Summary

{DISCONTINUED}

On one seemingly normal day, on his commute to work, Keith notices a rather eccentric-looking guy across the way on the opposite platform, they make awkward eye-contact and suddenly everything in Keith's life changes. Keith doesn't like change.

A.K.A a story about how Keith reluctantly learns to have faith in mankind again.

Notes

OK, so this is the start of something new (music note)
The idea came to me and I had to get it down.
(3 W.I.PS?!)
The same time every day, the same journey every day, the same bored faces on the platform around him. Today the sun was shining brightly, but Keith, like usual, was wearing black and nearly dying whilst pretending not to notice the heat. He detested the commute to work, but the idea of not having enough money to pay rent and buy food was something he detested even more.

His headphones were plugged in and his eyes were locked to the ground, he liked to pretend that the people around him didn’t exist and he was in his own little world of his thoughts and rock music. He glanced at his watch, the train was late, again, like always. He sucked in a deep breath and swept his eyes from the floor to the sky, and something caught his eye somewhere in the middle.

A guy, in a huge blue fluffy jacket?

Keith was never one to stare, but… he couldn’t help it. A guy, with cropped short dark hair and deep bronzed skin, was wearing a huge blue fluffy jacket. He had a laptop bag tucked under his arm and a care-free look about him, he had to be care-free to be wearing a jacket like that. They guy’s head twitched and Keith quickly looked away as the guy made brief and awkward eye-contact with him. Keith breathed a huge sigh of relief as their respective trains pulled up and he was granted the brief joy of not having to face the consequences of his staring, till he got into his usual seat and saw blue out of the corner of his eye.

It took everything within him to keep staring straight ahead, to the point he actually leant forward onto the table, rested his elbow upon it, and leant his head in his hand away from the window.

The train sat in the station for five long, uncomfortable minutes till finally he was granted the respite of the train pulling away.

Had that guy always been there? Did he usually get that train or was it… a freak occurrence. Did he always dress like that, did he like drawing attention to himself? Keith shook the thoughts away as the train finally pulled up at his stop, heading into work under the blazing sun he tried not to think about the colour blue and fluffy jackets, but that seemed impossible.

His day at work passed by monotonously, as always, he shouldn’t have been surprised since he worked in an office putting numbers from one column into another column all day. He stumbled out of the door way and directly into someone, he fell back in surprise and took in someone almost half his size.

“Woah, what are you doing?” The person squealed up at him, perturbed. Keith rubbed his forehead and gazed down at the figure. Bright golden eyes framed by big round glasses gazed back, with a fierce determination in their features.

“Oh, sorry.” Keith muttered, stepping aside and walking past.
“Watch where you’re going next time!” The person called as he walked away, he shook it off and stuck his headphones in, resuming his habit of ignoring everyone around him.

He grabbed a coffee, feeling as though it was going to be a long night and waited for his train home, luckily there were no bright blue idiots across the way from him as he stepped on board and zoned out once more. It wasn’t till he arrived at the station five minutes away from his apartment, that he stepped out and saw him again. On the opposite platform once more.

What kind of coincidence was this? The same guy, big fluffy blue jacket, who glanced over with the tiniest hint of a smirk on his face before turning back and climbing the stairs. Keith decided he was probably seeing things and climbed his own stairs, exiting the station and starting the walk home. It was already getting dark as he arrived at his apartment.

Keith would have been the first to say that his apartment was pretty shitty, but then he didn’t get visitors so there was no one to impress. He pushed the partially warped door open and threw his keys into the bowl beside the door and threw his backpack down on the sofa.

He turned and almost physically shit himself, when he was met with the sight of the person he’d bumped into outside his work feeding the fish in his fish tank.

“What the fuck.” Keith stammered, his legs pushing him backwards till his back was leant up against the wall, his arms out in front of him defensively.

“Oh, hey, you’re home.” She turned when she heard him speak. “Sorry that our meeting was so… well, you know. You were there.”

Keith tried to speak, but no words came out. Was this how he died?

“I’m Katie, but you can call me Pidge.” She approached jovially with a hand extended towards him.

“W-what the fuck are you doing in my apartment.” Keith pressed harder into the wall, as if wishing he would morph through it and be able to escape.

“Our.” Pidge corrected, as if that were explanation enough.

“What?” Keith spluttered.

“Our apartment.” Pidge shrugged as if it were obvious. Keith shook his head violently.

“This is a one bedroom apartment. And it belongs to me.” Keith finally pushed himself away from the wall, his voice a low growl. “Get out.”

“Oh, did you not get the memo?” Pidge grinned, unaffected by Keith’s attempt at a threatening demeanour. “I live here now.”

“What memo?!” Keith cried. Pidge sighed and turned, she headed to the kitchen area and pulled out a small, un-opened white envelope from a huge pile of un-opened letters. She approached Keith and handed it over.

“I’m not opening this letter.” Keith hissed, “You’re not living here, this is not happening.”

Pidge rolled her eyes and huffed out a big breath and tore the envelope from his hands, tearing it open. Keith tried to protest but before he could speak it was open and she was reading it aloud.
“To whom it may concern, due to financial instability and your lack of consistent payment, I have decided to rent out the second bedroom in apartment 42 to a new tenant, a Ms. Katie Holt - that’s me, but you already knew that – effective from the 8th of August.” Pidge recited. “Yours, the landlord.”

“I-I, what second bedroom?!” Keith exclaimed. “There has never been a second bedroom in this apartment!”

Pidge smirked and walked to the door next to the fish-tank and gestured to it.

“I was always told that was a broom cupboard!” Keith cried, exasperated. What kind of day was this?? He was right to have predicted it was going to be a long night, he was endlessly grateful for the coffee he’d already consumed.

Pidge turned the handle of the door and opened it to reveal what was indeed a bedroom, but also a bedroom far bigger than the one he was sleeping in.

“What?!” Keith exclaimed, he stamped past and entered the room, it was far bigger and far nicer than his. “No fucking way.”

“So yep, we’re going to be roomies now!” Pidge happily proclaimed. Keith shook his head and rubbed his eyes.

This had to be a dream, he’d passed out on his desk and fallen asleep and was dreaming this, he had to be.

He felt a sharp pinch on his arm.

“Not a dream.” Pidge smiled a big, toothy, shit-eating grin. “Nice to meet you, Keith!”

Green – No reaction
Red – No reaction
Purple – A brief glance
Blue – Eye contact!!!!!!!

Keith awoke the following morning, and much to his dismay, Pidge was definitely still there, cleaning the kitchen.

He decided it would make his life easier if she were added to the roster of people that he ignored,
He slipped his headphones in and fully ignored Pidge as he exited the apartment. He didn’t bother to have breakfast or make any coffee, so when he arrived at the station he had to splash out on expensive coffee just to keep himself awake.

Unfortunately, that meant he missed the early train and had to get his usual one, he’d subconsciously made the effort to get the early train so that he wouldn’t have to encounter Blue guy, as he’d taken to calling him. But there he was, in his stupid jacket with that stupid smile on his face that Keith completely ignored in favour of counting the windows of the station opposite.

He successfully managed to ignore him, until again, he got into his seat and turned his head away. He heard over the music blasting through his headphones a banging coming from the train next to him, Keith sucked in a deep breath and continued staring out the opposite window until the train pulled away from the station.

What was this guy’s problem? You make eye-contact with someone once and suddenly they wanna get your attention.

Nothing spectacular happened all day until he stepped out of his office building that night and ALMOST bumped into Pidge once more.

“Hey! Roomie!” Pidge waved obnoxiously. Keith shook his head and stormed off. “Wait! We might as well get the train together.”

Keith gritted his teeth, if he kept ignoring her, hopefully she’d just stop trying. So they walked in silence, Keith three paces ahead because his legs were much longer, and Pidge tailing behind, making weak attempts at conversation.

They climbed onto the train and much to Keith’s chagrin, Pidge flopped down onto the seat next to him, Keith sighed and turned up the volume on his music, to the point it was almost painful, why was she not getting the message?

Eventually, Pidge did finally stop trying to make conversation, and opted to instead pull Keith’s headphones out of his ears and chew his ear off for the entire journey.

“Hey, I’ll make you dinner tonight!” Pidge exclaimed as the train pulled up to their stop.

“Please don’t.” Keith finally responded, pulling his backpack onto his shoulder and pushing past her and onto the platform, not even hazarding a glance back at the platform opposite.

“Hey, what is your problem?” Pidge yelled from behind him as he stormed off up the stairs.

What a good question, what was Keith’s problem?

He just didn’t like people, and people didn’t like him. Simple as. He knew he wasn’t the only person in the world to feel this way, so why was everyone so shocked when he wasn’t bowled over with happiness every time someone tried to talk to him.

He just didn’t need people and he knew for sure that people didn’t need him. Never had done and probably never would.

But Keith had never felt the need to explain himself, and Pidge wasn’t any more special because she was his roommate, she was just another inconvenience essentially. He didn’t really care if he hurt people’s feelings, it wasn’t his intention, it was just what other people were projecting onto him, their expectations of him as a human being.
Once they arrived back at the apartment, Keith did his usual routine of eating instant noodles, drinking coffee and trying to sleep, with the added exception of quiet groaning after realising that Pidge had re-organized all of the kitchen cupboards so it took him ten minutes longer than usual to have dinner.

Pidge had spent the evening singing and feeding the fish.

Blue – didn’t have the same effect, will try something new tomorrow.

“HEY!”

Keith’s head shot up, his stomach filled with dread and embarrassment, he knew exactly what was happening right now.

The guy who was no longer wearing a blue jacket, now in a bright yellow Letter Jacket was waving enthusiastically at Keith from across the tracks.

Keith felt all the blood drain from his face, as the people around him turned around to stare at him, he felt his cheeks warm with humiliation and tried his hardest to just ignore it.

“HEY! YOU IN THE BLACK JACKET WITH THE MULLET!” The guy actually cupped his hands around his mouth to project his voice.

Keith almost turned and ran away, but with his fists clenched and the feeling of imminent vomit, he was steadfast in his determination to ignore this obnoxious jerk. The train pulled up and he stormed on, ignoring the stares of passers-by as he decided to sit on the opposite side of the train. His body physically turned away from the train beside him.

All he ever wanted was to just… exist without people bothering him, and this guy was bothering him greatly.

He was relieved at last to step into his cubicle and turn on his computer, grateful for the monotony of numbers he was about to spend seven hours of his day with.

“Hey, um… are you… Keith?”

Keith’s heart stuttered, what was everyone elses problem?!

He considered for a couple of seconds whether or not to just pretend that he wasn’t Keith, that he was some random French dude called Akira, but his barely fluent knowledge of French probably wouldn’t tide him over for very long. Instead, he relented and turned to the inquiring voice and was shocked to see a tall, dark and strong-looking stranger.
“U-Um, yes?” Keith stammered, his voice croaky due to the fact he’d not spoken a word all day thus far.

“Hey, I’m Hunk, I’m your new intern!” Hunk waved a little limply, as if he were nervous.

“Intern?” Keith enquired, he was barely above entry level even after four years of employment here, why was he suddenly getting an intern? “No… no one told me I was looking after an intern?”

“Oh… you must not have got the memo?” Hunk shrugged. “I was told to come and find you, that you would show me how everything worked? Show me the ropes? You don’t mind do you?”

Keith minded, Keith minded very much, but he couldn’t afford to lose this job by refusing.

“No, it’s fine.” Keith sighed, Hunk grinned and pulled up a desk chair, squeezing it very closely to Keith in his tiny cubicle. Keith supressed a sigh and ran through everything with Hunk almost ten times, gradually getting more and more frustrated with Hunk’s lack of information retention.

Before he knew it, it was lunchtime and he’d done sweet fuck all.

“Hey, want to go to lunch together?” Hunk suddenly asked, Keith was surprised at his forwardness.

“I don’t usually go out for lunch.” Keith muttered.

“Oh? Well, let me treat you, as a way to thank you for showing me how all this stuff-“ Hunk gestured vaguely to the screen. “Works.”

Keith would usually have immediately said no, but Hunk was offering him free food, Keith was unsociable, not stupid. They walked in silence to the nearest sandwich bar, Hunk ordered their food and they sat in the window, eating quietly.

“You’ve worked at that place for a long time, huh?” Hunk asked, as if the silence physically pained him.

Keith nodded, with a grunt filling in for where a response would have been.

“Is that what you’ve always wanted to do?” Hunk asked, genuinely interested.

“No.” Keith responded simply.

“What’s your dream then?” Hunk asked, as if it were a perfectly normal, not at all invasive question.

Keith scoffed as a reply, trying not to engage in this conversation.

“My dream was to be a world-renown chef.” Hunk stated proudly, finishing the last of his sandwich and leaning back, satisfied. Keith remained silent, trying not to encourage him anymore. “But, as you can see, that hasn’t exactly worked out for me so far, huh.”

“Guess not.” Keith shrugged.

“You’re not the most… chatty are you?” Hunk smiled generously, Keith stared at him blankly. “Ok, that’s a… yes, I get it.”

They finished up their lunch, Keith was grateful for Hunk’s comfortable silence from that point onwards, Hunk retired to his own cubicle, but came and interrupted Keith almost every ten
minutes asking for help again, Keith was glad when the day ended and they bid farewell at the door. Just as Hunk walked away, Pidge appeared.

“Hey, roomie!” Pidge was just as jolly as ever. “Train?”

Keith shrugged and they walked in silence.

OKAY! Yelling wasn’t a winner.

Keith slowly trudged down the stairs, glad that it was at last, Friday. One more day until he could spend the entire weekend in bed, he couldn’t wait.

He stood at the edge of the platform, staring straight at the floor, ignoring more curious gazes from the people around him, trying to pretend that yesterday’s incident didn’t happen.

“HEY!” A whisper-yell? Came from across the platform, Keith grit his teeth, if he were pushed today he felt he might actually yell back in an angry rage.

He glanced up with anger in his eyes when he noticed the guy, now wearing a purple jumper was holding up a sloppily written sign saying.

I’M SORRY FOR YELLING AT YOU.

Keith raised his eyebrows, looking up from the sign at the guy holding it who was grinning happily, obviously thrilled at Keith’s compliance. He quickly spun the sign.

BUT YOU DO WEAR A LOT OF BLACK AND HAVE A MULLET.

Keith sighed deeply and looked away, finally, he noticed a tiny crowd forming behind him, reading the signs amusedly, he heard a couple of them giggling and realised why when he glanced back.

SERIOUSLY, THIS ISN’T THE 80’S DUDE, GET A HAIRCUT!

Keith pouted angrily and threw a middle finger in his direction and folded his arms, the guy chuckled at Keith’s response and shrugged as their trains pulled up. Keith did as he had done the previous day and sat on the opposite side of the train, he heard the tell-tale banging and ignored it completely. This guy was a serious jerk, did he think that insulting him was cute?

When he arrived at his desk at work, Hunk was stood with a big smile and a box in his hands, Keith took a self-cleansing breath.
“Hey, sorry, I’m not here to harass you!” Hunk explained, extending the box outwards to Keith. “This is for you! I baked you a cake to say thank you for being patient with me.”

Keith was thoroughly astonished, he hadn’t done anything that a normal person wouldn’t do, so why would Hunk bother to make him a cake.

“Don’t mention it.” Keith muttered, not making a move to take the box but instead sitting down in his desk chair, hoping that Hunk would get the message.

He didn’t hear anything, but saw out of the corner of his eye the box being gently placed on the desk beside him.

Hunk dropped by at lunchtime to offer another lunch-date which Keith refused quickly and quietly. He appreciated that Hunk didn’t walk away muttering a profanity under his breath directed at Keith. The day passed with only a few interruptions and Keith headed to the train with Pidge following behind as had become habit in the last three days, Keith hated that one of his new habits included another person.

He didn’t even bother to protest when Pidge sat down beside him and chatted away. Keith didn’t listen, he just stared out the window as the landscape passed them by.

“Are you sure you don’t want me to make you dinner?” Pidge asked. “I make a mean lasagne!”

“Please, don’t.” Keith responded as they stood up to exit the train. As he stepped onto the platform and Pidge began ascending the stairs, Keith heard a familiar voice shouting at him from across the platform.

Out of sheer curiosity, which was something Keith had never really experienced before, he turned and saw the guy in purple holding a new sign.

I WAS KIDDING, I DIDN’T MEAN TO INSULT YOU!

Keith looked up at him with a stoic expression, shook his head and left.

DEFINITELY NOT A WINNER.

Keith didn’t leave his room. Which was a joy in and of itself, Pidge had knocked a couple of times on the door to see if he wanted some lasagne, which she insisted was her speciality, only to be met with silence.

It wasn’t till nearly 11pm on Saturday night that Keith even ventured out of the room, he tried to sneak past Pidge, who was on his make-shift sofa playing some sort of video game.
wondered why she wouldn’t do that in her own bedroom, being that it was the biggest one in the 
apartment, he still was quite bitter about that. He was unsuccessful in his sneaking as when he 
turned with a cup of coffee in his hand, he nearly threw it all over himself as she seemingly 
apparated behind him.

“Wanna play?” Pidge asked, extending a controller out to him, Keith regained his normal breathing 
and shook his head and walked past her. “C’mon! I’d bet I’d wreck you!”

Keith stopped abruptly, and was cursing himself for his competitive spirit. He turned, stared her 
down and took a sip of his coffee.

“No one wrecks me.”

“Y’know Keith, you remind me a lot of my brother,” Pidge threw her controller down victoriously 
after beating Keith for the fifteenth time at Mario Kart.

Keith growled in response.

“I destroyed him at video games too.” Pidge smirked. Keith shook his head and threw his 
controller unceremoniously at the dirty futon of a sofa whilst standing up to storm out of the room. 
“Thanks for playing with me though, Keith, really.”

Keith turned and saw a sadness in Pidge’s eyes that he didn’t have the emotional capacity or ability 
to empathise to pretend he noticed her melancholy.

“Don’t mention it.” Keith waved his hand and returned to his room to attempt some semblance of 
sleep.

When Sunday rolled around, he heard a banging and clattering coming from the living room and if 
he’d have been anywhere else he would have ignored it, but since it was his own apartment, he felt 
his curiosity getting the better of him. He pulled himself out of bed and opened the door between 
his room and the living room and saw Pidge single-handedly dragging a brand new white leather 
sofa through the door.

“Woah, what the hell are you doing?” Keith yelped as he un-characteristically leapt forward to try 
and help her.

“Well, the movers finally arrived with my stuff and I thought it might… spice up the place a bit?” 
Pidge shrugged, but smiled with gratitude for Keith’s help.

“Why didn’t the movers help you bring this stuff in?” Keith asked, glancing around to see if there 
were more strangers randomly in his apartment.

“Well, because I had to put the deposit down on this place at such short notice,” Pidge giggled a 
little awkwardly. “I only had enough money to afford the van and the driver, so… the moving I’ve 
had to do all by myself!”

So, Pidge was on her own too? Keith hated himself for what he was about to say.

“You should have woken me up, I would have helped.” Keith tried not to show too much emotion 
in the way that he said it, but it still earned an excited squeal from Pidge. “Don’t make that noise,
I’m only doing what any normal person would do.”

“Sure,” Pidge grinned, Keith rolled his eyes and nudged the old futon out of the way, actually kind of glad for Pidge’s new sofa, it looked far better than the old piece of crap he’d grabbed from a thrift store for twenty bucks.

“Wait, did you drag this up four flights of stairs on your own?!” Keith suddenly realised, he turned and Pidge was busy flexing her biceps for him.

“Just ‘cause I’m short, doesn’t mean I’m weak.” She raised her eyebrows at him happily.

“I can’t believe the driver, in good conscience, let you do all this on your own.” Keith sighed, Pidge shrugged. “Anything else to bring up?”

“Uh yeah… just… one more thing,” Pidge smiled innocently.

“THERE IS NO WAY THIS IS GONNA FIT IN MY APARTMENT!” Keith yelped.

“OUR apartment, Keith!” Pidge patted the 75” TV she’d brought with her with pride.

“How did you even afford something like this?” Keith actually felt small next to this thing.

“I inherited it from work,” Pidge smiled. Keith decided he wasn’t going to ask any more questions, he didn’t want to be implicit in whatever dodgy dealings Pidge was up to. “and besides, I’ve done all the measurements, it’ll be fine, I promise!”

Keith glared at the monstrous thing, if it fit, it would be pretty cool actually.

“And I’d be able to destroy you at Mario Kart in 4K HD!” Pidge exclaimed happily. Keith snarled and turned.

“Do it on your own then.”

“WAIT, KEITH I’M SORRY!”

“Okay, I’m definitely making you lasagne tonight!” Pidge grinned happily as Keith flopped down onto the new sofa in front of their new TV.

“What is it with you and lasagne?” Keith sighed, the sofa was infinitely more comfortable than the old futon.

“I would say it’s because I’m Italian, but… that would be a stereotype.” Pidge shrugged. “My mom taught me to make it and I mastered it and it’s nice to do things you’re good at.”

Keith was getting a lot of free food at the moment, and if Pidge was good at cooking, that was just a plus.

“Why would you make me lasagne?” Keith asked the question he’d been wanting to ask since she’d first offered.

Pidge looked taken aback at Keith’s question, as if it were a totally bizarre thing to ask.
“W-well, because… you’re my roommate? And you welcomed me into your home?” Pidge stammered as she answered. “And you helped me move my furniture in and y’know… it’s a pretty normal thing to do?”

“So is all of those things?” Keith shrugged. “You don’t have to reward me for things that anyone would do, and also two of those things I didn’t even have a choice in anyway.”

“I-I guess…” Pidge considered for a moment. “Why is it a problem when people want to do nice things for you? I haven’t got some ulterior motive if that’s what you’re wondering.”

Keith didn’t respond, he generally felt that… even when people said they didn’t have an ulterior motive, it usually meant they did anyway. They just hadn’t figured it out what it was they wanted from him just yet. Pidge pretended not to notice his silence and set about excitedly making Keith a lasagne.

Keith found himself in a situation he’d never experienced before, curled up on a comfy new sofa, chowing down on the best lasagne he’d ever eaten before, watching Pidge play video games and actually enjoying himself. Pidge was excitedly telling him the entire back story to The Legend of Zelda whilst he sat back and listened, finding her voice bizarrely relaxing. The sun was starting to set and Keith could feel himself beginning to drift off, he was minutely depressed knowing that the weekend was already nearly over, he always cursed himself for spending so much of it in bed, but until quite recently he’d not had anything better to do.

It wasn’t till he shot awake on Monday morning, still on the sofa but with a blanket over him he even thought about how nice it actually was to have a roommate. Keith never thought he’d find himself admitting something like that, people always complained about their roommates, maybe he’d just gotten lucky which is something he could have never imagined he’d think.

He got up and stretched, the living room was tidied, the washing up was done, Keith got ready for work without feeling a massive weight of responsibility on his shoulders, it was nice.

Keith had almost forgotten about the guy at the other platform but was met with a crushing realisation as he immediately saw him stood in an orange coat with some massive white signs clutched under his arm. Keith quickly hid behind a column before the guy noticed him. He could see out of the corner of his eye the guy checking his watch and glancing around, a slightly sad look on his face. Keith just sighed and looked away, his hiding apparently successful, till a random stranger came up to him.

“He had a great weekend thanks! He hopes you did too!” The stranger stood next to him yelled in response.

“What the hell are you doing?!” Keith yelped.
“Helping you, because you so clearly do not know what you’re doing.” The stranger smirked.

“I don’t need help. I don’t want anything to do with this guy.” Keith grit his teeth in response, he didn’t want to be rude but he found it was the only way to get people to back off.

“Awww come on! He’s cute! What’s your problem?” The stranger had the goofiest grin on his face, that with the strange scar across his nose and grey eyes, he’d have been cute if he weren’t being such an imposition.

“Why does everyone keep asking me that?!” Keith just wanted to put his headphones in and go to work, why did people keep wanting to stop him from doing that simple thing.

“I’ve seen you every single day here, trying to deny yourself any kind of happiness.” The stranger completely out of the blue placed a hand on Keith’s shoulder. “Look, this guy is clearly trying to make an effort with you and as much as you tell yourself you hate it, you clearly don’t because you’re always blushing every-time you see him.”

Keith audibly gasped at that.

“No, I go red in the face with anger, because he’s an asshole!” Keith didn’t know why he was justifying himself to this guy, he shrugged the guys hand off his shoulder. “Who the hell are you anyway?! And why do you think I care about this guy? I don’t know him, he’s harassing me!”

“Hey, you’re right, I shouldn’t be meddling!” The guy held both hands up in a surrendering motion. “And since you asked, my name is Takashi, but… you can call me Shiro.”

“Don’t worry, I won’t be calling you either of those things.” Keith turned and folded his arms, the guy in orange had been stood with a sign waiting for Keith to notice.

I’M SORRY IF YOU THINK I’M HARRASSING YOU.

Keith rolled his eyes. As the guy went a bright red and flipped the sign around.

I JUST THOUGHT YOU WERE CUTE AND WANTED A WAY TO BREAK THE ICE.

Keith felt all the blood rush to his face.

“SEE! You’re blushing!” Shiro nudged Keith happily. The guy grinned as he noticed Shiro nudging Keith and grabbed another sign from under his arms.

THE NAMES LANCE, AND I’VE BEEN WAITING FOR MY TRAIN FOR 15 MINUTES, BUT I’VE BEEN WAITING FOR YOU MY WHOLE LIFE.

Keith actually covered his face as Shiro whooped and hollered, other people on the platform were laughing. What the hell was happening?!

“YES! NICE LINE!” Shiro called across the platform at him. Lance threw him a big thumbs-up in response as Keith continued to hide behind his hands. “Please! Let me tell him your name.”

Keith shook his head, still trying to quell the heat in his face, he had never been more embarrassed in his whole life, but there was a stupid smirk on his face he was trying to hide more.

Shiro laughed happily as he escorted Keith onto the train as it pulled up, Keith was too humiliated and embarrassed to even protest as Shiro sat down beside him and waved at Lance happily through the window.
“C’mon, you have to tell me your name! Respect your elders!” Shiro laughed happily, still waving to Lance who was practically jumping off his seat in the other train.

“It’s Keith.”
In which everyone is too fucking nice!

"I only told you that to prove that people do notice you. Everyone gets noticed. No one is ever just a face in the crowd."

“That’s all I’ve ever wanted to be. Just another face in the crowd.” Keith sighed, pressing his head to the rattling window beside him.

Keith arrived at work, cheeks still insanely hot and red. He was so mad. He was made a complete fool of in front of so many people. He threw his bag down by his desk and stared at the box full of cake that was still on his desk, he daren’t look inside, it was probably growing new life on it. He didn’t feel bad about putting it in the bin till Hunk caught his eye. Hunk was definitely not as good at hiding his emotions as Keith, and Keith wasn’t even that good at it. He looked genuinely heartbroken as he saw Keith with the box in his hands and his foot on the pedal of his bin.

Keith didn’t like to hurt people’s feelings, but often… like he had said to himself a million times before, it was the best way to get people to back the hell off. He’d been unsuccessful with Lance and Shiro apparently, he needed to be able to control this. But that didn’t stop the awful feeling in the pit of his stomach as Hunk saw him drop the heavy box into the bin.

Hunk didn’t interrupt him once. He should have been happy about that, but he felt rotten. He didn’t even bother to ask Keith if he wanted to join him for lunch, instead Keith saw him leave with another one of their co-workers, laughing jovially. Keith breathed a sigh of relief, he’d not ruined his day at least. He finished work and stepped out into the street. He was surprised to find that there was no Pidge walking by at just the right time. He glanced around to see if she was running late, but when she was nowhere to be found, he headed to the station on his own.

He stepped onto the train and sat down. He gazed out of the window. He should have been happy.

He should have been happy.

It had been five days, how had he been so stupid to let his guard down so easily? He thought he was done with all this… emotional shit. And now he actually felt sad that Pidge wasn’t there. So much for being a loner. He sighed, put his headphones in and leant his head against the window. He thought he’d trained himself out of this, relying on people, caring about people.

He made a promise there and then to himself that things would go back to the way they were. When you started to care about people, you just got hurt. He couldn’t be weak. He didn’t want to be weak.

The train pulled up at his station and he almost didn’t get off, knowing that if Pidge hadn’t been at
work, she’d probably be at home for some… reason or another. He could just stay on the train and sleep there, he’d eventually get to work on time, he could live on the train, right? There was a snack cart on board, wasn’t there? He glanced across to see Lance at his side the station, seemingly waiting for something. Presumably him.

He leapt out of his chair just as the door was about to shut and shot up the stairs. Hoping with everything inside of him that Lance didn’t see him and cursed himself for telling Shiro his name that morning, he knew tomorrow would be awful.

As he walked, he could feel that the air was beginning to change, autumn was just around the corner, which meant that the hot mornings would cease to exist, for a little while. He’d get away with wearing black as much as he liked. He wondered if he’d be able to afford a taxi to work tomorrow morning instead. Anything to avoid Lance and even more to avoid Shiro who was now some strange part in this whole thing.

He sighed, tried to lose all emotion and entered his apartment building and begun ascending the stairs. Halfway up the stairs he heard a woman screaming.

“Ignore it.” Keith said to himself. “It’s nothing to do with you. Everything’s fine, it’s probably just… nothing.”

Keith cursed himself as he ran down the second-floor hallway and banged at the door the screaming was coming from.

“Only in the fucking city. Why did I move here again?” Keith muttered to himself as he slammed his fist against the wood.

Suddenly the door flew open and Keith nearly fell into a small woman who gazed up at him with tears in her eyes.

“Is everything okay?” Keith asked, a little breathless from the exertion.

“Um, yes.” The woman responded, her hair was a strikingly beautiful white. It fell down her back in a glossy cascade of curls, a stark contrast against her flawless dark complexion. “Sorry, I, uh didn’t mean to frighten you.”

“Why were you screaming then?” Keith groaned exasperated. She looked away from him then, a slight blush on her cheeks.

“I’m setting up furniture, because… I’m new to the building and… I stubbed my toe.” The girl muttered, embarrassed. “On the new furniture.”

“Oh.” Keith muttered, “I thought you were getting murdered so. Yeah. Welcome to the building.”

“H-hey, wait.” She grabbing his arm before he walked away. Keith grit his teeth, why did people keep grabbing him against his will?! “I know we’ve just met and… it’s way beyond me to ask this of you but… will you help me build a dresser?”

“You don’t have anyone else that can help you?” Keith sighed deeply. Keith was yelling at himself internally – ‘WHAT IS WRONG WITH YOU?! TELL HER TO GO FUCK HERSELF AND LEAVE!’ – and he really wished that he would.

“N-no… I don’t have any family or friends, I… just moved here from England.” She tried a smile, Keith glanced down and saw her toe completely red and swollen. “And you’re the first person I’ve met that doesn’t look like a serial killer. I’ll get you a pizza to say thanks.”
More free food. Keith wasn’t sure when the last time was that he actually paid for a meal from his own pocket. Keith was a sucker for fast food and take-away’s. Keith groaned loudly.

“Fine. Let me go and check on my roommate and I’ll be back.” Keith groaned. The woman squealed and clapped her hands.

“I’m Allura by the way!” She extended a hand kindly to him, for the first time in forever, Keith actually took it and shook it.

“Keith.” He turned and continued his ascent up the stairs. He opened the door to his apartment and saw a very guilty looking Pidge on the sofa.

“Hey. Where were you today?” Keith asked, putting his backpack down onto the sofa, wishing that his stupid mouth would stay shut. So much for promising to ignore her again.

“I-I have something to tell you.” Pidge sniffled, she looked like she’d been crying. Keith sighed, he did not cope well with crying.

“What?” Keith shrugged.

“I over-fed your fish.” Pidge blurted, her eyes beginning to fill with tears again. Keith looked at the fish tank, there was a perfectly healthy school of fish swimming inside. “I-I went and replaced them, which was why I wasn’t on the train. I got off work early to go and get them.”

“Then why have you been crying?” Keith raised his eyebrows.

“W-what do you mean?” Pidge rubbed her eyes, Keith didn’t know why she was so shocked and confused by the things he said.

“I don’t care. You made it right. No harm done.” Keith shrugged again. “You could have easily just not have told me and saved yourself all this.” Keith gestured to her sniffling form.

“B-but I killed your fish…” Pidge repeated, completely flabbergasted at Keith’s casual demeanour.

“So? You did something stupid but you fixed it. I don’t care.” Keith groaned. “I just came to make sure you weren’t ill or something. I’m going to help someone build furniture.”

“W-what?” Pidge’s eyes lit up a little.

“I’m going to help that new girl on two build some furniture?” Keith repeated.

“N-no, before that.” Pidge grinned a sickly grin. Keith groaned.

“Screw you. Are you coming or not?” Keith gestured to the door. “She said she’d buy me pizza, she doesn’t have friends, are you coming or not?!”

“OH HELL YEAH!” Pidge leapt up, not bothering to put on any shoes and flew out the door. Keith groaned. This is the opposite of what he wanted.

He could have stayed in the apartment and screwed them both over, but he didn’t. He told himself it was because he was getting free pizza. Which was definitely for sure the reason.

Pidge waited at Allura’s door dutifully, Keith shot her a look, how did she know about this place, Pidge just shrugged innocently as Keith knocked.

“It’s Keith.” He shouted through the door. He heard soft footsteps pad to the door, Allura opened it
and suddenly noticed Pidge, who was staring her in awe.

“Jesus, man, you didn’t tell me she was beautiful!” Pidge gushed, Allura blushed a little awkwardly.

“This is Pidge.” Keith gestured at Pidge. “I hope she also doesn’t look like a serial killer.”

“Jury’s out.” Allura whispered to Keith quietly as Pidge continued to stare at her wide-eyed.

“Come on in guys!”

They walked into the apartment, it was painted and decorated much nicer than Keith’s was, in-fact it even had a balcony. Keith was not shown an apartment like this when he was looking for somewhere to live. They entered the living room and saw a very familiar looking instruction manual and lots of particleboard.


“Cute and affordable!” Allura grinned, Pidge nodded in agreement.

“Has it got a stupid name, like Tyssedal?” Keith groaned rolling his eyes, he kept trying to remind himself why he was there. Pizza. Pizza. Pizza.

“Y-yes how did you know?” Allura smirked. “You’re secretly an IKEA fan aren’t you?!”

“You’re not serious.” Keith gave her a dead-eyed, unamused look.

“Yeah!” Allura bent down and grabbed the manual and showed it to Keith. It was in-fact, called Tyssedal. He groaned loudly and dropped to the floor, snatching the manual out of her hands.

“Do you have a screw driver?” Keith asked, glancing around. Pidge joined him on the floor and tried to organize the screws.

“Um, no?” Allura shrugged. It took everything with him not to face-palm right in front of her, he was so close to getting up and walking out but he really wanted pizza.

“How… did you build that then?” Pidge asked gesturing to a freshly built – Keith guessed - Malm dresser with two drawers.

“I’m really strong.” Allura smiled, flexing. “Like, freakishly strong, here, put a bit of this together and I’ll show you.”

Keith and Pidge exchanged a look, maybe it was her they should have worried about being a serial killer, she seemed a little delusional. They decided between them, silently, if they wanted to live they ought to comply with her strange demands.

They lined up a few sections of the furniture and held it, and watched on, amazed, as Allura literally twisted in the correct screws with her bare hands.


“C’mon, let’s work as a team and we can get this done quickly! Then I’ll order pizza and we can watch a movie or something!” Allura smiled. Pidge nodded happily and Keith pouted. This was a mistake, he was offering services in return for payment, and now he had to hang out with a total stranger.

He was about to say no, but Pidge had already agreed, and he was too done with the day already to
be seen as an asshole in front a perfect stranger.

So he stayed, they built the dresser in record time as Pidge applauded Allura for her crazy, weird talent and sat on the sofa watching a film with pizza. Luckily the pizza was really good and Allura didn’t talk all the time, Pidge was too wrapped up in the movie to talk so Keith was having an ok time. When the movie ended, they bid Allura farewell and trudged upstairs, Keith had had so many social interactions that day that he was completely exhausted. Pidge offered him a game of Mario Kart in 4K HD, Keith refused and climbed into bed.

Except when he got there, all he could think was the anticipation of tomorrow morning. Shiro had his name, and Keith knew no matter how sneaky he was, he would not get away with murdering Shiro. Too many witnesses, too messy. A taxi was too expensive and he’d never get away with a disguise.

He could call into work sick and stay at home all day… but that would just invite Lance to write a board saying ‘hey were you ill yesterday? Want me to make you feel better?’ or something as equally stupid and slimey.

All of this weird shit had happened ever since he’d seen Lance that one time, he regretted it more and more each day. He had to stop thinking, he was never going to sleep at this rate.

Eventually, he thought about how good his pizza was, and how good the film was and how… okay the company was and bored himself to sleep.

________________________

AWWWWWW! SCAR-FACE YOU HERO!

That seemed to work, he’s super cute when he’s flustered.

________________________

Keith stood at the entrance to the station and took in a deep, cleansing breath. Maybe it wouldn’t be so bad. Suddenly Keith noticed with horror that people were making eye-contact with him and SMILING at him. Keith just stared blankly back more out of shock than his desire to get them to back off. He was a celebrity here, it hit him all at once, all of these people had been witness to all of Lance’s stupidity. He stepped onto the platform to see Shiro waiting for him, holding two cups of coffee.

“Morning.” Shiro greeted, holding the coffee out to Keith.

“What are you doing?” Keith asked, not making a move to take the coffee, Shiro grinned and pressed it into his chest.

“I got you coffee to say sorry for embarrassing you. Well…” Shiro considered. “It wasn’t
technically me that embarrassed you, but I’ll apologise for my complicity in it.”

“You certainly didn’t make it better.” Keith muttered, still not taking the coffee.

“Take the coffee dude. I’ve not poisoned it and you don’t owe me anything.” Shiro chuckled, Keith grunted and final took the coffee. He took a sip, it was perfect.

“I knew you were a black coffee and one sugar kind of guy!” Shiro laughed victoriously. “Oh, here comes trouble.”

Keith followed Shiro’s line of sight and saw Lance, wearing a fluffy cerise jumper and holding some more signs, a couple of people on this side of the platform began cheering and Keith sighed heavily.

“I think people are getting so into it because they’ve never had this sort of excitement in their own lives.” Shiro grinned, noticing Keith’s angry demeanour. “You guys are a like a live romantic comedy!”

Keith shook his head and sipped his coffee, Lance smiled brightly at Keith and Shiro and held up a finger before grabbing one of his signs. A small crowd began to form.

SO, YOU KNOW MY NAME NOW! WHAT’S YOURS?

Keith sighed and rolled his eyes, shaking his head as a response. Lance laughed loudly and grabbed another sign.

WHITE-HAIR SCAR FACE! WHAT’S HIS NAME.

Shiro fucking beamed. He was so happy to be a part of the whole pantomime.

“HIS NAMES KEITH!” He all but screamed across to the other platform. Lance nodded thoughtfully.

He actually reached into his pocket, grabbed a sharpie and started scribbling on one of his pre-prepared signs. Keith was rolling his eyes so much he was worried they’d fall out of his head.

KEITH HUH? THAT NAME SOUNDS FAMILIAR.

Keith didn’t want to know the follow up to that, and the name Keith was scribbled on with hopeless abandon. He flipped the sign and the crowd that had formed actually began screaming.

SOUNDS LIKE MY FUTURE HUSBANDS NAME!

Shiro broke down in tears of laughter.

“Man, this guy is hilarious!” Shiro guffawed, nearly slopping coffee all down his shirt.

If Keith didn’t have a cup of coffee in his hands, he would have both hands over his face. He knew how red he probably looked right now, he felt hot and sick with shame.

“HE LOVED IT!” Shiro yelled with a big thumbs up.

“Would you stop!” Keith yelled angrily. Shiro’s face fell, and then a stupid smirk took it’s place.

“You only encourage it by acting like that!” Shiro chuckled, “Look! He’s got something else to say.”
Lance’s face looked quite sincere. Keith glanced down, and cursed himself immediately for it.

_BUT SERIOUSLY. YOU ARE REALLY CUTE, DESPITE YOUR STUPID HAIR CUT._

The crowd were staring at Keith with adoring eyes. Keith just told himself not to engage, ignore it, it would go away eventually.

Lance smirked as he flipped the sign.

_WOULD YOU GO FOR COFFEE WITH ME?!

Keith looked desperately at Shiro, willing him not to say anything, Shiro just looked down at him and shrugged.

“He ain’t asking me.” Shiro shrugged. Keith had a whole crowd of people, from both sides of the platform staring at him.

He’d never felt so under pressure. He hated it so much. This was not okay, this was not a nice way to ask someone out. How was he supposed to say no without getting abuse from the people around him. He wanted the ground to swallow him whole, he stared at Shiro wishing that he was a magician and would make what he’d made worse, better.

Shiro locked eyes with Keith and knew what he needed to do.

“SURE I WILL, YOU UNBELIEVABLE FLIRT!” Shiro yelled over the way, Lance broke down in fits of laughter as the train pulled up.

The crowd laughed at Shiro and boarded the train as if nothing had happened and Keith felt like he could cry. Keith didn’t even mind that Shiro sat next to him, he’d never had anyone rescue him from an awkward situation before.

“Are you okay?” Shiro asked after waving friendlily at Lance in the other train.

“No.” Keith admitted, it was the first time he’d ever been honest with someone when they asked him that question.

“I’m sorry, Keith.” Shiro apologised and sounded like he genuinely meant it. “If you want me to tell him to back off, I will.”

“N-no… I don’t want to make any more of a scene than he already makes.” Keith sighed. “I… I’m just not used to… attention. Of any kind.”

“I get it.” Shiro said simply. Keith breathed a sigh of relief. It actually felt quite nice to say out loud.

“But if you have a problem with him, you should just tell him to back off.” Shiro smiled, softly, he was a very calming presence to be around.

“I can’t, if I did, all those people would hate me.” Keith complained. “They’re invested in this stupidity, I’d be the bad guy if I did.”

“I thought you didn’t care?” Shiro asked with a smirk on his face.

“I don’t. I want to go back to people not realising I existed.” Keith sighed. “I don’t want to be hated by a bunch of random people.”
“What makes you think people didn’t realise you existed?” Shiro asked, leaning back in the seat sipping his coffee. Like some sort of therapist.

“Well, before Lance people just never spoke to me, or looked at me or smiled at me.” Keith shrugged. “Back in the good old days, when I was just another anonymous face in the crowd.”

“That guy, has been wearing a different, brightly coloured accessory every single day, to try and get your attention.” Shiro laughed loudly, not even exaggerating.

“Shut up.” Keith shook his head. “No he hasn’t.”

“Literally, for… a year and a half now?” Shiro looked up thoughtfully. “Yeah, he started working in the city two years ago. One day I saw him notice you, and this stupid little smile lit up his entire face. He tried staring at you, but you were too busy staring at the ground, so he started wearing ridiculous clothes to try and get you to notice.”

“Stop it.” Keith groaned. Why would Shiro lie like this, he was regretting bothering to tell him anything. He was just as over-dramatic as Lance.

“No, I’m serious.” Shiro sat forward and fished his phone out of his pocket. “It became a bit of a game for us. I would show him a colour on the screen on my phone as my sort of guess for what I thought you might notice, and it was like his challenge on his lunch break? To try and find something in that colour. I’ve taken a picture of him every single day since I started getting involved.”

Keith saw Shiro open a folder in his phone titled ‘Love-struck idiot’ and went all the way to the bottom, to the very first picture. He clicked on it and searched for the properties, it was dated from a year ago. The picture itself was a picture of Lance with longer, floppier hair wearing a pink bowtie doing the ‘shaka’ symbols for the picture.

Keith could have kept ignoring him, he wondered then how much longer Lance would have kept going. It had obviously just became a game between Lance and Shiro, rather than an actual attempt to get Keith’s attention.

“I was so thrilled for him when you finally looked up and saw him,” Shiro grinned at the memory. It hadn’t even been a week and he looked so wistful about it. “And I told him blue would work, it makes his eyes pop!”

“You sound like you’re in love with him.” Keith muttered, resting his elbow against the window, more and more regretful with every sentence that Shiro spoke. This was why he didn’t talk to people.

“Nah, not at all. Not my type.” Shiro waved dismissively. “I only told you that to prove that people do notice you. Everyone gets noticed. No one is ever just a face in the crowd.”

“That’s all I’ve ever wanted to be. Just another face in the crowd.” Keith sighed, pressing his head to the rattling window beside him.

Keith arrived at work and climbed into his cubicle, Hunk gave him a shy wave and Keith blankly stared back. Hunk took that as an opportunity to come over and talk to Keith, Keith still felt bad about the whole cake incident. But he was so emotionally drained already.

“Hey, I take it you’re not a fan of cake?” Hunk grinned, Keith wasn’t sure who he was trying to
make this less awkward for. It wasn’t working.

“It’s not that,” Keith sighed. “I’m just... I dunno. I’m sick of people being nice to me. Just... go back to the way it was before you worked here.”

“W-what?” Hunk spluttered.

“Y’know, go back to the way you were, I didn’t exist in your world before you started here,” Keith sighed weakly. “Go back to that.”

“Um. No?” Hunk frowned. “Why... would you ask me to do that?”

“Because, I’m so sick of people talking to me!” Keith cried out, everyone in the room turned to stare at him. At this point, if he got fired he wouldn’t care. “I can’t deal with everyone staring at me and smiling at me! I just want to be alone! I don’t care! I didn’t eat the cake because why would you reward me for something I got paid to do!”

“Jesus, Keith, I’m sorry.” Hunk apologised which just pissed Keith off more.

“Why are you apologising?!” Keith exclaimed even louder. He could feel his boss’s eyes on him. “Please... just. Leave me alone.”

“O-okay...” Hunk walked away with a despaired look on his face. Keith bit his lip hard, the crushing realization of where he was hit him, he fell into his chair and tried to ignore the stares of the co-workers that up until he decided to open his stupid mouth, didn’t even know he existed. He’d done that one to himself.

As he stepped out of the cubicle to leave at the end of the day, his heart dropped at the sight of his boss, leaning against the wall just outside of the elevator.

“Keith.” His voice was stoic. He seemed angry. “A word?”

Keith sighed and took a deep breath, following his boss into his office at the end of the hallway.

“You don’t look good, my friend.” His boss didn’t invite him to sit, instead he leant against the edge of his desk and look genuinely concerned. “I’ve never seen you blow up at someone like that. Is everything okay?”


“I mean, you look stressed. You haven’t taken any vacation days in two years.” His boss shrugged. “I’m telling you to take at least tomorrow off. Get some good sleep. I’ll smooth things over with Hunk, don’t worry about it.”

Keith was shocked into silence.

“Don’t worry about it coming out of your allocated vacation days. No need to thank me, that was all I wanted to say, and if I see you tomorrow, I’m sending you home.” He said with a pointed finger. “And don’t test me, because you know I will.”

Keith stepped out onto the street to see Pidge actually waiting for him.

“Hey, are you okay? You look like you’ve seen a ghost.” Pidge laughed. Keith just shook his head and started walking.
“My boss told me to take the day off tomorrow.” Keith spoke quietly, still in shock. “He’s gonna pay me, but he’s not gonna dock me any vacation days…”

“Wow… that’s a really nice boss you got there.” Pidge stuck her hands in her pockets. “What are you gonna do for the day?”

“I have no idea…” Keith genuinely didn’t know. He didn’t have hobbies, he ate, he slept, he worked. He didn’t have days off. He didn’t have spare time anymore.

“Want me to take tomorrow off and we can hang out?” Pidge suggested. Keith considered it for a second.

“N-no, it’s okay. I… probably need the rest.” Keith sighed, deeply. He was hoping he’d awake tomorrow morning and feel some kind of inspiration. Maybe he could… no. There was no point thinking about what was in the past.

“Hey, fancy lasagne tonight?” Pidge clapped her hands together as she sat down next to Keith on the train. Keith glanced down and noticed his headphones in his pockets. He hadn’t worn them for nearly four days in a row. His stomach churned.

“I uhh…” He looked at Pidge, feeling like he wanted to cry.

He didn’t deserve any of what had happened to him in the past couple of days. He should have been grateful but, he was mad about it. He felt so close to tears.

“Hey, I was joking, I can make other stuff! I’m gonna make you… CALZONE!” Pidge exclaimed happily.

He’d had… five separate people showing him immense kindness. And… he had done absolutely nothing to deserve any of it.

“Please don’t.” Keith whimpered. He’d never even considered that every single time she’d asked, he’d always said ‘please don’t’. Because he knew deep down inside that he hadn’t earned it.

“Keith, are you okay?” Pidge finally asked, reaching out to touch his arm, he twitched away. Why did people keep on insisting on touching him so fucking casually? He could see the doors to the train beginning to close, Pidge was sat in the aisle seat, he felt very trapped.

“Woah, Keith. Look at me.” Pidge said quietly, only a little above a whisper. “Look at me.”

Keith did, he stared right into her big golden eyes. And then he saw the reflection of himself in her glasses and felt physically sick. He hadn’t eaten or drunk anything all day so he was grateful that if he did wretch that nothing would come up. Pidge seemed to catch on and she took off her glasses.

“Look at me Keith.” She was quiet and stern. Keith looked back at her. Grateful not to see his pathetic, panicked reflection anymore. “Take a deep breath, I’m not going to touch you, but I want you to try and breathe with me.”

Keith grit his teeth. What the hell was she doing?

“You can think it’s stupid or tell me to fuck off, I don’t care.” Pidge continued to speak quietly. “But I want you to at least, breathe with me.”

Keith rolled his eyes, and decided that – like everyone else – she’d keep on at him if he didn’t. So he did. He took a deep breath and counted with her. He held his breath when she did and let it out
when she did.

“Okay. Good.” Pidge smiled. “You feel better?”

Keith didn’t want to admit that he did feel better, because fuck, he hated to be proven wrong.

“It’s okay I know you do.” Pidge smirked at that. She remained silent for the rest of the journey. Keith felt less panicked, but it didn’t stop the rolling doubts in his head.

He knew he didn’t deserve people to be kind to him. And up until recently he’d never felt kindness. He’d never felt what it was like to be the subject of someone’s good deed. Maybe he’d just become so tragic to other people that they felt like they had to rescue him. Which pissed Keith off in a completely fresh way.

They eventually arrived at the station, Keith stepped off the train and Pidge smiled at him, she started walking up the stairs as Keith turned, slowly, to face the platform opposite. He saw Lance stood, leaning against a column on the platform. He had a soft, kind smile on his face.

He was wrong... Lance… had been showing him a weird brand of kindness every single day and Keith had never noticed it before. Lance actually spent his lunch-breaks trying to find something that would get Keith’s attention. He’d spent a year and a half thinking about Keith for at least a second every day, when Keith hadn’t even known he existed. Lance had gained nothing for the last year and a half for something he did every single day without fail. If it were a game, wouldn’t Lance have stopped by now? He’d won, He’d discovered the colour that Keith finally noticed. But he hadn’t stopped, and it didn’t look like he was going to any time soon.

The churning in Keith’s stomach had returned, but it felt different it felt… exciting. Keith was more terrified of that then the sickness he was used to.

Keith did something… completely insane. Maybe it was because he knew he wouldn’t see Lance tomorrow and he thought he might miss him? He couldn’t be sure, but he hoped it wasn’t that.

He waved.

OMG OMG OMG
THAT SMILE, THAT WAVE I THINK I DIED.
IF I DIE TONIGHT, THEN TELL SCAR-FACE IT WAS ALL WORTH IT!

Chapter End Notes

omg, two chapters in one day, i think i’m in love!
thanks for the kind comments already!
tumblr - foxsmo-lder
In which Keith makes a lot of mistakes and has a lot of regrets.

“Are you asking me out on a date or just as a friend?” Keith blurted. He wasn’t skilled enough in the art of conversation to know what tact was.

Keith got his answer when Shiro burst out laughing.

“Okay. You don’t have to laugh that much.” Keith muttered, sipping his coffee and glancing around at the staring passers-by.

“Seriously, it’s been a minute. Stop.” Keith ground his teeth together, he suddenly remembered why he didn’t speak to people.

Keith woke up far too early, his body was obviously in work mode, it was 6 am, and he had regrets.

He covered his face in his hands. Why, did he wave at Lance? What came over him?

He hated this feeling, he hated it more than he could say, he hated feeling weak, he hated this weird feeling in his stomach and he’d just unleashed a whole can of worms. He rubbed his eyes and sat up, he could see the sunlight streaming through the curtains behind him, he could just stay in bed all day… but that would be even sadder than the fact he’d waved at Lance and aggravated the situation tenfold.

He stood up and wandered towards the window, he hoped that some kind of inspiration would hit him, he knew that if he did turn up at work his boss would actually send him home, and he didn’t want to draw any more attention to himself there.

He decided on coffee. Fancy coffee. Fancy coffee he could afford since he’d not had to buy himself dinner for nearly a week. That was as good an idea as any, he showered quickly and dressed, noticing that Pidge had already left for work and had left him a home-made pastry on the kitchen side with a small drawing of a kissy-face next to it. Keith sighed deeply, screwed up the stupid illustration and ignored the pastry. It was time to stop humouring people.

He thundered down the stairs, ignoring a call from the second floor and stepped out into the sunshine. He knew the fanciest coffee shop around was a twenty minute walk, and for the first time in a week, he put his headphones in and zoned out whilst he walked. He gazed around, the leaves were beginning to change, he loved Autumn, not least because Halloween was around the corner. He felt a familiar twinge in his stomach, a feeling he’d not felt in a long, long time. He crushed that feeling and stopped outside the coffee shop.

He took a deep breath and stepped inside, and nearly vomited when he saw him.
What the fuck.

“KEITH!” Lance waved, with his big stupid smile from behind the counter, dressed in a barista’s uniform. Keith’s heart stopped and he froze in the doorway. His mouth opened and closed like a goldfish and he turned and walked straight back out again.

Keith stormed back to the apartment, so much for branching out. So much for his fancy fucking coffee.

If Lance worked there why the hell then, was he getting a train that took him an hour and a half the other way?! Keith clenched his fists. Was he actually riding the train backwards and forwards just to harass Keith? Because if he thought that was cute, he was wrong. That was terrifying levels of creepy. Keith cursed his fucking stupid waving hand and goofy face. How could he be sucked in by something so simply manipulative.

Keith pulled his back-pack further up his shoulders and threw open the door to his apartment building and angrily stomped up the stairs.

“KEITH!”

Keith stopped on the first step that lead to the third floor. He knew that was Allura, and that she’d definitely noticed that he’d heard her. It wasn’t Allura’s fault but… he was so mad at everyone. He grit his teeth and pushed on, ignoring her for the second time that day. He stepped back into his apartment and let out a deep breath. Now what? He stared at the pastry he’d ignored, if he continued to ignore it, it would send a seriously strong message. He thundered past it, throwing his keys on the counter and stood, angrily in the middle of the room.

He looked at everything in the room, his stupid old futon which they’d pushed into the corner and Pidge had balanced some stupid plants on, his fresh fish in their freshly cleaned fish tank, the beautiful new sofa and the ridiculously huge TV. None of it, apart from the futon and the fish tank itself, was his. But he wasn’t an asshole, he kept maintaining for some reason, so instead of smash the TV or tear apart the sofa like he wanted to deep down, he pulled off his clothes and started aggressively playing Mario Kart in an effort to beat all of Pidge’s time trials.

Hours passed and he heard the door open and close behind him, he was watching Yoshi fall off the map for what felt like the hundredth time. Keith usually caught on to these sorts of things quickly, but he just couldn’t get this right. Pidge approached him with a bag in her hand extended.

“I come, bearing soups!” Pidge announced grandly. Keith looked up at her with an eyebrow raised, but she wasn’t holding back. More free food, Keith told himself.

He grabbed the bag out of her hand.

“You’re home early.” Keith sighed, taking one of the soup bowls out and propping it on his lap. Pidge scoured the kitchen drawers for spoons and dropped down onto the sofa beside him.

“Well, I figured that this was the time of day that you’d likely be sat in your underwear—“ Pidge gestured to his current form sans clothes. “Trying to passive-aggressively learn how to play Mario Kart better than me — and failing — so I thought I’d bring you food because I figured you hadn’t eaten yet. Aaaand you ignored my pastry offering.”

Keith pouted and snatched a spoon from her and began sipping soup.

“You came all the way here, on your lunch break.” Keith reasoned it out-loud. “Just to bring me soup?”
“And what?” Pidge shrugged, opening her soup and beginning to eat, she glanced at her watch. “And I’ll be getting the train back in... 10 minutes.”

“Why?” Keith asked, staring at Yoshi in the middle of the screen, being lapped by almost eleven NPC’s.

“Stop questioning these things and just say thanks.” Pidge sighed. “And what are you doing to my son?!”

“Yoshi?” Keith scoffed. Pidge gave him a solemn look and shook her head. She dropped her soup dramatically onto the sofa beside him and grabbed the controller off the floor where Keith had heartlessly thrown it, and within the last lap of the game she managed to get Yoshi, her son, across the line at first.

She yelped at her watch after doing a celebratory victory dance, grabbed her soup and ran out of the door with her jacket whipping behind her like a cape. Keith groaned and fell back against the sofa. He hated that he felt happy when she was around. Everything within him told him to pack up his shit and run away. Go to another city, another town where nobody knew him. But... that’d mean finding a new apartment, and a new job. He sighed and stared up at the ceiling. He rubbed his eyes, dressed himself, grabbed the pastry and left the apartment.

Keith was leant against the wall next to the entrance of the station, waiting for Pidge. He wasn’t entirely sure why, but there he was. He was scrolling away on his phone but not really paying attention to anything he saw there. Suddenly he felt a tap on his shoulder.

“Excuse me, sir.” A man with an accent almost as thick as his moustache was staring at Keith inquisitively, holding a camera in his hand. “Would you mind taking a photo for me?”

Keith closed his eyes and took a deep breath, vowing that when he opened them, the guy would have just been a figment of his imagination and he could move on with his life. Except when he did, the guy was beaming at him with his arms out-stretched, camera for the taking.

Could Keith just steal it? Run away and become some militant photographer, make a name for himself as an artist on the run, amass a cult following on the internet and go down in history as the anonymous criminal photographer. He’d be known to the masses as the immoral, digital version of Banksy.

Keith had been staring at the camera in the guy’s hands for nearly two whole minutes, and the expectant expression on the red-head’s face hadn’t faltered for even a second. Keith sighed deeply and took the camera, but instead of running and pursuing his suddenly realised dream of being a wanted photographer, he followed the man to a lamppost.

Keith looked at the lamppost, this was definitely not a special lamppost, it hadn’t been in any movies and it wasn’t known for anything, but that didn’t dissuade the man’s desire to have a photo taken next to it. He leant dramatically against it, one arm above his head, hand wrapped around the metal, and he smiled a big, toothy, sparkling grin. Keith shrugged and snapped the photo, just as he moved the give him the camera back he raced off to a tree five feet away from them and sat, leaning against the trunk. One knee up and one hand placed under his chin. Keith knelt down accordingly and snapped a picture again.

Keith had to stop humouring him once he tried to lie in the road and insisted that Keith take the picture as a car drove past behind him. Keith shoved the camera into his chest in an effort to say no
more. The man grinned and ran away for a couple of seconds and returned with a pretzel that he thrust towards Keith as a form of payment? The man sauntered off happily flipping through the photos that Keith had taken.

Keith heard laughter behind him and he turned, Shiro was stood leaning against the station wall with a stupid, amused smile on his face. Keith shrugged and approached him.

“What? I got a pretzel.” Keith muttered leaning against the wall beside him. Shiro tore off a piece of the pretzel and took a huge bite.

“Hey, did you and Lance go on that coffee date today?” Shiro asked through chews. Keith shot him a look of confusion.

“No?” Keith asked, completely confused. “Why would you think that?”

“Well… neither of you were on the train today.” Shiro shrugged, tearing off another piece of Keith’s bizarreness earned pretzel. “You had a severely disappointed crowd, but we were thrilled that you guys had managed to get it together.”

“No, nope. Didn’t happen.” Keith shook his head. Keith considered telling Shiro about his seeing Lance in the coffee shop, but he didn’t want to feed the fire of Shiro’s deluded idea of their nonexistent relationship.

“Hey, you should come for a drink with me this Friday.” Shiro pushed himself off the wall. “I’ll wait for you here after work and I’ll take you somewhere really fancy.”

“No, thanks.” Keith sighed, finally taking his own bite of the pretzel. Shiro didn’t even flinch, like he was expecting that kind of response.

“So, today’s Wednesday, that gives me… two days not including today to convince you.” He folded his arms, a smirk on his face like he enjoyed the idea of a challenge.

“Don’t bother.” Keith shook his head, pulling away the pretzel when Shiro went to grab for it.

“Challenge accepted.” Shiro nodded, checked his phone and prepared to leave. “See you tomorrow, Keith.”

“See ya.” Keith waved slightly. Just as Shiro turned and walked away, Pidge appeared with impeccable timing as always.

“Awww! What are you doing here?” Pidge asked, shocked. Keith rolled his eyes and shrugged. “Awww, were you waiting for me?”

Pidge gushed happily as Keith groaned out loud. She grabbed the pretzel out of his hand and started chowing down on it as they began ascending the stairs. Pidge waved at Allura as they passed the second floor, who was sat on the floor outside her apartment with a guitar in her hands, gazing at them expectantly, luckily Pidge decided she wasn’t up for humouring Allura that evening either.

Wow…
He’s even cuter up close.

“So!” Shiro yelled, handing coffee to Keith which such gusto that he might as well have thrown it at him. “Here’s a couple of reason’s why you should go out with me on Friday, and a couple of reasons why I’m such a great person to hang out with.”

“Is the fact you’re so humble one of them?” Keith muttered, taking the coffee and sipping it reluctantly.

“No. Definitely not.” Shiro smiled. “I’m funny-“

“Questionable.” Keith rolled his eyes for maybe the one-hundredth time that week alone.

“I know a bar that I think you’ll really enjoy.”

“I don’t ‘enjoy’ bars.”

“Don’t worry. You’ll enjoy this one.” Shiro grinned. Just as they turned, Lance came running down the stairs, with a ridiculously huge blue hat on in his head – the type old women would wear to a wedding – as if he were in a rush. As he came to a stop on the platform opposite, he leaned forward on his knees to try and get his breath back.

Shiro and Keith exchanged a look. Lance finally stood up, stretched and pulled out a sign.

**HEY IT WAS NICE TO SEE YOU YESTERDAY.**

The people around them cooed happily and Shiro scoffed. Lance smiled and flipped the sign.

**SORRY YOU RAN AWAY. YOU ARE ACTUALLY CUTER CLOSE UP.**

Keith sucked in a deep breath and grit his teeth as people starting squealing like girls at a concert.

**IF YOU WERE WONDERING, THEY TRANSFERRED ME.**

Keith wasn’t wondering… not really.

**BUT I RAN ALL THE WAY HERE BECAUSE. I MISSED THIS.**

Keith knew he was bright red. But based on the people around that were screaming, Lance probably just missed all the attention he was getting for being such a fucking ‘Romeo’.

Lance waved quickly at Keith and Shiro, who waved back. Keith kept his arms clamped at his sides whilst he watched Lance run away quickly. At least that answered the question of why Lance was where he was. Not that Keith cared or that it mattered. He took a sip of his coffee and stepped onto the train.

As Keith arrived at work, he felt his stomach drop to the floor as he spotted a box on his desk with a small note on the top.
Keith groaned and dropped his bag by the desk. Keith wasn’t an asshole, but if Hunk kept pushing he was going to have to be an asshole soon. He slumped down into his desk chair and grabbed the note.

*I’m sorry for making you mad. Please don’t be mad I made these. But you should know that everyone is worth knowing and remembering. Unless you’re a murderer or something.*

*Hunk.*

Keith sighed, screwed up the note and threw it in the bin. He pushed the box to the side and turned on his computer.

His curiosity got the better of him as he peeked inside the opening of the box.

Fuck. He was fucked.

White chocolate cookies. Keith’s absolute favourite. How, did Hunk know? Was it an insanely convenient and coincidental guess? There was no way he could have known. Keith had barely had a proper conversation with the guy.

But, Keith couldn’t let up now. If he did, it invited more opportunities for Hunk to brighten up Keith’s day with presumably delicious baked goods. He had to ignore it, he was not in the business of having anything brightened up unless it was a dark room with a light-switch.

A couple of monotonous hours passed and Keith had a thought. If Keith ate a cookie, and it was disgusting then he had a great reason to ruin Hunk’s day, insult him, and therefore get Hunk to back off completely. Keith was a fucking genius.

He waited till he saw Hunk leaving the building with one of their co-workers till he reached into the box and took a cookie. He took a bite and felt immediately rageful. This cookie was the reason that everything good in the world existed, and Keith was NOT one to be dramatic. He sighed deeply, this meant that he was going to eat the rest of this cookie. And the rest of the contents of the box. Keith slipped a cookie in some tissue in his bag for Pidge and ate the rest before Hunk came back.

He planned it out perfectly, as Hunk came in he made a show of putting the box in the bin. He turned semi-dramatically and started typing away at his computer, when he felt movement beside him, Hunk was leant over the top of his cubicle with a smirk on his face. Keith turned and narrowed his eyes a little, Hunk simply tapped the side of his mouth gently, before grinning and walking away.

Keith blanched as he wiped a cookie crumb away from the corner of his mouth.

Keith stepped out of the building at the end of the day with the left over cookie in his hand. He felt it snatched away and a tell-tale squeal.

“Hey! This is home-made! Where did you get this from?” Pidge gushed after taking a bite and having her life improved in millions of ways.

“One of my co-workers made me them.” Keith shrugged as they descended the steps to the platform.

“Wow, I think I need to leave my job and start working with you!” Pidge smiled, finishing the
cookie and sucking her fingertips, satisfied. Keith gagged and they climbed into their seats on the train.

“Hey, are you... out tomorrow night?” Keith asked out of the blue. He’d been thinking about stupid Shiro’s stupid offer all day.

“Yeah, I’m going to see... a man? About a dog?” Pidge questioned to herself more than anyone else. “Why? Did you wanna hang out?”

“N-no, this guy I kind of know asked me if I wanted to go for a drink with him...” Keith never imagined he’d say something like that, out loud, to anyone else ever.

“Oh? My? God? Has someone asked you out?!?” Pidge squealed quietly. “Like a date?!”

Keith hadn’t even considered that, was Shiro asking him out on a date?!

“I-I don’t know, I don’t think so?” Keith shrugged. He wouldn’t know either way. He’d never been asked out romantically or platonically. “Anyway, that’s not what I wanted to ask.”

“Well?”

“Should I go?” Keith muttered. He’d never asked anyone for advice before. It was... weird he felt gross and vulnerable.

