Kacxa Drambles 2019

by poorrichardslegacy

Summary

Compilation of drabbles and rambles I posted on Tumblr for Kacxa Week 2019

Notes

This is an extract from a work I just published on AO3 (Rejected by the Galra). That work is a KACXA-centric work that lays out an alternate VLD universe. The extract below details the immediate aftermath of the Paladin’s battle against the White Mech. In this AU, Acxa played a key role in aiding the Paladins in this battle, as well as helping them defeat Sendak’s Fire of Purification forces. A romance has slowly been building between the two, and Keith and Acxa are forced to deal with feelings they have no experience with.

In this post, the story picks up from the point where Acxa heads out to the crash site of the Black Lion.
Determined the impact area of the lack Lion, she bolts to the Hangar Bay to board the fastest shuttle on Atlas. She calls for Matt Holt, who joins her and pilots the craft to the expected crash site.

Reaching Blacks’ crash site, Acxa sees the wreckage lying in an impact crater. EMT personnel from the Garrison medical contingent that remained on the ground when Atlas launched are also arriving on the scene, and Matt knows they will not let just anyone into the crash site.

Due to toxic chemicals released during the crash, Matt and Acxa mask up. Racing to the Lion, they are stopped by the armed patrol that accompanied the EMTs. Matt identifies himself and Acxa, but because anti-Galra feelings are running high, the patrol is not letting her in. Acxa is in no mood to be stopped, but Matt calms her down. He speaks to the patrol leader and while doing so contacts his father on Atlas. Commander Holt asks to speak to the EMT and security patrol teams.

“I’ll make this very simple for everyone. You are alive today because of the actions of six people. One of them is in that Lion. Another is the one you just stopped. Listen carefully…not all Galra are evil. And if there is one Galra you want on your side, it’s Senior Commander Acxa Combari. Now stand aside and let her in. She can get Keith out faster than any of you can. Understood?”

“Yes sir!” Turning to Acxa, the patrol leader says “Sorry, ma'am.” Before Acxa can rip into the patrol leader for calling her ma'am, Matt steps in front of her and says, “Thank you, Lieutenant.” Turning to Acxa, “Remember why we’re here.”

Acxa expresses her heart-felt gratitude to Matt. “Matt…I can’t possibly thank you enough for what you’ve done. Now, go find your sister. I’ve got this from here.”

Sprinting to Black, Acxa finds the escape hatch to the cockpit and opens it. Keith is lying in a heap, battered, bruised, and bleeding badly. He is barely conscious when she finds him.

Frantic at what she finds, she calls out to him. “Keith! Hold on! We’re going to get you out of here. Hold on, please!”

Arriving at the hospital, the EMTs burst into the Emergency Room with Keith, followed very closely by Acxa. She immediately takes charge of the room and makes it very clear to the staff that he is in bad shape and needs immediate assistance. The doctors take him back to surgery to stabilize him. Acxa attempts to follow, but she is stopped by two security guards.

“I need to be back there with him. Why are you stopping me?”, she snaps. She is in no mood to deal with anyone standing in her way right now.

The head of the Emergency Department approaches Acxa and tells her directly how it will be. “I am Dr. Philip Hansen, head of this Emergency Department. Right now, we need to get him stabilized. To do that he needs to be in a sanitary environment, which means anyone who is not medical staff is not getting back there with him. You are welcome to wait here, and I’ll be happy to provide updates to you. Until then you need to realize that I am in charge of his care here, not you!”

Sighing heavily, her shoulders slump in resignation. She looks at the doors Keith was taken through, then back at Dr. Hansen. Panic is beginning to set in, and she is unsure what to do. “I apologize, Dr. Hansen. I was out of line. I…Keith…he’s very important to me. I just…wanted to be sure he is getting the care he needs.”

Softening his tone, Dr. Hansen puts his hand on her shoulder. “I understand how you feel…I’m
“Acxa, Axca Combari, of the Blade of Marmora.”

“Acxa, Keith is in the best place he can possibly be. I promise you he’ll get the best care possible. He and the other Paladins just saved us from the Galra and a God-knows-what mechanized contraption. If we can save him, rest assured we will. I’ll let you know how he is doing on a regular basis. In the meantime, let me show you to a room where you can collect your thoughts.”

“If…if you can save him? Is he going to die?”

“I won’t lie to you Acxa. He is in bad shape. His vital signs are fluctuating, and he’s lost a lot of blood. The first call we got from the EMT transport expressed concern that he might not survive the trip here. The good news is that he made it this far.”

Acxa is stunned. She and Keith endured more than eight phoebs of separation. Now, there is a very real possibility he will die just as they are reunited. The news hits her with a thud. She does her best to collect her wits, despite a burning desire to put her fist through a wall in frustration.

“Please, you’ll let me know if or when his condition changes? Would you also let me know the status of the other Paladins? I’m assuming they will be brought here as well?”

“I will, and yes. The other Paladins are all on their way in now. I’ll let you know when they get here, and I’ll let you know how they are doing. I can tell you that the preliminary reports we are getting is that they are all in critical condition, but they are stabilized. Unfortunately, Keith appears to be in the worst shape.”

“I should let you go. You have a busy quintant ahead of you. Thank you, Dr. Hansen.”

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Acxa waits in the quiet room for vargas. Pacing, wringing her hands, fighting the urge to put her fist through that wall. Was there anything she could have done to prevent the Paladins from crashing? Did she wait too long to act? She is filled with self-doubt and remorse. With no one there for her to confide in, she bottles up her emotions. She needs to remain strong.

After six vargas, Dr. Hansen comes to see her. “Acxa, would you come with me please? You can see him now.”

“Doctor, how is he? What is his condition? Will he…will he live?”

“Let’s go into his room and I’ll tell you everything.”

Entering Keith’s room for the first time she sees he looks very pale, and his lips are a dark blue. He is hooked into several monitors, measuring heart rate, breathing, blood pressure. Acxa is no doctor, but to her the readings look weak. She turns to Dr. Hansen and sees great sadness on his face.

“Acxa, you may want to sit down for this.” Pausing for a moment while she slowly sits on the bed next to Keith, he continues. “I promised you I would tell you the truth. You’re not going to like what I’m about to say.”

“Keith is in the worst shape of the five Paladins. He was the closest to the explosion, and as a result his Lion hit the ground the hardest. He suffered severe internal injuries caused by the blast and by impact with the ground. At one point we had to resuscitate him because his blood pressure crashed. It’s a miracle he’s alive. The next 48 to 72 vargas will determine if he lives or dies. If he is still here in
three quintants, he’ll make it. But…I’m not optimistic he will. He is near death now. I’m sorry.”

The words are crushing to Acxa. She turns to Keith, staring at him, shaking yet unable to move. This can’t be happening. “Isn’t there SOMETHING we can do?”

“This is grasping at straws, but there may be one hope. And that one hope rests with you. You told me Keith is a very important person to you. I suspect you are equally important to him. You may be the only one with the power to pull him back from the brink.”

“Tell me what I have to do. Please!”

“Talk to him. Let him know you are here. Tell him how important he is to you. Keep saying it. Believe it or not, he will hear you. He hears us talking about him right now. Even though he’s comatose, he’ll know you are here. Acxa, it might be enough to save him.

"At this point I will try anything. Thank you for giving me a sliver of hope…” Turning back to Keith and taking his hand, “For giving us a sliver of hope.”

“That’s all it is, I’m afraid. Good luck. I’ll continue to check in on you. The nurses will get you anything you need.”

“Thank you, Dr. Hansen.”

Dr. Hansen departs, leaving Acxa alone with Keith. She wastes no time speaking to him. “Keith. It’s Acxa. I’m here. I came back for you. I am so sorry I wasn’t there to protect you the way you protected me against Sendak. I hope you can hear me. Keith…please come back to me. We need you.”

She pauses to choke back her emotions and hold it together, for his sake.

