He eats red carnations

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He eats red carnations

by UnderZeWeather

Summary

Lance owns a tattoo shop nestled comfortably between Cafe Altea, and the florist shop Paladin's Perfection. Life is pretty sweet working with and around his friends. However his life gets turned upside down when the owner of Paladin's Perfection hires a few staff member. Keith. A strange, young, handsome man with a mysterious past? How could Lance not mess around with him?

Notes

This is my first time posting something for the Voltron fandom. I'd really love and appreciate any feedback you would like to give me. Kudos and comment if you could. Thanks. Enjoy :D
Today was just another day for Lance as he opened up the Five Lions tattoo shop. He’d recently inherited it from the previous owner, which had really surprised Lance and the other employees. Most agreed that he did deserve it, but some seemed to hate the idea of working for Lance and promptly quit. Thankfully that was only one guy so there wasn’t really much of a change.

Lance was fantastic at his craft. He paid attention to detail and could perform some of the most intricate and detailed tattoos in the city. But his favourite was watercolour tattoos. He’d given one of his friends, Pidge, a watercolour tattoo on their wrist. It was a simple one with a few different shades of green with a geometric design they created themselves over the top of it.

Speaking of Pidge, she was the resident piercer and body modifier of Five Lions. If she could pierce it she would. Her favourite piercings to do on people were corset piercings. Pidge thought they looked gorgeous, but nine times out of ten the people that got them came back in after a few days because they popped one out or something. They never listened to her.

Then there was Hunk. He was the number one first choice when it came to tattoo cover ups. If someone had a bad tattoo that needed to be fixed Hunk would go above and beyond to make things right and make sure they the client left feeling like a million bucks.

Once Lance opened the front door he quickly punched in code on the keypad to avoid a visit from the police. As he did so the bell on the door jingled open and the white haired coffee princess happily walked in. “Morning Lance. I brought you and the others some coffee.”

Lance grinned and happily grabbed the carry tray from her and put it on the front desk. “Thanks Allura. You are the best.” Allura was working next door at Cafe Altea with her uncle Coran. At least she called him her uncle. From what he heard he was more of a very close family friend. They had always had an agreement going back to way before Lance had started working there that cafe Altea would deliver them coffee and lunch as long as Five Lions paid for it in advance at the start of the month.

Allura made the best coffee Lance had ever tasted hence him giving her the nickname coffee princess, but that eventually just got shortened to princess. It was just the perfect blend to wake up anyone up in the morning. Lance happily took a sip of his coffee and sighed contently.

“Perfect as always Princess.”

Allura laughed a little and looked over his shoulder. “Are Hunk and Pidge here yet?”

“Should be here any minute now.” Lance walked behind the counter and started pulling up folders of their tattoos and piercings as well as the booking book. He flipped it to today’s date and happily looked through it. “Hunk has a booking at nine so he’ll definitely be here. Pidge is on walkin’s and I am doing a touch up on Shiro’s chest tat.”

Allura frowned a little when she heard that. “A touch up? Did you botch his tattoo?”

Lance gasped and clutched his chest. “Me? Botch a tattoo? Allura! What is this blasphemy? How dare you say this to me, on the day of my daughter’s wedding!”

Suddenly the door opened up and Pidge walked in with Hunk. Pidge made a beeline for the coffee cups and happily grabbed one. “Morning you two. What’s Lance whining about this time?”
Lance pointed an accusatory finger at Allura. “She thinks I botched Shiro’s tattoo! I have you know I worked eight hours on that piece! If I messed anything up I probably just left out a line or something needs more shading.”

Pidge gave him a look of complete indifference and shrugged. “Whatever drama queen. If any of you need me I’ll be in the back prepping my gear.”

Hunk chuckled a little and grabbed his own coffee. “Thanks Allura… Did Coran listen to my suggestion about the tomato soup?”

“Oh yes.” Allura excitedly bounced on her heels. “He took your suggestion to heart and well, it’s now part of the official recipe. He rewrote it in the cookbook and threw away the old one he was so impressed.”

Hunk grinned and went to prep his machine. “I knew he would. Don’t get me wrong it was really good it just needed a little something to punch it up a little.” He looked over at Lance. “When’s Shiro coming in again?”

“Afternoon.” Said Lance. “It’ll be good to see him again… Who is watering all his flowers while he’s gone anyway?”

Allura smiled. “That would be me and Coran. Shiro gave us the key to his shop while he was out hiking. I guess he’ll be opening up again tomorrow?”

Lance shrugged. “I guess.” Shiro owned the flower shop right on the other side of the Five Lions. The place was called Paladin’s Perfection. He’d run it for a few years now and it was insanely popular. Probably because Shiro was damn handsome and polite to everyone. He was also kind of like a second dad to everyone he came into contact with.

“Well I better get going.” Said Allura. “Coran can’t handle the breakfast rush by himself. I’ll try and stop by with lunch a little before midday.”

“Thanks Princess. You’re the best.” Said Lance as she left the shop. He sighed contently, but happened to notice the smile on Hunk’s face. “... What?”

“You really like her Lance.” Said Hunk. “Just ask her out already. Pretty sure she would say yes.”

Lance blushed and spluttered a little. “What? No. She’s like, a big sister to me… Shut up man. No way someone as cool as her would go for someone like me... I mean I'm awesome and stuff, but the princess is the princess.”

“Ask her out already!” Called Pidge from the back room. “We both know you wanna smooch her. Take her out and do all kinds of things to her. Pervert.”

Lance’s face burned brighter. “PIDGE!!!”

***

After his friends were done embarrassing him the day went on as normal. Hunk’s client came in, completely embarrassed and ashamed of the couples tattoo she had on her arm. Hunk managed to hide it under a swan and some flowers. Pidge got a couple of walkin’s looking for ear piercings. Lance tattooed a dove on a woman’s wrist a little after lunch before Shiro’s appointment.

Around three in the afternoon Shrio walked in with a big smile on his face. “Hey guys.”
“Hey Shiro, take a seat.” Lance gestured over to his set up while he quickly shoved the rest of his sandwich into his mouth. “Sorry, just managed to get lunch in.”

Shiro chuckled as he took off his shirt and sat in the chair. “Hey, no problem Lance. You gotta fit it in lunch when you can, right?”

“Right.” Lance happily walked over and looked down at Shiro’s tattoo. “So, what’s wrong with the black lion?”

“Well the lines here and here aren’t very clean.” Shiro pointed out the small imperfections. “And the nose doesn’t seem quite right.”

Lance frowned a little and studied the imperfections carefully. “... Yeah, those lines are shaky and the nose needs to be darkened there just a bit. My bad.”

“Hey it’s still a really good tattoo.” Reassured Shiro. “I’m just being picky at this point.”

"Hey, it's your tattoo on your body and you have every right to complain about shoddy work. You have to wear it." As Lance started mixing pigments he heard the sound of the door opening, but he had his back to the door and didn’t bother looking up. “Someone will be with you in a moment. Just take a seat.” However after a few seconds he felt a looming presence behind him. It made him turn around to see a pair of greyish purple eyes staring at him curiously. “... Um, can I help you?”

“Oh that’s just Keith.” Said Shiro. He laughed nervously. “I thought I told you to wait next door for me to be done?”

“I got board.” Keith pulled up a chair on the opposite side of Shiro and proceeded to crouch in it instead of sitting in it like a normal person.

“I was gone for five minutes.”

“I know.”

Shiro sighed a little and gave Lance an apologetic look. “So Lance, this is Keith. He’s a friend of mine. He’s gonna be working with me starting tomorrow... You don’t mind him sitting here while you work, right?”

“Well, not at all. As long as he doesn’t touch anything and just watches I don’t mind.” Lance found this kind of weird. Well he found Keith weird. He just kind of stared at Shiro’s tattoo as he worked, but occasionally he would glance up at Lance and look at the tattoos just poking out of his sleeve.

“So you’re tattooed too?” Inquired Keith.

Lance nodded. “Yep. Kind of weird for a tattoo artist to not have some ink on them. You doing okay there Shiro?”

“Yeah, I’m good.” The slight twitch on his face said otherwise. “You almost done?”

“Almost. There isn’t much to work on.” Lance hummed a little to himself as he finished correcting the last slightly crooked line and started on shading the lion’s nose. “So, how was your weekend? You said you were going to go hiking up by that trail? That one you always go on or is that a different one?”

Shiro smiled fondly. “Yeah, same one. It was really good. You can see so many stars out there at night. It’s beautiful.”
“Aren’t there like lots of coyotes, or mountain lions, or something with fangs and claws up there?”
Asked Lance. “Glad you didn’t get clawed to death while you were star gazing.”

Shiro laughed and shook his head. “Nah, the trail I use is surprisingly free of danger. Wouldn’t you
say so Keith?”

Keith gave Shiro a small glare and shrugged. “It’s whatever.”

“Oh, so you two went hiking together?” Asked Lance. “Why didn’t you mention that? We all
thought we were going to have to send out a search party for you if you didn’t make it home after a
few days.”

“Well we didn’t plan on meeting up.” Said Shiro. “Keith was just there when I was there. That’s all.
Right Keith?” Keith nodded in agreement.

About then Pidge emerged out of the back room with her face in her phone. “Yo Lance, gonna get
an afternoon caffeine hit. You want your usual?”

“You know it Pidge.”

She nodded a little and looked over at the trio. “Hey Shiro. Good to see you back in one piece.
Who’s the gargoyle?” She gestured to the way Keith was sitting.

“Keith.” Said Shiro. “He’s going to be working with me from now on.”

“Cool. You two want anything?” Pidged asked. “Black, flat white, cappuccino, mocca, skim milk,
full cream, almond milk, iced coffee, latte?”


Keith shrugged. “Water.”

She raised an eyebrow. “Water? Just water? Alright. Back in ten. Give or take.” She walked out the
door and headed to Cafe Altea.

When she was out the door Lucien have Keith a confused look. “Not a fan of caffeine?”

“Coffee gives me headaches.” Said Keith. “Water is better.”

“... Right.” Lance shook his head and continued to work on Shiro’s tattoo until Pidge came back. By
then he was done and the two men left with their drinks. Pidge commented on how odd Keith
seemed since he was so quiet and Lance had to agree. Keith was weird but he didn’t seem bad or
anything like that. They would probably get used to Keith after a few days anyway.

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Two days after Keith started working with Shiro Lance managed to bump into him one morning. It
looked like Keith had been given the task of setting up the chalkboard. He was drawing some floral
design on the front under the advertisement about lilies.

“So you’ve been promoted to sign artist, mullet?” Teased Lance.

Keith frowned at him and touched his hair. He didn’t quite seem to understand what Lance was
talking about. “Shiro just said to draw something flower related so I am. That’s all.”
Lance looked at the wonky design and chuckled a little. “No offence Keith, but you shouldn’t quit your day job. You’re not that good at drawing.”

A slight blush dusted Keith’s face. “I know I’m not good at drawing. Shiro trusted me with this so I’m doing my best. You do it if you think you can do better.”

Lance rolled his eyes and took the chalk from Keith. “Boy, I draw for a living. Just watch.” He quickly scribbled a few good looking lilies and a few other flowers around the board and smirked at Keith. “How’s that?”

Keith looked at board, then at Lance, then at the board again. “Thanks.” He set the sign up and went back inside.

Lance stared at the shop window in confusion for a moment before he realised that Keith pretty much got him to do his job. That kind of pissed him off that he got so easily tricked by Keith, but he blamed most of his attitude on his lack of caffeine. He sighed heavily and went to open up shop just as Allura happily came out to deliver the day’s coffee.

***

The day had been relatively quiet so the trio at Five Lions went around and did a huge clean up. Hunk brought out the squeegee and started cleaning the front window and floor. Pidge cleaned out her piercing studio and double checked all the equipment to make sure it was both functional and sterile. Lance had the task of cleaning out the break room and taking out the trash.

They kept the place relatively clean so there was hardly one trash bag full of stuff, but it still needed to be thrown in the dumpster out the back. He swung open the backdoor and took in that fresh air laced with garbage. He was about to throw his trash bag into their dumpster when he heard a weird noise coming from the direction of Shiro’s shop.

An animal or something probably climbed into his dumpster or something. That wouldn’t have surprised Lance in the slightest. Shiro lived in the space right above the shop after all. There were probably food scraps mixed in with some of the usual plant matter. Normally Lance would have left it, however he did know that it was possible Shiro might have thrown out a container or something that has something poisonous in it and he really didn’t want some poor stray to eat something and get sick.

With a small sigh Lance went over to his neighbours dumpster. “Alright, clear off now you- Keith?”

Keith was crouched down beside the dumpster with a handful of red flowers in one hand and a bunch of stems in the other. He seemed just as shocked to see Lance staring at him, if not more so. He quickly stood up and hit the plants behind his back as his face went about as red as the flowers he was hiding.

Lance put his hands up and smiled nervously. “Whoa man. Chill. Didn’t mean to spook you. Just thought you were a cat or something. My bad… What are you doing?”

“Nothing.” Muttered Keith.

“Right…” Clearly he was lying about something, though Lance wasn’t too sure what. “So… What flowers have you got there anyway?” He gestured to the ones Keith was attempting to and failing to hide behind his back.

“… Red carnations.” Muttered Keith. “Shiro was just going to throw them away since they were starting to wilt and stuff but like I just…” He coughed a little and to both their surprise a half chewed
red petal fell out of Keith’s mouth and caught on his lip.

Lance blinked a little in surprise and couldn’t help but look at Keith like he was mad. “You… You eat carnations?”

Keith’s face went almost as red as the carnations he was holding. “It’s not like they are poison! These ones are grown organically and haven’t been sprayed with pesticides so the petals are edible!”

“Okay… You do you…” Muttered Lance. “I’m just… I’m gonna go back inside now… Enjoy your lunch I guess?” Lance quickly threw his trash out and headed back into his shop. Once he was back inside it took him a moment to process what he just saw. Keith eats red carnations.
Paladin's Perfection

Chapter Notes

Pretty much just Keith quietly brooding over his own feelings and questioning his flower addiction. Kudos and comment if you can. Enjoy :D

Keith ended up sulking in Shiro’s room for the rest of the day after Lance and the carnation incident. It was so embarrassing to be seen eating flowers. He knew it wasn’t a normal thing to do but he couldn’t help it. He knew he was having a hard enough time fitting in but this was just going to make things worse.

After what only seemed like a few seconds Shiro was standing in the doorway, frowning slightly. “Hey Keith. Did something happen?”

Keith nodded and shuffled over on the bed. Once Shiro sat down Keith told him about what happened. “I just… It was so embarrassing.”

Shiro nodded a little. “I see… Um Keith, why didn’t you just eat the carnations in the back of the shop?”

“… Because you told me to throw them out.”

The older man sighed a little and smiled fondly at Keith. “Look. If I give you flowers to throw out and you want to eat them go ahead. You can eat them in the back room and just throw the stems out.”

“Thanks… He’s going to think I’m weird. Who the hell eats flowers anyway?”

Shiro shrugged. “Coran and Allura get fresh viola, snapdragons, and marigold from me for some of their dishes. Eating flowers is more common than you think… just not off the stem.”

“Right…” Keith sighed and put his head in his hands. “I still fucked up Shiro… Lance is going to think I’m a freak and then everyone will and it just… Fuck it I’m moving back to the desert.” He moved to stand up but Shiro calmly pulled him back onto the bed.

“No you’re not. You said you’d give this kind of life a fair go. Remember? You can’t just get up and leave at the first sign of conflict. So what if you eat carnations? No big deal. It’s not a social taboo here or anything. Besides carnations are used in some wines.”

Keith grumbled something under his breath but reluctantly agreed. “Fine. Okay. Yeah, I’ll stay… For now… Guess I should go back to work?”

Shiro shook his head. “Nope. I just packed up for the evening.” He gestured to the window to show the sun had almost completely set.”

“… Right.”

The older man smiled and walked out of the room. “Come on Keith. Go and take a shower. By the time you get out I’ll have dinner ready.
The younger complied and quickly slinked off to the bathroom. The cold water felt nice against his skin. He still couldn’t believe he could waste water like this every day without a care. For a few years he had been more or less living off the grid. It had only been by chance that Shiro had found him again, albeit under much nicer circumstances this time.

Keith had just been out foraging when he slipped down a rather unstable incline and right into Shiro’s path. Neither of them could really believe the other was actually there after parting ways a few years earlier. They had gotten to talking and Keith shared his adventures while Shiro listened.

After hearing what Keith had been up to, Shiro didn’t hesitate to offer Keith a job and a new home. Even if it was just potentially a temporary thing, he wanted Keith to stick it out for a few weeks. Keith had agreed but he hadn’t realised how awful he had gotten with social cues. Basic laws and rules he could follow, that wasn’t a big deal, but the little things really messed with him. It made him yearn for that solitude again.

Once he was done showering he went to see what Shiro had cooked for dinner. He’d made a simple stir fry topped with the petals of pink dahlia, and daisies. Keith gave Shiro a puzzled look, but the older man just shrugged and ate his food, flowers and all.

“Eating flowers is no big deal Keith. If you don’t like it you can just eat the petals. I still have some of the flowers up here too.”

A small smile made its way onto Keith’s face as he took his bowl. “Thank you.” It made him feel warm inside to know Shiro cared enough to make something like that for him.”

***

The next morning Keith was setting up the sign outside the shop again. Shiro had given in a few pieces of paper with flower designs he could try and copy. He didn’t really know if he could do any of them but he gave it a go. He ended up doing some simple swirl design with a few tiny flowers. It was simple and good.

Suddenly a shadow loomed behind him. “So what’s on the menu today mullet?”

Keith rolled his eyes and didn’t bother looking up at Lance. Of course he was going to tease him about his eating habit. “Hydrangea.” Muttered Keith. “It’s poisonous if you eat it. But go ahead and try. Results should be interesting.” He didn’t even bother looking at Lance as he set up the sign and marched back inside.

Shiro was lightly spraying a few flowers with some water and gave Keith a confused look. Keith just rolled his eyes and started rearranging the hydrangea display. Shiro didn’t say anything about it, but Keith knew that he was watching him.

After a few minutes Allura happily walked into the shop carrying a coffee and a bottle of water. “Morning boys.”

Shiro smiled at her and took his coffee. “Morning Allura. How’s everything this morning?”

“Oh, everything is going pretty well. Coran’s started doing some more coffee art. A lot of teenagers are taking photos of it for instagram.” She offered the bottle of water to Keith. “Here you go Keith.”

Keith nodded a little and took the water. “Thanks…”

“You know making you a coffee isn’t a bother to us.” Said Allura. “You can have something else other than water… And if you don’t like coffee we can make you something else. What else do you
“... I like juice.” Muttered Keith quietly. “But there’s too much sugar in all that stuff.”

Allura nodded in understanding. “I see… Well we make fresh orange juice to order. We don’t add anything to it. If you would like to try some I can bring you a cup at lunch?”

Keith glanced over at Shiro for a moment to see if he thought it was a good idea. He gave a small smile and nod so Keith reluctantly agreed to Allura’s suggestion. “Sure… As long as nothing is added to it… If you don’t mind.”

The woman smiled happily and nodded. “Of course Keith. I’ll make sure that you get your juice.”

As they talked Shiro prepared a box of flowers behind the counter. “Here you go. Keith, help Allura carry the cafe.”

Keith just nodded and picked up the box while Allura paid for it. The two then proceeded to walk down to the cafe. It was a nice warm day with a slight breeze. It made Keith relax a little. He didn’t realise how tense he had been.

“So how did you and Shiro meet?” Asked Allura. “Shiro’s a pretty open book on most things but I don’t think he has ever mentioned you.”

Keith frowned a little and put the flower box on an empty cafe table. “We just met when I was younger. That’s all.”

“... Oh, okay.” She nodded a little and started to take old flowers out of the tiny vases on the table and put fresh ones in.

“... What are you doing?”

“Changing the flowers.”

“Why?”

“Well because they are dead and need to be changed.” Said Allura. “Why?”

“... Seems like a waste. That’s all.” Muttered Keith.

Before Allura could ask him what he meant Pidge and Hunk walked in. Pidge was showing something to Hunk on her phone and grinning like a mad man while Hunk looked kind of concerned.

“Pidge, I’m all for people doing body mods, but that just looks painful and like, kind of dangerous.” Said Hunk. “Like, what if you cut too deep and you sliced an artery? You could die.”

Pidge rolled her eyes. “Details man. Besides I always have a needle and cauterizer ready to go in case of such emergencies. Plus I would be shrieking for you or Lance to call an ambulance while I try to stitch the guys tongue back together.”

Hunk cringed. “That’s gross Pidge… I get squeamish enough when people talk about getting tongue piercings… And that one has a zipper in it.”

“I know. Pretty cool right? Matt’s been saying he wants to get his tongue split for ages but he keeps chickening out. He’s worried about accidentally getting it infected and it falling out.”
“... I am suddenly less hungry for breakfast now.” Muttered Hunk.

Allura chuckled a little and waved at them. “Morning you two. I already delivered your coffee to your shop.”

“Thanks Allura.” Said Pidge. “We’re just kind of starving today. Me because Matt ate the last pizza rolls for breakfast and Hunk because he went on auto pilot and left the house before he ate.”

“In my defense I was up all night talking with Shay.” Muttered Hunk as he shuffled over to the counter. Pidge snickered at his admission and went to stare at all the pastries in the display cabinet.

Keith took this as his cue to leave and he silently slipped out of the shop and headed back to Shiro. On the way he happened to glance into the window of Five Lion’s and happened to spot Lance sitting on a chair fiddling with his tattoo gun. He had to admire how well Lance seemed to take care of his equipment. He might have been an ass to him, but at least he took his job seriously.

When he got back to the shop, Shiro started to train him some more in the art of bouquet creation. Keith wasn’t very good at it, but he was quickly learning. But at the moment Shiro wouldn’t let him make any bouquets for customers, but he did go around and fetch the flowers for Shiro to make into a bouquet.

As he ran around the shop some of the regulars, older women, would come in and comment about him being such a shy young man to Shiro. He didn’t know why they did that. The shop was small. Why were they saying that kind of stuff about him to Shiro? If they had a complaint they could just talk to him about it. Was he really that unapproachable?

Probably. He had never really been one for much social interactions and preferred to be on his own. Even when he was growing up he never really remembered being around other people that much. Sure there was his dad but that didn’t last too long. He missed him so much.

“Keith?”

“Huh?” Keith looked over at Shiro in mild confusion. “Sorry, what did you need?”

Shiro smiled at him and pointed to the stairs leading up to their home. “Lunch time. There’s some left over stir fry in the fridge if you want it.”

“Oh thanks.” Keith walked back upstairs and took it out of the fridge. He didn’t bother heating it up and just ate it be the open window in Shiro’s bedroom. From the window Keith could see right into the alley and across the rooftops of the other buildings across the way. He didn’t mind this change of scenery that much, but there was something to say about waking up to sandy dunes and rolling hills.

He ate about half of the stir fry before he got tired of it and went to the kitchen to see what edible flowers Shiro had around. Most of what he found he didn’t really like the look of, but he did like the look of the carnations Shiro had put in a vase by the TV. There were a few in there, so Shiro wouldn’t mind it he had one.

“...” He quickly grabbed one and went back into Shiro’s room. He leaned against the windowsill and sniffed it a few times before he sunk his teeth into it and started to chew on the sweet tasting petals. Of all the weird things he could be eating flowers weren’t so bad. He could have been addicted to eating chalk or ashes, or something more harmful for him.

As he continued to eat his flower he glanced down the alley to the back door of Five Lions. It was open, but it didn’t seem like anyone was coming out anytime soon. He wondered if Lance would walk out in a moment with a trash bag or something. He was probably working on a customer or
“...” Keith stretched out his arm and had a look at it. He kind of wondered what his arms would look like if they were covered in tattoos, but he had no idea what kind of tattoo he would get. Hunk had some that wrapped around his arm, Pidge had a cool green looking one on her wrist, and from what he could tell Lance had some tattoos that only went a little way down his forearms. Then there was Shiro with his chest tattoo. That was cool.

The sudden sound of glass smashing made Keith jump and drop his half eaten carnation out the window. He cursed slightly and glared back over to Five Lions. Pidge was busy flexing next to the dumpster while Hunk and Lance looked on with amusement.

“Told you losers I could do it.” She said. “It’s all about the momentum baby. Fear me.”

Lance laughed a little. “Yep. We’re all gonna fear the angry trash throwing gremlin. Such power. Much scare.”

Hunk just shook his head. “Pidge, we never said you couldn’t do it. We just said that you shouldn’t do it. No offence but you don’t have much upper body strength.”

Pidge looked offended. “I’ll have you know that I am taking kickboxing with Matt. Three more classes and I’ll be able to deck you.” She pretended to charge at Hunk, and he stuck his hand out and carefully held her back at arms length while she swung her arms around wildly. “I’m gonna get you! Just give me a second! You can’t keep your arm up forever!”

Hunk shook his head. “Yeah yeah. Come on Pidge. We got work to do.” The two of them went back inside while Lance stayed back for a bit.

He pulled out his phone and did something. Suddenly he looked up and stared at Keith. He grinned and waved up at him as he wandered over. “Hey Keith. What’s up?”


Lance rolled his eyes and shook his head. “Yeah, yeah. I know I walked right into that one.” He looked down at the ground and saw the carnation on the ground missing half of the petals. Lance picked it up and looked back up at Keith. “I think you dropped your lunch?”

Keith could feel his face burning with embarrassment. He slammed the window shut hard enough for the glass to rattle. Lance was an asshole. What the hell did he do to Lance to deserve this? He just didn’t do anything to Lance.

Maybe Shiro was wrong about the whole eating flowers thing about it being a social taboo? Shiro knew that he wasn’t the best socially and probably just wanted him to feel normal and accepted or something. It upset him that Shiro might be tricking him. He didn’t like getting tricked like that. He kind of just wanted to lock himself away somewhere for a while, but it was Shiro’s turn to eat lunch.

He walked back down and nodded a little at Shiro. “If you want to go and eat you can.”

Shiro smiled at him and nodded. “Thanks. By the way Allura came by. She dropped off your orange juice and said to tell her if you liked it or not.”

“Oh. Okay.” He stood behind the counter and watched Shiro walk up the steps. The shop was eerily quiet while he stood around, waiting. It was kind of boring, so Keith started sipping the orange juice. It was pretty good. He liked it. It didn’t seem like there was anything added to it.
A few people came in while Shiro was upstairs. Thankfully the few people that came in wanted things like a rose or two or a premade bouquet. It was kind of nice to see and try to figure out what people were getting flowers for. He liked to think that maybe the younger people buying one or two roses were getting them for their loved ones, maybe the person getting a bouquet was celebrating an anniversary? That would be nice.

Keith turned away for a moment to throw his cup in the bin when the door opened and he once again started the greeting that Shiro had told him he should say to new customers. “Welcome to Paladin’s Perfection. How may I help- Lance!” Keith’s face was burning again.

Lance grinned at him. “Hey there Keith. What’s up?”

“What do you want? Come to mock me again?”

“Nah, you do you mullet.” Lance happily walked around and looked at the flowers. “I was just gonna ask Shiro to send a bouquet to my mum. It’s her birthday in a few days. I always send her some flowers since I usually have to work.”

“... Oh. Okay. Well Shiro will probably be down in a minute. He can help you out then.”

“Okay.” Lance hummed a little and leaned against the counter. “... You know I’m just teasing you about the flower eating thing, right?”

“...” Keith ignored him and went about picking up a watering can and watering the flowers.

Lance sighed dramatically. “Keeeeeerreeeeeeee. I’m just teasing you, okay? I’m glad that you’re not eating poisonous flowers and I’m sure there are places were eating flowers is as normal as like eating bugs.”

“... You don’t eat bugs?”

“...”

“...”

“...”

“I’m joking Lance.”

“I knew that.”

“No you didn’t.” Muttered Keith.

There was an uncomfortable silence for a moment before Lance cleared his throat. “So um… It’s like my mum’s birthday soon. What kind of stuff do you for you mum on her birthday?”

Keith shrugged. “Nothing. I don’t know where she is. She just up and left me and my dad a few weeks after I was born.”

“Oh…” Lance nervously rubbed the back of his neck. “So um… Like what do you do on your dad’s birthday then?”

“Also nothing. He died when I was younger. He was a firefighter. He went into a burning house one day and never came out.”

Lance frowned and ended up looking at the ground. “Wow… that’s um… That’s rough man. So
“Foster kid?”

Keith nodded and put the watering can down. “Yeah. I moved around a lot during that time... Kind of just had a trash bag that I couldn’t even fill up with my stuff... And after I got moved to a really shit place in Texas I just said fuck it and left.”

“You left?”

“I left.”

“... So you turned eighteen and walked out?” Asked Lance. He seemed kind of confused. Not that Keith could blame him. He was skipping out a lot of the details but he didn’t really have much of a reason to hide this kind of stuff from people if they asked.

“I was eleven.”

Lance looked shocked. “You what? What the hell Keith? How the hell did you just leave?”

“I took my backpack, filled it with food and walked out of the house and that was that. I found out a week later the place I was staying at got shut down due to child abuse. The husband got life and the wife got sixty to life. So they got what they deserved. No big deal.”

“... That is so much to unpack right there…” Muttered Lance. “Now all I’m thinking is those kinds of horror stories you hear on the news about the children of people in cults and stuff.”

Keith shrugged. “Eh, I’d say they were a lot more heavy on the beatings than some of the other things you’re thinking about.”

“Shit…”

It was around then that Shiro decided to make his appearance. “Hey Lance. Thought that was you. What can I do for you?”

While Shiro talked to Lance, Keith went around with a small bin to throw out any flowers that started to wilt beyond the aesthetic beauty. He felt kind of bad about it, but there wasn’t much he could do. This is what Shiro told him to do.

“Thanks Shiro, you’re the best.” Said Lance. “Oh by the way, you and Keith up for pizza tomorrow night?”

“Sure. We’ll be there.”

“Sweet. Okay, catch you then if I don’t catch you earlier.” Lance quickly thanked Shiro again before quickly leaving.

Once he was gone Keith gave Shiro a confused look. “Pizza?” Keith couldn’t remember the last time he had eaten pizza.

Shiro nodded as he started to type something into the computer. “Yeah. Once a month we all get together and sort of have a pizza night thing. It started with just being the people that work at Five Lions. Then the old owner became friends with Coran, and he and Allura started to tag along. Then I ended up going along too. We rotate who hosts it each month. Next month it’s our turn.”

“I see...” He frowned a little. “So we’re eating at their shop?”

“Yep... You do like pizza right? You don’t have crohn’s disease or something?”
“... What?”

“Never mind. Think you can get some ribbon from the back? The white lace one.”

“Okay.” Keith went to the backroom and started to look for the ribbon Shiro wanted. He kind of hoped that he could get out of it. Maybe pretend he was sick or something? Keith still wasn’t comfortable being around other people, and he was pretty sure Lance might do something shitty to him.
Pizza and ink

Chapter Notes

Hey everyone. Thank you for reading. Please give me feedback if you feel like it. I enjoy reading and responding to comments. Kudos and comment when you can. I suggest you look up some of the tattoos mentioned down below. It's all actually really neat. Enjoy :)

Unfortunately for Keith, Shiro wasn’t going to take any of his excuses. Apparently Shiro thought Keith needed to socialise a little more with other people and all but dragged him to Five Lions. He had no idea how Shiro was so damn strong, especially when he was dragging him along with his prosthetic arm.

Allura and Coran were already there when they arrived. Coran seemed to be in the middle of telling some story to Allura and Hunk. “I swear it was the biggest marllon I had ever seen. Jumped right over the boat and I had to cut the line. I feel bad that I wasn’t able to at least pull it onto the boat to get the hook out of its mouth, but it had to be done.”

Hunk sighed in relief. “And here I was thinking you were going to say you hooked a shark or something.”

“Oh, you want to hear about when I hooked a whale shark?” Asked Coran. “The gentle giant pulled me under and I was at least able to get the hook out of that poor fella’s mouth. It did nearly swallow me though… Which to be fair would have been fair enough. Good thing whale sharks don’t eat people.”

Allura sighed a little, seemingly having heard both these stories a million times before. Her eyes lit up once she saw Shiro and Keith. “You two made it!”

“Of course.” Said Shiro as he patted Keith’s back. “Wouldn’t miss it. Where’s Pidge and Lance?”

“We’re in the back room!” Called Pidge. “I’m using Lance’s height to replace my blacklight!” After a few moments the two of them walked back out. Pidge looked very pleased with themselves as they happily swung a small flashlight around in their hand. “Damn, that blew while my last client was checking out the UV piercings I just gave them. By the way Allura, I have this mad set of white UV earrings I think you’ll really love.”

Lance just shook his head. “You literally could have just used that little flashlight you have there. We don’t do any UV tattoos anyway.”

She rolled her eyes and waved him off. “Details, details. My room looks way cooler when the whole place is covered in purple light. Plus it helps me know where I need to bleach if some idiot bleeds on my floor.” She quickly flashed her light over a bin and a few tissues lit up. “Ha, that’s either blood from a client, or I’m gonna have to call HR and report you two for being gross.”

“It’s blood Pidge.” Said Lance. “Just blood. Anyway, pizza’s should be here soon. Keith are you like a vegetarian or like a vegan?”
“... What’s a vegan?”

“Keith isn’t vegan.” Said Shiro. “It’s all good.”

After that weird bit of conversation Keith kind of just hung back and watched everyone else interact with each other. It became pretty obvious very quickly that everyone knew each other really well just from their relaxed postures. It made him feel a little like the odd one out so he just crouched down on a seat and watched them with indifference. It was like he wasn’t even there. Shiro should have just let him stay at the shop.

***

Lance was kind of surprised to see Keith had joined them. Of course Shiro was going to bring him along. Keith was a pretty quiet guy so he probably wasn’t going to hang around people without Shiro pushing him. Maybe he just liked observing people or something? That might explain why he was just watching everyone. That was until his attention fell on a dark blue case sitting on a chair.

He observed Keith staring at it for a few moments before he very subtly scooted over towards it and reached over to try and open it. Lance instantly intervened. “Hey, what are you doing?”

“Nothing…”

“You shouldn’t try and touch my kit without asking.”

“Oh… I didn’t know what it was.”

Lance couldn’t help but smile a little at Keith. He was like some curious child. At least he wasn’t like some entitled brat. He sat by Keith and opened the case. “Let me show you.” He was more than happy to show Keith the three tattoo guns he had with custom grips, coils, pigments, disposable needles, and anti-scar ointment. Along with a whole bunch of other things, but Lance didn’t think that Keith would care about learning what the rubber bands or rubber rings were for.

Keith just nodded along and would occasionally mutter a few words like. “Huh. Okay. Alright.”

“But of course these aren’t all the pigments we have here.” Said Lance. “These are just a few of the most basic shades. We have boxes and boxes of pigments in the back. We just restock when we see fit. Like the anti-scar ointment. But we pretty much have like, jars and jars of the stuff all over the place. Like seriously open any drawer and you'll find twenty jars.”

“Okay.” Keith seemed indifferent.

That kind of pissed Lance off. He was sharing his job with Keith, a job that he was passionate about, and he didn’t seem to care. Before he could actually say anything though the pizza guy arrived and everyone stopped talking for a few moments to eat.

After a while though Pidge started talking about silicon implants. “So like, I still can’t believe how many stars and skulls and paws I have to order in. I thought it was starting to go out of fashion. But like, each to their own I guess… But like, paw prints and stuff on the back of your hands? I just don’t get it.”

Hunk gave Pidge a weird look. “You think that’s weird yet you literally put screws in a bald guy’s head so he could have a spike mohawk?”

“... Putting small screws in someone’s head is easier than trying to separate skin and ligaments to slip in a silicon shape.” Muttered Pidge. “I always worry I’ll accidentally slice one and then boom, can’t
use your fingers anymore.”

Coran nodded a little. “Reminds me of a guy I once knew. Ex military. Got the back of his hand sliced with a knife so he couldn’t keep working. Shame too. He was a good cook.”

“He was a cook?” Asked Hunk. “So it wasn’t a combat thing?”

“Oh no, kitchen accident.” Said Coran. “The base he was on was a little fast and loose with their OH&S so he ended up slipping and had lots of cutlery falling on him. Ended up having a knife slicing through his hand and he lost all ability to use his fingers. He did get surgery done, but he never got all motion back in his fingers.” He wiggled his fingers for emphasis.

Allura cringed a little. “You always tell that story.”

“Well I can’t help that I have met such a colourful cast of characters growing up.” Said Coran. “Most people around here aren’t as colourful.”

Lance chuckled. “Well everyone here’s got some ink on them so we’re all technically pretty damn colourful Coran.”

Keith frowned a little and tilted his head in confusion. “You all have tattoos?”

Allura nodded and pulled down her sock to show off a little flower tattoo on her ankle. Coran rolled up his sleeve and showed off a constellation tattoo.

Hunk smiled proudly. “I did both of those.”

Allura grinned. “Yeah. It almost feels like it’s part of an initiation to come here and to be honest I saw it as an opportunity to break free and become more independent… It kind of hurt more than I expected.”

Pidge snorted with laughter as she tried not to choke on some garlic bread. “Yeah, it all hurts. Some places more than others… But you know what? It kind of is like an initiation.” She looked over at Keith and grinned. “Ever thought of getting a tattoo? I can see you getting some trashy tattoo of like a hotdog on your butt.”

Keith had a confused look on his face. “Um, I don’t have a hotdog tattoo on my butt…”

“Is it a tramp stamp?” Asked Pidge with a devilish grin.

Lance couldn’t help but laugh a little at that. He was having a hard time imagining Keith with some hotdog tramp stamp he had to get after losing a bet. That would be a sight to see. Hunk could probably cover up something like that but a tramp stamp is still a tramp stamp. Laser removal might actually be a better option at that point.

He cringed a little at the thought of getting a tattoo lasered off. Sure they did sometimes recommend a good place when a client freaked out about how big some coverups needed to be, but Lance wasn’t the biggest fan.

While this was happening, Pidge got Allura the UV earrings she had talked about earlier and was showing her and Coran how they glowed under her little black light. “Pretty neat huh?”

“Those are so beautiful.” Said Allura. “What do I owe you?”

“Nah, it’s a present. You bring us caffeine It’s the least we can do… Also if you ever want a body
mod under say… two fifty I can let it slide.”

Allura blushed a little but happily put the new ones in. “How do they look?”

Lance did his best to sound as smooth as possible. “You look regal Princess.”

Unfortunately for him that just earned him a blast of black light in the eyes from Pidge. “Bad Lance. No flirting when we are eating pizza.”

“Hey! I wasn’t flirting! I was trying to pay a compliment to the Princess.”

Pidge smirked and happily flicked the black light on his face a few times. “Nope. Get blind Romeo.” As she flicked the light around she ended up hitting Keith in the face with it, making him cringe. “Oops, sorry about that Keith I—” She stopped for a moment and just stared at him.

Keith rubbed his eyes a little. “It’s fine…”

“…Come with me for a second.” She quickly got and and grabbed hold of Keith’s wrist and dragged him to her room. Keith was just as confused as the rest of them but reluctantly let her take him away. Everyone looked around but before anyone could speak Pidge squealed super loudly. “OH MY GOD!”

“Ow!” Yelped Keith in surprise. “My freaking ears!”

“Ah, sorry!” Said Pidge. She had this excited inflection in her voice that she only really got when she was looking up new equipment or building some new tech to make her job easier. “Okay, now take your shirt off.”

“What?”

“And your pants!”

“… SHIRO!”

It was a blink and you’d miss it moment. Shiro seemed to teleport from one side of the shop to the other and slammed the door open with such force it made the shelves rattle. “What the hell are you doing to him Pidge?!” He froze for a moment and just looked into the room with a very surprised look on his face. “Whoa… Since when did you? How did you? Wow… That is impressive…”

Curiosity quickly got the better of everyone and everyone headed to the back room to see what all the yelling and surprised shouting was about. Lance was not ashamed to admit that what he saw made his jaw drop.

Pidge had managed to push Keith into a chair and had him under a blacklight, and he was lit up like a Christmas tree. Extremely fine intricate details and designs all composed of UV ink completely covered his face, extended down his neck and from the exposed skin on his arms and hands the tattoos seemed to cover his whole body.

Allura gasped in shock. “Oh my, Keith that’s beautiful! I had no idea you were even tattooed. Your artist is amazing!”

Coran nodded in agreement. “I haven’t seen work this detailed on such a big piece. This must have taken months, if not at least a year.”

Hunk walked over to him and had a good look at the tattoos he could see. “This is really good
work… Wait, do you actually have your eyelids tattooed too? Damn that’s dedication. I don’t touch anything to do with eye stuff. Too much can go wrong. Like eyeball tattoos.”

“That’s because you’re a wuss.” Said Pidge as she rolled Keith’s sleeve up to see how far it went. “Damn son, this goes on for days…”

Lance couldn’t help but let out a low whistle. “Wow… No offence but like, you must be some kind of masochist or something. UV tattoos pretty damn painful. Like anything with white ink. Who is your artist anyway?”

Keith was looking very uncomfortable from all this attention, but was too worried to move. He was like a deer caught in the headlights. His eyes locked with Lance’s for a moment with an expression that screamed help me. But before Lance could say or do anything Shiro intervened again and quickly pulled Keith to feet and stood between him and everyone else. It looked like he had suddenly switched into dad mode, but he was still trying to be polite.

“Come on guys not cool.” He gave Pidge an unimpressed look. “Did you really have to do that Pidge?”

Immediately Pidge seemed to shrink as she pouted and averted her gaze. “I couldn’t help it… We don’t do UV tattoos here and I just like… When I flashed my light across his face I couldn’t contain my excitement… Sorry Keith. I shouldn’t have geeked out like that… Didn’t mean to make you uncomfortable.”

Keith was quiet for a moment before he sighed reluctantly. “It’s fine… I know it’s unusual so like, yeah… Just please don’t do that again…”

Pidge nodded and turned off the blacklight. “Yeah.”

“So who did it?” Asked Hunk. “I can see a lot of tribal influences along with neo traditional, and blackwork. And that’s only the stuff I can see.”

Keith shrugged. “Just some guy I knew. It was no big deal.”

Lance rolled his eyes. “You could have at least told us you knew about tattoos in general. Here I was thinking you were a total noob when it came to tattoos. Man, I was going through my kit with you and everything thinking you didn’t know anything.” He was just exaggerating and playing it up a little, but Keith didn’t seem to get the joke.

“I wasn’t trying to lie to you… I just wanted to hear you talk about it.”

Now Lance felt like the asshole. “Oh I um…”

Shiro sighed a little and patted Keith on the back. “Look, it’s starting to get kind of late. I think it’s about time for Keith and I to call it a night. Our place next month, right?” Everyone kind of nodded in agreement and watched as the two men left together.

When they were gone Allura sighed a little. “Well I think it’s about time Coran and I headed off too. It is getting late. Are you ready Coran?”

“Yeah.” Coran happily shook everyone’s hands. “It was a pleasure to do this again.” They left and Pidge sighed loudly, slamming her face into a wall.

“I done fucked up…”
“Yeah, you kind of did.” Admitted Hunk. “That was pretty bad. Like if you were male and Keith was a girl and you told them to basically strip… That’s pretty messed up.”

“I know… Fuck I didn’t realise he was on the spectrum… I think he’s on the spectrum… Fuck am I just digging myself into a hole now that I can’t get out of?”

Hunk shrugged as he started gathering the empty pizza boxes. “Well he might be. He does seem a little off, but it’s no big deal.”

“I know it’s no big deal!” She whined. “But like, I would have tried to calm myself a little more before dragging him around. I’m an idiot... “

Hunk shrugged and patted her back. “Just don’t do it again. Okay?” He took the boxes out the back to throw them out.

Lance attempted to cheer her up a little. “Hey Pidge, if it makes you feel better I think I kind of fucked up too being too dramatic.”

“Yeah that was fucked man.”

He pouted a little and crossed his arms. “Anyway… You noticed that Shiro and Keith seem to be living together? You think they are like related or like dating?”

Pidge thought for a moment as she contemplated what Lance had said. “Maybe… But who really knows? Shiro kind of keeps that sort of personal stuff to himself and Keith seems to be really soft spoken. If they are actually a thing I doubt anyone will know unless we see the two of them locking lips and doing the tonsil tango.”

Lance pulled a face. “Ew Pidge. If I can’t call Allura regal you can’t talk about potential couples kissing and making out.”

Pidge just poked out her tongue and grabbed her stuff. “Whatever you say nerd. I’ll tell Matt you guys said hi.” When Pidge left, Lance and Hunk went about doing a quick bit of tidying up before setting the alarm and locking up for the day.

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Back at Shiro’s place Keith flopped onto the couch and pressed his hands over his face, sighing loudly. “I didn’t want to go Shiro… That was just… That was draining.”

“Sorry Keith.” Said Shiro. He went to the kitchen and started to boil some water to make tea. “But up until Pidge put you under a blacklight it was nice, right?”

“I guess…”

“Why didn’t you mention you had tattoos anyway when we caught up?” Said Shiro. “It’s really cool.”

Keith shifted uncomfortably on the couch. “They… I don’t want to talk about it Shiro. I’m not going to talk about it.”

“… Okay.” Shiro came over to Keith and offered him some tea. Keith gladly took it. “I’m guessing it wasn’t a very good experience for you?”

“Yeah… I um… yeah…” Keith wanted to talk to Shiro some more but at the moment he didn’t think
it was very wise to do so. Shiro was his family to him. The closest thing he probably would ever have to a family anyway. “I’d appreciate it if you didn’t mention them or talk about them anymore… It makes me uncomfortable.”

Shiro nodded a little. “Okay. Come on, time for bed.” Shiro helped Keith move the cushions off the couch and pulled out the bed for him to sleep on. “You want an extra blanket?”

“Yeah. I’m sure…”

“Okay. Night Keith.”

“Night Shiro… Shiro?”

“Yeah?”

“Thanks… For like, putting up with me.”

The older man sighed a little and smiled fondly at him. “Keith, I’m not putting up with you. You’re like a brother to me. You know I’d do anything to help you.”

“Yeah… Thanks.” Keith watched Shiro head off into his room, closing the door behind him. He sighed a little and curled up on the fold out bed. Today had been okay for the most part. Hanging out with everyone else was kind of nice. It made him feel good, even though the ending was extremely stressful for him. He sighed a little and drifted off to sleep.
Lance's day off

Chapter Notes

Thanks for all the support for this story. Kudos and comment when you can. It would really make my day (because of time zones and junk I'll be nodding off soon and it'll be my birthday tomorrow \(^w^\)/). Enjoy 😊

Today was Lance’s day off. Which basically meant he needed to restock his fridge and call his parents. Like always his parents seemed to call him while he was out and about. This time he happened to be walking through the dairy section of the grocery store. As usual his mum had put Lance on speaker so she could talk to him while she was cooking.

“-and Veronica just spilled it all over her shirt.” She laughed as she finished up her story. “Oh she was so mad Lance you should have seen it.”

Lance laughed along with her as he looked over what cheese he wanted to get. Cheap American, or something more fancy like brie? “Sounds like her. She wasn’t hurt was she?”

“Only her pride Lancy. So how is work going? Still enjoying yourself?”

“Oh yeah, work is good.” Lance went with the cheap cheese for today. Now to decide on the milk. “The place gets a steady business. We get a few repeat customers.”

“That’s good… No gangs?”

“No mama. No gangs… As far as I know.” Lance was pretty sure they didn’t get gangs. They had a small folder of symbols and phrases at their shop that they would not tattoo on anyone due to their affiliation with gangs and racist symbols. “We are very careful mama.”

His mother made a slightly annoyed sound, but she let it drop. “How are Pidge and Hunk? Still working with you?”

“Oh yeah. Things are going well with them. I think Hunk has a girlfriend. I met her a few times. Her name’s Shay. She’s really sweet. Pidge is also doing well too. She’s still going off the wall with her own little inventions in between working. I feel sorry for any poor fool that she tests her latest gadget on.”

“Oh that sounds like her. We still need to thank her and Matt for installing our security system last year…”

Lance remembered that well. Last year they had gone to a tattoo convention that was about twenty minutes from his parents place and Lance’s family had practically adopted everyone. They had them over for dinner every night that the convention was on. It was a blast and everyone loved it. On the second night they went over his papa had been struggling to install a camera at the front door and Pidge happily lent a hand. She got it up and running in less than ten minutes.

“Pidge was just happy to help mama. She’s just good with all that kind of stuff. She helped hook up our alarm system back at the shop too.” Lance couldn’t decide between full cream milk or skim milk. Full cream.
“True, but next time she comes over we will thank her properly.” She hissed a little. “Ouch.”

“Mama?”

“Oh nothing Lancy. Just cooking and well, splashed myself with some oil. What else is new in your life?”

Lance thought for a moment as he walked to the meat section and started to try and decide if he would buy the bulk mince meat or if he should get sausages instead. “Nothing much. Allura and Coran are still running their cafe. Shiro is still selling flowers, oh and Shiro’s finally got himself some staff.”

“Oh? Who is it? Are they cute?”

Lance rolled his eyes as he got both meats. “I guess if you like mullets. He’s okay I guess. He’s a little weird but he’s cool I guess.”

“Oh? Is he weird like your cousin Antonio or weird like you need to barricade the front door and bedroom door weird?”

“Antonio weird, mama.”

She laughed a little when she heard that. “Well it’ll be fine then. You had me worried for a moment. Oh, speaking of Antonio, he and his family are going to be over for my birthday. Will you be able to make it this year?”

“Ah, sorry mama… I don’t think I will be able to this year.” He felt guilty about this, but he couldn’t really just leave the shop running with two people. Well he could, but it didn’t seem right. “I’ll drop into the shop today and double check the book to see if I have anyone booked. There is a good chance, but I need to make sure that everyone can run the place.”

“Oh, okay Lancy.” She sounded disappointed, and that just tore Lance up inside. He hated upsetting her. “Will you be at least able to come over for Christmas?”

“Of course mama. We always shut down for two weeks over Christmas… How is Papa?”

“He’s good. He’s watching the security cameras to try and find out which birds are eating from our bird feeder.”

“Sounds about right.” Lance put a few more items into his trolley. “I’m going to have to go soon mama. I’m almost done shopping and you know, gotta drive back home.”

“Of course love. You be good now, and let me know tomorrow if you really can’t make it over for a few days.”


“Love you too Lance. Bye.”

Lance hung up and continued with his shopping. He only had a few things left to get when he happened to notice a wild mullet staring at the frozen fish in the seafood section like it had insulted his mother. Did Shiro send Keith out to do groceries or something? He seemed lost.

With a small sigh, Lance drifted over towards him. “Hey Keith. What are you doing here?”

Keith seemed surprised to see Lance. “Oh hey. I’m just shopping for some stuff. Shiro gave me a list
and I just…”

“You lost?”

“Kind of…”

“Need some help?”

Keith nodded and handed the list Shiro wrote down over to Lance. It was pretty simple stuff really; salmon, rice, apples, miso soup, and instant coffee. “I’m not used to places like this…”

“I can tell.” Lance grabbed a pack of salmon. “Skinless or skin on?”

“... I don’t know.”

“Skin on it is then.” Lance put it in Keith’s basket and gestured for him to follow. He easily showed Keith where everything else was and helped him at the self checkout since he seemed kind of lost. They walked out together out of the store and Keith made his way towards the bus stop down the other end of the parking lot. “No car?” Asked Lance.

Keith shook his head. “No.”

“I’ll drop you back. I need to check something at work anyway..”

Keith seemed hesitant, but accepted anyway. He looked really uncomfortable sitting in the car since he really couldn’t sit the way he usually did. It made Lance wonder if he sat with his feet on the seat on the bus ride there. That was probably very awkward. Especially if the bus suddenly stopped. He would have flown forward into the seat in front of him. Painful.

It was a surprisingly quiet drive back, which Lance was not really used to. He was used to Pidge talking about all kinds of things weird and wonderful things, or Hunk talking about some cool new recipe he had just found or trying to improve some already known recipe. He wasn’t used to this.

“So um… How are you liking living here?”

“It’s alright.” Keith drummed his fingers on his legs as he looked out the window. “It’s kind of nice not freezing my ass off in the desert.”

“... We talking sleeping in a shack or under some rocks?”

“A shack. I managed to find one a few months ago. I think it used to be something else… Like some government parks thing. I don’t know. No one came by. I think it was abandoned.” He seemed to smile fondly as he thought about the shack. “It wasn’t much, but it was home.”

“So… You’ve been pretty much homeless?”

“I guess so. Does that bother you?”

Lance shrugged. “Not really. Just as far as I know I haven’t really talked much with people who have like, you know, been homeless.”

“I technically wasn’t really homeless. I had a shack.”

“Is a shack really a home?”

“It had four walls, a roof, floor, window and door.”
“Did it have a bathroom?”

“... It was a home.”

Lance laughed. “Whatever you say man... So what’s the deal with you and Shiro? Correct me if I’m wrong but you guys are like really close, right? Like close, close?”

Keith gave Lance a strange look and blinked very slowly. He seemed to be trying to process what Lance was trying to say. “I guess?”

“I mean like um... Are you two a couple or something? I mean Shrio seems super protective of you and like you know, you two live together.”

For the first time since Lance had known Keith, the black haired man laughed. It was a surprisingly lighter than Lance thought it would be. He kind of thought that if Keith laughed it would be kind of more guttural and rough. It was nice and made Lance’s face heat up a little.

“Yeah, we live together but Shiro’s more like a brother to me... He really saved my life when I was in a really difficult situation. I owe him a lot.”

“Huh... I see.” That kind of made sense to Lance. “So like, what did he do?”

“He let me live with him for a while.” Keith sighed contently and closed his eyes. “It was a real godsend. I really didn’t think he would care about me or like just overlook me and keep walking. I owe Shiro my life. He really saved me that day...”

“... Huh, okay.” Lance wasn’t too sure if he should push for more information, and didn’t really have time since he was currently going down the street towards their places of work. He pulled up in front of Shiro’s shop and the two of them got out.

Keith grabbed his groceries and quickly thanked Lance for giving him a lift and quickly went back inside. Lance watched him go then went over to his shop and walked in. Pidge was at the counter talking to a mother and daughter, showing them some earrings.

“These little silver ones are called sleepers.” Said Pidge. “You can keep them in pretty much all the time so I do recommend them for younger kids. Just to make sure the hole doesn’t close up if you forget to put them back in the next day.” She glanced over at Lance and waved. “Oh hey Lance. Isn’t today your day off?”

“Yeah. I just need to check the book.” He quickly scooted behind the counter and looked through the book while Pidge and the clients decided on a simple pair of sleepers for the daughter, who jumped excitedly. They went around to Pidge’s room and less than five minutes later the little girl and her mother happily left the shop.

Pidge sighed and flopped onto a chair, letting herself spin around a little. “Soooooo, what are you doing with the booking book?”

“My mama wants me to go home for her birthday and I don’t know if I can make it.”

Pidge rolled her eyes and grabbed hold of the book and looked through it. “… Okay, so this guy is chill. We can call him up and move him around... Apart from that we should be good for you to have like... Three days off? Hunk and I can handle walkins.”

“What? No. I couldn’t do that.”
“What can’t he do?” Asked Hunk as he walked in with lunch for himself a Pidge. “Um, I don’t have lunch for you too Lance. I didn’t think you were going to be in today.”

“I’m not. I’m checking the book. Mama wants me home for her birthday and I’m seeing if I can make it.” Informed Lance.

Hunk traded a sandwich with Pidge for the booking book. He hummed a little and flipped the pages over a few times. “... We can easily give you like three days Lance. It’s no problem. Go see Rosa.”

“Really?”

Hunk smiled kindly at his friend. “Come on Lance, you don’t need to worry so much. The place won’t burn down if you’re gone for a few days.”

Pidge nodded in agreement as she hoed into her lunch. “Mmmmm! We can do it.” She spluttered a few crumbs across the counter which she quickly mopped up with her napkin. “You got nothing to fear.”

“Eh, okay.” Lance quickly blocked out the three days he needed so no would accidently book clients for him. “Guess I should get going now?”

“Duh.” Said Pidge with a roll of her eyes. “Go rest up dude. Don’t you go grocery shopping on your day off?”

Lance paused for a moment as the cogs in his brain slowly started turning. The day was kind of warm. He had cold things in the boot of his car. His car was kind of stuffy at the best of times. “My Milk!” Lance raced out of the shop and quickly drove home. He had to save his milk before it spoiled.

***

Keith was sitting in the back room among the ribbons and wrapping paper as he pulled petals off a few carnations and into a small bowl. He was planning to snack on them like chips when he dipped into the back. He thought it would be easier than just randomly taking a flower, eating it, and getting weird looks from Shiro because he was just eating his stock.

Shiro walked in and started to look through the ribbons they had and hummed a little. “Hey Keith, have you seen the purple ribbon? The one with lace on one side?”

“No.”

“Okay.” He continued to look while Keith pulled petals. “... So how did you get back so quickly anyway? I was pretty sure you needed to catch the bus.”

“Lance was there and he gave me a lift.” He said.

Shiro seemed surprised to hear it. “Oh? Did you thank him.”

Keith rolled his eyes. “I’m not that antisocial you know, right? I thanked him.”

“Well that’s good.” Shiro grinned and grabbed the ribbon he was looking for and had a good look at it to make sure he had enough. “You know, I’m really proud of you Keith. I think you and Lance could be really good friends.”

Hearing that kind of made Keith confused. “Really?”
“Yeah.” Shiro grabbed a few more rolls of ribbon and hummed thoughtfully. “If you two do become good friends I’ll be more than happy to let you have the same days off as Lance… Minus valentines day and mother’s day. Everyone buys flowers on those days.”

Keith was surprised to hear that but nodded anyway. “Um, thanks Shiro… Is that okay?” As he was talking he started eating the petals that he gathered in his bowl. Mildly sweet. He liked that.

“It’s perfectly fine. Come out a little later when you’re done in here.” Shiro left and Keith alone.

The younger man sighed a little and looked up at the ceiling as he ate his petals. Well, while it would be kind of nice to have a friend he didn’t really know if Lance was the right one for that. He was loud and obnoxious and was totally making fun of him for eating flowers. However Keith did have to admit that Lance had been pretty nice to him. He didn’t have to help him shopping or help him get back to the shop.

Everyone else was really nice too. Allura was always happy and smiling as she she came in every morning. Coran seemed like a cheerful man full of funny stories. Hunk was kind hearted and Pidge was really smart, and kind of eccentric in her own ways. He kind of liked being around nice people like this.

Nice people.

They were nice people too.

They were all nice people but it didn’t matter.

Nice people were never always just nice till they got what they wanted. The only one he really trusted was Shiro. Shiro had proven time and time again that he deserved. He and Shiro were’t brothers by blood but they were brothers through and through. It made him happy. There was a chance that everyone around here was like Shiro. Shiro wouldn’t be friends with them if they weren’t good people, right? He hoped so.

Keith sighed a little and continued to eat more carnations.
People who know people

Chapter Notes

We learn a little more about Keith's past, but it's still vague af. Also Beezer is a doggo in this universe because Beezer is a good boy. I like Beezer. Kudos and comment when you can. It's much appreciated. Enjoy :D

It all started because Shiro had encouraged Keith to go out more and get used to the neighbourhood. Keith hadn’t been too sure about it but Shiro insisted. So Keith reluctantly took the day off to go for a walk.

It didn’t really matter which direction he went there was nothing but buildings in every direction. Needless to say he became hopelessly lost after about ten minutes. He knew he could call Shiro and get some help if he needed it. But he was going to give it a try. Even though he really hated it.

Going out and exploring places when he didn’t have to always lead to trouble for Keith. He preferred to just have a small area he knew really well, and then go out when he had to leave. Living with Shiro was way different and he wasn’t sure he liked it that much. He kind of wanted to go back to his shack away from it all, but that was so far away now. Several hours away. And Keith had fallen asleep on the way to Shiro’s place so he had no idea how to backtrack to the shack.

As he internally lamented over this he heard the sudden and frantic yaps and barks of some dogs. Looking in the direction of the barking he was surprised to see a dog park. Curiosity getting the best of him, Keith wandered over just to see what kind of dogs were there. He liked dogs. He had thought many times about getting one for himself, but considering the life he lived he just couldn’t bring himself to do it.

He sighed a little as he watched a woman throwing a ball for a tiny fluff ball and some kids getting tackled by some giant big boy while laughing. Keith smiled happily at all the good boys and girls and their humans.

Suddenly some mixed breed dog, about the size of a german shepard ran up to him and headbutted the side of his leg. He was surprised, but happy. He crouched down and patted the dog and checked their collar. “Hey there… Beezer?”

Beezer made a happy dog noise and parked their butt down. As they did two people walked up to him. Two people that Keith actually knew pretty well. It took everything Keith had in him not to punch the couple and bolt. But considering there were lots of people around, he figured he’d try being polite for the moment.


Nyam grinned at him and crouched down. “Come here Beezer.” The pooch happily ran over to her and she clipped his leash back on. “Beezer’s always been good at tracking down what we need.”

Rolo nodded in agreement. “Yep. And something we aren’t even after at the moment.”

That just made Keith roll his eyes at them and take a more defencive stance. “Cut the crap you two.
Everyone and their mother knows how badly you two fucked up with Prorok.” Hearing that name made the two of them visibly cringe. It made Keith a little cocky. “What was that? You still afraid to hear his name? You guys really messed up royally. Shouldn’t have double crossed him.”

Rolo frowned and pointed an accusatory finger at him. “Hey, you know fucking well that’s not what happened. Our information was good. The Blade of Marmora fucked us up.”

“Yeah.” Nyma looked pissed. “Now who would have told them that? The trusted people that we have worked with before, or the little bastard that tagged along because Prorok thought the little bastard should prove himself? Hmm?”

Keith rolled his eyes. “Oh right, you think I would really go and do something like that?”

“Yes.” Snapped Nyma.

Rolo smiled a little and put his hand on her shoulder. “Now, now Nyma. Let’s think of this as an opportunity. So, Keith. Where’s your pack?” Immediately Keith went quiet. He didn’t like where this conversation was going. His silence just made the two people grin. “You defected didn’t you? Oh Keith… Keith, Keith, Keith… What are we going to do with you?”

Nyma smirked and made a tut, tut, kind of noise. “Prorok would probably like to learn about the whereabouts of someone who willingly defected don’t you think? Maybe even someone higher up? I’m sure Sendak would like to know, maybe this will go all the way up to… Zarkon?”

That was it. Keith decided that nothing good ever happened outside. He bolted. Fuck this. Fuck that. Fuck everything. He was not going to be a part of this anymore. What the hell did they want from him anyway? Were they going to drag him back and leave him to them? He had no idea what was worse; Zarkon getting his hands on him, or Sendak. Both were sadistic fucks.

Keith ended up running for what seemed like hours, but was probably about twenty minutes or so. He ended up jumping a fence and landing in some bushes. For the moment he didn’t give a fuck that he just jumped into someone’s backyard. He quickly looked around to see where he was.

He had landed next to some flowers and groaned in pain. The flowers would have been softer. He slowly stood up but when he did so the back door to the house opened up and out walked, Pidge? No, not Pidge he was slightly taller and he looked really confused.

The Pidge look alike blinked very slowly at him. “Um… Can I help you?”

Keith was equally just as confused as this person. “Um… Do you happen to know Pidge?”

“… What’s your name?”

“Keith.”

That made the man instantly relax. “Oh, okay. Good to know. I’m Matt… Usually people use the front door not jump the fence.”

“In all fairness I didn’t know this was your house.”

“Oh? Were you trying to rob us?”

“No I just… Never mind.” Keith didn’t feel like telling Matt that he had two bounty hunters on his ass now. “I should probably get going…”
Matt shrugged and just pushed the backdoor open just that little bit more. “Nah, come on in. You look like you ran a marathon. Pidge is at work though if you were dropping by to see her.”

“I don’t—” Keith heard the sound of that damn dog Beezer yapping. That immediately made Keith bolt inside and yanked Matt inside with him. He out his hands over Matt’s mouth and stayed perfectly still for a few moments until he was sure that Beezer was gone. Once he was sure he let Matt go and slid down the door as he sighed in relief.

Matt immediately backed away from him and had a very nervous expression on his face. “Um, okay… What was that about?”

Keith sighed a little. “Sorry… Kind of met some assholes that I needed to get away from. I need to hide out here for a bit till Shiro comes and picks me up.”

“Okay?” Matt looked so confused but Keith ignored him and shot Shiro a message about picking him up at Pidge’s place.

Thankfully Shiro seemed to know where her place was so Keith just stayed sitting on the floor as he quietly stewed over what to do. Nyma and Rolo were bounty hunters and smugglers. The two of them were pretty good at it too. They were also in real deep shit with Prorok at the moment and that could make the ability to breathe and live very difficult. Capturing and delivering someone who defected would put them back in their good books.

He needed to get the fuck out of here.

A few minutes later Shiro did turn up and he talked with Matt for a bit before he took Keith into his car. Once they were safely inside Keith sighed and ran his fingers through his hair. He was stressed.

“Shiro… I need to go.”

“Keith. We talked about this. You said you would give it a month and—”

“It’s Zarkon.”

As soon as he said that Shiro almost slammed on the brakes. Thankfully he pulled into a side street so they wouldn’t get rear ended by the car behind him. “What?”

Keith nodded. “Yeah. I… I ran into some old acquaintances and they kind of figured out I’m not around those people anymore and they want to get back on the good side of those insane people because you know, they are insane… I think it’s best if I like you know… Maybe go away.”

Shiro thought about this for a few moments. “No. You’re still staying.”

“But Zarkon—”

“Forget Zarkon. Laying low for a while might be a good idea though… Do you think you need to move out of town for a few days?”

“Yeah… I think so.”

The older man tapped his fingers on the steering wheel a few times as he thought this over. “Okay… I think I have an idea… Maybe… If Lance agrees.”

“Lance?”

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Lance was shocked to say the least. He had just finished up a six hour biomechanical tattoo on a woman’s shoulder and was trying not to get a hand cramp when Shiro and Keith walked in. Lance had joked a little about adding another lion somewhere on Shiro or maybe giving Keith a facial piercing. He did not expect Shiro to ask him to take Keith with him when he went to visit his mum.

“I’m sorry, what?” Lance didn’t think he heard correctly.

“Please take Keith with you when you visit your mum.” Repeated Shiro. “You don’t need to take him with you. Just stick him in a hotel while you enjoy her birthday. We’ll pay for gas and wherever you put him for the night. It’s just really important that Keith gets out of town for a few days. Please Lance.”

Lance seemed very confused at this point. “Um… Look, I know I owe you a lot Shiro. You’re like a second dad to me but like…” He wasn’t sure how to explain he didn’t want to spend six hours in a car, three there and three back, with Keith in the car with him. “I don’t know…”

That was when Keith spoke up. “It was a stretch Shiro. Just stick me on a bus that goes out of town and I’ll lay low for a while.”

“Come on Keith you don’t have to do that.” Shiro gave Lance a pleading look. “It’s just for a few days. Please Lance.”

“I don’t-”

“He doesn’t want to Shiro.” Muttered Keith. “You know this was how it was going to turn out. No one gives a fuck about me. Just leave it at that.”

Lance held his hands up. “Whoa, let’s settle down petal. What’s the reason you need to suddenly skip town? I thought only tattoo places attracted dangerous people.”

“Whatever.” Keith just sighed and looked very frustrated. “Look, I need to get the heck out of town because I know some people that know people I used to hang with. Said people don’t like me at all anymore and because of some things I did. Now they want to enact some mob justice on me. So if those people tell my people where I am I am dead. Literally. They will skin me alive and use my skin to decorate their walls.”

That seemed like an exaggeration. “Alright… Um, I guess if you really need to lay low for a while, I guess I could take you with me...”

Keith seemed shocked that Lance agreed, and to be fair Lance was a little surprised too. But Lance figured that if it was for Shiro it was okay. He could do this one favour for him since Shiro said he really needed help.

Shiro visibly relaxed. “Thanks so much Lance. We really owe you one. You’re heading off in a day or two right?”

“Two days.”

“Perfect. Just swing by the shop as early as you can and Keith will be ready. Thank you so, so much.” Shiro and Keith quickly left after that and Lance was just kind of confused. He still had no idea what on earth Keith’s problem was.

Maybe he owed people money or something? Since he was so antisocial he wouldn’t have been surprised if Keith had accidentally done something and offended a gang member or something. Now he was worried that Keith might have done something to piss off some really scary gang, like the
Yakuza. If Keith was getting hunted by the Yakuza he would probably have to abandon Keith. He didn’t want to get completely destroyed by them. No one would find his body.

Hunk sighed a little as he looked up from his phone. “So, you’re taking Keith with you?”

“Apparently so… What do you think he did?”

Hunk shrugged. “No idea. Keith’s a strange guy. Theft?”

“Too mundane.”

“Grand theft auto?”

“Too childish.”

“… Stole something from a rich person?”

“Oh, that would be a thing.”

“Maybe he killed someone?” Suggested Hunk. “He killed someone and they are trying to find him?”

Lance made a slightly distressed noise. “I hope not. I promised mama that I wouldn’t get involved with that kind of gang crap.”

“If you don’t come back in three days we’ll know you’re dead.” Hunk’s phone dinged and he quickly picked it up, grinning when he did so.

That piques Lance’s curiosity. “Who’s texting you?”

“No one.”

“Is it Shay?”

“…”

Lance smirked and walked over to Hunk as he half heartedly attempted to read what was on his phone. “You guys organizing a date? Movie and dinner? You gonna cook for her?”

Hunk blushed and lightly pushed him away. “She’s got a half day at uni today. She’s going to drop by and we’re going to have dinner at this diner we both like.”

“Ooooo, such a romantic.” Teased Lance. Hunk and Shay were good for each other. She was such a sweet woman, and smart too. She was going to uni to study geology. Lance wasn’t too sure what specifically she was doing, but it made her happy and Hunk went all starry eyed when he talked about her passion. It was adorable. Lance still couldn’t tell a rock from a fossil, but that was fine with him.

Hunk rolled his eyes and gave Lance another playful shove. “Oh hush you… You think Shay would like some flowers?”

“Duh, girls love flowers. Red or pink roses.”

“Okay. I’ll be back in second.” He quickly ran out the door to Shiro’s place.

Lance just shook his head and laughed. Hunk was so hopeless sometimes. He went back behind the desk as he watched Pidge walk out of her room while talking to her latest client. “-and it you have
any troubles just come back in and I’ll help sort you out. If it’s super bad though you will have to, and I mean have to go and see a doctor. Okay?” The person nodded, paid and quickly left.

“... What part of them did you pierce?”

“Belly button.” Said Pidge. “You wouldn’t believe how many people don’t keep it clean. Especially younger people. It’s just gross.”

“Ew. Nasty.”

“Yeah. So what’s happening? Where’s Hunk?”

“Getting flowers for Shay.”

“Disgusting. That's adorable”

Lance shook his head and patted her back. “Our boy is in love Pidge. Let him be happy.”

“I am. It’s still disgusting… He’s getting her roses, right?”

“He better be. I will be disappointed in him if he doesn’t.”

“Yeah.” She elbowed him in the ribs. “So, when are you going to get flowers for Allura?”

Lance’s face burned as he clutched his aching ribs. “Firstly, ow. Secondly we need to get to know each other a little more. You feel me? Sure we talk and stuff, but we haven’t really been doing any one on one stuff, you know? Thirdly, ow my fucking ribs…”

“Ah, grow up ya baby.” She quickly checked the booking book before turning and heading back to her room. “If you need me I’m going to be working on Rover. They should be up and running by the time you get back.”

“We can just buy a roomba! You don’t need to build one!”

“Rover will be more than a mere roomba! I'm installing lasers! Motion sensors! All kinds of cool shit!”

Lance shook his head and ended up gazing out the window, waiting for Hunk to come back. It didn’t take him too long to see Hunk heading back, but he suddenly stopped and waved at someone. Moments later Shay was walking towards him with a huge smile on her face. They talked for a bit and Hunk meekly handed over the flowers. From what Lance could tell he gave her two red roses and one white rose. Shay blushed and accepted the flowers. They talked a little while longer and they came back into the shop.

“You clocking out Hunk?” Asked Lance.

He nodded and went to grab his stuff. “Yeah. You don’t mind right?”

Lance shook his head and have him a dismissive wave of his hand. “Off you go Hunk. You two enjoy your date. Keep it PG kids.”

Shay laughed a little and happily smelled her roses. “Yes Lance. Nice to see you again.”

“How’s it going Shay? Still doing rock stuff?”

“Yep. Still doing ink stuff?”
He grinned. “Yep. But seriously, you two have fun.”

“Thanks Lance.” She looked towards the backroom. “You here Pidge?”

“Hi Shay!” Called Pidge. “You two have fun smooching!”

She laughed a little while Hunk just blushed and grabbed the rest of his stuff. “Night guys! See you tomorrow!” They said goodbye to Hunk and started to wrap things up for the day. Lance had to rethink some of his plans now since Keith was going along with him.
Today we learn some more about Keith and his crazy past. Lance is oblivious to it all.
Kudos and comment please. Feedback is very much appreciated. Enjoy :D

The day eventually came and Lance pulled up in front of Shiro’s shop. He quickly ducked into his own shop to double check and make sure Hunk and Pidge had everything under control. Sure he knew they did. They were more than capable of looking after the shop for a few days, but still he worried a little. However as soon as he stepped inside Pidge booted him out.

Lance huffed a little and reluctantly entered Shiro’s shop. The man had his arm on the counter as he death glared the prosthetic with malice. “What did your arm do?” He asked.

Shiro looked up at him and then looked back at his arm. “I think a stem or something got caught in it somewhere… When I try to move it, it gets kind of stuck and I just… I don’t know. I have half a mind to open it up and find what’s wrong with it.”

“Pidge could help with that.”

“Probably. I’ll go get Keith. The flowers for Rosa are there.” He pointed to a beautiful bouquet of flowers set in a box. It was perfect. He walked over to the stairs and called up. “Hey Keith! Lance is here!”

A few seconds later Keith was in the shop with a worn out backpack slung over his shoulder. “We going now?” He asked. “What the heck did you do to your arm Shiro?”

“I took it off.” Said Shiro and he attempted to direct Keith towards Lance. “Now you two go and have a good time. Everything should be fine after a few days… Have fun.”

The two men said goodbye to Shiro and got into the car. When they got in Lance passed the flowers to Keith. He just stared at them and looked confused. Lance just rolled his eyes and pushed them onto his lap.

“Passengers get to hold the flowers… And I swear if you eat any of them I will hurt you.”

Keith rolled his eyes and looked out the window. “Whatever.”

Lance had instant regret about taking Keith with him. He just had to remind himself that this was a favour to Shiro. But damn it, Lance really hated all the silence that came with moving Keith around. It was a three hour drive too. He hated it. Three hours of silence sucked.

Normally on these drives Lance would turn on some music and sing along to whatever pop song was blaring. However he didn’t think that Keith would appreciate his pitch perfect voice, or his intentionally bad singing. It was fun to sing badly once in a while just for fun.

After maybe about an hour of mind numbing silence Keith was the one that broke it. “Sorry you got roped into this.” He said. “I know you’re just doing this for Shiro.”
Surprisingly getting called out like that hurt Lance a little. “Ouch man.”

Keith shrugged. “Don’t feel bad about it. I know I’m cutting in on your family time here… So like, is it just you and your parents?”

Lance shook his head. “No. I also have two older brothers, Marco and Luis. Then there is my sisters Rachel and Veronica. That’s not even counting all my relatives back in Cuba. My family is huge.”

“Huh. Alright.”

“Yeah…” He didn’t know if it was appropriate to ask Keith if he knew anything about his own relatives. He did say he was an orphan and all. “Um… So… You got any more questions?”

Keith thought for a moment. “... What was it like to grow up with parents? What’s it like to grow up with siblings?”

Lance thought for a moment. He wasn’t too sure how to really describe it since he didn’t want to come off as making it sound better than what it really was. “Um… Well I grew up on a farm in Cuba. We lived there for about the first six years of my life and then my family moved to America. The house was always noisy. My siblings are all older than me. Marco and Luis were kind of assholes growing up, but you know, after Marco’s near death experience in a car crash he straightened himself out and quickly brought Linus in line with him. Veronica was always more straight laced. She was like a second mother to me. Which was kind of weird looking back on it. Rachel used to put all her hair clips in my hair and painted my nails. I was the baby of the family.”

“Huh… What were your parents like?”

“Mama is kind, but strict. She could have been a sharp shooter she’s deadly accurate with her sandal throw.” He started to rub the back of his head. “I got my fair share of hits to the head…”

“I can imagine.”

Lance ignored that for a moment. “My old man is pretty much the same as my mama. He’s kind of stoic at times, but he a major softy. He cries when watching Disney movies with my cousins.”

“Huh…”

“Yeah…” Lance tapped his fingers against the steering wheel a couple of times. “So… What’s it like growing up in the system? You mentioned that the last place you were in was very bad?”

“... Yeah.” Keith sighed and started to play with the ribbon on the flower box. “I bounced around five homes within like, two years. I apparently have behavioural problems. Stealing things. Ignoring instructions. Staying out late. Breaking things. That sort of thing.”

“Oh…”

“Yeah… Got into fights in school too.” Admitted Keith. “To be fair I only beat up the kids that made fun of me for being an orphan. Fuck those brats. Talk shit get hit.”

Lance nodded a little and glanced over at the other for a moment. Keith didn’t seem upset about that. He just seemed tired. He probably had repeated this story plenty of times to different people.

“... So what did you do while you were on the run?” Asked Lance. “What did you do? How did you survive?”
Keith shrugged. “I liked reading. I read a lot of survival books about plants and animals and stuff. I memorised what was safe to eat and what not. You would be surprised how much sugar is in cactus flowers.”

“Oh, is that why you eat flowers? Survival stuff?”

“What? No. Shut up Lance.”

“Hey no judgement here. You gotta do what you gotta do, right? But like, weren’t people looking for you? You would have been a missing kid. Fuck you probably still are.”

“Even if I am no one is looking for me.” Muttered Keith. “Who the fuck looks for an problem orphan?”

“…”

“Exactly.”

Lance frowned a little but wasn’t going to push that topic any further. “So what adventures did you get into on your own?”

“A rock fell on me once and I almost died.”

“Seriously?”

“Yeah. My legs were trapped under a rock for a few days. By the third day, I gave up and kind of just decided that this was how I was going to die. Thank fuck for Shiro. He found me and saved my life.”

Lance was surprised to hear that. “Really? That’s how you two met?”

“Yeah. Shiro saved my life and I went home with him while he tried to figure out what to do with me. I liked staying with Shiro. His boyfriend at the time was kind of an ass though. We didn’t get along.”

“... Huh.” Lance glanced up at a sign for a truckstop a few miles ahead. “Want something to eat? I’m hungry.”

“... Okay.”

Lance pulled into the truck stop diner and the two sat in some booth, ordered some food that was going to be too greasy, and waited. As they waited Lance found himself thinking more about what Keith had told him about his childhood. He still believed that Keith carried over his flower eating as a form of survival. He also felt pretty bad for Keith. His upbringing seemed pretty brutal.

He also wanted to know what happened after Shiro found him. Obviously that didn’t last too long. He didn’t hear Shiro talk at all about Keith in all the time that he knew him. Also, there was the little matter of someone being after Keith for reasons he still refused to talk about. Not that Lance wanted to know about that. The less he knew the better at this rate.

The waitress came around with their food and Lance almost felt a little strange to see Keith eating loaded fries instead of flowers. Though Keith kind of ate like an animal. A starving animal. A starving animal that didn’t know when it was going to eat next. Did Keith not know how to use a fork properly? Stabbing all those potatoes until he couldn’t get any more onto his fork and then shoveling it into his mouth. With the way he ate he was done before Lance had even gotten halfway
through his own food.

“So did you forget to eat breakfast this morning?” Asked Lance.

“Hmm?” Keith glanced up at him. He had cheese and bacon on his chin. “Why would you say that?”

Lance rolled his eyes and tossed him a napkin. “Wipe your face. You’re not a child.”

Keith rolled his eyes and wiped his face clean. “Better?”

“Yeah, better.” Lance went back to eating while Keith looked out the diner window. It made him wonder a little about what would happen if he did end up coming over for dinner with his family? Keith ate like Rachel. Hell, Rachel would probably take this as a challenge and try to eat more twice as fast as Keith. That would have been something to see. They’d both get a whack to the forehead with the cooking spoon and a lecture about eating like pigs.

Suddenly Keith tensed up which made Lance pause and give him a confused look. Before Lance could ask him what was up Keith quickly stood up. “Bathroom. I’ll meet you at the car.” He dashed off and Lance just shook his head. Keith was really weird.

He looked out the window to see if there was something weird outside that might have surprised Keith. There wasn’t really anything. Just a family trying to herd their kids back into the SUV, some people pulling in with their trucks, and a cute biker chick. She was really cute. Like, super cute.

She happily skipped up to the diner with her helmet under her arm. The way she moved made her long pony tail swish and sway like a metronome. Damn she was cute. Lance kind of half hoped that she would order something and he could talk to her. However, she seemed to be lost since she took out her phone and asked the waitress for some directions.

It was mildly disappointing, but it was no big deal. Plenty of fish in the sea, so to speak. A cutie like her probably had a partner already.

***

Keith was freaking the fuck out in the shitty diner bathroom. Why was Lance such a slow eater? He was just lucky that he decided to look out the window. He saw that bike. One of their bikes. He knew those bikes well. He had worked on them himself. He wasn’t too sure which one of those crazy bitches was riding one of those bikes but damn he was not sticking around to find out.

Without much thought about the consequences Keith did the only logical thing he could think of to get out of the diner without being seen. He climbed out the window. It was a very tight fit but Keith managed to do so and landed hard on his back.

“Ow… Fuck.” Keith stood up and brushed the dirt off his jacket. Hopefully Lance would be done eating now and he would be waiting in the car. Keith took a few steps away from the window, when a sudden chill ran up his spine and he instinctively reached up and blocked someone trying to smash him in the face with a hammer kick. “Holy shit!”


Keith growled a little and pushed her back. “Fuck off Ezor. The fuck are you doing here?”

Ezor just laughed at him and playfully rocked on her feet. “Hey don’t be like that. It’s been years
since we last saw each other. Half-breeds gotta stick together. Ya know?”

“And you attacked me because?”

“Because I wanted to.” She said it like it was the most obvious thing in the world. “Anyway, have you considered Lotor’s offer? You know you would be welcome to join us.”

“And have Lotor hand me right over to Zarkon? I’m not stupid Ezor.” He wondered if there was something he could use to hit her, but he couldn’t see anything. “Why are you here? Are you tracking me?”

She shrugged. Her posture seemed aloof to the untrained eye, but anyone that knew her knew that she could suddenly snap at any second. “There was a little trickle down through the grapevine of a certain half Galra causing trouble around here and Lotor was just sending his best scout out to see if it was you and um… Honestly I got lost. I was just going to scope out the area before Zarkon’s cronies got down here.”

Keith was caught a little off guard by the way she spoke about Zarkon. Wasn’t she technically part of that man’s army or something? “Okay?”

Ezor laughed a little at Keith’s confused expression. “Oh right, you kind of poofed out of existence after that thing got all botched up. Lotor and Zarkon got into a tiny fight so me, the rest of the girls, and Lotor decided it would be safer to like, get the heck out of there. We considered joining up with the Blade of Marmora, but you know. Different ideologies and stuff.”

“… So you’re on the run too?”

She shrugged. “We have a little more leniency since you know, Lotor’s Zarkon’s son. You wanna join us or like, are you doing the whole lone wolf thing?”

“Fuck off Ezor.”

Ezor frowned when he said that. “Fine. Have it your way Keith.” She turned to leave, but quick as a flash she quickly spun around and kicked him hard in the side. It knocked him off his feet, but before he hit the floor she spun around and kicked him again, knocking him flat onto his back. Keith was dazed for a moment and went to sit up, but Ezor stepped on his hand, digging her heel into his hand. “You really shouldn’t swear at people trying to help you out.”

Keith cringed and gritted his teeth. He wanted to bark back and insult her, but even he knew that would be a bad idea. Through gritted teeth he just nodded.

After a few seconds Ezor removed her foot and stared down at him with a satisfied look on her face. “Much better. Later Keith. I’ll let Lotor know you’re on the move. Should get Zarkon off your back for a while.”

Keith groaned and rubbed his aching hand. “Yeah, yeah… See you around Ezor.” He watched her as she practically skipped back to her bike, put on her helmet and drove off. When she was gone Keith let out a sigh of relief. He was just thankful that Ezor was the one that found him and not Zethrid. If it was her she probably would have snapped his neck, or even ripped his head off. She was a damn monster.

Once he was sure she was gone he carefully slinked back to the car. Luckily for him Lance was walking towards the car, and he managed to get in there as soon as Lance unlocked it. He seemed surprised to see Keith quickly slip back into the car.
“Oh, when did you get here?”

“Just now.”

“You were in the bathroom for a while. You okay?” Asked Lance as he started driving. “You kind of raced to the bathroom pretty quickly.”

Keith rolled his eyes. Like hell he was just going to tell Lance about Ezor. But at the same time he didn’t want Lance to think he had some kind of digestive issues. What was more important to him? His secrets or his ego? Secrets. Definitely secrets.

“I think the cheese was bad. It just suddenly hit me.”

“... Should I crack a window?”

“I’m fine Lance. Really… How much longer till we get to your parents city or town or whatever?”

“An hour and a half if we don’t stop for gas.” Lance hummed to himself. “The town is pretty small, but there is a nice little bed and breakfast place you can stay it.”

“Really?”

“Yeah… Hey is there something wrong with your hand?” He asked.

Keith looked down at his hands and noticed he was kind of curling it in more of a claw like shape. There was also a little bit of a bruise starting to form on the back of his hand. He only just noticed it starting to form under his glove. Ezor was way stronger than she looked.

“Slammed my hand in the stall door by accident. No big deal.”

“Huh… Okay.”

Keith just shrugged and looked out the window. So he was going to stay at a bed and breakfast. He hadn’t stayed at one of those places before. It might be nice. That was as long as Ezor didn’t tell Lotor about him, which she would. That would then make Lotor send Zethrid, Acxa, and Narti out to find him along with Ezor. Lotor was too much like his father. Neither of them could take no for an answer.

If this kept up then Keith might have to break his promise to Shiro and run away again. It was safer to do that then stick around and wait for Lotor or Zarkon to pounce on him and rip him apart like wolves on a lamb with a broken leg.
Quick disclaimer; I do not speak Spanish. I have never learnt Spanish. I only have google translate so some things might be off, but I don't use many Spanish words since I am not confident using them. Please be gentle. Kudos and comment if you can. Enjoy :D

Shiro was nervous as hell. Keith had only been gone for an hour and he was already sure that something bad had happened to him. But then again he was probably just worrying about nothing. Keith was an adult. He knew what he was doing. Probably. He’d already grown up so much.

He still remembered the first few days Keith had moved in with him very vividly. When he had tried to take Keith to the hospital the younger had bitten him and tried to jump out a window. At the time Shiro lived on the third floor of his apartment complex. So that wasn’t a very good idea.

Once he had calmed Keith down enough, the young teen ended up hiding all over the apartment; closets, cupboards, under the bed, and anywhere else he could fit. It scared the hell out of Adam the first time he had met Keith. He thought that Keith was some kind of thief. Shiro had explained why Keith was living with him.

Adam was not happy at all about it and had insisted that Shiro look up and see if there were any missing persons reports on the mystery child he had unofficially adopted. Officially, Keith Kogan was missing and presumed dead. There were a few newspaper articles about it, but after that there was nothing about it. It was pretty sad.

He remembered asking Keith if he had any family that could help him or take care of him. Keith had gotten really upset and screamed at him about wanting to get rid of him. Then he tried to jump out the window again. At least now Keith seemed to seem be over climbing out of windows stage.

Those had been a few rough years. He had no idea what was going through Keith’s head during that time, but he was glad he stuck around for Keith. He needed someone to support him and he was glad Keith let him do it.

Shiro sighed a little and manually flexed his prosthetic arm a few times. Allura had dropped by earlier after the usual breakfast rush to see if Shiro needed some help since Keith wasn’t there. She helped him tweasar the leaf that got caught in the joint. He still wasn’t sure if it was any better and would probably have to go and see someone about it soon.

Suddenly a dog jumped up and put their paws against the window. It wagged its tail and barked excitedly. Moments later a young woman walked into the shop carrying the excited pupper. “Shush, calm down Beezer. Is it okay if I carry him? There isn’t a pole I can tie him to outside.”

Shiro smiled at her. “No problem. As long as he doesn’t do his business in here, he’s free to walk around on a leash.”

The woman smiled and carefully put Beezer down. “You be good now Beezer.” The dog happily yipped and started to sniff around. She then turned to him and smiled. “Hi, I’m Nyma. I was
wondering if you could help me out a little.”

“Sure, what do you need?”

Nyma hummed a little and looked around. “Um… What kind of bouquets do you make?”

“Well, pretty much for every and any occasions; Mother’s Day, Father’s Day, graduations, birthdays, Valentine’s Day, funerals, or whatever else you would like.” Informed Shiro. “You can also pick a few different flowers and I can make a bouquet out of those.”

Nyma smiled. “Oh that’s really good. What would you suggest just for a little bit of decoration around the home? I was thinking maybe daffodils or tulips.”

Shiro nodded a little and looked down at Beezer, who was sniffing around the backdoor and stairs. “Um, if you wouldn’t mind me asking, this is your dog right? Are they an inside dog?”

“Well yeah? Why?” She looked a little confused.

“I see… Well, daffodils and tulips are poisonous to dogs if they eat them.” He informed. “I’m happy to make you a nice, simple arrangement for you, but I feel like I should warn you just in case your dog does eat them. If they do you’ll need to take them to the vet as soon as possible.”

“Oh.” Nyma seemed very surprised to hear that. “I never really thought about that… Beezer, come here boy.” Beever did not walk over to her and instead pawed at the backdoor. She sighed a little and gently tugged on his leash. “I am so sorry about him. He must be smelling something interesting behind there… Do you have some food back there?”

Shiro shrugged. There really wasn’t anything back there. Just spare ribbons and some extra flowers. Keith did hang out there a lot but that he always tidied up after himself if he made a mess back there for any reason. He usually ate upstairs anyway so there wasn’t any dead food back there.

“I highly doubt it. Nothing back there but supplies.”

“Huh… okay. Well how about these flowers?” She pointed to a couple and paid Shiro the money for a simple bouquet. Shiro happily started working on it while Nyma watched Beezer and struck up a friendly conversation. “So you work here all by yourself?”

“No, I have a part timer helping out.”

She hummed a little and looked around the shop. “So um… Where are they? Day off?”

“He’s off visiting family for a while. Should be back in a few days.” Not a total lie, but not a total truth either. Besides Nyma was just a stranger, but was being friendly, so he was being friendly back. “So did you just move in around here? I haven’t seen you before.”

“Oh just passing through with a good friend of mine… Actually, we came here because we had recently just got into contact with an old friend of ours.” She smiled, happily took the bouquet and happily smelled the flowers. “He was kind of busy and ran off before we could talk to him properly. Good thing my little Beezer is a good tracker, aren’t you boy?” Beezer barked. “He apparently works around here… Maybe you know him?”

At her question the whole room seemed to become colder. Shiro was starting to get bad feelings about Nyma. But he was going to play it cool. “Oh? Maybe. I mainly see women, and sometimes husbands and boyfriends coming in to get flowers so he might not be someone I know.”
“Oh that’s fine.” Nyma quickly began describing the person she was looking for. “He’s about this tall, black hair in a kind of mullet like style. Pale Asian looking guy. Greyish blue eyes. Quiet and kind of antisocial. Know someone like that?”

Shiro shook his head. “Sorry. I really don’t know anyone that fits that description. A few come close but like… No. Sorry I couldn’t be of any help. Hope you find them.”

Nyma sighed a little. “Oh well, thanks anyway Shiro. Come on Beezer. Maybe Rolo’s had better luck.” She gave Beezer’s leash a little tug and the dog reluctantly followed her out.

Once she was gone Shiro picked up his phone and got onto the group chat that everyone in Five Lions and Cafe Altea was apart of. He needed to add Keith to it at some point. He informed everyone that there were some strange people looking for Keith and to be wary or anyone called Nyma or Rolo. He doubted anyone would reply straight away, but they would see it soon enough.

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Eventually Lance pulled up to the bed and breakfast that he knew pretty well. It was the only one in the tiny town he had grown up in. In his mind it looked like it could have been some plantation slave owners farm house. Apparently he was kind of right. In high school when they had to look up local history it was apparently the second home of some slave traders back in the day. Now it was a bed and breakfast run my a nice African American family. Apparently they wanted it torn down or something but it was heritage protected.

Once he parked Keith checked his phone to see if his parents or siblings had texted him at all during the ride. He was surprised to see the message from Shiro and glanced over at Keith who was looking past him to see the building.

“... This looks like the kind of place I’d end up getting killed in.” Muttered Keith. “I have no idea why… I’m getting deep South white racism from this place.”

Lance snorted a little when he said that. “Maybe so, but Mr and Mrs Jackson are far from white racists. They run a nice place. You’ll be fine here for a few days.”

“If you say so…”

“Yeah.” The two of them got out of the car and Keith grabbed his backpack. “So like, Keith?”

“Yeah?”

“Who are Rolo and Nyma?”

Keith immediately tensed up and clenched his jaw. He did not look happy about this at all. “How do you know those names?”

“Shiro messaged the group and said those two were looking for you.” Said Lance as he showed Keith his phone.

Keith was fuming at this point. But to his credit he did his best to stay calm. “Nyma and Rolo… You don’t want to mess with them. They are the kind of people that can get you anything if you can pay their price. And I mean anything. They might look harmless, but they will straight up kill you if you have something they want… And the people they work for are a million times worse. You name anything and they have smuggled it somewhere.”

“Yes, alive and dead, yes.”

“What do you mean alive and dead?!”

Keith shrugged. “Some people want dead babies. Don’t ask me why.”

“Geeze Keith. How the fuck do you know people like that?”

“I have made many poor decisions in my relatively short life.”

“I can tell…” Lance felt like he was going to die. If his mum found out what was going on with Keith she would flip out and clobber them both with her sandals.

He walked with Keith into the bed and breakfast and talked with Mr Jackson who was manning the front desk. There was always a few rooms that were available. Keith just grabbed the smallest and cheapest room and vanished once he got the keys.

Lance let out a small relieved sigh and headed back to his car. Once he safely in the seat he just sighed and ran his fingers through his hair. Keith was really into some dangerous shit. That did make him wonder if he used to work with Nyma and Rolo. He couldn’t imagine Keith being some drug lord, human trafficker, terrorists, or organ harvester. He really hoped that none of those things were true. His mum would bury him under a mountain of sandals if that was true.

He groaned a little and drove towards his parents place. He didn’t need to think about that anymore. He was back in his hometown. He just needed to relax and hang out with his family.

He got to the house with no problems and knocked on the front door. Rachel happily answered the front door and grinned. “Lancey-Lance!” He looked over her shoulder. “Mama! Lance made it!” She ushered him inside and Lance chuckled a little at her enthusiasm.

His mum grinned and kissed Lance’s cheek. “Lance, so good to see you. Are these flowers for me?”

“Of course mama.” He handed her the flowers and she put them on the table. “Sorry about everything getting jerked around so much and not knowing if I could make it yet and stuff. Pidge and Hunk have it all covered.”

“Well that’s good.” His mum hummed happily and repositioned the flowers. “Luis and Lisa and the kids are sitting outside with Veronica. Marco and Pop-pop are just out picking up a few things.”

Rachel grinned and put Lance into a headlock. “Come on you, let’s get going.” They walked out the back and Rachel grinned. “Hey guys! Lance made it!” She released him from the headlock.

Instantly the two children, Nadia and Silvio, ran over and almost tackled Lance. They laughed and started yammering on and on about school and things they had done or were doing. Lance listened as best he could to the two of them, but when they were excited they both talked very fast and loud.

Thankfully Lisa was able to call them over and get them to calm them down a little. The way only a mother can. She had the same effect on Luis. Probably one of the reasons why the big lug married her in the first place. His niece and nephew then went back to running around the backyard.

Lance let out a small sigh of relief and sat down in one of the chairs on the back between Veronica and Rachel. “Thanks for saving me there Lisa.”

She chuckled. “No problem. It’s good to see you again Lance. It’s been a while, hasn’t it?”
“Yeah it has. How are things going?” He asked.

Lisa shrugged. “Things are okay. I have an entitled mother this year that doesn’t think her child has autism when he very clearly does. I was just trying to help her and her child. Oh well. I’m doing my best.” Luis smiled a little and gently rubbed her shoulder. In a supportive manner.

Veronica hummed a little as she swirled some wine around in her glass with her perfectly manicured nails. “I hate entitled people. Anyway, how was the drive up here Lance? Must have been boring to drive three hours up here.”

Rachel giggled a little. “You never do well on long car trips. I still remember when we went to the beach and you started complaining like ten minutes into the trip.”

Lance could feel his face going red. “I was three!”

“Are we talking about the family trip to the beach?” Asked his mum as she walked out with a drink for herself and Lance. “Here you go Lancey.”

He quickly accepted it. “Thanks mama…”

Rachel just grinned and nodded at her mother’s comment. “Yeah. Lance was whining the whole time because he hated getting strapped into the car seat.”

Their mother just chuckled and sat in her own seat. “Oh don’t laugh to hard Rachel. You cried when we got to the beach and got seaweed in your hair. You complained all the way home. At least Lance was a good boy and fell asleep on the way back.”

“…” Rachel huffed and crossed her arms, making a pouty face.

Suddenly Silvio ran to the side gate and climbed up so he could look over it. “Grandpa and uncle Marco are back!” He yelled.

Moments later Marco opened the gate and slowly swung it open. He was careful enough not to smash Silvio onto the fence. “Careful there squirt. You’re gonna get crushed if you’re not careful.” He looked over to where the adults were sitting and grinned when he saw Lance. “Hey hermanito finally showed up.” He walked over to Lance and ruffled his hair. “Still inking for a living?”

Lance rolled his eyes and tried to swat his brother’s hands away. “Yeah, yeah. I’m still in the tattoo business, and no I haven’t gotten any more ink since the last time you saw me.” He craned his neck a little and grinned when he saw his dad. “Hey Pop-pop. Good to see you again.”

The older man grinned and hugged Lance tightly. “Good to see you again Lance. How’s the shop?”

“It’s all running smoothly.”

“That’s good. How are Pidge and Hunk? Still working with you?”

“Yes.”

“Those other friends you have, the ones at the coffee place and the flower shop. Those places still opened.”

“Of course. Everyone loves the coffee at Cafe Altea, and everyone loves Shiro so there’s no way he’s ever going out of business. He’s even hired someone to help him out he’s doing so well now.”

Rachel suddenly perked up when she heard this. “Oh? Is she cute? Making eyes on the flower girl
Lancey-Lance?” She purred.

Lance rolled his eyes. “Pretty sure the flower boy wouldn’t be happy about being called a flower girl Rachel.”

“... Is he cute?”

Lance face palmed.

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The moment Keith entered his small room he fell down flat on the bed and stared up at the ceiling. Fucking Rolo and Nyma. Of course they were still looking for him. He was thankful he had actually left when he did. If Beezer had caught his scent he would have gone ballistic. The little bloodhound would have probably have gone and tried to rip him a new one.

Hopefully Shiro didn’t say anything incriminating when he talked to them. If they thought he was hiding something Shiro would be fucked. Even more so if Rolo and Nyam decided to let the Galra know about him.

Also, Lotor and Zarkon had a falling out? That was so weird. He thought they were on okay terms. As okay as a warlord and the son of a warlord could be. But he and his generals escaped Zarkon’s influence. That would be trouble. The Blade of Marmora was different. Considered more of a fringe group and an annoyance to Zarkon the Galra kind of ignored them… Lotor being who he was, that was just asking for trouble with the rest of the Galra.

He groaned and rubbed his hands over his face. What was he meant to do now? Lotor was asking for him, which was an automatic never going to happen to him. Ezor could have just bullshitting him about Lotor wanting him to join them and they would probably just hand him over to Zarkon.

He made a frustrated noise and rolled onto his side to pick up his backpack. He dug through it for a few seconds and pulled out a large purple hunting knife. He hid it under his pillow and continued to stare up at the ceiling. He knows he might be paranoid or becoming paranoid. Okay, he knew he was completely paranoid. Whenever he heard the sound of a car engine or a motorbike going by his head would immediately snap towards the window. He was going to give himself whiplash at this point.

It was just for a few days. Rolo and Nyma would leave soon once they realized he was gone. He was the kind of glad that Galra were pretty much known for getting the hell out of places quick smart once they felt like they were in trouble or their cover was blown. All they would be able to do is just vaguely point them in Keith’s direction. He just had to be patient and wait.

He closed his eyes and breathed heavily. He needed to calm himself down. Breathe in. Breathe out. Everything was going to be okay. He could wait this out. Everything would be fine. If something really bad happened he could easily escape. He always did. He was good at running.
The look

Chapter Notes

Once again I warn y’all I don’t know Spanish and am using google translate because where I live we don’t teach Spanish in schools so never learnt it. If I messed up let me know. It would be much appreciated. Kudos and comment when you can, I love reading comments :)

That night the McClain clan all crowded around the family table for Rosa’s birthday. It was just like the usual family dinner Lance had grown up with, just with a little more alcohol. It was fun to hear his family talk more about their lives. It was fun hearing Nadia and Silvio going on and on about their school. Silvio hated English but was really good at maths. Nadia was good at PE but didn’t like science. It was fun.

That lead to Rosa and Pop-pop reminiscing about everyone else’s school experiences. “Remember when Luis and Marco blew up the shed?” Asked Pop-pop. “Then they tried to blame it on Veronica because she was the one that thought it was creepy?”

Rosa sighed and nodded. “A science experiment gone wrong I believe? You boys ruined perfectly good gardening equipment.”

“We paid it back.” Whined Luis. “Eventually.”

His kids looked up at him with wide eyes. “Can you teach us how to do that?” Asked Silvio.

Luis quickly shook his head as Lisa death glared him. “Oh no. I can’t possibly do that. Marco was the one that cooked it all up. I was just the innocent boy with the match.”

Veronica rolled her eyes. “I was the only innocent one in all that and you two know it. The way you goons tried to blame everything on me you’re lucky I didn’t set your room on fire.”

Marco sighed. “We said we were sorry. We panicked. Rachel was at a friends house when it happened and Lance was practically glued to mama. You were the only scapegoat and- OW! Did you just kick me Veronica?”

The woman smirked smugly and sipped her drink. “Prove it.”

Rosa sighed and shook her head. “Oh dear, these children of mine. Always getting up to something… Remember that storm that happened when you five were coming home from school? What was the story again?” She took a sip of her drink and smiled. “Oh yeah, I remember; Lance and Luis got into a fight, Luis pushed Lance down a hill, but slipped and grabbed Marco, who grabbed Rachel, who grabbed Veronica, and you all landed in a huge mud puddle… Then you all got colds.”

The five children blushed at this and mumbled words under their breath. Lance remembered that day, kind of. He wasn’t too sure what he and Luis were arguing about but they did. He remembered crying a lot when he hit the puddle at the bottom, but he felt a lot better when he saw his siblings tumbling down after him. They all got an angry lecture from their parents and had to stay in the
garage while each person got to shower one by one.

Rosa laughed at everyone’s embarrassed expressions. ‘Aw, don’t be like that. You’ve all grown out of that now, right?’

The family continued on with their conversations after that, and Lance let his mind wander a little. He wondered if Keith was going to raid the garden for flowers to eat that night or if he was going to horrify people with his bad eating habits down in the small dining room that was there.

Maybe he should have asked his mama if Keith could come over? She and the family in general was always happy to have more people over. Then again he was probably going to get a sandel to the face from mama for not inviting Keith over in the first place.

Rachel happily nudged Lance while everyone else was talking. “So Lancey-Lance You still want some advice for trying to woo that cute coffee girl?”

A blush covered his face. “Things with Allura are going okay.”

“You should take her out on a date already. You’re still interested in her, right? Or are you getting interested in the some of the boys in your area?”

Lance rolled his eyes and lightly shoved her. It was no secret to his family that he was bisexual. He had come out to his sisters first since he was closer to them than his brothers. Eventually everyone found out and it didn’t really change much in the family dynamic for him. It just meant his siblings teased him so much more when he talked about men or women. His parents didn’t really get it, but they weren’t angry about it or treated him differently.

“No boys Rachel. I still have a thing for Allura. She’s really cute.” Said Lance. “I um… I’m thinking about maybe asking her on a date… Once we both get a day off together I’d like to take her shopping…”

“Sounds like a nice thing,” Rachel sighed. “If only I could go on a fun shopping trip with a cute boy…”

“Hey Lance.” Called Pop-pop, effectively pulling him away from his conversation with his sister. “Next time you come up here bring your friend Pidge. She’s good with all the tech stuff right? I got a little project I’m thinking of and thought she might like to help out.”

“I’ll let her know when we get back.

Veronica raised an eyebrow when she heard that. “We? Did you bring someone here with you?”

Immediately all eyes were on Lance and Lance kind of wanted to die. “Um…”

Maroc smirked. “Oh? You brought a chica here and didn’t want to bring her around to the family? Or is is a chico?”

Lance wanted to die right then and there.

Nadia swallowed a big mouthful of food and look up at her uncle curiously. “Uncle Lance has a girlfriend?”

“No Nadia.” Muttered Lance. “I don’t have a girlfriend…”

“Oh, so you have a boyfriend?” She asked with her big innocent eyes. She smiled and swung her
legs under the table a few times. “Can we meet him please? I wanna meet him.”

“Why didn’t you bring him over?” Asked Rosa. She sounded slightly offended. “We are more than happy to accept anyone you love.”

Lance needed to fix this quick. “Whoa, whoa, whoa! Time out. Back it up here everyone! Keith is just a friend and he needed to get away for a few days. He’s not my boyfriend. We aren’t dating, we are just friends.”

“You still should have invited him over.” Scolded Rosa. “I thought I raised you better than that Lance.”

“He’s kind of a loner and said he didn’t want to bother our family time mama. I didn’t want to push it… He knows family is important to me…” He hoped that they would drop the subject, but that wasn’t happening.

Rachel smirked that evil little smirk she only smirked when she had an evil little idea. “Where’s he staying tonight Lancey-Lance? Surely not in your car or something?”

“What? No. He’s staying at the bed and breakfast.”

“Oh the one run by the Jacksons?” Asked Luis.

“Yeah. That’s the one.”

Rosa pouted a little and shook her head. “No. That won’t do Lance. That won’t do at all. You’re bringing your friend over for lunch tomorrow. No questions.”

Lance could have argued, but he knew when he was defeated. “Yes mama…”

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Around midmorning a knock at the door made Keith jump up and grab his knife in one swift motion. It took him a few moments to calm his racing heart down a little before he walked to the door. “Who is it?”

“Lance. Open up mullet.”

Keith rolled his eyes and opened the door while hiding the knife behind his back. He had learned from experience that most people didn’t take kindly to seeing someone with a knife. “What do you want? Did something bad happen and now we have to leave?”

Lance rolled his eyes. “Do you really think I’m a disaster Keith? Look, I mentioned you were here and mama told me to bring you over for lunch.”

“... No.”

Lance shook his head. “No can do mullet. Mama gave me the look.”

“The look?”

“Yeah, the look. You know the look? The one that says you’re going to get your ass beat if you say no.”

Shiro had given Keith several of those looks. He had an idea of what it looked like. “Oh.”
“Yeah. Grab your stuff and come with me. Mama will probably ask you to stay the night. Hope you like bunking with hyperactive kids.”

Keith frowned and grabbed his backpack. He made sure to make sure Lance didn’t see his knife and followed him out. On the way Lance did inform him that along with his siblings his brother and his niece and nephew. So all in all there were ten people in that house. Ten. That was a lot.

They got to the house and he followed Lance around the to the backyard where Lance’s family was hanging out. They grinned when they saw the two one them. A woman with long brown hair came up to them and grinned wildly. “So this is the chico you were talking about last night hermanito?”

Lance blushed and lightly pushed her away. “Yeah, yeah. Back of Rachel. Leave Keith alone.” He quickly introduced him to his other sister, his brothers, his sister in law, his niece and nephew, and his parents.

Keith did his best to be respectful to Lance’s parents. “Thank you for inviting me over. I really didn’t expect this… I was kind of just planning to just stay away till Lance was ready to head back.”

Rosa smiled warmly at him. “Nonsense. Any friend of Lance is welcome in our house anytime. You want something to eat? Something to drink? We’re having lunch soon. You don’t have any allergies do you?”

That was a lot of questions at once. “Um… No allergies or anything. I’m not thirsty at the moment.”

“You sure? I can get you some water?”

Lance nudged Keith in the side and gave him a look that just said do it. “Water would be nice. Thanks.”

While that was happening Lance’s nephew walked over to him carrying a soccer ball under his arm. “Hey mister. You want to kick the ball around with me and Nadia?”

Lance pouted a little. “Aw, you don’t want to play with me anymore Silvio?”

He frowned a little. “You kick the ball too hard uncle Lance and you never keep it on the ground for us.” He looked over at Keith. “Please?”

“Um… Sure?”

As soon as he said that Silvio tugged Keith over to where Nadia was waiting. She waved at him and smiled. “Hi. I’m Nadia. You’re Keith right? Why did you come up here with uncle Lance?”

Keith shrugged and kicked the ball over to Nadia when Silvio kicked it to him. “Sometimes you need a few days away from work. You’ll understand more when you’re older.”

“What do you do for work?” Asked Silvio. “Our mama is a teacher and or pa does construction stuff.”

“I work in a flower shop.”

Nadia’s eyes lit up. “Really? That’s so cool! Do you do any sports? I’m really good at soccer. Watch this!” She did a few fancy ball tricks, managing to kick it up so she was balancing it on her knee. She then did some quick, fancy leg work and ends up balancing the ball on her forehead. “Pretty cool huh?”
Keith nodded. “Impressive.”

“Yep.” She headbutted the ball to Silvio who bounced it off his chest.

“Can you do any tricks Keith?” Asked Silvio

Keith shrugged and pretty much did everything Nadia did, but then expertly leaned forward and rolled the ball down his neck and rested the ball between his shoulder blades. That got the kids to watch him in awe. That made him smile a little. His balancing skills were good for something.

Nadia walked over to Marco and pulled him to his feet. “Come on uncle Marco. You used to play soccer right? Play with us! Keith is really cool!”

Marco laughed a little and followed her as he eyed Keith. “It’s been a while but I think I can handle this chico.” Keith really needed to learn some Spanish. He watched Marco kick the ball around a little doing a few tricks. He then suddenly headbutted the ball to Keith. Keith bounced it off his chest and balanced it on his knee. Marco grinned at him. “Hey, not bad. Didn’t think you would catch that one.”

“Why? Was it meant to be hard?” Asked Keith. The kids oooed and aaahed at those fighting words. They grinned and sat on the edge of the garden while Keith and Marco started to get a little more competitive.

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The rest of the adults watched this silly little competition unfold between the two men. Rosa sighed as she relaxed into her chair. “Keith seems like a nice young man. Reminds me of your friend Hunk.”

Lance frowned a little and shook his head. “Mama, the only thing the same about Hunk and Keith is that they are both guys.”

“Well he is a nice boy Lance.” Said Rosa. “Look at how well he’s getting along with Silvio and Nadia.”

Rachel giggled a little. “He is very cute Lance. If you aren’t interested in him would you mind if I try putting the moves on him? He’s a total cutie and I want his number.”

Veronica rolled her eyes. “Really Rach? You’re going after Lance’s friends?”

“I have a particular taste when it comes to men.” Muttered Rachel.

Lance just tuned the women of his family out for a moment and watched Marco try to one up Keith. Every move he made Keith easily matched. He wasn’t even breaking a sweat yet. Did Keith play on the weekends or something? He was really fit. Suddenly one of them, Lance wasn’t really paying attention as to who it was, kicked the ball onto the veranda roof.

Pop-pop sighed and handed Lance the keys to the shed. “Go get the ladder will you?”

“Got it.” Lance grabbed the keys and headed to the shed. While he was doing this Keith walked past him and shimmied his way up one of the support beams faster than a stripper on pay day. The whole McClain family just watched him in shock. Everyone that could actually see Keith from the grass, which was Marco, Lance, Nadia, and Silvio, had their jaws drop when they saw his next stunt.

Once Keith had pulled himself halfway into the roof he swung his legs back and forth a few times
until he managed to hoist himself up so he was doing a handstand. Slowly he shifted his weight so he was balancing on one hand while he grabbed the ball with the other and knocked it back onto the ground. He then quickly got down the same way he got up.

He gave everyone a confused look when he noticed they were staring at him. “What?”

“That was so cool!” Exclaimed Silvio. “How did you do that? That was so cool! Did you guys see that? Did you see what he did?!”

Marco chuckled a little and put a hand on Keith’s shoulder. “Didn’t expect you would have such upper body strength chico. You must be pumping iron like crazy.”

“... Thanks?” Keith looked so confused.

Lance walked back to Pop-pop and gave him the shed keys before he sank back into his seat. He was a little in shock to find out about Keith’s new talents. He had no idea how that Keith was able to do that and it was kind of hot?

Rachel noticed Lance’s face and leaned over to him. “Lancey-Lance.” She cooed. “Are you blushing?”

“...” Now Lance was blushing. He quickly looked over at his mama. “Hey, so is lunch almost ready?”
Lunch went pretty well. At least that’s what Lance thought. The family seemed to like Keith and were treating him like family. Every time he finished his plate someone was offering him something else, and Keith, being the antisocial child he was, didn’t know how to say no. So he was getting fed way more than he probably would normally eat.

Much of the conversation was directed at Keith. Not that unusual really. His family was friendly and very big on sharing stories. Though Lance had a feeling that he probably should have warned them that Keith was an orphan.

“So what’s your family like?” Asked Rosa. “Do you have any siblings? Probably not as many as Lance has.”

Keith looked visibly uncomfortable and shook his head. “No I um… I don’t have any siblings… I um… I’m an orphan. I moved around a lot till I um… I could just live on my own…”

Rosa looked upset when she heard that. “Well you’re welcome here anytime Keith… Lance said you were staying at the bed and breakfast right?”

“Yeah?”

“Well you can stay here. There’s still space in Lance’s room. We’ll just have to move some things around. You’re good with that Lance?” She shot him a look that basically told him that this was happening no matter what he said.

So Lance just smiled and nodded. “No problem. Just gotta move some bags around. I can get to it right after lunch.”

“Good boy Lance.” After that the conversation drifted back to more family centered stuff. Keith was mostly quiet but still engaged in conversation when directly asked something by either Nadia and Silvio since they were sitting close to him.

Once lunch was over Lance took Keith up to his room. Lance had been pretty lucky when it came to sleeping arrangements. Victoria and Rachel shared their old bedroom. Luis and Lisa stayed in the room Marco and Luis shared. Marco was cool with crashing on the couch while Nadia and Silvio slept on the blow up mattress in the lounge room with him. His parents obviously had their own room and Lance got to hog his room all to himself.

Granted his bedroom was the smallest but he never had to share. Lance pushed his bag out of the way and against the wall. “Alright, so here’s what we’re gonna do, We’re gonna clear some more space and then get the other blow up mattress. You all good with that?”

“Yeah…” Keith was standing awkwardly in the room. “Um… You know you don’t have to do that.”
“Keith, mama gave me the look. The look. You don’t say no to that.”

“I guess…” He still seemed embarrassed.

Lance smiled softly at him. “Look, you aren’t imposing or anything. Mama always makes way too much food at family gatherings or when more than two extra people come over. By the way we’re going to be expected to take home many, many leftovers. You and Shiro are going to have food for days.”

“Well her cooking is really good.”

“Yep. Now come on, we should let the Jacksons know you’re staying with us now, and you can grab the rest of your stuff.”

“Okay.”

The two of them returned to the bed and breakfast and made sure Keith had all his things before checking out. On the way back to his parent’s place Lance took the scenic route and show Keith around a little. Keith seemed to appreciate the longer ride too. He kept his gaze out the window the whole time.

“... Hey, sorry about my family. They can be a little intense.”

“Hmm? Yeah I guess, but it’s nice.”

Lance smiled a little. “Really? Some people aren’t used to the whole big family thing… But I probably should have mentioned to my mama that you’re an orphan.”

“Yeah… That would have been nice to avoid.”

“Yeah. Sorry about that.”

“It’s okay. I know families are all weird and different. I try my best to fit in and stuff… But like, I usually just end up shrinking into the background. I would have been fine with that, but your niece and nephew don’t shut up.”

“Yeah. They like talking.”

“Yeah. They take after you.”

“Yep they do and… Hey!”

Keith smirked and chuckled at Lance’s expression. After that the car ride was mostly quiet with Lance pointing out a few landmarks or things he thinks are cool. Stuff like the school, movie theater, the community center, the church, and the huge water tank on the hill that overlooked the town.

They ended up driving up the winding road towards the water tank. Lance was kind of surprised that the road seemed to be recently paved and there were new metal barriers put in place. He had heard of a few car accidents that happened along here if it rained or if idiots were speeding but he didn’t realize that people took note of it.

Suddenly Keith sat up properly in his seat and kept his eyes on something as they drove along. “... Hey pull over. Now.”

“Huh?”
“Pull over Lance.”

Lance was a little confused but pulled over like Keith said. Once the car stopped Keith got out and walked back down the road. As he did so he took off his jacket and jumped the railing by some corner. A few seconds later Keith was walking back with something wrapped up in his jacket.

He sat back in the car and Lance looked over to see Keith had a small puppy. It looked really tired and didn’t even seem to care that Keith was cradling them. “... A puppy?”

“Got a problem with dogs?”

“You just picked up a dog? It could have diseases you know.”

Keith shrugged and carefully pulled back the small puppers lips for some reason. Lance wasn’t too sure why, but Keith seemed concerned. “Can you take me to a vet? I think he has fleas or ticks or something. His gums are really pale…”

“Um okay.” Lance did a quick U turn and headed to the local vet so they could do a check up on the small dog.

Through the whole thing Keith looked extremely concerned and voiced several times that the dog was abandoned and he would be taking care of them from now on. After all the initial checks the vets took the dog into the back to give it a quick flea dip while he and Lance sat in the waiting room.

“... How did you even see that dog anyway?” Asked Lance. “Even I couldn’t see it. It was down a ditch not visible from the road.”

“I have good eyes.” Muttered Keith, his eyes fixed on the staff only door. Soon the vet came back carrying a much more alert little black dog. Immediately Keith got up and retrieved them from the vet. It surprised Lance how much Keith was babying the animal, but he must have been a dog person.

They walked back to the car and Keith continued to cuddle the pup. The pup happily yipped and nipped at his fingers. It was pretty cute. “So Keith?”

“Yeah?”

“What are you going to call him?”

Keith thought for a moment and looked down at the happy pup. “... Cosmo.”

“Cosmo?”

“Cosmo.”

“... Right, and you think Shiro will let you keep Cosmo?”

“Yes. There is no way he would say no to it.”

“And how can you be so sure?”

“Because I know Shiro and he knows me.”

“... Right.”

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Keith knew that Shiro would let him keep Cosmo. There was no way that Shiro would say no to him keeping a cosmic wolf. For starters they were extremely rare. Also, it was better that Keith looked after this wolf rather than anyone else. No one else would really know what to do with it. Besides, Cosmo already bonded with him. He was lucky that he managed to see the pup warp into reality and flop into the ditch when they were going past.

“Think your cousins will like him?”

“Probably. I’m pretty sure they like animals, but if Cosmo needs some space to rest you can take him to my room.” Said Lance.

“Okay.” He patted Cosmo a few more times and the small puppy looked up at him. They made a very happy yipping noise and licked his fingers. “… Do you think your mum has some chicken or something we can feed him? Something that isn’t covered in spices?”

“Probably. I can ask.”

When they got back everyone was extremely surprised to see that Keith had a puppy. At first Nadia and Silvio wanted to have the dog but Keith quickly put his foot down. He made sure they knew that Cosmo was his dog now. Luis and Lisa agreed with Keith and told their kids to leave Keith and Cosmo alone.

