and i'm still waking in the morning (but it's not with you)

by jjkimchi (orphan_account)

Summary

He saw other people with Hanahaki, weakened and with flower petals stuck to their cheeks. He saw them, but he never thought he’d be them. Hell, he never pictured loving anybody. He pops a mint in his mouth, looking in the mirror. They say Hanahaki disease devours the body in less than six months if you’re lucky.
Six months isn’t nearly enough time to find another Blue Paladin.

Notes

Obviously, this is set after Keith leaves for the BOM, because we have to fit in Maximum Angst™ for Lance. I have another fic in the oven, so there will be updates, but they’ll be posted on horribly inconsistent dates.
See the end of the work for more notes.
“Lance,” Shiro says exasperatedly. “Are you even listening right now?”
“What? Yes. Of course!” Lance yelps, straightening up and sending hopefully a convincing wink at Shiro. He pushes down the uncomfortable tickle in his throat. “Just a little off today.”
“Focus. Voltron is the top priority,” Shiro chastises, turning back to the rest of the paladins.
Hunk shoots a look at Lance. Lance nods, waving him off. He turns away and coughs silently into his palm. It smells like rotten perfume.

Lance is in the bathroom when it happens next. He presses his lips together, but eventually he can’t hold it in and he’s rushing to the bathroom sink and hacking out coughs of sweet scented clouds.
The tickle in his throat has morphed into a lump. A painful one.

Lance leans back and rubs his hands over his face. He’s on the ground in the castle’s library.
Books are sprawled around him, piled everywhere like the plague. Lance can’t scrape together the energy to organize them all. His heartbeat seems a million times louder.

Hanahaki disease. Of all the shitty things that Voltron’s faced in the past.

Of course Lance isn’t stupid: he knows who the flowers in his lungs are for. Keith and his stupid soft mullet and his deep violet eyes and the way he looks at Lance sometimes, so intently. He can feel it, even through the shitty connection the Blade of Marmora base has with Voltron that allows a shaky holocall, but not much else. Keith who had literally run off into the desert to avoid interacting with other humans. Lance could only guess how a relationship with Keith would turn out.

And of course Lance knew what would transpire if Keith actually thought of him as more than the dirt beneath his shoe: the judging glances, the knowing that Keith had chosen someone inferior. Lance couldn’t bear doing that to him, seeing him suffer.

There was one other solution: getting surgery to remove the flower petals, but losing all memory of your love.
But Lance couldn’t bear looking at Keith with no recognition in his eyes, a blank slate.
He saw other people with Hanahaki, weakened and with flower petals stuck to their cheeks. He saw them, but he never thought he’d be them. Hell, he never pictured loving anybody.
He pops a mint in his mouth, looking in the mirror. They say Hanahaki disease devours the body in less than six months if you’re lucky.

Six months isn’t nearly enough time to find another Blue Paladin.
Lance’s eyes take on a steely gleam. He will find another before he dies. He will never inflict pain on any of the other paladins.

It works for about two days.

Lance holes up in his room, training like crazy in the early mornings when he’s sure Shiro or Hunk or Pidge aren’t in there. Allura and Coran rarely train anyway, and it was usually in the common room if they did.
He pauses the training sequence, panting and dropping to his knees to catch his breath. He starts coughing again. If he keeps this up, he would never need deodorant again.
His lips curve up into a twisted grin at the thought, but it fades when he looks down at his hands.
One scarlet rose petal lies in his curled palm.

Lance crushes the delicate petal in his palm, tossing it to the entrance of the training room. “Unpause training sequence,” he commands, readying his bayard. “Continuing Level 41 training sequence,” the bot says, launching itself at him. Lance feels a stab of surprise. Level 41? Even Keith, with his constant nightly training before he left, had only reached Level 34 on a good streak.

“Pause training sequence,” another voice says. A younger voice, higher. Lance turns around. “Lance,” Pidge says in the doorway, holding up the rose petal. “Care to explain what this is?”
I stayed up until literally 2 in the morning to write this, bitches.

Chapter Notes

Lance screeches and falls on his butt, scrambling away from the tiny gremlin. “Pidge, you tiny silent demon!”

Pidge rolls her eyes. “Lance, I was here for ten minutes. We’re all worried about you ‘cause you’ve been marinating up in your room the past few days. I saw everything. Including you coughing your lungs up along with a couple of petals. Which, as I recall, are the signs of Hanahaki disease.”

“Don’t tell anyone,” Lance says urgently. “I don’t want anybody to worry about me while I’m…” “Dying,” Pidge says, voice cracking on the second syllable.

Pidge softens, looking at the petal in her hand. “Who are they for?” “Keith,” Lance mutters. Pidge would know everything within five minutes if he didn’t tell her anyway.

“Lance,” Pidge says dangerously, walking up to him and touching his shoulder. “Why wouldn’t you TELL US SO WE COULD ACTUALLY TRY TO SAVE YOU AND YOUR STUPID LOVERBOY HEART?”

Lance flinches away from the harsh words. “Pidge-” “Sorry,” she apologizes immediately. “But couldn’t a healing pod save you? Even though they’re only for physical injuries, they could sew up your lung or I can, like, code it to-”

“Pidge,” Lance says softly. “There’s no cure for a broken heart.”

Pidge slumped. “But I don’t-t-I don’t-” “We’re in space, Pidge. We’re fighting an intergalactic war. Once I’m, you know, gone-”

Pidge is scowling furiously at a spot on Lance’s armor, eyes taking on a silvery sheen. “-we’re gonna need a new Blue Paladin. So could you cover for me when we’re on different planets and I disappear for a couple of hours?” “What, to find a replacement for you?” Pidge snarls viciously. “You can’t be replaced, Lance! The Blue Lion chose you!”

“Pidgeon,” Lance says pleadingly. “You’re my space sister. Do me one?”

