezes her overfed belly. "I just wanted to give something back. Now eat up... you wouldn't want all my hard work to go to waste, right?" The acrobat's grin is her own, but not those last words. *Look at me, Azula, she thinks happily. I learned your lesson well.*

A few hours later, the sound of snoring fills the barracks once more. Not even out of their beds,

the Kyoshi Warriors lie sprawled in their shifts. With one hand on her distended belly, Suki moans contently in her sleep.

Above them, Ty Lee observes the dozing warriors and the heaps of empty dishes. Gobbling up the only left over jelly doughnut, the acrobat clasps her hands and smiles: "Oh, if only you could see how *cuuute* you look!"

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"As you all know, diet is important to proper chi-blocking!" Standing with her hands behind her back, Ty Lee addresses the assembled Kyoshi Warriors with the best military pose she can imagine. "It's all about being in tune with yourself and the world. Consider this fruit tart..." With due reverence, the rotund instructor holds up the pastry in question for the others to see. "Looks delicious, doesn't it? There is obviously only one place it belongs." With that, she devours the cake in two voracious gulps.

"There," Ty Lee declares, happily rubbing her belly. "The cake was delicious, I wanted to eat it and so I did just that. Now *that's* harmony."

"Uh, are you saying we should eat fruit tarts?" one of the Warriors inquire sceptically.

Azula could have explained this so much better, Ty Lee despairs, trying her best to come up with a reply a little more verbose than "uh, yeah". "Uh, what I'm saying is... harmony is good for chi-blocking. So, uh, not eating something you'd like to eat messes things up. It makes you all non-harmonious and that's bad for your aura." The acrobat allows herself to consider her speech for a moment, then grins broadly and silently congratulates herself for omitting "I think" from the end of her lecture.

"Well, I do like having a nice aura," a Warrior comments and accepts a pie from a nearby servant. Shrugging, she takes a bite and is soon joined by her sisters-in-arms.

After a while – and many, many pastries later – Suki asks through a mouthful of cookies: "Sho, when do we start actual traini'g?"

"Huh? Training?" Custard smeared around her mouth, Ty Lee blinks innocently. Leaning back she puffs up her plump tummy and rubs it slowly. "You know, I think I might have overindulged a little..." she explains evasively, shifting slightly to underscore her ponderousness. "Why don't we do that later?"

"Okay by me!" one of the Kyoshi Warriors exclaims, helping herself to another doughnut.

"Don't mind if I do..." another chimes in, feigning reluctance as she does the same.

"I think my aura needs another banana roll."

"Well, if we aren't doing any training anyway..."

As the Kyoshi Warriors show their overwhelming lack of disappointment at practice being cancelled, Ty Lee turns to Suki:

"I'm sorry..." she says and smiles apologetically.

The young woman smiles back: "It's okay; we'll do it some other time."

"Right!" Ty Lee beams and gets up to hand Suki a moon cake.

Leaving the Kyoshi Warriors gorged and gluttoned, Ty Lee returns to her room. The trip seems to be taking longer and longer, but there is one corridor that has always made her hesitate since her return: Pretending she needs to catch her breath, she finds herself standing outside Mai's door.

Over a month, she notes, and still she has not visited her friend. She tells herself she has no reason not to, but that would be ignoring the months she spent living in secret right under Mai's nose and how she helped Azula escape Yasura Island before that.

What would I tell her? What if I tell her the truth...? Azula would kill me!

No, she cannot face Mai. Not today.

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In the chilly courtyard of the Royal Palace, a lone balloon is being tied down by a ground crew. Numbering over a dozen, they do their best to make themselves useful, creating a throng of too many cooks. This escapes the notice of the two passengers, however, as they ascend the wide granite stairs:

"I told you I never wanted to go in that thing again!" Toph thunders and throws up her arms. "It's too flimsy!"

Behind her, Sokka has an impish smile on his lips: "Come on, Toph. It's the future of travel!"

The annoyed earthbender sighs: "Why did I even agree to come with you..."

"Because a display of your students' metalbending is 'necessary cultural exchange'" Sokka reminds her solemnly. "Also, your school could do with some publicity. Which is where I come in, obviously."

"Obviously." Toph says and gives Sokka a wry smile in his general direction. "Well then, why don't I go convince Zuko to come visit and in the meantime, you can go on a little... recruitment drive." The earthbender's suggestive tone is unmistakable.

"Kids these days," Sokka tuts, before waving goodbye and heading for Suki's room.

Throwing a friendly rude gesture in Sokka's general direction, Toph continues on her way to the throne room. Halfway there, she hesitates at a strangely familiar vibration. Odd – too slow, too heavy – but still somehow familiar...

"Ty Lee??" she exclaims, startling the ample acrobat as she emerges from the kitchens, stack of pies in one hand, a piece of one in the other. "Is that really you?"

"T-Toph?" Ty Lee stammers, trying to balance her pastry haul as she regains her composure. "What are you doing here?"

"Pursuing another of Twinkletoes' girly ideas," Toph replies brashly. "What about you? We haven't seen you in months!"

"Oh, you know, s-still with the Kyoshi Warriors..." Ty Lee smiles uncertainly and reflexively stuffs the pie slice into her mouth.

"Well, get over here and give me a hug!" Toph beams and grabs the acrobat in her powerful grip. The muscular earthbender's bear hug is tight enough to cut deep into Ty Lee's ample flab, squeezing the bare flesh so it cascades over her wiry arms. "Well, aren't you just like a nice, big fluffy pillow!" she says loudly, while purring contently.

"Eheh..." Ty Lee is all manages while it feels like her chi is being squeezed out of her.

