### A Bone To Pick

by Ahhuya

**Summary**

It started as a tingling sensation. Keith shoved it off as training in the Red Lion for too long. Soon enough however, he started to lose control of both his own body and his lion.

**Notes**

I started this for Whump Week on Tumblr, but in the end it became a bit too self centered so I gave up on that. I've been wanting to write a fic with bone spurs for a while but none of my fandoms ever really fit... I guess Pidge would be the most logical to make the main character because of age, but I wanted to shove it to Keith. Its still a thing for late teens/young adult so it's fine like this, haha.

See the end of the work for more notes.
It started as a tingling sensation. Keith shoved it off as training in the Red Lion for too long. After all, it would only show up during training, his leg growing restless, needing to move away from the pedal controlling his lion. Red was already hard to control as it was, having his own stamina work against him didn’t work with that. He didn’t know why it came up now. The Galra troops were rather quiet, days where the paladins had to fight every day seeming far away. It couldn’t be that he had overworked his leg badly during training or battle. In the end he blamed himself for not training hard enough. His own leg was getting too used to doing nothing. He didn’t wish for new Galra troops to attack, but he did wish for new opportunities to keep his strength up.

It was fine in the beginning however. The restless feeling in his leg disappearing after ten minutes, his body going back to the way it had been before. It wouldn’t come back until the following day, around the same time. He found himself bouncing his leg inside Red, hoping that the lack of movement in the lion wasn’t noticed by the rest of the team. Luckily Red’s agility made up for it. Although Shiro would comment on the several late reactions, Keith was always fast enough to hit his mark in time. It was worse when the leg bouncing didn’t work anymore. The feeling of soft pain creeping up his leg didn’t move away anymore, growing worse over a 45 minutes before moving away again. Keith started to hope that it would still come back at one time on the day. He wished he could prepare for it… The problem was that he could never prepare.

It wasn’t just related to flying Red or training, Keith found out soon enough. On a day of break, the days Keith and Shiro disliked the most, it still came back. He sat down on the couch when it came. Lance was sitting on the other side, watching a video and enjoying his cold drink.

“Can you please stop bouncing your leg?” Lance said eventually, looking up from his screen to glare at Keith.

“What?” Keith snapped back, trying to control the growing bouncing of his leg, “Does it bother you?”

“Uhm… yes?” Lance said, “I’m just getting to the good part of this movie and your bouncing is distracting me from it.”

“Fine.” Keith answered, stopping his leg from moving as he tried to shift his attention to the files that were placed in front of him. They were about the Galra, their culture. Perhaps they contained some information about his heritage and if he could just get his mind of the dull pain, he’d be fine. It would be over within an hour. It was no big deal.

Keeping his leg still was a problem however. The pain didn’t like being ignored and really didn’t like being stuck in a unmoving limb. Keith found himself looking at Lance again. The Cuban seemed to be sucked in his movie and Keith was sure he wouldn’t notice if he started bouncing his leg a little. Slowly his leg started to shake, preparing to rapidly move up and down again.

“Keith…” Lance voice was no more than a soft grumble, but Keith understood the tone his voice well enough.

“Fine.” Keith sighed as he forced himself to stand up. He didn’t realize he was limping on his way out of the common room.
His fingers dug deep into his thigh, trying to grab and calm his screaming muscles. He already knew it wouldn’t work but the idea of having some way to ease the pain was enough for now. He tried to avoid the other paladins whenever his leg started to act up, not wanting them to worry or make fun of him. Although the pain became worse and it started to last longer, he could predict when it would come. He’d tell Shiro he was going to train as he retreated to his room to wait out the pain. If he did find anyone outside his room, he could shove the limping on a training accident.

He hated that his leg was this restless, especially during the night. He would find himself awake at 4am for no other reason than the burning sensation running through the limb. Eventually Keith found out that the Altean painkillers closest to Ibuprofen were able to stop the sensation for a few hours. Before he realized it, his room was filled with multiple boxes of them. One box couldn’t last him for more than a few days.

The amount of training Keith got done was less than he wanted. As he tried to give his leg its needed attention by fighting training bots, he felt his muscles scream in return. Eventually he had to accept that using it too much was only going to make things worse. Even if he wasn’t stuck in the hours of pain, Keith felt himself use his right leg less and less, until the limping had become natural to him. He would make it seem like nothing was wrong when surrounded by the others, joining in on group trainings as if his leg was working like it should. Keeping up an act never hurt him before.

Keith wished he could say that keeping an act up didn’t hurt him. It hurt a lot. The peaceful time of training was over too soon. The Galra empire had found new attack force much too soon for Keith’s liking. Or perhaps they had been too slow. If they had come back like this weeks ago, Keith was sure his own body would still be responding. That he wouldn’t sit there, piloting his lion as he felt his entire body shake. His leg hurt too much. The painkillers were supposed to be working for at least another hour, so why was he back here again? The tingling sensation couldn’t stick to his leg’s muscles, it was moving up in a rapid speed, his arms shaking as he tried to keep Red under control. He had succeeded with that in the beginning. The lion soared through the empty space, destroying ships that tried to get close to the castle. However, as the battle progressed, it became harder to react in time, his mind too occupied by controlling his own limbs.

“Keith!” Shiro’s voice sounded so far away.

“KEITH!” Even if it was over the comms, Shiro never sounded this distant.

“Yeah?” Keith didn’t notice how forced his own voice sounded.

“We need you on the right flank here. Your lion is drifting too far away.” Shiro answered him. Keith wasn’t sure if he was angry or just frustrated, but neither pleased Keith. He was disappointing his team for no good reason.

“I’m on my way.” Keith’s response was short, it was all he could bring up. He hadn’t noticed how far Red had drifted from the others. If they needed to from Voltron, he was ruining their only chance.

