Auntie A
by Kalira

Summary

Shiro and Keith's cub has been wearing them to exhaustion when Allura comes to collect him for a while and let them rest. The Empress is quite capable of cooing over her adorable temporary charge and running the Galaxy at the same time, Councilors.

Notes

Written for Day 30 of Sheith Month: Break.

As you might guess, this is connected to the story for Day 19, Galra (although not a direct result of the heat cycle in that story). There are probably going to be more cubling stories, as well as more stories in general in this Galra!AU.

“There, starshine. . .” Keith crooned, rocking their cub soothingly, his voice thrumming from deep in his chest. Sirikan whined and fussed in his sire’s arms, but he was quieter now. “Shush little one. You’re safe.”

Shiro dropped his head against the back of his chair. “He must be tired. Why won’t he let himself rest?” he asked despairingly.
“I don’t know, darling.” Keith said, voice still a calm croon as he bounced Sirikan gently in his arms, pacing nearby. He leapt lightly up to walk across the low table, and then higher, to the back of the lounge, walking its length before turning and retracing his steps. Shiro snorted. He felt like he didn’t even have enough energy to pick his head up again unless he absolutely had to move. “Perhaps he simply can’t. Poor cubling.” Keith hummed, running his fingers through Sirikan’s thick hair.

Shiro tilted his head a little to watch his mate. Keith moved as gracefully as ever with their cub in his arms, and it was both strange and . . . a delight, to watch him coddling their child. Shiro felt warm and content deep inside, despite his weariness and his distress for his restless cub, with his mate alert and caring for their little one nearby.

It was enough to soothe Shiro almost to sleep where he sat - sprawled, more like; he’d collapsed into the chair when Keith pushed him towards it and collected their distressed cub from his small nest himself.

Sirikan yowled, flailing his tiny limbs, and Shiro cringed. Keith only crooned again, jostling him gently and rubbing behind one of his adorable, oversized ears - he’d gotten those from Shiro, and he could only hope that, like himself, Sirikan would eventually mostly grow into them. Sirikan’s struggles weakened and his cries tapered off again into little more than whimpers and protests.

Shiro swallowed down the urge to whine. It wasn’t Sirikan’s fault that he couldn’t sleep, the cub was clearly just as frustrated as they were, but it pained Shiro that he couldn’t fix it for his child. And he was beyond tired, after a full night and going on a second day of almost constant restless cries and upset from their cub.

Keith came to his side, running a hand through his hair and perching on the arm of his chair. Shiro sighed, leaning into him, cheek against his arm. Keith echoed the sigh, then shifted, humming a snatch of almost-lullaby to Sirikan and moving his arm to rest across Shiro’s shoulder instead of pressing against him. Sirikan whimpered and Shiro leaned down close, nuzzling his son’s belly and purring directly against his chest.

His kicking and flailing slowed again, but the whimpering whines did not quiet, and Shiro once more had to tighten his jaw to hold back a whine of his own.

There was a soft chime from their door, and Shiro lifted his head, ears flicking towards the door uncertainly. Sirikan fell almost silent, his ears twitching and his eyes wide. Watching him, Keith’s own eyes had gone even softer and he looked like he was about to melt.

Shiro strangled down the urge to purr and just wrap himself around his mate and little one, and pulled away to get to his feet.

Keith rose quicker than he did and offered Sirikan to Shiro. He got up anyway, but happily took the cub, settling Sirikan against his chest and giving a low rumble to settle him. It only half worked, but that was not much of a surprise after the past day and night.

Keith moved to the door, Shiro drifting after him, curious but expecting likely one of their team in the corridor awaiting them.

It was not; it was the Empress herself.

“Allura!” Keith said, startled, and bowed his head, ears twisting outwards. “Your Excellency.”

“Keith,” Allura dipped her head the tiniest fraction, “Shiro.”

“Hello, your Excellency.” Shiro said, coming up to Keith’s side. “What do you require?” he asked
readily, though his stomach twisted unhappily at the thought of either leaving his cub - unlikely she would ask it of him yet; Shiro was mostly recovered but his body was still healing from the strain and he was not in his best condition - or of his mate being called away from them to be sent into battle.

“Nothing, Commander. I came only to collect Sirikan for a time.” Allura said, not unkindly, her thin lips curving.

Shiro’s eyes widened.

“Isn’t there a council meeting?” Keith asked practically, one ear cocked.