Pidge slowly nods, shaking, before she launches herself at Lance and hugs him. Lance presses his lips together to keep from completely breaking down. “Okay. Now can I train in peace?” Lance asks. “Absolutely not,” she snaps. “We’re getting you to a healing pod so I can study these symptoms and prolong the disease’s course.” Lance wants to say it’s useless, that he’s going to die and all he wants is a nice space funeral, maybe with a bedazzled coffin, but he holds it in for now, letting Pidge grab his wrist and pull him
towards the healing pods.

He coughs into his fist, feeling another petal dislodge itself.

Chapter End Notes

Comment! Kudos! Bookmark! Review!
Chapter 3

Chapter Notes

Shoutouts to Archive users Shiloa and QueenNavi for commenting on my fic!

Go check out my other fic that I finally finished! It's titled "that's not what you were saying last night" and it's a oneshot with the space mice included!

Link is below. Just copy and paste and you should be there!

https://archiveofourown.org/works/14726042

---

Lance coughs into his sleeve, eyes darting around to the other paladins. They’re in the training room, watching Shiro and Allura spar. Normally, Shiro, or Buff Space Dad™ as Lance dubs him, would be creaming his opponent's ass, but Allura’s actually holding her own. Shiro’s sweating a little bit as he fends off her quick, deliberate attacks. Allura’s expression is almost bored as she casually sweep-kicks Shiro’s left leg, sending him sprawling.

He gets back up with a good-natured grin, shaking hands with Allura, who’s wearing a smug expression on her face. Lance doesn’t miss the exchanging of alien currency from Pidge to Hunk upon the verdict, and he’s turning to Keith to make some snide comment about how Allura could probably kick his ass, when he realizes-

Keith’s not here. He’d normally be sitting right next to Lance, close enough to brush arms whenever one of them moves, far enough so that they’re still just teammates, nothing more.

The thought has Lance choking and spitting out rose petals, vibrant against the muted colors of his hoodie. He sweeps them into his pocket before anyone notices, except, of course, for Pidge, who shoots him a knowing, devastating look.

---

Red is the color of Keith’s armor, the bright scarlet accents on the shoulders and knees. Red is the color of Keith’s jacket, bright against the stars in the galaxy they’re in. Red is the color of the impulsive, vibrant lion so much like Keith. Red is the color of Keith’s bayard, deadly yet graceful as it attacks and protects. The color red almost seems tailored to Keith. Like it was made for him.

Red is the color of the roses dripping out of Lance’s mouth. He lets out a bitter laugh, seeing red. Of fucking course it’s about Keith. Lance can’t get Keith out of his mind.

And of fucking course Lance is caught again.

He’s dying as quietly as possible, gripping the wastebasket to steady himself and honestly just feeling like Kaltenecker’s shit, when there’s a knock on the door.

“Lance? Buddy? Are you all right?”

Lance lets out a stream of “fuck shit crap” as he leaps up and shoves the wastebasket behind the toilet, letting Hunk in and trying to look as “Me? Coughing up flowers? Ha!” as possible.

“Lance,” Hunk says seriously, staring him down.

“Hunk! Yellow ray of sunshine! Well, looks like you’re awfully busy, so I’m just gonna-”
Hunk puts out a hand to stop Lance edging past him, then walks into the bathroom, inspecting every corner. Lance chases after him, panic making him wring his hands.

“Hunk, buddy, is there really a need for this? I mean, this is just creepy. You—”

Hunk lifts up the wastebasket, stiffening as he sees what’s inside.

There’s a small mountain of red petals piled inside, some of them lined with the barest hint of blood. Actually, it’s morbidly impressive.

Lance bites his lip as Hunk turns around. But instead of beating the crap out of him or shouting like Pidge, Hunk just says so quietly, numbly, “How long?”

“Six days,” Lance mumbles, rubbing his hands up and down his face. “Hunk—”

“Who are they for?” Hunk asks, cutting him off.

“How long?”

“Six days,” Lance mumbles again.

“Hunk, do I really need to tell you?” Lance says sarcastically, gesturing to the small can, almost overflowing with rose petals.

“Oh. Oh. Oh, Lance,” Hunk says softly, gathering him up for a hug, and although Hunk’s hugs would usually comfort anyone, Lance pulls away, muttering, “Don’t ‘Oh, Lance’ me.”

“Did you tell Keith yet?” Hunk asks, and Lance’s heart rips in half every time he hears ‘Keith.’

“No,” Lance mumbles, looking down at the floor. “I don’t know if I ever will.”

“And I know you would never get the surgery,” Hunk chokes out, eyes starting to shine with unshed tears. “Because you could never bear the thought of forgetting Keith.”

“Hunk. Can you do me a favor?” Lance asks.


“Stop treating me differently,” Lance says. “It’s no big deal. So I’m going to die. So what? I mean, Allura’s a better pilot than I ever was, and Coran can still navigate, and I’m not—”

“Shut up, Lance!” Hunk yells, wiping away a tear trailing down his cheek. “The Blue Lion chose you for a reason, didn’t she? People care about you here, Lance. It’s not like the Garrison. You’re part of our family here.”

“Yeah? Then explain how easy it is—was—for Keith to leave us,” Lance says angrily. “He left because he cared about us, Lance,” Hunk says softly. “Because he cared about you.” Lance looks away.

“Lance?” Hunk says.

“What?”

“If you’re going to—to die, than can’t you at least live life to the fullest while you can?”

Lance looks up. “Hunk. You know that’s all I want to do, but Voltron needs a new Blue Paladin. The universe isn’t going to stop without me, and I kind of have to do my part.”

Hunk nods, looking at Lance as if he’s trying to memorize his features. “But can you at least do Movie Night tonight?”

Lance nods, smiling. “Of course.”

He touches his throat, which feels like a million needles are stabbing it, wondering when he got so gloriously fucked.

Lance knows that in the ending stages of Hanahaki, the stems start coming up. And in Lance’s case, they’re going to have thorns.
THE LANGST IS REAL IN THIS CHAPTER, GUYS.
Gah I keep forgetting the space mice! I'M SO SORRY SPACE MICE. I PROMISE YOU'LL BE IN THIS FIC I SWEAR.

