Lance takes the job for the money.

Love is apparently a package deal.
Chapter Notes

*jazz hands* im here to bring you your filthy cliche stripper au

See the end of the chapter for more notes

You know, the whole thing about destiny is kinda’ bullshit. Divine intervention? Fate? People like to spew that shit when good stuff happens, but what about the bad?

Was it fate when Lance dropped out of college? Was it destiny for his parents to give him the good ol’ boot out the door?

Nah, but Lance does what he can, you feel? There’s no need to dwell on the bad- he makes lemonade out of limes, or whatever.

Instead of idealistic concepts, Lance focuses on the one true thing in life. The one thing that matters. The only united entity that connects the world.

Money.

Lance needs some dough, okay? He be needin’ cash, like, yesterday. College was a no-go, the grocery store job was a double no, and he just wasn’t made to be a garbage man. Good cash, bad for the skin.

So that’s how he ended up here, sitting in a dark, red-wallpapered hallway, the crusty chair under his ass creaking with every shift. It smells like sex and bodybutter, which isn’t all too surprising. Music thumps from the floor below him, and sometimes the orange light above his head flickers.

He waits long enough to regret coming – he waits even longer cursing Hunk and the day he was born. It’s all because of him that he’s here.

My work is hiring! He says. They’re looking for dancers! He says.

The creaky door swings open with a shout, and Lance clenches his asscheeks out of fear -sitting up straight when Handlebar Man looks his way.

He smiles, gentlemanly, just like he’s dressed. “Ello’ there! Weren’t waitin’ long, were ya’?”

“Nope!” Lance lies, because he got here an hour ago.

“Wonderful! Allura is ready to see you.”

He stands off of Creaky McSqueaky and wobbles through one old hallway, into an even older looking room. The wallpaper looks like something out of his grandma’s kitchen, floral, and pale. There’s weird decorations on the walls, like an iron sculpture of a nose, and dried petunias.

“Hello!” The bosslady smiles from behind her square desk, rising to shake his hand. “I’m Allura.”

“Lance.” He grins, “Nice to meet you.”
“And you.” She nods, “Please, sit.”

He does, and sighs when the chair doesn’t squeak. Allura sits as well; she’s a pretty thing, older, but the good kind of old. Mature, is the word Lance is looking for. Mature. She’s got that pretty British accent too.

“So,” she smiles, looking down at the paper on her desk, “I received your resume.”

“Yes.”

“I’m just going to cut to the chase here. Why do you want the job?”

“Well…” Lance begins, and flicks on the charm like he knows, “…when I was little I always thought when I grow up, I want to be a stripper-“

Allura’s smile falters, and she narrows her eyes, “Lance.”

“I need money.” Lance cuts off, seriously. “I thought this might be a good fit for me.”

“Hmm.” Allura scans the paper, “This isn’t an easy job.”

“I know.”

“You’re twenty-two?”

“Yes.”

“Young.”

“Y-yeah.”

“They like ‘em young, you know.” Mustache Man pipes, scaring the life out of Lance, because he forgot the damn bastard was there, standing by the door.

“I know.” Allura hums, “But we’ve had some good applicants.” She looks him in the eye, “Tell me. Why should I give you the job?”

“Well,” Lance throws his imaginary hair over his shoulder, “I am beautiful, after all. I thought I’d share this with the world.” He gestures to himself, and raises a cocky eyebrow.

Allura’s face falls flat. A beat drops, before Allura crushes his resume in her strong, mature little palm and says, “Next.”

Lance jolts, “Wait, wait!” He stands, “P-please, I’m just kidding. I- I really need this job.”

“Then please take this seriously.” She snaps, those eyes scary as hell, “This isn’t a game. If you don’t make the club money, then you’re a waste of time.”

“I can dance.” Lance blurts out, “It was written there, uh, there-“ he gestures to the crumpled up resume, “-on the paper you crushed in your man hands.”

Allura ignores the insult, “What can you dance?”

“I took hip-hop and salsa for years. I used to go clubbing a lot too.”

“Then tell me, Lance.” She folds her hands together, the angry lines on her forehead smoothing out,
“Have you ever stripped?”

He was like, four hundred percent sure he fucked up that interview. His damn mouth is it’s own entity entirely, Lance is sure.

Ah, but he gets a phone call from Allura’s Buffalo Bill henchman, and about shits his pants when he says he starts on Monday. Lance calls Hunk, screaming words that aren’t really words.

Blah blah blah, long story short, Lance ends up here on a Monday morning, standing on the street corner across from Denny’s, staring at the unlit sign.

The Paladin

Weird. A little too nineties, for Lance’s taste, but whatever. Dough is dough, moola is moola.

He’s been to strip clubs; he’s liked what he’s seen, so, here goes nothing.

The door pushes open with a creak – the club is bright and silent, chairs upside down on tables, the stage glistening under the skylight, poles being rubbed down by a worker. He closes the door behind him with a jingle, and breathes in the musty air. A bar sits to the far right, barstools up on the counter as well.

“Lance!”

He jolts, and looks to see Coran- Coran, is his name – walking his way with a chirpy smile, rolling his mustache between his fingers.

“Glad to see you here on time!”

“No trust.” Lance jokes, and shakes his hand, “Thanks for the job, man.”

“Of course! We have the utmost amount of faith in you.”

Lance raises an eyebrow, and Coran laughs.

“Come, come. I’ll give you a quick tour.”

This place is actually a lot bigger than it seems. There’s an entire dance studio in the back, mats on the floor, dancers stretching, music playing softly. There’s some practice poles- a few girls swirl around them with ease.

“So, this is the studio,” Coran smiles. “Allura and I are the lead choreographers. As you know, this is an LGBT friendly club, so, we do female and male shows.”

Lance nods; at least his bi ass belongs.

“So, until you learn the choreography, you’ll be spending time here, before we’re confident enough to put you on stage.” Coran shifts in the doorway, “Watch these guys. Learn whatcha’ can. They’re quite talented.”
Lance looks to the room; they’re a snobby bunch, heads held high, bootyshorts and tanktops tighter than skin. There are certainly some pretty ones – he notices a strong lookin’ guy doing stretches on a yoga mat – multi colored hair, nice muscles. Daddy material-

“Hey, Coran.” A dancer stands, dusting off his yoga pants and running a hand through his long hair – the bro needs a haircut, for real. Ah, but Lance looks him over, head to toe, and decides he is pretty hot. He’s toned, but slender, all smooth skin and confident lines. He nods, “Is this the new meat?”

“You betcha’!”

“Hey.” Lance smiles, and sticks out his hand. “I’m Lance.”

The dancer eyes him, up and down, and crosses his arms, “He doesn’t look like much. This is the best you guys could find?”

Lance takes back his hand and snaps, “Hey, well, fuck you too buddy-“

“Now, now.” Coran laughs, “Keith, haven’t I told ya’ to never judge a book by its cover?”

“We needed someone strong Coran.” The Asshole Named Keith grits, “Someone to do the lifts with Shiro. This guy couldn’t lift a chair.”

Lance grinds his teeth – puffs out his chest and opens his mouth to argue – he hates snobby dickwads, and this guy is the dictionary definition of a pussyfart. Fuck his clear skin, fuck his nice hair-

“Yes, but he has dance experience. I thought he’d be a nice addition to the team. You trust Allura’s judgement, don’tcha’?”

Keith hesitates, rolling around his tongue in his mouth before shrugging. “I guess you’re right.” He turns to Lance and sticks out a hand, covered in a fingerless glove, “Sorry. I’m Keith.”

Lance swallows, his head reeling. He narrows his eyes and sputters, “What the hell? Are you bipolar?” He shakes his hand anyways.

“No.” Keith snaps, “I just want this club to do well. Don’t fuck up, alright?”

Lance pulls back his hand and glares.

“Allrighty.” Coran chuckles, and nudges Lance with his elbow, “Let’s get a move on, shall we?”

Lance grumbles through the rest of the tour – all he remembers is a break room, something about a rule book to read through, something else about this being one of the oldest buildings in town, and a wardrobe. Wait, what.

“What?” Lance blinks back, looking around the room full of empty vanities.

“I said that this is the makeup room! You’ll come here to get dressed up.” Coran winks.

“Right.”

“Are you against wearing dresses?”
“Nah. I wear skirts.”

“Perfect.” Coran grins, and continues walking. “We have themed shows sometimes. They’re a real hoot.”

“I’m sure.” Lance smiles back. “Do I get to wear a garter belt? I’ve always wanted one of those.”

“You’d be quite surprised.”

“Yesss.” Lance draws out the S, and laughs when Coran smiles.

“That about ends the tour.” He gestures with a smile, “If you have time tonight, I do recommend you coming by.”

“Why’s that?”

“Just t’ get a feel for the place. You know, watch our dancers work.”

Lance thinks of Keith, and cringes. Asshole. Shithead. Douche canoe-

“If you’re upset by Keith, please don’t be.” Coran reads his face, “That’s just how he is. He’s incredibly blunt, but a fine lad. Very talented, too. Especially friendly once you get to know ‘em.”

Lance wants to huff- say no, he’s a big stupid doodo head who thinks I’m too skinny – but instead he nods, and says, “Alright, Coran. I’ll come by.”

“Wonderful! Just be sure to-“

The front door chimes open, and a figure walks in, small, but with purpose. Their round glasses sculpt their face, wily short hair a mess. Coran cuts himself short and turns, with a smile.

The figure waves, “Hey, Coran.”

“Pidge! You’re here early today.”

The Small One Named Pidge shrugs, “I wanted to practice a few drinks. I came up with a new one called The Scrooge McDuck and I want Allura to try it.”

“Ah.” Coran blinks, “Well, I’m sure she’ll adore it.” He turns with a smile, “Lance, this is Pidge, our one of a kind bartender. They, them, if you will.”

Pidge extends their hand, “Hey.”

“Hi.” Lance shakes it, “I’m Lance.”

“I heard.” Pidge turns, “New dancer?”

“Correct!”

Pidge hums, and pulls back their hand, eyes scanning him over, “He doesn’t look like much.”

Lance sputters, “S-Seriously? Again with this?”

Coran laughs, “He danced for us. I think he’s a perfect fit.”

Pidge raises an eyebrow, but slumps to their bar with a shrug, “Alright. I trust Allura.”
Lance sniffs through like, *half* his laundry basket before he finds something that smells okay-ish. Lance hates living like this; he’s not a *slob*, he’s just out of laundry detergent, and his spare cash is going towards groceries, bruh.

The shirt is an old band-tee; he bites his cheek and decides to hack at it with some scissors, thinking maybe if he slices it up enough, he can call it a Forever21 *distressed French tee*.

It slides off his shoulders now, which is fine – it matches the holes in his skinny jeans. He throws over a bomberjacket and walks the half mile to the club, huffing into his hands when a breeze blows.

He can hear the club music from a block away; it thumps on and on – he can see the line wrapping around the corner. He slides past them, right up to his big buddy at the door, arguing with a girl in a miniskirt, an arm around her girlfriend.

“Look, I can’t let you in without ID.”

“Come on! I promise I’m twenty one, I just left it at home.”

“Sorry, you’ll have to leave-“ Hunk looks up and sees Lance. He grins, and leaves the other bouncer to argue, “Lance, my man.”

“Hey buddy.” Lance smiles, “Do I need to show my ID?”

“Nah, you’re on the VIP list bro. Come on in.” He lifts up the velvet rope, and the girl barks out a complaint. Lance clasps Hunk on the shoulder, and dips into the club.

And uh, woah. The quiet, soft, serene club from this morning is all gone. The bar is lit up in lights, Pidge grinning and twirling drinks. The stage blasts music, two girls on poles slippery and soft, swirling around and rolling their hips. The DJ sits up in his booth, one hand on his headphone, the other flicking switches as the music bobs.

Lance gets jostled by a few passerbys, so he does his best to squeeze to an open table. The room is half full, but for a few seats in the back. Lance squishes in – winces when he trips over someone’s foot, and settles down with a huff.

The lights change with the music – a cute waitress comes by with a plate. Cute, strong looking girl.

“Hello!” She smiles, “I’m Shay, and I’ll be serving you tonight. Would you like a drink to start off with?”

Lance looks up and blinks – he wants to say *fuuuuck yes*, but he’s got maybe six pennies and a paperclip in his pocket, so he shakes his head no. She slips away with a polite nod, and Lance looks back to the stage.

The girls are beautiful – Lance ogles their soft legs and perky boobs, but metaphorically stabs himself with a needle, and tells himself to focus.

Lance is a funny guy. He makes jokes. But he, uh, really needs this job.
He watches the girls – watches them in how they move, deep dips, wide hip swirls, strong arms to lift them up on the pole. He studies their legs as they hold onto the pole—*damn* that’s some serious strength. Lance might need a gym membership, as much as he hates to admit it.

Ah, but he has his own abilities. That’s what he tells himself—his *own* trump card, from all the years and years of dancing. From the people he slept with in college. From standing in front of his bathroom mirror and singing Britney Spears like he was born to. He can summon some sex appeal—fuck the haters, yo.

Don’t get discouraged, Lance. Breathing is a two-part system, in, and out.

Eventually the DJ comes on mic, the music lowering. The girls begin to stand up and walk off stage. He says with a chirp, “*Thanks, ladies. Beautiful job, you did.*” They wave to the audience, pulling dollar bills out of their bras and smiling. The DJ continues, “*Give ’em a hand, will you? Yeeeah, gorgeous.*” The stage dims, “*Now, for your favorite husky lion.*”

The crowd cheers, and grows; Lance sits up in his seat with interest.

“*Who wants a dance from the Purple Paladin?*”

The audience roars, hands shooting up, from men and women alike. People wave dollar bills, other call and scream.

Okay, cool. So, the place is full of regulars.

“*Someone~ told me a lady out there has a birthday, yeah?*”

There’s more screaming—spotlight singles out a girl, covering her face in her hands as her friends laugh and squeal.

“*Come on up, darling.*”

The ‘paladin’ steps out, a chair in arm; Lance recognizes him as the super-hot dancer stretching on the mat this morning. Except, uh, Lance notices a *prosthetic arm*, smooth, and metal, moving like a human arm would. Lance definitely didn’t catch that this morning, holy shit. He looks like a superhero, or like something out of a wet dream, goddamn.

He’s in low sweatpants and a tank, smiling a little too warmly to be in this kind of work. The girl is ushered up on stage, wiggling and squirming, flushing but smiling.

The DJ laughs, “*It’s alright, sweetheart. Shiro will go slow.*”

The crowd laughs and hollers, but Lance focuses on the name.

*Shiro.*

The girl takes a seat, face red, hands braced on either side of the chair.

“*Alright! Now you know the rule – no touching!*”

The lights dim, the music turns up. Shiro folds his hands behind his back and smiles.

Lance prepares himself for like, a tidal wave of secondhand embarrassment. This guy does *not* look like a stripper – yeah, he’s hot as fuck, but he just looks so…kind. Sweet. Like he’d hold the door open for you at the grocery store. A real Steve Rodgers lookin’ fucker.
Except, he eyes the girl in the chair, gives her a soft smile, and rolls his body in a way that should be one hundred percent illegal.

Lance’s mouth falls open, and his eyes swell wide.

Shiro rolls his body once, twice, fingers smoothing down his chest. He twists his hands in the bottom of his shirt before sliding it up off his chest and hoooooo booooy- you could grind meat on those abs, my dude.

The shirt gets tossed, and the crowd cheers. The girl squirms with a smile.

Shiro rolls forwards, sweatpants so, so low on those hips, as he ruts down, and grips the chair behind the girl’s back. He lowers himself, both prosthetic and human hands locking together as he gyrates his hips.

This guy’s body is earth and water, strong and firm but melting hot and fluid. He makes it look so manly – like he could breathe Axe bodyspray out of his nose like a dragon.

His right hand, the human one, pulls back toward his own stomach. His fingers dip down, down, toward his hips, thumb hooking into his sweatpants before pulling back. His body still swirls with the music, thighs wide across her hips. He pulls back with a grin, stands up confidently; he slips his fingers down the sides of his sweatpants. The fabric teases, pulling with the concept of coming off, but not yet. His hands pull back up, and high above his head, still rolling with the beat.

Lance suddenly feels so small. The world drops around him, swirls and numbs and just becomes him. This Shiro guy. Lance assumes that’s what a job well done is- making your audience feel nothing but you.

Wow, oh wow, is he beautiful.

Shiro slips back up to her, braces a knee between her thighs, and lifts himself up, those abs now inches from her nose. The girl gasps, twisting with the work of staying still. Fuckin’ hell, Lance can’t blame her. He’s got a half- chub just from watching the guy.

Then, oh then, Shiro rolls his hips in a way that can almost be described has dry humping, and the audience hollers. Money flies from all directions, sliding across the cool, shiny stage.

The entire time Shiro’s face is calm, a resting smile in place. Lance suddenly believes in fate, destiny, whatever the hell got him in this seat, watching this guy.

Shiro is very, very good at what he does.

When he slides off her lap once more, and slips his hands down his pants, Lance literally holds his breath. Shiro rolls his sweats down halfway, purple and black spandex shorts underneath – cheers and money, cash and screaming – he pulls it back up, then down again, before pushing the sweatpants to the top of his thighs, and straddling her once more.

His prosthetic arm moves so fluidly, the cool metal a beautiful contrast against his skin. He’s got a few scars on his back, where sweat slicks down softly.

When the pants come off, Lance sees god. Or Shiro’s thighs, which are comparatively the same thing, because they are surreal. Defined and strong, leading up to a perfect ass covered by spandex. Damn, what the hell is fueling that ass?

Money rains, and Shiro grinds into her lap, and Lance has never been so jealous in his life.
It ends all too soon, the lights rising, Shiro bowing and pressing a polite kiss against the girl’s cheek, before slipping back behind the stage.

Lance has whiplash. Or like, blue balls? Hell, Lance doesn’t even know. Holy shit.

“Enjoying the show?”

Lance jumps a little – he looks up and sees Allura, smiling smugly. She takes a seat next to him, crossing her coy little arms.

“Um.” Lance chokes.

“Thought so.” Allura grins, “Shiro is one of our best.”

“Do I get a cool stripper name?”

“If you prove yourself, you'll become a lion." Allura mumbles, "Not sure what color."

Lance has no idea what the fuck that means, so he looks back to the stage, where girls come back to dance.

“So, what’s the plan for me?” Lance asks, “Lap dances? Poles?”

“You’ll see.” Allura smiles. “Group performances first. You have to work up to single shows.”

Lance shrugs, “Fair enough.”

“Although…” Allura eyes him, “I have a few ideas.”

“Huh?”

“Nothing.” She turns back, and begins to stand, “Enjoy the show while you can. It’s all hard work from here.” She pats his shoulder, “Keith is up next. Prepare yourself.”

Lance sputters, “Prepare myself? For that stuck up dickface?”

Allura smirks, and gives him another pat, “You’ll see.”

She slips away, gone to the crowd, just as the lights simmer red.

Chapter End Notes

so., i had alot of fun with my other shklance fic, so i thought id try something a little longer ha

disclosure~ this is 100% not how a strip club works lmao, this is just something for fun
Chapter 2

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Man, this sucks ass.

Lance folds his arms and pouts. Whatever, whatever. He doesn’t want to stay, but he guesses he will, just to see how good this Keith guy really is. He’s probably basic as hell. Probably hates dogs, too – he looks like he would. Dog hater.

The DJ turns the music back down to a low hum. He calls out with a grin, from high up at his booth, “Wonderful evening so far, don’t you guys think?” The audience cheers, and he pipes, “Yeah! That’s it, ladies and gents. Who’s ready for your red paladin?”

The audience swells, the room growing hot, money already falling to the stage. Lance huffs, and sits back, feet stretching to push up against the leg of the table. He should just go-

The lights spin to the stage; it's not a huge platform, but the illumination makes it seem grander than it really is. Keith steps out, already shirtless, but in skintight leggings, glittery black with swirls of red. The fucker looks pretty, makeup to match, mullet messy and tousled. He’s got that ‘effortlessly sexy’ vibe going on, which is mildly infuriating.

He gives a little wave to the audience, but his resting bitch face is prominent. The music swells louder- a remix of some Beyonce song, or whatever. Keith goes to work.

Like Shiro, he starts out slow. Soft, little body rolls. Hands high above his head, twisting and rolling languidly, eyes half lidded, mouth pressed in a firm line. His body rolls up, and his left hand falls down, to press against his navel as he dances. His body is so goddamn tight, like, zero body fat whatsoever, skinny twink-ass lines of muscle.

Keith isn't over the top – just slow, and annoyingly erotic. His hand moves again, this time slowly reaching for the pole. His index finger traces it, before taking hold – and as soon as he’s got it his body dips, falling with the strength of that hand, doing a full twirl around the base of the pole before standing up again.

It happens so fast, so purposeful and strong, that Lance shoots up in his chair.

Keith starts again; he slides both hands up to the pole, reaching behind his head. He tips his head and drops, thighs spreading, balancing on his toes before standing back up. He gyrates his hips against the pole and drops again, grinding against the pole beautifully.

Fuck. Fuck. Shit.

Keith reaches up higher on the pole and kicks up, locking an elbow and using his strength to twirl around the bar. His legs slide apart, and back together, defying all gravity. His dancing is captivating – it sucks you in, addicted to the easy movements, and effortless grinds against the pole. Keith just looks so comfortable in his skin, like he’s not on a stage at all, like this is something he does in his sleep.

Lance is pissed. A little pissed, a little turned on, a little inspired. He swallows his pride – thinks okay, fine, whatever, he’s good, whatever, okay, okay – and pouts. Lance is a grownup.
Keith is just so good – he grips the pole and climbs it, a thigh hooking around the bar, using momentum to push him. He dances slowly, intimately, so erotic that it rains money.

Lance feels antsy, suddenly, the need to be up there. He wants on that stage, under those lights, against that pole. He wants to be better – to captivate an audience, like the one Keith has now. Lance is gonna’ be his damn rival, if he has to – practice all day until he can grind like that.

Speaking of, Keith is now teasing beneath the waist of his leggings. Instead, unlike Shiro, he doesn’t smile. He just stares, seriously, right into the audience – right at Lance.

So, so much blood is going into Lance’s dick right now, which is so not cool, dick, but he can’t control that shit.

So he sits there and stares, stares, stares as Keith drops down again, spreading his thighs and rolling back up, pushing the spandex halfway down his ass and back up. Fuck, he’s got a nice ass too.

He dances around the pole with abandon, fast and slow, legs and arms bracing, sometimes letting him fall and catching himself again. It’s effortlessly sexy – more money rains. He climbs the pole, locks his hands around the bar, and falls upside down, thighs slowly spreading out in a perfect split. How the fuck, how the fuck?!

Alright, okay. Lance is a big enough man to admit that move is dank as fuck.

Keith brings his legs back up, locks his ankles around the pole, and lets go – the crowd gasps as Keith spreads his arms out wide, and rolls his wrists to the beat.

In another fast whirl of limbs, Keith ends back up on the ground, sinking to his knees, prodding his hands up his naked chest, and through his hair. He teases his leggings, tugs them down to his thighs, and reaches for the pole again. Keith is swimming in cash – his face flickers with emotion for the first time yet – a well-placed smirk, that makes Lance fully hard.

Lance shifts in the chair, and grinds his teeth.

Yes, yes. Lance will become as good as him – Shiro, too. He’ll get his own show. He’s gonna’ rock the fuck out of this job.

Lance goes home and contemplates his existence. There’s this fiery, burning feeling in his chest. And uh, his dick too, but he takes care of that in the shower.

“So?” Hunk asks, legs up on his couch, “What did you think?”

“Hm?”

“Of the club?”

“Oh.” Lance blinks, “Pretty cool.”

Hunk grins, “Pretty cool? I came over to say hi, but you were hardcore ogling the dancers.”
Lance chews on the inside of his cheek, “They’re uh…good. Pretty good. Okay, ish.”

Hunk laughs and settles back into the chair, grabbing another slice of pizza, “Sure, buddy. I thought we were over the sexuality crisis.”


“Yeah?”

“The uh, purple guy. Purple lion, man.” Lance gestures with his hand, “What’s with the uh,” he sticks out his elbow, and Hunk makes a noise of acknowledgement.

“Shiro’s arm?”

“Yeah.”

“Mm.” Hunk chews on the inside of his cheek, and shifts, “Well, Shiro is kind of a private guy, but I guess it’s pretty much common knowledge in the club.”

“What is?”

“That Shiro is ex-military.” Hunk sips his drink, and continues, “Lost his arm abroad.”

Lance pauses. Guilt swells a little in his gut, and he blinks, “Oh.”

“Yeah.” Hunk sighs, “Came home, and his wife couldn’t deal with the PTSD and the amputation. Divorced the poor guy.”

“Oh my god.”

Hunk shrugs, “It was really sad. I met him through the club. I think he started stripping because he didn’t have any experience, other than in the army.”

“Fuckin’ hell.” Lance crosses his arms, “That’s so sad. How old is he?”

“Maybe a year or two older than us?”

“Fuck.”

“Well, I’ll tell you this. Shiro is literally the nicest guy I’ve ever met.” Hunk laughs, “I think there’s a universal don’t make Shiro sad rule in the club. That’s not in your handbook, but it’s strongly implied.”

“Noted.” Lance nods. “So uh, where did he get that super rad arm?”

“Oh!” Hunk perks up, smiling, “Pidge and I! Last year I found out we were in the same bio-mechanical engineering class.”

“What, really?”

“Yep! Pidge came up to me with some schematics for a better prosthesis. Shiro had an okay one, but it didn’t do much, other than bend at the elbow. Pidge and I did our entire thesis on the arm, trying to make it have movement in the fingers. Thank god for 3D printing.”

“Jeez, that’s what you were working on all year?” Lance laughs, “Stop being so smart.”
Hunk laughs too, “The hard work was seriously worth it. Watching Shiro work his fingers again for the first time in years was sublime.”

Lance grins, and nudges Hunk with his foot, “You’re a good guy, buddy.”

“Wish I could say the same about you.”

“Asshole!” Lance kicks him laughing, “Jerkwad!”

“I’m kidding! I’m kidding!”

The studio is quiet. A few girls stretch off in the corner, chattering with the music.

Lance stretches his arms high above his head, and wiggles anxiously. He’s ready to start, ready to learn, ready to work.

The little radio sometimes catches static, and the lights above occasionally flicker, giving the studio this old ambiance. He looks to the long mirrors in front of him, and sighs, sitting down to stretch out his legs. He warms up, fingers grabbing his toes, sometimes pressing his forehead to his knees.

He jumps at a chirpy tone, “Wow, you sure are stretchy, aren’tcha?”

Lance looks up, and scrambles to sit normally, “Er-“

“That’s good.” Allura smiles, and crosses her arms, “We don’t have to put you through the taffy stretcher.” She looks cute, in her sports bra and leggings – but he’s learned that Allura is scary as fuck, so, he’s gonna’ try to reel back the flirting. He likes where his dick is currently, thanks.

“Um, do I even want to know what that means?”

“Nope.” Allura smirks, “Stand up. Are you ready to learn some basic dance moves?”

“Definitely.” Lance grins, folding his hands behind his back. All he has to practice in is an old pair of joggers, and a baggy shirt. He doesn’t look like any of the other sparkly, skimpy little things, but whatever. When he gets his first paycheck he’ll invest in some shorts.

“Wonderful!” Coran claps, “We won’t touch the pole today, but we can start with basic choreography.”

Lance nods, maybe less confident than his face shows, but it’s cool, it’s cool. He’s a somewhat fast learner.

Coran is patient with him. He shows him the steps twice, gives him a thumbs up when he does the body rolls right. Er, but Allura isn’t so patient - when he stumbles, she barks, when he doesn’t drop right, she huffs.

“Here.” Allura jabs her fingers into Lance’s stomach, “Suck it in _here._”

“I have nothing to _suck in._”

“Do it anyways!”

Lance huffs, and breathes in, doing the slow roll, before sliding his thighs apart and dropping to his
“Better.” Coran nods, “But you’re a little shaky. You took salsa, yeah?”

“Yeah?” Lance stands up.

“Try remembering some of that. Sex appeal, you know, is the seller.”

Lance nods, “Right.” He goes to try again.

He sits in the corner, sipping water, watching the other dancers practice. They lift themselves easily, so fluid, like water.

*Water, water.* Lance thinks, *I have to be like water.*

When Shiro and Keith walk in, Lance about snorts Dasani out his nose. Shiro’s arm drapes around Keith’s shoulder easily, squeezing him once before letting go. Keith hugs him around the waist, the damn bastard smug as hell, before dropping his bag to the ground and rummaging through it.

Lance folds his hand over his mouth to hide his gape, gluing his eyes to the floor.

“Oh, did I not mention they were dating?”

Lance jolts, and looks to glare up at Coran. He winds his mustache between his fingers, smiling oh-so innocently. Lance grumbles, “No. Must’ve slipped your mind.”

“Must have! They’re a cute couple. You ought’ to watch their duet shows. They’re quite popular.”

*I can imagine.*

Lance watches for the rest of practice, and goes home before the club opens. He feels motivated, motivated to practice, motivated to stand on that stage, motivated to dance like he knows he can.

For a moment, he forgets about the money.

“What?” She turns around, huffing, arms on her hips. “You’re supposed to be paying attention.”

“I am.” He totally isn’t, but whatever – “I have a question.”

“What is it?”

“What the fuck is a paladin?” Lance crosses his arms, “Or a lion, or whatever.”
Allura blinks, “Coran didn’t tell you?”

“Nope.”

“Well, you are a lion.” She points, “One of our dancers. If you work hard enough, you’ll get to be a paladin.”

“Which are?”

“The ones good enough to do single shows.” She winks.

“Oh.” Lance smirks, “I’m gonna’ be one of those, then.”

“Are you?” Allura raises an eyebrow, and turns back around, “Then you better get practicing.”

Lance goes home sore every day. His thighs ache, his abs especially. Allura wasn’t kidding about the hard work – Lance may have underestimated this whole stripper thing.

Ah, but he’s not really one to back down from a challenge.

One day he stays late, watching all those lean bodies work around poles and floors, when a hand appears in front of his face.

“Hello.” The hand says – er, Shiro, actually, smiling so friendly and warm.

Lance looks at the hand, then the arm, then the beautiful face, an oddly pretty scar resting across his nose. Lance stares, and stares, before he remembers to actually fucking shake his hand, goddammit.

“H-hi.”

“Sorry, Keith just told me you were new. I thought I’d introduce myself.” He smiles, “I’m Shiro.”

Lance stands and grins, “Oh, I know who you are purple paladin.”

Shiro actually blushes, which is the cutest thing Lance has ever seen in his twenty-two years of living.

He rubs his mechanical hand behind his head and laughs, “A-ah, I see.”

“I’m Lance.” He grins. “You’re super talented, my dude.”

“Thank you!” Shiro grins, “It’s nice to see a new face around here.”

“Oh yeah?”

“Yeah. We haven’t hired a new dancer in years.”

“Really now?” Lance blinks, “Why’s that?”

“Well, uh.” Shiro chuckles, and looks up to the faulty electricity, “In case you haven’t noticed, this place is kind of…not doing so hot.”
Lance feigns innocence, “Whaat?”

Shiro snorts, “Mhm. Allura thought hiring someone new would change it up.”

“I’ll have to bring my all, then.” Lance grins, and feels his heart physically stop when Shiro smiles too.

“Please do.” He pats Lance on the shoulder, leaving a warm feeling buzzing on his skin, “Let me know if you need any help, alright?”

Lance swallows, and nods, “Thanks, dude.”

Shiro walks away, and Lance rips his eyes away from his perfectly shaped ass.


Lance pants; he’s not even on the pole yet, still trying to master the same set of choreography. Lance isn’t exactly impatient, but this is getting redundant – seriously.

“Dude. I’m being as sexy as I can.”

“But I need more.”

Launce grinds his teeth and breathes out hot air – he’s trying his best here. Humping the air can only look so sexy, dude.

“This is all I’ve got.” Lance gestures, “I’m not stacked like Shiro. I don’t have that asshole bad boy vibe Keith has going on.”

Allura raises an eyebrow, “Hm? Then what do you have?”

“What?”

“You know we hired you for a reason.”

“I thought it was ‘cause I was Latino.”

Allura presses her hand against her forehead and sighs. She closes her eyes, and opens them again, trying to breathe in patience. She exhales, “No, Lance. That’s not why.” She folds her hands behind her back, and smiles, smug and more relaxed, “Tell me. Do you know what a twink is?”

“Er…” Lance bites, “So you’re tellin’ me to carve my own path?”

“God no.” Allura laughs, “Go look up some dancers that have similar body types to yours. Watch how they do it. Dance the best way that fits you.”
“That doesn’t make sense.” Lance huffs, “It’s all the same choreography.”

“Dammit, Lance. Just trust me.”

So, he does. He can’t really afford internet right now, but he lives a street down from the library. He finds a computer tucked wayyy far away from everyone else, and deletes his internet history for an hour.

It gets frustrating, for a while. Every day he sees those dancers, strong men, beautiful women, working hard in that studio. Every day he sees Shiro, smooth and sexy - Keith, so effortless on the pole, so hot and fiery and practiced – it fuels him, pushes Lance to earn that first paycheck.

What’s particularly frustrating, is that Keith and Shiro hardly look his way. He’s going to earn their attention, dammit, earn those eyes until they burn.

It takes a while to understand what Allura meant – dancing to his body type. He wasn’t sure what kind of wizard riddle Allura was spittin’ out, Master Oogway talkin’ fucker-

But it clicks, one day, the talk about salsa dancing and bodies.

Work your assets.

Lance dances to the laundromat on the day of his first paycheck. He dances home, too. Swirls his hips as he cooks dinner. Drops down and parts his thighs when he drops a fork on the floor.

There’s, er, totally a day when he forgets to close the blinds. Mrs. Dorothy next door got a fantastic view of his ass, and it’s kinda’ scary when Lance doesn’t get a written complaint.

Keep the blinds closed, for the love of god keep the blinds closed-

Although, he finally buys spandex shorts. Yay! He fits in.

“Woah!” Coran grins, the next week, “Lancey boy, you certainly have improved.”

“Don’t call me that.” Lance laughs.

“No, seriously.” Allura interrupts, from her chair, “You move a lot smoother. Have you been practicing?”

“Y-yeah.”

“It’s good.” Coran nods, “I’d just try and drop a little lower. I know you’re flexible enough.
Remember, this choreography is for a group of three, so you have to try and stick out.”

“Right.”

“Again.” Allura gestures, “And remember your eyes. Captivate your audience, and forget your embarrassment.”

“Oh, Allura~” Lance coos, “I have no shame, you know.”

“That’s why we hired you.” She smirks, “Now dance.”

Lance nods, and Coran rewinds the music. The song plays, and Lance starts with his shoulders. They roll back, hands following the movement. He curls his hips up, and in a circle, before drawing his hands at his navel, and pulling them up toward his neck. They move upwards, high above his head, body leaning on his right leg to jerk with the movement.

He remembers salsa classes, hip movements and level slides. He remembers water, adaptable, and smooth.

It’s a lot to think about – his eyes too, he remembers to snap up and look at Allura, probably less sexy, and more smug, but he tries his best as he slides to his knees, and rolls his body once more.

He forgets a slide, but recovers by dipping his fingers under the hem of his shirt, and rolling it up to his bellybutton, and back down. For a millisecond he’s embarrassed, but remembers the steps, remembers to hop back up to his feet and think of sex, sex, sweat and money.

“Fantastic.” Coran grins, “More eyes, please.”

Lance blinks, and tries again as he dances. Allura nods, “Pretty and blue. We can use those.”

Coran agrees, “Mhm.”

Lance gets momentarily distracted, and grins at the compliments. “Ooh, you think my eyes are pretty, do ya’?”

Allura’s smile drops. She folds her arms, and sneers, “Lance.”

“What?”

“The basic rule of stripping.” Allura stands, “Don’t respond to compliments while dancing.”


Coran rubs his nose, “Well, you see, it kinda’ ruins the whole picture. You know, that you’re this alien sex creature above human desire.”

“Is that what it means to be a stripper?”

“Yes and no.” Allura rolls her eyes, “Point is, no getting distracted. Again.”

Lance mumbles beneath his breath, but stands back up to his starting position. He knew the praise was short lived, but fine. Fine. He’ll show them all.
Backstage smells like lotion and sweat, which, granted, isn’t the best smell in the world. There’s that musky hairspray fog mixing with the moth-eaten curtains, separating them from the stage.

Lance only gets to watch tonight, but he’s determined to learn. He stands, watching dancers take their turns, going out looking clothed and put together, walking back in like they’ve been through hell. It’s like watching Dr. Seuss’s Star Bellied Sneetch machine – pretty goes in, money stuffed, underwear clad strippers come out.

Lance stands there; Lance catches something he wasn’t supposed to see.

Tucked between the makeup room, and the front curtain, Lance hears soft, gentle words.

You were beautiful tonight.

So were you.

Lance turns and sees them- Keith, arms around Shiro’s neck, smiling soft like Lance has never seen. Shiro grins so beautifully – kisses him just like that, soft and gentle, and so, so pure, like he didn’t just striptease in a thong.

Lance rips his eyes away, but his feet stay where they are, glued to the wooden planks beneath him. Softly, so softly he hears –

-cooking dinner tonight?

Mmmhm.

You’re the best. A soft kiss, Love you.

Lance’s heart beats stupid fast, like stupid fast. Stop, stop stop. Stop stop stop.

“Oh, hey Lance!”

He freezes, and turns on his heel. Shiro smiles, an arm tucked around an indifferent Keith.

“H-hey.” Lance smiles, “Good work out there, man.”

“Thanks.” Shiro smiles, scar flushing a little pink on his upper cheeks. “You came just to watch?”

“Yeah.” Lance shifts, and bites his lower lip, “I’m uh, antsy to get out there. Trying to learn what I can, you know?”

“I respect your enthusiasm.” Shiro smiles.

“Don’t get ahead of yourself.” Keith grits, “If Allura and Coran are doing one on one time with you, take advantage of it.”

Lance huffs at his tone, “I am.”

“I know you are.” Shiro butts in, so soothing, so calm. Stupid hot. Stupid. “Have you started pole work?”

“A little.” Lance shrugs, “Just the basics.”
“You’ll get there, don’t worry.”

“How long did it take you?”

Shiro hums, and shifts his weight on his feet, leaning a little bit more on Keith. “I never did a lot on the pole, because of the arm.” He looks down at Keith, “But what about you? It took you what, four months?”

“Three,” Keith corrects, “to do the hard choreography. I was on stage after one.”

“Mmm.” Shiro nods, “Yeah, I’d say a month or so.”