Allura arched one eyebrow, the tip of one of her own less mobile ears twitching. “When was the last time you slept properly? Either of you?” she asked, and Shiro groaned at the thought, settling Sirikan in the curve of one arm and rubbing his eyes. He heard a low hissing sound from Keith.

“Yes, precisely.” Allura said, nodding slightly. “Give him here,” she held out her arms, “and go and take a nap, both of you. I promise, he will be fine with me.”

“Yes, Empress.” Shiro said automatically, but he clung to his cub uncertainly. Keith shifted at Shiro’s side, a low sound in his throat that wasn’t quite distress or anger but could have lead to both, before he echoed Shiro’s words. Their cub hadn’t been away from both of them at once for very long at a stretch yet, and almost every moment since his birth they had both been watching over him.

Shiro bowed his head and nuzzled Sirikan, bringing his cub up to his face. Keith leaned in as well, nosing Shiro’s ear and then bending to kiss Sirikan’s brow, his cheek brushing Shiro’s and his wild hair tickling Shiro’s neck. Keith rumbled to Sirikan affectionately as he squirmed and closed his eyes, calming briefly with both his parents so close, fingers and toes uncurling, tufted ears relaxing, and mouth going slack.

Shiro sighed as he raised his head, steeling himself to loosen his hold on his son and give him to their Empress.

“When I spoke it was not an order, Commander.” Allura said gently, taking the cub from Shiro’s arms as he passed their child over with only a little hesitation. “You simply need the rest, badly, and it is my pleasure to take him for a time.” Sirikan stirred as he found himself in the Empress’ arms, blinking open his bright, grey-blue eyes again and yawning with a little mew, showing tiny, perfect fangs.

Allura cooed at him, tracing one fingertip down his tiny button nose, careful not to scratch, and then letting it rest on his lip. He mewed again, the sound a little muddled in his throat, and blinked up at her curiously.

Allura cradled their cub a little closer to her body, rocking him and crooning in affectionate tones. She looked up at them again, Keith still a solid presence at Shiro’s side, and smiled. “Go on, go and take a nap, the both of you. I’ll look after him; you need the break.”

Shiro hesitated, holding himself back from reaching for his child to take him back again. Sirikan was fine, and he knew it, and he was dead on his feet, but . . .

“I will bring him back to you in three and a half vargas precisely, Commander.” Empress Allura assured him crisply with a knowing look. It wasn’t sharp, but understanding. “I will take good care of him, my little darling.” She cooed the last at Sirikan himself, letting him test his baby fangs against her fingertip and delicately-manicured claw without protest.

“I . . . Thank you, Empress.” Shiro bowed his head slightly. Keith rested a hand on his upper arm,
and the touch lent Shiro strength and comfort.

“Thank you, Commanders.” Allura said softly, her eyes warming just a touch. “For allowing me to steal him away from you for a time.” she teased. She chittered playfully at their cubling, and he squirmed in her arms again, dragging her finger further into his mouth and biting harder. Shiro flinched, but Allura’s expression didn’t even twitch, though Shiro knew those little fangs were needle-sharp, milk teeth or not.

“If he needs us…” Keith said in a low voice, his jaw up and his ears perked forwards.

“I do not think I will have any trouble.” Allura said, but she tilted her head. “I will summon you if there is any problem whatsoever, Commanders, you have my word.”

“Thank you.” Keith said, bowing, and Allura smiled and inclined her head again before stepping away, their cub fussing in her arms as she swept down the corridor.

Shiro did whine, then, unable to hold it back.

“It’s all right, darling.” Keith murmured, nuzzling his neck and wrapping him in a tight embrace. Shiro shuddered and ducked his head, nosing into Keith’s hair and whining again. “Do you want me to go and bring him back now?”

Shiro stilled. Keith drew back to meet his eyes, framing his face with both hands. “If you aren’t ready to let him out of your sight, that’s fine, Shiro.” Keith promised, stroking his face. “I’ll go and bring him back to you and Allura can look after him some other time.”

Shiro’s heart beat a little harder in his chest, but he shook his head - if not without some reluctance. He did want his son back in his arms, but he trusted his Empress and he believed Sirikan would be fine - it was just . . . hard to make his heart and his deepest instincts believe it, too. “No.” Shiro said finally, his voice a little thick. “He’ll be all right. So I’ll be all right.” he added before Keith could point out that wasn’t the concern.