The rest of his team was surrounded by fighter jets and Keith realized how much he could have ruined their mission.

“Well look who finally decided to show up.” Lance’s voice sounded over the comms. He clearly wasn’t pleased, but Keith wondered if he had ever heard him talk to him in a normal tone.
“What took you so long? We are taking quite the beating here!” That was Pidge.

“Guys!” Shiro interrupted the arguing paladins, “We have no time to argue. Let’s form Voltron, take these ships out and get out of here.”

“Fine,” Lance sighed on the other side, “I can kill Keith after that.”

Keith shook his head softly. Lance would never learn would he?

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Keith knew he was in trouble when the other four paladins came to him after the mission. Lance walked in front of the group, already having a judging finger out towards Keith.

“What were you doing?” Lance almost shouted, “While you were out enjoying yourself in space we were getting slaughtered! You weren’t even doing your job when we formed Voltron!”

Keith hated that he was right. When they had formed Voltron, his thoughts were too scattered to fully focus on keeping the robot together. Luckily he wasn’t the head, knowing that if he had to follow Shiro’s wish in his condition, Voltron wouldn’t stay together for more than five seconds.

Another flare of pain from his leg reminded him he had to respond in order to get his alone time.

“I was not enjoying myself. I was busy with my own things.” Keith huffed.

“Your side of the battle did look a lot better… less ships and all…” Hunk tried to add in, barely heard over Lance’s accusations.

“Look I’m sorry,” Keith waved the others away as he made his way out, “It won’t happen again.”

“Keith…” He could hear Shiro’s voice behind him, sounding concerned, “Are you okay?”

“I’m fine.” He tried to force a smile even though the extra burning sensation in his leg made such a thing impossible, “I was just distracted today. Like I said, it won’t happen again.”

“That’s not it.” Shiro frowned, “You’re limping.”

He hadn’t noticed it. Or if anything, he had stopped noticing it. He had been so caught up in his own head that he forgot to act like he was fine. With his own failure, his team coming after him, pretending had slipped from him.

“It’s fine,” Keith muttered, lifting his leg from the ground in the hope to remove any extra pressure of it. It never worked, but he liked giving it a chance. “I’ll just get some painkillers and it’ll be over in an hour.”

“That’s not fine.” Shiro frowned. “If you got injured, you should go to the infirmary and have it taken care of.”

“It’s not an injury.” Keith brushed Shiro’s concern off, “Probably just an overworked muscle. I know how to deal with it.”

“How long have you had this? It’s not like you to overwork your muscles. You usually know when to quit.” Shiro frowned as he moved closer.

“I don’t know.” Keith shrugged, “A few months or so? It was barely noticeable in the beginning.”
“Have you even been sleeping well.” Shiro asked, noticing the dark circles that started to form under Keith’s eyes.

“With enough painkillers around, I sleep fine.” He hated being interrogated. Surely in the middle of the night he would wake up suddenly, immediately curling up to hug his own leg. He had lost enough hours of sleep that way, but none affecting him too much. He knew Shiro was lacking just as much sleep and could still lead Voltron. The hours he lost at night weren’t a big deal if he could keep Red in the sky. A thing he had almost failed at this day.

“Keith, I’m worried.” Keith looked aside to see Shiro’s hand on his shoulder. The older male looked at him with concern.

“Don’t be. Nothing is wrong.”

“If nothing is wrong, then don’t almost cause our death in outer space!” Lance yelled from the other side of the hallway. Shiro glared at him, immediately causing him to shut up.

“Lance, how about you and the others talk with Allura about the mission. I’m taking Keith to the infirmary to have Coran take a look at him.” Shiro said. Lance wanted to protest but Hunk and Pidge dragged him with them to the bridge.

Keith wanted to protest against Shiro doing this to him. However, looking at the concern in his eyes and the softness in his voice as he called for Coran to meet them, made him realize that there was no way of getting out of this.

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“The scanners don’t pick up anything wrong.” Coran frowned as he looked over the results of the scan, “if anything they show everything is fine. Perfect even.”

“He isn’t doing perfect if he’s limping.” Shiro said. The irritation in his voice was clearly noticeable.

“The scanners show nothing. Perhaps some extra bone mass at his leg, but isn’t that just a human thing?” Coran asked as he turned to the two paladins.

“What do you mean with ‘extra bone mass’?” Shiro raised an eyebrow as he stepped closer to take a look at the scanner himself.

“It seems he has extra bone growth at the top of his femur. I didn’t know humans could do such a thing.” Coran said, looking at the results and he stroked his mustache.

“That is because they aren’t supposed to. The extra bone is probably hurting surrounding muscles and nerves.” Shiro stated.

“Then just get rid of it.” Keith mumbled, fingers digging in his flesh to soothe the pain.

“But it’s your bone,” Coran didn’t notice how his voice cracked in the moment of confusion, “You can’t get rid of it.”

“What about the healing pods?” Shiro asked.

Coran shook his head, “I’m not sure if those would work. Although they’re great for healing injuries and abnormalities, bone belongs to his body. I don’t know what it would do if the instructions say to get rid of the extra bone.”
“Still Keith can’t pilot the red lion like this.” Shiro’s voice raised a little as his body entered a defensive form.

“I’m fine!” Keith yelled all of a sudden, done with the senseless arguing about his health, “If it can’t be fixed, that’s fine. I’ve been doing just fine already.”

“Keith!” Shiro called after him, but the teen had already stormed out of the room.

“Is he really… fine?” Coran asked, pulling down the scan results as he watched Shiro making a move to pursue Keith.

“I doubt it. He’s just making himself look stronger than he is.” Shiro sighed before he too disappeared from the infirmary.