“I…need you. We have so much to talk about. You can’t leave now.”
Ceremonies, Customs, and Traditions

Chapter Summary

Keith remembers a lesson his mother taught him while in the Quantum Abyss.

Responding to Acxa’s request for them to talk in private, Keith knocks on the door to her quarters and enters.

“So, what’s on your mind?”

Acxa is sitting on a two-person divan in the sitting area of her quarters. “Keith, please, sit next to me.” As he takes his place, she begins the most important conversation of her life. She’s rehearsed this for days, and now it’s showtime.

“You more than anyone other than Zethrid and Ezor know how upset I am that Lotor is back. His presence reminds me of an awful period in my life, one that I thought I’d put aside forever.”

“But its also made me realize how lucky I am. My life has turned around, in large part because of you. I wouldn’t be here if you hadn’t seen the good in me, encouraged me, and supported me along the way. You never doubted me, even when I doubted myself, and you gave me the confidence to carry on.”

Taking his hand and squeezing it, “I thought I was doomed to be alone for the rest of my life, but that changed when I met you. You showed me what it means to love, and to be loved. Keith, I don’t want to lose that.”

“Whoa. What makes you think you’re going to lose my love for you? Have I done anything to give you that impression?”

“No, Keith. You’ve done nothing of the sort. I’m looking ahead now, at what happens when this war is over. I believe we will win, even if we don’t know how yet. But when the war is over, what happens to us? What is our next step, together?”

“I’ve…I actually have thought about it, but I’ve been so focused on the here-and-now recently that I haven’t thought about it for awhile. Not since we left Earth. I know I don’t want to lose you.”

“I don’t want to lose you either. I hope you won’t think I’m being too forward in what I’m about to say. Corillian society is a matriarchal society, unlike Earth, so women on Corillia take the initiative on things that Earth women may not.”

She pauses, clearly struggling with how to tell Keith what’s on her mind. She had everything planned out…what she was going to say, how she was going to say it, when she was going to say it. Unfortunately, she overlooked ONE minor detail.

“I don’t know what the translation is for what I want to say…I only know it in Corillian…” She looks down at the floor, shaking, clearly distressed and embarrassed.

Concerned by what he is seeing, Keith kneels in front of her, takes her hand in his, and cups her chin with his other hand, lifting her face to him. “Then say it in Corillian. We’ll talk it out. Please, don’t
hold it in.”

“Jokan ihr Markana, Keith?”

His eyes grow wide and he sits back slightly away from Acxa, hearing words spoken in a tongue he learned from his mother while they were stranded in the Quantum Abyss.

Acxa is expecting him to ask her for a translation of her question. His reply is not what she expects.

“Jokan ihr Markana, varana, Acxa.”

His words stun her, and her eyes grow wide with surprise. “Keith…you…understood what I said? How?”

She is frozen in place. On Corillia, it is traditional for the woman to propose marriage. Following that tradition, she just popped the big question to Keith in her home worlds ancient tongue. He responded in kind, accepting her proposal. In Corillian. But how did he even understand her question?

Keith stands, pulls her up, and takes her in his arms. “I understood every word, Acxa. Two years in the Quantum Abyss with my mother. Language lessons every day to help pass the time. For some reason she included Corillian in with the Galran, except she never told me it was Corillian. She said I’d need to know those specific words someday. I never understood why until just now.”

“I did give the right response, didn’t I? I mean, there is no one else I’d rather spend the rest of my life bonded to…no one else I want as my life partner.”

Acxa smiles and nods. “You gave me the answer I was hoping for.”

With that, Keith gives her a long kiss and hug. He then invites Acxa to sit while he kneels in front of her again, reaching into his pocket and pulling out a small box.

“I’ve been carrying this around with me since we left Earth. On Earth it’s traditional for men to propose marriage and offer a token of their love and commitment to their intended. Normally it’s a ring, but I know you’re not a ring person. I did some research and I found that the Corillian traditions call for the man to offer his intended a betrothal pendant as part of his acceptance of her marriage proposal. So, I had a special one made…hoping we’d have this conversation someday.”

Hands shaking, and with a trembling voice, he offers her the box. “I…hope you like it.”

Opening the box Acxa sees a pendant on a fine white gold chain. The pendant is a highly decorated miniature version of Keith’s Marmoran blade. A vein of Luxite runs down the middle of the blade, and the handle is made of Scaultrite.

“If I understand Corillian traditions correctly, the pendant is supposed to be a meaningful reminder to its recipient of why they chose their intended as their life partner. I hope this pendant will remind you of the day we met and the common path we already share. I hope…it will remind you of the love I have for you.”

“Keith…it’s beautiful. I…would you help me put it on?”

“Yes.”

Sitting next to her, taking the chain and pendant, Keith fastens it around her neck. Tears welling in the eyes of both, they embrace for a long time. Acxa flashes back to the first time Keith held her in his arms, on the Black Lion, when they began the journey to Earth. He had just told her she was the
prettiest woman he’d ever met.

She now clings to him tightly, just as she did then, not wanting to let him go.
Life on Earth

Chapter Summary

Following Keith’s recovery from the final battle for Earth, Acxa struggles adjusting to life on Earth. Seeing this, Keith decides to take action and ease her into adjusting to life on his home planet. Starting with a return to nature.

Early in the morning, Keith, Acxa, and Cosmo leave in the Black Lion for the mountains. The location Keith chooses for their camp is a level area on an otherwise gentle slope above a clear blue lake with the mountains and valleys beyond.

Keith sets up camp while Acxa explores the area immediately around the campsite. She inhales deeply and takes in the crisp, clean mountain air. She realizes, for the first time in many years, that she feels completely relaxed. And safe. She looks at Keith, and realizes he’s the reason she feels that way. She sits on a boulder and enjoys the scenery that surrounds her.

“How have you ever been backpacking?”, he says holding two backpacks.

Keith takes her out on the trail, and they explore the mountains around their campsite. She is amazed at the beauty of nature and the variety of flora and fauna. The stop at another clear blue lake at a higher elevation. Acxa is struck by the quiet. She’s never really paid attention to it before, and she is amazed by its calming effect.

The quiet is broken by the call of a bald eagle flying to its nest.

“Keith, what is that?”, asks Acxa in amazement.

“It’s a Bald Eagle. Big bird, big predator. They are amazing creatures. They live off fish in the lake and make their nests in the tall trees around it. It’s one of the apex predators here. They are beautiful birds.”

“What are…fish?”

Keith kneels near the edge of the lake and points out a small school of trout. “Those are fish. They live in the water. Good eating. If you like we can catch a couple and have them for dinner tonight.”

As Acxa leans over the water to get a better look, Keith can’t resist the urge to get a some water in his hands and flick it into her face.

Startled, Acxa sputters. “KEITH! What the…?” She turns towards him, with murder in his eyes. He’s not so sure she took his actions as the playful joke he meant them to be.

Um…Acxa…it was all in fun. Sorry?…Don’t hurt me?”

Acxa’s eyes turn from murder to an impish let’s-fool-around mode. “Ok big boy. You want to play? Let’s play!” She chases him down and tackles him. She quickly flips him on his back, straddles him, and pins him to the ground.

Laughing just a bit, Keith teases her. “So, is this how Corillian women tell a guy they are interested
Acxa leans down to Keith with both hands, grabs his hair, and says the first thing that comes to mind. “No! Keith…just…shut up and kiss me!”

Keith happily obiliges her. After a moment, she rests her forehead on his and looks him in the eyes. “I can’t remember ever being this happy or having so much fun. Thank you!” She kisses him again, then stands and pulls him up. “So…how do we catch these fish?”

Still reeling slightly from her kiss, he recovers and says, “I have the gear back at our camp. We’ll catch them in the lake by our campsite. I’ll show you how to fish when we get back. Ready to move on?”

“Let’s do this!”

They continue down the trail for another hour, then break for lunch. Acxa tells Keith stories of the wildlife on her home world of Corillia, and how it’s so different from that of Earth. The stories continue as they finish their hike, arriving back at their campsite five hours after they left it.