“I think maybe you should try and find out if he wants to bang with you...” Pidge grinned, Keith scoffed with disbelief. “Or hang with you.”

“I don’t know why I talk to you.” Keith muttered, turning away and putting his headphones in, where they belonged.

Oh god, he probably thought I was a stalker or something. I didn’t even consider that. Have I fucked this up? I think I’ve fucked this up.

Keith rubbed his eyes as he trudged down the steps. He’d humoured Pidge’s weird Mario Kart obsession all evening and definitely hadn’t gotten enough sleep. He was actually glad to walk into an armful of coffee.

“More reasons why you should hang out with me tonight?” Shiro turned to him, a stupid grin on his face. “Okay, since you asked so nicely!”

Keith rolled his eyes, 101.
“I can dance!” Shiro exclaimed suddenly, like he’d only just remembered. “I am very sociable, I know some good drinking games, and I am strong! Strong enough to carry your skinny little, lightweight ass home.”

“God.” Keith face-palmed dramatically. “I just need to ask you one question first.”

“Sure?” Shiro said, sounding unsure if anything.

“Are you asking me out on a date or just as a friend?” Keith blurted. He wasn’t skilled enough in the art of conversation to know what tact was.

Keith got his answer when Shiro burst out laughing.

“Oh. You don’t have to laugh that much.” Keith muttered, sipping his coffee and glancing around at the staring passers-by.

“Seriously, it’s been a minute. Stop.” Keith ground his teeth together, he suddenly remembered why he didn’t speak to people.

“No, I’m sorry, it just caught me off-guard more than anything.” Shiro chuckled, wiping away a tear like the drama queen he was. “No, just as friends. There is no way I’m competing with that.”

Shiro gestured to a red-faced, out of breath Lance who had once again ran all the way to the station just to flirt with Keith. Harrass with Keith, no harass Keith. Just… harass him.

Keith took a sip and watched him, half-amused at how unfit Lance seemed to be. Lance grinned widely and held up a sign.

NEXT WEEK WILL BE BACK TO NORMAL I PROMISE!

Keith rolled his eyes, 102.

UNTIL THEN, HAVE A GREAT WEEKEND.

Lance waved, Shiro waved back and he dashed off up the stairs.

Keith paced up and down the corridor of his office. If he came out of the station and Shiro was there, he wasn’t sure he’d be able to say no to his face. Keith kept maintaining he wasn’t an asshole, but in reality he just wasn’t good at being an asshole to people in person.

He took a deep breath and walked out of the office, he glanced down at his work shoes. He definitely wouldn’t be turned away from a bar in these shoes. And he couldn’t deny that he’d subconsciously dressed a little nicer than usual.

He heard a whistle from behind him, he turned to see Pidge stood, fussing with her glasses like an anime character.

“Look at you in your fancy pants.” Pidge smirked. “You’re the definition of Mr. Fancypants. I’d take you out myself if you weren’t absolutely not my type.”

Keith made a mental reminder to never, EVER make an effort in front of Pidge. Not that he’d made a conscious effort, this was an accident.

“I take it you are going out tonight then?” Pidge asked as they started the trek to the station. “Also,
I’m disappointed you have no baked goods to give me today.”

“Is that all I am to you now?” Keith grunted.

“You’re a peddler of baked-goods and mediocre company.” Pidge chuckled, teasingly.

“Fucking hypocrite.” Keith tried his hardest not to smirk.

“Hey, good-looking.” Shiro grinned as Keith approached. Keith rolled his eyes heavily, 103 ½.

“Hey, this is my friend Pi…” Keith realised what he was saying as he said it in the same moment that his ‘friend’ had disappeared completely, with his backpack?! “Uh… never mind. I don’t have any friends.”

“You’re one of those cool lone-wolf types huh?” Shiro scoffed, pushing himself off the wall and gesturing for Keith to follow. “I take it I don’t qualify as a friend?”

“Um, would friends encourage harassment of the other friend?” Keith shook his head. “Would friends-“

“Bring you coffee every morning without fail?” Shiro questioned. “Yes, in fact they would.”

Keith wracked his brains for bad things that Shiro had done.

“Where are you taking me?” Keith asked, he vaguely recognized the area, they were still only about a fifteen minute walk from his apartment, but he didn’t know any of these shops.

“Dinner first.” Shiro simply said. “Because it’s only seven thirty, and you’re a skinny little bastard that doesn’t eat enough and I am not mopping up your liquid vomit from anywhere.”

“God. I’m not a light-weight.” Keith groaned. He was in entirely new territory. Usually, people went for dinner and talked about stuff. Keith had nothing to talk about, and he was filled with a renewed dread.

The dread that he might actually be a boring person.

But then, maybe if he was a dull asshole, Shiro might leave him alone.

Shiro stepped into the porch of a very un-assuming Japanese restaurant and entered, Keith ducked under fabric hanging from the ceiling and followed Shiro into a booth.

“You like Sake?” Shiro asked, as he watched a waitress approach the table.

“I-I don’t think I’ve ever tried it?” Keith gulped, a little unsure. The restaurant was decked out with shoji screens between the booths and Japanese lanterns hanging from the ceiling with little twinkling fairy-lights strung across the walls.

“You’ll like Sake once we’re through.” Shiro grinned, with an evil glint in his eyes.

Keith loved Sake. He also loved sushi, sashimi and tempura-fried crab. And he was trying to hold himself back from tipsily telling Shiro that he loved him ‘as a friend’.

“Why did you move to the city?” Shiro suddenly asked, gathering up some noodles with his chopsticks, he was much better at holding his liquor than Keith was apparently.
“I just did. Everyone was always talking about how they wanted to live in the city.” Keith shrugged, he was too full of Sake and rice to eat anymore. “I had nothing better to do so I came here.”

“Family?” Shiro queried. Keith shook his head, which was an action he immediately regretted. He decided to keep his head still and his eyes trained on Shiro’s scar.

“What’s with the scar?” Keith pointed. Shiro scoffed with amusement.

“If I told you, then I’d have to kill you.” Shiro leant forward and spoke quietly, threateningly. Keith snorted.

“I bet you fell out of a tree as a kid or something.” Keith muttered, unimpressed by Shiro’s attempt at ‘scary’. Shiro raised his eyebrows and shrugged, finished up his plate and gestured to the waitress for the bill.

Shiro very kindly, and as per usual for Keith quite recently, paid for the food and they left, Keith turned as if to walk home to the point that Shiro had to grab his arm.

“No, no. To the bar!” Shiro grinned.

Keith felt a little worse for wear as he stood next to the bar, Shiro next to him ordering drinks. Keith insisted on just a water, he didn’t want to get black-out drunk, he couldn’t even remember the last time he’d had an alcoholic drink. Shiro instead bought Keith a JD and coke, but to his credit he also ordered a pint of water, which Keith downed before starting to sip delicately on his whiskey and coke.

Shiro was right, the bar was really quite nice. The bar itself was mostly glass, lit from the bottom with an optimistic looking yellow, the music was quiet enough to still hear conversation, and there were no drunken people grinding up against each other whilst Keith pretended to ignore their existence. The walls were covered with posters from old video games and there were board-games littered about the place on each table.

Shiro guided Keith to a standing table, a small red candle was lighting up both their faces, and there was a deck of playing cards resting just off to the side, which Shiro grabbed with much excitement, Keith had regrets, many, many regrets.

“Have you ever played snap?” Shiro asked, shuffling the deck, a stupid smirk on his face.

Keith didn’t bother to dignify that with an answer.

“Okay, so two, ace and jack.” Shiro grinned. Keith raised his eyebrows, but wanted to pretend that he knew what was happening, so nodded nonetheless.

Shiro started slamming the cards face up onto the table, the two of hearts went down and Shiro’s hand slammed down on top of it with an almighty thud.

“DRINK!” Shiro grinned, Keith noticed how fucking nice Shiro’s goofy-ass smile was.

“What? Why?”

“I thought you’d played snap before.” Shiro scoffed. “I put down a two, and you didn’t slam your hand down on the table before I did, therefore, you drink.”

“That’s the stupidest thing I’ve ever heard.” Keith grunted, folding his arms in protest.
“I don’t make the rules!” Shiro shrugged innocently.

“No, no you literally did just that!” Keith exclaimed, Shiro just shrugged more dramatically, to the point his shoulders were almost touching his ears. Keith hissed at him and took a sip of his drink.

“Okay, so now that you know the rules, lets go!” Shiro yelled joyfully. “TWO, ACE AND JACK!” Shiro continued to slam cards down onto the table, Keith was losing hard, and he’d ploughed through his entire JD and coke, which when he got to the bottom of the glass he realised was actually a double. Shiro was a terrible ‘friend’.

“Okay, you can go get us the next round, buddy.” Shiro smiled, re-shuffling the cards. Keith would have never done such a thing if he hadn’t have been under the influence.

He trudged over to the bar, hoping that he looked as Edgy and Unapproachable as he felt, and leant against the bar, head raised a little to appear sober and nonchalant. He ordered drinks, making sure that Shiro’s was a triple – and paying quite the price for it, a bad idea in hindsight – and rejoined Shiro at the table.

“Let me be the card master!” Keith yelled after handing Shiro his drink. Shiro laughed and handed Keith the deck. Keith messily shuffled the cards, trying to appear deft and dexterous.

“Uh… three… king and… queen?” Keith spoke, completely unsure. He didn’t play a lot of card games, he was mostly going off what he’d seen on TV.

Keith began placing cards on the table, trying to give it as much gusto as Shiro had been. But there was no advantage to be had in dealing the cards, Shiro was still destroying him.

“OKAY! I’m done with this game! My turn!” Keith waved his hands, he promised himself he wasn’t going to get black-out drunk, and if things carried on this way he wasn’t sure of his chances.

“You are getting on my bus!” Keith shouted, threateningly. He laid the cards out. “You have to get from one side of the bus to the other without getting an ace or a face.”

Keith grinned happily, this was the one card game he remembered from college. Shiro rubbed his hands together and flipped the first card, immediately there was a happy little King smiling up at him.

“DRINK FOR ONE SECOND.” Keith hit his hand on the table for the drama. Keith never did anything for the drama. This was all very interesting.

Shiro complied, Keith laid a fresh card down on top of the one he’d already flipped. Shiro winced when he suddenly realised that what he was drinking was a triple vodka and not a single. But he was determined, trying to ignore the tipsy haze that drinking all that Sake had already given him. He flipped the fresh card and continued to almost the second to last card, when he was faced with the Ace of hearts.

“Drink for four seconds.” Keith grinned happily. As Shiro raised the drink to his lips his eyes twitched away and back to Keith. Keith began slowly counting to four as Shiro sipped his drink.

“Jesus. What kind of frat boy drinking game is this?!” Shiro spluttered, he didn’t have much of his drink left. He was a big guy, but Vodka was his kryptonite. “Keith, you know I’m the only one that can get you home from here!”
“You’re weak.” Keith muttered, his head had slowly started to edge closer to the table, as if losing all the strength in his neck gradually. “WEAK.”

Shiro’s eyes flickered away for another, regrettable second, which caused Keith to turn and feel all the blood rush from his face.

“Lance?” Keith said so quietly he knew that Lance wouldn’t have heard. He slowly slipped around to the other side of the table so that he was stood beside Shiro.

And there he was. Dressed to the nines, nice jeans, nice shirt, hair impeccable, skin flawless. With someone else. Keith didn’t care obviously, he was more fascinated more than anything. The guy he was stood with had ridiculously beautiful glossy flowing locks, and Keith recognized him, but couldn’t quite figure out from where he recognized him.

“Hah… love-struck idiot, huh?” Keith whispered. Had the music gotten louder? Keith could hear his heartbeat in his ears, staring at Lance who was sipping a drink and laughing with this… pretty guy.

“Huh.” Shiro agreed, they both stared at them for a couple of seconds, the pretty white-haired guy leaned close to Lance’s neck to whisper something in his ear, Keith got a full view of the guy’s face and it hit him.

“That’s the fucking pizza delivery boy!” Keith whispered into Shiro’s ear in much the same way as the pizza guy had just done. The pizza guy was leaning all up in Lance’s personal space and Keith suddenly felt a new kind of… vigour.

“HIT ME.” Keith whispered yelled after downsing his drink. Shiro punched him lightly in the arm.

“No, get me another drink you fucking doof.” Keith muttered. Shiro snorted and disappeared to the bar. Keith leant against the bar with his forearms, staring Lance and this guy down. He really didn’t want Lance to notice, but he felt really fucking angry about this beautiful white-haired guy.

Keith could just go over there and say hi. But… why would he? Lance was just some guy that was harassing him at the station every day. So, why was he so mad? Keith didn’t want an answer to that, he wanted a solution, which happened to be getting black-out drunk with his new friend Shiro.

“How do you know he’s a pizza delivery boy?” Shiro inquired after returning with two glasses full and two shot glasses. Keith didn’t even ask what it was before throwing it back. It was Sambuca. The thick taste of liquorice felt like it was coming out of his nose.

“There’s this girl in our apartment building,” Keith kept his voice low and conspiratorial. “I built furniture for her and she bought me pizza, and this-” Keith pointed aggressively “Asshole, is the one who delivered the pizza.”

“How was the pizza?” Shiro asked, it was a pertinent and important question that Keith didn’t blame him for asking.

“It was amazing, but that is beside the point.” Keith shook his head dismissively.

“And the girl?” Shiro asked another fairly pertinent question.

“Stunning, way out of your league.” Keith batted at Shiro with his hand, these details were unimportant.

“Okay, another drinking game,” Shiro spoke after throwing back his own shot. “Every time that
guy touches Lance’s arm, leans against him, whispers to him or laughs raucously at something that definitely was not that funny, we drink.”

In the time it took Shiro to say that sentence, the pizza guy had done all four of those things.

“This is gonna be a long night.” Keith grunted whilst placing the glass to his lips.

Four glasses in and this game was beginning to be a little depressing. This white-haired Adonis was not letting up, he was not being subtle and yet Lance did not seem to get the picture at all. Either that or he was playing hard to get? Was that a real thing? Keith had lost the will to lift the glass that felt heavier at every sip, even though there was less liquid inside each time.

“Oh god, I feel like I need to intervene.” Shiro sighed, taking another sip as the guy whispered in Lance’s ear once more. Keith groaned and polished off his glass, feeling the room spinning around him. He’d not been this drunk in a long time. Why was angry drinking always such an immediate regret?

“Don’t.” Keith said simply, unable to come up with any more words. Shiro sighed and dragged Keith to a table further away that actually had some chairs beside it.

“I’m gonna tell you about my first crush.” Shiro declared proudly now that they were fully out of Lance’s eye-sight.

“I would really… rather you didn’t.” Keith slurred.

“So, it’s ten years ago,” Shiro began, Keith let his head drop onto the table with an emphatic thud, though it did little to dissuade Shiro. “I’m eighteen years of age, fresh out of high school, getting ready to go to college, and there’s this kid. I’ve known him my entire life, but all of a sudden he’s back from a family holiday to Fiji—“

“Oh, Fiji.” Keith sighed, propping his head up on his arm.

“And he’s got this beautiful hair,” Shiro mimed hair flowing down over his forehead. “And this incredible tan, I was used to seeing him as a pasty fuck. He looks like a surfer dude and I’m suddenly like holy shit. I wanna stroke his face and brush his hair.”

“It sounds more like you wanted to domesticate him like a pet.” Keith muttered, unamused.

“But, sadly, it was not meant to be. But man, even to this day. If I saw him here and now, I’d probably still wanna plait that glorious mane.” Shiro smiled, a wistfulness in his expression.

“Why did you tell me this?” Keith sighed. “Are you trying to make me feel bad for you?”

“No. You’re not coping very well with your first crush,” Shiro interrupted Keith’s indignant protests. “And I wanted to tell you that it’s ok to not know what to do. But… I missed my chance. I don’t want you to miss yours.”

“Fuck you.” Keith muttered, almost falling off the table.

“Okay. Let’s get you home.”

Shiro slipped his arm around Keith’s waist and guided him to the door, trying to avoid Lance and the pizza guy’s lines of sight as they stepped out into the fresh night.

There was the sound of sirens and drunken yelling throughout the streets, Keith tried to find it.
relaxing, trying to feel the solidness of the ground beneath him.

Just as they made it across the road, Keith heard a familiar voice.

“Keith! Hey!”

Shiro turned with Keith in his arms and Keith glared at the figure, trying to bring them into focus, Lance was stood, with a big smile on his face and his arm in the air.

“Lance.” Keith regarded him as if he were a mob boss.

“Where are y-“ Lance begun to step into the road before Keith threw up an arm to stop him.

“Don’t come any closer.” Keith hissed warningly, he’d grown accustomed to seeing Lance at a distance, he was afraid if he crossed the threshold, their weird acquaintanceship would evolve into something that Keith was terrified of. Expectations would change and Keith hated change, he was trying to cope with what was already happening all around him since he’d seen Lance for the first time.

“Uh… ok?” Lance faltered and stepped back onto the street on the other side, his cheeks pink, embarrassed. Keith could see the white-haired dude looking out the window from inside the bar, watching the whole exchange, Keith couldn’t help but snarl.

“A pizza delivery boy? Really?!“ Keith exclaimed loudly across the street, gesturing to the guy inside, Lance glanced back and then turned to stare fixedly at Keith, a weird look on his face. It looked… victorious? “Like not to job shame or anything.”

“Stop writing messages to me. Okay.” Keith stammered. He was trying to sound aloof but he couldn’t have sounded more bothered, his vocal chords were betraying him.

Keith didn’t wait for a response as he turned his head, trying to rotate his body so that Shiro would get the hint, which luckily he did and Shiro continued carrying him down the road.

The last of their drinking games finally hit Keith as they arrived at his apartment building. Keith finally got his solution, he was black-out drunk. He didn’t remember telling Shiro which apartment was his. He barely remembered falling through the door and to the floor, but he really hoped that he would remember hearing Pidge speak.

“I’ll take it from here, Shiro.”

Chapter End Notes

THIS IS STUPID FUN
thanks for all your kudos and comments

Tumblr - foxsmo-lder
How to Miscommunicate with Success in Social Situations

Chapter Summary

In which Keith just gets in his own way

It was all so grotesquely domestic and fluffy. He wagered that if he was still alone by the age of forty, he’d ask Pidge to marry him. Sunday mornings with the smell of fried goods and a happy, singing tiny wife didn’t sound half bad. She plated up the food and presented him with bacon and pancakes, a generous drizzle of maple syrup already making it glisten and shine.

Maybe he could ask her to marry him right there and then. Keith wanted to slap himself, and realised he’d been staring at Pidge rather than taking the plate.

“If you’re thinking about wedding me just don’t even entertain the idea.” Pidge smirked, “I will never be some edgelord’s wife.”

“Don’t flatter yourself.” Keith muttered.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Jealousy, thy name is Keith.

Keith wiped his drool from the side of his face and felt carpet.

He decided actually that his eyes were better off staying shut at this point. He could tell this was the carpet in his room, so at least there was that.

This was a pain that he’d not felt for a long time. Not since college, back when he’d attended a couple of frat parties. Couple being operative word, he’d literally been to two. He learned all that he needed to know in both of those instances, he’d learnt a decent card game and he learnt that frat boys were the fucking worst.

He finally decided to roll over, the churning in his stomach from a combination of delicious Japanese food and Shiro’s bad influence made him wretch. He pushed himself up from the floor, the pressure in his head moving as he lifted, this was crippling. There was no way he was going to be leaving this room today. He ran a hand lazily through his hair, he could smell booze on his skin
and he hated it. He could at least leave the room for a shower.

A quick glance at the clock near his bed told him that it was only a quarter past ten, he hoped with every fibre of his being that Pidge would not be home.

At the thought of Pidge, his brain began picking at something he knew he should remember. Shiro had dragged him home, but something happened that Keith had made a mental note to remember.

He used what strength he had left in his legs to lift him to standing. He fell to the wall and tried to support himself. He apologised deeply to his liver and reached for the door handle. He pushed his door with a might he didn’t know he could manage and fell through.

Thankfully, he realised after looking up from the floor, Pidge was nowhere to be found. He crawled to the bathroom and climbed into the shower after stripping off his clothes. The hot water felt so nice on his skin. He gazed down all at once and noticed how pale he was, he was so pale he looked almost translucent. He thought back to Shiro’s bizarre story about his first crush and found himself imagining going on a vacation.

He then thought about the fact that Shiro was under the impression that Keith had a crush. Keith didn’t do crushes, it was an unnecessary effort according to Keith’s admittedly limited experience. And he couldn’t say that Shiro’s weirdly ominous story had helped him feel better about the possibility of a crush.

Not that it mattered in any case, it was clear that Lance wasn’t interested. Either that or Lance just liked the attention and did that sort of thing a lot, Keith shut his eyes and pushed his head under the water. He didn’t care, so what did it matter? He heard the door to the apartment open and shut, Pidge was home. He climbed out of the shower, wrapped a towel around his waist since he neglected to bring a change of clothes and brushed his teeth.

He pushed the door of the bathroom open, rubbing his forehead with his eyes closed as he let his feet lead him to the sink in the kitchen. He opened his eyes finally and reached around for a glass. He turned with a glass full of water and a met two silent, amused pairs of eyes.

“Keith,” Allura nodded with a smirk.

“Hey,” Keith leant back against the sink and sipped some water. Pidge raised a container in the air.

“Breakfast?” Pidge grinned.

“Thanks.” He walked skittishly towards Pidge and grabbed the food and tried to disappear into his bedroom.

“CUTLERY!” Pidge called just as he opened the door to his bedroom.

He sucked in a deep breath and turned back around, trying to ignore Allura’s gaze following him, grabbed a fork and a spoon in a panic and returned to his bedroom. He flopped on the floor and started demolishing a Full English Breakfast. Just has he climbed into bed and pulled the covers over his head, there was a knock at the door.

Keith stayed silent.

“Uh, Keith?” Allura spoke through the wood. “Tomorrow afternoon, could I… borrow you for something?”

No, nope.
“Whatever.” Keith miss-spoke, but he couldn’t take it back now.

“Okay, cool… uh, see you tomorrow then I guess.” He heard Allura’s soft footsteps pad away, he heard the apartment door open and shut.

Pidge burst through his door without invitation.

“C’mon! Mario Kart! My online friends are in a tournament and we’re gonna join them!” Pidge announced, whipping away the covers, Keith was grateful he’d at least put some clothes on.

“Friends? What friends?” Keith grunted, squeezing the bridge of his nose in an effort to alleviate his headache.

“Wow, ouch.” Pidge drawled sarcasm. “How could you say such a thing to me? I have never been so roasted, so savaged. My reputation, my family. How could I go back to them and look them in the eye, how can I wake tomorrow with any purpose? You have slain me, Keith. You cut deep, and as a great man once said, the first cut is the deepest. Baby I know, the first cut-“

“Okay. Yes. Well done. I get it.” Keith held up a hand in protest. “Do we have any pain killers in this apartment?”

“Yep. Bathroom cabinet, hurry up, it’s gonna start soon!” Pidge chided. Keith exited the room and came back with two white pills in the palm of his hand, threw them back and downed some water. 

“I’m terrible at this game, why do you want me to play?” Keith muttered, grabbing a blanket from under their futon/coffee table and curling up with it on the sofa next to Pidge.

“I have a strategy.” Pidge spoke lowly like it were some master plan. “So, in all likelihood you’re going to be in last place-“

“Fuck you.” Keith muttered but actually couldn’t deny it.

“But that means that you get all the best items!” Pidge exclaimed, this was her eureka moment. “Well, that is if you stay on the course and actually drive into the item boxes.”

“You’re the worst friend.” Keith sighed throwing his head back into the sofa cushions, regretting every word he just said once Pidge turned to him with the most insane smile on her face.

“Keith? Did you just call me a friend?” Pidge leant forward and grabbed his shoulders, her tiny hands were freakishly strong. She could probably suplex him if she wanted. “Omg, did the Grinch’s heart grow three sizes that day?!“

“Did you just say omg out loud?” Keith tried to lean away from Pidge’s almost palpable excitement.

She let go and grabbed the blanket he had tucked under him and laid it on herself, shuffling closer to him. Like him calling her a friend meant that she was now allowed in his personal space, which… Keith actually didn’t mind for the first time ever.

“Yep, and so did you.” Pidge grinned.

Hours passed. Pidge and Keith, they were a dream team, THE dream team. Keith’s ability to get through the course had improved somewhat, but he was still very much in last place. Pidge was
almost constantly at the front, and when her friends over-took her, she’d scream at Keith to unleash fury. Keith was hoarding blue shells like a mad-man. Pidge ended up winning and she did an awful and cheesy victory lap around the room, but Keith couldn’t help the smile on his face.

Pidge dropped back onto the sofa and took a deep breath.

“Hey, I never asked you how your night was?” Pidge suddenly remembered.

“It was fine,” Keith committed to nothing. He knew that whatever it was he was trying to remember involved Pidge. He wasn’t entirely sure why that was.

“Was it a friendly thing or a sexy thing?” Pidge asked, nudging Keith and raising her eyebrows.

“Not sexy. Definitely not sexy.” Keith sighed, remembering how they’d spent almost three hours of the night watching Lance get accosted by a pizza guy. “He is very pretty though, the guy I went out with.”

Pidge scoffed a little too loud.

“What?” Keith narrowed his eyes, something was tweaking in the back of his head, a memory searching to be found, when it hit him all at once. “YOU KNEW HIS NAME!”


“No, no you said - and I quote – ‘I’ll take it from here, Shiro’” Keith raised the pitch of his voice a little to impersonate Pidge.

“Nice impression, but I have no idea what you’re talking about.” Pidge folded her arms. “I didn’t even hear you come in last night, that guy must have been nice and put you to bed.”

Keith didn’t know what to think. Maybe he was wrong, maybe he’d imagined it. He couldn’t think of a single reason why Pidge would lie about something like that. So he decided to let it go, it was probably just in his head.

Keith eventually found himself flagging in the late afternoon, Pidge tried to feed him macaroni and cheese like a toddler but he batted her hand away and retired to bed.

The next morning he awoke to the scent of… cooked breakfast? Pancakes? Coffee? He felt much better today, but he couldn’t help but think that everyone was feeding him in attempt to fatten him up. He climbed out of bed and entered the kitchen. Pidge was singing along to a Disney song that Keith happened to know quite well and frying bacon.

Pidge noticed he was there and grinned affectionately. It was all so grotesquely domestic and fluffy. He wagered that if he was still alone by the age of forty, he’d ask Pidge to marry him.

Sunday mornings with the smell of fried goods and a happy, singing tiny wife didn’t sound half bad. She plated up the food and presented him with bacon and pancakes, a generous drizzle of maple syrup already making it glisten and shine.

Maybe he could ask her to marry him right there and then. Keith wanted to slap himself, and realised he’d been staring at Pidge rather than taking the plate.

“If you’re thinking about wedding me just don’t even entertain the idea.” Pidge smirked, “I will never be some edgelord’s wife.”

“Don’t flatter yourself.” Keith muttered, sitting down on the sofa, low-key freaking out that Pidge
was apparently reading his thoughts.

They ate and watched Sunday morning kid’s cartoons in 4K HD, Keith could see everything. He found it strange to think that this time two weeks ago he would have been in bed, on his own, wallowing. And here he was, eating pancakes with someone he could actually call a friend. It was hard, but he was learning slowly not to hate it.

Though he knew it wouldn’t last long. Nothing good ever did.

“Don’t forget you’re going to Allura’s this afternoon.” Pidge reminded, taking Keith’s plate and beginning to wash up.

Keith stood up, turned to Pidge and said something he never, ever thought he’d say.

“Hey, Pidge. Let me do that.” Keith offered, gesturing to the washing up. Pidge gasped, and pressed a hand to her chest dramatically.

“You called me by my name…” Pidge whispered, Keith groaned.

“No, I have definitely said your name before.” Keith rolled his eyes, 104 ½.

“No, the only other time that you’ve ever said my name-“ Pidge pointed. “Was when you introduced me to Allura, that doesn’t count!”

“Why is this a big deal?!” Keith groaned, approaching the sink and pushing Pidge out of the way. “I was only offering to wash the dishes, I wasn’t actually asking you to marry me.”

“I’m so proud of you.” Pidge smiled, looking like she was actually going to cry. “When I first met you, you told me to ‘get the fuck out of my apartment’ and now… you’re offering to do dishes.”

Keith decided now was the time to make good on his overdue promise to ignore Pidge once again. They’d have a silent, sex-less, but very well fed marriage one day. He ignored her but continued to do the dishes anyway.

The afternoon rolled around, and he decided to actually go to Allura’s. Ignoring Pidge would be more successful if he weren’t in her immediate vicinity. He didn’t say goodbye as he slammed the door shut and begun the descent to the second floor.

As he arrived at her corridor, he could hear the chords of her guitar playing. He wondered then exactly what it was she wanted him for.

Keith sat silently on her sofa, he gazed for a second at the dresser they’d built together and went back to staring at her balcony doors, which were open and letting a gentle breeze fill the room, it was pleasant. But that was Allura all over, pleasant.

“Ok, so you’re probably wondering why I asked you over here today.” Allura stood with her guitar rested on the floor in front of her, she looked as though she were going to give in an inspiring speech. “But first, I wanted to check if my hunch was correct.”

Keith shot her a look, terribly unsure of where she was going with this. She approached him and held out a hand. Keith felt very nervous.
“Your hands?” Allura answered his confused gaze. Keith complied. Allura gazed at them closely, a small smile broke out on her lips. “Yes! I knew it!”

“What the hell are you doing?” Keith twitched his hands away from her and Allura beamed.

“You’re an artist aren’t you?!” She gushed.

Keith’s stomach dropped, the colour drained from his face.

“Well, you used to be,” Allura elaborated. “I can tell by the callouses on your fingers that you haven’t drawn anything in a long time.”

“Where are you going with this?” Keith muttered, this had well and truly got his back up and he wanted to leave.

“Well, I used to play the guitar all the time,” Allura gestured to the wooden instrument by her feet. “And one day I just stopped. Then I met you, you shook my hand and I saw it. That we’re the same. We both lost our love of something we loved so much once.”

Keith grit his teeth and shut his eyes. He didn’t want to hear the speech.

“I’m not asking you to draw me a picture, Keith,” Allura sighed. “But you inspired me to pick up my guitar again. This will probably sound so arrogant and obnoxious, but I was hoping to return the favour.”

Keith kept his jaw tight. Her heart was in the right place but Keith didn’t want or need inspiration. He stood, he wasn’t sticking around for this.

“No, I’m fine thanks.” He walked straight to the door.

“Keith! Please I’m sorry, I didn’t mean to upset you!” Allura cried, dropping her guitar and chasing him to the door. “I’m sorry, I pushed too hard too fast.”

“Don’t push at all.” Keith muttered, pulling the door open and storming out.

He could have gone back to the apartment, but that would have meant that Pidge would hound him with questions. So he wandered. He’d found himself in a nearby park, sitting on a bench under a tree. The leaves were beginning to lose their green colour and he was feeling frustrated.

Keith loved to draw, past tense. He didn’t do it anymore. For as long as he could remember, he drew, he drew on walls, on people, on paper, on library books, anywhere. As far as he was concerned back then anything blank was a potential canvas. He had so much inspiration back then, he didn’t have to think too hard about what he wanted to draw, he just did it. And even Keith himself could turn around and say that he was actually pretty decent at it.

When Hunk had asked him what his dream was, it felt like a punch in the gut. Keith hadn’t thought about his dreams in a long time.

Keith couldn’t even remember why or how he stopped, he just… lost his love for it. It happened around the time he finished college with a bachelor’s degree in fine art and he was desperately looking for a job. He wanted to be an artist and sell pictures but… he couldn’t even get a job in an art gallery.
Which was when he moved into the city, moved into monotony, and four years later, nothing. He hadn’t touched a pencil or a sketchpad since. His mind-set was ‘if I don’t do it for a living, I don’t do it at all.’ Everything he did do was necessary, like breathing, eating, sleeping and working.

He had no friends, he hadn’t really spoken to anyone on his course or his roommate, he was a background character to everyone else’s lives, and that’s the way he liked it. And it was the way he wished it had stayed. Protagonists had strife and pain and angst. Background characters just got on with their lives, appeared in lots of different places in the same day and drank coffee. Keith was happy with that existence. And then a stupid fluffy blue jacket came into his life. Keith wanted to throw his fists to the sky and yell ‘DAMN YOU LANCE, DAMN YOU ALL TO HELL.’ But he couldn’t. He didn’t want to, that was a protagonist’s way. Keith wasn’t even a minor character.

But there he was, he was doing the most emo and edgy thing he’d ever done, he was angisting hard on a bench, on his own. It was a grey day, he looked like he should be in an early noughties emo rock band’s music video. He was a protagonist against his own will. All he needed now, was for the rain to start pouring to complete the look.

And that it did, thick, wet and heavy raindrops fell onto the bench beside him. When had his life come to this? And was he too far gone to put it back? His only real option now was to become to asshole he kept telling himself he wasn’t. Soon he was soaked right through, but he had no intention of moving.

“Sir?”

Keith regretfully looked up at the voice, moustache man was back, holding an umbrella and bearing a concerned look.

“What?” Keith spat with a vitriol he was having to dig up from deep inside, from years of resentment and lack of meaningful fulfilment.

The man shot Keith a patronizing look and took an unwelcome seat beside him.

“I wanted to show you the pictures you took.” The man spoke. He slipped his hand into his coat pocket and handed Keith some printed pictures. “You’ve got an eye for it, my boy.”

The guy wasn’t wrong, these were decent pictures, but already he was failing on the whole ‘be an asshole front’.

“Thanks?” Keith sighed, he went through the pictures and couldn’t help the twinge of a smirk at them, he tried to direct the involuntary twitch to the side his face this man couldn’t see.

“You’re welcome.” The man smiled. “My name is Coran.”

The man held out his hand for Keith to shake. Keith stared at it, if he took this hand, it’d be the second time in a day that Keith had touched someone else. Keith shook his head and stood, walking away. Leaving Coran to gaze on, confused.

Keith trudged back to the building, fed up, cold and tired. He went back to the apartment and snubbed Pidge with point-blank success. He stripped himself of his clothes and climbed into bed. It was barely evening and he was already so exhausted. Allura’s attempt at ‘inspiring’ Keith had only stripped him of every confidence he’d gained over the last week or so. He didn’t want to be reminded of something he couldn’t do anymore. He let himself drift off to sleep, and much to Keith’s unexpected surprise, Pidge didn’t bother him at all.
Monday morning came as a seriously unwelcome event. The sky was still grey and gloomy, Keith was happy that it accurately represented his mood. He dressed and washed his face, having no motivation to do much else. He was endlessly grateful that Pidge left so much earlier than him for work. He left the apartment without incident and daren’t look down the corridor on the second floor, though he doubted that Allura would make any effort to speak to him after the day before.

He flipped up his hood under the rain and made his way to the train station, keeping his head down and away from inquiring eyes he took his usual spot next to Shiro, who wordlessly handed him a coffee.

“Morning,” Shiro spoke simply, Keith kept quiet, taking sips of his coffee. “How did you feel on Saturday?”

“Like death.” Keith muttered, he couldn’t see Lance across the way, hopefully what Keith had said to him on Friday night had gotten through to him. Keith couldn’t handle any stupid charades this morning.

But, with some sort of divine providence, Lance strode confidently onto the platform, signs under his arms, shooting Keith a challenging look.

“What the fuck.” Keith hissed, Shiro gazed on with interest. He’d been there to hear the toxicity with which Keith had told him to back off and stop writing signs, he admired Lance’s tenacity.

Lance held up a sign, and instead of some sort of cheesy pick-up line, there was several separate drawings. Keith stared hard at it, trying to decipher the meaning.

“You asked me not to write, so I draw.” Shiro translated, a hint of amusement in his voice. At least Shiro was finding this all so entertaining.

“But… that’s a peach?!” Keith gestured to the small sketchy peach that was positioned between the picture of a sheep with a ‘female’ symbol above its head and a drawing of a teddy bear with a big letter T crossed out and a circle around the letter K. This was a nightmare.

“Jesus, you’re a forty year old man trapped in a young person’s body,” Shiro tutted, throwing a thumbs up to Lance to let him know that the message was received. “You know that right?”

“Screw you.” Keith sighed. Lance nodded happily and spun the sign round, Keith understood the symbols even less than the one before.

“If you want me to back off I will.” Shiro translated, a weird softness to his voice. Keith sighed and folded his arms, trying to appear grumpy without pouring his coffee on the floor.

Lance smirked as he grabbed the only other sign he had. He held it up. There was another Peach, a finger pointing towards Keith and a drawing of a plate of something that looked like pudding.

“Ass point pudding?” Keith spoke out loud confused, Shiro couldn’t help the laughter that escaped his lips.

“Yes, of course, ass point pudding.” Shiro choked between laughs. Keith rolled his eyes, 105 ½, just about done with the day already. “No, he’s saying ‘but you jelly’.”

“What the fuck is jelly?” Keith spluttered, throwing his free arm out in confused exasperation.

“Well, it’s a delicious after-dinner snack,” Shiro muttered, tapping his chin. “But kids nowadays say Jelly when they mean jealous.”
“What the fuck?!” Keith grit his teeth. “Why would I be jealous?!”

“Of that guy that Lance was with on Friday night?”

Keith felt a wave of indignant rage go through him, he handed Shiro his coffee, threw his backpack down onto the ground and rifled around for a piece of paper and sharpie he had in one of the pockets. He quickly sketched something out and held it up for Lance to see, his hands gripping the edges of the paper with so much anger that he was crinkling the page. It was childish, but Keith did it without thinking, a drawing of a hand flipping its middle finger. Lance’s own sign faltered as he took in Keith’s message, but instead of being offended or put off, he burst out laughing.

Keith was glad when the train pulled up and he shoved the piece of paper back in his bag. He slung his bag over his shoulder, snatched his coffee out of Shiro’s hand and stormed onto the train.

Keith was too angry to even respond when Shiro dropped into the seat next to him with an amused grin on his face.

“God, you are so bad at this.”

Keith had had his head on his desk for forty minutes.

Turns out, the sheet of paper he’d drawn a vulgar hand-sign on had been an extremely important, sensitive document that Keith had totally forgotten to post over the weekend.

Upon telling his boss, who had only found it mildly amusing, simply told him to reprint the document, head to the company’s office the day after and visit the C.E.O to get his signature.

None of this would have been a problem for Keith, if it hadn’t been for the fact that not only was he going to have to get Lance’s train into the city, but it was an hour and a half long train. An hour and a half, that was a long time to be on a train on your own, but another thing to be on a train with someone that you couldn’t consider a friend and were too familiar with to consider an ignorable acquaintance.

To make matters worse, the C.E.O of the company was the eccentric moustached dude he’d met twice and essentially told to go fuck himself the second time they’d met.

All Keith had to do was then post the papers and return to work. As if nothing had happened. Hunk had come over to try and take the blame, which only served to piss Keith off, who then had to prove that he was in fact the one who drew it, by redrawing it.

Their boss and several other employees had found this highly amusing, Keith had promised himself that he’d go back to flying under the radar, only to now be the top topic of conversation in the office that day. And his second drawing was now on the fridge in the office’s shared kitchen.

So, as it was, Keith was face down on his desk, humiliated, and he was sure that he was only making things far worse for himself.

“Keith? Lunch?” Hunk came over and tapped Keith delicately on the shoulder. Keith rolled his head back and forth as a rejection, he was happy staring at the wooden desk, hoping it would give him the answers he needed.

Half an hour passed and he felt something being placed on the desk next to his head. It was a sub, the same sub he’d gotten the first day he’d met Hunk. That was nearly two weeks ago, Keith was
amazed that Hunk had remembered what Keith ate that day. But the embarrassment he was still reeling from had completely destroyed his appetite. He instead pocketed it for later.

Finally the day drew to a close, Keith had some freshly printed documents in a file safely in his bag. As he exited the office building, he tore his sub in half and held out the other half for Pidge to take.

“Yes! Back to way things should be.” Pidge grabbed it happily from his hands. “It’s not a cookie but it’s good enough!”

They sat down in their usual spots, Pidge was still destroying her half of the sandwich when she suddenly seemed to recollect something.

“Hey, what happened with Allura?” Pidge asked between chews. “When you came back you looked pissed off and soaking wet. I take it that it didn’t go well?”

“Don’t wanna talk about it.” Keith muttered, folding his arms. Pidge considered pushing, but she opted for silence and Keith could not have been more grateful for it.

I’m a sucker for pain.

Keith was rubbing his hands together, trying to psych himself up for getting on that train. He’d faltered and paced around outside the entrance to the other platform, till finally he descended. It always felt strange to see a place you knew so well from a different perspective. He finally saw what it was that Lance was seeing. He could see Shiro holding two cups of coffee from the other side of the platform.

Shiro’s head shot up when he spotted him and held the coffee up, with a confused look on his face. Keith shrugged apologetically. Shiro started twitching his head to his right, Keith’s left, and Keith followed his gesture. Lance was stood less than ten feet away from him. Keith felt like he was going to vomit. He held his finger to his lips and then clasped his hands in a begging motion. Hoping beyond hope that Shiro wouldn’t draw attention to the fact that Keith was within touching distance of Lance. His heart was racing as he gently, trying to move without sound, stepped a couple of feet back and away. Lance’s head was twitching around, obviously trying to look for Keith, which didn’t help the fact that Keith’s heart was already racing he couldn’t cope with much more. Shiro had assumed a position of casual nonchalance, luckily he had the two coffees, so that if Lance happened to spot Shiro, he’d notice that Shiro was expecting Keith to be there.

Keith could have murdered for that coffee. He remained silent, but couldn’t help but finally regard Lance up close. The last time they were this close, Keith was hammered and couldn’t really see straight. Lance’s hair was a beautiful chestnut colour, chestnut colour… just chestnut. Keith could see the freckles across the bridge of his nose from this angle and distance. Keith got angry with himself at the heat he could feel on his cheeks. He bit his lip and instead looked away, hating the
gross feeling he was getting in his stomach. He glanced around, thankful that the other people on
the platform hadn’t spotted him either.

He could see Shiro lift his head and shrug, seemingly in response to Lance, Keith held his breath
as the train pulled up and he rushed on without looking and slipped into a seat and leant up against
the window. He looked across to the other train and saw Shiro who was looking at him with wide-
eyes and gesturing forwards with his head, Keith looked forward and saw familiar chestnut hair in
the seat in front of him.

His heart was in his throat, when he looked back at Shiro, he was waving happily, he could see
movement coming from Lance out of the corner of his eye, Shiro’s eyes flicked briefly to Keith as
if to say good luck and the train’s pulled away.

Keith tried to breathe deeply and quietly, he didn’t want to draw any attention to himself, he
couldn’t cope with Lance suddenly noticing that he was there. He had an hour and a half on this
train to try and ninja his way through this. He kept his head down behind the chair, but couldn’t
help his curious glance to between the chairs at Lance’s phone. He could see everything from here,
it was awful and immoral but he couldn’t help himself.

The first thing he noticed were Lance’s hands. He’d never thought that hands could be even
remotely… pretty? But somehow Lance managed. The second thing he noticed was Lance was
typing quickly and deftly to someone called… Lotor?

Lance  -  Man, he wasn’t there today, and I worked so hard on my drawings last night.

Lotor  -  I don’t know why you’re still bothering. He’s not interested. I don’t get it.

Keith’s heart was beating so loud he wondered how Lance couldn’t hear it.

Lance  -  It’s been a year and a half, do you really think I’m going to give up now?

Lotor  -  Why? I don’t get it dude, what’s so special about him anyway?

Keith knew he should look away. He felt like he was going to vomit. He was trying to control the
volume of his breathing.

He heard Lance exhale a deep breath, Keith could only imagine the stupid goofy smile on his face.

Lance  -  I can’t explain it. He’s just… so cute. When we saw him last Friday, and I got to
hear his voice?

Lotor  -  Here we go again.

Lance  -  I thought, holy shit. This is the man I’m going to marry.

Keith felt his heart actually stop. What was this feeling, he felt so weak like he was going to faint.
What was Lance saying?! He was being an idiot, who said stuff like that when you didn’t even
know someone?!

Lotor  -  Didn’t he tell you go to fuck yourself?!

Keith could hear Lance chuckling quietly. Holy shit, why was his laugh so damn cute? Keith was
freaking out.

Lance  -  I know… I’m an idiot, and it probably seems really creepy for me to keep this
Keith begged himself to stop watching, he was playing a very risky game with both being noticed by Lance and having a heart attack. But he couldn’t.

Lance - But if we met one day, and it turned out we didn’t like each other and we had nothing in common?

Keith tried to drag his eyes away from Lance’s phone screen, this was only going to end badly.

Lance - Then so be it. But for the first time in my entire life, I really believe that this guy is worth that risk.

Lotor - You’re a fucking sucker, I gotta go.

Keith let out an unholy noise and slammed himself against the chair away from Lance, wishing with everything he had that Lance hadn’t heard. Luckily Lance seemed to be so wrapped up in whatever he was thinking about that he didn’t notice, and nor did anyone else. He saw Lance move and root around in his bag and pull out a notebook and a pencil.

Keith watched him beginning to sketch more messages, he still didn’t understand what they meant. He glanced down at his watch, they still had another hour and ten minutes before the train journey was over, Keith leant back against the window and stared down at his hands, bereft.

Keith hadn’t had to think about anything even close to love before, he never ever wanted to and he still didn’t want to. Lance was a sucker, and Keith actually started to feel bad for the guy. He could tell that Lance was an adorable hopeless romantic, and he really deserved to have someone that would feel the same way back, with the same gusto and effort. Keith… had never been in love, he wasn’t even sure if he was capable of it. Everything within him said to just reject him, to his face, tell him he didn’t have a chance, because he knew there never would be a chance.

But. Somewhere deep inside him, he didn’t want to reject Lance. Keith touched his face and felt the heat that was making his cheeks flush so much, he knew deep down that he didn’t deserve the love that Lance had in him. What could he do with this feeling? He had to crush it. He didn’t want to hurt anyone, he wasn’t an asshole, he wasn’t. Not really. But he wasn’t a lover either. If he had to choose, between strength and weakness, He always chose strength. Strength meant not letting infantile things like love get in the way, good things never lasted. Ever. Keith was sure of that more than anything.

As the train pulled up at the station, Keith waited for Lance to exit the train, signs under his arms and an optimistic smile on his face. Keith felt his stomach flip and he stood up, stepping off the train and slowly climbing up the stairs, feeling rotten as all hell.

“Hey! Keith!”

Keith blanched, Allura was waving at him, he knew that Lance wasn’t far enough away that he wouldn’t have heard her, he did the only thing he could think of. He couldn’t deal with the awkwardness of the entire situation, the fact he’d been on that train for an hour and a half and not said anything, the fact that Lance genuinely seemed to like him and the fact he knew that he couldn’t do anything about it. So he rushed over to Allura and wrapped his arms around her waist, pulling her close and tucking his head into her neck in an effort to hide his face. Allura froze, unable to react and then slowly held him back. He hoped with everything he had in him that Lance hadn’t recognized him, he hoped his stupid mullet wasn’t a total giveaway that it was him.
After a couple of awkward minutes he pulled away, he hazarded a glance around, Lance was gone, he realised with a sigh of relief.

“Keith? What the hell was that for?!” Allura exclaimed, a slight smile on her lips.

“I uh…” Keith tried to come up with a decent excuse and instead opted to run the fuck away from her. He couldn’t handle the idea of getting into the whole stupid mess with her right now. He was still mad at her for the stupid ‘inspiration’ stunt she pulled.

He glanced down at the map on his phone, he had a ten minute walk from the station, when he noticed halfway a familiar looking coffee shop. He couldn’t help but glance through the window, first of all he noticed the white haired guy he’d seen Lance with at the bar, leaning over the counter, and then he noticed that he was clutching Lance’s hands in his.

But Lance, had this look on his face. He looked so… sad. Surely Lance hadn’t noticed Keith, holding Allura… in such a… romantic way.

Lance looked up and caught his eye, Keith did the only thing he could think of, and ran away.

Chapter End Notes

thanks again for the comments and kudos!
I'm having too much fun! Sorry btw!
tumblr - foxsmo-lder
fluff comin' up.
In which Keith realises things.


Great, another scene, in front of a lot of people. Lance finally looked up.

“Woah, Keith come on.” Shiro held out his hands trying to calm Keith, which only served to piss him off even more. “I’m sorry, I didn’t mean anything by it.”

“I’m not some stupid, vapid, charity case that needs helping.” Keith hissed through gritted teeth. “I’m not someone that you think you can help. I don’t need help. I don’t need anyone, I never did. You’re the reason that I feel this way, you’re the reason that Lance is upset, you fuelled a fire that didn’t even exist!”

Fuck.

Why was Keith so mad at himself? He could still smell the scent of Allura’s perfume on him as he finally arrived at the office building. He’d done the right thing, essentially. If Lance had seen Keith and Allura embracing, that meant Lance knew there was no chance.

Keith didn’t have time to even think about how hurt he was feeling inside at that thought, he stepped into the building and was completely overwhelmed by the sights and sounds around him. Everything was brightly coloured and loud. He tried not to look around too much and stepped towards the reception desk. The woman behind the desk with long blonde hair and a bright blue crop top glanced up at him, smiling brightly.

“How can I help you?” She spoke, her voice as bright as her hair.

“Um, I’m here to see… Coran? Smythe?” Keith spoke, questioningly.

“Do you have an appointment?” She asked, glancing down at the computer screen.

“Y-yeah, my name’s Keith…” He faltered, she looked up at him grinning happily.

“Follow me, Sir.”

Keith bit his lip, he wished that she’d just tell him where to go. Instead not only was he being lead around by a stranger, she was giving him a guided tour.

The company was as eccentric as Coran was. They seemingly ran a website on the internet doing something, Keith wasn’t paying attention, his mind was too busy racing, picturing Lance’s heartbroken little face catching his eye.
Finally they reached Coran’s office, it was as much as Keith expected, all glass with a simple looking white desk in the centre, Coran was leant back in his chair, asleep and twiddling his moustache whilst unconscious, was this man even a real person? Keith wasn’t sure.

The woman pushed open the door and Coran leapt up, arms outstretched as if ready to fight.

“Coran, Keith from that… company? Is here to see you.” The woman gestured, she nodded her head at him and left the room. Keith held his backpack awkwardly in his hand.

“So, it’s Keith, is it?” Coran regarded him after sitting back down in his chair. He gestured to the chair in front of the desk for Keith so sit in, Keith reluctantly obliged.

“Yeah, um… sorry… for the other day.” Keith muttered, he glanced all around him. He could see Coran’s employees all around him working away, but… it didn’t look like work. There was a girl throwing paint at a wall and taking photos and an enthusiastic looking group of people filming a man on a skipping rope.

“It’s quite alright.” Coran leant forward, elbows on the desk. “I’ve been told that you have a rather interesting excuse for being here.”

Keith cursed internally. He’d really hoped that his boss would explain the situation over the phone, though he guessed he deserved it for making the mistake in the first place.

“Well, there was this guy on the train and I wanted him to leave me alone so I drew a vulgar hand-symbol on the back of the document that had your signature on it,” Keith blurted, he was too emotionally compromised to be having this conversation. “So here I am.”

Coran was smirking at him, one thick eyebrow raised in amusement. Suddenly he leapt up and grabbed a blank sheet of paper and slammed it onto the desk in front of them both.

“Draw it for me.” Coran demanded with a dramatic, pointed finger. Keith was in the presence of an insane person.

“What?” Keith couldn’t help the stupid, contorted and confused look on his face.

“Draw the hand for me.” Coran spoke again like it was a completely normal request. “If you draw it for me, I’ll sign that document. If you don’t… I’ll sever the contract I have with your company.”

Keith tried not to stumble backwards with the shock of it all. He was more than eccentric, he was actually delusional.

“What?” Keith stammered, forgetting his desire to be polite lest he lose his job. How was this man in charge of a huge and presumably well-doing company?

“Do I look like a man who kids?” Coran gestured to himself. It was only then that he noticed Coran’s pink bow-tie and matching pink braces. Keith held himself back from face-palming.

“What’s the worst that could happen?”

“I-I…” Keith stammered, unable to come up with a good excuse. This would be the third time drawing the same thing in a matter of two days. Coran was steadfast, there was no way he was going to let this go. Keith groaned loudly and grabbed a pencil out of Coran’s pen holder and sketched it out as quickly as possible. Once he was finished he pushed it across the desk without looking at it.

He reached into his bag, grabbed the documents and dropped them with a heavy thud onto the desk
“Now that you’re done being whatever it is that you’re being right now.” Keith grit his teeth, trying to control his stupid temper. “Please sign these so that I can go.”

“It’s beautiful.” Coran sighed, picking up the sheet of paper and gazing at it like it was his first born child. Keith leant back in his chair and squeezed the bridge of his nose. Before Lance, none of this crazy shit ever happened to him. Keith just wanted to leave.

“You’re a talented man, Keith.” Coran said, grabbing some sticky-tack and attaching Keith’s ridiculous drawing to the glass walls, he stepped back and grabbed his chin thoughtfully as if admiring the Mona Lisa in the Louvre.

“Are you joking? It’s a drawing of a hand holding up its middle finger.” Keith stood up and joined him in staring at it, trying to understand what it was everyone was seeing. “What’s so fascinating about it?”

“It’s not the image itself,” Coran gestured towards it. “It’s the feeling that’s gone into it. I feel your righteous indignation, the perpetuity of your edginess. I feel how you feel at the moment you drew this.”

“Impatient, the feeling of wanting to leave?” Keith sighed quietly. Though he needn’t have, Coran heard him nonetheless.

“Yes, all of those feelings.” Coran spun and approached the desk, grabbing a pen and signing the contract. He collected the papers in his hands and handed them over to Keith. “Thanks for humouring me, Keith. See you soon.”

Keith ignored the ominousness of those words and left as quickly as possible. He went to the nearest mailbox, put it in an envelope and dropped it inside. He wiped his hands and walked away, heading back towards the station, he hazarded a glance into the coffee shop as he passed it, Lance wasn’t there. He must have been on his break, he huffed a breath of relief and headed back to work.

After the two hour journey, Keith may as well have gone home, it was already three in the afternoon when he entered the office. Everyone noticed and greeted him when he entered, Keith quelled the anger inside of him and simply nodded. He made his way to his computer desk and dropped down, wondering if it was worth him turning on his computer and doing any work.

“How did it go?” Hunk suddenly appeared at the entrance of his cubicle, regarding Keith with an amused smile.

“As well as you can imagine.” Keith muttered, Hunk sucked his teeth as if he’d witnessed someone stubbing their toe on a coffee table. Keith decided not to go into any details, he didn’t want the stupid story to circulate the office like most other things had done.

“I wasn’t sure when you’d get back, so I got you this just in case.” Hunk grinned, pulling a small package out from behind his back.

“Why are you doing this?” Keith sighed, taking the package and putting it onto the desk beside his keyboard.

“W-what?” Hunk spluttered.

“Why do you do nice things for me?” Keith whined, he leant forwards on his thighs and rubbed his
forehead. Thoroughly and completely confused.

“What a... strange and off-putting question.” Hunk tapped his chin, half-amused. “I guess... I just like doing stuff for people.”

Keith was worried that might be the answer. It was a very non answer, a lazy answer that didn’t mean anything. He rolled his eyes 106 ½ and turned back around to his computer and stared at the dark screen.

He hadn’t managed to get Lance off his mind, even through all the craziness with Coran and the two hour train journey with nothing to do other than watch day-time drunks have an adventure on a train, all he could think about was Lance.

He sighed, feeling his stomach flip at the thought. He just wanted the day to be over and to go to bed, sleep it off like a fever. Keith suddenly felt his phone vibrate in his pocket, which was... completely unusual. Keith didn’t get messages, he wasn’t even sure if he had any contacts in that phone other than his boss’.

He glanced down and saw a message from an unknown number, purely out of curiosity he opened it.

Unknown  -  What happened?!

Keith mulled it over, was his curiosity so strong he’d actually respond when in fact it was just easier to ignore it. Keith had to know it was from.

Keith  -  who’s this?

Keith dropped his phone onto the desk next to his computer and switched it on. He might as well get a couple of hours work in whilst he was here till 5pm anyway.

Unknown  -  I’ll give you three guesses.

Keith groaned.

Keith  -  Shiro?

Shiro  -  Damnit. Yes it’s me well done. What happened?

Keith  -  How did you get my number?

Shiro  -  Drunk Keith is way nicer and more interesting than sober Keith.

Keith  -  I take it I drunkenly gave you my number then.

Shiro  -  you’re so weirdly good at guessing games.

Keith considered ignoring it and saying he was busy at work, but he was faced with a column of numbers that he really didn’t want to get to know.

Shiro  -  c’mon, give, why were you on Lance’s train this morning? Did he see you? Did you talk?!

Keith  -  I had to for work, and no to both.

Shiro  -  Lame.
Keith - but something kind... of did happen?

Keith huffed, why was he pouring his heart out to everyone all of a sudden?

Shiro - did you lock eyes at the last minute and realise how much you loved each other?

Keith - no... I think I might have successfully put him off.

Shiro - how?!

Keith - romantically embracing another?

Shiro - did you cuddle a random stranger?

Keith - No, it was that girl I built furniture for. She said my name out loud and I didn’t want Lance to see me. So I hid in her neck.

Shiro - Wow.

Keith sighed. He dropped his phone in his bag, feeling rotten for reliving the whole stupid memory. He heard his phone vibrating in his bag but elected to ignore it.

The rest of the day dragged, Hunk bought him a cup of coffee and a smile that Keith twitched his eyebrow at and sipped. Was Keith’s coffee order so predictable?

He stepped outside, handed whatever Hunk had gotten for him to Pidge as they made their way to the train.

Maybe everyone was right, maybe I was just kidding myself. It’s fucking pathetic thinking I had a chance with that guy.

Keith’s mood had fallen even further than it had done before. He felt this horrible, crushing nervousness getting out of bed. This was why he chose strength, why he chose not to care about people, why he left people alone and hoped they’d do the same for him.

Because it fucking hurt, and people’s feelings were fragile.

He should have been elated, relieved and happy. He wouldn’t be bothered by cute guys trying to get his attention anymore. He’d never have to deal with the weakness of whatever a crush lead to.

But when he stepped onto the platform, took his coffee and saw Lance, he felt something close to how people described heartbreak. Lance had his head down, headphones in and a normal dark coat over his barista’s uniform.
“Damn. Whatever you did, it worked.” Shiro whistled lowly. “He hasn’t looked up since he got here. He’s ignored everybody, he didn’t even wave at me.”

“Good.” Keith lied, through gritted teeth, trying not to let the sadness be real. “It’s about t-time he got the message.”

Keith huffed in a deep breath. People around them were noticing Lance’s attitude and glancing between them. For once in this whole stupid charade, Keith wasn’t even concerned with people hating him, he was concerned with how Lance felt about him now. Lance didn’t even look mad, he just looked… sad and done. Keith could have coped with anger, he was used to anger, he was not used, however, to making people sad. No one had ever cared that much before.

“Are you kidding me, dude?” Shiro groaned, Keith knew that he wanted to shake him, to slap him, hit him or whatever. Hell, Keith probably deserved it, but… Keith didn’t ask for any of this, he wasn’t the one who encouraged it, it was everyone else.

This was a good thing.


Great, another scene, in front of a lot of people. Lance finally looked up.

“Woah, Keith come on.” Shiro held out his hands trying to calm Keith, which only served to piss him off even more. “I’m sorry, I didn’t mean anything by it.”

“I’m not some stupid, vapid, charity case that needs helping.” Keith hissed through gritted teeth. “I’m not someone that you think you can help. I don’t need help. I don’t need anyone, I never did. You’re the reason that I feel this way, you’re the reason that Lance is upset, you fuelled a fire that didn’t even exist!”

Keith hadn’t yelled at someone before. It always seemed like people felt better because of it, but he felt so much worse. Shiro wore an unfamiliar shocked look on his face at Keith’s outburst. Keith suddenly felt the warmth of eyes on him, he couldn’t help but look at Lance, who was red in the face with his headphones in his hand.

“I’m done. Okay?” Keith muttered to Shiro, looking away from Lance and backing away. “I didn’t ask for any of this.”

Shiro wordlessly and with a shocked, gormless open-mouthed look on his face, nodded. Keith backed away like prey being stalked and dashed off up the stairs and back to the apartment. He slammed the apartment door behind him and fell onto the sofa. Letting out a deep breath and wanting to hit himself.

He had failed, he promised himself not to let feelings get in the way, to remain emotionless and distant but he’d failed. He’d caught stupid feelings for someone he’d never actually had a conversation with. And now, he’d ruined any chance he might have had, and lost a friend who was – in his own stupid way – trying to help him. Keith wanted to cry, he wanted to blame someone, but really… it was his own stupid fault. He could have just told Lance to back off, he could have just… told everyone to back off.

He realised suddenly that it was the first time he’d admitted that he had feelings, he was certain it wasn’t a crush, it was… more a feeling of wanting to get to know someone, which for Keith was just as terrifying as a crush.

Keith almost leapt out of his skin at the sound of his phone ringing. He realised with a start that he
was supposed to be at work. He pulled out his phone and reluctantly answered it.

“Keith?”

It wasn’t work. It was Shiro.

“What do you want?” Keith sighed, all his anger had exhausted him so much he couldn’t even find the effort to sound angry anymore.

“Are you okay?” Shiro asked, Keith could hear the sound of the train bustling by in the background.

“Are you really asking me that question?” Keith muttered. “Why are you calling me?”

“I want to make sure you’re okay.” Shiro spoke as if it were obvious. Obvious to everyone except Keith.

“Why?” Keith laid his head back against the couch pillows.

“Because you’re my friend, obviously.” Shiro muttered. “I upset you, I’m sorry. I pushed too much.”

Keith faltered.

“I messed up.” Shiro’s voice went quiet. “I was so caught up in my regrets, I was projecting all that on you.”

Keith suddenly had a flashback to the night Shiro dragged him to the bar. Shiro seemed really cut up about this guy that he for some reason missed his chance with.

“If you’re not interested in Lance, then so be it. It’s none of my business.” Shiro continued. “But, I actually like hanging out with you. I don’t want to lose a friend over a stupid argument.”

“Shiro, what happened to that guy?” Keith blurted.


“The guy you had a crush on, what happened?” Keith whimpered into the phone. The way that Shiro had spoken about it, it didn’t seem like… a rejection.

“Uhh… sorry. Keith I have to go. I just got to the office,” Shiro seemed to be making excuses. “I just… wanted to make sure you were okay, no hard feelings?”

“I guess not.” Keith exhaled, thoroughly worn out, emotionally and physically. Shiro was hiding something and he didn’t know why. Keith hung up the phone and felt the exhaustion wash through him, he found himself falling asleep in the middle of the morning on a Wednesday.

He woke up to the sound of the apartment door opening and closing. He felt the warmth of a blanket covering him, and the soft, smiling face of Pidge.

“Hey buddy.” Was all she needed to say. Keith reached out and grabbed her around the waist, which for Pidge was such a shock that she nearly fell to the ground. Pidge smelt like home, she smelt like safety.

“K-Keith, don’t you’re gonna make me cry.” Pidge’s voice sounded thick with emotion. Keith only pulled her in tighter.
Keith had heard the term ‘touch-starved’ before, but always thought it sounded pathetic and weak, but he knew what it was all about now. It was like hugging Allura had broken a dam inside him. But he didn’t feel weak.

“What happened?” Pidge spoke, her voice was quiet and betrayed her emotions.

“I don’t know.” Keith whimpered softly.

“Do you want me to stay?” Pidge spoke, her hand reaching to stroke Keith’s hair, all he could do was nod against her waist.

Keith didn’t even think about how Pidge knew he was even there. He was just grateful she was there, allowing him to pour close to eight years of loneliness out of him. He hadn’t let go of her, he was drifting in and out of sleep whilst she played video games and gave him random commentary throughout. Maybe this kind of weakness was ok, maybe Pidge and even Shiro, were people he could rely on to be weak with. But was it even weakness, was there some kind of weird strength in letting people in.

Eventually the sun began to set, Pidge placed a hand softly on Keith’s head.

“Shall we go get some food?” She asked softly. Keith almost cried, the endless kindness she showed him even after everything. He knew better than anyone that all Pidge ever really wanted to do was stay on her video games and talk to people she’d never had to meet. He nodded softly.

He sat up and turned to her, she softly cupped his face between her hands, an understanding look on her face.

“Hey, Pidge.” Keith smiled, feeling his cheeks bunch up under her hands. “If I get to forty and I’m still not married, you’d marry me right?”

Pidge let out a laugh, but nodded anyway.

They sat in the window of the pizza place, Pidge was eating a slice of pizza that was absolutely bigger than her face, and Keith had a small box of garlic bread to himself.

“Were they not mad that you didn’t go back to work?” Keith spoke, taking a bite out of his delicious, but incredibly greasy, garlic bread. Pidge shook her head laughing.

“I basically run the place, they can’t be mad at me.” Pidge smiled.

“I never bothered to ask, what do you actually do?” Keith smirked, Pidge rolled her eyes, 107 ½.

“I do audio visual and conferencing.” Pidge stated simply. Keith raised one eyebrow as an invitation for her to go on.

“Have you ever watched E3?” Pidge asked. Keith nodded vaguely. “Well, the company I work for is who controls all the lighting, sound, animation everything apart from the dude doing the presentation is pretty much us.”

“Oh,” Keith shrugged. That was impressive, it also explained why she managed to get such a huge television for free.

“What about you? I see you coming out of that building but it’s always been a mystery to me.”
Pidge took a huge bite of her pizza.

It was almost pitch black outside, and Keith didn’t have a real answer.

“Uh… to be honest, I don’t know. I’ve never known.” Keith muttered a little wistfully. It had never bothered him before, but seeing Pidge gush about what she did made him feel a little jealous.

“Why do you do it then?” Pidge asked, a genuine question. “More to the point, what would you rather be doing?”

Keith dropped his head into his hand, and stared out the window. Instead of answering with words, he grabbed a napkin and snatched a pen from the counter. The girl at the cash register simply shrugged in response. He went back to the table to a puzzled looking Pidge and poised the pen in his hand on the napkin.

“Keith?” Pidge grinned, staring down at his hand.

So he drew, he drew the peace lily that Pidge kept on their futon/coffee table. He drew the carnations that Pidge had brought home with her the day before. He drew the image of Pidge’s glasses left on the window sill, something he’d seen a week ago and forgot he’d noticed. He sketched the wedding hat that Lance had worn less than a week ago.

He felt like his heart was in his throat but, he actually felt good.