Shiro knew he could find Keith in his room. The noise of Lance and Hunk in the training room was too clear. If those two were out there, chances were big that Keith was spending his time before dinner far away from them. Especially during the past weeks, Shiro had seen Keith training less. Now that made sense to him. Keith had never wanted to be seen as weak and being the paladin with a chronic pain issue could give him that stigma easily.

The door to Keith’s bedroom slid open and Shiro stepped inside without waiting for any permission. Keith was on the bed, curled up with his arms wrapped around his leg.

“Hey.” Shiro said and sat down on the side of the bed.

“Not right now. Painkillers haven’t set in yet.” Keith grumbled, turning around and burying his face in the pillow.

“Is it okay if I wait here until you’re able to talk?”

Keith nodded before he let his eyes fall shut to make time pass faster. Around ten minutes later, Shiro heard a sigh and felt Keith shift on the bed.

“What did you want to talk about?” Keith said after he sat up and moved next to Shiro. “If it’s about what Coran said, I’m not letting some alien pod remove my bones. No way.”

“We don’t know if the pod will actually destroy your bones.” Shiro told him. “But that’s not what I came here for. I wanted to know if you were fine.”

“My leg feels like it’s burning all the time, if that’s your definition of fine then I’m doing amazing.” Keith laughed softly. “Sorry, sarcasm is more your thing.”

“I think sarcasm is everyone’s thing when they’re in pain.” Shiro smiled. “But don’t you think you should tell the others about this. It could affect the entire team.”

“You’re not telling Lance about this.” Keith growled as he let himself fall back on the bed, “That guy will only make fun of me.”

“I think he’s just as concerned as anyone.”

“Don’t care. They don’t have to know. I can pilot Red just fine.”

“The moment you can’t, you will have to tell the others. We can look for solutions together.”
“Whatever you want.”

“Dinner is in an hour, try to get some things done before that.” Shiro smiled as he left the room.
Shiro noticed that Keith hid his disabilities extremely well. If it wasn’t for the small limping before breakfast, he doubted he would have noticed any of it. The dragging of Keith’s feet across the floor disappeared within the next hour. Group training didn’t seem to be a problem either as the red paladin still jumped around from place to place, hitting enemies without a problem. The moments after the training, Keith would distance himself from the group. As Shiro noticed, he did this more than usual. Lance had noticed it too, but shoved it off as ‘Keith going more emo’. It was a statement Shiro couldn’t exactly deny. However, every time he passed Keith’s room and he could hear the cursing breaths on the other side, it was clear that ‘just being more emo’ wasn’t the way his team should see him. At certain times Shiro blessed the laconic nature of his team, focusing on the mission most of the time instead of the smaller details. Right now however, he wished that they hadn’t taken that habit from him.

He never entered Keith’s room. He knew exactly what Keith was doing there. He’d be gone for an hour without anyone seeing him before he came back for lunch or training as if nothing was wrong. Shiro had agreed to himself that as long as Keith wasn’t driving himself crazy, he wouldn’t do anything. They both had their right to keep secrets. And there were really no difficulties in their normal day activities. Not as long as Zarkon didn’t show up. When he did…

Shiro could see the red lion slow down with every new attack, hearing Keith’s ragged breaths over the comms every time. The battle always came without a warning and Shiro knew that in the short time they had to prepare, Keith couldn’t know how much time his painkillers were buying him. One battle he was fine, other battles like these, he wasn’t.

The moment the red lion was back in the hangar again, it would be a moment of relief for Keith. He could buy himself five minutes to walk to his room for a new dose of painkillers before they’d talk over the mission with Allura. The words spoken to him would only fly past him as he focused on the intensity of his pain instead. No one seemed to care about it. It was good to know that he was hiding it well enough. Everyone was sure that he would understand the next step of attack.
Everyone thought he had been listening to everything. Everyone except for Shiro and Coran. Keith could feel their eyes burn on his skin. Shiro’s burned more than Coran’s for sure, but neither were wanted by him. Their concern was fine, but Keith was also fine. He didn’t need their worries or the ‘maybe you should get some rest too’ after talking about the mission. He didn’t want to see them worried about nothing.

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Resting was never an option. The moment he’d find himself a comfortable spot to spend time at, he had to move. Although it was never more than walking circles in his room or a quick stop at the kitchen, the call of training was too loud to be ignored sometimes. Those times were the most annoying.

Training would start without too much trouble. The Gladiator couldn’t get a hit on him, Keith knew he was too fast. The sound of metal clashing against his bayard, moving on to the next training level. The exhaustion he could feel from training was always better than being worn out by his own body. That was until his own limbs started to fall behind, his own muscles too tense to follow his commands.

“End training sequence,” Keith’s pants echoed through the hall and the Gladiator fell apart before his face. He let out a relieved sigh before his legs gave out underneath him, forcing him to sit down on the ground. The moment of relief from training was gone the moment he muscles flared up.

“Fuck.” Keith whispered as he ran his fingers along his muscles in the hope to calm them. The other paladins shouldn’t be too busy by now, and knowing their hobbies on the ship, there was a slight chance of running into Lance on the way back to his room. That was the best option. Lance would buy the lie of a training injury with ease. However, when his muscles decided to respond again and he moved back to his room for new painkillers, it wasn’t Lance he ran into. Of course it had be Shiro who had thought it was a perfect time to get some training done himself. The two crossed each other in the hallway. Shiro stopped in his track when he saw Keith move around with difficulty.

“What happened?” He asked, getting a glare from Keith in return while the teen leaned against the wall. “You look worse than I’ve seen you before.”

“I was out training.” Keith answered him, “Good distraction.”

“Are you sure it was a good idea? You look terrible.” Shiro tilted his head.

“You’re hurting yourself like this.” Shiro said as he placed a hand on Keith’s shoulder. “You need to start telling the others about this.”

Keith looked down at his trembling hands, “It’s not like they know what this feels like. Or what to do against it.”

