"So like in 'Step Up'?"
Allura shrugs. "Now that you put it like that - yes. I guess it's just like in 'Step Up'."
The smile that she sends Shiro's way - followed by a shy wave, eugh - is sickening to say the least, and Lance still doesn't believe in dance camps.

Lance McClain's dancing career begins and ends with Keith.

Keith just wants to find out what Lance's deal is.

Notes

anyone who's spent five minutes around me : oh is it aNOTHER DANCE AU
me: shut up

A "creative title" and a trainwreck full of sexual tension. Enjoy.
On an unusually sweltering May night, Lance McClain decides that he’s going to have a threesome. No, not the sexy kind – though who is he to lie and say that the thought hadn’t crossed his mind at least a couple of times – but he knows that he needs to get in there. He wants to earn the right to climb the makeshift stage that’s surrounded by the ever-growing crowd of people. Lance really wants to weasel his way in right between the two men dancing on it. In the front, preferably. Lance would never settle for anything less and the sidelines simply don’t suit him.

After all, he’s “a drama queen and an attention whore” (Hunk Garrett, Pidge Gunderson, verbal conversation, May 21, 2016). He needs to maintain that title, at least.

“If I had a dollar for every time Shiro wore a sleeveless tight shirt, I’d be a millionaire,” Pidge says somewhere to his left, voice barely audible over the deafening pump of the bass suddenly switching the medley to Jason Derulo. If Lance had a dollar for every time that singer popped up in RB’s shows –

“If he didn’t wear those, then maybe Lance’d finally shut up about wanting to slide across the floor and proposing to him on the spot,” Hunk shrugs and takes another bite of some crispy thing that he’s devouring ever so slowly, savoring. Lance can tell that he’s nervous – his best friend transforms into an all-consuming black hole when he’s feeling out of his element.

“Hey, it’s not my fault that he looks like an Ancient Greek god, alright? A man has urges!” Lance waves him off, gaze still stuck on the dancers. The crowd nearly yodels when Shiro executes a perfect jump-flip and falls down into that perfect transition of powerful moves, and - wow okay, Lance needs Pidge’s water bottle asap.

“Look at him! That can’t be normal! He has to be a robot, I swear. No one can execute that wave with such perfection. He’s got a robo arm, I’m so calling it!” Conspiracy theories regarding Shiro’s inhuman… everything, aside, Lance firmly believes this to be true. Why else does he always wear that black compression sleeve? Suspicious!

Hunk snorts a laugh and pushes the last bite between his crumb-covered lips. “Gay.”

“Uh, first of all, not gay but bi!” Lance points one finger in his friend’s face. Pidge gives them a flat stare and kicks some guy’s shin when he slightly pushes them out of the way. Don’t mess with the small and angry ones. “And if you tell me that you’ve never had hots for Shiro, well, I might as well quit freestyling and sign up for Allura’s ballet classes.”

“Still pretty gay, dude.” Not as gay as Lance feels when Keith does that thing with his hips. Speaking of, “Kay dudes, if we’re continuing the millionaire game – if I had a dollar every time Keith shook his hips like he’s Shakira himself, I’d be richer than the entirety of Switzerland.”

Lance feels himself drooling a little but quickly wipes at his mouth in a discreet manner. “He’s a hoe, but a pretty hoe,” he mutters and Pidge - honest to god! - starts laughing at him. It’s probably because his ears are an embarrassing shade of maroon. “Look at him! It’s like he’s riding an invisible dick!” Lance chokes, throwing his arms in Keith’s general direction. The guy has the perfect balance and his ankles must be made of steel or some shit because it almost hurts watching him bounce like that despite how entrancing it is. Lance had tried copying this set of moves before. He had pulled a muscle and then proceeded to bitch everyone’s ears off about it. Hunk even subjected himself to carrying him from lecture to lecture just to make him stop complaining.
Case in point – do not attempt to ride invisible dick unless you’re Keith.

An unspoken “wish he’d ride mine” hangs heavily in the air and clouds the bullshit factory that is Lance’s inner world and whatnot.

Keith and Shiro are the fucking best in their prefecture when it comes to street dance competitions - and probably secret underground beauty contests that Lance isn’t aware of. They’ve been at it since 2007 and haven’t lost a single competition since last year’s July. They’ve made it to Echo’09 finals, came out as champions, and the rest is history - aka everyone’s interest in the duo kind of exploded.

In 2011 Pidge dragged an unwilling Lance to his first street dance show and ever since then he couldn’t get out. He was stuck in the deep dark hell that was made of Shiro’s muscled arms and Keith’s cursed hip shimmies. And a whole lot of ‘work till you drop dead’ training regimes. Every single day.

After witnessing the RB in action for the first time, Lance started going at it like crazy just to get a shot at competing on the same stage - just to get closer to what he considers to be the ultimate perfection of teamwork and art combined.

Whenever Lance’s Twitter feed buzzes with a new message that his idols are going to appear at one event or another, he’s immediately there, sometimes forsaking basic duties such as homework and helping out with chores.

Also he may or may not obsessively stalk their Twitters and other social media networks, but that is a story for another time.

Keith falls back without a moment of hesitation. Shiro smoothly catches him with one arm as though his partner is a swooning lady – probably a daily occurrence - and propels him forward. As always the last three seconds of their performance leave Lance’s mouth hanging open, and he shamelessly joins in once the noise level around him rises high enough to drown out the last few finishing beats of the medley. Keith is breathing heavily and pulling off his damp shirt while Shiro’s waving at the screaming fans with a kindhearted smile. The DJ croons out some final compliments and Lance’s heart sinks a little when he sees Keith making a beeline in his direction. The dancer almost brushes by, yet doesn’t spare him and his friends - his team - a single look.

Lance hopes that one day he’ll manage to wash off the shame that he feels whenever he recalls the first time he had faced off Keith and massively fucked up - too nervous and inexperienced, trying to prove himself as the better man.

Perhaps one day he’ll be good enough and make Keith finally acknowledge him, or at least look him in the fucking eye.

Pidge checks the time on their phone and Hunk pulls Lance along to their assigned dancefloor.

Nowhere near the big leagues, but still good enough. They gouge some cheering even if the team that they’re competing against is light-years ahead of them when it comes to breakdancing.

Lance is no stranger to losing.

He has nothing on a natural like Keith or a hard-worker like Shiro, who’s been dancing even before he could read. They say that talent is merely an actively pursued hobby, and Lance is a firm believer
of that, even if sometimes he feels like punching things and/or himself whenever his noodle arms give out and he’s physically unable to hold his weight with one arm, falling face-first into the concrete. Breakdancing isn’t his forte; he’s much more into simple ass hip-hop and has a love for popping and locking. If you got a lean body like this, you have to make the best of it.

But if he wants to be good enough, he needs to nail this one, too. Pidge tries - keyword: *tries* - to teach him sometimes, but it comes easy to them, *natural*, and Pidge isn’t the most patient teacher out there. They may be small, but they’re strong enough to restrain Lance with only one arm whenever they wrestle for the remote and the headlock leaves Lance’s thin neck aching for days. Meanwhile, Lance can fight about a thousand ants on good days.

Pidge is (sadly) a complete bookworm and a grade A nerd so they cannot supervise his ass 24/7, and laughing at his failures after one too many times gets kind of old. Lance’s first internet fame came from a vine compilation of him kissing the cracked pavement of the abandoned parking lot located under a closed off bridge, the spot where they usually meet up to practice.

He still remembers how *not cool* it was when he had been hitting on a girl in his group and she only responded with a ‘wait, aren’t you that guy from that one vine?’

All in all – utterly and completely *degrading*.

Not as degrading as fucking up in front of his idols, though.

There he goes again.

With a huff, Lance threads to his boombox and shuffles through the playlist. Nope, *nope*, something easier - *ugh*, *whatever* ‘Heartbreak in the making’ will suffice.

He closes his eyes and goes over his routine of practicing the more difficult moves and freestyling. Sweat drips down his nose but he chooses to ignore the fact that he must look and smell gross and twists his body in a sudden spin. Lance swipes at the air like he’s trying to punch his frustration away, locks his palms with a swift movement, getting pissed when he misses a beat. He *can’t* do it smoothly. His transitions are either too fast or too clumsy.

He visualizes Keith’s face, Keith’s slim body, visualizes *success*, and knee-drops on the ground, making sure that his torso rolls in the exact same way that he sees in his mind. Fuck, how’s that even *possible*? How does he make it seem so... so effortless? Does Keith take bellydancing classes as a bonus to get in shape? His one-sided rival certainly has those breathtaking hips for it. *God*, what Lance wouldn’t give for at least one lap dance. It’d probably overthrow his eighteenth birthday strip-club experience completely -

‘*Next morning I was so conflicted – ‘*

Lance feels his right ankle buzzing with static at the slightly awkward pose. He goes back down to earth and notices that he’s been sitting around with his legs uncomfortably bent under him, pressing his weight on them, and gaze focused on the concrete graffiti-covered “sky” for at least a minute or so. He’s been visualizing Keith’s skin and those cursed abs so vividly that he kind of forgot what he was supposed to be doing to begin with.

*God*, this whole competing business is killing his performance.

Right as he closes his eyes, something cool presses against his cheek. With a startled yelp, Lance lays down on the ground, kicking out his legs. The static intensifies.

He hits nothing. *Shit*, is someone going to shank him?
“Finally trying to work yourself to your early grave?” White hair blinds his vision and he smiles, half-assed, heart beating wildly from the surprise.

“What kind of unworthy knight does that? I’d never leave you behind, sweet Princess,” he croons. She drops the bottle on his face in response. It hits his nose rather painfully.

“Forget that I even cared,” Allura huffs, never one to take Lance’s bullshit. Her sapphire eyes twinkle with seriousness a moment later. “That was pretty good until you flopped down like a dead fish and, pardon my crudeness, decided to have a bizarre mental mating ritual with some Keith.”

Shit, did he actually repeat Keith’s name like a mantra out loud? What the hell is wrong with him these days?

“I wasn’t – that wasn’t - !” Lance gapes and rakes his brain for an appropriate response. Explaining this ritual of boosting self-confidence usually ends up getting weird. “It was just some mental stimulation to do better - wait, that came out horribly wrong.”

She backs away, slowly. “Oh-kaaay, we can stop right there. Clearly, I really don’t want to know.”

“It’s just that – ” Lance scoffs and gets up with a prolonged sigh, maintains a respectful distance from the woman. He’d rather die than close the gap between them after a training session like that. He has a reputation to uphold no matter how bad he feels right now and how much he wants to get closer to her. Oh god, someone please hold him. “I can’t stop thinking about my mistakes. I get mad and frustrated, and then it all falls to shit.” He doesn’t bother filtering his language in front of his ex-crush. She rejected him one time too many. “And I just really want to reach some sort of - some sort of breakthrough, but so far it’s just – argh.” He falls back down into a small patch of dainty grass growing out through the cracks in the concrete despite the lack of sun. Lance can relate, and shit, is he seriously relating to weeds now?

To his surprise, Allura follows and settles next to him, hugging her knees close to her chest. Her legs bend a little awkwardly due to the white high heels that she’s wearing. They sit in a contemplative silence for a while, an unusual occurrence when you’re stuck with someone like Lance of all the people, so naturally, his companion feels the urge to point it out. “You usually don’t get so… serious. Though I- I understand, actually. I mean that ‘sissy dancing’ or so you’ve called it – ”

“Allura, I apologized for that like a million times already. I’m the one who permanently lives in salt mines, not you.” She had literally pirouetted him into stunned silence a year ago when they were visiting her during the class that she was co-teaching, and the leotard-clad young ladies didn’t take any of his self-absorbed shit. Lance doesn’t like talking about it. Surprisingly, neither do Pidge and Hunk.

Allura chooses to ignore him. “I was stuck once, too. I was envious of my upperclassmen whenever I saw them performing. But one day, I realized that the so-called grand difference between us, was simply the extra time that they put into practicing along with their feelings and heart. If you follow that regime, you’re bound to catch up eventually. You mustn’t stop when things get hard.” She stands, and with a graceful movement falls into the third position, followed by a perfect arabesque. Her balance is perfect. “You’re still learning, Lance. It is alright to mess up - it’s how you get better. And if you ask me, all you need is some endurance training and extra work on your balance. The moves are already a part of you. Own them.”

The cold gust of wind makes the sheen of sweat dry instantly and Lance runs his fingers through his short brown hair, lets it stick up. He’d be lying if he said that Allura’s speech didn’t make him a little teary-eyed. It’s nice to get some reassurance every now and then from someone who’s a master at what they do.
She claps her hands together with a blinding white smile. “That being said, get back to practicing and show me what you got! Impress me, Lance! Afterwards I’ll give you an utmost objective critique.”

She urges him on despite his protests and shame – he is not ready to show off to Allura if he can’t show off to people like Keith and Shiro – so he reluctantly plays a new song, the beat fast-paced and a bit above Lance’s skill level. But this is what he wants. To see what he’s doing wrong and to get some pointers.

When he hesitates before falling into a knee-drop, Allura claps her hands once more in a steady rhythm. “Good, good, show no hesitation! Keep going!”

By the time it’s over - he’s out of breath and a fine layer of sweat coats his lean body. He heaves while Allura claps as though she’s at some high-class ballet show instead of watching a dumbass 22 year old flailing away. It’s enough to make Lance grin and he bows, overly-pompous. “Thank you, thank you, my audience is too kind.”

“Allura’s competencies because of the whole ‘ballet is for little girls’ thing. She’s incredible and he’s honestly undeserving of this hospitality.

“At this point, you might as well start coaching us.” Lance laughs when Allura squints at him as he finishes up the snaking and waving combo, his body rigid from exertion.

“I don’t see why not.”

Lance chokes on his own spit.

“R-really, that’s alright, I –” His voice cracks embarrassingly at the end.

“Look, do you want to prepare in time for this year’s Echo, or not? Because I, personally, think that you could use all the help that you can get. And I’d rather you not go out there and show the crowd a bad performance!” She uses the Mom Voice, sticks out her lips in a defiant manner and places her hands on slim hips as if daring him to talk back.

Lance’s shoulders sag when he towels himself off. He could really use a bath. “What’s next? Coran is a secret bboyer?”

“Actually –”

Too much for one day. Lance throws his arms into the air. “Okay, I’m done. Nope nope nope, goodbye.”
And so, Allura begins showing up every Tuesday and Thursday evening to relentlessly order Lance around, clapping a firm beat for him to fall into until he’s close to collapsing – or, well, *actually collapses*. It doesn’t take much. He whines for water breaks that are meant to mask his heaving, but she takes none of it.

“You can rest after you show me a plausible transition. One, two, *go!*”

It’s kind of *hellish* but Lance can feel himself getting whipped into shape nonetheless. It’s surprising that Allura sticks to her pompous dance schools instead of commanding army troops.

They blow through the Summer competition prelims like it’s a slight breeze instead of an all-out battle.

Hunk crushes him and Pidge in a back-shattering hug once they win the right to enter the finals.

He can finally hold down the little caramel-haired Satan when they try to switch the channel from Lance’s telenovela to boring documentaries.

“Since when can you do that?” Pidge huffs out, and scratches at Lance’s forearms to free themselves.

Lance places the remote under his ass - the one place that Pidge doesn’t dare to poke around - and flexes, kisses his naked bicep. “Since I got these guns, baby, *aw yeah*. I am the fucking strong.”

“Those are tiny plastic water pistols at best. You’re still a noodle,” Pidge groans in defeat – haha, how does that one feel, *sucka* - and gets up.

“A noodle who can finally carry the team through the finals with mad bboying skills.”

In a sudden rush of overwhelming sentimentality, Pidge grabs his face and looks deeply into his eyes. “Lance, I love you and I’m proud.” It’s followed by a firm tug on the back of his neck and he falls off the sofa, magically getting a carpet burn in the process. “But you’re still an ass and that remote is mine.” They reclaim the remote with a cocky smile, wave it in front of his face, and Lance doesn’t get to hear who Jose’s biological father is, which is, like, *unforgivable*.

Leave it to Pidge to ruin their bonding moment.

Lance feels like there’s an entire tree stuck in his eye when he finally holds onto the outfits - that Pidge had painstakingly designed: color-coded and adorned in neon stripes - for the very first time.

They hug and cry like weenies when they win their first tournament ever.

October brings colder weather, brown leaves, Pumpkin spice lattes, Halloween and Lance’s absolute favorite – Halloween-themed dance competitions.
So he doesn’t mind it when Hunk splashes the upper part of his face in dark blue paint that he had mixed up at Chem class – only mildly complains when that shit gets in his eyes, it stings – and they have an all-out verbal battle whether they should wear those glowy cat ears or not. Pidge and Hunk – who are undeniably passionate about all things cute and cuddly – out-vote him, only on condition that Hunk attaches the ears to Lance’s hood instead. They’re cute blue things that look kind of awkward on his head if he wears them with a headband - probably because of the short hair and the long face - and he’s only a little envious that he can’t pull them off like his friends do.

As a punishment for pulling his hood on at inappropriate times and saying ‘you know like nya’, Lance is subjected to a very intense nail-painting session, courtesy of Pidge. His younger siblings love the way it looks, so maybe it isn’t too bad - apparently, Pidge got a whole lot better at this - and they’re more than happy to paint McClains' nails a soft coral blue that glows in the dark.

They wait in the long ass line at the entrance, surrounded by people wearing all kinds of outfits and by the time it’s their turn to get stamped, Lance counts at least eleven sexy nurses. Nice.

He pulls on the hood once they wiggle their way past the masses and the security – Lance makes a few jokes about the police outfits and gets deathly glares in return – and Pidge threatens him with a hiss, “I swear to god, if you do the thing again – ”

“What thing? Oh, you mean – ” His hand automatically rises to his head, curling.

“Lance,” Hunk groans in exasperation. “Don’t do that, please, I’m gonna have nightmares.”

“Oh, what’s that now? Can’t hear you over the music there, pal, what do you want me to do, again? You know – nya?”

Pidge and Hunk throw their arms in the air, earning some confused stares from those around them. “You’re impossible to take out, you know that, right?”

“I’m pretty sure anyone would take me out, am I right or am I right?” He double-pistols at some girl who only curls up her nose and stomps away. Huh, maybe he deserved it.

Hunk places a comforting hand on his bony shoulder and they entertain themselves with a little game of ‘I Spy’ while they wait for the competitions to start. After Hunk spies yet another sexy cop, the game turns a little boring.

That is until in the dim lights, Lance spots the undeniable shape of a man who plagues his mind - and frequently co-stars in his wettest dreams. Motherfucking Keith.

Lance chokes when the wandering red strobe light lands on that familiar mullet – it’s not weird that I can recognize it like forty feet away, guys, what are you on about – and Lance’s jaw almost hits the sticky floor.

Hunk stares as well. “Dude.”

“Ohhh my God, oh my God, what is he wearing?!” Lance screeches indignantly, face brighter than the lights above. He could be a beacon of sexual tension. “Who let him dress himself, Shiro is a well-respected adult with morals! He’d never let - !” He places his fingerless glove-clad palms over Pidge’s eyes. “There are children in the vicinity, goddamn it!”

Pidge elbows him in the ribs with a “fuck off, Lance” – “children shouldn’t curse”, he says, and gets another smack - while his gaze latches itself onto Keith’s figure. He looks a little awkward because of the attention that he’s getting from all sides. At least, he could’ve done something with his ridiculous hair if he truly wanted to stay unnoticed and blend in. Mullet’s aren't unnoticed nowadays.
Keith probably didn’t get that memo.

“Is he supposed to be like a sexy corpse bride, I’m not sure.” Pidge attempts to fix their over-sized glasses, only to belatedly remember that they’re wearing contacts. To save themselves from the impending embarrassment due to the small slip up, Pidge awkwardly pinches the bridge of their nose.

Hunk raises one fine eyebrow. “You’ve been living with Lance’s family for how long now, and – ”

“It’s the Day of the Dead get-up, you walnut,” Lance screeches, throat feeling very dry. His eyes roam all over Keith’s slender body. “Except it’s totally disrespectful - who the fuck wears a goddamn croptop, ugh, ughhh.” He is in a lot of distress, truth be told. Keith’s stupid clothes cling to his body like a second skin and the colorful paint makes him, god forbid, cute.

Suddenly it’s very hard to tell the difference between checking out a rival to mock him, and checking out a guy whose bones he must absolutely jump. And here Lance was thinking that all those wet dreams were some sort of bizarre side-effect of the intense rivalry that he’s feeling.

Lance looks up at Hunk, teary-eyed. “Oh my God, I’m gay for Keith.”

His best friend only stares like this isn’t news to him, as though Lance had said it a million times already. The revelation feels severely downplayed - what about the ground-shattering surprised looks, indignant gasps, and drama? Instead, Hunk just says, “We know. Not to sound rude or anything, but I told you so, multiple times by the way, but who listens to Hunk, am I right?” He’s too smug about this to actually sound upset by that.

Lance looks down at his quivering palms. “He is so cute, man, I wanna get there and rub my face all over that – ” He channels his Mexican side of the family and babbles away in heated Spanish about the things he’d do to goddamn Keith and his stupid – what were those even, leggings? It doesn’t go too smoothly, because by now his friends know just enough of the language to make disgusted faces and simultaneously echo a ‘sick, dude!’

“Okay stop stop stop, or I’ll tell Ma to wash your mouth with soap when we get back.” Pidge sticks out their tongue.

“How about you bathe me in the holy waters of Jerusalem, because hot damn.” Lance fans himself when Keith and, oh there’s Shiro, too, make their way to the dancefloor. “He can be the La Muerte to my Xibalba any day.”

Another sexy priest walks by, and Hunk kindly asks him to perform an exorcism on Lance’s sorry smitten ass to make him stop sinning. Even when he’s hit with a plastic cross a few times, the sin remains.

“I can’t believe that they stole our song! They may be hot, but it’s our jam!” Lance stomps his foot like a petulant child when the first beats of ‘Make it shake’ rile the massive crowds up. His body tenses as though on impulse, he’s supposed to dance to this. It’s ingrained into the very core of his being, hours upon hours of actually practicing the same moves instead of freestyling on the spot.

“Well, we can’t just charge in. Remember what happened last time?” Hunk gestures wildly, looking as though he’s going to be sick. “I’m not having a repeat of... that.”
Lance can’t blame him, that particular fuck up is always a sour spot on the tip of his tongue whenever they talk about it. He remembers the crowd booing and the indecipherable look that Keith had sent his way, as though he had proven his point. Lance was inferior and always would be.

“Come back when you actually learn how to dance, idiot,” he hissed lowly into Lance’s ear and the brunet had nothing left to do but to curl back his imaginary tail and run away.

But that’s in the past, and this... “This is it, our great breakthrough, guys. I can feel it. It’s like all of the planets are aligned for us.”

“I’m pretty sure that’s just your dick talking.” Pidge interrupts, looking quite queasy themselves.

“No, guys, listen! We have to. We have to do this, it'll be a good experience. We may not be quite there yet, but we can wipe the floor with them. I believe in you. Hunk!” He turns to the taller man gnawing on his fingernails. “There’s no one out there who’s better than you at popping. Pretty boy wouldn’t stand a chance!” Hunk turns bright red at the praise and scratches at the back of his neck, muttering something shyly.

Then, Lance turns to Pidge, but they cut him off. “Let me guess, this is the part where you give me a pep talk about breakdancing.”

“Precisely!”

“And what about you? Are you truly feeling ready? Last time we kinda – ” They hold their elbow close to their side, a display of insecurity. “You’re our front man, Lance. We’ll fall apart if you screw it up.”

“And that’s why we won’t fail! Otherwise Allura is going to kick my ass to another galaxy and then back.” He pulls his friends close. “Now, are you with me or not?”

Seemingly affected by all the praise and the good atmosphere, Hunk is the first one to nod. Then again, he always goes with Lance’s ideas, no matter how crazy. It’s what kept earning him the title of Lance’s best friend for eight consecutive years in a row. “Till the end of the line, pal.” It certainly shows that they had a ‘Captain America’ movie marathon yesterday. “Let’s kick some ass!”

“That’s what I like to hear!” They exchange a complicated handshake, followed by a brofist. Pidge remains cautious. “C’mon, it’s an opportunity. They probably don’t even remember us.” They weren’t the first ones to challenge the champions, not by a long shot. Lance knows that for a fact.

“It’s Halloween, we’re kind of well-masked from the shame here.”

Pidge finally relents and Lance looks over his shoulder in a rush of excitement. “What team!?” he yells when they make a circle.

“Wild cats!” Pidge yells back, while Hunk stops mid ‘Vol-

“Not quite, but I’ll make this meme count!”

Three, two, one.

Lance jumps into the spotlight.

‘Guess who just walked in!’
The crowd lets out an appraising roar that is equal amounts of discontent and support when Lance crashes Keith’s show for the second time in his life. The reaction that he gets is exactly the same like the last time, except it seems that Keith doesn’t immediately write him off as a ‘cocky newbie’ because of their uniforms.

That detail is immediately noticed by the DJ of the night, whose voice Lance recognizes by heart. It booms loud and clear, the music dying down for a moment. “Looks like team Voltron still can’t find themselves a satisfactory place in the pro-leagues after the last championship! Maybe tonight is their lucky night!”

Okay, maybe Lance was wrong, they’re not that well-masked. Ha, no pressure.

He doesn’t hear the rest of their introduction followed by their sob-story because his body goes on autopilot, faster than ever before, ready to take some breaths away. Allura would be floored.

The crowd seemingly fades away, reduced to a distant shapeless noise, and he somehow knows that Pidge and Hunk are keeping up with him just fine. Keith and Shiro circle their gang like two vultures, Shiro's smile almost playful – that guy always remains too kind even after he’s done absolutely slaying someone on the dancefloor – and Keith…

Oh god, Keith.

Keith looks at them with that shine of interest gleaming in his eyes that only surfaces once every three tournaments, Lance knows that. Fueled by it, by Keith's attention, he puts in extra effort into a rushed windmill, switching combinations like it's nothing. Keith raises his eyebrows when Lance all but slides towards him in a very krumping fashion, shoulders thrown back – which he kinda despises doing, it’s too fuckboyish and immature, even he has standards. Keith’s face is still kept carefully emotionless, though Lance can see that he’s trying to fight back the beginnings of a smile. Totally a smile, Lance decides, when his snapback sails through the air and he doesn’t have to look around to catch it. He puts in on his head, but not before doing a fancy flip.

And, holy shit, Keith actually smiles.

Lance’s heart does a somersault, knees a little weak, and he kind of wants to clutch at his chest and die right on this dancefloor which he absolutely owns. The crowd cheers and Lance breathes heavily, doesn’t have to visualize success for the first time in his life because it’s standing right before him in the shape of a mulleted man with a very damn tight black croptop.