Keith gets the fishing gear out, and after giving Acxa a quick five-minute course on baiting a hook, casting the line, and setting the hook, they go down to the water. Both cast their lines at the same time. Her line takes a hit immediately.

She sets the hook, then turns to Keith and asks, “What do I do now?”

“Turn the crank on the reel and reel it in.” Keith watches in amazement as she reels in the fish as if she’s done it her entire life. Without instruction, she grabs the net and scoops up her catch. On her first cast she lands a 14-pound trout.

“Well, no point in fishing for any more. You just caught our dinner!”

They begin dinner preparations together. While Keith cleans and prepares the trout, Acxa peels and slices the vegetables. As she peels the potatoes, she happens to notice that Keith is standing near the pot of cold water they will be cooked in. She makes a few mental calculations; angle of trajectory from her hand into the pot, speed of the potato hitting the water, and splash radius and direction of the water upon potato impact. Thinking she still owes him from the dousing he gave her at the other lake, she acts. Expertly flipping the potatoes from her hands all at once, they splash into the pot…soaking Keith in the process.

“ACXA! What…why did you do that?”

Laughing hysterically, Acxa screams at him. “PAYBACK!”

Now it is Keith’s turn to chase Acxa. He picks up a smaller pot of water and begins chasing her as she backpedals. “Keith…you put that down RIGHT NOW! Don’t you even THINK about throwing that at me!”

He sets the pot down and catches her. In catching her, he happens to grab her just under the armpits…and discovers that she is VERY ticklish! The more he tickles, the harder she laughs. It is an endearing laugh that melts his heart. Not wanting to overdo it, he eases up and pulls her close.

“That was not fair, Keith!” With that, she pulls him close and kisses him.

After a couple of minutes Keith says, “We should stop fooling around and finish cooking dinner.”
After dinner, Keith and Acxa sit on camp stools and take in the awesome majesty of nature. Reaching into his rucksack, he pulls out a chocolate bar, breaks it in half, and offers it to her. Seeing her quizzical look, he explains, “It’s a chocolate bar. One of the favorite treats on Earth. Try it.”

Peeling back the wrapper, she takes a nibble, and her face immediately lights up with delight.

“Keith…this is delicious!” Taking a larger bite, she reaches over, grabs his half, and tells him, “I hope you brought more!”

He just laughs. “No worries. I’m taking you into town tomorrow to show you around. I’ll pick up more while we are there.”

“Good! Because chocolate makes me happy!” She pauses, giving him an expression of pure contentment.

“But…Keith…you make me happier.”
Blade of Marmora Life

Chapter Summary

Acxa and Keith take on Galra pirates after the fall of the Empire…and have their eyes opened to future possibilities

The attack begins at dawn. Two Blade of Marmora strike teams assault the positions of the Galra pirates at opposite points, forcing the pirates to fight a battle on two fronts. Keith’s team strikes first. Coming in from the South, their objective is to distract the pirates from the main attack Acxa’s team launches from the North fifteen minutes later.

Completely taken by surprise, the pirate positions collapse within 20 minutes of the start of the attack. As prisoners are rounded up, Keith and Acxa each begin a sweep of their respective attack areas looking for stragglers.

Moving carefully through his area, Keith stops in his tracks as he detects movement coming from a small bunker. Sword drawn, he cautiously approaches and kicks the door in. Seeing movement in the corner of the bunker he raises his sword to strike…and immediately stills his hand.

Huddled over to protect a group of three very young children is an older child, no more than 10 years old. She is brandishing a 10-inch knife and waves it several times at Keith. Overcoming his initial shock at seeing them, he puts his blade back in its scabbard, lowers his mask and kneels in front of the children.

“It’s ok. You’re safe now. You have nothing to be afraid of. I won’t hurt you.”

The younger children are clearly frightened, the youngest crying out of fear. The oldest does her best to project confidence, but Keith can tell she’s just as frightened as the others. “That’s what the pirates told us too…before they took us away from our parents.” She jabs the knife in Keith’s direction. “STAY BACK!”

Keith stretches his arms and hands out, palms outward, to show that he is no threat. “I promise I won’t hurt you. I’m with the Blade of Marmora. Have you heard of us?”

“Trembling, the oldest lowers her blade slightly, but is still wary of Keith. ”Yes…the Blade of Marmora…they help people…people like us…Are…you here to help us?”

“Yes, we are. What is your name, youngling?”

“A…Ateri, sir. These are my brothers and baby sister.” Tears begin to stream down her face as she lowers her blade. “Please…if you really are Blade of Marmora, help us…we haven’t eaten or slept in days.”

“Ateri. That is a beautiful name. My life partner’s mother is named Ateri. My name is Keith. Let’s see what we can do for you.” Sitting cross-legged in front of the children to make himself as non-threatening as possible, Keith immediately shares his water and rations with Ateri. “Share these with your brothers and sister, but only a little at a time. I don’t want you eating too much at once and getting sick. While you do that, I’m going to call for help.”
“Acxa, it’s Keith.”

“Keith! Thank the Spirits! I was worried sick! You’re not at the rendezvous point. Where are you?”

“I’m in the small bunker next to the ruined building just south of you. I need help. I’m fine, but I’m dealing with a small problem…make that four small problems. We need food, water, and blankets.”

“We?…Never mind. We’re on our way.”

Ten minutes later, Acxa enters the bunker with one of her team members, their arms full of blankets, carrying a rucksack full of food and water. Surprised to see four children, the youngest happily sitting in Keith’s lap, she turns to him.

“Four small problems indeed!”

“Everyone, this is Acxa. She is a Blade of Marmora, like me. Acxa…these are my new friends. This is Ateri, her brothers Natani and Brogar, and…” indicating the one on his lap, “…this little one is Aelana.”

“Hmmm…I see. It’s a pleasure to meet all of you. Aelana, are you trying to take my husband away from me?”

Aelana wrinkles her nose and smiles at Acxa. “Maayyybe!”

While Keith breaks into the food and water supplies, Acxa uses her medical kit to check on the condition of the children. As she conducts her checks, she watches Keith with great interest. As he gives each of them a carefully measured amount of food, he is talking to them. Making direct eye contact and smiling. Doing everything he can to help them feel at ease. Normally quiet and pensive around people he doesn’t know, he opens up to the children, continually talking to them in an upbeat voice. Seeing him in action, she’s struck by one thought.

He’s very good with children

Since their bonding ceremony three months ago, Acxa’s thought more than once about broaching the subject of starting a family someday. But Keith never expressed much of an interest in having that conversation, with everything going on since the founding of the Galra Republic, so she never brought it up. She didn’t think he would have the slightest interest in children.

Until now.

Finishing her checkup on the children, she sits next to Keith and engages them in conversation. Aelana crawls back into Keith’s lap and smiles at Acxa.

“Miss Axspa…do you and Mr. Keef have children?”

This isn’t the conversation she expected to have with a 5-year old, but she plays along. “No my love, we don’t. Not yet.”

“Don’t worry. Someday you will. You and Mr. Keef will be good parents!”

As Keith and Acxa both blush the same shade of bright purple, Keith turns to the little girl and tells her it’s time for bed. They work together to set up blankets and rig up pillows for the children so they can rest before being picked up and sent home tomorrow. Acxa watches Keith with interest, seeing the enormous patience he displays as he finally gets the last one (Aelana) tucked in.
“Mr. Keef, would you tell us a story?”

“Let’s make it a short one, Aelana. You need some sleep. What would you like to hear about?”

Tell us how you and Miss Axspa beat the pirates!”

Acxa can’t help but laugh at the little one’s mispronunciation of their names. ”Yes, Mr. Keef, how did we beat those pirates?”

“Well, this is how we did it…” Keith spins a fanciful yarn about how the heroic Blades, led by their leader Miss Axspa and her trusty sidekick Mr. Keef chased the mean pirates away.

Peacefully settling down for the first time since they were kidnapped, the children finally fall into a sound sleep.