Lance chews on the inside of his cheek, and rolls his weight back on his heels, “Cool, cool.” He pauses, before he smirks, “I’ll just have to beat that, then.”

Keith narrows his eyes, and Shiro laughs, “All the luck to you.”

“Go home.” Lance gestures, “Sleep. You deserve it.”

“Hey.” Keith huffs, “What about me? I danced out there too.”

“You did okay.” Lance teases, and laughs when Keith puffs up his chest, pretty face twisting in annoyance.


“You too.” Lance nods, and twists his hands behind his back, twists, and twists, until he’s a sweaty, beating mess.

Chapter End Notes

edit: i’ve gotten some art of stripper keith ;u; cries

check out this and this
Chapter 3

Chapter Notes

hahdbgxb thank you for the kudos and comments

Lance thinks about them a lot.

This, infatuation? Fascination? God, Lance might even say obsession, with Shiro and Keith isn’t cool.

Keith is a dickwad, Lance is still sure, but Shiro is all smooth lines of hardcore sexy.

Still…they’re…addicting, in a sense.

Whenever his limbs are tired, whenever he’s starved and exhausted, the thinks of them on that stage, and pushes himself harder.

Lance isn’t sure what that means, but he chooses not to focus on it.

Focus on the paycheck.

Do a good job.

Finally, finally after hard work and practice, he’s with a group.

Granted, they’re still practicing in the studio, but he at least knows enough to keep up.

The other strippers are these dudes he’s never met before. They’re typically backup dancers, like most of the girls here, made to entertain between paladin shows.

Still, they’re way more stacked than Lance, which is, granted, a little intimidating, okay. Lance is fine with his body – he knows he’s pretty, but like, standing next to two college jock lookin’ bitches isn’t great for the self-esteem.

He stands up tall in the studio, eyes narrowed and focused. He…kinda’ feels like a rabbit. Or, the smallest goldfish in the tank. He can feel people watching him, judging to see how good he is.

He tells himself they’re jealous of how good his legs look in these shorts.

The music hums, and the three of them practice in their little corner. Lance runs through the moves like a knife through butter, easy and practiced, committed to memory.

“Good.” Coran smiles, “Kev, you could stand a little taller.”

Dudebro Kevin nods.

Lance continues to dance to the music, forcing his breathing steady. If he can’t handle these eyes, how can he handle an audience?
Lance can see Allura, talking with Keith, and a different group of dancers. She’s running over choreography, cute, in her yoga pants – but Lance is still drawn to Keith. He’s definitely got a resting bitch face; his hand is propped on his hip, his lips a pursed line.

There’s this moment, where Keith looks his way, and Lance loses focus. He’s staring, watching, studying him.

So Lance grins and rolls his hips, twists his arms and dips his thumbs in his pockets, grinning harder when Keith stays frozen where he stands.

He won’t lose.

It’s a nice, routine Sunday. Lance thrums his fingers rhythmically against the ridge of the car window and hums, smiling as the wind rustles his hair.

“I heard you’re doing good,” Hunk grins from behind the wheel.

“I’m doin’ okay.” Lance smiles back, “The money is a serious relief. I paid rent on time last week. Like, woah.”

Hunk laughs, “Proud of you, but that’s not what I meant.” He flicks on his blinker, “I heard you’re doing good with the choreography.”


“Watching you strip is really gonna’ stretch our friendship, you know.”

“Hunk, you’ve seen me naked.”

“I haven’t seen you in lingerie.” Hunk points out, “I’m not sure which is worse.”

“Shut up!” Lance laughs, and slaps his thigh, “God, I’m rubbing off on you and it’s horrible.”

“I’m trying to congratulate you!” Hunk shies away from him, almost jerking the wheel as he laughs, “You’ll have your first show soon, right?”

There’s this really thick, hot wave of nervousness that flushes from his head, to his toes. Lance freezes, dry tongue sticking to his gums, eyes snapped to the road in front of them. His hands clam up, his throat won’t swallow.

His brain clicks on a moment later – all that practiced self-confidence fills in what he doesn’t. Lance grins, “Dude, I’m super excited.”

Yep, yep. Super excited. Doesn’t want to throw up at all. Not one bit, nope nope.

Lance rocks back and forth on his heels, waiting in front of Allura’s office door. The red wallpapered hallway is warm, that damn orange light flickering again. The faulty electricity in this place is a real menace.

Lance is making a quick coffee run; he just stopped by to see if she wanted anything, but-
Lance freezes, when he realizes that he can hear voices through the door.

-what I’ll do.

Allura - calm down.

We could lose the club!

We won’t, sweetheart –

- only thing left in his will – all I-have-

-llura

Lance backs away, and skitters back down the stairs, heart thumping, breathing too fast.

He’ll, uh, come back later.

“Try this!” Pidge smiles, and sends a drink his way. Lance eyes it wearily, eyebrows pushed together.

“Do I have to pay?”

“Nah, it’s on me! It’s my newest creation.”

Lance picks up the shot, sniffs it, and looks at the green liquid. It swirls, full of weird shades and unnatural shapes. “What’s in here?”

“A secret!”

“That’s not a good sign, Pidge.”

Pidge laughs, cute and incredibly evil. They nudge him on, “Please? I want someone to test it before I show Allura.”

“And that someone is me?”

“You’re the only one stupid enough to say yes.”

Lance gasps, “Rude. You just lost your test subject.”

Pidge begs, “No! Please!”

Lance eyes the shot again. Yeah, yeah, Pidge isn’t all that bad. Actually, Pidge is pretty nice. Sometimes after practice they come by with a different sweet tasting drink – they always wave goodbye, and nod hello. A different, but kind soul.

Ah, whatever.

Lance pinches his nose, and downs the shot. He immediately coughs, the burn seeping from his nose, to his throat, stinging his eyes. He sputters into the crook of his arm, and wipes his eyes.

“Wow, attractive.”
“What the hell was that?” Lance coughs, spitting out remains on the floor.

“That, Lance, was the equivalent of six shots in one.”

“Holy fuck Pidge!” Lance slides the glass away, “That shit could kill me!”

“Nahh.” Pidge eyes their bottle, where the rest remains, “If you took two shots then yes, it could kill you. I gave you half of one, you baby.”

“I’ve done kegstands Pidge. I used to down Jaeger. I’m no lightweight.” Lance coughs again, “You need to burn that. All of it.”

“What’s going on over here?” Hunk slides, with a smile, away from the doorway. The club will open soon, employees flipping chairs off of tables, others prepping the stage.

“I have a new drink!”

“Nope, nope.” Hunk begins to walk away, “Good luck, Lance.”

“Noo come back.” Lance cries, “I might need my stomach pumped.”

Pidge looks at their bottle, sniffs it once, and then takes a swig. Lance lets out a very manly squeak, and nearly jumps across the bar to rip it out of their hand.

“Pidge!”

Pidge pulls the bottle back and looks at the green liquid. They shrug, “What? It tastes fine to me.”

“Oh my god, Pidge is a monster.”

Hunk calls, “That’s literally a surprise to no one.”

“Fuck off, Hunk.”

Now that he practices with the group, life has become a hundred thousand times harder.

Yeah, okay, he’s in a room full of really attractive people but that’s fine. Lance is mature. He understands nonsexual situations, and the appropriate time to ogle. He’s not a creep, for fucks sake.

Except, Shiro and Keith are ruining his life.

Now, every day he sees them in the studio, stretching and dancing, practicing just as beautiful as ever. Soft skin, hard lines of muscle, nice hair and poised bodies.

Like, sure, Lance recognizes the whole Shiro thing. Everyone likes Shiro, because Shiro is the physical embodiment of the sun from the teletubbies.

But! Lance finds himself watching Keith too! He doesn’t even like the bastard, yet here he is, watching him spread his thighs, arms holding him high up on the pole like it’s nothing. Fuck, that’s stupid hot, and Lance hates it.

It’s kinda’ easy to get lost that way – lost, in how they move on stage, swept to sea, in their spread thighs, drowned, in their steady eyes. Yes, it’s all a fantasy – strippers, sex appeal – it’s not real.
So reality crashes down, and crashes down *hard*.

They’re dating. Lance can’t keep studying their movements – can’t keep thinking about every show they do, like a mantra. He *can’t* keep staying after just to watch *them*.

*I stay for the girls, I stay for the girls*, he lies, he lies.

What a fuckin’ liar Lance is.

If this is a weird double crush, Lance tries not to think about that. Focus on that stage. Focus on the money.

Right, right. Let's make rent on time again.

---

They sit on the floor, criss cross applesauce, as Coran reads out the schedule for the week.

Lance zones out – picks up bits and pieces of *paladin first, then the girls, yes, yes, Wednesday we’ll run the duet show*-

But his ears catch his name, and he sits up straight.

“Then, Friday we’ll start the intermission show with Lance, Kev, and Coulter.” Allura nods, “You’re after Shiro. We’ll run that show for a week. See how you do.”

Lance swallows thickly. The room feels a little tense.

But Shiro breaks it, easily, with a smile, “Aha, wait, what am I doing on Friday again?”

“The kitty cat performance!” Coran chirps, “We know how much ya’ love that one.”

Shiro’s face scrunches up, “Oh god.” He presses his fingers into his temples, and all the other dancers laugh. Lance isn’t sure what *that* means, but holy shit, he wants to find out.

Allura and Coran run over a few more details, something about rules and whatever- *Stick to the routine! Stick to the routine!*

- but Lance daydreams about Shiro, and kitty cats.

---

Lance is just fucking himself over. Over, and over, right up the ass, he is.

Why is he here? If he’s *trying* not to be a creep? Stand up, leave, fucking *move* –

But he doesn’t move. Instead, he sits here, watching Keith and Shiro come out on stage together. Bloody fucking hell, they’re in matching outfits; black joggers, shirtless, with corresponding bomber jackets. One purple, one red.


“*And now, your favorite Paladin couple~.*”

Two chairs sit on stage; Shiro and Keith walk out, eyeing each other, hands in their pockets. Already
the room swells with noise; it feels fuller than usual, a little more packed.

Probably for them.

Lance is fucking himself over, but he can’t help it. He’s never seen their duet show- heard about it, certainly, but he’s never seen it.

It’s a Thursday. He should be home. He should be home sleeping, practicing.

But Lance sits in the back of the club hoping maybe, maybe nobody will notice him. He keeps it on the down-low, pulls up his hoodie – but Shiro immediately meets his eye, and smiles.

Goddammit.

The music starts off slow – Shrio and Keith reach for the chairs in sync, and flip them around, straddling them backwards- and Lance holds the fuck on.

_I wanna’ see you work out for me_
_Work out for me_

Shrio and Keith share this look; and, like, it’s not any look. They’re talking to each other. Lance can see it, in the twitch of Keith’s upper lip, and the glimmer in Shiro’s eye.

Their heads turn back, their arms flop forwards, and they _thrust_ in sync against the chair, making the crowd roar.

_Hey, we got a good thing_  
_Don’t know if Imma’ see you again_

The music swells louder, and the crowd grows with it. Lance watches in awe, as their bodies move and thrust, rolling with each beat. The jackets slip off in a synchronized slide, gone to the floor behind them, and Lance about chews through his tongue.

They _glisten_ under the stage lights. Shiro is fuckin’ ripped as hell, of course – and Keith isn’t exactly twig either. The dudes got a six pack. Lance is man enough to admit that.

_I know what’s on your brain_  
_You’re probably hopin’ never would end_

Shiro and Keith grip the backs of the chairs, and rise up enough to prop their right knees on the seat, leaning up and over, now able to _physically grind_ against the top of the chair. Money fuckin’ rains down, dammit, as the joggers ride low on their hips, and the sparkly underwear beneath shines in the light. The sex appeal oozes off of them in waves, thick, _thick_ confident waves.

_Like is it the real thing_  
_Or is it just a one night stand?_

Lance has never in his life been so jealous of a chair. Two chairs, actually. He needs to get laid.

Shiro and Keith are still perfectly together, working as one, like a mirror. Their hands move together, down, across their own chests. Their fingers dip down beneath waistbands, their hips roll, they _somehow_ balance, held up by strong muscles.

It’s really, really hot in here. Shiro looks him in the eye again, and Lance melts.

_I’m here for one night, how far will you go?_
I wanna see you work out for me, work out for me

Moving with the beat, they step back from the chairs, spinning them with their fingers, facing the chair towards the audience. Shiro and Keith swap places, sitting on the edges of their new chairs, thighs spread wide.

Their faces are neutral, but their bodies are obscene, moving, rolling, smoothing their fingers across muscle, just to tease.

Lance gnaws on his lower lip and loses all sense of time.

She like them boys with the big ol' chains
Ride around town in the big ol' Range

Can Lance just take a second? To wonder how the hell? Are they so in sync?

Yeah yeah, practice makes perfect, but they look ethereal. Like one person. Two sides of the same coin.

That makes Lance’s gut twist, for whatever reason.

They stand up off the chairs - roll the joggers down their ass, and back up, all while moving with the beat, all while moving together.

Their heads whip to look at each other; the crowd cheers knowingly.

Would you look at that, I came back for it
Just to give it to ya, like you asked for it

They shatter the mood, break the mirror, suck the literal breath out of Lance’s throat.

Keith turns and pushes Shiro down into the chair, moving fast like the lyrics of the rap; but Shiro secures his hands on Keith’s hips and pulls, yanking off the joggers, the fabric splitting like magic.

“Magic”, they say, is really just velcro, but, it’s still hot as hell. Keith is left in these red spandex lookin’ shorts that hug his ass, and show it the fuck off as he straddles Shiro’s lap and rolls their hips together, really giving the audience a view.

Shiro holds him up, supports him, dances with him and looks smug.

Lance is hard. Lance is soooo hard.

Does he want to be? Not really. Is he? Yes.

Lance can’t even decipher the lyrics anymore- can hardly hear the steady thump of the song- instead he focuses on how they dance, how Shiro smooths his hands down Keith’s thighs. How Keith rolls in his lap and tips his head, back arching, pulling tight like a bowstring.


Don’t imagine them having sex. Don’t imagine them having sex.

Keith shifts a foot between Shiro’s thighs. He mouths across his cheek before he grips behind the chair, hoisting himself up, crotch now eye-level with Shiro. It pours washingtons.
And Keith does that thing again. With the hips. Shiro spreads his own thighs, and holy Mother Theresa his thighs are thick as hell. He's still clothed, but Lance can see where the fabric stretches.

God, that's hot.

Shiro’s fingers slide up Keith’s bare thighs – you can’t see Shiro’s face from here, where Keith smothers his body and dances, but you can only imagine what Shiro is doing.

The music plays, time rolls on, the room grows hotter, Lance falls harder.

It’s hard to breathe, hard to focus, when Shiro picks Keith up and spins him in his lap, forcing his thighs apart with his knees, showing off that Keith is actually hard through his shorts, which, you know, happens.

Lance’s mouth runs dry. He wipes his hands on his knees, and tries to ground himself. He can see Pidge making drinks happily – he can hear Hunk stopping someone at the door-

But Shiro rolls his hips up against Keith and plays with the hem of his own joggers. Keith dances so smooth, so fast, so hot, like fire, in his lap.

Lance is lost, lost, lost, when Keith rips off Shiro’s joggers. Gone, when they dance in sync again, spinning the chairs amongst dollar bills. Destroyed, when they kiss across the chairs, and the song ends.

*Work out for me.*

*Work out for me.*

Lance tries to waddle past the stage and out the back door, where he can pass the crowd and call an Uber. He's gonna' go home and jerk off for the next century-

Lance tries to be sneaky, but a hand grips his bicep, and he nearly trips over his own foot.

“Hey.”

Fuck.

Lance turns, and blinks down into Keith’s eyes. Keith pulls back his hand and frowns, crossing his arms and rolling back his shoulders. He’s still sweaty, but back in sweatpants and a t-shirt. Being sweaty shouldn’t be attractive. It shouldn’t-

Keith tips his head, “Leaving already? The shows not over.”

“Yeah.” Lance swallows, “G-Gonna go to bed early.”

It’s three in the morning. Great fucking excuse, Lance.

“Hm.” Keith blinks, “We’re having drinks after we close. Won’t you stay?”

Lance gapes, “Are…are you inviting me?”

“Uh, yeah.”
Lance blinks once, twice, and tries to stammer out a coherent reply.

Keith rolls his eyes, and shifts his weight, “Really dude? I’m not sure where you got the idea that I hate you, but I don’t.”

“You insulted me the first day we met!”

“I didn’t mean to!” Keith blurts, “I was skeptical.”

“You still are.” Lance snaps, turning his head dramatically, “I can tell.”

“Yeah. I am.” Keith sighs, “But…I want this club to succeed. That’s all. It wasn’t supposed to be personal.”

Lance chews on his lip, and thumbs at his pockets, because okay, okay, whatever, Keith isn’t that bad-

“Fine.” Lance says, and sticks out his hand, “You’re still my sworn rival. I’m gonna’ kick your ass up there, one day.”

Keith, surprisingly, smiles and shakes his hand, “Lookin’ forward to it.”

There’s a laugh from their left, and they retract their hands at lightning speed.

“Would you look at that.” Shiro grins, and slides up to wrap an arm around Keith’s waist, “I knew you two would get along eventually.”

“What? Never.” Lance fakes innocence, and looks away when Keith rolls his eyes.

“Did Keith tell you about drinks?”

“Yeah, is Pidge makin’ em?”

“Yep.”

“Hm.” Lance weighs his options, until Shiro laughs, hot as fuck and still sweaty and damn attractive as hell-

“Don’t worry. They’re not making anything new.”

“Thank god.” Lance grins, “Then I’m in.” Lance shifts on his heels, and feels his face flush, “Er, also, great job up there. You did awesome.”

Shiro smiles, and the tops of his cheeks turn an adorable shade of pink, “Thank you.”

“Really? Again with this?” Keith interrupts, “I was up there too.”

Lance shrugs, “Didn’t notice,” and laughs when Keith reaches between them to punch his shoulder.

There’s free laughter, here, behind the stage, as girls go out and dance.

Lance’s heart smacks against his ribcage. Thrums. Squeezes.

Stop it, heart. Stop it.
Employees flip chairs, turn on the lights, sweep the floor and clean up garbage. There’s glitter everywhere, and it’s a little hot and stuffy, but Lance is actually enjoying himself, so.

A few of them gather in a booth. Some girls pack together; a pink paladin, known for her private shows, and a couple backup dancers.

Keith sits up on the top of the booth seat, perched with Shiro at his side, who sits in the chair like a normal human being.

Lance sips his drink – it’s a plain beer, thank fuck. He’s not really in the mood to get shitfaced, but it’s more entertaining to watch Keith slowly get drunk. His resting bitch face is more of a resting neutral face now; which Lance finds much cuter.

Er, more tolerable. Y-Yeah, that.

“Your first show is tomorrow, isn’t it?” The pink paladin smiles, cute and blonde.

Lance nods, “Yep.”

“Nervous?”

“Not at all.” Lance lies, with a grin. “I’m the epitome of confidence right now.”

“He’s nervous.” Shiro sips, and Keith hums an agreement.

“Are not!”

Keith smirks, “Are too.”

“Are. Not.”

“Are too!”

“God, are we in kindergarten?” Pidge rolls their eyes.

“You look like you could be.” Keith says, a little drunkenly, and Pidge chucks an empty solo cup at his head- which he catches in one hand.

“Don’t play with me.” They snap, “I’ll stick the yellow paladin on you.”

Keith shuts his mouth, and Shiro laughs into his hand.

“Hey.” One of the girls gesture, “That’s supposed to be a secret.”

“Right,” Pidge sits back. “Sorry.”

“What?” Lance looks around the table.

“Nothing~.” They sing in unison.

Lance crosses his arms, “Wait…how many paladins are there?”

“A few.”

“There’s the red, white, purple, pink, orange, yellow…” a girl counts on her fingers, “…uh, and we used to have a black paladin.”
Everyone at the table cringes, and it grows quiet.

“Used to?” Lance sips his drink, “Did he quit?”

“I guess you could say that.”

“He was a fuckin’ asshole.” Keith grits. Shiro pats his knee, and Keith looks away.

Okay, alright. Touchy subject, moving on.

“I’m gonna’ be a paladin.” Lance states. “Definitely.”

“Oh really?” The blonde smiles, “Feeling inspired?”

“Nahh,” Lance lies, “I heard they make hella’ bank.”

Keith leans over to nudge his thigh with his foot, and Lance chokes out a laugh.

These...these guys aren’t too bad.

Lance was totally popular in highschool- in college he didn’t do too bad, either, (before he dropped out, anyways). But, it’s kinda’ nice to hang with people again.

He tries not to laugh too much – tries to reel back the flirting. Still, he can’t help but glance across the table- watch Shiro’s long, pretty fingers clutch his drink – study Keith as he opens up and laughs.

They stay until Allura kicks them out. Until the sun peaks over the sky. Until Shiro offers to drive him home, and Lance can’t help but say yes.

He goes home, not even tired. Not in the slightest.
“Hey...dude.”

“Yeah?”

“Can I ask you a question?”

Hunk looks over at him, from where they sit on the hood of his car, smoking something not great and drinking something worse.

“What’s that?”

Lance wraps his arms around his legs, and rests his chin on his knees, “Why are you still working at the Paladin?”

“Hm.” Lance chews on the inside of his cheek, “And Pidge? They’ve graduated too.”

“Pidge works an early job with some programming company. The bartending is part time.”

“But why do they stay, Hunk?”

“The Paladin has a sense of family, dude.” Hunk says seriously, “If you haven’t picked that up by now.... Everyone wants the club to-“

“-do well, I know.” Lance finishes, with a huff. He reaches for the blunt, and sighs, “But it’s just money. Everyone seems way too invested in this place.”

A strip club, is a strip club, yeah?

Hunk stares at him. Really, really stares, to make him feel dumb, like when they were kids. Hunk looks away, and sips his drink, saying, “You don’t get it yet. You will.”

Lance shrugs, and breathes out smoke.
Backstage is full of bustling people, wardrobe ushering naked dancers into outfits, others sitting at vanities.

Despite the relatively up to date stage, the back still has that *old theater* feel. The vanities have those old round light bulbs that glow orange, and the wood planks under their feet creak sometimes. The wall that separates them from the crowd is thick enough to dull the music to a steady *thwump*, *thwump*.

Lance stands there, thumbs hooked in his pockets, looking this way and that for where he’s supposed to go.

Coran just said *be there by midnight, you’re on at 2.*

There’s a voice, sharp and confident, “Lance?”

He looks down; there’s a girl, green hair, short, cute round cheeks and all. She props her hands on her hips and grins, “You *are* Lance, aren’t ya’?”

“Yes!” He blinks, and reaches out a hand, “Hiya.”

“Sweet.” She shakes his hand, “You’re mine tonight. The names’ Lori.”

“Nice to meet ya’ Dori.”

“Lori.”

“That’s what I said.”

He goes to say something else, but there’s a hand at this back, and a seat under his ass. Lori spins him around fast enough to get whiplash; Lance blinks it away. Alright, okay.

“Ya’ ever worn makeup before?”

“Uh.” Lance blinks, “Foundation.”

“It’s a start.” Lori nods, and reaches into her, in all honestly, intimidating bag full of things Lance hardly recognizes.

She smears stuff on his face – he zones out. He focuses on Shiro, who sits in a chair across from him. His eyes are closed, patiently waiting as the artist draws swirls of purple on his eyes. He's glowing, and beautiful.

Lance leans a little to the left- Lori hisses, “Stay still.”

“Sorry!”

He bites his tongue, and thrums his fingers against his knee.

“It’s only thirty minutes,” Coran had said. “*Most of our guys perform multiple times a night, but we’ll start ya’ off on one performance, just to see how ya’ do.*”

Thirty minutes. Lance isn’t nervous. Totally. Not at all.

He knows the choreography frontwards, and backwards. He’s got this.
Lance gets lost in the strong swell of Shiro’s jawline, until Keith enters the room. The door slams shut, and Lori’s arm jolts, the pen-like thing in her hand sliding a little.

"No me jodas," She mumbles, and turns with a glare. “Keith! Seriously?”

There’s a few more mumbles from the other makeup artists, and Keith raises his hands defensively, “Sorry, sorry.”

“Hey.” Lance blinks, turning to look Lori in the eye. She’s staring at the line on Lance’s cheek with worry, but Lance grins, “Habla español?”

“Por supuesto!” She smiles, and turns back to her vanity. She grabs a makeup wipe, and carefully dabs at the mistake.

Lance looks back to Keith, who pecks Shiro on the lips, before taking a seat at his own vanity. Lance swallows, nails digging into his knees.

“So,” she begins, “you’re the new kid everyone’s been talking about. What made you apply here?”

“Aww, people talk about me?” Lance flirts.

“Close your eyes, and answer my question, doofus.”

He laughs, “Needed rent money.”

“Mmm.” Lori hums. Her face is close, hands gracefully shading something onto his eyes. She leans back, and draws another line across his eyelid, “Estas seguro que no es por ellos dos, los paladins cariñosos?”

Lance opens his eyes, and looks right at Shiro, who’s talking to Keith with the dumbest smile on his face. Keith does his own makeup, actually smiling too. Keith doesn’t smile a lot - but when he does, it’s blinding. His eyes light up, and the dimples on his cheek make him seem less stoic, more human.

“Definitivamente no.” Lance answers back, with a pout.

Lori shrugs, “No te lo niego. Esos malparidos son muy calientes.”

“S-Shut up.” Lance stammers, “Necesitaba un trabajo, y yo se como bailar.”

He looks back to Shiro and Keith, who, surprisingly, are looking his way. Lance turns his eyes down fast enough to give himself a headache. They're probably surprised by the Spanish, is all. No biggie.

Lori shrugs, “Sigues aver si te deja dormir.” She reaches back into her bag, and smirks, “But if you’re trying to be subtle, I’d try to reel back the googly eyes.”

The thongs aren’t really a surprise. Uncomfortable at first, maybe, but not a surprise.

Their matching outfits are just grey joggers, loose, before tightening around their calves. The stylist yanks them low on his hips, and pulls the jean jacket straight on his naked chest.

Lance stands offside, watching Shiro fucking kill it out there.

Lance, it appears, has been blessed this day, because he got to see the kitty cat routine.
Shiro is in cat ears, a pretty collar, and thin purple shorts. He's on his hands and knees, between the thighs of some guy. The audience cheers- Shiro rises up, tips the chair back to the floor gently, and climbs atop him, the attached tail hanging off his belt.

The room is about half full- the usual, for the Paladin. Kev and Coulter shift behind him, talking calmly. This is their routine after all; Lance is the noob.

His body jitters with misplaced excitement, but it’s all cool. There’s some cute girls in the audience- an especially hot guy in the front row too. Maybe if he's lucky enough, he can score some tonight.

He rolls his shoulders back. Takes a deep breath.

Grins.

When Shiro walks off stage, he looks a little disgruntled. Keith meets him with a smirk and a laugh, petting his cat ears, and giving him a slap on the ass.

Cute, cute, cute-

“Heya!”

Lance jumps, and turns to look at Coran, “Huh?”

“Good luck out there.” Coran pats his shoulder, “Stay relaxed. Stick to the routine. You’ll be fine, mate.”

“Thanks dude, but, I'm totally gonna' rock your socks off.”

The music turns back to the typical club garbage; the audience turns back to their tables.

That’s the tough thing about intermission shows. You have to fight for the attention.

But Lance is willing to fight.

Kev and Coulter step out first, hands in their pockets, fuckin’ relaxed as hell, goddammit. Lance tries to puff up his chest, but he probably looks like a baby kitten compared to these guys.

He turns to look behind him; Coran gives him a thumbs up.

Kev and Coulter start with the filler choreography- Lance follows along. It’s all easy, slow movements, drawing attention, but not too much. Slow body rolls, hands tugging at the bottom of their vests.

Lance looks across the audience; there’s maybe two, three people watching at most. People chat to each other, accepting drinks from Shay and Pidge.

Alright, okay.

There’s three poles that sit across the stage. They do easy turns, slow lifts, practiced, and in sync. Lance grips the pole with a sweaty palm and swings, bending at the knee and kicking up a little, like Coran taught him.

He can feel himself dancing a little stiff- but, as the DJ bobs his head, so does Lance.
It’s not that bad up here, actually. It seemed more intimidating from far away – and as the routine turns, Lance finds himself actually kinda’ having fun. He sways his hips, and tugs at the bottom of the jean vest like the others.

The vests get tossed at some point; there’s a dollar or two thrown to the stage. Still, the eyes wait until the good ones, the paladins.

Lance smooths his hands down his chest, and spreads his thighs, crouching down to the audience’s eye level. He counts to ten, rolls back onto his heels, and hoists himself up by the bar. Yeah yeah, he’s a bean pole, but he lifts himself just as fine as the other dudes, okay.

He probably looks out of place. Kev and Coulter look like two buff chickens incubated in a fraternity, and Lance looks like a baby fresh off the beach.

Still, the DJ plays some okay beats, and Lance rolls with it. He looks out of the corner of his eye- Lance is vain, okay, he wants validation- and Coran stands there smiling.

Except, Keith and Shiro watch too, a few other dancers standing tall behind them.

And that’s when Lance feels a fresh, hot wave of nervousness sweep down to his toes.

They’re watching me. They’re watching me.

His hands slip a little on the pole, and he almost fumbles over a step. The three of them dance away from the pole, now just there to dance slow, and sensual, playing with the hems of their joggers, teasing the thongs underneath.

He looks back – they’re still there. Keith’s face is pressed into a stern one, arms folded, hair sweaty and pulled back by a hairband. Shiro looks a little less intimidating, but still oddly serious.

Focus!!

The song changes to a slower one – more filler, to wait for the pink paladin. A few people watch idly, heads propped up in their hands. Lance looks a girl in the eye, and winks – he shouldn’t but he can’t help it, she’s cute as fuck.

The girl giggles, and turns to her friends – Lance remembers to take a step back.

The music hums:

Don’t fuck with me, don’t fuck with me
Since you shipped my ass off to sea

Their arms reach up to grab the pole again, swirling around once, twice.

I never knew where I was going
I went where the water was flowing

They grind against the metal – Lance still can’t look away from where Keith and Shiro stand. Fuck the people in the audience, fuck the girls ogling him, and the cute guy up front. All he cares about is –

I know I’ve been gone a long time
I'm back and I want what is mine

Shit! Shit!

Lance’s sweaty palms slick the pole too much. He slips, falling down to his knees, palms spread out on the ground. The sting makes him wince, and the smack of his body registers over the music.

That, uh, certainly grabs the attention of the club. Pidge looks up from her bar. Hunk turns around at the front door. Eyes stare – Kev and Coulter keep going.

Well, this wasn’t in the gay agenda.

The ship was the love of my life
We went down together that night

Oh god, oh god. What do. Oh god-

Lance stares, frozen, panic catching him quick. Fast, fast, Lance has performed on a stage before. Catch up, catch up-

But Kev and Coulter swing around the pole, and Lance can't move.

I surfaced and married a shell
For years I just cruised on the run

He meets the eye of a businessman in the back. His eyes are a dark swirl of purple, black hair slicked back. He raises an eyebrow in Lance’s direction.

So Lance decides to do what he knows best: bullshit the hell out of this.

He smooths his hands down his naked chest, spreads his thighs wide, and grinds against the air, rolling with the slow beat of the song. It’s lewd, and obscene, but he does it anyways.

I know I've been gone a long time
I'm back and I want what is mine

He’s not sure what the fuck he’s doing, but part of the audience cheers, and he can feel his ego physically being stroked, so.

He’s still on his knees, still not following the goddamn routine, but the businessman smiles, and there’s a few dollar bills thrown his way. The music turns a little louder, and Lance runs his hands down between his thighs, dancing and whipping his head to the beat.

So don't try and fuck me about
The worst thing that happened was
I was standing too close to your heart
I'm tired and about to wake up

Coran is probably having an actual honest to god heart attack, but Lance is having way too much fun. He grins, staring down the patrons in front. They holler when he shoves his hand down his pants and snaps the string of the thong; he sticks out his tongue for good measure.

I know I've been gone a long time
I'm back and I want what is mine
Lance risks a look offside- he needs to get back on track, or Allura might actually yank him off this stage. She looks furious – but Shiro and Keith still watch. Keith’s mouth is slightly open in surprise; Shiro is actually blushing.

Lance: 1. Universe: 0.

Lance turns his head back, grinds a little into the floor, and remembers what he learned from hip-hop.

In an easy string of movements, he braces his hands between his thighs on the floor, and lifts himself up into a handstand, one hand going up, legs stretching out into a k-kick.

_I know I've been gone a long time but_  
_I'm back and I want what is mine_

Yeah yeah, it’s not exactly the sexiest thing ever, but it catches more attention, and lets Lance swivel around to his feet, rolling his body as soon as he lands.

He sees Kev and Coulter still following the routine, and Lance eventually slides back in when he sees something familiar.

_Oh, I know I've been gone a long time but_  
_I'm back and I want what is mine_

There’s more faces watching now – Lance feels too good to regret it. His body glides quick, and practiced, and he can’t help but grin a little cockily. That businessman– those purple eyes, they stare, and then they’re gone.

When the song ends, and another begins, they run through the routine once more. It’s good, and fun, and Lance feels free of all things, surprisingly comfortable under the new attention.

_I know I've been gone a long time_  
_I'm back and I want what is mine_

Lance, uh, doesn’t feel so free anymore.

There’s the steady thump of that stupid DJ Snake song down below, the walls shaking with the bass. There's a pen on Allura's desk that jostles with every bass drop.

_Bzzt._

_Bzzt._

_Bzzt._

He reaches forwards, and slaps his sore palm on the pen, eyes shooting up to look at Allura. She stares him down, eyes narrowed, seemingly comparable to Maleficent, or perhaps, Cinderella’s evil stepmother.

Lance rapidly pulls his hand back, and squirms down in his seat. Allura grinds her teeth; Coran
closes the door behind him, and sighs.

“Lance,” Allura huffs, “I can’t believe you.”

“Look,” he tries, “I’m sorry I-“

“Shut up.” She points, “You were told two things-“

“Actually, I was told a lot of things-“

“A lot of things.” Allura repeats, “But the two most important ones were don’t interact with the audience, and don’t stray from the routine!”

Lance clears his throat, and looks away. “Yeah.”

“And what did you do?”

“I interacted with the audience.”

“And?”

“Uh, strayed from the routine.”

“You promised to try your hardest.” Allura lectures, fingers thrumming against her desk. “You said you needed this job.”

“I know!” Lance defends, “I fell, I’m sorry. I just got…got uh…”

“Lost in the moment?” Coran finishes.

“Yeah, that.”

“You have to stick to the choreography. If you fall, you get up and keep going.” Allura says, and rubs her temples. She takes a moment to breathe, before she looks up, shocking Lance into sitting up straight, “But…”

Lance blinks, “…but?”

“It was pretty cool,” She smiles, and Lance feels his chest swell with air.

“You practically turned into a pretzel!” Coran exclaims, “An’ the way ya’ twisted into a handstand. Incredible, my boy.”

Lance exaggerates slumping back into his chair, making Coran laugh.

“It was alright.” Allura points, “You have decent improv skills, which is good, for a work like this. Bad because you can’t follow instructions, but you seem to have a shred of natural talent.”

“Jeez, princess.” Lance jokes, sitting up, “Givin’ my ego a handjob, are you?”

“And now I hate you again.” Allura replies, in a deadpan, and Lance scrambles to laugh.

“I’m kidding!”

“Don’t do it again.” Allura waves him off - she presses her face into her hand, “And leave my office.”
“Yes sir.” Lance salutes, and stands up with his shoulders rolled back. Coran gives him a smile and a pat on the back.

He feels Coran lean over to mumble *monday morning, new choreography, be there.*

And Lance suddenly feels brand new.

He washes the makeup off his face in the bathroom. Lori told him *specifically* not to rub at his eyes, but he does anyways, because fuck the police. He’s tired, it’s late, and he survived.

It...felt good up there. He could do better, definitely, but that moment- where he sat there and just *moved*, no choreography, no rules-

It felt real, real good.

Lance looks at himself in the mirror. Brown hair, blue eyes. He's exhausted, but his skin glows, now free from the makeup. He effectively smudged the eyeliner, but it’s fine. His hair has glitter in it – fuck if he knows how *that* got there, but he figures it’s something to expect now.

He comes out of the bathroom, and is met by a big bear hug. Lance squawks, his feet leaving the ground.

“Lance!” Hunk laughs, “Great job, buddy.”

Lance exaggerates some choking noises, and cries, “Lungs- caving in -losing - consciousness-“

Hunk rolls his eyes, and sets him down with a grin, smoothing down his own suit, “M’ proud of you, dude.”

“Thank you.” Lance smirks, and elbows him, “Pretty sexy, yeah?”

“Pff.” Hunk snorts, “About as sexy as my front lawn. I meant that cool handstand you did.”

“The K-kick?” Lance blinks, “That wasn’t in the routine.”

Hunk pales, “Fuck. Did Allura kill you?”

“Nope! She praised me.” He coos, and runs a hand through his hair, “*Ohh Lance, that was soo hot, you’re so awesome and cool please date me*~.”

“Yeah. He got chewed out.” Pidge affirms, Shay nodding as she wipes down the empty tables.

“I didn’t!”

“A toast, then.” Hunk nods to Pidge, “For Lance not fucking up *entirely.*”

Pidge grabs a bottle of vodka, “To Lance,” they pour the shots and laugh, “the lucky train wreck.”

“No faith.” Lance laughs, and downs the shot in one go.

He sleeps like a bear that night. He wakes up sometime around two, which is *beyond* fine with
Lance. He lays in bed for an hour, tosses, turns, thinks about that night up on stage.

Lance didn’t see them again; Shiro and Keith. By the time he walked off stage, they were gone.

Why, fuckin’ hell why is he thinking about them still? God, Lance doesn’t have time to catch feelings. Some tail would be nice, yeah, but not feelings.

He thinks about Shiro on that stage, the cute, purple kitty cat. He was so adorable, embarrassed, sliding up to Keith with a flush.

Keith had kissed him – slapped his ass – wormed an arm around his waist and walked away with him.

They’re effortless in everything they do; PDA included, apparently.

Lance groans, and rolls over in his bed. His body is tired – stripping is like, definitely an underrated sport.

Still, his dick finds enough energy to show interest, his mind still thinking of that duet show.

They’re stupidly beautiful. Stupidly.

God needs to limit how much beauty can go into one person. It’s not fair to everyone else.

Lance grinds his hips into the sheets and sighs, feeling his dick grow harder.

