something just like this

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Summary

Keith reluctantly becomes the counselor for the Red Cabin at Camp Voltron, a summer camp in the middle of buttfuck nowhere that his older brother Shiro has worked at for years. Already unhappy with the current position that he is in, Keith prepares himself for a boring, sweaty, miserable summer; and his frustration only grows when he meets the counselor for the Blue Cabin- an insufferable asshole with a horrible sense of humor, a devilish smirk, an inexplicable animosity towards the Red Cabin, and a smile that literally looks like the sun. Needless to say Keith is really, really unprepared for the next three months.

Notes

alright people, Keith and Lance are counselors for rival cabins at Camp Voltron, and Lance is
a beautiful Cuban summer boy, and Keith is insecure and hates sweating. I'm kind of nervous to put this up but here goes???

Edit: so after a lot of really disgruntled comments I realize now that it's not realistic or accurate for Lance to insert Spanish phrases into his everyday dialogue--I just didn't really know that it was so inaccurate! I'm working on fixing it but I haven't had time to go through and delete all the extra Spanish. Thanks for the advice and sorry again! Try to ignore it if you can >< I'm so sorryyyy

See the end of the work for more notes.
Keith doesn’t have an aesthetic.

He isn’t too loud, or too tall, or too wide. He doesn’t take up a lot of space. He doesn’t wear colors that don’t match with gray or black. His wardrobe consists of black jeans and about five different colored v-necks, and that is how it’s been for as long as he can remember. He has always been neutral in his presence, not quite one thing and not quite the other, always drifting somewhere in the middle.

All of that being said, as Keith stares at his reflection with a look of pure disgust on his face, eyes scanning over the polyester, firetruck-red polo and the khaki shorts, he realizes that there is one thing he knows for certain is not his aesthetic.

Being a *summer camp counselor* for a bunch of rowdy, smelly 10 year olds.

There is a patch sewn just above his breast pocket that reads, “Camp Voltron!”, with a little picture of an astronaut giving a thumbs up. The material is thick and scratchy, and Keith knows that it will not bode well with the burning summer sun that is beating down outside. He turns around and glances at the back of the shirt in his refecction. In large, white letters, it says, “RED CABIN, KOGANE”.

He sighs in frustration. Being a camp counselor this summer really, *really* wasn’t his choice. This is the last thing that he would want to do, *ever*, in his life, but he accidentally let it slip that he was in need of some spending money, and his older brother Shiro wouldn’t let it go for the next month. Shiro is a head counselor at Camp Voltron, and said they desperately needed someone to be in charge of the Red Cabin, but all of the applicants didn’t fit the bill. Keith argued that he didn’t fit the bill either, but Shiro had just smiled in that strange way proud older brothers do and said, “Nonsense, you’ll be great.”

So, reluctantly, Keith is now standing in a small, wooden cabin that smells like sweat and dry flowers. He has a pile of ratty luggage on the floor next to his feet that probably doesn’t have nearly enough supplies for three months. The mirror he is looking into is rough around the edges, foggy from exposure to the sun, and covered in dust. Streams of sunlight peek through the lopsided, cracked windows. There is a packet of “welcome materials”, rules and guidelines, about an inch thick that he has to learn before training starts tomorrow. He briefly wonders why anybody would willingly do this to themselves. Why would anybody travel to the middle of butt-fuck nowhere to wear itchy clothes and yell at a bunch of sweaty children for eight hours a day? He tries very hard to see the silver lining, but it’s a struggle. He really isn’t made for this.

The door bursts open with a very concerning creak that makes it sound like its going to crumble off of it’s hinges. Shiro walks in with a blinding grin on his face, eyes scanning over Keith in his new uniform. He himself is wearing the same polo as Keith, but it’s black and fits tightly onto his toned torso, unlike the fabric that is bunching along Keith’s waistline because he got a size too big. Shiro is also wearing a pair of khaki shorts, with his shirt tucked into them and a white belt holding them snug to his waist. He is beaming at Keith, his dark shaggy hair falling softly onto his forehead.

“Look at you! Officially a Camp Voltron counselor. I’m so proud.”

Keith snorts. “Thanks, Shiro.”

“Did you read through the welcome materials?”
“I started to. It’s like, really dense though.” Keith crosses his arms over his chest, ready to defend himself when Shiro reprimands him, but he doesn’t. He just shrugs.

“Eh, it’s probably better to learn on the job anyway. You’ll fit right in.”

Keith scowls. “Yeah, I don’t know about that Shiro. Also, I look like a twizzler in this damn polo.”

Shiro barks a laugh. “No, you look like Keith in a red shirt,” he says lightheartedly, ruffling Keith’s hair, “Now quit being so mopey, will ya? The kids are going to arrive tomorrow and I want you to meet the team.”

“I don’t wanna meet the team.”

“You’re gonna meet the team.”

“Can I take a nap first?”

“Nope.”

Keith sighs in frustration. “Can I at least change my shirt?”

“Nope!” Shiro is grinning. “That’s your uniform Keith, you’re going to have to get used to it.”

“It’s so itchy.”

“You sound like you’re five years old.” Shiro rolls his eyes. “Come on, follow me. You’re going to love them.”

“Doubtful.”

But Shiro is already tugging at Keith’s shirt sleeve, urging him to follow.

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The camp grounds are much more simple to navigate than Keith thought they would be, which is good, because although he would never admit it to anyone he is absolutely awful with directions. There are five cabins in somewhat of a disorganized circle, all surrounding a small courtyard where there are a picnic tables, a fire pit, and a small group of chairs where Keith assumed meetings were held. A narrow path through the woods led to a small lake, a soccer field, and a recreation center where most of the non-athletic events and activities take place. Along the pathway, the trees are littered with ropes courses and team-building activities that Keith is already dreading as Shiro leads him through the trees, pointing to the “net wall” and the “trust fall station”. Keith wants to barf.

Of course, surrounding all of this camp nonsense is miles and miles of endless woods. Woods and nothing else. Keith is on a forest island. In hell.

The air is thick and humid, his shirt is already starting to slide uncomfortably on his pale skin, and when he tries to scratch it, the sensation just burns more. He can feel a thin sheen on sweat on his face. He is not made for summer. He burns easily and his hair is thick and heavy. He just absorbs heat. He takes a deep breath and wipes his forehead, it stings slightly. He is probably already sun burnt.
Shiro is still talking mindlessly about the campgrounds, and Keith really does try to listen, but the heat is getting to him and he just wants to lay down. He feels his eyelids drooping and he blinks rapidly, combating the dizziness. Thankfully, the end of the path is near and they are walking into the courtyard again. Keith can see his cabin, the sloppy, lopsided paint next to the roof that spells out “The Red Cabin”, and he sighs with relief, wiping his cheeks with the back of his hand again. Just a few more steps, almost there.

“Keith, hold up! Not so fast”

_Ugh. Shiro._

He swivels around, annoyance clear on his face. “What now?” He snaps. He immediately regrets it, because Shiro is standing at the fire pit, except he is not alone anymore. Next to him is a man with flaming orange hair and a handlebar mustache. He is in a gray polo and khaki shorts to match, and he is staring at Keith expectantly with one eyebrow raised.

Shiro sighs at Keith’s hostile reaction. “Keith, this is Coran. He is the director of Camp Voltron. Coran, this is my brother Keith.”

Keith falters a little, suddenly embarrassed for making Shiro look so bad. “Oh, uh. I’m sorry.” He bows his head a little. “Hi, Coran.” He walks up to Coran and extends his hand, “I’m sorry. I’m just not quite used to this heat.” He tries to smile.

“Not at all, boy!” Coran’s voice is boisterous and happy, his eyes squinting as he grins. God, is it even possible for a man to be this happy? “Shiro has told me a lot about you. Very excited to have you on our team this summer! We’re going to have a grand old time, I’m very sure of it!”

Keith laughs nervously. “Yeah…of course.”

Shiro smirks at his discomfort.

“The team is excited to meet you! It’s been a while since we’ve had a new member. There is definitely some anticipation!” Coran has his hands on his hips, his chest puffed out with pride.

“Anticipation?” Keith isn’t used to people anticipating him.

“Why, yes! Last year we couldn’t get a counselor for the Red cabin in time, and it was a dreary summer to say the least. Also, very busy! All of those kids had to be separated into other Cabins.”

Keith had remembered Shiro complaining about it last summer over the phone. Apparently the absence of one cabin was enough to throw off the entire chemistry of the camp, and it had really been a blow to the fun, energetic summer that Shiro had planned for his campers. He had sounded so tired.

Keith feels a warmth spread through is chest when he looks at his brother’s smiling, bright eyes again. Maybe this would be the worst summer ever, but he would bear with it for Shiro. For family.

“Coran, is that a red shirt I see?” Keith hears a deep, smiling voice from behind him and turns around to see a large figure looming over him. He has dark skin and an orange headband laying across his forehead. He is stalky and has thick arms, a square jaw, and kind eyes. His polo is a bright yellow, but the smile on his face is even brighter as his eyes land on Keith.

“Hell yeah! Red Cabin man!” He pumps a fist in the air and then shoots his arm out towards Keith. His hand is double the size of Keith’s and when he takes it his whole arms is shaken violently. “I’m Hunk, Yellow Cabin counselor! It’s seriously awesome to meet you. You’re Keith, right?”
Keith clears his throat and attempts a smile. “Yeah, that’s me. Nice to meet you, Hunk.”

A small figure appears from behind Hunk and takes Keith by surprise. It is a short girl with a mop of sloppy brown hair and round glasses that take up more than half of her thin face. She is smiling lightly, rolling her eyes at Hunk. It is almost comical how different they look in size—Hunk towers over her like a building and is nearly double her width. She is wearing a lime green polo that is way too big on her small frame, and the way she looks at Hunk indicates that they have probably known each other for a while. She turns towards Keith and breaks into a grin.

“Sorry, Hunk can be a little over-eager at times.” Hunk scoffs in mock offense. “I’m Katie, but you can call me Pidge.”

Keith takes her tiny hand, smiling a little at the feeling compared to Hunk’s, and looks at her. “Hi, Pidge. Nice to meet you. I’m Keith.”

She smirks. “Yeah, I know.” Keith chuckles at that.

“What’s all the commotion?” A girl is walking into the courtyard with a questioning look on her face. Her voice is smooth like velvet, and even from far away Keith knows who she is. Allura.

It’s not that Shiro is obsessed with Allura or anything, except for the fact that he totally is, but Keith has had way too many conversations with Shiro about how there is a beautiful girl here who teaches the archery and craft classes. Shiro would moan and groan on the other end of the phone, saying that she was so out of his league and he shouldn’t even try. Keith would just roll his eyes because he honestly couldn’t really think of anyone that was out of Shiro’s league.

But looking at Allura now, he finally understood what Shiro was talking about.

This girl is stunning. Dark, shining skin, soft curves, silver hair, and glowing eyes. Shiro is seriously done for. He glances at his brother, who is already flustered by her mere existence, rubbing the back of his neck and looking at the ground with a flush on his face. Keith smirks.

“Oh, a new counselor! You must be Shiro’s brother.”

Keith can’t help the heat that spreads across his face when Allura looks at him. It’s almost unreal how beautiful she is, and he feels like he isn’t worthy. She places a warm hand on his shoulder. “Welcome, Keith! Shiro has said so much about you. How incredibly exciting.” Her tone is earnest, and Keith is smiling broadly before he realizes it.

Coran jumps in, still maintaining the same amount of excitement he had earlier. “So glad introductions have been made, however a lot needs to get done in order to prepare for the children’s arrival tomorrow!” He holds up a hand, beginning to count off tasks on his fingers. “We need to do cabin checks, head counts, and some event planning for the first week. Get ready for a busy summer!”

Dread pools at the pit of Keith’s stomach again.

“Wait, where’s Lance?” Pidge sounds suspicious.

Keith raises an eyebrow at her. Isn’t this everyone? “Who is Lance?”

“Blue Cabin guy!” Hunk is smiling down at him. “Tall, tan, and handsome? Super—“

“—Annoying? Loud?” Pidge interjects.
“Charismatic.” Hunk finishes, glancing at Pidge.

Keith lets his eyes drift over to the Blue Cabin. It is the only cabin with actual artwork on it. There is a large painting of a fish on the front facing door. The scales are holographic blues and purples. Shiro’s voice pulls his attention back to the group.

“I mean, are you guys surprised? When has Lance ever showed up on time for anything?” The words are meant to be accusatory but the tone is fond, and they all giggle at it.

“Good point.” Pidge says.

As a group, they all start making their way to the rec center. When they get there he realizes that Coran hadn’t been wrong, a lot had to be done in a very short amount of time. They all break up into groups and run around the campsite, cleaning cabins, hanging signs, tallying chairs and tables, and making sure everything is in order. By the time it is dark out, they are all drenched with sweat, and exhausted. Keith briefly wonders how on earth he is going to survive the summer if he barely even survived the day.

They all gather around the fire put and Shiro effortlessly starts a fire. They plop down around it, muscles aching, with tired smiles on their faces. Coran hands them all water bottles and then holds his up, standing over them. “Cheers,” he says, smiling, “to another fantastic summer!”

They all throw their water bottles into the air, cheering. Keith doesn’t, because he doesn’t really see it coming. It catches him a little by surprise, all of the happy faces around him. Maybe he feels himself smile a little too. Maybe.

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Keith walks to his cabin, thoroughly exhausted, covered in mosquito bites, and itching to take a shower. All of the other counselors have made their way to their cabins, and he can’t wait to feel the cold water on his skin, and get in bed.

He hears rustling coming from somewhere behind him. He freezes.

It’s not that Keith is scared of the dark. It’s just that, when he is in a place that is dark, he’s…kind of scared. It’s been that way since as early as he could remember. He remembers the rocket ship nightlight that stayed plugged into his wall until he was fourteen, and Shiro told him it was maybe time to face his fear.

He hears the noise again. His heartbeat quickens. What if I die? Wait no, Keith, snap out of it. You won’t die here. That’s ridiculous. But also possible. Very possible.


Keith is panicking now, although he would never admit to anyone. He jerks his head one way, then the other. Just darkness, darkness all around him. The sounds are getting louder. Closer. He feels his heart beating in his ears, pulse racing, what if it’s an alien? Or a murderer? Or a giant mutant mosquito? Or—

“Hey, who are—“
Keith shrieks at the voice, turning on his heel and throwing a punch with so much force that he can hear his knuckles cracking with the pressure of it.

A body falls to the ground, hitting it with a loud, unforgiving thud. Keith is panting, eyes wild, and he scans his eyes over the person who was probably going to cut out his guts and feed them to angry wolves.

It’s a boy. A boy around his age. Keith can’t see very much in the dark but he sees long, wiry limbs and short shaggy hair. A thin arm is held up to the boys face, and there are small droplets of blood staining the sleeve that is pressed up against his nose. His eyes are seething. He screams into his arm.

“What the actual fuck?! Who the hell are you?” The voice is loud, high pitched and cracking, making Keith jump in his skin.

“I—uh shit, I’m so sorry, I just— you scared me!” Keith stumbles over his words, pain throbbing in his knuckles. He holds out a shaky hand in an attempt to help the boy up, but long fingers slap it away, and the scowl only deepens on the boys face as he shakily stands up.

“Mierda, Dios mio, I think you broke my nose, pendejo!” The boy’s voice is muffled by the hand over his face but Keith hears another string of Spanish curse words spilling out of his mouth as he leans over to pick up his bag. Keith frowns.

“I didn’t break it.”

“What, tonto.”

That just makes Keith angrier. “Who the hell are you? This is a private campground, get the hell out of here.”

The boy practically growls at him. “I know, hijo de puta I know these are private campgrounds. I’m a fucking counselor here.”

Keith falters. “Wha…What?”

“Yeah! Been a counselor here for four damn years! Who the hell are you? I should be asking you to get the hell outta here! You literally just physically assaulted me.”

“I. What? No, I—”

Jesus Keith get it together. “Jesus Keith get it together. “I’m a counselor here too.”

The boy’s eyebrows pull together. “You can’t be serious.”

Keith falters. “Wha…What?”

“Yeah! Been a counselor here for four damn years! Who the hell are you? I should be asking you to get the hell outta here! You literally just physically assaulted me.”

“I. What? No, I—“

The boy pinches his nose to stop the blood, and hisses in pain. “Yes, idioto. I’m Lance.” He lets his hand drop from his face, and Keith squints through the darkness, already seeing a bruise starting to form on the left side of his nose. He want to assess the damage but it’s so dark that he can barely even see anything anyway, so there would be no point.

Keith figures the next step is to tell Lance who he is, so he says, “Oh, I’m—“

“Don’t care.” Lance snaps. Then he is charging past Keith, a scowl still on his face as he slams their shoulders together, before disappearing behind the other side of the cabin.

Keith’s blood is boiling. He can feel is temper rising uncontrollably, as it tends to do, and if his hand didn't hurt so much he probably would have punched the wooden panels on the side of the cabin.
What a *fucking asshole*, and he didn't even show up on time. How is any of this Keith’s fault? He shouldn't have been sneaking around this late at night anyway. Keith growls to himself, clenching his fists, trying to force himself to take deep, calming breaths.

He decides to just try and go to sleep, and attempts to push all destructive thoughts from his brain till morning.

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It turns out that morning comes way too fast.

A high-pitched bike horn shocks Keith awake, and he nearly falls out of his bed. He hears Coran’s voice, loud and tinny, clearly speaking through some kind of megaphone. “Up and at ‘em, counselors! Today is the day! Time to wake up and get ready for the kids!”

Keith groans into his pillow. He is drenched with sweat and the sheets are scratchy. His head feels heavy with fatigue. Typically, he is a morning person, but his watch says 6:00AM and his stomach is unsettled with nerves that he can’t quite explain.

Despite the early time, the sun is already high in the sky, sending hot stripes into the cabin windows. Keith can feel parts of his skin warming under the sun’s rays. He closes his eyes and tries to imagine laying in snow right now, feeling his hot skin sizzle against the cooling ice. He takes a second to bathe in the imaginary sensation.

His moment of peace doesn’t last long though, because Coran starts shouting meaningless things into the megaphone again and the whole cabin is shaking from the volume of it.

He gets up and scrubs his face with water that smells like copper. He brushes his teeth and tries to run a hand through his mussed up, sweaty hair with little success. *Well, guess I’ll just look like a freak on my first day. Fantastic.*

When he walks out into the courtyard, all of the counselors are already there, standing in a circle and engaging in idle conversation. Keith wonders how the hell they all got ready so fast, suddenly self-conscious about how he still had a severe case of bed head. His eyes fall on a tall figure, his back turned towards Keith. A figure that wasn’t there yesterday.

Hunk and Pidge are the first to turn around and see him. Pidge bursts out laughing the moment she lays eyes on him, and practically howls, “Keith, you are my *hero*. Is it true that you freakin’ *decked* Lance last night?!”

Keith’s eyes widen. Right. He did that. That happened.

“Uh—“

And suddenly the tall figure swivels around to face Keith, arms crossed against his chest, and Keith finds himself at a loss for words.

Lance looks *a lot* different in the light.

He hears Hunk’s words echoing in his head, “*Tall, tan, and handsome*”, as his eyes drag over the boy standing in front of him. His legs go on for miles, leading to a skinny waist, broad shoulders,
and a lean torso. He is wearing a light blue polo t-shirt with the sleeves rolled up for literally no reason other than to show off his arms, which are a soft, golden-brown that glows against the blue of the shirt. His collar is popped, which totally screams *douchebag* but somehow it is working for him, the light blue fabric framing his long, thin neck.

He is looking at Keith, scowling, and underneath the purple bruise that is blooming across his nose Keith can see tan, smooth skin, dusted with light brown freckles. Short, dark eyelashes frame his eyes, which are startlingly blue, vibrant against his tan skin. He has a narrow face, a sharp jawline, and high cheekbones. There are sunglasses perched atop his head, making his light brown hair stick out in all directions around them, some short stands resting on his forehead and some tucked underneath the lenses. His thin, angled eyebrows are pulled together in anger. Keith blinks at him. Then blinks again. This boy. This boy is *beautiful*. What the *fuck?*

“I-It was an accident.” He squeaks. Lance glowers at him. “It was dark! He scared the crap out of me!” Keith frowns and attempts to regain a fraction of his composure, only remembering now how rude Lance had been to him the night before. This boy may be pretty, but he’s also a giant dick. He turns his gaze to Lance, suddenly seething. “You shouldn’t have gotten here so damn late!”

Lance takes three steps towards Keith, fists curling against his sides. “Hey guess what *tonto*, I’ve got four years on your ass, so don’t you dare start complaining to me about being on time.” He is baring his teeth as Keith, blue eyes clouded with anger.

Keith snarls at him, vision turning red. “You’d better *stop* calling me that.”

“Why? It suits you so well.” Lances lips screw into a smirk. “After all, you did get the loser cabin.”

It’s such stupid insult. It doesn't even make any *sense*, but Keith is fuming, and he charges forward, fully intending to attack Lance again, when he collides directly into Shiro, who has strategically placed himself in between the two arguing boys.

“*Keith.*” He says sternly, placing a firm hand on Keith’s chest. “Calm down.”

Long, angry breaths tug at his lungs as he narrows his eyes at Lance. The anger starts to dissipate from his vision and he sees that Pidge and Hunk are staring at him, eyes wide with amused smiles on their faces. Allura looks mildly concerned. Coran is standing very still, arms crossed over his chest.

Lance stands up tall again, smirking at Keith and raising an eyebrow at him. He looks thoroughly pleased that he was able to get a rise out of him. Keith growls low in his throat.

“Keith, quit it.” Shiro snaps. Then he turns to Lance. “Lance, watch yourself.” Lance’s smirk falls into a pout, and he turns away from Keith with a small “Humph.”

Allura is the first one to break the awkward silence that follows. “Alright cabin leaders, we have three hours until the kids start to arrive. Let’s head to the rec center for a quick breakfast, and then afterwards you can start preparing your cabins for the day’s activities!”

Lance nods forward so that his sunglasses fall onto his face. It’s supposed to look dumb but it ends up looking really smooth, and Keith looks away, frustrated.

“Let’s do this.” Lance says, holding a fist out to Hunk. Hunk pounds his fist happily and laughs.

“Hell yeah. Good to see you again man.” Then he tackles Lance into a crushing bear hug and Lance laughs, loud and unabashed, face splitting into a wide grin. Keith drinks it up for a moment, the flash of white teeth, the two dimples appearing on the freckled skin, but then it is gone as quickly as it appeared, and Lance falls into step next to Hunk.
Pidge is walking next to Keith and giggling to herself. Keith looks down at her. “What’s so funny?”

“I just keep picturing you punching Lance in the face.” She snorts with laughter. “He must’ve been so pissed.”

“Yeah.” He actually smiles a little, despite the anger curling in his stomach. “Yeah, he was super pissed.”

She laughs for a little longer and then sighs. “Look, Lance is a dick, and he’s super annoying.” She pauses and then says, “But he’s family, and we love him, unfortunately.”

Keith looks at the ground. He doesn't reply.

“He has a way of getting under people’s skin.” She says, breaking the silence again. “But don’t let it get to you too much. I actually think you guys could be good friends.”

Keith grunts at that. No fucking way.

Pidge shrugs. “Or not, whatever.” But she is smiling.

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The cars start to pull up into the parking lot and Keith has knots in his stomach.

He’s not really that good with kids. He’s not horrible with them, but on a scale of one to ten he’s probably a solid four and a half. There is a small voice in the back of his mind that is whispering, over and over again, what if they don’t like me?

Coran has them each sitting at a different picnic table so that he can direct the kids to their assigned counselor and keep them all organized. Keith sits on the splintered wood and watches as the various minivans drive up to the courtyard, twiddling his thumbs and glancing around nervously at the other counselors. They all look excited. Keith can imagine that they know a lot of these kids well. There are probably a lot of returning campers that they have grown close to. Keith suddenly feels like he is intruding on something he doesn’t belong in. As sad as it is, he welcomes the familiar feeling.

“Hi.”

He is startled out of his reverie by a small voice somewhere near his feet. He looks down and sees a small boy, who can’t be more than nine years old, staring up at him with big green eyes. He has wild, untamed brown curls framing his face. “My name is Leo. Are you Red?”

“Oh, hi. Yeah! Yeah, that’s me I’m Red.” It’s a little awkward but he smiles as kindly as he can at the kid, and Leo’s face breaks into a grin with a few teeth missing. “Yay! I found you all by myself!”

“You sure did, kid.” Keith hesitates for a moment and holds his hand out for a high five, wondering if Leo will actually give him a high five. Are high fives cool? Maybe nobody high fives anymore. Keith hasn’t been a kid in a while.

Leo does high five him, getting a jump-start and slamming his hand down eagerly. He lands on the ground giggling. Keith finds that he is smiling too.

High pitched screaming rings in his ears and breaks his gaze, and he turns towards where the sound
is coming from, which of course is Lance’s table. Five kids are charging towards the tall boy, dropping their bags and backpacks as they get closer so they can pick up speed. “Laaaaaaaaaaanccceee!” They are all screaming, and he is grinning openly at them, opening his arms, and bracing for impact.

The kids all jump and cling onto with a giant “oomph” and he is laughing wildly. “Hola, mis pollitos, Kevin is that you? Que alto, you've gotten so big! Jack don’t you dare— Dios mio when did your hair get so long?” Lance giggles and falls to the floor, the five kids still climbing on top of him, resting on his hips, hugging around his shoulders, straddling his ankles. He is still laughing uncontrollably. “Que fuerte Freddie, you might even be stronger than me now! Let’s see those guns.” Freddie, the boy sitting on Lances hips, curls his arm to show off his thin, non-existent bicep. Lance gasps with exaggeration. “I can’t believe it! Have you been workin’ out?” The child giggles loudly and pitches forward into a hug, wrapping his “strong arms” around Lance’s neck.

Keith is convinced that if Lance wasn’t such an asshole, he would be the most attractive boy Keith has ever seen in real life.

More kids start filtering in, exchanging teary goodbyes with their parents. Keith meets three more of his campers. Two blonde boys named Mike and Jake, and a young girl with round, black eyes named Stacy. According to Shiro, each cabin usually ends up having about twelve kids; six boys and six girls. The cabins themselves have two rooms and a lounging area where the counselor sleeps, so that the boys and girls stay separated. Luckily, the kids are too young for Keith to have to worry about…any funny business.

Keith can see Pidge, Hunk, and Shiro all gathering their kids into circles, laughing and reminiscing about summers past, asking about family, and using secret handshakes that strike Keith as way more adorable than he thought they would. It is weird for him to see his brother like this, so animated with kids. He realizes how much Shiro loves this shabby camp and all the people here, and his heart warms with the thought of it.

Keith starts asking his kid questions like where they are from, what is their hometown like, what are they excited for this summer. He never realized how much kids love to talk about themselves—they all started shouting their answers over each other, eager to impress Keith with their “kickball skills” and “super awesome sleeping bag”. Keith is giggling, his heart beating quickly in a nervous way, but it feels good. It has been a while since he has seen anyone this excited about anything.

They all stay outside for several hours, waiting for the entirety of the campers to arrive, and by the time the sun begins to set, Keith is standing face to face with twelve hyper, wide-eyed, jittery nine year olds.

“Campers! Report to the Rec Center for opening announcements!” Coran’s voice boom through the megaphone, and all of the campers are screaming and charging towards the narrow pathway before Keith can gain any semblance of control over them. Hunk and Pidge are running too, but Lance lags behind, only managing to get up off the ground by the time all the kids were running. Keith stands still for a moment, shocked at the sudden change in environment, the screams fading into the distance and a silence taking over the courtyard. Lance is standing a few feet away from him, dusting himself off. His khaki shorts are smeared with grass stains and dirt from being tackled by the kids. He is chuckling quietly to himself.

Keith realizes that he is staring and looks away immediately, frowning. He starts walking towards the rec center and prays that Lance doesn’t acknowledge him.

“Hey tonto, “
Of course his prayers are not answered. Lance is already jogging to catch up to him. “Nice group of kids you got there, try not to teach them your horrendously violent ways.” His voice is bitter, a frown painted across his face. Keith rolls his eyes.

“I told you it was an accident, jesus, you’re so dramatic.” Keith curls his hands into fists but maintains his composure.

“Well soon, I won’t be the only one falling on my ass. Hope you aren’t a sore loser, tonto.”

Keith sighs frustratedly. “What the hell are you talking about? Also, stop calling me that.”

Lance looks at him, the corner of his lip tugging into a devilish smirk. “Blue Cabin always wins, Red Cabin always loses. It’s practically in the handbook, perdedor, you are already a loser and the summer hasn’t even started yet.”

Keith growls, snapping his gaze to meet Lance’s. “Loses what? What are you talking about?” He spits.

“Well, other than everything, including choice in counselor,” he gestures at Keith with a disgusted look on his face, “Red cabin always loses the Voltron Champion Cup at the end of the summer. And guess who always wins? Blue Cabin. Why? Let’s be real. Probably me.”

Keith feels like a vein is about to rupture in his brain. His vision is spinning. God, this asshole. How does he manage to make Keith so fucking angry? He spins around and faces Lance, cutting him off so that he stops walking. Lance raises an eyebrow, unimpressed, looking down at Keith with a bored expression.

“Hey, fuckface, I don’t lose. Especially not to stuck up shit-for-brains like you. So I’m going to make you eat those words. Red Cabin is going got kick your ass this summer.” Keith is spitting fire, and Lance’s unchanging expression is just making him angrier. Lance just shrugs.

“Whatever you say, perdedor. Sounds fake, but okay. Also, you should probably stop swearing. There are children here.” He frowns at Keith. “So get your head out of your doodle, alright?”

Keith snarls, “My what?”

Lance just shrugs again, a smug smile on his face, and starts walking away with an air of confidence that makes Keith’s blood boil. “Hasta la later, tonto.”

Keith stands in the middle of the empty courtyard, angry heartbeat still throbbing in his ears.

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The schedule for the first official day of camps is a lot busier than Keith anticipated. Coran wakes him up mercilessly at 6:30AM so that he could at least have half an hour to get ready before he woke up the campers. Keith practically drags himself out of bed, cursing every god that can possibly exist, and slips on the thick polyester polo and his shorts. He probably smells like shit but he can’t bring himself to get into the shower, because he knows that the second it’s over he is going to just smell bad again anyway.

He stands in the lobby, holding an airhorn in his hands. In about thirty seconds, he has to blare it and wake up all of the kids in the cabin. He closes his eyes and sighs, breathing in the calm before the storm. Then he opens his eyes, blares the horn, and with as much energy as he can muster, says,
“Morning Red Cabin! Time to get up! Everyone out of bed!” It sounds uncharacteristically paternal coming out of his mouth.

He hears a series of grumbles throughout the cabin, beds creaking, positions shifting. He feels for these kids. It’s so fucking early. “Come on everyone, breakfast is waiting!”

The next half hour is a chaotic blur. Socks flying across the room, kids falling over as they attempt to tug their shorts on, toothpaste smeared on the mirrors, combs on the floor, pajamas strewn across the wooden panels underneath the furniture. Keith bounces from bed to bed, desperately trying to help the kids get dressed. Someone already lost their overnight bag. Someone is already crying about how their hair is too tangled. Keith is being tugged by every one of his limbs, in seven different directions, and he doesn’t know what the hell he is doing.

After thirty minutes of complete and utter destruction, Keith is stumbling out of the cabin with his campers in tow, and despite his campers looking put together, Keith is an absolute wreck. His shirt is untucked, his hair is a bird’s nest, he can feel foreign substances on his face that weren’t there when he woke up, and his socks aren’t matching.

He bursts into the rec center, his kids rushing past him to meet their friends, and he stands in the doorway, taking a moment to collect himself.

“All of the counselors are sitting at a round table. Hunk waves him over with a big grin on his face. “Come have some breakfast!”

Keith collapses at the table and puts his face in his hands, taking a deep breath. He hears Shrio laugh next to him and Allura joins him. When he takes his hands off his face, Lance is smirking at him from across the table.

“You’ve got a little toothpaste on your face.” He hears the smile in Pidge’s voice. A blush colors his cheeks and he looks at Shiro, hoping the panic isn’t too evident in his eyes. He sends a silent help me please in his brother’s direction.

Shiro laughs louder this time and smudges the toothpaste off of Keith’s cheek, then ruffles his hair. “First morning is always the hardest, Keith. Don’t get discouraged.”

Keith glances at Lance and he is looking at him strangely, but then something snaps in his expression and it twists into a frown again, looking away.

Keith groans. “I didn’t even know someone could make that big of a mess brushing their teeth.”

Hunk smiles. “Dude, you’ve got so much to learn.”
This first activity of the day for the Red Cabin is crafts, which Keith decides might actually be tame enough for him to deal with. Each activity usually has two cabins assigned to it at a time. For crafts, the Red Cabin is paired with the Green Cabin.

Allura is in charge of most of the activities that happen in the rec center. She teaches most of the arts and crafts classes, as well as cooking classes and the archery lessons. She is standing in front of the campers now, tall and confident, and Keith stays in the back of the room, leaning against the counter. Pidge comes over to stand next to him. The loud chatter of the children is echoing, bouncing off the high ceilings and vibrating through the floor. Allura whistles loudly to get their attention, and a hushed silence follows.

“Hello campers!” She grins and her happiness is contagious. Keith smiles too. “It’s so lovely to see your smiling faces again! Welcome back to arts and crafts.” A couple kids whoop and clap their hands. Allura laughs. “The first thing we are going to do is painting, of course! So everybody make a line in front of the sink and I will hand you your brushes and palettes!”

The kids waste no time getting up and shuffling towards the sink with an innocent excitement that Keith probably hasn’t felt in years.

The arts and crafts period goes by a lot faster than Keith thought it would. The assignment was to paint “one thing that you really want to do at camp this summer”, and Keith bounced from table to table asking his campers what they were painting. There were some crazy ones. Leo drew himself riding on a UFO, Mike drew a cabin made entirely out of turkey sandwiches. But then there were some really sweet ones, like Stacy’s, which was a painting of her with her arms around two other girls, sitting on a hill, watching the sunset.

Keith doesn’t really know what to do with the fondness that tickling his chest, making him smile and giggle as the children look up at him with big eyes and toothy grins.

“Keith, why don’t you draw something?” Leo is looking up at him, smiling, holding out a piece of paper and a magic marker.

“Leo, I don’t know how to draw…” Keith says, surprisingly shy. Pidge is next to him in a flash.

“Aw come on, Keith. Who here is going to judge your artistic ability? Do it for the kids!”

Allura giggles from somewhere behind him.

“Yeah Keith! Do it for the kids!” Stacy is jumping up and down excitedly. Keith laughs.

“What do I even draw?”

“Well, what is something that you want to happen this summer?” Pidge asks.
Keith looks down at the blank paper and debates drawing himself sitting in a circle with the other counselors, a bonfire burning in the center of all of them, with beers in their hands and laughing grins on their faces. A nervous warmth falls on his cheeks and he brushes off the idea. Instead, he settles for drawing himself laying in a pile of snow, with a fan blowing cold air into his hair from above him. Pidge snorts. “You want to be cold?” She says, smiling.

“I want to get the H-E- double hockey sticks out of this heat.” Keith says pointedly, realizing that he probably shouldn't say the word “hell” in front of nine year olds.

Pidge laughs out loud, a surprised look on her face. “What a surprise.” She says sarcastically. “Keith hates the summertime.”

Keith rolls his eyes at her but he can’t stop the laugh that bubbles out of his mouth at Pidge’s sass. Allura takes his drawing, smiling, and hangs it next to the line of drawings from the Red Cabin.

The day actually moves much faster than Keith thought it would, and before he knew it, they had already eaten lunch and half of the day’s activities were over. He has already learned so much about the kids in his cabin and it hasn’t even been an entire day. He can’t even imagine how the other counselors feel about their campers after years of doing this.

The next activity on the schedule is Capture the Flag, and Keith feels dread like a brick in his stomach when he sees the words “Blue Cabin” next to the assignment.

Of course. Out of all the activities he could have had with the Blue Cabin, it’s capture the flag. Not painting, not cooking, not archery, but capture the fucking flag.