If he looks close enough, he can see all of the specks of indigo in Keith’s cat-like eyes, and only then does he realize that Keith’s standing incredibly close to him, their noses a few inches apart at most. It looks like the black-haired man is searching for something in his eyes, something that would make him recognize Lance maybe - his hand hovers near Lance’s cheek as if he's tempted to wipe off the smudges of electric and cobalt blue that end just below his cheekbones.

Lance’s eyes flicker to his mouth for a bit because goddamn, it’s tempting and even if he has Hunk around - who's like 70% of his impulse control - his friend stands somewhere to his right and completely out of the range, thus incapable of smacking some common sense into him.

He wants to kiss Keith so goddamn much, and he thinks, that yeah, read it into it however you want, they’re totally having a moment here. He can see that Keith's obviously interested - what kind of interest, though, he doesn’t know yet. And oh shit (!!!) the distance shrinks until it doesn’t(???). Lance stands completely frozen, wide-eyed with surprise, when Keith simply steals his hat and swiftly jumps out of Lance’s reach like nobody's business, followed by a curt nod in Shiro’s direction.
“What a goddamn tease. How’s he even real?” Lance mutters to himself and stares away, dumbstruck. And oh shit, those words are so true because Keith is a god-awful tease and he's not afraid to prove himself. The next song in the medley is far too sensual for Lance's comfort, and damn boy, that hip shimmy is way hotter up close - it's right there and it's real, unlike the one that Lance sometimes visualizes before going to bed when he –

Keith executes that perfect drop – Madre de dios, help him, he’s gonna rest in bloody pieces right there, right now – and when he turns around with a soft effortless bounce, he pulls the hat back onto Lance’s head, obscuring his vision. The hotness of Keith's palm almost burns Lance’s naked chest, the brunet's positively dying at this contact, but it’s a small torture to bear because Keith pushes roughly until Lance stumbles away.

Lance, despite his mental raging boner soon to grow into the real deal, still feels very offended at such treatment - just who the fuck does Keith think he is? He kinda wants to reach out, grab him and – and do something, but Pidge holds him by the hood and drags him backwards. “Playtime’s over, lover boy, you've proven your point.”

“But!”

“No buts. I think you’ve had more than enough butts for one evening, don’t let it get to your head too much.” Did Pidge just pun him? Lance, however, has no time to appreciate it because his eyes lock with Keith’s, and the guy smirks at him like the absolute butt that he is. Lance flicks him the bird and almost trips over his own feet when Keith wiggles his fingers in a smug wave and blows him a kiss.

“I am deceased,” he says to no one in particular, one hand resting on his chest. It’s too noisy, the crowd’s focus shifts back to Shiro’s robotic tricks and insane inverts in no time. Hunk is swept away by his newly-formed fanclub, while Pidge - the sad adoptive sibling that's constantly stuck with Lance McClain’s ever-fluctuating moods - heaves a sigh.

“Well, he is your La Muerte.”

“Siiiii.”

He doesn’t see Keith or Shiro for the rest of the night.

Lance is roughly shaken awake at 6 am. He gets ready to use his 'older sibling authority' and kick his sister out of his room, but gets subjected to more jostling which can only belong to Pidge. “Wake up, you jerkoff.”

“I didn’t jerk off,” Lance murmurs in defense and attempts to pull the covers over his head. They got back home at 3 am and then he spent the next 45 minutes of his "alone time" thinking about Keith and probing at the burning patch of skin, located at the center of his chest. He didn’t violate that sacred moment though, so it was true, even if he didn’t understand half of Pidge’s screechy voice. “Jus’ another five mins...”

He’s rudely awakened by water on his face. With a scream, he sits up. “Jesus, what the fuck’s your problem – ” The screaming earns angry thudding from the other side of the wall.
Pidge actually looks ashamed. “I’m sorry, Ma!” they apologize. The thudding stops. His damn Ma, always playing favorites.

“Where’s the fire?” Lance wipes away the sleep crust from his lashes. He was having a very good dream. “What’s got your panties in a twist?” Like, literally. Pidge is in front of him in all of their almost-naked glory - only in underwear and a haphazardly thrown on binder. How they’re awake at this hour Lance will never know, then again, he often doubts that Pidge ever sleeps.

Pidge’s expression is twisted up when they shove a phone into Lance’s face. He hisses at the sudden invading light. It’s an article, and the phone vibrates with their group chat notifications, flooded by Hunk’s messages of ‘this is horrible’.

The header screams: ‘A **shooting near Black Lion’s nightclub, one severely injured.**’

Lance’s heart stops beating.

Holy shit, **this is the place where they’ve spent the night.**

He skims the article, feeling very cold. “…opened sudden fire”, “…multiple witnesses, mass confusion”, “…illegal betting centers” and finally.

“A member of **RB, the local internet-famous dance crew, undefeated in underground street dance competitions for over a year, Takashi Shirogane (more known under the alias of “Shiro”) has been severely wounded by three shots to the right side, and was rushed off to the hospital.”

Lance stops reading at the black bold letters that spell out ‘**critical condition**’.

They sit in a stuffy silence. Pidge's eyeing him warily as though they want to say something, but stuff like ‘I’m sorry’ just isn’t going to cut it in this situation. They reclaim their phone and open the group chat to reply to Hunk.

Lance sits completely still and then makes a mad lunge for his charging phone, cursing colorfully when it doesn’t immediately turn on. He goes on Twitter, and with shaky fingers scrolls through the mass confusion shit-spam along with numerous condolences directed at his team of idols - #prayforshiro is trending - until he finds Keith’s message.

‘**Team RB is officially disbanded.**’

It’s like a sharp stab with an icicle to his stomach. Hearing this from the **official source** freezes up his insides painfully.

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They drop out of that year’s Echo tournament. Lance continues practicing, but his drive dies more and more with every passing month.
of pizza rolls & hot dance instructors

Chapter Notes

ok so this might be a bit longer than initially planned shit i memed it up too much

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Lance is an avid believer in fateful encounters, Zodiacs, curses, destiny, the theory that his next door neighbor is an alien, and starting today – pizza rolls.

Correlation? None, it may seem. But pizza rolls are the true MVPs that kickstart the gears of Lance’s destiny. He’d kiss Pidge if it wasn’t a gross thought.

Though when he first hears about the pizza roll thing, he’s too tired and grumpy to react and just wants to be left alone with his scattered thoughts, courtesy of crippling depression which only university manages to bring out despite the fact that it’s summer. As expected, he has to retake his Advanced math exam. God damn it, who even cares about logic and combinatorics? His professor – who never fails to remind Lance that he’s a waste of space in the great world of mathematics - apparently.

’If train B goes at 200 kmph and the apple basket weights a pound, then what is the mass of the sun divided by the fridge’s color’, his ass. “Get your own damn pizza rolls, Pidglet,” he groans. He has like two whole weeks to learn this crap and he’d much rather take a nap. Ten naps. Nap himself into a coma so that he doesn’t have to see another math-related question ever again.

“You’ve been staring at the wall and drooling for the last fifteen minutes,” they say and continue scrolling through some coding program, bloodshot eyes searching for any mistakes. During summers Pidge absolutely flourishes with their freelance work. Goddamn lucky. And then there’s Lance - jobless, mooching off his family’s food, flunking exams. “Air your pea-sized brain before it dies. I can’t reprogram it, sadly. And while you’re at it you can buy me the rolls.”

“What about the ones we have?”

“You just ate the whole bag, pea-brain.” Lance stares for a moment until he realizes that the bag is sitting on the desk in front of him, and it’s indeed open. His brain must’ve been frying so badly that he didn’t notice taking the snacks. They were bought by Pidge so it’s only fair game that he should be the one going out to restock. He’s a decent human being despite bitching enough to make it seem otherwise.

Lance still recalls The Nacho Incident when he stole Pidge’s salsa-flavored crisps like a fool with a death wish and in a brilliant moment of thought association, fear for his life and a need to save his own ass combined, he left a post-it note by the empty bag with the word ‘sorry’ scribbled on it and bailed to Hunk’s. Hunk wasn’t too hot on saving Lance’s ass when an enraged Pidge called him and asked if Lance was there.

“You stole Pidge’s food? Not cool, man,” he reprimanded, Pidge put on speaker between them.

“That was one time!”
“They didn’t land from nacho heaven with small nacho wings for you to devour, you dolt, it’s my hard-earned money!” Pidge had yelled and relayed that they’ll be coming over in ten.

It was a horrible experience and he does not want to repeat it again.

So with minimal bitching Lance pulls on his sneakers, pushes back the fat Persian cat Pepe – he’s good at naming things, really – who’s trying to sneak out to play with the neighbor’s tabby as always, and hops onto the bike. The chain is still making weird rattling sounds but Lance has kept that thing in oil for a few days, too busy to do anything else about it. He prays that it doesn’t fall off, he’s not too eager to touch it.

Of course his phone chooses to ring at that very moment, and he has to balance the handlebar while speaking to his little sis. “S’up?”

“Buy me some apple juice and a chicken salad.” Straight to the point as ever.

“Couldn’t you tell me when I was leaving? Where are you right now?”

She sounds upset with him and judging by the noise level in the background – definitely higher than the ever-present one of their home – she’s probably out, wandering. There are too many people living in their small house for Lance to keep up with who’s returning and who’s leaving. “It’s Friday!” she says it like it’s supposed to explain everything.

“Uh huh?”

“I’m at the dance camp, idiota!” Em bristles and ohhh right. Lance has to play it cool like he totally knew that. This small piece of information had slipped away from his brain completely the moment Allura mentioned gathering up her students for the seasonal dance camp. It’s more like a prolonged sleepover that lasts about five days and – wait. “Are you at the Studio right now?”

“Yes? I told you that I’ll be staying there like a bajillion times already.”

Lance squints and avoids a hole in the pavement. “There’s a convenience store literally three buildings away and you’re asking me - calling me - to go halfway across the town and buy you some goddamn chicken salad.”

He can almost visualize Em slowly blinking like he’s the young shitty sibling here instead of her. “Uh, yeah?”

“Might as well rename myself to fucking delivery boy,” Lance mumbles, grumpy.

He’s never gotten along with Em too well, she's a complete shit to him, but if he's to be honest, maybe he had it coming all along because he used to be a pretty bad sibling when she was just a baby. Never forget the ruined Barbies, followed by destroyed math homework in retaliation – chewed up, technically, but Lance's homeroom teacher did not buy those stuttered excuses of his sister eating his homework. He should've lied and said that it was their dog's fault, but nothing would've saved him from that F.

Should he blame Em for his math exam failure, too?

“I’ll tell Ma that you’re cursing – ”

“Well, hold that thought because she can hear you whining a whole town away.” Lance checks the vibrating phone. An incoming call from ‘Sauron’ flashes on the screen, waiting for the line to free up. Ma truly lives up to the All-Seeing Eye title. He changes lines. “Yeah?”
“Lance, hijo, did Emilia leave already?” His mother sounds too worried, as always. She’s probably on her way back home from work if she has the time to call and check in.

“Mhm.”

“Did she take everything?”

How’s he supposed to know that? Ma doesn’t wait for an answer, instead worrying over things Em might’ve forgotten, such as her food – whimsical brat, right? – sleeping bag, and a change of clean clothes. She makes it sound like her child has left for three months to hike in Himalayas instead of a camp fifteen minutes away.

“Lance, I need you to go there and bring her a warm change of clothes! The nights are so chilly this week, I don’t want her catching a cold.”

“But Ma-”

“Clothes! Go immediately! Now!” she snips and he barely suppresses a groan, knowing fully well that he’d get an earful if she caught him doing so. He misses the days when he was the little sibling.

“Sí, Mamá.”

Confirmation is all that she needs, and hangs up the moment Lance resigns himself to his fate.

He turns the bike around, pizza rolls already forgotten. “So… chicken with cheese or chicken with nuts and tomatoes?”

Em seems pleased.

He doesn’t dislike Em or any of his siblings even if they do fight at times – with some more than the others – like most families out there. Lance just doesn’t really get Em specifically, they’re way too different. He’s the prankster, the extrovert, and a little bit more all over the place than it’s socially acceptable, while she’s refined, incredibly smart, just as friendly – a McClain family trait - but rather picky when it comes to interacting with new people. They don’t see eye-to-eye about many things and topics, starting from stuff like spicy food vs sweet and sour dishes, and ending with political views and whatnot.

Em is a first year student at Allura’s ballet class with a bright future ahead. Lance is a freestyle dancer with what could be considered a tragic backstory and ex-dreams of tournaments.

He stepped out of the spotlight on the day RB fell apart - more than a year ago now, wow, time sure flies by - and he has no plans of going back to the big stages anytime soon.

So naturally, when Lance navigates the all-too-familiar hallways, equipped with a bag of goods for his little sister, his thin eyebrows nearly rise into his hairline the moment he takes a good look at ‘the kids’ – let’s be honest, that dancer group looks his age – dressed in the kinds of clothes that Lance has never seen in Allura’s camps. The group of teens chilling by one of the beautifully carved columns give him a critical eye. Lance evades them and quickly climbs to the second floor, finally finding the kids that he recognizes to be the ballet dancers. There are way too many of them gathered here, milling about and chattering, laughing away.

He looks for his sister, for a glimpse of curly brown hair, but finds Allura instead.
She notices his tall lean figure almost immediately and politely excuses herself. Lance waves at her companions and the ladies return the gesture with warm smiles on their faces. He loves them - honestly, they make some banging sweets and never fail to invite him into the office for some tea whenever he drops by to pick up Allura.

The aforementioned woman is dressed in her coaching outfit - a deep blue thing made of shiny material that hugs her curves nicely. Her mass of white hair stands on the top of her head, clipped into a huge, tight bun – how she manages to make it stay like that Lance’ll never know because for some reason Allura doesn’t like sharing beauty secrets.

“Lance!” she exclaims, pleasantly surprised, and folds her hands neatly. “So you’ve changed your mind and decided to come!”

Lance holds up a dismissing hand and then the bag, shakes it a few times. “Uh, before you delve into a speech about how I’ve finally reached the eye-opening moment and realized the value of dance camps – no I haven’t, they still suck, and I’m just a delivery boy for Em.” He looks around, ignoring Allura’s tight-lipped pout. “Have you seen her around? She’s too short for me to find. Also what’s up with all those kids on the first floor?”

He doesn’t get an answer because Em tugs on his sweatshirt's sleeve and takes Lance’s free hand, shaking it to the sides. She seems very excited and her face is dusted in a light shade of pink. “Lance, holy shit.”

“Language,” he parrots back, because he’s a mature adult.

She’s already dressed in her leotard and wearing one of Lance’s old over-sized AC/DC hoodies. Em pays him no heed and continues bouncing around like a rabbit on crack, long braid whipping around. “The street dance kids’ coach is like the hottest human being to exist on the face of the earth, I swear you gotta see this.” That explains Em’s starstruck expression, ah crushes. She also knows how weak-kneed Lance gets around cute hot boys.

His mind is still somewhat focused on the mention of street dance kids, eyebrows furrowing, but he doesn’t get to question the women because Em drags him away from Allura and deeper into the masses of teens standing around near the grand staircase.

“Jeez, just how hot is this guy? 'Disney prince in real life' kind of hot?” he asks, now very curious himself, and curtly apologizes whenever Em’s provision bag smacks against someone’s legs.

“If we’re talking about the kindness levels – yep! And he’s even better!”

“Sounds like a dreamboat,” Lance laughs. “So, is he young Hugh Jackman kind of hot?”

“Oh?” Right, he tends to forget that she doesn’t get references such as these. One more reason why they don’t get along swimmingly.

“X-men, Em.”

Her lips form a small ‘o’ and she nods heatedly. “Yes, now take a look for yourself!” And then discreetly points out her newfound crush, standing on her tiptoes and craning her neck to see him better.

Wow, the guy certainly falls into the ‘I want this man to be my baby daddy’ category - he’s crowded by girls and guys alike as though he’s a celebrity. The moment he turns around with a soft smile stretching his divine face, Lance realizes that he'd recognize that perfect jawline that just won’t quit even if all the lights suddenly flickered out.
His jaw almost drops to the floor and Em giggles something that sounds like ‘told you so’. But this isn’t the reason why Lance has to figuratively pick up his unhinged jaw, oh no - rather, it’s the fact that Takashi fucking Shirogane is standing before him in flesh and bone after a year of absolutely nothing.

Lance kind of wants to lay down on the ground and cry. He’s never been more confused and overwhelmingly happy?

“I gotta go use the bathroom real quick,” he breathes out, wide eyes still glued to Shiro’s sturdy form. The older man looks like he hasn’t changed one bit - it’s hard to believe that he took three bullets to the side and wrestled with death - and his smile is wide as ever.

“Ugh, gross!” his sis calls out, obviously mistaking it for something else. Since when did the little squirt develop Lance-patented oversexualization filter?

He drops the bag in her small hands and races upstairs to find Allura.

“Please explain this!” he begs once they’re in the grand hall and the chatter is a little further away. Lance feels a little unnaturally hot under the collar.

Allura seems infinitely confused, and is she faking it or does she truly not understand - doesn’t have the slightest idea what he’s on about. Seems like it’s the latter. “I told you that you might be interested in this year’s events because my companion and I have decided to hold them on the same days, in the same building no less. We want the youth of our respective troupes to get to know different dance styles, learn to appreciate them, participate in the mutual training activities and come out of this as good friends – ”

The woman drones on about the infinite benefits of the camp that Lance dislikes – he’s a firm believer that dance camps and paid-for dance studios in general ruin individualistic creativity even if he can justify it in ballet, kind of – but he has to cut her short even if it seems rather rude. His heart’s beating too fast for him to act like he’s aware of social norms right now.

“No, I meant the part where – ” He gestures upward and Allura’s sapphire eyes follow the trajectory to - “Where Shiro is actually participating here, and... Oh god, is he the one in charge of the street kids?” Lance’s eyes widen. “Wait a second; is he that secret ‘acquaintance’ of yours? The same Shiro who is – was, damn it - a part of RB? And you never told us?”

Allura’s eyebrows rise high up. “What difference does it make? We’re friends, and now – work colleagues. We’ve never really talked about our achievements and backgrounds, we only wanted to practice in peace together!” Her chocolate-brown face flushes a deep raspberry and her hands curl into shaky fists. “You never asked and I never told you. You never told me anything, Lance, not even when I wanted to know why you stopped pursuing your dream!” She’s getting frustrated, he can see it. Her accent spills out more strongly when she’s mad.

Lance brushes a hand over his face, unhappy. He doesn’t like thinking about it, much less talking. He still remembers Allura - cautious and out of place with her white sundress and high heels - sitting on the baby grass next to him. Still remembers his lame attempts to counter those ‘quit moping around’ speeches with witty ‘I’m not moping around, I don’t have a broom with me’ replies. Needless to say, they backfired.

He and Allura didn’t talk for a while afterwards.
He has to wrap it up. With a sigh, he groans. “So you’ve decided to have a mixer of two completely different styles and observe the outcome? Aren’t you afraid that these kids will be at each other’s throats before you can even start?” Lance cautiously looks at the members of the same group who had given him the stink eyes, now openly glaring at the roaming ballet dancers, hostility rolling off in waves.

“Yes, we want them to get to know each other, teach them mutual respect and importance of cooperation.” Allura literally glares down the bubbling insults on the street gang’s kids tongues before they can even surface. They look away in shame. “And I think that if they truly want to stay here and work on their skills, they’ll keep their mouths shut.”

Lance is kind of envious of the way she holds herself like true royalty. Well, technically Allura is related to the royalty of some small country in southern Europe of which Lance’s never heard of, but that’s beside the point. “So like in ‘Step Up’?”

Allura shrugs. "Now that you put it like that - yes. I guess it's just like in 'Step Up'."

“With you and Shiro as the leads, I presume.” He huffs, jealous, and arms crossed over his chest. He doesn’t have to look up to know that Shiro is looking down at them from the second floor as though he’s worried that Lance is somehow harassing their precious ballet instructor.

“I – ” Allura begins, her mouth falling open and closing a couple of times. She looks like a fish pulled out of water and glances up again. The smile that she sends Shiro's way - followed by a shy wave, eugh - is sickening to say the least, and Lance still doesn't believe in dance camps. Obviously, this is some stupid elaborate ploy of two individuals with overactive imaginations and peace-seeking drives that's meant to fail eventually. Though the set up is strangely character-appropriate, especially for Shiro.

Allura seemingly forgets what she had wanted to say, as she reassures Shiro – with like one gesture, whoa – that everything’s fine. “Lance, if he means so much to you, you’re more than welcome to stay. I won’t ask any payment of you, I just want to see you practicing again.” Allura looks nostalgic somehow and Lance is almost tempted to humor her and stay the night just to make her feel better. Later on, he can tell her that he wasn’t feeling it or simply couldn’t stay. If he’s going to let her down, he needs to do it gently.

After all, seeing Shiro again brings out unwanted memories and secret needs that he has fought down repeatedly for a year.

He recoils when he notices that in his moment of spacing out, Allura had leaned in uncomfortably close, carefully studying his expressions with a funny look etched on her face. “Jeez, don’t scare me like that!”

The beautiful woman then crosses her arms, a small yet mischievous smile pulling at her lips. “I think that I know the perfect way to restore your resolve and… convince you to give this a shot.”

Allura drags him into one of the spacious training rooms - one of its walls is lined with mirrors bigger than Lance's future plans, and beautiful, arched windows take up the other side. It’s already dark outside so the forest-green satin curtains are pulled away, showing off the beautiful view of the city. The detailed marble columns are lined with piles of bags and people keep emerging from the dressing rooms. There’s a whole lot of movement, some of the dancers are already going over their routines of warming up or simply practicing in small groups. Lance thinks that, yeah, it’s amazing
and all, a sleepover and dancing, but this isn’t enough to change his mind. That is until Allura pulls away the curtain off an arc that leads into the storage room. Lance thinks that, wow, it looks a whole lot different than the last time he’s been here, playing hide and seek with Allura’s ballet group at the Christmas afterparty. The entire McClain family (along with Hunk) had attended it to watch Em perform - she was cast as one of the main leads in the play.

Now the space is clear of soulless mannequins and brass instruments. The stools and tables are pushed aside and the low-hanging ceiling is clear of cobwebs. Lance can see that this is clearly where the older age SD group rules over - all of them are stretching, dressed in sweats and loose-fitting clothes. Meanwhile, the ballet kids stand around in the corners of the ex-storage room, eyes filled with admiration, yet too shy to join in just yet.

“Make sure to stretch properly before we get started,” a stern voice calls out and Lance nearly chokes on his own spit.

His head almost gets whiplash at how fast he turns it to the side, only to find Keith there, looking over the students, hands placed on hips. The looks that he’s getting from guys and girls alike, are those of deep devotion and respect - like they worship the very ground that Keith walks on. Lance’s cross-wired brain halts its crashing process for a second to wonder if this is how he looks whenever he watches Keith, too. Alas, the remains of lucid thoughts are swept away by the wave of overwhelming emotions that he’s feeling, thoughts a garbled mess of Keith’s name on repeat - Keith Keith Keith. Keith's here, he's real and completely oblivious to Lance’s presence just like back in good old days.

He looks a little tired, thinner than Lance remembers him to be - he can easily notice it because of the loose white crop top that the other’s wearing. Keith's hips are still banging, though, even if he has the baggiest sweats known to mankind on. Lance gulps nervously, fingers twitching for his phone. Pidge and Hunk are gonna freak out when they hear about this.

Then he remembers their last encounter, the bright paint and the proximity, and his brain functions cease altogether.

Oh right.

Lance wants the black-haired man to look at him like that again, wants to see the indigo specks in those dark eyes, wants to –

Allura obscures Lance's vision as she sidles up next to his massive fucking crush and looks over the students with a fond smile. “Looking good. Is this your first shift?” she wonders and Keith briefly glances her way, completely ignores Lance gaping over her shoulder.

His voice is nonplussed when he speaks up. “The second one. They’re not bad, but some can’t keep up.” Ah yes, the 'holier-than-thou' attitude. How could he forget?

“You’ll whip them into shape, I’m certain.” Allura nods and Keith’s lips curl up just the slightest bit. “That’s the idea,” he shrugs.

“Shiro is very proud of you, Keith. I am too.” Allura continues to sweet talk and Lance knows her well enough by now to see where this is going and he is. Not. Ready!

“I’ll try to live up to his expectations,” Keith says in reply, ears turning a little pink at the tips. He finally seems more engaged in the conversation and actually faces them properly, crosses his arms over his chest. Lance tries not to do that thing he does whenever he’s in front of Keith - the Thing
where he repeatedly sneaks in quick glances at those sketched abs. He kind of wants to reach out and rub his paws all over the soft-looking muscle. When Lance looks up after the third, timed peek, he squawks inwardly because Keith’s looking right at him with a raised eyebrow. *Caught in act, good job.*

They say that third time’s the charm, and he has somehow managed to fuck it up.

Lance’s mouth is stretched into a long flat line of need, and he tries very hard not to show any fear or discomfort as though he’s facing off a panther. No matter how hard he tries, it still seems like Keith can actually smell the unease, ready to pounce and devour. However, in the end it’s Allura who sticks Lance out to the lion’s den like the true friend that she is.

She pushes him out from behind herself to stand right in front of Keith. Lance’s hands are an ocean of nervous sweat and he’s visibly shaking – in fear or excitement, he doesn’t know. Keith’s gaze is steady, judging. Shit, he must be "quite the sight". Even Lance'd be turned off and he has the lowest standards out there.

He firmly rubs his moist palms against his baggy jeans, wondering if he’s gonna bleach them with all that scrubbing and sweat. Allura introduces him, “This is my acquaintance. He’s a very valued companion and I wish to entrust him to you to hone his fine dancing skills.” She’s flattering Lance beyond belief in that proud parent voice of hers that she sometimes tunes in by accident, and Keith looks far more interested now. If Lance’s heart beats any faster, he’s going to die of heart failure. He also feels that if he opens his mouth he’s going to throw up.

Allura sends him a firm look that screams ‘this is the part where you introduce yourself’ and he immediately goes in for Keith’s pale hand like it’s a lifeline, shaking it furiously. “I’m McClance, I- I mean Lance. Lance McClain’s the name.” McClance? Really? He lets go of Keith’s hand as though it’s been burned and barely suppresses the urge to wipe it again, not wanting to seem disrespectful. Shit, it’s all sweaty. Did he seriously touch Keith’s hand with it? He touched Keith’s hand! He held it! Now he kind of wants to do it again. He wants to hold those stupid cool-skinned hands and do dumb things while they’re at it, such as going on dates and stuff.

Keith stares as though he’s an enigma, violet eyes wider than usual, hand still hovering, frozen. “Uh, I’m Keith…” he trails off and slowly lowers the hand. No recognition shines in his eyes whenever he looks at Lance, and he doesn’t know if that’s a good thing or not. The brunet feels as though he has a secret identity. Either that or Keith really couldn’t care less about their last encounter. Maybe he flirts with everyone like that? Nah, he’s too awkward, Lance can obviously see it.