“I know, but it’s always better to know that others are there for you.” Shiro smiled, “Just like you guys know about me and Zarkon.”

“But that’s…”

“Different?” Shiro asked.
“Yeah.” Keith replied.

Shiro didn’t respond for a while after that. Sure there was a difference between being captured and tortured by the Galra for a year, losing every connection to Earth in that time, and suffering from one’s own body structure. There was a clear difference in the pain they couldn’t feel from each other, but Shiro had long given up on suffering alone. Surely he couldn’t share everything, keeping the flashbacks and nightmares to himself, but at least the others knew.

“Still…” Shiro said eventually, crossing his arms as he looked at Keith. “You can’t keep this a secret any longer. It affects the entire team.”

Keith stared at the floor before a loud sigh escaped his lips, “Fine,” he agreed eventually, “But only because you want it.”

“Thank you.” Shiro smiled, “I’ll see if we can get everyone together.”

Keith nodded. Perhaps this was the best way. His hands were still shaking, but started to calm down. He’d make a quick sprint to his room before Shiro called him back, making sure the tension in his leg faded before he had to face the others.

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Keith immediately regretted agreeing with Shiro’s idea for a meeting. First of all everyone seemed to be dragged out of their favorite past time. Hunk hadn’t changed out of his apron yet, stains of food goo and many different alien sauces decorating it. Pidge, judging by the way her hair was a bigger mess than usual, looked like she had been busy examining files concerning her family earlier. Meanwhile Lance, as much as Lance could be like Lance, wore his bathrobes. Keith was sure that a cold drink and face mask were still left somewhere in his room. Allura and Coran had been walking around the castle to keep its systems online, a thing Keith also knew needed more attention than his own problems.

The other paladins had already found a place in the common room when Keith entered. The reassuring look from Shiro from the side was the only thing Keith cared about.

“So why did we come here again?” Lance asked, looking from one paladin to another.

“Yeah,” Pidge said, “I was just getting in a great research mood.”

Shiro walked from the side of the room to where Keith was standing, leading him down to one of the couches where he could sit down.

“Keith?” Shiro said, raising an eyebrow at the younger male, “Do you want to explain it?”

“Don’t think there’s much to explain.” Keith huffed as he let himself fall down on the couch. The tension in his leg grew slightly in the motion, making Keith wonder if standing had been a better option.

“Keith…” Shiro’s voice was a low grumble. Clearly he didn’t take any more evading behavior. Keith hated it. He hated that he was in this situation and he hated having to admit that he had become to weakest link in the team.

“Fine,” Keith sighed, leaning back before he faced the rest of the team, “My leg has been a fucking shit for a few months now.”

“Keith, language.” Shiro corrected him as he shook his head. Keith shrugged in response, showing
that he was done talking about the issue. “We’ve been to Coran to talk about this. It seems his bone has started to create deformations.”

“So, bone spur?” Pidge asked.

“Most likely.” Shiro nodded.

“It doesn’t exactly matter what you call it.” Keith mumbled as he let his leg bounce slightly. “There isn’t anything we can do right now and talking doesn’t help that much.”

“You can’t get rid of it?” Pidge tilted her head, “I’ve heard of people getting bone spurs removed.”

“I’m not trusting the healing pods for that.” Keith huffed, glaring at Coran who made the ‘I can’t help that’ face while no one was watching, “Plus, I’m fine with it. It’s no big deal really.”

“Although it is a big deal, we don’t know well enough what we’re dealing with here.” Shiro added. “Until then, Keith’s leg is as good as out of the running.”

“Wait could you like…” Hunk stared at Keith’s leg before looking at Keith with a serious face. “Lose your leg to this or something.”

“If you do, you should try getting one of those Galra prosthetics.” Lance laughed, “More useful, gives us access to more stuff when we don’t always have Shiro and you can get in touch with that Galra part of yours.”

Keith glared at him, but was ignored for an enthusiastic squeak from Pidge. “Think about all the possibilities that could have! Except you know… getting Galra tech to do so might be a bit hard… maybe there are some Altean prosthetics instead?”

“Guys…” Shiro tried to interrupt them, before Lance and Pidge would be too caught up in a ‘Keith and his Galra leg’ fantasy. “No one is losing a leg here. This isn’t as serious as that.”

“This is exactly why I didn’t tell you about this.” Keith sighed. The bouncing of his leg could easily be shoved of as irritation combined with the growing restlessness of his muscles.

“Sorry Keith,” Pidge laughed softly as her expression turned serious again, “we got distracted.”

“Still, a Galra leg would help us more than yours right now.” Lance said as he leaned back on the couch.

“Could you at least act like you care?” Keith growled, gaining only Lance’s response of arms thrown in the air, in return. This intervention started to feel more and more like a mistake. Lance didn’t seem to care more than he usually did about his health, Hunk only made it seem worse and Pidge let herself be dragged into it by the others. The only one he really trusted in it was Shiro, which was exactly why he preferred it to stay between the two of them. Coran was a special case in that, Keith knowing that he was the only one who could really help them with these kind of problems. Surely Allura was there too. Allura however, was probably as bad as Hunk when it came to worst case scenarios.

“The way you act right now could bring Voltron and all of the universe in danger.” The princess said as one of her hands was underneath her chin. The thought process she seemed to emit, went past Keith with every word she said. “We need to prioritize our mission.”

“Don’t tell me you’re also on team ‘replace your entire leg’ now.” Keith grumbled as he glared up at her.
“I’m not, but we need to think about what we’re here for.” Allura said, sighing as she looked away.

“I can still pilot Red without any problem.”

“And what about fighting? You can barely stand on your own two feet without trembling.” Allura glared at him and Keith tried to stop the movement of his leg to prove her wrong.