He’s not going to jerk off thinking about Shiro, and he’s not going to jerk off thinking about Keith, and he’s noooot going to jerk off thinking about Shiro and Keith, and what it’d be like to be physically spit roasted between them both.

Nope. Not gonna’.

But his brain wanders to Shiro, and his thighs, and Keith, and his stupid goddamn mullet, sticking to his forehead, sweat rolling down his neck-

Lance shoves a hand down his pants, and physically keens at the contact. Great googly moogly is he hard. Rock solid, down there.

Lance squeezes his eyes shut, and jerks off so fast and hard, his filter falling through the floor, and down to the apartment below him.

He’s not going to think about them.

(He does.)

Chapter End Notes

thank you mal for the translations :))

“Speak Spanish?”
“Of course!
“You sure it’s not because of our adorable paladins?”
“Definitely not.”
“I won’t kid ya’. Those bastards are super hot.”
“I needed a job, and I know how to dance.”
“Sure. If it helps you sleep.”
On Monday, he stretches in the dance room, hands gripping far down on his toes, nose between his knees. It feels good – his body is getting a little stronger. His back pops, and Lance’s sigh echoes off the walls.

Coran introduced some cool choreography today. Something a little harder – more of the stuff you see in your typical club scene.

Lance was told to take his time, learn the steps, get more comfortable on stage.

“It’s all in the baby steps, Lance. Ya’ have to caterpillar before you can butterfly.”

Like that made any sense, but whatever. Lance got the memo.

There’s the sound of a throat clearing – Lance looks up and sees Keith, arms crossed, eyebrows raised.

“Hey.”

“Yo,” Lance nods, and curls his legs underneath him.

“Uh…” Keith blinks, and for once, Lance sees him look a little nervous, “…how’s….how’s it going?”

Lance stares. Keith’s cheeks are the slightest shade of pink, his hair parted where he’s run his hands through it too many times.

Oh my god, that’s adorable.

Lance gapes, before he breaks out into a laugh. Keith’s face scrunches up, and Lance laughs harder.

“Good dude, ahaha, I’m good.”

“I saw your show on Saturday,” Keith frowns.

“Hey,” Lance points, “I already got the lecture.”

“No…um…that’s not…” Keith rubs behind his head, and watches Lance rise to his feet. He clears his throat, “You were horrible on the pole.”

“Wow.” Lance deadpans, “Thanks.”

“Your hook was too low.” Keith says, seriously, “And you don’t put enough power into your turns.”

“Thank you.”

“And when you scissor, you have to point your toes-“

“Wow, would you look at the time.” Lance checks his imaginary watch, “It’s just past Dick-o-Clock. Time for you to leave!”
“You should come over,” Keith says, in one breath.

Lance pauses.

“What?”

“Shiro and I have a pole.” Keith rocks back on his heels, frustratingly cool. “You were okay on the floor, but I can show you how to spin better.”

Oh.

Oh.

“Are you trying to help me?” Lance sputters.

“I don’t have to!” Keith argues, “I’m just saying. You suck.”

Well, Lance sure as hell never expected this, but, he’s not gonna’ turn down an opportunity to get better. Keith plays with the waistband of his yoga pants, long eyelashes touching his cheeks as he stares at the floor. It’s interesting- Lance was sure Keith would be a hundred percent confident in everything he did. He just has that asshole vibe- the dude does his own makeup, for fucks sake.

But he's surprisingly human.

Keith scuffs the tip of his shoe against the floor and looks up, waiting for a response.

“Sure.” Lance stands up straight, just to make a point of looking down at him, because Lance is petty as hell.

Keith’s eyes widen, round and sparkly.

“Cool,” Keith nods, and turns on his heel, “I’ll text you our address.”

“Wait...” Lance backpedals, “where’d you get my-“

“Hunk.” Keith gestures, still walking away, leaving Lance to imagine Keith standing at the front door, pestering Hunk for his phone number.

Shiro gives him a little wave from across the room, and Lance decides that he’s royally fucked.

Life slowly improves. It’s in the little things, like affording internet again, and buying good meat from Whole Foods instead of Trader Joes. Doing laundry is great too. He’s able to buy new gym clothes to practice in.

The days turn longer, with summer stretching on.

He does the routine twice a night; Lance makes a big show of following the choreography exactly like he’s supposed to- and gets half the attention he did on that first night. It’s pissing Allura off a little bit; he’s kinda’ rubbing it in her face - Ha Ha my improvised bullshit was better than your precious ‘routine’ – but Allura says nothing, and Lance keeps his trap shut.

So after proving he can do more, they let him.
Lance is given a little more play room in the routines. He performs with some female strippers one night, and has a hell of a lot of fun.

But...he’s uh...yet to take Keith up on his offer.

The month is just swept beneath his feet, pulled, like a rug, super-fast and without warning.

And...it’s just...in hindsight, Lance realized what a bad idea it is.

He’s practically batting away his feelings with a fly swatter right now, and he’s not exactly ready to handle their cute little home and their domestic lifestyle.

What if he sees Keith is pajamas? What if he sees Shiro *cook*?!

Lance will die. Literally, die. He’s trying to focus here, and Keith and Shiro aren’t really helping.

But Keith makes a big pouty show of stomping over one day during practice, and hauls Shiro over too, so Lance has no other option but to end up here, in their living room.

---

It’s a nice house. Lance would like to exaggerate the word *house* and not *apartment*.

Lance shouldn’t be surprised; they’re two highly respected strippers that make good dough.

They’ve got one of those modern kitchens – you know, like, the ones with the dark cabinets and the white granite. Their pole is smack dab in the middle of their workout room, which is really just a full length mirror, some weights, and a yoga mat.

Lance wipes his sweaty palms off on his shorts. They’re tight, but his baggy band shirt reaches right past his ass – he didn’t expect to dress *nice* just to practice *stripping*.

Of course, Keith looks hot as hell – he’s in a fucking crop top, of all things, and these jean shorts that should be honestly, illegal.

“No.” Keith scowls, “You’re doing it wrong.”

Lance rolls his eyes, “Of course I am.”

Keith climbs the pole in one easy grab, using his upper arm stretch, and his toes, to bring him towards the top of the bar. His wrists hold him strong, and he flips upside down, his ankles reaching up, and locking around the pole. He lets his body fall straight, and he crosses his arms, “Inverts are all in the calves.”

“I *did* that.” Lance argues. He can feel his face flushing red – he *tries* not to stare, okay, but it’s hard. Keith has really nice legs. And like, when he folds his arms like that, his biceps *hella* bulge-

“No, you didn’t.” Keith says, like being upside down isn’t physically straining at all. “You were too tense.”

“The blood is rushin’ to my head! How am I *not* supposed to be tense?”

Keith holds the bar again, and flips back, sliding down gracefully, “Practice. Do it again.”

Lance rolls his eyes, and Keith’s face scrunches up into a scowl – it’s *not* cute, it’s not, it’s not, *It’s* not...
“Goddammit, can you start taking this seriously?”

“I am!” Lance grips the bar, “It’s hard when you’re being such a dickhead.”

Lance braces himself for an argument- this wasn’t really what he wanted, but Keith surprises him.

He sighs, and sits down on the Yoga mat, “Yeah, alright. Fine, sorry.”

Lance blinks down at him, but talks as he flips upside down, and tries to brace his bare feet around the pole, “You alright, dude?”

“Yeah.” Keith watches, “It’s just…easy to forget you’re not a beginner.”

Lance wiggles his eyebrows, still holding onto the pole with his hands, “Oh? Cause I’m such a natural, right?”

“Actually, yeah.”

Oh. Well.

Lance stares, and he feels his ankle nearly slip. “O-Oh.” Lance stutters, “I wasn’t expecting that.”

“I’ve kinda’ been watching you.” Keith explains, “Like, in the studio, you suck ass-“

“Thanks.”

“-but on stage, you like,” Keith flicks out his fingers, “light up. It’s weird.”

Lance slowly, slowly lets go of the bar, feeling his weight pull against his calves, and the blood rush to his head. “I j-just have fun, I guess.”

“Mmm. Squeeze your thighs.”

“Why?”

“Because your calf muscles aren’t that strong. Do it.”

Lance does, and grins when he feels himself stop slipping. He extends his arms with confidence, and laughs, “Haha, hey! I’m a circus man.”

“Right.” Keith rolls his eyes, “Come back down before you pop a blood vessel.”

Lance laughs at that, and grips the pole, swinging back around and blinking away the dizziness.

In an attempt to be funny – because lets be real, Lance is hilarious- he slides down into a split, and lifts his arms above his head like a cheerleader.

“Ta-da!”

He expects Keith to scrunch up his little nose or roll his eyes – but instead he just stares, mouth opening, then closing. He blinks once and says, “That’s…that’s really good.”

“What?”

“There’s a lot you can do with that flexibility, you know.”
“Really?” Lance stands back up, “Cool.”

“Yeah.” Keith stands up too, and grips the pole, “How about you try this?”

His body aches, but it’s a good ache. One that resonates in his bones. One that says you’ve done good.

New routines push him harder. Lance is actually having fun.


It’s time for Lance to lay his cards down on the table.

He paints his toes blue – something Lance really didn’t start doing until recently. Fuck, if people are gonna’ see his feet all the time, they might as well be cute.

He wasn’t sure if he’d have the courage to do something so small before- until that first lesson at Keith’s place, where he saw his nails, a slick black color.

It’s a small detail, but it made Lance smile, and want to do the same.

God, it’s time to be honest.

He likes Keith. He likes Keith, and he likes Shiro and he likes them both together.

Lance breathes out a shaky breath. He’s tried so, so hard to ignore his heartbeat. To ignore the way he’s drawn to them, like a magnet.

They’re just hot, is all.

Sure, sure. They’re all hot Lance, great excuse.

Yeah. Lance likes them.

Time to repress.

Vrrrrrt

Vrrrrr

Vrrr-

This phone buzzes once, twice, three times, before Lance pole-vaults over the back of his couch, and scoops up his phone off the counter. He almost smacks himself in the face with the little dumb charm he’s attached to it- something silly Hunk gave him.

“Yo, this is L-Dawg.”
“Lance?”

“Allura!”

“Oh my god, did you just refer to yourself as-“ she sighs, “you know what, nevermind. I know you worked a long shift last night, but do you think you can come in earlier? We got a sudden wave of people, and I’d really like to stock someone up on the platforms.”

“Oh,” Lance blinks. The platforms are two, usually vacant stripper poles that stand on opposite sides of the club. At most clubs they hold dancers all night, just to strip, even during performances. Ah, but the Paladin barely has enough staff. Lance gives a little laugh, “Yeah, yeah, totally. That’s uh… probably my fault too.”

“W…What?”

“Well,” Lance sits up on his kitchen counter, “I kinda’ went raving about the place on Twitter. I posted a few videos on Youtube too. You know, there’s like, nothing on social media when you google the place? You really ought to-“

Allura sputters through the phone, “Y-You did what??”

“Oh jeez.” Lance hesitates, “Was…was I not supposed to do that?”

“No…no, that’s…” She bites, “I’m mad I didn’t think of that. Are you coming early then?”

Lance smirks, “Yeah, yeah. So you admit I’m super smart and talented right?”

There’s a huffy little breath, before she barks, “Just get here soon,” and hangs up.

Lance snickers in the silence of his apartment, jumping off the counter top and kicking open his rickety closet door.

His body really hurts – he’s sore, from practicing on his day off – but then he remembers that Keith is here too, sacrificing his free time, so Lance tries to keep his pie hole shut.

Lance could watch Keith swirl around that pole for hours. He just owns it, like, it doesn’t even strain his body. Lance tries to monkey see monkey do, but he ends up on his face, and Keith actually laughs at him.

Lance huffs – feels his face turn red and barks out excuses-

But, there’s a hand in front of his nose, and he’s pulled to his feet with a smile.

God, his heart hurts so bad – hurts, because he can see Keith opening up, little by little, and Lance adores it.

They’re taking a break when Shiro comes home. Lance swivels back and forth on their barstool-which is more than enough entertainment for Lance – while Keith just sits up on the counter top, peeling an orange with his nails.

When the door slams shut, Keith’s head pops up.
“Hey!” Shiro smiles.

Lance swivels around, “Shiro!”

Keith goes to hop off the bar, but Shiro waves him off, walking his way, “How was practice?”

“Good.”

“Eh.”

Keith glares daggers into the side of Lance’s face, and he laughs, “I’m kidding it was fine.”

“Awesome,” Shiro smiles, and winds his robot arm around Keith’s Violet Chachki waist.

“You’re not performing tonight?” Keith tips his head.

“Nope.” Shiro leans up – and Lance looks away, as Keith pecks his lips. “Just have a few personal dances to go back for.”

Lance sips his water. Ignores the silly butterflies in his stomach.

It’s…it’s probably time to go. What even is the time?

“Are you staying for dinner?” Shiro asks, suddenly, turning around and leaning his hip against the granite.

“Huh?” Lance blinks, “Uh, n-no, I don’t think so-“

“You should.” Keith kicks his legs, and continues with his orange, “Shiro is making ramen.”

“He’s making ramen?”

“Hey, it’s not the gross over-processed pasta you get for 99 cents.” Shiro laughs, and turns back to dump his keys on the counter. “My mom taught me how to make the real stuff.”

“I need to thank your mom for that,” Keith says.

“Did she make you work in the kitchen?” Lance grins, “That’s what my mom did.”

“Yeah.” Shiro laughs, “Every night. Did yours?”

Lance sputters into a laugh, “Oh, I can hear it now.” He raises his voice into a shrill tone, “Oiga, venga y ayuda a tu madre con la cena, desgraciado!”

Keith and Shiro blink before they laugh; it’s a really nice sound. Shiro’s laughs are rumbly and deep, and Keith’s smile is seriously blinding.

Yeah. Lance stays for dinner.

Sweat rolls down his back. The stage lights are warm, and the dancers next to him are on point with
the routine.

They’re in these high waisted short things, a purple cropped sweatshirt and a snapback. The biggest pain are the thigh highs- but Lori introduced this thing called fashion tape, and Lance’s life has seriously changed.

Lance rolls his hips- doesn’t focus too much on keeping up, rather, he stares at the girl in the front row and winks, smoothing his hands down his thighs, keeping eye contact.

She grins behind her hand – turns her head and beckons her friends to watch.

Lance flirts a little, dances, just for her, before turning back to the choreography, and gripping the pole in one hand.

It’s gotten a little easier – he’s only been ‘tutored’ five or six times, but he can already feel his body kicking in the muscle memory. He’s starting to fill out the uniforms better – build muscle in his thighs, and his core.

Lance rolls into the lift, and spreads his thighs quicker than the others. His legs flex into a perfect split, just for a moment, before his ankles lock around the pole, and he spins with momentum, grinning when he does a good job.

There’s some money thrown on the stage.

He reminds himself to slow down, to breathe in, to follow the others.

His body grows stronger.

“Hey,” Shiro says, from where he sits in the corner of the room, “I just noticed your shirt.”

The T.V. in the livingroom is turned onto some Alternative station. Lance feels sweat roll down his neck, but he’s determined to perfect this. It’s a matter of stubbornness now.

“Hm?” Lance looks down at himself; he’s got one arm hooked around the pole, and a foot keeping him steady.

They work tonight, but Lance came over early to eat lunch and learn how to walk in heels. The whole uh…heels thing will take some work, so, Keith pointed him to the pole, and called it a day.

“Def Leppord, huh?”

“Oh, yeah!” Lance slips down a little on the pole, landing somewhat gracefully on his feet.

“Pyromania saved my life.”

“Do another angel,” Keith directs, “and you have no idea who you’re talking to.”

“Yeah,” Shiro grins. “That was my era, baby.”

Lance knows it’s a joke, but the word still makes him flush hot. It runs down his back, to his toes. Makes his face hot. Time freezes.

Baby.
Keith rolls his eyes, “You were born in 89. That’s like all the seventeen year olds that call themselves nineties kids.”

“Hey, you don’t have to be born in the era to grow up appreciating it.”

Lance grips the pole again, and focuses on the angel pose. He grins, “True that. Shiro, Van Halen or AC/DC?”

“Flock of Seagulls,” Shiro answers, smiling.

“Oh please,” Keith jabs, “you listen to more Blondie than anything.”

Lance starts to laugh, his grip slipping, and Shiro barks, “Hey! He doesn’t need to know that.”

“No shame, my dude,” Lance does the spin. “Blondie has a real Bikini Kill feel to it.”

Keith nods, “Oh yeah that’s – point your toes – my shit right there.”

Lance furrows his eyebrows, and points his toes, trying to be graceful. He’s breathing a little heavily, hot under their eyes, but he says, “Now you’re talking. Wheezer and Metallica shaped the 90’s.”

Shiro snorts, “Metallica came from my era.”

“Dude, everyone knows they weren’t any good until Ride the Lightning.”

“You better watch your mouth in my house,” Shiro jokes, and Lance laughs so hard he falls.

“Ahaah,” Lance giggles from the ground. “D-don’t worry man. Growing up I was more concerned with the early 2000’s hip hop.”

“Oh that’s some good shit,” Keith gestures.

“No kidding.” Shiro checks his phone, and then looks up, “Hey, you guys down for some coffee?”

“Yeah, if you’re paying,” Keith flirts – and Lance’s heart beats a little faster. He stands from the floor. Straightens his shirt.

“Dude, I’m always down for coffee. Inject that shit into my veins, bruh.”

Shiro snorts, and stands up too, “Am I driving?”

Lance says, “Yeah, unless we decide to take my invisible car.”

“Wow, you’ve got a mouth on you, don’tcha?” Shiro smirks.

Keith rolls his eyes, “Like you’re surprised?”

“Hey,” Lance points with a grin. “You’re not one to talk.”

“Well, everyone knows I’ve got a big mouth,” Keith talks as they walk, waving his arms dramatically, “Ohh, red paladin. Snarky asshole. Short fuse.”

Lance flips around his snapback and thinks no, actually, Keith is more than that.

He watches Keith grab Shiro’s metal hand and squeeze it tight. Shiro looks down at him with so much fondness and –
Fuck, they’re nothing like those stage personalities. Shiro, the apparent sex god, is totally a squishy little bear – and Keith is cuddly and funny, dammit.

“So, I’m going to google which Starbucks drink has the most caffeine,” Keith says, as he grabs his phone off the kitchen counter. “Then we’re going to get six and drink them all in one go.”

“It’s a dark roast,” Shiro answers, without looking, “if you drink more than two, you’ll die.”

“Perfect.”

“Where have you guys been all my life?” Lance jokes, and watches Keith and Shiro smile.

Their friendship sneaks up on him, like a panther. Huge and dangerous.

And beautiful. Absolutely beautiful.

Lance wiggles in the makeup chair, squirming in his new fancy clothes.

Tonight’s theme is with the stars! so they’re all in sparkly little galaxy outfits. It’s cheesy and kinda’ awesome.

“Can you sit still?” Lori barks.

“Sorry!”

“I want you to look perfect,” She grins. “You’ve been killin’ it out there, you know.”

“I have?”

“Totally. Allura hasn’t told you yet, but people have started requesting you for personal dances.”

Oh. Well, that’s certainly news.

“That’s good?”

“Really good,” Lori contours his cheeks- contours! That’s a new world Lori taught him. She gently sweeps a powder across his nose, “Usted ha estado llamando la atención de más que sólo los clientes.”

Lance, in a panic, looks to where Keith sits in Shiro’s lap on the chair, waiting their turn on stage. Keith is in a galaxy halter top and these pastel dance joggers. Shiro rocks a muscle tank like nobody’s business.

They’re so damn cute; their PDA should be disgusting, but everyone in the club just seems to leave them be.

Lance remembers to reply, “Hemos estado pasando tiempo juntos, eso es todo. Ellos están en una relación feliz y yo no soy un homewrecker.

Lori shrugs, “Okayyy. If you say so.”
Lance wrings his hands in his lap. Feels his heart beat and swell.

He’s gotta’ get this crush bullshit under control.

And then Keith looks his way.

“Hahah, hey,” Keith waves, “You’re in a skirt.”

“Yes,” Lance answers back, voice filling in with fake confidence. He sticks out his tongue, “I’m gonna’ upstage you guys, just you wait.”

“You can try,” Keith sticks out his tongue as well. Shiro rolls his eyes – but he looks happy. Warm. The scar on his nose flushes a faint pink as he smiles.

“You and Keith can really pull off skirts.”

A few makeup artists agree.

“All our dancers can.”

“True.”

“How come you don’t wear ‘em, Shiro?” Lance smirks. “I’ve never seen you walk around in heels either.”

“Uh…”

“That’s because he can’t,” Lori interjects, with a laugh. “He’ll fall flat on his ass.”

“Hey, I can!” Shiro defends.

“Babe, no.”

“I’ve done it!” Shiro laughs, “I just…fell…flat on my ass.”

The little makeup room brightens with laughter. Lance has to lean away from Lori’s brush to giggle, clutching his side when it hurts. Shiro is a great sport, laughing at himself with a genuine smile.

Keith wraps an arm around Shiro’s shoulders and grins, “He’s just a little top heavy.”

Lance nearly bites a hole in his tongue, trying to hold back a remark.

*Top heavy,* dear god.

“It’s alright,” An artist smiles. “Shiro doesn’t need all the fancy outfits and the nice shoes. You could put him out there with a cardboard box, and he’d make it work.”

There’s a chorus of *true that* and *amen, sister.*

Shiro pulls his face into his hands. Lance wants to kiss him.
//thanks for all the nice feedback guys, kisses for all //

also thank you mal & britney for translations :) )

"You’ve been catching the attention of more than just the patrons."
"We’ve been hanging out, is all. They’re in a happy relationship, and I’m no homewrecker."

edit: okay, i appreciate ya'll, but please stop harassing me about the spanish,. ive asked two native speaking friends to help me and i dont wanna be rude after the trouble they've gone to. Spanish differentiates from household to household , thanks
“Holy shit, guys. I… I think I’m fucked up.”
“Yeah, you think?”
“That’s what you get for doing Jello shots with the regulars.”
“They bought them for me!”
“You’re supposed to say no!”

Lance sways a little into the doorway. The performances continue, but their shifts are done – Lance especially, that’s for fuckin’ sure. He’s having a hard time standing up straight, and his words aren’t coming out right.

Keith crosses his arms, “How many did you do?”
“Uh….”
“That’s not a good sign,” Shiro says, and reaches out to catch him when Lance sways backwards.

Lance feels his arms brace beneath his armpits. Oooh, Shiro is really warm-

They’re back in their street clothes, but they’re all covered in glitter. Lance would make a joke about looking like they just came from a gay strip club, but then, he realizes that they actually did just come from a gay strip club, so.

The cosmic night went relatively well. A little too well, because Lance ended up watching Keith and Shiro’s independent routines – he told himself not to! He told himself! Does he listen? No.

He watched with a knot in his throat. With his dick hard against his thigh.

So Lance slipped towards the bar and met a group of super cool dudes with a lot of money and, well, Pidge certainly was no help.

“That would be a no,” Shiro decides, and picks him up in one arm, like a princess. There’s like 101 reasons why that’s super sexy, but, Lance won’t get into that.

“Nooo, I’m fine-“

“You’re crashing on our couch.” Keith says, walking behind them, out the back entrance to the
employee parking lot.

The back lot is half full, and the moon is directly above them – Lance would appreciate the mood lighting, but he’s too obsessed with the way Shiro is effortlessly holding him.

He babbles about something during the drive. He’s sure it makes absolutely no sense, but Shiro and Keith start cracking up in the front seat, so, it’s probably worth the embarrassment Lance will feel tomorrow.

“Yeah, yeah,” Lance buzzes, leaning up far enough in the seat for the seatbelt to yank him back, “like, y-you guys tell me, Olive Garden breadsticks, or Red Lobster cheddar biscuits?”

“Oh, cheddar biscuits.” Keith answers, trying really hard to keep from laughing. He’s talking in that voice that like, people use to talk to children, or very drunk assholes.

“See,” Lance slurs, “that’s where you’re wrong.”

Shiro flicks on his blinker, “I’m with you buddy, breadsticks all the way.”

“Seriously?” Keith turns, “But Olive Garden breadsticks are just, soggy beef jerky.”

“No, no, no no.” Lance slaps a hand up on the back of the headrest, “Ch-Cheddar biscuits just fuckin’ crumble, yo. Like, that shit- that shits everywhere.”

“No, they melt in your mouth-“ Keith says, and then cuts himself off. He slumps down in the seat and groans, “Oh god, drunk Lance is getting us to argue over bread.”

Shiro starts laughing from behind the wheel; it’s that deep, rumbly laugh that makes Lance squirm in his seat, and relax all the same.

He tries opening the door and walking up the driveway, but his body says nope and he face-plants into the bushes. Keith almost throws up from laughing so hard, but Shiro kindly scoops him up, wipes away the blood under his nose, and gets him in the house.

“See,” Lance purrs, “th-this is why you’re my favorite.”

Shiro raises an eyebrow, and smiles, “I’m your favorite?”

Oooh. Lance stares at his face as they walk. Pretty. So pretty. He squints, “Do you draw in your eyebrows?”

Keith lets out another snort from across the living room, closing the door with his foot and cackling.

Shiro doesn’t grace him with an answer. He sets him down, and says, “I’ll grab you a pillow. Hold on.”

“Kayy,” Lance wiggles. They have such a nice couch. Lance pats around for his wallet, and chucks it on the coffee table, along with his phone.

“Hey,” Keith hands him a cup, “here’s some water.”

“Rad. Thanks, yo.”
“Stop talking like that.”

“Like what?”

“A nineties surfer dude.”

“I’m from Florida,” Lance says, like that makes any sense. He takes a sip, and sets down the cup on the coffee table – slowly, mind you - but he sees something interesting resting on the corner. It’s a black collar, studded, without a tag.

Lance gasps, jolting up gracefully on the couch, “What!? Keith! You guys have a dog?!”

Keith freezes, halfway between the couch and the kitchen. He turns, slow, like in a horror movie. He looks Lance in the eye, and looks mildly horrified, but that doesn’t register to Lance’s brain.

“Uh….”

Shiro appears in the doorway, smirking, a pillow under his arm, “Yeah, Keith. Do we have a dog?”

“Y…Yes.” Keith says, “Uh, yeah we have a do-go to sleep.” Keith barks, scoops up the collar, and runs into the bedroom.

Shiro is laughing, but Lance can’t tell why. Shiro flicks the lights low on the kitchen, and hands him the pillow.

“Here you go.”


“No problem.”

“You gotta’ show me your dog in the morning.”

Shiro bites his lip and smiles, super cheeky and smug.

“Of course.”

Lance doesn’t remember much after that. He thinks he fell asleep to the sound of their T.V. playing dim from their bedroom. He remembers a little talking. He remembers passing the fuck out.

When morning comes, he stirs to the sounds of birds out in the trees. Lance wakes up with a little kink in his back, but nothing too bad. His street clothes from last night are a little uncomfortable; he still has glitter in his hair.

Ooooh, and there’s the hangover. Yep, yep.

Lance sits up, flinching at the natural light flooding into the room. He can hear someone in the kitchen. There’s a low voice talking, smooth, and comfortable.

Lance looks around the living room, squints, and whispers aloud:

“I don’t think they have a dog.”

Lance sends them an e-card the next day;
Thanks for putting my drunk ass to sleep!

When they see him in the studio, they laugh and slap him on the back, say something about Olive Garden, and more stuff Lance doesn’t remember.

But Lance is sure to stomp up to Pidge. He puts his hands on his hips and goes *goddamn, how much alcohol did you put in those Jello shots?* In which, Pidge only laughs.

“So, how’d the first date go?”

Hunk sits across from him, writhing in his seat.

“G-Good. I think.”

They’re in McDonald’s; Lance said he’d pay, and this is the best he can spare, at the moment. To be honest, nothing’s wrong with a little Mickey D’s every now and again.

“You *think*, or you *know*?”

“Ah, she…she kissed me? At the end?”

Lance rolls his eyes, “Oh wow. Then did you ask for Daddy’s car and take her to prom?”

“You’re an asshole,” Hunk laughs. “I thought it was a big deal.”

“I’m just kiddin’,” Lance kicks him from under the table, with a grin. “She’s totally into you.”

“Thanks,” Hunk flushes, and plays with the straw in his milkshake. “Um, how’s your double crush going?”

Lance hesitates, “Er…”

“Keith told me you passed out drunk on their couch.”

“I did do that.”

“At least they cared enough to take you home?”

“See, that’s the part that’s fucking me up,” Lance sighs. “They’re just so nice. And hot.”

Hunk snorts, “Well, they’re actually giving you the time of day, so, I wouldn’t sell yourself short just yet.”

“Pff, me? Selling myself short?” Lance huffs, “Please. If anyone can woo two people, it’d be me.”

Lance is so full of bullshit. He’s *so* full of bullshit. If you looked up the ass of a cow, there’d be nothing there, because *Lance, is full, of bullshit.*

Hunk doesn’t immediately reply – but he does give him this look, wordlessly saying that he understands. Lance sinks down a little in his chair. He’s exhausted. A little high strung. Kinda stressed. Hunk sees it all.

“Yeah, well, I’m rootin’ for you buddy.”
Lance gets a phone call on his day off. It buzzes from across the room, where it’s plugged into the wall.

He’s a little hesitant to answer it, but after the third ring, he does hop off the couch, and checks the caller I.D. When he sees Shiro’s name he smiles, and answers, “Yo.”

“Hey Lance.”

“Shiro! What’s up, my man?”

“Well, I know it’s your day off, and everything.”

“Well, technically weekend,” Lance interrupts. “Allura gave you guys time off too, right?”

“Ah...yeah, that’s why, er, I was calling to see if...” he pulls the phone away from his ear. There’s muffled words of wait, what are we doing again? And Takashi hand me the phone – until the voice changes.

“Lance. We’re going to come pick you up.”

“Uh...what?”

Keith barks, “We’ve got fuckin’ two days off, and I’m sure as hell not gonna’ stay home. Are you on board, or what?”

Lance starts walking towards his bedroom, “Er, where are we going?”

“Wherever we want.”

Lance pauses, and rubs a hand beneath his nose, smiling. That sounds good. Real good.

“Lance?”

“Yeah. Yeah. I’m down.”

“Cool. Pack a bag, we’ll be there in ten.”

Keith hangs up, and Lance is left there to smile into his hand, like a complete moron. His stomach fills with silly butterflies.

He shoves an extra change of clothes, his wallet, and his phone into a backpack. On his way out, Lance nicks his bag of granola off the counter, and locks his apartment shut.

Shiro drives a silver Chevy truck that’s probably seen better days. It’s kinda’ old, probably early 2000’s, but it drives smoother than hell.

Keith sits in the passenger seat, balls deep in a bag of Chex Mix, feet up on the dash. The radio plays, not too loud, but enough to hear the bass. Shiro focuses on the road, but Lance doesn’t miss the way his right hand reaches out, and grabs Keith’s hand in his lap.

It’s just, one of those things you have to be there for. To see the road rush by. To not know where
you’re going. To fold up your legs in the back of a truck and breathe in the smell of faux leather.

“We’re going to take the coastal highway,” Shiro says. “Is that cool?”

“Perfect!” Lance squirms, a little too excited.

“When was the last time you left town?” Keith asks, as he blindly waves the bag in Lance’s direction.

Lance grabs a handful, and says, “Uh, like, years. I was a kid.”

“Damn,” Keith pulls the bag back, “too expensive?”

“I stopped going on vacations after I got booted out of the house.”

Keith mumbles, “Oh…”

“Is everything okay?” Shiro asks, because he’s got a heart of fucking gold.

Lance laughs, “Yeah, I love my family, and they love me. They just…didn’t agree with some of my lifestyle choices. It’s cool.”

Keith gives a little hum, and Shiro nods, “We’ve been there.”

“Oh man…” Keith trails off. “Uh…working at? Or stripping specifically?”

“Working at.”

“Seven years.”

“Goddamn.”

“I’ve been there five,” Shiro says.

“Wow…” Lance does the math in his head. “Hey, you’ve been there since you were sixteen?”

Keith snorts, “Yep. Do you want to hear my tragic anime backstory?”

Lance laughs, “Only if you want to tell me.”

Keith settles down in his chair a little. Leans his head against the glass, and looks beautiful.

“Child services came in when I was seven, or whatever.” He waves his hand around, “Nobody really adopts older kids, so, when I was sixteen Allura gave me a part time job at the Paladin. Helped me get emancipated.”

“Wow,” Lance says. “That is a tragic anime backstory.”

“Yeah,” Keith smiles. “It kinda’ sucked, but, I was a busboy for a while, and that kept me focused. When I turned eighteen I begged for a stripping job, and she gave it to me.”

“No kidding… so you’ve been there a while, huh?”
“Yeah. Believe it or not, I used to be an even bigger asshole.”

Lance snorts from the back seat. Keith blindly swats at his knee, “Shut it.”

“What was your epiphany?” Lance teases.

“Shiro,” Keith says seriously, and Lance suddenly struggles to breathe.

“Oh.”

Shiro rubs his nose, and looks away, but Keith smiles and pokes him in the ribs, “He walked in when I was nineteen. Shiro had lost everything, but he was so sweet and nice to everyone. Even me.”

“Fuck, that’s cute.” Lance says, in a jokingly defeated tone, and slumps back in the seat.

Shiro and Keith smile, and the radio continues to sing.

“He was too feisty not to adore,” Shiro says.

“Groooosssssss,” Lance teases, and kicks the back of Keith’s chair playfully. His heart beats painfully fast. They’re adorable, they’re adorable.

Keith laughs and turns around to look him in the eye, “Hey, what about you, then?”

“I have a very confidential relationship history,” Lance looks at his nails. “It’s best for all parties involved to keep it that way.”

“He’s a virgin.”

“Definitely.”

“Am not!” Lance jolts up.

“Hey, nothing wrong with that, dude.”

“I’m not a virgin,” Lance says, because really, he’s not. “I slept with… like two people in college.”

“Oh,” Keith says, settling back in the chair. “So no one right now?”

“God, no,” Lance complains. He slumps back in the seat, “But not for lack of trying.”

Keith laughs at him, and Lance leans up to pull on his hair.

“Ow ow ow-“

“Hey, I’ll turn this truck around,” Shiro jokes, and Lance laughs too hard to fight anymore.

The rest of the ride is like that: Shiro driving patiently, the three of them talking about impractical nonsense for hours. When Lance sees the ocean, he smiles, rolling down the window and sticking out his head to smell the salt. He takes pictures. Laughs. Passes out in the back, and wakes up at a Burger King.

Dammit, it’s fun. It’s so, so fun, and so dangerous for his heart, but Lance is a frog in a pot. Stuck, and boiling.

Shiro is annoyingly nice. Keith is obnoxious.
Lance adores them.

They sleep in the truck for a night, then turn around, and drive back. Sometimes they pull over, to take a picture of an odd looking tree, or to explore a weird, abandoned shack – or to sit in the grass and pull flowers.

It’s incredibly innocent, for three sex workers.

Lance is in a constant state of awe. Keith and Shiro trust each other so much. They let the other give lap dances. Appear half-naked on stage. Flirt and wink and be utterly sinful.

But they hold hands through the fields of flowers. And smile when they see the ocean.

It should feel weird to third wheel like this. Should. It doesn’t.

The impromptu road trip ends, but Lance feels brand new. He’s dropped off at home, and given hugs for fucks sake, and Lance almost wants to cry.

It’s like they looked at him, the sleep deprived, anxious little bean pole, and said yeah, you need a vacation.

He’s not sure how to stutter out a thank you, but they don’t ask for one. Lance shoves twenty dollars’ worth of gas money between the car seats. He’s not sure if Shiro will find it or not, but, whatever.


Lance feels sparked. Feels determined to shine.

They’re practicing when Allura drops the bomb.

She’s talking to Shiro, casually, a hand on her hip, the other gesturing. Lance swirls around a pole, practicing in shoes. Pole work is fucking hard in shoes. He likes using his toes.

"Business has been picking up, right? I’ve noticed more people."

“Yeah. It's been pretty steady, so I interviewed around ten or eleven people.”

“Any good ones?"

“Mhmm. I’ve decided on six. Coran is going to call them today.”

“Wait, what?!” Lance jolts, and slides down the pole like a fireman.

They turn his way.

“Oh, that’s right,” Allura smiles. “You’re not going to be the new kid anymore.”

Lance breathes in a dramatic gasp, and hoots, “Ooooh yeahhh!!”

Allura’s smile drops, and she rolls her eyes as Lance begins to dance.
“I’m not the new kid~ I’m not the new kid~”

“Really, Lance?”

“Do the cabbage patch~ Do the cabbage patch~”

Shiro laughs into the balled up fist of his metal hand, but Keith walks up to deadpan,

“You’re an embarrassment.”

“Don’t give a shit~ Don’t give a shit~”

“Come on,” Allura pats him on the back, “you better have a good idea of what you’re doing tonight. We’re supposed to host a bachelor party.”

Lance grins, “Oh yeah, I’ll knock your socks off, princess.”

“Stop calling me that.”

He works the platform nearest to the bar for an hour or two. It’s easy – it’s kinda’ like being an extra in a movie. Some people pay attention to you, but they’re usually consumed by the main act.

Which is cool. Lance just does slow lifts on the pole. He stays shirtless, dancing to the music, and just has fun with it. Allura gives him a thumbs up from backstage, so, it’s all good.

He’s ushered off the platform after a while; a sweet girl takes his place.

For the time being, he shrugs on his joggers, throwing on a shirt and hanging out with the others backstage. He’ll probably chill for a bit, and go back out on the other platform. Lance doesn’t have any stage performances booked tonight, but, he has one tomorrow that he’s rather excited about.

Lori just handed him a drink when there’s hushed commotion from the backstage hallway. Lance peeks out, and sees the pink paladin heaving into a trashcan.

“Good lord,” Coran pats her back, “dear, are you sure-“

“I-I’m fine,” she coughs, and ugh gross, poor thing, she heaves again. Allura rushes up with a clipboard, flipping through pages, a pen in her hair.

“Emily, we can’t send you out there.”

“I…I…” She gags a little, and coughs, “I’m so sorry-“

Coran gives a look to Allura, before mumbling it’s alright dearie, come come, let’s get you to a couch, yes?

Allura looks completely panicked.

A stagehand appears at her side, “Miss? Who are we sending out? Shirogane’s set ends in five.”

Keith is here too, apparently, “Is everything okay?”

“No, everything is not okay,” Allura runs a hand through her hair. “I just sent four people home because their shift ended, and I don’t have anyone to fill the next hour.”
“Uh…Kevin and Nunnelee left?”

“Yes. They did three sets already.”