"No wonder I couldn't tell straight away who it was," Toph says and releases a gasping Ty Lee from her embrace. Curious, she tries to reach around the hefty acrobat to better judge her size. Obviously baffled by it, she spreads her arms in a perplexed imitation of Ty Lee's hugeness. "Being with the Kyoshi Warriors has been good to you, I guess. Speaking of which, we're taking Zuko to my academy; could you tell your buddies so they can tag along?"

"Oh, I don't know..." Ty Lee hesitates, still unnerved by the earthbender's sudden appearance and characteristic bluntness. "They're really busy right now. And you know he doesn't like making a big deal out of things. M-maybe it would be better if just you went with him?"

"Hmm, I guess you're right," Toph muses, feeling similarly to Zuko about pomp and spectacle. "Sokka will be with us and maybe we can get Katara up here too." Toph shrugs: "Well, I guess I'm supposed to be in a hurry, so I'll talk to you later." With a mischievous grin, she pats Ty Lee's belly and leaves: "Save some pie for me, will you?"

"Hngh! Come on!" Suki groans from behind the dressing screen.

"What's that?" Recklessly forgetting to ask first, Sokka saunters around to find his girlfriend struggling with the sash of her uniform.

"It-it's this stupid belt!" a flustered Suki exclaims, realizing there is no alternative but to come clean. Round-faced from overindulgence, she is indignantly eyeing the additional inches on her waist. "Ty Lee has been a really bad influence on me," she sighs and puts a hand on a belly that is close to outdoing her breasts.

Silence falls and Sokka knows he is expected to say something. Gritting his teeth, he nervously racks his brain for a way to change the subject, realizing it is the only way to avoid putting his foot

in his mouth. Close to breaking down, his face suddenly brightens as he thinks of something: "Hey now... it's not so bad. In fact I'm positive you weigh less than my last girlfriend."

Giving herself a moment to process that information, Suki then turns away and seductively puts a hand on her more pronounced posterior: "Oh really...?" she says coyly, before realization dawns on her a split second later. Spinning around, she fixes Sokka with a critical eye: "Wait, didn't she turn into the *moon*??"

Anticipating violent retaliation, Sokka simply offers a meek "Yes..."

"That's it, you're sleeping on the sofa tonight!"

"But you don't have-" Sokka foolishly tries to point out, but a murderous glare quickly shuts him up – and sends him into wise retreat.

In the shadows of a moonlit palace pagoda, the young Fire Lord sits staring into a secluded garden pool. Resting his chin on his hands, deep in thought, he fails to notice a figure approach:

"You out here to, eh?" Sokka sighs and plops down next to Zuko on the bench.

The Fire Lord looks up from his brooding and glances in the direction of the newcomer: "Hmm? Yeah, I guess I am..."

"Man, I tell you that girl drives me crazy," Sokka announces without invitation.

"You and Suki had a fight?"

Sokka continues as if he heard nothing: "Puts on a few pounds and she acts like it's *my* fault."

"Is it?" Zuko says and turns towards Sokka with an inscrutable smirk. It takes the tribesman a while to discern what he means:

"Hmm? Well I... Wait a minute. No way! You don't... She can't... Oh sh-"

"Relax! I'm only kidding," Zuko chuckles. "You didn't bring up your ex, did you?"

"Maybe..." Sokka reluctantly admits as he tries to keep his breathing under control.

His laughter fading, the Fire Lord shakes his head: "Not that you should be getting relationship tips from me."

"Should have known you were having girl trouble, sitting here moping like this. Don't worry, Mai will forgive you."

Zuko looks away: "She's right, though. I've only been back here two days and I'm leaving again tomorrow. And when I'm actually here, it's all council meetings and dinners with stuck-up nobles."

"That's the price of progress, my friend. Give it another year and I'm sure everyone will be used to the whole 'voting' and 'council representatives' thing. It wasn't done in a day over in the Republic, either."

"But I would still be the Fire Lord and that's not who Mai wants me to be."

"I don't know," Sokka says thoughtfully. "She does seem to enjoy being able to boss people

around."

The chuckle emerging from Zuko's throat is raw and cynical: "Maybe I should give *her* the job. After all, how can I tell people what to do when I don't know what *I'm* supposed to do?" He looks down again. "Too bad that's not how it works."

A look of sympathy on his face, Sokka puts a hand on Zuko's shoulder: "Hey, don't worry. You've managed to hold on to Mai on-and-off for five years. Running a nation is peanuts compared to that."

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Lying on her back on the bed, Ty Lee stares at the ceiling. She sighs. With Team Avatar around, she has barely left her room these last days, lest she inadvertently spoil Azula's plan.

"You know you're too ditzzy to be trusted with this kind of thing," she tells herself to explain her self-imposed exile. If she was not, why would she give up the company of the Kyoshi Warriors? "Azula's told you *so* many times!"

Folding her hands across her big belly, the acrobat pouts: "She never should have sent me in the first place." *Better I stay in here where I can't mess things up.* There was no telling what Azula would do if she did blab, but Ty Lee felt certain the princess would be devastated if her plan failed. And quite possible murderously mad.

"Best keep my mouth shut," Ty Lee tells herself and does just that, clamping her lips so tight not so much as a syllable can escape. *Like I did with Toph the other day?* she realizes eventually. She could not help it, of course. The earthbender had blindsided her, so it was no surprise that she...

"Told her nothing..." In fact, she had kept Team Avatar from taking her charges away from their pampered lifestyle. Rather than ruining the plan, she had *saved it*.

Immediately, Ty Lee sits up straight – though immediately might be an exaggeration of her alacrity – and exclaims: "I wish Azula would be around to tell me these things, instead of me sitting around here moping, waiting to figure it out!"

Swinging out of bed, she slides into her slippers and saunters over to the mirror. Standing straight with her gut jutting out before her, the former acrobat looks at herself proudly: "You know, I think I'm starting to get a hang of this!" At the moment it is as if there is nothing she cannot do. Starting with...