Comment! Bookmark! Kudos! Wax poetic about me! Lord knows I need it with my disgustingly low self-esteem!

Archive user LadyOrapma commented about some confusion w/Allura's lion and Lance, and oml thank u so much for bringing that up! i'm going a little bit off canon here: allura pilots red here, lance pilots blue, hunk the golden boi is yellow, and pidge is green, shiro of course pilots black (i know there's a whole thing about shiro and not-shiro, but i couldn't keep track, so it's just space dad shiro).
They’re watching some Altean soap opera that no one except for Allura and Coran can understand when Shiro whispers, “Lance, can I talk to you?”

Lance follows him out, feeling a growing pit in his stomach. In the hallway, Shiro looks at Lance for a long time before speaking. “Why won’t you tell Keith?” “What-how did you figure it out?” Lance whisper-shouts panickedly. Shiro just points at the scarlet petals scattered around the hallway. Lance remembers he’d been stumbling out of his bedroom at one, two, three in the morning and coughing. Apparently he hadn’t been cleaning up after himself very well.

And apparently everyone on the whole goddamn ship knows about Lance’s gigantic crush.

Shiro puts a hand on his shoulder. “Lance, I’ve seen Hanahaki firsthand.” Lance fidgets with the ties of his hoodie as he listens. “You need to get help, but I’ll respect whatever choice you make in the end.” He walks back to the movie, giving a reassuring smile at Lance as he goes.

Lance slides down to the floor, burying his face in his hoodie and wondering when he became this pathetic and obvious for Keith.

Lance is sweating and glaring at the bot as it lands another punch. His bayard is back in his room, and Lance can’t muster up the energy to limp back to his room, coughing every single second and ignoring the sympathetic looks from his teammates.

He knows he’s the weak link, but he doesn’t need to be reminded.

He knows Shiro’s told Allura and Coran already, because Coran’s desperately trying to program a healing pod to fix Lance. Allura’s been attempting to try to talk to him in private, and normally Lance would be absolutely thrilled at the thought of a beautiful alien princess interacting with him, but he’s had enough with his friends trying to comfort him when they all know he’s going to die in a few weeks. Even the space mice, normally so energetic, are either hiding in some alcove or perched on Allura’s shoulder.

Last night, he felt the pain double, even triple in his throat, before he coughed out an entire flower, laced with blood. He grabbed his throat, crying out silently and gasping for help. But no one was there. No one heard a sound.

He’s heaving and dripping with sweat by the time the bot cheerfully announces, “Level 52 cleared. Commencing Level 53.”

53. Even Shiro, the best close-range fighter on their team other than Keith, had only reached Level 41 on his best day.

Lance couldn’t even smile. He would have jumped up and ran immediately to the common room, bragging about how he was the absolute shit. Keith would have rolled his eyes, but there would still be a glint of pride in his eyes.

Lance sighed, picked up his bayard, and braced himself.
They’re rescuing a small alien planet, one of at least fifteen in the past week. All of the paladins are tired, although Shiro and Allura, as always, play the generous diplomats to the grateful aliens (who look like furries, a fact that Lance whispers to Pidge immediately).

Lance surveys the small crowd of furries/aliens. They look like the most dangerous thing they’ve ever held in their life is a marshmallow. Not very fitting for the Blue Paladin and the more daring feel of the lion. Lance sighs. They’ve been rescuing peaceful aliens for the majority of the week, and Lance still can’t find a fit.

Shiro and Allura are talking together, voices low, when Shiro comes over to Hunk, Pidge, and Lance. “The inhabitants of this planet and their leader are inviting us to a ceremonial dance and mind reading. Apparently, it’s a special trait of theirs.”

“I mean, we haven’t really had fun in a while, so…” Hunk trails off, looking at Lance anxiously.

“Do you want to go?”

Lance plasters a smile on his face. “Of course I want to go! Dancing, food, creepy alien furries reading our minds sounds like a hell of a night.”

“They’re giving us our own chambers tonight,” Allura says, smiling. “A nice touch.” Lance trails after the other paladins, mind stuck on dance. He used to dance on Earth. Mostly contemporary, some hip hop. He quit after he was accepted into the Garrison, not for falling out of love, but because he loved it too much.

Maybe he can learn again.

---

Chapter End Notes

---

SPACE MICE SPACE MICE SPACE MICE

Langst was very intense, space mice appeared, Shiro found out, space mice appeared, Lance is a BAMF, space mice appeared, and there will be dancing in the next chapter! Oh, and the space mice appeared. Can you tell I’m a little bit obsessed with them at this point?

Fill my pathetic lonely soul with the drive to write by commenting nice things and leaving kudos and bookmarking!
Chapter 5

Chapter Summary

Dancing! Lance dancing! Space mice in tuxedos! There's a bunch of crap about clothes here, so you can skip over that shit. Lance and Pidge sibling bonding! Furries!

Shoutout to Midnight_fries, GirlKnight, and Bluejayday for commenting! TAKE NOTES FROM THEM. COMMENT. RAWR.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The clothes provided for them by these aliens seem a little skimpy.

But hey, it’s not like Lance is complaining. They're going to a banquet, he gets his fortune told, and he gets to dance. He spins around, finger gunning at his reflection in the mirror. He’s wearing what could vaguely pass for a tuxedo on Earth, but the tail of the suit is more like a bride’s train. And there’s an undershirt, but it’s basically a blue crop top. And there are thigh high boots.

It’s ridiculous. Lance loves it.

And there’s a white handkerchief on the nightstand. Lance knows what it’s for, and he actually flinches away from it before picking it up and stuffing it in a pocket.

He opens his door and steps into the hallway, decorated with carved sconces and pale silken curtains. Obviously the furries spare no expense for their guests. Pidge is already sitting against the wall. She has on some kind of rose gold, frilly dress that’s eerily similar to an onion.