“Well…I can…”

“No, Keith, you just performed.”

Wow, is this deus ex machina, or what? Lance hops out into the little hallway and waves, “Oh! Oh! Me! Pick me!”

“What?”

“Send me out there!”

Allura looks up with the most horrifying glare, but Lance remains strong. “And do what? You’ve never performed alone. We don’t even have choreography for you to perform alone.”

“I can do it,” Lance nods. “I can totally do it.”

“Do what?”

“I’m really really really good at bullshitting.”

“I won’t send you up there to-“

“I trust him.” Keith says, sharp like a knife. The hallway hushes, the light flickers. Lance’s smile cracks his face, his gut twisting hard.

Allura blinks, “W…What?”

“He can do it,” Keith nods. He looks at Lance, his eyes a determined please don’t fuck this up.

The stagehand shifts on their feet, “Erm…Allura? Two minutes.”

She looks at Lance. Looks him right in the eye. Tightens the grip on her clipboard, and sighs.

Shiro doesn’t have a clue what’s going on. He got off stage, wiped off his makeup and got changed. He was super hungry too, so, the sandwich platter someone brought in was very nice. He should find out who that is, and thank them.

He’s sitting on the couch, scrolling through his phone when he hears hushed whispering. There’s a few makeup artists swiveling around in their chairs.

Yeah! She was sick in the bathroom. Poor thing tried to convince Allura she was okay.

Oh my, what did Allura do?

Freak out, of course!

Shiro looks around, and realizes that Keith isn’t here.

Oh no.
Shiro stands up off the couch, and walks through the hallway, down to the back of the stage. There, he sees Allura biting her nails to pieces, and Coran.

“Hey,” Shiro whispers.

The group turns around, and oh, there’s Keith.

“Shiro!”

“I heard what happened? Sort of? What’s going on?”

“Emily was sick,” Allura explains. She looks especially pale. “Lance… Lance is…”

“Lance is out there, filling time until the girls get here to take over,” Coran says.

“Lord.” Shiro blinks.

Lance is out there? Granted, Lance is full of natural talent, but he’s a whirlwind.

“Are you serious?” Shiro blanches, his tongue slipping because oh my god-

He peaks around to see that yes, indeed, Lance is laying on top of a table, letting some guy take a shot off his chest.

When the man finishes, he sits up, the club cheering, drinks raising. Lance hollers with them, and goodness gracious he looks wrecked, but-

“He’s killing it out there.” Allura says, voice filled with disbelief. “He’s being a complete slut, but he’s killing it.”

“We’re a strip club, Allura. Slutty is good.”

“And he’s a people person,” Coran adds. Lance dances onto his knees, rolling his hands down his stomach, where the alcohol is sticky. Some girl reaches up and shoves ten dollars down his underwear- Lance grips her hand by the wrist, and licks her palm. Holy hell.

Shiro whispers, “He’s absolutely shameless.” That sounds like a bad thing, but Shiro can attest that it’s definitely not.

“He’s fucking smashed. The bachelor party up front gave Lance like four shots.”

“They weren’t spiked, right?”

“Lord no, Pidge is beyond careful.”

Shiro looks to Keith- and surprisingly enough, he’s nearly smiling. Well, rightfully so. Lance looks so into this, dancing on his knees, hands in his hair. He’s smiling and laughing, interacting with people and talking. He slides off the table, and onto another. Some guy reaches up to tug off his joggers – Lance encourages him with a warm laugh, and the joggers rip right off, like they should. Velcro rings through the club, and more people cheer. He’s got the attention of the entire room, and he’s not even on stage.

“I dunno…” Keith trails off, “We’ve seen him drunk. He wouldn’t be so graceful if he was really hammered.”
Lance slips off the table, and into the lap of some woman. He dances for her, hands above his head, moving effortlessly with the music. Her friends holler; Lance encourages her to wrap her arms around his neck, and she does. Shiro can see his lips moving – he’s saying something, because the group laughs. Lance looks good out there, snapback turned around, sparkly spandex shorts, and all.

“What did he do when he first walked out?” Shiro asks.

Allura rubs her temples, “He strolled up there, did a kickflip off the stage, and immediately started giving lap dances.”

Coran laughs, “He’s a wily, stretchy little thing.”

“I’m going out there,” Keith decides, suddenly chucking off his shirt and throwing it at Shiro’s face.

“Keith, wait.”

But he’s gone, taking a jump off the stage, and down towards the table up front. People cheer, and Lance’s head whips around with a grin.

Keith starts to monkey see, monkey do, sliding up to random tables, giving dances, and rolling in alcohol and money.

“They’re walking around like, like,” Allura sputters, “the fucking magicians that go from table to table at pancake houses.”

Shiro shrugs, and tucks Keith’s shirt in his arm, “They look like they’re having fun.”

Lance runs over to Keith, slinging his arms around his neck and laughing. Together they hop up on a table, effortlessly rolling to the music. No routine. No choreography.

Allura is having a literal anxiety attack, but from Shiro’s perspective, all seems well. The patrons are happy, they’re making money -

Keith says something to Lance to make him laugh; Lance dances with his arms above his head, and cheers when money gets slipped into his shorts.

They look incredible.

Shiro smiles.

Chapter End Notes

10 pts if you find the Cr1Tikal reference
20 pts if you find the RT podcast reference
Chapter 7

Chapter Notes

strap in kids, this is a long one

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Lance scrubs his arms down in the shower. Watches glitter wash down the drain in round, silvery circles. His showerhead is old, and sprays in random hard spurts, but it's enough for Lance to run shampoo through his hair.

Close his eyes.

Feel the hot water soak into his skin, and run down his back.

He’s not sure how badly he fucked up. The night runs itself through his head, over and over, over and over and over-

Keith had danced with him; Shiro had watched.

It was exhilarating. Lance didn’t even have to think, he just…acted. Existed.

Lance breathes out against the steam. Washes away the last of the glitter.

"I'm taking you off tomorrow. See me on Monday."

It smells like flowers in here.

Lance really hates being in this seat. He feels like he’s six again, sitting in time out, as his mother wags her finger and scolds him in a language he’s barely grasped yet.

Allura is looking at him, arms crossed, eyebrow raised. Her hair is tugged back, makeup on point – Lance would say something, but, he keeps his mouth shut, for his own safety.

Lance coughs, and looks up at the ceiling. There’s water damage, that’s cool.

“Lance.”

“So that weather, huh?”

“Lance.”

“Did you hear about Brexit?”

“Lance.” Allura breathes out, trying not to smile. “You’re not in trouble.”

“Oh,” Lance sits up, “I’m not?”
“No,” Allura looks down to the files on her desk. She gathers the papers, taps the bottoms on the desk, and straightens them into a pile. “So, as you might’ve heard, people liked your performance last week.”

“Whaaat?” Lance feigns innocence, “They did?”

“Someone recorded it, and it got uploaded on Youtube,” Allura deadpans. “I know you’ve seen it.”

“Y…Yeah.”

“So,” Allura shrugs, “I can’t really be mad. You’ve been getting private dance requests like crazy.” Lance grins, “Really?”

“Mmhmm. I’m not going to start building you a client list until you consent to it, of course.”

“Dude, I’m so down.” Lance grins, “That’s some good dough.”

“Uh…yeah.” Allura blinks, “Okay. You’ll have to further your training, you know.”

“I’m excited!”

Allura smiles, “Good. Also…” She looks up, “I was wondering if you’d be interested in doing more solo shows?”

Lance feels his body just, puff with excitement. He wiggles up in the rickety old chair and grins, “Ah! You’re shittin’ me!”

“Nope.”

“Fuck yeah! Excuse my language, but fuck yeah I do.”

The door opens. Coran steps in, gives a small wave, and closes the door. He heads for the chair across the room, “Ello, Lance.”

“Hey man!”

Coran turns to Allura, “Did ya’ ask him?”

“Mhm.” Allura smiles, “He agreed.”

“Dude, I had so much fun up there,” Lance expresses. “Like, I know you were like, terrified the whole time, but it was soo fun-“

“Cool,” Allura looks at her nails. “You know…only paladins do single shows, right?”

Lance pauses.

He blinks once, then twice. His mouth opens and closes.

Coran muffles his laugh into his hand.

“Wait…” Lance tips his head, “No…”

“It’s a lot of work,” Allura says. “Extra training, more shows, complex collaborations with other paladins. We market you, and you’re a face for the team.” She smiles, “I hope you like blue.”
“Keith! Shiro!”

Lance actually kicks open the door to the studio. It flies open, loud and violent, which is good, because Lance is feeling especially loud and violent. All the heads turn his way – specifically Shiro and Keith, who stand stretching together.

He books it across the studio, jumping over Coulter’s outstretched leg, and throwing himself between Shiro and Keith. Lance locks his arms around their necks, and together they tense, swaying with the weight.

“Woah.”

“Lance! What the fu-“

“I’m a paladin!” Lance laughs, squeezing them both close. “I’m the blue paladin!”

Shiro is the first to relax, “Are you serious?”

“Yes!” Lance is smiling so much it hurts. “I’m blue! Dabadedabadi~”

Keith is tense and wide eyed next to him, but Shiro tugs him away to give Lance a proper hug, ignoring his horrible joke. “Lance, I’m proud of you.”

Shiro’s arms are strong and warm, and Lance would be focusing on them more, if he wasn’t so excited. He hugs Shiro tight, and pulls back, “Thank you!”

“Congrats,” Keith relaxes, finally, and gives Lance a pat on the shoulder. “Now I gotta’ stay on my toes.”

“Fuck yeah you do,” Lance grins, “I’m coming for your job, bitch.”

Keith laughs, and punches his side, “Jerk. Let’s get drinks after work, Shiro’s paying.”

Shiro sputters a laugh, “Oh, am I?”

“Yes, yes!” Lance wiggles, “Dude, yes!”

Shiro and Keith look really happy, and it makes Lance’s gut squeeze; his heart is beating stupidly fast.

He did it. In half a year, Lance actually did it.

And Keith and Shiro are proud of him.

Oh uh, and the pay raise.

It isn’t their job to perform tonight, so they sit around an empty booth and clink glasses with any dancer not on stage.

The audience is captivated by Emily and her spiked bra, which frankly, looks more dangerous than anything, but Lance would be a liar if he said it wasn’t a weird turn on.
Except, Lance is more entertained by Keith sitting on Shiro’s lap, dancing on the edge of tipsy, doing shots with Hunk. He looks cute, hair pulled back, face clean and glowing as he laughs. Shiro’s arms wrap around him – Lance watches him nuzzle into Keith’s neck, and feels his own heart skip a damn beat or two.

Hunk sets down the shot glass, and waves Shay over.

“Hey, aren’t you working?” Lance laughs.


“What are you guys taking shots of?” Shiro lifts one of the partially empty glasses, and smells it.

“Dude, fuck if I know. Pidge gave it to us and said it was some variety of hard liquor.”

“Is it any good?”

“Fuck no,” Keith answers. “Alcohol is terrible.”

“That’s why we do shots, Shiro,” Lance gestures, and downs his own. It burns his nose, and his throat, but everything feels warm and loud.

He’s not horribly drunk – just enough to feel good and loose. The DJ is playing some good shit tonight, and Lance is happier than he’s been in a long time.

“So, you gotta’ tell us,” Shay appears, leaning against the edge of the table as she takes back empty glasses. “What’s your first move as a paladin?”

“Okay, okay,” Lance lifts up his hands. “I need you guys to consider… enchilada night.”

“Lance, what does that even mean?”

“Free enchilada’s with every private dance!”

“This was a horrible mistake.”

Lance laughs, unintentionally shifting closer to Shiro and Keith, “I’m kidding! I have no idea, man. I’m probably just going to keep running around half naked and talking to people.”

“Well, you were super entertaining to watch,” Shay smiles. She gives Hunk a pat on her way out, and saunters off with the empty glasses.

“It’s so true.” A dancer smiles, “I want to see you do more hip-hop.”

“Oh, me too.” Her friend nods.

“Ladies, ladies.” Lance teases, “One at a time.”

Shiro rolls his eyes and nudges him with his shoulder. Lance laughs, and looks to meet his eye. He’s sipping some variety of whisky, but Shiro’s eyes are just as clear and sexy as ever.

“I’m kidding,” Lance turns, flushing, actually. “I’ll probably just do whatever the fuck Allura and Coran want me to.”

“Hey, one more round,” Hunk grins. “For the underdog.”
The table raises their drinks, “For the underdog!”

It’s an interesting feeling. The buzz of the alcohol, and being surrounded by people now your friends. To hear the music play – to see drinks raised for you.

Lance never thought he’d end up here, but he’ll never forget the feeling.

They clink glasses, tap the bottom’s against the table, and down the liquor.

Shiro didn’t have all that much to drink, but he doesn’t feel morally right about driving – so they Uber home and Shiro leaves his truck at work.

They walk in the door already laughing; Keith misses the hole to the lock like three times, and Lance makes a sex joke that almost gets him punched in the face.

“Shut up!” Keith laughs, “God!”

“You can try,” Lance says, and pulls down his lower eyelid, sticking out his tongue.

Keith unlocks the door and kicks it open, “Fucker, I will!”

“Keith, if you punch him, you’re on the couch tonight.” Shiro says, stepping in past him with a laugh.

Keith looks completely betrayed, but Lance laughs and laughs, sputtering, “D-Dude! Your boyfriend just f-fucking took my side dude. Dude.”

“But that-" Shiro starts, taking Lance’s wrist and pulling him through the doorway, “-means you’re on the floor.”

“Oh. Right.”

“We can put him in the bathtub,” Keith teases.

“Girl you know my legs are too long for that.”

“True.”

“Do you want any water, Lance?” Shiro asks, as he walks into the kitchen. Lance face-plants on the couch, and feels Keith not too far behind him.

He muffles, “Mm yes please.”

Lance yelps as there’s a weight pressed down on his back- a strong, smaller body.

“Hey!”

“You’re on my couuuuch,” Keith groans.

Lance sputters – his face burns, as Keith presses his nose into his shoulder and sighs. The weight is good. Really good.

Lance swallows.
“D-Dude, I know you’re not that drunk.”

“I’m not,” Keith says, and Lance burns hotter.

Shiro picks Keith up off him in one arm, and hands Lance his drink with the other. That’s like, instant boner material, but Lance breathes through the heat and takes the water with a thank you.

Shiro maneuvers a squirmy Keith into his lap, and sits down next to Lance on the couch.

“Noo, let me go,” Keith frowns.

Shiro states, mildly amused, “That one’s not yours, Keith.”

“So?” Keith squirms.

“Keith.”

“Shiro.”

“Keith.”

“Shiro.”

“Lance!” Lance pipes, and two heads turn his way. Lance laughs, “Sorry. I have no idea what we’re talking about.”

“Me neither. I’m still...a little drunk.” Keith sighs, and finally gives up on struggling. Shiro pats around for the T.V. remote. Lance folds his legs under himself, and doesn’t even turn to look at the T.V. Keith and Shiro are way more entertaining, and pretty to look at.

Lance asks, “Is that bad?”

“Not really,” Keith says, and plays with the divots on Shiro’s metal arm. Lance watches the movement, momentarily captivated.

“I still can’t believe I’m a paladin,” Lance mumbles, more to himself than anyone else – but two cute faces turn his way, and smile.

“We knew you would be.” Shiro corrects, “Well, I did.”

“Hey!”

“You two fought on day one.”

“That’s true.”

Lance smiles, and leans back into the couch, the cold glass between his fingers.

It’s grounding.

He’s not sure how much time passes here, talking on their couch – Lance starts off on the opposite end, but somehow inches closer until their legs tangle, as they tell stories and laugh. Lance rummages through their pantry and complains over the lack of junk food; they eat protein bars at two in the morning, but don’t even feel the tiredness of night.
Lance laughs, still giggly, “Are you fuckin’ serious?”

“My scene phase was no joke, Lance,” Keith teases, beautiful against the light of the T.V. “I almost got a tattoo that said ‘if you don’t understand my silence, you don’t deserve my words’.”

Lance cackles, “Wow, calm down there, edgelord.”

Shiro barks out a laugh, closing his eyes and ignoring Keith’s half-assed glare.

“Like you guys didn’t have a phase.”

“Oh, I did.” Shiro wipes at his eyes with his human hand, “There was a time in my life where I essentially wanted to be Dolly Parton.”

Keith and Lance share a look on an inhale, and laugh on a synchronized exhale.

“Ahaha, what the fuck does that even mean?!”

“It means I wanted to be Dolly Parton!” Shiro laughs. “I dressed in like, cowboy boots and really ugly jean vests. It was awful.”

“I didn’t know that,” Keith sniffs, trying to wipe away his smile with his hand. “I thought I knew everything about you.”

“It’s a very dark part of my past,” Shiro teases, tipping his head to look Keith in the eye.

There’s this small moment, where the mood changes.

Keith sees only Shiro, his smile subtle, but very much there. Keith’s stare dips from Shiro’s lips, to his eyes, slow and suggestive.

“Where’s my picture, hm?” Keith mouths.

“All burned.” Shiro teases, and worms his arms further around Keith’s waist. They’re just so…in love.

“God,” Lance curses, without meaning to.

The bubble pops. Eyes look his way.

“Hm?”

“O-Oh,” Lance panics, and squirms up higher on the couch. He can feel how red his face is, *fuck* he’s such a creep. His mouth runs, “You guys are just like, super hot, man.” Shit. That’s not what he was supposed to say.

Two sets of nicely sculpted eyebrows raise.

“Oh?”

“You’re both strippers,” Lance deadpans. “Are you really that surprised?”

Keith and Shiro share another look.

“Like especially together,” Lance babbles, digging himself deeper into this goddamn hole. “Like, agh, you two just look at each other so passionately I just wanna’ like, climb in a hole and scream-“
The wind is suddenly knocked out of him, as Keith jumps across the small distance, grips him by the shirt, and rolls him off the couch, landing atop him on the floor.

Lance goes to suck in air and yell *something*, but the lips that move across his own are furious and warm.

Wait.

Lance’s eyes round into saucers. His body tenses, freezing, arching, as Keith grips him by the collar and straddles his hips, weight heavy and strong.

Keith is kissing him.

Lance hesitates, just long enough for his brain to run through a short panic mode of *oh god what the fuck holy shit holy fuck what the fuck-*

But Keith gives a growly little noise, and Lance completely gives in.

Digs his fingers into Keith’s side.

Kisses *back*.

Oh Jesus, it’s so hot. Keith is *so* hot, in every possible sense of the word. His lips are smooth and bruising, forcing Lance’s lips apart, deepening the kiss into something opened mouthed and ultra-sexy.

Lance’s head falls back against the floor. He moans, low in his throat.

They break for air – Keith doesn’t let him get one word in, before kissing him again, harder, oddly better.

“*Hah-*“

It’s been a while since Lance kissed someone, but his brain fills in the motion automatically. Push, pull, breathe. Lance’s common sense is completely fried; the alcohol still in his blood soothes him over, says *calm down, don’t think, just go*.

He feels the weight on his hips. The spread thighs. The body that he’s *ogled for soo long* is licking across his bottom lip and panting needy into his mouth.

Keith fists a hand in his hair. Pops back from the kiss. Stares Lance down, and makes him immediately hard.

Keith’s eyes are big, and round, and the most amazing thing Lance has ever seen.

Lance is panting, head forced back by the grip bruising his skull. “What…” Lance exhales, “What was that?”

“You idiot,” Keith pants. “Do you know how hot you are? Do you *know*?”

“I’m sure he does,” Shiro purrs, smooth behind them.

Lance’s eyes flicker up, and back, panicked, unsure. He just kissed Shiro’s boyfriend. He just swapped *spit* with someone in a *relationship*.

“I-“ Keith presses his hands into his chest, “have wanted to-“ he smooths up the buttons of his shirt,
“rip the clothes off of you~“ he pulls, snapping a button, “~for months. Months!”

Lance is trying really hard to comprehend all this, but he’s finding he doesn’t need to. He’s clouded, burning– Keith is running his hands up his naked chest, and Keith is hard. Lance can feel. How hard. Keith is. Holy. Shit-

The thing he manages to blurt out, is, “You guys are swingers?”

Keith doesn’t even give him a reply – he bends down to steal Lance’s soul through his lips, kissing and pushing and making everything burn.

A metal arm wraps around Keith. Hauls him up.

Lance brings a hand to feel his lips tingle – but he’s suddenly pulled up too, and carried away.

Shiro shifts their weight in his arms, and turns on his heel saying, “We’re moving."

“Oh my god,” Lance blurs. “Oh, my god.”

Shiro nudges open the bedroom door with his foot.

“Did he just pick up both of us?” Lance’s voice cracks.

“Yes,” Keith replies from Shiro’s other arm.

“That’s so hot-“

“I know!”

“How does he do that?”

“I don’t know, but I love him.”

Lance cranes his head to look around their room. A large bed. A nice sized T.V. A lamp in the corner- hey, that’s a nice lamp-

Keith is thrown onto the bed first, and then Lance. He bounces on the mattress – has enough time to turn around, before Shiro is over him, a hand at his bicep, pushing him down into the sheets and kissing him too holy-

Shiro doesn’t kiss like Keith. It’s very methodical. Mature. Wet, dear lord, Shiro’s tongue is slick and practiced, delving into his mouth and curling around Lance’s tongue like he’s done it before.

Lance gives this involuntary moan, that pours down Shiro’s throat and out his ears.

They kiss for what feels like ages – or maybe minutes, but, just enough for Shiro to wedge a knee between his legs, and drive Lance completely insane. It’s needy, scolding. Completely lustful and unreal.

"Ah," Lance mews, "Shiro~."

But he’s kissed to death, a warm hand curling up his arm, down his slender chest, and pushing into the muscle of Lance’s stomach.

Lance wants to feel him too- lick every inch he can- but he settles on feeling up his chest, and internally screaming at how well built Shiro is.
“He tastes so good, Shiro,” Keith talks. “Doesn’t he? Like strawberries, I told you.”

Shiro pops back. Dips his nose in Lance’s throat. Breathes in, like that’s not making Lance’s dick physically throb. Shiro is so broad, dear lord, Lance will never have enough brain cells to take this all in.

“He does.”

“W-what?”

“You smell like strawberries,” Keith explains crawling over to thread his fingers in Lance’s short hair, and pull. "All the time."

“Good god, what is happening?” Lance asks aloud.

“We want to fuck you,” Keith answers.

Oh. Ohhhhhh.

Okay, okay. Lance can handle that.

He pushes back the squeeze in his heart. Pushes back the sensible thoughts of don’t do it, you’ll only get hurt-

Because they’re here. They're right here, and Lance wouldn't give up this opportunity for all the heartbreak in the world.

Lance blinks, “Okay.”

“You’re drunk,” Shiro breathes in.

“Not enough.” Lance wraps an arm around Shiro’s neck, growing braver. “You guys’ve been giving me wicked boners for a solid six months. Both of you owe me,” he teases.

Shiro actually kinda’ purrs into his neck, and Keith tightens his fingers.

The nose turns to lips, first soft, then harder, right at the junction of his neck. Lance worries that it might’ve been too long since the last time he banged someone, because just that is enough for his gut to tighten.

Shiro’s kisses are warm, and wet, rolling down the left side of Lance’s neck – but Keith is there too, suddenly, squirming in to bite his right ear and nip down the other side of his throat.

“Ah, fuck.” Lance rolls his hips up against Shiro, “Sorry, fuck.”

Shiro pants against his ear. Makes Lance shudder.

“You’re ours tonight.” Shiro states.

Keith adds, with a slow kiss, “Blue paladin.”

There’s something therapeutic about letting go.

About not caring. Letting today’s problems be tomorrow’s worries.
Keith and Shiro have been dating for so long, they seem to share this similar wavelength. They’re constantly moving, biting, kissing – Lance tries to keep the fuck up, but damn, it takes all his focus just to kiss one of them back.

Keith licks into his mouth, and hums when Lance finds a hand in his hair, and pulls. It’s an instant reaction, so he does it again. Lance pulls, Keith moans.

“Is that a turn on, for you?” Lance kisses, with a grin.

“Yeah,” Keith exhales. “Count to ten.”

“What, wh-oh fuck!” Lance keens, head tipping back, throat moaning, as Shiro hooks both his legs over his shoulders, and buries his tongue so far up his ass that Lance sees god. Lance’s back is pulled into a solid curve, but his body bends without strain.

“That’s his thing,” Keith smiles. He dips his hand to run through the line of Lance’s abs, and coos, "So flexible."

Lance can't really respond. He's too busy uh, dying.

Shiro licks flat against his hole, looks up at Keith from between Lance's thighs, and says, “Keith, he’s loose.”

Keith inhales.

“Oh, y-yeah,” Lance laughs, “I j-hah, j- jerked off really hard a c-caaaah couple days ago, Jesus.”

Shiro licks flat, and pushes in, not as hard this time. Lance’s eyes roll shut, and his brain clicks off, because holy shit, Takashi Shirogane, one of the most decorated strippers at the Paladin, has his tongue. Up. His. Ass.

Shiro’s tongue slips in, and out, licks around and teases, everything wet, breath ghosting across all the skin that’s sensitive. Keith sits back on his knees just to watch – to smirk and stare at Lance’s face. Lance feels the heat – he’d say something, but his mind is tripping over itself, trying to keep up.

Lance didn’t even know he was into this. Like, he never even considered it a possibility, let alone something he’d like, but motherfucker Lance is into it. He’s sooo-

Shiro pulls back far enough for Keith to press something into his hand; there’s the familiar click of lube. Shiro’s fingers now slide up his ass with no resistance, and Lance is suddenly religious.

The burn is gone, now only great friction and talented fingers. It shouldn’t be a surprise that Shiro is so good at this. He’s literally sex on legs.

This is all happening so fast - Lance wants to take it all in, appreciate every moment- but he can't. For a one time fuck, a swing - he can't.

So Lance holds the fuck on, and chews his lip until it's swollen.

“I think we owe you an explanation,” Shiro says, and shifts to lick around where his fingers thrust in. His left hand holds Lance’s leg still – Lance uses all the concentration he’s got to keep himself from sliding.

“Nope.” Lance shakes his head. “Don’t want it.” Don't pop the bubble. Don't break the fantasy.

“Last week,” Shiro talks, “when you danced-“ his fingers curl, deep and hard. Keith is now smiling
into his naked collarbone, nipping the skin, pulling back deftly and licking over each bruise. It's something that burns. Something that's undeniably a turn on.

“Ah! Ahhn-“

“-you were completely obscene.” Shiro enunciates his words with each curl, each scissor. Lance looks down between his legs where he is, embarrassingly enough, leaking up a fucking storm. Shiro turns and bites into his inner thigh, and mouths, “Slut.”

Lance’s cock throbs. His mouth falls open.

Keith grins into his neck.

“Is that it, hmm?” Keith purrs. “Does that do it for you? To be called a cute little whore?”

“Don’t,” Lance pants, because he can’t, everything is so, so hot. His skin growing sticky with sweat, and Shiro’s fingers are fucking relentless. Lance arches, moans, twists and rolls.

“He’s speechless,” Shiro pushes in a third finger.

“Ahhhh! Fuck!”

“Nope,” Keith laughs, and Lance would laugh too, if he wasn’t trying to keep back his orgasm with a metaphorical fly swatter. His cock feels swollen, occasionally twitching every time Shiro does something especially deft. He squeezes his calves over Shiro’s shoulders, and keens.

"God, your legs, Lance," Shiro mumbles, and his free hand curls up his thigh. Fingers thrust in - Lance chips apart.

Keith sits up on his knees, and talks as he chucks off his shirt, “How’s it feel, hm? Do you know how many times those fingers have been up my ass?”

“Hhrrhg, god,” Lance cries, “I’m close, I’m-“

Shiro nails into his prostate. Lance comes untouched.

It’s violent. That’s the only word Lance can really use here.

The coil that’s been hot, and winding, bursts through him hard, making his hips warm and his back arch off the bed. His dick jumps with every pulse, his body trembles, and seizes. Lance isn’t sure what he says, probably names, probably nothing. Blood rushes past his ears, and it takes a moment to realize that Shiro has set his legs back down, and is smoothing his hands up and down his naked thighs.

“Good,” Keith kisses him. “Pretty.”

Lance shivers, and feels hot all over again.

They let him lay there, to cool, and watch, as Keith and Shiro wrestle the clothes off each other. They’re absolutely stunning, in the way they kiss and bite. In how they move like they know each other, effortlessly trusting.

Lance knows it’s been too long, because he’s only been watching them make out for like, five
minutes before he’s half hard again.

He can’t help it, okay? They have their dicks out. They’re right there. Lance thought maybe jizzing his brains out would help the disgustingly thick arousal in his blood, but nope. Shiro and Keith are his kryptonite.

They’re beautiful. They’re kneeled together, tangled, hands skillfully working around the other. They kiss slow, then fast, then everything in between.

Lance would say something. Flirt. Slip up behind them and touch, but he’s not sure of boundaries. He’s honestly just happy to be here. Thank the academy, and all that.

Plus they’ve got nice cocks. Lance would give them like, both an eight on the dick scale – but Lance is more enraptured with the shape of Keith’s ass, and Shiro’s god given thighs.

“Are you ready, Lance?” Keith turns, looking Lance in the eye, and scaring him onto his elbows.

“W-What?”

“Shiro is going to fuck you,” Keith says, and throws a lazy arm over Shiro’s shoulder, like he’s a shameless greaser girl showing off her new car.

“Oh, really?” Lance smirks. He fills with confidence, “And I don’t get a say in this?”

Keith and Shiro pause.

“Are you okay?”

“Yeah, but I’m not gonna’ just keep sitting here, god.” Lance rises up into a sitting position, shamelessly naked. “I’m riding something before this night ends.”

It’s extremely satisfying to watch both Keith and Shiro shiver. Lance hasn’t lost his touch quite yet.

Shiro then laughs into Keith’s shoulder. Keith’s face turns pink, for once.

And the room grows hotter.

There’s pushing and shoving, limbs in the way. Sloppy kisses and the caps of lube. Lance has never slept with more than one person – but this is unlike anything Lance has experienced before. It’s so fluid, hands everywhere, everything warm.

Shiro slides to the end of the bed; Lance straddles him backwards, and rests his back against his chest. Damn, what a nice chest. Two hands rest at his hips, one hot, one cool. They’re both large, and curl around his hipbones in a way that gives Lance goosebumps.

Lance grips Shiro’s cock beneath him; the condom is slick with lube, and his dick is hot, fuck. There’s this like, sudden, impressive wave of need that washes over Lance like a punch to the gut. He needs it. Needs it. To be full, and spent.

The first press is hot, and stretches Lance bigger, and wider than what he’s used to. Lance has only taken one dick up the ass in his lifetime, so uh, Lance isn’t responsible for the choked back, whiny little noises he’s making, okay.

He sinks down, inch by inch. Keith kneels on the floor in front of him, cock heavy between his legs, eyes soft, taking them both in.
“Take it slow,” Shiro mumbles in his ear. Lance nods and does not take it slow.

Shiro tenses behind him. Bruises his fingers into his hips. Breathes out hard and pants against the back of his neck, and that’s enough for Lance to roll his hips down, and sob.

“Oooh shit, shit, shit.” Lance repeats, “Oh fuck.” Shiro is all the way in, thighs meeting thighs.

“Okay?” Shiro rasps.

“Yep, ohh yeah.” Lance purrs, “So good, d-dude. Ahhh,” he sits up on his knees, and rolls back down. He can’t look away from Keith, kneeled on the floor, hand working over his dick.

“You’re so stretchy,” Keith praises. “Look at you.”

Lance is trembling, thighs spread lewdly apart. Shiro’s hands urge him up, and dammit he’s strong – Lance’s brain turns to mush as he starts to ride.

So he rides Shiro the best he can. Like a pole, he does. Up and down, mouth running, a slick mantra of aaah, shit, big Shiro you’re big, fuck- and Shiro gives small moans against his ear, patient, and so, so warm.

Keith waddles up on his knees. Makes the executive decision to suck Lance’s cock into his mouth.

And Lance loses all sense of self. Of time. Of what it’s like to be human anymore. Of problems. Of money and work.

He can’t question why he’s here, what he’s doing.

He just feels. Feels Shiro breathing hard against his neck, and thrusting up his ass – feels Keith suck his goddamn dick like a motherfucking champion – feels his balls draw so tight, he sobs.

They’re sloppy. Half thrusts. Lots of spit and drool. Hands are everywhere, up thighs, around his sides – Lance braces his right hand in Keith’s hair and pulls, watching him jerk off furiously.

But Keith never looks away. Always meets his eye. Looks from Shiro to Lance, Shiro, to Lance, cheeks hallow, breathing labored.

The slap of skin is lewd. Lance’s mouth drools a constant, “Ahh, ahh,” making the room fog with the smells and sounds of sex. The angle is perfect, each thrust nailing where he needs it, making Lance’s body spark beneath his skin, and throb in Keith's mouth.

Shiro comes with a grunt that’s forever burned into Lance’s mind. Beautiful, he’s so beautiful, Keith is beautiful, they’re soo beautiful. Just, stunning, and glowing. Shiro’s arms tighten around Lance’s bare, sticky stomach, and he bites into his neck, bleeding out all the tension Lance had there, before he pulls out.

Lance trembles, close, close, close. Keith licks around the head. Sucks hard. Bobs and teases, urges him, drools –

“Lance,” Shiro purrs, and dear fucking lord his voice is deep. So deep, so, so deep. Was it always that deep? It thrums through Lance’s bones. He repeats his name, “Lance, you can do it.”

“Hnnn,” He bites off, thighs squeezing. He’s already come once, he’s not sure if he can handle a second-

Shiro speaks calmly against his ear, “Look at him, Lance.”
He does. Keith is breathtaking. Hair pushed back. Face illuminated by the single lamp in their room. He’s doing wonders with his tongue, doing things Lance never even thought possible.

Lance will wake up. It’ll all be some dream.

“He wants it,” Shiro breathes. “Look.”

Keith actually fucking moans, which is, just…there’s not enough words in the English, or Spanish vocabulary to describe that. Hot. It’s fucking hot, okay. It’s hot.

“Come down his throat.” Shiro demands, and Lance does, like a dog told to sit.

It hurts. It wrecks through him, makes Lance convulse. Keith swallows obediently, and Lance completely gives up on listing every single thing about this situation that’s sexy.

As he pants, skin cooling, mind reeling, he has just enough energy to watch Keith come between his own fingers, mumbling a mixture of their names.

And thus, that’s the end of Lance McClain.

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He wakes up with a minor headache, dressed in clothes that aren’t his own.

The room is very…soft. Light pours in through the cracks of the drapes, pooling around the floor. He’s all alone.

Lance stretches his arms above his head. Breaths in, and sighs. Rolls around in the sheets – they smell really good. Like Shiro and Keith. His hips ache, his lips are a little swollen, and-

Oh.

Lance’s eyes snap open.

Oh. Oh fuck.

These aren’t his clothes.

This isn’t his bed.

He fucked Keith and Shiro.

Lance’s heart rate goes from zero to a hundred real fuckin’ fast. What was he thinking? Holy shit, holy shit-

There’s soft talking in the kitchen. A little bit of laughter. Lance is going to have to do the fucking walk of shame.

In a panic, he hunts down his clothes. They’re thrown all around the floor – he gets dressed in a rush, and it takes him a moment to figure out why the buttons in his shirt don’t line up. He opens the door, licking his hand and smoothing back his hair.

And there they are, in pajamas, bedhead and all. Shiro is cooking breakfast, cute in a pink apron, and Keith sits on the countertop, eating all the chocolate chips planned for the pancakes.
Lance’s heart sinks.

“Oh, hey.” Keith nods, “You’re up.”

Lance doesn’t say anything. What does he say? Oh, hey, *what the fuck happened last night?*

“You’re dressed already?” Shiro flips a pancake, “Got somewhere to be?”

“Oh….” Lance stammers, “No, I just uh…thought…” *Am I allowed to stay?*

“Come eat, dude.” Keith hops off the countertop, “It’s like, two in the afternoon.”

Lance doesn’t move at first. His heartbeat is in his ears, a steady *thrum, thrum, thrum.*

They’re…they’re acting like nothing’s wrong.

Okay, okay. Lance can do this. Lance can act.

He hesitantly reaches for the chair of the dining room table.

They give him pancakes, and he smiles.

*What are we?*

Chapter End Notes

∠(鸹 ‍orraine ∠)
One week passes, then two. Time turns without any noteworthy event.

Which, considering everything, is a little concerning.

Lance sees them at work. Keith and Shiro wave and smile – they’re just as polite as they always were, giving him pats on the shoulder, and occasional advice.

They don’t bring up what happened, so, Lance won’t either.

Lance sits at the bar. He’ll go up soon, to dance alone again. It’s fun, really, Lance loves it, but his head is just so full. Every time Lance closes his eyes, he sees them. Shiro above him. Keith between his knees. He feels their hands, their lips, teeth and hair – Lance feels poisoned.

He hasn’t been to their house again. Lance figured it was best to ask for a raincheck on the private lessons, and neither Keith nor Shiro questioned him.

“Fella’ done you wrong?” Pidge jokes, drawing up a beer for a patron.

Lance smiles, and sips his drink, “Only the big man upstairs.”

Pidge raises an eyebrow, “God?”

“No, the guy in the apartment above me.”

Pidge breaks out into a laugh, and slides the drink across the bar, “Ha-ha. I’m serious, what’s up?”

“Nothin’ dude.” Lance corrects, “Er, person.”

Pidge smiles at the notion, and leans up against the granite. “You look tired though. Is it new fancy paladin duties?”

“Yeah,” Lance half-lies. “I had my first private dance yesterday.”

Pidge laughs, “Oh man, and how’d that go?”

“Kind of a train wreck. She was smashed, so, she didn’t see how I messed up the choreography.”

“And by messing up the choreography…you mean….”

“Don’t ask.”

Pidge gives their trademark snort-laugh, and turns back around to make more drinks. The music pounds on, and Lance has to strain to hear their voice, “You should ask Shiro for help. He’s practically the champion of lap dances.”

Lance feels his heart sink. Blinks, and feels Shiro against his back, hands at his hips-

“I should.” Lance grins, and downs the rest of his glass. He slides Pidge a tip, saying, “Don’t work too hard~” - and gets a peace sign as a thank you.
It’s a relatively tiring, but easy dance. Coran had shown him some moves he wanted him to do – and the rest was up to Lance, which is *perfect*.

Adjusting to the harder practice schedule, and the longer shows, has been tiring to say the least – but it’s pushed Lance to be better, stronger –

And it’s distracting, which is what Lance needs.