“I know!” he barks instead, voice cracking at the end. Keith raises those dumb, beautiful eyebrows again. “I mean, I heard it while you were talking to Allura, duh, so uh – “ Out of ideas as to what he should do to save himself from the impending public embarrassment – Keith’s self-proclaimed bodyguards are eyeing him as though they’re contemplating whether stabbing Lance with a blunt knife would be more painful than shooting him in the kneecaps - Lance fingerguns. “It’s nice to meet you and I’m good. At dancing, I mean.” Whoa, smooth like a piece of sandpaper that's currently being dragged up and down his very much burning ass. Slowly.

That’s how he feels when Keith frowns.

Their distance shrinks and is it appropriate to get flashbacks to Keith's colorfully painted face and that excuse for a shirt, so tight you could see every curve of those chiseled muscles? Because that’s exactly what happens when they’re almost nose to nose and Keith grins mirthlessly in a challenge. “We’ll see how good you are, Lance.”

Lance would gladly give away like half of his prized nerdlord merchandise for Keith to continue
saying his name like that for the rest of their lives. Sadly, they only have five shitty days, and is Lance staying here? Hell yeah. He’s staying in this camp even if it means sleeping on the floor tonight.

“Sure,” Lance hopes he sounds confident enough and he probably does because Keith backs off, not used to rude responses like that. Or maybe far too used to them. The glares of those around them intensify. Lance feels a shaky grin pulling at his lips. “I could go all night, mullet boy,” he says.

Some girls gasp, indignant. Allura hisses a low ‘Lance!’ and he know he’s done goofed. A round of applause for Lance McClain and the three monkeys residing in his head that pilot his thought process, sex drive, and language, respectively. It’s the first time he’s properly spoken to Keith and he’s already managed to insult the guy.

It’s not his fault that Keith’s presence alone is enough to make explosions erupt inside his brain and ribcage, and then turn him into a godawful, thirsty fuckboy. Except that it totally is, and fuck Keith but also fuck Keith.

And, of course, Keith wouldn’t be Keith if he ever turned down a challenge, no matter how small.

Not even Allura can save him now.

Group chat name: no zoinking allowed in pokego

[11:21 pm] Group chat name changed to: pray 4 lance 2k16

sirlancealot (Lance McClain): guys

holy fucking shit guess what

pornbot justice (Pidge Gunderson): “Holy fucking shit“ you didn’t buy me the pizza rolls and disappeared? I noticed

sirlancealot (Lance McClain): shut the fuck up about the goddamn pizza rolls pidgey im having a life changing moment here!!!!!

Beach hunk (Hunk Garrett): Midlife crisis?? you're like twenty-smth :/

sirlancealot (Lance McClain): uhhh no also you dont know how old i am??? dude. btw its something even more intense!

pornbot justice (Pidge Gunderson): Did you finally grow your first pubic hair?

sirlancealot (Lance McClain): did you??

Beach hunk (Hunk Garrett): It’s ok pidge, i’ll bake you some pizza rolls tomorrow !! :))

pornbot justice (Pidge Gunderson): True friend right there

Beach hunk (Hunk Garrett): Aww !! : )
sirlancealot (Lance McClain): touching whatever guys pay attention to me

pornbot justice (Pidge Gunderson): I am not obliged to do anything until I see the pizza rolls on this goddamn table, McClain

Beach hunk (Hunk Garrett): What??

sirlancealot (Lance McClain): thanks hunk so anyways im at the dance camp rn and i have super hot instructors named shiro and keith respectively. by the way em's totally hot for shiro i guess it’s a mcclain family trait, youre next pidgeboi

pornbot justice (Pidge Gunderson): Sellout

WAIT WHAT

Beach hunk (Hunk Garrett): Omg????? how what how'd this happen, tell us everything :OO

sirlancealot (Lance McClain): haha drown in jealousy bitches im just as amazed as you are tbh. full story later can i talk about keith rn coz i gotta im literally typing this out of my grave rn i am burning

pornbot justice (Pidge Gunderson) sent 'heisburning.png'

Beach hunk (Hunk Garrett): Proof first or it didn’t happen ;)

sirlancealot (Lance McClain) sent ‘foundyouomissnewbooty.png’

Beach hunk (Hunk Garrett): Whoa. Did you try the space pants line on him yet?

sirlancealot (Lance McClain): i did and he didn’t look like he appreciated it. or understood it. he told me to drop down and give him a 20 and then i was like lol time to be funny gives him 20$ i thought he was going to stab me

Beach hunk (Hunk Garrett): loooool

pornbot justice (Pidge Gunderson): K back. Is it weird that I could literally recognize him just by looking at his ass? Also it’s ok, Lance, cry your little gay out

sirlancealot (Lance McClain): *****************Bi

pornbot justice (Pidge Gunderson): JUST DO IT, DON’T MAKE ME WHIP OUT MY MEMES

sirlancealot (Lance McClain): so keith right madre de dios i remember why i liked him sooooo much

Beach hunk (Hunk Garrett): Because he got an ass that won’t quit?

pornbot justice (Pidge Gunderson): Because he degrades you and you’re into that?

sirlancealot (Lance McClain): yes and yes?? i dunno?? also abs dont forget the cheese grater!!! and the beautiful eyes. but mostly the ass. im an ass man
pornbot justice (Pidge Gunderson): I’m kinkshaming you right now. Rattling my keys in your face. Chanting my shame. You are a disappointment to this family.

sirlancealot (Lance McClain): i’ll ignore all that because im full of grace tonight.

Beach hunk (Hunk Garrett): And keith

sirlancealot (Lance McClain): ha i wish. we had a dance off

pornbot justice (Pidge Gunderson): You challenged him!?

Beach hunk (Hunk Garrett): Seconded but with three times the exclamation marks

sirlancealot (Lance McClain): yea kinda didn’t really mean it but he accepted it and i lost. miserably. he wiped the floor with me like i was a fucking rag. quite literally almost twerked me into submission. i think i can hear some guys calling me keiths bitch right as im typing this out i mean sure i wanna be his bitch just not when it comes to dancing gtg assert dominance

k i tried telling them off i think theyre gonna shank me in my sleep i don’t trust these street ds asses they look like a bunch of fuckboys

pornbot justice (Pidge Gunderson): So in other words you fit right in?

sirlancealot (Lance McClain): I AM NOT A FUCKBOY U DARE

Beach hunk (Hunk Garrett): Lance please ‘-‘ also we have to visit you now! bring you a sleeping bag and some protection ;)

pornbot justice (Pidge Gunderson): And steal some cash for pizza rolls. Prepare that 20.

sirlancealot (Lance McClain): uh how about you don’t??? and no??? ? ?

pornbot justice (Pidge Gunderson): I hope you aren’t saying that NO to the protection. Spread stdis awareness.

Beach hunk (Hunk Garrett): It’s fair game, dude. fries over guys uh or pizza rolls over paying guys in this case i guess

sirlancealot (Lance McClain): stop siding w pidGAY omg i thought we were bffs hunk why friendship over

Beach hunk (Hunk Garrett): Does that mean i have to return the bff shirt too? :’O

[11:40pm] Group chat name changed to: dance camp shenanigans & betting center

pornbot justice (Pidge Gunderson): I’m going to win that cash off of you even if it’s the last thing I do.
the sibling scene is actually based on a true thing that happened - my friend's sis was at a hiphop camp and called him while we were hanging out, asked him for juice. the store was literally right next to her. my ex-classmate was her instructor too, ha, i love irl refs
Keith chases his group around late into night, not really caring about the complaints that follow. Sadly, Lance notices, he’s getting the brunt of Keith’s wrath.

Oh he wonders why.

He gets degraded from ‘Lance’ spoken in an assholish tone to ‘McClain’ and that’s by far the biggest defeat he ever experiences.

Keith’s a fucking prick, Lance firmly decides, when he gets yelled at one times too many or winds up in yet another petty argument with the group’s instructor. He’s arrogant and struts around like he’s hot shit and has the authority here – technically, he does, but Lance conveniently forgets that fact. He’s positively insufferable and so kind to the confused dancers who don’t get something and need another repeat of move combinations that it sorta makes Lance cringe.

Lance is jealous as hell, but he’ll never admit that out loud. He only clenches his jaw and keeps up, sweatshirt soaked through. Yikes.

“Would you mind teaching me how to shift my weight properly when we have to—“ a short girl with curly blond hair asks, and instead of trying to describe it, waves her hand in a ‘screw it’ gesture and goes over the combination. She tries to bounce backwards from her toes to a light crouch but it looks so bad that the people standing behind her stifle laughter into their palms. Lance would let out a snort too, but he knows exactly what she’s aiming for, remembers his own ambitions that resulted in pulled muscles. Remembers looking idiotic, too.

Keith lightly smiles at her and shoots the laughing bunch a nasty glare, threatening. He then rolls up his oversized pants a little bit so that the girl can see the movement of his legs better. Lance drinks in the explanation, fingers twitching for his phone all the while. Oh, it’s coming, it’s coming.

Once he’s done, Keith rubs his palms together. “Alright, it’s rather simple. I showed you the shift, now carefully look at what I’m doing.”

‘Oh, I’m looking alright.’ Lance thinks frantically and feels like a sinner when he casually pulls out the phone. He may feel like he’s in heaven right now but he’s definitely going to hell for this.

Keith goes over the motions slowly and it’s insane how he manages to balance so well when he has to keep the rather difficult poses for a prolonged period of time. Back in the day, Lance could barely hold himself upright while trying to do them as fast as RB members.

He slides backwards with a light bounce. Lance bites his lower lip. “See what I’m doing? Always keep your hands or elbows pressed into your legs.” No no, don’t do that, I’m calling the police, Lance screams internally when Keith digs the elbows into his thighs, spine dipping beautifully. “It all revolves around your sense of balance. If you’re tilting forward, arch backwards. Shift the gravity center to your heels without removing your hands and then...“ He continues the easier part of the combination in normal pace, spreading his legs in that fast rolling motion that makes the straightest of men noodle out. Keith smoothly adjusts the pose, jumping up, curling lightly to the left and then locking. Lance mentally crosses himself and fiddles with the phone. “Got it?”

Lance counts like five people in the room who haven’t gone completely red-faced.

The girl – her pale face now colored an interesting shade of magenta – nods curtly and mimics
Keith’s little show. It’s not perfect, her balance still wavers, but it looks way better than before.

Lance quickly sends the four second long video to Pidge with an attachment to GIF IT.

Another hour passes, filled with ‘c’mon, McClain, I thought you were good at this’ and ‘if you’re getting too tired here you can always drop out and go home’, and then some retorts such as ‘oh, I’m just getting started, Mullet’, followed by ‘won’t get rid of me that easily, are you scared that I’m too much for you?’. For all his cockiness, by the time it’s over, Lance feels as though he’s dying – he’s already forgotten what intense practice feels like. He whines to Em about gross cooling sweat until she takes pity and takes off the old AC/DC hoodie, throws it into Lance’s overheated face. He’d rather go through ten more sessions with Keith than sleep in sweaty clothes.

The cold shower works wonders against his flushed skin and Allura kindly offers one of the staff’s towels. He crawls to the third floor where they’re supposed to roll out the sleeping bags for the night and quickly steals a beanbag chair, dragging it to the unlit side room, too unsettled to sleep near the street dance gang. Those guys kept eyeing him the entire night as though they really were planning on shanking him in his sleep. Lance totally isn’t too overdramatic.

Thankfully there aren’t any people around and Lance stretches out, muscles aching in a pleasant way. He’s missed these thrills. He then spends half an hour texting Hunk and trash-talking Keith until he finally dozes off.

He’s a light sleeper – exceptions being the times when he doesn’t get enough rest - due to the fact that whenever his younger siblings have nightmares, they usually come to his room, seeking comfort. None of them want to bother Ma and Pa because they work hard every day to provide for them and keep their hectic household standing - that much the McClain siblings figure out at a very young age.

So needless to say, Lance rubs the sleep sand out of his eyes the moment he feels something shifting not too far away. The lights of the city shine a pale orange on the man’s skin and Lance blinks a few times, thinking that it’s a rather vivid dream.

Keith is ruffling through a duffel bag, shirt gone, mullet dripping steady rivulets down his sculpted back. Lance moans quietly, but it doesn’t go unnoticed by Keith who whips around with wide eyes. They hold eye contact for a few seconds until Lance’s brain gets some semblance to a signal in there. He murmurs something that could be translated into ‘that you, Keith?’ but sounds more like ‘fsddh uuuu kisth?’ and the aforementioned man turns back to whatever he’s doing.

“You’re dreaming,” he finally speaks to the brunet like an equal, voice devoid of arrogance and no sneering or glaring in sight. He seems calm and the atmosphere would be almost serene if not for some muted whispers coming from the other side of the heavy curtain that separates the room from the main hall.

Lance stretches out his cramping legs and continues staring at his idol with an endearing sappy look as Keith pulls on a black tank top and checks his phone, hissing at the flash of light. It’s weird to see Keith acting like a human being for once.

A warm weird feeling bubbles in Lance’s chest and rises up his throat in the form of sleep-induced words, “You know, you’re actually… not that bad. Plus, you’re pretty,” Lance yawns and Keith visibly stiffens up, lifting his gaze from the phone.

“Um, what?” That same surprised look from when they’ve first met overtakes Keith's handsome features.
His voice snaps Lance back to reality. With a shameful cough, Lance turns over in his makeshift bed and pulls the hood low over his head, neck blazing hot. “I said you look shitty, goodnight!”

Keith’s disgruntled ‘asshole’ is barely audible, but after a second he angrily bites back ‘goodnight to you too!’

The sound of a curtain pulled aside follows and the black-haired dancer leaves.

Lance wakes up at 11:30 am.

His first thought is ‘where the hell am I’, followed by ‘I can’t feel my neck’, and then ‘oh shit’. Now he’s no genius or anything but it doesn’t take one to know that he has seriously slept in.

He doesn’t have the time to do pretty much anything as he jumps up from the beanbag and thunders downstairs, sweating buckets when he catches people staring weirdly, whispering about him. He nearly crashes through the curtains and his excuses are so loud that Keith is forced to stomp to the sound system and halt the music. The glares that his students shoot Lance aren’t pretty.

“Look who has decided to join us,” Keith crosses his arms and his hip juts out to the side. The shirt he’s wearing is too damn tight. Lance tries very hard to stay focused. “I was certain that you were on your way home by now, McClain.”

Lance knits his eyebrows together. “That’d be too easy for you.”

Keith tries to keep his chill but that eyebrow twitch gives him away. He stalks towards Lance, eyes squinting and challenging. “You’re quite the snarky chatterbox, aren’t you?”

“I’m glad that you’ve noticed the finer details of my personality. It’s like you’ve cracked me already.”

“Oh I have you cracked alright, McClain.” The crowd around them holds their breath, watching the exchange. They probably want him gone, those asses. “You’re a lazy brat who thinks that the world revolves around him. Let me tell you something, you’re no star here. I’m not the moon to your earth – “

“Are you trying to pick me up with romantic lines? I’m almost sold. “

Keith stabs a finger into his chest. Ouch, that’s gonna bruise. “I’m your fucking superior and you will look at me as such. If you couldn’t hear like five alarms I’ve set for you-“

Lance’s eyes widen in surprise, genuinely touched. “You went out of your way to set an alarm for me?”

Keith chooses to ignore him, cheeks a little pink. He ends up stepping away, chin up. “Show us what you’ve learned, McClain, and there’s a small chance that I won’t kick your sorry flirty ass out.”

“But you do admit that we’re flirting?”

“No!”

“Alright, jeez! Don’t yell, sheesh,” Lance backs off, hands up in defense. Keith continues huffing and storms towards his plugged in iPod. The brunet begins lazily stretching, watching Keith’s butt all the while. He’s wearing leggings today. Nice. “You know, you should get some sleep too, you’re
really cranky. It's unhealthy.” Keith ignores him, thumb shuffling through the playlist. “Also you gotta stop trying to humiliate me in front of my sister.”

From the back, he hears Em yell “get rekt!”

“Love you too, sugar!” Lance groans and rises from the floor after a third push-up the moment the first beats of ‘Bubble butt’ play. Fits his mood, honestly.

Lance isn’t a huge fan of dancing to anything K-pop - or whatever mixture of music this is - but this is Keith’s kingdom, his reign, and Lance has to obey. The song is very jammy and his muscles are way looser than like twelve hours ago, throwing him into rhythm easily enough. He doesn’t feel that he’s freestyling until he executes a perfect air flip, some students gasping in admiration, his sister cheering in the background and clapping wildly. Instead of walking backwards like he’s supposed to during the finishing beats of the song, he takes a few bouncing steps towards Keith instead, mimicking his crossed arms-pose, hip jutting out dramatically.

Keith’s face is expressionless when he pauses the song and studies Lance’s smug grin. “When did I tell you to freestyle?”

The brunet’s grin falters.

The room goes deadly quiet.

Keith pats his shoulder a few times, smirking, barely there, chin jutting out. It's mock consolation. “Congratulations, McClain, your sister’s cheering saved your life. However-“he does not like the sound of that,” “for pulling this shit and disobeying me, you might as well welcome yourself to hell. An hour of this routine until I deem you good enough and let you stop.”

He sharply turns around on a heel and Lance wants to punch him in the face. Badly. “You can’t just--” he begins, indignant, and Keith faces him with a lopsided smile.

“Uh, I can and I just did. Have fun.”

‘Fucker.’ Lance feels himself boiling and looks at his ‘instructor’s’ retreating back. He huffs a sigh, ‘I hate seeing you leave like that but I sure love watching you go.’

The music resumes.

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**Group chat name: dance camp shenanigans & betting center**

**sirlancealot (Lance McClain):** never mind what i said bout keith hes satan and he needs an exorcism asap

please come here and exorcise him

exercise him lol

**pornbot justice (Pidge Gunderson):** Somehow I knew that you’d be begging us to save your ass one day into this ordeal.

**sirlancealot (Lance McClain):** have mercy
pornbot justice (Pidge Gunderson): Okay, what did he do?

Beach hunk (Hunk Garrett): Did you not like doing ‘dirty dancing’ lifts with him or something???

Did he drop you???

pornbot justice (Pidge Gunderson): Did he tell you he’s not into fuckboys?

sirlancealot (Lance McClain): …pretty much

Beach hunk (Hunk Garrett): Never lose hope young aspiring grasshopper!! :) im sure he’ll come around

sirlancealot (Lance McClain): ok man satan incarnate aside

Beach hunk (Hunk Garrett): Keith aside???? that’s a new one :O who are you and what did u do to lance???

sirlancealot (Lance McClain): more like what keith did to me and boy did he do a lot i dont think i can feel my body after this session

pornbot justice (Pidge Gunderson): I demand context, son.

sirlancealot (Lance McClain): KEITH ASIDE guys i cant live like this anymore. im dying here. i cannot be seen in public like this and the public is all around me even when I gotta take a piss break and i have a meeting with shiro in allura in a bit and look at this

sirlancealot (Lance McClain) sent theapocalypse.png

DO YOU SEE WHAT THAT IS. DO YOU SEE IT. ITS FUCKING STUBBLE. S T U B B L E

I CANNOT BE SEEN LIKE THIS I LOOK LIKE A HOBO WITH A 5’OCLOCK SHADOW

pornbot justice (Pidge Gunderson): I honestly didn’t notice until you pointed it out? I didn’t think you were capable of growing facial hair seeing as you’re like twelve in soul. I thought that your mindset affected your appearance somehow

sirlancealot (Lance McClain): yeah im twelve on a scale from one to ten also fuck you

Beach hunk (Hunk Garrett): Oh cmon lance you look good!! it actually suits you a lot

sirlancealot (Lance McClain): i look like a caveman bearbro

pornbot justice (Pidge Gunderson): If you want to see a true caveman take a look at my legs, dude, I haven’t shaved since like last Christmas. Now stop crying over every single thing. You won’t die without your beauty bag.

sirlancealot (Lance McClain) sent mounteverest.png

UH HUH THEN TAKE A LOOK AT THIS
Beach hunk (Hunk Garrett): Uh what are we supposed to be looking at?

sirlancealot (Lance McClain): THIS. THE PIMPLE. I HAVEN'T HAD ONE SINCE I WAS SEVENTEEN. THIS IS GROSS.

pornbot justice (Pidge Gunderson): Tragic.

sirlancealot (Lance McClain): you guys better stop dicking around and come here. get all of my shit. all three bags of it YOU HEAR THAT PIDGE???????? oh and some holy water and salt for Keith

Beach hunk (Hunk Garrett): Just go back to your ‘dirty dancing’ lifts

lancealot (Lance McClain): and my fullcap. cant reach ultimate swag levels without it

Compared to Keith, Shiro is a god-send. He’s soft and warm like mashed potatoes and breathtakingly beautiful. Lance can’t wait to see what his and Allura’s future children will look like. He can see the chemistry between them but they’re obviously in that stage where they don’t know that they like each other, though they’re beginning to realize it.

Shiro also doesn’t question it too much when Lance drags the tip of his sneaker across the surface of the fluffy Persian carpet and asks him for an autograph. For his little love-stricken sister, of course!

Shiro gives him two, winking playfully when Lance asks why. “It’s better to have two in case you lose one,” he explains.

Needless to say, he’s happy that at least one of his idols fits the ‘idol worth looking up to’ image.

“I don’t understand why Keith hates me so much,” Lance groans and melts into the comfortable armchair of the staff room. The lingering scent of mint and mango tea makes him relax. He tries not to scratch at the pimple, too self-conscious around Shiro who radiates this – this energy. You just can’t feel it from most of the pretty people out there.

Shiro sets down the cup of tea and blinks at him, long eyelashes fluttering. “He doesn’t hate you,” he reassures with a small smile. “He’s not really good when it comes to socializing and this alone is a challenge for him already. He’s completely out of his comfort zone, please understand.”

“Doesn’t give him the right to act like an asshole.”

Shiro’s smile turns painfully awkward. “He’s… headstrong to say the least, but he isn’t bad. I know that he sees talent in you. For sure,” he nods sagely and Lance gets those vibes that Keith has probably complained about him to the older man last night but Shiro’s trying very hard to contain himself and not blabber out Keith’s private thoughts. “Give it some time, I’m sure it’ll work out.”

Allura – who’s awfully quiet, only listening to them talk and blatantly mooning over Shiro – pats away the remains of sugar from her lips. “Lance, you know fully well that you have some discipline-related issues yourself. You cannot blame this all on Keith.”

Lance gasps and grabs his chest. “I can’t believe that you’re taking his side! After forcing me to do the same routine for almost three hours just because I slept in, I –“
“Wait,” Shiro interrupts, eyebrows furrowed. “He made you do that?”

“Yes!” Lance yells and throws his arms in the air, grabbing at his short brown strands. They’re no longer soft now that he hasn’t seen his conditioner for two whole days. “He’s a slave driver and you’re trying to tell me that it’s fine! I’m certain that this is a huge violation of my rights – “

Lance shuts up when he catches a glimpse of Shiro’s smile, carefully covered by the rim of the ceramic cup. “Well, Lance, I guess you have something to look forward to!”

“You mean the sweet release of death, because that’s the only thing I want the most right now!”

Allura’s sapphire eyes study Shiro’s strange expression until they twinkle in understanding, her painted mouth forming an ‘o’. Lance feels completely thrown off by their reactions. “What?”

Allura rises, the shiny spandex of her leotard gleaming. Shiro looks aside, flushing.

“Back to practice!” she commands before the brunet can open his mouth to protest. She almost shoves him through the door, trying to encourage all the while, “work hard and trust me, the results will be worth it!”

Lance nearly falls over. “You know, if you and Shiro just wanted a moment for yourselves to make smoochy faces at each other, you could’ve just asked me to – “

The door gets slammed into his face.

“…leave.”

“Okay, again. Right, left, bounce twice on it, with toes, toes! Oh my god, stop!” Keith waves a hand around and some kind soul halts the song. Lance feels more in his element now that he’s dancing to one of his goddesses – Rihanna.

“What’s wrong now?” Lance groans and shifts back to standing. He’s legitimately aching and just really wants that evening break to come sooner before he collapses or has to run to the bathroom to throw up the curd puffs he had for lunch.

Keith’s hair is tied back in a messy ponytail, the back of his neck gleaming with sweat. He stalks to Lance and leans in, hands on hips, eyes scanning. “The slow robo shift, cmon. Do it again.”

Lance sighs at the lack of music and the overabundance of scrutinizing stares all around, dips his weight low while swinging his arm before himself at chest height, bent at elbow to make the move more precise, ”laggy”. His upper body flows like water and he takes the stupid right, left, right, left, followed by the dumb bounce before Keith decides to yank at the material of his pants till only the tip of Lance’s sneaker is touching the ground. He almost stumbles forward because of the sudden action.

“I told you – on toes,” Keith says slowly as though the brunet is a petulant child, eyebrows furrowed, glaring at Lance’s leg as though he’s having some sort of epiphany. Lance really wants to scream. “It has to be a bouncing step, not some awkward tap-dance to the beat of the hottest polka hits. And then you have to kick out. “

Keith repeats the motion flawlessly, bringing his right leg – again with the fucking toes, Jesus, he should be teaching ballet - in a perfect semi-circle, and then kicking it out twice, powerful.
Lance tries again and Keith’s eyebrow twitches like watching the brunet dance is causing him physical anguish. He rubs at his face, exasperated. “This isn’t working out,” he quips. “You have an enviable amount of control in your upper body that even I can’t compare to.”

Lance’s jaw drops. People around them start whispering. He rubs at his tired blue eyes – did he hear this right? Keith’s dishing out compliments? Where’s Ashton Kutcher yelling out ‘punk’d’? Of course, all good things must come to an end. “However, I’m not sure how your upper body is going to pull you through when your legs aren’t listening to you at all. You’re like,” Keith kicks air randomly and some people start sniggering, “I don’t know, aiming to be the soccer champion here? You can’t do that, it needs to be precise. And most of it needs to come from your hips, which, by the way, you aren’t using. At all.”

Lance actually gets offended by it. “Excuse me!? I’ll have you know that I have the best hips out there, and while I may not be Shakira – “

“So this should be familiar to you.”

Keith’s fingers are five distinctive points of fire on Lance’s lower back. The brunet sucks in a shaky breath and prays to god almighty for strength to not pop a stiffy in front of everyone - they’re honestly too amused to look away from the pair.

“Spread your legs, get down lower, and lean forward,” Keith commands and Lance closes his eyes for three seconds, just inhaling.

He does as he’s told, forcing himself to grin smugly. “I never knew you were a kinky exhibitionist.”

Keith’s fingers dig into his back in warning. “Grind downwards, you horrible shithead.”

“You wanna see how fine my grinding is, really? What teaching method is that? Buy me dinner first,” Lance babbles nervously and tries to do just that, channeling his hip game, thankful that Keith’s knee is at least a few inches away from a certain area.