Seeing Keith go to each of the children to check on them and kiss them good night, she says softly, “Who are you and what have you done with my husband?”

They stretch out next to each other in an adjoining room in the bunker, exhausted but neither able to sleep. She puts her arm on his chest and her head on his shoulder. “You did a wonderful job with those children today. I didn’t know you had it in you. I’m proud of you."

“Thanks, but it wasn’t hard. We’re both orphans, we know what it’s like to be abandoned. Besides… I like kids.” Turning to look at her, he gives her a thoughtful gaze.

“Someday…maybe?”

“Patience, love. Sooner or later…we will.”

He bites his lip, choosing his next words carefully. “You know…I could be ok with sooner…”

She cups his cheek with her hand and gazes lovingly into his eyes.

“Me too.”
Well, this one is certainly aggressive, and it can loosely be called negotiation. This is an excerpt from the next work I’m going to publish on AO3 (The Seven Paladins). It will be out sometime next weekend assuming I finish the final editorial pass on time. Keith tries to do the right thing for Acxa and takes his lumps.

Dressed in full Paladin armor, Keith paces the hallway outside the Atlas briefing room. He is nervous about the upcoming meeting, arranged by himself and Allura at Lotor’s request, between Lotor and his former Generals. The last time Acxa, Zethrid, and Ezor had any dealings with Lotor, he ejected them into space and left them to die. The bad blood that act of betrayal created continues to eat away at them, particularly Acxa. Keith and Allura both agreed that a clear-the-air meeting between the four, while potentially explosive, is necessary if they hope to win the last battle against Honerva.

After a few more minutes, the three Generals finally arrive. They are attired in their Blade of Marmora uniforms, and their faces reflect the dread they all carry going into this meeting.

“Thank you all for agreeing to do this. I know none of you want to have this meeting, but it’s important that we settle things between you and Lotor once and for all. And, hopefully, you can put that chapter of your lives behind you and move forward.”

“Keith, I think we’d all feel better if you were in there with us.”

“I will be, Ezor. Don’t worry. Allura will be in there as well. But, she and I are not the ones who need to be doing the talking.”

“What if we don’t have anything to say to him?”

“I don’t believe that for one minute, Zethrid. Look, I know it’s hard dredging up these old painful memories, but you must if you hope to let them go and move on with your lives.”

Acxa sighs heavily, takes his hand and looks him in the eye. “I’m not looking forward to this, but you’re right. Let’s get this over with.”

Keith leads the group into the room. Standing on the opposite side of the room, in her full Paladin armor is Allura. Next to her is Lotor. Keith allows the Generals to move in front of him, while Allura steps back behind Lotor.

A reticent Lotor smiles and greets them. “Acxa…Ezor…Zethrid. It’s good to see you again.”

Acxa steps forward toward Lotor. As she does so, Keith and Allura exchange wide-eyed looks as Keith takes several steps forward to stay close to Acxa.

“You look well, Lotor. How are you feeling?”

“Remarkably well, thanks to Allura. As well as can be expected.”

Acxa narrows her eyes. “Good. I was hoping you would say that.”
Watching his fiancé carefully, Keith sees the one thing he hoped he wouldn’t. Acxa’s right hand curls into a tight fist, the muscles in her right arm and shoulder tensing.

“ACXA, NO!”

His words go unheeded. Taking one step toward Lotor, Acxa swings her fist as hard as she can, delivering a right cross to Lotor’s jaw that drives him into the back wall of the room. Keith jumps in front of her, taking a hard left to his chin before grabbing her wrists and pulling them down to her side.

“ACXA, STOP THIS NOW!”

Ignoring Keith, Acxa uses her height advantage over him to glare at Lotor while screaming at him.

“YOU BASTARD! YOU MURDERED NARTI! YOU’VE KILLED THOUSANDS OF INNOCENT PEOPLE WITH YOUR WILD SCHEMES! YOU TURNED THE THREE OF US INTO MINDLESS SLAVES TO YOUR INSIDIOUS PLANS! WITH EVERY FIBER OF MY BEING, I HATE YOU!”

Attending to Lotor, Allura turns to Keith and gives him a warning. “Keith, you need to get her under control or so help me I will, and I’ll make short work of her.”

“ACXA, LOOK AT ME!” Keith can see the fire in her eyes as he struggles with all his might to hold her back. Looking into Keith’s eyes she finally begins to come down from her adrenalin rush, her anger beginning to subside. “Acxa, please. You’ve got to calm down!”

“Keith…I’m…I’m ok now.” Looking at him she sees his jaw beginning to swell and she realizes what she did to him. “Keith, I…oh no, are you ok? Love, I’m sorry, I didn’t mean to hit you.”

“I’ll be fine. But you need to calm down. This is not helpful, for anyone.”

Releasing her, he turns to Lotor. “Lotor, are you ok?”

“Yes, Keith, thank you. I’ll survive.” Turning to Allura he tells her, “It’s ok Allura. To be honest, I had that coming. I’m just grateful it wasn’t Zethrid that hit me.”

Zethrid, clenching her right fist and pounding it into her left hand, looks at Lotor and growls. “That can be arranged, Lotor.”

Keith turns to Zethrid. He has had enough. “Zethrid, NO!” Not helpful! We’re here to talk.

Pouting, Zethrid drops her hands to her side. “Fine. We’ll talk.”

“Now that we have that out of our system, let’s get down to the real reason why we’re here. Lotor, you have some explaining to do to your Generals.” Turning to the Generals, Allura gives them their rules of engagement. “And you three, speak your minds and get your issues off your chest, but use your words, not your fists!”

“You’re right, Allura. I apologize for my outburst, but Lotor I’m not sorry I hit you. We trusted you. You took us out of a bad situation when you got us out of that orphanage on Corillia and we are grateful for that. But we endured that four decaphoeb training regimen you put us through. We blindly followed you. We believed in you. And you lied to us. Everything we ever did for you was based on a lie. You led us down a dark path of death and destruction. You murdered our sister Narti. And until you convince us otherwise, we will take those beliefs to our graves.”
Lotor does his best to maintain eye contact as Acxa speaks. Biting his lips, he chooses his next words carefully. “Before this meeting began, Allura and I had a heart-to-heart conversation. She warned me that your words would be harsh, and to be honest I expected that as well. Considering all that you’ve been through, I’m surprised you agreed to meet with me.”

“If it weren’t for Keith, we wouldn’t be here. Since we joined the Blade of Marmora, he’s been completely honest with us, something you never were. In my opinion, this meeting is a waste of time.”

“Point taken, Ezor. I don’t blame you for feeling that way. Allura told me one other thing in preparation for this meeting. For the first time in my life I need to be completely honest, and to tell you everything. Hide nothing. Then, when I’m done, ask forgiveness. In that spirit, I need to accept responsibility for all the wrong I’ve done to the three…the four of you…my Generals…and give you the explanation you should have received decaphoebs ago.”

Acxa looks at Zethrid and Ezor. Receiving vertical head nods from both, the three Generals take a seat at the conference table.

“We’re listening.”
Free Day

Chapter Summary

This is a humorous fluff piece that was inspired by a visit to the local farmers market today. Acxa needs a break, and Keith knows just where to take her.

She’s been working at a breakneck pace since she arrived on Earth.

No breaks.

Helping the Paladins defeat Sendak and his Fire of Purification, then contributing to the defeat of Honerva’s mech. First to arrive on the scene of the crashed Black Lion, she pulled Keith out, sat with him until he regained consciousness, then took responsibility for creating his physical therapy program and made sure he did it.

Twelve weeks. No breaks. She is on the verge of complete exhaustion and needs a break.

A situation Keith very clearly sees. Concerned for the woman he’s become very close to over the past year, he steps in to make sure she takes a day off.

“Acxa, I have an idea. Why don’t you and I take some time, just for ourselves, to go out and do something fun? Just the two of us?”

“Keith, I would love to but right now I don’t think I could spell the word ‘fun’ if my life depended on it. What did you have in mind?”