“I already told you that I’m fine and with painkillers I can fight as well as anyone here.” Keith said as he stood up, “This meeting was a waste of time, really. We can keep forming Voltron and defeat Zarkon and ignore this problem.”

“It is not a problem to ignore.” Allura said as she took a step closer.

“And it’s not a problem you can fix at the moment.” Keith snapped, almost shouting. “Whatever, I’m going to train some more.” He walked to the door, the lacking weight he put on his leg clearly noticeable to the others.

“That was… helpful…” Hunk said as he watched the doors slide shut. “Is he going to be okay on his own?”

“You know he won’t open up to anyone but Shiro. I doubt he would have spoken about it if Shiro didn’t tell him to.” Lance shrugged.

“He had been hiding it from me too.” Shiro shook his head. Whatever Keith had been trying to achieve with hiding his condition, it was only backfiring.

“So what do we do now?” Hunk asked, looking around the room.

“We can’t do anything about this without Keith.” Shiro answered him, closing his eyes as he let out a sigh.

“That mullet isn’t going to help himself though.” Lance spoke up. His voice carried a deep tone of irritation.

“We could start by showing interest in what is happening to him. Support him when he needs it and make sure that he doesn’t unnecessarily strain himself.” Shiro said, focusing on Lance in particular. The Cuban only nodded in return, clearly having enough of the conversation already.

“Knowing Keith, that’s impossible.” Pidge let herself fall back on the couch.

“He’s probably out on the training decks already.” Hunk added to that. “I don’t think he has much of a different hobby.”

“Next to listening to those emo songs of his.” Lance added in.

“Next to that yes.” Hunk agreed, Pidge nodding in agreement.

“I know, but…” Shiro sighed, pinching the bridge of his nose, “Make sure he doesn’t do anything more stupid than usual. We’ll be stuck in this situation for a while.”

Chapter End Notes
I honestly how one tells others why you can barely walk at certain times... but I tried here? I'm also sorry if some things made no sense in this, it was a horrible chapter to write.

Thanks again for the support!
The first one to come to him was Pidge, much to Keith’s surprise. She had found him across the way to his room after one of the many training sessions he had to keep secret from Shiro. Even if Shiro was their leader, Keith couldn’t follow his order to stay still all day. His body was aching to stay strong, to not follow the rest of his body’s form. Whatever Shiro wanted, Keith would do, but this was the sole exception to that. Along the way of struggling to get back to his room, Pidge had been there. He ignored her, taking the time to get to the comfort of his own room. Her ‘are you okay?’ went past him as he only muttered as soft ‘yeah fine’ on autopilot.

The problem was that Pidge would see right through him. Keith had the hope that he could shake her off, but the moment he sat down in the kitchen to relax a little, Pidge was there next to him, her big eyes staring right at him.

“What do you want, Pidge?” Keith asked, his voice already sounding tired.

“So what is it like? Does it just flare up when you’re moving or …?” She returned the question.

Keith sighed, of course she would come to ask about it. He shrugged his shoulders. “Depends.”

There wasn’t much more to say and there wasn’t more he wanted to say.

“But it gets worse when you put too much pressure on it, doesn’t it? Maybe there’s a way to get the pressure of your leg, make it easier to move around.”

“I’m not sure I get what you want to do.” Keith frowned. The amount of questions Pidge could throw in one short moment was already starting to get too much for him.

“Think about this,” Pidge said as she inched closer, “if you’re able to remove extra weight from your leg, you might be able to give your leg some rest.”

“Don’t tell me you’re back on the idea of replacing my leg?” Keith rolled his eyes at her.

“Not like that!” Pidge jumped to defense. “That was much more of a ‘what if’ situation, we’re not at such a state.”

“Good you realized that at least.” Keith smiled, although he wasn’t exactly at ease.

“So what do you think of the idea?” Pidge asked.

Keith sighed and shrugged his shoulders, “Whatever that idea of yours is, I’m not sure it would work. I can’t exactly do anything without full control of my leg.”

“And you’re trying to say you have that control right now?” Pidge tilted her head, not believing a word Keith said.
Keith raised his eyebrow, “More control than I would have with whatever you’re planning. I need to able to feel what I’m doing.”

Pidge gave him a doubting look, “If you say so… So the times you lose control of your lion have nothing to do with everything?”

“I thought you were more the programming type, not the building one.” Keith said, ignoring the question she had thrown at him.

“I’ll admit it was Hunk’s idea.” Pidge laughed softly.

“Why doesn’t that surprise me…” Keith sighed as he leaned back in his chair.

As if summoned by the call of his name, the Samoan showed himself.

“What are you guys doing?” Keith looked up to see Hunk enter the kitchen. Of course he came here, Keith thought, the kitchen was his home in the castle.

“Telling Keith about those ideas you had.” Pidge explained.

“Ohohoh!” Hunk smiled as he moved over. “Did you tell him everything yet?”

“No, I didn’t even get to the first idea yet.” Pidge smiled at Keith. Keith however, didn’t feel like staying any longer and have himself be the subject of the conversation. It didn’t even matter as Hunk and Pidge seemed to be dragged away in their own talk already.

Keith knew it was best to leave the two in their own technical paradise. He didn’t care for whatever plans they had. He didn’t want to depend on the others to do his job. Everyone already knew he was the loner and it wasn’t going to change right now. He doubted the other two really noticed him getting up and walking out the kitchen.

He found some peace on a couch where he could do whatever he wanted to do, without having everyone hang around him. He had shaken off Allura on the way and specifically avoided Coran. He didn’t need them to make things worse. There were enough things he could do with his time and while he preferred training, looking through files wasn’t that bad either. At least it was some silence.