He presses his upper back against Keith just to live up to the shithead title, pushing back on his fingers. He then throws a curious look over his shoulder, dying to know how this action has affected the other, only to see Keith staring back with wide eyes like he didn’t even consider the idea of Lance actually doing something like this and playing along with this crap. Lance bites down on his
lower lip at their proximity and Keith shakes his head to the sides. He tries to free the leg, but Lance only clamps his thighs around it, locking it in place.

“How was that, Mullet?”

Keith, for once, has nothing sassy to say.

“Get a room!” Em yells and there’s a flash of a camera.

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**pornbot justice (Pidge Gunderson):** No monkey business until we arrive with a pack of condoms, jeez, Lance. Keep your dick on a leash.

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Lance spends the short break getting shit for grinding with the instructor and handling a whole lot of thirsty teens asking for advice, all of them extremely impressed by their small show.

He befriends a tall girl named Shay, the only one who looks at him with complete kindness rather than burning jealousy and discreet hatred. She’s almost a head taller than Lance and probably has bigger guns than his and Pidge’s combined, but her tanned face is soft and cute.

“I heard that at the end of day five, the camp’s chosen ones will perform,” she says and hands Lance her water bottle. He gratefully accepts it and dumps it over his naked torso. He’s gross as hell already, might as well. “Six solo performances by the people from ballet and street dance studios respectively, and then three mixed performances. “

Em strolls up to them at that moment and rams herself into his back to show affection. “The combined performances are the shit! I hear that you’ll get to dance with Shiro! They’ll film it and put it up to RB’s old YouTube account! Isn’t that great!? Obviously I’m aiming for that.” Internet fame and glory, huh. Not bad.

Shay folds her arms to hug herself, looking sad. “I don’t think that this rumor is true. Shiro’s… completely out of commission. He’s more of an adviser and choreographer rather than an instructor. Some of the more difficult moves that require a lot of upper body strength have to be performed by Keith in his stead.” Her amber eyes drift to the ex RB duo, Shiro rubbing at the spandex-covered injured arm while Keith watches the careful movement, gaze filled with worry.

Lance looks at Shiro showing Keith some moves, talking thorough every shift, and sees the older man’s face twisting up in discomfort the moment he has to do that throwback with arms. It makes even Lance wince. Keith’s immediately on him, frantically waving around. Shiro looks ashamed by the scolding.

The reality finally hits Lance full-force.

“He really is out of commission, huh.”

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Keith finds Lance playing the stupid Rihanna song that always leaves him feeling confused by the emotions he feels, practicing the kicking motion in earnest.
He lingers in the entryway with his arms crossed, fully leaning against the graceful arch, and continues observing with a fond smile until Lance’s gaze finally drifts to his reflection in the mirror. He stops dancing, panting heavily, the beat of ‘Needed Me’ loud in the background.

Keith casually walks in with small bouncy steps, hands clasped behind his lower back, and tries very hard not to let his gaze wander too much in the general direction of Lance’s abs, tight from blood rush and rippling under the dark skin with every inhale of breath.

“You’re no longer aiming for FIFA,” Keith attempts to break the ice.

Lance towels his face, hiding the faint blush in the soft material, maybe screaming a little into it at the happy feeling that overtakes him. “There goes my childhood dream, then.”

Keith rocks back and forth, shifting from toes to heels. “I don’t know about childhood dreams, but I don’t think you would’ve made a very good soccer player either way. You got that dancer’s kick ingrained into you. Just had to extract it somehow. Keep, uh. Keep working on your hips too,” Keith’s embarrassed stutter doesn’t slip by Lance completely unnoticed. He feels a smile playing on his lips.

Keith turns away immediately, cheeks dark red. He coughs into a fist and sidles up to Lance, readjusting the material of those black leggings in embarrassment. “Okay so… you just - ugh, this is gonna look like some kickboxing regime, but it helps." His demonstration is soft and the way he kicks out uses so much hip game that Lance instantly gets flashbacks to that Halloween party. “You just, uh. Softly, you know. Bounce, shimmy, kick. Not like you’re kicking around a man who’s already down.” He then swings the leg in a sharp small arc and Lance feels a laugh bubbling from his throat.

“You would know what that feels like, wouldn’t you?”

Keith squints at him, confused, and shrugs it off. Lance takes that as a silent command for him to do it. He copies the move with a playful bounce to his step and Keith’s eyes brighten. “Good. Softer, though. Like your own child.”

Now Lance really does start cracking up. He clutches at his naked chest and laughs until tears well up in his eyes. Keith stands there frozen, looking like a deer caught in headlights. “That’s not… the right way to use this one, um.”

“N-No…” Lance wheezes, “baby kicker.”

And starts howling again, only to get startled by the soft snort coming from his side. He looks up, completely mesmerized, when he hears Keith expressing actual glee. Actual poison-free joy over a dumb use of a metaphor.

Keith snickers softly and punches Lance’s shoulder lightly. “Alright, alright, I get it.” He sounds as though he’s still holding back another wave of laughter, a grin stretching his beautiful face. Lance smiles back until his cheeks hurt and he memorizes the position of the dimples on Keith’s cheeks, the flash of perfect teeth. “A silly thing to say.” The instructor rams his side into Lance. “Go back to practicing, you prick.”

“Aww, that’s the nicest name you’ve called me today.”

Keith shrugs and makes his way towards the exit. “Don’t let it get to your head too much, McClain.” Ouch. But hey, Lance loves a good challenge and Keith is by far the most interesting one.
Lance’s first sexuality crisis happened all the way back in junior year of high school.

He was known as the Ladies Man, the Beast in Bed, the guy your mother warned you about and your father pushed out of range with a long broomstick. Lance had the looks and the game, and whenever those failed, well, he had the *sick* guitar skills. The ladies sure appreciated a boy who knew how to play. It was super romantic whenever he played under their windows or something like that. He honestly never fully grasped this concept in particular.

Yet when he had his first… thoughts about the guys around him, he wasn’t really that shocked. Not as surprised as he thought he’d be, really. Almost *disappointing*.

When a guy from his parallel class pulled Lance into the bathroom stall – they were talking about something beforehand but for the life of him Lance couldn’t remember what it was about – he was almost excited. He had his fair share of *stall adventures* but never with another dude and that made his heartbeat faster due to anything but fear. He was *so ready* to give his first BJ - or receive one, didn’t matter, the guy was really damn beautiful even if he looked like one of those basic bass-playing emo stoners – that he almost whined in overwhelming sadness when that guy only pulled out a folded piece of paper containing the answers of their upcoming physics test and asked if he was interested in buying it.

Wow, way to leave a guy hanging.

Lance had emerged from that bathroom as a brand new man and when he told Hunk about it, his friend merely shrugged and they continued talking about their history project like nothing happened.

When Lance first meets Keith officially, he somehow knows for sure that the other won’t really care if he decides to pull some choice moves on him. Keith seems just like his best friend in that aspect: uncaring of social norms, desensitized, and completely immune to the finer aspects of Lance’s flirting.

A few minutes into their one-on-one routine practice, Lance knows that he can get away with shameless flirting, ‘accidental’ physical contact. Keith only rolls his eyes at the lame pickup lines and continues teaching him like ten variations of a smooth slide-out and overly-complicated locking. The black-haired man doesn’t bristle as much as he did on the first day, sometimes drops incredibly sarcastic remarks – “if you have the time to run your mouth, you have the time to learn these moves, *faster, McClain*” – but makes no move to pull out the sound system’s cords and strangle Lance with them.

That knowledge leaves the brunet’s blood pumping and mind reeling, coming up with all those smooth one-liners, all the while working up a fine layer of sweat and trying not to die. Exploring what makes Keith tick is the fun part.

Comments regarding the instructor’s appearance don’t affect him at all – it’s like trying to pour water on geese, absolutely impossible. Whenever Lance so much as *insinuates* that Keith has thighs meant to crush a man’s skull, the other writes him off as another mouthy fuckboy who’s all about talking big and speeds up his movements just to spite him. Lance can keep up, sure, but he’s still lacking.
Keith’s eyes don’t miss the fact that Lance is getting better and faster with every repeat.)

Keith snorts when the brunet fucks up a rushed slide-out and throws a smug ‘again’ over a naked shoulder, eyelashes fluttering innocently. Lance sticks out his tongue at that and turns his attention back to the mirror to observe the instructor’s fluid movements, the beats of ‘Needed Me’ too far away.

They have a stare-off, gazes stuck on the reflective surface – honestly, if they were looking at each other directly right now, Lance suspects that there’d be a whole lot more eye sex involved – and Keith commands him to get into position, this time to dance to the song from the very beginning. Damn, Lance sure loves that bossy side of him. In certain situations, of course.

Keith slowly makes his way to the brunet, taking his sweet time, eyes shining a fierce indigo. Lance, being himself, decides to be an asshole and instantly copies the other’s walk until they end up circling each other. He feels confident in his stride, a shit-eating grin tugging at his lips. Keith’s eyes glimmer at the sight of it, accepting the silent challenge.

“Show me what you got, McClain.”

“Get ready to be floored!” Lance winks playfully and it feels almost too familiar, the teasing and the not-quite smile on Keith’s face.

Keith still keeps a close eye on Lance’s movements reflected in the mirrors, guiding him with a stern voice whenever he loosens up too much and messes up something basic.

It isn’t Lance’s fault that the material of Keith’s pants is tight enough around his ass to grab his attention like that. This would be so much easier if he chose to wear the baggy sweats today too. His blue eyes are completely stuck on the alluring curves of Keith’s killer hips when he swiftly steps back and the arm that he throws back to match the movement at that delicious ‘boom boom’ nearly smacks into Lance’s thigh.

There’s supposed to be more distance between them, right?

“Eyes where I can see them,” Keith huffs, eyebrows furrowed, not stopping for a second and perfectly stepping into the beat.

Lance refocuses back onto the mirrors, notices the light pink flush on that pale face that has nothing to do with exertion – Keith’s completely immune to getting tired, it’s like he’s a programmed robot ready to produce sick moves on command – and a wicked idea surfaces in his head.

Just in case he’s really going to get choked with cables, at least he’s going to go out smiling, whispering ‘worth it’.

“Pull once, don’t forget to step out on time or you’ll miss the beat, then down, down, roll your elbow nicely and try to lower it sensually so it flows smoother, end the transition on ‘give it to ya’, “Keith narrates, sounding just a little winded, and Lance feels that it’s the perfect moment to put his plan into works.

His goddess Rihanna croons out a perfect ‘baby’ and Lance quickly finishes the last move, lowers the arm and takes a few steps towards Keith until he can almost feel the heat radiating off the other’s back.

Keith’s movements turn laggy from surprise while Lance continues the motion purely on memory, staring at the back of that pretty neck coloring a cute pink.
“You’re not supposed to do that. “ Keith hisses, always the one anal about precision in routines, yet he still pushes his butt out into that sensual roll and Lance barely has the time to copy the movement - Keith still manages to step on his toes, though. Any contact down there specifically wouldn’t end well and Lance would rather not have a walk of shame so early in the evening.

The instructor stops the moment Lance’s fingers brush over the pale skin of his hand placed at the hip. The music continues and Keith knows that catching up would be wasting efforts.

Keith looks over his shoulder, annoyance and something else entirely written all over his face, visible in the stiff body language. Indigo eyes flicker to Lance’s lingering hand, then back to the stupidly attractive tanned face a couple of times. He subconsciously does it a few more times and forces himself to stop at Lance’s triumphant grin. He won’t let the other have a goddamn field day.

“What the hell are you – “ Keith thanks every deity out there for making his voice come out sharp rather than all stutter-y and weak, just like how he feels on the inside.

Keith can feel Lance ‘discreetly’ brushing a thumb against the material of his black leggings and bites on the inside of his cheek to stop himself from inhaling sharply. There are a few inches of space between their noses at most.

“Sorry, sorry, reflex!” Lance laughs, strained. Having the black-haired man so close is doing funny things to his chest. There goes ‘Operation: Smooth sexy approach’. Keith squints those pretty eyes, seemingly dumbstruck. “How am I not supposed to place my hands on pretty curves when they’re right in front of me?”

Something weird happens to his voice as it cracks and lowers and Lance almost feels embarrassed, but then he sees the sudden shift in Keith’s expression. Somehow, it’s not what he expects. His indigo eyes are blown wide with surprise, eyebrows slightly pinched and mouth hanging open as though he’s just realized something.

Lance feels his palms beginning to sweat, followed by a pang of strange fear in his gut.

“Wh-what?” he manages to grind out and Keith shakes his head to the sides, blinking rapidly.

“It’s – “ Keith begins and his hand hovers near Lance’s face until it doesn’t. Keith twists his body in a sharp turn and elbows Lance in the stomach just enough to leave him curling up, uses the momentum to quickly get back.

God damn it, if this is how he treats every single person who pulls moves on his sorry dense ass, then is it really worth the effort?

“Why?” Lance winces and dramatically crumbles down to the floor, curling up.

He can hear Keith’s rushed steps, but they’re not getting closer to check on the fallen man and possibly cradle him in his arms. In fact, it seems that the other is leaving.


Once the brunet knows that he’s alone, Lance quits his Oscar-worthy act of a dying man in a desperate need of TLC and rubs at the aching bruise on his ribs, confused.

“What the hell is his problem, sheesh.”

(Meanwhile, Keith is repeatedly shaken by the most bizarre and intense sense of déjà vu.)
Break time is a relief, Lance decides, as he sidles up to Em, short wet hair sticking out in every direction and smelling of extremely cheap soap. Despite being a fancy school they sure can’t afford the basic necessities. The black sweatpants that Shiro had pushed his way hang a little too low on his waist and Lance prays for his friends to get there faster. He cannot lose the pants, only to flash everyone, and he’d rather not think about the fact that he’s swimming in Shiro’s sweats while completely commando altogether. These past few days have been insane to say the least. One moment he’s foaming at mouth over RB, and the next he’s standing with his idol’s pants clutched to his chest, trying not to whimper in gratitude.

Em tries to talk him into keeping the pants forever so that she can sleep with them wrapped around her head or whatever, but immediately backs off when Lance mentions the underwear fact.

Speaking of RB…

There’s a group of youngsters gathered around the McClain siblings as they go over old RB videos, all of them which Lance knows by heart. Some kids comment on how their movements have gotten way better in the vids taken after their first tournament - the duo radiates more power and confidence. Em decides to drool over Shiro while Lance stares at Keith’s slim figure, over-sized shirts doing nothing to cover up his beautiful movements. He thanks god that the black-haired man has swapped his hanging shirts for hanging crop tops.

He feels some weird overwhelming affection worming its way into his heart and while Lance used to, uh, observe their vids at 3 am – he has that one Keith-exclusive dance choreography of ‘Say my name’ ingrained into the core of his being, it’s Lance’s religion and beliefs combined into one, and he has begged his friends to bury him with a copy of it more than enough times – but he’s never felt something like this.

Getting to know the real Keith is a wild ride that he appreciates even if it leaves his head spinning.

Somehow Em ends up at ‘K-pop dance covers’ part of YouTube and a discussion breaks out, spreading like wildfire, dragging in more and more people and summoning various opinions.

“If you think that it’s easy, Lance, try putting on my pointes and then freestyle to the fastest song out there all the while standing on your toes!” Em passionately yells, brown eyes full of arrogance. She’s provoking a good old one-on-one banter and he despises that because they always end up clashing too much, sometimes to the point they end up not talking to each other for weeks. They aren’t home so they need to keep it low-key.

“This isn’t dancing,” Lance firmly says and waves at the six cute girls on the screen, hopping around to some cheerful Korean song with seemingly minimum effort and movement. “Maybe if they took those torture devices off their feet, it’d look like something close to goddamn effort.”

“Try it first and then say that it takes no effort!”

“Uh huh, not gonna happen. And I still stand by the fact that this is by no means dancing. I could do it too.” Lance crosses his arms over his chest and leans back, ignoring Em’s puffed up chest, swelling with a rant about his opinions being dumb and close-minded, or something along those lines.

She doesn’t get to voice it out though, because there’s a familiar voice behind him. “Then go for it. If you think that those girls have it easy, show us how it’s done.” Keith mimics his pose, obviously on
the supporting side, ready to throw down if needed.

Lance merely rolls his eyes. “You sure sound confident for someone who’d fall the moment you put those on.”

“Tragic experience talking?”

“Try me, pretty boy,” Lance spreads his arms, gesturing vaguely. “Hop around in heels for me, c’mon.”

Keith takes in a sharp breath, seriously offended. “You’re saying I couldn’t do it?”

“I’m not only saying, I’m stating,” Lance blows a raspberry. This can go two ways and he can clearly see which path they’re taking. He knows that he’s pushing Keith’s buttons in all the wrong places. Perhaps he’s driven by the curiosity and the challenge, never one to miss an opportunity like this. “I’m also stating that this isn’t dancing.”

Keith glowers at him and Em has half a mind to back away from the war-zone on time. “I’m stating that you’re about to eat your words, McClain,” he hisses and his eyes sweep over the crowd.

Everyone’s attention is now focused on the bantering duo as though they’re the dinner entertainment of the century.

Lance is ready to show them the true entertainment.

“C’mon, Mullet, impress me. Prove me wrong, oh great guardian of not-an-art-form.”

Keith’s grin is deadly. “If I fucking slay on that dancefloor, you better show me a satisfactory performance. One-up me, McClain.”

Lance feels cool sweat breaking out on his neck at the flash of sharp canines and feels himself cornered but it’s going to be worth it in the long run. Worth the embarrassment. Then again, he’s pretty certain that he can still somehow manage to dance in heels. He did that once on a dare a long long time ago and it wasn’t even hip-hop related. Now that he thinks about it, that couldn’t even be considered ‘dancing’.

Lance’s ass is grass and he has given Keith the mower.

He helplessly watches Keith seek out Allura and she reluctantly gives him her black boots, their heel no thicker than a pencil. Knowing Allura, those shoes probably cost more than Lance’s house.

“Have fun kissing the ground!” Lance calls out in a last ditch effort to seem confident, excitement thrumming in his veins.

Keith flips him off and gets swallowed up by his students while putting on the toothpick heels.

“He’s so easy to provoke,” Lance breathes out almost fondly, even though he feels his ass nearly roasting over the bonfire that Keith has built. His body flushes at the thought of what’s about to happen, drowning out the uneasiness.

“Your ass is toast, though, and you know it,” Em says just to be a little shit, and fucks up his good vibes instantaneously.

“Pft yeah right, I’ll prove that it’s nothing.” He’s trying to convince himself at this point rather than anyone else.
“Whatever lets you sleep better at night, bro.” His sister examines the ends of her thick braid, nonchalant. “Just so you know, rumor has it that Keith is a pro at dancing with heels. Then again it might be just a rumor. Perhaps you won’t embarrass yourself too much.”

Lance feels his guts freeze over and his heartbeat halt. “What?” he blurts out right as some guy yells ‘give it up for Keith!’ and, of course, Jason Derulo’s ‘Wiggle’ starts playing.

Keith pulls his hair up into a loose bun and Lance chokes a little. “Well, he can certainly walk in them, doesn’t mean that – “ His mouth is so fucking dry.

Keith’s movements aren’t restricted whatsoever as though he’s wearing the world’s most comfortable kicks and his heels aren’t six inches away from solid ground.

Lance grabs at his heart when Keith does The Sexy Squat – he needs a trademark somewhere in there – and lowers his head. Em has taken up the recording duty along with half of the people around them.

“I can’t do this anymore,” Lance whimpers like a wounded dog, face flushed and pride damaged.

“How are you holding up?”

Keith falls on the ground, gracefully catching himself with strong arms, spine dipping in a sensual roll.

‘Hot dang it, your booty is too banging’, indeed.

Lance whines and tells Em to call 911, tell Ma that he loves her, tell Pidge to delete his internet history and burn his mag collection, and that he wants a headstone that says ‘don’t challenge pretty boys to dance offs’.

The last drop that Keith executes leaves the crowd roaring with praise and Lance shakes from the pressure that he feels building up in his throat and belly. Keith carefully peels off Allura’s shoes, not a single scratch on them, and waves them in Lance’s face.

“What else you want on your headstone?” Em asks when he runs a hand through his messy hair, flattening it.

“I had a horrible sister’ will suffice.”

“Time out, time out, this is bullshit! You’re cheating, it’s the Korean blood! Korean blood, I say!” Lance squeaks and almost falls for the third time, legs shaking as though he is a new born gazelle ready to explore the joys of African savanna.

Plot twist – the gazelle gets devoured by a goddamn panther before it can so much as take a single step, the panther being Keith.

Shay, thankfully, holds him up with one strong arm wrapped around his waist, eyebrows furrowed in worry, disapproving of the snickers of those around.

Keith quirks an eyebrow at that. “And do tell, how do you know that fact?”

“Uh. Shiro told me.” ‘Smooth, Lance, very smooth. Sure, put Shiro out for roasting like that, it’s not like Keith can ask him about that at any given moment. Jesus Christ, Pidge was actually right, I’m a
It’s still better than the truth and something along the lines of ‘oh you know, it’s just that I’ve spent the past god knows how many years drooling over your dance vids and actively stalking you on Twitter, retweeting all of your rants about conspiracy theories and politics along with countless blurry pics of Shiro smiling before tournaments. Oh and then I told all of this to my local pastor, no hard feelings right, it was an accident. Also you’re by far the most interesting person I’ve ever met and I want to know everything about you but your mullet is still stupid so there’s that.’

“This is fucking bullshit!” Lance yells once again, frustrated, and takes off Allura’s shoes before she can charge him with three million dollars for scratching up her Louis Vuittons.

Keith looks at him with smug satisfaction, point proven. He’s unlike Pidge in that aspect – seemingly never gets bored of Lance making an idiot out of himself in public.

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Group chat name: dance camp shenanigans & betting center

sirlancealot (Lance McClain) sent jesuswonthelpusnow.mov

Beach hunk (Hunk Garrett): I cant believe he actually did it??? :o this is some mad skill though, i wish i could execute that worm drop in such perfection while wearing heels

sirlancealot (Lance McClain): please dont ignore my wounded pride

Beach hunk (Hunk Garrett): I’m sorry man but it’s been slain :(  
sirlancealot (Lance McClain): it died a beautiful death not gonna lie  
btw i think em is a keith-girl now. its like having a boy band and then everyone picks favorites  
Beach hunk (Hunk Garrett): Ohh, like Pidge is a shiro fan, youre a total keith-boy and im that five percent in it for the cool dance tricks  
sirlancealot (Lance McClain): youre a total shiro-boy dont you even lie to me

pornbot justice (Pidge Gunderson): How did it feel having your ass handed to you yet again, brother?

sirlancealot (Lance McClain): the same way it’ll feel when you give me those 10 dollars that you just lost  
its ok pidgey we must all taste defeat someday

pornbot justice (Pidge Gunderson): Do you want the rainbow boxers with unicorns and nyan cats or those small lacy panties that I just found?

sirlancealot (Lance McClain): have mercy

pornbot justice (Pidge Gunderson): Too late.
Pidge gets their ass to the dance camp half an hour later. Keith even graces Lance with a small break and Pidge scrunches up their nose when the exhausted brunet attempts to drape himself all over their small frame.

"Give me your life-force, gremlin," Lance hisses in a greeting and gets elbowed in the ribs.

"You stink, dude. How are you supposed to get babes when you smell like an old moldy sock? Go wash up, ya dirty boy," Pidge brings back the chat memes right on queue like a good bro that they are. Lance instantly feels better and straightens up his aching back.

"They got this weird ass herb soap and – hey! I smell like a bed of roses!" The brunet gasps, grabbing at his chest at the insinuation. They both break out into a fit of giggles at that. "Yeah yeah, I got it, just give me my shit and be on your way."

"No way!" Pidge sticks out their tongue, light reflecting off the piercing there. "I trekked through mountains and valleys just to get you your stuff, lost my valued companion Hunk at the volcano area where he decided to stop by and bake some more cupc – "

"Drama."

"Hey now, there was a traffic jam on the main street, cut me some slack. I don’t appreciate public transport. A lady who sat next to me smelled of old cabbage. I think some scent rubbed off on me, sniff it." They hold up the sleeve of their mustard-yellow cardigan and shove it under Lance’s nose.

"Get your sleeve away, ew."

"C’mon, sniff it!"

"Pidge, gross!"

They end up play-fighting and eventually Pidge takes their hand away, laughing. "I don’t understand why you complained so much about this place. It’s nice enough?" Pidge assesses, looking around with big curious eyes as though they haven’t been there like 5165165 times before. "The people seem alright."

Their light brown eyes fall on the street gang squad – Asshole club, or so Lance dubs them inside his mind – and they start punching at each other, pointing in their direction. They have nasty grins on their faces and Lance silently begins praying for their safety.

"Hey, McClain, introduce us to your girlfriend!" It’s the guy who Lance affectionately calls Jelly and who looks like he should be playing quarterback on a football team instead of trying to pick up Keith and pushing Lance away from the instructor whenever he gets the chance. Lance doesn’t really give a shit about that guy so he only presses his palms together and inhales, whispering a soft ‘boi, you done’.

In a split second, Pidge goes to berserker mode, shoulders hunched and fists clenched, fire of hell blazing in their eyes. Lance tends to call it the Saiyan pose except it’s ten times more frightening despite Pidge’s height. Vegeta would be cowering away.

It still takes just as much yelling.

The short youth looks close to spitting on the ground to assert dominance.
“Come closer and say that to my fucking face, shithead, I’ll punch the grin off your mouth,” they roar and take a few steps in the gang’s direction.

Lance feigns deep offense. “Ouch, you hurt my feelings, I’ll have you know that I’m very date-able.”

“Shut it, Lance, I’m trying to show them that if they mess with you, they mess with me,” Pidge silently hisses over their shoulder and Lance actually swoons a little.

“My hero in flip-flops!”

Surprisingly, orrr just not wanting to get kicked out of the camp – Allura has made it pretty clear that any physical violence will result in instant expulsion – they back off, unhappy, heads bowed.

Pidge crosses their arms and stands tall. “Yeah, you better run!”

“Is there a fight going on?” a voice asks right behind them and oh, that's why. The duo turns around, Pidge with fists still raised, while Lance mutters a silent ‘shit’.

“Nooo, no, why would you say that – down, Pidge.” Lance elbows his sibling but Pidge only stands frozen in spot, jaw hanging open and Lance can feel. Shiro tends to have that effect on people.

Especially the ex RB fans.

Shiro raises his sharp and divine eyebrows, head slightly cocked to the side. “And who’s your fierce friend, Lance? I don’t think they’re from my group.”

Pidge colors a deep maroon and straightens up. “Siblings,” they echo at the same time and Shiro’s smile softens some more, leaving the McClains swooning a little, hands clammy. No one should have soft gazes like that. Shiro looks at people like they’re the best thing to happen since sliced bread.

“Ah, brought you the stuff?”

“Yiss,” Pidge croaks awkwardly, toes wiggling. Lance can tell that they’re trying very hard to contain excitement.