Rosa got some plain chicken and water for Cosmo and Keith ended up hiding with Cosmo in Lance’s room. The puppy seemed very happy to be there and walked around sniffing everything. Once he was done exploring Cosmo started to gobble down his food while Keith watched them.

“So…” Muttered Keith. “Can you properly teleport or was that little flash I saw you doing before just a fluke?”

The pup looked up at Keith while chewing on some chicken with its bright yellow eyes. “Arf?” It then went back to eating. It was cute.

Keith chuckled a little and watched the pup finish eating and waddle over to a shirt Lance left on the floor. Cosmo now had a very round belly and looked very satisfied. Keith smiled softly at the pup and gently rubbed the animal’s belly. “Why were you alone anyway? Your mum should have been right behind you… Did something happen to her and you were left alone?”

Cosmo made a little huffing noise and started to kick one of his back legs. This animal was adorable. He was going to take good care of him.

There was a knock at the door and Lance walked in. “Man, it feels weird knocking on my own bedroom door. How’s Cosmo?”

“Stuffed.”

“That’s good. Here.” He handed Keith some newspapers.

Keith just stared at it dumbly. “I don’t want to read it.”

Lance rolled his eyes. “It’s not for you to read. It’s for Cosmo to go to the bathroom on.”

“But he can do that outside?”

“He’s a puppy. You think he’s house broken yet?”
“... House... broken?”

Lance was staring at Keith like he was a complete moron. “Really Keith? Really? How can you not know what house broken is? Just spread the newspaper around and make sure that Cosmo does what he needs to do on that. I don’t need him crapping all over my room.”

“Okay.” He looked over at Cosmo. Even if he did make a mess it wouldn’t be a big one. He was just a small cosmic wolf.

“... Did the vet give you any medicine to give him?” Asked Lance.

“Yeah, some worming stuff. I crushed it and mixed it in with his food. So much easier to mix powdery things with wet stuff.” He wasn’t going to tell Lance how he knew that. Lance sat on his bed and watched the two of them interact for a bit. It made Keith feel a little uneasy but he chose to ignore it until it annoyed him. Turns out Keith found this got very annoying very quickly. “What?”

“Just wondering.”

“About what?”

“Hmm, nothing too important mullet.”

“Really?”

“... Well you seem to like being around animals more than people and you’ve what? Only known this pup for about an hour? The darn thing hasn’t left your line of sight.”

Keith shrugged. “I found him. He’s my responsibility.” Though he mostly wanted to make sure that Cosmo didn’t suddenly teleport somewhere he shouldn’t be when he wasn’t looking. That would be hard to explain. “Besides, if you saw him you would have helped him, right?”

“I guess?” Lance sighed a little and laid back on his bed. “So... We pretty much have free time till it’s time for dinner. I assume you want to stay with Cosmo?”

“Yep.” He scratched behind the little pup’s ear and smiled when they let out a relaxed sigh and closed their eyes. Cosmo was so cute and adorable and perfect. He loved them so much.

“... Well, since you only stayed one night at the bed and breakfast, we could take Cosmo to a pet barn and see what stuff we can get him.” Suggested Lance. “Cosmo will need a collar. It’ll be interesting and Cosmo can choose his own toys.”

Keith didn’t know about places that let animals go in if it wasn’t a vets or a pet shop. “O-okay... If Cosmo wants to go.” He gently nudged one of Cosmo’s paws. “What do you saw little buddy? Want to get some pet stuff?”

Cosmo’s ear wiggled and he quickly stood up. “Yip! Yip! Yip!” He seemed excited so Keith picked up the pup and the two of them left the house, after Lance quickly informed the family about where they were going.

As soon as they got onto the front lawn Cosmo wiggled out of Keith’s hands, ran onto the lawn and did his business. The two men watched this small puppy make the proudest face and walked back over to Keith, wanting to be picked up again.

Keith picked them up and looked at Lance. “Told you Cosmo goes outside to do that.” He then walked to the car while Lance sighed dramatically and went inside to grab a small plastic bag to get
Lance couldn’t help but grin when Keith and Cosmo entered the pet barn. It didn’t seem like either of them had ever been in one before. Hell it almost seemed like Keith had never been inside a place with a trolley before. He directed Keith to the trollies and told him where to put Cosmo. He seemed hesitant, but did it anyway and soon they were walking around the store.

Lance was pointing out all the practical things he would need like a collar, leash, food. Keith nodded along but he and Cosmo seemed to be more interested in the weird toys for cats and dogs.

He found it kind of adorable and couldn’t help but push a button on one of the cat toys and became delighted when he saw Keith’s eyebrows shoot up into his hairline in surprise. He laughed a little and Keith shot him a dirty look.

Lance just shrugged and showed Keith the collars and leashes. “Here pick something for your boy.”

Keith looked it over and pointed to a dog harness. “What’s that?”

“Dog harness. Some people prefer using that when they walk their dog rather than just a leash.”

Keith nodded a little and grabbed a rather big harness and collar. “Um… You know your dog is tiny, right?”

“He’s going to get bigger. Much bigger.”

“Oh, you know what kind of dog he is?”

“Yep.”

“What kind?”

“Wolf.”

Lance snorted a little in laughter. “Yeah, no seriously. What kind of dog is Cosmo?”

Keith stared at Lance for a few moments, slowly blinked and walked away to the next aisle. Lance was kind of stunned. Was Keith telling the truth? Cosmo didn’t look like a baby wolf. He didn’t think there were any native wolves around this area anyway. He quickly followed Keith around the corner and saw Cosmo happily snuggling up to a big red lion chew toy. Cosmo looked so happy and Keith looked happy.

That was when it hit Lance like a ton of bricks. Keith was a dog dad. Keith was the weird stone faced guy that scared off people but had so many sweet baby puppies waiting for him at home. It was too adorable. Too much for Lance’s heart. Dark, mysterious, handsome and…

Lance felt his face burn bright red when that thought crossed his mind. Where did that come from? He blamed his dumb bi ass for that. It had been a while since he had a slight gay thought about someone other than a Hollywood actor. He sighed a little and shook his head. It was fine to have silly little crushes. Especially since it was just a silly crush on mullet.

“You done with everything? We have food, a collar, leashes, and poop bags. That sound right to you?”

Keith nodded. “Yeah, and red.”
“Red?”

“Cosmo’s toy.” He gestured to the red lion. Cosmo happily looked up at them and yipped excitedly and he snuggled more into it. Keith smiled and gave Cosmo a few pats as he pushed the trolley over towards the check out. As he walked Lance couldn’t help but check out Keith’s butt a little. His pants fit him quite nicely.
Keith still didn’t leave Cosmo’s side no matter what. When they got back to Lance’s parent’s place Keith stayed in Lance’s room with Cosmo. When dinner came around he came down to get some more food for Cosmo while carrying the pup before retreating back to the room. Lance quickly explained that away as Keith being overly protective of the pup. Rosa understood and happily sent Lance up to Keith with a large plate of food.

When Lance got there with the food his heart melted when he saw Keith and Cosmo. Keith was leaning back awkwardly against his bed while Cosmo was carefully walking up his chest while wagging his tail. Once the pup got close enough they play bit his nose.

Keith just pulled a face and moved the happy pup away while straightening himself out. “Your breath stinks.”

Cosmo happily yipped and wagged his tail. Suddenly his nose started twitching and he saw Lance. “Arf!”

Keith looked up at him and gave him a slightly confused look. “What’s with all the food?”

“It’s for you. Duh.”

“Oh. Thanks. Put it somewhere Cosmo can’t get it.”

Lance nodded and put the plate on a desk before sitting down on his bed. Cosmo ran over to the desk and started walking around with his nose up in the air. He wanted the food so badly because it was tasty people food.

Keith smiled a little. “You can’t have people food Cosmo. You already had chicken.”

Lance grinned. “Yeah. He’s a real greedy. He’s gonna get all fat at this rate.”

“He’s not going to get fat.” He walked over and brought Cosmo back over to where Lance was. He sat next to him on the bed and ran his fingers through the small animal’s fur. The pup was confused for a moment, but quickly relaxed and closed their eyes. Enjoying the attention.

Lance hummed a little as he happily watched Keith and the smaller animal interact. Although he was pretty cold towards most people he was just soft smiles and kind looks towards the pup. Lance kind of wished Keith would look at him like that. He was such a sucker for dark brooding guys that were actually big softies.

“Well are you going to eat? I can take care of Cosmo for you.” Offered Lance.

“…” Keith seemed a little hesitant but reluctantly passed Cosmo over to him and walked over to the desk to eat his food. He did keep a close eye on Lance and Cosmo, but Lance didn’t mind too much.
He had a fun time playing with the puppy.

He hummed a little and lightly booped the small animals snoot which made them jump and flop to their side. “Aw, so cute.” Lance then started rubbing Cosmo’s belly and the puppy started kicking their paws around while playfully yipping and trying to bite his fingers. “Aw, you’re so big and strong and scary. That’s what you are. So mean. Such a big scary boy. Much scary. So scary.”

He barked and rolled onto his belly, panting a lot. It was then he noticed that Keith was eating and he was not. He let out an unhappy yelp and quickly ran over to Keith, just begging for a taste of delicious human food.

The rest of the evening was pretty uneventful. Rosa came up later that night to see how Keith and Cosmo were going. Keith did apologise about not interacting much with the rest of the family, but Rosa was very understanding. She was just happy that Keith was a kind young man that loved animals. She mentioned as much to Lance many, many times that evening.

The next day Lance needed to leave and that meant so did Keith and Cosmo. They loaded up Lance’s car with Cosmo’s things along with several containers of food. They each had three between them. Keith had no idea what he was meant to do with the tupperware containers. She just told him to wash them and give them to Lance.

Keith nodded along and politely said goodbye to the rest of the family and then promptly hid in the car till Lance was ready to go. Once they were on the road Cosmo was only interested in looking out the window and watching everything go by. On the brief moments Lance was able to look over at theme he could only chuckle when he realized that Keith was doing the same thing.

“Do you think you’ve been away for long enough?” Asked Lance.

Keith nodded. “Yeah. I’m kind of known for vanishing when things get tough. Why? You worried about me or something?”

“Well who’s going to look after Cosmo if you get bumped off by someone?”

“... Shiro could look after him.” He scratched under Cosmo’s chin. “I wouldn’t let anyone else but Shiro look after you. So you better like him too Cosmo.”

“Aw, you not even going to let me look after him?” Asked Lance. “Don’t you trust me with the pup?”

“I only trust Shiro.”

“... Wow, rude much?” Lance was faking his hurt, but he wouldn’t have minded looking after the playful pup.

Keith just shrugged and scratched Cosmo behind his ear. “I have my reasons for trusting Shiro above all else... I wouldn’t trust anyone else with my stuff.”

“Aw, but you trusted me enough to drive you so far away?” Asked Lance. “Don’t you think I’ll drive you somewhere and kill you. Take your stuff?”

Keith looked over at him and slowly looked Lance over from head to toe. He then chuckled and looked back out the window. “You just keep thinking that Lance. We all have to cling to wild fantasies I guess.”

“What? You really think I couldn’t kill you?”
“Yep.”

“Aw, that’s mean. Like literally anyone could kill anyone if they tried hard enough, or made a mistake.”

“I guess, but I doubt you would be smart enough to kill…”

“. . . Yeah Keith? You want to finish that sentence?” Keith suddenly yanked the handle on his car seat and laid back, pulling Cosmo with him. The small dog yipped in surprise and Lance almost swerved.

“Whoa, mullet! You trying to scare me or something? What the hell?”

“Black and purple bike.” Said Keith quietly. “It’s about to pass us. The rider is in some jumpsuit thing with orange reflectors on it.”

Sure enough someone wearing that kind of outfit on that kind of bike sped past them. “. . . Friend of yours?”

“Maybe. Didn’t want to risk it.”

“. . . You really need to talk to someone about your paranoia.”

Keith rolled his eyes and continued to stay laying down in his seat for the next half an hour. However he probably would have stayed laying down if it wasn’t for Cosmo’s continuous whining about not being able to look out the window. Keith was still very paranoid for the rest of the trip and had one hand on the seat lever the whole time.

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Eventually they got back to Shiro’s place and Keith let out a small relieved sigh. He grabbed Cosmo, his backpack, and quickly went inside. Lance followed moments later with containers of food and put them on the counter.

“Remember what my mama said about returning the containers.” Warned Lance. "She'll whack you with a sandal all the way from her place if you don't. Her aim is that accurate."

“I know.”

Shiro walked out of the back room and let out a relieved sigh. “Hey there you two. How did everything go? . . . Whose dog is that?”

Keith smiled a little at Cosmo. “This is Cosmo. He’s mine.”

That seemed to surprise Shiro a lot. “What? Keith I don’t think that-”

“Can we talk about this later?” Asked Keith quickly. He walked past Shiro and went upstairs. He put Cosmo on the couch and watched the pup sniff around for a few seconds before it yipped and teleported to the back of the couch, and then the coffee table, then the countertop in the kitchen.

“Hey! Don’t just do that!” Keith went to grab Cosmo but the pup was in play mode now and wouldn’t stop teleporting around the room. “Get back here before Shiro or someone sees you!” Cosmo ended up teleporting on top of the fridge and gave a tired yawn before curling up. “. . . You can’t sleep there! Are you listening to me?”

Cosmo responded with a tiny snore.

Keith groaned in annoyance and contemplated how he was going to get the pup off the fridge when
Shiro walked in with the containers Lance brought in. “Well it looks like we’re set for the next day or two and Lance filled me in about… Why is Cosmo on the fridge.”

“He teleported up there.” Muttered Keith.

Shiro was surprised. “Teleported? So that means he’s your kind?”

“... I don’t really know. Cosmic wolves, at least the adults, can jump between the realms. Puppies and young wolves just do short distance teleportation.”

Shiro sighed and put the containers into the fridge before carefully taking Cosmo off the fridge. He looked at the puppy and seemed to be studying it carefully as they whined from being woken up. “So this is a cosmic wolf?”

“Yeah.”

“And you named it Cosmo?”

“Yeah?”

“Keith, you have never been good at naming anything have you?”

He blushed a little and looked away from Shiro, mumbling a little to himself. “Not my fault… He just looked like a Cosmo to me…” He looked back at Shiro. “So… Can I keep him? Please?”

Shiro thought for a moment as he looked between Keith and Cosmo. “… Well, it’s better that you look after him than him living on the streets.”

Keith sighed in relief and looked over at the annoyed puppy. “Thanks Shiro. Come here Cosmo.” He tapped his chest and held his arms out. Cosmo yawned again and teleported into Keith’s arms. “Good boy.” He looked back up at Shiro and was amused by his slightly confused expression. “He finally has enough strength to just do it on his own. He was too tired yesterday.”

“I see…” Shiro looked a little closer at Cosmo. “So… You know a lot about cosmic wolves?”

“Um… They are kind of rare where I’m from.” Admitted Keith. “I know they eat meat, kind of nocturnal… They get really big. Like a little bigger than normal wolves, and they are really smart. They are apparently really easy to train. Never trained one myself, but I knew people who did when they used to breed them.”

Shiro looked bug eyed at Keith. “Are… are you serious? That’s… That’s really big.”

“I’ll look after him. Don’t worry.” Keith tried to be reassuring. “I’ll take full responsibility for Cosmo.”

“... Okay. You’re going to have to pay for his food though if he only eats meat.”

“I will. Promise.” He took Cosmo to the couch and set him on a pillow. Cosmo made a happy sound and fell back asleep. Keith just smiled and watched the pup.

After a few moments Shiro handed him a cup of tea and sat next to him. “So… Did you enjoy spending time with Lance’s family? He said you fitted in quite well.”

“... I did?”

“Yeah. You did. I’m proud of you.”
Keith smiled a little and drank his tea. “Thanks… Did anyone come by looking for me?”

“Yeah… Nyma came by with her dog. From her description he was looking for you.”

“Oh… Well as long as you didn’t say anything that would make them think I’m here then that’s cool. I’m known for vanishing when I feel like I need to… Plus I have more dangerous people after me now…”

Shiro sighed heavily. “What did you do this time Keith?”

“Nothing. I just… I ran into someone that I used to know and she is one of Lotor’s underlings, but Lotor is on the run and wants me to join up with his group, and I have no idea why… And to be honest I really do not want to find out. If I go and meet him I know I’m as good as dead.”

“… If you like you can hide up here for a few more days.”

“It’ll be fine Shiro. Promise.”

“… Okay.”

***

The next day Lance was back in the shop bright and early. However after five minutes of walking around the shop he got attacked by a roomba. It ran into his ankle several times as he was trying to get things ready.

“What the hell?” He crouched down and flipped it over. Its wheels swivled and its brush whirled but Lance kept it there. This did not please Pidge when she came in and had to tinker with it.

“Why did you have to flip Rover like that?”

“What? Not even asking me how the whole family get together went?”

She rolled her eyes. “You’re smiling, breaking my shit, and you haven’t gotten anything ripped off your body. You are fine.”

“Ah, rude.” Lance slumped over the front desk and whined. “Huuuuuuuuuuunk help me…”

He shrugged. “Sorry Lance. You shouldn’t have flipped her roomba.”

“Rover!” She whined. “You heathens will never understand and… When did Keith get a dog?” The trio watched Keith try and fail to walk a very excitable dog that ran into their front door, twice before giving up and barking. Pidge squealed and threw open the door. “Is that a puppy?! When did you get a puppy? Get in here!”

Keith was a little startled but went inside anyway. He kept a strong grip on the leash as Cosmo ran around excitedly. Hunk and Pidge were fawning over him. “This guy is so cute.” Cooed Hunk.

“You got a dog over the weekend?”

Keith nodded slowly. “Yeah. This is Cosmo. I found him by the road with Lance… Cosmo, sit.” Cosmo looked up at Keith and gave him a confused look before reluctantly sitting down. “Good boy.”

Lance frowned a little as he looked at Cosmo. “Is it just me or is he bigger?”

“Yes. Puppies grow fast Lance.”
“Well yeah I know but… Yesterday you were able to pick him up with one hand, right? He looks like you need to use two hands now.”

Keith looked down at Cosmo and shrugged. “Puppies grow fast.”

Before Lance could say anything else Allura walked in with the morning coffee. “Morning everyone. I have your coffee. How was everything? How are your parents Keith I…” She froze a little when she saw Cosmo. “A… a dog?”

Pidge grinned. “Yeah! Look at him! He’s so cute! His name is Cosmo! Can he do any tricks Keith? Can he?”

“I’ve only had him for a few days… And I was kind of just taking him for a walk so he could pee and stuff… So I guess I should just… You know…”

Allura frowned a little. “Keith… Are you sure you can keep a dog like this? He does seem kind of… You know. He looks like he’s going to get a lot bigger. If it gets to crowded in Shiro’s place I would be more than happy to offer you my home. He needs room to run around.”

Keith gave her a weird look and gently tugged on Cosmo’s leash, trying to get him to the door. “Yeah, no thanks. I can look after Cosmo myself. Bye.” He quickly left with the bouncy puppy happily following him.

Allura sighed and shook her head. “That dog is going to get much larger… I should probably talk to Shiro about this…”

Hunk gave her a confused look. “Allura, I know Keith is a little weird, but he doesn’t seem like a bad person. I don’t think he would hurt an animal. Shiro is there. He would make sure Keith looked after him.”

“I know…” Muttered Allura. “I just know that type of dog gets really big really quickly, and I am very concerned about animal welfare. I mean, I do volunteer at the animal shelter on my days off…” She sighed and put the trio’s drinks on the table. “Oh well. I’ll just have a quick word with Shiro. You three have a good morning. Coran will be over around lunch time. Hope you all like turkey sandwiches.”

They happily waved goodbye to her and Lance smiled a little to himself. Of course Allura would work at the animal shelter. She was such a kind person. Maybe he should give it a go? He did like animals and it would give him brownie points with her. They could probably eat lunch together and have dinner after a day of working with the animals, if they worked the same days. That would be really nice.

Suddenly Pidge was at his side, smirking. “You’re planning on volunteering with the princess, aren’t you?”


Hunk chuckled. “Lance, your face is red.”

Lance continued to bunch as he grabbed his coffee and marched over to his station. “Hush your mouths! What I do or don’t do in my spare time is none of your business! If I just so happen to find out which shelter she works at and volunteer there than all the better for the animals. With my salesmanship I’ll be able to find homes for all those animals.”

His friends just laughed and gave each other knowing looks before scampering back to their own
stations. Neither wanted to hear Lance whine or complain about not thirsting for Allura.
And in this chapter Keith becomes all defensive about his pupper and Lance is the only one mildly concerned about how fast Cosmo is growing. Kudos and comment when you can. Enjoy :D

Over the next month Lance watched Keith take Cosmo for a walk. Over that time he swore that Cosmo was growing way bigger than he should have been. By the end of the second week Cosmo’s head was visible from the window, and he kept on growing.

One morning on their way back Lance just threw up his hands. “His dog his freaking huge! What the hell?”

Hunk shrugged. “Maybe his dog just has gigantism or something? Cosmo’s still pretty cute though.” He smiled a little as he checked to see if his tattoo gun had any dried ink in it. “Yesterday during lunch when I went out the back, Keith was there and he was trying to teach Cosmo some tricks.”

“Really?”

“Yeah. He was trying to get Cosmo to lie down and roll over. He managed to get Cosmo to roll onto his back and then he stopped. Good effort… But then he tried to eat my sandwich… But I gave him a cookie instead. He really liked that ginger cookies I gave him.”

Lance gave Hunk a look of betrayal. “You made your gingersnaps and didn’t share with me?”

Hunk shrugged. “Hey, I only had a handful of them. Didn’t think it was worth sharing. But like, Cosmo really liked them. I think I might try making some dog biscuits and see if Cosmo likes them. It’ll be easier for Keith to train him.”

“I guess… Can you make me some gingersnaps?”

“This weekend… Maybe.” Hunk thought for a moment. “Actually might be a while. I have a date with Shay and we’re going to her parents place on my day off. It’ll be fun.”

“Isn’t her brother Rax an asshole though?”

Hunk shrugged. “The guy was going through some stressful times with a teacher being an ass to him. It’s all good now.”

“If you’re sure… But if Rax gives you anymore sass you let me know. Okay? I’ll kick his ass.”

“… Sure thing buddy.” Hunk did his best not to laugh since Lance obviously didn’t have the body to fight anyone. “Sure thing.”

Pidge walked out from her room and hummed happily to herself. “If you want to build up some muscle you can come with me to the gym tonight. Like come on man you’re taking me tonight since Matt’s pulling overtime. You might as well come in and pump some iron while I have my class.”
“Still can’t believe you weren’t joking about the whole kickboxing thing Pidge.” Said Lance. “I thought you were just a nerd.”

She shrugged. “Matt took me to the gym to punch the shit out of a bag after someone-dropped my new case of custom facial piercings and broke half of them. I talked to one of the women there and I signed up for a class since she said I already had good form.”

“Really?”

“Well, I know it was probably a lie, but I’m stronger now so I can carry more stuff around so that’s good.” Pidge happily flexed. “My muscles are toned and you know, working out the body is just as important as working out the mind… So you gonna join in or what?”

Lance shrugged. “Eh, I think I have some gym stuff in the back of my car… I’ll think about it squirt.”

She rolled her eyes and walked back into her room while calling out. “You’ll be bored out of your mind for an hour if you don’t come in.”

“I’ll take my chances Pidge.”

***

Living with Cosmo had been quite interesting for Keith and Shiro. The pup was indeed growing up extremely quickly to the point he was the size of an adult Labrador by the end of the month and he was still growing. Keith was kind of glad about this since it meant Cosmo would stop teleporting all around the house since it was now quicker for him to walk. He only ever teleported to go outside at night to do his business by the bin, or if someone had closed a door on him and he couldn’t open it. This was kind of an inconvenience for the two of them and caused many mild heart attacks when Cosmo decided to investigate what was going on in the bathroom when one of them was showering or using the toilet. Keith had been training Cosmo to not do that with limited success. Sometimes he would come in but he was learning that if he pawed at the door and someone said; occupied, he would just have to wait.

Cosmo also enjoyed curling up on the fold out bed with Keith every night and would always whine in the morning when it had to be folded back up. Keith was okay with this, except for the fact that when Cosmo wanted him to wake up he would lightly bite Keith’s face. It never left a mark, but it really confused the hell out of him a lot.

By the end of the day when there were fewer people around Keith stood in the alleyway out the back of the shop and happily threw a ball at the wall for Cosmo to run up the wall and catch. He was a good boy.

In about an hour, once the shop closed, Keith was going to take Cosmo to the dog park and try to teach him a few simple commands. They had been going to the park every day since they had gotten back. It was fun. The park was kind of quiet during that time and if there was no one around Keith would try and do a little bit of teleportation training with Cosmo.

As he was bouncing the ball Coran happened to walk out to throw out the trash. He seemed surprised to see Cosmo and walked over. “Keith my boy. So Allura wasn’t exaggerating. You really do have a… Well he’s a big boy isn’t he? What’s his name?”

Keith felt a little uneasy talking to Coran since he didn’t really talk to him at all. This was probably
their first actual conversation. “Cosmo… And yeah, he’s going to get bigger. Much bigger.”

Coran nodded and gave Cosmo a knowing look. “You know, I used to get stationed all around the world when I worked for the airforce. Anywhere where there were dogs or wolves you’d always get these stories about giant monster dogs with supernatural powers.”

“Oh really?”

“Yep. I worked in the airforce for a while and we had a station near the mountains. Honestly it was all highly classified secret stuff, but the locals had these legends about star wolves. Wolves that fell to the earth like stars and roamed the mountains. I wouldn’t have believed it if I hadn’t seen it with my own eyes.”

Keith raised an eyebrow. He was very sceptical. “You saw a star wolf?”

(Of course I have.” He leaned in closely to Keith, almost uncomfortably so. “You see a lot of really weird things when working for the government… Your dog been acting weird?”

“… Not that I am aware of.” Muttered Keith as he took a step back. “Look, I know he barks sometimes and he sometimes runs up and down the alley but I didn’t think that would be enough to worry your customers. If you don’t want me to let him run around out here I’ll stop. We’re also working on his barking so…”

Coran smiled a little and shook his head. “Oh no my boy. I’m not worried about that. Never even noticed it. I’m just a little worried about the poor pup living up there. He’s just going to get bigger and living up there won’t be good for him.”

“…” Keith did not like the way he was talking and very slowly moved himself so he was standing between Cosmo and Coran. “Yeah, Allura mentioned the same thing but like. But the parks are pretty close and Cosmo runs around until he gets tired. I do this every day. I know how to take care of a dog Coran.”

“Never said you didn’t. It just doesn’t seem responsible to have such a big dog living in such a small space.”

That’s it. Keith was getting annoyed now. “I don’t need you or Allura thinking I’m an irresponsible dog owner because Shiro’s place is small. Cosmo has all his shots. He’s healthy. He doesn’t have fleas and I feed him properly. I’ve been spending as much time with him as I can. If Allura wants a dog so badly she can get her own! Cosmo is mine!” He looked over at Cosmo. “Cosmo walkies.”

Cosmo wagged his tail and quickly grabbed his harness, leash and collar. Keith death glared Coran as he put them on his dog and stormed off back through the shop. He angrily informed Shiro that he was leaving early since Cosmo was getting restless.

Keith hated how people were judging him and thinking he was bad for Cosmo. Sure he was used to everyone judging him before, but Cosmo was different. They could judge him on his looks, his attitude, and the way he spoke. But they could not tell him he was bad for Cosmo. Cosmo wasn’t just some dog that anyone could take care of. He was a cosmic wolf. What were Coran and Allura thinking?

They got to the park and Keith let Cosmo off his leash. The dog happily bounded around the park. They greeted the other big dogs and got down on their bellies when he saw a small dog. The owners of these small dogs were very worried about Cosmo running over to them, but Keith was always close by and Cosmo had quickly learnt the command heel, so other dog owners were a little less
concerned about Cosmo.

Thankfully there aren’t too many people around so it didn’t matter too much today. Cosmo just occupied himself my wandering around and bringing Keith some cool looking sticks. Keith attempted to play fetch with Cosmo, but the dog just gave him confused looks before walking somewhere else. Somewhere far away from the stick he just threw.

The two of them stayed at the dog park till the sun started to set. Even then Keith stayed a bit longer. In the night Cosmo’s eyes shone like beacons in the night. It was cool, but Keith wasn’t too sure if normal dogs eyes could glow like a cat. He really needed to look that up.

After a while Cosmo decided to lie down and pretend he couldn’t walk anymore. He whined and whined about wanting to be picked up and carried home. It annoyed Keith a lot, but Cosmo was a whiny baby.

Reluctantly Keith sighed and held his arms open. “Okay Cosmo. Jump up.” Seconds later he was almost knocked over when Cosmo jumped into his arms. Keith groaned a little and slowly made his way back to the shop. It was a bit of a distance away and he wasn’t used to carrying such a heavy thing for so long. “You’re so damn heavy… Why? You weren’t this heavy yesterday…” Cosmo just wagged his tail and licked his face. Keith was spoiling him so much.

After walking for what felt like forever a car suddenly pulled up next to him and the person rolled down their window. “Yo Keith, why are you carrying Cosmo? And why is Cosmo so fucking huge? He looks like a bear.”

Keith looked down at Lance, the wonder of said car. “Yeah… Cosmo is a baby and wants me to carry him. What are you doing?”

“Just dropped Pidge back at her place. We went to the gym.” He grinned. “There were way more cute chica’s there than I expected. Apparently they all go to the gym at night or go when there is a kickboxing class. So you need a ride or are you going to carry that bear home?”

Keith thought about it for a moment before opening up the backseat and shoving Cosmo in there. The dog made a surprised noise but happily laid across the backseat while Keith sat in the passenger seat. “... So you go to the gym a lot?”

Lance shrugged and started driving back to Shiro’s. “Just went because I was Pidge’s ride tonight… So, you still worried about random people jumping you?”

“Nah. If they haven’t done it yet then they aren’t going to do it.” Said Keith. “Besides, I have Cosmo now. He’s loyal and has my back.”

“Really? You and that mutt?”

“Yep.”

Lance nodded slowly. “Alrighty then… So you ever think about heading to the gym?”

“Hmm? What? Why?” He was confused.

“Well if Cosmo gets any bigger he’s going to end up dragging you everywhere. You need to build up some muscle man. Shiro goes to the gym on weekends. Go with him.”

Keith thought about this for a bit. “Maybe.”
Lance dropped them off and gave Cosmo a few pats. “Who’s a good bear? You’re a good bear. Take care of mullet.”

“Thanks for the ride Lance. I appreciate it.”

“Hey no problem… Do you even have a car? Does Shiro have a car?”

“I think he has a van for work but like… We don’t do many deliveries anymore. Shiro has a courier now.”

“Ah, okay. See you tomorrow Keith.”

“Later.” He got out and got Cosmo out too. He waved at Lance and watched him drive away. He took Cosmo inside and since there was no one around the dog teleported upstairs instead of using the stairs. He just rolled his eyes and followed him.

Cosmo had made himself comfortable on the couch while Shiro looked like he was recovering from a heart attack in the kitchen. He looked over at Keith and sighed heavily. “So… How was the walk?”

“It was fine.” Keith sat next to Cosmo and ran his fingers through the dog’s hair.

“Are you sure.”

“Yeah.”

“Because Coran came in minutes after you left to apologies.”

“…”

“He’s just concerned because Allura is con-”

“She should just butt out!” Snapped Keith. “They don’t know how to raise a cosmic wolf! They don’t even know what Cosmo is! How the hell would they know anyway? Fucking stupid.”

Shiro sighed a little. “I know Keith, but think of it from a human perspective. Cosmo is a really, really big dog. This place is really small. Sure we know what Cosmo is, but to any other person it probably seems like a bad idea to keep a dog as big as Cosmo here.”

“… Are you going to make me get rid of him?”

“What? No. I’m just saying you need to think about what it might look like to us normal people.” Said Shiro. “People are also talking about how big Cosmo is getting after such a short amount of time.”

Keith huffed and attempted to pull Cosmo onto his lap. The happy boy just leaned back and spread across his legs. It was adorable how happy he looked. It made Keith smile a little and rub his belly. “I know… But I really can’t help it. Cosmic wolves tend to just get really big really quickly. He’ll stop growing when he’s good and ready to stop… But he shouldn’t get much bigger than this.”

“Okay… I’m not trying to give you a lecture here Keith. I’m just trying to tell you to be more aware of your surroundings.” Warned Shiro. “You’re not living in isolation anymore.”

“I know…”

“Good. So do you want to order pizza for dinner?”
“Yeah.”
Needless to say Keith ended up joining Shiro at the gym when he went. Shiro had been a little reluctant since Cosmo would be home alone. But Keith had assured him that Cosmo would be fine. He just needed to pull out the pull out bed and give Cosmo his red lion toy and he was happy.

Keith didn’t really know what to do so he just spent most of his time spotting Shiro as he did weights. He knew Shiro was fit but he was still surprised by the weights he was able to lift. He couldn’t help but chuckle a little.

“Wow you’re doing really well now. Before you could hardly hold me down.”

Shiro rolled his eyes and laughed. “Well weights don’t usually scream, bite, squirm, and try to jump out windows at the drop of a hat.”

“Yeah…”

“Good thing you grew out of jumping out of windows.”

“Yes.”

“... Keith, you have stopped jumping out of window’s right?”

“…”

“God dammit Keith…”


“Yeah.” Shiro did a few more reps then got up, wiping down the bench. “Your turn Keith.”

The younger male shrugged and started doing reps with the same weights as Shiro. It wasn’t easy, but it wasn’t overly difficult for him either. He could see Shiro had a rather impressed look on his face.

“Not bad. You’re a lot stronger than you look.”

“I’d hope so. Cosmo keeps rolling over and crushing me in his sleep.” He had no idea why Cosmo wanted to lie on top of him, but it meant he didn’t need a blanket anymore, so that was pretty neat. Keith finished up his set and Shiro had moved on to something else. He ended up on the treadmill and ran for about fifteen minutes while Shiro was doing what he did.
The treadmill was facing the street so people could watch what the traffic go by. That just seemed strange to Keith. Who actually ran and focused on anything? It was weird. He sighed a little when out of the corner of his eye he saw a flash of something blue. Lance walking by carrying something in a blue plastic bag.

“Huh? Does he live around- FUCK!” Keith lost his footing, tripped, and got launched into the back wall. “… Ow.”

Shiro and one of the staff members quickly came over to see what the hell just happened and even Lance paused for a moment since he probably heard Keith swear and fly into the wall at high speed. That was embarrassing as hell.

“You okay Keith?” Asked Shiro. “Didn’t scrape anything?”

Keith had a little bit of carpet burn, but he’s had worse injuries. “I’m fine… I think I’m done doing gym stuff today. I’m just going to walk home.”

“You sure?”

“Yeah.” Keith quickly gathered his stuff and left. Lance was standing outside with an amused look on his face. “What?”

“Dude, I think that’s my line.” Lance seemed to be trying very hard not to laugh. “I never thought I’d actually see someone fall off a treadmill like that. You okay?”

“Yeah, I’m fine… What are you doing?”

Lance looked down at his bag. “Alcohol. I’m going to be Hunk’s guinea pig tonight. He’s baking a stupid amount of food so he can find the best thing to impress Shay.”

“… Shay?”

“Yeah. His girlfriend. You wanna come with? He’ll love getting more than just my opinion.”

“Um… I guess?” He looked back over the gym window but couldn’t see Shiro.

“Relax mullet. Just text Shiro and I’ll drive you home.”

“… Should you be drinking and driving?”

Lance rolled his eyes and started walking in the direction Keith assumed was Hunk’s place. “None of this if for drinking. It’s for cooking. Hunk was missing some stuff and asked me to grab it. Come on man.”

The two of them made their way to a small apartment building. Lance unlocked the door and tossed the key into a small key bowl by the door. “Yo, I’m back Hunk, and I picked up a stray!” Keith death glared Lance, not too pleased about being called a stray. Lance just grinned at him.

“Is it a kitty?” Called Hunk. “I will die if you brought a cat in here Lance. You know I love cats!”

“Well this kitten’s got some claws.”

Keith blushed a little and elbowed Lance. “Shut up.”

Lance snickered and walked into the kitchen, putting the bag on the counter. Keith followed and looked over at Hunk. He had his back turned to them and was quickly mixing and adding spices to a
bowl while moving something around in a pan. “Can you take that bottle of rum out and pour exactly one third of a cup into the measuring jug for me. Also, where’s the cat?”

“I didn’t bring a cat. I found Keith.”

Hunk looked over at Keith and smiled. “Oh, hey there Keith. Sorry about the mess. I’m in the middle of something and… Lance! Why are you just pouring it straight into the pan? Why? What are you doing? That is not exact! That is not exact!”

Lance let out a small screech and ran out of the room while Hunk waved a spoon at him in a threatening manner. Keith just assumed that this was because Lance was getting reminded of Rosa whacking him with a spoon or something.

“Um…”

Hunk sighed a little and looked over at Keith. “Sorry about yelling like that. I’ve almost finished the first batch. You can wait out at the table with Lance.”

Keith nodded and walked in the same direction Lance went. He quickly found him sitting at a table with his phone out. He sat across from him and absentmindedly looked around. Hunk’s place seemed nice. He liked it. Didn’t really understand why someone needed to have such a big place to live if he lived alone. Then again he still thought Shiro’s place was too big for two people. He was not used to this much space.

Suddenly Hunk put a plate of cookies down in front of them and sighed happily. “Okay, this is the first of five batches I’ve already made. These are strawberry shortbread cookies. Try them and give me your honest opinion.”

Strawberry? Keith liked strawberries. When he was younger if he ever had the chance he would swipe a small punnet of them at the grocery store. Which was part of the reason he kept getting into trouble for stealing growing up. In one town he was literally called the strawberry thief by the local police.

Keith took a cautious bite of it and was instantly in heaven. “Wow… This is really good.” He mumbled through a mouthful of food. He quickly wolfed down the rest of it and reached for another since there was a whole plate of them. But before he could grab another one Hunk lightly whacked his hand with a spoon. “Ow.”

Lance snickered and wagged his finger at Keith. “No, no, no mullet. You want another cookie, you gotta give Hunk more than it’s just good. You need to use descriptive languages. For example…” Lance cleared his throat. “Hunk. The shortbread is once again perfect. You have it down to a fine art. The flakeyness is perfect. I would suggest maybe a few more strawberries? Maybe add a little jam into it? Girls like pink stuff, right?”

At some point Hunk had taken out a notepad and started scribbling down what Lance was saying, nodding along. “Yep… Got it. Good flakeyness, more strawberries, jam, and girls like pink. Got it… But Shay likes green and yellow?”

Lance shrugged. “I’m just speaking generally there bud. Now Keith, you try.”

“…” Keith really had no idea what to say. He just liked strawberries, but he needed to say something more if he wanted another cookie apparently. “Um… I can’t remember the last time I’ve had shortbread. I don’t have anything to compare it to… I like it.”

Hunk was surprised. “Really? You haven’t had shortbread before? How?”
Keith gave him a blank expression. “Any time I got money I would save it and buy stuff I really, really needed. Shortbread isn’t something I needed to eat to survive.”

“Oh, okay… Well, was it too sweet?”

Keith shook his head. “I thought it was good.”

Hunk nodded and quickly made note of that. “Okay, I have another batch ready.” He quickly ran to the kitchen and came back with another plate and a plastic bag full of cookies shaped like bones. “I also have these for you. Well, not for you, but for Cosmo.”

“... Thanks?” Keith opened the bag and sniffed. It smelt like peanut butter and bacon. “What is this?”

“Peanut butter and bacon dog treats.” Said Hunk. “My Aunt is a dog trainer and she swears by them. No dog can resist peanut butter and bacon. It’s her recipe.”

Lance pouted and leaned across the table. “Aw, you make this kind of stuff for Keith but nothing for me? You’re so mean Hunk. So mean to me.” He faked a small sob.

Hunk just shrugged and moved the new plate of cookies closer to Keith. “Alright. Guess Keith will have to tell me what he thinks of the triple chocolate and salted caramel sandwich cookies.”

“I was joking! Joking!” Whined Lance as he reached for the cookies. “I’m sorry! Give me one please!”

Keith couldn’t help but laugh at how childish Lance was being. Getting that worked up over cooking? This made him feel a little better after making a total ass of himself at the gym. Lance and Hunk were good people.

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That laugh. That damn laugh. Keith’s laugh was adorable. Lance could feel his face heat up a little. Mullet didn’t have to be so damn cute. He quickly covered up his blush by shoving one of the cookies in his mouth and pretending to choke on it. Hunk freaked out a little and gave him the heimlich. He then berated Lance about actually chewing his food first.

The rest of the evening went pretty much the same way; Hunk gave them cookies, they would eat them, and Hunk would take notes. Rinse and repeat. Keith did manage to be a little more descriptive when asked.

By the end of it Hunk had filled out several pages in his notebook. He seemed satisfied. “Okay, let’s go over this one more time; the shortbread needs more jam, the triple chocolate salted caramel sandwich cookies need a little more salt, the cinnamon roll sugar cookies need more icing, the almond raspberry cookies need more almond and less raspberry, and the vanilla bean cookie bars should be bigger? Is that right?”

Lance nodded as he grabbed one of the cookies, not really caring which one he grabbed. It was all just a small knit picking at this point. Hunk was really good at all kinds of cooking in general. “Pretty much. You’re a master at cooking.” He sighed a little. “I wish someone would cook for me… But no. Only my mama will. I only have me and my cooking. It’s not the same as someone cooking for you. Shay is a lucky woman.”

Hunk laughed a little and nodded. “Yeah she is… Do you think she will like an assortment of these?”
“Totally.” Lance glanced over at Keith. “Hey Keith, do you know how to cook?”

“... I can barbeque. Kind of.” He looked a little unsure of himself.

Lance raised an eyebrow. “What do you mean you don’t know if you can barbeque? What can you cook? BBQ lamb? Chicken?”

Hung grinned. “Nothing is better than a good juice barbequed steak.”

Keith shrugged. “I never really cooked something that extravagant… I spent a fair bit of my time homeless and it’s pretty much a you eat what you kill situation; lizards, rats, snakes, the occasional hiker that happened to get lost in my hunting grounds.”

Lance did choke on his cookie this time. “W-what?!” He hacked. “You ate a person?” Hunk looked equally horrified.

“No.” Said Keith. “It was more like ten.”

“Keith!”

“It’s a joke.” Muttered Keith. “I don’t actually eat people, or at least have never knowingly ate one… It was just a joke.”

Hunk just shuddered a little. “Man, don’t joke about that stuff. After the cannibal horror movie marathon last Halloween I just… Gross.”

Keith looked confused. “What?”

Lance grinned. “Every year we go over to Pidge’s place and watch a bunch of horror movies in one genera or a bunch of horror movies done by one director. Last year was cannibal flicks, year before that was body horror, Lucio Fulci… and who could forget the insanity of the Child’s Play marathon?”

“I still say Matt is sick for the Fulci night.” Muttered Hunk. “What is with that man and eyes? It’s so gross… You have any idea what’s happening this year?”

Lance shrugged. “Demon or demon possession movies I think? Pretty sure we’re going to watch some really schlocky garbage. Especially the newer stuff. Too many of those movies rely on cheap jump scares.”

Keith nodded a little and slowly got up. “Well, I should be getting back now. Cosmo’s going to start looking for me if and that will bother Shiro.”

“Sure, I’ll drop you off.”

Hunk smiled at them and saw them out. “Thanks so much for your help guys. It was really cool for the two of you to help out. Especially you Keith. I didn’t expect you to come by. It was cool.”

Keith nodded a little. “Thanks for the dog treats.”

“Don’t sweat it. Tell me if Cosmo likes them and I’ll make some more for him.”

“Thank you.” The two of them left Hunk’s place and got into Lance’s car. The ride back was pretty quiet for the most part. Eventually though Keith did speak up. “Do you really think I killed and ate people?”
Lance shrugged. “Hey, you’re a weird guy. You said it without really giving any indication that it was a joke.”

“Oh…”

“... You were the weird kid in school weren’t you?”

“What?”

“You know, the weird kid.” Said Lance. “The kid that was always quiet, never really talked to anyone and did some odd things that freaked other people out for seemingly no reason?”

Keith frowned a little and stared out the window. “Whatever. I’ve never eaten a human before. I’ve never been that desperate for food while on the streets.”

“Damn mullet you’re getting really anal about this. We were just a little surprised. We know you haven’t eaten people. You took us way too seriously. You need to chill and relax, or like chillax. How are you gonna get the chica’s if you’re pissed off all the time?”

“... Chica means girl, right?”

“Yeah?”

Keith sighed and gave Lance an unimpressed look. “Lance. I’m gay.”

“... Oh.”

“Oh?”

Lance blushed a little and shrugged. He kind of felt a little awkward about this. Not because Keith was gay. He himself was bisexual and liked guys too. He just knew from experience that the next few things he could say could have Keith choke him out while driving. Then he would crash. Then they would both die. Not cool.

“Um… so you just…” Lance struggled to find his words. “Well you haven’t really shown interest in any guys around here, you know?”

Keith narrowed his eyes at him, like he was studying him under a microscope. “I don’t like anyone around here. Besides any man that visits the shop is usually married or getting things for their girlfriends… You going to act all weird around me now that you know?”

“What? No. Keith, I like boys too.”

“So you’re gay?”

“No… I like girls…” Lance really hoped that Keith wasn’t one of those people that thought bi people were faking it or didn’t count because they could have a straight relationship. That would suck.

Keith just stared at him for a moment before nodding to himself. “Okay. I know some people like that.”

“Oh?”

“Yeah.” He looked back out the window and sighed. “For a while I lived with these cool people. We were all pretty open about who we were and what we liked. As long as it didn’t affect what we had
to do no one cared.”

That sounded really nice to Lance. He kind of hoped that one day the rest of the world would be more like that. “That sounds really nice… Where was this?”

“Small private compound outside of some rural town.”

Lance pulled up in front of Shiro’s place, slamming on the breaks a little harder than he probably should have. “… Wait a second… Let me get this straight… You lived in an isolated location?”

“Yep.”

“Were you like told how to dress, what to do, have to ask permission for anything major?”

“Yep.”

“Did they tell you not to talk to outsiders? Make you question your own memory? Use propaganda? Make you report other people for not following the rule?”

“Yep.”

“Us versus them thinking? Loaded language? Make you change your name? Lots of singing and chanting?”

“Yep.”

“Shun you for disobeying them? Shower you with praise and attention? Teach you emotion-stopping techniques? Teach that there is no happiness outside the group?”

“Yep. Why all the questions?”

Lance groaned and face palmed. “Keith, you joined a fucking cult.”

Keith seemed surprised by that conclusion. “I joined a what now?”

“You joined a cult. What the fuck? Okay, I get it, they can be really good at pulling in vulnerable people to boost their numbers, but damn. What the fuck Keith? You joined a cult?”

“… But it wasn’t a cult.” Muttered Keith.

“All those things. Every last one of them is a cult thing Keith. You were part of a cult. Holy crap, are those people that are after you part of the cult too? Are they trying to drag you back for running away? Are they going to sacrifice you to Cthulhu? Dagon? The flying Spaghetti monster?”

Keith rolled his eyes and got out of the car. “Thanks for the ride Lance. I never have been, nor will be, in a cult.”

Lance pouted and rolled down the window, leaning out to Keith. “Come on! You totally were! What was it? An offshoot of some pre established religious group? Aliens? Someone claiming to be the second coming? Scientology? Young earth creationists? Some psycho group that thinks essential oils can cure cancer? You have to let me know!”

Keith shot Lance a dirty look. “Fuck off with your bullshit.” He slammed the door shut, locked it and went upstairs. Lance just sunk back into his chair and sighed heavily. Keith was totally part of some insane cult. That’s the only thing that made sense in his mind at that moment.
Keith was pissed. First there was the whole cannibalism thing and now Lance thought he was part of a cult. He stomped into the kitchen and dropped the plastic bag onto the counter. He needed to find a container Cosmo wouldn’t immediately rip open to get to them.

While he was looking for one he noticed Shiro and Cosmo watching him from the couch. “What?” Keith snapped.

“... So what happened?” Asked Shiro calmly. “You kind of left with Lance and I kind of heard him shouting at you, then you storm up here. What happened?”

Keith didn’t want to talk about it, but Shiro was giving him a concerned look. “... Fine. I tried to make a joke, but apparently you people don’t joke about cannibalism. Oh, and then I told Lance a little more about being gay and now I’m apparently an ex-cultist.” The older male chuckled a little. “Shiro!”

“Sorry, sorry.” Shiro smiled at him. “Let me guess, you pretty much just told him about that compound and used as vague terms as possible? Maybe talked about how it was isolated from everything? How you had to wear a uniform? Maybe how they were extremely strict with punishments.”

“Well yeah. But what does that have-”

“That’s stuff cults do Keith.” Said Shiro calmly. “You know it wasn’t a cult. I know it wasn’t a cult, but to the average outsider, it’s a cult.”

“Oh…”

“Yeah. Want to watch TV with us? It’s a documentary about cryptids.”

“What’s a cryptid?”

“Watch and you’ll find out. They’re just about to start talking about mothman.”

“Who?”

“Watch and you’ll find out.”

Keith reluctantly took a seat on the couch and was immediately almost crushed to death by Cosmo deciding to jump on him. Cosmo was cute, but he was too damn heavy for his own good sometimes. He’d deal with Lance thinking he was part of a cult later.

Chapter End Notes

If anyone is interested in the criteria that Lance used to determine that Keith was in a cult I used Steven Hassan's BITE Model. It's pretty cool and is actually used to help people decide if the religion they are in is a cult. It's also a useful writing device if you need to write a cult into your story so it isn't just stereotypical blood and sacrifices and junk. Hope you enjoyed this chapter. Let me know what you thought :)}
Lance was still wondering about this cult Keith was denying he was in all through the next day. There was no way he wasn’t. It was all there. He was probably just too embarrassed to admit he was part of a cult. He had no idea what kind of things these cults did. He only had an idea about them from watching documentaries. None of it was good.

During their lunch break Pidge pointed out his behaviour. “Seriously Lance, what’s wrong with you today? Sure you’re bummed when you have no clients or anything, but this is a whole other level of bummed. What’s wrong?”

He shrugged. “Just thinking about stuff… Looked at some documentary about Heaven’s gate. You know, crazy space cult shit.”

Pidge frowned a little. “Dude, if there is a species of alien that is a kind of like… ghosty or whatever, I doubt they would be made of the same things are supposed quote unquote supposed souls are made of… Maybe they would be plasma based? That would be pretty cool.”

Hunk raised an eyebrow. “You believe in aliens?”

“Well yeah. There are so many planets out there. There has to be some other form of life out there. If we’re the only planet in existence with life I will be very disappointed.” He leaned back and shouted at the ceiling. “DISAPPOINTED!!!”

Lance laughed and rolled his eyes. “Yeah, yeah. I was just wondering who would actually join a cult in the first place? Like, wouldn’t you bale when the crazy ”

Pidge shrugged. “Same reason people join any religion. They want a higher purpose, they are afraid of death, shit like that man. Plus when you think about it lots of it sounds like insane bs anyway. Cults are pretty much the same. They rope you in with love and shit, but then boom. Once you’re all indoctrinated then they hit you with the crazy shit. Like flat earth shit, lizard people, aliens, and everything else.”

Hunk chuckled a little as he finished off his drink. “Wow Pidge, tell us how you really feel.”

“Hey, if people find happiness and stuff with that it’s all cool, it’s when people start using religion as a weapon to make you hate people or like steal your money and control every part of your life, that’s when I have a problem with it.”

Lance hummed a little and looked out the window. He doubted that he would magically see Keith walking by with Cosmo again. He was pretty pissed off at him for saying he was in a cult, even if it was totally true. Keith also mentioned he had his name changed when he was in the cult. What was it? Brother Keith? Something weird with elo, iel, or something else to that effect? That might be something to ask him later, if Keith every brought up his cult family again. What was it even called
anyway?

“Yo Lance.” Hunk snapped his fingers in front of his face. “You still with us buddy?”

“Hmm? Yeah. What?”

“Pidge and I were asking if you were interested in other cult documentary things.”


“... Why do you know so many cults?”

“Matt and I have a passion for the weird. So you gonna watch stuff about them? I must warn you, lots of sexual assault of minors and adults, mutilation, suicide and murder.”

“So normal cult stuff?”

“Yes.”

Hunk shuddered a little. “Come on guys I’m eating here.”

“Yeah, speaking of eating…” Lance leaned in close to him. “When are you giving Shay all those cookies?”

He blushed a little. “When I next see her… Which is tomorrow.”

Pidge frowned. “Wait… You made cookies and Lance was the one that got to taste test them? Come on man! Your cooking is too good to be wasted on just him.”

Lance gasped and put his hand on his chest in fake shock. “Pidge! You bitch! You said you needed to get home asap last night!”

She pouted. “Well yeah… That was because the next episode of Galactic Defenders Ultra Takedown Mega Star was finally dubbed… But I could have had Matt tape it if I knew you were making cookies!”

Hunk smiled. “Don’t worry Pidge. I always make too many. I’ll bring in the extras tomorrow. By the way how was Galactic Defenders anyway?”

For months now Pidge had been trying to get Lance and Hunk to get invested with this anime she and Matt had gotten into. She described it as an action drama mech anime with strong LGBT characters. Though she was worried that the English dub would butcher it like the first dub of Sailor Moon did and made the lesbian couple, cousins. But their mildly romantic scenes made them look like kissing cousins. Anime was weird.

She suddenly became extremely excited, almost jumping out of her seat. “It was fucking awesome! Keiichi finally grew some balls and confessed to Hatsuharu that he was in love with him! Sure it was during the climactic battle and Keiichi was on the verge of dying, but then Hatsuharu unlocked beast mode. Which like totally confirmed my suspicions that he is half human, half biomorph! The fandom boards went insane! Then Princess Ritsu was a total bitch about it because the biomorphs destroyed her home planet and all biomorphs must die and the- and then-”
Lance put his hand over her mouth. “Breathe.”

Pidge rolled her eyes but did what he said. “It’s a very compelling story made all the more complicated because Keiichi has been pinning for Hatsuharu since their first hand to hand combat session where Hatsuharu pinned him. There was a moment! Season one episode two! But it was established that the biomorphs killed his family, which is why he signed up for the Galactic Defenders in the first place and I just! I can’t even guys… And I have to wait two weeks for the next episode because there’s a holiday in Japan! Fuck my life!”

Lance shrugged. “Sucks to be you. But hey, it’ll come out eventually. What’s there to worry about?”

“... I guess. But still… Fuck it. I am going back to work.” Pidge quickly cleaned up her stuff and walked back to her room.

“I think we made her mad…” Stage whispered Hunk.

“Yeah… Think she’ll set her evil roomba on us?”

“She will if you keep calling it her evil roomba.”

***

Keith was carefully following the instructions Shiro had written down for him to make a bouquet for display. He was having some difficulty. Shiro’s handwriting was garbage. How did someone make a C look like a T? How was that physically possible? How? Why? He didn’t get it. But he struggled along for Shiro.

Cosmo watched him from his spot next to the stairs. Once in a while he would wag his tail when Keith looked over at him, but apart from that he didn’t really move much. Which was good. The dog had quickly become popular with people since Cosmo liked following Keith around while he worked. Shiro was okay with Cosmo being in the shop during work hours as long as he didn’t attack anyone. Which he hadn’t.

He just lied down and watched everyone go about their business. When People brought in their small children he’d close his eyes and let them give him lots of pats. Everyone loved him. Keith half thought that Cosmo was trying to make him jealous since he’d keep giving Keith little glances when other people were giving him attention. It was cute.

Keith sighed in frustration and threw down the Tulips he had been trying to put in the boquete since he had mangled the stems. He glared angrily at them for a moment before picking them back up and biting the flowers right off the stems. This was stupid. He hated it.

Cosmo seemed to notice his frustration because he let out a small whine to get his attention. Keith looked over at the dog and watched as they walked over to him and lightly pressed his forehead against his thigh.

“... Thanks Cosmo.” He gave him a few pats. “This is harder than it looks.” The dog whined a little and started to lean into Keith more. “... How about we go for a hike? Somewhere far, far away from here? Somewhere with trees and rocks and stuff. Far away from people. You’ll be able to run around as much as you like. Okay?” Cosmo wagged his tail at that. Keith knew he was really happy.

“Shiro!” He called.

Shiro looked out of the backroom holding several sheets of coloured plastic wrap. “Yeah? What’s up?”
“Can you take me to a hiking trail tomorrow for Cosmo?”

“... Sorry, but I am swamped with orders. Three birthdays, two graduations, and a wedding. The bride that ordered them is a bridezilla. She will eat me alive if her and her birde’s maids bouquets are even slightly wrong.”

“Oh… Sorry Cosmo.”

“But if you really need to go tomorrow I know someone who has a day off tomorrow.”

“... You don’t mean-”

“And you’ve been away with him for days before.”

“Not going to happen. He’s a-”

“Didn’t you say you were doing this for Cosmo?”

“...”

Shiro had this slightly smug look on his face. “Go and ask him. It’ll be fine.”

Keith muttered several curses under his breath as he reluctantly trudged next door and walked in. Lance was spinning around in circles on his stool but stopped when Keith walked in. He grinned and waved. “Hey Keith. You here for a piercing? You’d look badass with a snake bite.”

“... I don’t want to get bitten by a snake.” He muttered. “Anyway, I got a favour to ask you, for Cosmo.”

“Oh?” Lance got up and walked behind the counter. “Does Cosmo want a piercing?”

“What? No. I just… We need your car and Shiro can’t drive us tomorrow.”

“Does he need to go to the vet?”

“No I just… I wanted to take Cosmo to a hiking trail. I thought he might like it better than the dog park. He can run laps around there and I just… Look, I wouldn’t be asking you if I could drive myself. Will you help me out or do I have to wait for Shiro to have a day off again?”

Lance thought about it for a moment and tapped his fingers on the table. “Well… I guess so. Since it’s Cosmo asking and so totally not you asking to get me all to yourself again.”

“What?”

“Admit it mullet, you like me.” Cooed Lance. “Getting me to take you on a hike just so we can have a romantic time together is just too cute.”

“... I never said you would be hiking with us.”

Lance’s face dropped. “What?”

“You can drop us off and pick us up later.”

“Hell no. What if Cosmo like… um… What if he hurts his paw and needs the both of us to carry him? He’s a bear! And what if you get hurt and need help? Who’s gonna help you if you fall down a hill and snap your leg? Who?”
“... Myself?”
Lance rolled his eyes. “Seriously? I’ll pick you up at six in the morning tomorrow. Don’t be late.”

“... Alright?” Keith went back to Shiro’s shop feeling kind of confused about what just happened, but happy it seemed to work out.

***

So the next day Keith found himself standing outside the shop with Cosmo. Shiro had acted like such a dad and stuffed his backpack with food and first aid stuff. Keith had tried to argue that all he really needed was his knife and a small pot to boil water, but Shiro was having none of it. At least he let him keep the knife for survival reasons.

Lance pulled up and Keith got in with Cosmo. Lance didn’t really look like he was ready for hiking. Maybe spending a day outside, but not hiking. “... You sure you’re going to survive out there?”

“Yeah. It’s just a walk Keith.” He brought up his phone and showed Keith a picture of some national park. “This one is closest and it has some good reviews. It’ll be a walk in the park. Literally. Cosmo will like it.”

“... If you say so.”

“Of course he will.” Lance turned on the radio and started to drive. Some upbeat pop song started playing. “So what did you pack?”

“Shiro gave me food, water and first aid stuff. I just brought my knife.”

“What do you need a knife for?”

“Cutting things.”

“... Like?”

“Branches and stuff.”

“Okay.”

“...”

“...”

“Do you have something you want to ask me Lance?”

Lance pouted a little. “What? Do I have to ask you something?”

“No I just thought you did.”

“... So you were in a cult.”

Keith groaned in annoyance. “Not this again.”

“I just have one question!”

“... Fine. One question and then you drop it forever. Okay?”

Lance thought for a moment and sighed heavily. “Okay, fine. One question. You mentioned they
changed your name. What did they change it to?"

“Oh… They um… It wasn’t actually them that changed my name.” Muttered Keith. “When I defected I got in touch with a group of people that also defected and they changed my name to protect me. Worked pretty well for a while.”

“Oh? That’s pretty cool. What was your name?”

Keith nervously chewed the inside of his cheek. This name wasn’t really something he should be giving away without any thought. Especially to some random like Lance. What was he trying to be anyway? Another Shiro? That was bullshit.

“Yo Keith, you listening? What was your cult protection name?”

“... Yurak.”

“Yurak?”

“Yurak.”

Lance grinned. “Seriously? That’s the best name they could come up with?”

Keith could feel his face heating up. “Shut up Lance. It doesn’t matter what I was called or why. It worked. People just thought I vanished till Rolo and Nyma showed up…”

“Hey, no disrespect here Keith. It just kind of… It stands out. You know?”

“It didn’t stand out among the people I was with.”

“Huh.” Everything was quiet for at least three pop songs before Lance spoke up again. “So what made you leave in the first place?”

“That’s two questions Lance. You only had one.”

“But come on.” Whined Lance. “You can ask me any question you like. Let’s trade secrets. What do you say?”

Keith looked over at Lance and frowned. “You have no secrets I want to know.”

“Ouch. Hurt my feelings much Keith.” He pretended to wipe away a tear from his eye. “I’m sure I have plenty of things you’re interested in. I’m an open book. Ask me anything.”

“... Still a virgin?” Keith assumed that would shut Lance up. Unfortunately for him Lance didn’t seem to have any shame.

“Nope. It’s a cliche, but I lost my virginity at prom with my prom date.” Said Lance without missing a beat. “Cute girl. Anastasia Bellwood. My parents sent me and my siblings to some ultra conservative Catholic high school since it was the only one in the area. Parents are kind of religious. Anyway, all those rumours about Catholic school girls being freaks in bed? Eh, kind of true I guess?”

“O-oh…” Keith was bright red. How the hell could Lance talk so casually about that.

“Yep. Okay, Now I got a question for you Keith.”

“No.”
“It’s not about the cult.” Whined Lance.

Keith could feel his blood pressure rising. “What?”

Lance gave a slight sideways glance at Keith with the smuggest smirk on his face. “... Are you a virgin?”

“...” Keith unbuckled his seat belt and started to yank on the door handle. “Let me out. Now.”

“What the fuck are you doing Keith? I just turned onto the highway. You’ll freaking die.”

“My sex life is none of your concern.”

“But you asked me, and it wasn’t about your cult.” Lance interjected. “Come on. I won’t tell anyone.”

“... No.”

“No?”

“Yes.”

“Was that a no you won’t answer or a no you’ve never had sex?”

“... The second one.”

Lance seemed surprised. “Really? No offence but you are pretty damn cute. I can’t imagine you having trouble finding a boyfriend if you wanted. Or like a one night stand? Now do your seat belt back up man.”

Keith blushed more and went back to trying to open the door. “Why won’t this open?”

“Are you really getting bested by a childproof lock?”

“... No.”

“Sure Keith. Sure.”

Thankfully for Keith’s sanity Lance laid off the question game thing right around the time Keith threatened to knife him. By then they had gotten to the park and got out. Immediately Keith felt a sense of unease and it seemed like Cosmo did to. Though it was more subtle than Keith’s apprehension.

Lance looked over at Keith and Cosmo once he locked the car. “You good? Place not live up to your standards or something?”

“... No.” Keith didn’t want to worry Lance. He was probably just over thinking things and getting worried about nothing, which was making Cosmo worry. Either way he had one hand on Cosmo’s leash and one hand on his knife. Was he just being paranoid because he was in a new environment? Yes. Probably. He should probably feel a lot happier being out in the wild again, but the paranoia. That damn paranoia.

Lance walked over to a sign and pointed to it. It showed all the trails and a few other places like the picnic spot and campgrounds. “This one is good, right? Said on the website that it shouldn’t take more than like two hours?”
“Okay…” Keith followed Lance as he glanced around. Was he too used to living with Shiro now or something? That sucked. He hated it but there wasn’t anything he could do at this point. Maybe he could just go and camp out somewhere for a while? That would be nice. Sleeping out under the stars would be fun again.

He heard a branch snap and he quickly whipped his head around and looked up at the trees.

He must have stood there for longer than he realized because Lance called out to him. “Yo mullet, you okay there? Something wrong?”

“No nothing just… Thought I heard something…” He was just being paranoid. That’s all. Nothing more. Maybe.
Lance was quickly regretting taking Keith out hiking and insisting he went along with him. He didn’t have the right shoes, he should have packed a hat, should have brought along some more water. Hell, he didn’t even really like hiking. So why did he agree to this when he could have slept in like a normal functioning human?

Well the answer was pretty obvious. Keith. It was Keith. Sure Lance had admitted to himself that he had a bit of a crush on the guy, but he was also kind of worried that Keith would do something stupid and end up having to call Shiro from jail or something. Plus he still wanted to talk to Keith and ask him questions about stuff, and it wasn’t like Keith could just stab him and take his keys. He couldn’t drive.

Once they were far enough on the track Keith let Cosmo off the leash and the dog ended up walking a few paces ahead of them and sniffed everything. He really seemed to be enjoying coming out here, and in turn that made Keith happy.

“... So Keith, can we keep playing twenty questions?”

“Huh?”

“We were playing it in the car.” Said Lance. “That’s where I learnt about you being a virgin and your other name being Yurak?”

He death glared Lance when he said that. “Just because you know that name doesn’t mean you should keep using it. Yurak is not a name just anyone can use around me. Got it?”

Lance put his hands up in surrender. “I got it. Relax. My lips are sealed. I won’t say nothing.”

“Good.”

“... But back to the game, when did you know you were gay?”

Keith rolled his eyes. “I don’t know Lance. Since forever? Never really thought about it. I just liked boys more. Girls just never really did it for me... When did you know you were bi?”

“When I realized that the feelings I had for one of the guys in my class was the same feelings I had for a girl in my class. No big deal.” He looked over at Keith. He seemed satisfied with that answer. “So... What’s your favourite colour?”

“... I like blue.”

“Blue?”
“Yeah.”

“Why?”

“Because it isn’t red.”

“You don’t like red?” Asked Lance. “But like, isn’t that jacket you usually wear red?”

Keith shrugged. “Red means danger. Means stay the fuck away from me.”

“... Alright then?”

“... What do you do?” Asked Keith. “Like, outside of work?”

Lance couldn’t help but grin at him. “Aw Keith, you wanna know more about my personal life?”

Keith blushed a little and huffed. “Wasn’t that the point of the game you idiot?”

“I was just teasing you Keith.” Cooed Lance. “I play a lot of video games. I’m into old retro stuff right now. Classics like Donkey Kong, Castlevania, Kid Icarus. That kind of stuff. You play any video games, like when you were a foster kid?”

It looked like Keith was thinking hard about it. “... There was this family I was with for a few months. I was there with another girl. They gave us three dollars a week for doing chores and I’d pretty much spend it at this shitty arcade playing pinball... I think it was space themed? I don’t remember.”

“You liked pinball huh?”

“It was the only machine that worked properly.” Keith took an elastic out of his pocket and tied his hair back into a low ponytail. Damn he looked cute. “Why are you staring at me?”

“...” Lance had to think fast. “Um, just wondering if that’s a freckle or some dirt.” He quickly poked the side of Keith’s neck and pretended to wipe something off his finger. “Huh, just dirt.”

“... Thanks I think?” Keith rubbed the back of his neck and blushed slightly. That was so cute.

Unfortunately for Keith, it gave Lance an evil idea. “Hey Keith? Are you ticklish?”

Keith stopped dead in his tracks for a moment, stared at Lance like a deer caught in the headlights, and bolted. “Cosmo! Follow!” The pup happily ran after Keith and barked in a playful manner. Obviously thinking this was some sort of game.

“I was joking Keith!” Whined Lance. He quickly ran after Keith, suddenly very thankful for being able to walk most places from his house. He rounded a sharp turn on the track just in time to see Keith slow down a little and Cosmo tackled him. “...” Lance walked over and laughed at him. “You seem to be eating dirt a lot lately.”

“Shut up Lance... I didn’t think he was going to jump on me. Cosmo, off!”

With much reluctance the dog got off Keith and sat next to him. Keith checked himself over to make sure he didn’t have any injuries bigger than a few scrapes. “Do I look okay to you?”

“You look pretty fine to me.”

Keith went red. “What?”
“What?”

“… Nothing.” Keith stood up, dusted himself off, and put the leash back on Cosmo. Punishment for trying to squish him. Cosmo didn’t like it that much, but he complied. It was pretty quiet for the better part of an hour after that. Lance didn’t ask Keith embarrassing questions and Keith was just a little more open with him.

They talked a bit about movies, Keith had only seen a handful of them anyway, favourite foods, Keith had a thing for strawberries, allergies, reluctantly Keith had admitted he was lactose intolerant. Not so much that he would feel like dying, but enough to make him feel pretty awful for a while. Lance would have to talk to Hunk about that if he ever needed opinions on his appetizers.

Eventually they got to a small clearing area and sat down for a bit to have something to eat. Cosmo tried and succeeded in stealing Keith’s food, twice. Keith wasn’t impressed in the slightest, but Cosmo was happy. They watched as the pooch happily sniffed around some trees close by and pee on them.

“So Cosmo still toilet trained?” Asked Lance.

Keith nodded. “Yeah… But I think his piss might be made of acid of something. He keeps peeing on the bin and it’s started to rust through.”

“Ouch. Invest in some rust proof spray or something. We had some rust on one of our bins behind the shop and some trash pandas got in and ran off with some food scraps.”

“Trash pandas?”

“Yeah. You know, raccoons.”

“Huh… Alright.” Keith took a drink of water and frowned a little as he thought about what to say. “… I um… I really appreciate you taking me and Cosmo out here. You didn’t have to on your day off.”

Lance shrugged. “Hey no problem. It’s kind of fun hanging out with you. You’re a strange person and I like that. If you can’t tell I kind of surround myself with odd people. Like, firstly Hunk, Pidge and I do tattoos and body mods for our jobs. Hunk is also a mad baker and is a super fun guy to be a round. He’s a teddy bear. Pidge is a fucking tech gremlin in her spare time. Coran tells all these crazy stories about serving in the army, navy, and airforce. No one knows what he used to do. Shiro is a cool veteran and one of the kindest people I know. And Allura is… She’s the sweetest person in the universe. She acts like a princess but like, not in an entitled bitch way.”

“And you?”

“Me?”

“Yeah.”

“What about me?”

“What are you in this weird group of people?”

“Oh well…” Lance thought for a moment. “I guess… I’m kind of the goofball? I joke around a lot.” He laughed a little. “Outside of tattooing and getting payroll I’m not really much or anything really.”

Keith frowned. “That’s not true. You were saying before you play old video games. You probably
do a whole bunch of stuff everyone else would be impressed with. You do anything that everyone would be surprised by?”

Lance was a little surprised to hear that and thought for a bit. “Um… Well, only Hunk knows this, but I know how to use a gun.”

“Really?”

“Yeah. My grandparents live in Cuba and have a huge sugar farm. They had a few barn cats they shared with the surrounding farms to control the rats but sometimes they get a little out of control.” He smiled a little. “My abuela gave me and my siblings their pest control gun and like ten bullets each. For every rat we shot she’s give us a peso. No one ever got ten pesos accept for me. I never missed a shot. That’s like about five dollars and twenty cents?”

Keith looked impressed. “That’s actually pretty cool.”

“… You think so? No whining about how I shouldn’t have been handling a gun?”

“Well as long as you didn’t shoot anyone else and followed instructions who cares?”

“Huh. Okay.” He was actually surprised to hear this. Hunk had freaked out a little when he told him and had said that was kind of scary. So he didn’t really like talking about that aspect of visiting his grandparents in Cuba. It was pretty cool how Keith was fine with it. “You know, no one has ever really-”

Keith suddenly stood up and gestured for Lance to shut up. “… Lance, where is Cosmo?”

Lance quickly looked around and sure enough the dog was gone. “Shit.”

“Fucking damn it…” Keith quickly walked around the treeline and crouched down a few times and touched the soil. “This way.”

“Wait Keith, we might get lost? How are we going to get back?”

“…” Keith took his knife out and marked a tree. “There. I’ll just mark the way.”

Lance wasn’t too sure about this, but reluctantly followed Keith. He seemed to know what he was doing when it came to tracking. A skill he probably picked up early in his life. He hoped that everything would be okay. Hopefully they wouldn’t run into a bear or something. There weren’t bear’s around here were there? Did he have bear mace? Did Keith had bear mace? How did one get away from a bear or like, a mountain lion?

They walked down a small valley and into between some rocks. They heard something growling and Keith quickly crouched down, pulling Lance with him. Lance yelped a little and was about to yell at Keith but the look on his face told him he should shut the hell up.

Keith peered around a corner and let out a small bird whistle. Moments later Cosmo walked back over to them, but he looked really on edge. He was glancing over his shoulder, teeth bared and muscles tense.

Lance frowned a little. “Hey buddy? Why so ma-” He was cut off when Keith slapped his hand over his mouth.

“Shut the fuck up Lance.” He hissed. “We are not alone here.”
Lance stayed quiet and carefully looked around the rock. Much to his surprise it looked like some weird soldier cosplayers and or LARPers were walking in and out of a cave. Two of them were carrying rocks with the third looked like it was sorting through them. They had a small pile of what looked like slivers of glittering opal scales next to them.

“What the hell is this?” He moved back and turned his attention back to Keith. In all honesty it looked like Keith was about to have a panic attack. He had his hands over his head and was breathing very heavily while muttering incoherently to himself. “Keith? Buddy? You okay?”

After a few moments Keith took a deep breath and leaned back closing his eyes. He spoke quietly. “Lance. No matter what happens. No matter what you hear. No matter what you see, you stay back here and do not fucking move a muscle. Understand?”

“What?”

“Promise me.”

“… Okay? What’s going on?”

“You know how you were saying I used to be in a cult?”

“Yeah?”

“Well… I guess this is either gonna prove or disprove it.” He slowly stood up and lightly flicked his wrist. This, for some reason managed to turn his knife into a huge sword with a purple glow.

Lance’s eyes went wide with shock. “Holy shit. What the fuck is that?”

Keith stared at Lance with a cold expression. As he did something like a cat’s third eyelid slipped across his eyes turning them yellow. “Stay here and shut up.” He jumped over the rock and rushed at the figure crouched by the rocks.

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Keith didn’t want to do this. He really hated it, but there was really nothing he could do at this point. He had to squash this right before it started. These were just scouts. Not that big of a deal now, but they could lead to something worse. He had to take care of it now.

As he dashed over to the one crouching by the rocks he accidentally stepped on a stick. That got its attention. It quickly snapped around and pulled a blaster on him. They pulled the trigger and Keith dodged before he quickly lopped its arm off, sending it and the blaster flying. It seemed surprised to have lost an arm which gave Keith the chance to quickly slice off it’s head.

The other two came out and tried to shoot at him. Keith knew this was going to be tricky and he had Cosmo had only experiment with this a few times. He had no idea if it would work, but damn it would be good it it did. “COSMO! NOW!”

There was a small flash and Cosmo was by his side. Another flash and he was behind the two guards. He cut through one of the guards while Cosmo jumped at the other and in a flash the two of them were gone. Seconds later there was another flash and Cosmo was standing on a rock while the one they tackled fell to the ground and made a crunch noise.

Keith quickly dashed over to them and was about to cut off his head, but he stopped when he ended up staring down the barrel of the blaster. The fucker still had enough life in them to hold a weapon.
Suddenly their head exploded like a balloon and they hit the floor. Keith was shocked for a moment till he looked over to where Cosmo was. Standing next to the rock was Lance holding a blaster. He was shaking.

“... Lance, put the blaster down.” Keith took a few steps towards him and Lance pointed it at him.

“Back the fuck off.” Said Lance in a slightly panicked tone. “What the fuck just happened. Cosmo fucking teleported. You straight up murdered people and what the fuck happened to you? Why are your eyes yellow? And like your’re covered in purple fur! And what the fuck happened to you ears? And the knife!”

Keith frowned a little and looked down at his arms while touching his ears. He didn’t realise he went full Galra. This was going to be complicated. “... Okay. How about this? I’ll kick my knife to you, and you put down the blaster? You saw what that does to someone’s head.” He slowly put down the swords and it turned back into the small knife that it was before and he kicked it towards Lance.

Lance hesitated a little and slowly lowered the blaster, but kept holding on to it. “What the fuck is going on Keith?”

Keith sighed and picked up one of the dismembered arms. “First of all this is not human. This thing has three fingers and it’s blood is blue. For fuck’s sake it’s armour isn’t even that. It’s a carapace, an insect shell. None of this is human.”

This seemed to panic Lance a little more and started to raise the blaster again. “And what are you Keith?”

Keith sighed and crossed his arms. He knew Lance was scared. He would have been scared too if he was in Lance’s position. “Lance… I’m not completely human.”

“Yeah, no shit! What the fuck are you?”

“... I’m not something you would know. I’m Galra.”

“A what?”

“A Galra…” He sighed. “Okay I don’t really know how to explain this but like um… I just… Look, even I never got a straight answer when I asked them what Galra was. Demons to some, aliens to others. I don’t even know. Most Galra love the demon moniker because it makes us sound tough, and yeah, we are tough. Sports, punishments, judgments, education, and courtship all revolve around brutal combat. If you’re not bleeding you’re not doing it right… That was the mantra we would say. I think that only made the label of demon stick even more...”

Lance narrowed his eyes at him. “And why are the Galra here on Earth? Starting an invasion?”

With much reluctance Keith nodded. “That’s what they told me before I ran away.”

“What do they want from us?” Asked Lance. “What the fuck does Earth have that other planets don’t have?”

“It’s not the planet Lance.” Said Keith. He pointed over to the thin crystal scales. “Galra want two things. Crystallized quintessence is the first thing they want. All I know is that it’s energy. There are deposits of it everywhere. Crystal form is the safest way to transport it.”

“... And what’s the other reason?”
Keith gave Lance a sad look. “Do you want to know? Do you really want to know?”

Lance pointed the blaster at him again. “I fucking swear Keith. I will fucking shoot you if you keep stalling.”

“... It’s genocide.”
In this fic Narti lives damn it! She has such a cool character design and I love her! She is amazing! That being said kudos and comment when you can, enjoy :D

Genocide. Lance must have misheard Keith. That couldn’t have been right. This was a little too much for him. He just thought Keith was a weird guy with some weird traits. He wasn’t some weird alien, demon, thing. But now he was and there is now apparently some kind of conspiracy involving genocide. Of what? The human race? And he still had no idea what quintessence was.

He must have been having his existential crisis for a while since Keith had started to gather the bodies into a pile. Once they were piled up Keith took apart the blasters with ease and added them to said pile. He then carefully put the shiny bits of quintessence all over it and walked behind a large rock.

“... Lance get over here.”

“What?”

“Get over here idiot.”

“...” Lance very slowly walked over towards him and once he was close enough, Keith yanked the blaster out of his hands. “Hey!” Keith rolled his eyes and made a quick hand gesture to Cosmo. Seconds later Cosmo had tackled Lance to the ground and pinned him. “Hey! Get you weird demon dog off me!”

Suddenly there was a huge explosion from the other side of the big rock and Keith let out a small, relieved sigh. He sat next to Lance and Cosmo while dismantling the blaster. “Okay. I think that’s all of it… I knew I felt something was up. I just knew it. Didn’t expect it to be a quintessence field but still.”

“Keith, Cosmo… Crushing me...”

He looked over at Cosmo and gestured for him to get off and Lance quickly backpedaled away from him. Keith didn’t seem to care as he got his knife and dropped the extra blaster pieces into a smoldering crater where the pile of bodies used to be.

“... What the fuck happened?”

Keith just shrugged. “Quintessence in crystal form is more stable than its plasma counterpart but, it’s still highly unstable. A small spark sets it off. This was just a small amount of the stuff but it’s enough to well... you know. Blow a hole in the ground.”

“Right...”

“... You’re afraid of me now, aren’t you?”

“You literally just admitted you’re part of a race of genocidal demon things! Are you going to kill me
now or something? Please don’t kill me!” Lance never thought he would have to beg for his life, but here he was. To be fair, he never thought he’d be face to face with someone like Keith before either. “You know I have a family, you met them! Don’t kill me!”

Keith went through a variety of emotions as Lance pleaded. First he was surprised, then angry, then frustrated, and then sad. “Lance… I don’t kill humans. But yeah I get it.” He looked over at Cosmo and started to walk away. “Come on Cosmo we’re leaving.” The dog seemed to hesitantly glanced over at Lance for a moment before he quickly followed after Keith.

“H-hey! You’re just going to leave me?”

Keith looked over at Lance and shrugged. “I marked the trees. It isn’t too far from the trail. Just back track and you’ll be able to follow the trail back to your car. Let Shiro know I’m sorry, but I really can’t stay with him.”

“You’re running away?” Lance quickly got up and followed him. “What the hell Keith? I still have questions!”

“Well so do I!” Snapped Keith. “You think I know all about this Galra shit? I’ve only known what the fuck I actually was for about six years! Until then no one fucking told me shit! I was just a freak!” He was quickly getting angrier and angrier. “And even when I found other Galra they hardly told me shit because I’m a fucking half-breed! You have any idea what kind of shit you have to go through to get any fucking respect from those assholes!” He was shaking and practically snarling at Lance like a dog now. “I gave them everything! I gave the Galra everything and nothing fucking matter Lance! Fuck off!”

Lance took a hesitant step back. “... O-okay… But you need to tell Shiro you’re running away like a little bitch! You actually like Shiro! Does he know about this Galra shit? Did he find out about you and like you freaked out and vanished? You tell him you’re walking out on him. I’m not going to make Shiro sad!” Lance might have been scared out of his mind but at this point that was starting to die down and he was getting pissed off at Keith.

“Shut the fuck up!” Hissed Keith. “What the hell do you even know about me anyway? You know shit! Get the fuck out of here Lance! Just get the fuck out of here and get back to your life!”

Yeah, Lance was no longer scared. He was starting to get pissed off at Keith. “You know what Keith, you’re a fucking coward. You can kill three of those Galra things and blow them up but you’re afraid of Shiro? What was all that shit you said about Shiro being your brother? You don’t do that to your brother Keith! I don’t care if you’re some weird purple cat thing this is bullshit”

“Lance I fucking swear-” Suddenly Keith’s ears flicked and swivled around. “Shit, we have to hide.” He grabbed Lance and dragged him behind the rock again just as the sound of an engine came onto range. Lance tried to move, but Keith held Lance close, his back flush against his chest with Keith putting his hand over his mouth to keep him quiet. Now Lance’s heart was racing and he wasn’t sure if it was because of panic or because he was this close to Keith. Stupid emotions.

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This was bad. This was all bad. Maybe he should have just done what he intended to do and walk back to the trail with Lance before running off. He knew someone would be coming by to check on those things once their life signs were cut. He just didn’t expect it so quickly. They would need to figure out an escape route as soon as possible. Keith could at least pass as a full Galra in this form but Lance, Lance would be murdered in the spot.
“Are you sure it’s over here Ezor, are you sure the quintessence signal came from here?” Asked a familiar female voice.

“Yep. Well it was until a few minutes ago Acxa.” Said Ezor. “Maybe my tracker glitched out? This thing is pretty old.”

“Maybe… Lotor is not going to be happy if we have to make repairs to… What is this?”

Keith carefully peered around the rock and saw Ezor and Acxa approach the still smoldering crater. Seeing Acxa again made Keith feel kind of bad. He actually got along pretty well with her. Maybe it was because they were both socially awkward? He wasn’t too sure, but he hung out with her a lot.

Ezor crouched by the crater and shuddered slightly, dropping her human facade and letting her more colourful, reptilian form shine through. She ran her fingers through the ashes and sniffed it. “Seems to me like someone went and blew up the quintessence deposit. Shame. Lotor was really hoping we could snatch this one from Zarkon… Think it was an accident?”

Acxa shook her head and observed the scene. “I doubt it. If it was an accident we would see more bodies. All I can see are some blood spots and drag marks. Plus there’s an unassembled blaster in the crater. This looks more like the work of someone from the Blade.”

“Really? Again?” Ezor groaned and stood up dusting off her hands. “They do know we can do more cool stuff than rip open time and space to realm hop, right? This is bullshit. At this rate Lotor’s gonna have to consider trying to actually rob Zarkon… I don’t want to do that if we can avoid it. Zethrid might enjoy that though She’s been itching for a fight.”

Her companion sighed a little and continued to look around. She seemed to be interested in investigating her theory about the Blade of Marmora being involved. He knew that she would probably find him soon if she kept walking towards him. So he decided to make himself known, while keeping Lance’s involvement a secret.

He leaned forward and whispered into his ear. “Lance. These people are dangerous. They will not hesitate to kill you if they know you are here. Stay here with Cosmo. Nod if you understand.” Lance nodded and Keith slowly let him go.

Taking a few seconds to gain his courage, Keith took a deep breath and stood up.”Ezor, Acxa.”

The two women jumped a little, but seemed to relax when the saw who it was. Ezor practically ran over to give him a hug. “Keeeeeerrrrrrrrrrrrff~” She cooed, but Acxa yanked her back before she got too close to him.

She was stone faced but there was no coldness in her eyes when she looked at him. “It’s good to see you again Keith. I assume this was actually your work?”

Keith just shrugged. “To be fair I didn’t know you guys were after the quintessence… So Lotor and Zarkon really are fighting?”

“I already told you that!” Whined Ezor.

“No offence Ezor but like… You know…”

Ezor pouted and her face became even more red than it already was. But before she could snap at him Acxa cut her off. “He is right you know. You kind of have a tendency to be very out there Ezor.” That comment just made her huff and cross her arms. Acxa paid no mind to her and looked back at Keith. “But it is true. Ezor, Zethrid, Narti, and I have sided with Lotor. What we are planning
is no secret. We plan to overthrow the Galra’s stranglehold on all its realms. We need quintessence to create gateways to realms that Zarkon hasn’t invaded yet to warn and arm them.”

“I see…”

“You know you could help us, right?” Said Acxa. “You were one of the best quintessence scouts we had. You know how to extract and handle it safely without it exploding. We could really use your help.”

Keith shrugged. “Thanks but I’ll pass. I don’t intend to get back into the fight when I’ve heard Zarkon’s losing his footing here on earth, you know?”

Hearing that Ezor glared at him. “Hey! We keep giving you chances to join us but you just brush us off like we’re nothing? Zarkon’s footing is slipping here but you know if he can’t have this realm he’ll enforce a scorched realm policy. He did the same to that one Fae realm. He’ll do the same if he wants.”

Acxa sighed a little. “Enough Ezor. Keith has his own reasons and we have stayed here long enough. Grab the blaster pieces. Both of us need to leave before Zarkon’s forces show up. Agreed?”

Ezor rolled her eyes and started to put the blaster into more manageable pieces. “Yeah, yeah… I don’t feel like getting shot at anyway…”

Keith nodded a little. “Sounds like a plan. It was good to see you again Acxa. You look good.”

The woman blushed a little and averted her eyes. “Of course I do. Last time you saw me I had just survived a quintessence explosion. You look good too. No offence but you look much better as a Galra than as a human. Purple is your colour.”

Keith could feel his face heat up, suddenly very thankful for the fur covering his face. “Thanks. Well, see you girls around.” Neither he nor Acxa really knew how to take compliments.

“Later Keeeeeeeeeef.” Cooed Ezor as she walked off with the now assembled blaster.

Acxa, always the professional, gives Keith a traditional Galra salute. Keith did one back to her and he watched the two of them leave. Once the women were gone, Keith felt his knees give out and hit the floor. He hadn’t realised how tense he had been through the whole exchange. Sure he was on good terms with Acxa and Ezor was… well she was Ezor, but man that was scary. Anyway, he decided to take their advice and leave.

He walked past Lance and Cosmo and whistled. Cosmo quickly followed and a few seconds later Lance did the same. As they walked away Keith slowly managed to get his Galra form under control. The fur and ears always stung like a bitch, but at least the Galra eye thing was easy enough to fix. He literally just had to blink.

By the time they got back to the trail Keith noticed that Lance hadn’t said a word. “... Lance?”

He looked pretty shaken up, who wouldn’t be? But to his credit he just smiled a little at him. “I’m fine Keith. I just… I have a lot to process right now… By the way, is Cosmo a Galra too?”

Keith was slightly offended by that. “Cosmo is about as Galra as you are a fish. He’s a cosmic wolf… Sorry about all that. No one’s supposed to know about that…”

“Scorched realm policy… What is that?”
“... The less you know the better.”

“Keith…” The tone in Lance’s voice really hit Keith hard. “That Zarkon guy, is he going to wipe out humanity?”

“...”

“Keith?”

“...”

“Keith please…” He reached out and grabbed hold of his jacket. He was subtly shaking. “You seem to know about this. You’re not human. You knew those people. You’re like… I don’t know. Just… Ha… I’m really scared here man…”

“...” Keith didn’t really know what to say that would calm him down. This whole situation sucked. “We’re still in the early stages of phase one at the moment. Unless Zarkon finds a huge deposit of crystallized quintessence they won’t hit phase two for another few hundred years… You won’t live long enough to see anything he does.”

“Yeah but I’m human!” Said Lance. “My family is human! My descendants are going to be human! This planet is my home! Just because you come from planet Galra or whatever doesn’t mean that you can brush over my worries about losing my home planet, even if it’s far off in the future!”

“... It’s my home too Lance. I’m half human.”

“... Really?”

Keith nodded. “Yeah, I’m half Galra, half human… My mother was Galra and had to leave to protect me and my dad. I kind of wish she had taken me with her. Would have saved me a lot of trouble growing up… But whatever.”

After that Lance was quiet again and so was Keith. Normally Keith would have loved the silence, but silence with Lance was worrying. Lance wasn’t a quiet guy. He was loud and happy but now… This was bad. Really bad. They finished the hike, got back to the car, and drove back to Shiro’s shop in silence.

When they pulled up Keith looked over at him nervously. “Lance… Do you want to talk to Shiro? He knows about me not being fully human…”

“... I guess.”

Keith nodded and the two of them went upstairs. Shiro seemed to have been enjoying alone time and was happy to see Keith was back, but frowned a little when he saw both Keith and the expressions on their faces. He gave Keith a confused look.

“He knows Shiro… I just… You talk to him.” He walked into Shiro’s room and closed the door. He sank down to the floor and put his head in his hands. This was bad. Really bad. He told Lance more than he should have. He was going to hate him now wasn’t he? He already did, didn’t he? He called him out for being Galra and he didn’t even know all the horrible things they had done, and are doing right now. This was why he wanted to be alone. Being alone was better than this… All of this...

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Once Keith locked himself away Lance looked over at Shiro. The older man smiled knowingly at
him. “So what did Keith-?”
“He’s a fucking alien, demon, half-breed thing!” Lance all but yelled. “Like what the fuck? We like,
we lost Cosmo and then we found him but there were some weird looking people and they had these
blasters and collecting these rocks. Then Keith’s eyes went yellow and he charged at them. His
fucking knife turned into a sword! Oh, and he turned into some fucking purple cat thing. Then he
blows shit up, and more Galra show up and I just… What the fucking fuck man? And the human
race is going to fucking die in a few hundred years or something and quintessence is explosive?!”
By the time he was done with his rant he was out of breath. Shiro just nodded and gestured for
Lance to sit next to him. Once he did Shiro just patted his back and let him breathe a little. “Sounds
like a lot of stuff happened to you today.”
“Yeah. Like what the fuck? How did you even meet him? How the hell are you cool with this?”
Shiro shrugged. “It’s a bit of a weird story. But when I was much younger I went out hiking along
this desert trail in this national park. I decided to be adventurous and I went off the beaten path. As I
walked along I happened to see some vultures circling around something and me, being curious
wondered what it was. If it was a body I’d call the police and make sure that they came and took it
away. Doing the decent thing, you know?”
“I guess?”
“Turns out it was actually Keith. He was about eleven or twelve at the time. He looked like he had
been trapped with his leg under a rock for days. I didn’t know what he was at the time since he
looked like, as you described it, a weird purple cat. I actually thought he was dead for a while and I
poked him with a stick. His eyes snapped open and he started flailing around trying to attack me and
get away at the same time.”
“Weren't you worried?’ Asked Lance.
“Well yeah, I had no idea what he was but he honestly just looked like a scared animal. So I gave
him some food and while he was distracted I moved the rock off his leg. He seemed really surprised I
let him go and he dashed behind the rocks like a bat out of hell… Turns out he had just grabbed his
backpack and followed me. He then stalked me for about half an hour.” He laughed a little. “It was
kind of cute. Whenever I stopped he would stop a few feet behind me and just glare.”
Lance could totally see Keith doing that. “So he just followed you home?”
“Pretty much.” Said Shiro. “I fed him some more food, gave him some water and well… I just
couldn’t help myself. He was some scared whatever that was obviously abandoned and needed
someone to look after him, and he seemed to like me. So I took him home. The rest is history.”
“... Okay. So he like… When did you find out he was like… Like Galra?”
Shiro thought about it. “Um… About a year before he just left. It was… It was an intense year.
Anyway, did Keith scare you?”
“Yeah… He tried to run away.”
“Oh…” Shiro looked over at the closed door where Cosmo was pacing in front of. “That is not
good. Stay here Lance.” He stood up and walked over to his bedroom door, knocking on it. “Keith?
Open up for a second please? I need to talk to-” Cosmo pressed himself up against Shiro and in a
flash the two of them vanished. Seconds later there was surprised screaming and barking coming
from the room.”


Lance wasn’t too sure what to think. While that did answer one of the questions he had about Keith and Shiro. He kind of wondered what Keith looked like as a small twelve year old in his Galra form. He already looked kind of cute as an adult but he’d probably just be adorable as a kid and…

Lance shook his head as his face went bright red. Why was he going back to thinking Keith was cute? Pretty much all the things he knew about Keith and the world in general was a fucking lie. Maybe he had undiagnosed ADHD? Maybe this was just his way of coping? He did not know. All he knew was that he was fucked.

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Once Keith and Shiro calmed down from Cosmo randomly teleporting into the room, they started to have a serious talk. “Keith, Lance told me you were going to run away. Why?”

Keith felt guilty. “Shiro… He looked at me like I was a monster, and like, I know I am but… Lance was pretty nice to me, and I think he likes me or something.”

Shiro couldn’t help but grin. “You think he likes you?”

“Well yeah? He kind of treats me the same way you do. He’s driven me places and talks to me when we see each other… though he is kind of annoying sometimes. But I guess we’re kind of friends?”

“Oh… You’re talking about friendship.”

“Yeah, what did you think I meant?”

“… Never mind. Anyway, you should know by now that humans are afraid of things they don’t understand.” He thought for a moment. “So, how much do you like Lance? Like, do you still want to talk with him? Interact with him?”

Despite his want to run away, Keith did kind of feel like he should probably explain some things to Lance. He’d left him with a lot of questions and with more confusion than one should leave a person. “Okay… I guess I should tell him.”

“Good. Let’s go and talk to him and-” he glared at Cosmo. “-we will use the door this time.” The dog whined.
Childhood

Chapter Notes

Omg this chapter... and the next... So long yet so vague... I feel like I have crippled my fingers I have been typing so much... Wither way this chapter has been brought to you by insomnia and several shots of whiskey. Kudos and comment when you can. Enjoy :D

It all started with the day after the fire. The family was saved but his dad was dead. He didn’t know what was going to happen to him. He just went with the flow. In all honesty it was unbelievably quick, at least for him it was. After the funeral a woman took him to live with a family.

He was there for a week before he was moved to another home. There were a few other kids there. Some of the older kids bullied Keith since he was the youngest in the house. However he didn’t stay in that house too long since he pushed one of the bullies down the stairs. The next place he was the only kid there, but he started fights at school since bullying started when people found out he was an orphan.

It was bullshit. He did try to ignore it at first, but that just made the bullying worse. So Keith bit one of the kid’s ears. The kid lost his earlobe and Keith was sent away. Again. No matter where he went the story played itself out. With each move, with each harsh word, with each physical assault, the more and more Keith’s anger towards people grew.

It eventually just got to the point where if anyone said anything negative towards him he would just clock them right in the jaw and knock them onto their ass. He hated being around people. He just wanted to be left alone. At schools where people did leave him alone people would stare. He hated the stares just as much as he hated the talking.

Then he got moved to the hell house. The place was in a small town right next to some national park that looked like more of a desert than a park. The house itself wasn’t anything to write home about. Which just made the things that happened there even worse. The people there were assholes. The woman seemed sweet enough when around other adults but she was an entitled cunt. Her husband wasn’t much better. He basically yelled and hit him whenever he did anything wrong. Keith just put up with it.

Surprisingly he stayed in the hell house the longest out of all his foster homes. Maybe the checks the husband and wife were getting for keeping him were larger considering he was so troubled? Not that he really cared that much. They didn’t treat him any better than anyone else. They treated him worse.

After a while he just stopped talking to people and got labeled weird and autistic by some of the people at school. Mainly the bullies, though he had heard some of the teachers suggest that Keith get put in a special ed class. It was annoying.

Eventually Keith had just about enough of everything. For years when he had the chance to go to a library he would and look at books about plants and animals. It started off as a hobby, but after being forced around so much he started to think that maybe he could need it for something else? Maybe he could run away and use this. He would.
On the day he decided to just go off on his own some people who had been calling him names had decided to finally get physical. Three older kids against one small kid? They got some hits in but Keith still beat the shit out of them. They ended up running away and called Keith a yellow eyed freak. He didn’t really get what that was about till he saw his reflection.

That was the first time he had seen his eyes had a second eyelid. He cautiously poked it and found it was like poking glasses. It didn’t hurt. It was just kind of annoying. He carefully pressed his finger against it and carefully slid one of them back into his face. After that he tried scrunching his face up in an attempt to try and make the muscles in his face work and after a few attempts, he could do it as easily as blinking.

He didn’t really know what to think about that, but he kind of figured that if he was able to do this, maybe there really was something weird about him? Maybe it would explain why he was so aggressive? He wasn’t so sure.

Either way it didn’t change his plan. He walked back to the hell house, made sure the entitled wife was still out shopping using the check they got from him living with them. The husband was passed out on the couch. Drunk again. Keith just shrugged, walked to his room, collected his things, raided the kitchen, and walked out.

From there he traveled the half hour down the road to the national park and entered. There weren’t many people or really anyone around, so Keith just traveled down a hiking trail and then when he felt like he had gone far enough, he stepped off the trail and went off on his own.

***

Days turned into weeks and weeks turned into months. After the first month Keith stopped trying to count them. He just wandered around a lot and remembered the survival tips he had read in his books. It wasn’t too difficult if he didn’t wasn’t picky about eating. He went after bugs mostly and lizards and snakes if he was able to stab them with a stick.

As the time progressed he hardly noticed his nails slowly lengthening. Heck he didn’t even notice he was starting to grow fur til the day he managed to find a small pool of water and got a good look at himself. He jumped in surprise. He didn’t understand why he suddenly looked like some weird purple cat thing. If he had the luxury he would have questioned it more, but he didn’t mind. It didn’t hurt him or stop him from doing what he was doing.

Everyone had been calling him a freak before and abusing him. Maybe they just knew there was something wrong with him before he did? He wouldn’t be surprised. Everyone just took one look at him and knew he deserved to be treated less than human.

One day when he was scavenging he could one of the best things ever. Honey pot ants. He had just been looking for flowers since flowers meant plants and plants mean food. As the ants quickly marched by with their abdomens swelling with honey, Keith would grab one or two and quickly eat them for the sugar. He then started eating the flowers that the honey pot ants were eating. But only a few. Just so the ants would come back and he could keep eating them.

He went back every few days and would get some more ants. Life was good. Sure there were days where he didn’t get a lot of food, and there were days where he didn’t get a lot of water, but he did his best and took it easy when he needed to.

Some nights, when he curled up in a small crack in a cliff face he called home, he wondered if anyone was missing him? Did anyone even know who he was? Doubtful. He doubted anyone was even looking for him. But that didn’t matter. He liked being alone.
Then the accident happened.

Keith had been trying to stab a rattlesnake with his spear, but this snake was really pissed off and angry and had driven Keith to the edge of a small hill. There were lots of loose rocks around him but Keith was pretty good with his footing so he felt like he was capable of navigating it. He did manage to spear the snake, but he slipped and fell down the hill. He landed face first at the foot of the hill and groaned. He was about to get up, but something heavy landed on his leg.

“!!!” Keith looked back at his leg and was shocked to see a rock had landed on him. He attempted to try and wriggle out from under it. It didn’t work. He tried to push it away. That also didn’t work. He even tried digging himself out. The ground was too hard. Keith was stuck.

This was bad. Really bad, but Keith couldn’t do anything about it. A day past. Then two. Then three. By the fourth day Keith had gone through the seven stages of grief and just accepted this was the end for him. He sighed and rested his head against the dirt and closed his eyes. He saw the vultures circling over head. Soon he’d be dead. That would be it. Maybe he would see his parents when he died? He wasn’t sure how death worked or if there really was anything after death. There was apparently stuff for humans, but what about him?

He let out a long sigh and just waited for the sweet embrace of death when he felt something poke his cheek. Maybe a bird had come by to see if he was dead yet. “...” He felt the poke again. “...” And again. “...” And again. “...” And that was one poke too many. Keith’s eyes snapped open and he flailed his arms and snarled at what was poking him.

As it turned out, the thing that was poking him was a man. A young man? Either way they looked like an adult to Keith and he snarled at him and hissed.

The adult looked surprised that Keith was alive. “Oh wow.” He said. “I really thought you were dead… Easy there little guy.” He talked in a calming voice and slowly crouched down. “You don’t look too good there. How long have you been stuck out here? You don’t look too good.”

“...?” Keith was very confused. He knew he didn’t look very human right now. What the hell? He had no idea what was going on. It must have been a trick. “HISSSSSSSSSSS!!!” Suddenly there was a granola bar in front of him. “...” He grabbed it and quickly ate it. Three days without food would do that to a person. Suddenly the weight on his leg was gone and Keith froze in shock. He quickly sat up and looked down at his freed leg before looking back up at the adult with wide eyes.

He just smiled at him. “There you go. Feeling better now kid?”

“...” Keith quickly bolted off. His backpack had to be around here somewhere. He had taken it off earlier to chase the snake. Once he found it he quickly looked around to see if the adult was still following him. They were walking away. “...” Curious as to who this person was and why they helped him out in the first place, Keith followed him at a distance. This person was weird. So weird. He was actually nice to him.

Every once in a while he would see the adult dropping something on the ground. When he investigated it, it always seemed to be a bit of food, so he obviously ate it. This continued on for about twenty minutes until the man sat down on a rock and looked over at Keith.

He smiled warmly at him. “My name is Shiro.” He pointed to himself. “Shiro. Can you say Shiro?”

“...” Keith nodded. “Shiro.”

The man seemed surprised at how articulate he was. “That’s pretty good. You pick up pretty fast.”
“I’m not stupid you know.” Muttered Keith. “Just because I didn’t talk to you right away doesn’t mean I can’t.”

Now Shiro looked completely dumbfounded. “Oh wow… Well… Okay. Sorry? Um… Well what’s your name?”

“... Keith.”

“Well Keith, you look like you probably haven’t had anything to drink for a while.” He offered Keith a water bottle. The younger quickly snatched it away from him and drank. “So Keith… Where are your parents?”

Keith shrugged. “I’m an orphan.”

“Okay… And the reason you look the way you do?”

“I don’t think I’m human.”

Shiro nodded a little as he seemed to think about this. “So… are you an alien? Some kind of experiment?”

Keith shrugged. “I don’t know what I am… No one’s told me anything.”

“I see… Do you… Can you look human? I mean, the yellow eyes, fur, and ears are pretty nice, but-”

“Everyone hates things they don’t understand.” Muttered Keith. “I know. I know.” He shook his head and tried to will himself into losing the fur and ears. It hurt but it was easy enough to change back. That was kind of surprising to him. Then again he never tried to change back once he did.

Shiro was once again surprised but his facial expression quickly softened. “Oh… Hey Keith, I know this is sudden but, would you like to come home with me? You don’t look like you’re doing too well out here on your own.”

“...” Keith didn’t know what to do. He didn’t know Shiro, but he had been really nice to him. He didn’t know what to do.

***

Keith ended up sitting in the passenger seat of Shiro’s car as they drove to his place. Shiro talked about himself a lot, trying to get Keith to feel more relaxed around him. Probably. He talked about finishing high school and starting university. He talked about his friends and how he lived with his boyfriend.

Through the whole exchange Keith just nodded along and let him talk. Once in a while he would mention how he used to live with some random family, or went to a place where something similar to what Shiro had said happened.

They got to his place and while Keith sat awkwardly on the couch, Shiro went to the kitchen and made something. Whatever it was it smelt good. It made Keith’s stomach rumble, but he didn’t expect to get anything. Much to his surprise Shiro put several slices of pizza in front of him.

“Eat.”

Keith’s eyes went wide with surprise and hesitated for a moment before practically inhaling everything on the plate and licked it clean. He held the plate up to Shiro. “Is there more?”
Shiro smiled softly at him and patted his head. “Not at the moment Keith. That was the last of the pizza. But I’m going to be making dinner really soon. Okay?”

“... Okay.”

“Yeah... Hey Keith, would you like to go to a hospital? They could check you out and—”

“NO!” Keith raced towards the window and tried to push it open.

“KEITH! NO!” Shiro ran to the window to try and pull him away. Keith hissed and kicked and bit him until he tired himself out and Shiro was tired from holding him back. “Okay. I get it. No hospitals. That was a dumb thing to say.”

***

Soon Keith met Adam. Adam freaked out a little because Keith was looking through the DVDs by the TV. Shiro quickly calmed him down and tried to explain the situation while leaving out the more supernatural parts. Keith ended up hiding in another room while they yelled at each other.

“What the fuck Shiro? Seriously? What the fuck?” Snapped Adam. “Why didn’t you call the police or CPS or something? You’ve pretty much kidnapped a kid!”

“I did not! Adam, he was starving and dehydrated! He was out in a desert area! He’s a scared kid! He has no family! He told me he’s an orphan!”

“It could be an act!”

“An act? Adam! He was off the trail in the desert! The fucking desert! If I hadn’t found him he would be dead! He freaked out when I suggested I take him to a hospital! Even if he isn’t an orphan maybe he ran away from an abusive family? You want to be the one responsible for sending a kid back to something like that?”

“... Fine! But you’re paying for anything he needs out of your pocket! I am not dealing with this! This was not part of the fucking plan Shiro!”

“I know Adam! Just make an effort! You remember how fucking shit it was couch surfing at sixteen when your parents kicked you out for being gay!”

That seemed to stop the conversation for the moment and Keith learnt that he should stay away from Adam when he was around. He would do his best to stay out of his way when he was around even when he was in the same room as him. But staying with Shiro was nice. The man was kind to him and actually treated him well.

A few weeks passed when Keith overheard Adam and Shiro talking again. This time Adam seemed to be showing Shiro something on his computer. “Keith Kogan. That’s him Shiro. He’s registered in the missing person’s database.”

Shiro read what was on the laptop and looked extremely concerned. “... Wait, so the last people he was staying with got arrested for child neglect and child porn? Holy crap...”

“We need to tell the police about him. They have to know this kid is still alive.”

“But he doesn’t have any family.” Reminded Shiro. “He’ll just go back into the system. Something worse might happen to him.”
“Shiro, we’ll get in trouble if someone finds out that he’s been staying here.”

Keith hated it. He’d had enough. Adam hated that he was around. He was causing problems for Shiro. He should just go. He packed his bag and attempted to leave by climbing out the window, but he couldn’t squeeze out with his backpack. So he had to leave out the front door and walk past them.

“Where are you going Keith?” Asked Shiro.

“I’m leaving.”

“What?”

“YOU WANT ME GONE RIGHT?! SO I’LL GO! I’M GONE!” He clenched his fists and continued to march to the door. “You should have just left me to die…”

Before he grabbed the doorknob Shiro pulled him back into a tight hug and glared at Adam. “Adam, I know these past few weeks have been really stressful for us, but seriously? Can we not talk about this now?

“…” For what it was worth, Adam seemed ashamed by what he had said.

***

A few years went by. Adam and Shiro made up. Adam was a little nicer and more understanding towards Keith. However Adam and Shiro eventually broke up. Keith did worry that he might have been the cause of it, but Shiro had reassured him that this wasn’t the case. Keith didn’t know if that was a lie or not.

Keith and Shiro talked a lot about what Keith could be and came up with theories. All of them were pretty weird. Some of the best theories were; government experiment, alien experiment, and weird monster creature thing.

Also, during his time with Shiro he started going to school again. Once again the bullying started and Keith got into a fight. Shiro was called and they decided to try and talk through this anger of his. It worked. Sometimes. On days where Keith felt like he was going to lose it he just didn’t go to school and ended up just walking around the town.

On one particular day Keith was really not having it. All week some asshole at school had been trying to piss him off and make him fight him. Keith didn’t want to upset Shiro so he didn’t. He just ditched school and walked through town until he got to a less than stellar part of town.

He wasn’t really watching where he was going or where he was walking. He ended up walking right into someone and they snarled at him. “Hey, watch where you’re fucking going you little-”

He didn’t get to finish his sentence because Keith punched him right in the jaw and knocked him back. That felt pretty good to Keith, but he quickly realized that he fucked up when two people grabbed him and dragged him into a back alley.

“Well what do we have here?” One of them sneered. “This kid thinks he’s tough shit or something?”

“Looks like we’ll have to teach this little shit a lesson.” Growled the other one. “You want the first hit Sendak?”

The man Keith had punched in the face was apparently Sendak. He was a huge scary looking man that looked even scarier when he was pissed off, which he obviously was now. “You got some
fucking nerve you little shit. But I’ll give it to you, you have one hell of a right hook. Too bad you aren’t so fucking smart.”

He raised his fist and punched Keith in the face, though at the last second Keith moved out of the way and made him hit the wall. Dust from the brick wall exploded next to Keith’s face and out of reflex he let his third eyelid slip to protect his eyes.

As soon as Sendak saw that he looked very surprised, but then let out an amused chuckle. “Well what do you know? Looks like we got ourselves a half-breed.” He gestured to his goons and they let him go. Sendak extended his hand to Keith. “Name’s Sendak. Which side of you is Galra?”

“... What?”

“Galra. Was your mother Galra or was it your father?”

“... What the hell is a Galra?”

The three mean looked around and laughed before their skin morphed and they looked just like him, well, how he did when he himself was out in the desert. “We are Galra. What’s your name half-breed?”

“... Keith.” He kind of felt that half-breed might have been a slur, but he was going to roll with it for the moment. But considering these people seemed to like him now, and they decided not to kill him, Keith shook his hand.

Sendak nodded and made a small humming noise. “Well Keith. You should watch where you are going. You shouldn’t go swinging punches at people like us. Galra have a tendency to fight to the death… If you like, you can come by and talk to us if you want to find out more about what Galra are.”

“But Sendak,” said one of the goons. “We have orders to bring half-breeds to-”

Sendak grabbed them by the top of the head and lifted them into the air. “Did I fucking stutter? Keith can be let off with a warning. Not his fault that whichever parent at him was Galra decided he wasn’t worthy enough to grow up Galra.” He looked back at Keith. “You can clear off now. We usually hang out around here so it’ll be okay. Just don’t punch people in the face. Run along.”

Keith just nodded and left. He wasn’t angry anymore. He knew what he was. He was apparently Galra. He was Galra. He knew what he was. He wasn’t alone. They were willing to talk to him. Life was looking up for him.

***

Over the next few days Keith secretly looked up anything he could find on Galra. There was nothing. Not even anything obscure. This lead him to the conclusion that Galra were either aliens or some obscure race of monsters. He didn’t tell Shiro about it. Not yet.

He went back to where Sendak was a few times and the older man was more than happy to tell Keith about Galra while they sat behind some sleazy looking bar. Keith didn’t know if Sendak owned the place or what, but people from the bar would supply them both with alcohol as they talked. Keith did sip it but he never really liked it that much.

“Galra are a proud race.” Sendak would say. “We are a race of warriors whose empire expanded eons under our leader, Zarkon. You’ll meet him some day. He always meets the half-breeds.”
“Why do you keep calling me that? Half-breed?”

“Because that’s what you are.” Said Sendak. “A half-breed is any one who has a Galra parent and a none Galra parent. We do have several half-breeds within the Galra empire. Many Galra see half-breeds as weaker and less than, but if they rise through the ranks within the army they get our respect. Honour and respect are the things Galra place high importance in.”

“Huh…”

“… You know, you have lived like a human for your whole life. Why not join us? Prove your worth and we will accept you as our brother.”

Keith liked that idea. He liked the idea of being accepted by the Galra. Everyone else besides Shiro had made it apparent that he wasn’t worth their time. Maybe he did belong with the Galra? Maybe it was time to talk to Shiro about this? So he did. Shiro was shocked that Keith had found other people that were like him, but was very encouraging. He asked Keith lots of questions about it and what Keith planned to do.

“I… I don’t know.” Admitted Keith. “I want to know more about myself… And maybe this is the way to do it? Like, what If Galra are able to do something really weird or are like super allergic to things that humans aren’t?”

“Well what do you know? About being Galra I mean.”

“Well… Sendak said we are basically a military based race.” Said Keith. “Our leader is someone called Zarkon. I have no idea what he’s like but Galra seem to be revered by everyone. He’s pretty much a warlord I think? He sounds pretty brutal.”

Shiro nodded a little but started to look kind of concerned. “Okay… Look. I’m not going to lie. I have a few concerns about this. To be honest neither of us know anything about Zarkon or Galra but what you’ve been told about them. Please think more about this before you decide to run off to join them.”

Keith didn’t really understand where Shiro was coming from. Shouldn’t he be over the moon to know that Keith knew who he was? Knew what he was? Why was he being like this? It upset him a lot, but just felt like this was a human thing.

He kept going back to Sendak and talking to him. He did hype up what life is like as a Galra, and how it was an honorable thing. He talked of Zarkon and glorious battles as the empire expanded. He painted an interesting picture and eventually told him that there was a place he could go to train in the Galra army. It was apparently there to help Galra troops get used to the environment of Earth. He would be a valuable asset.

A valuable asset. Since when had Keith been called anything like that? Since when was he valuable? Since when had he been able to do anything for anyone like that? It made him smile. Maybe humans hated him, but the Galra would be different.

***

At seventeen Keith ran away to join the Galra. They had disguised their base as some new age cult thing outside of some rural town where no one asked questions. When he first got there everyone gave him weird looks. So many weird looks. He felt a little self conscious about himself, but he quickly learnt a few things; Galra do not take insubordination, any disagreements are resolved to hand to hand combat, rank is important, Galra show greater respect for those that can fight.
Needless to say Keith got into fights again. But at least this time he was encouraged to do so. He was actually reprimanded for not fighting back hard enough. In response to that Keith went and trained during his spare time. If he wasn’t eating or sleeping he was training.

It was during one of these sessions that he first met Lotor and his generals. They had visited the base one day and Keith honestly had no idea who they were, but gave him the general respect that he gave anyone above him.

“So you are the half-breed?” He asked. Keith just nodded and the other man smiled. “I am Prince Lotor. These are my generals; Acxa, Ezor, Zethrid, and Narti.”

Keith looked at them and nodded a little. All of them were different. They didn’t look too different, but they obviously weren’t full Galra. Suddenly one of them jumped at him and embraced him in a hug. Keith instantly grabbed her and threw her off. She hit the training mat hard and bounced, but managed to catch herself and spun around on the palm of her hand.

“He has good reflexes Lotor.” She said with a grin. “Can we keep him?

Lotor chuckled a little. “Ezor please. Control yourself.”

Ezor pouted a little and made her way back to Lotor. “Sorry boss. I just can’t help myself. It’s been ages since we’ve met another half-breed. I just wanted to test him a little you know?”

The tallest and most muscular looking woman stared Keith dead in the eyes and cracked her knuckles. “A surprise attack is nothing. If we really want to see if he is worthy I’ll gladly face him and hand to hand combat. The runt doesn’t look like he can take me on anyway.”

Keith would have snapped at her is Lotor didn’t cut in. “That is enough Zethrid. We did not come here to test our skills today. Lotor just smiled at Keith. “Soon you will finish your basic training and will be assigned to where you will fit best within the empire. I suggest you take your time to learn about and study quintessence. All half-breeds seem to be more intune when it comes to hunting it down. If you prove yourself there I will be more than happy to offer you a place among my generals. Despite what you might have been told, half-breeds do not get far.”

With that the group left and Keith thought that would be the end of it. He ended up seeing Acxa around a lot. Apparently Lotor had tasked her with keeping an eye on him. It was a little annoying but Keith pretty much ignored her for the most part. Once in a while they would exchange greetings but that was it.

After a few months of this he and Axce started talking more and she was able to give him a slight insight into the people in charge that he would need to impress and how. “Prorok is in charge of finding and gathering quintessence at the moment. He is impressed with intelligence and following procedure to the book. Sendak only cares about brutal combat and how strong someone is. He probably only recruited you to see how strong you were.”

Keith just shrugged. “Considering Sendak punched me in the chest and almost killed me my second day of training I kind of realised that he’s not a nice guy.”

“Good. I just wanted you to know… Watch your back Keith. The more Galra you look the less shit will get thrown your way.”

***

Lance listened to everything Keith was telling him and trying to take it all in. Okay, so Keith was orphaned. He had a shit time growing up. He thought it would be a good idea to live in a desert.
Shiro is way too nice to be real. Keith probably shouldn’t have joined the Galra. He nodded a little and let out a long, slow sigh.

“Ooooooooookay… Okay.” He muttered. “Okay… I just… Okay.”

Keith looked annoyed. “Stop saying okay.”

“Okay.”

“Shut up!”

Shiro sighed and shook his head. “Keith, calm down. I think he’s taking this pretty well.”

“I still can’t believe you just adopted him.” Muttered Lance. “You saw some weird looking cat kid thing and just thought, yes. I will adopt this child.”

Shiro shrugged. “He needed help. I wasn’t going to say no to him. He was half dead and starving. Though I do wish he had explained a little more that he was leaving.”

“…” Keith looked embarrassed. “Yeah. Sorry about that. Anyway…”

Lance fidgeting nervously on the couch. “So, when did shit really hit the fan? Like when did you finally snap and just leave?”

Keith sighed. “Well… It all started when I finished basic training and started to work for Prorok and finding quintessence…”
With basic training done Keith was immediately sent to work for Prorok. The older man gave him seemingly impossible recovery tasks. But Keith kept managing to pull it off. Quintessence in an already occupied mine? Done. In a mountain rage in the middle of winter? No sweat. Shark infested oceans? A walk in the park.

After his first mission was completed he was sent to a room to retrieve quote unquote; markings. This was essentially tattoos but were meant for identification of a body. They were practically invisible unless under certain lights, and Galra fur usually covered that up anyway so it wasn’t visible anyway. It was an outdated tradition anyway. There were different, more efficient ways for identification now. But the tradition still stood.

Keith kind of liked it anyway. It hurt like a bitch to get his markings, but it was worth it. It showed he was one of them. It proved he was an efficient and valuable member of the Galra. It made him feel good. He was part of something. He was making a difference and people were acknowledging him.

Sometimes after he got a new making Acxa would be waiting for him. “Not bad Keith.” She would say. “You’re Doing really well for yourself. You have no more room on your arms, right?”

Keith nodded. “Yeah. I don’t think I have any space left on me now.”

“That’s impressive. Lotor will be pleased to hear of your progress.” Acxa was relatively monotone in her delivery, but he could tell she was happy for him. They seemed to have a stronger bond since they were the only two half-breeds among the full blooded Galra. It was nice.

After one particularly difficult run, where Keith gathered a large chunk of quintessence from an underwater cave, Prorok called him over to talk. “You’ve done pretty well Keith.”

“Thank you sir.”

“Well, I have a few more difficult deposits of quintessence for you to gather. It’s a two person job because of how large the deposit is supposed to be.”

Keith nodded a little. He hadn’t worked with other people before. He was generally left to his own devices. “Yes sir. Who will I be partnered with?”


Keith nodded and went straight to the training room. There were several people already in there practicing shooting and fighting against training dummies. He looked around to see if he could find this Krolia. He had no idea who she was, so he just stood back and waited to see if anyone
approached him. Krolia would probably find him since he was the only human half-breed.