Silence was once again a subjective thing. By the time Keith had found himself at peace, the dullness of his leg having died out to its lowest point, he was dragged out his thoughts by the sound of a door opening. From the corner of his eye, he could see Lance enter the room. The younger teen was browsing on his phone before he noticed Keith in the room. He looked up at Keith and moved closer.

“Hey,” Lance said as he sat down next to him.

“Don’t tell me you’re still as obsessed about this entire leg thing as Pidge and Hunk are.” Keith mumbled, not looking at Lance, “Or do you still not care about it?”

“Who told you I don’t care?” Lance shot into defense. Keith raised an eyebrow. That wasn’t the reaction he had expected.

“It seemed pretty obvious from how you’ve been acting.”

“So you prefer more people constantly asking you if you’re okay? Because I can do that.” Lance cleared his throat in a cough and sat up straight. “Oh Keith,” His voice wavered, floating through
the room as if he was acting in an overdramatic stage play. “how is that horrible leg of yours troubling you today?”

“You can go back to not caring, I prefer that.” Keith said, trying to suppress the laughter Lance’s overdramatic show had created at him.

“Good,” Lance smiled as he fell back again, slumping on the couch as he always did, “so, how is it going? Next to the entire ‘torture leg’.”

“I think that ‘torture leg’ is the only thing really going on.” Keith said, “The others never shut up about it anyways. You already know how the rest goes.”

“Okay, but let’s go back to the fact that I-” Lance raised his hands to make quotation marks in the air “don’t care. What else are you up to? Did anything interesting lately?”

Keith looked at the ceiling for a moment as he thought for a while. “Been trying to get more control with my knife. I want to see if it can tell me more about myself.”

“And how is that going? Turned purple and fluffy yet?”

“No.” Keith hissed, “I haven’t been able to go back into my past like I did at the base of the Blade of Marmora. It’s easier to awaken now though.”

“Ahw,” Lance pouted, “I really wished I could see you be cute for once.” The grin across Lance’s face was met by Keith’s hand.

“Not going to happen.” Keith huffed, crossing his arms, “As much as I want to get in touch with my past, turning Galra isn’t my plan.”

“Oh come on, I’m sure everyone would love to see it. Might come in handy with the war.”

“In case you forgot, Allura still hates the Galra.”

“Then fix that.” There was that grin again, the grin Keith knew he couldn’t get out of this world no matter what he did.

“You’re horrible, did you know that?”

Lance laughed as he stretched his arms above his head, “I think you mean that I’m great.”

Keith smiled softly and Lance took that as enough of an answer to have his grin grow even more. The silent communication between the two of them was enough to calm Keith. For once he was able to have a normal talk and truly put his mind of things. It was something he had missed doing. It being with Lance was the thing he hadn’t expected, but now that he was here, in this moment, it didn’t seem that strange.

Lance didn’t seem to be able to stop talking and where Keith would have normally walked away from him, he stayed to listen. Lance’s rambling would keep his mind busy and when Keith actually listened to it, he realized that Lance had a lot more on his mind than he expected at first. Between the rambling about Blue’s new techniques and cute alien girls, Keith noticed the memories of Earth slipping through. Blue’s purrs reminded him of the Cuban beach, one of the cute girls he had met in the space mall reminded him of an old classmate and a small training accident reminded him what his younger sister had done once when she fell out of a tree. It was clear that Lance missed his home. Keith had known that already, but he realized he hadn’t given enough attention to the situation. He never did.
Lance fell silent after a while. He stared at the ceiling for a while before he turned to Keith.

“I think I’m going to check in with Blue before it’s time for group training.” Lance smiled for a moment before he sat his hands down on the couch to push himself up.

“Lance.” Keith said as Lance stood up. The other looked at him as Keith muttered a soft “Thanks”.

“What? You’re thanking me now?” Lance smirked.

“You’re the first to talk to me without putting it all on my leg.” Keith explained.

“When you have enough reckless family members, you learn that not everyone is asking for never ending concern.” Lance laughed softly as he walked to door. “I’ll see you at training, okay?”

Keith nodded. “I’ll see you then.”

---

“Keith!” Lance yelled over the comms. Great, he had been too distracted again to see the next wave of ships coming in. He hadn’t let himself drift too far, however. The lions were close enough to each other to still form Voltron in time. That meant that this battle was far from lost. If only he was able to connect well enough…

“Keith!” Lance again, Keith had almost forgotten how much he hated the screaming of his name. “Maybe focus on becoming an arm instead of what’s going on with your leg.”

“How did you- nevermind.” Keith said. He didn’t have to wonder about anything at the moment. Lance was right here. His focus should have been on nothing but the battle and Voltron. He only had to think about the ships in front of him as they exploded one by one. The sound of explosions was combined with alarms soon after. More screaming over the comms followed. Oh yes, those screams were definitely directed at him. He could see the yellow lion flying around him, taking more hits than it should. Keith hated being shielded, because that was exactly what Yellow was doing right now. Those hits were meant for Keith, that was obvious. Red wasn’t responding as long as signs of errors filled most of his vision. It shouldn’t be too hard to fix, he had done this before. He just needed a moment.

“Keith? Buddy?” He could hear Hunk’s voice over the comms. He sounded out of breath. “I don’t think Yellow is going to be able to stay like this much longer.”

“Just give me second to get Red working again.” Keith responded. It really wasn’t that hard. Reboot the system, redirect the quintessence to the engines in an attempt to have it run around the damaged parts. He just needed to concentrate, find that bond with red and hear her voice.

Her voice… if only he could hear her. His fingers were trembling at the control panels, his thoughts too occupied by gaining control of himself again. He had to keep his leg still, his hands in place and his thoughts empty. Red had to be talking to him, he needed to hear her.

“Could you hurry already?”

“We’re catching too much fire here.”

“We have to retreat NOW!”