With deft hands, Ty Lee does up her hair and makes for the door.

Against the setting sun, the silhouette of a flying bison glides effortlessly through the air before it comes to rest within the courtyard of the Royal Palace. It quickly becomes obvious not all of its passengers share the animal's calm:

"Good to be home again, isn't it Zuko?" Katara says cheerfully, trying to put a smile on the Fire Lord's face.

"Thanks for the heads up; I had no idea," Zuko replies sarcastically and brushes past her. A head shorter than the Fire Lord, but well-built, it looks for a moment as if the waterbender is about to resort to physical violence. Gritting her teeth, she turns to her brother in exasperation: "What was *that* about? He's been like this all the way here!"

"Give him a break," Sokka smiles. "He and Mai are just having a rough time."

Following Zuko with her eyes as he vanishes into the palace, a touch of indignation lingers on Katara's inscrutable face as she mutters under breath: "Is that so..."

"Who is it?" Mai says, a touch of irritation in her voice at the knock on the door. Lying on the bed, she is barely acknowledging a poor servant who is desperately trying to juggle three lychee nuts. One hand on her stout midsection, the other rests over a set of throwing knives and a big bowl of fire gummies. All the while, the involuntarily conscripted juggler does his best and hopes that hand chooses the less steely of the two.

The unbidden guest says nothing. Instead the door suddenly bursts open, sending the servant and his lychee nuts scattering to the four winds.

"It's me, silly!!" Ty Lee exclaims, brimming with confidence and custard tarts. "How have you been??" she asks, trying to pre-empt a question as to her whereabouts the last months.

Her fears turn out to be unfounded, as Mai simply states: "You've gotten fat."

At this, Ty Lee's brow furrows slightly, her lips pouting. With her big gut and heftier breasts, she certainly looks more obviously fat than her old friend, but Mai is hardly a sylph herself anymore.

Noticing the ample acrobat's reaction, Mai adds with friendly wryness: "Then again, I guess you've always been more... well-endowed."

"What do you mean?" Ty Lee asks innocently, but the tone in the noblewoman's voice is enough to dispel any misgivings.

Used to Ty Lee's naïveté, Mai just ignores her: "Well, at least you won't have to worry about being mistaken for your sisters anymore."

Grinning broadly, Ty Lee pats her big ball of a gut with both hands: "I guess not!"

Sizing up the ample acrobat, Mai says thoughtfully: "You should consider updating your wardrobe, though."

"Oh yes!" Ty Lee exclaims, ecstatic at the thought of buying new clothes. "We should go shopping together! I'm going to get the prettiest dress ever and then you can..."

On the bed, Mai offers only a good-natured scoff at Ty Lee's enthusiasm and patiently waits for her to finish gushing. "I'd offer you some sweets, but I'm guessing you get enough of those," she

says once the acrobat has said her piece, sweeping her hand across the assorted delicacies beside her. Behind a divan, the gesture makes the terrified juggler wince.

"That's all right," Ty Lee smiles. "In fact I'm more in the mood for something salty."

Smiling back, Mai heaves herself out of bed and gestures towards the door: "Then why don't we take a walk together and look for it."

On a balcony, Zuko sits looking at the dying rays of the sun bathing in a bird bath below. Resigned to his own thoughts, he remains unmoving as someone comes up behind him. In silence, Katara puts a hand on his shoulder.

"What do you want?" the Fire Lord mutters when the waterbender sits down beside him.

"To see if everything is okay with you," Katara replies, adding a little sternly: "Which it obviously isn't."

"Hm," Zuko exhales curtly and falls silent. By his side, Katara follows suite and the two sit there examining their shoes. Eventually, after Katara has waited patiently for him to speak, the Fire Lord sighs: "I'm sorry. It's not you I'm angry with."

"I know."

Zuko looks up, his words a little harsher this time: "I'm not sure you do. You and Aang are so obviously made for each other." He glances away. "Not everyone is lucky enough to be so certain."

"Is that so?" Katara says gruffly. "Aang might be the Avatar, but he's still just a boy."

Zuko smirks sardonically: "Hopefully he isn't as big of an idiot as I was at that age."

"At least I know he'd never betray me!" Katara blurts out. Realizing what she said, she awaits Zuko's reaction in silence. To her surprise, he just looks her in the eye and smiles sadly. Capitalizing on this, Katara continues: "I know he can be childish sometimes, but it seems he's always so... serious and serene," she explains, a touch of bitterness in her voice as she says those last words.

"Believe me: I know how hard it is to be Fire Lord – I can't imagine being the Avatar is any easier."

Knowing how selfish she sounds, Katara looks away: "I know, but... it is like he has no..." She looks up again. "...passion."

Oblivious to Katara's gaze, Zuko shrugs: "He should hang out with Mai more, then. Sounds like they have a lot in common."

"Oh, I don't know," Katara chuckles. "It certainly looks like she has a passion for food."

"At least she makes the royal servants earn their salary," Zuko admits, deflecting Katara's jab with a joke of his own. Talking loudly as if it will obfuscate his feelings, he doesn't hear the sound of footsteps approaching below.

Sensing the conversation is back on track, Katara continues with greater determination and

purpose: "I mean, she used to be so *skinny*! Whatever happened?"

"Being the Fire Lord's girlfriend isn't easy. Spirits know I haven't been a very at it and I've been an even worse boyfriend. It seems all I can do is drag her along to dreary banquets that are guaranteed to bore her to tears."