Shiro, the cinnamon roll that he is, remains blissfully unaware of Pidge’s colored face. Or chooses to ignore it.

They shake hands. Pidge somehow manages not to fuck up the introduction – McClance has become the new meme in their group chat and Lance wants it to die already – and then Shiro refocuses his attention on the brunet.

“I just wanted to tell you that Keith’s expecting you to dance this evening.”

Lance has to frown at that. He didn’t think that Keith would let him anywhere close to the dancefloor on the night of reviews. He’s yelled at him more than enough times to leave that impression. “Are you sure? I mean, I’m not officially registered here. It wouldn’t be fair, fi – “

Shiro only waves an arm. “Allura has taken care of everything; you’re already here so you might as well consider yourself an official member of this dance camp.” He looks a little confused when he sees Pidge snort and whisper ‘oh the irony’ while Lance bows his head in defeat.

“I don’t really think that – “
“Lance, you’re good enough for this, trust me.”

Pidge casually leans against a column, ankles crossed, and examines their neon green nails. “I taught him the bboying,” they look up to Shiro to gouge a reaction.

Lance still hesitates.

Is he really good enough compared to all those street dance kids who are light years ahead of him when it comes to technicalities and the true experience? He’s been out of commission for so long; two days just aren’t enough to feel confident. Confident enough to perform in front of Keith and a critical audience.

As if reading his thoughts, Shiro sighs. “You know, Keith has put a lot of time and effort into you these past few days. Repaying him with a fitting performance is the least you can do. Allura as well.”

Lance heaves a sigh. Shiro is not so subtly guilt tripping him here and he honestly has no other choice. He has to repay Allura for everything - for never giving up, for granting him a second chance, for letting him in here for free, letting him reconnect with his inner world, his idols.

He feels himself close to tears of gratitude yet again.

Lance just really loves his friends.

“I’ll do it,” he sniffs and pretends that there’s something in his eye. “Don’t expect anything from me though. It’s not like I’ll win my right to perform on the last day.”

“Just try,” Shiro pleads, gives him a fatherly pat on the back and that’s that. “And Pidge, you’re more than welcome to stay for dinner.”

Pidge coughs into their fist awkwardly and fingerguns. “Ay, gotcha.”

Shiro laughs lightly at the action and then bids them farewell. Lance heaves one last sigh and decides to get his shit together. Moping around has never actually done him any good. Shiro’s right – he can always try. Even if lately he keeps fucking up more than usual.

“It doesn’t work when you do this,” he says nonchalantly, ruffling through the huge bag that Pidge has graciously packed for him.

Pidge continues staring at Shiro’s retreating form, fingers still curled up in that silly pose, and glares at the other. “Does too.”

“Does not.”

“Does too.”

“Can’t believe you were tryna pull moves on Shiro, dude, no. He’s like ultimate dad material, I think that he just adopted you, actually.”

“It’s just for fun, don’t be so whiny about it. I’m gonna leave the marriage rights to you.”

And with that, they’re back to normal.

“If I get all these extra cheese pizzas every time I end up at dance camps, then you’re more than
welcome to sign me up to dance on the grandest of stages while wearing a bikini and stilettos,” Lance squeaks in excitement and then takes a slice of heaven on earth, his mouth watering. It smells absolutely delicious.

“You just ruined my appetite, thanks,” Em grouches - while Lance mumbles ‘not my fault that your imagination is raunchy’ - and bites into her pizza slice.

They were supposed to have a nice family dinner but Pidge took their share and fucked off to Shiro’s room under the pretense of wanting to converse with Allura. Lance opens their chat to check out Pidge’s shitspam liveblogs.

[19:35 pm] Group chat name changed to: stop takashi shirogane 2k16

pornbot justice (Pidge Gunderson): He’s like, whoa momma, fans self

I’d sleep on those tiddies like pillows

Have you noticed that he has that perfect dorito-shaped body? Ho w. I wanna know his secrets.

He’s so nice, I’m gonna cryyy

sirlancealot (Lance McClain): ohhh you got it bad i told you its a family trait

[20:01 pm] Group chat name changed to: pidge calm ur thirst 2k16

pornbot justice (Pidge Gunderson): I absolutely do not, I just want to appreciate a fine body when I see one

sirlancealot (Lance McClain) sent whythefuckyoulying.mov

Em vs pidgeboi who will win

Beach hunk (Hunk Garrett): Money’s on allura ;)


But Shiro really is very –

And that’s where he stops reading. All of it is just Pidge writing an essay about Shiro’s abs and he knows that ‘Ode to the booty’ is impending. Whatever, he’s a total Keith-boy.

Speaking of.

“You’re gonna let your boyfriend suffer any more in their company or are you going to do something about it?” Em mutters around her bite, not bothering to look his way.

“He is not my boyfriend.”

“Say that to Ma when you bring him for dinner in a few days.”

“Pft, yeah right,” Lance laughs nervously and continues observing Keith who is surrounded from all sides by young adults, all of them offering slices of different pizzas while Keith politely turns down the offers, visibly trying to escape, uncomfortable. It hurts to watch, actually. By now, Lance can easily decipher the look that the other wears and he can see that the instructor looks close to socking
a wet-leaf in human form in the eye. He has to keep up the ‘nice instructor’ façade though, so the black-haired man only forces a smile, a nerve dangerously twitching in his jaw. Keith hurriedly stands up, trying to get away before another person reaches out to him.

Rinse and repeat for ten minutes now.

“Well?” Em asks again and wipes her fingers with a napkin.

Lance hates moments like this. She just knows.

With a sigh, he rises and oversteps multiple pizza boxes strewn across his path. The guy seems to be bothering Keith even more, so Lance swiftly inserts himself between them, face carefully emotionless when he turns to the annoyance and says “No, he doesn’t want your goddamn pepperoni, he’s a bloody vegan, piss off, bye.”

And then unceremoniously drags Keith away by the wrist, easily navigating around the clusterfuck of horny teens.

Keith takes his hand away, frowning lightly. “How’d you even know that I – “

Of course, no ‘thank you’.

“Em told me!” Lance squeaks, embarrassed. His sister sits in hearing range and simply raises her middle finger at him, followed by a flat stare.

Lance thinks that he hears something close to ‘you sure know a lot about me’, but that might as well be a figment of his imagination. He grabs a pizza box from the ground and Keith cautiously follows him to the farthest corner of the hall, settling next to him after a moment of hesitation. Lance offers him a flat stare, stomach begging to be stuffed.

“You’re not going to mind if I eat this, right?” he questions and wiggles his fingers before taking a slice of some spicy ass pizza that looks like it’s going to leave his stomach aching for days. “I mean, I’m against animal abuse, but –“ he tries to catch the string of cheese with his tongue before it reaches his clean sweatshirt.

Keith huffs, incredulous, and pulls off his small backpack. “I’m not going to shove my beliefs down your throat. Eat what you wish.”

“Not going to do that? Who are you, stranger?” Lance jokes and Keith pinches his thigh in retaliation.

He says nothing more, only unpacks the ‘rabbit food’, and Lance stares at what is obviously cheese.

“Vegans don’t eat that, right?” he points at it, curious, and Keith crosses his legs, shrugging.

“It has no dairy in it.”

“How do you make a cheese without milk?” Lance squints, eyebrows furrowed. Man, vegans sure come up with a lot of new ways to get basic stuff. He respects it, though.

Keith cuts a small piece and chews on it, shoulders relaxed and eyes lidded. Lance tries very hard not to observe how nice he looks under the fluorescent lights, soft black hair framing his pale face.

“Well, this one is made from almonds,” Keith offers an explanation once he swallows down the bite. “There are many different recipes to make cheese. Shiro knows how to make one from seeds.”

A snort to his side catches Keith’s attention. Lance looks like he’s trying very hard not to crack some
joke or bust a lung, but he lets out another snicker and it tumbles out of his dumb mouth anyways. “This is nut cheese?”

Keith looks at him with a miffed expression and Lance starts laughing to himself. **Oh god, priceless.** “Dude, you seriously eat nut cheese, oh my god, Pidge is gonna love this.”

“Ever the poster boy for maturity, aren’t you, McClain?”

Lance’s laughter dies down only a little when he sees the questioning look changing to annoyance and dials down the dirty jokes, wiping at his damp eye. “Sorry, man, it’s just too funny, now give me a piece of that.” He goes for Keith’s hand but the instructor only pulls it away.

They wrestle for the knife yet Keith gives up, not wanting any extreme injuries. “You seriously don’t have to. I don’t think you’re going to like it anyway.”

“How bad can nut cheese -” Lance snorts “be?” He cuts himself a slice while Keith facepalms, defeated, too tired to reason with the other.

The taste that greets his tongue isn’t exactly awful, but it’s kind of plain and clashes with the remains of Tabasco sauce from the pizza. Lance chews languidly and tries to keep his face clear of any negative emotions.

Keith peers at him curiously, expecting some sort of critique.

“IT’s good,” Lance lies and swallows.

A knowing smile tugs on Keith’s lips. He huffs an almost-laugh. “You just scrunched up your nose, you don’t have to lie.”

“No, back off, I’m eating this goddamn nut cheese,” Lance quips, pushes Keith’s prying hands away. Feeling oddly determined and ready to please, he cuts himself another slice. "Best cheese I've ever had, shut up, you know nothing about me!"

Keith sighs and continues watching Lance with a fond look.

They end up sharing the extra big container of Ma’s family recipe salad and the pizza lays there forgotten.

Lance searches for Pidge, only to find Shiro sitting like an inch away from Allura and biting into a big ass burger. He looks up, startled, and chews guiltily. Lance crosses his arms.

“And what’s your excuse, Mr. I support Keith and will take up this vegetarian quest even if it kills me?”

The older man swallows down the big bite. “Don’t tell Keith. He’s been obsessed with me eating healthy after the whole, uh, incident, so that my wounds would close up better and scar at minimum. The food that you consume affects the healing process.” It honest to god sounds like a quote from his partner.

It’s not like Lance can blame him, he could go for a cheeseburger himself. That cheese was by no means his kind of food and he has given Keith the bigger share of the salad after noticing how much he enjoyed it.
Lance promised to invite him for dinner next time.

He’s ready to dub his younger sister a prophet.

But there was something very sweet about the moment and the shared food that made Lance forget his initial hunger as they bonded over recipes, while he carefully dodged all questions related to his dancing experiences.

Keith doesn’t need to know, not yet.

sirlancealot (Lance McClain): do you ever have it so bad that you eat nut cheese for them

Beach hunk (Hunk Garrett): He ate my nut cheese when no one else would…… – keith probably, 2k16

pornbot justice (Pidge Gunderson): If I were Keith, I’d marry you immediately

sirlancealot (Lance McClain): youre both uninvited to the wedding

Beach hunk (Hunk Garrett): When you go on ur honeymoon dont forget to visit your cousin - the dead sea

pornbot justice (Pidge Gunderson): It's the only thing saltier than your sorry ass.

sirlancealot (Lance McClain): fineee whatever youre invited just bring me mickey ds to wash down that nut taste

Beach hunk (Hunk Garrett): Yay!!! :))

Chapter End Notes

three videos that you need for this chapter:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5pyisiFqJhI
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-g6rw_HqO4U (imagine Lance at 3 am watching this for the ultimate effect)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q1Lo2bangnk

Honestly Keith's dancing is to be blamed on the excessive amount of Mina Myoung choreo vids that i've seen in my shitty life. we're scratching the surface of deeper bonding that is less thirst-driven here, stay tuned
The evening - along with dance camp reviews - comes far too soon.

Lance barely manages to sneak in some warm up routines, stomach twisting with anxiety all the while. This is it - his great comeback, his chance to prove himself in Keith’s eyes at least.

However, he didn’t expect there to be more than three judges, two of them obviously being Shiro and Allura.

Lance bites at the dry skin around his fingernails as he stares at the professional-looking judges - two women he’s never seen before, both seemingly in their forties, dressed in posh blazers and dark pencil skirts.

“I didn’t think it’d be so serious,” he mutters around his thumb and Pidge smacks the hand away. A good thing to happen, usually Lance tends to make his fingertips bleed first and only then stops his ministrations.

“You’re at a dance camp located at the most extravagant dance school in the region. I don’t know what you were expecting.” Pidge shrugs and points out the rest of the street dance kids discreetly fixing their appearances, obviously floored by the intimidating ladies as well. Lance feels as though he’s back at high school, ready to take the math test of a lifetime. Those ladies sure fit the ‘strict teacher’ image.

“Besides,” they continue. “Everyone’s just as uneasy. I personally think that you’re going to do fine. This isn’t your first rodeo,” right as Pidge says it, Lance’s phone buzzes with a new chat notification, Hunk’s cheerful ‘wish I was there, man, do your best!!!:)))’ doing nothing to calm his frayed nerves.

Lance barely restrains himself from blowing a raspberry. “Yeah, but none of them were so…” He waves a hand in the general direction of Shiro and Allura who are busy entertaining the judges, both of them dressed as though they’re ready for a grand ball. Allura’s lilac dress nearly glows in the faded lights of the huge chandelier. “So fancy and high-class! It’s like they’re about to force me to freestyle to the hottest Tchaikovsky jams. I mean, sure, maybe Keith can do stuff like that with his complicated twirl-obsession and tip-toe torture experience, but I - ”

“I’m not babbling!” Lance babbles nervously, voice cracking and high-pitched. “I am most definitely not babbling, and never was, where’d you get that idea – “

What did his Pa say about situations like these? Breathe in and exhale for eight seconds? Four? How many? God, he doesn’t know –

They stick around and check out the ballet kids’ performances, only truly paying attention once it’s Em’s turn to shine. She does wonderfully and receives heated clapping from her fellow peers, the loudest being from the small group of girls she had befriended over the span of two days. Allura flashes her a bright smile when she bows and walks off the stage to rejoin her friends, undoing her tight bun immediately.
When it's time for the street dance competitions to start, Pidge nearly has to drag an unwilling Lance to the second floor western hall. Lance wants to claw at the walls and Pidge has to forcefully tug him away from every column he manages to latch onto, whining about quitting and going home all the while.

This whole thing was a huge mistake. He’d much rather be home right now - eating Ma’s cooking and crying himself to sleep while desperately trying to math, burying himself under multiple notebooks in order to absorb at least some of their knowledge.

“Riling up Keith is one thing, Pidge, this is pretty damn big,” Lance winces when they finally reach the huge double doors, and in one last attempt to save himself, the brunet desperately tries to latch onto the door frame. Some teens pass them by, shooting pitying looks at the tall boy. “I’m not exactly friends with high expectations!”

Pidge kind of gets annoyed by that and wants to kick his ass inside but doesn’t have the time to do it because a heavily-accented voice resounds behind them. “Lance, my boy, is that you?”

The distraught brunet directs tear-filled blue eyes to a cheerful old man, dressed in a well-fitted dark blue pinstripe suit, luscious mustache doing nothing to cover his wide grin.

“Coran!” he squeaks in surprise and tries to brush up his act, letting go of the door frame immediately. “It’s so nice to see you!”

“Likewise. And do tell, what are you lads doing in a place like this?” The older man brushes at his ginger mustache, eyeing them with a quirked eyebrow. “Got lost on your way to the Echo finals?”

Lance tries to ignore the painful stab in his stomach at the mention of that tournament in particular but decides to hide the discomfort instead. “The same could be said to you!” he counters, crossing his arms. “What are you doing here?”

“Allura asked me to judge the performances of Shiro’s kids.” Coran tugs on the lapels of his blazer, chest puffed out. “I must say that it is quite an honor! Ah, I’ve missed the good old days…”

Lance clearly remembers the first time Allura had dropped the bomb on him that her uncle - the headmaster of Ms. Altea’s school of Fine Arts - used to mingle with bboyers at underground dance competitions, mostly doing judge’s work and making sure that the shows went by smoothly without any excessive cheating. However, he quit that lifestyle the moment Allura’s father died and left him in charge of the school.

Lance can’t help but respect the man for all the effort that he has put into changing himself and learning, studying different styles over the years, taking over as the headmaster.

Different styles…?


“Are two sides of the same coin, therefore I expect that you will manage to bring out the best in each other.” Allura steps in at that moment, Shiro following a few paces behind. Her gaze seems stern.

“I hope that you have learned a thing or two about cooperation at this camp, Lance,” she says in a threatening voice, thin eyebrows furrowed, and the brunet doesn’t need to open his mouth to reply because he knows that she knows.

He and Keith… aren’t exactly on the same mindset and level of skill, especially now that Keith feels like controlling all of Lance’s movements according to his will.
They’ve somehow managed to work together a bit better after that shared dinner, but Keith’s fuse was still pretty damn short whenever Lance’s fluid movements halted or lagged.

Shiro’s a little kinder on the matter, watching Allura with doe-like eyes. She takes it upon herself to drag her uncle away, chatting all the while. “I know that you can do it,” is all that the older man manages to sneak in before he has to catch up with the rest of the judge team.

“And there you have it,” Pidge quips and drags a frozen Lance inside. “Now let’s observe the competition before it’s your turn to roast.”

“Thanks,” Lance says, voice lacking any actual sarcasm.

Pidge looks at him for a long moment and takes out their bright green phone to type something out. Probably about how Lance has finally lost his marbles.

“You okay?” Keith asks, standing on his tiptoes and reaching for the ceiling in a full-body stretch.

Lance feels as though he’s about to throw up and continues reaching for his toes. His shoelaces are triple knotted.

“Never been better,” he forces out and looks at himself in the mirror. His face is chalk-colored at best.

Lance drags his snapback lower so that he doesn’t have to see his stricken expression. Keith observes him in the mirror’s reflection.

His heart pounds somewhere in the back of his throat and the stage lights momentarily blind him. Lance tries his hardest not to look at the five figures sitting in the front row, gazes scrutinizing, searching for any slip-ups that might occur. The hall is almost full - a blur of colors and stony faces and lights that are too damn bright.

Lance can’t even see Keith anymore – the other is bathed in yellows and oranges as though he’s a god born for this greatness, for the grand stages and fluid movements, and Lance, the foolish mortal, tries not to think too much about the overwhelming gap in talent between them. Sweat begins gathering under his collar but he keeps going.

'Shit, what the fuck you complaining for?

Feeling jaded, huh?'

Keith’s a blur of red hues and Lance’s eyes follow his long legs, as his arms do the automatic combo of elbow, elbow, drop, twist, knees outwards in a slide, throwback, boom boom, are the lights getting more blinding?

His eyes are still glued to Keith’s legs as he copies the movements to his best capability, step, step, down, up, pull –

Did they practice this part?

Step, step –
And then Keith’s in his personal space - for a split second at most - before they clumsily collide.

“Stop the music,” one of the judges frigidly gestures at the balcony.

There go the stage lights, the music, the glory, and the appreciation.

Lance, honest to god, wants to cry tears of frustration. Wants Keith to look his way, but the other only drags punishing fingers through the black mess of his hair, inhaling sharply as he takes a few steps away from Lance, disappointed, ashamed, everything but –

_**Proud.**_

“I’ll just,” Lance chokes out into the deathly silence, neck blazing hot and vision blurry with unshed tears. “Pack my stuff…” he vaguely gestures to the backstage, taking an uncertain step in that direction.

One of the women, her golden hair braided into what seems to be a crown, only glowers over the top of her half-moon glasses, green eyes icy. Lance gulps nervously and freezes in his spot.

She continues observing them for a few seconds and Lance tries very hard not to look in Keith’s general direction though he can still see that defeated stance from his peripheral.

“I’ve expected better from your partner, Shirogane,” she directs it to Shiro who looks very confused as to what just happened. The fact that she completely disregards Keith’s existence even though he is the instructor here makes Lance’s unfortunate partner’s shoulders slump downwards even more.

Shiro gnaws on his lower lip and exhales. No one dares to make a sound.

“You mentioned that this is the best student in your group, is that correct?” she finally snaps in Keith’s direction and looks over the stack of papers placed on the desk, searching for Lance’s folder.

“Yes, Ma’am,” he nods, voice barely audible. Keith sounds like a child being scolded.

Lance feels himself dying a little on the inside.

The words ’best student’ echo in his head over and over again. He’s failed the other miserably.

“In all my years of judging at these events, I’ve never seen anyone so… out of sync. Not technicality-wise, but…” another judge begins and gnaws on the end of her pencil. “It’s like you boys aren’t on the same page at all. Your pupil is blindly following your every step as though he has no body language - no will, if you may - of his own. I’m not sure if you’re up for this task - whether you’re qualified enough - because instead of teaching, you blatantly wanted to create a perfect copy of yourself. Dancing is all about freedom and not trying to squeeze someone into the frames of your making.”

Keith bows his head in shame, shoulders dropping even further. “I understand.”

“If I may speak up,” Allura cuts in tentatively, using her official voice, and Lance almost wants to curl up on the floor and ask her to stop - stop shielding his useless ass, stop trying to prove others that he’s worth something when he is clearly not. “Mr. McClain has been freestyling all his life. If anyone is to blame here, it’d be me. Perhaps I was too… brash for thinking that he could fit into the dance routine regime standard in the span of a mere few days – “
“‘A few days’, you say…?” Coran leans back in his chair and begins twirling at his mustache, deep in thought.

Lance’s almost grateful when the judges start arguing over whose fault it was for bringing in a complete street rat and thinking that he could dance – of course they don’t say that out loud, but that’s what Lance gets from their conversation anyways – because he has the time to wipe away at the corners of his eyes, bubbling with tears of humiliation.

Keith’s gaze lands on him for a split second when Coran speaks up. “Lance, are you okay with performing once again?”

The dancer duo simultaneously opens their mouths to voice out why this is a terrible idea but Coran only waves a hand and the unvoiced protests die down immediately. The ginger man seems uncharacteristically serious. “Alone, if you may. Forget the small details and the technicalities; take the base of Keith’s teachings and freestyle however you seem fit. Can you do that?”

Lance feels Keith’s indigo eyes burning holes into his side but he takes in a short breath and nods when he sees Allura’s curt nod.

Coran returns the gesture and the music drowns out the muted whispers of multiple people shifting in their seats. Lance closes his eyes.

He has to show them his best before he gets booted out. Gotta go out with a bang.

---

Three two one.

Lance fixes his hat.

---

‘I was good on my own, that's the way it was, that's the way it was

You was good on the low for a faded fuck, on some faded love'

The hours spent practicing Keith’s routine are ingrained to the very core of his being, but here he is, making the sensual moves smoother now that he has no guidelines to follow. He's easy in his step, fluid in the way his hands brush over his torso as Lance dips lower than usual, putting all of his soul into the way he moves his upper body – your strength, Lance.

That voice sounds suspiciously like Keith.

His sneakers produce pleasant squeaks against the floorboards when he expertly twists his foot and then his body to match the beat, visualizes the hours spent sweating in front of that mirror wall, trying to copy Keith all the while.

And shit. He finally gets it.

He isn’t meant to copy anyone.

He isn’t meant to be like Keith or Shiro or anyone else. He’s meant to be Lance with his own faults and unique style. He finally unwinds.
Don’t get it twisted –

His fingertips smack lightly against his hip, leg smoothly rolling and the first yell of appreciation can be heard over the song. It’s as though someone has flipped a switch in his hearing, he thinks, when he hears more and more positive hums joining in and it fuels his tricky movements, makes him do better.

The straying tears dry and Lance finally feels lost in his element, a grin tugging at his lips.

He flips his snapback in the air and goes wild to the sound of encouraging roars.

Fuck Keith’s reign and his kingdom, honestly.

He easily pulls off Keith’s choice hip rolls, adding more bounce and energy into every move, slowing down at appropriate moments. When the cheering gets even louder, he summons his long-since-forgotten bboying skills, dropping on the ground with perfection that has come from countless hours spent practicing.

Down in a graceful flip, floor solid against his back for a split second.

One fancy flip of a snapback later, he finishes this on-the-spot bullshitted routine and bows as the crowd that’s looked down on him just a few hours ago yells their appreciation, Pidge and Em going insane in the back.

Shiro’s laughter is rambunctious and he smacks a palm against the table, making it shudder from the force. “That’s more like it!” he points at the stage, grinning from ear to ear.

The wide-eyed lady judges heatedly whisper among themselves, and Allura covers her pretty mouth, eyes glistening with mirth. She discreetly points to Lance’s right, making the brunet look up.

Keith is panting beside him, rolling his neck in a way that he usually does after a good dance routine. Lance’s lower lip quivers when he catches Keith’s lovely smile.

Could it be…?

“You’re a good front man, Lance,” he laughs quietly, eyes glistening and teeth flashing in a satisfied grin. It finally registers, that yes, this has just happened - Keith had joined in and he actually -

“I can’t believe that you followed my lead. I knew that you had it in you.” Lance playfully elbows him, pushing at the tip of his askew hat in order to face Keith better, presenting the black-haired man his softest smile that he usually saves up for his closest friends and family only.

The mushy look that Keith rewards him with could be described as starry-eyed, but his tone is awfully smug when he bats the offending limb away. “Don’t think that it’s always going to be like that from now on. I could still kick your ass.”

“In your dreams, pretty boy,” Lance winks at him, never ceasing to smile.

Lance has heard stories of the ultimate bonding moments - he’s had plenty of those with Hunk and Pidge - but the electric feeling that courses through him in indescribable. A shared moment of victory and glory between them. Lance feels them connecting in a new and exciting way.

He looks at Keith and feels as though he could kiss him right then, right there, under the blinding stage lights.
Sadly, reality knocks on their personal bubble a second later in the form of Coran who looks nothing short of proud and actually floored. Lance feels himself flushing from happiness. “My boy, you never cease to amaze me,” the older man says and sniffs lightly. Allura places a gentle hand on his bicep, looking a little emotional too. “You’ve always had a talent in you that’s, as all of us can see now, not meant to be easily tamed. Which brings me to a very important point – “ he stands up and spreads his arms as though he’s ready to hug all of his precious students and guests. “As the late headmaster once told me, dancing is all about freedom. Don’t be afraid to break the rules sometimes and always try to learn from fellow dancers. They can teach you more than you think.”

Lance and Keith exchange a look.

“Always strive to develop your respective strengths - and the best way to do it, as dear Allura and Shiro have mentioned at the start of day one, are at these kinds of events. A round of applause for cooperation and appreciation, everyone!” Wild clapping follows and Lance covers his laughter behind a curled hand, side-eyeing Keith who politely joins the masses. It seems that one of the judges is forcing herself to do it – a very strict ballet instructor from NYC, Lance will find out later on – but the good mood is unbreakable.

Lance feels as though there’s been a massive boulder lifted off his tired shoulders.

“You’re finally working together!” Allura yells over the noise, touched. “Continue on this path and I will repeat Coran’s words – learn from each other and be patient. You’re both unique in your respective fields and your dance styles are different, but if you combine them, I’m certain that you can make something beautiful that’ll floor us all on the final day!” she flashes a thumbs up. “Make me proud, Lance! You too, Keith!”

The brunet rapidly blinks at that. Wait, final day?