Thankfully she did find him. She walked over to him and held her hand out. “I’m Krolia.”

He nodded and shook her hand. “Keith. Prorok informed me that we will be working together on our next mission.”

“Apparently so. Just so you know I will take seniority on this mission.”

“Oh? How many missions have you run in the last few days?” Keith didn’t like the idea of following orders from someone when he was able to run missions by himself just fine.

Krolia raised an eyebrow. “I have seniority. I’ve been doing these runs in dozens of realms. I’ve been doing this before you were even born.” She glanced over at an area specifically set up sorting out disagreements and smirked. “But, I guess you know what we have to do. Beat me in hand to hand combat and I will let you plan the mission. Sound fair?”

There was no way Keith wouldn’t take this opportunity. He still liked fighting. It was the perfect stress reliever for him. He smiled and walked over to the open area. “Okay. Hand to hand combat it is. What are the win conditions?”

She thought for a moment. “Knock out sounds like the most reasonable option for this matter. Are you okay with that?”

“Yeah, I’m good.”

“Is hand to hand good or do you want to use training swords?” The way she said swords sounded condescending.

Keith ground his teeth a little and just glared at her. “I can knock you out without the aid of a sword.”

Krolia nodded. “Okay. As you wish. Let’s fight.”

The fight was highly intense and several Galra that were training paused to watch the fight unfold. It was never a very clear winner in this fight. Any time one of them would get a hit in the other would instantly strike back. She was taller than him so Keith tried to knock her down to his height by striking her joints. Knees, hips, ankles he struck them all. Krolia mainly went for his ribs and tried to wind him and knock him over. They seemed to be fairly evenly matched. Then Krolia stumbled, and Keith took his chance. He jumped and kicked her hard in the temple. He watched her eyes roll into the back of her head and she hit the mat hard.

The Galra that were watching them fight went back to their own training while someone called someone to take Krolia to the med bay for assistance. Keith was feeling pretty damn proud of himself. Hell, he was extremely proud of himself. Now he was going to be the one in charge of this mission and that Galra would have to just suck it up. They would probably hate it, but she had to follow the rules of combat. She lost. He won.

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The mission had gone a lot smoother than Keith expected. Krolia was following orders he gave her with ease. They didn’t have to travel too far to find this quintessence since it was apparently in an abandoned mine. They wouldn’t have to do much digging themselves. As they followed the tracker Krolia started to talk.
“So, what was it like growing up on Earth? What were your parents like?”

Keith gave her a weird look. “I’m an orphan. My mum, presumably a Galra, ran away and left me with my dad. He died when I was really young.”

“... Oh... That is... I am so sorry Keith. I didn’t know.” Krolia looked rather upset. “You know, maybe your mother left due to the directive implemented by Haggar?” Haggar, the high priestess and essentially Zarkon’s right hand. She was a scary woman apparently.

“Oh? What directive?”

“Any half-breed Galra children are to be brought in for testing.” She said quietly. “We um... When it comes to half-breeds we have what you would probably call a Spartan upbringing? I have tried to study your planet’s cultures and well... The way they simply abandoned or threw away children born with defects is similar to how many Galra treat baby half-breeds. I think your mother might have left you to save you from potential death.”

Keith didn’t know that. Like, he knew Galra were tough as nails but that was kind of extreme.

“Huh... Okay, well that is different.”

“Oh Keith, there’s so much you don’t know about the Galra...”

Soon they found the quintessence they were looking for. The crystal was no bigger than a golf ball. But that was extremely large for a piece of crystal quintessence. They were going to need more than two people extracting it.

Keith called it in to Prorok and informed him they would need a full team of no less than ten to make sure the operation ran smoothly. Prorok was a little annoyed, but he agreed. A deposit that large needed to be collected asap.

The two of them waited outside and soon more troops showed up. Much to Keith’s surprise Acxa did too. She smiled a little and walked over to him. “Hey Keith.”

“Hey Acxa. What are you doing out here?” He asked.

She shrugged. “I decided to see how well you acquired quintessence. Kind of exciting extracting a crystal this big.”

“Yeah.”

Krolia smiled a little at them. “Keith, is Acxa your girlfriend?”

Keith gave her a weird look. “No? Acxa and I are friends?”

Acxa was also confused by Krolia’s accusation. “Have people been spreading lies about us? I am here on the orders of Prince Lotor.”

The older woman laughed a little. “I get it. Carry on and... Who are those two?” She gestured to two very obviously not Galra people opening the back of a truck and preparing the machine that would stabilize the quintessence as it was transported.

“Rolo and Nyma.” Said Keith quietly. “Prorok occasionally uses their services in exchange for letting them live after they committed crimes against the empire.”

“Is that even legal?” Asked Krolia.
“Probably not but I’m just the guy that finds this stuff. Not my head on the chopping block if Zarkon finds out.”

“True.”

Out of the corner of Keith’s eyes he saw something flash. Only for a moment, and then he a second flash. That flash went by fast, but Keith knew what was happening. He hit the floor with seconds to spare as the whole mine exploded and collapsed in on itself. Anyone that was still alive after the explosion was extremely hurt.

Keith’s ears were ringing and his vision was unfocused as he tried to pull himself into a sitting position. Laying by him was Axca. She was bleeding from her head and looked like she was unconscious. He looked over at Krolia. She was getting dragged away by someone wearing a black and purple mask.

“Shit… H-hey you!” Keith attempted to stand up but someone came up behind him and punched him in the back of the head, knocking him out cold.

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When Keith came to he was locked away in some cell. His head was pounding and it hurt to open his eyes. He could hear shouting, but he couldn’t really tell what was going on. His head hurt too much.

“I swear if you lay one finger on him Regris I will rip them off!”

“Kolivan gave me orders to-”

“I don’t care if he said he’d give you the best tech in this realm! You lay one finger on my baby and you are dead! You hear me? Dead!”

“This is not your decision to make!” Spat Regris. “And if I’m mistaken, didn’t you abandoned him? You didn’t even tell us about him! You left him out there! What did you think would happen?”

“I was going to go back for him! After doing one of these kinds of missions I was going to go and see him and his father! I was going to see them again but he… He’s fucking dead!” Keith could hear a woman sobbing and that was the last he heard before he closed his and blacked out. Did Galra cry? Had he ever seen a Galra cry before?

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When he opened his eyes again he was still in his cell but there was a tray of food near him. That was nice. He heard footsteps coming towards him so he pretended to still be knocked out. He heard the feet stop close to the cell and he tried to look as unconscious as possible.

The person clicked their tongue in annoyance. “Still out? How long are humans usually out for?”

Suddenly a woman screeched from down the hall. “KOLIVAN! GET AWAY FROM HIM NOW!”

The shriek was enough to jolt Keith into an upright position. Krolia looked was trying to swipe at a tall, muscular Galra with a long braid. He was holding her wrists in his hands and growling at her.

“I was just checking on him!” He snapped. “He was giving food ages ago and I was seeing if he had eaten anything yet!”
“Don’t you dare lie to me!” She snapped. “If you come anywhere near my son again I swear I’ll—”

“You’re my mum?!” Keith blurted out.

The two Galra stopped and stared at him. Krolia looked very relieved. “Keith you’re awake… Oh thank goodness. I didn’t—”

“Stay the fuck away from me.” He snapped. This woman was his mother? The one that abandoned him? Was he meant to be happy? He wasn’t. He was furious. “What is wrong with you? You fucking left me and my dad! He fucking died! Do you have any idea what horrible shit happened to me? Every day since my dad died I’ve been beaten and abused till I ran away from it all! I hated it! I hate you! Why am I even in here? What the hell is going on?”

Kolivan sighed a little and shook his head. “Have you ever heard of the Blade of Marmora? We are resistance fighters. We’re fighting to end Zarkon’s reach over this and every reality.”

***

For the next few days Keith stayed in his cell. He was angry at Krolia. She was a traitor and a spy. And his mother. She was the worst. She probably planned for the quintessence to explode and for them to get abducted. If he ever got out of this he just knew Prorok would blame him for it and then Keith would end up getting the shit kicked out of him by someone Prorok deemed worthy of it.

Every day Krolia talked to him and tried to explain herself to him. Keith just death glares her from the other side of the bars. “I was saving you Keith.”

“You left me.”

“I didn’t want you to live this life. You deserved to live a human life.”

“I was abused by other humans for existing.”

“You could have died if took you with me… I wanted to come back to you and your father. I wanted to stay with him but I couldn’t… If you knew what Zarkon has done—”

“He’s expanded the empire!” Snapped Keith. “He’s just done something that humans have been doing forever on a larger scale. Who fucking cares? War is war. In the end Zarkon won and that is that.”

“... I’m sorry Keith. I’m so sorry… When you were born I wanted to call you Yurak, but your father shot me down and made me call you Keith. I liked that name too. It fit you so well.”

“Whatsoever.”

“Keith…”

“I will never forgive you for abandoning me. I don’t care what sob story you use.”

This went on and on and on and on for what felt like an eternity. He had no idea what to do. He hated this so much. Krolia could say whatever she wanted. He wouldn’t believe her. How could he believe someone he hardly even knew? She could have been lying about being his mother for all he knew.

Kolivan tapped on the bars to get his attention and opened up the cell. This confused the hell out of Keith and he just glared at him suspiciously. “Follow me kid.” Said the old Galra.
Keith frowned a little but reluctantly followed him. “So what now?”

The older man didn’t bother looking at Keith. “You’ve only been exposed to what the Galra have been doing through the lense of Zarkon. You have no idea what they have been doing to everyone else. I understand that you have been told about the glory of battle.” He stopped and turned to face him. “Sometimes war is necessary. However, those times are few and far between. Galra do not need to do this.”

“Oh yeah? You’re just some traitor.” Snapped Keith. “You have no honour.”

“Honour? You have no idea what honour is. Is this honourable?” He placed his hand on the wall and it peeled out of the way to show a barren hellscape. The sky was blood red, the land was black and covered in ash. There was nothing. Everything was dead.

“... Where are we?” Asked Keith.

“The Titan realm. One of the first realms Zarkon destroyed.” Informed Kolivan. “This realm’s inhabitants lived on giant creatures called the Balmera. They had a symbiotic relationship with all that lived on their bodies. But their bodies created crystals that are used to amplify the power of quintessence. Zarkon killed every single Balmera... Almost all the Balmerans died when the Balmera they lived on died. We rescued who we could and sent them to realms that Zarkon had not touched yet. Less than one percent of the population survived.”

“... Are you serious?”

“Yes I am... We haven’t had such a successful evacuation before or since. We usually only manage to save between point zero one and point zero three percent of the population. When Zarkon enters phase three it’s always the same.”

“Phase three? What are the other phases?”

Kolivan sighed sadly and put his hand on the window. “Your planet is in the first phase right now. During that time Galra forces are sent to infiltrate and learn what they can about the new realm. The quickest and most covert way to obtain that is by studying the dominant species and see how it integrates with the Galra. That is the main purpose of half-breeds. An experimentation. Once they fail to meet Galra expectations they are dismantled and studied to see what caused their fault. While that happens quintessence is quickly harvested to create gates for the fleet to come through.”

“...” Keith felt a shiver ran through his body. If he had failed basic training would he have been deemed worthy of slaughter?

“In phase two the gates are made and the invasion begins. If the realm surrenders there is some mercy given to them and their species is allowed to live as long as they swear allegiance to Zarkon and the Galra empire. Any resistance is met with extreme prejudice, and usually any resistance is seen as a declaration of war and all living inhabitants are wiped out. War is officially declared. All people regardless of age and gender are murdered on sight.”

Keith felt a ball of anxiety rising in his chest. He knew humanity would not take an invasion from an outer force lying down. They hardly took other human refugees very well. They would fight and they would all die immediately. He had kind of just assumed that when Zarkon did invade that they would just wipe out military forces and that would be it. Humanity would be under Zarkon rule but that would be it.

“In phase three, the final phase, all resources will be extracted from the realm and Zarkon will have a
new portal opened up and he will start all over again. He has done this countless times…” Kolivan sighed sadly. “Your realm doesn’t have the necessary make up to create a sizable amount of quintessence. If we destroy enough deposits than Zarkon will be trapped in his previous realm and he’ll be unable to continue without finding a way to safely handle quintessence in its plasma form.”

“... How long will phase one go in human years?”

“In human years?” It took him a few moments but he managed to eventually convert it. “At minimum around five hundred years.”

“... Really? I won’t even be alive then...”

“No human will be alive when Zarkon is done.” He gave Keith a stern look. “Keith, this realm is only one of trillions Zarkon has destroyed. Zarkon has started to claw his way into your reality. He will destroy everything you’ve known. Can you stand by and really let Zarkon invade? Even if he claimed he would not slaughter your people would you really risk it if this is the end result? When there is Galra involvement no one survives.”

“I… I..” Humans had never treated him right. Every last one of them was awful to him. The only acception had been Shiro and he… Keith would be lying if he said he didn’t think about him from time to time. He hoped he was doing well. Maybe he had a boyfriend by now? Maybe even a kid? Who knew? But Earth was Shiro’s home and the place where Keith was born. Even if the whole of humanity was gone, he wanted the rest of the planet to be there.

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There was a lot of distrust and Keith was watched like a hawk by every other member, but Keith kept his head down. He was conflicted. Everyone had done nothing but lie to him over and over again and he didn’t know if there really was anyone he could trust.

He was given access to information about the different realms and what went over every detail of the so called glorious battles he was told about. Each one, no matter the race or realm ended in a bloody slaughter. Not one of them stood a chance. There didn’t seem to be an end to the levels of torture or depravity Zarkon wouldn’t stoop to to make an example of someone.

He skipped to the first realm invaded the Galra to see where this all started. Much to his shock and disgust it never even started off as an invasion. It started off as a peaceful meetings between what he could only physically describe as a race of fae like beings called Alteans. The Alteans were the ones with the technology and ability to warp between dimensions using quintessence. They shared their technology with the Galra, and the Galra repaid them by invading and completely obliterating their realm.

Keith had to accept the facts. The Galra were wrong. He had to join the Blade. Once he had made his decision he approached Kolivan. “I can hunt down any and all locations of quintessence for you on earth. I can detonate it and destroy it before Zarkon can collect it.”

“Good to know.” He made a quick hand gesture and Regris was by his side.

“Sir?”

“You’re going to work with Keith to locate quintessence on earth. Your orders are to kill on sight if he attempts to make contact with the Galra.”

Regris nodded. “Yes sir… Sir?”
“Yes?”

“Yes?”

“Considering what information I have managed to gather over the course of several months, Keith is pretty well known for being one of the best quintessence collectors. He will be needing a code name to avoid being targeted by others.”

“Yes…”

“… Yurak.” Muttered Keith. “She said she wanted to call me that but my dad named me Keith.” The other two Galra nodded in agreement and Keith picked up the alias of Yurak.

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Under the name Yurak, Keith became very useful to the Blade. He was quick to inform them about the habitat on earth and taught them some of the safer ways to handle crystal quintessence in earth’s atmosphere. The members of the Blade started to warm up to him and Keith was surprised by how friendly they actually were towards him when they warmed up to him.

He first found this out when Ilun brushed and tied Keith’s hair back before he went on a mission and told him to be safe. That then became a ritual. No matter where he was, someone would comb his hair and tie it back. He didn’t really know how to react, but he ended up approaching Ilun and asked to comb their hair back before they went on a mission. They became extatic and to be honest, it kind of felt like he was part of a real family.

The only time he felt like this was when he was with Shiro. If Shiro had long hair he would brush it too. It was nice. It was like home.

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Eventually though all good things had to come to an end. During a rather dangerous mission they were ambushed by Zarkon’s forces. They still managed to destroy the quintessence cluster, but Keith had been hit in the neck by shrapnel and almost bled out.

Everyone was freaking out because they weren’t too sure how to fix someone with human biology, but they managed. Only just. It took weeks before Keith was well enough to even sit up. By then Kolivan had to talk to him.

“Keith, sometimes we forget you are half human.” He said. “Everything you have done for us and everything that you do… We appreciate you more than you will ever know. But you are still part human and are not as durable as a full blooded Galra. It’s a miracle you are not dead already.”

“And?”

“I believe you humans have this concept of vacations?”

“Yeah?”

“I want you to take a vacation. When we need you again we will contact you.”

Keith was shocked. “What? You can’t be serious! I’ve worked my ass off for you guys and you want to get rid of me?”

Kolivan glared at him. “Keith. You’re tired and run down. You almost died because you’ve been working yourself so hard. Go to your realm. Go to a place where you can relax. It will be good for you.”
“... Okay.”

“Good... Here.” He handed Keith a knife. “This is for you. Your mother told me to give this to you. She was ashamed of how she treated you and wanted to give this to you in person, but she needed to be sent back into the field to gather more information. You know what kind of blade this is.”

Keith nodded and took it. “Don’t leave me for too long. Okay?”

“Okay.” He put his hand on Keith’s shoulder. “Be safe.”

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Not really knowing where to go, Keith went out to a desert to relax and chill. If for nothing but the nostalgia. After walking around for a few days he found some old shack and Keith decided to take shelter there. It was abandoned so Keith made this his vacation home. It was nice. It was quiet. It was so nostalgic.

He easily slipped back into the routine he had when he was first living on his own. He hunted snakes and lizards and gathered edible plants. It was pretty simple but it was good. Kolivan was right about needing time off. He’d been working himself to death. When was the last time he had actually had a day off since he joined the Galra?

On one of his small hunting trips he ended up having to shimmy along a cliff face. In all honesty he didn’t have to do this but he was a shortcut and there was a safer way, but since when did Keith ever do anything safe?

He took a few more cautious steps when suddenly the ground gave out from under him. He gasped in shock and fell down the side of the cliff. Still it tapered out a little and Keith managed to orientate himself to roll down safely.

He landed with a thump on a walking track and groaned in pain. “Ow…”

“... Keith?”

Keith looked up at an all to familiar face. “Shiro?”

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“And then I pretty much told Shiro the same story and I started to live here with him.” Said Keith. “The Blade will find me when they need me.”

Lance nodded slowly as he looked between Keith and Shiro. “Okay... So this is... You went and... Holy shit dude. That’s just...”

“I know. It’s really messed up and everything and-”

“You hate you mum for trying to save you?!”

Keith had to do a double take. “What? That’s what you’re taking away from that story, weren’t you freaking about the destruction of the human race?”

“Well yeah but now that you’ve explained it properly it sounds like that Kolivan guy has it covered. Also your mum explained to you why she did what she did.” Said Lance. “Okay, shitt thing to do, but like if it’s a choice between having your kid killed and having you leave them so they will live, I’d want my kid to live. Also, there’s no way in hell she would know your dad was going to die.”
“...” Keith glared at him. “That’s not the point Lance. Look, now you know what’s going on.”

“Okay, one more question.”

“What?”

“Are Rolo and Nyma Galra?”

“What? No.” Keith was starting to look annoyed. “Their realms surrendered to Zarkon and now they are part of the empire, but they are their own respective races. Whatever they are.”

Lance nodded a little as he tried to fully process everything that was going on. He probably would need a few days to get his mind together. Honestly it all sounded very hard to believe and if Keith had just told him what was going on with no proof he wouldn’t have believed him. But holy shit there was a fair bit of proof that these things were true.

“Okay…” Lance took in a long, slow, deep breath and slowly stood up. “Right. I have listened to what you said… And now that I am going to go home, and get so fucking drunk I forget how I got home.”

He quickly walked down the stairs and headed to the front door. But before he could get to it Keith grabbed his hand. “Hey, wait Lance.” He sounded extremely worried. “You won’t tell anyone, will you?”

“Keith, even if I told someone, who would believe me?”

“I guess… Drive safe… Don’t drink too much.”

“I won’t… You get some sleep too. You’ve had one hell of a day. I’ve had one hell of a day…” He smiled a little at him. “Maybe next time you want to go out somewhere we can go somewhere there is like, no quintessence or Galra?”

“I guess. Night Lance.”

“Night Keith.”
Hey everyone. Hope you all enjoy this chapter. Kudos and comment when you can :)

Lance didn’t see much of Keith for the rest of that week. When he walked to work in the morning Shiro was always setting up alone and when he left at night Shiro had already closed up for the day. Was Keith avoiding him? He hoped not. Lance had calmed down a lot since Keith had told him the truth, and had a few shots.

He wasn’t surprised that Pidge and Hunk were watching him very carefully. Hunk was the first to speak up about it. “Hey Lance? You doing okay there buddy?”

“Hmm?”

“You’re spaced out again.” Hunk sighed and walked over to him. “Dude, you’re only like that when something’s bothering you. Want a brownie?” He gestured to the back room where they had a fridge and freezer. It was mainly for bottles of water and ice packs. “I brought a few. Pidge probably ate most of them though.”

“Yeah, the sneaky little goblin child probably did.”

“I HEARD THAT!” Called Pidge. “I WILL EAT THEM ALL NOW!”

The boys laughed a little and Lance ran his fingers through his hair. “I don’t know Hunk… I guess I’m just having one those days, you know? … More like one of those weeks…”

Hunk nodded and looked at him thoughtfully for a moment. “You missing Keith or something?”

“What? Me? Missing mullet? No way.” Said Lance a little too quickly. “I’m just having one of those weeks. I need to see a therapist or something… Maybe…”

Hunk gave him a sympathetic look and put his hand on his shoulder. “Hey man. You can talk to me any time about anything. Okay? You know I’m here for you.”

“Thanks man… I’m just going to step out the back and like… get some air or something.” He smiled a little at his friend and walked out the back, taking a brownie and a bottle of water from the fridge as he did so. He sat on the step, ate his food and drank his water.

As he did so he heard the backdoor open from Shiro’s place. From where Lance was sitting he was right next to the dumpster and couldn’t actually see who was coming out. He kind of hoped that it was Keith so he tried to be sneaky and look around the side to see who it was. Surprise, surprise it was Keith. He looked like he was throwing out bags of excess stock.

Lance smiled and walked over to him. “Hey Keith. Haven’t seen you in ages.”

Keith jumped a little in surprise when he saw him. “Oh, hey Lance.”

“What’s up Keith, you need avoiding me or something?” He teased. “Haven’t seen you all week.”
“... I just didn’t think you’d want to see me.” Muttered Keith. He actually looked sad when he said that. He was avoiding eye contact with Lance. In all honesty is was kind of adorable, but Lance knew something that would make him even more adorable.

“Of course I’d still want to see you Keith. Hey, can I see your Galra form again?”


“Well I was in a panic when I saw you like that before. I want to see you like that again and like, you know, not be in the middle of freaking out?”

He hesitated for a moment but reluctantly changed his form. Keith’s eyes changed first when he blinked. It was like someone had just stuck solid yellow contacts in his eyes. His ears started to before more pointed, as a fine layer of purple fuzz slowly covered his face. It kind of looked like he had goosebumps. When Keith wasn’t snarling and all angry he really looked like an adorable cat person.

“...” He cupped Keith's face and squished his cheeks. “You are fucking adorable. So fucking fluffy.”

Keith made a weird, slightly high pitched sound and scrunched his eyebrows. “Why? Just why?”

“Dude you are ridiculously fluffy. Do you like, wash your whole body in conditioner or something?”

Lance continued to squish his cheeks and rub his thumbs along his cheek bones. “Man, not even my hair is this soft and I take have a whole hair care routine.”

“If you don’t move your hands away this second I will punch you in the sternum so fucking hard my fist will hit your spine.”

“... You’re no fun.” Lance stopped squishing his cheeks, but continued rubbing his thumbs across his cheekbones. “So... What does that yellow do anyway? Is it just for show?”

“It protects my eyes from dust and rocks and stuff.” Said Keith. He still looked annoyed by seemed to allow Lance to continue touching him that. “They also kind of help me see in the dark but that’s about it.”

“That’s really cool.”

“You think so?”

“Yeah... So all Galra pretty much look like this right?”

“Yeah?”

“You guys are so freaking cute. You’re like, super evolved cats or something. Oh my god, we’re getting invaded by cats... The videos and memes were Galra propaganda.”

“... The fuck is a meme?”

Lance narrowed his eyes at him. “Are you sure you’re human?”

“Trust me, I’ve been tested many, many times.”

That surprised Lance. “Really they have tests for that?”

“Yeah the Galra did several, kind of invasive medical tests when I started basic training... Not very fun.”
“... Is it bad the first thing I thought was you got anal probed?”

In a flash Lance was flat on his back while Keith was standing over him, glaring. “Go back to work Lance.”

Lance groaned a little and slowly sat back up. “Aw, come on Keith. I was just teasing you. Want to do something after work today? Make up for avoiding me all week?”

“... Go back to work.” He quickly walked inside and slammed the backdoor shut. Seconds later he opened it back up and glared at him. “And I did not get anal probed.” He then slammed the door again.

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Keith was burning up. His face went impossibly red when Lance touched his face and started to stroke his fur. That felt really… It felt kind of nice. Which confused the hell out of him. He had no idea why it felt nice or made him blush. It was so awkward. Thank whatever was up there that his fur stopped people from seeing him blush. He was also very thankful Lance wouldn’t see his where he was looking when he went all Galra.

He kept looking at Lance’s lips when he was talking. He talked way too much. That stupid guy just kept rambling on and on with a smile. Like nothing ever happened… Then he had to ruin it by asking if he got anal probed. What an asshole.

He grumbled a little as he rubbed his hands over his face, quickly losing his Galra form. He could still feel the heat of his blush plastered across his face.

“Hey Keith, is everything okay?” Asked Shiro as he looked into the backroom. “I thought I heard Lance?”

“... He um. He was just here for a bit.”

Shiro had this knowing look on his face.

“What?”

“I didn’t say anything.”

“I know you were going to say something. I know that look.”

Shiro just laughed and shook his head. “Whatever you say Keith… So what did Lance want?”

“He just wanted to see my Galra form and ask a bunch of dumb questions.” He muttered. “And we’re apparently going somewhere when he’s finished work… I don’t know.”

“So a date?”

Keith’s face went bright red. “W-what? No! It’s not a date! He like… we…” He groaned in frustration. “I hardly remember what human courtship rituals are these days… I only know flowers because flower shop.”

Shiro couldn’t help but chuckle and leaned against the door frame. “Well flowers are one thing. What do Galra do?”

“... Romance by combat.”
“And that is?”

“One Galra confesses to the other other Galra and if there are mutual feelings we will generally fight till one yields.” Said Keith. “Most Galra are generally evenly matched in those fights since Galra don’t tend to romance people they don’t think they can take in a fight.”

“... Please don’t fight Lance. Pretty sure you will kill him.”

Keith’s face continued to burn. “I’m not going to fight him! Firstly, I do not like him. Secondly, I know I would kick his ass, I could probably snap his neck and shatter his skull if I kicked him in the head… And thirdly, I don’t fight people that don’t piss me off.”

“... And you tried this romance by combat before?”

“Well no, but any of the Galra that I kind of liked could literally rip my spine out through my throat.”

Shiro shook his head and patted Keith’s shoulder. “Try human courting rituals instead. Less likely to become dead that way.”

“But I don’t like him like that!”

“If you say so Keith.” The bell at the front door rang and Shiro carefully pushed Keith out to the front. “Well, we have a while before the store closes. Hop to it.”

Keith grumbled a little and reluctantly went to help the old lady that had just walked in. Her order was simple enough and after here there were only five or six more people that came in. One woman came in with her daughter and she went over to pat Cosmo. Which meant Keith would just hover close by to make sure Cosmo was fine. Needless to say he was.

Time eventually passed and Keith ended up waiting outside for Lance. Shiro had taken Cosmo for a walk this time. He still remembered how confused but excited the pup was to go on an adventure with Shiro instead of Keith. He didn’t know if he should feel happy or kind of jealous over Cosmo’s excitement.

He watched Coran and Allura closing up the cafe and leaving. He then saw Pidge leave the shop followed by Hunk shortly after. After about five minutes Lance walked out and grinned at him.

“Oh hey. I thought I’d have to bang on the door till Cosmo poofed me up.”

“... Cosmo doesn’t poof.” Said Keith. “He’s a Cosmic wolf. He teleports.”


“Um okay? Where are we going?”

“This awesome Malaysian place. It’s in this shopping center and the food is really good. Oh, by the way we are getting the deep fried chicken skins. I have no idea what that stuff is marinated in but it’s super addicting. Especially when with that sweet chilli sauce. It’s to die for. Every had Malaysian food before?”

“I don’t think so… Kind of just ate what I could, you know?”

Lance nodded and got into his car. “What kind of food is Galra food anyway?”

Just asking that question made Keith internally cringe. “Best way to describe it? Food goo.”
“... Food goo?”

“Food goo.” He shuddered at the memory. “It’s this cheap, easy to manufacture, green gunk. It has the consistency of really thick custard. It was really high in protein and had all the other things in it I needed to live. It tasted weird but I wasn’t going to die from it. My food goo was always a brighter green than everyone else’s. Apparently it was a modified blend since I’m half human.”

“Huh… Did they have that when you with the Blade too?”

“Yeah. They stole shit from the Galra all the time so they had a lot of food goo.”

“... Is that why you eat like Cosmo?”

“What?”

“You eat like someone’s going to snatch your food away and it gets all over your face.”

Keith blushed and glared out the window. “I was just eating…”

“Mullet, you are a messy eater.”

“... I’ve seen worse.”

“Wild animals don’t count.”

“... Shut the fuck up Lance.”

***

Keith was absolutely adorable. At least that’s what Lance thought. Even when he knocked him on his back he just had the cutest look on his face. Was it weird to be attracted to weird alien, demon, boy things that could easily kick his ass? Was this the beginning of a kink? He would not be opposed to it if it were the case.

They got to the place and ordered their food. Keith honestly had no idea what he ordered. He just pointed at something on the menu. The menus there were full of pictures to Lance just assumed he got something he thought looked good. Which was fair. The first time he went there he just let Hunk order for him since he trusted his friend’s taste.

“So…” Started Lance.

“Yeah?”

“Tell me about yourself Keith. I don’t think I know enough about you. Mr mystery.”

“... There’s not much to say. You already know my brief history. anyway.”

“Hmm, tell me about your first crush? I’m guessing it was Galra. Totally Galra.”

Keith went red. “Well yeah… I mean, I liked being around them more than other humans… So yeah my first crush was one of them… But they were already with someone and I am pretty sure their partner would have murdered me.” He sighed a little. “As a half-breed I was instantly seen as untouchable when it came to matters of romance, and yeah I get it. They think the whole pupil and iris thing is gross… And having skin that’s only covered in certain places by hair… Let’s just say according to Galra beauty standards I look like someone who’s had most of their face eaten away by face cancer.”
“... Well that’s a thing.” Lance didn’t really know what to think about Galra beauty standards. Even on earth there were a lot of variation between different human cultures. “So you’ve never been on a date with any Galra?”

Keith was slowly sinking back into his chair while avoiding eye contact with Lance. “I’m not attractive to them. I’m just some weird half-breed. I’m sure if I wasn’t useful to them I’d be thrown away.”

“You know, Galra might not like you, but you’re really attractive for a human.”

“You think so?”

“Well yeah. You got good skin, nice eyes and like...” Lance quickly shut himself up. Bi or not he wasn’t that confident about talking to other guys about how attractive they were. “Look, you look good. You’re a handsome guy. Don’t sweat that romance stuff. You’ll find someone in no time.”

Their food arrived and they ate. Keith really seemed to like it if his silence while eating meant anything. However he seemed to be trying hard to not be as messy when he ate. It was kind of adorable really. After every few mouthfuls he would pause and wipe around his mouth to make sure he didn’t have any bits of stray noodle or fish stuck to him. It made Lance smile a little on the inside. He was adorable.

Keith glanced up and his eyes locked with Lance. “... Do I have something on my face?”

“No?”

“Then why are you staring at me?”

“Hmmmmm, no reason. You look like you’re enjoying yourself.”

“... It’s good food?”

“Well yeah I know. I was just saying that um... I’m glad you’re having a good time.”

“Oh. Okay... Are you also having a good time?”

“Heck yeah. Why wouldn’t I be? Good food, good company. What more could a guy want?”

Keith looked down at his food and frowned a little. “You consider me good company?”

“Yeah?”

“... Okay.”

“Did I say something wrong?”

“No... I am just not usually called good company. That’s all.”

“Well you are.” Lance pushed some rice around on his plate. “... You got any place you need to be after this? I can drop you off anywhere I just have a few things I need to grab from the grocery store before I head home. Just a few cans of stuff. Nothing fancy.”

Keith shook his head. “I have nowhere to be.”

“Cool.”
Blue

Chapter Summary

jfc, I need to get me some insomnia medication or something. Blah. Oh well. Bippity boppity bo, just means a new chapter for you. Kudos and comment when you can. Enjoy :D

Keith was kind of confused by the things Lance bought from the store after dinner. He had just bought several cans of something and then they hopped back into his car and headed somewhere. It was a different direction than he was used to. It wasn’t towards going towards Paladin’s Perfection.

“... Where are we going Lance?”

“Oh, I just needed to get these back to my place. I’m on a bit of a time crunch here. But I’ll drop you home right after I’m done. Okay?”

“Okay…”

They traveled to Lance’s apartment complex and he followed the other man into his place. Lance’s apartment was small but decorated with a bunch of photos of his friends and family. The whole place had a very relaxed homey feel to it. It was nice and welcoming.

He watched as Lance went to the kitchen with his cans, grabbed one, emptied it out onto a plate, and stuck it on the balcony outside. Keith had no idea what he was doing till a very pretty siamese cat appeared and ate the food.

Lance grinned, gave the cat a few pats, and picked them up. The cat had a nice black and white pattern and two stunning eyes. One eye was bright blue and the other one had no pupil and looked like it contained an entire galaxy. Around their neck was a bright blue collar with a bell.

“Cat.”

“Yep. Cat.” Lance walked over to Keith and showed him the cat. “This is Blue. She’s my neighbours cat. Her owner is a little old so I help her out a bit when she thinks she’ll be late getting home.” He laughed a little and winked at him. “Apparently bingo nights can get pretty rowdy.”

“Oh… What’s with her eyes?”

“She’s blind in one eye.” Lance held her like a baby and grinned at her. Blue started purring happily.

“She’s such a good girl. Want to pat her?”

“...” Keith cautiously extended his hand out to Blue. She sniffed his hand a few times before shoving her face into his hand and purring loudly. “Oh! She likes me?!”

“Of course she does. Blue is a good girl and knows good people.” He smiled at Keith. “You must be a really good person.”

Keith could feel his cheeks heating up. “I’m really not…”
“Well you are. Blue has spoken.” He put the cat on the ground and she wandered back outside to finish her food. “So… Want a drink or something? What do Galra drink anyway? Is water okay?”

“Yeah. I can ingest pretty much everything a normal human can. Water is fine.”

“Okay.” Lance went to the kitchen and started moving stuff around so Keith continued to look around the place.

He saw the games console by the TV. Even he knew it was super old. Game cartridges were so old school and one of them was stuffed into it. It looked like it was something called Metroid. There were a bunch of other games scattered around it and Keith crouched down to have a look; Kirby, Mario, Ice Climber, Castlevania, and Yoshi. He did not know if this collection was impressive or not.

“You want to play something?” Asked Lance as he walked over to him and handed him a cup of water.

Keith took the cup from him. “Um, not thanks. Just seeing what you had. It looks interesting.”

“Well you can come over any time and we can play something. Pidge sometimes drops by and we take turns playing some of the harder games. Every time one of us dies we trade controllers. Boss battles are a bitch… Hey can you go Galra again? I wanna see how Blue reacts.” He quickly ran over to grab Blue.

Keith was a little worried that Lance would start squishing his cheeks again, but he did it anyway while Lance got Blue. He walked over with her and the cat looked very shook when she saw him.

“Mrow?”

“It’s just me Blue…” He once again reached out to her and let her sniff him. She sniffed him, gave him a weird look for a few moments before she slammed her face into his hand and purred as loud as she could.

Lance laughed and handed Blue over to Keith. He struggled a little to balance the cat and his cup of water. Blue immediately started rubbing her face all over his neck while purring happily. “Aw, she really, really loves you.” He cooed.

“I um… I guess?” Keith sat on the couch and just looked at the cat. “Thank you for liking me?” Blue purred loudly and rubbed her face against his for a bit before she jumped off him and ran out onto the balcony.

“Not a cat person?”

“Animals either like me or they don’t… And when they don’t like me that bite and scratch.”

“Ah, fair enough.” He sat down next to Keith and smiled at him. Keith awkwardly smiled back. “… So like I just noticed your teeth are sharp. Kind of like Blue’s teeth.”

“Oh?”

“Do your teeth hurt too? Like when you change?”

“... I never really noticed.”

“Yeah, it’s really cool.” Lance reached out and gently touched his face again. Keith could feel his face instantly burn at his touch. Was this normal? Was he really that touch starved? “... You know,
you look pretty attractive when you’re all Galra and stuff too. I find it hard to believe that you couldn’t get a date.”

Keith’s throat instantly went dry and he attempted to drink some water without chugging it. “O-oh? You think so?”

“Yeah. And seriously how the fuck is your fur this soft? What conditioner do you use?”

“I-I don’t… I should probably head back to Shiro’s now.”

“Oh okay. Let’s get going.” Lance got up and headed to the door.

Keith took a few deep breaths and calmed himself down enough to change back. Once he was calm he followed Lance and got into his car. He was hoping that his blush was gone by now. If it wasn’t he’d probably die of embarrassment.

When they got back Lance said goodbye and Keith went back inside. Once he was inside he was tackled by Cosmo. “Ow, hey boy. You miss me? Yeah, I know I smell like a cat.”

“Why do you smell like a cat?” Asked Shiro.

“Lance looks after his neighbours cat when she plays bingo or something.” Said Keith. “Blue really likes me apparently.”

“Well that’s good. Glad your date went well.”

“It wasn’t a date!”

“Sure it wasn’t.” Keith pouted and sat next to Shiro on the couch. He looked down at Shrio’s hands for a moment then up at Shiro, and then back at his hands. This quickly caught his attention pretty quickly. He raised an eyebrow at him. “Do you need something?”

Keith picked up his hands and put them against his face. “Hmmm…”

“And you are doing this because?”

“Just checking something.”

“... You know, you haven’t let me do this since you were younger.”

“Yeah, well I grew out of it.” Shiro touching his face didn’t make his face feel hot. Not like when it was Lance. He moved Shrio’s hands away and relaxed back into the couch. He must be getting sick or something. He put his hands on his own face and squished his own cheeks a few times. His face wasn’t warm when he touched it. He was probably sick or something, or like Lance was using something on his hands that he was allergic to.

“Has Lance been touching your face?”

“Yeah, a couple of times. Why?”

Shiro grinned. “Has he found out how to make you purr yet?”

That made Keith blush like mad. “No!” That had been an accident anyway when they both found out about it. Keith, while in Galra form, had someone ended up getting cake batter all over his face. While Shiro was helping Keith clean it off his face he ended up brushing his fingers over a small patch of fur behind his ear. When that happened Keith immediately closed his eyes and purred. It
was super embarrassing.

The older male just laughed at Keith’s embarrassment and shook his head. “If he keeps touching your face he’ll find out you know that right?”

Keith grumbled and pulled his knees up to his chest. “Yeah yeah… I think I’m allergic to whatever he uses on his skin anyway."

“Why would you say that?"

“My face gets all hot and weird when he touches me.” Keith frowned a little and rubbed his cheeks some more. “He looks like the kind of guy that does all that skin care stuff. I’m probably allergic to something he uses.”

“... Whatever you say Keith. Whatever you say.”

***

Lance got home relatively quickly and was happy to see that Blue was waiting for him out on the balcony. He grinned and let her back in. “Aw, hello Blue. You miss me girl?”

“Meow.” She walked in and rubbed her face against his legs a few times before she happily walked over to the couch and plopped down on one of the couch cushions. He sighed a little and sat next to her before pulling her onto his lap. Blue looked up at him and did a few slow blinks. He slow blinked back at her and she purred loudly. She honestly sounded like a tiny chainsaw.

Lance chuckled a little and patted her a few times and sighed. “... Keith’s fur is softer… And prettier… You think he has a short stubby tail or something? Like some dogs or like when you need to cut off a cat’s tail because it gets really fucked up and damaged? He’d look cute with a stubby tail.”

Blue just looked up at him and attempted to reach up and swat his face. She made a bunch of happy cat noises and wiggles her little toe beans at him. Lance chuckled and gave them a few squishes.

“Maybe he has more cat things going on too?” He mused. “It would be cute if he had toe beans like you… What if he’s like a boy cat and has those weird barbs on his…” Lance’s face went bright red and he refused to finish that thought about Keith’s body. But once his mind went there he had to ask himself another question. “Am I a furry?”

“MEOW!” Blue dug her claws into his leg while throwing her weight against him. Lance cringed and quickly started patting her. When Blue demanded attention she fucking meant it.

“Ow, sorry Blue… You need to get your nails trimmed.” He scratched under her chin and relaxed a little when she slowly melted into a fuzzy cat puddle on his lap. “Are you mad I was talking about Keith and not you?”

The cat just stretched out and took up as much space on his lap as possible. Then she started to purr like a chainsaw again. Lance heard a few sounds coming from nextdoor. His neighbour was back. Reluctantly he took Blue back out to the balcony and watched her happily trot back to her apartment and slink in through the small open window.

He smiled a little and leaned against the railing. He looked out across the town and sighed. Was there really a secret war going on? Would the world as he knew it really be over in a few hundred years? He didn’t want that, but what could he do? He was just some random human and even Keith didn’t seem too worried about it.
Speaking of Keith, he could probably be gone tomorrow if that whole thing about Blade of Marmora was true. But then again Keith could have been lying. But he had no reason to lie. But he had no reason not to tell the truth either. Maybe there was no war, but maybe there was?

It was confusing and gave Lance a stress headache when he thought about it for too long. He couldn’t really comprehend what was going on around him on a large scale. He was having a hard enough time trying to think about what he was going to do next month, let alone a few hundred years.

He kind of hoped that the Blade didn’t come back for Keith. He was really cute and he didn’t want Keith to go off and get hurt again. He could die. It sounded really dangerous, and violent, and Keith… He was too cute to get hurt. Though that weird purple kitten has some claws on him. Slicing up a bunch of those Galra troop things… Nah, he was still cute. A cute purple murder kitten…

He laughed a little and let out a sad sigh. Yeah. Whatever he was thinking he should just stop. No real point in entertaining feelings where he knew there were none. Maybe he should focus more of his efforts on Allura? She was still beautiful and he really liked her. Plus there wasn’t a chance she would turn into a fluffy purple cat lady. If he wanted cat ladies he could ask Pidge for some anime. She had some weird kinky shit.

Lance pulled himself away from the balcony and flopped onto his bed. This was confusing and painful to think about. He needed to stop thinking about Keith, even though he was super cute, and start thinking of Allura. Stop thinking about the unobtainable and think more realistically. If he could talk to Hunk and Pidge about it they could probably think something. They were way smarter than him.

Pidge was brilliant. She could probably make some kind of quintessence tracking device. She made a working geiger counter during her first year in high school for crying out loud. She would rattle off some crazy smart words while tinkering with her machines and then boom. She could solve the problem.

Hunk was always so logical and reasonable. If they needed to formulate a plan then he would be the kind of guy that would triple check it to make sure that everything would go as safely as possible. Everything he did always went off without a hitch. When he and Pidge put their minds together there was nothing they couldn’t fix.

Even Coran and Allura could help Keith out if they talked about this Galra stuff. Coran used to be in some branch of the military, or all. He never had a clue. Allura was always calm and diplomatic. She’d probably be able to find a peaceful solution to any situation.

Then there was Shiro. He was practically Keith’s big brother. Keith could confide in him about anything. He was also a vet. He’d seen war and stuff. They could probably bong over training at the gym and stuff and help Keith with pretty much anything he needed. He was perfect moral support for him.

And he… Lance could… He could just smile and look pretty. What else was he useful for anyway? He was never the smartest guy, and if he was honest he didn’t feel like he was the best at tattooing either. Hell, not even top three in his own workplace, and only three people worked there. He wasn’t useless. He wasn’t. He just… He just happened to find out Keith’s secret by accident and he had to explain himself to stop Lance from panic shooting him in the chest.

Be grumbled a little and pulled the covers over his head. Angry thoughts started entering his mind. He probably shouldn’t have gushed over how cute Keith was. He’d just made him uncomfortable. Why did he touch his face? That was fucking stupid. He was fucking stupid. Just some stupid Cuban
boy that didn’t really know anything. Keith was probably annoyed by him and hated him. He was probably just talking to him because Shiro told him it was more human. More normal.

He knew he was annoying. He just wished that Keith would say it to his face. Maybe he should have just let Keith continue to ignore him.

***

Pidge and Hunk were getting concerned about Lance. Sure he was smiling and acting all happy. Hell, he was perfectly charming with any clients he had. But they both knew something was up. If he wasn’t talking to a client he was hardly talking at all. They had seen him like that a few times. Mostly when he had bad breakups. Sure he had been down for a few days, but this was the worst.

While Hunk had some down time he slipped into Pidge’s room. “Hey Pidge, is now a bad time?”

She had a mouthful of sandwich and shook head. “Nope. What up?”

Hunk shushed her and kept his voice down. “Hey, we need to talk about Lance… Was he seeing someone?”

“Not that I know of. Why?”

He gave her a look that was just asking her if she was stupid or something. “Um, have you seen him? He attempted to do payroll this morning, didn’t actually save it, and when I double checked it he forgot to include Monday’s pay, and two of the walkin’s.”

“… Shit man. Did you fix it?”

“Obviously. But seriously, what has got him into this kind of depression? Should I bring in some sugar cookies?”

Pidge shrugged. “Maybe… Hey, do you think he finally confessed to Allura and she rejected him?”

Hunk had a horrified look on his face. “Oh boy… He’s been pining over her for ages. If she turned him down then… Okay, what do we do? What did we do last time? What can we do that’s better than last time?”

“Circus followed by pizza night and several tubs of Ben and Jerries choc fudge brownies ice cream?” She sighed. “Too bad the circus isn’t in town this time…”

“Ah… Yeah…”

Pidge sighed a little and finished her food. “Well, I’m gonna go and talk to Allura to check and see if she did smash his heart and make him all depressed.”

“… You sure that’s a good idea?”

“Yep. If they have any pumpkin soup I’ll grab some for you.”

“You’re the best Pidge.”

She smiled and walked out to the front. Lance was leaning over the counter and blankly staring out into space with a completely unfocused look. “You want a drink or something?”

He didn’t even look at her. “Hmm?”
“Heading next door. Want a drink? Coffee, chiller, juice?”

“Nah, I’m good.”

“Okay.” Pidge headed next door. Thankfully it was relatively empty with Allura manning the coffee machine while Coran was working the sandwich press.

When she saw the smaller girl, Allura’s eyes lit up. “Afternoon Pidge. What do we owe the pleasure? Would you like your usual or are you picking something up for the boys?”

She shook her head. “Nah, I’m good… Have you spoken to Lance lately?”

She looked a little confused. “Lance? Well in the morning when I dropped off your coffee order but apart from that… You know he did seem kind of odd this morning. Did something happen to him?”

Pidge frowned and thought for a bit. Maybe Allura wasn’t the cause of Lance’s sudden depression? Then again maybe he was trying to be all sly and slick but his attempt to ask her out failed and he took that as complete rejection. That could have been possible. Lance was kind of an idiot.

“Oh? Did he ask you something? Maybe to go somewhere with him or something?”

“… I don’t believe so? We’ve mainly talked about weather, animals, coffee, and all that kind of stuff.” She leaned over the counter and smiled at Pidge. “Does Lance like me or something?”

“Um… Well he did say something about asking you and junk.” Muttered Pidge. “I was pretty sure he was just joking around stuff but like… It’s hard to tell with him sometimes. Just like um… So I guess it’s something else that’s got him down.”

“Well if Lance is upset I guess Coran and I can help out a little.” She walked over to the cake display and frowned. “Coran, where are the violets?”

“I called Shiro earlier. We should be getting some fresh ones any time- Oh there’s Keith. Hi there Keith.” The moustached man happily smiled and waved at him.

Keith blushed a little and kept his head down low. He was carrying a small box with violets and elder flowers. “Shiro told me to run these down…” He put them by the cash register and Allura happy handed Keith some money.

“Thank you so much Keith. Now I can get this dessert done.” Allura quickly placed a slice of cake in a box and decorated it with fresh violets. “Here Pidge. Give this to Lance when you get back. I made the cake myself today. If my chocolate violet cake doesn’t make him feel a little better than we’ll have to think of something else.”

Keith frowned a little. “Something’s wrong with Lance?”

Pidge nodded. “Yeah. He gets like this sometimes. By the way Allura can I get some pumpkin soup to go?” She looked back up at Keith. “Once in a while Lance gets like super depressed. Not like, gonna throw himself in front of a train kind of depressed, but more like questioning his self-worth kind of thing. Usually happens when he gets dumped by a girl he was really, really into… Has he mentioned a girlfriend to you?”

“Not that I know of…” Keith kind of looked a little awkward.

Allura handed Pidge a plastic tub with pumpkin soup. “There you go. Soup and cake.”
“Thanks. See you later.” Pidge looked at the soup and the cake box, then looked at Keith. “Yo, can you like, help me carry this? I need two hands for the soup and the front door is a pull door.”

“Ah, okay?”

Pidge grabbed the soup container and left Keith with the cake. He opened the front door for her and Pidge walked past him to get to Hunk, but as she did she notice something that didn’t happen that often when Lance was in the early stages of his depression. For a brief second when he looked at Keith his eyes lit up.

She grinned and got into her room and pretended to close the door and gestured to Hunk to keep his voice down and listen in to what was sure to be insightful. Hunk looked confused but complied.

“Hey Keith.” Said Lance. “How are you?”

“I’m good. Pidge said you were sad so… Um… Here is cake?”

“Aw, you got me some cake? Thanks mullet.”

“It wasn’t me. Pidge got it… Allura made it.”

“Huh, okay.” There was a long pause before Lance spoke up again. “Um, sorry if I made things awkward last night. I kind of do things without thinking.”

“Hey no I… I kind of do the same thing. Thanks for dinner. I can’t remember the last time someone’s taken me out to dinner before.”

“Really? Seriously man. I still can’t believe no one’s asked you out on a date before you’re-”

“Zip it Lance.” Hissed Keith. “... Look it was really nice going to dinner and um, your place was really nice too. I kind of feel like I might have cut things short?”

“What? No, no, no.” Lance sounded cheerful, but at the same time he sounded stressed. “You wanted to stop and go home. No big deal I should have known you would have found it uncomfortable.”

“It’s fine I just… I’m not used to people touching me as um… As intimately as that…”

Hunk and Pidge stared at each other in complete shock. Lance wasn’t sad because of Allura. He was sad because of Keith. Pidge made some wild hand gestures at Hunk that roughly translated to her expressing her opinion that they were both going to fuck but things went awkward and they bailed. Hunk shook his head and tried to make hand gestures to express his confusion and ask when they even started going out in the first place.

“Sorry. I should have realized from that shocked expression on your face when I touched… Anyway, I won’t do it again. Sorry. I should have known that was like a bad touch kind of thing with you.”

“... I didn’t say I didn’t like it.”

“Oh?”

“Yeah.”

“... Can I touch you again?”
“I guess…”

“Like now?”

“… Enjoy your cake Lance. I’m out of here.”

“Wait Keith I was joking!” He whined. “Come back… And he’s gone… Yo, Pidge? Hunk? Where you two at?”

Pidge flailed a little and stuck her head out of the room putting on a bitchy expression. “Dude, I was trying to show Hunk this cool cake decorating video. What do you want?”

Lance rolled his eyes and smiled at her. “Nothing. Just wondering why you two were so quiet.”

“Cake video. Japanese cake video.”

“Oooo, the fancy shit.”

“Yep. Call us if a client walks in… Eat your cake.”

“Sir yes sir.” Lance seemed a lot happier now.

Pidge nodded and slowly closed the door. Once the door was closed she made some wild freaking out gestures about the fact that Lance and Keith are apparently in a secret relationship. This was freaking huge. Why would Lance hide this? They both knew he was bi. Was Keith experimenting with him or something? What was going on?
Feelings Suck

Chapter Notes

Feelings do suck. Kudos and comment when you can. Enjoy :D

Lance was still depressed. He couldn’t help it. He knew he was useless. Just plain useless. He knew he just had to wait it out. That’s what he had done every other time he felt like this. He just needed to get over himself. Just because he was terrible at everything didn’t mean that he couldn’t at least try his best. Still, it didn’t stop him from just going straight home to sleep each night.

He still felt like crap even when Allura came over to drop off the morning coffee. “Morning Lance. You feeling okay today?”

“Hmmm? Yeah I’m fine. Just in a bit of a funk you know? I’ll be fine in a few days.”

“I see… Well I was wondering if you would like to maybe come with me when I go shopping tomorrow?”

Lance’s melancholy was almost immediately replaced with surprise. “Huh?”

Allura smiled at him. “We just don’t really talk that much and there is this shop that recently opened up that I just haven’t had much of a chance to have a look at myself, even though I really want to. I would appreciate it if you could come with me?”

He couldn’t help but smile. “Escort the princess? Of course. Shall we meet the food court?”

She nodded. “Sounds perfect. I’ll be waiting in front of Vrepi’s diner. Oh and just to be clear Lance, this is just to hang out. Not a date. Okay?”

“Yeah, that’s fine.” Okay that stung a little, but hanging out with Allura was a good start. He couldn’t believe he actually managed to get a friend date with her. He was ecstatic. “See you there Princess.”

***

When Allura walked into the flower shop she was kind of surprised to see Keith sitting on the stairs leading upstairs looking all angry and moody. Cosmo was leaning against his legs and thumping his tail against the ground. Shiro was standing behind the counter looking tired. Though he did smile at her.

“Hey Allura. How has your morning been?”

“It’s been well.” She looked over at Keith. “Um… Is something wrong with Keith.”

Shiro nodded. “Relationship troubles. Keith is socially awkward and from what we’ve talked about he’d rather confess his feelings with his fists than you know, talking?”

“Ah, I see…” Allura felt bad for Keith. She had always been a sucker for romance. Hence one of the reasons she asked Lance out. She didn’t know him too well, but he was a nice, funny guy and she
would love getting closer to him. “Is he receptive to relationship advice right now or?”

“Most times when I try to give him advice he bites me.”

“Isn’t that kind of childish?”

“Well he never grew out of his toddler stage apparently.”

Keith stood up and stormed into the backroom. “You want to gossip about me being a fucking idiot go right ahead. Just don’t fucking talk about me like I’m not in the same fucking room as you like I’m not even there!” He slammed the door shut behind him. Cosmo gave the door a confused look and pawed at the door a few times and whined.

Shiro sighed and shook his head. “Don’t feel bad Allura. Keith just gets like this sometimes. He gets frustrated way too quickly.”

“Yes… but seriously, what relationship drama is happening with Keith?”

Shiro shrugged. “He’s been acting weird and he talked about some romance based stuff and now he’s angry with me and with everyone because I tried to help him. He’s good with logical stuff but emotional stuff isn’t his thing.”

“… Perhaps he needs a woman’s touch?” Suggested Allura. “I’d be happy to help him with some pointers to help him win his maiden’s heart.”

“Oh, well Keith isn’t interested in girls…”

Allura looked surprised for a moment. “Oh! Well I’m sure my advice can probably transcend genders. Would you mind if I talked to him for a bit?”

He seemed a little hesitant, but gestured towards the backdoor. “By all means.”

She smiled and walked into the backroom. Keith was all huddled up in the corner. He was wedged between the wall and several stacks of paper. He looked extremely distressed and miserable. She hadn’t seen someone act like this that wasn’t under the age of ten before.

“Keith?”

He looked up at her and glared. “What do you want Allura?”

“… You have quite a lot of anger don’t you?”

Keith huffed and started glaring at the ground. “I have anger issues. I know that. I just… When I don’t understand something I get frustrated. When I get frustrated I get angry. When I get angry I want to fight. But I can’t fucking fight anyone around here without getting arrested for assault and I just…” Keith let out a sound akin to a frustrated growl as he raked his fingers across his scalp. “Ow!” He pulled back and the two of them flinched when they saw the nail of Keith’s middle finger lift. “And I fucking up my nail… Today just keeps getting better and better.”

Allura sighed a little and took a band aid out of her pocket and fixed up his hand. “Look, I get it. Kind of. Shiro mentioned how you were orphaned and had a rough childhood. It’s only natural to lash out and get aggressive when terrible things happen to the people you love…”

“… Who did you lose?” Keith didn’t seem comfortable. He kind of looked angry and kind of ready to snap at her.
She just smiled. “My whole family.”

“Oh?”

“Yeah… It um… it was a house fire. Terrible business really.” Allura sighed sadly. “Keith, the anger you’re feeling is normal but there are ways to work out your aggression… Anyway, what are you so frustrated about that it’s making you mad?”

“…” Keith mumbled to himself.

“Pardon? I didn’t catch that.”

“… There’s this guy and he… He touched my face and everything just heated up and it doesn’t when other people do it.” He sighed a little. He seemed to become less angry and more depressed the more he talked. “I don’t understand why he makes me feel that way. It pisses me off and makes me want to punch him in his stupid face… but not really. I don’t understand what I need to do… And that just pisses me off even more!” He punched the wall hard. It was just painted brick so the two of them just heard the loud snapping and popping of all the bones and joints in Keith’s hand. “… FUCK!”

“… Do you need an ambulance?”

“No…” Keith cradled his hand close to his chest and slowly manipulated his fingers back into place.

“… That really seems like something you should see a doctor about.”

“It’s okay Allura. I’m used to it. A few fucked up fingers is nothing to me…”

“…”

“… You should just go. I’ll get over it eventually. I’m just a violent fuck up.”

“Well… If you are serious about this person, ask him out. It’s scary, but what’s the worst thing that can happen? He says no? He’s already seeing someone? He’s not gay?”

“Some people are pretty violent to people like me.”

“Well if he gets violent then you can get violent. But only so you can run away. Got it?”

“What are you? My mum?”

Allura chuckled a little and smiled warmly at him. “Well we are around the same age. I’d rather be a big sister. Anyway. You just have to calm yourself, be yourself and just talk to this person that is making you feel the way you do. It’s quite obvious you have feelings for them.”

Keith cursed under his breath as he popped his thumb back into place. “Why does everyone keep saying I like that guy… He’s just some asshole that makes my face blush and… And he just makes me feel weird when we’re together.” He sighed heavily. “It makes me feel weird when we’re together… and I… I don’t know if I like it or not and I don’t know how to date hu-people… I wouldn’t know what to do so he’ll hate me when I mess it up.”

“Oh Keith… I’m sure you will do okay. You just need a little confidence. That’s all. Things will be fine. You can do it… And I can guarantee that you will feel better talking to him than punching a wall.”

“I guess…”
“Well, I need to get going. Coran’s probably wondering where I am. Good luck with your feelings. Stop abusing brick walls.” She gently patted his back and went back to Shiro to inform him about Keith possibly needing medical attention.

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Keith’s hand fucking hurt. It hurt like a fucking bitch. He didn’t know why his stupid feelings were just spiraling out of control today. Maybe because he didn’t get enough sleep? Probably. He’d stayed up all night with his face pressed into Cosmo’s fur. He had tried to replicate the same feeling of warmth on his face that Lance gave him, but nothing was working. It was pissing him off so much.

In fact, everything about Lance was pissing him off now. He just wanted to walk up to him and clock him right in the jaw. He wanted fight Lance. Really badly. He wanted to punch him and kick him to the ground, but he wanted Lance to do the same to him. He wanted Lance to surprise him with some untapped strength and throw him into a wall or something.

It was around three in the morning when Keith realized that he had a crush on Lance and wanted to do romance by combat with him. Something he knew he couldn’t do that because he would kill him. Well if he couldn’t do that he was happy enough to go straight to denial and just do what came naturally to him.

He then spent the next two hours replaying every moment in his mind where he had been explicitly told he was a terrible, horrible, ugly, shitty person. That just made him angrier and angrier. This thought process was meant to make him accept the fact he didn’t deserve anything. But it just made him want to punch Lance more.

Shiro bringing up how frustrated he looked didn’t help either. He snapped at him and was seething for the rest of the day. He was still kind of mad at Shiro too since he sent Allura to talk to him. She was too nice for him to get mad at. She was just trying to help him.

He stayed in the backroom for a few more hours before he decided to just suck it up. Humans just asked people out on dates. So why not just try that? Like Allura said, what’s the worst that could happen? He already knew Lance was bi, so if he said he wasn’t interested at least he would know it wasn’t because he was grossed out by his sexuality… Maybe. Bi people could be homophobic too right?

He just sighed and walked through the flower shop but Shiro stopped him. “And where do you think you’re going?”

“... I’m going to talk to Lance.” He muttered. “I um… I guess I like him or something?”

“You’re not going to challenge him to the romance combat thing?”

“No… I’m going to try the human thing. You know, asking out and stuff.”

Shiro smiled. “Oh good. I’m proud of you Keith. Let me know how it goes. You can do it.”

Keith rolled his eyes a little and walked over to the tattoo shop. When he looked into the store window he saw Pidge spinning around like crazy on a chair while Lance pushed her along with a broom and Hunk was trying to stop them. Those guys were weird.

He walked inside and in on their conversation.

Pidge was groaning. “I think I’m gonna barf… Why am I doing this again?”
“Because I can’t get sick today and Hunk’s just a little too heavy to push with broom.”

Hunk managed to grab Pidge and stopped her from spinning. “Whoa, got ya buddy. Take a few breaths.” He smiled a little at Lance. “You’re just excited to be going out with Allura tomorrow.”

“Hell yeah I’m excited! I’ve wanted some one on one time with that chika for months. The princess is so sophisticated and cute.” Lance sighed a little then frowned. “Shit she probably likes eating at fancy places. I hope I have enough for a decent cafe... What if she wants to eat something like lobster? I don’t have lobster money!”

Going out with Allura? Lance was going out with her? Oh, of course he was. They had to admit that they did look good together. Allura was beautiful and Lance was handsome. He couldn’t even be mad at them. None of them knew Keith’s feelings. He’d only just figured them out today. But he was still fucking mad. So fucking mad. This was just normal. This was how it was meant to be. Everything he likes or tries to have some kind of connection with doesn’t want him in return. He wanted to punch Lance in his stupid face. He wanted to scratch his eyes out. Crack his ribs. Break his legs. Anything.

Instead he just smiled, though he knew it looked forced. “Oh? You are Allura are going out?”

Lance looked over at him and grinned. “Oh hey Keith. Didn’t hear you come in. Yeah, Allura and I have thing tomorrow. Awesome huh?”

“Yeah… Awesome… I am very… happy for you.”

The tanned boy frowned a little. “Really? You don’t sound too happy.”

“Well I am.” Keith was quickly becoming annoyed again. “Well I should go.”

“But you just got here? Didn’t you need something?”

“No. Fuck off Lance.” Keith stormed out of the shop and back into the flower shop.

Shiro was a little surprised to see him back so soon. “Oh hey, what happened?”

Keith glared at him and went full Galra. “HISSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSS!!!” He stormed up the stairs, pulled a blanket over his head and sulked. Today fucking sucked. Why couldn’t the Blade just pick him up already. He was tired of being surrounded by these weak people that couldn’t fight for shit. He needed to let off some steam. He needed to let off all the steam.

***

Lance was confused as fuck. He looked over at Hunk and Pidge. “What the hell crawled up his ass and died?”

Hunk shook his head. “Well, you and Keith did have a date the other night right? You went out for dinner, went back to your place and like... did things... Did you not like tell him you were going to see other people? Like you did tell him you guys weren’t exclusive, right?”

Pidge nodded in agreement. “Yeah. Kieth seems very socially awkward. Hell he probably hasn’t done that kind of thing with a lot of people. He probably assumed you guys were exclusive. No wonder he’s pissed off at you. I’d be pissed off at you too.”

“Ah, what?” Lance was even more confused. “What are you guys talking about? Yeah we went to dinner last night and stuff and we went to my place but we didn’t do anything else.”
“Cut the crap Lance.” Pidge attempted to stand, but almost ended up falling over since she was still dizzy. “Ugh… never again… Hunk and I heard you and Keith talking the other day. You were totally feeling better when he came over and handed you that cake. You two started touching each other and crap. Now Keith just feels like you don’t want him because he didn’t put out. It looks like you’re just throwing him away now that you and Allura are together.”

Lance’s confusion wasn’t lessening. “What? But… Allura are just friends. We’re hanging out as friends. If it goes further I’m happy to do it. Also, Keith and I have never... We haven’t even kissed or anything. I haven’t even seen him shirtless. Closest was when he was wearing that workout shirt for the gym. That’s all.”

“But you were talking about intimately touching him and shit!” Retorted Pidge. “So like, you know? What the fuck kind of intimate touching is there that you would classify as Bad Touch?”

“I touched his face?”

Pidge frowned and looked up at Hunk. “Yo, is face another name for penis that I don’t know about yet?”

“I meant face!” Whined Lance. “I touched his actual face. Keith has issues about people touching him and getting close to him. Calm your thirsty ass down Pidge. Keith and I haven’t had sex or anything close. I can’t even imagine what he looks like naked anyway!” Lance was still wondering if thinking sexy thoughts about Keith meant that he was a furry or not, or if it was only furry thoughts if he thought sexy thoughts about Keith when he looked like a Galra.

His friends gave Lance very skeptical looks. Hunk just shook his head. “Okay, fine. That sounds a little weird and kind of fake but whatever.”

Lance felt betrayed. “Hunk!”

He put up his hands. “Look, you gotta know how shady it sounds to us. Especially since that outburst Keith had. Like, he finds out you’re going out with Allura and he tells you to go fuck yourself? It really sounds like the reaction someone would have when they find out they are the side hoe.”

“Well… I guess?” Yeah, Keith was acting really freaking weird. Though it might have just been a Galra thing. It seemed like something it would be. Galra culture seemed to be very much about beating the shit out of your problems, but like human culture at least tried to be all about talking things out. The culture shock was probably very difficult for Kieth. “I’ll talk to him later. We still have a few hours till work’s done.”
Lance was still kind of confused by Keith’s attitude towards him, but he had to push that to the side for now. Today he was going to spend time with the princess. He waited outside of Vrepi Sal’s diner. For about ten minutes before Allura turned up. Lance felt his throat go dry when he saw her. She looked absolutely stunning. Okay, she might have just been wearing casual clothes that were different from her work clothes and her hair was out instead of tied back. But to Lance he couldn’t help but feel a little happy to see she was wearing something different. There wasn’t much of a dress code for his place. So he was always in casual anyway. But today he wore long sleeves to hide any tattoos. He wanted to at least look like potential boyfriend material.

“I’m so sorry I was late.” Said Allura. “Parking was a little difficult today, and don’t even get me started on the walk time to get over here.”

He just laughed a little and waved it off. “It’s fine Allura. I wasn’t waiting too long. So where is that shop you wanted to go to?”

“Oh, well it’s this cosmetics shop… But if you don’t want to go there I fully understand.”

Lance’s eyes lit up. “Oh, I think I know the place. I’ve been there before.”

“Really?”

“Yeah. They have some really good skin care stuff. It takes work to look this good.”

She laughed at that. “Well you seem to pull it off pretty well.” Her voice was like music to his ears, and her comment made his heart flutter in his chest.

“Well let’s get going princess.” The two of them happily walked to the cosmetic’s store. Sure enough it was one that Lance thought it was. He actually enjoyed himself quite a lot as he grabbed a few things for himself. He was almost out of moisturizer anyway.

They talked about different skin care routines and what kind of shampoo they used. It was cool to swap what things worked for them and what didn’t. He also helped her pick out some makeup for her. They laughed and joked around and Lance ended up with a bunch of sample lipstick marks on the back of his hand.

After they just walked around for a bit and went into a bunch of other shops. Lance really liked hanging around Allura. Sure she still had that huge air of sophistication around her, but it was honestly just her accent that made up the majority of it. She was still just a young adult that liked doing all the dumb young adult things.

When they started to get hungry Lance told her to pick where to eat. Much to his surprise she took
him to some small hole in the wall place. Best of all? All they did was loaded fries.

“Wow princess, how did you find this place?”

“Coran is friends with one of the chefs here and he let us know where it was.” She grinned. “I have to admit I don’t usually eat loaded fries but when I do, I always come here. It’s the best.”

“Looks like it.”

She smiled happily at him. “So how is life going Lance? You’ve been pretty down for the past few days. We were all really worried about you.”

Lance could feel himself starting to blush. “Oh? You were worried about me princess?”

“Lance we were all worried about you.” Reassured Allura. “When you’re down there is obviously something wrong. We all prefer it when Lance is smiling and having a good time. Your energy is infectious. You keep everyone around you in positive spirits.”

He was surprised to hear her say that. “Wow, Allura… Is that what you really think about me?”

She nodded. “You are a very sweet person. I’d hate to see you get so upset.”

“Aw thanks. You’re really nice Allura. You’re always doing your best to make sure us delinquents at the tattoo shop are doing alright.”

Allura smiled. “Thank you Lance. Speaking of delinquents, have you spoken to Keith recently? He’s a complete wreck.”

“Ah yeah… I managed to talk to him yesterday and he told me to fuck off…” He didn’t bother mentioning that Hunk and Pidge had assumed that he went and did inappropriate things with Keith.

She sighed a little and picked up a fry, pointing it at him. “Apparently Keith is having some romance problems. At least that’s what Shiro has told me. Do you hang out with him much?”

“Aw, you trying to play match-maker here princess?” It was sweet that she was trying to help Keith out. Allura was always too nice for her own good. “You know who Keith’s going all mushy over?”

She shrugged. “Well from what I have gathered it’s just some guy he really likes and since he’s so socially awkward about it he wants to physically assault them whenever he is around them.”

“… RIP any guy that Keith is crushing on then huh? The guy is a freaking monster. He’d deck them in a heartbeat.”

“Hmm… I guess. Why did Keith tell you to screw off anyway?”

Lance shrugged. “Who knows? He got all testy when I said I was hanging out with you today. I probably wanted me to drive him somewhere. He’ll just have to catch a bus or something.”

She looked at Lance in confusion for a few moments as she looked like she was thinking very hard about something. Her eyes suddenly lit up. “Oh! Oh, okay. I think I understand the situation a little better now…”

“Really? Care to enlighten me?”

She just smiled and shook her head. “Not at the moment Lance. I might be wrong about my assumption and things might get a little messy if I talk about them and I am wrong…”
“If you say so princess.”

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“Ninety nine, and one hundred. Twenty push ups. Go.” Said Shiro as he let the punching bag go. Keith just huffed and dropped to the ground and started to power through his third set of push ups. Shiro had closed the shop early and dragged Keith to the gym to punch out some stress. It was kind of working, but there was only so much punching a bag and doing push ups could do for him.

“Shiro… This isn’t working.”

“Come on Keith, you’re only on your third set. Two more sets and we’ll move onto the leg press.”

“Yeah, yeah…” He finished his last push up and started back on doing a hundred hook punches on the bag while Shiro held it still. After about fifty he stopped and stared at Shiro. “This is really boring, you know? It just isn’t fun if nothing’s fighting me.”

“Hand to hand combat more your thing?”

“Yeah…” He punched the bag one more time. “I want to punch a living person…”

“... Be back in a second. You take five.” Shiro quickly walked to the front desk and talked to the person behind the desk.

Keith sighed and leaned against a wall. He was still angry. He wanted to fight. He wanted to fight. He wanted to fight. He wanted to punch someone in the face. He wanted to go sword to sword with someone. He wanted there to be high stakes. He wanted there to be a real risk to his life. Not relieving this tension was driving him crazy. He hated it. Hated it. Hated it. Hated it. Hated it.

Suddenly he got hit in the face with a cotton glove. “... What?”

“Put those on.” Said Shiro. “If you don’t want your hands to smell like hundreds of people’s b.o you’ll do it.” Keith grumbled and did as Shiro told him to do, then almost got hit in the face again when he tossed a pair of boxing gloves out of the box with all the gyms boxing equipment. While he did that Shiro put a pair of boxing pads on his hands. “Okay, hit the pad.”

Keith rolled his eyes. “You really want me to hit the stupid pad? This isn’t what I want Shiro. I want an actual fight.”

“Just hit the pad.”

Without much force or effort, Keith tapped one of the pads with the glove. Immediately Shiro hit him hard in the side of the head, enough to leave Keith’s ear ringing. Keith stumbled back in shock and gave Shiro a confused look.

The older man just gave him a cocky smirk. “You want to fight something that can hit you back, right? If you’re going to be lazy I will hit you back.”

“Really now?”

“Yep.” Shiro went to hit Keith again, but the second he went to block the attack Shiro jabbed him in the stomach. “Don’t look down on me just because I didn’t have special training.”

Keith chuckled and took a boxer stance. “I’ve never looked down on you Shiro.” He did a few quick
jabs that Shiro easily blocked. “You’ve been the closest thing I’ve had to family my whole life.”

“Thanks Keith. You’ll always be like a brother to me.” He lightly jabbed Keith’s chin with he was distracted. They continued on like this for a while until they both got tired and headed home. When they got back Keith managed to get the shower first since he got Cosmo to jump on Shiro as soon as they got through the door.

The warm water was good for relieving that final bit of tension, at least for a few seconds. After a short while he could feel his anger quickly starting to grow again and he had no idea why. He was getting angry again. He hated it. He tried to remember the last time he had gotten this angry. The only time it came close was a few months after he first joined the Galra and went into basic training.

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Keith had been doing his best. He had kept up with the rest of them. Sure he received plenty of backhanded compliments from them. The most common being; “not bad for a half-breed”. It annoyed him, but there wasn’t too much he could do about it. He still wasn’t fully versed in Galra social norms and didn’t know what the appropriate response should be to any of this. So he just let it continue.

But there was this one guy that was probably a little older than him by a few years that really seemed to have it out for him. He would always bump into him in the hallways, only refer to him as half-breed, and a few times he had deliberately knocked the food goo out of Keith’s hands. That was especially annoying since the Galra were extremely strict about food portions and once you got your food goo that was it till the next designated meal time.

Eventually though Keith reached his breaking point. He had just been walking down the hallway and heading to the training room to improve his skills when that one Galra walked past him and swept Keith’s legs out from under his feet. “Wow, half-breeds are so clumsy.” That Galra and his friends laughed at that.

“Whatever.” Growled Keith as he got up and tried to walk past them. Then the Galra went and knocked him to the ground again.

“Hey! Who said you could get up?” They pressed their foot hard between Keith’s shoulder blades to make sure that he stayed pinned to the ground. “Half-breeds need to learn their place in the empire. You half-breeds need to stay with your faces to the ground. How the hell do you even think you’re even close to being one of us? You are nothing. Nothing.”

Keith wanted to rip his face off. He dug grooves into the ground with his nails and did his best to stop himself from growling. He was going to kill him. He was going to rip his fucking heart out and shove it up his ass.

But before he could carry out his plan their Drill Sergeant, an intimidating woman called Aiaphos marched up to them looking extremely pissed off. “What in the name of Zarkon do you think you’re doing you spineless Webbum sack?” All Galra, including Keith instantly stood at attention while she screamed at them. “Well? Any of you pathetic inbreeds have enough motoneurons between the lot of you to rub together to give me an answer? You!” She pointed at one of them. “Speak up or has a yupper got your tongue?”

The Galra gulped and spoke with a slight stutter. “Sergeant Aiaphos, we were just messing around. Just a bit of light hearted fun.”

“Oh, I see...” All the anger seemed to leave her face for a second and everyone relaxed, until she
started shrieking at them loud enough for other's to take pause to watch this play out. “DO YOU THINK I LEFT THE NURSERY YESTERDAY? DO YOU THINK I AM BLIND? WELL? ANSWER ME YOU SNIVELING SACK OF TAUJEERIAN SHIT!”

The Galra that they were yelling at was visibly shook. “N-no Sergeant Aihpos! I would never even think such thoughts!”

Aihpos growled at them and glared at the Galra that had knocked Keith over. “Well then this pathetic little, insignificant piece of space crud must be the one who thinks those things about me.”

They quickly shook their head. “I-I have never thought those things about you Aihpos!”

“That’s Sergeant Aihpos to you space crud. What are you?”

“Space crud ma’am.”

“Damn straight you are!” She death glared him. “Don’t you think for one damn second that I and every other superior officer hasn’t noticed your disdain for Keith. We let it slide for a few weeks because we thought you would finally stop pussy footing around the issue and challenge him to combat, but it looks like you have no quizznacking honour!”

Keith couldn’t help but smirk. There was nothing like a bully getting absolutely reamed by someone above them. That guy was probably shitting himself right now. But that was when Aihpos turned their attention to him.

“And you! You pathetic, irresponsible half-breed! Don’t you dare smirk! You are supposed to be part Galra but I see nothing but some pathetic little shit stain that’s put on a uniform and just dances around like a damned fool! Where is your fucking honour? I’m surprised we haven’t found you strung upside down in the bathroom by your toes with your guts splattered all over the damn floor! You have had months you piece of shit! Months to learn Galra ways! This is unacceptable. What excuse are you gonna stutter out at me now half-breed? What?”

Keith gulped a little, but he was still fucking furious about the way that the other Galra had been treating him and wanted to piss them off. What could be a better way to piss that bully off then by being respectful to the Sergeant? “Sergeant Aihpos, I have no excuses. I can only blame my lack of understanding Galra culture due to my uncivilized upbringing. I will gladly accept whatever punishment you think is worthy of my stupidity.”

She glared at him in silence for a solid minute before she chuckled. “You Galra could actually learn a thing or two from the half-breed. He has more Galra honour in one finger that all of you do combined.” She then crossed her arms and grinned at them. “So, you and Keith have bad blood between you two? Here is what is going to happen; you two fight it out. Keith wins you shut the quizznack up about him being a half-breed and assault him only in the training room like a real Galra. If you win, we’ll kick Keith off a cliff. Do you challenge Keith?”

Pleased about Keith’s imminent demise, the bully quickly agreed. “Of course I challenge the half-breed. Hand to hand combat it is.”


“Swords. Definitely swords.”

She nodded approvingly. “Good. Training room. Now.”
Keith beat the shit out of him in front of a group of curious onlookers who witnessed the verbal beat down they had gotten. It did start off with swords but quickly spiraled into an all out brawl. It ended with Keith getting a broken nose and a chipped tooth, while the Galra he fought ended up with a fractured skull and partial deafness in one ear.

It was amazing. Keith never felt so alive. He loved it. It was the first time he had ever fought with someone like that. It might have been all the adrenaline pumping through him, but he wanted to fight someone else. He probably would have if Aihpos didn’t call him over.

“You did well Keith. Are you feeling better now?”

“Yes ma’am. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to regain my honour… As much honour as a half-breed can gain within the Galra empire.”

She shrugged and waved him off. “Relax Keith. I didn’t do that for you. Well, not for your honour anyway. There was instability in the group due to your parentage. Half-breeds always cause this. Expect to be challenged repeatedly by other Galra soon… And learn our ways quickly.”

“Yes ma’am. I will ma’am.”

She nodded and gave him a scrutinizing look. “Keith, be honest with me. Have you been feeling more aggressive lately?”

“Yes ma’am, but I assumed that was simply because of the abuse because of him.” Keith gestured over to the Galra that was only now just getting moved away by their buddies.

She frowned at him, gave him a quick look up and down and sighed. “Quiznacking spikes… Keith, for the next three weeks you are to triple your training. If you are not sleeping, eating, or under the order of another commanding officer you are in this room. You are to accept any and all people that challenge you combat. Understood?”

“Yes ma’am, but may I ask why?”

She smirked at him. “You told me to punish you for being stupid, didn’t you? That’s your punishment. Become a better fighter. Now head to the infirmary and fix your face. You’re hard enough to look at normally without blood gushing out of it.”

Keith nodded and went to the infirmary. It felt good to be able to beat the shit out of someone who was pissing him off so much. He honestly hoped more people would challenge him so they could fight it out.

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Keith sighed a little and lightly touched his nose at the memory. He was really proud of that moment. It was the first time he had gained any honour with the Galra and he had kept earning more and more honor through combat ever since. It felt good being able to fight like that.

Suddenly there was a small flash of light and Cosmo poked his head into the shower. They barked at him. Keith let out a rather unmanly, surprised shriek and promptly vacated the bathroom as quickly as possible. Keith was slightly pissed off that Cosmo just seemed to do that because he was a little shit and not because he needed something. He had a suspicion Shiro put him up to it as revenge.

Once he was clean, Keith walked down stairs and sat on the backstep out the back of the shop. It was quiet there and he could think. He still wanted to fight. He wanted to fight Lance. Stupid Lance with his stupid face and his stupid hands that made him feel feelings. Disgusting. He’d break the
fuckers hands.

He turned his knife in his hands a few times and sighed. He wasn’t going to break Lance’s hands. That wouldn’t be right. He’d end up getting arrested and Lance wouldn’t be able to work anymore.

Speaking of Lance, the lanky man was suddenly standing over him. “Hello there Keith. What are you doing?”

Keith looked up at him and glared. “Ask another stupid question and I will shank you in the neck.”

“Whoa, still got a Galra anal probe shoved gears deep up your ass I see.” Lance just shook his head dismissively. “Seriously, what’s up with you dude?”

“What’s up with me? What’s up with you? Aren’t you meant to be on a date with Allura today?”

He shrugged. “We finished up. We had fun going out and doing stuff. I’m just here to help Pidge and Hunk with clean up and stuff today. I know it’s weird going to work on your day off but like, Hunk and Pidge are my friends, so it’s cool heading into work on our days off. Pidge does it all the time.”

“... Whatever. Just go back to your friends. I don’t want to be around you right now?”

“Why?”

“Just because.”

Lance pouted at him. “Hey, I know you probably don’t know how to human properly but humans need to talk out their problems. So talk to me.”

Keith groaned and shook his head. “I can’t talk at the moment Lance.”

“But you just did.” He said with a smug look on his face. “So let’s keep talking.”

“No fuck off I-” Keith heard something. It sounded like a bike engine. One that he was rather familiar with. “-shit. Go back into your shop right now and lock the door.”

“Huh? Why?”

“Because it.” The sound of a bike slowly roared down the alleyway. Keith knew the make and model of the motor bike. He knew the uniform of the person riding it. “-inside now. Galra shit.”

Lance looked mildly horrified and took a few hesitant steps back towards his shop. “Shit...”

Keith growled at the Galra as they got off the bike. Keith just flicked his wrist, turning his knife back into a sword. “I’ll fucking kill you.” He growled at them as he allowed himself to become full Galra.

The Galra paused and seemed to consider removing their helmet for a moment. However they decided against it. They took something that looked like the handle of a bayonet off their belt and tapped one end of it. This seemed to spontaneously generate a blade out of the other end of the handle creating a sword. Keith couldn’t help but grin as he charged at them. Finally a fight. A fight with another Galra. This was perfect. He could finally get what he wanted.
The fight was extremely quick. Faster than what Lance was used to seeing that's for sure. It was like someone had put some fancy sword fighting on fast forward with the way the two of them moved. it was inhuman. More than a few times the two of them would jump off the walls and buildings.

Lance was afraid that if he moved he might accidentally get hit and subsequently murdered. Suddenly Keith seemed to get the upper hand and sent the attacking Galra’s sword flying down the alleyway. However when this happened the Galra sucker punched Keith right in the face and sent him flying. He lost his knife and the Galra was on top of him, beating the hell out of him.

Lance cursed and quickly looked around. He picked up a bin lid and flung it at the Galra on top of Keith as hard as he could. Much to his delight he struck them in the throat hard enough to make them choke. Keith took the opportunity to kick them as hard as he possibly could in the groin. His kick was so strong that they manage to lift them off the ground and flip them onto their back.

Now the fight was noisy. Extremely noisy. So it was no surprise when Shiro came out looking confused. “What the hell is going on here?”

Pidge and Hunk also happened to take a peek. “What’s with all the noise out here?” Asked Pidge. “...Okay why the absolute fuck does Keith look like a furry?”

“Um, I think we should be questioning the fact that Keith is fighting the other person?” Suggested Hunk. “... Also, is that a sword?”

Lance laughed nervously. “Oh boy… this is going to be hard to explain… You see guys-” Before he could say anything the Galra got to their feet and kicked Keith in the guts, making him slide into the dumpster. “Hey!”

Before Lance or anyone could say anything there was a blur of white that went screaming towards them, only stopping when they struck the Galran’s sword down. The strike narrowly missed both the Galra and Keith. They struck with such force that they sent bits of asphalt flying.

Much to everyone’s shock it was Allura. She seemed to pay no mind to anyone apart from the Galra that were right in front of her. It was about then Lance noticed she had two pink marks under both her eyes. The Galra wearing the biker helmet gasped in shock. “An Altean? But how? Your realm was burnt to the ground!”

Allura smiled at them with the most disturbingly sweet smile Lance had ever seen. “Why yes. You did. So now I am going to rid this realm of Galra filth. All Galra must die. For Altea.”

She went to swipe at the Galra, but Keith quickly scrambled to his feet, grabbed his knife and threw it at the Galra. “Sword!”

The Galra quickly grabbed it and blocked Allura’s attack just in time. They continued to pass the
sword around as Allura erratically swung the Galran sword around in an attempt to strike them both down.

“Stand still you quizznacking bastards!” She snapped. Suddenly a small blue light flew into their fights and all three yelped out in pain before collapsing to the ground, apparently knocked out.

Everyone was quiet for a moment before Lance spoke up. “What the fuck just happened?!”

“I believe I can answer that.” Said Coran. He walked over to the unconscious trio and checked on Allura. He sighed sadly and picked her up like a child. It was then Lance noticed he had blue markings under his eyes and his ears were now pointed. “We should go inside somewhere and talk. They will be waking up soon and might need some medical attention.”

Shiro stepped aside. “Bring them in here. The place is already shut down for the day. You guys quickly close up your places too and get in here.”

Everyone seemed confused as to what was going on but after about ten minutes everyone was standing in the middle of Shiro’s shop with the shutters drawn. Allura was passed out on a pillow, Cosmo had wrapped himself protectively around Keith, and the Galra was tied with their arms behind their back.

Once they were all inside Hunk started speaking. “Okay, so what the hell is going on? Keith is some weird purple cat thing, he was fighting some crazy biker person with a sword, Coran and Allura are things called Alteans and Keith and the biker person are called Galra? Am I right? Did I get that right?”

Coran nodded as he twirled his mustache. “Well all that information is correct to point. Princess Allura and I are refugees from Altea.”

“Wait, the princess is an actual princess?” Asked Lance in shock. “Oh my god I went on a friend date with actual royalty…”

Pidge rolled her eyes. “Surprisingly that’s the least interesting thing that’s happened so far. Anyway, Coran, so you are saying that you and Allura are aliens?”

“Not exactly…” Coran thought for a moment. “You see Allura and I are from a completely different dimension. There are an infinite amount of them that exist. In our realm we’ve lived and existed for eons longer than humans and as such we’ve been able to create advanced technology that’s been able to navigate the quintessence fields between reality giving us access to countless realms.”


“That’s because it is.” Said Coran. “Quintessence is highly unstable and can break you down to the electron that flies around the atom… But I digress. After many years of experimentation Allura’s great, great grandparents Oberon and Titania initiated the Avalon project to explore and create peace between different realms.”

Pidge’s jaw dropped. “Wait, Oberon and Titania? Like as in the king and queen of the fairies? Have you guys been to earth before or something?”

Coran shrugged. “It is possible, but at the time your realm probably didn’t meet the standards for Oberon and Titania to allow trade between realms. Earth was probably marked as unsuitable and to be checked on every once in a while. Standard stuff.”

Shiro nodded a little. “Okay, so from what I understand, Altean’s are just an advanced race of beings
from another reality that are the source of the myth of fairies, at least in Europe. Right?"

“Hmm, sounds about right.” Agreed Coran.

“But why are you refugees?” Asked Hunk.

Coran hesitated for a moment and looked over at Keith and the other Galra. “Well, you might have gathered from their exchange that the Galra burnt our realm to the ground… The Galran realm was one of the first realms we were able to develop a stable relationship with. Zarkon, their then king but now emperor, had reassured king Alfor, Allura’s father, that he had no interest in invading another realm since he had his hands full enough as it was with the Galra… But we soon found out that was a lie. Made all the more tragic since Zarkon and Alfor became very close friends.”

“So then Zarkon invaded and used your tech to destroy your realms and is jumping from realm to realm doing the same thing?” Asked Pidge.

Coran nodded. “To make a long story short, yes. Galra are a fiercely violent and destructive people. Even when they were on friendly terms with us we often got into strong culture clashes because almost all disagreements are solved by fighting with them.”

Allura groaned a little slowly started to sit up. “Ow… Coran? What happened? I thought that I…” She looked over and saw the two still unconscious Galra and grabbed the closest thing to her, a watering can, and went to strike the closest one in the face with it. Unfortunately, that happened to be Keith. Fortunately, Coran and Shiro quickly restrained her. Allura thrashed around and screamed. “Let go of me! They killed everyone Coran! Because of them everyone is dead! You have to let me do this!”

“Princess you have to stop!” Said Coran sternly. “Killing these two won’t bring back Alfor or Melenor!”

Allura struggled a little more but eventually relented and let Shiro take the watering can from her. “I-I know… But they are parasites. Demons. They take and take and take… If they are here than that means this realm is going to perish soon too… W-we’re all going to die…”

Everyone in the room went quiet. The only sounds that could be heard were Allura’s slight sobs for a solid minute before Keith groaned and slowly sat up. “Ow… What the fuck was that?”

Shiro breathed a sigh of relief. “Oh good, you’re okay… Um, looks like your people kind of wiped out Allura’s entire race. Just so you’re all caught up.”

“Oh. Explains why she attacked us.” He looked over at the Galra and glared at them. “Hey, stop pretending you’re knocked out.”

The Galra chuckled a little and lifted their head. “Never could fool you, could I Yurak? Mind helping me take off this helmet? Kind of stuffy in here.”

The group watched as Keith removed the helmet. A woman with a striking resemblance to Keith stared back at him. She smiled slightly at him. “Your fighting has gotten a little sloppy. You haven’t been training much have you?”

Keith ignored her and stood up, looking slightly embarrassed. “Um, so everyone… This is Krolia. The one who apparently gave birth to me. I still want testing done.”

That must have stung because Krolia growled at him. “Hey! I came all this way to see you and this is the welcome I get? You attempting to murder me, an Altean trying to murder me and getting hit with
a short range taser grenade?” She sighed a little and pulled on her bindings will they snapped and she was free. “You really need to learn some manners.”

Keith growled at her. “Manners? Speak for yourself! How the fuck is it good manners to abandon your kid after six fucking months?”

Krolia snarled at him. “Yurak! I have told you countless times why I had to abandon you and your father! Do you have any idea what they would have done to you? What they would have done to him? You father was a human! He knew about Galra! They would have-”

“Shut up!” Snapped Keith. “You lost every right to talk about him the second you fucking walked out on us you fucking bitch! I hate you! I fucking ha-” Krolia grabbed his face and started rubbing a spot behind his ears and he started purring.

She smirked and continued to rub that spot. “There. Have you calmed down now? Kolivan sent me to find you. Okay? Are you going through another spike?”

Keith mumbled something incoherent and closed his eyes, still purring. Everyone just looked confused. “Um, what’s happening?” Asked Lance. Not that this wasn’t adorable as fuck, but he was still very confused.

Krolia smiled at them. “Just a Galra trick. We have a sensitive patch of fur behind our ears. Galra parents usually only do this to calm down our children. Only parental figures and lovers should do this. It’s a bonding thing.”

Lance took note of that but then quickly dismissed that thought. What would he ever need that information for anyway. “Okay.” He said. “Bonding moment is cool and all, but like why are you here? Last time Keith mentioned you he said you went back to spying on the Galra.”

“Wait you know about this stuff?” Asked Pidge.

“Just the Galra stuff and it was an accident, I swear!” Said Lance as he crossed his heart. “We can talk about this later!”

Krolia just shook her head and smiled. “I have a mission to do and I did it. I’d been given plenty of free time to gather intel on human governments to make it easier for the Galra to cripple your armed forces. Kolivan contacted me and asked me to drop off Yurak’s bike since we will need him back soon.”

“Back for what?” Snapped Allura. “Do you think any of us will let you leave now that we know about your disgusting plans to pick apart this realm?”

“That is fair enough.” Said Krolia. “Our people are enemies of your people after all. But Yurak and I are a part of a resistance group known as the Blade of Marmora. We are attempting to find all the crystalized quintessence we can on earth and destroy it before Zarkon can get it. We are not able to destroy the empire but we can cripple it and contain it so it will not spread anymore. Not all Glara agree with what Zarkon has done.”

Allura still looked angry. “All Galra are the same.”

Krolia looked at her dead in the eyes. “And the Galra have claimed that the Alteans were nothing more than a bunch of pathetic, weak beings that couldn’t see the potential of quintessence, but that’s obviously not true your highness.”

Coran whispered something to Allura and she seemed to calm down a little. “Fine… You Galra’s
just stay the hell away from us. You should have just stayed in your own realm…”

“I agree with you.” Said Krolia calmly. “The Blade of Marmora has wanted it to stop since we first passed through Altea. We are, or at least were, a race of noble warriors. What Zarkon is doing is disgusting and we will not stand for it… Princess, if the Blade fails to stop Zarkon here we will do what we can to ensure you safe passage to another realm.”

“Um… What about us?” Asked Hunk. “You know, the people that live here already?”

“According to our calculations and taking human life spans into account none of you would be anywhere close to alive by the time Zarkon actually starts his invasion. Even if you lived to the maximum lifespan of a human it would still take many human life times.”

“Okay. Just checking.” Said Hunk. “Just needed to know how freaked out I needed to be about suddenly getting murdered by weird alien, demon cat people things.”

“I’m more interested in this spike thing.” Said Pidge. “What is it?”

She shrugged. “It’s a Galra thing. Every once in awhile a Galra’s hormones levels will suddenly spike. It usually ends up presenting as aggression. Galra usually just end up fighting a lot more, so we hardly notice it. Parents and lovers usually quell their anger by doing this.” Throughout this whole conversation Krolia had been gently scratching the patches of fur behind Keith’s ears. Keith himself had practically become a quiet purple fluff ball of soft purrs.

He looked so calm and peaceful. Lance wanted to do that. “That’s ridiculously adorable.”

“It is.” Said Krolia. “However, I am kind of worried that he will attack me if I stop…” She looked over at Shiro. “… You are Shiro, correct? You look how Yurak described you.”

“Yeah?”

“He speaks of you as a guardian and family member. Would you mind taking over for the moment?”

“Um, sure?” Shiro awkwardly took over for Krolia and Keith purred louder. “… This is kind of awkward.”

“You can slowly stop. I just didn’t want to be right in front of him when that happens.”

“Why did you even come here?” Snapped Allura. She was still extremely agitated by their presence.

“I came here to drop off Yurak’s hoverbike.” Said Krolia calmly. She looked over at Lance and smirked. “You know, it really hurt when you got me in the throat with that bin lid. I couldn’t breathe for a bit and saw spots.”

“Oh um… S-sorry about that. Kind of thought you were trying to kill him.” Lance laughed nervously. He really hoped that she wasn’t going to beat the shit out of him for hitting her. How was he meant to know she was Keith’s mum?

She just chuckled and shook her head. “Relax. I’m quite impressed actually. You have quite an arm on you. Good aim too. You’re seem like a natural at long range weaponry.”

“And on that note we should probably be leaving.” Said Coran as he carefully tried to drag Allura out the backdoor. “It was nice meeting you all and we should catch up and talk about this a little more or something once Allura has calmed down.”
“I am calm Coran!”

“Bye!” He quickly took her outside and they kept talking in hushed whispers.

Hunk still look confused, but he just shook his head. “Yeah, I’m calling it a night too. This is too weird for me. Interdimensional, genocidal, alien demon things from a hell dimension? Sounds like something out of a video game.”

“Sounds like Doom to me.” Muttered Pidge. “Like a shitty, less pew, pew version of Doom set on earth rather than Mars, but still Doom.”

Lance thought about if for a moment. “… Huh, it kind of is isn’t it? Weird.”

She nodded and walked to the backdoor with Hunk. “Alright, we’re going to get drunk to deal with this sudden development. Lance, we’re gonna need to have a serious talk about all this tomorrow?”

“She nodded and they walked out the backdoor with Hunk.

Once they were gone Lance let out a breath that he didn’t know he was holding and Cosmo went up to him and nuzzled his leg. “That’s Cosmo.”

Krolia smiled a little and gave the wolf a few pats. “Well hello there. Since when did Keith find a Cosmic wolf?” Cosmo sniffed her a few times before leaning into her hand. “You’re a good boy.”

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Throughout this whole exchange Keith had been in a mild state of bliss. Sure he heard and understood everything that was being said to him, but he was physically locked out of his body. He couldn’t talk or move at all. All he could do was listen. He understood Allura’s anger and he understood the confusion in Pidge and Hunk’s voices.

Slowly the blissful feeling was starting to fade away and when he opened his eyes he was looking at Shiro who looked kind of embarrassed by everything. Keith was embarrassed too and quickly looked away. But ended up looking over at Lance and Krolia. He was silently fuming.


“Because Yurak has told me not to call him by his proper name because that’s the name his father gave him.” Said Krolia. “I have to call him something and everyone in the Blade calls him Yurak, so that is what I call him. I would only ever call him by his human name to keep his identity secret from other Galra.”

“Okay. Well I can respect that… Still don’t get what a spike is. Is it kind of like how human girls get periods or something? Or like how animals go into heats and ruts of something?”

Keith let out a sound that sounded like a shrill squeak.

Krolia thought for a moment. “Kind of? It’s more of a throw away trait that we have evolved out of. We are technically a little more fertile during a spike, but it’s not significant. Like I said, we are a little more aggressive, but that is it. If Yurak is acting up it’s probably just because of that… Just get Shiro to do the ear trick with him.”

Shiro coughed nervously. “I um… Why am I the one to do that?”
“Because you’re a father figure to him.” She said calmly. “Or at least a family member to him. Since I assume Yurak doesn’t have a partner it falls onto a family member. Since he doesn’t recognise me as his mother I have no choice but to ask you to do this for me Shiro.”

Keith grumbled and crouched down in a corner of the shop with his hands protectively placed over his sensitive fur patches. “I hate all of you!”

She just shook her head and put some keys and a crystal down on the counter top. “Here. These are your keys and the crystal you’ll need to activate the hover mechanics. Kolivan will be in contact with you soon Keith. Be ready to leave at any moment.” She looked over at Cosmo. “… I’ll need to tell him about Cosmo. He’ll probably need to stay at the base if you intend to keep him.”

Keith growled at her when suddenly he got smacked in the face with a magazine. “Hey!”


Keith hissed at him and clawed at the magazine. Lance was an asshole. He wanted to rip his fucking face off at this point. “Not all of us have a good relationship with or parents like you do Lance! I don’t have parents!”

That made Lance hit his forehead just a little harder. “Rude! She is right here! If she drop kicked you or beat you or abused you I could understand you hating her but this is fucking stupid. Grow up Keith. Are you an adult or do Galra mature slower than humans?”

Hearing that made Keith’s blood boil. He wanted to fight again. He wanted to punch Keith right in his stupid face. Break his stupid teeth. Shatter his jaw. Give him a black eye. Hell, punch him so hard that he goes blind and deaf. He could feel his hand balling into a fist as he started to growl at him.

Suddenly Cosmo jumped on him and started licking his face. Keith yelped a little and struggled to stay sitting up right. He sighed a little and patted Cosmo’s fur. All his aggression quickly melted away.

“What’s the best way to deal with spikes?” Asked Shiro. “How long do they last?”

“He should be fine in about three to four days.” She said. “Best way is just to fight it out. How long has he been this angry?”

“About two days?”

She nodded. “Yeah, you have two more days of this and you won’t have to deal with it for about three earth years. He’ll be fine. I would be worried if he didn’t lash out. Shows he has a healthy hormone system going on.” She looked between the men and picked up her helmet. “It was good to see you again Yurak. I’m glad you’re doing well… Hopefully we can actually catch up soon? I have a few days before I have to go back on my mi-”

“You’re mission. I know. Just get out already Krolia.” She snapped at her. “I don’t want to speak to you longer than I have to.”

“… Yes Yurak.” She gave a small nod towards Shiro and Lance before she left out the backdoor.

Lance was not impressed. “Why do you have to be such a dick to her? She is trying her hardest for you.”

“Well that’s because you know how it feels to have a loving family.” Growled Keith. “One that
loves you and looks after you… One that’s always there no matter what… When things got rough I got passed off to another family. She can’t stick around me even if I wanted her to. She’s a spy in some super secret undercover mission. She’s around for a few days and then gone… That’s not a real mother.”

“…”

Shiro sighed a little and patted Lance’s back. “You know, it’s been one hell of a day for all of us. Why don’t you go hang out with Pidge and Hunk? I think Keith needs some time to calm down.”

“Oh, okay…” He looked down at Keith and frowned. “Just… take care of yourself, okay?” He gave Keith one last look before he left out the backdoor.

Shiro walked over to him and crouched down. “I know she said I should do that thing, but just so you know, I won’t. It doesn’t seem right.”

“Good… I hate suddenly becoming that weak.”

“I know… You know you’re still full Glara, right?”

“…” Keith quickly went back to his normal human form. “I think I’ll just go upstairs and lie down… Everything is just… It’s just been too much for me today…” He got up and walked by the counter, quickly pocketing the keys and crystal before going upstairs. Today had been the worst. He kind of just wanted to crawl into a hole and die. At least he got his hover bike back. Kolivan didn’t let him take it before for some reason. Jerk.
There was a fair bit of tension the next day in all the shops. For the first time since Lance had been working there Coran was the one that delivered the morning coffee. “Where’s Allura?”

He shrugged. “Allura’s not comfortable doing the coffee runs anymore. I think she just doesn’t want to go near the flower shop anymore now that she knows that Keith is Galra…”

“Yes…” Lance sighed and took his coffee. “I just… I have no idea what is happening… Allura was just so mad, and I know she’s seen some horrible stuff, but like… She’s blaming Keith for it? Keith wasn’t even alive then…”

Coran nodded in agreement. “I know… I tried to explain it to her, but she’s not exactly receptive of the idea that Galra aren’t all monsters. We have been lied to and betrayed by them so many times in the past… Allura saw her parents getting killed by Zarkon himself. We couldn’t even give them a proper funeral.”

“… Really? She seems so happy though.”

“We it did happen several thousand earth years ago so, you know.”

“Wait, thousands of years? Really?”

Coran nodded. “Yep. Altean technology uses lots of quintessence and one of the side effects is slowed aging. It was rather surprising and we were in the middle of researching the long term consequences of quintessence exposure. Then there was plasma versus crystalized forms. It was pretty interesting.”

“I see… Will Allura be alright?”

“She will… Eventually… Well if you need anymore coffee, just drop on by. Okay?”

“Okay.”

Coran left and Lance sighed heavily. He felt bad for not telling Hunk and Pidge about Keith. He felt bad for Allura and Coran being dimension hopping refugees. He felt bad about Keith having to deal with all this. He felt bad for Shiro having to have all that happening under his roof. He felt bad for hitting Korlia in the throat. The only one that he didn’t feel bad for was Cosmo. And that was because Cosmo was a fucking dog. Weird ass magic dog, but still a dog.

Pidge and Hunk walked in. “Hey Lance.”

“Hey…”

Hunk smiled kind of awkwardly at him. “So like… Pidge and I talked a lot about what happened last
night and um…”

“We concluded a few things.” Said Pidge. “Firstly, you already knew about the Galra thing because of Keith, right? Is he… Is he cool? Because we only know about Galra from what Allura was screaming.”

Lance shrugged. “Keith told me that they are pretty violent and stuff… But he also said he was part of that resistance group, so I don’t know… Shiro trusts him, and since I can’t really do anything I just… I don’t know… And now Allura and Coran had their whole species wiped out by Galra… I just don’t know.”

Pidge sighed and ran her fingers through her hair. “Fuck man… This shit is intense… But there really isn’t too much we can do, right? I mean, humans haven’t gotten anywhere near that level of technology yet. But yeah, humans might have the tec in a few hundred years, but by then these Galra guys might have infiltrated the government and stuff and I just… Well it’ll be too late.”

“Lots of existential crisis stuff happening.” Siad Hunk. “But like, a bit of alcohol helped a lot with speeding up that process.”

“We would have done drugs if we had some and didn’t have work the next day.” Said Pidge. “But no such luck… So do you think we’ll have to pick a side? Like do we side with the Altean’s or like Keith and stuff?”

Lance shrugged. “Look, I don’t see why we need to pick sides like that. Keith is Keith and he’s opposed to what the Galra are doing. Allura and Coran hate what the Galra have done to their people. Like I can understand some level of racism, I mean, humans aren’t any better about it just look at our history, but still…”

Hunk nodded in agreement. “Yeah… I can understand Allura being a little distrustful over the race that murdered her entire race but like… She kind of tried to kill Keith and his mum. Keith really dislikes her, doesn’t he?”

“He does.” Muttered Lance. “Keith has a lot of distrust towards her…” He picked up a pen from the desk and started fiddling with it. Just to keep his hands occupied.

Pidge huffed a little and crossed her arms. “You know what? Screw all this interdimensional, alien, demon bullshit! Allura and Coran are our friends. Keith is also our friend. Lance is right, we shouldn’t have to choose. The Galra are bad, but just because Keith is a Galra doesn’t mean he is bad.”

Hunk agreed. “Yeah.”

Lance nodded. “Yeah… Okay, enough messing around. We need to start setting up now. Okay?” The others agreed and started to get set up for the day. None of them saw Allura or Keith for the rest of the day.

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Despite the tension being lifted in the tattoo shop, there was still tension along the street. It unnerved Lance quite a lot, but he didn’t feel like he should talk to either Keith or Allura just yet. They both needed to calm the fuck down.

When he got back to is apartment he almost jumped out of his skin when he saw Krolia standing in his parking spot. She let him drive into the parking spot and waited for him to get out. Lance cautiously got out and gulped.
“Am I in trouble?”

“No. I just wanted to talk to you.” She looked up at the apartment building and frowned. “So this is where humans live?”

“Well yeah, some of them… Come on in I guess?” Lance let her into his place and Krolia looked around. She seemed to be giving everything a critical look. She stopped when she saw the family photos. “... Need something?”

“You have a very large clan.”

“Clan?”

She shrugged. “Clan, pack, group, family, cluster. Whatever a group or relatives is called.”

“Family.”

“Family. Okay.” She smiled when she saw a picture of Lance and his siblings when they were younger. “Are these your siblings? You all look adorable. Galra’s generally have two or three young ones. Your parents must have been very fertile during their peak.”

Lance went red. Those were words he never wanted to hear about his parents. “I um… I guess? I don’t know.”

Krolia hummed a little and continued to look at the photos. “... I wanted to have a big family. I was hoping that I would be able to make it back to him but…” She sighed sadly. “If it’s not with him then it’s not going to happen at all.”

“... Okay? Um… Do you want something to drink? Water? Coffee? Juice?”

“I am okay. Sorry, I didn’t come to you to talk about those kinds of family matters… I am worried about Yurak.” She confessed. “He is a good Galra. A damn fine Glara. One of the best… But he isn’t socialized to be human.”

“Tell me about it.” Muttered Lance. “He hardly ever talks and it’s just a nightmare talking to him sometimes.”

“I assumed as much.” She walked over to Lance with a dangerous look in her eyes. Lance just gulped and backed up until he hit the small counter top in his kitchen. He nervously leaned back while she continued to loom over him with that look in her eyes.

Lance gulped and nervously smiled at her. “Um… C-can I help you with something?”

“... You and Yurak seem very close.”

“W-well I guess we are close, but we’re not that close.” Said Lance. “Shiro is way closer to Keith than I am. But like, I wouldn’t mind being closer to him. He’s interesting and stuff, but like you know… He’s kind of been really mad at me and after everything that’s happened with Allura I don’t know if he wants me around anymore. Maybe it’s the spike thing you were talking about? I um so I-I guess we might be close? Maybe? I-I’m not saying that we aren’t.”

She cut him off, saving them both from his rambling. “You two are close.”

“Yes.”

“You are human.”
“... Yes?”

“You’re going to help Yurak be more human.”

“Um…”

“That wasn’t a question.”

“Yes ma’am.” Lance was still terrified of her. So there was no way in hell he was going to say no to her.

“Good.” She stopped leaning over him and continued to look around the apartment.

Lance relaxed slightly and watched her as she randomly walked around his place and picked up stuff. He really hoped that she wouldn’t go into his room. “S-so um… What do you want me to do?”

She picked one of the games Lance had on his shelf and squinted at the picture on the box. “Just socialize with him. He missed out on social interaction with his human peers at a young age. I want you to make him more comfortable being a human.”

“Okay… But isn’t he going on a mission soon or something? Isn’t that what you said?”

“Well yes, but soon for a Galra isn’t necessarily soon for a human. I just wanted him to be happy with his human side… He honestly hates being a half-breed so much.” She sighed. “I don’t know what to do. When I was with him he doesn’t act like a human. He acts Galra.”

“Isn’t he supposed to act Galra?”

“I guess, but it’s painful to see him like that. I didn’t have him for him to be just another Galra. Yurak is an expression of the love between me and his father… But I know he thinks I just betrayed them. I have tried very hard to explain the situation to him but he always ends up screaming at me. It’s distressing.”

“Wow… That’s um… That’s rough.”

She nodded a little and sighed. “Yeah… But anyway, this is why you are going to help Yurak. Your species is a very social species. Mostly family orientated. I want Yurak to be more human. It’s what his father would want.”

“... Okay. I’ll try my best.”

Krolia nodded and walked to the front door. “Good. I will be keeping an eye on you Lance. You better not screw this up or I will have your head.”

Lance gulped and grabbed at his throat. He kind of liked his head being in his own shoulders. That was where it belonged. It kept the top his neck warm. Also, most importantly it kept him alive. “Yes ma’am. Will do.”

“Good.” Once she left the apartment he picked up a couch cushion, put it over his face, and screamed. And screamed. And screamed. And screamed. And screamed.

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Keith instantly felt like he was being ostracized. Firstly Shiro had told him that he didn’t need to work in the shop today. He stuck around the stairs to see if Allura was going to come by, but no. It was Coran. Coran even asked Shiro if he will be the one to deliver their flowers from now on. Allura
didn’t want Keith to come by the cafe anymore.

It was depressing, and eventually Keith just went outside to have a proper look at his hover bike. Without the crystal plugged into it, it just looked like a standard greyish-red motorbike. He grabbed a toolbox in the back of the shop and started tuning it up.

As he worked he would glance over at the backdoor of the tattoo place to see if Lance would walk out. But he didn’t. He would have settled for Pidge or Hunk coming out to talk to him, but none of them did. Of course they wouldn’t.

They would hate him. Pidge and Hunk would obviously take Allura’s side. They knew her better. Lance might give him the benefit of the doubt, but he liked Allura. They were dating now. He’d take her side.

He sniffled a little and had to stop working on his bike so he could calm himself and stop shaking so badly. So what if everyone hated him? That’s just what humans did. Humans hated him. Even Shiro was starting to dislike him. Why else would he have told him not to help him in the shop? He’d have preferred it if they just hit him so he knew just how much they hated him. It was easier being with the Galra.

He wanted Kolivan to bring him back into the Blade soon. At least there he could wear his mask all the time so no one could see his face. When he was like that everyone seemed to forget his half-breed status. He wished that Kolivan had just let him relax and recover at their base instead.

“... Fuck everyone.” He muttered. “Fuck everything.”

He knew he was useless. He couldn’t do anything right. He was only kind of useful to the Galra since he had been good at finding quintessence. He was useful to the Blade because he could find them quintessence. If he couldn’t find it he was useless to everyone. Maybe he should just hop on his bike and leave? He’d have to figure out how to get Cosmo on the back, but he could try.

He rubbed his eyes and took a few deep breaths to try and calm down. He was being overly emotional. That needed to stop. He was just swinging from anger to sadness way too quickly. He didn’t know why this was happening. No one told him anything about Galra biology. Even when he did ask he only got vague answers. He hated it.

He heard the backdoor open and Shiro walked out. “Hey Keith, you doing okay?”

“... Do you want me to leave?”

“Why would you think that?”

“Because I’ve upset everyone.” He muttered. “Allura wants me dead, Coran probably hates me too. Pidge and Hunk have taken Allura’s side, Lance is dating allura so he’s going to side with her. And you don’t want me in the shop anymore... I’m just a fucking screw up.”

“Hey, you’re not a screw up Keith.” Said Shiro sternly. He walked over and put his hand on Keith’s shoulder. “What the Galra did to the Altean’s, that wasn’t you. You can’t help that you were born the way you were.”

“... You should have just let me die when you found me.”

“Hey.” He turned Keith so they were looking at each other. “Keith, listen to me. You are not a screw up. It was not a mistake to save you. You are a good person. I just didn’t want you in the shop today because I thought you needed a day to relax and unwind after what went down yesterday. I didn’t
mean to offend you.”

“It’s okay Shiro… I just…” He sighed. “Am I just not good enough for anyone? Like, I was never
good enough for any foster family or school. I was constantly fighting every single day one way or
another when I was with the Galra, and even when I proved myself I was always looked down on.
Sent out on the most dangerous quintessence missions hoping that I was going to get myself killed.
The Blade pretty much kicked me out when I almost died since I’m not fully Galra I’m not strong
enough… I’m just not good enough.”

“…” The older man sighed and hugged him tightly. “Keith, you’re not useless. I love having you
around. I really missed you when you were gone. Don’t think badly about yourself just because
some idiots can’t see how amazing you are.”

“You’re just saying that so I don’t punch you to let me go…”

“… If that means I won’t get punched in the gut then yes.”

“Asshole.”

“You know I’m just joking.” He let Keith go, but kept his hand on his shoulder. “Look, it’s obvious
that Allura has a huge chip on her shoulder about Galra. She will need time to realise that just
because you are a Galra doesn’t mean you are the Galra that killed her people. Pidge and Hunk are
smart people. They just need time to process the whole, interdimensional stuff.”

“And Lance? He’s going to stick with his girlfriend.” Muttered Keith. “Looks like I lost my ride.
Guess I can’t take Cosmo out to hiking trails and stuff anymore…”

Shiro shook his head. “Look, even if Lance and Allura are dating it doesn’t mean they will become
one person. I have no idea what Galra partners are like, but you should know human’s can be very
different. Remember me and Adam?”

“Yeah…”

“Remember how much he hated spicy food?”

“Yeah.”

“Remember how much he liked those stupid relaity TV shows that we both hate?”

“Yeah.”

Shiro smiled. “So you really think Lance is shallow enough that he will just absorb the personality of
the person he’s dating?”

“No…”

“Good. If he didn’t run screaming when he found out about your life when you first told him I doubt
learning about Allura’s resentment towards Galra will change it.”

“… Okay.”

“Feeling better now?”

“A little…”

“Good.” He looked over at Keith’s bike and smiled. “It’s a good bike. Gonna take it for a ride later?”
“Yeah. Gonna make sure that the hover part of this hoverbike still works.”

“Cool… You do have proper riding equipment, right?”

“I once fell down a cliff and should have died, but I walked away with a few broken fingers and a concussion.”

Shiro slow blinked at Keith’s whatever attitude. “Okay, but have you considered road rash is a thing? Do you really want to crash at high speed and erase your entire face along the ground?”

“… Point taken. I’ll wear a helmet.”
A few days later Keith was satisfied with how he tuned up his bike and deemed it safe to test out if it could still hover without crashing and turning into a fireball. He’d have to test it at night though. Less people around. It was only a few hours till sunset anyway.

As he finished up he felt someone standing behind him. He glanced over his shoulder and looked at Lance. “... Shiro is inside.”

“What? No hello?” Asked Lance with a slight smile on his face. He stood next to him and looked at the bike. “Pretty neat.”

“Thanks…” Keith hated being around Lance right now. He was probably going to talk down to him and try to make him feel bad about being Galra. “Like I said Shiro’s inside.”

“I didn’t come by to see Shiro.” Lance smiled at him. “Are you okay? I know I haven’t seen you since your mum beat you up and stuff… So like… I just wanted to see if you were okay.”

“If you actually cared you would have come over the day after.” Muttered Keith. “But I guess you were too busy with your girlfriend.”

“Huh?”

“You know, Allura? You guys went on a date the other day and she hates me. Only natural you would avoid me since I’m Galra.”

Lance looked very confused. “What? Allura and I are just friends. Sure I wouldn’t mind it if we were something more, but like we’re friends.”

“… You went on a date.”

“We went out to get makeup and junk. Well, she got makeup and I got some more face masks.” Said Lance calmly. “We were just doing friends stuff.”

Keith was confused. “But like… You two went out. Together. Alone. You’re a guy and she’s a girl… Isn’t that a date?”

“Well yeah? I guess?”

“So you two are dating.”

“No.”

“…” Keith was still confused. From everything he had learned about human dating that was the thing. That was what you do. Maybe learning about how human relationships work from watching TV wasn’t the best thing? “But…”
“How do Galra date? Do Galra even date or are you guys like have arranged marriage kinds of things?”

“Galra don’t date. We compare our fighting skills and if we feel like we are compatible.” Said Keith. “Then if we both think we can live together we fight to determine which one of us will make most of the decisions in our relationship via combat.”

“You guys sure love to fight.”

“It’s what we do… The only time we don’t fight is if someone is pregnant. Then the pregnant one has to choose someone to fight for them. Literally any other time you have to fight no matter what.”

“… Well that’s a thing I guess. Glad pregnant people don’t have to fight. Anyway, human dating is different. Allura and I are just friends so you don’t need to worry about me just taking her side. I kind of think she’s in the wrong anyway. You’re not the one that killed her people.”

Keith was kind of surprised to hear that. “You don’t think I’m responsible?”

“Just because your Galra doesn’t mean you personally murdered people.”

Keith could feel a blush coming on. “Have you ever been on a bike before?”

“Hmm? You asking me to ride with you?”

“Yeah, I need to test how it handles with a bit of weight on the back.”

“You calling me fat?”

“Shiro refuses to get on with me after I almost got us killed.”

“Point taken… Wait, why do you think I’d be okay with you driving if you almost killed Shiro?”

Keith shrugged. “I was younger and more inexperienced. Plus this one hovers. It’s better.” He opened the case on the back of the bike and took out a helmet. He tossed it at Lance and then took another one out.

Lance frowned a little and looked between Keith and the helmet. “What the fuck is this timelord technology bhullshit? There’s no way that could fit one helmet in there let alone two.”

“… It’s Galra.”

“Well yeah but like… Have you ever seen Doctor Who?”

“What?”

“Not what, who.”

“…” Keith ignored him and slammed the helmet onto Lance’s head. “Just shut up and put this on. I need to adjust the coms so we can talk.” He popped a small compartment on the side of the helmet and quickly hit a few buttons before putting on his own helmet and repeating the same thing. “… Can you hear me?”

Lance seemed a little surprised. “Wow, this is so cool! Your voice is so clear… But like what’s with all this interface stuff I can see? … Why is it saying my heartbeat is dangerously low?”

“It’s a Galra thing. Our heart beats are a little higher than humans.” Keith hit a few more buttons on
the side of Lance’s helmet. “Is it gone now?”

“Yeah.”

“Okay. Get on.” Keith hopped onto the bike and revved the engine. He enjoyed how nicely his bike purred for him. He felt Lance get on behind him, but he didn’t seem to know where to put his hands. “… Lance, this might not look like it but it can go really fast. If you don’t hang onto me I won’t know if you’ve fallen off or not.”

“Right… So like this?” Lance hesitantly put his hands on Keith’s hips.

When he felt his hands on him, even over his clothed skin, Keith felt his skin heating up as shivers quickly shot along his spine. Keith had to fight the urge to quickly turn around and elbow him off. “That’s good…” He quickly sped off down the alleyway and onto the road. Lance yelped in surprise and tightened his grip on him. It gave Keith a weird feeling deep within him, settling in the lower half of his body.

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This was a bad idea. A very bad idea. That’s all that was running through Lance’s head. Sure he was happy to be talking to Keith again, but did he really have to decide between maybe getting killed in a motorbike crash or possibly getting decked by Krolia? At least he was pretty sure if he got into an accident with Keith he’d die on impact.