"That's not true!" Katara protests, daring Zuko to look her in the eye. "I know you're a *great* boyfriend and-" Her words falter. "What I mean is..." Realizing she has grabbed a hold of Zuko's hand, the waterbender shoots up and puts a few more feet between them. "Can't you see she doesn't deserve you! You've put up with her crap for far too long, Zuko. Of course you're busy; you're *the Fire Lord*. She *should* be there to support you." Like a tsunami, Katara's words surge forth, harsh and unstoppable. Caught up in the righteousness of her cause, she can do nothing to stem the tide. "You're always bending backwards to accommodate her and what does she do? Leaves you alone for months!"

As she realizes what she has just said, tears well up in Katara's eyes. "I-I'm sorry," she says, her voice trailing off into a barely audible whisper. "I just think you deserve to be happy for once..."

Having recovered from the verbal onslaught, Zuko rises from the bench and steps over to the waterbender. Silently their eyes meet and he takes her into his arms. Hugging her tightly, he whispers: "Don't worry. I know what you mean."

"A 'great boyfriend' is he?" Mai says angrily as she stomps out of the gardens, a distraught Ty Lee on her heels. "Well, if Katara thinks he's so great, she can have him!"

"Hey, come on," Ty Lee begs. "I'm sure she didn't mean what she said about you!"

"Zuko seemed to think so. Of course, it's what he wanted to hear." Throwing open the doors to her room, Mai storms in and throws herself on the bed. Gazing into its canopy her face is as hard as stone. Beside her, a fretful Ty Lee is lost for words, allowing the oppressive silence to hang for a long time.

When Mai's fierce visage finally melts, it is with her eyes sparkling with tears. "Why didn't that idiot say anything?" Then the brief respite gives way to anger once more: "Of course he *never* tells me anything. I *get it*, Zuko, you're busy trying to make the councillors cooperate, but why don't you *tell me that!*"

With her hands clasped against her breast, Ty Lee dares not say anything. In her mind, she hears the voice of Azula offer advice: *How tragic. And what an opportunity!* The acrobat cannot help but see it: If Azula wants the Fire Lord's bodyguards out of the way, then why not turn the one closest to him against him as well. Having seen the princess in action, Ty Lee knows it only takes a few well-placed words. Words perhaps even *she* can find.

Outside Ty Lee's head, Mai continues: "Of course you think I'm too fat, but at least be man

enough to say it to my face!"

"No," Ty Lee finds herself saying in response, as much to the Azula voice in her head as to Mai. "I'm sure he doesn't think that. Zuko knows how much you hate politics, that's why he doesn't talk to you about that stuff." She smiles: "So what if he's a bit of an idiot; you knew that going in."

"I guess you'd have to be pretty stupid to stick with me for so long," Mai says wryly.

"Let's forget about all this, okay?" Ty Lee implores her friend, then winks: "I never got that salty treat you promised me."

* * *

In the relative calm of a remote part of the palace, the Kyoshi Warriors sit mediating on straw mats. At their head sits Suki with her eyes closed, a burgeoning gut hanging over the belt of her tunic. The sound of footsteps registers in her mind, but she remains aloof. Even when a palace messenger crouches down to whisper in her ear she keeps still until she has heard the whole message.

"I'll be back in a few minutes," Suki announces and groans as she gets up. Beside her, the messenger rushes in to help her. Her breathing is noticeably louder when she turns to leave: "You... just keep on meditating."

As soon as the Kyoshi leader leaves the room, an ominous hand in the shadows points at the remaining warriors. As one, several figures move in on them from behind thick pillars and side passages. Their senses dulled, the Kyoshi Warriors fail to notice the incoming onslaught before the horde is right beside them, each carrying at least one tray replete with the finest of dishes.

"Is it lunch already?" one of the warrior women asks, but around her the others are too busy stuffing their face to answer.

Marching with purpose down the corridor, determination is written on Suki's face – determination that is somewhat diminished by the feeling of her increasingly flabby midsection jiggling freely now that she is out of her constricting uniform. Thankfully she can still squeeze into it, but only because the founders of their order had the foresight to design it so her ass could balloon indiscriminately. Still, as big as her butt has become, right now it is her wobbling gut Suki notices.

Without waiting for a reply to her knock, Suki opens the door before her.

"Eep!" a surprised Ty Lee exclaims, hastily retreating behind the new dress she was holding up to admire. "Oh it's you, Suki!"

"Why are all my warriors lying out in the hall, stuffed to the gills?" Suki demands to know, not prepared to mince words.

"I'm sure it's nothing to be worked up about." Putting down the dress, Ty Lee steps towards the annoyed warrior. "You're so tense," she says softly, a touch of worry in her voice. Grabbing Suki, she takes the Kyoshi Warrior's hand and puts it on her soft gut. "Tell me: does this feel tense to you?"

"W-what are you doing?" Suki barely manages. Completely taken aback, she does nothing when the acrobat turns her around.

"Shh," Ty Lee whispers and begins to massage Suki's shoulders. "Relax." Yielding to the acrobat's expert knowledge of anatomy, the warrior woman's protests grow increasingly half-hearted. At the same time, hands slip under her tunic, and begin to slowly undress her while the back rub continues.

Somehow finding herself lying face-first on the bed, Suki loses herself in the bliss of Ty Lee's touch. Her muscles relax and soon it is as if her body ceases to be, only to be replaced by a feeling of contentment and pleasure. It is not long before the divine experience sends her into unconsciousness.

When Suki finally comes to again, the utter peacefulness and lethargy remains, so she is barely able to open her eyes to see the feast laid out before her. Her mind too cloudy to think, Suki allows herself to be fed. Her world reduced to the food in front of her and the haze that surrounds it, she begins eating herself. There are no feelings, only the flavours touching her tongue and the numbness in her limbs, both of which seem to her immensely pleasant. With time dispersing into meaninglessness, it is not long before she drifts away once more.

The next time Suki stirs, it is to another magnificent massage. Is it the second time? The fiftieth? None of these register in her mind, to which only the divine sensation and unending feasts matter.