“Wow…” Pidge breathed. Keith dropped the pen on the table and retook his seat, destroying the remainder of his garlic bread.

Pidge picked up the napkin with a huge goofy smile on her face.

“Don’t.” Keith smirked, Pidge pretended to zip her mouth shut.

God. I hate that I think he’s still cute!

Keith stepped onto the platform, Shiro was stood with two coffees as usual, and he felt his stupid heart soar at the sight of it.

“Hey, Shiro.” Keith spoke quietly as he approached. Still a little embarrassed.

“Hey,” Shiro smiled, handing off the coffee and throwing an arm around Keith’s shoulders. “How you feeling?”

“Okay.” Keith smiled, but couldn’t help but cringe as Shiro planted a big kiss on the side of Keith’s head.
“Always gotta take it one step too far.” Keith muttered, Shiro laughed.

Keith looked up and saw Lance, still dressed completely normally, but he was looking over, probably confused at the change in attitude. Keith let a smile play on his lips, he could tell Lance was trying to stop the smile that eventually broke out on his face. Keith was glad to know that Lance didn’t completely hate him.

Keith was dreading stepping into the office, he never ended up calling his boss to let him know that he wasn’t going to be in. More than anything he guessed he could collect his stuff and leave in person.

But nothing happened, people still reacted to him the same, a soft smile and a nod. Keith glanced around and looked at his desk. Another box. With another note on top. He walked over to it and grabbed the note.

_Hope you were okay yesterday. I told our boss that you were poorly and that you couldn’t call because your phone was dead. Only eat this if you haven’t been throwing up for the past 24 hours. Hope it wasn’t the sub I got you._

_Hunk_

Keith felt like crying. He opened the box and inside was cake iced with the words – ‘HOPE U FEEL BETTER’ – Keith sucked in a deep breath with a stupid smirk on his face.

He dropped into his chair and stared at the screen. His job had never been fulfilling per se, but… now it just felt empty. Keith considered pulling another sicky, but he needed the money. So he put as much effort into moving columns of numbers into other columns as he could, just desperate to make the day pass a little quicker.

As he stepped out of the office, he turned around and grabbed Pidge by the arms.

“Keith?” She faltered in shock, Keith grinned.

“Where’s the nearest arts supply store in town?”

Keith and Pidge piled onto the train with bags full of art supplies. Keith felt weirdly optimistic, but… he’d been thinking about it all day. He hated to admit it, and Pidge had forced it out of him, but he did like Lance. He knew it wasn’t a crush and it might not ever be, but… Lance was the reason everything had happened the way it had, he deserved some of the kindness he’d bestowed on Keith, it was cheesy and Keith was close to hating every second of it but, it was something Keith felt like he had to do.

Keith needed a good reason to draw, and making amends with Lance felt as good a reason as any.
Oh no, Lance, right back to where you started.
Everyone was right, you are a sucker.

Chapter End Notes

omg i'm like... feelin' so fluffy r/n
Everyone will come together soon!
I like medically need some lance in my life <3
tumblr - foxsmo-lde
Expectations

Chapter Summary

In which Keith kind of faces some fears

“You want me to march up and down the platform like a…” Keith struggled for an example. “Like a toy… soldier?”

“Yes, that’s exactly what I want you to do.” Shiro slammed a hand down on Keith’s shoulder, seriousness in his voice. “March like you’ve never marched before. March like you’re in the military, march like you’re at a pride parade, just fucking march Keith. I believe in you. Look at those feet.”

Keith glanced down at his black converse-clad feet and back up at Shiro’s grey, determined eyes.

“Those are the feet that belong to a strongly apologetic and remorseful man.” Shiro commanded, Keith was unbelievably confused but he felt weirdly driven. “Those are the feet that are going to pierce the heavens. Get out there soldier, and give those paving slabs hell.”

Chapter Notes

GOD i'm sorry, it's finally here.
i really wanted to be 100% happy with this chapter before i released it... i hope it's not a huge and crushing disappointment :D

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Keith had been staring at the canvas for hours, the seemingly endless blankness of it wasn’t sparking a single witty, interesting or artistic idea. He and Pidge were stood in front of it, both with arms folded, one hand cupping their chin in thought. But nothing was happening.

“What now?” Pidge muttered, quietly, as if not wanting to disturb Keith’s potential thoughts. Keith huffed out a breath.

“I don’t know…” Keith responded, tapping his chin with his forefinger. “I was hoping I’d just… I don’t know, think of Lance and it’d all come pouring out of me.”

“Let me leave the room before anything comes ‘pouring’ out of you.” Pidge muttered with a contorted, disgusted look on her face.

Keith all but forced Pidge out of the apartment before she finally agreed to go and take a walk so that he could be alone with his ‘emo thoughts’ as Pidge liked to call them.

Keith leant the canvas up against the TV and took a seat on the couch opposite it, he knew that this
was going to be his final hurdle. No matter how much he wracked his brains and stared at the
blankness of the sheet of canvas in front of him, nothing came.

He sighed and stared, he was sure that hours had passed when Pidge finally arrived home,
clutching a bag full of Chinese food in her hand.

“Woah, it’s literally been three hours, what is happening?” Pidge exclaimed in shock. “Is this how
the creative process works?”

“Um… not usually for me, I guess.” Keith wasn’t entirely sure what was usual, it’d been four long
years since he’d even thought about putting pencil to paper.

“Maybe give it a rest, for tonight.” Pidge patted him on the shoulder. “Don’t force it, it’ll happen
when you least expect it, I can promise you that much.”

Keith groaned and fell back into the couch cushions, frustrated with himself. He wanted this to be
his breakthrough, the thing that brought him back from the brink, but just like everything else is in
his life, it was a disappointment. He guessed that Pidge was right, he ought to stop forcing it,
nothing good ever came from forcing something.

“Don’t be hard on yourself. It’s okay to not know what you’re doing.” Pidge smiled encouragingly,
pulling plates out of the cupboard and separating the contents of the Chinese food onto each plate.

“I know what I’m doing.” Keith grit his teeth, lying seemed like an apt way to deal with whatever
it was that was going through his head. “I know what I’m doing, it’s just… taking a while.”

“So… I have to ask, who is this Lance guy anyway?” Pidge asked, carrying the plates of food over
to the couch and handing one off to Keith. “You seemed pretty… cut up about him?”

“I don’t know.” Keith sighed, stabbing a fork into a deep fried piece of chicken. “He’s just this
guy. We’ve not even had a conversation but… it seems like by some crazy coincidence that since I
saw him all this weird stuff started happening to me. On the day that I saw him, you moved into
my apartment.”

“How is that crazy? That’s glorious. You’re a lucky man.” Pidge raised her arms in the air
dramatically, like a patron saint.

“But I also met Shiro, and Allura and Hunk… all within a matter of days.” Keith sighed, his
appetite was poor. “And I can’t help but think that… maybe it was just all meant to be? I know that
sounds stupid.”

“Like everything’s connected, huh?” Pidge smiled, nudging him. “Like all of this was supposed to
happen this way.”

“Yeah… I know it sounds stupid but… it can’t be all some peculiar coincidence.” Keith rested
forward on his elbow, his fork still deep in the fried piece of chicken, unsure of what to do with it.

“Hey, I’ve always believed that everything happens for a reason.” Pidge smiled, though there was a
sadness in her eyes. “The bad and the good, no matter what, I’m sure it all happens for a reason.”
God that sucked. I actually missed making an idiot of myself for him. I’m such a fucking sucker.

Keith stared at the floor of the platform, he knew he had to make the first move if he ever wanted to make amends with Lance, but he didn’t know how. He was, very stupidly and at Pidge’s advice, wearing the brightest item of clothing he owned. Which happened to be a bright red, thick knit jumper, which to everyone else probably seemed quite normal, but to Keith he felt like he was under a spotlight. He couldn’t even remember buying the damned thing. He supposed the one redeeming quality of this jumper was how thick and cosy it was, and now that Autumn was well and truly on it’s way, he needed that extra layer of warmth.

He had his jacket laying over his arm, just in case he lost his nerve, which he almost did when a heavy hand landed with a thud on his back.

“Hey, you’re early!” Shiro happily declared, as if it were a rarity he might never see again. “What gives? Love the jumper, really brings out your eyes!”

“Ugh, god, I look stupid don’t I?” Keith groaned, covering his face, feeling the stupid tell-tale warmth of his cheeks going a bright pink colour.

“I see what’s happening here!” A stupid smile slowly started widening on Shiro’s face. “You’re trying to beat him at his own game, hoist him on his own petard!”

“Please don’t make a big deal out of this.” Keith muttered sharply, like Shiro was an embarrassing dad, which based on most of the interactions they’d had thus far, he totally was.

“Oh man, you like him don’t you?” Shiro leant down a little, a teasing look in his eyes. Keith rolled his eyes and bit his lip.

“I don’t like him, I just… I don’t know. I feel like I owe him… something.” Keith groaned, folding his arms petulantly.

“Man, you’re oblivious.” Shiro smiled, patting Keith heavily on the back once more. “Let’s go grab some coffee, we actually have time this morning!”

They returned to the platform with coffees in hand and noticed Lance across the way, again he had his headphones in and his head down, staring at the phone he was rapidly texting on. Keith watched him, feeling an idiot in his red jumper, but not standing down, not hiding away. He wanted, no he needed, to do this.

“Maybe we should shout at him.” Shiro whispered as if Lance would be able to hear them talking anyway.

“He’s got his headphones in, that’s a classic sign that he doesn’t want to be bothered.” Keith gestured, he then noted the grimly set line of his mouth, straight and un-emotive, completely unlike the Lance he admittedly knew next to nothing about.
“Ok, so… we need him to just… notice you.” Shiro muttered, scratching his bristly chin. “Maybe just… walk up and down the platform?”

Keith looked at him with his eyebrow raised.

“You want me to march up and down the platform like a…” Keith struggled for an example. “Like a toy… soldier?”

“Yes, that’s exactly what I want you to do.” Shiro slammed a hand down on Keith’s shoulder, seriousness in his voice. “March like you’ve never marched before. March like you’re in the military, march like you’re at a pride parade, just fucking march Keith. I believe in you. Look at those feet.”

Keith glanced down at his black converse-clad feet and back up at Shiro’s grey, determined eyes.

“Those are the feet that belong to a strongly apologetic and remorseful man.” Shiro commanded, Keith was unbelievably confused but he felt weirdly driven. “Those are the feet that are going to pierce the heavens. Get out there soldier, and give those paving slabs hell.”

So he did. Probably with not as much gusto as Shiro would have liked, but he cheered Keith on nonetheless. Keith walked up and down the platform, constantly staring at Lance like he was trying to bore a hole through him, backwards and forwards, he zigged and he zagged, people from both sides of the platform were beginning to stare, but Lance – who was biting his lip and furrowing his brow – didn’t even glance up.

Keith felt deeply ridiculous and embarrassed as their respective trains pulled up. He groaned audibly and followed Shiro onto the train and dropped into the seat next to him.

“God, why did I think that might actually work.” Keith muttered, slamming his head into the back of the chair in front of him. “I’m an idiot, I give up.”

“Goddamnit Keith!” Shiro yelped, making Keith reel back in shock. “That boy didn’t give up after a year and a half, I won’t see you give up after a goddam day!”

“Yes, sir.” Keith muttered limply, dropping his head back onto the seat in front of him, half-defeated, half a little… optimistic.

Keith stepped into his office, his heart half dejected and half confident, he spotted Hunk over by the kitchen, making himself a coffee. Keith paced over to him, mimicking the aggressive march with which he paced the platform that morning and stood, quietly behind him, totally unsure of what to do next. He wasn’t usually the one to… make the first move so to speak. So he stood, in complete silence, with his hands on his hips whilst Hunk whistled and poured himself a coffee. When Hunk finally turned he yelped in fear and poured burning hot coffee down himself.

Nice one, Keith.

“Oh shit. Sorry.” Keith muttered, reaching for a kitchen towel to help Hunk mop up the mess.

“Holy crap, Keith, what the hell?!?” Hunk exclaimed, his voice high-pitched from the searing burning sensation creeping up his arm.

“Shit. I don’t know. I’m sorry. I came over here to try and talk to you and just…” Keith bit his lip, the look on Hunk’s face told him he was an idiot. “Nevermind. I’ll pay for another shirt. I’m
“N-no, Keith, I’m sorry.” Hunk laughed, patting his shirt dry with the kitchen towel. “I didn’t mean to jump so much. Or swear at you, that was really unprofessional.”

Keith stared at him… when… had he swore?

“Hunk, did you not hear me say shit?” Keith raised an eyebrow at him, unbelieving. “You’re good, honestly. I shouldn’t have scared you like that. I just… didn’t know where to start and I’d been standing there too long, I dunno it was this… whole thing.”

“Don’t sweat it.” Hunk laughed, stepping away and pouring himself a fresh cup, offering Keith one in the process. “How are you feeling today? I was out of the office yesterday so I didn’t get a chance to come see how you were.”

“I’m… fine thanks.” Keith smirked, remembering the cake that was left on his desk. “Thanks for… covering for me. You didn’t have to do that.”

“No sweat, you’d do the same for me!” Hunk smiled, slapping Keith on the shoulder. Keith was 100% sure of the fact that he definitely would not have done the same. “What did you want with me anyhow?”

“I uh…” Keith faltered, regretting every minute, but he’d come this far. “I wanted to… I dunno, take you out for lunch? To thank you… in part for my roommate who demolished your cake in three seconds flat.”

“Oh man, you know I’d love to, but I’m swamped today.” Hunk’s face fell, he sounded genuinely apologetic. Today was not Keith’s day. “Rain check today? I promise I’ll take you somewhere awesome on Monday!”

“No problem.” Keith muttered. “Uh, if I don’t see you before the day ends, have a-“ Keith faltered once more, not believing the words were leaving his lips. “A… weekend.”

“I’ll try?” Hunk laughed, clapping Keith once more on the shoulder for good measure and bounding away like a huge, excitable bunny.

Keith sighed and limped back to his cubicle, the pain in his feet from repetitive impact finally hitting him, perhaps it was for the best that Hunk rejected his offer, at least he wouldn’t have to walk anywhere for lunch.

A couple of hours passed and Keith heard his phone vibrate in his bag, he reached for it and glanced at the screen, a text from Shiro.

Shiro  -  Meet me tomorrow afternoon at the station.

Keith  -  That sounds ominous. Are you going to have me killed?

Shiro  -  Perhaps, I haven’t decided. Come anyway, it’ll be exciting either way.

Keith  -  it kills me to say this but fine.

Shiro  -  you won’t regret it.

Keith wagered he just might.

The end of the day finally came, and Keith actually found himself getting excited at the prospect of
a night in with Pidge, playing video games and eating take-out food and just goofing around. But when he stepped out into the late evening air, there was no one.

It was close to being September, which meant the nights were beginning to get darker, Keith loved the smell in the air and the feeling of being warm inside whilst it was cold and depressing outside. But Keith could remember how those winter winds felt before he managed to get his apartment. Keith wasn’t homeless for long, possibly only a manner of weeks whilst the money he’d earned working whilst at college ran out and he couldn’t stay in the same hotel room anymore, he’d thought about what a stupid idea moving to the city without a plan, money or a job was whilst he’d wandered the streets in the search for shelters.

He knew he wouldn’t be on the streets for long, just before he’d graduated he’d been commissioned by a mysterious buyer who ended up spending about $1,500 dollars, just enough for Keith to put a deposit down on an apartment, an apartment he’d already had his eye on. Mostly for the number, 42 just sounded… nice.

The buyer had wanted the commission to arrive and be perfectly undamaged before the money was released, and the piece had gone over-seas so it had taken a couple of months for the money to come through. It was the last piece of art that Keith ever did, he could barely remember what it looked like, the buyer had come back to him, requesting another commission only for it to fall upon deaf ears.

He suddenly thought about how lucky he really was. Most other people who ended up on the streets, never got off them.

He shouldn’t be worried about whether or not Pidge was there, he was lucky to be able to feed himself and have somewhere to live, he zipped up his jacket over his stupid red jumper and walked to the train station.

As he ascended the stairs of their apartment building he kept telling himself that Pidge was probably just in the apartment. The building seemed spooky and deserted, he couldn’t hear anybody, but he was deafened by the silence around him. His footsteps echoed, and he had a horrible feeling in the pit of his stomach.

He opened the apartment door, it was totally empty and dark. Everything was the way it was when they’d left in the morning, it was eerily cold. Keith realised how much he hated it when he was there alone. He’d become so reliant on the company of others, it almost made him sick.

He flicked the lights on and set about tidying the apartment. He gathered all his brand new, unused art supplies and stashed them in the corner of his room, probably destined to live a life of obscurity and dust collecting. He flopped onto the sofa and stared at the blank TV screen. He should probably get dinner but it didn’t feel right to get it without Pidge. He switched on her games console and tried to pass the time by adventuring through Hyrule, but no amount of pretty scenery and puzzles were enough to stop him worrying.

Hours passed and Keith found himself pacing, teasing the cuff of his jumper with his teeth, he had the game on pause so the room was filled with a soft twinkling music but it did nothing to relax him. His feet were aching from the morning’s activity but he was full of this nervous energy that didn’t quit.

Another hour passed and he could feel anxiety gnawing away at his insides. Was it too much for a roommate to ring their other roommate to make sure they weren’t in some horrific accident?

He grabbed his phone and dialled. The phone rang to voicemail three times before he finally got an

“What?” Keith exclaimed. “Where are you?!”

“Keith! I told you earlier this week, I’m doing a show tonight, y’know, lighting and sound!” She whispered once more into the phone. Keith could hear someone talking loudly in the background, he felt his cheeks burn with shame.

“I-I’m sorry.” Keith sighed, rubbing his forehead.

“Hey, don’t worry.” He could hear a smile in Pidge’s voice. “It’s almost over, I’ll grab dinner and be home in like an… hour?”

“Ok…” Keith felt himself smile. “I’m sorry for not listening. Sorry if I get you in trouble.”

“Don’t say sorry.” Pidge’s voice wavered for a second, it was so slight that Keith almost missed it, but Pidge hung up the phone before he had a chance to ask if she was even ok.

An hour passed and the door finally swung open, Pidge grinned at him with a bag full of Indian food.

“I’m here! Have no fear!” She was smiling but her heart didn’t seem in it. Keith stood to get some plates out of the cupboards.

“I’m sorry for calling you at work.” He admitted quietly. “It was stupid of me to be worried, you can look after yourself.”

Suddenly and without warning he felt Pidge slam into his back and wrap her arms around his waist, clutching him tightly. He could feel her shoulders shaking and the sound of her sniffling cries.

“Pidge?” Keith loosened her grip and spun around, he brushed the hair out of her eyes. She was crying, but he could tell by the look on her face that even if he asked, she wouldn’t tell him why.

Instead, he wrapped his arms around her shoulders protectively, he’d never had to comfort someone before, but he remembered how good it felt just to have someone near you when you didn’t know what it was you were feeling. He could return the favour, he felt like in that moment he would do anything for her. Is this what it felt like to have a sibling, to just have someone you’d protect without question? He rested his head on top of hers, she still smelt safe, she still smelt of home.

He knew right then and there that maybe this was the one thing he’d never lose, this might be the one thing that didn’t let him down or disappoint him.

“Hey, shall we eat food and play video games?” His voice was softer than he knew he was capable of. Pidge sucked in an almighty breath and nodded against his chest.

So they did, the food was good but the company was better. They played and played, Keith was even getting better at Mario Kart, so much so he actually beat Pidge once because of a strategically used red shell and they fell asleep on the couch, bundled under a blanket, completely contented.
Did… not expect that?
Was that his attempt at getting my attention?
Because goddamnit it was so cute.

He awoke the following morning with a snoozing, drooling Pidge on his shoulder, he smiled and gently nudged her off, he stretched off the couch and gazed across at the kitchen.

“You’re about to become my bitch.” Keith snarled, determined.

Half an hour passed and he was well and truly the kitchen’s bitch. There were four failed attempts at pancakes still burning in the bin and Keith was nearly all out of ingredients. He used to be good at this, he was letting his natural survival instincts down. If he really thought about it he was much better at cooking savoury than sweet. He stashed the remaining ingredients away and set about instead making scrambled eggs on toast, that was something he was good at.

He added a little bit of parsley and some pepper on top to garnish and presented a half-asleep Pidge with a full plate of beautifully cooked eggs, she blinked her eyes a couple of time as if unsure if she was still dreaming.

“Hey, you made me breakfast.” She smiled sleepily. “Maybe I will let you wed me. I’ll be Mrs. Edgelord.”

“Uhh, I don’t know about that anymore.” Keith grimaced a little, Pidge actually looked offended.

“Uh, what?! Rude?! You made me promise! In front of the children!” Pidge gestured to the fish who were swimming along completely happy and oblivious.

“Yeah… I know but…” Keith hesitated, unsure if he should say this to her. “I feel like you’re my… I dunno, my sibling. Like we’re family?”

Pidge bit her lip, her eyes full of emotion.

“Don’t cry again, I’m not emotionally capable of handling that again.” Keith laughed teasingly. Pidge just nodded. “Sorry to break your heart.”

“I don’t mind.” She whimpered trying not to cry. “You can break up and leave a wife, but you can’t ever lose your… f-family.”

Keith was leant against the station wall, regretting not asking Shiro for a more specific time, he’d been stood there for about twenty minutes waiting. He glanced down at his phone to see… nothing. He huffed out a big breath and let himself slide down the wall till he was sat on the floor.

Keith  -  Where are you?
Shiro  -  Someone’s an eager beaver. I’m around the corner.
Keith  -  Why would you say something like that. I’m going home.
Just as Keith was about to storm back to the apartment, Shiro rounded the corner with a big smile on his face.

“So, what’s the big idea? You look like the cat that got the cream.” Keith muttered, not liking the stupid look on his face.

“Nothing,” Shiro smiled. “We’re going for crunch, coffee and cocktails.”

“The heck is crunch?” Keith groaned rubbing his face, he should have stayed at home with Pidge.

“I wanted it all to start with a C, so its lunch with a C.” Shiro threw an arm around him, Keith expected them to go onto their usual platform but Shiro directed him to the opposite side, the side he’d usually see Lance on. “It’s also a play on the onomatopoeia of eating something.”

“You’re so lame, you know that right?” Keith muttered, as they stood waiting for their train. “Where are we going for lunch?”

“I think you mean crunch, and it’s a surprise!” Shiro exclaimed, Keith had a very bad feeling about whatever it was that Shiro had planned.

They stepped onto the train and sat down, Keith sat staring out of the window.

“This train takes an hour and a half to get to the other side of the city.” Shiro spoke with amazement. “How is one place so damn big?”

“It’s gotta take one big place to hold everyone’s ‘dreams’.” Keith sighed, remembering what all his fellow classmates had said about moving to the city. They were all chasing their dreams. Keith did it because he thought it was what he was supposed to do.

“Man, that’s philosophical.” Shiro breathed, smiling.

"That and there’s a tonne of stops with people getting on and off.” Keith muttered, not so philosophical.

Shiro chuckled and leant back, pulled some headphones out and offered one to Keith, who accepted.

The train journey slipped by as Shiro and Keith discussed their opposing opinions on music, it got pretty heated to say the least, to the point that Keith balled up Shiro’s headphones and threw them across the train carriage. Which only caused Shiro to burst out laughing as he went to retrieve them, apologising at the group of old women going to the city to see a show.

They stepped off the train and walked up the stairs, stepping out into the crisp autumn air. Shiro glanced down at his phone and pointed in a familiar direction, Keith was slowly having an even worse feeling about what was about to go down.

“Where are we going?” Keith gulped unhappily.

“I told you it’s a surprise.” Shiro responded in a sing-song voice.

“You’re taking me to Lance’s coffee shop aren’t you?” Keith stopped stock still on the pavement.

“God I forgot how good you are at guessing things.” Shiro groaned, hitting his forehead lightly, indicating that he was an idiot, which was a thought that Keith wholeheartedly agreed with.

“What are you doing?!” Keith said through gritted teeth.
“Keith.” Shiro spoke seriously, full military mode like the day before. Keith held his breath. “I know you’re scared. I get it, I was like you once. But… if you keep running away from the things that scare you, you’ll miss all the amazing things that are out there in the world for the taking.”

Keith furrowed his brows.

“I’m right here with you.” Shiro smiled, his eyes comforting. “You’re not doing this on your own, so what have you got to be afraid of?”

Keith really couldn’t argue with him, Shiro was right there, that much was true. But that didn’t account for Lance, that didn’t account for the fact that Lance could turn around and just tell them both to go fuck themselves. Keith wasn’t sure if he could take it, he’d become soft, soft and bitter, a strange oxymoron but that was him all over.

“What if he tells us to-“

“If he tells us to go away,” Shiro smiled. “We’ll say hasta la vista, get some coffee and food somewhere else and pretend he never existed.”

That, Keith could get on board with.

They finally got to the coffee shop, Keith would be lying if he said he wasn’t trying to stall for time by pretending to take pictures of the trees and random artsy looking storm drains. Shiro peered inside, luckily, like he’d predicted, Lance was working.

Shiro turned to Keith.

“Breathe. It’s gonna be okay.” He spoke softly without sounding patronizing which in Keith’s experience was difficult to do.

Keith nodded wordlessly, the anticipation nearly killing him. His heart was in his throat, and racing at the speed of… something going stupidly fast, he was so nervous he’d forgotten how metaphors worked. Was that even a metaphor? Was it a simile? His hands were shaking so much he was sure he was forgetting how sentences worked. What’s in a name? What are legs, and how do they work? Was there a robot remotely controlling him to walk into the coffee shop close behind Shiro and glance around casually, he could feel that if he lifted his arms it’d give away his tremulous nerves.

The bell on the door sounded as they entered the shop, Lance was the only one that seemed to be working so he glanced up automatically, his mouth already forming a smile and the word ‘Welcome’. It faltered for a second and his face made a lot of strange movements, he was completely caught off guard and didn’t know how to react.

Keith tried a weak smile. Lance took in a deep breath like he was nervous and approached them from the other side of the counter.

“H-hey guys,” Lance smiled. His non-shouting voice was something to behold, smooth and comforting with a side of faux cocky self-assurance.

“Hey, sorry to uh… come all the way here, I’m sure it looks a bit weird.” Shiro leant forward casually on the counter, he had such an amicable demeanour and Keith was all kinds of envious. “But… I thought it was about time we all met for real, I guess?”
Lance flickered his eyes between Keith and Shiro, a tiny smirk on his lips.

“Okay… well, it’s cool to meet you both.” Lance smirked, he reached out a hand for Shiro to shake, Shiro shook it confidently, Lance extended the same nicety to Keith.

Keith just stared at Lance’s hand, they were just as pretty as he remembered when he was watching him without his knowledge on the train that one time. God it sounded creepy in Keith’s head.

“Okay…” Lance’s smirk faltered a little as he retracted his hand. “Um, I’m really swamped here right now… what did you guys have planned?”

“CRUNCHCOFFEEANDCOCKTAILS.” Keith blurted. Shiro stared round at him with wide eyes, Lance mimicked the same shocked look and then burst out laughing.

“Um, what?!” He laughed, his laughter was lyrical.

“Um, we are gonna eat lunch I think and um… have some coffee? And go for cocktails? I mean go for drinks.” Keith glanced between the two of them, Shiro looked exceptionally amused.

“Hey, that sounds… great.” Lance chuckled. “But I’m working till pretty late tonight, so I won’t be able to join you I’m afraid.”

Keith was all at once disappointed and relieved.

“What about after work?” Shiro suggested, Lance thought about it for a couple of minutes. He seemed half reluctant and half keen. Keith was familiar quite recently with half feelings.

“I guess I don’t have plans…” Lance wondered to himself, he glanced back at Keith. “Sure… um. I finish at like, seven? Did you guys wanna come back and meet me here?”

“You don’t have to.” Keith muttered, noting Lance’s reluctance. “Like… you don’t have to if you don’t want to.”

Lance regarded him for a second, Keith was trying to be nice, extend him a courtesy that no one had bothered to give him, but Lance looked mildly offended.

“If you don’t want me to come just say, Keith.” Lance lowered his voice a little, Keith bit his lip, that was not what he was trying to say.

“N-no, it’s not that it’s just.” Keith groaned, why did nothing ever happen like he planned?! “You didn’t seem sure, you seemed reluctant and I didn’t want you to feel like we were forcing you.”

“Keith, honestly, if it would make you more comfortable that I wasn’t there I won’t come.” Lance lowered his voice a little more.

“No, no really…” Keith felt his cheeks going pink, Lance was staring at him with a look he couldn’t decipher. Shiro leaned towards Keith.

“He wants you to say that you want him to be there.” Shiro whispered, though if he was trying to stop Lance from hearing him he failed.

Lance smiled a little too softly, Shiro copied the same smile, it was almost eerie. Keith panicked, he didn’t know what he wanted. He wanted both, but it was impossible. He wanted Lance there because… he just did, but then he didn’t either because… he wasn’t sure why. Everything just felt messy in his head.
“Maybe it’d just be easier if you guys went out without me.” Keith muttered, folding his arms, Shiro scoffed and Lance groaned.

“Goddamn you’re such a martyr.” Shiro whined. “We’re all going and that’s final. Lance, we’ll come meet you here at seven and we’ll go for drinks. Easy. Done. Bye.”

“Wait, aren’t you guys gonna stay here for lunch?” Lance held out an arm as Shiro started to make a move to the door.

“We would but I have to have a talk with Keith.” Shiro raised and eyebrow, Lance’s mouth fell into an O shape.

“What?” Keith exclaimed as they stepped out of the shop, he glanced back at Lance who was staring down at his hands with a weird look on his face.

“C’mon.” Shiro grunted, dragging Keith down the street towards a fast food place. He got them food and sat Keith down at a table.

“What is your problem?” Keith whined, feeling like a toddler having a tantrum.

“Keith. What are you afraid of, really?” Shiro muttered after tearing open his box of fries and pouring them onto to the tray like a savage.

“What do you mean?” Keith sighed, getting ready for another military style pep talk.

“Tell me. I’m not here to chew your ear off. Tell me what you’re afraid of.” Shiro stared him down, Keith didn’t feel panicked, he knew that Shiro wasn’t really being an asshole.

“I don’t know.” Was all Keith could come up with. Because he really didn’t know. He’d never had friends, he’d never had whatever it was that Lance was to him, he’d never done any of this it was all so new and scary and he hated most of it but not all of it.

He’d learnt that doing things he thought he hated, actually turned out ok for the most part. Getting a roommate, having people to talk to, having a co-worker he could go for lunch with, all these things that he thought he detested… weren’t as bad as he’d built up in his head.

But that was the thing, anticipating things, building them up. He was scared that he held Lance to such expectations that he would only be a disappointment, and Keith had had enough of being disappointed. Keeping Lance at a distance meant that he’d never be faced with the inevitable disappointment. He knew deep down that he and Lance were very different people, Lance was confident and self-assured, whereas Keith was quiet and self-doubting. They’d never get along as friends let alone anything else.

“You’re scared of being let down, I get it.” Shiro sighed, filling in for Keith’s lack of a response. “But not everyone is going to let you down. I don’t know who hurt you, but I can promise you that not everyone is out to get you. I don’t know Lance, but… I don’t think he’d waste a year and a half trying to get your attention just to let you down right at the end of it all.”

“But what if it turns out he finds me dull as fucking dishwater.” Keith blurted. Maybe he was actually worried about Lance’s expectations of him. There was NO WAY that Keith would be what Lance was picturing he’d be. “Then he’ll have wasted a year and a half for what?!”

“If he finds you dull, that says more about him than it does about you.” Shiro smiled. Keith raised an eyebrow.
The afternoon passed and the 7pm café shutting was giving Keith something close to a heart attack, he really didn’t want it to be awkward. He really didn’t even want to be there, but he knew he should see this through. He and Shiro made their way to the coffee shop, Lance was inside wiping down the tables as they stepped inside.

“Oh wow, you actually came back,” Lance smiled, almost disbelieving.

“Did you think we wouldn’t?” Shiro pulled out a chair and sat down on it, oozing charming nonchalance.

“Uh, yeah I was sure you wouldn’t.” Lance folded up the dish-cloth he was using, untied his apron and stashed it all behind the counter, he switched off the lights that gave the pastries inside such an attractive ambience. Keith couldn’t help but feel as though that was directed at him. He felt a little bad.

“Are you almost ready?” Shiro asked, Lance nodded, he grabbed a set of keys from the cash register, ushered Keith and Shiro out of the door and locked it behind them.

“Where to then?” Lance asked.

Keith and Shiro looked at each other, maybe this wouldn’t be as bad as Keith thought.

Chapter End Notes

Who's ready for some horrible awkward drunken shenanigans! Not meeeee!
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Chapter Summary

In which Keith realises he's in way over his head.

“What the hell are you doing?” They heard a voice from behind, glossy long-locks was suddenly there, a look of half-amused disgust on his face.

“We’re appeasing the lion goddess.” Keith blurted. Lance and Shiro nodded fervently. Lotor raised his eyebrow, suddenly recognizing Keith.

“If we don’t appease her,” Lance continued, walking towards Lotor and placing both hands on his shoulders, deadly serious. “Then fire will rain from above, and giants will dance in the sky!”

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Keith felt like he was wrong. This was not going to be okay.

Upon asking the question, Shiro and Keith realised that they in fact, had no idea where to go. Lance then offered to take them to a very nice bar that he knew.

And here they were, Lance had picked them both out a cocktail each and one for himself, sat in awkward silence, with tension so thick that Keith thought he might choke. Lance was staring off awkwardly into the distance and stirring his drink, the sound of clinking ice and music around them.

All of Keith’s fears had come true at once, and he wanted to run away but he felt too awkward to even swallow. He jumped when Shiro coughed, and glanced over at him, Shiro made a face and they decided to down their drinks in unison.

“I’ll get the next round.” Shiro leapt out of his chair and raced to the bar, Keith almost made grabby hands at him, instead he looked at Lance who smiled awkwardly.

“God.” Keith whispered to himself, his stomach tying itself in knots.

“Huh?” Lance twitched his head up upon hearing Keith talk. Keith just stared at him, his words suddenly didn’t seem to work. Keith simply glanced at Shiro, who was smiling and chatting to the barmaid, the same barmaid that Lance seemed to know quite well.

The bar was pretty quiet for a Saturday night, Keith glanced down at his watch and saw that it was only half seven, had only half an hour passed? It felt like so much longer. He looked back at Lance who looked… sad, disappointed. But there was nothing Keith could do, he was feeling the same way only he was disappointed in himself. Lance looked so dejected and Keith didn’t know what to do about it.

Shiro returned with three fresh drinks and Keith downed his as quickly as he could. He just wanted to lose whatever inhibitions made him so awkward, he had to at least try. Lance was sat with two
full drinks and Shiro had just finished his. Keith leapt up.

“I’ll get the next round!” He exclaimed, finally finding his voice, he hoped it was the booze slipping into his bloodstream. Lance glanced at his two full drinks and winced.

Keith walked quickly over to the bar and sat himself down on one of the stools, the barmaid noticed and wandered over, a big smile on her face.

“Hey cutie,” She oozed casual charm, she had that kind of voice that made you want to listen to her for hours. “What can I get you?”

Keith turned and pointed at Shiro and Lance, who were already talking… maybe it was just Keith, his hand twitched for a second at the realisation.

“W-whatever they ordered.” Keith’s voice wavered, the barmaid smirked, seemingly impressed at the speed with which he and Shiro were drinking their drinks. She disappeared and came back with three full glasses and two shot glasses.

“What’s your name then?” The barmaid asked, dragging a stool so that she was sat opposite Lance, it all felt very spaghetti western.

“It’s Keith…” Keith didn’t know why he bothered responding. “And yours’?” He wasn’t entirely sure why he bothered to ask.

“It’s Nyma,” She smiled, raising her shot glass to Keith as an indication that he should do the same. “You’re here with Lance right?”

Keith threw back his shot at the same time she did. Sambuca, again. Keith tried not to cringe as the liquorice flavour threatened to choke him.

“Yeah…” Keith glanced back again, Shiro and Lance were actually laughing, whatever had happened that Keith missed, must have broken the ice.

“How do you know him?” Nyma asked, innocently.

“I don’t really… know him.” Keith muttered, leaning an elbow on the bar and sipping his drink. “This is my first time properly meeting him.”

“Properly?” Nyma grinned, her curiosity piqued.

“Yeah, we know each other from the train… it’s this… whole weird complicated thing…” Muttered Keith. Nyma’s eyes lit up in recognition.

“No way. You’re the train guy aren’t you!?” Nyma squealed, just loud enough that Lance’s head twitched.

“I guess?” Keith shrugged. “Wait… does Lance talk about me?”

“Only all the time!” Nyma gushed happily, pouring them both another shot. “Oh man, I really thought you weren’t real! I was sure he’d made you up to try and get Lotor off his case!”

“Lotor? His friend?” Keith smirked a little bit and took another shot with Nyma. She was a delight.

“Yeah! He has it so bad for Lance, and Lance totally knows but isn’t interested at all!” Nyma laughed loudly. There was no way Lance didn’t hear her. “I did think a year and a half was a long time to keep up some weird charade. Anyway, I’m glad that whatever he did finally worked, it’s
cool to meet you train dude.”

“Hey, is Lotor… a pizza guy?” Keith asked, just to make sure he had the right guy in mind. Nyma nodded enthusiastically.

“Totally! His dad owns this huge pizza ‘empire’!” Nyma exclaimed. “They have this huge monopoly on pizza in this city! I think he manages one of the stores near where Lance lives, but every now and again he helps out by delivering some pizzas. He’s a cool guy, he’s just a little dense, he doesn’t really see that Lance isn’t interested, either that or he doesn’t care.”

“Wow… that’s…”

“Weird! Right!” Nyma laughed, pouring them both another shot. “But… you should see the stupid, goofy look that Lance gets on his face whenever he talks about you. He goes all-

“Nyma! Hi, what’s the, what’s the um what’s the happy haps… guys?” Lance suddenly appeared behind Keith and almost scared him out of his chair. “What’s goin’ on what’s with all the talking so loudly that I can hear and you aren’t subtle at all Nyma stop it.”

“Nothing!” Nyma smiled innocently. “I’m just getting to know your very nice, very handsome friend here Lance. He’s exactly like you described, long glossy flowing black-

“Okay. Um. We’re gonna stop that now.” Lance exclaimed, grabbing his and Shiro’s drink, he gave Nyma a meaningful look as she poured her and Keith another shot. “C’mon, Keith we’re playing a game, don’t let this harpie steer you wrong.”

Nyma held out her shot glass for him to clink his again, he did and they took another shot together. Keith gave her a slight wave as he walked back over to join Shiro and Lance at the table.

“Whatever she told you, just…” Lance sucked in a breath that seemed to cause him great pain. “just take it with a pinch of salt? Okay?”

Keith shrugged, he could feel the effects of the alcohol already coursing through his veins, he couldn’t help the smirk on his lips, he had a slight advantage over Lance right now, he had information.

“What are we playing then?” Keith asked, laying his hands flat on the coarse wood of the table. Flexing his fingers absentmindedly. Lance was staring.

“We’re gonna play snap again.” Shiro smiled. “I’m sure you’re familiar with that game now, Keith, huh?”

“God.” Keith muttered, remembering the last time they played this game. “But I thought you needed a deck of cards for this?”

“Oh shit… yeah.” Shiro muttered, suddenly remembering.

“Oh hold up, lemme ask Nyma if they’ve got a deck of cards anywhere.” Lance leapt out of his seat and raced over to Nyma. Keith watched them, it didn’t look like he was asking for a deck of cards, it looked more like Nyma was having a stern talking to, which Keith couldn’t help but chuckle at.

“What happened?” Shiro chuckled at Keith’s already intoxicated demeanour. It wasn’t even 8pm.

“Nyma was giving me the low down, the down low.” Keith smiled, taking another sip of his cocktail. “She was telling me about how Lance talks about me with this stupid goofy face on.”
“Why are you surprised by that?!” Shiro laughed, disbelief in his voice. It was true that Lance wasn’t exactly… embarrassed by how forward he’d been, but ever since what happened at the station with Allura, he’d been… not so forthcoming.

It was just a hug, what was his problem? And why did Keith care?

Lance reappeared with a deck of cards and a victorious look on his face.

“Okay! I’m ready! Let’s go!” Lance exclaimed, his energy suddenly electric, Keith could feel it radiating off of him.

“Okay, so I take it you know the rules.” Shiro beamed, grabbing the deck from Lance and shuffling it.

“I’m card master!” Keith yelled, grabbing the freshly shuffled cards out of Shiro’s hands. Shiro only shrugged with an amused look on his face.

“So, it’s queen, ace and five! Got it?” Keith looked between the two, but he couldn’t help but linger on Lance’s eyes, which were locked onto his. They were crazy blue, and sparkly, the kind of eyes that a poet could talk about for fourteen pages at LEAST. Fortunately, or unfortunately for Lance, Keith was not a poet.

“Got it.” Lance smiled, god, Keith’s stomach flipped at it, he was completely lost in Lance’s face. It was pathetic.

“O-ok. Let’s go.” Keith tried to not let his stupid voice betray his stupid thoughts. He started slamming down cards with gusto, and for once, he wasn’t the one losing, Lance was staring at the cards with a bizarre kind of concentration.

“Lance, you gotta drink, you lost about three times.” Shiro laughed, nudging him. Lance yelped a little and grabbed his drink and drank for three seconds whilst Keith counted down slowly.

“Okay, let’s try this again.” Keith began slamming down cards once more, Lance finally slammed his hand down on the table, but on totally the wrong card. “Are you doing this on purpose?”

“No! I swear!” Lance laughed, drinking his drink again, he finally seemed like he’d loosened up a bit, he glanced up at Keith with a stupid smile on his face.

Keith started putting cards on the table once more, then finally, Lance slapped his hand down on the right card, but in last place, his hand landed sharply on the back of Keith’s.

“Ow!” Keith laughed, rubbing the top of his hand. Lance blew on his hand sharply like it were a gun he was blowing smoke from, Keith could help but scoff, he was so goofy.

“You still lost though.” Shiro shrugged, Lance yelped a sound of indignant denial.

“What?!” He yelped. “I slammed my hand down like you guys!”

“Yeah, but you did it last. You’ve got to not be last.” Keith explained, shaking his head.

“I don’t like this game! My turn! I’ve got a far better game!” Lance made grabby hands at the pile of cards.

“Ok, whilst you do that I’ll get some more drinks.” Shiro smiled, picking up the empty glasses like a good patron, Lance quickly grabbed an empty one out of Shiro’s grasp before he could take it.
Shiro just shrugged and took the rest of them to the bar, Nyma laughed gratefully in response.

“What’s your game then?” Keith asked, Lance twitched like he’d been burnt, like he did not expect Keith to talk to him when Shiro wasn’t there.

“Uh, it’s called Kings?” Lance smiled, shuffling the deck and laying out the cards in a circle around the cup. “Every card has a rule. The most important rule, however, is that whenever someone gets a king, you pour a bit of your drink into the cup. And whoever gets the last king has to down the contents.”

Shiro came back balancing three glasses with three tiny shot glasses. Lance and Keith let out a collective groan at the sight of them.

“Nyma insisted.” Shiro shrugged, placing the glasses down and taking a seat, taking in the sight before him. “Kings? A classic.”

“Right!” Lance beamed. Keith glanced between them, they were getting on so well that Keith doubted it’d be different if he were there at all.

“Okay, Keith, you go first.” Lance gestured to Keith. He grabbed a card and lifted it, it was an Ace. He showed it to Lance and Shiro.

“Waterfall. You start.” Shiro grabbed his drink and stared at Keith. “You start drinking and we can’t stop till the person to our right stops.”

“Oh. Okay.” Keith grabbed his drink and started pouring, he drank for a couple of seconds before lowering, but he could see that Shiro was staring at Lance, unwilling to stop drinking his drink. Lance was making evils at him, but still didn’t stop.

Shiro polished off his drink, as he did, so did Lance.

“Oh god. I better go get some more.” Lance stood. He pointed at Shiro. “You a asshole.”

Keith glanced at Shiro, a bitter jealousy rushing through him, it was so easy for Shiro… he was so damn pleasant and easy to talk to. Shiro caught his eye and smirked.

“What’s that look for? You’re doing great!” Shiro laughed encouragingly. Keith narrowed his eyes at him and looked away, hissing a little. He glanced around, the bar had suddenly gotten a little busier. Lance came bustling back with three more drinks, luckily he wasn’t carrying any shot glasses this time.

“Okay, Shiro, your turn!” Lance exclaimed, the booze was definitely having an effect on him, he’d seemingly forgotten about calling Shiro ‘a asshole’ not five minutes before.

Shiro picked up a card, and got their first King, he poured a fairly decent amount of his cocktail into the glass and gestured to Lance. Lance picked up another card and held up an eight.

“Mate. You, Keith, drink with me.” Lance raised his glass to Keith, Keith stared blankly for a few seconds, Lance gestured to Keith’s glass so he picked it up, clinked the glasses together and drank with Lance. Mates.

Keith picked up the next card though he didn’t know how much longer he could keep drinking for. He glanced down at his watch, it was at least past 8pm now.

“Oh, usually this would be categories but I have a better one!” Lance stared at the ten in Keith’s
hands. “My version is Gecko.”

“Huh?” Shiro and Keith asked in unison.

“Okay, so Keith you are the gecko.” Lance turned to Keith, seriousness on his face. “You can touch anything in this room and hang onto it till someone else gets that card, when you do grab onto something, the last one of us to touch the same thing has to drink!”

“That’s a good one!” Shiro laughed, clapping his hands together. Keith glanced around, trying to find the thing that would the most difficult thing to touch.

“You don’t have to do it right now!” Lance touched Keith’s shoulder as if he were a flight risk, he tried not to twitch at Lance’s touch but… he was sure it was the booze. “You can use it whenever you want, until the point that someone else gets that card.”

Keith nodded wordlessly, still reeling from the simplicity of Lance’s hand on his shoulder. Shiro chuckled at him and grabbed a card.

“Okay, Pickle.” Shiro held up the nine of hearts. Lance tapped his chin.

“Sickle.” Lance pointed in the air victoriously. They both looked at Keith expectantly.

“TICKLE!” Keith yelled a little too loudly, they heard a cry from the bar as Nyma threw her arms in the air and yelled it back.

“Nickle!” Shiro yelped suddenly. Lance bit his lip, thinking hard.

“Fuck!” Lance groaned, grabbing his drink and taking a considerable drink.

“You could have had fickle!” Keith shrugged, Lance groaned and drank more.

Lance grabbed a card and groaned as he broke the circle, he wordlessly downed his drink as Shiro clapped and laughed. He huffed out a breath and stood, heading to the bar, Shiro glanced at the card he’d left, it was the number seven. Shiro glanced over at Lance and without a single word threw his arm in the air, Shiro gazed at Keith and started laughing. Keith looked at Lance who was stood with his fist in the air like Freddie Mercury.

“The fuck?” was all that Keith could muster.

“Seven is heaven. Lance can throw his arm up in the air any time he wants!” Shiro announced. “Last one to copy him, drinks!”

Keith shrugged and knocked back some more of his glass. He grabbed a card and poured some of his drink into the communal cup when he saw it was a king. Lance returned with more drinks and glazed-eyed look.

“Maybe we should stop playing this game.” Keith suggested, feeling like he was going to lose control of his body very quickly.

“Okay! We’ll play a quick fire round then!” Shiro yelled, willing to oblige. “We keep picking cards till we find the last two cards, and regular rules apply, last king drinks the communal cup.”

So they did, Shiro got the third King and Lance got the fourth and final one. He grabbed the glass, it was almost spilling over the top and regarded it.

“Tonight, we DRINK LIKE KINGS!” He dramatically thrust it to the sky, brandishing his finest
british accent, Keith automatically threw his hand to the sky and Shiro groaned, realising he’d forgotten the seven rule. They chanted obnoxiously loudly as Lance downed the cup victoriously. He slammed it onto the table when he was done and let out what Keith could only describe as a victorious ‘WOO’.

Shiro laughed and clapped loudly, everyone around them was staring but for once, Keith didn’t care. Lance beamed down at him and he finally climbed down from the table, Keith didn’t even remember him climbing the table but there he was. They flopped down in the chairs, Keith leant forward and stared at his drink.


Keith turned his head and looked at him.

“Yes, blue?” Keith blurted without really thinking, but he was a little too drunk to care.

“What do you do?” Lance leant forward sideways, so that their faces were inches apart.

“I move numbers.” Keith smiled. He knew it wasn’t interesting, it was just lots of numbers.

“Like an accountant?” Lance queried, turning his head to the side. “Is that what you always wanted to do?” Keith rubbed his chin on the table, shaking his head to say no.

“No. Numbers boring.” Keith sat up and stretched, he glanced around the room and suddenly inspiration hit him.

He leapt up and raced over to the other side of the room. There was a huge statue of a beautiful golden Lion. He raised his hands and slowly, ceremoniously placed his hands on its face. He could tell people were staring at him, but he didn’t care and started laughing when he heard Shiro and Lance yelp in recognition, they raced over, pushing and shoving each other to get there first, Keith watched Lance’s tanned, pretty hands lay over his, Keith didn’t even try to pretend he wasn’t blushing because he was, he turned to face Lance, who’s nose was centimetres from his, he looked like he was blushing too. Then finally, better late than never, Shiro slammed his hands down on both of theirs’, painfully hard. He was stupid strong.

“What the hell are you doing?” They heard a voice from behind, glossy long-locks was suddenly there, a look of half-amused disgust on his face.

“We’re appeasing the lion goddess.” Keith blurted. Lance and Shiro nodded fervently. Lotor raised his eyebrow, suddenly recognizing Keith.

“If we don’t appease her,” Lance continued, walking towards Lotor and placing both hands on his shoulders, deadly serious. “Then fire will rain from above, and giants will dance in the sky!”

Lotor lifted his hands and placed them on Lance’s, a charmed smile on his face, Keith grit his teeth slightly at the casually intimate contact.

“Okay, Lance.” He lifted Lance’s hands off his shoulders and turned to Keith and Shiro. “I’m Lotor, you must be Keith, and you are?”

Lotor’s eyes lingered on Keith, he felt a shockwave of dread run through him.

“Shiro,” Shiro held out a hand for Lotor to take, who shook it. Lotor was very tall, Keith suddenly realised, taller even than Shiro.
“Nice to meet you both. Thanks for keeping my friend company.” Lotor threw his arm around Lance’s shoulder casually. Keith couldn’t help the wince on his face, Keith was sure it was the booze but it seemed like Lotor was trying to… mark his territory, like Lance was an object.

“They weren’t keeping me company,” Lance muttered rolling his eyes, with a smirk on his face. “We were hanging out. Are you staying?”

“Can’t, I’ve got to go to work, Nyma mentioned that you were here so I thought I’d check in on you.” Lotor smiled down at Lance, he was laying it on thick. Keith silently cursed Nyma.

“Okay, bye.” Lance stepped away from him and back towards Keith and Shiro, Lotor raised his perfect little face to look down his nose at them, turned and stalked off like the villain from an 80’s cartoon.

“I think the lion goddess has been thoroughly appeased.” Keith muttered, folding his arms and heading back to their table. He slumped down in his chair and sipped his drink.

“Jealously isn’t a good look on you,” smirked Shiro as he re-joined him, Lance was at the bar talking to Nyma again who seemed like she was trying to feign innocence.

“I’m not jealous, Shiro. He just seemed like an asshole.” Keith muttered, his mood had dropped completely.

Lance came back over and dropped into his seat. He grabbed his drink and sipped it, things had gone back to being awkward.

“Wait!” Lance exclaimed and turned to Keith, he leaned towards him, closely. Keith could feel the head radiating off him, he was back to blushing like an idiot. “You didn’t tell me, what it was you wanted to do?”

Keith rolled his eyes, there was no way he was going to get into that now, not in the mood he was in. In response to that, he finished his drink and headed to the bar.

Nyma turned and acknowledged him with a nod. She approached with two shot glasses and a bottle of Sambuca, she was relentless.

“Hey sorry about earlier,” She smiled, trying to make amends.

“What about earlier?” Keith slurred, not entirely sure he trusted himself to recall it.

“For telling you all that stuff about Lance,” Nyma shrugged. “I didn’t mean to make you uncomfortable.”

“Why would it have made me uncomfortable?” Keith slurred again, grabbing the freshly poured shot glass.

“Well, first of all, those were all Lance’s secrets not mine.” She slammed her shot back, and Keith did too. “And also, I didn’t know you had a girlfriend so, there’s that.”

Keith had seen this kind of ridiculous charade in movies and in TV, but there he was, spitting his drink out onto the bar in shock.

“What?” He wiped his mouth whilst Nyma broke down in disgusted laughter. “I have a what?!”

Nyma shook her head and grabbed a dishcloth, once she was done she poured him another shot.
“You know, beautiful girl, long white hair, your girlfriend?” Nyma raised her eyebrow at him before taking her shot. Oh god, Lance did think that Allura was his girlfriend, which didn’t really matter but it mattered to Keith right there and then.

“No, no, I don’t have a girlfriend. I don’t have an anyone.” Keith spluttered. Nyma’s face broke out into the stupidest, goofiest smile ever.

“That is INTERESTING.” She grinned, her teeth a mad white against the glowing lights all around her. “That is interesting. In that case, I take back the apology.”

“Okay.” Keith laughed, he threw back the shot and managed not to spit it out everywhere.

“You should tell Lance that.” Nyma leant forward and spoke quietly. “I wanna see how he reacts.”


Keith’s face didn’t move, she looked at him, genuinely shocked.

“Are… are you serious?” Nyma muttered, vaguely unamused. Keith shrugged. “God. Um, are you really asking me if Lance would care… about you being single. After a year and a half of him wearing the stupidest clothing to try and get your attention and you actually are surprised that Lance would care if he heard that you were single.”

“We barely know each other.” Keith shrugged again. “You can’t ‘like’ someone that you barely know.”

Nyma scoffed and poured another shot for them both, shaking her head, they clinked their glasses and she sent him away, effectively cutting him off.

“Keeeeiiiiitthhhhh.” Lance moaned. Keith bit his lip trying not to think about Lance moaning his name, it was the booze giving him unpure thoughts. “Where’d you go?”

“I went to talk to Nyma.” Keith shrugged and dropped into the seat beside him, Lance leant forward, his eyelids looked heavy.

“Isn’t it weird…” Lance spoke slowly. “How you can speak to someone once, get drunk with them and suddenly you just like… I dunno. You get it right?”

“Uh, yeah?” Keith glanced at Shiro who was almost fast asleep. Keith had noticed them chatting away all night, they got on like a house on fire, Keith felt a little put-out by it.

“Yes, and you realise the closer you are to their face, the cuter they are?” Lance whispered. Lance was under the impression that Keith was in a relationship, there was no way that Lance, in good conscience would be talking about Keith right now.

Keith leant back and leant on the table.

“Yeah, I know what you mean.” Keith smiled a little limply, Lance blinked at him and dropped an arm on his shoulder, it felt heavier than it should have.

At least at the end of all this, Keith could be happy that all this… time that Lance had wasted chasing him, wasn’t for nothing.

Shiro’s head suddenly shot up and Lance couldn’t help but giggle at him. Keith looked away and huffed, feeling suddenly very sober. He got up out of his chair and wandered over to the bar, Nyma
stared at him with her eyebrow raised.

“I told you! You’re cut off!” She smirked. “No more here for you, shoo, go, be free.”

Keith slumped onto the bar and gazed up at her.

“No. Drink with me, Nyma, you’re my only true friend.” He muttered unhappily, he looked back at Lance and Shiro who were leant close to each other over the table, they looked like they were talking about something important, and Lance was blushing like crazy.

“God, you’re a nightmare.” Nyma rubbed her forehead. “But okay, I’ve known you for less than six hours and you’re already a terrible influence on me, if you didn’t already realise, I am the only person working tonight.”

Keith glanced around, damnit she was right. She was the only person working. Keith suddenly had an idea that made him realise he definitely wasn’t sober.

“Lemme help!” He yelped leaping up from the chair, Nyma shook her head and held up her hands.

“No, no no! You’re a drunken mess, there is no way!” Nyma exclaimed, forgetting the fact that she’d slammed however many shots back with Keith.

“Come on, half these people are drunk anyway, who cares?!” Keith gestured round to all the people stood around him. The people that sober, he would have never ever spoken to.

Nyma stared at him for a couple seconds and shrugged.

“Fuck it. It’s my bar.”

Keith grinned and joined her around the back of the bar, when he arrived and took in all that was behind it, he suddenly didn’t feel so confident. There was a lot of… stuff. He looked up and saw two girls looking at him expectantly.

“Uh… hey, what can I… get you?” Keith winced, feeling the anxiety gnawing through his drunken haze.

“Whatsoever you recommend!” One of the girls yelped over the music. That was a safe bet, because Keith literally knew no cocktails. All he knew is he wanted to make the bluest drink he possibly could.

He glanced around and saw something that was the perfect colour. He grabbed some ice, poured them into some fancy looking glasses, poured the blue stuff in and some lemonade and handed them over, the girls – who had watched the entire mess – stared at him.

“You realised you used an entire half bottle of Blue Curacao?” The more sober of the two girls gestured to the glass. Keith looked at Nyma who was too busy with a group of five drunk guys to even notice the wastage.

Keith shrugged.

“No, it’s a mixer, you have to put liquor in there with it!” The drunk girl laughed pointed at a huge skull-shaped bottle of expensive looking vodka on a very high shelf.

Keith felt like these girls were to be trusted, so he poured half of each drink into another glass and started climbing, gracefully he hoped, onto the counter to reach for the bottle of vodka. He glanced
back for a momentary second to see if Nyma was still distracted, and when he confirmed that she in fact was distracted, grabbed bottle by the neck and nimbly leapt down from the counter with an accidental flourish. The girls clapped happily as he tore off the top of the bottle and filled the remainder of each glass with the vodka. They emptied half of the bottle in one fell swoop, Keith topped it up with water and crept back onto the counter and placed it back on it’s pedestal.

Keith grabbed the third glass and raised it in a toast to the two girls. They were staring at him in shock.

“Um… do you know how expensive that vodka is?” The more sober of the girls stared with wide eyes at him.

“Oh, no?” Keith didn’t really know nor care at this point, he looked past the girls at Lance and Shiro, who looked like they were having a drunken, yet very serious heart to heart.

“It’s like $360 dollars a bottle, dude!” The drunker girl laughed raising the glass and clinking it with Keith’s, Keith barely heard her, he didn’t even really care. All three took a sip and the girls wandered off to the rest of their night.

The super expensive vodka was going down way too nicely, it was so smooth and the rest of the drink was just delightful. Keith kept mixing bizarre cocktails for people, hoping that they tasted okay and for the most part he wasn’t freaking out. He’d never have thought that he’d ever be out on a Saturday night, drunk, serving strangers drinks.

Nyma finally grabbed a bell that was sat on the corner of the bar and yelled.

“LAST CALL.” She screamed. Keith had never been anywhere for last call, he’d never expected that his first ever last call would be on the other side of the bar, rushing around to serve drinks and guess how much they cost.

After about twenty minutes of rushing around in a panicked frenzy, the patrons began trickling out, Lance and Shiro were still talking quietly and closely, and Keith’s head was on the bar whilst Nyma mopped up the spillages around him.

“Look at them.” Keith muttered. He didn’t want to be miserable, he didn’t want to be that person, he didn’t even like Lance like that. Nyma followed the gaze of his eyes and tutted.

“I’m not touching that.” She lifted her arms and stepped away, wringing out the cloth, nudging Keith to the side and continuing to clean the bar.

When Nyma had finished cleaning the bar, she dragged Keith over to the table where Lance and Shiro suddenly stopped talking, and locked the front door after the two girls Keith had served earlier waved happily at Keith.

She huffed out an exhausted breath as she dropped into the chair at the head of the table, gazing across the messes that were Lance, Keith and Shiro.

“Okay guys, are you ready to play a little game?” Nyma smiled, leaning forward and talking quietly as if she had a secret.

“That sounds ominous…” Shiro responded, trying to stare her down, his attempt to seem intimidating fell flat as Nyma just scoffed at him.

“No, nothing ominous, it’s just a quick way to get to know each other,” Nyma had the cheekiest, stupidest smirk on her face, but Keith was too far gone on expensive vodka to do anything about it.
Lance seemed the same, his chin was on the table staring up at them, the softest little drunk smile on his face. Keith found it hard to tear his eyes away.

“So, I want all three of you to tell each other a secret.” Nyma grinned, her teeth glittering in the ambient light. Keith blanched, Nyma looked at him dead in the eye, he knew what she was trying to do, but there was no point. “But. If I think it’s a lie, or not a good enough secret, you drink and try again.”

As if from nowhere, Nyma slammed the skull-shaped bottle of vodka down onto the table in front of them and stared at him, a terrifying, un-breaking stare. Did she know? Did she know that half of that $300 bottle of vodka was actually water?

“Nyma, that’s really expensive vodka, what are you doing?” Lance exclaimed gesturing to the bottle, which seemed to be staring at him despite the fact it had hollow eye sockets.

“You’re right. It is expensive, huh?” Nyma still hadn’t broken eye contact with Keith. “How much do you think it is, Keith?”

Oh shit she definitely knew. Was there any point in Keith continuing to feign ignorance? Keith shrugged out of instinct, she scoffed again.

“Doesn’t matter. Shiro, you go first, then Lance, then Keith.” Nyma smiled at Shiro, who shot up as if he’d been asleep the entire time.

“Um… god I don’t have any good secrets.” Shiro stared at the ceiling in thought. “I got this scar in a car accident?”

Shiro moved his arm and pointed out a scar on his forearm, Keith groaned loudly, he’d been curious about the scar across his nose ever since they’d met.

“Lance.” Nyma twitched her head towards him, either Shiro’s secret was good enough or she just wasn’t interested.

“I… I have a…” Lance gulped staring around the room as if trying to find inspiration. “I have a… I have a tattoo!”

“You do?!” Nyma exclaimed, suddenly excited. “How long have I known you for and you never told me that you had a tattoo!”

“Oh, it’s… somewhere I don’t really want you to see it?” Lance laughed, Keith wondered if there were any places Lance didn’t mind people seeing.

“When did you get it?” Nyma asked, wondering if it were a recent thing.

“I’ve uh, I’ve had it for years,” Lance smiled, like it were a fond memory. “I found this artist online and just totally fell in love with their work. So I went and had my favourite piece of theirs done.”

“What’s it of?” Shiro asked, Keith was barely even included in this conversation, it was like Nyma had totally forgotten about the game, which only served to help Keith in the long run.

“I… I don’t wanna say, it’s really personal? I guess…” Lance smiled, Keith desperately wanted to know now.

“Where is it?” Keith blurted, Lance jumped as if he’d forgotten Keith was there, which Keith
couldn’t deny stung a little.

“Uh, somewhere…” Lance smirked, glancing around at the three of them. “Let’s move on, was that a good enough secret, Nyma?”

“Only if you tell me where it is.” Nyma looked down her nose at him suspiciously. “I’m having a hard time believing you actually have one.”

Lance sighed and stood up, he brushed past Keith and leant right next to Nyma’s ear, brushing some of her shiny blonde hair out of the way. Keith was really struggling this evening. Lance whispered something to her and Nyma covered her mouth.


“W-wait really? Are you not gonna tell us?” Keith muttered, Lance smiled meaningfully and shook his head.

“Nope, Lance’s was good enough, it’s your turn. Keith.” She leant forward, clutching the bottle of vodka in her hand and staring at him. “Tell us a secret.”

Keith felt hot, his cheeks were pink. He kept staring at the vodka bottle, he definitely didn’t have $360 dollars to replace the bottle.

“I uh… I hate my job?” Keith tried, all three of them groaned like that much was obvious. Nyma grabbed a shot glass as if out from thin air, opened the bottle and poured some of the liquid in.

Keith felt a little relief knowing that it was probably mostly water. She pushed it across the table at him, he looked at it and threw it back. Yep, mostly water.

“Try again.” Nyma kept her voice low. All three of them were staring at him, Lance especially so, Keith felt his heart racing.

“I uh…” Keith faltered he thought he was actually getting on quite well with Nyma, he didn’t want her to throw him out and force nearly four hundred dollars out of him. “I need to use the bathroom.”

Keith leapt up and ran away, he didn’t even really know where the bathroom was, he just kept walking till he found something that resembled a bathroom. He threw open a stall and sat on top of the toilet seat. He was fine, he knew he wasn’t going to be sick but he couldn’t cope.

He sat staring at the stall door, wondering why he was there, why he’d made these decisions and why he felt so shitty about them. The room was spinning around him, he didn’t think he was going to be sick but then he didn’t think he’d be out till two am on a Saturday night, interacting with the general public, so there were firsts for everything.

He heard the bathroom door open and shut.

“Keith?” Keith’s head shot up at the sound of Lance’s voice. “Are you okay, buddy?”

Buddy. Keith wasn’t sure if he wanted to laugh or cry.

“Yeah,” Keith sighed, resting his head against the bathroom stall wall.

“You okay? Are you screaming at the porcelain telephone?” Lance giggled, Keith could hear that
he was leant up against the stall door.

Keith panicked, what would seem less depressing? The lie that he was vomiting from the amount of alcohol he’d consumed or the fact he was hiding away because he was freaking out.

“Uh… no?” Keith panicked, and then smacked a hand to his head, he’d just invited Lance to ask questions that Keith didn’t know if he had answers to.

“Then… what are you doing?” Lance asked quietly. Fuck. Now what. Keith stood up in a panic and began pacing the stall. “Are you freaking out?”

Keith stopped dead in his tracks.

“It’s fine if you’re freaking out but…” Lance sounded like he was smiling. “In my experience it’s nice to freak out with someone else.”

“I-I’m fine?” Keith tried, but even Lance knew he was lying.

“Do you want me to stick around till you feel better?” Lance asked, Keith sucked in a deep breath and let it out.

Keith unlocked the door and open it, he was face to face with Lance, in the stall doorway of a cocktail bar’s bathroom. Keith had never imagined he’d ever be anywhere like this with someone like Lance, he could feel his heartbeat picking up as he looked up at Lance, who was looking at him with this… weird, soft expression on his face.

“I’m better.” Keith whispered, Lance smiled a big toothy grin and then slowly lifted his arm into the air, Keith laughed and copied him, feeling infinitely better.

“I want chicken.” Lance muttered as the three of them poured out of the doorway, Nyma finally kicked them out after 3am, an hour after everyone else had been thrown out for the night.

“Me too.” Keith muttered, Lance stumbled up to him and threw an arm around Keith’s shoulder, Keith pouted but didn’t push Lance away.