After a while Lance spoke up. “So um… Where are we going?”

“I’m just going to find a stretch of road we can really test the hover part out. We just need a place where there are no people.”

“Okay.” Lance was still trying to figure out how the bike would even be able to hover. He just assumed that it was going to suddenly pop rockets out the side of it or something. He had no idea. He sighed a little and lightly pressed his helmet against Keith’s back.

Suddenly, Keith veered off the main road and onto some side road. Lance jumped and tightened his grip on Keith’s hips. Keith laughed a little at Lance and sped up a little. “This is much better.”

“Are you sure no one’s around?”

“My helmet’s scanning for human life. It’s only picking up on you, and a kind of not reading on me. We’re fine.”

“Oh, okay.” Lance looked around a little. They were pretty far away from it all. All he could see was vast nothingness for miles around. Though it was kind of hard to tell since it was pretty much dark. There could have been a house out there and he wouldn’t have known.

“Yeah. Ready to start hovering?”

“… I guess?”

“Cool. Hold on tight, it has a bit of a kick to it.” Keith moved his hand over the petrol tank and did something Lance couldn’t see. But once he was done doing what he was doing the bike quickly shifted. It became bulkier, wider and, elongated. It seemed to develop wings with two huge discs on each end. Lights on the discs lit up and there was a small jump. Then it was smooth riding from there on.
“Are we hovering?”

“Well we didn’t crash at high speed so, yeah Lance. My hover bike actually works. Wasn’t sure it would…”

“... Are you telling me we could have just crashed?”

“Well if it didn’t start hovering this wouldn’t have crashed. It would have exploded.”

“... WE COULD HAVE BLOWN UP? WHAT THE ACTUAL FUCK KEITH?!”

Keith cringed. “Ow! No need to scream. I can hear you loud and clear.”

“Why must you constantly endanger my life?”

“Why do you keep putting yourself in situations where you can die?”

Lance pouted. “You know what? Fuck it. How fast can this thing go?”

Keith didn’t say anything. He seemed to be the kind of guy where actions spoke louder than words. He revved the engine and leaned forward slightly. A split second later the hover bike doubled in speed and Lance instinctively cling to Keith like his life depended on it. Which it probably did.

He screwed his eyes shut and started loudly praying in Spanish when Keith suddenly veered off the road which made Lance pray louder and faster. Even when they finally stopped Lance was clinging to him and still repeating the same prayer for the tenth time.

“... Lance?”

“Yeah?”

“Can you let me go?”

“Huh? Oh, right. Sorry…” Lance slowly released his grip. In his panic he had moved his arms from Keith’s hips to his chest. He quickly let him go and sat back in his seat. He looked around and was mildly concerned that they were out in the middle of nowhere. “Um… where are we?”

Keith jumped off the bike and straightened out his shirt and jacket, keeping the helmet on. “We’re just a bit outside of town. It like a two hour walk back. Maybe.”

“... You sure?”

“Why? You thinking of walking back now after that?”

“... Maybe.”

Keith took off his helmet and shook his head. “Am I really that bad of a driver? You didn’t die.”

“Mullet, your idea of what a good and bad driver is, is mildly concerning.”

Keith just shrugged and walked a little away. He sat on a hill just a little bit away from the bike. Lance followed him and took off his helmet and sat next to him. From the hill they could see the lights from the town. It was pretty cool.

“Wow, did you know the view was going to be this nice?”
“No. I just wanted to sit on this hill.”

They sat in silence for a moment before Lance spoke up. “So, are you really going to leave when the Blade tells you to go back?”

“Yeah.”

“What about Shiro?”

Keith frowned a little and shrugged. “Shiro knows that this is what I want to do… I want to try and fix what I have been a part of. Even if no humans ever find out what I am doing I want to help stop Zarkon.”

“Well I know but like… I don’t know… I kind of want you to stay man.”

“... Really?”

Lance blushed a little and nodded. “Yeah… It’s kind of a human thing. When we find people we like we don’t want them to go… You ever felt like that?”

Keith furrowed his brow and thought for a bit. “… When I first left Shiro, and when Kolivan told me to take some time off.”

“Okay… You said you got hit in the neck with something, right? Do you have a scar?”

Keith pulled down his collar and ran his finger along some skin. He couldn’t see a scar. Maybe it was just too dark? Or maybe Lance was distracted by the sexy curve of his neck. He kind of wanted to reach out and touch it, but he restrained himself. “Huh. Alright. You heal pretty well.”

“Thanks. Galra genetics are good for something.”

“Yeah.” He continued to stare at Keith’s neck. “... You know, it’s a shame you already have a bunch of tattoos. I really would have loved to give you a few. You have nice skin.”

“Oh? Thanks?” Keith looked very confused. “I um. You know it’s kind of creepy you were looking at my skin… You going to skin me or something?”

“... I find it very hard to tell if you are joking or not, but like, I don’t want your skin. Do Galra skin people?”

“Some do.” Confessed Keith. “But like, only if they find something that they like… If someone like Sendak managed to get his claws on me my skin would end up tacked to his wall.”

Lance slow blinked at him then redirected his gaze to the stars. “Alright then…”

“... What tattoo would you give me if you did give me one?”

“Huh?”

“What kind of tattoo would you give me? I want to know.”

Lance thought for a moment. “Umm… Maybe a back tattoo? A big water colour one. Lots of nebulas and shit. I’d put Cosmo in there somewhere since he’s like a cosmic wolf and stuff. It would look really cool.”

Keith thought about it for a moment before nodding. “That would be cool. I’d like that.”
“Really?”

“Yeah. It would probably hurt less than getting my eyelids tattooed.”

“Your eyelids are tattooed?”

“Yeah. Every part of my skin is tattooed.”

“Right…” Lance gave his body a slow look, starting from his face and ending around his pelvis. “… Even there?”

“What?” He followed Lance’s gaze down and blushed bright red. He shoved Lance over as he drew his legs up. “Pervert!”

Lance couldn’t help but grin when he got pushed onto his side. “Hey, you said all your skin was covered in tattoos. I gotta assume everything down there’s got some ink too, or have you got some weird Galra looking thing down there?”

Keith blushed more. “Everything is anatomically human…”

“Okay but seriously, is your dick tattooed?”

“… You’ll never find out.”

“Awwwww…”

“Lance?”

“Yeah?”

“Shut up.”

Lance laughed and made himself comfortable on the ground. This was nice. Just hanging out here with Keith. He’d have been happy to do this with him even if he wasn’t Galra. He was fun to be around and he made him smile and laugh. Lance also thought it was kind of cute how Keith was all jealous of Allura after just going and hanging out with her. He couldn’t help but laugh again.

“What are you laughing about? Still being an immature pervert?”

“Nah, just thinking about your logic.”

“My logic?”

“Yeah. You thought me and Allura hanging out together meant we were dating. By that logic you and I are like on our third date.”

Even in the dark Lance could tell Keith’s face exploded into a brilliant shade of red. “W-what?!”

“Well we went on a hike, we had dinner and you came back to my place, and now this.” He couldn’t help but smirk at him and wiggled his eyebrows. “And you know what they say about the third date rule.”

“… What is the third date rule?”

“Well usually the third date ends in sex. You game there Keith?”
“...” Keith quickly put his helmet on and walked back towards the bike.

Lance quickly followed him. “Hey, I was just messing around with you! I didn’t mean it!”

“Lance you are fucking weird.” He jumped onto the hoverbike and revved the engine.

“Hey! You’re not going to leave me here are you?”

“Not if you don’t hop on I won’t. You really want to walk two hours back to town?”

Lance quickly shoved his helmet on and climbed onto the back seconds before Keith floored it. On instinct Lance clung to Keith again and started loudly praying. He just knew Keith was speeding on purpose now. He just knew it.
This might be the last of the daily updates for a while. Probably will end up updating every two or three days now. These things happen my dude. I have been spoiling you guys with the last few chapters. Anyway, kudos and comment when you can. Enjoy :D

Keith ended up laying on the foldout bed while Cosmo laid across his chest. He ran his fingers through Cosmo’s hair while he wondered if he had somehow messed up some important human courting ritual. Had he and Lance gone on dates? And if they did, did that mean they needed to have sex now? What were the rules?

He looked over at Shiro who was walking about the kitchen, getting himself something to drink. “Hey Shiro? Can I ask you a question?”

“Yes. What do you need?”

“When you and Adam were together did you have sex after the third date?”

Shiro’s face went bright red. “Where is this coming from?”

“I’m trying to figure outfit human courting because apparently your TV shows are shit and are not accurate. I didn’t even know about the third date rule until Lance told me about it!”

“The three date rule isn’t a thing,” Said Shiro. “It’s more like a guideline. Some people have sex on the first date and some wait longer. Every couple is different.”

“Oh okay… So when did you and Adam do it?” Shiro blushed and mumbled something into his cup that Keith didn’t quite catch. “What was that?”

“Second date…” Said Shiro a little louder. “To be fair we were both really, really, really drunk at the time so… Yeah.”

“Alright… So Lance was just being a dick about us going on our third date.”

Shiro almost choked on his water. “Wait, what? You and Lance are dating? I thought you said he and Allura were?”

“Well TV lied to me again,” Muttered Keith. “I swear Galra’s make way more sense than humans. Everything has a set of rules that are easy to follow. None of this weird crap. There’s too much to do.”

“Well, humans are complicated.”

“Clearly… So does Lance like me or something?”

“Is this because you two have hung out together?”

“Yeah.” Keith sighed and rubbed a spot behind Cosmo’s ear. Lance was weird. He didn’t like it. He
still wanted to punch Lance in the face whenever they were together, but after spending so much
time around other humans he had to admit that Lance was someone who was handsome. At least by
human standards. If he kept his mouth shut he’d be perfect.

He sighed a little and attempted to make himself more comfortable under Cosmo. The cosmic wolf
whined and leaned harder into him. He seemed to be determined to make him suffocate at this point.
Damn wolf. He growled a little at him and the wolf just gave him a weird look before wrapping his
jaws around Keith’s face and wagged his tail.

“... You need help there Keith?”

Keith carefully pulled his face away and gagged. “Gross. Stinky wolf breath. You need a mint or
something.” Cosmo nuzzled him and licked his face. “... Shiro, are there any animal dental things we
can use on Cosmo?”

“Um, I don’t think there is anything to make his breath better. Stuff to keep his teeth strong so they
don’t rot out of his head, yes, but he’s always going to have dog breath.”

“... Gross.”

Shiro hummed a little in agreement and leaned over the couch. “So…”

“So?”

“Are you going to try and talk to you mum?”

“Fuck no.”

“Okay… But I think you’re making a mistake.”

Keith glared up at him. “I hate her. Everything that she did to me. She never bothered looking for me
or my dad after she had to go back. I understand she had a mission to do, but we were nothing to her.
She didn’t even tell the Blade that she got knocked up and had me… I’m just an embarrassment to
her. To all Galra.”

“Don’t put yourself down like that Keith.” Said Shiro. “You know… If I was you I’d like to at least
take the opportunity to talk to my parents again…”

“…” Now Keith was starting to feel bad again. He had asked Shiro about his parents when he was
younger and he had been informed that they were hit by a drunk driver. Shiro had a very good
relationship with his parents. They were apparently very supportive and loving. Keith could see that
reflected in the way Shiro acted. “Are trying to guilt trip me?”

“Perhaps. Is it working?”

“A little…”

Shiro smiled a little and gently patted Keith’s head. “Then I’m doing my job.”

“Your job?”

“Yeah, as you big brother. Keith, you’re like my little brother.”

“... That’s Shiro.”

***
The next day Keith went and walked with Cosmo to the dog park. By now everyone there was used to the giant that was Cosmo. He did get a lot of looks from confused and surprised people, but no one really cared when Keith let Cosmo off his leash.

Which is what he did. He let Cosmo off his leash and followed him at a distance. It was nice to watch Cosmo interact with all the other dogs. He was way bigger than the biggest dogs that came there. When a smaller dog came up to him Cosmo would drop to the ground and roll onto his back so they could play with him.

It was cute and Keith always stayed close by, especially when a worried dog owner would come up to make sure that their own dog wasn’t going to get eaten by the wolf. Cosmo seemed to really like it when the smaller dogs like the pomeranians and corgies wanted to play with him. When he got close to a few smaller dogs that were off their leashes Cosmo flopped onto his side and wagged his tail. Those ones belonged to people that frequented the park and were happy for them to be around Cosmo.

Keith smiled a little and leaned against the fence. He was glad Cosmo was having fun. He sighed but quickly tensed when he felt a familiar presence beside him. “Krolia.”

“Yurak.” She offered Keith an ice cream cone. Which he ignored. “Come on Yurak. It’s dairy free.”

“…” He took it from her. “So you remembered I’m lactose intolerant. Big deal… Your human disguise is getting better.”

She shrugged. “I think I finally have the skin tone correct.”

“Hmm…” He ate some of his ice cream and looked over at Cosmo. He still looked like he was enjoying himself. “Has Kolivan called me back yet?”

“Not yet. I just saw you and decided to see how you were going. Is that so bad?”

“Yeah. You’re not my mother. Don’t start acting like one now.”

She sighed. “Fine. I’m concerned about you because we’re both members of the Blade and I want to make sure you’re fit to go back.”

“So you’re the one that gets to decide if I’m fit to go back? If that’s the case I’m stuck here forever, aren’t I?” He hissed. “You’ve never wanted me to be Galra or part of the blade. Nothing.”

“You need to be at the top of your game if you want to do missions for the Blade.” She stated bluntly. “You know none of us will send you out on a mission if we think you’re not up to our standards.”

“Whatever… You know, if you didn’t want me you shouldn’t have fucked my dad.”

Krolia rolled her eyes. “You really think the life I had with your father was that shallow?”

“Considering you kept my existence a secret from everyone what else can I think? You were ashamed of having a half-breed and left me with dad so that you wouldn’t be shamed by the rest of the Galra.”

“… Well if that’s what you want to believe, fine. But it was a lot more than that. Did your father talk badly about me?”

“No… He was only ever spoke about you as some amazing woman that had things to do before you
were able to come back to us. You told him you would come back, but you didn’t and I never even knew who you were or why you did what you did and—"

“Breath Yurak. You’re rambling.”

Keith took a moment to compose himself. “... Why dad? What made you want him anyway?”

“Well he saved me when my vehicle crashed and I almost died of heat stroke. Several of the crystals that powered my suit got shattered on impact so it was heavy, cumbersome, and was overheating me. I passed out and he took me to his home and helped me recover.”

“And you didn’t kill him?”

“Oh I was planning to. In fact I almost did. I had my knife and I was so close to stabbing him right in between the eyes.”

“What stopped you?”

“He told me I didn’t have to kill him just because I was afraid.” She smiled fondly at the memory. “I also almost killed him on reflex when I first woke up. I pinned in to the floor and was about to rip out his throat when he told me I had gorgeous eyes… You know how rare it is for a Galra to hear that.”

“Yeah the whole pupil and iris thing is pretty gross to most of them… So dad just flattered you out of killing him?”

“I guess he did. After that I grew more and more attracted to him till I realised that I was in love with him.”

“How does love between a human and Galra work anyway?” Asked Keith. “I’m having enough trouble trying to find anything about human courting… There’s too many cultures and too many rituals… I don’t get it.”

Krolia chuckled a little and smiled at Keith. “Well it was a little strange, but the two of us made it work. I wanted to kill him every chance I got. I wanted to challenge him to romance by combat, and I did, and he accepted.”

“You did?” Keith was surprised to hear that. He didn’t expect anyone that wasn’t Galra to agree to that. “What happened?”

“I punched him in the stomach, flipped him onto his back and he yielded. The fight lasted less than five seconds.” She giggled. Actually giggled. Krolia was usually a very stoic, reserved person as long as she wasn’t wound up and then she would be screaming and throwing fists. “I was so shocked that he yielded so quickly to me. But he told me humans don’t fight the ones they truly love. He only agreed to the fight because he knew that’s how Galra establish our romantic bonds.”

“Huh…”

“Have you started to have romantic feelings towards anyone Yurak?”

Keith blushed and looked anywhere but where she was standing. “What? No. Why would you think that?”

Krolia chuckled. “You’re very easy to read Yurak. Just like your father… I’m guessing you’re having a difficult time because of your Galra and human instincts?”
“... Maybe. I don’t know. I keep thinking about him and he’s said some weird stuff to me that might or might not mean he likes me that way but I just… I don’t know anymore. I just want Kolivan to hurry up and bring me back so I don’t have to think about it anymore.” Suddenly Cosmo wrapped his mouth around the hand Keith was holding his ice cream. “... Do you mind?”

Krolia smiled and gave the wolf a few pats. “The best advice I can give you in loving a human is to talk to them. They are a lot more social than Galra and most would rather use their words than their fists to understand one another.”

“... Can I punch him if he rejects me?”

“Humans are squishier than Galra.”

“Is that a no?”

“That’s a big no Yurak. Don’t punch the squishy humans.”

“Fine…”

“Well, I should get going soon. You try and get that love life of yours sorted out. Okay?”

“Whatever...” He didn’t look at her as she walked away. It felt weird having a bonding moment with her. He didn’t really have those kinds of moments with people. It made him feel weird. He looked down at Cosmo and frowned. “You owe me an ice cream.”

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Lance felt like his hand had completely seized up. In fact it probably had. He did a massive trash polka piece on a guys back that had been two days in the making. There were skulls, and lizards, and maps, and a tank all integrated into the design. By the end of it he just wanted to die. At least his client was happy.

Pidge kicked him out on his ass when he was done with that client. She told him that he wasn’t any use to any one with a completely fucked up hand. She Lance packed up his stuff and headed out.

The sun was starting to set and Lance couldn’t help but wonder if Keith was going to go out on his bike again. He’d had fun the other night going out with him. Keith seemed to be pretty good at driving that hoverbike of his, especially when he went off road. It was also lots of fun teasing the hell out of him.

Keith was cute when he hissed and blushed at him. He also thought he looked adorable when he got mad in Galra form since he reminded Lance of a grumpy cat. A grumpy cat that could rip his face off, but he felt the same way about big cats like lions and tigers too.

He hoped Keith would take him out on his bike again. It was fun, and apart from having a near heart attack everytime Keith sped off while in hover mode. It was one hell of an adrenaline rush, but he was pretty sure that if they crashed at that speed they would both be dead. Real dead.

As he contemplated this Cosmo bounded up to him and jumped up happily. Lance grinned and caught his front arms. “Hey there buddy. Where’s Keith?”

“Right behind him.”

Lance looked over Cosmo and grinned. “Hey there mullet. Taking the big boy out for a walk?”
“Yeah. We went for a walk.”

Lance nodded and happily scratched behind Cosmo’s ears. “Well that’s good. You going to go for a ride again tonight?”

Keith smiled a little and gave him a questioning look. “Why? You want to go for another ride? Thought it was too much for you. Your legs were practically shaking when you finally stood up again.”

“... I can’t tell if you meant that to sound slightly sexual or not but that’s how it sounded.”

“What? No! Are all human males this perverted?” He huffed and crossed his arms, pouting slightly. “And here I was thinking Galra were bad. But no. Looks like it’s you guys that can’t get your mind out of the gutter.”

Lance knew he shouldn’t ask but he couldn’t stop himself. “And what do Galra consider perverted?”

Keith blushed a little. “You know… Stuff like fighting technique. Fighting styles… Things like martial arts is way more than just beating the shit out of each other for the hell of it. Some of it is just really sexy to us. I mean, for certain things we only allow certain techniques…”

“And what does the mysterious Keith find to be a sexy fighting style?”

“... Cosmo and I are going home now.”

“Aw, okay man. Have a good night.” He raised his hand to wave at him and he instantly felt sharp pain racing down his fingers. “Fuck!”

Keith frowned and stared at his hand. “What did you do to yourself?”

“Hand cramps. It happens sometimes. I’ll be fine.”

“... Let me try something?”

“Will it involve me getting punched or kicked?”

“Just give me your hand.”

Lance sighed dramatically and held his hand out. Keith delicately took his hand in his and gently rubbed his thumb over his knuckles. “Should be an easy fix…” He carefully pressed his thumb into one of his knuckles and quickly manipulated Lance’s hand in his own. He repeated the process until he had put pressure on every knuckle. “There. Did that help?” Asked Keith.

He quickly flexed his fingers and was surprised to see that whatever Keith did worked. His hand felt a lot better and was showing no signs of cramping. “... Okay, how did you do that?”

“It’s just some basic stuff. Nothing fancy.”

“Well it’s pretty cool.”

“Yeah?”

“Yeah.”

“...”
“…”

“So um… I actually was thinking about taking my bike out again. I need to test some more things with it. Jumps and stuff… If you want to come along you can, as long as you stop screaming Spanish in my ear.”

Lance pouted. “Those were prayers. Prayers that I wouldn’t suddenly die.”

“If you start screaming them I will turn off the communication function on your helmet.” Said Keith bluntly. “You trying to squeeze the life out of me is distracting enough.”

“If I’m gonna go down I’m taking you with me.”

Keith laughed a little and kept walking with Cosmo. “Fair enough. I’m going to drop Cosmo off and we can get going. The bike’s just around the back.”

“Okay cool.”

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It was still just as terrifying experiencing Keith’s off road hoverbike skills. Sure he was good, but damn did he really have to go at full speed over every damn hill? He was pretty sure that at this point Keith had turned off the helmet’s intercoms since Keith hadn’t told him to shut up yet.

After a particularly hard landing Keith stopped and got off the bike, before promptly falling down and crawling into the fetal position. “… Are you okay Keith?”

“Really bad landing… Landed right on them…”

It was hard for Lance not to laugh. “Dude, you landed on your balls? Do you need some ice or something?”

“J-just give me a minute… Ow…”

Lance grinned and stood next to him. “What? You don’t got some special Galra massage thing you can use on yourself?”

“… Lance I swear to whatever god you believe in I will leave you out here if you don’t shut up… It really fucking hurt…” He mumbled the last part and that made Lance feel bad.

He sat by Keith and leaned against the bike. “… First time I got whacked in the nuts was when I was like… five. Playing soccer with my family and Marco punted the ball right at me. I tried to bounce it off my chest but I missed. It fucking hurt. I thought I was going to die. I thought I was dying. Mama yelled at Marco for a bit about kicking the ball too hard and Pop pop just gave me a bag of frozen peas. Rachel and Veronica complained and whined about eating peas for the rest of the week.” He laughed. “The bag wasn’t even open yet.”

That got a small chuckle out of Keith. It made Lance grin. Maybe he’d feel a little better if he heard some more about his accidental maiming.

“Oh, and then there was the time I almost drowned because I was being a dick.” Said Lance. “I was ten and the family was at this big lake. Us kids were climbing a tree and jumping off it into the lake. I was being a little shit and messing around. I then slipped, hit a tree branch, slipped off it and almost drowned. Luckily Veronica was able to drag my dumb ass out. Parents still don’t know it happened.”
“You really almost drowned?”

“Young. What story you want to hear next? The one where I fell down a well or the one where I almost got murdered by a flock of geese?”

Keith looked over at him. “You almost got murdered by a flock of geese?”

“Yeah. I was passing through a field, shortcut to get home, and the guy’s place I cut through happened to own a bunch of geese. The only saving grace was that those satan birds had their wings clipped so they couldn’t fly after me. The owner just watched me running from his kitchen window laughing at me.”

“You kind of deserved it.”

“I know.”

Keith slowly sat up and sighed. “Well, you’re an idiot, but those birds are evil.”

“Right?”

They shared a laugh about that before falling into a comfortable silence. It seemed to last forever. Not that Lance minded. He liked it. He pretended not to notice when Keith shuffled a little closer to him. Close enough that their arms were touching. It made them both blush ever so slightly.

“... Hey Lance?”

“Yeah?”

“Since I don’t really know how to interact with humans, can you be straight with me?”

“Can’t I’m bi.”

Keith rolled his eyes. “Can you be serious for a moment?”

“Sorry. Whenever someone mentions being straight I have to make sure people know I ain’t straight.”

“... Never mind.”

“Hey man, you can still talk to me. It’s fine.”

Keith shook his head. “Don’t worry about it. It was a dumb idea.”

Lance reached over and cautiously touched his fingers. He instantly felt Keith shiver at his touch. “No man. If you want to have a real heart to heart here I don’t mind. Like, I know you don’t have to or anything. You’ve already told me so much about yourself. Just like... If you need to vent about something I’m here to listen to you.”

“Lance, I think I li-” Suddenly the two of them were engulfed in a bright purple light. Lance was momentarily blinded but Keith jumped to his feet. “Who the fuck are you?”

The lights dimmed a little and they were able to see a rather large looking man on a hoverbike. They got off it and walked over to Keith. He didn’t even bother looking at Lance. Lance looked at Keith to see if he knew what was going on.

Keith himself looked very surprised, but he snapped to attention. “Sir?”
The man just waved at him. “At ease Yurak. It’s good to see you again. Did you enjoy your vacation?”

“Well yeah, I guess. But it was a little long.” Admitted Keith.

“I see.” It was about then that the older male Galra looked down at Lance. “Yurak, who is that?”

“This is Lance. He’s a friend of mine. He knows about the Galra.” Said Keith calmly. “Since the majority of humans do not believe things like aliens or supernatural stuff no one would believe him if he told anyone anything anyway. Lance this is Kolivan. He is the leader of the Blade of Marmora.”

Lance nodded and slowly stood up. “Hi…” He really hoped that he didn’t have to fight this guy. He was a fucking giant. He was pretty sure that if Kolivan punched him his great, great grandchildren would feel it.

Kolivan gave Lance a critical look before turning his attention back to Keith. “You need to gather your things. We need to go.”

Lance was shocked. He knew Keith said that the Blade would come back for him at any time, but he didn’t expect it to be so soon. Krolia sad soon for Galra wasn’t soon for humans. Was that just a lie? He didn’t understand what was going on. He looked over at Keith for him to say something, maybe even object. He had to at least stay for Shiro, right? Shiro was the only person he knew for sure he liked.

But Keith just nodded at Kolivan’s words and stared at him with a blank expression. “Understood. We will leave for the mission once I have gathered my things.”
Apart

Chapter Notes

In which both boys are sad and they know why but they don't really know why. Kudos and comment when you can. Enjoy :D

One week. It had been one week since Keith had left. Lance thought it was weird how quick things suddenly went back to how they were before. No one had really spoken much more about him apart from asking where he went. When Lance mentioned that Keith went back to the Blade, that was that.

Lance should have been happy for Keith. He was back to doing what he wanted to do, but he wasn’t. There was just a feeling that something wasn’t right. He sighed heavily and slumped over in his chair.

The door opened and Lance looked up. It was Allura with the morning coffee. He hadn’t seen her in a while. Since she found out Keith was Galra in fact. She gave him a small smile. “Morning Lance.”

“Morning Allura… Haven’t seen you in ages. Wonder why.”

She blushed a little in embarrassment. “I um… Look, I needed time to think. Keith is a nice person but I needed time to process everything in my mind. That is all… was working up the courage to talk to him and ask him to forgive my outburst… Keith wasn’t the one that hurt my people. Now he’s gone… I feel terrible.”

“Okay.”

“Do you need anything? Would you like to go out somewhere?”

“No. I’m good Princess.” He laughed a little. “I still can’t believe you’re an actual princess.”

She smiled a little. “Yeah… Are we still friends Lance?”

“Sure Princess.”

“Thank you… I’m going to talk to Shiro now.”

“Okay. Bye.” He watched her leave and sighed sadly. He was glad Allura was able to work through her prejudices, but it was a little too late for her to talk to Keith. Keith. Fucking hell, Keith. He had such an emotionless, stoic expression on his face when he was talking to Kolivan. It was so robotic and not like the Keith he knew.

He missed him so much. Lance missed tossing out the trash and seeing Keith playing with Cosmo, or looking out the window and seeing Keith taking the giant wolf for a walk. He liked just hanging around him and having fun. Keith was quiet but he was still fun. He sighed louder and slumped over more in his chair.

This time Pidge and Hunk didn’t need to ask what was wrong with Lance. It was pretty obvious this time. They were worried about Keith too. The best that they could hope that he would be able to come back soon.
Keith hit the wall with a loud thunk. He had been out of practice for too long. He could usually hold his own pretty well against Ilun, but today they were kicking his ass. Literally. They had managed to get behind him twice and kicked him in the ass.

To their credit, Ilun did go over to help them back up. “You okay there?”

“Yeah, just out of practice. Humans don’t fight as much as we do.”

“Fair enough.” Ilun brushed some hair out of Keith’s face and made a disapproving noise. “Your hair needs to either be cut short or tied back.”

“I guess… But I’m lazy.”

Ilun sighed and pulled Keith to a quiet area and started to braid his hair. “So lazy… What was the human realm like? Did you happen to find that Shiro person you used to talk about?”

“Yeah I found him.” Keith smiled sadly. “He was really happy when I moved in with him. It was like I never left in the first place. It felt like home… He was really torn up about me coming back, but he understood that this is what I want to do.”

“Met any other interesting humans?”

“Well… I don’t know if Krolia has reported this yet, but I met two Altean’s. The Princess, Allura, and someone called Coran. I don’t know if they are related or not but they are okay I guess… I also met like, three humans I found interesting. They are pretty cool.”

Ilun nodded as they continued to braid. “Kolivan has informed us about the refugees in the human realm. Tell me about these humans.”

“Well, there’s Hunk. He’s really nice. He does a lot of cooking. I think it’s his passion or something. He’s also kind of overly cautious, but it doesn’t matter. Pidge is the other one. She apparently has a different name, but everyone calls her Pidge. She’s really smart and makes robots when she’s not doing her job.”

“That’s really cool.” They were quiet for a few moments before they spoke again. “What about the third human? You haven’t said anything about them.”

Keith frowned a little. “Oh yeah… That um… Lance…”

“Lance?”

“Yeah. He’s this guy that’s loud, friendly, talked to me a lot… I met his family and they seemed to like me too… He makes me laugh and his smile makes me smile and I just… I don’t know. He makes me want to punch him. I want to punch him right in his stupid face and break his teeth.”

Ilun laughed. “Wow, sounds like you like him.”

“… I don’t know. Even if I do like him human courting is hard. Some follow this thing called a three date rule where you have sex on the third date.”

“… What is a date?”

“A date is where one male and one female go to a place or places together by themselves.”
“Just a male and female? Not a male and male or female and female? … What about all the other genders and sexualities?”

“Humans have a very limited understanding on those aspects. Some places are better than others but you know. It’s generally just male and female.”

“... Humans are weird.”

“I know. Anyway, I have no idea if he was trying to romance me the human way or whatever. I think he might have liked me? I was open to the idea of maybe trying a human romance with him...”

“How did that turn out?”

“Well I’m here, aren’t I?”

“Oh.”

“Yeah…” Keith felt a little bad that he never said anything to Lance but it was probably for the best. He was going to end up going back to the Blade anyway. He’d have to leave Lance behind. He was a human. Just a regular human guy. He had a family. He couldn’t just drop everything and join him. Lance had a life. He would be missed by a lot of people if he was suddenly gone. Lance wasn’t like him. This was for the best.

Ilun sighed and finished braiding his hair. “Romance is such a difficult thing… I wish I could find a mate but like, you know. Kind of hard since if we’re not on missions we’re recovering from getting our butts kicked.”

“Yeah.”

Suddenly there was a small flash of light and Cosmo was in the room with something in his mouth. He happily wagged his tail and ran over to Keith, jumping on him. The wolf seemed to be very happy living somewhere bigger where he didn’t have to worry about teleporting and scaring people.

“Hey boy, what do you have there?” Keith took the thing out of Cosmo’s mouth. It looked like someone’s glove. Seconds later Verk entered the room. He looked very out of breath, and he was missing a glove.

“Stop that… stop that dog…”

“I have your glove.” Keith held it up. “It’s covered in spit, but I got it.”

Verk groaned in annoyance and took it back before glaring at Cosmo. “That’s the last time I’ll be giving you any pats.” Cosmo whined and flopped onto the floor. Verk just ignored him. “Anyway, you okay there Yurak? Heard you’re a little shaky on everything.”

Keith shrugged. “A few more days and I’ll be at the top of my game… Do either of you have any idea what Kolivan needs me to do? I’m assuming there’s some big quintessence deposit that you guys have found or something?”

“Actually, we’re planning a rescue.” Said Ilun. “Thace has let us know about a prisoner base that got set up in the Olkarion realm. Krolia got us the codes we need to open up a small warp gate to Olkarion so we can rescue anyone that they might have abducted from other realms. We have reason to believe these are prisoners in an experimentation camp rather than an actual prison. Thace is still giving us information.”
“I see…” Keith frowned and nodded. “Let me guess, I’ll probably be the one making the
distraction?”

“Probably.” Said Verk. “You’re good at that. You’ll have to talk with Kolivan about it.”

“… I guess. Come on Cosmo.” He walked out of the room quickly followed by the Cosmo. It didn’t
take too long for them to find Kolivand. He was talking to Regris and Antok. “Excuse me,
Kolivan?”

He looked over at Keith. “Is something wrong Yurak?”

“I was wondering about the mission. Ilun and Verk have been talking about it. Am I going to cause a
distraction?”

“Yes.” Kolivan was always blunt with him. It was something that Keith really appreciated. “But we
still have to collect intel before we can finalise the plan. Understood?”

Keith nodded. “Of course. Knowledge or death, right?”

The corner of Kolivan’s mouth twitched slightly into a smile. “Good. Until we’re ready you should
keep training. Your skills aren’t as good as they used to be… Better than when you almost got
yourself killed, but still room for improvement.”

“Of course. I’ll get back to training right away.”

“Good, and Yurak?”

“Yes?”

“It’s good to have you back.”

Keith smiled a little. “Thanks. It’s good to be back.” He ended up training for a few more hours with
Ilun and Verk before he retreated to his room with Cosmo. The happy wolf made himself on the bed
and was promptly pushed off by Keith so he could lie down. Cosmo just jumped up on top of him
and curled around him. He sighed contentedly and ran his fingers through Cosmo’s fur. “… It’s good to
be back.”

He closed his eyes and sighed. He made the right choice, right? Keith needed to go back. The Blade
needed him. This wasn’t a mistake. Shiro understood why he was doing this. He knew he had to let
him go. Keith might have been a wreckless, but he was loyal to a fault. He had to do this… But even
though he knew this it didn’t stop him feeling weird.

It was something that he hadn’t really felt before. Maybe he was feeling a little homesick? But he
never really had a home. Sure he was staying with Shiro, but was that really his home? Was his place
with the Blades his home? Maybe his home was with Lance… Wait. Lance?

Keith’s eyes snapped open. Lance? Why was he thinking about Lance? Sure he did think that dumb
Cuban boy a lot. He was going to say that he liked him before Kolivan showed up. Maybe he was
feeling regret? Was that what this feeling was? Regret? He didn’t like it. It kind of made him really
fucking mad. But he didn’t know what he was mad at. Maybe after this mission Kolivan would let
him go for a few days so he could see everyone? Maybe. Hopefully. Doubtful.

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After a few days a just sulking, Lance decided to do something about it. He needed to get out of
town for a while. He just got into his car early on his day off and drove away. He ended up pulling into the parking lot of the national park he and Keith first went to. He wasn’t sure why he had been drawn here. But he didn’t really care that much.

He got out and walked along the same track he and Keith did with Cosmo. He remembered all the silly things that they got up to. Like the silly twenty questions game, or threatening to tickle Keith. Cosmo jumping on Keith when he ran away from him was fun too. Those were nice memories.

Eventually he got to the little clearing where Cosmo had wandered off and he first found out about Keith being Galra. It seemed so surreal. He walked off the track and tried to find the tree that Keith had cut into. Surprisingly it wasn’t too hard to find. Keith hard really cut deep.

He continued to follow the cuts on the trees to the spot where Keith had gone and killed those Galra things. He didn’t know why he wanted to be there. Maybe he just needed a reminder that it was real and not just some insane fever dream?

The burnt crater was still there. It was no longer smoldering. Why would it be? It had been ages. He crouched by the hole and ran his fingers over it. He could still vividly remember how cool and scary Keith looked at the time. It was like someone had flipped a switch in his head and he just lost his mind. At least while he was fighting.

He sighed a little and looked over at the cave where they had been gathering the crystalized quintessence. They hadn’t actually looked in there when everything was said and done did they?

Curiosity got the best of him and Lance decided to have a little look for himself. He wouldn’t go too far. Just enough to see if there was anything of interest in there. Like, maybe if he found some Galra stuff he could maybe store it away and give it to Keith if he came back?

He walked into the cave and used his phone as a light. He saw; dirt, rocks, walls, dirt, moss, dirt, dirt, a rock, and more dirt. Why the hell was he even doing this? Lance sighed sadly and ran his fingers through his hair. Keith might not even come back. Why would he come back? He was part of some interdimensional group of ninja cat people. If he came back for anyone it would be Shiro not him.

He didn’t understand why that bothered him so much. He wished that if Keith did come back he would come back and see him. Not just Shiro. But what was the chance of that happening? Shiro was his brother and actually meant something to Keith. What was Lance? Lance was just a stupid goofball. Some footnote in his life. He should just leave. He didn’t need to be here. It was just his stupid bi ass brain being stupid again.

He turned to leave and immediately tripped over a rock. “Ow…” He slowly got up and looked at the rock he tripped over just to death glare it. However, he happened to see something plastic that shouldn’t have been there by the rock. He quickly grabbed it and dusted it off.

It was about the size of his palm, made from dark plastics, a kind of tacky substance that held everything together, and a black mirror that took up the majority of one side. Lance frowned a little and attempted to clean it a little more as he tried to figure out what it was. It had to be Galra. It didn’t look like some kind of silly toy or typical hiking equipment.

He frowned a little and took a photo and sent it to the group chat. One of them was bound to know what it was. If it was Galra, Allura and Coran would know. If it was hiking stuff, Shiro would know. If it was some science equipment, Pidge would know. Hunk might know what it was. That guy was full of surprises.

Lance tried to rub a small bit of dirt off bottom of the black mirror when it suddenly sprung to life. A
plethora of random glyphs danced across the mirror like a hollywood computer hacker typing code. Then there was a flash of red, like it took his photo or scanned him or something. Then the glyphs started flashing red.

“I’m so fucked.”

Lance dropped it and quickly ran out of the cave. He knew he was screwed now. So, so fucking screwed. It was totally Galra tech and now they had his face or his scan? He had no idea what it was but he needed to get the hell out of there before he got killed.

He only got a few steps out of the cave before he heard the sound of some kind of rifle getting cocked. Lance turned his head just in time to see a bright light heading towards him. Everything seemed to go in slow motion. He saw the blast coming. He felt it hit. It was like a punch to his guts and his muscles cramped painfully while the rest of his muscles started spasming. He hit the ground hard, convulsed for a few seconds, and blacked out.
Everyone had gathered around the table as Kolivan went over the mission. “This is extremely important. The Olkarion realm was once full of exotic plant life. These days it has been practically burnt to the ground. The Galra stripped it of its timber and natural resources.”

Several images flashed across the screen of the Olkarion realm before and after the Galra invasion. It looked like such a beautiful place before it all went to hell. It reminded Keith a little of the rainforests on earth. However the plants were clearly not from his realm. It was upsetting to know that such a beautiful place was now reduced to little more than a concentration camp.”

“The Olkari were a people known for their advanced scientific methods and technology. Which is why this realm hasn’t be burn to the ground.” Said Kolivan calmly. “The Galra have bastardised and cannibalized much of their technology and turned their realm into both factory and prison. Thace was able to supply us with blueprints and codes to get in and out. Krolia has factored in which areas we would need to hit to allow maximum time to extract the captives.”

Keith looked over the plans that Kolivan had laid out. There were seven buildings they needed to hit. He, Regris and Ulaz were going to hit all the power cores in those buildings. No big deal. They would set them up to explode simultaneously. It would be insanity.

Once everything was set up Regris would meet up with Verk and would break into their main prison unit to disarm any alarms. They would then join with everyone as they would help guide the prisoners to the extract points. Kolivan and Antok were going to be in charge of keeping the way points open for everyone to escape. Everyone was expected to help in helping prisoners escape. There was no way of knowing the physical or mental conditions of any of the prisoners.

“... There something else you all should know.” Said Kolivan, the mood in the room instantly becoming more somber. “Krolia and Thace have unconfirmed information that the prisoners are not being used for slave labor since the population is so small and the prisoners seem to be a mix of different races from different realms. We all know what that means.”

There was an uneasy murmur among the rest of the group that Keith didn’t understand. He hadn’t really been part of any big prison breaks before. He was usually sent on missions where he could cause the most collateral damage as possible.

Kolivan seemed to notice the fact that Keith wasn’t as uneasy as the rest of the Blade and sighed a little. “Yurak, the Galra look down on all that are not Galra as inferior. They take a small sample size of any species they conquer before the invasion and take them away to run experiments to find the most efficient ways to wipe them out. They test for things like heat and cold resistance, pressurization, how long a species can hold their breath, what chemicals can they safely breathe in. The essentially torture species to death. Do you understand the gravity of the situation now?”

Keith nodded. “Yes sir. I understand now.”
“Good. We don’t have much time left before the mission starts. Yurak, I want you to concentrate on training. You’re almost back to normal performance. If you aren’t training go and work with Regris. Understood?”

“Yes sir.”

“Good. Everyone knows what we have to do?” When no one objected Kolivan dismissed the group and everyone went back to what they needed to do.

This was big. Keith knew it. It wasn’t every day that the Blade was saving these kinds of prisoners. He had heard about saving them from fighting arenas that they had been saved from, but nothing like this. He hoped he’d be able to pull this off. If any part of this mission fails he knew it would be his head.

He just had this feeling that if he didn’t do this right everyone would cast him aside. Kolivan would put him on some kind of permanent vacation. He’d never see the Blade again. He’d effectively be exiled, and if the Galra found him he would be dragged in front of Zarkon to be publicly executed for all other Galra to see. But that would be after they tried to make him crack and spill his secrets. If it came to that Keith wasn’t above going to the extreme and ending his own life to save his honour.

He sighed a little and shook his head. He didn’t have time to brood about how useless he was. The only way he’d be able to make a difference was if he completed his mission. Cause a distraction and rescue the prisoners. Simple enough. He could do this. He hoped he could. He had to. He didn’t have much of a choice.

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The tattoo shop was relatively quiet. In fact it was so quiet Pidge was spinning around on one of the stools and trying to get Hunk to push her around with a broom. Obviously Hunk was having none of this since he didn’t want her to fall over and hurt herself. Pidge let out a tired sigh and was about to give up and go back to work when Allura came racing in.

“Oh quiznack!” She exclaimed. “Where is Lance?”

“It’s his day off.” Said Hunk. “What’s wrong?”

Allura’s eyes bugged and she looked like she was freaking out even more. “Oh no… This is bad, Really bad. Have any of you two seen what Lance has sent us via the group chat?”

They quickly checked their phones and frowned at the image Lance had sent. “Is this some kind of shitty movie prop?” Asked Pidge. “I mean, look at it. It’s so dumb looking.”

“A toy?” Suggested Hunk.

Allura made a distressed noise. “No! It’s a Galra communication device! It isn’t on at the moment, but they are very easy to activate, and when they activate… Lance is in great danger!”

“Hold on Allura, it could be broken.” Said Pidge. “Like you said it isn’t on at the moment… Are you sure it’s Galra tec?”

“Unmistakable.” She started pacing around. “Is there anyway of knowing where Lance is right now? I can’t contact him via text nor phone call. Aaaaah, this is really bad. We’re going to need weapons. We’re going to need a plan.”

“Whoa, calm down there Allura.” Said Hunk. “Don’t you think you’re overreacting a little.”
She shot him a horrified look. “Hunk. You do not know what the Galra do other species… Every now and then Alteans went missing and we didn’t know what was happening, but the Glara were taking them to study… To find our weaknesses, to experiment on us… If the Galra have Lance they won’t waste any time performing tests on him! We have to find him now before the Glara decide to open him up!”

While Hunk was trying to calm Allura down Pidge started to look through her phone to see if Lance had posted anything on his social media accounts; tattoo stuff, tattoo stuff, tattoo meme, beach meme, Spanish meme, Cosmo, shop advertisement, more tattoo stuff, and finally a pick of the entrance to some national park. Trust Lance to be the kind of guy to take photos of everything.

“... Guys, I’ll be back in a bit.” Pidge looked over Hunk and Allura. “Hunk get ready to close the shop. Allura, once you’re calmed down go and talk to Coran. I’ll go get Shiro.” She quickly ran into Shiro’s shop. Thankfully he was alone right now. “Shiro. Emergency.”

He gave her a confused look. “Did something break?”

“Allura thinks Lance got caught my Galra.”

“What? Why?”

“Check the group chat.” As he did Pidge quickly explained how it’s supposed to be Galra tec that Lance found and now that he has it, it’s possible the Galra have found him and if they have him Allura thinks he’s going to get carved up like a frog in a biology class. “And the last thing Lance posted before he sent that photo to us was a picture of this park. You’re all about that hiking life. You know where it is?”

Shiro took her phone and had a look. “... Yeah. I know this place. I recommended Keith and Lance take Cosmo there for a walk...” He frowned. “I think I know what trail they took... Crap, we’re going to have to fight some people. Aren’t we?”

“Possibly. Allura’s having a meltdown right now over it. Probably going through some PTSD stuff.”

Shiro nodded. “Okay. I see... Kind of. Maybe... I hope there’s still enough petrol in that old van...”

“We’re taking your van? No offence but can you even drive it with your arm?”

“... I can make do. Just go and get everyone.”

***

When Lance regained consciousness he had no idea where he was. Something heavy had been placed over his head like a box or a helmet. It muffled his hearing and he couldn’t move an inch. Cold metal was placed over his hands and feets. It felt like he was strapped to a metal table.

He tried to remember what happened after he got hit with that weird light thing. Was it electrical? Probably. He got tased? Maybe. Either way he was there and now he was here. How was he going to get out of this one?

Suddenly a blinding light completely flooded his vision. Even when Lance closed his eyes the light was still there burning through his eyelids. Then, the sound. That sound. It started out low but it quickly started to get louder and more high pitched. It then hit a frequency that made it feel like someone was scraping the inside of his skull with a spoon.

Lance started to panic. He shook his head and desperately tried to get whatever it was off his head.
But no matter what he did the thing was stuck fast. He couldn’t take it off. He couldn’t stop the noise, he couldn’t stop the lights.

He started to hyperventilate when the pain settled behind his eyes. It still felt like someone was scraping away at his skull from the inside. Black spots danced in his vision as Lance couldn’t hold himself back any longer. He started screaming, begging that someone or something would turn off the noise and the nights. It was too much for him. Way too much. He’d never felt this kind of pain before.

Mercifully, before too long the black spots in his vision had started to rapidly expand and the sounds became all fuzzy. His body quickly gave up again and he passed out for a second time.

***

Somehow Shiro had been convinced to let Coran drive his very old van while Allura, Pidge and Hunk were crouched in the back. On the way there Allura had filled them in on what to expect if there were still Galra around. In her words it was kill or be killed. Hunk had been hoping that maybe Allura was just over thinking things and maybe it was nothing. Pidge thought they should be overly cautious when it came to Galra tec since they didn’t know too much about it.

They got to the park and quickly got out. Pidge and Hunk scanned the parking lot of Lance’s car and easily spotted it. From there Shiro lead them up the trail and then off the path into a clearing. When questioned he explained that Keith had told him about this place and told him about the marks he left on the trees, which were still there.

The group cautiously followed the marked trees and kept as quiet as possible. Soon enough they managed to find a small cave with a small crater in front of it. “This is the spot.” Said Shiro. “This is where Keith told me he fought some Galra troops and disposed of their bodies.”

Coran nodded a little and twirled his mustache. “Yes, I must say that this does look very much like a place quintessence crystals would form. It has a lot of the right conditions for it… It kind of looks like there was a scuffle around here.”

Pidge frowned a little and looked over to where Coran was looking. “Oh yeah… Lots of feet mark and some drag marks too… Okay, working theory since there is no blood; Lance activated the Galra tec, it sent off some warning, Galra came, knocked Lance out, and then dragged him off somewhere.”

“… Do you think there’s a Galra base near by?” Asked Hunk. “I’d really like it if there was no Galra base near by…”

“It is possible.” Mused Coran. “Galra do tend to set up shop in quite a variety of interesting places when they start off…”

“There are no Galra around here.” The group jumped a little when they saw Krolia casually leaning against a tree. With the way she was composing herself she looked like she had been there for a while.

Allura glared at her and took a fighting stance. “Krolia! What have you done with Lance?”

Shiro quickly stood between them. “Easy there Allura. We don’t even know why she is here.” He looked back at her. “Can you explain why you are here?”

She shrugged. “To be fair this is mainly for my amusement. I have been keeping an eye on all of you to satisfy my curiosity and from my observations you all suddenly piling into a van and coming all
the way out here is not a normal thing. So I tailed you and now we are here. What is this about Lance?”

“Lance is missing.” Said Shiro calmly. “Before we lost communication with him, he sent us a photo of what Allura claims is Galra tech. Can you confirm that for us?”

He showed her the photo and she frowned. “... Yes, this is a Galra communicator. Standard stuff. They respond to very specific stimuli, but it’s not too difficult to activate.” She didn’t look happy at all. “If Lance activated it he would have been taken away to the prisoner colony in the Olkarion realm... This is going to be tricky.”

“What’s so difficult?” Asked Pidge. “We just have to brake Lance out of a Galra prison in another realm. Seems simple enough.”

Krolia chuckled a little. “I admire your attitude, but it is not that simple. You have to take into account how many skips and jumps you would have to take to get there since you don’t have a gate to just warp there. It’s so much easier if you have a stable gate by the Blade does not. The Olkarion realm is one of the oldest realms in existence. If it were to be mapped out flat like a typical map taking any direct path there without Galra detection would take at minimum one human millennia.”

“Are you serious?” Asked Hunk in shock. “How is that even possible?”

“I think I can answer that one.” Said Coran. “The quintessence fields that surround each realms are not made equally. Some are vast and aide like a raging river while others are thin like a stream. It’s faster to jump from stream to stream than to swim across a river. Zarkon’s forces have a monopoly on finding and using these streams to get into different realms while ignoring the wider rivers. You’d need to travel through the rivers to avoid him which take longer. But Galran tec has built upon old Altean tec and they have made the navigation a lot more succinct. One to one.”

“Exactly.” Said Krolia. “... Leave this to the Blade. We will have Lance back in a few of your planet’s rotations. The Blade is already planning an attack and rescue on Olkarion anyway. I can keep you informed.”

“What about Keith?” Asked Shiro. “Are you going to tell him about this?”

“By the time I make contact with the Blade, due to the quintessence time fluctuation since we do not have a stable gate the mission will already be well underway even though the plan is for it to take place several rotations from now.”

Hunk frowned a little. “Okay, so you’re saying we have to sit around here and wait how long for you Blade guys to find Lance?”

“Not just find him.” Said Krolia calmly. “We also have to treat any injuries he might have sustained while under the Gare of the Galra empire. It could take a while.” She thought for a moment. “About one human month should be it.”

“A month?” Asked Hunk. “Are you serious? What are we going to do for a month?”

“We have to help Lance.” Said Pidge. “You can’t expect us to just stand here and do nothing!”

Krolia was unamused. “None of you know the conditions you will have to face. Besides most of it is travel time. Humans can’t even revers global warming and you think you can handle something as mind warping as quintessence navigation? I am sorry but there is nothing more that you can do. You will have to trust the Blade to rescue Lance. I will inform Yurak as soon as possible. I suggest you all head home and cover for him. He will be back soon I promise.” Before any of them could stop her,
Krolia was gone.

Hunk sighed. “Do you really think we can trust her? Like, I mean she is Keith’s mum and she says she’s part of a resistance group…”

Allura growled a little and clenched her fists. “I guess we have no choice…”

Coran cleared his throat. “Um, Princess? I do have some Altean tec we could maybe dig up to try and perhaps help out a little?”

Pidge’s eyes lit up. “Tec from another realm? Sign me up! Hunk and I got nothing to do.”

“Why am I getting pulled into this?” Asked Hunk.

“Because we need to do this! It’ll be cool, and we can help Lance. Plus, it’s probably full of potential. We could probably make some kind of cool Altean weaponry to like, fight against any Galra that might drop by?” She was way too excited about this.

Coran and Allura agreed that this would be a good idea. Shiro thought it was a good idea too, but he was really worried about Lance. He had no idea what was happening to him. He could only hope that Krolia was able to fix this.

***

When Lance woke up again he was in a dimly lit cell. He was able to see and hear, and able to move around. But he had a splitting headache. It felt like someone was trying to drive a wedge through his brain.

“F-fuck…” He hissed. “What the fuck happened?”

“Psssst. New meat. You awake?”

“New meat?” Lance looked around. He couldn’t see anyone else around him. “Who?”

“I’m in the cell next to you. Name’s Rolo.”

Rolo? That name sounded familiar but he wasn’t sure why. “Hey. Name’s Lance.”

“So Lance, what are you?”

“Me? I’m human.”

“Huh… So they’ve started taking people now… Depressing.” Rolo sighed as he moved around his cell. “So Lance, how are you holding up?”

“Hmm? I have a huge headache but I guess it could be worse.”

“Ooo, Mind taps suck.”

“Is that what it’s called?”

“You’re strapped down to a table and they put a thing on your head that’s all bright and plays a noise till you pass out?”

“Yeah.”
“Mind tap.”

Lance nodded a little and rubbed his eyes in a vain attempt to try and stop the pain. “So why are you here? What is this place?”

Rolo laughed a little. “This place? Non Galra go in, but they don’t go out... It’s the ultimate prison for those the Galra doesn’t like... They like to experiment on things that aren’t Galra. Though they have been known to exact extremely harsh punishments on those Galra that are traitors here...”

“Still doesn’t explain why you are here.”

He was quiet for a moment. “... Me and my partner... The Galra invaded our realms but our leaders surrendered. The Galra let most of us live, but since we aren’t Galra, they treat us like service animals. My partner and I were caught trying to smuggle some stuff to another realm and we got caught. We then struck a deal with this bastard of a Galra to run quintessence... It was dirty work but we had to do it or end up here.”

“Shit, that’s rough dude.”

“Yeah... and then we got called to do a job and we got betrayed by that bastard half-breed, Keith.”

“Keith?” That’s where Lance remembered Rolo from. Keith’s story.

“Yeah, weird name. But he was in charge of the whole operation. He didn’t order a proper security check. Then he goes MIA after the incident and with no one else to blame, who do the Galra blame? Me and Nyma... We ran as far away as we could, but we couldn’t get back to our own realms... Then we found him. We found Keith, alive and well. He was our ticket to get back into the Galra’s good books... But we couldn’t find him and they couldn’t find him and they caught us... took us here...” He laughed. “It’s really fucked up isn’t it? Fuck, it’s all because of me Nyma got roped into this and I don’t even know if she’s alive anymore...”

“H-hey, you can’t give up man. There has to be a way out of here.” Lance looked around the room but he became dizzy and sick when he moved his head. “... There has to be a way out.”

“Don’t bother. I already tried looking... If I were you I’d just give up. The more you resist the more they will mess with you. They like the ones that fight back.”

A new wave of pain quickly flooded his senses and everything went an alarming shade of red. At least in his left eye. “F-fuck... Fuck what did they do to me? Fuck... What does that mind tap thing do?”

Rolo laughed. “You don’t know? Maybe it’s best you don’t. Trust me, some of the things they do to the poor souls here...”

“Come on man, I think I’m dying here...”

“No you’re not. Not yet. No one dies here unless they want you to. They have ways to make you come back... Especially Sendak.”

“Sendak?” He remembered Keith mentioning him a few times. “Who is he?”

“A sadistic son of a bitch that loves playing with new toys.” Said Rolo. “You better hope he doesn’t show up any time soon. If he does...” He started laughing, at least in the beginning he did. By the end it sounded like wrecked sobs. “J-just don’t resist... Let him do whatever the fuck he wants. The more you resist the more he’ll come back and do something worse... It’s only fun for him when you
fight back… Oh fuck Nyma, I’m so sorry… I’m so, so fucking sorry…”

Rolo muttered a few more things, but Lance didn’t quite catch it. His head felt like it was splitting open and there wasn’t much he could do about it. He hunched over and put his hands over his ears while he rocked back and forth, breathing deeply. Everything hurt so fucking much.
The plan so far had gone off without a hitch. Kolivan, with the help of Regris had been able to find and hijack an old quintessence stream that the Galra were no longer using. They would have to make two jumps to get to Olkarion. They did this so that if the Galra followed them then they wouldn’t immediately be jumping right into their base. Smart move.

From Keith’s understanding of how the Quintessence distorted time, it would take them seconds to get to Olkarion, but it would end up being more like two hours all up. Quintessence navigation was hard to understand. He just found and stored the stuff.

Once they were safely there everyone broke off into their respective teams. Keith made short work of his part. Placing his explosives around the main quintessence cores was simple enough. He went to the rendezvous point and waited for Regris and Ulaz.

As he waited Ilun quickly buzzed over the comms. “Heads up everyone. I just got word of a surprise inspection from one of our favourite commanders, Sendak.”

Verk made a disgusted noise. “Probably come by to throw around some unfortunate soul. Sick fuck.”

“How far away is he?” Asked Keith.

“It might work in our favour.” Said Kolivan calmly. “Sendak will want to head towards the explosions assuming we might be attacking from there. We stick with the plan. Nothing has changed. Understood?” There was a small chorus of people agreeing with Kolivan. “Good. And Yurak?”

“Yes?”

“Change the setting on your voice modulator. The Galra still believe you are just missing. We don’t need someone like Sendak suddenly recognizing your voice.”

“Understood.” Keith quickly lowered the setting so his voice sounded deeper, more gravelly. By the time he was done Ulaz and Regris silently met up with him. Keith nodded at them. “All good?”

Regris nodded and hit the comms button on his mask. “Phase two is about to commence. On your order Kolivan.”

“Understood.” Said Kolivan. “Verk, have you cleared a path for Regris yet?”

“I’ll need a little more time.” Said the other Galra with a grunt. “The ventilation system in the prison is a lot harder to navigate than initially thought. But I have been able to disarm the outer security systems. We can move into position for phase two.”
Kolivan made a disapproving noise, but ended up agreeing. “Everyone get into position. If it isn’t a prisoner it’s collateral damage.”

Everyone quickly scrambled into position. Keith quickly moved through the vent with ease and crouched over the vent opening. Any second now Kolivan would give the word and phase two would start.

As he waited he got a private message over his comms. He didn’t usually get many private messages and quickly answered it. “Hello? Did something change?”

“Yurak? It’s me Krolia.”

Keith sighed heavily. “What do you want? I didn’t think you were part of this mission outside gathering intel?”

“How far into the mission are you?”

“We’re about to start phase two. Why? Should I bring Kolivan in on this call?”

“I have just been informed that Lance was taken by the Galra and there is a strong possibility that he is here right now.”

Keith felt his stomach drop. “W-what?” Why was Lance here? He shouldn’t be here. Why would he be here? Why did the Galra know about him? “How did they find out about him?”

“He apparently found some Galra tec and accidentally turned it on.” Krolia sighed a little. “I am not too sure how long he has been gone because I have no idea quintessence channels the Galra used to transport him. But according to the time stamp on the photo Shiro showed me he sent his last communication a few Earth hours ago.”

“So he could have been here for anywhere between a week and a day, right?”

“Correct. Keep an eye out for him. I can inform Kolivan about your friend being captured if you would like?”

“... No, just let me deal with this. Thanks for informing me.”

“No problem. And Yurak?”

“Yeah?”

“Good luck.”

***

Lance laid limply in the middle of his cell. The Galra seemed to like electrocuting him before they moved him from place to place. He would have thought that they would have preferred him to walk around on his own, but nope. Apparently not.

Either way they would keep subjecting Lance to that mind tap thing. He had no idea what it was meant to do. It just made his head hurt and made him feel like vomiting. He pretty much had a constant buzzing in his ears and he swore he could taste copper right in the back of his throat. How long had he been here? He really didn’t remember. The constant throbbing in his skull just behind his eyes was enough to make him forget about time.

He could hear Rolo shuffling around in the cell next to his. He kept muttering to himself about Nyma
and something called Beezer. In Lance’s opinion Rolo sounded like he was losing his mind or had lost it. Maybe he had lost his mind? It hurt to think.

He closed his eyes and tried to tune everything out, but it wasn’t working. His ears were still ringing, his head hurt, and despite his best efforts to shut the noise out he could hear his own heart beat and the blood rushing around his body.

Suddenly a huge shockwave ripped through the building. That just made Lance whimper in pain and pull himself into the foetal position as he pressed his hands over his ears to try and block it out. Why the hell was it so loud? Was this actually happening or was this all in his head?

Suddenly something grabbed his arm and jerked him into a sitting position. “Hey you okay there?” Asked a deep, gravelly voice. “Shit, are you bleeding?”

“What’s wrong?”

“My head… It hurts… Mind tap I think…”

“What? Why the fuck would they? Shit. I got something for that.” They fumbled around for something for a little bit before they took something out of their pocket. Lance couldn’t see what it was but he felt it when something pierced his skin.

“Ow! What the fuck man? What did you inject me with?”

“Painkillers. It’ll start working in a few ticks till we can get someone to look at you. Now we have to go.” He pulled Lance to his feet and out of the cell.

Much to Lance’s surprise he didn’t feel like suddenly dropping dead from vertigo and his head was slightly clearer. Those pain killers were amazing. Lance also noticed that there wasn’t anyone else around. “… Where are the guards and like, where’s Rolo?”

The Blade member looked over at him and then around the hall. “I took care of the guards and directed everyone to the exit point. You’re lucky I decided to to an additional sweep. You completely missed the first call and now-” An alarm went off causing the two of them to look around in surprise. “Shit. They got power back here quicker than I thought…”

They grabbed Lance by the arm and practically dragged him down the hall. Suddenly they froze and quickly ushered Lance into an empty cell and put his hand over his mouth as a few guards ran by. Once they were gone, the Galra sighed. “Damn it… Give me a second.” They touched the side of their mask and started talking. “Kolivan? I’m in a bit of trouble. I might be a little late getting out. I have a prisoner with me… Minimal wounds. Claims to have had a mind tap. Unsure of how many times. Already administered painkillers… Understood.” They looked back at Lance. “We’re going to have to take the long way out.”

“Okay… How do we get out of here?”

“Well first you need a weapon… Stay here.” They quickly dashed away down the hall. Seconds later he heard blaster fire along with screams. Once the screams stopped the Galra came back and
handed Lance a newly acquired blaster and some kind of gauntlet. They strapped the gauntlet to his left wrist and handed him the blaster. “Here. If we get into a fight hang back and shoot. The gauntlet is a shield. You can block blaster fire with it. Understand?”

“... Kind of?”

“Good enough.” They pulled Lance along again and they stayed as quiet as they physically could. A few times they jumped into the shadows to avoid any guards running by, but they stayed pretty much undetected.

When Lance was pretty sure they were alone he couldn’t help asking. “So, what’s your name anyway? I’m Lance.”

“My name is...” They sighed a little and shook their head. “My name isn’t important Lance. What is important is getting you out of here alive.”

“... Alright then. Keep your secrets. But do you know a guy called Keith?”

“...”

“...? Oh, he says you guys call him Yurak. You know a Yurak?”

“... Yeah. I know a Yurak. Half-breed, has a temper, has a cosmic wolf.”

“Yeah, that’s him... Is he okay?”

The Blade member stared at Lance with what he could only assume was a confused look. At least judging from his tone. “We could get captured and killed and you’re asking about a half-breed?”

Lance glared at them. “Why do I get the feeling that term is very similar to a lot of racial slurs humans use. Like seriously man. You’d think a more advanced race would be more advanced in the equality department.”

“...” The Blade member gestured around them. “You really think a race of genocidal psychopaths think highly about any race that isn’t Galra?”

“... Okay, point taken. But still. Do you really think it’s right to call someone that? They had no control over how they were born.”

“I... I guess not... What is Yurak to you anyway?”

Lance smiled a little. “Keith is... He’s my friend and I... Oh my god I just realized I could have fucking died here... Like, Every since I woke up it’s just been a bunch of mind taps and shit so I couldn’t really think... Oh fuck my family... They wouldn’t have seen me again... Not even my body...”

“Hey, Lance. Keep it together.” The Blade member put their hands on Lance’s shoulders. “Listen to me, you can’t go into shock just yet. I need my sharpshooter to watch my back. Just like last time. Okay? No mental breakdowns until after we get the fuck out of here. Got it?”

Lance gulped. “O-okay... Wait, sharpshooter? Last time? Holy shit Keith!” He hugged him tightly. “Holy shit! I didn’t think you would be here! What the hell man? Why didn’t you say it was you? Why do you sound like you’ve smoked an excessive amount of cigarettes?”

Keith flailed a little and awkwardly pushed Lance away. “Now’s not the time Lance. We’re behind
enough as it is. Kolivan’s not going to be impressed… And when we’re on a mission, so you can’t call me Keith. You have to call me Yurak. Got it?”

“Okay. Let’s go Yurak.” Lance felt a little better that Keith was with him. It still felt kind of weird to call him Yurak, but this if this was what he wants then that’s what he would get.

Keith opened up a door to a room with a few Galra guards. They saw him and readied their weapons. “Cover me Lance.”

“I got you buddy.” Lance really hoped and prayed that Keith knew what he was doing.

***

Keith had no idea what he was doing. Lance wasn’t meant to be here. He should have been out by now. The mission should have been over by now. But no. Lance was here. Stupid Lance getting captured. Once this was all over he was going to strangle him and smash that stupid, perfect face of his into the ground. Until then he could just take his aggression out on these bastards.

Three swipes of his sword and most of them went down. Two shots from the blaster and Lance got the last of them. He glanced over at Lance and his stupid cocky smirk. Stupid bastard. How could he look like that? Fucker.

“Come on. Quit fooling around.”

“I’m not fooling around.”

Keith rolled his eyes when he suddenly got a message over the comms. “Hey guys heads up. Sendak is on his way along with a whole lot of other guards.” Said Regris. “Yurak you’re the only one left in the building. Do you need assistance?”

“Yeah, a little assistance would be good. I’m still stuck on my level. Guards are starting to swarm. I have one prisoner with me, everyone else was able to get to the lower levels before it all went to shit.”

Kolivan made a disgruntled noise. “Okay. Everything is covered here. I’ll make my way over to you. Continue to the rondevu point. If you are not there within five ticks when I get there we will have to abandon you and the prisoner.”

“Understood. See you shortly.” Keith quickly ran towards the next door. “We have to get moving. The rondevu point is just down the hallway first door on the right. Kolivan will meet us there.”

“Big scary guy?”

“Yes.”

“That guy’s terrifying.”

“He’s not that bad.” Keith quickly punched a few things into the keypad and grinned when it opened. However he wasn’t grinning when he was instantly grabbed in the claws of something much larger than himself and lifted into the air. “Fuck!”

“Ke-Yurak!”

Looking down at what had grabbed him Keith’s blood ran cold. It had been years since he had seen him, but despite all the physical changes and modifications to his body, such as his bionic eye and
arm that seemed to be powered by magic, it was still Sendak.

“S-Sendak?!” Croaked Keith in a panic.

Sendak just smirked. “The ever elusive Blade of Marmora. I’m going to enjoy this.” He threw Keith with as much force as he could muster down the hallway, and into Lance. This sent both of them flying down the hallway and landing in a tangled heap.

Keith groaned a little and looked over at Lance. He was clutching his head and bleeding from his nose. The painkillers work well, but they weren’t perfect. “Shit. Lance.” He gently shook Lance’s shoulder. “Hey, listen to me. You need to get to Kolivan. I can distract Sendak for long enough.”

“... Wait, what?”

Keith quickly stood up and got into a fighting stance. Sendak was just smirking as he slowly walked towards them. He seemed to be enjoying the panic that his mere presence was inflicting. Keith hated to admit it, but Sendak had every reason to be as smug as he was. He wasn’t considered one of the most sadistic in the Galra empire for nothing.

“Just run Lance.” Growled Keith. “Just run.” He dashed towards Sendak and attempted to strike him, but that giant robotic claw of his grabbed hold of his sword and threw it away, like it was nothing. While Keith was still stunned by the loss of his sword, Sendak punched Keith hard in the stomach with his normal arm then grabbed him again with his robotic arm.

Keith struggled a little to free himself, but then he heard the sound of something charging up. Seconds later, painful jolts of electricity coursed through his entire body. He wasn’t sure if he screamed or not. He was pretty sure he did. Then the pain stopped, but only for a few seconds, then it started again. Over and over again Sendak would stop and start shocking him.

When Sendak was done he threw him to the ground hard enough for Keith to bounce several times. His whole body was frozen and he could smell something burning. He wasn’t sure if he body had gone into shock or if he was having a stroke. Honestly either option was plausible at this point.

He almost felt like laughing. It was just his luck that he’d get captured and die on his first mission back. And by Sendak no less. He really wasn’t good enough to be part of the Blade. Being a half-breed made him too weak to be anything useful. Kolivan should have just never brought him back. The mission would have been a roaring success if it wasn’t for him. Lance would be fine if it wasn’t for him. Lance would be-

“Lance!” Keith looked over in the general direction where he’d last seen Lance and he was gone. He instantly felt relieved. Lance managed to get past Sendak while he was distracted. Just like he had told him to. That was good. He’d escaped. He’d meet up with Kolivan and the mission would be a success.

Out of the corner of his eye he saw Sendak standing by him. The Galra grabbed him by the arm and pulled him up. That sick smile never leaving his face. “Tired already? Need another jolt to wake you up?”

The awful charging noise sounded again and Keith braced for another shock, but it never came. Instead there was a bang as Sendak’s arm got shot off and hit the floor, causing the Galra to step back in shock and drop Keith. Both looked over to where the shot came from. Much to Keith’s surprise it was Lance. He was leaning against a wall and looked like he was having trouble keeping the blaster level.
“Ha, looks like you’re almost completely armless now.”

“You dare mock me you inferior scum?” Growled Sendak.

Lance just laughed. “Come on man, it’s a joke. A pun. Thought you were all into them since you seemed to be all smiles and shit while you were trying to fry that guy.”

Sandak growled and started to walk towards him. “You’re going to regret what you’ve done.”

“Nah, pretty sure that’s going to be you.”

The entire hallway filled with smoke and the last thing Keith saw clearly was Lance looking like a smug little shit. If they survived this than Keith would punch him right in the face. Once he couldn’t see anything he heard something that sounded like someone getting hit repeatedly until they fell to the floor. He was then grabbed by someone and quickly pulled out of the hallway.

He attempted to pull away from them, but Stopped when he realized who it was. “Verk?”

“Yeah, yeah. Questions later. Escape now.” Verk easily picked Keith up and dashed towards the extract point. Once they got to the extract point, Keith was surprised to see Kolivan already there with Lance. What the hell just happened?

Before he could ask Kolivan quickly got on the comms again. “Has everyone been evacuated yet?”

“Everyone is back at base and starting to undergo medical checks.” Said Ilun. “We’re just waiting on you, Yurak, Verk, and the last prisoner.”

Kolivan nodded. “You heard them. Back to the base.”

***

Lance’s head was swimming. As soon as that Sendak guy showed up Keith just threw himself at the Galra giving him time to escape. Lord knows Lance didn’t want to, especially when he heard Keith screaming. But he was level headed enough to know that Kolivan needed to know about this. He found Kolivan easily and quickly explained the situation. The Galra seemed hesitant to go back. He had to assume that it was some kind of Galra code thing.

Thankfully Kolivan called in Verk and they easily rescued Keith and knocked the hell out of Sendak. Well, at least one of them did. Lance had no idea who did what but once he heard something hit the floor Kolivan grabbed him and they dashed to the extraction point or whatever.

The sudden movement really made Lance feel ill and he couldn’t focus on anything. One second he was getting carried, then he was in a chair and getting scanned, and then someone was carrying him again. Then he was laying on a bed and there was something heavy on his legs.

When he felt like he could move without vomiting, Lance sat up slowly. He expected to be in some kind of infirmary. But he really was just in some small room. The thing on his legs moved and he was kind of startled to see Cosmo laying across him. “Oh. Hey there Cosmo.”

Cosmo looked up at him and wagged his tail before he suddenly vanished in a flash. Seconds later he turned up again with Keith. He was wearing the same uniform as the rest of the Blade, but he wasn’t wearing his mask anymore.

“Oh my god, Keith!” He tried to stand up but Keith but his hand on his shoulder to stop him. “Keith?”
“You shouldn’t be moving too much. The painkillers we’ve given you will help but you’re still going to feel sick for a few days… Also you’re going to be sneezing up a lot of blood over the next few days.”

“... What?”

“The mind tap is just straight up torture and a simple brainwashing technique the Galra use.” Explained Keith. “It kicks your senses into overdrive and the frequency of the noises they play do have a tendency to make the smaller blood vessels in your head rupture.”

“Does this mean I have a brain hemorrhage?”

“Nah, just red eyes and blood in your sinuses. You’ll be fine after a while.”

“Okay well that’s good I guess… But how are you? You were smoldering.”

“Yeah… Sendak melted my suit to my skin… It was a bit of a bitch to clean up. But at least we got away and we saved everyone we could.” He smiled a little and slowly sat on the edge of the bed. “A few days of treatments and I’ll be back to normal and so should you… Are you okay? You almost lost it back there…”

Lance just shrugged. “I think I’m still in shock at the moment… Like I’m starting to realize the gravity of what happened, like… I could have died. I might not have ever seen my family again and… You almost died. How did you know where to find me?”

“Honestly? I didn’t.” Said Keith. “I didn’t think you would be around any Galra stuff. Krolia informed me that you were here during the middle of my mission… I’m glad I found you when I did.”

“Yeah, me too…” Lance reached over and lightly touched Keith’s hand. He was thankful that Keith didn’t pull his hand away. “I can only guess how bad things would have gotten if you hadn’t shown up.”

“Yeah…”

“...”

“...”

“... Keith?”

“Yeah?”

“This isn’t a hospital or infirmary… Where am I?”

“Oh um…” A blush was slowly creeping across his face. “I kind of like… There weren’t any beds and stuff and we only had so many beds for injured people so I kind of just, you know… Just took you to my bedroom...

Lance was surprised to hear that and had a better look around the room. There wasn’t really anything around it to indicate Keith lived here. Hell, it looked more like Cosmo’s room with the dog bed in the corner. But if he was in Keith’s room, this meant he was in Keith’s bed. He couldn’t help but smirk.

“Wow Keith.”

“What?”
“If I had known it would have been this easy to get into your bed I would have gotten myself kidnapped by the Galra ages ago. I—” Lance sneezed. He instantly coated himself, his clothes, bedsheets, and Keith in blood. It was the worst nosebleed ever. But he actually felt a little less dizzy when he did.

Keith just made an annoyed sound. “Should have brought some tissues or something… You’ll be fine in a day or two. Trust me.”

Lance frowned a little as he tried to figure out what to do about all this blood. “You speaking from experience?”

“Yeah… Getting mind taps is part of basic training.” Said Keith. “I’d feel sick for weeks after and I’d have terrible nosebleeds… Though I have to admit no one would fight me during those times since I quickly learned I could use it as a weapon during hand to hand combat.” He smiled a little. “I actually got praise for using a biological weapon by a general.”

Lance laughed a little. “That sounds like it might be a joke, but I’m not mentally there enough to care right now… You got something for this blood?”

“Yeah, I’ll be back in a second.” He stood up and looked down at Cosmo. “Stay. Don’t lick the blood.” He gave Lance one more look before he left the room. As he walked Lance couldn’t help but notice that Keith seemed to be walking kind of strangely and wrapping his arm around his chest. He was way more injured than he was letting on.

Lance sighed and looked down at Cosmo. “Your owner is a weird one.

***

Keith felt slightly mortified about Lance’s comment about staying in his bed and what that implied. It really was because there weren’t any beds available for anyone that didn’t have a serious injury. Lance’s injuries weren’t considered life threatening so Kolivan just told him to let Lance stay in his room. What was the man thinking?

He shook his head and walked into the infirmary to look for something to mop up all the blood. As he did he nodded at a few of his fellow Blade members running around getting aid for the most of the brutalized escapes. Along the way he happened to pass Rolo and Nyma. Rolo had a bandage wrapped around his head and stomach while Nyma’s entire right arm and leg were bandaged. They were all surprised to see one another.

“Keith? You’re one of the Blade?” Asked Rolo.

“To be fair I joined after the Blade caught me and helped to deprogram me after being brainwashed by the Galra.” Admitted Keith. “... I’m guessing you guys got caught up in this because of me?”

“... Yeah.” Rolo sighed and ran his fingers through his hair. “Look, it was nothing personal. We just wanted to be able to get away and live our lives… And you can’t really do that in the Galra empire if you’re an enemy.”

“We’re sorry Keith.” Said Nyma. “That’s for rescuing us.”

“No problem.” He looked over at the towel next to them. “... You guys using this?” They shook their heads and Keith took it. “Where’s Beezer?”

“Around.” Said Rolo. “They’ll be back in a bit.”
“Okay… Well, I hope you two feel better. I gotta get going…”

“Okay… Hey Keith, did you find some guy called Lance?” Asked Rolo.

Keith gave him a confused look. “Lance?”

“Yeah. He was the guy in the cell next to mine… Do you know if he’s okay?”

“Lance is fine. Just a little nauseous and kind of gushing blood out his nose. He’ll pull through.” They seemed a little relieved so Keith headed back to his room, making sure to grab a bucket along the way as well just in case Lance needed to puke.

This turned out to be the right choice considering Lance was half out of bed with his hand covering his mouth when Keith walked back in. He quickly shoved the bucket into his hands and Lance immediately wretched.

Keith kind of just stood there with no idea what to do. He wasn’t the kind of person who knew how to comfort someone who was sick. He didn’t really know what to do to make someone feel better when they were sick. All he really knew was what Shiro had done to help him when he got ill.

He sighed heavily and sat next to Lance. While he was sick Keith gently rubbed his back. “Um… there, there? Just let it all out. Try not to choke?” He really wasn’t good at this. But Lance seemed to appreciate his efforts.

Once he was done being sick he gave Keith and uncharacteristically shy smile. Maybe it was just because he was sick? “So… If I am sleeping in your bed, where are you sleeping?”

Keith shrugged. “With Cosmo. I usually end up sitting with him and he falls asleep one me and then I fall asleep… Honestly the bed is just taking up room.”

“Oh, okay…” Lance looked down at his shirt and frowned. “I should probably take this off huh?” He didn’t wait for Keith to say anything and just removed the bloody shirt. He had a few bruises from where he’d been thrown around. Keith hated seeing those bruises on Lance’s skin. Before Keith even realized it he reached out and grabbed Lance’s arm, rubbing his thumb over the bruise. “… Keith?”

Keith jumped a little and quickly let him go. “Sorry… I um… You…”

Lance chuckled a little. “Neo-traditional.”

“Cool.”

“Yeah… Well are you going to change? I kind of got a lot of blood on you.”

Keith looked down at himself and shrugged. “Not my blood.”

“Well yeah but-”

“You should rest now.” Said Keith. “When you’ve rested up we’ll get you back to your realm.”

“… So we’re like not on earth?”
“Nope.”

“Wow…”

“What?”

Lance shrugged. “Never thought I’d ever leave earth or my own reality or whatever this is.”

“Oh… Well you should still get some rest.” Keith attempted to push Lance back down onto the bed.

Lance complied but didn’t look very pleased about it. “Fine I guess… But you should still change. You got another suit around you can use?”

“Well yeah, but I don’t want to change in front of you.” Keith could feel another blush coming on. Why did Lance have such an affect on him? It wasn’t fair.

“Why? You embarrassed to show me your chest or something?” Asked Lance with a cocky grin. “Didn’t realize you were that modest here Keith.”

Keith groaned in annoyance. “It isn’t much chest I… Look, these suits the Blade wear are extremely tight and wearing anything under them is extremely uncomfortable.”

Lance had a confused look on his face for a few moments before it clicked and he started laughing. “Oh my god! Keith you’re not wearing any underwear? You’re completely naked under all of that?”

“Shut up and sleep Lance.” Snapped Keith. “Cosmo, keep an eye on him. If you need me I’ll be in the training room.” He quickly left before Lance could make any other joke. He walked a few feet away from his room before he started punching the wall. Stupid Lance. How the hell could he still be so him even after what the hell had just happened to him? Maybe once his pain meds wore off he’d be back to normal? Maybe. Still, Lance was an idiot that made him feel feelings. Disgusting.

“Um, are you done abusing that wall?” Asked Ilun.

Keith gave them a dirty look and punched the wall again.

“Guess not… So that human, that is the Lance you mentioned before, right?”

Keith blushed a little and nodded. “Yeah… It’s him. What are the chances?”

“Yeah… Still, you know you could have just left him in the infirmary. We had enough beds.” Said Ilun. “You didn’t have to hide him away from the rest of us. Worried we might snatch him away?”

“…”

They laughed and patted Keith’s shoulder. “I get it Yurak. You like him. He’s special to you. You just want to hold him and love him like the way you think is appropriate. It’s cute.”

“… I’m not cute.”

Ilun chuckled a little and shook their head. “You’re too cute Yurak. Are humans all this cute?”

“If you hang out around Lance you’ll realize how humans are kind of dumb.” They laughed and started to drag Keith back towards the infirmary. “Ilun? What the hell?”

“You’re still beat up pretty bad. You need more than a slathering of burn gel. You got kind of cooked. We need to cut out that burnt flesh so it doesn’t go septic and you die.”
“... Fine, But don’t take too long. I gotta-

“Get back to the guy you want to be yours but you haven’t worked up the courage to tell yet?”

“... I hate you so much right now.”
Recovery

Chapter Notes

Here be the next chapter. Enjoy Keith trying his best for Lance and Lance being Lance. Kudos and comment when you can. Enjoy :D

When Keith eventually got back to his room Lance was already in a deep sleep. That made him feel a little better. Lance needed some rest. He sat on the ground opposite the bed and watched him sleep. Was it creepy? Probably. But Keith had been told to rest and this was his room after getting looked at again.

Hr groaned and started to pull his arms out of the suit. He let the material gather and pool around his hips. It was tight enough that it wouldn’t end up falling down his legs without him physically pulling it off. Keith ran his fingers along the bandages along his chest. He knew he was horribly bruised and burned. Sendak really did a number on him. He should have been laying down, but Lance needed it more.

He sighed and closed his eyes as Cosmo walked over to him and laid his head on his lap. Keith smiled slightly and let his fingers run through the cosmic wolf’s fur. There was something soothing about patting something fluffy.

Keith was almost asleep when he heard a small gasp. It made him look over at Lance with concern. Turns out he had every right to be concerned. Lance was curled up on the bed and shivering. Keith couldn’t tell if he was having a nightmare or if he was awake and finally breaking down.

What was he meant to do in this situation? Should he wake him? Go over to him? He wasn’t really sure. No one did this kind of stuff for him before. He thought about it for a moment. What would he want if he was in this situation? He had an idea, but he didn’t like it.

“... Hey Lance? Lance? Are you awake?”

Lance froze for a moment. “Did I wake you up?”

“No.” Keith moved over to him and kneeled next to the bed. Lance was facing away from him and still shivering. Keith hesitantly reached out to him but withdrew his hand at the last second. “Hey I um… I’m not going to lie. I’m not really sure how you feel. I mean, if I ever got tortured or something I don’t really have anyone that would miss me… Like, I don’t have any close family, never have, but you do. I can’t imagine what it would feel like to know you’d never see them again… Do you want to talk?”

“... I could have died.”

“I know.”

“No one would have known what happened to me… I’d just be dead… I’d never see my family again… My mama, pop-pop… Veronica and Rachel… Marco, Luis and Lisa… Nadia and Silvo… I’d just be… No one would know… I’d just be… I’d be gone…” He sniffled a little. “Then there’s Hunk and Pidge… Allura and Coran… Shiro… I’d just be…” He started sobbing quietly.
Keith just nodded along awkwardly. He so was not the person that should be dealing with this. “H-hey Lance? Look at me for a second?”

“No…”

“Why?”

“I’m ugly crying.”

Keith rolled his eyes and tossed the towel over at him. “Here. Clean your face and then turn around.”

“….” Lance wiped his face and blewed his nose a few times before he rolled over to face Keith. He looked miserable. The shock had definitely worn off. “Hey…”

“Hey…” Keith sighed a little and let his Galra side show through again. He took one of Lance’s hands and put it against his cheek. “... You like touching my face when I look like a Galra right?”

“Well yeah, but like…”

“It’s comforting to pat animals. Cosmo’s asleep and not moving and I look like a cat. Just freaking pat me already.” This was stupid. Why did he think this would make Lance even a little bit better. This was stupid. He hated himself so much for thinking that this was a good idea.

He was about to pull away when he felt Lance slowly moved his fingers across his cheek. “... You’re really fluffy.”

“Thanks… Does this make you feel better?”

“A little.” Lance continued to rub his fingers across his face, getting dangerously close to that small patch of sensitive fur behind his ear.

“... Hey Lance?”

“Yeah?”

“You like it when Blue purrs right?”

“Well yeah.”

Keith sighed a little and gently moved Lance’s fingertips behind his ear. He shuddered a little and started to purr softly as he rested his head against the mattress. Lance seemed a little surprised that Keith was letting him do it, but he continued anyway. Keith’s eyelids slipped shut and he purred softly at Lance’s touch. He absolutely hated it when people did this to him, but it was a necessary evil at this point. Lance needed something familiar to comfort him. This was the best he could do.

He felt Lance’s other hand touch his other cheek, then it started to slowly drift down his neck. “… Keith?”

“Hmm?”

“Your neck is covered in a very fine fuzz… So your whole body is like this huh?”

“Hmmm yeah… Fine fuzz…”

Lance chuckled a little. “You sound all sleepy now.”
“Feels real good...” Moments later Lance drew his hands back. It made Keith frown a little and blink at him sleepily. “Why’d ya stop?”

“Your mum said that only family or lovers should do that to you… Does this mean you think of me as family or something?”

“… This is a special case. I… I don’t know how to look after people. All I know is what I’ve experienced through the foster system and what the Galra have taught me. Sure being with the Blade everything is a little different, but they are still Galra. It’s all about tough love with them.”

“… What kind of tough love are we talking about here?” Asked Lance. He seemed a little more concerned about Keith than himself.

Keith shrugged. “We don’t like showing weakness. Any kind of weakness. Getting injured is shameful. Crying is laughable. No one comes to comfort you when you’re scared or hurt. You have to stick it out by yourself.”

“Keith… That’s awful.”

He shrugged. “It is what it is… So are you going to keep patting me or are you done?”

Lance thought for a moment. “Um… Hey just for tonight could you possibly sleep next to me? Okay, I know it’s a lot to ask but like… I just don’t think I can be alone at the moment…”

Keith was a little hesitant. Was this normal human behaviour? Did it really matter? “Move over.” Lance wriggled over and Keith got in next to him. It was a little difficult and they both needed to stay on their sides to be comfortable. Keith watched Lance’s gaze travel over his body, stopping at the bandages on his chest.

“You got fucked up pretty badly huh?”

“Just burns.”

“That whole body tat of yours is going to be ruined now.”

“Doubtful. My markings are permanent. When my skin heals my markings will too in the exact same place and position as they were before. I know. I’ve been burnt before.”

“… Can I make you purr again?”

“Yeah. Just as long as you get some sleep. Okay?”

“Okay.” Lance gently touched Keith’s face and gently rubbed the fur patches behind his ears. Once again Keith let his eyelids slip shut as a satisfied rumble left his chest. This was kind of nice when Lance was doing it. Much better than when anyone else had done it to him. He felt completely relaxed and safe enough to just fall asleep.

***

The next day Lance woke up alone. Not even Cosmo was there. He couldn’t help but feel a little disappointed and slowly sat up. He was a lot less dizzy than he did before, but he still felt like shit. He looked around for the trashcan and towel. The trashcan was cleaned and the towel was new too since it had no bloodstains. Hell, even his shirt was clean and neatly folded.

There was a tray with some green goo in it with a note that said one word; eat. Eat. That sounded
more like a threat than anything, but Keith had mentioned this green gunk was the stuff he ate so Lance decided to give it a go. It was savoury, but it had the consistency of custard. It was kind of gross, but it was okay.

Once he was done he put the plate down and slowly stood up. Dizzy, but not nauseous. He opened the door and walked out into the hallway. Everything was really quiet. He ended up walking down the hallway aimlessly hoping that he would walk into someone soon. Which he actually did when he rounded the corner. He walked straight into a Blade member and stumbled back a little.

“S-sorry. I was looking for Keith…”

They were wearing their mask so Lance had no idea what they were thinking when they looked at him. “... You would be Lance, right?”

“Yeah.”

“Cool. I’m Ilun. Glad to see you’re feeling better.”

“Um thanks… Have you seen Keith? Oh but like you guys just call him Yurak right? Yurak is what his name is here…”

Ilun chuckled a little. “Wow, humans are way cuter than I thought… At least cuter than Yurak makes them out to be. He might have pink skin but he’s all Galra under there… So humans come in more shades than pink?”

“... Do Galra come in more than one shade of purple?”

“Good point. Follow me” They happily walked with Lance in the complete opposite direction that he was walking. Ilun had a few questions about human things and Lance answered them as best he could in between bouts of extreme vertigo. Eventually the two of them were approached by another Blade member. Lance was surprised to see this one had a long tail. Ilun waved at them. “Hey Regris.”

“Hi Ilun… Should that be in the infirmary?” They gestured to Lance.

Ilun laughed and squished Lance’s cheeks together. “Aw, come on Regris. Look at it. It’s so squishy. It’s a human, like Yurak. Well, a full human. This is what a full human looks like.”

“...” Regris leaned in closer to Lance. “So, is this the normal skin tone for humans and Yurak has some genetic disorder that makes him pale since he’s a half-breed?”

“Apparently not.” Said Ilun. “Apparently their skin tones vary from extremely dark brown to extremely white. Who knew?”

“Huh… Interesting. I’ll have to make a note of that.” Muttered Regris. “Still doesn’t explain what he’s doing here and not in the infirmary.”

“It’s Lance.” Cooed Ilun. “Yurak’s Lance.”

Regris seemed surprised to hear that and looked between Ilun and Lance several times before gesturing down the hall. “Yurak and Antok are in the training room.”

“Oooooo… Is Yurak still alive?”

“Last time I looked.”
“Okay. Thanks Regris.” They pushed Lance along and patted his shoulder. “I was joking about the whole Yurak being still alive thing. They are probably just doing some hand to hand combat stuff. No need to worry.”

They lead Lance to the training room and Lance was kind of in awe at what he saw. Firstly he saw some giant Galra with a shield blocking attacks from Keith that was getting bounced around the Galra by Cosmo. Eventually though the larger Galra managed to grab Keith’s leg and held him upside down. It was around then that Cosmo flopped to the floor for he was tired.

Ilun chuckled a little. “Aw, Cosmo’s all tuckered out. Poor wolf.”

“Yeah… That was really cool… I’m going to sit down now…” Lance leaned against the wall and slowly used it to guide himself down to the floor. Maybe he should have stayed in Keith’s room?

Ilun sat next to him and ran their fingers through his hair. “... You should grow your hair out. It would be easier to braid.”

“I guess…” He closed his eyes and sighed. Maybe he was getting sick because of the food goo he ate? What if that was actually dog food? He ate Cosmo’s lunch didn’t he? He totally did. Damn it.

Ilun hummed quietly to themselves. “So, what do you think of Yurak? I mean, he distracted Sendak for you.”

“Hmm? I guess he’s pretty cool… I’m still pretty out of it so I don’t really feel like talking.”

“Oh okay. Sorry I’m just kind of fascinated by other species.”

“It’s fine… I’m kind of curious about Galra too… Like you guys are really cold and junk. I’m surprised you can even get along with each other the way you are.”

“Like all successful species we evolved to be social. If we can’t work as a team we will die.”

“Really?”

“Yeah.”

“Huh…” Lance cracked an eye open and watched Keith and Antok sparing a little more. Cosmo wasn’t joining in this time. He preferred to stay on the side lines and lie on his side. Lance was a little surprised that Keith hadn’t noticed him and Ilun yet. Maybe he had and was just ignoring him? He seemed to be really into the fight now.

Keith was staying low to the ground and used his smaller size against the larger man. Keith’s movements were well timed and fluid. It wasn’t like he was fighting at all. It was more like some kind of dance the way he seamlessly transitioned from movement to movement till he managed to get behind Antok and punch him in the back of the head, making him fall forward.

Ilun clapped. “Good work Yurak! Took you ten less ticks than you normally do to take him down.”

Keith finally acknowledged them and walked over. “Lance… You shouldn’t be here.” Keith didn’t look like he was doing very well. He still had an arm wrapped around his chest as he walked and a look of pain on his face.

“Dude, my man, buddy, you look like shit.” Said Lance. “And this is coming from a guy that currently looks like this and feels like they stuck their head in a meat grinder.”
Keith rolled his eyes and pulled Lance to his feet. ‘I’ll take you to the infirmary. You need painkillers and so do I.’

“Huh?”

Keith didn’t bother answering him and just dragged him away. “Did you eat the food goo?”

“Oh so that was for me. I ate it.”

“Good. It has all the things in it that you need to live.”

“I’d rather eat a burger.”

“Same.”

Lance smiled a little. “Yeah. When we get back home let’s go to this awesome burger place. It’s amazing. Hunk found it and it’s so good.”

“… You do know I’m not going back with you, right Lance?”

He gave Keith a confused look. “What are you talking about? Your mission is over. You can come home with me.”

Keith shook his head. “Lance, my home is here with the Blades. As long as Zarkon’s a threat I’m going to stay here. I have to help stop the Galra.”

“Keith…”

“No talking. You’re nose is bleeding again.”

“Oh… Shit…”

Keith took Lance to the infirmary and dropped him off in a chair while he went to talk to someone. He gestured over to Lance before going to find an empty seat to sit on.

Before Lance could call out to him a Blade member walked over to him carrying some things in his hands. “So you’re Lance then? I’m Ulaz. Sorry we’ve only been able to give you basic care, but we had to deal with the most injured first. I hope you understand.”

“Fair enough doc.

“… Yes… Doc… Just put this on your head.” He gave Lance some weird thing made of a bunch of twisted metal while he sorted through some of his other things.

Lance looked at it oddly then put it on his head. It was cold and kind of vibrated a little. He wasn’t sure what this was meant to do, but Ulaz said nothing so he assumed it was right. After a few moments Ulaz took it off his head. He then injected Lance with a painkiller and gave him some water.

“Best to stay hydrated.”

“Okay… What was that thing you put on my head?”

Ulaz smiled a little. “It was just a simple scan on your head. I’m going to layer it and compare it to our other human scan.”
“Other?”

“Yes.” He gestured towards Keith. “Yurak is our only template for humans… And even then only human males, and he isn’t a full human either… We’re going to do our best with our limited information.”

“I see…” Lance looked over at Keith. “So what exactly is wrong with him?”

Ulaz gave Lance an odd look before chuckling a little to themselves. “Normally I wouldn’t say anything, but considering the circumstances I guess I can let it slide. “He has electrical burns to a good portion of his chest. Most of it was absorbed by his suit, but some of the areas were a little too thin and he got burnt pretty badly. We had to remove the dead tissue and stuff the wound with gauze.”

“Wait, what? When you say you had to remove dead tissue…”

Ulaz pointed to his rib cage and ran his finger along a rib. “The flesh was seared and cooked down to the bone. To be fair this is not the worst injury that Yurak has received while on a mission. Not even top ten. Luckily for him his Galra genetics give him a much higher pain tolerance and a much faster healing rate.”

“Oh…” Lance was still freaking out internally. Keith was way more injured than he thought, and he was just sitting on a chair just patiently waiting for someone to help him out. No wonder he had been walking around clutching his side. He shouldn’t have been training. How the hell could he make such fluid movements when he should have been in obvious pain? Suddenly Ulaz was standing in front of him with some weird looking thing in his hand. “… And that is?”

“I need to cauterize several small lacerations within your nasal and sinus cavities.” He explained. “If I do not you will continue to bleed and you will keep feeling dizzy and ill. It isn’t life threatening, but it will make the healing process a lot faster.”

“Um…”

“I just need to insert this into your snout to start the procedure.”

“You’re going to be shoving that where?”

“Snout? Nose? I think Yurak has used the term nose before?”

Lance gulped a little and leaned back in his chair. This looked like it was going to be painful. Wait, didn’t Keith bring him here for painkillers? Why had he not been given these yet?

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Keith needed help redoing his bandages. They had shifted and moved around during his training and were starting to hurt. After waiting for a few minutes Keith decided he should just rebandage himself. He started looking around for supplies and Kolivan put his hand on his shoulder.

“We’ve started relocating some of the refugees to safer realms.” He informed him.

“That’s good.”

“… Ulaz finished a scan on Lance’s head.”

“What’s the damage?”
Kolivan put his hand on Keith’s shoulder. “Converting time into human terms, he’s only been there for about three rotations of the earth. There’s no obvious scar tissue in his brain to suggest he’s been subjected to anymore than that.”

Keith nodded a little. He felt extremely relieved to know that. Lance would be fine. He just needed to rest. “That’s good. Do we have any more of that salve? I kind of need it if we have it.”

Kolivan had a quick look around and gave Keith a half full container. “Here… You know, now that several of the refugees have been moved on, there are spare beds in here now… You can move Lance in here now.”

“Can’t.”

“Why not?”

“… Cosmo likes sleeping on his legs. You know how much of a pain he is.”

“Right. Cosmo wants Lance to stay in your room.”

“Yes.”

The older Galra his chuckled slightly and shook his head. “Whatever you say. Come on, let’s sit you on a bed so I can help you change your bandages.” Keith didn’t have much choice but to nod and follow Kolivan’s orders.
Confessions

Chapter Notes

Mac freaking finally. That’s all I can say. No smut but just enjoy the dumb asses being dumb. Kudos and comment when you can. Enjoy :D

After they were both done in the infirmary they went back to Keith’s room. Keith practically forced Lance down onto the bed before he sat down next to it with his back facing him. Lance didn’t like this. Keith should be the one in the bed now him. Keith was in way more pain than he was.

“... Keith?”

“Yeah?”

“How long till I can go home?”

“A few more days.”

Lance frowned a little and drummed his fingers on the mattress. “So you’re going to stay on the floor the whole time?”

“Yeah.”

“... You know, you really helped me sleep last night.”

Keith fidgeted a little. “Oh?”

“Yeah.” He wanted to reach over and touch Keith’s hair, but stopped just short of his shoulder. “It really helped me and I wouldn’t mind doing it again, if you want to that is… It was probably pretty bad for you since you don’t like how it feels when people touch you there…”

Keith was quiet which only confirmed Lance’s suspicions. Although it was cute and adorable, Keith hated it. After all the first time he had ever seen Keith purr he threw a small fit about how much he hated it. Besides he had said it was just to make him feel better. The touches probably made Keith feel angry or sick or something.

“Sorry… Just forget I mentioned anything…”

“It’s fine.” Muttered Keith. He got up and laid down next to Lance with his back facing him. He shuddered a little and his Galra side came out.

Lance smiled a little to himself and ran his hands over Keith’s shoulders. That Blade suit he was wearing was very, very tight. Practically painted on at this body like a second skin. In fact he could actually feel the bandages under the suit. This didn’t seem right. He shouldn’t be wearing this right now.

“You need to take this off. It’s not good for that huge cut in your chest.”

“... Ulaz told you about that huh?”
“Yeah… Why didn’t you say anything?”

Keith was quiet for a moment. “Because it wouldn’t make a difference? I’m already hurt. Not like telling anyone about my problems is going to fix anything. It’s just something I have to work through by myself.”

“You shouldn’t have been training if you’ve got such a deep wound Keith. You’ll just make it worse.”

“… I have to.”

“Have to what? Work yourself to death? You’re injured. You have to rest. If you don’t you’re just going to keep hurting and never get better.”

Keith tensed up a little at his words. “I can’t. I have to keep pushing myself Lance. I have to… Do you know what the Galra do to people that are useless? That can’t do what they are told to do? They are abandoned. They are left behind… If I can’t show the Blade I am useful to them Kolivan will get rid of me… I thought he did before.”

“And you were able to make a home for yourself with Shiro.” Reminded Lance. “You lived with him in that tiny one bedroom home and even convinced him to keep some magic wolf baby. You’re friends with Hunk and Pidge. Coran still likes you despite the stuff the Galra did and even Allura regretted not apologizing to you before you left.” He tugged on the hem around the neck of Keith’s suit. “Just do what you did last night and take it half off. Better than nothing, right?”

Keith sighed a little and sat up again. He carefully peeled off the suit down to his hils and lied back down again, still not facing Lance. Not that Lance minded too much. It meant he got to see a slightly darker patch of purple fuzz running down along his spine. He reached out and gently ran his thumb along it, smiling when he felt Keith relax a little under his touch.

“Huh, kind of reminds me of a mane or something…”

“What?”

“You have a stripe of dark fur down your spine.”

“Oh. Yeah. Most Glara males have it. Have no idea why.”

“Well I think it’s neat.” Lance continued to touch it.

Keith fidgeted a little under his touch. “Can talk to you seriously for a moment?”

“Sure man. What’s up?”

“… Remember when I was going to tell you something before Kolivan showed up?”

“Yeah? Oh is this the thing?”

“Yeah…”

“…”

“…”

“Well?”
“Well what?”

“What is it?”

Keith sighed and mumbled a little to himself before he cleared his throat. “Lance. I want to break your fucking neck.” Well Lance wasn’t expecting to hear that from Keith. “Every time I see you I want to beat the living shit out of you. I want to break your ribs and smash your bones. I want to rip your face off every time we are close to each other. Every time you touch me it makes me want to throw up. I fucking hate it. It makes me so fucking mad that I want to yank your spine out through your throat.”

“Oh…” Lance moved his hand away. “Sorry… I didn’t realise you hated me that much… I know I can be annoying but you going as far as to want to kill me…”

Keith suddenly turned around and grabbed Lance’s hand, looking sufficiently annoyed. “But I don’t hate you. That’s the problem. This is like the opposite of hating you. I think I like you, and I like you a lot. But I have no idea if you like me too since I know fuck all about human romances… I have no idea if the things you’ve been saying to me have been because you like me or not and it’s just confuses me.”

That was a lot to take in. One second Keith was saving he wanted to straight up murder him and then the next he was saying it was because he had a crush on him? What kind of fucked up Galra logic was that? That sounded like something a serial killer would say or a super stalker.

Keith seemed to notice Lance’s unease because he quickly let his hand go and sat on the edge of the bed. “It’s fine if you don’t like me like that… I know I’m not… Emotionally I’m definitely not human. I think too much like a Galra. Hell, at this point I think the only thing about me that is human is my ability to swap between looking human and looking Galra. Fuck having this stupid talk is the closest thing I think I’ve ever done that might even be considered human emotion or some shit…”

“Keith…”

“Look I get it. You hate it. Think it’s disgusting that I like you. Obviously you would. Why the fuck would anyone want something as disgusting as a half-breed liking them? You just stay here and get better. I need to go.” He quickly got up and headed out the door, quickly pulling the rest of his suit on as he went.

Lance continued to be confused as Keith left. He had some major issues he needed to work out apparently, and to be honest Lance was still in shock that Keith confessed that he liked him. He never actually thought that Keith might like him, after all he was just some dumb human that kept intruding on his life. He thought that Keith would eventually find some Galra that he was more suited to and end up with them. But Keith wanted him and made an effort to try and explain his feelings. That just made Lance’s heart swell.

He had to find that idiot. No, not just that idiot. His idiot. His stupid Galran idiot.

Unfortunately he had no idea where the fuck Keith would have run off to. The base was huge. Well, not really, but he had no idea where anything was. Still, Lance decided that while his painkillers were still at peak he’d look around for him.

It didn’t take him too long to find Kolivan talking with Antok. Not who he was looking for but it was a good start. He walked over to them and waited for them to finish talking. However when he got close they stopped talking and Antok stared at him.
Lance gulped a little. “Um hey… I wasn’t sure if you guys were done talking yet but I was just wondering if-” Antok made an odd growling noise and walked past Lance. Completely ignoring him. “-did I do something wrong?”

Kolivan shook his head. “Pay no mind to him. He gets uneasy whenever outsiders are in our base. He’s probably a little more high strung than usual since you are technically walking around in restricted areas.”

“Oh, my bad. I was just looking for Keith. Yurak. I hate how he has those two names. It’s dumb… Like I know it’s for his protection and stuff, but still…” Lance sighed. “Anyway, I need to talk to him. Can you point me in the right direction?”

“Why do you need to talk to him?”

“... Human stuff? He said some things and kind of ran out before I could respond to him.”

“What was he talking about?” Asked Kolivan.

Lance awkwardly looked away from him and rubbed the back of his neck. “I um… I think he confessed that he liked me? But he ran away before I could answer him.”

Kolivan seemed a little surprised but nodded approvingly. “So he challenged you to romance by combat? Very good. Wasn’t sure he would. Good for him. You didn’t turn him down did you?”

“What? No, no, no, no, no, no, no, nooooooo. I think he was trying a more human approach since he kind of just blurted out all his feelings… Admittedly most of those feelings seemed to be directed towards his hatred of me but like… I am pretty sure you guys attack the people you like or something?”

“Only with consent.” Said Kolivan. “It’s one of the most romantic gestures that two Galra can do in public next to sacrificing our lives for them, but that kind of thing is expected of bonded couples.”

“Oh…” Lance suddenly felt worried. Sure he liked Keith too, but did he like him enough to be Galra bonded with him? Is that what would happen if they got together? Maybe that was a little too much commitment right now. Maybe he would accept maybe being boyfriends? “I um… Bonding sounds a little… extreme.”

Kolivan shrugged. “It is what it is. If you haven’t noticed Galra are kind of extreme in their emotions. You do not have to accept him just because he confessed to you. But do tell him if you reject his confession.”

Lance nodded a little. “Um okay… What’s the appropriate Galra way to say you accept a love confession but you don’t want to do the whole romance by combat thing because you’re super unsure about it.”

“Break his nose.”

“... Really?”

“Yes. Go up to him and break his nose. Just inform him of why you are doing it before you do. There is no bigger insult to a Galra then someone telling them something like that and just leaving it like that. It’s like saying you are not worth my time or energy. Highly disrespectful.”

“Um… Okay?” This was a lot for him to think about.
Kolivan gave Lance a sympathetic look and directed him to follow. “Come. I have an idea where Yurak is hiding away.”

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Keith had hidden himself away in some unused room in the base. He felt like an idiot. Of course Lance wouldn’t like him. Some humans lost their shit at the thought of mixed race individuals, what would they about something like him? He was technically the product of an interspecies relationship.

Because of that reason in general no Galra would give him a second thought. Why would he even think that Lance might think differently? Just because they talked every once in a while and he let Lance touch those patches of fur only a family member or a lover is meant to touch didn’t mean anything. Hell, he even asked if Keith thought of him as family. Fucking family.

Okay, it was nice to think that Lance thought he was close enough for him to consider family but no. He wanted more from Lance. He wanted more and he knew he wouldn’t get it. Any time he wanted anything he never got it. He wanted parents growing up but he didn’t get that. He wanted friends growing up, but he didn’t get that. He wanted the Galra to accept him, but he didn’t get that. He wanted Lance to like him but he knew he wouldn’t get that either.

He growled in frustration and pulled at his hair. It would have been just so easy to keep his mouth shut. He just had to do it for a few more days and then Lance would have been gone. He wouldn’t have to see him again, but there he was running his mouth and disgusting him. How was he going to avoid Lance for the rest of his time here? Lance was sleeping in his fucking room for fuck’s sake. Granted it was his fault for that happening in the first place, but still.

Suddenly the door opened and Kolivan walked in with Lance. Kolivan, as stoic as ever just shook his head when he when he saw him. Keith felt like he was going to be sick. Galra don’t show weakness. He knew he looked extremely weak now. He didn’t need Kolivan berating him about how he wasn’t acting like a Galra.

However Kolivan didn’t say anything, he just gestured to Lance to move closer to him, which he did. Lance looked kind of nervous. Of course he did. Fuck, he probably told Kolivan about what happened and asked him how to tell him to fuck off and never come near him again in Galra. He felt sick.

“Keith… I um… I really appreciate what you told me, and I kind of wish you let me answer you before I ran out.”

“You don’t have to say anything Lance. I know you don’t feel anything for me and I’ve probably just been misreading normal human things and I-”

Lance quickly shushed him by putting his hand over his mouth. “Keith… I like you too. I’m pretty sure I feel the same way about you as you do about me.” Keith was shocked. There was no way this was real. No way. It was just a joke. It had to be. He let out a small confused sound which made Lance look over at Kolivan. “I think I broke him.”

Kolivan shook his head. “I already told you what to do. Do it.”

“Okay…” He looked at Keith awkwardly. “Okay, I am not sure if this is the thing I am meant to do but Kolivan said it was the thing I needed to do so… If this isn’t right please don’t kill me.” He quickly punched Keith in the face.

Keith recoiled a little and grabbed his face. That wasn’t what he expected at all. Lance confessed to
him and punched him in the face. He could feel his face going red in embarrassment. This meant Lance really did like him and was trying to do it in the Galra way right?

“... R-romance by combat.” The words spilled out of Keith’s mouth before he could stop himself. “I challenge you to romance by combat.”

Lance looked surprised and quickly backed away. “Whoa, wait one second. That’s a boning thing right? You have to tell me what’s what in human terms. Are mates and bonding different things? I’m kind of winging Galra culture here people.”

Keith quickly thought about what the human equivalent would be. “I um… I guess mates is like being boyfriends but stronger and bonding is like getting married? That’s kind of what it is.”

“I see…” Lance thought about it for a moment. “Um, I guess I accept your challenge then? Is that the right thing to say?”

Keith felt his heart skip a beat. “Really? Your kind isn’t really all about fighting so um… You might get hurt pretty badly. I didn’t expect you to say agree to it...”

Lance just waved it off. “Nah, you won’t feel right unless we do this right? Just give me a day to figure this out the rules along with lots of painkillers. Pretty sure I’ll be able to end this thing in a few seconds.”

“Oh yeah? How?” Asked Keith. “Got some kind of stun gun on you?”

Lance just shook his head and smirked. “Never you mind all that Keith. I am a man full of surprises. You’ll just have to wait and see.”

“Yeah. I guess I will.”
Keith could not believe how quickly word spread among the rest of the Blades that he and Lance were going to do Romance by Combat. It was so embarrassing. He wanted to die. How was he going to do it without physically destroying Lance? Lordy lord Keith just couldn’t stop pacing along the hallway. What style should he use? What style wouldn’t instantly put Lance into a coma?

As he was freaking out Ilun watched him from their spot on the floor. “I can’t believe you challenged Lance.”

“I know.”

“And he accepted.”

“I know.”

“... Please don’t instantly murder him. Humans are really squishy and you’re both still recovering from getting injured.” They sighed and shook their head. “It’s going to be like watching two newborn’s having a knife fight.”

“Yeah… Shit I’m going to kill him aren’t I?”

“Well you just have to make him yield, right? So just disarm him and pin him till he gives up. No need for punches and kicks, right?”

“... Yeah okay. I can do that.” Disarming him was good. Lance wasn’t a fighter. He wouldn’t be able to match him in any hand to hand combat that he knew and even if it came down to guns vs swords Keith would still be able to beat him. “Does Lance even know the rules? Shit I probably should have told him the rules...”

Ilun shrugged. “Pretty sure Lance is going around grilling people about the rules. Do you really think he has some secret weapon or technique he can use against you?”

“All he knows is the sensitive patch behind a Galra’s ears, but he’d have to get really close to use that against me... Should be a short fight.”

“Yeah… Either way all of us, or at least as many of us as possible are going to watch this. It’s been ages since any of us have seen this kind of fight. You two look cute together.”

Keith could feel himself blushing again. “Thanks.”

Ilun giggled. “I’m never not going to get over the fact human’s turn red when they get embarrassed or angry. It’s too cute!”

Keith shook his head and crossed his arms. “Should we get moving to the training room now?
Kolivan’s probably waiting for us to get there.”

“Okay. Just remember to disarm only. Don’t actually fight him.”

“I know.” As they walked to the training room several of the Blade members were already there just standing by the walls while Kolivan was talking with Lance. Possibly going over the rules again to make sure he understood that he was probably going to end up in the infirmary after this.

When Kolivan noticed him he gestured for Keith to come over. “I was going over the rules once more with Lance to make sure he understood what he needs to do and what is expected of him.”

Lance seemed way too confident. “I’m pretty sure I understand the basics. Pretty sure you guys will pull me up and let me know when I’ve messed up.” His attitude was starting to make Keith question if he actually had brain damage from getting tortured by the Galra.

“Um… Maybe we should wait till Lance gets another scan. I think there’s something wrong with his brain. Most humans aren’t this happy to fight.”

Lance scoffed. “Seriously mullet? You gonna back out now after all this? You’re just scared I’ll use my secret technique and end this fight before you can land a blow on me. Heck, let’s make a bet. I bet you I can end this fight before you can hit me once.”

Okay that kind of pissed him off a little, but Keith wasn’t going to show it. “Lance, I’m just concerned you have some kind of brain trauma. Our medical facilities can help when it comes to neurological abnormalities but things we haven’t gotten a proper scan of a full human brain before. We might have missed something because you are acting weird.”

Lance just shook his head. “Keith, you’re thinking about this too much. I’m still going to end the fight before you land a hit on me. My plan is foolproof.”

Kolivan just let out an exasperated grumble. Obviously not used to dealing with someone like Lance. “Since you proposed the fight, Yurak, Lance gets to choose the weapons you both use… Mind you we will modify things so it’ll be training weapons so there’s less chance of you dying. No offence Lance.”

He just waved him off. “Details, details. For Keith I want him to have a sword and I want to have a blaster.”

Kolivan nodded and gestured for someone to bring him those things. Keith reluctantly took the sword and gave it a few swings. He wasn’t used to the weight and feel of it. It had been a while since he used one of these swords.

Lance just took the blaster and with Kolivan’s blessing he fired a practice shot at the wall. “It’s set to stun.” Said Kolivan. No need for anyone to get more injured than they already are… That being said, we do have a few beds opened up in the infirmary for you when this is over.”

“Wow, no one has any confidence in me do they?”

Kolivan just shrugged and clapped his hands together. “Alright everyone! We all know the rules. The fight is not interrupted nor does it end till one makes a verbal confirmation that they have yielded.” He pointed at the two of them. “Back to back fifty paces.”

“… You can still back out now Lance.” Reassured Keith as he moved into position. “I kind of just blurted it out there. You don’t have to force yourself to do this.”
“Keith, you’ve never forced me to do anything I don’t want to do.”

Before Keith could say anything else Kolivan shot him a look that made Kieth shut up and march the needed fifty paces. Once he was done he turned around to see Lance standing with the blaster just casually slung over his shoulders. It was like he wasn’t taking this seriously at all. He could seriously get hurt.

Kolivan cleared his throat and raised his hand and quickly dropped it. “FIGHT!”

Keith wasted no time and he quickly dashed towards Lance with the training sword drawn, but Lance didn’t move an inch. When he was close enough to strike Lance the Cuban dropped the blaster and fell to his knees. The back of palms were pressed flat and open against the floor and his forehead was touching the ground.

“I YIELD!” He yelled. “I YIELD!”

Keith tripped over himself as he tried to stop his own momentum, but ended up tripping over Lance anyway and falling flat on his face. “Ow! What the fuck Lance?”

“The fight is over!” Declared Kolivan. “Yurak is the winner!” Hearing that some of the other Blade members burst into laughter at the absurdity of it all. Technically Keith had won. Someone just needed to yield after the fight started. There were no rules saying you couldn’t immediately yield after someone started the fight.

“Oh thank the lord…” Muttered Lance as he sat up. “You have no idea how fucking scary it is to have someone run at you full force with a sword… Well maybe you do but still. Scary.”

Keith was bright red at this point. Not because Lance instantly yielded, but the way he did it. He could have just said it and that would have been enough. Instead he did it so formally, as if begging forgiveness from a superior. He quickly pulled Lance to his feet and walked out of the training room and headed back to his room.

Once they were inside Keith pushed Lance against a wall. “What the fuck was that?”

“Oh, that was just my plan.” Said Lance with a grin. “I didn’t feel like getting beaten to a pulp so I asked some of the Blade members what the best way to grovel for your forgiveness without it being insulting. One of them said doing it like that was best… Did I get it wrong?”

“Who told you to do it like that? Was it Ilun? I bet it was them…”

“No, skinny Galra with the tail.”

“… Regris?”

“I think so.”

Keith grumbled under his breath. “Do you even know what kind of apology that was?”

Lance frowned a little. “Regris said it was an apology you give if you’re truly sorry… Was he messing with me?”

“No you…” Keith sighed heavily. “Lance, just like fighting styles mean different things to Galra the way you yielded and said sorry for not fighting is extremely important… You were on your knees with your head pressed against the ground… You were exposing the back of your neck and compromising your vision… You had your hands turned upwards with the back of your hands on
the floor so you couldn’t even be able to push yourself out of the way properly if... You only give that type of apology to someone extremely high ranking. I’m talking Emperor level, and you did that in front of everyone... Everyone practically saw you asking for forgiveness while simultaneously trusting I won’t take advantage of you...”

“... So in other words I pretty much did the most romantic thing possible a Galra could do?”

Keith could feel his face burning with embarrassment as he nodded.

***

Lance couldn’t believe his plan went off without a hitch. He just needed to ask around a lot to understand the rules, and then exploit the fuck out of it. He blamed Pidge for that mentality. However he had to admit he should have been a little more specific about what kind of apology he needed to do.

He didn’t mean to embarrass Keith so much. He didn’t mean to upset him. He was trying to be extremely humble. He wanted to show Keith that he was willing to try and do things his way. He knew how important culture was to some people and to Keith being Galra was important to him so he’d respect that.

He gently cupped Keith’s cheeks and smiled softly at him. Keith’s face was still burning in embarrassment. “So what now? We start kissing? Maybe a little more?” He teased

“... Yes. If you want to.” Muttered Keith. “Since we’ve gone and done that and are here now no one is going to come in and bother us for a few days…”

Lance raised an eyebrow. “A few days?”

“It tradition! W-we don’t have to do anything!” Keith groaned a little and ran his fingers through his hair. “Fuck this is just like those couples that never learn about what sex is and have to get it explained to them on their wedding night…”

“Please tell me you know the basics of gay sex…”

Keith made a noise that sounded like someone strangling a duck. “I did spend most of my teenage years with Shiro going to a public school you know? I had internet access back then.”

“True… But what do you want to do? You know we don’t have to do anything, right? I mean, you’ve never had a boyfriend or anything like that before.”

Keith nervously looked down at the ground. “Well it’s kind of expected that we do, right?”

“Expected or not if you’re not comfortable with it we can go slow.” He smiled a little and held Keith’s hand. “Going slow is a human thing.”

“Really?”

“Well it’s at least a me thing… Though if at all possible I’d kind of like to lie down. I think the painkillers are finally wearing off.”

“Oh right.” Lance let Keith lead him over to the bed and let him lie down while he sat on the edge. “... I’m still sorry about suddenly challenging you. I kind of got ahead of myself when you said you liked me back… I’m really not good at the whole human thing am I?”
Keith was too cute for his own good. Lance just smiled at him and gently squeezed his hand. “Hey it’s fine. I get it. Galra don’t do emotions the same way humans do. You’re a lot more aggressive. You guys seem to see empathy and stuff as a weakness.”

“Because it is weak.”

Lance shrugged. “Well I’m weak. I don’t see what’s wrong with that.”

“You’re not weak.” Said Keith quietly. “You’re amazing…”

That was kind of surprising to hear. “You think so?”

“Well yeah… You’re kind and funny, even if I don’t always get your jokes… And you easily make friends and you have a huge family that loves you… Fuck this was a mistake… I’m not even going back with you I’m such a fucking idiot.”

Lucien sighed a little and sat back up and hugged him tightly. “Keith… you ever heard of a thing called a long distance relationship?” Keith shook his head. Lance just smiled and lightly kisses his cheek. “Get me some communicator and I’ll talk to you every day. It’ll be fine.”