Lance and his campers are already on the field when Keith arrives. He is crouched down onto the grass with the kids crowded around him in a tight circle, telling a loud, animated story, grinning wildly. “And then, I took the cat home, but mi madre was so mad at me, because she is allergic! So I told her I got rid of it, but I hid it in my room for a month! Oh man, she was not happy!” The kids around him were all laughing at his dramatic tale and he stood up, dusting himself off and smiling down at them, beaming.

Keith cleared his throat awkwardly to announce his presence. When Lance looked up at him, he raised an eyebrow, his beaming smile replaced with a smirk. “Look who came to join the party.”

“Hi.” Keith said awkwardly, not really knowing how to respond to Lance’s remark.

“Ready for us to kick your doodle in some Capture the Flag?” His campers all giggled behind him. His voice sounds oddly light. There is much less bite behind his words, although there is still a challenge heavily implied.

Keith frowns. “Nah, our doodle is going to be just fine.” Keith, on the other hand, still has some bite in his words as he remembers what Lance had said to him the day they met, “the loser cabin”.

Lance’s eyebrows shoot up in mock surprise. “Oh yeah? Why, you have a plan, tonto? Because you’re dealing with some major Capture the Flag experts over here.” He ruffles one of his camper’s hair fondly, but his cocky gaze remains on Keith.
Keith tries to continue with his confident facade, but his face falters a little. “Of course we have a plan.” He doesn’t have a plan.

Lance hums, tapping his chin with his pointer finger, eyes narrowing at Keith. He is obviously unconvinced. “Guess you’ll just have to show me.”

Keith scowls. “We’re not playing, you doodle. Only the campers are.”

Lance barks a laugh at that, it sounds humorless, but his face is still bright, eyes still shining, when he looks at Keith. “Wow, you really are new here, aren’t you, Rojo?” His campers giggle and stick out their tongues at him. Keith’s scowl only deepens. “Here at Camp Voltron, everyone plays capture the flag.” And with that, Lance crouches down and sticks his finger into the mud. Keith watches him, irritated, curious, as Lance brings his muddy finger to his face and draws a small stripe across each of his cheeks. His campers all gasp excitedly and follow suit, until all of their cheeks are streaked with tiny, sloppy stripes of mud.

“Even the counselors.” Lance says, smirking playfully, eyes narrowed at Keith in determination.

Keith can’t help it. He laughs. The whole thing is just such a dramatic spectacle. He’s never seen anyone act so much like a child, but it is endearing in a way, that this tall boy with a bruise across his nose and a mouth that spits insults like fire is someone who has such a soft spot for kids, for unofficial sports, for summer. Keith feels a very brief twist in his chest but pushes it away forcefully. He is not going to let himself think Lance is cute. No way.

“You’re on, Blue.” Keith spits, sounding equally as determined as Lance looks.

They break, moving to opposite sides of the field, and Keith crouches down, beckoning for his campers to surround him.

“Oh guys, we need a plan that will totally kick the Blue team’s doodle.” He says, a little too seriously. His campers all stare at him with wide eyes, blinking. He clears his throat, trying again. “Have any of you ever played this game before?”

They all nod at him, slowly. He grins. “Alright, any ideas?”

“I run real fast!” Leo says, bouncing up and down on his feet. “Like, really really fast!”

Jack pushes his glasses up onto his nose. “I have a secret place for the flag.” He says, shyly. Keith smiles.

“Sweet, you guys rock. This is going to be fun.”

Stacy raises her hand. “I have an idea!”

Mike talks over her. “Wait, my idea first!”

Stacy frowns. “No, me! Keiittthhh!!!”

“Mike, Stacy had her hand up first.” Keith says calmly, never easing to be amazed with the paternal voice that comes out of his mouth.

Slowly but surely, like pricing together a very loud and sloppy puzzle, their plan comes together. After about five minutes all of his campers are buzzing with excitement, ready to play. He feels a nervous anticipation in his gut but it feels good, and he welcomes the strangeness of it. They turn around towards the field and Lance’s cabin is already standing tall, watching them.
“We’re ready now.” Keith says coolly. Lance’s eyes are angry, but there is a sly grin tugging at his lips.

“Well, then. Let’s see what the loser cabin can do, eh Rojo?”

Keith growls.

Then the game is starting.

Lance and a couple of kids behind him don’t waste any time, charging forward towards Keith’s side. But Keith’s campers don’t go after them. They all decided that the flag is so well hidden, they don’t have to worry about protecting it as much as they have to worrying about finding the blue one, so Keith gives his campers the signal and they all charge forward, leaving their territory completely vulnerable and open for Lance to explore. Keith laughs breathlessly as he sees the shocked faces of the remaining blue campers, who weren’t expecting to have the entire red team charging at them, full force.

The Blue Team looks at the open territory as an opportunity. They think they've won. Little do they know that there is immeasurable strength in numbers.

Shaking out of their initial shock, the blue campers start running towards them, swirling around them. He sees some of his campers get tagged down but they are still stronger in numbers, bounding across Blue’s territory. Leo was right, he is really fast, and he is weaving through the Blue players in a blur, passing them all within a matter of seconds. Keith glances towards the Red Cabin’s side of the woods and sees Lance, as well as a few blue campers, searching frantically through the trees, looking up and squinting, trying to find the Red flag. Keith smirks. They aren't going to find it.

Mike is next to him. He leans over and places a hand on Mike’s shoulders. “I’m going to go defend our flag. You know what to do, right Mike?”

The little blonde boy grins evilly, nodding, and then sprints away. Keith starts making his way back to the Red territory.

“Hey tonto!” Lance yells to him, anger painted all over his pretty face. “Wanna tell me where your flag is?”

“Not a chance.” Keith is charging towards him. Lance squeaks, surprised, and start sprinting away from him, but Keith picks up speed and bounds after him.

“I’m going to find your flag!” Lance calls over his shoulder, taunting.

“Like hell you are!” Keith snaps, legs moving faster.

Lance’s legs may go on for miles but Keith has been a runner his whole life, so it’s only a matter of time before he catches up. Lance looks over his shoulder again and swears in Spanish, ducking out of the way and changing direction, making Keith growl in frustration.

“Where’s your defense, Mr. ‘I have a plan’?” Lance teases from in front of him. But it doesn’t bother Keith. Because the absence of Red defense means that the plan is actually working. The Blue team is confused. They don’t understand why the Red Cabin’s territory is completely open, free of any threats, allowing some members from the Blue team to slip through easily and start carding through the forest, looking for the flag.

“You know you're supposed to guard your flag, right? Or is that the reason why the Red Cabin always loses?” Lance is running backwards now, facing Keith, an angry grin on his face.
“Don’t get ahead of yourself.” Keith warns, gaining speed again. Lance yelps and turns around, sprinting faster.

Keith’s heart feels like it’s about to explode. He runs all the time, but never like this, never with this much drive or excitement. He feels elated, the challenge fueling his legs, making him run faster than he ever has before. Lance is getting closer and closer to him. If he reaches out his hand, he can possibly brush his fingers over the material of Lance’s polo. Their field is in plain view again as they break through the woods. He sees Blue campers wandering around on his side of the woods, however there are significantly less of them than before. He chuckles to himself, knowing very well that Leo and Mike have probably tagged everyone out while Jack was looking for the flag. The plan is working.

“Lance!” One of Lance’s campers looks up at him with a panicked expression. “We can’t find their flag anywhere!”

Lance ducks as Keith jumps forward, reaching out to try and tag him. Keith falls to the ground, grunting in pain as he misses. Keith stays on the ground for a bit, listening to his rapid heartbeat shaking his chest, thumping into his ears. He hears Lance panting heavily next to him, trying to catch his breath.

“Freddie?” Lance sounds concerned, voice high pitched. “Where on earth is the rest of the team?”

Freddie sounds scared. “They got tagged, Lance!”

Keith starts to get up, legs shaking. Before Lance can say anything at all, Keith hears Jack’s voice, muffled in the distance.

“I found it! I got the flag!” He is sprinting towards the Red territory again, holding the Blue fabric high over his head, with Leo and Mike flanking his sides. “I got it, Keith! We win we win we win!”

Keith feels fondness filling his heart, and warmth blooms across his cheeks as he watches his campers running towards him, covered in mud, goofy grins breaking across their faces.

He rises fully to his feet, legs sore, and holds out his arms for a hug because he feels like that is an appropriate thing to do right now. Is a hug too much? Are his campers going to think he’s uncool? Whatever, he’s going for it.

The three campers collapse on top of him, shoving the blue flag in his face, and he hears crazy cackling coming from somewhere, until he realizes that it is coming from him, and the rest of his team quickly following after the three boys, collapsing on top of Keith until they are just a mountain on top of his chest, cheering boisterously.

“Woah, woah, woah, hold up.” Lance’s angry voice breaks through their celebration and they all separate, sitting on the ground, looking up at him. Keith raises an eyebrow at him and sends him a smirk, and Lance is staring down at him with wide eyes, a shocked expression blinking it’s way onto his face.

“How the quiznack did that happen? There’s no way you just won.”

“We just won, Lance. The Loser Cabin just beat your doodle!” Keith practically shrieks it, excitement bubbling in his stomach at Lance’s dumbfounded expression. The rest of his campers start whooping and cheering around him.

“You must have cheated.” Lance says slowly, and angry scowl on his face.
“Nope. Didn’t cheat. Just won.” Keith is loving the look on Lance’s face way too much, and he is grinning without even realizing. “Told you we had a plan.”

“Where on earth was your flag?” Lance shrieks gesturing wild and the woods around them. “You didn’t even guard it!”

Keith shrugs. “We didn’t have to. Jake here had a really great idea of where to hide it.”

Lance’s eyebrows furrow, looking more curious than angry. “And?”

“And it was literally right in front of your face the entire time!” Keith points to the large sign at the mouth of the field that reads “Altea Fields”, where tucked into the capital A was the bunched up red flag in plain sight.

Lance just stares at it. He looks thoroughly shocked. “Wha-? How did I not-?”

“The sign is facing the Red territory,” Keith says matter-of-factly, “so by the time you ran onto our side and started looking in the woods, your backs were already turned to the sign. So you never saw it.” He ruffles Jakes hair. “This kid is a genius.”

“There has to be a broken rule somewhere in that.” Lance snaps. “That doesn’t sound legal.”

Keith shrugs. “We play dirty.” His campers shout in victory.

And Lance’s whole face turns bright pink, with an angry scowl that Keith practically relishes in, and then he is turning on his heel and walking away, muttering “good game” as his campers follow him. The horn blares to signal the break between activities.

That’ll show him, Keith thinks, satisfied.

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The rest of the day flies by. Keith’s sore muscles are a pretty good indicator that it was an active, busy few hours, and he is dreaming of showering and going to bed. But it has only just started getting dark out, and the dining room is filling with campers who desperately want dinner. He sighs tiredly and plops down at the counselors table, where Shiro, Hunk, and Pidge are already sitting.

“How’s your first day treating ya?” Hunk asks with a friendly smile.

Keith feels a grin tugging at his lips. “It’s actually been…really fun?” He says shyly. Shiro snorts.

“Don’t sound so surprised Keith. Told you that you’d fit in here, didn't I?”

“Yeah, I guess you did.”

Allura and Lance appear out of nowhere and take a seat. “Hi everyone, any disasters on the first day? I see that everyone is still alive, so that’s good.” Allura’s words are teasing, but kind. Keith’s gaze falls on Lance and Lance narrows his eyes at him.

“Today was fine,” Lance says bitterly, “Other than Keith cheating at capture the flag.”
“What?” Keith braced himself against the table, surging forward. “I didn’t cheat! You’re just a sore loser!”

“Woah, slow down you guys. We’re supposed to be the adults here, remember?” Shiro breaks them apart, but he’s laughing slightly.

Pidge is loving this way too much. “Oh my god, Keith, first you punch Lance in the face and then you beat him in capture the flag? I think I’m in love with you.” Her laugh makes something leap happily in his chest and he smirks.

“For the record, it wasn’t that hard to beat him.”

Lance gasps and sputters, placing a hand on his heart and falling backwards in a dramatic spectacle. “I’ll have you know that the Blue Cabin has more capture the flag wins than any other cabin on these campgrounds, pendejo hijo de puta quire matarte—“ Lance spills out what are probably dozens of Spanish insults, the words rolling nastily off his tongue.

Shiro is laughing now. Hunk and Pidge are giggling behind their hands. Keith just shrugs. “Well looks like that’s going to change this summer.”

“Oh man, you’ve got a death wish, dont you, tonto? It’s on.”

And for a second Keith could swear that there are no hints of malice in his voice, nothing hateful, or spiteful, or vengeful. Just challenging, just playful, as he raises his eyebrow at Keith, satisfied from getting the last word. Without all of the hostility, Keith takes in the beautiful features that make up Lance’s face. Just for a moment, before shaking himself out of it and standing up to get dinner.
The rest of the week is more of the same. Keith doesn’t get to play capture the flag against Lance again because the schedule rotates, but he does end up having arts and crafts with him. While the campers are all gluing pipe cleaners onto planks of wood, Lance challenges Keith to a drawing contest, (“Hey *tonto*, I bet I can fill up this page with more circles than you in an hour.”) which is such a stupid, *stupid* challenge but somehow Lance pisses Keith off enough for it to sound like a brilliant idea. Lance ends up winning, with 344 circles on his page, and he shoves the paper in Keith’s face for a solid five minutes screaming happy things in Spanish. Lance laughs a little bit more around Keith now, but most of the time he is still frowning at him, still swearing at him in Spanish, and still putting him up to stupid challenges when their cabins had activities together.

By the time Saturday comes around, Keith is physically and mentally exhausted, probably severely dehydrated, and sunburnt. Despite all of this, he also finds that there is a sort of contentment in his veins that he has never really felt before.

Weekend activities give the campers a lot more freedom to do what they want. It’s more of a giant recess than anything else, and there really isn’t anything scheduled until the campfire on Saturday night, so the kids just run around in groups, playing a variety of different sports and messing around in the rec center. Keith sits at one of the picnic tables in the courtyard, shirt rolled up slightly to cool off, because the sun is especially brutal today. Pidge and Hunk come over to sit next to him. They all have meaningless conversations and watch the kids run around. Lance is currently engaged in an intense water gun fight with some kids from his cabin, shouting endearing things in Spanish and sprinting away from them, yelping when the water touches his back. Keith pushes away the tingling in his chest. How is this boy so damn good with kids? He closes his eyes and tilts his head back for a moment, feeling the sun baking his face. He’s going to be so red tonight, he’ll probably end up blending into his obnoxiously bright shirt. He takes a deep breath and feels sleepiness start to take hold of him, the heat making him lethargic.

All of a sudden, there is a flash of ice cold water on his face and he shrieks, shooting upwards. His eyes fly open and he sees Lance, dripping wet with a halo of sunlight around his wispy hair. “Wanna join in, *tonto*? Or are you too scared?”

Keith bares his teeth, the cold water now seeping into the collar of his shirt. “I’m not scared, I just don’t feel like—” water sprays onto his face again and he sputters. Lance is laughing, pointing the gun at him. “Huh? what was that? Couldn’t hear you.” The grin that is splitting across his face is so pretty that it almost hurts to look at it, all white teeth, thin lips and dimples. Keith frowns.

“Lance, seriously, I don’t want—”

More water hits his face. Keith snarls.

“Jesus, *fine*, just give me a gun!”

Lance is laughing wild as he throws a gun into Keith’s hands, and Keith is charging at him before
Lance gets a chance to escape.

“Get him!” Lance commands his campers, a grin still plaster onto his face as he points to Keith.

Keith sees Stacy and Leo playing catch nearby, and at the sound of Lance’s voice they both look up and see Keith being drenched relentlessly by water.

“Keith needs help!” Leo shouts, and Stacy follows after him, both charging at the Blue campers. Mike and Jake come out of nowhere and join them, trying to pull the guns from the blue camper’s hands.

The fight goes on for a while. Lance just keeps popping up out of nowhere and blasting Keith in the face, which just riles him up, and he chases Lance around the field with an inexplicable anger pulsing through his veins, leaving his camper to their own devices against the Blue Cabin. Lance is still cackling, Keith briefly wonders why Lance enjoys bugging him so much.

His campers have claimed half of the water guns, which makes Lance slow down his running, a little shocked at the impressive overtaking. Keith takes the opportunity to completely uncap his water gun, spilling it’s entire contents over Lance’s head. Lance shouts at the cold temperature but he is laughing, and Keith feels a bubble of laughter coming from his own mouth too.

“Fine, tonto” Lance snaps, but his voice is smiling. He wipes off some of the water that is dripping down his face and chuckles. “Fine, you win this round, but mark my words, this isn’t over.”

Keith shakes some water out of his hair. “Yeah, yeah, you’ll get me next time, whatever you need to tell yourself, Blue.” He turns his back to Lance before he can see his reaction, and faces Pidge and Hunk who are watching from the picnic table. He raises the water gun over his head in victory and they both cheer for him. His campers all start running up to him and pouring the contents of their guns on his ankles and feet, in what he assumes to be celebration, and Keith just shrieks and giggles, feeling the cold water sloshing around in his shoes.

It is a welcome relief from the brutally hot sun.

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Keith stares into the flames of the campfire. The circle of campers and counselors around the pit is cramped and sweaty, children piled on top of each other, sitting on laps and curled around ankles. Shiro, Allura, and Coran are sitting next to each other, on stools that are a bit higher than the rest, so that they can maintain some semblance of control over the excited, bouncing children so close to open flames. He looks over at Hunk and Pidge, who are sitting on either side of him, and they are staring into the fire too, looking just as exhausted as Keith feels from the hectic first week.

There is an excited chatter that is humming in the air, all of the counselors and campers talking about their favorite parts of the week and what they want to do next. All of a sudden, the doors of the Blue Cabin burst open and Lance is marching towards the campfire, holding an acoustic guitar. His campers all cheer and clap and he bows dramatically, tipping an imaginary hat.

“Hello, my good people!” He says in a goofy voice and all of the kids laugh loudly. “Anyone want to sing some campfire songs with me?”

Apparently this is something that all of the kids are used to, because they are laughing and hearing as
Lance sits gracefully on the edge of a log, propping his guitar up on his leg. Keith looks around at the other counselors, confused. Shiro just smirks at him, and Hunk is grinning.

“Play the one about the mustache!” A kid shouts.

“No, play the sandwich one!” Another voice.

“I want to hear the pretty love song!”

Lance laughs and it sounds like music. Keith hugs his arms around himself, willing the warm feeling to pass.

“Alright, alright, I know you guys love those ones, but I learned a new one!” He is grinning down at the kids, dimples in full view. “wanna hear it?”

They all cheer. Even Shiro.

With that, soft guitars strums start to float throughout the warm air and all of the noise suddenly stops, the kids all falling into a science and leaning into each other as the music starts. Lance starts to sing in a soft voice that stuns Keith into speechlessness, because this boy is so loud and brash how on earth can his voice even sound that smooth?

Lance is singing a song in Spanish, which apparently is something he does often because nobody looks surprised by it. Keith can’t believe what he is hearing. He never pegged Lance as a singer, but the soft, raspy voice that is curling around him right now is definitely the voice of a singer, and Keith just stares a little too openly at the sight before him.

Lances golden skin looks orange in the light of the fire. The bruise on his nose is almost fully healed and the sun kissed freckles underneath it are slowly starting to become more apparent. He has a long and slender nose that hooks upwards in such a unique and intriguing way at the end, and his lips, which are always pulled into an evil smirk, are now gentle and relaxed, with a sheen of sweat just beneath his nose. His lashes are short but dark, and there is a light sunburn dusting his high cheekbones, although Keith can tell that it’s going to turn into a glowing tan by tomorrow. His jawbone is hard and angled against his popped collar, and his arms are slender and golden. The firelight is flickering all around his, catching the shine in his shaggy hair, the shadow beneath his pointed chin, the dark line of his upper lip.

Keith realizes that he is probably staring like a madman but he cant help it. Unlike Keith, this boy is made for the summer. He is made for the hot sun and the water, for grass stains and campfires, for giggling children and tan lines. He is light and golden and glowing, like the sun. Keith feels his face heat up. This really isn’t the right time for him to be having ultra-gay thoughts, especially not about Lance of all people, because this boy has been a complete thorn in his side since he met him a week ago, but damn is he gorgeous.

“Mi barba tiene tres pelos,

tres pelos tiene my barba,

Si no tuviera tres pelos,

no sería una barba!”

Keith is brought back to reality when Lance breaks into a goofy grin and starts singing an upbeat song in Spanish, a song which all of the kids for some reason know all the words to, and he is strumming his guitar wild and tapping this foot to the beat and all of the kids belt out the lyrics. It
sounds like some kind of Spanish nursery rhyme. Keith can’t help the giggle that escapes his lips. This boy has absolutely no shame.

He sees Shiro eyeing him and laughing, amused by Keith’s reaction. Allura lean over to him and whispers something in his ear, and he looks down at her with an even bigger grin, a blush dusting his pathetically enamored face. Keith rolls his eyes and looks away.

After Lance finishes all of his songs, the campers are undoubtedly sleepy. Keith can tell that they are losing steam and silently thanks all the gods in the world because he is exhausted, but then Pidge goes, “Who wants to hear a scary story?”, and with that, all of the kids start cheering with excitement again.

Keith desperately tries to think of an excuse to leave because, as much fun as this is, he hates scary stories. Almost as much as he hates the dark. Which is a lot. He thinks that maybe he can escape to the bathroom but then he feels a small body curl around his ankle and it’s Leo, snuggling into his leg, so he suddenly feels like kicking a child away and running for his life isn’t the most responsible option.

Pidge just goes for it, the fire is slowly starting to die and Keith feels himself start to flip a shit as the darkness envelopes them. Pidge is talking about a camp that is haunted by some ghost, or something, Keith isn’t really following. He is just glancing around nervously at the woods around them, which suddenly just looks like some sort of dark abyss threatening to swallow him whole, which is totally a reasonable thing to think about, obviously.

“They went into his cabin but he wasn’t there, and all that was left was the orange shirt that he was wearing the day he disappeared…” Pidge’s voice is carrying low and taunting, all the kids are leaning in, eyes wide. Keith holds his breath. “The were warned not to go looking for him, but then didn’t listen…and when they went out into the woods, they started hearing it…A snap, a twig cracking, footsteps, someone was following them…”

Keith feels Leo’s grasp tighten around his calf and he shakily leans over, patting the mop of brown curls in an attempt at comfort.

“It was getting closer…faster… the kids had nowhere to run…” Keith’s heart rate was skyrocketing. *Dont freak out dont freak out its just darkness, darkness all around you probably filled with horrible MONSTERS AND PEOPLE WHO WANT TO CUT YOUR FACE OFF*—

“and then it…GOT THEM!” Pidge shouted playfully, and Keith jumped, shrieking, practically throwing poor Leo across the fire pit. Everyone was staring at him, shocked at the ungodly noise he just made, and he felt his face heating up uncontrollably. Suddenly the campers all burst out laughing, rolling all over the floor and pointing at him. He buried his face in his hands and prayed to just die and end this horrible embarrassment. This was clearly a story that Pidge had told before, so all of the kids saw it coming. He could hear Pidge and Hunk laughing wildly, even Shiro, who was supposed to be his *family* goddammit. He lifted his hands from his face and locked eyes with Lance, who had a hand over his mouth and a smile beneath it that made his eyes look wild with mirth.

“Keef is a scaredy-cat!” One of the campers said.

“Keith screamed like a girl!”

Lance crossed his arms over his chest raising an eyebrow, a grin still stretched across his face. “You doing okay, *tonto*?”

Keith sighed, frustrated. “That’s not fair, you guys have all heard it before!” But now he is smiling.
The laughter doesn’t die down for a while, and Keith decided there is nothing he can do but just wait for it to pass.

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It is around 2AM when Keith gives up on trying to sleep.

It is so dark in his room. There isn't even any moonlight coming from the window. He knows that the darkness is supposed to help him sleep but he is paralyzed with fear. Why did he think that coming out into the woods with an intense fear of the dark would be a good idea?

He sighs, running his hands over his face frustratedly. He knows he technically isn’t allowed to leave his cabin unsupervised, but if he lays there for one more moment he is probably going to have an anxiety attack. He takes out his phone and turns the flashlight on, quietly slipping on a hoody and sneakers and padding out of the house. He looks back at the Red Cabin and fear tugs at his chest, telling him to go back because this is against the rules, but he is so wired, and he just can’t even imagine laying back in bed. What if something kills him. Something might definitely kill him.

He walks through the courtyard, letting the cool night breeze tangle his hair and calm down his hot, itchy skin. Maybe he should go for a run or something. Or Just lay in the dirt. He isn’t really sure where to go from here.

His stomach grumbles loudly and he looks down at it, sighing. He is out of granola bars in his cabin. Without even thinking about it rationally, he starts making his way down to the rec center, hoping that there is maybe some leftover bags of chips or apples in the kitchen.

He uses his “staff” keys to open the doors and slowly creeps into the dining area. He knows that nobody will be here at this hour, but he can’t help but be cautious anyway. When he reaches the kitchen he turns the lights on, a breath of relief leaving him as the darkness disappears, and he starts fumbling through cabinets and drawers, hoping to find something resembling food. He opens the fridge and sees a loaf of bread and a jar of jelly. No peanut butter. He shrugs carelessly to himself and pulls the ingredients out. A jelly sandwich doesn’t sound too bad.

He is done making his sandwich when a green, reflective bottle catches his eye. It’s wine. Cooking wine, in the back of the fridge, behind boxes of ingredients and water bottles. Keith just stares at it. He stares at it for a while. It will help him fall asleep, he knows it. It will help him forget about the dark. It’s a really bad idea. Like, a really bad idea.

Slowly, hesitantly, he grabs the bottle by the neck and takes it out of the fridge. Just one swig. One swig and he’s done. He needs to get back to his campers anyway.

He sees the back door of the kitchen and figures that is the easiest way to exit, and when he is outside in the darkness again he finds himself on a small hill overlooking the pond. He had no idea such a pretty view existed behind the kitchen. He takes out his phone, turning on the flashlight, and creeps forward, trying to find a place to sit.

His eyes settle on a large rock at the bottom of the hill, near the pond. It is completely hidden until you are standing at the absolute edge of the hill, which seems ideal for Keith’s current, slightly illegal situation. He trots forward excitedly, grateful that he was able to find a spot so hidden, and plops down on the rock, eyes scanning the soft glow reflecting off the surface of the pond.
He takes a large bite of his sandwich and an even larger swig of the wine, feeling the burn in his throat and an almost immediate calm in his nerves. He closes his eyes and tilts his head back, bathing in the silence, listening to the crickets in the distance. He takes another swig of wine. Maybe falling asleep here won't be that big of a deal…

“Hey tonto,” a voice breaks the silence, soft and tired. “You’re in my spot.”

Keith jumps and looks up, heart racing because he has been caught, before realizing that it is Lance standing there, in boxers and a white undershirt, looking down at him with sleepy eyes. It takes Keith a moment to register what he said to him.

“Your— wait, what?”

Lance groans, sounding tired. “I don’t know how the hell you found it, but you’re in my spot. This has been my spot for four years. It’s mine.” He probably means to sound malicious but he just rubs his eyes instead, looking like he just woke up, with his hair mussed up and a crease on his cheek from his pillow. Keith’s heart is pounding.

“Well, I’m sitting here right now, so find some other spot.”

“No. Do you even know how long four years is? I can’t just simply ‘find a new spot’.” Lance is frowning now, stepping in closer. He sighs. “If you’re not going to move, can you just budge over? I wanna sit.” He taps Keith’s thigh with his foot, pushing him to the side. Keith sighs.

“What are you even doing here, tonto?” His words are accusatory but is voice is quiet. Exhausted.

“I’m terrified of the dark and I can’t sleep because of it. Just wasn’t tired I guess.” Lance chuckles. “Pidge’s story scared that much? Wow.”

Keith scowls, face reddening. “What? No.” He hugs his arms around himself, pulling his knees to his chest.

Lance hums in amusement. “Just kidding, just kidding, calm down.” He feels Lance’s position shift slightly next to him and then he hears Lance draw in a breath. “Hey, tonto, is that wine?”

Lance giggles, his nose scrunching up in a way that makes a warmth spread throughout Keith’s chest. “Jesus, Keith, you sure are breakin’ a lot of rules tonight. Didn’t think you had it in ya.” His
impressed gaze feels heavy on Keith’s face and Keith looks away, shrugging, taking another swig of wine to calm his erratic heartbeat. Lance leans over him, impossibly close, and grabs the bottle from his hands. “How ‘bout letting me have a bit, eh tonto?”

Keith grunts in annoyance as the bottle is plucked from his hands, and watches openly as Lance takes a giant gulp of it, admiring the thin, long column of his throat. He clears his throat again and looks away, but he can practically feel Lance grinning next to him.

They both slump a little further down on the rock, exhaustion starting to take over. They spend a few minutes passing the bottle back and forth in silence, taking long sips and the warmth from the wine is tingling all over Keith’s body.

“You’re campers really seem to like you.” Keith says dumbly, a little buzzed. “Like, really like you.” Lance chuckles softly next him. “They are such good kids. For some of them this is the most fun they have all year. I really try to make it that way, anyhow.”

“You do a good job.” Keith mumbles earnestly.

“Thanks, rojito.”

Keith sighs. “What on earth does that mean?”

Lance has a smile in his voice. “Little red.”

“’M not little.” Keith is blushing.

“You kinda are.” Lance is still smiling. Does this guy ever stop smiling?

Keith tries for another swig, but finds that the bottle is empty. He sighs.

“I’m scared of the dark.” The words slips out of his mouth without warning and he mentally slaps himself.

Lance snorts like it’s a joke. Keith scowls. “I’m serious. That’s why I’m out here. I can’t sleep. It’s too dark in my room.” Frustration starts clouding his embarrassment.

He sees Lance in the corner of his eye, turning slowly to look at him. “Wait, en serio? Seriously?” Keith is suddenly self conscious again. “Yeah…I mean a little.” He feels regret starting to creep up his neck, through his chest, into a blooming heat on his cheeks.

“You’ve got to be kidding me.” Lance deadpans, “So Pidge’s story actually scared you? And here I was thinking you were all tough and mysterious.”

Keith frowns. “I’m tough. I almost broke your nose, remember?”

“Not that tough.” Lance is smirking.

“Im tough!”

“Sure you are.” Lance laughs, this time loud and shameless. Keith is scowling.

“Whatever you say. The bruise on your face begs to differ.” And with that he feels a smile tugging at his lips, satisfied with his answer.
They sit in silence for a bit longer, the sound of the crickets getting louder.

“They thanks for sharin’ the booze.” Lance says.

“Yeah…no problem.”

“Heal tonto, I hope you know this doesn’t mean we’re friends.” His voice is slowly returning to the cocky, annoying Lance that Keith knows. There is a small hint of teasing in his voice.

“Oh, no, of course not.” Keith says, mimicking his tone.

“Just wanted your booze.”

“Yeah.”

Lance pats his shoulder, standing up. “Welp, enjoy my spot, I only hate you a lot for taking it from me.” And as quickly as he appeared, he’s gone.

Keith is in the dark again, alone, but the warm tingling that is throbbing in his chest is making him feel oddly calm amidst the pitch black woods.
“Anyone want to tell me why I found an empty bottle of wine next to the kitchen yesterday?” Coran is standing over them on Monday morning, holding the empty bottle of cooking wine that Keith and Lance has polished off during the weekend.

Keith’s eyes widened. Shiro catches the movement and narrows his eyes at him. He feels Lance glance at him and he glances back. They both look away quickly.

“I’m going to assume it wasn’t a nine year old who drank an entire bottle of cooking wine.” Shiro deadpans, still looking at Keith.

“We can’t be leaving these things around for the kids to find them. Also, you all really shouldn’t be drinking on the job.” Coran’s smiley voice is reprimanding. “I’m going to need whoever did this to speak up. Camp policy.”

Keith just stares at it. He can’t get in trouble. At least not yet. He’s only been here for a week! Why does he do such reckless things? Why can’t he just go to bed instead of stealing booze from the kitchen? Shiro deserves better than than, he really does, it’s not fai—

“Yeah, lo siento, sorry that was me. Just really wanted a drink last night.” Lance’s voice breaks through his internal panic, sounding cool and careless. “Won’t happen again, Coran-man, that’s a promise.”

Keith looks at him, heart in his throat. What? Lance is covering for him? Why?

Coran frowns, clearly disappointed, but just sighs sadly. “Well, thank you for speaking up Lance. This is a warning, but please don’t pull any of these irresponsible stunts again. We don’t want parents thinking that we aren’t taking good care of their kids, now, do we?”

“No, we don’t.” Lance said, now sounding slightly upset, eyebrows furrowed in concern.

“Just stay out of the kitchen at night, everyone. If you want food at night we can work something else out.” Shiro says, sounding like an angry parent. “Lance, watch yourself. You may be able to show up late to things but don’t push your luck with anything else.”

Guilt twists mercilessly in Keith’s chest.

“Moving on,” Coran says quickly, changing the subject, returning to his brilliantly cheerful self. “Today is, drumroll please, ropes course day!”

Keith feels his stomach drop. He hates ropes courses. Hate hate hate—

“So, ready your campers for a day of team building and working together! Don’t forget sunscreen, and tell them to bring their water bottles! Oh, how exciting this is. This is one of my favorite days of the summer!” Coran’s voice is too loud for 6AM.
With a nod of understanding, the counselors all disband, readying themselves for the day’s activities. Keith jogs up to Lance, catching his shoulder and turning him around to face him. “Lance.” He says, not really knowing what else to say. Lance looks at him expectantly, eyes a dark blue that makes Keith feel like he’s drowning. He sighs shakily. “Lance, you didn’t have to— uh— Thank you.”

Lance smiles softly, an expression that Keith isn’t at all used to seeing on the boy’s face. “Hey, _tonto_, don’t get all sentimental with me. It’s toot early, _vale_?”

“But I—“

“I don’t have much to lose here, my reputation is what it is.” Lance smirks. “After all, I did end up drinking some anyway so…not a total lie.”

“Lance—“

“Adios, _tonto_. I’ve got a cabin full of kids who haven’t been blessed with my beautiful face yet today. And that’s just unfair.” With that, Lance walks away with a shit-eating grin on his face, but as Keith watches him leave he notices a small slump in his broad shoulders that wasn’t there before.

Keith’s heart is racing and he doesn’t even know why. He takes a deep breath and wills himself to calm down, walking to his cabin and preparing himself for the chaos that will ensue once his campers wake up.

—in case Keith hasn’t said it before, he’ll say it one more time.

He _hates_ ropes courses.

He hates the climbing wall, and the rope ladder, and the trust fall, and the stupid _stupid_ tangled net exercise. He hates the heat and the thickness of the air in the woods, the constant tickling and itching of grass on his ankles, the mosquitoes and flies swarming around him. He hates it all.

And to make matters infinitely worse, the cabin he is going through the courses with is none other than the fucking Blue Cabin, and Keith just wants to die.

“_Tonto_!” Lance’s voice is loud and close to his hear, making him jump. “Looks like we’re going neck and neck today. Your doodle is about to be _fried_.

“Lance, stop bringing up my doodle.”

“Blue cabin has been the champion at ropes courses for that past two years. We are practically bulletproof!”

A familiar anger coiled in Keith’s stomach. “Oh yeah? Well that’s what you said about capture the flag too, but your sorry doodle got practically kicked across Altea fields!” Lance’s face immediately falls into a scowl.

“Oh you’re really pushing your luck here, _rojo_, bringing that up again.”

“Well good!” Keith spits, not really sure what he’s saying. “Maybe I like…pushing my luck!”
Lance sputters. “Well fine then!”
“Good!”
“Fine!”
“Great!”
“Yeah, great!”
“Goo—“
“Keef?”

Keith looks down and sees Leo staring up at him. He flushes, realizing he has been caught acting like a complete child by one of his campers.

“Leo, hi. Everything okay kiddo?”

Leo hugs his leg. “Stacy is crying and I don’t know why.”

Uh oh. Keith can’t even deal with people his own age crying, let alone kids. He looks up with wide eyes at Lance, who is smirking at him.