“Excuse me, but there’s been some sort of misunderstanding!?” he tries to catch Allura's attention, but Coran is already on his way through another speech, the masses roaring. Some kids climb on the stage and begin warming up, ready for the next round. Lance hops around in frustration. “Guys, explain this!”

“Isn’t it pretty clear already that I’ve had my eye on you since day one, Lance?” Keith wonders while looking over the chaos with a fond gleam in his eyes, and begins inspecting his nails.

Lance waves a hand in his direction, not bothering to look up. “We will flirt later, pretty boy, I have to find out what they meant by ‘will floor us on the – ‘” Lance freezes and lowers his arm, eyes going wide.

Suddenly, everything makes an awful lot more sense than before. Shiro and Allura acting secretive, Keith chasing him around until he had nearly dropped from exhaustion, this entire event -

Keith looks too damn sly when he crosses his arms and sticks out his hip a little. “Congratulations, McClain. I hope that you’re ready to cooperate,” his smirk is full of bad intentions, and in response, Lance drops down to his knees, arms raised.

“I thank Lord Almighty and the Divine Miss Allura Altea for this chance!” he yells and it earns a muffled laugh from Keith. The instructor pushes the rim of Lance's hat down his eyes and then gracefully walks off the stage, running to Shiro.

Lance rubs at his dark red cheek, gets chased away by the impatient dancers a moment later.

The second he hops off the stage, he’s tackled by Em and Pidge. He hugs them close and feels like
the happiest man alive.

“I give you the honors.”

“No, you.”

“You.”

“You had to deal with my needy ass for days, so make this choice.”

Keith sighs, eyebrows furrowed. He and Lance may understand each other better now but they still tend to banter over every single thing. “Fine, but don’t blame me if I pick a bad one. I’m not very lucky with lotteries,” the black-haired instructor mumbles.

“Just stick it in already!” Lance snorts and shakes the bubble-shaped glass vase in front of him, full of folded papers with the names of songs for their future combo dance scribbled on them. Truly, this is quite the gamble, but he trusts Shiro’s music taste more than Keith’s. Whatever they might pull out it probably won’t be too bad.

Keith rolls his eyes and pushes a hand through the opening, randomly touching a few papers before pulling one out.

He unfolds the paper, but doesn’t get to read it because Lance rips it away, almost dropping the vase in his haste. “Oh man, that’s the luckiest hand ever! We got Beyoncé!” he waves it in front of Keith’s face so much that the other has to catch the brunet’s wrist with an exaggerated scoff.

“Just stop doing that and let me – “

Lance watches Keith’s frame tensing up as the other’s gaze runs over the small letters multiple times as though he cannot believe that he’ll have to dance to Beyoncé – Lance can’t quite believe it either, but his disbelief is mostly of ecstatic kind. Now he’s more-than-eager to start, whereas Keith…

“You okay there, buddy?” Lance questions, bending lower to peer at Keith’s stone-like face.

The instructor comes out of his trance only after Lance snaps his fingers in front of his vacant eyes.

“How? Yeah, I’m fine.”

Lance can see that he’s everything but fine when Keith slips out of range before the brunet can question again.

Tired from the excessive stress and strain, Lance barely manages to drag his ass to the sleeping quarters after sending Pidge on their way home. He has a proper sleeping bag and what can be called PJs – an old "Adventure time" shirt that was gifted to him by Em a lifetime ago, Jake’s face a little faded from the wash, along with a pair of neon pink shorts (thanks again, Pidge, you shitnugget) – and he’s glad that tonight too he gets to sleep alone. He’d be too embarrassed if his sister’s friends actually got to see him in this attire. It already happened once when Maxi, his older brother, brought home his poker buds without telling Lance beforehand.

The shame was unbearable. He got called “Ponyboy” at school for at least a year, but everyone
somehow thought that it was a cool reference to the “Outsiders” instead of his Rainbow Dash sleeping shirt. Curse Hunk’s creative gifts!

Lance wakes up a few hours later and realizes that he isn’t as alone as he’d like to think.

Again, he hears some rustling and peels his tired eyes open to find Keith standing in shorts and a loose shirt, scrolling through his phone. He coughs into his fist and Lance groans, curling up in the sleeping bag and pretending that he’s a caterpillar – except that he’s a majestic butterfly, who is he kidding.

He makes a silent police siren noise and Keith jumps up, startled. "Hold it, mister. What do you think you are doing up at – “ Lance checks his watch, “3 am!” His blue eyes go wide and he wiggles around in the sleeping bag some more in an attempt to seem intimidating. “I’ll have you know that we are partners now and I need you at your best performance today!”

“It’s not ‘today’ until I sleep.” Keith shrugs. Lance can see the black circles under his dark eyes. “I was about to dress up and go practice some more. Someone’s gotta come up with the moves.”

“I'll take that as an offense to my capabilities.”

“Whatever.” Keith pulls on circus tent-like sweatpants over his shorts. They poof out weirdly. “Take your own advice and rest up. We got a rough day ahead of us.”

Lance wiggles closer to Keith in a threatening way, glowering. The other raises his eyebrows, bemused by this worm impersonation. Well, Lance is too comfortable to leave his safe cocoon but Keith's seriously testing his patience. “No way, Jose. Go to sleep!”

“What’s it to you what I do during night time?”

“I’m just looking out for ya! You’ve been dancing like crazy for hours now, the least you can do is rest up.”

Keith huffs and runs a hand through his tangled hair. “Think of it as a breather then. I won’t overdo it or something.”

Lance tries to navigate his arms in the restrictive space in order to unzip the sleeping bag, eyebrows scrunched up. “Sleep!”

Keith starts lacing his sneakers, seemingly getting annoyed with his companion. “Keep your voice down!” he reprimands just as loudly, if not louder. Someone tosses around on the floor on the other side of the curtain. “I literally can’t sleep, let it go. I’ve had insomnia for like two years now,” Keith’s voice is nothing short of hollow when he says it, fingers stilling in motion for a while, resting on the laces. “I don’t like sleeping. I always get… nightmares.”

Lance sits up in his half-open sleeping bag adorned with white planets and moons and goes quiet, not really knowing what to say. It’s obvious as to what Keith’s referring too.

_The shooting._

Lance had a lot of terrible dreams involving that incident as well and he wasn’t even there to witness it. He cannot even begin to imagine how bad it must’ve been for Keith.

The other resumes tying the shoes, and with a tortured groan, Lance finally peels himself away from the sweet soft bag and kisses his rest goodbye. He blindly searches for his dark blue hoodie, sweats. “I’ll go with you then.”
Keith straightens his back. The measly light coming from his phone flickers out and dies down completely so Lance doesn’t get to see his reaction. He can still make out Keith’s fit figure illuminated by the faint orange light coming from the street, spilling through the spacious windows.

“Why?”

Lance has expected a lot of replies - most of them of rude variety - so this one catches him a little off-guard.

He shrugs in the dark and then realizes that the other can’t see him doing so either way. Instead, he starts pulling on the hoodie. “Why not? I’m gonna feel bad if I let you roam around all alone. B- Besides, this is our routine. It’d be pretty assholish of me if I let you do all the work.” Smooth save.

Keith stays silent, but when he speaks again, his voice is back to normal. “You’ll only have yourself to blame when I kick you awake at 8 am tomorrow.”

Lance scoffs and rises, legs aching a little. “Oh please, if this is your strategy to get rid of me, it’s not going to work.”

“I know. I tried,” Keith huffs with exaggerated annoyance and goes to the curtains. “You’re just too sticky.”

“They call me ‘The Glue’ for a reason.”

“One, awful reference, two, didn’t they call you ‘The Tailor’ or something?”

“My references are great and at least now I know that you were actually listening to me!”

“Was not.”

“Was too. Too late to bullshit your way out of this one.”

Keith blindly presses a finger to Lance’s dry lips and the brunet takes it as his queue to shut the fuck up when the instructor peels away the curtain. Lance follows in tow, his hand chasing the lingering sensation of a cool touch against his mouth.

“If this is your strategy to get rid of me, oh boy is it working,” Lance whines and cautiously looks around the dingy hallway, quickly dodging a hanging cobweb. Gross. Keith is a few paces ahead, climbing the creaking staircase with an obvious goal in mind. “Are you sure that we can go there? Last time Allura caught me trying to break in and it didn’t end well.” Apparently the rooftop’s been closed off to everyone except for a few janitors and some chosen people. Something involving unfortunate incidents and a suicide, or so he was told. 'Just to be safe', Allura’s late father had said, and locked the only entrance leading to the roof forever.

The forbidden entrance that Lance was about to defile for the second time in his life.

“If you’re too scared, you’re free to go back,” Keith offers and twists the heavy keys on his index finger. He shoots Lance a curious look as if to see what sort of impression those words have left on the brunet.

Lance halts in his step, staring at the keys. “Where’d you get those?”

Keith catches the rusted metal ring. “I borrowed them.”
Okay, now he's certain that they shouldn't be here. “Oh my god, you criminal, did you steal them from Allura!?”

“Borrowed, Lance. I’m going to return them once I’m done and she won’t even notice that they were gone to begin with.” The black-haired man takes out the board that’s bolting the door and shoves one of the keys into a rusted lock. “I’ve done this yesterday and nothing happened. So are you going to keep on whining about it or will you trust my authority even if they do catch us?”

“You know, you’ve got an awful personality,” Lance mumbles under his breath, rubbing his arms when a cool gust of wind spills into the hallway the moment the metal door opens with a loud clang. “You might want to invest some time into rebuilding yourself as a person, so that your looks can match your – whoa.”

The sight that greets Lance is absolutely breath-taking. It’s not like they’re that high up but the school is still located in the most beautiful part of the city, overlooking the main street of the city center. Multiple billboards and streetlights momentarily blind Lance and he trudges to the chain-link fence, pushing his fingers through the rusty metal. He’s always wanted to get up here and just... laze around. Maybe look at the stars, cept the light pollution ruins those dreams far too easily. Tonight the sky is swarmed by heavy black clouds, hanging low. Lance has no doubt in mind that it’s going to rain soon.

Keith’s by his side, scrolling down his endless playlist, searching. Lance takes a moment to ogle his pale, pretty face, heart swelling in a very satisfactory way.

“Pretty neat, huh?” Keith questions as though he can feel Lance’s burning gaze, finger stilling when he reaches the ‘B’ on the list.

“You sure are,” the taller man whispers, cheeks pink, and Keith raises his head, wind ruffling the long hair.

“What?”

“I said that it is!” Lance barks, embarrassed, and swipes a hand towards Keith’s phone. “Now give me that! I’ll be your DJ and you can impress me with complicated choreo.”

He doesn’t wait for Keith’s reply, only stalks to the wall and climbs a mess of fat pipes, perching on the highest one - living up to his ‘cat man’ name that’s earned him plenty of hospital visits in the past.

Lance’s gaze drifts to the swirling abyss of blacks and oranges but Keith’s voice is sharp enough to bring him back. “Anytime tonight?”

Lance obeys, presses play and observes while Keith tries to freestyle, moves a little too stiff, obviously out of his element. His choices are pretty good though, Lance decides, when Keith does that trademark dip but somehow it’s less sensual and more energetic.

Somehow it’s a reflection of Lance’s bouncier style.

He can see that the other is trying hard to incorporate moves that'll be easier for Lance to execute and he stops thirty-something seconds into their version of the song, tapping at his chin while Beyoncé drones on about baby boys in the background.

Lance hops down from his seat. “S’up?”

Keith scoffs, rubbing at his eyes. Despite all that big talk, he seems beyond tired. “This isn’t new to me, Lance. I’ve already worked on a choreo for this song.”
Lance is at a loss as to what he should say to that. He has to bite his tongue before he can call out *bullshit*. Keith has never danced to this song, he would know. He’s never seen any sneak peaks, vids, or live versions of it at any of the dance competitions.

“And your point is…?” Lance asks and halts the song.

“The ending of it is a little... I don’t think you’d be okay with it. You should come up with one, it’s our thing now.” The way he says it sounds like *bitter defeat* and Lance feels his heart plummeting to his heels at the instructor’s tone. Obviously, the other doesn’t want any extreme changes, or so it seems.

“Show me what comes next and we can decide afterwards?” Lance offers, voice strained.

They argue about it until Keith finally relents, too worn down to make compelling arguments. He rubs at his naked biceps and blows away a strand of hair that keeps brushing against his nose. “How do you feel about jump-catches?” Keith sounds thoroughly embarrassed just voicing it out and it takes a moment for the brunet to find his voice.

“What now?” he croaks, blinking.

Keith’s back rests against the fence with a loud rattle. “Ugh, forget it. It’s probably not a thing for this sort of audience either way.”

Lance joins the other. “Hey, man, if there’s one thing that we’ve learned today, it's that *fuck audience*. Just show me. If I don’t fuck it up, I’m up for it. Or down, whichever position you’ll put me in.” He wiggles his eyebrows and Keith knocks a foot against the side of Lance’s ankle. He then takes the phone and they spend a few minutes discussing certain parts of the song and what they could pull.

“And then at ‘I see you in my dreams’, we do that catch and end it. We don’t really have the time to do much else, plus we’ll fit into the limit perfectly.”

Lance screams internally, but his face is devoid of that emotion in particular. “So… a demonstration, if you may.”

Keith shifts his weight nervously, plucking at the material of his sweatpants. “Uh, okay, we'll still have to improvise some moves before that, but let’s try it how I imagine it for now.“ He then places his hands on Lance’s upper arms, hold icy-cold, and pulls him away from the fence where there’s more room. “I’m gonna run towards you and you just... try to catch me right on the beat and spin me before the sentence is over. For now, try spinning me a few times in a row, we’ll see how many we can shove into the time limit later.”

Lance’s throat is tight with nerves and excitement, heart pounding. His mind travels back to Hunk’s message and he can no longer believe that this is his life.

Keith takes a few uncertain steps back and Lance tries not to drop the other’s phone while resuming the song, waiting for that perfect moment.

The song comes out a little muffled by the pocket of his hoodie and Lance’s so focused on the soft bob of Keith’s head and his mouth silently counting down that he’s immediately startled when Keith runs into his arms in a high leap. The catch is so bad that they nearly fall down, Lance’s grip on his sides slipping.

“Okay, that was terrible,” Keith whispers against Lance’s ear when both of his feet are firmly planted on the ground. He’s breathing a bit heavily for some strange reason and Lance isn’t in a much better
condition. It’s probably because they almost fell to the cold hard pavement, that’s gotta be it. It’s only relief, right? Ha…

“Again,” Keith commands, and Lance works on the phone.

The second time is less horrible. Lance manages to spin him, but the grip is uncomfortable - it’s awkward for the lack of a better word - and Keith wraps an ankle around his shin almost painfully. It’s probably going to bruise.

The third time – after Keith explains how the leg thing works and how it gives him not only a good sense of balance but it also looks nice – is horrible once again because Lance feels his fingertips brushing the skin under Keith’s over-sized shirt and he lets the other go, surprised. Keith seems rather annoyed by that one.

The fourth time they finally fall down because Keith comes at him a beat too early.

“This isn’t working out,” Lance wheezes and rubs at the back of his bruised head. Keith’s awkwardly meshed against his torso but both of them are too frustrated to pay attention at this sudden proximity. “I’m trying though, maybe we’ll get it after a few more attempts?”

Keith only wipes skinned palms onto his pants, hissing a little. “Time to switch.”

“Excuse me?”

“You know how it works by now, so come at me.” Keith offers a good hand to help him stand. “Perhaps you’re the kind of guy who needs a hands-on experience to learn this sort of stuff? Guess we’ll find out.”

Lance’s grateful that his tender foot isn’t acting up after this uncomfortable fall and he looks up at Keith who seems more than ready to spin him as though they just got married. He rolls back his sleeves. “No music?”

“Just do it, I wanna see if you can hold up fine.” The instructor wiggles his fingers a little, and with a pout, Lance crosses that small distance and hops into Keith’s waiting arms, comfortably hooking his entire leg around the black-haired man’s firm thigh instead of settling for a foot only.

The world turns into a blur of orange and white hues and Lance risks a glance at Keith’s focused face.

Their eyes meet and that strange electricity returns.

Keith spins him around more than necessary but they don’t mind it, getting dizzy, chests constricting. Lance fixes his grip on Keith and the small action probably rings some alarms in the other’s head because those cursed violet eyes widen significantly. Lance feels his partner's arms tightening around his torso in retaliation.

“I’m going to dip you now,” Keith says in an airy voice and then Lance is the one thrown for a loop.

“You’re going to what!?” he manages to squeak out, but then the world tilts and his legs awkwardly flail, Keith’s arms tight around his waist. *His face is too damn close*, the brunet panics, and immediately lets go of those strong shoulders, palms covering his eyes instead.

He expects to fall down, but Keith continues holding onto him like he weighs no more than three grapes and a feather and easily lowers him down some more.
In a completely unexpected twist of events, the high heavens above start crying tears of secondhand embarrassment because of Lance’s smitten ass, and Keith actually snorts when the cold rain starts soaking his black shirt.

“What’s so funny?” Lance squeaks through the gap between his palms, spreading the fingers to peek at Keith’s laughing face. God, this is so embarrassing.

“Just… this whole scenario?” the instructor laughs and Lance feels himself pulled a few centimeters away from the ground. “We’re at a forbidden territory at 3:30 am and I’m dipping you in the rain.”

“You’re so honest,” Lance mumbles ashamedly and disentangles from the other’s steel-like arms, flopping down on his ass. “We should probably bail, I don’t think it’s going to let up anytime soon.”

“And people call me a stick in the mud,” Keith nearly chirps, enjoying the cool splashes of raindrops against his heated face. Lance can still see him shivering, goosebumps rising along that porcelain skin.

“More like you should start taking better care of yourself, oh Mr. Knight in shining armor.” The brunet wastes no time in peeling off his hoodie and pushing it down over Keith’s head. He pulls on its ends until he’s greeted by two violet eyes, glimmering in oranges. “You’re gonna catch a cold,” Lance lamely explains and smacks Keith’s back lightly, heading towards the entrance, sitting under the metal ledge. The rain keeps getting stronger. “At least you aren’t wearing a crop top, I imagine you’d have a bruised back and pneumonia by now.

Keith’s swimming in Lance’s hoodie, sleeves a little too long. The back of his head hits the wall and he sighs, seemingly drowsy. Lance tries to avoid staring at his throat and the light bob of his Adam’s apple.

“I’m not exactly actively teaching right now so there’s no point in it. Plus the pneumonia thing, I guess.”

Lance turns his head slightly to face his companion better. “So it isn’t some fashion statement? What a shocker.”

“I don’t know about fashion” Keith chooses to ignore Lance’s silent ‘clearly’, “but it’s a good thing to wear while you’re dancing. It’s pretty comfortable and my students can actually see the movements that I make with my torso.” He taps one finger against his hips and draws a line to the ribcage. “If you’re teaching, long and over-sized shirts are really inconvenient because they get in the way, obscure too much.”

It takes a moment for Lance to realize that they’re actually getting to know each other. He’s always thought of Keith as some sexy menace, probably trying to make everyone question themselves, but he’s just another guy with a job he doesn’t really like nor dislike, sassier than Lance had given him credit for and actually nice when treated with kindness. Now that Lance thinks about it more carefully, he is like an orange. You have to peel off ten layers of jackassery and douchebaggery to get to the juicy part.

“It’s like asking why you dance with a snapback.”

“It’s just cool,” Lance answers in a heartbeat, shrugging. Also Shiro used to dance with one too and incorporated it into his awesome tricks, but Keith doesn’t need to know that.

The instructor looks thoroughly unimpressed and Lance grabs at his chest. “Are you doubting me!?”

“No, of course not,” he replies in a very doubting voice. “Why would I ever doubt that being a
douche is cool nowadays?”

“Whoa there, gramps, what’s that about snapbacks being douchey?”

“If you’ve ever been to a serious dance competition, you should know.”

“I’ve been to plenty and I’ve seen none of these people that you just described.”

“So you finally admit that you’re really involved in my world?” Keith turns to him with a sly smile and Lance wants to smash his head against a wall. Desperately.

He chooses to ignore the blatant attempt to extract more information regarding his background. Keith kept going at it, playing mind games and whatnot. “So you’ve only met douches in snapbacks?”

“Yeah, I’m afraid so.”

“No… nice douches?” Lance asks, trying not to sound too hopeful. He probably fails because Keith’s smile only grows. He looks like that cat meme with the knife that Pidge adores so much.

“Not a single one.”

Ouch, right to the pride.

“Though I remember there was this one guy in particular who at least somewhat knew how to impress. Real flashy, very fun to mess with. Don’t really remember who he was, though. Never saw him again.” Keith shrugs and Lance tries very hard not to go into questioning mode. Was he tall, dark, and handsome? Neon blue? Team Voltron? Goes by the name ‘Blue’? Real name Lance McClain? Currently sitting next to you? Asking you these dumb questions? Marry me, please?

Wait, one of these things is not like the others.

Lance tries to laugh it off, nervous sweat gathering at his temples. “Must’ve been quite the guy if he managed to impress you.”

“I was so impressed that I’m constantly swooning whenever I remember him,” Keith deadpans, face stone-like.

Lance squints, just in case. “Really?”

“No. Now let’s go before you’re the one catching a cold.”

By the time they get to their sleeping chambers, it’s a little pass 4 am. Keith turns on the flash in his phone and peels off the baggy pants while Lance gathers his shit and pushes his beanbag chair to Keith’s.

His companion stops toweling at that perfect, slightly damp hair and stares at Lance who only shoves his feet into fluffy socks.

“Uh, what?” the brunet questions and folds his long legs, watching Keith intently.

“What are you doing, Lance?” Keith sighs and sneezes. It sounds adorable, Lance has to bite his lower lip to stop himself from cooing and stepping on the other’s pride. On any other occasion he would’ve jabbed at it like there was no tomorrow but somehow he no longer feels that insane urge to
“You mentioned that you have insomnia, right? Well, Pidge says that they sleep better whenever they get to chat with another human being before going to bed. Stimulates the brain in a positive way or something. Pidge explained it to me in big scientific terms and I honestly don’t know what half of them mean… but the main point is that it’s good for you, ok! So sleepover time!” Lance happily props his head against a curled palm and stares at Keith who only fiddles with the hem of his shorts nervously.

He looks like he wants to say something but can’t voice it out so Lance takes away his phone in an attempt to turn off the small ray of white light, so that the other can get more comfortable. Maybe he’s shy like that!

Lance turns over the sleek red device in his hand and swipes at the screen, the words ‘hey, what’s your lockscreen code’ dying on his tongue when he sees Keith’s wallpaper.

The other’s eyes widen and he instantly lunges for the phone, but Lance has grown up surrounded by siblings so taking things away from him is no easy task.

“Lance, give it!” Keith nearly whines but Lance pushes back his head and holds the phone far out of Keith’s reach, inspecting the wallpaper. Keith settles for punching him in the ribs. “Give me back my phone!”

“Ouch!” Lance whines and tries to rub at the bruise, but holding down Keith, even for a second, is kind of difficult. “I love your wallpaper, dude!”

“Are you making fun of me?” Keith hisses lowly, looking pretty pissed off, face a dangerous shade of maroon, but Lance only blows a raspberry.

“Hell no! I love “Adventure time” to death, man! Hunk does too, obviously, he got me into it. He’s the Jake to my Finn.” Lance laughs and Keith stops struggling, one cheek pressed into Lance’s ribs, eyes wide. Lance seriously loves that Lady Rainicorn lockscreen, it’s amazingly well-done. “Have you taken a good look at my shirt, man? I know it’s faded as hell by now, but still.” He shines the faint light onto the sleeping shirt, pointing at Jake.

Keith sits up and stares at Lance’s shirt with a sort of innocent curiosity shining in his eyes. “I haven’t noticed it in the dark. It’s nice.”

Lance nearly bounces on the bag. Now this is a quality sleepover conversation starter. “If you dig the shirt, check this.” He rolls up the sweatpants and lifts his leg a little. On his left shin, there’s a small tattoo of Finn, brandishing his sword.

Keith produces something akin to a soft gasp, probing at the blue patch of ink of Finn’s shirt. Lance smiles a little at the other’s curiosity. “Pidge has Beemo and Hunk has Jake. It was kind of a dare that I lost but they went to the tatt parlor with me either way. Hunk totally cried!” So did Lance, maybe twice as much, but it was worth it in the end.

There’s a ghost of a smile on Keith’s lips. “Shiro and I used to watch it every morning. He really liked PB and said that I was a complete Marceline. I think he was too kind, I’m a total Gunther when I think about it.”

“I’d say you’re more of a Marshall Lee,” Lance snorts and lets the material drop down. “God, I loved Fionna. She was so badass. Maybe someday I’ll get her tattooed on the other leg.”

They spend the next twenty minutes discussing their favorite characters and episodes and Lance...
drops the bomb that he’s been saving up. “So Pidge tells me that I can totally rock that Jeremy Shada voice.”

Keith’s eyebrows raise a little, amused. “Can you now?”

“Yeah! I mean I may not sound like the perfect Finn, but I can try. Wait, let me think of some quotes,” the brunet rakes his mind for something appropriate when the perfect one surfaces in his head.

He clears his voice a few times, makes sure to sound a little younger, and shuffles around until he faces Keith properly, their knees touching.

The black-haired man leans in a little, holding his breath in anticipation and waiting for Lance to work his magic. “I like you. I think I… I think I like, like you,” he says in his best Finn voice and Keith’s eyes widen a little. If Lance looks closely, he can see the other’s face tinting a bright shade of pink with every word.

He goes over his tirade, his own cheeks feeling a bit too hot. It seems that he is starting to spill some honest feelings in there, getting too comfortable.

“How was it?” Lance asks and looks away, face burning.

Keith’s quiet for a few moments, probably admiring his sick voice acting skills, yeah. It has to be that, totally. “…You actually sound like him though I’m pretty sure that it doesn’t go like ‘sit on the couch with you and dance with you all the time’.”

Lance doesn’t dare to look up but somehow he knows that Keith isn’t looking at him either, covering his mouth.

Lance runs his fingertips over the soft surface of his planet-adorned sleeping bag. “Next time, I’ll show you some song covers that I did. The records are pretty old and my uke skills aren’t top-notch, but… Uh, it’s kinda late, don’t you think?” he cuts in and drops onto the covers, quickly shoving his feet into the sleeping bag. He gives up on it when he realizes that it’s way too hot for it either way.

“Mhh, yeah, you’re right, we should sleep now, goodnight,” Keith copies his actions and the light disappears.

Lance crashes immediately whereas Keith tosses and turns in his sleeping bag and watches the sun rising over the tall buildings, mind working overtime.

“Mornin’,” Keith yawns into his sleeve and takes the steaming cup of Starbucks coffee from Shiro’s hand.

Shiro says nothing. The black-haired man raises an eyebrow.

“What?”

No one points out the fact that he’s still wearing Lance’s hoodie for the rest of the morning.