His face was burning bright red. Probably from the kiss. “... Are long distance relationships normal for humans?”

“Well… Not really.” Admitted Lance. “But it’s not like that they don’t work… Galra are super loyal right?”

“Yeah?”

Lance grinned. “Then it’s no problem. The big thing that fucks up long distance is lack of loyalty. If both people aren’t loyal then it won’t work… And when I get serious about someone I think I can safely say I’m as loyal as a Galra.” Keith seemed to visibly relax a little when he said that. Which made him feel better. He wanted Keith to feel better now. “... Wanna try kissing?”

“Eh?”

“Come on man. You’ve been around humans enough to know that humans kiss the people we love. Would you be more comfortable punching me or something? That’s what Galra would do right?”

Keith’s face reddened a little more as he brought his fingers up to his own lips. “No… Galra don’t punch their mates… We um… I know you’re going to make fun of me when I say this… We have these small glands just by the corners of our mouths and we um… We nuzzle like a cat…”

“... Christ Keith you guys are fucking adorable little murder cats aren’t you?” You gonna tell me you guys have toe beans like a little kitty cat too?”

“...”

“No…”

“...”

“Keith! Show me your hands! Right now! Take off your suit!”

“Ah, I think the fuck not!”

“Come on, it’s gonna happen eventually. You know that right? We’re mates now babe.” He cooed.
He loved the permanent blush that covered the other’s face. “If you show me your Galra toe beans I’ll do something you want.”

Keith mumbled something and reluctantly unhooked and unclip several parts of his suit around his forearm and peeled it off like a glove. He then reverted to his Galra form and showed Lance his hand. On each finger tip was a dark purple pad while the palm of his hand had something similar. Lance took Keith’s hand in his and started to squish the beans,

“Toe beans.” He cooed. “Toe beans, toe, beans, toe beans.” They were so soft and bouncy. Keith was too fucking adorable.

After a while Keith huffed pulled his hand away. “Okay, that’s enough. I want you to do what I want now…”

“Okay. What do you want?”

“…” Keith looked at him with his big yellow eyes for a few moments. If he was trying to prompt Lance to do something he wasn’t getting the message. Keith’s ears flicked a little in annoyance and he quickly leaned forward, pressing his lips against Lance’s. The kiss was pretty stiff and awkward, but that was okay. It was absolutely adorable.

When Keith pulled back, Lance knew he had a goofy grin on his face, which Keith would probably hate. “That was nice.”

“Shut up. I know it sucked.” Muttered Keith. “I know I’m not good at it… Haven’t had much practice.”

Lance hummed a little and ran his fingers through Keith’s hair. “Well, how about we practice kissing and see where things go from there? I kind of don’t want to go all the way if that’s okay.”

“Why?”

“Well two big things that are making me take a hard nope on that one; we have no lube, and two, we’re both still injured pretty badly. Like, apparently you technically have skin missing on your chest and your ribs are visible.”

“Not all my ribs… Just one…”

“… No visible bones where there shouldn’t be visible bones. Okay?”

Keith huffed a little and nodded. “Okay fine… We’ll go slow. Like humans do.”

***

Ulaz frowned a little to himself while he looked over the scans of both Keith’s and Lance’s heads. He had been trying to mark any significant differences between the two. Next to him Regris was doing some calibration work on the base’s power core generators. Liquid quintessence was such a bitch to work with.

“So, you having fun there with your xenobiology?” Asked Regris.

Ulaz shrugged. “It’s fascinating work. Humans skulls aren’t nearly as thick as Galran skulls, and they have a little more fluid surrounding their brain than ours. Their sinuses are shaped slightly strange… Their teeth are odd too. They have more molars than us.”
Regris raised an eyebrow. “Really? That’s interesting.”

“Yeah. They also don’t have many muscles connecting their ears to their head. They can’t wiggle them.”

“... Really?”

“Yeah.” Ulaz decided to overlay the images and hummed a little to himself. “Maybe once they are done I can get some samples from Lance to add to our biodata? That would be good… You know what I am impressed with though?”

“Hmm?”

“How easily a human’s mind is able to recover from the micro scaring a mind tap causes.” Said Ulaz. “It could be that the Galra have improved their methods or there is something in either Lance’s or human biology that is mildly resistant to Galra mental torture.”

“That is... interesting. We’ll have to look into that more once those two are done being all… you know...”

“Yeah… You know, it was mean of you to tell Lance that’s the most respectful way to apologise to someone.”

Regris chuckled. “Hey, that is the most respectful way. Not my fault that in that context it can be interpreted as an extremely romantic thing… Humans are so strange.”

“That they are...” Ulaz suddenly went extremely pale. “Regris...”

“Yeah?”

“It has come to my attention that we know absolutely nothing about human mating.”

Regris also became alarmed. “This... This is not good... And Lance knows nothing about Galra mating... Should someone check on them? Make sure everyone is still alive?”

Ulaz seemed hesitant but reluctantly sighed and walked to the door. “I’ll bring them some medical supplies and other things... Hopefully we can get to them before they do something really, really stupid... I should have done a full body scan on him while I had a chance...”

“Try not to get clawed to death by Yurak. You know how bad his temper is. It’ll be even worse with all those hormones rushing through him.”

“Noted.”

Ulaz quickly dashed to the infirmary while Regris continued to monitor the power core. It was stable, but not nearly stable enough. They would need to go on a quintessence run soon. Definitely not the kind of mission he wants to tell Kolivan they need to do.
This chapter is pretty much smut, and by smut I mean hand jobs and everyone finding out how Galra biology works because Lance has 0 fucking clue because Galra, and Keith has no idea because Galra military training does not include sex education. Kudos and comment when you can. Enjoy :D

It didn’t take long for Keith to get the hang of kisses and damn was he good at it. It was almost unfair how quickly he was able to pick it up. Maybe he was just naturally talented? Either way that didn’t distract Lance from the fact that he had one extremely attractive male in his arms that was starting to nip and bite his lips while pulling him closer. It was endearing how enthusiastic and eager Keith was.

Lance ran his fingers through Keith’s hair, lightly tugging. That forced a small needy whine out of Keith’s throat that sent shock waves straight to Lance’s groin. He groaned a little and lightly pushed Keith back. He was still very much in his Galra form and looked completely wrecked just from making out. His already messy hair looked completely disheveled, his ears were twitching randomly, his mouth was half open as he panted heavily.

“... Fucking hell Keith. You’re making this hard for me to keep this PG13.”

“Fuck PG13.” Growled Keith in a way that just sent shivers through Lance. “I want more.” He pulled Lance into another heated kiss, but his hands started moving all over him. Over his chest, along his back, through his hair, and under his shirt. He gasped a little when he felt Keith’s hands start to head further south towards his pants.

“Whoa, slow down a little there Keith.” Purred Lance. “Did I suddenly flip a switch or something?”

“Hmm, probably.” Keith hummed a little and started kissing his neck. “I don’t know. Never been like this before. Never felt like this before.” He bit Lance’s neck hard.

“Ow! Keith!”

Keith quickly drew back. “Too much?”

Lance rubbed where Keith had bitten him. He didn’t pierce the skin, but he knew he was going to bruise. “Babe you have really pointy teeth… and you were going for my jugular.”

“... So that’s a no?”

“Big no. Is that a Galra thing?”

Keith shrugged. “I honestly don’t know. It felt like the right thing to do… Sorry. I’m kind of going on my instincts here. Doing Galra military training didn’t exactly cover Galra sex ed. I’m figuring this out as I go.”

“Fair enough. Just slow down a little...” There was no way Lance was going to admit that Keith suddenly becoming domineering, even for a split second did things to him. Things he wasn’t sure were safe to admit to Keith just yet.
“Fine. Slow.” He leaned forward to kiss Lance again, but there was a sudden knock at the door which made Keith tense up and growl.

“... Um, should I answer that?” Asked Lance.

“No... Let me...” Keith quickly went over to the door and opened it. He quickly looked around, looked down, and brought in a tray with a few things on it. He looked kind of confused.

“... What is it?”

Keith looked through all the things and frowned. “Medical supplies... Bandages, disinfectant, gauze, ointments, gauze, some muscle heat rub stuff, painkillers, and... lube?” Keith picked up the piece of paper that was on the tray and quickly read it. About halfway through he made an embarrassed squeaking sound.

“What is it?”

“It’s Galran. You wouldn’t be able to read it.”

“Yeah, but what does it say?”

“... I’m not telling.”

“Why?”

“It’s embarrassing...”

Lance obviously didn’t believe him. So he brought out the big guns. “Alright, guess I won’t suck your dick then.”

***

Keith felt like his brain was shutting down. Lance was going to suck his dick? Really? Was he serious? Even if he was or wasn’t should he really tell Lance what was on the paper? It would embarrass them both. Might even make Lance reconsider having sex in the near future if that was the case.

But that damn bastard with that lazy smirk on his face. He’d bite him later. “It’s um... It’s some information about Galra mating... It reads like a textbook. Not interesting at all...”

“... Are there diagrams?”

Keith could feel his face heating up for the millionth time that day. “No! L-look... It’s just um... It’s simple things that I kind of know and some stuff I didn’t know...”

“Like?”

“Well clusters and stuff-”

Lance’s eyebrows shot into his hairline. “Clusters?”

“Fuck...” Keith nervously ran his fingers through his hair. “We um... Humans are kind of a one and done sort of deal but it’s um, kind of more of a rapid fire kind of thing with Galra...”

Lance thought about this for a moment before he finally got it. “Holy crap! You guys have multiple orgasms? How the fuck did you figure that out? Oh man, tell me you were just tugging one out and it
just happened?”

Keith felt like he was going to die. “Something like that… I um… I kind of thought that was a normal thing but some stuff happened and I talked to Shiro about it because he’s a guy too and um… That’s when I found out it’s a Galra thing.”

Lance was pretty much dying of laughter at this point. “Oh fuck! Seriously? Poor Shiro! Can’t believe he had to explain that to you!”

Keith rolled his eyes and kept reading the paper. “Yeah, yeah. Laugh it off... Galra also tend to mark their mates through biting and scratching... I think that’s why there’s all these medical supplies.”

“... Am I gonna die?”

All Keith could do was grin at him just to show off his fangs and purred. “I’ll be gentle with you Lance.” He liked it when Lance would blush and nervously swallow like that. He was cute. “What? You like my teeth?”

“... Maybe. As long as you don’t like, puncture anything major. I’m okay with biting.”

“Really?” Keith was kind of surprised to hear that. So Lance was into biting? That was good to know. Good to know that he could bite him if he wanted. Because he wanted to bite him and mark him and make it obvious that he was his… But when he thought about it that was kind of creepy possessive.

Lance nodded, looking kind of embarrassed. “Yeah, I kind of like some of the more kinkier stuff. Like, I’m good with just doing normal stuff. That is always good. But I am willing to do adventurous things… So biting and scratching is fine with me…”

Keith almost couldn’t stop the deep rumbling in his chest. Lance was cute. He wanted to bite him again. He put the paper to the side and walked back over to Lance. He pulled Lance onto another deep kiss and took a firm hold of his hip.

In response, Lance laced his fingers into Keith’s hair and tugged. It shot a beautiful tingling sensation straight down Keith’s spine. He let out something between a moan and a growl. It was so fucking good and felt amazing. Lance just chuckled a little and lightly bit his bottom lip.

“Looks like you like getting your hair pulled mullet.”

Keith growled a little and pushed him back onto the mattress, pinning him down. “You’re playing with fire there Lance. You sure you want to get burned?”

Lance smirked at him. “Says the guy that got the shit burned out of him trying to save my useless ass.”

With little warning Keith pressed his hips against Lances and slowly started to grind against him. The two of them moaned in unison and Lance bucked his hips upwards into Keith’s. Jolts of pleasure just shot through Keith’s body as a small whine escaped his lips. Fuck that was good. But he needed more. I wanted more. He craved more.

Suddenly Lance reached out and pulled at Keith’s suit. “T-take it off.” He moaned. “I need m-more.”

Keith sat back and started pulling his suit off. He tried to make a small show of it for Lance. Looking down at the other’s blown out, lust filled eyes made Keith gulp. “Fuck Lance… You’re gorgeous…”
“Speak for yourself. Human or Galra you are fucking sexy.”

“Oh shit I am still Galra, aren’t I? … Do you really not mind that I look like this?”

Lance smiled, reached up and gently cupped Keith’s face. “Keith, no matter what you look like you’re still you and I want you. I need you.”

That struck a nerve with him. Lance needed him? Before Keith knew what he was doing he pulled Lance close and sunk his fangs into his shoulder. Lance moaned and pulled at his hair. It felt so damn good. Keith couldn’t explain it but it felt nice having some part of Lance in his mouth.

Lance was panting hard as he reached between them and started to try and grope him, but Keith knew he couldn’t be able to do much since there was a protective plate built into the suit, kind of like a cup but more flexible. Either way he still pressed into Lance’s hand. Just the pressure felt nice.

“Fuck, Lance…”

“Hmm?”

“Don’t look so fucking innocent you little bastard.” He growled.

Lance chuckled and pulled Keith down for a quick kiss. “Okay. Lube?”

Keith nodded and grabbed the lube that he had left on the floor and actually read that if this was meant for sex. Thankfully it was. He’d have to ask Ulaz if Galra needed lube normally for sex later. Definitely later. Right now he had someone he desperately had to please.

By the time he climbed back onto the bed Lance was sitting back up again and had removed his shirt. Fuck he was perfect. Though in the back of his mind he felt kind of irritated that Lance’s skin was so… barren. It needed to be marked.

He leaned in to pull Lance close again but Lance quickly stopped him. “Whoa, slow down for a second there. I think we’re getting a little carried away again. Remember, we’re going slow. Slow.”

Keith made a slightly irritated noise. “Yeah. I know.”

“… I’m not comfortable going all the way at the moment.”

“Yeah, I remember. We’re not going all the way since we’re both injured. I’m cool with that… I um… I don’t think I can go all the way either anyway…”

Lance smiled a little and quickly kissed his cheek. “Okay. I just wanted to make sure we are on the same page.” He looked down at Keith’s legs and smiled a little. “You gonna take off the rest of your suit?”

“Only if you take off the rest of your clothes.” It almost felt like a mad dash to see who could remove their clothes first. But Keith easily came in first on that front since he was only wearing a one piece suit. It gave him an opportunity to stare at Lance’s body as he undressed. He knew he was probably staring at Lance with hungry, predatory eyes. But he didn’t care. Lance was beautiful.

A light chuckle left Lance’s lips. “Hey, my eyes are up here kitten.”

“… Kitten?”

“Don’t like the nickname?”
“I um… I don’t know.”

Lance grinned, sat back down on the bed and practically seated himself on Keith’s lap. Keith gasped a little at their sudden closeness. “You don’t know?”

Keith shook his head and quickly cast his gaze anywhere but Lance’s face. He was suddenly just so… So Lance. While he was distracted by his thoughts Lance put some lube on his hand and started stroking him. He gasped and buried his face into the crook of Lance’s neck. The sensation was different from when he did this on his own.

“L-Lance…” He moaned as he lightly dug his nails into his shoulders.

“Me too.” Mumbled Lance. “Touch me too.”

With a shaky hand Keith reached and started to touch and stroke Lance. He was kind of worried he wasn’t doing this right, but he instantly became more confident when Lance moaned into his ear. It sent shivers down his spine and he started moving his hand faster. His heart skipped a beat every time he felt Lance’s cock throb in his hand.

“Fuck, Keeeeeeeeeith.” Whined Lance. His teeth grazed Keith’s ear, and a pleasurable sensation was quickly building up deep within his core. He felt his breathing quickly becoming ragged as he was practically sprinting towards his end. From Lance’s labored breathing he was fast approaching his end too. Lance came with a low moan and made a mess of his stomach and Keith’s hand.

Hearing Lance moan was just what Keith needed to push him over the edge. Keith bit his bottom lip and let out a small whimper as he reached his climax. He moaned loudly and he quickly thrust up rapidly into Lance’s hand. He came a second time, and then a third time before he reached his end and collapsed against Lance, panting heavily.

***

Lance was a little shocked to say the least. He kind of thought Keith was kidding about the whole cluster thing, but no. Apparently that was a thing and not something he was bullshitting just for shits and giggles. Either way Keith had practically passed out on top of him.

“… Keith?”

“Hmm?”

“You’re heavy. Get off me.”

Keith just yawned and pushed against him until Lance fell back against the mattress. “Tired. Sleep now.”

“But we need to get cleaned up.”

Keith huffed, lightly bit Lance’s ear and growled. “Later.”

“Your fur’s gonna get all gross when our cum dries on you and you’ll have no one to blame but yourself.”

“… Weblum snot is worse. That shit’s like wax.” He wrapped his arms around Lance and sighed contently. “Sleep.”

Reluctantly Lance relented. “Fine. We’ll clean up after a nap.” With his clean hand he reached up
and lightly rubbed the sensitive patch of fur behind Keith’s ear. His eyes immediately slipped shut and he started to purr. This closeness felt right. Being able to hold Keith like this made him feel content and safe. Lance’s eyelids started to slowly drift shut.

Suddenly Keith’s eyes snapped open and he lightly nudged Lance. “Hey.”

“You said you were going to give me a blow job.”

Lance couldn’t help but snort out a laugh. “Fucking hell Keith, next time. You said you wanted to sleep now.”

“Oh man.” Keith didn’t need to be told twice and he practically passed out on top of Lance.

“…” He attempted to push him off, but Keith was like an unmovable sack of bricks. Lance just sighed and ran his hand along Keith’s back. This wasn’t so bad.
Reunion

Chapter Notes

Finally time for Lance to get back to his friends and new alliances to be made. Kudos and comment when you can. Enjoy :D

Lance was pleased to finally have a shower. It was a fucking ordeal trying to get Keith off him and into some pants on the first place. He was just a huge sleepy cat boy that just wanted to keep sleeping. But Lance was able to make him move with a vague reminder of a possible blow job. No matter what species it turns out pretty much all guys like oral.

Either way Keith took Lance to the communal showers and they both got clean. Lance couldn’t help but laugh a little when he saw Keith lathering up the fine fuzzy fur on his chest and stomach. He took care to avoid the waterproof bandage on his chest.

“Wouldn’t it be easier if you were in your human form?” Asked Lance. “You know, less fur to tug on?”

Keith shrugged. “It’ll hurt if I change back when I have stuff stuck in my fur… Fucking crusty mess…”

“Hey, I tried to warn you about cleaning up.”

“I know, I know…” Keith sighed and looked over at Lance. “Um… Was it okay?”

“Was what okay?”

“You know…” Mumbled Keith. “You have more experience with those kinds of things than me…”

Be still Lance’s beating heart. Keith was worried about that? That was adorable. He smiled and kisses Keith’s cheek. “Keith, It was perfect. You don’t have to worry about it. I think we both needed a bit of stress relief like that. Don’t you think?” He purred.

“…” Being this close to Keith, Lance could actually see the fur on Keith’s face puff up like a cat. Was this what Galra do when they blush? “Yeah. I guess so… Um, is your head okay?”

“I feel like I’m back to normal now. The only one of us that’s fucked up right now is you. How long till you’re completely healed up?”

“I think about a month? Maybe less. Depends on if I get an infection or not.”

Lance nodded and rested his hand on Keith’s shoulder. “Take care of yourself Keith. We couldn’t have gone through all of this just for you to get all fucked over because of an infection.”

“I-I won’t. Promise.” He shrugged Lance off him and stepped under the water getting rid of all the soap and suds. After a few seconds Keith shuddered a little and reverted back to his human form. “... I should go to the infirmary after this. I need to make sure my wound is actually clean… Come with me?”
“Sure.” Lance reentered to his own shower and finished getting clean. The two of them then dried, got dressed and headed to the infirmary.

Along the way Keith took hold of Lance’s hand. When Lance glanced over at him he could see how red Keith’s face had become. It was adorable. He totally wasn’t used to any kind of PDA. He grinned and laced his fingers with Keith’s and squeezed which made Keith look down at their hands. He smiled sheepishly at Lance and squeezed back.

When they got back to the infirmary Ulaz was there taking stock of what things they had left. He seemed very surprised to see them. “Oh, do you need more supplies?”

Keith blushed and shook his head. “No we… You were the one that left all that stuff outside my door, aren’t you?”

“Yes.” Said Ulaz in a matter of fact sort of way. “I realized that neither of you probably know about Galra mating and I wanted to make sure everyone was taken care of. Galra mating is apparently quite brutal to some species.”

Lance could only laugh as Keith turned an impressive shade of red. “Ulaz!”

“What? It’s quite common for those who have done Romance by Combat to mate very soon after the fight is over. It is a natural urge, and to be honest no one expected to see either of you for a few cycles.” Informed Ulaz like it was the most normal thing in the world.

At this point Lance decided to interject since Keith looked like he was going to die of embarrassment. “Most humans take it kind of slow and don’t generally like mating when their partner is hurt. You can still see Keith’s bones under those bandages, so we’re gonna do it the human way and not the Galra way.”

“Really? Interesting…” Ulaz seemed to make a mental note of that. “In any case why are you two here?”

“I need to rebandage my wounds…” Muttered Keith.

Ulaz nodded and quickly took what Keith needed out of the cupboard. “There… Lance? Since you are here would you mind if I take a scan and a few samples from you?”

“Huh?”

“I simply wish to improve our database on humans and your cooperation will be vital if we come across and need to treat any injured humans.”

“Oh okay. Sure.”

Ulaz directed him to lie down on a bed which he did. Moments later Ulaz waved some weird metal rod over him a few times. Which was weird. Then he got some cups and needles. “Spit into this. Urinate into this. Bleed into this. Sneeze into this.”

Lance did his best to comply with what Ulaz wanted him to do. Though he kind of thought the urine sample would kind of have to wait for a bit till he found a bathroom. Also the bleeding thing was a little weird. But once he was done he watched Ulaz helping Keith with his injury.

He couldn’t see the injury that Keith had from where he was sitting, but he didn’t really want to. Thankfully neither of them seemed like they were worried about it so that was enough to ease Lance’s anxiety.
Suddenly Kolivan walked in. “Ulaz, how is- Oh? What are you two doing here?”

“Humans take it slow.” Said Lance quickly so Keith wouldn’t have to explain anything. “We tend to build up to it. We have a lot of weird little rules and stuff before anything actually happens.”

That seemed to satisfy him. He just nodded and cleared his throat. “Well then, I guess I can tell you this now then… I have been in talks with Princess Allura of Altea over the past few rotations. It has been difficult trying to get everything sorted out, but she and her entourage will be here soon. I believe they are friends of yours Lance?”

Lance grinned. “Oh cool. It feels like a life time since I’ve seen them. When will they be here?”

“Any tick now. Krolia is bringing them here.”

Keith frowned at the mention of his mother but nodded along and pulled the rest of his suit up when the bandages were done. “And what if we were still in my room?” He asked. “What then?”

“We would have informed them that you two are participating in an ancient Galran ritual and would be indisposed for a few Earth rotations. Now I do not have to. Follow me, they will be here in a moment.”

Lance grinned and looked over at Keith. “Hey this is awesome. It’ll be cool to see Allura again. I wonder if her entourage is just going to be Coran?”

“Maybe. Let’s just go Lance…”

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Keith was suddenly very anxious. Allura was here. They were going to take Lance away. Lance would go back with them. He had a family. He had friends. He had a job. They were going to have to do that thing Lance was talking about. Long distance relationships. He didn’t know if he could do that. Just the thought of not being able to see Lance with his own eyes every day or so just have him anxiety. Was this normal?

The three walked into a room where Allura and Coran were standing with Krolia and Antok. They looked like they were keeping it official with the weird formal clothes Allura and Coran were wearing. Since when did Allura wear a dress that long?

“Hunk! Pidge!” Yelled Lance as he quickly ran over to his friends. Keith hadn’t even noticed that they were there, but they looked excited to see each other. Hunk and Pidge were crying, though Hunk was crying harder than the two of them.

Keith just stood back while Lance caught up with everyone and tried to blend into the wall. He wasn’t needed here. He wasn’t needed anymore. He could practically feel regret filling him. Not just for him, but for Lance. He’s not going to want to stay with him. Galra weren’t worth it. He wasn’t worth it. Why would anyone actually want to be with him anyway? He just wanted to leave. Would Kolivan let him leave?

“Hey Keith. Long time no see.” Said an all to familiar voice.

Keith quickly looked up and gasped a little at the man in front of him. “Shiro!” Keith practically pounced at him. Shiro jumped a little but easily caught him in his good arm. “What are you doing here?”

He chuckled a little and ruffled Keith’s hair. “Because Krolia said it would be a good idea for all of
us to come along. She also gave Allura and Coran a way to communicate with Kolivan to help set up this… I’m glad you two are okay.”

Keith smiled a little and looked over at Lance. He was still talking with Pidge and Hunk using lots of exaggerated hand gestures. He looked back in his element and much happier to be around his friends. “Me too.”

“Excuse me.” Said Regris. He was looking at Shiro’s prosthetic arm in fascination. “I couldn’t help but notice this… Are you… Yurak’s Shiro?”

Shiro gave Keith a confused look. Keith shrugged. “It’s just how we talk about people we don’t know. It’s just a language thing. This is Regris by the way. He’s our tech expert.”

“Ah, okay.” He looked up at Regris. “Yes, I am Shiro. It’s good to meet you Regris.”

Regris nodded and continued to stare at Shiro’s arm. “Yurak didn’t mention you were missing a limb.”

“Oh, well this happened after he left the first time.”

“Fascinating…” They lightly tapped it a few times. “If you would allow me, I would like to offer you some improvements.”

“Oh you don’t have to.”

Regris shook his head. “Think nothing of it. I am very interested in this kind of stuff. I mean, I’m a double amputee myself.” He tapped his arms together. They made a slight metallic sound. “I would be honoured to give you something a little more… natural.”

“Natural?”

Regris nodded enthusiastically. “Yes. Our technology would be able to make it so it feels like it’s actually part of your body. It’ll feel practically the same as having your actual limb. It’s no big deal.”

“Oh? Um…” He looked at Keith giving him a questioning look.

Keith nodded. “It’s fine Shiro. If Regris wants to give you a new arm it’ll be fine. He knows what he’s doing.”

“If you’re sure…”

Regris nodded and started to lead him to the infirmary. Keith couldn’t help but smile as how excited the older Galra seemed to be about talking to another person with a missing a limb. He was glad everyone was having fun while his own anxiety was building.

He had no idea how long he was standing alone for, but it seemed to be a significant time because Shiro and Regris walked back into the room with Regris going over what his arm could and couldn’t do. “-and if the preset pain threshold is reached it will immediately shut off and flash a warning light so you won’t pass out due to pain.”

Shiro just stared in awe at his arm as he moved it around so freely and fluidly. He was even able to wiggle his fingers as freely as he did his actual arm. “This is just… Wow… I can’t believe it… This is too much…”

“Think nothing of it.” Said Regris. “If anything thank Lance. We only just got his bio scans done
today which was basically the road map I used to connect your nervous system to it in the first place.”

Keith smiled a little at him. “You enjoying your new toy there?”

He grinned. “This is amazing. Not even the most advanced human technology can make an arm or leg or anything move like this.”

“Think of it as compensation for having to put up with me for all these years.”

“…” Shiro hugged him tightly and tried not to sob. “Thank you Keith. You’re one hell of a little brother.”

Keith hugged back and awkwardly patted his back. “Shiro… You’re kind of crushing me.”

“Oh right, sorry.” He quickly let go of Keith and grinned. “You have no idea what this means to me.”

Suddenly Pidge was standing by Shiro and holding his arm. “Holy shit! This is so fucking cool! This is Galra tec right? Right?” She looked up at Regris grinning. “Like, you guys take and adapt the technology you fine in other realms right?”

Regris nodded. “Yes we do… Are you… interested in technology?”

“Heck yeah! I make robots in my spare time!”

Hunk started talking with Shiro. “Hey that’s really cool. So what does it do?”

Shiro started talking to Hunk about his new arm and Keith stepped away. He was happy for Shiro. He was happy for Hunk and Pidge. He was happy for everyone. He was. Really. So why did he feel like he just wanted to go and cry in his room?

Before he had the chance to do that Lance was suddenly by his side. “Okay, so even though we’ve been here for a few days it’s been almost a month. So much has happened. Work shit aside, Allura and Coran have been super cool and talking to Pidge, Hunk, and Shiro all about Altea technology and catching them up on Altean stuff.”

“Oh? That’s nice. Sounds like you have some homework now.”

Lance laughed. “Yeah, sounds like it. But hey, I gotta catch up on Galra culture too am I right? Maybe hit the gym so we can actually spar without you without getting my ass kicked. No swords this time.”

Keith smiled a little. “Yeah… Did you tell them about us?”

“No-” Of course he didn’t tell them. He’d be going back with them This was just going to be some secret between them, wasn’t it? The Blade wouldn’t mention it since it wasn’t any of their business to talk about who was mated with whom. “-I thought we could do it together.”

Keith gave him a surprised look. “Really?”

“Yeah, of course. Look, I’m not sure what the Galra thing is, but human’s kind of like to do these things together. I want to do this together with you.”

“…” Keith blushed. “O-okay.”
Lance grinned and held his hand. “Awesome.” He gently pulled Keith back over to Pidge, Hunk and Shiro. “Hey guys, Keith and I have something important to tell you… Keith’s my boyfriend.”

Pidge grinned. “ Fucking finally. Holy shit I can’t believe you guys got together.”

Hunk gave them two thumbs up. “Awesome guys. And to think all it took was Lance getting kidnapped and tortured.”

Shiro gave Keith an expression that he couldn’t quite figure out. But it was kind, compassionate, and kind of proud? It felt weird that maybe he had made Shiro proud. He really wasn’t used to this. “I’m proud of you guys were able to talk out your feelings.”

Keith could feel himself blushing even more when he said that. “Um… Thanks.”

Lance grinned and slung his arm over Keith’s shoulder. “Thanks guys. That’s really awesome of you. Now we have to go and talk to his mum.”

“What?!” He quickly pulled Lance aside and quickly whispered to him. “We are not telling her about this.”

“What? Why? She’s your mum.”

“Because I don’t want her to know about my life. We are coworkers. We are not a family unit.”

“But this could be the start of something good. You two could bond over having humans as mates.”

“… No.”

Lance frowned. “I’m going to tell her anyway.”

Keith growled at him. “Lance, I’m pulling rank. You are not telling Krolia.”

“Pulling rank?”

“Yes. I won the fight I have final say over things like this.”

Lance raised an eyebrow and crossed his arms. “… What the fuck did you just say to me?”

Keith hadn’t really understood much about human culture and romantic relationships, but he felt like he had just fucked up somehow. “… I out rank you because I won the fight?”

“And you think because you won a fight, which I threw because I didn’t want to fight, you think you can control me?”

Keith made a small distressed sound. “That’s not what I meant. This is a Galra thing.”

“Yeah, and I’m gonna show you a human thing.” He spun on his heels and marched over to Krolia, who was still talking with Kolivan, Allura, Coran, and Antok. “Excuse me, sorry for the interruption. I need to let Krolia know something very important. It’ll take a moment. Promise.” He looked up at her and smiled. “So Keith challenged me to Romance by Combat. I accepted. We’re a thing now.”

She looked stunned to hear that. She quickly looked between Lance a Keith a few times before she just smiled and nodded. “Thank you for informing me Lance. Let’s discuss this at length later.”

Lance nodded and walked back over to Keith and glared at him. “We can do a lot of the Galra things because I know it’s important to you, but you are not doing that pulling rank shit on me again. Got
“... Fine.” Of course he was already fucking up their realtionship. Only a half-breed could fuck it up so badly so quickly. No wonder he never saw half-breeds with mates or families. Lance was probably happy to be going back now. Keeping him at an arm’s distance was a good idea.

Suddenly the lights flickered and Kolivan grumbled. “I’m sorry about that… Our power cores need maintenance and major upgrading… It’s very old Altean tec…”

Coran lit up. “Old Alten tec you say? Well Allura and I could have a quick look at it. Altean power cores can be a little temperamental after a while.”

Pidge grinned. “Altean tec? Sign me up! I gotta see this!”

Kolivan thought about this for a moment. “... Alright. Everyone follow me.”

Antok put his hand on Kolivan’s shoulder. “Kolivan… Do you really think we can allow these outsiders to be in such a sensitive area?”

“The Altean’s are our allies Antok.” Said Kolivan in a calm, yet commanding manner. “If they wish to offer us help I see no reason we should not.” After that there were no more objections as Kolivan lead the humans and Altean’s down to the power room.

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Lance didn’t know what Keith’s problem was. They had only been together officially for probably a few hours and he was trying to control him? Not cool. Did all Galra have that pulling rank BS up their sleeve? Their military mindset completely stained their entire culture didn’t it? Pulling rank. Nonsense.

But to be fair Keith did look relatively sorry about what he had said. So Lance would talk to him about it a little later and let him know he forgave him. Just behind closed doors. The Galra seemed to be rather secretive people.

They got to the power room and Coran immediately ran over to the core and started walking around it and tapped it a few times. “Hmmm… What is it set it? Have you tried recalibrating the frequency to maintain the quintessence’s stability?”

“Yes.” Said Kolivan. “We even did a shut down of the whole system to reboot it.”

“Well, you could have burnt out the cooling coils.” Said Coran. “Tends to happen in these models. The coupling could have broken in the motor? How is the undulation mechanism? Still undulating the plasma quintessence?”

Kolivan frowned a little and went over some notes. “The undulation mechanism is running on spare parts. We need to scavenge newer parts.”

“That could be it. We’ll need to raise the protective barrier to assess the situation properly.”

Hunk made a concerned sound. “Um… Protective shield? Is this stuff radioactive?”

Coran waved him off. “Not to worry. Quintessence as the same radioactive qualities as spending about three earth minutes in the sun every human hour. You’ll be fine. Maybe a little sunburnt, but you won’t die from it.”
“That’s a relief.”

Kolivan started to press buttons on the control panel to raise the shields. “Hopefully this will be a simple fix.”

Lance hummed a little and looked over at Keith. He still looked very upset at himself. Maybe he should let him off the hook a little? “... Look, I’m not that mad at you. I just don’t want you to think I’ll let you get away with anything just because you decide to pull rank on me. We’re still cool okay?”

“... Okay.” Keith didn’t seem so convinced, but Lance wasn’t going to keep pushing it. At least not right now.

“You know I love you, right?”

“...?!?” Keith looked at him with wide eyes. “Really?”

“Of course I do.” He held Keith’s hand and smiled at him. “I’m a romantic Keith. When I fall for someone I fall hard and fast.” The shield started to rise and illuminated the room in a light lilac light. It caused Allura and Coran’s Altean markings to glow brightly.

“Whoa, how are you doing that?” Asked Hunk.

Allura chuckled. “Alteans are much more intune with quintessence than other species. When we are by a strong source it powers us up so to speak. It speeds up our healing and slows our aging. None of us are really sure how or why we are one with the quintessence, but we do have a few creation stories I shall tell another time if you would like to hear about them.”

Pidge shrugged. “Can’t be any more insane than all other human creation stories.”

“I’d like to hear about them.” Said Lance. “I kind of missed out on the Altean culture lesson.”

“Of course Lance I.” Allura gasped in shock when she looked at him. Everyone else turned their heads to see what she was looking at and they all stared at Lance in slack jawed amazement. Even the Galra look like their eyes were going to pop out of their skulls.

“... Um... Do I have something on my face?” Asked Lance as he nervously touched his face.

Keith reached out and rubbed his thumb over Lance’s cheek. He looked confused and slightly hurt. “Lance, why do you have Altean markings?”
The next few minutes were kind of a blur to Lance. He got dragged out of the power core room and taken once again to the infirmary. Everyone was fussing over him and trying to figure out how in the multiverse Lance could be Altean, or at least part Altean.

“This isn’t possible. Are his parents Altean?”

“Has he ever shown any unexplained strength?”

“Shape shifting abilities?”

“Have anyone in your family ever looked Altean?”

“Has being Altean been hidden from you?”

Lance sighed and put his foot down. “Look. Everyone calm down. I have never done any of those things and none of my family are Altean. Never even mentioned once. Not even some crazy family folklore about anyone in my bloodline marrying anyone that has markings on their face.”

“... I think I might have an idea.” Muttered Pidge. She looked like she was in deep thought as she talked. “Altean’s seem to be the basis of elves or fairies in human folklore. Coran, you even said that it was possible that Altean’s visited earth early on, right?”

“That would be correct.” Said Coran. “What’s your point?”

She shrugged. “Well, it’s all genetics. Some Altean knocked up a human and eventually everything that made them distinctively Altean disappeared after several generations. Someone in Lance’s bloodline was Altean. Maybe it’s like a recessive gene now? Something like albinism? If that’s the case it could be completely possible that Lance is the only one in his family to present an Altean mutation. In fact he could have always had the Altean mutation but it wasn’t apparent since he didn’t have the markings? Maybe they only activated because of his exposure to the quintessence?”

Allura scoffed at the idea. “Pidge, the first Altean explorers were responsible. They wouldn’t have mated with the general inhabitants of another realm. Especially with one that was so technologically inept at the time.”

Suddenly Coran snapped his fingers. “Oh! I think I have an answer to that! When we escaped Zarkon that teleporter wasn’t stable. I did warn Alfor that it was experimental and could throw us through time, space, and realms… It’s very possible that a handful, or even one Altean was placed on a primitive earth and had children with the locals.” He seemed very proud of himself for coming to that conclusion. “Why, Lance could very well be related to Altean aristocracy; the Duke or Duchess of Merphipel, the Marquess of Alcarnar, the Baroness of Cintiwell, the-”

“That’s enough Coran.” Snapped Allura. She looked very stressed out about this whole situation.
She took a moment to collect herself and gave Lance a strange look. “Lance, your condition is very… It’s strange. It isn’t unexplainable, but it is surprising. We will be able to do a better investigation when we are safely back in your realm.”

Lance glanced over at Keith, he was near the door looking rather agitated. He wasn’t even looking at him anymore. Was he that upset about Lance being part Altean? Something that even he didn’t know about?

“I have to raise a few concerns.” Said Krolia calmly. “I don’t believe Lance should go back to his realm.” There was around of objections but she quickly quieted them down. “Please hear me out. I understand that Lance should go back to his realm, but considering that he is part Altean… To Zarkon any Altean is better than no Altean. He would be a valuable asset in finding weak point to build gates.”

“And how would I do that?” Asked Lance.

“As you saw when we were in the power room all the Altean marks lit up. They would basically wave you around until they lit up.”

“Is that how Zarkon was able to expand the empire so rapidly?” Asked Allura. “He forced any survivors to do that?”

All Galra in the room, including Keith shared worried looks. Kolivan took something out of his belt that looked a lot like a scanner gun, but more Galra. “No one forced the Alteans to find these places… Traditional Galra tec is much more bio organic in nature. It is easier to repair and deal with than metal and what not… At least that is the case in our realm. Most of our tec is a mix between Bio organic and more traditional technology.”

A feeling of dread washed over the room. No, it didn’t wash over the room, everyone was drowning in it. Kolivan popped the top off of the device and showed them what was inside. Coran looked like he was going to faint and Allura looked like she was going to throw up.

Along with the normal electronic parts there were more organic parts. A chunk of brain hooked up and wired to a blue, jelly like organ. It was still quivering in the device.

Pidge gulped a little. “... Is that what I think it is?”

Kolivan nodded and put the case back on it and put it away. “Many of the Alteans that the Galra captured were harvested for all the necessary parts to detect plasma quintessence… At the time it was the most efficient way to do it… We no longer use such things but we have to scavenge what we have…”

“Your people cannibalised my entire race...” Whimpered Allura. “Everyone that we couldn’t save… Everyone left on Altea… My only solace was that they didn’t suffer... But now…” She started to sniffle. “E-excuse me…” She turned away from the group and tried her best to keep herself composed. Coran was by her side and doing his best to try and console her.

Lance felt sick too, but more for the fact that someone would integrate flesh and technology like that... It was something out of a horror movie or video game. It left him with all kinds of unsettling feelings. Mostly it was the implications that messed with him. If the Galra had known he was part Altean would that mean they would have cut his head open and scoop his brain out? He shuddered.

Krolia just nodded. “This is why I do not think that Lance should be back on earth. He is not safe there unprotected. He doesn’t seem to have inherited any of the physical traits besides the Altean face
markings… Kolivan I highly suggest that Lance have a Blade member be his bodyguard at all times. Despite the advances that the Galra have made with their technology they will still use the old bio organic methods.”

Kolivan nodded in agreement. “I was going to suggest the same thing. Yurak, until further notice you will be guarding your mate. Pack your things and be ready to go. Cosmo will be going with you of course.”

Keith looked very surprised to hear that, but he smiled a little. It was so subtle that Lance doubted that anyone but him and the other Galra could see it. Maybe Shiro. “Understood. I will be back shortly with Cosmo and our things.” He quickly left the room.

Lance went to follow him, but Allura called him back. “Lance? Where are you going?”

“I’m going to help Keith pack.” He said. “I’ll be back in a minute.” He quickly headed to Keith’s room and pretty much saw him putting a few of Cosmo’s things into his backpack. “… Hey?”

Keith looked over at him and nodded. “Hey.”

“Are you okay? You’re acting weird… Is it because I yelled at you? I just wanted to make it clear that you can’t order me to do what you want just because you beat me in a fight. Humans don’t work that way… Or is this the Altean thing? Because I didn’t know about any of that. I would have told you if I knew… You believe me, right?”

Keith gave Lance a weird look. “I do believe you Lance I just… I’m a little anxious. I don’t really know why I’m like this.”

“Well, when did it start?”

He shrugged. “I guess when everyone showed up? Like, I was happy they showed up but it meant you were going to leave… So I just… I don’t know. I kind of felt like you were leaving me behind or something…”

Hearing that Lance walked over to him and held him close. “Keith… I’m not going to leave you behind… I really like you and um, I’m kind of glad I am part Altean… It gave Kolivan an excuse to let us stay together since I really can’t stay here. My family would eventually find out that something is up with me and file a missing person’s report.”

“You talk too much.” Mumbled Keith. “I’m glad that I can go back with you, and I’m sorry about trying to pull rank on you… I just, really, really don’t like Krolia. Like, I trust her, she’s good at what she does, but she’s not my mother. I can’t just open up to someone that didn’t love me enough to at least check in on me once a year… And I guess the Altean thing is kind of a shock for me too… Turns out you are the only monster fucker in your bloodline.”

Lance laughed a little and ruffled his hair. “Shut up man. We didn’t even fuck yet. It was just hand jobs.”

He chuckled quietly. “Yeah, I know… He Lance, can you do the thing for me?”

“The thing?”

“Yeah the thing. You know? The thing?”

Lance blinked in confusion. “Another hand job?”
“No the thing. The thing that helps me relax… and purr…”

“… Oh! Okay.” A soft smile made it onto Lance’s face and gently rubbed the spot behind his ears. He wasn’t sure if it was going to have the same affect on him that it did in his Galra form, but he was willing to give it a try. After a few seconds Keith’s eyelids slipped shut and he started to softly purr. It melted Lance’s heart that Keith actually asked him to do this. That he trusted him to do it. Everyone else could wait a few minutes for them to be finished. This kind of bonding was important.

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Keith felt a lot better about everything now that Kolivan gave him a mission to stay with Lance. Sure he knew that those who did Romance by Combat were meant to stay with each other for a few days, but he didn’t think it would affect him that much since he wasn’t fully Galra. Maybe some of the anxiety he was feeling was because his Galra instincts were telling him he needed to stay with Lance? He had no idea.

As they walked back to meet with the others Keith whistled for Cosmo and the wolf happily appeared by his side. He nuzzled his side and sniffed his pants since Keith needed to change back into his normal human clothes instead of his Blade gear. “Hey Cosmo. Been a while hasn’t it boy?”

“Where was he anyway?”

“He stayed with Verk. Despite him acting like he doesn't like him, Verk actually likes him a lot.”

They met up with everyone again back where they first let up. Lance quickly went to talk to Hunk and Pidge, leaving Keith alone again. He felt slightly better now that the two of them had talked. Plus he now had Cosmo by his side.

As they were talking Krolia approached him. “Yurak.”

“Krolia.”

“I hope you are not mad at Lance for telling me about your relationship. You know I would have found out eventually.”

He shrugged. “I didn’t think you would take much of an interest in my life since you never did before.”

“… I can understand why you would feel that way. But I am happy for you. You deserve this.”

“Whatever.”

She sighed a little and shook her head. “Your mission is a very important one Yurak.” Her tone and posture changed ever so slightly. She was no longer talking like she was trying to have an emotional connection. She was back yo acting like just another member of the Blade. “Not only are you going to be a bodyguard for someone with Altean blood, you’re also going to be protecting your mate. Don’t let your emotions get the better of you.”

He gave her a confused look. “I don’t get emotionally compromised when on a mission.”

“I know. But this is different. This is your mate. You already have a very strong emotional connection with him. There is every possibility that you will act on your emotions and instincts rather than what is logical and correct. Be careful not to hurt him physically or mentally.”

“… Krolia?”
“Many of our way are very… You must know from interacting with humans that their sense of morality is very different from ours. We have a much more might makes right thing going on. Humans take emotions much more into consideration than we do.”

“Yes… he kind of already talked to me about that…”

“Good. Apart from that just remember your training and talk to him to make sure you aren’t doing something that makes him uncomfortable, or is illegal. Over protection will compromise the mission as much as under protection.”

“Understood…”

“Also, you two will be living together. Does his till live in that small unit building?”

“I’d assume so.”

Krolia thought for a moment. “… Okay that is acceptable. More people around means it’ll be harder for Galra to come in and just take him if they find out about his identity. You will also have to be in communication with the Alteans as we are now in an alliance with them.”

“Understood. I haven’t failed a mission yet.”

Krolia nodded in approval. “Very good Yurak. I wouldn’t expect that you would. You take after your father.”

“… Personal matters aren’t very professional Krolia.” He informed her. “I would have thought that you knew better than that.”

She frowned a little at him. “It is not too personal to encourage you.”

“Okay…”

They were able to get back to earth rather easily and with no fuss. Krolia had apparently set up a temporary gate in the back alley behind the shops. The sun looked like it was setting but he couldn’t really tell. Cosmo seemed to be happy to be back as he sniffed around and promptly lifted his leg to pee on the side of a dumpster.

Krolia quickly said her goodbyes to the group and left as soon as possible. Everyone else quickly started talking amongst themselves so Keith took this opportunity to pull Shiro to the side.

“Can I ask you a favour?”

“Sure Keith. What’s up?”

“Can you please take Cosmo for a few days?”

Shiro looked a little confused. “I don’t mind, but why?”

Keith felt embarrassed but he needed to tell Shiro about this. “When you guys showed up Lance and I were kind of in the middle of a Galra mating ritual kind of thing… I kind of want to finish it… and it would be better if Cosmo wasn’t around and had someone to take him for walks and stuff… If you wouldn’t mind.”

Shiro went a little red. “Oh, okay. Yeah. I can do that. Um… When you’re done doing that you can start working here again if you want?”
“Thanks. I’d like that.”

Lance went up to Keith and grinned. “You ready to go? These guys were awesome and brought my car around so it wasn’t stuck all the way out there… Or do you feel more comfortable staying here with Shiro?”

“What? No, I’m going back with you. I’m going back with you.” He quickly grabbed Lance’s shirt and pressed himself against him. Seconds later he realized that everyone was staring at them so he quickly let him go and took a step back. “I um… Let’s get going… Cosmo, stay here with Shiro.” Cosmo wagged his tail and happily sat beside Shiro with a slightly dopey look on his face.

After that everyone went their separate ways. On the way back to Lance’s place he called his mama and had a long talk with her in Spanish. Keith had no idea what either of them were saying, but Lance seemed really happy. That’s what was important right now.
By the time they got back to Lance’s place his Altean markings had stopped glowing and were completely invisible now. He looked just like a normal human. Which was probably a good thing. Lance didn’t seem like the kind of guy that would get such strange face tattoos anyway. He didn’t know if that was because he wasn’t charged up with quintessence or not anymore. It was interesting.

They walked into the apartment and Lance visibly relaxed as he walked around and lightly touched his things. A comfort. Lance was feeling better. He quickly went to the kitchen and checked the fridge. “... Hey Keith?”

“Yeah?”

“Turn the TV on to a news channel.”

Keith did as he was told and after a few minutes someone said what the day and month was. It made Lance grin and he quickly pulled out a few things from his fridge. “Hasn’t expired yet!” Suddenly he stopped, put everything pack in and pulled some chocolate covered ice cream out of his freezer. “Ha! Knew I saved these for a special reason. Want one?”

“Not really…”

“You sure? They are so good.”

“Yeah.”

Lance shrugged and grabbed one for himself. “Okay. Suit yourself. You know where to get one if you want one.” He then went and sat on the couch and sighed happily. Savouring the taste of his ice cream. “So much better than that food goo.”

“Yeah…” Keith sat next to him and ever so slightly leaned into him. They were safe and Lance was happy. That made him happy.

“Oh so I was talking with Allura,” said Lance. “And tomorrow after work I’m going to go over to her place to learn more about the whole Altean thing. Want to join?”

Hearing that made Keith’s anxiety rise. “You’re going to work tomorrow? Aren’t you going to rest or something?”

Lance shrugged. “I don’t really see the point you know? Like we’re back here now and everything’s good. We aren’t gonna run into any Galra or anything while we’re here. It’s fine.”

“That’s not what I…” He weakly gripped Lance’s shirt. “I need you right now Lance… After Romance by Combat Galra spend days together alone… Sure, I was happy to see everyone again but I need you here with me. Please stay…” He hated how weak he sounded when he said it, but
Lance didn’t understand. He wouldn’t understand. Keith hardly understood it.

To his surprise Lance just smiled softly at him and kissed his cheek. “Okay. We’ll stay here for a few more days.”

“... You sure?”

Lance rolled his eyes. “Look, I have no idea what’s going on with you right now but if you really need me with you right now so we aren’t going to go anywhere. We’re going to stay right here. Okay?”

“Okay.” He leaned more into Lance just wanting to close any and all distance between them. Keith felt like he was probably touch starved at this point. At least he didn’t feel like ripping Lance’s face off anymore. It was definitely more a feeling of protectiveness now.

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While Lance was happy to finally be back home, he was internally screaming. In fact, he’d been internally screaming ever since the whole Altean thing came to light. What was he meant to do now? He wanted to learn more about Altea and Allura and Coran were willing to teach him but Keith was acting so weird.

He was acting nothing like he was before. He was so unsure and scared of themselves. Keith used to be so stoic and sure of what they were doing, if not a little aggressive. Looks like he had to be the level headed one. Which was just leading to more internal screaming from him. He wondered if Galra could smell stress or something? If so Keith wasn’t letting him know it.

“Lance?”

“Yeah?”

“... Can we go to bed?”

“Sure. Today’s been really tiring huh?”

Keith nodded in agreement and they went to Lance’s room. Lance watched Keith just walking around, looking at everything, touching stuff, and just generally exploring. Lance let him be and retreated into the bathroom to finally do his face care routine. It had been too long. His skin looked awful. He needed his sugar scrubs and face masks.

Apparently Keith thought he was taking way too long since about five minutes in he was standing in the doorway. “... What are you doing?”

“Skin care. I haven’t done this in ages.”

“I see…”

Lance hummed a little and put on his face mask. So refreshing. Keith still looked curious so Lance picked up his sugar scrub and gestured for him to some over. “Give me your arm.” Keith did as he was told and Lance happily rubbed a small amount into the back of his hand in the gap of his fingerless gloves. Once he was done he washed Keith’s hand under some water and grinned. “Touch it. It feels so much smoother now.”

“...” Keith touched the area and made a slight surprised sound. “Huh, it does… Smells sweet.”
“No shit. It’s sugar.” He looked back at the mirror and hummed a little as he inspected his face. The mask he was wearing was slightly translucent so he could still kind of see his cheek bones. He was surprised to see that the Altean markings were gone.

He was interested in why the markings were gone now. Maybe he needed to be around quintessence for it to work or something? He wasn’t sure. He personally didn’t mind them too much. Though he knew his mama would flip shit if he got face tattoos. There were several things that he promised her that he wouldn’t do; no neck or face tattoos, nothing racist, antisemetic, or overly sexual. The Altean marks were definitely something that would make her whack him with a sandel.

Out of the corner of his eye he saw Keith licking his hand where Lance had applied the sugar scrub. “... Why are you licking your hand?”

Keith jumped a little and quickly hid his hands behind his back. “Am not. Can’t prove it.”

Lance laughed. “You’re an idiot.”

Keith pouted and looked away. “Shut up… Can’t help it that sugar scrub his sweet and stuff… It’s non toxic right?”

“Yeah.”

“Good... You done yet?”

“In a bit... Are you really okay with me being part Altean?”

Keith frowned a little. “Why wouldn’t I be?”

“Well, I guess it’s kind of a big deal or something? Like everyone seemed to be freaking out and shit but I have no idea... Maybe being part Altean is really important? But who really knows at this point? What do you know about Alteans?”

His boyfriend shrugged and walked up behind him and wrapped his arms around Lance’s torso, resting his chin on his shoulder. “Nothing that the Galra haven’t written... History is written by the victors. Everyone that isn’t Galra is disgusting parasite that is described in the worst possible way. Alteans were always described as extremely feeble and weak willed. A species that was just begging to be subjugated and dominated by a superior species.”

Lance frowned a little and put his hands over Keith’s. “That’s really fucked up…”

“Galra have no mercy for everyone else... To the Galra, if you aren’t Galra then you have no honour. If you have no honour then you deserve death... To us if you have no honour then you can only receive true honour in death.”

“Are the Blade the same?”

“No. In the Blade it’s knowledge or death.” He kissed Lance’s neck. It made him blush. “We don’t like ignorance.”

Lance nodded a little and started to remove his mask. “Really? Well it’s good to know that they are all about learning new stuff.”

“Yeah... It can be pretty difficult for Glara to admit they need to learn new things... We’re kind of-”

“Stubborn? Bullheaded?”
Keith rolled his eyes, “Yeah… You finished doing your face stuff now?”

“In a second. You go wait for me on the bed. Okay?”

“… Okay.” Keith reluctantly let him go and walked back into the bedroom. A few minutes later Lance walked out and flopped onto the bed next to him. It felt nice to be back in his own bed. Keith instantly snuggled up next to him. “All good now?”

“Yeah.”

“You sure?”

“I’m sure. Oh! Since we’re meant to be alone together for a while does that mean Pidge and Hunk can’t come over?”

Keith didn’t seem too happy to hear that. “I don’t feel comfortable with them being here right now… In a few days, yes, but for the time being I just…I want it to just be the two of us. Is that okay with you?”

Lance smiled and kissed him. “I’ll text them and let them know tomorrow. You know, it’s kind of weird how clingy you are right now. Are all Galra like this?”

“Apparently full Galra are worse than me. I’m not really Galra enough for the Galra.”

Lance smiled a little and kissed his cheek. “I’m glad. I think you’re just the right mix of human and Galra.”

Keith blushed a little. “You think so?”

“I know so.” He looked down at Keith’s chest to where his injury would be. “How is your wound?”

“It’s almost fixed. Should be fully healed really soon.”

“That’s good.” He kissed him tenderly. “Are you excited? Wanna get down to it?”

Keith blushed and hid his face in Lance’s shoulder. “Shut up… Forgive me for wanting to have sex with my boyfriend.”

“We’ll do it soon.” He yawned and closed his eyes. He was tired. He didn’t realize how tired he was. The past few days had been absolutely crazy.

It just felt like he hand blink and Lance woke up the next day. Keith was still in bed next to him. But he was sitting up and staring off into the distance at the far end of the bed. He seemed extremely tense and he seemed to be looking through some kind of Galra device.

He hummed a little and yawned. “Morning Keith. What are you doing?”

He looked over at Lance and shrugged. “I’m actually reading up on Galra biology and anatomy. Seeing what’s similar and different about me.”

“Oh?” Lance got up and crawled over to him. He looked over his shoulder but he couldn’t tell what he was looking at. It was all written in Galran. But he did see a diagram of a Galran chest and was slightly confused. “Your heart’s on the right side? Not the left?”

Keith nodded. “Yeah. We’ve always had our hearts on the right… Learnt that was kind of a very weird thing for humans.”
“Yeah…” Lance put his hand over the right side of Keith’s back. He wondered if he could actually feel his heart beating under his hand, but realistically he knew it wasn’t going to happen. “That’s still pretty cool. If some dumb ass tries to stab you or shoot you in the heart they’ll have another thing coming.”

That made Keith smile a little. “Yeah… But um, I’m mainly looking up on the whole Galra mating stuff.”

Lance nodded. “You find anything interesting? Still can’t believe that you don’t know much Galra stuff like this. You lived with them.”

“Yeah, but the Galra were only focused on military stuff. I had to be put into special training to learn the basic Galran alphabet.” Muttered Keith. “... But I’m kind of just looking at what happens after Romance by Combat… I’m just trying to see if there is a reason I’m getting so anxious.”

“You’re anxious?”

“Well yeah… I don’t know why I’m feeling like this so I can only assume it’s a Galra thing, Endorphins and stuff I guess. You okay with me getting up and making us a coffee and some breakfast? Way better than food goo. I promise.”

Keith seemed a little hesitant but nodded. “Okay. I’ll be here. Call me if you need anything.”

Lance smiled and kissed his cheek before getting up and going to the kitchen.

***

While Lance was doing that, Keith kept reading. His communicator had several lengthy bits of information about chemicals and all that stuff. It was annoying that he couldn’t find what he wanted right away, but eventually he did find what he was looking for.

*After the fight is over, the two Galra will retreat back to their sleeping quarters where they shouldn’t be disturbed or risk getting physically assaulted by both parties. During this time partners should not be separated unless under extreme circumstances. This includes; getting attacked, being under attack, or one of the people involved is mortally wounded and require medical attention. These feelings of possessiveness will last for anywhere between three to five cycles.*

Keith frowned a little. That sounded really messed up. But he could deal with that. It wasn’t so bad. He then continued on to see what the dangers of being separated during this time would do.

*If separated or interpreted by a third party it will cause one or both parties to become extremely anxious, aggressive, and or depressed. Spending alone time together is essential to establish a strong and healthy bond. If not it can lead to many arguments and fights that’ll escalate in violence till they either kill each other or cause extreme physical trauma to one party.*

Keith really didn’t like that. He needed to talk to Lance about this. He got off the bed and slinked into the kitchen. He watched his boyfriend standing by the stove, happily cooking. He looked so pleased and happy with himself.

“Lance?”

“Yeah Keith? Just couldn’t stay away from me huh?”

He rolled his eyes and walked over to him. “Hey um… I found out some interesting things about Galra…”
“Yeah?”

“... I physically need to be around you because Galra stuff. We’re on the third day now, so it’ll be over by the end of today or in four more days at the latest... You okay with that?”

“I’m fine with taking another week off work. So we talking we have to just be one on one or can I have a friend come over?”

“One on one...” Muttered Keith. “I don’t really know the logistics of it, but it could end pretty badly if we don’t... I don’t want to mess up and accidentally hurt you. You’re too important to me... It won’t be for too long it’s just... I’m sorry.”

Lance looked over at him and smiled. “Hey, that’s okay. Probably just some weird hormone thing going on, right?”

“Yeah.”

Lance quickly kissed his cheek and started plating up their food. “We should probably talk about this stuff anyway... Like, are you going to start acting overbearing towards me?”

“I don’t think so. Galra only really get protective if we feel like our mates are in danger... So I know humans value independence and stuff and I’m more than happy to let you have it. I don’t think I can be around people all the time anyway...”

“Fair enough.” He pushed a plate of food towards Keith and handed him some cutlery. Scrambled eggs and sausages. Nice. Way better than food goo. “Okay, so you’re just getting over protective now because of hormone stuff?”

“Yeah.”

Lance nodded in understanding. “Okay. That’s fine. I can work with that.”

“You sure?”

“Yeah.”

Keith nodded and picked at his food with his fork. Lance was too nice and understanding. “Um... When all this hormone stuff is done I promise we will work out all this Altean stuff. I swear.”

“You don’t need to worry about that.” Reassured Lance. He reached over and squeezed his hand. “Keith, being part Altean changes pretty much nothing about my life. I could have lived my whole life not knowing I was Altean and I would have been fine. This Galra stuff is more important... Do you need help changing your bandage?”

Keith looked down at his chest to where his wound was. The last time he looked down all the salve he had been using had helped to boost muscle growth and pretty much all his bones were covered completely now. He just had to wait for the skin to cover it now.

“I can to it on my own. It’s fine. It doesn’t hurt.”

“Well that’s good. Want to watch some TV today?”

“Yeah, sounds good... Sorry.”

Lance gave him a confused look. “Sorry? Sorry for what?”
“Making you stay here with me when you don’t want to…” He muttered. “You obviously want to get back to work and be around your friends.”

Lance sighed. “Keith, you don’t need to apologise for that. Sure I didn’t really know what I was getting into, but to be fair you didn’t know either. No one told you about this stuff.” He leaned over and kissed him. “So eat your food and we can lounge around in our underwear all day.”

Keith blushed a little. “Just in our underwear?”

“Well if you want we could go commando?”

Keith whined and hid his face behind his hands. He knew he was bright red. This level of intimacy was not something he was used to. “I hate you so much right now…”

Lance chuckled and ate his breakfast. “Nah, you love me.”
The two of them ended up watching some stuff on TV that Lance had recorded. Keith didn’t really understand what any of it was since it was all in Spanish. He never really cared that much for TV anyway. Keith was much more interested in leaning against Lance and touching his arm. He just liked the feeling of being this close to being with Lance. While Lance watching his shows Keith was scrolling through his communicator to read what he could.

_Romance by Combat is a sacred right that Galra do not perform lightly. It is the first and arguably the most important step before becoming bonded mates with a partner. There are traditionally three main spots that mating partners bite to help solidify their bond; neck, wrists, and thighs. It is important to note that the skin around the neck and wrists of Galra is generally thicker than most species. This prevents accidental death due to excessive bleeding. If for some reason biting cannot be performed due to deformity or injury scratching is a viable substitute._

_Other places of note where Galra tend to bite include the chest, stomach, and genital region. Though this is more common with bonded partners since they have a much higher level of trust that can only be formed over years of mutual trust and respect (see PDF 327)._

Keith cringed slightly when he thought about biting someone’s dick or having someone biting his dick. But he didn’t need to think about that for a while. He looked down at Lance’s arm and wondered if Lance would be okay with him biting his wrist. He sighed and continued to read.

_Physical platonic intimacy is just as important as sexual intimacy. Non sexual touches are very important to building trust and helps to reaffirm and solidify the bonds formed during mating. This is most easily achieved by stimulating the hypersensitive areas located behind the ear._

Keith put his communicator away and looked up at Lance. His eyes were fixed on the TV. “...Lance?”

“Yeah?”

“... Bite my wrist?”

He blinked in confusion. “Excuse me?”

“... Galra thing.” Explaining Galra stuff was embarrassing. “It’s a thing we’re supposed to do... Like we’re meant to bite each other’s necks, wrists, and thighs.”

“Kinky.”

Keith rolled his eyes. “Shut up Lance. I’m trying to be serious.”

Lance chuckled a little and squeezed Keith’s hand. “I know. Sorry about that love. I’m just being an asshole.”
“Yes. Yes you are.”

He smiled and lifted Keith’s hand to his face and started kissing the back of his hand. “Sorry love. So, do need to break the skin or something?”

Keith shrugged. “I guess. I don’t know what it’s supposed to do. But we’re supposed to bite each other. I don’t know… Galra are weird…”

“It’s okay… Um…” He took Keeith’s wrist in his mouth and lightly bit down. He gave Keith a confused look and mumbled out something that sounded vaguely like “Am I doing it right?”

“Honestly? I have no idea. Bite me harder?” Lance shrugged and bit a little harder. Keith could feel his teeth pressing hard into his skin. It made him shudder and sent goosebumps up his arm. It felt kind of nice. “Y-yeah. Like that.”

Lance took Keith’s arm out of his mouth and gave him an odd look. “… You Galra are real kinky fucks.”

Keith was blushing. “Not my fault Galra like biting.”

“You can bite me too if you want.”

“… You sure?”

“Yeah, just no Galra fangs. They look all pointy and stuff.”

“O-okay.” Keith leaned forward and lightly bit his neck. He felt Lance shudder and moan ever so slightly under his touch. It felt so nice to have Lance like this; moaning and gasping under him. Keith could hardly contain the satisfied rumble in his chest when Lance made those beautifully sweet sounds. It made him feel a little more confident and he bit him harder.

“Fuck, Keith…” Moaned Lance. His hands ran along Keith’s back, gently tugging at his shirt. It felt nice. He pulled back a little and lightly kissed Lance. His partner happily kissed back. “You Galra are still kinky fucks.”

“Says the guy that was moaning when I bit your neck. Humans are the real kinky bastards.”

Lance laughed and rolled his eyes. “Well I can’t say you’re wrong there.” He grinned and pushed some of Keith’s hair out of his face. “You okay there Keith? You look a little flushed.”

“… This stuff is still all very new to me. I’m just trying to do the things that I’m supposed to do.”

“Maybe you’re overthinking it a little?”

“You think so?”

Lance nodded. “Yeah. Like, it’s all good to look up stuff, but if you worry too much about it, you’re not going to have fun.”

“… I guess?”


“Y-yeah I guess… Not as intimate as biting between bonded mates…”

“What do you bite then?”
“Chest, stomach, and um… genital area…”

“… Ouch.”

“Yeah. It made me cringe too.”

“Yeah… humans generally do not want their dick or their lady bits bitten unless they have some very, very specific kinks. You got any kinks I should know about Keith?” Said Lance in a slight teasing tone as he moved his hands down to his hips and lightly rubbed his thumb over his hip bones.

“I um… I haven’t really thought much about my sexuality past I am gay and like dicks. Kind of haven’t had much down time to do that kind of experimenting since I first joined the Galra… Pretty sure they might have discouraged that stuff to make us more aggressive or something… I don’t know.”

“Hmm, well we can just do more of this biting foreplay stuff. It’s kind of nice.”

Keith gave him a skeptical look. Lance was being really accommodating to him. Sure it was because Lance had more experience, but he wanted to do more stuff for him. Give and take and all that stuff, right? He softly pressed his hand against Lance’s thigh and ran his thumb over the zipper of his pants.

Lance’s breath hitched in his throat a little. “K-Keith.”

“Do you want me to stop?”

“… No.”

Keith smiled a little and unzipped Lance’s pants. “J-just tell me if you don’t like it.” He was going to do it. Just, not teeth and don’t bite. Did Galra have a gag reflex? Did he have a gag reflex? Fuck it. Time to find out.

***

Lance had just assumed that Keith was going to jerk him off, but no. Before he could say anything Keith’s lips were wrapped around his cock. He gasped slightly when Keith started to bob his head. Lance tilted his head back and moaned softly as he laced his fingers in Keith’s soft hair, giving it a light tug.

How long had it been since he last had a blow job? Far too long. Even his last girlfriend wasn’t into oral but that was okay. Fuck he shouldn’t be thinking about girls right now. Not when he had a sexy half-Galra sucking on his dick like a lollipop. Keith was making such lewd and dirty sounds. He kept glancing up at Lance with questioning eyes. Like he didn’t know if he was doing it correctly.

“F-fuck. You’re doing so well Keith.” Moaned Lance. “You can take more of me, can’t you? Just a little, Fuck you look so beautiful.”

Keith seemed to respond well to the praise since he started to push himself further and kept trying to take more of him down his throat, even when Lance felt himself hit the back of his throat. It felt so good, but Lance didn’t want it to end so soon even though he felt like he was getting close to finishing.

He gently pushed Keith away from him, which made him look very confused and kind of concerned. “Did I do something wrong?”
“What? No. No Keith. You were doing really well. Too well... Let’s go to the bedroom. I wanna make you feel good too.”

Keith blushed a little and the two of them walked into the bedroom. He looked a little confused but he sat on the bed and kind of just waited for Lance to do something. He seemed to squirm under Lance’s gaze. “Um, are you sure I was doing alright? You didn’t finish...”

Lance chuckled a little and kissed him. “Don’t you worry Keith. I’m gonna finish, but if I remember correctly, I still owe you a blow job.”

“I-I guess so...”

“Good. Take your pants off and lie on your side.”

“... Why?” Fuck, Keith was pretty dense sometimes. But his innocent when it came to certain sexual things was pretty cute.

“69.”

It took a few seconds for Keith to register what that meant, but when he did his face went bright red. “O-okay... But um... Are you really sure about this? Clusters...”

“Pretty sure I can handle it.”

Keith nodded a little and slowly shimmied out of his clothes and awkwardly lied on his side. He didn’t look very comfortable. Lance could quickly change that. He got onto the bed, grabbed Keith by his legs and quickly pulled him over so his legs were on either side of his head. Galra liked it rough right? Keith might appreciate this.

“L-Lance?” He squeaked.

“Yes Keith?”

“... Nothing.”

“Good.” He ran his hands along Keith’s thighs before he leaned over and lightly bit his inner thigh. This instantly drew a desperate gasp and moan out of Keith. “F-fuck Lance!”

Lance hummed a little and quickly took Keith into his mouth. Keith gasped a little as his hips twitched down, pushing himself just that little bit deeper into his mouth. Lance kept a firm grip on Keith’s thighs and started to bob his head. Then he felt Keith’s perfect mouth back on his cock. It was amazing. It made him moan, which just made Keith’s legs shudder as he tried to push his hips closer towards Lance’s face. His whole body was so sensitive.

Keith was just too amazing. His mouth, his tongue, everything was just amazing. He moaned and came in Keith’s mouth. Keith made a slight surprised noise and swallowed. He swallowed. He actually fucking swallowed. He pulled his head back and moaned softly. “F-fuck Lance! I’m so f-fucking close! I-”

The muscles in Keith’s legs tensed up and that’s all the warning Lance got before Keith came in his mouth. Lance attempted to swallow, but Keith was still hard and his hips seemed to be moving on their own as they quickly thrusted into his mouth while Keith whined and whimpered.

Lance quickly pushed Keith off him just as he reached his second climax, getting hit with a full load
right in the face. It wasn’t the kind of facial that he was expecting, but there were worse things he could have gotten hit in the face with. He’d take it.

Keith was panting heavily and shaking slightly as he curled in on himself. He’d slipped his protective third eyelid over his eyes at some point making them bright yellow, but Lance could tell from how flushed Keith’s face was they were completely consumed by lust. He shuddered a little and came again.

Lance smiled at him and went to grab a washcloth from the bathroom to clean them both up. While he was in the bathroom he quickly washed his mouth out since he was there. When he got back to Keith he was flat on his back with his arm draped over his eyes. Lance smiled softly at him and started to clean him up.

Keith gasped a little and shuddered. “Cold…”

“Yep. But at least you’re all cleaned up now… Was that good for you?”

“Yeah… Um thanks for biting me…”

“Hey, no problem. Figured that would be a good time to bite you.”

“Yeah.” Keith seemed really embarrassed.

Lance smiled a little at him and ran his fingers through Keith’s hair. “That was your first time giving oral, wasn’t it?”

“... Yeah. Was it bad?”

“No it was good… But you know you didn’t have to swallow, right? You could have just spat it out.”

“... Was I meant to?”

Lance chuckled a little and lied down next to him. “Spit or swallow it doesn’t matter. But I think we should talk about the fact that your hips won’t stop moving after your first orgasm. Kind of tiring on the throat and jaw.”

“... Sorry about that.” Muttered Keith. “It’s like… After the first wave hits the time to climax halves and then it halves again. It’s really hard to control my hips when that happens.”

“Fair enough I guess?” Lance hummed a little and started to gently rub behind Keith’s ear, making him purr softly and relax. “Guess it’s just one of those things I’ll have to get used to huh?”

Keith made a small content sound. “Yeah… I’m tired…”

“Yeah, cumming three times in a row would take it out of anyone.”

“...”

“Keith?” He moved Keith’s arm away from his face and smiled a little. He’d fallen asleep again. It was pretty adorable. He looked so peaceful and content. He leaned over and kissed his cheek. “I love you Keith.”
Things continued on like that for the next few days. Though Lance had to admit he kind of had to get used to Keith nipping and biting his wrist or neck when he wasn’t paying attention. He couldn’t tell if Keith was doing that because Galra, or because he was an asshole. He chose to believe it was the former and not the latter.

Then one day Lance woke up and Keith wasn’t in the bedroom. Which was weird. Keith usually stayed in the same room as him until he woke up. Sometimes he woke up with Keith draped across his body. He frowned a little and looked around. “Keith?” He got up and walked to the kitchen where Keith was messing with the kettle. “Morning.”

Keith looked over at him and smiled a little. “Hey. I um… I think this is over now.”

“Over?”

“Yeah. The time period after Romance by Combat where we need to be together is over. You can go back to work now.”

“... You sure? How can you tell?”

Keith shrugged. “I don’t feel anxious or have any real need to mark you with more bites.” He passed Lance a cup of coffee. He seemed like he was back to normal, but Lance wasn’t so sure. He didn’t want to do something and then have it all blow up in their faces.

“Oh. I guess you would know better than me… Do you want to go and get Cosmo?” That seemed like a good idea. A good way to see if Keith really was okay now.

He seemed to perk up a little at that. “Sounds good. I want to see Shiro too.”

“That’s good. Let’s get dressed and try to wear clothes to hide all the bruises on our arms and necks.”

“Why? That negates the purpose of marking someone.”

“Well um… It’s a human thing. Bruises like this are kind of a um… It’s not really seen as a mark of pride for us.”

“Oh… Okay. Let’s find something appropriate then.” He seemed a little disappointed, but he respected Lance’s wishes, which Lance really appreciated.

Once they got dressed in more appropriate clothes they headed out to Lance’s car and he drove down to that familiar street. Keith looked really excited to be there and to be honest so was Lance. It felt like forever since they had been there, even though they were just there a few days ago.
He smiled a little when they pulled up and he happily watched Keith immediately get out and quickly walk into Shiro’s shop. When Lance got to the door he couldn’t help but laugh when he managed to just see Cosmo flying at Keith and landing on him. They hit the floor with a loud thud. Cosmo was wagging his tail and jumping around all over Keith. He was so happy that Keith was back.

Lance chuckled and patted Cosmo when he lifted his head up to sniff him. “Hey there boy. How are you going?”

Shiro looked in from the back room. “Hey, you two are back. Everything sorted out with the whole Galra ritual thing?”

Keith nodded and tried to sit up, but Cosmo knocked him down again. “Ow, fucking hell Cosmo. You’re too big damn it. Yeah, it’s all good. I can start working back here tomorrow if that’s okay?”

“That’s fine… Are those bruises?”

Lance shrugged. “Galra ritual called for biting.”

“Right. Don’t need to know anymore than that…” Muttered Shiro. He seemed to be pretty embarrassed. Not that Lance could blame him. He was still kind of embarrassed about that too, but it made Keith feel better so he didn’t mind. Thankfully he didn’t bruise easily. Keith on the other hand… Well the less said about the state of his thighs the better.

Cosmo barked at them and wagged his tail like mad. Keith just sighed and pushed Cosmo off him. “Off. Now Cosmo.” The dog whined but did what he was told.

“You taking Cosmo with you two?”

Keith nodded. “Yeah… Can I bring him over when I work? He’d rip Lance’s apartment if he’s left alone for too long.”

“Sure.”

Lance was sure they had some catching up to do. “Hey, I’m going to pop over next door and catch up with Hunk and Pidge. Okay?”

Keith seemed a little hesitant but nodded. “Sure. I’ll be there in a bit.”

Lance grinned and quickly went next door. Hunk and Pidge were in the middle of just doing general maintenance. “Glad to see you guys have kept the place in shape while I was gone.”

Pidge grinned and ran over to him, quickly catching him in a hug. “Lance! Are you actually back now or like, is Keith gonna burst in here and drag your ass back home and fuck you silly?”

Lance blushed and Hunk pulled a face. “But seriously, is an angry half-Galra going to march in here and wreck the place?”

“No Hunk. Keith’s back to being all grumpy and moody.” Informed Lance. “Though to be fair he isn’t exactly grumpy and moody, but he is acting a lot more like Keith and not all shy and stuff.”

Pidge frowned a little and looked over Lancies neck and his arms, specifically at the bruises. “So, is this a case of Galra are freaks, Keith a freak, or are you the freak here?”

“…” Lance blushed and looked away. “I um… I’d say it was 80% Galra, 10% Keith, and 10% me…
Galra are very specific about where you bite and I was happy to go along with it since we didn’t exactly go all the way…”

“Wait…” Muttered Pidge. “You mean to tell us that you and Keith did a Galra mating ritual without the actual mating part? How the absolute fuck do you mess up that part?”

Lance shrugged. “Mating ritual never said we actually had to fuck. We just had to bite and touch each other a lot… Beside’s I’m kind of nervous about going all the way with Keith. Since he’s half Galra and all that. Pretty sure he’d end up decking me to determine who tops.”

“This sounds like something you should talk about with Keith…” Muttered Hunk. He looked very, very embarrassed to be talking about this. Which was reasonable considering that they were pretty much talking about the sex life of his friends.

Pidge rolled her eyes and waved him off. “Hush Hunk, this is interesting. We must know for science.”

Lance laughed and shook his head. “Nah Pidge. You’re just a pervert. Talk to Keith if you want details about Galran sex life. Though you should be prepared to get throat punched into next week.”

She frowned and crossed her arms. “Yeah, I’d rather not get murdered for asking if Galran sex is like two Tasmanian Devils going at it.” She got weird looks from her friends. “You know, fucked up little Australian animal that is just made of anger and fur? Look it up. The girls have thick skin around their neck so their mates don’t rip their spine out during mating season.”

“…” Lance nervously touched the back of his neck. While he didn’t think Keith would be anywhere near that aggressive, he still didn’t want to risk it and get fucking murdered just for sex. This wasn’t some preying mantis bullshit. “I um… So… Anyway… That whole Altean thing…”

“Oh yeah.” Pudge grabbed Lance’s face and yanked him close to her face as she squinted her eyes and tried to spot his Altean marks. “... You really look all human now… Is it racist for a white chick to say that to a person of colour even though he is technically not all human?”

Hunk shrugged. “Probably best you don’t say that in public. People will think you’re a racist.”

“Noted.” She continued to look where the markings should be and frowned. “So… You really need to be around quintessence for it to light up or something?”

“Apparently. You guys got any theories about how I became part Altean?”

Hunk shrugged. “We kind of all agreed that Coran’s theory about you having an Altean relative somewhere in the past and like, that’s just how it happened. We aren’t geneticists here buddy.”

“I know… Should I go and see her now?”

Pride shrugged. “Allara will be around in a few minutes to bring us lunch and—oh here she is now.”

Lance looked over and smiled as the princess of Altea happily walked in with a few sandwich bags. “Lance! It’s so good to see you again. I wasn’t sure when we were going to be able to see you again… Is your neck okay?”

“Galra bite their mates a lot. No big deal.”

She gave him a concerned look but otherwise dropped the subject. She gave Hunk and Pidge their lunch and quickly turned her attention back to him. “So Lance, can we please go back to my place
right now so we can discuss the matters of you being Altean? Is that possible right now?"

“Oh um… I guess? But we’ll have to bring Keith along. He’ll think this is interesting too.”

“… Okay. That is fair enough. Where is he?”

“He’s talking with Shiro now.”

She nodded in understanding. “Alright. Sounds good. Let’s get going now shall we?”

Lance nodded. “Alright. Later you two. Unless I suddenly get kidnapped again or die, I’ll be in for work tomorrow.” Hunk and Pidge just laughed it off and they went next door.

***

Once Lance was gone Keith just let out a long, sad sigh. When he was out of sight he looked over at Shiro who was giving him a knowing look that just made Keith blush. “What?”

“I didn’t say anything.”

“That looks says a thousand words.”

Shiro shrugged and walked around his shop. “Whatever you say Keith.”

“Yeah… How’s your new arm?”

“Hmm?” Shiro looked down at the Galra arm and smiled almost fondly at it. “It’s been a life changer. It feels like I have my actual arm back. I can feel temperature, pressure and all that kind of stuff with it… It was a little weird for the first few days.”

“ Weird?”

“I smashed a few plates and mugs when I grabbed them.” Admitted Shiro. “This arm is a lot stronger than I actually am. It’s weird, but I am getting used to it… So you and Lance huh?”

Keith nodded a little and smiled. “Yeah… I only found out that he was captured when phase two of the mission was about to start… I’m really glad I found him. He would have been fucked if the Galra had gotten to him.”

Shiro nodded. “Well, I’m glad you were able to save him. You did a really good thing there Keith. I’m proud of you.”

“Thanks Shiro… So um, you really okay with me coming back to work here and like, me living with Lance now?”

Shiro shrugged as he sorted through some flowers. “I think it’s best for you two to live together since you’re now boyfriends, or whatever you want to call it. You two just need to have an open and honest relationship and it’ll last.”

“… Okay. I’ll do what I can.” Keith wanted to make this work with Lance. He hadn’t felt like this with someone before. He didn’t think he was allowed to be with someone like this. Since after all he’s a half-breed. No Galra wanted to be mates with a half-breed. Lance was special and he’d fight for him if he had to. He really loved Lance. Hopefully he was able to express it in a way Lance would accept.

“Is something wrong there Keith?” Shiro walked over to him and handed him a white carnation.
“You can eat that if you like.”

“Thanks…” He picked a few petals off it and ate them. “I guess I’m just a little worried? I’m more Galra than I am human. Sure Galra are technically a very physical species, but I know a gut punch means very different things between Galra and Humans… We aren’t into the whole soft touches thing…”

“… Is that why you headbutted me that one time?”

“To be fair I didn’t know I was Galra and just wanted to show that I liked you but literally have no idea how. It was either that or kill the neighbours cat and skin it.”

“… I for one am very happy you didn’t kill and skin Mr Fatman.”

Keith shrugged. “In hindsight so am I. He was a cute little guy.” Cosmo whined a little and nuzzled Keith’s hand. “You’re cute too you dummy.”

“Are you happy with Lance?”

“Yeah. I am.”

“That’s good. I’m glad.”

A few moments later Lance was back in the shop with Allura. Keith was okay with Allura. Kind of. He knew that she had attacked him and Krolia with good reason and she had a valid reason to distrust her… But she was now in some kind of alliance with the Blade so he definitely couldn’t do anything to her without substantial evidence. There was also this other nagging thought at the back of his mind.

Allura is Altean. Lance is part Altean. They both physically look around the same age. Would Allura now see Lance as a potential mate since they both had Altean blood? And it wasn’t like Lance couldn’t be attracted to her. Lance was bi after all… And Allura was a full Altean. She pretty much looked human even when she looked Altean. She didn’t turn purple, and growl, and bite. She could take Lance from him too. They were just mates. They weren’t bonded mates.

Now that the thought of Allura being a potential rival, just seeing those two together made Keith want to growl. He knew he was being stupid. That Lance loved him and wanted to be with him right? Had they actually said that they loved each other? In all honesty that last few days were more of a hormonal haze to him in one way or the other.

“Hey guys.” Said Lance. “So Allura’s said she wants to teach me about Altean stuff so I thought we could drop by her house. What do you say Keith? Wanna come with? Learn something from a real Altean princess?”

“Of course.” He said a little too quickly. “I mean I um… It’s my job to look after you. My mission is to be your bodyguard after all. I take my mission’s very seriously. I’d be failing in my mission if I let you go to an unsecure place by yourself.”

Thankfully Lance just laughed this off and gave Cosmo some more pats. “Whatever you say Keith. Can Cosmo come over too Allura?”

“Oh of course.” She also patted Cosmo and the pup made very happy sounds which Keith scowled at. Traitor. “I shall head to the cafe and let Coran know I will be leaving. We’ll take your car Lance. Do you mind if I ride shotgun so I can give directions?”
“Of course not Princess.” Said Lance with a smile. “Keith and Cosmo can get cozy in the backseat. You two okay with that right?”

Cosmo just barked and tried to knock Lance over with his paws while wagging his tail. Keith knew this was a dumb and petty thing to be upset over, so he just smiled and nodded. “Yeah, sure. It’ll be fine.” It was not fine.
Keith wasn’t jealous. No not in the slightest. He wasn’t mad when he got delegated to the back seat instead of Allura. He wasn’t upset when Lance let her go through his phone to change the music to something she liked. He didn’t feel a kind of jealousy when they started talking about makeup and skincare things. And he most certainly wasn’t jealous when he saw her lightly slap Lance’s arm when he said something stupid. He held Cosmo close and buried his face into his side.

His sudden jealousy was stupid and unfounded. Allura wasn’t flirting with Lance. Lance wasn’t flirting with Allura. He was just being friendly with her because they were friends. Just friends. There wasn’t anything between them.

“And we’re here.” Said Allura.

Keith looked out the window and was very surprised to see Allura’s house was kind of big. Like, a proper two story house with fancy gates and a well kept garden. She probably had a pool with a waterfall in her backyard too.

“Wow Allura, your house is amazing.” Said Lance in amazement.

She just chuckled. “Thanks. Coran and I live together, so please excuse some of the mess.” She got out and happily led them inside and down into the basement. Though it looked more like a hidden bunker. Everything was covered in thin sheets of metal and wires. She flipped a switch and everything lit up with blue lights. It was oddly beautiful. “Please take a seat.” She gestured to a couch and Lance happily sat.

“Huh, surprisingly comfy.” Said Lance. He waved Keith over and he reluctantly sat next to his boyfriend. Cosmo lied in front of them in a protective manner. Keith was thankful that Cosmo could read the mood of a room better than he could.

Allura just smiled at Lance. “Thank you. Coran and I have been attempting to make the basement as close to Altea as possible. It is something we take pride in.”

“Well you guys have done a really good job.”

“Thank you Lance.” She happily looked through some things she had placed on a shelf. “Ah, here it is.” She walked over with some weird looking blue and white metal thing in her hands. “Could you please hold this Lance? I want to measure your passive quintessence absorption rate.”

“... My what now?”

She giggled. She actually giggled. “Quintessence is everywhere. There are very few particles of it in the atmosphere right now. For most living beings it just passes right through them without causing harm or anything like that. Some beings are more intune with quintessence than others and therefore absorb more of it. For example, if 1 is pure quintessence, Alteans can absorb 0.95 quintessence at
most, Olkari can absorb 0.75, Merlock can absorb 0.50, and so on. All living creatures are on this scale. The higher one’s species is on the scale, the easier it is to use and manipulate the quintessence in one’s environment. Does that make sense?”

Lance nodded a little. “I think so? So the more quintessence you absorb the better you can manipulate it, like magic?”

Allura shrugged. “I guess you could call it magic. Species from realms that are on the lower end of the scale call what we can do magic since they do not understand the process.” She held the device out to him. “Now please hold this. I should be able to estimate when Altean blood entered your bloodline.”

Lance took the device and just held it while it hummed in his hand. He looked over at Keith and smiled. “So where do you think I’ll fall on the scale? Pretty high up right? I’m thinking like 0.89 or like 0.85.”

Keith rolled his eyes. “I think your family would have noticed if your levels were that high.”

Suddenly it started beeping and Allura quickly took it off him. She pressed a button on the side and a small screen popped up with words written in some long dead language. Keith assumed it was Altean. She hummed a little and looked like she was doing some quick calculations in her head.

“Let’s see… my rough estimate would be… Altean blood entered your bloodline around the tail end of the 14th century.”

“What was my score Princess?”

“0.33.”

Keith couldn’t help but chuckle a little at that. Of course Lance scored way lower than he thought he would. Cocky bastard. But he was his cocky bastard after all. “Sounds like you.”

“Hey, what’s that supposed to mean?” He pouted and crossed his arms. “What level would Keith be?”

Allura shrugged. “Galra are a convergent species so their scores are some of the most diverse we were able to measure. Our scientists theorised that it was because Galra evolve extremely quickly. While it might take millions of years for a species to say, evolve from a dinosaur into a chicken, it would take anywhere between four to five hundred years for a Galra to do the same just through breeding alone without genetic manipulation.”

“That is both cool and terrifying… Is that why some of the Galra in the Blade had tails and stuff?” Asked Lance.

Keith shrugged. “No idea. None of them have mentioned to me that they are half-breeds, which is something they would have disclosed early on. I can only assume they are pure Galra that have just evolved to better suit whatever realm they invaded and occupied.”

Allura nodded in agreement. “I would have to agree with Keith on that one. Zarkon himself and the first few waves of Galra invaders in Altea had little to no fur and were much more reptilian like… I was a little surprised to see that most Galra seem to have developed more feline features when I met the Blade…” She sighed a little and shook her head. “Anyway, this isn’t about Galrans. This is meant to be about Lance being part Altean.”

“…” Right. This was about Lance. They came here for Altean stuff. Keith was just meant to be in the
background. They didn’t need to know Galra stuff. He just sat there and watched Allura and Lance talk. Every once in awhile she would get up and bring something else over for Lance to look at. They would talk and laugh and move onto something else.

They were getting along so well... Really well... If Keith didn’t know any better he’d say they looked like a couple. He felt his heart drop. His jealousy and self doubt was kicking into overdrive again. Just because they were mates now didn’t mean they were going to stay mates. Allura was way nicer than him and they were both Altean. If he, Allura, and Lance were the last people on Earth, Lance would definitely choose Allura. Everyone would choose Allura.

“Hey Allura, where’s your bathroom?” Asked Keith.

“Upstairs. The door has a starfish on it.”

“Okay.” Keith quickly got up and walked out of there. He needed some time alone. He trusted Lance around her, but he didn’t trust himself around her right now. He wrongly saw her as a rival for Lance’s affection. Normally when someone who was mated felt like someone was trying to get with their mate a Galra would have grounds to beat them till one of them stopped moving. But here that would definitely be illegal and possibly a few other crimes.

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Lance was fascinated and completely captivated by all this Altean stuff and Allura was more than happy to share her knowledge with him. She showed him a few simple Altean toys and explained how they were created to help infants learn to manipulate the quintessence fields around them.

“Since you have a score of 0.33, you’re well above the average human that would have scored a 0.27.”

“Allura? Is 0.27 big?”

Allura shrugged. “It basically means that humans a good sense of self preservation and can usually sense when there is something wrong about a situation. I believe you have referred to it as a gut instinct? 0.27 is just the average. There are some that would score a point or two higher or lower. The people that score just a little bit higher are the most likely to be mistaken for witches and psychics.”

“And they aren’t Altean?”

“All of them might have been part Altean, but it isn’t uncommon for the population in any realm to have a handful of people that are naturally more intune with quintessence than others… But their abilities would fluctuate wildly.”

Lance nodded a little and messed around with the glowing cube Allura had given him. He didn’t know what it was. “So, I can do magic or something?”

“Allura, thought for a moment. “Um… Kind of, but not in the way you would expect.” Allura thought for a moment. “For someone with such a low quintessence score I would say… You would probably be able to naturally channel quintessence without you even realizing it. Tell me, are there any particular skills that you are very good at?”

Lance thought about it for a moment. “Well I’ve always had a good eye for art… Oh, I’ve always been accurate when it comes to shooting. Video games, real life, give me a gun and tell me what to shoot and I can do it. Easy.”

Allura beamed. “That’s actually really good. You’ve probably been passively manipulating
quintessence your whole life without even knowing it.”

Lance couldn’t help but feel a little proud of himself. He knew he was awesome. He just apparently didn’t know how awesome he was. “Oh! Do you think this might mean that I’m Altean on my mama’s side? She’s deadly accurate with her sandal throw.”

She shrugged. “Possibly. You wouldn’t know unless she was exposed to a quintessence powercore like you were. But it honestly doesn’t matter that much.” She happily took Lance’s hands and grinned. “It has been so long since I’ve been able to talk about Altean things with another Altean, or part Altean that wasn’t Coran. Either way, I’m just so happy. I’ve always felt that there was a connection between us.”

“…” Lance couldn’t help but blush a little. He had been drawn to Allura since they first saw each other. She was just so different, and now he knew why. He couldn’t help but put on his most flirtatious smile. “Why Princess, I’m already spoken for.”

Allura looked confused for a moment before she laughed. “Oh Lance, I didn’t mean in a romantic sense. I meant more as a strong platonic bond. I’ve been drawn to you because I have a strong sense of familiarity… I’m sorry if you felt that way about me at some point, but I must confess my feelings for you have always been that of friendship.”

Sure that hit Lance’s ego pretty hard, but it was okay. He kind of knew he didn’t have much of a chance with Allura. Hell, he hadn’t really thought about her that much since Keith came into the picture. He was starting to see her more as a friend like Pidge anyway, but like, one he could buy makeup and beauty products with. Maybe more like a sister?

“Aw Princess, you’re breaking my heart here.” They both had a good laugh about it.

“Tell me Lance, how is everything going with Keith? Are you really okay?” She gently touched the bruises on his wrists and gave him a concerned look. “You have some very, very dark bruises…”

Lance just laughed it off. “Thanks for the concern Allura. I was a little worried about it too, but it’s apparently just a Galra thing. Just something to show that we are mates and for others to back off. Pretty sure if Keith wanted to hurt me he would know how to do it.”

“I know but I just…” She sighed a little. “I’m sorry. I’m still very cautious about the Galra and it concerns me that you two are mates… If you feel like Keith is pushing it too far don’t hesitate to tell us. Galra are… From my experience they can be very malicious…”

“Thanks for the concern, but Keith isn’t like that.” Reassured Lance. “Things are fine between us but if anything bad happens you guys will be the first to know. Okay?” While he didn’t think that anything like that would happen with Keith, he wanted to make Allura feel a little better too. She was obviously very concerned about his safety, especially since he was only just rescued.

His words seemed to make her feel a little better. She relaxed and nodded. “Okay… Let’s see if you can use this.” She dragged him to his feet and over to a small control pad and instructed him on where to place his hands. She attempted to get him to get him to play some Altean game. It was kind of hard since all instructions were in Altean, but Allura was more than happy to help him. It was fun.

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Keith had calmed down and was halfway down the stairs to the basement when he heard Allura and Lance laughing. He tried to ignore the sharp stabbing feeling he felt twisting in his guts. They were just friends. They were allowed to have fun together. Fun is good. He shouldn’t be possessive. This
wasn’t a big deal. Not at all.

He sat down on the steps and watched the two of them interact. Allura was smiling with her hands on top of Lances and Lance was laughing. He winked at her and she blushed slightly. No, he shouldn’t be jealous. Lance was normally like this anyway. It was a human thing, right?

It was normal for human males to flirt with pretty girls. Was he even flirting? Human things just confused him. If they were all Galra Keith could just deck Allura for getting to intimate with Lance and then he’d deck Lance for allowing her to touch him like that… But he didn’t want to hurt Lance. Alteans and humans were probably more into touching each other anyway without having a familial or romantic bond kind of thing.

That thought upset Keith quite a lot. He wasn’t like Lance or Allura. He couldn’t express himself the way that they did. It was like he was back in the foster system all over again. Always sitting on his own away from everyone else, while all the children played and made fun of him for not fitting in… Once he had outlived his usefulness to Lance would he throw him away? Everyone else had tossed him aside once he wasn’t useful anymore, why would Lance be any different?

He continued to watch them and felt worse and worse about himself. Allura was pretty and smart. She was on a whole other level, and royalty. She was smart and kind and amazing. Keith was nothing like this. He wasn’t pretty or anything like that. He wasn’t royalty. He was just an angry, unlikable half-breed. Lance probably felt pressured into being with him since he didn’t really know Galra culture very well.

It upset him to think that he might have forced Lance into something he didn’t want to do. Maybe that’s why they didn’t go all the way during their small isolation period? That made sense. The fact he was injured and humans take it slow seemed like a flimsy excuse in hindsight. He was just a half-breed. An interesting thing to have around till people lost interest and he was passed onto someone else. Lance wasn’t like that, right?

“Oh hey you’re back Keith.” Said Lance with a grin. “How long have you been there?”

“Not long. I didn’t want to interrupt.”

“Well come over here and have a look at this.” Lance gestured for Keith to come over so he obliged. “So this is like some Altean game where you’re meant to use the quintessence in your body to get the circle from here to there while avoiding squares and junk. I’m pretty good at it.”

“He just passed the tutorial level.” Informed Allura.

Keith nodded. “And at what age group was this made for?”

“… 0-7…” Muttered Allura.

Keith patted Lance’s back. “Congratulations. You passed the children’s tutorial level.”

Lance scoffed and continued to make the circle slowly crawl across the screen. “You’re just jealous I have a higher quintessence score than you do… I do right?”

Allura shrugged and passed the device to Keith. He held it in his hand till it started beeping and she took it from him. “0.29.”

“Ha, knew I was better at this quintessence stuff mullet.”

Allura hummed a little to herself as she put the device away. “Well Galra tend to bounce around
anywhere between 0.15 - 0.93. As I said they are a convergent species that rapidly evolves. If Keith was a full Galra he would probably have a higher score, but since he is half human it is pretty low. His passive perception would be much higher than that of a normal human but I highly doubt that he would be able to actually use this. He’s Galran. Not Altean in the slightest.”

Keith just nodded and sat back on the couch with Cosmo. “It’s fine. You two just keep doing what you’re doing.” The two complied and went back to what they were doing. Laughing and joking as they went. Had he ever made Lance laugh like that? Made him smile like that? She was so much better than him.

He couldn’t stop the spiral of self doubt, self loathing, and jealousy that he had gotten himself in. But what was there to be jealous of? Allura was a full Altean. He was half Galra. People like her were just better than him. As unfair as it was that’s just how it worked. He was just a half-breed.

Cosmo put his head on Keith’s lap and looked up at him with concerned eyes. He just knew that there was something wrong with him. Keith appreciated him looking out for him and gave him a few pats. “I’m okay. Don’t you worry about me… But thanks.” Cosmo huffed a little and licked his hand. At least Cosmo liked him

After what seemed like forever Lance and Allura were done with their Altean game and were just talking with each other. They still looked good with each other and they were happy. Could he make Lance happy like that? He wanted to, but he didn’t know if he could. He wasn’t someone made for these kinds of things was he? He was too… Too Galra…
Talk it out like humans

Chapter Notes

So much angst in the last two chapters, but now it's time for some comfort with no foreshadowing or bad things happening at all ever... Because no way I would do something shifty in one of my fan fics... You can totally trust me... Kudos and comment when you can. Enjoy :D

Allura and Lance continued to talk away about Altean things for what seemed like hours until Coran walked down into the basement. “Ah, you’re all still here and so late too.”

“What is the time?” Asked Lance.

“Oh, it’s six o’clock in the evening my dear boy.”

“Oh, we should get going.” Said Lance. “Come on Keith, let’s get going.”

“Wait, hold on a tick. I have something for you.” Allura quickly went over to a shelf and brought over a box. “Here. A gift from me to you.” She opened up the box and Lance looked inside to see two bracelets. Once was made with a blue cord and the other a red one. Both had a single white metal bead on it them. “Which one would you like Lance?”

Lance picked up the blue one and a V lit up on the bead. Seconds later it transformed into a blaster. “Whoa! What the hell is this?”

She grinned. “This is Altean technology. It’s called a bayard. You wear it on you wrist and you hold the bead in your hand and it transforms into a weapon. I already gave one to Hunk, Pidge and Shiro to ensure that they always have protection on them. I can only assume more weirdness is going to happen.”

“Fair enough…” He looked over at Keith. There was something about the way he was sitting and kind of trying to make himself appear smaller than he actually was that upset him. “What about Keith?”

“Hmm?” Allura looked over to Keith and then back at the bayard. “Oh... Well I kind of assumed that with his training he wouldn’t need one... But I can see your point. It would be good for him to have a backup weapon just in case... Keith, this last bayard is for you.”

Keith seemed a little hesitant and walked over to grab the last one. It turned into a sword in his hands. He didn’t seem very surprised. “How do we change it back?”

“Just let go of the bead and it will revert to its bracelet form.” Informed Coran. “Simple as that my boys. Now, would you like to stay for dinner?”

Lance quickly glanced over at Keith and could just see how uncomfortable he was getting. “Sorry Coran. Keith and I already made plans. We need to go and get some food for our freaking cosmic wolf too.”

“Fair enough. Glad you two came by to learn about Altean culture.”
Allura nodded in agreement. “It was.” She reached over and gently held Lance’s hand. “If you ever want to talk more about your heritage as an Altean I am more than happy to teach you anything you wish to know, and you can come over anytime you like.”

“Thanks Allura. I might just take you up on that offer.” He was really happy how ready and willing Allura was being. She was an amazing friend.

Keith and Lance quickly left after that with Cosmo. Keith kept staring out the window and wouldn’t make eye contact with Lance or even speak with him. It was kind of weird. Was Keith angry at him? Was he still upset that Allura tried to murder him and his mum? Probably. He’d probably still be mad at her too if that was the case. At least they got some cool bracelet things out of it.

“... Hey Keith? Can you tell me what’s wrong?”

“Nothing’s wrong.”

“You do know you’re a terrible liar right?”

“... I don’t like Allura.”

Lance sighed. He knew it. “Look, it was all a misunderstanding. She saw her entire race getting murdered by Galra. While I don’t think she should have tried to hurt you, I can understand why she’s uncomfortable around you.”

“I don’t dislike her because she attacked me.” Muttered Keith. “I don’t like her because she’s Altean—”

“That’s racist.”

“-And you’re Altean.”

Lance gave him a confused look. “What does me being Altean have to do with anything?”

Keith grumbled a little and started to pull one of his legs up and hug it. “You two are Altean, and you get along better with each other than you and I do… And let’s face it if anyone were to choose between me and Allura for anything they would always pick her…”

That caught Lance of guard. “Keith, are you jealous of Allura?”

“... Well how can I not be?” Asked Keith, suddenly sounding very angry. “She’s perfect! She’s kind and smart and funny and pretty! Apart from her trying to kill me, she’s been nothing but nice! Then there is me! I’m a fucking monster! I fight and scratch and bite and kill! And she clearly likes you and wants you to be her mate since you’re a young handsome guy with Altean blood! No one wants a fucking half-breed especially when the other option is fucking royalty!”

After that Keith went quiet and quickly pulled his other leg up and tried to make himself as small as possible. He looked extremely tense and Cosmo was attempting to stick his head into the front seat to check on him and to make sure he’s okay.

Lance didn’t understand how Keith suddenly went from being infatuated with him to suddenly becoming jealous and accusatory. “Keith… I don’t like Allura like that. At least not anymore.” He heard Keith sniffle little. Was he crying? Did he make Keith cry? “But I haven’t thought about her in a romantic sense since you came around. I’ve pretty much only had eyes for you since I met you… I see Allura more like a friend or a sister… And she’s only ever seen me as a friend anyway. She’s just super excited to find someone part Altean. Why would you think I’d want to be with her? We
literally just finished a Galra mating ritual.”

“... I’m just an idiot, okay?” Muttered Keith. “I know I’m being stupid, but I can’t help it… I don’t want people to take everything important away from me… Even though I know they should leave me. Everyone should leave me, but I’m selfish. I’m a horrible selfish thing. I hate that I got so jealous. I wanted to fight Allura for you, but that would just prove a thing like me doesn’t deserve you… I don’t deserve anything…”

This didn’t seem like a Galra thing. This seemed like a Keith thing. Now that Lance really thought about it Keith’s life had been a series of events where anything good in his life was taken away from him. He could kind of understand why Keith hated the idea of him getting too close Allura if that was the case. They needed to work on his jealousy issues.

“Okay, here is what we are going to do.” Said Lance calmly. “We’re going to go to the grocery store. We’re going to get meat for Cosmo. We’re going to get several bags of lollies. We’re going to get some trashy takeaway food. Probably pizza. Also alcohol. We will have dinner and we will talk about this properly like adults. Okay?”

“... Okay.”

“Good… I’m sorry I made you feel so terrible.”

Keith said nothing for the rest of the trip back, and that really worried Lance. He didn’t really know what was going on in Keith’s head, but he was determined to try and figure it out. Once they got into the apartment Cosmo started to explore and sniff everything while Lance went to get a bowl for Cosmo’s dinner.

He looked over at his boyfriend only to see him take a seat on the floor and curled up on himself. He looked so stressed out. Lance sat by him and offered him pizza. “Forgiveness pizza?”

Keith glanced up at him. “... I don’t want any. You didn’t do anything wrong. It’s all me.”

Lance frowned a little and sat next to him. “Keith… No matter what you think happened it didn’t. Allura and I aren’t a thing and are never going to be a thing. I love you and want to be with you… Do you understand that?”

Keith just sighed sadly. “I know… I just… I worry about these things. I l-love you too Lance, and I don’t want people to take you away from me but I know I don’t have any right to try and keep you.”

Lance sighed and hugged Keith tightly. “It’s okay Keith. Calm down… Look, I think I get it. But I am not going to leave you for Allura or anyone. You are my boyfriend. If anything I am jealous of you.”

“... What? Why?”

“Dude, you can transform and junk, you’re fucking strong, and you’re just incredible.” He kissed the side of Keith’s head and smiled a little when he saw the tips of his ears turn pink. Even though he was hiding his face he was totally blushing. “I love you because you make me happy. Don’t I make you happy?”

Keith was quiet for a few moments before he quickly reached out and hugged Lance tightly in an almost bone crushing hug. “You do. Of course you do… I’m just being stupid and jealous for no reason. I just…” He sighed and tensed up again. Every word sounded like he was forcing it out. Talking about his feelings obviously wasn’t something he was used to doing with anyone. “I can’t help but feel like I’m just a second choice. Not even second. More like seventh, or fiftieth… There’s
always someone better than me at everything...”

Honestly, Lance didn’t really know what to say about this. He gently rocked Keith in his arms and rubbed his back. “Hey, I’m not really a prize either here… My mama always told me that you can only judge yourself by your past achievements. If you keep looking to others for validation you’ll never be happy.”

“... Rosa is smart.”

“That she is.” He picked up the pizza and held it out for him. “Now eat some pizza. We’ll eat, watch a movie, drink, and go to bed. Sound good?”

Keith sighed and reluctantly took the pizza. “Okay… Sorry I’m like this.”

“Not your fault. If you need some reassurance once in a while to know what we have is solid relationship I don’t mind.” He held Keith’s hand and gently squeezed. “That’s for telling me what you’re going through. I appreciate it.”

Suddenly a loud bang and a huff drew their attention to the balcony door. Cosmo’s nose was pressed right up against the glass as he stared down at Blue. The cat was standing on her hand legs and trying to nuzzle Cosmo through the glass.

“... Is Cosmo okay around small animals?”

“Cosmo likes playing with Chihuahua’s.”

“Oh, okay.” Lance went up to let Blue in.

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Keith watched Blue dart in and start nuzzling Cosmo like there was no tomorrow. Cosmo immediately fell to the ground and rolled onto his back. Blue was very pleased about this and started climbing all over Cosmo. It made the Keith chuckle a little. All animals seemed to just love Cosmo. Maybe it was a cosmic wolf thing?

After Lance was sure that Cosmo wasn’t going to eat Blue, he walked back over to Keith and gave him a bottle of beer. Keith accepted it and gave it a little sip. Beer tasted gross, but hey, Lance offered it to him. He’d drink it.

Lance sat next to him and put on some movie. It was some children’s movie apparently. It was a movie that Lance had said he’d seen a million times because of his niece and nephew. But Keith had never seen it. He couldn’t remember the last time he had seen a movie. Lance went on about this movie saying how it was really cool because it was kind of educational.

It was some movie called Finding Nemo. It was full of really weird animals and things that he didn’t think was real. However Lance proved him wrong by showing him photos of the actual animals they were based on. It was really interesting.

This was nice. Sitting here with Lance, eating food, drinking beer, it was all nice. It felt good to actually be able to talk to him about what he was going through. Was this something his human side really needed but he had just been denying the whole time? He had no idea. But it was nice.

He liked that Lance didn’t judge him or tell him to grow up. He kind of just expected him to brush him off since even he knew his jealousy was stupid and uncalled for. But he didn’t. He just wanted him to talk.
He leaned his head against Lance’s shoulder and sighed contently. “Hey Lance?”

“Yeah?”

“Thanks for listening to me be stupid.”

“You weren’t being stupid Keith. You were upset.”

“Still… I don’t talk about my emotions that much.” He muttered. “Galra just don’t do that stuff.”

“Well you’re not full Galra.” Reminded Lance. “You’re still human. You can’t expect to be able to handle everything Galra when you aren’t full Galra.”

“… I guess you’re right.”

Suddenly Blue raced over to them and jumped on Lance. Seconds later Cosmo jumped on the both of them. The boys yelled out in surprise as Cosmo continued to try and chase Blue around. Blue managed to dart away before Cosmo landed on them and ran off before she could get squished.

Once Cosmo realized that Blue wasn’t there he ran off to find her. Once he caught her, he booped her face and then rolled onto his back. Blue playfully smacked him repeatedly in the face with her paw.

Lance just sighed in annoyance and picked Blue up. “Okay, time for you to go home.” Blue made a confused sound but seemed fine with being booted for the night. Once she was back outside Lance ended up leaning against the window and looking up at the night sky.

He looked so… so handsome. Keith didn’t know how he was able to get this lucky. He walked up behind Lance and hugged him as he pressed his forehead against his shoulder. Lance was too much. He cared way too much and spoke his mind like it was nothing. He was able to talk about feelings and all that stuff that made him extremely uncomfortable and anxious. Lance made him happy. He made him feel like home.

Lance hummed a little and put his hands on Keith’s. “You know something that I missed when we were at the Blade’s hideout?”

“Hmm?”

“The stars. There’s just something nice about seeing them you know?”

Keith rested his chin on Lance’s shoulder and looked up at the sky. There were a few stars out despite it being a little cloudy. He used to like star gazing when he was younger. It was one of the few things he did out in the desert purely for his own enjoyment and not his survival. “Yeah.”

“Think we’ll ever travel beyond our universe?”

“… Lance, you were out in two completely different realities, and you are thinking about outer space?”

He shrugged and turned his head to kiss Keith’s cheek. “Can’t help it. Space is neat. I’d love to think that someday humanity will be able to leave here and just explore.”

“Well as long as the Blades stop Zarkon from starting phase one of the invasion it might happen.”

“… Oh yeah. I keep forgetting that Zarkon is a thing.”
“Yeah… Sorry about that.”

Lance just smiled at him and kissed him again. “It’s no big deal Keith. I have faith that the Blades will be able to stop them… And Allura and Coran have an alliance with them now too. They’ll be able to stop him in no time.”

Keith hummed a little and nuzzled his neck before giving it a quick nip. “I hope so… I um… I love you Lance.”

“I love you too Keith.”

***

With grin Ezor lowered her binoculars. “Bingo.”

“You get something?” Asked her taller, much larger companion.

Ezor smiled up at them and struck a pose. “You bet that cute button nose on of yours Zethrid. Lotor’s gonna be so happy. I think we finally have a bargaining chip to get Keith to work with us.”

For weeks now Ezor had been tasked with keeping tabs on Keith since their second encounter. She had gathered some rather interesting bits of information on him from her rooftop perch. Her superior eyesight along with the Galra made binoculars made it so she could easily see across the town from a high enough vantage point without detection. She picked up her communicator and happily called Lotor. “Hey Lotor, Ezor here.”

“Good to hear from you Ezor. I trust this is good news? Zethrid hasn’t caused trouble for the natives again has she?”

Zethrid huffed and crossed her arms. That just made Ezor giggle. “Nope. Not this time. She’s been really good. We’re actually going to try some of the local food after this. Zethrid really likes this weird earth food called ghost peppers. They are pretty mild spice wise, but you know her and her spicy foods. She can’t stand the stuff.”

“As much as I adore this banter can you please stay on topic? What information have you found?”

“Oh right. So it looks like Keith now has a mate.”

“A mate? Really? This is quite interesting… A Galra that has deserted the war?”

“Nope. Looks like a normal human to me.”

“Even better. They shouldn’t be difficult to overpower if we need to persuade Keith’s involvement. Anything else of note?”

“Yeah. I think we hit the motherload. Remember how the Altean’s were meant to be completely erased from existence? Well, I think we found the Altean princess herself. Allura.”

“... Allura? She’s still alive?”

“Yep.” Ezor felt super proud of herself. “Not only that, but I think Allura’s working with the Blade of Marmora. She’s also working with some of the native inhabitants of this realm. This includes Keith and his mate. Also, a friend of Keith’s seems to have been given a Galra arm by the Blade. Oh, and Keith seems to be in possession of a cosmic wolf. I’ll be sending you a full report by the end of the day. What are your orders?”
“... Proceed with caution. Make contact with Keith again and inform him that I wish to have a face to face conversation with him.”

“And if he refuses again?” Asked Zethrid.

“This is not a request. Use whatever you have at your disposal to bring him to me. I only request that you bring Keith to me alive. Everything and everyone else is collateral damage. If you think it is necessary we can arrange a pinduk negotiation.”

“You got it boss.” Said Ezor. “We'll inform you if we believe a pinduk is the best option. Ezor and Zethrid out.” She ended their communication and looked up at her companion with a grin. “Well, you heard the Boss. You want to handle the negotiations on this one babe?”

Zethrid chuckled darkly and cracked her knuckles. “I thought you’d never ask.”
And the boys are back at work. Everything is starting to calm back down as they settle back into their normal lives. For now at least. Mwahahahahaha. Kudos and comment when you can. Enjoy :D

Keith was still a little anxious around Lance, but he did seem to be a lot better and wasn’t accusing Lance of wanting to be with Allura because they are both Altean. For some reason that meant they were more compatible than them for some reason? He didn’t understand Keith’s logic. Looked like Keith had some insecurities they would have to work through. Kind of annoying, but they could do it.

They managed to have a peaceful evening and a nice morning. Lance did his best to bond with him by lightly touching the patches behind his ears. Keith kept purring and a lot more relaxed by the time they were out the door and heading to work.

Cosmo was always happy to be out doing things. He was especially happy to be back at the flower shop again. Lance quickly kissed him on the lips before Keith walked inside. “See you around lunch time, right?”

Keith blushed a little but smiled at him. “Okay. See you at lunch… Oh and Lance?”

“Yeah?”

“Thanks for making sure I was okay… I’m not used to people doing that for me… The only ones that even came close was my dad or Shiro. So I’m not used to this kind of stuff with people.”

Lance smiled softly at him. He liked how open Keith was being with him lately. Maybe it was because they were mates now? At the very least it meant he trusted him more. “Hey, no need to act all sheepish Keith. Humans are way more social than Galra. If you need to talk I won’t judge you.”

“… Thanks.” He quickly walked into the shop with Cosmo.

Lance just grinned and walked into his shop. Much to his surprise Pidge was already there. She looked dead but at least she was sitting in a chair, even if she was slumped over and looked like she would die at any moment.

“… You okay there Pidge?”

“I need caffeine…” She whined. “So like… How did the thing go with Allura? Learn anything interesting?”

He grinned and happily sat next to Pidge, showing off the bracelet. “Yeah she gave me this and told me all this cool stuff about quintessence. Turns out I might have just been passively using it my whole life without knowing it.”

“That’s pretty neat.” She showed him her bracelet. The white metal bead was attacked by a green cord instead of blue like his. “What does yours turn into? Mine is like a grapple hook, taser thing. I
like it.”

“Neat. Mine’s a gun. What’s Hunk’s?”

“This minigun cannon thing.”

“Cool… Keith’s is a sword.”

Pidge looked kind of confused. “Wait, Allura actually gave Keith a bayard?”

“Well yeah, why wouldn’t she?”

“Because Keith’s a Galra with a magic sword?” Suggested Pidge. “Plus you know, she’s still kind of wary of the Galra? Plus Keith can kind of hold his own anyway. I saw him dodging and weaving Allura when she tried to murder him.”

Lance shrugged. “Yeah. Well he’s sexier when he’s swinging a sword.”

Pidge cringed a little when he said that. “Ew. No. Don’t tell me you have a knife fetish now.”

“What? Why the fuck would I have a knife fetish?”

“Well it would go along with that danger kink you seem to have.”

“¿Qué?”

Pidge looked at him like he was an idiot. She went over to the front desk to grab a pen and some paper. “Alright, time to tally this shit up… Let’s see who you have been with in the past five years… Sword swallowor chick, reptile lady, reptile man, You went out with that dominatrix for like two months. Why did you stop seeing that one again?”

Lance grimaced a little. “Ball crusher.”

“Right.” She went back to her tallying. “There have been at least seven heavily tattooed people that may or may not be part of biker gangs. One who actually was part of an out of state gang and actually paid you the next day because he thought you were a male prostitute.”

Lance was bright red. “To be fair, a lot of those were hookups and I have gotten much better over the past year. I hadn’t seen anyone for at least half a year before Keith even showed up so shut up.”

She rolled her eyes. “Point is you have a type… Which honestly made me and Hunk wonder what the hell you saw in Allura. She’s like, not who you usually go for… We kind of thought that maybe you were growing up or something? Like you wanted to settle down and have a family or something? I don’t know.”

“… So you don’t like Keith?”

“What? No. Keith is fine. But like Galra stuff aside he seems like the typical guy you go for anyway.” Said Pidge. “Moody, edge lord, grumpy, probably a total sadist in bed.”

Lance rolled his eyes. While it was true he did pursue people dangerous looking people in the past he looked past that and tried to see the more personal, intimate parts of his partners. Unless they were hookups. Hookups were hookups. But he did try with the people he dated. Underneath all of Keith’s outward aggression he was just a scared and confused young man that just wanted to protect the things he cares about. It was one of the things he loved about Keith, but Pidge didn’t need to know about that right now.
“Guess you’re right. I do have a type. But hey, this is the first time I can say I’m dating an alien demon, thingy… What would you classify a Galra as?”

She shrugged. “Well, they can’t really be aliens because they didn’t come from outer space. They are coming through portals that rip through realities and are the base for like so many myths and junk here… Fae?”

“Galra really aren’t fairies.”

“Traditional fae include shit like trolls and goblins and shit.”

“Really?”

“Yeah.”

It was at that point Hunk walked in. “Hey guys. You good to come back to work Lance?”

Lance nodded and grinned. “Totally. I missed working here. I am itching to ink someone soon.”

Hunk grinned. “Nice. Good to have you back. How’s Keith going?”

“Keith’s good.” Lance went over to his tattoo kit and happily went through it. It felt like a lifetime ago since he was able to get his hands on his tattoo gun again. “… I call first walk in!”

“All yours buddy.” Said Hunk.

***

Keith was okay with working at the flower shop again. Lance was just right next door and they would see each other again at lunch. It made him smile a little but his stomach did little nervous flips when he thought about him. He was happy. Really happy, but still kind of nervous.

“Hey! Slow down there Keith.”

Keith quickly looked up at Shiro and gave him a confused look. “Huh?”

Shiro chuckled at him and pointed at the flowers in his hands. “You’re eating the merchandise again.”

Keith looked down at the thoroughly destroyed flowers in his hands and quickly wiped the petals off his face. Perfect. He was nervous eating. Why was he nervous eating? “Sorry Shiro… I guess I’m just worried? I don’t know… I have no idea if it’s a Galra thing or a me thing.”

“I see… Want to talk about it?” He beckoned Keith over to the counter to make a bouquet. He was always good with distractions, though it was because he wanted Keith to do something with his hands that didn’t involve eating the merchandise. “You know you’ll feel better if you talk about it a little.”

“… You sound like Lance.”

Shiro laughed a little. “Well, Lance is the kind of guy that talks a lot. I guess he’s been trying to get you to open up a little more huh?”

“Yeah… Hey Shiro? When you were with Adam, did you ever get jealous of people they were friends with?”
The older male frowned a little as he thought about the question. “Well… Near the beginning, yes. I think we both got jealous. I think it’s normal, but it was early on in our relationship and we didn’t know if we were going to be able to make it… We talked about things when we things really bothered us and it worked out most of the time.”

“Most of the time?”

Shiro shrugged. “Nothing is perfect. Talking doesn’t always work, but it’s better than doing nothing.”

Keith listened to the older man’s words, taking them all in like he always did. “I see… Um… Lance and I talked about stuff last night after we came back from Allura’s…” He attempted to wrap up some flowers like Shiro was doing but was having some difficulty.

“How did that go?”

“I quickly found out that I’m jealous of Allura and want to bite her whenever she gets close to Lance… And I am pretty sure that’s a me thing and not a Galra thing.”

