Lan huffed. Her eyes darted across the supposed new recruits of the faceless. They were traitors to the brigade. She glared, waiting to see who she could throw her anger at.

Once the masks had been removed, she scanned the group. She made a striking realization. They were the missing benders. That included Uki. Her heart sank.

The ice binding her hands felt colder. She was so overwhelmed. So much was happening at once. All that she could think to do was say something. “Uki… how could you?” Her eyes stung. “You’re following a madwoman!”

Uki turned towards her. “She’s nothing like what you’ve been told.” Lan searched Uki’s gaze. She tried to find any doubt. Did Uki really believe Agam? She could find no regret in Uki’s eyes. That made everything feel worse.

She squeezed her eyes shut. She couldn’t bear to listen to anything else Uki would say. This had to be a dream. There was no way Uki could betray her, betray the brigade. Her heart ached. She didn’t want to believe this was real. The cold sting of the ice around her hands brought her back to reality.

She finally opened her eyes. Her vision was too blurry with unshed tears to see anything. She looked up. Uki stood next to Agam. Mutters had filled the room. Lan was unsure about what Uki had said, though she knew it must have been important. She cursed under her breath.

Lan glared at Agam. Pure hatred flared in her heart, replacing the sorrow. She had to have done something to Uki. Brainwashed her with those stupid kachoris. Maybe Uki really was kidnapped, and that foul woman had just manipulated her. She refused to believe that Uki would do this willingly. She knew Uki. And she knew Uki would never do this.

The idea that she didn’t truly know Uki flashed within her mind for a moment. That was a stupid idea. She and Uki had been inseparable since the very first day they joined the brigade. If anyone knew Uki, it had to be her. Agam knew nothing about Uki.

She stared at the ground. Her mind raced with excuses. Maybe Uki was afraid. Maybe Lan hadn’t done enough to protect her. She tried to convince herself that somehow, some way, Uki wasn’t at fault.

“If any benders have had enough of a crumbling system that no longer protects them, you’re welcome to join us.” A voice echoed. Lan looked toward Agam. The hatred festered in her heart. She had never felt so much rage boiling inside her. She had never been so angry before.

She let a single tear fall. A tear of anger. Pure unadulterated anger. This was the woman that had stolen Uki from her. And now, she was trying to steal her friends. Lan paused for a moment. She wasn’t sure why she didn’t include Uki as one of her friends, maybe she felt as though they were something more.

Her face flushed, she pushed the thought to the back of her mind. Looking towards the rest of the brigade. There was no way they would seriously join Agam. A crowd of benders stepped forward, joining the faceless. Lan blinked, there was no way. Did any of them even care about the safety of Ellora?

Benders in the faceless began removing the shackles from the volunteers. Lan couldn’t believe it. Uki appeared again. Lan’s eyes locked onto her by instinct. She was greeting a new member.

Lan stared at Uki. Starting to weigh her options. She could stay with the brigade, keep making Ellora safe. Though Uki wouldn’t be there with her. She could go with Uki, but the guilt of leaving Ellora defenseless would never leave her. There were too many options. Too many decisions.

Uki turned to stare at her. Seemingly wondering if Lan would choose her over the brigade. Lan stayed silent. She had finally made her decision. She wouldn’t leave behind Ellora. She could never defect. Ellora was what she knew she had to protect. She turned away, trying to find any way not to stare at Uki.

She still watched Uki from the corner of her eye. Uki turned back towards the new members, her head down. The harsh reality of it all finally crushed Lan. Uki had betrayed her. She abandoned her. If Lan was truly that disposable to Uki, what would be the point of following her?

Lan realized that if Uki truly valued their inseparable history, she would have never forced her to make such a terrible decision. She hated seeing that Uki was sad, she hated seeing Uki being so distant. Though, she still couldn’t bring herself to hate Uki.

There was a time where she imagined that she would spend her whole life with Uki. They would sit at the bending compound and banter about who was better at what.

They were so young, so innocent. She knew now that the only one she could trust was herself.

That realization stung. Her eyes watered, drops falling to the floor so gracefully. It felt mocking. Her own tears defied the strength she tried to project. Especially during her lowest point. She instinctively attempted to move her hands to wipe her tears, before being struck with the agitating reminder that they were bound.

That alone made her so furious she could have screamed. Instead, she just allowed the tears to stream down her face. A flurry of anger and sorrow twisted a knot in her stomach. How badly she wished Uki would wipe her tears for her. To tell her that she changed her mind, to say she would stay.

It was stupid. Though she still held out hope that Uki would hold her. That Uki would comfort her and tell her it was all going to be okay. Spirits, how she wished that she could just feel Uki's touch one last time. Even a simple brush of her palm. Wiping away the tears pounding the ground.

She let out pathetic huffs. Her tears flowed steadily. She felt so small, so useless. She couldn't even get Uki to stay… Havens, it was all her fault. She should have been there more. She should have been the one to talk to Uki. Tell her that she would always be there, and that she is so loved within the brigade.

But she wasn't.

That thought just made her cry harder. At this point, she couldn't care less about anything around her. She didn't care that Uki was joining the Faceless. She just wanted Uki. She needed Uki.

Sorry that the beginning is kinda rushed this is my first fic EVER and i was going based on a friends idea

This sucks sorry, it was originally posted to ao3 like a day before it got shut down LOL