The DJ plays some good shit; Lance kicks and moves around the pole, like he’s practiced. One moment he’s smooth, grinding against the metal – and the next he’s solid, holding himself parallel to the pole and grinding to the floor.

It’s a whirlwind of movement – of winking at the girls up front and rolling his hands down his chest with every beat.

But he closes his eyes, and sees them. Feels the hands.

God, they need to talk.

But Lance is a big fat weenie, and he’s fucking scared.

He swallows, back to the present. This is his job. Do it right.

He dances to his knees, then his back, arches up and curls his hands behind his head against the floor. He looks up to the ceiling – laughs, because he can, and rolls up until he’s chucked off his pants, now in sparkly blue lingerie.

Lance jumps off the stage.

Straddles a lap, and goes to town.

On a late night, he calls up Hunk.

Hunk is good, because he won’t ask questions.

So they ruin their bodies on the rooftop, with weed and booze and the cooling air, as time shifts to autumn.

“Are you happy?” is all Hunk asks.

But he’s not sure yet.

Lance got a fat paycheck, so, yeah, sure.

He finds himself avoiding them.
It’s not that Lance wants to, it’s just. It hurts, you know? To see them super happy and snuggly, knowing that you were right there with them.

He kinda’ wishes they’d make a big deal. Wishes they’d show any sign that the night actually happened.

But they’re just as they were. Back to normal.

Have they done this before? Taken someone home and fucked them raw? Then continued on without any acknowledgment at all?

The bruises that Lance had are gone. The hickeys on his throat, the hand prints on his hips.

He’s being pathetic, but pretending his problems aren’t there is just the way Lance works.

Smile at Shiro. Pat Keith on the back. Go home and curl up under the sheets.

“Hey, Lance.”

He looks up off the floor, from where his fingers grab his toes. Shiro stands there, in all his beauty, hands in his pockets. Shiro has this way of looking so comfortable in his skin - sweatpants always cling to him perfectly anyways.

“Hi!” Lance smiles, faker than hell.

“I’ve missed you,” Shiro says, apparently with no fucking shame. “Been busy, yeah?”

Lance’s heart beats, and his palms sweat, but he pulls himself together.

“Oh yeah, it's crazy,” Lance stands up. “How do you guys do it?”

“Ah, well, the first few weeks are rough.” Shiro nods. “How are the private dances going?”

“I think I’m getting better,” Lance flexes his arm. “I got tipped hella’ the other day.”

Shiro looks at him – really looks at him, and Lance feels his tongue stick to the back of his gums.

“That’s wonderful. You’re getting enough sleep though, right?”

“Huh? Oh, yeah.” Lance rubs behind his head, “Haven’t had a good meal in a few days, but it’s fine.”

Shiro frowns, “Really?”

“Yeah man, but it’s no big deal.”

“Do you want to come over?” Shiro asks. “We’re making quesadillas.”

Lance breathes in. God is testing him.

“Oooh, thanks, but no thanks,” Lance says, because he’s fucking scared. Of what?

Rejection.
“You sure?” Shiro stares.

“Yeah!” Lance grins, “I’d hate to be a bother, yo. Plus, I got a Subway gift card my grandma mailed me.”

That’s a lie, abuelita died three years ago.

“Okay,” Shiro smiles. “Let me know if you change your mind, okay?”

“For sure, man.” Lance sticks out his fist, and Shiro effortlessly bumps it.

Lance watches Shiro walk away, and feels his own gut sink to his feet.

_Dammit_, they’re reaching out to him, but Lance is such a coward. He _knows_ what’ll go down.

If he goes there, they’ll talk. If they talk, they’ll tell the truth. And Lance isn’t quite sure if he’s ready to hear that.

He sits back down on the floor. Exhales hard.

Fuck, that night meant _everything_ to him – that rushed, sloppy excuse for sex. It was fast and drunk and meaningless. Like, the sex scene in a movie.

Lance wishes it was meaningless.

Keith gives him a look from across the studio. Lance stares at his toes.

He walks through the breakroom, down the small hallway, and into the makeup room. There, Lori stands waiting for him with a smile. She redyed her hair; it’s a nice vibrant green.

“Hey, Lancey.”

“Hi Mallory,” Lance gives a half smile, and sits down in the chair. “How are you?”

Lori immediately freezes. She narrows her eyes, and spins the chair around so he’s facing her, “Hey, what’s the deal?”

“Hm?”

Lori pokes his cheek, “Your skin looks terrible. You have bags under your eyes. You called me _Mallory._”

Lance laughs, “I’m sleep deprived. It’s all cool.”

Lori looks around the room; they’re seemingly alone. She turns to her vanity and says, “Is this about Keith and Shiro?”

“N-No!”

“Don’t lie.”

Lance closes his eyes. Lori preps his face with a primer.
His head hurts from thinking about this so much. His heart kinda’ hurts too, because he’s just so confused.

Lance is emotionally drained, weak, and sad, so he says, “Dormi con ellos un par de semanas atrás.”

Lori’s hand freezes. Lance doesn’t open his eyes, but he can imagine the look on her face.

There’s a pregnant pause.

“Are you serious?”

“Yep.”

“Was it a…one time thing?”

“I don’t know.”

“Do they like you?”

“I don’t know.”

Lori huffs, “Do they want to date you?”

“I don’t know!” Lance barks. “That’s not even possible anyways.”

Lori draws across his eyelid and snaps, “Polyamory exists, moron.”

Lance tenses, “Uh, what?”

Lori breathes in, and out, like she’s trying to exercise patience. “Like, dating more than one person?”

“That’s real?!”

“What, you didn’t think it was?”

“No, I just like,” Lance shrugs, “I thought it was something you only saw in weird romance novels.”

“It’s real Lance,” Lori brushes powder across his eyelid. “Have you even talked to them?”

“We’ve talked.”

“About the sex, Lance.”

“Oh uh…no.”

“God, this is like a bad miscommunication trope…” Lori mumbles, “...tremenda novela...”

“Hey! Don’t give me that.” Lance fights. “Do you know what it’s like? To crush on two people so hard, and then have them suddenly fuck the life out of you, and pretend it didn’t happen?”

Lori pauses. In a soft gesture, she brushes Lance’s bangs out of his face. “It’s scary, I know. But clearing the air would be much better than faking a smile around them all the time.”

“…What do I even say?”

“How you feel?!” Lori sputters. “Men are helpless.”
Lance laughs, and opens his eyes to poke her in the ribs, “I’m doing my best here, okay.”

“What are you doing tonight?” Lori asks, brushing across his cheeks again.

“Some private shows.”

“Then promise me,” she stares, “as soon as they’re over, you’ll reach out to them.”

Lance rolls his tongue in his mouth. He hates being wrong, but – this is pretty miserable. He misses Shiro. He misses Keith. He misses being their friend.

“Yeah.” Lance agrees. “Yeah, okay.”

There’s multiple rooms for private dances. They’re all protected by security and cameras, a curtain being the only door. The customers are technically not allowed to touch unless specifically stated otherwise, but, you know how drunk people are.

Lance walks in; he’s clean again, tired, from his previous dances, but ready for his last. He’s never quite sure what to expect – but a pristine, well-dressed man in a grey-stitched business suit isn’t on the list.

His eyes are a scolding yellow. Bright, and unreal.

“Hello,” Lance smirks, crossing the room to the man sitting on the couch. “I hope you didn’t wait too long.”

“Not at all,” the man smiles. His face is shapely, and mature.

“Wonderful.” Lance flirts, and stretches out his hand. “I believe you requested a dance?”

“I guess so,” the stranger says, and takes his hand; he follows Lance to the chair sitting in the middle of the small room.

The businessman takes a seat. Lance looks him over. His hair is thick, and dark, rolling over his head in a quiff. He’s quite masculine.

The music thumps beyond the walls, but a different, slower song plays in the room.

“So what brings you here?” Lance smiles, gently straddling his lap, and smoothing his hands over the shoulders of the stranger’s suit.

“Business,” the man replies.

“Oh?” Lance raises an eyebrow. He rolls his fingers over the soft material of the suit, feeling along the seams. He prods off the jacket, and the man slips it off, now left in a white button-down. Lance chucks the jacket onto the couch. “And-” he grips the back of the chair, “-what kind of business would that be?”

“Classified,” the man smirks, attractive in an odd way.

“Classified?” Lance repeats, and takes careful note to keep his tone light, and smooth. “You know...”
he drags a finger down across the buttons of his shirt, “...everything is classified in here.” He purrs, "No secrets."

The man watches him – Lance decidedly rolls his hips a little, and lightly grinds into his lap.

“What’s your name?” Lance’s tone drops.

“What’s yours?”

“Blue.”

“Your real name.”

“Classified.” Lance teases, and rolls his hips down. He drags his hands across his own chest, and plays with the hem of his shirt.

“I thought there were no secrets in here?” The man repeats, eyes burning through him. They’re so bright. It’s almost unsettling.

“Lance,” he answers, through half lidded eyes. He pops his shirt off. Chucks that back with the suit jacket.

The beat is smooth, and low. The lights are warm. Lance dances in his lap, touches his own navel, trails up until he’s running his hands across his pecs, his throat – the man watches, hands obediently still.

“Your turn,” Lance purrs, close enough to feel his breath.

“Sendak,” he answers.

“Mmm,” Lance rolls, “interesting name.”

“You,” the man says, “are the one more interesting.”

“Oh?”

“My boss has taken a liking to you,” Sendak replies. Lance shifts his weight further, locking his knees behind the chair, and pushing their bodies close.

“Your boss, hm?~” Lance hums, “And why isn’t he here himself?”

“Away on business.” Sendak answers.

“Lame~” Lance rolls his tongue in his ear, like a purr. “Tell him if he wants to talk to me, he’s gotta’ get his butt over here.”

Sendak gives a little puff of a laugh – the first genuine response Lance has pulled out of him. “That’s why I’m here.”

Lance squeezes his thighs, pressing them close, being as sultry as he can, before pulling away.

“In his place?” Lance spins around, and sits backwards on his thighs. He lifts his arms above his head, and dances.

“Exactly.”
“And what is it he wants...?” Lance flirts. He grinds back into his crotch, in slow lazy eights.

“To give you something.”

“Oooh, how scandalous~”

“A job,” Sendak rumbles, “to be precise.”

Lance pauses. He bites his tongue, and remembers to think sexy.

“If he wants a whore,” Lance purrs, “he’ll have to really convince me.” He slides forwards, sloooowwly reaching for the floor, pushing his ass up higher, “I’m no dime a dozen bitch.”

Sendak looks down at him- watches Lance smooth his hands up and down his outer thighs, and sit back up. It’s all slow movement, sexy, relaxed. He answers, “No, nothing like that.”

“Ooh,” Lance plays, “then let me keep guessing.” He pulls back, until he’s standing up enough to tease the hem of his joggers. “Does he want a little maid? To play dress up, tied to his bedpost?”

The music thrums, Lance dances.

“No.”

Lance slides off his own pants, “Ahh~, does he want a slutty waitress?” He curls his tongue, “I’m great at balancing.”

Sendak smirks, “Try again.”

“Hmm,” Lance dances up, to the beat, until he’s forward in his lap again. “I’m stumped.” He grinds his crotch against Sendaks, and grins, “Won’t you give me a hint?”

The man leans close – close enough for Lance to feel vaguely nervous.

“It’s a better life than this.” The man states – and suddenly, Lance feels dirty.

He squirms in his lap. Puts his grin back on, and says, “Ahh, but what life is better, than existing solely to please others?” He plays with the hem of his underwear, showing off the V of his hips, before snapping the elastic back.

“A lot,” Sendak whispers. He stares him down- makes Lance freeze. His words are slow, and powerful, “You can live better.”

Lance looks at him. Gets lost, in the swirls of yellow.

But he suddenly jumps, as a hand smooths down the curve of his back. He opens his mouth to argue, but something is placed neatly into the spandex of his underwear.

“H-Hey-“

Lance stands up, and fishes for whatever it was.

It’s a business card.

Sendak stands, reaches for his suit jacket, and pushes a wad of money into Lance’s chest.

“For the trouble,” Sendak says. Lance blinks rapidly, looking between the cash, and the card. He
glances up to Sendak, but sees him walking away, shoes clicking against the floor, until he brushes past the curtain and leaves.

Lance chews on his lip, and flips the card over and over. It’s just the letter Z, and a phone number.

Well, that was fuckin’ weird.

The lounge is relatively empty, the snack table raided by now. It’s quiet, as the last few shows are taking place, and everyone else has gone home.

That was uh... a weird person to end his night on, but fine. The dude tipped a hundred dollars... like yo, Lance can’t complain.

He flips the card once more.

“Lance?”

He looks up – and lo and behold, Shiro and Keith are there, hands together. At first his heart slams against his ribs, hard and panicked, but Lance breathes in. Remembers his promise to Lori.

“Hey guys,” Lance smiles.

“How’d the dances go?” Keith asks. He looks stiff. Nervous.

“…Ah…okay.” Lance chews his lip. He looks up, “You guys headed home?”

“Mhm.”

“Um, would it be-“

“We were wondering if-“

Shiro and Lance pause.

Shiro gestures, with a smile, “You first.”

Lance shakes his head, sitting up on the couch, “No, you.”

Shiro squeezes Keiths hand, “Um. I know you said no, but…we uh…really want you to come by.”

Lance blinks, “R-Really?”

Keith looks at his shoes, and says, “Yeah we…we should talk,” he looks up, “you know?”

Lance feels that hot rush of panic- before he smiles. Like genuinely. He stands up, and slips the business card into his pocket. “Funny. I was just going to say the same thing.”

The ride there isn’t really awkward, so much as tense.

They’re all good at small talk. It’s part of the job.

It just...feels fake.
Are you excited for the new themed show?

Yeah, me too.

The weather is getting colder.

Football season is starting.

Walking through the door, Lance feels his throat go dry. Shiro tells him *take a seat*, and Lance does.

Keith flicks on all the lights, and keeps the radio on. Lance sits in the loveseat, and wants to die, just a little.

It’s silent. Lance plays with the fraying hole on the knee of his jeans.

“Um…so…” Keith sits, “…talk first. Then quesadillas.”

Lance fakes a laugh, “I thought so.”

Shiro slides in next to Keith – his face is serious, eyes staring at his hands, as he runs his fingers across the synthetic rubber in his other palm.

“So, us first then?”

“Y…Yeah.” Lance swallows. God, this is miserable.

“We talked it over,” Keith says, “um, Shiro and I. About what happened.”

“We feel awful.” Shiro states, and makes Lance’s heart drop to his knees.

He hates crying, hates it. *Hates it*, but he suddenly wants to.

It must show on his face, because Shiro’s voice picks up, “It was wrong of us to take advantage of you like that. *I’m* sorry…I…I’m the oldest.” He swallows, “I should’ve been more responsible.”

Man, Hunk wasn’t kidding about a sad Shiro. His eyes are just, *blank*, mouth pressed into a firm line.

“Shiro…” Keith eyes him.

“N-No!” Lance sits up, in a slight panic, “No, no, I. I totally consented. It was okay, I-I promise.”

Keith and Shiro share a look.

Keith shifts, “Er….that’s good but…we…”

“We’re still sorry,” Shiro continues. “Because we were…”

“Manipulative.” Keith finishes. He looks so uncomfortable, saying, “I jumped on you *knowing* we had feelings for you. We fucked you knowing more, and we didn’t tell you.”

Lance’s brain short circuits. Everything goes numb, for one, solitary moment.

Then Lance sputters, “Wait, *what?!*”

“God, it was stupid of me.” Keith looks away.

“It wasn’t *just* you.” Shiro butts in.
“I started it.” Keith argues. He turns back to Lance with an exhale, “But anyways…we both felt bad, and we wanted to talk to you…’cause I thought maybe the feeling was kinda’ mutual?”

Shiro adds, “I thought so too.”

Lance doesn’t say a word, wide, blue eyes looking between them both, mouth slightly open.

“Yeah. But…but you looked like you wanted to bolt the morning after,” Keith rubs his nose. “So…we…tried leaving you alone. I get it if you’re mad.”

“Hold up, hold up.” Lance interrupts, “Wait, you guys…”

“I’m so sorry-“

“Yeah, me too-“

“Wait.” Lance barks, and the room hushes. Lance sits there a moment. Rubs a hand across his face, and meets their eyes.

His heart is in his ears. His palms sweat. Everything narrows down to this moment, here, in the middle of the night.

Lance swallows, and his voice drops, “You...you guys like me?”

“...Yeah.”

“Like, like you want to date me?”

“Uh...yes?”

“Like,” Lance blinks, “like the poly…polygon, poly-“

“Polyamory?” Shiro offers, with the first hint of a smile.

“Yes!”


Lance licks his lips. Turns to look at the hole in his jeans.

It starts as a small giggle, but it snowballs, growing larger, until he’s laughing behind his hand. Shiro looks mildly horrified - and Keith looks furious –

But Lance looks up and smiles, “This is so stupid.”

“Excuse me?”

“I was so stupid.” Lance admits. “You know I’ve been crushing on you guys for months, right? You figured it out?”

Their faces change like night and day. Lance continues to laugh.

Shiro shifts, “We thought...maybe...but...we felt awful assuming anything.”

“Fuck, man,” Lance laughs, “I, ahah, I was so heartbroken over, ahah nothing-“ and oh god, here come the tears. Ew, he’s an ugly crier.
But really strong arms pick him up out of the chair, and Lance instinctually wraps around the body like a snake. Shiro smiles into his neck; Lance holds on, and cries like a bitch.

“Ahaha, I’m sorry,” Lance sniffs, wiping his eyes. “God, why’d this have to be so difficult?”

He clings onto Shiro, like a koala, he does. Shiro stands there, and holds him tighter than anyone ever has.

“Poly relationships are hard,” Keith says, looking awfully bashful on the couch. “You…you have to work for it, you…you…” He struggles for words. Keith looks stuck, between happiness and hesitation and disbelief.

“When,” Shiro says, suddenly, dumping Lance in his lap. “Take this.”

Keith sputters, and looks Lance in the eye. They’re both red faced, and flustered. It’s ridiculous, considering that their job is to parade around almost naked – but they’re sitting here, confessing like middle schoolers.

Lance sniffs, “Hi.”

“Hug it.” Shiro prompts.

Keith gives him a look. Lance sniffs, and gives his biggest puppy-dog eyes.

And then they laugh. Keith squeezes him tight and giggles - and Lance does the same.

“I’ll work hard,” Lance says, against his cheek and his hair, “I’ll do anything.”

I adore you.

I adore you both so, so much.

“Me too,” Shiro nods.

Keith says, “Ditto.”

“You’re so unromantic!” Lance teases, wiping away the last of his stupid tears.

“Oh, you want romantic, do you?” Keith jokes back, nuzzling into his neck like a puppy.

“Yeah, we get to go on dates now, right?”

“Definitely.” Shiro says, sitting down next to them. “We’ll do it right.”

“And I get to take you guys out?”

Keith looks away- and fuck his cheeks are so pink, it’s adorable-

“I mean, if you want to…”

The feeling is…really indescribable. This like, elated, warm buzz in Lance’s chest. He feels exhausted, but alive, suddenly so, so excited and so so so happy.

He wishes he had a bigger vocabulary. Some smart dictionary to really describe the feeling.

But he settles on squirming and laughing between two really, really cute bodies, that Lance has completely fallen head over heels for.
Work resumes tomorrow. *Everything* changes, and it’s fucking awesome.

Chapter End Notes

edit: sobs., cosu drew the sendak scene, check it out [here](#)
“So like this, then?”

“No, a little lower.”

Lance kicks his heels together, then out, trying to jerk to the new choreography. He spreads his thighs, drops low, and back up.

“Farther,” Shiro demonstrates, “like this.”

His body moves so comfortable, so fluid, like gravity just isn’t real. It’s frustratingly attractive – and now, of all places, isn’t the time for Lance to get lost in how goddamn thick his thighs are.

Shiro looks his way; Lance nods, and copies the movement.

The studio is especially lively today, filled with nearly every employee. Legs stretch up on bars, and others grab their toes, all warming up for the club to open in a few hours.

Lance smiles as he watches Shiro dance. He’s so sturdy and broad, masculine and hotter than hell. News flash, you guys already know this - Lance just likes to drive the point home.

And Lance can tell him now, straight to his face. He’s allowed to do that. They’re dating.

Shiro swivels around, and says, “Got it?”

“Think so,” Lance smirks. “When are we doing this, again?”

“A few weeks?” Shiro rubs his fingers against the back of his undercut. “You’ll have it by then.”

“Let’s hope,” Lance swats his bicep, and Shiro’s eyes sparkle with affection.

Lance dived nose first into this whole…multiple partner thing really fast. It seemed so complicated, but, in all honesty, it’s really not.

Here’s what Lance has learned so far:

- Two hugs. Two kisses. Two butts.
- There’s always someone to snuggle you.
  - Always
- There’s a scheduled rotation system for who gets to sit in the middle during movies
  - Because let’s be honest the middle seat is the best
- Talk about your feelings

That’s pretty much it.

“Hey!” Keith calls, thumbs in his pockets. Lance and Shiro turn, mid-stretch.

“Hm?”

“We’re going out tonight, right?” Keith elbows Lance.
“Oh, that’s right,” Shiro nods, “I forgot to ask.”

“I was planning on it.” Lance smiles.

“Cool. We’re trying this whole,” Keith waves his hand around, “innocent thing, right?”

Ahh, yes. That too.

You see, considering what happened with the whole uh, fucking rigorously on a whim thing, they kinda’ skipped over the part where you actually date.

They’re trying not to miss the small things, you know? Like the buzz you get from handholding and innocent kisses.

“Oh yeah.” Lance points, “No sex.”

“No sex.” Keith agrees.

They look to Shiro. He blinks once, and responds, smoothly, “I make no promises.”

Lance laughs, and jabs him in the side, “Hey!”

Shiro gives a huffy little laugh, and wraps an arm around his shoulders. He’s not taller by much, but it’s enough to make Lance feel really warm and tingly.

“No sex,” Shiro agrees.

“After work,” Keith points. “Parking lot. Meet us there.”

“Yes, sir!” Lance salutes, and lightly taps his butt with his foot when Keith turns to stomp away.

They get some strange looks, but it’s fine.

News spreads fast around the club anyways.

They don’t perform tonight, so they leave the studio by midafternoon. It’s just chilly enough for Lance to miss his jacket – he’d have his hands in his jean pockets, but they’re both currently occupied, by a warm churro, and Keith’s fiery palm.

Keith’s body seems to run at an abnormal temperature. The Red paladin really is no joke.

Sometimes Keith will squeeze his palm, or run a thumb across his knuckles- and every time it sends a hot shiver up and down his spine.

Lance smiles, and looks up at the trees as they walk. The leaves are a pretty orange, the sky swirlly with different shades of blue.

Lance loves this park. He used to come here a lot, when he had time.

Now they eat food from vendors, talk and walk, hold hands and smile together. Sickeningly innocent, stupidly pure.

It’s fun. It’s good. It makes Lance so incredibly happy.
“Do you think they’ll decorate the park for Halloween?”

“They did last year!” Lance swings Keith’s hand. “There were lots of pumpkins, and the trees were lit up all orange.”

“Oh wow,” Shiro looks over across the pond as they walk, “We never got a chance to see it.”

“Yeah, we were too busy with last year’s Halloween show.”

Lance gasps, a mouth full of churro, “Halawheen thow!?”

Shiro laughs, and plucks the mostly-eaten churro out of Lance’s hand, “Yes.” He takes a bite, and tosses the paper in the trash.

Lance swallows, “Dude! I fucking love Halloween. I hope the club does another one this year.”

“We should.”

“I can’t wait for candy-corn,” Lance purrs.

“What??” Keith sputters, pulling his hand out of Lance’s grip. “Really?”

“Dude, it’s so good~! Especially when it’s still all chewy.”

Keith stares him down, “Lance. Candy-corn is the devil’s food.”

“No, pineapple on pizza is the devil’s food.”

“Pineapple on pizza is amazing.”

“Why are all our arguments over food?” Shiro sighs.

“Alright, alright,” Lance waves around his newly freed hand, “Question then. This could make or break our relationship.”

Keith raises an eyebrow, and smirks, “Oh?”

Lance begins, “How do you feel...about the coleslaw discourse.”

“It’s fucking gross. It’s just wet salad.”

“Okay.” Lance smiles, and hooks his arm with Keith. “You can stay.”

Shiro gives a fake pout, “But...coleslaw is good.”

Lance pretends to think long and hard, before he reaches out, and hooks his other arm with Shiro’s. “You’re cute, so, you can stay too.”

Shiro and Keith laugh – it’s melodic, and nice with the weather. They look a little silly, like the three witches from Hocus Pocus, but the park is quiet, and nobody seems to give a damn.

There’s a breeze that rustles through the leaves; it doesn’t faze Keith, but Lance shivers a little. Shiro looks to him- leans back, and asks, “Are you cold?”

“Are you not?”

“Nah,” Shiro grips his sweatshirt by the collar, and tugs it off with one hand – which damn, is
weirdly attractive. He hands it to Lance, who takes it with a really big grin.

“Dude! Thanks!” Lance beams. It’s big and black, and really snuggly. Lance leans away from Keith to pull it over his head. The sleeves are a little too long, and the hem falls over his butt, but it’s sooo warm, and really smells like Shiro.

“That was so lame.” Keith jokes.

Shiro gives a nonchalant shrug, and Lance teases, “Yeah, but he’s beating you on the boyfriend meter.”

“There’s a boyfriend meter now?”

“Mhmm…Shiro just got ten points.”

“Yesss,” Shiro jokes, and Keith sputters into arguing.

“Dude! I bought you a churro.”

“Yeah, three points per churro, ten points per sweatshirt.”

“Pff,” Keith snorts, and digs his index finger into Lance’s ribs. “How do I catch up then? I want to beat Shiro.”

“Hey!”

“Hmm…” Lance flops around the sleeves of the sweatshirt. He looks at Keith, and says, “Give me your gloves.”

Keith glances down to his fingerless biker gloves, then back to Lance. “Really?”

“Yes. Each glove is worth eight points.”

Shiro starts snickering – and fully laughs when Keith actually takes off his gloves, and hands them over.

“You’re a little leech,” Keith jokes.

Lance pulls on the gloves, and wiggles his newly warm fingers in Keith’s face, “Get used to it~”

They stop walking when they realize that they’ve looped the entire park twice. Lance didn’t even notice, until the sky started to turn pretty shades of pink and yellow.

“Hey,” Lance looks up, “what time is it?”

Keith pulls out his phone, “Seven?”

“Do you need a ride home?” Shiro offers.

“Ooh, that’d be great!” Lance flops the sweatshirt sleeves. “Do you guys want to come in? I live right around the corner.”

“Is that okay?”

“Yeah,” Lance shrugs, “I mean…it’s not as nice as your house, but…I have a T.V.”

“Sounds great,” Keith says, and makes Lance smile.
“What teams are playing tonight?” Shiro asks, digging for the keys in his pocket.

“Detroit and Arizona.”

“Ooh, the Lions.” Keith hooks his fingers in the car door, “They’ve been getting better, you know.”

Lance nods, “Oh I know. They sucked ass for so long, but last season they made playoffs.”

“What’s your team?”

“Dolphins, baby!”

“Figured,” Keith grins, and climbs into the back seat with Lance.

“Oh?” Shiro turns around from the driver’s seat, “Am I chauffeuring now?”

“Yes,” Lance claps his hands twice. “Take us home, Sebastian.”

Lance throws his arms out, and twirls around in the baggy sweatshirt, “Vua-la! Mi casa es su casa~!”

Shiro and Keith give a quick glance around the place. It’s very small – it’s not dirty, just, cluttered from the lack of space. He’s got a small, ratty couch and a bean bag – the kitchen is old, and the wallpaper peels a little.

Lance looks self-conscious, despite his incredibly adorable persona of self-confidence, so Shiro says, “Thanks for having us over,” with a smile.

“No problem! Sorry it’s kind of a mess. I’m looking for a new apartment right now.”

“Oh?”

“Yeah! Take a seat. The remote is right there.”

“Sweet,” Keith collapses, and immediately turns on football.

“Do you have a bathroom?” Shiro asks.

“Oh! Yeah, first door on your right.” Lance points, and slides in next to Keith.

“Thanks,” Shiro says, and walks around the corner.

The sink is a pink, stained porcelain; it’s littered with a toothbrush, and different shades of nail polish, which is endearingly cute.

Shiro washes his hands, being careful of his prosthetic fingers. So far as he’s concerned, tonight has gone pretty good so far.

Lance is beautiful – and incredibly adorable in his sweatshirt, waving around the big sleeves and wiggling his hands in Keith’s gloves. It’s fun to watch him bicker with Keith – Keith’s eyes light up, and his sharp tongue really shows itself.

It’s something different, but incredibly enjoyable.

Shiro walks back out into the living room; his face cracks into a smirk, and he leans up against the
dooryway.

“An innocent date, hmm?”

Keith and Lance are completely wrapped around each other, snuggled in, kissing hot and adorable, like two puppies. Yeah, that’s exactly what they look like – two really soft and clumsy puppies, trying to get as close as possible.

It takes all the self-restraint in the world, to not immediately pounce, like a predator.

Keith pops his head up from underneath Lance, and their lips smack apart loudly. He’s already got an arm around Lance’s shoulders, and a knee against his hip.

Lance laughs, “Oops.”

“Come on, Shiro,” Keith grabs Lance by his cheeks, and turns him towards Shiro, “Look at this face. Look at it.”

Lance gives the biggest puppy-dog eyes. They’re so bright, and blue, swirly and alluring.

“Oh, I know.” Shiro smiles, and sits down next to them. He wraps a hand around Keith’s ankle, and rumbles, “That’s why I said I make no promises.”

They break the no sex rule on Lance’s ratty couch.

Oh, and the Lions won.

Everyone sits criss cross on the studio floor; Allura walks back and forth, clipboard in hand, hair high in a ponytail.

It's your typical Monday meeting.

“Aright, everyone,” Allura smiles, “I’ve got the plans for this week. Routine schedules will be emailed, per usual, but-” she pauses, “-there’s something I wanted to talk to you all about.”

Lance wiggles a little next to Keith, and their knees brush together. The movement alone is warm – he sneaks a hand into Keith’s lap, and Keith takes his hand, like an instinctual reaction.

Allura continues, “The club was…really in a rough place for a while, as many of you know. But we’ve made plan for this month-“

There’s a ceremonious clapping. Allura shows a genuine smile, and tucks a strand of loose hair behind her ear.
“Aha, thank you,” She nods to Coran, “It’s all thanks to you guys.”

“We love you!” A girl jokingly shouts from the back.

Allura rolls her eyes, and smiles, “Anyways, we made plan. We’re doing good. I want to really push this sudden swell of new customers we’re getting. I’m open to new routine ideas, marketing suggestions, anything.”

“We want something t’ help us stand out,” Coran continues, tweaking his moustache. “You know, why should someone come here? And not the strip club a few miles north?”

“Cause we got Shiro,” Emily coughs, in the front, and causes laughter.

Shiro visibly flushes, and hunches his shoulders – it’s really, really cute. Shiro is funny that way – built like steel on the outside, but made of super squishy stuffing on the inside. Like, Iron Man. Or maybe the love interest in every Shoujo manga ever.

Allura ignores the giggles, “I want your best out there. Agreed?”

There’s a unanimous: agreed!

Lance looks to Keith. His eyes are so full, wide, and fiery.

Everyone here is so excited, so, Lance is gonna’ do his fuckin’ best too.

There’s no sense in being nervous – even if this is the first time the club has attempted something like this.

Lance adjusts his skirt, and shifts in his blue platforms. All the dancers are here, dressed in either cheerleading uniforms – which are really just pleated skirts and halter tops – or, as football jocks in, you guessed it, spandex shorts and shoulder pads.

Yaaay football season.

Paladins get their assigned colors – everyone else is in neutrals. They look like a bunch of slutty college kids that had a giant orgy in the bathroom before the big game.

“Stop fidgeting,” Keith swats his hand, “we’re up soon.”

Keith looks really cute in his cheerleading uniform. Lori begged him to wear his hair in pigtails, but that was a solid N.O.™ from Keith.

Still, the thigh-highs look sooo good – Lance reaches over and dips his finger in one, just to pull back and snap it.

“Hey!” Keith barks, in a whisper. Shiro snickers next to him, and Keith elbows him in the side.

There’s a firm voice, “Alright kiddos, let’s go.”

Lance turns around, and about chokes.

“Allura?!”
She smiles, the black streaks on her cheeks tweaking a little. She’s in one of the jock uniforms, the shoulder pads broad on her shoulders.

“W…w….” Lance sputters, “W-What…”

Allura laughs, and claps him on the shoulder, “What? Haven’t you ever wondered who the White Paladin is?”

“Oh my god.” Lance’s mouth stays open. “You’re going to dance with us?”

“I wrote the choreography.” Allura nudges him forwards, “Of course I am.”

Lance’s smile cracks his face – he looks to Keith, who looks smugger than hell.

“You guys knew?”

“Anyone that’s been here longer than a year, knows.” Emily smirks, cute in her pink football getup.

Lance exhales, “Holy shit, I feel like I’m in the twilight zone.”

Shiro gives a short huff, and tugs on his wrist, “Come on, let’s go.”

Lance has so many questions, but they’ll have to wait. The audience is full tonight – when dancers fill the stages, platforms, tables – they cheer, and clap.

Lance hops up on Pidge’s bar, and grins, hands on his thin hips. Shiro is up on front, and Keith is on a table somewhere.

Each dancer has their own choreography - so when the music boosts loud, the club comes to life.

*Be my woman, girl, I'll be your man*
*Be my woman, girl, I'll be your man*

The club has never done a performance with more than five people – but it’s fun. Every table has a dancer – Allura swirls on stage, and she looks happier than Lance has ever seen. She’s beautiful, and tall, and a total natural.

So Lance lets go. Does the choreography up on the bar – throws his hands high above his head, and loses himself.

*Beating my drum like dum di di day~
I like the dirty rhythm you play~*

Shiro kills it on stage – he lifts girls, sets them down, strips so masculine and practiced.

Not to mention Keith, who looks absolutely amazing up on the table, hands running across his body, hot and passionate. Keith is really fucking good at dancing in heels – it’s like, a second language to him.

*I know you want it in the worst way
I wanna hear you callin' my name~-*

Lance decides to whistle, and gain his attention. Keith’s head snaps over, like a dog.

Keith grins, and hops off the table.
Like, hey ma- ma, mama, hey ma, mama hey~

Allura eyes them from where she dances – but it’s not like she can really do a damn thing about it. Going off routine is Lance’s specialty, okay?

Keith jumps up on the bar; Lance is much taller in his platform shoes, but he dips his hands around and pulls Keith’s hair and moves with him.

Hands grip his ass- turn Lance around towards the patrons below, and lift his skirt high enough to show the lace underneath.

Lance laughs against Keith’s ear, and together they move, listening to wolf whistles and laughter that mix with the loud bass of the music.

The fingers digging into his ass are really warm, and in all honesty, making Lance a little hard – which is kinda’ obvious through the skirt, but whatever. Keith grinds against him, and Lance copies every movement.

A lady reaches up, and shoves a dollar in the waistband – Lance turns around and winks.

Be my woman, girl, I'll be your man

For a moment, Lance forgets that this is a job.

Lance rubs off the makeup with a wipe, and collapses down on the couch backstage. He exhales hard – his body is sore, and his feet hurt from the shoes, but the night was good. The group routine went great, and the individual shows were fun as hell too.

Lance tips his head back, and exhales.

And two bodies plop down next to him.

“Hey.” Shiro wraps an arm around his shoulders, “Ready to go home?”

Lance opens his eyes, and grins, “Are you giving me a ride?”

“Of course,” Shiro reaches over to kiss him, quick and soft. It wakes Lance up – makes a hot shiver run down his spine. His lips are so soft and sweet, and taste like the flavored water he was drinking.

When they pull back, Lance beams, “Thanks!”

“We were busy with private dances, how’d your show go?” Keith pats his thigh.

Lance shrugs, “Pretty good. I did the skirt routine, and then went out and danced with some people on the floor. Pidge watered down some shots for me.”

“Man, I’m sad I missed it,” Shiro nuzzles into the side of his neck, tickling him just a little, and
making Lance giggle.

Lance shys away, “Eh, you didn’t miss much. Some guy grabbed my dick, so, that was weird.”

Both Keith, and Shiro pause.

“What?”

“Huh?”

Shiro pulls back his arm and looks him dead in the eye. His mouth presses into a line, eyes serious, “What happened?”

“Oh uh,” Lance shifts, sitting up, “it wasn’t that big of a deal.” He rolls the hem of his shirt between his fingers – avoids Shiro’s eyes, because they’re burning.

“No, this is important.” Keith presses. His voice is deep, “What did he do?”

Lance shrugs, “This older dude just shoved his hand down my shorts. I figured it happened sometimes.”

Keith stands up, “They’re not allowed to do that. Do you know what he looked like?”

“Uhh…grey hair? Hawaiian shirt?” Lance blinks, “He’s probably gone.”

“I’m going to go get Hunk.”

“No need,” Shiro stands up, and curls the fingers of his prosthetic hand, making the artificial joints crack. Good god that’s hot, but Lance really doesn’t need some drunk guy to get knocked the fuck out by Shiro on his behalf.

“Shiro-“

“Stay here,” Shiro says, “I’ll be back.”

And then they’re gone.

Lance sits there, and blinks. The room is quiet again, besides the talking outside the door, and the music out on stage. He’s not quite sure what the fuck just happened, but there’s something really cute about Keith and Shiro being protective. They’d probably do this for anyone at the Paladin, and that’s even more attractive.

Keith comes back with Allura and Coran – Shiro comes in dragging some old man in by the collar. Er, Hunk is the one doing the dragging, as Shiro is the one walking in front with his arms crossed like some army sergeant.

“Was this the guy?” Shiro asks.

“Oh, yeah.”

Shiro cracks the joins of his prosthetic hand again, and Keith angrily shifts back and forth on his feet – but Allura and Coran chew the guy out – say you’re officially banned from the premises, we have the right to refuse you entry, blah blah blah.

They take the guy away – Lance is left feeling kinda’ awkward.
“You didn’t have to do that,” Lance says, now standing with his hands in his pockets.

“Look,” Keith sighs, “I know you have this whole easygoing attitude thing working for you, but stuff like that isn’t okay.”

Lance rolls his eyes, “I know that. I just don’t like making a big deal out of it.”

“Then you tell us, and we’ll make a big deal out of it.” Shiro worms a hand around Lance’s side, and makes him crack a smile.

“Yeah dude. That dick belongs to us now.”

