Lotor finds himself on the castle ship and in need of a team, but Shiro has something in mind for him.
Chapter 1

The Dynamics of Leadership

Chapter 1

Standing back, out of the way, Lotor watches with disdain as the Paladins, with the exception of Allura, practically fall over themselves vying for their leader's attention. Being Galra, Lotor knows a leader establishes his position through complete dominance. It is expected that Galra leaders inhabit and control every aspect, and see to the needs of, the 5 to 10 lives of their immediate subordinates, male and female alike, including their mating habits. In fact, they are considered responsible for the complete well being of all that fall under their command.

The practice has long been in existence and has proven to be quite effective in establishing a strong bond between members of each command. He sees that same devotion here, displayed by the paladins towards their leader, their Shiro, but other than the princess, they are nothing more than children and to the Galra, even the idea of engaging in sexual activity with a mere child is abhorrent.

His lips curl into a sneer as he watches the one called Pidge lean in, anxious to show Shiro her latest achievement on the small screen in her hand. Shiro places a hand on her back, his human hand, always his human hand, and peers intently at the device. He offers a small smile of encouragement and speaks to her quietly, no doubt offering words of praise, further solidifying his hold over the girl.

As Pidge all but skips away, Shiro moves next to the princess. They talk quietly, their expressions and body language giving no indication of what they are discussing. For all Lotor knows it could be anything from requests for the next meal break to battle planning. But in his head he imagines them making plans for her to go to his bed later. As his de facto second in command of Voltron, Allura would naturally spend the most time of all the paladins there. Lotor finds the idea of Shiro bedding her less distasteful, only because she is well beyond the age of sexual maturity. Even so, the thought of them together does not appeal to him and he makes a point of not examining why.

Lotor retreats back to his room, completely unaware of the gray eyes that follow until he is out of sight. He needs to think. Lotor knows he needs Voltron, which means he needs Shiro and the other paladins. But he is not sure he can stomach the thought of having to engage in any sexual activity, to solidify his position of power, with the children who pilot the green, yellow and red lions is simply nauseating.

As it would be his duty, he is fairly certain he would be able to service the princess, but when his thoughts turn to Shiro, with his distinctive features, he is taken by surprise by the intense pulse of want that runs through his lower body. He turns the idea of leading this group over in his head. He would be required to care for and meet the needs, including the sexual ones, of the entire team and so he is forced to reject that plan.

Shiro may be able to do it, but the human is also not Galra despite the advanced tech of his artificial arm and so Lotor has to assume that the concept of age and consent do not bother the black paladin. The thought leaves Lotor feeling uneasy and so he heads to a training room to clear his head. The possibility that the leadership dynamics amongst other species may vary from those of the Galra does not even occur to him.

As he trains, he reflects upon his former Generals and the dynamic that he tried to establish among them. Shunning the traditional leadership role, Lotor had attempted to allow the individuals under his command a level of autonomy not typically found among the Galra. Even going so far as to allow his
team the freedom to chose their own sexual partners, be it within their own team or on any number of the planets they visited. For a while it seemed to work and he reveled in the loyalty of his Generals, proud of the cohesive and yet independent team he commanded.

That is what made their betrayal that much harder to accept. But now he knows better. Understands why the tenets of leadership must be strictly adhered too. He will not make the same mistake twice. But if leadership is out of the question, can he allow himself to be lead?

At his core, the notion of subjecting his will to another causes a distinct level of discomfort, but at the same time, there is something intriguing about the idea of being under the black paladins complete control. Lotor frowns at the images that come unbidden to his mind. Foreign and aberrant as they are, he is more uncomfortable with the heat that ignites in his belly as a result.

With a frustrated growl, Lotor throws down the staff he had been training with. If he hadn’t been so arrogant, had not deviated from Galra directive, he wouldn’t be in this situation. He would still have his command, still lead his generals and most importantly in this moment, he wouldn’t be distracted by his baser needs.

Lotor knows better now. Knows that the Galra leadership dynamic is the only way to successfully lead. And if he cannot stomach leading these children, then he will have to submit himself to Shiro’s control.

He leaves the training room in a huff, completely unaware of the gray eyes that watch from the surveillance cameras within the heart of the castle ship. Lotor does not know of the way Shiro scrubs the hand of his artificial arm across his mouth or the way his flesh and blood hand trembles when he reaches up and turns the monitor off.
This is the eighth night in a row that Lotor lingers outside Shiro’s room. He lurks in the dark, waiting to see who comes to the black paladins quarters at night. So far no one has come and that leaves the Galra Prince confused and even though he doesn’t dare admit it, also a little relieved.

Lotor has been watching Shiro closely, trying to find a way to insinuate his way on to the team. He briefly toyed with the idea of discrediting one of the other paladins in hope of taking their place, but that idea was quickly discarded. The paladins are far too loyal to their leader for any attempt to be believable.

By now, Lotor has learned Shiro’s schedule. The man is unfailingly consistent, bordering on predictable, edging towards boring. Every morning he rises before the rest of the paladins and trains on his own. He then eats breakfast as the others begin to make their way into the communal dining area. While the paladins eat, Shiro excuses himself until they are done and ready for their team meeting.

Lotor has begun to attend these meetings, hoping to start securing his place amongst them, even though he rarely contributes unless Shiro specifically addresses him. Here they discuss tactics, upcoming missions, the status of the castle ship and any thing else of import. Afterwards, Shiro leads the paladins in group training. Sometimes they practice hand to hand combat, sometimes they fight with weapons, other times they practice piloting their respective lions.

After training they break for the mid day meal. Again eating in the dining room. Lotor eats with them, but always keeps to himself, never engaging in conversation. Not even when he can feel one of them looking at him. He barely even looks up, assuming that he will simply be greeted by a look of disgust or distrust, often both. And even though it has been getting better, specifically with Pidge and Hunk, who seem more accepting than the others, it is still not ideal, but Lotor is patient, knowing the time he invests now, will pay off later.

When the meal is over, the team meets again to discuss their impressions of their training session and for Shiro to critique their performance. At the end, he always singles out one of the paladins for additional one on one training that will go until the evening meal. When Shiro is done eating, he spends more time training on his own. Occasionally, he cuts it short, to spend some time engaging in some banal activity with the rest of his team, such as watching them play games.

In all, Shiro’s behavior is rigid and disciplined and very much what Lotor expects out of a good leader.

A soft rustle of fabric alerts Lotor to someone’s approach. His sensitive hearing tells him that this is not one of the other paladins by the way this person moves. He retreats further, ducking around a corner and into the shadows, grateful that he still has on his dark armor.

There is a knock on Shiro’s door and it is opened a moment later.

“Keith!” Lotor can hear the pleased tone in Shiro’s voice just before the door closes again.
Lotor walks into the team meeting after a restless night and immediately frowns when he sees Shiro leaning down behind Keith, with his chest almost touching the smaller man’s back, as they both look over something on the screen in front of them. The prince supposes he should be pleased that Shiro is such a strong leader that he still garners loyalty from those who are no longer on his team, but all he can think about is what must have been going on behind closed doors last night. And seeing them here now, in such close proximity, it bothers him and he cannot quite put his finger on why.

Lotor has himself convinced to skip the meeting and turns back towards the door when he is stopped by someone calling his name.

“Lotor, good, you’re here,” Shiro says, voice as calm as ever.

The prince’s shoulders rise up closer to his ears in shame at getting caught retreating, but if Shiro notices he says nothing.

He straightens and continues, “while we’re out training, I want you to spend some time with Keith. He brought us some good intel and it would be good to have your insight on it.”

Lotor’s eyes flick to the former paladin who wears a look of utter disdain on his face, but nods his head none the less.

“Keith, I want you and Lotor to work together for the next couple of days. Before you have to go back, we can review everything as a group.”

The younger man’s brow creases and the corners of his mouth turn down in displeasure.

No doubt Shiro notices, “After lunch each day we can get in some one on one training. I’d like to see what you have learned during your time with the Blade.”

That seems to appease the former paladin and Lotor has to admire how Shiro handled the situation, further cementing his leadership role. He is startled out of his thoughts when he hears his name once again.

“And Lotor,” Shiro pauses until he is sure he has the complete attention of the prince, “you know my schedule,” there is a slight upturn at the corner of the black paladins mouth that on anyone else, Lotor would swear was a smirk, “find me after the evening meal.”
Lotor stands outside the training room, hand outstretched to open the door, but not quite able to bring himself to grasp the handle. His time working with the former red paladin went well even if it did start out a little rocky. It had served as a good distraction, but as soon as they were done, Lotor’s mind turned immediately to Shiros’ request to meet with him.

He spent the rest of the day trying to figure out just what Shiro wanted to see him for. Knowing that the black paladin would be in the training room, Lotor opted to wear his full armor, finally deciding that Shiro must want to train. Reaching the rest of the way out, he grasps the door handle and pushes it open.

The scene before him is not what he expected. Shiro lays on the floor on his back with his lower body twisting at his spine as he stretches. The human does not react other than to bring his knees to center and twist to the opposite side.

Lotor takes a moment to watch Shiro, taking in the lack of armor on the man’s body. In fact he is clothed only in the tight under suit that is usually worn underneath. Even his feet are bare.

Clearing his throat Lotor says, “you wanted to see me?”

Without looking towards him, Shiro rolls up to a sitting position before coming to his feet. Finally, he looks at the galra prince. “Yes.” He closes the distance between them until he is standing only a foot or two away. “Did you come here with the intention of sparing?” he questions as he looks at Lotors armor.

“I do not know why I am here, but I would advise against sparing.”

Shiro inches just a little closer, “why would you say that?”

Giving an appraising look Lotor answers, “you are human for one and also not wearing any armor.”

“Hmmmm…” Shiro hums noncommittally. “I don’t think you need to worry about that,” he adds as he spins and kicks Lotor directly in the chest, causing him to fly backwards where his back impacts against the wall. Shiro knows the display of dominance was not strictly necessary, but he wanted to see Lotor's reaction and he is not disappointed.

Lotor is on his feet in an instant, hands raised defensively in front of him.

“What is it that you’re trying to accomplish Lotor?”

The galra just looks at him, as he starts to edge away from the wall and circle behind Shiro.

The paladin turns his head to watch as Lotor moves behind him, but does not move. He has no fear of having the prince at his back. When Lotor stops moving again, Shiro steps over to the weapons rack and picks up two staffs. One he tosses to Lotor, who catches it deftly. The other he grips and begins to flow through the series of moves and positions that make up his regular training routine.

Lotor stands, alternating between looking at Shiro and the staff in his own hand.
“How long did you debate on whether to take over or join my team?” Shiro asks conversationally as he continues to move. “Or are you still undecided?”

“I beg your pardon.”

“What’s stopping you from challenging me? You said yourself, I’m just a human. And I don’t see you as much of a team player.”

Hefting the staff, Lotor feels the weight and balance of the weapon in his hand before beginning to twirl it experimentally. “I will not lead children. I would be unable to fulfill all my duties as their leader.”

Shiro stops moving and looks directly at the galra prince, genuinely curious. “Which duties?”

“I understand that it may be different for humans, but galra do not mate with children.”

The paladin has to work to keep from reacting outwardly, the very idea disgusting him. “Humans don’t do that either, why would you even think that?” And then he remembers.

Shiro purposely tries not to think about his time with the galra, not to dwell on what was done to him. But this, this he knows, this he remembers.

“I am not galra. I do not lead my team that way.”

Lotor ignores the sense of relief that he feels until he thinks about his meeting earlier in the day, “what about Keith?”

Blinking in confusion Shiro asks to clarify, “what about Keith?”

“Did you…..do you…..” the prince trails off as he recalls the pleased way Shiro greeted Keith the night before at his quarters.

The way Lotor stumbles over his words and his own observations over the past couple of weeks solidify a decision that Shiro had been struggling with for some time, and he is glad that he followed his instincts in asking Lotor to meet with him.

“Pay attention Lotor, first of all, I do not sleep with any of my team, not even Keith. Second, you will not be on my team. Third, you will not challenge me for leadership. The paladins will not follow you and we both know you need Voltron.”

“Then what am I to do?” Lotor snaps, jerking his arms out to his side, the staff gripped tightly in his right hand.

Shiro approaches the prince, his own staff held at the ready. Lotor sees this and brings his own in front of his body, ready to defend against an incoming blow, braced but unwilling to flinch back. Stopping only inches away from Lotor, Shiro looks him directly in the eyes. “You could be so much more. At my side.”

He takes a step back and brings his staff forward, going back to his training routine. After several minutes of silence, Shiro glances over at Lotor who is standing as if frozen, the confusion clear on his face. The paladin tilts his head towards the staff the galra still holds, “join me.”
Chapter 4

Lotor watches Shiro as he moves his body through a few more sequences. He has to admit that there is a certain gracefulness in the paladins movements, something that the galra are not known for. He is so focused he is barely able to bring his staff up to block the blow Shiro has aimed at his head.

“Pay attention,” the paladin chides as he lowers his own staff and resumes his movements.

Lotor positions his feet and begins to mimic Shiro’s moves. He finds he quite likes the feeling, even if part of him desires something a little more strenuous. But he waits, biding his time and when he thinks the moment is right as Shiro stands with his back towards him, Lotor strikes, bringing his staff around to impact against Shiro’s ribs. At least that is what he intended.

Instead of striking the paladin’s exposed flesh, he makes contact with Shiro’s staff. To his surprise Shiro does not seem to be angry at the attack and instead seems to be attempting to supress a smile. That still doesn’t stop him from dropping his weapon and charging Lotor, grabbing him around the waist and slamming him into the ground.