“Like an onion,” she says, voicing Lance’s inner thoughts exactly.
Lance kisses his teeth. “I mean…”
“Don’t mince words,” Pidge says miserably.

“Actually, I think I can fix this disaster of a dress,” Lance says thoughtfully. “My sisters could never find the right dress for dances, so I had to sew a lot.” He loses himself for a second in thoughts of his family, so large yet so close-knit, a million light years away.

“Anyway, my point is that if we just crop the skirt, tighten the bodice, use some extra material for a train, and maybe change up the silhouette, we can get this to look a little better,” he says.

“I’ll take any help I can get at this point,” Pidge mutters, fluffing up her skirt.

A couple minutes later, Lance steps back and looks at his masterpiece. “Oh, right! We need a mirror!”

He runs in his room and drags out the gargantuan silver mirror against his wall. Pidge gasps at her reflection, twirling around in a surprisingly girly moment. “Lance!”
“Jesus. Did I fuck it up? Please tell me I didn’t fuck it up, because-”
“This is amazing!” Pidge squeals. “Thank you!”

Pidge’s skirt is shorter, but still flares out. Lance made the bodice a little higher, making the neckline end at her neck. She has a train of rose gold fabric tied around her head, attached to a circlet. Lance is actually really proud, considering it took only fifteen minutes to do.

Pidge launches herself at him, whispering in his ear, “You’re a lifesaver.”
Lance puffs up under her gratitude. “They don’t call me the tailor for nothing.”
Lance laughs. “Where’s everybody else?”
“Still changing. You were the second to come out.”

Just then, Hunk emerges from his room in a black tuxedo with yellow accents and a silver circlet on his head. “Dude. The furries have the best taste in clothes.”
“I am hot shit,” Lance says proudly, spinning around.

Shiro comes out next, in a formal black shirt with sheer gold-edged fabric hanging down from it, pants with two vertical silver stripes down them, and heels. They’re slight, but they are unmistakably heels.
“I feel uncomfortable,” Shiro mutters, looking down at himself.
“Eyeliner on fleek, Shiro,” Lance says, giving him a thumbs up.

Allura and Coran are last. Coran is, weirdly enough, in a tuxedo with a tutu...thing under it, but he pales in comparison to Allura, in a long cerulean dress with arm circlets. Honestly, there are no words. Everyone’s turned at least a little gay for Allura in that second.

“Holy shit,” Lance mumbles. Hunk and Pidge are staring just as unabashedly as he is. And Shiro is staring at Allura with the most whipped look on a grown man Lance has ever seen. “Ten bucks that Shiro is going to melt into a little puddle of cherry Jello by the end of the night,” Pidge mutters to Lance.
“Oh, you’re on,” Lance says. “I say he’s going to trip at least twenty times during the night.”

Lance almost hesitates before entering the ballroom. It’s at the back of his mind: Keith would always be at his side, warm and comforting.
Lance glares at the ground. He doesn’t need Keith. Yes, he is a pining mess, but this pining mess of a blue paladin is going to have fun tonight, and hopefully find a new blue paladin.

“Paladin!”
Lance turns around from the pretty furry/alien at the voice.
“Would you like to partake in a dance contest?” the furry inquires.
“Sorry. I don’t really...do solo dancing anymore,” Lance says, turning away.
“It would do you good, Lance Mcclain. I can see your memories from Earth. You are reluctant to say no, yes?” his dance partner whispers.
“I just don’t want to put myself in the spotlight,” Lance says, scratching his neck. “That’s all.”
“We have prepared a special queue of Earthen music for your style of dance,” the furry says, cocking her head. “Just one dance, yes?”
Lance is about to turn her down when he catches Allura’s death glare from across the ballroom, where she’s dancing with the space mice in tuxedos. The message is clear: don’t screw the alliance up.

“I would be honored to,” Lance says, bowing slightly and winking.
“Excellent! I will give you a song presently,” the furry enthuses, hurrying away.
A couple seconds later, the starting notes of Jason Derulo’s Swalla come on.

Oh no.

Lance forces himself to put a confident smirk on his face as he walks to the cleared dance area. He remembers the last routine he choreographed before he left for the Garrison was this exact song. He looks around at the enthralled furries and fucking dances. He’s grateful for the crop top now, enabling him to swish his midriff like the world is ending. Ty Dolla $ign’s verse comes on, and he drops to the floor in the lowest squat he’s ever done, rolling up and letting the weird bridal train on his clothes whip behind him as he stretches out one leg. It’s exhausting and he’s never felt unsexier in his life as he sweats and actually flips across the floor at Nicki’s verse, but the furries and his teammates seem to think otherwise. As the last notes ring out and he ends in a kneel, looking up, there’s dead silence.

Hunk breaks it with a wild round of applause. “Yeah!”

Lance stands up, smiling weakly and hearing the entire ballroom clap for him. More than a few furries are openly blushing at his dancing. When the furries mob him, though, asking how did he do that, can they have an autograph, holy shit Lance when did you learn that (that was from Pidge), he makes an escape, citing a bathroom emergency. He sits down, running a hand through his sweaty hair. He feels dangerously close to collapsing. He lurches forward as a fit of coughs rip through him.

Where are you, Keith, he thinks desperately, looking at the rose with pinpricks of blood on its thorns.

Meanwhile, Keith is raiding a Galra ship, hissing as a bullet whistles through his shoulder.

Chapter End Notes

AHH KEITH IS IN DANGER AND I JUST LEFT YOU GUYS ON A CLIFFHANGER GAH

I’M SORRY

BUT I’M ALSO NOT

SPACE MICE IN TUXEDOS Y’ALL!
(I need fanart of space mice in tuxedos rn. If one of you could comment with a link to your art for this fic that’d be awesome okay?!)