“Looks like you’ve got some business to attend to.” His voice is taunting. Keith practically growls at him.

“This doesn’t concern you.”

Lance just shrugs smugly and walks away, waving behind him. “Adios, tonto. Buenos suerte, good luck with that.”

Keith sighs, trying to calm himself down, which he seems to be doing a lot lately. “Where is she, Leo?”

Leo’s tiny fingers point to the Red Cabin. Keith looks at his phone. There are ten minutes before the first ropes courses begin. Maybe he can get her to come out in time.

Hi heart is beating rapidly with nervousness and he pads into the cabin. He sees Stacy on the couch and moves to crouch down in front of her. She sniffles and wipes her nose on his sleeve, looking up at Keith with here huge, dark eyes. Tears are spilling onto her cheeks and she stifles another sob.

“Stacy, hi.” Keith tries for a gentle voice, and he thinks it works. He’s not sure. “Why are you crying? Did something happen?”

“Jack is being really mean to me.” She sniffs again. “He keeps calling me names.”

Keith raises an eyebrow. “Jake? What’s he saying to you?”

Tears fill her eyes. “You know, that I have cooties and stuff. He says I’m gross.”

Keith can’t help but chuckle a little because obviously Jake has a crush. Stacy looks at him with confused eyes. “Keef?”

“Jake is only being mean because he wants to be your friend.” Keith tries, but even as he says it he knows it doesn’t make sense. He tries again. “I think you make him nervous.”
“What? Why? I really nice to him all the time!”

Keith smiles softly at her. “I’ll talk to him, Stacy. Don’t worry. But trust me, he doesn’t mean the things he says, okay? You are a really good kid.”

She sniffs and nods, a small smile appearing on her round face. “Keef!” She pitched forward and tackles Keith into a hug and he laughs, surprised. “You are the greatest leader ever!”

Keith doesn’t really know how to respond to such high praise. He just laughs even more. “Come on,” he says, grinning, “let’s go show the Blue Cabin who’s boss, alright?”

“Yeah!” She grins mischievously and trots out of the cabin door before Keith can process what is happening. He chuckles quietly to himself, feeling a burst of warmth in his chest at the unexpected gesture of affection, and slowly walks outside to face the horrible day that is awaiting him in the woods.

Lance is standing with his campers at the opening of the forest, arms crossed over his chest, eyebrow raised when he sees Keith leaving his cabin.

“Oh hey, tonto, there you are. We’re only a hundred years older!” His campers all laugh. Keith sighs.

“Just solving problems, being a good leader. Don’t expect you to understand.”

Lance sputters. “I’m going to make you eat those words, perdedor!”

Keith smirks. “Lookin’ forward to it.” He starts walking towards the forest with a strange sense of confidence, beckoning for his campers to follow. He sees the golden orb of Jakes head and reminds himself to talk to the little runt when he gets the chance.

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The first ropes course is the trust fall, admittedly Keith’s least favorite. It involves a single camper standing on a raised platform and falling backwards into he hands of the rest of the team, who all catch them together.

The Blue Cabin goes first. Lance’s cheers are practically deafening as he supports his campers, one falling after the other, all being caught successfully. Keith has a nervous thought that one of his campers is probably going to die today, but then figures that might just be anxiety talking and tries to shove it down.

Lance is next to him in a flash. “What’s with the look of terror, rojo? Intimidated by how incredible my campers are doing?”

Keith hadn’t realized he was being so transparent. He clears his throat. “Has anyone ever, like, gotten seriously injured during one of these things?” He mentally slaps himself for sounding so scared.

Lance seems to take notice because his smirk falters slightly. “What? Keith, don’t worry about that.” His voice sounds much gentler than before. A strange feeling twists in Keith’s stomach.
“Keef it’s our turn it’s our turn!” Leo is bouncing up and down on his tip toes and pulling on Keith’s hand. Keith smiles, still terrified, and follows his campers to the platform.

Mike goes first, then Stacy, then Jack. All of them are caught without any problems. To his surprise, thee kids are all doing this so easily, and Lance pipes up behind him, “See how strong you are when you all work together?” He doesn’t know if Lance is reassuring him or the campers, but wither way, his statement has comfort settling in Keith’s stomach as his anxiety slowly calms down. He looks over his shoulder at Lance and Lance sends him a knowing smile, eyes bright. Keith swears that this boy looks like summer.

The kids end up begging Lance to trust fall with Keith, and Lance tries multiple times to reject the offer, saying there is no feasible way Keith can handle “this much man”. But Keith insists, because he knows he’s strong enough. When he catches Lances between his arms with little effort, Lance stutters and swivels to face him, a small blush dusting his cheeks. Must be because it’s so damn hot out.

---

After untangling themselves from a human knot, racing up rope nets, and lifting each other over a 7ft wall, the red and blue cabins are exhausted, sweaty, covered in scrapes, and starving. The sun has taken a toll on Keith, he can feel it, and the splintering heat breaking across his skin makes him know that he probably looks like a lobster right now. He glances and Lance, who’s brown skin just looks darker, shiny with droplets of sweat and glowing with his tan. Keith huffs at the unfairness of all of it.

The last ropes course of the day is the swinging log, which is a low hanging log on top of a huge puddle. The log is wobbly and unstable, and the team has to walk across it with their hands on each other’s shoulder and try not to fall. Needless to say, they fell multiple times. Both teams did. But Keith just stayed in the puddle while Lance prodded at him to get up because the cold water let so good on his skin.

“Come on rojo the kids are getting away!”

“But my face hurts.”

“Suck it up, you have a reputation to uphold, mr. ‘greatest leader ever’!”

Keith scowled. “Great leader. Horrible sunburn.”

Lance poked his side with his foot. “Come on, penjedo—“

“Fineee” Keith gets up reluctantly, dripping with water, and stands face to face with Lance. He can feel his sopping wet hair sticking out in odd directions. He can feel the mud and grass on his face. But he still goes, “How do I look?” Before he can stop himself.

Lance laughs out loud at him, clapping a warm hand onto his cold, wet shoulder. “You look like you hate the woods, rojo.”
“’Kay, as long as that’s clear.” Keith is smiling despite himself.

“I’d ask how I look but,” Lance flips his hair dramatically, “we all know the answer to that.”

Keith blushes a little but responds with, “worse than me?”

“You wish, mullet. You wish.” But Lance is still smiling. Keith wonders if maybe, just maybe, they are becoming friends.

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Keith really doesn’t mean to go back to the rock behind the kitchen, especially not after the close call in the morning. But he has a nightmare that there is a serial killer in his cabin, threatening the kill his campers with a machete, and he scrambled out of his bed in his boxers, tugging on a loose tank top and slippers before sprinting out the door, heart racing and sweat breaking out all over his body.

These night terrors need to end, he can’t function on such little sleep. He can’t keep doing this to himself. But he is just terrified.

He doesn’t take any food from the kitchen this time. He just collapses defeatedly against the rock, willing to calm his heartbeat down, listening to his stomach grumble, and squeezing his burning eyes shut.

He feels like maybe he should tell Shiro what is going on. Shiro was always there for him when he was younger and this happened. Shiro would get in bed with him and wrap his arms around him until he stopped shivering, whispering comforting words into his ear until he fell asleep. But now he is twenty years old, dammit, and he should be over this, but he’s not. He can’t shake off the feeling of impending doom that suffocates him whenever he turns the lights off.

He shouldn’t tell Shiro. He needs to learn how to cope with this.

He hugs his knees to his chest and looks out onto the lake again, the water shimmering with the bright moonlight. The absence of darkness makes him feel like he can breathe again, the tight clutches slowly loosening on his heart.

“Tonto?” Lance’s soft voice curls around him and he looks up with tired eyes. “I— You’re here again?”

Keith just looks at him, not really knowing what to say. He nods.

Lance looks so stunning in the simplest way. He just has on blue joggers and an orange tank top, but they hand off his body in waves and his skin looks deeper in the moonlight; his freckles look like black dots splattered artfully onto his face. His short, wispy hair is messy from the pillow and his eyes are a piercing blue, making everything in their vicinity glow despite the dark night sky surrounding them. He looks sleepy, but his think eyebrow is raised in curiosity.

“’That’s all the info I’m getting from you, huh?”

Keith just nods again, and looks away from Lance because his frustrating beauty is a little too much
for this hour of the night.

“I take it you aren’t going to leave?”

Keith shakes his head, hugging his knees closer to himself. Lance sighs.

“And there’s no wine this time.”

Keith shakes his head again.

Lance plops down next to him, closer than Keith was expecting, their shoulders pressing together. The heat coming from Lance makes Keith feel safe and nervous at the same time, and she screws his eyes shut, wanting the feeling to go away so he can attempt to think straight.

They sit in silence for a bit. Lance takes out his phone and scrolls through Instagram for a bit and Keith stays still with his eyes trained on the lake, every ripple of the water catching his attention. Then he finds himself speaking.

“How do you fight someone with a machete?” He looks over at Lance, noticing how little space there is between their faces, and hides his blush beneath his arm when Lance turns to look at him.

He expects Lance to make fun of him, to ask him what he is on, tell him he’s crazy. But Lance just answers, plain and simple. “Shoot them.”

“But what if you don’t have a gun?”

“Then you gotta find the way to get the machete from them.”

“Yeah, but how?”


There are a lot of options.

Keith hears it over and over again in his head. A lot of options. Because Lance is totally right, there are. There are so many options! And Keith has taken martial arts his entire life, what is he so afraid of? He sees Lance looking at him very tentatively and that’s when he realizes he is staring at Lance, with probably a maniacal look on his face. He turns away and clears his throat. “Yeah, yeah I guess so.”

“Keith?” Lance sounds very hesitant. “Are you…okay?”

“What? Yeah, yeah I’m—” but something inside Keith breaks when he looks at Lances eyes, blue like the ocean and filled with concern. “I…” Lance waits. Keith sighs. “I keep having nightmares.” He says softly, turning his attention to the lake again. “They get worse every night and they wont go away. I don’t know. Maybe it’s just…being out here. I don’t know. But I haven’t been able to sleep. And this stupid spot is the only place that calms me down.”

He waits for Lance's teasing, but it doesn’t come. He refuses to look at Lance because he feels like a child, admitting that he is so scared of things that dont even exist. The crickets are chirping loudly and Keith just wants to sleep, but every time he closes his eyes, he sees the terrified look in Leo’s eyes as the machete comes down on him—

“Yeah, this place is the best for that.” Lance says, as if Keith didn’t just embarrass the shit out of himself. “Because the lake is always bright no matter how dark it is outside.”
Keith wonders why it only took Lance thirty seconds to understand something that has taken him two weeks to understand about himself. “I… yeah.”

Lance is looking at the lake now, the sharp angles of his profile highlighted by the white light reflecting off the water. Keith lets his eyes trail along his angle jaw and hooked nose for a brief moment.

“So, is that why you come here?” He asks Lance, not expecting an answer, but just trying to keep the conversation going.

“Nah, not really. I just love the water. Reminds me of home. I grew up in Miami, right by the beach, so whenever I’m not around water I get a little stir crazy.”

Keith nods. ‘Yeah, I get that.”

They both stare at the water for another moment.

“You can also get into a massively devastating pillow fight with him.” Lance says after a long period of silence.

“What? With who?”

“The guy with the machete!” Lance is grinning at him, dimples poking through his cheeks, His eyes are so bright that Keith has to look away.

Keith laughs out loud, clamping his hand over his mouth to stifle it. “You are insane.”

“There would be feathers everywhere! You could escape without being seen! It’s foolproof!”

They are both giggling widely as the image of a serial killer covered in feathers flashes though their heads, and Keith feels at ease for the time all night.

When Keith crawls back into bed twenty minutes later, the nightmare returns as he falls asleep. But just as the machete is swung at Leo, Leo swings back with a pillow, and the whole room bursts into feathers. Leo’s happy giggles are heard over the frustrated grumbling of the scary man, and Keith feels a warmth fill all of his senses.
After archery the next day, Keith sees Jack tugging on Stacy’s ponytail and teasing her when she misses her shot, and he decides that as much as he doesn’t want to, he needs to talk to him about what is going on. Taking a breath and bracing himself for the awkwardness that is going to ensue, he walks up to Jack and taps him on the shoulder.

“Hey big guy, can I see in you the cabin for a minute?” The campers all make an “oooooooh” sound at Jack because they know he’s in trouble, and Keith silences them. “Come on guys, let’s not do that.”


“I just wanna talk.” He says, sounding very unlike himself.

When they get into the cabin, Jack sits on the couch and Keith kneels down in front of him so that they are at eye level. “Jack…” He starts, but Jack cuts him off.

“This is unfair! I didn’t do anything! I wanna go play.” He huffs and crosses his arms over his tiny chest.

“I just want to talk to you about Stacy.” Keith tries, voice gentler this time. Jack’s eyes get comically wide and he flushes.

“What? Why?” He practically shrieks, panic evident in his eyes.

“You aren’t being very nice to her.” Keith says knowingly. “She’s really upset about it. She told me a couple of days ago.”

“I’m not mean to her!” Jack says, clearly in denial.

“You pulled her hair today, I saw you. That is not a very nice thing to do.”

“I was just kidding! It didn’t hurt or anything anyways!”

Keith sighs. Here goes. “I know you don’t mean to be rude. I just think…I think you like her.”

“What?” Jack squeaks. “Ew! She has cooties!”

“Jack, do you like-like Stacy?” He hasn’t used the word “like-like” since third grade.

Jack sighs. “Yes. But you can’t tell anyone! It’s a super secret okay?”

Keith chuckles. “I won’t. But maybe being nicer to her will make her like you more too?”

Jack scowls. “I don’t think so. She doesn’t like me.”
“Well, you tease her quite a bit.” Keith says matter-of-factly.

“Otherwise, you tease Lance all the time!”

Keith falters, shocked. “I—what?”

“You and Lance are mean to each other too!”

Keith flushes, heart rate increasing. “Yeah but… I don’t like Lance.” It sounds more like a question than a statement.

“You don’t?” Jake is looking at Keith wide-eyed, questioning, confused, as if this statement made no sense to him.

“What? No of course not! I—“

The door to the Red Cabin bursts open and Lance’s voice breaks through the tension in the room. “Hey tonto, we’ve been waiting forever! It’s swimming time!”

Keith stares at him, an intense flush coloring his cheeks. Lance is wearing blue swim trunks and flip flops, exposing his bare, tan torso in it’s full glory. He pushes his sunglasses up to the top of his head, making his hair a spiky, shaggy mess underneath them. He has very light tan lines on his shoulders from where a tank top usually is, and he is carrying a bucket filled with supplies like goggles and kick boards. There are a few small moles scattered across his chest and stomach and Keith wants to connect the dots, dragging his tongue across — “The kids aren’t going to wait forever!”

Keith sits still, absolutely stunned with the dark, slippery slope that is happening in his head at the moment. He opens his mouth to speak but only a squeak comes out and he clears his throat. Taking a stuttered breath, he tries again. “Yeah, sorry, we’ll be out in a second.”

“Yeah rojo, you better be! We don’t like to be kept waiting!”

Lance walked out of the cabin to join his campers in the courtyard and Keith turned to Jack, who was sticking his tongue out at him. “You think Lance is dreaaammyyyy!” He says exaggeratedly, fluttering his eyelashes.

“Hey, hey, that’s not—” Keith sighs defeatedly. “That’s a super secret, alright? So how about I keep your super secret, and you keep mine, okay?”


“Good, now go get your bathing suit on.” He pushes Jack playfully towards his room but then stops him. “And Jack?”

“What?”

“Don’t… follow my example. Being mean to the person you like is not good.”

Jack frowns. “But it worked for you!”

“I—no, it didn’t.” Keith counters, confused, and he wants to ask Jack what he means but Jack sprints away from his, giggling wildly and grabbing his swimsuit before running out the door.

Keith lets out a long, shaky breath.
They have only been at the lake for ten minutes and Keith can already tell how much Lance loves the water. He dives in before any of the kids do, jumping off of the small dock and whooping into the air before crashing into the stilled surface, making it break into hundreds of small waves. The kids are all shrieking as they follow him, whooping just like he did and cannonballing into the water. Keith watched the spectacle with a fondness that creeps up on him, like a slow burning in his stomach.

Lance’s head breaks through the surface of the water and he looks at Keith, raising an eyebrow with a joyful grin shining on his face. “You coming in, tonto? Or are you going to make me drag you in myself?”

Keith’s mind goes to a trillion horribly dirty places before he actually comprehends what Lance said. Jesus, what is with his brain being so deep in the gutter today?

“I’ll just watch, thanks.” He bites out, trying and failing to sound irritated.

Lance rolls his eyes. “Oh come on, it’s like ninety five degrees out. You know you want to get in on this, rojo.”

Keith doesn’t move. “Nope, I’m really okay right here.”

“You’re no fun!” Lance shrieks, bounding out of the water, right towards Keith.

“Lance, no. No, don’t you—”

But in one smooth swoop Lance has Keith gathered in his arms, and Keith can only savor the feeling of Lance’s cold, wet chest pressed against the side of his body for a moment before he is being pitched into the ice cold water, fully clothed. He breaks the surface, gasping angrily as Lance jumps in after him, giggling mischievously. When Lance resurfaces they both look at each other for a brief second. Keith’s eyes watch a droplet of water fall from Lance’s eyelash to his cheek, and then down to the corner of his lip.

He growls angrily and lunges at Lance. “You idiot! I told you I didn’t want to swim!”

Lance laughs out loud but doesn’t quite dodge Keith fast enough, and Keith tumbles onto him, sending the both under the water. He hears Lance’s muffled screaming and when they come up for air, Lance is laughing hysterically. “Damn, pendejo, looks like you got me.”

Keith smirks and swims to the edge of the pond, opting to sit in the shallower water there and watch over his campers. Lance currently has one of his campers sitting on his broad shoulders, and he counts to three before shouting and flipping the kid love his head and into the water. All of the campers around him laughs boisterously and start chanting, “my turn!” and “Lance, flip me!” Lance is grinning brightly at them and Keith feels a blush creeping up the back of his neck at the sight of it, so shameless and stunning. Does Lance even know how beautiful his smile is? The crinkled eyes, white teeth, dimples, and glowing skin do dangerous things to Keith’s stomach, making it flip consistently even after the grin has disappeared. There are droplets of water dripping off his hooked nose and dark lashes, and when he moves to shallow water, his torso is glittering with water and
practically shining as it soaks in the sun. Keith suddenly feels even more self conscious about his pale and pasty body. Rationally, he knows that there really isn't anything wrong with how his body looks. But looking at Lance makes him feel like he is so average in comparison. This boy is gorgeous. Keith finally begins to admit defeat, feeling the acceptance of his crush slowly start to swallow him whole.

“Keef! Come play too!” Leo’s voice rings in Keith’s ears, snapping him back to reality. He smiles at Leo and gets up.

“Okay okay, fine.” He grins and starts peeling his wet shirt off. Leo is bouncing up and down with excitement.

“Stacy! Keef is going to swim with us!” Stacy looks at Keith and screams giddily. Keith smiles fondly. His eyes wander over to Lance, but Lance is already looking at him, eyes falling on Keith’s body slightly before snapping up to meet Keith’s. Lance smiles a little sheepishly and turns away, yelping as one of his campers tackles him into the water.

Keith falters. Was Lance just checking him out? Checking out his pale, pasty, unimpressive body? He blushes and hugs his arms around himself, feeling insecure. Leo looks oblivious to his inner turmoil and tugs him but the arm. Keith trips into the water.

They end up playing Marco Polo, and Keith reluctantly agrees to participate. Lance is the first person to be Marco. He screws his eyes shut and he can’t stop smiling, arms flailing around him as he tries to feel for his surroundings.

“Marco!” He shouts.

“Polo!” All of the kids say, and Lance dives forward, making them all shriek.

It doesn't take long for Lance to tag all of the kids. It turns out, Lance is an expert at this game, and the kids are definitely not. All of the campers are gathered on one side of the lake, where the people stand when they get tagged, and Keith is on the other side of it, smirking at a confused Lance who is feeling around in the center.

“Was that everyone?” Lance asks, eyes still closed.

“You haven't tagged Keef yet!” Leo shrieks happily, and Lance’s face breaks into a shit-eating grin.

“Dónde estás, tonto? Where are you, huh? Come on, don’t be shy.” Lance takes a breath. “Marco!”

“Polo.” Keith mumbles through a smile, knowing that there is no use trying to win this game. Lance is too good, and maybe, deep down, Keith wants to let him win this.

Lance’s head snaps in Keith’s direction and Keith lets out a small giggle despite himself, at the seriousness Lance always handles these games with. Lance is moving closer to him but he doesn’t budge. He hears Stacy yelling at him to move but he just grins, heart beating faster as Lance nears him. It isn’t fair that this idiot has such a profound effect on him. This idiot of a boy who isn’t an idiot at all, but caring and fun. Keith feels the heat in his cheeks and thanks god that Lances eyes are closed or else he would see the obvious fondness in Keith’s eyes. Finally, Lance is less than a foot in front of him and his naked torso is gleaming brightly with sweat and lake water. Keith can feel Lance’s breath, hot on his nose.

“Marco.” Lance says softly, a small smirk playing on his lips because he knows he’s won. Keith soaks in the small freckles, the golden skin, the white teeth that are just slightly crooked, and the soft, full lips that decorate Lance’s face.
“Polo.” Keith responded, barely able to hold in the hitch in his breath when Lance flattened a hand against his chest, long fingers splaying across the bare skin below Keith’s neck. Keith sucked in a breath and prayed that Lance could not feel his skyrocketing heartbeat beneath his palm.

Lance leaned impossibly closer, eyes flying open and glinting with a grin. Keith chuckles nervously at the closeness and nearly drowns in the blue of Lance’s bright irises. “Got you, tonto.” Lance says, sounding almost gentle. The moment passes quickly, though, and Lance reels around towards the kids and throws his hands in the air, whooping. “I win!” He shouts. The campers all cheer loudly, and Keith dissolves into giggles at the adorableness of it all.

As they are drying off, Keith has to forcibly tear his eyes away from Lance’s towel-dried, messy hair and soft skin. He feels like this crush has hit him like a train. It was much easier to handle when Lance hated him, but now Lance treats him like a friend, even throughout all the challenges and friendly competition. Keith can’t stop looking at him. He can’t get enough. Everything about Lance, from his Spanish cursing to his long, slender fingers, makes Keith feel like his head is spinning.

He goes to sleep with a nervous heartbeat and an unsettling warmth in his stomach.

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“Estoy tratando, mamá. I’m trying, but I don’t get my paycheck until next week.”

It is well after midnight when Keith realizes that he forgot his phone on one of the chairs by the lake, and he gets out of bed reluctantly to find it. He doesn’t expect anyone to be awake, but he hears Lance’s voice coming from somewhere near the lake, soft and slightly irritated. He pauses and stays dangerously still. He doesn’t really mean to eavesdrop, but his curiosity is getting the best of him and he can’t bring himself to pick up his phone and leave. He spots Lance across the small lake, looking exhausted and distraught. He strains his ears to hear Lance’s voice.

“Coran is impossible to argue with, mamá. I can’t change the pay day, it’s when everybody gets paid….No, no puedo pagar….Mamá I know, please listen to me, I’ll send it as soon as possible… No!….I know she is, I’m doing everything I can, pero no puedo hacer más que…mamá please—“

Lance’s voice cuts off and Keith realizes that he’s been spotted. He gasps quietly and shuffles awkwardly, trying to pick up his phone and run out of sight, but it’s too late. Lance is already jogging around the lake to catch up with him. “Tonto?” and then, “Keith?”

Keith turns around sheepishly. “Lance, hi. My, uh, I forgot my phone here, so…” He keeps his eyes trained on the floor and tries not to look at Lance’s face, which is twisted into a stressed frown.

“Oh, uh, okay.” A pause. “Did you have another nightmare?” Lance’s voice sounds a little off, a little awkward. Forced conversation is not something that Keith thinks Lance does too much, and he can tell by the way Lance is shifting uncomfortably and wrapping his arms around himself.

Keith decides that this isn’t the way he wants to see Lance. Not now, and not ever again.

“What? No, not yet anyway.” Keith scuffs his foot along the rocks on the ground. “I just. You know.” He holds up his phone. “Need an alarm to wake me up tomorrow.”
Lance doesn’t reply. Just shrugs and nods, eyes hooded and tired.

“Are you okay?” Keith asks, sounding way too concerned for someone who has only known Lance for three weeks. Lance shrugs again.

“Family issues, money issues.” He looks at the ground and sighs like this is a conversation he has had with a lot of people. “Just issues all around.”

Keith wants to reach out and touch his face, hold him, kiss his eyes, nose, mouth, tell him everything is going to be okay. He resists the urge and curls his hands into fists to avoid doing anything impulsive. His nails dig painfully into his palms. “Lance—“ He begins, trying to come up with something comforting to say. But Keith has never been good at comforting people, or emotions in general, really.

Lance cuts him off mercifully, “Keith, it’s…really it’s fine.” He chuckles nervously, throwing Keith a gentle smile that lacks it’s usual light. It isn’t convincing at all. Keith feels something hollow in his chest at the sight of it. “Parents, huh?” Lance tries to joke.

Keith doesn’t want to ruin Lance’s attempt at light humor by telling him that he actually doesn’t even have parents, so he just smiles a little and shrugs. “I bet they’re a handful.”

Lance smiles fondly. “They are.” He says softly. “But even so, I can’t help but miss ‘em. College and then Camp Voltron? I haven’t really been around much…” His voice trails off sadly and Keith can’t take it anymore. He can’t stand seeing Lance like this. This boy is the personification of sunshine, and Keith feels oddly protective of his light.

He grabs Lance by the wrist and drags him towards the lake, without really thinking. He just needs to get Lance’s mind off of whatever is bothering him, and he needs to do it fast. Lance laughs, a little breathlessly, at Keith’s sudden change in mood. “Rojo? What are you doing?”

They make it to the edge of the water and Keith stops, suddenly realizing that he doesn’t have a clue what he is planning on doing. He looks at the water, then at Lance, then at the water again. Lance raises an eyebrow, slightly amused. “Hey tonto, what’s gotten into you?”

Keith breathes a sigh of relief at the use of the nickname, he can see the Lance he knows start to slowly return. His chest heats up. He needs more of it. More of that light. That smile.

His heart is beating wild and he turns to the water. Lance likes the water, right? He said that it calms him down. Keith strips of his shirt and Lance whistles jokingly. “Lookin’ good, rojo.” He says, smirk returning to his face. But Keith doesn’t stop. He pulls off his pants, kicks off his shoes, and suddenly he is standing in front of Lance in just his boxers, with his hands hovering above the waistline. He looks at Lance briefly, as if he is coming to terms with reality again and realizing what he’s about to do. Lance is staring at him, his wide, shocked eyes are a pale blue in the glowing moonlight.

“Woah woah woah!” Lance waves his hands in front of his face, walking closer to Keith, laughing incredulously. Keith stops what he’s doing and looks up at Lance, who is now only inches away. “What on earth are you doing, tonto?” Lance looks shocked, bewildered, impressed, but most importantly, happy. “If I knew I was going to get a show I woulda brought my singles! Damn!”

Keith flushes, suddenly very aware of how naked he is. “I’m…skinny dipping?”

“You what?” Lance is grinning wildly. “You want to skinny dip? What the hell? Who even are you?” Lance is still grinning, eyes glinting again, and Keith is drinking it up.
Keith shrugs, trying to remain calm, but his heart is beating in his throat. “We can’t get drunk, we can’t smoke weed, but we can get naked, and we can swim…” Keith begins pulling his boxers down and Lance’s wide eyes dart downwards to track the movement. Keith can see a faint blush on his freckled cheeks and wonders briefly what exactly is causing it. “And you’re having a bad night, so…I mean, it’s a fun thing, right? Isn’t this what like…isn’t this what they do in all the camping movies?”

Lance just looks at him for a few seconds, eyes wide. Then he bursts out laughing, doubling over and crossing his arms over his stomach, trying and failing to steady himself. Keith feels the musical laughter curl around him like an embrace that he didn’t even know he was craving. Lance’s laugh is so loud, shameless, unassuming, and gorgeous. It takes Keith an entire twenty seconds to realize that Lance is actually laughing at him, and his knees shake, the nerves finally getting to him. He attempts to frown, and watches as Lance wipes a tear from the corner of his eye. “So, are you in or not, Blue?” He says, trying to sound like he still thinks this is a good idea when it so obviously isn’t.

Lance has finally calmed down, the grin still dazzling on his face. His thin eyebrow raises, and then softly he says, “I can’t seem to figure you out, rojo.”

Keith clears his throat, turning towards the water. He is suddenly feeling way too many things and can’t stand this close to Lance anymore. “Nothing to figure out.” He says, a little sadly, despite himself. Then before Lance can reply he jumps into the water.

It is freezing cold on his skin, so cold that it almost burns. Keith wonders why it is so much warmer during the day. He scrambles to pull his boxers off because he is a man of his word, and when he breaks the surface, he tosses them to the sand and Lance is looking at him, utterly shocked. “You gonna join me?” He says, sounding much less nervous then he feels.

Lance grins mischievously. “Hell yeah!” He throws off his shirt and starts tugging at his sweatpants, smiling the whole time. Keith feels heat exploding all over his body despite the freezing water. He trails his eyes over Lance’s long legs and toned torso, suddenly feeling incredibly helpless. This beauty. He can’t handle it. This is a horrible idea.

Lance crashes into the water and Keith sees his boxers fly onto the sand. Holy Shit Lance is naked. Lance in naked. Keith’s brain starts to short circuit.

But Lance is giggling like crazy and it makes Keith’s stomach feel like liquid. Suddenly, any potential embarrassment feels worth it.

Once the giggling has died down, both boys look at each other, smiling stupidly, water dripping down their faces.

“This feels weird.” Keith says.

Lance giggles. “I know. It’s really cold.”

Keith lets his limbs go limp and floats effortlessly, mouth disappearing underneath the water. Lance sighs happily and does the same. They spend a few minutes in silence, looking up at the stars. They float towards each other without realizing, and when their shoulders brush Keith jumps and the sudden movement splashes water all over Lance. Lance sputters and falls upright, splashing Keith back. Keith laughs.

“Hey tonto, i’ll race you to the other side of the lake.” Lance says in his usual taunting voice, eyebrow raising in a challenge.
“I’m not going to frantically swim while I’m naked, Lance.”

“Are you sure? Or are you just scared cuz you know you’ll lose?”

Keith frowns. “Fine, Blue. You’re on—“

But Lance has already dove into the water again, and Keith gets a brief glimpse of his bare ass that practically paralyzes him, but then he realizes that this is, in fact, a race, and he comes to his senses and goes diving after Lance.

Lance wins, of course, and spends the next five minutes rubbing it in Keith’s face, but Keith doesn’t mind at all, because Lance is practically glowing in the moonlight and Keith can watch him talk for embarrassingly long amounts of time.

They both settle in a shallow part of the lake, where they can sit without their lower halves being exposed. Keith can’t seem to stop smiling no matter how much he tries. He can’t believe that he did this, it’s so unlike him. His heart beats wildly in his chest when he sees Lance turning to look at him out of the corner of his eye.

“Thanks, tonto.” Lance says, so gently that Keith thinks he might have missed it. “Eres loco, You’re crazy, man, but this was really fun.”

Keith fakes nonchalance. “I mean, you were there when I had a nightmare, so…” He leans back onto his elbows, looking up at the sky. He feels Lance’s eyes trailing over his exposed skin.

“Jesus, rojo, you’ve got some abs going on under there. What else are you hiding underneath that hideous polo?” Lance’s voice sounds teasing.

Keith snorts. “Just a bunch of pale skin that burns way too easily.”

Lance shrugs, laughing. “Nah, you’re skin looks fine to me.”

“Well thanks for your approval, Lance. I can sleep at night now.”

“Oh yeah totally, no problemo.” Lance snaps back with equal sarcasm.

They both turn to look at each other at the same time and Lance smiles, almost sheepishly, at him. Keith feels overwhelmed by the how soft Lance’s features look underneath the glow of the few stars that are out tonight, and he can’t help but tell himself that if this was a movie, then now would be the perfect moment for a kiss.

But he knows who he is. He knows who he is not. And he knows that he is not the kind of person who kisses beautiful boys. He is not the kind of person who gets someone like Lance, and this isn’t a movie.

He sighs tiredly. “We should go.” He says. “Our campers really shouldn’t be alone this long.”

Lance’s smile falters a little but he nods softly in agreement. Yeah. We should. Could you…uh… close your eyes while i get my clothes?”

Keith chuckles. “You got something to hide?”

“Come on Keithhhh—“

“Alright, alright.” Keith’s face is back to that stupid, persistent grin again.
Once they have their boxers on again, Keith gathers the rest of his clothes and starts to make his way towards his cabin, raising his arm to wave goodbye to Lance. Lance reaches out and catches his wrist before he can walk any further, and without warning, Keith is pulled into a hug.

“Gracias, thanks again, tonto. You made my night.” Lance says into Keith’s wet hair.

Keith can’t really respond like a human being because Lance’s body, almost fully naked and soaking wet, is pressed up against him at every possible point, from his shoulders to his thighs, and the sensation of smooth skin and lean muscle combined with the citrus smell of Lance’s shampoo has Keith’s stomach flipping out of control. Heat pools in his cheeks and spreads through his chest. He raises his arms up and smooths them onto Lance’s back, desperate to memorize the feeling. “Yeah.” He croaks helplessly. “Yeah no problem, Lance.”

And then Lance lets go and Keith’s whole body screams at the loss of contact.

Lance smirks at him. “See you tomorrow, rojo?”

“You bet.” Keith smiles back.

Lance walks away looking much happier than he did an hour earlier, and Keith flops face first into the mud, wondering when on earth he became so utterly pathetic.
Keith is rudely awakened at 5:45AM for a mandatory counselor meeting organized by none other than Mr. Tall, Tan, and Handsome himself. Coran bursts into his cabin and tugs at his ear when he refuses to get up. “Come on, Keith-man! Up and at ‘em! Counselor meeting is in ten minutes. It’s going to be important today, according to Lance!”

Keith reluctantly drags himself out of bed, shivering despite the heat because of his lack of sleep. He just wants to hide under the covers forever.

He looks at his exhausted face in the mirror and sees tired, puffy eyes, dark circles hanging beneath them. There is a crease pressed into his cheek from the fold in his pillow. *I look like shit,* he thinks, self-consciously, eyeing his crazy bedhead. He doesn’t want Lance to see him like this and he hates to admit that to himself. He knows that there is absolutely nothing he can do to improve his appearance, especially his hair, so he just throws it into a sloppy bun, brushes his teeth, and puts his itchy red polo on.

The counselor meetings are usually very brief, because the kids can’t be left alone for more than ten minutes (a rule that Coran made up when they have their first impromptu counselor meeting in the courtyard) so Keith isn’t too concerned about how he ends up looking, maybe everyone will be too sleepy to care anyway.

When he walks out into the courtyard, he is the last one to arrive, as usual. Hunk and Pidge grin at him, looking much more awake than he feels. He feels a hand clap him on the shoulder and looks to his left where Shiro is smiling down at him. “Morning, sunshine.” He teases. Allura giggles and Shiro grins smugly at her. “This boy is the absolute opposite of a morning person.” He says, ruffling Keith hair. Keith growls, annoyed that Shiro messed up his bun, and pushes the hand off his head to re-do it.

“Come on, Keith, we’re in the great outdoors! Wake up and smell the—’’ Hunk starts, but Keith scowls.

“The what? The leaves? The dirt?” He snaps. It sounds mean, but Hunk bellows out a laugh and Pidge joins in.

“Dude, you’re hilarious.” Pidge says through her laughter. “I wish morning Keith was Keith all the time.”

“Alright, Alright, break it up you guys.” Keith hears Lance’s voice and the familiar twisting begins in his stomach. Lance is breaking through the counselors surrounding Keith, and when their eyes meet he sends Keith a kind, knowing smile that makes his heart stutter in his chest. “Maybe Keith was up late last night, give him a break.” He winks so subtly at Keith that he almost misses it, and he officially wants to die.

