Gotta Go Right Now (But I Don’t Want to)
by Lanceeselhombre

Summary

Keith and Shiro get into a little argument. There’s some shouting, some crying, and some misconceptions, but it all ends okay. :)

(Takes place directly after His Process chapter 1.)

Notes

Me: asks my beta readers to help me with a title

Them: Suggests the title

Me: Great idea! It represents X Y and Z about the plot!

Them: Oh lol I got it from a detrol commercial

See the end of the work for more notes

When Shiro said Keith would have to start exposure training to get over his phobia, he didn’t expect to have to start right away. They were still in the middle of a space war, he assumed that teaching himself not to fear bathrooms was the least of his problems.
But apparently Shiro thought differently.

“Why now?” Keith demanded, refusing to lower himself to whining to persuade his leader to give him more time. A rougher approach was more likely to win him the argument anyway, or at least help him outlast Shiro so they ended in a stalemate. Whatever would get him out of training, he’d do it. “I literally just confessed that I had a phobia, I’m not ready to start getting over it.” He crossed his arms over his chest defensively, unwilling to budge an inch.

Shiro sighed. “I know. But the sooner you start the sooner it’ll be over.” He explained. He knew it wouldn’t be easy to persuade Keith into starting training, regardless of how long he gave him to prepare. It wasn’t the lack of time he was given that Keith was complaining about; it was his reluctance to face his fear. Which he couldn’t truly be blamed for, phobias were phobias for a reason. But he couldn’t just let him use it as an excuse forever. “And besides, it isn’t like you’re afraid of spiders or something. This is a bigger issue.”

The red paladin stared at his feet and frowned deeply. “It isn’t even that much of a problem.” He muttered. It didn’t interfere with missions or coalition events really, or it didn’t affect his performance at least. If it didn’t affect that, how much of a problem could it be?

Shiro copied his frown. “Yes it is.” He countered sternly.

“No it isn’t.” Keith argued.

Shiro sighed tiredly. “It is a problem when you start to hate yourself for it.”

That jab kind of got to Keith, but he didn’t let it show. He’d never said it outright, but it wasn’t much of a secret to the team that his phobia did cause some self-esteem issues. “I hated myself because I was pissing my pants every day! Hunk gave me a bowl and a thermos so I’m not doing that anymore! Look, problem solved!” He yelled, throwing his hands out for emphasis before he place them on his hips defiantly. He didn’t like bringing up his previous solution to his phobia. Shiro knew that.

“No, problem not solved.” The black paladin said, keeping his cool, unlike the more hot-headed teen in front of him. “What are you going to do if we’re on a planet and you need to go?” He asked, waiting to hear what Keith had to say for that one.

“Go back to red.” Keith replied instantly.
“Okay, and what if you don’t have her?”

“I’d have my thermos.”

“And what if you couldn’t use that?” Shiro tried, starting to get frustrated.

“I’d hold it.”

“You’d hurt yourself.” Shiro reminded him.

Keith crossed his arms again. “We have healing pods.”

“Keith, stop coming up with excuses!” The man finally groaned, fed up with the teen’s childish act. “You know the healing pods are for emergencies only! I’m not going to let you hurt yourself badly enough to need one because you refuse to help yourself!”

The red paladin internally flinched at the hard edge his leader’s voice took. He didn’t like it when people yelled at him. The anxiety it caused only added to the anger in his voice. “And I'm not going to purposefully induce a panic attack to try to! You should be the first person to know I panic at the thought stepping inside a bathroom and you want me to subject myself to that?!”

“Keith, is that what you think I’m asking you to do?” Shiro asked, lowering his voice when he realized the misunderstanding. “The point of exposure training is to help you learn not to be scared, not to hand you over to your phobia and watch you suffer.”

“The hell it isn’t!”

The black paladin’s eyes hardened a little. “Keith, you don’t need to yell.” He reprimanded. Of course, he expected Keith to be getting riled up when they were discussing such a sensitive topic; it was just how he was. But sometimes he needed to be reminded when he was taking it a bit too far.

“You yelled at me first!” Keith shouted, his face starting to match the color of his armor. His eyes
widened a little, allowing Shiro to see the white above and below his irises, and he knew Keith’s anger was just him starting to panic.