Lotor quickly becomes very aware of the proximity of their bodies as Shiro pins him down. Bucking up, the prince twists until he has the paladin underneath him, one knee placed squarely between Shiro’s thighs.

“Very good Lotor, but you forget one thing,” Shiro grins up from the ground.

Lotor only has enough time to raise a questioning eyebrow before he registers the glow that emanates from the former Champions tech arm, just before he is hit hard enough in the chest to topple him off. He lays on the ground blinking up at the ceiling for a moment, grateful that he is wearing his armor.

Shiro rises to his feet and looks down on the prince. He does not offer to help him up. “This,” he gestures at Lotor’s prone form, “is not at my side.” Turning, he walks to the door and opens it, making Lotor lift his head to watch him, “tomorrow, same time. Do not wear your armor.”

Shiro exits the training room without looking back. Lotor is standing in front of the weapons rack, looking over each piece of equipment with his back towards the prince. He is once again barefoot, but this time he is also shirtless and Lotor can see every scar, every bit of damage he suffered while fighting in the arena. He can see the ring of scar tissue where his flesh meets with his tech arm. It is unsettling,

This time when Lotor opens the door, Shiro is standing in front of the weapons rack, looking over each piece of equipment with his back towards the prince. He is once again barefoot, but this time he is also shirtless and Lotor can see every scar, every bit of damage he suffered while fighting in the arena. He can see the ring of scar tissue where his flesh meets with his tech arm. It is unsettling,
disturbing, and a reminder that although Shiro is human, he is so much more than that. The muscles across his back ripple as he reaches out and takes a sword off the rack, admiring the blade, running his tech hand along the sharpened edge.

Lotor closes the door behind himself and waits, knowing he has misstepped by wearing his armor again, despite Shiro’s instructions. The prince expects anger and a fight when Shiro turns around to face him, but instead he see’s a flash of disappointment on the paladins face.

The human drops the sword on the ground and strides forward. Lotor is completely mesmerized as he looks over the scars on the other mans chest, so much worse than those across his back. He is so distracted that he does not have time to react when Shiro reaches up and grabs him around the throat with his tech hand. His head impacts with the wall and he stares wild eyed at the black paladin as he feels his airway constricting.

“This is not at my side,” Shiro growls as he releases Lotor and stalks out the door, slamming it closed.

Lotor blinks in surprise as he reaches up and rubs at his neck. He suspects there may be bruising and is thankful that his suit has a high collar. Walking over to the rack, he picks up the sword from the ground and places it back in its designated slot before taking one of the staffs from the day before.

He begins to move through the motions Shiro showed him the day prior, but it doesn’t feel right and so he stops long enough to discard his armor before beginning again.

Shiro watches intently as Lotor moves on the screen in front of him. Revealing his scars to the galra had been a calculated risk and he was disappointed to see the prince in his own armor again, but seeing him now, Shiro knows there is still hope. He reaches forward and turns off the monitor before heading back to his room.
Chapter 5

Lotor comes to the training room with out his armor as he failed to do the previous day. He is confused when he opens the door only to find the room empty. Knowing Shiro will stick to his schedule and should be there any minute, Lotor decides to grab a staff and start warming up.

He moves and shifts his body until his muscles are warm and loose. Shiro still has not shown up and so Lotor starts working through the training routine. He repeats the moves over and over again until he finally admits to himself that the black paladin is not coming.

Early the next morning, Lotor pulls open the door to the training room where he finds Shiro doing sit ups. He is wearing only a loose fitting pair of knee length shorts that have slid down his thighs and a pair of athletic shoes. His exposed skin is wet with sweat. When he raises up at the waist, Lotor is almost certain the paladin smiles, but on his next one, his expression is once again blank.


Shiro doesn’t respond, he just continues with his sit ups.

“You heard me, right?” Lotor asks.

“Yes.”

It is so very hard for Shiro to hold back the laugh that wants to escape as he watches Lotor become more and more frustrated.

“No armor Shiro. And be on time,” Lotor snaps at the paladin before stomping out the door.

As soon as it closes, Shiro lets out the laugh that he has been holding back. His laughter dies down, but the smile remains. He’ll be sure to be on time tonight.

They fall into a pattern, training everyday. It is challenging for Lotor, the paladin is wildly unpredictable and he finds that the only way to hold his own against the former Champion is to be just as unpredictable. Training, often quickly turns into sparring as they keep trying to best the other by surprising them. A hit or kick that is unexpected, a hidden weapon, a new move, the men use everything at their disposal and they both love it. And if either of them happen to become aroused, well they both just choose to ignore it.

“Stop holding back,” Shiro tells Lotor for what must be the 100th time. His voice is steady, calm, but Lotor knows Shiro is not happy.

“I’m not,” he argues.

Shiro punches Lotor in the stomach and follows up with a kick to the chest that leaves Lotor on the
“Stop holding back!” Shiro commands as he glares down at the galra sprawled on his back before him.

“This,” he gestures to Lotor, “is not by my side.”

From his spot on the floor, Lotor watches Shiro leave. He doesn’t get up immediately and instead lays there contemplating how he can show the paladin that he has no intention of holding back any longer.

The next day Lotor shows up and removes his shirt and boots leaving him in only a pair of tight breeches. He waits for Shiro to make the first move, hoping to retain some control during this training session. But the former Champion is a patient man and they make it through the entire routine with the staffs without either man attacking the other.

It is as Shiro is replacing them on the rack that Lotor approaches and runs a hand over the most prominent scar on the paladins back. The 2 inch wide swath of skin is shiny and gnarled and runs in a diagonal path from left shoulder to right hip.

He can see the involuntary shiver that travels through Shiro’s body at his touch. Lotor presses his chest to the paladin’s back and snakes a hand around to the humans stomach, where he can feel the mans muscles contract beneath his fingers. He trails his hand up until he is able to grab Shiro forcefully around the neck. He lifts just enough so that he has to stand on his toes to be able to breath.

“This is me not holding back.”

Lotor isn’t sure what reaction he was expecting, but it certainly is not for Shiro to relax into his grip. On reflex he lets go and Shiro falls to his knees, sucking in air.

“Perfect,” he gasps. “Tomorrow, full armor.”
Fighting Shiro in full armor feels different after all their time training without it. And this is a fight, not training or even sparring. They fight and the prince has no doubt that if he does not fight back, Shiro will continue his assault until he is forced too.

Lotor doesn’t have a lot of opportunity to think about it though, as Shiro moves to attack yet again. Even with the armor, Lotor is sure he will have bruises from the sheer ferocity of the paladins blows. The prince blocks a series of strikes in quick succession before swinging his fist out and is surprised to make contact with Shiro’s jaw.

The human staggers back a few steps, hand coming up to his face as he shifts his jaw around. And then he smiles. His stance relaxes and Lotor is fairly sure their session is over for another day, which is confirmed when Shiro heads for the door.

“Until tomorrow, Lotor,” Shiro calls over his shoulder as he exits the room.

The prince watches him go, ‘until tomorrow, Lotor’ He replays over and over in his head. He can’t quite figure out what it is about those 3 words that made his stomach clench pleasantly.

They continue to train and spar and fight everyday. And everyday Lotor attends the team meetings. Shiro often asks for his input on tactics, which he readily gives, despite the continued feeling of distrust he still senses from some of the others on board the castle ship.

On those occasions when Keith comes with any intelligence, Lotor works closely with him to analyze it. He finds he actually doesn’t mind working with the former paladin. In fact, working with Keith is one of the few things he actually almost likes about his current situation. One of the other key ones, being the human with the white tuft of hair, gray eyes and mass of scars.

Even as he thinks it, Lotor looks up from the table where he sits across from Keith, in time to see Shiro enter the room. Shiro leans down over Lotors back to look at the papers spread out across the table. For just a moment Lotor expects an attack, knowing that Shiro likes to catch him off guard and he can feel the huff of the humans breath on the side of his face when the paladin notices the way he tenses.

No attack comes though. They talk and plan and when they are done, Keith joins them for the mid day meal before training with Shiro one on one.

When Lotor opens the door to the training room that night, he is surprised to find Keith in his full Blade armor, there along with Shiro, who is dressed in a set of casual clothes. The prince knows Shiro likes to keep him off balance, and assumes this is just another way for that to happen.

He shuts the door and stands, hands at his side, refusing to show any of the anxiety he feels. Lotor knows he doesn’t imagine the small smile on Shiro’s face as he nods to Keith. The former paladin wastes no time and immediately lunges for Lotor, knife in hand.

Fighting against the smaller man is different than when he fights Shiro. Keith is wiry and his strikes
are faster, less controlled. It takes Lotor awhile to adjust to the change and finds himself knocked on his back, kicked in the face, or punched in the gut several times as a result.

There is a shift though as Lotor gets better at anticipating Keith’s moves. He is able to block the next flurry of strikes. The prince glances over at Shiro just long enough to see the small smile on the human’s lips. That momentary distraction is all it takes for Keith to gain the upper hand. A hard kick to the ribs knocks Lotor off balance and then Keith is on the galra’s back with his knife at his throat.

“Thank you Keith,” Shiro states calmly from where he stands. The former paladin backs away and looks to Shiro. “You can go. Be ready to review the intel you and Lotor have been working on, tomorrow,” the black paladin instructs.

He waits until Keith has left before turning to Lotor. “Shower, then come to my room.”

Shiro turns on his heel and walks out leaving a very confused Lotor behind.

Even though Lotor would never admit it to himself, he rushes through his shower, anxious to find out why Shiro would ask the prince to come to his room. He dresses, pulls his hair back and walks to Shiro’s room. Even though he neither see’s nor hears anyone else, he still moves as quietly as he is able so no one will notice him going to the black paladins room.

Before he can tap on the door, Shiro has already opened it and beckoned him inside. Lotor looks quickly at the paladin, who is wearing a pair of loose fitting black sleep pants and nothing else before looking around. The room is fairly spacious, twice as large as the one Lotor stays in.

Dominating the room is a large bed against the far wall, much larger than one man needs. There is a single chair with a small table beside it. It is here that Shiro nods to, indicating that his guest should sit.

Lotor isn’t sure what is going on. He feels off balance and out of sorts. He often feels this way around Shiro. The human is constantly changing things, the way they train, the weapons they use, the amount of armor they wear, even bringing Keith in. Shiro’s fighting style changes, sometimes minute to minute, without rhyme or reason, he is unpredictable and fierce, getting Lotor on the defense and forcing him to retreat or react without thinking. The prince knows it is this that made him such a strong Champion in the arena.

And now, as Shiro looks at him expectantly, eyes flicking over to the chair. Lotor decides that this time will be different as he recalls the one time he truly felt in control of the situation. He remembers the sensation as he felt Shiro react to his touch and relax into the hand gripped around his throat. He walks across the room, past Shiro and sits on the bed, with his back against the plain wood that makes up the headboard. He lifts one foot and then the other, removing his boots and carefully sets them on the floor.

There is a brief flash of surprise across Shiro’s features before the sides of him mouth, curve slightly upwards. The human sits on the opposite side from Lotor and moves around until he is laying on his back with his head at the foot of the bed. He has his hands under his head as he stares up at the ceiling.

“Is this another test Shiro?” Lotor asks because he understands that is what Shiro has been doing since this all began.

The paladin only hums noncommittally.
“Will you at least tell me why you are training me?”

Shiro tilts his chin down so he can better see Lotor, “to be at my side.”
“At your side… you say that as though that is where I want to be. I don’t recall ever telling you that,” Lotor challenges.

Shiro continues to look at the ceiling. His shoulders shift slightly in a shrug. “No, you didn’t,” he admits, “but I’m not wrong.”

Lotor opens his mouth to protest, but it dies on his lips when Shiro sits up and leans slightly back on his tech arm. "Am I wrong, Lotor?"

“I came here because I had no other options. You are the one that started this nonsense about being at your side. Not me.”

Shiro can hear the mounting frustration in the prince's voice. “You're right. I did.”

“Then why all the training? The tests?”

Relaxing back down on the bed, Shiro resumes looking at the ceiling. “To stand at my side we must be equals.”

“Equals!” Lotor scoffs. “We are hardly equals. I am a prince of the galra empire. It's rightful ruler and-“

“And I am its Champion! Or did you forget so quickly?”

“That hardly makes us equals!”

Lotor lurches up and pounces on Shiro, who doesn’t react when the prince pins him down to the bed with the weight of his own body.

“Does this look like equals to you Champion?” the galra snarls.

Lotor would swear Shiro sounds disappointed when he answers, “no it doesn’t.”

The human shifts his leg, hooking it around both of Lotor's, then twists his body, causing them to roll off on to the floor. They land hard with Lotor's back taking most of the impact. Immediately the prince rolls them a second time so he has Shiro trapped beneath him again. He holds Shiro's wrists to the floor on either side of his head, but the paladin does not fight back.

The prince searches the human’s eyes, before growling, “You fought in the arena because you had to. You were a novelty to them, nothing more! Otherwise they would have treated you better! You were not revered, not held in any esteem. You were a toy, to be hauled out and played with upon their whim.”

“And how is that different from you.”

“We both fought in the area, but I was there by choice, that does not make us equal!”
Lotor is almost shouting by now, features twisted into an ugly snarl. His body is coiled tight waiting for the attack he knows is coming. He is not expecting the same disappointed sigh as before, from the man below him.