“Keith!”
The screams were starting to blur together into one and Keith couldn’t find the power to answer them. There was no time to focus on his team when he had to find Red again. Focus, relax, stop shaking, hear Red and get out of the fight. It was such a simple plan in theory, but reality was always different. He couldn’t relax and he couldn’t hear Red.

He didn’t even hear everyone’s screams as another blast went straight for Red, sending him tumbling through space even further.

Chapter End Notes

Next chapter should be the last!

Thanks again for all the support! You're all amazing 😊
Far From Reckless

Chapter Notes

And it's the final chapter! Could have been better, but thinking about how to write this just didn't get me anywhere and I had to get this done before uni starts next week... So this might seem a bit rushed?? But knowing myself I would have never finished it otherwise
Sadly I couldn't reach my 10k words goal, but it was close :D
Again thank you for all the support on this story, it's amazing!

“…eith…” The empty static of the comms made room for voices after a while, although broken over bad reception.

“That was extremely reckless.” Shiro said as he supported Keith with walking.

“That wouldn’t call it just reckless. That was dangerous and could have killed us all.” Pidge said as she joined the others in the main hall.

Keith already knew it had been dangerous. He didn’t need to hear it or to see the judging stares in his direction.

If they found him.

The thought suddenly crossed his mind. With his comms and lion offline, there was a chance they didn’t know where he had crashed. If the Galra had kept them too occupied, they might have had to retreat instead. No, knowing Shiro they wouldn’t leave him behind.

“…th…yo…ere…?” It sounded like Shiro, but Keith wasn’t sure with the static running through the message.

“I’m here.” Keith groaned. Oh yes, this was definitely not helping the headache. He waited for a response, calling out to Shiro and the others multiple times to make sure his message wasn’t going to be lost and unheard.

“Keith... you there?” Finally a clear message came through. No doubt it was Shiro he had been sending messages to earlier.

“Yeah, I’m here.” Keith responded slowly. “It seems Red has taken quite a beating, she’s still
offline.”

“We ha... visual... lion...” Of course the static came back when it was wanted the least. Keith’s hope could make enough out of the message however, they had a visual... that meant that they had to come for him...

“The comms are broken too. I can’t hear you.” Keith responded, but was met only by more silence and static. There wasn’t anything he could do except waiting for any possible help.

The time alone, trying to feel the bond with Red again, gave Keith the time to have reality sink down on him. Reality didn’t just bring the revelation that he had brought everyone in danger. Along with it had been pain. The pulsating ache in his right thigh, now accompanied by a sharp pain in his left leg and a stabbing feeling around his chest. The crash had clearly made things worse for him. Keith shoved it off as a good distraction. He could deal with these things... he was fine.

There was a sound outside... The ground his lion apparently was lying on trembled for a moment before there was silence again. Then sound again. It sounded like footsteps, softly moving across the surface of his lion. Someone was there.

There was a knock on the head of the lion and Keith looked up. The hatch, of course. There was another knock on it before the hatch moved open and footsteps clearly sounded through the cockpit.

“Keith?” Keith turned around slightly to see Shiro walk towards him.

“Hey...” Shiro said as he approached Keith. “Are you okay?”

“I’m fine.” Keith replied as he looked down at his legs, “Got my leg messed up in the fall though.”

“Can you walk?” Shiro asked, taking in the situation, “I can fly you back to the castle with Black and have Hunk tow the Red lion back to castle.”

Keith had wanted to offer flying Red back himself, but seeing as she still wasn’t operational and he could barely move, he knew it was a bad idea. He pushed himself out of his chair, putting his weight on his right leg to avoid hurting his left more. It wasn’t helping, although he was distracted from the ache in his right leg, his knee buckled beneath him, making him fall to the ground if Shiro hadn’t been there.

“I’ll take that as a ‘no’ for my question.” Shiro sighed as he wrapped an arm under Keith’s shoulders for support. “You look terrible, how badly did you get injured in that crash?”

Keith shrugged his shoulders, immediately regretting so, “Don’t know really. Mostly hurt my leg and got this terrible headache. The rest is probably just bruises, nothing too bad.”

“You wouldn’t say it’s ‘nothing too bad’ if you knew what that crash looked like.” By the confused look on Keith’s face, Shiro could tell that the teen had no idea what he was talking about, “You got shot down during battle. Eventually your lion crashed into this planet. We had to take care of the Galra before we could come to get you. Everyone got pretty worried when we couldn’t reach you.”

When Keith finally stood outside his lion, he understood how serious it had been. Red’s lion was buried in a layer of dirt, smoke coming up from her sides. He had made a terrible mistake.

“Yeah, he’s injured, but it isn’t as bad as we expected. We’re on our way back now.” Shiro said over the comms, probably to Coran or Allura. The black lion was waiting next to Red. Yellow,
Green and Blue stood close by, waiting for orders. Keith didn’t give them too much attention as Shiro helped him enter the black lion’s cockpit.

He would talk to the others when time came. Right now he only wanted to away from this planet.

…”

“We all agree that this was a bad day for the team,” Shiro sighed as he glared at the rest of the team to make sure they wouldn’t all team up against Keith and his decisions, “but right now we need to make sure the team is back to its full power. That means we will take care of Keith’s injuries first.”

“I think you need more than just his injuries taken care off.” Lance said, crossing his arms.

“With that amazing leg control of his, Voltron might not defeat the Galra as fast as we’d like.” Pidge laughed to herself. Lance joined in with her, the hallway filling more with empty remarks than serious business. Hunk, clearly left in the middle of it all, turned to Shiro with a questioning look. Shiro however already knew that there was nothing he could do against it.

“It’s best to go see Coran for now,” Shiro said to Keith. Hunk nodded in the background as confirmation to nothing. Shiro knew he was most likely to head to the kitchen to cook away any of the worry he had. Pidge and Lance were the most likely to join him there. Meeting up with Allura would come after that. She knew how to wait, even if it wasn’t her best trait.