You guys. Lance and Pidge being meme siblings. AAAH

Exciting news! KROLIA IS COMING IN THE NEXT CHAPTER Y’ALL! YES I LOVE KROLIA BEING MY MULLET SON’S MOTHER YES

Bookmark! Comment! Kudos! Moan about my emo son Keith almost being FUCKING KILLED
Chapter 6

Chapter Summary

Go check out another super short, full of tooth rotting fluff, oneshot fic I just wrote! It's called ambuLANCE, took me about ten minutes to bang out on my laptop, and features Klance being soft to each other! GO READ IT RN.

Also, shoutout to AO3 user Erin for commenting and OFFERING TO DRAW FANART, IF I'M INTERPRETING THAT COMMENT RIGHT. Please draw me some space mice in elegant, *swashbuckling* tuxedoes. Make me proud. I love fanart. *rolls around on bed, screeching*

What are you waiting for? Go read!

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Keith slams his head into the Galra, knocking its weapon out of its hand. He’s up and running down the corridor before it can get up. He pants, wiping his forehead. They were just supposed to get information on Zarkon’s next attack and get out, but Galra had found them before Kolivan could ready an escape route. Keith’s hood sticks to the wall as he slides down, peering around the corner.

“Shit,” he hisses as he sees more soldiers coming down the hallway.

Just then, a blur crashes into him from above. Keith has his knife in his uninjured hand before he registers who it is.

“I’ve configured an escape plan. Get the message around,” Kolivan hisses, climbing back into the air vent.

“Affirm-” Keith starts, breaking it off with a series of coughs.

“Keith, are you all right?” Kolivan calls from the vent plate.

“I’m fine,” Keith rasps. “Go.”

He catches the bloody cornflowers in his glove, crushing them beneath his foot. Of course he knows who it's for.

Of course, that person is on the other side of the galaxy, sticking with the team instead of abandoning them because he’s scared. Scared of that confident smile and the way he calls him “Mullet” mockingly and the quiet tap on his wall at night, saying he’s there, it'll be okay.

Stupid Lance. Stupid, stupid Keith.

“Go through the vents,” he barks to Ilun and Vrek. Ilun grunts out a “roger that” as she sweep-kicks a soldier’s ankles.

Keith launches himself up, grabbing hold of the metal vent’s edge, hissing as the sharp corner slices into his palm through his glove. Hoisting the rest of himself up, he hunches down and starts crawling through the vents, following the trail of seeds Kolivan left in his wake.

Soon enough, he’s standing on the verge of a giant ship dock, climbing down carefully.
“Keith!” a feminine voice calls. “Jump down. I’ll catch you.”

Keith stubbornly ignores his mother, sweating the rest of the way down the tall, smooth wall. He sucks in his breath as his shoulder wound stretches out.

“Keith, let me see,” Krolia says, taking ahold of his arm. Keith tugs his arm away silently.

“Keith,” Kolivan says dangerously.

Keith is still silent, but he allows Krolia to turn over his arm gently, inspecting it. “Looks like we can just air it out. Luckily the bullet went straight through, so there’s not as much damage as there could have been. I’m relieved,” Krolia said quietly.

She glares at Keith. “Don’t ever do that again! It’s not okay to think that sacrificing yourself for the team is a run-of-the-mill thing.”

“And leaving your son to fend for himself is?” Keith shouts, breaking his silence for the first time in weeks.

The silence stretches out for what seems like centuries as they stare at each other. Krolia opens and closes her mouth, looking at Keith.

“Why don’t we discuss this back at base,” Kolivan finally says, laying a heavy hand on Keith’s shoulder. Behind them, Ilun and Vrek drop down with two heavy thuds.

Keith crosses his arms, staring at his mother. Krolia is starting to say something, but she stops every time she opens her mouth. “I’m sorry,” Keith bursts out. “I know you were just trying to protect me and everything by leaving, but I was so mad for all these years and-”

“No. Keith, I’m at fault here. I should have stayed with you and taught you everything you needed to know. I’m sorry for abandoning you and leaving you to figure out everything on your own,” Krolia says, blinking furiously. The normally fierce, calculating spy is staring at Keith like he’s still a tiny baby, in need of protection.

Keith blinks once, twice.

Krolia pulls him into a hug, and although it’s awkward, although they haven’t had a lot of experience, Keith buries his face in her shoulder, feeling something stir in his chest.

And then the pressure must dislodge something in his chest. Because he’s coughing like he’s going to die, and Krolia is saying something distantly, is that his name, and Keith is thinking that his mother can’t lose him again, but he can’t lose Lance, and there’s an entire fucking bouquet of bloody cornflowers and he’s spitting out petals, and Krolia’s yelling now--

-  

Lance whistles hoarsely as he walks in the kitchen, where Hunk is baking cookies. “You feeling okay?” Hunk says, looking at his pale teammate whose clothes have gotten ten times baggier in the past few days.

Lance barely remembers stumbling out of the bathroom of the furries, being escorted to the ship, Hunk half supporting, half carrying him to the healing pods to buy him a few extra days.

None of that matters now. What’s a few extra days in the entire scheme of the universe?
Blue roars mournfully in his mind. Even she can sense his dying life force. What it’ll mean for Voltron.

Speaking of which, he pulls a paper with five or six names on it. Hunk is trying not to look and be caught, but he’s always been terrible at subtlety.

“You know all those planets we’ve been running ourselves ragged for, like, the past week?” Lance says, not looking up from the paper.

“Yeah,” Hunk says. “What about them?”

“I’ve been gathering names of the bravest aliens. The ones that’ll be best for... for Blue. And you guys,” Lance says, coughing into his fist. “You know, the new Blue Paladin.”

Just then, Shiro runs into the room. He’s sweating, like he paused a training session and ran halfway around the castle. But when Lance looks closer, he realizes Shiro’s not sweating because he’s tired.

Shiro is scared. No, terrified. And anything that can ruffle Space Dad™ is undoubtedly bad news.

“It’s Keith,” Shiro gasps out.

Chapter End Notes

AHAHAHAAHAHA I AM EVIL. CLIFFHANGERS.