Lance breaks out into an ugly laugh, and blindly swats at Keith through his watery eyes.

Sunday Sunday Sunday!

God’s day!

God bless Sunday.

God bless the club being closed on Sunday.

The last six days were brutal – long shifts, multiple performances, new chorography and literally no time to chill.

Lance all but hops on Shiro’s shoulders Saturday night, and says Tally Ho! Tally Ho!

Dating someone as strong as Shiro is really fun, because he can pick you up – can throw you around like a rag doll.

And in all honesty, Keith isn’t a limp biscuit either – Keith can lift him easy enough, toss Lance over his shoulder, parade off with him after work.

So Sunday. God’s day. The good ol’ Sabbath.

Lance kneels between Shiro’s legs, and bites marks into his naked inner thighs. People will see them, of course, but there’s something attractive about a stripper working with hickeys across their skin.

Shiro’s thighs are sculpted by the gods, as you know. They’re super strong and powerful – Lance can actually run his tongue down the muscle, and feel the indent.

Keith kisses him lazily – sucks on Shiro’s tongue and plays with the shaved hair behind his ears.

Lance nips again at his thigh, and draws circles on his hip with his nails. His skin is warm and salty, and they don’t really have anything to rush for – so Lance enjoys himself. Noses into his the V of his navel. Runs his tongue under his cock, and feels that really hot weight of arousal settle in his gut when Shiro’s breath hitches.

Shiro making literally any noise is like, on Lance’s list of the top ten hottest things ever.

Lance doesn’t have Keith’s God-given ability to suck cock, so he does it his own way; spits into his
hand, wraps his fingers around his dick and licks relentlessly across the head. He’s warm in his hand, salty against his tongue.

He grins when Shiro groans, shivers when a prosthetic hand comes to curl in his short hair.

Lance is lazy with his motions, tracing everything he wants to with his tongue, and ignoring how painfully hard he is in his jeans.

His left hand digs into Shiro’s thigh – rolls up, right to the junction of his hip, then back down. He watches the muscle twitch – feels Shiro’s cock throb against his lips.

He keeps his eyes on them as they kiss; Keith is making these huffy little noises, breaths and pants of Shiro, Shiro, which are way too hot for their own good.

Lance is having a good ol’ time – he hums along to the song playing on the radio from the kitchen; These hoes ain’t loyal~~

Lance pulls off his cock and laughs, when Shiro and Keith turn to look at him.

“Heeey,” Lance purrs, still working his hand, still drawing Shiro against his tongue, and back up.

“You’re so weird,” Keith says, albeit incredibly affectionate.

“Thank you~” Lance retorts, and begins to seriously suck Shiro’s dick.

Shiro’s head falls back against the couch, and he gasps, hips reactively twitching up a little. Lance moves his head back to accommodate the motion – keeps a close eye on both of them as he sucks and dips and rolls his tongue around.

Shiro isn’t really paying attention – more lost in breathing out hard and biting his lip – but Keith is watching him steadily.

“Faster,” Keith demands, and Lance listens.

He hums, and brings his hand to meet his lips quicker, a back and forth rolling motion that’s lewd and awesome. Shiro bites off a noise in his throat, which is hoooooo, awesome.

“Good,” Keith praises, and curls up at Shiro’s side. He runs a hand down Shiro’s chest, and burns his eyes into Lance’s skull. “So obedient.”

Lance slips back, and breathes, “I’m a good dog, hm?”

Shiro’s eyes pop open fast enough to see Keith’s face. Keith’s mouth falls open, and Shiro starts to actually laugh.

“Ahahaha-“

“You…you remember that?” Keith pales.

Lance works his hand and grins, “I know you ain’t got no fuckin’ dog.”

“Goddammit,” Keith presses his face into Shiro’s shoulder and whines, as Shiro continues to laugh. “That was so long ago.”

“Not that long,” Lance says, and sucks Shiro back into his mouth. Shiro’s laugh chokes off, and he moans, back arching off the couch. Lance’s mouth is full, but his eyes say I know you kinky sons of
bitches have a tub of sex toys somewhere, and I’m gonna’ find that shit.

The burn on Keith’s face eventually fades- he takes to tracing circles around Shiro’s hip, pushing up his shirt, rolling his finger down between his abs.

“Ah,” Shiro grinds, “how did this become about me?”

“Because we wanted it to,” Lance says, rolls his tongue so hard, that Shiro gasps, ”Lance-!” and tugs back roughly on Lance’s hair.

Lance opens his mouth wide on instinct- Shiro spills across his tongue, and his lower lip.

Keith kisses it all off.

When they lie in bed, Lance is the one left awake.

Keith and Shiro sleep peacefully. Sometimes there’s an ambulance siren, far off in the distance, but other than that? Relatively peaceful.

Lance runs his fingers up and down Shiro’s inner forearm. The skin is smooth, the veins protruding just a little, because of the muscle there.

He sighs, and looks to Keith, who’s tucked oh-so snuggly into Shiro’s other arm.

Lance falls asleep eventually. Tomorrow he’ll go back home. Tomorrow he’ll see them at work again.

Shh.

Listen close.

The soft sound of oxfords against marble floors. They click, before they pause.

A pen, against a desk.

Tap.

Tap.

Tap.

Smooth, soft wood. A muted sound it is. The metal on the tip of the pen is just sculptured enough – just right, to copy the sharp ring of a coin falling against the floor.

Are you listening?

The squeak of a chair.

The pen dropping.

A voice - no, two.
“You gave him the card?”

“Yes sir.”

Chapter End Notes

i just wanted them to dance to our lord and savior, mother Nicki

edit: i got art for this chapter! check it out here
Chapter 10

Chapter Notes

look, i chose the song before the meme happened;; okay;;
lmao

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Lance lays beneath the covers. The weather is cooler, and the heater isn’t all that great – but the Mt. Fuji sized pile of blankets on his bed does the trick.

He’s tempted to text Keith and Shiro.

Lance is so fucking lame – he can’t even think about them without smiling.

It’s like, dating your friends. You poke fun and push buttons and then fuck afterward.

Lance is actually really happy.

Keith is minding his own business, when the backstage door is nearly thrown off its hinges.

Keith sits on Shiro’s lap, playing with his phone – there’s a few dancers standing around, chattering, waiting for their rotation on stage. Keith was totally content, but everyone looks up as Lance parades in. Lori stands behind him, face in her hands, mumbling something in Spanish.

“Hello boys,” Lance says dramatically, hands on his hips. He props a foot up on the coffee table, and whips his head around unnecessarily. “Notice anything different about me today?”

Shiro, of course, immediately starts laughing, but Keith is annoyed more than anything.

“Really Lance?”

Lance whips his head around once more, the long, brown wig falling over his shoulders. He’s obviously trying not to laugh – but the other dancers are prodding him on with their giggles. Keith crosses his arms, and frowns. Lance looks really cute with long hair.

Still, he’s is being a huge goofball. Surprise, surprise.

Lance is purposefully rolling his head around – ironically throwing his hair over his shoulder and wiggling his eyebrows in Keith’s direction.

“Oh my god,” Keith deadpans. “You’re such an embarrassment.”

“But I’m your embarrassment.”

“I am so sorry.” Lori sighs, “He gave me the puppy-dog eyes.”
“Ah, yes.” Shiro says, “You can’t underestimate those.”

“Hey guys, look, I’m a white girl at the club.”

Lance stiffly shakes his butt back and forth, closing his eyes and, funny enough, actually looking like one of those girls who parade in and get drunk off a Cosmopolitan.

“I’m breaking up with you,” Keith jokes.

Lance whips his head around intensely, straight, brown strands of hair falling over his shoulders. He gasps dramatically, "Keith! Por que!? Como te atreves de hacer me esto!?"

Lori begins to crack a smile, and of course, Allura chooses that moment to walk in.

She takes one step forwards. Opens her mouth. Closes it. Furrows her eyebrows.

“Lance?” Allura sputters.

“Hey baby,” Lance flips the wig around.

Keith, for a moment, is concerned that Allura might actually roll her eyes back into her skull – but she sighs into her clipboard and says, “You and Shiro are on in ten.”

“I’m keeping track of time, don’t worry,” Shiro assures, and pats Keith’s thigh. Keith takes the cue to stand up.

Allura sighs, and looks to Shiro, “Control your man.”

Shiro laughs, “Oh, he’s mine now?”

Lance is still incredibly entertained by the way the wig follows his movement – the female dancers keep prodding him on, making him dance like a puppet.

“Bend- and snap! Ahaha-“

Keith grinds his teeth a little – becomes fixated, on the way the girls giggle and laugh. Lance wiggles his eyebrows and rolls his hips, and Keith feels his blood run a little warm.

So he reaches up, and pulls the wig right off.

Lance gives the most melodramatic gasp Keith has ever heard in his life. He turns around, a fake expression of horror on his face. Lance obviously tries not to laugh as he says, “Girl I know you did not just snatch my weave.”

Keith smirks, and dangles the wig.

Lance opens his mouth – probably to scream – but Shiro comes to the rescue. He wraps an arm around his chest, and a hand across his lips, mumbling, “Lance, there are customers on the other side of that wall.”

Lance gives huffy little noises against his palm – but when Shiro pulls away, he laughs.

“Nine minutes,” Allura points, and stalks back down the hall.

“Yes Sarg,” Shiro says; Lori laughs in the doorway.
“You’re gonna’ give her an aneurysm one day, Lance.”

“You, and fire is hot.”

This is a first.

The solo performances, he’s got down. Dancing with other people- he’s got that down too. He’s even improvised routines with Keith. Lance can do it.

But, this is the first time he’s doing a fully choreographed set with Shiro.

He’s a little nervous. Shiro is favorable among every gender, and every sexuality. He’s polished, and professional. He’s hot.

“You’ll be fine,” Shiro had kissed him. “Just follow me.”

So Lance stands here, as the music plays, and Shiro makes the first move. The audience is impatient, watching, a few whistling in the back.

Most of Lance’s routines have been smooth and fluid. Feminine, or slutty. But this is the first he’s done dressed like this – snapbacks, joggers and knockoff Jordon’s, made to look masculine through the muscle tees and light makeup.

Lance pushes back the nerves. Meets Shiro’s eye.

Shiro dances. Lance follows. The crowd grows.

_Shawty, I don’t mind_

It’s all harsh movements, masculine body rolls and suggestive slides. Hands that slide down to their crotch- fingers that curl, stomachs that swirl.

_If you dance on a pole_
_That don’t make you a hoe_

They slide their hands up their chests in sync – roll their fingers around the waistbands of the sweatpants, and their sneakers squeak against the floor.

_Shawty, I don’t mind_
_When you workin’ til three_
_If you’re leaving with me_

Lance would laugh at the song choice, but he’s too busy trying to _focus_ goddammit. Shiro is fucking killing it, like usual.
Together the shirts pull off, and together they toss them into the crowd. Money gets thrown to the stage – Lance winks at the girl up front.

You can take off your clothes
Long as you coming home
Girl, I don't mind

There’s a chair between them that Lance is eyeing like a vice. He knows what’s coming, and his chest squeezes with misplaced excitement.

As scripted, Lance turns on a dime, kicking into a one armed handstand, legs extending out into a K-kick. The cheers make him smile. He grins, and feels the strain on his arm, before Shiro slides behind him.

His feet land back on the ground - he rolls his body straight, and then falls.

Shiro catches him, pushes him up. Rolls his fingers sensually down his sides, and Lance dances into the touch. The cheers accompany the bass, and Lance tips his head back against Shiro’s shoulder, and puts on a show.

You want your own
And you need your own

He grinds his ass back against Shiro, throws his arms up, and lets Shiro’s hands roam down beneath his joggers.

Honestly, Allura wasted no time capitalizing on their new relationship. Choreography was written like, three days after they showed up holding hands.

Baby, who am I to judge?

Shiro’s palm grazes his crotch, and smooths back up. Lance involuntarily shivers, but hides it by turning around in his arms.

He jumps; Shiro lifts him the rest of the way.

Lance can see Keith standing in the back of the club. He’s staring, eyes hot and full of fire, and Lance winks at him, just to watch him blush and scowl.

Cause how could I ever trip about it
When I met you in the club?
Shiro shifts him higher- and takes a step back, his spine pressing up against the unused pole on stage. Lance grips the pole, and uses it as leverage to nearly grind the valley of his hip against Shiro’s face, just as they practiced. It lets Shiro breathe – but gives off the assumption that Lance is actually riding his goddamn face.

_I make enough for the both of us_  
_But you dance anyway_

Fun shit like this is Lance’s favorite. Watching people throw cash and holler is the _best_. Shiro holds him by his thighs, strong and unwavering, supporting Lance as he dances in his arms.

Lance lets go of the pole; he slides down Shiro like a fireman.

And suddenly he’s in the chair. Suddenly, his sweatpants are gone. Suddenly, everything is warmer than before.

So Lance reaches out – rips Shiro’s joggers right off, and smooths his hands over Shiro’s outer thighs. Damn, they’re strong as hell.

It’s rushed, and fast, a little too passionate for being on stage, but Shiro’s eyes are _captivating_. The pupils are blown, all shades of pretty grey turned black. Lance has been with Shiro long enough to know what that means.

And suddenly, it’s real. _Suddenly_, Lance forgets all about routines. Forgets about the audience, and the music, and the stage lights.

With the joggers gone, they’re left in knee high socks, high-tops and spandex shorts. They’re in their respective colors- now half naked, where the light picks up the sweat on their chests.

Shiro straddles his lap, and Lance nearly swallows his tongue.

_Good god_, Shiro is fucking obscene. He grips the chair behind his head, and grinds hard into his lap. One body roll, two, three-

Lance tips his head back and groans – not really routine, but come the fuck on. This is _Shiro_.

Only Lance catches his laugh, but he feels Shiro roll his hips, and purposefully rub their crotches together. Good, okay, cool. Lance isn’t the only one kinda’ hard.

Lance has no idea what the audience is doing. He’s just, lost. Suddenly stuck at sea without a paddle. _Sinking_, dammit.

Shiro palms up Lance’s bare chest. Lance reaches out to touch him, but as expected, Shiro grips his wrists, and tugs them down to the seat. Lance curls his fingers around the lip of the chair so hard, his go knuckles go white.

There’s more money being thrown up on stage – Lance still isn’t paying attention.

What was he supposed to be doing again?
Oh, oh yeah, shit.

Lance spreads his thighs wide, and rolls his hips up thrust for thrust, matching the beat of the song. The chair squeaks against the floor.

And suddenly, the music is loud in his ears again.

_Shawty, I don't mind_
_If you dance on a pole_
_That don't make you a hoe-

Shit, the song is ending soon.

Lance takes the cue to hook his ankle around the leg of the chair. Shiro looks him in the eye, breath short, and grips the chair right between Lance’s spread thighs.

In a move _totally_ not taken from Magic Mike, Shiro lowers Lance, while in the chair, onto his back.

The whistling almost drowns out the bass-

_Shawty, I don't mind_
_When you workin' til three_
_If you're leaving with me_

Lance is now on his back, legs still thrown over the edge of the chair – he inhales when Shiro hovers over him – holds his breath, when Shiro straddles him, and grinds into his chest.

_Cause I know how it is_
_Go handle your biz_

In a moment of blind desperation – Lance reaches up to Shiro’s shoulder and drags him down, sloppily kissing him, and pulling his lower lip with his teeth.

Shiro inhales- kisses him back – rolls his tongue across his teeth and kisses him so strong it hurts-

_You can take off your clothes_
_Long as you coming home_

_Girl I don't mind_
They…might’ve gotten a little too into it this time – because after walking off stage, Shiro drags him by the hair down to the bathroom, and grinds against him so hard that Lance almost comes in his pants.

They both walk out of the bathroom aesthetically fine, but totally smelling like sex. Keith is waiting for them with an eyebrow raised, arms crossed.

“Great job out there.”

“…Thanks.”

“Did you guys-“

“No!” A pause, “Yes.”

“Yeah, okay.” Keith smirks, and reaches for Shiro’s hand. “Are you staying?”

Lance shakes his head, “Nah. I’m headed out.”

“Okay.” Shiro nods. “See you tomorrow?”

“Yep!” Lance smiles, and leans up to kiss Shiro shortly. Keith huffs out a breath through his nose, and Lance beams, turning to kiss him too.

“Text us.”

“Okay!”

“See ya.”

Lance waves, and turns. He smooths down his shirt, hoping it doesn’t look as bad as he thinks. He pats around – wallet, keys, phone. Cool.

The hallway is dark, as one of the lights went out last week, but Lance knows his way around just fine. He passes the private rooms, and sees Hunk on his way.

Lance waves, “Hey bud,” and continues walking.

Wait.

Lance turns around on his heel, eyes wide, staring right at a completely horrified hunk.

He’s half dressed, hair sticking to his forehead. His shirt is in his palm, jeans messily shrugged back on. Lance opens his mouth, and Hunk fucking panics. He throws a hand over Lance's mouth, kicks open the door to an empty room, and shoves Lance inside.

“Oh my god!” Lance shouts, now free. “Oh my god!!!!”

“Shush!” Hunk sputters.

“Are you…are you-“

“I only do private dances!” Hunk yells in a whisper. The room is dark, only the light from the hallway feeding in. “T-That’s it!”
“Why didn’t you tell me?! What the fuck? What the hell? What the-“

“Because I-I didn’t know what you’d think!” Hunk panics. “T-They made me Y-Yellow paladin. F-For extra cash.”

“Dude seriously?” Lance blurts, “Since when?”

“Since I…started working here.”

Lance bounces, “That’s fucking awesome!”

“R…Really?”

“Dude. You thought I’d judge you?”

Hunk looks away. He nervously wrings his shirt between his hands, and says, “ Cause I mean…like, I’m me.”

“And dude, I love you.” Lance swats his arm, “This is so cool. Yellow paladin. Fuck, man. First Allura, now you.”

Hunk’s face lights up, and he punches Lance softly in the shoulder, “Don’t tell anyone.”

“Your secret’s safe with me, buddy.”

What a day.

The weather is gorgeous outside. Bright, and sunny. They’re awake before noon, which is honestly, a huge improvement.

Still, guess what day it is.

Guess.

The only fucking day Lance has off this week, thank you.

So naturally, he parades through the mall with Keith on his arm, Shiro behind them holding a handful of bags.

“Oh,” Keith gestures, “should we go in there?”

“You’re going to spend your entire paycheck at this point,” Shiro jokes.

“Hey, we worked for it.”

“True.”

“Yay. Overpriced hair bows.”

“No no no,” Lance swings on his arm. “We can get our ears pierced, Keith.”

“Right.”

“I’m serious! Shiro already has studs, so he’s no fun, but we totally can.”

Keith chews on his bottom lip, “I don’t know…”

“Just get one.”

Keith snorts, “And look like a pirate?”

“No, no.” Lance laughs, “Piercing one ear is totally a trend.”

“Isn’t that a thing to show that you’re gay?”

“Aren’t you gay?”

“Yes, but I don’t want it written across my forehead.”

“Hmm…then just don’t pierce the gay ear.”

“Which ear is the gay ear?”

“I dunno’, google it.”

“I’m not googling that.”

“Come on,” Shiro laughs, butting in. “Let’s walk. We can come back later.”

Lance huffs, “Fine.” He starts to walk again, waving around his free hand, “But we’re getting matching earrings.”

“I’ll think about it,” Keith teases, and lets Lance pull him.

They pop in and out of stores – Lance learns that Keith actually has a really good fashion sense. Of course, Lance does too – but poor Shiro would walk out wearing Crocs, if he could.

“It’s a sensible shoe.” Shiro argues.

“It’s a disgrace.”

“Vans are a disgrace.” Shiro mumbles, “There’s no arch support.”

“It’s for the aesthetic, Shiro,” Lance says back, and Keith backs him up with a nod.

Shiro eventually gives in – buys the new shoes because peer pressure, and ends up getting a hoodie with it.

Lance can’t remember the last time he had enough spare change to go shopping for fun. He should probably be looking for a new apartment, but honestly, Lance’s bank account is fatter than he’s ever seen it, so, he can afford to spend money on a new wardrobe.

Lance has seen Parks and Rec. He knows.
When the sun sets, they leave, holding hands and cracking jokes and secretly kissing against the car door of the silver truck.

Lance has heard, once or twice, that people you’re compatible with smell really good.

And, well, Keith and Shiro always smell amazing.

Especially now, as Keith lays atop him, lazily kissing him like he’s got nothing better to do. It’s slow movements, sluggish presses. They work their mouths open – kiss like that, for a while. Warmth settles in Lance’s gut, but it’s not anything hurried yet. Lower lips slide- they hum, and kiss louder.

Keith pulls back so, so slow. He licks up the spit on the corner of Lance's mouth, and leans down to press his lips against his throat.

Right above the collar.

Lance doesn’t know he got here. He’s not really complaining.

“So what should we make him do, Shiro?” Keith licks beneath the collar, and Lance shivers. “So much power~.”

Shiro’s voice is like the crack of a whip. Sharp, and stinging. “Whatever we want.”

“Mm, that’s right,” Keith purrs. Lance sucks in, and exhales.

“Someone’s fucking me, right?”

Keith gives a fake gasp. “Shiro, did you hear that?”

“Hear what?”

“A talking dog,” Keith smirks. “Dogs don’t talk.”

“That’s right,” Shiro assures. “Bad dog.”

Keith gives a single hard swat to Lance’s hip – and Lance gasps, back arching up off the bed. It stings, but like, in a good way.

Keith sits up and grins, wiping the spit off his chin with the back of his hand. “Alright, puppy. On your knees.”

Lance narrows his eyes. Alright, alright. He wiggles up from beneath Keith, and sits on his knees. He’s uh, pretty naked.

“You’re to stay there,” Shiro points. “And do exactly as we say.”

Lance bites his tongue, and nods. Hhh yes yes, tell Lance anything in that voice, and he’ll do it.

Shiro hands something to Keith- Keith lifts it to the light, and grins, “Perfect.”

Good god. Here we goooo-

“Since you’re already so loose~,” Keith lubes up what appears to be, a pretty pink buttplug. “Here.”
Lance takes it. It's smooth, and cold, and *haha*, not a foreign object. Keith and Shiro are staring at him. Fuck, this is turning Lance on.

Lance breathes in – shifts up on his knees, feels around his ass, and slowly presses the toy in. It stings, just a little, but it’s almost good. The damn thing is too short to reach anywhere he needs it, so once the flat base presses against his ass, he relaxes, and sighs.

“Perfect.” Keith tells him – and then he holds up a – *oh fuck! Ooh fuck, oh fuck oh fuck-*

“*Ahh! Ahh-*“

“You’re going to stay just like that.” Shiro tells him. “Quietly. And you’re going to watch me fuck Keith.” He runs a hand up Keith’s back – Keith leans into it, like it’s natural.

Ahhh shit. Ah shit, ahh tits. Fuck. Bitch. *Whore,* this thing can really vibrate. Lance digs his nails into his knees and *keens.*

His dick, which *was* kinda’ soft, is totally rearin’ to go now, bloody hell.

But Lance is forced there, like a good dog, a black collar around his neck, commanded to watch as Shiro bends Keith beneath this fingertips.

And lord, they’re gorgeous. Shiro and Keith, Keith and Shiro, biting and nipping and licking up chests. Shiro’s fingers are so beautiful, stretching Keith pliant and open – and his mouth is evil, coaxing Keith’s lips apart just the same.

They do this, for what feels like years. Lance breathes hard; feels the toy vibrate all the way up to his core.

Lance shifts a little on his knees – the toy moves. Lance shifts again, and it slides again and *oh shit-*

“*Ahhnn-*“ Lance bites off, and squeezes his eyes shut. “*Ah, ahn, p-please-*“ He’s not quite there, but he’s close enough to feel the tugging in his gut. He’s making a real sticky mess of his hip, that’s for sure.

His fingers twitch at his thighs.

“Don’t you, *ah,* dare!” Keith grits, as Shiro fucks into him, knees by his ears. “Lance I’m *ahh w-*watching y-you, you bitch. Don’t you *hffucking* dare-*“

“*Keith,*” Lance whines, shifting back and forth, sitting on his heels, tipping his head back and whining oh-so shamelessly. He's hot, he's burning, his dick is gonna' *die-*

Shiro’s hips are a piston. Lance is so, so, sooo jealous.

Shiro turns his way; looks him over, from head to toe; mouths *good dog*; makes Lance bite his lip so hard, it bleeds.

His vision is fogging with arousal. Lance blinks through it, but everything is scorching hot. Just the feel of his own nails against his thighs is too much; he can *hear* the toy, over the lewd sound of Shiro’s thighs slapping against Keith’s ass.

*Bzzt, bzzzt, bzzzzzt-*

Lance rolls his hips – spreads his knees wider – tries, *tries* to grind the base of the toy against the bed. M-Maybe if he can just push it in a little further-
“Fuck, Lance,” Keith watches him, getting fucked hard, headboard slamming against the wall. “Hah, ahh! Shiro harder-“

They’re covered in sweat. Beautiful. Too much, too much-

Lance let’s out a really ugly noise; he watches Keith come, eyes closed, mouth open, silently shaking and rolling his hips. He watches Shiro follow after – watches cum slick down Keith’s ass, and across his thighs, as Shiro pulls out with a low groan and a breathy pant.

Lance’s knees are doused in red streaks from his nails. He’s chewed through his lip. His hands are actually shaking.

Keith’s hair is thrown about the pillows. His eyes are foggy – but he sees Lance so desperate, sees him trembling, and breathes, Lance, baby –

But Shiro is already on it, pulling Lance into his lap, kissing across his mouth and wrapping a hand across his leaking cock-

“Good boy, good boy,” Shiro tells him, “So good, so good-“

And Lance’s body wracks with tremors, shakes, trembles, convulses and comes so hard he yells-

Shiro nips around the collar. Bites, and sucks and creates a collar of his own, hand working him through it, voice praising him to kingdom come.

And when all is said and done, Lance looks at that dog collar with an entirely different perspective.

Mm, it’s a good day. A silent morning. Cool outside. The perfect day to do some chores.

Lance dumps all his laundry on his bed, and smells the fresh, cottony scent practically steam off the fabric like a shower.

A paper rolls off the bed, and onto the floor.

Lance sighs, and squats down – it’s all wrinkled from being washed, the ink barely legible. The poor thing was probably stuck in his pocket.

But it’s that business card.

Lance stares at it. The Z is still so bright and prominent, staring at him, almost.

*Throw it away.*

He…can’t bring himself to.

Why?

“Hey, what’s up with you?”

Lance peeks open an eye, “Hm?”
“You seem mopey.” Lori draws a swirl of blue on his cheek, that leads down his neck. "Ay problemas en el paraiso?"

“No, no.” Lance grins, “Everything’s great.”

“It better be. I’m the one who hooked you guys up.”

“Oh please.”

“I was! You were gonna’ mope for six weeks if I didn’t say nothin’.”

“Nothing’s wrong,” Lance smiles. “How’re things with you?”

“Me?” Lori brushes on powder, “Fabulous. Allura hired another artist, so my workload has lightened beautifully.”

“That’s good.” Lance shifts. He looks around the makeup room. It’s full of chatter, seats filled, artists working. It’s lively – but the place just looks so old. “The Paladin needs a makeover.”

“No kidding,” Lori snorts. “Speaking of, don’t go in the third private room.”

“Uh…why?”

“The light literally fell out of the ceiling.”

“Holy fuck.” Lance opens his eyes, “With someone in there?”

“Oh no. But it’s basically trashed until a repair guy comes.”

“Goddamn.” Lance resists the urge to itch his nose, “Do you think we could come up with some extra change to fix it?”

“I don’t think we’ll need to, with the ads going out next month.”

“Oh, right.” Lance blinks.

Lance never got to see the pictures – all he knows is that some photographer ushered them into these skimpy little paladin outfits and made them pose in front of a backdrop. It was kinda’ weird. Lance isn’t a model, per say, but… he totally got into it.

In all honesty, he’s more interested in seeing Keith and Shiro’s prints.

“What’s the routine tonight?” Lori asks.

“Emily and I are doing pole.”

“Ohh, that’ll be interesting.”

“Why?”

“Battle of the attention whores,” Lori teases, and Lance has to lean away from her brush and laugh.

“So mean!”

“Am I wrong?”

“….No.”
Lance stirs the pasta bubbling in his pot, and sighs. His apartment fills with steam, and the smell of marinara sauce. He’s never cooked for Keith and Shiro before. He hopes? They’ll like it? Lance is betting on his Totally Not Frozen pretzel rolls to win them over.

Still, he’s excited. They’re gonna’ eat lots of food and play shitty games on his old Wii and probably pass the fuck out on his tiny bed.

There’s nothing too fancy about their date nights – it’s usually something plain, and simple. Shiro took them out to a nice restaurant last week, and that was cool, but Lance really likes the small things. Like, going for long drives and practicing new routines together.

Lance is trying really, really hard to convince Keith to go ice skating. So far it’s been a solid No, but Lance isn’t gonna’ give up that easily. He’ll see Keith in legwarmers if it kills him dammit.

Lance is spooked into nearly chucking the wooden spoon across his goddamn kitchen – his phone buzzes super loud, and Lance suddenly remembers that Keith changed his ringtone to the He-Man meme.

He taps the spoon on the rim of the pot, and sets it down on the counter. Wiping his hands off on his jeans, he reaches for his phone.

He sees the name on screen, and immediately pulls back his hand.

Mama.

Oh god. Lance blinks, and feels his heartrate skyrocket.

What does she want? Does he answer? What if something's wrong?

But shit what does he say? Hey mom! Sorry I haven’t called in a year. I’m a stripper now. Yeah, I’m also dating not one man, but two.

He swallows, throat dry, and lets the phone ring.

He…he can’t. Lance is happy. Things are totally fine. He… he has Keith and Shiro. But those words…they're so loud.

“It's a better life than this.”

Sssssssst-

Lance jumps; shit, the pasta! He yelps, and scrambles to take the pot off the burner, wafting away the faint smell of smoke with his hand.

Fuck.
Lance closes his eyes, and sighs.

Chapter End Notes

thanks for all the kudos/comments guys ^^
Chapter 11

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Lance sits at his kitchen table, flipping his phone in his hands.

There’s this…uncomfortable weight settling on his chest. It’s heavy, and he doesn’t really know what to do with it.

Lance is happy, right? He’s happy.

But he thinks about his mom.

Thinks about the day she said *come home when you’ve got your life together*.

He’ll never be accepted there, living like this.

Does he want to be?

He’s happy! Lance has a stable job. He’s apartment hunting. He’s got a smartphone and new clothes and he can afford the dentist again.

…But…what does he say? When his barber makes small talk, and asks how his day was? What does he say when the sales assistant in Nordstrom’s asks if he’s buying heels for a lover?

The practicality of it is suddenly daunting. It just…and it didn’t seem like an issue before? It was survival of the fittest. Make dough, get out.

Does Lance want out? *Should he?*

Lance rests his forehead against his small wooden table, and breathes out a frustrated breath of air.

Get your head in the game, Lance. Keith and Shiro are coming to pick you up.

*Smile,* for fucks sake.

________________________

Keith is having a good day.

Shiro woke him up with kisses, and mumbled something about meeting Lance for lunch, which was great.

Lance ate like, an entire plate of raspberry pancakes, and totally tasted like them afterwards, so yeah, good day.

When they got to the house Keith said *later bitches,* and went the fuck back to sleep. He left Lance and Shiro to do whatever – he just wanted some more sleep, dammit.

He thinks it’s late afternoon when he wakes. He stretches like a cat – rolls, physically, out of bed, and feels ten times better. Keith yawns, running a hand through his hair. It’s bright in their living
room; Lance and Shiro aren’t here.

Keith shrugs, and hunts down coffee. He fills a giant cup with ice – pours in half a cup of coffee, a shitton of creamer, and calls it a day.

He’s just about to text Lance, when he hears giggling from the next room.

Keith slowly paddles around the corner, sipping his makeshift ice coffee. When he peeks in the doorway, he almost chokes, trying not to laugh.

Shiro is on his back, without a shirt for whatever reason, body shimmery with sweat.

He’s fucking bench-pressing Lance.

“Holy shit, Keith,” Lance says, as he’s lifted up, and down. “You’re awake.”

“What the hell is going on?”

Shiro grunts, and does another rep. Lance giggles, “Well, it’s a long story.”

“Make it a short one.”

“Jeez, grumpy.” Lance smirks, “I bet Shiro that he couldn’t bench-press me.”

“I’m currently,” Shiro pants, “proving him wrong.”

Goddammit. Keith has dated Shiro for years, and he still finds weird ways to turn him on.

There’s also something incredibly adorable about Lance laying in his hands, like some kind of princess.

Shiro finally does one last rep, and lifts Lance down to rest on his chest. Lance sits up like a dog, eyes bright and happy.

“Amazing!”

Keith hums, and sleepily leans up against the doorway.

“We’re on at eleven, right?”

“Mhmm. Drive me?”

“Of course,” Keith sips. “I’m taking a shower. Anyone in?”

Lance raises his hand, “Oh! Me!”

“I’m going to work on dinner,” Shiro smiles.


Lance rolls up off Shiro’s chest, and offers Shiro a hand. Lance then bounces to Keith’s side, raddling off all the stuff he and Shiro did – and Keith tries to push away the buzzed, warm feeling in his chest.
Keith and Shiro have one of those fancy ceiling showerheads, so the idea of dual-showering is actually possible.

Lance massages conditioner into Keith’s hair, and takes total delight in how Keith all but purrs.

He forgets about the small ache in his heart, and becomes completely enveloped in the way Keith leans into his touch.

Keith’s hair is longer when wet; it falls around his face, strangely attractive. Lance hums, and runs his fingers down the bumps of his neck, spanning across his shoulders, and digging his thumbs into the muscle there.

“Ahh,” Keith nearly moans, and his head lolls forwards. “What are you doing?”

“Jeez, whatya’ got in here?” Lance digs in harder, “Rocks?”

“Internalized rage.”

Lance laughs, “Makes sense.”

“I’m kidding.” Keith turns around in his arms; Lance immediately seeks his eyes. Keith sneaks a hand to his hip, and another to his face, crossing the short height difference to kiss him. Lance hums, kissing back under the spray.

It’s hard to think about practicalities, with them. It’s hard to think about destiny, and what he’ll say to the hygienist when she asks where he works.

It nags him, but Keith’s tongue is so skilled, so soft, that Lance’s brain switches off.

“You’re getting stronger,” Keith mumbles against his lips. His hands span down Lance’s chest, and press into his stomach. “Look at that.” Keith presses again, and Lance laughs.

“Oh yeah, check out these guns,” Lance flexes his arm. There is, actually, a bit of muscle there.

“Oh?” Keith flexes his arm too, and ugh, it’s so hot Lance pouts.

“Dude, no fair. You’ve been doing this for years.”

Keith laughs, and it echoes off the shower walls. It fills Lance up. Makes him breathe out against the steam.

Keith’s hands fall down, and rest at his hips. He casually rocks their bodies together, eyes still spanning from Lance’s lips, to his thighs.

There’s the sound of food cooking from the kitchen. Lance plays with Keith’s soaking hair, and jokes, “Shiro is such a good waifu.”

“The best.” Keith smiles, and presses a kiss beneath Lance’s jaw. Lance shivers – Keith presses another, then kisses once more.

“We’re performing tonight,” Lance warns.
Keith mumbles, “I should bite harder then,” and sucks a hard bruise right into the curve of his neck.

“Ah,” Lance closes his eyes. It’s a dull burn, a delicious sting. Lance tips his head to the side, and lets him do it again.

“Are you still okay?”

“With what?”

“The routine.”

“Oh, yeah.” Lance pants. “I think um, S-ha- Shiro is the one that’s still iffy about it.”

“Shiro is worried about going too far,” Keith mumbles, low against his ear, and Lance feels his dick rub against Keith’s belly.

“Ah, god.” Lance pants, “W-Wouldn’t that be a sight.”

“He won’t.” Keith licks up his ear, grinds against him, lets water rush down his back. “But he’ll want to.”

Lance hums. He runs his hands down to feel between Keith’s legs, “And you?”

“I’ll fuck you here first,” Keith nips, patting around for the lube thrown amongst the basket of hair products. “If you’re loud enough, Shiro might hear.”

“Is that a challenge?” Lance tips his head, and looks him in the eye. Their breath mixes, the glass fogs more.

Keith hooks an arm beneath his thigh, and hauls him up against the lip of the wall.

"Ahh! Ahh!"

Shiro presses his forehead to the fridge, and breathes out hard.

The vegetables are simmering, low on the burner, and the rice is already done.

But god- Shiro can hear everything.

“K-aHh! Keith! Ke-mmh!- “

"Mm-"

"Ahhh! Harder!- “

The bathroom door is shut, for goodness sakes, but it still echoes off the shower walls, and down the hall.

He can hear Keith too – repeating Lance’s name, like some prayer. Shiro screws his eyes shut, and resists the urge to shove his hand down his pants.

They’ll be the death of him, for sure.

Patience, Shiro.
Lance sits, already dressed in the makeup chair, swiveling back and forth as Lori does Keith’s makeup.

“I can do it myself, you know.” Keith mumbles.

“Not this.” Lori brushes a dark powder under his eyes, making him look like some bad-boy. She paints fake blood across his cheeks – takes his hands, and does the same.

“Hey Lancey,” She calls, without looking, “do you think I can borrow you?”

“Hm?”

“C’mere.”

“Okay~” Lance hops over.

Lori reaches up, frowning at the height difference, and lifts up a red lipstick. “Can I put this on you for like, two seconds?”

“Okay…?” Lance leans down, and pouts his lips. Keith stares, eyebrows pushed together.

“Why?”

Lori ignores him. She covers Lance’s lips in red, and stands back, “Perfect.” She gestures to Keith, “Now make out.”


“Thank you~”

Lance blinks at Keith, and grins, “Oh ho ho.”

“This is stupid…” Keith flushes. His cheeks are awfully red, for someone that just fucked the life out of Lance not even three hours ago.

Lance leans down to kiss him – it’s a short, polite kiss, only because the entire room is watching. Shiro stares from his chair, already dressed in his uniform, lips pulled up into an amused smile.

Their kiss is slow, just to smear the lipstick as Lori wants. Lance pulls back, “Ta-da!”

Keith looks cute, just a hint of red brushed around the corner of his lips.

“Get his neck, too.” Lori points.

Lance grins, and Keith rolls his eyes. “Did he pay you to do this?”

“Nope.” Lori looks at her nails, “I’m just a great friend.”

There’s more laughter – Lance makes a big fat show of kissing Keith’s neck, leaving smeared lipstick marks down to his chest.