“No, it does not. Maybe you need to think about why you’re here.”

There is only a moment for Lotor to feel confusion creeping up on him, before Shiro grinds his hips up, causing his confusion to increase when he can feel the hard outline of the paladins erection beneath his sleep pants.

Releasing Shiro’s hands, Lotor jumps off and skitters several feet away. This has happened before, to one or both of them as they spar, but this time feels different, personal, intimate, purposeful.

Shiro climbs to his feet, making no effort to hide the obvious tenting of his pants. This time there is no mistaking the disappointment, “get out Lotor.”

The prince turns on his heel and exits the room without another word, leaving the black paladin standing, hands on hips, staring at the door at it closes.

Lotor retreats to his own room and begins pacing the floor mumbling to himself.

“Equals……yes we both fought in the arena…. That means nothing…. Needed to prove myself…. To gain the respect I deserved……” he pauses and thinks that over for just a moment before shaking his head and resuming his pacing. “And he’s here on this ship, crusading around, thinking he can save the universe if only he could stop the galra from conquering more people…."

He doesn’t want to examine his own reasoning for being on the castle ship. Flopping down on the bed, he lets his thoughts wander, thinking back on the weeks of training they have done. He thinks about how Shiro valued his opinion in the team meetings, the way he trusted him to work with Keith analyzing information from the Blade. He lays there and thinks about it all, going over and over it in his mind. Until he can only come to one inevitable conclusion. Both men are right, they are not equals.
Chapter 8

Chapter Notes

We're edging into NSFW territory here. Tags have been updated accordingly.

Chapter 8

Shiro opens the door to the training room, trying and failing to keep his mind solely focused on his morning training. Kicking Lotor out of his room the night before had been difficult, especially after he was certain they had been making progress. He lets the door swing closed behind him and turns to lock it to ensure his privacy.

The paladin only has a moment to register surprise as he is grabbed and shoved forcefully, face first against the cold metal.

“Don’t fight. Takashi,” Lotor growls in his ear. And just hearing his given name spoken in that tone almost makes him want to obey. But that is not his way. Even though he thrills at the feeling of the galra prince’s body pressed up against his, that is not how he wants this to work between them.

As so he rears his head back and smashes into the prince’s face, splitting open the skin just above his right eye. As soon as Lotor releases him, Shiro spins ready to strike, but he stops, eyes riveted on the trail of blood that trickles down the side of Lotor’s face.

That short delay is enough for the prince to swing his fist out and make contact with the paladin’s jaw. The blow snaps his head around and when he turns back to look directly into Lotor’s eyes, he has a grin on his face that makes the galra take an involuntary step back.

In that moment, when neither one of them moves, Lotor knows something has changed. He can feel it in the electric charge in the air around them. Shiro lunges forward and pulls the prince in to crash their lips together. He plunges his hands into the galra’s lush hair, grabbing fistfuls as he devours Lotor’s mouth.

The prince works his fingers into the short hair at the nape of Shiro’s neck. It is almost too short, but there is just enough for him to yank the paladin’s head back and to the side. Lotor leans in and bites down on Shiro’s exposed neck, causing the human to groan when he feels the prick of Lotor’s canines into his vulnerable flesh. The prince can’t tell if the sound is from pleasure or pain and right now, with the way Shiro is looking at him when he pulls back, he doesn’t really care.

This time it is Lotor who initiates the kiss, pressing Shiro back against the door. The paladin runs his tech arm down Lotor’s side and works his hand under the simple black tunic the prince is wearing until he is touching bare skin. He takes a moment to caress the hard planes of Lotor’s abs before activating his tech arm and sending a shock of energy directly into the galra’s stomach muscles.
Lotor flinches at the sudden pain, but recovers quickly and there is only a slight pause before he resumes kissing the paladin.

“Is that all you got?” Lotor murmurs against Shiro’s lips before flicking his tongue out and coaxing the paladin’s mouth open again.

“My room. Now,” Shiro commands when he finally has to pull away to breathe.

For a brief moment, Lotor considers refusing, but he is enjoying this too much for it to end. His lips pull back in a smile, making sure his canines show and he doesn’t miss the small shiver that runs through Shiro’s body. He steps back and jerks his head in a nod, eyes darting to the door behind the paladin’s head.

It is early and even though Shiro is certain none of the other paladins would be awake at this hour, he is still cautious as he leads the prince to his room. As soon as they are safely behind the locked door of Shiro’s quarters, the paladin grabs Lotor and pulls him into a forceful kiss. When he feels Lotor’s body relax against his own, he grips the prince by the arm, spins him around and shoves him face down onto the bed. Before Lotor can react, Shiro is on his back, the lines of his body pressed closely to the galra’s.

“Is this what you wanted?” Shiro growls in his ear as he runs his tongue along the pointed ridge of the lavender flesh, before enveloping the tip in his warm mouth.

Lotor takes a moment to wonder if Shiro is aware of what he is doing by stimulating such an erogenous zone. He decides that the paladin is probably very aware of what he is doing. “Clearly, its what you want Takashi,” he responds as he pushes his hips up to make contact with Shiro’s groin.

Shiro jumps off the bed and watches as Lotor rolls over onto his back with a question in his eyes.

“Answer me. It this what you want?”

Sitting up, Lotor grabs the bottom edge of his tunic and pulls it over his head. Although Shiro has seen Lotor without his shirt before, this is different. There is no pretense of training, no other reason for Lotor to be pulling his clothes off while on Shiro’s bed.

“What I want, Takashi,” Shiro licks his lips and has to wonder if Lotor knows how much power that name has over him. He concludes that Lotor must know and silently commends the prince for using it to his advantage, “is to be your equal. To be by your side.”

It doesn’t need to be said that the others on the castle ship cannot know about this. They both know there isn’t a lot of time left before Shiro will have to make his appearance for breakfast and so there is an urgency to their movements as they shed their clothes.

There are limits to what they can do in the time they have and so they silently agree to forego any extensive exploration of one another’s bodies in favor of taking themselves over the edge as quickly as possible. They will make time later for more, but for now this will have to do.

Touching and being touched in return like this has both men close within minutes. It is when Lotor takes Shiro’s tech hand and guides it to his cock, replacing the flesh and blood hand the paladin was stroking him with and then unsheathes his claws and grips Shiro’s bicep hard enough to draw blood, that they both spill into the others hand.

Shiro rolls on to his back to lay beside Lotor. He looks up at the clock on the wall, “I have to go.”

“I know,” Lotor responds as he sits up and reaches for his discarded pants.
“But you don’t have to. You can stay here, for awhile,” the paladin rushes to add.

Lotor knows exactly what Shiro is doing. He doesn’t want any of the other paladins, who may be awake by now, to see Lotor leaving his room and the prince cannot blame him for that, but the human is also extending a large amount of trust in the prince, by allowing him to remain in his quarters alone.

“Then I shall. I will see you later, at the meeting, Shiro.”

A genuine smile spreads across the paladin’s features, but Lotor only has a moment to see it before Shiro grabs his clothes off the floor and goes into the rest room to clean up and dress for breakfast.
Chapter 9

Chapter Notes

We are well into NSFW territory now. Appropriate tags have been added.

Chapter 9

Shiro is standing in the training room, facing the weapons rack, when Lotor opens the door and enters. The paladin takes a deep breath and tries to clear his mind before turning around and facing the galra prince. All day, his thoughts kept turning to the few moments of pleasure they had given each other that morning.

It was distracting and made it hard to concentrate on anything else. And now Lotor is standing directly behind him, within touching distance and Shiro wants nothing more than to drag the man to his room and find out just how much pleasure they can feel when they have more time.

He reaches out and traces the fingers of his tech hand along the length of several of the weapons. He can sense Lotor standing behind him, even though he cannot see or hear him. As he pulls his hand back, he spins and swings the shortened staff he had concealed in front of his body in his flesh hand. The staff is blocked by a raised forearm, clad in armor.

Lotor thrusts his opposite hand forward, hitting Shiro squarely in the chest, knocking him off his feet. He presses his advantage, not giving the paladin a chance to recover and aims a kick to the prone man’s side. The impact is minimalized though when Shiro grabs him by the leg and rolls, bringing Lotor down on top of him.

They break apart and both spring back to their feet. Shiro crouches in a defensive stance, but Lotor knows better than to trust that. They clash again and again until they are both sweaty and breathing hard. Shiro is bent at the waist, hands on his hips as he pulls deep breaths into his burning lungs.

“Shower,” Shiro pants. He takes a moment to catch his breath before straightening and looking at Lotor. The galra’s hair is damp with sweat and strands of it stick to the side of his flushed face. Shiro is over heated in his light weight training gear and so he knows Lotor must be miserable in his heavy armor. “Let’s go,” he says as he grabs Lotor by the forearm and pulls him to the door.

They end up back in Shiro’s room and the paladin immediately pulls his shirt over his head, dropping it on the floor as he heads to the bathroom. Lotor begins to remove pieces of his armor, stacking the plates carefully on the rooms sole chair. He can hear the water turn on in the shower and hurriedly pulls off his under suit.

The sight of the paladin standing in the shower, water cascading down the muscles across his back, makes Lotor pause in the doorway. Despite, or maybe because of his extensive scarring, Shiro is absolutely stunning to look at.
Cocking his head to the side, eyes closed, Shiro listens as the prince approaches and joins him beneath the spray. Lotor presses his chest to Shiro’s back and wraps one arm around his chest and the other around his waist. Like the last time he stood this close to Shiro, Lotor can feel the tremor that runs through the paladins body and he has to wonder, just how touch starved Shiro really is for something other than combat.

Letting his hand wander down, he wraps his long fingers around Shiro’s length and strokes him roughly. The paladin braces one hand against the arm across his chest and reaches his tech hand back to grip tightly at Lotor’s hip. His head lolls back to rest against the prince’s shoulder as he squeezes Lotor’s hip rhythmically. He is close, so very close, and when Lotor unsheathes his claws and scrapes them lightly across the sensitive flesh of his testicles, his breath stutters as his head falls forwards. The added sensation of the sharp prick of teeth biting into his neck, is all it takes to send him over the edge.

They stay just like that for several moments before Shiro turns and drops to his knees. He immediately takes Lotor into his mouth. Pulling back, he feels the ridges that ring Lotor’s cock as they bump along the roof of his mouth and the top of his tongue. He can’t help but think about how those same ridges would feel gliding in and out of his body.

Lotor reaches a hand out and grips the patch of white hair of the paladins forelock and reluctantly drags the warm mouth off of his length.

“Takashi, you would kneel for me?” Even though what Shiro is doing to him is making him come undone, it feels wrong, unbalanced.

That is, until Shiro peers up at him, “as you will for me.” He leans in and licks across the head of Lotor’s length, “this, and so much more.”

They train, they spar, they fight and afterwards they spend the evenings exploring each other in ways that no other has before. During the day, in front of the other paladins, nothing changes. Lotor attends the team meetings, takes meals with them and gives his input and opinion when asked. Lotor doesn’t want to admit it to himself, but he finds the thought of his unknown relationship with Shiro to be strangely intoxicating. To know that he has a piece of the man that no one else gets to see.

He also has come to realize, at least subconsciously, what Shiro has been doing all these weeks with the training, the testing and even their moments of intimacy. The paladin has given Lotor the means with which to defeat him. And in fact, Lotor is certain he can do it in any number of ways now, but his hand is stayed by the knowledge that Shiro has the same power over him. They are truly becoming equals, except in the galra’s eyes, in one notable area. He doesn’t want to acknowledge his growing attachment to the paladin and that puts him at a distinct disadvantage.
They are grappling with each other when Lotor hooks one of his long legs behind Shiro’s knee and brings them both down. They land awkwardly with Shiro’s face entirely too close to the bulge in Lotor’s pants.

“Go on then,” Lotor encourages with a smirk, knowing that Shiro would never give in that easily.

Any real intimacy between them has always taken place in Shiro’s quarters. And he is not wrong, as Shiro climbs to his feet and exits the room without saying a word.

Lotor follows him out into the hall, “are we done then?” He asks, feigning innocence, as he gestures back to the training room when Shiro turns to look at him.

“Oh no. We’re not done. Not by a long shot.” He turns back and strides down the hall and Lotor eagerly follows behind.

Lotor swings his fist out, aimed for Shiro’s head, but the shorter man ducks beneath the arm before lunging forward and grabbing Lotor on the sides of his face, pulling him into a kiss. Lotor starts to kiss him back, but stops and pulls back when he feels the sharp point of a blade just slightly prick the skin at his neck. He grins, revealing his canines and starts to lean back in.

“No biting,” Shiro tells him, placing a hand on the galra’s chest to hold him back. “Last time Allura saw and asked me what happened.”

Gently batting Shiro’s hand away, Lotor leans in and murmurs against the paladin’s neck, “what did you tell her?”

He can feel the human tense against him, so he gently kisses Shiro’s warm skin until he starts to relax again.

“I told her I….AAHHHH….Lotor!” He cuts off when the prince nips harshly at his flesh. “What did I just say about that?”

“Not to do it.”

Shiro can almost hear the laughter in his voice.

“Are you sure its wise to send me out with Lance? He doesn’t want to hear anything I have to say and I am sure he does not like the idea of having to work with me on this mission. He has made it quite clear he does not trust me,” Lotor says as he moves beside Shiro.

“Not yet. Give it time.”
“You are their leader. You could just order him to trust me,” Lotor says as he twists to the side and pulls a dagger from beneath his chest armor. He lunges forward trying to stab Shiro in the lower back, just below his armor, but the paladin moves and Lotor finds his forearm pinned between Shiro’s bicep and side.