This fic is actually nearing its end! I'm so happy?? I love you guys so fucking much for staying with me *cries*

BUT HOW BOUT THAT KROLIA KEITH MOTHER SON RELATIONSHIP
There's so much angst I'm sorry. Space mice didn't appear, but THEY WILL IN THE NEXT CHAPTER I SWEAR.

VOLTRON S6 COMES OUT IN THIRTEEN FUCKING DAYS WOOT WOOT

Bookmark! Comment! Kudos! Bolster my h o r r i b l e ego!
Chapter 7

Chapter Summary

LANCE MEETS KROLIA, MY BLUE BOI IS IN DENIAL, ANGST ANGST ANGST

been helping a friend propose to his *girlfriend*, doing homework, practicing violin, preparing for incredibles 2, and what am i doing? writing fanfiction. hahahahaha *sobs*

Shoutout to Ao3 users OverInvestedFangirl and ButThatsNoneOfMyBusiness for commenting! every time i get a comment, i actually roll around on the floor and spasm like a dying pterodactyl. no lie

Read! Revel in the UTTER STUPIDNESS OF MY SPACE BOIS

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Even Allura, perpetually focused and cool, can’t hold back a gasp when Krolia barrels in with a limping Keith, arm bandaged and blood flecking the corners of his mouth.

“He just collapsed, Princess. I don’t know-I don’t know what I’ll-I’d do. What of he-he’s going to-,” Krolia stutters out between tears, wringing her hands on the hospital bed.

“Not if I can help it,” Allura says grimly, supporting Keith as they stumble to a healing pod.

Just then, Hunk, Pidge, and Shiro run in. Pidge’s eyes are blown wide in fear at the sight of Keith, Hunk’s hands are still in oven mitts, as if he’s dropped everything he was doing before, and Shiro…

Allura knows Shiro was a brother to Keith, supporting him through his Garrison days and searching tirelessly for a way to communicate with him on Kerberos. She knows that feeling of helplessness, of feeling that someone is disappearing in front of you while you watch. Shiro looks stoic, but he's breaking apart.
It’s the exact feeling of watching her father being hijacked by the Galra crystal.

She watches Coran scuttle around, running his hands through his hair, biting his lip, before he turns to Allura slowly. “I’m-I’m afraid there is nothing we can do. If we hold Number 4-Keith in stasis much longer, the disease will only heighten its path.”

“But is there a cure?” Krolia interjects.

Coran’s silence is an ample answer.

Lance leans against the doorway, heaving. “You guys are really...freakin’...fast.”

A stab of guilt goes through each of them as they remember the Blue paladin. Immediately, Hunk is there, holding him up to crawl across the room and sit.
Krolia is staring at him, nonplussed. “You have the same disease?”

“You’re Keith’s mom?” Lance blurs out.

“You...you are Keith’s-” Krolia starts.

“Keith has Hanahaki?” Lance says, eyes widening.

“Keith has Hanahaki for this boy,” Krolia breathes, everything falling into place.

“No, I have Hanahaki for Keith, and Keith has it for someone else,” Lance says. “Right?”

“What’s even happening right now,” Keith croaks, leaning on Coran.

“What’s happening is that the both of you are oblivious idiots who won’t talk to each other about your feelings,” Hunk mutters in a rare burst of irritation.

“Hunk?” Lance ventures. “Are you saying what I think-”

“Let’s give them a little bit of alone time,” Shiro says. “Hopefully they’ll work their feelings out with each other.”

“Are you sure this will work?” Pidge says quietly to Allura as they walk out.

“Well, if it doesn’t, there’s nothing else we can do,” Allura says finally. “And then we will have lost a Paladin and a Blade, both devastating losses.” She sits down against the door with the rest of the paladins and Krolia.

Pidge is furiously typing on her computer to distract herself. Allura talks quietly with Shiro and Coran. Krolia leans back against the door, burying her head in her hands.

"Shiro, if we can’t get them to-" Allura starts.

"We will," Shiro says firmly. "We have to."

Coran’s mustache lies limp across his face as he considers the possibility of the complex Blue Paladin and the recluse Blade of Marmora member together. It’s not a far stretch in his imagination, but it’s speculation if they feel the same way. And if they can act on it before it’s too late. He didn’t tell Krolia this, but they’re both mere hours from death.

Krolia hasn’t moved from her position against the door since she slid down with a stony face.

"Krolia?” Allura ventures. "Are you...upset with Keith?”

“No,” she says succinctly. "I’m terrified for him. He’s never...had to open up to someone before, and he might get hurt now, and I know that the Blue Paladin is a good match for him, but they can’t voice it."

"We know," Shiro says, laying a hand on her shoulder. "We just need to let them work things out on their own."

But the words are empty, filler words, and they both know it.

The space mice reflect the entire mood of the team as they form a dejected pile between Hunk’s feet.
“I know,” Hunk says softly to them, feeding one of them a cookie in small crumbs. “I need them with us too.”

There’s flowers littering the ground inside the room and his friends’ lungs, red and blue, and although they’re beautiful, they’re killing Hunk’s family.

Chapter End Notes

okay I swear we're super close to the end i'm just. really touched?? by all the *positivity* this fanfic has gotten in comparison to my trashy wattpad account (which is now deleted, so don't even try) and i can't believe i'm actually getting -fanart- for this angst ridden lump of a story eek!

VERY EXCITING NEWS: I HAVE FANART! Erin (aka wheredidslavevengo on tumblr, aka Phichits_BrowserHistory on Ao3) has posted fanart on her tumblr of the SPACE MICE IN TUXEDOES. Find it right here: https://wheredidslavevengo.tumblr.com/post/174541809036/alluras-mice-in-tuxedos-chulatt-platt

*dies*

Bookmark! Comment! Kudos!
Chapter 8

Chapter Summary

CONFESSIONS. KISSING. ANGST.
(not in that particular order)

This is the next to last chapter, you guys! Thank you so much for commenting, bookmarking, and showing your support. You guys are awesome. *wipes away tears*

OKAY, SAPPY MOMENT OVER. GO READ.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Blue is mournful inside Lance’s mind as he looks at Keith. She was there through every single up and down with Keith, knows how he feels every time he smiles at him.