“Okay team, we have a very important topic to discuss today!” Lance says, holding one arm up to
gather everyone’s attention. The rest of the counselors all gather around the picnic table. Keith slumps forward and puts his face in his hands.

“Hey, tonto, stay sharp. I don’t tolerate any doodle-hopping during my meetings.”

“…Doodle hopping?”

“As you all know, this weekend marks the end of the third week at Camp Voltron, which means—“

“Lance, please don’t say what I think you’re going to say.” Shiro mumbles. Lance scowls.

“—which means it’s time to paint our Cabins!”

“Lance, you already tried to make this a thing last year. Don’t you get it? We can’t let the kids paint all over camp property. Do you even remember the trouble that fish on your Cabin door caused?” Shiro reprimands.

“It also costs a lot of money for all of that paint…” Hunk says sadly.

Keith can tell this is something that Lance has brought up before. He looks over at the Blue Cabin, eyeing the large fish that is painted onto the front face of it. He always wondered why the other cabins are bare.

“Look, guys, please.” Lance pleads. “The kids love it. This is some of the only freedom of expression that these kids ever experience. We can just get one color, it doesn’t have to be expensive, and you know I talked with the property owners and they ended up saying it’s totally fine—“

“It teaches them to make a mess, Lance. We are practically teaching them vandalism.” Shiro says, frustrated. “They can paint on paper, we aren’t going to destroy the Cabins so the kids can have a good time.”

“But isn’t that the point of all this?” Lance yells, sounding irritated. “The point is for the kids to have a good time! These kids keep coming back to the same cabins year after year. How wild would it be if they came back to their own artwork?”

“Lance,” Allura starts, sounding tired. “We love the kids dearly but, they aren’t the most talented of artists. You are talking about painting the entire front face of a building. They are children.”

“Which is exactly why they should do it. Do you guys know anything about how kids work? They need to know they are capable of changing things. Creating and damaging things. Don’t you get it?” Lance says, crossing his arms. His voice is angry, but there is sadness in in eyes.

“Lance—“ Shiro starts again, but Keith cuts him off.

“Let’s do it.”

Everyone turns to look at him, shock painting their faces. Nobody expected him to speak, apparently. He clears his throat awkwardly but continues, despite the holes Shiro’s glare is burning into his face.

“If you guys don’t wanna, then me and Lance will. You don’t have to participate at all.” Keith smirks. “Just, ya know, be prepared to deal with all of the complaints you’ll get when the other kids see how much fun we’re having.”

Everyone is silent for a moment, and a grin breaks across Lance’s face that is so bright Keith has to look away. “See? Even this pendejo agrees with me.” He says, a little fondly.
Coran sighs, clearly at a loss for words. Shiro looks at Keith tiredly.

“One color. White. We all paint with white. It’s the cheapest.” Keith reasons. “Lance is right. The same kids have been coming here for years and there are still many years left that they’ll come back. They can make this place their home by painting the cabins. When new kids come, we can just paint over it. It’s not a big deal.”

All of the counselors eye each other wearily. Shiro takes a long breath.

“Okay, fine—“

Lance shrieks and tackles Shiro so hard that they both tumble onto the ground. “Thank you thank you muchos gracias por todo—“

To Keith surprise, Shiro laughs as he pushes Lance off of him. “But try to be careful, okay?”

“Careful is my middle name!” Lance shouts giddily, pointing to himself. “Oh man I’m so pumped! Meeting adjourned! Gotta go tell my campers!”

All of the counselors disband, the tension suddenly gone. They all smile fondly at Lance, softly laughing and he runs to the Cabin, tripping over his own feet with excitement.

“That boy is either going to make or break this camp.” Coran says, affection in his voice, and the rest of the counselors nod in agreement.

Keith feels his heart warming. “I think he already made it.” He says, quiet enough that the others don’t hear.

It isn’t long before Keith is standing in front of his cabin with his campers, staring at the blank wood with three buckets of white paint at his feet. He ties his hair into a bun and opts for wearing a loose white t-shirt instead of his polo because he knows this is going to be messy. Lance is bounding towards him, already shirtless with a smear of white paint across his chest. Leave it to Lance to have paint on himself before they even start painting. Keith’s heart is pounding as he inches closer.

Lance looks beautiful, as usual. His bronze skin shimmering and his golden-brown hair wildly wispy in the breeze. Everything about him says summer, and when he is closer to Keith, the blue in his eyes is brighter than the blue in the sky above them.

“Hey tonto, this is a new look for you.” He says slyly, reaching over to flick at Keith’s ponytail with his long fingers.

Keith tries to hide his smile and knocks Lance’s hand away. “Shut up, it’s hot and my hair keeps getting in my face.”

Lance chuckles. “Looks good on you.”

“What?” Keith freezes, raising an eyebrow in complete confusion. Did Lance just compliment how he looks? Today of all days?

“I said your hair looks good like that.” Lance says, unwavering. His confidence makes Keith irrationally frustrated.
“Oh. Thanks.” Keith falters, and Lance smiles at him.

“Thanks for standing up for me this morning, tonto.” Lance’s eyes look at Keith softly, and Keith feels the flush rushing to his face before he can stop it.

“No problem, Lance.”

“I feel like I’ve been saying thank you to you way too much lately.” Lance laughs. “You gotta stop doing nice things for me, rojo, I’ve got an image to uphold.” He winks at Keith for the second time that day and then he is gone, waving behind himself carelessly.

Keith takes a shaky breath, collecting himself, before turning to his campers.

“Alright you guys, what are we going to paint on our cabin?”

“A dragon!” April, who is typically a soft-spoken girl, screams from the back of the crowd.

“No no, a giant robot hippo!” Mike protests.

“Turkey sandwiches!” Another voice says.

“Seventeen trillion dragons!” April shouts again, with determination.

“A watermelon!”

“Harry Styles!”

“Did I say dragons yet?”

Keith is grinning so hard his face hurts. “How about a little bit of everything?” The smiles he gets back are blinding.

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One hour into painting is apparently enough for Keith to be completely covered in splotches of white paint. He can feel it drying on his face, his arms, and his shirt. The cabin looks about as good as it can while being attacked by ten year-olds. There are handprints, smiley faces, hearts, and of course a giant dragon that Keith couldn’t talk April out of.

“We are the Red Cabin and dragons breathe fire, Keith! Duh.” She had said matter-of-factly.

Keith is having much more fun than he thought he would, and even his art-starved ass can appreciate the creativity of these children. Their imaginations are on overdrive and he can tell. The worn-down brown wood is barely visible anymore beneath the blinding white splatters that paint the front face of the Red Cabin. Keith takes a few steps back, off the porch and into the courtyard, to admire it.

Slowly, his gaze drifts towards the Blue Cabin. He sees Lance, covered in white paint and laughing hysterically as one of his campers leaves a white handprint on his stomach. Warmth curls in Keith’s chest at the sight of it and he can’t look away. Not even when Lance notices he is staring and waves eagerly at him. Keith smiles at him and waves back, a little shyly in comparison. “Your cabin needs
some work!” He shouts, teasingly.

Lance gasps dramatically, using his whole body so Keith can see his reaction. “Look who’s talking, Rojo! Your cabin doesn’t have a painting of my face on it anywhere. How could it possibly reach it’s full potential without this charming smile?” He points to himself and flutters his eyelashes, smiling. Keith feels his face flush because Lance does have a charming smile, but then he collects himself and smirks, slowly making his way over to Lance’s cabin.

“Oh, sorry, is that a smile? I couldn’t see it through all of the crusty paint you’ve got on you face.” He says tauntingly. He walks up the steps onto the porch of the Blue Cabin; a place, he realizes with shock, he’s never actually been before. He stands in front of Lance but isn’t brave enough to face him head-on yet, so he scans the paintings over Lance’s shoulder. Lance studies his face as his eyes move across the artwork. The paintings are pretty similar to the one’s on the Red Cabin, however there are a few Spanish phrases painted in goofy lettering and small chickens along the doorframe, because Lance calls his campers “pollitos”.

Keith doesn’t realize he is smiling until he locks eyes with Lance, and sees that Lance is smiling right back at him with something in his eyes Keith can’t quite place. “You like my Cabin.” He states, like it’s a fact.

“I…” Dammit. “Yeah, fine, it’s not bad.” Keith says, feigning nonchalance and crossing his arms over his chest.

Lance is grinning now, the sun hitting the planes of his face in all the right places. He looks divine. “You’ve got a little paint on your face.” He says jokingly, pointing to his own cheek to let Keith know where the paint is.

Keith grumbles frustrastedly. “Obviously I have paint on my face, you doodle.” He lifts his arm to wipe it but Lance frowns.

“No, you missed it.”

He wipes at it again, grumbling further.

“Wow, you suck at this.” Lance says. “You’re not going to make me do something cheesy like wipe it off for you, are you?” But he is grinning mischievously and Keith’s heart literally can’t take it.

“No, I’ll get it myself.” He snaps, feeling around his face for the dried-up paint. “Your face is covered in paint too and you don’t hear me complaining about it.”

“That’s because it looks great on—oh my god tonto, seriously?” Lance chuckles exasperatedly and Keith is not given any warning before he feels Lance’s hand cup his cheek and a thumb scrape across his cheekbone in one warm stroke. “I can’t watch you do this anymore. There, it’s gone.”

Keith’s heart is beating in his throat but he does his best to shake off the shocked expression that is probably on his face. He settles for raising his eyebrow instead. “You did the cheesy thing.” Is all he says.

“Yeah, I did.” Lance replies, and Keith sees a faint blush on his freckled cheeks. Keith is suddenly itching to wipe the smear of paint off of Lances chin too, and his hand is shaking as he raises it to—

“Keith! Who the heck is watching your campers? There is paint everywhere!” Shiro’s angry voice startles Keith and he swivels around to look at his cabin, white paint splattered unattractively all over the porch, the grass, the door, and the ground.
Keith had literally been so distracted by Lance he forgot all about his campers. What the hell kind of camp counselor is he? He sprints over to his cabin, not daring to look back at Lance, who is snickering at him. Shiro is standing at his cabin before he gets there, and he braces himself for the worst.

“Keith—” Shiro starts.

“I know I know I’m Sorry, Shiro, I’m sorry.” He says quickly. “I shouldn’t have left my cabin, that was dumb of me, irresponsible, I know you don’t have to tell me.”

Shiro sighs. “Keith, just... try your best to clean up some of this extra paint. You can flirt with Lance all you want but not when you are supposed to be watching the campers.”

“What? Flirt—I wasn’t flirting!”

Shiro rolls his eyes. “You’re forgetting I grew up with you, remember? I can tell when you are head over heels for someone.”

“I’m not—“

Shiro smirks. “Just clean up the paint, Keith. We can talk later.” He starts walking away.

“There’s nothing to talk about!” Keith calls after him, but even if he hears, he doesn’t respond.

— — — — —

The rest of the day is exhausting, to say the least. Keith is still embarrassed about the mishap during the painting in the morning, and slightly ashamed. He tries to stay away from Lance for the rest of the day to prove to Shiro and Coran that he is taking this seriously, but Lance makes it really hard with his constant pestering and teasing.

The other three cabins look much more organized and planned out than Lance’s and Keith’s. Pidge’s cabin is covered with small squares, pixel-like graphics, that spell out “Green Cabin” in a digital font. Hunk’s is covered in car parts and cartoon food. Shiro’s has a large, majestic Lion painted on the door.

Keith collapses onto his bed much earlier than the other counselors, opting to skip dinner because he doesn’t want to face Shiro, and also because he is so exhausted and the lack of sleep is finally starting to get to him so much that he isn’t even hungry. He tells Coran that he isn’t feeling well and wants to check out early, and Coran says that he will take care of making sure all the Red campers get to bed.

Keith doesn’t even realize he has fallen asleep until he starts dreaming.

* * *

“Shiro? Shiro, where are we?” Keith hears his own voice, panicked and breathy. “What is this place?”
The room around him is all black, with absolutely no light source at all. Keith is looking around frantically, trying to find—

“Keith!” Shiro’s voice comes out hoarse and broken, from somewhere in the distance.

“Shiro, where are you?” Keith screams, running forwards towards nothing in particular.

Suddenly Shiro appears. “Keith,” he breathes in relief, “thank god you found me. They almost got to me.”


A blood curdling scream fills the air and Keith feels the air around him thicken with burning heat.

“What—Shiro, what is that?” He asks, frantic.

A sad look passes across Shiro’s face. “Just as I thought.” He says, voice eerily soft. “You’re too late.”


“Too late to save me.”

Keith sobs. “Shiro!” But it’s too late. Darkness is threading around Shiro’s legs and arms, starting to engulf him like a tangle of sinister veins. He shouts in anguish, trying to fight them, but it’s no use.

“Keith, leave me—“

“I’m not leaving you here!”

Maniacal laughing is suddenly filling Keith’s head and he doesn’t know who it belongs to, but it is sinister and mocking and taking pleasure in Keith’s pain. A low voice shakes him down to his veins, “Your brother is dying. You could not save him.”

Keith is sobbing now, clawing at the darkness but every touch burns him like fire and his hot tears are clouding his vision like dark smudges across his eyes. He calls Shiro’s name, over and over, he hears Shiro screaming and suddenly disappearing as his whole body is engulfed—

Keith shoots upwards, chest heaving with gasping sobs that leave his whole body shaking violently. He is drenched with sweat and all of his limbs are shivering. He sucks in a large breath but it comes out as a sob again, and he muffles the noise with his hand.

He looks around the room in a panic but it’s completely dark, just like the room in his dream, and his tears are soaking into his shirt collar and all he sees is dark dark dark and he needs to get out of here.

He scrambles out of his bed anxiously and doesn’t even bother putting a shirt on or shoes on before he runs out of his cabin door, gulping in the fresh air and violently wiping the tears out of his eyes. But they keep coming, burning and persistent. He lets out a few more stuttering sobs, debating visiting Shiro and crying into his arms. But the second he thinks of Shiro he hears the pained screaming, sees the darkness engulfing his brother’s face. It makes him shudder and he doesn’t even think before sprinting across the courtyard and bursting into the Blue Cabin. He sees a door that looks a lot like the door to his own bedroom and practically kicks it down.

Lance is fast asleep in his bed, looking oddly serene and unlike himself. Keith lets out another sob at
the sight of him, suddenly overwhelmed with another bout of emotions. He doesn’t give himself a chance to think rationally about any of this before he bends over and shakes Lance anxiously.

“Lance,” He whispers, but a sob makes his voice crack. “Lance, Blue, please wake up…”

“Hm?” Lance turns over and looks up sleeping, his eyes glassy. They widen slightly when they lock onto Keith. “Tonto? What—“

“Please let me sleep here.” Keith says, tears threatening to spill over his cheeks again.

Lance leans up onto his elbows, now fully awake. “Um, yeah, of cour—“

Keith doesn’t even let him finish, he just slides Lance over and shoves himself into the bed, shivering and curling into himself underneath the covers. He takes a long, shaky breath of relief at the warmth of Lance by his side, the citrus smell that fills his senses. The moment of peace only lasts a moment before he feels the tears streaking his face, soaking into the pillow beneath him. He tries to control the small, broken whimpers that are falling from his lips but he can’t seem to muffle them enough. He feels Lance’s arms, hovering above him but not quite touching him, as if he’s not sure what to do.

A sob tears out of Keith throat before he can stop it, and he realizes he is still shivering despite the warmth radiating off of Lance. He screws his eyes shut and wills the image of Shiro’s face, terrified and helpless, to leave his mind. He can still hear the screaming.

Lance’s arms finally fall around him, pulling him in. Lance’s body is warm, solid, grounding. Keith can feel his heartbeat through his shirt, fluttery and light against his cheek. “Hey…Rojo…shh…estás seguro, you’re safe, everything is okay…” Lance’s voice is scratchy from just waking up, and his hand is rubbing small circles onto his back, leaving a trail of heat wherever it touches. “It was just a dream…”

Keith melts into him, pressing his face into Lance’s chest and bunching his shirt up in his fists. He takes deep breaths, trying to calm down, but they come out shaky and broken. “Shiro…he was dying and I couldn’t…I failed. I couldn’t save him.” Another sob. More tears.

Lance just tightens his grip, carding his fingers through Keith’s sweaty hair. Keith holds on for dear life. Lance is stable, comforting, and real. This is real. He nuzzles into Lance’s soft undershirt. It smells like grapefruit.

Lance presses him closer to his chest. “Shiro is sound asleep in his cabin. He’s safe. No te preocupes, don’t worry about a thing…” Keith takes another deep breath, starting to feel calmer. “Shhh, no more tears, okay?” Lance leans down so he is face to face with Keith, brushing his thumb delicately over Keith’s cheek. “It’s okay…you’re okay, and Shiro is too. Wanna know why?”

Keith drinks up Lance’s face; the soft freckled skin and the narrow, hooked nose. “Why?” He asks, voice cracking.

The corner of Lance’s mouth tugs upwards. “Cause he’s got you, of course.” He shoves Keith’s shoulder lightly. “And you don’t take bullshit from anyone, tonto.”

Keith’s eyes fill with tears for a completely different reason now. He smiles despite himself, his heartbeat finally starting to feel normal again (well, however normal it can be around Lance.)

“You punched me in the face when we first met.” Lance says, now smiling gently at Keith.

“Because I was terrified.” Keith chuckles weakly, the dry tears making his cheeks feel tight. “I thought you were a serial killer or something.”
Lance pokes his nose lightly. “Well, serial killer or not, you knocked me on my ass. So all of this ‘I couldn’t save him’ business is just plain unrealistic.” Lance’s voice is lighter now, with more of a teasing tone, but Keith can tell that he is still absolutely serious.

There is a long pause after that. It isn’t awkward but it isn’t comfortable either. Keith trails his eyes all over Lance’s face, which is dimly lit by the sparse light coming in through the window. He looks down promptly and realizes his hands are still bunched up into Lances shirt.

“I’m sorry.” Keith whispers, letting go. Suddenly, like being hit by a train, Keith realizes what the hell he is doing. He is in Lance’s bed. Lance is pressed up against him in all imaginable places, and Keith is literally, literally half naked. He clears his throat, and it’s like a spell is broken. “I’m, uh… sorry for waking you up.”

Lance grins. “No hay nada, it’s totally fine.” Lance says gently. “Are you feeling better?”

Keith nods slowly, shuffling a little to put some space between him and Lance because there is literally no room for Jesus and he isn’t handling it very well. Lance seems oblivious and just keeps talking. “I guess now you are the one thanking me, eh tonto?”

Keith smiles. “Yeah…I guess so.”

More silence. Keith’s eyelids are growing heavy. He feels the exhaustion start to take hold. His head is throbbing from crying and his limbs feel like lead. Lance’s hand lifts and cards through his hair one more time, Keith shivers at the contact. “You think you’ll survive the night, rojo?”

Keith takes a shaky breath. A moment of silence passes before he gathers the courage to respond out loud. He speaks, his voice barely a whisper.

“I don’t want to leave.”

“Then don’t.” Lance whispers back.

Those two words are all it takes for Keith to fall into a deep, deep sleep again. This time, he only dreams of Lance; his tan skin and blue eyes bathed in pale moonlight.
Chapter Summary

I just love cliche supermarket romance, sue me

“What do you think he is doing here?”

“Ew, do you think they were kissing?”

Keith’s is stirred awake by several hushed, whispering voices.

“Shouldn’t he be in the red cabin?”

“Ew, is he naked?”

For a moment Keith’s eyesight is bleary with sleep. He shifts slightly and feels a weight against his back, hot and firm. It takes him a moment to realize it is a body and that body is Lance and there are arms slung around his waist and Lance’s breath is hot on his neck and holy shit the memories from the night before come rushing back, hitting him like a freight train and—

His campers. He left his campers alone all night.

His eyesight is crystal clear now and he sees three of the blue campers staring down at him and Lance with wide eyes. He feels Lance stirring behind him, groaning slightly as he stretches and mumbling Keith’s name and he can feel each one of Lance’s muscles moving against his back and shit shit shit—

He jumps out of bed like he’s been shocked. The three campers yelp and step back. Keith looks down at his almost fully naked body and flushes. Holy fuck he is in so much trouble, Shiro is going to murder him what if all of his campers are dead oh my god—

He sprints out of of the Blue Cabin, taking note a majority of them are still sleeping so it can’t be that late and maybe everything is okay and he can still get to his cabin undetected. His heart is beating a million miles a minute and he bursts into the Red Cabin door praying to god that—

Coran is standing in the living room of the Red Cabin, arms crossed, glaring at Keith as the front door shuts behind him. Coran’s usual sunny demeanor is gone; in it’s place, a look of absolute disappointment.

Well, fuck.

Keith doesn’t even try to speak. He just stands at the door, staring at Coran with panic in his eyes, at a loss for words.

“Keith.” Coran starts. “What on earth—“ He stops to take an angry breath, “were you thinking?”

“Coran—“ Keith’s voice cracks.

“Do you know what I was doing all night? Looking for you.” Coran puts a finger to his temple. “I
came to check up on you after you fell asleep, because you weren’t feeling well. You were gone.”
Keith can see an angry vein appearing on his forehead. “Are you aware that you left twelve ten-year-olds alone, unsupervised, in the middle of the night? How irresponsible—I don’t even understand how you could even think—“ Coran huffs incredulously. “Where on earth were you, Keith?”

Keith looks around frantically as some of the campers around them start to stir awake.

“Coran—“ Weak. He sounds so damn weak.

“You have a responsibility here, Keith. If there is something going on keeping you from watching these kids, you’d better tell me right now and it better be a good excuse.”

Keith can’t even get a word in before Shiro is bursting through the door.

“Keith!” Shit, he sounds angry. “Please tell me what Coran said to me this morning was just a joke because if that actually happened I swear on my life—“

Coran cuts him off. “Keith here was just about to tell me the reason he left his campers unattended.”

Keith stands between them, wanting to shrink. To disappear. But he did this. This is his fault. His stupid, impulsive, terrified ass made this mistake and he has to deal with the consequences.

“Can we please…” He starts, mumbling. “Can we please talk about this outside?” He can feel his camper’s confused eyes on him and it makes his skin itch with guilt.

Reluctantly, Coran and Shiro lead the way, and then they are standing in the courtyard. Almost as if the devil himself has it out for Keith, the door to the Blue Cabin opens and Lance walks out, looking way too gorgeous to be human, accompanied by a few of his campers. He has a concerned look on his face.

Shiro turns to Lance, seething. “Lance, want to tell us where Keith was last night? I’m sure you have something to do with this.” There is venom in his voice that Keith has only heard a few times before. Man, he really fucked up this time.

Lance’s face flushes and he scowls, looking hurt.

“Leave Lance out of this.” Keith feels the familiar heat of anger start to pull at his gut.

Shiro turns to look at Keith. “I gave you this job because I trusted that you could do it. How disappointed do you think I feel right now?”

“I can do it!” Keith spits, sounding a little angrier than he deserves to. “I’ve just been hitting some road blocks!”

“Something could have happened to those children!”

“I know, I know how irresponsible I was—“

“Parents are trusting us with their kids!”

“I know!” Keith feels angry tears pooling at the corners of his eyes and desperately wills them away.

Lance’s voice intercepts the argument, small but confident. “It’s my fault, I was having a nightmare and—“

“No, Lance.” Keith snaps. “I’m not going to let you cover for me again.”
All four of them stand in silence. Keith looks at the ground, chest heaving, hair falling into his face. He realizes he is still in his boxers. Hunk and Pidge seem to have heard the commotion, and they are cautiously walking out of their cabins with a few of their campers to observe the scene.

“Shiro…can I please talk to you alone?” Keith manages, embarrassed and ashamed at the crowd they have attracted.

Without a word, Shiro just huffs angrily and beckons for Keith to follow him.

They make it to Shiro’s cabin before he snaps. “I trusted you, Keith, I thought you were more mature than this. Do you have any idea how disrespectful this is, to everyone? How could you do this to them? To me?”

Keith sighs brokenly, tears filling his eyes. “I can’t do this anymore.”

Shiro’s harsh expressions softens ever so slightly. “Can’t do what anymore?”

“The woods, the dark, the scary stories, the nightmares. I haven’t slept in weeks. You are right, the kids do deserve better. Because they have a counselor who is more afraid of the world than they are. And that’s just not fair.” Keith realizes that he is crying again, which he seems to be doing a lot more than usual lately. “Being out here is making me crazy with anxiety. All I do is dream about people dying. Leo dying, Stacy dying, Jack dying. Last night, you died, and I couldn’t save you.” His voice cracks at the memory. “And I know it was irresponsible to leave my campers, but I can’t help but feel like I couldn’t even—” a small sob bubbles out of his throat, “—couldn’t even protect them if I was there, because I would have been so terrified.”

Shiro’s frown has decreased significantly. “Keith—“

“And I know I shouldn’t have gone to Lance’s cabin, but over the past three weeks he has been there, in the middle of the night, when I couldn’t sleep. He’s told me funny stories and listened to my nightmares and I don’t know if it’s a crush or if it’s survival but I ran to him because he makes me feel so incredibly safe, in the best way.” He sighs shakily, willing himself to calm the fuck down, heart racing at the mention of Lance’s name. “So you should probably fire me, because then the kids will be safer and I’ll never have to be around when Lance realizes how pathetically gone for him I am. You know, kill two birds with one stone.”

Shiro is looking at Keith with a concerned expression that Keith has seen hundreds of times over the years, whenever he apologized for doing something stupid, or woke up crying, or got too angry and tried to calm himself down. Keith looks down to hide the blush that his blooming across his face, now that Lance’s name has been thrown into the picture. His embarrassment his almost palpable.

“Keith. You’ve been having nightmares again?” It’s all Shiro says. Those words carry the weight of countless nights of Keith waking up, sobbing, clawing at his clothes and shouting for Shiro to save him, eating soup in the kitchen at four AM, dried tears and puffy eyes becoming a familiar feeling that keeps him from falling back asleep, and Shiro using his sleeve to wipe Keith’s eyes and nose, over and over and over again.

Keith blinks away tears. “Every night.”

In the way only an older brother knows how to, Shiro’s arms wrap around Keith and pull him into a crushing hug, tight against his chest, and Keith breathes in the achingly familiar scent of his deodorant, from all of the nights that he held Keith just like this, trying to save him from the night terrors that persisted for years and years. Keith sobs into his black polo, saying “I’m sorry” over and over again until it just becomes a collections of mumbled sounds strung together, muddled and
indecipherable.

“I’m sorry too.” Shiro says, defeated. “I know how hard it is for you.”

They sit in silence for a few minutes, and Keith lets himself breathe. He is not in the clear, for sure, but telling his brother what has been on his mind feels so freeing, liberating, and refreshing.

“I don’t know how to be better.” Keith says quietly. “I care about the kids so much. But I can’t get better for them.”

Shiro pulls away and looks Keith dead in the eye. “Keith. You have gotten through this before, and you can get through it again. I know you don’t think you’re strong, but I do. And you are going to get through this, because I’m not giving you a choice. Those kids care about you too much, and they aren’t giving you a choice either. You need to be there for them.”

“You…you’re not going to fire me?”

“If you keep leaving kids alone at night then yes, I most definitely will. But I believe you can beat this Keith. By yourself. Without Lance. That’s why I’m going to give you another chance.”

“But—“

“You deserve a chance to know that you can beat this on your own.”

“But Coran…”

“I’ll talk to Coran. He’s a softie. Once I tell him what was happening he’ll understand. You’re forgetting I’ve worked here longer than you. Coran sees me like a son, and knows almost everything about me…even what I went through with you.”

Keith takes a deep breath, trying to steady himself.

“And Keith?”

“What?”

“I don’t know what…happened between you and Lance last night but try to keep any….” Shiro clears his throat a little awkwardly,—any intimate contact away from the kids. Some of the kids are…talking.” He smirks playfully. “And after that spectacle this morning, I’m sure the talking won’t exactly get better.”

“Shiro! I—we didn’t—nothing happened—“

Shiro laughs. “Okay, okay! It’s fine, you don’t have to tell me!”

“But nothing—!”

“Whatever Keith!” Shiro is grinning brightly at him, fondly, and Keith makes a silent vow to himself that he will try his best to never disappoint him again.
Breakfast isn’t nearly as awkward as Keith thought it would be. It seems like all of the tension from the early morning has completely dissipated. Hunk is cracking jokes, Pidge is laughing, Shiro and Allura are mooning over each other, and Coran is back to his usual, happy self. Keith looks up at the sky and thanks whoever is up there for making this morning end the way it did. He risks a glance at Lance, who is being uncharacteristically quiet, and sees him staring down at his plate, pushing his food around.

Keith feels something uncomfortable in the pit of his gut. He ruined things, didn’t he? He made things awkward. Their friendship wasn’t strong enough for him to go plowing through his door and crying into his arms. Lance must think he’s such an idiot. He tears his eyes away and looks down at his own food, which all of a sudden looks very unappealing. Allura’s voice snaps him out of his self pity.

“I think we should make s’mores at the campfire tonight! The kids have been so wonderful.” She says excitedly, clapping her hands together.

Lance’s face lights up at this suggestion. Keith has to hold his breath to keep from tackling him to the floor and kissing his face off.

He wishes that was an exaggeration, but alas.

“S’mores? Oh man, that’s the stuff. I’m on board.” He is grinning like a child. Keith feels himself blushing at the sight of it, allowing himself to just once remember the warm feeling of their bodies pressed together, the long limbs draped over him, the grapefruit smell lingering in the pillow.

Shit, he is so gone.

“Okay, S’mores tonight sound like a great idea. But we need supplies!” Coran warns. “And you all know that is a long trip!”

“No that long!” Lance pouts. “And we don’t all have to go!”

“Where is the nearest store? Are we seriously that far away from everything?” Keith asks.

Pidge snorts. “Dude, we are at least an hour away from the nearest convenience store.”

“That is ridiculous.”

“That’s Camp Voltron!”

“That’s cheap property!” Hunk cuts in. Everyone laughs.

Allura looks around at the counselors. “Alright, so we need six bags of jumbo marshmallows, four boxes of graham crackers, and about twenty hershey bars. Who’s willing to go get that?”

Lance raises his hand dramatically.

Allura chuckles. “Lance, you don’t have a car.”

“Keith,” Shiro’s voice cuts in. “Why don’t you and Lance take my car to get the supplies?” He has a knowing smirk on his face. Keith falters a little.

“I don’t think--”

“Great idea Shiro!” Allura coos, almost disgustingly fond. Jesus, when are these two going to get together?
Lance is frowning again. “Uh--”

“So it’s settled! And as a punishment for this morning, make Keith pay!” Shiro jokes.

Keith groans and put his head in his hands. This is one of the worst ideas ever.

---

Keith is going to kill Shiro.

Not only does he have to be trapped in a car with Lance, the boy who fell asleep curled around him last night as he sobbed like a child; but he also has to be trapped in a car with Lance, who looks so breathtaking in his stupid blue polo as the sun filters through the car window and lines his face with a golden halo. Lance’s hair is messy in the most exquisite way. He makes bedhead look beautiful. He makes everything look beautiful. He is so damn beau--

“Hey, tonto.” Lance’s voice lacks its usual mirth. “Eyes on the road.”

Had Keith been staring? He doesn’t think he was staring but how could he know? Oh my god, he was totally staring, wasn’t he? Lance probably thinks--

“Mind if I put music on?” Lance’s voice sounds small.

“Go ahead.”

A soft Spanish song fills the car and Lance starts to sing along, voice quiet and raspy. He tilts his head against the headrest behind him and closes his eyes. Keith chances a peek and goes into a miniature cardiac arrest before quickly eyeing the road again.

The air is thick and awkward. Keith takes a moment to realize that out of all of the interactions he has had with Lance over the past three weeks, not one has been awkward. The thought warms his cheeks and makes his heart flutter.

Taking a breath, he reaches out and turns the volume down. Lance frowns and shoots upwards. “Hey! I was listening to that!”

Keith scowls. “What’s wrong, Lance?”

“What’s wrong is that I was listening to music and you turned it off.” Lance huffs and crosses his arms over his chest.

“You know what I mean.”

Lance slumps a little in his seat, taking a breath that sounds difficult for him. “Nothing,” He says.

“Lance, seriously? How dumb do you think I am?”

“You’re not dumb.”

“So then why don’t you tell me what’s wrong?”
Lance turns to look out the window, rather sadly. “I’m just...sorry you got in trouble for last night.”

Keith freezes. “What? Why are you sorry?”

Lance is silent and for a moment, he just shrugs. Then he says, “Just feels like it was my fault that’s all.”

“Lance, I came to you. It’s not your fault.”

“Yeah, but then I told you not to leave, which was just selfish of me.” Lance pulls his long legs up to his chest and rests his chin between his knees.

“Wha--selfish?” Keith’s heart starts to beat rapidly.

“I mean...yeah. I didn’t want you to leave, rojo.”

A warmth spreads throughout Keith’s chest and prickles its way to his fingertips. He knows that he is blushing. “Really?”

Lance turns and rests his cheek on his knee so that he is looking at Keith. “Yeah, tonto. Really.” He uses the teasing nickname, but his voice is genuine.

Keith smiles to himself, heat bursting in his cheeks. “Well I…I didn’t want to leave either.”

“Yeah, I know.” He hears Lance’s smile in his voice, but makes himself keep his eyes on the road.

“Well then don’t feel guilty.” Keith says quietly.

Lance’s voice is gentle when he replies. “Okay, rojito.”

The silence that follows is comfortable, almost too comfortable, and it leaves Keith’s skin buzzing with a heat that can only be described as fondness.

“You and Shiro are really close, huh?”

Keith nods. “Our parents were MIA a lot of the time, so we really only had each other for most of our lives.”

“Do you have any other siblings?”

“Nope.”

“Hm. Interesting.”

A pause.

“What about you?” Keith asks back.

Lance smiles. “I have five other siblings. Two older, three younger. My family is a little huge.”

“Oh.” Keith knows he really shouldn’t be surprised, especially after seeing how Lance is with kids, but he can’t help but feel a little shocked at the vast difference between their families. “Wow, that sounds like a really fun time.”

Lance’s face falls slightly. “Yeah, I mean, it is fun, a lot of the time...” His voice trails off and his eyes suddenly look tired. It takes a moment for him to start talking again. “We fight, but it’s never
anything serious. We are really close.”

“That’s amazing.” Keith says. “I’ve never had a big family like that.”

The corner of Lance’s lip tugs upwards in a smile. “But now you’ve got your campers, eh tonto?”

Keith chuckles. “Yeah, I sure do.”

“They’ve really grown to like you over the past couple of weeks.” Lance says. “I know when you first got here you didn’t really wanna be here but...those kids are really lucky to have you.”

Keith’s face is on fire. “Did I really make it that obvious?”

“Let’s see. You punched me in the face--”

“I was scared!”

“--you walked into breakfast with toothpaste on your cheek and mismatched socks on, you laid in a muddy puddle for twenty minutes because of a bad sunburn, and you were swearing up a storm before I put you in your place.”

Keith looks at Lance, eyes wide. He didn’t realize that Lance was actually paying any attention to him at all during those first few days. “I--” His voice cracks. He starts over. “I don’t normally swear, you were just astronomically annoying.”

Lance shrugs, smirking. “It’s okay anyway. I hated Camp Voltron when I first started too.”

“Four years ago?”

“Yeah.” Lance sounds wistful. “My friends had planned a huge trip to Mexico but my family couldn’t afford it. They ended up going without me.” He sighs. “My little sister, Maria, got into a car accident and needed surgery. We couldn’t pay for it, so my parents pretty much forced me to find a job. That’s how I ended up here. And I was not happy at all.”

They are pulling into the parking lot of the grocery store as Lance speaks, and when they park, Keith turns the car off and finally turns to face him, giving him his undivided attention.

“Money was always tight.” Although Keith is looking at Lance, Lance is still facing forward, eyes straight ahead. “Still is. Almost all the money I make here goes home. I know my parents don’t mean any harm but, sometimes the lack of money makes them crazy. It’s all they used to talk about when I was little.” He sighs, looks at Keith, and smiles. “But when I came to Camp Voltron and met the team, including your brother Shiro, it was like a whole new world opened up for me. I finally saw happiness without money. Those two things started to become separate in my head. And those kids…” His face gets impossibly brighter. “Those kids are family to me, too.”