“How come Lance doesn’t get this?” Keith flushes.
“Because,” Lori smirks, "you already did a number on him before you came here.”

There’s the distant sound of Shiro laughing in the back, and Lance pulls away in embarrassment. He brings a hand up to his own neck – the hiccups…. they’re…. they’re pretty bad.

It’s Keith’s turn to look smug – Lance sticks out his tongue, and Keith does the same.

“How do you put up with this?” One of the artist’s jokes, gesturing to Lance and Keith as they pull silly faces.

“It’s much, much easier than you think,” Shiro replies, really warm and sweet.

“Awww,” Lance coos. He makes little heart hands, and Shiro hides a laugh.

Tonight is something special.

It was promoted pretty heavily; Allura and Coran worked their asses off for it. Everyone did.

*Emergency Night,* is what it’s called.

Kev and Coulter are walking around backstage, dressed like two doctors you’d see in a porno. Lance has been calling them *Doctor Gee. Spot* and *Doctor A. Hole* all night.

Others are dressed as skimpy nurses – the strongest, buffest men they have are half-naked firemen.

Oh, but Shiro. *Shiro* is the best one.

Police cap, blue booty-shorts, cuffs and a fake baton at his side. Hair slicked back, combat boots to his calves.

Lance literally wants him to spit on his face. Break his nose. Punch him in the gut. Lance doesn’t *care,* god, he looks hot as fuck.

Keith and Lance aren’t dressed up – they’re just in low, baggy rip-away jeans, and zip up hoodies.

Because tonight, *they’re* the bad guys.

The music is already playing when Keith and Lance walk on stage. They each have their hands in rip-away cuffs. The chains are longer than typical handcuffs, for a very good reason.

This is a…relatively dangerous routine.

It’ll be fine.

Lance keeps a careful eye on Keith. They’re supposed to stay completely in sync.

A nameless employee ushers them to the poles – they take their cues, and let the employee adjust the handcuffs.

When they stand there, frozen, hands behind their backs – and snap their heads up together, Lance really gets a chance to see the crowd tonight.
Holy shit it’s full. Like, actually full. People are standing in the back, others cheering.

Lance is shaking a little, with excitement.

Okay, okay. Let’s dance.

Keith and Lance start out as complete mirrors of the other.

They’re both on their knees, chins to their chests, hands behind their backs, chained to the pole. They have enough slack to do what they need to- so together they move.

The assortment of yelling, cheering, and whistling is loud in Lance’s ear, but he focuses on the beat of the song.

Tonight it’s incredibly important to keep tempo. It’s a fast song, and a fast routine. They worked hard for this, don’t fuck it up.

Together they dance. Together, they pull the chains of the handcuffs, making a loud, ringing noise that matches with the snap of the song.

Lance keeps his body soft, like water, rolling his body and making a big show of looking like some kept criminal.

It’s just like theater in high school. Lance really liked theater.

They lean as far forwards as they can with the cuffs, thrusting hard, snapping their heads to the beat.

Shiro’s boots click against the floor.

They roll back on their heels.

This is probably the most complicated routine Lance has ever done. It’s dramatic, it’s harsh. It’s not so much a dance, more than a show.

Shiro walks into the stage lights; the crowd goes fuckin’ nuts.

Lance and Keith are on their feet, albeit crouched with their thighs spread wide. It’s obscene, the way they drop.

Shiro’s face is set in stone, hotly serious and a little scary. He cracks the retractable baton against his leg, and Keith and Lance slide to stand up, the cuffs clinking against the pole.

Ahh, fuck, Shiro looks so good – Keith too, hair in front of his face, body jerking and pulling against the pole.

Lance yanks apart his wrists, and makes the metal chain ring. He rolls his body, grinds his ass against the pole – makes a huge show of looking like some kid seducing a cop.

And then, in something that took literally weeks to learn, Keith and Lance bring their hands high above their head, and grip the pole they’re chained too.
Do you know how hard it is to dance on a pole with your hands chained to it?

It’s fucking hard, okay.

But that’s the point.

Tonight they’re entertainers. Tonight the patrons gasp as they pull back far enough to twist the chains, hoisting their bodies up, kicking their legs in sync.

The bass drops.

Shiro cracks the baton against the pole – Keith does an invert that should honestly, not even be possible.

It’s hot, it’s hurried. It’s legs that kick and bodies that swirl.

Sweat drips down Lance’s temple- his hair is in his eyes, but he dances, for the audience. For the cheers and the cash – for the look in Shiro’s eye.

Shiro switches between them, back and forth, running his hands across Keith, then Lance. He tugs off their shirts, pretends to bite behind their ears. Drives the crowd crazy.

Lance grows hot under his breath, hotter under the lights.

Shiro grips him by the hair again, and spins him around, making the chains pull as tight as they can. Lance pushes his chest out, tips his head up – gives Shiro a look so sultry, that he sees him bite his lip. His arms strain behind his back, but it’s worth it. So worth it.

Keith is still dancing on the pole next to them, still doing the impossible.

But Shiro yanks Lance’s hand; pulls away the cuffs, and flips him around, re-chaining him so that his hands are in front of his nose.

With his ass now face out to the audience, Lance is free to smile all he wants.

Shiro copies the moves of a pat-down; the audience hollers with recognition. The money being thrown on stage is unreal – the cheers from the back make Lance grin.

Shiro sweeps his hands down Lance’s chest. Feels down his sides. Grips around his ass, and dips his hands down his jeans. He pats around his thighs, palms over his crotch.

Lance waits for the initial tug and – there go the jeans.

Shiro kicks apart his ankles. Kneels between his legs. Licks up the inside of thigh, and makes Lance forget about the routine for a solid minute.

“Ah, god,” He mumbles aloud, and feels Shiro smile against his inner thigh. Allura had allowed Shiro a lot of improv room. This um, wasn’t a part of the routine.

Keith makes a big show of banging the chains, rolling his body, dropping down and spreading his thighs, popping up and arching back against the pole.

Shiro stands back up. Lance sticks his ass out further, shamelessly looking over his shoulder – and Shiro meets his eye. He grips Lance by the hip, and hauls him back as far as the chains will let him, grinding his crotch against his ass, and making Lance keen.
And yay. Lance is hard. He breathes in, and tries to focus on the routine, but fuck he’s so turned on. Keith is hot. Shiro is hot. This is too much. Is Lance into roleplay? He thinks he might be into roleplay.

There’s a smack against his ass – his surprised yelp gets lost behind the whistling.

But it’s Keith’s turn now.

Shiro cracks the baton against the pole, making the metal ring. The snap makes Lance’s skin rise with goosebumps – makes his brain go into this autopilot mode of *yes, yes, god yes, please, tie me up, kiss me* –

But instead he dances there, hands crawling up the bar, doing twists and angels around the pole. With his hands now in front of him, Lance is able to climb the pole easier, and grind against it midair.

He looks over his shoulder, just as Shiro forces Keith on his knees.

Fuck, fuck. This is Lance’s favorite part.

The audience can see everything from where Keith and Shiro stand. They can see Shiro grab his belt loops. Can see Keith nose into his crotch. Can see the way his tongue flicks out – how he grabs the zipper with his teeth, and unzips his shorts.

It’s a slow pull, almost romantic, as Keith stares into Shiro’s eyes.

Fuck. *Fuck.* Fuck fuck, fuck.

Keith noses open his shorts – the audience is losing their goddamn minds.

Shiro pushes his shorts to rest low on his hips, and Keith nuzzles his cock through his underwear. As Lance hauls himself up on the pole, he catches a glimpse to see just *how* hard Shiro is. Ahh fuck yeah, fuck, yeah.

But Lance gets wrapped up in the chain. He goes to do a practiced slide, by lessening the grip on his calves and his ankles, but he completely falls to the floor with a loud bang.

He lands on his knees, and the crowd cheers – because let’s be honest, it *looked* cool – but Keith and Shiro immediately look his way.

Lance’s knees sting, his legs burn, and he wants to bite out something in pain, but he immediately smirks at the audience, and keeps dancing.

Shiro and Keith share a look, but continue on the routine.

Shiro grips Keith by the throat – pretends to haul him up against the bar, and keep him there.

And together they rock, grinding together, eventually kissing and hearing the patrons holler.

Money flies.

Lance bangs the chains against the pole, and dances.
The sexual tension is probably thick enough to box up and ship to China.

The ride back to their house is quiet.

And when the door opens, Shiro grabs each of them by the collar, hauling them onto the bed, and kissing them. Biting into their shoulders. Rolling and growling and looking like some animal.

But Keith and Lance aren’t just supple prey.

It’s a mess of limbs – of Keith pinning down Shiro’s arms – of Lance straddling Shiro’s face, and moaning against his forearms.

They scratch and bite – laugh, sometimes, because they’re ridiculous-

“Beautiful,” Shiro says, into Keith’s thighs, “Just, hah, b-beautiful-“

“I want you up my ass,” Lance pants. “Fill me up like a goddamn 7-Eleven big gulp.”

Keith is the one who starts laughing – Shiro buries his face into Keith’s thigh, and groans.

“How is it, ahaha, that everything you say is simultaneously, hahaha, so sexy and disgusting at the same time?”

“I’m just that talented,” Lance says, with his fingers shoved up his ass.

But Shiro laughs, turning to kiss Lance so sloppy and hard, rolling spit into his mouth, tugging on Lance’s tongue.

And when then they’re done? They’re a mess. Sticky, and sweaty, bruised and marked. It’s so late, it’s morning. It’s so dark, even the crickets don’t sing.

Keith collapses on his stomach and sighs, “We’re so pathetic.”

“Why?”

“We can’t even dance together without fucking afterwards.”

“That wasn’t dancing.” Lance sputters, “That was…that was something else, dude.”

Shiro is already passed out. It’s okay. Shiro did a lot today. Keith wipes him clean, and pulls a blanket over his naked body.

Keith then hums, and rolls over to his back, opening his arms. “Did you have fun?”

Lance laughs, and crawls up to nose into his neck, “Did I have fun? Seriously?”

“It’s just a question.”

“Yes,” Lance answers, and kisses the big round hickey Shiro gave him. “Yes I did.”

Literally everything hurts when Lance wakes up the next morning.
Shiro and Keith are already in the kitchen – Lance can hear them talking.

He patters out in his underwear; he finds Shiro’s shirt on the ground, and considers that good enough. It smells like him, so, it’s a win-win.

Man, everything is just a huge blur. But Lance can feel the nail marks on his back, and the handprints on his thighs.

He limps into the kitchen, muttering ow, ow, ow - did they both fuck him last night? Jesus.

What hurts the most are his knees, honestly, but that was his own fault. The two consecutive hours of sex may be a bit fogged, but that police routine is gonna’ be burned in Lance’s brain for like, years.

“Morning,” Keith waves, half asleep. He’s cute, with his bed head, and the dark circles under his eyes.

“Hiya,” Lance yawns.

Shiro asks, “How do you feel?”

“I hurt.”

Keith rubs his eyes, and opens his mouth to reply – but suddenly his eyes go wide. He sits up on the barstool, and yelps, “Lance!”

“What?”

“Oh my god, your knees!”

“Huh?”

“Fuck,” Shiro slides the pan off the burner, and walks around the kitchen island, “Fuck, I forgot about your fall last night.”

Lance blinks, and looks down at his legs. There’s a plethora of bite marks on his thighs, but oh… yeah, his knees are really swollen and purple.

“I’ll get some ice,” Keith stands up.

“Come here,” Shiro opens his arms.

Lance rolls his eyes, “I can walk.”

“You shouldn’t. Hold on.”

Shiro lifts him up, firm and warm and steady. Lance kinda’ just wants to stay here and sleep another six hours, but Shiro sets him back down on the couch. Keith comes paddling over with an icepack.

Shiro kneels at his feet, and softly grips him by the ankle. He slowly stretches out one of Lance’s bare legs, gauging his reaction. Lance winces, “Ah.”

Ew, now that Lance really stares, the bruises do look pretty ugly. Did he fall that hard?

“Fuck.” Shiro curses again. “I am so sorry Lance.”

“W-What? Why? It was my fault.”
“But we threw you around like a ragdoll last night.” Keith pales, “I completely forgot.”

“Me too. We could’ve injured you more.”

Lance shrugs, “It didn’t hurt until this morning.”

“You need to stay off your feet,” Shiro seriously tells him. “You might need to see a doctor.”

Lance sputters, “Dude! No way, it’s just bruised.”

“Your knees are swollen,” Keith barks.

“It’s fine!”

Shiro softly, softly drags his fingers up the inside of Lance’s knee, feeling just how inflamed it is.

Lance yelps, and shies away from him.

“Don’t move.” Shiro orders. “I’m going to call into work for you.” Mmm, his face is so pretty when he’s serious.

Lance sleepily leans back into the couch, “Okie dokie.”

Shiro arches an eyebrow at him, and turns on his heel. Keith settles the icepack on one of his knees, and Lance flinches away.

“Ow ow ow!”

“Keep it on!”

“No! It hurts –“

Shiro calls from the kitchen, “Lance, keep it on.”

“No!”

Keith looks him right in the eye, grinds his teeth together, and growls, “Lance.”

Wow, fine. Someone’s not in the mood today.

“Okay, okay, jeez.” Lance sniffs, and winces through the sting of the ice pack.

Keith crawls up against his side, and carefully rests his head on his shoulder, clicking on the T.V. in the process.

“You two are as bad as my mom.”

Keith huffs, “Good.”

Lance breathes in, and settles against Keith. Shiro talks on the phone in the other room, and for some reason, Lance’s heart hurts.

He pushes back the feeling; focuses on the steadiness of Keith’s breathing.

The bruises fade in a week or two.

The pain in his chest stays.
“You can live better.”

Can he?

Chapter End Notes

ayee Imao

here's the song they strip to
Chapter 12

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Lance stands in front of the studio doors, eyebrows furrowed, mouth open. It’s chilly, now early January. With Christmas passing, and the new year beginning, now is really not the time to leave Lance to freeze his balls off out here. He’s got goods to protect, okay.

There’s a note taped to the window, simple, typed up in Calibri font.

Hello Crew!

The Paladin is officially closed for renovation!

There’s a mandatory meeting in the Studio at 3 P.M. Tomorrow.

Check your emails :)

~Allura & Coran

Holy shit, what?

“It’s great to see you all here!” Allura smiles, and claps her hands together. There’s miscellaneous chairs from the club thrown about, so dancers sit wherever they can. There’s a light that flickers above them, occasionally buzzing. Allura’s voice echoes off the mirrors.

Lance crosses his arms, and leans up against the wall; Keith sits in Shiro’s lap on the floor.

“I’m sure you all of questions, so give me a minute to explain.” Allura breathes. “The Paladin is closing for the next three weeks. We’re completely reworking the entire building. Studio, stage, hallways included.”

There’s chatter and excited whispers – Lance looks down to Keith and Shiro, who look ecstatic.

“This,” Coran points to the light above them, “is gonna’ be all fixed.”

Unanimous clapping.

“It’s super exciting!” Allura smiles, “I can’t believe we have the extra money. It’s always been a dream of mine.”

A few more people clap, and Allura shyly nods, “Thank you.”

“It’s paid leave, so there’s no need to worry,” Coran grins. “We’d like to encourage you to practice the routines you’ve been working on. We hope t’ throw a huge party for the grand reopening!”

“Holy shit,” Lance mumbles. He nudges Shiro’s thigh with his foot, “Dude, three weeks’ vacation.”
Shiro looks up, and wordlessly smiles.

“Hopefully when you all return, you’ll see an entirely new Paladin!”

“Check your emails! We’ll give y’ guys a tour when the renovations are complete, as well as a schedule for the reopening.”

“Dudes.” Lance swings Shiro’s hand as they walk, “This is fucking crazy.”

“I know, right?” Keith nods, “The Paladin has been falling apart for…for months.”

“I’m really happy for Allura.” Shiro says. “She’s wanted this for so long.”

“The club must be doing pretty good, yeah?”

“From what I’ve heard.”

“What do we do for three weeks?”

“Uh, enjoy ourselves?” Keith huffs. “Let’s leave town.”

“We need to work on routines,” Shiro reminds him, fishing for his truck keys. “We’re still working on that new trio show.”

“Yeah, yeah, yeah. There’s more than enough time for that.” Keith hops in the passenger seat.

“Where should we go?”

“Anywhere we want.”

At first Lance embraced the free time – cause like, *hell yeah*, paid leave.

They take a drive down to the ocean. Its chilly, but they sit on the sand, and bask in the sun. They kiss under the stars, and sleep in the truck. Lance drives when Shiro is too tired – Keith holds his free hand as he sleeps.

It’s like something out of a fairy tale.

That’s…that’s why Lance is nervous.

His mom calls again. Only once, while driving home from the beach, but Lance ignores it again. He just doesn’t know what to say. He doesn’t have the words.

But…he remembers something his dad used to tell him. His father was a hardworking man. Ruthless, in everything he did.

“If you’re not proud of what you do, it’s not worth doing.”
Is Lance proud? Is he really?

When he’s on that stage, he feels invincible. The eyes burn him – push him to be better.

But fuck, man. He’s a stripper. At the end of the day, if you shave down every fancy word, Lance is just a stripper. People come to see him get naked, and that’s it. Nothin’ left. Show’s over, folks.

Now Lance is back home.

With work he was busy – he could bury his head in routines and dates and impromptu sleepovers.

But now.

Lance rolls over in bed, and lets out a hefty sigh. The laptop Keith and Shiro gave him for Christmas rests on his nightstand – and, right there, is that...that damn card.

It’s been so many months since he was given that card. Does the businessman even remember him?

Once or twice, Lance has seen those eyes in the audience. Bright yellow – or neon purple.

But they’re always gone, like a whisper.

Lance buries his face in his pillow, and groans.

When he’s with Shiro, he forgets all about his worries. When he’s with Keith, he laughs too hard to think about the weird heartache.

But Lance can’t rely on them like this. He can’t just...project his issues, and think ignoring everything will solve his problems. Lori has pretty much driven that point home, more than enough times.

That Z haunts him.

The air inside the house is warm. It smells like Keith’s cookie candles, like, literally everywhere, because Keith has this weird obsession with smelly wax. It’s cute though.

Lance swirls around the pole in their house, practicing inverts, and trying new poses Keith taught him. Meanwhile, Keith and Shiro hover over a laptop, arguing over listed apartments.

“What about a two bedroom?”

“I don’t need two bedrooms though.”

“But we visit you, Lance.”

“What do I do with all that space though?”

“I dunno’, keep stuff off the floor? Maybe?”

“Nah, keep looking.”

“What about this one?” Shiro turns around the laptop. Lance squints at the screen while upside
down. He flips, “Nah. Too far away.”

“You’re so picky.”

“I want somewhere nice!”

“Just fucking live with us, dammit.” Keith growls.

“I don’t want to impose, dude.”

“You’re not imposing, you’re saving a fuckton of money.”

“Keep looking~” Lance spins.

“We have a spare bedroom you can use…” Shiro offers. “It really wouldn’t be any trouble.”

Lance lands back on his feet, “I want to at least look a little longer. In a few weeks I’ll let you know.”

Shiro brushes aside his bangs, and chews on his lower lip.

“Okay…” Shiro looks away. He kinda’ looks like a kicked puppy, and it makes Lance’s heart squeeze.

Rule 1: Don’t make Shiro sad.

Lance is being stubborn; he knows it. His head is just… aghhh, right now.

“Hey!” Lance barks. “Dance with me.”

Shiro looks up to him, and blinks in surprise. Keith snatches away the laptop with a smile.

“Play some music, Keith.” Lance stretches out his hands. Shiro takes one, like a gentleman.

“Okay. Should I play Stupid Hoe or Dirt Nasty?”

“Something romantic, Keith.”

“Okay, so, Stupid Hoe.”

“I hate you,” Lance flirts. Keith finally rolls his eyes and clicks on Pandora, before going back to the apartment listings.

Lance brings a hand up to rest on his broad shoulder– Shiro braces one on Lance's hip, and tugs him close. Lance looks into his eyes, and sees nothing but swirls of grey, lightly amused and stunningly serious. He smells good too, but, you know, thats a given.

Shiro takes a step back, and Lance follows.

“What about one with a double balcony?”

“Nah,” Lance says, as they waltz together. Shiro is sturdy, and strong, and takes the lead easily.

Keith scrolls, “There’s a one bedroom like…six miles from the club.”

“Nothing closer?” Lance shifts, and Shiro twirls him. They’re both smiling like idiots.
“Beggars can’t be choosers, Lance.”

“I’m *trying* to be independent.”

“Let us support you, dammit.” Keith jokes, and looks up to see Lance wrap his arms around Shiro’s neck, and jump.

Keith smiles, and closes the laptop.

And they dance, cheesy and silly in the workout room, until it’s time to get back to practice.

---

“Is that Antonio Banderas?”

“Nah, Antonio Banderas is much hotter.”

“Antonio Banderas *is not* hot.”

“Oh my god *what??*”

“He’s got like, pube hair.”

“But he didn’t *always* have pube hair! Holy shit, haven’t you seen the Legend of Zoro?”

“Yeah, but he’s not cute now, so it doesn’t count.”

Lance gasps, and turns his head in Keith’s lap, looking to Keith above him. Lance has managed to worm his body across both Shiro and Keith, stealing their body heat like the leech he really is.

“Seriously?” Lance sputters, “What kind of logic is that? *That’s* like saying young Johnny Depp isn’t no longer hot because he got old.”

Shiro sighs, “Can we just watch the movie?”

Keith shrugs his shoulders, “Young Johnny Depp was okay.”

“*What kind of gay are you?!*” Lance chokes. “Who do you find hot, then?”

“Oh man,” Keith’s head falls back against the headrest. “Lee Byung-Hun.”

“Oh, okay, I’ll give you that one.”

They’re cut off by a sharp ringing noise. Shiro jumps a little, and pats for his phone; Lance sits up out of his lap, and Shiro squints at the light.

“Oh, it’s my mom.” Shiro pats Lance’s thigh, “Excuse me real quick.”

“No problem bro,” Lance shifts. Keith slides across the gap, and works an arm around Lance’s shoulders instead.

Shiro picks up the phone, and Lance hears him immediately start speaking Japanese.

Lance swallows around his tongue. He can hear his voice, chirpy and happy, tongue speaking fluent
and beautiful.

To his mom.

Keith squeezes his shoulder, now focused on the movie – but Lance dips his fingers into Keith’s lap, and seeks out his hand, ignoring the weird churn in his gut.

Lance falls asleep at their place, which isn’t unusual at this point.

They’re a big body pile, warm, beneath the sheets. The place still smells like candles, dammit, but it’s almost comforting.

Thighs press against thighs – the arm over his waist is warm, and the nose against his neck is warmer.

Lance really would love to live here. He’d sleep here every night, sweet and happy in their arms.

But he’s… hesitant. Not really sure, you know? Like, does he really belong? This is their space. Their home. Lance is totally fine with a one-bedroom apartment.

The arm against his side pulls away. Lance stirs awake.

There’s a breathy, “No, no-“

Lance rubs his eyes. Stretches his toes, and curls back up. Fuck, what time is it?

“No…n-no-M-matt-“

Lance’s eyes fly open.

What?

The sheets rustle. Lance sits up, and sees Keith awake too.

“Shiro…” Keith brushes a hand across his cheek. It’s warm, and soft, and so, so loving. Lance can barely make out their features in the light. “Shiro, you’re dreaming.”

Shiro’s neck is slick with sweat. His eyebrows are pushed together, lip red from chewing it so hard. It makes Lance’s heart sink.

“Is he okay?”

“Yes…” Keith kisses his cheek, trying to wake him. “He has nightmares.”

“R…Really? About what?”

Keith threads a hand through the tuft of Shiro’s bangs. He tries to smooth out the wrinkles between his eyebrows, and sighs. “The army.”

Lance feels his gut twist. He swallows hard, and looks away. “Oh.”

Shiro gasps hard, suddenly pulling at the sheets.
“Shiro…baby…” Keith kisses his forehead. “You’re okay.”

Shiro doesn’t wake up, but he does relax into the sheets. Lance can feel his heartbeat in his ears. He…almost wants to cry.

“How long has…how long has he been having nightmares?”

“Ever since I can remember,” Keith whispers. “It’s okay.”

“I didn’t know.” Lance swallows.

There’s…there’s probably a lot about Shiro that he doesn’t know. Keith too.

He watches the way Keith snuggles into Shiro's side, and realizes that yes, Lance…Lance isn’t there yet. They’ve been dating for months, but Lance isn’t there yet.

“Come here,” Keith whispers, so he does. Keith tucks him into his arm, and sleepily kisses his eyebrow. “Don’t worry about it.”

Lance doesn’t reply. He lays on his side, and listens to their steady breathing until morning.

Those three weeks pass so quickly. Lance saw them with so much hope, but they passed with a bittersweet taste, like green popsicles.

They practice their trio routine rigorously. It’s a lot of work – a lot of steps to memorize, beats to practice. It’ll look gorgeous on stage, of course.

But Lance can’t help but feel emotionally removed.

Partially because he’s just, fallen so hard. Fallen harder than he thinks he’s allowed to.

Keith and Shiro kiss his shoulders and snuggle him to sleep. Offer their home and cook him meals. Paint his nails, buy him clothes. They’re doting, and understanding. Fiery and passionate, annoying at times, a little too perfect and a pain in the ass to sleep with –

But Lance has fallen in love.

It’s something they haven’t discussed. Not…not yet. Keith and Shiro tell each other all the time and every time they do, Lance’s body runs warm, like a seat heater. God, they’re fucking cute. Illegally cute.

This is all temporary, isn’t it? The stripping job. The relationship.

This stable ground Lance built beneath his feet – the things he worked for, the things he obsessed over. He has them, and now he’s not so sure what to do.

Lance is in love. With the club. With Keith, and Shiro.

But he shouldn’t be. And that’s really the scariest part.

So he dances with them. Does the trio routines, and laughs. Squeals when Shiro picks him up. Hums
when Keith kisses him.

Those three weeks pass, and Lance finds no apartment. Those three weeks pass, and he feels more lost than he was before.

It’s still fucking cold as shit outside.

Lance holds Shiro’s human hand, because let’s be honest, holding his prosthesis in the middle of January is like shoving your hand in an icebox. Shiro usually keeps a glove over it, just to keep the fingers from sticking. Hunk can do maintenance, but ripping off a finger on accident takes longer to repair.


Allura smiles, the breeze rustling through her hair, making the strands whisp about like kite strings. The majority of the dancers are gathered here, right outside the shiny Paladin doors.

“It’s not completely done!” Allura beams. “But I thought I ought to show you while we have time.”

“Hurry up,” Keith huffs, and Allura ignores him.

“Just watch your step!”

Lance squeezes Shiro’s hand, trying to suck every ounce of warmth he can. Shiro leans close, so considerate and adorable.

Lance would be a liar, to say he’s not a little excited. He’s actually kinda’ ecstatic. New toys? New stuff?

Allura pushes the doors open.

It takes a moment for everyone to fill in – but the gasps and excited chatter immediately fogs up the room, like smoke.

“Oh my god!”

“Woah,” Lance breathes, mouth slowly cracking into a smile. The warm building defrosts his cheeks, and he gazes around the club, lit only by sunlight.

It’s different. Like, new different.

“As you can see-” Allura gestures, “-we went for a new modern feel.”

Yeah, no shit. It looks awesome.

The walls are made of lights. Like, small little circles that glow different colors. Actually, everything glows – the booths, the stage. Dear god, the stage. It’s much bigger, and much prettier, shiny and clean. There’s more poles, more everything.

“The stage is state of the art,” Allura says. “The stage lights are automatically controlled from a room up there-“ she points. “And we moved the DJ stand over there.” She gestures to the other side of the
“Holy fuck,” Lance whispers.

Keith breathes, “Shit. This is amazing.”

“We added walkways here,” Allura turns. “And there’s platforms that line all the walls now. We can have up to ten performers out on platforms.”

“Maximize space…”

“Exactly.”

Lance looks up at the ceilings – there’s gorgeous chandeliers, new lights – new *everything*. There’s still paint buckets scattered, and a ladder here or there, but the renovations are amazing. The bar is now shapely, the barstools way nicer than the wobbly ones they had before.

Allura ushers them through a hallway, and *yay*, no more ugly red wallpaper. No more orange lights. No more faulty electricity.

There’s excited chatter as they walk. Allura raises her voice to speak,

“The studio is currently under construction, but we’ve replaced all the cracked mirrors, and dug up the floors. I think you guys will really like it when it’s done.”

“When’s the reopening?” A dancer asks.

“Next Friday.” Allura points, “Don’t forget it.”

“How did you do this so fast?” Lance asks, eyes still soaking it all in. It’s all so new new new-

“Hired a ridiculous amount of people.” Allura sighs. “Every day we’re not open is a day lost.”

“Are we promoting this?” Shiro gestures.

“Oh, of course. I’ve hired a few people to take care of the marketing.”

“This is so cool,” a male dancer grins. “We’re legit now.”

“We were always *legit.*” Keith argues. “Now we’re just…”

Lance smirks, “Legit-er.”

“Yes, thank you Lance.”

Allura rolls her eyes, “With the reopening, Coran has been working his ass off to get sponsors to show.”

“Sponsors? As in…?”

“Investors,” Allura shifts. “We’ve uh…put all we’ve had into this renovation. We have to prove that we’re *different.*”

“Hey, different is our specialty, right?” Lance teases.

“Exactly,” Allura smiles. “I’m going to email the routine schedule for the reopening. I’m afraid we don’t have any time for a dress rehearsal.”
“Please,” Keith rolls his eyes. “We’ve never done a goddamn dress rehearsal. Why would we need one now?”

“Because I’m stressing, Keith.” Allura walks, back towards the main club, a few stragglers still snooping around. “We have to really bring it.”

Shiro reaches up, and rests his gloved hand on her shoulder. “Allura, it’ll be fine.”


The wrinkles between her eyebrows smooths, and she nods, “Thank you, Lance.”

“Tighter.”

“I’m tight, Keith.”

“I’d beg to differ…”

“Shut up!”

“Lance, focus.” Keith frowns. “This has to be perfect.”

“Cause Allura said so?” Lance grits, from high up on the pole.

“Because there’s going to be important people there!”

“Stop yelling!” Lance barks, and slides down the pole. “It’ll be fine!”

Shiro looks over, and frowns, “Guys.”

“You’re dancing half assed. I’ve seen you put effort into shit, Lance. I know you can do better.”

Lance feels his entire body rush hot, and angry. His skin feels uncomfortable, his head hurts. Keith is giving him this disappointed look, and it makes Lance more frustrated than anything.

“I’m giving it my all! You’re the one being nitpicky.”

“The whole point is to be in sync-“

“I am in sync!”

“You’re kicking too high-“

“I’m doing what you fucking said to-“

“Enough.” Shiro rumbles, and they both jolt to stand up straight. Lance looks away, and Keith stares at the floor. Shiro’s deep, authoritative tone is usually reserved for situations like these. It makes Lance feel shitty, like, immediately. Shiro frowns, “Are we really going to argue over this?”

“Dude, look me in the eye and tell me Keith isn’t being an asshole,” Lance grits.

Shiro looks him right in the eye, and says, “Keith isn’t being an asshole.”
Okay, wow.

Lance huffs out a hot breath, and puffs up his chest. “Right, right, okay. Cause you’ll always take Keith’s side, right.”

“No,” Shiro growls. “Because I know he’s stressed. He just wants the best from you. God, Lance.”

There’s a deep wave of guilt that rushes to Lance’s toes. He glances to Keith, who almost looks hurt.

“Sorry, sorry.” Lance pushes his bangs back. Dammit.

Shiro’s face lightens, eyes softening to what Lance knows. “Lance…is everything okay?”

“What’ya mean?” Lance shifts.

“There’s…there’s no favorites,” Shiro suddenly says, like he’s piecing together the puzzle. “You know that, right?”

No favorites.

‘Right, Right, Okay. Cause you’ll always take Keith’s side, right?’

“Totally!” Lance sputters. “S-Sorry. I’m just… worried too, haha.”

“Okay…” Shiro eyes him. He doesn’t believe him. Lance knows it. Shiro knows that Lance knows.

“Sorry I yelled.” Keith blurts.

“Awww~” Lance beams, and throws an arm around his shoulders. “It’s okay. I really wanna’ get this down.”

“Me too.”

“From the top, then?”

“I’ve totally got it this time.”

______________________________

No favorites.

______________________________

Does he want to do this?

Does he really?

Lance almost wishes he had Lori’s number. Maybe she’d have some advice.

But he’s just so curious. What’s the harm in calling anyways?

Lance brushes his finger across the home button, staring at his nails. The ones Keith painted yesterday.
Lance breathes in. He presses the call button, and lifts the phone to his ear.

_Brring....Brringg.....Brringgg-

Lance paces around his room. Was it a joke? It was probably a joke. Ha-ha, super funny, great prank, where’s the cameras-

“Hello, this is G&E corporate offices, you’ve reached Mr. Zarkon’s personal assistant, how may I help you today?”

“Uh…” Lance stops pacing. Zarkon? What kind of Scandinavian, white-ass name is-

“Hello?”

“Oh, oh, hi.” Lance swallows, “Sorry. Um…okay…well uh.” He looks to his card, “I was calling about a job offer.”

“A job offer? May I ask who’s calling?”

“Um…my name is Lance. Someone gave me this business card and-“

“Oh!” The assistant perks up, “Yes, yes. We’ve been expecting a call from you.”

“You have?”

“Yes, give me one moment, I'll patch you to him directly.”

“Oh, uh, oka-“

The line buzzes to elevator music. Lance pushes his eyebrows together, and sits on the edge of his bed.

Hmmhm, doo do doo~ doo doo doot doo-

“This is Z.”

Oh.

“Um, hi.” Lance chews, “I’m calling about a job offer?”

The voice on the other end is smooth, and deep. Dark, like Shiro’s but maybe darker. It’s almost alluring, in a sense. Kinda’ intimidating.

“Lance McClain?”

“Y-Yeah, how do you know my-“

“I thought you’d never call,” the voice says. “I’ve been keeping a close eye on you.”

“That’s…not creepy.”

The voice chuckles, “No no no, you see, I’ve seen you perform. I’ve seen your potential, Lance, and I’d really like to offer you something better.”

“Yeah? What would that be?”

“I’m afraid I can’t tell you over the phone.”
Lance frowns, “Why?”

“I’d really like to show you in person. Would you mind scheduling an appointment?”

“Look dude.” Lance shifts, “This sounds real fishy. I’m sorry, but, I don’t think this’ll work out, thanks-“

“No, no, please. We’ll just meet at my office. I promise it won’t be a waste of your time.”

Lance chews on his lip, “I dunno’…”

“I can already promise you double the pay.” Zarkon’s voice rumbles, “It’ll be a job you can truly be proud of.”

Lance feels his chest seize, and his tongue go a little dry. He curls it against the back of his teeth, and sighs, “What day?”

“Well, I leave town soon. How’s the 23rd?”

“Oh, okay. What day is that?”

“Friday.”

Oh, shit. “Sorry, I can’t that day. It’s the reopening of the Paladin.”

“Well…I’m afraid it’ll be a month before my flight back. I can surely give you a tour without missing your reopening.”

Lance breathes in. Weighs his options.

He’s such a traitor.

But that’s what started this all, right? The one real thing in this world?

“It’ll be worth your time.”

Lance digs his toes into the floor. Plays with the fraying hem of his shirt.

“Okay.”

Chapter End Notes

thanks for sticking with me this far!!
i can safely say there's about four more chapters left ;;;
sorry that this turned out so long;;; i just preferred to do the story justice, rather than cutting corners
Chapter 13

Chapter Notes

*here* is what zarkon looks like, if yer interested

*also*

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

You know, Lance would typically start this out with something along the lines of *it's a cold day today*, or *Lance stood outside in the chilly air*, but really, that’s a fucking understatement of the century.

So here it goes. Today, Lance stands outside in what can only be described as the Yeti’s armpit, or perhaps, Frosty the Snowman’s big fat asshole.

It *sucks*. Lance is standing on the curb of his apartment complex, hands in his pockets, jacket zipped up to his red nose.

Apparently? He’s supposed to have some fancy driver guy pick him up? Lance has no fucking idea. This is stupid. What is Lance thinking?

He’s incredibly anxious. His chest twists, and he constantly checks the time on his phone.

It’s currently three p.m.


It’ll be fine, right? Lance is just curious, is all. He’s not…he’s not, committing, or anything.

There’s a soft little *beep beep*, and suddenly Lance sees a golden chariot of hope. Or in reality, a black luxury car with a taut little driver.

He steps out with a nod, “Mr. McClain?”

“That’s-a me,” Lance shivers. The driver politely opens his car door, and Lance climbs into the back.

“Thank you,” he mumbles.

“You’re welcome, Sir.”

Lance lets out a hot breath, and relaxes back into his seat. The driver clicks his seatbelt, and slowly pulls out onto the main road.

Lance’s phone buzzes.

*Keith (✪‿♥️):*

> *Hey, you got a ride tonight?*
Lance swallows.

Okay. Lance is kind of a bad boyfriend. He didn’t…exactly…tell them about the job offer.

Keith and Shiro keep their secrets, okay? Lance doesn’t pry.

He texts back a quick, *yep! TY <3* and shoves his phone back in his pocket.

Lance is nervous. He feels like a kid who stole the cookie from the cookie jar. He’s *only* doing this to curbstomp his curiosity. That’s it, that’s it.

Nothing else to it.

G&E is a huge fucking tower smack dab in the middle of downtown. The traffic is loud here, sirens blaring, people bustling and horns honking. It’s a little unsettling, but it’s not unfamiliar.

Lance is ushered into the building – some guys in tiny hats open his door. Lance compliments them on their tiny tiny hats, and they mumble a polite thank you, sir.

‘Sir’, haha. He’s a stripper. Strippers don’t get titles, do they?

He walks through the door, and is floored by the gorgeous décor. It’s white and sterile, and incredibly modern. It’s so beautiful. Full of glass chandeliers, and oddly shaped couches.

“Lance McClain?”

Ooh. That voice–

Lance turns on his heel, “Yes?”

“Hello,” a man smiles – and holy shit. It’s the eyes! The bright, striking purple ones. He sticks out his hand, “It’s a pleasure to formally meet you.”

Lance is gaping. He can’t help it, really. Is this Zarkon? He’s gorgeous.

His cheekbones are sharper than hell, hair thick and well kept. He’s in a white, three-piece suit. It’s tailored, and made of material Lance doesn’t even recognize. He’s tall – mature looking. Late forties, maybe, but god, he looks like serious sugar-daddy material.