Shiro nodded a little when he heard that. “Well when was the last time you had someone you liked as much as Lance? You two are boyfriends now. I mean, you’ve pretty much been a lone wolf your whole life.”

“Yeah… I don’t like seeing her touching him. I feel really gross when I get jealous of her…”

“Did you talk to Lance about it?”

“Yes. He said they are just friends and I believe him.”

“I feel like there is a but in there somewhere…”

Keith sighed a little and gave up on the bow, he was trying to make. The ribbon was too slippery. “But I can’t help being suspicious and paranoid. I’ve been taught to be suspicious about everyone and everything… I think it might take awhile for me to really trust him even though I know I can fully trust him. It’s not like he’s abandoned me yet or anything…”

“So, does this mean you don’t trust me?”

“What? No I trust you. You’re my brother.” Said Keith earnestly. “Out of everyone in all the realms you’re the only one I fully trust… Is it a bad thing that I trust you more than Lance?”

Shiro shrugged as he finished up his bouquet and went to put it with the other premade ones. “Well, I think it’s natural to trust your family more than other relationships to an extent… But you just find it really hard to trust people. Humans have been hurting you for the majority of your life. Where as Galra, though they attacked and hurt you too, only hurt you in very specific situations where it was socially acceptable to do so. They are violent, but there is a reason for their violence, unlike with most humans. You might not associate Lance with violence, but you do with humans, and Lance is human.”

“… I guess? That kind of makes sense in a weird way?”

“Yeah. You’ve also been brought up under the impression that everything you have can and will be taken away from you at any second. This jealousy of yours could also be you trying to protect yourself from getting hurt by immediately pushing Lance away.”
“Oh…” There wasn’t really much else he could say about that. He didn’t realize he could sabotage himself like that so badly. He needed to let go of whatever weird emotions he had. Lance was a good person and he loved him. He trusted that there was nothing going on between him and Allura. Trust was very important in both human and Galran relationships. Being mates with Lance meant he was going to stay loyal to him.

***

When lunch time rolled around Keith was standing out in the alleyway while Cosmo happily walked around and sniffed everything. He was happy that Cosmo was content with looking at all the weird shit in the alley. He became interested in an empty beer can and happily smacked it into the wall.

The backdoor of the tattoo shop opened and Lance walked out. He was grinning from ear to ear. “Hey Keith. How’s your first day back at work going?”

“Pretty good. I actually managed not to fuck everything up.”

“That’s awesome man.”

Keith nodded a little. “Yeah. So what’s got you so happy?”

“I’m tattooing again of course.” Said Lance. “Tattooing is my passion dude.”

“Well, glad you’re back to doing what you love… So um, where do you want to eat, and can I bring Cosmo?”

Lance thought for a moment. “Well, I was kind of craving going to this deli about a block away from here. Do you want to go there? We can grab some ham or a sausage for Cosmo while we’re at it?”

Cosmo happily thumped his tail against the ground at the mention of food. Keith just rolled his eyes. “I think he likes that idea.”

“Okay, we’ll do that. My treat.” Lance held his hand out to him and Keith kind of just stared at it for a moment before Lance spoke up. “Um, couples usually hold hands? Do you not want to hold hands? Like we don’t have to or anything, it’s just what couples sometimes do when they walk places.”

Keith quickly grabbed his hand and nodded quickly. “I want to hold your hand.” Wait, did that sound too eager? Humans liked being relatively independent… Maybe he shouldn’t be too eager about being close to Lance right now? Especially after last night.

He went to pull his hand away but Lance had already laced his fingers with his own and started to walk out of the alley. He was talking about sandwiches or something. Not that Keith particularly cared that much. He kind of just wanted to be with Lance at this point.
So Galra don't understand the concept of what a top or a bottom is, or Lance talks to Keith about sex and Keith doesn't understand the concept of who is on top and who bottoms in a same sex relationship. Also, I have realized I see Galra as more like bigger and slightly less aggressive Tasmanian devils, and not big cats as most people in the fandom seem to see them as. lol, anyway, kudos and comment when you can. Enjoy :D

“Female devils prefer to mate with the largest, most dominant males. If multiple males show up at a female’s door, they will battle for the right to mate with her.” On screen two small black animals death glared at other with pure hate if their eyes as they slowly reared up and made ungodly sounds that one could only describe as death rattles.

Seconds later the two small creatures were ripping into each other in a brutal and furious display of teeth and claws. “But coming out on top doesn’t guarantee the female’s affection- a male also has to physically force his potential mate into submission. A female will test the male to see if he is good enough for her standards. In fact, females are known to reject small males vocally and physically.”

Once the two creatures had stopped fighting, one of them limped away and the winner quickly approached another black creature that had been watching the fight. The female. They seemed to size each other up before the female shrieked at them and went for the male’s neck. They fought for a few minutes on screen before the male managed to pin the female down by the scruff of her neck and dragged her down into a burrow while she snarled and growled.

***

Keith couldn’t help but stare dumbly at the screen. All he had done was ask Lance if there was any particular reason they hadn’t gone all the way despite being very physically intimate. Lance got very flustered and ended up showing Keith a documentary on the mating habits of the tasmanian devil. He didn’t really understand what this was meant to accomplish or what this was meant to convey to him… Unless Lance was trying to say he thought that was what Galra making was.

“So let me see if I got this straight…” Said Keith slowly. “You think I’m going to pin you down and force you into having sex?”

Lance pulled a face when he said that. “Sort of? Not really… It’s more… I’m kind of worried you’re going to end up biting and scratching me till I end up looking like a crime scene.”

Keith nodded slowly and looked back at the video. “Um… Galra mating isn’t really like this…”

“Oh?”

Keith was blushing at this point. “Yeah. Did you really think I was going to throw you down like that?”

“Well considering you seem to solve everything by fighting I wasn’t too sure what to expect.” Confessed Lance. “And yeah, I have done a lot of kinky shit but like… I kind of draw the line at
extremely violent sexual acts and stuff…”

While Keith understood Lance’s concern he did feel a little hurt. “Can I ask you a few things?”

“Sure.”

“... So in your eyes Galra just fight because we are violent and don’t have any real reason?”

Lance nodded. “Yeah… I am guessing that’s kind of wrong?”

“Yeah…” Keith held Lance’s hand. “So um… While Galra are violent compared to humans, everything is always consensual in one form or another. I um… Just from all the biting that we did I think that I um…” Keith blushed. “I think that biting is a very important part of Galra mating or something. It felt good…”

“Huh… So S&M is just considered normal sex to a Galra?”

Keith blushed and nodded. “I guess? It seems logical to me… But I wouldn’t really know. Since I’m not full Galra I might not even really like doing it the Galra way. I might prefer doing it the human way… I really don’t know how Galra sex works anyway…”

Lance looked surprised. “Really? I thought it was just the Romance by Combat thing? You don’t know how two guys have sex?”

Keith rolled his eyes and shoved Lance off the couch. “I know how to guys have sex Lance. What kind of gay would I be if I didn’t even know that? I just… I don’t know what Galra instincts of mine might take over, I just know I wouldn’t hurt you, if you can believe that.’

“Well I do but… Can you blame me for being a little overly cautious?”

“No…” Keith sighed. “I get it, really I do I just… You do trust me not to hurt you, right?”

Lance smiled at him and kissed his cheek. “I know. I’m just a little cautious of things I don’t know. But I am pretty sure I know how you might act since we’ve touched each other a lot already.”

Keith went bright red and nodded a little. “Yeah, but you still think I’m going to pin you down and take you like that?”

“To be fair I kind of got it in my head that you’ll fight for whatever position you are after.”

Keith frowned a little. “Position?”

“Yeah. You know, if you want to top or bottom or whatever.”

Keith stared at him blankly. This was not concepts that he knew. It was probably a human thing. “Huh?”

“... Wait, you said you know how gay sex works, right? How can you not know what a top or bottom is?”

Keith grumbled and crossed his arms. “If it didn’t have anything to do with fighting and helping the Galran empire it didn’t matter… You think I should ask someone about this?”

“Probably… Who would you ask about it anyway?”

Keith took out his communicator and quickly looked through it to see if he had a good signal for
anyone in the Blade. He did not. However he was technically able to contact one member. It annoyed Keith a lot, but this seemed like something they needed to clear up. So he reluctantly called them.

“Hello Krolia…”

“Hello Yurak. To what do I owe the pleasure?”

“Hi Krolia!” Said Lance. “We have a Galra sex question since I am a human and Keith wasn’t told anything.”

“Oh. Hi Lance. I’ll try and answer any questions you have as best I can. What do you need?”

Keith groaned in annoyance. “We’re only talking to you because I can’t get a hold of anyone else…”

“Of course Yurak.”

Lance just rolled his eyes. “Okay, so in same sex Galran couples who tops?”

“... The one that manages to physically get on top of the other?”

“No, I mean, how would they decide who gets to you know…” Lance was starting to blush now. “Penetrate the other… You know… Who tops.”

“... Yurak? Is this a common thing that humans struggle with?”

“It’s still illegal to be gay in some countries on earth.” Said Lance.

“... You know, I sometimes think we aren’t so different from humans and then I find out weird bits of information like that… Anyway, Galra don’t get hung up on things like that. Intimacy between mates behind closed doors is a private matter. As long as both parties are satisfied it doesn’t matter who inserts what into whom… Lance, is it different for humans? I never had this problem with Yurak’s father.”

Both boys quickly started to go red. Lance kind of looked at Keith to help him out, but he just shook his head. Lance dug himself into this hole he could dog himself out. Lance just sighed loudly. “Well, some humans have a preference if they want to top of bottom and um… I was just wondering if there was like some way Galra figure this stuff out. Mainly because I don’t want to get a concussion just because it turns out that’s how Galra decide who is going to top whom.”

“... Again if you want to top you can just roll over? I used to do that all the time with-”

“Okay! That’s enough of that!” Keith quickly cut in. He did not need to hear when she and his dad got up to. “Thank you for that Krolia. We don’t need to hear anymore details on that.”

She sounded like she was laughing on the other side. “Sorry Yurak. I was just trying to say that Galra in general don’t have much of a preference for those kind of things. Sex is meant for procreation and pleasure. Not to assert dominance and power over another.”

“... Seriously? The one time you guys don’t bet the crap out of each other is sex?” Asked Lance in shock.

“Well has Yurak ever indicated that he would get aroused if he disemboweled you?”

Keith gave Lance a scathing look. One that clearly meant he would punch him right in the face if he breathed a word of their more intimate moments together his Krolia. Lance seemed to get it because
he just laughed nervously. “I can neither confirm or deny it because Keith looks like he is going to "

“Fair enough. These things are more or less of a private nature. I’m sure you two will work it out. But seriously if you wish to be on top then just move so you are. I simply do not get it.”

“Okay bye Krolia.” Keith quickly ended the call and sighed. “So is that enough to convince you I won’t rip your face off?”

“... Okay fine. You have convinced me... I still can’t believe Galra have no concept of what a top and a bottom is,”

Keith rolled his eyes and poked him. “I can’t believe humans get so hung up about who gets fucked. I honestly don’t care.”

“... You don’t?”

“No. of course I don’t.” He leaned over and kissed Lance’s cheek. “For me all that matters is that I get to be with you. Being with you is the most important thing to me... I want you to take the lead anyway.”

Lance seemed surprised to hear him say that. “Really?”

“Yeah? Why wouldn’t I? You’re more experienced than me at these things than me.”

“Aw Keith...”

Keith rolled his eyes and stood up from the couch. “You’re ridiculous. I’m going to take Cosmo for a walk.” Immediately Cosmo attempted to scramble up from his spot on the ground. He was super excited to go for a walk. “We can continue this conversation when I get back. Okay?”

Now it was Lance’s turn to blush. “Yeah sure. I’ll um, start cooking dinner.”

Keith smiled softly at his boyfriend and kissed him. “Okay. I’ll be back in about an hour.”

Lance kissed back and grinned. “Okay. See you soon.”

***

Keith felt a little better about everything now. He was glad he had taken the advice to just talk with Lance about things. He had no idea Lance worried about something that didn’t seem like a big deal at all to him. Human things like that were so silly. It honestly made him laugh a little.

But since they were talking about this, maybe this meant Lance wanted to do it and they would do it tonight? Humans were really fucking weird and Keith sometimes had some difficulty reading Lance and his mannerisms, but he mostly found it endearing. Even if this wasn’t the case he was still happy they could talk about things like that.

They got to the dog park and Cosmo happily ran around him a few times. He was so pleased to be out and back in the fresh air. He was way too adorable for his own good. Suddenly he stopped and stared off at something.

“What is it boy? You see someth-”

“Keeeeeec.” Coood Ezor. She practically skipped over to him with her human disguise as convincing as ever. “Fancy seeing you here, so you gonna come and talk to Lotor now? You’ve had
a lot of time to cool off.”

“No. Go away Ezor.”

Cosmo growled softly and stood in front of Keith. Seeing the wolf’s reaction made her chuckle. “Wow, that’s one loyal pooch you got there Keith.”

“Go away Ezor.” Growled Keith as he put a hand on Cosmo to calm him. “I don’t want to talk to you or anyone from the Empire. Just leave me alone. Whatever shit you are selling I ain’t buying.”

She pouted a little and crossed her arms. “Really? Lotor really just wants to have a face to face with you.”

“I am not interested.”

“This isn’t a request Keith.” The atmosphere around her changed in an instant. She was no longer some bubbly, yet deadly girl. Her facade was slipping and her more malevolent side was showing. “This is your final chance. Lotor wants to speak with you face to face and have a polite and amicable conversation about acquiring your services. Now, are you coming with me or not?”

Despite how aggressive she looked, Keith knew she wouldn’t do anything stupid in public. He just stood his ground and smirked at her. “No. Now kindly fuck off.”

She looked disappointed and picked up her communicator. “Okay. Fine. You asked for it.” She quickly hit something on the touch screen and instantly became her happy and bubbly self again. “Hey boo! Yeah, plan A didn’t work. Looks like we’re gonna have to try plan B. You good to go? … Oh that’s perfect! I’ll pick up snacks. What? Yeah I already let Lotor know what Plan B was. Narti and Acxa should have everything ready. Okay love you bye.”

Keith kind of wondered if he should have just walked away while she was talking. “Yeah. I’m gonna go now…”

“Oh. Oh, but before you do you will need this.” She took a folded piece of paper out of her pocket and held it out to him. He gave her an unimpressed look but she just smiled. “Trust me Keith. You will really, really, really want this paper. It’s super important and you’ll just be kicking yourself if you don’t take it.”

Just to get her off his back he snatched the note out of her hands and looked at it. It was a series of numbers. “… What is this?”

Ezor shrugged. “Who knows? Lottery number? A prediction for the temperature for the next few days? Coordinates? Any who, since you decided that you won’t take Lotor’s kind invitation we have no choice but to have a pinduk negotiation.”

A cold chill ran down Keith’s spine, but he could bluff his way out of this. “Really? Pinduk? You’re that desperate you’re threatening me with that? Good fucking luck Ezor.”

She just laughed and shook her head. “Oh Keith… Keith, Keith, Keith… I’ve been watching your for months. I know you are very, very close to two very adorable, squishy humans. One with a Galra arm and one that you have decided to make your mate if those bruises mean anything, and the fact that you two are living together.”

Keith felt numb. Ezor wasn’t known as one of the best spies for nothing. But it was still chilling to discover that she knew about Shiro and Lance… Lotor’s generals was going to take one of them.
“Don’t you dare…” Growled Keith. “If you fucking touch one of them I’ll-”

“You’ll what?” Asked Ezor. “What can you do at this point in time Keith? You gonna fight me? Do you really think that will make us give them back? Just head to those coordinates and the pinduk negotiations can start. Later Keeeeeef. See you soon. Brush up on how to negotiate. We’re doing this the traditional way.”

She happily skipped off and Keith started to furiously text both Lance and Shiro. With the time being what it is, Shiro might be at the gym and Lance was probably dancing in the kitchen while cooking. One of them had to pick up soon.

**Keith**

Shiro where are you?
Tell me where you are right now!
Galra emergency!
Answer me!
SHIRO?!

**Keith**

Don’t answer the door!
Lance answer me!
Please!
Galra emergency!
Lance?
LANCE?!

After a few minutes of silence from the both of them Keith began to panic. He started to head towards Lance’s apartment. He couldn’t lose either of them. He couldn’t have the Galra take away his brother. He couldn’t have the Galra take away his mate. Stupid Lotor. Why the fuck couldn’t he just leave him alone Why? Why? Why? Why?

**Shiro**

What’s wrong Keith?

**Keith**

Ezor.
One of Lotor’s generals told me I had to meet him.
I said no and she said she would take one of you for a pinduk negotiation.

**Shiro**

???
Pinduk?
What are you talking about?
Keith?
Keith?
I’m heading over to the apartment right now.

Keith raced back to the apartment with Cosmo. When they got there Keith didn’t even bother unlocking the door, he got Cosmo to teleport them both back inside. There was food on the counter and a pot of water was boiling on the stove. Keith quickly turned it off while calling out for Lance. There were no signs of a struggle, but Lance was gone.
Welcome to the next chapter where Lotor introduces himself to Lance and I am like 95% sure I gave him a few more red flags than I intended to, but I shall roll with it because this bitch is shady af. Kudos and comment when you can. Enjoy :D

It seemed like a lifetime before Shiro entered the apartment. Keith was just pacing around the room like crazy. Cosmo was whimpering and looking all over the place for Lance, but he wasn’t there. He didn’t know where Lance was, well he did, but he couldn’t figure out how to work the stupid GPS on his communicator.

“Whoa, slow down there Keith.” He put his hands on Keith’s shoulders in an effort to stop him pacing. “What happened? You said it was a Galra emergency.”

“It is! Fuck, I was only gone for less than thirty minutes! I messed up! I fucking messed up! I messed up so bad! I failed as a mate and as a bodyguard! I didn’t think Lotor’s lackys were still following me! Now they have Lance! He wants to do a fucking pinduk negotiation! Fucking Pinduk!”

“Um, what’s a Pinduk?” Asked Hunk.

Keith jumped and hissed when he saw Hunk, Pidge, Allura and Coran entering the apartment. “What the fuck are they doing here?!” He snapped.

Pidge rolled her eyes. “Relax cat boy. Hunk and I have spare keys for an emergency. Considering Shiro had to drop by to get the keys and he said it was Galra related we thought it might be best if we all came by. We’ve been trying to reach Lance but he hasn’t picked up.”

“So the Galra kidnapped him?” Asked Hunk. “What if they find out he’s part Altean? What will they do to him then?”

“Lotor doesn’t give a fuck about Lance that way.” Growled Keith. “He doesn’t even care that Lance exists. The only reason he has Lance is because he wants me…”

“Why does Lotor want you my boy?” Asked Coran. “Does this have to do with this pinduk thing you were talking about?”

Keith was shaking at this point. He was so scared and angry. “It’s a very old form of Galra negotiations. When all other forms of communications break down one party will make a pinduk negotiation… It involved kidnapping a child, mate, or someone who has a strong familial bond with the targeted Galra. Lotor doesn’t know about Krolia and believes I’m an orphan so I have no blood relatives he could take, or children for that matter… So he took Lance instead of Shiro because it would provoke the biggest reaction from me since he's my mate.”

“Is he going to contact you?” Asked Pidge. “How is he going to do it?”

Keith handed her the GPS coordinates. “Here. I can’t work the GPS on my communicator.”
She just nodded and started punching numbers into her own phone. While she did this Allura spoke up. “Apart from kidnapping what else is involved in pinduk?”

Keith glared at her and nervously picked at his nails. “… Traditionally, the Galra that took the family member of the other will lay out their terms of their release. There will be negotiations but if things break down and there is no agreement, the one that was kidnapped will be disemboweled and thrown back to their family to die…”

Everyone looked horrified. “Well what does Lotor want?” Asked Allura. “What does Lotor want from you that he would go and kidnap Lance to get it?”

“I don’t know!” Snapped Keith. “And I honestly don’t want to know! I want nothing to do with the Galra! I want nothing to do with him! He probably wants me to go on some fucking suicide mission… Galra just use people… He doesn’t know me. I’m not one of his generals. I’m just a throw away to him.”

“Well we still have to save him.” Said Hunk. “Like, we could all go together? They are expecting Keith, not all of us. We could take them by surprise and give Keith the time he needs to find Lance?”

Pidge nodded in agreement. “You know, Lance truly is the Daphne of our group at this point. At least at this point in time. Ah, bingo… Looks like Lance is… Being held on some shitty looking farm house?” She showed everyone the google map picture of the area the coordinates showed. “Anyone else getting Texas chainsaw massacre vibes?”

Hunk frowned. “Yeah, that’s creepy…”

“This is actually quite common.” Said Keith. “They will have an underground base but have a simple, slightly rundown and innocuous facility on top of it so people don’t give it a second thought. That’s what the Galra did for that army camp thing I went to for years.”

Shiro frowned a little as he seemed to be thinking of a plan. “Okay. I think we can do something here… Keith, can you get in touch with Krolia?”

“What? No! Why would need to talk to her?!?”

“I have a plan.” Said Shiro with a smile. “Trust me on this.”

“… Fine. I’ll call her.” He grumbled. “But if something bad happens to Lance because we’re wasting time talking with her I will bite you.”

***

Lance woke up with a splitting headache. What was the last thing that happened? Oh right, he opened the door and there was this really tall buff lady. A flash of something white and then… Now he was here. But where was here?

He sat up and looked around. He was… on a bed in a rather nice looking room. It was surprisingly lush and decorated with deep royal purples and crimsons. Okay, this was kind of weird. If not very weird. Well, there was only one thing he could do right now, get the fuck out of there.

Lance quickly got up and headed to the door. It didn’t have door handles or a door knob or anything like that. There seemed to be a palm reader on his side of the door. He knew it was a dumb idea, but he tried to use it. The palm reader just made a low sound and flashed red. He wasn’t getting out.

“For fuck’s sake… Keith is so going to fucking kill me…” He muttered as he walked around the
room. There were a few vents but there was no way he could fit through them. He reached up to try and see if he could pull it off. It was at that point he realized that he still had the bayard bracelet thing that Allura had given him. He could use this to his advantage once he had figured out a plan.

While he was quietly contemplating this the door suddenly opened and in walked a rather tall man with purple skin and long flowing white hair. This man was accompanied by a slender reptilian woman who had no eyes. She was patting a really weird looking cat. These people were Galra, right?

The man smiled at him. “Greetings. I take it from your lack of surprise that you already have a vague idea of who we are or at least what we are?”

Lance frowned a little and kept his eyes on both of them. “Yeah… You two are Galra, right?”

The man smiled warmly at him. “You would be correct. Now, I believe proper introductions are in order. I am Prince Lotor of the Galra Empire. This here is Narti, one of my generals. The creature she is carrying is called Kova.”

Lance looked over at them and nodded a little. “Good to know… I’m Lance.”

Lotor smiled when Lance told them his name. “Now, I assume you might be a little confused as to why you are here?”

“So I’m just here so that Keith will do what you want?”

Lotor shrugged. “In a way yes. Pinduk has been a very effective form of negotiation that has been around since the dawn of time in my home realm of Daibazaal. Traditionally you would be killed if negotiations deteriorated and we didn’t get what we need from Keith. But those traditions are barbaric and so archaic.”

“Roughly translated it means kidnap or hostage.” As he he talked Narti put Kova down and left the room. Kova walked up to him and stared at Lance with her big yellow eyes. It made Lance uneasy.

“Yeah… I don’t know about the Galra, but human’s really don’t appreciate being kidnapped.”

“I completely understand.” Said Lotor in a calm voice. “I wouldn’t have done it if Keith would have just answered my simple request of discussing the use of his skills. I would never have agreed to a pinduk negotiation.”

“And what is a pinduk?”

“Yeah, it is…” Lance wasn’t sure what he thought of Lotor. Keith didn’t talk much about the Galra aristocracy. He only knew about Lotor from a brief mention when Keith told him his backstory and a brief mentioning that Lotor and Zarkon weren’t on friendly terms anymore. He wasn’t sure that he could trust anything Lotor said.

He seemed to notice Lance’s hesitation and sat on one of the plush chairs in the room. Kova jumped up on his lap. She continued to stare at Lance. “Look, I understand your hesitation. I am sure Keith has told you much about the Galran way of life and how it is rather violent compared to what you would be used to. Please do not worry. You are not a prisoner here, nor are you trapped. Once Keith makes an appearance you are free to go with him no matter if he agrees to work with me or not. I just wanted the opportunity to speak with him.”

“... You know, he is going to get really mad that you kidnapped me, right?”
Lotor just shrugged. “To be fair, until I found out that you were Keith’s mate I had considered that if it came down to a pinduk negotiation that we would use that older man with the black and white hair, the one missing an arm. But using a mate gets the message across so much better. Don’t you think?”

“... I guess it would. So I am pretty much stuck here in this makeshift prison?”

Lotor simply shrugged. “Well this is just your room for the duration of your stay. You may go most places here but obviously some places will be locked for your safety. Can’t have you running around and getting into trouble now can we?”

“I guess not...” Lotor was really creepy and Lance did not like it. The man picked Kova up and put her on the bed. “As a bit of a peace offering I would like you to keep Kova with you during your stay. Your species likes to pat and cuddle up to smaller animals, correct? Kova is similar to the earth creature known as a cat.”

“Yeah, they are...” Said Lance quietly as he watched Kova watching him. “What is Kova?”

Lotor smiled fondly at the animal. “She is known as a Cacobeast. They are a rather sweet creature from my realm. Good companion animals. They provide comfort, warmth, and are quite good hunting animals ten times their size.”

“... Right.”

“Well, I shall be taking my leave now Lance. Please feel free to move around our base as you see fit. Someone will come by and check on you from time to time if you don’t wish to leave here.” Lotor gave Lance a little bow and quickly left the room.

Lance didn’t really know what to make of this. He kind of just flopped onto the bed next to Kova and cautiously reached out to her. She looked at his hand for a moment and just huffed at him in a questioning manner. Kind of like she was asking why Lance was giving her his hand in the first place.

He sighed and looked up at the ceiling. “How the fuck am I going to get out of here?”

***

Lotor sighed a little as he finally made his way back to the main control center of their base. Narti was sitting in a chair looking slightly lost, but was otherwise okay. He smiled a little at her. “Narti, how is Lance doing? Has Kova shown you anything?”

Narti shook her head and quickly moved her hands in Galran sign language indicating that Kova hasn’t shown her anything. Kova and Narti had formed a very strong bond. It was a strange and something even the best Galran scientists had difficulty working out, but Kova was able to give Narti the ability to see through her eyes. It was very good on spy missions. Also for constant observations like this with Lance.

While violence was a very effective way of getting what was wanted there was something that was so satisfying about using your brain in these matters, not brawn. He would take some pleasure in being able to talk to Lance over the next few hours. Keith had chosen a very pretty looking mate. Best of all he wouldn’t cause much trouble being a human. And if he did Zethrid would happily drag him back to his room and lock him in there.

Acxa walked in and nodded at Lotor. “I see pinduk is well underway?”
“Indeed. Hopefully Keith will turn up soon, but not too soon. This Lance fellow is quite a nice looking young man. I’m interested to see how he was able to tame such a spitfire like Keith.” He chuckled a little. “There is bound to be an interesting story behind that.”

“Possibly.” Said Acxa calmly. She cleared her throat. “So, what are your plans for negotiations? Are you really just going to let Keith walk away again?”

“I just want him to hear what I have to say. Him just coming here is enough, though he will probably be on edge since he knows what is normally expected in these negotiations.” He thought for a moment. “Prepare the end sequence on one of the incubation pods.”

“Sir?”

“Despite this being something between me and Keith, I want to get into Allura’s good graces so that when we eventually meet things will go a lot more smoothly.”

Acxa nodded. “Understood… Sir?”

“Yes?”

“What if Keith does turn up, but goes straight for the kill? We took his mate. No Galra will take this lightly. You practically spat in his face without actually doing so.”

Lotor just chuckled. “Thank you for your concern Acxa, but I think I can handle Keith. However if I cannot I always have you all, my loyal generals to back me up and subdue him.”

She nodded. “Understood. I will go and prepare the pod now.”

Lotor thanked her and started flicking through the security cameras to see what was happening around the base. He settled on watching Lance as he lay on the bed with a rather unhappy look on his face. It was rather amusing. Lotor had only talked to Lance a few minutes and he had already found himself intrigued by this man. Probably because he hadn’t been around humans very much.
Mystery meat

Chapter Notes

Lance refuses to eat food goo again and puts his escape plans on hold to make a decent meal. Meanwhile Keith is freaking the fuck out that Lance has been taken and they aren't just going to go and get him. Kudos and comment when you can. Enjoy :D

After staying in that room for far too long, Lance decided to see if he could actually get out of this place. He put his hand on the palm reader and was actually surprised when the door opened. He looked around the black and purple hallway. He cautiously walked out and was followed closely by Kova.

Kova was kind of weird. Lance had always considered himself a cat person, but Kova was a little weird. Her eyes were just a little too human for his liking. But he was okay with her following him around.

Whenever Lance passed a door with a palm reader he would press his hand against it just to see if it would open. Most of them didn’t which didn’t surprise him at all. That’s just how it was. Lotor did say he wasn’t going to be able to go everywhere.

As Lance kept walking he couldn’t help but notice that there didn’t seem to be anyone around. It was kind of unnerving to not see anyone. He had been walking around for about twenty minutes and hadn’t seen any living soul besides Kova.

Just when he was about to give up and go back to his room when a door opened up and a woman with blue skin and short hair walked out. Their eyes met and Lance felt like someone just dumped ice water all over him with just her stare.

Lance quickly put his hands up in surrender and took a step back. “I wasn’t doing anything. I swear.”

“I never said you did do anything.” She said calmly. She held her hand out to him. “I am Acxa.”

“Lance…” Lance cautiously went to shake her hand when she gripped his forearm tightly in a firm grip for a few seconds before letting go. That was weird.

She just nodded at him and gave him a scrutinizing look from head to toe. “So, you are Keith’s mate?”

“Yeah?”

“He has… Interesting tastes.”

“And what is that supposed to mean?”

Acxa gave him a confused look. “Nothing really. Keith is just Galra and I kind of assumed that if he became mates with anyone it would be another Galra. Humans are… Well from what we have observed you’re very fragile. But considering Keith is half human I guess it is natural that he could find himself attracted to humans as well as Galra. I feel attraction to my mother’s species as well as
Galra.”

“... Why do I feel like you are insulting me?”

She just shrugged. “I didn’t mean to insult you. I am just trying to state facts... How are you finding your dwelling?”

“By dwelling you mean my prison?”

Acxa seemed genuinely surprised by that reaction. “Oh? To be fair a Galra prison is far worse than what you are getting. You are free to go pretty much anywhere in the building and do whatever you like. If Lotor was following the normal pinduk negotiations to the letter you would be locked in a small empty room with no food, water, light, or even a blanket to keep yourself warm. Lotor is treating you with much more care and respect than any other Galra would.”

“... Oh... You guys still kidnapped me.”

She just shrugged. “Call it what you like... Are you hungry? I am hungry.”

“Um... I'm good.”

“Follow me anyway.” Said Acxa calmly. “You will need to know where it is later on if you need food or water.”

Lance didn’t like it, but he reluctantly followed her anyway. It didn’t take too long to find the kitchen area where a very red and reptilian looking girl was sitting at a table. She had a tentacle freely swaying around her head as she looked at a big lump of raw animal meat on the counter. As soon as she saw them, she grinned and waved.

“Hey there Acxa! You want some um... Some mystery meat? What about you human? You want mystery meat?”

“Do you really not know what animal that is?” Asked Lance in mild concern.

The woman just shrugged. “Earth meat... Of the four legged and hoved variety. I don’t know Zethrid found it. I’m Ezor by the way.”

Lance cautiously walked over to the table and looked at the meat. Well it was either a small cow or a goat. Some farmer was going to be pissed if this was stolen. “... Did you buy this or just take it?”

Ezor shrugged. “Knowing my bae, she probably punched it.” The kitchen doors opened and a goliath of a woman walked in. She didn’t seem too happy to see Lance there. Ezor just grinned. “Zethrid! Hey, Lance wants to know what this thing you killed is. What did it look like?”

The giantess shrugged. “Small, had a beard, large horns.”

“That was probably a goat...” Said Lance. “So, you guys just going to eat that raw?”

Ezor pouted. “No way. We are going to cook it... We just... We don’t really know how to cook earth meat... It’s a little different from where we were last time... and it’s either eat this or food goo.”

Lance shivered at the thought of eating food goo again. “Okay, no, that’s not going to happen. Not going to eat that crap again... Do you have any food things here besides the meat?”

Acxa nodded towards a cupboard. “Go ahead. We try to get ourselves accustomed to the cuisine of whatever realm we are in.”
Lance nodded and quickly looked through the cupboard and tried to see what they had. They had some spices and some stock. A few other things like rice, beans, and cans of things too. He could work with this. “Okay, bring me your biggest pot and I will cook you all something… There aren’t any more of you guys around here, right?”

“There are just five of us.” Said Acxa. “Plus you that is six. Is that a problem?”

“Shouldn’t be. Bring me your biggest pot and someone start cutting that goat up into chunks.” Zethrid and Ezor took care of the goat while Acxa found him a large pot. She handed it over to him and watched curiously as he started mixing and spices and oils into the pot over what he assumed was a stove.

“You know you do not have to cook for us, right?” Asked Acxa. “We are the people that you say, kidnapped you.”

Lance just shrugged. “Look, I just want to eat something decent. I don’t know if food goo tastes alright to you guys but it tastes gross to me. I do not want to eat that if I don’t have to.”

She nodded and just let him cook. After a few minutes Lance had a huge pot of lamb curry boiling away and another pot of rice steaming perfectly next to it. The women seemed very curious about what Lance was making and just watched him.

It felt a little awkward with everyone’s eyes on him so he awkwardly cleared his throat. “So… All you ladies are half Galra? No offence but um… You don’t really look that Galra? Mind you I haven’t seen many Galra so, I could be wrong.”

Ezor just laughed. “Well, we’re all half-breeds here you goof. No one here is a full blooded Galra. Not even Lotor.” Acxa shot her a dirty look, like she had just said something she wasn’t supposed to. “... Oops?”

Lance was kind of confused when he heard that. From the way Keith talked the Galra really didn’t like other realms. How could Lotor be a half-breed if they were so xenophobic? That was bizarre to him. Before he could question it further Lotor and Narti walked in. As soon as they did Kova ran up to Narti and jumped into her arms. She easily caught the cat creature and gently patted them.

Lotor had an amused smile on his face. “Are we being treated to an earth dish today?”

Ezor grinned. “Yeah! Lance doesn’t like food goo and Zethrid did punch out a goat before we got here, so we’re eating goat tonight. Isn’t that cool?” Lotor just chuckled and sat down at the table in the room and started a conversation with Ezor and Zethrid while Narti sat there patting Kova.

Lance chose to just stir the curry and kind of question why he pretty much just designated himself as the cook for the Galra that kidnapped him. How the absolute fuck did that happen? Keith was going to kick his ass when he finds out about this. Maybe he should just try and find some poison or something to slip into the curry so he could get out of there? Then again he wasn’t even sure if this Galra base was even located on earth.

Acxa gave him a sympathetic look. “Look, I know this isn’t what you want, but please try to make the best of it. Lotor does not wish to harm you but we seriously had no other ideas on how to get Keith to talk to us. But don’t worry you will see him very soon. I promise.”

Lance was still uneasy. “So, you guys have any bowls?”

“Sure.” Acxa helped Lance serve up the food and handed it out to everyone. The Galran’s seemed a little hesitant to try the human food and lightly poked it with their spoons. Eventually though they
started eating and they all seemed to find it palatable. Which made Lance relax a little since he kind of assumed he would end up as dinner if they didn’t like how it tasted.

“So tell me Lance,” said Lotor. “Do many humans cook?”

“It’s a skill we all kind of should have.” Said Lance. “But you know, some spoiled people don’t know how and make other people do it.”

“Indeed. You find brats like that in every realm.” Lamented Lotor.

After that they finished eating Ezor and Zendrith went and cleaned everything up. Lance just awkwardly looked around a little and attempted to try and slip out of the room, but Korva quickly dashed after him. It was a little annoying, but whatever. It was just an animal.

After a few minutes of Lance trying to navigate his way back to his room. That was when Lotor approached him. “Lance, are you okay?”

“Yeah. Just heading to the room you got ready for me.” He muttered.

Lotor just nodded and happily walked Lance back to his room. “I do trust the room is to your liking? We weren’t too sure on what your species really likes when it comes to sleeping arrangements.”

“It’s fine.. You know Keith is going to kick your ass when he finds me, right?”

Lotor just shrugged. “He can run at me with a sword as much as he likes. I am pretty sure a gun is faster than a sword anyway.”

“You’re going to shoot him?!”

“Only to stun.” Reassured Lotor. “Not to kill. I want Keith alive just as much as you do… May I enter your room so that we may talk about this further?”

Lance didn’t feel like he had a choice in the matter and just nodded. “Sure. Come on in.”

Lotor smiled at him and took a seat in the one plush chair in the room while Kova jumped onto his lap. Lance just sighed and sat on the edge of the ridiculously large bed. They kind of just stared at each other for a bit and Lance was starting to feel a little freaked out. He was staring at him like a piece of meat and he was getting some very, very bad vibes from him. He could not tell if this was just because he kidnapped him or because Lance felt like he was ten seconds away from getting violated.

“So… You wanted to talk?” Lance started fiddling with his bracelet a lot more now. Yep, he was probably going to get killed by a bunch of Galra for killing their leader. Not how he planned to go, but he would live with it.

“Ah, sorry about my staring. Despite spending a lot of time in your realm I haven’t really seen many humans or interacted with them.” Explained Lotor. “I am also very interested in interspecies relationships. I’ve just been wondering if it is an aesthetic or emotional connection that drew Keith into asking you to be his mate.”

“… Still kind of creepy.”

“My apologies.” He placed Kova on the ground and the creature quickly made her way over to Lance and sat close enough for him to pat her. “I am used to patiently sitting by and observing the people around me. As a half-breed myself it was the only way I was able to survive for as long as I
have. My father and many other Galra close to him have always looked down on me as a blight on the empire. Weak. Something to be ashamed of… But since I was royalty they had no choice but to treat me better than the rest… I truly despise the Galra and all that they stand for.”

“Okay. Fair enough I guess.” Lance sighed a little and gave Kova a small pat. “I was kind of kidnapped by the Galra a little while ago by accident.”

Lotor seemed surprised to hear that, “You seem to get kidnapped by the Galra a lot.”

“Tell me about it. Keith is going to kill me when we next see each other… Anyway, long story short I’m not singing their praises either.”

“Indeed.” Lotor couldn’t help but smile when he heard that. “That is why I want Keith’s help… How much do you know about quintessence or the Galra empire in general?”

“Admittedly not a lot…”

Lotor nodded a little as he seemed to be thinking carefully about what he was going to say next. “That is understandable… To summarize I need Keith’s help to collect quintessence. It’s a very versatile energy source and crystallized forms can be used to make many things rather than just gates to other realms. I’m doing what I can to try and stop my father’s stranglehold. What he is doing is barbaric and I will not stand for it.”

Lance just nodded. “Good for you. I’m guessing you want me to convince Keith to help you?”

“I just want you to know that I am not the bad guy here.”

“…”

“Would you like me to leave now?”

“Yeah. If you wouldn’t mind.”

Lotor nodded and stood up. “Okay. If Keith happens to turn up anytime soon we shall come and get you. I don’t want to keep mates apart from each other for longer than necessary.”

“Ohay.” Lance didn’t believe him.

***

Keith was growling and snarling as he continued to pace around the apartment. He did not understand why they couldn’t just go and get Lance now. They knew where he was. They knew it was dangerous to leave him in the hands of the Galra. Sure, Keith trusted Acxa to treat Lance with some dignity, but her loyalties lie with Lotor. What he said would go. If a single one of them touched a single hair on their head he would rip them all to shreds.

Krolia had shown up minutes after Keith gave his communicator to Shiro to call her. She was extremely concerned for Lance’s well being but was quickly trying to bring everyone up to speed on Galra culture so they wouldn’t all get instantly killed when they went to get Lance.

“I am serious.” She warned. “If any of you raise a weapon to any of them they will see it as a challenge and they will fight you. Depending on the current atmosphere they might kill you.”

“So violent.” Muttered Allura. “Can’t you take a more diplomatic approach?”

“Pinduk is the most diplomatic form of negotiation we have.” Informed Krolia. “If we do this
correctly then Lance will be handed over without a scratch. Now, unless prompted none of us should talk except Yurak. Lotor took his mate. He is the only one that is allowed to talk in these negotiations.”

“Question.” Said Hunk. “Like, I still really, really want to go and help Lance, but is there a reason we should all be going? Like won’t it anger them that more people than Keith have turned up or something?”

Keith growled at Hunk when he said that, which made everyone jump a little in surprise, apart from Krolia. She just ignored him. “Having a large entourage is a small, but effective way to show how much power and influence we actually possess. Yurak showing up alone will flag that he is weak and any that may have stood by him are intimidated by Lotor. That would be a huge boost to his ego, especially since he has been exiled from the empire.”

“Okay, what happens if a fight starts?” Asked Pidge. “Because that-” she gestured at an extremely angry looking Keith. “-looks like it’s gonna crack some skulls.”

Krolia growled at Keith who snarled at her. She just rolled her eyes. “If Yurak wants to fight them then we let him fight. We do not interfere. If one of us interferes we are also tossing ourselves into the fight. You do not want to fight if you do not have to… This goes double for you Yurak.”

“What?!” He snarled.

“You know what will happen if things end badly. Do you really want to risk Lance’s life for your pride?”

“…”

“That’s what I thought.” She looked back over at everyone else. “We should go now. The longer we wait the worse Lance’s living conditions could deteriorate.” Keith was itching and ready to go. He was going to kill Lotor. He was going to fucking kill him.
When they got to the house the coordinates showed Keith was practically foaming at the mouth. He went ahead of them and took his hoverbike. Once he got there he was easily twenty minutes ahead of everyone else, so he decided to change into his Blade’s suit. And out his own clothes over the top of them. They didn’t need to know he was part of the Blade and he wanted some extra protection.

By the time he was done Krolia showed up and so had everyone else in Shiro’s crappy van and in Pidge’s ridiculous SUV. Why did she need one of those anyway? Whatever. It didn’t matter. The only thing that mattered now was Lance.

“... It doesn’t appear that anyone is home.” Observed Coran.

“They wouldn’t make it look too lived in.” Said Krolia. “Just lived in enough to make people leave it alone…”

While everyone was talking and looking around the house Keith had his eyes on the ground and looking for a bunker or trapdoor of some kind. He didn’t care if no one else saw him do this. He needed to get to Lance.

He knew he was talking around for what seemed like an hour to him, but was probably just a few minutes, he found a wooden hatch on in the dirt. Without hesitating he shifted to his Galra form and sank his nails into the wood and tried to yank it out. If it was just made of wood it would have easily ripped off its hinges. However it didn’t budge an inch. He growled and started punching at the hatch.

“Let me in your purple fucker.” He growled. “Open the fuck up or so fucking help me I will dig down there with my bare hands, scoop your eyes out, and shove them in your pants so you can watch me kick your ass!”

“Um, you found something Keith?” Asked Shiro.

Keith glared at him for a few seconds before he started clawing at the hatch again. “This is the way in.” He growled. “We have to get in there.”

“... Let me try,” Shiro gently moved Keith aside and raised his Galra arm. He took a few deep breaths and his hand started to glow purple with energy before he swiftly brought it down. He managed to punch a hole through the hatch and pulled it open. “... I honestly wasn’t sure I could do that…”

The group headed down the hatch. Inside everything was covered in sheets of black and grey metal. It caused everyone to feel uneasy, but Keith didn’t care. He walked straight to a palm and started punching it. “Come on you sick fucks! Open up! We fucking know you are here!”

The screen above the palm reader flicked on and Ezor was staring at him. “Hey there Keeeeeeeeeef!
So glad you decided to show up. Wasn’t too sure that-

“Cut the bullshit Ezor!” He hissed. “Send the elevator up right now and bring me Lance. If any of you have hurt him I will fucking kill you all.”

She just rolled her eyes. “Wow, someone’s all pissy today. Whatever. Axca’s on her way up. I’ll go tell Lotor what’s happening.”


“Relax. Lance is fine. You can inspect him when you get down here Mr Grumpy. No need to-”

Before she could say anything else Keith punched the screen and broke it. He didn’t want to hear her anymore. He just wanted her to shut up. He didn’t want to hear her. He didn’t want to see her. He didn’t want to see them. He wanted to see Lance. He wanted to be with Lance. He had to. He had to make sure that he was safe. He had to make sure that Lotor didn’t do anything to him.

“... Is this normal Galra behaviour?” Hunk asked Krolia.

“It’s a typical symptom of suddenly being removed from your mate at such an early stage.” Informed Krolia. “This is going to make negotiations difficult... Maybe I should do the talking instead? We’ll need someone with a level head to do this.”

Suddenly a set of doors opened and Acxa was standing there. She seemed quite surprised at the amount of people facing her. “Oh, that’s a lot...”

Keith growled and stormed over to her. “Lance. Now.”

She seemed a little surprised by his aggressive behaviour but seemed to take it in her stride. “Lance is fine Keith. I will take you to your mate immediately.” Everyone quickly got in and Acxa quickly put her hand on the palm reader. The doors slid shut and they started moving down. After a few moments of silence Acxa spoke with Keith. “... You look like you’re doing well...”

“Shut up Acxa.” He growled. If Lotor hurt my mate I will kill him.”

“I know, but I can assure you that Lance is okay.” She said calmly. “Lotor is more kind and compassionate than any other Galra you know. You can even ask Lance yourself when you see him.”

“I will.”

“... For what it’s worth I think you chose a good mate.”

“If he is hurt I will kill every one of you.”

“Fair enough.”

The lift eventually rumbled down to a halt and Acxa gestured for the group to follow her. Everyone looked uneasy, but Krolia and Keith walked with confidence. Well Krolia was walking with confidence and Keith was just pissed off and ready to kill. They came to a room where Lotor was sitting at a table. He looked far too relaxed for Keith’s liking.

He couldn’t help but growl at him and bare his fangs. He wanted to rip the bastard’s face off. Despite his show of aggression Lotor didn’t even seem to flinch. He seemed much more surprised that there were so many people around Keith rather than his growling.
He quickly got over his shock and stood to greet them. “Good to see you made it Keith. I have been expecting you. We have much to ta-”


Lotor paused for a moment and chuckled. “I should have expected this. Do not fret, Narti has been dispatched to retrieve Lance from his room. He will arrive shortly. Until then, allow me to introduce myself to you entourage. I am Prince Lotor of the Galra empire.” He offered his hand to Krolia who quickly extended her arm and firmly gripped his forearm.

“I am Krolia of the clan Kasadya.” She said calmly. “It is an honour to meet you in person.”

“Likewise.” He looked over at the other humans and smiled at them. “Now who might you be?”

Shiro seemed a little hesitant, but he reluctantly introduced the group. “I’m Shiro. This is Pidge, Hunk, Allura and Coran.”

“Allura?” Lotor looked over at her and smiled. “As in Princess Allura of Altea?”

Allura seemed a little uneasy but reluctantly nodded. “Yes. I am Princess Allura…”

Lotor bowed. “I deeply apologize. I would have hoped that we would have met under different circumstances. Meeting during a time like this is most unfortunate. I would have prefered-”

Keith rolled the bead from the bracelet bayard thing into his hand. He was done talking. This was taking too long. He swung the sword and came just short of slicing into Lotor’s throat. “Lance.” He growled. “Now.”

The barrel of a gun pressed into the back of Keith’s head. “Lower that sword right now.” Said Acxa in a deadly calm voice. “You will not get a second warning.”

Lotor just smiled and gently pushed away the blade away from his throat. “Now, now everyone. There is no need for violence. Let us sit at the table and negotiations can get started.”

Keith growled at him and wanted nothing more than to cut off his head. But when he did, he felt the barrel of Acxa’s gun digging into his skull. Keith really didn’t want to do this, but he needed to see Lance. He couldn’t do that if he was dead. So he reluctantly lowered his sword. Once he did Acxa lowered her gun.

“Wonderful.” Said Lotor as he walked back to the table and happily took a seat. He gestured to Keith to sit in the chair opposite him/ Once Keith was seated Lotor started to talk again. “So, as you would know by now Keith, Zarkon and I have had a slight disagreement and now I am classified as a fugitive. My father wants to kill me on-”

“I couldn’t care less.” Hisset Keith. “Zarkon is a fucking monster. I won’t hear another second of your speech until I see Lance.”

Lotor sighed a little, looking mildly disappointed. “Very well. If that is how you feel. We can just wait here in silence until Lance is here.”

“Fine.”

“Fine.”

“…” The tension quickly started to build as the two Galran males stared each other down. It was like
to animals sizing each other up before a fight. Though Keith did look more wound up and ready to
fight than Lotor. Though that wasn’t a surprise. Keith had heard that Lotor uses his brain a lot more
than just pure strength. He probably had several ideas already formulated in his head on how to kill
him.

Suddenly a door opened up and Lance walked in with Narti and her freaky cat Kova. When Lance
saw them his eyes lit up and he grinned. “Hey guys! You know we seriously need to stop meeting
up like this.” He went to move over to them, but Narti quickly grabbed him and yanked him back.

The second she did that Keith stood up so quickly he knocked his chair to the ground and growled.
“LET HIM GO NOW LOTOR!” He practically roared at him.

Lotor didn’t even flinch. He just glanced over at Narti. “Please, we are not animals here. No need to
handle Lance like that.”

Krolia put her hand on Keith’s shoulder and glared at him. “Keith. Calm yourself. Getting angry will
not help Lance.” She gave Lotor a stern look. “Permission to make sure he’s alright?” Lotor nodded
and gestured for her to go and check on him. Keith tried to move with her but she just growled at
him and gestured to the chair. “No. We’re doing this the right way. You pick that seat up and stay in
it.”

“...” Keith grumbled but did as he was told and watched Krolia like a hawk as she walked over to
Lance and quietly talked to him. It pissed him off how quietly they were talking. He wanted to hear
them. He wanted to go over and make sure Lance was okay himself. Sure he didn’t look like he was
hurt at all, but this was Lotor. The son of Zarkon. He had to have been up to something.

When Krolia finished talking with Lance and walked back over without him. He bared his teeth at
her, but she growled at him first. “He’s fine. He hasn’t been attacked or injured in any physical
way.” She looked over at Lotor. “What are your demands for the release of Keith’s mate?”

Lotor nodded a little and looked at Keith directly into his eyes. “Now, I know you are extremely
good at harvesting quintessence, but have you ever harvested dark quintessence?”

“... What?” Keith had heard of that, but he didn’t think it was real. “Theoretically I know it’s a thing
but seriously?”

Lotor just nodded. “Yes. While pretty much everything here runs on quintessence we have been
finding and harvesting dark quintessence. While it is unstable and shows little to no physical
properties other than having the consistency of dry clay, when it is immersed in plasma quintessence
It actively pushed quintessence away from it creating an impenetrable barrier from which
quintessence cannot pass through. There is an abundance of dark quintessence in this realm and in
fact, any realm that has a low amount of quintessence. It’s like a cosmic equilibrium.”

“... That makes sense.” Said Coran. “Altean’s have theorised that there had to be some form of
quintessence that would have neutralizing effects to quintessence… Earth having a low amount of
naturally occurring quintessence might also explain why this realm has a very limited number of
people that can manipulate the quintessence around them.”

Allura suddenly gasped. “Wait, are you saying that there is a way for us to possibly stop Zarkon
once and for all? By locking him out of this realm using dark quintessence?”

“More than just that.” Informed Lotor. “If my plan works as intended, all full blooded Galra will be
locked away in their original realm of Daibazaal. But dark quintessence is extremely delicate in this
realm and we need someone with the skills that only Keith has to extract it to save every single realm
“Every full blooded Galra?” Questioned Krolia.

Lotor shrugged. “Well we know that the Blade is working against Zarkon which is part of the reason why we haven’t gone through and tried to use it. Though we have used it on a few smaller realms that we have managed to find that Zarkon has either overlooked or ignored due to their size… But dark quintessence is not in as much abundance as normal quintessence is. We have to strike now.”

“Doesn’t Zarkon know of dark quintessence?” Asked Allura. “Hasn’t he invested any time into researching it?”

“He is only interested in plasma quintessence.” Informed Lotor. “He wants to switch from crystal to plasma quintessence as soon as possible. Dark quintessence is still theoretical in the minds of Galra scientists.”

Keith dig his nails into the table. He was hardly listening to what Lotor was saying. It didn’t matter to him. Zarkon could do whatever he wanted for all he cared. He just wanted Lance. He kept glancing over at him while Lotor spoke. Lance seemed uneasy and kept glancing over at Narti and Kova as he tried to slowly inch away from them with limited success.

“So will you please comply with my request and help me?” Asked Lotor.

Keith glared at him. “Let Lance go right now and I’ll consider it.”

He sighed. “Very well. Narti, release him.” Narti took a step back and let Lance go. Immediately Lance went over to Keith and Keith practically ran to him.

“Are you okay?” Asked Keith. “Lotor didn’t do anything to you did he? You weren’t hurt?”

Lance smiled softly at him and tried to speak with him in a calm tone. “I’m okay Keith. Worst that happened was waking up dizzy and Lotor giving off creepy vibes. But I am okay. Compared to the last time I got taken by the Galra this was a walk in the park.”

Keith stared hard Lance, trying to see if he was lying in anyway, but he seemed okay. He didn’t have any fear in his eyes or any new cuts and bruises. “Okay… That’s good.” He quickly kissed Lance before he growled at him. “How the absolute fuck do you keep getting kidnapped by Galra? Do I have to handcuff you to the bed or something?”

Lance looked surprised for a moment before he laughed. “Keith, babe, we can talk about that kinky shit later. Okay?”

Keith huffed and started pulling Lance towards the exit. “Okay, I have Lance we are leaving.”

“Wait.” Said Allura. “We can’t leave just yet.”

“She’s right.” Said Shiro. “Keith if Lotor has a plan that will stop Zarkon’s invasion before it even begins then we should hear him out.”

Keith growled at them. “Are you kidding me? This is Lotor! Zarkon’s son! What the fuck kind of shit could he come up with that won’t remove Zarkon and give him full control over the Galra?”

“I can understand your mistrust.” Said Lotor calmly. “But to be fair you don’t know what we have been doing to help protect and preserve realms. We have saved countless people, including Alteans.”
Hearing that made Allura and Coran gasp in shock. “How is that even possible?” Asked Coran. “Unless… Oh, of course! When we escaped Zarkon in the first place. Other Altean’s obviously escaped too and made it to safe realms.”

Lotor nodded. “Indeed. We found a small realm full of Altean’s that have been living there for generations. Many of their myths are similar to the events that took place when the original Altea was destroyed. They strongly believe that the Goddess Allura saved their people from a fate worse than death and her spirit resides within the quintessence field.”


Allura blushed and quickly looked away. “I can’t believe it… Did I really do that?”

“Shut the fuck up.” Growled Keith. “No fucking way any of this is true. It’s all bullshit! Lotor’s obviously just trying to manipulate us for whatever stupid reason he has. How the fuck can you fall for this?”

Suddenly the doors opened up and Ezor ran in grinning. “Yo! The pod finally popped and she’s walking and talking and… Wow, there are a lot more people here than I thought there would be…”

Lotor just smiled at her. “Turns out Keith isn’t as much of a lone wolf as we thought. Anyway, the pod?”

“Right.” Ezor clapped her hands. “So, you want them to come in now or later?”

“Bring them in now.” Said Lotor calmly. “Maybe they will be able to convince them that what I have been saying is true.”

Ezor nodded and quickly ran off. She came back moments later with Zethrid, who was helping steady a blond Altean. The Altean seemed very disoriented and not able to walk properly. “W-what’s going on?” She muttered.

Allura looked like she was about to cry. “Oh my stars, it really is another Altean.”

Seeing her sent shockwaves through Keith. If she was here did that mean what Lotor was saying was true? Had he not been lying? This had to be a trick of some sort. Lotor couldn’t be the good guy here. He was Zarkon’s son. He kidnapped Lance. He couldn’t trust him. He couldn’t. He would never trust him.

The blond Altean looked at Allura and Coran with a shocked expression on her face. “Y-you survived too?” She asked. “I didn’t think that…” She started to tear up. “Thank the goddess…”

Allura quickly went over to her and tried to comfort her. “I didn’t think that…” She started to tear up. “Thank the goddess…”

Allura quickly went over to her and tried to comfort her. “Please calm down. It’s okay now. Can you please tell me your name? My name is Allura. The other Altean here with us is Coran.”

She stared at him with shock. “I-I’m Romelle… Are you Allura, as in… the one who saved our people all those years ago?”

“It would seem so.”

Romelle started crying. “Oh no… I’m dead aren’t I? I didn’t make it. I’m dead.”

“Whoa, hey, you aren’t dead.” Said Hunk quickly. ”You um… Well I don’t know what happened but you aren’t dead.”
“Could you please tell us what happened?” Asked Allura. She gently put her hand onto hers and squeezed. “Everything will be okay. Just take your time Romelle.”

It took a little while for her to calm down enough to actually speak, but she was still shaking when she did. “Zarkon invaded… We were running maintenance on our defences, but they must have already been observing us because they wiped us all out the moment we were defenceless. My parents… My brother… He shielded me but I froze up… I couldn’t move… He died in my arms and I… I was too injured to move… It was a miracle that Lotor found me and put me in a healing pod to recover… Everyone is gone…”

Lotor sighed sadly. “I take full responsibility for what happened to that Altean colony. We had only just successfully used dark quintessence to completely block off a small, uninhabited realm and I was going to inform that realm’s Altean refugees that they would no longer need to fear Zarkon’s return, but I was too late… Saving the life of one of my people was the least I could do.”

“Your people?” Questioned Krolia.

Lotor nodded. “Yes. Like my generals I am a half-breed. I am half Galran, and half Altean. My mother was one of the first Altean scientists that passed into my father’s realm… Ever since I learned about my heritage I have dedicated myself to trying to undo what Zarkon has done. It’s my duty as a prince and an Altean. I condemn every last one of my father’s actions and I am doing everything in my power to stop him.” He sighed a little as he stood up. “You do not have to take what I say as truth, but please do not believe for one second that I am anything like my father.”

Keith didn’t know what to make of this. He had a suspicion that Lotor was a half-breed, but he didn’t know for sure… And Romelle’s existence and story seemed to back up what Lotor had been saying. He still didn’t trust him and made it a point to stand between Lance and Lotor. He didn’t want to work with Lotor or Zarkon.

“… I need to think about it.”

Lotor nodded in agreement. “Of course. I just wanted you to listen to what I had to say anyway. If you choose to help me we will be able to stop Zarkon once and for all.” He then turned his attention to Allura. “Princess Allura, I know that this might be sudden, but as a full Altean I think it might be more appropriate if you were able to take Romelle with you. Under different circumstances I would gladly take her, but my generals and I are usually in and out of this realm at the drop of a hat to arm and help safeguard other realms against my father. We cannot afford to take someone with no experience under our wing.”

“Of course.” Said Allura. She smiled kindly at Romelle. “Please, come with me. Coran and I are more than willing to take you with us and give you a new home. Hopefully we will be able to help you get accustomed to life on earth.”


Lotor smiled and clapped his hands. “Alright, now that everything has been established you may all leave.”

“Just like that?” Questioned Krolia.

“Just like that.”

“… You really aren’t like other Galra, are you?”

“I’d prefer to have negotiations without needless bloodshed. I might be my father’s son by blood, but
my blood does not make me Zarkon.”

“I can see that… It has been interesting talking to you Lotor. Your goal is admirable.”

“Thank you. It is an honour to hear another Galra share that sentiment.”

Keith just growled and tugged Lance towards the exit. “We’ve wasted enough time here. Let’s go.”

Soon everyone was heading back to the surface. On the way up Pidge and Hunk were asking Lance a whole bunch of questions about everything that happened. It kind of annoyed Keith to find out that the worst thing that happened to Lance was that he had to cook food for everyone. But he was happy that Lance was okay. He felt happy being able to hold Lance close to him while he talked. He didn’t want to let Lance go again.

Eventually they got outside and Hunk offered Lance a spot in Pidge’s SUV to drive back, but Keith quickly pulled Lance back. “No. He’s riding with me.”

There was a strong sense of unease between everyone, but eventually everyone figured out who was riding with whom and headed back. Keith didn’t give a fuck who was traveling in what vehicle as long as Lance was on his bike with him, which he was.

Keith quickly set up the coms for their helmets and moved Lance’s hands so that he was pretty much hugging him while he was sitting behind him on the bike. He wondered if this was too clingy at this point, but he was scared and needed to know that Lance wasn’t going to vanish on him again.

“… Are you okay?” Asked Lance through the coms.

Keith shrugged. “My boyfriend suddenly vanished and I got given coordinates that I couldn’t put into my communicator because I was panicking so much… And that’s not even counting how fucking scared I was that Lotor was torturing you just for fun since Lotor is Zarkon’s fucking son. So you tell me Lance, am I okay? Do I sound okay to you?”

“…” Lance lightly gripped Keith’s shirt. “I’m sorry… I didn’t want to get kidnapped you know. I just wanted to hang out around our apartment and have dinner with you and Cosmo…” His voice cracked slightly. “All I wanted was to spend time with you and then… I wish I was like you. Then maybe I would have been able to fight back.”

“I’m sorry.” They pulled up to some lights and put his hands on Lance’s hands. “Look, I might sound pissed off at you but I was just scared about you… What could have happened to you… I was fucking scared you were brutalized somewhere in a cell or fucking dying. I wouldn’t be able to forgive myself if you were-” The car behind him honked and Keith hissed and flipped them off as he started driving. “Fuck you too shit head!”

Lance squeezed Keith tightly in a hug. “I get it. I totally understand… I was half expecting to get killed and put in the pot for their dinner or something. I was scared something bad would happen… Lotor was really fucking creepy… Are you going to work with him to find this dark quintessence stuff?”

“… I don’t know. I need to think about it.”

“Okay.”

Keith smiled a little and pulled back into their apartment building. He’d need to improve his security measures to keep Lance away from Lotor. If he took him once he would do it again. He’d have to watch him very closely for a few days. He couldn’t trust Lance not to get kidnapped by him again.
He had to protect him. He just had to.
When they got back to the apartment Cosmo was extremely happy to see them both again. He was satisfied with a few pats from each of them and let them go about their business. Keith silently took hold of Lance by the wrist and pulled him into the bedroom. He shoved Lance hard onto the bed and closed the door, almost slamming it. Lance yelped a little in surprise and rolled over onto his back, just in time to see a very, very pissed off looking Galra. Okay, Keith was very pissed off at him. He still looked completely Galra. Lance doubted he changed since they had seen each other again. Keith was practically snarling at him with his fangs bared and his claws seemingly much longer than they normally would be.

Now normally Lance wouldn’t be too worried by this since Keith’s aggression wasn’t placed on him, but now it seemed like he’s about to attack him or something. Which honestly scared him. Did Galra hit their mates for getting kidnapped or something? Was Keith going to attack him?

Keith leaned in close to him and pinned him down. He could hear Keith growling darkly and he squeezed his eyes shut. He didn’t know what Keith was going to do to him but he was scared that he was going to do something really, really fucking painful.

Suddenly Keith’s full body weight was on top of him and his growls quickly changed to uneven, terrified whimpering. “I-I’m sorry…” He whimpered into his shoulder. “I’m so sorry… A-are you g-going to kick me out? Do I need to live with Shiro ag-again?”

Lance was extremely confused. He looked down at the sobbing man on his chest. Why was Keith freaking out so much and assuming he’d be kicked out? What was going through his head? He didn’t understand.

“Keith, why would I kick you out?”

“B-because I’m a shitty mate.” He muttered. “I wasn’t able to keep you safe… You got kidnapped when I should have been protecting you… I was ordered by Kolivan to protect you since you’re part Altean, apparently, and I failed… Fuck when Kolivan finds out I’m going to get kicked from the Blade for sure.”

Lance ran his fingers through Keith’s hair, brushing over his Galra ears and watched them twitch. This was really stressing Keith out. “Calm down Keith. The Blade isn’t going to kick you out for this. They don’t have to know.”

“You’re joking right? Krolia will follow protocol and tell Kolivan everything. He was talking about using dark quintessence to trap Zarkon… If Kolivan thinks it’ll help he’ll end up ordering me to work with him…”
“Why don’t you just quit the Blade?” Asked Lance.

He immediately regretted saying that when Keith looked up at him with a genuine look of horror and betrayal. “Are you saying I’m that useless?”

“What?”

“That the Blade doesn’t even want to use me?”

“Whoa, now you’re putting words in my mouth.” He put his hands on Keith’s face and squished his cheeks. “You are stressed out. Really stressed out. Theoretically I should be more stressed out than you. I got kidnapped by a giant purple Link.”

“Is that a reference to something?”

“... We can talk about the Legend of Zelda later.” Muttered Lance. “What’s important now is that you know you didn’t do anything wrong. Just forget about all that. We’re talking about you right now. I don’t think you’re useless. No one thinks you are. I just want you to calm down. I still want to be your boyfriend... I can’t help it that I’m a Galra magnet.”

Keith rolled his eyes and rested his head against Lance’s shoulder. “What? You think Altean’s give off some special aroma to attract Galra or something?”

“Hmm, I’d like to think it’s my own natural musk.”

“At least you admit it isn’t your personality.”

Lance gasped in fake surprise. “Ah, rude! I can’t believe you just said that.” He started gently rubbing those sensitive spots behind his ears to make him purr. Thankfully that worked and Keith instantly relaxed against him. “There you go Keith. Just relax. You’re a good boyfriend. You came for me as soon as you knew who took me, right? You even got backup and were ready to kill Lotor. You are amazing.”

Keith hummed a little and started to tug at Lance’s shirt. “Off.”

“Why?”

“I need to see you’re okay.”

“Huh?”

“I need to make sure that they didn’t do anything to you.” He lightly swatted Lance’s hands away from his face and started to pull up his shirt.”

Lance sighed and sat up. “Come on Keith. You don’t think you’re being a little paranoid?”

He gave Lance a deadly serious look. “Lance, I do not trust Lotor. I do not care how believable Lotor’s story is. He took you. He’s Zarkon’s son. I will never be able to forgive him or trust him. I hardly trusted him in the first place... Let me just check and make sure he hasn’t gon and implanted something in you.”

Seeing the desperation in his eyes, Lance reluctantly let him take off his shirt and check him over for any unusual cuts or scratches. Anything to put his worried boyfriend at ease. He ran his fingers over Lance’s chest, stomach, back and arms at least five times before he was satisfied.

“Okay... Pants off. Now.”
“What?” He asked in surprise.

“I need to check your legs too.”

Lance gave him a flirtatious smile. “Aw Keith, is this just your way of getting me naked?”

Keith did not look amused. He actually looked annoyed. “I just want to make sure that you are okay. If Lotor did put something in you I need to find it. Okay? Okay.”

Lance just sighed and undid his pants. “Okay fine, but if you start touching my dick or try to probe in in any way, shape, or form I’m gonna hit you.”

“Fair enough.” Keith quickly grabbed his leg and started checking. Once he was completely satisfied that Lotor had not planted some tracking device on him he relaxed a little and lied back against the mattress. “Okay. Lotor isn’t tracking you. That’s good.”

“Yeah.” Lance quickly pulled his clothes back on and flopped down next to him. “... Are you okay?”

Keith nodded and clung to his arm. “Yeah... I’m good now.”

“That’s good.”

“Yeah... You want a drink or something? I’m kind of thirsty.”

“Nah, I just want to sleep. I couldn’t get comfortable when I was staying with Lotor. I just felt like I was being watched all the time. Freaking Kova and we weird human eyes... Damn Cacobeast thing.”

“Cacobeast? Wait, Kova was staying with you the whole time?” He sounded kind of worried.

“Yeah?”

“Cacobeasts form this weird bond with someone and give them some kind of powers. Kova belongs to Narti and everyone knows that Narti uses Kova to see. So Narti was watching you the whole time.”

“... Well shit.”

“Yeah... I’m going to get a drink now. I’ll be back in a minute.” Keith got up and walked to the kitchen.

Lance sighed a little and draped his arm over his eyes. This was so fucked up. Was Keith going to help Lotor for the greater good of stopping Zarkon? Would Kolivan really order him to help if Krolia told him about it? And what about this Romelle girl? She seemed really confused and disorientated. At least she was with Allura and Coran. They could help her. Maybe she would even start working at the cafe so they could keep an eye on her?

That would be nice. He would love to have a new face around. He could show her what tattoos where while Pidge freaked her out with a;; her body mod stuff and piercings. Hunk would do what he could to introduce her to human food. Coran and Allura were kind of already used to it so that was whatever.

He suddenly felt something wrap around his ankle and pull hard. He yelped in surprise and looked down to see Keith using a fucking rope to tie his let to the bed. “... Um, excuse me? The fuck do you
Keith looked at him sheepishly. “Trying to make sure you don’t suddenly vanish on me again?”

“And what if I need to use the bathroom?”

Keith held up a bowl he took from the kitchen.

“...” Lance took a moment to compose himself and closed his eyes. “Keith… I’m not mad at you right now. I understand you have some abandonment issues, but doing this is kind of really, really fucking creepy. Let me go now.”

“...” Keith seemed hesitant to do so but did as he was told and sat on the floor.

“What are you doing now?”

“Guarding you.” He muttered.

“Why?”

“Because securing you is creepy and makes you uncomfortable.”

Lance rolled his eyes. “You know, you’ll be able to guard me and keep me safe if you come up here and hold me all night.”

“... I guess.” He quickly climbed onto the bed and quickly wrapped his arms around Lance. “I’m sorry… I’m paranoid.”

“I know. But I’m okay now. Okay? I’m not going to leave you again.” Lance wasn’t too sure what possessed him to do it, but he grabbed Keith’s arm and bit his wrist hard. It made Keith squeak in surprise. “... I did do that right, right? Like That’s where we are meant to bite since we are mates?”

Keith nodded and nuzzled Lance’s neck. “Yeah. I’m still sorry though. You deserve better.”

“I deserve you. Just go to sleep. We’ve both had a stressful day.”

Keith nodded a little in agreement and closed his eyes. He still seemed really stressed, but that was okay. It was understandable. As long as Lance didn’t wake up with a paranoid boyfriend tying him to the bed with a bowl to pee in he’d be happy.

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Keith was a failure. A pathetic excuse for a mate. If he was with a Galra they would have promptly beaten the shit out of him and or beheaded him for not being able to protect them. He almost wished that Lance would have yelled at him for being too pathetic and weak to look after him.

He didn’t sleep that much that night. Every time Lance moved his eyes would snap open and he’d quickly look around the room for danger. His paranoia was getting the best of him. Lance was fine. Lotor didn’t do anything to him. Lance was okay. He was fine.

But since Lance hadn’t been injured Kolivan would definitely order him to work with Lotor. Lotor was a bastard. He hated him. He wanted nothing to do with him. The Blade was doing just fine stopping Zarkon. They didn’t need Lotor. He didn’t trust him. He couldn’t trust him.

Lance moved again in his sleep and Keith watched him. He deserved so much better than a half-breed. He couldn’t even do a simple bodyguard job with someone he liked. He loved Lance so much
but to him this kind of proved that he was a bad mate. Lance would be better off with Allura or a normal human.

He didn’t understand what was so wrong with him. It must be a half-breed thing. He had it hammered into him from a young age that he was never going to achieve anything from humans, he had it hammered in that all he had was the empire from the Galra, and that the greater good was most important from the Blade. Did he even have a sense of self? An actual identity besides Keith; half-breed Galra, traitor to the empire, member of the Blade of Marmora, and just all around pathetic excuse of a soldier.

That’s really all he was wasn’t he? Just a soldier. He was just made to follow orders. What the hell did he even do in his down time for fun? He trained, and trained… and trained… and… Okay he had to have other things he was interested in. What did he do when he was younger? … Okay between hunting for food and finding clean water he really didn’t have much time to do anything a normal human might consider fun. He really needed to a hobby that didn’t involve the Galra in any way, shape, or form.

Suddenly his communicator went off and Keith quickly grabbed it and quietly slipped into the bathroom. It was Kolivan. “Kolivan. To what do I owe the pleasure?”

“Yurak, I assume you know Krolia has made contact with us in regards to the pinduk negotiations you have had with Lotor. Apparently Lotor had been in contact with you before about acquiring your assistance. Why were we not informed about this sooner?”

“I um… I didn’t think that it was important. I assumed Lotor was going to give me back to Zarkon to get back into the empire.” Said Keith quietly. “I didn’t think that it would serve the best interest of the Blade to do so.”

“Regardless you should have let us know. It would have been really useful.”

“I’m sorry Kolivan. It won’t happen again.” He already felt terrible. He’d let the Blade down. Would he get fired? Probably. There wasn’t room for error when it came to this kind of thing.

“I should hope so. Not only did I hear about this from Krolia I also heard about this from Princess Allura. Anyway, you have a new mission. You are to work with Lotor in finding and collecting this dark quintessence. You must also get us a sample so we can perform our own testing.”

“I-I don’t think I can-”

“This is an order Yurak. Not a suggestion. You will get into contact with Lotor at soon as possible and you will get that dark quintessence.”

“… Yes sir. I will make contact with Lotor soon.”

“Good. I would expect nothing less from you Yurak. Contact the Blade once you have talked to Lotor again.”

“Yes sir, but Lance is-”

“You and your mate are adults. You must have realised how you would have to go on missions even after you got a mate? You would have to be incompitant to think otherwise.”

Keith felt sick. He thought Kolivan would give him more time, but this was a special circumstance. Lotor had just given them a way to take down Zarkon forever, but that meant he would be away from Lance. He didn’t want to be away from Lance. But what choice did he have? Keith was just a
soldier. He just did what he was told.

“Understood. I will get into contact with Lotor soon and work with him.”

“Good. I hope to hear from you soon.”

Keith finished up his call and crumpled to the ground. He didn’t want this. He didn’t want to work with Lotor. He should just quit the Blade, but he wanted to be useful. He couldn’t be useful if he wasn’t a soldier. He would just have to grin and bear it. What else could he do? He hated everything that was happening.

He felt tears starting to stream down his face. He couldn’t protect Lance in the slightest and Kolivan knew it. Now he was moving onto another mission. If he wasn’t useful in one area he would be instantly moved somewhere else. Keith wasn’t useful here. He wasn’t useful anywhere. He just had to suck it up and tell Lance when he woke up. It wouldn’t be too long now. It was almost morning.
Stress

Chapter Notes

More emotional things happen to our poor boys, but things do get a little better. Kudos and comment when you can. Enjoy :D

Keith was stressed. Extremely stressed. Shiro could tell the second Keith walked into the shop. He honestly didn’t think that Keith was going to turn up for work after they got Lance back from Lotor, but he did. The second he came inside he robotically moved around and did all the usual things that Shiro had asked him to do previously.

About halfway through his early morning routine Allura showed up with Romelle. The blond Altean had been pretty quiet on the drive back but seemed to be happy enough to know that she was safe now.

Allura just smiled warmly at them. “Hello boys. How are you?” He lightly nudged Romelle and she out the drinks down on the counter.

“H-hello.” Said Romelle quietly. Her eyes fell on Cosmo. “Is that a cosmic wolf?!” She quickly went over to him and gave him lots of cuddles and hugs. “You are so cute! Adorable! I love you!” Cosmo was very happy to receive attention.

Keith made an annoyed noise and went to hide in the back room. The two women looked very confused and looked over to Shiro for some semblance of an explanation as to what was going on.

Shiro just shrugged. “Best guess he’s still upset about what happened yesterday. I’ll talk to him more about it later… But how are you Romelle? Are you adjusting to human like okay?”

The Altean shrugged. “I’m doing my best. Allura and Coran have been nice enough to let me work in their shop. They said it would help with my social skills, but if it gets too much I can hang out in the backroom.”

“That’s good. You can come over here too if you like.” Said Shiro. “It’s quieter and there’s Cosmo.”

She smiled and nodded. “Thank you um… Shiro? It is Shiro, right?”

He nodded. “Yep. It’s Shiro.”

Romelle nodded. “Okay. I hope Keith feels better soon. I um… I’m not too sure what happened on your end of things but things with Lotor… Some of the things he did were questionable, but he saved my life and I hope that you would at least have some small amount of respect for him.”

“Well, I personally hold no ill will to Lotor, but I have to admit I am a little cautious since he is the son of the guy who wipes out other realms like it’s nothing and he is currently trying to invade this one.”

“… Point taken. But um, I guess we should be going now?” She looked over at Allura for confirmation.
Allura nodded. “See you around lunch time Shiro.” The two women left and Shiro went into the back room to see Keith in him full Galra form scratching at the brick wall.

“... Um, Are you okay?”

“I am stressed.” Growled Keith and he continued to scratch.

“I can see that. Want to talk about it? Does this have to do with Lance or Lotor?”

Keith sighed and dug his claws into the brick while his ears flattened back against his head. “Not just that... Allura and Krolia told Kolivan about Lotor and what he wants to do... He wants to get a sample of dark quintessence and ordered me to meet with Lotor as soon as possible.”

“Isn’t that a good thing?” Asked Shiro. “Have you told Lance about this?”

That turned out to be the wrong thing to say. A pained sound left Keith’s throat as he crumpled to the ground and started to sob. “I-I can’t.” He whimpered. “I can’t do it. I can’t do it. I can’t do it. I can’t do it. I can’t—”

Shiro was quickly by his side and holding him close. “Easy there Keith. Now, what is going on?”

“I don’t want to leave Lance so suddenly...” He admitted quietly. “I want to stay with Lance but I can’t Kolivan wants me to go and work with Lotor. I can’t turn down a mission from the Blade... If I refuse then Kolivan... He’ll kick me out... I can’t lose them. I can’t lose the Blade, but I can’t be apart from Lance so soon. I don’t know what to do... I have my mission. I have to complete my mission. Kolivan knows I failed to protect Lance when Lotor kidnapped him... I have to do this but I can’t. I can’t.”

Keith was having a full blown panic attack now. He was rocking in Shiro’s arms and starting to hyperventilate. “Keith. Listen to me for a moment. Can you do that?”

“And I have to tell Lance.” He whimpered. “He’ll get angry at me for leaving him again so suddenly. I’ll be gone for weeks. Weeks. Quintessence harvests can last anywhere between a few weeks to almost a year. I don’t know how difficult dark quintessence will be. I could be gone for years. Lance won’t wait around for me for years.”

“Keith, can you hear me?”

“Why was I like this? Why did this have to happen? I have to go. I just have to go and do this. Why do I have to do this? Why? Lance is going to hate me but if I don’t then Kolivan will kick me out and I’ll lose everything. I can’t lose them. I can’t lose them.”

“KEITH!”

Keith quickly looked up at Shiro. He looked stunned to see Shiro was actually there, like he had forgotten he was there. “…

“Go upstairs, sleep on my bed, and take Cosmo with you. You need to rest.”

“But I... Work?”

“You can’t work looking like that. You are Glara right now.”

Keith looked down at his hands and frowned. “Oh... So I am...” He stood up and slowly wandered upstairs with Cosmo.
Shiro sighed heavily and ran his fingers through his hair. This was bad. Really bad. The last time Keith had broken down like this was when he got threatened rather harshly by a teacher at his high school after he was threatened with expulsion after getting accused of something he didn’t do.

He was about to go back to the front of the shop when he noticed that Keith’s communicator seemed to have dropped out of his pocket. He picked it up and frowned a little. He’d seen Keith use it before and he had a vague idea of what he needed to do to get it to work. He hesitated a little and was pretty sure that Keith would beat him with his robot arm when it was over, but he couldn’t help it.

He quickly pressed a few buttons and held it up to his ear. “Hello? Is this Krolia?”

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Keith hated himself. He could add the title of coward to his long list of things that he was. He couldn’t even bring himself to tell Lance what Kolivan had said to him. He didn’t want Lance to worry about him. He wanted to spend lots of time with Lance but he knew he couldn’t. It was impossible.

He heard the door open. “Go away Shiro.”

“Keith, it’s me. Krolia.”

Keith sat up and glared at her. “What are you doing here?”

She smiled sadly and sat on the edge of the bed next to him. “You dropped your communicator and Shiro contacted me.”

“... Bastard.”

She chuckled and patted Cosmo a few times. “Listen, Shiro says you are stressed out because Kolivan has given you a new mission but you wish to stay with Lance?”

“Yeah...”

“It could be a matter of time fluctuation in the quintessence field?” She suggested. “Kolivan might believe you and Lance have been mated for months when it has only been a few days. I know he would not tell you to start a new mission right after becoming mates with someone. I’ll talk to him and-”

“No!” Said Keith quickly. “Don’t do that. Just don’t... I can do it I can do what I need to do. Kolivan told me I had to so I will. Simple as that. It’s all good.”

She frowned. “No. I am sorry Yurak but you are not emotionally fit to go on such an intense mission so suddenly. Being forced apart from your mate so suddenly is extremely emotionally distressing and will cause you to make many irrational decisions. Might I refer you to almost slitting Lotor’s throat?”

“... I guess.” Keith pulled his legs up to his knees and felt miserable. He was pretty sure that Lance noticed something was up with him this morning but he didn’t end up saying anything to him. He was too nice like that. “I... I just don’t know what to do. Kolivan knows I failed to keep Lance safe. If I refuse or fail this next mission... I don’t want to get kicked out of the Blades... I’m tired of people just using me and throwing me away.”

Hearing that seemed to alarm Krolia. “Throw you away? Keith, none of us will throw you away. Not ever.”
“Yeah, right.” Muttered Keith. “I’m a half-breed. I’m not good for anything. I’m just a soldier, fuck I’m not even that. I might as well just be some mindless Galra scout or sentry or something.”

Suddenly Krolia pulled him into a bone crushing hug. “No. You are so much more than that… Keith, I left you once. I will never leave you again. Even if every last Galra turns against you, I will be there. I will never leave you my son. I love you too much… I wasn’t there for you when you were growing up, so please, please let me be here for you now..”

“…” Keith held her tightly and quietly sobbed. He was too overwhelmed by all his emotions. He wasn’t used to this. He just bottled everything up and dealt with it, just like he always did. He never fully opened up to anyone. He didn’t want to open up to Krolia like this. He didn’t even want to open up like this to Shiro.

She hummed softly and gently rubbed Keith’s back in a soothing way. “There, there. It’s okay. It’s not healthy to bottle things up like that… Would you like to come with me for a bit? Just so you can calm down. Don’t worry we won’t be too far away from Lance. If anything happens you will easily be able to go to him.”

“… Okay.”

“Good.” Krolia gently took him by his hand and walked back down stairs. Keith managed to shift back to his normal human form and followed her outside, giving Shiro an apologetic look as went. Shiro just seemed to nod in understanding and gestured that it was okay for him to leave.

They walked down the street and towards a rather rundown looking motel. Krolia took out a key and walked into one of the rooms. It wasn’t anything fancy or anything. But it looked more comfortable than the normal rooms they stayed in at the Blade HQ.

She sat on the bed and gestured for Keith to sit by her. When he did she hesitantly ran her fingers through his hair and hummed softly. “When I left your father I felt the same way you feel now with Lance. I was angry, sad, and second guessing myself for months. I didn’t know what to do, but I knew I made the right choice.”

“… Do you really think you made the right choice?”

Krolia nodded and smiled sadly. “I do… When I saw that you were weren’t developing typical Galran features while you were still in your egg I couldn’t in good faith bring.”

“Wait egg? You laid me like a chicken?!” This was news Keith did not know.

His mother just laughed a little and shook her head. “I keep forgetting you know nothing about Galran reproduction. The closest earth counterpart would be a monotreme. A mammal that lays eggs and produces milk for their young.” She chuckled a little. “Ah yes, if I remember correctly we also produce milk in a similar way too.”

“… I know I am going to regret asking this, but how does that work exactly?”

“We produce milk in the sweat glands on our pectorals.” Said Krolia. “We don’t have nipples.”

“… Wait, what?”

She nodded. “Yep. Didn’t you notice that full blooded Glara don’t have nipples?”

“No? I just thought it was a male Galra thing? I haven’t exactly seen a named female Galra.”
Krolia chuckled a little and gently patted Keith’s head. “No love. Anyway, I will help you talk to Kolivan. I will make sure that you and Lance have some more time. You don’t need to stress about this. Okay?”

Keith nodded a little and gently leaned into her hand. “O-okay… I should talk to Lance about this, right?”

“Yes. This is an important thing to talk to your mate about. It is not good to bottle your stress up. Galra can get physically ill. You wouldn’t want that now would you?”

“No… I’m just worried that some Galra will take Lance away again. What will I do if that happens?”

“Then you will find him and bring him back. Being a good mate isn’t just preventing the bad things from happening. It’s being able to pick up the pieces and rebuild when the bad things happen.”

“I guess…”

“Yeah… Do you feel better now?”

“A little…” He shifted uncomfortably on the mattress. “You called me Keith…”

“Oh, right… Sorry Yurak. It kind of just slipped. It won’t ha-”

“No it…” He blushed a little and smiled slightly. “It’s fine… I don’t mind as much as I used so…” He muttered. “You can call me Keith.”

Krolia looked surprised, but she smiled warmly and hugged him tightly. “Thank you Keith. I love you.”

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Lance was stressed. Extremely stressed, but not that anyone could really tell. He’d heard Keith crying alone in the bathroom, but didn’t know if he should talk to him. Mainly because he didn’t know if Keith would snap at him or not for doing it. Which he was kind of regretting now since Keith seemed so cold and distant in the morning.

Sure Keith stayed around him and tried to touch him constantly, which was fine, but Keith wasn’t there. It was hard to explain. He just didn’t seem connected with anything happening around him. He didn’t even talk to him or look at him all morning. The only time he did was when Lance suggested that Keith stayed at home, but Keith practically screamed that he was fine and wasn’t useless. Lance never said that he was.

Now he was nervously standing around his shop while Pidge was nextdoor trying to buy some breakfast for herself and Hunk was running slightly late. So Lance was alone… All alone… No one was around… That was fine. It was cool. He could do this.

He started tapping a pen against the counter until he accidently bumped a plastic cup and it fell off the counter top. He jumped in surprise and slipped, falling onto the floor. Since when had he been so jumpy? He couldn’t be all jumpy and twitchy when he did tattooing for a living. If he was all twitchy like that then he wouldn’t be able to work.

With a sigh, Lance quickly put the pens back in the up and put it back on the counter. He felt kind of weird. He didn’t like suddenly being alone like this. Pidge or Hunk should be here by now. What if Pidge didn’t go nextdoor? What if she went somewhere else? What if Hunk suddenly called in sick?
What if it was just him today and anyone could get in? His hands started to tremble.

Was he scared of being alone? The thought made him laugh nervously. Him? Afraid of being alone? What was that about? How could he even think that? He wasn’t… Why did he? He had no idea. Maybe he was just a little on edge after getting kidnapped by Galra, twice. Fucking twice.

He looked around and shuddered nervously. This was fine. Keith wasn’t far away. Things will be fine. He was fine. Just fine… He heard the front door open and he jumped when he saw Pidge walking in eating a sandwich.

“H-hey Pidge.” He squeaked.

She stopped for a moment and gave him a slightly confused look. “You okay there man? You look kind of pale?”

He just laughed and shrugged it off. “I-I’m okay. I just… I think I’m having some trouble being alone at the moment… I mean, Keith didn’t leave my side since we saw each other at Lotor’s base and I… I guess I don’t feel too safe being alone or something.” He continued to laugh nervously and started to flip through the booking book just to occupy his hands.

Pidge just frowned as she thought. “That is understandable I guess. Dudem you have been kidnapped twice in less than six months. Totally fucked up man.”

Lance just smiled and shrugged. “It’s nothing man. I’ll be fine. Don’t worry about it. I’m just a little jumpy.”

“Dude, you probably have some PTSD shit going on.”

“Who has PTSD?” Asked Hunk as he walked in. “Are we talking about Lance or Keith?”

“Maybe both?” Mused Pidge. They shook their head. “Well today we’re talking about Lance. He’s kind of low key scared of being alone right now.”

“Totally understandable.” Said Hunk. “I’d probably be catatonic if I was taken by the Galra the first time.”

Lance blushed and kicked at the ground. “It’s not like I am scared of being alone per say…”

“You’re just scared that a Galra will pop out from behind a corner when you’re alone and drag you away?”

“… Maybe.”

Hunk smiled a little and patted him on the back. “That’s rough buddy, but we’re here for you. If you need some time off or just want to do some cleaning for the next few days we’re good with that. Right Pidge?”

“That’s right. You take it easy man. Let us know if you need anything. If you need one of us to hang out with you if Keith’s out or something just give us a call and we’ll be right there.”

“Thanks guys. You’re the best.” Lance was thankful to have such close friends.
After work Lance and Keith headed home. Lance was glad that Keith seemed a little more relaxed than he did before. So that was nice. The two of them got home without much trouble and Lance made them a simple dinner. They settled on the couch and watched TV.

It made Lance feel a little better. “So, you feeling a little better?”

Keith nodded and leaned against him. “Yeah… I talked to Krolia today.”

“Oh?”

“Yeah. Shiro called them.”

Lance nodded a little, not sure how or why they needed to talk. It probably didn’t end well. “What was it about?”

“… Kolivan called me last night.”

“What about?”

“Krolia sent him a report and Kolivan wants me to go and work with Lotor.”

That didn’t sit well with Lance. “Oh… So you’re going to do it then?”

“Eventually… I just… I want to spend more time with you.” Keith admitted. He leaned against Lance and picked at a loose thread on Lance’s pants. “I um… I kind of had a panic attack when I was at Shiro’s place, which was why he called Krolia.”

“What?” Lance was shocked. He held Keith close and ran his fingers through his hair. Why didn’t he tell him sooner? He would have dropped everything and gone straight over to comfort him. He really would have. Keith knew that, right? Shiro could have gotten him, right?

Keith shrugged and patted Lance’s arm. “Don’t worry about it. It wasn’t anything too serious. Krolia and I talked for a bit and… Apparently Galra are monotremes.”

“… What? Mono what?”

He watched his boyfriend sigh and blush in embarrassment. “Okay, so Galra apparently lay eggs and sweat milk out their chests because they don’t have nipples.”

“… Excuse me but what kind of fuckery is this?” He started poking Keith’s pecks. He distinctly remembered Keith had nipples.

Keith pouted and swatted his hand away. “Hey, I didn’t know I was born that way either. How the fuck would I know? I still have questions about human reproduction!”
Lance sighed a little and patted his head. “Okay fair enough. Sex ed is broken as fuck… Geeze, I can just imagine someone knocking up a Galra girl and then a few months later they dump an egg in your hand and tell you it’s yours.”

“Yeah, and apparently the eggs are transparent.”

“... Babe, that sounds like nightmare fuel.” He shuddered. “Your species just full of little nightmare surprises... At least you guys don’t do something really horrific like eat your way out of your mum’s belly or something. That would be super fucked.”

Keith nodded in agreement. “At this point I am too scared to look through my communicator to see if I have a file about babies...”

“Me too...” He shuddered a little and cuddled Keith a little closer. “So um... When will you?”

“In a month or two. Lotor and Kolivan can just suck it up and wait. I’m not leaving unless they drag me away... And even then I will kick and scream and bite.”

Lance smiled a little at that. It was nice to know that Keith didn’t want to leave him and would fight to stay with him. He’d do the same for Keith. He pulled Keith even closer so he was practically sitting on his lap. Keith hummed a little in approval and leaned against his shoulder. Lance smiled and started to absent mindedly rub that sensitive spot behind Keith’s ears. He relaxed and purred softly. Lance felt safe with him in his arms.

He looked down at Keith and smiled. He looked so peaceful, but at any moment he could attack and snap someone’s neck. Which he actually kind of liked? Maybe he was just weird. When Keith’s anger wasn’t directed at him he found himself quietly swooning. He had weird tastes.

“Hey babe?”

“Yeah Lance?”

He smiled and kissed him. “I love you.”

***

Krolia was mad at Kolivan and impatiently tapped her foot against the ground as she waited for him in their base. Eventually he showed up and she death glared him. “Kolivan, that was not appropriate.”

“What are you talking about?”

“Keith and Lance have only been together for a few rotations. It isn’t enough time to establish a proper bond with his mate. Separation so early on is damaging to young mates.”

Kolivan looked shocked for a moment before he sighed and pinched the bridge of his nose in annoyance. “We really need some way to stabilize the gates so we don’t have this kind of time delay... Okay, I will give him some more time, but I need him to work with Lotor. Come.” He directed her to the main comms room where Regris was typing away in front of a screen.

He looked up and seemed a little surprised to see Krolia. “Oh, hi. I’m almost done here.”

“At ease.” Said Kolivan. “Can you bring up the files on Lotor and his generals.”

“Of course.” Regris quickly brought them up on a monitor.
“Are you planning on debriefing me on this mission?” Asked Krolia. She recognises all the generals. Acxa is the first one enlarged.

“Acxa,” said Kolivan. “She is a calm and calculating leader of Lotor’s generals. She is his most trusted and knows almost all of his secrets. She was his first general. Her mindset is the most like that of a Galra compared to the others. She specializes in firearms, but is well adapt in hand to hand combat. Out of combat she is their tech expert.”

“So she is the most dangerous?”

“Depends on your definition of dangerous.” Kolivan gestured to Regris and he enlarged the photo of Ezor. “Ezor is the most talkative and carefree of the four. She is nimble and acrobatic. She specializes in assassinations and espionage. Hand to hand combat makes her lethal. Because of her father’s lineage she is able to turn invisible making her the perfect weapon. She’s is their main information collector.”

Krolia didn’t like that. Invisibility always made her uneasy. “I see…”

Kolivan nodded as Regris and he enlarged the image of Narti. “Narti has strange powers. She can neither see nor speak, but uses her Cacobeast Kova to see. We do not have much information on her because of a general lack of information. We believe that because of her connection to Kova that she has some connection to quintessence. She is an extremely deadly fighter, especially with Kova on the battlefield.”

Krolia liked Narti even less than Ezor. They needed more information on her. “And the last one?”

“That would be Zethrid.” Said Kolivan with a small frown. “She’s a wild card. She only seems to properly listen to Lotor and is known to take orders to the extreme. If Lotor tell her to stop someone she will rip off their legs to stop them. Much to our surprise, prior to her joining Lotor she was an engineer. She is an extremely aggressive and brutal fighter. She is a true Galra through and through.”

“I see… And what things do we have on Lotor?”

Kolivan frowned and looked very uncomfortable. “Our sources are a little rusty on what the exact specifics were behind Zarkon’s exile, but we do know it is due to genetics and the possible hybridization of Galra.”

That was something that Krolia didn’t expect. But then again she could understand why Zarkon would get rid of him for it. Mixing Galra genetics with any other species is seen as a disgusting abomination. Zarkon wouldn’t hesitate twice to banish anyone doing such acts.

“Lotor seems to have an interest in Keith so we need him to get close not just to investigate this dark quintessence. We need him to investigate Lotor’s biological endeavours. If he is trying making half-breeds we need to understand why and to what end. I could only fathom he’s attempting to make an army that is superior to the Galra to fight his father head on, but I cannot be certain. Keith is vitally important to our goal and we need him to gather what information he can by any means necessary…” He sighed a little and looked very displeased. “This would have been easier if Keith didn’t have a mate…”

Hearing that sent a chill down Krolia’s spin. “Kolivan? What are you suggesting?”

He gave her an annoyed look. “You know what I mean Krolia. Keith knows how important the mission is. We have to do anything and everything we can to complete it. Even the empire has that mindset.”
“But Keith—”

“He wouldn’t even be here if you didn’t complete your mission.” Reminded Kolivan. “We all know what the first few hundred Galra spies are meant to do during phase one. We have to do what we have to do. This is war.”

Krolia clenched her fists in anger and glared holes into the ground. It wasn’t like that. She wasn’t just collecting human DNA for the Galra empire. She hadn’t even planned on doing that. That was the whole reason she crashed her hoverbike so far away from civilization in the first place.

Kolivan placed his hand on her shoulder. “Krolia, I know that isn’t what you want to hear, but we have all had to make sacrifices that we wouldn’t have made otherwise. This is war… None of us want anything bad to happen to Yurak, but he signed up for this life the second he started basic training with the Galra empire. There is not getting out of this and you know that.”

“… This isn’t the life I want for him.” She growled. “Keith isn’t a mindless soldier. He is a sentient being with his own thoughts and feelings. I’ll go in his place.”

“No you won’t.”

“Why not? I can collect quintessence too.” She snapped. “I have more experience than Keith. I can collect dark quintessence for Lotor.”

“Because Lotor isn’t interested in full Galra.” Reminded Kolivan. “Yurak is the only one of us who is a half-breed. He is the only one that Lotor will let in. He only takes in half-breeds. The ones no one wants. The throwaways. The trash. The undesirables of the Glaran empire. Lotor wants Yurak so he can have him, but only when he is ready to start his mission. Are we clear Krolia?”

“…”

“Are we clear Krolia?” He repeated with a little more force.”

“Transparently…”

“Good… Yurak is a good soldier. He knows what is at stake here. You can’t fault him for being loyal to the cause.”

She nodded a little. Krolia knew that Keith was a good soldier. He was a strong and a good fighter. He could make plans on the fly and put the mission above his own safety. He was what they needed to win the war… But Krolia never wanted that for him. If she had her way then Keith would have grown up as a normal human with his father. He didn’t deserve to live this way.

Antok walked into the room. “Kolivan. Vrek and Ilun have returned from their mission. They brought back a sentinel. Do you want to observe the autopsy?”

“Of course, we don’t want a repeat of last time.”

“What happened last time?” Asked Krolia.

Antok shrugged. “It wasn’t fully dead.”

She followed Kolivan and Antok into an almost blindingly bright white room. Ulaz was already setting up medical equipment. Strapped down to a table was a very badly damaged Galran sentinel. Krolia doubted that it was still alive since it was missing its legs halfway down the thigh. They had been placed on a cart a bit away from everything else.
Ulaz looked up at the trio and nodded. “I doubt this one will cause much trouble for us. I am pretty sure it bled out.”

“Better to be safe than sorry.” Said Antok as he leaned against the wall.

Ulaz just shrugged and started to collect fluid and tissue samples. This was what they had to do. The Galra mass produced robots for phase two of their attack, but during phase one they would repurpose biomass native to the realm they were invading. Data collected from those sentinel's bodies would help them figure out how to better adapt and take over a realm.

Once Ulaz finished collecting the basic samples he went and started to slowly start to cut away and peel off the exoskeleton on its face to expose the flesh underneath. Krolia cringed a little when she saw the sticky blue stained meat. Cybernetic coolant fluid. The only thing that was compatible with something as robotically integrated as this. Without it, cells would start to deteriorate. It would eventually turn muscle tissue blue, but is was arguably more efficient than blood.

The skull of this sentinal looked very human. It made Krolia feel uneasy. This thing probably wasn’t any older than Keith, give or take a few months. It made her sick to think that this could have been Keith. Half-breeds when they couldn’t show their worth to the empire were stripped down and repurposed into something useful. It was also a fate most traitors of the empire would face. She didn’t want that fate for Keith. Did Keith even know this would happen to him if Zarkon found him? She didn’t know.

Ulaz carefully turned the sentinel’s head and lightly ran his nails over small wires coming out of the holes drilled in the side of his head. When Ulaz eventually cut into the skull there would no doubt be dozens of wires and computer parts would fall out. He picked up a bone saw and started to cut into its skull. Suddenly it gasped and everyone jumped back in shock.


Before anyone could say anything Antok swiftly down on its neck, severing its head from its body. It rolled off the table and Ulaz shot him a death glare. “Antok!”

“What?”

“I was already dead!”

“It gasped!”

“Involuntary movement!” Snapped Ulaz. “We all know twitching happens hours after death! You almost cut my autopsy table!”

The taller Galra huffed and crossed his arms. “Not my fault that it moved! Last time something like this happened it got loose and attacked us!”

Ulaz grumbled more and continued his autopsy taking notes and measurements. “... Okay, from initial observations his is a human half-breed. Male. Would be considered to be around his early to mid twenties.”

Krolia had seen enough. She didn’t want to see something like that. Something that would actively haunt her dreams if she stared at it for too long. She already had nightmares about it when she first realised that Keith was her son. She had been absolutely terrified that Keith might make a mistake or if someone higher up than him decided that they didn’t like him then he… He could have been stripped down to his basic and useful parts and everything else would have gotten thrown away.
Kolivan might care only about everyone’s loyalty to the mission, and Krolia cared too. She cared a lot, but she was loyal to her son too. Right now her son needed her more than the Blade needed them. She was going to fix this. She wasn’t sure how, but she was going to keep Keith safe. Nothing was going to hurt him. Not while she was around.
Blackmail

Chapter Notes

Some fluffy moments between Lance and Keith while Krolia and Lotor have a very important talk. Kudos and comment when you can. Enjoy :D

Keith was still surprised at how well things were going. The whole communication thing really was important. He wasn’t too sure how Galra did relationships but he liked this. He felt a lot better about expressing himself and had taken to running his claws through his lover’s hair while they watched TV together. Keith was a little annoyed that Lance’s hair was too short to braid.

Lance seemed to like it. He hummed happily and tilted his head back when Keith ran his Galran claws from his hairline down to the base of his skull. It made him happy to know that he was making Lance happy.

“Hmm, hey Keith?”

“Well?”

“Want to go out for dinner?”

Keith tilted his head a little. “Hmm? Go out?”

“Yeah, like a restaurant. What kind of food do you want to eat?”

Keith hummed a little as he thought about it. “... I like the fried chicken place. That burger place we went to for lunch on the weekend was nice too.”

“... “ Lance looked over at Keith with the most confused expression. “You men KFC and McDonalds?”

“Yes.”

“... There are way better places to eat than there Keith. Those places are kind of garbage.”

“I guess, but considering I’ve spent most of my life eating what I can find I’m pretty much game for anything.”

“Well that’s good. Put some shoes on and make yourself look like a human and we can get going.”

Keith did as he was told and was kind of excited to see where Lance was going to take him. Lance ended up taking him to something he called a steakhouse. He had no idea what that meant, but he was pretty sure it meant there was going to be a lot of meat.

Unfortunately for Keith he kind of had a tiny little bit of a secret that he hadn’t actually told Lance… He couldn’t read English for shit. Sure he kind of could because he grew up reading it, but he was so used to reading Galran at this point anything else took him a few minutes to read. Which kind of sucked, but he could handle it. But damn it if he wasn’t frustrated.
Lance quickly picked up on it. “You doing okay there?”

“Being multilingual sucks.” Muttered Keith. “I’m more used to reading Galran, but I can’t just ask for something in Galra now, can I?”

“... Keith, you do remember that I’m Cuban right? Spanish is my first language. I sometimes forget English words.” He chuckled a little. “I once forgot the English word for water and spent the better half of half an hour butchering Spanish and English to try and get a cup of water... To be fair I was very, very sick at the time... I think I called it sky tears, or unsalted wetness.”

Hearing that made Keith chuckle. “Unsalted wetness?”

“Well I didn’t want salt water. My siblings were assholes enough to do it. Anyway, I assume you want to get a stake or something?”

“Yeah.”

“How do you want it cooked?”

“... Could I possibly get it uncooked?”

Lance looked a little surprised. “Uncooked?”

“I prefer my meat raw... I am guessing that’s a Galra thing? I only cooked food when I was living alone because survival guides said I should cook it... But I can eat raw meat. I’ve seen some Galra do it, but raw meat is kind of a delicacy or something? I’m not too sure.”

“Well we can ask them to undercook it as much as they are legally allowed to.”

“Thanks.” Keith was grateful to Lance. He really couldn’t navigate just the normal everyday life that just came naturally to other humans. He probably would have ended up getting thrown into jail by now.

He smiled at him and Lance smiled back. That smile. He always looked so good when he smiled. These kinds of feelings deep inside him that before made him want to rip Lance’s face off now made him want to kiss him instead. He looked so happy and Keith wanted to make sure he stayed happy. He wanted to keep going to nice places with him and doing all kinds of things that would keep making him smile. When Lance was happy Keith knew things were all right in their world.

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“-Which is why I am a much better suited to collecting dark quintessence rather than Keith.” Stated Krolia. She didn’t want Kolivan to send Keith out to do this. She knew where Lotor was. She had to go over his head and tell Lotor she would do it instead.

To his credit Lotor did listen to her and nodded along. “Thank you for insisting that you can do this job yourself, but I will have to decline.”

“Might I ask why?”

“Because I don’t work with pure blooded Galra.” Said Lotor with a dismissive flip of his hand. “And if that is all you have to offer me, I do not care. I would much rather be working with someone similar to me. Which is why I feel more comfortable working with Keith.”

“But I have more experience.” She stated firmly. “I am more qualified to-”
“Please Krolia, I do not need to hear anymore.” Said Lotor calmly. He smiled a little too sweetly at her, which greatly unnerved her. “I understand you want to protect him. You are extremely close with him. One might even think it is a little too close…”

Krolia pulled a disgusted face. “If you are implying that I have sexual interests towards Keith you are sorely mistaken.”

Hearing that made Lotor laugh a genuine laugh. “Really Krolia? You would think that I would think that you two are? No. You are quite obviously Keith’s mother.”

“... And what makes you think that?” She asked coldly. She couldn’t let anyone know that Keith was her son. There would be too many questions from the other Galra. How did Lotor figure this out so quickly?

Seeing her expression Lotor simply shrugged. “After you showed up with Keith and his human companions I got Ezor to run a little background check on you. Not very difficult mind you. Your first spy mission was this realm during the start of phase one. You were one of two hundred Galran women that were tasked with procuring and incubating half-breeds for experimentation. You were one of ten that were unable to do so due to either environmental issues or failure to blend into human society.”

Krolia shifted a little uneasy on her feet. “I ended up in the desert. I took samples of the local flora and fauna.”

“Then about a year later you returned and reported what you found. That was more than enough time to get pregnant and have a baby. You were meant to return as soon as you showed signs of being pregnant so you could be monitored and it could be removed as soon as possible once the egg had been birthed. You having a half-breed child outside of the Galran empire is considered an act of treason... And that’s not even considering your links to the Blade of Marmora.”

She felt like she was going to faint. How did Lotor have this kind of information? She was careful. She had covered her tracks over and over again. There was no way he could know. How could he know?

Seeing the panic on Krolia’s face made Lotor smirk. “Keith’s links to the blade are pretty damaging too. No wait, you call him Yurak, correct?”

“...”

“Please don’t act so surprised Krolia. I’ve known that Keith is Yurak for a long time now. Acxa quite likes Keith in a mentour kind of way. I allowed her to use her free time to try and figure out where Keith was and if we could help him.” Informed Lotor. “Once we found out that Keith was Yurak, we decided to see how everything played out, but kept tabs on him. We have an extensive file on Keith and his unusual life.”

“And what do you plan to do with that information?” She asked.

Lotor shrugged. “Honestly? Nothing. Nothing at all... Well, as long as it doesn’t benefit me. Besides, the information I have would be like setting of a supernova. Why do I need to destroy the world to squash an insect?”

She clenched and unclenched her fists. Lotor was threatening her child. He knew too much. But there was nothing she could do. She was in Lotor’s domain now. She didn’t know where this information was stored so she couldn’t go and erase it.
Lotor chuckled and put his hand on her shoulder. “I think it would be best if you left now and didn’t come back. There’s nothing more you can do for him. I enjoy working with half-breeds much more than I do with Galra. And I would much rather work with him than you. Good. Now off you go Krolia. I am sure you have other things you need to do.”

Krolia was pissed, but he was right. She quickly left the base feeling angry and concerned for Keith’s safety. She didn’t trust Lotor. How could they have had that much information on Keith and be trustworthy? They pretty much have this blackmail they could use at any time. This was going to be extremely dangerous for Keith. If something happens Lotor can use that against him.

Lotor was a lot like Zarkon. He liked to be in control. He liked to be the one in control. He didn’t use the usual threats of physical violence and intimidation to get his way, he used information to get his way. He was extremely dangerous to work with. She needed to warn Keith.

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When they got back to the apartment Cosmo happily danced around them and wagged his tail. Lance grinned and cuddled the fluffy boy. “You’re so cute.” Lance cooed. “Such a good and happy boy. Fluffy boys are best boys.”

Keith hummed in agreement and walked to the bedroom, taking off his shirt as he went. Lance had to admit, Keith always looked sexy when he did anything and everything. Maybe it was a Galra thing? Stupid Galra stuff… Speaking of Galra stuff...

Lance walked over to the bedroom and watched Keith getting into his pyjamas. He’d also gone back to his Galra form again. He wondered what he was doing that? Not that he really minded. “Hey Keith.”

Keith looked over at him and smiled a little. “H-hey. You coming to bed?”

“Yeah. I’m kind of tired.” He went to change into his own nightwear and felt his boyfriend’s eyes on him. He smiled a little and looked over at him. “You wanna join me?”

“Yeah.”

Lance chuckled a little and sat on the bed. He reached out for him and instantly felt comfort in Keith’s arms. He still felt a little anxious these days when he was left alone, but he was slowly getting better. However the only time he actually felt completely at ease was when he was in Keith’s arms.

“Hey Keith?”

“Yeah Lance?”

“... So like, when you do go to do the thing for Lotor are you going to take Cosmo with you?” He really wanted to keep Cosmo with him. If he couldn’t keep Cosmo he’d be living on Hunk’s couch, or Pidge’s couch… Maybe Allura and Coran would let him stay with them? But they had Romelle with them now… Damn it.

Keith frowned a little and started running his claws through Lance’s hair again. It made Lance shudder a little. “Um… Probably not. I like the idea of Cosmo staying here to make sure you’re safe… And if anything goes wrong I’d rather have Cosmo here to be able to protect you.”

“...” Lance pouted a little. “What? You think that I can’t defend myself? I have this super secret Altean weapon. I could shoot someone if I had to.”
Keith chuckled a little and smiled. “Oh yeah? Why didn’t you shoot Lotor?”

“Hey, I was trying to figure out my escape.” Whined Lance. “I had to scope out the area and decide where I was going to go. To be honest I didn’t even know if I was actually on earth… I could have been anywhere…”

Keith frowned a little and kissed Lance softly. “Don’t think about that. You’re here now with me. Everything is fine. I’m not going to let another Galra take you away.”

Lance smiled at him and kissed back. “I know. I’m thankful for that. You’re so amazing Keith… I wish I was like you and like, you know, not so weak…”

“You’re not weak.” Said Keith in a firm but kind tone. “Lance, I’ve been trained for a good part of my life to be a soldier. Fighting is kind of my thing. But it’s okay if you can’t fight. I don’t expect you to fight. Not everyone can fight and that’s okay.”

“Yeah, but isn’t fighting like really important to Galra?” Asked Lance. “I seriously need to work on my fighting game to at least stand a chance against you.” Keith chuckled. “What’s so funny?”

“You don’t need to throw a punch at me or a kick to fight me. You just need to know how to defend yourself. I can show you how to block and do some basic grappling stuff if you like?”

Lance’s eyes lit up. “Really? You’ll do that?”

“Of course.” He cuddled Lance some more and made a small happy noise. “Babe, I’ll teach you how to snap a man’s neck and how to shatter a rib cage without breaking a sweat.”

“... Well alright then. I can’t tell if you’re excited about teaching me to fight or if you’re getting aroused by the thought of fighting.”

“...” Keith’s ears flattened back against his head and pouted. “I am neither confirming nor denying that… But it would be hot if you put me in a choke hold.”

Lance laughed a little and flopped back onto the bed, pulling Keith with him. “You have one weird kink there Keith my boy. But that’s one of the reasons I love you.”

Keith gave him a weird look. “You like me because I have weird kinks? You are the weirder one.”

“Says the cute purple kitten.” He cooed.

Keith rolled his eyes and lied down on the bed, cuddling Lance close. He had taken to being the big spoon since Lotor had kidnapped him. Keith nuzzled the side of Lance’s neck and gave the skin a light nip with his fangs. “Not a kitten. Dumbass.”

Lance laughed and squeezed Keith’s hands. “Yeah you are. You’re my kitten, and I love you. My super awesome attack kitten that protects me while I sleep.”

“... You’re still a dumbass.” Keith mumbled fondly. “I’m always gonna keep you safe.”

Lance hummed contently in response and closed his eyes. Being here with Keith, doing all these domestic things. It was hard to tell that neither of them were exactly human. Keith more so than him, but still… He hoped that Keith would never have to go and help Lotor. He just wanted to stay with him like this forever.
This was not how Lance was expecting to spend his day off, but to be honest he wasn’t going to complain. He woke up feeling something hard pressing into his lower back, and he had a pretty good idea what it was since Keith was still spooning him and he could very clearly see his hands. He did shift a little and turned his head to see if Keith was still asleep. He was sleeping peacefully with no indication that he was awake at all.

He shifted his hips a little more and gently touched Keith’s face to try and get him to wake up. It worked and Keith was slowly stirred back into consciousness. Lance smiled and kissed his cheek. “Morning Keith.”

Keith smiled sleepily and cuddled Lance while pressing his lips against Lance’s cheek and neck. “Morning… Work?”

“No, no work today. My day off.”

“Good.” Keith pulled him closer. Lance had no idea if Keith knew he had a hard on right now since he was kind of dopey so early in the morning. “Go back to sleep.”

Lance chuckled a little and reached back to run his fingers through Keith’s hair. “Well I would, but I think your dick has a few other ideas.”

Almost instantly Keith let him go and was over the other side of the mattress. “S-sorry! I’ll take care of this. Just-”

Lance reached over to him and quickly pulled him back. “Keith, I thought we were done with being embarrassed about that kind of stuff? I wouldn’t mind if you wanted to have sex this early after waking up. I have nowhere to be today.”

Apparently that had been enough for Keith, and before Lance knew it, his chest was pressed against the mattress while Keith was slowly thrusting his fingers inside him. He moaned breathlessly as he thrust back onto his fingers.

“F-fuck! Keith!” He moaned. ‘K-Keith!”

Keith, being the little shit that he was, roughly twisted his fingers while biting Lance’s shoulder. Lance could feel him smirking against his skin when he moaned. Keith loved biting him just a little too much, but Lance would be damned if he said he didn’t like it. Suddenly Keith’s fingers brushed against his prostate and made him see stars.

He must have made a noise or something that startled Keith a little because he stopped moving his fingers all together. Normally that would just be mildly infuriating, however Keith just left his fingers pressed right against his prostate. It was driving him crazy.
“Are you okay Lance?”

“I’m fine.” Whimpered Lance as he tried to thrust his hips back to make Keith move his fingers again. He felt Keith’s hand tightly grip his hips, making it impossible to move. He whimpered a little and clutched at the bedsheets. “F-fuck! P-please Keith. M-move already!”

“Are you sure you’re okay?”

Lance grunted in annoyance. “Keith, I swear I will break your fucking fingers if you don’t start moving again.”

Keith paused for a moment before he started slamming his fingers into him without mercy. A steady stream of moans and yelps fell from Lance’s throat. Why was Keith so good at this? Didn’t he say he hadn’t done this kind of stuff before? Fucking hell. Keith was too good at this.

“I’m so close!” He whimpered.

Suddenly Keith removed his fingers and Lance turned his head to yell at him, but his lips were instantly caught in Keith’s. Lance moaned in ecstasy and tugged at Keith’s hair. The harder he tugged the more Keith moaned in response. Keith was perfect. Hit bit Keith’s lips and shuddered when he heard Keith growl.

“Fuck me.” Whispered Lance in a breathy voice. “Fuck me hard Keith.”

“I um, yeah.” Keith’s hand fumbled around the bed, knocking the lube off the bed but eventually found a condom. He fumbled a little but eventually put it on but paused. “Um… How do you um… How are we doing to do this?”

Lance couldn’t help but chuckle when he heard that. “S-seriously? You’re asking me that now? After you almost finger blasted me into oblivion?”

Keith blushed a little and nodded, too embarrassed to actually look at him. “W-well yeah? I got a little over excited and um… I don’t know if there is something that you like…”

Lance thought about it for a moment before he smiled at him and pulled him into a soft kiss. “You seem to be pretty in tune with your instincts at the moment. What do you want to do?”

“... I um… Okay…” Keith carefully moved Lance so he was back on his knees and moved over him.

“... You know, if it turns out Galra actually do knot when they have sex I am going to give you hell for it.” Muttered Lance.

Keith huffed in annoyance. “Galra don’t knot… I think…”

Lance was about to come back with some snarky and mildly sarcastic comment, but all words were lost the second in his throat when Keith slowly started to push in. Lance was no stranger to getting fucked, his box of sex toys he had hidden under the bed was a testament to that, but damn Keith was big and just stretched him open in all the right ways.

“O-oh! Keith!” He moaned softly.

Keith hummed softly and kissed across Lance’s neck and shoulders till he completely bottomed out. Both were panting and moaning as they tried to keep their thoughts together. Lance was hardly there when he felt Keith grip his hips and and started to thrust. It was slow at first, but Keith quickly sped up. It felt so good.
He could hear Keith panting heavily in his ear and fuck it was hot. Lance desperately clung to the bed sheets as Keith ploughed into him. He gasped when Keith adjusted himself and struck his prostate. Lance’s legs were shaking. He reached behind him and attempted to pull him into another kiss. He ended up getting his tongue and lips bitten as Keith tried to devour him.

Lance whimpered a little and shuddered as Keith’s hands left his hips and ran over his chest and stomach. “Fuck.” He mumbled between bites, almost coming out as a growl. ‘Mine.’


Keith seemed to approve of this because his hand quickly found Lance’s dick and started to stroke him. Lance cried out as he saw stars and came onto Keith’s hand and the bedsheets. Seconds later Keith dug his nails into Lance’s hips and he sunk his teeth into Lance’s shoulder hard enough to pierce the skin. As he did this Keith thrusted even harder into Lance, which Lance didn’t think was possible, as Keith started to cluster.

Once Keith had finally exhausted himself he collapsed on to of Lance and passed out. In turn, Lance collapsed onto the soiled bed sheets and also proceeded to pass out. That was possibly one of the best lays he’d had in ages.

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Eventually Keith woke up he felt something warm under him. He sighed contently and tried to snuggle into it, but when it moved a little he opened his eyes and looked down at it. It was Lance. He was laying on top of Lance… Oh and his dick was still in him. Fucking brilliant. He was silently begging whatever god was out there listening that Galra don’t knot as he very slowly pulled out.

Thankfully either Galra can’t knot or he can’t knot and he threw the condom away. As he did that, Lance rolled onto his back and sighed. “Wow…”

“A-are you okay?” Asked Keith in concern.

“Yeah. I’m fine.” He stretched a little and winced a little when he moved his neck. “Ow…”

“I am so sorry.” Said Keith quickly. “I didn’t mean to bite you so hard. I-I was just following my instincts like you told me to. I didn’t mean to hurt you. I um… I should get you a bandaid or something… Didn’t mean to make you bleed…”

Lance sighed a little and slowly sat up, flinching and lightly touching his hips. “Wait, am I bleeding from my ass or my neck?”


“Okay, neck is fine. At least you didn’t knot me.”

“Y-yeah…”

Lance smiled a little and kissed his cheek. “So, was your first time going all the way as good for you as it was for me?”

Keith instantly felt his face heat up. “Y-yeah. It was good. Really good… You’re amazing and kind of loud…”

He shrugged and leaned against Keith’s arm. “Yeah well your biting made me loud. At least most people went to work already anyway… And I have a few gags we can use next time if you think I’m
“... Gags?”

“Yeah. Things like ball gags and silk knots and stuff like that.” Said Lance. He kissed Keith’s cheek. Might be a good idea to use one of those on you if you decide to bite me like that again.”

“I-I said I was sorry about that…” Me muttered as he hid his face in his hands. “It was instincts… I’m sorry…”

“It’s fine Keith. I’m just messing with you.” He cooed. Lance kissed his cheek again and attempted to stand up. His legs wobbled uncontrollably and he tried to walk to the kitchen.

Keith quickly got up and grabbed hold of Lance. “H-hey. Are you okay? Why are you getting up?”

“Oh, I’m just hungry you know?”