Bringing his leg forward, Lotor knees Shiro in the back of the upper thigh causing his weight to shift so they both fall forward. The knife clatters to the ground and both men scramble after it on hands and knees.

Shiro reaches it first but is unable to make use of it as Lotor lands across his back, pinning him flat to the ground, pressing the side of his face into the cold floor.

“He’ll get there. They all will,” Shiro says from underneath the prince.

Lotor does not release his hold. “How can you be so sure?”

“Because I want them to, but they have to come to it on their own.”

Shiro can feel Lotor’s weight shift as he starts to withdraw. “Maybe it would help if you pushed them along,” the prince suggests.

Shiro grins and tries to look farther back over his shoulder, which causes the galra to increase his hold. “Who says I haven’t been?”

“If you have, it hasn’t been very successful so far. I’m not sure your subtle little pushes work at all.”

“Don’t they? Think about it Lotor. I’m pretty sure my subtle little pushes have gotten me exactly what I want so far.”

Lotor leans down and snarls in Shiros ear, “from here it doesn’t look that way at all.”

“Are you sure about that?” Shiro asks as he jerks his head and hits Lotor square in the face causing him to roll to the side, hand clutched to his nose checking for a break.

The paladin chuckles as he turns and looks over the galra prince, “here you are. Right at my side.”

Lotor surges to his feet and heads for the door, “your room, Takashi. Now.”

Shiro nods and follows him out.
Chapter 11

Keith knocks on Shiro’s door having just arrived on the castle ship. As usual, his first stop is to see his former team leader. After several long moments with no answer, Keith knocks again, slightly louder. Just as he is beginning to wonder if Shiro is not in his room, which would be very unusual at this late hour, he hears a noise just before the door is pulled open.

He furrows his brows as he looks at the black paladin. Shiro is dressed only in a pair of low slung loose black sleep pants. His bare chest is covered in a light sheen and the hair at his temples is wet with sweat, there is color high up on his cheeks and Keith can see a slight bruising at the juncture of his shoulder and neck that stands out in sharp contrast to the rest of his scar covered skin.

“Shiro?”

“Keith,” Shiro responds and Keith can tell by the guarded tone of his voice that something is going on.

“Is everything ok?” He tries to sneak a look into the room, but Shiro has his body effectively blocking the view of anything within.

“Yeah, everything’s fine. I’m a little tired is all.”

“Are you sure? You look….. uh…. ”

“Yeah, I’m fine.”

“Ok,” Keith doesn’t sound convinced, but he pushes on. “I’ve got some information we need to go over.”

“We can talk tomorrow at the meeting and when we train,” Shiro tells him as he runs his flesh hand through his hair.

“This is important Shiro. We should talk about this before we meet with everyone else and before I go over anything with Lotor.” Keith takes a step towards the door, hoping the paladin will allow him in, but Shiro holds firm.

“What ever it is, I’m sure it can wait until the morning.”

“It’s about Lotor.”

There is a slight pause before Shiro says anything.

From within the room a voice calls out, “let him in Takashi.”

Oh

Shiro’s lips thin and he moves back from the door to allow Keith to step into the room, where he is greeted by the sight of a shirtless Lotor sitting on the bed with a sheet pulled up to his hips. His back
is resting against the headboard.

**OH!**

Closing the door behind his former team mate, Shiro sits beside Lotor on the bed.

“How long?”

“How long Shiro?”

“A while now.”

“How long?” Keith demands, voice quivering in anger.

“Long enough!” Shiro growls, only stopping as Lotor reaches over and squeezes his arm. “Long enough,” he repeats quietly.

“How could you?” Keith asks, the disappointment clear in his voice.

If Lotor takes offense, he says nothing.

Shiro’s eyes are blazing when he responds, “I don’t have to explain myself to anyone Keith and certainly not to you!”

“Really? Because if you weren’t doing anything wrong, you wouldn’t be reacting the way you are,” Keith points out.

Before either man can say anything else, Lotor shifts on the bed and leans over slightly to grab his pants off the floor. As he does this, the sheet dips low enough for Keith to get a look at his naked hip and flank, further confirming what he already knew. The prince pulls his pants on under the sheet and gets out of bed before proceeding to finish dressing.

“Keith,” he says, “if he did not want you to find out, he could have just not let you in.”

“Yeah, except that you opened your mouth and so he had no choice,” Keith spits at him.

“He always has a choice,” Lotor tells him.

The prince sits on the end of the bed and it sets Keith on edge with just how comfortable the galra is in Shiro’s room. And when the human moves to sit beside Lotor, without even bothering to put on a shirt, Keith is even more agitated. Shiro gestures for the former paladin to sit in the lone chair, but chooses not to respond when the younger man ignores the offer.

“What’s going on?” Shiro prompts.

“Zarkon is personally hunting for Lotor. He has already decimated several outposts and his personal forces are occupying 5 more planets already.”

Lotor speaks up, “we already knew the galra were on the move. Voltron has been using the information the Blade has been providing to fight back.”

“This is different,” Keith tells them both, gaze flitting between them. “Zarkon’s forces are split. The other attacks, the ones we knew about, those were a diversion to keep Voltron busy. What he’s doing, it’s personal. He wants you dead,” he adds, looking directly at Lotor.
Both men are quiet as they absorb what Keith has told them. It is Shiro who speaks first, “I think Lotor and I need to talk this over, alone.”

“Shiro…” the younger man interrupts.

“Go. Spend some time with Lance. We’ll talk in the morning.”

Keith looks stricken. “How did you know?”

Shiro doesn’t answer, just stands and walks to the door.

After Keith leaves, Shiro turns and leans his back against the door, eyes closed, head bowed forward.

Lotor gets off the bed and stands in front of the paladin, “you know what I have to do.”

Shiro doesn’t answer and doesn’t look up.

“Shiro……Takashi……” Lotor reaches out and gently grips Shiro’s arm where his flesh and the galra tech are joined. “You know.”

The human raises his head, but turns to the side, refusing to look at Lotor’s face.

“Come,” the galra says softly as he takes his hand and pulls him back towards the bed.
Chapter 12

Normally Lotor leaves Shiro’s bed and goes back to his own room sometime during the night. This time as he started to get up to gather his clothing, the paladin laid a hand on his arm and pulled him back down to the bed. The prince does not resist and instead allows himself to be lulled back to sleep.

When Shiro wakes in the early morning hours, he leaves the still sleeping Lotor in his bed and goes to train. This is where Allura finds him.

“Shiro. I’ve called an emergency meeting in 10 minutes.”

He stops and wipes the sweat from his brow, “what’s going on?”

“We can discuss it at the meeting.”

Her tone is sharp and based on his conversation with Keith the night before, he figures it has everything to do with Zarkon and Lotor.

“Ok, do you want Lotor there as well?”

“No. Just the paladins.”

She leaves the training room and Shiro immediately heads for his room. When he arrives he finds his bed empty and no sign of the galra prince. He showers quickly and then heads up to the meeting.

Shiro is the last to arrive and he quickly takes a seat.

“This morning,” Allura begins, “Keith arrived with some new information on Zarkon. He has been attacking system after system, searching for Lotor. Thousands have perished and dozens of planets are now under galra control. We cannot stand by and allow this to continue.”

Shiro looks around the room at the other paladins trying to gauge their reactions. “What are you suggesting?”

Lance speaks up right away, “I say we give him Lotor.”

“Zarkon will kill Lotor as soon as he gets his hands on him,” Shiro states, trying to keep his voice level. He doesn’t want to hand the prince over to face certain death at the hands of the galra. He spent half the night arguing with Lotor, trying to convince him not to surrender himself and now having his team contemplating the very same thing is hard to swallow.

“Shiro, we can’t just stand by and let the galra destroy worlds looking for one man,” Pidge interjects. “I don’t like the idea of giving him to Zarkon, but we have to consider our options.”

“You can’t just send him to die,” the black paladin argues. “Do you really think Zarkon will just withdraw and go away? He can’t be trusted. If you do this, we lose our best ally against the galra.”
After watching the paladins argue for several more minutes, Allura finally interrupts, “I know it seems wrong to do this, but if we have a chance to stop Zarkon from destroying more worlds, I think we need to do this.”

Shiro slams his galra hand down on the table in front of him as he lurches to his feet. “This is wrong! We don’t trade lives!”

“Maybe we should. I mean, no, this isn’t ideal, but is one person’s life worth more than thousands of others?” Hunk asks.

“Do you really think that handing over Lotor will get Zarkon to stop?” Shiro looks around the room at each paladin. Hunk and Lance keep their heads down, while Pidge stares at him defiantly. Keith stands at the back of the room, saying nothing.

When his eyes meet Allura, she stands just a little taller. “I don’t think we are getting anywhere with this. I think we all need to take a step back and we can reconvene again in 2 hours. In the mean time, we will move the castle ship to Zarkon’s last known location.”

He doesn’t like it, but Shiro knows continuing to argue is not going to help, so he goes in search of Lotor. The paladin stops by the galra’s quarters first, only to find them empty. A check of the training facilities finds them empty as well. Shiro moves around the ship checking all the locations where he expects the prince to be, but he doesn’t find him.

Changing into his armor, Shiro spends the last 45 minutes, before they meet again, training. His thoughts turn again and again to Lotor. He knew the galra prince couldn’t hide out with them forever, but this is not the way he wanted this to go. He had a plan and it had been progressing well and now everything has been thrown into chaos.

With only minutes to spare, Shiro enters the meeting room where he finds Lotor along with the other paladins standing in a loose circle around him. Keith stands off to the side and immediately moves closer to his former leader.

“What’s going on here?” Shiro snaps, eyes darting around the room, until they finally land on Lotor. The prince keeps his eyes down cast, avoiding looking at Shiro.

“They’re handing Lotor over to Zarkon,” Keith tells him. Accusation clear in his voice.

Shiro snaps his head around to glare at Allura, “is this true? I thought we agreed to discuss this?”

To her credit, Allura doesn’t shy away from Shiro’s look, “Lotor has agreed to go.”

Shiro turns to look at the prince, disbelief on his face, but Lotor is still keeping his eyes down. “You can’t do this,” Shiro tells him. “Zarkon will kill you.” He looks around the room and each paladin in turn, “You know he’ll betray you. He won’t stop just because you give him Lotor.”

“They’ve already made up their minds,” Keith tells him.

Shiro is trying to keep his voice down, trying not to yell and scream and rage. He walks to Lotor and pulls him to the side by the arm. Lowering his voice, he all but hisses, “you can’t do this. You’re not ready to face him.”

“Shiro……-” Lotor begins.

“Getting yourself killed will accomplish nothing.” The paladin is still gripping Lotor’s arm tightly. “It’s too soon. You’re not ready.”
Lotor pitches his voice low so the paladins cannot hear him, “Shiro….. Takashi……I have to do this.” He turns to Allura and louder tells her, “lets get this over with.”

He turns and strides out the door, followed closely behind by Allura. Shiro turns to follow, but is stopped by a hand on his arm. Keith shakes his head and waits, not letting go of Shiro’s arm, until they are the only ones left in the room.
Chapter 13

Keith is standing beside Shiro as he pilots the black lion down to the planet’s atmosphere. Neither man had been willing to ride in the shuttle carrying Lotor and the other Paladins down to the meeting with Zarkon.

“I can’t believe they’re just going to hand him over,” Keith snarls. “There is no way Zarkon is going to honor his part of the deal.”

In the pilots chair, Shiro says nothing. The only sign that he is listening at all is a slight tightening around the edges of his mouth.

“Once they get on the ground, I’ll turn on the feed from Lance’s helmet. Unless you want me to do it now?” Keith offers.

“No,” comes the quick reply. Shiro has no desire to hear the other paladins try to justify their betrayal to themselves. And that’s just what Shiro sees this as. Lotor was under their protection and they elected to give him up at the first opportunity. And as for Lotor himself, the black paladin doesn’t really want to think about that right now. He has to keep focused and be ready to step in as soon as it goes bad. And as he spots the galra battle cruiser hovering just beyond the horizon, he already knows that’s what is going to happen.

“I’m sorry if this causes a problem between you and Lance.” Shiro glances briefly over his shoulder as he says this.

Keith frowns at the back of Shiro’s head when he faces forward again. “It’ll be……,” fine, he almost said, but Keith doesn’t want to lie to Shiro. Especially when his own partner? lover? is facing certain death, “we have some things we have to talk about.”

“Make sure that you do. Its important to be clear about your relationship.”

Keith can hear the regret and barely restrained anger behind his former leaders words. All the younger man can do is place a hand, hopefully comforting, on Shiro's shoulder.

“Keith... Keith, we’re here...” Lance’s hushed voice comes over Keith’s communicator.

“I got ya, turning on feed now.”

Immediately an image pops up from Lance’s helmet camera. Lotor can be seen standing about ten feet ahead, hands chained together in front of his body.

“Lance, I need you to look around so I can see your surroundings,” Shiro instructs, his voice tense with anxiety. Both men watch as the scene pans around showing a U shaped rocky outcropping, standing about sixty feet high at its tallest point.

Voice low, Keith whispers, “they’re walking into an obvious trap. Surely Allura can’t be so blind as to not see it?”
The response from Lance is equally low, so the rest of the paladins don’t overhear, “she see’s it. That’s why we’re not going in.”