“Let’s go into town. I would love to show you around, show you some of the culture of my home planet. They have a huge farmers market there, and we can spend hours just browsing the shops. Then, when we’re done, we can go down to the lake just outside of town and walk along the shore. I know you like the outdoors. What do you think?”

“Keith, that’s a horrible idea. Why would you think I want to go someplace where they sell farmers? No…that’s…just not right.”

“Acxa…sweetheart…no…it’s not like that. They don’t sell farmers at the farmers market. They sell what the farmers make and grow.”

Acxa blushes a bright purple, looks at the ground, and gives him a sheepish reply. “Oh…I did it again, didn’t I?” Acxa sometimes tends to take statements literally, and this is one of those times.

“You did, but that’s one of the things I love about you. It’s ok. Well…would you like to go?”

“Absolutely! I need a break, and I’m sure you do too. It will be nice to spend some time together where I’m not scolding you to do your exercises or wiping the mat with you in our sparring matches.”

“Yeah, well, I almost had you on the range yesterday. It took you 500 shots to beat me. And even then, you cheated.”
“I had to cough.”

“ON MY LAST SHOT?”

“Look dweeb, are we going into town or not?”

“As soon as we throw ourselves on my speeder…dork.”

She smiles and gives Keith a playful shove out the door towards his parked speeder. “Let’s do this!”

While she would flatten anyone else who called her dork, Acxa doesn’t take being called that by Keith as an insult. During Keith’s rehabilitation they would sometimes refer to each other in this manner, to the point that ‘dork’ and ‘dweeb’ became personal terms of endearment for each other.

Arriving at the Farmers Market, Acxa is amazed at its sheer size, and the amount of farm goods available for sale. But what really gets her attention are the shop stalls where merchants are selling antique furniture, home goods, and clothing.

Walking into one of the clothing shops, Keith tells her to look around, and that they’ll meet up at the front entrance to the store in 20 minutes.

She finds a collection of hats that catches her interest. Trying them on, she finds one wide-brimmed hat she finds particularly attractive. Looking at it in the mirror, she hears Keith coming up behind her.

“Hey, that looks good on you.”

“Thanks, Keith, I…” Turning to face him she is rendered speechless by what she sees. Keith is wearing a pair of farmer’s bib overalls, a straw hat, and is carrying a pitchfork.

“What do you think?”

She is laughing hysterically and can barely get the words out. “Keith…what…are…you…wearing?”

“Looks good, right?”

“Keith, it’s hideous! Completely and utterly hideous! Well, the hat’s not bad ut the rest of that outfit…”

“You’re right…but hey, I got you to laugh! No worries, I wasn’t going to get them. But…if you really like that hat I’ll get it for you.”

Their business at the clothing shop complete, Acxa and Keith (and their hats) head out to look at the food stalls in the market.

They stop at a produce market and Keith tells her to pick a fruit and try it. She sees one customer taking a bite out of an apple. Looking over the wide variety of fruit, Acxa picks one up and winds up to take a big bite out of it. Until Keith stops her.

“Um…Acxa…what are you doing?”

“You told me to pick a fruit and try it. I picked an apple and I’m going to try it. Go pay the farmer for it.”

“I would, except that’s not an apple. It’s a green bell pepper. Trust me, you don’t eat those like you would an apple. Here…this is an apple. Try it.”
Taking the apple, she takes a big bite out of it. Apple juice dripping down the corners of her mouth, she renders her verdict. “Not bad. It’s not chocolate. Or bacon. But not bad.”

“You and your bacon!”

A part of Keith’s physical therapy program included a strict diet, but she gave him leeway to pick some of the food items. At different points he introduced Acxa first to chocolate, and then later to bacon. They quickly became her favorite foods.

“OK, I know what you would like. Come with me.”

Taking her by the hand, they pass by the butcher’s stall, where Acxa sees sliced bacon by the pound.

“Keith…bacon…stop please?”

“Nope. I’ve got something better in mind.”

They next pass the stall of the candy maker, and his heaps of chocolate.

“Keith…?”

“Nope. Got something even better than just plain chocolate.”

Downcast and disappointed, Acxa trudges after him until they stop at the stall where different varieties of coffee and teas are sold.

“Acxa…look in that case. I think you’ll like what you see.”

Looking in the case, her eyes immediately light up with delight. Never in her wildest dreams did she think she would see anything that looked so delicious. She turns to him, hopeful, and asks, “Keith? Can we try some?”

“For your, anything.”

Procuring the item for her, she takes a bite and is immediately swept into culinary nirvana. She wraps her arms around his neck and gives him a long kiss.

“Keith, thank you! This is a wonderful day!”

“I’m glad you are enjoying yourself. And I’m glad you like the chocolate-covered bacon. I had a feeling you would.”
AU Life - Pilgrim

Chapter Summary

Inspired by one of my favorite songs by Enya. This story is set right after the failed operation by the Generals in the Ulippia system, where they tried to retrieve the teleduv crystal.

Following this operation, Acxa is at a crossroads in her life, and for the first time begins to question the path her life is currently on.

ACXA (Her PoV)

Acxa lies in her bunk, wide awake, staring at the ceiling.

The Ulippia operation was going so smoothly.

Until the Paladins showed up. Until HE showed up.

The Generals had secured the teleduv crystal. Had it loaded onto their cruiser. All was well until they discovered the Paladins skulking around in the cargo bay. Her reaction, and that of her fellow Generals, was instinctual. Attack and destroy the enemy.

She found herself paired off against the one Paladin she didn’t really want to face. She’d met him before. They didn’t speak when they first met, but she knew him.

He was the Red Paladin then. He saved her life when she was trapped in the belly of the Weblum. He didn’t know who she was, or how she got there, but it didn’t matter to him. He saved her, and she owes her life to him. She didn’t speak at the time, preferring to hide her identity from him. Despite that, they worked well together toward achieving a common goal. They built trust between each other.

And she betrayed that trust. She didn’t kill him when she cold have. She owed him that much for saving her life. Yet that betrayal bothers her more than it should. He told her she was “…just like the rest of them.” Just like the rest of the Galra.


But why did his parting words trouble her then, and why are they even more troublesome now?

When he charged at her in the cargo bay, he still had no idea who she was. She could have taken him out with one shot as he charged at her, but she held her fire. She ran straight at him and blocked his sword with her blaster pistol, and they settled into a stalemate of sorts.

She saw his eyes grow wide as he finally realized who she was. He was not a bad hand-to-hand fighter, but his balance wasn’t good, and it got worse once he recognized her. His anger at her, she guessed because of her betrayal in the Weblum, caused him to become reckless. She could have easily put him on the ground and ended their fight by shooting him. She didn’t.

Why? Probably because he saved her twice in the Weblum, and she still owed him a life. Yeah, that
was it.

But those words he spoke to her as they parted inside the Weblum…are still bothering her.

When Ezor broke their stalemate, she made it a point to go after one of the other Paladins. The goofy one who wouldn’t shut up. She left the Black Paladin to his fate against Ezor.

Why? Because she couldn’t bear the thought of killing the person who saved her life twice the first time she met him. She couldn’t just kill the only person she’d ever met who put her life ahead of their own.

Why does any of that matter? He’s the enemy!

Or is he?

When the Paladins fled the cargo bay, the four Generals could have pursued them. Zethrid was ready to kill, and there is no doubt that the Generals would have killed the Paladins. But, she stopped her fellow Generals from starting a pursuit.

Why? Was it because they had what they came for? That’s what she told them. Was it concern that the Paladins might actually win if they went after them?

Or was it something else?

As they left the Ulippia system and were pursued by Voltron, she skillfully maneuvered her Sincline fighter into a position where she had a clear kill shot. She and Lotor discussed this scenario, and it played out exactly how they planned it. At this range she couldn’t miss. All she had to do was pull the trigger.