“I can get you something to eat. You don’t need to get up right now.” He picked up Lance and held him close. This made Lance squeak a little in surprise as he clung to Keith. “I’ll take care of you today so don’t worry.”

Lance sighed. “Keith, my legs still work. It’s not like it hurts or anything. I’m just all wobbly.”

“I’ll still look after you today.”

Cosmo barked and happily walked over to them wagging his tail. Lance grinned and reached over to pat him. “Hey there boy. Did you hear us banging and get all worried? You need some food? Water?” He looked up at Keith and smiled. “Hey babe, can you put me on the bed and make sure Cosmo has food and water?”

“Yeah, yeah…” Keith went and put Lance on the bed before pulling on some underwear. He refilled Cosmo’s food and water bowl. The canine happily wagged his tail, licked Keith’s hand and started chowing down. When he saw that it was midday he wasn’t surprised that Cosmo was hungry.

Keith wasn’t very good at cooking. He needed an open fire to cook anything successfully. No matter how many times he’d Lance cooking he still wasn’t sure how to do it. He just sighed and grabbed a bunch of snacks from the cupboard and walked back to the bedroom. Lance was on his phone playing some random game. Keith sat next to him and offered Lance a bag of cheese puffs, which he happily took.

“Um… What are you doing?” Asked Keith.

“Playing a matching game.” Said Lance. He put his phone down and started eating the junk food given to him. “Mmmm, post sex cheese puffs. The best kind of cheese puffs.” He held one up to Keith who reluctantly ate it. “Good right?”

“I guess? So it’s like midday.” Oh shit, does Cosmo need to go for a walk?”

Keith shook his head. “Later… Do you want to come with us? If you can walk?”

Lance nodded his head. “Hell yeah. We can just take the car to the dog park and you can just let Cosmo run around while I sit on a bench and watch.”

“Okay.” He kissed Lance and smiled at him. Lately Lance had been insisting that he goes with Keith whenever he takes Cosmo for a walk. Not that Keith minded. He liked having Lance around him all
the time, and Lance seemed to enjoy being around him all the time too. This was just going to make things even more difficult when he eventually went to work with Lotor. He still didn’t want to work with Lotor. But he needed to think about doing it soon before Kolivan dragged him to the purple bastard and dumped him at his feet.

Lance frowned a little as he stared at his face. “What are you thinking about?”

“I need to work with Lotor soon or Kolivan will kick me off a cliff.”

“... I can never tell if you guys are serious when you make those kinds of threats.”

“Yeah… I still need to work with him.”

“That sucks man.”

“I know… I’m sorry… I’ll make it quick. Promise.”

Lance sighed a little and ran his fingers through Keith’s hair. It made Keith smile and make a small happy sound. He was going to miss this so much. “Do you really have to go?”

“Yeah… I feel bad about it.”

“It’s okay. I know this is important.”

“Thank you Lance. I love you.”

“I love you too Keith.”

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With much reluctance Keith exited the elevator and was greeted by Lotor and Acxa. He smiled happily at him and greeted him with open arms. “Keith, welcome. Glad you were finally able to join us.”

Keith shrugged. “I didn’t have much of a choice in the matter did I?”

“You always have a choice.” Said Lotor. He gestured for Acxa. “Please show Keith to where his sleeping quarters will be while he’s staying with us.

Acxa nodded and took Keith away to his room. As they walked in relative silence Keith went over what Kolivan had told him. He needed to get samples of dark quintessence and he needed to investigate Lotor using whatever means he had at his disposal. He didn’t like what that might imply, but the sooner this was over the sooner he could go back home to Lance… And Lance was safe now that Cosmo was staying with him, and knowing Krolia she probably had an invested interest watching the goings on of everyone working in those shops, so Lance was fine.

“Are you okay?” Asked Acxa.

Keith shrugged. “I’m fine… I just, you know… I have a mate now. I don’t like knowing that I’m going to be away from them for so long. It’s distressing.”

She nodded. “I completely understand. Zethrid and Ezor were the same for a long time.”

“... Those two have mates?”

“Those two are bonded mates.”
Keith was surprised to hear that. This was the first case of half-breeds being bonded mates that he had ever heard of. “Wow… I never really thought that… They don’t seem to act like it? It’s just not what I expected.”

She shrugged. “They were bonded mates long before we came to your realm. You wouldn’t know them any differently… If Ezor was ever in a life or death situation Zethrid wouldn’t hesitate to take the hit for her instead. I know Exor would do the same, in fact she did.”

“What? Really?”

Acxa nodded. “Ezor took a piece of shrapnel through the chest for Zethrid. It still hit Zethrid, but Ezor took the full force of it… Those were very stressful times… We weren’t sure that Ezor would pull through but she did. Zethrid was extremely overprotective of her for ages after she was better. She hardly let Lotor have any time with her, which is saying something. Lotor is one of the only people Zethrid actually listens to.”

Keith frowned. Even he thought that sounded very extreme. Then again, that was going to be the next step in his relationship with Lance if he wanted that. But they were months away from that. Maybe even years… If Lance wanted to he could call it off and Keith could do the same. Though Keith knew he couldn’t do that. Lance was too important to him. He hoped that Lance felt the same way about him.

Acxa unlocked Keith’s room for him. It just had the bare essentials; bed, drawer, desk, and light. That was it. “Thanks, Acxa.”

She nodded and smiled at him. “If you would like I can come over and get you for dinner?”

“Yeah, that would be good. Thanks Acxa.”

“No problem.” She turned to leave but paused. “Do you still hate us about the whole pinduk thing?”

Keith shrugged. “I know what you did was within the regular social norms of Galran society, so I can’t be mad… I’m still not pleased about it.”

“I understand. I am still sorry about what happened.”

“I know… I’ll see you in a bit. Okay?”

“Okay.”

Once Acxa was gone Keith locked his door and flopped down on his bed. He didn’t like it. It wasn’t comfy and it didn’t smell like Lance. He sighed a little and put his hands over his eyes. He didn’t like this one bit but he needed to get back into his military head space. He couldn’t keep thinking about Lance. He would distract him from the mission. He had to do a good job. He had to complete his missions. Complete the mission and go back to Lance.
Lance felt like shit. Keith was gone. He had given him ample notice, but he wasn’t happy about it. Cosmo gave him a small amount of comfort and his friends were more than willing to let him stay over or go over to his place while Keith was away. He had declined staying at their places. He didn’t want to impose or anything.

Allura had asked if he wanted to stay with her, Coran and Romelle. Since he was technically part Altean and it would be good to experience a more Altean life style. It was part of his heritage after all. He’d also declined staying with them. He wanted to sleep at his place with Cosmo in case Keith suddenly showed back up.

Lance wanted to be home the second Keith was so he could hug him and kiss him stupid. He’d hold him and rub those silly fur patches until he was a complete purring mess. He’d cook him all the food he wanted and they could watch TV and all that fun stuff. Then they could go to the bedroom and do all that other fun stuff too if he was up for it.

He sighed loudly and slumped over the counter top. He hoped Keith was okay. He was okay, right? There was no way he wasn’t okay. Keith could take care of himself… He still really missed him. This was worse than when he left before to join with the blade.

“Hey buddy, you holding up okay?” Asked Hunk.

“I don’t know…” Muttered Lance. “I miss Keith, a lot… I keep thinking I hear him coming home, but it’s just my neighbours coming home… I haven’t slept too well…”

“Come to my place tonight. It’ll be nice. We can watch some movies and you can crash on the couch. What do you say?” Asked Hunk. “You can bring Cosmo with you. It’ll be fun.”

“... I don’t know.”

“Just go with him!” Called Pidge from her room. “If you make Hunk cry I will get you drunk and pierce your balls!”

Lance flinched a little. “Thought you didn’t do genital piercings? Shit about it being all unhygienic and stuff.”

“Fine! I’ll stick a gauge piercing in your cheek!” She called. “You can frech kiss your boo while he kisses your cheek!”

That left a very weird and disturbing image in his head. “Ew… Okay I’ll hang out at your place… But we gotta swing by my place to get Cosmo’s dinner. He’ll be upset if he doesn’t get fed.”

“Sure thing buddy. Is he in the apartment?”
“No. He’s at Shiro’s place. I like him being close and Shiro likes having him around. Apparently he has repeat customers that come by just to see the big friendly dog.”

“Aww, that’s cute.”

Lance smiled a little. “Yeah. He still has some dog treats that he lets some of the younger kids feed Cosmo while he talks with their parents. Cosmo’s gonna get fat… Maybe I should walk him more?”

Pidge walked out of her room snapping the rubber gloves off her hands. “Keith will probably get pissed if you make his interdimensional, teleporting wolf fat.”

Lance rolled his eyes. “I’m not over feeding Cosmo. I’m giving him what he needs for an animal his size. He never steals or complains anyway… Only if I sleep in and don’t feed him. That’s all.”

“Still, don’t make Cosmo fat.” Warned Pidge as she wagged her finger in front of his face. “He’ll kick your ass if you do.”

“That’s foreplay to him.”

Hunk frowned a little. “Buddy, you really should try and work that kind of stuff out of him. Like, I get that the physical violence thing is all Galra stuff, but you are human after all. You know?”

Lance shook his head. “I know Hunk. We talk a lot about that kind of stuff and anything that happens is consensual. We don’t force anything on each other… I admit we are a little kinkier than other couples might be, but we need to compromise. Keith isn’t fully human and he needs to satisfy his Galra side too.”

“Okay. I just worry about you sometimes buddy.”

“It’s fine. I appreciate it Hunk.” He smiled and playfully punched Hunk’s arm. “I’m good.”


Lance laughed a little and nervously scratched the back of his head. “Oh you know. Good days and bad days… Some days I think he’s coming home or that there is someone…” He laughed nervously. “But I feel better knowing that Cosmo is with me. We go pretty much everywhere together when we’re at home.”

“… Even when you poop?” Asked Pidge.

Lance blushed. “N-no! He sits outside of the bathroom when that happens you gross little gremlin… Though he does lie on the bathmat when I’m having a shower…”

“Gross.”

Lance rolled his eyes. “He’s just making sure I’m okay… And I appreciate it. I think he misses Keith too. I sure know I do.” He wanted to see Keith again. He missed him too much. Maybe out there Keith was missing him too?”

***

The plan was simple; dive into the cave, collect as much dark quintessence as physically possible, and then head back. Repeat until all dark quintessence was done. This was going to take at least two weeks. A month if they were really careful. It was best to be careful in this situation. If he wasn’t
then Lotor would ask him to keep working for him and Kolivan would agree. That meant more time away from Lance.

So there Keith was with Acxa and Ezor under what Keith knew as the Mariana Trench. The cave that Lotor found had been meticulously cleared of water and had to have artificial gravity and pressure installed to create a livable working environment.

Ezor was already there and happily talking to Zethrid as she tinkered with an air filtration pump. “The pumps are working perfectly now boo. Thanks so much. You know I wouldn’t have fixed it properly without you.”

“It was nothing. But the second you feel dizzy, light headed, or like your skull is collapsing in on itself get out of there. Okay?”

“You know I will my cutie. Gotta go now. Acxa and Keith just showed up.” She cooed. “See you when we get back.” She turned off her communicator and grinned at them. “Hey there you guys. Get here easy enough?”

Acxa shrugged. “It was alright. We took our time and saw some of the wildlife that existed down there. It was fine.”

Keith nodded in agreement and went about checking the equipment and storage containers. They had relatively good equipment, and it seemed all good. He carefully started to chip away at the cave wall with a lazar tool. It was slow but it was safe. He’d probably be here for a few hours just freeing up enough rock to safely remove the dark quintessence.

As he peeled the rock away he started to get a good idea of what dark quintessence looked like. It seemed to naturally form in more of a ball shape rather than the typical crystal shape he was used to. It was also a lot more porous and he needed to put on a mask. Where were the masks anyway?

He quickly looked around for one. Acxa handed him one. “Here.”

“Thanks.” He put it on and continued working. Acxa watched him work which was a little unnerving, but he was okay with it. “Do you need something?”

“I’m just helping. We have been collecting this by ourselves before you decided to help us.”

Keith shrugged and let her work. They worked in silence together as they worked. The only sounds Keith could hear were that of their tools on the rock and Ezor happily humming to herself as she checked the machines keeping them alive. She seemed to be having a little trouble with the machine that was giving them breathable oxygen.

“... Yeah, okay. This is now working.” She muttered. “Okay you two, I’m gonna head back to base and get some parts to fix this.”

“What’s wrong with it?” Asked Acxa.

“CO2 filter is bust, Gotta go back for spare parts. It’ll konk out in a few, but it’s best not to cut this sort of thing close, you know? We can’t just be falling over dead.”

“Okay. Get back as soon as possible.”

“Rodger dodger.” Ezor gave them a mock salute and happily went to retrieve the filter.

When she was gone Keith just went right back to work. It would be fine. This was literally just mind
numbing work. This might be considered office work by human standards. What he wouldn’t give for the filter to die and just suffocate him now.

“I’ve been meaning to ask.” Said Acxa. “Why do you refuse to show your Galra form around us? Why keep disguising yourself as a full human? You know we would accept you if you showed what you really looked like… In fact, why didn’t you change your appearance during your basic training? It would have made things easier for you.”

Keith shrugged. He had wondered that for a while himself. He had come up with a flimsy answer for why it was that way. But when he was around Lance and saw how he didn’t seem to care at all about his Galra form. Galra or human it didn’t matter to Lance. Keith was still Keith.

“I’m not going to change how I look to fit in because Galra are zenophobic.” Said Keith. “I want them to know I, a half-breed, am better than them just by doing the exact same things that they do… I only show my Galra side if I accidentally lose control, need to hide, or when I feel like it around Lance…” He missed him so much.

“He doesn’t mind?”

“He doesn’t. He thinks my Galra side is cute or something.”

“... Humans are strange.”

“That they are.”

“Violent too.”

Keith stopped working and gave her a confused look. “Excuse me?”

She shrugged. “We haven’t been here for very long and we have already seen humans try to destroy each other hundreds, if not thousands of times. We have seen human on human genocide and humans taught us the term; serial killer. A phenomenon that seems to be a human trait… I have never seen a more zenophobic species.”

“The Galra are pretty bad when it comes to that stuff too.” Reminded Keith. “We are half-breeds.”

Acxa gave Keith a confused look. “Galra have never decided to completely wipe out half-breeds or tried to force us to be slaves. The Galra are only truly zenophobic to other species. We aren’t like that to other Galra.”

“I guess…” Keith sighed and went back to work. He didn’t like what Acxa was insinuating. Sure Keith did feel the same way sometimes, mostly when he was in basic training. For years he honestly felt like it would be better for humanity to get taken over by the Galra. In his mind the superior Galra were doing a favour to the savage humans. It had taken him a while to unlearn that when he was with the Blades. Now he just kind of had the attitude that all species are fucked up and should be allowed to run themselves into the ground without outside help.

The continued to work quietly for a few hours before Ezor turned up again with a metal box. “Hey guys! Miss me much? I got the filter!”

“How long will it take to fix?” Asked Acxa.

Ezor shrugged. “Not long. A few ticks. Might get a little stuffy for a bit so you might want to stop for a while.”
Keith had no reason not to stop working and leaned against the wall as he watched Ezor work. She pulled open the side of the oxygen machine and started to remove some wires and eventually pulled out a few lumps of discoloured meat that looked like it was leaving tar and tossed it through the atmosphere barrier. She then pulled out some other lumps of flesh from the box she brought in and stuffed it into the machine. Seconds later it whirled to life and fresh oxygen pumped through their artificial atmosphere.

“Done and done.” Ezor happily wiped her hands on her legs and went over to double check their storage containers.

“... How heavily do you guys rely on biomass?” Asked Keith.

Ezor shrugged. “We don’t have the luxury of using machines for all our repairs. We gotta make do with what we got. Lotor had been sneaking DNA samples out for ages to make sure that we would be able to mass clone what we need if we need it.”

Keith raised an eyebrow. Was this part of the reason why Lotor was forced out by Zarkon? Could it be connected to supposed cloning? He would have to look into this soon… but that would mean getting close to Lotor. He really didn’t want to get close to Lotor.

“I see… That’s um… That’s interesting. Humans don’t work with biomass like that.” Said Keith quietly. “It’s weird to see people using that stuff again.”

She shrugged. “Whatever. Back to filling up those containers guys.”

Keith rolled his eyes and went back to work. The sooner this was done the sooner he could see Lance… And if Lotor’s plan helped end the Galra invasion before it took a hold of Earth, than that would be fine too. In the end it would help Lance. It would save his home and that would make him happy… Fuck, Keith missed everything about him.
Once they had finished collected the dark quintessence for the day the trio reported back to Lotor. He was pleased by their progress. “You have all done very well today.” He said. “Thank you for your hard work. Axca, get those containers to Narti immediately. Ezor, Keith, you are dismissed for the rest of the evening.”

Acxa nodded and walked towards what Keith had come to know as the laboratory. He wasn’t too sure what was in there. He had attempted to go in there earlier but he was locked out of that room. Not that he was too surprised. These things happened.

Ezor grinned and stretched. “Thanks boss. If you need me I’ll probably be with Zethrid. Later Keeeeeeeef.” She cooed as she happily skipped out of the room.

The way she over exaggerated the e sound in his name really irked Keith. He just sighed and left the room. He missed Lance and just wanted to lock himself away for a while. He didn’t want to interact with Lotor or the generals any more than he needed to.

“Are you okay Keith?” Asked Lotor.

He had no idea why Lotor was following him. Keith just shrugged and kept walking. “I’m fine.”

“Where are you going?”

“Back to my room.”

“You really should try and be more social with the other generals. None of them have any ill will towards you.” He sighed a little and crossed his arms. “Keith, we all quite enjoy your company and before everything went down we were very enthusiastic about you joining us. I was in the middle of getting you transferred to working with me… But then you got kidnapped by the blades and we all assumed you were MIA, and possibly dead… Would you have considered the position if you hadn’t been taken?”

Keith shrugged. “Perhaps. You are Zarkons son and being selected to be one of your generals is the highest position a half-breed can possibly go within the Empire. It’s an honour to work for you.”

Lotor chuckled a little. Obviously pleased at the compliment. “I feel as though there is a but in there somewhere?”

“… I just want to stay with Lance. I’m happy with the quiet life that we have together.”

He nodded in understanding. “I understand. Being able to live a quiet and stable life with your mate is something all species strive for. It is not fair that things such as war divide us so much. I too hope to find a mate some day.”
“I’m surprised you haven’t found one yet.” Siad Keith. “Half-breed or not you are the Prince. You should have had a few suitors lined up to try and woo you.”

Lotor laughed and walked towards the kitchen. Keith reluctantly followed him. “As far as most Galra are concerned my blood it tainted by the Altean within me. For a while Haggar has been trying to alter some of my um… My genetic material to ensure that it would be fully Galran royalty when I finally do impregnate my mate or a kit carrier.” He looked through the cupboards and started to boil some water for some kind of drink.

Keith sat at the table and gave Lotor a questioning look. “Kit carrier?”

The Prince just nodded. “Yes. It is common for Galran couples that wish to have a kit but cannot due infertility or due to being same sex couple and physically not reproduce to enlist the services of a kit carrier… Or in the cases of male infertility a doner.”

“Oh…” So kit mean child or baby? He was still learning new Galran terms every day.

He shrugged and offered Keith some kind of tea. Keith reluctantly accepted it and sat across from Keith. “Yes. Zethrid and Ezor have been talking about the possibility of having kit some day since they are bonded mates… Though male Galra DNA is a little hard to come by these days since we got exiled…”

“… Please don’t tell me this is your way of asking me to donate my DNA to them.”

Lotor gave Keith a confused look for a moment before he chuckled and shook his head. “Oh goodness no. Zethrid demands that any donor they choose must be extremely strong and Ezor wants a donor with the rare scale mutation. So no. You wouldn’t even come close to their first choice when it comes to a donor.”

“Good to know…”

He smiled a little at Keith. “Have you thought about having kits with Lance one day?” Asked Lotor.

The thought made Keith blush. Kids with Lance or kits or whatever? He didn’t know what to think. He and Lance were just mates now. They weren’t even bonded mates. “I um… We are just mates…”

Loto smiled. “Yes of course. I must admit it is quite entertaining to see such young mates figuring out how things are going to work between them. It is quite adorable.”

“… Yeah.”

“… If I made you uncomfortable I am sorry.” Said Lotor. “It has been a while since I’ve been able to enjoy the company of anyone other than my generals.”

“Huh, okay.”

“Yes. It can be quite lonely being the only male among women… If you wouldn’t mind, I would like to continue to have one on one conversations with you.”

This was probably a good thing. He could find out more information for Kolivan if he was friendly with him. “Really?”

Lotor shrugged. “Well it is nice not to repeat the same conversations over and over again. I would have kept talking to Lance about these things if you took longer to come by and get him. But I guess
getting kidnapped doesn’t necessarily make humans want to talk much…”

“I wouldn’t think any species would talk much if they got kidnapped by anyone.”

“Fair point… You miss Lance a lot, don’t you?”

“Obviously.”

Lotor nodded a little and drank his drink. “If you wanted to, you could have brought Lance along with you. I wouldn’t have minded him walking around the base.”

Keith glared at him. He didn’t want Lance anywhere near Lotor. He’d rather stab Lotor in the face then have that happen. “Humans have things they need to do to stay alive and stuff. Lance also would rather be around his friends than around the strangers that took him.”

“Fair enough.”

“… Thanks for the drink. I’m going back to my room now.” He quickly stood up and quickly left the room. Lotor was kind of creepy, but he could put up with it. He just needed to get information and a dark quintessence sample. That was all. Once that was done he could go back to Lance.

He went to his room and flopped onto the bed. This sucked. He just wanted to leave now. He wanted Lance and he was miserable… And now Lotor put the idea of having kits with Lance and he… He wasn’t opposed to the idea, but he was extremely sceptical of having any kits after looking up stuff about Galra reproduction. Also, he highly doubted he would find a Galran kit carrier or human surrogate… If they used a human surrogate they would need to use Lance’s sperm since that he had no idea what his half Galra genes would do to a baby. Probably kill the damn thing before it managed to split into two cells. That’s what.

Keith groaned in annoyance. Why did he have to think of theoretical kits? Stupid Lotor for putting that idea in his head. The idea of the domestic life he could have with Lance just made him miss him more. He hoped that Lance was dealing with this better than he was.

***

Lance and Cosmo ended up at Allura’s place one evening. She was filling him and Romelle in on the old Altean ways of life. It was interesting to watch her as she happily showed them Altean children’s toys. Lance felt a little relieved to see that Romelle was as equally confused as he was.

“And this one was my favourite toy growing up.” She held up a glowing purple ball. The energy it immited made Lance’s Altean’s marks light up. Romelle had initially been confused by this and squeezed Lance’s face till it was explained that he was the result of generations of Altean genes mixing with human genes.


A smiled grew on Allura’s face. “This toy was used to help Altean children channel quintessence. This is how you do it.” She held the ball and closed her eyes. Her Altean marks started to grow brightly while the glow of the ball went dim. Suddenly all the glow rushed back to the ball and it bounced out of her hands. Romelle gasped and quickly caught it. “And that is how you use it.”

Romelle and Lance looked at the glowing ball with a mix of surprise and awe. This toy was something else. “So… we just absorb it and let it go?” Questioned Romelle.
Allura nodded happily. “Yes. Lots of Altean technology was controlled through active and passive quintessence use. The better you were at consciously manipulating quintessence the more likely you were able to get more distinguished jobs within the kingdom.”

“Huh, okay.” Romelle gave it a go and she managed to make it wobble and fall out of her hands. “Quiznack...” She passed it to Lance. “You give it a go.”

Lance frowned a little and took the ball from her. He had no idea how to absorb the quintessence or how to manipulate it. He felt really embarrassed about it. He had no idea what to do. He just held it and took a deep breath in and closed his eyes like Allura had done. He had no idea what he was meant to feel if he was meant to feel anything at all.

After about a minute he sighed in disappointment and handed it over to Allura. “Guess I’m not Altean enough to use this huh?”

She shook her head and pushed the toy back to Lance. “Keep it. Its energy levels are low enough that you can put it in a box under your wardrobe and it will be fine. It will be good practice for you.”

Lance sighed a little and just looked at it. He felt pretty bad that he couldn’t do it. Romelle was able to just do it. Probably because she was a full Altean. Lance wasn’t even half Altean. Still, he was pretty disappointed in himself.

Romelle noticed his sour mood and nudged his arm. “Hey don’t beat yourself up about it. All this stuff is kind of new to me too. Most of the stuff Allura’s talking about was considered magic where I came from. Heck, anyone that could use quintessence were called mages where I came from. Obviously I wasn’t considered a mage.”

Coran suddenly popped out from the kitchen carrying a platter of Altean food, that Lance couldn’t stomach. “How interesting. It still boggles my mind that people think it’s magic. Well that’s life forms that have grown up in quintessence starved realities for you. Can I interest anyone in some traditional imitation kiyark?”

Lance dreaded to know but he had to ask. “Kiyark?”

The older man beamed with pride. “Kiyark is a traditional Altean dish. It’s made from finally diced warmra meat, phihiboras, yamtum, yimma eggs and a hint of spiced grack. I had to substitute the ingredients with raw shredded lamb, avocados, peanut butter, oregano, salmon roe, and ground mustard seeds. Perfectly delicious.”

Lance just nodded politely. “Thanks… but I think I will pass…” How on earth did Coran manage to run a cafe without killing everyone with food poisoning? He might never know.

Allura seemed pleased enough to eat a spoonful or the grotesque looking kiyark. To Lance it looked like old, rotted guacamole with an orange fungus going through it. Romelle seemed a little unsure about it, but ate it too. She seemed pleased with it. Even Cosmo tried to grab some, but Lance pulled him back.

“No Cosmo. I think Keith would murder me if I let you eat that.” He said sternly. Cosmo just whined and begged for it. The animal was almost the size of a bear by now. A grizzly bear to be precise, but he was still a whiny baby. “I said no.” Cosmo huffed and nudged Lance over. “Hey!”

Romelle chuckled and gave Cosmo many pats. “I still can’t believe that Keith has a Cosmic wolf. These things were legends in my realm.”

Allura nodded in agreement. “They were legends in Altea too… Do humans have wolf legends?”
“Kind of.” Said Lance. “Lots of different places have wolf legends. The only one I can think of off the top of my head is the werewolf one. Like how people get bitten by wolves and get cursed into being half wolf monster people during a full moon.”

“Ah, the old luna fever.” Said Coran with a knowing look on his face. “A blood born parasite that burrows into the brain and reacts to certain frequencies of lunar light. The parasite ended up forming a symbiotic relationship with their native hosts in the Joconon realms.”

“Wait… werewolves are a thing?” Lance knew he should be surprised anymore, but damn.

“Of course lad. But they prefer to be called Jocolians.”

“Huh… So they are real…” Lance was still bemused by this fact.

Cosmo leaned against him and whined a little to get his attention. Lance rolled his eyes and gave the animal a few loving pats. He wondered if Cosmo acted like this with Keith when they were together? That would have been something to see.

Keith… Oh Keith… He missed Keith so much. He wished that Keith didn’t have to go and work with Lotor. He half wanted to go with him but he didn’t want to be around the elf looking bastard and his crew of Amazons. He missed having Keith around. He missed him so much. He missed his stupid hair, that stupid pout of his, his loving stare, his human form, his galra form. His fluffy ears and his purring. He missed how happy and safe he felt when Keith was around. He missed it all. He loved him so much.

Now Lance made himself sad. Perfect.

To distract himself he tried to use the Altean toy. He still had no idea how on earth it worked. Was he meant to make his mind go blank? Was he meant to feel heat traveling through his fingers or a numbness? What was he meant to do? It was frustrating, but it was better to be frustrated than to be sad.

Coran hummed and twirled his moustache as he watched Lance try very hard to use the toy. “Need a little advice there my lad?”

“Yes please.”

“Might I suggest using a happy memory?”

“… What?”

Coran smiled and reached out for the toy. “May I?” He took the toy from Lance and made it repeatedly jump up from his hands. “The fwanga is tuned to the simple feelings of positivity. It is meant to help ingrain a sense of positive association with quintessence. Since you aren’t a full Altean you’ll have to go and find a truly happy memory. Something from your childhood? Something to do with Keith maybe?”

“… I’ll think about it.” Lance wasn’t too sure what happy memories he could use. He’d probably have to experiment with this later. “Um… Do you have anything simpler?”

“Afraid not my boy. This is equivalent to an ages 0-2 year old child’s toy. With how you are you’ll probably only be able to master this. Which I have to admit is a very admirable thing. Don’t give up Lance. You can do it.”

“… Thanks Coran.” Lance looked over at Allura and Romelle. They had finished eating and Allura
was showing Romelle some other Altean technology. It looked like some kind of hologram projector. They giggled and laughed as the hologram played out.

He kind of felt a little bit rejected by Allura. Like he was yesterday’s news now that Romelle was here. Maybe he was a little jealous because Allura was his previous crush? It was dumb. But wasn’t he a little bit more interesting since he was the result of generations of Altean’s living with humans? He didn’t know… But then again Allura probably missed being around other Alteans.

And Lotor probably mentioned that he had helped set up other Altean colonies or something like that? He was too distracted by the fact that the purple bastard had kidnapped him. Allura was probably hoping to find the other Altean colonies and be with her people once Zarkon and the Galra empire was taken care of.

Lance sighed and looked back at the fwanga, as Coran called it, and tried to think of happy memories; going to the beach with his family, the first time he went surfing, the first time he went to Cuba to meet his extended family for the first time, getting his first job, gaining his life long friends, meeting Keith… Keith...

He really hoped that Keith would come back soon.
The boys are still sad beans, but they are less sad when they get to talking to people, and not the people they usually talk to. Socializing is important people! Kudos and comment when you can. Enjoy :D

A happy memory… A happy memory… Lance was still having trouble figuring this one out. He didn’t know what to say or what to think at the moment. All of his thoughts were kind of sad at the moment. Well, he wasn’t too sad, it was more of a melancholy. He hated it. He wasn’t as Altean as he could have been and he was tanking when it came to his performance at work.

He sighed and just held the glowing orb in his hand while he layed back on his bed. It was still very pretty, even if he couldn’t use it al all. Maybe he could use it to play fetch with Cosmo? The pup was laying on the floor next to him happily chewing on the biggest animal bone he managed to buy at the butchers.

Suddenly a knock at the front door and Cosmo quickly rushed to the front door. He tensed up a little, but after sniffing it a few times he wagged his tail a few times and made a happy sound. That instantly relaxed Lance and he walked over to answer. “Who is it?”

“It’s Krolia.” She called. “Is now a bad time?”

“No, it’s fine. Just give me a moment.” He opened the front door and smiled at her. “Hey there. What can I do for you?”

She smiled a little and walked in while giving Cosmo a pat. “I was wondering if you could help me. You have a vehicle, correct?”

“… Yeah?”

“I need help picking up some equipment and I only have a bike. The place I made my purchase does not have a delivery service.” She explained. “You are the only one who I know has a vehicle and might be inclined to help me out.”

“Oh sure. I can do that.” Lance grabbed his keys and smiled. “Will there be enough space for Cosmo or should he stay here?”

She thought for a moment. “It would be best if he stayed here and… What is that he had in his mouth?”

“Cow shin.”

“Ah, okay. He should be occupied for a few hours.”
As it turned out the things that Krolia needed his help with was help picking up gym equipment and setting it up in a storage shed. Lance did not know how she got the money to do it, but he felt like he wouldn’t like the answer. They probably did some high risk mercenary work or something considering how they seemed to be quite happy with a more violent lifestyle.

He helped her set up some of the equipment like the punching bag and mats on the floor while she happily constructed a lat pulldown machine and set up her weights. She seemed very pleased with herself when she was done.

“Thanks Lance. I appreciate your help.”

Lance just grinned and shrugged. “Ah, you know me. I love to help.”

She nodded and looked over at the lat pulldown machine and hummed to herself. “Want to break some of this in with me? How many kilograms can you pull?”

“…” Lance quickly took out his phone so he could convert pounds to kilograms for her. “Um… let’s see… one twenty in kilos is… About fifty four kilos?”

Krolia nodded. “That is respectable for a human male… I assume? I do not know too much about human physiology. But I feel like that is a good number.”

“… How much do Galra lift?”

She thought for a moment. “Let’s see… The average Galran soldier can lift between two hundred and thirty, to three hundred and ten kilograms.”

Lance quickly punched in the numbers and felt like he was going to die. Galra were too strong. “Wow… that is… So Galra use the metric system?”

“We use the most universal and therefore the easiest one to understand.” She informed. “Apparently the culture around here likes to take all logic and beat it into an inch of its existence before resetting its bones back incorrectly and using its shambaling near necrotic corpse to measure things out.”

He stared at her in stunned silence for a moment before he chuckled. “That was a joke, right?” When Krolia smiled and nodded. That made Lance laugh louder. “That sounds like something Keith would say.”

“Good. I have been trying to improve my human social interactions and Akira did tell me that humour was a good way to make humans feel comfortable and more at ease is through humour.”

“Akira? Was that Keith’s dad?”

She nodded. “Yes… He was a very sweet and kind man. Anyway, want to use some of this equipment with me?”

“Yeah sure? Why not?”

He spent about half an hour working in the makeshift gym with Krolia. It was actually kind of nice. He was also really shocked that Krolia could easily lift the weights she said she could. That wasn’t a joke. Apparently Galra had very dense muscle mass or something? Lance wasn’t too sure how Glara muscles worked.

After Lance almost killed his arms trying to push himself on the lat pulldown machine the two of them stopped for the day and just sat around. The sun was starting to dip a little. He probably needed
to head home soon to feed Cosmo.

“Do you feel better now?” She asked.

“Huh?”

“You were sad before.” Said Krolia. “Forgive me if I’m being presumptuous, but you are sad about Keith not being around?”

“... Yeah. I just miss him, you know?”

Lance nodded a little. “I understand… I missed Akira when I first left. It was one of the worst feelings I have ever experienced. I miss him every single day…”

“I can imagine so… He sounds like a good guy. Keith said he was a firefighter or something and that’s how he… You know…”

Krolia nodded slowly. “Yes… Akira was a very kind and sweet. I managed to find where he was buried and I visit him from time to time.”

“Oh? Really? That’s so nice.”

She smiled and nodded. “Galra usually cremate our loved ones and heroes once they have died. It is considered an insult to let our dead rot in the ground. We have stones or bits of metal with our names, birth and death dates, and any military rank that we have. I know human culture is a little different, so I always go and keep his resting place clean when I go to see him.”

Lance smiled. “That sounds nice. Akira’s definitely smiling down on you guys from wherever he is.”

Krolia had a very confused look on her face for a moment before she nodded. “Right… Humans have the concept of an afterlife… Galra don’t really have that… But if there is an afterlife in your realm I hope Akira’s looking down on Keith and trying to keep him safe. I can take care of myself. “And Keith can take care of himself.” Said Lance. “But I still worry about him.”

She patted his back and smiled at him. “Well you’re being a good mate. I can see why Keith chose you. You’re a very kind person.”

Lance chuckled a little. “Really? You think I’m kind?”

“I don’t think it, I know it. I’ve seen it. The way you talk and act proves it.”

“Oh, um… Thanks…”

“No problem… You know, if you like, I’ll let you use this stuff when you feel like it.”

“Huh? Why?”

She shrugged. “Exercise is good for you. Plus if you feel up to it, I could teach you a few fighting moves to impress Keith when he comes back?”

Lance’s eyes lit up. “Really? Okay, let’s do that.”

***

It was late during the base’s night cycle when Keith left his room to look around. He knew how to
walk without making a sound. He was light on his feet. He explored the base as quietly as possible.
He needed to get a proper mental map of the place. He had a few rooms already mapped out in his
head, but there were rooms that he didn’t know about.

He rounded a corner and froze in shock when he saw Kova and Narti. The small animal gave Keith
a suspicious look and Natri approached him. She tilted her head slightly in question.

“... I can’t sleep.” Said Keith. “I’m used to sleeping with my mate next to me.”

She nodded in understanding but tilted her head the other way in what Keith assumed was another
question. Maybe asking where he was going? He wasn’t too sure. He needed to learn some sign
language.

“I’m just walking. I have no real destination in mind.”

She nodded again and quickly made a few hand gestures. Keith didn’t know what she was saying so
he shrugged. When she didn’t get a verbal answer she put Kova down and started to do some
charades to try and communicate with him.

Keith played along with her. “Okay first word, first syllable, sounds like down? No, low? Second
syllable; rip? Tore? Lotor?” Nati nodded and kept making gestures. “Phone? Computer? Oh,
communications? Lotor is in the communication’s room?” She nodded. Keith shook his head. “Ah,
thanks for letting me know I guess?” Keith had no desire to see Lotor. “Well have a good night.”

He went to walk by her, but Narti quickly got his attention. She still had something to tell him. She
quickly made a few strange gestures that took Keith a little while to understand.

really confused. Narti seemed to be a little frustrated and quickly changed her posture to look
standoffish and slightly grumpy. “Oh! Axca. It’s Axca right?” She nodded and continued to make
gestures. “Looking? Writing? Writing and looking? Oh! Axca’s in the laboratory?”

Narti nodded and picked up Kova again. She seemed to be smiling a little, but it was kind of hard to
tell sometimes.

“Okay, thanks.” He kept walking and glanced over his shoulder a few times to make sure she wasn’t
following him. He made his way down to the laboratory and placed his hand on the palm reader,
unsurprised that he wasn’t allowed access again. He sighed and knocked on the door. “Come on
Axca. Narti told me you were in here.”

After a few seconds the doors opened up and Keith walked inside. Acxa was sitting at a table
monitoring a container containing quintessence and dark quintessence. She just nodded at him and he
sat a bit away from her so she could do her work uninterrupted.

It hadn’t been the first time he had been in a Galra lab. Though there was a wall covered wall to wall
with test tubes containing a viscous purple liquid, and lumps of meat in different stages of
development. He’d always felt kind of weird when he looked at that kind of stuff. He had a feeling
that it might have been some primal human instinct telling him that this wasn’t right and he shouldn’t
be looking at that kind of stuff.

Acxa walked over to him once she was done. “So why did you seek me out?” She asked.

Keith shrugged. “I don’t have clearance to be in the lab and Narti told me you were in here while
Lotor with in the comms room. I’d rather talk to you than him.”
“Fair enough.” She looked back over at the containers of different quintessence. “So, what do you want to talk about?”

“Oh um… I don’t know… I kind of just walked here? I can’t sleep.”

Acxa nodded sat by him. “Are you okay Keith? Stress can cause someone to have trouble sleeping. Is working for Lotor too much for you?”

Keith shook his head. “No I-” A buzzing sound suddenly went off and made them both jump a little. “What was that?”

“Just an expiration alarm.” She said calmly. “I didn’t think the next expiration was due for a little longer.”

“Quintessence has an expiration date?”

She shook her head and gestured to the walls of meat in the tubes. “We can only keep flesh on stand by for a certain amount of time before the liquid it is stored in mutates it into becoming basic building and repairing material. Good for structure, but not for more delicate things.”

“Huh… okay. So what, you just like, clone things? I never really got told where biomaterials come from.”

She nodded. “Yes. We gather genetic materials, cut out the genes we do not need and clone till a better source is found. We occasionally mix DNA together to make sure that we do not have one source of genetic material that might malfunction in certain climates.”

Keith nodded a little. “So when you say clone, you mean like, entire people? Like you clone a whole person and harvest them?” He was trying to understand this but at the same time he felt kind of sick.

“… I think you might have the wrong idea about this.” She said calmly. “When it comes to cloning, we do not clone an entire sentient being. We cut out the genes that tell would create a proper nervous system or their species equivalent of a functioning brain. They are essentially kept on life support until they are either harvested or they had expired and are repurposed into biomass.”

“Okay…” Keith felt a little uneasy about that, but at least they weren’t alive.

“Might I suggest going to the training room and running some simulations to tire yourself out?” Suggested Acxa. “You will need your energy for tomorrow. We have only removed two percent of the dark quintessence and need to collect it all.”

Keith sighed and stood up, walking out of the room. “Okay Acxa. See you tomorrow.” Training would be good.

***

Acxa walked into the communication’s room and approached Lotor. “I have the reports for you.”

Lotor smiled at her when she said that. “Thank you Acxa… You did follow me orders when Keith when you let Keith into the laboratory?”

She nodded. If Acxa was anything, she was loyal to a fault. She would follow Lotor’s orders without much question, but sometimes, like in this case, she felt she had to. “Lotor, you know I would never question your judgement on many things…”
“But you are questioning me now?” He asked.

She shook her head. “No. I just want clarification. Why did you want me to lie about how we collect biomass? Is it really that hard for him to comprehend that we clone other life forms and put them in a medically induced come until they are used?”

Lotor frowned and nodded. “Unfortunately, yes. From what we have been able to observe from humans they both hate and love their own species. They are full of contradictions and emotions that make it practically impossible to know that all biomass is sentient and just put in a simulation to keep their minds healthy enough to harvest. Keith might have seen this as cruel and refuse to help us. It was just a little white lie for the greater good.”

Acxa frowned and handed him her findings. “Strategically I applaud your cunning. However, morally I find your decision morally grey at best.”

“I understand your concerns with my methods, Acxa, but we both know that the ends justify the means.” He took her notes and read through them. “Once we have what we need and my father is defeated we can answer for any perceived crimes that we may have committed, but until then we must keep moving forward. This is the only way that we will be able to win the war… Where did you sent Keith to?”

“I sent him to the training room. He is unable to sleep for very long without his mate by his side.” She informed. “… I do not think it was a wise idea to have him on this mission. He may not trust us and help is in the future.”

“This isn’t about how Keith feels.” Informed Lotor calmly. “It’s all about who he is connected to; Princess Allura and the Blade of Marmora. As long as we are trustworthy then they will agree to work with us. The more allies we have the better when it comes to fighting Zarkon. We will have more hands to collect dark quintessence. Everything will be okay if we keep playing along. Is that understood Acxa?”

She didn’t fully agree with him, but she understood where he was coming from. “Understood. Shall I continue to keep an eye on Keith?”

“Yes, and if his mental state deteriorates anymore I'll come up with a compromise so he can go and see his mate.”

“… Understood.” Acxa might not agree with his methods, but he did get results, and results were what they needed.
Hope you all enjoy this one. I need to take a nap. Insomnia is a bitch. Ramble, ramble, ramble. Kudos and comment when you can. Enjoy :D

Lance tried to make the ball thing do the bounce like Allura said he should, but he couldn’t. It was dumb and he hated it. He wished he was able to do it. He thought it would be cool it be part Altean but in reality he was just a quintessence detecting glow worm. His phone suddenly started ringing and he picked up without seeing who was calling.

“Lancey Lance here.”

“Hey there baby bro. Guess who is cool, awesome, and needs a couch to crash on for the weekend.”

“... None of my siblings because they are responsible adults.”


“Fffffffffine. When?”

“I should be at your place in like... Ten minutes?”

“What?!”

“I’m joking. I’ll be there in an hour. Clean your gross bachelor pad up. Make it all respectable for a lady.”

“You’re not a lady. You’re my sister.”

“Ah! Rude. See you in a few baby bro. Fix your shit up.”

Lance groaned loudly and hung up. He quickly put the ball away in a box and hid it in the deepest part of the closet and hoped that his Altean marks would vanish before she showed up. Either way he needed to clean up the place and Cosmo looked very confused by this. It took him the better part of an hour to finally clean the house. It gave him just enough time to check his face in the mirror and quickly apply some foundation to his Altean marks.

A knock at his door made Cosmo get up and quickly ran to the door and sniff. They let out a confused whine and pawed at the door. Lance heard a woman squeak in surprise and curse. Lance couldn’t help but snicker and open the door to his sister.

“Hey there Rachel.”

“Hey there Lance. You have a dog?”

“Oh kind of. Come on in.” He let her in and Cosmo gave her a few cautious sniffs before he happily
yipped and walked around her in circles. “Remember that dog Keith found? This is him. Cosmo’s all
grown up now.”

Rachel’s jaw dropped. “What the hell? This is Cosmo? Oh my god he got so big! Is he a wolf?”

“I think so.”

“Wow… So why did you end up with Keith’s dog?”

Lance blushed. He knew this was going to end in an interrogation. “Um… So um a few weeks ago
Keith moved in with me…”

“Oh cool you got a roommate.” Suddenly she narrowed her eyes and looked around. “Wait a
second… You only have one bedroom… Is he sleeping on your couch?”

“No… He’s sleeping in my bed… With me…”

She stared blankly at him for a few seconds before she broke into a grin. “Oh my god… You two are
dating, aren’t you?” When he nodded Rachel squealed and quickly grabbed her phone.

“How are you calling?”

She shushed him and made her call. “Hey Marco. You owe me fifty bucks! Yeah. Fuck you. He
admitted it. Later asshole.” She hung up and grinned.

“… You made a bet about me and Keith?”

“Well the bet was actually that you would go with a boy next. Double if you ended up dating Keith.”
She happily spread herself out on the couch. “So, where is that cute boy toy anyway?”

“Keith isn’t a boy toy he… He’s my boyfriend.” Said Lance calmly. “And he um… He had to go
out of state for a bit because he’s helping a friend move some stuff.”

“… He had to go out of state?”

“Yes.”

“To help someone?”

“Yes.”

“Must be a very close friend.”

“… Yeah.”

Rachel grinned some more and excitedly patted the couch. “So you gotta tell me how you two finally
hooked up. Knowing you it was dumb and someone was drunk or- AAAAAAAA!!” Suddenly
Cosmo jumped up and sat on her. “Get your dog off me!”

Lance snickered. “Yeah. Cosmo does that when you pat the couch. I learnt that lesson the hard way.
But to answer your question we um… I kind of got lost a while back and Keith managed to find me
by accident find me while he was out on his bike.”

“Oooo, he drives a motorbike?” She wiggled her eyebrows. “Be careful when you ride with him.
You gonna be able to control yourself with that much power roaring between your legs?”
“... Cosmo, kill her. Now. Attack. Murder.”

Cosmo tilted his head in confusion and happily nuzzled Rachel while looking up at Lance while wagging his tail. Rachel grinned and cuddled the happy pooch. “Ha, he loves me more than you.”

He rolled his eyes. “No, Cosmo has just been trained to bite people that physically threaten me. Not emotionally threaten me yet. I’m still teaching him.” She just rolled her eyes and moved so she was sitting up again. When she was upright Lance happily plopped down next to him. “So... Why are you here?”

She shrugged. “Finally got some holiday time, but my asshole roommate was an asshole and fucking stole my spa tickets and plane ticket.”

“What?! Rachel! What the hell?”

She grinned. “Oh, don’t worry. I canceled the spa and I canceled the return ticket. If that bitch wants a spa day and a way back home she can fork out the cash for it... So I moved my stuff into mama’s house and I’m looking for a new place. I wanted to get away from all that drama. So I am here.”

“Aw Rachel...” He hugged her tightly. “Okay, we’re gonna have some good sibling bonding time. We’re gonna get some good face masks and go get manicures and pedicures. I am gonna pamper you.”

“Aw, you’re sweet Lancey Lance.” She cooed. “While we’re out you can tell me all about your boyfriend. He’s such a cutie.”

Lance just rolled his eyes at her. “Wow thirsty much?”

“... Cosmo, attack!”

The canine instantly jumped on Lance and licked his face. “Traitor!”

***

The robot in the training room violently swung their blade around at Keith like it was trying to swat a fly. Keith managed to block a lot of attacks but he still got hit several times. Honestly he didn’t really mind much. If he wasn’t working he was training. He’d eat when he felt like it and slept when he was tired. Which meant he was doing odd things at off times. He needed to keep his mind occupied.

Suddenly a robot swung their sword and almost gracefully at Keith and ended up flinging him at the wall with enough force to make a sizable dent in the metal wall. He groaned in annoyance as gravity kicked in and slowly peeled him off the wall.

He groaned in annoyance and slowly tried to pull himself up to keep fighting when a disgruntled voice bellowed out. “End simulation.”

Keith growled in annoyance and glared over at Zethrid. She was glaring at him and did not look impressed at all. “What?” He snarled.

She just rolled her eyes and yanked him up to his feet. “What are you doing here? You should be getting more sleep and food. You have been skipping out on meals and we have all noticed. If you don’t like what we have one of us can go and buy you more human food.”

“This isn’t about food.” Snapped Keith. “Just leave me alone so I can get back to training!” He turned away from her and started to walk away when she grabbed him by the back of his head and
harshly dragged him out of the room. “FUCK OFF!” He screeched at her.

Zethris said nothing as she kept walking. She opened up his room and chucking him inside. “Stay. Fucking sleep you useless kit.”

“I’m not a kit!” Snapped Keith. “And I’m not fucking useless!”

“Oh yeah?” She growled. “Look at yourself. Look at you. You look sick. You never sleep. Your skin and fur is awful. You have lost weight when you shouldn’t have. I thought you had a mate? You want them to see how you are unable to take care of yourself? Pathetic! Do not burden your mate by making yourself completely reliant on them!” She took some kind of bar out of her pocket and chucked it at his head. Keith ducked in time. “Eat that and sleep!”

Keith was a little stunned to say the least. Out of all of them he didn’t expect Zethrid to pull him aside and tell him to take care of himself… Even if it was kind of violently aggressive. Apparently she cared very much about mates. Which he could understand. Zethrid was still a half-breed. He understood that her and Ezor being bonded mates was practically a miracle for all half-breeds everywhere.

He sighed and sat on the bed as he reluctantly ate the food bar she threw at him. He’ll eat it and get some sleep. Even if he didn’t feel hungry or sleepy at the moment. But he’d honestly rather do that rather than risk Zethrid getting pissed at him and knocking him the fuck out so he will sleep. He wouldn’t put that past her.

Keith managed to get a short nap in before he heard a knock at his door. He sighed a little and sat up. He was kind of groggy, but he assumed that Acxa was trying to find him again or something. “Come in.”

Much to his surprise it was Lotor. “Are you okay?” He asked. “Zethrid told me she had to drag you out of the training room by your hair after getting beaten pretty badly. Do you need medical attention?”

He shrugged. “I’m fine. If I need anything all I need is to finish collecting that dark quintessence so I can go home.”

“... This separation anxiety that you are experiencing is going to impede your work.”

“You think?” Asked Keith sarcastically.

Lotor chuckled slightly at that and smiled fondly at him. “No need to be upset at me Keith. I simply have a proposition for you, if you are so interested?”

“... I’m listening.”

“Having you stay for the duration of the extraction was clearly a terrible idea. What I think would work better would be if you worked here for roughly the time period that humans would refer to as a week. After that you may go and be with your mate for two earth days and then return to continue to work. I believe that arrangement is more agreeable for all parties. Of course this would set back the extraction a little, but the mental health of those that work for me is more important than one might first assume.”

Keith’s eyes lit up a little when he heard that. “Does that mean I can go home now?”

Lotor was a little surprised when he saw how excited Keith suddenly became. “If that is what you wish to do than I won’t deny it. However if you do not come back or are at least on route back here
after your allotted time with your mate is up I will request one of my generals to collect you.”

“Okay.” Keith quickly got up and grabbed what little stuff he had brought with him and practically raced past Lotor.

But before he could get too far Lotor grabbed his arm and quickly spun him back around. “Wait, I have something I must give you before you leave.” He handed Keith a small container containing a small chunk of dark quintessence. “I believe the Blade of Marmora would be interested in this sample?”

Keith stared at the sample for a moment and looked back up at Lotor. He wasn’t meant to know he was working with them. “The Blade of Marmora? The Galran rebel group? What do you expect me to do with this?”

The older man chuckled. “Oh Keith, I know that Princess Allura is working with the Blade and is in obvious contact with them. That woman, Krolia, was with you when you came to collect Lance. Even if you aren’t officially a member you know people who are better connected. I wish to avoid conflict with them if I can help it and I know their intentions are good. Anyone that wishes to overthrow my father is at least somewhat trustworthy. Please deliver this to them if you can.”

Keith was a little hesitant, but took it and quickly exited the base. He wasn’t sure how if Lotor actually knew he was an active member of the blade, but he wasn’t going to look a gift horse in the mouth. Once he was outside and a safe distance away on his hoverbike he made contact with Krolia.

“Krolia, I have something to give to you.”

“Did you get a sample?”

“Yeah I did. But Lotor actively gave it to me to deliver. You might want to go and check the container for any bugs.”

“Understood. Are you okay? You sound kind of stressed?”

“Separation anxiety. I miss Lance.”

“Understandable. I’ll give you an address to deliver the container.”

She gave him an address and Keith quickly drove to it. As it turns out it was a storage unit. His mum was standing outside one and waiting for him. Once he parked his bike and handed it over to her. Krolia gave the small container a quick visual inspection and ran her nails over every nook and cranny on the container before she nodded and pocketed it.

“Good work Keith. How have you been? You look kind of tired.”

“I am tired… I miss Lance, a lot.”

“I know…” She gently put her hand on his shoulder. “Look, if it’s any consolation Lance has been taking this separation pretty badly too. He will be very happy to see you are back.”

“Really?”

“Of course.” She smiled softly at him. “Go and see him already. He’ll be missing you.”

Keith nodded and quickly raced home from there. Well, as fast as he legally could. It would have just been his luck if he got pulled over by the police because he was speeding. Lance would not be
impressed in the slightest and probably would scold him for hours after he bailed him out.

Once he parked his bike be practically flew up the stairs and slammed the door open. Cosmo instantly tackled him and showered his face with kisses. Keith laughed a little and almost fell over. “Hey boy. I missed you too. Where’s Lance? Show me Lance.” Cosmo ran inside and Keith quickly followed. “Lance?”

Lance popped his head out of the bedroom and stared at him in shock. He had some weird purple face mask on. “KEITH!” He ran over and hugged him tightly while kissing him. This ended up smearing some of Lance’s face mask on his own, but neither seemed to care. “Holy shit I didn’t think you would be back yet.”

Keith chuckled. “What? Expect me to just not come back? I had to come back for Cosmo at some point.”

Lance pouted. “What? Just your dog?”

“Yes.”

“Asshole. Oh, and I gotta tell you something really, really important.”

“Yeah, what?”

“My sister is here.”

Suddenly Rachel popped out from the bedroom and grinned. She was also wearing a purple face mask. “Hey there Keith. Remember me? I’m Rachel, the cool sister.”

“Oh hey.” He gave Lance a very confused look.

“Rachel is just gonna sleep on out couch for a few days.” Explained Lance. “She had a shitty roommate and they stole some stuff from her so Rachel kind of stranded them in another state and moved out. She’s living back with mama till she gets a new place.”

“I’m just here to mooch of my baby bro for a few days.” Said Rachel. “Anyway, been a while since I’ve seen you. How’s it going Keith? I just knew you and my baby bro were gonna knock boots eventually.”

Lance rolled his eyes. “Rachel…”

Keith was confused. He did not know what knocking boots even meant. Probably a sex thing. Yeah. Lance would say something like that so it made sense that she would say something like that too.

“Oh hey, now that you’re back do face masks with us!” Said Rachel with a grin. “It’ll be fun. We still have stuff left over. Plus Lance needs to fix his face after getting some of his mask on you.”

“Um, okay?” Keith was kind of confused and just getting thrown into this. Next thing he knew he was sitting on his bed while Rachel brushed and tied back his hair while Lance slathered the weird purple gunk on his face. It was weirdly refreshing.

Rachel grinned. “Damn Keith, purple is so your colour.”

“That it is.” Purred Lance.

Keith rolled his eyes and lightly pushed Lance away. “Keep talking like that and I’m leaving again.”
“Ah, my boyfriend is so mean to me!” Whined Lance. He hugged Keith and pouted. “He’s the meanest of mean. Smack him Rachel.”

She rolled her eyes. “First you want Cosmo to attack me, and then you want me to attack Keith? Do your own dirty work.”

“But I is baby.” Whined Lance. “Defend me!”

“No.”

“... Keith, smack Rachel for me.”

“I agree with your sister.” Said Keith. “Do your own dirty work.”

“Ah! You’re all traitorous traitors!”

Rachel rolled her eyes and nudged Keith. “So, you seriously chose to stay with this bi disaster?”

Keith looked over at Lance who was still ranting. He was switching between Spanish and English seamlessly. He couldn’t help but smile at his perfect idiot of a boyfriend. Just being in the same room as him was enough to put him at ease. They didn’t have to be touching or being romantic with each other. They just needed to be close to each other.

“Yeah. I chose him and he chose me.”
After everyone had washed off their face masks it was getting pretty late in the evening. Rachel insisted that they go out to eat somewhere and have fun. She’d even spring for an uber to help out. Keith had no real input into where they went to eat. Lance was still horrified to know that Keith thought that places like Burger King were acceptable places to go out eating when not craving it or on a budget.

Lance opted to just go to a place that did good pub style food. It might not be as fancy as his sister might want, but taking Keith to a fancy restaurant was like trying to teach a dog how to eat with cutlery. It wasn’t going to work.

Still, Rachel was more than happy to eat a huge plate of fish and chips all to herself while she chugged some beer. Lance and Keith ordered schnitzels. Lance went with a classic chicken parmigiana while Keith ordered, and instantly regretted, something called the Mexican schnitzel. Basically a normal chicken schnitzel but with an entire serving on nachos on top. It easily doubled its normal size.

Lance spent most of the evening trying to steal some of the nachos off his food. That was how Lance quickly found out that Keith was territorial when it came to food. He couldn’t tell if it was a Galra thing or a, I lived in the middle of nowhere and every meal could have been his last kind of thing. Keith had stabbed the table a few times next to Lance’s arm and growled slightly at him. Thankfully Rachel was too distracted by her own food and drink to notice that.

Though Lace did find it kind of funny that Keith couldn’t even make it halfway through his food before he gave up and sighed heavily. “What the hell kind of portions are these?” He whined.

Lance patted his back. “American.”

“This is why everyone has diabetes and heart disease.” He grumbled. “This is more than anyone can eat…”

Rachel snickered. “Poor boy. You won’t survive Christmas this year if you can’t finish all this.”

“Huh?”

She rolled her eyes. “Well you’re obviously coming over for Christmas now that you’re dating Lance.”

Keith suddenly became nervous. “Oh… I um… I haven’t really… I don’t know if I should…”

“Of course you should.” Said Rachel with a grin. “Mama and Pop-pop like you already and everyone thinks you’re pretty cool. Boy you were part of the family before you were dating Lance. You can bring Cosmo too. Nadia and Sylvio would love to see how big that tiny pup got.”
“... I don’t know…”

Lance smiled a little and draped his arm over Keith’s shoulder. “It’s cool Keith. We got months to think about it. I’d personally love it if you wanted to come over for Christmas, but hey, something might come up and I am cool with that if you like wanna spend Christmas with Shiro or maybe Krolia?”

“Krolia?”

Keith nodded a little. “Krolia… She um… She’s my mum… We recently connected again…”

“Fair… Hey Lancey-Lance, get your sister another beer please?”

Lance pouted a little and got up. “Okay. I’ll be back in a second. Want anything else babe?”

“I’m good.”

***

Once Lance had walked away, Keith felt Rachel’s eyes burn into him. In that moment he felt that he was seconds away from getting stabbed with a fork. “... Um… Do you want something?”

“What are your intentions with my baby brother.”

Keith tilted his head in confusion. “My intentions?” Was this a human thing? Did he need to have intentions? Like a checklist? Why didn’t Lance tell him about this? Was he going to get in trouble now if he said the wrong thing? “I um…?”

“Yeah.” Said Rachel as she pointed a chip at him. “What are you planning to do with my brother?”

Keith panicked. “Sex?”

“...” Rachel tried to stifle her laughter. “Okay, fair enough. But I am serious. Is this a serious thing between you two? Because Lance seemed pretty bummed out until you finally turned up… Lance has had a few weird relationships in the past and he really seems to like you. I want to know that you feel just as strongly about him as he does about you.”

That was understandable. Lance came from a big family and he was the youngest. It would make sense that everyone would want to make sure he was a good match for him… That they weren’t making a huge mistake becoming mates… Now Keith’s anxiety was coming back in full force. What if Rachel didn’t think he was good enough for Lance? Would she convince him to leave him and kick him out? If that happened, he could probably always go back to living with Shiro, or maybe the blade?

“I… I want to make Lance happy.” Said Keith quietly. “I don’t know if I’ve been able to do that lately, but try so hard to make him happy… I don’t want to force him to do anything he doesn’t want… L-Lance is my first serious relationship and I don’t want to screw this up and hurt him…”

Rachel seemed surprised that he said that, but smiled softly at him. “Hey, I didn’t mean to scare you. I’m just being the big sister here. Looking out for my baby brother. I’m glad you guys are together. You seem like a really nice guy.”

“O-okay. Thank you.”

Lance came over with more drinks and happily took his seat next to Keith. “Did I miss anything?”
“Nah. it’s all good.” Said Rachel as she drank her beer.

***

Eventually the trio caught an uber back to the apartment. Rachel got ready for bed first and ended up crashing on the couch. Cosmo happily dragged a pillow over to where she was sleeping and decided to guard her. Then Lance and Keith got ready for bed.

Lance sighed contently as he quickly checked his phone to see what was going on in the world of social media while Keith was brushing his teeth. He was logged into the company’s twitter account and was happily reposting, liking, and sharing some awesome tattoos from both his shop or other tattoo places they were friendly with.

Eventually Keith was done and crawled into bed next to him. He quickly pecked Lance on the lips and Lance kissed back. This was nice. Being in bed with Keith again was perfect. He reached behind Keith’s ear and smiled when his lover closed his eyes and happily purred.

Keith smiled a little and relaxed against Lance’s chest. For the first time in a while they both seemed happy and content. “I missed you.” He said quietly.

“I missed you too.” Lance ran his fingers through Keith’s hair and sighed. “Sorry Rachel’s here. If she wasn’t here we’d probably wouldn’t have gone out at all and just stayed in bed.”

“Why? I had fun going out and I’m not that tired.”

Lance rolled his eyes. “I seriously can’t tell if you are joking or are being serious. You trying to tell me you didn’t want to… You know… While we were apart?”

“…” Keith went bright red. “I um… I-I tried not to think about that stuff…” He muttered. “I didn’t know when someone was going to walk in on me. The door to my room wasn’t exactly locked…”

“… Okay fair enough. What about the showers? You get any privacy in there?”

Keith shrugged. “To be honest I always felt too dead after working and training to actually do anything… And the thought of you being so far away… Yeah, it was causing me anxiety. So I just tried to not think about it…”

“Well it’s over now, so don’t worry about it.”

“… Yeah, about that…” Keith moved so he was resting on his elbows. “I um… Lotor has kind of made a deal with me…”

“Oh?”

“Yeah… I work for him for about a week, then come back here for a few days, then go back.” Said Keith quietly. “It isn’t the best solution, but it’s better than not seeing you at all, right?”

Lance was a little surprised by the solution they came up with, but he was happy they could still see each other. “Yeah, sure.” He kissed his cheek. “So everything will take longer than planned, but at least we won’t be missing each other as much.”

“Yeah.” Keith smiled and kissed his cheek. “... And maybe when your sister isn’t around we could do the kind of things you’re thinking of?”

Lance blushed a little and nodded in agreement. “Y-yeah.”
“Good.” Keith lied back down and was quiet for a moment. “Would your family really be okay if I go over to your place for Christmas? Like, Christamas is a family thing and we aren’t even bonded mates. We’re like, just mates.”

Lance chuckled and squeezed his hand. “Of course it would be fine. As far as I’m concerned you are family and to my family, friends are just extended family. Hell, Pidge and Matt once spent Christmas with my family because the airport fucked up and they couldn’t get home for the holidays… But if you wanted to stay here to have Christmas with Shiro that’s cool too. You probably haven’t done that in ages. Galran’s don’t have Christmas do that?”

“Galra don’t have Jesus.”

“Fair point… What holidays do they have anyway?”

Keith frowned slightly in thought. “Well, off the top of my head there is Zazubark, that celebrates the expansion of the Galra empire beyond its original realm… So it’s kind of the day Altea got destroyed. Grakcha, the day where Zarkon unified the clans into the present day empire. And Verta’chark, the day we celebrate those who died honorably in battle. Those were the main ones I heard about.”

Lance nodded. “Huh, alright. That’s both kind of cool and kind of sad. Mainly the one celebrating Altea getting destroyed.”

“I know. But hey, people have always celebrated their victories over others.”

“Very true… Come here.” He reached out and cuddled Keith, effectively becoming the big spoon. He buried his nose into Keith’s hair and just felt safe. Sure it was nice having Cosmo there for him, it was nothing compared to Keith actually being there. Just being able to hold him and touch him and just wanted to know he was close by. He hadn’t experienced this before with anyone else… Was this some kind of strong romantic love, or a symptom of his self diagnose PTSD?

“I love you Lance.” Said Keith quietly.

“I love you too Keith. You don’t need to whisper it.”

“If I say it any louder I’ll wake up Rachel. Do you really want your sister to come in to tell us to shut up?”

“… To be fair I have done the same to her when I stayed at her place for a week with her boyfriend.” Mused Lance. “Told her to shut up and she threw the closest thing she had at me… And that is how I was almost knocked out by my sister’s dildo.”

Keith slowly looked over his shoulder at gave Lance a horrified look. “That is the single most disgusting thing I have ever heard you say.”

“I’ve had worse things thrown at me.”

“… I don’t want to know.”

“Aw, really?”

“Yep. Sleep now. Good night Lance.”

“But I don’t wanna sleep just yet?” Whined Lance as he kissed along Keith’s neck and shoulder.
Keith shuddered a little. “Then you can sleep on the couch and Rachel can sleep in bed with me.”

Lance pouted. “What? You’d rather sleep in bed with my sister than me?”

“At least Rachel wouldn’t try to seduce me with a sibling in the next room… Plus she’d probably let me be the big spoon.”

“What? You want to be the big spoon?”

“... Maybe… You’re too tall you lanky bastard.”

Lance chuckled. “Big spoon, jetpaking, it’s all good. I just know you wake up early and I want to just hold you and keep you with me as long as possible.”

“Hmm, still wanna be the big spoon.”

“Hmm, okay.” Lance let Keith go and rolled onto his side. After a few seconds he had Keith’s arms wrapped around him and his lips on his neck. A few seconds after that, Lance felt Keith’s teeth nip at his neck and shoulder. “Ow! Pay back for the kissing?”

“Yes.”

Lance could feel Keith’s smile pressed against his neck and he laughed. “Okay big spoon. Night. Love you.”

“Love you too little spoon.”
The next day Rachel went to work with Lance to get a tattoo. Lance flat out refused to do it for her because he didn’t want her to whine or complain to him if he stuffed it up. Instead he got Hunk to do it. Rachel was happy with that and was more than happy to sit in the chair while Hunk tattooed a mantis shrimp on her arm.

It took a few hours and during that time Keith came in around lunch time. He seemed a little surprised that she was getting a tattoo. “I didn’t know you were getting one.” He said to her.

Rachel just shrugged. “Always wanted to get one and thought that maybe I should get one now? Like I had the money and everything. I was talking about it on the drive here this morning. Weren’t you listening?”

Keith shrugged. “Kind of distracted…”

She would have said that was an understatement considering how close he and Lance were when she woke up. They were practically joined at the hip all throughout making breakfast. It was almost sickly sweet the way they acted around each other. They were very obviously, deeply in love. She was already wondering how long it would take before Lance popped the question and the two got married at this rate.

“Yeah you and Lancey-Lance were practickly eye fucking each other during breakfast.”

“Lies and blasphemes!” Whined Lance from across the store. “I was being a good boyfriend and giving my boyfriend all the love and attention that he deserves!”

Keith blushed and mumbled something under his breath about how does someone eye fuck someone anyway, and how that would probably cause blindness. It made Rachel giggle. Keith was kind of adorable.

“Hey Keith, got a question for you.” Said Rachel.

“Yeah?”

“You ever think about getting inked?”

Keith frowned and shook his head. “Can’t. No space left.”

“... Huh?”

Hunk chuckled. “Keith’s body is covered from head to toe in tattoos. He just has UV tattoos.” He informed.

“Really?” She gave Keith a sceptical look. “Your whole body is covered in tattoos?”
He nodded. “Yeah.” Keith ducked behind the counter and picked up a small black light and shone it on his arm. It instantly lit up with extremely detailed and beautiful work. “My whole body is like this. I don’t have an inch of skin that isn’t tattoo free.”

“Oh wow! Where did you go to get that done?” She asked.

Keith shifted uncomfortably. “I um… Just some guy I knew… I got them done when I was in a really, really bad place in my life… I don’t like talking about them that much.”

“Oh, okay… Do they mean anything?”

“Kind of. Does your rainbow shrimp mean anything?”

“Hell yeah.” Said Rachel with a grin. “Firstly, I’ve always loved shrimp. They are cute, and taste pretty good with lemon. Also, mantis shrimp are freaking rainbow. Plus they things punch as hard and fast as a speeding bullet.”

Keith seemed kind of surprised to hear that. “Really?”

“Yeah. The ocean is filled with a bunch of crazy shit.” She gestured over to Lance. “Baby bro loves sharks. Kings of the ocean. He helped save a beached shark when we were on holiday once. He was like, what? Ten?”

“I was eleven!” Called Lance.

“And you’re done.” Said Hunk proudly.

Rachel looked down at her tattoo and grinned. “Heck yeah! This is so awesome! I love it. Thanks Hunk.”

“Aw, it was nothing. I’ll ring you up and fill you in on tattoo care.”

“Awesome.” Rachel happily paid and listened to Hunk go over good tattoo care. She was a little bummed when he said to avoid swimming pools for a while because the skin would get infected and destroy her tattoo, but that wasn’t so bad. “Thanks Hunk. You’re the best.”

She looked over at Keith and Lance. Lance was just finishing up a tattoo for a different client while Keith was patiently waiting for him to finish. It made her heart melt to see how adoration the raven haired man had for her brother. Yeah, those two were good for each other. She hoped that this would last.

“Yo Lancey-Lance. I’m gonna go shopping for a bit. You need anything?”

“I’m good Rachel. See you back in a few hours?”

“Yep. Later.” She happily waved and left. When she was out of the store she happily texted Veronica.

Rachel:
Ronnie!
Ronnie!
Ronnie!
Ronnie!
Ronnie!
Veronica:
What?

Rachel:
Lance has a boyfriend!

Veronica:
What? Really?
Who?
Are they cute?
Super buff?
Super skinny?

Rachel:
It’s Keith!

Veronica:
Who?

Rachel:
Keith!
Cutie that climbed up the pipe to get the ball off the roof?
Flower boy?

Veronica:
Oh, that cute guy you were low key drooling over?

Rachel:
Shdvbsfhdfdgfsdgfs!!!
So I’m the freak for having similar tastes in men as my brother?
Anyway they are together and they are so fucking cute!

Veronica:
How cute is cute?

Rachel:
Half expected Disney songs to start playing it’s so sweet.

Veronica:
Aw, that’s cute. He coming over this Christmas?

Rachel:
Up for debate, but looks hopeful!
They are too cute I’m gonna die!
Sdfsadfsadasdfjhg!!!

Veronica:
You’re a dork.
Tryl work is calling

Rachel:
K
When Lance finished up with his client, he turned his attention to Keith. The man was just sitting patiently in the waiting area for him. He went over and quick kissed him. “Hey love. Miss me much?”

Keith happily kissed back. “Hmm, not that much. You did a good job on that tattoo.”

“Aw, thanks. Wanna head out for lunch?”

“Yeah.”

Lance grinned and looked over at Hunk. “Taking lunch now. Hack in half an hour.”

“Take your time.” Said Hunk. “We’ll call if we start to get busy.”

“Thanks.” He happily held held Keith’s hand and walked out. It was a nice day. “Man, this is nice… Wish everyday could be like that… But rain would be nice too.”

Keith hummed in agreement. “Yeah. Rain’s okay… It’s gonna suck when I have to go back to that stupid trench…”

“Oh yeah, where is Lotor making you mine for that dark quintessence stuff?”

Keith shrugged. “A place called the Mariana Trench.”

Lance’s jaw dropped for a few seconds before he composed himself. “Are you serious? You were down there? That’s… Wow…”

“Is that really such a surprise?”

“Fuck yeah. That’s really… Wow…”

Keith smiled a little and squeezed his hand. “It’s not that impressive. We’re in a cave so I don’t really see any fish or anything like that.”

“Still pretty cool… Can you bring me back a cool looking rock?”

“A rock?”

“Yeah! Who else can say they have a rock from the Mariana Trench?” Lance practically bounced on his heels in excitement. “Can you take pictures? Can you take pictures of any fish that you might see? Ah, that would be cool! Like, I know you have a job to do and stuff, but damn I want to see what it’s like down there! There’s probably all kinds of weird and cool glowing fish! Oh! Speaking of glowing I have something to show you when Rachel leaves.”

Keith had an unreadable expression on his face. “Is it your dick?”

Lance went bright red. “I um… Well technically yes? But no. Allura gave me some Altean toy thing to try and channel my quintessence or something. Kind of makes my marks show, but it’s still pretty cool.”

“… What’s the age range of the toy?”

“… Oh look, let’s go to this place and get some chicken.”
“Why are you avoiding the question?”

“Oh look, peri peri chicken. You want something spicy? Maybe something grilled?”

Keith rolled his eyes. “It’s a baby toy isn’t it?”

“... You’re getting real milk in your cereal tomorrow.”

That made Keith laugh. “So a really young baby toy?”

“Why must you hurt my ego so?”

“Because you’re stupid and I love you.”

“... Just for that no peri peri chicken for you. Only plain chargrilled chicken.”

Keith shook his head and smiled at him. “Wow your ego’s pretty fragile huh? Jokes on you though, I like chargrilled chicken.”

Lance pouted and snapped his fingers. “Damn it. I forgot you are used to flame grilling everything. I’ve been bamboozled once again.”

“Not hard to do.”

“And I feel betrayed.”

Keith rolled his eyes. “You dork. So what do you want? I’ll pay for hurting your ego today.”

It took a few minutes but eventually the two of them managed to order something that they liked and sat down to eat. Spending time with Keith always lightened Lance’s mood. He loved how comfortably they were able to slip back into their lives together. Just cracking jokes, hanging out, being in love. It was so domestic. So perfect.
Hey there everyone. This one was a little hard to write for various reasons (mainly my brain did a dumb and didn't want to cooperate with me lmao). Anyway, kudos and comment when you can. Enjoy :D

Once the weekend was over Rachel was ready to leave and go back to living with her parents while trying to figure out where she was going to live. She gave Lance a huge hug and a slightly less enthusiastic hug to Keith, but it was just as loving.

“You two take care of each other now. Got it? Be good or I will run you both over with my car.”

Lance rolled his eyes and patted her shoulder. “Go on, get out of here you goof. Call if anything happens to your tattoo. Okay? I know a good tattoo shop up near mama and pop-pop.”

“Will do baby bro. See you later.” She waved, hopped into her car and left.

They boys waved at her and quickly retreated back into their apartment once she was gone. As soon as they were inside Keith jumped on Lance, attacking his neck and face with kisses. Lance yelped a little and fell back onto the couch. Both boys froze for a moment before laughing together and grinning.

“Wow, you really want me that badly?” Asked Lance.

Keith rolled his eyes and quickly pecked him on the lips. “Can you blame me? You’re hot. I missed you. I wanted to bite you the second I walked through the door.”

“Kinky.”

“Shut up. You bite just as good as you get.” Just for emphasis he nibbled on Lance’s neck.

Lance chuckled and slowly ran his nails over Keith’s scalp, making him shiver under his touch.

“True, true. Very true. I just don’t have fangs like you do mr giant kitten.”

“I’m not a kitten. I’m part weird, alternate dimension, alien, demon, purple thing…” Muttered Keith against his neck.

Lance chuckled and lightly rubbed behind his ears, earning him a long drawn out purr. “If it purrs it’s a kitten.” Keith huffed against his neck and bit him again. “... And if it bites it’s kinky.”

***

All too soon Keith had to go back and work for Lotor. They were both upset about it, but they knew it wouldn’t be forever. They shared one last kiss before Keith hopped on his bike and left. Cosmo whined a little at the fact that Keith was gone again. The big baby.

To make himself feel a little better, Lance took Cosmo for a walk down to cafe Altea to get something to eat. When he got there Romelle seemed to be taking a break. She was sitting alone at a
table outside drinking her coffee. She looked a little conflicted.

Deciding to be nice, Lance walked over to her. “Hey Romelle. This seat taken?”

She shook her head and gestured to it. “Go ahead.”

He sat down and Cosmo attempted to wedge himself under the table, putting his head on her lap. She squeaked in surprise, but gave him a few pats. “So, are you okay?”

She sighed. “Is it that obvious?”

“Kind of.”

She sighed again. “Well… I’m just… I don’t know. Everything feels all weird and cloudy, if you can understand that. It’s like I’m sick and my head is in a constant fog.”

“You coming down with a cold or something?”

“I don’t know. Maybe? It’s confusing to me…” Romelle frowned down at her coffee. “My memories feel foggy… I feel like I’m forgetting what my life was like before Zarkon… Lance, I’m forgetting what my brother looks like.”

“Romelle…”

She sniffled a little. “I am grateful for what Lotor did for me but I… I sometimes I regret being saved… I should have died with them… I should have died with my family and friends. Why was I the one that lived when everyone else…” She used a napkin to dab at her eyes. Cosmo made a sad sound and nuzzled her hand. He was doing everything he could to make her feel a little better. It worked a little. She wasn’t crying.

Lance reached over the table and put his hand on her arm. “Hey, don’t get upset… Look, it must be hard having survived through that. I’m not going to pretend I know what you are going through, but if you want to vent or someone that isn’t Allura or Coran I’m here.”

“Really? You sure?” She asked.

Lance shrugged. “I don’t mind. I mean, you and I are friends or something, right? And like, if you have trouble with human stuff I can give you a hand as long as you help me with Altean stuff.”

She smiled slightly. “Okay. You know, you’re a pretty nice guy.”

“What? Has Allura been talking bad about me behind my back or something?”

“What? No. She just kind of talks negatively about Glara and with you dating a Galra…” She laughed nervously and pressed her fingers together. “Like I know not all Galra are bad because at least half galra are good because Lotor is half galra and Keith is half galra… Yeah I um… It isn’t like she hates Keith or anything because he’s Galra, but she’s trying her best and…” Romelle sighed. “She has some issues and so do I…”

“I think anyone who encounter the Galra have issues.”

“Yeah…”

“They have done some pretty horrible things… But um, anyway, point is we can talk about the shitty things the Galra did together. Like, they kidnapped me and tortured me for a bit.”
“Seriously? How did you survive?”

“Keith saved me along with this other group he’s a part of called the Blade of Marmora.”

“Oh yeah! Allura was talking about that… Also something about Keith working to get dark quintessence?”

“Yeah… Did you ever hear Lotor talk about dark quintessence?”

She shook her head. “Sorry. I didn’t work in the defence force. I was just a farmer. Nothing else I could be or do really… Damn, I really should have tried out for the defence force… I could actually be useful. Lotor sent us so much stuff about what to do and how but I just… Maybe if I knew something I could have…”

He gently squeezed her arm in an attempt to comfort her. “Romelle, you can’t think about all the what ifs out there. I mean, come on. What if I didn’t try to get to know Keith? What if I didn’t want to be his boyfriend? What if he just left the first time I found out about the whole Galra thing? I have no idea. We have to live with the hand we’ve been dealt with. For whatever reason you survived. Think of this as a second chance. Your second chance.”

She sighed and smiled slightly. “Yeah. I know you’re right. I kind of have survivors guilt and what not… But my problem isn’t really that. It’s more like I am forgetting… I can’t even remember my parents faces anymore. They are just blurs in my mind. My brother is all washed out. I can’t even remember my friends or what I used to do… I don’t know if this is a side effect from being in a healing pod for so long… But I hope I don’t lose my memory… I don’t want to forget my family… Everyone…”

“I’m sure you won’t… How about you get a diary and write everything down? It might help so even if you forget you will always have that?”

“… That actually sounds like a good idea. Thanks Lance.”

***

It was surprisingly easy to get most of the dark quintessence out of the rock once Keith and Acxa really got into it. They easily collected 30% of the deposit in one day. Everyone was happy with the progress, especially Lotor.

“Well done team.” He said. “At this rate we should be done in no time. With that much dark quintessence we should be able to enter the next phase of the plan and put an end to Zarkon once and for all. Another planet will not be taken by him.”

“Fuck yeah!” Cheered Ezor as Narti politely clapped.

“About time we were able to stick it to Zarkon.” Zethrid practically growled.

Acxa smiled slightly when he said that. She glanced over at Keith and nodded. “And you know it’s all thanks to you, right?”

Keith shrugged. “You guys would have done it eventually without me. We still have seventy percent we need to remove.”

“Acxa is right.” Said Lotor. He placed his hand on Keith shoulder and smiled warmly at him. “With your help, the time we would have had to work on collecting dark quintessence has shortened significantly. Countless lives have no doubtedly been saved through your efforts alone. Because of
what you have done there are realities out there within the multiverse that will never know of Zarkon or the Galra, as it should be.”

Keith could feel a slight blush coming on. “It’s nothing.”

Lotor chuckled at his humbleness. “Alright, everyone take a break. It is time to relax after working so well.” The girls quickly left the room leaving Lotor and Keith alone. “I must thank you again for your help.”

“Don’t mention it.”

“... You know, once this is all over I would be okay with you staying on as one of my generals.”

“Um… Thanks for the offer, but I’d rather not…”

“If you are turning down my offer because of Lance my offer extends to him as well.” Said Lotor. “He is more than welcome to live here. He is a rather interesting man, and I would personally like to get to know him better.”

Keith couldn’t stop himself from glaring at Lotor and get defensive about Lance. Lotor had taken him once, he would not do it again. “If you even look at Lance again I will skin you alive and wear your skin like cape. Fuck you.”

His anger seemed to amuse Lotor and he laughed at him. “Well aren’t you all full of fight? I take it our agreed arrangement for you to visit Lance ended up going really well?”

“... Yeah.”

“Well that’s good to know… Lance is still welcome to visit here anytime he wished.” Said Lotor. “Now, go and enjoy the rest of your evening.”

“Okay.” Keith turned to leave.

“Oh, one more thing.”

“Yeah?”

“I have decided to lift your clearance. You can now go into any room on the base. I hope this will help foster some trust between us and repair some of the damage after I took Lance to ensure a meeting. I do find it regrettable that things turned out the way it did, but I am proud to say that he was treated very well.”

“... Yeah, okay bye.” Keith quickly exited the room and got far away from there. He didn’t like it when Lotor steered the conversation towards Lance. It gave him creepy vibes.

Shaking off that feeling, Keith decided to explore the other rooms that he couldn’t access before. Most of the rooms seemed to be storage rooms. A couple were laboratories. He eventually found a room that he couldn’t open up before that he found interesting. It had a lot of lab equipment and had a strange smelled like a mix between lightly fermented meat and bleach.

On one side of the room there was a strange looking pod that looked like it needed to be repaired. Curious, Keith walked over to it and looked around for any paperwork that was around that would tell him what the pod was. Eventually he found a report.

*Incubation pod*
I.D number; X-33-1099H7

Errors;
- Malfunction in P.H level stabilizer. Zygote terminates ticks after exposure to chemical additive A77S3.
- Chemical additive A77S3 is being added too early. Gamete does not become a zygote 9/10 times.
- Vacuum seal is not working.

Recommended repairs;
- Recalibrate P.H levels
- Timer needs to be replaced. It is broken.
- Take apart vacuum seal lock to find the source of the problem. Replace all necessary parts.

So it was an incubation pod. Keith pulled a face at the thought of something growing inside it. It was practically an artificial womb. It was probably what they used to make all their biomass. It made him frown a little. It gave him an unsettling feeling deep in his guts. He made a mental note of the I.D number. Maybe Kolivan would be able to do something with that? He had no idea.

He went to leave when he caught the reflection of something in one of the shiny surfaces. At a quick glance it looked like the head of an anatomical model. The kind that one would see in a biology classroom or a doctor’s office. Again, his curiosity did override whatever sense of dread he felt.

Keith approached the tray and a wave of nausea overcame him. Propped up on metal tray with a metal rod was Romelle’s head. It wasn’t even her full head. A quarter of it was missing exposing her brain. Several thin metal rods were embedded in the skull and attached to different machines via wires. Morbid curiosity overtook him and he flipped the switch on one of the machines.

Instantly the head’s mouth opened. Her mouth was gaping like a fish while her eye rolled around aimlessly in her skull. He quickly turned the machine off. He felt sick. What was this meant to accomplish? What was this meant to do? What was it Romelle?

“And of course you come in here.” Mused Lotor as he walked over to him.

Keith jumped and knocked some tools off the table. Since when was Lotor in this room. “What the fuck is that?” He asked as he pointed to Romelle’s head.

Lotor frowned and looked down at the head. “An experiment to determine if earth metals have an effect on the quintessence glands of an Altean when electrified? What else?”

“That’s Romelle’s head.”

“Well of course it is.” Said Lotor, like it was the most obvious thing in the world. “Her DNA was good and viable. Why wouldn’t we use it? Do you have any idea how difficult it is to find viable Altean DNA that the Galra do not hoard like quintessence? For generations, I've had to use my own DNA for these experiments. Needless to say the experiments were shoddy at best and nonviable as worst. Romelle’s appearance was good for us, though I do not like the circumstances for which it occurred… but when the opportunity presents itself…”

“… This is really shady.” He muttered. “There is no way she would agree to this.”

Lotor shrugged. “To be fair this is the Galra way. I would never be held accountable for this in a Galran court of law. In fact, it wouldn’t even be recorded as one of the things I would be charged for… I know this is uneasy for you, but I must inform you that this is just how Galra do things. If anything I am more uneasy than more Galra. I use cloning. Most Galra simply would use much more
heinous methods to get the flesh that they need… I will let your own imagination figure out what that means.”

He walked past Keith and exited the room. The implications of his words made Keith shiver. All the vile ideas that the Galra were doing to anyone that was Galra made him want to vomit. In comparison to what the Galra were doing this small bit of cloning Lotor was doing it was nothing.
The rainbow dong

Chapter Notes

I literally just wrote a whole smut chapter. Why? Why the fuck not. I know what my audience wants! Most of the time! Some of the time! ... Kudos and comment when you can. Enjoy :D

It wasn’t Lance’s fault things ended up the way that they did this week. He had just gotten a little overworked with a big client piece and frustrated with that Altean toy that refused to work for him. Oh, and he really missed Keith. All of that combined he just needed some kind of physical release. He was only human and missed Keith a lot.

On the day that Keith said he probably would come back Lance just couldn’t help himself. He was frustrated and too pent up for just his fingers. He triple checked that the apartment door was locked and gave Cosmo the biggest, thickest bone he could get from the butcher to distract him and hopefully deter him from trying to get into the bedroom when he closed the door.

This was his time now. He took his black box out from under the bed and looked through his more personal things... In other words his surprisingly large collection of sex toys. Most of them he didn’t even use because they looked painful or were given as just jokes. One of his favourite joke one was a giant rainbow horse dick. Mainly because it had the best suction cup on the bottom that was so powerful it could suck tiles right off the bathroom floor. He had lent it to Pidge when they were doing some bathroom renovations and needed something to pull tiles up.

He did end up leaving it out, but he happily took out a few items that he usually used. Once he had his toys all set out and ready, he put on his noise canceling headphones so he wouldn’t get distracted by Cosmo crunching on his bone in the other room. He quickly put on some random beach noises. He didn’t know if listening to beach noises while touching himself was the start of some exhibitionist kink, but it didn’t really matter much.

Lance didn’t need much time to finger himself. He had already done it when he had a shower that morning. The whole time he was thinking about Keith and how it felt when he fingered him before. He couldn’t get anywhere near as deep as Keith could.

He decided to start small anyway and started with a set of golf ball sized anal beads. He couldn’t remember where he got these from or if they were part of a weird promo thing on some sex toy sight, but he liked them. Each bead looked like it was full of stars. They were pretty.

He lied down on his side and slowly pushed in a bead. Lance gasped a little when the first bead entered. He took his time as he slowly pushed in the next few. By the third bead he gasped. He felt the beads nudge against his prostate.


He loved it. He loved how it felt. It would have felt so much better if it was actually Keith’s cock, but damn, this was a good close second. Lance closed his eyes as he slowly teased the fourth bead into himself. He softly moaned Keith’s name again. Fuck he wanted Keith back already. He moved slightly and shuddered a little when he felt the beads move slightly.
“Oh fuuuuuck…” He moaned.

Lance hummed softly. There were five beads in this chain and he’d never actually been able to put in all five before, but damn, he was horny, missed Keith, and wanted something filling him. Sadly, if he wanted that the beads just weren’t going to cut it.

He opened his eyes and reached over to grab one of his toys when he realised that Keith was standing in the doorway. Keith was bright red and looked kind of shocked. Lance was blushing too as he slowly took off his headphones.

“Um… So you’re back earlier than I thought.” Said Lance.

Keith nodded slowly, looking everywhere but Lance. “I um… Yeah… I was able to leave earlier… I heard you moaning and I had no idea what you were doing… And um, when I heard you moaning my name I kind of just… And then you were… I’m going to take Cosmo for a walk…”

“Hey wait!” Lance reached out to him and bit back a moan when he sat up. “D-don’t go… I missed you… How much did you see?”

Keith blushed and approached the bed. “I saw you pushing the last one in…”

“Ah, so not that long…” Lance smiled a little and randomly picked at the bedsheets. “… If you’re up for it… I’m game.”

“Huh?”

“Sex Keith. I’m horny and want to fuck.” Said Lance bluntly. Sometimes it was best to just be straightforward with Keith. “Like if you want to…”

Keith just blushed more and his eyes happened upon the rainbow horse dick. “… You were going to use that on yourself?” He sounded kind of shocked.

Lance looked at it and chuckled. “Oh that? Nah, I just didn’t put it back in the box. It’s more of a joke than anything. I have a lot of joke sex toys. I only have like three things that I regularly use by myself. Have a look.” He nudged the black box over to Keith with his foot and happily watched as Keith very cautiously looked through what he had in there.

He picked up an alien looking tube that looked like a cross between a dog dick and a worm. “... What the fuck is this?”

Lance shrugged. “Ovipositor.”

“... A what?” Keith looked both confused and slightly terrified.

“Yo fuck yourself with it like a normal dildo and then you fill yourself gel eggs. You know, like an insect ovipositor.”

Keith dropped it like he had just picked up a piece of hot metal. “The fuck?!”

Lance snickered. “You know, considering Galra apparently lay eggs wouldn’t that kind of be your fetish?”

Keith looked slightly mortified. “I didn’t even know Galra laid eggs until Krolia told me Galra lay eggs! I thought they gave birth like normal mammals! I can’t believe you use this!”

“I don’t use it.” Whined Lance. He picked up the rainbow cock and lightly bopped Keith with it.
“That’s one of the joke ones I just have for the sake of having it. Getting a bunch of eggs laid in my ass is not my fetish.”

Keith swatted the toy away and pouted. “I can’t believe I came home for this...”

Lance shrugged. “Your fault for walking in when I decided to have a little bit of fun.” He poked Keith in the face with the rainbow cock. “See anything else in there that you like?” He purred.

Keith pouted a little and looked through the box and sighed. “Why do you have things that look nothing like a human dick? Were you seriously into this kind of stuff before you found out about me being Galra?”

“Kind of. I was more into the feeling and texture rather than what it looked like.” Said Lance. “Plus the colours are kind of pretty. Don’t you think?”

Keith chose to ignore that question and picked up something that looked relatively normal, but had a long tube coming out of the base. “... Do I even want to know?”

“Cum tube.” Said Lance. “Fill the syringe with cum lube and shoot it into your butt.”

“... I feel like I have been violated and I’m still the one fully dressed here.”

“Aw babe, don’t be like that. You haven’t even found the vibrators or the sounding stuff yet.”

“Sounding? You know what, no. I don’t want to know. It’s a trap.” He quickly stood up and quickly backed away to the bathroom. “I am going to go and pee. You can… Keep doing what you’re doing? I’ll be out in a bit.” He quickly escaped into the bathroom and locked the door behind him.

“Coward!” Called Lance. “I will introduce you to the world of kinks and fetishes if it’s the last thing I do!”

After a few seconds he sighed and slowly started to slowly pull out each bead. He was shaking by the end of it and still as hard as a rock. He didn’t know if Keith would actually want to do anything when he came back out or if he was a little weirded out by Lance’s collection of weird sex toys. If that was the case he’d probably end up getting blue balled by Keith… Unless he was able to sneak into the bathroom after Keith and get himself off.

Soon Keith walked out and he was looking anywhere but the bed. “Um… Okay.”

“Okay?”

“Yeah, okay.”

“... Okay what?”

“... Do you want to have sex?” Asked Keith. “I mean, you kind of look like you wanted to or something... And like… You know...”

Lance’s eyes lit up a little. “Oh, did you want to try some of these things?” He was still wielding the rainbow dong in one hand.

Keith nodded.

“On me or on you?”

Keith face started to burn.
“I’ll take that as a yes?” Lance glanced over at the box. “... Want me to use the ovipositor on you?”

“I will shove that down your throat and make you swallow those eggs.” Growled Keith.

Lance just laughed and put his hands up in defense. “I was joking. Besides, I’d actually need to make the gel eggs and that takes time to set. Remember, it’s a joke gift so I didn’t invest in something reusable.” He sat up and held out his hands to Keith. “Come here love.”

Keith smiled slightly and rolled his eyes as he walked over to Lance. Lance pulled him close so he was straddling his hips. Keith leaned down and kissed his lips. “I missed you.”

“I missed you too.” Said Lance quietly. He pulled at Keith’s shirt and smiled. “This is no shame zone. Okay?”

“Okay...” Keith stopped looking at Lance, he looked nervous. “I um... I don’t really know what to do... Like, I haven’t really thought about these kinds of things much... I don’t really know what feels good.”

Lance nodded. “It’s cool. I’d never think about shoving old rainbow up your ass for your first time.”

Keith blushed more and grumbled under his breath. “Shut up... I’m not that fragile you know.”

“... Keith, not being able to take something as stupidly huge as this thing doesn’t mean you’re fragile. Just means you have a normal ass. Sure you can work your way up to it and stuff but like, you know... You can’t just fuck yourself with that straight off the bat. I can’t take that thing... Let’s take things slowly. Okay?”

“... Okay.” He looked over at the collection. “... I have no idea...”

Lance smiled up at him and gently cupped his face. “Okay. How about you trust me? You haven’t really done much of that kind of stuff, have you?”

“... No...”

“Do you trust me?”

“More or less...”

“Okay. I’ll make you feel really good.”

***

Keith’s heart was thumping so loudly in his chest he was surprised Lance hadn’t called him out on it. He really didn’t expect this to happen when he came home today. Best he was hoping was making out, maybe some groping, but not this. He didn’t expect to see Lance shoving anal beads up his ass while moaning his name. Then his collection of toys... He was starting to think that maybe Humans really were the kinkiest fuckers in the entire multiverse.

He did try to calm himself down when he escaped into the bathroom. Lance had been so bold as to ask him if he wanted to use any of those things on himself. Sure, he did kind of want to bottom and Lance really did look like he was enjoying himself too...

So now Keith was naked on their bed while Lance was fingering him like no tomorrow and forcing moans to come spilling out of his mouth. He hated how easily Lance could make him moan like this. He felt too exposed, too vulnerable, but damn it felt right. So fucking right.
Lance twisted his fingers and Keith saw stars. He let out a loud moan and desperately clung to Lance like he was his life line. It only lasted for a few seconds, but Keith was blushing by the end of it. “... I fucking hate you.” He grumbled

His boyfriend just smiled and kissed his cheek. “Really? Sounded like you were having the time of your life.”

“I am gonna bite you.” Keith attempted to growl out, but there was no real bite behind his words. He just didn’t want Lance to think he still couldn’t kick his ass if he so chose to.

Lance just chuckled and kissed him as he continued to rub and massage his insides, making him see stars. Keith moaned into his mouth and lightly bit his bottom lip. That just seemed to spur Lance on with his movements. Soon, Keith was seeing stars with every movement. Suddenly Lance moved his hand back and Keith whined as he desperately tried to pull him back down. He didn’t like this feeling of suddenly being empty.

“Don’t worry kitten.” Purred Lance. “I’m gonna give you something that’ll feel nice.”

Keith was just a panting mess at this point. He was experiencing way too many firsts with Lance. It was all too much. He could hardly think straight right now. He just wanted to cum already and be done with it. But when he tried to reach down to touch himself Lance swatted his hand away and told him to stop it.

“B-but I need it!” Whined Keith. “P-please Lance! I-”

Lance put a finger over Keith’s lips. “Hush now. I got you.” He pressed something much thicker than his fingers into him, but it definitely wasn’t Lance’s dick. It was definitely one of the smaller toys from his box. It felt okay. It wasn’t so bad. Not that he expected it to be bad or anything. Lance had pretty much proven that he knew what he was doing when it came to sex.

“You doing okay there Keith?”

“F-fine.” He moaned. “W-want more…” It was embarrassing to hear himself say that, but he did want more and if Lance was willing to give it to him he sure as hell going to take it now.

Lance smiled softly as he gently rubbed his hip. “As you wish.”

Suddenly the toy that Lance was fucking him with suddenly buzzed to life and made Keith’s hips buck up. “Fuck!” He yelped. Keith did not expect that. He quickly hid his face behind his hands and whimpered. That was too much. He wanted to cum so badly. He wanted to touch himself so badly but Lance told him not to. He was feeling way too much. Experiencing way too much all at once.

Before he could stop himself he came hard, and Lance, the bastard, pressed the vibrator hard against his prostate just to speed up his clusters. It felt like it was half a second between orgasms and by the end of it he felt completely boneless.

Lance kissed his cheek and pulled out the toy. “How was that?”

“... Y-you didn’t fuck me?”

Lance seemed surprised to hear him say that. “I thought you just wanted to try some toys?”

“I wouldn’t have said no to you...” He muttered.

“... Keith.” He ran his fingers through Keith’s hair and gently kissed him. “I just wanted to make you
feel good. I hope you felt good?"

"Y-yeah. I did." Keith lazily reached up and lazily touched Lance’s face. “... You didn’t get to finish?”

Lance smiled a little and shrugged. “No big deal. I just wanted to make you feel good.”

Keith frowned and pulled himself up into a sitting position. “No fucking way. You were getting yourself off before I got here. You wouldn’t start doing that stuff to yourself if you didn’t want to get off.”

“... Well, you got a point there.”

Keith nodded a little and reached over Lance to find the lube. He put some on his hand and started to slowly jerk Lance off. Hearing his boyfriend gasp and moan in his ear stirred something up in him and he started to gently bite and suck on Lance’s neck while he stroked him.

It didn’t take too long to tip Lance over the edge and he came over Keith’s hand. “Fucking hell Keith…” He tilted Keith’s head back up and kissed him. “Your hands are fucking magic.”

“Thanks.” Purred Keith and he lazily leaned against Lance. They needed to clean themselves up and move all of Lance’s random sex junk off the bed.

“... So.” Said Lance slowly as he ran his fingers through Keith’s hair. “You sure you don’t want to try the ovipositor?”

Keith grabbed the nearest thing, which just so happened to be the rainbow horse dick and smacked Lance with it. “Fucking die already you fucking furry fuck.”

Lance gasped as he tried to block the attack. “Who told you about furries?!”

“I have rediscovered the internet.”

“I blame Pidge for this!”

“Don’t blame Pidge for your furry fetish!”
Clones

I was this close to calling this chapter attack of the clones, but that was too star wars even for my nerdy ass. Kudos and comment when you can. Enjoy :D

After resting for an hour or two, Lance introduced Keith to something he called “Dick soup day”. Basically, it was putting a pot of water on the stove to boil all the sex toys in with some chemicals to get them clean. Even the stuff they didn’t use Lance put into the pot.

“I was going to have dick soup day when you went back, but I thought it would be better to show you this now.” He said. “Just in case we need to make another pot of dick soup.”

Keith just nodded and poked one of the toys bubbling away in the water with a spoon. “Fair enough I guess? Do you do this often?”

“Usually about once a month. Just depends how much I use them. But you know, whatever. Good to keep everything clean. Especially if you’re sticking it up your ass. It’s all fun and games till you get some raging infection and you have to go to the clinic.”

“… That sounds like you speak from experience.”

Lance blushed a little. “It was one time and it cleared up with a cream and some antibiotics. I was young and stupid!”

Keith chuckled a little and nudged him. “I’m just messing with you… What was it and who gave it to you?”

“You’re going to laugh…”

“Promise I won’t.”

“…” Lance sighed. “Yeast infection, and I gave it to myself.”

“… What?”

“I was a gross teenager and I was baking bread… Turns out if you aren’t careful and get yeast on your fingers and scratch your balls you can give yourself a yeast infection.” Muttered Lance.

“… Excuse me for one second.” Keith picked up a pillow from the couch, pressed it against his face and laughed. Which made Lance pout. Keith’s face was red from laughing so much by the time he was done.

“You finished laughing at my pain yet?”

“Sorry Lance… But at least you didn’t get it from sticking your dick in someone you shouldn’t have.”

Lance rolled his eyes and pushed Keith onto the couch. “Shut up man. You said you wouldn’t
laugh.”

Keith landed on the couch with an oof and rolled onto his side. “I’m sorry Lance… I missed this… Just… Just these stupid fights and stuff… Everyone is so serious at Lotor’s base.”

Lance nodded and sat next to him. “Must suck.”

“It does…” A very serious expression came across his face. “Remember how the Blade of Marmora had those quintessence detection things that have Altean body parts in them?”

“Yeah?”

“Well Lotor’s base… It’s made from really old Galra tech… Old Galra tech needs lots of biological material to function… Lotor’s cloning people. He cloned Romelle for her body parts…”

Lance was horrified. “HE WHAT?!”

“It’s a Galra thing!” Said Keith quickly. “Like, Lotor’s cloned himself too for biomass. It’s really just a normal thing. It was just weird to see her head on a tray.”

“…” Lance didn’t really know what to think about that. “Do you think that means Romelle isn’t actually… Do you think Lotor cloned her and like, the Romelle with Allura right now isn’t the original Romelle?”

“I… I don’t know.” Said Keith quietly. “I don’t think Lotor would do something like that… Besides, I asked about how they clone people and they do some genetic manipulation to they don’t have brains and stuff… But like, if they do have brains they are effectively brain dead. They are alive, but not sentient enough to understand that they are alive… Like, Lotor is a creep and kind of crazy, but he isn’t evil…”

“Do you think he’d cloned you too?” Asked Lance. “Like, why would he even clone you in the first place?”

Keith shrugged. “Body parts? Easier to get an organ transplant from your clone than from someone else.”

“Fair point.”

“… There probably is at least one clone of me somewhere.” That thought seemed to trouble Keith, a lot. Not that Lance could blame him. The thought that there was a clone of himself somewhere that he didn’t know of was very disconcerting.

Lance frowned a little and ran his fingers through Keith’s hair. “It should be okay. Right?”

“I guess…” Keith sighed and leaned against Lance’s arm. “You think he has a clone of you or something? He could find out you’re part Altean.”

“…” That was not a very comforting thought. How royally screwed would he be if Lotor realised this? That guy was really, really creepy and he didn’t like it at all. He gave off bad vibes that Lance really didn’t like. Considering this new information all about Lotor cloning Romelle. “Do you think we should tell Romelle about the whole cloning thing?”

Keith was quiet for a moment. “… No.”

“No?”
“No.”

“Why?” Asked Lance. “Shouldn’t this be something she should know now?”

“If we tell her about the cloning thing then Allura might not want out of the alliance with Lotor and the blades.” Reasoned Keith. “She’ll freak out and everything that we have been building up to will be over. Lotor is extremely close to figuring out how to get rid of Zarkon for good. We can’t let this one little thing stop us from stopping him and-”

“One little thing?” Lance couldn’t believe he was hearing this. “Cloning people to carve them up is a little thing to you?”

Keith frowned and gave Lance a stern look. “Cloning for biomass is common for Galra. We have to do that because most of our tech is based in well… flesh and junk. It’s self repairing, malleable, and its just better to work with…” He sighed. “Look, this is just how it is. Okay? Don’t tell Romelle or Allura, or anyone about this until Lotor’s plan is completed. Okay?”

Lance didn’t like this one bit, but he trusted Keith. “Okay. Fine… But you better tell them soon.”

“I will.”

“… So um… I got that Altean toy if you want to see it?”

Keith seemed relieved at the change of subject. “Yeah sure. I’d really like to see what it’s all about.”

Lance smiled and quickly headed to the bedroom and quickly walked out with the box. He just knew his Altean marks were already glowing. He sat next to Keith and showed him the ball. Keith looked between the ball and Lance’s face. He didn’t seem very impressed with it.

“... Look, you’re meant to like… Absorb the quintessence and push it back to make it jump… Coran said I should think of a happy memory but I can’t think of any that are happy enough…”

Keith frowned a little. “You can’t think of anything?”

“Well… I can kind of some but… Maybe I’m just not as special as I thought I was…”

“Oh Lance…” He gently reached over and out his hands on Lance’s. “Look, maybe being part Altean isn’t as special as you thought it was… but you are special because you’re you. Fuck the Altean bullshit. You’re you and there is no one else like you. Therefore you are special.”

“…” Lance could feel his face heating up. He couldn’t tell if it was because of the blood rushing to his cheeks or because of his Altean marks were starting to glow brighter. Suddenly the orb jumped up and smacked Keith right in the chin.

“OW! MOTHERFUCKER!”

“Shit! I am so sorry! You need some ice or something?”

Keith waved him off and rubbed his chin. “I’m good… Is that what it’s meant to do?”

“I think so?” He smiled a little and kissed Keith’s cheek. “Thanks for your help babe. I think you helped me actualy do it. Who would have thought the power of belief would have helped me do it?”

Keith smiled and rolled his eyes. “Glad I could sacrifice my face to help you.”

Lance laughed and kissed him. “You’re an idiot.”
“Speak for yourself.”

***

Lotor was grinning from ear to ear. His plan was coming along swimmingly. It would take years for the Blade of Marmora to figure out everything he already knew about dark quintessence. They probably just saw it as something to counter quintessence, but it was so much more. Just like how quintessence was practically alive, so was dark quintessence.

It was amazingly glorious and had the potential for so many possibilities. After all, if it was alive, he and his generals could program it. He was so close to cracking the code. Just a few more days and he should have the code figured out. Then he would just have to apply it to the rest of the dark quintessence.

Once that was done he could release what was essentially a dark quintessence bomb into the quintessence field between realities and detonate it. Of course there would be carnage. There was no doubt about that. All pure blooded Galra would be ripped from the realities they were in and forced back into their original reality.

He could only chuckle at what his father would face when that happened. So many Galra would die just from going forced back in the first place. Then from the ones that were left the real blood bath would begin. His home realm was a wasteland. All resources depleted to nothing. With no choice they would have to start eating their dead and then they would cannibalize each other. And due to their rapid evolution rate all pure Galra would be nothing but mindless beasts. They would revert back to their base instincts to survive.

How he wanted to see that happen in real time. He could sit back and watch as they all devolved and became nothing more than gibbering, squealing abominations. Creatures that were nothing more than living garbage.

Of course there would be survivors that wouldn’t be taken in by this bomb. All the half-breeds. He already had a plan for them too. He would take over, of course, as the rightful ruler of the Galran empire. He would gather all the half-breeds and make them swear their loyalty to him. He would promise them a new beginning for all Galra. That they would no longer have to be ashamed of their heritage. That they could hold their heads high and be proud of who they were...

And if there were some half-breeds still loyal to Zarkon, then his generals could easily take care of them. No one was going to stop his plan. He’d be seen as the saviour to all realities and no one would bat an eye. Everything was going according to plan.

Speaking of plans, he picked up his communicator and called Allura. The beautiful Altean princess. Someone that any past realms that dealt with the Altean’s respected. They had a relationship built on necessity more than anything, but he hoped that there could be something more. Even if it would only be for good publicity among future, potential allies when all was said and done.

“Allura? Is now a bad time?” He asked.

“Please make it quick.” Said Allura. “I’m in the middle of work.”

He chuckled. “I still find it amusing that you would lower yourself to work such a menial job.”

“And what is that supposed to mean?”

“With your skills you could do so much more for humanity.”
“Oh… Well you need qualifications to get those and you need to pay for qualifications in this realm. So I am kind of stuck here.”

“It is most unfair and undeserving… I don’t mean to be rude, but I did request four triple fiber couplings a few weeks ago. How is that going?”

Allura sighed. “Coran is building them but they take time. We will get them to you as soon as possible.”

“I completely understand.” Said Lotor calmly. “Please take your time to make sure they are up to Altean standards.”

“Thank you. Now if you excuse me I have to get back to work.”

“Of course. I hope to talk to you again soon Allura.” He ended communications with her and smiled a little to himself. Things were moving slowly, but things were moving forward nicely. Now he just had to try and get Keith on side. That was going to be a lot tougher.
Lance knew that Pidge and Hunk were not impressed with him in the slightest. But to be fair it wasn’t his fault. He and Keith just happened to be extremely horny that weekend and might have spent almost all day in bed, but it was so worth it. Even if his body was covered in bites and scratches to the point he had to wear a high collared, long sleeved shirt to work. Normally that would be seen as appropriate work attire, but in the case of a tattoo artist, it helped to show off their own tattoos.

“Keith mauled the fuck out of you didn’t he?” Questioned Pidge over her morning coffee.

“My precious Galra boy shows affection through bites and scratches.” Said Lance. “Can’t help it if he’s so desperately passionate about me.”

“... Damn if that’s what he does when he likes you what does he do when he hates you?” Asked Pidge in a rhetorical fashion.

“Ignore me and pout.” Said Lance. “That’s his usual m.o… Though you know what? I really wish he didn’t try to bite the back of my neck when he’s got me down on my knees and he’s-”

“Finish that thought and I stab you in the eye!” Screeched Pidge. “There are children here!” She gestured to Hunk and was just shaking his head.

Lance gasped in fake shock. “Hunk! You pure innocent child that has been in a super steady relationship! One where you always have romantic nights and have asked several times about lube and other sexy things. You are too pure to hear about my boyfriend nailing me harder than a carpenter with a nail gun.”

Pidge flailed. “Noooo! Don’t ruin my perfect and pure image of Hunk for me!”

Hunk just laughed. “Come on Pidge, I think out of the three of us you’re the most pure. Aren’t you a proud ace?”

“Damn right I’m ace.” Said Pidge. “And just because I’m ace doesn’t mean I don’t enjoy getting down with my bad self once in a while. Why do you think I’m so into robotics?”

Lance just stared at her in shock. “Holy shit... Are you building your own sex bot?”

“In all fairness something out there has to give those with a vagina an orgasm.” Said Pidge. “I am perfecting it so that they don’t have to suffer shitty sex.”


“Damn right it is.”
Lance grinned and continued to walk around the shop. He knew he’d probably have to eventually change into a sniglet or a shirt with shorter sleeves. But he honestly didn’t want to have to explain to so many people why he looked like he got attacked by a really pissed off cat. He was sure Keith wouldn’t appreciate people knowing how much of a scratcher and biter he was in bed.

It had gotten to the point Lance had to introduce handcuffs and ball gags to prevent further damage to himself. What he didn’t count on was Keith almost killing him with his thighs. The boy had some powerful leg muscles. Ridiculously so. He sighed a little. He hoped that Keith was doing alright.

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Keith was currently in the communal shower room scrubbing the hell out of his hair. His scalp felt itchy and he just felt poorly all over. Maybe he was experiencing another spike? He knew it wasn’t meant to happen for a long, long time, but damn it all if he wasn’t experiencing some kind of physical frustration. Just fucking like rabbits with Lance wasn’t enough to satisfy his weird Galran biological needs. He needed to fight someone.

He groaned in frustration and pressed his forehead against the freezing tiles of the shower. He still wanted Lance. He wanted to make him and get marked by him. Some deep seated primal need to claim and to be claimed. Did the other half-breeds feel the same when they hit a spike? He’d mainly been around males so he wasn’t sure how it worked with girls and it seemed like something too personal for him to ask Lotor about. Maybe he’d feel better if he ran into a wall or something?

From off in the distance he heard someone walking in before hissing and swearing quietly. “Fuck. I didn’t think someone else was in here…”

Keith looked over to see Zethrid had walked in wearing a towel. “Sorry. I’ll be out in a second. Got soap in my hair and stuff.”

“I can see that. Just take your time.” She walked over to one of the showers furthest away from Keith and started to shower.

“…” Keith continued to wash himself when he suddenly got a very, very stupid idea. “You’re strong, right?”

“Huh?”

“You’re strong, aren’t you Zethrid?”

She rolled her eyes. “No shit. I could crush you without batting an eye.”

“Do it.”

“Huh?”

“Fight me. Hand to hand combat.” He said in an excited manner. “Fight me.”

Zethrid glanced over at him, gave him a once over, and chuckled. “Yeah, not happening runt. You’re too small. I’ll crush you.”

“… Coward.”

Hearing that made the much larger Galran lady pause. “... Did you just call me a coward?”

“So what if I did?”
She growled at him. “Fine. After my shower we will fight. Get to the training room you little shit.”

Keith just nodded, washed the soap out of his hair, and quickly left. He did his best to hide the pleased smirk that was quickly forming. If he got the crap beaten out of him then that would be fine with him. If he somehow managed to beat her that was fine by him too.

He happily made his way to the training room and waited for Zethrid. When he heard the doors open his head perked up but he became annoyed when he saw it was just Lotor. He wasn’t even looking up at him. He had his nose down in some papers.

“So keith, I was thinking that we should be able to extract at least fifteen percent this week and… What are you doing?”

“Getting ready to fight Zethrid.”

“… Why?”

“Because I want to fight and I haven’t fought anyone in too long.”

Lotor frowned at him and gave him a very sceptical look. “Right… Don’t get beaten up too badly okay? We don’t have time to reset your bones when she’s done throwing you around.”

Keith shrugged. “Whatever. I need to fight.”

“Oh really now?”

‘Yeah. I really, really need to fight right now.”

Lotor gave him a slightly confused look till it seemed to click with him. “Oh. You’re spiking?”

“… Maybe so.”

“Ah, fair enough… But could you have chosen someone else less… Could you have picked a fight with someone who isn’t a wall of muscle?” Lotor asked. He looked so tired by this.

Keith shrugged. “I don’t care. I have to fight her.”

“I’ll get a healing pod ready for you. Good luck.”

The door opened again and Zethrid walked in. She did not look very impressed when she saw Keith, but she nodded to Lotor. “Boss.”

“Zethrid… Don’t beat him too harshly. He’s experiencing a spike.”

“Ah. So that’s why the little bastard called me a coward.”

Lotor cringed slightly and looked back over at Keith. “Good luck Keith. You will need it.” He quickly left the room, presumably to get to the medbay.

Zethrid walked over to Keith and smirked. “So, you’re getting all pissy with me because you’ve hit a spike and have no mate to screw?”

“Shut up and fight me.” Growled Keith. So without a word Zethrid picked Keith up with one hand by the front of his uniform and threw him across the room. To Keith’s credit he managed to roll and not destroy all his bones in one swift motion. He quickly got to his feet and jumped out of the way when she tried to grab him again. “Too slow Zethrid.” He taunted.
“You talk too much.” She growled as she punted him across the room.

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Acxa sighed as she watched Zethrid and Keith fighting like their lives depended on it. This was not going to end well for either of them. Zethrid was a powerhouse and would easily obliterate Keith if he got within punching distance. Keith was nimble and quick. If he could get behind her he could get on her back and punch her in the back of the head.

Ezor looked over her shoulder and grinned. “You get him Zethy!” She cooed. “Kick his ass! She’s so cute when she’s beating the shit out of people.”

“... You do realise we need Keith alive, right?”

“Yeah, but Zethrid is cute when she’s in a mood like that.” Ezor was head over heels for her lover. “I’m gonna give her so many backrubs when she’s all done.”

“Yeah, well Keith is still important and shouldn’t be crushed by Zethrid if she decides to sit on him.”

“Hey, only I may get crushed by my lover’s glorious thighs.”

“... Didn’t she almost kill you because you demanded she sit on your face and you broke your neck?”

A wicked grin made its way onto Ezor’s face. “Ha, yeah. Admittedly it was a stupid idea, but it would have been one hell of a way to go. Lotor was so pissed off I almost died like that. What did he say again?”

“He said that was the single dumbest way to die he had ever seen in his life.” Said Acxa with a monotone deminor. “And I’d have to agree with him.”

She shrugged. “Nah, pretty sure there are dumber ways to die, and I didn’t die… And now I am sad…”

“Because Lotor scolded you for being dumb?”

“Because Zethrid won’t sit on my face anymore,”

“...” Acxa ignored her and went about prepping a healing pod for Keith at Lotor’s instruction. Sometimes she wondered how any of them had stayed alive for so long. Galra genetics side; Zethrid had anger problems, Ezor never took anything seriously, Narti gave off a very unsettling vibe, Lotor seemed to have some emotional issues and a terrible manipulative streak, and she herself was a very cold person that wasn’t very open with her own emotions. They should have all died at least fifty times within the past two weeks.

Ezor sighed, unhappy that Acxa wasn’t paying attention to her. She hopped onto a swivel chair and started to spin around. “... Is Zethrid winning?”

“I don’t think there is any winning when it comes to these kinds of fights.” Said Acxa. “... But I am pretty sure they are both going to need a healing pod at this rate. Keith kist punched her in the back of the head… And Keith’s getting thrown across the room again… He hit a wall.”

“Awwww.” Cooed Ezor. “Zethy is gonna sleep well tonight after such a good fight.”

“She could have possible head trauma?”
“Yeah, and when she gets out of the healing pod she’ll be all sleepy and cuddly.” Said Ezor.
“Cuddly Zethy is best Zethy.”

Acxa just shook her head and looked back at the monitor just in time to see Keith perform an impressive wall jump and kick to Zethrid’s head while she delivered a punch to Keith’s face. They both fell to the floor like a sack of potatoes.

“... I think they just knocked each other out?”

Ezor frowned and looked at the monitor. “... Damn it Zethy.”
Other perspectives

Chapter Notes

So this chapter is pretty much just what everyone else has been up to while Keith and Lance have been busy doing the sex and generally just being off in their own little world. While getting them together was the thing, there's still the matter of everything else kind of going to shit around them. So no Keith or Lance this chapter but they are mentioned. Hope you all enjoy this slight change of pace. Kudos and comment when you can. Enjoy :D

For a few weeks Coran had been helping the Blade of Marmora with their power problem with the help of Pidge and Hunk. It was very interesting to see the Blade had rigged everything up. Pidge and Hunk had spent a lot of time with Regris going over their code and the hardware that they had available to make repairs.

Coran pulled himself out from under a console and wiped a spot of grease off his moustache. “Alright Pidge. Flip the switch.”

Pidge grinned and flipped the switch. Hunk crossed his fingers and Regris monitored the energy readings. “… Energy readings seem to be stable…” He said. “Energy output is at ninety nine percent. Medbay readings are stable, Comms bay is stable… Oh! We finally have power in the Theta wing again. It’s been twenty deca-phoebs since we had this much power.” They smiled at the trio. “Thank you.”

Hunk smiled back and high-fived Pidge. “No problem pal. It was a fun challenge.”

“Indeed.” Said Coran. “It was good to get stuck into all this old Altean tech. You folks did very well maintaining it.”

Regris nodded happily. “We do our best… What are you doing Pidge?”

Pidge smiled and showed Regris the design she had been sketching out. “Yo, I think I have a solution to your gate problem. Like, this will fix up all the weird time fluctuation stuff you have going on.”

Regris looked over the design and frowned slightly. “Theoretically yes, but how would you stop it from melting?”

“Use a lower wattage.” Said Hunk. “Or use better insulation here and here.” He pointed to parts of the diagram.”

Regris considered this for a moment before their eyes went wide with shock. “… You did it. You actually did it. You’re geniuses.”

Pidge shrugged. “Hey, it’s nothing. Least we can do really.”

Regris made a small happy sound and happily directed the trio to his workshop. “You start working on it. I’ll go and gather a few extra parts from the storage room.” They quickly dashed off and the trio went about making the new gadget.
Admitly, Coran wasn’t too sure what Hunk and Pidge had planned, but he was okay with that. He was just happy enough to help them gather some materials and advise them on the best ways to attach certain materials together and not set it on fire. They both appreciated his help.