“Chicken?!” Shiro shouted into the night. Lance stopped and gazed at Shiro, who was staring up at the moon with desperation in his eyes. He let go of Keith and headed over to Shiro, he cupped either side of Shiro’s face and Keith felt hot.

“Chicken.” Lance confirmed. “Come, follow me.”

Keith woke up with his face pushed into his pillow, his back arched uncomfortably and he saw a cup of water next to his bedside. He suddenly remembered why he rarely drank. He heard a knock at the door which sounded a thousand times louder than it probably was.

“Keith?” Pidge whispered through the wood, Keith grunted in response and looked up, there was an empty bucket of fried chicken on the floor next to his bed, so they definitely got chicken.

Pidge pushed open the door with a concerned look on her face.

“Oh, hey, buddy.” She smiled glancing at the door as she closed it. “Um, there’s a… guy on our couch?”
Keith sat up in shock, shit, he didn’t remember a thing past the chicken moonlight incident.

“Fuck, who is it?!” Keith whisper-yelled. Pidge reeled back in shock.

“What?! How would I know?!” Pidge exclaimed, though still managing to whisper hoarsely. Keith ran a hand through his hair, grabbed Pidge’s arm and pulled her under the covers with him.

“I think it’s Lance.” Keith whispered, Pidge’s eyes lit up with joy. “NO, no, stop that face.”

“OOOHHHHHHHHH!” Pidge squealed grabbing Keith’s face in her hands.

“No, no no!” Keith exclaimed trying to shut her up. “Stop! It’s not like that, Lance thinks I’m dating Allura, and after last night I think he’s crushing hard on Shiro!”

Pidge blinked a couple of times at him, she’d just had a tonne of information laid on her all at once, she tapped her chin.

“Well, that is quite the predicament…” She couldn’t help the smirk that played on her lips. “Wait, why the hell would he think that you’re dating Allura?”

“Uggghh, because there was this whole thing with a train and…” Keith sighed. “I didn’t want him to see me and Allura was there, so I panicked and hugged her… it was more of an embrace because I buried my face in her neck in an effort to hide my identity but instead… now I have a girlfriend and Lance is not in any way interested in me, so don’t.”

“Why don’t you just tell him you’re not dating Allura?” Pidge shrugged, Keith groaned and facepalmed in response.

“It doesn’t matter now anyway.” He sighed, dropping his head onto Pidge’s shoulder. “You should have seen them, they just got on so well, they talked and laughed for ages, I might as well have not been there at all. He wouldn’t care if I told him anyway.”

Pidge sucked in a lungful of air and patted Keith on the back.

“Sure, okay buddy.” Pidge pushed him off of her and left the room. Keith dropped back onto the bed with a thud, not wanting to move all day.

He felt like garbage, physically and emotionally. He’d repeatedly told himself that he didn’t care what Lance felt, what Lance did and he should have been happy but he felt rotten. Lance was finally off his case, but Keith just felt sad.

He could hear the sound of Pidge and Lance chatting, she must have woken him up. He didn’t understand, why was it just him that made things so awkward and uncomfortable? He could hear that Lance and Pidge were talking and laughing like they’d been friends forever. Keith raked his fingers through his hair, he reached for a rarely-used hair tie on his bedside table and bundled his hair into it. He’d have to get out of bed sooner or later… he’d have to face Lance eventually. He climbed out of bed and pulled on some casual looking pyjamas and stepped out of his bedroom.

Lance glanced around and beamed at him.

“Morning sunshine.” Lance’s smile radiated a warm kindness that Keith struggled to ignore. Keith grunted in response, it was all he could manage.

Keith watched Pidge’s eyes as she watched Lance look at Keith, she burst into a fit of coughing, Lance raced over to her and started gently patting her on the back.
“Woah, are you alright?” Lance asked genuinely concerned, but Pidge was staring aggressively into Keith’s eyes as if he were an idiot.

Keith shook his head with a grim look on his face. Pidge rolled her eyes and ceased with the coughing, reassuring Lance that she was fine.

“Hey, um, I know this is kind of out of the blue,” Lance approached Keith, rubbing his neck awkwardly. “And I know you probably have plans with... you know.”

Keith and Pidge exchanged a look, no, they didn’t know.

“But... I wondered if you guys wanted to come with me and Shiro for... lunch?” Lance finally asked, Keith looked at Pidge, it was obviously an invitation for the both of them, Pidge shook her head fervently.

“Um, I’m free?” Keith shrugged, not wanting to shut him down completely, Lance nodded.

“Does, she um... have plans already then?” Lance asked, Keith glanced at Pidge, why would he refer to Pidge like that right in front of her. Pidge just nodded silently.

“Y-yeah. Sorry, just me I’m afraid.” Keith shrugged. Pidge smirked, like there was some joke that Keith didn’t understand.

“No, no that’s cool!” Lance smiled. “I have a friend we can invite anyway, so no one’s gonna be third-wheeling it.”

Keith sucked in a deep breath, told himself he didn’t care, and tried a smile. More new people, great.

“Let me just get a shower?” Keith asked, gesturing to the bathroom.

“Sure, I’ll make you some breakfast!” Lance smiled, seemingly unaffected by a hangover of any sort.

Keith disappeared into the bathroom and pressed his face against the cool tiles.

He was having a fucking nightmare.

Chapter End Notes

The next chapter will be Lance P.O.V
YAAAY
Tumblr - foxsmo-lder
In which Lance I think everyone can agree, is a fucking sucker.

“Well… Um. We went and got fried chicken,” Lance chuckled, scratching his cheek. “Then we got on the train, you and Shiro were drunkenly singing me songs for the entire hour and a half and then you insisted that I should come and stay at your apartment.”

There it was again, the blush that made Lance’s stomach fill with butterflies.

“R-really?” Keith muttered, looking like he was sweating nervously.

“Yeah… well it was more like you forced me,” Lance laughed at the memory. “You insisted on showing me your fish and that you would wreck me at Mario Kart.”

“Oh… did I?” Keith was staring at his feet.

“You did show me your fish, very proudly, whoops sorry I mean your ‘children’” Lance smiled at Keith’s embarrassed demeanour. “But you did not defeat me at Mario Kart, I am unbeatable at that game.”

Lance was panicking, he honestly hadn’t expected to get so far, he really thought that Keith would flat out refuse him, and now… they were walking to his apartment in thick silence and Lance didn’t actually have plans.

He wasn’t going to lunch with Shiro, or anyone for that matter, he’d literally thought of it off the top of his head because… he wasn’t really ready to leave Keith. They’d not even had a proper conversation, and he was close to sneaking out till Pidge had come in and noticed he was there. And then Keith had to walk out of his bedroom with that sleepy look on his face and that adorable messy bed-head in a fucking ponytail on top of his head.

Lance glanced over at Keith, who was sporting his signature moody pout which Lance for some unknown reason found completely charming. He felt his heart lurch as they reached the second floor, remembering Keith drunkenly and proudly telling Lance that this was his girlfriend’s floor. Keith didn’t even make a move to stop as they passed the corridor.

“Hey, um… aren’t you going to go say hello?” Lance stopped and gestured down the hallway, Keith stared at him, a blank expression on his face, his head followed the direction of Lance’s hand and he twitched as if suddenly remembering something.

“Oh… um, yeah I guess I should?” Keith sounded hideously unsure, he stepped slowly and awkwardly, twitching his head back to look at Lance as he did a strange sort of shuffle-dance down
the corridor.

Lance watched as he stepped in front of the door and held his fist up, poised and ready to knock but he faltered, looked back at Lance, took in a deep breath and finally knocked. Lance couldn’t help but smirk, for someone who had a girlfriend he was unbelievably uncomfortable doing… anything apparently.

Keith looked like he was counting the seconds, he turned to Lance after about fifteen seconds and prepared himself to depart only for the door to fly open and seemingly scare the life out of him. Keith turned stiffly and gave a little wave to whoever opened the door, and Lance watched as a blur of glittering white flew out the door and wrapped her arms around Keith.

“Keith! Hey!” The girl cried happily, her voice was tuneful, if Lance had seen her for the first time out and about in the general public he would not have hesitated to tell her how beautiful he thought she was.

The girl pulled away and gazed up at Keith with great affection in her eyes, Lance bit his lip and looked at the wall, noticing the paint beginning to chip away as it did in these old apartment buildings. As Lance looked back at the two of them, the girl was staring at him, with a soft smile on her face.

“Who’s this?” She asked, Lance rubbed his neck awkwardly. He and Keith hadn’t really… hung out enough to be ‘friends’ per se, so he felt bad introducing himself as such, and with Keith’s social skills, he doubted that the girl would even believe it.

“Oh… this is, Lance.” Keith gestured vaguely in Lance’s direction, as if he couldn’t bear to tear his eyes away from her, Lance wished he’d ever had someone look at him like that.

He could have sworn that Keith had given him a similar look the night before, but… it must have just been the booze and the intensity of appeasing such a grandiose lion goddess.

Lance suddenly felt very awkward being introduced at such a distance, so he finally let his legs carry him towards the couple. She beamed up at him and extended a hand.

“Nice to meet you, Lance, I’m Allura!” Her teeth were perfect, eyes a beautiful ethereal blue tinged with flecks of an almost rose gold and he could imagine that her hair was probably as soft as it looked. “Hey, you know what, I think I’ve seen you before…”

Lance gulped, remembering the first time he had seen Allura, wrapped up in Keith’s embrace, the look on her face had been so happy and contented that Lance couldn’t stand to re-live it.

“I think we must… work in the same area of the city,” Lance laughed, but his voice betrayed how weird he felt looking at her up close. “We get off on the same… station.”

“I’d have thought I’d notice you before,” Allura smiled, she nudged Keith with an unsubtle look on her face. “He’s really cute, huh, Keith?”

Lance watched with vague amusement as Keith’s skin turned from a dusky pale to a sweet fuchsia pink, but couldn’t help the heat in his own cheeks at Allura’s comment. What a… weird thing to say to your boyfriend… not only in front of Lance but just generally. He could hear Keith gulping and stammering like a fish out of water.

“Well, I’m honoured to be hearing something like that,” Lance couldn’t help the stupid, smooth voice that spilled out of him every time he said something goofy like that, “From someone as beautiful as you.”
He found himself leant up against the wall next to her door frame, one arm propping himself up, trying to seem confident and flirtatious. Allura grinned like an idiot at him and glanced back at Keith who looked like he might faint from lack of oxygen.

“Okay, we’re leaving.” Keith muttered abruptly, he patted Allura on the arm – with a weirdly formal undertone – and made to leave.

“Uh Keith, wait!” Allura held out her hand to grab him, but twitched away mere millimetres from actual contact. “D-did you think about what I said?”

Keith froze perfectly still and didn’t even make a move to look back at her.

“Y-yeah.” Was all he seemed to be able to muster, and he stalked off. Lance turned to Allura and shrugged nonchalantly.

“It was really nice to meet you, Allura,” Lance waved confidently, Allura smirked a little seeming to enjoy his energy. “Keith is a lucky guy!”

Lance could have sworn he’d heard Allura say something, but before he could even think about turning around to hear what she had to say he heard Keith yell his name from the floor below, his voice breaking in the middle… he seemed nervous.

He trotted down the stairs and re-joined Keith’s pace, he could tell from the back of Keith’s neck that he was still blushing like crazy, Lance couldn’t help but smile at his flustered demeanour, he’d grown addicted to it in fact, making Keith blush was one of his new favourite things.

He knew at first it was… frustration that was making Keith go red in the face, and he probably should have given up, but he thrived on it, he looked forward to it every single day and he couldn’t deny that he was devastated knowing that Keith had a girlfriend – of course he did, all the best ones do – but… he could at least say he’d made a friend after all this.

And if Keith and Allura broke up… then maybe he could be Keith’s rebound… not that he’d ever say or think that in good conscience. He mentally cursed himself but he couldn’t help the thought either. Maybe if Keith had noticed his ridiculous antics sooner then things would be different. But looking at Allura, and the magnetic pull that she had on Keith, there was no way that Lance would have been good enough.

He pushed those thoughts away as quickly as they came when he joined Keith on the pavement outside of his building. Keith looked up at him expectantly and Lance was suddenly aware of how perfect Keith’s height was next to him. He was at the perfect height that Lance could easily throw his arm around his shoulder, he could comfortably pull him close and rest his chin on the top of Keith’s head whilst they waited in line to buy some movie tickets, he could easily lean in and plant a kiss on Keith’s forehead, he could tuck his hand softly under Keith’s chin in order to lift his head and-

“Lance?” Keith raised his eyebrow, but his cheeks were still tinged pink. “Where are we going?”

“O-oh, yeah, um… follow me, I guess.” Lance stammered, trying not to think about things he knew he couldn’t have.

He tucked his hands into his pockets and begun the walk to his apartment. He’d suggested after having made Keith and Pidge breakfast, that he’d need to head home for a shower as well. Pidge had been the one to suggest that Keith go with him because she needed the apartment to be free… she was vague about why but Keith seemed to have too big a soft spot for her to say no, so he
Lance prayed that he’d remembered to tidy… he sucked in a deep breath remembering that he probably hadn’t, but he didn’t really need to worry about impressing Keith anymore.

“Where are we going for lunch?” Keith muttered, he was stalking along with his arms folded, his jacket pulled up tight around his neck like an adorable little eskimo.

Shit, Lance still didn’t actually have any plans.

“Uh… Shiro didn’t say… you know how he is,” Lance laughed awkwardly, he reached into his pocket for his phone, only to pull it out and discover it was dead. “All cool and mysterious and aloof, you know.”

“Yeah,” Keith scoffed looking away. Lance bit his lip, he was going to have to delay, plug his phone in and wait for some charge, text Shiro an emergency text… and then he was going to have to figure out a fourth person.

Why did he do stupid shit like this. Lance was gonna have to take a loooong bath waiting for his phone to charge, whilst Keith… sat… awkwardly… in silence in his grandmother’s old apartment. Oh god, why had he not thought this through.

“Are you feeling better now?” Lance asked, desperately wishing that things wouldn’t feel uncomfortable like they had last night, but Keith was massively unhelpful as all he did in response was nod. “It looked like you and Nyma were getting along famously!”

Too famously, Nyma had said way too much, or maybe not enough, Lance was in a constant state of contradicting himself.

“Yeah, I could say the same for you and Shiro.” Keith responded, Lance glanced over at him and would be lying if he said he didn’t detect the tiniest hint of jealousy in his words. Lance couldn’t help the smirk on his face thinking that Keith might actually be jealous.

“Yeah, he’s a cool guy,” Lance smirked, giving Keith the side-eye, trying to gauge his reaction. Much to Lance’s joy he watched Keith’s nose crinkle in distaste, but he remained silent.

They walked a little further and finally arrived at Lance’s apartment building, he pushed the door open to the entrance, greeted the doorman and pressed the button for the lift. He turned to see Keith glancing around the building, vaguely fascinated and interested.

The door for the elevator opened and Lance found himself dragging Keith inside.

“What is this place? Are we breaking into someone’s apartment?” Keith whispered in full-panic mode, feeling incredibly out of place.

“Number one rude, this is my apartment building.” Lance laughed shaking his head. “Number two, I inherited this apartment from my grandma.”

“Wow… this place is amazing.” Keith was in quiet awe, staring around at the elevator, the mirrors reflecting four of him back at his fascinated face. “Why would you stay in my apartment when you live somewhere like this?”

Lance gawped, Keith really didn’t remember.

“Well… Um. We went and got fried chicken,” Lance chuckled, scratching his cheek. “Then we got
on the train, you and Shiro were drunkenly singing me songs for the entire hour and a half and then you insisted that I should come and stay at your apartment.”

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“You did show me your fish, very proudly, whoops sorry I mean your ‘children’” Lance smiled at Keith’s embarrassed demeanour. “But you did not defeat me at Mario Kart, I am unbeatable at that game.”

Keith let out a groan like he was in pain.

“Don’t look at me.” Keith muttered, the elevator finally stopped at Lance’s floor and they stepped out. Lance lead Keith to the end of the corridor and opened the front door to his apartment.

It was messy, but not as bad as Lance had anticipated, a few items of clothing strewn about the place and some left over washing up he’d not bothered to do since Friday night.

“Um… make yourself at home? Help yourself to anything in the kitchen,” Lance gestured about the place, before disappearing into his bedroom, plugging his phone into the wall and staring at it, willing for it to get above 2% so that he could notify Shiro of the mess he’d made.

He let out a grunting noise as he dropped backwards onto his bed, he’d forfeited this glorious bed in favour of a cramped sofa, Keith had insisted that they share his bed, but Lance could only imagine the mortification on Keith’s face when he woke up to Lance ultimately and inevitably spooning him.

God had Lance almost relented to that request, Keith didn’t even seem embarrassed when he’d asked, he must have been completely hammered, so much so that it seemed like Keith literally didn’t remember a thing. Which meant he didn’t remember calling Lance cute when he leapt up victoriously after winning Mario Kart for the twentieth time in a row.

Which meant he didn’t remember Lance telling him that he was cuter. Lance cursed himself for even entertaining the idea of flirting with someone in a relationship. But Keith just felt like an exception to most of his rules, Lance felt a horrible dread in the pit of his stomach. He’d never experienced unrequited feelings before, it was all so poetically depressing.

But watching Keith and Allura interact made Lance feel like maybe all wasn’t as he expected, sure Keith looked at Allura with nothing but devotion but there seemed to be some kind of underlying… tension? The way that Keith wouldn’t respond to her question properly, the formal way he bid her farewell and Allura’s reluctance to touch him as he left.

He leapt up when he heard Keith calling for him, he glanced at his phone, 4% he pressed the button to turn it on and left the room.

“Hey, what’s up?” Lance asked, he couldn’t help but laugh at the vision of Keith stood on Lance’s sofa, fear in his eyes.

“I think you have a rat in your apartment.” Keith sputtered, nervously. Lance blanched and ran over
to the cage planted on top of the bureau.

“Shit.” He shook his head, noticing the bent gap in the cage. “It’s not a rat, it’s my pet hamster.”

“H-hamster?” Keith whimpered quietly. “Why would you have a hamster?”

“Oh…?” Keith slowly stepped down from the sofa a little embarrassed.

“Where did you see him go?” Lance asked, trying to bend the bars in the cage back to where they were, what kind of freakishly strong hamster could do that to a cage?

“Him?” Keith smirked.

“Yeah, him? Slav?” Lance shrugged, gesturing to the room. Keith snorted with laughter, Lance couldn’t help but be charmed by his goofy laughter, even if he was making fun of RoRo’s hamster.

“Slav?” Keith chuckled, Lance nodded happily, not being able to help the stupid smile on his face.

“Yeah, Slav. My niece named him, and what kind of monster re-names a hamster?” Lance was having too good a time. “Anyway, where did he go?”

Keith rubbed his neck and pointed at the television stand, Lance rubbed his hands together and went down onto his hands and knees in front of the stand, he closed one of his eyes to try and get a better look but it was too dark. Lance, out of pure habit, rooted around in his pocket for his phone, forgetting completely that it was still on charge.

“Hey, can I borrow your phone for a sec?” Lance asked, reaching a hand out absent-mindedly.

“What, why?” Keith sputtered, seemingly flustered. Lance sat up and stared at him, he was pink in the face and Lance could not, for the life of him, figure out why.

“I need a torch and my phone’s on charge.” Lance raised an eyebrow at him. “C’mon, it’ll take like two seconds, I just wanna make sure Slav is still alive. RoRo would kill me if anything happened to her precious Slav.”

Keith pursed his lips and grabbed his phone, handing it over and looking away. Lance pressed the centre button and noticed a text that had been left un-opened on the screen. It was from Pidge and looked like the beginning of something that Lance probably shouldn’t have seen.

Pidge - If you don’t tell him the truth I’m gonna...

Lance wasn’t nosy, there was no way in hell he was going to open that up, and it was probably super obnoxious to think that Pidge might even be referring to him. But Lance was more curious than ever. Luckily Keith didn’t have a code or a pattern to unlock his phone, Lance used all his will-power to not open the text and turned on the torch. He held it under the TV stand and noticed a tiny, shaking Slav beneath it.

“What are you doing under there, buddy?” Lance cooed. Slav only buzzed angrily in response, unwilling to move. “Hey Keith can you grab some treats? They’re in the drawer underneath his cage.”

He felt Keith’s footsteps falter and move behind him whilst he maintained eye-contact with Slav,
whose little mouth was twitching. He heard the sound of Keith opening the drawer and rooting around.

“What do they look like?” Keith stammered again, Lance groaned and sat up, staring round at Keith who was gazing at him with an un-readable look on his face.

“Take this.” Lance gestured to Keith’s phone. “I’ll get them, keep staring at him, he won’t move if you give him the stare down of his life.”

Keith came over and took the phone out of Lance’s hands and knelt down where Lance had been. He rested his cheek on the floor and stared at Slav. Lance stood watching him for a couple of seconds before he remembered what he was supposed to be doing. Lance rooted around in the drawer to find Slav’s milk treats and re-joined Keith on the floor.

“Here.” Lance placed one of the treats on the floor in front of Keith’s nose, and as if by magic Slav came wandering out. But rather than go for the treat, he climbed Keith’s face with contented curiosity.

“Fuck.” Keith whispered quietly, squeezing his eyes shut. Lance couldn’t help the laughter that escaped him. Seemed that Keith was one with the animals against his will.

“Slav, come on, stop harassing my friend—“ Lance gulped, realising what he’d said, was it too far to say that he and Keith were friends?

Instead of looking at Keith’s expression he grabbed Slav out of Keith’s hair and returned him to the cage, he found some wire in Slav’s hamster drawer and wrapped it around the gap that Slav had made.

“I’m gonna go take a shower.” Lance mentioned awkwardly before rushing back to his bedroom. He grabbed his phone, which had gained 6 more percent and was finally turned on. He spotted a couple of texts from Lotor, all which had been received in the early hours of the morning.

Lotor  -  how was your night?

Lotor  -  Lance? Everything ok? Please let me know when you get home.

Lotor  -  What’s going on? I swung by your apartment and you weren’t there, please tell me that you’re safe.

Lotor  -  I know you Lance, and if you ended up staying at Keith’s then you’re just gonna make things harder for yourself. He has a girlfriend, you’re better than this.

Lance sighed, slapping a hand to his forehead. His stomach was churning unhappily. He knew that, he knew all this but… it was hard.

This was someone he’d tried so hard to impress for a year and a half now. These weren’t feelings that he could easily just… forget. It had only been harder since they’d met, Keith was… everything that Lance had expected and more. He was endlessly fascinating, Lance wanted to cry at the feeling in his cheeks, the feeling in his stomach. He’d made an attempt at cutting ties when he’d found out about Keith’s girlfriend, but then Keith started making the effort. It was so hard, the hardest thing he’d ever done to try and ignore Keith when he was in that gorgeous red jumper, marching up and down the platform like a goofball, Lance was just… so happy that he went to that effort all for him.

Lance sucked in a breath.
Lance - sorry I didn’t respond. My phone was dead. I had a late one. Don’t be mad.

Lance  -  EMERGENCY -  I NEED TO MEET YOU FOR LUNCH, I HAVE KEITH WITH ME YOU SAID YOU’D HELP ME WITH THIS NO MATTER WHAT.

Lance wracked his brains for a couple of seconds, he’d definitely told Keith that there would be a fourth person, he felt his face break out into a smile, he knew the perfect person.

Lance stepped into the living room, freshly washed with two people texted and agreeing to back him up. Keith was nearly half asleep on the sofa, the television on quietly, at least he’d figured out how to turn it on. He looked so sweet, his mouth half open and his eyes nearly shut that Lance felt bad for what he was about to do.

Lance crept, silently, like a ninja, behind Keith. He didn’t know where it had come from, he was too used to having siblings he loved to annoy, and this was a classic. He just had the compulsion to annoy people, and although he and Keith probably weren’t good enough friends for it, Lance hoped it would break the ice a little, even if it meant Keith yelling at him.

He leapt, screaming, grabbing Keith’s shoulders in an effort to scare him, which in Keith’s half-asleep state it totally did. Except Keith leapt up, hoisted himself underneath Lance’s weight and judo-threw him onto the floor, Lance vaguely recognized the throw as an O Goshi. Keith then proceeded to straddle Lance and hold his arms against the floor above Lance’s head, he was scary strong, but Lance couldn’t help the stupid blush on his face feeling Keith’s weight on top of him.

“What the fuck was that.” Keith growled lowly. Fuck, Lance was fucked. The only thing that would make this better would be if Keith, completely out of character and unrealistically, kissed him, aggressively. Lance imagined that Keith was a biter. Lance had to stop imagining things.

“Uh, I’m sorry, dude.” Lance spluttered, trying not to give away the fact that he was completely flustered. “I just… saw you half asleep and it seemed like the perfect opportunity.”

Keith pouted, but didn’t move. He just stared deeply into Lance’s eyes, which didn’t help Lance’s already flustered state, he could have sworn that Keith was leaning closer to him, millimetre by millimetre. Lance was so close to closing the gap when Keith leapt up, covering his mouth.

“You’re such an asshole.” Keith’s voice was breathy. Lance stared up at him from the floor, unable to move, he’d been completely paralyzed by Keith’s… energy. “Fuck.”

Keith dropped back onto the sofa, folding his arms and staring at the TV. Lance sat up and stared at him.

“Sorry,” Lance whispered, he stared at Keith’s closed-off form before being shocked back into reality by the feeling of his phone vibrating in his pocket. He pulled it out and looked down at the text.

Lotor  -  what happened?

Lance blushed, he’d text Lotor back later. He looked at the time, if they left now they’d get to the place that Shiro suggested on time.

“C’mon. We’ve got to go.” Lance spoke, finally standing and trying to rub the flustered feeling
away from his face. Keith grunted in response and stood.

They left the apartment building in blindingly tense and uncomfortable silence, which Lance hated. He wasn’t entirely sure what kind of tension they were currently in so thick that he thought he could cut it with a knife. It felt like more than just awkward new friends, but Lance had to stop letting his thoughts get away from him.

He had to imagine Allura’s face, how heartbroken she’d be if… Lance got in the way. Though he was thinking far too highly of himself to even entertain the idea of anyone leaving someone like that, for someone like him. He sighed, trying to relieve the horrible feeling in his chest. It was going to be ok, he’d get over it eventually, he could even see himself being friends with Allura, she seemed too nice and too beautiful for Lance to successfully hate her.

“Where are we going then?” Keith finally broke the silence, his voice sounded strange, like he was thinking about other things.

“Uh, like I said, Shiro just told me where to meet him.” Lance looked down at his phone, they were only around the corner. As Lance dropped his hand to put his phone back in his pocket, he felt the brush of the back of Keith’s hand and couldn’t help the stupid, audible, flustered gasp that escaped his lips.

He still wasn’t over the fact that not twenty minutes ago he was being straddled by Keith. He’d never had someone have such a hold over him that the slightest awkward touch could send him reeling inside.

“Who’s the friend of yours you invited?” Keith glanced away, if he noticed the touch he didn’t give it away, which Lance was grateful for.

As they turned the corner, he spotted them.

“Shiro! Hunk” Lance waved, he lightly jogged over to them, not even noticing Keith’s expression.

“Hey, Lance!” Hunk waved happily, as Lance got close enough in proximity he grabbed Lance into a crushing bear hug like always. Hunk’s eyes opened and reflected Keith’s shocked expression as he noticed him behind Lance.

Lance greeted Shiro, who was staring at Keith and Hunk, and then he finally noticed them staring at each other.

“Keith! Holy crow! What are you doing here?!” Hunk exclaimed happily, Keith twitched. “I didn’t know you knew my buddy, Lance!”

What. The. Fuck. They knew each other?! Lance seriously underestimated how small the city actually was.

“Wow, um… what are the chances, huh.” Keith responded.

“How do you guys know each other?” Lance queried, noticing how uncomfortable Keith looked.

“We work together!” Hunk exclaimed. Lance blanched, he could only imagine how Keith felt about this, that they were colleagues, professionals, and this was way beyond the realms of professionalism. “How do you guys know each other?”

Keith looked at Lance with a pink-tinged stare. Keith probably knew that Lance had told Hunk about him as ‘the train guy’ which if Lance was honest, would only serve to embarrass him more.
Lance looked at Shiro, who just looked amused at the whole charade and gulped.

“I… uh, we met at a bar.” Lance gulped. Hunk turned and beamed at Lance.

“So, you finally got over your unattainable dream?” Hunk laughed, clapping Lance on the shoulder. Okay, no this was worse. “You were only hurting yourself chasing train guy, I’m happy for you.”

Shiro scoffed happily in the background.

“N-no, me and Keith are just friends and…” Lance faltered, lying was not his strong suit surprisingly. “and train guy… moved… away.”

“Oh, okay, I mean that’s good too!” Hunk laughed, he threw an arm around Lance’s shoulder and looked at Keith and Shiro. “This love-struck idiot had it sooo bad for this guy he kept seeing on the train, he’d go on and on about how cute he was and how much he wanted to stroke his ha-“

“Okayyy!” Shiro interrupted, Lance wasn’t sure if he’d have been able to find the words to stop Hunk, so he was unbelievably grateful for Shiro’s intervention. Keith was staring at the pavement, with a blush that could only be rivalled by Lance’s own. “Let’s go and get some food.”

“I’ve heard of this place! It’s supposed to be amazing!” Hunk gushed, letting go of Lance to clasp his hands together and stare at the menu. “Oh man, lets go. I’m so excited! And hungry!”

Hunk happily wandered in, completely oblivious to Lance and Keith’s collective panic. Shiro looked at them both with the stupidest grin on his face. He could not have been happier with this turn of events.

He clapped them both on the back and guided them into the door, Hunk was already chatting away excitedly to a waitress who had already placed them in a booth. Lance slid in beside Hunk and Shiro slid in so he was opposite Hunk, leaving Keith with no option but to sit opposite Lance, so instead he stood at the end of the table with his fists clenched.

“Keith, come on.” Shiro gently coaxed him like a nervous cat. Keith grunted and finally sat in the chair, but he stared at the table with such intensity it looked like he’d discovered the meaning of life, the universe and everything etched in the wood.

Lance wanted to cry, or disappear or even have the ground swallow him whole. Anything to help him escape this uneasiness. Maybe he should have warned Hunk before he came. Lance cursed the fact he spent most of his time living too much in the moment and never thought about the future. This was gonna be horrendous.

“Hey, Hunk.” Shiro smiled, his usual amicable, confident self, “What brought you to the city?”

“Oh, well,” Hunk laughed happily after giving the waitress his huge order. “You can thank this one for that.” Hunk gestured to Lance who smirked and shrugged in response.

“Lance said that he knew somewhere I could be a chef and have somewhere to live!” Hunk exclaimed, hitting Lance’s shoulder so hard Lance was sure he’d get a bruise. “I thought, perfect! Travelled across state and it turned out he’d hired me to be an in-house chef for his grandmother.”

“Technically the job description wasn’t wrong!” Lance laughed at the memory. Hunk tutted and shook his head.

“Eventually, I enjoyed her company so much I basically became her carer.” Hunk smiled fondly.
“She was a delight, and the way she used to fire off insults and scolding’s in Spanish at Lance would make me laugh for days.”

“So why then, are you working with Keith?” Shiro asked, Lance heard Keith yelp beside Shiro, biting his lip, predicting what was about to come next.

“Well, she died about a year ago?” Hunk spoke thoughtfully, glancing at Lance who nodded in confirmation.

Lance hated the memory, he adored his grandmother, but she was poorly and in a lot of pain. Lance moved to the city to help out with her care since his mom and dad just didn’t have the time. He had insisted Hunk move in under minutely false pretences, because she was getting so ill that she couldn’t cook for herself anymore.

Lance also knew that Hunk was unhappy where he was, and poor, so his plan was perfect, Hunk had somewhere to live and Lance’s grandmother had someone to keep her company almost always. It was only a convenient plus that Hunk was a good cook. Lance’s grandmother had passed away in her sleep, happy, well-fed and in good company. Lance couldn’t have asked for anything more, it was everything she deserved.

“Oh man, I’m really sorry.” Shiro looked genuinely saddened. Keith shifted uncomfortably in his seat.

“Me too.” Keith muttered. “I’ve had Hunk’s cooking. It’s amazing, she was lucky.”

Lance tried to stop himself from smiling, Keith was giving him so little but… it felt like so much coming from him, Lance held him in far too high a regard.

“And technically, I do kind of still work for Lance as well,” Hunk laughed, Shiro raised an eyebrow in query. “I bake nearly all the stuff they sell in the coffee shop. But I don’t make enough from that for it to be my full-time job unfortunately.”

“So that’s how you started working with Keith!” Shiro grinned, he was so happy with this turn of events. Lance and Keith both hated him for it.

“I know! Small world right?!” Hunk responded happily. Their food arrived and Hunk was rendered silent as he dug into his food.

Keith hadn’t made eye-contact with Lance for the entire meal until dessert. Keith was the only person that didn’t bother to order dessert, but when Lance’s sundae arrived, Keith was eyeing it with a desperate hunger for sugar. He glanced up at Lance with a strange look in his eyes, like he was begging for something.

“You want to share?” Lance smiled teasingly, waving his spoon in the air. Keith pouted and looked away, but nodded nonetheless.

Lance took a big scoop of the sundae and handed it over to Keith, he had intended for Keith to take the spoon, but Keith stared at Lance and then awkwardly ate it straight off the spoon. Lance almost dropped the goddamn thing, he’d just inadvertently fed Keith, and it was too cute for Lance to handle.

Shiro who was covering his mouth trying to stifle his laughter was shaking at the effort of it, Keith didn’t notice, he was too busy enjoying the ice cream in his mouth. And Hunk’s eyes were darting between the two of them, wondering what the hell was happening.
“Just friends, huh?” Hunk spoke softly, Keith didn’t hear him but it sent Shiro over the edge, and he burst into a wracking laughter. Lance wanted to slam his head against the table in an effort to knock himself out, but Keith totally didn’t even notice, he was looking at Lance expectantly.

“M-more?” Lance stammered, Keith had this awe-filled look in his eyes as he nodded. Lance wanted to curl up into a ball and cry, wishing that he could see that face all the time. “L-let’s get another spoon, hey?”

Lance was so glad to have Shiro and Hunk there, as much as Hunk had embarrassed him earlier, it meant that there was no awkwardness, no tension. Keith was actually talking, barely but hey, at least he was interacting, he still hadn’t really said much to Lance. But he could understand why, maybe Lance was being too obvious and making him uncomfortable. Lance sighed when the bill came and they all paid for their food, Keith even insisted on paying half for the sundae that Keith ended up hogging, not that Lance minded, he’d have killed for the joyful look on Keith’s face whilst he ate it.

But he was sad that it was time to go. It wasn’t even like he could try and convince everyone to go out for drinks after, it was a Sunday night and Lotor was probably wondering why he’d not text back.

“I’ll… see you tomorrow.” He bid them farewell, Hunk went in one direction and Shiro and Keith stalked off together. Lance glanced down at his phone.

Lotor  -  Laaance, quit ignoring me! I finish work at 7, I’m coming over after.

A quick glance at Lance’s phone told him that seven was only five minutes away. He leapt like he’d been burnt and rushed back to his apartment. Lotor was going to chew him out when he found out what Lance had been doing today.

He knew that Lotor had… a thing for him. But, as much as Lotor was beautiful and intelligent and interesting, Lance just didn’t see him like that. They’d been friends for too long, and Lance truly valued him as such, so he just kept pretending he didn’t notice.

He’d hoped that gushing about Keith, although he didn’t have to force or make up any of the things he said, would put him off. But it didn’t. Much to Lance’s frustration and Lance didn’t like confrontation, so he daren’t tell Lotor to back off. But… there was always that doubt that Lance, again, was thinking too highly of himself. What was there for Lotor to be interested in anyway? Lance was just… Lance. He was incredibly… average, if not a little mediocre in fact.

He sighed as he arrived at his apartment and Lotor was already waiting outside. Still in his work uniform, looking as effortlessly beautiful as always.

“Hey, sorry to keep you waiting.” Lance sighed, pulling his keys out of his pocket and opening the door. He had a sudden flashback of Keith being half-asleep on his sofa and felt a twinge in his stomach.

He wanted to be coming through his front door with Keith, flopping on the sofa next to him, and hearing all about his day. Lance inhaled a deep breath and tried not to think about how they’d cuddle up together and watch a movie, he tried not to think about running his fingers through Keith’s hair and just… being with him.

He was such a fucking sucker and he knew it. And it killed him to imagine such instances but… he
knew that his imaginings would be the closest thing he’d get to it being a reality. Lotor stared at him as he stood in the doorway, looking sadly at the sofa.

“What have you done?” Lotor sighed, nudging past him. “You’re such a sap.”

Lotor bustled around in the kitchen, he always made himself at home when he came to Lance’s apartment.

“What happened last night, then?” Lotor sighed, carrying two cups of tea to the couch and dropping down on it. Lotor always forgot that Lance hated tea, but Lance didn’t have the heart to say anything now that he’d brewed it for him.

“Not much. After you left, we had some more drinks, got some food and then came home.” Lance shrugged, blowing on his tea to try and cool it down. If he was forced to ‘enjoy’ tea, he might as well try not to burn himself as well.

“But you didn’t come home, did you?” Lotor raised an eyebrow, judgingly. Lance groaned.

“Fuck you.” Lance muttered. “I stayed at Keith’s but nothing happened. I’m aware he has a girlfriend so don’t give me that look. He insisted I stay. I slept on the sofa, no big deal.”

“Mhm.” Lotor sat up and leant forward on his thighs. “I’m only saying this because I care for you, deeply, but you shouldn’t see him anymore.”

Lance bit his lip and looked away, Lance knew he was right. He was only going to end up getting hurt, this was all so goddamn messy. Lance hadn’t even thought about what he was going to do on the train tomorrow. Would he wave? Draw a picture? Write a sign? Everything just felt too… unfamiliar now, like he knew Keith too well to go back to that. Keith had straddled him for fuck sake, they’d stared into each other eyes on multiple occasions, there was no sign that Lance could draw that would… equal that.

“I know.” Lance sighed, taking a sip of tea, it was disgusting but he had to drink it now.

“Promise me you’re not going to hurt yourself anymore,” Lotor’s face deadly serious. “Promise me you’re not going to entertain this ridiculous idea of some kind of unattainable relationship with this man.”

Lance sucked in a deep breath. He really liked Keith, like a lot. More than he’d ever liked anyone else and he barely knew him. If he carried on getting to know Keith and they did become good friends? He might end up falling for him, and Lance wasn’t sure if he’d ever be able to recover. He knew that… cutting ties with Keith was the right thing to do.

“I promise.”

Chapter End Notes

dhgfhlflndf i’d marry lance if i could honestly.
thank you for the comments & kudos, i thrive off it :3
tumblr - foxsmo-1der
Chapter Summary

In which Keith kind of goes on a date?

“Oh my god, did you guys kiss?!“ Shiro whisper-yelled, grabbing both of Keith’s arms. “Holy shit, you kissed didn’t you!”

“No! We didn’t kiss! I just straddled him is all!” Keith exclaimed, way too much information. If he could eat his words he would because Shiro’s face was the single most ridiculous thing he’d ever seen. “NOT LIKE THAT!”

“HOLY SHIT KEITH!” Shiro all but screamed, Keith glanced back and breathed a sigh of relief knowing that Lance wasn’t there to see Shiro’s ridiculous reactions. “WHAT HAPPENED?! TELL ME EVERYTHING!”

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Keith couldn’t help but look back at Lance as he and Shiro walked away, he was looking sadly at his phone.

“What happened last night then?” Shiro grinned, elbowing Keith in the side to get his attention. “Or should I say, this morning?”

“Stop, you know nothing happened.” Keith groaned, his face still hot and uncomfortable. “As far as Lance is concerned I’m dating Allura. He’s too nice a guy to push anything.”

“I don’t know about that,” Shiro smirked. “You should have seen him, you should have heard him, honestly. He’s got it so bad for you.”

“I think you’re mis-reading things.” Keith sighed, remembering the way that Lance looked at Shiro, the way he spoke to Allura. Maybe that was just Lance’s way… he was just a flirty person.

Speaking of, how the hell did Lance know that that was Allura’s floor? He cursed himself for drinking that expensive vodka, he didn’t remember anything. Keith felt his stomach drop, he must have told him that she lived there, he was perpetuating this stupid idea of his dating Allura himself. He was a bad liar and one way or another, Lance was bound to find out and hate him for lying.

He was so lucky that Allura didn’t say anything, though she had nearly made him slip up by saying that Lance was cute.

“I’m miss-reading things?” Shiro scoffed. “God, you’re more oblivious than I thought.”

“Stop.” Keith muttered, rubbing his forehead.

Too much had happened that day, he’d had this… weird glimpse into Lance’s world. His
apartment, his bizarrely named pets, his family, his life. And he wanted to hit himself because he wanted to know more. He wanted to know everything about Lance and it was killing him.

And then Lance had to make him jump, and Keith just HAD to break out his vague Judo knowledge and straddle Lance. God… he was so close to kissing him, and Keith had never been willing to kiss anyone before.

Keith kept telling himself it was just because he was tired, but Lance’s expectant face, the puckering of his lips, he looked like he wanted to kiss him back. But there was no way. Keith couldn’t let himself think like that, Keith didn’t do crushes and there was no way that Lance was still interested in him. But he couldn’t deny the fluttering off his stupid heart, the way Lance looked so… vulnerable pinned down like that.

“Keith! What the fuck is that on your face!” Shiro laughed, grabbing his arm and pointing at Keith’s face. “What the fuck happened? You are the same shade as a raspberry, you HAVE to tell me what happened!”

“I don’t want to talk about it.” Keith muttered, folding his arms. He was getting distracted and flustered again and his stupid cheeks were betraying his thoughts.

“Oh my god, did you guys kiss?!” Shiro whisper-yelled, grabbing both of Keith’s arms. “Holy shit, you kissed didn’t you!”

“No! We didn’t kiss! I just straddled him is all!” Keith exclaimed, way too much information. If he could eat his words he would because Shiro’s face was the single most ridiculous thing he’d ever seen. “NOT LIKE THAT!”

“HOLY SHIT KEITH!” Shiro all but screamed, Keith glanced back and breathed a sigh of relief knowing that Lance wasn’t there to see Shiro’s ridiculous reactions. “WHAT HAPPENED?! TELL ME EVERYTHING!”

“Fuck! I was almost asleep on his sofa and he scared me!” Keith exclaimed. “So I O Goshied him and accidentally began straddling him! Nothing happened!”

“Oh man, your affection is weird.” Shiro finally let go of Keith and continued walking. “But you don’t have to worry, I know for a fact that he would 100% bang you.”

“Fuck off.” Keith muttered. “I think you mean he would 100% bang you.”

“That’s not what I heard.” Shiro grinned happily. Keith rolled his eyes 108 ½ and ignored Shiro, not entirely understanding why he was pretending Lance was interested. “And I told you, Lance is no way my type.”

Keith shook his head, trying not to think about the possibility. Keith’s chest hurt at the thought, he couldn’t let himself think of Lance as anything other than a friend. He never pictured himself… pining pathetically over someone, he couldn’t let himself do it, he couldn’t stand how weak it made him feel.

This wasn’t a crush, it was a fleeting… feeling. He’d get over it soon.

He made it home, racing past the second floor corridor and throwing the door open, he was so exhausted. His mind had been racing so much that he just couldn’t cope with anymore. Pidge was on the sofa watching a film, Keith dropped next to her and rested his head on her shoulder.
“Alright, my love?” Pidge asked petting his cheek softly by way of greeting. “You ignored my text. Did you tell him? How did it go?”

“What text?” Keith absent-mindedly grabbed his phone out of his pocket.

_Pidge - if you don’t tell him the truth I’m gonna break all your shit and throw that canvas away._

Keith glanced at the time she sent it, and felt all the colour drain from his face. She’d sent it as soon as they’d left, which meant when Lance had taken Keith’s phone to use the torch, he’d definitely seen it.

But the text had been left un-opened. Keith locked his phone and glanced at the screen, all that could be seen were the first nine words. Fuck. Somehow that was worse, it sounded ominous. There was no way that Lance didn’t see it.

“No. I didn’t even see the text. You’ve doomed me.” Keith cried. If Lance had seen it, he didn’t mention it… Keith wasn’t entirely sure how he felt about that.

Did it confirm that Lance definitely didn’t have feelings for him because he was too uncomfortable to bring it up? Keith couldn’t be sure, and he’d probably never know because there was NO WAY he was going to mention it.

“God, I just want to slap you.” Pidge grunted. “When you stepped out of your bedroom this morning, he looked at you like he’d just won the lottery, been given a box of puppies and been given his dream job. You’re an idiot.”

“Not you too, Pidge.” Keith moaned as he sat up. “I get enough of that from Shiro. There’s nothing there, he’s not interested, he thinks I have a girlfriend.”

“I could kill you!” Pidge groaned loudly and paused the film, turning to him. “Why are you denying yourself this?! Just tell him, the longer you keep up this lie, the harder it will be to be honest about it.”

“I can’t! He met her, he told her that I was a lucky guy!” Keith exclaimed, burying his face in the blanket. Pidge pulled his head up and cupped his cheeks.

“Keith. If you just explain the situation, I’m sure he’d understand.” Pidge sighed, shaking her head. “He’d probably find it hilarious. However, if you keep lying to him, when he eventually finds out because Shiro or I’ve told him, he might not be able to forgive you.”

“Or, you could just… y’know, not tell him.” Keith muttered, his eyes low. Pidge scoffed and let go of his face. Resuming the movie and effectively ending the conversation.

Keith found himself unable to sleep that night, all he could picture was Lance’s face beneath him, lids half open with some kind of… flustered blush on his face. All he could hear was Hunk talking about Lance’s pining after ‘train guy’. Keith kept forgetting that he and ‘train guy’ were one in the same, and Lance had said all those things about him. Keith sucked in a deep breath. Pidge was right, if Keith wasn’t honest now and Lance found out weeks down the line, Lance would probably hate him.

An uncharacteristic urge overcame him and he grabbed his phone, remembering that Lance had given him his number the night before.

_Keith - Hey, Lance. it’s Keith._
Keith - This is probably going to seem really out of the blue... and you probably won’t even care but.

Keith - Holy shit why is this so terrifying to say.

Keith - I don’t have a girlfriend. I was never dating Allura.

Keith - Sorry that I lied but...

Keith - I get it if you don’t wanna... be friends with me anymore I guess.

Keith - It was a pretty... weird thing for me to do, I guess...

Keith almost threw his phone across the room, cursing himself for the entire fucking charade in the first place. He shoved his face in his pillow, knowing deep down that if Lance didn’t respond, there was absolutely no way that Keith was going to be sleeping tonight.

This was all such a mess, he just wished that he could start their entire relationship over again, his heart was racing. He stared up at the ceiling, a feeling of dreaded realisation rushing through him.

He kept telling himself he didn’t have a crush on Lance, but he was wrong, he was so fucking wrong. Keith couldn’t say he was wrong about a lot of things, but this... this was one of them.

He had a painful as, bona fide, crippling crush on that fluffy blue jacket wearing idiot. He gulped and leapt out of his bed, he felt so... full of adrenaline at this weird realisation. He ran out of his bedroom and burst into Pidge’s room, she sat up in terror, grabbing at her bedside table for her glasses.

“Keith? What’s wrong?” Pidge muttered rubbing her eyes, confused and a little terrified.

“Pidge.” Keith leapt onto her bed and grabbed her by the face. “I’m fucked. I’m so so fucked. How could you let this happen to me?!?”

“Are you on something?” Pidge muttered, but couldn’t help the little smile on her face. “Do you owe your dealer some money? How am I to blame for this?! I always said, don’t do drugs kids.”

“I’m fucked Pidge, what do I do?!” Keith groaned. Pidge sighed and rolled her eyes, she pulled Keith’s hands off her face with great effort, pulled the covers off her and patted the bed next to her. Keith bundled into bed with her and grabbed her face.

“Okay, number one, stop that.” Pidge muttered, pulling his hands away again. “Number two, what the fuck is your deal, dude! Start at the beginning.”

“Pidge, I like him.” Keith felt so... unwell saying it out loud but now that he’d said it, it was more true than ever. “I like him, what the fuck. Why did you let this happen to me?!?”

“What? Like who?” Pidge was so foggy with sleep, and it was driving Keith insane.

“Lance! I like Lance!” Keith cried, burying his face in Pidge’s sheets. “Fuck I can’t believe I’m saying it out LOUD. Pidge, how-“

“Did I let this happen to you?!?” Pidge finished his sentence, the biggest, stupidest smile on her face. “ARE you kidding me, KEITH! I could have told you that you liked him days ago!”

“Shut up. Pidge, help me. I don’t know what to do.” He whined, feeling his cheeks burn, his little heart couldn’t take it.
“Well, I think you need to tell him you don’t have a girlfriend.” Pidge smiled, utterly elated at Keith’s delayed realisation.

“Fuck.” Keith leapt out of her bed and left the room, he ran into his room and grabbed his phone, there were two texts and his heart leapt into his throat. Before he had the confidence to read them he leapt back into Pidge’s bed, who grunted, half-asleep again.

With a shaking hand, he tapped on the messages, his cheeks desperately aflame.

Lance  -  well, that was a lot to take in all at once. Um… why didn’t you tell me sooner? I’ve been thinking this entire time that you had a girlfriend! That’s messed up dude! I’m pissed!

Lance  -  I do feel however, you should 100% have a chance to explain yourself in person, so I expect to see you tomorrow evening, waiting for me at the train station and you can make it up to me by making me dinner.

Keith almost screamed like a teenager. Pidge was squealing beside him. Holy shit, Keith needed to breathe, this was so unlike anything he’d ever experienced before and he was so unprepared for it. Keith felt excited and equally deathly afraid. Was this a date? Or was it just Lance giving Keith a chance to explain his stupidity? Or a chance for Lance to ring him out for lying to him for so long? Keith didn’t know but, he wasn’t going to let his anxiety hold him back.

Keith  -  sure, any requests.

“Nice, play it cool, play it cool.” Pidge smirked. “I won’t tell him next time I see him that you were almost squealing like a teenage girl at a concert.”

“Go fuck yourself!” Keith laughed, nudging her, they stared at the screen, waiting for a response.

Lance  -  chicken fajitas. See you tomorrow, sleep tight.

“CHICKEN FAJIIIIITAS!” Pidge exclaimed, she was far more excited than she needed to be, but Keith couldn’t even be annoyed, he was pretty excited too.

Keith exhaled a huge, cleansing breath, wrapped Pidge happily up in his arms and fell asleep with the stupidest smile on his face.

Keith was really nervous, he wasn’t seeing Lance properly until later but… he was about to see him for the first time since Keith had realised he actually liked him. Should he wave? Should he throw a paper aeroplane saying ‘hi’ over the tracks? Should he shout? Do a dance? He didn’t know.

He walked towards Shiro was staring with curiosity over at Lance, who when Keith looked over too, was sporting the goofiest grin on his face.

“What… happened?” Shiro asked, he suddenly turned and saw that Keith smirking in response. “What am I missing here?”

“I told him.” Keith muttered, feeling the heat rise to his cheeks once more. Shiro gasped and slammed Keith’s coffee into his chest with excitement.

“Fuck me sideways! You told him?!” Shiro exclaimed, and then leant back, confused. “Wait, what did you tell him?”
Keith didn’t feel like he could say it out loud again, the smile that would appear if he did threatened to make his cheeks ache horribly. Instead he wordlessly grabbed his phone and showed Shiro instead. Shiro read it lightning fast and almost dropped the phone in shock.

“Keith. My boy, I am... so proud of you.” Shiro mocked a father crying with pride. “Look at him, he’s so happy.”

Keith saw that their trains were pulling up, he used the five second window to throw a wave in Lance’s direction before leaping on the train, his stomach threatening to make him puke with excitement. He just wanted the day to be over, he was scared, more scared than he ever had been before, he was scared of rejection, he was scared of not being good enough but fuck, he was more scared of not doing something about this feeling, of pretending this emotion didn’t exist.

And Lance seemed worth the fear.

Keith arrived at work feeling antsy, full of uncomfortable energy. He wanted, no he needed for the day to be over. He had to get all this… adrenaline out of him. He watched Hunk bounding over happily.

“Hey! Keith! How are you?” Keith exclaimed happily, Keith smiled at him, for probably the first time since they met, definitely for the first time judging by Hunk’s shocked reaction.

“I’m okay, you?” Keith responded, folding his arms, comfortably, another thing that shocked Hunk.

“Y-yeah, I’m fine, are we still on for lunch?” Hunk asked. Keith blanched, he’d totally forgotten about that, he wasn’t sure if he’d be able to manage dinner, and his stomach was so full of something like butterflies that his appetite was almost completely gone.

“Hey, can we do another rain check?” Keith suddenly pondered over what the fuck rain check even meant. “I’ve got tonnes of work to do today!”

“Hey, no sweat! We’ll go tomorrow, see ya!” Hunk waved and bounded away as happily as ever.

Keith sat in front of his computer, stretching and flexing his hands, his heart still going a million miles an hour. He wasn’t even sure if he could work, his mind was completely elsewhere, which wasn’t good, usually working made the day pass a little quicker. He groaned and stretched his arms, this was going to be a long day.

Okay, maybe not long enough, the day came to an end and Keith had to get his train, and suddenly he was crippled by his nerves. He stepped out onto the pavement and felt Pidge grab his arm excitedly.

“C’mon! You’ll be late for your date!” Pidge grinned, Keith groaned.

“It’s not a date!” Keith moaned unhappily as Pidge dragged him along. She glanced back at him and shook her head amusedly.

“Okay, okay, you’ll be late to cook dinner for your new boooyfriend.” Pidge grinned, which only made Keith groan louder.

“He’s not my boyfriend! How do you know I’m not gonna turn up there and he’s gonna yell at me, and tell me to go fuck myself!” Keith wanted to hide, now more than ever. “What if I get there and
it turns out he finds me boring as fuck! What if I get there and he doesn’t like me and he just wanted to tell me that to my face!”

“Keith! Chill!” Pidge laughed as she pulled him onto their train and sat him down. “Don’t think too much, you don’t and won’t always have control over everything, and that’s not always a bad thing.”

“But I hate not being in control.” Keith muttered, Pidge grabbed his face and squeezed his cheeks together.

“Think of all the things that have been out of your control recently.” Pidge smiled, smushing his cheeks happily. “Me moving in, Lance trying to get your attention, hell, all of the good stuff that has happened to you lately has been out of your control! I promise it will be okay.”

Keith couldn’t deny it, she was right. But that didn’t mean that Keith didn’t panic about all those things, and that he wasn’t panicking right now because he was.

He was panicking so much because he desperately didn’t want this to go badly, he’d never… liked someone before, and when Keith did something he wanted, it had to be perfect, he had to do it right, it was all or nothing. But Keith honestly didn’t know what it was he was doing, he had no idea how to do anything, he’d never even really been kissed per se, not that he was expecting for Lance to want to kiss him. He’d never been on a date, he didn’t know anything.

He just didn’t know, and that was his greatest fear, the fear of the unknown.

But Pidge was looking at him with a genuinely excited look, with joy and anticipation for Keith, and hell, he just had to let himself be excited too.

The train pulled up at the station, Pidge gave Keith the once over and then suddenly her face fell.

“Fuck.” She muttered, tapping her chin.

“What? What?!” Keith exclaimed, glancing down at himself, he had dressed nicely on purpose and for once actually thought he’d looked good.

“You don’t have a gift!” Pidge exclaimed.

Fuck, he hadn’t thought any of this through. Pidge was looking round, she suddenly had a eureka moment and dragged Keith up the stairs. Just outside the entrance to the station, was a small, blonde girl selling bouquets of flowers. Pidge gestured to the girl.

“Flowers?! Really?” Keith exclaimed.

“Everyone loves to get flowers, Keith.” Pidge tutted, Keith groaned and approached the girl, who beamed up at them both.

“Hey, Pidge, nice to see you again.” The girl was obviously familiar with Pidge, which seemed about right because Pidge was always coming home with flowers, Keith was certain he could open a florists out of their apartment and make a killing.

“Hey,” Pidge smiled. “My friend here is looking to apologise to someone, anything you can recommend?”

“Daffodils?” The girl turned and rooted around for some. “They represent forgiveness and new beginnings, you know, if you broke their heart or killed their hamster or something.”
“Perfect!” Pidge exclaimed, the girl bundled some beautiful yellow daffodils into some brown paper and tied it up with some string. Pidge handed her some money and passed the flowers to Keith.

“Oh, you look so… emo.” Pidge sighed, lovingly. Keith rolled his eyes, 109 ½ and realised it was now or never.

In his nervousness he forgot to say goodbye to Pidge, he nervously shuffled off, he found himself anxiously delaying the inevitable, eventually he made it to the other side of the station, and spotted Lance leant against the station wall, looking effortlessly cool and gorgeous.

He sighed heavily, feeling lucky that someone like Lance even entertained the idea of giving Keith a chance to explain himself. He could really have anyone that he wanted, this was all under the assumption that he was even slightly interested in Keith.

Keith took a deep breath and approached Lance, trying to exude the confidence he so desperately lacked. Lance finally looked up, his initial shock dissipated into the softest, most heart-breaking smile Keith had ever seen.

“Hey, Keith.” Lance smiled, pushing himself off the wall. Keith didn’t have the words, he didn’t trust himself not to mess it all up. Instead he thrust the flowers forwards for Lance to take.

“Um, wow, thank you.” Lance grinned, taking the flowers out of his hands. “How did you know that I love daffodils? They’re beautiful.”

Keith shrugged, still unable to find his words, Lance smirked and raised his eyebrows.

“Okay, let’s go I guess, I’ll just… let you get over whatever this is.” Lance laughed, Keith wished he could thank him, but the words still could not be found. Lance turned and began to walk, Keith rushed to keep up and walked wordlessly beside him.

“Sorry that I didn’t get anything for you,” Lance apologised, staring down at the flowers, the same soft smile on his face, Keith was happy he did good. “But I figured that you had some making up to do anyway, you don’t deserve gifts just yet.”

Keith gulped at the word ‘yet’, he had a dreadful feeling that this was probably going to go well, his heart was racing, his hands thrust into his pockets.

“It’s okay,” Keith finally spoke. Lance looked around at him, the smile on his face grew a little at Keith’s voice.

They arrived outside a brightly coloured grocery store, Lance grabbed a basket and slotted the daffodils in and begun strolling the aisles casually. Keith did not know how he was so… cool, so casual and self-assured.

“So, did you want to explain to me the whole girlfriend mess now, or?” Lance smirked, throwing some raw chicken into the basket.

“I guess it’s best to just… get it out of the way…” Keith considered. “Because we’re in a public place, and if you decide to hurt me you’ll hopefully get arrested.”

“I don’t know, this neighbourhood, you never know if anyone’s gonna actually call the cops.” Lance laughed. “So, go, start from the top. I’m listening.”

“Ok. Well, on the day that you saw me hug-“
“Embrace lovingly,” Lance corrected, Keith shrugged, unable to argue with that.

“Allura, I’d been on your train for the last hour and a half,” Keith winced, it all sounded so… shitty saying it all out loud. “I was sat behind you in fact, but… before you yell at me. I was, far too nervous to say anything to you. And, when I realised Allura had said my name and you’d probably heard, I panicked. I didn’t want you to see me and realise I’d been sat on the same train as you for the last hour and a half and didn’t say anything to you. It was this whole… thing.”

Lance was stood staring at Keith, with the weirdest half-smile half-shocked look on his face, he suddenly burst out laughing.

“Oh my god, you’re so awkward.” Lance laughed, grabbing more ingredients and throwing them into the basket. “But why did you let me believe it, every time I mentioned it you didn’t... correct me and you even told me what floor she lived on.”

“I don’t know... I was, scared I guess.” Keith muttered, he wasn’t even sure to this day. “And then when we went for drinks, I saw you making eyes at Shiro every time he talked. I didn’t want to seem, obnoxious or self-centered by telling you I was single and assume that you’d care either way.”

“Right.” Lance’s lips drew into a stern, thin line.

“And I cannot be held accountable for my actions past chicken moon,” Keith shrugged. “I’d had a lot of expensive vodka. I don’t remember any of the things I said to you.”

“That means you definitely don’t remember calling me cute.” Lance laughed as he threw a packet of tortilla wraps at Keith, they thudded against his chest and Keith managed to catch them, deftly, at the last second.

“N-no, I did?!” Keith stammered, definitely not remembering that. “W-what did you say?”

“You really want to know?” Lance smiled, approaching Keith slowly, with a sly grin on his face. Keith nodded, suddenly unsure. “I told you that you were cuter.”

Fuck, fuck. Why didn’t Keith remember this? God, Keith was so glad that he was there, his stupid little heart was racing in the best way, but he wanted to run away as fast as possible too, he was having a tough time dealing with this all.

“Don’t look so terrified.” Lance laughed at Keith’s expression. “C’mon, now that that’s out of the way and I totally forgive you because come on look at that face, let’s go.”

“What, you forgive me? Just like that?!” Keith stammered, holding the tortilla’s close to his chest. Lance glanced back and considered for a moment.

“Okay, maybe not.” Lance smirked, Keith regretted saying anything. “I guess it all depends on how good your chicken fajita’s are.”

“What about dessert?” Keith called, thinking about the sundae that Lance had weirdly fed him yesterday.

“Fiine, let’s get some ice-cream.” Lance groaned, heading for the frozen food department, grabbing a tub of Neapolitan and making his way to the checkouts.

They fought over who would pay, and then they fought over who would carry the bags. Eventually in both circumstances they reached a compromise and both did half. Once they were both loaded
with bags, they began the trek to Lance’s apartment.

They stepped into the elevator, Lance looked up to see Keith staring at him in the reflection of the mirrors in the elevator, they both quickly looked away awkwardly. The elevator finally got to Lance’s floor and they made the silent and vaguely tense walk towards Lance’s front door. He struggled to get his keys with so many bags in his hands.

“I told you I should carry the bags!” Keith exclaimed watching Lance struggle. Lance pouted at him whilst he just about managed to get a good grip on the keys.

They bundled through the door and Keith headed straight for the kitchen and began unloading the bags, he glanced around and saw Lance stood in the doorway, watching him, regarding him with an unreadable expression on his face.

“What?” Keith stammered, unsure if Lance had completely changed his mind and wanted Keith to go fuck himself.

“N-nothing.” Lance stammered, shutting the door behind him and joining Keith in the kitchen. They unloaded the bags silently, Keith could feel Lance’s eyes on him as he glanced around the kitchen, it was much cleaner than the last time he was there.

“Uh, hey, thanks for explaining it all to me,” Lance’s voice was low, Keith’s stomach flipped and he turned to face him.

“Thanks for giving me a chance to.” Keith smiled. “Sorry, that it all happened in the first place.”

"You know that... it was a really shitty thing to do right?” Lance winced, Keith knew, Pidge knew, Shiro knew, even Nyma knew, that it was a stupid, pointlessly irrational thing to do.

"I know... I don't really have an excuse? But... I promise I will never lie... that's not me." Keith found himself close to begging. "I regret it every day, and the fact that I stupidly played along with it, I just... genuinely thought that you didn't care either way."

Ugh, Keith was being really, genuinely, it was so strange to hear it coming out of his own mouth.

“Did you really think I was making eyes at Shiro?” Lance asked, he suddenly seemed unsure of himself.

Keith turned and began preparing the chicken, embarrassed that he’d even mentioned it.

“Uh, I guess.” Keith stammered in response, desperately not trying to sound as nervous as he felt, he knew what Lance was trying to get out of him.

“Does that mean you were jealous?” Lance’s voice was suddenly a lot more confident than before.

“I guess.” Keith groaned, he was really laying it on thick.

“Jealous of who?” Lance was killing him.

“Wow, you really want me to dot the I’s and cross the T’s don’t you!” Keith exclaimed, scavenging the cupboards to try and find a wok to cook with. “I was jealous of Shiro, okay?”

“Oh? Why were you jealous of Shiro?” Keith glanced round at Lance, who had the biggest shit-eating grin on his face, leant on the kitchen island with a sly look in his eyes.

“God. What are you doing to me?” Keith shook his head with a tiny grin on his face, Lance was
just… too cute. Lance shrugged innocently. “I was jealous because I thought you were into him, happy?”

“Very.” Lance stood up and finally sauntered off. Flopping down happily onto his couch and switching on the TV.

Keith laughed and carried on cooking, he poured some oil into the wok and put it on heat, threw in the chicken and chopped vegetables and began sautéing in spices, he didn’t get many opportunities to cook with such a generous roommate. He forgot how much he genuinely loved it.

“Wow.” Lance had suddenly appeared beside him, watching Keith with an awe-filled expression on his face.

“What?” Keith breathed through the shock.

“You’re really good at that!” Lance smiled. “You’re gonna have to show me how to do that some time.”

“You don’t cook?” Keith asked. Lance hoisted himself up onto the kitchen island, dangling his legs off the side casually.

“No, I mean, my grandmother was an amazing cook,” Lance spoke wistfully. “And she did try to teach me, but… it kinda went in one ear and straight out the other, I’m afraid. I’m sure she’d be happy to learn that her kitchen was being used properly again.”

“I’d love to teach you.” Keith responded, “I mean, you know, since you asked.”

“Yeah,” Lance scoffed.

“Hey, I never asked you, what’s your dream?” Keith suddenly thought, remembering the fact he’d never actually responded to Lance’s question when they’d been for drinks.

“Oh hey yeah!” Lance exclaimed. “I’m a typical drama student, except I never got the chance to BE a student in the first place.”

“Acting?” Keith asked, grabbing the tortillas and heating them in the microwave. Lance nodded happily, Keith could picture it. “You never went to college?”

“No… what with my grandma being sick and… my many, many siblings,” Lance jumped down and grabbed some plates out of the cupboard. “We couldn’t really afford it. My older brother went to community college and ended up getting a job that had nothing to do with his major, so I chose instead to stay at home, work a little and then I moved to the city to help with my grandma.”

“College isn’t all that it’s cracked up to be, honestly.” Keith laughed, taking the chicken and vegetables off the heat and pouring them into a serving bowl. “I went and I’m not doing what I dreamt of doing so… it’s not everything.”

“What did you do?” Lance asked.

Keith wasn’t sure whether or not to tell him the truth. It made him sick to his stomach to think of his failures, but… he promised himself, and Lance, that he’d never lie to him.

“I did fine art.” Keith winced as he said it, but he winced even harder at the way that Lance’s face lit up.
“HOLY crap!” Lance exclaimed happily. “I mean it was obvious you could draw, the way you drew that middle finger was immaculate, but I had no idea art was your dream!”