On the screen, they watch as Allura nudges Lotor forward. The galra prince begins to walk, only stopping when he reaches the mouth of the outcropping. Zarkon steps out into view at the highest point and for a moment, no one moves. A noise about 3 yards to the emperors left, followed by a cascade of falling stones reveals the location of a squad of hidden galra soldiers, poised, with weapons raised. On the ground, the paladins react by raising their bayards and taking defensive stances.

“We have brought Lotor, as agreed, and now we expect you to withdraw your forces and uphold your end of the bargain,” Allura calls out.

Zarkon’s face pulls into a sneer, “there will be no bargain Princess.”

“Keith…” Lance calls quietly over the comm as he watches Zarkon give the signal for his soldiers to fire.

The former paladin doesn’t respond as the black lion drops from the sky to crouch protectively between Lotor and the galra forces. Shiro exits the lion and runs to Lotor where he uses his tech hand to break the prince’s shackles.

“Get to your lions,” he yells over the now open comm line to the other paladins.

They retreat immediately to their shuttle and take off under heavy fire. “Keith, I need you to protect that shuttle.”

The black lion pivots and its tail lashes out, swinging at the rocks, before leaping in the air, taking out a large portion of the galra troops before they can start firing on Lotor and Shiro.

Grabbing Lotor by the wrist, Shiro drags him behind a large boulder. He snatches two rifles off fallen galra and tosses one to the prince.

“When this is over,” Shiro starts, as he leaps out from behind the rock and uses the rifle to shoot several advancing soldiers, “we’re going to have a talk.” He drops back down and levels a sharp look at the prince.

Lotor sighs in frustration as he stands and takes several shots before crouching again, “I did what I thought was best.”

“How is this best?” Shiro challenges as he raises his rifle and shoots just to the left of Lotor’s head, killing a galra that had managed to get too close.

Before Lotor can answer, there is an ear shattering explosion as the boulder they have been taking refuge behind, breaks apart. Both men are flung backwards. It takes Shiro a second to clear his head, but then he climbs to his feet and runs to Lotor, diving in front of him, blocking a blow from Zarkon’s sword with his tech arm. He twists and activates his arm, throwing Zarkon back. Lotor scrambles to his feet as Shiro pulls out his bayard and tosses it to him. The prince activates it just in time to block another blow from Zarkon’s blade that nearly decapitates him.

Shiro loses sight of Lotor and Zarkon as he fights the remaining galra troops that try to come to their emperors aid. He uses his fists, both human and tech to reign blows down upon the soldiers. After all the weeks training Lotor, fighting these foot soldiers is only a challenge when they manage to work together against him. It takes them awhile, but the 6 remaining galra manage to force him to retreat back against a wall of rocks. He runs through the scenario in his head over and over, looking for the
best options for escape and rejecting them in turn. All of this takes place over a matter of seconds while the galra advance.

A ball of metal in the shape of a red lion crashes into the ground a short distance away, causing the ground to heave and plumes of dust to rise up, choking off vision and air alike. Shiro lowers the face of his helmet and presses his advantage using the heads up display to locate and eliminate his attackers.

He turns his attention in the direction that he had last seen Lotor and Zarkon fighting and makes his way through the slowly clearing haze. He finds Lotor crumpled on the ground, his bayard laying beside him. Rushing to his side, Shiro is relieved to see Lotor turn his head at his approach. The paladin kneels beside Lotor and runs a gloved hand over several of the prince’s wounds, but he keeps his eyes trained on Lotor’s face. He has a fraction of a second to react when he see’s Lotor’s eyes shift just over his shoulder.

Shiro dives and rolls to the side as Lotor grabs the bayard, lurches to his feet and activates it, causing the blade to go right through Zarkon’s chest. The emperor falls to his knees before collapsing to the ground, wrenching the bayard from Lotor’s grasp.

“Keith!” Shiro calls over the comm as he makes his way over to where Lotor is swaying on his feet. “Keith, what’s going on up there?”

For several long moments there is no response, until finally, “they’re retreating. The galra have recalled their ships and they’re retreating. What do you want us to do?”

Shiro looks to Lotor who responds, “let them go.” Nodding in agreement, Shiro relays the order to Keith and then moves to help Lotor sit at the base of a rock.

The prince spits out some blood and wipes the back of his hand across his face, eyes riveted on the body of his father. “Takashi?” He sounds lost, uncertain. And so Shiro says the only thing he can think of to help.

“I’m here. Right by your side.”
Chapter 14

Chapter 14

The black lion touches down inside the hanger of the castle ship and it is several long minutes before Keith steps out, followed closely by Shiro and Lotor.

“Shiro…” Allura begins, only to be cut off by a sharp look from the Paladin.

Shifting his eyes forward, Shiro walks out of the hanger with Lotor at his side, not deviating when Allura tries again. “Shiro, I think we should talk about this.”

This time it is Keith who looks at her, “now isn’t the time.” He hurries out of the hanger after Shiro, but turns in the opposite direction, towards Lance’s quarters. It’s time to have that talk.

Shiro closes and secures the door to his room before helping Lotor remove his armor and undersuit. He works in silence, not ready to speak to the galra prince yet. Once Lotor is stripped down and laid out on the bed, Shiro retrieves a first aid kit and begins to dress his wounds. Most are superficial with the exception of one large gash that requires several stitches to close properly.

With that done, Shiro heads to the dining hall and brings back a tray of food. He still says nothing as he places the tray next to Lotor on the bedside table. The paladin takes a piece of fruit off the tray and begins to eat it as he strips off his own armor. He removes his undersuit, leaving him in a tight pair of black briefs.

Laying down next to Lotor, he turns to his side, facing away from the galra, not quite ready to talk yet. He can feel Lotor shift on bed, feel the warmth of his body as he draws near. An arm wraps over his body, around the paladins waist.

“Shiro…” Lotor stops when he feels Shiro tense against his chest.

The paladin doesn’t pull away or try to move his arm, so Lotor stays where he is. Shiro will talk when he is ready. And hopefully by then, Lotor will be able to explain his actions.

Lotor comes awake slowly and it takes him a moment to recognize the air against his chest for what it is. A quick feel of the mattress tells him that Shiro has been out of the bed long enough for the spot where he had been laying to cool. Rolling to his back, Lotor throws an arm across his eyes.

From the chair Shiro speaks, “what were you thinking?” There is steel in his voice. He is still dressed in only his briefs.

“I thought to spare you.”

“Spare me?” Shiro cuts him off. “From what?”

Sitting up, Lotor looks him right in the eye. “From losing your team.”
The paladin just lifts an eyebrow, challenging Lotor to convince him.

“They were going to hand me over to Zarkon no matter what your stance was. I simply meant to make it easier.”

“For who?” Shiro snaps.

“For you, of course!”

Lurching to his feet, Shiro runs a hand through his short hair, “how was watching you walk into an obvious trap supposed to make things easier on me? Was I supposed to watch Zarkon kill you and then just go on with my life?”

“Yes!” Lotor shouts. “That’s exactly what you were supposed to do. He is moving from system to system, hunting me down, killing thousands, destroying worlds.”

“And killing you wasn’t going to stop that,” Shiro counters.

“No it wouldn’t have, but at least your team would not be fractured because of me. The galaxy needs Voltron, Shiro. It needs you, leading them to stop Zarkon.”

Shiro hisses, “and I need you! I need you by my side!”

Lotor stands and walks over to stand directly in front of the paladin, “I’m here, Takashi. I’m here now.” He takes both of Shiro’s hands in his own and waits for a response.

Shiro pulls his hands away and moves to sit on the edge of the bed, hands dangling between his knees, head bowed. “With Zarkon gone, the galra will need a new leader. You aren’t ready Lotor.” He lifts his head and looks directly into Lotors eyes, “We aren’t ready.”
“They are not going to agree to this. It’s too soon,” Lotor says as the pair spar in the training room.

Shiro frowns and jumps back out of range of an overhand strike. He knows Lotor is right, but they are running out of time. Lotor needs to be there. “I’ll tell the team in the morning. This is happening. We are taking you there.”

That night Lotor does not leave Shiro’s bed. He stays until morning, only leaving the paladins side to shower and put on a fresh set of clothes. They meet up in the dining room, both slowly picking at their food until the others arrive. Lotor excuses himself and makes his way to the meeting room to wait for the others.

It is only a matter of a few minutes until Shiro walks in. He says nothing but keeps stealing little glances at the prince. Lotor tries to appreciate the quiet knowing it will not last. And he is not wrong

“The Kral Zera will take place in one week. We need to get Lotor there.”

Allura frowns. Shiro has finally decided to talk to her and this is what he leads with at their team meeting. The uproar is instantaneous as accusations and insults are let loose. Lotor keeps his composure, knowing that a show of anger now would only make things worse. But he can see that Shiro is getting more and more agitated as the minutes tick by.

He moves to stand by Shiro’s side and places a hand on the paladins arm. It is an oddly intimate gesture and the room goes silent as they can visibly see their leader relax under the touch.

Unsurprisingly, it is Allura who speaks up, “how long has this been going on?” she asks quietly as she looks pointedly at the spot where Lotor’s hand rests on Shiro’s arm.

Shiro squares his shoulders and faces the princess, “it doesn’t matter.”

“It most certainly does. You have asked us to make him emperor. I think the fact that you are sleeping with him matters quite a lot.”

“You have to see that this is the best option. We can have someone in power that is an ally.”

“And you have to admit that your judgement is clouded by your feelings,” Allura tells him.

“And yours isn't?” Shiro accuses.

“With good reason! His father has destroyed and enslaved entire worlds!”

“His father! Not him!”

“He is Galra!”

“So am I,” Keith interjects angrily. “Does that automatically mean I am not to be trusted? You’ve been using the information from the Blade for months.”
Allura takes in a breath to calm herself, “never the less, we will not be taking Lotor to the Kral Zera. That decision is final.”

“I’m sorry you feel that way,” Shiro says, eerily calm. He walks out of the meeting room with Lotor right behind him.

The Galra trails behind Shiro and can feel the anger coming off him in waves. Lotor is surprised when Shiro does not turn down the hall to his quarters and instead turns right and heads to Lotor’s room. Shiro has never once been in Lotor’s quarters. The prince hurries to unlock the door and then ushers the human inside.

“Takashi…”

“Get your stuff.”

“I was careless and should not have touched you. I apologize.”

“Get your stuff,” Shiro repeats.

Lotor quickly gathers what little he has and then follows Shiro back to the paladins own room.

The Galra stands in the center of Shiro’s room, unsure of what to do. He watches as Shiro opens the drawers with his clothes and begins to move things around. Once he is satisfied, he takes Lotor’s items out of his hands and begins to put them away along side his own.

“You’re staying here, with me. I want you by my side at all times.”
Chapter 16

Lotor has been in Shiro’s room countless times, but this, this is different. He watches the paladin as he stalks around the room, unable to stay still for long. He seems fragile and full of sharp edges, ready to break or hurt anyone that gets too close, in turns. Lotor watches but says nothing, just hoping to not make it any worse. After several tense minutes Lotor removes his boots and sits back against the head board on the bed, as Shiro continues to pace around the room.

After watching the paladin become more and more agitated, Lotor rises from the bed and steps in front of him, interrupting his pacing.

"Would it help to spar?" he offers hoping that he can somehow help Shiro purge some of the aggression and excessive energy from his system.

The emotions that flicker across Shiro’s face are gone too quickly for Lotor to read and when the paladin stops moving and stands looking into the galra’s eyes, Lotor has to consciously make an effort not to shy away from the intensity of it.

"Shiro?" he prompts after several moments of silence.

The paladin comes closer and reaches up a hand to grip the back of Lotors neck, drawing him down into a kiss. It is soft and tender, not rushed and ferocious as is their usual, but no less intense. This is something different and Lotor isn't sure how to react. Doesn't know what is expected of him and when he freezes, Shiro pulls back with a flash of disappointment.

"I think I’ll go train," Shiro tells him.

"Just give me a moment and I'll- "

"Alone," Shiro cuts him off.

"Oh..... of course." Lotor tries his best to keep the question out of his voice. He figures he must have managed since Shiro only jerks his head in a nod and then abruptly walks out.

Lotor watches the paladin pull on a pair of those tight black briefs that he seems to favor, savoring the view as he does. Lotor himself is only wearing a pair of thin breeches, having discarded the rest
of his clothes and armor earlier. He says nothing when the human climbs on the bed and sits straddling his lap. When Shiro raises his hand and draws Lotor in for a kiss, soft as before, this time the galra is better prepared and he doesn't hesitate.

He allows himself to be drawn into the kiss and even if the softness of it seems foreign, he finds part of him still enjoys it, despite the tension thrumming through his body. Shiro’s hands are buried in his hair and Lotor has to resist the urge to speed things up just to make himself more comfortable. The weight of Shiro’s body, pressed down where he straddles Lotor is nice, grounding him in the moment and that helps, but when Shiro grinds his hips down, it takes all of Lotor’s self control to not just flip Shiro and fuck him into the mattress as they have done to each other countless times since this thing between them began.

The time it had taken the paladin to strip off the last of their garments and prepare his body had brought Lotor to the edge of his patience. He wanted more, more movement, more friction, just more. And now, now he has this. He cannot stop the way his hands come up and grip at Shiro’s sides, claws unsheathing to draw little wells of blood to the surface. The paladin lets out a sound somewhere between a moan and a gasp and Lotor can’t decide if it’s a good sound or not. One look at Shiro’s face tells him that the paladin probably isn’t sure either. He makes a conscious effort to pull his claws back, but keeps his hands where they are.