Keith just stares at Lance’s wide smile, wondering how such simple words can be so touching, can hold so much meaning. He want to know more, to listen to Lance talk for hours. He wants to know about his mother’s cooking, his first kiss, what’s hanging in his room, what he argues about with his sisters.

He wants to kiss Lance until neither of them can breathe anymore. He wants to hold him, run his fingers through his hair, memorize every little thing about his body, his life, his past, his dreams, his family. He wants to breathe him in. He already feels like he’s suffocating. The heat beneath his skin is starting to become unbearable.
Lance isn’t just an attractive boy anymore. He is an ocean, and Keith is drowning.

Keith takes a very long, shaky breath, willing himself to think rationally. “Well then let’s get our family some s’more, shall we?”

Lance huffs out a laugh. “First one in wins!” Then he is darting out of the car and leaving Keith alone, desperately trying to catch his breath.

---

Of course Lance ends up getting into the store first. When Keith walks in, the sliding doors open to reveal Lance, sitting in a shopping cart, leaning over the edge with his chin resting in his elbow. “Took you long enough, rojo.” He says, rolling his eyes.

“What are you doing.” Keith asks.

Lance shrugs. “Just sittin’. Ya know. Like winners do.”

Keith holds back a smile. “Get outta there, Lance.”

Lance holds his hands up in surrender. “Hey I don’t make the rules. Loser has to push winner around the store. Wasn’t my choice, just how it is.”

Keith rolls his eyes. “Fine, whatever, just don’t make a scene.”

Lance gasps dramatically. “Me? A scene? I would never!”

Keith laughs and grabs the cart, pushing it forward. Lance throws a fist in the air and whoops loudly, making a few people turn and look. “Onward!” He shouts.

Keith groans, ducking down behind Lance to hide his pathetic blush.

---

It takes approximately seven and a half minutes for Lance to knock over a store display. He has a baguette in one hand and a large plate in the other, using them as a sword and shield. He points forward screaming “charge!” and forcing Keith to push the cart forward. A pyramid of cans come crashing to the ground and they both stare at it, in mild shock, unsure of what to do, before hauling ass, paying, and sprinting out of the store.

There are tears in Keith’s eyes when they get back to the car, panting and gasping through their laughs. Keith can’t remember the last time he laughed this hard. His sides hurt and his stomach is in knots, but in the most pleasant way.

When they finally calm down and get into the car, Keith turns on the ignition and looks over at Lance. He is blinking sleepily, looking out the window, a lazy smile still apparent on his face.

“You can sleep if you want.” Keith says, sounding a little shy. “I know you probably didn’t get
much sleep last night, with me hogging the covers and all…” He tries for a joke but he just ends up sounding guilty.

Lance turns to look at him. “Hm, maybe I will. You are quite the blanket hog.” He jokes, a smirk beginning to appear on his lips.

Keith chuckles at that, relief uncurling the tightness in his chest. “I’ll wake you when we get home.”

“Mmhmm, sounds good.”

Lance adjusts his position so he is slightly more curled up, head resting on the top of the seat and arms crossed tightly over his chest. His eyes fall shut and Keith watches them, a little too openly.

Clearing his throat as quietly as possible, he returns his attention to driving, and backs out of the parking lot.

A couple minutes of silence go by and Keith can hear Lance’s breathing begin to even out as he drifts off; but suddenly, quite randomly, Lance is talking again, voice quiet and unsure.

“Hey rojo?”

“Yeah?”

“It was one of the best sleeps of my life.”

Lance falls asleep shortly after and it takes Keith an enormous amount of effort to make it back to camp without crashing.
okay so just a few things-- upon the announcement of Lance's summer bday I had to include it, I don't even care if the timing is accurate lol. Also, I totally meant for Shiro and Allura to be part of the club scene but I COMPLETELY FORGOT TO WRITE THEM IN i am trash and forever regretful, i just got so caught up in the klance, please forgive me for my dreaded ways. Happy reading, this chapter is a big one!

The s’mores are a hit.

It doesn’t come as a surprise that the second Lance and Keith return to the campgrounds they are trampled by their campers, overwhelmed with a chorus of “I missed you!” and “Where is the chocolate?” Lance looks like himself again, gleeful and full of life, and he bends down to pick up as many campers in his arms as possible.

“Hola mis pollitos!” He laughs. “I come bearing sugar!” They all cheer loudly and try to grab the bags out of Lance’s hands. He laughs and pushes them away, telling them to go sit by the fire so he can pass out the food.

In a mess of melted marshmallow, smudged chocolate, and crumbling graham crackers, the s’mores are annihilated within minutes. The counselors keep a few on the side for themselves, fully aware that the kids weren’t going to save any for them.

Lance is sitting on the log next to Keith. “Let me show you the proper way to roast a marshmallow, rojo.” Lance raises an eyebrow in confidence, bumping Keith’s shoulder with his. “I get it right every single time.”

“Yeah right, Lance.” Hunk chimes in, rolling his eyes from across the campfire. “I’m the master at marshmallow roasting and you know it.”

“You may be good,” Lance replies, “But my skill is unparalleled,”

“That sounds like a challenge, McClain.” Hunk stands up, ready. “I beat you last year and I’ll beat you again!”

“Unfair advantage!” Lance shrieks, standing up too. “You stuffed yours with chocolate last year! Of course you won!”

“It’s called culinary innovation! And the kids loved it! Right guys?” Hunks turns towards the campers and they all cheer wildly in encouragement.

“The marshmallow must speak for itself, no chocolate allowed!”

“What? Says who?”

“Me!”
At this point, Shiro intervenes. “Guys, are you really going to do this again?” He sounds 
exasperated, but he is smiling. “You gotta face the facts, Lance. Hunk roasts a mean marshmallow.”

“Oh no, Shiro. He can’t seem to learn, so I accept your challenge Lance! No chocolate allowed! The 
kids will be the judges!”

The kids all stand up and whoop loudly, along with Pidge, who screams, “Roast-off!”

Keith watches the scene with a grin that hurts his face because it’s so big. His heart feels too full, 
heat threatening to spill over the edges, as he watches Lance smirk playfully at Hunk with that 
challenging expression Keith has come to know way too well.

“You’re on, Hunk!” He shouts back, sounding unbearably excited.

Lance gasps, literally recoiling from the statement. “You are supposed to be my friend, *rojo! Dios 
mi que pena* I can’t even trust my friends anymore? What is this feeling? Is this what complete and 
utter emptiness feels like?”

Keith laughs out loud, surprising himself, and claps his hand over his mouth in embarrassment. 
Lance is smiling smugly at him, eyes twinkling at his reaction. “Alright *rojito—*”

“Stop with the rojito, Im not that tiny--”

“--So the first thing you have to do is turn the whole thing around once, really slowly, just to make 
the whole thing is warm.”

“I’m pretty sure sticking it in the fire automatically makes it--”

“--*Then*, once you’ve roasted it fully, you can begin browning the bottom side.” Lance worriedly 
looks up at Hunk, who is explaining his process to the kids quite similarly, looking extremely 
confident. Lance scowls, but it doesn’t really look that angry, just grumpy. Keith can see him trying 
to figure out what Hunk is doing, the wheels in his brain turning. He slowly returns his gaze to Keith 
and continues talking.

“And after a few seconds, you--*mierda! Dios mio hijo de puta estoy demasiado estúpido no puedo 
creer.*” Lance jumps in his seat and lets out an impressively long string of Spanish curses, lifting the 
marshmallow out of the fire to find the “browned” side completely black, ashes bubbling and 
popping across it’s charred surface. “How the fu--doodle-- did that even happen?” He shrieks, 
staring down at it.

Hunk lets out a bellowing laugh from across the campfire. “You didn’t turn it in time, you doodle!” 
Pidge is laughing too, then SHiro and allura quickly join in, all watching Lance’s horrified face as he 
stares down at his disaster of a marshmallow. He slumps down into his seat next to Keith, still in 
shock. He turns to Keith with wide, puppy-dog eyes and a pout on his face. Keith can’t keep the 
chuckle from bubbling out of his mouth.

“But I’m usually so good at it!” Lance says.

“Lies!” Hunk says.
“Aw Lance, don’t worry. I’m sure someone, somewhere likes the taste of mutilated marshmallow.” Keith says mockingly, placing a hand on Lance’s shoulder. Lance frowns at him, the challenging glint back in his eyes.

“Oh yeah? You wanna be a smart ass now? I bet you can’t eat the whole thing.” He shoves the severely burnt marshmallow in Keith’s face, inviting him to the challenge.

“No, I can’t. Because it’s inedible.” Keith deadpans.

“Or because you’re not tough enough.”

“What does that have to do with anything?” Keith snaps, crossing his arms over his chest and turning more to face Lance.

“I’m with Keith on this one. That’s a little steep.” Pidge interjects, pushing her glasses up onto her nose and chuckling.

“Just admit it Keith. I bet even if I gave you an incentive you wouldn’t do it.”

At the word incentive, Keith immediately pictures Lance pushing him against a wall and tearing his shirt off, kissing him until they both can’t breathe. He straightens his posture a little, suddenly unable to form words. “Uh.” He clears his throat. “What do you mean, incentive?” The heat is probably very obvious on his cheeks, and he feels Shiro’s smug eyes burning holes into his face.

“Ten bucks.” Lance offers.

“Not nearly enough.”

“Twelve bucks.”

“Lance, no.”

“Fifteen bucks and an I-Owe-You.”

“An I-Owe-You?”

“Yeah, a favor. I’ll make your bed, or buy you toothpaste, whatever.”

Whatever.

“Final offer.” Lance says, smirking. “And I bet you won’t even take it.”

Keith frowns, feeling the blush on his face spreading to his neck and chest. Without warning, he grabs the marshmallow off the stick and shoves it in his mouth, not daring to break eye contact as Lance’s eyes go from smug to utter shock, widening as Keith swallows it.

“Holy shit.” Pidge says, to which Coran’s voice is heard somewhere in the distance saying, “Language, Pidge!”

Lance bursts out laughing, sounding utterly impressed. “Jesus, rojito, you seriously cannot back down from a challenge! You have a problem.” He tries to calm down but fails and continues laughing.

Keith is grimacing from the monstrosity that he just willingly put in his body, stomach bubbling and twisting angrily and a horrible taste left in his mouth from the crusty ashes. Then he feels it, the nausea, starting in the pit of his gut and moving up his throat at an alarming pace. He shoots
upwards, pushing Lance to the side and running towards the red cabin, bursting through the bathroom door and throwing up into the toilet.

He kind of sits for a few seconds, trying to regain his composure. He stands up unsteadily and rinses his mouth out with some toothpaste and water, before being hit with another pang of nausea and sitting back down again. He rests his back against the wall and stretches his legs out in front of him, placing his feet on the base of the toilet. He tilts his head back and closes his eyes, already starting to feel better. Maybe if he takes a short nap--

“You. Eres loco. You are a crazy, crazy idiot, rojito.”

Keith cracks an eye open and looks up at Lance, who is looking down at him with equal parts concern and amusement. He has his arms crossed over his chest and a worried frown on his face. “Estas bien? Are you feeling better?”

Keith closes his eyes again. “It’s not my fault your marshmallow was poisonous.” He says, voice raw.

“No,” Lance agrees, plopping down next to him. “But it is your fault you ate it.”

“Wha--” Keith’s eyes fly open and he whips his head around to look at Lance. “Are you kidding me? You practically shoved it in my face!”

“I was just making a bet! You didn’t have to take it. You literally can’t say no to anything. That’s why it’s so fun to mess with you.” Lance giggles and Keith’s face heats up. “You are insane sometimes.”

Lance is grinning and it makes Keith break into a small smile of his own despite the fact that Lance just made fun of him.

“Are you feeling okay, tonto?” Lance asks, voice gentler. “I really am sorry.”

Keith feels his insides melting. “No, yeah, I’m--” Stop babbling jesus christ, “I’m feeling better.”

Lance turns to face forward, smile soft. “Well, good.”

“Now you owe me fifteen bucks, smart ass.” Keith says. “And a favor.”

Lance sighs. “Shit, I thought you’d forget.”

“Nah, nice try though.” Keith giggles, bumping their shoulders together. Lance laughs and shoves him back.

---

Over the next week, Keith works to avoid all kinds of trouble. He watches over his kids like a hawk, never leaving their side, and tries to make up for the mistake he made a week before. He doesn’t ever want his campers, or Shiro, to think that he doesn’t care. He can feel himself getting closer to his campers; an intimate feeling that is completely new to him, and it fuels his motivation to be a good role model for them.

It is breakfast on Friday morning, and Keith is sitting with the rest of the counselors shoveling
scrambled eggs in his face. There is a long hike scheduled for today and he knows that he isn’t going to last very long without proper sustenance. Lance is looking at him with disgust as the eggs rapidly disappear. “Easy, rojito, they aren’t going to run away.”

Keith glares at him, a crumb falling from his mouth. Lance chuckles. “I’ll leave you to your animalistic, savage ways and get some yogurt.” The minute he walks away, Pidge leans forward, and starts talking in a low voice. “Okay you guys, what’s the plan?”

Everybody at the table leans forward to hear her. Keith raises and eyebrow. “About what?”

For a moment, everyone looks at him like he has three heads, then Hunk sighs. “Oh, right, he’s new, guys. Remember?”

“Lance’s birthday.” Allura whispers helpfully. “It’s tomorrow.”

“He always insists that we don’t do anything. Despite how cocky he is, he doesn’t want people fretting over it.” Hunk says. “But...we all want to do something for him anyway. Last year was...not the best. We want to make it up to him.”

Keith’s heart clenches. This is a lot of information at once. Lance is a summer baby. Lance doesn’t want anyone to fret over his birthday, Lance had a bad birthday last year that he clearly didn’t deserve. There is a tightness in his chest that won’t go away. “Well, what happened last year?”

Pidge shakes her head at Hunk, who looks like he’s about to talk. “He can tell you himself if he wants to. It’s a bit of a touchy topic for him.”

Keith nods slowly. “Okay so what should we--”

“Wow, you guys all look like somebody died. Is my absence that much of a burden on your frail souls?” Lance returns, a playful grin on his face, completely oblivious.

Pidge snorts and rolls her eyes. “Maybe we were all happy till you came back.” She says, but it sounds more affectionate than hurtful. Hunk and Allura laugh at the pout that appears on Lance’s face.

For the rest of breakfast, Keith steals glances at Lance’s smiling laughing face, and makes a silent promise to himself that somehow, he will make sure Lance has an incredible birthday.

*  

After a majority of the daily activities, Lance announces to the counselors that he is going to take a shower. Keith agrees to watch his campers while he is gone, because they’re all just playing flag football in the courtyard anyway. As Lance walks away, Pidge summons the counselors into a small circle, and the planning begins.

“Okay, we have exactly 27 minutes to think of a plan.” She says urgently.

“27?” Keith asks.

“It’s how long Lance usually takes in the shower.” Hunk supplies helpfully. Keith snorts.

“I think we should all go out.” Pidge says. “The kids can have a movie night in the rec center with
Coran, and we can go out to a really nice dinner and--"

“Really nice dinner? Do you know Lance at all? We should go out dancing.”

“Dancing?” Keith asks nervously. He is ignored.

“And Hunk, you can make him that cake that he loves, the one with the blue icing!”

“Wait there are two with blue icing. Which one?”

“Don’t you remember when Lance first came here, and he was super bummed about not being able
to go to Mexico with his friends? You made him a cake! He loved it, I remember.”

Shiro frowns. “God, that feels like it was so long ago. He was so upset about missing that trip.”

Keith remembers Lance telling him the story about how his friends went to Mexico without him. He
remembers the sadness in his eyes, the long tired sigh, the frustration. Pidge’s voice interrupts his
thoughts.

“But your cake made him so happy, remember? You should make it Hunk. Then we can all go out
for drinks, go dancing, have a great time, maybe even come back and go swimming in the lake when
we’re tipsy.”

They all look at each other, content with the plan, but in Keith’s mind, it’s not enough.

It’s not nearly enough.

“Keith,” Shiro can tell what he is thinking. “Lance really doesn’t like it when people make a big deal
about his birthday. He is going to be so happy, trust me. I know him really well.” Keith nods, trying
to ignore the voice in the back of his head that is saying give him the world over and over and over
again.

Hunk sighs. “It’s not the beach in Mexico, but it’ll make him happy, I know it will.”

Keith has never really had very close friends, but he briefly wonders if leaving your friend in the dust
to go to Mexico without him is something friends usually do to each other. Something tells him that
the young, seventeen year old Lance with no money thought that his friends would be there for him.
Keith can’t even imagine how much that could have hurt him. His heart hurts for what Lance has
gone through, for how hard Lance works for his family, and how humble he is about the things that
matter.

And suddenly, Keith knows what to get Lance for his birthday.

The next morning, Keith wakes up to a chorus of screams coming from the courtyard. He can’t
decide if it is coming from the children or if it coming from the collection of Pidge’s tiny body and
Hunk’s huge one, but he hears, “Happy Birthday Lance!”", and it is so loud that it shakes the cabin.
Keith shoots out of bed, cursing himself for missing whatever was happening outside. He combs through his hair with his fingers uselessly and brushes hi teeth, not even bothering to change into his clothes before darting out of his room in his pajamas. In his head, he pictures himself tackling Lance into a hug, kissing him all over his face, screaming “happy birthday happy birthday” until his voice is gone; and deep down, he actually thinks he might do it. He thinks he might go for it. His heart starts pounding and his feet speed up, getting faster and faster.

But then he sees Lance, standing in the sun, all golden and bright and beautiful. He sees the elegant features on his face, his unabashed grin, his bright eyes, his freckles, his hooked nose, his wispy, adorable bedhead, and his stupid popped collar. He immediately loses his nerve.

He can’t help it. Every time he sees Lance, it’s like he gets even better. Even more breathtaking. It surprises him every single time. His breath hitches and he slows his feet, coming to a stop behind Lance. At the sound of his pathetic panting, Lance turns around and flashes him a dazzling grin that leaves him breathless.

“Buenos días, rojo! Your bedhead is looking especially swell today.”

Keith stomach flips relentlessly in his chest. “Happy Birthday.” It comes out nervously, hesitantly, and Keith mentally slaps himself for sounding so shy.

Lance chuckles. “Gracias, tonto. You going to let me win at Capture the Flag today?”

Keith smiles, already feeling the butterflies swirling in his stomach under Lance’s gaze. He hums. “Maybe just this once, because it’s your birthday.”

Lance pumps his fist in the air and whoops. “Yes! Sweet.” Pidge rolls her eyes and Hunk laughs. Keith drinks in Lance’s smile.

* 

Lance has almost all of Hunk’s cake for breakfast. Literally 3/4ths of it. And then spends the next hour complaining about his stomachache, moaning and groaning about regretful decisions, and blaming Hunk for his talents in the kitchen. Hunk shrugs and says, “I told you not to eat it all at once! Remember what happened two years ago with my chicken parm?”

Lance groans again at the supposedly horrible memory of whatever happened with the chicken parm, and Keith laughs, rolling his eyes. “You are one of the most extreme people I know.”

“Me?” Lance shrieks. “Have you met yourself?” And Keith just shrugs nonchalantly in response, loving the way Lance sputters frustratedly and smacks his shoulder.

Keith had gone back to his Cabin and wrapped Lance’s gift earlier in the day. It is now in his back pocket, and Keith is waiting not-so patiently for the right time to give it to him. He leans back in his seat to make sure it is concealed as Lance continues talking.

“So what’s the plan for tonight?” Lance asks. “We gonna roast some marshmallows? Have a heart-to-heart around the campfire? Talk about our place in the universe? Barf up blue icing all day?”

Pidge snorts. “No, you idiot. We are going to go out.”
“Wait, really?” Lance sits up excitedly. “Like, to Applebee's?”

“What? No way. What the hell? We’re going to a club, dumbass.”

Lance raises an eyebrow. “But the nearest club is like an hour away from here.”

Hunk shrugs. “Guess we’re driving an hour then.”

“What about the campers?”

“Coran said he could do a movie night with them. He’s got a whole list of movies planned.” Hunk replies.

A slow smile spreads across Lance’s face, gentle and fond. “Man, I love you guys.” He says. “This is going to be so fun! I gotta go practice my moves!”

Pidge laughs out loud at that, and rolls her eyes. “Okay, Lance. But first, let’s go make sure all of our campers are alive.”

Lance nods. “That’s probably a good idea.”

***

Around 2 o'clock, the day gets especially hot. The sun is beating down heavily onto the campsite and all of the counselor change into swimsuits to try and stay cool. They are all sitting at a picnic table, watching the kids play a pathetically disorganized game of ninja (which includes Lance of course, whose long gangly limbs pretty much tag every child within a five foot radius) and talking about their plans for the night. After a while, Pidge and Hunk round up their campers to go to the Lake, because it is just too hot, and Keith says he will follow them. It goes without saying that it’s because he wants to wait for Lance, but Pidge and Hunk exchange a subtle, knowing look that Keith doesn’t miss before heading down to the water.

A few minutes later, Lance jogs over to the table, covered in sweat and smiling smugly. “Guess who just dominated in ninja!” He flexes his thin bicep and winks at Keith, who is smirking and trying to cover up the persistent heat in his face.

“You are four times their size. Unfair advantage.” He deadpans.

Lance squawks indignantly. “Nu-uh! I won fair and square!”

“You sure they didn’t let you win? You know, birthday pity?” Keith’s smirk has broken into a grin.

Lance scowls. “Cállate, rojito. I’m a winner.” The he sticks his tongue out like the mature adult he is. He takes a few steps forward and plops down next to Keith on the bench. Keith chances a small glance in his direction and sees him staring and his campers playing, looking lost in thought.

“Lance?” Keith asks.

“Hm?”

“What happened on your birthday last year?” Keith sees Lance’s face visibly screw into one of pure discomfort and adds, “Pidge just mentioned that last year wasn’t too great and...I don’t know. I was
just wondering. You really don’t have to tell me.”

There is a brief silence and Keith feels like he is suffocating. Then Lance just says, “I mean, it really wasn’t as bad as everybody thought. I was just a little down, that’s all.”

Keith doesn’t say anything, just waits for him to continue.

Lance takes a deep breath, resting his elbows on the picnic table behind him and leaning back. He continues to look at his campers as he speaks. “It really wasn’t that big of a deal. There was this concert that I had bought tickets for, literally a year before my birthday. It was a DJ that I was obsessed with and I was so shocked that he was coming to my small hometown.” Lance chuckles a little. “I was like, woah, hey! And on my birthday too! It was meant to be.”

Keith turns towards Lance a little more, eyes tracing over the graceful rises and dips in his profile. The sun is making the sweat on Lance’s nose and upper lip glisten in the most delicious way. Keith clears his throat slightly, letting Lance know that he is listening.

“A couple weeks before the concert, I had everything planned. I had a ride, I had friends to go with, I had all of the songs on my car playlist, I was set. I had saved up so much money for those tickets and now I was finally getting to go” Keith sees his smile start to fade. “But, you know, shit happens.” Lance clears his throat a little awkwardly. “My younger brother was failing math and science, and he wasn’t going to pass seventh grade. My family needed to sign him up for summer school, and tutoring, and…” Lance takes his elbows off the table and moves his arms to wrap them around himself. “Well, my mom sold my tickets for the money. And she sold them without even telling me...so I showed up at the concert and they told me to fuck off, pretty much.” Lance sighs and shrugs. “I mean, I wouldn't have cared if she had asked me first but...it was all so frustrating, and disappointing, and I felt really betrayed.” Lance takes a shaky breath. “So I came back to camp three hours earlier than I was supposed to, and everyone was like ‘how was the concert?’ . And, I mean, what could I say? So I just went to bed early.”

A beat of silence follows and Lance smiles at one of his campers, who waves to him. His face falls when the camper turns away.

“Oh man, Lance.” Keith almost forgets to respond. “Oh man, I’m really sorry that happened.”

Lance turns to him and, surprisingly, smiles. “It’s okay, my brother is in the top 10% of his class now. So, you know, sacrifices had to be made but maybe it was all worth it. He’s a lot happier.” Lance’s smile gets even bigger. “And, I have amazing friends who are taking me dancing tonight! So life does get better, huh? Imagine that.”

Keith smiles, trying to ignore the desperate ache in his chest to wrap Lance up in his supremely gay arms. He thinks about the beginning of the summer, when he hated this camp and he hated Lance and he hated the sun and he didn’t want to meet the team. “Yeah, imagine that.” He says back.

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It has been a hot minute since Keith has been to a club.

The air is stuffy and hot, the bass is shaking the ground and the dance floor is packed, people pressed up so close together that they can’t even move. Keith wrinkles his nose in disapproval. He really isn’t a clubbing kind of person.
Lance, on the other hand, is beaming. “Holy shit!” He shrieks. “This is going to be awesome!” He
grabs Pidge with one hand and Keith with the other and drags them to the bar with Hunk in tow.

“Order whatever you guys want.” Hunk said. “I’m buying. I owe Pidge a bunch of money and
Lance is the Birthday boy so, it’s on me.”

Lance grins wildly at him and then turns to the bartender. “Hey gorgeous,” he says smoothly, the
nickname rolling naturally of his tongue. “I’ll have a rum and coke, this kid’ll have a vodka soda,
and,” he turns to Keith, raising an eyebrow in question. Keith shrugs and mouths, whiskey? Lance
turns back to the bartender, “--and this handsome mullet-head will have a whiskey on the rocks.” He
winks and the bartender, who is a beautiful girl with long blonde hair and brown eyes, giggles and
rolls her eyes at him.

“Coming right up.” She says.

Keith tries desperately to ignore the fact that Lance is flirting with someone who isn’t him. Lance
turns around and leans back against the bar, surveying the dance floor. His expression is excited and
bright. “Damn, I can’t wait to dance. You’re going to dance too, verdad?”

Keith doesn’t realize that Lance is talking to him until he looks over and sees Lance staring at him,
waiting for an answer. He shakes his head wildly.

“Me? Oh, no way. I really really don’t do that. Ever. In my life.”

Lance leans in closer. “What? Dude you have to shout, I can’t hear shit over this music!”

Keith leans in closer as well, not able to control himself. Their noses almost touch. “I’m not going to
dance!” He shouts.

Lance smirks and raises an eyebrow. “We’ll see about that rojo. I’ll ask you again once you’ve had a
few.” He sends a wink in Keith’s direction and Keith is giddy with anticipation.

About five drinks later, everybody is starting to feel it. Pidge, the designated driver (and also not
legal, she just snuck in behind Hunk), is the only sober one and it is very obvious. Lance is telling a
story, shouting and using exaggerated hand gestures, his words slurring and his motions sloppy.
Keith doesn’t even understand what is going on, but he laughs all the same. Because this is Lance
and Lance is hilarious and beautiful and captivating so he laughs because what else can his drunk
ass do?

They have already gone through two order of french fries. The baskets are strewn across the table,
not one crumb left in them. Lance orders another shot of tequila and they all take it together, clinking
glasses beforehand and shouting, “To Lance!” And Keith means it. He really really means it.

A new song starts and the people of the dance floor cheer. Lance perks up. “I know this one! Oh my
god I love this song! Hunk, dance with me!”

But Hunk looks rather preoccupied, making heart eyes at a woman across the dance floor. The
woman is beautiful, and smiling at Hunk. She beckons him to come over. Hunk looks at Lance
panicking, and Lance rolls his eyes. “Fine, go get her big guy.” Hunk grins, eyes glazed over from
the alcohol, and sloppily stumbles out of the booth towards the mystery woman.

“Lookszlike you’re stuck wi’ me!” Lance slurs, practically falling onto Keith in the booth. “Dance
with me.”

Keith is too drunk to try and hide his goofy grin. “I can’t dance.” He shakes his head wildly,
giggling. “I’ll look like an idiot.”

“Come on, guapo, it’s my birthday! Come on, give me something! **Quiero bailar contigo, seria divertido,** it’ll be so fun **lo prometo--**”

Keith laughs. “Okay, okay! Enough with the drunk Spanish, I can’t take it!”

Lance cheers and grabs Keith by the wrist. Keith didn’t realize how drunk he was until he actually stands up, the walls spinning and his legs wobbly. He stumbles into Lance and Lance stumbles as well. They both laugh hysterically at their drunken disorientation.

Before he knows it, he is standing with Lance in the center of the dance floor, surrounded by a sea of moving bodies, pressed together between hundreds of sweaty dancers. Keith is far too drunk to feel uncomfortable, and when Lance wraps his arms around his waist, he isn’t even embarrassed of the small hum that escapes his lip as he presses in close. He feels Lance’s lips brush against the skin just below his ear. “Just follow my lead, **rojo.**” He says, voice low. Keith nods dumbly, suddenly very aware of Lance’s body pressed firmly against his.

He briefly wonders, in his drunken haze, if it is possible to die from wanting someone so badly. He feels the muscles in Lance's stomach moving against his as he starts to sway his hips, and he is already incredibly overstimulated, helpless, and desperately turned on.

He moves his eyes upwards and Lance is looking down at him, a cocky smirk plastered onto his face. “Now you move your hips too.” He says, tightening his arms around Keith’s waist and bringing them impossibly closer. Keith’s brain short circuits.

“I can’t.” He says.

“Sure you can.” Lance dips his face lower, leveling his eyes with Keith’s, their noses only a breath apart. “Just back and forth, to the beat. Like me.”

Keith can’t think at all with Lance this close to him. He can feel Lance’s hips against his, swaying back and forth, creating a delicious friction that has him biting back a moan and breathing a little heavier than normal. The heat between them is rising. Lance’s scent envelops him, tangy and sweet and so inviting. Slowly, Keith starts to sway his hips to the beat, matching Lance’s movement. Lance smiles at him, eyelids heavy. “Mmm, there you go.”

The song starts to speed up. The crowd around them grows heavier, pushing them into each other. Keith is dizzy with the feeling of their hips grinding together. He feels Lance’s hands running up and down his back, settling on the curve just above his ass. He digs his fingers into the skin there and pushes Keith’s hips into his. Not expecting the new sensation, Keith lets out an embarrassingly low moan, falling forward and nestling his face into Lance’s neck, not able to control the urge to any longer. The beat is loud and vibrates through his entire body, every thrum of the bass matching up with a sway of hips, a new angle, and new sensation, and holy shit Keith’s head is spinning and it isn’t just because of the alcohol anymore.

The skin of Lance’s neck is smooth under his lips. It smells sweet and musky and Keith doesn’t even think before opening his mouth and darting his tongue out, swiping it lightly over the soft brown skin, his alcohol-induced confidence making his judgement incredibly hazy.

He feels Lance melt at the touch, grinding forward, harder, and faster. Their movements slowly start to evolve. Keith gives in, sucking the skin into his mouth and biting down, and **holy shit** Lance is so hot and he tastes so good and fuck he feels Lance shiver against him and tilt his head back, inviting Keith in for more. Their grinding starts to get sloppy but Keith doesn’t care, because they are still
pressed up against each other in the hottest way and Lance is making small noises, gasps of pleasure and low moans, and Keith can’t even believe a sound that sexy can exist. He can’t get enough. He wants to taste every part of Lance. He wants to drink him, breathe him in, lick him up and down. Heat is bursting all over his body, persistent and terrifying. He needs more.

He moves his face away from Lances neck and Lance whines, low in his throat. They both fall forward, breathing heavily, foreheads pressed together, still moving to the beat. Their breath mingles, Keith can feel it, hot on his face. Lance eyes flutter shut as the sway of their hips match up again. Keith can’t tell if he is hard, but he probably is, and when their noses bump a jolt runs through Keith’s entire body that almost makes him blind with desire.

“Lance--” he rasps, and he feels Lance’s hands sliding up his shirt, running over his stomach and holy fuck he doesn’t know how much longer he’ll last--

The song ends, and it’s like the spell breaks. They both freeze. Lance with his hand up Keith’s shirt, their foreheads resting against each other, hips pressed together, eyes shut, breathing heavily.

“Mmmm, rojo.” Lance hums drunkenly, sounding dazed. He rubs their noses together. “You are a good dancer.”

Keith wants to lean forward, wants to close the space between their lips. He wants to hear Lance moan again. He just wants wants wants and he is so drunk and Lance smells so good--

“Hey guys! I want you to meet Shay!”

Lance and Keith jump apart like they have been electrocuted at the sound of Hunks voice. They turn to look at where the voice is coming from and see Hunk pushing through the crowd, holding hands with the beautiful girl he was looking at earlier in the night. She has tan skin and large, brown eyes, with short thick hair that comes to a stop at her chin. “This is Shay! We bonded so much!” Clearly, Hunk is still drunk, but Shay doesn’t look very sober either. Lance laughs and gives Shay a high five, as if that is an acceptable way to meet someone, and Keith waves shyly.

They find Pidge again and sit back down, ordering even more food and laughing about ridiculous things. Keith can feel his present for Lance burning a hole in his back pocket. As he starts to sober up he begins to feel a heavy nervousness come over him. Maybe he made a mistake. Maybe Lance won’t like it, or think he’s too extreme, or get weirded out and stop talking to him. Maybe he shouldn’t give it to him. His knee bounces up and down as the nerves start to overtake him.

The rest of the night goes by in a blur. The more sober Keith gets, the more aware he becomes of the fact that he needs to give Lance his present before the night ends.

Lance keeps glancing at him, a strange look on his face. Keith notices that the flush from the alcohol is slowly leaving his cheeks and he is obviously sobering up too, even if only a little.

The drive back is quiet because everybody is exhausted. Pidge tries to start a conversation, but Lance and Hunk are asleep, and Keith feels himself drifting off too. He hesitantly lets his head fall onto Lance’s shoulder and closes his eyes, feeling nervous and comfortable at the small contact. He falls asleep with a dull heat in his chest, left from the whirlwind the night had been.

When they get back to the campsite, it isn’t really that late. Poor Coran had to handle making sure all of the kids went to bed by 11:00, and it is about 12:30 when the counselors get back. Keith is still
tipsy but not nearly as gone as we was before, and by the sleepy look on Lance’s face, Keith can tell he feels the same. Pidge and Hunk bid them goodnight and head to their cabins, rubbing their eyes and yawning.

The present in Keith’s pocket feels like it’s a hundred pounds. Should he give it to Lance? Is it even a good idea? Keith starts panicking because Lance is walking towards him, probably preparing to say goodnight, and he needs to make a decision.

Lance must see the panic in Keith’s eyes because his pretty eyes look dark with worry. “You going to be okay, rojo? Are you still having nightmares?”

Keith feels his stomach drop to his feet, suddenly feeling the urge to cry, because Lance cares. He can hear it in his voice. Lance cares about him. Lance wants to make his nightmares go away. To make him feel better. Even though the past week has been strangely nightmare free, Lance wants to make sure. Keith feels his heart expand like it’s about to burst, suddenly overwhelmed with feelings, and without thinking he stuff his hand into his back pocket and shoves the contents in Lance’s face. “Happy Birthday.” He says, voice breaking a little.

In his hand is a small, white envelope, with ‘Lance” written in chicken scratch writing on the front.

Lance stares down at it, eyes wide, blinking. “You...you got me something?”

Keith snaps his gaze to the floor, hiding his maddening blush. “Yes, I got you something, idiot. It’s your birthday.”

With shaking hands, Lance reaches out and takes the envelope. He continues looking at it like it is glowing. Keith sighs awkwardly. “Are you gonna open it or just stand there?” He tries to sound nonchalant but his voice comes out high pitched and rushed.

Slowly, Lance peels back the front of the envelope, hands still shaking. Keith looks at his face, eyes downcast and dark lashes fanning against his freckled cheeks. He doesn’t take his eyes off of that face, not even when Lance slowly looks up, eyes glassy and wide, locking with Keith’s.

“Keith...these are plane tickets.” Lance says, voice shaking.

“To Mexico.” Keith says. Lance just stares at him, eyes filling with tears. Keith can’t stand the silence and keeps talking. “Because, you know, you didn’t get to go...before.” He clears his throat. “And there are two, so you can take you brother, or Hunk, or your mom, or maybe one of those friends you were supposed to go with, even though personally I don’t think you should take one of them because--”

“Keith.”