“Y-yeah. I um… since I moved to the city, that middle finger was the first time I’d drawn anything.” Keith admitted. Lance helped him carry the plates and food over to the sofa. They rested the bowl of chicken and tortilla’s on the cushions between them, each cross-legged on the couch facing each other.

“How long have you lived in the city?” Lance asked, completely fascinated.

“Four years?” Keith winced, he knew it had been a long time, he’d gone over it in his head a million times but he felt ashamed admitting it to Lance.

“Oh man, so I made you so angry that you actually drew for the first time in four years!” Lance clapped himself on the back happily. “Go me!”

“I guess.” Keith laughed. The conversation fell silent again, but… it wasn’t as awful as Keith thought it would be.

Lance took a huge bite of his fajita and moaned appreciatively.

“Damn, you’re so good at everything, what the hell.” Lance moaned lowly. Keith couldn’t help the laugh that escaped his lips. “No seriously, this is so good!”

“Thanks,” Keith smiled. “Have you ever, I don’t know, been in anything?”

“Me? Oh god no,” Lance laughed shaking his head with a mouthful of food. “I… guess I just lost my confidence, got out of practise? An actor cannot have any self-doubt”

“You? Lose your confidence?” Keith muttered, disbelievingly. Lance scoffed at that. “I don’t have as much confidence in my entire body as you have in your little finger.”

“That’s cause I’m an ‘actor’.” Lance raised his eyebrows, making himself another Fajita. “I’m good at pretending to be something I’m not.”

“I have to ask…” Keith’s face grew serious. “Why… me?”

“What kind of a question is that?!” Lance exclaimed. Keith looked up at him, biting his lip.

“Honestly.” Keith muttered, playing with a chunk of chicken on his plate. “Why did you… I don’t know, why did you think I was worth making all that effort for?”

This was the one question, above all else that Keith had wanted to ask since this whole thing had started. Keith knew that Lance could have had anyone, he saw the way he’d flirted with Allura and how she’d lapped it up, he managed to flirt without looking… skeevy or creepy, it had been nothing but fascinating for Keith to see at the time.

“Shiro always told me, that he remembers the first day you saw me.” Keith felt like an idiot just saying it. “That… your face lit up when you noticed me, a year and a half before I even knew you existed. I have to know why, when you could get any person that you want, you have a fucking potential model after you for fucks sake,”

Keith looked up at Lance, who had the softest, biggest smile on his face. Keith felt all the heat rise into his cheeks, he was not going to be a blushing, flustered mess, he refused.
“I wish… I wish I could tell you. Because you really are so not my usual type.” Lance laughed, pushing his plate onto the floor.

“Thanks, that’s the response I was looking for.” Keith grunted sarcastically.

“No, I just… I looked at you and just I felt it.” Lance leant back into the couch cushions, not breaking eye contact with Keith, it was magnetic. “Like I had to know you, like… I don’t know, it was fate? It sounds really dumb I know but… I’m glad I never gave up because… here you are.”

Right, there he was. Completely fucking flustered and angry with himself for being so, he wasn’t some infantile fourteen year old, he was a grown man dammit and this was getting embarrassing.

“Fuck, well. That’s… cool.” Keith sputtered, he grabbed the plates and returned them to the kitchen, feeling the cool tiles on his feet, trying to cool himself down. He turned on the taps to start washing up when Lance raced over.

“Hey, you cooked, I clean!” He exclaimed, nudging Keith out of the way. Keith relented with his hands in the air, he watched Lance roll up the sleeves of his barista uniform and start scrubbing. If he thought Lance’s hands were pretty, his arms were insane. Keith was not a creep, but he didn’t feel creepy admiring Lance’s arms. He was more surprised that he’d never noticed them before.

“Hey, did you want to watch a film? I know it’s late and you have work tomorrow but…” Lance suggested, Keith looked down at his watch, an hour and a half had already passed and it felt like ten minutes, and he wasn’t really ready to leave yet.

“No, a film sounds good to me.” Keith smiled, Lance breathed a sigh of relief as he finished up the washing up.

They made their way back over to the couch, Lance sat first and looked up at Keith expectantly, Keith felt twitchy, he… didn’t know where to go.

If it were Pidge and him, he’d sit right beside her, all up in her personal space but Pidge was like his family, and Keith wasn’t even sure if his was a date…

“Keith, this is technically a date.” Lance smirked watching Keith’s internal struggle play out on his face, Keith cursed himself for not being more subtle.

“So, what does that mean? That doesn’t clear anything up for me!” Keith groaned, extending his arm to the couch.

“Have you never been on a date before?” Lance scoffed, he’d meant it as a joke, but the look on Keith’s face told him all he needed to know. “Um, I guess, just sit where you feel comfortable.”

Keith huffed out a breath and planted himself within touching distance of Lance, but… not quite as close as he would have sat with Pidge, he was comfortable with that.

“What do you wanna watch?” Lance asked, grabbing his remote and looking at the channels, they flicked through lots of trashy films until they settled on something they could both agree on.

Keith glance down at his watch again, it was almost half eleven, and it was pitch black outside, the film was almost over, Keith knew he ought to leave but… he didn’t want to either.

“C’mon, I’ll walk you home.” Lance stood up and held out his hand for Keith to take. Keith felt his stomach churn, this would be the first time they’d willingly touched whilst sober.
Keith tried to fight off all his inner demons, and reached out for Lance’s hand, letting him pull him up, trying to pretend that such casual contact didn’t send him reeling. Keith grabbed his coat and pulled on his shoes, hoisting his backpack over his shoulder.

“You don’t have to walk me home.” Keith muttered, “because then I’ll have to walk you home, and we’ll keep walking backwards and forwards, it’ll be this whole… thing.”

“Keith, you came to mine, I walk you home, that’s how this works. I’ll be fine,” Lance smirked, Keith was a complete newbie, it was so amusing for Lance apparently.

“So will I.” Keith mumbled, rolling his eyes, 120 ½ . Lance simply laughed, a noise that Keith could fall sleep to, and they left the building. Keith stuffed his hands in his pockets, it was freezing outside, and tomorrow marked the three weeks since he’d seen Lance for the first time. And he was FREAKING OUT, would he have to kiss Lance when he left him at his building? He reealllyy didn’t know what he was doing and it sucked.

“Oh, I hate autumn.” Lance muttered, shivering at the breeze, they had a couple more days left before September came around and it was Keith’s favourite time of the year.

“C’mon, you have Halloween, thanksgiving, Christmas, all that good stuff!” Keith listed, even though he had never really… celebrated any of those things, man, thinking about it he probably should have hated all those holidays. Maybe it was just all the discounted chocolate.

“Nyma usually throws a Halloween party, you should come with this year,” Lance smiled, though he looked a little crestfallen as they arrived at Keith’s apartment building. Keith came to an abrupt halt outside the front of his building.

“Thanks, Lance.” Keith smiled awkwardly.

“No problem.” Lance returned a similar smile. “I um, it’s good to know that your apartment isn’t far away from… the station.”

“Yeah, it’s really… convenient.” Keith breathed. “It’s uh, nice to know that your apartment is only a ten minute walk from here.”

“Super… convenient.” Lance chuckled quietly.

“Um…” Keith felt all his blood rush to his face again, he could see that Lance was staring at his lips, he was gripped with the whole ‘never been kissed’ fear and wanted to run away.

But, Keith had learnt over the past almost three weeks that he had to stop running away from the stuff that scared him. Like Pidge said, he didn’t have to be in control of everything, maybe he could let go.

He felt with a start the feeling of Lance’s hands on his waist, he felt so, secure and he could feel the heat radiating off his hands as he pulled Keith close. Keith had a sick feeling in his stomach and a lump in his throat.

Fuck. He was about to have his first proper kiss, and he was pretty sure he was okay with it. But Keith had no clue of what to do with his hands, should they… go on Lance’s shoulders, on his face or around his neck so that Keith COULD CHOKe HIM AND RUN AWAY BECAUSE HE WAS SO TERRIFIED.

He decided that the final choice was probably not the right one, and he needn’t have worried, because whilst he was coaxing himself away from murder, Lance had gotten a phone-call and had
pulled away.

“No, I’m out.” Lance muttered, rubbing his forehead, seemingly pissed off that they’d been interrupted. Keith was ashamed to admit that he was a little relieved as well as completely put out.

“What? What is your problem?” Lance hissed angrily. “Can you just hold on for five seconds?”

He muted the conversation and turned to Keith, a sincere apology written on his face.

“I’m really sorry, I have to go.” Lance sighed, looking genuinely devastated at the fact. “I had a really nice time. I’ll… text you?”

“Yeah, okay. Night.” Keith gave him the smallest wave, because… yeah, he was a little pissed off, what kind of date ended with one of the two getting a fucking phone call.

“Wait.” Lance reached out for his arm, once Keith was facing him again, he wrapped an arm around Keith’s shoulders, pulled him towards Lance gently and planted a soft kiss on his forehead. “Bye, Keith. You were worth everything and more.”

Lance smiled down at him, his cheeks as pink as Keith’s definitely were, and walked away.

Chapter End Notes

another chapter so soon?
tumblr - foxsmo-lder
Midnight Show

Chapter Summary

In which Lance has some explaining to do.

“Lance, what are you doing here?” Pidge rubbed the sleep out of her eyes, blearily. Lance was so grateful that Keith hadn’t been the one to answer the door, he wasn’t sure he’d be able to explain without looking completely out of his mind.

“Not important, do you know how to pick a lock?” Lance asked, desperately trying not to sound like a criminal.

At that, Pidge’s spine went rigid, a stupid grin on her face, she adjusted her glasses and the hallway light glinted off them malevolently.

“What have you done?” She grinned maliciously.

Chapter Notes

Sorry this is a little shorter... I hope you like it anyway.

And in reference to the haiku’s, I wrote them to the tune of any of the haiku's that JacksFilms on youtube has ever done :’)

Just... read them out-loud and count your fingers I guess!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Thanks for the interruption, buddy.” Lance muttered down the phone, “What do you want?”

“Oh, nothing… where are you?” Lotor’s voice oozed faux nonchalance down the other end, Lance’s head whipped round, he pouted.

“More to the point, where are you.” Lance grunted, half-amusedly. “You know, if someone didn’t know we were friends, they’d think you were stalking me.”

“Don’t flatter yourself.” Lotor laughed wickedly. “I just happened to be making a delivery nearby, I saw you with your… friend and felt I owed you a phone call. Can’t have you making regrettable decisions now, can we?”

“He doesn’t have a girlfriend.” Lance sighed, the stars were beginning to shine through the thick, smoggy canopy of clouds and light pollution. “He told me.”

“And you believed him, just like that?” Lotor scoffed in response. “How do you know he isn’t lying to you, so that you wouldn’t have any hesitations?”

“Not everyone is as evil as you paint them to be.” Lance muttered, blush still present and burning
on his cheeks, rounding the corner to his apartment building.

“All you have is his word, Lance.” Lotor tutted, patronizingly. “He could tell you anything, it’s not like you’re going to… march over to his ‘girlfriends’ apartment and confront her about it, are you?”

Lance came to an abrupt halt, his words frozen in his throat.

“He could be spinning you all sorts of lies, and you’d be none the wiser,” Lance could almost see the smile on Lotor’s smug face. “You met his friends, and none of them corrected you, if they were good people they would have just told you the truth.”

“Stop it.” Lance grunted, he knew he should hang up the phone and go to bed with a clear conscience, but Lotor was too good at messing with his thoughts.

“I’m just trying to protect you, Lance,” Lotor sounded stern. “If you really want to know, just ask the girl he claims isn’t his girlfriend, surely she could clear things up for you. He might even be over there right now, seeing her. Wouldn’t that be perfect? Catch him red handed!”

“Lotor, I’m not going to do that.” Lance winced, angry with himself for even debating it. “That’s way too far, that’s creepy, beyond creepy!”

“But now you’re thinking about it!” Lotor laughed, Lance was seriously regretting a lot of friendship choices. “You’ll lose sleep over it, I know you will. And I’m sick of you pining over this guy, it’s pathetic. Just go and clear it up, either way you’ll be able to move on and get over it.”

“Fuck you.” Lance grit down the phone, he hung up and pushed his phone into his pocket, he could feel the warmth coming through the glass doors of his apartment building, he was not going to let Lotor get into his head.

He said to himself, out of breath, leaning forward on his knees, inches away from Allura’s front door at almost midnight on a fucking Monday. He was being an idiot, he’d ran all the way here out of some kind of blind panic, and if Keith found out he was here, interrogating Allura like this, he might never speak to him again.

But Lance had to know. He had to know more than anything, it put an ache in his bones at the possibility that Keith might be lying to him.

He, regrettably and whilst cursing himself a million times over, knocked on her front door. He expected her to be a fast asleep, but he immediately heard footsteps padding to the door, she opened it with vaguely bleary eyes, adjusting to the fluorescent lights in the corridor.

“Lance?” Allura rubbed her eyes, Lance could see that there were candles burning in the apartment behind her, soft music playing, it all looked suspiciously romantic. “What’s up, what are you doing here at this time of night, are you looking for Keith?”

“Shouldn’t you be asleep?” Lance sputtered, not really knowing where to go from here, Allura raised her eyebrow at him, Lance had almost forgotten that they had literally met once before, he was essentially a stranger, asking questions about her life choices.

“Uh, I guess I didn’t realise the time, I’ve been up all night doing-”

“DOING KEITH?!” Lance exploded, Allura looked genuinely shocked at his outburst, it took her a
couple of seconds to regain her composure.

“I’m sorry?!” She exclaimed, resting her hand against her doorframe, trying to steady herself. “What are you saying?!”

“You and Keith are dating right?!” Lance sounded like a fucking crazy person and he knew it, but he was in far too deep and the question was out. Allura resumed her shock and taken abackness.

She looked like she was having a really tough inner debate with herself. She looked up at Lance, trying to read his face, trying to understand why he was acting so crazy, like she was trying to gauge what it was Lance wanted to hear from her.

“Yes?” Allura spoke, but it sounded more like a question. Lance didn’t pay attention to how unsure she sounded, he clapped his hands together, feeling all the blood rushing to his face, seeing red.

“WELL I THINK YOU SHOULD KNOW THAT ME AND YOUR BOYFRIEND…” Lance pointed at the staircase, indicating Keith’s general whereabouts. “HAD DINNER EARLIER AND I NEARLY KISSED HIM!”

“Wait, what?!” Allura exclaimed, but it was too late, Lance was storming up the stairs to Keith’s apartment, ready to tear him a new one. He heard Allura’s panicked footsteps as she grabbed his arm. “Wait! What are you saying? Did you and Keith go on a date?!”

“Yes! And I’m glad that I told you, because he’s been lying to the both of us.” Lance grunted pathetically, all the adrenaline he thought he had seeped out of him as he dropped onto the steps, Allura gazed at him with wide, un-readable eyes.

“You like him?” Allura faltered, dropping Lance’s arm, and seating herself on the stairs next to him.

“Yeah.” Lance sighed, folding his arms on his knees and burying his face in his forearms, embarrassed and humiliated.

“How much do you like him?” Allura asked, but... she didn’t sound upset, she sounded downright sly.

Lance glanced up and looked at her, the devilish grin she sported for a split second fell into a faux devastation. Lance narrowed his eyes at her.

“Tell me.” Allura’s lips twitched, she desperately wanted to smile, Lance could tell that much but... he really didn’t understand why.

“A lot. More than I’ve ever liked anyone else before.” Lance admitted, dropping his head back down into his arms.

He’d never had such a wild Monday night before, now he was faced with the guy he almost kissed’s girlfriend, who was grilling him on the precise amount with which he had a crush on her boyfriend. It was almost as insane as him running to her apartment at midnight to confront her, so he guessed he couldn’t really judge her. He felt Allura’s weight disappear from beside him as she grabbed his arms and pulled him up.

“WELL YOU’RE IN LUCK BECAUSE HE’S NOT MY BOYFRIEND!” Allura exclaimed happily, Lance blanched. He knew he should have trusted Keith, god he was a fucking idiot. “And he never has been! I only agreed because... I thought maybe he’d said I was? And I didn’t want to out his lie without finding out why he’d lied in the first place.”
“Fuck. Are you gonna call the cops?” Lance groaned, looking at his watch. “Or worse, tell Keith that I was here?”

“Number one, you need to sort out your priorities,” Allura shook her head sadly. “And number two, I’ll only tell Keith if you break his heart.”

“Fat chance of that happening.” Lance scoffed before realising what he’d said. Allura had her hands clasped together, with the stupidest look on her face, before her entire face dropped, she rushed wordlessly back down the stairs and down her corridor.

“FUCK!” Was all that Lance heard, before he realised, her door must have shut and she definitely didn’t have her keys.

Lance groaned, he drooped down the stairs and saw Allura leaning, bereft against her door, she gazed up at Lance with desperation in her eyes.

“There are candles burning in there.” Allura whined unhappily. Lance groaned and banged his head against her door.

“Shit. I’m sorry Allura, if I hadn’t have come here and yelled at you,” Lance groaned. “If I’d have just trusted Keith… we wouldn’t be in this mess.”

“God, you’re so weak!” Allura leapt up, grabbing Lance by the arms. “Rather than admitting defeat, you came over here to make sure what you were scared of wasn’t true! And you’ve messed up right here in doing so, sure, your reasons were impossible for me to comprehend, but now you have to fix this.”

“How, how do I fix this? I can’t break your door down!” Lance groaned.

“You must be able to pick a lock… or know someone who could pick a lock.”

Lance felt all the colour drain out of his face.

“Lance, what are you doing here?” Pidge rubbed the sleep out of her eyes, blearily. Lance was so grateful that Keith hadn’t been the one to answer the door, he wasn’t sure he’d be able to explain without looking completely out of his mind.

“Not important, do you know how to pick a lock?” Lance asked, desperately trying not to sound like a criminal.

At that, Pidge’s spine went rigid, a stupid grin on her face, she adjusted her glasses and the hallway light glinted off them malevolently.

“What have you done?” She grinned maliciously. She began backing away from the door, slowly with one arm outstretched.

“Pidge, please don’t.” Lance begged, her arm was heading straight for Keith’s door, “I’ll explain everything just… please don’t wake him.”

“Why shouldn’t I?” Pidge whispered, still with an evil grin on her face.

“Because, the truth sounds so horrible I’m worried he’d hate me for it!” Lance exclaimed, trying to keep his voice down, but the desperation caused loud spikes in volume that were out of his control.
Pidge stopped, her fist a few centimetres from Keith’s door.

“But don’t you think, that after everything with Allura,” Pidge smirked. “You owe Keith the truth? You’d be just as bad as he was if you aren’t honest with him.”

Lance thought about it… she was probably right, in her weird, little, evil way she was right, he did deserve the truth, the same way that Lance had deserved the truth, though he wish he’d just trusted that it was in fact the truth. None of this would have happened if he hadn’t have let Lotor get into his head like he always did.

“You’re right.” Lance muttered unhappily, he leant himself against the doorway, trying to prepare himself for the inevitable end of something that hadn’t even been given the chance to begin.

“Hahhh! Psyche! Let’s go, studmuffin!” Pidge laughed, grabbing a small bag of tools, her keys and dragging Lance down the stairs.

Lance huffed out a breath of relief, but Pidge was evil, pure evil, the kind of evil that Lance could 100% get on board with. They descended the two floors to Allura’s apartment, who had her face rested against the wood nose first.

“Allura?” Pidge scoffed at the sight.

“I’m trying to smell if it’s burning in there.” Allura twisted her head and regarded Pidge. She glanced at Lance. “Good choice.”

“Okay, move out of the way.” Pidge exclaimed, grabbing her tool kit and laying it out on the floor, she picked up something sharp and thrust it into the hole, she twisted it around and inserted another… sharp thing and teased it alongside the other… sharp thing. Lance didn’t even pretend to know what the fuck she was doing, both he and Allura were watching with intense interest

“What the fuck are you guys doing?”

All three of their heads rotated slowly, dread sketched into their features, Keith was stood at the end of the corridor, in his pyjamas, his converse thrown on in a panic and his hair scraped up in a messy ponytail at the back of his head. If Lance weren’t so desperately panicked and ashamed he’d probably be swooning at the sight of Keith’s sleepy, adorable face.

“Lance?” Keith narrowed his eyes, “What are you doing here in the middle of the night?”

He glanced at Allura, who was knelt closely to Pidge, trying to get a look at what she was doing and Pidge was on her knees in front of the key hole, trying an innocent smile and failing.

“Poetry!” Lance exclaimed, pulling something out of his ass apparently, Keith folded his arms, raising one eyebrow.

“Poetry?” Keith muttered, completely disbelieving, and Lance did not blame him, he had no idea how he was supposed to follow this up.

“Y-yeah.” Allura interjected. “I… I saw him leaving and… I needed someone to join my um, midnight improv poetry club and I saw Lance and… improvised.”

“But in her rush to race to Lance, she left the door wide open,” Pidge exclaimed. “and a gust of wind blew the door shut and we didn’t want to wake you up. Simple. Truth. A very truthful story.”

“The truest.” Allura smiled, resting her hands delicately in her lap.
Lance gulped as Keith stared at him.

“Poetry me.” Keith challenged, Lance felt the heat rise in his cheeks.

He could do this, he was an actor, he just had to remember NOT to quote Shakespeare.

“Alas, poor…” Fuck. He’d already failed on the whole no Shakespeare front. “Dear Slav? I was sure that he was dead. But thank god he’s not.”

Keith smirked.

“What was that?” He laughed, unconvinced.

“A haiku of course!” Allura leapt from her seated position, Pidge continued scuffling about with her tools whilst Lance and Allura spun their little tale. “Sorry we scared you, it was nothing I promise, please just go to bed!”

“See, improv poetry!” Pidge exclaimed over her shoulder. “I am innocent, I have never picked a lock, please don’t check my file!”

Keith looked completely baffled at the three of them. He turned without a word and made a move to climb the stairs. Allura stared at Lance with wide eyes as he faltered, she gestured wildly with desperation for him to follow, Lance groaned and finally relented.

He started up the stairs behind Keith who trudged sleepily.

“Hey, Keith.” Lance called out, Keith glanced back momentarily and stopped at the last stair to the fourth floor.

“Yes, Lance?” Keith smiled, but he still had an unreadable look in his eye.

“I um, just wondered if, you know, I could come over tomorrow?” Lance rubbed the back of his neck, embarrassed. Keith blinked twice, sleepily. “We could get take out?”

“Sure,” Keith, rubbed his eyes and smiled. “See you tomorrow.”

Lance breathed a sigh of relief as he watched Keith continue up the stairs.

“Oh, and Lance?” Keith suddenly yelled down the stairs, a weird smile on his face. “You think that I’m dumb. You spoke to Allura huh? Improv poetry?!”

Fuck, Keith had grassed him out with a fucking haiku. Lance covered his face and ran away in embarrassment, he heard a victorious yelp from Pidge whilst he ran past the second floor and back to his apartment, hot with shame.

The following day, he stepped slowly down the stairs to his side of the platform, wishing more than anything he could be getting the same train as Keith, he hadn’t had the guts to text him or anything else for that matter since he’d… had a weird encounter with him in a stairwell at midnight.

In hindsight that sounded less strange than what actually happened, Lance considered maybe he’d actually be quite good at improv poetry, and thinking of haiku’s off the top of his head like he had.

He spotted Keith and Shiro chatting over coffee, the same way they always did, Shiro was
laughing his head off, Lance desperately wished that it wasn’t at his expense, but his fears came true when as soon as Shiro spotted him, he pointed straight at him and laughed even more. Lance almost didn’t hold up the stupid sign he’d made that morning but he had to, just… if anything for the comedy value of it all. He was nothing if not a sucker for comedic timing.

_Sorry for last night,_

_I will make it up to you._

_See you later on._

Keith smirked and Shiro doubled over with happiness, seemingly thrilled with everything that was happening, Lance was minutely joyful that he’d given Shiro such a laugh on a Tuesday morning.

Their trains pulled up and Lance waved limply at Keith before he climbed aboard. He took his usual seat on the train and stared down at his phone, willing himself to say something, to text Keith, anything, he knew that this day would drag and he had so much he wanted to say, so much he wanted to explain. Suddenly, his heart leapt into his throat as a text popped up on his phone.

_Keith - I’ll meet you outside the station._

_Keith - your turn to explain your bizarre behaviour._

Lance sighed and dropped his head on the table beside his phone, suddenly another text popped up, but this time it was from someone that made his stomach churn nervously.

_Lotor - Well, what did she say?_

_Lance - What did who say?_

_Lotor - You know exactly what I mean. There is no way that you didn’t run off and harass that poor girl, I know you Lance, better than anyone._

_Lance - He definitely doesn’t have a girlfriend. So fuck you._

_Lotor - Well at least you know now for sure!_

_Lotor - And Lance, I am happy for you._

Lance huffed and closed the conversation, Lotor had been his friend since he’d moved to the city, why was he being such an asshole over something like this. Lance had had girlfriends and boyfriends since being friends with Lotor, but this time he was being an unbelievable dickweed. And Lance didn’t use that word often.

Lance watched the cityscape peel away around him, an hour and a half felt like longer than ever in anticipation for seeing Keith, he’d said it a million times but he was such a sucker for that mullet-wearing pretty boy.

He sighed and tried to shut his eyes to quell the butterflies causing a stampede in his stomach and to make the journey pass a little faster, to no avail. It dragged as he stared around him, the same faces, the same bored, sad looks on his fellow commuters, he felt glad to have something he could smile about, but he couldn’t allow that feeling knowing that he’d probably ruined it all.

_Pidge - Are you gonna tell him the truth?_

Lance shuddered, he didn’t remember giving her his number, nor receiving hers in exchange.
Lance - new phone who dis?
Pidge - nice try lance. don’t make me bust out another haiku.
Lance - No more, I can’t live with the shame of it.
Pidge - Well, are you gonna tell him?
Lance - I know I should but… I’m terrified of how he might react.
Pidge - To be honest, I feel as though he’s made the connection in his own head, it’d do you no favours to try and lie about it. Keith has this really… odd way of guessing things.
Lance - Are you gonna be there tonight?
Pidge - Of course. That means you’re buying me dinner too.
Lance - Mario Kart?
Pidge - You’re on, bitch.

Lance pressed his face against the cold glass of the counter containing all of Hunk’s baked goods. Shay was beaming down at him happily.

“You okay Lance, what happened?” She laughed, a tinge of sympathy in her voice, Lance always had something to complain about.

“I don’t wanna talk about it, I don’t think I could talk about it.” Lance sighed dramatically, pulling himself away from the glass to stare at her. “Without spontaneously combusting, and then you’d have to clean it up as the second in command.”

“Gross…” Shay turned her nose up. “Something to do with train guy?”

Shit, of course Hunk had told her about train guy, anything for him to have an excuse to talk to her, typically Lance was the one thing they both knew they had in common, and could laugh about behind his back.

“I’m gonna tell Hunk never to speak to you again.” He muttered unhappily, the door swung open as the bell rang, Shay and Lance’s heads twitched towards the door, and as always with perfect harmony and unison, shouted welcome at the newcomer.

“GOD, I’m so glad that day is over.” Lance sighed, wiping down the last of the tables. Shay exclaimed in agreement, they switched off all the lights and headed out the door, locking it behind them, suddenly, Allura appeared as if from nowhere.

“LANCE!” She exclaimed happily, Lance groaned, whilst Shay gazed at her in awe, like she’d never seen a woman before. “What are the chances?!”

“Very high apparently. You don’t usually finish work at this time?” Lance was guessing, he just wasn’t entirely sure he could handle seeing Allura after the night before. It hadn’t even been twenty four hours since his harassment debacle.
“No, I finished early, I thought I’d keep you company on the train,” Allura smiled, she suddenly spotted Shay as if she hadn’t noticed her the entire admittedly short and convenient conversation.

“Oh, Allura, this is Shay,” Lance introduced. “Shay, this is Allura.”

Lance watched with discomfort as they… stared at each other. At least thirty seconds passed before Lance coughed, jolting both women out of the strangely tense staring contest they’d unwittingly found themselves in.

“Nice to meet you,” Shay extended a hand, Allura shook it, staring at Shay’s hand with meaning, Shay’s hand dwarfed hers’ considerably, and Lance found that Allura was caught in another staring contest however this time with Shay’s hand.

“Come on, we’re gonna be late.” Lance muttered, grabbing Allura by the arm and dragging her away whilst shouting a farewell at Shay, who was stood mesmerized by the door of the coffee shop.

They jumped onto the train just before it pulled away, luckily. Allura fell back into her chair and grinned at Lance.

“So. Last night, huh?” Allura smirked, Lance groaned and fell face-first onto the table between them.

“Don’t. I’m trying to pretend that it was a bad dream.” Lance muttered against the slick plastic. “I’m sorry, I just had… this bad moment.”

“No, I don’t mind… I just think I deserve an explanation?” Allura laughed, tapping the back of Lance’s head softly. His head shot up and he glared her down, knowing that she was probably entirely unprepared for the avalanche he was about to rain down upon her.

“Ok. So, the day that Keith hugged you I thought you were dating.” Lance explained quickly wanting the ridiculousness to be over. “Keith never corrected me, but I really liked him and couldn’t keep myself away from him so I thought ‘okay we can be friends, I can deal with pining over a friend’ and then he told me he didn’t have a girlfriend but then I wasn’t sure if he was telling the truth so I had to come running to you in the middle of the night to find out what was true.”

“Ok. Wow, that was… messy.” Allura’s eyes were blown-wide, a tonne of chaotic information thrown at her all at once. “Yeah, that does sound a little problematic. On both parts? But… I’m not even gonna try and dissect that. Ohhhh I just remembered you were there when we hugged again!”

“Don’t, I know. So now I’m gonna go over there, and face my fate and hope against all hope that he doesn’t completely hate me because of it.” Lance sighed.

“I don’t know Keith very well but…” Allura smiled, Lance was still adjusting to the fact that she absolutely never dated Keith. “I think he’d be ok as long as you were honest with him. He’s got a lot of walls, but he seems much… softer than before.”

Lance let a smile form on his face, maybe it would be ok.

Allura and Pidge walked in front, chatting amicably, telling each other about their days, whereas Lance and Keith were walking side by side, awkward and tense silence between them as they made their way to the apartment building. Lance wanted to say something or do anything but… he was so ashamed, and also terrified of Keith telling him to leave, that was the last thing he ever wanted to
hear leaving Keith’s lips. Keith walked with arms folded, though that wasn’t out of character, the only time Lance had seen Keith walk without his arms folded, was the night before, when he’d stuffed his hands in his pockets. Lance wondered if that meant anything, it probably didn’t but a man could hope.

“How was your day?” Lance finally burst through his lips, his voice sounding as uncomfortable as he felt. Keith twitched beside him, as if Lance had made him jump, like he hadn’t expected it.

“Fine. Yours’?” Keith responded, his voice giving nothing away. Lance groaned, maybe it wasn’t going to be ok, Keith looked shocked at Lance’s groan. “What? I asked you about your day too!”

Lance shook his head as they started up the stairs towards their apartment.

“No I mean… I don’t you want to be uncomfortable around me again.” Lance muttered, he watched Pidge bid Allura farewell and continue up the stairs, trying to give Lance and Keith some space.

“Maybe you should have just trusted me.” Keith responded as if it were obvious. “Rather than running to my neighbour’s apartment, harassing her in the middle of the night, causing her front door to shut and lock her out, then waking up my roommate, waking me up without meaning to, causing me to freak out thinking that something had happened to said roommate, only for me to run downstairs and discover the three of you, trying to pick Allura’s lock and spinning me some shit about midnight improv poetry.”

“Wow, um you are really good at… guessing things, when you lay it all out like that it sounds stupid-“

“That’s because it was! Because it is! I told you I wouldn’t lie!” Keith was showing more emotion now than Lance had ever seen before.

“I’m sorry! I just… I let Lotor get into my head.” It was a ridiculous excuse but… it was the truth.

“Lotor, right.” Keith folded his arms again, storming ahead of Lance. “Is it always gonna be Lotor?”

“What?” Lance couldn’t help but wince at his tone, but… it sounded half hopeful, that whatever this was might last long enough for Lotor to be a problem in the future. It sounded stupid but Lance was willing to hang on to anything at that point.

“Nothing,” Keith muttered, Pidge had left the front door open for the two of them, just as Keith was about to step inside, Pidge’s head popped, out grabbing the handle of the door.

“Have you guys made up?” Pidge asked inquisitively.

“We haven’t fallen out.” Keith sighed, shaking his head. Pidge shrugged and slammed the door shut in front of them

Keith reached into his pockets and pulled out his key, he fit the key into the lock only for it to come firing out again.

“What the fuck.” Keith grunted at the door, slamming a fist against it. “Pidge, stop it. You’re being such a child.”

“SAYS YOU!” Pidge cried from the other side. “You guys can kiss and make up or you aren’t coming inside!”
Keith clenched his fist against the warped wood of his apartment door, Lance stood awkwardly beside him, watching all this craziness unfold in front of him with his arms folded.

“Pidge. This isn’t high school.” Keith moaned through the door.

“Nope, which is why you guys need to talk it out, like adults.” Pidge responded, a sarcastic, sly lilt to her voice.

“Keith I-“

“Don’t encourage her stupidity!” Keith held out a hand without looking to stop Lance talking. “Pidge, please.”

Lance sighed and stepped forward, grabbing the hand that Keith had extended out to him and pulled him lightly away from the door.

“I’m sorry, I should have trusted you.” Lance spoke, Keith stared up at him, his eyebrows drawn together, sternly. “I was being stupid. I had to know, I had to know that I had a real chance with you.”

Keith’s lips flew into a weird… smirk, as if he were holding back a smile, his cheeks pink.

“That’s a fucking stupid excuse.” Keith’s voice betrayed the laughter in his thoughts.

“I know, but it’s the truth.” Lance laughed, grabbing Keith’s other hand and bringing it to his chest

“Okay, god.” Keith looked away like he couldn’t cope with the intensity of Lance’s stare. “WE’VE MADE UP PIDGE!”

The door slowly fell open, Keith looked back at Lance and smirked before pulling his hands away from Lance and rushing inside.

“So Lance!” Pidge rubbed her hands together, “What are you buying us for dinner?”

Lance wracked his brains, glancing around the apartment, hoping that the furniture scattered throughout might give something away. Of course, as furniture went, it gave him no clues.

“Chinese?” Lance tried, Pidge’s eyebrows raised approvingly. Chinese it was.

Keith had found a home on the couch, buried beneath a blanket, watching as Pidge set up Mario Kart and Lance ordered the food, Lance couldn’t help the stupid smile on his face at Keith’s adorable little blanket burrito-ed form.

“Okay, Lance. Let’s see if you can defeat the un-defeatable.” Pidge grinned, holding out a controller for Lance to take, which he did with gusto. He hung up the phone and leapt over the back of the couch, landing gracefully beside Keith, who observed him with raised eyebrows.

“You have no idea what’s coming to you.” Lance glowered threateningly. Pidge scoffed as she set up an online tournament with a couple of her friends.

“That’s weird.” Pidge muttered, looking at the list of her online friends. “Usually they’d be online right now…”

“Who’s missing?” Keith asked, he’d obviously seen this a thousand times, Lance had only just looked up at the screen when he let out a tense noise.
No fucking way.

“YOU’RE K_BIRD?!” Lance screamed as he leapt from the chair, gazing down at his bitter nemesis. Pidge stared at him, horrified and confused, till realisation shaped her newly grim features.

“No.” Pidge bit moodly. “No fucking way. Not a chance in HELL!”

“What the fuck is going on here?!” Keith exclaimed, still bundled up in his blanket, watching the exchange with a tired, frustrated look.

“This is my ultimate rival, Keith. You can’t see him anymore.” Pidge narrowed her eyes at Lance, not breaking eye-contact for a second.

“Are you kidding me?!” Keith pulled the blanket further up around his face. “Don’t be stupid.”

Lance and Pidge were staring each other down with a mighty ferocity. This was the person that Lance had been battling against for months, literally since he’d bought the game. They’d found each other on a regional tournament, been neck and neck for 5 tournaments, and Pidge cinched it at the last second with an impeccably thrown banana. Lance had requested her friendship and they’d been battling ever since, Lance was determined, he never ever gave up on anything.

Realisation hit him, there was one instance that he was so close to winning, and a user with the same name as Pidge’s was consistently last and consistently had blue shells that destroyed him every time he got into first, he turned to Keith with betrayal written on his face.

“You helped her!” Lance whined, “You hoarded blue shells and helped her defeat me!”

Pidge was cackling wickedly behind him. Keith was gazing up at him with nothing but… a confused and contempt look on his face.

“I’m sorry, Lance, I didn’t know how important this was to you.” Keith rolled his eyes. Lance was sure that if Keith had been keeping count that would have been 121½.

“It is important!” Lance cried, dropping back down onto the sofa, dropping the controller onto the seat beside him. “I can’t believe this!”

“What a crazy coincidence!” Pidge chuckled, nudging Lance in his side. “Cheer up, this is your opportunity for redemption, and in front of Keith no less.”

Lance glanced back at Keith, with expectation in his eyes. Keith shut his eyes for a couple of seconds, then re-opened them, the softest hint of a smile on his lips.

“I believe in you, Lance.” Keith smiled softly. At that Lance turned to Pidge with a burning determination blazing within him.

“You’re going down, birdie.”

Or not. ‘Birdie’ was definitely not going down, by any stretch of the imagination. Lance had hoped that Pidge would be a nice person and at least go a little easier on Lance in order to make him look good in front of Keith but there was no chance of that happening, not if he was going by the downright vitriolic look on her face.
Halfway through one race, Lance had to scuffle about in his pockets to hand Keith his wallet, which Keith took and jumped to the door in his blanket dress and answered the door reluctantly, struggling to hand over the correct cash without letting his tight blanket-fortress fall to the ground.

Keith had dished out all the food and finished his by the time Lance finally admitted defeat, Pidge jogged around the room victoriously as Lance moped over to Keith and dropped his head, sadly, on top of Keith’s head.

“Not only have I been defeated in front of you,” He complained sadly. “But I’ve got to eat cold Chinese food.”

“I don’t think any less of you Lance,” Keith laughed from beneath him, the sound of it vibrated through Keith’s head and onto Lance’s cheek. “Don’t worry. And Chinese food is still good cold.”

Lance out of instinct reached out and grabbed Keith’s face with both hands, he was warm and soft to the touch, he could feel his hands brush lightly through the messy hair that fell around Keith’s face. He could feel Keith twitch under his sudden touch, but he didn’t pull away.

One of Keith’s hands slowly bundled out of his blanket and rested softly on top of one of Lance’s hands. Lance knew his heart was in his throat, and the heat he was exuding through his cheeks was probably hot enough to reheat his Chinese, but there was something so comforting about the weird contortion they’d found themselves in.

Pidge was staring at them uneasily. Lance just stared right back, not willing to let go of Keith’s face. She took her plate, looked them both up and down with a disgusted look on her face and stalked off to the couch to begin eating, watching Yoshi celebrating across the course continuously.

“Lance?” Keith spoke.

“Yes?”

“You can let go of me now.” Keith chuckled beneath him. Lance twitched way, apologetically, he grabbed his food and joined Pidge on the couch.

“You’re such a sucker.” Pidge whispered, an evil grin on her lips. Lance shook his head, laughter staining his words.

“So people keep saying.”

“I should go.” Lance spoke from across the couch. Pidge had gone to bed hours before, it was almost midnight, and Lance had had bad experiences in that apartment building at midnight.

Keith stayed silent. They’d been watching videos about conspiracy theories all evening, with opposing opinions, it had been fascinating for the both of them to witness each other’s weird thoughts.

“Yeah…” Keith sighed. He glanced away, towards the TV which was already beginning to load up another video about the Bermuda triangle, Keith made no move to stop it, or pause it. He seemed to be engrossed in the circular motion of the buffering symbol spinning on screen.

“Keith?” Lance tried to pull him out of his hypnotized state. “Are you ok-“
“I should walk you home.” He stood up, his blanket falling around him at his feet. Without looking at Lance he pulled on his jacket and shoes and stood by the front door, staring at the floor.

“O-okay.” Lance gulped, they left the apartment to the sound of the Bermuda triangle being compared to Atlantis.

It was dark, but Keith’s expression was darker, and Lance wished that the walk to his apartment building was longer than ten minutes.

“Hey, I was thinking of getting everyone over on Friday night…” Lance spoke up, breaking the silence. The sound of cars all around them wasn’t enough to relieve the tension. “You, Allura, Shiro, Hunk and Pidge? I’ll make a huge dinner and we can drink and just… chill?”

Keith’s shoulders seized up at the mention of it, but then relaxed with an exhalation.

“Sure,” Keith responded. Lance bit his lip, hopefully that didn’t mean that as soon as they got to the building he was ending it, whatever it was.

They finally came to a stop outside the building, Keith hadn’t looked up from the ground once, a weird concentration on his face.

“See you Friday then?” Lance asked, Keith looked up at him. “Or not… I don’t mind if you’re not into it honestly, I get it if you don’t wanna see me any-”

He was cut short by the one thing he never expected. Keith was gripping either side of his face and had lunged forward to press a quick, short, sharp kiss on his lips, and then the next second he was gone. Lance didn’t even have a second to comprehend what had happened before Keith had stalked off into the night.

His heart was racing, his cheeks were burning, it was such a simple gesture but Lance’s legs threatened to give way beneath him. He’d done what Lance didn’t have the chance to, and was too chicken to do.

“Fuck.” Was all Lance could say.

Friday couldn’t come quick enough.

Chapter End Notes

Allura is totally 3 syllables :D
and um i am blown away by your comments, i will have every single one engraved on my gravestone <3
tumblr - foxsmo-lder
Revelations

Chapter Summary

In which Keith buys his first succulent.

“What does it mean to christen something?” Keith asked. “Are you gonna have to perform an exorcism on me after or something? Lance was convinced my name was Damien.”

“No, no, I mean Damien suits you to a T but—” Pidge laughed, changing her voice to sound like a studious British professor. “To christen something means to have sex on it, to bang upon an item of furniture or within a space, like if you’d christen a car or something.”

“Well that doesn’t sound very Christian.” Keith blanched.

Chapter Notes

um. can we talk about Keith's vlog? like, not to go on about it like everyone else but everytime i see it, it breaks my heart?

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Keith buried his face into the collar of his jacket, not needing it, he was burning up a fucking fever.

He’d spent the entire evening going over how he was going to do it. Watching Lance be defeated by Pidge seemed to devastate him to such a degree that Keith felt it only right to kiss that sad face of his.

He honestly couldn’t believe that he’d done it.

It had been a crazy twenty four hours. He’d woken up to the sound of scuffling at gone midnight, run out of his room to find Pidge missing and his natural instincts kicked in and he’d raced down the stairs only to discover Lance, Pidge and Allura crouched around her front door.

Keith wasn’t an idiot, he put two and two together and realized that Lance hadn’t trusted him, which he honestly couldn’t be surprised at given the nature of the circumstances. The fact of the matter was, Lance had come to confront Allura in the middle of the night, and that was just as messed up as Keith’s long-term lie about Allura being his girlfriend in the first place. He should have honestly been glad that Lance cared enough to ask Allura himself, but it still bit to think he didn’t trust him.

They were both as bad as each other, Keith had concluded after telling Lance that what he’d done was stupid. It seemed as though Lance was just as terrified of rejection as Keith had been, terrified
of the consequences of his actions that he seemed genuine when he apologised.

And hell, Lance was good at haiku’s, and that was impressive in and of itself. Those were among the reasons that Keith had pushed against the fear deep in his stomach when he grabbed Lance’s stupid face and kissed his stupid pouty lips.

And maybe the reason he’d ran away from Lance as soon as he’d done it, was because he couldn’t face the awkwardness that came after a first kiss. Where do you go from there? Lance probably had had better, and was now realising that Keith perhaps wasn’t worth all the effort he’d gone to. Maybe he wasn’t having the same, weak-legged feeling that Keith was having. It was sapping all the energy and effort within him to keep him upright and storming away. Keith tried to crush the fear of rejection deep down inside him, but it kept bubbling up to the surface.

He felt his phone vibrate deep in his pocket, he knew that was probably Lance and he loathed to look at it in anticipation of denial, but Keith had learned quite recently that his curiosity was the strongest thing in the universe.

Lance  -  Uh, holy shit, why did you run away?!

Keith sighed, he didn’t have a good answer for that. Or at least he did, but he wasn’t quite ready yet to show that kind of weakness to Lance.

Keith  -  It was late, and the spooky ghost stories we’d been learning about got me spooked.

Lance  -  Spooky.

Keith  -  Yep.

Lance  -  text me when you get home.

Keith  -  Why? I’m texting you now.

Lance  -  No, I mean, to let me know you got home safe

Keith stared at the message on his phone. Was that what people did? Keith had been wracking his brains not knowing when Lance had gotten home the night before, he didn’t know that he could just… ask for that kind of information.

Keith  -  Why?

Lance  -  Because then I can sleep soundly knowing that you’re home ok.

Keith bit his lip, why would Lance lose sleep over whether or not Keith was at home. It seemed like such an unusual and specific lie.

Keith  -  Why?

Lance  -  Because I care about you and your wellbeing? I’m getting concerned that you’ve been kidnapped by an oblivious criminal.

Keith stopped outside his apartment building, at the glowing lights beaming through the windows at him.

Keith  -  I’m home.
Keith thought to himself, a soft, sleepy thought but daren’t text it back. ‘How, could I hate you?’

“Hey loverboy,” Shiro fluttered his eyelashes at him as he appeared on the platform. “Are you going to Lance’s this Friday?”

“Don’t ever call me that, ever again.” Keith threatened, he’d barely gotten a wink of sleep, he’d been up all night sketching stupid sketches, his fingers were sore and his eyes were worse. “And yeah, I guess so. Are you going?”

“Jesus, you look like death warmed up.” Shiro chuckled, handing Keith his coffee, which he accepted with extra enthusiasm, ignoring the insult. “And yeah. I’m thinking I might bring some food, Lance doesn’t seem like… the cooking type.”

“I wouldn’t know.” Keith yawned, rubbing his eyes. “Haven’t seen him cook yet.”

“And did he make it up to you?” Shiro asked, waggling his eyebrows. Keith rolled his eyes, 122 ½ and socked him in the side of the arm.

“If you mean he bought me Chinese and explained everything? Yes.” Keith grunted, sipping his coffee and trying to make his eyes work properly.

“If you don’t ease up on the late nights, you’ll get sick!” Shiro teased. He glanced up and saw Lance appear on the platform. “There he is! Loverboy number two!”

“Don’t ever say those words again.” Keith sleepily covered Shiro’s mouth before he had a chance to shout anything embarrassing across the tracks at Lance.

Keith looked across at Lance who was sheepishly holding a sign under his arms, he was surprised and mildly petrified that it might be another haiku. Lance instead smiled and held up a sign of two stickmen kissing. Keith felt his stomach fill with something close to dread, but at the same time he wasn’t… sad or upset or scared. It didn’t seem like Lance was making fun of him, not if Keith were going by the look on Lance’s face. He suddenly flipped the sign.

I realised I didn’t bring you a gift last night, so I drew you a little something instead.

Keith stared at him, wanting to respond in some way, but a text or a wave felt a little underwhelming by comparison. He dropped his backpack to the floor and placed his cup of coffee beside it, he rooted around for a piece of paper that wasn’t an important document and a sharpie, he turned Shiro around and leant the paper against his back, quickly sketching out a tiny hamster with cheeks and huge eyes. He signed it with a little Slav underneath it and held it up for Lance to see.

Keith could see the curious faces of passers-by but he elected to ignore them, especially after the heart-breaking smile that appeared on Lance’s face after the fact. Their trains pulled up and they quickly waved at each other. Keith grabbed his backpack and coffee and slipped aboard, sitting next to Shiro like they always did.

“What’s that?” Shiro asked, grabbing the newly illustrated piece of paper. “Slav?”

“Lance’s hamster.” Keith responded, Shiro made an ‘ah-ing’ noise at the realisation. “Technically it was his niece’s but she’s allergic.”
“Man, I love hamsters.” Shiro beamed at the little drawing. “Oh I get to meet Slav on Friday, oh I’m even more excited than before.”

Keith felt his phone buzz against the table.

_Pidge_ - Hey, quick Q. is Shiro gonna be at Lance’s on Friday?

Keith was trying to mull over this specific question in his head. How did Pidge know that Shiro was even invited, unless Lance had mentioned it in the invitation.

_Keith_ - Uh, yeah, why?

_Pidge_ - It doesn’t matter, I’m working late Friday night anyway.

_Keith_ - Just come afterwards?

_Pidge_ - And the next day.

_Keith_ - You’re really mysterious, you know that right?

_Pidge_ - It’s one of my greatest features.

But Keith knew better than anyone that he shouldn’t pry. There was absolutely nothing worse than someone trying to force information you weren’t quite ready to share out of you.

_Keith_ - Have a nice day.

_Pidge_ - You too <3

As Keith entered the office, he caught eyes with Hunk. He smirked at the memory, the day before he and Hunk had had lunch together, during which using his still incognito status with Hunk, and asked all about ‘train guy’ which Hunk had only been too happy to share.

Keith had learned that Lance thought his name was going to be something like… Aron or Damien. Keith wasn’t sure how he felt about Damien, still. He had also learnt that Lance found Keith so cute that ‘he could barely stand it’ and that ‘it isn’t fair to have to see someone so insanely beautiful every day and not be able to speak to them.’ And Keith was only partially sure that he was telling the truth.

Either way, it had been an interesting and informative luncheon, and Keith actually hadn’t hated every second of it, not only that but Hunk had taken him to a café called ‘Scoops’ which was almost exclusively waffles and ice-cream sundaes, Keith hadn’t realised until quite recently that he fucking loved ice-cream. Which in turn made him realise that he and Lance had bought a bucket of Neapolitan ice-cream and completely forgotten to eat it, so he decided if he needed to escape from the mess that would be Friday night, he could find a dark corner in Lance’s bathroom with a spoon and a bucket of ice-cream.

Hunk bounded over with the usual cease-less energy.

“Hey! Are you going to Lance’s on Friday?” Hunk exclaimed in a question. Keith nodded. “Great! I’ll get the train with you then!”

“Okay,” Keith responded, he’d recently been so readily agreeing to so many different things. It was weird to think how different everything was since three weeks and a day ago.
The day passed slowly as he left the office building at the end of the day, Pidge was stood with two cartons of Chinese food.

“This new place opened up and I noticed it on my way over here,” She spoke, handing over the carton without even looking up at Keith. “I know it’s Chinese again, but, eh I don’t even have an excuse, you can never have too much Chinese food.”

“Thanks, Pidge.” Keith smiled, accepting the carton and regarding the contents, it looked glorious, but then when did Chinese food not look glorious.

They got comfortable on the train and Pidge leant her head against Keith’s shoulder, which had become habit on these journeys.

“Hey, what happened after I went to bed last night?” Pidge presented two plastic forks and handed one to Keith. “Did you get freaky on my beautiful sofa?”

“No, we watched conspiracy theory videos and I walked him home.” Keith grunted, Pidge sighed with disappointment.

“Man, someone’s gotta christen that couch someday.” Pidge muttered, shovelling some rice into her face. “And it sure as shit ain’t gonna be me.”

“What does that mean?” Keith’s head perked up confused, Pidge sat up and stared Keith square in the eyes.

“What?”

“What does it mean to christen something?” Keith asked. “Are you gonna have to perform an exorcism on me after or something? Lance was convinced my name was Damien.”

“No, no, I mean Damien suits you to a T but-“ Pidge laughed, changing her voice to sound like a studious British professor. “To christen something means to have sex on it, to bang upon an item of furniture or within a space, like if you’d christen a car or something.”

“Well that doesn’t sound very Christian.” Keith blanched, Pidge laughed and returned her head to Keith’s shoulder. “And no, but I did kiss him.”

Pidge leapt up again, with a stupid smile on her face.

“What was it like?” Pidge asked, almost like a whisper.

“Quick. I ran away afterwards.” Keith smirked, enjoying the disappointment that then fell on her face, she groaned and slammed her head back onto Keith’s shoulder and continued to gorge on the contents of her carton.

“So who else is gonna be there on Friday?” Shiro asked, handing Keith’s coffee cup over as he stepped onto the platform the following morning.

“Uh, me-“

“I’m not coming then.” Shiro pouted and turned his head.
“Fuck you. Me, Allura, Hunk and Lance.” Keith pushed him lightly in the arm.

“Hunk I’ve met already, and Allura is the improv poetry girlfriend, right?” Shiro smirked, Keith nodded, mildly disgruntled that Allura had been lumbered with such an association.

They both observed as Lance sleepily stepped onto the platform, carrying his own cup of coffee, which was unusual for Lance, he waved at Keith and Shiro before taking a big hulking gulp of his own cup.

Suddenly, as if from nowhere, Allura appeared beside Lance, clapping him heavily on the back and laughing at his struggle to contain the hot liquid in his mouth. Keith stared at her, he hadn’t even seen her leave the building, he must have been exhausted to have not even noticed her. She was never normally on the train at this time.

“Is that Allura?” Shiro whispered, Keith stared at him, why was he whispering? They were a long way away from Lance and Allura.

“Yeah, that’s her.” Keith smirked at Shiro’s face.

“I’m amazed Lance even thought that she was your girlfriend,” Shiro sighed, “She is so far out of your league she’s in another galaxy.”

Keith tutted and rolled his eyes, 123 ½. Her usually cascading white locks had been bundled up into a huge bun on the top of her head.

“You know, I realised something,” Keith suddenly perked up. “So, Lance works for a coffee shop chain that has a shop less than a ten minute walk from his apartment, and yet, he goes an hour and a half out of his way to the other side of the city, to work in its sister location.”

“Maybe he likes the change of scenery…” Shiro considered, Keith pouted, he’d have to remember to ask Lance about that, it seemed completely impractical.

The day passed even slower than usual, Keith almost passed out at his desk three times before lunch, Hunk bought him a triple shot cappuccino from the coffee shop that Keith accepted with such over-tired gratefulness he was nearly in tears.

But now, as he was stepping outside the office, he was filled with a twitchy, palpitating heart and a horribly exhausted but nervous energy.

“Keith? Are you ok?” Pidge asked, resting a hand on his shoulder.

“Y-yeah, I had a super strong coffee earlier.” Keith nodded, they made their way to the train and stepped on board, Keith was suddenly hyper aware of his surroundings.

Of the woman sneezing four seats away, the man in a suit seemingly stimming on his e-reader, the teenage girls playing Pictionary together in the next section of the train.

“Hey, are you listening?” Pidge nudged him, breaking him out of his vaguely existential funk.

“Shit sorry, I’ve just got a bad twitch on.” Keith muttered, he felt like he had to do something with his hands.

“Oh here!” Pidge exclaimed, pulling her bag off the floor and into her lap, she unzipped the pocket
and pulled out a small wrapped gift, she handed it to Keith. “I was gonna save it for next week as a kind of… anniversary present for living together for a month, but I feel like you need it now.”

Keith raised his eyebrows and regarded the gift. He’d never really gotten gifts before, sure he’d get them as a kid, but there came a point where… he just didn’t anymore. He delicately pulled away the tape and un-wrapped it. Within was a sketch pad of sorts, it was pretty small, but tucked into a small elastic circle was a pencil, it was obviously a sketchbook to be used on the go.

“I have one for work,” Pidge explained. “When we’re on show, usually if the animation and the camera work is all done just right, there hours where we’re not really doing anything, so I sit and write ideas down because I get too twitchy otherwise.”

“Huh,” Keith flipped it over, there was a spotty pattern on the other side and in big black writing written in sharpie was Keith’s name, except Pidge had written ‘Keef’ “Keef? Really?”

“It’s an affectionate nickname. Be glad I didn’t write Damien,” Pidge laughed. “If I were ever to write a biography of my life, your pseudonym will be Damien, for sure. I love it so much.”

“I’ll let Lance know how you feel. And, thanks…”

Keith sighed, thinking about it, he hadn’t texted Lance since Tuesday night, and Friday night was tomorrow, and he was beginning to grow a little anxious, he expected a text from Lance to cancel.

As they stepped off the train, Keith heard noise from behind him, he turned and saw Lance waving at him from the other side, Lance then gestured to his phone, Keith followed suit and noticed a text.

**Lance - Meet me outside!**

Keith smirked and ascended the steps, Allura was already outside, leaning against the wall and tapping away on her phone, she and Pidge greeted and headed off whilst Keith waited for Lance. He came bounding around the corner and faltered just as he got to Keith, like he meant to… do something and thought better of it. Keith knew he’d be forever wondering about that over and over in his head.

“How… Keith.” Lance smiled, he stared all around him like he wasn’t entirely sure where to go from there.

“Hey,” Keith responded. They stared at each other for a second and Keith bit his lip. This was why he’d run away from Lance, the awkwardness after that first kiss apparently didn’t have a statute of limitations.

“Um, so tomorrow? I take it Hunk is gonna come with you after work?” Lance smiled, rubbing his arm uncomfortably. Keith nodded in response. “Ok, so I’ll meet you guys, Shiro and Allura here tomorrow night.”

“Okay.” Keith smiled, knowing they both had to part ways now, but not entirely sure how to do it, given that it had taken almost four hours to build up the courage to give Lance a quick peck on the lips. “See you tomorrow!”

He rushed off whilst throwing a wave in Lance’s direction, who just watched in him in shock, before giving him a limp wave in response. Keith knew that he probably shouldn’t have ran off, he thought they were over all this but he really didn’t know what he was doing, and it just felt safer to be away from it. He knew he wouldn’t have a choice tomorrow night, and he was still minutely terrified that all this was going to be some kind of ploy to humiliate him, he doubted that was so but
he couldn’t ignore that feeling deep inside.

As he arrived back at his apartment, Pidge was staring at the television, seemingly waiting for something to happen.

“HAH! He’s on. Let’s do this.” Pidge grit her teeth, staring down Lance’s character on the screen, it was just the two of them and ten NPC’s. Keith stared at the screen, regarding Lance’s screen name, within seconds Pidge suddenly gasped. “Holy shit, you said Lance thought you were called Damien right?”

“Uh, yeah that or Aron.” Keith mentioned, seating himself in the kitchen and staring at Pidge’s gift.

“Oh my god, he’s such a fucking dork.” She laughed. “He combined your ‘names’ together to get his screen name, look, it’s Dance.”

“That’s so-“ Cute “Lame.”

“I know right, he’s such a sucker!” Pidge laughed before spending the rest of the evening completely destroying Lance, Keith thought about what Lance would be doing right now, frustrated that he still wasn’t getting retribution. It began to get late and he notice ‘Dance’ suddenly disappeared from the tournament.

Lance - Tell Birdie she’s the worst. I was mad that she couldn’t make tomorrow, but now I’m glad. I stayed up all night last night trying to get better, and she destroys me every time.

Keith - She told me to tell you that she loves Damien.

Lance - Nothing will make me forgive her.

Keith - She said you’re weak.

Lance - Fuck that. I’m going to bed.

Keith - Night.

Lance - Hey, tomorrow night, reckon you’ll stay?

Keith - Uh, well you invited me so...

Lance - I mean stay the night, sleep in my apartment.

Keith - Is that what usually goes down at these things?

Lance - Sometimes, you don’t have to if you’re not comfortable with it. I can walk you home.

Keith - Is everyone else staying?

Lance - Yeah.

Keith - Then I guess I will too.

Lance - Aces.

Lance - Let’s pretend I didn’t say that.
“GOD I am so nervous.” Keith muttered as he greeted Shiro, who regarded him with confusion.

“You’re acting like it’s the first time you guys are hanging out,” Shiro laughed. “You’ve been on a date with him, he’s been to your apartment, you’ve KISSED HIM!”

“That’s what makes me so nervous!” Keith muttered, grabbing his coffee out of Shiro’s hand. “Now there’s all this expectation. When I spoke to him last night I actually ran away.”

“What expectation?” Shiro moaned, waving at Lance and Allura, who had suddenly become a familiar face across the platform. “Usually things get more comfortable after getting that first kiss out of the way.”

“I wouldn’t know.” Keith sighed, rubbing his forehead, watching Lance and Allura chat away happily, Keith was glad that Allura wasn’t one to hold a grudge. Because dammit she had every right to considering Lance’s behaviour.

“Keith, has anyone ever told you that you think too much?” Shiro asked, throwing a casual arm around his shoulders. “Stop living inside your head so much, good shit happens if you just let it.”

Keith had been told so many times to just let go and he knew that he should and he was so close to it, but every time he got on the precipice, a fear gripped him and he just couldn’t.

“And besides, it’ll be okay, you won’t be on your own, it’ll ease the tension a little,” Shiro smiled, comforting.

Keith sighed and nodded, he wasn’t entirely sure he completely believed Shiro, but he trusted him.

Hunk followed him out of the building at the end of the day, a bundle of energy like always. He was carrying a huge container of something, Keith hadn’t even thought about bringing anything. He supposed he could just help Lance cook if it came to it, which was better than nothing considering that Lance himself admitted he was no good at cooking.

“Aw, I’m so pumped, this is gonna be a blast!” Exclaimed Hunk happily. “I’ve not done something like this in years! The city is a busy place but it’s surprisingly lonely.”

Keith grunted in agreement, he glanced around for any sign of Pidge, and then remembered her claim that she was working this evening. He wondered if her excuse was true, she was always surprisingly cagey wherever Shiro was concerned, which was unfortunate, they were essentially the two most important people in his life. And the memory of Pidge calling Shiro by his name only felt stronger the more he thought about it, but he still couldn’t think of a reason why on earth she would lie about something like that.

They headed to the train in relative silence, Hunk didn’t seem to know this part of the city terribly well, he was gazing at the scape of it all around him with interest, considering he lived with Lance for a time.

“How did you and Lance meet?” Keith asked, Hunk spun around, surprised more at the fact that
Keith asked the question in the first place than the question itself.

“Oh, it’s kind of a funny story,” Hunk chuckled. “It’s gonna sound so strange, but we met at a drama camp, y’know those places out of state in the middle of nowhere where all they do is plays, play instruments and sing songs?”

“Oh, sure…” Keith raised his eyebrows, in fact having no idea whatsoever.

“So, I only went because my mom wanted me to go,” Hunk sighed, “And I had nothing better to do with my summer. Lance and I were staying in the same cabin, he knew my name in passing and in the middle of the night he woke me up and told me we were sneaking out. And I think I’d seen him maybe once or twice around the camp, we’d never actually spoke but I got a good vibe and went with him. With the promise that we’d break into the canteen and steal a couple of donuts.”

“What happened?” Keith smirked, expecting the worst.

“Of course we got caught, parents got called, we had to leave and…” Hunk breathed a heavy, wistful sigh. “I never got donuts. But we stayed in touch!”

“That’s… something.” Keith was learning to trust his instincts, he felt like he was getting to know Lance more every day.

“My mom was mad, and hated the fact that we kept in touch,” Hunk smiled, scratching his cheek absentmindedly. “She hated it even more so that I moved to the city because of him, but… Lance, you’ve met him right? He’s a determined guy, as soon as he found out my mom didn’t like him, we took a train across state and he charmed her to within an inch of her life, now she adores him.”

“Did your mom want you to do drama then?” Keith asked, not entirely understanding the whole ‘drama camp’ context. He understood more than anything why Lance was there, but Hunk was a mystery.

“She’s a mom, she thinks that her kid is talented.” Hunk shrugged. “She was just like all moms are, desperate for you to do your best, she had this weird idea that I was an amazing singer and insisted that I go, I don’t think I managed to sing one song before I was kicked out.”

Sure, like all moms are.

“But I do feel kind of bad, now.” Hunk rubbed his shoulder. “It must have cost her an absolute bomb for me to go, only to just get kicked out not even halfway through. I’m really lucky she even bothers with me anymore.”

Keith felt a twinge in his chest, and ignored it. Crushing it to the bottom of the pile with everything else. He’d not thought about it in a long time and there was no way he was about to start now.

Luckily for Keith, as Hunk was about to ask him a predictably invasive and personal question, the train pulled up at the station. Shiro was stood leant against the train map and he glanced up as Hunk and exited the train.

“Hey, Shiro! Good to see you again!” Hunk exclaimed, he looked as though he wanted to grapple him into a hug, but the container that Hunk was holding was far too big, so he just stood kind of awkwardly leaning towards Shiro.

“Nice to see you too,” Shiro smiled, noticing the body language and clapping him on the arm as a way of greeting. “Need a hand?”
“No, it’s fine I got this.” Hunk smiled, “looks like you’ve got enough yourself!”

Keith looked at Shiro, who was clutching grocery bags, Keith blanched hotly, he didn’t have anything except his over-night bag. This was the guy he was kind of seeing and Shiro and Hunk had shown him up tenfold. He looked over his shoulder and caught Lance’s eye as he and Allura climbed the stairs on their side. He raced up the stairs without an excuse and raced to the flower girl. His eyes raked over the flowers on display and he noticed a small pot with a satisfyingly symmetrical plant growing out of it. He pointed and stared at the girl.

“That’s a succulent?” The girl followed his gesture.

“What does that mean?” Keith stammered, he could hear the sound of Hunk and Shiro calling his name.

“It’s a kind of plant, like a cactus?” The girl responded, not really knowing what else to say. “They last longer than flowers?”

“I’ll take it!” He slammed some cash into her hand and grabbed it, cradling it in the palm of his hand and headed to the platform entrance, trying to make it look like he hadn’t just panic-bought a plant he didn’t even know had existed before now.

“Keith?!” Shiro yelled as he stepped out of the entrance, then took a huge breath of relief. “God I thought you’d run away.”

“That stings. Good to know that you have faith in me.” Keith muttered sarcastically. Shiro and Hunk glanced down at the plant in Keith’s palms.

“Aaah, you panic bought him a succulent because you didn’t have a gift for him.” Hunk chuckled, Keith stared desperately between them. Was this a well-known thing that he had no idea about?!

“Yes, dammit don’t say anything.” Keith panic-whispered as he heard Allura and Lance’s talking getting louder. “I’m not very good at this.”

As Hunk watched Lance and Allura round the corner, something seemingly dawned on him, his head flipped between Keith and Lance.

“WAIT!” Hunk exclaimed, Lance and Allura both stopped in their tracks. Hunk glared at Keith. “YOU’RE TRAIN GUY AREN’T YOU?!”

Shiro burst out laughing, it seemed as if Hunk had finally realised that Lance and Keith got off on the same stop at different stations. Hunk was biting his lips and glancing around nervously, re-living the amount of information he’d laid on Keith at their lunch.

Lance sighed and rubbed a hand down his face. Allura scoffed a little, and bounded up to introduce herself to Shiro, by way of changing the subject.

Keith wandered sheepishly over to Lance and handed over the succulent.