Sitting at her desk, Ty Lee observes the sleeping Suki on the bed. Stripped to her underwear, the Kyoshi Warrior's distended abdomen lies bare for all to marvel at its size.

"Who knew Suki had such an appetite," Ty Lee says to herself and shrugs blithely; she is just happy to help her sisters-in-arms eat her fill. Picking up a brush, she taps it against her plump cheek: "Though she *is* a warrior, after all."

Humming cheerfully, Ty Lee brings ink to paper, unaware of Suki's moans behind her as she writes.

"Mmm, where am I?" Suki mutters to herself as she stirs. "I must have fallen asleep – how long was I out?"

Putting away her writing kit, Ty Lee turns around with a big grin on her face: "Oh, a couple of days!"

"W-what??" Suki exclaims and tries to get up. To her surprise, she is as weak as a kitten and her

enormously over-stuffed belly proves to be too much to budge.

"Don't you feel all smooth and calm now?"

Eyes fixed on the ceiling, Suki tries to remember what has happened. Taking stock on the situation, she has to admit: "I feel fantastic."

After helping Suki to her feet and finding herself alone once more, Ty Lee returns to her desk. As she writes, she greedily helps herself to the many leftovers that have piled up over the last days. A fruit tart every second brush stroke soon becomes three, then even more. By the time she has finished, Ty Lee is leaning back, groaning happily.

A knock on the door disturbs her while she waits for the ink to dry.

"What have you done to Suki??" a distraught Kyoshi Warrior demands. Once a slim little thing, the girl has blown up to barely fit in her uniform and her pronounced double chin quivers in sync with her incredibly plump cheeks as she speaks.

"Nothing?" Ty Lee says sweetly, sluggish with too much dessert.

Hands on her hips, the warrior looks sternly at the seated acrobat: "Well, whatever it is, I want it!"

Ty Lee's eyes light up: "Of *course!*" Putting a hand on her stuffed belly, she holds up the other to the Kyoshi Warrior and adds: "Just give me a hand here. I think it's time I sent this letter."

* * *

Keys jangle as they are spun around a slender finger. In a cramped office, Princess Azula leans back with her feet on the desk, observing the keys as they swing. A bowl of fire flakes sits on her bloated midsection, heavily laden enough to sink into its flabby mire.

"You know, Taya," she tells the meek brunette standing before her, "now that I have conquered this household, I hardly know what to do with it."

"Would you like some more roast duck, head housekeeper?" the girl replies, but before Azula can make up her mind – or put more than three fire flakes into her mouth – another servant appears in the doorway.

"Head housekeeper, this just arrived for you," the second girl announces.

Reaching for the letter, Azula's hand comes to a stop with a groan. The tiniest irritation in the corner of her eyes is enough to prompt the girl to come closer and put the letter into the reclining princess' palm.

Azula's golden eyes scan its contents and a thin smile forms on her lips. Crumpling the letter, she briefly forgets that she is no longer able to make it disappear in a puff of smoke. Instead she

casually tosses it away.

"Well, it has been fun, girls," she says with a self-satisfied smirk. "But I'm out of here." Grabbing the armrests, she heaves herself up, only to find that she butts against her hefty midsection half-way up. Lips curled in indignation, she angrily waves the two servants over to help her out of the recliner.

* * *

Smiling happily, Ty Lee strolls down the hall in her new peach-coloured gown; extravagant with its gold trim and silk skirt. Not only does it pull attention away from her generous midsection with a plunging neckline that shows off most of her robust bosom, but carefully placed pleats at the waist allows for a certain amount of expansion. Fresh from the Kyoshi Warrior barracks, Ty Lee is feeling especially grateful for the latter feature at the moment. Everything is better with others and for the acrobat, gluttony is no exception. After weeks of her... soothing physical therapy, the Kyoshi Warriors have become quite eager dinner companions. At first they would be too relaxed to do anything but eat, but soon this massage-induced lethargy gave way to the sluggishness of overindulgence and the ponderousness of their expanding waistlines. The constant eating they had become used to months ago, even before Ty Lee showed them the bliss of indolence. While some might question the effects their sedentary lifestyle was having on their once-athletic bodies, none thought twice about how they were being fed from dawn till dusk. This suited Ty Lee just fine, being able to gorge herself among a dozen other girls who were eating, filling out and getting out-of-shape just as much her, if not more. As much as she loves to eat, with all the flabby consequences that entails, the acrobat must admit that it would be nice to have someone bigger than herself around.

"Maybe Jiata..." Ty Lee muses. The big raven-haired warrior certainly never seems to be able to eat her fill, no matter how many meat pies she gets her hands on. The acrobat decides she should consider feeding *her* extra.

"Lady Ty Lee?" On her way to her room, Ty Lee finds her thoughts on how to make Jiata outgrow her interrupted by a willowy servant. The girl gestures towards the acrobat's quarters and says meekly: "There is a package for you, my lady."

"Oh great! My new clothes are here already??" This weight gain business certainly has its upsides, Ty Lee decides. Especially when you can have the shopkeepers send your new garments to your door. *This one is feeling a bit tight over the chest*, the acrobat thinks and fondles her ample bosom, already planning the new wardrobe she will surely need soon.

The promise of the prettiest designs out of Yu Dao waiting for her puts a spring in the overfed

acrobat's step and she is soon back in her room.

"I hope you still fit!" she gushes over the crate before her bed, very conscious of how much she has been eating lately. She has been spending a lot of time with the Kyoshi Warriors, after all and it might just be that she's filled out so much that she will simply have to shop for some new clothes. Not so much that she can't try the ones she just got, mind.