The two humans happily tinkered away while Coran found some parts from a few old Altean technologies. “Ah, this one probably came from an old food dispenser module.” He said. “The spring in the valve seems to be a little wonky, but that’s what it looks like to me.”

“That’s pretty cool.” Said Pidge… Does it have any insulation on the inside?”

“Yep.”

“Perfect. Hand it over to Hunk.”

Hunk raised his hand and Coran tossed it over to him. “Thanks buddy.” Hunk quickly started to weld it to another piece. “Like this Pidge?”

“Perfect.”

Soon Regris came back with a box containing a few more parts. “I think these will come in handy.”

“You’re the best Regris.” Said Pidge as she started to thread wires through some insulated piping. She showed Regris what to do and asked what things they had that would be similar to other earth materials.

After a few hours the gadget was finished and the group went to hook it up to the main gate. They had a few minutes to wait until it synced up to the rest of the system. As they waiting Regris leaned against the wall and crossed his arms.

“So…” He said. “How is Yurak? I haven’t heard much about him recently.”

“Ah, well he is working with Lotor at the moment.” Said Coran. “I believe he is a little miffed about it. I know Lance is not a huge fan of the long distance relationship going on.”

Pidge rolled her eyes. “But when those two do get together they spend all day in bed, and then Lance comes into work covered in bites and scratch marks.”

“Yeah…” Said Hunk. He looked over at Regris. “Um, if it’s not too rude to ask but um… Do Galra bite and scratch that much during… you know?”

It took a few seconds for Regris to understand what Hunk was asking and ended up blushing so badly he put his mask back on. “Aaaaaaaaa, um… Kind of? Our skin is a lot thicker than yours so we wouldn’t really notice that much… Perhaps you should consider giving Lance and Yurak bandages and ointments?”

“That would be a good idea.” Said Coran. “The normal human immune system is not that good compared to Altean’s and Galran’s… Hmm, do Galran’s practice good dental hygiene?”

Regris shrugged. “We floss quite a lot since we have a mainly carnivorous diet… Though we’ve mainly been eating rations. They do not taste the best.”

“Ah, I can start bringing you some food every once in a while if you like?” Suggested Coran. “Earth food does take a little getting used to, but it is quite nice.”

“Do you have a biodome here?” Asked Hunk. “Or something like an environmental, habitat thing? If
you do you guys could try raising chickens. They are pretty easy to take care of if they have enough food and water… But you can’t eat them straight away. You’ll need to breed them first and then you can sometimes have chickens… You can also eat their eggs. I can get you some simple egg recipes if you like?”

“That would be wonderful. Thank you... What are chickens?”

***

Allura was starting to get a little worried about Romelle. The younger Altean spent all of her free time laying on her bed and looking up at the ceiling. She had confided in Allura that she was starting to forget her family and couldn’t keep it all together in her head anymore. She explained everything felt like it was being slowly erased. She was even having difficulty believing her name was actually Romelle anymore.

“Every second I’m awake is another second I forget about my past.” She muttered. “I simply do not understand… I should remember those moments. Why would my mind choose to erase everything from my mind? Even the things that were not traumatic?”

“I’m sorry, I do not know.” Said Allura sadly. “The mind is one of the most advanced and complicated things in the multiverse no matter the species… Coran and I will find a way to help you keep your memories. Even if we have to scan them so we can replay them for you. We won’t let you lose your family again.”

Hearing that made Romelle laugh a little. “You know Allura, we worshiped you as a goddess and your main characteristic was your overwhelming kindness… Nice to know that was accurate and not something we made up.”

Allura smiled a little and gently squeezed her hand. “I’ll go and get you something to drink. Okay?”

“... Okay Allura. Thank you.”

Allura left the room and headed to the kitchen. She went to make some tea and checking her communicator to see if anyone had left her any messages. She mainly got messages from Coran, and sure enough there was one from him.

Coran:

*We managed to get the generator running at the Blade’s HQ.*

*Pidge and Hunk also made a gadget to help fix their time fluctuation problems.*

*Everything is all synchronized now.*

Allura:

*That is wonderful Coran.*

*See you back home soon.*

She was very pleased that they had been able to fix that with the blade. It would make sharing information and coordinating plans to stop Zarkon so much easier. They were one step closer to finally stopping the threat once and for all. She checked her other messages and was a little surprised to see a message from Lotor. Granted it wasn’t unusual for her to get messages from him asking for updates on this and that, but this one was different.

Lotor:

*Would you be surprised to know today was the first day I experienced rain in this realm?*
Allura:
Rain?

Lotor:
Yes.
I have mainly stayed inside our base while I have been working on a way to stop my father. Today was the first day I decided to take a small break and go outside. It was raining.

Allura:
And what are your thoughts about rain?

Lotor:
Wetter than I expected.

Allura:
Well rain tends to be wet.

Lotor:
Unless it's Veramira.
That realm rains crystals.

Allura:
Water tends to be wet in most realms and not crystals. Though hail is a thing here.

Lotor:
Hail?

Allura:
Round balls of frozen rain that fall from the sky.

Lotor:
Sounds painful.

Allura:
It is.
So apart from wet, what did you think?

Lotor:
Cold.
Also, the last realm I was in where I was caught out in the rain was orange and warm. Not clear and cold.
Beluragh realm.
It was beautiful.

Allura:
Most realms are before Zarkon invaded.
Can I ask you a question about Romelle?

Lotor:
What seems to be the matter?
Allura:
Can you send me her medical scans?
She is having memory troubles and I am concerned she has some kind of Altean illness that’s causing her memory to deteriorate.

Lotor:
That is unusual.
I shall check and recheck her medical history personally and send you a copy of her medical files once I get back to my base.
I’m still caught out in the rain. It’s gotten pretty heavy.

Allura:
And you don’t have an umbrella?

Lotor:
I am guessing that is something humans use to keep dry?
Unfortunately I did not being one with me as I am unsure of what that is.

Allura:
Fair enough.
I must depart now.
I have to take care of Romelle now.

Lotor:
Of course princess.
It was nice talking to you about something that wasn’t related to my father.
I wouldn’t mind doing that more often.
It’s a nice reprieve from reality.

Allura:
Agreed.
Talk to you soon Lotor :)

Lotor:
:)

***

Shiro pulled down the shutters of his shop and sighed heavily. He’d been feeling extremely uneasy since they had gone to rescue Lance from Lotor. He just couldn’t put his finger on it, but something wasn’t right with any of this. On one hand he did believe that Lotor did want to stop Zarkon, but on the other hand he felt like there was more to his words than he was letting on.

He had been around enough people to tell when they were hiding something. As far as he could tell whatever he had planned wasn’t going to be good for a lot of people involved in this secret war that humans did not know about. He just had this look about him that Shiro couldn’t fully trust.

Which meant he was very unsure about Keith’s future with Lotor. The thought of Keith being so close to Lotor sent Shiro’s protective nature into overdrive, but he couldn’t do anything. Keith was a man and if truth be told, he was never really someone he could ever hold back or attempt to.

Keith was a force of nature. A very angry force of nature, but he was completely untameable that just ran around and did what he wanted with no regard to his own personal safety. At least now he had
Lance as had to at least think about keeping himself alive. If not for himself but for Lance’s sake. So some good came out of it, but he just knew Lotor would exploit it.

There was just something that just screamed he was going to take advantage of Keith. At least the younger male didn’t seem to be trusting of Lotor and kept him at a distance. At least that’s the feeling Shiro got when Keith dropped by to complain about the older Galra. He kept talking about how he shouldn’t have to work for Lotor, but Kolivan ordered him to.

Keith just wanted to be with Lance and forget about his responsibilities. Something he knew Keith would never do. Deep down beneath all that rage Keith was loyal to a fault and would always do what he felt would make whoever he looked up to happy. There had been many times when Keith was younger that he did try to do things for Shiro to make things easier for him and Adam financially when money got tight.

One of the most notable times was when Shiro was in between part-time jobs and Keith very conveniently had to study for several weeks at the local library and would take care of himself for dinner. Shiro obviously hated the fact that Keith did that and he always slipped a few extra of those cheap muesli bars during that time so he would at least eat something. He noticed Adam did it too. Adam and Keith never saw eye to eye, but Adam always made sure that Keith didn’t go hungry either. He might not like Keith’s weird attitude and the fact that Shiro wouldn’t turn him back over to CPS, but he did care for the kid.

His stomach rumbled a little and Shiro sighed. He didn’t have much food left in his fridge so he needed to go out for some dinner and something for breakfast. He grabbed his umbrella and stepped outside, almost immediately walking into someone.

“Sorry.” Said Shiro quickly.

“No, it’s… Shiro?”

Shiro blinked in surprise as he looked at the very, very familiar man he walked into. “Adam?”
Shiro and Adam have dinner while Lance and Keith talk about the future (do I hear wedding bells?). Kudos and comment when you can. Enjoy :D

Shiro and Adam ended up going to a pub. There weren’t that many people because of the rain. They ordered some food and caught up with each other. Adam ended up working for a bank and was actually now the manager for one of the local banks. Shiro told him about opening up the flower shop and how it was doing relatively well. They laughed at each other’s jokes and it almost felt like they never broke up in the first place.

“So what happened to Keith?” Asked Adam. “He should be in his mid twenties by now?”

Shiro nodded. “Yeah. Keith’s doing well. He lives with his boyfriend who runs the tattoo shop next to mine. Really nice guy. Lance is his name.”

Adam smiled and nodded. “That’s nice… Is he still kind of? You know?”


“All of that.”

“He’s still all those things, but he’s found positive outlets.” Said Shiro. “... He’s good to Lance. Oh, and they have a dog.”

“Oh? What kind?”

“A wolf.”

“... A wolf?”

“Yep. Months and months ago Keith and Lance, before they started dating, found it on the side of the road near death and Keith decided to adopt it.” He chuckled a little. “That was when Keith was living with me. It was a really tight fit having two adults and a wolf, but Keith looked after them. Took Cosmo for walks every day, spent most of his pay on getting food for Cosmo. Because wolves eat a lot of meat. It was an interesting few months.”

Adam nodded. “I still can’t believe CPS never found out about him.”

Shiro shrugged. “Keith was dumb, but not that dumb. He’s never gotten in trouble with the law. He’s been a good kid.”

“Well… I guess that’s good?”

“Yeah. Oh! Keith found his mother a few years back.”

“Really? That’s good. Right? Was it a good reunion?”

“Keith has abandonment issues and kind of screamed at her a lot… Kind of threatened her too… But
think they have sorted things out a little so now they can hold a normal conversation.”

Adam nodded. “I guess that is fair… Did you find out what happened?”

“… She couldn’t keep him.” Said Shiro. “I don’t know the details.”

“Fair enough.”

“It’s been a very crazy few months for us.” Said Shiro. He finished his drink and smiled at Adam.

He looked older, but was still the same man. “So um… How is your life? Are you seeing anyone?”

Adam shook his head. “Unfortunately no. I haven’t had much luck in the love department. You?”

“No. Everything has been a little hectic for me…”

“I can see that…” He looked at Shiro’s arm and frowned slightly. “Um… If you don’t mind me asking, what happened? Last time I saw you, you um… You don’t have that…”

Shiro looked down at his arm. “Yeah… So I did end up joining the military, but just my luck one month into getting deployed I lost my arm in an explosion. Cut my military career kind of short.”

“Takashi… I’m so sorry.”

The other man shrugged. “It’s okay. Not your fault I lost my arm, and hey, I run my own business now and have good friends.”

“I’m surprised you became a florist.” Said Adam. “But as long as you’re happy then everything is good, right?”

“Yes… Are you happy?”

Adam thought for a moment. “Sometimes, but I honestly do feel kind of lonely. I work with idiots and I honestly only moved to town a week ago and don’t know anyone.”

“… Well you know me.”

“That is true.”

They smiled at each other and although they were both happy, Shiro knew that there was something else. Something that neither of them were talking about, or even knew how to start talking about. “… Why did we break up in the first place?”

Adam’s smile faltered a little and he stared down at his drink. “I don’t know if it was any one thing… I think it was a lot of small things. Balancing school and part time jobs… Looking after Keith and finding out CPS probably wants him… Financial things. That kind of stuff.”

“Yeah. Just a bunch of small things…”

“Yeah… Could I possibly get your number?” Asked Adam. “Like I said I don’t know anyone in town so it would just be nice to know someone else that isn’t from work.”

“Oh sure.” The two of them exchanged numbers. It made Shiro smile a little. He was actually happy about this. He didn’t realise how much he’d actually missed Adam until now. Which was kind of sad considering how many years it had been.

“Hey, Shiro!” Called Lance. Shiro jumped a little and was surprised to see Lance and Keith walking
towards them. Keith looked a little shell shocked to see Adam there and kept giving Shiro very confused and mildly angry looks.

Shiro ignored the looks Keith was throwing him and smiled at Lance. “Hey Lance, Keith. Adam, this is Keith’s boyfriend, Lance. Lance this is Adam, my ex.”

Lance seemed a little surprised but smiled and shook Adam’s hand. “Hey. I’m guessing you two had an alright break up considering you’re getting dinner together?”

Adam nodded. “Yeah. I just moved into town last week and kind of walked into Shiro n my way here.”

“Cool. Well Keith and I were going to get dinner. We’ll let you guys-”

“Why don’t we sit together?” Suggested Keith. “I haven’t seen Adam since I was about… What? Thirteen?”

“Do you mind?” Asked Lance in an unsure manner.

Adam shrugged. “I don’t mind. I wouldn’t mind finding out what you have been up to.”

So Lance and Keith pulled seats up to the table and joined them. Shiro thought it was a little strange considering Keith didn’t seem to like Adam when he was younger, but then again this was probably more for his sake rather than Keith’s curiosity about Adam.

Adam and Keith did make a little bit of small talk before Lance quickly interjected. “So, what stuff did Keith get up to when he was younger? I must know the embarrassing Keith shenanigans.”

Keith death glared Lance, but Adam just laughed. “Oh one time he stole every cushion in the apartment and piled them on his bed, and refused to give them back for a few hours. That was an interesting day.”

“Yep. Sounds like Keith.” Said Lance. “Now it’s Cosmo that takes all our pillows.”

“He did that once.” Grumbled Keith. “It wasn’t even that bad. You’re exaggerating. Again.”

“Aw, so rude to me.”

After that dinner and drinks went pretty smoothly for the two of them. Lance and Keith left first with Keith still giving Adam uncertain looks. Then it was back to just the two of them. Shiro smiled at Adam and Adam smiled at Shiro.

“So, you work at the florist then, huh?”

“Yeah, and you work at a bank?”

“Yep… Guess I’ll be seeing you around then Takashi?”

“I’m sure you will… And Adam?”

“Yeah?”

“I’m really glad we could see each other again.”

“Me too… So you’ll be at your shop tomorrow?”
“Yeah.” Shiro smiled hopefully at Adam. “You going to drop by?”

“Maybe. If your shop stays open that long.”

“I live above the shop. Just text me and I’ll come down and let you in if you come by and I’m closed.”

“Oh, thanks. I’ll um, I’ll text you my address once I finally get all my stuff settled in.”

Shiro nodded a little. “Yeah. I’d like that.”

***

“I don’t like it.” Muttered Keith.

“I know babe.” Said Lance.

“I don’t like this at all.”

“I know.”

“He made Shiro cry when he left. He. Made. Him. Cry.”

“Well yeah, but he doesn’t seem like a bad gu-”

“He made Shiro cry!” Snapped Keith. “I pretended to have nightmares for a week so that Shiro would let me stay in the same bed as him so I could make sure he was okay… I don’t trust Adam.”

Lance sighed and gently patted his leg as they sat on the couch. “I know, but people change? Maybe Adam is a better person now?”

“… I don’t like it.”

Lance sighed louder and practically laid across Keith’s lap. “You’re overthinking this and have a major grudge against him. Like, come on dude. Shiro seemed happy They were having dinner together. They must at least like each other.”

Keith growled a little but reluctantly relented. “Yeah, I guess… I just don’t want Shiro to get hurt again. He’s my brother and I care about him.” He ran his fingers through Lance’s hair and huffed a little. “I don’t know if I can forgive Adam for upsetting Shiro like that… He really loved him and he just… It upsets me that they would just split up like that…”

“Well, Adam can’t be the only one to blame, right?”

“Huh?”

Lance poked Keith’s face. “Look, after talking to Adam and seeing how Shiro was around him I highly doubt you can fully blame Adam for them not working out.”

“Oh, so Shiro’s at fault?”

“What? No. Sometimes people just don’t work out.” Said Lance calmly. “Sometimes a bunch of little things make people split. Sometimes one will just fall out of love with the other. These things happen.”

Keith nodded slowly and looked down at Lance. “... Do you think you’ll fall out of love with me?”
“At the moment? No. I still can’t imagine my life without you.” Said Lance with a small smile.
“Why? You thinking of falling out of love with me?”

“Don’t say that… I just… If you love someone so much why would you leave them? I just don’t get it…”

Upon hearing that Lance quickly sat up and pulled Keith into a hug. “Yeah, I don’t get it either, but I love you and you love me. That’s all that matters now, right?”

“Yeah.”

Lance frowned a little and kissed his cheek. He felt like Keith was projecting a little here but didn’t really know what to say to make Keith feel better. He just really wanted to make sure that Shiro was safe and happy… and granted exes were never really good to have around in general but Shiro seemed happy and Adam seemed nice… And Shiro was old enough to make his own choices. He had his own life to live.

Speaking of lives to live… “So how much longer until everything is over with Lotor and stuff?”

Keith shrugged. “Soon I hope… After that, he’ll have enough dark quinessence to finish his plan. I just want this all to be over. Once it’s done we can think about all that kind of stuff… Like um… Maybe getting our own house? Cosmo would probably like a backyard to run around in.”

Lance nodded in agreement. “Yeah. Sounds nice… I’d really like to have a house with you someday. A place with a big backyard, maybe a pool. I wouldn’t mind having a vegetable garden or like a herb garden… It would be nice.”

“Sounds good. I’d like that… Can I have a fire pit?”

“Why do you want a fire pit?”

“So I can cook food like I used to when I feel nostalgic.”

“Of course.” He kissed Keith’s cheek. “I wouldn’t mind to see how your cooking tastes.”

Keith frowned a little. “Yeah… But it isn’t good. It doesn’t taste very nice. Kind of just smokey and dry.”

“Yeah, but it’s your cooking.” Said Lance warmly. “I wouldn’t mind. You know that right?”

“Okay… So um, would you…?”

Lance smiled a little at him. “Would I what?”

“… No. Never mind.”

“No, tell me.”

“It’s dumb…”

Lance pouted a little and hugged Keith tightly. “Come on Keith. What is it? What else do you want after you’re all done with Lotor?”

“… Bonded mates.” He muttered quietly. “I um… I want to be bonded mates with you… If you’ll have me…”
“... Bonded mates is like getting married or something, right?” Asked Lance. He knew Keith had mentioned something like that before so he needed some clarification.

A dark blush quickly covered their face and he quickly back peddled. “Forget it! It was a dumb idea. Just don’t think about it. Don’t worry about it. It was dumb.”

“What? No don’t say that Keith. It’s fine. Really.” He reassured him. But it was still a bit of a shock. He hadn’t really thought that Keith would want to do that with him so soon. But he was thinking about it at least which made his heart flutter. If Lance was honest he did wonder if Keith would accept a marriage proposal from him. Would they get married first and then become bonded mates on their honeymoon, or would they bond first and get married for all the legal human stuff?

Either way they would so have to have a wedding ceremony. His mama would nail him with both her sandals if he didn’t. He could already feel two large welts forming on his head where he knew they were going to land. He’d have a migraine for a month. He needed to start thinking about engagement rings.

“I wouldn’t mind being bonded mates with you.”

“Really?”

“Yeah.” He kissed Keith again and smiled. “I’d be happy to bond with you if you’d be happy to marry me.”

Keith kissed back and smiled at him. “Of course I’d marry you… But we should probably talk about this more after everything is done with Lotor.”

“Of course.”
Lance was getting better at that Altean toy Allura gave him. He could easily make it jump and pop up in his hands and it made him feel good. Made him feel a little less useless. Allura was very happy he was able to do it too and everyone was very encouraging.

Allura was quite impressed that he was able to get a relatively good handle on it so quickly. She gave him another orb toy to try, it was a dark blue, and he attempted to use it. His first try and smacked himself so hard in the nose he gave himself a nosebleed. Coran ended up administering him first aid.

“That was pretty good lad.” He said with a grin. “Just move your face back a little when you do that again. Alright?”

Lance flinched a little and nodded. “Yeah, yeah… But I didn’t think it would just suddenly… You know… Smash me in the face…”

Coran chuckled and carefully dabbed a little bit of dried blood away. “Well now you know. Now be careful. The beyond only knows what will happen if you get cocky and try to do something like disperse quintessence. That would be a disaster.”

“What?”

“Oh, it’s just a thing Altean’s can do.” Said Coran in a nonchalant manner. “Since we’ve worked with quintessence for so long we can kind of… filter it? If we come in contact with raw quintessence we can absorb it, like the quintessence in that toy, and disperse it so it’s safe to filter through the air.”

“What happens if you don’t?”

“Well anything that comes into contact with it have their atoms ripped apart. I feel like we might have had this discussion before at some point…”

“Maybe… What would happen if I tried to filter it?”

“Oh, you would burn out.” Said Coran. “You don’t have the physical ability to filter it through your body. It would be like drinking a cup of cyanide. You’d probably be okay for a few seconds, but then you’d be dead.”

“… Okay, understood. No filtering quintessence.”

Romelle yawned and looked up from her spot on the couch. “Hmm? Did you hurt yourself again Lance?”

Lance couldn’t help but pout at that. “Um, rude. Still getting patched up from the first screw up.”
“Noted.” She yawned and curled back up on the couch, quickly falling back asleep.

“... Is she okay?” Asked Lance quietly. He knew Romelle was slowly getting sick or something, but he had no idea. He was really worried about her. “Does she need some vaccinations or something?”

“We got her up to date last week.” Said Coran. “She should be good for all human illnesses… But I don’t know. Allura has been looking over the medical report Lotor sent us, but she hasn’t found anything yet. It might be a mental issue that is manifesting itself as a physical issue, but I don’t know…”

Lance nodded along, but he couldn’t help but feel his skin crawl when he heard mentions of Lotor. There was just something about him that he couldn’t trust. It was more than him having a grudge about getting kidnapped. Lotor was just plain creepy to him and made him feel all slimy and gross. He gave off #Niceguy vibes that made him want to run away and hide. He had no idea how Keith could stand to be around him. He just felt that Lotor was going to stab them in the back at some point and they’d all get screwed over.

“... Romelle will be okay.” He said quietly. “She has to, right? Allura will find whatever is wrong with her and you guys will be able to help her?”

“Hopefully…” Said Coran. He got up and put a blanket over her in an attempt to make her more comfortable. “We can do a lot of things, but we won’t know if we can properly help her until after we figure out what is wrong with her… Poor girl. Allura’s quite taken with her.”

Lance nodded a little and started to help pack up the first aid kit. “Yeah, those two are pretty good friends…”

Coran frowned at him. “Oh? No, no, no my boy. Allura and Romelle are courting each other.”

“... Courting?”

Coran nodded, took the kit from Lance, and walked to the bathroom to put it away. “Oh yes. It’s a very traditional way of trying to find romantic partners on Altea. Humans used to do similar things and some still do. But they’ve had to put their courting on hold due to the seriousness of the Galra threat and Romelle’s sickness.”

“Oh… I hope things work out for them. They deserve to be happy.”

Coran couldn’t agree more. “Well said lad. Now let’s get back to using that toy. It’s much more advanced than the previous one you were using. This one is for ages three to five.”

“... Yay.” Lance felt indirectly insulted.

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Things had been going well for Lotor. He had just finished finalizing his plans to go over with Kolivan and Allura in the comms room. They were reaching the end game now. It made him very happy to know the finish line was just within his grasp. Soon the age of Zarkon would end. The Galra would be finished. It would be perfect.

Suddenly an alarm went off and Lotor looked up to the security cameras. It was Sendak. What was Sendak doing here? How did he find him? He growled in annoyance. It had to either be either Haggar using her magic bullshit, or Sendak had really been looking for him.

The older Galra stood at their property line. Clearly he was worried about traps, but he was alone.
He was going to talk to him? Maybe? He wondered if Sendak wanted to talk. He turned on the speakers to hear if he was saying anything.

"Come on Lotor. I know you’re in there. I’m here to talk."

"..." Lotor looked down at the papers he had on his desk and quickly grabbed a flash drive before he got up and headed out. He passed Acxa on the way and nodded at her. She seemed confused by this action, but he didn’t have time to talk to her. He needed to get to Sendak.

It didn’t take long for him to get to the surface and went outside. He saw Sendak waiting for him looking as confident as ever. Lotor confidently walked to Sendak. He could tell that the man was not here for diplomatic talks no matter what he said. That wasn’t his strong suit, but he was here anyway. Which meant this was possibly a direct order from his father, or the witch.

"Commander Sendak, to what do I owe the pleasure?" He asked. “Has father decided he would prefer me in a cell than cast out of the empire? Or are you here because of the witch?”

The older Galran just chuckled at his bluntness. “Lord Zarkon has nothing to do with this.”

“Then it’s the witch.”

“Indeed.” Said Sendak. “Give me one good reason not to bring a thousand Galran soldiers down on your head and drag you, and the rest of your half-breed bitches back to the empire. They will get slaughtered, of course, but the witch wants you alive.”

“How kind of you.” This was a little annoying, but it looked like Lotor would have to play his trump card a little earlier than he intended to. “But you will not be doing that.”

“Give me one good reason why I shouldn’t.”


Sendak just chuckled. “Honour? What honour do I have for a little half-breed bastard that betrays Lord Zarkon?”

Lotor would ignore that comment for the moment. “But Sendak, you have lost a small bit of honour haven’t you? You were the one that discovered a certain human half-breed and manipulated them into joining the empire by filling their head with the glory of war. You could have just brought them into the fight, but you made them believe it was their idea. We all know when you feel like it, you can be extremely manipulative… Then he goes and runs away. MIA for years. Presumed dead.”

Sendak shot Lotor a death glare. “And what is your point? The little shit was responsibility of that fat bastard Prorok when he-”

“But it was you that brought him in.” Said Lotor. “He wasn’t even fully integrated into Galran society. You brought him in. He vanished and after he had accomplished so much too. People were talking about the little orphaned half-breed you rescued for ages… even if you did just drop them off in a military camp… You lost a bit of honour by picking a bad half-breed.”

“And your fucking point?” He growled. Sendak was practically bubbling with rage at this point.

“I know where Keith is.” Said Lotor in a calm tone. ‘I know what happened to him after he was taken by the Blade of Marmora. He became one of them. He became that annoying little saboteur, Yurak.”
Sendak looked like he was going to kill someone. “Yurak? He turned traitor and started working for the blade? After everything the empire did for him?”

“Yes a tragedy really.” Lotor was completely disinterested with Sendak’s anger. “Anyway, he’s working for me at the moment and his usefulness to me is practically over.”

“You’re working with the Blades?” He growled. “You’re even more treacherous than I.”

“Please, it’s just a means to an end.” He held up a flash drive. “This drive contains all information on Keith, past and present. You can do with it what you wish. While dragging me be would please Haggar, I am assuming this is a quiet, under the table kind of deal. Dragging back Keith will mean a public execution. You’ll get praise for finding him. You’ll get the pleasure of knowing you went ahead and crippled the Blade of Marmora. I’ll even message you to let you know when he is leaving the facility so you can take him.”

Sendak thought for a moment. “... What do you want?”

“I just want to be given a head start.” Said Lotor calmly. “You know where I am now and I simply wish to gather my things and leave. That is all. Plus wouldn’t you have more fun chasing me?”

“You make a fair point. Deal. You’ll get one month after I capture Keith.”

“Deal.” Lotor handed him the flash drive and watched him leave. When he was sure Sendak was gone, Lotor returned to his base. He hadn’t wanted to play that card so soon, but sacrifices needed to be made. Keith was a soldier. He understood this. It looked like he would need to quickly ramp up his plans. No time for testing. It was now or never.

***

Acxa was in a state of shock. She had watched the entire interaction happen from start to finish. Lotor completely sold Keith out, and to Sendak of all people. How could he do that? Keith was one of them. Sure he was snarky and didn’t really trust Lotor very much to begin with but he…

Lotor was planning this from the start, wasn’t he? He had to have. Lotor planned for every possibility and she just blindly followed him. Why wouldn’t she? Lotor had always been there for her. He had saved her from a miserable existence in the Galran empire under Zarkon, but this was too far for her.

He had so easily and carelessly given Keith up. He was expendable to Lotor. They were expendable to Lotor. How long until he decided that she was expendable? What about Narti? Ezor? Zethrid? The second Lotor decided they weren’t useful they were gone.

It made her feel sick.

What was she meant to do now? Sandak would destroy them if he didn’t get his claws on Keith, but she had always considered Keith her friend despite his coldness towards her after what happened with Lance. Maybe she should consider defecting to the Blade of Marmora?

As she had an internal crisis Lotor walked into the comms room. “Acxa, get Kolivan and Allura on the line now. We have to push the plan ahead now.”

“...”

“Acxa?” He gave her a very confused look. “Is something wrong?”
“You sold Keith out to Sendak…” She said quietly.

“Oh, so you heard all of that then?” He sighed and crossed his arms. “With Keith has always been good at gathering quintessence his presence here was insurance in case the empire came knocking at our door. Keith was always insurance.”

This made her extremely uneasy. “So he was never part of our team? He was always going to be just that? Insurance? Something to barter with to save your skin?”

Lotor just shrugged. “It was just an in case situation. That’s all. If nothing came of it then Keith would still be useful. But he is not like us. He doesn’t have the same loyalty to us and our cause. He’s too… He’s too different… This is why I need to get in touch with Kolivan and Allura right now to discuss our new options. We have been compromised. We have to push ahead.”

“…” Acxa was still unsure. Things were getting a little too hectic and unsure for her liking.

“… Please Acxa.” He put his hand on her shoulder. “If the plan works Sendak will never touch Keith. I must speak with Kolivan and Allura right now.”

“… Okay.” Acxa put Lotor through to Kolivan and Allura before she left the room. She needed a moment to think.
Threats

Chapter Notes

Hope you all enjoy this. Now, we all know Sendak is an asshole, so in this I tried as some psychological torture in with his usual fuckery. Kudos and comment when you can. Enjoy :D

Keith was rather pleased with himself. He’d almost finished completely extracting the dark quintessence. One more trip and he would be completely done. He felt like he had done his best and now that this was coming to an end. Now he could think more about the future with Lance. He smiled at the thought. He wanted to give Lance the happy life that he wanted. He didn’t care if what Lance wanted was cliche. Cliche was fine with him. He wanted all the dumb, silly cliches he could get.

The plan would work. They would stop the Galra Empire, Everything would turn out okay. The Blade would probably start going to the realms Zarkon has destroyed or was in the process of destroying. They could help rebuild realms that Zarkon had under his control. If that was the case, maybe he would consider helping the Blade out a little?

He was pretty sure Lance wouldn’t mind if he went away for a bit to do some humanitarian work. He wanted to help make things right after contributing to the empire, even if it was only in a small capacity. Yeah, he still felt a little guilty about that.

When he was back at the base and getting ready to leave again Lotor approached him. “Thank you for your efforts. We have more than enough dark quintessence to complete the plan now. This realm is very rich in dark quintessence deposits.”

Keith shrugged. “Don’t mention it. One more trip and I’ll get all of it.”

Lotor shook his head. “That is not necessary. You did what was agreed. You may go back to living with your mate. You are not needed here anymore if you do not wish to come back.”

Keith was kind of shocked. “Seriously? I’m done? I don’t have to come back?”

“No at all.” Said Lotor. “But you may visit if you wish. Acxa still enjoys your company. She always has.”

“Oh okay. Well… See you around I guess? It wasn’t that bad working with you.”

Lotor seemed to take that as a compliment and nodded in agreement. “Indeed. I quite enjoyed working with you. Give Kolivan and the rest of the Blade my best when you next see them.”


“Goodbye Keith.”

Keith just nodded and went outside to his hoverbike. He felt good that he wouldn’t have to come back here again. He took the helmet off the bike and rubbed some dirt off the visor. In the reflection he saw Acxa standing under a tree, watching him.
“Hey.” He said.

“Hey.” She said back. She chewed her bottom lip and had a very conflicted look on her face. “So… you’re done? You’re leaving?”

Keith nodded. “Yeah. I’m going to go home, write up a report of Kolivan, and then I’m going to keep on living with Lance.”

“He’s a lucky man.” Said Acxa. “Lance is lucky to have you, and you’re lucky to have him.”

“Thanks.” He nervously rolled his helmet around in his hands. “So um, you need to ask me something?”

Acxa gave him an odd look. “Just… Thank you for what you have done. You really made a difference.”

Keith smiled a little at her. “Yeah, well I’m glad it’s over now. Things are gonna be different now… I want to move forward with Lance. We’ve talked about maybe getting married in the near future.”

“Married?”

“It’s the human version of becoming bonded mates.” Explained Keith. “Two people get together in front of family and friends. They declare their love for each other and exchange wedding rings.”

“That sounds really sweet.” She smiled softly at him. “You really love him, don’t you?”

“Yeah. Of course I do.” He smiled at her. “We’ve been talking about the future and I’ve kind of come around to the idea of living a quiet human life with Lance… After some of the stuff that has happened to him this year I think he deserves something nice like that.”

Acxa nodded in agreement. “Yeah. You both deserve something nice… Please drive safely. Make it back to Lance in one piece.”

“I will.” He smiled a little and put on his helmet. “If you’re ever in town, give me a call. You guys aren’t too bad.”

“... Thanks Keith. I will. Good luck.”

He nodded at her and quickly drove out of the property and down to the road. In less than an hour he would be back with Lance. Their part in this war would be over and they could wait for the plan to kick in and then it would be like the Galra were never there.

That thought made Keith smile a lot. Though he was quickly pulled out of his happy thoughts when he suddenly got an incoming warning over the interface inside his helmet. Which really confused him. What the hell was happening? Thankfully he suddenly realised that no this wasn’t a glitch and quickly swerved off the off the road, losing any grip he had on his tiers and crashed.

It wasn’t anything too disastrous. The bike wasn’t wrecked or anything, but seconds later a small explosion went off very close to him. He humped in surprise, took his helmet off, and went to inspect the damage. It was like someone had shot a small missile at him or something.

“... This is not good.”

He looked down the road. Way off in the distance he could see someone on a really bulky looking bike. The roar of its engine was slowly getting louder and louder. Even at this distance he could tell it
was a Galran vehicle. What Galra knew he was here and wanted to kill him? Lotor? Probably Lotor. He was a sneaky fuck and he did say he didn’t have to go back anymore. Bastard.

He quickly grabbed hold of his Marmora Blade, flicked his wrist and watched it go from a tiny knife to a full sword. Keith stared them down as he tried to assess the situation in front of him. The person riding that Galran issued vehicle was pretty large. It had to be Zethrid. But she drove something different. Who the hell was this?

When they were a few feet away they stopped and got off their bike. Now that they were close enough Keith felt his blood run cold. He recognised the robotic, augmented claw on the left arm of the bastard. Even before he took off his helmet he knew who it was. It was Sendak. He took his helmet off and tossed it to the side. A sick smirk on his face.

“Keith.” He almost purred. “Been a while hasn’t it? But you don’t go by Keith anymore do you? Didn’t you start to go by Yurak? It is Yurak now, right?”

“...” This was bad. Really bad. Sendak shouldn’t know who he’s alive let alone his involvement with the Blade as Yurak. He knew all the colour had drained from his face and he probably looked terrified because he sure as fuck felt like it.

“What’s that matter traitor?” Asked Sendak with amusement in his voice. “Can’t speak? Ghosts of your past catching up with you? If I’d had known you would have betrayed the empire I would have handed you over to Haggar the day we first met.”

That robotic claw arm of his suddenly shot out and grabbed hold on Keith, flinging him across the street and back into his bike. It hurt like a bitch. Keith yelled out and writhed as he tried to quickly get back up so Sendak couldn’t immediately punch a hole through his chest. But he knew Sandak. Which he really wish he didn’t. Sendak was a sadist. He’d play around with Keith for a while until he grew tired and then he would take him away to be publicly punished for all the empire to see.

The sick smile never left Sendak’s face. Hell, if anything it got wider. “You’re a fucking piece of shit you little parasite. You know that right? You’re not worthy to have Galra blood flowing in your veins. The only good thing about humans is how durable they are. This entire fucking realm is full of such interesting material. We’ll trip down every last human for their parts, piece by fucking piece.”

Keith steadied himself and left his Galra side show through. If he somehow managed to get close enough he’d take out his other eye. He needed to do something, anything, but this was Sendak. He always ended up besting Keith somehow in a fight. Hell, he only managed to survive their last encounter because Lance was there.

Sendak seemed to enjoy seeing Keith go full Galra as he clapped his hands. “Oh, how precious.” He cooed. “You’re gonna fight me like a Galra? How sweet. Does your mate know he’s sleeping with some disgusting half-breed scum, or do you have some sense of dignity and don’t show him your Galra form?”

“Lance?” Shit. This was even worse than he thought. Sendak knew about Lance. Lance was in danger. Again. He was in danger again because of him. Without thinking he lunged at the Galra and attempted to strike him. But Sendak easily blocked him. He blocked every, single, fucking, strike.

He then grabbed hold of Keith’s arm and punched him hard in the face, stunning him slightly. It had been a while since Keith had been punched in the face by another Galra. He was pretty sure he split his lip and maybe knocked some teeth loose.

“Pathetic.” Growled Sendak.
Punch.

“Weak.”

Punch.

“Traitor.”

Punch.

“Half-breed.”

Punch.

“Die already.”

He punched Keith so hard in the chest it launched him a few feet into the air and sent his sword flying. He hit the ground with a painful thump. Something had to have fractured or at least dislocated inside him. Maybe an organ ruptured. That would have been his luck. He couldn’t even tell what part of him hurt more. His face or every part of his fucking body.

Sendak loomed over him and harshly started to kick him in the chest and stomach. “You’re a fucking pathetic shit!” He snarled. “You could have been something! You could have been anything! But no, you were just a little shit.” He grabbed Keith by the front of his shirt and slammed him into the ground. He felt like he was going to die. This was it. Sendak was going to kill him.

Actually, no. He wouldn’t die here. He’d just get beaten within an inch of his life. Then it would go on to the public execution. The Galra had many ways of executing their traitors. It could range anywhere from a simple beheading to a more elaborate torture. Usually involving getting ripped apart. Yeah, that was totally going to happen to him.

Suddenly Sendak went to slam his robotic claw arm into his chest. In a panic, Keith somehow still had the agility and found enough strength to grab hold of it and try to keep it away. He was running on adrenaline at the moment. If he wavered for even a second Sendak would do something to stop him from fighting back and take him away. Sever his spine, cut the tendons in his legs, or break his legs. Any of which would work for him.

Sendak laughed as Keith struggled under him. He was obviously loving the fear and pain he was causing Keith and just wanted to twist that knife in as deep as it would go. “You know what?” He sneered. “I’m going to beat you within an inch of your life, and then I’m going to find that human you’ve shacked up with. I’ll beat him to death right in front of you. How long do you think it will be until he starts begging for death?”

Keith’s heart was racing in his chest. Sendak was going to hurt Lance? It was one thing for him to go after him, he was technically a traitor to the empire, but Lance wasn’t a part of this. Not at all, but Sendak was going to hurt him.

“I’ll make him curse your name.” Purred Sendak in a sadistic manner. “I’ll make him cry and scream for your death. I’ll destroy his fucking mind. Drive him insane. Make him a dangerous lunatic and set him on you just to see if you will defend yourself or let him kill you? Would you like that? I know you would.”

Keith looked over at his blade. It was too far away for him to reach. He whimpered and tried to push the claw away from his chest when he felt the clacking of his bracelet against the metal. The bracelet. The bayard. He silently thanked Allura as he tried to work the bead down to the palm of his hand so
he could properly activate it and free himself.

“And if you can’t kill him when he’s fucking mental-” Said Sendak was the most monstrous glint in his eye. “- I’ll just tie him up and let the closest military base have fun with him. He’s already used to getting fucked by some fucking half-galra. Shouldn’t be too difficult to break him in for everyone else to use.”

The bead rolled into his hand and the sword quickly formed. Without hesitation he sliced through that stupid robot arm. Sparks were flying and some strange liquids sputtered out. He pushed Sendak back and started swinging wildly. He didn’t really care what he was hitting. He just wanted to hit Sendak to stop him. He felt blood flying and hitting his face.

By the time he stopped he was crouched over Sendak, his bayard long since abandoned when he managed to get the man to the ground. He had started to rip into any flesh he could with his claws and teeth. He looked like he’d been mauled, which was technically true. Along with the deep cuts and scratches along his face, torso and arms, Sendak was missing a large part of his cheek exposing all his teeth and gums along one side of his face. However there was a sick smirk on his face and he laughed. The sick fucker actually laughed.

“Huh, didn’t think you actually had it in you…” He laughed. Sendak looked up at Keith and grinned, showing off what was left of his bloody teeth. “To think… To think a disgusting half-breed like you… Ha…” They coughed and spat up some blood. “You think you’ve won because I’m dead? They will come for you… We’ll all come for you now. We know who you are. We know where you are. We know all your weaknesses... In short, you're fucked.”

Adrenaline was still pumping in Keith’s veins and he swung his sword down one last time. His sword cut cleanly through Sendak’s neck, severing his head from his shoulders. Finally, Sendak was dead. However he was right, this wasn’t over. Now that he was dead whatever sensors inside the Galra’s suit would go off and they would come for his body. He needed to get out of here.

Keith stumbled to his helmet and put it on. He then went and slowly got his bike back up and climbed on to it. He continued to drive down the road and towards the town. The adrenaline had finally ebbed away and now he was able to feel all the pain in his body. Everything hurt and he was pretty sure that Sendak had broken several bones. He didn’t know if he could make it back to Lance’s apartment. He had to go to the closest place he knew.

His mind was practically on auto pilot at this point and he hardly even realise he turned into the alleyway behind the row of shops. He got off the bike, took off his helmet and stumbled towards the back door. His vision became slightly blurred as he reached for the door handle.

Keith’s body swayed and shook. He missed the door handle and face planted the door, hard. He slid down the wooden door and hit the floor. He didn’t have the strength to try and get up. He was tired. Way too tired. Sendak really did a number on him.

He felt the door open up and heard what he assumed as Shiro calling out his name in shock. His hearing felt a little muffled but he felt Shiro’s arms wrap around him and he felt safe, which was what he desperately needed right now.

He heard Shiro talking to someone else, but he didn’t give a shit at the moment. He was just tired and needed somewhere safe to stay till he could get back to Lance. Suddenly he was no longer ins Shiro’s arms and he was on the couch. Maybe. He wasn’t sure. His vision wasn’t the best right now.

He rubbed his eyes and slowly started to focus on who was in the room. Two figures. Shiro and… Adam? The fuck was Adam doing here? Maybe he and Shiro were patching things up finally or
something? He wished he got to talk to Shiro some more about Adam, but now he felt all kinds of screwed. He was still in Galra form when he knocked on Shiro’s door with his face. Now even Adam knew he wasn’t human. He was probably freaking out now and yelling at Shiro about him being an alien. Total bullshit, but shit happens.

“Lance…” He murmured. “Lance…”

“You want Lance here?” He heard Shiro ask, but is sounded distant.

“Okay. Just try and stay awake. I’ll call him.”

He heard Shiro walk away. Keith then heard Adam awkwardly clear his throat. “Well… This actually explains a lot.” Keith couldn’t help but chuckle and smile at that. Looks like he had to fill Adam in about what was happening too.
Within minutes of Lance getting the call from Shiro, Lance was at his place and by Keith’s side. He looked like he’d been put through a gauntlet. He had a split lip, black eye, and a bloody nose. And he didn’t even know how badly the rest of Keith’s body was yet. In an instant he took the first aid kit from Shiro and started to patch Keith up.

“L-Lance?” He muttered.

“Shush love.” Lance would say as he quickly went to work patching him up. He didn’t even notice that Keith was in his Galra form or that Adam was in the room. When he had finally calmed down he sat next to him on the floor and gently squeezed his hand. “... What happened?”

“Sendak.” Muttered Keith. “Sendak found me.”

Lance frowned. “The big guy with the claw that electrocuted you that time?”

“Same.”

“Oh shit…”

Adam awkwardly cleared his throat. “Um, sorry interrupting but can I please get the short version of what’s going on?”

“Keith’s birth mother is a being from an alternate dimension.” Said Shiro. “Keith’s half Galra. The Galra are playing the long game to invade earth. Keith was part of their army but defected to a Galra resistance group, the group his mum was a part of. Keith got injured and was technically on vacation when we met up again and then stuff happened, Lance found out about Keith being Galra. Keith went back to the resistance group, Galra kidnapped Lance, Keith rescued Lance, they got together, Lance got kidnapped again, more Galra stuff happened, and now we’re here. Oh and Sendak is a high ranking Galra Commander who is really, really sadistic.”

“Okay. Got it… Wait, so this is why you didn’t want to call CPS?” Asked Adam.

“... Yeah?”

Adam gave Shiro a weird look and shook his head. “Shiro, you are such an idiot…”

Lance proceed to ignore the ex lovers and kissed Keith’s slightly swollen cheek. “What happened to Sendak? Is he still following you? What?”

Keith flinched slightly and tried to sit up, but he quickly gave up on that. “He somehow found out everything… He found out I was still alive. He knew I was Yurak. He knew I work for the Blades. He knows that we’re mates… He knew all about you.”
His boyfriend squeezed his hand and nervously bit his bottom lip. “I… He found me and beat the fuck out of me, which yeah, it sucked but then he… He threatened to hurt you… So I killed him.”

“Oh my god…” Despite knowing how violent the Galra could be it had never crossed Lance’s mind that Keith would or could actually kill someone. Which in hindsight was really stupid. “Are you okay?”

“Honestly? No.” Keith very carefully managed to pull himself up into a proper sitting position and groaned in pain. “I killed Sendak. People are going to notice… I don’t know who else knows. Shit… You’re not safe now… Shit… This is all my fault…” Keith was quickly working himself up into a fit of tears.”

Lance gently tried to shush him as he gently ran his fingers through his hair in what he hoped was a soothing way. “It’s okay Keith. This isn’t your fault. You were very careful. You were so, so careful. Please don’t cry. It’s okay.”

“No it’s not Lance. We’re fucked. I fucked us over so badly… I’m so sorry…”

“…” Lance carefully hugged Keith and gently rubbed his back, doing his best to avoid the spots where he tensed up. “It’s okay Keith. It’s okay… Just take a deep breath and calm down… We’ll figure out what to do, okay? We both just need to think calmly.”

Keith nodded and hid his face in his hands, quietly sniffling. He was very clearly terrified. Whatever Sendak had said to him had clearly shaken Keith, and the repercussions for killing Sendak wasn’t making him feel better either.

What could they actually do now though? If more Galra knew about him and Keith then they were both in very real danger. They were all in danger. They would have to leave. Maybe Kolivan would be nice and let them stay at the base? Sure Keith was already a member of the Blade of Marmora, but would he be allowed? An honorary Blade? Maybe the cleaner for the Blade? A cook? There was no way they would let him fight. He wasn’t built for that.

But then there was his family. He’d have to just get up and leave. He wouldn’t be able to let them know what’s going on. How could he just leave like that? Everyone would be crushed not knowing what happened to him. He had no idea what to do. Lance didn’t want to just vanish, but the less people that knew he had to leave the better.

“... Do you think Kolivan will take me in?” He asked Keith.

Keith gave him a confused look. “Huh?”

“W-well you’re part of the Blade so you can go back to them and hide, right? I’m just…” Lance laughed a little and felt like this was going to force them apart. “I could clean up the training room? Maybe?”

“Lance… You want to run away?”

He smiled weakly and nodded. “Yeah. If we stay here we’re both fucked aren’t we? We just have to pack up everything and leave right now. Right?”

“... I can’t ask you to leave your family.”

“But they know I’m your mate.” Argued Lance. “They will find me and try to use me against you
somehow, right?”

“... Yes... But you have a life here. An actual family and not just... Not whatever I have.” Muttered Keith. “I’m sorry. I really screwed up your life.”

“You didn’t.” Lance tried to reassure him. “You didn’t screw anything up. I love you Keith. Please believe me.”

“I do believe you. Which is why this is so hard…”

“Okay, that’s enough you two.” Said Shiro. “Here is what we are going to do, you two are going to sit here and drink some tea. I’m going to call Allura and see if she can help somehow. Let’s not do anything too drastic yet.”

The two nodded in agreement and Shiro walked into his room to have a private talk with Allura. Which meant that the two of them were alone with Adam. He looked like he had many questions, but knew this wasn’t the right time to say anything.

“So um…” He muttered. “Apart from everything that just happened, everything okay?”

Lance shrugged. “It’s fine I guess? Oh, we’ll have to go back to the apartment and get Cosmo. He’ll be so worried when he sees what’s happened. He’s gonna act all protective of you.”

Keith smiled a little and nodded. “Yeah. Yeah he is. I-” Keith sneezed and got a blood all over himself and some on Lance’s hands. “... Sorry.”

Lance just smiled and helped clean him up. “It’s okay Keith. Not your fault.”

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Keith felt like shit. Everything was all his fault. Lance was willing to leave everything behind for them. For him. It made him want to cry. He didn’t deserve to have someone like Lance. He should just leave him. He’s ruining his life. He’s ruining everything.

He hardly even noticed when Allura showed up, or Coran and Romelle. Then Allura ended up projecting some hologram onto the wall or something? And Hunk and Pidge were at the Blade’s HQ with Kolivan and Krolia? TThis day just kept getting weirder and weirder for him. There was a bit of fussing and explaining what was going on for Adam’s sake since he was still in the room and had kind of just been thrown into this situation.

But once that was all out of the way Keith finally got to speak. He explained how after he had finished up with Lotor he was driving back, but Sendak had somehow found him. He knew all about him. About him defecting to the Blades, how he was Yurak, how he now had a mate. They had been compromised and he had no idea how deep this ran or how much the Galra now knew.

Allura looked extremely worried. “... Kolivan? Do you think this is what Lotor meant the other day?”

“It is possible.” Said Kolivan. “The other day Lotor informed us that there was a major data breach at his base. Because of this he has decided to push ahead with his plan to take out the empire.”

Keith groaned a little. “He could have warned me that this happened…”

“You did your best.” Said Krolia quickly. “We are very impressed that you were able to eliminate Sendak all by yourself.”
“... You know…” Said Coran. “This all seems a little strange to me.”

“How so?” Asked Allura.

“Well, Lotor had a major data breach but didn’t even bother to inform us what information might have been taken.” Said Coran. “I understand that the Galra are secretive, but this seems counter productive at this point. Also, if the Galra had an idea of where Lotor was wouldn’t they attack first and as questions later?”

“I totally agree.” Said Lance. “Lotor is up to something. There is something shady about him and I don’t like it.”

“We shouldn’t cut to conclusions.” Said Allura quickly. “Lotor is… He probably had his reasons.”

“I agree with Lance.” Said Kolivan. “Lotor is acting highly suspicious, even for a Galra… We have not fully trusted him since the start of this.”

“What if Lotor’s plan doesn’t work?” Asked Keith. “I killed Sendak! They know about me! They will come for me, and if not me they’ll go after Lance! What then? What am I meant to do?”

“You can come back to the Blade.” Said Kolivan calmly. “You can bring Lance too. We’ll find something for him to do here.”

Keith felt his blood starting to boil. He didn’t want that. He never wanted that. “That’s no-”

“We’ll do it.” Said Lance calmly. “We’ll grab what we can and leave as soon as possible. The sooner we go the better. Right?”

“Agreed.” Said Krolia. “We can set up a larger room for the two of you and can discuss further living arrangements when you two get here. The sooner the two of you disappear the better. I can go to your apartment and collect Cosmo and whatever items that you need.”

“Mind if I throw in my two cents here?” Asked Pidge. They were holding some kind of Galran data pad and quickly scrolling through it. “Okay, so I have been familiarizing myself with Galra coding and what not since I’ve been working with Regris and I have to say Galra tech is very, very difficult to hack. Not impossible, but just breaching one fire wall would take at least five years… So how long would it take for someone to hack Lotor’s base? They would have had to be here at for years.”

“So what are you saying?” Asked Shiro. “Are you suggesting that one of Lotor’s generals or Lotor himself gave the Galra information on Keith? Why would they do that?”

A deep scowl made its way across Kolivan’s face he thought over this information. “This is not good… Either way, Yurak needs to come back to the Blade so Ulaz can give him a proper medical. You need a professional to look you over. Lance, you are more than welcome to accompany him. We will set up a small gate for you two to get through. We will have a stretcher ready for you when you get here.”

Keith nodded a little and with Lance’s help the two of them slowly made their way outside. Everything hurt and Keith just felt terrible. Everything was his fault. Things would have been so much easier for everyone if he hadn’t come here in the first place. Things would have been so much easier for Lance. He would have been safe from everything Galra. He stumbled forward a little and felt his eyes roll into the back of his head.

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After Keith had passed out for a second time it only took Lance a matter of seconds to throw them both through the gate once Kolivan had activated a small one right outside in the alleyway. Immediately Keith was taken away to the med bay.

According to Ulaz, Keith had minor internal bleeding, fractured ribs, a fractured skull and a concussion. He’d need a lot of time to rest and recover from the physical and mental strain of fighting and killing Sendak.

Lance felt like absolute shit. He didn’t know what to do. He knew that Keith felt horrible about Lance having to completely uproot his life for him. But that wasn’t Keith’s choice to make. Lance wanted to do this. There was nothing Lance wouldn’t do for Keith if he could help it If it was physically possible for him he would do it.

About half an hour after he and Keith had arrived in the medbay Krolia, Kolivan, Hunk and Pidge came in. Krolia was quickly by Keith’s side, gently holding his hand. “How are you Yurak? Ulaz did give you painkillers, right?”

Keith grunted and gave him a thumbs up. “Yeah.”

Kolivan nodded a little and took his communicator out of his pocket and quickly searched for something. “A few ticks after you two come in we received a transmission from one of Lotor’s generals. A woman named Acxa. I think you should hear this. I already played it for everyone else…”

Kolivan played the audio of Lotor and Sendak talking. They heard everything from Sendak threatening Lotor, to Lotor taunting Sendak, to finally Lotor handing Keith over to Sendak on a silver platter.

Lance felt vindicated that his suspicions about Lotor were correct. He was a backstabbing, double crossing bastard. He knew they couldn’t trust him. He just knew it. There were too many red flags. Maybe he should trust his gut instinct more?


He tried to pull himself up, but Krolia held him down. “No. Rest.”

“FUCK OFF!” He yelled at her. “HE DESTROYED LANCE’S LIFE! BECAUSE OF HIM LANCE HAD TO LEAVE EVERYTHING BEHIND!”

“Um, he kind of also betrayed you.” Said Lance.

“I don’t care about that!” Snapped Keith. “I was prepared for Lotor doing something shitty to me and betraying me, but he went after you. He put you in danger… I’m going to kill him for that…”

Lance was shocked at how angry Keith was that Lotor had endangered him when Keith was the one that got attacked. Keith was an idiot. Some big, stupid, self sacrificing idiot that seriously needed to think of himself. Even if it was just so he’d be able to heal enough to go and fight Lotor.

Suddenly Keith’s head fell back and his eyes looked kind of glassy. “Ooooo, that’s the good stuff…” He mumbled.

Lance looked over to see Kolivan pressing a button on a machine hooked up to Keith. “…Just a little something to help him relax a bit more. He seemed a little on edge.” Lance nodded and gently ran his fingers through Keith’s hair. They could sort this all out once Keith was better. Hopefully that
wouldn’t take too long. As much as Keith wanted to kill Lotor, Lance wanted to get in a few good
punches too before Keith finished him off.
So close! The end is almost here! I can see it! I know how I want this to end! But I have to write it which is fucking lame! So much effort! BAH! Kudos and comment when you can. Enjoy :D

Lotor had a feeling that his plan probably hadn’t worked out the way he had hoped. Several hours after Keith left the scanners at his base had picked up an emergency signal that the Galra would typically associate with a Galra suddenly dying. If he had to make an educated guess he’d have to say that Keith had managed to kill Sendak.

Which was not part of his plan at all. He had hoped that Sendak would catch Keith, which in turn would force everyone else within their group would be inspired to work harder and faster to defeat the Galra and save Keith. If Keith happened to die because of this than he would have become a martyr. Like thousands of martyrs before them he could wave Keith’s corpse around like a prop to push them forward.

But no. Keith killed Sendak. Which was annoying, but Lotor could work with that. He could twist it around a little to escape the conflict relatively unscathed. Sure there would be plenty of backlash. He kind of expected it. Especially if Sendak told them anything about how he came about his information.

Suddenly an alarm went off and Lotor almost jumped in surprise and Zethrid’s voice rang out over the intercoms “Everyone to the comms room immediately! This is not a drill!”

Lotor quickly made his way to the comms room where the rest of his generals were already standing around. They all looked worried. “What is going on?” He asked.

“We’re totally screwed.” Said Ezor.

Zethrid nodded in agreement. “We’ve been compromised. After whatever happened with that signal happened several of Zarkon’s drones got sent out to scan the area. They used some ground penetrating radar and picked up our base. They know we’re here. They are slowly gathering their army.”

Acxa frowned. “This is not good. We can’t take on an army by ourselves. What are we meant to do? We can’t just leave either. The plan is so close to being complete.” Narti nodded in agreement.

“I see…” Muttered Lotor. This was bad and had a high chance it wouldn’t work, but he needed to do this. Zarkon couldn’t ruin everything now. Not when he was so close. “Call Kolivan and Allura. We need someone to help fight of Zarkon.”

Acxa seemed hesitant, but called the two. They answered the call almost immediately, but they didn’t look too pleased to see him. Keith must have told them something incriminating. He’d have to try and bluff his way out of their frustrations.

“I am glad you were able to answer so quickly.” He said. “I am sorry to have called you suddenly
but this is an emergency.”

"What kind of emergency?” Asked Koliavan.

“Zarkon knows of my location and by the looks of it he is planning to storm my base.” Said Lotor calmly. “If he does this than my plan to take him down will not work. Zarkon will continue to spread through the multiverse and we will all be doomed.”

"Do you really think we will trust you?” Snapped Allura. "After everything you did to Keith?”

“... I see you heard about that.” Said Lotor calmly. “I do regret my actions I didn’t expect Sendak to jump on that information so quickly. It was meant to be a diversion. I needed to give Sendak something to distract him so I could complete the plan. It is almost done, but with Zarkon’s troops gathering and threatening to knock down my door the plan will be dashed.” Said Lotor. “Look, I know you might not trust me at the moment and might want me to suffer, I do not care. My plan is the only plan we have. I will gladly take whatever punishment is necessary, but right now we could all die and Zarkon will win. We can all collectively agree that my father can not win at any cost!”

Allura and Kolivan were quiet for a moment. Neither of them seemed to want to get involved in this, but both knew that Lotor’s plan, even if they didn’t know the full extent, was the only one they had. If he died they would have nothing, and if anything Zarkon would have more than enough to destroy them. They had no choice. They had to help him.

“Okay.” Said Kolivan. “What kind of fight are we in for? Will we be able to open a direct gate into your base?”

“You can’t be serious.” Said Allura. “Kolivan you saw what Lotor’s betrayal did to Keith. I would have thought that you of all people would-”

“Princess, the Blade of Marmora has been fighting against Zarkon since before the multiverse was discovered. We are completely dedicated to ending his rule. By any means, and I mean by any means.” Said Kolivan. “When this is over then we will discuss an appropriate punishment for Lotor. Right now we have to focus on Zarkon.”

“Please do not fight amongst yourselves.” Said Lotor calmly. “Kolivan, I need people to help my generals to fend off the ground troops. I’ll also need your best engineers and technicians for the final part of the plan. It would also be a good idea if as many Alteans were here as possible. If you wouldn’t mind Princess Allura.”

She did not look pleased at all. “Why?”

“There is a moderate chance that there will be an influx of quintessence that will be dangerous to my generals.” Explained Lotor. “Because of this sudden development we do not have any time to grow adequate quintessence filters, and me being half Altean I am not physically able to filter it. I refuse to have my generals survive an onslaught of firepower only to die from radiation poisoning. Please Allura. This is bigger than this. I will apologise to Keith and even let him slay me if he feels it will absolve me of my transgressions. But after this. Please.”

“... Fine. I still do not like this.” She grumbled.

Lotor nodded and smiled. “Thank you. I will send you the coordinates to open a gate within our base. I am unsure how long until it will be until they actually fight, but please get here as soon as possible.” He ended the call there and sent the coordinates to them. He then turned to his generals and they all looked very surprised and kind of confused.
“... You betrayed Keith?” Asked Ezor.

Lotor sighed. “It was to buy us some more time to finish the plan. I will explain myself more thoroughly later. Right now we have to fortify the base and monitor the ground troops that are starting to gather. We are so close.”

His generals still seemed a little hesitant. But after a few seconds Narti nodded and went to a monitor. She quickly started typing away and started to lock down all non essential hallways, rooms, and wings. That kicked everyone else into gear and the generals quickly went about their duties.

As Lotor watched them quickly work, he couldn’t help but smile. Things were a little rushed, but it was all going to plan. He could do this. He could win.

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Kolivan went and talked to everyone, still gathered in the medbay, what was going on with Lotor. Needless to say no one was overly excited about helping him. Keith was completely against it and yelling out really random things since Kolivan gave him more painkillers.

“Fuck that purple bitch!” He slurred. “Fuck him! Fucking bastard!”

Lance just sighed and gently patted Keith’s arm. “I agree with what Keith means. We shouldn’t be helping him.”

“Bitch!” Slurred Keith.

Krolia frowned as he thought about this. “As much as I hate Lotor and what he did, if his plan works, then we will deal with him.”

“He almost killed your kid!” Snapped Lance. “You can’t trust him!”

Pidge frowned. She didn’t look happy at all. “Lance, I’m going to have to agree with Kolivan.”

“PIDGE?!”

“Look, Lotor is a piece of shit but at the moment he’s the lesser of two evils. Who is worse? Lotor, a guy that got Keith beaten up, or Zarkon, the guy who’s been going from reality to reality committing genocide without a second thought?”

Lance hated how she was right. How they were right. They had to side with Lotor. At least for the moment. “Fine… What do we do?”

Keith groaned and tried to sit up. “Gonna kick some Galra ass!”

Krolia easily pushed him back down with one hand. “Keith can’t fight.”

“Agreed.” Said Kolivan. “I will be gathering the best Blades we have for this mission. This also includes you two, Pidge and Hunk.”

Hunk was taken aback. “Us? Why us?”

“Lotor requested the best techs we have along with any engineers available.” He said. “You two proved that you are more than capable when you helped fix our gate problem and our power issues.”

Kolivan looked over at Lance and Keith. “You two will stay here. Lance, your job is to keep Keith from running into the fight. He needs to rest and recover. As he is now he is a liability to everyone. Understood?”
“Yes sir.” Lance wasn’t happy that Pidge and Hunk were getting dragged into this, but at least he and Keith would be okay.

Kolivan nodded and gestured for everyone to follow him out of the room to give Lance and Keith some alone time. Lance sighed a little and slumped into his seat next to Keith. This was crazy. His focus should have been on Keith but now he was worried about Zarkon.

Poor Keith was still kind of loopy and was moving his hand around to try and grab Lance’s. He smiled a little and held his hand. “Are you okay?”

“I fuuuuuuuucked up…” He mumbled. “Sooooooo fucking bad…”

“It’s okay Keith. You did nothing wrong. None of this is your fault.”

The doors to the medbay opened up and Ulaz walked in. He was carrying a clipboard and walked over to them. “How are things going? How is… Who upped his painkillers?”

“Kolivan.”

Ulaz grumbled and quickly hit some buttons on his machine. “I tell him to stop messing with my machines… But no. Of course it’s just a suggestion…” Once he was satisfied that the machine was back to how it should be, he went over to a fridge and grabbed an IV bag filled with a milky, slightly yellow looking liquid. He hooked it up to Keith’s IV drip.

“… What’s that?” Asked Lance.

“Stem cells.” Said Ulaz calmly. “We have found that this is a very effective treatment for the kind of injuries that Yurak has sustained. He should be up and about in an hour or two… I wouldn’t recommend doing anything too stressful. If he breaks his bones again he will have to settle for it healing the old fashioned way. Setting it and covering it in plaster.”

Lance nodded. “Okay. I’ll make sure he stays here and takes all his stem cells.”

“Good.” Ulaz looked down at Keith. “Do you understand what I just said?”

“Yesh…”

“Good.” He looked back at Lance. “Please take care of him… I have to go to the briefing now.” He left the room.

Lance looked down at Keith and smiled at him. “Well that’s good. You’ll be fine in a little bit.”

Keith nodded and looked up at the ceiling. “We’ll have to join the fight.”

“Why?” Asked Lance. “It sounds like they have it covered.”

“You don’t understand.” Said Keith. “After everything that’s happened… This is the final stand. My whole life I’ve been waiting for this and now… I can’t sit out.”

“Your bones are broken and you have some pretty horrible internal injuries.” Said Lance. “You’re going to have to sit this one out please.”

“I can’t!”

“You have to!” Snapped Lance. “Damn it Keith you almost died! What the hell would have happened if you died? I have no idea what I’d do! We’re mate’s aren’t we? Fucking hell Keith I
don’t want you to throw your life away!”

Keith looked at him in surprise for a few moments before he looked suddenly guilty. “I’m sorry… You know how big this is for me… I just feel so useless… I don’t want to be useless… I have to be useful and do something… If I don’t help out now then Kolivan will–”

“He won’t kick you out of the Blades.” Reassured Lance. “Kolivan wants you alive… I want you alive. Everyone wants you alive… Please stay alive for me. For you. For us… Please…” He knew he sounded desperate right now, but he was genuinely scared Keith was going to do something stupid and then that would be it. No more Keith. He didn’t want that and he hoped that Keith didn’t want that either.

“…” Keith sighed a little and closed his eyes. “I’m sorry… I just… I need to prove that I… I can’t be thrown away again…”

“Keith…” Lance squeezed his hand and gently brought it to his lips. He gently kissed the back of his hand. “You are not going to get thrown away. I promise… I um… When this is all over and you’re better I want to be bonded mates with you.”

In an instant Keith’s eyes were on him. “What? Are you serious? Y-you want to do that? With me?”

Lance chuckled and nodded. “Yeah. I want to be bonded mates with you. I’ve wanted it for a while… I was going to ask you about it after you were done helping Lotor. Hell, I was going to ask you if you would be willing to look for rings with me so we could have a wedding ceremony… If you wanted.”

“Wow…” Muttered Keith. “You want to… You really want to do that with me?”

“Yeah. Why wouldn’t I?” Lance smiled and squeezed his hand again. “Keith, ever since you first walked into my tattoo shop and watched Shiro get his ink touched up, I knew there was no one else for me.”

Keith smiled and rolled his eyes. “You didn’t even like me like that then.”

“Hmmmm, totally did.” Teased Lance. “… Keith. You are my world now. I want to stay with you for as long as we can.”

“…”

“Keith?”

His boyfriend smiled a little at him and gently squeezed his hand back. “If you’ll have me, when this is over, we’ll become bonded mates, and get married. All that stuff.” Lance’s heart fluttered slightly when Keith said that. He hoped Lotor’s plan would work and be over soon. He wanted that to be over so he and Keith wouldn’t have to be apart again.
The Blade had entered the coordinates and made a gate to Lotor’s base. They were quickly greeted by Ezor who ushered the Galra along with Hunk and Pidge to a much larger room in the base. In the center of the room was a spinning disc that looked like it was going a thousand miles a second. To Krolia it seemed like a Lotor had converted an old quintessence generator into some kind of gate? But it didn’t look very stable.

Ezor pointed over to some machinery that Zethrid and Narti were trying to fix. “So, you humans are good at tech stuff right? We need those filters working. Can you help?”

“Should be able to.” Said Pidge.

“Yeah, but what about you know, the Galra about to destroy us?”

Kolivan gestured to Regris. “Regris will have your back if anyone comes for you. It will be okay.” Regris nodded and walked with Pidge and Hunk to where Zethrid and Narti were. “Where is Lotor?”

“Control room.” Ezor gestured to a large glass observation window. “I’ll show you where it is.” She quickly lead them to the room where Lotor was quickly typing away at a console. He looked up at them and nodded before he went back to his work. “So… What now boss?” Ezor asked.

“Please go back to your post. Allura and her entourage will be here soon. Please bring them right here.”

“Will do.” She quickly walked out of the room.

When she was gone Kolivan quickly took charge. “Lotor, what is the plan?”

“Simple.” Said Lotor. “We have to hold back Zarkon’s forces while the finishing touches are put in place for my dark-quintessence bomb to work. There is so little left to do, but it has to be perfect. If even one thing is out of place this could explode and this entire planet could be obliterated.”

Krolia frowned when she heard this. She did not like this at all. Lotor’s plan was risky and the fact that if they failed it would mean the end of this world she didn’t know how to feel about it. They couldn’t fail this mission.

Lotor showed them a map and where they needed to go. Kolivan quickly dispatched everyone to key locations. As Krolia went to her position she happened to run into Ezor and the Alteans. Allura and Coran waved at her in passing. She nodded back as she hurried to her position.

She rounded the corner and saw Romelle. The Altean was standing in front of a door with a very unfocused look on her face. It concerned her to see them like that. “Romelle?”
“...” She mumbled something under her breath.

“Romelle?” She put her hand on the Altean’s shoulder and made her squeak in surprise. “Are you okay?”

“O-oh! Hey Krolia. What are you doing here?”

Krolia was instantly concerned about her. “I am here to fight Zarkon. What are you doing here?”

“Allura said we have-”

“No I mean here. In front of this door.”

“Oh…” Romelle looked back at the door and put her hand against it. “I… I don’t know. I just… We walked past here and I was drawn to it… Do you know what is behind the door?”

Krolia looked up and saw that it had Cloning Laboratory written in Galra above it. It gave the Galra a sinking feeling in her guts. “You want to go in there, don’t you?”

“Yes…” Romelle pressed her hands against the door. “I… I need to see what is back there. I have to get in there. I just… I have to.”

Krolia knew this was going to be a bad idea. “Hey,” Called out Acxa. “What are you two doing?”

“I have to get in here.” Said Romelle. “Ever since I came back here I just… I’ve been drawn here. Please open the door.”

Acxa looked a little hesitant but she opened the door. That surprised Krolia a lot. She hadn’t expected Acxa to actually do it. She probably should have been telling them to get into position or something. Acxa seemed like the most dedicated of all of Lotor’s generals. Something must have changed recently.

As soon as the door opened up Romelle raced in.Seconds later she let out a horrified scream. Krolia was by her side and instantly saw what scared her so much. There were several heads, Romelle’s heads, in jars. Most of them weren’t complete either. Many of them had pieces cut out of them. It was a horror show and confirmed the sinking feeling Krolia felt in her stomach.

“W-what is this?” Asked Romelle. “What is this?”

Acxa sighed sadly. “Clones. These are all clones. Your DNA was harvested and used to make clones. We need clones to fix our base. They are basic building parts since getting the mechanical components are difficult for us… We’ve had to revert back to the basics. Which is biotech. We have been cloning you for generations.”

Romelle looked like she was going to faint. “Generations? Am I… Am I even the original?”

Acxa shook her head. “The original was a viable bone marrow sample salvaged from a rib bone. We don’t even know if your real name is Romelle. We have memory implants to help your body develop and grow in a way that will keep it healthy. You started off life as a scraping. Not even a scraping from the original sample. A clone of a clone.”

Romelle slowly sank to the floor in stunned shock. “Th-that’s why my mind is… Why I’m…”

“Having trouble remembering?” Asked Acxa. “Not surprising. Clones are never meant to wake up from their dream… I was concerned about Lotor waking you up, but we had created the wake
sequence just for that reason.”

“So Zarkon never destroyed my home because I never had a home… I was already… Where did he get the original samples?”

“We stole many from Zarkon when we left.” Said Acxa. “I am sorry, but you are one of the original Alteans from Altea before it was wiped out by Zarkon.”

“Why are you telling me this?”

Acxa shrugged. “I don’t think you know the gravity of the situation we are all in at the moment. If Lotor’s plan works then everyone is safe. If he fails we will all be slaughtered in an instant. Worst case this entire realm is vaporised and if there is any open gate in this universe the residual energy will flow through it and vaporise every other reality. It will never stop either. It will only charge up and get stronger with every pass through a new gate… If something goes wrong I thought you should at least be able to live your last hours as the real Romelle and not the Romelle we made you think you were.” Her communicator buzzed and she quickly glanced down at it. “… We have to go now. Allura and Coran want to know where you are.”

“I… I can’t go.” Said Romelle quietly. “I… Lotor is a monster… He used me to get Allura and the blade involved with his plan, didn’t he?”

“It seems that way.” Said Krolia. She gestured for Acxa to leave. The general frowned a little but complied with her wishes. When she was gone Krolia sat by Romelle. “So… You’re a clone huh?”

She sniffled a little. “Yeah, but I guess it isn’t a surprise… Why should it be? I… Nothing has made sense for the longest time… My whole family is just… It’s gone… I have no one.”

“That’s not true.” Krolia put her hand on Romelle’s shoulder. “Romelle, look at me. You are an intelligent you woman. Who gives a fuck that you’re a clone? How the hell does that make who you are any less Romelle? Do you think Allura will reject you because you’re a clone? Coran? What about the humans? Do you think any of them are that shallow? I must admit I had slight suspicions, but in all honesty, who cares how you were made?” She stood up and held her hand out to the girl. “It’s not where you come from that defines you. It’s what you do with the life you were given. I’m Galra. I should be on Zarkon’s side, but I’m not. I will stop Zarkon at the cost of my life so that people like you, people like my son, everyone that isn’t Galra can live free.”

She looked up at Krolia with tear filled eyes. She tried in vain to try and stop them from falling, but it was no use. “B—but I’m not me. I never was me. I-I’m what he wanted me to me.”

“That stopped the second you got unhooked from your incubator and set free.” Reminded Krolia. “You now have agency. You have a choice. You matter. Every experience you have had since you met us has been your own and will always be yours. Lotor had no hand in it. He has not and will not ever be able to control your life ever again.”

Romelle hesitated for a moment, but took Krolia’s hand and pulled herself up. When she was on her feet she looked over at the other incubation pods lined up against the wall. “… When this is over we’re freeing them all.”

Krolia was slightly surprised by the statement but nodded in agreement. “The Blade will do what they can to rehome everyone here. Now come on. Let’s go.” They left the laboratory and Romelle went to Allura and Coran, after getting some instructions, and Krolia took up her position, quickly meeting up with Ilun.
They chuckled a little as they prepared their gun. “What took you so long there Krolia? Get lost?”

“I had to check on Romelle.” She said as she armed herself and got into position. “She is a clone of a long dead Altean.” She put on her mask and quickly tuned into their comms system

“Oh… That sucks.” Ilune pressed a button on her mask “Team Char is in position.”

“Team Nu in position”

“Team Har ready to go.”

“Karak standing by.”

“Dak waiting for orders.”

“Ozorot have secured the main East hall.”

“Ree have taken position in hydroponics.”

“Team Verm has taken the West wing.

“Urg is waiting orders.”

“Duur is standing by.”

There was a moment of silence over the intercoms and Krolia held her breath. She knew what was going to come next. They had been waiting their whole lives for this. When this was over then maybe, just maybe things could finally stop being so horrible. The war would be over and they could start rebuilding. That's what she wanted. It’s what everyone needed. She just had to keep looking towards the future.

Kolivan’s voice came over the comms. He sounded as stoic as ever. “My fellow Blades… This is our final stand. If we fail here it means the end of the main resistance. There will be no one left to effectively attack and cripple Zarkon. If we fall here everything we have put our hopes in... The futures that we have been striving for; peace, love, the ability to walk outside without a disguise… They will all be taken away if we fall now…” There was a slight waver in his voice, but he quickly collected himself. “Whatever reason you have chosen to join the Blades, be it vengeance, a sense of justice, anger, love, whatever it may be you will all need to dig deep. You cannot hold anything back. If you hold back you will die without honour. You are fighting for your lives and the lives of everyone in existence. Who are we?”

“The Blade of Marmora!” Came a rousing cry from all blade members.

“And why do we exist?” He asked.

“To stand up for those who cannot stand for themselves!”

“Do we fear death?”

“We fear not death! We welcome death if it means the truth!”

“And what is the truth?”

“The most powerful weapon against the tyrants!”

“Good. I am proud of you all. It has been an honour to serve with you all. We are taking no
prisoners. Kill them all.”

“Sir yes sir.”

Ilun smiled and chuckled and readjusted her position. “Kolivan’s really a sap at heart, huh?”

“That he is.” Krolia had her eyes trained on the door down the other end of the hallway. The second it opened she would open fire. Nothing would get past her. “... What are you fighting for?”

Ilun shrugged. “All the usual stuff I guess? I want to regain honour for our species. I want to fall in love and have a child without fear they will get forced into this war. I want to get a home and raise grarak puppies. You?”

That made Krolia chuckle. “Do you really need to ask?”

“Well I guess Yurak is a big thing, but like, what will you do?” They asked. “What does Krolia want to do?”

“... I don’t know.” She said quietly. “I joined the resistance for justice. I stayed fighting for my family. I’m fighting right now for my son and the future he deserves. It’s the least I can do to make up for my failed parenting.”

“A noble goal.” The lights flickered momentarily and a loud humming quickly filled the base. It made Krolia’s mouth go dry and shiver. Zarkon was here. This was it.

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When Lance left the room to go to the bathroom Keith made his move. The solution Ulaz had given him worked very quickly and along with the painkillers he was given he felt perfectly normal now. He removed his IV and carefully pulled on his suit. He had to get to the fight. He had to stop Zarkon. This was his fight. He had to be a part of this.

He only made it halfway down the hallway before Lance grabbed him. “Nope! You’re not going that way! Back to bed!”

Keith groaned and squirmed out of his arms. “Stop it! I need to go!”

“Need to or want to?”

“Lance! I have to go! I have to be a part of this fight! Hunk and Pidge are a part of this fight!” He argued. “Even if I can’t join in the fray I’ll stand with them and protect them! I want them to be safe! Let me do something! I have to do something!” Keith almost felt like crying. He was stressed and wanted to fight. He needed to do something. He had to do something. He was giving himself anxiety at this point, but maybe the pain meds were wearing off.

Lance looked a little distressed. Keith couldn’t blame him. He wanted to keep Keith safe but his friends were in the thick of it too. “But you’re inj-”

“Lance, I’m up and walking around.” Said Keith. “If I can walk I can fight. Please…”

“... How would we even get there?”

“I know how to work a gate. We can just open it up to the last coordinates and be at Lotor’s base. It’ll be fine.”

Lance didn’t seem very convinced by this. “I don’t know…”
Keith pulled Lance into the armoury and quickly shoved Lance into a Marmora suit and armour. It was important to get this done as soon as possible. Keith needed to do this quickly before Lance changed his mind or tried to convince Keith to get back into the medbay.

“You look good in our uniform.”

“Thanks. I think?”

Keith smiled a little and dragged Lance over to the gate. The pain meds were wearing off and his chest and jaw was starting to hurt. He had to be quick. He had to do this. He quickly punched in the numbers and the gate opened up. Before he could walk through Lance held him back.

“... Is this really what you want?”

“Yeah. It is.”

“... You better not die on me.” Muttered Lance. “If you do I’ll bring you back just to kill you myself.”

Keith put his hand on Lance’s and smiled slightly. “As long as my sharpshooter’s got my back I’ll survive.”

They shared a small smile for a few seconds before they walked through the gate. Keith was immediately met with the heavy scent of blood and the distant sound of gunfire. Around them were the bodies of several dead Garla soldiers and even a dead Blade member. They couldn’t have died that long ago. There were still bleeding out of the giant hole in their chest.

“... Shit.” Keith crouched down beside them and tuned into their comms. What he heard wasn’t very comforting

“We’re pinned down over here! We need Someone to move their ass and get over here!”

“Can anyone help team Karak? We have our hands full over here!”

“Team Ree can get there in a few ticks. We’re just dealing with the last few bastards.”

“I... I’m sorry everyone... Team Ozorot is...”

“Don’t you fucking die on me Verk! Team Char is on its way!”

“West wing is secured. Where is team Ree?”

“VERK?!”

“Team Ree and Verm have been eliminated.”

“Zarkon’s troops have taken the East hallway.”

“Team Karak has fallen back. We were overwhelmed.”

“We can’t let Zarkon take the East hall! All available Blades go to the East hallway! That is an order!”

Keith nervously bit his bottom lip and looked over at Lance. “We need to get to the East hallway. Now.”
Lance nodded and looked down at the fallen Blade member. “W-what about them?”

“There is nothing we can do for the dead.” Said Keith. “If you want to do something for them then you fight and you win.” He started to move towards the East hallway and getting closer to the gunfire. When they got close enough Keith stopped him and gave him Lance a very stern look. “Can you cover me sharpshooter?”

“Of course I can.” Lance looked a little nervous and he sure as hell didn’t look ready to shoot anyone. But Keith trusted him. Even if he wasn’t able to properly cover his back Keith was sure that Lance could save himself. Lance took his bayard out and summoned his gun while Keith readied his sword.

As soon as they rounded a corner Keith couldn’t help but grin. They were right at the back of some Galra soldiers. They obviously didn’t expect to get attacked from behind. It was perfect. With very little effort Keith ran up behind them and went in for that attack. He managed to cut down three before they noticed him. When they did notice him though, Lance managed to take down a couple in a few shots.

Keith’s comm’s started to go off. “Keith, what the fuck are you doing here?” Snapped Krolia.

“... Um, I’m a little busy at the moment.” Keith dived out of the way of a sword slash. “Can we talk later?”

“Keith, if you survive this I am personally going to punch you so hard in the chest you get a heart attack!”

“Why the hell is Keith here?!” Snapped Ulaz. “Why does no one listen to me when I’m giving medical advice anymore?”

Keith rolled his eyes as some of the Blade argued and bickered over the fact that Keith was now fighting. It didn’t matter. He was here now. He was fighting. That was it. No room for discussion. He quickly dispatched two more soldiers before Kolivan forced him into a private channel.

“And why are you here?” He asked.

“Did you really think I would let you guys take on Zarkon without-” He dodged out of the way of a stray shot. “-me involved.”

“I would have thought the concussion, broken bones and internal hemorrhaging was enough.”

“... Touche.”

Kolivan sighed heavily. “Okay. Come to the observation deck via their tech division when you are done there. We will be waiting... Is Lance with you?”

“Depends.”

“On what?”

“On how much trouble I’m going to get into.”

“... Just bring Lance with you, and don’t get killed.”

“Yes Sir. We’ll be there soon.” Kolivan was so going to kick his ass when he next saw him. Well if he wanted to do that he was going to have to get in line. Krolia and Ulaz seemed to have called dibs
on that.
With Keith and Lance’s help they were able to help thin out Zarkon’s troops and the two were able to make their way to Kolivan. He immediately chewed Keith out for being in the fight in the first place.


“Because this is my fight just as much as it is yours!” snapped Keith. “I can do this too!”

“Go back!”

“Make me!”

Lance watched the two of them bicker while he stood at the back of the room. Kolivan was so mad and Keith was equally pissed. It was only a matter of time until they would yell at him and that just made him feel like crap. He looked over at Romelle who was standing next to him. She looked a little spaced out.

“You okay?”

“I just found out I am a clone that was woken up to trick Allura and by extension the Blade of Marmora into working with Lotor.” She said quietly.

“Oh… That’s rough…”

“Yeah… So what’s new with you?”

“Um… I’m in a Blade of Marmora suit. It’s skin tight. So tight I literally couldn’t wear any underwear with this.”

“… That was a little more information than I needed.”

“True, but to be fair if I take any time to actually think about what is going on I am going to shut down and have a panic attack, so no filter for you.”

“Fair enough.”

“Yeah… Do you even know what is going to happen now?”

Romelle pointed to Lotor who was still at his console punching in numbers. “Lotor, the bastard, is still trying to do the final calculations to drop that.” She pointed to the weird looking generator thing
in the other room. “When he’s got the calculation right he’ll drop his dark quintessence bomb into the quintessence field. Apparently that will stop all this Galra shit from happening. When that happens I’m punching Lotor in the back of the head.”

Lance nodded along. He kind of understood it, but not really. This quintessence stuff was way over his head. “So… If you’re a clone where is the original?”

“… Bones. The original is just bones.” She said quietly.

“Oh, sorry. No disrespect. No filter so I don’t panic. All that fun jazz.” Muttered Lance.

“Nah, I get it…”

“Yeah, where’s Pidge and Hunk?”

“Out by the spinny death thing.” Said Romelle. “They needed to get some generators working r whatever. Once that’s done Lotor will lower the shields and the generator will kick in to filter the atmosphere. If that fails then well… Everyone will probably die of quintessence poisoning and over exposure.”

“… Fun.”

“Yeah… So we’re pretty much just have to stand around here and wait?”

“Pretty much…”

Lance nodded and walked over to the window. He could see them working on some machinery, and for the first time in a long time he felt small. Like nothing he could ever say or do would be able to help in any way. He was only human after all. The only things that made him kind of special was being part Altean, which added pretty much nothing to himself, and being Keith’s mate. Apart from that he was just a normal human and that was that.

“…” He looked over at the two Galra, who were still yelling at each other, then over to Allura and Coran. He walked over to them and smiled sheepishly. “Hey guys. Surprised you aren’t freaking out more about this…”

Coran shrugged. “Well before you two walked in the Blade updated Kolivian and they have retaken a sizable bit of ground. They have done pretty well. Hopefully we will be able to end this soon.”

“Hopefully…” Lance looked back towards the window. “I’m going to go and see how Pidge and Hunk are going.”

“Be careful lad.”

Lance made his way to them just in time to see Hunk packing away his tools. “I think that’s it. I-Lance!” He hugged Lance tightly and he hugged back. “What are you doing here man? Thought you were back at the Blade’s base?”

“Keith sweet talked me into letting him come here. The crazy bastard.”

“Sounds like something he would do.” Said Pidge as she kept tinkering with stuff. “You need to grow a backbone there Lance.”

“I shot a few Galra. I killed people. I think I have a backbone.” Whined Lance. “Oh hey Regris.”

Regris nodded in acknowledgement. “Hi.” He looked back over at Pidge. “You done yet? We’ve
made some ground but some of Zarkon’s troops are wearing down a few places and are making their way here.”

“In a second.” Said Pidge.

As she quickly welded away Keith walked into the room. He didn’t look too happy. “Hey guys.”

“Hey Keith.” Said Hunk. “You um… You actually don’t look half bad?”

“Thanks. Ulaz gave me some of the good stuff.”

“And done!” Pidge slammed down a hatch and hit the start button. The machine hummed as it started up and she high fived Hunk. “I think we got it.”

“What now?” Asked Lance.

Pidge grinned as they adjusted their glasses. “We just gotta head on up and Lotor will start the machine. Then boom, not more Galra.”

The second Pidge finished her explanation there was an explosion over the other side of the room. Several of Zarkon’s troops quickly poured in and started shooting. Regris and Keith started swearing in Galra and started shooting back. Pidge, Hunk and Lance immediately dived behind a piece of machinery and started freaking out.

“Shit! What do we do?!” Cried Pidge.

“We’re so gonna die!” Whimpered Hunk. “Shit!”

Lance quickly looked around and tried to find the quickest way to the door. “... Follow me. You guys still have your bayard things that Allura gave you, right?”

The two of them nodded and quickly took them out. With stealth, patience, and a lot of praying to all the gods out there they managed to slip out of the room while Regris and Keith were fighting.

They raced back to the observation room and almost got shot by Kolivan. “... Careful there kids. I almost got you.”

“Yeah… thanks…” Whimpered Hunk.

Pidge raced up to him. “What the heck just happened? Are you going to go out there and help them?”

“I’m literally the only soldier keeping everyone alive in here.” Said Kolivan. He quickly got onto his comms and started barking orders. “We have been breached! All available teams get to my position right now! Regris and Keith need back up!” Lance quickly turned to leave the room and go back to help Keith, but Kolivan pulled him back. “Not you.” He growled. “We need trained soldiers. Not a civilian with a hero complex.”

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Keith fucking hated this. They shouldn’t have been able to sneak around and get behind them. They were too fucking close now. They were too close to Lance and he wasn’t going to let that happen. He raced towards the troops and viciously stabbed and sliced with his sword. Ignoring the rapidly increasing pain in all his bones and joints. But he didn’t care. He was going to kill them all. Every one of Zarkon’s fucking troops that Lotor didn’t manage to get rid of Keith would with his sword.
Suddenly Krolia’s voice quickly crackled over the comms. “East hallway is secured. We’re on our way. We’ll be there in less than three ticks.”

Keith quickly dodged a bullet and got clipped in the arm by a stray shot. It ripped his suit and grazed him slightly but he was still alive. “Could do with some help here Krolia.” He growled out.

“I’m on my way. Just hold on Keith.”

Keith growled and got close to one of the troops and split their head in half. A troop managed to get behind Keith and kicked him in the back, knocking him to the floor. He yelped in pain but quickly had to roll out of the way to get stabbed in the back with a sword.

Seconds later the trooper got smashed in the side with Regris’s tail. For an added bonus it sent several other troops flying. However by doing this one of the stray swords from the troops went flying through the Ir and embedded themselves in the protective glass shield surrounding the weird spinning death reactor thing.

But he didn’t have time to think about this as he was still fighting for his life. “KEITH!” He looked up in time to see Krolia charging towards him as she took down a few more guards. “Are you okay?”

“I’m fine!” He called. “Just take them down!”

They managed to kill a few more troops before an alarm went off and Koliva’s voice came through loud and clear over the intercoms. “Get out of there now! The sword breached the containment shield and is amplifying the quintessence to dangerous levels! Get out of there now before the glass explodes!”

Without hesitation the three Blades quickly made their way to escape while trying to stop Zarkon’s troops from trying to kill them. Regris managed to make it out of the room but before Krolia and Keith cold escape they both heard the glass starting to crack.

“GET OUT OR GET BEHIND COVER! NOW!”

Seconds after Kolivan yelled out that command Krolia threw herself on top of Keith. Just as the glass exploded. A searing pain ran down Keith’s left cheek. He cried out in pain as he felt blood gush down his neck. It took Keith a few seconds to realise that a piece of stray glass managed to shatter his mask and slice his face. As he looked around he couldn’t help but notice that the rest of the troops seemed to have been turned into pin cushions.

“Ergh…” Groaned Krolia as she slowly pulled herself off of Keith. “Keith… Are you okay?”

“Y-yeah. I’m fine… We should get back to Kolivan and…” She fell back on top of him and stopped moving. “Krolia?” He gently shook her. “Mum? H-hey mum, get up.” He touched her back and flinched when he felt glass. “Shit!” With his mask broken he pulled Krolia’s mask off and quickly put it on to try and get into contact with Kolivan. “Krolia’s hurt! Please! I need someone to help me! I-I don’t know what to do! I don’t know what to do!”


“SHE’S DYING! I NEED HELP! PLEASE! SHE’S BLEEDING OUT! FUCK!” He looked down at her and lightly tapped her face. “Stay with me mum. Don’t you fall asleep on me. We’re going to make it out of here alive… Talk to me… Please… I-I can’t lose you too…”

“K-Keith…” She lightly reached up and touched his face, smiling softly. “It’s okay… I love you.”
“I-I love you too… Please don’t leave me…”

As he cradled Krolia in his arms he wondered if anyone would come and help them. He doubted it. He didn’t think Kolivan could risk any other Blade members to come and help them. They all knew what they signed up for. Suddenly there was a flash of light next to them and Cosmo was there. Without thinking Keith reached for them and Cosmo transported them back to the observation deck where it was apparent that the glass from the observation deck got blown out too.

As soon as they were there Ulaz was beside them and looking over the glass embedded in Krolia’s back. “… Damn it. It’s all radiated with quintessence. I can’t remove it without getting some form of radiation sickness.”

“Sounds like a job for an Altean.” Said Coran as he quickly moved over to them and held his hands over Krolia’s back. His Altean markings started to light up as he slowly started to draw the quintessence out of the glass. It took him a few seconds to properly filter it all out of the glass. Once he was done Ulaz quickly removed her from Keith’s grip and started to treat her wounds.

Keith kind of just sat there, kind of shell shocked. There were a few other Blade members quickly running through the room. His eyes quickly fell on Lance who was talking very quickly with Allura and… Shiro? Since when was he here?

He quickly walked over to them. “Um… Hello? Since when were you here?”

Shiro smiled at him and shrugged. “When you left Adam and I went to look after Cosmo. Adam got an emergency call from work. Computers are a bitch. So he had to leave to sort that out. Seconds after he left Allura called and said she needed me to bring Cosmo here. Good thing I did too. After we arrived the glass shield exploded. If we got here a second later we probably wouldn’t have been able to help you with Krolia.”

“Yeah…” He looked over at Krolia. She was getting emergency treatment from Ulaz and Coran. He hoped she would be okay.

Suddenly he was embraced in a tight hug from Lance. “Holy shit that was scary. Don’t do that again.”

Keith hugged back. “I can’t believe you are okay. Fuck, I was worried that you guys…”

“We’re all fine… You need someone to look at that scratch of yours mullet.”

“My mum needs attention first. This is superficial.”

“I guess…”

Zethrid walked carrying Ezor. The smaller of the two was bleeding pretty heavily from a shoulder injury. “Hey! One of you is a medic right? Help her!”

“In a moment!” Snapped Ulaz. “I have this mess to deal with first!” He said as he gestured to Krolia.

“I’m fine Zethy.” Said Ezor. “Really, just slap a bandage one me and I’ll be back to kicking ass in no time.”

“No shut up. You need help.”

In the middle of the chaos unfolding all around them Lotor’s voice rang clear. “Ha! It’s done!” He quickly hit a button and the spinning metal around the rotating around the generator ground to a stop.
A few lights started flashing indicating something was up, but Lotor didn’t seem to pay it much mind.

He hit another button and the object hanging above the generator dropped. Everything seemed to go in slow motion for Keith as he watched it fall down. Closer and closer to the quintessence. Seconds before it hit an object went flying through the air and struck the object. It sent it off course and slammed into the wall. It had been pierced with what looked like a spear. It felt like no one could say or move at all for what felt like an eternity.

“... What the fuck just happened?!” Yelled Lotor. “Who the fuck did that?!”

Ezor looked through the blown out observation window and audibly gulped. “Um Lotor? Your dad is here…”

“What?!”

Everyone looked out the window and stared in horror as Zarkon stood in the hole in the wall that his troops had made earlier. His size and stature seemed to dwarf even Kolivan, which was scary. He was one of the tallest Galra’s that Keith knew.

Lotor gritted his teeth and growled. His usual dignified demeanor was quickly slipping away.

“Zarkon…”

“What are you gonna do boss?” Asked Ezor. “Pretty sure we’re fucked. We didn’t plan for Zarkon to show up…”

“It doesn’t matter.” Lotor hissed. “Fine, he ruined my plan, but I can still kill him. Honour or death.” Without another word Lotor jumped out of the window and drew his sword. “It’s time to end this old man.”
Ever since Lotor was a child Zarkon had hammered into him the importance of the Galran race. Of their importance in the multiverse. How they above all else were the ones chosen by fate to subjugate and repopulate all for the sake of the empire. As a child Lotor had believed him. He had wholeheartedly believed him.

Then he got older. He found out about his Altean heritage through his mother. If Altean’s were so inferior then why would his father marry one and have a child with them? A child fully acknowledged by the entire empire as being the true successor to the empire. No one questioned it. As far as he had known he was full Galra. How could his father just lie?

From finding the truth he threw himself into finding out what else Zarkon had lied to him about. He found out more about their deeds. It disgusted him. He felt sick at their actions. He went from military camp to military camp finding other half-Galra like himself.

He first found Acxa. A stone cold woman who was constantly getting the short end of the stick in where she was. She was forced to constantly run drills until she fainted. A punishment usually reserved for mild insubordination. He immediately took her away.

Then came Narti. Quiet, calm. Practically invisible within her camp. She was ignored by everyone. Lotor saw her potential and easily took her away. Everyone there was more than happy to remove her from their ranks. Years later they would regret overlooking her.

Ezor was his third general. She was playful, easy going, and fun loving. She looked and acted so different from everyone else. She was an easy target. But not for long. Lotor convinced her to join them. Only after she felt comfortable she revealed that she could camouflage herself. An ability from her non Galran parent. Something they made use of time and time again.

Finally Zethrid. She was built to fight. All she wanted to do was fight. She was difficult to control and her superiors were considering scrapping her for parts since she wouldn’t listen to them. Lotor could see the potential in her, and Ezor quickly becoming attached to her and mellowing her out didn’t hurt either.

Each one of his generals were hurt, lied to, and felt to be less than the rest of the Galra. Each and everyone of them deserved nothing more than a painful death. Zarkon had been a thorn in his side for far too long. Now he had gone and stopped his plans completely. This was Lotor’s only plan. Now he had to wing it. Killing Zarkon would be a good start.

Lotor thrusted his sword at the man, but Zarkon parried and sliced through the air, just trimming his eyelashes as he did so. The smirk on the old man’s face made Lotor’s blood boil. He had done it on purpose.

“Lotor.” He rumbled in his deep voice. “Still acting like a child? When will you just give up and
come back home? Your mother is worried about you.”

“The witch is not my mother.” He growled. “You are not my father. You banished me, remember? Was that just to teach me a lesson? Put me in time out? Let’s face it. You don’t want me. You never wanted me. Because I am a half-breed. You expect me, a half-Altean to come groveling back to you after a few months? I reject you and everything the Galra stand for. I am going to wipe the universe clean of all my enemies, starting with you.”

The two quickly exchanged blows. Zarkon’s strikes were extremely powerful while Lotor was much more dexterous. He could avoid most of his father’s strikes, but he was just blocking. Only blocking. He couldn’t get a hit on him. Not just yet. He needed something to distract him. Anything to catch him off guard.

The generator started to whirl to life again. Without the shield keeping the quintessence contained it would be prone to emitting random bursts of energy. Probably not enough to kill one of them, but enough to hurt and hurt badly.

No sooner had he realized this than did Zarkon move back just in time for quintessence to strike between them. Zarkon moved out of the way just in time but ILotor didn’t. He got hit with a massive amount of quintessence. It made his face burn along his cheek bones. Possibly due to his Altean heritage. Still stung.

At least now things were a little more even now. Lotor was actually able to attack Zarkon now, but Zarkon also got a few hits in too. Nothing too heavy, since the fluctuating quintessence made it near impossible for them to hit with nearly as much strength as he did before, but it still hurt a lot. This was okay. He just needed to distract him. One chance. One hit and he could end Zarkon for good.

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Up in the observation room everyone was freaking out. Firstly, Zarkon was there. Which was literally making some people scream and panic. Secondly, the quintessence generator was apparently broken and not meant to be going off the way it was.

“Can’t we just shut it down?” Asked Romelle. “We did that before.”

“It’s overheating now.” Said Zethrid as she fiddled with a console while trying to get into radio contact with Narti and Acxa. “If we just stop it now it will rip itself apart and blow up. Acxa, get your ass and Narti’s tail in here now.”

Ezor nodded an agreement as she struggled to keep things still on the touch screen. As long as the quintessence filters are all running we shouldn’t have much of a problem keeping it level and—” There was a large explosion followed by an electrical crackle. Zarkon had been thrown back into one of the generators. “—now we’re fucked…”

“Shit….” Growled Kolivan. He was quickly on the comms and barking orders to the rest of the Blade. His tone was solemn but commanding.

Keith was nervously hovering around. Trying to watch the fight while making sure that Krolia was okay. She would be fine until she was able to get proper medical care. Still Keith was worrying. He was pacing around so much that Shiro had to hold him still for a moment so he could catch his breath.

Lance just stood back, unsure of what to do. This was all too much. Everything was going to hell. If the generator exploded everything was fucked. Not just them but literally everything in this universe
was going to be destroyed. Hard to think that this could be the end. It wasn’t fair. He didn’t want this to happen. Not only would he die but his family, his friends, everyone… This was the end.

He looked out the shattered window and continued to watch the fight between Zarkon and Lotor. It was becoming more erratic as the generator spiralled out of control. Quintessence was flying everywhere and starting to break the room apart. Lance looked up and say a panel hanging off the ceiling by a cable. Without thinking he took out his bayard and shot it.

Lance watched as the panel fall down, clipped Zarkon and gave Lotor the opportunity to strike Zarkon. He delivered the killing blow to his head. On one hand this was good. Zarkon was now dead, but considering the fact that everyone was about to die, they couldn’t celebrate yet.

Acxa quickly got onto the intercoms. “Lotor! You need to check the generator’s levels!”

They watched as Lotor got as close to the generator as he could before he was forced back by an extremely large wave of quintessence. It hit everyone in the observation deck hard. It was strong enough to make every Altean, or part Altean’s marks to start glowing.

Ezor checked the monitors and made a distressed noise. “Shit… We’re royally fucked… I-I don’t think we can fix this… We’ve failed… There’s nothing we can do…”

“You mean it’s going to blow up?” Asked Hunk. “Doesn’t that mean the entire universe is kind of over now?”

Ezor smiled sadly nodded. “Yeah. It’s over…” Zethrid came up to her and hugged her tightly. Her voicing this really seemed to hit hard with everyone. They won the battle but lost the war. Everyone was going to die.

“... No.” Said Allura calmly. “This is why we are here in the first place. Acxa, how many parts per million is the quintessence?”

“About twenty million nanoparticals.”

“I see. And you just need the generator to cool down enough to turn it off?”

“Yes.”

She nodded and looked over at Coran and Romelle. “We need to get down there and start filtering that quintessence. We just need to help lower the temperature enough for everything to get turned off.” The Alteans nodded and quickly left the observation deck to join Lotor.

Lance watched them quickly talk to Lotor when they made their way down there. They seemed to be arguing for a moment. Then Romelle slapped Lotor hard. After that there was no more talking and the Alteans, and the half-Altean sat around the generator, raised their hands and started to channel the excess quintessence through their body, filtering it.

Narti tugged on Acxa’s arm and quickly signed something to her. The general looked surprised and quickly checked the monitors herself. “Oh, you’re right. It’s actually working. The temperature is dropping… But not nearly fast enough…”

“Couldn’t you just fix the generator?” Asked Pidge.

Zethrid rolled her eyes. “Yeah, you go out there and try to fix it. You’ll get fried shrimp. Only reason Lotor isn’t dead yet is because he’s half-Altean.”
“... I can’t believe I’m going to say this…” Muttered Hunk. “But lots of your tech is bio-organic, right? Don’t you like... You know... Have some Altean filtering parts somewhere?”

Acxa shook her head. “That is impossible. It needs to be hooked up to a proper system... We can’t even wake any more clones. It’ll take too long for the waking sequence to happen... We need to start shutting down non essential facilities. Limit how much we’re relying on the generator.”

“You got it.” Said Ezor as she and the other generals started to frantically started to shut down entire sections of the base.

Acxa looked over at Kolivan and smiled slightly. “Although it was short, it was an honour serving with you Kolivan. Please evacuate your people. There is nothing else you can do... And someone still needs to take down the rest of the Empire now that Zarkon’s dead. The gate will be the only other thing powered in our base for the next twenty minutes. After that it will be shut off.”

Kolivan stared at her for a moment before nodding and giving her a traditional Galra salute. “It was an honour serving with you too.” He got back onto his comms. “All Blade members this is a direct order. Everyone get back to the gate. It will be shut off in twenty minutes. This universe is unsalvageable. I repeat the gate will be shut off in twenty minutes. Everyone back to the gate.” He looked at everyone else in the room. “We have to go now.”

“We’re all going?” Asked Keith. “But we can’t go! We have to help!”

“Look at your mother!” Growled Kolivan. “Look at her! She needs medical help that we can only provide back at the base. We have completed our mission. Zarkon is no longer leading the Galra. If we don’t leave now we will all die and someone else will continue Zarkon’s work.”

Keith looked slightly distressed as he looked between his mother and everyone else. “... But this universe... It’s...”

“I know it’s your home.” Said Kolivan. “But we have to go now.” He went over to Ulaz to help him carry Krolia out. “Humans, you come with us too. We might not be able to save your world, but we can at least save your species...”

Lance’s heart was hammering in his chest as everyone was getting ready to leave. He felt Zethrid nudge him and he looked up at her. “Y-yeah?”

“You’re Altean, right?” She asked.

“Only slightly.”

“Why aren’t you down there with the others?”

“I can’t filter quintessence like they can...” Said Lance. “I’m just the sharpshooter... I’m not really an Altean.”

She made an annoyed sound. “Whatever... Go on. Get out of here. No point in all of us dying...”

Lance felt Keith hold his hand and tug him towards the door. “Come on. Let’s go.” He said quietly. “This is all we can do...”

He nodded and followed Keith out. As he left the room he heard Ezor swearing. “It’s not enough! We’re so fucking close but it’s not enough! Three working filters, three Alteans and a half-Altean just aren’t enough! Fuck! We need more! We need more damn it!”
Lance felt his stomach drop. He was part Altean. Not half, but maybe he could help? If he didn’t help then how could he keep on going? It wasn’t just his family that would die if the generator exploded. There was Pidge’s family, Hunk’s family and his girlfriend. Shiro had just reconnected with Adam too and now that was going to end. He looked at Keith. He wasn’t looking at Lance anymore. He wasn’t even holding his hand. He’d was desperately holding his own chest. His painkillers had to have worn off by now… Keith deserved to have a long and happy life. He had to try for everyone here and everyone who would never know this was happening.

He smiled a little at the back of Keith’s head. “Goodbye Keith… I love you.” Lance quickly turned heel and ran back to the generator room. When he got there the major of quintessence strikes had dulled to only a weak strike every few minutes.

Lance quickly sat on the ground between Allura and Romelle. “What the hell are you doing here?” Asked Romelle.

“I don’t make good decisions when under pressure.” Said Lance. “Ezor was saying you needed help. I’m not an Altean, but I am part Altean. I can help.”

“You really should be here Lance…” Said Allura before she sighed heavily. “Okay fine. Just sit still, clear your mind and channel the quintessence through your hands, into your body and out through your lungs. Do what you can. We’ve got most of this.”

“You got it princess.” Lance closed his eyes and reached up like they were doing. He really hoped this was working and wasn’t going to kill him, or at least if it did kill him everyone else would be okay.

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When they got back to the gate Keith looked around for Lance. He wasn’t there. “Lance? Lance?” How was that possible? Lance was just behind him and he hadn’t been attacked or injured like he was. There was no way he would have fallen behind. “H-has anyone seen Lance?”

Some of the Blade members that were already in the room and heading through the gate shook their head. They were too preoccupied bringing back the injured and dying. No one else from their group had seen him either.

“He’ll be here any second.” Said Pidge reassuringly.

“Y-yeah.” Said Hunk. “He’s probably going to run through those doors any second now.”

Keith didn’t buy it. He stood by the gate and waited for Lance to show up so they could all leave together. He waited, and waited, and waited. There were three minutes left before the gate would be completely cut off and they would be unable to get through.

Shiro put his hand on his shoulder. “Keith… We have to go now.”

“I can’t.” He said quickly. “I have to wait for him… I just don’t understand. Where could he be? He was right behind us and nothing fell down or collapsed. Why isn’t he here?”

“…” Shiro didn’t know what to say to make Keith feel better. “He’s part Altaen. Right?”

Keith’s eyes went wide. “Y-you don’t think that he went back to the generator do you?”

“I don’t know Keith… But we have to go now. We’re the last ones left.”
Keith’s heart was hammering in his chest. Was Lance really this stupid? Would he really put himself in harm’s way for no reason? Of course he would. It was Lance after all. He sighed and looked up at Shiro, possibly for the last time. “If this universe really does die, take care of everyone for us. Okay?”

Shiro looked surprised for a moment before his expression softened. He pulled Keith into a tight hug. “Goodbye Keith… You’re a good man.”

He hugged back and smiled at Shiro before he turned and quickly went back to the generator room. He couldn’t believe Lance would just go and do this. Did this idiot have some hero complex? They were mates. Keith wouldn’t be able to go on without him. Everything he had been doing he had been doing for Lance and the sake of their future. How could it be their future if there was no Lance?

When he made it into the generator room Keith was relieved to see that the generator had calmed down a lot. Still there were strikes but things were slowing down and actually looked like they would be okay. This would turn out alright.

He took no more than two steps into the room to see a weak quintessence strike hit Lance straight on. He might have cried out in pain, but the machinery was making too much noise as it slowly ground to a stop.

Ezor’s excited voice quickly made its way through the sound system. ”You did it! You guys actually did it! Holy shit! This universe isn’t going to get wiped out! Holy fuck!”

She went on a little more about this and that but the Altean’s and Lotor didn’t seem to care much. The Altean’s seemed disorientated and Lotor doubled over to vomit. But Lance… He wasn’t moving much. He wobbled slightly and fell to his side.

Keith ran to him. He probably called out his name, but he wasn’t sure. He just needed to get to Lance and make sure he was okay. He wasn’t a full Altean or a half-Altean. What would a strike of pure quintessence do to his body?

He sat by Lance and gently shook him. His body was hot. Extremely hot. Where his Altean marks were before were now two bloodied, burnt, and smoking brand marks. He was breathing, but only just.

“No…” Whispered Keith. “Not like this… Come on Lance. Wake up. Wake up damn it.”

He heard Allura gasp in shock as she sat on Lance’s other side, gently touching his face. “Oh no… Lance…”

“What happened to him?” Asked Keith in a shaky voice.

Coran walked over. He looked like he was about to cry when he saw Lance. “He’s burnt out… I warned him about this… We were all reaching our limits. When an Altean takes in too much quintessence at once it can literally cook us alive. Lance isn’t a full Altean and wasn’t able to filter such large amounts of quintessence fast enough…”

A chill ran down Keith’s spine. “You mean he’s… but he is still breathing?”

“He’s most likely brain dead.” Said Allura quietly. “We don’t have technology to help with brain injuries…”

“… The Blade does.” Said Keith quietly. “We get head injuries all the time! Ulaz will be able to help him! We have to get him there, now!”
“We need to get Lance to the Blade?” Asked Romelle. “Can do.” She walked over to Lotor and kicked him hard in the side. “Hey! Fucking help us you purple fuck! I’m still pissed at you!” Lotor almost lost his balance but waved up at the observation deck. He got their attention and quickly signed a few things up to them.

Acxa came onto the sound system. “Understood. We’ll turn the back up generator on, get the gate back online, and get in contact with Kolivan immediately. We’ll meet you all at the gate.”

Keith felt a little relieved that this was happening. He tried to get up and carry Lance with him, but he felt terrible. All his bones and muscles hurt. Coran ended up helping him. “It’ll be okay…” He said to Keith, trying to sound reassuring. “I’m sure we can get Lance back to his usual self in no time…”

Keith highly doubted it but he wanted to believe. He had to hold onto this belief. “... You’re such an idiot.” He whispered to Lance. “You should have just come with me then you… I wish you would just listen to other people when they told you to do things… Please come back to us… I love you…”

He heard a small sound coming from Lance’s body. He wasn’t sure if that was just the sound of air escaping Lance’s lips or if he was actually making a noise himself. Still it made Keith’s heart leap in his chest. He needed this. He needed Lance to be okay right now.

“Lance?”
Here it is. The end of the story. It has been a long time coming, especially these last few chapters. I hope you all like it. Kudos and comment when you can. Enjoy :D

It had been three months since Zarkon was killed and this universe almost died. Koliva and the Blade of Marmora had taken it upon themselves to squash the rest of the Galra invasion in other universes. It was a little difficult, but they had the Altaen’s helping them.

Sadly this meant that Cafe Altea had shut down. Allura, being the original princess of the original universe that Zarkon destroyed, she was a symbol of hope. Coran was an extremely good advisor and was more than ready to help Allura navigate the ins and outs of other universe’s cultures. Anything to help draw them into the new coalition. Romelle was working a lot closer with the Blades. When they liberated a universe of the Galra she would come in and save the clones the Galra would use for parts.

Lotor and his generals had been quickly taken into custody by Kolivan once they found out that they had succeeded. They quickly found out what Lotor’s original plan had been and he had been placed in solitary confinement while they decided the appropriate punishment for ganocide. The generals got off slightly better and were put into cells by one another. If they continued with their good behaviour they would probably be allowed to share cells soon. Something Ezor and Zethrid were hoping for.

After the fight about forty percent of the Blades had been either killed or injured. Krolia had fallen into the injured category. A large piece of glass had severed her spinal cord in the explosion. She was paralised from the hips down and had to use a wheelchair while Regris figured out if it was more efficient to make a robotic spine or just cut to the chase and make her a new pair of legs. Krolia wanted to keep her legs.

As for the humans, Hunk decided life was too short. He decided to pursue his passion and went to culinary school. He still enjoyed tattooing, but his heart hadn’t been in it for a while. He wanted something a little more stable for him and Shay. No one could blame him. It actually inspired Pidge to get into robotics as an actual profession. Her brother knew people that knew people. She would be fine.

Shiro still owned his flower shop. He said he was officially done with interdimensional bullshit and was ready to retire. No one could blame him. The man deserved to rest after everything that happened. He was still seeing Adam and things were honestly looking good between the two of them. Maybe in a few weeks they could actually start dating again?

As for Keith, after all the insanity that had been happening to him and everyone around him, he needed to get away from it all. A road trip across the country would clear his head. He’d always wanted to do it and now was the perfect time.

He stood in the back alley behind Shiro’s shop as he double checked that he had the last of his stuff. Shiro was watching him from the backdoor. “You have everything you need?”
“Yep.”

“Did you make sure Krolia has all of Cosmo’s toys?”

“Of course I did.” Said Keith. “Cosmo would go mad without his chew toys.”

“That’s good.” Shiro walked over to Keith and smiled as he looked at him. “Look at you now… All grown up, got a manly scar, and I’m actually getting a goodbye this time.”

Keith rolled his eyes and touched his scar. It had healed up but for some reason since the glass that cut him had been charged with quintessence the scar wouldn’t go away and his Galra healing factor wasn’t going to help. He was fine with that. It was the one bit of skin he had now that wasn’t marked with the ink that the Galra had placed on him. It was kind of a visual reminder that he was free now. He liked it.

“Well now we both have face scars so we match.”

“Very true.” Shiro ran his hand through his hair. “So… Where are you going?”

“Coast to coast. There are some spots that I apparently have to hit up.”

“Alright. When are you going?”

“When he’s done locking up.”

Right on cue Lance stepped out the backdoor and locked up. He grinned and waved at the two men. After getting hit with pure quintessence he actually was brain dead for a good hour or two. Keith was just thankful that Galra medical technology was as advanced as it was. Lance was in a medically induced coma for about a week. The glands in his face had completely fried and burnt his skin leaving two scars on his face. Coran said that since the glands were fried Lance could no longer channel quintessence like he had been doing before. Lance didn’t mind. He was just thankful that he and everyone else was still alive.

It took him a little while to get his motor skills back, but after another week Ulaz had cleared him and they could go back home. When they got back and after talking with Pidge and Hunk, Lance decided to sell the shop. Everyone was moving on and he felt like he should too.

Onto what though was still undecided. He had options. He could still find a human job or find a place in the Blades. They were taking on a lot more non Galra members now that they were expanding their reach to fully dismantle the empire.

“Hey guys. What’s up?” He asked.

Shiro shrugged. “Just making sure Keith doesn’t just run off by himself again.”

Lance gasped in fake shock and draped his arms around Keith’s shoulders. “Leave? Without me? Well I never! Keith, you’d just abandon me? Your mate? Your bonded mate?” He waved his hand around in Keith’s face for emphasis. On one of his hands was a simple gold band. Once they had settled down back in Lance’s apartment he had made good on his promise. Keith made Lance his bonded mate. He got Lance wedding rings the very next day.

He thought wedding rings was kind of dumb, but Lance wanted to get them and legally get married. Keith was fine with that. He could understand it. Getting married the human way was important to Lance. They had decided they were going to figure out the wedding details after their roadtrip.
So in Galra terms they were married, but in human terms they were just engaged. Keith could live with that. Lance was still his and he was Lance’s. Though if Lance tried to pull some more self sacrificing hero shit again he would personally break his fucking neck.

Keith just rolled his eyes and held onto Lance’s wrist. “Abandon you? I couldn’t even if I tried.”

“Aw, babe.”

Shiro chuckled and shook his head. “Well I can see you two have everything you need. I won’t keep you. Call me when you get to your first stop.”

Lance grinned. “Don’t you worry Shiro. I’ve got an instagram all set up to record all our cross country adventures.”

“I look forward to it.” He checked his watch and sighed. “Okay, I have to go now. I’m meeting up with Adam in about half an hour and I gotta clean my hands. Covered in dirt.”

Keith shook his head. “Just kiss him already. You know you want to.”

“I think you’re the last person who should be giving love advice.”

“I’m technically married.”

“Yeah.” Said Lance. “We’re Galra married. Soon to be human married. Double married. Didn’t even have to get a divorce to do that.”

Shiro just shook his head and went back inside. “Have a safe trip you two.”

When he was gone Keith just looked at Lance. He was still relieved every time he saw him. Thankful that they were still alive. The main battle was over and now there was just some clean up to do. He reached over and gently brushed his thumb over Lance’s cheek, touching his scar.

“What are you doing there kitten?” He asked.

“Admiring your scars.” Said Keith honestly. “They are beautiful.”

“Eh, not really.” Muttered Lance. “It’s scars…”

“Yeah, but they are your scars and they are reminders of our shared past.” Said Keith. “Do you think my scar’s ugly or something?”

“What? No.” Said Lance quickly. “Your scars are all rugged and handsome… I’m just wondering what I’m going to tell my parents when we see them… Mama’s going to kill me…”

“But they are scars?”

“They look like I got branded.” Whined Lance. “Mama’s gonna think I did it on purpose.”

Keith chuckled a little and passed Lance a helmet. “Whatever. If you want you can just tell her I convinced you to do it. I’ll be the bad husband. I already fit the bill anyway.”

Lance rolled his eyes and put on his helmet. “Ha, ha, ha. Shut up Keith. Mama already likes you. When she finds out we’re engaged she’s gonna be thrilled. She’s gonna crack open the photo album and show all the bad baby photos.”

“Well now I have something to look forward to.” He teased.
Lance pouted and crossed his arms. “Mean.”

“The meanest.” Keith got onto his bike and revved the engine a few times. “Next stop, the McClain house.” Lance got onto the bike and pushed something into Keith’s face. He moved his head back a little and looked at the thing Lance had shoved into his face. It was a red carnation. “Huh?”

“Just a snack for the road.” Teased Lance.

Keith rolled his eyes and bit the flower. It had been a while since he had eaten flowers. He still liked the taste. “Thanks for the snack. You got anymore?”

“… You know, when we plan our wedding we are only using flowers you won’t eat.” Lance tossed the flower away and wrapped his hands around Keith’s hips.

“Fine by me. I have no real idea how human weddings are meant to go. You’ll have to run me through it.”

“Of course babe.” Lance gently squeezed Keith’s hips. “We should get moving if we want to get to mama’s before dark.”

“Oh? We need to be there before dark you say?” He couldn’t help but grin.

“… Keith?”

He revved the engine. “Gotta get a move on you say?”

“Keith… no…”

“Guess I should ignore the speed limits then...”

“Keith no!”

“Keith yes!” With a final revve Keith gunned it out of alleyway and onto the road with Lance screaming very loud prayers in Spanish. Something’s never changed, and Keith loved it. He and Lance were finally free to live their best lives.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you all so much for reading this. I'm so happy that you have been able to make it this far. This was actually the first fan fic I posted to the Voltron fandom and I was really happy to receive all your nice comments. If you liked this please feel free to look at my other stuff. Thank you once again for taking the time to read this. Maybe I'll see you in another comment's section? Who knows? Hope you have a good rest of your day or night you wonderful people :D

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