“Oh man, it’s so sweet, thank you.” Lance smiled, leaning forward to plant a kiss on Keith’s forehead in thanks. Keith gulped at the heat in his cheeks.

“It’s nothing.” Keith brushed it off, Lance beamed down at him. “Are we gonna go now or just stand here?”

They walked all together, Hunk, Shiro and Allura introducing themselves to each other and
chatting easily, Keith did not know how the fuck they did that. Were they totally unafraid of embarrassing themselves? Of being told to stop talking or to go away? He was walking next to someone he’d been on a date with and kissed and he still couldn’t bring himself to say anything, or to even know what to say for that matter.

“Hey, I know I said I’d cook tonight, but I think I might need a hand?” Lance asked, looking down at Keith with a soft smile on his face, he was carrying the plant in one hand and left one hand dangling between them. Keith honestly didn’t get his meaning, but he could tell there was something there he wasn’t getting, so that was an improvement.

“Sure, I didn’t bring any food so I’ll help you cook.” Keith was barely aware of where his hands were, he was sure his arms were folded like always.

“Oh cool, so you’ll lend me a HAND.” Lance was staring him down now and slowing his pace, Keith followed suit, he was sure Lance was trying to say something to him but he honestly had no idea.

“Yeah, I just said that?” Keith responded confused, Lance rolled his eyes with an exasperated smile on his face.

“No, I’m subtly trying to suggest that you hold my hand.” Lance muttered a little quieter. Keith was getting sick of how easily Lance made his cheeks burn.

“You want to hold my hand?” Keith sputtered, Lance just nodded, a familiar pink tinge on his cheeks. Keith was all of a sudden hyper aware of where his hands where, he thought about it for a second, he could hold a hand. He had kissed this guy, albeit for less than three seconds, he could hold his hand.

He unfolded his arms and let his hand drop next to Lance’s, who smiled and quickly took it in his. Keith could feel his pulse quicken, as much as he knew he’d kissed Lance, for some reason holding his hand felt that much more intimate. Like it was reminding him of something.

Lance gently pulled him a little bit closer and planted another kiss on the side of his head, he gulped and continued to stare at the road as they passed it. Lance’s hand was so, comforting. Keith knew that they had ‘held hands’ before, but not in such a casually intimate way. The way that Keith saw old married couples walking together, and in movies and tv shows. He’d never pictured himself actually doing it, he never pictured any of this.

They finally arrived at Lance’s apartment building, and Keith watched with amusement as Shiro and Allura regarded it with amazement.

“Damn, Lance, what did your grandma do?!” Shiro exclaimed in surprise, they gazed at him, Lance laughed at their surprise.

“Lita was a software developer back in the nineties.” He laughed. Keith glanced at Lance, he’d never heard him refer to his grandma as ‘Lita’, nor what it was that she’d done. “She developed something that was very popular, I can’t tell you what for legal reasons, and managed to sell the code and everything else to a very rich multi-national company. So she bought this apartment.”

“Wow, that’s amazing.” Allura gushed, Lance smirked and rolled his eyes. He let go of Keith’s hand which left him feeling strangely… abandoned and pushed the door open, gesturing for everyone to follow.

“I forgot how beautiful this place was.” Hunk sniffled dramatically. “God if only you weren’t an
awful nightmare to live with.”

“I’m a delight.” Lance muttered as he pushed the button for the elevator after greeting the doorman.

“No, no, you stumbling in at one in the morning every weekend with a different person, is not delightful, it’s downright obnoxious.” Hunk muttered, at which Lance turned and stared at Hunk with wide eyes.

“Well it’s a good thing I don’t do that anymore.” He exclaimed through gritted teeth, Keith stared at him, and then looked at Hunk, who apparently was just not very good at keeping his mouth shut.

Keith thought about why Lance wouldn’t have wanted Keith to know that, and suddenly it dawned on him, a different person every weekend? Did that mean that Lance got bored easily? Would he get bored of Keith as easily? And did that mean in the entire year and a half he’d been ‘pursuing’ Keith like he said he had, he was sleeping with random people all that time. Keith would never judge or berate anyone for sleeping with a lot of people, it was Lance’s choice but it just… was Keith just a mountain to conquer, everyone knows that when you reach the peak of a mountain, it doesn’t take you half as long to get down as it did to get there in the first place.

Keith turned his head and locked eyes with Shiro, who was staring at him wide eyed and trying to mouth something at him.

“What?” Keith spoke out loud. Shiro rolled his eyes heavily and turned away. Hunk sounded like he was out of breath, Keith looked at him in the mirror and he looked like he was panicking. He’d obviously just realised what he’d done as well as everyone else. Lance was staring with a grim look on his face at the floor, Allura and Shiro were exchanging a look and Keith was just wishing for this elevator to get to Lance’s floor.

Finally the door opened and Lance raced down the corridor.

Hunk chased after him and Allura and Shiro looked at Keith.

“That was awkward.” Allura muttered quietly to the two of them, Shiro nodded and Keith shrugged, everything felt awkward for him, so what was new.

The three of them followed Hunk and Lance into the apartment, to come upon Lance stood at the kitchen island whilst Hunk spoke quietly to him. Allura and Shiro were too busy gazing around in awe at the apartment to even notice Hunk’s panicked expression. Lance glanced up and caught Keith’s eyes, shut his own and sucked in a deep breath. He scooped the plant off the table and walked with purpose over to Keith. Keith tried to destroy all the doubt in his mind telling him that Lance was going to tell him to leave and take his shitty plant with him.

“Keith. Can I borrow you, I need a hand choosing where to put him.” Lance gestured with his head to the plant in his hand. Keith almost laughed with relief. Keith nodded and Lance extended a hand, Keith took it a little confused but Lance dragged him into a room that Keith assumed was Lance’s bedroom.

They stepped inside and Lance slammed the door shut behind them. Keith could see the battle Lance was having with himself by his rigid body language.

“Okay, let me clear one thing up.” Lance muttered, staring at the floor. “What Hunk said about me, that’s not me that never was, I was having a rough time because of my grandma dying and… I don’t know I just lost myself.”
“Lance, I don’t care that you did any of it, you don’t need an excuse.” Keith folded his arms, because he honestly didn’t. “I just… I don’t know. Am I a mountain to you?”

Keith felt like his entire chest was aflame, he felt so sick and vulnerable and like he wanted to leave but he’d said it now, and Lance stared at him like he had no idea what the fuck he was saying.

“A mountain?” Lance raised an eyebrow, he stepped past him and put the plant by his bedside, he dropped onto the bed and looked up at Keith.

“You know. You climb and climb for days, you put in all this effort,” Keith covered his face, rubbing his eyes, feeling stupid. “But once you’re up there, you think ok, this view is alright, you take a picture and then you run down the other side in half a second, and you only look back on the picture as a memory of something you conquered. You don’t… set up camp at the top and live there forever, I know for a fact you’d probably die if you did that because mountains are dangerous at their peak and there’s low oxyg-“

“Are you saying you think I’ll get bored and leave after I get… you?” Lance smirked, watching Keith unload all this paranoia out in front of him. Keith pursed his lips. Unwilling to admit it. Even though he was the one who said it in the first place.

Lance stood up as if about to say something, till Shiro came barrelling through the door, clutching Slav in his hands, his eyes watering with happiness.

“Lance, this is the single most beautiful creature I have ever seen before in my entire life.” He gushed, clutching Slav close to his chest, the small creature’s nose twitching wildly against him.

“Woah, what the fuck, he just let you touch him like that?!” Lance exclaimed staring at the unusually docile Slav in Shiro’s hands. Shiro nodded, his bottom lip stuck out, Keith had never seen him so happy.

“Yeah, I love him. He’s the sweetest thing ever.” Shiro laughed. “C’mon, you’re leaving your guests to run amok and Hunk is crying into the chilli!”

Keith sighed and made a move to walk out, before Lance grabbed his arm and pulled him back.

“You like doing that.” Keith groaned, but was smiling all the same.

“You’re the perfect height for it, what can I say.” He laughed, his face still pressed against Keith’s forehead. “And I’m terrified to actually kiss you.”

Just as Keith made a move to respond, Lance had already dashed off to make amends with Hunk.

Keith stepped out of Lance’s bedroom and surveyed his surroundings, Shiro and Allura were on Lance’s sofa, pouring over Slav with delicate adoration and Lance had his arm around Hunk in the kitchen, patting him on the shoulder and trying to console him.

Keith couldn’t help but feel gutted that Pidge wasn’t there, she would have loved all this, the chaos, the animals and the fact that Keith was probably going to be spending most of the evening completely flustered and embarrassed.

“Keith! Get over here! Come and give Slav the love he deserves!” Allura exclaimed, beckoning him over. Keith smirked and joined Shiro and Allura on the sofa.

“Wow, I never pegged you as a rodent lover, Shiro.” Keith laughed, watching Shiro regard Slav
with the same emotion as he would a new-born baby.

“Rodent makes him sound like a dirty, disease ridden thing, how dare you say such a thing in front of him.” Shiro growled lowly, Slav was happily pancaking across Shiro’s chest, his eyes shut, seemingly fast asleep, completely contented.

Lance and Hunk finally joined them on the sofa, Lance sat beside Keith but not too close, Keith noted, and stared at Slav on Shiro’s chest.

“Holy shit, how did you make him do that?” Lance cried, leaning forward. “I swear to god Slav just totally hates me!”

Allura stared at Lance.

“Lance, have you seen Shiro’s pectorals? I could happily fall asleep on those things.” Allura gestured, Shiro chuckled with the tiniest hint of a blush on his face.

“I mean, yeah absolutely,” Lance fully agreed. Keith rolled his eyes, 124 ½ “But still, that’s my hamster, well, technically it’s my niece’s but nevertheless!”

“Well, it’s the least you could expect from a model.” Allura shrugged. Keith, Lance and Hunk all stared at her. Shiro scratched his face innocently.

“Model?” Lance spoke, cautiously, completely unprepared for whatever Allura might say next. She looked between the three of them.

“Are you serious?” She muttered, she gestured to Shiro once more. “Model? You don’t recognize him?!”

All three eyes shot to Shiro, who was staring off into the distance trying not to look any of them in the eye.

“Excuse me?” Keith stared him down.

Allura groaned and grabbed her phone, she tapped something in quickly and turned it, to reveal a picture of Shiro, completely topless, smouldering at the camera.

“Holy fuck. Shiro. Damn, I would let you destroy me anytime.” Lance gushed, all four eyes fell on him, he laughed it off. “I’m kidding of course, of course, no I’m kidding.”

“What the hell, how did you never mention this?!” Hunk exclaimed, Keith had grabbed the phone out of Allura’s hand and was flipping through the photos.

“Isn’t that the most obnoxious thing a person could say?” Shiro muttered. “Hey, nice to meet you, I’m Shiro, I’m a model.”

Keith was staring at the photos, Shiro was stunning, that much was obvious, but it felt wrong to look at him in his underwear, it was like looking at a family member getting changed, it felt awful, he very quickly threw the phone back to Allura, feeling dirty.

“What do you model for?” Lance had to ask, his cheeks were still pink, Shiro groaned and began absentmindedly stroking Slav.

“A lot of different things. Ugh, I hate talking about this, can we move on?” Shiro laughed, staring down at Slav, trying to take the attention off of him.
Lance was on his own phone now, grinning like an idiot at the pictures on his phone.

“Mostly underwear.” Lance clarified. Shiro groaned, if he hadn’t have had Slav on his chest, he’d have taken Lance’s phone and thrown it out of the window.

“Okay, moving on! What are we gonna do first!” Allura grinned. Shiro seemed grateful for the distraction, which was successful going by Lance’s cheeky grin.

“I have a great game to break the ice.” Lance grinned. “Ever played Never Have I Ever?”

Keith had not, and it sounded like his worst nightmare.

Chapter End Notes

i, love, keith, so, much. (imagine the commas are clapping emojis)
the next chapter will be a mixed P.O.V
Tumblr - foxsmo-lder
In which Keith sleeps soundly.

“Have any whiskey?” Keith glanced up at him, seemingly oblivious to Lance’s flirtatious intentions, Lance should not have been surprised.

“Oh yeah, let me get that for you.” Lance smiled, he was not being subtle. He pushed Keith very lightly out of the way of the cupboard, before performing what could only be described as a slut drop, rooting around in the cupboard and finding a bottle of Jack Daniels and presenting it to Keith, who was staring at him wide-eyed.

Success.

“That looked like it hurt, are you okay?” Keith bent forward, a little concerned. Lance groaned, maybe not such a success.

Chapter Notes

i may or may not have been rewatching voltron for maybe about the tenth time whilst writing this.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Keith was under the distinct impression that he had barely done anything, considering that he was almost stone cold sober and he had four drunkards laughing all around him.

As much as he’d hated that he wasn’t on the same level as them drunkenness-wise, he’d definitely learnt some eye-opening things.

He’d learnt that Shiro had been caught with handcuffs on once, Lance had almost made out with Hunk’s sister, Allura had had sex in an open field back in England and Hunk was certain that if he were a dog, he’d be a St. Bernard.

The only thing they’d learnt about Keith, and were not even remotely surprised at, was that he’d kissed someone and ran away.

The game finally came to an end, much to Keith’s joy since he was the only one not massively included, Lance was leaning into him, drunkenly laughing at something that Hunk had said. He felt, strong and warm against him, and it took everything within Keith not to turn and wrap his arms around him, burying his face into his neck and just staying there forever.

But the fear was stronger than the desire to be held, because he hadn’t gotten a straight answer from Lance just yet. He didn’t know why he kept doing this to himself, the uncertainty was driving
him crazy, and he had a feeling that fate had other ideas, whenever an opportunity for them to talk or kiss or whatever else arose, something happened. It was incredibly frustrating.

He glanced down at his watch, it was only 7pm and four out of five of them were drunk. Shiro spotted this straight away, and was now making it his mission to change that.

He was rummaging through Lance’s drawers in desperation to find a pair of die, which filled Keith with a renewed dread. Shiro knew far too many drinking games, and the last couple of times he’d played games with Shiro, he always ended up black out drunk.

“Finally!” He exclaimed, grabbing two die from the middle drawer underneath Slav’s cage, Shiro had now taken to wearing Slav like a parrot on his shoulder, he was nestled into Shiro’s collarbone a couple of treats bundled in his cheeks, he was happy, Shiro was happy and Lance daren’t attempt move the beast lest he lose a finger.

Shiro grabbed the footrest and dragged it in front of Keith, Hunk disappeared into the kitchen to grab some more alcohol, and Lance and Allura were already in the kitchen, kneeling by the oven, trying to figure how to put pizzas in said oven whilst under the influence.

Apparently Lance’s request for a hand with dinner was just... a line to get Keith to hold his hand, which Keith could even admit was freaking adorable, but he was upset that he didn’t have a reason to disappear from the action for an hour or so.

“Keith, pick a number from one to twelve.” Shiro stared him straight in the eye. Keith didn’t like where this was going. Hunk had returned with another beer for Keith.

“Three?” Keith tried, Shiro raised his eyebrows and threw the die, they rolled around and landed on a collective number six.

“Drink, for three seconds.” Shiro pointed at the bottle. Keith sighed whilst pouring the beer down his throat, he had forgotten how much he disliked beer. It reminded him of the second frat party he went to, where he learned that frat boys were the absolute worst.

“Try again.” Shiro smiled. Keith groaned unhappily. There was no way he was going to win this game.

“Six.” Keith muttered, resting the cold beer against his forehead, he could feel himself burning up.

Shiro threw the die again, the collective number came to twelve, Shiro looked up at him apologetically.

“Drink for six seconds, buddy.”

This continued for a couple of minutes, Keith only managed to get the number correct once, and in response to his victory, Shiro insisted that he down his drink in celebration. Keith wasn’t sure that was a real rule, but hell, he was throwing caution to the wind at this point.

Lance and Allura had finally figured out how to put the pizzas in the oven and had returned victoriously. Lance immediately spotted the blush that had settled on Keith’s cheeks, he saw the die on the footstool and glared at Shiro.

“What?” Shiro shrugged innocently. Lance shook his head, grabbed the die and returned them to the safety of the drawer. Shiro was like that big brother who was a terrible influence and tried to
get you drunk at family parties, Lance was more than familiar with that, but more often than not he’d been that brother.

He glanced back at Keith who was cradling the second, now empty beer, like a child, declaring that he hated beer.

Lance had been freaking out since they’d stopped playing never have I ever, he was glad that he wasn’t so drunk that his acting fell flat.

Keith hadn’t done anything. Lance was his first kiss, his first crush and was hopefully if he was still interested, his first everything. Lance was both thrilled and terrified. The thrilled side of him was so happy that Keith would get to have all his ‘firsts’ with someone that cared as much about him as Lance did. The terrified side was his self-doubt, gnawing away at him deep inside where it always lived, telling him that Keith deserved much better than him, that he deserved perfect. That much was absolutely true. But Lance had also been going over and over the whole mountain comment, Keith genuinely didn’t care that he had had so many… conquests so to speak, he was more terrified of Lance becoming bored of him.

Lance had desperately tried to tell him that he didn’t think he could honestly get bored of him, and then Shiro Doolittle had to come thundering in.

Lance was still figuring out what he had to do from here. He knew he couldn’t let another weekend go by without Keith knowing exactly how he felt about him. Lance had had a lot of exes, but he’d never felt the need to express anything further than desire before.

And, if Keith didn’t feel the same, at least he wouldn’t have any regrets. He watched as Keith made his way over to the kitchen to get something other than beer, stumbling slightly as he went.

“Lance!” Keith called over his shoulder, Lance sucked in a breath and sighed, he didn’t think he’d ever get bored of hearing Keith say his name, he wandered over to join him in the kitchen.

“Yes?” Lance asked, leaning on the counter and trying an attempt at flirtatious eyes. He felt like with Keith, he just had to be as obvious as possible to get anywhere with him.

“Have any whiskey?” Keith glanced up at him, seemingly oblivious to Lance’s flirtatious intentions, at which he should not have been surprised.

“Oh yeah, let me get that for you.” Lance smiled, he was not being subtle. He pushed Keith very lightly out of the way of the cupboard, before performing what could only be described as a slut drop, rooting around in the cupboard and finding a bottle of Jack Daniels and presenting it to Keith, who was staring at him wide-eyed.

Success.

“That looked like it hurt, are you okay?” Keith bent forward, a little concerned. Lance groaned, maybe not such a success.

Lance nodded silently and handed Keith the bottle, who took it, slammed it on the kitchen island and rooted around in different cupboards looking for a glass.

Lance stood up and turned, to see three faces staring at him, at least his slut drop had worked on someone. He shrugged at the three of them, and they carried on as they were, Slav was now nestled in Shiro’s hair.

Keith poured himself a very generous amount of whiskey and a small amount of coke.
“Hey, could you make me one?” Lance asked, leaning forward on the counter, Lance didn’t give up, especially not when it came to flirting.

“You’re a whiskey drinker?” Keith asked with raised eyebrows.

Lance definitely was not a whiskey drinker, but he wasn’t about to turn around and say no.

“Of course, why do you think I have it in my cupboard?” Lance smirked. Keith ran his fingers across the neck of the bottle.

“It’s dusty…” Keith mentioned, rubbing the thick, dark dust between his fingertips.

Lance was actually sure that his dad had bought that for his grandmother maybe about fifteen years ago. Even she hadn’t touched it when she was alive.

“I was saving it for a special occasion, and what’s more special than this?” Lance gestured to the two of them. Keith’s lips pursed.

“Are you trying to flirt with me?” Keith grunted flatly. Dammit, Lance forgot how good he was at guessing things, for someone who did not take social cues whatsoever.

“Yes, for fuck sake, you’re so hard to flirt with!” Lance stamped his foot like a petulant, albeit drunk, child.

“Why are you bothering to flirt, you don’t need to, I already li-.” Keith twitched and shut his mouth as soon as he said it, and that was all Lance really needed. He took the drink that Keith had already made and sauntered over to the couch where Shiro was continuing to be a bad influence.

He took a sip of his drink, yep, he definitely was not a whiskey drinker.

Almost, Lance made Keith almost slip up.

Another example of Shiro convincing him to drink ending up in him almost embarrassing himself, though Lance was definitely trying to flirt, Keith could tell that much. He glanced over at the four of them on the couch, watching Shiro lay out more cards, he was using Keith’s card game to try and get Hunk as drunk as he could, Hunk was a big guy so he could handle a lot more liquor than the rest of them.

Keith poured another drink, one for himself and joined them on the sofa.

“Great, now we’re all here, let’s play snap!” Shiro clapped his hands together, gathering up all the cards.

“But I didn’t get off the bus!” Hunk exclaimed unhappily. Shiro shrugged and shuffled the cards, Keith and Lance exchanged a look and a collective groan as Shiro looked very happy with himself.

“Allura did, and the rest of them wished that Hunk hadn’t, because he was so scary strong they were sure they’d be left with bruising.

“Allura did, and the rest of them wished that Hunk hadn’t, because he was so scary strong they were sure they’d be left with bruising.

“Okay, maybe this game was a bad idea.” Shiro winced, Hunk was beaming at them, he’d lost almost every time even so, so now he was suitably drunk.
“Where did you learn all these games, Shiro?” Lance asked, stretching and falling back against the lower half of the couch beside Keith, his arm falling nonchalantly on the cushions just behind Keith’s shoulders.

“I went to college, I was in a fraternity, I knew military guys.” Shiro smirked, taking a sip of his beer. “In fact, I have another good one.”

Shiro leapt up from his seat on the floor and grabbed some empty beer bottles and the tops for each.

“Okay, get into teams.” Shiro announced, Keith subconsciously grabbed onto Lance who grinned like an idiot.

Shiro gestured for Lance and Keith to sit at one end of the rug, and for Allura and Hunk to sit at the other end, both with a beer bottle in front of them and a cap resting, undone on the lip of the bottle. He then handed a bottle cap to Lance, who stared at it in his hands.

“Okay, so, this is a game of skill.” Shiro motioned to the battle ground dramatically. “You’ll take it in turns to try and knock the bottle cap off the other person’s beer bottle, if you do, they drink, if you don’t, you drink.”

Lance and Keith locked eyes, and nodded in solidarity. Lance closed one of his eyes and narrowed in on the cap of the bottle on the other side of the rug. It all seemed to happen in slow motion, he threw the bottle cap with such dexterity, Keith could already feel himself celebrating, and it knocked the other bottle cap off perfectly.

“Holy shit! You did it, on your first try!” Shiro exclaimed happily. “I think I’m gonna have to intervene you guys, it seems like we’ve got a sharpshooter in our midst.”

Lance beamed with pride, Keith followed suit with the goofiest smile.

“Let me try.” Allura narrowed her eyes at the celebrating team after taking a good sip of her beer. She lowered her head so that she was perfectly in line with Lance and Keith’s bottle. She threw the bottle cap, and completely missed, though the cap pinged against the neck of the bottle and into Keith’s hands.

“Fuck, nevermind.” Allura huffed, folding her arms.

Lance looked at Keith and down at the cap in the palm of his hand.

“You can do this.” Lance spoke, a hand on Keith’s shoulder encouragingly. Keith probably couldn’t but he felt like he could punch a comet based on how much Lance apparently believed in him.

So he tried, and unfortunately Lance’s faith was only a feeling, the bottle cap fell inches away from the bottle, he dropped his head in disappointment.

“Okay, maybe I don’t need to intervene.” Shiro teased, Keith glared up at him, whilst Lance took a big sip of his drink, wincing at the amount of whiskey Keith had poured in.

Hunk took the bottle cap and aimed for Lance and Keith’s bottle, again it pinged off the neck of the bottle, but the force with which Hunk had thrown said bottle cap was enough to move the bottle and cause the cap to come flying off.

“That counts right!” Hunk beamed happily, thrilled with his newly discovered skill. Shiro nodded
approvingly, Lance and Keith clinked their glasses together and took a good sip, Lance winced even more than before.

He took the bottle cap and made aim, and hit the cap perfectly once again.

“How are you doing that?!?” Keith whispered conspiratorially. Lance grinned and shrugged. “God dammit you’re so good at everything.”

“Says you.” Lance smirked, Keith shook his head, disbelieving.

Allura tried again, and almost hit their cap within a hairs breadth, she complained loudly with disappointment, Shiro tried to sound encouraging only for it to fall upon deaf ears.

Allura glanced at Lance with horror in her eyes.

“Pizza.”

They both scrambled up and raced over to the kitchen, opening the oven door they discovered that all was left was a thick cloud of smoke and two cremated pizzas. All of Hunk and Shiro’s snacks were gone, they had no food and far too much alcohol by comparison.

“What now?” Hunk cried desperately. “We can’t not have any food!”

“Let’s go for a walk!” Shiro stood with one raised finger. “Get some food, there’ll be tonnes of places where we can get food at this time of night.”

One quick glance at his watch told Keith that it was literally only 9pm.

They all messily pulled on their coats and headed for the door, Shiro had almost completely forgotten about Slav who was still nestled contentedly in his hair, he grabbed the small creature and with heartbreak in his features, put him back in his cage. They heard desperate squeaking as they left the apartment, and Shiro was near tears.

The evening was fresh, it was the first day of September which meant that the first day of fall wasn’t far away. Keith breathed in the freshness and they followed Lance, who walked with purpose towards something. They followed him for ten minutes, till he finally turned with a goofy smile on his face.

“So, where are we going?” Lance exclaimed, they all stared at him.

“We’ve been following you for about ten minute’s dude!” Hunk laughed loudly, throwing an arm around Lance, who scratched his face genuinely confused.

Suddenly, and without warning, Allura took off at speed.

“THERE’S A CAT!” She screamed, apparently Allura was one of those drunks that just like to… run off.

“Allura! What are you doing?!” Shiro exclaimed rushing off after her, Hunk glanced at Lance and Keith before taking off himself.

Keith made a move to follow, but Lance stopped him by reaching out for his hand and holding it tightly.
“But… there’s a cat…” Keith whimpered, gesturing to wherever the rest of them got to. Lance rolled his eyes but relented. They followed the general direction they’d seen Hunk run, but all there was, was darkness.

They’d stepped into a green zone, a purpose built park to stop the city from looking like an urban jungle, there were tree’s covered in gently changing leaves, park benches and colourful flowerbeds scattered throughout.

Keith was suddenly aware of the fact that he and Lance were holding hands so casually, like it was the most natural thing in the world and it really felt that way. Keith lifted their hands and stared at them.

“Do you want me to let go?” Lance asked, a soft sadness on his face. Keith shook his head, he was looking more at the difference in their skin tones, Keith looked paler than ever beside Lance.

“I’m so pale…” Keith muttered thoughtfully. Which caused Lance to laugh in shock, not expecting those to be the words that followed up the look on his face.

“Yeah, you are pretty pale. You need to get out more.” Lance laughed, “Where are you from, like before you came here?”

Keith mulled it over in his head, would Lance even believe him if he told him?

“My dad was a gruff Texan guy.” Keith huffed, he’d not thought about his father in a long time. He glanced up at the stars, for a split second. “I used to live in the desert I guess but, I don’t really remember much of it. You?”

“Hey! I lived across the state from you, New Mexico!” Lance grinned, the coincidences kept piling. “My family is originally from Cuba though,”

“No way,” Keith smiled. “Can you speak Spanish?”

“Sí!” Lance exclaimed excitedly. “Not amazingly well, I know enough to argue with my brothers and to have understood my grandparents, but I don’t get to use it much now that I’m in the city, and Lita is gone.”

“Sorry, I learnt a little in high school, but I’d probably offend you if I tried.” Keith muttered sadly. “Lo siento.”

Lance chucked at Keith’s attempt.

“Hey, you said sorry with a good enough accent,” Lance smiled. They walked a little further, no sign of the other three anywhere, they could barely hear a thing, their only light source was the moon reflecting light down on them. Lance stared up at the sky.

“Space.” Lance smiled, the stars must have been exceptionally bright tonight for them to be breaking through the usual light pollution.

“The final frontier.” Keith muttered. He wasn’t entirely sure where he’d pulled the quote from, he wasn’t even sure what it was from to begin with.

“Keith?” Lance spoke, he turned his head to face him, and saw the moonlight reflecting off his eyes, the breeze that fluttered by lifted the hairs on Lance’s head that were beginning to grow out, and he looked more beautiful than Keith could comprehend.
“Yeah,” Keith’s voice was little more than a breath at the sight of him.

“There’s something that I really want to tell you.” He spoke with meaning, Keith could feel his pulse quicken against his wrist.

“Yeah?” Though it wasn’t really a question, Keith had an idea of what Lance wanted to say, Keith wanted to hear it more than he could say out loud, but everything felt like so much.

It had all culminated up to this point, the chance encounter, the smiles, the messages, the drawings. The gestures that to anyone else probably felt like nothing, but to Keith they had felt like everything. Keith knew he was drunk, but everything felt clear for the first time in nearly a month.

Really, he wondered if he hadn’t have seen Lance that morning for the first time, whether or not all of this would have happened, if he’d have been standing there, in the dark on a Friday night, in the middle of a park with the stars shining above them, with that blue fluffy jacket wearing sucker.

Keith knew that he could call Lance a sucker, just like everyone else had been, because he was the same, he was so weak for him, and he was scared beyond all comprehension, but he had Lance’s hand in his and he felt so strong.

“But, I’m scared that you’ll wake up tomorrow.” Lance continued, “And you’ll remember this, you’ll remember all the things you’ve learned about me and all the things I’ve said, and you’ll regret it, you’ll regret ever meeting me, and that eventually you’ll hate me.”

Keith could finally say what he’d wanted to say not a week ago, because he didn’t think he could hate Lance. Even if Lance woke up tomorrow and told him to leave, he still probably wouldn’t hate him, even if Lance said the worst things that Keith could probably think of to hurt him, he still couldn’t hate him. He knew that more than he knew how much he liked Lance, and he liked Lance a lot.

“I don’t think I could ever hate you.” Keith breathed, it was so still and so silent in the night, they could hear the rustle of the leaves that had fallen skittering across the ground around them.

“And I don’t think I could ever get bored of you.” Lance’s voice was hardly above a whisper either.

His heart was in his throat, and he’d found his hands were now almost wrapped around the back of his neck, he could feel Lance’s hand’s spread across his waist and back, pulling in him, and for once Keith wasn’t scared. It felt like, for the first time in Keith’s life, everything was right with the universe. He could feel the heat of Lance’s soft breaths against his lips and his chest felt like it might explode as Lance finally leaned in an-

“GUYS, LOOK WHO WE FOUND!” Hunk exclaimed leaping out from behind a tree with a ball of fluff in his arms.

“Fuck.” Lance whispered, heatedly. Keith dropped his hands and glared at Hunk’s oblivious face, but Keith couldn’t be mad at him, standing there happily, holding the sweetest, fluffiest black cat ever seen by human eyes in his arms.

“We found her, isn’t she beautiful,” Allura beamed, appearing as if from nowhere as well, reaching out a finger to scratch underneath the cat’s chin.

“Yeah, she is.” Lance breathed, though he still felt hot and frustrated, he’d finally worked up the courage only to be interrupted like always.
He suddenly felt his phone vibrate in his pockets, he reached in and grabbed it.

*Lotor* - *I bought you some pizza’s for your friends… where are you?*

“Ah fuck, I forgot about Lotor…” Lance mentioned out loud rubbing his chin.

“Lotor?” Allura questioned. Keith sighed and rolled his eyes.

“He’s my friend… he has pizza’s for us at my apartment.” Lance muttered, glancing at Keith who seemed bothered by something.

“Oh man then what the hell are we doing here?! Lets go!” Hunk prowled off, not letting go of the cat as he rushed away.

“Hunk! You can’t kidnap someone’s cat!” Shiro called from a distance, he’d suddenly appeared from behind a different tree.

“THIS IS OUR CAT NOW, BITCH!” Allura screeched running after him. Shiro exclaimed at them both and chased them down the street.

*Lance* - *Hey, we just popped out, heading back now, should be about 15 mins.*

*Lotor* - *ok, I’ll wait here for you then.*

*Lance* - *thanks.*

Lance huffed, he knew that Lotor was doing a nice thing, but he usually always had an ulterior motive. He guessed he’d probably just have to wait and see what he had in mind. He saw Keith dejectedly beginning to walk off, he reached out for his hand before he could walk away, Keith glanced back at him and Lance pulled him tightly into his arms, savouring the feeling of Keith’s hair against his chin and the beating warmth against his chest.

“Did you mean it, what you said?” Lance asked, Keith could probably feel his heartbeat thudding against his head.

“Yeah.” Keith smiled, Lance smelt like home. “Did you?”

“Without a doubt.”

The entire walk home, Keith was holding Lance’s hand, and Lance felt like he might just stop, like his heart might just give at the last second.

He’d never been able to say that he could actively hate anyone, and he knew that it was a complete accident and Hunk didn’t mean to do it, but Lance could say that in that instance, he hated Hunk for walking out of the darkness with that cat. Because he was finally about to accomplish what he’d previously been to chicken shit to do, and now the stakes felt higher than ever.

It had to be beyond perfect. He had all this pressure, all the build-up and it felt so heavy it threatened to crush him, or maybe that was just all the feelings he was unable to contain anymore.

They piled into the elevator, Allura was close to falling asleep on Shiro’s shoulder and Hunk was still caressing the cat that they’d found, the cat was purring happily in his arms, Shiro glanced
down at it, knowing that he was now complicit in a cat napping.

The elevator doors opened to the sight of Lotor leaning coolly against Lance’s apartment door. He stood up straight, Keith had forgotten just how tall he was and regarded the five of them with a stern looking smile.

“Pizza?” Hunk whispered, clutching the cat tightly against his chest. Lance began walking towards him, Keith’s hand in his tightly, comfortably.

“Hey, Lotor,” He greeted, Lotor nodded and swept his eyes across the rest of them as they approached. “You’ve met Keith, Shiro and you know Hunk, this is Allura.”

“You’re Keith’s girlfriend right?” He grinned sharply. Lance felt Keith’s hand tense up in his, Lance sighed loudly.

Allura was regarding him with a kind of harshness that Lance had never seen on Allura’s face before.

“Sure,” Allura muttered, Lotor flicked some of his hair off of his shoulder, an amused smirk on his face. “You must be Lance’s boyfriend.”

Lance heard Shiro scoff behind him, and promptly covered his mouth, but the smirk on Lotor’s lips didn’t falter for a second.

“He wishes.” Lotor sneered unkindly. Lance could feel Keith’s heart rate picking up, Hunk tutted and approached him, dropping the cat into his arms.

“Lighten up, Lotor.” Hunk was almost as tall as Lotor, he clapped him on the shoulder patronizingly, Lotor rolled his eyes, obviously used to Hunk’s personality. “If you let your ego get too big you might not be able to get out of the building. And your mom’s cat was out wandering again.”

Lance knew that Hunk disliked Lotor, and at this point given all that had happened recently, he couldn’t really remember why he liked Lotor either.

“I best get back to work.” Lotor muttered unhappily, the cat was mewling unhappily in his clutch, he shot one last nasty look at Allura. “Enjoy the pizza. I’ll see you soon, Lance.”

Lance watched silently as Lotor continued his 80s cartoon villain aesthetic by storming past them without looking back, which was only enhanced by the presence of the black cat in his arms.

“What an asshole!” Allura exclaimed as he stepped inside the elevator and the doors slid shut behind him. “That pizza best be amazing.”

The pizza was amazing, much as Allura loathed to admit it, they bundled onto the sofa and put on a shitty film that they attempted to drink to, though the food was so good it almost immediately placed Allura, Shiro and Hunk into a post-food coma. Lance smiled at the three of them and grabbed some blankets from the wardrobe in his bedroom, throwing them haphazardly across the trio.

He could see Keith in the kitchen refrigerating the left overs, rubbing his eyes, just as sleepy as the rest.

“Bed time?” Lance asked, Keith turned as if surprised by the sound of Lance’s voice and nodded.
“You have some spare blankets?” Keith asked, though Lance wondered why he asked, he nodded anyhow. “I’ll make a bed on the floor then…”

Lance hadn’t intended for that to be the case, but he didn’t want to push Keith where he wasn’t ready, sharing a bed really was kind of a big deal when Lance thought about it.

“If you want,” Lance smiled.

The floor wasn’t comfortable, of course it wasn’t. Keith would have much rather slept in the bed with Lance, but he wasn’t sure if that was a breach of Lance’s personal space. He knew how funny he got about sharing his own bed – in that he never had done nor had the opportunity to - so he wasn’t going to go around imposing on other peoples. He couldn’t trust either that he wouldn’t end up clinging to Lance like a koala bear like he’d wanted to do all evening and scare him off.

“Hey, Keith.” Lance finally spoke up, the film that Lance had put on the television in his bedroom was close to ending and he sounded tired.

“Yeah,” Keith responded from the floor.

“You can come and sleep up here, with me, if you want?” Lance sounded a little hesitant, like he wasn’t sure.

“Uh, I don’t know…” Keith didn’t like the hesitation in Lance’s voice.

“We’re friends aren’t we?” Lance called down, Keith bit his lip.

“Y-yeah?” Keith breathed.

“And you’re friends with Pidge, right?”

“Where are you going with this?”

“You’ve definitely slept in the same bed as Pidge, haven’t you?”

“Yeah…”

“Then come here.”

Keith sighed and pushed himself off the floor. He really didn’t want to… push anything, so he awkwardly laid himself on top of the sheets, and Lance groaned.

“No, under the sheets, what is your problem?” Lance muttered. Keith grunted and pulled the covers from underneath him and laid under them. “Just, relax. I want you here.”

“Ok.” Keith then fell silent, he felt Lance move in the bed beside him.

“Keith?” Lance spoke again. Keith breathed and rolled his body round to face him, he looked so soft and sleepy, the freckles across his cheeks were much more obvious in the darkened light.

“Lance?” Keith responded, to which Lance’s face broke out into a smile.

“I really like you.” Lance spoke so suddenly without hesitation.

Keith stared at him, in shock and awe that he actually said it, his heart skipped a beat hearing the
words being said, he’d wanted to hear them, sure but… suddenly there they were, laid out all on the table for him, he didn’t know what to do with it.

“I… I fuck.” Keith faltered, his voice giving way amongst his words.

“I doubt that.” Lance snickered, Lance was obviously sleepy and drunk and just so stupid cute.

“Fuck you,” Keith laughed, breathily. Lance reached out his hand, placing it in the gap between them.

“Since you asked so nicely.” Lance smirked evilly, Keith could only scoff in shock.

“Fuck off!” Keith sputtered, his stomach churning with a stampede of elephants parading as butterflies.

“You’re sending me a lot of mixed signals here,” Lance grinned, Keith rolled his eyes and swallowed the fear that threatened to eat him up inside.

“I really like you too, you fucking asshole.” Keith laughed. At that, Lance reached out and grabbed both of Keith’s hands, pulling them into his chest.

He was so warm and broad and Keith did the thing he’d wanted to do since he’d gotten to Lance’s apartment, he wrapped his arms around him so tightly, the heat radiating off him in droves. He felt like he couldn’t get himself close enough, his finger-tips digging in softly to the muscles in Lance’s back. It felt like too much and not enough all at the same time.

He felt like all of these, feelings that he’d gotten pent up inside him were, less. They weren’t gone and they probably never would be but, he felt like they weren’t so bright in his mind right there and then.

Lance pulled away all too soon and Keith knew that he was subconsciously grabbing at Lance’s back, trying not to let go, he looked up at him, bereft.

Lance looked back at him, his cheeks tinged pink, his mouth pouting at Lance pulling away from him much too soon. Lance had wanted to make it special and perfect, and he knew that he probably would never be good enough for Keith, but fuck, he wanted to try. This fabled ‘real first kiss’ that he’d built up in his head didn’t have to be perfect, it didn’t have to be anything like that, he just had to remember that Keith liked him, he really liked him and that was enough.

It seemed like Keith had gotten the message by the way his hands moved from his lower back, across his stomach and up to clutch the neck of Lance’s shirt. Lance’s hands found their place on Keith’s lower back, Lance swore that if anything happened to interrupt this kiss, he was gonna throw a brick through his own fucking window.

Keith closed the gap that Lance didn’t even know he was hesitating on, and he felt like he could have cried, nothing happened, no one came storming in, there was no sudden fire or the sound of smashing glass, he was finally kissing Keith like he’d wanted to since they’d met, since he’d seen him a year and a half ago. All that happened, was Keith’s lips were pressed tentatively and nervously against his. Lance knew that Keith didn’t have a single clue what he was doing, but dammit Lance wanted to show him. So he did, again and again, like it was the one thing in the world he’d never get bored of. And it was worth all the exaggerated build up, the fear, the doubt, everything.
But Lance knew that he was going into territory that even he didn’t know how to deal with because he maintained without an shadow of a doubt that he’d never felt this way about anyone before, and if all went to hell like it probably would, he knew he’d never feel this way about anyone else ever again.

Keith woke up feeling like garbage, his whole body ached and his head was pulsing with pain. He’d almost forgotten where he was till he noticed his swollen lips and the arms wrapped around him tightly. Lance’s face was buried gently in the gap between Keith’s shoulders, hands flat against Keith’s chest, holding him in place, Keith was sure that if he tried there was no way he was getting out of Lance’s hold without a fight, not that he intended to move, ever.

He was so glad that he could still remember everything last night, even in his hazy, drunken state. The encounter with Lotor was enough to sober him up purely by the power of his anger, though he saw the look in Lance’s eyes and knew that he felt the same.

But he was happy to remember Lance finally kissing him, properly. Now that they’d had their first ‘proper’ kiss, he blanched at the memory of the chaste kiss he gave Lance after walking him home, it was nothing in comparison to the way that Lance had dominated his mouth the night before, he blushed profusely at the memory and didn’t even care.

“Lance?” He whispered, elbowing him gently in the side.

“No thanks,” Lance responded, his voice thick with sleep.

“What?” Keith muttered, elbowing him again.

“I won’t be moving from this bed all day, thank you.” He nuzzled his face further into Keith’s back.

“Really?” Keith scoffed, dropping his head back onto the pillow.

“Nope, sorry, no thanks, you’re not allowed to leave either.” Lance grunted groggily.

“But my head hurts and I feel gross.” Keith groaned into the pillow, Lance simply shook his head and promptly fell back to sleep.

Just as Keith had begun to turn to face Lance, the bedroom door flew open and three bodies and a hamster piled on top of them.

“Morning!” Allura beamed, Shiro had Slav nuzzling against his nose and Hunk had bought the refrigerated pizzas in. Lance made no movement, Keith reached out for a slice of pizza, Allura smirked and handed him one, realising that he probably wasn’t going to be able to move.

Keith took a bite, it was just as good cold as it was hot. Shiro fumbled with one hand for the remote and found the cheesiest Saturday morning cartoons. Soon, they’d watched so many episodes that they were quoting the opening speech and singing along with the theme song. Keith groaned at the sound of it.

“Goddamnit, is this my life now?!” Keith complained. He felt Lance nod and press a kiss gently into the space between his shoulder blades.

Shiro shrugged, stroking Slav who was resting in the dip in his chest, Allura smiled apologetically, and Hunk leant over and patted him on the head.
Keith thought he was fated for much worse.

Shiro, Allura and Hunk had tidied and said their goodbyes, Lance was sat up against the head of his bed and Keith was slipping in and out of consciousness on his chest. His hands were running through Keith’s hair softly, like he were a cat, and the sound of Keith’s soft breaths almost sounded like purring. Lance heard the sound of his phone vibrate on his nightstand, he reached out with a shred of dread anticipating abuse from Lotor.

Pidge - Did ya do it yet?

Lance - I’m sorry?

Pidge - you know what I mean.

Lance glanced down at Keith, who was currently fast asleep with a contented look on his face. Wondering how he’d feel about the person he considered his closest friend was asking questions like this.

Pidge - Did ya do it yet?

Lance - I’m sorry?

Pidge - you know what I mean.

Lance - No you fuckin’ perv.

Pidge - No! I mean did you tell him how you feel?!

Lance - oh.

Pidge - who’s the pervert now, huh?!

Lance - screw you. But yes, I did.

Pidge - How did it go? I take it because he didn’t come home storming around angrily that it went well?

Lance - Better than.

Keith’s head jolted up with a start, he rubbed his eyes and turned to face Lance.

“What time is it?” He asked, his half-asleep voice about the cutest thing Lance had ever heard. Lance quickly looked at his phone.

“It’s like 3 in the afternoon, why?” Lance asked, Keith yawned and shook his head. “Do you have plans?”

“Just wondered how long I’d been asleep for.” Keith muttered, turning back around and resting his head against Lance’s chest.

Lance felt with a jolt of surprise Keith slip his fingers into the gap between his shirt and his sweatpants, his finger-tips ghosting the lightest touch against his stomach, but it was enough to send gooseflesh all across his abdomen and heat across his cheeks.

It was like Keith was testing the waters, with the lightest touch, he slipped his hand underneath Lance’s shirt, across his stomach and gripped the soft flesh on Lance’s back just beside his spine, he used it like an anchor point to pull himself closer against Lance’s body. Lance could tell by the pink of Keith’s ears that the skin to skin contact was a big deal to him, he felt him suck in a deep breath and exhaled heavily, but his grip only tightened. Lance rested the hand that was in Keith’s hair on the exposed bit of skin between the ends of his hair and the start of his t-shirt. He felt Keith
react, but rather than twitch away like he thought, he shivered and leant into his hand.

God, Lance was so fucked, he was in so deep that the simplest of touches was enough to render him speechless.

He gulped heavily and stared at the television, trying to distract himself from a feeling that was threatening to ruin something so fresh and good, he couldn’t let that happen yet.

Keith knew he should leave but, he couldn’t, he didn’t want to. He had both hands under Lance’s shirt, gently clutching his back, feeling the softness and warmth of his skin was completely addictive and he didn’t want to move.

“Hey, buddy? Pidge is telling me to take you home, she says she misses you.” Lance nudged him, Keith groaned, though he couldn’t deny he did miss Pidge too. But he had a feeling he might struggle to sleep that night.

The thought filled him with dread. His entire life he’d never relied on anyone, now he was terrified that he might have rely on Lance for everything. He let go, reluctantly, and sat up.

“Yeah, I should go.” Keith sighed, climbing out of bed he picked up his bag and disappeared into Lance’s bathroom to get changed. He saw himself in the mirror, hair a mess and sadness in his eyes.

Was it too much all at once? To feel like he might actually lose sleep not having Lance there, that he’d slept the best he’d ever slept with the feeling of Lance’s strength and safety attached to him. He gulped, his doubts were stupid, he’d slept beside Lance once, and he’d been drinking and he was frustrating himself with all the doubt.

The minute something good came along, he had to poke holes in it to the point where he didn’t think it was good anymore, he didn’t want that to happen with Lance.

He pulled on his jeans and a fresh t-shirt, washing his face before stepping out. Lance had pulled on his jacket and shoes in that time, Keith gulped.

“Uh, you don’t have to walk me home…” He muttered, scratching the back of his neck, Lance glanced up at him confused.

“No, I don’t mind, honestly!” Lance smiled, Keith looked away and sighed, his stomach churning.

“I don’t… want you to walk me home…” He spoke, the hurt look on Lance’s face broke his heart, sure, but he didn’t want to lie, he didn’t want to rely on Lance. “Lo siento?”

Lance’s sadness broke into a soft smile.

“I can take care of myself,” Keith folded his arms, he was trying hard not to appear upset or grumpy but it was true, and he had done for most of his life.

“I know, I wasn’t saying that you couldn’t.” Lance sighed, standing up and copying Keith’s body language. “It’s just a nice gesture, it just means I don’t have to worry about you getting home-”

“Lance, I’ve been alone for the last almost fifteen years of my life.” Keith bit his lip, he didn’t want to snap, he really didn’t. “I don’t need you to worry about me.”
“Keith wait-“

Keith grit his teeth and stormed out of Lance’s bedroom. He honestly wasn’t even mad at Lance, he was livid with himself and he had to leave before anything happened. He grabbed his bags and headed for the door without looking back.

“What the fuck, Keith!” Lance yelled, the desperation in his voice was enough to make Keith drop his bags by his feet by Lance’s front door. “Don’t walk through that door! What happened? What did I do?!“

Fuck, Keith could feel everything overwhelming him, but he was too weak, it was too late and he couldn’t pick up his bags and leave now. An unfamiliar lump in his throat formed, he clenched his fist and slammed it against Lance’s front door.

He’d promised himself he wasn’t going to cry, not now, not ever and especially not in front of Lance. He couldn’t bring himself to turn around, he felt his shoulders violently shaking, he couldn’t look Lance in the eye knowing he was probably going to make fun of him. Call him a wimp, ask him why he was crying, because really, what was there to cry about?

“Keith?” Lance’s voice was soft and just behind him. Keith’s entire body tensed up.


“I won’t.” Lance softly spoke, he pulled Keith’s fist away from the door and pulled Keith against him. Keith felt himself freeze up against his chest. What the hell was he doing? Keith felt like he should want to pull away but he didn’t, instead he dropped his head against Lance’s collar bone and let him wrap his arms around him.

“I got you.” Lance whispered.

Lance would probably never truly know how true that statement was.

Chapter End Notes

GOD. my heart?! I hope i did it justice.
tumblr - foxsmo-lder
Chapter Summary

In which Keith goes for a drink.

“This, is the infamous train guy!” Nyma introduced with a flourished gesture of her hand, Shay gazed at him like he was a celebrity.

“Wow, he’s way cuter than I expected!” Shay exclaimed, Nyma nodded fervently. “But look, he’s got the eyes-“

“The colour of the midnight,” Nyma gushed mockingly.

“The hair-” Shay beamed gesturing.

“Dark, inky and glossy, like a precious, glittering black onyx!” Nyma’s impression of Lance was impeccable, Keith could admit that much.

“The skin,” Shay chuckled, Nyma gasped like she were in a shitty college play.

“Perfect, smooth, soft ivory.” She laid her hands dramatically on Shay’s shoulders, and they dissolved into fits of giggles. Keith was just… observing more than anything.

Chapter Notes

BECAUSE OF COURSE KEITH WOULD GET SICK! ARE YOU KIDDING ME ITS CHAPTER 13!!!!!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Keith found himself wandering. Because, what does one do after spending upwards of fifteen minutes crying on the shoulder of the guy you’d literally just admitted you liked to his face? Keith was pretty sure that this would have been brand new territory for anyone. After he’d finished, Lance calmly told him that he was there if he needed him, kissed him and sent him on his way, which Keith didn’t mind, he kind of needed to be alone.

Fifteen years was a long time, a really fucking long time, and he’d been alone for all that time. Well, not technically alone, alone, but nothing even close to what he suddenly had now all at once. It was overwhelming, he knew he was happy but that happiness and security seemed to be what was driving him to tears.

It was late, and beginning to get dark, a bitter wind seeming to go right through him, but he wasn’t ready to go home. He found himself, bizarrely heading to Nyma’s bar. He sat silently on the train for an hour and a half in a strange kind of fugue state, and followed his nose to find Nyma’s bar. He stepped inside, it seemed like the bar was hitting its busy peak, and he spotted Nyma behind the
Who regarded him with reasonable surprise.

“Holy shit, Keith, what are you doing here?” she exclaimed, “Where’s Lance, are you here on your
own?”

“I don’t really know what I’m doing here,” Keith laughed, Nyma seemed to be glancing around,
looking for something, Keith assumed her phone. “Please don’t call Lance.”

“Okay, um… do you want me to take those bags, maybe give you some company for a bit?” She
asked, gesturing to the bags still hanging off his shoulders. He nodded silently, dropping his bags
and pulling himself up onto a bar stool and ignoring everyone around him. He did notice, however
another person behind the bar. Nyma grabbed his bags and managed to stash them somewhere
before making him a drink.

Nyma reappeared with a glass of something familiarly blue for Keith, and followed Keith’s stare.

“Oh, that’s Shay, she wasn’t working the last time you were here!” She smiled, gesturing to the
girl who was serving patrons with a bright, friendly smile. “She works part time with Lance as
well, at the coffee shop.”

Keith nodded and took a sip of whatever it was that Nyma had handed to him, he widened his eyes,
recognizing the taste. This was the drink he’d made the other weekend for the two drunk girls, he
gulped. She smiled and leant across the bar towards him.

“What’s up, why on earth at 8pm on a Saturday night,” Nyma smirked “Are you here, looking like
you’ve been crying, all by yourself.”

“I spent all day with Lance.” Keith sighed, taking another sip.

“Yeah, I can see how that might make you cry,” She scoffed whilst turning towards Shay. “Hey,
Shay! Get over here, there’s someone I want you to meet! Calm down Perry, jesus, you’ll get your
drink!”

Shay smiled apologetically at whoever Perry was and smiled at Keith.

“This, is the infamous train guy!” Nyma introduced with a flourished gesture of her hand, Shay
gazed at him like he was a celebrity.

“Wow, he’s way cuter than I expected!” Shay exclaimed, Nyma nodded fervently. “But look, he’s
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dissolved into fits of giggles. Keith was just… observing more than anything.

“So what did the idiot do?” Nyma asked, pouring herself a drink and sending Shay off to serve
customers.
“He didn’t do anything, he’s perfect.” Keith sighed, leaning on the bar, ignoring the stickiness from previous spilled drinks.

“And that’s the problem right?” Nyma finished his sentence. Keith stared at her, how could she know? “That’s always the problem. Did you forget this is a bar, all love-struck idiots come here and complain to me, I’ve gotten really damn good at reading the signs.”

“So, do you have any good advice?” Keith grunted, taking another sip of his drink.

“Hm, usually I would just say stop thinking so much,” Nyma tapped her chin, “But I know Lance so this seems like a special case. Obviously the whole ‘stop thinking so much’ still stands but, start by telling me what you like about him.”

Keith took a long sip of his drink, feeling the way he did, he was pretty much up for anything.

“Well, he’s beautiful.” Keith muttered, staring down at the coaster he was ripping to shreds absent-mindedly, he was pretty much just letting his emotions do the talking, he imagined that Nyma had probably seen and heard much worse. “He’s funny, charismatic, confident, hard-working, talented and he makes me feel like maybe I am actually capable of being in love. I feel stupid just saying it but he makes me feel so safe, like… he wouldn’t ever let me down.”

He glanced up, Nyma was staring at him with her hands clutched to her chest a tear-eyed smile on her face, but her face fell suddenly as she glanced behind Keith.

“Well. That was a lot to take in.” Keith felt a hand land on his shoulder, but the voice and the touch were completely unfamiliar. He turned and saw Lotor, staring him down, all the colour drained out of his face within seconds.

“What do you want.” Keith muttered, less of a question, more of a fuck you, twitching his shoulder, causing Lotor to drop his hand, Lotor leant on the bar next to him, bearing down on him with an icy stare.

“I happened to be passing by and saw you, on your own, almost two hours away from home,” Lotor glanced around, taking all the other patrons in with judgemental eyes. “I wanted to make sure that you were okay.”

“Or making sure I wasn’t up to something that you could tell Lance all about?” Keith spat, taking another sip of his drink.

“Why would I do that? What Lance does with his life is nothing to do with me.” Lotor scoffed, tossing some hair away from his shoulder, elegantly. He was ethereal looking, and Keith could tell that everyone was staring at him, it was hard not to, he was magnetic.

Keith shook his head and continued drinking his drink, Nyma was watching the exchange with interest.

“Why are you here alone?” Lotor asked, not even really looking at Keith, he was more surveying and purveying.

“Do I really have to justify myself to you?” Keith muttered.

“I’m just merely trying to make conversation,” Lotor shrugged. “Looks like soon you’re going to be playing a very important role in my friends life, what kind of friend would I be if I didn’t at least try.”
“I’m here because I didn’t know where else to go.” Keith groaned, he still wasn’t sure why he was justifying himself honestly. He glanced up at Lotor and pondered on something. “Why are you and Lance even friends?”

At that, Lotor glanced down at him, his eyes were just… breathtaking. Keith honestly wondered why Lance didn’t find himself drawn to him at least once.

“We met here, actually,” Lotor smiled, looking across at Nyma, who was fixing him with a stern glare, trying to figure out what he was up to. “One night, he’d come here on his own and he looked lonely. He’d only just moved to the city and didn’t have any friends, I felt bad for him.”

“So that’s the only reason you’re friends with him?” Keith sighed, regretting asking in the first place. “Because you felt sorry for him.”

“Isn’t that why most people become friends with each other?” Lotor laughed like it was obvious. “I didn’t come here to start a fight, if that’s what you’re wondering, so you can put your claws away.”

“Why are you talking down to me then, like you’re better than me.” Keith narrowed his eyes at him, finishing his drink.

“If you think that’s what I’m doing, that says more about you than it does about me, friend,” Lotor sneered, he was the smarmiest asshole that Keith had ever met, he really didn’t understand why on earth he and Lance were friends.

“Then what do you want?” Keith hissed, Nyma wordlessly handed him another drink, staring between the two, Keith looked at her quickly, she looked like she could break up a fight, and Shay definitely looked like she could break up a fight.

“It might not seem like it to you,” Lotor sighed, folding his arms, his face falling. “But I do care about Lance. He’s one of my closest friends, I’d hate to think that anyone would ever hurt him…”

Keith grit his teeth.

“But, I over-heard what you said.” Lotor glanced up, staring at the lion statue, wincing as if it physically hurt him to say it. “I was completely untrusting of you after what happened with your ‘girlfriend’, I really didn’t want Lance to get hurt and I was so livid with you for thinking you could lie to him. But you do really seem to like him.”

Keith hadn’t expected that, Lotor couldn’t look him in the eye.

“And, I have accepted that Lance will… never see me as more than a friend.” Lotor sucked in a breath, it suddenly felt horribly tragic. “You seem to make him happy, happy to the point that… he doesn’t need me anymore. And Lance deserves to be happy, he deserves that more than my pride needs to be protected, so I’m sorry if I came off as an insufferable asshole when we first met.”

“And now.” Keith interjected, Lotor rolled his eyes, he obviously didn’t do a lot of apologizing, but Keith was amazed to be hearing this from at all.

“Yeah, I know.” Lotor sighed, his face falling even more. “Lance really does adore you. He thinks the world of you, we all thought it as a lie at first, some… train guy he fell in love with at first sight. The way he’d talk about you, I could hardly stand it, so I kept telling myself that you weren’t real, and then I saw you, and you were everything he’d told me you were and more.”

Keith hoped it was a just a poor choice of words, no one fell in love at first sight. Lotor glanced up at him, staring him straight in the eyes with a seriousness that made Keith so nervous he almost
looked away.

“And then I fell in love with you too.” Lotor spoke, without hesitation and Keith felt all the colour drain out of his face, both he and Nyma were at a loss for words, both gaping with open mouths at the sudden confession, till a tiny smirk appeared on Lotor’s lips. “I’m kidding, I couldn’t resist, you looked so serious and instense!”

He clapped a hand to Keith’s back jovially, laughing, he had a melodic laugh as well. Nyma groaned loudly and Keith could hear Shay giggling in the background.

“But honestly, I’m glad that Lance has someone who adores him as much as you do.” Lotor smiled, a genuine, heartfelt smile. “I wish we could have met and become friends under better circumstances, but I doubt Lance will want to see much more of me. That’s all I wanted to say, so… I’ll let you get back to your night.”

Keith was probably going to regret what he was about to say, and if it had been four weeks ago, he’d have never done it, hell he’d have never been in this bar.

“Wait-“ He spoke, out loud, which surprised all three of them. “You don’t have to go.”

Lotor turned and locked him with a pensive stare, Keith didn’t know if he could trust Lotor, but he trusted Lance’s judgement, and Keith felt sorry for him, and as Lotor had said, that was how most people became friends.

It didn’t turn to be as awful as Keith had anticipated. But then he hadn’t anticipated anything, he’d not expected to be in the bar at all.

Lotor was one of those obnoxious assholes, that was so far up his own ass that it was unreal, but once you got past that fact, he had some interesting stories to tell, stories about his father, who had a bizarre name just like Lotor, stories about some of the things he’d seen whilst out making deliveries, and it ended up not being as torturous as Keith had expected. He couldn’t imagine wanting to do it again, but he was glad he’d done it.

Lance had so many facets to his life, the coffee shop, this bar, his family, it was more and more fascinating to Keith. All Keith had was home and work.

Keith managed to stay sober for the first time in a bar environment, and he and Lotor left together, the latter walking Keith to the station, helping him with his bags.

“Thanks.” Lotor sighed as they got to the entrance of the station. He obviously hated doing this sort of thing. “Thanks for, giving me a chance, I guess. And thanks for making Lance happy.”

Keith nodded, Lotor smiled and walked away as Keith started down the steps. He reached into his pocket for the first time all evening, pulled out his phone and felt sick.

Lance was staring at his phone, shoes and jacket halfway on. It had been almost six hours before he’d heard from Keith. He’d text Shiro, Allura, Pidge, everyone and no one seemed to know where he’d gotten to. Pidge hypothesised that he was probably being moody and wandering the streets, though Lance wasn’t sure she was just saying that to convince herself he was okay. He’d rang more times than he cared to count and was so close to calling the police, when finally, Keith began to call him back.

“Hey, Lance.” Keith yawned down the phone. Lance was mildly livid at how casual he sounded.
“Where are you?” Lance exclaimed.

“I’m on the train, coming home.” Keith muttered, Lance could hear the chattering of people on the train, he glanced at his watch, it was definitely nearly midnight, and Keith was no doubt drunk himself, or surrounded by drunkards.

“Coming home from where?” Lance sighed, sitting up on his couch, rubbing his forehead.

“I went to Nyma’s bar.” Keith responded bluntly.

“Why did you go all the way over there, by yourself?” Lance stood up, pacing the living-room, not really knowing what to do with his nervous energy.

“I needed a change of scenery I guess,” Keith confirmed. “I didn’t want to go home, and I didn’t know where else to go.”

“Oh, did you see Nyma?” Lance asked, biting his fingers, knowing who to text to confirm.

“Yep, and I met Shay, and I bumped into Lotor.” Lance could hear the smile in his voice but Lance winced.

“Oh god, what did he want?” Lance chuckled, the appetite he’d lost since worrying over Keith had come back tenfold.

“He claimed he saw me on my own and wanted to make sure I was okay, then he said he was sorry for the way he’d behaved, that he really cared about you and was glad I felt the way I do about you.”

“Oh, and how do you feel about me?” Lance smiled, turning on the gas to the hob underneath his half-cooked dinner.

“God, what is it with you guys and your damn egos needing stroking constantly.” Keith sighed.

“No, I just love hearing it coming from you.” Lance chuckled, “I’ve only heard it once and I’m addicted, what can I say?”

“I’m on a train full of people Lance, do you really want me to embarrass myself in front of all these people?”

“Would I be a bad person if I said yes?” Lance smirked, stirring the chilli he’d made from a recipe that Hunk had sent him.

“I’m definitely not drunk enough for that.” Keith laughed, he sounded exhausted. “I’m sorry if I worried you. I know I said I could take care of myself and I totally can but…”

“You did worry me actually,” Lance interrupted indignantly. “Six hours, Keith! I had no idea where you were, Pidge didn’t know where you were, nor did Shiro or Allura or even Hunk!”

“I’m just not used to it.” Keith grunted.

“Well, get used to it.” Lance mumbled quietly. “I’m not doing it because I want to patronize you, I’m doing it because I care about you.”

“Yeah, not used to that either. Just assume that everything like that from this point on is stuff that I am not used to.”
“I’ll keep that in mind the next time you go off the grid for six hours.” Lance laughed. He heard Keith sigh down the other end.

“Thanks, for earlier.” Keith spoke quietly.

“You don’t need to thank me.” Lance smiled, pouring more chilli into his mouth.

“No, I do…” Keith hesitated, like he wasn’t ready for what he was about to say. “I’ve never cried in front anyone else, not since I was a kid and it was just about the worst feeling ever, so thanks for not making fun of me.”

“Are you kidding?” Lance groaned loudly. “Why the fuck would I have made fun of you.”

“Because, I don’t cry, crying is pathetic and weak.”

Those… didn’t sound like Keith’s words.

“I disagree,” Lance responded matter-of-factly. “I happen to think crying is one of the strongest things you can do. It shows that you’re able to come to terms with how you feel. Why would our bodies be capable of it if we weren’t meant to?”

Keith was silent on the other end.

“I don’t think you’re weak, Keith.” Lance spoke, seriously. “I really don’t.”

“Okay.”

“Are you okay?”

“Nope.”

“Do you want me to come meet you?”

Keith hesitated for a second.

“No, it’s fine…”

Lance heard the sound of the train pulling up at Keith’s station. He could hear the sound of Keith standing up and bustling through a crowd of drunken commuters.

“Hey, Lance, can I tell you something?” Lance could hear that Keith was now in relative silence, the sound of the wind and cars all around him, he’d obviously rushed away from a presumably crowded platform.

“Yeah?”

“You won’t make fun of me?”

“Promise.”

“I’m so fucking scared.”

“Of what?”

“This.”

Lance sucked in a deep breath. He’d grown so addicted to this, over-sharing, intimate, honest
Sunday passed quickly, Keith and Pidge stayed on the sofa eating snacks and watching crappy TV movies almost all day, though he had spent half of the morning finding himself having to apologise profusely to everyone that Lance had contacted, panicking about his whereabouts. It was an entirely new… thing to reassure people of your own well-being.

When he stepped onto the platform and into a waiting coffee the following morning, he was suddenly aware of how different everything was.

“Hey, we forgot to ask Allura why she’s getting that train now.” Shiro suddenly exclaimed, spotting Lance and Allura chatting over the other side of the platform.

“Why don’t you ask her?” Keith shrugged, taking a sip of his coffee. He was too busy staring at Lance, he’d been thinking about it constantly since their phone call the night before.

Could he call Lance his boyfriend? He’d never… had a boyfriend or an anything for that matter before, he’d asked and fake relationships didn’t count according to Pidge. But Lance had said he was scared too, did that mean that Lance hadn’t had an anything either? Just a string of meaningless one night stands?

Shiro nudged Keith and showed him the screen of his phone.

    Shiro - Not to complain, but why are you getting that train now?
    Allura - I got a new job with better hours!
    Shiro - Nice! Where are you now?
    Allura - That music shop, inside that huge mall on the other side of the city?

“Makes sense.” Keith muttered, he glanced over and saw Lance smiling at him, he hated how Lance made his stomach flip with just a look.

It that were the case, and Lance had never had a boyfriend or a girlfriend before either, how would they go about… that? How did one become someone’s boyfriend? Keith didn’t know if he should ask, they both seemed to be so deeply terrified of rejection that it might end up that neither of them would ever ask, and they’d just… dance around each other until they got old and died, just perpetually unsure of how to classify their relationship.

Keith was sick and tired of pussy-footing around the subj-

Keith sneezed.

He fucking sneezed.

Shiro stared at him, and backed away slowly.