"Velvet one with the pearls, burgundy and emerald..." Ty Lee giggles to herself as she fiddles with the lock, trying to decide what to try first. Humming contently, she flips open the lid to find the crate filled to the brim with overfed Fire Nation princess.

"Took you long enough," said princess grumbles, so tightly crammed into the box that her fat gut threatens to spill over the sides, her breasts pushing to envelop her chin.

"Azula!" Ty Lee exclaims, clasping her hands to her chest and gaping cheerfully until she realizes the princess needs some help getting out of her Takuan Horse. Leaning forward, her stuffed belly surges forth to rest on top of Azula's until she manages to grab a hold of her hands. Using her big butt as a counterweight, Ty Lee throws all her considerable weight into dislodging the princess. Groaning loudly, she puts a foot against the crate and pulls with all her might. At last she succeeds and falls flat on her ass. For a brief moment, Azula towers above her in all her gargantuan glory. Her sinopia shift barely reaches halfway down thighs so big and soft a winged lemur might drown in them. The dress hugs her big belly tightly enough for her belly button to show through, while leaving her arms bare. Beneath perfect, white skin they bulge with a layer of flab that has only gotten thicker: Since last they met, the princess has been pampered to such proportions that she now outweighs the fallen Ty Lee.

Too ponderous to scale the crate wall, Azula lurches forward with the momentum, teeters briefly and then comes toppling over the supine acrobat. Crushed beneath so many hundred pounds, Ty Lee gasps but manages to place a kiss on the fallen princess' cheek:

"It's so nice to see you!" she croaks under the load, her breath strained until a visibly bothered Azula rolls off her. As soon as she has some air back in her lungs, however, the acrobat lunges at the princess and gives her the tightest hug she can, considering their size.

"I thought I... told you not get any fatter," Azula gasps, completely disregarding the fact that her own gain outdoes Ty Lee's almost three times over.

"I'm sorry!" the acrobat beams, untangling herself from her fancy dress as she tries to get up. When she is finally on her feet, she smiles kindly and pats her gut: "But at least it looks like my belly is still a bit bigger than yours!"

"What is that supposed to mean??" a flustered Azula demands as she tugs at her outgrown shift. "Never mind," she growls and accepts a helping hand. Back on her feet, she walks over to the crate and pulls out a splendid outfit.

"Ooh! Do I get to play dress-up after all??" Ty Lee exclaims excitedly and rushes over to help. Not long after, Azula stands before Ty Lee's full-length mirror in full Fire Lord regalia – minus the crown. Freshly tailored with an ankle-length robe and voluminous sleeves, the outfit accommodates the princess' greater girth – but it can do little to hide it:

"Pull harder!" Azula barks, commanding Ty Lee to wrap the obi covering her midsection even tighter. Obviously sceptical of this, the acrobat shrugs and tugs with all her might.

"Gyah!" Eyes wide in her contorted face, the princess gasps as she tries to compose itself. "Let's..." she says softly, while picking at her taut obi. "Let us just go."

Sighing loudly, Mai lies with her arms outstretched on her bed. She is unable to sleep, but still cannot be bothered to get up and do something else. Doing her best not to fall into thought and failing, she closes her eyes and sighs again. When she opens them again, it is to Azula's face beneath the silk canopy.

"Missed me?" the prince smiles, her voice acidly sweet.

"Azula," Mai replies flatly. "What an unpleasant surprise."

"Oh, don't worry. I'm just here to visit my dear brother, if you do not mind."

Seemingly just annoyed by the princess' presence, Mai rolls her eyes: "Good for you. What do I care what you and your idiot brother do?"

Inclining her head in silence for a moment, Azula closes her eyes: "I'm sure you don't." A sly smirk appears in the corner of her mouth. "Unfortunately I'm afraid I cannot take any chances. Ty Lee..." she says, commanding the acrobat with a nod towards Mai.

Tiptoeing anxiously, Ty Lee does as she is bid but not without hesitation: "Sorry," she mutters weakly and gets to work.

"Oh, and I think I will take these," Azula muses, pocketing Mai's knives from the bedside while Ty Lee chi-blocks their owner. Completely immobilized, Mai looks no more annoyed than she already did. Of course, she was already just lying there without moving.

"Well, we really must be off," Azula announces, then adds with a smug grin: "But rest assured that your cooperation will be noted when the time comes for your trial."

Outside the Fire Lord's chambers, the Kyoshi guards that were supposed to take the night watch are curiously absent. Not so curious to Ty Lee, perhaps, since she saw their bulging bellies only a couple of hours ago.

"Good job," Azula whispers to the acrobat before carefully inching open the door. Together they slip into the room and make their way to the Fire Lord's bed. To Ty Lee's shock, Azula pulls out one of Mai's knives. Putting it against Zuko's throat, she clamps her free hand over his mouth:

"Hel-lo, Zuzu!" the princess grins, a mad glint in her wide eyes. "There, there. Don't even think about bending or my hand might slip and I would rather not make a mess in my new bed."

Frustration rises in Zuko's golden eyes as they narrow with barely mustered patience. Frustration... and something else.

"There is a good boy," Azula nods condescendingly. "But just to be sure... Ty Lee, why don't you come over here."

Even with the Fire Lord incapacitated, the princess keeps the knife resting on his throat and sets her eyes in her brother with wild determination: "Now, then... As rightful heir to the throne, I challenge you to an Agni Kai!"

"B-but, your bending!" Ty Lee blurts out behind her.

"Oh, I'm sure Zuzu will have his Avatar friend fix that little mistake. He must, honour demands it." Before her, Zuko scowls. "You must!" Azula suddenly shouts, pressing the knife closer to the Fire Lord's jugular. "Do you have *any* idea what it is like to have your bending taken away?? It is like a black pit, gnawing inside you. One that can never be filled!"

"Not even by five or even ten bowls of *kralan*!" Ty Lee adds helpfully.