Shiro presses in for another kiss, slow and warm. Both human and tech hand come up to fist into Lotor’s hair again. And it feels good, different, but good. Physically it borders on almost not enough but on another level, there is something else, something deeply satisfying about watching Shiro ride him. The paladin’s body shifts up and back, hips rolling. Lotor’s thoughts have gone fuzzy as he watches the paladin move, feeling every exquisite shift in the slow drag across his cock. It’s hard to think, almost too hard to breathe.

It’s a relief when Shiro collapses forward on to his chest, body spasming in pleasure, dragging Lotor over the edge as well.

Looking up at Shiro, Lotor whispers, "I don't know what this is."

The paladin pulls off and lays beside the galra, facing up to the ceiling. He reaches out and feels for Lotor’s hand, weaving their fingers together when he finds it. "Neither do I."
Chapter 17

“I don’t know what this is.”

“Neither do I.”

Lotor raises their joined hands, marveling at the contrast between their skin. “What was it supposed to be?”

Shiro lowers their hands to rest on his stomach. “An alliance. Between Voltron and the heir to the galra empire.”

Lotor is quiet long enough for Shiro to almost startle when he does speak. “You told me you do not sleep with your team as the galra do.... do you make a habit of seducing those you would form an alliance with?”

There is something in Lotor’s voice that Shiro cannot quite identify. “Do you find it useful? To gain loyalty, to solidify the ties between you and your allies this way?”

Shiro sighs as he realizes what Lotor is trying to say. “No, I don't use sex to get people to do what I want. That was never my intention.”

“Then why?”

“Does there have to be a reason?”

Lotor pulls his hand away and rolls to his side to sit at the edge of the bed. “What just happened Shiro? What was that?”

The paladin takes a deep breath and places both his hands flat on his stomach. “I don't know.” He sits up and searches around until he finds his briefs and pulls them on. “It wasn’t supposed to be like this. It was too soon for you to face Zarkon and now with the Kral Zera.... Unless something changes, Voltron won’t support you. If we had had more time.....”

Shiro dodges out of the way of Lotor’s strike and stumbling back a few steps. The galra tries to press his advantage, but only succeeds in over extending himself, leaving his side exposed. He braces for the blow that should come, but doesn’t.

It has been like this for several days and it is painfully obvious that they are out of sync. Lotor withdraws and puts his weapon away before heading to the door.

“Where are you going?” Shiro calls after him.

“We’re done Shiro.”

The paladin rushes to the door and slams it closed with his tech hand before Lotor can walk out.
“No. We’re not. We have just over a day before you have to leave for the Kral Zera and you’re not ready. You’re clumsy and slow, not focused.”

“And whose fault is that Shiro?” Lotor shouts as he grabs the paladin’s shirt and hauls him away from the door. “We were equals and you changed that.” Keeping his grip on Shiro’s shirt, Lotor throws open the door and practically drags Shiro down the hall to their room.

As soon as the door closes, Lotor has the paladin pushed up against the wall. He grips Shiro’s shirt and pulls it roughly over his head then drops it on the floor, before crowding in to press his body flush against the humans. He can hear Shiro’s breathing, fast and uneven.

He waits, body pressed up against the paladins. Bending his neck, he mouths lightly at the shell of Shiro’s ear. It's not the erogenous zone that it is for glara, but Lotor knows that Shiro responds to the sensation. Running one hand down the paladins tech arm, he laces their fingers together and brings them up against the wall next to Shiro’s head.

Lotor knows Shiro can break the hold, but he is sure he wont. With his other hand, he unsheathes his claws and gently grips the back of the humans neck, allowing the sharp tips to just graze the sensitive flesh. He is rewarded with a full body shiver that travels from Shiro’s head down to his toes. Pulling back, Lotor looks directly into the paladins gray eyes and he can see the question there.

"What…" Shiro swallows and tries again, "what are you doing?"

He doesn’t answer, not with words, not yet. Instead, Lotor leans in and gently brushes his lips over Shiro’s. He pulls back and has to suppress a smile when the paladin leans forward, chasing after the kiss.

"Tell me Takashi, is this what you wanted all along? To tame me, bring me to heel. Have me as your pet galra. Use me to bolster Voltron’s position in the universe?"

"No!-"

Lotor continues as though Shiro had not spoken. "Or was your intention to make me want you, to crave your attention so much that I bend to your will?"

"No! that's not-"

"Did you intend to use me? Use my body to exorcise your demons? To exact payment for what was done to you?"

Shiro doesn’t try to answer this time, just stares wide eyed.

"Did you intend for me to develop an emotional attachment so you could throw me back to the galra, weakened and alone?"

Lotor steps back and pulls Shiro to the bed where he pushes the paladin down onto his back. He crawls up the bed until he is over Shiro, looking down into those gray eyes again.

"Tell me Takashi."

Shiro’s hands twitch at his sides at the way Lotor uses his name like a weapon, but he doesn't move. "I told you what I wanted. We were supposed to unite Voltron and the galra empire."
"Hmmmm," Lotor hums as he uses the claws on his left hand to tear at the fabric of the paladins pants, "and now this is no longer an option."

Shiro has to force himself to focus on his words and not on the sensation of Lotor’s body or on the way his hand has snaked inside what is left of his pants and is tracing the lines of scar tissue that runs down his left leg.

"You can still be emperor," he forces out. "Even without Volton, you can still change things, make it better."

"And what if that isn't enough? What if making things better for a universe that hates and distrusts my kind, isn't enough? What if I want more?"

Lotor lowers himself to close the little bit of distance that still remains between them and brushes his lips across Shiro’s before immediately deepening the kiss. Shiro responds, body arching up for more contact. He cannot stop his hands from coming up and tangling in Lotor’s hair, not allowing him to pull away.

When they break apart to breath, Shiro whispers against Lotor’s lips, "what do you want."

The galra smiles showing his canines, "the same thing as you."
Chapter 18

Lotor watches the rhythmic rise and fall of Shiro’s back as he breathes. The human lays on his stomach, tech arm drawn up underneath his pillow, flesh one stretched out toward the galra. His features are soft, muscles relaxed. Not wanting to disturb the paladin’s sleep, Lotor traces the scars down his back with his eyes, until they disappear beneath the white sheet that lays low across his hips.

Carefully Lotor rises from the bed and dresses. He slips quietly out of the room and heads towards the observation deck, where he sits, gazing out at the stars. He isn’t sure how long he is there before he hears footsteps approach. He does not react when they stop directly behind him.

“Do you mind if I sit with you?”

Lotor shakes his head and gestures to the spot on the floor beside him in invitation.

“Are you not able to sleep?”

With a decidedly human shrug of his shoulders, Lotor responds, “there is much I need to think about.”

“And is Shiro one of those things?” Keith asks.

Lotor drops his head and looks at his hands as he twists them in his lap. “Shiro is often on my mind, tonight is no different.”

“He is a good man Lotor. A leader.”

“And is this where you tell me that I need to forget about him? That I need to leave tomorrow and never see him again?”

Keith keeps his eyes on the stars outside the glass, “no, this is where I tell you that Allura has the launch bay for the black lion on lockdown. You won’t get to the Kral Zera that way.”

Lotor hums in response, but otherwise stays silent.

“I’ve convinced Allura to leave your personal ship available. She said if you want to take it and go on your own, she doesn’t care.”

Turning to Keith, Lotor’s mouth draws down in a frown, “and if I don’t want to just leave Shiro and go on my way?”

“Then don’t leave him, its your decision to make.”

Lotor quirks an eyebrow at the younger man, “and Voltron?”

“You let me worry about Voltron.”

“You know it is not that easy, Keith.”
“When is it ever?” The former paladin asks with a wry smile.

“Shiro….”

When Lotor opens the door to his and Shiro’s room, he is not surprised to see the paladin sitting up in bed waiting for him. It was too much to ask for the man to still be asleep so they could avoid this conversation.

“Did you have a good talk with Keith?” The human asks as he stands and approaches the galra.

“It was….. enlightening.” And of course Shiro knows he spoke to Keith.

Lotor closes the door and leans back against it, watching Shiro, taking in every movement, every shift of muscle under flesh. He wants to commit this moment to memory and never forget it. In the days and weeks and months ahead, he wants to remember this. Remember Shiro as he is right now.

Stopping directly in front of the galra, Shiro reaches his tech hand out to push Lotor’s hair back behind his ear, causing an involuntary shiver to run down his spine when he makes contact with Lotor’s flesh. Shiro’s mouth quirks up, ever so slightly at the reaction, but only for a moment, before his expression settles on one of resignation.

“When will you leave?” He asks.

Dropping his head down to avoid looking into those gray eyes, Lotor replies, “soon. Within the hour, while everyone else is still asleep.”

Taking a step closer, Shiro gently applies pressure to the back of Lotor’s neck, drawing him in, until they are close, able to feel each other as they breathe each others air.

“Then we don’t have much time,” he whispers, breath ghosting across the galra’s lips before closing the final distance between them.

It only takes a moment for Lotor to realize he was wrong, this is the moment he wants to remember. This one, where Shiro’s body is pressed close to his, where he can feel the warmth of his skin through his body suit, his flesh hand gently twisted in Lotor’s white locks, while his tech hand shifts down his side, to grip at his hip, pulling them even closer together. He wants to remember this for the rest of his days.

Reluctantly Lotor breaks the kiss, “Shiro, I’m sorry.”

The paladin nods, giving a small sad smile. “It’s okay. You know what you have to do.”

And he does. Even though it hurts him, makes his chest ache with regret, he pushes the paladin away, before grabbing his arm and spinning him around. He cannot bring himself to face Shiro as he clasps his hands together and brings them down on the back of his head.

Lotor watches the human crumple to the ground and then begins to move. This moment, this one he does not want to remember.
Chapter 19

Chapter 19

It’s dark. That’s the first thing that Shiro becomes aware of. The second is the throbbing at the base of his skull. The third is the slight whir of an air handler and the faint thrum of engines. He tries to focus his vision in the dark, tries to make out any familiar shapes. His awakening doesn’t go unnoticed and a light clicks on.

“You know, if you were going to hit me so hard, you could have at least gave me something softer to lay on,” the paladin remarks as he rubs the back of his neck.

Lotor turns in the pilots chair, “apologies, Shiro. But I didn’t want to have to do it again, if it didn’t work the first time.”

“Okay, then why I am on the ground instead of in the bunk in the back?”

“I wanted to keep you by my side.” Lotor says this as though it is the most natural thing in the world.

With a wry grin Shiro responds, “you’ve learned well.”

Lotor turns back around, checking the displays and sensor readouts from the shuttles main console. “We’re about half a day out from Feyiv.”

Shiro only hums and they fall into a comfortable silence, Lotor piloting the ship and the paladin sitting cross legged on the floor beside him with his wrists resting on his bent knees.

“You should probably get some rest,” Shiro tells Lotor.

Opening his mouth, the galra starts to argue, but then thinks better of it and acquiesces with a nod. Rising from the pilots chair he holds his hand out to Shiro and gently pulls him to his feet. Lotor ducks his head slightly and brushes a kiss across Shiro’s lips before retreating to the back. The paladin takes the pilot’s seat and settles in.

Keith rushes on to the bridge of the castle ship, “Shiro’s gone!” he announces breathlessly. “I went to his room and he’s gone!”

“Hey, whoa, whoa, what do you mean gone? This is a pretty big ship, what do you mean he’s gone?” Hunk asks from in front of his workstation.

With a flash of annoyance Keith responds, “it looks like there was a fight, his room’s pretty messed up.” He pulls out Shiro’s bayard and shows it to the team.

“Take my bayard.”

“What? Why?”

“This has to look real. Get them to bring Voltron to Feyiv. And you need to fly Black. She listens to
“You’re sure this is the only way?”

“They won’t go to support Lotor, but hopefully they’ll want to come after me.”

“Lotor,” Allura hisses.

Lance glances at Keith before speaking up, “we know where he was going, we need to follow him to get Shiro.”

The look on Allura’s face is grim when she says, “agreed. We’ll move the castle into position above Feyiv. We can get Shiro out during the Kral Zera.”

“Suit up, we’ll need Voltron to do this,” Keith announces, stepping back into the leadership role.

The door to the bunk room slides open and Lotor comes face to face with shiro.

“I was wondering how long it would take you to figure out the auto pilot settings,” he smirks.

Shiro places his tech hand on the galra’s chest and activates it just enough to start to glow as he pushes him back into the room. To his credit, Lotor doesn’t flinch at the prospect of getting hit with the full force of Shiro’s arm. Shiro grins at him and he walks Lotor backwards towards the single bunk.

“Oh, I figured it out in the first minute. Just wanted to see how long you would be able to hold out.”

Lotor reaches up and pulls at the bottom of Shiro’s shirt, lifting it up until the paladin has to withdraw his hand to allow the garment to be removed. “It would appear, I am able to hold out, just as long as you are.”

It is only a matter of minutes before both men have stripped off every article of clothing from the other. There is a sense of urgency behind Shiro’s movements as he touches Lotor’s flesh, running his hands over his muscles, caresses along his neck and the sensitive places along his sides, just above his hip bones. Lotor works to slow the paladin down, to keep him in the moment. They have time and he intends to use it, not wanting to think about what is to come.