“Oh hell no, are you getting sick?” Shiro whispered. Keith shook his head, fervently, Keith didn’t do sick.

“No, I’m fine.” Keith quickly shut down the comment, but Shiro still kept his distance, and instead
of sitting beside Keith like he usually did once they’d boarded the train, he sat in the seat in front, eyeing Keith wearily.

“I bet you’re ill because you were wandering the streets at midnight on Saturday night.” Shiro whispered through the gap in the chairs.

“I’m not sick.” Keith grunted.

Keith was sneezing all day, and the more he sneezed the more awful he felt. Hunk watched him from a distance, not daring to go near him, at lunchtime he approached slowly with a hot bowl of soup and a wary smile.

As Keith stepped out of the office building, Pidge took one look at him and went into a militant kind of mom mode.

“You’re sick.” She stated, it wasn’t a question, but Keith shook his head like an answer anyway. She placed a hand against his forehead. “You’re definitely sick. C’mon, let’s get you home.”

Lance yawned and awoke abruptly to the sound of something he didn’t usually hear in the morning, it wasn’t the sound of his alarm clock going off, it was the sound of a phone call, he leant over to see that he had four missed calls from Pidge, Lance blanched, imagining only the worst case scenario.

“Pidge?” Lance quickly answered when she began ringing again.

“I’m really sorry to call you this early,” Pidge was whispering down the phone, conspiratorially.

“Uh, it’s fine?” Lance glanced at the clock beside his bed, it was 6am, what was Pidge doing awake at this time?! And why would she be calling Lance of all people?

“Listen, Keith is really sick.” Pidge whispered down the phone. “I’m whispering so he can’t hear me, I really have to go to work, I have this super important show on today and tomorrow, but I don’t want him to be alone, he’s probably done the whole sick thing by himself for most of his entire life, and I hate the idea of him being alone now.”

“O-okay…” Lance sat up fully.

“I know it’s a lot to ask, and you guys aren’t know, official yet,” Pidge sighed quietly. “And it’s totally not your responsibility, but, is there any way that you could come and look after him?”

“Are you kidding me? Of course!” Lance leapt out of bed and pulled on the closest pair of jeans and a jumper, along with some random medicines from his bathroom cabinet and the ice-cream that they were still yet to eat after all this time.

He left the house earlier than he ever had done before, calling his boss and running down the road, clutching blankets over his shoulders and bags of provisions, he was sure his shoes didn’t match but at this point he didn’t care.

“Lance? You’re phoning, suspiciously early.” Lance’s boss answered with a sceptical voice.

“Yeah, I’m really sorry, but I really have to take today off work!” He yelped, running down the
road. “There’s been an emergency and there is no way I can get there today.”

“Are you running?”

“Y-Yeah, I’m running… to… the emergency?” Lance exclaimed, rounding the corner to Keith’s apartment building. People all around him were staring with great interest.

“What kind of emergency?”

“Um, it’s personal, um a family emergency?” Lance sighed, climbing the stairs of Keith’s building two steps at a time. “My, sister… has gone into labour!”

“Oh, I didn’t even know she was pregnant!” His boss sounded excited on the phone.

“Funny story! Neither did she!” Lance laughed, “Hence the emergency!”

“Oh, right… I guess, just get Hunk to make me one of those red velvet cakes!”

“Done and done!”

Lance arrived at the front door of Keith’s apartment, hair a mess, un-showered and exhausted. He hadn’t even brushed his teeth, he probably needn’t have run all that way that quickly, but hell, he was there now.

Keith was curled up on the sofa, he’d relented and allowed Pidge to call his boss to tell him that he definitely wasn’t going to be at work today. He couldn’t have been more thrilled to be on his own, he still hadn’t quite admitted he was sick, but he felt delirious and that was enough to put him off going to work.

He was so delirious he could have sworn that he’d heard the sound of someone banging, desperately against the front door of the apartment. But there was no way, not at that time in the morning.

But then it happened again, Keith was sure that it wasn’t all completely in his head.

“Keith?!”

Oh god. Lance was here, which meant that Pidge had enlisted him to take care of Keith, she was so heavily under the impression that he was unwell that she willingly woke Lance up on – Keith assumed – his day off.

“Keith! I know you’re in there and I know you’re sick!” Lance cried through the door. Keith grunted and hid his face under the covers, hoping that it was just a dream.

He hadn’t faced Lance properly since he’d cried in his arms, it was going from one kind of weakness to another, and he knew that he was at his most vulnerable when he was sick, not that he was unwell, because he was 100% totally fine.

“Keith I just heard you sneeze!” Lance thumped the door again for good measure. “Please, let me in. You don’t have to do this alone.”

Keith bit his lip. Why did he always have to throw double meanings into everything that Lance said? He felt like opening that door was an admission, to let Lance in fully… not even just into his apartment but into his tightly compacted walls, there was one, small pidge-sized gap there already,
any more and he was afraid that all the foundations would come crumbling down.

But as he’d said earlier, even Keith was sick – not sick, no sickness here – and tired of pussy-footing around whatever the fuck this was. He pulled the duvet he’d bought out of his bedroom off of his weak form and stood, heading slowly to the front door, he slowly opened it and stared up at Lance, who when he looked down was definitely not wearing matching shoes. He had definitely just gotten out of bed and in a rush no less.

“Hey.” Keith sighed, rubbing his eyes. “Whatever Pidge told you was a lie, I’m not sick.”

Lance looked him up and down and raised one eyebrow like he’d heard it all before. Keith took in the piles of blankets and bags that Lance had hanging off his shoulders.

“Did you forget that I’ve got a huge family,” Lance sighed pushing past him and dropping the blankets onto the sofa. “I know sick when I see it.”

Keith folded his arms after slamming the door shut behind him.

“If I’m so ‘sick’” Keith muttered with air-quotes. “Then aren’t you worried you’re gonna catch whatever mythical disease I might have?”

“Didn’t you just hear what I said? I have a huge family, my immunity is iron-clad!” Lance patted his chest in an oafish manner and kicked off his shoes. “And what kind of person would I be if I didn’t come and look after my-

They locked eyes, both wide-eyed, Keith bit his lip.

“Person?” Lance winced, scratching the back of his neck awkwardly.

Keith rolled his eyes and sighed, not moving from the spot he’d found himself in front of the front door.

“I’m fine, I’m always fine. I don’t need anyone to look after me.” Keith murmured. “You didn’t have to come here to take care of me.”

“Pft, don’t flatter yourself, I’m only here because I happened to have a day off.” Lance shrugged, “I didn’t have anything better to do.”

Keith raised his eyebrows at him, Lance hadn’t thought that Keith would believe that. Lance began shucking off his jacket when he suddenly realised he hadn’t grabbed any of the food he’d meant to.

“Ah, shit,” He groaned, pulling his jacket back on and moving towards his definitely not matching shoes. “Be right back.”

“W-where are you going?” Keith stammered, Lance looked at him, trying to supress the smirk threatening to make an appearance.

“I’m just gonna go get some soup, y’know, warming stuff.” Lance smiled, standing up straight. “I was just gonna run down the road and grab some-

“You don’t have to go down the road,” Keith spoke, but he was staring out the window. “It’s the 21st century you can order it online. You don’t have to… go.”
Lance shrugged and pulled off his jacket, a victorious smirk on his face.

“Well, I’m here for as long as you need me,” Lance smiled, watching Keith make his way back to the couch, pulling the blankets over him.

“I don’t need you.” Keith scoffed, staring at the television screen like a moody teenager. “But you might as well stay since you came all the way over here.”

“It’s literally a ten minute walk-“

“OK!” Keith groaned, hitting the blanket dramatically. “Fine! I need you! Okay? Wipe the smug self-satisfied grin off your face and come here, you fucking asshole.”

Lance savoured the feeling in his chest at the sound of Keith admitting he needed him. He could have made fun of him for it, and god did he want to tease him, but he felt like now was definitely not the time.

He dropped himself on the couch beside Keith, who was staring at him with an unreadable expression on his face. Lance knew it was because Keith wasn’t sure what to do next, they’d cuddled sure, but Keith had been drunk and hungover both of those times. Lance took in a deep breath and lifted both arms like an invitation.

“C’mere.”

With that Keith came at him like a fucking wrecking ball, his face buried into the crook of Lance’s neck and his arms tightly wrapped around Lance’s waist. The heat that radiated off him was almost unbearable, Lance was familiar with that heat from days and nights of comforting his niece when she’d gotten sick, which was unfortunately a lot. He’d gotten really good at taking care of people, and he’d be lying if he said he didn’t love it.

Keith was hanging on to him like he might disappear at any moment, and Lance knew that his spike in heart-rate was giving him away. He reached forward and pulled a blanket tightly around them.

“It’s okay, Keith. I’ve got you, I’m not going anywhere.” Lance whispered, comfortingly into the side of Keith’s head, which only made him press even closer to him.

Lance was so aware of how quick his heart was beating, but more than anything it seemed to be calming Keith, the rate of his breath was slowing, and the tension in his fingers almost tearing into Lance’s shirt was lessening by the second.

“Have you taken some medicine?” Lance asked softly. He could feel Keith starting to nod, then it slowly turned into a head-shake. Lance couldn’t help smile to himself, Keith was taking the whole ‘not lying’ thing extremely seriously.

“Good thing I brought some with me, huh?” Lance chuckled, trying to reach over for his bag, which made Keith’s grip on his back tighten again. “Keith, I’m just trying to get you some painkillers.”

“I’m not sick.” Keith muttered, his voice muffled against Lance’s neck, the movement making Lance shudder.

“I thought we said no lies.” Lance winced, trying not to think about the fact that Keith’s mouth was so close to his neck. Lance’s biggest weakness was his neck.
“Fine.” Keith huffed, pulling away slightly so that Lance could reach for his bag. Lance was both devastated and relieved that Keith was no longer close enough to sink his teeth into Lance’s neck without having to move an inch.

Lance tried not to think about how he knew that Keith would be a biter. He reached into the pocket of his bag and produced some painkillers.

“What do you have some water?” Lance asked. Keith shook his head. Lance groaned. “Come on, I need to get you a glass of water.”

But Keith’s arms were wrapped so tightly around Lance’s, and he looked like he was totally unwilling to let go, his eyelids were beginning to get heavy, like he’d fall asleep at any second. Lance chuckled and did what any self-respecting guy would do, he scooped Keith up into his arms. Keith didn’t protest, if anything it only gave Keith better access to Lance’s neck, which was both fortunate and exceptionally unfortunate for Lance, who bit his lip and headed to the kitchen.

With the one hand he managed to free from underneath Keith, he managed to grab a glass and fill it with water, with messy effort. He re-supported Keith and headed back to the sofa. Dropping down onto the couch, Keith nuzzling up against him desperately, his mouth so insanely close to Lance’s neck.

“Okay, so here’s where you actually take the medicine.” Lance desperately prayed his voice didn’t betray how flustered he was. Keith moved his face lightly, opening his mouth. “I’m gonna need a little more co-operation than that, buddy.”

“Don’t call me that.” Keith muttered sleepily, hoisting himself up on his elbows and glaring at Lance. Lance handed him the painkillers, a stupid toothy grin on his face.

“Call you what?” Lance couldn’t stop himself. Keith glared at him before throwing back the pills. Lance wordlessly handed him the water and he sipped it before collapsing back into Lance’s chest.

“Buddy.” Keith slurred. Lance inhaled a deep breath before moving the glass of water out of the way, pulling Keith tighter into his arms. “I’m not your buddy.”

“Oh? What are you then?” Lance breathed, his heart picking up speed once more, Keith’s grip around Lance’s waist tightened, and then relaxed all at once. Lance knew exactly what Keith was, right there in that moment.

Asleep.

Keith shocked himself awake, pressed tightly and neatly against Lance’s form, his head tucked nicely against Lance’s collarbone, he glanced up slightly to see Lance’s face, he was clearly trying to concentrate on something.

“Hey Lance,” Keith spoke softly, Lance glanced down at him, the concentration in his face dissipating into the softest smile ever. “I’m sorry that you had to spend your day off looking after me.”

“Hey, like I said, I had nothing better to do.” Lance chuckled. Keith rolled his eyes, unstuck his arms from around Lance’s waist and sat up, surveying the area, he glanced out the window.

“How long have I been sleeping for?” Keith asked, rubbing his eyes. He didn’t feel any better, in fact he felt ten times worse.
“Like three hours?” Lance stared down at his watch. “And based on your face and the sound of your voice, clearly not long enough.”

“God you’re such an over-bearing… person…” Keith muttered, dropping heavily back into Lance’s arms. “Sorry it’s so boring.”

“Come on, with you, I don’t think I could ever be bored.” Lance grinned, his hand gently raking down from Keith’s hair to the top of his lower back. “I thought I’d told you that.”

“Fuck.” Keith moaned involuntarily at Lance’s touch. Not even realising the look he’d put on Lance’s face. “How can you just say stuff like that?”

“Because I lo—” Keith felt Lance tense up beside him. “Like you, of course.”

Keith yawned groggily and nuzzled himself softly into Lance’s neck.

“I like you too.”

FUCK.

FUCK.

LANCE WAS FUCKED.

Keith was fast asleep once more, breathing softly and soundly against him.

And Lance was fucked.

Was this some kind of fucked up Freudian slip that caused him to almost tell Keith that he loved him. Because, there was no way that Lance loved Keith. They weren’t even officially a thing.

He was endlessly grateful that the guy, fast asleep snoozing gently and contentedly against him, hadn’t noticed the stupid thing he’d almost said. The thing that would have destroyed everything, the thing that the more he thought about it, the more he couldn’t deny it.

But before he could let himself get carried away with over-the-top thoughts as the door to the apartment opened and closed behind him.

“Oh my god, my heart.” Pidge exclaimed appearing beside him clutching her chest dramatically. “My heart, it can’t take the cute.”

“Be quiet, he’s sleeping.” Lance hissed, Pidge stood up smirking at him.

“I just came to check that you hadn’t accidentally killed him or something,” Pidge muttered, seating herself awkwardly on the edge of the futon/coffee table thing. “And… to ask you something?”

“Yeah?” Lance asked quietly.

“This show, I’m on at the moment, I only just managed to sneak out to check on him,” Pidge whispered quietly. “But I’m gonna have to be there all night tonight and tomorrow. Is… there any way that you could stay the night?”

Lance stared at her like she was an idiot.
“Is that even a question, of course I will.” Lance breathed lightly. Pidge huffed out a huge exhale of relief, leaping up to plant a huge kiss on Lance’s cheek.

“Thanks,” She beamed, before running back out of the door. Lance groaned, moved one of his arms to reach into his pocket, re-dialling his boss and making sure that Keith was still fast asleep.

“Hey, sorry to call you again.” Lance whispered into the phone, Keith opened one eye slightly to watch him.

“No… um, here’s the thing, I’m stuck in New Mexico,” Lance sighed, biting his lip. “Yeah, it’s, it’s really messy… Yeah, she’s not coping well with the news.”

Keith tried to supress a smirk, so much for ‘not lying’.

“Yeah, I wouldn’t either, imagine not knowing you were eight months pregnant.” Lance chuckled quietly.

He fell silent for a second, Keith squeezed his eyes shut tightly.

“Important? Yeah, it’s important.” Lance sighed, running a hand across the top of Keith’s back gently. “Most important thing in my life.”

Lance rubbed his eyes, the darkness outside settling moodily. He’d woken Keith up in the late afternoon for some soup, then let him fall asleep again and he was starting to get sleepy himself, his back ached against the awkward position of the couch.

“Keith?” Lance gently nudged him. “C’mon, we should get you into bed.”

Keith groaned softly against his chest.

“My back hurts, come on!” Lance exclaimed quietly. Keith relented and sat up, his eyes barely opening, Lance pushed himself off of the sofa and extended a hand out to Keith who took it gladly, allowing himself to be lead into his bedroom.

Lance glanced around the room, realizing that he’d forgotten pyjamas, Keith seemed to understand this, dropping into the bed and gesturing to the drawers.

“You can borrow something in there.” Keith murmured before rolling over sleepily.

“Okay, whilst I do that, you finish that water.” Lance lectured, opening the top drawer of Keith’s drawers. It felt strange to go rooting around in someone else’s clothes. He pulled out a shirt and realized how small Keith really was, either that or he just really liked tight shirts, and Lance liked tight shirts on Keith so… it was a win either way.

He opted instead on some sweats he’d managed to find, but had a feeling that Keith’s body heat might cause him to overheat if he kept his shirt on. He pulled it over his head and climbed into bed next to Keith, who immediately turned to face him.

Keith slowly opened his eyes and stared at Lance, then his chest, then his stomach and then back up to his face. He felt the heat settle gently in his cheeks as he, compulsively, reached out and
flattened his hand against Lance’s chest. He felt so… strong against the palm of his hand, and some weird feeling in his chest forced him to drag his fingertips down from Lance’s chest to his abdomen, he looked up at Lance, who’s eyes were wide. Keith had… never seen another person’s body like this up close before, it was fascinating. He’d forgotten how the feeling of Lance’s skin was so addictive to him. He let out a breath he didn’t know he’d been holding.

Lance’s heart was racing faster than he ever thought possible, Keith’s hand resting gently, yet firmly against his stomach, he was dying basically. His skin was so hot, he’d never been so… flustered, for want of a better word, before in his entire life.

He wanted to lean into him, kiss his insanely inviting lips and let Keith’s hands do more than he was probably ready for, and for that reason he didn’t.

“Are you my boyfriend?” Keith blurted, his eyes were still lidded heavily, and Lance felt his heart twitch at the sound of the word, being said out-loud, by Keith.

“Oh, yeah, if you… want me to be?” Lance responded. Keith’s hand hadn’t moved from his stomach, at that thought, Keith’s hand began moving slowly from his stomach and back up towards his chest. Making a slow, languid ascent, setting Lance’s skin on fire.

“I don’t know, I’ve never had… an anyone before.” Keith breathed, his eyes half open still, watching his own hand move gently. “I’m nervous.”

“I’ll be whatever you want me to be.” Lance meant that more than he could express, he’d be a fucking tortoise if Keith told him that was what he wanted. “If you give me a chance, I promise, I won’t let you down.”

Before Lance knew it, Keith had – without being dramatic in any sense of the word – slammed his lips against Lance’s. The hand that had been gently caressing Lance’s chest was now wrapped around his neck and in his hair. Lance moaned lewdly against the force of it, pulling him in, lighting his entire body on fire.

“Show me.” Keith hissed quietly, his voice barely above a whisper, pulling Lance back in against his lips again.

Lance knew that Keith was sick as fuck and it was the grossest thing ever, but right there in that moment, Lance was willing to show him everything, from how to kiss, to where his childhood dog was buried in the backyard at his mom’s house, he wanted to show him all the places that his grandmother took him when he was a kid, he wanted to show him what it was like to drive through the desert for hours with nothing but shitty 70’s country songs for company, he wanted to see Keith jump off a cliff into the lake next to his aunt’s house with a smile that never ceased, because Lance would give him the world if he could.

Lance could have written a fucking fourteen hour long play about that kiss, but it was over before he knew it. His heart was so fucking swollen, and Keith was giving him this look, like all the things that Lance had been thinking Keith had heard it all and understood it. But not only that, he wanted to be shown.

“Okay, fuck, you’re my boyfriend.” Keith smiled.

Lance felt a lump forming in his throat, wrapping his arms around Keith and pulling him against him tightly.
“And you’re mine.”

Chapter End Notes

THE SICK FIC THAT NOBODY ASKED FOR :3
god. i don't think i'll ever be able to stop the references.
Btw tell me if im updating too quickly, i know its a lot and kind of frustrating so just let me know!
Also im downloading voltron vr chronicles tonight so y'know i might die in there but i'll let y'all know how it is <3

tumblr - foxsmo-lder
Heat

Chapter Summary

In which Keith experiences some mild jealousy

“Who’s this?” Lance laughed as he approached, Keith grinned and held it out, with some effort, for Lance to take.

“This is Jeff.” Keith smiled. Lance laughed and accepted the proffered plant, tucking it against his waist nicely.

“Are you gonna give me a plant every time we have a date?” Lance asked, a chuckle in his voice as they began walking towards his apartment.

“Till your house becomes a greenhouse.” Keith smirked in response, reaching out to take Lance’s free hand, “Till every surface has some kind of greenery on it.”

“I guess you’re planning on a lot of dates then?” Lance couldn’t suppress the stupid grin on his face that appeared at the thought of it.

Chapter Notes

just a heads up, this is a pretty smutty chapter, nothing explicit but i thought i’d warn ya
tell me if it's horrible :’D

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Keith grumbled unhappily as he opened his eyes and took in Lance’s sleepy, drooling face in front of him, the heat from his apparently bare chest pressing hotly into Keith’s t-shirt. Keith stared with a start at the scene in front of him, completely unsure of what had happened last night. He didn’t remember a single thing past Lance’s phone conversation with his boss, and suddenly Lance was shirtless in his bed.

Keith took this opportunity to do something he’d never done before. He’d never really viewed bodies as anything more than fleshy cages that carried you through your sad attempt at living life. He’d never looked at a body and have it… do anything for him, for want of a more eloquent phrase. But there he was, staring at the toned, tan, slim stomach of Lance which threw all eloquence out of Keith’s head. Because… Lance was so fucking hot. Keith felt like he’d have to cover his mouth soon, he was gazing completely unabashedly, bordering on lewdly at every surface of Lance’s chest and stomach. His breath was heavy in his chest, looking at the way everything was brought together, the muscles in his arms to the hip dips that disappeared into the waistband of the sweatpants that Keith had apparently lent him. The colour of his skin and the way it changed with the scars on Lance’s hips, moments forever imprinted on Lance, moments that
Keith would learn about, and the moments that Keith would never know.

But he wanted to know, so badly. He almost couldn’t stop the hand that moved from the pillow next to Lance’s face, he pressed his hand softly against the flesh just above Lance’s waistband, where some of the darker scars were, and ran his fingers all the way up to just under Lance’s underarm, leaving gooseflesh in his wake. He was so soft and warm and inviting all in one. Keith was actually holding himself back from pressing his lips to the exposed skin, but he was scared that if he did that he might not be able to stop himself from-

“H-hey.” Lance whispered, his eyes slightly open, cheeks pink. The arm that was wrapped around Keith disappeared and met Keith’s hand which was balanced on his waist. “You feeling better I take it?”

His voice sounded full of something, like he was struggling, like he was frustrated. His mouth was doing the same pouty thing that he was doing the first time Keith kissed him, but Keith’s eyes were flicking to the exposed flesh on his waist, the compulsion to kiss it was almost too much for him to bear.

“What are you looking at?” Lance breathed, following Keith’s gaze to the skin. His mouth took the form of an o, like he realised something, which Keith wasn’t entirely sure he understood.

But Keith was hoping that any bizarre behaviour he might exhibit could be excused by his illness, so he threw caution to the wind, leant down and kissed Lance’s waist, softly. He felt Lance take a deep, sharp intake of breath as Keith pulled away and looked at Lance, whose eyes were squeezed shut, biting his lip.

“Lance?” Keith asked, he knew he probably shouldn’t have done that, but he couldn’t help it. Lance’s skin was totally addictive to him, and it was right there, for the taking. And Keith wanted to take it. “I’m sorry.”

Lance’s eyes flew open at that.

“Why are you sorry?” Lance asked, his voice even breathier before, if that were even possible.

“For doing that.” Keith rubbed his eyes. The headache that he thought was gone seemed to be back in full force. “How did we even get here?”

Lance inhaled deeply, rolling onto his back and pressing a hand to his face, his teeth digging into his lip so much that Keith thought he might actually draw blood.

“W-what? What are you asking me?” Lance huffed, his voice still so full of something. Keith couldn’t decipher it, which only seemed to frustrate Lance more. “Fuck.”

“Are you okay?” Keith asked, suddenly feeling like he’d fucked up. Big time. “Shit, I’m sorry, Lance.”

Keith retracted his hands and clutched them close to his chest, like they were weapons he couldn’t trust himself to stop. Lance actually growled at that, Keith hadn’t heard him make a noise like that before, he sounded... angry. He, seemingly at the speed of lightning, rolled over, grabbing both of Keith’s wrists and hoisting them above Keith’s head on the pillow. He was suddenly straddling Keith in a similar way to how Keith had straddled him not so long ago, except this was intentional, lewd even. They stared at each other for a couple of seconds, Keith’s mouth had fallen open out of sheer surprise and Lance was on the edge of baring his teeth in some kind of animalistic way.

Lance moved one of his hands so that only one had was clutching both of Keith’s wrists. The other
hand came and gently cupped Keith’s chin, like he was inspecting him. Lance lifted his chin and slowly, far too slowly in Keith’s opinion, pressed a kiss against the skin against his neck. Keith felt his heart in his throat and tried with all his might to suppress the moan that escaped his lips, regardless of the effort he put in to hide it. Which only seemed to encourage Lance, as he grazed Keith’s neck with his teeth.

“Fuck, what are you doing?” Keith exclaimed quietly, he didn’t want Lance to stop, but he had no fucking idea what the hell was happening.

“What don’t you remember?” Lance whispered against the newly sensitive skin. “What can you remember from last night?”

Lance’s voice was still low, it rumbled against Keith’s skin, sending a bolt of something that Keith could only compare to lightning down his spine.

“I – fuck – I don’t know.” Keith sighed thickly, like he didn’t know if he’d be able to get his words out accurately. “The last thing I remember is you saying that you liked me.”

“You don’t remember going to bed?” Lance asked, his voice still deliciously low against Keith’s throat. Keith couldn’t help the clenching of his fists, feeling Lance’s hand against the tendons in his wrists as his muscles contracted. “You don’t remember telling me I was your boyfriend?”

Keith sucked in a deep breath as Lance pressed another, rougher kiss slightly below where he’d kissed before. Keith did not remember that, but he wasn’t gonna turn around and cast any ideas that he regretted it, not for one second.

“No, I don’t remember that.” Keith hissed quietly as Lance moved down again, Keith could feel an unbelievable heat in his cheeks, this was beyond embarrassment or humiliation.

“Do you want to take it back?” Lance asked, he sounded mildly doubtful but he didn’t stop continuing his slow descent towards Keith’s collarbone, his teeth making light contact with Keith’s skin as he went.

Keith didn’t, he knew he didn’t. But all he could say was-

“Fuck, Lance.” He groaned, which was even more encouraging as he felt Lance smile against his skin.

“Yeah?” Lance sighed, moving to press and open-mouthed kiss on the flesh between Keith’s neck and shoulder. “Tell me.”

Keith wanted to tell him, tell him exactly what was going through his mind, he wanted to tell Lance exactly what he wanted him to do with his tongue, but he didn’t know as much as Lance did and he was so scared of getting it wrong, so he instead opted to answer Lance’s question.

“I don’t wanna take it back,” He muttered through heady breaths, feeling Lance laugh against him. “Lance, holy shit.”

“Good.” Was all that Lance said, before the hand that was still lifting Keith’s chin gently crept down Keith’s chest before slipping under his t-shirt. It was like Keith could feel everything, the very shape of Lance’s fingerprints gently tracing up and across Keith’s stomach. He could feel his body writhe against his will beneath Lance’s weight.

“Fuuuck.” Keith groaned loudly, louder and lewder than he’d ever thought he was capable of. At that Lance’s hand that was still clutching Keith’s wrists let go, moving quickly to cup the side of
Keith’s face, his fingers disappearing behind Keith’s head, tangling themselves in his hair. Lance’s head then moved from Keith’s neck and silenced Keith’s loud moaning with his mouth.

With his hands finally free, one hand found itself on Lance’s neck, pulling him in deeper, whilst the other hand ran his nails down Lance’s back, which only made the latter moan loudly into Keith’s mouth. Apparently Lance only cared about silencing Keith, either that or he couldn’t help himself, which Keith loved. Who, going against all fear bubbling fiercely deep down inside, pulled Lance’s bottom lip between his teeth. Lance pulled back at that, sending the fear he was trying to keep at bay coursing through his entire body, but Lance looked fucking thrilled.

“I fucking knew you were a biter.” Lance grinned, smugly. Keith felt relief flood through him as he pulled Lance back down, but instead of kissing him like Lance expected, he nudged past Lance’s chin and sunk his teeth into his neck lightly, which made Lance make a noise that resembled something close to crying with joy.

Just as Keith was about to apply more pressure, he heard his phone vibrating violently. Lance sat up, groaning, his cheeks and the top of his chest bright red, he glanced across at Keith’s phone and pouted.

“It’s Pidge.” Lance complained, grabbing the phone and handing it to Keith, who answered it reluctantly.

“Hey.” He breathed, trying not to sound as flustered as he felt. Lance rolled off him and stood, Keith watching him all the while as he stretched sleepily.

“Keith? Are you okay? How are you feeling?” Pidge exclaimed down the phone, like an over-bearing mother.

“I’m fine. How are you?” He sighed, watching all of the muscles in Lance’s back move, following the dip of Lance’s spine from the top of his back to the top of the waistband of his sweatpants, a weird kind of hunger he’d never experienced before making it impossible to tear his eyes away.

“You sound really weird, are you sure you’re okay?” Pidge muttered, and then gasped. “OH FUCK, did I interrupt something, I DID DIDN’T I?! OH MY GOD KEITH!”

“Stop screaming at me.” Keith breathed, pulling the phone away from his ear as the volume of Pidge’s voice met something close to deafening. “You didn’t interrupt anything.”

Lance glanced back and smirked, the colour of his cheeks still a deep red, before he disappeared into the living room of Keith’s apartment.

“Oh my god. I totally did, I have never heard you so flustered.” Pidge laughed down the receiver, an evil cackle in his voice. “I’m sorry, dude, didn’t mean to be a cockblock.”

“A what-block?!” Keith exclaimed, sitting up. He heard Pidge laugh evilly down the phone.

“It means exactly what it says on the tin.” Keith could hear the smile by the sound of her voice. “Ok, so now that I know Lance is definitely taking care of you… ahem, I’ll leave you to it. BE SAFE.”

“Fuck you!” Keith groaned down the phone before hanging up, to see that he had a text from Hunk.

Hunk - Hey, dude, are you sick again?
Keith - Yeah, sorry, I’m still not much better than yesterday.

Hunk - I got you dude, feel better.

Keith sighed unhappily as he fell back onto his pillow, the headache he’d forgotten about through Lance’s successful attempt at distracting him had come back, heavily. He turned in his bed and pulled the sheets up and around his face. Wincing as he squeezed his eyes shut.

Lance was stood at the sink in Keith’s apartment, trying with everything within him to try and cool himself down. He didn’t know what had come over him, but he didn’t regret it for one second, and Keith certainly hadn’t hated it. He could still feel the marks on his neck where Keith had sunk his teeth in and almost made Lance cry, he ran his fingers across the divots where Keith’s teeth had been and found himself right back where he started.

He didn’t want it to sound like a cliché, but he couldn’t help it. He honestly had never been so turned on by such a simple gesture, Keith kissing his waist, his scars, which seemed so out of character and so completely innocent, but Lance found himself weak in the knees again just at the thought of it. He ran his hands under the faucet and almost threw cold water across his face, trying to ignore the ache that threatened to end him.

“Lance.” He heard Keith calling from the bedroom, he sounded like he was in pain, Lance rushed in and saw Keith curled up with the sheets clutched tightly around him.

“Woah, you okay?” Lance asked, ignoring all of his desire and wanting in favour of concern for his newly appointed boyfriend, a fact which delighted him more than he cared to mention.

“My head hurts.” Was all that Keith could say, Lance sucked his teeth in sympathy, before grabbing some medicine and a glass of water.

“Keith, c’mon, take these, drink this.” Lance encouraged, Keith’s eyes opened slightly as he sat up and complied. He downed the water and handed the glass back to Lance, before staring up at him, a slightly hesitant look on his face.

“Thanks, Lance.” Keith sighed, Lance desperately, more than anything wished to hear Keith say his name one more time laden with want, but he looked so bereft and sad, staring up at him with an unreadable expression.

“What do you want?” Lance asked, quietly. He watched as Keith wordlessly yanked away the sheets and pulled his own t-shirt off, he threw it across the room and reached out with grabby hands towards Lance.

“You.” He whined.

Lance wasn’t gonna turn that down.

Lance had probably been stroking Keith’s back gently for upwards of four hours, whilst Keith drifted once more in and out of consciousness, every time he opened his eyes, his headache came back. He had his hands planted firmly against Lance’s chest, feeling his breaths, trying to breathe with him. He couldn’t believe that Lance was even still there. It must have been such a boring way to spend his time off, cradling Keith in his arms.
As the sun began to set and Keith had had some more medicine, he finally began to feel a lot better, he and Lance were on the sofa, fully dressed, playing stupid games and eating the ice-cream they’d planned to eat on their first date. Neither of them had mentioned what had happened earlier that morning, and although there was no awkwardness between them, there was a strange underlying tension that Keith didn’t know what to do with. It felt like a tension that would probably build and build till one of them snapped, a similar kind of tension that built up to their first ‘proper’ kiss.

As Pidge arrived home, Lance reluctantly said his goodbyes, giving Keith a long, lingering, meaningful and heated kiss before he dashed back home. Keith watched him go, resting his chin sadly on the back of the couch.

“Goddamn, you have to tell me, what happened.” Pidge demanded, it wasn’t even a question as she dropped onto the couch next to Keith. Keith just smirked at her. “Okay, tell me what would have happened if I hadn’t have phoned??!”

Keith just shrugged as Pidge complained loudly.

“Another day gone by and this couch still hasn’t been christened.” Pidge lamented, Keith simply scoffed as she disappeared to make them some kind of complicated pasta dish, Pidge had told him what it was, but Keith didn’t trust himself to repeat it only to insult her by saying it completely wrong.

Lance  -  I miss you. Is that gross?

Keith  -   Yeah.

Lance  -  Fuck you, dude.

Keith  -  I know it’s gross... because I miss you too.

Keith had to remind himself that Lance felt the same, he’d fucking said it first.

Lance  -  Wanna stay at mine this weekend? I know... we’ve seen a lot of each other but I can’t imagine not seeing you this weekend.

Keith  -  Sure. You can buy me dinner.

Lance  -  That’s a deal.

Lance  -  God, ok I’m just gonna say it. I can’t wait to feel your skin under my fingertips again, you taste so fucking good, did you know that?! It’s killing me right now, I hate that I’m alone here.

Keith felt his breath catch, trying not to let Pidge see the screen. The heat returning to his cheeks, he dropped his head back onto the couch cushions and tried not to think about Lance ‘tasting’ him.

Keith  -  I did not know that. I’m sat beside Pidge, don’t say shit like that.

Lance  -  Oh? But it’s true. Did you know also that I have literally never heard anything as sexy as the sound of you moaning my name?

Keith bit his lip, trying to behave normally as Pidge nattered away about the show she’d just been working on, Keith’s pasta was beginning to get cold.
Keith - what are you doing!!
Lance - Just making observations? I swear I can still feel your teeth against my neck, did I ever tell you that my neck is my greatest weakness.

Keith almost groaned out loud. Pidge hadn’t even noticed he wasn’t paying attention, Keith felt like such an asshole, he had to disappear, he couldn’t, in good conscience sit beside the person he viewed as his sister as turned on as he was.

Keith - Fuck.
Lance - second sexiest thing I’ve ever heard you moan, because of me. I’m not trying to sound like an asshole, I’m just proud of myself.

Keith - I’m proud of myself for whatever noise came out of you when I did bite your neck. I’m glad now that I know your weakness.
Lance - That sounds like a threat.
Keith - More like a promise.
Lance - Okay, fuck, I’m gonna go. See you Friday?
Keith - Night, Lance.

“Heeeey, there he is! How ya feeling today?” Shiro grinned, handing Keith a coffee and throwing an arm around him in celebration of his improved health.

“Better, thanks.” Keith smiled, allowing Shiro to press a stupid goofy kiss to the side of his head. “How are you?”

“Yeah, good. Missed you guys though.” Shiro smiled. “Though I was gonna ask if you had plans this weekend, I was thinking of heading to the music shop Allura’s working at this Saturday?”

Keith glanced across the tracks, he could see Allura and Lance chatting as animatedly as always, Lance glanced over briefly, it seemed like that ever since the day before, all their interactions from that point on were going to be laden with sexual tension, the anticipation felt so heavy that even Shiro picked up on it.

“What the hell was that?” Shiro exclaimed, gesturing between the two of them after they’d finally tore their eyes away from each other. Keith sighed and rolled his eyes, not really offering an excuse in response. “Goddammit, you guys haven’t fucked yet then I take it?”

Keith socked Shiro in the arm as he laughed, which only served to give Shiro the answer he needed.

“God, you can cut the sexual tension with a butter knife, dude.” Shiro laughed, clapping Keith on the back happily. Keith groaned tersely, wishing he’d just never reacted in the first place.

Lance - Stop fucking me with your eyes.

Keith stared at his phone screen, he glanced up and saw Lance smirking at him. Shiro glanced over his shoulder, and almost collapsed with laughter, but held it together enough to tell Keith what he should say in response.
Keith wouldn’t have usually taken advice from Shiro, but everyone else clearly knew what they were doing better than he did.

Keith - Don’t even pretend you don’t love it.

Shiro broke down at the expression on Lance’s face after he read it, Allura happened to glance at Lance’s phone and her jaw dropped completely, both of them viciously aware of how out of character that was for Keith, but Keith was lapping up the look on Lance’s face. He was sure the tension was going to kill him, but teasing Lance was turning out to be one of Keith’s favourite things.

Their trains pulled up and Shiro and Keith sat beside each other.

“So what, is he your boyfriend now?” Shiro asked, taking a sip of coffee and leaning back in his chair.

Lance - Damn, am I that obvious?

“Yeah…” Keith breathed, enjoying hearing that far more than he should, they’d been official for less than two days and he was so fucking invested it hurt.

Keith - You aren’t exactly known for your subtlety.

“God, I am so fucking glad you guys finally got your acts together.” Shiro groaned loudly. “I like to think that I played a pretty huge role in this happening.”

To be fair, Shiro wasn’t wrong. He’d dragged Keith out onto the platform and started a weird… dialogue between the two, Keith could remember how unhappy and angry he was to begin with, and although still, looking back on it was pretty shitty a thing for Shiro to do, he couldn’t be mad at him. Maybe things would have stayed the same if Shiro hadn’t intervened, but at the same time, the newly discovered soppy side of Keith couldn’t help but think that maybe it would have happened regardless. Maybe Shiro was just a catalyst.

Keith’s day at work passed uneventfully, Hunk bought him some soup and some well-wishes before scampering off, every time Keith saw Hunk at work, he seemed busier and busier than ever. He worked fucking hard, and Keith knew that the same could not be said for him, it seemed that Hunk was progressing above and beyond Keith. He was such an amicable person that Keith was sure it had a lot to do with that.

As Keith left the building he spotted Pidge who was staring at her phone, concern and disappointment in her features.

“Pidge? Everything ok?” Keith tapped on the shoulder as she didn’t seem to notice he was even there. Her head shot up quickly.

“Holy fuck, Keith, you scared me.” She breathed, locking her phone and tucking it away in her pocket. “Yeah… I’m fine. I just found out I’m gonna have to work tomorrow night.”

“Aw, that sucks.” Keith sympathised as they headed towards the station.

“Yeah, I was hoping we could do something to celebrate living together for a month.” Pidge complained. Fuck. Keith had totally forgotten about that.

He suddenly felt… bad, really bad. He’d gotten so wrapped up in what was happening with him and Lance that he’d neglected to think for one second of Pidge. He’d spent so much time when
they were together thinking about Lance. He’d been such a selfish asshole.

“Hey, we’ll do something on Sunday to celebrate?” Keith tried, guilt flushing through him, he’d not really… felt guilt like this before, actually letting a friend down.

“Why not… Saturday night?” Pidge asked. Keith winced, trying not to show how much of an asshole he felt. “You have plans?”

Keith bit his lip and nodded.

“Yeah, Shiro mentioned going to the music shop that Allura works at…” Keith shrugged, trying to brush it off. “You can join us if you want to.”

Though he anticipated a refusal.

“N-no, that’s okay, you go have fun.” Pidge smiled, though it didn’t seem like she meant it.

Keith wanted to hit himself, he had no idea how to make this kind of situation better. This was what was so easy about being a loner, he didn’t have to worry about hurting other people’s feelings.

“I’ll make you dinner tonight AND Sunday.” Keith promised, which seemed to soften Pidge up a little, though he still felt rotten about letting her down.

Lance - This isn't unusual for me, but I thought about you all day.

Keith - Is this the kind of content I can get used to now we’re dating.

Pidge glanced over and cooed at the messages, Keith was careful not to let her see the filth Lance had sent the day before when her and Keith had dinner together.

Lance - I can ignore you if you’d rather that.

Keith - No.

Lance - Then don’t complain. Can’t wait to see you tomorrow.

“Goddammit, you guys are too cute, I think my teeth are gonna rot out of my head.” Pidge complained, nudging Keith as the train pulled up at their station.

“Can things sometimes go… to well?” Keith winced, staring at the message, trying to come up with a reply. “Like… no good thing ever lasts, I know that for a fact.”

“Keith you’ve been dating for less than a week,” Pidge sighed, shaking her head as they climbed the stairs. “Don’t write it off already.”

“You know what I mean.” Keith sucked in a breath as they walked to their apartment building. “Good things like this, they aren’t meant to happen to me. I can’t help but feel like the universe is playing some kind of trick on me.”

“You deserve more than you realise,” Pidge shook her head, opening the door and holding it for Keith as he entered behind her. “And if it does inevitably go to shit, so fucking what? How good do you feel right now?”

Keith smirked at her, she stopped him in the stairwell, a serious look on her face.
“I’m serious. How good do you feel right now?” She poked him in the chest, her big golden eyes forcing information out of him.

“Really good.” Keith sighed, folding his arms, still hating the whole being honest about your feelings shtick.

“There you go.” Pidge shrugged, victoriously. “Then stop signing everything away just because you’re scared of what might happen, never pegged you for a wimp.”

And with that, Pidge scarpered up the steps before Keith could quip back with an adequate response.

Lance - Pack some stuff. I’ll meet you outside of the station tomorrow night.

Keith - You got it.

Lance - Also, Shiro mentioned to me about going to Allura’s music shop on Saturday? If you’re into it?

Keith - Yeah, totally…

Lance - See if Pidge wants to join us?

Keith - Already asked, she’s working.

Lance - Dammit. Fine, see you tomorrow. Sleep tight.

Keith - you too.

Lance stared across the platform at Keith, who had a surprisingly small over-night bag casually thrown over his shoulder. He’d taken to wearing a black beanie now that the air was beginning to change, Lance felt it a little dramatic but Keith somehow made a beanie look sexy.

“God, you’re so in love.” Allura scoffed, elbowing him in the side. He grinned, it must have been that obvious, what he was still unsure of was the word itself.

That day, September 8th, marked the month that had passed since Keith finally noticed Lance across the tracks. Lance was certain that as unbelievable as it sounded, he did have feelings for Keith before they’d even met. He didn’t want to sound like a stalker, but he always just… liked watching him, Lance was fascinated by the way he held himself, the way he observed silently, like the mythical wallflower everyone in literature went on about. Lance was used to being dramatic, but this feeling didn’t feel like something dramatic, it felt realer than he’d ever thought it could. The fact that the feeling itself rendered him near speechless spoke volumes to him, because usually he could always find the words, the more over the top the better.

Lance just prayed that the day would go quickly, he just wanted to take Keith home and just soak him up for all it was worth, for once show him affection without one or both of them being ill or drunk.

“Hey, Shiro mentioned that you guys were gonna pop by tomorrow?” Allura asked, elbowing Lance again to get his attention.

“Oh yeah yeah yeah, for sure.” Lance stammered, trying to tear his eyes away from Keith’s smirk
as he spoke to Shiro.

“Do you play an instrument?” Allura asked, pulling her messenger bag further up her shoulder as the train pulled up and they climbed aboard.

“I’ve dabbled,” Lance smirked, shrugging. “My dad taught me how to play the guitar, but only really cheesy 80’s tunes.”

“Remember any?” Allura beamed, leaning towards him as they sat beside each other. Lance shrugged again, if he was going to be putting on a performance, he couldn’t tell her his trump card, the one song that Lance’s dad sung constantly and embarrassingly lovingly to his mom.

Lance was running the shop by himself that day, which would have been fine on any other day of the week, but Fridays were always consistently insane. Which honestly, he couldn’t have been more grateful for, he just wanted the day to be over with and the busier it was, the quicker it went.

Just as he was serving one of the last customers in the queue, his eyes flicked up to the window, feeling someone watching him. He narrowed his eyes at the glorious white locks that stared back at him. Much to Lance’s chagrin Lotor sauntered in, commanding everyone’s attention as he did so, like always.

“Lance,” Lotor smiled, bearing his teeth and leaning against the counter. His hair fell around his shoulders like a waterfall, Lance hadn’t known hair to actually glitter in the light till he met Lotor.

“Lotor,” Lance regarded him with a similarly distasteful look on his face.

“Looks nice and busy in here, I see.” Lotor commented, everything he was saying just felt so redundant to Lance now. He kind of felt a little bad, he and Lotor had been friends since he’d moved to the city, he was the one who introduced him to Nyma and Shay, two people that Lance could call good friends.

“Yeah, I guess.” Lance muttered in response. Lotor raised an eyebrow, his mouth drawn into a sad-looking pout.

“I bumped into… Keith last weekend,” Lotor smirked, flicking hair off his shoulder. “Can I refer to him as your ‘boyfriend’ now?”

“Yeah, you can.” Lance couldn’t help the childish voice that escaped his lips, he disliked with fervour the way he’d said ‘boyfriend’. It rubbed Lance all the wrong ways, he wasn’t entirely sure what Lotor was trying to accomplish by being an asshole.

“Well, good. I’m happy for you.” Lotor scoffed, he stared around, looking at all the people in the shop as if he were some kind of monarch, lording over all of them.

“What do you want, Lotor?” Lance asked, beginning to stack cups and wipe down the counter in an effort to make him leave.

“I thought we were friends,” Lotor’s voice feigned sadness. “Can’t a friend come and check up on another friend?”

“I know you. You want something.” Lance rolled his eyes, “But I can’t help you right now, as you can see, I’m pretty busy.”

“Okay, fine.” Lotor muttered unhappily before storming out. If Lance didn’t know any better, Lotor did genuinely look quite upset at Lance’s dismissal of him, but Lance definitely knew better,
Lotor always had an angle, he always had an ulterior motive.

The day drew to a close and Lance began cleaning up, washing up cups and wiping down down tables. He rushed off to the station just as the train was pulling up, Allura waved at him from inside the train and he raced on, dropping down into the chair beside her.

They chatted and made plans for the following day before the train finally pulled up at their station, they talked and bid each other fare-well as Lance made it to the other side, where Keith was waiting for him, carrying a gigantic cheese plant in his arms, he looked like he was struggling underneath the weight of it, his beanie hanging off his head at a funny angle.

“Who’s this?” Lance laughed as he approached, Keith grinned and held it out, with some effort, for Lance to take.

“This is Jeff.” Keith smiled. Lance laughed and accepted the proffered plant, tucking it against his waist nicely.

“Are you gonna give me a plant every time we have a date?” Lance asked, a chuckle in his voice as they began walking towards his apartment.

“Till your house becomes a greenhouse.” Keith smirked in response, reaching out to take Lance’s free hand, “Till every surface has some kind of greenery on it.”

“I guess you’re planning on a lot of dates then?” Lance couldn’t supress the stupid grin on his face that appeared at the thought of it. That eventually, if all kept going so well, they’d be living amongst a jungle, then he moved onto the idea of Keith moving in with him, tending to plants and always waking up next to Keith’s adorable sleepy face. His stomach flipped at the thought, but not out of fear, out of excitement.

“Pretty much.” Keith confirmed, tugging the beanie on his head, trying to stop it from slipping off. Lance noticed how long Keith’s hair had gotten since the first time he’d seen it… and made fun of it.

The first time that Lance saw Keith at the station, his hair was short. Dark, glossy and short, still with bangs that hung low on his forehead and almost in his eyes, Lance couldn’t understand how Keith could stand all that hair in his eyes. But Keith always stood with his head lowered anyway, his eyes staring down at the floor, so he supposed it didn’t really matter to Keith. But over the months and eventually what would bleed into a year Lance watched Keith’s hair grow and grow. Like Keith had just… stopped caring, Lance could tell that all Keith was doing to his hair, was chopping the front so that it wouldn’t fall in his face. And on anyone else, it would have looked ridiculous and ugly, but Keith… made it look good, he made everything look good. Pale skin, long black hair, dark almost violet eyes, scruffy black bomber jacket and ripped black jeans, he was so the opposite of what Lance usually went for, but he always maintained that there was just something about him. The way every now and again he would wear blue, which did eventually inspire Lance’s blue fluffy jacket, out of all the colours, Keith had an apparent affinity for the colour blue, that and Shiro’s insistence that he try blue at least once.

But now Keith’s hair was past his shoulders, the cut had grown out so messy that it flicked about the place, Lance could tell that Keith had naturally wavy hair, just like Lance’s if he let it get too long.

“How was your day?” Lance asked, tugging lightly on Keith’s hand to get his attention, as always it looked like Keith was so deep in his thoughts he was day-dreaming.
“It was ok, me and Hunk went for sushi.” Keith smiled softly, thinking of it. “How about you?”

“Eh, busy.” Lance shrugged, holding the door open for Keith to enter. “Lotor dropped by, that was exciting.”

“Oh.” Keith muttered, his mood always soured when Lotor was mentioned, “What did he have to say?”

“I didn’t let him speak.” Lance scoffed, pressing the call button for the elevator after greeting the door man. “I just said I was too busy to listen to him.”

“I think he misses you.” Keith spoke quietly, folding his arms, Lance regarded him in the mirror of the elevator.

“He misses being able to manipulate me.” Lance sighed, stepping out of the elevator as it arrived at this floor, he opened his front door and scanned the room for a good spot for Jeff and decided he belonged beside the television unit. He stood back, hands on his hips and admired it. Keith was already curled up on the sofa, making himself at home, which was exactly what he wanted.

He looked so content, so cozy, bundled up in a blanket that he’d found, it warmed Lance’s heart to know that Keith knew where to find things in his apartment, it sounded stupid but he loved it.

And he loved every second of this, if they could even call it a date, they teased each other, fed each other pizza, watched stupid movies and fell asleep tangled up in each other’s arms, Lance’s head resting on Keith’s chest, sleeping soundly.

Lance had never been in love before, but he’d always imagined what it would be like when he was. All big gestures and confessions. He pictured presents and flowers and long romantic walks on the beach and all that cliché bullshit, he hadn’t expected it to be as simple as waking up to a cup of coffee instead of a cup of tea. He stared at the cup that had been balanced on the floor beside the couch, still steaming, still fresh.

He felt his hand shaking as he reached out and took it, it looked utterly perfect, he sat up and looked around the room for Keith, who was by the oven, his long, beautiful hair scraped back, the sun that streamed through the window glinting off it, making it looking as soft as Lance knew it was.

“Hey, you made me coffee.” Lance spoke up, Keith turned and gazed at the mug that Lance was referring to and nodded. “How did you know I drank coffee… I don’t remember ever mentioning it before?”

“Wasn’t it obvious?” Keith shrugged, arms moving as he cooked whatever he was cooking, because Lance wasn't paying attention. He was paying attention to the way his heart was racing, the way his stomach flipped and his hands shook so much he almost spilt coffee all down himself.

Because of course it was obvious, if you cared enough, the same way that it was obvious to Lance that Keith took his coffee black with one sugar. Lance had never expected to fall in love over a cup of coffee, but there he was, almost cursing himself for being such a goddamn sucker, like everyone always said he was. But he didn’t care, he knew right then and there, clutching that hot coffee against his chest, that he’d be a sucker for Keith from then, until the day that he died.

Keith was almost falling asleep on the train, Lance was holding his hand and tracing circles over his knuckles, his head leant against the carriage wall, the rattling of it almost soothing. Lance had
seemed so distracted by something, and Keith was a little too afraid to ask him what was bothering him. He wasn’t sure if he was more scared of it being a good or a bad thing.

After what felt far longer than an hour and a half, the train finally pulled up. Keith had almost forgotten that Shiro was even there, he’d been so wrapped up in watching the scenery pass him by he’d completely ignored Lance and Shiro’s entire conversation.

“Hey, Keith, are you okay?” Shiro asked, breaking him out of his existential funk. Keith nodded as they exited the train and headed for the exit to the station.

“Shiro! I take it you’re interested in music since this was your idea!” Lance nudged him jovially, Shiro shot him an almost in-decipherable look.

“Yeah, that’s the reason.” Shiro smirked, though Keith hardly believed him. He made eye-contact and raised his eyebrows. “You’ll see what I mean.”

“Why the fuck is he shirtless!” Keith exclaimed, gesturing through the window of the music shop, whilst Lance and Shiro stared on, completely oblivious to Keith’s complaint.

Keith stood and tapped his foot with his arms folded, waiting for Shiro and Lance to get over whatever weirdness had overtaken them, and they finally stepped inside. Allura beamed when she noticed them by the door and hurried over to say hello. Keith dragged her to the side.

“Allura why is he shirtless?!” He whisper-yelled in her ear, trying to subtly gesture, she followed Keith’s eyes and ‘ah-ed’ when she realised what he meant.

“Oh, that’s just Rolo, that’s pretty standard.” Allura shrugged, Keith was of course referring to Allura’s apparent co-worker, long messy blonde hair, rugged good-looks and covered in tattoo’s, he was chatting away to two girls who seemed to not really paying attention to anything he said, Keith was more concerned with the stupid look on Lance’s face.

“I’m sure this is against health and safety protocol.” Keith hissed unhappily, Allura smirked and rolled her eyes.

“Are you jealous?” She laughed behind her hand. Keith huffed and shook his head, probably a little too quick to deny, if anything he was just proving her correct. “Hey! Rolo! Come and meet my friends!”

Rolo’s head perked up, he bid the two almost drooling girls adieu and wandered over, a smug smirk on his face, he exuded a casual kind of sexiness that was next to impossible for anyone to ignore.

“What’s up guys,” Rolo greeted, even his voice was insanely sexy, “Nice to meet you, name’s Rolo.”

“This is Keith,” Allura introduced Keith who was brooding unhappily, “And Shiro, who you’ve seen once or twice before, and Lance.”

Lance was pink in the face, and Keith was mad.

“Cool, welcome to the shop,” Rolo smiled, folding his arms across his chest, Keith could see Lance’s eyes roving across Rolo’s biceps and forearms. Rolo glanced at Keith, and smiled softly.
“Any of you fella’s play an instrument?” He asked, gesturing to the multiple different kinds of instrument adorning the walls, from ukulele’s, to acoustic and electric guitars, to random flutes and a digeridoo.

Keith did not play an instrument. Not even slightly, but he was so mad at Rolo’s smug face that he wished he did, just to prove something to him. Lance stepped forward, a smug, self-satisfied grin on his face.

“I play guitar,” He announced proudly, Keith stared at him. Since when, had he ever played an instrument, and why was he only bringing it up now?

Keith glared at the back of his head, he sounded as smarmy as he looked, why the fuck was he trying to impress this guy. Keith folded his arms moodily and glanced around the shop, desperate for a distraction, he saw a huge rack of vinyl’s and disappeared, completely uninterested in anything that guy had to say.

Before Keith knew it, both Shiro and Lance had acoustic guitars in their hands, testing the strings and pretending to know what the fuck they were doing, Keith took in a deep breath and tried to tune it out, running his fingers through the vinyl’s and disappeared, completely uninterested in that, he barely knew Rolo.

He suddenly from behind him heard a tune he recognized, it killed him to do it, but he turned and saw Lance strumming away at the strings, his eyes shut like he was imagining professionals did, Shiro and Rolo both watching him with delight in their eyes. This was a song that Keith remembered hearing as a kid, an old 80s tune that his dad had loved.

Allura had apparently caught on pretty quickly, and was accompanying Lance with a bass guitar, whilst Shiro watched on in awe, Rolo was grinning at the two of them, putting down the guitar he was holding and folding his arms to watch.

And then Lance had to start singing. Of course he could sing, why wouldn’t he? He was a typical drama student, his entire family probably sang, his family probably taught him to play this song. Keith ground his teeth together, his entire life had become a stupid trope. The worst thing was that it was actually making Keith exceptionally flustered. Like he wanted Lance to finish his song, only for Keith to tear the guitar out of his hands, smash it against the ground, push Lance up against the wall and make out with him aggressively. He wasn’t sure if it was the singing, the guitar or the way that Rolo was staring at him whilst he played.

And it was like Lance was reading his thoughts, he turned to stare at Keith as he sung, Keith rolled his eyes, he was so fucking dramatic, but again why was he surprised? Keith kept his arms folded and hoped the heat in his cheeks wasn’t giving him away. He definitely wasn’t trying to scope out the place to see if there was somewhere he could make his fantasy a reality. He felt weirdly… jealous and possessive, which he both hated and loved at the same time.

Keith huffed in a breath as Lance finally stopped singing, not that Keith hated it, he just wasn’t in the right place to enjoy it properly. Rolo clapped loudly and obnoxiously and Keith wanted to leave, taking Lance with him, almost to prove another point.

But Keith didn’t get to leave, he had to spend an entire afternoon humouring everyone else, when really all he wanted to do was get Lance in to bed. It sounded stupid and he never thought he’d ever think it, much less say it – which thank fuck he didn’t - but it was true. When finally the time came to bid the other’s farewell and they returned to Lance’s apartment, Keith immediately slammed the door shut behind them, and slammed Lance up against it.
When Keith had been behaving moodily for the entire afternoon, Lance had not expected this, to be pressed up against his front door, he certainly hadn’t expected Keith’s tongue in his mouth, but he certainly wasn’t going to stop him.

Before Lance could think or say anything, Keith had pulled away and pulled Lance’s jacket off his shoulders, his hands found themselves under Lance’s shirt, stroking all over his skin as Keith’s mouth went to work on Lance’s neck. Lance was in such a state of shock that he hadn’t even thought about doing anything with his hands.

“Keith.” Lance whispered, which made Keith’s teeth dig into his neck and growl lowly, Keith’s fingers flexed his nails into Lance’s skin.

“What?” Keith grunted against his neck, which sent a shiver down Lance’s spine. For someone that Lance had assumed was completely in-experienced, he was good at making Lance melt. He lifted his head to stare up at Lance, his teeth grit together like he might pounce.

More than anything, Lance needed reassurance, always. He needed Keith to be sure that this, namely Lance, was definitely what he wanted. Lance had come to terms with the fact he was head over heels for Keith, and it was too much to ask or even think that Keith felt the same, but Lance wasn’t in the business of fucking around anymore, not with anyone, not for anything.

“Are you sure?” Lance breathed, knowing that he sounded as flustered as he was. Keith’s eyebrows knit together with concern, but he let out a low growl, like that was response enough.

Before Lance could ask for a more explicit response, Keith had hoisted him up so that his legs were around Keith’s waist, and Keith was carrying him to his bedroom, all the while practically making out with Lance’s neck whilst Lance whimpered, he knew that was going to leave marks but he didn’t care. Keith all but threw him on the bed, kneeling between his legs and staring down at him, fiercely, regarding him with a hunger that Lance wasn’t used to.

“I’m sure.” He growled, with dexterous hands grabbing the hem of Lance’s t-shirt and wrenching it over his head, his hands and mouth making up for where the cotton fabric used to be. “You’re so, fucking, pretty. And you’re all mine.”

Lance moaned loudly, loving the sound of Keith being possessive. Keith’s hands moved from clenching the flesh on his waist to the top of Lance’s jeans, deftly undoing his belt and whipping it across the room like it was nothing. Lance heard it smack against the wall but before he had a chance to say anything, Keith was already working on the button on his jeans. Keith was breathing heavily against Lance’s neck, he faltered as he worked Lance’s fly.

“Can I?” Keith breathed, the heat was almost too much for Lance, the ache he’d all but forgotten about was back, and he needed it. But he couldn’t really put it into words, so he just nodded and Keith continued, he sat up and began working Lance’s jeans down his legs, but just as the thick fabric got to the top of Lance’s knees, Keith stopped.

Lance opened his eyes and took in Keith’s… devastated face, any hint of pleasure or desire completely fallen from his features.

“What?” Lance sat up himself, his cheeks stinging with humiliation. But Keith didn’t give him an explanation, he didn’t say anything, instead, he grabbed his shit and left, slamming the front door of the apartment shut behind him.
Lance felt the familiar crush of rejection in his chest as he dropped backwards onto the bed, trying to get his breathing under control, what just happened?! He kicked off his jeans all the way and crawled under the sheets, pulling them tight around him. Had he pushed too far too soon? Lance wouldn’t have minded if Keith wasn’t ready, but he was the one taking the lead.

Maybe he’d forgotten something and he’d be back… but hours passed and Lance stayed there, his face buried in his sheets, not knowing what the fuck had just happened. His heart racing and his teeth chattering, trying not to let this be the thing that broke him, maybe it was just a misunderstanding. But the look on Keith’s face, he never wanted to see that, ever again. But it was burned into his mind, and there was nothing he could do about it. How could he have done that? What had Lance done, how had everything gone from amazing to complete shit within a second?

He honestly wondered if he’d ever hear from Keith again. The insecurities in the pit of his mind told him he wouldn’t… and he couldn’t help but believe them.

Chapter End Notes

god i’m sorry.
*don’t wanna sound obnoxious* but i promise i’ll make it better.
ALSO, voltron VR is wild, it’s so fucking coool, but everyone needs to stop abusing my boy Lance
Im also gonna give u 3 guesses as to what Lance was singing.
ALSO! Im going to a wedding this weekend #bridesmaid so i wont be able to update much, will try and get a chapter out before the weekend so the torture doesn’t last for too long!
I love every single one of you and your comments
Tumblr - foxsmo-lder
Chapter Summary

In which Keith tries to make amends

Lance - How fucking dare you.

Lance bit his lip, staring at the screen, he knew he probably wouldn’t get a response, especially not at this time in the morning.

Keith - I’m sorry.

Lance’s heart felt like it was permanently stuck in his throat at this point. All of his angry resolve had seeped out of him, maybe Keith was as torn up about it as Lance.

Lance - What the fuck is your problem. Where are you?!

He stared at his phone screen, watching the minutes tick by as his eyes opened and shut, exhausted, he could barely keep his eyes open, as if just hearing from Keith was enough to relieve him somewhat. He fell asleep with his phone in his hand, like a fucking millennial.

Chapter Notes

#original titles.
here it is, sorry it's late <3

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Keith didn’t know how he’d got there, all he knew was that his feet were pounding heavily, painfully on the pavements as he ran away from one of the best things in his life. It was pouring with rain, soaking him through completely, but at least it drew attention away from the tears that were spilling un-hindered from his eyes. He was sobbing in the rain as he ran home, and he didn’t even really know why. He felt his phone vibrate, but he refused to look, he felt like he might vomit if he did, how was he supposed to explain this to Lance when he could barely explain it himself.

Because fuck, everything felt so good, Lance’s skin, his tongue, his mouth, his neck, everything. But then… he’d totally forgotten Lance even mentioning it, one drunken night in Nyma’s bar, the goddamn tattoo. He almost completely missed it in his hormone-drunken haze, but then something twigged in his mind and it felt familiar, and then hit him all at once.

Lance had something etched into his skin, something that reminded Keith of how much time he’d wasted, how much of his life had been for sweet fuck all, and that tattoo was a reminder of all the things that could have been. If Lance were willing to have something that Keith had drawn, what
felt like a million years ago, tattooed onto his skin permanently, then what the fuck was he doing living in some shitty apartment doing some shitty job living his shitty life? He halted violently in front of his building and collapsed onto the steps, sucking in lung-fulls of air, the exhaustion finally hitting him.

The universe was definitely playing a joke on him, how does something so insanely coincidental happen, did Lance secretly know that Keith was the person who’d drawn his tattoo, and was trying to fuck with him in some weird way? There was no chance, Keith wasn’t himself aware of his online presence, so how on earth would Lance have known. His heart was close to being torn out of his chest as he thundered up the stairs and threw open the door, Pidge’s head shot up, her features falling into a similar devastation to his own.

“Keith? What are you doing here? Is everything okay?” Pidge leapt up and raced over to him, looking him over, seeing how soaked through he was. Keith bit his lip and collapsed into her, he knew he was soaking wet but that didn’t stop her from throwing her arms around him tightly.

“What happened to me?” Keith sobbed against her shoulder, like she would know, like she would by some miracle have the answers. “How, have I wasted four fucking years of my life, Pidge?”

“What’s wrong? What happened?!” Pidge exclaimed, Keith sucked in a deep breath and only pushed his face further into her shoulder, trying to block everything out.

“It’s Lance,” Keith breathed unevenly. Pidge tried to stroke his back comfortingly, but nothing felt good, nothing felt good now that he’d felt perfection, and completely fucked it all up.

“Did you guys break up?” Pidge asked, Keith was about to shake his head, but he couldn’t really be sure that Lance would even give him the time of day after that. He hadn’t even thought about what might be going through Lance’s mind right now.

“No, it’s…” Keith sighed, standing up fully, Pidge’s eyes full of sympathy, he ran his fingers through his soaking wet hair and dropped himself forlornly on the couch, Pidge sat beside him and offered her shoulder as support.

“Do you wanna talk about it?” Pidge asked, Keith wanted to, no he needed to, maybe if he said it out loud it would make more sense.

“So… we’re making out—“

“Okay… I don’t think I wanna hear this.”

“Hear me out.” Keith smirks, rolling his eyes, Pidge was terrible at sympathy apparently. “So this kind of… feral animalistic passion comes out of me and I’m tearing his clothes off—“

“I’m so fucking scared about where you’re going with this.” Pidge blanched. “Was his dick like two foot long, and you were so intimidated by Lance’s third arm you had to leave?!“

“Fuck off, Pidge.” Keith laughed. “No… ages ago when we went to the bar with Shiro, Lance told us all he had a tattoo…”

“Oh fuck, was it like… a gross tattoo?” Pidge breathed. “Like saying how much he loves his mom,
or a stupid stickman that one of his friends did to him in high-school with a pen?!

“No… worse.” Keith winced, rubbing his face uncomfortably. “It was mine.”

“Yours?” Pidge responded, completely confused.

“I drew it back in college.” Keith grunted, it sounded so fucking ridiculous to say out loud. “It was one of my studies, marine life, a sketchy water-colour and ink shark.”

“No fucking way.” Pidge exclaimed leaping up, letting Keith fall onto the sofa behind her. “FUCK OFF, YOU’RE FUCKING KIDDING ME!”