“No, I didn’t.” Shiro replied, his voice completely calm again. He knew if he continued the argument right now he’d set Keith off completely; and he didn’t want to do that. He was taking a step back. “You’re blowing this out of proportion. You’re only riling yourself up.”

“I am not blowing this out of proportion! You’re the one who brought this up even though you know it freaks me the fuck out! And you think I’m the one riling myself up?!” He shouted out, tell-tale wobbling growing stronger, his breathing starting to speed up noticeably.

“If you told me I was scaring you and you asked to talk about it later I would have dropped it.” Shiro mentioned softly. But he knew Keith wouldn’t have done it. He hated admitting his fear.

“I don’t believe you!” The teen yelled, his frame beginning to shake.

Shiro frowned at that. In other circumstances, those words might have hurt, but he knew Keith didn’t mean it. He said things he really didn’t mean to when he got upset, to try to hurt others when he felt cornered so they would leave. “Keith, calm down.” If he didn’t relax he would say something he’d regret.

“No! FUCK YOU!” Keith screamed.

And there it was.

As soon as the words left Keith’s mouth, he suddenly snapped back to reality and realized what he just said. The anger and color drained out of him, leaving him pale as a sheet within seconds. He shook harder, breaths coming in shorter and less effective puffs as he took a step back.

Shiro quickly threw an arm out to grab Keith’s wrist as he turned and tried to run. He couldn’t let him leave, he would run to his room and huddle in a corner while he had a panic attack. He refused to let him suffer like that alone. “Wait-“

“Let go of me!” Keith cried, terrified, voice rising in pitch. He tried to yank his wrist out from Shiro’s grip, but the man’s fingers didn’t budge. He pulled back again and again, each attempt becoming more frantic as he realized he couldn’t get away.
“Come here.” The black paladin said simply. Nothing he said at this point was going to calm the other paladin down. He’d learned that from watching Keith experience panic attacks in the past. Nothing calmed him really; he had to exhaust his panic before it went away. But the very least he could do was hold him through it. He could show him he cared when he got scared.

It was like a switch was flipped in Keith’s mind. He stopped trying to fight and stood stock still, his arm hanging limply in Shiro’s hold. He stared up at the man with wide, disbelieving eyes, eyes that were quickly filling with tears as his chin began to tremble. Within seconds tears were trailing down his cheeks and his chest was trembling as he struggled to breathe. He opened his mouth to try to speak for himself, but no sound left his quivering lips.

Shiro’s heart ached for him. “Keith, come here.” He repeated, much softer this time as he gently pulled him closer. The teen cringed away from him but let himself be drug towards the man in defeat. Shiro let go of his wrist and wrapped his arms around him in a gentle hug, hoping to console him, at least a little.

Keith trembled in his arms, breathing in short, aborted breaths that didn’t fill his lungs at all. To try to help, Shiro gently patted his back between his shoulder blades. To his relief, Keith managed a deeper breath after that, but on the exhale the youth let out a panicked sob.

The man jumped a little in shock, having not expected him to break down like that. Keith tried to hide into him as his hands flew behind him to cover his butt in response. He sobbed in horror, panicking worse for a reason Shiro couldn’t quite figure out.

It took him a few seconds of Keith repeatedly sobbing out the word ‘no’ to realize what was wrong. Keith explained to him one day that he had been traumatized by the number of spankings he got as a child and expected more when he upset other people too much. He always covered himself when he felt that way. God he thinks I’m gonna hit him.

Shiro gently lowered them both to the floor and pulled Keith’s hands away to keep him from sitting on them before kneeled in front of the sobbing teen. Sitting on the floor would make him feel safer than simply trying to cover himself. Shiro held his head to his shoulder and let him cry into it. “Shh, you’re okay Keith. You didn’t do anything wrong.” He cooed.

“I’m sorry!” Keith wailed, trying to curl in on himself protectively. He was shaking, trembling, panicked, terrified that he just crossed the line and earned himself a beating. “I’m sorry! I didn’t mean it!”
“I know you didn’t.” Shiro replied soothingly. “Breathe, you’re safe. No one’s going to hurt you.” He promised, knowing that was exactly what he expected.

Keith didn’t respond for a moment, silenced by his cries. It wasn’t until his panic was starting to subside that he was able to respond with a small, “N-No?” It was sniffled out and weak, barely understandable, but Shiro caught it.