“As you wish, mate.” Keith murmured, kissing him gently. “Then let’s clean up a little and go to bed while the Empress looks after our cubling.”

Despite his instinctive unease, Shiro had to smile, amused, at that. Delegating the care of their child to the Empress as though she were a subordinate?

“All will be well.” Keith promised, nuzzling Shiro’s face and drawing him back fully into their rooms, the door closing.

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“Ah, little darling.” Allura murmured as Sirikan curled up a little tighter, pressing his nose to her chest. He was still sleeping, though it had taken her a good forty doboshes, three songs, and had earned her a few sharp pulls on her hair and several tender fingers from tiny fangs. “You should not be so hard on your parents, cubling.” she said wryly, thinking of how worn they had looked.

It was unusual to see Shiro looking so exhausted unless he had been on an extended mission, and even then, he was a strong creature and didn’t fade easily. Allura looked down at the cub in her arms. Then again, Shiro had been through quite a lot of strain.

She headed towards the council chamber - they had been supposed to begin ten doboshes ago, but it wasn’t as though they wouldn’t wait for her, and she had wanted to be sure the cub was securely asleep first.
Allura wondered idly which of his parents Sirikan would come to resemble more, as he grew older. They were both strong and attractive males, in their different ways, their child would no doubt be the same.

Keith’s striking eyes had clearly bred true, surprisingly, and the cub’s features were delicate and narrow, like his sire’s, but he was still far, far too young for that to be certain. “Your paws, though . . . those are definitely more like your Papa’s.” she told the sleeping cub softly, looking at his oversized, yet still small hands and feet.

He was so tiny, truly. All of him. Allura shouldn’t have been surprised - even allowing for the human blood he carried, Keith was incredibly petite; she simply hadn’t expected his child to be so small. Shiro was certainly not, broadly built and powerful.

Allura swept into the council room and her place in the small throne at the head of the oval table. Coran appeared at her elbow, and Allura met his eyes, nodding. Coran hid a smile as he leaned forwards just enough to peek down at the cub she held - he loved little ones, though sometimes they made him melancholy in remembrance of his lost family - before moving away again.

“Allura said shortly, settled into her throne and surveying her councillors with an idly patient eye. “Begin,” she qualified a moment later, two of them falling instantly silent, “with why we are losing troops in System Z-9-Y.”

Several nervous looks were passed around, and Allura pressed down a growl and focused on the cub she held, cooing to him as he stirred. Torvok offered a rather clean and far too short report, and she pinned him with a harsh gaze. That was also not his sector.

“Viranik.” Allura said sharply. “Explain.”

Obediently, she began to do so, only for one of the other generals to interrupt. She raised her voice, and another councillor cut in, even louder. Sirikan whimpered and stirred, pressing his head harder against Allura’s chest. Another councillor began to shout, and Allura hissed and clicked her fingers, vibrant pink energy swirling around her hand.

Silence fell, instantly.

“Allura said sharply, cradling Sirikan a little higher in her crooked left arm. “If you upset my commanders’ cub, my little charge . . .” she trailed off pointedly.

Further arguments rose no higher than a low conversational tone, and Allura settled back, satisfied, stroking the cub’s face and rocking him from time to time as she listened and dispensed orders and requests for more information.

“What was that about Arus?” Allura questioned, searching out the source of the almost whispery voice. It was Tennek, of course it was. She nodded at him, and he leaned forward a bit as he began to speak, still in the same whisper-soft tone as he always did.

Allura frowned, displeased, but not with him. Arus had been something of a thorn. It was best to work around it for now rather than throw soldiers at it repeatedly; and better for the morale of her army, and their pride and loyalty as a united force.

Eventually Arus would be choked off and she could make inroads against it, when there was no support to be had from any quarter, and no escape. And she had no other fronts nearby to provide further concerns and distractions.
Of course, not all of Allura’s councillors were happy with this plan. It set her teeth on edge when Torvok began to protest, though it was not a surprise.

“Tolvok I have heard your complaints and I dismiss them now as I always have before. You may be silent on this matter in future unless you have something new and useful to contribute.” Allura snapped, and Torvok puffed himself up like a bag of’gor in mating season. She sighed, controlling herself as he continued protesting, two of the others goading him on - one with agreements and emphatic gestures, the other by arguing.

Sirikan cried a little in his sleep.