Chapter End Notes
honest to god i'd love to tease but i wanna be done with this fic as soon as possible. massive updates here we go.

this chap (and keith wearing croptops) is a tribute to my ex dance instructor who slayed it in crop tops and educated us losers as to why she wore them in the middle of winter while it was like -20C outside.

as for lance... well, this happened to me too. good at freestyling, YET VERY BAD WHEN IT COMES TO GUIDELINES.
Pidge returns with Hunk and a box of steaming cupcakes at 11:30 am.

“I can’t believe that you’re actually asking me to send you those ancient Rebecca Sugar song covers,” Pidge hisses lowly into his ear and types away at their phone. “Just how badly do you have it for this guy? Didn’t you say that playing for others is what ‘pansies who can’t get laid’ do?”

“Look, times have changed. I really really need you to do this for me; I’ve got a boy to impress.” Lance stretches out the kinks plaguing his muscles and fixes his messy hair in the mirror. Pidge catches his gaze in the surface, looking a little skeptic. “He is the One, he is the Flame Prince…ss to my Finn, man.”

“Oh, I can clearly see that everything’s changed. You haven’t logged into the chat for more than ten hours now, this is some serious shit. Almost missed all of your liveblogs.”

“Do not summon me, Pidgey, or you’ll regret it and end up rage-quitting the chat or something. Again.” Lance grabs their head by the sides and turns it in the direction of Hunk and Keith who are animatedly talking about something. “Look at them bonding - Keith’s stealing my bear bro away.”

“I think that your boo is actually being stolen by that tall friend of yours.” Pidge bats his prying fingers away and stands on their tiptoes, pointing at Shay who is shyly eyeing Hunk, getting some choice warm gazes in return. What a smooth operator, Lance is proud.

“I can get behind this. They’d be a total power couple.” Lance shrugs and pushes Pidge in Keith’s direction. "Now you go over there and make sure that Hunk doesn’t start quoting my diary entries to him.”

“There’s not much to quote other than that one entry wherein – “

Lance's fingers return, twice as strong. “You too!?”

“You can’t hide your stuff for shit.”

Lance toes Pidge’s butt at that.

Pidge stumbles in on Keith and Hunk’s bonding moment right as Hunk finishes saying something related to RB – not a good thing to happen – and whips out the cupcakes.

Keith smiles politely and is about to refuse, but Hunk only waves a finger in front of his face. “Dairy-free! Special vegan recipe that I’ve found.”

Pidge almost wants to laugh at Keith’s miffed expression. He blinks owlishly and accepts the gift that’s taken a full day for the taller man to make. “Uh, how’d you find out my preferences?”

“Oh, Lance told me!” Hunk chirps happily and Pidge should really step in, but they’re far too entertained to bother. Hunk’s face twists up with mock-horror. “Wait, I wasn’t supposed to say that. Don’t tell Lance that I told you! Anyways, it was quite a challenge to bake them, but I tried my best.
I’d say that they came out pretty darn great, man.”

Keith takes a cupcake, going completely starry-eyed once the taste reaches his tongue. “So... Lance told you,” he trails off innocently and Hunk nods eagerly. “How’d he find out?”

“We’ve all been big fans of RB for years now,” Hunk offers. Pidge tenses up, ready to forcefully silence him if he mentions something regarding Voltron, but Hunk’s far too smart to do something like that. “But Lance is the biggest one. He took up dancing because he was extremely impressed by you guys!”

“Oh really…” Keith hums, seemingly lost deep in thought, and peers at Lance who immediately pretends that he’s checking himself out in the mirrors.

“He’s really happy to be here and that he got a chance to dance with you.”

Keith’s face is kept carefully emotionless, and in a blink of an eye, the aforementioned brunet is by their side, grip steel-like on his friends’ shoulders.

“I see that you’ve met Coop and Reemer,” Lance grinds out through clenched teeth and forces a smile. “But they really have to go now and take care of that other thing, right, guys?”

Hunk scrunches up his nose and says ‘what thing’ at the same time Pidge bonks their head and says ‘ohhhh yeah, completely forgot about the thing’ in a cringey fake voice.

They disappear pretty damn fast.

“Why’d you do that?” Pidge asks once they’re boarding the bus.

Hunk smiles mischievously. “Oh, just gave him a push in the right direction.”

“Lance’ll kill you, you know?”

“Nah, he won’t. He’s never going to find out.”

“Pinky promise, bro,” Pidge mutters, staring out the window. “Pinky promise, indeed.”

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**Beach hunk (Hunk Garrett): Got you keiths digits ;0**

**sirlancealot (Lance McClain): whxt hte fck**

**Beach hunk (Hunk Garrett): Be nice to him dude he is a cinnamon roll wrapped up in cotton candy!!!**

**sirlancealot (Lance McClain):are we seriously talking about the same guy here**

**Beach hunk (Hunk Garrett): Im serious, lance, play nice. keiths a good guy >:o**

**sirlancealot (Lance McClain): its like i dont even know you anymore**

**sirlancealot (Lance McClain) sent cryemoji.gif**
hunk back at it again stealing my baes

no dont u log off

this isnt over!!!!!!!!!!!!

pornbot justice (Pidge Gunderson): Yikes. Glad I sat this one out.

Keith’s performance isn’t top-notch.

He hasn’t slept, he’s beyond tired, and his mind is left reeling after that mostly one-sided conversation with Hunk.

His outlook on Lance… well, who is he to lie and say that it hasn’t changed completely.

That conversation has been an eye-opening experience, in a way. The kind-hearted man was straight to the point - no nonsense, unlike Lance’s other siblings. Hunk has thoroughly apologized for his friend’s shitty behavior while scratching at the back of his neck, looking guilty for digging around sensitive topics.

“Look, I know that he can act like a horrendous tool, but he’s a good guy. He doesn’t mean it and he’s only puffing up his plumage in order to impress you even if it’s... the wrong way of doing it. He’s always been fascinated by RB and the rumors regarding it, specifically your dancing. He honestly just wants to feel close to you and get a chance to shine. I’ve seen how badly took your duo’s break up. I don’t want to bring up any painful memories for you, but I have to tell you this much - read between the lines when it comes to Lance. It’s how everything goes with him and he’s too full of himself to be honest in this type of situation. Anyways, I wish you luck and now you gotta pretend that you didn’t hear any of this.”

Looking at Lance practicing in earnest like that with Hunk’s words ringing in his head, well... It’s something, to say the least.

Lance is still a cocky brat, that much he cannot deny, but even the cockiness seems to have some deeper meaning to it now. Which is really goddamn confusing, actually.

It also brings him back to the night before. Lance had approached him after their massive fuckup turned into one of the best experiences in his stress-filled life, head bowed, and grin sheepish.

Shiro had smiled in an encouraging way and nudged Keith in the other’s direction, attention refocusing on the piles of papers and fellow judges.

Lance had sharply inhaled and looked into his eyes, determined, sentences spilling out of his mouth like beans. “Look, man, it’s undeniable that we got off to a pretty rough start and now that we have to cooperate… let me properly reintroduce myself. I’m Lance McClain, my favorite pastimes are freestyling and TV shows. I like spicy food and space, also I’m not as bad as I seem, I swear.”

Keith had only stared at the other’s extended shaky hand and exhaled noisily, taking it. “Hello, Lance,” he offered, uncertain how to react.

Lance had snorted, of course. “You sound like we’re at an anon alcoholic support group.”

“I don’t know what else to say? I’m not really good at this stuff.”
Lance had been so gentle with him then. “Say whatever comes to your mind,” he offered, eyes glistening in the faded lights.

“Keith Kogane, bad at coming up with facts about myself and, uh, I’m a newbie dance instructor way in over his head. Is that good enough?”

“Sounds about right. Well, we can work on basics like this later on.”

But work on them when and how? They barely have enough time to pull this dance together.

“Keithy-boy, I know that my hips are mesmerizing to watch and all, but I really need you to get over here and start working!” Lance calls out, wiping at his sweaty nose with the hem of a baggy shirt, tanned skin practically glowing.

Lance is a danger to his sanity.

“Coming.”

They end up gluing together more than half of their final dance by the time evening comes and they end up dickng around instead of doing actual work. Lance doesn’t let go of the hip joke until he gets a solid laugh from the other man.

“Hips so fine they will never lie to you. They can even tell the future, ask away. One shimmy for ‘yes’, two for ‘no’.”

“Oh my god, you’re ridiculous,” Keith snorts while Lance bats his eyelashes innocently and bumps his hips into Keith’s, voice thin when he whines in a high-pitched voice ‘ask us stuff, Keittthhh’.

Then they start jamming out to even more Beyoncé songs. Lance absolutely insists that they freestyle to “Run the World(Girls)” and immediately regrets it when Keith executes it perfectly, but the ‘perfection’ lasts for thirty seconds at most because they start exaggerating everything and making up dumb moves with excessive twirling, dancing together in a weird on-the-spot bullshitified dance somewhat akin to a strange flamenco. They look like two “graceful” cranes trying to mate or something along those lines, and no one dares to enter the room because of it.

Lance shakes his butt like it’s the end of the world and Keith cracks up laughing at that while trying to feign at least some level of seriousness, dramatically throwing one sleeve of Lance’s hoodie over his shoulder as though it’s a scarf. They begin posing in front of the mirror wall and make weird faces at the reflection. By the end of the five-song playlist, they’re completely spent.

Lance gets up from the floor in a fancy flip, sliding forward, legs stretched before him to show off. It suddenly dawns on Keith that while he has viciously tried to whip Lance into shape, he’s never actually learned anything in particular from the other. They’ve decided on a varying routine that would combine their strengths, but the instructor is still curious.

“Teach me that?” he asks and Lance’s body goes frigid.

“You want me to teach you bboying?” he squeaks in a thin voice.

“If that was bboying, it’s pretty damn weak.”

Lance huffs and crosses his arms. “Oh I’ll show you weak – get ready to learn stuff, Mr. Perfecto.”
And then they spend the next half an hour with Lance nearly getting off to the words ‘on your heels, not toes, unless you wanna pull some muscles’. Karma is a bitch, indeed.

Apparently, Keith kind of sucks.

“I don’t understand?” Lance wonders out-loud and watches Keith on his knees, hands propped before him, nose scrunched up in concentration. He can do the flare’s circle perfectly despite trying just a few times – a fast learner, how unexpected, insert sarcasm here – but when it comes to the kick-out ‘V’ he always drops down on his ass, unable to balance. “I thought that you were an all-rounder like Shiro.”

“Well, when it comes to breakdancing, Shiro’s teaching methods are kind of… shit.” Keith sticks out his tongue and shifts forward with his left hand, doing another perfect circle. Getting too confident he tries to flare again only to screw it up. “I’ve learned how to do this much at least.”

“If you’d start with something less advanced maybe you could do it. Power moves ain’t easy. Pidge has nearly lost it with me, multiple times. I was always good at step combos though,” he brags and goes over a basic top rock combo, bouncing lightly, effortlessly. It feels natural.

Keith sits down thoroughly unimpressed, peels off the damp shirt and reties his hair back into a ponytail. Lance makes a low gurgling sound. “You seem to… get along with your siblings,” the instructor says nonchalantly.

Lance kind of wants to laugh at that. All they’ve been doing in front of Keith is constantly argue and diss each other. “Ah well, you know how it is. Siblings can be a real pain in the ass and you disagree on a lot of things and stuff, but at the end of the day, they’re still family and you love them unconditionally nonetheless.”

Keith’s quiet for a while. Lance almost expects him to not answer but the other destroys his grip on reality as always. “Guess I wouldn’t know. Don’t exactly have anyone who defines as family.”

Oh.

Well shit, way to be an asshole, McClain. No wonder Keith has never mentioned any family members on his Twitter or any other social media sites.

“Hey, don’t say that. There’s always Shiro. I think I’d trade Em for him any day. Though I’d miss her rants too much,” Lance offers and Keith actually smiles a little at that, making the brunet’s ribcage squeeze painfully.

“Shiro’s always been like family to me,” he nods in confirmation and Lance feels better, heaving a sigh of relief.

“See? You got Shiro and you definitely have more people who care for you, like Pidge and Hunk, Em and… me.”

Lance barely gets to finish the sentence before the world goes dark. Keith pushes his snapback low over his eyes and turns away, rummaging through his stuff for a water bottle.

The back of his neck colors a deep red.

It’s a tradition for the instructors to take one evening off and venture into the town in order to
entertain themselves and get some drinks. The evening is rainy but the weather is rather nice, warm and no longer windy.

Keith, being the newbie that he is, does not get these rights.

He doesn’t really mind it, he’s not in a drinking mood either way.

But then there’s Lance who is not quite a member of this dance camp despite kind of being one, and the moment Allura lets it slip that she and Shiro are hitting some fancy restaurant, Lance barrels through the staff room’s door, pinpointing Keith’s white crop top and mullet immediately.

He patiently waits for him to stop teaching – nearly vibrating all the while, but still patient by Lance standards – and the moment Keith approaches with a quirked eyebrow, ready to scold him for being a distraction, Lance grabs his cool hands.

“Let’s get the fuck out of here;” he sing-songs, eyes wide and sparkly.

He looks like a puppy.

Keith has a hard time saying no, especially when Lance gets whiny and pushy about it and Shiro gives the duo his blessings, saying that he’ll cover for them and warns them to not get too drunk.

“Return before morning practice,” Shiro says and hands his partner a spare key to the back entrance.

And so, here they are, Lance and Keith, huddled close under the smallest umbrella imaginable that’s covered in black cartoonish kittens – note to self: buy Em a bigger one – on their way to what Lance swears to god is the best pub ever - and the perfect spot for a first date, he thinks giddily.

“I mean, we could go to an arcade, but I’m not in the mood for kicking your ass at DDR. Don’t want your pride to get too crushed,” Lance laughs and Keith steps on his foot in return.

Keith’s glad that he has brought a pair of jeans with him, along with boots. He’s still left drowning in Shiro’s at-least-three-sizes-too-big jacket. Meanwhile, Lance’s just thankful that Pidge has packed him a shirt that isn’t old beyond belief or splashed in paint stains.

Despite being pretty late and generally miserable, the streets are still packed with plenty of people seeking out entertainment.

Lance only hopes that there’ll be enough space for them to chill at his fave place to hang.

“It’s a little dingy, but it has a good vibe and even greater music - perfect for kicking back and relaxing. We go there every Tuesday for the karaoke night. It surely lives up to its name – a Gem among gems!” Lance isn’t one to be cooped up in the same place for too long, Keith can clearly see that now, as he lets the brunet rant his ear off about the awesome atmosphere and how the bartenders know who he is by now, along with the names of his orders.

Seeing Lance in his natural habitat is undeniably fascinating. The brunet’s no longer trying to douche it up and seems more than willing to have a good time with a wet blanket like Keith.

Keith doesn’t think too highly of himself, neither does he think that he’s interesting enough for a chatterbox like Lance who always has to be in motion and showered in constant attention. Keith’s more on the reserved side - he likes to keep to himself, and it takes a whole lot of emotional bonding for him to be comfortable enough with showing true emotions.

Needless to say, he enters the building feeling like an out of place rain-heavy cloud in the middle of a
light blue sky.

The place is very relaxing in an odd way, all shiny dark brown wood panels and creamy walls, the lights bright. Soft swing music plays in the background, some couples dance on the spacious dancefloor located at the center of the pub. The multiple round tables are nearly-packed but it doesn’t feel too crowded, if that makes any sense. Keith doesn’t know - he’s not too keen on going to bars of any sort.

He and Lance settle by the long bar. Keith immediately orders a simple mineral water and Lance follows his example without a second thought.

“Why not alcohol?” he questions.

Lance shrugs, happy with his minty bubble water. “No ID on me, pal,” at Keith’s confused stare, he guffaws. “Pidge says that I look like I’m twelve, can’t risk it,” he offers as an explanation and takes a sip.

“You look old enough.”

“Thanks, I’m old enough to not be a lawsuit. Besides, I’m not going to let you sip on some random ass Georgian water by yourself, it wouldn’t be cool if I had a beer and you had nothing. It’s just not how it works with me.”

“Then maybe I’ll make the ultimate sacrifice of buying beer later tonight.” Keith looks into the distance and the couples swinging around. The music is familiar and brings back feelings of nostalgia to his heart. Days spent at a rundown jazz joint, spinning around in circles and being spun around, kicking at air playfully.

Lance is on him in a heartbeat. “Ohhh, I know that look. That lindy hop music in your playlist was by no means a mistake, right?”

Keith startles, choking on his water a little. His companion smacks him on the back a few times.

“Did you go over my entire playlist?”

“Yeah. Jeez, you’re so edgy. All that punk rock is astounding, hard to believe that you shake your butt to Beyoncé and Fifth Harmony.”

“Can’t really shake anything to the Yeah Yeah Yeahs.”

“That’s bullshit. I used to jam out to it pretty hard, if you ask me. I think there are some embarrassing pics of me somewhere out there. Old Myspace account maybe.” Lance pokes at an ice cube with his black straw and mindlessly fishes out a mint leaf. “Time for backstory, Keith-boy, cause I have some to share as well.”

His sigh isn’t long-suffering enough. Bummer. “You’re not going to back off until I tell you, are you?”

“Hmm… nope! We’re having a bonding moment.”

“Oh, are we now? What do you expect me to do next – cradle you in my arms?”

“That can be arranged, I think. But more on that later,” Lance’s blue eyes flicker to the dancefloor for a moment before he directs his best million-watt grin at his companion. “Go on.”

Might as well. “Technically, Shiro and I have met through lindy.”
It’s Lance’s turn to choke. His eyes are impossible wide when he croaks out, “no way!” and hits his chest a few more times.

“Yes way,” Keith shrugs and leans back on the unsteady bar-stool, making it creak. “How else do you think he can work those step combinations with such perfection?”

“Strangely enough, I can actually see him doing it,” Lance murmurs into his hand, stroking his chin. It’s really not that hard to visualize, Shiro dressed in a semi-formal attire, going over the three-step combinations and swing-outs to this kind of music. He gives the instructor a critical eye. “You on the other hand? Not so much.”

“I wasn’t really good at it. I’ve been going down the hip hop road my entire life.”

“So how’d it happen? Two different styles like that?” Lance watches the huge leaves of a flourishing plant placed near the bar, probably bigger than him in height. Maybe there was more truth in Coran’s words than he’d initially thought. Perhaps, he and Keith are meant to be like this - learning from each other, cooperating. Just like Keith and Shiro way before everything went downhill.

“My guardian was good friends with Shiro’s dad. That man was hardcore and has my utmost respect even to this day,” Keith closes his eyes with a slight smile tugging on his lips. He seems to be drowning in fond memories. Lance tactfully stays quiet, observing, drinking in this new information. “He ran a jazz pub, taught lindy hop classes, and worked a part-time at the local farm. He was everywhere all at once and he never complained about the workload. Shiro, naturally, took up lindy as well, wanting to help his old man out.” Keith remembers his partner, seventeen and overworked already, getting his first gray hairs, teaching kids whenever his dad fell ill or had other, more important business to attend to.

“This is gospel truth and we all knew this already but I gotta say it anyway - Shiro is a hero,” Lance says fondly, inspecting the sleeve of his parka. “My respect for him is off the charts.”

“It wasn’t an easy task. He didn’t get anything out of this other than experience and a sense of satisfaction.“ The Shirogane family has always been well-off but Shiro still worked himself late into the night for free, content just knowing that he could be of help. “I saw him dancing at that jazz joint and I saw raw potential. I tried recruiting him plenty of times whereas he tried dragging me into swing hell. I was fourteen at the time. None of us really succeeded until my guardian died.” Keith sniffs, obviously not wanting to elaborate. “I was all alone yet again and Shiro took it upon himself to act like my guardian. A week after the funeral he told me that he’d quit lindy hop, ready to follow me.”

The words ‘that’s sad’ rest on the tip of Lance’s tongue but he doesn’t know how to properly console in this situation. Shiro seems content enough with what he’s doing even to this day and with those injuries. So does Keith.

Lance puts his chin into his hands, humming. “You probably can’t see it right now, but I’m actually completely starry-eyed because I was pretty damn involved in lindy hop as well. I guess I just felt like reconnecting with this side, that’s why I brought you here. It’s swing music night,” Lance waves a hand to the center of the dancefloor, pretty vacant now that the song has changed. It isn’t too fitting for dancing, too many dips in it to get a good grasp on the beat.

“Seems like we have a lot in common?” Keith tries to keep his voice even and finishes up the drink.

“Wееееell, that’s how bonding works. You get to find common grounds and then talk about them.” Lance smacks his palms to the beat of the song against the bar top. “For example, if we’re getting back to the lindy hop thing, my dad was a big enthusiast back in the day whereas my mom was a
professional. He’d go to the local pub and watch her dance, never daring to actually ask for a swing. Ma took it upon herself to ask Pa out after she got fed up with his staring. That’s how they met. Guess my family members are just cursed to gravitate towards other dancers.” Lance’s face warms up significantly and he feels Keith’s intent gaze burning holes into the side of his head.

The words are right on the tip of his tongue, nearly forcing themselves out. “Are you also – “

The song switches and Lance sits up straight, craning his neck and looking at the speakers. “Oh my god, I love this one!” He hops off the chair, pulling off his parka and rolling up the sleeves of a light blue button-down. Keith peers at him curiously and uncrosses his legs.

Lance is in his personal space in 0.5 seconds. “I don’t know about you, Keith, but I really feel like dancing right now!”

“Aren’t we supposed to be… resting tonight?” The rest of the sentence is trailed off when Lance glances back at the dancefloor and waves a hand.

“Pshaw, no, I’m talking about lindy! Get up and let’s go!”

Violet eyes blink rapidly. “It’s been years, I don’t remember the moves?”

“Dude, it’s us. We’ll improvise,” Lance puffs out his chest and continues rushing him – god forbid the song ends before Keith pushes off Shiro’s jacket away from his shoulders.

Lance takes him by the hand and eagerly drags him along, Keith nearly tripping over his feet. “You’ll lead,” the black-haired man huffs, a little embarrassed by the sudden attention that they’re getting from all sides. “I don’t exactly remember any moves.”

“It’ll be like your jump-catches, just remember the follow’s steps.” Lance takes his left hand in an appropriate link and goes over the combination in a rushed blur of movement, hopping quickly. “One, two, one two three and so on, got it? Don’t forget to bend your knees, too!”

“I didn’t – “

“Perfect!” Lance yells and quickly drags him to the center of the illuminated stage, walking backwards and facing Keith all the while, already going over the lead’s step combos. Keith tries his hardest to keep up, staring at Lance’s feet and trying to recall what was it exactly that Shiro had taught him all those years ago.

“Improvise, Keith!” Lance says loudly over the jammy music and grabs Keith’s waist, making up moves as he goes. “No one’s here to judge, keep your eyes on my face.”

Keith stumbles trying to do a swing-out but Lance only cackles and he finally decides to follow the other’s advice, letting his body go on autopilot.

“It’s trueee! I wanna be like you!” Lance sings along, turning in a sharp twist and Keith sees the opportunity for a spin, grip tight on Lance’s shoulders when he kicks out his legs in that V meant for the flare, knees bending a little when Lance dips him easily enough, snorting. “King of bboying. You could nail that flare without any problems right now.”

'I wanna walk like you, talk like you – ‘

Lance spins their linked hands above Keith’s head and the instructor twists around easily enough, doing so to Lance too, easily retaking the lead, ignoring the move combinations, a light bounce to his step.
Lance’s footwork is absolutely impeccable when it comes to lindy, but Keith doesn’t pay any mind to it, too focused on the amazing guy before him, not bothering to show off for once. Lance watches him closely, the grin never fading from his lips, hair messy and skin gleaming.

Keith can hear the blood rushing in his ears.

It doesn’t take long before they’re laughing and the happy Disney song switches to a new one, followed by another one.

They dance away until they’re short on breath and once they finally stop, wild applause from a few tables reaches the duo. Lance takes in a few deep breaths and bows, shyly smiling at Keith and taking his hand, lacing their fingers together.

“I had fun tonight,” Keith says once they’re on their way back to the building, the bus completely empty, old southern music and the hum of the engine filling in the silence. The digital numbers of the clock read 2:58 am. “You’ve lived up to the ‘not as bad as you seem’ title.”

“Hey, if I was really that horrible to you, all you had to do was tell me to back off. I would have.”

Somehow Keith feels like this isn’t true and snuggles into the jacket even further. It’s a little cold.

Lance seemingly reads his mind. “Perhaps not completely, you’re kinda fun to mess with – ow! – but I would’ve kept it under the wraps more…ish.”

“Don’t see a point in telling you off now that we’re stuck together,” Keith mumbles, getting a little sleepy and wow, isn’t that a first? Maybe that whole brain-stimulation nonsense actually works?

Lance stays uncharacteristically quiet until they reach their stop.

“Thanks,” he says, when Keith starts shuffling around, lazily getting up from his seat.

It’s met with a quirked eyebrow. “For what?”

“Everything.”

They don’t talk for the rest of the night.

pornbot justice (Pidge Gunderson): You actually took him out to Gem? And lindy hopped?

Am I reading this right?

There's no way that this is real.

Beach hunk (Hunk Garrett): You know what they say, dude, kids tend to take after their parents

The history repeats itself!!

sirlancealot (Lance McClain): guys i dont see why u r making such a big deal out of this we
literally just danced to some swingy jungle book osts

sides i dont think he even liked it that much

Beach hunk (Hunk Garrett): oh he liked it alright ;)))))

sirlancealot (Lance McClain): OK THAT’S IT BRO SPILL IT
did he say anything???????? did he fall for me???

NO DO NOT LOG OFF

HOW DARE

pornbot justice (Pidge Gunderson): Dude, if you don’t bring him back home for that promised dinner at this point, I will seriously disown you.

sirlancealot (Lance McClain): ok but like did hunk tell u anything about the keith thing

NO NOT U TOO. I HATE THIS FAMILY AND I HATE THIS CHAT

I HATE YOU GUYS WTF

[10:11 am] Group chat name changed to: pray 4 lances dense ass

sirlancealot (Lance McClain) has left the chat

PRIVATE: sirlancealot (Lance McClain): please let me back in i cant live without my daily dose of memes

Chapter End Notes

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d1vQMIisJuc the song they dance to!
i've always been a huge lindy hop nerd but i'm too shy to try it out! really self-conscious also i got permanently sweaty hands, no one would want to dance with me i think??

last update on friday
Lance takes it upon himself to come up with at least some exclusive moves that could fill in the small spaces left behind in their dance routine. He and Keith have been going over this as a team but Keith’s part is undeniably bigger and that’s just not right. They need to divide it at least a little more evenly in order to prove to the judges that they actually know what they’re doing – not really, in Lance’s case, at least.

The moment he kicks Keith out for a veeeery long water break, he goes over a few breakdancing power moves. “Nah, too intense for this song.”

Then a few drops. “Nope, it’s gonna look weird.”