Looking away to shoot daggers at the acrobat, Azula eventually turns her attention back to Zuko: "I can't hear you, brother. Say it! Say you agree!" Leaning in closer to scream into his face, her ample gut pours forth onto the bed. Their eyes locked for a short eternity, silence reigns.

"W-what are you doing..." Ty Lee whispers, seeing the knife at Zuko's throat starting to cut into his skin. Azula is oblivious to her pleas, pushing harder to force her brother to relent.

Suddenly a sharp pain shoots through her hand. Grimacing, the princess drops the knife and pulls back. Gasping, she sees a dessert fork lodged in the back of her hand.

"Get your hands off my ex-boyfriend!"

"Mai??" Azula exclaims, scrambling off the bed to face the newcomer.

"Ex??" Zuko chimes in.

Pulling the fork out of her hand and throwing it away in her rage, Azula points to the hefty assassin, her voice quivering as she screams: "I give you a chance to stay out of this and this is how you repay me?? Oh, but I will enjoy this... Ty Lee! Get her!"

Jumping at Azula's sudden command, Ty Lee finds herself facing her friend. In her incredibly inadequate outfit, her bare gut sways impressively as she tries to find her fighting stance. Opposite her, her opponent is little better and so is Azula once she joins in.

"I guess your chi-blocking is a little rusty," Mai observes and lunges forward with a chop. The attack is slow, but with her fat gut weighing her down Ty Lee can barely avoid it. Stumbling backwards, she finds herself precariously perched on one foot and desperately trying to regain her balance.

"Too bad you aren't in very good shape yourself," Azula retorts, smiling confidently as she moves in to strike. Not burdened with Ty Lee's big belly or the princess' enormous rear, Mai manages to sidestep with ease, breathing heavily as she turns to face the new threat. With an indignant scoff, Azula follows up with a flurry of punches and slices – though 'flurry' might be a slightly misleading term. With her opponent giving ground with each strike, Azula soon has her against a wall. Smiling confidently, she holds up one hand to ward off a counter-attack and readies the other for a final blow.

Mai's mouth narrows with determination. Just as Azula moves in, she casts her eyes down and her lips relax. As Azula noted, she is not in the best of form and as much as she would love to put a side kick square in the princess' bloated gut, she doubts that she can. That does not mean she is entirely out of options, however...

Scowling with barely controlled rage, Azula steps in to deliver her attack. As the princess' back foot leaves the ground, Mai moves to meet her, kicking at her lower leg with great force. Unaccustomed to fighting, not to mention doing so at such a considerable weight, Azula immediately loses her balance and is pulled to the ground by her prodigious posterior. Gaping in shock and humiliation, she hesitates for a moment. Realizing she will not be able to get up in time, she instead scrambles backward, until her back hits the Fire Lord's bed.

"Please, don't fight!" Ty Lee pleads. Finally back on her feet, she interposes herself between Mai and the fallen princess.

Mai shrugs, but does not let her guard down: "Whatever; the guards will be here any minute anyway."

Realizing she does not have enough time, Azula's eyes flare open allowing terror to shine through: "No..."

"Come on, Azula! You have to get out of here!" Ty Lee insists and keeps Mai at bay with a quick jab that sends her gut jumping up and down.

"No!" the princess yells. Getting up on the bed, she searches frantically for the knife she dropped. When she cannot find it, she grabs Zuko by the collar of his nightshirt and shakes him violently: "You cannot do this!" Without giving her brother the chance to reply, she tosses him aside and looks away: "There is no way you..."

"Azula!" Sharp with uncharacteristic vehemence, Ty Lee's voice cuts through the princess' rambling. Absorbing another hit with her plump midsection, the acrobat gives her a stern look: "You... *have to... go!*"

"Of course," Azula mutters to herself as if she has heard nothing. "This is not how it was meant to be. No, there is another way. There has to be..."

Leaving the princess to her monologue, Ty Lee turns her attention to Mai's incoming attack.

Capitalizing on the acrobat's distraction, the noblewoman rushes in. Both know that an attempt to dodge is most likely to end up with Ty Lee falling on her plump buttocks again and if she does...

Ty Lee takes one last look at Azula muttering to herself on the bed, then steps forward to meet Mai head on. Surprised, the assassin does not have time to bring all her strength to bear in her strike. Instead, she finds herself smacking into Ty Lee's bulging belly. Stout though she might be, Mai is no match for her considerably fatter opponent and is sent reeling backwards into a wall.

"That's it; we're leaving!" Ty Lee declares and grabs Azula's wrist. The princess offers no protest as she is hauled out of the room. Down the hall, they hear the clatter of scabbards and the heavy footfalls of someone that have grown unused to running. Ty Lee quickly decides to lead them the other way.

"How... are... we... going to lose them..." Ty Lee thinks out loud, already out of breath. The Kyoshi Warriors may be almost as out of shape as she is, but if the other palace guards have been alerted...

"There are hidden passages." To the acrobat's surprise, Azula suddenly speaks up, surprisingly lucid. Her words seem to make her recall something. Stopping briefly to think, she takes the lead: "Quick; in here. There is something I have to get first."

"A... dead... end..." Jiata pants. Clutching her side – and so digging into her impressive love handles – she stands doubled over, waiting for the other Kyoshi Warriors to catch up. Her taut, almost spherical gut heaves with each breath, threatening to split the seams of her uniform. She is still gasping by the time her sword-sisters catch up.

Like Jiata, the other Kyoshi Warriors have neglected to complete their outfit by putting on their armour. Even Suki – waddling in to cover the rear – has had her midsection catch up enough with her posterior for her to outgrow her armour. Without make-up her ample double chin is quite obvious, leaving no doubt as to how big she has gotten – even if she does not have Jiata's bulging gut testing the limits of her battle dress.