Keith snaps his mouth shut and notices that there are tears streaking Lance’s face. Lance holds a hand up to his mouth, but Keith can tell he is grinning underneath it by the way his eyes crinkle at the corners. “You got me plane tickets.” More tears fall from the ends of his eyelashes.

Keith shifts awkwardly on his feet, feeling a rush of emotions too strong for him to handle at the sight of Lance crying. He feels tears prickle his eyes as well but blinks them away. “Yeah, I did.”

Lance shakes his head, eyebrows scrunching up. “How did you--?”

“I made money here too, so.”

Tears won’t stop falling from Lance’s eyes. Keith tries to ignore that fact that Lance is not at all an
ugly crier.

“You used the money you made this summer to buy me plane tickets?”

Keith shrugs, but he is shaking under Lance’s intense gaze. “Well all the money you make here goes to your family but...you deserve something too, I mean, for your hard work.”

Lance is looking at Keith incredulously, wide eyes darting all around his face, like he is trying to comprehend what is happening.

“You got me plane tickets.” Lance says again, softly.

Keith nods, trying to control the blush burning it’s way across his whole body. “I...yeah.”

At that, Lance lets out a sob that sounds oddly like a laugh and grabs Keith’s face, smashing their lips together. Keith makes a surprised noise at the contact because holy shit Lance is kissing him and his lips are exactly how Keith always imagined them to be; warm and soft and sweet and salty like the ocean. Keith breathes in, deep with his nose, and smells that intoxicating citrus that makes his crazy, and suddenly he is wrapping his arms around Lances neck, kissing back with even more force than Lance. He digs his fingers into the hair at the nape of Lance’s neck and revels in how soft, how touchable it is. Lance’s lips are moving so deliciously against his, and he can feel everything. The smooth skin, the hooked nose, the dried tears, the eyelashes fluttering against his cheeks. Lance breaks the kiss and moves his lips to Keith’s cheek. His lips are suddenly all over Keith’s face, planting small pecks on his forehead, his lashes, the tip of his nose, the corner of his mouth. Keith is struggling to breathe under the sudden attention, and between every kiss, Lance speaks, voice sounding helpless. “You” “are” “one of the most” “amazing people” “I have ever met”. He pitches forward and catches Keith’s lips with his again, and Keith swears that he is not alive, the he is dead and in heaven and this is all a dream. He waits for something to go wrong and nothing does. He can kiss Lance forever. He whines as Lance’s hands card through his hair, run up his back, touch him in the way he has wanted for so long. They break because they need to breathe, and Lance’s forehead is sleek with sweat, pressed against his. They are both panting, Lance's lips wet and bitten. Keith hadn’t even realized he was doing any biting or licking at all, but apparently he had.

“You just kissed me.” Keith says, voice hoarse.

“You got me plane tickets.” Lance says again, like he is still in shock.

“You are,” Keith starts, voice still not back to it’s normal pitch. “You are one of the most amazing people I have ever met, too.”

And as Keith watches Lance’s smile spread across his face, he can’t help but think to himself, *easily the most amazing person.*
soft

Chapter Notes

I literally have only 40% of an idea of how to end this fic, and I'm still working through it haha. This chapter is a little shorter but here's some fluff for you all, some "after the first kiss" action haha. I'm thinking one more chapter and an epilogue or just one more chapter? Well see! Either way, coming to an end soon, which is upsetting, but I've already started a new one, which is exciting!

Just wanted to say a massive thank you for everyone who has read, and left such beautiful comments. What a rollercoaster writing this has been. I'm so happy! You are my people.

They exchange numbers immediately after they kiss.

Really, it is something that should have happened weeks ago, and Keith had laughed for about ten minutes the night before when they broke from kissing for the third time and Lance said, “I don’t even have your fucking number, tonto, quit sticking your tongue down my throat!”

They had gone to bed giggling like twelve year olds, Lance refusing to let go of Keith’s waist and groaning about how much he wanted to cuddle all night. Keith had just rolled his eyes, blushing like crazy, and pushed Lance away (rather reluctantly), saying that literally every bad thing that had happened to him this summer had been due to Lance being distracting. Lance had pouted like a child and crossed his arm over his chest, watching Keith walk towards his cabin. Right before he got too far, Lance grabbed his wrist and spun him around, planting one more kiss on his nose (“Okay that’s it I’m done for real now goodnight!”)

It is 6AM and Keith, by some mystery that will forever stump all of mankind, is wide awake. He is staring at the collection of digits in his phone, screen so bright that he is squinting. There is a heat in his cheeks that hasn’t left since the night before, and he still doesn’t quite understand that it all actually happened. Lance kissed him, more than once. More than twice, even. Lance think’s he’s amazing. Lance wants to cuddle with him. What?

Despite all of this, he can’t seem to control the nerves twisting and turning in his stomach as he stares at the name “Lance (aka el guapo :p)” in his contacts. This is Lance. The same Lance it has always been. Except now he is in Keith’s phone. Keith can text him, and call him, and send him silly pictures—all of which he typically wouldn’t give a shit about but because it’s Lance, he feels like he is holding the world at his fingertips.

Almost as if Lance can read his mind, his phone lights up and a text appears on the screen. Keith’s heart almost leaps out of his throat as he opens it. All it says are two words in caps.

**Lance (aka el guapo :p)**

*VOLTRON CUPPPPPPP*
Keith stares at the words in confusion. They sound vaguely familiar to him, but he can’t quite piece it together. Chuckling a little, he texts back.

**Keith**

...what? also, why the hell are you up?

He gets a response in under twenty seconds.

**Lance (aka el guapo ;p)**

*Tonto, there are only two weeks of camp left. That means it’s TIME FOR THE VOLTRON CUP*

Keith raises an eyebrow at his phone as if Lance can see him.

**Keith**

*am I supposed to know what ur talking about?*

**Lance (aka el guapo ;p)**

*Oh man tonto, you really didn’t read the welcome materials did you*

**Keith**

*Does it look like I did?*

**Lance (aka el guapo ;p)**

*lol, well ur lucky you have me to tell you ;) Voltron cup is the big competition at the end of camp every year between all the cabins!!! Hello?? Duh, rojito.*

Keith suddenly remembers where he heard the words before. The first day that he spoke to Lance, he had told him about it, saying that his cabin “wins every year” and the red cabin is “the loser cabin”
Keith

*Oh yeah, when you were still an insufferable asshole you warned me about it, i remember now.*

Lance (aka el guapo ;p)

*Oh yeah! Rigghhhtttt, oops*

Keith is grinning now, looking down at his phone with an ache in his cheeks from how large the smile is.

Keith

*I may have had my tongue down your throat last night but my cabin is still beating all of your blue doodles, so don’t even bother trying*

Keith can almost hear the indignant squawk that comes out of Lance at the sight of his message, and he giggles wildly to himself.

Lance (aka el guapo ;p)

*Oh alright i see how it is rojito. Fuck it, it’s on!*

Keith

>:

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Apparently, the Voltron Cup is a pretty big deal to the kids, because when all of Keith’s campers wake up, there is an undeniable change in energy that is buzzing throughout the cabin. Stacy ties her hair in her lucky hair tie, Leo wears his favorite shorts, and Jack is wearing a shirt as bright red as Keith’s polo, grinning smugly and saying, “I look just like Keef!” as if it is something to be proud of.

In the two weeks that are left of camp for the summer, all five cabins need to somehow be narrowed down to two finalists, who will end up competing in the last week for the Voltron Cup. All activities are included in the competition—everything from arts and crafts to archery and swimming. This battle, apparently, is something Lance’s cabin has won for all four years that he has been here, and although Keith might like the guy a little, that doesn’t mean his competitive ass is anywhere near giving him the winning slot again.
Keith finishes getting his campers ready and they all head down to breakfast.

The first thing Keith registers as he walks into the dining hall is Hunk’s loud voice. “Let the battle begin!” He shouts dramatically, to which Pidge swats him upside the head and rolls her eyes.

“You are, quite literally, the lamest person I know.” She says fondly.

“Oh hey, rojo.”

Seeing Lance again makes Keith’s heart lurch in his chest, filling with warmth but also an anxious excitement that he can’t put a name to. He turns to face Lance head on and soaks up the knowing smirk, the glinting blue eyes, the small freckles.

“Oh hey.” Keith replies with the same tone of voice.

“Keith you’re playing a pretty dangerous game if you think you’re going to challenge the Blue cabin for the Voltron Cup.” Shiro says, grinning. “He’s won every year and I doubt you are an exception.” He is teasing Keith in the way that only an older brother can. Keith scoffs and blows his bangs out of his face.

“Well then maybe some things need to start changing!” He says, not able to hide his smile. “My campers are real tough, trained, doodle killers!”

Shiro laughed at that, a little incredulously. “Okay, Keith, don’t take this the wrong way, but coming here this summer has made you exponentially less cool than you used to be.”

“You are also much pinker.” Allura chimes in, her voice teasing. Shiro laughs a little too loud and Keith makes a mental note to tease him about it later.

“The sun is relentless!” He argues, face heating. “It’s not my fault I’m pale as sin and you’re all freaks of nature who absorb sunlight!”

Lance giggles at this, a sound that makes Keith’s face heat up for a whole different reason. “Relax, tonto. Who is the extreme one now?”

“You are savage.” Keith deadpans, standing up to fill his plate. He hears Lance laughing out loud behind him and goosebumps rise all over his arms.

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The thing is, Keith isn’t an idiot. He knows that he only has two weeks. Two more weeks, and then Lance will be gone. Back to Miami. They won't be a cabin away from each other anymore. They won't sit against a rock in front of the lake anymore. They won't swim together anymore and they won't--

See, the thing is, Keith is not an idiot. He knows this. He is fully aware of this.

He is just in complete, self destructive, life ruining denial.

---
As the first activity starts, Keith blissfully shoves the thoughts to the back of his mind and forces himself to focus on his campers.

The first activity is arts and crafts. The campers are challenged to glue as many pipe cleaners together as possible, and the tallest pipe cleaner tower wins. Keith is up against the Yellow Cabin, and Hunk is so mild compared to Lance that he actually just ends up complimenting Keith’s team when they win.

“Wow, your kids are wicked fast!” He shouts, grinning widely. Keith smiles fondly at him and suddenly is able to see how he and Lance have gotten along so well for so many years.

“Thanks Hunk, they worked really hard this summer.” Keith replies, as if gluing pipe cleaners together requires multiple weeks of intensive training.

His campers are all cheering, deafeningly loud, and hugging his legs, climbing all over him, shouting “we won we won we won! 122 pipe cleaners!” Keith laughs, pride swelling in his heart at these kids who have become so important to him over such a short period of time.

“Alright kids!” Allura and Coran are standing at the head of the room, gathering all the teams. On the other side of the room, it looks like Lance’s Cabin has beat out Shiro’s and Pidge’s, with 167 pipe cleaners. Keith glares at him and Lance just smiles back, innocently fluttering his eyelashes.

“Looks like the two teams in the lead are Blue and Red!” Coran yells happily. “Onto the next one, then! To archery!” A brief moment of chaos follows, where all of the kids excitedly try to leave at once and end up falling on top of one another, but eventually they figure it out, walking in somewhat of a regulated line. Keith hears footsteps speeding up from behind him and then Lance is at his side, smelling like heaven and looking impossible not to touch. “Rojito, don’t get too confident, now, or else your loss will be that much more difficult to cope with.”

In a desperate attempt at calming down his rapidly escalating x-rated thoughts, Keith reaches out to the side and pokes Lance in the stomach. Lance yelps. “What was that for?”

“You better watch your doodle, Lance.” Keith replies, trying to steady his voice.

“Too busy watching yours.” Lance says slyly, winking and jogging away before Keith can even react. Keith feels heat flaring in his cheeks.

“Hey!” He shouts, trying and failing to sound angry. Lance turns over his shoulder, practically cackling, and Keith can hear his heart pounding relentlessly in his ears.

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“Look at that concentration, rojo.” Lance is standing next to Keith, watching as the kids (with Allura’s help) start aiming to shoot their first arrows of the day. “Joey is my absolute best aimer. He could shoot with his eyes closed.”

Keith snorts, trying to ignore the fact that Lance is so close he can feel the heat radiating off of his skin. “Just you wait, Stacy is practically unbeatable.”

Lance grins, finally turning to look at Keith. “You sound like a proud older brother.”
Keith shrugs. “I mean, I guess.”

“You hate that this summer has made you go all soft.”

“I’m not soft.”

“You are so soft.”

“I’m not!”

“You are proud of the kids and you keep saying doodle, even when they’re not around. Have you forgotten how to curse, tonto?”

“I punched you in the face!”

“That was weeks ago!” Lance’s eyes are so bright they are almost blinding. “Ya softie!”

Keith really thinks he should be scowling right now, at least the Keith from four weeks ago would be, but he is biting back a grin that is threatening to split his face in half. God, how did it come to this?

Lance takes a step closer to him. “Just face it, you are a tiny, soft, sunburned rojito.” He is only standing a few inches in front of Keith now, voice gentle and almost fond, but a teasing glint in his eyes nonetheless. Keith goes for a frustrated noise but it comes out as a giggle, and Lance’s face get’s impossibly brighter at his reaction. “But guess what?” Lance continues.

Keith sighs, a little dizzy from their proximity. “What.” He asks, exasperated.

“You are also insanely sexy.”

“Keith!” Shiro’s voice makes them both jump. “Eyes on the campers!” He doesn’t sound angry though, just taunting, and Keith feels the blush filling up to the tips of his ears. Lance smirks and winks at him.

“Looks like Stacy is up, I hope she can get enough points to salvage your epic loss.”

“You are the worst.” Keith groans, rolling his eyes and walking towards his campers, the word “sexy” still ringing in his ears and making his chest feel like it’s on fire.

Stacy, as Keith expected, ends up earning the most points for her aim, and when Lance sees the final scores, he whirls around to look at Keith and pouts rather dramatically at the impressive gap in points. Keith laughs at his expression, opting to save his bragging for later because swimming is the next activity and he knows Lance’s cabin is the best at that. Lance quickly smiles as Stacy walks up to Keith, and even gives her a high five, which warms Keith’s heart and makes him feel disgustingly fuzzy.

---

By the end of the day, it comes as no surprise to anyone that Keith and Lance’s Cabins are in the lead, and literally tied, leaving very little room for bragging. When the counselors all sit down for
dinner, the dining hall is oddly quiet because everyone is exhausted, and they all eat rather quickly so they can rest for the next free couple of hours before bed.

During their free time, Keith watches from the picnic table as Lance tries and fails to teach a Spanish line dance to the campers, stumbling over his feet and laughing hysterically as the kids do the same. His laugh is like music. Jesus, Keith is so--

“--so gone for him, aren’t you?”

Keith jumps a little and looks up at Shiro, who is looking down at him with a fond smile on his face where Keith expected a shit-eating grin to be. Keith doesn’t answer right away, and lets Shiro sit next to him on the bench. The both stare forward at the spectacle, which Hunk and Pidge have now joined, all of them laughing and stumbling into each other.

“Holy shit, Shiro. Just...holy shit.” Keith says. As if that will explain everything. As if it explains the heat exploding in his chest and the fluttering in his stomach whenever Lance speaks to him. As if it explains the way his skin tingles and his mind buzzes when they touch, even just slightly. As if it explains the blinding sunlight Keith sees whenever Lance smiles, or smirks, or frowns, or breathes, or anything, really. He doesn’t want to say all of this to Shiro. He doesn’t want to hear how gone he is. He doesn’t need to know how deep the hole is that he has buried himself into. Thankfully, Shiro understands.

“Yeah. I know.” He replies. It is silent for a bit, the sound of Lance’s laughter warming Keith’s cheeks again, and then Shiro continues, despite Keith desire for the conversation to be over. “I’ve never seen you like this.”

Keith shrugs, trying to quell his erratic heartbeat. “It’s just a crush.” He tries, rather uselessly.

Shiro hums a laugh. “Okay, Keith.”

Keith leans back and wraps his arms around himself, suddenly feeling very vulnerable. “I don’t know what the hell I’m going to do.” He says defeatedly.

“It’s not a bad thing, Keith.” Shiro says softly. “When is the last time you opened up for anyone? It’s been years.”

“But he is leaving. I’ll never see him again. This was all so stupid of me.”

“No, it’s not. Do you regret meeting him?”

Keith sighs. “Fuck no.”

Shiro shrugs. “Well then, none of it was stupid. You can’t just decide not to fall for somebody.”

“Fall for--? But, I’m not--”

“It’s just not your choice.” Shiro cuts him off, not letting him deny it.

Lance is on the ground now, and has several of his campers standing on his back, trying to give him a back massage. Hunk and Pidge are rolling their eyes and smiling at the scene as Lance tries to shout instructions over his shoulder. He is grinning wildly, cheeks flushed from the heat and hair sticking out in all different directions. Hundreds of heavily cheesy thoughts are weighing down Keith’s mind, one of them being that he wouldn’t care if the sun went away and never came back, because Lance is enough.
“I might love him.” Keith says dumbly.

“No kidding.” Shiro deadpans, as if the world isn’t crumbling around them because of Keith’s confession. As if everything is normal and this is a conversation they have all the time.

Keith frowns. “You think you have the right to tease? Have you seen yourself with Allura? How much can someone gaze longingly at someone before it becomes a medical condition?”

Shiro’s face turns bright red. “What are you--”

“When the hell are you going to ask her out? She clearly likes you.’

Shiro sighs. “I don’t think so.”

“Seriously? Have you seen yourself?”

Shiro laughs nervously. Keith pushes on. “You have been pining over her for years, Shiro. If I have to listen to you laugh way too loud at one of her jokes again, I think I’m gonna blow my brains out.”

Shiro groans frustratedly, putting his face in his hands. “What if it doesn't work out? This is one of my permanent jobs, Keith, I’m at this camp year round with her. It can ruin everything.”

Keith shrugs. “Or not.” He says, smiling softly. “It could also be really great.”

Shiro huffs and rolls his eyes. “Holy shit, this camp has made you soft. Who even are you anymore?”

Keith scowls and smacks his stomach.

---

Keith is on the brink of falling asleep when his phone buzzes on his nightstand.

**Lance (aka el guapo ;p)**

*Meet at our spot?*

Keith stares at his phone for way too long, heart hammering in his chest.

**Keith**

*I don’t know if I should leave my campers…*

**Lance (aka el guapo ;p)**
Keith smiles despite himself.

**Keith**

*Coming*

The response is immediate.

**Lance (aka el guapo ;p)**

*That’s what she said ;)*

Keith rolls his eyes, desperately trying to stop his thoughts from using *Lance* and *coming* in the same sentence before he explodes and dies. He slips on his shoes and a tank top before pushing open the door and heading to the lake.

When he gets to the rock, Lance is already there, leaning against it with his arms crossed over his chest, staring out at the water. When he sees Keith, he smiles brightly and waves, standing up to greet him. Keith smiles shyly, suddenly unaware of what to do with any of his limbs as he nears closer. It’s a good thing Lance has a plan though.

Lance’s arms circle around Keith waist, pulling him into a hug. Keith freezes for a moment, tense and a little terrified and the multitude of emotions that are filling his chest, but then he feels Lance’s face press into his neck and he melts into the touch.

“*Tonto*,” Lance says through a smile, voice muffled by Keith’s neck.

Keith breathes in, slow and shaky. “Lance,” he says back, because he doesn’t trust himself to say anything else.

Lance lets go and looks down at Keith, eyes practically twinkling. “Your hair is up again.”

Keith chuckles. “Are you aware of how warm it is out here?”

“Kind of your fault for not getting a haircut in...” Lance studies Keith’s hair, “...probably like 12 years.”

Keith barks out a laugh at that. “Right, because that number is not an exaggeration at all.” He says sarcastically. “It’s only been like, a year, Lance.”

Lance doesn’t look at all phased, eyes still shining as they study Keith’s face. Keith feels the heat in his face at the attention. Nobody has ever looked at him like this. He clears his throat. “You’re lucky your hair is light so you don’t die in the heat.”
Lance chuckles, making his way over to the rock. Keith follows him. “You may be right, tonto, but then in the winter I’m always cold.”

They both sit against the rock, staring at the water like they have done multiple times before. Keith briefly entertains the idea of Lance during the wintertime; tan skin slightly paler, less freckles, a cold, bitten rosiness on the tip of his hooked nose, and his long, slender body covered with layers and layers of--

“I want you to come with me. To Mexico.” Lance’s voice isn’t even a little hesitant.

Keith feels like someone just put his heart in an oven, and clearly he is running out of metaphors. Lance is looking at him now.

“Wait, what?” Smooth, Keith.

“I want you to come to Mexico with me.”

Keith is staring at him incredulously. “But what about--”

“I don’t even understand how you thought I’d take anyone else.”

Keith feels a very inexplicable urge to cry and blinks it away quickly. “But your family?”

“Tonto, do you know how many places I’ve gone with my family? Do you know how many places I want to go with you?”

Keith just doesn’t understand. He doesn’t understand how Lance can just say those things, so openly, unashamed, without his voice even shaking. He looks at Lance with wide, blinking eyes, trying to sort through his thoughts, trying to find anything at all to say, but nothing seems good enough. He wants to say thank you, he wants to say I like you so much, he wants to say you mean the world to me.

He settles for, “I’m going to miss you.” Which doesn’t exactly communicate half of what he wanted, but it’s all he has the courage to say.

Lance’s smile falters a little. “I’m going to miss you too...come to Mexico with me rojo.” Lance’s voice is quiet because of their proximity. “I’ll even translate everything for you.” He grins, just enough for the white of his teeth to show.

They stare at each other in silence for what seems like an hour. Keith’s eyes jump all over Lance’s face, wanting to take it all in, memorize it, as if he hasn’t already. The words slip out of his mouth so suddenly that there is probably nothing he could have done to try and stop them. “I’m sorry, I just, you are just so fucking beautiful.”

Lance looks utterly shocked at this, smile disappearing and a confused, astonished look painting over his features. A red flush spreads across his cheeks and Keith can see it in the tips of his ears. “I’m--what?”

Keith wants to crawl into a hole and die because he has never really told anybody how he feels, ever. But he pushes on. “You... You are beautiful. Literally the first time I saw you I thought I was having a stroke. I’m sure you hear it all the time though.” He mumbles, looking back at his feet to avoid Lance’s eyes. Lance is still unmoving beside him, staring at him with wide, blinking eyes. Keith turns his head slowly to face him. “What?” he huffs, incredibly uncomfortable with the silence.

“I don’t.” Lance finally says.
“You don’t what?”

“I don’t hear it all the time.”

“How?” Keith blurts, completely dumbfounded.

Lance’s soft expression is a little too much for Keith to handle, and he can probably tell by the constipated look on Keith’s face that maybe this is an emotional overload for him. His fond smile starts to turn into the snarky smirk that Keith knows so well, and Keith visibly breathes a sigh of relief at the sight of it.

“So let me get this straight,” Lance says, voice light and teasing. “The first time you saw me, you fell hopelessly in love, because I mean, duh, and then your first thought is to punch me?”

Keith giggles. “No, you idiot, it was so dark, I didn’t know what you looked like. I mean the day after.”

“But I had that nasty bruise on my face!”

Keith clears his throat awkwardly. “Still beautiful.”

Silence.

“Hey.” Lance says softly. “Hey, rojito, look at me.” Keith feels a warm hand on his cheek, long fingers guiding his jaw so that he faces Lance. His breath hitches and Lance leans over, closing the space between their lips.

This kiss is nothing like the first one. It is soft, controlled, and gentle. Keith lets himself fall into it, the tightness in his chest loosening and heat spreading throughout his entire body. Lance tastes as sweet as he smells, and Keith wants to drown in it. He never wants to leave this spot right here, with Lance’s lips on his. He feels Lance’s tongue sweep across his lips, and opens his mouth, inviting him in. They kiss like this for a while, languid, lazy, and slow. Lance then pulls back, eyes still shut, breath slightly uneven.

“Jesus, tonto, I really, really like you.” He takes a shaky breath and sweeps his thumb along the top of Keith’s cheek, earning him a pathetic shiver.

“I really, really like you too.” Keith says, voice sounding much more helpless than he would have liked it to. The minute the words leave his mouth it’s like every muscle in his body loosens, the tension suddenly gone that he has been holding in all summer.

“So will you do it?” Keith bites his lip. Lance’s eyes track the movement briefly. “Come to Mexico with me? Por favor, rojito?”

Keith laughs, sounding exasperated. “Of course, Lance.”

Lance jumps onto his feet and whoops loudly. “Oh man, yes! We are going to have so much fun! You are going to get so sunburnt, okay, shit, bring like spf 600, also do you want to get one of those hotels with the massage spas and the steam room? I’ve always wanted to use a steam room. It’s like being underwater and still breathing! At least that’s what I hear, but then we could actually be underwater at the beach like an actual beach oh my god and I’ll be with you!” Lances long, excited rant comes to a stop when he sees Keith looking at him all too fondly. He takes a deep breath, and then softly repeats. “I’ll be with you.”

Keith grabs his face and kisses him, unable to control the urge, and Lance laughs into it, the sound
like music to Keith’s ears.
OKAY PEOPLE I had way too much to write, and my life is a mess, so sorry this took longer than usual. There will be one more chapter after this, and then an epilogue (probably their trip to mexico but no spoilers). SMALL SMUT ALERT, yes THERE IS SMUT IN THIS CHAPTER because im a slight ho. If you dont like reading smut, then...its like only two paragraphs and you'll know when it starting lol. thanks for your patience! enjoy everyone!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Time goes by way too fast.

In a blur of playful banter, stolen kisses, swimming in the lake, racing in the courtyard, and screaming things along the lines of ‘Can’t wait to beat your doodle!”’, the week flies by. The worst part is that it doesn’t even hit Keith until he is sitting on his bed talking to Leo and Leo says that he needs help fixing the wheel on his suitcase because “packing week” is starting and it’s broken.

Packing week.

Keith has one week left at Camp Voltron.

He knows that going back to college isn’t the worst thing to go back to. Garrison University, where he is studying, is actually a really nice place and a small part of him does miss his tiny apartment, his (sort of) friends, the air conditioning, the bed that doesn’t creak every time he moves, and even some of the work.

But another very large part of him looks at his campers, his brother, and all of the friends he has made this summer and suddenly air conditioning isn't as important as it once was. He knows he can’t stay here forever, and it’s not realistic, and in a week none of these people will be here anymore and it won’t be the same. But, he can’t help what he wants, alright?

As literally everyone expected, Lance and Keith’s cabins are the last ones standing in the Voltron Cup. Pidge’s Cabin was easily the best at arts and crafts, and Hunk’s dominated in kickball, but by the end of the week Keith and Lance were so ahead everyone that there was no way any other cabin could catch up.

Lance and Keith met at the lake every night. They didn’t talk about what was to come, they didn’t talk about anything, really. They mostly just made out and complemented each other because it’s not appropriate to do so during the day, and of course Keith has endless compliments to throw at Lance and Lance doesn’t take them very well, surprisingly sheepish and humble whenever Keith says something kind about him.

Keith can feel himself growing impatient, wanting more. More skin, more kissing, more time alone. He feels like every time they stop kissing to catch their breath, it’s a waste of time. He doesn’t want to waste any time. He want to get as much as he possibly can before Lance is gone; before Lance doesn’t live twenty feet from him anymore.
Lance catches on to Keith eagerness, chuckling into his mouth and trying to calm him down, whispering soothing things in Spanish as Keith pushes forward relentlessly. “Hey, tonto, no puedo hacerlo aquí, we can’t do this here.” But Keith just usually makes an embarrassing noise, something between a whine and a growl, and leans in for another kiss.

“Dios, you’re really testing my willpower right now, rojo.” Lance says tonight, as Keith pushes his back up against the rock and straddles him. “You are making it very hard to say no.” His voice sounds strained, slowing as Keith inches closer.

Keith shakes his head. “Do you know how long I’ve wanted to do this? Shut up and let me make irresponsible decisions.”

Lance chuckles, the sound low and gravelly as Keith experimentally pushes his hips forward, arching his back. “S’really bad idea.” Lance says, voice no louder than a pleasured hum, which makes it very unconvincing. “We really shouldn’t be--fuck, Keith.”

Keith has pitched forward and is sucking a hickey into Lance’s neck. Lance’s hands fly up to grasp Keith’s waist, pulling his body closer. He lets out a shaky sigh. “Rojo…” There is a small warning in his tone but it’s barely there. Keith lets his lips detach from the smooth skin on Lance’s neck with a small pop, breathing him in for a moment.

“I’m sorry…” He mumbles, heat flaring in his face for multiple different reasons. “I just...feel like we wasted so much time and I’m trying to get it all back.”

Lance laughs, breath still a little uneven. “Yeah, if only we’d been doing this all summer.”

“I want to…” Keith doesn’t really know how to say it without sounding too blunt. “I mean...how far do you...can you…”

Lance raises an eyebrow. “Que?”

“How far do you wanna go...with me?”

Lance just stares at him. “Isn’t that...I mean, that feels fast doesn’t it?”

“What does?”

“Sex.”

Keith clears his throat awkwardly, sitting heavily on Lances lap, but the mood is ruined. “Oh. You don’t want to?” He tries to fight the pout that is appearing on his face but apparently it doesn’t work, because Lance is sitting up straighter and grabbing Keith’s face, panic all of a sudden filling his eyes.

“Oh my god, tonto, I--, Dios, of course I want to are you kidding me?” He laughs like what Keith just said is unbelievable. “I’ve wanted to since the day Shiro wiped that toothpaste off of your face--”

“Wait hold up, what--?”

“But I don’t want to mess this up by going too fast.”

“ Toothpaste?”

Lance rolls his eyes. “Yeah, on the first day of camp you had toothpaste on your face at breakfast, remember? Then Shiro had to wipe it off for you. It was fucking adorable. Probably on the top ten list of ‘Adorable Tonto Things’.”
“Top te-- but you hated me?”

Lance shrugs. “I can still wanna plow people I hate. Also, I didn’t hate you, I was upset with you, and then I had dreams where we would have, beautiful, sweaty hate sex and I’d wake up hating you more.”

Keith huffs a surprised laugh. “Hate sex?”

Lance shrugs. “Guilty.”

Keith shakes his head in disbelief. “You are insane.”

“Oh come on, don’t tell me you never had hate sex dreams about me, rojo. When you kiss me like that? There’s no way.”

Keith blushes. “I mean, I probably would’ve, if I wasn’t having nightmares.”

“Fair enough.” Lance says, smiling.

“I just...want to have as much of you as possible...before we leave, ya know?”

Lance sighs sadly. “I want that too, rojito. Trust me. But I’ve been in situations where I went too fast and...I want it to be more meaningful with you.”

Keith bunches up the front of Lances shirt in his hands and places a kiss, firm and warm, on Lance’s lips. “Fine.” He mumbles against them. “Fine, I’ll wait.”

Lance giggles, carding his hand through Keith’s hair. “Bueno, I’m proud.” He says, smirking.

---

The final four activities, spread evenly over the final four days, are as follows; Swimming, relay race, arts and crafts, and capture the flag. Keith doesn’t have a chance at winning the swim race, he knows that, because Lance’s cabin is downright crazy in the water. So he gathers his campers together on Monday morning and decides to try and hype them up.

“Alright guys, We gotta work the hardest we have ever worked this week, alright? We are not going to let the Blue Cabin beat us this year!” His statement is met with various cheers from the children, throwing their fists in the air and whooping loudly. Keith continues on. “We know we are going to win capture the flag because, duh, we’re champions at that game, so all we have to do is kick Blue’s doodle in the relay and stack up more pipe cleaners, and we are in the clear!”

Jack raises his hand. “But Keef, we lost the pipe cleaner challenge last time!” He says worriedly.

Keith is about to open his mouth but Lance’s voice booms over his from across the courtyard. “Yeah, Keith! You lost the pipe cleaner thing last time!” He says mockingly. Keith rolls his eyes and turns back to his campers. “I know we can do it, we just have to work extra extra hard okay?”

“That’s what she sa--”

“Lance.” Keith swivels around and addresses Lance in a warning tone. Lance is walking up to him with his campers in tow. “Stop that, there are children here.”

Lance laughs. “It goes right over their heads” he says secretly, leaning over so only Keith can
hear. Keith wants to argue back but Coran is at the front of the courtyard now, beckoning everyone to gather around.

“Come on, everyone, chop chop!” He says happily. “We have a very busy couple of hours ahead of us!” The campers all circle around Coran, leaving space in front for the two competing cabins. Coran claps his hands together loudly. “Great! Now as you all know, each activity is about two hours, and there will be one every day for the next four days.” Coran twirls the end of his moustache with his finger. “The remaining hours of the day are free for you to do whatever you choose, but keep in mind that you can use the time to park packing!”

Keith chooses to ignore the word “packing”.

“The first activity of the week is….drumroll please!” All of the kids stomp their feet. “Swimming!”

Lance cheers and Keith pouts, crossing his arms over his chest.

“He tonto, get ready to--!”

“Yeah, yeah, I get it.” Keith says, exasperated, but he can’t keep the smile off of his face.

Lance’s cabin dominates.

Of course they do. Keith thinks they were all secretly born as mermaids or something, because there is no way any human being can weave through the water that easily. Lance almost becomes the water, all fluid, languid movements. Keith ignores the heat at the pit of his stomach that makes him want to drag Lance out of the water and pull his swim trunks down and---

“Hello?” Pidge and Hunk are standing in front of Keith, waving a hand over his face. “Earth to Keith?”


“Damn.” Said Pidge, looking equal parts impressed and disgusted. “I mean, we knew you and Lance were foolin’ around but I was not expecting this level of thirst from you, gotta be honest.”

Keith feels heat exploding across his face. “Wha-- how do you--?”

“You’re forgetting we’re Lance’s best friends. He tells us literally everything. And I mean everything. How is your lip doing by the way? He said he bit it a little too hard last night.” She says bitterly.

Keith doesn’t know how to react, but a laugh is falling out of his mouth before he can stop it. “Holy shit, I hate him.” He says.

Hunk smiles, amused. “Nah, I don’t think you do.”

Lance and his campers are leaving the water, panting and giving each other massively dramatic high fives, as Coran shouts. “Holy Crow! Four minutes! I think that’s a new camp record!”

Keith tries to calm down the heat that is spreading to his...lower half, as Lance approaches him with water droplets dotting his bare torso. “Beat that. Rrrrrrojo !” He says, dramatically rolling the rrr
sound for an excessively long amount of time. Keith giggles, shaking his head and tearing his eyes away from the smooth skin on Lance's stomach in an attempt to regain some composure.

“You knew you were going to win.” He accuses.

“Yes.” Lance replies, giving a thumbs up and winking. One of his campers calls him over and he sends a small salute to Keith before turning around and jogging away. Keith sighs as he watches him go, a sad feeling filling his chest at the idea of not seeing him anymore.

---

Most of the free time on Monday is spent with Lance dancing around the children, singing silly songs in spanish and running from them as they try to catch him. Keith decides he needs a break from constantly having his heart on the verge of utter annihilation, and retreats to the Red Cabin to start cleaning up a good four weeks of damage. The Red Cabin was already a mess when Keith had first arrived at Camp Voltron, but now it's ten times worse. There are ambiguous stains on almost every surface, cracks in the walls, some funky smells with unknown sources, and hair ties. So many hair ties. Everywhere.

He ties his hair back and gets to work, soaking a few sponges and beginning to scrub down the most accessible surfaces first. His mind wanders as he cleans. He wonders about his friends back at Garrion University; what had they done this summer? Why hadn’t he tried to contact them? Were they doing things to progress in their career? What the hell even is Keith’s career? He has one more year in college and he has no idea what he wants to do in his life.

What does Lance want to do with his life? Probably something with kids. Probably something way too adorable. Keith lets out a puff of air that blows some stray hair out of his face, scrubbing harder. Does Lance go to school in Miami? Does he live at home? Has he been living with his family during college? And how the hell does Keith not know these things?