My paladin cannot go on like this, she says to Lance.

I won’t, Lance says to her. I’ll make sure you get a better paladin. I swear.

I don’t need a better paladin. I need you.

Lance ignores her.

Keith is massaging his arm, partially healed, but still wrapped in a bandage.

“Does it hurt?” Lance asks, the first words shaky and hoarse.

“Not as much now,” Keith mumbles, looking away.

Lance nods. They’re silent.

Until Keith lets out a cough and a bright blue cornflower drifts to the floor. If there was any doubt in Lance’s mind about who Keith had Hanahaki for, it’s erased now.

“Keith,” he whispers. “Why me?”

“I don’t know. Why do I like you? Why do you like me? Why did all of this even happen?” Keith bursts out, looking at Lance for the first time. “Lance, I’m replaceable. The Blade can easily recruit someone stronger than me. You’re not. You’re a paladin of Voltron. Blue chose you.”

“Paladin of Voltron, my ass,” Lance says vehemently. “I’m replaceable too, Mullet. There are scads of aliens stronger, faster, braver than me.”

Keith buries his face in his hands. “I don’t know why I love you. I don’t know why I had to run away to get you to see me as more than...whatever you have for me.”

“Keith,” Lance says softly.
He looks up.

“We both think we’re too fucked up for each other. Isn’t that right?” Lance says. “Well, I might just be a cargo pilot to you, but I still want you.” He speaks plainly, clearly, through the blood in his throat.

Keith stares at him like Lance just plucked the moon from the night for him. He coughs weakly, but this time, there’s no blood. Or cornflowers. Not even a petal. He touches his throat in wonder.

Completely healed.

He sucks in a breath, as does Lance. Lance breathes in experimentally, starting to smile when there’s no tears of pain coming to his eyes.

“It’s gone,” they say at the same time, then laugh.

And then Pidge, Hunk, and Shiro burst in, with the Alteans and Krolia close behind, barraging them with “are you better do you need anything you look better did you finally admit your feelings you dumb bricks” (Pidge).


Krolia beams, kissing his pale forehead and squeezing the life out of her son.

“Hi,” Lance says brightly. “I’m better. Okay, I don’t feel comfortable saying this, but can you guys get out right now?”

“Why?” Hunk says, a little wounded. “I had cookies.”

“Because I just confessed to my crush and found out he liked me since the Garrison, so I’d like some privacy so I can maybe make out with him for a couple hours,” Lance deadpans. “What do you think?”

“Okay, everybody out,” Shiro says, herding the paladins out. “Oh, Keith and Lance?”

They both look up.

“Use protection,” Shiro says, winking and closing the door.

“Ignore him,” Lance whispers, leaning in.

It’s not perfect, not chaste like a fairy tale. It’s messy, with the faint taste of roses and cornflowers and blood, and they’re still weakened and dizzy.

But it’s theirs, and they’d never trade it for anything else.

Keith pulls away first, hot breath wafting over his face. He realizes his eyes are closed, opens them.

“Hi,” he says.

“Hi,” Lance says back. They both burst out laughing, leaning on each other as if they’ve known this all their life.

-  

There will be side effects. They’ll both have breathing problems, maybe for the rest of his life.
Lance will have a scar along his neck, where he clawed his skin away during a particularly bad fit. Keith will have to pause his training to breathe in and out. They'll both wake up in the middle of the night, sweating and palms aching from loneliness.

And then the other will reach out for them, holding him tight, until they drift into sleep.

Chapter End Notes

ATTENTION: THIS FANFIC IS NOT OVER YET. This does seem like a good ending, doesn't it? BUT NO. THERE IS A REASON I DID THAT ENTIRE CHAPTER WITH LANCE DANCING TO SWALLA.

(so Keith can tease him about it. duh)

AND IT WILL BE TURNED INTO AN EPILOGUE, HOPEFULLY POSTED ASAP.

This was a pretty big project for me (a multi-chapter fanfic that i actually finished and had the balls to post here!), so I'll probably write a bunch of oneshots, maybe group them into a series. I've always liked soulmate!, fashion model!, and olympic! AU... in other words, the disgustingly cliche ones. ack.

Bookmark! Comment! Kudos!
Chapter 9

Chapter Summary

It's the end of our journey, my friends. *cries* Thank you for reading, fangirl/boy-ing over it, and commenting nice things. Lance and Keith survived! So proud.

What's in this chapter? Lance and Keith making out, Keith reacting to Lance dancing, the space mice being good with tech, some Shallura, and some of Pidge being a little shit. Nothing really action packed and zombie apocalypse-esque really happens here. Really, it's just wrapping loose ends up and whatnot. And fluff. Large quantities of it. I know, very exciting. GO READ.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“Hey, Keith,” Pidge says over a bowl of food goo. “Did I ever tell you about this planet we rescued that had literal furries on it?”

“Um, no. Sounds interesting, though,” Keith replies, a little confused. Everyone is gathered around the ship’s table, save a navigating Coran. Keith is still in his Blade of Marmora suit. Every time Keith and Lance see each other again, it takes at least twenty minutes for anyone else to get close to the kissing couple. (Hunk timed it.) Of course, they communicate through holocalls every day, but it’s not the same as feeling the other boy next to him.

“Pidge, what are you doing?” Lance asks, confused and more than a little suspicious. Beside him, Hunk and Shiro’s eyes widen as they realize what Pidge is scheming. Shiro is sitting next to Allura, his hand covering hers on the table. (They say they’re just teammates. Fat chance.)

“Just updating dear Keith on everything that’s happened,” Pidge says innocently. “Anyway, we did some kickass shit, did the diplomatic talks, yadda yadda.”

“Language,” Shiro says.