Yet, she missed the shot. Pulled her shot, actually. For the first time in her life she deliberately missed a clear shot against an enemy. Lotor vehemently reprimanded her for botching the operation. Her fellow Generals knew she pulled her shot, and Ezor called her out on it. Pulled her aside and asked her what was wrong. Asked her point blank if she had feelings for this upstart Paladin with the flippity hair. Told her she would keep her suspicions to herself but warned her to be careful. This Paladin could be her undoing.

She pounds the mattress with both fists in frustration. Why is HE on her mind so much? And WHY is what he said to her in the Weblum bothering her to the point of distraction?

KEITH (His PoV)

Just two star systems away, the Black Paladin is in his room on the Castle of Lions, consumed by the thoughts of a certain Galra General.

When they saw the Generals in the cruiser for the first time, he charged at the one closest to him. The blue-skinned, blue-horned General. But rather than shoot, she closed the distance between them and used her pistol to block his sword. At one point it almost seemed as if she were toying with him, not really giving it her all.

And then he recognized her. Her uniform markings, the way she carried herself. She is the mystery Galra he rescued in the Weblum. He recalls how after getting her out of her crashed fighter they worked well together. But in the end she betrayed him. He let his guard down just for a moment and she got the jump on him. Certain he was about to breathe his last, he seethed in anger and told her she was no different than the rest of the Galra.
He remembers seething in anger during the fight in the cargo bay as well once he recognized her. He got reckless and he knows it. She is obviously a skilled hand-to-hand fighter ad she could have easily taken him down. And shot him, because he knows for a fact she is an excellent shot.

But she didn’t.

She didn’t kill him in the Weblum. She took a bag of the Scaultrite and left without killing him. She didn’t kill him in the cargo bay. She pulled her punches, then ran off to fight Lance when the General with the tail on her head broke their stalemate.

Why didn’t she kill him?

Payback for saving her life? Maybe there is a shred of integrity in this one after all.

They should have been even after that, but she saved his life again when she had a clean kill shot. She skillfully maneuvered her fighter during the fight when Voltron was in pursuit of their cruiser, and he fell right into her trap. She had Voltron dead to rights.

And she pulled her shot. Anyone who was there knows she pulled her shot. It was that obvious.

Why?

He has no clue. And it bothers him to the point of distraction.

ACXA (Her PoV)

She tries to think of something to get her mind off the Black Paladin, and her mother immediately comes to mind. Before her mother died, when Acxa was 9, she made it a point to drive home three key values.

All life is precious

Never kill needlessly

Everything happens for a reason.

She thinks about those values, values her mother taught her, values that are a part of Acxa’s moral code, values that Acxa had suppressed since her mother’s death.

And then it dawns on her, like a bolt out of the blue.

The Black Paladin has the same values that her mother did.

That she does.

He saved a complete stranger in the Weblum. He’s shown that when fighting an enemy his first choice is not to kill. Otherwise he would have killed her in the Weblum when she realized she was Galra. And their paths seem to keep crossing, for what reason she is not sure. But she is convinced there is a reason. Is this a message to her by a higher power? By the Supreme Spirit perhaps? Is this why she finds herself drawn to the Black Paladin?

She wonders, for the first time in years, if her life is going down the right path. After meeting the Red, now Black Paladin, she realizes she’s reached a fork in the path of her life. She has a choice to make.

Stay on her current path, a path filled with death and destruction, a path she is presently walking with
Lotor?

Or go down the path her mother laid out for her? The path that the Black Paladin seems to be on as well.

Whatever path she chooses, she knows it will be a long and winding one.
Movie Date

Chapter Summary

Told from Acxa's POV, Keith takes her out to the movies on their first date together. This is a total fluff piece.

Chapter Notes

While this is the prompt for Day 9 of Kacxa Week 2019, it's actually the second part of a 4-part college AU that I'm writing for the week. I'll keep the parts in order here and post them as they are ready.

Practice is over, and not a moment too soon for Acxa. Her legs are dead. Between practice, the game the night before, and two days spent in a walkathon the previous weekend, she is physically spent. But the sight that greets her as she leaves the gym immediately brightens her spirits and puts a spring back in her step.

Standing there, fresh from hockey practice and grinning at her, is Keith.

“Hey, Keith! I didn’t expect to see you here, but…I’m glad to see you!”

He breathes an immediate sigh of relief, for what she’s not quite sure. “I’m glad you’re glad. Acxa, is everything ok? I didn’t see you in class yesterday and I thought…maybe…something was wrong. It’s not like you to cut class. I…was worried…”

"Keith, that’s sweet. Nothing’s wrong. We had to leave early to get to our game site on time yesterday. It was four hours away by bus. Ugh! I let Professor Hansen know last week, and he told me to make sure I got notes from someone. I…was going to call you later to see if I could borrow yours?"

"Then you'll be wanting this. My notes from class.” Handing her the notebook, he asks a question that’s been on his mind for the past three days, since the end of the walkathon. “I was wondering…if you’re free this weekend…if you might like to go to the film festival…” Keith gulps hard to get the lump out of his throat. “…with me.”

Eyes widening with delight, she can’t say yes fast enough. “I am, and I’d love to!”

“Then…I guess it’s a date. Walk you back to your room?”

Slipping her hand into his, she tells him, “Darn right you are!”

In her room later that evening, she relates the story of Keith showing up after practice to Shay. Shay sighs heavily, shakes her head, and gives Acxa some additional insight.
“Sweetie, that boy has been shot down and had his heart broken by girls more times than you can possibly imagine. It wouldn’t surprise me if he thought you were dumping him when you didn’t make it to class.”

To say that Acxa and Keith stand out in the crowd would be an understatement. Standing at 6’7 and 6’5 respectively (Acxa being the taller of the pair), they tower over their fellow students. The stares Acxa is getting would normally bother her, but tonight she doesn’t give them a second thought.

She is on a date with the guy she’s had a secret crush on for over a year. The guy she was finally introduced to a week ago at the walkathon by her friend Shay, and Shay’s boyfriend Hunk. The guy who asked her to the university Fall Formal, an event she never thought she would ever attend, because no guy wanted to date a girl much taller than himself.

Tonight, she is with Keith. He has her full attention, and the rest of the world can just go away.

Tonight she is going to make it clear to him that she is not like the rest of them.

“So, here’s a serious question for you. What do you think? Snack before we go in? Popcorn or chocolate?”

Acxa stares intently at the counter. “Hmmm…shame they don’t have chocolate-covered popcorn. Or better yet, chocolate-covered bacon!”

Keith just groans and laughs. “Shay warned me you were a bacon-loving chocoholic. Sorry kiddo, no chocolate-covered bacon here. Not in any movie theater I’ve ever been to.”

“Too bad. Ok, let’s go with the popcorn. Better get a big bucket, though!”

He selects two seats in the back row of the theater so as not to block anyone’s view. At least that’s what he tells her. She’s hoping he has something else in mind, but it’s best to be cool and see how the rest of the evening plays out.

Settling in for a long evening of movie watching, she decides to have a little fun. “Hey…how about we play movie critic and give comments on the movies as they play out? Sorta like what they do on Mystery Science Theater 3000?”

“And they call ME a geek? So, you’re suggesting we make tacky comments throughout the movie and annoy everyone around us?”

“Why not? It’s not like anyone in this part of the theater is going to be paying attention to the movie anyway. I mean, the serious movie watchers are sitting closer to the front of the theater. Back here, it’s all couples.”

“Meaning…what exactly?”

Acxa just rolls her eyes. Her new boyfriend is definitely a clueless dork at times. But he is an adorable clueless dork. “Just roll with it, Keith. What do you say?”

“Sure.” He picks up three pieces of popcorn and throws them onto the head of Hunk, who is sitting
with Shay two rows in front of them. “If it means I get to annoy Hunk, I’m all in.”

An annoyed Hunk turns to Keith. “Dude…if your idea of showing your new girlfriend a good time on your first date is throwing popcorn on someone…you have more issues than I thought you did!”

She senses Keith tensing up just a bit. She reaches over, takes his hand again, and squeezes it. “It’s ok. I thought it was funny.”