His brain doesn’t stop floating around in his head, images of Lance as a pediatrician or a kindergarten teacher making his whole body heat up with a fondness that threatens to knock him onto his face. He files the questions in the back of his mind for another time, when he can sit with Lance and learn everything about him. Everything he wants to know.

The door creaks open behind him and he jumps a little, hand still scrubbing the table back and forth. He looks up and sees Lance staring down at him. A flash of ‘pediatrician Lance’ appears in his head for a brief moment and ties his tongue. He clears his throat. “Uh?” He manages to say. Lance bursts out laughing.

“Hi to you too.” He says teasingly. “What are you doing in here? It’s so happy out there!”

“But the stains are so gross.” He says, gesturing wildly to the splotchy mess all around him. “I may as well do this now while someone is watching my campers and I have time, right?”

“Not right.” Lance shakes his head. “Because I miss you.”

Keith frowns, blushing. “You literally saw me twenty minutes ago.”

Lance shrugs, grinning. “Come on, rojoooo.”
“Okay, okay fine. But you’re helping me clean later.”

“Deal!”

Lance grabs his hand and they head back out into the courtyard again. They plop down at the picnic table with Hunk, Shiro, and Pidge. The campers have started their own game of soccer, running back and forth while consistently tripping and falling in the mud. Keith sees Jack talking to Stacy, twiddling his thumbs nervously as she smiles at him. It had taken a while, but Jack is finally starting to be nicer to Stacy, and it shows. Stacy is grinning at him and blushing lightly at whatever he is saying. Keith feels like a proud father.

“So, Keith, where are you off too after next week?” Hunk asks, leaning over the table and placing his hand on his chin. Keith turns his gaze away from Stacy to look at him. He shrugs.

“I have one year of school left so...I’m probably going back there.” He smirks at Shiro, who looks unsettled by the word “probably.” Shiro rolls his eyes.

“He is going back there.” Shiro says scoldingly, raising a finger at Keith. “Suck it up for one more year alright?” Keith laughs.

“Yeah, yeah, fine.” He says, waving Shiro away.

“What are you studying?” Pidge asks.

“Astronomy and physics.”

“Astronomy?” Lance cuts in, voice shocked. “That is, quite literally, the last thing I would have pegged you in.”

Keith raises an eyebrow. “Well what would you have guessed?”


Shrio laughs. “Oh my god, imagine Keith as a designer. He would die.”

Pidge’s face has not stopped looking fascinated since Keith revealed his major. “Physics? Astronomy? Dude that’s sick! We could have been having such great conversations this whole time! How did I not know this?”

Keith is smiling, feeling very shy as the center of attention. “I’m really not that good at it.”

“He says, with a 4.2 GPA.” Shiro chimes in sarcastically. Lance is gaping at him.

“Four point two--?”

“And he got into college with a full ride,”

“Full ride?” Pidge exclaims.

“It’s really not--” Keith starts.

“Oh, and he’s already been offered two internships since he’s been at Camp Voltron.”

“Wait what?” Keith asks, but Lance talks over him.
“Internships? Dude, get on that!”

“Wait Shiro, how did you—?“

“I check your email more than you do, Keith.”

“Holy shit, Keith, that’s so cool!” Pidge is shouting again.

“Guys, stop, it’s not a big deal.” Keith says, blushing furiously.

Lance covers his face with his hands, groaning. “Ugghhh how are you so cuteeee? ”

“This conversation is a trainwreck.” Hunk supplies helpfully.

“Keef!” All conversation comes to a close when Leo’s voice tears through the air, high and panicked. “Keef I think something stung me!”

“Uh oh,” Shiro says under his breath. All of the counselors, as if summoned, get up at the same time and jog over to where Leo is covering his arm and sniffling.

“Hey bud, lemme see. How much does it hurt?” Keith kneels down in front of Leo, holding out a hand. Leo extends his arm forward. There is a small red dot where the bug probably bit him, but the skin surrounding the dot is red, swollen and angry. Keith presses his fingers to it and it is burning hot. Leo hisses, tears filling his eyes.

In one moment, Keith starts panicking internally. He’s dealt with injuries before but this looks like an allergic reaction, and even though Leo is clearly still breathing and his throat isn’t closing up and he isn’t breaking out into hives and everything is fine, Keith’s minds starts running a mile a minute. *Oh my god, Leo is dying. Leo is going to die. A poisonous bug bit him but it's not going to be like spider man, there won't be any powers he’s just going to fall over dead. I’m too late. His throat is going to close up oh my god just like in the fifth grade when jennifer was stung by a bee underneath the tire swing and she stopped breathing—*

He feels a warm hand on his shoulder and suddenly Lance is kneeling down next to him, gently taking Leo’s arm out of his grasp and lightly running his thumb over the bite. It takes Keith a moment to realize that his heart is jack hammering in his chest and he’s broken out into a cold sweat. How long had he been sitting there, staring at Leo with wide, panicked eyes? He doesn’t know.

“Looks like a spider bite.” Lance says. His voice is calming. Firm. Grounding. Keith takes a shaky breath. “Happens all the time, man. You took it like a champ! Those hurt a bit don’t they?”

Leo nods, still sniffing. He raises his other hand up to his nose and wipes it roughly. “Let’s get you to the nurse’s office, okay? We can put some medicine on it and you’ll even get a popsicle for being so tough, yeah? How’s that sound?”

Leo breaks into a watery grin, which makes Lance grin back at him. Keith’s chest feels tight. Lance takes Leo’s hand and they begin walking down to the rec center. Keith watches them until the disappear, his heart in his throat.

A moment of silence goes by. Keith knows that Shiro is next to him without him having to say anything. There is a pause where all Keith can hear is his heartbeat, starting to slow to a normal pace again. He sighs quietly.

“Everything okay?” Shiro asks cautiously.

“Yeah.” Keith says, voice a little shaky. “I shouldn’t have freaked out like that. It was so stupid of
“He keeps his eyes glued to the opening at the edge of the courtyard, where Leo had gone with Lance. “How does Lance do it?”

“Do what?”

“Just...be so calm around kids. And like...in situations of crisis.”

Shiro shrugs. “He grew up in the middle of a huge family. I’m sure he deals with crisis aversion every single day.”

“Yeah, I guess so.” Keith says, a warm feeling tugging relentlessly at his heart.

It’s starting to get dark outside and Keith rounds up his campers to start getting ready for bed. Lance doesn’t return after twenty minutes, and Keith doesn’t know if he’ll see him before he falls asleep. As he climbs underneath his covers, in the safety of his cabin, with all of his campers already fast asleep, he sends Lance a text.

Keith

Thank you…

And then with some hesitation, he adds.

<3

*

What Keith doesn’t see is Lance receiving the text, dropping his phone on the floor, and squealing into his pillow like a lovesick, twelve year-old girl.

———

The arts and crafts challenge is actually a lot more stressful than Keith prepared for. Coran actually ends up “surprising” the competing cabins by changing the product they had to stack at the last minute. Instead of building something out of pipe cleaners, which are bendy and hold their shape, they have to use popsicle sticks. Lance makes a dramatic spectacle of the thing, obviously, standing up and clearing his throat as if he is about to defend himself in court, and then speaking for five whole minutes without taking a breath about why that is, in fact, “the worst decision ever, Coran-man.”
They end up using popsicle sticks anyway, because according to Lance, behind Coran’s “sunny smile” is a “ruthless dictator who just wants to watch the world burn.”

The room stays deathly silent as Coran scans the finished towers, counting every popsicle stick to ensure that there is a clear winner. Keith just waits, eyes wide and heart pounding, ignoring the smirk that Lance is sending him from across the room.

“Blue Cabin final count: 189 Popsicle sticks.” Coran says. “Red Cabin Final count…..”

Keith holds his breath. He hears Lance draw in a long breath, waiting.

Coran’s face spreads into a grin. “196 sticks!’ Red Cabin wins!”

Keith jumps into the air, whooping as his campers tackle him to the floor. He hears Lance somewhere behind him saying, “What? Are you kidding me?!” When his campers finally let him stand up he just walks up to Lance and sticks his tongue out, because that’s what he felt like doing, okay?

Lance stares at him incredulously. Then he bursts out laughing. “Who even are you, tonto?”

“I’m a winner! So HA!” Keith shouts poking Lance’s chest as he does it. Lance just rolls his eyes, but he’s blushing. “Just you wait, rojo. There are still two events left.”

“Yeah, but one of them is capture the flag, so…” Keith smirks.

Lance scoffs. “Maybe I’ve been practicing!”

“I don’t even think that’ll help you at this point.” Keith teases, feeling oddly confident.

Lance is scowling, a blush still very apparent of his cheeks. Keith watches as he looks around the room, eyes darting to the campers and counselors leaving through the double doors. When most of the people have cleared out, he pitches forward and captures Keith’s lips with his, firm and warm. He nips at Keith’s bottom lip and pulls away, so fast that it doesn’t even feel like it happened.

“You’re so cute when you annoy the shit out of me.” He says, sounding exasperated. Keith laughs out loud, covering his mouth to muffle the sound.

“You are so strange.”

Lance smiles and leans forward again. This time, the kiss is much longer.

---

Lance sings to the kids around the campfire in the evening. Keith stares like a moron who is hopelessly, stupidly in love.

---

They meet at the rock later that night. Lance doesn’t even waste any time before tackling Keith to the ground, licking into his mouth and moving against him in the most delicious ways. Keith feels
slightly ambushed, but mostly very turned on. They only make out like this for a few minutes before Keith, already hard in his khaki shorts, decides to do the stupidest thing ever and stop it from moving forward. He puts his hands on Lance’s chest and gently pushes him away. Lance detaches from his mouth with an obscene popping sound that Keith has only ever really heard in porn. “What the hell are you--” Lance starts, voice cracking, but Keith sits up so that Lance is straddling his lap. They stare at each other for a moment. The disappointment is clear on Lance’s pouting face. “Aren’t I the one that usually stops this?”

Keith takes a deep breath. “Don’t you think we should...I don’t know. Talk?” Keith asks nervously, still panting from the kissing.

Lance watches his chest rise and fall, eyes tracking the movement. “Talk about what?”

Keith shrugs. “Like...I don’t know. What is this? What do we do when we leave? What’s going to happen? I don’t even know what you’re studying, or where you go to school..”

Lance raises an eyebrow. “Can’t we talk about this after I jerk you off?”

“What--” Keith laughs nervously, heat exploding between his legs and curling in the pit of his stomach. He swallows hard. “Lance.” He says, trying to sound reasonable but failing as his voice cracks.

Lance huffs a frustrated sigh, fingers tracing slowly over Keith’s chest, down to his belly button, then up again. “Fine…” He says quietly. Reluctantly. Keith takes a shaky breath.

“So, I’m going back to school…”

Lance’s fingers don’t stop moving across Keith’s chest. “Mhm.” He says.

“And we probably won’t be...anywhere near each other…”

Lance flattens his palm on Keith’s chest, reaching his thumb out and swiping it over Keith’s nipple. A short gasp falls from Keith’s lips. “Yeah...probably far away.” Lance mumbles. He swipes his thumb over, again and again, creating small circles around it. It sends shivers down his spine and he swallows hard. What was he talking about? He doesn’t remember. Was it his nipple? Were they talking about nipples? No. No they weren’t.

“And so…” Keith tries to continue, voice heavy. “So... we won’t see each other…”

“Mnhmm.” Lance falls forward, pushing his face into Keith’s neck, breathing out a long sigh that fans across Keith skin. Keith’s eyes flutter shut as he feels Lance’s tongue dragging against the spot just below his ear. He takes a deep breath through his nose, involuntarily tilting his head back to give Lance more access.

“S-so...ah--”

Lance nuzzles his nose and mouth beneath Keith’s ear, nibbling at it. “Hmm?” He hums, lips closing around the spot and sucking gently. Hands roaming. Keith didn’t even realize Lance’s hand is moving until he feels one grazing his thigh, moving upwards until--

“F-fuck…” Keith mumbles, feeling the pleasure shoot through his body as Lance palms him through his shorts. “Lance...b-but we--ngh--”

“So later.” Lance whispers, lips brushing Keith’s ear before moving to press against his mouth again.
“But I--ah!” Lance presses down harder with his hand and Keith finally gives in, grabbing Lance’s face and deepening the kiss. Lance hums a smug laugh against his mouth and Keith swats him upside the head, but they don’t stop kissing.

Keith already can’t handle the feeling of Lance’s hand on him, and there are two layers of fabric in between them. He feels himself start to warm up significantly, breaking into a sweat when Lance starts to move the heel of his hand in slow circles, pressing down hard. Lance climbs onto his lap, straddling him again, never slowing the movements of his hand. They kiss. Lance’s hand moves slowly. So Slowly. They kiss and kiss and kiss until Keith can fucking take it anymore. “Lance,” he whines, detaching their lips and resting his forehead against Lance’s. The name comes off his lips, desperate and frustrated. “God, please j-just--”

Lance lets out a small, satisfied hum. “Look who’s impatient now, rojo.” Without any sort of warning, Lance’s hand is slipping beneath Keith’s waistband and grabbing him eagerly. With no cloth separating them this time, Keith lets out the most pathetic moan at the contact and bucks his hips upwards, needing more. He feels Lance’s hand, warm (and much softer than he thought it would be), begin to tug upwards with fast, hungry strokes.

“Holy shit...” Keith breathes, not really aware that he had said it out loud until he feels Lance’s breathy, hot laugh curling all around him. He lets his head fall back against the rock, Lance towering over him with a smirk on his face that is too attractive to be fair. He tells himself to keep his eyes open. To look up at Lance the whole time. But as Lance’s hand starts curling further around him, rubbing some of the most sensitive places, Keith feels his eyes starting to drift shut against his own will. He can feel Lance’s long, slender fingers, the one’s he’s been fantasizing about for so long, wrapped around his length and it’s all too much and Lance is letting out small, labored breaths that are making Keith stomach practically boil with desire. He lets his mouth fall open slightly to try and even out his suddenly rapid breathing, practically panting as Lance experiments with different positions of his hand, twisting and dragging it along the sensitive skin.

“Fuck, no puedo creer ---I’ve wanted to see you like this for so long, precioso.” Not the Spanish. Keith can’t handle the Span--

“Jesus--ah--” A particularly pleasant stroke.

“Quiero ver tu cara, I want to see your face when you come, rojo.” Lance’s voice is deep and shaking ever so slightly with his movements. A familiar heat in Keith’s gut spikes at the sound of it, making his hips twitch slightly underneath Lance’s grip. A small moan leaves Lance’s lips.

“When I touch myself, I always think you about, Keith.” Lance whispers hotly, warm breath ghosting over Keith’s face. Another swipe over the tip. Another hard flick of the wrist. “Your hands...your mouth...your ass... God, the things I would do to you, rojo…”

Keith gasps, back arching off the rock, pressing his body closer to Lance’s. “Shit, Lance…” His skin is on fire. Every touch burns, but in the most satisfying way. Lance is speeding up, squeezing harder, swiping his thumb over the tip so gently, delicately, and every flick of his wrist has Keith melting, falling, further and further and further into--

“O-oh fuck, I’m so close” Keith hears himself mumble. It sounds far away. It doesn’t sound like him. His eyes screw shut and he feels his whole body tensing and Lance’s hand is still moving but now Lance has fallen forward, sucking hard onto Keith’s neck and biting down aggressively. Keith moans loudly, not even bothered to cover it up and holy shit he’s so close so close so fucking--

“Come for me, bello, come on.” Lance commands in his ear, low and hoarse, and it pushes Keith
over the edge, color exploding behind his eyelids and pleasure shooting to the tips of his fingers and toes, leaving a tingling yet numb sensation throughout his entire body.

Heavy breathing.

Toes uncurling.

Muscles loosening.

Silence.

“Fuck.” Keith chokes out, opening his dazed eyes and seeing Lance right in front of him with a smug, toothy grin spread across his face. Sweat shimmers across his skin and makes him look like he’s glowing. “Where the fuck...how long have you been able to do that?” Keith asks dumbly, brain not quite at 100% yet.

Lance winks. “As long as you've known me. Look what you’ve been missing out on, tonto!”

Keith covers his face with his hands. “You’re so good at it. Shit. I don’t think I’ll ever recover.”

Lance shrugs, eyes glinting. “Probably not.” He says happily. And just like that, Lance is back to being a sweet, sweet cinnamon roll, not one naughty bone in his body. Keith’s cheeks warm.

“Um...well, thank you?” Keith says awkwardly. Lance bursts out laughing.

“I think that’s our sign to call it a night, rojo.” He grins fondly down at Keith’s nervous face. “But, you’re welcome.” He adds softly, as if they’re not talking about a handjob but something much more significant.

Keith clears his throat. “Guess we’re not talking tonight?” He asks sleepily. Lance rolls off of him and yawns.

“I don’t know, rojo, I’m pretty beat.”

“Yeah, me too.”

“Talk tomorrow?”

Keith smiles. “Fine.”

“It’s a date.” Lance winks, causing Keith to roll his eyes.

“Okay Lance.”

_ _ _ _ _

The relay race, as far as Keith can tell, is going to be pure chaos. Of course, his campers are hopping and pacing and jittering with excitement, but as Keith scans his eyes over the set of obstacles set before them, he can’t help but feel like this will absolutely not end well. The kids have to crawl through a tunnel, hop across several tires laying on the ground, and climb over a 6 ft rock climbing
Nevertheless, Keith is pretty fired up. Deep down, he actually feels like his cabin might be able to win this. Lance may give A+ handjobs, but Keith still wants to win more than anything. He loves the kids so much and they deserve this. They really do.

Both teams are lined up at the starting line. Coran is screaming some kind of gibberish through a megaphone, and the raising volume in his voice is hyping the kids up, making them lean forward further and further to get the best head start. Suddenly, the whistle blows, and the first kids burst off the starting line. Leo is the first to go in Keith’s team, running so fast that he is just a blur of movement. He is ahead in an instant. Keith is screaming so loud that he is starting to feel his voice crack but he doesn’t care because Leo is winning! And he didn’t drop dead from his bug bite! All good things.

Leo sprints back to the starting line and tags Jack, who is the next camper to go. Jack isn’t as fast, but he is agile, and doesn’t even trip once. Lance’s campers are catching up though, following very close behind. He can hear Lance screaming encouraging words in Spanish as his camper crawls rather aggressively through the tunnel, finally catching up to Jack.

Needless to say, it is a very stressful couple of minutes. Keith doesn’t realize that he was holding his breath the whole time until his last camper is about to cross the finish line. He’s about a foot in front of Lance’s camper, and Lance sounds very distraught by how things are looking to turn out.

“Come on, pollito, run!” He screams helplessly.

Keith’s last camper crosses the finish line first.

The screaming is so loud that Keith is convinced one of his eardrums ruptures, and he tackles Leo into a massive hug, “You are so fast, Leo! That head start was incredible!”

Leo looks up at him with a wide, toothy grin. He is about to say something but is then tackled by the rest of his team mates, who are all shouting and telling him to try out for the “running olympics”.

Keith’s heart feels so full. The fullest it has felt in so many years. Full of pride, love, and contentment. He swivels around to look at Lance and throws his hands up in the air. He tries to say, “We won!” or, “Look who has the loser cabin now!” But the words die in his throat when he sees Lance’s smile, beaming and fond, directed right at him. He ends up letting out a “victory whoop” instead because there was no way that any words were going to leave his mouth with Lance looking at him like that.

Coran is screaming, “Red team takes the relay!”

Hunk gives Keith a massive hug.

Pidge holds her fist up for Keith to pound it.

Shiro ruffles his hair.

Keith’s face hurts from smiling.
One more day.

There is only one more day of camp.

---

Packing is a disaster. If Keith thought his first morning in the red cabin was chaos, then he was absolutely mistaken. Trying to get twelve ten year-olds to pack up a month’s worth of stuff is definitely, **definitely** worse.

There is a kid crying somewhere in the cabin about dirty socks but Keith can’t deal with that right now because Jack and Mike are fighting over who has the bigger suitcase and April lost her special shoes and Keith thinks that somebody just stepped on an earring.

When Lance walks in it’s like he’s Keith’s guardian angel, somehow managing to calm all of the kids down and even get a majority of their things packed in less than an hour. Keith is baffled by everything Lance does. The way he talks to the kids, it’s like he knows exactly what they need to hear. April has her shoes again and Leo is giggling and everyone is just so happy when Lance is around. It’s like there is literal warmth radiating off of Lance that everybody can feel when he’s around. It comforts them all, especially Keith.

Keith feels a brief and very surprising wave of jealousy when he thinks about Pidge, Hunk, and Shiro having so many years with Lance. So many years to watch him grow up, learn, change, become who he is today. Keith wants that. He wants to **know** him.

Three painful hours pass after Lance leaves where Keith attempts to tie up loose ends, to make sure that everybody is ready to go in twenty four hours. There is a heavy sadness that is suddenly hanging over the cabin, everyone realizing that this is almost over.

Keith is in his own room packing up his things, which is an impressively small amount of things, When Leo appears at his door with the rest of his campers in tow.

“Keef, we are going to miss you!” Leo says, all of the kids behind him nodding. Keith smiles (mostly to hide the pain) and beckons his campers into his room.

“I’m going to miss you guys too.” He sits on the floor and his campers all sit around him. “But aren’t you guys coming back next summer?”

“Well yeah...but you won’t be, Keith.” Stacy says.

Keith frowns. He has never even thought about it. But now that it’s been brought up, it’s almost as if it was a given the whole time.

“Of course I’m going to come back. I’m the red cabin counselor, aren’t I?”

“Really?” Jack jumps up. “You’re really coming back?”

Keith taps his chin. After he graduates college, he might have a job...but he can always negotiate to start a month later...
“Of course I am.” He concludes, grinning. The thought of seeing Lance again after months of probably not seeing him is already stirring warmth and excitement in his stomach. Lance would come back to camp, right? He loves it here.

Keith ends up sitting on the floor with his campers until it is time to go to bed. Some of them fall asleep, leaning against his shoulder and across his lap, and he shakes them awake and tells them to return to their beds. He never realized until this very moment, how much he is going to miss these kids.

---

The last event of the Voltron Cup is Capture the Flag, which is as ironic as it is exciting. Not once this summer has Lance’s Cabin beat Keith’s, so Keith already knows that he is going to win before they line up across from each other and get ready to start the game.

Lance and Keith aren’t allowed to play this time, so it’s entirely up to the campers. But Keith has no doubt that his campers have the perfect plan to win.

The game starts the same way it always does. Keith’s campers are screaming and charging and Lance’s campers are attempting to scream louder. Lance walks over to Keith, standing next to him and sighing loudly, obviously trying to get his attention. Keith rolls his eyes and looks at him.

“What.” He asks, unamused.

Lance sighs dramatically. “Oh nothing. It’s just that I have a feeling…that maybe … by some miracle provided by some sort of deity…. You might actually win this thing…”

Keith bites back his smile. “Oh yeah?”

“Yeah, just a feeling.” Lance drawls, making a show out of rolling his eyes. “And I’m a little bummer about it, ya know? I’m pretty damn bummed, rojo .”

“Is that right?”

Lance finally turns to look at him, an exaggerated pout on his face. “Someone finally beat the blue cabin. And it was you?”

Keith laughs. “Hell yeah.”

“Well, you know what this means right?”

“What, Lance.”

“You’re going to have to make me feel better tonight.” Lance’s eyes scan over Keith’s face, darkening slightly. “Alright?”

Keith clears his throat, face heating up.”I don’t know man, you might be inconsolable.”

“We’ll figure something out.” Lance smirks. Keith giggles. They hold their gaze for a beat before turning their attention back to the game.
It is no surprise to anyone that the Red Cabin wins. They find the blue flag in a record breaking eleven minutes, and Keith is so ecstatic that he feels like he can’t breathe. He gathers all of his campers into a big group hug and they’re all screaming, cheering, throwing mud, jumping up and down, and tackling each other to the ground. Coran tries and fails to scream over them, announcing the red cabin did in fact win, and he is holding a large plastic trophy that is going to be put on display in the rec center.

Lance is wrapped around him before he can even process what is happening, laughing praise into his neck and practically suffocating him with that intoxicating, sweet citrus smell. “Congrats, rojito. You did it.”

Shiro pulls him away from Lance into a crushing big-brother hug that it immediately interrupted by Hunk and Pidge climbing on him and shouting “You won! You beat Lance! We’re going to miss you so much!”

Keith is practically cackling. “I’m going to miss you guys too.”

Being the center of attention has never been something that Keith particularly enjoys, but with these people? He doesn’t mind it too much.

Keith is sitting by the rock for the last time. He doesn’t hear Lance approaching, but suddenly Lance is sitting next to him. There is a slight, warm breeze shaking his bangs across his forehead. He looks over at Lance, who is looking as stunning as ever, staring into the lakewater.

“I don’t want to leave.” Keith says.

Lance chuckles a little sadly. “Now you know how I have felt for the past four years.”

“I really thought I would hate this place.” Keith says.

“I feel like this is a plot of some cheesy summer camp chick flick.” Lance laughs, rubbing his eyes.

“That sounds pretty accurate.”

Lance shrugs. “Well, it’s back to real life soon I guess.” His voice sounds heavy. Sad. Very unlike Lance.

“I don’t want to leave you.” Keith says softly, trying to keep his words delicate. Lance looks like he is about to break.

“I really, really don’t want you to leave me.” He says quietly, looking forward at his stretched out legs.

“This really sucks.”

“Yeah.”

It’s silent for a bit. They listen to the water, the warm breeze, and the crickets. All sounds that Keith
took for granted and now is going to greatly miss once he’s back at the Garrison.

“I’ve never met anyone like you, tonto.” Lance breaks the silence, sending Keith a shy smile. “You put up with me in a way nobody else has.”

“I don’t put up with you because I have to. I do it because I want to.”

Lance laughs bitterly. “Exactly.”

Keith just stares at him. Lance clears his throat. “You never back down from a competition, you take my insults in stride and come up with better ones, you’re mean but kind...strong but sensitive...I’ve just...never met anyone else like you.” Lance sighs, pulling his knees to his chest. “It doesn’t really help that you are fucking gorgeous, either.”

Keith’s face heats up against his will. Nobody has ever talked about him like this before. “What are you trying to say?”

“I don’t care how far apart we are, tonto. I want to date you. I want to be your boyfriend. I want to text you whenever I feel like it, and talk about everything with you, and probably have lots of great phone sex. I just want it all. And I thought that I could just leave and wait until something brought us together again but I really don’t think that’s possible.”

Keith doesn’t even hesitate. He practically trips over his own words. “Yes, I--boyfriend, yeah no I really want that too.”

Silence.

Lance starts to grin, the smile spreading across his face slowly. “Well okay then.”

“I know that Miami is really far from Garrison University but I’m sure we can work it out.” Keith continues, starting to ramble because he is feeling entirely too vulnerable at the moment. “Like, we can do weekend visits, and then we’ll see each other in march, right? In Mexico. And then we are both coming back here next summer so I guess if things work out I’ll see you then--”

“Did you say Garrison University?” Lance’s face looks a strange mixture of shocked and excited.

“Yes?”

“That’s where you study?”

“Yeah.”

“Like, that’s where you live and go to college?”

Keith sighs and rolls his eyes. Why does any of that matter?

“Lance, what the hell? Yes.”

“Keith!” Lance shoots upwards, grabbing Keith and tackling him into a tight, breathless hug. “Keith, *esta perfecto no puedo creer* you stupid stupid tonto, voy a matarte rojito I’m going to kill you--”

“Lance?” Keith asks, panicking. “What’s happening?”

“I’m *from* Miami, tonto! But I don’t go to school there!”

Keith raises an eyebrow. “Wait. What? Where do you go to school?”
“Altea University, you perdedor!” Lance’s eyes are glistening.

“Wait but that’s-”

“A fifteen minute drive from the Garrison? Yeah! I know! Fifteen fucking minutes!”

Keith stares at him for way too long, the words still processing. Still trying to find a place in his messed up, tangled thoughts. “Fifteen minutes?”

Lance nods, grabbing Keith’s face in his hands. “Fifteen minutes, tonto.”

Fifteen minutes.

Keith takes a deep breath in. He can see the flecks of gold in Lance’s blue eyes.

Fifteen minutes.

He breathes out slowly, counting the freckles on Lances cheeks.

Fifteen minutes.

Fifteen fucking minutes.

Chapter End Notes

two more chapters to go! <3
Chapter Notes

I already had this written so I decided to post it anyway! Just the epilogue left! Thank you all so much for your support and kind comments I can't handle this amount of love omfg.
Also, I started a new fic if you want to fill the dark void in your life with something else like i do. Its called Follow My Lead, a friends w/ benefits fic (also Klance) you can find it on my profile :)
Thanks again and enjoy!

Keith bursts through the front door of Shiro’s cabin, where Shiro is sitting on his bed reading a book. He stomps up to him and knocks the book out of his hand.

“Hey!” Shiro shouts, eyes wide. “What the hell?”

“You knew Lance went to school next to me! Why didn’t you tell me? Do you know how much misery I have been going through?”

Shiro’s offended expression suddenly cracks into a smile. “Wait, you’re just finding out now? Damn. Okay, I guess I owe Pidge twenty dollars.”

“What?” Keith snarls.

Shiro laughs. “I had a bet going with Hunk and Pidge about how many weeks you guys would make out without knowing anything about each other. I guessed two weeks, Pidge and Hunk said one. You are seriously just figuring it out, aren't you? Wow, okay fine they win. I guess I had more faith in you.” Shiro is still chuckling under his breath.

“We tried to talk about it!” Keith retaliates. “Things just...got in the way!”

“’Making out’ things?”

Keith rolls his eyes. “Oh shut up.”

“I’m sorry, when Pidge brought it up it was too tempting.”

“You could have saved me so much grief!”

“What doesn’t kill you makes you stronger Keith.” Shiro says, still holding back a laugh.

“I hate you so very much.”

Keith doesn’t get very much sleep that night for several reasons; one of them being that tomorrow is
the last day of camp, and another one being that he spent a majority of the night in Lance's lap, kissing him senseless. It's not entirely his fault. Lance kept pulling him back in when he insisted on leaving, so at least half of it wasn't his responsibility.

_Fifteen minutes_. The words play over and over again in his head. For the past three years, he has only been fifteen minutes away from Lance, and he had no idea. Lance was a few blocks away the whole time. How had they not run into each other at a restaurant? Or the laundromat? Or a bar? How is it that they ran into each other 129 miles away in the middle of the forest?

Keith really, really doesn't believe in fate. But still. He totally does now, okay?

He hasn't had nightmares in two weeks, ever since he fell asleep in Lance's bed. It just filled him with a warmth that never went away and he doesn't feel as scared as he used to. Is that love? Is that what it feels like? Is love safety? Is it feeling like you're home?

Lance had said goodnight about seventeen times before finally retreating to his cabin with a blush still burning across his face. Keith was blushing too.

Keith has been blushing like an idiot since his first day in this godforsaken camp.

He goes to bed with Lance's smell still lingering on his shirt, and falls asleep instantly.

---

Everybody wakes up sad.

It's not the kind of sad that is outwardly, obviously sad. It's the kind of sad that just feels like a raincloud floating somewhere slightly above everybody's heads, waiting to lower down and settle on their shoulders. Keith wakes up too early and stares at the ceiling for an hour, waiting for the sun to rise.

When he wakes up his campers, they all chatter about seeing their family again, seeing their dogs and cats. They sound excited, but still sad. It's all very bittersweet. Leo tells Keith that his dog has, according to his mother, been sleeping outside his door every night waiting for him to come back. Keith briefly considers getting a dog.

Once all of the campers leave the cabin for breakfast, Keith surveys the area to try and estimate how long it will take to clean once everybody is gone. The campers are to be picked up around noon, and then the counselors stay until about 6PM to make sure everything is clean and back to how it was at the beginning of the summer. Keith sees all of the stains that he failed to clean beforehand. He sees the cracks in the wall that will definitely need to be spackled.

Sighing, he walks out the door, not surprised at all to see that the sun isn’t out, and it is raining.

“Wow, can today get any more shitty?”

Keith turns towards Lance and tries to smile. “At least I won’t get sunburned.”

“Yeah, but at the cost of depression? I’m going to have to pass.”

Keith giggles.
Pidge and Hunk make their way out of their cabins, looking exhausted. “I can’t even begin to explain to you guys how much cleaning I have to do.” Pidge groans, putting her face in her hands.

“It’s okay! It’ll be fun, we’ll put on some music in the courtyard and just plow through it. It’s what we do every year!” Hunk attempts to lighten the mood.

“But the only person who ever operates the music is Lance and he has horrible taste!”


“You listen to Taylor Swift dubstep!” Pidge yells, exasperated.

“It’s the newest art form of this generation!” Lance defends.

“We need to get to breakfast before all the food is gone, guys.” Hunk interjects. Keith nods in agreement. Lance huffs a frustrated sigh in Pidge’s direction, and Pidge responds with a laugh.

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Sitting at the same picnic table he was stationed at four weeks ago, Keith waits for his campers parents to return. He typically doesn’t consider himself a very cliche person, but there is not one thought running through his head that doesn’t sound like it was barfed up by a chick flick, so he decides to keep them to himself instead of sharing them with his fellow counselors.

Stacy and Jack are sitting across from each other on the grass. Jack is writing something on Stacy’s hand, which Keith can only assume is some sort of contact information. He smiles to himself, wondering what their story was like. Whatever it was, he’s glad something worked out.

Stacy’s mother is the first parent to appear, and when she walks out of her car, Stacy runs into her arms and screams “Mommy mommy mommy!” as her mom hugs her. Keith wraps his arms around himself, feeling a little awkward, but mostly content. Stacy jogs up to Keith as her mom is packing the car and talking to Coran. There are tears in her eyes. “Keef!” she says sadly.

“Come here.” Keith says, opening his arms up to hug her. She pitches forward, wrapping her arms around his neck. “You were amazing this summer. Did you have fun?” He says, finding it very hard to let go.

“So much fun!” She grips tighter. “You are coming back next summer, aren’t you keef?”

Keith smiles. “Of course.”

She giggles and lets out a tiny cheer, hugging Keith one more time. “Thank you for being so much fun! I’ll miss you!”

With that, she lets go, smiling wetly and waving goodbye as she gets in her car. It drives away, and Keith doesn’t take his eyes off of it until it disappears.

He takes a deep, shaky breath.

Eleven more to go.
Mike and Jack’s mom hasn’t stopped talking for ten minutes. Keith is fine with it, because that means they stay longer, but at the same time, he doesn’t really know how to deal with middle aged woman talking to him about how they make broccoli into rice now and there is a yoga class where you can pet dogs while in downward dog. Luckily Lance chimes in at the last second and charms the woman into talking to him instead, somehow picking up on Keith’s silent cries for help.

Keith ends up hugging Jack and Mike goodbye with the promise of coming back next summer, and their mom makes them say “thank youuuuu” for the “wonderful time we had at Camp Voltronnn”.

He wishes that he could say every goodbye gets easier, but it’s actually the opposite. As more of his campers leave, it gets harder and harder to let them go.

Leo is one of the last campers in the Red Cabin to leave, and if Keith is being honest, he is dreading saying goodbye to Leo the most. Leo was his first camper that arrived at Camp Voltron, and he holds a pretty special place in Keith’s heart. When his parents arrive, Keith feels something in his chest tighten. Leo hugs his parents excitedly, but then turns to Keith, eyes wide and lips pouting.

Keith bends down to give him a hug, and Leo practically suffocates him. “Come home with me, Keef!” He shouts sadly. He can hear his parents chuckling from somewhere behind him.

“I can’t bud. But I’ll see you next summer, alright? For sure.”

Leo nods sadly into his shoulder, not letting go.

“Hey, Leo, I need you to do something for me okay?” Keith pulls out of the hug and puts his hands on Leo’s tiny shoulders.

“What?” Leo asks, sniffing.

“The second you get back to school, join the track team, alright?”

“Why?”

“Because you are an incredible runner! You’ll be so amazing You’ll kick everyone’s doodle, I swear.”

Leo falls forward for one more hug, agreeing to do what Keith said. Then, he is waving goodbye, getting into the car, and driving away.