He slowly shook his head, smiling a little now that Keith was becoming a bit more coherent. “No one’s going to.” He repeated, voice assured. “You don’t deserve it.”

“B-but I t-told you to f-fuck y-yourself…” He whimpered remorsefully, still expecting some kind of reprimand for what he’d said. He sounded very obviously sorry for his impulsive words, and that was enough for Shiro.

“And what kind of leader would I be for punishing you for speaking your mind?” The black paladin asked kindly. Keith sat up a little more in his arms at that, chin still wobbling uncertainly and eyes still pouring tears. Shiro gently tilted his face so their eyes met, one finger curled under his chin to keep him from looking away. “Keith, exposure training isn’t supposed to cause panic attacks. You’re supposed to go slow, only pushing your boundaries a little and getting comfortable being past them. You’re not supposed to go all in and hope for the best.” He explained slowly. “Do you understand that now?”

Keith seemed hesitant to say yes. He broke eye contact and looked off to the side while he thought hard about something. “H-How do I g-get over a fear of b-bathrooms without going i-inside one?” He wondered as he looked back to Shiro.

The man smiled softly at him. “Simple. What scares you about it? Do you feel like you’ll be forced to stay in there? Do you feel like someone’s going to grab you? Is it just the memories?” He asked. The basis for fears was an important thing to know, so it could be targeted and focused on. Even if there wasn’t one, it was still important to know.

It was quiet for a moment while Keith thought about that. He didn’t even seem like he knew exactly what part about a bathroom he was scared of. “Uh, I-I guess I feel like someone’s gonna grab me. And y-yeah it brings back memories…” He shivered uncomfortably, reliving one of said memories with a disgusted frown. He tucked his head down into Shiro’s chest, unable to look at him and continue speaking. “T-the...obvious ones come to mind, but t-there was also this time that o-one of the adults b-brought me to the bathroom and tried to get me to use it…” He started, taking a moment to calm himself a little so he could speak more clearly.
“I felt kind of okay with her there, so she stayed and tried to distract me. But even though I wasn’t panicking I just...couldn’t do it. She was patient and we waited awhile but i couldn’t go and i eventually cried because I wanted to leave.” He cleared his throat. “She let me without putting up much of a fight, but as soon as I walked out I had an accident...then she got kind of mad…”

“So you feel pressured?” Shiro clarified, figuring that pretty much summed up what he said. It sounded like he had a bad case of performance anxiety. Keith nodded into his chest.

“Y-yeah I guess.” The teen agreed. “I don’t want you guys to be mad when I can’t do what you ask of me.”

“Okay.” The man hummed. They had a lot to work with. “Well, since you’re scared of being pulled into the bathroom, we can start with helping you be comfortable being within arm’s reach of the door? And the team can help you with the performance anxiety by simply asking you to do things. The more you do it the easier it’ll get.” He suggested.

Shiro could feel Keith smile a little. “That doesn’t seem very difficult.” He said as he sat up, much calmer than before. His tears had dried and all the shaking in his body had ceased.

“No it doesn’t.” Shiro agreed with a small chuckle. “So what did we learn from this?” He asked, using his best Space Dad™ voice.

Keith rolled his eyes but smiled a little wider at the signature tone. “I can tell you to fuck yourself and get away with only a pep talk?” He tried.

Shiro hummed and shook his head. “Try again.”

Keith laughed. “Don’t jump to conclusions?” He tried again.

The black paladin ruffled his hair and broke away from the hug to stand. “How about ‘talk to people when you get scared so you don’t work yourself into a panic attack?’” He said as he offered Keith his hand to stand as well.

The red paladin rolled his eyes good-naturedly but didn’t take the hand. “Yeah i guess.” He replied. “And can i stay here for a bit longer? I don’t...wanna stand yet.”
“Whatever makes you feel comfortable kiddo.” Shiro promised as he put his hand down, not offended by the light rejection.

End Notes

Hey guys! I know haven’t posted in a bit but I have lots of half finished files that will be getting posted soon. :) Get ready for another one of my posting bursts XD

Im also going to be trying to go back and finish and/or continue older series. Don’t worry, they’re not forgotten.

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