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The first movie (a romance chick flick) proves to be more entertaining than Keith and Acxa though it would be. She is enjoying herself, and it’s clear he is as well. She is so engrossed in the movie that she fails to notice Keith slyly slipping his arm across the back of her seat and putting his arm around her.

Noticing his left hand is now on her left shoulder, she smiles broadly, leans over to him, and in a sultry tone whispers in his ear.

“Smooth move, Keith!”

Sputtering, Keith begins to apologize and move his arm, but she stops him by putting her index finger on his lips. Raising and stowing the armrest between them, she slides over close to him and nestles her head into the hollow between his neck and shoulder.

“Keith…it’s ok. I…like being held by you.”

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They are standing at the door to Acxa’s room, their long first date night coming to an end.

“Acxa…I had a great time tonight. I…hope you enjoyed yourself.”

“Keith, I had a great time. I’m glad you asked me out.”

“I was wondering…if you would like to do this again. Go out on a date together.”

Acxa gives him the answer he was hoping for, but not quite in the way he expected. She pulls him in to her and plants a long, searing kiss on his lips. Overcoming his initial surprise, she feels him returning the kiss with equal fervor.

He just rocked her world, and looking at the smile on his face she’s guessing she just rocked his.

“So…I can take that as a yes?”

She rolls her eyes and chuckles. He is such a dork. But, he’s her dork. She cups his cheek in her hand.

“Oh, Keith. I wouldn’t have kissed you if the answer were no, silly!”
During Battle

Chapter Summary

Acxa gets help from an unexpected source during a battle on a forested planet. This takes place shortly after Keith and Acxa’s second meeting, at Throk’s base in the Ulippia system.

There is a tie-in in this chapter to the story contained in the next one. A reference to a dream Acxa had years prior in the orphanage on Corillia. On first read in this chapter, it won’t make much sense. It will once you read the next chapter.

Chapter Notes

This is my submission for Kacxa Week 2019, Day 10.

She watches as the Blue Lion comes in for a landing next to her fighter. Part of her still can’t believe that she reached out to Princess Allura for help. Then, she turns and looks at the battered and torn form of the Black Paladin and thinks to herself that she made the right decision. For his sake.

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It was supposed to be a routine mission, yet it was anything but routine. Lately every mission Lotor gave her, since being sent into the Weblum, turned out that way.

She was supposed to do a quick run into the forests of Ephesian IV, extract 30 pounds of Semnesium, and head home. Simple, right?

Not quite

Lotor neglected to tell her about the Dire Wolves. The ones that stand over seven feet tall at the shoulders. The ones with the 12-inch fangs. The ones with the very nasty tempers. The ones that attacked her not even 5 minutes after she landed.

She fought them off and made it to shelter on higher ground, but was cut off from her fighter. She had enough food and water to last two days, but she doubted the wolves would let her live that long. From her shelter she transmitted a distress signal in the clear, hoping someone, anyone, would pick it up. Starting a fire that seemed to keep the wolves at bay, she sat in her shelter alone, shivering against the nighttime chill.

Morning dawned, and she saw the wolves regrouping at the base of the hill for a new attack. Certain that she’d seen her last sunrise, Acxa prepared for the inevitable. And hoped against hope that someone heard her transmission and would come to her aid at the last minute.

It turned out someone did.

As the wolves charged up the slope toward her shelter, the ground between them and Acxa suddenly
erupted in a series of fiery explosions that forced the wolves to back off. Turning to see where the shots came from, she saw the Black Lion of Voltron landing on the hill above her position. Standing in the jaws of the Lion was the Black Paladin.

Her eyes widened and her jaw dropped when she realized who it was. He jetpacked to her position as the wolves regrouped at the base of the hill yet again.

“I heard your transmission. I’m here to help”

“But…why?”

“No time to explain right now. Name is Keith. Look…we worked well together in the Weblum. Think we can do it again?”

Turning and seeing the wolves charging back up the hill, she put on her warrior’s face. “Name is Acxa. Let’s find out, Paladin!”

In unison, the pair charged at the oncoming wolfpack. Doing exactly what the wolves didn’t expect, they succeeded in breaking up their formation.

“ACXA! BACK-TO-BACK! THEY’LL TRY TO SEPARATE US. WE CAN’T LET THAT HAPPEN!”

As the wolves charged, Acxa shot at them in a rapid-fire fashion while Keith used his Marmoran blade and hacked at the ones that made it close to them. One wolf raked Acxa across her leg, hobbling her badly. But she refused to give in to the pain, for if she did they would both die. Keeping up her fire while Keith continued his defense with his sword, the wolfpack slowly backed away and withdrew.

They soon find out why. Out of the smoke and haze of the battlefield, the Alpha wolf emerged. Larger than the others in the pack, Alpha slowly approached their position…and headed straight for Acxa. Her blaster fire wounded many of his pack, and Alpha isn’t happy about that.

Keith knew she was in no condition to take Alpha on herself. He stepped in front of Acxa, looked the giant wolf straight in the eye, and challenged him. “I don’t want to hurt you. But if you want to get to her, you have to take me out first.”

The wolf pinned its ears back, bared its fangs, and growled loudly at Keith. To Acxa’s surprise, Keith growled back at the wolf and…wait…were those fangs he bared? Then she remembered. He’s a half-breed, just like her.

He charged at the wolf, hacking at the front paw of the giant beast. Howling in pain, the wolf swatted him with his uninjured paw, slamming Keith to the ground. The force of the impact bounced him down the slope, the wolf in hot pursuit. Acxa lost sight of them as they vanished in the mist at the bottom of the hill. She heard Keith cry out in pain, followed soon after by a loud painful whimper from the wolf.

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She found him at the foot of the hill, lying face down. The Alpha wolf gored him badly, and his breathing was labored. Making him as comfortable as she could, she retrieved her medical kit from her fighter and tended to his wounds. She succeeded in stopping the bleeding, but her fear was that he may have lost too much blood. He needed to be extracted and placed in a healing pod.

Knowing if she called for help from Lotor’s forces that they would torture and eventually kill him,
she did the unthinkable.

She contacted the enemy.

Keith regained consciousness as her transmission to the Castle of Lions ended. He tried to get up, but his wound didn’t allow him. She gently cradled his head in her lap and gave him some water, which seemed to settle him down. As she stroked his hair in a comforting manner, he looked at her with a soft smile, and thanked her for coming to his aid.

“Keith…you saved my life…again. Of course I was going to help you. But, I don’t understand…why did you come to help me? You had to know who sent that distress call. The last two times we met I tried to kill you.”

“I knew it was you. I came because it was the right thing to do. Acxa…I know from the short time we spent together in the Weblum that you are a good person at heart. You follow a code of ethics, the same code I follow. I know that because if you didn’t I’d be dead right now.”

He smiles at her again and jokingly said, “Although I’m still mad at you for pulling that blaster on me when you took the Scaultrite.”

Unable to help herself, she smiled back at him, still stroking his hair. “Yeah, that’s not one of my finer moments. I really regret doing that. Is it too late to apologize?”

“You apologized when you came for me after that wolf beat me up. And I’m grateful. Acxa, I believe all life is precious, and I think you believe that too. Your actions prove that. In my experience with you, you’ve never taken an innocent life, and you’ve had the chances to do it.”

She paused to reflect for a moment. “Wow. What are you doing to me, Paladin? I’m supposed to hate you. But I don’t…You’ve given me a lot to think about.”

“Good.”

After uttering that word, Keith passed out. Checking to make sure he’s still breathing, Acxa thought to herself that slipping into unconsciousness was a good thing for him. The pain from his wounds had to be terrible. She made a pillow and gently laid his head on it. Brushing a lock of hair out of his face, she cupped his cheek.

She reflects back on a dream she had so many years ago, in the orphanage on Corillia. In that dream she was sitting in this exact spot, giving aid and comfort to the handsome, indigo eyed, flippity haired man who saved her life. She recalls what she said to him as he drifted off to a well-earned sleep. She repeats those words now.