Lance’s eyes widen as he realizes what Pidge is going to reveal. “Pidge I’ll do your laundry for a month no no no-”

Pidge clamps her hand over his mouth, pinching his lips shut so he can’t bite his way out. “And then guess what?”

“What?” Keith asks, playing along. Lance glares at him, slapping Pidge's hand away. “Keith, you’re supposed to be on my side, no matter what.”

“I am,” Keith says affectionately, kissing Lance on the chin. “It’s just that when Pidge gets that gleam in her eye, I know it’s juicy.”

“Man, how did I ever think you were straight? No straight guy would ever say ‘juicy’,” Lance mumbles to himself.

“They invited us to a party,” Pidge says, lazily twirling her spoon around. “A dancing party, in
“Pidge,” Lance whines. “You’re just dragging out my torture now.”

Pidge plows on. “And the thoughtful furries provided us with a special selection of Earthen music. Tell me, Keith, have you ever heard about Jason Derulo?”

“He sings about butts and stuff,” Keith says. “I think.”

“Correct. And the furries, of course enamored with Lance and his past history of choreography, invited him to dance,” Pidge continues. “Keith, name the most Lance song by Jason Derulo you can.”

“Oh my god,” Keith mumbles to himself, putting the pieces together. “Lance danced to Swalla.”

“I did not,” Lance moans, putting his head on the table.

“Don’t we have a recording?” Shiro asks Pidge, winking at her. “I remember everybody wanted to show their friends.”

“In fact, Shiro, we do!” Pidge replies. “Thank the heavens you helpfully reminded me. Platt, pull up recording #30B2.”

The yellow mouse dashes across the control board, bringing up a hologram. It’s slightly wobbly, as if recorded with a shaky hand. Lance appears in the middle of Nicki Minaj’s verse, practically eye-fucking every single furry in the audience.

Lance, in real life, is mumbling a long stream of curse words. “Pidge, I will kill you and bring you back to life so I can kill you again.”

“You don’t scare me,” Pidge laughs. “Oh, here’s the good part!”

“Are you wearing thigh high heels?” Keith asks as the onscreen Lance executes the lowest squat in history, kicking his leg out and arching his back.

“Maybe,” Lance says resignedly, sullen and slumped down.

“Did you choreograph this, though?” Allura asks. “It’s very impressive, with the level of physical fitness it must require. And yet you never train. Voluntarily, at least. How did you keep up this level?”

“I made this up on Earth, in the privacy of an empty dance studio where I didn’t think anybody would ever have to see me,” Lance says, cringing as his virtual self stretches out on the floor, flipping up on his knees. “And I may have practiced it. A couple times. At night. In my room.”

Onscreen Lance strikes a pose as the furries’ wild applause takes over the audio. Plachu scampers over and shuts it off.

“That was…” Keith begins.

“Horribly fucking embarrassing,” Lance groans, scooting his chair out, slowly getting up, and starting towards Pidge. “Pidge, you wanna know something?”

“I know everything,” Pidge says casually.

“I have a small reserve of patience, but a large reserve of endurance, which means I can chase you
around this castle indefinitely.” Lance makes a grab for the tiny green Paladin.

Pidge laughs maniacally and scurries out like a squirrel.

“So, Keith,” Shiro begins, smiling terribly. “What’d you think?”

Keith opens and closes his mouth, uncharacteristically red. “I-I have to go.”
He pushes in his chair and follows Lance.

A few seconds later, Pidge runs back in through the other door. “Looped back,” she pants. “Lance is fucking athletic.”

“Language!” Shiro says again, indignantly.

“Your Space Dad is showing, Shiro,” Pidge says in reply.

“Keith?” Lance shrieks from somewhere in the hallway, followed by a thump. A couple of them. And then rustling fabric.

“You know what?” Shiro says to nobody, putting his head down on the table. “I’m not going to go investigate. I have too many problems already.”

“They’re deflowering the hallway,” Hunk says faintly. “I’m never going to be able to look at them again.”

“Bet they’ve done the dirty on every surface of this castle,” Pidge says casually.

Allura blinks. She’s probably been hopelessly confused for this entire conversation. “I don’t get it.” She shakes her head. “I’ll go help Coran.”

“Princess!” Shiro says quickly, launching out of his seat after her. When she turns around, he rubs the back of his neck, seemingly at a loss for words after his outburst. “Um...I’ll go with you.”

Allura just looks at him with a raised eyebrow/smirk combination. “For official, grown up, purposes, I assume.”

Shiro turns beet red. “Good wording.”

“Shiro and Allura are such good friends,” Hunk says blissfully, squeezing his cheeks. Pidge side eyes him, deciding to keep her mouth shut. Behind her, the door to Lance’s room slams shut. She makes a mental note to blackmail Keith on any hickeys he’ll have tomorrow.

Voltron is fighting. Lance and Keith finally admitted their feelings to each other. Hopefully Shiro and Allura will. Eventually.

They’re all in a galactic space war with high stakes and enemies, and it’s scary, but it’ll be okay in the end. And if Lance ever decides to piss Pidge off again, she’s armed and ready.

Yes, everything is okay.

Chapter End Notes

(And then Zarkon drops dead and they all go home and live happily ever after.)
I JUST REALIZED I TOTALLY FORGOT ABOUT LOTOR. JESUS FUCKING CHRIST. (He just doesn't exist, I guess??)

DID YOU LIKE THAT ENDING? I KNOW I DID. IT WAS BEAUTIFUL.

Seriously didn't expect to get this many kudos and hits. Guess my blue boi's angst paid off pretty well.

Check out my other fics, which are all disGUSTINGLY fluffy! They are (in no particular order), "ambuLANCE", "shiro gives the Talk", and "that's not what you were saying last night." Read them as a remedy to the emotional rollercoaster you may feel after this fic.

And as I type this sentence, I end the epic, angst filled saga of Lance and Keith with Hanahaki!

*bows and accepts bouquet of roses and cornflowers*

End Notes

Comment!

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!