On the bunk, his body is draped over Shiro’s back as he moves, trying to keep his pace slow, but the paladin keeps pushing back, keeps trying to take more, faster, harder. Finally, Lotor wraps a powerful arm around Shiro’s mid section and hauls him upright on the bed, still buried within his body. Keeping his arm wrapped around Shiro, he snakes his other hand down and strokes along his length. He grinds his hips forward as he dips his head down and mouths along the edge of the paladins ear.

Shiro immediately wants to struggle, to regain some control. He feels vulnerable and unsteady, but Lotor’s muscular arm around his chest is grounding, comforting. He relaxes his body back against Lotor’s and allows the galra to support him. His head lolls back and as Lotor runs his tongue along the edge of his ear, his mouth falls open. Raising his tech arm up, he reaches back and wraps his hand in Lotor’s hair. Slowly he grinds his hips down and back. He keeps his movements small,
allowing the galra to set the pace.

Lotor continues to move within Shiro’s body, bringing them both closer to the edge, until the paladin spills in his hand, dragging Lotor over with him.
Sitting in the pilots chair, Lotor’s attention keeps drifting back to the bunk room and Shiro. He had expected to spend at least a little longer relaxing next to the paladin, but when Shiro abruptly got up from the small bed and handed Lotor his clothes and his armor, he knew he was wrong.

This thing between them has morphed and changed since that first training session so long ago and Lotor is left with the feeling that it has changed once again. But this doesn’t feel like before, when Shiro was pushing him, testing him, forcing him to adapt and learn. He can’t quite decide what it feels like, but he knows he doesn’t like it.

He has to focus, has to be ready. As he prepares to bring the ship down into Feyiv’s atmosphere, he takes a deep breath to center himself. Lotor checks his weapons yet again.

“You’ll be fine,” comes Shiro’s voice from behind him.

Lotor just manages to not jump at the paladin’s sudden appearance, but cannot keep his hands from squeezing tight on the flight controls.

And he can’t quite keep the irritation out of his voice when he responds, “I thought you said I wasn’t ready. That we weren’t ready.”

Shiro steps into view beside Lotor, dressed in his own armor, “I changed my mind.”

“Yes. It would seem you do a lot of that.”

The paladin only hums in response.

Even before they land, they can see the group of Galra gathered for the Kral Zera. Their stances and posture indicate that the challenges will begin soon, if they haven’t already. A second survey of the group, just before touching down allows Lotor to see at least two bodies already down.

As the galra’s attention is diverted to Lotor’s shuttle, one of them, Sendak, attacks another. The fight is over quickly as Sendak is the superior fighter. He quickly begins to ascend the stairs, knowing that he only needs to light the Kral Zera to become emperor.

As soon as the shuttle door opens, Lotor is on the ground. He runs for Sendak, weapon drawn. The larger galra turns to face Lotor, knowing that defeating the prince will only solidify his position as leader of the galra empire. Sendak knows that Lotor has experience fighting in the arena, but he is certain his height and size advantage will quickly overpower the smaller man.

Lotor’s pathetic swipe of his sword at Sendak’s mid section, causes a ripple of amusement to travel through the rest of the gathered galra. When Sendak swings his arm out to bash in the prince’s head, the group quiets. Lotor twists away, shifting behind Sendak’s back and manages to stab his sword into an exposed bit of flesh between armor plates. He withdraws the blade and jumps back, out of the
reach of Sendak’s prosthetic arm.

One of the other galra takes advantage of the others distraction and stabs the nearest would be emperor through the chest. This starts an all out brawl among the remaining galra. From the base of the shuttle ramp, Shiro watches, his attention focused solely on the remaining galra as they fight. It is only when two break away from the main group and head for the steps leading to the Kral Zera, that he acts.

Clenching his fist, he activates his tech arm and runs to intercept the two galra. Shiro was not given the title of Champion lightly and he gives no quarter as he fights to keep the two from gaining any ground. Behind him, he can hear the sounds of Lotor’s fight with Sendak. The grunts of effort, hisses of pain and endless posturing by Sendak are put out of his mind, trusting that Lotor will be able to handle himself. He has to be able to or else all these months of training will have been for nothing.

A shadow passes overhead followed by the roar of engines as Voltron passes over the Kral Zera. For just a moment everyone turns to look.

Except Lotor, who uses the momentary distraction and presses his attack against Sendak. He darts and jumps, taking advantage of his relatively smaller stature much the same way Keith did when they fought.

Switching tactics, Lotor pulls a small blade and wedges it at the shoulder joint of Sendak’s tech arm. Jumping on his back, Lotor jams the blade down until the arm sparks and fails. He allows himself to be knocked off and rolls to his feet, where he comes up fighting.

He uses every part of his body, striking high and low. From his boot he pulls a shortened staff and moves through the training routine Shiro taught him, albeit at a much quicker pace. It is simple and intuitive and Sendak finds it harder and harder to counter. Moving in close, Lotor twists his wrist and activates a power source in his gauntlet and brings it down across the garla’s neck in a fatal blow.
Chapter 21

“There!” Hunk calls out, drawing the paladins attention to Shiro on the steps below.

“The galra are attacking him,” Allura adds. “Keith, what’s your plan?”

“They’re too close to Shiro, we can’t use our weapons. We need to set down.”

Shiro watches as Voltron makes a second pass before finally setting down at the top of the stairs just beyond the cauldron of the Kral Zera. He has to admit that the show of power is impressive and it certainly looks like Lotor has the backing of Voltron, even if it isn’t true.

Between Lotor’s defeat of Sendak and Voltron’s arrival, the last of the galra leaders back down and Lotor is able to light the flame. Its over. Its over and the moment is bitter sweet as Shiro reflects on all the months of training and preparation to get to this point before he is swept up in the aftermath.

The black paladin shouldn’t be surprised by Allura’s suspicion. The rest of the paladins readily accepted, or at least chose to believe that Shiro was taken against his will, but Allura is not quite so trusting. Not anymore. Shiro knows he will have a long way to go to win back her trust after everything that has happened between him and Lotor, but for the sake of Voltron, he will do everything that he can to make sure it happens.

It is late when the knock comes on the door to his room. Despite the hour, Shiro is sitting on the edge of the bed with Lotor’s meager belongings spread out next to him. He already knows who is at the door and calls out for them to just come in.

“Why are you still here?” Keith asks as he closes the door behind himself.

Shiro just looks at him blankly before turning and picking at the fabric on one of Lotor’s tunics. Keith waits, crossing his arms over his chest. The minutes drag on as Shiro runs his hands over each item on his bed.

Finally he raises his head, but does not look at Keith, “this is where I belong.”

Keith isn’t sure which one of them he is trying to convince. “Are you sure about that?”

Shiro just flashes a look of annoyance at the younger man, but doesn’t respond.

“Can I ask you something?” Keith doesn’t wait for an answer before continuing. “What were you trying to accomplish with all this?”

The look of annoyance reappears, “I was trying to form an alliance between Voltron and the galra.”

“So, when did that change?”
“It didn’t!” Shiro snaps at the younger man, who just blinks and waits. “Nothing changed. Lotor is emperor. That’s what we were trying to accomplish.”

With a sigh, Keith moves to sit next to Shiro on the bed, “I meant, what changed for you personally?”

“Nothing.” Shiro doesn’t even try to meet Keith’s eyes when he lies to him. And of course Keith picks up on it with a huff.

“So you went from training him, to sleeping with him, and helping him become emperor and now you’re going to just walk away?” He pauses for just a moment to see if Shiro has any response. “That doesn’t sound like you Shiro.”

The black paladin jerks to his feet, “look, we got what we wanted. I don’t know why any of this matters.”

Keith rises and heads towards the door, “did we get what we want?” He opens the door and turns to look at his friend before leaving, “did you?”

There is a constant stream of galra, it doesn’t seem to end and Lotor is growing tired of it. In all the chaos of getting to his new command ship, once belonging to Sendak, he lost sight of Shiro. The new emperor has to assume that Shiro is on the castle ship with the rest of his team, but he can’t help wondering why he hasn’t come to him yet.

The doors open to the command deck and another galra general steps in and beyond him, Lotor can see another and another. And he wonders again, where Shiro is.
Chapter 22

Lotor is speaking with a handful of his new generals when he is alerted to a ship that has landed in the docking bay. He is both relieved and irritated, but tries to push it down. Hurrying the discussion along, he dismisses the generals.

He knows Shiro will find his way to the command deck, Lotor left strict instructions that the paladin was off limits and was to have complete access to the ship. Of course, those instructions were given almost a week ago. He takes a moment to compose his thoughts and is surprised and dismayed to find one of the galra still standing before him. He already knows more than enough about this particular general.

Commanding an empire is a daunting task under the best of circumstances, but it is made more so by the fact that Lotor has to try and unify a people that crave battle and personal power. He has already had to send several battle groups out to crush rebellions before they can gain any ground.

Out of the corner of his eye Lotor sees the door to the command deck slide open and Shiro step into the room. It takes every ounce of his will power to keep his focus on the galra who has started prattling on about some matter that Lotor is sure can wait. He can’t keep his eyes from drifting to the human who stands unobtrusively to the side.

The general frowns when he notices Lotor’s gaze slide away for the third time and clears his throat, “maybe it would be best if we concluded this later, perhaps in a more private setting?” He looks pointedly at Shiro.

Lotor’s attention is focused on the paladin and even though it is subtle, he notices the way Shiro’s body tenses at the galra’s suggestion. And when he responds, “yes, I agree,” he watches as the human’s tech hand clenches tightly at his side. He is surprised when Shiro steps away from the wall and heads back for the door.

“Shiro?” He calls out, ignoring the sneer on the face of the general.

The paladin turns slowly back around for a brief second, his expression blank, save for the tightness around his eyes, before starting for the door again.

Lotor frowns and looks at the general in front of him. “Go,” he commands.

He doesn’t wait to make sure the galra general complies. Striding up to Shiro, he grabs the human by the arm and turns him around so they are face to face.

“Where are you going?” Lotor asks and his voice comes out harsher than he intended, but he is frustrated and even a little angry that Shiro waited so long to come to him and now he’s walking out. It doesn’t make sense and right now, with everything else so chaotic, he cannot handle any more of Shiro’s tests, any more being pushed and knocked off balance. He needs Shiro’s strength, his intelligence, his….. He needs Shiro by his side.

He takes a calming breath and repeats softer, “where are you going?”

“To give you privacy with your general,” Shiro snarls, glaring to the side where the general still
stands, watching the interaction with rapt attention.

Lotor’s reaction is instantaneous. He releases Shiro’s arm, pulls one of his concealed daggers and throws it. The blade hits its mark and the general falls to his knees, with the handle jutting out from his neck. If it bothers Shiro or shocks him, he doesn’t show it, but Lotor feels the need to explain anyway.

“He disobeyed a direct order. His intention was to curry favor by being invited to my bed and failing that, he had already begun gathering behind himself, those that would seek to oppose me.”

The paladin’s mind seizes on only one part of the explanation, the part that was already going through his head. “Of course. That is the galra way.”

“Yes, but I hope to bring an end to that. We can unify the galra empire, make it something greater than it is.”

“And you’ll do that by inviting your generals to your bed.”

It’s a statement, cold and cruel in its simplicity.

“What?” Lotor takes a step back, genuinely confused. And when Shiro doesn’t respond he feels his chest tighten, “is this another test? Because I can’t do this. Not now, not with you. I have spent most of my brief time as emperor trying to navigate my way through an endless parade of beings, all looking to test me in one way or another. And the rest of my time, I have spent trying to understand why you weren’t here!”

For just a moment, when Shiro’s expression softens, Lotor thinks it is over and exhales the breath that had been caught in his throat. But before Shiro even opens his mouth, he knows he was wrong.

“You don’t need me by your side.”

And when Shiro walks out, he doesn’t try to stop him.
Chapter 23

Lotor paces angrily for several minutes before making a decision and slamming his hand down on the control panel in front of him, “lock down the docking bays. No ships are to leave or enter without my express consent.”

“Yes sir!” Comes the voice over the comm line.

Lotor is about to walk out when he hears the voice again, “sir, your, ah…. Guest…. Is attempting to leave. What are your orders?”

“Clear everyone from the bay and seal it off, I will handle this personally.”

Lotor takes a moment to compose himself outside the docking bay doors. He had every intention of letting Shiro walk away, but was still taken by surprise when he actually did. And now he doesn’t know what to do. It is never as easy as simply telling Shiro what he wants, but right now, he desperately wishes it was.

“Seal the door behind me and do not open it again under any circumstances,” Lotor instructs the galra standing by the door, who immediately snaps to attention.

Punching in his override code, Lotor steps back as the door slides open. Shiro is standing at the control center inside the bay. He is pushing buttons and growing more and more agitated by the moment. Raising his galra arm, he activates it and brings in down, smashing the panel with a cry of frustration. Behind him, Lotor can hear the door sliding shut.

The panel immediately begins to spark and smoke. Lotor approaches slowly, wary of the way Shiro stands with his head hanging down. The galra takes another step forward and narrowly avoids the metal bar that Shiro grabs from the console and swings at him. He lowers his center of gravity and charges forward, tackling Shiro on to his back. He rolls to the side in time to avoid a knee to the groin and regains his footing. Shiro is up as well and slowly begins to circle him.

“You should have come to me sooner Takashi.”

The paladin’s eyes draw together, but he doesn’t respond, not verbally. He charges at Lotor and sweeps his leg out, trying to knock him down, but Lotor leaps over the leg and swings his fist out, making contact with Shiro’s shoulder causing him to stagger back a step.