“Rest, my Paladin.”

As agreed to when she called for help from the Castle of Lions, Allura makes the journey to Ephesian IV solo in the Blue Lion. Approaching the makeshift shelter Acxa created, and seeing Keith’s condition, Allura gets a sense for the magnitude of the fight that took place.

“He’s over here, Princess. He’s in bad shape. He fought the Alpha male and his wounds are severe. I stopped the bleeding, and tended to them as best I could, but…” She chokes up just enough for Allura to pick up on it. “…I’m no healer.”

Placing her hand on Acxa’s shoulder, Allura tries to comfort her. “I am, Acxa. Thank you for calling
to us for help. I’ll get him stable enough so that we can get him back to the Castle and into one of the healing pods.”

After getting Keith stabilized, Allura and Acxa carefully transport him to the Blue Lion. Allura is struck by the care and concern Acxa takes with him. At the very least, there is a warrior’s bond of respect between Acxa and Keith. Allura suspects something else may be there as well.

“Acxa, I have one question. After the fight with the wolves, nothing was stopping you from just leaving him here. You saved him instead. Why?”

“Other than the fact that he’s saved my life three times now? It was the right thing to do. He’s a special person, Allura, with so much to offer the universe. He deserves a chance to live. To find happiness. To find…someday…his life partner.”

The way she says it is telling to Allura. That bond of respect between two warriors is definitely there, but this battle-hardened General also has an obvious soft spot for the Black Paladin.

“I…I have to go now. Before Lotor gets suspicious about why I was gone so long.”

“I understand. Acxa…when Keith wakes up…is there anything you want me to tell him?”

Acxa turns to look at Keith one final time. “Tell him…I hope we meet again. Not as enemies, but as…” She chokes up for a second or two before she can finish her thought. “…but as…not enemies.”

“I will.”
Nightmare Comforts for Acxa

Chapter Summary

The setting is the orphanage on planet Corillia. It’s been one year since her mother was killed, and two months since she met Ezor. Warm milk, a caring friend, and pleasant thoughts of a stranger she’s never met are the perfect ingredients to chase nightmares away for 10-year old Acxa.

There is a tie-in between this chapter and the preceding one. For those who read it, you’ll know it when you see it.

Note, no intelligent creatures were harmed in the writing or telling of this story.

Kacxa Week (Extension) Day 11 submission

She wakes up in a cold sweat in the middle of the night, sitting bolt upright in her cot, screaming out in terror.


Panting, terrified, nightshirt drenched in sweat, Acxa slowly calms down from her nightmare.

“Honey, that’s the third night in a row. Same dream?”

Still panting, heart still racing, but slower now, “Yes, Ezor. Same dream.”

“You want to talk about it? That might help you get past it.”

“Sure. Yes. Anything to stop it. To keep it from coming back.”

“I…I was in the pilot’s seat of a fighter. I had crashed…and this is where it starts getting weird…in the belly of a beast I can’t even describe. I remember in the dream flying into that thing’s mouth, trying to get into its stomach to get something. I don’t know what and I don’t know why. And, I crashed. No one knew I was there. The fighter was breaking up, and I knew…that was it. The end of the line.”

Ezor reaches under her bunk, into her secret stash, and pulls out a container. “Here. Drink this. Warm milk. It will help.”

“Ezor, how did you get warm milk in here? Headmaster Radnok will punish us both if he finds it.”

She smiles at Acxa, a glint in her eyes. “Yeah, but he has to find it first.”

After sitting with Ezor for twenty minutes and finishing her milk, Acxa settles back down and tries to get back to sleep. It isn’t long before she’s back in deep REM sleep. And it’s not long before her dream returns…with a twist this time.

She is back in her crashed fighter, waiting for her inevitable end. But this time she is rescued by a mysterious stranger. He’s of a race she’s never seen before. Someone with dark black hair and deep
indigo eyes. Tall, he wore strange armor, trimmed in red, and he carried a sword. Handsome in a
droguish sort of way. She remembers him saying he was there to help. At some point in the dream she
hears a name, an unusual one, and she believes it is his.

The next morning, she relates her dream to Ezor as they are doing their chores in the orphanage. “So,
what do you think, Ezor?”

“I think it means the warm milk worked. It turned your nightmare into a pleasant dream. Too bad it’s
one that may never happen. Not unless you get out of here someday.”

“Someday Ezor, we will BOTH get out of here.”

Two nights later, the nightmares return. This time she is on a heavily forested planet surrounded by
large intelligent carnivores who are trying to kill her. She’s worked her way into what she thought
was a sheltered position, but it turns out to be a trap. As the creatures move in for the kill, she bolts
upright once again, screaming at the top of her lungs.

“Acxa! Honey! It’s me. It’s ok. Breathe slowly, no one is going to hurt you! You’re
hyperventilating.”

She is gripping Ezor’s arm tightly, digging her claws into it and drawing blood.

“Was it the same dream?”


“Oh boy.” Seeing the terror in her friends eyes, Ezor tries to keep the conversation light. “Here, drink
some more milk. You’re just determined to drink all of it, aren’t you?”

It takes her an hour to calm down this time, but she does eventually and drifts off to sleep. And just
like two nights ago, she finds herself back in her dream. But things are different. She’s back on the
forested moon, sitting by a campfire, with the same mysterious stranger from her previous dream.
Except he’s been badly injured, and she is tending to him, his head cradled in her lap. She is gently
stroking his hair to reassure him.

This time, she remembers more details.

She remembers that he took on the carnivores to protect her, because they had injured her and she
couldn’t fight them alone. She remembers how he threw himself on them, practically sacrificing
himself to save her life. When she asked him why, he told her it was the right thing to do.

The next morning, she relates her latest dream sequence to Ezor. But this time Ezor doesn’t brush it
off.

“You know, Acxa, among my people there is a belief that nightmares like yours are actually visions
of the future. When different dreams have the same people in them, and you can remember vivid
details about them, you are having a vision of a future where your paths cross. Maybe that’s what is
happening here. Didn’t you tell me you remember hearing the name of this stranger? And was it the
same in both dreams?”

Acxa stares straight ahead, contemplating what Ezor just told her. “I did hear his name in both
dreams. And it was the same. A strange name. Keith, I believe it was. You know…it was almost as
"if...he chased the nightmares away both times. Like he was...protecting me."

"That's different. Well, the good news is, if you ever run into a handsome stranger with indigo eyes, black flippity hair, protective instincts, who goes by the name of Keith, you'll know you found the man of your dreams. Easy enough. When you do meet him, ask him if he likes warm milk!"

"Ezor, you are something else. Please stop with the puns...man of my dreams...honestly!"

____________________

She sits in the cockpit of her crashed fighter, waiting for the inevitable end. How many days has she been here? Five? Six? She’s lost count. And, worse yet, she’s lost hope.

The sound of a thud on the fuselage breaks her out of her stupor. Looking up she sees someone standing on the nose of the fighter, staring down at her. He is wearing white armor trimmed in red and black and is wielding what appears to be an Altean broadsword.

“Don’t move. I’m here to help.”

His blade slices through the diamond hard cockpit glass as if it were paper, and she is free. He extends a hand to her and he pulls her out. As she is pulled closer to him, she sees that his eyes are a deep indigo and his hair is jet black.

Later, after striking an uneasy truce with the stranger, they make their way to the third stomach of the Weblum together and are joined by the stranger’s companion. As the two strangers pause to greet one another, she takes a couple of steps in front of them to look around.

“Hey, Keith! Who’s your buddy?”

She freezes in place, eyes wide with disbelief.

Keith.

The name from her dreams so many years ago. The name of the person who chased the nightmares away. The man with the indigo eyes and black flippity hair.

The man of her dreams.

She turns her head slightly over her left shoulder to eavesdrop on their conversation.

If this really is the person from her dreams, things are about to get very interesting.

She wonders if he likes warm milk.

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