---

Keith hated being in the infirmary. It wasn’t just the emptiness of the space or the feeling of helplessness from being there. Right now, he mostly hated the distance between the infirmary and the hangar. Even with Shiro’s help, walking was painful. He refused to let Shiro carry him for such minor injuries. It really was nothing, Coran agreed to that. An hour of cryo was all he needed for it. Compared to what others had gone through, he really was only making this a bigger deal than he should.

He sat down next to the pod Coran was preparing for him. The small injuries were all he was supposed to take care of, knowing how Keith didn’t trust him for the bones yet. Keith looked down at his hands, trembling as he occupied his mind with the bouncing of his leg, before he felt a hand on his shoulder.

“Ready when you are,” Shiro said, pointing at the empty pod.

Keith looked up, feeling a breath he didn’t know he had been holding leave his lips, “I’m sorry for being this useless.”

“Oh Keith,” Shiro said, tightening the grip on his shoulder as a way of reassurance, “you’re not useless. The team is only concerned, we all need you in it.”

“Pidge was right though.” Keith muttered as he stared at his hands, “I can’t do anything for the team while I’m like this.”

“Keith, that’s not-”

“No Shiro…” Keith snapped back, although his voice didn’t raise too much, “You don’t have to act as if this entire leg situation isn’t doing the team more damage.”

“So?” Shiro asked, waiting for Keith to continue with his train of thoughts.
“I’ll have to give that healing pod a chance, I guess.” Keith sighed as he looked up at Shiro and forced a smile on his face. He knew the others were there with enough backup plans. He knew that Coran trusted those pods more than anything. More importantly, he knew he couldn’t stay in Voltron the way he was now. The rest of his injuries were proof of that. Although they still hurt, they were only temporarily. He’d get to a pod for them, as much as he hated those. It would fix his problem faster than he could on his own.

Shiro only smiled besides him. “I’ll talk to Coran about it. You just get that cryo suit on and it’ll be over before you realize.” He tossed the white cry suit he had been holding at Keith who caught without too much trouble. As Shiro walked away, Keith sighed again. If Shiro was there to oversee things, he couldn’t refuse it.

It wasn’t just for himself…

It was for the team…

For the universe…

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Knowing that Shiro was watching him had calmed Keith’s nerves. The healing pods weren’t perfect and certainly not familiar with human biology. As much as Coran had insisted that there were no big risks with the healing pods, Keith didn’t want to believe him. It wasn’t until Shiro had offered to stay and monitor the healing process that Keith had entered the pod without too much worry. He’d trust Shiro with his health. At least Shiro knew the way a normal human bone was supposed to have. Even without full medical training, he knew more of it than Coran would.

The light of the cryo pod blinded his vision, making the image of Shiro and Coran on the other side disappear.

…

He was met by a bright, blue light that shone against the white walls. He felt himself fall forwards, not sure how to put down his own weight yet. He could feel himself being caught, a strong embrace stopping him from falling as he returned to reality.

“Hey,” Keith looked up to see he had fallen in Shiro’s arms, “how are you feeling?”

Keith didn’t know how fast he had to find himself steady on his own two feet again, pushing himself away from Shiro’s hold.

“Better.” He muttered as he looked around the room. The other paladins were standing on the side, but moved closer the moment they saw Keith out of the pod.

There was still a tingling sensation in left, but Keith shoved it of as being an after effect from cryo. After all, this was different. He couldn’t describe but something was missing or more… that something was finally gone.

“It’s weird…” Keith muttered, stretching his leg as his muscles didn’t scream at him in protest.

“The pod should have restored your injuries and any damage done to your leg over time.” Coran said, popping up from behind the monitors. “Your muscles might need some time to get back to their full strength, but everything else is looking good. Perhaps you’ll have some sore muscles for a few days, but it’s nothing permanent.”
That felt like a relief. Getting muscle strength back was an annoying progress, Keith knew that, but it wasn’t too hard. He could train at ease. He didn’t have to wait for anything to heal first, bless those healing pods.

“You should start with retrieving your balance.” Shiro noted, pointing at Keith’s stance, “You’re still not putting your full weight on it. Shouldn’t become a habit.”

“Yes, yes,” Keith looked up to see Hunk come closer, moving Shiro aside, “very important and all, but let’s eat first.” His idea was met by glares that he responded to with a shrug. “What? It’s been a long day and everyone is probably exhausted.”

Keith had to admit that Hunk’s cooking sounded like a gift at the moment. Hunk was right that they were exhausted, Keith felt like he hadn’t had a decent sleep in weeks. Thinking about it, he really hadn’t.

“Food sounds great.” Keith smiled. Hunk nodded, glad that Keith understood that much. Judging by the reactions of the others, food was really the thing everyone had been waiting for. He didn’t need Shiro’s help, glad to finally be on his own feet again.

Hunk’s cooking never failed to amaze him, especially when it came to ‘Keith is finally back to normal food’. Keith hated the name, but after many times of hearing Lance and Pidge saying it to each other, he had accepted it nonetheless. As good as the food was however, the day had still be exhausting. The moment his head hit the pillow, Keith could say it was lights out. It was the first good sleep he had had in ages.

Chapter End Notes

So yeah, I skipped a lot of "healing" stuff, but knowing that everyone has their own way of doing so, I guessed it was the easiest to just leave that to the cryo pods and Keith's conscience.

Thank you all for reading this extremely silly story and I hope the ending wasn't too disappointing...

You can find me on Tumblr at @aulra, I'm always taking writing requests and willing to chat :D

End Notes

I should get the second part done soon enough.

Still not sure if this ever goes on Tumblr, but ao3 is perfect to spam this with :D

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!