Keith can’t help it. His emotionally-starved ass isn’t used to these kinds of feelings, and tears prickle at the corners of his eyes, threatening to fall free. He swallows hard, trying to quell the sudden surge of feelings in his chest.

“Nope. Absolutely not. I won’t allow it.” Keith hears Lance voice behind him. He turns around a raises an eyebrow.

“What?”

“You aren’t allowed to cry. That’s just incredibly insensitive. Do you know what that would do to my heart?” He clutches dramatically at his chest, then shakes his head. “Can’t do it.”

“I’m not crying.” He tries, voice cracking.
“Nice try.”

“Lance...”

“I know a crying tonto when I see one.”

Keith lets out a giggle that surprises him. “Oh my god.” He rolls his eyes.

“Ah! You smiled. How do I do it? Bueno, I should write a book.” Lance holds up his hands and moves them across the sky as he spells out the title. “How To Cure Tonto Tears™”

Keith bursts out laughing at that, shaking his head in disbelief at how lame Lance’s attempts at jokes are. With the disbelief, of course, comes fondness. Warmth.

“Thanks.” Keith says, smiling.

Pidge makes a gagging noise somewhere across the courtyard, followed by the sound of Hunk laughing.

———

Keith immediately gets to work scrubbing the floors of the Red Cabin. He’s never had to use so much Mr. Clean in his life, and the stains were only getting light, but not disappearing. He took a break and went through each room, making the beds and checking underneath them to make sure the kids didn’t leave anything.

The music playing in the courtyard is indeed Taylor Swift dubstep, and Pidge is screaming insults across the courtyard at Lance for his horrible life decisions.

Keith wrinkles his nose at the sight of a crust stain of the couch, and makes the decision to soak it in some carpet cleaner. As he is spraying the cushion, the door opens and Shiro walks in. Keith gets a flash of deja vu at the sight of Shiro walking into his cabin and asking, “You ready?” Just like he did on Keith’s first day.

“Not quite. Still have a lot of cleaning to do.”

The corner of Shiro’s lip tugs upwards. “You know what I mean.”

Keith sighs. “This is a lot harder than I thought it would be.”

“Cleaning?” Shiro teases.

“Leaving.”

Shiro nods sadly. “Trust me, I know. It doesn’t get easier, either.”

“There just something so...nice about this place.”

“You mean, aside from the fact that we are two hundred miles away from reality and any kind of civilization?”

Keith smiles. “Yeah, aside from that.” A pause. “Thank you...for making me do this.”
His brother smiles. “I knew you would love it here.”

A sad silence fills the cabin. Keith watches the carpet cleaner bubble and fizz on the couch cushion. Shiro clears his throat.

“So...I asked Allura out.”

Keith gasps. “What? Finally! What did she say?”

“She said yes. Apparently she likes me or something? I don’t understand.”

Keith rolls his eyes. “So what’s the plan?”

“We have dinner on Sunday planned.”

“Oh my god I can’t believe you finally did it.”

Shiro shrugs. “Yeah, I mean I figured if you could find love this summer then it must be possible for literally anybody.” He smirks at Keith.

“Get out.”

Shiro laughs loudly as he walks out the door.

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It is 5:00PM and Keith is nearly done cleaning when Lance bursts into his cabin. “Ha!” He shouts triumphantly, pointing at Keith. “I finished cleaning before you! Beat that, rojo!”

Keith raises an eyebrow at him. “We were racing?”

Lance frowns. “Duh.”

“But I didn’t know, so that’s cheating.”

“What? You can’t make up rules!”

“I didn’t!”

Lance takes a few steps closer, crowding up Keith’s personal space. “Yes you did! We were racing and you lost! Plain and simple.”

“Not that simple!”

“Totally that simple.”

“You suck.”

Lance smiles sadly. “Yeah, so do you. Also, let’s never leave.”

Keith feels a tug in his chest at Lance’s sad smile. “I know. I don’t want to.” He says, voice quieter now that they aren’t arguing. “But we are going to be so close to each other! You’ll get sick of me, probably.”
“What if all of this is just a magic spell and I’m actually an ugly troll who takes on his true form in small suburban college towns?” Lance says, sounding genuinely worried.

Keith snorts. “I highly doubt that. I don't think there is any suburban college town that can make you ugly.”

“You say that now…” Lance grins mischievously.

“Wait until you see College Keith. That shit is not pretty.”

“Impossible.” Lance’s eyes are glinting.

“No, it’s true. I have Dorito powder on my face and torn sweatpants on ninety percent of the time.”

“I don’t know, I’m into it.”

Keith laughs and falls into Lance, wrapping his arms around his waist. Lance chuckles softly and hugs back. “I’m so glad I met you, tonto.” He says.

“You’re so cheesy.”

“But you know I’m right.” He runs his fingers through the hair at the nape of Keith’s neck and he shivers.

“Yeah, you’re right.”

Lance pulls back but keeps his arms wrapped loosely around Keith's waist. “And in college we don’t have to watch any kids at night...so…” He leans over and kisses Keith, slow and teasing. Keith breathes out a long sigh through his nose, letting Lance lick tantalizingly into his mouth. Lance moves away slightly. “So we can do whatever we want.”

Keith smiles, rubbing his nose against Lance’s. Heat pools in his cheeks and throughout his chest. “Yeah we can.”

They stand like this for a moment, just breathing each other in, before Lance lets go and takes a deep breath, collecting himself. He looks at Keith with bright eyes. “You ready?”

Keith grins. “Let’s go.”

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Saying goodbye to the counselors isn’t as hard as saying goodbye to the kids, because they have a group chat and snapchats and a million other things that pretty much make it impossible for them to not keep in touch. Even Coran is in on it.

Keith gives goodbye hugs to Hunk, Pidge, Coran, and Allura, making sure not to cry because he would never hear the end of it. Pidge and Hunk say goodbye to Lance, falling to their knees and ugly-sobbing at his feet, which makes him roll his eyes and tell them to “stop making fun of him”. Keith’s heart feels full as he watches Shiro start to pack their car, readying themselves for the hours of driving ahead of them. His brother asks him where his stuff is, and then he remembers it is still in the living area of the Red Cabin.
Standing at the entrance of the Red Cabin, now empty and too clean to feel comfortable, Keith holds his ratty luggage in one hand and the packet of welcome materials, which he never ended up reading and now needs to return, in the other. He breathes in the smell of dried flowers and rotting wood that he used to hate but is now so familiar to him, and it curls around him like a warm embrace. The Cabin feels much bigger, and emptier, without the mussed up bed sheets and stray swimsuits littering the floor. Keith puts his hand on the door handle, taking one last look, turning around and heading to the car.

During arts and crafts on Keith’s first day as a counselor, the kids asked Keith to draw what he wanted most this summer. Before giving in and just drawing himself chilling by the fan in the snow, he had his mind set on drawing something else. He wanted to draw himself, with all of the counselors, sitting around the campfire with beers in their hands. He wanted to draw happy faces. A family.

Mostly, he wanted to feel like he belonged to something.

Walking into the courtyard now, he sees Pidge and Hunk laughing at something Coran said. He sees Shrio and Allura gazing fondly at each other. And he sees Lance. Fucking Lance, who is looking at him with bright, loving blue eyes, glowing golden skin, and a breathtaking smile.

He got so much more than he bargained for.
epilogue: mexico

Chapter Summary

very very very cheesy cheesiness mixed with fluff and also some sex. sorry not sorry. keith is in love. lance is in love. they are dorks and they are madly in love. THIS CHAPTER CONTAINS SMUT you'll know when it is starting so it's easy to skip over if you're not a fan!

Chapter Notes

AHHHHHHHHH. this whole fic was such a whirlwind for me to write. thank you to everyone for all of the kudos and comments, i love these two with all of my heart. you guys are wonderful. MAJOR FLUFF WARNING. I apologize for the cheesy ending but i mean come on, have you read the rest of this thing? no way the ending wasn't going to be fluffy af

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Keith has finally found a place that is hotter than Camp Voltron.

The temperature in Puerto Vallarta is comparable to what he imagines Satan’s butthole to be like. The minute he walks off the plane he feels the humidity hit him like a wall of hot water. He groans in misery at the same time that Lance sighs with satisfaction. “This is my kind of weather.” Lance says, stretching his arms out and turning his chin up towards the sun.

The resort they found is apparently one of the best in the area. Lance was adamant about them having a spa and a steam room, two things which Keith doesn’t give a rats ass about. But then Lance smiled at him with those stupid white teeth and those stupid dimples and Keith couldn’t really say no. Besides, the thought of Lance in a fluffy bathrobe and a face mask just makes Keith's stomach warm significantly.

It had been a constant debate over the past few months— Keith wanted to go to a resort with very few amenities and just sit by a pool, but Lance had a checklist of things that absolutely needed to be included. “I have to combine everything I want to do now with everything I wanted to do back then, and yet still have significant time to make out with you” Lance had said when they first started planning their trip. They were sitting across from each other on Keith’s small dorm bed and sharing a pizza, writing all of their plans on sticky notes and pasting them onto each other’s bodies in random places. Keith wrote down “steam room” and pasted the post-it to Lance’s forehead. Lance wrote “sex in the steam room” and pasted it to Keith’s forearm. They both laughed until it couldn’t possibly be funny anymore, shoving pizza into their mouths and wasting countless sticky notes on sex related things until all of the sticky notes were on the floor, along with their clothes.

That day seems like it was so long ago now, as Keith walks into the entrance of the resort with Lance in tow. Lance is already making his rounds, greeting all of the employees with that sunny personality that seems to make everyone feel right at home. It also helps that the Spanish rolls
effortlessly off of his tongue after years of speaking it at home with his family. Within seconds, the staff are offering them hot towels and mimosas, taking their luggage and walking them to their rooms. Keith looks at Lance, baffled, and Lance sends him a dazzling grin that has his eyes crinkling at the corners; a sight that, even after months, Keith still isn’t quite used to.

Ever since the day Keith went back to school, Lance was there. Keith didn’t really know what he expected. He knew that Lance liked him, but honestly, a small part of him was still afraid that it was all just some kind of summer magic that would disappear once he started reading physics textbooks and taking exams again.

But reading physics textbooks with Lance sitting on his bed his different. Studying for exams while Lance doodles on his small whiteboard is different. Everything is just different now, with Lance around; and it’s a good different. It is like there is sunlight cast over all of the tasks that used to be mundane and dry. It makes Keith wonder how exactly he managed to be happy at all without Lance around all the time, yelling at him in Spanish and making him laugh until he practically peed himself.

Lance had come over in a heartbeat when Keith has nightmares in the winter, tucking himself into Keith’s small dorm bed and carding a hand through his hair. Seeing his tan skin and golden-brown hair wrapped up in layers of winter coats and scarves was truly a sight to behold, rosy cheeks and all. Quite different from the Lance that Keith had known during the summer, but still beautiful. Lance had taken him out for drinks when he was offered a part time job with NASA after graduation. Lance was there, always, no matter what. Aside from Shiro, Keith had never really known friendship or love like this, and it was all overwhelming, but very welcome.

Keith learned a few months ago that Lance is, in fact, on a pre-med track and studying to be a pediatrician (which only killed him a lot when he found out) and he is minoring in music studies. Keith made sure that he was at Altea University whenever Lance had a huge exam the next day. He would drag him to the pool and pull him into the water, throwing off their clothes and swimming naked until Lance was so engulfed with giggles that his nerves were gone.

Old habits die hard, apparently

Needless to say, the the past few months have been making Keith fall so fast, so relentlessly, and so endlessly in love that every time Lance speaks to him, he has to hold his breath and pinch himself, just to make sure this is real. Just to make sure that this is actually his life and Lance is actually his.

It sounds so cheesy and so stupid and honestly, if Keith from a year ago were to hear any of this he would probably projectile vomit onto the ceiling.

But now, as he is opening the door to their unnecessarily luxurious hotel room, he sees Lance strip down to his light blue boxers and flop onto the bed, all smooth tan skin and long limbs, and his heart stutters in his chest. The moles dotted across his back, which Keith has traced over time and time again, stand out against the skin around them. Probably form the added sun. There is a light tan line around his waist where his boxers are riding lower than usual. Keith stares at him unabashedly because, well he can now, okay?

“Oh man, tonto. This room is amazing!” Lance drawls, rolling into his back and staring at the ceiling in awe. “Did you know that we are on the floor right above the spa? It takes less than twenty seconds to get down there, rojo. Veinte segundos. Dios, this is going to be awesome.”

Keith smiles as Lance babbles on and on about the room. He talks about the coral shower curtains and how the bath towels are folded and how the mini bar has tiny bottles of tequila that are so small they “look like they belong to my sister Maria’s american girl dolls.”
“Okay, this room is awesome and everything but where is the thermostat.” Keith says grumpily.
Lance gasps. “Don’t you dare touch it, you heathen! The temperature is perfect in here!”

“Wha—! Lance, I’m pretty sure my ears are sweating.”

“Oh, ew.” Lance wrinkles his nose up adorably and then laughs at Keith’s helpless expression.
“Okay, okay. Fine. Don’t need a sweaty tonto stinking up the hotel room.”

Keith rolls his eyes. “Thank you your majesty.”

“No problem.” Lance is chuckling now, picking up the brochure on the nightstand and flipping through the activities. “Oh man, there’s so much stuff I wanna do! But first things first, we’re are going to the beach and fucking relaxing.”

“Relaxing, huh? I think I’ve forgotten how to do that.”

“I’ll remind you!” Lance says giddily. “Maybe I’ll even beat your ass at a game of beach volleyball. And by maybe, I mean, totally and completely.”

“You seriously think you can beat me in beach volleyball?” Keith asks, flopping onto the bed and turning onto his side so that he is laying facing Lance. “Have you not learned?”

Lance raises an eyebrow at him. “Someone sounds cocky. Don’t worry, I’ll put you in your place, rojito.”

Keith mulls over Lance’s words, eyebrow raising. He hums. “Best two out of three?”

Lance smirks at him. “Oh, you’re on, tonto.”

— — —

The beach is crowded when they get there, but they manage to find a small nook of sand where they lay out their towels. Lance flops down on his towel, already stripped down to his tiny swim trunks, and stretches, placing his hands behind his head. “This. is. Amazing.” He says.

Keith, of course, stares down at Lance’s body and takes a minute to admire it before scowling. “Well that’s great for you, but some of us can’t just lay in the sun without putting on ten pounds of sunscreen first.” He says bitterly, uncapping the bottle and squirting almost all of it’s contents into his hand. Lance sighs, but it comes out as a laugh, and he sits up and gestures for Keith to sit in front of him.

And Keith may hate his pale, easily burned skin, but if that means he gets to feels Lance’s hands rubbing up and down his back, then maybe it isn’t so bad.

Lance is talking to him, laughing about someone on the towels next to them and saying something about getting a margarita but Keith just lets his eyes close as he savors the feeling of Lance rubbing over his shoulders and trailing his hands over his lower back. Throughout all of the time that they have spent together, especially touching each other, Keith has come to the very odd conclusion that Lance’s hands are pretty much his favorite part of him-- they are so elegant, yet so rough, and Keith finds the combination to be intoxicating.

Suddenly, he feels one of those aforementioned hands swatting him upside the head.
“Ow!” He yelps in surprise.

“Are you even listening to anything I’m saying?” Lance asks incredulously, voice cracking. Keith turns to face him.

“Uh.”

“Dios mio, Keith, I’m putting sunscreen on your back, it shouldn’t render you speechless”

Keith blushes. “I was lost in thought! It has nothing to do with you.” He lies, but Lance knows him well enough. He shakes his head slowly, laughing, and lowers himself onto his towel. “You’re all good now.” He says lightly. Then adds. “You little perv.”

Keith tries to make angry sounds but it bubbles out of him like an embarrassed giggle. Lance’s smirk intensifies when he hears it.

Once sufficiently covered, he lays on his towel beside Lance.

“I can’t believe we’re actually here.” Lance says, sounding dazed.

“Mmhmm.” Keith hums sleepily. “We’d better thank the gorgeous, generous, flawless fuck who got us these tickets.”

Launce laughs out loud. “Feeling a little full of yourself today, huh?”

Keith grins but doesn’t reply.

“Might as well knock you down a few pegs at that volleyball net.”

Keith groans. “But we just laid down!”

“You just know you’re going to lose, that’s all. It’s okay, I accept your terms. We’ll just lay here.” Keith can practically hear the smug smile on Lance’s pretty face.

Keith sighs. “You are the worst person.” But he’s already getting up, and Lance is laughing wildly as he stands up with him.

“Just one game! Once you lose, we can come back here and I can work on my tan.”

“You mean once you lose?”

Lance chuckles. “Oh tonto, you have another thing coming if you think I’m going to lose.”

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Lance loses.

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“Oh come on, rojo. It’s not that bad.” Lance says, barely able to hold in his laughter. Keith shoots him a death glare.

“What do you mean? It’s horrible! Look at me!” He makes a helpless face and gestures towards himself and Lance finally bursts out laughing, walking towards Keith with tears in his eyes. He desperately tries to catch his breath. “It’s cute!” He attempts, between bouts of laughter. Keith just scowls at him, feeling an embarrassed flush in his cheeks.

They are back in their hotel room after hours of laying on the beach. Lance is a little tipsy because he’s been drinking margaritas consistently since noon, and Keith is…

Well, Keith is bright red.

About two bottles of sunscreen later, Keith still managed to burn all over, his color bearing an uncanny resemblance that of a stop sign. He decides to ignore the pain right now and just focus on the visual, eyes scanning his shirtless body in the mirror, horrified. “But how?” He shrieks. “I practically drank the sunscreen!”

Lance is behind him now. He wraps an arm around Keith’s waist and presses a cool hand to his stomach. “Tssss.” He says, making a sizzling sound at the contact. Keith bites back a smile. Lance is grinning at him in the mirror.

“Maybe it’ll turn into a tan?” He jokes, earning him an unamused look. “Okay okay, never mind.”

“Let’s just go to dinner.” Keith sighs, moving away from Lance and searching through his luggage for the softest shirt he can find. He can tell by the strained noises coming from Lance that he is still trying not to laugh. Rolling his eyes, he shoves Lance’s shoulder and Lance dissolves into laughter again.

Keith settles on a soft, dark gray tank top that feels tolerable on his sensitive skin. He throws his hair up into a ponytail in an attempt to cool down and flops down onto the bed. Lance is still in his towel, scanning the shirts and shorts in his suitcase.

“Why does it take you so long to get ready?” He asks, genuinely curious.

Lance scoffs. “Well unlike you, some people actually have to put effort into looking gorgeous.”

Keith smiles, surprised by the answer. “Well, you aren’t one of those people.”

Lance pauses to look at him. “You’re just saying that.”

Keith shakes his head as Lance flushes, biting his lip and looking back down at his clothes. “Oh, stop.” He mumbles. Keith finds it so strange that ever after all this time, Lance still gets flustered when he compliments him.

They leave their hotel room about half an hour later, because despite Keith’s outrageously kind compliment, Lance still takes forever to get ready. When they finally make it to the restaurant and sit down, Keith’s stomach is grumbling relentlessly.

“Mmm, I’m fucking starving.” Lance says, flipping open the menu.

“Me too.” Keith scans the menu hungrily. “This all looks so good.”

“Hey rojo.”
Keith drops the menu and raises an eyebrow at him. “What.”

“Wanna know what the best part of this trip is?”

Keith continues looking at Lance with his eyebrow raised, waiting for him to answer his own question. He expects something cheesy, like ‘being with you’ or ‘spending time here with you’. But what Lance actually says is, “Now when I call you rojo, it’s even funnier because you’re actually rojo.”

Keith snorts, rolling his eyes and picking the menu back up to hide his blush. Lance is laughing loudly at his own joke.

“Oh man.” Lance says as he starts calming down. “Oh man, tonto, there’s oysters.” He makes a point to wiggle his eyebrows when Keith lowers his menu.

“So?”

“So oysters are like one of nature’s most known aphrodisiacs. We should get them.” Lance jumps excitedly in his chair.

“An aphrodisiac? Who’s the perv now?”

Lance rolls his eyes. “Come on! It’ll be fun. Like an experiment! They do it in all the movies.”

“But--”

“This is vacation.” Lance pleads. “What is vacation without heightened sexual experience?”

Keith giggles. “Okay, fine. But if we’re getting oysters then we’re getting wine too.”

“Deal.”

They end up making quite a mess of the whole situation, neither of them ever having had oysters before, and make fools out of themselves in front of the other restaurant guests trying to figure out how to eat them. The wine comes and just keeps coming because this trip is all inclusive so they don’t have to pay for each separate bottle. Keith feels full of warmth and heat and happiness as they stumble a little drunkenly out of the restaurant, giggling and holding onto each other for dear life. The air is hot and thick in the city, streets crowded with party-goers and teenagers clubbing. It really is a beautiful city, and the buzzing in Keith’s brain is making it look even more so. He feels Lance wrapped around him and it really is blissful, in the simplest of terms.

They stop by a small convenience shop and Lance makes friendly conversation with the cashier, blabbering quickly in Spanish and laughing at something he says while Keith searches for a bottle of aloe vera cream. If the cashier is put off by how drunk they appear to be, he doesn’t show it, and whatever Lance is saying to him is charming his pants off anyway, so they didn’t really have to worry about making a fool out of themselves. Keith listenes as Lance runs his tongue, the foreign language sounding smooth and practiced and it falls from his lips. It’s strange because it still sounds like Lance, everything about it, from the inflection of his words to his expressions, and it baffles Keith every time he hears it.

When they leave the store, Lance puts a hand on Keith’s shoulder and gasps.

“We didn’t go to the steam room today!” He whines. “That was what I wanted to do the most!”

Keith chuckles. “This whole city is just one giant steam room, can’t you tell?”
“Not the same!”

“Well, I think it’s open 24 hours, so we can still go if you want.”

Lance pulls away from Keith and makes a show out of tapping his chin and looking up at the sky. “Hmmm…” He ponders loudly. Keith just looks at him, taking in the newly bronzed skin, shiny with sweat, and the blue of his eyes in the soft white light coming from the lamp post above them. Lance’s hair has gotten a little longer since the summer, falling onto his forehead and curling a little at the nape of his neck. He has a slight flush in his cheeks from the wine, and his pursed lips look oddly inviting. Keith can’t help but feel that Lance looks breathtaking like this— all brown skin, red cheeks, and tousled hair, surrounded by palm trees and low lights and summer air and the smell of the ocean and it’s all so very Lance, and so very dazzling.

“Okay let’s do it!” Lance finally decides, as if it was even a question in the first place. “It’ll be empty now anyway.” He holds out his hand with an adorable look of anticipation in his eyes and Keith lets out a breathy laugh, reaching out and lacing their fingers together.

They walk back to the hotel hand in hand, talking about meaningless things and laughing at stupid jokes because that’s just what they do. All the while, Keith’s heart overflows.

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The most hilarious irony to ever exist is Lance’s reaction to the steam room.

“This is, by far, the worst experience of my life.” He says, after they had been sitting for only three minutes. “I want out.”

Keith laughs. “Seriously, Lance?”

“Oh come on, tonto. There’s no way you can convince me that this is enjoyable! I can’t breathe! Do people actually do this to relax?”

Keith continues laughing, the tipsy feeling from dinner still very present. It’s a good thing they are the only people down in the spa, because they’re both drunk and loud and fairly obnoxious right now. “Well then let’s get out of here.” He says. “I hate it too.”

Grabbing Lance’s hand, they walk back into the cool, air conditioned spa and sigh with relief.

“Never doing that again.” Lance says, laughing incredulously as he uses a towel to wipe the sweat from his face. “Never ever ever.”

Keith’s eyes track the droplets of condensation trickling down Lance’s naked torso. He imagines catching them with his tongue, right before they soak into the low hanging towel around Lance’s waist. The muscles in Lance’s stomach would probably jump at the contact, like they always do when Keith trails his fingers along the bare skin of his midriff. He would probably gasp, breath hitching in the addictive, delicious way that Keith adores. Suddenly, Keith feels heat spreading throughout his entire body at the thought of touching Lance, rubbing against him in bed and hearing him moan and--

He clears his throat and tears his eyes away. “Wanna just go upstairs?” He asks, hoping his tone doesn’t sound too urgent. Apparently it does, because Lance lowers the towel from his face and
looks at him strangely.

“What’s the rush?” He asks slowly, eyes glinting because he can read Keith by now. He knows what Keith is feeling just by looking at him, and he especially knows when Keith is turned on.

Keith takes a breath. “No rush. Just...wanna shower.”

Lance hums, unconvinced. “Okay, _tonto_ …” He looks down at Keith and grabs his chin lightly, leaning forward until they are a breath apart. “Oysters…” He says tauntingly, a slow smile spreading across his face.

“I don’t think the oysters have anything to do with--” Keith mumbles, but is cut off when Lance’s lips press against his. The feeling is now very familiar, but still as exhilarating as it was the first time. Lance kisses him slowly, tantalizingly, teasing with his tongue and nipping at Keith's bottom lip because he _knows_. He _knows_ that it is driving Keith crazy. He _knows_ that Keith gets impatient. He _knows_ and he’s just a little shit for making it so fucking good.

A shiver runs down Keith’s spine as Lance trails his hand over the skin on his chest, then stomach, then very teasingly slipping underneath the towel before moving back up again. Keith takes a deep breath through his nose, already feeling the heat collecting between his legs and the dizzying feeling of arousal in his head, clouding his vision. He pulls back from the kiss, breathing unevenly.

“Lance…” He pleads, voice hoarse. “Please, let’s just--”

Lance nods and they both stare at each other before booking it to the elevator, laughing breathlessly and slamming down on the “close door” button before attaching at the lips again.

They have done this countless times. It’s always the same routine, but Keith never gets tired of it. He is usually the first to bring it up, and then Lance is always a tease about it, leaving light touches all over Keith’s skin until one of them eventually breaks. It’s just how it always ends up happening.

They stumble into the hotel room and fall onto the bed, already working to remove their clothes. Keith hisses in pain as Lance tries to lift his shirt over his burnt shoulders, and Lance actually has to break the kiss to laugh, because he’s a horrible person. He mumbles something along the lines of “aloe later” into Keith’s parted lips and then they are kissing again, this time with much more intensity.

Lance’s kisses have personality. It may seem like a weird thing to say, but kissing Lance is never as simple as just kissing Lance. It’s almost like he is always trying to say something, to tell a story, even when his lips are preoccupied. And Keith knows that he has fallen in love with all of those stories. Every single one.

Lance tastes like the ocean and his skin is so smooth, so warm underneath his fingertips. He lets his hands explore, running over the peaks and dips of a body that he has come to know so well. The small, familiar noises that Lance makes when Keith brushes over some of his favorite spots (the skin just below his belly button, the top of his forearm, the nape of his neck, the small dip of skin between his collarbones) All spots which he has learned over nights and nights of lazily dragging his hands across Lance’s skin. Lance is panting into Keith’s mouth now, no longer the one in control, and Keith rolls on top of him in one smooth movement, not wasting any time before reaching out and stroking him through his swim trunks, which quickly become the last thing to come off.

Keith strokes Lance, slow and practiced, just enough to make him crazy but not enough to push him over the edge. He watches as Lance’s face goes from calm and relaxed to tense, with his eyes squeezed tightly in the way they always do when he can feel himself getting close.
“Fuck, rojo, no puedo ... quiero hacer--- I don’t--ahh…” Lance darts his hand out and grabs Keith’s wrist, stopping the movement of his arm. Keith raises an eyebrow at him.

Lance takes a shaky breath. “If you keep going, I’m gonna come.” He says, voice strained.

“Isn’t that the point?” Keith asks, smirking.

Lance shakes his head. “Wanna fuck you.” He murmurs pulling Keith down by the back of his neck and attaching his mouth just below Keith’s jaw.

Keith whimpers slightly at the contact, letting his shaking legs finally give out so that their bodies press flush against each other. When their hips meet they both gasp, Lance’s body jerking underneath him.

“Did you bring lube?” Keith asks, panting.

“What the fuck kind of question is that? Of course I did.” Lance says, voice cracking. “In my bag.”

Keith scrambles off of him and retrieves it, already popping the lid off and squirting it into Lance’s open palms. “Please hurry.” He says, and Lance laughs filthily, rolling over so that he is on top of Keith, straddling his hips with his long legs. Slowly, without breaking eye contact, he eases one finger in. Keith hisses quietly, but then hums at the feeling. “Jesus…” He whispers. Lance leans forward and kisses him again, long and sensual, working his finger in and out of Keith in a slow, rhythmic pattern. Keith is letting out shuddering breaths into Lance’s mouth, feeling his legs start to shake as each pump feels better and better. Lance eases another finger in. Keith tightens his grip on Lance’s shoulders. The rhythm continues.

The first couple of times that they did this, Keith was a fucking wreck. He came before Lance could even properly get inside him. Now, he’s a bit better at keeping himself together. It has taken a while, but the dizzying movement of Lance’s fingers inside of him no longer makes him lose it. At least, not as quickly as he used to.

“Oh, rojo …” Lance smothers him with praise, like he always does. “You look so fucking beautiful like this. Fuck, you’re so hot…” The praise, as usual, draws a low whine from the back of Keith’s throat as Lance scissors his fingers in and out, faster, harder, making Keith’s hips stutter and shake, pushing upwards.

“Lance, come on…” He says, a little pleadingly.

“Okay, okay.” Lance is grinning. “So eager.”

Keith rolls his eyes as Lance slicks himself up, trying to ignore the fact that Lance’s cocky attitude is actually a huge turn-on and really, always has been. All thoughts come to a halt when he feels the familiar sensation of Lance entering him.

Keith hears a strange sound, something between a laugh and a moan, and then Lance’s voice quivers as he says, “You...you have the funniest tan line ever...I-It’s like--” He gasps as Keith shifts underneath him, “I-like those ice cream cartons with the vanilla--ah--next to the strawberry.”

Keith frowns, a giggle threatening to burst from his throat, but then Lance starts moving and really, nothing else matters anymore. There is nothing that Keith has ever really felt in his life that beats this. It may seem like an exaggeration, but the heat and the friction and the delicious feeling of Lance filling him up is a little more than heavenly. Just a little more. Keith wonders if life after death is just being in bed with Lance, forever and ever. It seems like a possible contender for heaven.
Lance starts moving faster, filling the room with small, needy sounds that make Keith’s stomach feel like it’s melting. After all this time, he knows exactly what Keith likes. They went through the process of elimination over the past few months and have finally found a way to do it that works for both of them. It had been a bit of a fumbling process, with some awkward and rather gross moments, but now it’s like they are experts in each other. Keith knows exactly what touches will elicit what sounds from Lance, and Lance know exactly how to fuck Keith.

Keith tried to be on top, he really did, but he just likes bottom so much more. As it turned out, Lance liked being on top more. This always seems to be what works out best for them.

Lance is getting louder, his moaning carrying through the small, humid room. “Fuck.” He hisses, as Keith starts thrusting forward and meeting him halfway with every movement. “Shit, you feel so good…”

Lance is much better at dirty talk than Keith ever will be, in his entire life, and when Lance starts panting heavily, thrusts getting sloppier and looser, he dips down and buries his face into Keith’s neck, whispering “’M gonna come inside you” in the lowest filthiest voice Keith has ever heard.

Keith’s hips stutter in a warning, pleasure building in his stomach and his shoulders and his fingertips and fuck he feels small explosions occurring all over his body, getting louder and louder and--

“You can’t come till I tell you” Lance’s gasping voice rumbles against his neck and he whimpers pathetically, feeling his whole body shaking as Lance continues to pound into him.

‘Lance--” He chokes out.

“We’re going to come at the same time” Lance’s voice is shaking violently, the tone sounding familiar from all of the times he has tried to talk right before having an orgasm. It something that he actually does way too often.

“Mmf, hold on, Keith…” One more thrust, Keith’s vision begins to blur.

Fuck.

“Hold on…”

Shit.

“J-Just mmfew more--”

Keith feels the tension paralyzing his whole body, desperate for release.

Then finally, a hot breath on his neck, “Now.”

Keith let’s go with a loud groan muffled into the pillow next to him. He feels the rush of pleasure racking through his body and shivers as he feels Lance falling on top of him with strangled moan, coming with him. All of the muscles that were just tensed up are now loose, and Lance lets all of weight fall down in top on Keith, nuzzling his face further into his neck and taking big, gulping breaths.

Keith shakily lifts his hands and runs his fingers down lance’s back, feeling the sticky, sweaty skin and the small knotted pattern running down his spine. It is silent for a long time, but it doesn’t feel long to them because they are too blissed out to really process any time passing.

“Oysters.” Lance says again, into the base of Keith’s neck. Keith can hear the smile in his voice. He
bursts out laughing.

“Oysters.” He says back, in between giggles.

“You have to go to the mirror.” Lance says voice slow and lazy. “You have to go to the mirror and look at the tan line on your ass, oh my god it’s fucking hilarious--”

Keith swats at his head and Lance dodges it, laughing as Keith pushes him off the bed and walks to the mirror. “Holy shit.” He says, looking at the stark line of white against his red stomach where is bathing suit used to be.

“See? What’d I tell you?” Lance cackles.

“How did you even continue having sex with me after seeing that?” Keith asks incredulously, trying and failing to hide his smile.

“I’ll admit, it was hard to take you seriously, but I pushed through.” Lance says lightly, eyes teasing. “No pun intended.”

Keith snorts unattractively, glancing at his poor, red, naked body in the mirror again. Sighing, he pulls on a pair of boxer in an attempt to hide the hideous burn line. Launce sits up and slips on his boxers too, standing up and making his way towards Keith with slow, tired movements. He stops once he’s standing in front of him.

“I love Mexico.” He says softly, staring at Keith with fond eyes.

Keith smiles. “Yeah, it’s a pretty nice place.”

“I love you, tonto.”

Keith blushes, heart leaping in his chest. “I love you too.” He murmurs, just for Lance to hear.

Lance grins, planting a wet, sloppy kiss on Keith’s cheek, which in turn makes Keith groan in disgust. “Lance.” He says scoldingly, earning him a laugh. The moment is over as quickly as it began, and now Lance is blabbering again.

“Oh my god, we should go snorkeling tomorrow. *Hay tortugas* I heard there are baby sea turtles if we go deep enough and we might even be able to see like nemos!”

“You mean clownfish?” Keith is ignored.

“*Dios mio* and then we can build a sandcastle, expect it’s gotta be better than the one that those kids built today because *let me tell you* that was one of the most structurally disastrous sand castles I have ever--” Lance keeps talking, sentences building onto other sentences and words slurring together. Keith just stares at him, which he really does too much (he kinda has a problem.)

Lance is smiling animatedly, waving his hands around his mussed up hair and shouting about surfing and parasailing and Keith wonders how on earth he managed to get so lucky. There probably isn’t anyone in the world as beautiful as the boy standing before him, and he doesn’t just mean physically. Everything about Lance has been an adventure for him, and he knows that it will just keep being one; because Lance is always challenging him, always keeping him on his toes, and always there. Keith never understood how home could be a person, but looking at the tall, goofy dork of a boy in front of him, he finally understands.

“Lance.” Keith says, effectively cutting off the blabbering.
“Hm?” Lance raises an eyebrow at him. “Oh my god, you stopped listening again, didn’t you?”

“Can I say something super cheesy without you making fun of me?” Keith asks, ignoring Lance’s last remark.

“You already did.” Lance says, referring to the “i love you” moment they had in front of the mirror.

“No, something else.”

He gets a confused look in reply. “Um. Sure, rojito.” He takes a step forward, wrapping his arms around Keith’s waist. “You know I like it when you’re cheesy.”

Keith’s heart beats in his throat. “I wish I could fall in love with you all over again.”

Lance’s eyes light up, smirk spreading across his face. He doesn’t miss a beat. “Well, there’s always this summer, tonto.”

Chapter End Notes

THANK YOU ALL AGAIN SO SO SO MUCH I LOVE YOU!
If you want to check out my newest klance fic, its called Follow My Lead. Here's the link!

http://archiveofourown.org/works/11476449/chapters/25735047

Thanks again for accompanying me on this fluffy journey. <3

End Notes

My silly lil art for this fic:


My tumblr: dimplesandcurlsss

<333

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!