And then a brilliant idea surfaces in his clouded brain, momentarily distracting the three monkeys piloting his body. Shit, he is a genius, give him a medal. They’re going to kill it on the stage.

“Oh-kayyy,” Lance huffs and fixes the snapback, pushing it back. “I can use this.”

He listens to the song a few more times and chooses the best timing, freestyling awkwardly, trying to combine some ideas.

18…20…24.

Thirty seconds. Perfect.

Lance whips out his good old workout playlist and scrolls down the infinite list filled with his favorite lady singers till he finds the song that he needs, lowering the volume just in case.

‘Make it shake’ rings too damn familiar and sets his body to motion without a single beat of hesitation. He doesn’t really remember the last time he’s danced to it - certainly he’s tried it after that incident at the ‘Black Lion’? However, the memory of it is so blurry that he can no longer recall anything. Lance does remember the blinding frustration and the words ‘never again’.

He crosses his arms in front of his chest, keeping them parallel to collarbones, weight shifting from one foot to another in a smooth wave. The move flows easily enough. Still got it!

He can definitely use it; it’s just too damn fitting for this routine. He can also incorporate some of Keith’s choice moves as well, bring back that vivid memory from a year ago, keep it alive.

Maybe Keith will actually remember him this time. It’s a scary thought, but it’s one that he entertains every once in a while nonetheless. He desperately wants a repeat of that masquerade, especially now that he knows that it’s bound to go different.

Unless Keith’s opinion on him is going to change the moment he finds out that Lance is that mystery douche in a snapback. He's certainly fucked himself over with this one, hasn’t he?

Lance continues practicing, shedding his shirt and going over a variety of combinations, the time limit kind of scaring him. Keith has put his trust in him however and he isn’t about to betray it a second time.
Meanwhile, Keith stands perfectly out of sight, body frozen stiff. At this point he probably looks like a very realistic ice statue.

Wait a minute.

He thinks that he recognizes these moves and this song, no, scratch that – he definitely does. And if these faded memories fail him, the snapback doesn’t.

He slides down the wall and closes his eyes, the heavy curtain keeping him hidden.

Well. This makes a whole lot more sense now. Especially that strange dream, starring a hot stranger at a nameless night club, dressed in neon blues, all long tan limbs and… Lance’s confident voice.

Talk about fate and déjà vu, huh.

“Damn,” Keith exhales until there’s no breath left in his lungs. “Played me like nobody’s business.”

>> Hunk G.

Can I ask for a small favor?

>> Cinnamon roll

Ask away!!! ; )

>> Hunk G.

I know this is going to sound a little weird but could you –

Hunk snorts and whips out his chem kit.

“Yooo, Keith, uh, how long have you been standing there?”

He’s nervous. Good.

“I just got here. Let’s continue.”

Working together with Lance and switching up the vital parts of this choreography makes Keith’s patience thin out rapidly, especially considering the fact that he isn’t much for socializing and he’s been surrounded by people for four days now. Four long, grueling days.

He and Lance agree on a lot of things but Keith’s hardass attitude is hard to change in the span of a few days, especially when he remembers how important this song is to him.
His last song, their last song, before the shooting, before everything they’ve ever worked for got set on fire, one last dance that’s never been practiced. It’s been Keith’s first attempt to do something for Shiro for once instead of constantly asking the older man for advice on the moves and incorporating them into routines.

And now this thing with Lance, it’s throwing off his game completely. Needless to say, the dance instructor doesn’t appreciate it.

“Look, what’s got your panties in a twist?” Lance finally snaps a few hours later, eyebrow twitching. He’s worn out and looks like the devil himself. He has pretty much no time to chill and fix his appearance, and damn, how could he forget this one tiny detail – they’re really goddamn pressed for time. “Let’s just go over it one last time and take a break before you decide to go ‘homicide mode’ –“

“It’s not funny, McClain,” Keith yells, pushing messy strands of hair away from his eyes. “Don’t try to bullshit your way out of this; we don’t have much time left.”

“Jeez, man, I was just kidding.”

“And as I said – not funny. Just do your goddamn part without complaining for once, okay!? I’m not here to babysit you through this one,” Keith takes a swig from a water bottle and glares some lingering people away. They scurry away immediately, scared. “This’d be so much easier if we had left it how I designed it. Shiro wouldn’t complain, take him as an example if you want to keep up with me.”

The hurtful words slip away from his mouth before he can redeem himself, but Keith’s too pissy. He wants them to sting, wants to take out his frustrations on Lance’s poor unsuspecting head.

The brunet’s shoulders drop at that, mouth hanging open. He looks like a dog kicked out into the rain, eyebrows furrowed lightly.

Lance takes in a shuddering breath, inspecting the floor as though it’s the most amazing thing out there. As though it has a valid explanation for Keith’s horrendous behavior. He doesn’t even bother to fake a smile, only sighs out a defeated “I’m sorry that I’m not Shiro,” gathers his belongings, and leaves.

Keith wants to punch the mirror till it shatters. This is low, even for him.

“What the fuck is wrong with me…” he hisses, running a shaky hand over his face.

Em glares at him as though she wants to set his mullet on fire, pink lips thinned out.

“Where’s Lance?” Keith asks tentatively, feeling himself shrinking up under the short girl’s intent gaze.

Em eyes him warily as though she’s considering whether she should answer the question or tell him to go fuck himself. Her shoulders sag a little when she deems Keith’s appearance guilty-looking enough. “Third floor, I think. It’s not a good idea to seek him out right now,” she mumbles, voice tinged with sadness on her brother’s behalf.

He’s in the wrong here. He knows it. “Thank you anyway.”
The girl huffs, suddenly pissed off. “Lance likes you a lot, you know. If you hurt his feelings, I’ll hurt you.”

“That’s fair.”

Em actually kicks his shin. Pretty hard. “Apologize to him, don’t be a shit.”

Well, if Lance wants to kill him for seeking him out, at least he can chalk it up to the extremely intimidating sister, glaring at him as though she wants to see his kidneys get pecked out by a flock of ravens.

Shiro seems just as disappointed with him but doesn’t say anything. He stands behind Em and stares his partner down until the man rounds a corner.

Keith only truly dares to seek out the brunet a few hours later, only six hours remaining till the final review.

True to his younger sibling’s words, Keith finds Lance at the third floor hall which is, naturally, off-limits, but keeping the other away is impossible. Keith tries to make his steps as silent as possible, ready to check on the other first and only then assess whether he should give it a few extra hours. Hours that they don’t have.

Keith doesn’t have the time to do any once-overs because he finds Lance curled up on the floor, rubbing at his ankle, banging a fist against the floor and muffling curses whenever he probes at the injury too much.

Keith’s by his side in a second. “Are you okay!?” he falls to his knees next to the other, hands hovering over the injured leg.

Lance recoils from him, wincing a little. His teeth are digging into his lower lip almost too painfully. “Peachy!”

“You don’t seem peachy, more like ‘lemony’. Let me take a look!” Keith’s tired of reasoning with the other as though he’s a petulant child.

“Ha ha, hilarious,” Lance hisses through clenched teeth, eyebrows pinched. “Here’s a thought, Mullet, don’t fucking touch me. I got this.” Lance says, as he clearly does not ‘got this’. He looks in a serious need of some painkillers and elastic bandages.

“Stop tossing around, you’re hurting yourself more. Let me – “ He smacks Lance’s twitchy fingers away and probes at the leg lightly, earning a hiss. “Looks like an old trauma with too much strain put on it.” Keith glares. “Let me guess - you’ve locked yourself up and started overworking.”

Lance’s nostrils flare up with indignation. He tries to slide out of Keith’s reach. “I’m fine, okay!? Let’s just get this done, ten minutes of rest and I’ll be as good as new,” he lies through his teeth, knowing perfectly well that it’s only going to get worse after this. He never should’ve tried to copy RB, this is what happens. A life-long ligament trauma, and now, degradation in front of the judges once again. Yay! “I do my part, you do yours, we pretend that we’re Bonnie and Clyde of the dance world, slay competition, hopefully not get verbally shanked, head home, never see each other again. Sounds like the perfect plan, right?”

“Lance – “
“I mean, I’m just a bother to you! I don’t know what I was expecting, ha. I never should’ve signed up for any of this. You probably think of me as some incompetent obstacle that’s holding you back – “

“Lan – “

“I know that I’m not Shiro, and will never be Shiro, but I don’t want to fuck this up for you, argh! I just can’t be like the two of you, alright!? I’m just dumb Lance with big dreams, ugh, now Allura will hate me! Estúpido, estúpido, estúpido – “ Lance looks close to smacking his leg in frustration and Keith’s patience snaps like a twig.

“For the love of! Will you just shut up already!?” he grips Lance’s slimmer hands in his, grip tight enough to almost bruise. He catches the other’s wild gaze. “Do you even hear yourself? Are you seriously that dense? Lance, you may not be Shiro, but that’s why you’re good. You’re your own goddamn person.”

The brunet takes in a sharp inhale, eyes gleaming with unshed tears. Keith continues. “I took it out on you and it was a damn shitty thing to do and I’m sorry but goddamn. Stop comparing yourself to others. You have your own dance style that’s unique and if we manage to pull this off, you’ll get to see just how well we match! And we match pretty damn well, Lance, I’ve known this from day one. I could’ve picked anyone and I still went for your arrogant ass! And do you know why? Because I saw the goddamn potential.”

“You’re just saying all this to make me feel better,” Lance chokes out, a tear slipping down one tanned cheek. His shoulders are shaking uncontrollably.

Keith’s throat is tight as he softens his hold and catches the straying droplet with his thumb, voice gentle. “No… I would never say this if I didn’t mean every single word. Shiro… he’s Shiro, okay? He’s good, it’s undeniable, but you gotta remember that you are you. Just as good in your own way.” Keith lines their foreheads together, giving the brown strands an awkward pat. “I took it out on you because of my own personal issues. This - this is the last dance that I’ve actually worked on very hard. It was supposed to be for me and Shiro, true, I was mad because you were ruining that vision, I guess, but this. This is good too. We can make it work. I – I just always feel guilty that he can no longer dance. He could, and yet, he took those bullets for me.”

Lance’s breath stutters against Keith’s damp lips and his eyes swim with more tears, a silent sob shaking his lean frame. “I’m so sorry, I didn’t know, I.”

Strong arms wrap around Keith’s stiff shoulders and the black-haired man sits still, lets the other cry on his shoulder and rubs soothing circles on his back. “It’s fine now, sthhh.”

“It’s not! I was being selfish,” Lance cries, the tip of his nose rubbing against the soft material.

“It’s okay.”

“Why are you so nice to me, I don’t deserve it?”

Keith stays quiet. Honestly? He doesn’t know.

He has a strong feeling as to ‘why’ though, especially after that night at the pub.

He carefully disentangles himself from the other when the shaking subsides and the teary noises die down. Keith offers his companion a hand to help him up. “Can you stand? Move around?”

“Y-Yeah. I’m used to this, it’s just gonna be a bitch to use my legs too much.”
“Then don’t,” Keith says and lets Lance use his shoulder for support, watches him shifting his weight, teeth digging into his lower lip to bite back a sound of discomfort. “Just stay here for a bit, I’ll get some stuff from the staff room. Don’t want others to see that you’re down and think that they’re losing competition.”

Lance forces a laugh, hopping on one leg and awkwardly leaning against a column. “We’ll win this,” he reassures himself rather than Keith.

The black-haired man pats him on the shoulder before rushing out.

“Thanks,” Lance whispers once more when Keith bandages the leg, touches extremely careful.

“You’ve already thanked me,” Keith doesn’t look up and continues working. The tips of his ears color a bright red.

“It’s never going to be enough,” Lance wails and another wave of tears gathers in his eyes.

His emotions are messier than his bedroom.

[18:42 pm] Group chat name changed to: klance is canon yes vs no

pornbot justice (Pidge Gunderson): Ladies.

Tonight is the final night to place your bets and win a hefty sum.

Bets are open until 8 p.m. aka the time of the final performance.

Beach hunk (Hunk Garrett) sent itsthefinalcountdown.mp3

It’s been an awesome five days but all good things must come to an end!! or continue, i guess we’ll see

30 bucks say that lance and keith get together at the end of this. 20 more is a dare

sirlancealot (Lance McClain): a dare you say

im listening

pornbot justice (Pidge Gunderson): 35 bucks if you and keith change up the moves and give us some fanservice

Beach hunk (Hunk Garrett): What pidge just said!!

sirlancealot (Lance McClain): i was planning on doing it either way weve encountered some technical difficulties so its unavoidable but thanks for the easy cash dudes

as for the getting together id hold onto that cash tbh

don’t think were gonna make it ive accepted this
pornbot justice (Pidge Gunderson): Why you lyin, friend?

sirlancealot (Lance McClain): no pidge listen its fine if we dont get together the point is that i made friends here

even jellybean boi wished me good luck

i think he had his brains fried somehow because wtf creepy

pornbot justice (Pidge Gunderson): You sound as though he has rejected you already, mate.

sirlancealot (Lance McClain): not exactly i just dont get ~the vibes~ from him. at one point today i really thought he was going to kiss me man it was the perfect romcom moment but with less com and more salt

dun dun dun he didn’t

what a shocker

i accept death if my leg doesnt kill me before this is over

pornbot justice (Pidge Gunderson) sent sadnessandsorrow.mp3

Beach hunk (Hunk Garrett): You know what screw it, 60 dollars that you are gonna get together mark my words, lance

sirlancealot (Lance McClain): i appreciate the enthusiasm bearbro but like let it go man youre just rubbing more salt into my achy breaky heart

pornbot justice (Pidge Gunderson): Me@Keith: “don’t break his heart, his achy breaky hearttttt~”

Curse of the Billy Ray Cyrus mullet, man, that’s what this is.

Beach hunk (Hunk Garrett): Me@lance: fuck your bad vibes, bro >: ( chin up!!!

Lance puts together the best outfit that he has at this point, digging out the nicest track pants and throwing on the light blue button-down over his black shirt for the aesthetic. Keith joins him in the packed hall a moment later, looking divine as always in his tight jeans and a loose red croptop.

“Thought you aren’t teaching.” Lance tries to joke, fixing his hat nervously. There’s a limp in his step, fuck.

Keith only shrugs. “I kind of am. Teaching the others their place.”

“Sick burns, pal,” Lance snorts and they make their way to the main hall of the event.

Lance goes over their moves, catching Keith’s form with unwavering arms, face emotionless when
they look into each other’s eyes. He tries to keep it impersonal, thinking of what could be changed that would make his friends’ jaws drop.

Hunk and Pidge sneak into the backstage, Hunk immediately dragging Keith away, squeezing something into his hands. Probably some good luck charm.

Em has given him hers, a braided bracelet with a small dolphin charm. He’s hugged the little struggling rascal, thanking her for actually giving a shit when it matters the most.

“Floor us, bro, and this will be over.” Pidge claps him on the shoulder a few times, grinning wide. “Maybe you’re gonna get the fame and the boy.”

“In my dreams, ha,” Lance sighs, trying not to sound too salty, sneaking in a secretive glance at Keith’s curvy form. Beautiful as always. A crater on the surface of his achy fucking breaky heart.

“We shall see,” Pidge says smugly as though they know something that Lance does not and then they have to drag Hunk away. The bigger man flashes him a thumbs up before the curtain falls back to place.

Keith hides Hunk’s item in the folds of his hoodie before Lance can see what it is. “Ready?”

“Not really,” the brunet replies honestly, anxiety beginning to surface. The crowd’s mumbling is rather ominous, even the wordless music cannot drown it out.

Keith says nothing, probably feeling the same.

When it’s their time to go, Lance catches the other’s wrist, making him turn around. “Just so you know I’m not doing this for you.”

“Didn’t expect it to be any other way.” Keith nods tersely but Lance’s grip tightens.

Now or never.

“No, hear me out... I may not be doing this for you, but just so it’s clear – this is for us. As a team.”

Keith doesn’t get to say anything in return because their names are called and they step into the lights for the second time at this cursed dance camp of hell and heaven combined.

Guess they’ll never talk this one out, huh.

They skip the introductions and the first beats of the song fill the air. Lance rolls up his sleeves, praying to every deity out there, wishing hard for his leg and bullshit to pull him through, and Keith bounces lightly as though testing his mobility, gathering some strength.

The first moves leave Lance feeling content, something based on his style rather than Keith’s. Keith keeps up with him just fine - completely synchronizing, Lance notices from the corner of his eyes - shifting his weight comfortably to the right, using powerful moves with his arms, locking at the right points as though he’s been dancing to this song in particular for years now.

The lights are no longer blinding. In fact, they kind of feel pleasant.

Their last dance. Gotta make it great.
He sees Keith perfectly well, winking at him at the right moment when they face away from the crowd and they work through those low squats followed by hip shimmies, Lance making his playful, a reflection of his style, stepping out just on time.

He starts counting down the seconds to the moment when he can start improvising.

‘Fulfill my fantasies - ’

The weird look that Keith shoots his way as Lance pulls his old choreo moves into that part is strange to say the least. He keeps up, still.

Lance’s mind is a buzzing beehive of counting down beats and then he sees a perfect opening, Keith’s arm raised, ready to do that awesome shift, but instead Lance sneaks up to him, placing the other’s arm on his shoulder and Keith doesn’t even look his way as they shift down as though it’s supposed to be like this. As though they’re one.

The crowd gives an appraising roar and Lance grins. He cannot believe how well they’re working together. It’s as though Keith’s reading his body language like an open book without even properly looking at him.

They face each other, nearly laughing, Lance’s arm loose around his waist, legs spread and dipping lower again, a personal tribute to the exaggerated booty shaking and their small ‘dance session’. Oh they’re going to leave some mouths hanging open.

Keith mock-waves Lance off when they’re rolling around on the floor – not scripted, oh god, and yet it works out perfectly, Keith is actually freestyling, what is Lance’s life even – and the brunet offers him a hand, ready to do that catch and spin.

Normally that would be the part where they end their routine but Lance feels like a little shit, silently whispering “I’m going to dip you now.”

Keith barely reacts to that, planting his feet firmly on the ground before Lance does it, both grinning wide at the crowd that goes wild.

The clapping is positively deafening.

Lance takes off his hat and holds up his free hand, burning the image of his smiling no-longer-instructor into his eyes. Who knows how long they have left – they’re one of today’s last performances.

Who knows if they’ll ever see each other again?

Lance can only hope that they’ll remain good friends even if his stomach churns with discomfort at the thought. He's really thought that there's something going on. Some spark, something.

“Slayed it!” the brunet hoots and pulls his hand away when Keith goes in for a high-five. “Too slow!” he teases, trying to defeat the beginnings of a certain kind of sadness pulling him under.

They leave the stage, Lance going for the left side while Keith goes for the right.

Lance would love to stay and look at the rest of the performances – sadly, Em didn’t make it, but she isn’t too upset about that – but he needs to pack his stuff. Pidge and Hunk have showered him in
praise and promised to wait in the hall, help him carry his things.

For the first time in a long while, he feels that he needs a moment to himself.

The sadness is beginning to bloom in his chest like a poisonous plant, spreading down his body like ivy tendrils.

If anyone told Lance McClain that one day he’d end up at a dance camp with RB members and actually enjoy it despite a few minor setbacks and a heavy start, he would’ve laughed into their face and said something along the lines of ‘lame joke, try harder’.

Well, the joke’s on him.

He feels that he should be seeking Keith out and thanking him for his time and infinite patience – Lance must’ve cost the other man a lot of nerves, judging by Keith’s final outburst – but he knows for sure that he’s most likely going to tear up before voicing any of it out. He’s been pretty terrible, he cannot deny it, but Keith wasn’t very nice to him either. No point in looking back to that now. They’re a team, a duo, and while they may not be RB, they’ll always be something – Lance and Keith, the Wonder team, red and blue, fire and water, two sides of the same coin.

“Leaving without saying anything? Didn’t peg you as that type of guy.”

Lance halts, turning around to meet Keith, face kept impassive. As impassive as it can get now that he is desperately fighting back the sharp pangs of pain coursing down his body. “I’ve got a lot of packing up left. Would’ve properly said ‘goodbye’ afterwards.” Maybe. Not really.

Keith closes in on him, inspecting Lance’s snapback, squinting. It’s the one from that night a lifetime ago. “Remember that douche I told you ‘bout? The one in the flashy snapback,” Keith steals his hat like the goddamn tease that he is. Lance almost wants to crack up at the irony. He watches Keith pull the hat over his head. “He ran off on me too. So yeah, I don’t really trust you enough with this.”

Lance coughs into his fist, shifting his weight awkwardly. His leg is killing him. “Best of luck finding that asshole. He’s undeserving if he bailed on you like that.”

Keith laces his fingers behind his back, crossing his ankles. “Oh, I agree. I’m going to ask him why he did that the moment I see him again, along with some other stuff. I was pretty damn curious, you know.”

Lance is at a loss of words, feeling bitter regret and anger directed at himself for acting like such a coward. He doesn’t want to damage his view in Keith’s eyes even further. He’s already been acting like a huge needy baby.

It’s better if they never talk this one out.

“I, uh, really gotta go now. I’ll see you in the hall, man.” Lance vaguely gestures behind himself, taking a few steps back in the direction of the grand staircase, head lowered in defeat.

The next three seconds are a blur.

“Hey, Lance, think fast!” the black-haired man says, and Lance feels some cold gooey stuff splashing onto his face, dripping in rivulets of electric blue.

Son of a bitch, that kinda stings!

“Keith, what the shit!?“ Lance coughs, spitting some substance from his open mouth, nose wrinkling
at the taste. Paint. It’s bloody paint. “What’s gotten into you – “

He feels Keith’s cool palm rubbing at the lower half of his face, and with a dull sense of horror in his gut, Lance watches him retract the hand, completely covered in smudged electric blue paint.

Oh. Oh no.

The snapback is back on his head and Keith’s smile is smug when he speaks up again. “I knew it was you. Those moves are unmistakable. You’re the mystery guy, Lance.”

Lance’s eyes are the size of saucers and he opens his mouth a few times only to close it dumbly. He tries to force a grin, spreading his arms. “Bam! Surprise!” he rather lamely attempts to regain at least some of his lost dignity. “It is I, the mystery douche in a snapback, from team Voltron in case you’ve forgotten. And now I must skedaddle. It was pretty fly dancing with you, Keith!” he squeaks, voice high-pitched, and attempts to bail – oh the irony once again – but Keith tugs him back by the sleeve, leaving bright blue fingerprints all over it.

“Not so fast! I’ve got stuff to ask.”

“Please don’t,” Lance winces, covering his face with his free hand, smudging the paint even further. “I already know that this was a horrible idea and I ran off on you and I’m sorry! I didn’t mean to, I – “

“It’s okay, you came back so I kinda forgive you.” Keith’s fingers curl into the collar of his shirt, indigo eyes flickering to his lips for a second. “Here’s the catch – I’m going to forgive you if you actually kiss me this time. It’s been like a year.”

Lance stumbles forward, knees too weak to hold his weight. Is this really happening, what the hell, oh god –

Did Keith just seriously ask him that?

“Unless you don’t want to…?” the black-haired man trails off, a little confused, and Lance only shakes his head to the sides rapidly like the desperate nerd that he is, sadness replaced by warm fuzzy feelings, threatening to overspill.

“No, no no no, no takebacks, here I go,” he babbles nervously, leaning in. Keith laughs when Lance’s snapback gets in the way, bumping against his forehead awkwardly, and he pushes the neon blue rim to the side, finally meshing their lips together.

Lance dies and goes to heaven like three times in a row, one of his legs popping up as though this is a teen romance movie. A mistake, because ouch!

Keith’s kisses are a little clumsy and inexperienced, but Lance will teach him all of his techniques if the other lets him. He’ll teach him a whole lot more things in the future too.

“You wanna dip me maybe? For that ultimate cheesy effect?” Lance whispers against the other’s soft lips.

Keith complies.
They don’t win the first place, but Lance walks out feeling like the king of the world anyway.

“You know,” Keith says, taking a bite of his fry. “You should seriously consider starting a dance choreo channel.”

“Oh my god, yes!” Pidge squeaks, nearly dropping their ice cream. “We could be, so famous! Especially if Keith and Shiro agree to throw around some promos.”

“Or I can simply be a frequent guest,” the mentioned man shrugs. “I mean, someone’s gotta keep Lance in check. The fame might get to your thick head too much, McClain.”

“Do you wanna go, pretty boy!?” Lance roars, his eyebrow twitching. How dare –

“Oh I wanna. Come at me!”

“Yeah, you wanna go, you wanna go on a fucking date!?”

“We’re already on a date!”

Hunk finishes up his cola, facing Pidge and shrugging. “And all is well.”

All is well, indeed.

Except that they get kicked out for throwing around fries.

“Stop tugging on your sweater like that. It’s just a family dinner, not a wedding, sheesh,” Lance reprimands his date, smacking his fingers away from a loose thread hanging in the other’s sleeve. “Ma cooked up a storm; I think we could feed half of America’s population like this.”

“No pressure, am I right, McClain?” Keith mumbles moodily, fixing his hair now. Lance can see right through that fake chill façade, he’s too nervous to function.

“Will you still be calling me McClain when we share the same last name?” Lance chirps and rings the doorbell again.

“What?”

“Nothing, nothing.”

“You know what, you’re – you’re insufferable!” Keith huffs, face a little red. Lance kind of wants to kiss it. No, scratch that - he really wants to do it.

So he goes for it.
It’s how they usually end their petty arguments as of late.

Pidge opens the door, face scrunching up when they see Lance backing Keith up against the wall. “Ma, they’re being gross again!” Pidge calls out and Em yells somewhere from the hallway. “Use the spray bottle, it works for me. They should calm down.”

“Don’t be hating my game just because you’re jealous,” Lance laughs, quickly pecking Keith on the cheek one last time and dragging his boyfriend inside.

This is the guy he’ll eat all the nut cheese for, he thinks, when he sees a huge one laying on the kitchen table.

This is the guy who is his equal and always will be.

Chapter End Notes

And then they were never accepted to that Mickey Ds ever again, the end. Lance did get his youtube channel though and became a celebrity, but it didn't get to his head... much.

We've reached the end, folks! I'm not one for lengthy closing messages, but I feel like this fic deserves one. To all of you who enjoyed this fic, I send you guys my love! I'm glad that it has inspired some people to get back to dancing and heck, I'm just glad that you stuck with this till the very end.

A special thanks to Em (yes, the sis is named after m'bro) and Jack, who were big help when it came to dealing with some... negative comments. A final message that Em has offered: if you guys stuck around till the very end and didn't judge the entire plot after the first three sentences, you are worthy. we call this tactic 'weeding out the weak'. And Jack, sorry for the lack of OAMS and meta jokes. I really wanted to put in some. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XIB6gDWy16A the finale dance!

End Notes

the amount of research i had to do is like hrghhghhrghh\ this entire chapter was the plot-buildup tbh

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