“Instead, you ran back to Allura.” Lotor steps close and grabs Shiro’s human arm, bringing it up to punch at his side, before flipping the smaller man to the ground. “Does she hold your leash that tightly?”

Shiro lunges to his feet, face a mask of rage as he charges in to attack again.

“If only I had known you were the jealous type….” Lotor is goading him and he can tell by the way Shiro’s blows are becoming less precise that it is working. And he just wants a reaction from the human, one that for once he doesn’t have to interpret.
Lotor spins behind Shiro to avoid a punch to his chest with his galra arm and lands an elbow to the back of the human’s head, knocking him to his knees. Then he circles Shiro, watching him pant with his head down.

“I have grown beyond what I once was, Takashi.” He swings his booted foot out and kicks Shiro in the side. The paladin collapses down, sucking in a deep pained breath.

“I have no use for weakness or insubordination,” Lotor hisses as he drops to his knees beside the paladin’s head. He grabs the white tuft of hair and yanks until they are looking eye to eye. “I could kill you now and you know it.” He wouldn’t, not ever, and he can’t decide if he is better or worse off for it.

Shiro laughs, actually laughs, even though there is no humor to it, “then do it, your highness,” he spits.

Lotor lets go of Shiro’s hair and stands, walking several steps away. Worse off, he decides. Right now, definitely worse off.

“And you say I’m weak. Look at you. Unable to kill a simple human. One you no longer have any use for.” Shiro is still on the ground, his human arm wrapped protectively around his side and what must surely be several broken ribs.

“No Shiro, you’re not weak and if I am, it is you who have made me so.” Lotor turns on his heel, overrides the door lock and leaves. He lifts the order for the bay to stay sealed and heads to his quarters without looking back.

Shiro crawls over to the landing strut of his ship and sits, leaning against it, pulling in breaths past his broken ribs. After a while he pulls himself up, using the strut and opens the hatch. Making his way into the bunk room he picks up the bag he had packed and drops it on the ground before carefully lowering himself on to the bed and then activates his comm line.

"Keith.... Keith, I need to talk to you."

Almost immediately the paladin responds, "I'm here."

Lotor watches the docking bay on his monitor, waiting for Shiro’s ship to take off. He waits and he watches until he has to go back to the command center and resume his duties as emperor, but all the while his thoughts keep returning to the ship in the docking bay and the man within.
Chapter 24

It’s been over an hour and the paladin stills sits on board his ship. Talking with Keith helped to answer some of his questions, but left him with others. He’s frustrated and confused and he hates it. Shiro shifts on the bunk until he can sit up and then forces himself to stand.

*You didn’t talk to him?*

*I watched him with that General.*

Wrapping his arm across his broken ribs, Shiro bends and picks up his bag. It’s not heavy, but it holds nearly all of his meager possessions. Or at least the few things that matter.

*But you didn’t actually talk to him?*

*No, but it was fairly obvious what was going to happen.*

He takes a look around the bunk room, brows furrowing. He still isn’t sure what he is doing and the way his stomach flutters nervously makes him feel almost sick. It shouldn’t be this hard. He has commanded teams of men, has fought against powerful foes. He has made decisions and given orders that affect millions of peoples lives throughout the galaxy and yet now he falters.

*So you didn’t give Lotor a chance to explain?*

*He went right back to the old ways. He was going to sleep with him!* Slapping the panel next to the door, Shiro looks out over the docking bay when it slides open.

*I don’t think he would do that to you Shiro.*

*He has no reason not too.*

Not giving himself a chance to think, he tightens his grip on his bag, wraps his arm around his ribs again and exits the ship. He can still turn back, there is no one around to see him, but he pushes forward, placing one foot in front of the other.

*You’re kidding me right?*

*………*

*Shiro, what are you afraid of?*

He half expects the door to the hanger to be sealed, but it opens at his touch. For a moment, he wonders at the fact that there are no sentries posted. Making his way down the hallway, he approaches the first sentry he finds and forces the words out of his mouth, “take me to Lotor’s chambers.”

*He doesn’t need me. He’s Emperor now. He has everything he could ever want at his finger tips.*
Does he?

The sentry leads Shiro down several hallways. When the sentry stops outside an unmarked door, Shiro has a moment of fear, wondering if he has been led into a trap. But then the sentry simply turns and walks away, leaving the human alone in the corridor.

I don’t know where I’m supposed to fit in.

Yes you do.

Now that he’s here, he doesn’t know what to do. He hesitates and then, reaching out, Shiro activates the panel next to the door and it slides open. He isn’t sure what he was expecting, but its certainly not a room that nearly mimics his own on the Castle ship.

What if he doesn’t need me anymore?

He does.

Looking around Shiro takes in the familiar furnishings, the simplicity of the space. He barely registers when his bag hits the ground.

What if he doesn’t want me?

He does.

If he let himself, he could almost believe this was his room, that this was the room he called home.

What are you really afraid of?

What if he doesn’t want me, or need me, the way that I do him?

What if he does Shiro?

……I don’t know. Maybe I’m afraid of that too……..

Shiro stands in the center of the room, looking at the bed with its two pillows and familiar linens. He knows without a doubt that the sheets will feel smooth and cool against his skin and the blanket will feel soft and warm. Just like he knows that in the shower he will find a bottle of scented shampoo that reminds him of leather and snow. An odd combination to be sure, but one that he immediately associates with Lotor.

He is so focused on his memories that he fails to notice the whisper of the door sliding open behind him until he hears his name, uttered softly, reverently, “Takashi.”
“I thought you were leaving?” Lotor asks as he steps up behind Shiro. He makes no attempt to touch the human.

“So did I.”

Shiro crosses his arms in front of his body, but keeps his back to the galra, hoping it will be easier to ask the question that has been on his mind.

“Tell me the truth, were you planning to use sex as a way to form an alliance, a bond with your generals?”

“No. And I don’t understand where you would get that idea,” Lotor states as he reaches out, placing a hand on Shiro’s shoulder to turn him around.

“It is the galra way.” The paladin keeps his eyes down, but adds derisively, “Leaders meet every need of their subordinates in order to create trust, form bonds.”

“You’re right. That is the galra way.” Lotor can see the way Shiro’s shoulders tense and hastens to add, “but that has never been my way.” He has to make an effort not to scoff at the irony of the situation.

When Shiro doesn’t respond, Lotor stalks away, frustration rising until he burst out, “the only one in this room that has used sex to manipulate is you!”

Shiro jerks his head up, eyes narrowing.

“You think I didn’t see it? You used sex to get me to do exactly what you wanted.”

“I wanted to form an alliance! Between Voltron and the galra empire!” Shiro shouts.

“Exactly! And you needed me to do it. You manipulated me, trained me, you used sex as a reward for doing what you wanted!”

“How can you say that?” The paladin’s eyes are wide, voice almost pleading, while Lotor if anything, seems to have gotten calmer.

“Tell me it isn’t so.” Lotor pauses before continuing, meeting Shiro’s gaze. “You can’t.”

Shiro looks at him defiantly, but before he can deny it Lotor growls, “just admit it Shiro. You asked me for the truth, you owe me the same.”

Shiro drops down onto the bed, holding his head in his hands, “if you knew that’s what I was doing, then why did you go along with it?”

“Because I wanted it. Because I shared your vision, but somewhere along the way, being with you became more important!” Lotor clamps his mouth shut at his admission, feeling foolish.
He can see Shiro’s jaw working, but the man doesn’t respond.

“You have your alliance Shiro. I won’t throw that away now. You can go back to the Castle ship, back to the other paladins and know that you succeeded beyond your wildest dreams.”

For a long moment there is no response, but when it comes it is not what Lotor expects as Shiro jumps to his feet and grabs the galra by both shoulders. “If all I was concerned about was an alliance, then explain to me why I am here!”

Shrugging away Shiro’s grip Lotor steps back a few paces, “to make sure the alliance was still in tact.”

Shiro laughs, actually laughs. “I could have done that from the command deck. I mean, why am I here,” He gestures around the room they are standing in. “I’m here Lotor, in your room, in our room,” he says, gesturing again. “No where else. I’m here. Not for an alliance. I’m here for you.”

The human stoops down and picks up his bag from the floor. He sets it on the bed and opens it and starts pulling out his belongings. Lotor watches Shiro as he opens drawers and places his clothes in them. It takes a conscious effort, but Shiro tries to keep the nervousness he feels from showing. This is it for him, he is putting himself out there and Lotor will either accept him or not.

Reaching out, Lotor stills Shiro’s hand. “I don’t know what this is Shiro. Is it another test? More training? Because I am not doing this with you anymore.”

Lotor can see Shiro’s shoulders slump as he pulls his hand away and drops both to his sides.
“It’s not…. I’m not testing you Lotor. And I’m not training you. You don’t need me to train you.”

“Maybe not,” Lotor admits as he steps close enough to Shiro that his chest is touching the human’s back. Shiro cannot help, but lean back into the familiar warmth. “What about you, Takashi, what do you need? Hmmm?” The way the galra practically purrs this into Shiro’s ear is almost too much.

Shiro raises his tech hand and clenches it into a fist, eyes fixed on the glow. “I don’t know.” It’s a lie and Shiro knows it.

Lotor steps back and turns Shiro around by the shoulder, “then what about what you want?”

“Takashi,” he pleads as the paladin thrusts slowly into his body, tech hand twisted gently in Lotor’s hair, with no space between them. He doesn’t know if he is pleading for more…..for less…. or for release. He just knows he needs.

Lotor runs a hand up and down Shiro’s back, caressing the scarred flesh as the human lays partially draped over him, head on Lotor’s chest. He can feel Shiro shiver underneath his touch as the sweat dries from his skin. Its nice, but it can’t last and one more glance at the clock on the wall tells Lotor that their time is running short.

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The human opens his mouth to respond, but Lotor cuts him off.

“Staying here, warming my bed. It won’t work. Not for long anyway.”

Reaching a hand out, Shiro runs it over Lotor’s hair, brushing it back from his face, an oddly intimate gesture, outside of bed, and one that Lotor is not accustomed to. But he cannot bring himself to say he doesn’t like it.

“So you would go back to Voltron. And come to me those few times when they don’t need you? Is that it? How long did you expect to be here, before you left again? Why did you even bother to come back?”

“Because I don’t want that!” Shiro protests, jerking back. “I don’t want that and it’s certainly not what I need.”

“Then what do you need, Takashi?” Lotor is pushing and he knows it, but he wants Shiro to be honest with him. No more training, no more tests. He silently pleads with the human to finally just be clear and give him the answer he needs so desperately, even if it’s not the one that he wants.

There is a long tense moment as Lotor waits for Shiro to speak and when his answer comes it almost knocks the wind out of his lungs with the honesty it is spoken with.

“I trained you to want me, to have a bond that would make the alliance between the galra and Voltron strong. I have manipulated you for months, getting you to do what I want. And now here we are.” He pauses to take in a deep breath. “I never expected that I was conditioning myself you want you in return. I didn’t expect to want to stay with you, but you’re right, warming your bed would never be enough. So I don’t know where to go from here.”

Lotor knows that is the closest he is going to get to a direct answer. He climbs out of bed and stands naked and unashamed. “Yes you do. All this time, you said you wanted me by your side! I will not believe it was all a lie to control me! So stay! We’ll work with Voltron to better the universe and lead the galra as equals, as we are meant to be.”

There is a heartbeat where Shiro searches Lotor’s eyes and then his face falls and he looks away, “I can’t just walk away from Voltron. I’m their leader.”

Picking up his clothes and armor, Lotor starts to dress, but pauses to look at the human, “no, I guess you can’t.”

As soon as the last plate is attached, Lotor walks out the door, leaving Shiro still on the bed.

It’s hard to listen to the assorted commanders as they bicker amongst themselves. Lotor knows he will have to put a stop to it quickly, but for now he waits, interested in seeing how things play out. Despite the turmoil of the last several hours with Shiro, he finds himself feeling calm and more sure of his path than he has since taking over the galra throne.

The door to the command center slides open and closed, but there are too many galra to easily see who has entered. Lotor doesn’t need to though, he knows just by the startled murmurs and disgruntled grumblings just who it is. But he is still pleasantly surprised to see Shiro has changed out of his usual Paladin armor and is now wearing armor similar in build and coloring to his own. Lotor has to admit that he looks rather striking in it. But he puts those thoughts away for later.

“What took you so long,” he asks as Shiro climbs the few steps to stand beside Lotor.
“I wanted to say goodbye to Black and let her know she is in good hands with Keith. With him, Voltron with be a good ally for us.”

There is more Lotor wants to ask, but it will have to wait as an angry shout interrupts them, “Lotor, what is the meaning of this?”

The galra commander gestures widely to Shiro who jumps down the steps in one leap, powering up his tech arm in the process. He thrusts his hand forward into a powerful blow, knocking the galra off his feet. “You will address him as Emperor Lotor, or Your Highness.” He raises his head and looks around, ensuring that all of the gathered galra take note before calmly returning to his place beside Lotor.

“Well.” Lotor pauses to get himself under control from Shiro’s display, before continuing for the human’s ears only. “I cannot imagine that was good for your ribs.”

Even though he is hurting, Shiro still has a small smile when he murmurs in return, “no, but I’m sure you’ll make it up to me later.”

Lotor smiles at the thought, at the very idea that there will be a later for them as they lead the galra side by side.

Chapter End Notes

It's been fun, hanging out over here in the Voltron Universe. I'm heading back over to the Marvel Verse, where I spend most of my time with Captain America and Loki. (A very similar ship.)

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