"Did... we lose her??" Suki exclaims once she has squeezed her still-quivering butt through the crowd of overfed warrior women.

"Maybe she... went another way?" a round-faced Kyoshi Warrior suggests.

"But... she could be anywhere by now!" another chimes in. A plump little thing, she almost looks as if she has been blown up like a balloon, so taut is the skin over her thick thighs, arms and cheeks. Exhausted from running all this way on firm legs fit to burst, the prospect of searching the entire palace is not an inviting one.

Feeling her rear sway ponderously just from turning around, Suki could find herself agreeing to that sentiment: "Ai is right. Besides, Azula is likely to try and disappear into the city." Putting a

hand on her plump midsection, she yawns loudly: "Better let the city guard handle it."

Down in the harbour, the commotion in the palace remains unknown. Here and there, a few night owls go about their business. None of them concern themselves with what appears to be a sewer grate in the wall somewhere in the south-eastern part of the dock district.

"What's so... important about a piece... of paper, anyway?" Ty Lee gasps while waiting for Azula to clamber out after her.

With one foot dangling over the edge, Azula's jaw clenches. Her eyes glow with a mad fervour that overwhelms both indignant rage and unerring determination: "You... have no idea," she mutters, clutching the old letter as if her life depended on it.

"That's nice, but you should get a move on," Ty Lee squeaks while anxiously scanning the back alley around them.

"Of course." As if pulled back to reality, Azula blinks and slips down onto the ground. Exhausted, she proceeds to walk briskly rather than run – with Ty Lee in tow.

"Where are you going?" the acrobat wonders as they turn into yet another narrow alley.

"Me?" Azula's voice cracks as she stops and looks back, her golden gaze staring straight into Ty Lee's eyes. For a moment it is as if she waits for the acrobat to say something, but instead her eyes harden, her voice soft and intimidating: "*We*, my good Ty Lee, are going on a little trip."

With that, the princess leads them to the wharf, where among the other ships a small Fire Nation frigate lies docked. Without blinking, she strides over to the gang plank and goes on board. Such is her irrational determination that they are both on deck before any of the guards know what to do with them.

"What is the meaning of this??" a smooth-faced young man demands with disdainful indignation as he staggers out on deck. He is halfway into his uniform, his chin-length hair loose and his eyes drowsy – until they suddenly threaten to pop out of his head. "Y-you!" he stammers, suddenly white as a sheet.

Noticing the panicked officer, Azula simply raises an eyebrow and observes him in silence. The man does a shaky salute and gives a high-pitched shout: "C-captain Chan at y-your service, Y-your Highness!" His voice a faint squeak, he adds: "Please don't wreck my ship..."

"What is *his* problem?" Azula mutters to Ty Lee – who is more than a little taken aback at their meeting – and steps towards the terrified officer. Having had the opportunity to catch her breath, she walks with her usual grace, her wide hips swaying elegantly with each heavy footfall.

"Very well, captain," the princess smiles. "Take us out of here."

Epilogue

In the night-time streets of Yu Dao, two men walk hurriedly lest they fall prey to a passing robber. They make tempting targets: The one whose republican-style clothes retains strong Earth Kingdom influences has the dress and jewellery of a well-to-do merchant. The other, proudly wearing Fire Nation garb is obviously from the upper strata of Yu Dao society, with his neatly trimmed beard and conspicuous signet ring on his finger.

"I'm tellin' ya, these tariffs are killin' me," the merchant moans. "Couple of years ago it was turbulent, sure – not like when ya could deal with the Fire Nation directly. But these trade barriers; who am I supposed to do business with? The three mud huts and council hall in Republic City? Might as well haul my stuff to the South Pole."

"What can you expect?" the merchant's companion says in the calm, self-assured tone of an important dignitary. "Why should the Council fight for your cause with the Avatar's tyranny weighing down upon them."

The merchant nods eagerly: "Yeah, why do the water tribes have *two* guys on there when there ain't barely a snow-hugger in the Republic at all? Damn, just you wait for the Avatar to start havin' kids to take his place in the Air Nomad seat and he'll have a dynasty to dominate the Council along with his penguin-fancier allies."

"All very true," the Fire Nation man agrees. "And all very lamentable, but do not worry: The Fire Lord will sort things out."

Already excited, the merchant looks absolutely livid now: "Huh?? What did *he* ever do for us – except get us into this mess in the first place!"

Having arrived at his door, the nobleman stops. He shakes his head and smiles: "Not that usurper, my friend... the *true* Fire Lord!"

Flanked by roaring bonfires, Azula sits enormously bloated upon her throne. Reclining comfortably, the doughy mass of her fat gut billows out beneath her generous bosom. Beside her stands a slender servant girl with a tray of delicious confections, another with a pitcher of wine, a third with chocolate milk and one more ready to feed the Fire Lord as much *kralan* as she wants. Surrounding her are also servants on standby to rub her feet, manicure her nails and dab her pasty skin with perfume. Standing a little apart, a robust girl is dutifully fanning Her Highness as she indolently surveys her makeshift throne room.

Instinctively accepting a piece of fruity *lokum* when offered, Azula seems to consider something as she chews before finishing with a lazy smile: "May I have a report on the state of the military? General of the Armies... if you please?"

Stepping forward, Ty Lee is clad in full Fire Nation military uniform, tailored to suit her

impressive girth.

"Commander Chan..."

Still looking ready to piss himself, the lanky young man takes a tentative step forward. Next to him, another figure joins the two commanders.

"Ah, Minister of the Interior," Azula smirks. "How good of you to join us."

"The pleasure is all mine, Your Highness," the raven-haired woman curtsies, finishing with an impossibly wide grin: "Welcome to Yu Dao. I think you'll like it here."