“If you wake him, Torvok,” Allura said, her voice cool and calm; after she had spent almost a varga coaxing the poor cubling to sleep at last, “at my next diplomatic occasion, you shall be the . . . entertainment.”

Torvok’s ears trembled and he pressed himself back in his seat, half-raising one hand towards his mouth as though he would stifle himself that way. He was not the only one around the table to look suddenly terrified - all of them remembered what had become of the last soldier to so displease her and be brought to provide her evening’s entertainment at such an event.

“Now, what were you saying about the Taujeerians?” Allura asked Lekoran, turning her gaze towards him and curling one hand against Sirikan’s chest, feeling his tiny heart fluttering. So delicate.

Allura listened to the report, but she looked down at the cubling sleeping so trustingly in her arms, and had to suppress a smile. She thought of his parents, allowing her to care for him, and felt a flash of fondness for the mated pair from her favoured elite.

Shiro might have behaved as though he felt it were an order she had given, to give up his cub to her arms, but he would have resisted - protested - if he did not trust her with his child. Even more so than he would protest against what he felt were unwise or unneeded orders in any other instance. Keith very well might have simply snatched him away. Keith was not good at restraining his impulses, and had snarled in Allura’s face more than once in the past when he disagreed with her.

Not often, and when he was wrong he took her temper without quailing, but Keith showed no fear of her. Indeed, he showed little fear of anything. Allura thought with pleasure. He was a very fine asset for her elite.

They both were, and someday - very far from now - their son was very likely to be as well. Allura smiled slightly at him, tracing his sharp jaw. Not for a long while, though.

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Though they were comfortably ensconced in their bed, Shiro breathed uneasily, shifting under the blankets. Keith waited quietly at his back.

“Do you really think it’ll be all right?” Shiro asked softly, the fingers of his cybernetic hand curling inwards near his breastbone.

Keith sighed sleepily and nuzzled the nape of Shiro’s neck. “Of course, darling.” he soothed his mate, wrapping one arm around him, hand smoothing over his belly. “Allura would rend the entire population of this ship to shreds, aside from our team, before she let anything happen to our cubling.”

He purred soothingly.

Shiro sighed, snuggling into Keith’s arms. “That’s true. . . Our Empress is quite protective. . . And vicious.”
Keith hummed approvingly.

“It’s really no wonder the two of you get on so well,” Shiro said, with an amused lilt, and Keith smiled against his neck, “you can be so very alike sometimes. You’ve rent the entire population of a battleship to shreds before. Unarmed.”

Keith growled at the memory, setting his teeth against Shiro’s neck. Shiro purred comfortingly, and let out a soft, high-pitched mewl that tugged at Keith’s instincts. He sighed and licked affectionately at Shiro’s shoulder and neck instead. “I would do it again in a heartbeat, mate.” he promised softly.

“I know.” Shiro said, twisting enough to nuzzle Keith’s face, his bright eyes soft. “I love you, too.” he returned gently.

Keith smiled and kissed him. For his beloved mate, Keith would do much worse than shred half a battleship and every living inhabitant aboard with his bare hands and claws. For their son, Keith would be at least as fierce.

Shiro turned again, settling with his back against Keith. He nuzzled his mate’s ear, stroking his belly, and Shiro purred softly, relaxing under the caresses as Keith gave a subvocal rumble of his own, rubbing his cheek against Shiro affectionately.

Keith dozed lightly, but kept himself awake enough to keep track of his mate’s breathing and mild tension. After a while he pulled himself back to wakefulness, yawning widely.

“Darling,” Keith nudged his nose against Shiro’s ear, “rest. Sirikan is fine with his Auntie A,” his lips twitched; Allura had called herself that shortly after their cub’s birth, crooning over him cradled safely between their bodies, “and she is right - we have had little time to rest since he was born,” he nuzzled Shiro’s throat, “and it wasn’t the most restful before that.” he pointed out wryly.

“You can talk.” Shiro grumbled, but he nudged into Keith’s arms gently, giving a happy hum when Keith tightened his embrace.

“I can.” Keith said, dry. “I was here with you.” He nipped gently at Shiro’s ear. “Rest, mate.” He purred coaxingly.

Shiro heaved a sigh, shifting restlessly, and finally let himself truly fall into sleep as Keith continued purring, stroking him lightly. Keith nuzzled against the back of his neck, curled himself around his mate’s broader body, and once Shiro had been settled in sleep for many heartbeats, Keith bowed his head to rest his brow against Shiro’s nape, and slept.