“I wish I was kidding you Pidge.” Keith rolled unhappily on the couch, covering his face. “So, I pull down his jeans and there it is, and I fucking bolt without saying a word.”

“Wow, you’re a fucking asshole.” Pidge smirked, turning and gazing down at him patronizingly. “You didn’t think to try and explain?”

“No, I panicked. Pidge.” Keith groaned, he knew he should have stayed. “I didn’t want to cry in front of him again. I looked at it and thought about where I was when I drew that, when I painted it. I had such high expectations for my life, and I am nowhere close to where I thought I’d be, I was so optimistic, I really thought I could make something of myself, and my entire life has been such a fucking waste.”

“Keith, what are you talking about?” Pidge smiled. “You’re only 24, you’re not dead yet. You still have so much of your future left to come. It’s okay not to be where you thought you’d be. Give yourself a fucking break. That boy loved something you’d done so damn much that he paid to have that shit inked in his skin permanently. That’s fucking huge, dude.”

Keith stared up at her. She wasn’t wrong, that was a pretty huge thing. Most artists would be endlessly thrilled and honoured.

“And not only that, but he’s dating the guy who did it!” Pidge nudged him, a huge smirk on her face. “Without even realizing it, that’s the coolest thing I’ve ever heard! It’s fate!”

Keith sat up, resting his cheek against the couch cushion.

“What are you so afraid of?” Pidge reached out and touched his shoulder. “Really?”

Just over a month ago, Keith would have had an answer for that. But now, he didn’t know. He really didn’t know what it was that he was afraid of.

Lance hadn’t slept. He was so mad, he was so mad and upset and frustrated and he was staring at his phone. All of the insecurities he’d thought he’d gotten over had hit him like a tidal wave, more like a tsunami at this point, he was staring at his phone, waiting for something, anything, from anyone.

It was 3am and he was scared, how ironic that the day he realized he was in love, was the day that that person disappeared from his life, seemingly forever.

He rolled over and stared at the plant, the first plant that Keith had bought him, with it bought the promise of more dates, more plants, the promise of something that had a future. Lance still couldn’t pinpoint what it was that made Keith run scared.

He was getting himself so angry that he didn’t trust himself not to storm over there, kick down the
front door and give him what for. But he honestly didn’t have the energy, so instead he opted for an angry text, didn’t have as much punch but fuck it.

Lance - How fucking dare you.

Lance bit his lip, staring at the screen, he knew he probably wouldn’t get a response, especially not at this time in the morning.

Keith - I’m sorry.

Lance’s heart felt like it was permanently stuck in his throat at this point. All of his angry resolve had seeped out of him, maybe Keith was as torn up about it as Lance.

Lance - What the fuck is your problem. Where are you?!

He stared at his phone screen, watching the minutes tick by as his eyes opened and shut, exhausted, he could barely keep his eyes open, as if just hearing from Keith was enough to relieve him somewhat. He fell asleep with his phone in his hand, like a fucking millennial.

Lance shot awake, drooling grossly on the pillow below him, his phone still clutched in his hand, completely dead, he was literally unable to believe that he’d fallen asleep holding it. He sucked in a deep breath and plugged it into the wall, climbing out of bed and stretching, hating the cold, empty feeling in his bedroom, he’d slept alone in this apartment more times than he’d slept there with Keith, but it felt distinctly lonely that morning, the weather was fucking rotten outside as he climbed into the shower to try and wash away the awful feeling he had in his gut.

Was… it over? Lance honestly didn’t know, couldn’t tell. It didn’t feel over, but then, what did he know? He thought he’d be waking up next to Keith and that certainly hadn’t happened. He climbed out of the shower and dried himself off with a towel, he stared at himself in the mirror.

It seemed that as soon as Keith saw him with his pants off, everything changed. Was his body that disgusting? That repugnant that Keith just took off?! That had never happened to Lance before, but then all of his previous partners had been experienced in the dark under thick drunken hazes. He thought he looked normal, but was he not what Keith had expected? He pawed at the scarred flesh on his hips. He thought he was over all this. He bit his lip and shook his head, running his fingertips over the water-colour design on his hip, it was always comforting to him, it was the one thing he’d been able to control about his body, the one thing he could honestly say he liked about himself.

He padded around the apartment for the rest of the day, glancing at his phone every now and again to see nothing. He debated the idea of going to find Keith, to confront him, but he anticipated what Keith might say and was terrified of it. He fell unhappily onto the sofa, not knowing what he wanted to do, he hated the silence, the uncertainty.

His heart leapt at the sound of his phone buzz violently against his coffee table. He jumped from the sofa and almost landed on the ground beside the coffee table, grabbing his phone and bringing it to his face, it was definitely from Keith, he felt sick.

Keith - I’m coming over. We need to talk.

Lance groaned, that sounded sickly ominous.

Lance - Do we have to?
He stared at his phone, waiting for a response.

Keith - I think so.

He groaned heavily as he fell back onto the sofa, the nerves tearing him apart from the inside out, he hated this feeling. He felt everything so intensely in the minutes that followed, he tried staring out of the window to see if he could see Keith coming, but as the famous saying went – a watched pot never boils, so he returned to stewing on the couch, staring at the darkened TV screen, the room so silent he could hear Slav skittering about his cage.

Finally, he leapt up to the sound of a knock at the door, he raced towards it before composing himself, pressing his hand softly to the wood, expecting nothing but the worst. He always thought that if he expected the worst, he could never be disappointed.

He pulled open the door, and felt his heart flip at the sight of Keith, his beanie pulled sloppily onto his head like he’d been rushing, something that looked like paint on his chin, his eyes and head low, like he couldn’t bear to look at Lance in the eye.

Lance neglected to notice the canvas in Keith’s arms, its front pressed close to Keith’s chest, like he was trying to hide whatever was on the front.

“H-hey.” Keith winced, like the words hurt him physically. “I know you probably… don’t want to see me right now… or ever. But. I wanted to explain.”

Lance pouted, he really wanted to yell, to scream at him, but he couldn’t. Lance was dramatic, sure, but Keith looked so broken and sincere, he didn’t think he could cope with the devastation he might witness once more on Keith’s face if he launched into a screaming tirade.

“I didn’t know… how to put it into words.” Keith muttered, his mouth in a pout. “So Pidge convinced me to find a way to tell you… why I ran away… before.”

He wordlessly held out the canvas, shutting his eyes like he couldn’t bear to look at what was on the other side. Lance hesitated, his fingers shaking as he reached out for it. As soon he took it out of Keith’s grip, Keith turned and stormed down the hallway towards the elevator, before Lance had a chance to stop him, he’d bolted again. Was this his version of a break up? Because it pissed Lance off more than if he’d manned up and just said the words out loud. He thought about chasing him, but Keith had insisted that this canvas would hold all the answers he would need. He shut the apartment door, and flipped the canvas.

When he witnessed what was on the front, he felt a lot of different things. Awe and wonder at the beauty of it, it was all purples and blues, the thick swirling colours of the stars, meeting the turquoise and azure of the ocean, the figure in the middle’s head facing the stairs, it’s hands meeting the lapping waves. Confusion because what the fuck was this supposed to mean? Was the figure in the middle supposed to be him?! Was Keith telling him, in a roundabout way that he was going to the beach or going to space?

Then a thrilling realization at what it really met, when he was met with an all too familiar sketchy signature in the corner, the K that he’d learnt to recognize off by heart, his mouth fell open when he finally understood why Keith, with his infinite inability to cope with complex emotions, had run away like a moody teen, twice.

“Fucking asshole.” Lance breathed, before gently dropping the canvas by the door, and bolting out the door himself.
Keith was halfway home, when he heard a pounding of oddly soft footsteps behind him, but he didn’t turn because there was no way it’d be Lance, not after witnessing the look on his face just now, but when he felt a strong hand grip his forearm and turn him, he knew he was wrong.

“Keith!” Lance exclaimed, an awe-filled smile on his face, grabbing Keith’s other arm with the other hand and gripping him excitedly. “That was you?”

Keith had to look away, the heat in his cheeks uncomfortable, he knew that Lance would make the connection, but he’d hoped he’d be a million miles away when he had. He could barely cope with the look on Lance’s face.

But Keith couldn’t find the words, convinced that handing Lance that canvas would be the last time he’d see him, he hadn’t planned for this, so he stayed silent.

“What happened?” Lance sighed.

Keith expected a lot of things, a slap, a scream, a yell, an explicit warning for Keith to never show his face again in these parts, he hadn’t expected Lance to press the gentlest kiss to his forehead, it was soft and comforting, it almost made Keith cry all over again, in an effort to stop the stupidity, he leant into Lance. Glancing down momentarily he realised that Lance was not wearing shoes.

“Where are your shoes?” Keith whispered against Lance’s shoulder. Lance’s shoulder twitched as his head moved to follow Keith’s line of sight.

“Uh, huh…” Lance smirked, “I ran after you in such a hurry I forgot to put them on.”

“Why would you run after me?” Keith rolled his head against Lance’s shoulder. It wasn’t a question, it was a statement that he expected to cause Lance to question it himself.

“I’m not even gonna dignify that with an answer.” Lance exclaimed, pulling away from Keith, a stupid smile on his face. “Are you kidding me?! Why do you KEEP running away, are you trying to tell me something?!”

Keith against was at a loss for words, but he was finally staring Lance in the eyes, realizing where the inspiration for his painted ocean came from.

“Come on.” Lance grunted, kneeling and throwing Keith over his shoulder, much to Keith’s utter dismay and humiliation. “I’m gonna teach you how to use your goddamn words. I know you don’t know how to person well but fuck me.”

“You don’t have to carry me like a fucking dead body.” Keith huffed unhappily against Lance’s back as he walked. “You're so dramatic.”

“Says the person who handed me a painting as explanation!” Lance exclaimed marching happily back to his apartment. “What is more dramatic than that?!?” whilst Keith kept trying to moodily fold his arms whilst upside down, but instead allowed his arms to droop uselessly.

When they arrived back at the apartment, Keith had originally expected to never see the painting that he’d spent a sleepless night and a stressed out morning and afternoon sketching and throwing messy watercolour paint at ever again. But he could honestly say that it felt right sitting in Lance’s apartment, and he felt good seeing it again.

Lance sat on the couch beside him, handing him a coffee apparently seeing how exhausted Keith
“So, wanna try and explain exactly what it was you freaked out about?” Lance smirked, leaning back into the couch, like he was ready for a show.

Lance watched as Keith cupped the mug he’d just been handed, as if the heat was fueling him. He watched him suck in a breath and try to choose his words carefully.

“What the fuck is wrong with you?” Keith’s voice was low, accusatory, and Lance was genuinely confused.

“I’m sorry?” Lance screwed up his face in complete bewilderment.

“I mean, why the hell would you get that inked into your skin,” Keith grunted. “That shit is permanent! Are you stupid?!”

“Ex-fucking-scuse me?!” Lance almost screamed in shock. “Are YOU really questioning my life choices right now?! You’re supposed to be explaining YOUR stupid behaviour, not questioning mine!”

“No, I have to understand why on earth you would do that.” Keith muttered, leaning forward on his knees, staring harshly at the painting now leant against Jeff the cheese plant. “And you also just admitted that it was stupid behaviour.”

“Fuck you.” Lance rolled his eyes, sighing and rubbing his palm against his face. “I found it in and fell in love with it, I wanted it with me always, and you weren’t exactly doing prints of your work, so… I decided I could be my own personal print.”

Keith sucked in a deep breath, staring at the coffee, Lance was sure that Keith was most likely not going to touch it, he cursed the waste.

“So, I’ve explained why, now you go.” Lance gestured casually, Keith’s grip tightened on the mug, Lance feared it smashing and splintering across the room.

“I… I took one look at it, and it made me remember…” Keith spoke quietly, desperately trying to choose his words carefully, his eyebrows knitting together. “How I felt at the time, where I was, what I expected out of my life. I was so… optimistic and excited about the future, and seeing it again made me realise that… I have done absolutely fuck all.”

Lance blanched, did that mean… he was a walking reminder of what Keith viewed as failure. Okay, there were worse things than a break up, this was worse.

“And just seeing it again, made me freak out to be honest.” Keith bit his lip, eyes trained on the floor. “I shouldn’t have run away, and I should have been honoured that you loved it that much to get it on your skin forever, but it just made me feel like I’ve wasted all this time. I should have told you at the time.”

Lance looked away, for the first time since he’d gotten it, he wanted to take a wire brush and scrape it off, he did not want to serve as a reminder of Keith’s disappointment and lack of fulfillment.

“You don’t have to worry about seeing it anymore.” Lance choked, he knew that Keith was trying by being honest with him, but the dread in his stomach was the worst feeling ever. He knew that if
things continued, Keith would potentially see that tattoo all the time, would it be something Keith would eventually resent him for?

“What?” Keith finally looked up and stared at Lance hard.

“I’m sorry, but I don’t want to be a walking memoire of your personal disappointment.” Lance placed his coffee on the floor and folded his arms.

“N-no, Lance, that’s not what I meant!” Keith flailed his arms, a little guardedly in an effort not to pour coffee all over Lance’s couch. “When I ran away and spoke to Pidge… she told me that… I’m acting like I’m going to die tomorrow. I set my expectations way too high for myself, I still have time.”

Lance’s eyes fell on Keith, and then the fresh painting leant up against his wall. Suddenly, when he turned back, Keith was so close he was almost in his lap, he hadn’t even heard him move. Keith had put his mug of coffee next to Lance’s on the floor.

“If you want me to go, then I’ll go.” Keith’s face faltered involuntarily. “But… if you don’t want me to go then I’m here. I want to see it, I want to see you, all the time.”

Lance reeled back a little, his stomach twisting at Keith’s words.

“You don’t hate me for it?” Lance stammered. “You aren’t gonna resent me in the future?”

“Why would I?” Keith smiled. “How could I?”

“Goddammit Keith.” Lance smirked reaching out and pulling him into his chest. “See what happens when you just use your words?! Was that so hard?!”

“Harder than you can possibly imagine.” Keith breathed against him, reciprocating by wrapping his arms around Lance’s middle and holding him tightly. “How did you even find it?”

Lance chuckled against him, thinking of the memory.

“I was taking a look around colleges.” Lance muttered wistfully. “My parents were trying to convince me that they could afford it, but we all really knew that if they tried, they’d struggle so much and I couldn’t do that to them. There was an art exhibition at one of the colleges, and that’s where I saw it.”

He felt Keith tense up around him.

“Are you serious?” Keith’s voice was quiet, his face still pressed against Lance’s chest.

“Yeah… I spoke to the guy running the show and he said he didn’t know who K was.” Lance smiled, remembering that even the little plaque beside it had a pseudonym. “I looked K up online and there was nothing, only images of that work, I would have bought the painting at the time if I’d have known I’d never be able to find it again.”

Keith was deathly silent, Lance glanced down at him, and Keith was wearing a particularly stoic looking thousand yard stare.

“That exhibition, it was only on for one day.” Keith finally spoke. “I was there that day. That must have been my college you visited.”

“Are you kidding?” Lance felt his stomach clench and Keith finally sat up and stared him in the
eyes. “We must have just missed each other.”

“N-no…” Keith whimpered, his cheeks pink. “I kept seeing this one dude, I’d walk around and around and there was this one guy always stood there… but I was too nervous to look at his face, he was wearing this denim jacket—”

“Covered in love-heart patches.” Lance smirked. “That was a hand-me-down from my sister.”

They stared at each other quietly, both probably thinking the same thing. Neither of them really knowing what to say, because what do you say about insane fucking coincidences like that. Keith bit his lip and glanced away.

“I almost went and spoke to you…” Keith huffed, sitting up fully, untangling his arms from around Lance’s middle. “But… you know, I’m me. I wasn’t sure if you were staring because you hated it.”

“Wow, I wonder what I would have said to you.” Lance laughed, standing up and stretching, noticing how the sun had disappeared beyond the cityscape. “I wonder if we’d have made friends…”

Keith glanced out the windows, a solemn look on his face.

“It’s getting late, huh…” Keith smiled softly, sadly. “I should really get going.”

“Or you could stay.” Lance shrugged nonchalantly, like it were an obvious suggestion that he was surprised Keith didn’t suggest himself.

“I don’t have any… stuff…” Keith shrugged, gesturing with his hands, all he had was his jacket, his beanie and the clothes he’d come in with.

“A poor excuse.” Lance raised his chin judgementally, he’d learnt that trick from Lotor. “If you don’t want to stay just say, I won’t force you.”

Lance had a lot of expectations for that evening, he expected for Keith to refuse and moodily walk home after refusing to be walked, he expected for maybe Keith to accept but insist on sleeping on the floor or the sofa like the night they told each other they liked each other.

He had not expected to be shirtless and pants-less writhing wantonly under Keith’s exploratory touch. It had started as an opportunity for Keith to see the tattoo again, and the expression that followed had been nothing short of… animalistic, and then Keith’s hands were everywhere, Lance realised that evening that Keith was rather possessive. And, for someone who barely talked in any other circumstance, he talked a lot, almost constantly. Lance didn’t mind, it was odd, however for their roles to be completely reversed as he was rendered near mute by Keith’s unexpected domination, save for the low moans and exclamations of Keith’s name.

The only way the situation could have gotten any better, was if Keith was sans clothes, but as it was, Keith was knelt between Lance’s legs still completely fully clothed, a deep magenta flush burning on his cheeks as he admired Lance’s form lewdly. There was something so strangely hot about Keith regarding Lance’s near nude form still completely dressed.

Keith honestly couldn’t believe his luck, he honestly couldn’t describe how Lance looked right
there under his tentative touch, mere words wouldn’t do it justice. Lance was a piece of art that Keith wished he could take credit for, but was endlessly thrilled that – and in the least creepy or possessive way – it belonged to him now. It was all his, and he planned on memorizing every single little thing, he wanted to be able to carve it into marble with only his memory as reference.

“Lance.” Keith’s voice was lower than he expected, his fingertips ghosting over the rich colours of his artwork. “You are so fucking beautiful, has anyone ever told you that?”

He heard Lance’s breath catch in his throat. The closer he looked at the tattoo, the more impressed he was that everything was perfect, in its place. That should have been intimidating, that someone else could recreate it so perfectly, but Keith lapped it all up. Most of what he was doing was experimental, he had absolutely no experience but Lance didn’t seem to mind, in fact he seemed to love it. Keith couldn’t stop himself from talking, and the more he talked the more whiney Lance’s moans became which only served to make more words, compliments, praises to come falling from Keith’s lips.

Lance was biting his own lip roughly, and staring at Keith under heavy-lids, he shook his head, and Keith smirked, leaning forward slightly.

“Good.” Keith hissed, “I want to be the only person to tell you that. I could look at you like this all day, I could listen to you moaning my name, because of me till the day I die.”

Lance squeezed his eyes shut, writhing into Keith’s lap, like he was trying to get some form of friction. Keith pulled himself away slightly, his hands gently stroking down Lance’s legs till he was level with Lance’s tattoo, one of his hands brushing across the taut skin and without thinking leant forward and pressed his open mouth to the skin beside it. He though the tattoo could do with a little… editing as he sucked the skin into his mouth.

He felt his heart race at the unholy noise that Lance made, as he sunk his teeth in gently.

“Fuck, Keith.” He moaned loudly, his hands finding the back of Keith’s head, tangling in the length he found there. “I need you.”

He pulled away from the skin, seeing a nice bruise beginning to bloom, perfectly complimenting the blues that had begun to fade from the tattoo. He looked up at Lance who looked like a desperate man, Keith untangled himself from Lance’s legs, and laid beside him, pressing his front against Lance’s back, his teeth and lips finding Lance’s weak spot on his neck.

“Keith! I need you to touch me.” Lance breathed heavily, Keith lifted his head and glanced at the blush settling on Lance’s shoulder. He couldn’t deny how unbelievably sexy it was to hear Lance sound so desperate.

“I am?” Keith questioned, he felt Lance’s chest expand as he softly laughed. Keith seemed to be missing something, as always.

“C’mon, do I need to spell it out for you?” He could hear the smirk in Lance’s voice, which made Keith dig his teeth into Lance’s neck in response, earning the press of Lance’s ass against him and a low guttural moan to silence him.

“Appears so.” Keith muttered as he pulled away once more, he could guess, he knew what Lance meant without a shadow of a doubt, but more than anything he wanted to hear Lance say it, and to basically… tell him what to do.

Cause Keith honestly had no idea. He never thought he’d get this far with anybody, and as much as
he felt confident that he could easily make Lance keen like he was with just a touch or a well-placed kiss, anything beyond that was unknown territory. Terrifying territory in fact, he’d be lying if he said he wasn’t a little scared.

Luckily, Lance seemed to know what Keith meant, and the hand that was stroking softly against Lance’s side was being grabbed and moved gently across the plane of Lance’s stomach and towards the waistband of Lance’s boxers, the only item of clothing left. Keith leant up on his elbow, watching with heated interest.

“Is this okay?” Lance asked breathily, Keith glanced towards his face, if he thought that Lance’s face couldn’t get prettier, he was in for a surprise based on what followed after he uttered the two words that he’d probably never regret saying in any context.

“Fuck yeah.”

Lance had always hated Mondays, but this particular Monday was the worst Monday ever. It meant that Keith woke up far earlier than either of them expected, as he remembered in a panic that he hadn’t got a change of clothes. He’d gripped either side of Lance’s face and pressed a kiss to his lips before racing off.

Lance was addicted to the feeling of being around him, he just wanted to keep him all to himself, especially as it happened that Keith took direction and instructions extremely well, and learnt very VERY quickly. Lance had spent half the night with his hands gripping Keith’s hair tightly behind him, forcing Keith to bury his face into his neck whilst Keith’s hands went to work, with enthusiastic, breath-taking dexterity. Keith had spent the entire evening with his eyes wide in wonderment, watching curiously, he seemed so endlessly fascinated, and Lance was so close to believing him every time he told him he was beautiful, being that Keith said it every other sentence, and the only other thing he said was ‘Fuck’.

He couldn’t even keep count of the times a heartfelt declaration of love almost came pouring out unwelcomed. Keith ran away at the sight of a tattoo, a bad memory, Lance could only imagine how far and how fast Keith would run away at the sound of Lance telling him he loved him, but it felt like it was eating him up inside.

He sat on his bed, pulling his knees up close to his chest, he could potentially ruin everything by saying it, but if the majority of their relationship was anything to go by, if he didn’t say something, Keith might not either. He didn’t have time to dwell on it too much as he was interrupted by the sound of his phone ringing, he reached over and was surprised to see that it was his mom.

“Hola mamá.” Lance crooned sleepily down the phone, stretching and climbing out of bed, heading towards the bathroom.

“Hola, mijo.” He could tell by the sound of her voice that she was exhausted, she must have been in the middle of babysitting. “How are you?”

“I’m okay, mamá, how are you?” Lance asked, stepping into the bathroom, he rubbed his eyes sleepily and caught sight of something that made his heart leap into his throat. What could only be described as a deep constellation of hickies were littered all over his neck and shoulders.

“Lance? Did you just say the F word? Are you sure you’re okay?”

“Oh f-” Lance stammered, glancing around the room looking for inspiration. “Lo siento, mamá
what did you say?”

“I was just letting you know that your sister and I are going to come stay with you this weekend! We’re bringing the baby, you can finally meet Amelia!”

“Oh wow, yeah, that’s… great!” Lance was only half paying attention, he grabbed the tube of toothpaste sitting in his toothbrush holder. “Finally, right? Ha-ha.”

With great difficulty and one hand whilst trying to hold a conversation, he squirted some toothpaste out onto his finger and lathered it across the hickey’s. He didn’t really want to hide them, he was not ashamed of their existence, but his boss might have some choice words for him and toothpaste always seemed to be a decent solution back in high school.

“So, we’ll probably be arriving mid-morning?” Lance’s mother continued. “We can go for lunch, maybe say hello to Hunk at some point?”

Lance had to remind himself that his sister was married, he didn’t trust that Hunk wouldn’t try and get revenge on him for that ONE TIME that Lance ALMOST made out with his sister.

“That sounds great…” Lance faltered, was it worth mentioning Keith? Was it far too early for Lance to be introducing Keith to his mom? Would it freak Keith out as much as Lance confessing his clearly not super dramatic undying love for him? Was Keith weirded out by children?

“Allright then, mijo, we’ll see you Saturday, te amo!”

“Te amo.”

Keith came bursting through the front door just as Pidge was about to leave the apartment, she stared at him, reeling back in shock for a couple of seconds.

“Oh, someone had a slumber party, huh?” Pidge smirked, folding her arms. “I take it the apology went well?”

Keith smirked, raising an eyebrow, it went better than okay.

“Depends on what you mean by well.” Keith wandered past her nonchalantly, stripping off his shirt as he opened the door to his ill-used bedroom, the paints from the day before still strewn about the place.

“Holy shit, Keith have you seen your back?!” Pidge exclaimed, Keith hadn’t, but he could only imagine what it looked like, he twisted around in the mirror in his bedroom, admiring the scratches that Lance had left accompanying the moans that Keith hoped he’d never forget.

“God you look so damn proud of yourself,” Pidge chuckled, watching the stupid smile on his face, “I can’t believe it, you finally banged.”

Keith tapped his chin thoughtfully, he wasn’t sure if what they’d done constituted banging per se, all that had happened was he’d gotten Lance off (totally thrilled and happy he could actually say that to himself), did that count?

“I don’t know if we did though?” Keith wondered aloud, Pidge scoffed.

“If you’re not sure, then you definitely didn’t.” Pidge laughed, pulling on her jacket, glancing at
her watch to see if she was late. “What happened exactly… without too many details?”

“I… uh, I don’t even know what the right word would be…” Keith muttered, staring out the window. “Without it sounding… gross?”

Pidge raised an eyebrow at him.

“I don’t have time to explain it I’m afraid,” Pidge chuckled, grabbing her bag and pulling it onto her shoulder. “But if you’re not sure, just ask Lance, I’m sure he’ll explain.”

She pulled open the door and offered him a salute by way of goodbye, Keith waved her off and climbed into the shower, letting the hot water trickle over him. He was exhausted, honestly, now that the adrenaline had worn off he was painfully aware of how little sleep he’d actually gotten. He was up most of the night… servicing? Lance? No, that made him sound vaguely prostitute like.

He climbed into some fresh clothes and started the trek to the station, running a hand through his hair, making a mental note to cut his bangs at some point, they were beginning to get to that length again. His fingers continued to the length at the back, was it worth having that cut? The way that Lance twined his fingers in it made him really want to never ever cut it ever.

He stepped down the stairs and spotted Shiro, staring at something across the tracks, he followed his line of sight and spotted Lance, with half his shirt unbuttoned, showing off the bruising that Keith had left to Allura. At first he felt humiliation and shame, and then he saw how excited and happy Lance was at their existence, and he only felt… a weird kind of pride.

“Holy shit Keith, what did you do to that poor boy?!?” Shiro exclaimed, handing Keith his coffee and gesturing to Lance’s hickeys. “Did he not feed you or something?!”

Lance and Allura both glanced over at Keith and Shiro and grinned in unison.

“Oh my god, look at his goofy little face.” Shiro chuckled, gesturing to Lance and throwing an arm around Keith’s shoulder. “You’re that good huh?”

“Apparently so.” Keith smirked, not even pretending to be humble, he’d been there for all of Lance’s exclamations and encouragements.

“I’m proud of you Keith.” Shiro glanced down at him with a prideful little smile on his face. “Finally got your end away after all this time.”

“What does that mean?” Keith rubbed his forehead, he was having to learn a lot in a short amount of time.

That wasn’t to say that Keith was ‘innocent’ or ‘pure’ by any stretch of the imagination, but this was the first time in his life he’d really had friends, or anyone really to talk to about sex, he didn’t know what all the terms were.

“You know, you busted that nut?” Shiro suggested, Keith stared back blankly. “You shot that load, rustled your jimmy, goofed your troop, concluded?”

“What the hell are you saying to me?!” Keith winced, it all sounded so gross and he had no idea what the fuck was happening.

“DID YOU HAVE AN ORGASM MY DEAR BOY?!” Shiro exclaimed far too loudly, people around them were staring the shit show happening in front of them. Keith had forgotten what public humiliation felt like since Lance had ceased harassing him.
Keith didn’t have to respond, he noticed a text pop up on his phone.

Lance - Tell Shiro, that what I have planned for you is something he could never experience on the mortal plane of his futile existence.

Keith smirked and held out his phone for Shiro to see, he burst into laughter.

“MAN, maybe I should have hit that up while I still had the chance,” Shiro laughed wistfully. Keith turned on him venomously.

“Touch him and die.”

Keith leant on his desk, staring at his computer, completely unable to think of anything other than the night before, was that a normal thing? Or would he eventually get used to it as more situations like that happened?

“Hey, buddy!” Hunk bundled over happily, “Did you want to come for lunch with me?”

Keith glanced at his watch and then back at Hunk, maybe it’d do him good to have Hunk distract him from imagining Lance’s… conclusion?! Over and over in his head. (Nope, conclude was not the one)

“Sure,”

Hunk took them to a little Japanese restaurant that specialized in ramen. They sat down and placed their orders.

“Hey! So! Are you excited to meet Lance’s mom this weekend?!” Hunk exclaimed, taking a sip of his green tea casually.

“W-what?!?” Keith sputtered, staring at Hunk, hard. He had a bad habit of blurting things out without thinking about them, but he seemed mildly unfazed.

“W-what?!” Keith sputtered, staring at Hunk, hard. He had a bad habit of blurting things out without thinking about them, but he seemed mildly unfazed.

“Yeah, maybe he hasn’t had a chance to tell you yet!” Hunk continued, unperturbed by the sheer terror painted on Keith’s face. “His mom’s coming this weekend with one of his sisters, and the baby of course.”

BABY?!

“It’s a shame that Ciara is married, else I’d exact my revenge on Lance.” Hunk chuckled, thanking the waitress as she brought them their ramen. “It’s even more of a shame because she’s super cute too.”

Keith was processing this new information, and was not working in any sense of the word. He’d heard mention of Lance’s family, and he could only imagine that he was one of those guys who had a big family who he absolutely adored. And Keith had come to terms with the fact that he’d probably have to meet them eventually, but Lance definitely hadn’t mentioned the fact it’d be so soon.

Unless he wasn’t planning on introducing them.

Unless he’d not even been bought up to Lance’s mom at all.

“W-what’s Lance’s family like?” Keith decided that playing along was probably the best option in
regards to dealing with the situation. He could at least collect some data, prepare himself should it come up.

“Oh hey, they’re so nice!” Hunk exclaimed, slurping his ramen messily. “I’ve been there over summer a couple of times and they’re so friendly. It’s complete chaos obviously, including him and the new baby, there’s thirteen of them, and that’s just his closest family.”

Thirteen.

Thirteen people.

“But they’re super welcoming, I’m sure they’d really like you!” Hunk finished his ramen in record time, not even noticing that Keith hadn’t touched his, his appetite had all but disappeared.

“Y-yeah… sure.”

Keith really wasn’t so sure.

Chapter End Notes

farm!lance?
yes, 100%
tumblr - foxsmo-1der
Chapter Summary

In which babies are more than they seem

“What? What are you showing me?” Hunk exclaimed, staring at the screen, the screen high-lighting his confused features.

“He’s calling me.” Keith deadpanned, half a mouthful of his sandwich still hanging out the corner of his mouth.

“What do you want me to do about it?” Hunk exclaimed, taking the phone in his hand tentatively, like a precious animal.

They both stared at the screen till it went to voicemail.

“Why didn’t you answer it?!” Keith exclaimed, Hunk just stared at him, an unamused expression on his face.

“Keith, this is your phone.”

“He’s your friend!”

“He’s your boyfriend!”

“Dammit, you’re right.” Keith muttered.

Chapter Notes

WOOOOOOOW sorry for the accidental hiatus! hopefully updates will be more regular, i just honestly lost any and all motivation, and then suddenly October was over!
I HOPE IT'S NOT A HUGE DISAPPOINTMENT!
Thank you for keeping in touch everyone, sorry!
Also, this is a little shorter (only by about 300 words), i realised that in less than fifteen chapters the fic was over 100,000 words, like um that's insane?! just lemme know when you want me to end this mess.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Shiro  -  Hey, quick question, why the hell did Keith come storming up to me this morning yelling ‘BABIES’ at me?!

Lance  -  You’re guess is as good as mine, buddy…
Lance stared at his phone, why… on earth would Keith be harassing Shiro about babies? Why the sudden interest?!

*Lance* - Hey, uh… did you tell Keith that my mom was coming to town this weekend?

*Hunk* - Was I… not meant to?

Lance groaned, letting his head fall back onto the seat behind him, prompting Allura to look up from the intense game of scrabble she was playing on her phone with Shiro.

“What? What’s happened?” Allura fumbled, her mouth full of the pastries she’d bought earlier that morning.

“Hunk told Keith that my mom’s visiting this weekend.” He sighed, rubbing his forehead.

“And the problem is?”

“I don’t know!” Lance cried, stuffing his phone into his pocket and resting his forehead against the window of the carriage. “What if he doesn’t like my mom? What if my mom doesn’t like him? What if he doesn’t like Amelia? What if Amelia doesn’t like him?! What if it’s too soon?!”

“Okay, okay… I see the problem.” Allura groaned, locking her phone and turning in her chair to face Lance. She reached out and grabbed his cheeks, pulling him so they were locked in intense eye contact. “Stop. Overthinking. Everything.”

Lance huffed out a breath and rolled his eyes. He knew he should stop overthinking, but knowledge of that fact didn’t stop said fact from being true, he always overthought everything.

He was so close with his family, and he couldn’t recall one time that Keith had ever mentioned even having a family, it seemed like Pidge was the closest thing he had to a sibling. Lance was more worried that Keith would feel out of his depth, or uncomfortable.

“Fine.” Lance shook his head out of Allura’s grasp.

“Who’s Amelia?” Allura questioned finally, watching with a regretful expression as she then spent the next hour of their journey being shown endless pictures of said child.

Keith was halfway through his sub when he felt his phone vibrating in his pocket, Hunk was pointing out the window at an innocent passer-by, part of their new lunchtime ritual was to people-watch, Keith learned quickly how… good at reading people Hunk could be.

He felt a wash of nerves pass over him as he saw that it was Lance. He thrust the phone toward Hunk as if he would know what to do.

“What? What are you showing me?” Hunk exclaimed, staring at the screen, the screen highlighting his confused features.

“He’s calling me.” Keith deadpanned, half a mouthful of his sandwich still hanging out the corner of his mouth.

“What do you want me to do about it?” Hunk exclaimed, taking the phone in his hand tentatively, like a precious animal.

They both stared at the screen till it went to voicemail.
“Why didn’t you answer it!?” Keith exclaimed, Hunk just stared at him, an unamused expression on his face.

“Keith, this is your phone.”

“He’s your friend!”

“He’s your boyfriend!”

“Dammit, you’re right.” Keith muttered, watching as the phone suddenly sprang back to life, he knew he should answer it.

Shiro had given him… a strange look that morning upon Keith’s exclamation that Shiro tell him all he knew about babies, and had gleaned little to no information forthwith. Keith had decided that Shiro, and Pidge, were useless. For all the wonderful things that Pidge knew, - as he had learnt that morning at 5am - she knew sweet fuck all about babies.

Hunk, however, was a veritable font of knowledge on the subject of infants, and Keith had been soaking it all up, as well as consuming images of Hunk’s nieces and nephews. He’d been trying to force himself into thinking they were genuinely cute, rather than terrifying entities of cheek chub and saliva.

Keith stared up at Hunk, who was holding Keith’s phone out for him, he grabbed it, answering the call.

“Hey babe.” Keith said, without thinking. His whole evening, night and morning had been consumed by babies, it was an honest mistake.

There was dead silence on the other end. Keith couldn’t very well take it back, if he took it back it might hurt Lance’s feelings, it might infer that Lance was not babe-worthy, which he absolutely was, it was just… so unlike Keith to say anything like that.

So they sat in silence, Hunk checked his watch a couple of times, it felt intensely uncomfortable for all those involved.

More silence and Hunk’s hands were clenched with anxiety.

“Should I hang up?” Keith whispered, he just wanted this to be over, Hunk shook his head ardently.

“Lance?” Keith’s voice wavered as he said it.

“Huh?” Lance’s voice sounded distant, distracted.

“You called?”

“You called me babe!”

Keith huffed, of course, what did he expect? Lance always made a big deal out of these things. Keith decided in that moment that he just had to own it.

“Y-yeah, I did… actually.” Keith stammered, staring down at the sandwich on the table in front of him.

“Are you ok?” Lance asked, Keith glanced up at Hunk who was watching the entire exchange with wide eyes.
“Yeah, of course, I’m fine, I’m having lunch.” Keith didn’t really know what he was saying. “What’s up?”

“Uh… I was just gonna see if you wanted to come for dinner?” Lance still sounded distant, almost nervous about something. “I have something I wanted to talk to you about…”

Keith stared at Hunk, who simply shrugged.

“You mean you want me to come over and make us dinner?” Keith smirked into the phone, it was like he could hear Lance’s eye-roll.

“Hey! I’ll help!”

“Sure you will.” Keith scoffed fondly.

“So is that a yes, or?”

“What do you think he’s gonna say?” Pidge asked, laying playing cards on Keith’s lap.

“I don’t know? About his mom? About why I keep harassing people for baby information?” Keith ran his fingers absentmindedly over the playing cards.

“Yeah, that was certainly one of the stranger things I’ve been asked at 5am.” Pidge said, jabbing her finger at the Ace of Diamonds. “Is this your card?!”

Keith stared at her, and shook his head.

“Fuck!” Pidge exclaimed loudly, Keith glanced over, with an apologetic look, at the woman shielding her six-year-olds ears.

“Why are you trying to learn a card trick?” Keith muttered as he watched Pidge pile the cards up, shuffling them.

“I promised my brother I’d learn a magic trick, y’know,” Pidge shrugged, as if Keith knew exactly what she meant.

“No, I don’t know,” Keith raised an eyebrow as he took a card out of the fan of cards Pidge proffered him.

“It was one of those goofy promises you make to siblings,” Pidge stared deeply into Keith’s eyes as he placed the card back into the deck. Keith just stared at her blankly.

“Why am I nervous?” Keith wondered aloud, watching as the train pulled up at the station feeling the anxiety bubbling up in his stomach. “Will I ever get over this sick, uncomfortable feeling?”

“Nah, you’ll probably feel like this forever,” Pidge shrugged, shuffling the deck and beginning to lay cards out on Keith’s lap again. “On the day you tell each other how madly in love you are, on the day one of you proposes – my money’s on Lance – on the day you get married, on the day you adopt your first Lizard, then, on the day you adopt your first child, etcetera etcetera, add infinitum.”

“Woah, we’ve only just started dating!” Keith exclaimed, his leg twitching, earning a frustrated look from Pidge as the cards fluttered delicately to the ground. “Now you’re talking Lizards-“
“You’ll be in a state of perpetual queasiness and uneasiness.” Pidge muttered, dropping to the footwell to gather her cards. “Fuck, there’s one missing…” Her head popped up. “What was your card?”

“The five of spades?” Keith shrugged, it was a vague memory being that now all he was imagining was a lizard baby.

“FUCK! That’s the one that’s missing!”

Another date, another plant heavy in Lance’s arms, this time it was an ivy, sprawling like a waterfall of greens out the lip of the ceramic pot.

They had headed to the same grocery store that they had on their first… kind of? Date? And Keith had picked out some ingredients, Lance would have loved to have helped but he was too busy being burdened with another green child.

Though, honestly it was for the best as he was wracking his brains trying to figure out how on earth to approach the subject with Keith, and he was still reeling from the whole ‘babe’ comment.

It was one thing to invite Keith to meet his mom and sister, it was another to tell his mom without her immediately booking a wedding venue and writing his vows.

They arrived, at Lance’s apartment, and Lance found a place for the new ivy to sprawl down the drawers where Slav’s cage was perched.

Keith kept himself busy prepping their dinner whilst Lance paced awkwardly in the living room, his nervous energy must have been palpable.

“Stop. That.” Keith extended a hand out toward him without even looking up from the tomatoes he was slicing. “You’re distracting me, I’m going to cut myself.”

“Dios, I’m sorry.” Lance groaned, running his hands through his hair.

“Why are you being so dramatic?” Keith huffed, still not looking up, “I know that’s your thing but just… chill, okay?”

Keith? Telling Lance to chill? This was a day of firsts.

Lance padded over to the kitchen and… kind of floated around Keith, waiting for the right moment, something, anything.

“Lance, I know you’re mom’s coming this weekend.”

Dammit, Keith and his impeccable guessing skills strike again.

“But, I also know that you didn’t tell me right away.” Keith continued, his eyes trained on the beef and onions he was currently sautéing. “Which means your mom probably doesn’t know about me, which means you’re not sure if you should invite me to meet her.”

Keith’s weird skill did make the whole issue of exposition that much easier. Keith finally glanced up after he was met with a silence.

“Y-yeah…” Lance sighed, leaning against the counter. “I’m not like… ashamed of you or anything, my mom is just… a lot.”
Keith made an affirmative sound, like an audible nod.

“My family is super close, and I didn’t want you to feel… uncomfortable.” Lance folded his arms, staring across the room at his painting. “You’ve never mentioned your family before, so I wasn’t sure how you’d deal with a gigantic kid-ridden family like mine.”

Keith remained quiet, it was his turn for silence as he began stirring in some passata. Lance felt like he’d touched a nerve, which was the opposite of what he wanted, but that was the price one had to pay when it came to honesty.

“But, Shiro told me that you were harassing him for baby information,” Lance smiled tentatively. “And whether or not you meant it to, that… means a lot to me, that you care, that you wanna learn about this stuff.”

“Babies are gross.” Was all that Keith had to offer in response, the merest semblance of a smile on his lips. “I spent my entire lunch being shown pictures of Hunk’s niece and nephew.”

“Oh man, they’re so cute right?” Lance gushed, Keith looked up at him with a blank expression and shook his head.

“Babies are gross.”

Pidge  -  Hey, I spent the evening that you were away researching babies.

Pidge  -  Basically, the one thing I’ve gleaned from google is that you MUST NOT, I repeat, MUST NOT, judge another woman on her parenting.

Pidge  -  You will be crushed, you will be utterly destroyed, in the most passive-aggressive way possible.

Pidge  -  These ‘mama’ forums are a cesspool of sarcastic smiley-faces and ‘sweeties’.

Pidge  -  It’s fascinating and endlessly amusing.

Pidge  -  Catch me at the end of any argument saying ‘So back the fuck up with your breastfeeding propaganda bullshit, Susan.’

“So, I have some news.”

Lance stared at himself in the glass just outside the café. Phone in one hand, a supportive-looking Shay by his side.

“What is it mijo? You aren’t cancelling on me this weekend are you?” Lance’s mom responded.

“N-no, it’s just.” Lance glanced at Shay, who nodded, a fierce look on her face. “I uh… I have a boyfriend.”

“FINALLY!” Voices from the background squealed.

“Mama! Do you have me on speaker?!” Lance cried, grabbing Shay’s shoulder with his free hand.

“I always have you on speaker.”
“MAMA!” Lance screeched, feeling Shay’s shoulder tense under his grip at the shrillness of his voice.

“Does this mean we get to meet this boyfriend at the weekend?”

“Y-yeah, I guess.”

“And Hunk will be there?!” Lance could hear his sister Ciara’s voice in the background, accompanied by the gurgles of baby Amelia.

“CIARA, YOU’RE A MARRIED WOMAN,” Lance heard Ciara’s husband cry in the background. News of Lance’s almost-kiss with Hunk’s sister was the worst-kept secret in history.

“So, tomorrow’s the big day, huh?” Shiro greeted, knowingly, Keith had been stressing over it since Tuesday when he found out he’d be meeting his boyfriend’s mother and sister. Keith’s voice was short and sharp, accepting his usual cup of coffee from Shiro’s waiting grip.

“Are you nervous?” Shiro asked, a smirk on his face, he knew the answer already, so Keith shoved him in the side.

Keith glanced across the platform to see Allura standing by herself, glaring at her phone. “Where’s Lance?” Shiro muttered. Keith shrugged. Shiro waved his arm in an attempt to get Allura’s attention, when she finally glanced up, she merely shrugged in response.

Keith - Where are you?

Lance - Oh, sorry, I forgot to say, I had to take the day off to sort out my spare bedroom.

Keith - Oh, ok, do you need a hand?

Lance - I don’t want you to see the travesty that is the garbage I hoard in my spare room.

Lance - Hey, um, did you wanna… come with me to collect my mom from the station?

Keith - Yeah, sure, what time?

Lance - Get to my apartment for 9am?

Keith groaned, that was early, he and Pidge had made plans to play stupid games and eat takeaway food.

Keith - Okay, sure, see you tomorrow.

The day slid by, dragged by, and Keith was glad to finally walk out the door, greeted by a waiting Pidge, who filled him on her day as they made their way to the station.

He’d thought a lot about what Lance had said, about… family. He glanced across at Pidge, who
was shuffling her deck of cards, thinking about her brother, this was his family, she was his family. They made it back to their apartment and ordered pizza (pizza that Keith hoped and prayed would not be delivered by Lotor) and Pidge was regaling him with more comments from the mama forums, that sarcastic, excited glint in her eyes that she always wore, the light from her phone making her features glow.

Keith, without thinking, reached out and grabbed Pidge’s wrist, she stared up at him, her expression stilling when he saw how serious he looked.

“Pidge.” Keith felt a… feeling building in his chest, staring at her, sensing the ghost of words he’d not spoken since he was a child playing on his lips.

“Oh my god, Keith, are you dying?” Pidge whispered, the silence around them permeating Keith’s every thought. “I’ve never seen you look so grave.”

From the day they’d met, Pidge had been such a constant, she kept trying, she never gave up on him, and for as sickly and uncomfortable as it had made him feel at the time, he was so grateful for that fact.

Pidge pursed her lips unevenly, her eyebrows drawing together like an understanding just hit her, and when the words couldn’t come-

“I know, Keith.” She smiled finally. “I love you too.”

“Are you okay?” Lance asked for about the 100th time that morning alone, he watched Keith roll his eyes.

“Yes, Lance.” Keith groaned, dropping his head onto Lance’s shoulder as they waited outside the station, Lance could feel the head radiating off him, the way that his fists were shoved deep into his pockets, he was nervous.

Lance reached out almost naturally, and wrapped his arm around Keith’s shoulder, pulling him into him, he glanced up at the clock at the station, the train was late by about twenty minutes, twenty anxiety-ridden minutes.

They stayed in tense silence till finally, he spotted the train pulling up, filled with angry-looking commuters in huge crowds by the door, pouring out as it finally came to a stop. Lance spotted them from a mile off.

He felt his heart thud heavily in his chest as he spotted baby Amelia, a tiny mop of dark curly hair on her head, his family’s signature. Without even thinking, he pulled his arm from around Keith – who had become a dark-haired blur at this point – and raced over to them, cooing the entire way.

His mom’s eyes lit up as soon as she saw him, but Lance went straight for Amelia, whipping her out of Ciara’s arms and holding her up at an arms-length, watching her huge blue eyes searching his, a giant grin on his face which immediately became mirrored in Amelia’s expression, her tiny chubby hands reaching out for him.

“I knew it!” Ciara laughed, folding her arms, the near hundreds of baby bags hanging off her arms making her movements jagged. “I knew she’d love you straight away.”

Lance was too busy cooing over his baby niece that he’d not even notice a doe-eyed Keith
approaching, his skin pale.

“You must be Lance’s boyfriend!” Lance vaguely heard from behind him, as he spun the infant around in his arms, listening to her sweet little laughter, her tiny hands clutched to his wrists.

He barely noticed a rigid-looking Keith being pulled into a hug that he almost immediately softened into.

He only quietly heard an almost breathless Keith mumble in greeting.

“It’s nice to meet you both.”

Hunk was laid on his back, balancing Amelia so that her feet were on his stomach.

“Oh my god, you’re so tall!” Hunk beamed, Amelia regarded him with a gummy grin and a crinkled nose.

Keith was stood against the kitchen island with his arms folded, taking in the scene, feeling so out of his depth he felt like he was drowning.

But he was doing okay, and he certainly hadn’t criticised Ciara’s parenting, and he’d only been called ‘sweetie’ in earnest by Lance’s mom after he offered to help make lunch.

“Lance, since when did you keep plants?” Ciara asked, staring at the cheese plant beside the television.

“Since Keith started buying them for me?” Lance shrugged, gesturing over to Keith who felt pale at the sudden attention on him.

“That better mean you’re looking after them,” Ciara smirked a little sternly. “But I also hope that you haven’t forgotten about Slav. RoRo would never forgive you if something happened to him.”

Keith watched, knowingly, as Lance tried to subtly pour some food into Slav’s bowl.

Keith watched with a horrible sick feeling as Lance’s mom finally noticed, and picked up the painting that Lance had decided to keep out in the open. Keith wished in that moment as Lance’s mother evaluated it with interest that he’d just thrown it out of the window when he had the chance.

“Lance, mijo, you didn’t tell me you’d managed to find your mystery artist.” She smiled, glancing up at her son, who was now laid beside Hunk on the floor, using his finger to tickle under Amelia’s chin happily.

Lance sat up suddenly at that and glanced across at Keith, silently asking permission, which Keith appreciated more than anything, though the thought of more people knowing filled him with dread.

His mother stared between them, watching the silent exchange happen with piqued interest, quirking an eyebrow when she made eye-contact with Keith.

“OH MY GOD!” Ciara exclaimed, allowing Amelia to climb over her as she lazed on the sofa. She was definitely related to Lance. “So that means you saw Lance in my most beloved jacket?!”

Keith nodded, his mouth still in a set, grim line.
“Oh man, you are welcome.” Ciara chuckled, grabbing Amelia from the top of the sofa cushions and placing her back on Lance’s lap.

Lance’s mom had been watching her son with a… knowing kind of look on her face, the kind of look that made Keith’s stomach fill with a renewed dread.

“It’s pretty crazy, right,” Lance smiled, like it was his favourite story in the world, like he couldn’t wait to tell it again, like Lance would tell anyone who cared to listen for the rest of their lives.

The rest of their lives… with their lizard… and their…

“Hey, I had an idea!” Hunk was now sat up on the rug, legs crossed like a child. “Since it’s been a while since all of you hung out, I thought maybe the three of you could go for lunch tomorrow and we’ll look after the baby.”

He gestured to himself and Keith.

“What a great idea!” Lance’s mom beamed, her eyes not leaving Hunk’s. Keith glanced between them, was this some kind of conspiracy?! They had evil grins plastered on their faces.

“I dunno…” Lance tapped his chin, his eyes searching Keith’s.

Keith gulped uncomfortably.

“That sounds like a great idea to me!” Ciara grinned.

“We’ll be fine! I’m here aren’t I? You trust me right?” Hunk reassured as he followed Lance to the door, Ciara and Lance’s mom were chatting happily, already half-way down the hall and Lance looked utterly terrified.

Keith was sat on the floor in front of the sofa, watching Amelia shove baby food into her mouth, his arms awkwardly posed as if ready to catch her should she lose balance and fall.

“I do… just… I-“

“Sh.” Hunk stopped him before he could speak again. “We’ll be fine, you guys go and have fun.” Lance groaned and reluctantly turned to follow his mom and Ciara.

Hunk shut the door and spun to face Keith, who was concentrating on Amelia’s movements, twitching every time she moved.

“You okay, buddy?” Hunk smiled as he dropped himself onto the sofa next to Amelia, her eyes widening as she toppled a little. Keith immediately leapt forward and steadied her.

“How does anyone get anything done with a baby around?” Keith grit his teeth, readjusting the infant so that she could support herself again. “They’re like walking danger magnets.”

“Well, not quite walking.” Hunk muttered.

“That’s somehow even worse!”

“Well, after Amelia’s lunch we gotta put her down for a nap.” Hunk announced, folding his arms decisively, he was the expert after all.
Keith nodded silently, still watching her with the same intensity. Hunk smirked, grabbing Amelia’s empty food jar and retreated to the kitchen, listening with amusement as Keith exclaimed loudly, he assumed that Amelia must have simply reached forward and almost dropped off the sofa completely.

His theory was confirmed as he turned with baby-wipes at the ready to see Keith with Amelia tucked safely against him, his t-shirt now covered in baby food and an unhappy, disgusted look on his face as a result.

“Heyy, did someone try to do a somersault off the couch without the proper safety precautions?” Hunk cooed happily, rubbing the mess off food away from Amelia’s cheeks, hands and Keith’s t-shirt.

Hunk went to grab another baby-wipe, only to discover it was completely empty.

“Hm,” Hunk thought. “We’re out of baby-wipes.”

Keith stared at him, he didn’t know the implications of being in the presence of a baby and not having baby-wipes.

“I’m gonna go look in the baby bags, and Lance’s bathroom,” Hunk muttered as he turned away. “If I can’t find any I’ll have to run down to the store and grab some more.”

“What.”

He turned to Keith who had a sleepy-looking Amelia in his arms, an uncomfortable look on his face.

“Jesus Keith, don’t have a baby,” Hunk stopped to chuckle at his own hilarity. “I said if, gimme a sec.”

Hunk searched and searched, to no avail.

He pulled on his jacket, barely listening to Keith’s protestations.

“Keith, you will be fine, I promise.” Hunk sighed as he headed to the door. “All you gotta do is get a baby to sleep!”

“You say that as if it’s the easiest thing in the world!” Keith exclaimed, not even noticing the weight of Amelia’s eyes as she struggled to keep them open.

“I’ll be back in a second! Do not freak out! You got this!”

Lance’s energy hadn’t relaxed the entire time they were out for lunch, Ciara had tried to reassure him, but he couldn’t help but panic. He also couldn’t help the feeling deep in the pit of his stomach that this had been some kind of set up. Especially judging by the way it almost took his mom twenty minutes to choose what she wanted from the menu.

“So, Keith is cute right?” Ciara smiled, leaning forward on the table as she laid down some dollars to help pay for lunch.

“Yeah…” Lance smiled, talking about Keith was his new favourite thing, Ciara and his mom shared a knowing look.
“So when are you gonna ask him?” Ciara leant forward a little more, almost conspiratorially.

“Ask him what?” Lance raised an eyebrow at her, watching her roll her eyes in response.

“I don’t know! To marry you, to move in with you!” Lance’s mother exclaimed. “Dios mio, you’re so in love it’s killing me.”

“Mama! We’ve only been official for… um…” Lance tried to count it. “Holy shit, it’s not even been two weeks.”

“TWO WEEKS?” They both exclaimed in unison, staring from each other back to Lance.

But… it felt like so much longer, it felt like forever.

When they finally finished up and headed back, Lance could only imagine the pure chaos he was heading back to, Amelia probably would have missed her naptime and would be throwing an over-tired temper tantrum right about now, he could only imagine Keith trying to argue back, frustrated and angry.

As they threw open the apartment door, Hunk flew over with a finger to his lips to quiet their loud conversation.

“What?” Lance whispered urgently. Hunk simply gesticulated with the finger at his lips. Lance glanced around, baby and boyfriend nowhere to be found.

“I went out to buy baby-wipes,” Hunk whispered. The finger that had been against his lips was now pointing at Lance’s bedroom. “Don’t go in there unless you’re ready to propose on the spot, because, Lance, buddy, I almost did.”

“What?” Lance whispered, Ciara was already at the bedroom door, peering in, she slowly closed it after seeing what was inside.

“He’s right.” Ciara confirmed. Lance rolled his eyes and pushed past her, gently opening the door and shutting it behind him as he entered.

Lance heard the quiet sound of Keith’s voice as he whispered.

“Shhh.”

Lance turned, Keith was leant up against the headboard, his eyes heavy, like he almost might fall asleep himself, the sunlight streaming through the window casting a golden light on him, Amelia fast asleep, almost ethereal looking in his arms. His arms were wrapped around her so gently, so sweetly, cradling her against him perfectly, Lance had never seen a baby more comfortable, her chest rising and falling softly.

Lance slowly crawled onto the bed, watching Keith’s sleepy eyes follow him.

“You did it.” Lance whispered, unable to contain the stupid smile on his face.

If a complete stranger were seeing this scenario, they’d have a hard time believing that Amelia wasn’t theirs, her hair was almost dark enough that it looked just like Keith’s, and her skin was a muted caramel, a slightly paler version of Lance’s skin. She looked like a perfect combination of them both.

“I did.” Keith’s voice barely a breath, nestling the sleeping infant a little closer.
“See, I knew you’d be okay,” Lance smiled, shuffling a little closer, his arm coming against Keith’s gently, who immediately dropped his head onto Lance’s shoulder.

“No you didn’t.” Keith smiled against him, earning a quiet chuckle from Lance. He could feel Keith’s breath becoming slower, like he was about to pass out at any moment. He slowly released Amelia from his grip, wrapped an arm around Keith and nestled Amelia close to him.

Lance bit his tongue, a million things he wanted to say almost pouring out of him, like how this could be his perfect Sunday afternoon activity for the rest of his life, like how he constantly felt like fate was pulling them together, like how this wasn’t even chance, or a lucky break. This was meant to be.

So, like Allura had said, he decided to stop overthinking.

“I love you, Keith.”

Lance awoke a couple of hours later, the sun had set and he was alone. He could hear noise and activity from the living room, the magnitude of what he’d said hitting him all at once.

He prayed and prayed that Keith had been asleep when he said that, he had no idea how Keith would handle something like that.

He rubbed his eyes, groggily, and climbed off the bed, opening his bedroom door to see that Hunk was nowhere to be found, Keith and Amelia on the floor drawing with some crayons that Keith had found, his mom and Ciara drinking coffee and watching with soft smiles on their faces.

Keith glanced up as he saw Lance enter, he looked stressed, a fake smile plastered on his face and Lance felt sick, so he did hear him. He sighed heavily to himself, another bump in the road to deal with once his mom and sister were gone.

“You’ll come and visit us soon won’t you?” Ciara smiled, wrapping an arm around Keith’s neck, pulling him and Amelia into a hug, he’d not let her go since they’d begun walking to the station. “I think Amelia’s going to miss you.”

Keith nodded, trying a smile on his face, clutching Amelia tightly to him. He lifted her so they were eye to eye, her happy little face gurgling at him. He was gonna miss her too.

“See ya,” He smiled, handing her off reluctantly as the train pulled up. He watched as Lance finally pulled away from his mom to bid farewell to his sister and niece.

“Give Hunk a kiss from me,” Ciara winked at her brother, who groaned loudly and shoved her playfully in the arm.

“You’re still a happily married woman.” Lance sighed, folding his arms.

“I am, but you’re not,” Ciara grinned, hooking her free arm through her mothers’ before shooting Keith a teasing look. “Yet.”

Keith watched Lance’s body still as Ciara burst out laughing, her mother cursing her in Spanish and dragging her onto the train.
The train pulled away, Lance still standing with his back to Keith. He wanted to say something, but he didn’t know what.

“Lance-“

“I’ll walk you home.” Lance sounded a little defeated honestly. But he took Keith’s hand nonetheless, clutching it tightly, the slightest feeling of a tremor in him. Keith wanted to say something, to make it ok, but he didn’t have the words.

He was lucky with Pidge, Pidge knew what he wanted to say, she understood, but with Lance, it felt like he needed to hear it to know it was true.

When they arrived at Keith’s apartment building, he realised that Lance hadn’t looked at Keith even once.

Maybe when Lance had said it out loud, he’d realised it wasn’t true after all, Keith hated those stupid, repetitive doubts that invaded his mind whenever there was a tense silence. Is this how it was always going to be?

Keith tugged on Lance’s hand, forcing him to turn around and face him, but Lance kept his eyes low, defeated.

“Lance come on, stop making that face.” Keith sighed, “I’m sick of this.”

“Sick of what?” Lance’s eyes finally flew up to meet Keith’s.

“Us! Being so unsure of absolutely everything!” Keith exclaimed, letting go of Lance’s hand.

“You’re different after holding a baby…” Lance smirked a little.

“It’s such bullshit angst, I hate it.” Keith folded his arms, grumpily. He’d spent so much time that weekend watching a baby, a baby who had no worries or cares, who had only love and joy.

A baby who had fallen asleep in his arms without any fear, who had looked at him like he’d hung the stars in the sky.

He was jealous of that baby, who found delight in almost everything she did, who was just so trusting and willing to learn and see new things. He knew that baby would never see the things he’d seen, never know the heartbreak he’d known, and he was sick of still feeling it.

He probably would never be completely anything, completely confident and free of doubt, but he could be more than what he had been.

He wasn’t his past, he wasn’t the things that had happened to him, his future was right there in front of him, staring at him like he’d had an epiphany.

“I am sure of you.” Keith spoke with finality. “So just stop being unsure of yourself.”

“Shiro?!“

Keith had expected a lot of things upon entering his apartment, Pidge to still be in her pyjamas playing video games, the scent of recently ordered Chinese food in the air.

But instead, there sat Shiro, on the sofa beside her. Pidge was a little teary-eyed, but she had a
smile plastered on her face. His two elusive friends, who had seemingly tried everything to avoid each other, he was even beginning to believe that they literally existed on two separate planes of existence.

He was a little nervous that now the universe might cease to exist.

“Keith!” Pidge exploded off the couch and raced over to him, grabbing him by the face.

“What’s going on?” Keith asked, glancing between them.

“You need to get next week off work.” Shiro spoke quite seriously, but he too had a soft, tentative smile on his face.

“I’m sorry?!” Keith exclaimed, nothing was being cleared up, and he was more nervous than anything else.

“My brother!” Pidge beamed, eyes renewing with fresh tears. “He’s finally back in the country again, which means that my other ‘brother’ has to come with me to visit him!”


“It’s a road trip! Of course!”

Keith - Road trip.
Lance - You what?
Keith - You heard me, road trip.
Keith - Did you know, Pidge has a brother? I mean I knew, but…
Lance - No, I did not know that!
Keith - He does this… crazy job that means he’s away for ages, it’s super-secret.
Lance - He’s a spy isn’t he?
Keith - No, he’s more… a scientist? He does stuff with ice.

“What does that mean?” Keith winced, showing the message to Shiro, who scoffed.
“He’s saying yes.”

Keith glanced up at Shiro and Pidge, staring between them, he had A LOT of questions. But they both looked so thrilled he wasn’t quite sure what it was that he wanted to ask.

He immediately thought of the guy that Shiro had mentioned a while ago, he could remember how that hadn’t sounded like a rejection of sorts, but it didn’t explain why up until this point Shiro and Pidge couldn’t be in the same room as each other.

Even now, they both seemed happy, but he could tell there was a history that Keith felt like he needed to know.

But for now, they just looked so happy, he didn’t want to ruin it by dragging up the past, so instead they made plans.

Pidge was nestled up next to Keith in his bed, heat radiating off her.

“So, you’re probably wondering why me and Shiro fell out.” She whispered quietly, Keith’s eyes opened suddenly, it was as if she’d read his mind.

Keith nodded, as if speaking might interrupt her thoughts, scare her into silence once more.

“It… it was silly really,” Pidge smiled, leaning her head against Keith’s shoulder. “I’ve known Shiro for a long time, he and my brother were really close, Shiro was like the upperclassman my brother always admired.”

“So, Shiro goes off to college, and my brother follows close behind,” Pidge breathed quietly, Shiro was staying in Pidge’s bed hence the sleepover, “They graduate, etcetera and Shiro falls into his… modelling, completely ridiculous and by accident and a story I’ll save for another time – a.k.a blackmail. And my brother gets offered this job, to go away, live his dream.”

“But… I didn’t want him to go.” Pidge sighed, lowering her head. “I knew that it was his dream job, but I didn’t want him to leave me, he was my best friend, the one person that got me through school, who encouraged me. I was young and I was selfish.”

“But I also knew how dangerous it would be for Matt,” Pidge shut her eyes gently. “By doing this research, he puts his life on the line every single day, Shiro knew that. I was so close to changing Matt’s mind – selfishly, I know – but Shiro kept encouraging him, I couldn’t understand it, everyone and their mom knew that Shiro was besotted with my brother, so I didn’t get why he told him to go, rather than help me convince him not to.”

“So, we argued, I told him I hated him, and then the resentment bred from there.” She pulled the covers up around her chin. “I know he did it because he loved my brother and he wanted him to be happy, but I was so mad at him, not only that but on the day my brother left, Shiro was nowhere to be found. It was his fault he was going, and yet he wasn’t even there to say goodbye. So I told him to go fuck himself and never speak to me again.”

“And then I moved in with you, and by some crazy coincidence you met Shiro,” Pidge chuckled, nudging Keith. “And on the night that Shiro dragged your drunk ass home, I looked at him for the first time in five years, and I didn’t feel mad anymore. I just felt sad, sad that I hadn’t seen him for all that time, because he’d been like a brother to me too.”

“My life is a regular fucking sausage-fest huh,” Pidge laughed. “I think I’m gonna ask if Allura can
come too, else the testosterone might choke me.”

“Wow, that was stupid.” Keith smirked.

“Hey! I was fifteen! Fuck you!” Pidge laughed, elbowing him in the ribs, hard. “It felt like my world was ending! It was hard to let him go, and yeah, I was proud of him, and my parents told me I was being a spoilt brat but I had to get through high school without him! It was the WORST!”

“Have you not seen him at all in five years?” asked Keith, Pidge shrugged.

“I’ve seen him maybe once or twice, but this is the first time he’s in the country for longer than two days.” Pidge grinned, her elation contagious.

“Do you think he’ll like me?” Keith breathed, the anxiety of someone new creeping over him, Pidge nodded fervently.

“Yeah, he’s like the boy version of me, only older.”

“Great, so an even bigger dork that will ream me at Mario Kart.”

“I don’t know, he’s not played Mario Kart in five years, you might have a chance.”

Keith rolled his eyes.

“Hey, I didn’t tell you, Lance told me he loved me.” Keith finally said, Pidge’s eyes widened for a second, and only a second.

“I’m not surprised.” Pidge gestured nonchalantly. “It was pretty obvious. I take it you didn’t say it back.”

Keith stared at her.

“Keith, if you couldn’t say it to me in words, why would I think you’d say it to him?”

“I kind of got away with it, he thought I was asleep anyway.” Keith smirked, Pidge huffed like ‘of course’.

“So? Do you think you feel the same way?”

“I don’t know…”

Pidge stared at him to continue.

“I don’t know ‘cause I’ve never been in love.”

“It’s okay, it’ll probably be a realization at midnight with lots of squealing like last time.” Pidge smirked. “You’ll be ok.”

“I know,” Keith grinned. “I got this.”

“Yeah you do.”

Chapter End Notes
I'm sorry, road trips are the one trope I will NEVER get sick of!
come harrass me
Also, i'm way into one-shots so prompts would be great if you feel like it!
tumblr - foxsmo-lder

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