“Hi.” Lance shakes his hand. “Nice to meet ya’.”

“My name is Zarkon, but many call me Z,” He smiles. “I’m the C.E.O. of G&E.”

“Holy shit,” Lance blurs. He sputters, “S-Sorry, I mean-“

Zarkon laughs, low and rumblly and weirdly attractive. “No worries. I’m sure you have many questions,” he nods. “I hope you don’t mind if we talk in the car?”

“We’re going somewhere?”

Zarkon politely nods, “Yes. It’s right around the corner, I promise.”

Lance finds himself staring again – it’s just, *fuck*. Was this guy made in a lab? Fuckin’ hell. Legs for days.
Lance blindly follows him into a new car. He forgets about the cold.

Lance has never ridden in a Limo. It’s really fucking cool – the bar is rad, and the lights that glow around the walls are pretty.

Still, he checks his phone. Four p.m.

Be back by nine, be back by nine.

“Tell me,” Zarkon pours a drink. “How long have you lived here?”

“Um…eight…nine years?”

“Have you attended college?”

“Ha…sorta’.” Lance chuckles. Zarkon offers him a drink, and Lance politely shakes his head no.

Zarkon sips the drink instead, and hums, “Drop out?”

“Ran out of cash.” Lance bites, “Wasn’t eligible for any loans.”

Zarkon frowns, “That’s a shame.”

Lance shrugs, “I do what I gotta’, you know?”

“I know.” Zarkon stares.

Lance chooses to focus on the swirls of the car door lights. Let’s hope this isn’t a mistake.

Maybe he’ll get kidnapped, like some action movie. That’ll be interesting.

It’s a large building. A really, really large building.

A theater.

An empty theater.

“This, is the Myzax theater.” Zarkon gestures. It’s huge, and gorgeous, the stage large, the seats pristine and red.

“Wow,” Lance marvels, and hears his voice echo against the walls. It’s like something out of a movie – gold ropes, huge curtains, stage lights and balconies-

“I opened this theater ten years ago,” Zarkon smiles. “It’s run Broadway shows since opening day.”


“I’ve had an interest in you, Lance.” Zarkon places his hands in his pockets, and politely smiles.

“Ever since I saw your first performance at the Paladin.”

“Really?”
“Yes.” Zarkon looks back to the theater. “Your improvisation skills and natural rhythm are pristine. With time you’ve only improved, and it’s obvious that you’ve become a great asset to the Paladin.”

“Wow…” Lance beams, “Thank you.” He knows he’s pretty, yeah, but that’s so nice? Wow.

Zarkon looks back to him- Lance feels his body warm. Those eyes. They’re unnatural.

“You are incredibly talented,” Zarkon explains. “Way too talented to work as something so shameless.”

“I…” Lance swallows. “I don’t mind it…”

Zarkon looks like he wants to say something – but instead he smiles, and gestures. “I want you on my stages, Lance. You could be so, so much more.”

“Dude, I…” Lance laughs. “I just make stuff up. I’m goofy.”

“You’re you.” Zarkon says, excitedly. “You’re fresh, and different. People would travel to see you, Lance.”

His face is definitely red. Lance thumbs at his pockets, and laughs nervously, “Wow…I don’t…I don’t know.”

“Then let me show you more.” Zarkon turns, with an attractive smile, back to the doors, “Come, come.”

They hop in the limo once more – and this time, Lance accepts a drink. Slowly, the tension seeps out of his shoulders. Slowly, Zarkon talks Lance into being himself.

Zarkon is quite the people person, which is fun, because Lance is a people person. It’s like, Clash of the Bigheads.

Except, Zarkon seems pretty genuine. Lance has never banked on his judge of character, but Zarkon’s laughs are nice, and his eyes are so sparkly. He smells good too? His cologne probably costs more than Lance's rent.

The next theater is bigger than the last. Lance shivers from the cold, but gapes at the size.

“Have you ever heard of the Cirque Du Soleil?” Zarkon smiles.

“Have I?” Lance laughs. “Dude, everyone has.”

“They perform here, on tours.” Zarkon walks down the empty isle, “I’ve partnered with them for years. I’m a sponsor.” He turns, “It’s quite the honor.”

“No kidding…”

“These are high tech stages.” Zarkon pats the bottom of the stage. “It’s a pool, it’s a trampoline, it’s a net. They’re just like the ones you’ll find in Vegas.”

Lance jokes, “Wow. Are you offering me a job with the Cirque?”

“Do you want one?” Zarkon arches a nicely shaped eyebrow.
Lance chokes on his own spit. Attractive, he knows, but seriously?

“Dude, what the hell?” Lance shakes his head. “I strip. You know that, right?”

“Lance…you’re not seeing the big picture,” Zarkon sighs, and leans up against the stage. “Have you ever seen yourself perform?”

“On video? Like…once?”

“You learn incredibly fast.” Zarkon stares. “Your reflex skills, your charisma. It’s the full package, Lance.”

“You’re making me out to be way better than I really am.”

“But I’m not.” Zarkon stares, “Haven’t you ever had someone believe in you?”

Lance inhales. His lungs ache. His hands freeze by his sides.

Has he?

Shiro and Keith do. He thinks.

“That looks like a no.” Zarkon frowns.

“I just…don’t understand.” Lance turns, “Why would a C.E.O. fish after me? Why are you spending your time here?”

Zarkon shrugs, and looks him right in the eye. Pierces him, in the heart. “You’re just intriguing to me. It pains me to see so much talent trapped behind stilettos and stripper poles.”

Lance swallows. What time is it?

“Come,” Zarkon leans back up. “Would you like a tour of the back stage? It’s some of the most intricate technology in the world.”

Lance smiles, and nods. “Yeah, yeah okay.”

This is weird. Lance’s chest hurts. It all just seems so perfect.

To perform on stage? Wasn’t that Lance’s dream? So long ago? Didn’t he study dance? Wasn’t he a theater major?

It’s all here, right at his fingertips.

Zarkon walks him patiently – shows him the enormous makeup rooms, the wardrobes behind locked doors. Shows him a future.

He’s ushered into a car.

Shown around town – given offer, after offer. G&E owns ballet studios, dance crews, comedy bars and every type of live entertainment you can think of.

This has to be a dream, right? It sure feels like one. Lance feels swept away, dazed, completely lured in by each new place Zarkon takes him.

It’s like nothing Lance has ever seen. Extravagant, and new. An entirely different world.
What time is it again?

“Ahahaha, you’re joking!” Lance laughs, and shifts in the limo.

“Nope,” Zarkon smirks. “I was actually just there a few months ago.”

“Wow…I’ve always wanted to go to Japan,” Lance sighs. “I’m sure my b-“ Lance coughs. “Um, I’m sure my friend would really like to go too. He’s from there.”

Fuck, Lance.

Zarkon arches an eyebrow, and smiles, “Yeah?”

“Y…Yeah.”

Lance checks his phone. Oh shit, it’s seven already?

“Sir…” Lance trails off. “Um, thank you so much, but I really need to get back home soon.”

Zarkon blinks, “Oh? Surely there’s time. There’s one last place I wanted to take you.”

Lance shifts, “Are you sure? I really can’t be late.”

“I’ll have you there,” Zarkon winks, and it’s shockingly attractive. Lance nods, and sits back in the limo. Okay, okay. Two hours, it’s fine.

They end up back at G&E headquarters. Lance is confused, and extremely skeptical, but chooses to keep his trap shut, all the way up the elevator. He watches women stare – sees the security guards share looks – but whatever. Lance isn’t concerned.

Once again, he’s enveloped by the beauty of the building. Lance grew up in the suburbs, at best. He never really saw any towers of this size.

He watches the elevator floors light up – seven, eight, nine, ten - Zarkon’s posture is straight, and gentlemanly, just as he’s been the entire evening.

Lance ignores the weird squeeze in his chest. Man, this guy is so nice. Lance feels undeserving.

The elevator doors slide open. Lance follows Zarkon down a hallway, full of white floors and glass walls. It’s dizzying, so Lance chews on his cheek. Zarkon pulls out a security card, and unlocks a grand door at the end of the hallway.

“Oh…”

“Welcome in,” Zarkon turns, and smiles. He pushes open the door; Lance audibly gasps.

Wow…it’s…

It’s like a penthouse suite. A large, sweeping couch. Gorgeous décor. Large windows that show everything. Holy shit, Lance can see for miles.

“Woah!” Lance bounces in, “This is incredible!”

“Thank you,” Zarkon nods. “I’m sorry for dragging you here. I wanted to formally thank you for
going along with me this evening.”

“I should be the one thanking you,” Lance breathes. “I haven’t done a damn thing to deserve this.”

Zarkon slowly walks to the bar, and sets down his keys, phone, and shrugs off his jacket. “Mm, but you have. I’ve seen you.”

“How?” Lance laughs, and turns back around. “I’ve never seen your face at the club.”

“I’ve been there,” Zarkon assures him. He walks behind the bar, “Drink?”

“Of what?”

“Whiskey.”

“Sounds great.” Lance turns back to the window; the cars look so tiny down below. Ah, a lady is walking her dog. What a nice dog.

“So…tell me,” Zarkon talks as he pours. “Which location was your favorite?”

“Not gonna’ lie…” Lance beams, “…the Broadway stage was cool.”

“I’m glad.” Zarkon walks over with two glasses. Lance takes one with a nod. “I’d really like to have you up there.”

“But why?”

Zarkon takes a seat on his couch, and politely crosses one leg over the other.

“Ah, haven’t I already told you? There’s so much raw talent.”

“Yeah…but…”

“Don’t you want to be proud of yourself?” Zarkon asks, eyes sharp and tearing. Lance freezes by the window, the chiseled glass cold in his palm.

“I…”

“How does it feel, hm? To call your mother, and tell her you straddle laps for a living.” Zarkon sips. “Wouldn’t you like to be up there? Wouldn’t you like a career you can brag about?”

Lance inhales, “That’s…something I’ve been…considering.”

“Thought so,” Zarkon says seriously. It’s growing dark out, the sun setting, the lights below clicking on like a Christmas tree. Zarkon looks him in the eye, “Is the nightlife really something worth pursuing?”

“I don’t…I don’t know.”

“Sit.” Zarkon pats the couch. “Drink.”

So he does.

Wow, this whiskey is really fucking good.
When it starts to hit his system, Lance becomes the stupid, giggly mess that he is. Zarkon must be tolerating him pretty well, because he’s chuckling too.

Lance isn’t sure what they’ve been talking about. It started off serious, Z going on and on about the places he’s visited, but Lance accidentally tripped over his own foot trying to find the bathroom, and it’s been a mess of laughter since then.

He’s not a bad dude. Lance is pretty sure.

Man, the lights outside sure are pretty. Lance swirls around the drink in his hand, and smiles. He wishes he had his phone. Then he could take pictures, and show Keith and Shiro. Mmm, yes, they’d be so happy.

Oh! Wait! Lance does have his phone! Herp derp!

He blindly pats around his pockets, and furrows his eyebrows. Where?...Phone…had…

“Are you looking for something?” Zarkon asks politely.

“My phone…”

“Oh,” Zarkon blinks. “It fell out of your pocket. I placed it on the bar for you.”

Lance beams, “Thank you!”

“No problem.”

Lance waddles over to the bar, and nicks his phone off the counter. Oops, it’s been on silent.

What time is it?

Lance pushes the home button, and sobers up really fucking fast.

The world swirls beneath his feet. Gravity pulls him back down.

Eleven P.M.

Oh god, oh god oh god oh god.

“The reopening!” Lance suddenly shrieks. Zarkon startles in his chair, and looks over his shoulder.

“Excuse me?”

“It’s eleven!” Lance sputters, “Fuck, fuck. I’m so sorry, Z. But I have to go now.”

“Oh my…” Zarkon blinks. “I am so sorry, Lance. I completely lost track of time.”

“I-I did too.” Lance panics. His heart beats, his palms sweat.

Twenty-three missed calls.

Shiro and Keith. Shiro and Keith.

Remember them, asshole? Huh? Remember them? Remember the two beautiful men you worked so hard to woo? Yeah, where’d all that love go, huh? Down a fucking whiskey bottle, that’s where it went.
“I have to run,” Lance panics, searching for his jacket. “Shit, shit.” He shrugs it on.

“Here,” Zarkon stands up, and offers him his coat. “Please wear this as well. It’s much colder, now that the sun is down.”

“What?” Lance shakes his head, “No, I gotta’ go-“

“Please, I insist.” Zarkon places the coat across his shoulders. “I’ll call ahead, my driver will be waiting to take you.”

“Thank you,” Lance blurts, running out the door. “Thank you, thank you! I’ll call you back, okay?”


Lance waves him off, and starts to call Shiro.

They’re not picking up. They’re not picking up.

Lance calls and calls, leg bouncing in the back of the limo. He wants to chew the skin off his lips. Tear his nails into his palms. Why is the driver so slow? Faster, faster!

The doors opened at nine. Lance’s performance was at eleven.

His blood rushes past his ears. The car ride takes too long, too long, too long-

Midnight.

When the wheels stop, Lance runs. Books it, into the dark parking lot. Runs and runs, until he sees Shiro and Keith, walking out the back doors, car keys in hand. They’re only illuminated by the single streetlight, bundled up in warm clothes.

“Keith!” Lance pants, “Shiro!”

They turn his way, eyes wide, full of worry.

“Lance!”

“Lance, what the hell?”

He’s out of breath. Shaking. “I am so sorry. I am so sorry-“

“What the fuck happened to you?” Keith runs up to him, hands patting his face, his shoulders. “Where were you? I was so worried!”

Keith and Shiro are covered in glitter. Hair slicked back. Clothes wrinkled, from after the show. They look exhausted.

“I… I…”

“We had to do an old routine, dude. How could you ditch us like that?”

“It was a total accident!”

Keith searches his eyes. They flicker down to the white jacket hanging off his shoulders. Keith pulls
back his hands, as if stung, and Lance jolts a little too.

Keith’s eyes go fire hot. The chilly breeze rustles his hair. The streetlamp lights his face, and all goes still. His voice dips low, “Where…where did you get that?”

“I’m so sorry.” Lance repeats. “I lost track of t-time, I got drunk, I’m so sorry-“


“Here?”

“Right here.”

“I got a job offer,” Lance swallows. “Um, he…he could only meet with me today. I thought…I thought I could make it in time-“

“You got drunk at a job interview?” Shiro blinks.

But Keith snarls, “You took a job offer on the reopening?”

“I’m sorry!” Lanceblurts. “He…he offered me double what I make now! I couldn’t refuse an interview.”

“No way…” Shiro stares. “You should’ve told us. I was worried sick about you.”

“I know, I’m so sorry.” Lance repeats, once more. But he smiles, “You…you should’ve seen it. He took me to all these Broadway theaters. He offered me a job at Cirque! Like, I could train to be a trapeze artist!”

Keith grinds his teeth. He looks to the asphalt, then back up, “At Cirque, huh?”

“Yeah!” Lanceexclaims, “Could you imagine? It’d be something I could really be proud of, you know?”

There’s this immediate flicker of hurt that falls across Shiro and Keith’s faces. Realization hits Lance in the gut. He tries to backpedal, but his tongue ties, his throat closes.

“Be…proud of?”

“Because this is just a dirty job, hm?”

“N-No,” Lance shivers, “Z-Zarkon just told me that-“

“Zarkon?!” Keith spits. He takes a step back from Lance, shaking his head, breathing out hard, “I knew it. I knew it.”

Keith shakes. His eyes burn. Shiro stills next to him.

Lance stares, “W…What?”

“I fucking knew it.” Keith spits again.

Shiro starts, “Keith…”

“Woah, what?!!” Lance sputters.

The world spins, blurs. Aches, like drilling a screwdriver in your ear. The words hit hard, harder, hardest.

“It’s one thing to ditch us on opening night,” Keith spits. “It’s another to look at job offers without telling us. It’s *fucked up* to not answer our calls, but to spend the night off partying with Zarkon? Fuck. You.”

Lance frowns, “Dude, I have no idea what you’re talking about.”

“No, no. Don’t mind me.” Keith hisses, “Please, go take your pretty Broadway job, and enjoy your shame free life.”

“Keith!”

He projects his voice, loud and overdramatic in the parking lot, “I sure hope you remember us simpletons! Us dirty little things! Don’t forget us, you hear?!”

He stomps to the back door. Goes back in the club, and slams it shut.

The metal rings around the parking lot.

Lance swallows the hard knot in his throat. Oh god.

Shiro is staring at him. Disappointed. Angry. Lance feels the weight of the world. Feels gravity crushing down.

“Sh..Shiro…”

“Look.” Shiro snaps. “I don’t care about the secrecy. I don’t care about Zarkon. I’m just disappointed in you.”

Lance tries, “I really didn’t mean to show up late-“

“You didn’t *mean* to, but you did.” Shiro crosses his arms. It’s still cold. It’s still miserable. “We worked hard on that routine, Lance. We *needed* you there.”

Lance feels his eyes sting. His spit turns to battery acid, burning his throat, eating through his stomach.

“Shiro-“

He shakes his head, “I know it’s just a job to you, but this club means *everything* to us.” Shiro looks away, and Lance feels his heart sink.

“I’m so-“

“Tonight wasn’t just about you.” Shiro rumbles, “Maybe it’s embarrassing, but we’re *proud* of what we do.”

“I-I know! O-Of course I know…it’s just…”

Shiro holds up a hand, “No, I get it. You’re a stripper dating two other strippers. How *hard* it must be.”
Lance begs, “God, no, Shiro please. Let me explain.”

“I don’t really think you have anything to explain.” Shiro chews his lip, and gestures, “If this isn’t enough for you…” he meets Lance’s eyes, and they’re so full of hurt-


“…then just leave.”

Lance doesn’t respond. He’s shocked cold. Completely speechless.

So Shiro turns around, and goes after Keith.

And Lance is left there.

In Zarkon’s jacket.

Chapter End Notes

edit: omg rip me prince drew me more art,., check it out here
Chapter 14

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Lance goes home. Chucks off the clean, white jacket. Collapses on his bed and cries.

He cries, and cries, and cries. Sobs for hours, into his hands and his pillows. It’s ugly, the choked wails and the pathetic hiccups. Slowly, he climbs into the shower and cries there too.

He didn’t think it was possible to hurt this bad. And to hurt, because it’s all his fault.

"Just leave."

Lance slides down onto the shower floor. Bawls into the crook of his arm, until all he can do is dry heave, and suck in steamy air.

_Inhale, inhale, inhale-_  

His body wracks with each sob. Everything hurts, his head aches, his stomach twists. The tile walls are cold against Lance’s forearms, the water boiling against his back. He’s stripped bare of everything, every fake wall, every pathetic lie. His hiccups are muffled, eyes puffy and swollen – haven’t you ever cried that hard? That it feels like your soul is physically leaving your body. It hurts, it hurts so bad-

_Inhale-

Lance had so much alcohol on an empty stomach; he manages to climb out of the shower, and lurch into the toilet.

And then he cries, just a little bit more.

__________________________

Lance doesn’t feel bad for himself. Not in the slightest.

This was _his_ fault.

Why wasn’t he happy with what he had?

God, Lance just hates himself. Stays in his crummy little apartment, calls into work the next day, and doesn’t move.

_Coward. Coward. Coward._

He can’t see them. He _can’t_. Lance will cry and sob at their feet and beg for forgiveness he doesn’t deserve.

He walls himself up in his room. Comes out to sip water, and goes back in. Lance can’t cry anymore. There’s nothing left in him.
There’s a single text from Hunk, a surprising little u ok?

Lance doesn’t deserve it. Doesn’t respond.

He misses them. Shiro and Keith. His heart hurts, because he loves them so, so much, and he hurt them.

The look in Keith’s eyes. It was so hot, so full of hate. Having that directed his way…it was like looking into the eyes of a bull. Lance feels sick.

The way Keith recoiled at the jacket. The way he spat Zarkon’s name. It makes Lance’s head hurt. He just… doesn’t understand.

Why? Why? Lance deserved everything Shiro said. Deserved to be told off like that – but what did Zarkon do? How does Keith know who Zarkon is?

It doesn’t make any sense. If Lance is gonna’ be an asshole, he wants to know all the reasons why he was an asshole.

There’s no text from Keith. No call from Shiro. Good, right.

The coat sits on his chair.

After an entire day of sitting in the same spot, staring at the peeling wallpaper, Lance finally stands up off the bed.

He looks at himself in the mirror. There's dark circles around his eyes, and his cheeks are sunken just slightly. Christ, his skin is a mess.

Lori would be pitching the biggest fit right now. Calling him every insult under the sun. Hunk would be disappointed. Pidge would call him pathetic.

Lance needs to fix this. He has no fucking idea how, but calling into work on Monday won’t solve a damn thing. Lance brushes his teeth. Takes a proper shower. Decides right there and then, that he needs to find out how much damage he did.

He needs to apologize to Coran and Allura, first.

But it’s Sunday afternoon. The club is closed.

Lance stares at his phone. Coran wouldn’t mind, right? He’s never called his personal number, but Lance needs answers. He needs to apologize, and he needs answers.

He dials the number; paces around his room; listens to the ring. When the voice picks up, Lance feels an overwhelming mixture of relief and anxiety.

“Ello! This is Coran speaking.”

“Coran…it’s Lance.”

“Oh…! Lance? Are you okay?”

“Yeah…I-

“We were quite worried about you. Shiro and Keith wouldn’t tell us what happened.”
“Figured.” Lance sighs, gut churning, “Coran, I fucked up. I owe you and Allura an apology.”

“…Oh…”

“You guys worked so hard to renovate the club…and I missed the reopening because I was offered a b-better job interview.”

God, don’t get choked up now.

Coran is silent on the other line. Eventually he hums, “I see…”

“I feel horrible. I’m so sorry.”

“Well…” Coran’s voice picks up, “I accept your apology! There’s no shame in perusing a different career. Don’t worry too much about it, lad~ we had your shift covered just fine.”

There’s a soft, brief wave of relief. Lance wishes Coran was here – he’d hug him to hell and back.

“The…the reopening went okay?”

“It was still fabulous~ Granted, a little less exiting without you, but we still gained a great rep!”

“That’s a relief…”

“Don’t worry yourself sick, you hear? It was just one night.”

“Yeah, but…I think I fucked up more than that.” Lance rubs a hand down his face. “Keith and Shiro…when I mentioned the man who gave me the interview, they were pissed.”

“Who was it?”

“A C.E.O. named Zarkon? Or Z? Have you heard of him?”

There’s an inhale on Coran’s side. He pauses, before mumbling, “Yes. Yes I have.”

“Who is he?”

“You know…I could tell you, but you should really hear the whole story from Allura.” Coran says. “She’s at the club today, doing paperwork in her office if you’d like to see her.”

Lance stammers, “Y-Yes. I would. Is that okay?”

“I’ll call and tell her you’re on your way.”

“Thanks, Coran.” Lance sighs, “You’re the best.”

“I try!” Coran chirps. “I hope everything works out for you, Lancey.”

“Thank you,” Lance swallows, and tries not to cry.

When Coran hangs up, Lance isn’t sure if he feels better, or worse.
He takes a bus to the street corner, you know, with the Denny’s. He walks the rest of the way there, passing by a sweet couple, huddled against a telephone pole. Lance tugs his green parka close, and puffs air into his scarf. His ripped jeans were a bad decision today, the cold air making his thighs especially cold.

When he reaches the back door, he finds it unlocked. Lance pushes it open with his shoulder, and listens for the hard whoosh of air, and the initial click as it closes behind him. Lance breathes out, and embraces the warm room. He tugs off his scarf with one hand – slowly, he walks through the renovated club, looking at the décor along the way.

They really, really put a lot of work into this. The walls, the lights. The floors, even.

It’s completely silent, which is incredibly eerie. Not one sound, from the studio, or the club.

Lance unzips his jacket, and climbs the stairs to Allura’s office. No orange light. No red wallpaper.

He sees Allura, through the crack of the door, scribbling at paperwork and typing things into her computer. Even on her day off, she works so hard. Her hair is pulled up, a few strands falling around her face; she looks tired.

Lance breathes in. His heartbeat is in his ears; there’s no telling what she’ll say. Will she yell?

He taps his knuckle against the door twice.

Allura looks up at him, stares, and sits up straight. “Lance, you’re here.”

“Hi,” Lance answers solemnly. “Can I come in?”

“Yes, yes, take a seat.”

Lance wobbles into the office, sitting down in the brand new chair. It doesn’t squeak. The light doesn’t flicker, but the room still smells like flowers.

Allura shuffles her paperwork to the side. She rests her hands in her lap, and looks Lance straight in the eye, “So?”

“I’m sorry.” Lance blurts, “I’m really sorry I missed the reopening.”

“Coran told me why.” Allura nods. “Shit happens. You’re not the first one to suddenly disappear on a special performance night.”

“I…I’m not?”

“Nope.” Allura shrugs, “I’m annoyed, yeah, but it’s just business.”

Lance sighs, and rubs his face with his warming hands. “I still feel like shit. I’m sorry.”

“Well, honestly,” Allura leans back, “I’m not the one you should be apologizing to.”

“Huh?”

“You really hurt Shiro and Keith,” Allura states. “They were worried sick…and yesterday they just moped around all night.”

“Christ…” Lance’s heart sinks.
“You wanted something better, right?” Allura asks. “A job less shameful?”

“W-Well…I…” Lance looks away. “I don’t know what I want.”

He’s never felt so lost.

“Shiro, Keith,” she lists, “Pidge, Hunk, Emily, Kev. Lori, Coulter, Nunnelee, Coran-“

“What?”

“They all take this place incredibly seriously. They…” Allura smiles, “…they love this club. As do I.”

Lance doesn’t know what to say. He doesn’t even have an excuse.

“Chasing money isn’t a bad thing, Lance. Believe it or not, money makes the world go round.”

Allura stands up, pushing the chair against the floor. “But…when you bring love into the picture…”

She slowly walks across the room, to her little stack of shelves. Each one holds a different knick-knack, but on the top shelf, sits a vase of flowers. They’re odd – they’re not roses, or tulips. They’re exotic, and full. Red, like the lipstick he’s worn. Red, like Keith’s jacket.

“When you love someone, it’s not just about you anymore.”

Lance inhales. He watches her pick a flower out of the vase, and turn his way. She smiles, voice oddly soft and understanding – it’s not what Lance expected. She’s speaking as a friend, Lance realizes. A true friend.

This is the Allura everyone loves. Lance sees her now. Soft eyes, soft hair.

She looks at the bright red flower in her hand, and asks, “Lance, do you know what a coxcomb is?”

“Uh…” Lance stares. He shifts in the chair, and tries to level his voice. “A flower?”

“It’s a double entendre in a sense.” She glances up to him, “Yes, this is a coxcomb. But do you know what the word means?”

“…What does it mean?”

“Selfish man.”

Oh.
It hits Lance hard. Suddenly, all at once. Like a big fucking train. Like a baseball to the face.

Fuck, he’s been so selfish. She’s right. She’s so, so right-

“There’s nothing wrong with perusing something better.” Allura places the flower back in the vase, and returns to her chair. “But talking it out with your lovers is important.”

Lance hangs his head in his hands, and groans, “Ohh god….Allura….”

Allura gives a huff – an almost laugh, and crosses her arms. “So Zarkon, huh?”

“He…he offered me so much.” Lance doesn’t look up, “I was so blind.”

“I’m sure he offered you the world.”

He did. Everything shiny, everything beautiful. But how could Lance forget? In this life there’s handholding. Walking through the park in October. Sharing hotdogs and giggling as you kiss.

Slowly, Lance clears his throat, gathering his thoughts, peeking through his fingers to the boss that sits before him.

“Allura, who is he?”

“It’s a long story, I’m afraid.”

“I want to know,” Lance drops his hands to his lap. Everything hurts. “Please.”

*How much damage did I do? What have I done?*

“How much damage did I do? What have I done?”

“How much damage did I do? What have I done?”

“Do you really?”

“Yes.”

“Zarkon…” Allura sighs, and rubs her temple. “Zarkon used to work for my father.”

Lance gapes, “Huh?”

“My father was a wonderful man.” She smiles, “He was hardworking. He taught me so much. About shame, and pride. He ran the most *amazing* chain of night clubs – and even as a child, I thought that was incredible.”

Wait wait wait-

“The Paladin was…your father’s?”

“Yes.” Allura nods. “Growing up…he told me that there was no shame in being a sex worker. That this was a job – a job to *entertain*. He showed me that what seems sexual is only dirty if you see it with clouded eyes.” She chews her lip, and smiles once more. “His eyes were so clear….”

Lance swallows, “What happened?”

“Zarkon… was his business partner.” Allura looks up, “And his Black Paladin.”
“Woah, woah, woah!” Lance sputters. “Zarkon was a stripper?”

“Not just any. People came for miles just to see him perform.” She says, “Together, he, Coran, and my father opened up clubs in several cities – their success was immeasurable. Each club was decorated beautifully. There was live music, lines that stretched around the block-“

“What went wrong?” Lance sits up. He can hear it in her tone – in her eyes-

Allura’s face sobers. The room is silent. No music, no bass. She looks down to her desk, and exhales. “He got sick.” She brushes a stray strand of hair behind her ear, “Father passed away, and in his will…he left the clubs to me. I was just nineteen.”

Lance breathes, “Oh.”

“Zarkon was infuriated,” She exclaims. “He thought the Paladin belonged to him…So he left, took all the money he saved, and sought to destroy every…single… thing…he and my father worked so hard to build.”

“Oh my god,” Lance breathes. “What did he do?”

Allura shifts, “He started with the Broadway theaters. Then it was the dance clubs. Then the karaoke bars, and the Cirque shows and the comedy clubs. He just…opened one, after the other. He drove down business so hard that…” Allura swallows. “We had to close every club…this…this is the only one left.”

It feels like, someone is squeezing his heart with a compressor. Like someone is sitting on his shoulders. Like Lance is being punched in the face. No wonder Keith hates him. No wonder Shiro’s eyes glazed over, like fog.

“I’m the worst.” He says aloud. “I’m the fucking worst.”

“You had no idea, Lance.”

“But I could have asked,” Lance whines. “I’m so sorry. Fuck. Fuck, fuck.”

“From the looks of it…Zarkon played you.” Allura sighs. “And me. I think…he was trying to hit us where it would hurt most. And you’re…”

“I’m the gold-digging kid with no fucking conscience,” Lance groans.

It makes sense.

It’s like a kingpin. You pull it, and it all falls. His relationship, the club-

“Hey,” Allura suddenly spits, in that boss voice, and Lance sits up straight in the chair.

“Huh?”

“Do you know why he picked you?” Allura asks. “I certainly do. You are, actually, amazing, Lance. I think…if we traced it all down,” she gestures, “a lot of this is because of you.”

“No…I“

“Don’t sell yourself short.” Allura points. “You are incredible. And you fucked up, like people do. Remember when you fell on your first performance?”
“…Yes?”

“And I forgave you?”

“Yes.”

“Go,” Allura shoos him with her hand. “Go talk to them now.”

“N-Now?” Lance sputters. “There’s…there’s no way they want to see me now.”

“Don’t call them, don’t text them.” Allura commands. “Go to their house, and apologize.”

His palms sweat. His heart beats. Allura is staring through him – Lance can’t even summon up any fake confidence. He’s got nothing, nothing-

“What if they don’t forgive me?”

“What if they don’t forgive me?”

“Do you think they love you?”

The question rings through Lance, like putting your head inside a bell tower. Do they? Did they? They probably don’t anymore-

Lance can’t answer, but Allura smiles.

“They’ll forgive you. Here-” she stands back up, and plucks that coxcomb from the vase. “Take this.”

“What if they don’t forgive me?”

“What if they don’t forgive me?”

“Are you sure?”

“Yes, god. I’m tired of seeing your pitiful face. I want cocky Lance back.”

Lance laughs – and Allura smiles. He takes the coxcomb; it’s heavy, and big. But he takes it, hugs her goodbye, and runs out the door.

In the time it takes to call an Uber, and watch the road whiz by, Lance is hit by realization strong enough to shake his core.

It doesn’t matter. The morality, the practicality.

Keith and Shiro matter. The club matters. Hunk and Pidge, Coran and Allura – they are what’s important.

Words from Hunk are suddenly prominent in his mind; they’re loud and clear, just as the day Lance heard them.

“The Paladin has a sense of family, dude.”

“You don’t get it yet. You will.”

He gets it. Right now, he gets it.

Lance feels his chest swell – bites his tongue and breathes in – because who cares?

Who cares if he’s dating two guys? Who cares if he strips?

This is who he is, right? This is what Lance loves doing.
And Lance loves them. Shiro and Keith. So, so so much – so much, that just the idea that he’s hurt them – it makes him sick. Makes him ache to fix it all.

So his mom might not be happy. So he might get an odd look from his barber.

Lance is Lance?! He’s walked to school in just his underwear. He used to wear dresses to class and pass out drunk at parties. He’d do keg-stands and jump off balconies and drive golf-carts into pools.

And what Allura said- she’s so right. This isn’t just about him. This isn’t just about the money.

A better life than this?

What could be better? Than being loved? And accepted? Of going to work with your friends and wearing makeup and cute clothes?

What’s there to be ashamed of?

God, what an idiot.

Zarkon played him. Through Sendak and his subtle words. Through his Broadway stages and alcohol and promises of something more.

Lance doesn’t want more. He wants Shiro. He wants Keith.

He wants to hold their hands, and snuggle into their sides. He wants to shoulder their burdens – he wants to carry them on bad days and make them smile when they’re sad. He wants to cook them pasta, and laugh when they’re drunk and he wants to be there.

The Uber driver is going soo slow. Lance thrums his fingers against his thigh, and impatiently looks out the window.

The coxcomb stays between his fingers. Held tight, like a reminder.

They might not be home.

But Lance will sit at their doorstep and wait.

Chapter End Notes

*jazz hands*

thank you so much for all the comments last chapter;; it was amazing to see all the theories you guys came up with ^^

it’s fun to have all these things i planned out months ago finally happen~
Chapter 15

Chapter Notes

heya– just a general rule, lets play nice, okay? i appreciate all of you! thanks for reading my story

i just wanna try and keep this a positive place, yeah? this plotline was something i wrote for my own poly ass when i was going through some shit

thank you!!!!

You know that feeling, before presenting in front of the class?

Where like, you almost want to throw up? But like, reverse throw up. Like, swallow oil and hope it kills you.

Or maybe like, your stomach grew a hive of bees, and now they’re like Freedom! For The Queen! And they’re trying to tear themselves out of your insides.

Yeah, it kinda’ feels like that.

Lance huffs into his palm, and exhales, watching his breath puff like a dragon. Their truck is in the driveway. Shiro and Keith are home.

The door is newly painted, a nice fresh white. He’s seen this door drunk. He’s seen it after good nights and kinda’ okay nights. He’s watched Keith fumble with the lock – he’s been carried through it by Shiro.

Lance summons the courage to knock. He raps twice, and waits. There’s no initial response, so Lance knocks harder. Breathe in, breathe out.

He doesn’t know what he’s gonna’ say, but, Lance can’t give up now.

Lance knocks again -he stops when he hears a “I’m coming! Hold on!”

He knows that voice so well.

Lance blurts, “Keith?”

There’s the sound of a hand grabbing the doorknob. A muted, metal sound. Then a pause.

“…Lance?”

“Keith, I need to talk to you guys.”

There’s a pause, before Keith chokes, “Go away!”

Ah, god. Keith’s voice sounds gravelly – not like himself. It makes Lance’s heart sink to his knees, and his breath catch by his tongue.
“Keith.” Lance raps again, “Please. I want to apologize.”

There’s talking on the other side of the door – a bit of arguing.

Keith, just let him in.

Are you fucking serious? After all that?

We can at least hear out his apology.

I don’t want to hear shit!

“She’s,” Lance breathes. “I’ll do it through the door, I fucking swear. I’ll do it right here.”

“Go. Away.”

His heart squeezes. His mind races with hot, hard thoughts of they hate you, they hate you-

But Lance has to try.

He exhales shakily, rests his forehead against the door, and brushes his knuckle along the frame.

“I didn’t mean what I said…about…about pride.”

“Stop!”

“Keith, open the door-

“No, Lance! Leave!”

“I didn’t realize how much the Paladin meant to me,” Lance grits, through the sting in his eyes. “I was so… I was afraid that I’d never be able to be proud of my job. I… I was scared I’d never be able to tell anyone about what we do. I was scared that I couldn’t tell anyone about both of you.”

The other side of the door goes silent. Lance rolls around the words in his mouth, but nothing seems to come out right.

"Theres nothing bad about... th- theres nothing shameful..."

His mind is so panicky. So shaken. His mouth just sings for him-

‘But Shawty I don’t…. mind.’

‘If you dance on a pole-’

‘-as long as you coming home-‘

There’s a choked noise on the other side of the doorway. Some more muffled talking, before the door suddenly unlocks, and Lance nearly falls.

He sturdies himself, panting in the cold, hands frozen at his sides. He looks up and sees Keith, eyes hot, mouth pressed into a firm line; Shiro is spouting an almost smile behind him.

“I hate you.” Keith grits.

“I’m sorry.”
“Get in here before you die,” Keith growls, and stomps off back towards their living room.

Lance exhales, and steps inside, closing the door behind him. It’s much, much warmer in here. Shiro is standing there, eyeing him, but he offers a half smile. “Hey.”

“Hi…” Lance chews. “Um…I…”

“I want to hear what you have to say.” Shiro stares, “But you look half-dead. How long were you out there?”

“L-Like, twenty minutes,” Lance half laughs. “T-Trying to work up the courage, aha.”

Shiro’s eyes soften. He nods, and turns on his heel, “I’m going to get you some coffee.”

“Don’t.” Lance and Keith say together.

Shiro shoots both of them a glare; Lance nods quickly, and silently sits down in the love seat.

Keith isn’t looking at him. He’s burning holes into the carpet, popping his knuckles and bouncing his leg. Lance toes off his shoes, and folds his feet beneath him.

When Shiro comes back with a warm cup of coffee, Lance’s gut twists, and his heart hurts. Even while mad, Shiro is so, so kind. Such a beautiful human being. Lance is unworthy of him – but he’s a coxcomb. A selfish man, who want’s Shiro. Wants them both so, so badly.

“Thank you.”

“You’re welcome,” Shiro sits beside Keith.

“So um…”

“You get two minutes,” Keith huffs. “Then I’m kicking you out.”


“Great.”

“I had no idea about Zarkon. Allura…she told me everything. And it was such a dick move of me to see him without telling you guys, especially since he's done so much to run you guys out of business.”

“Yep.”

Lance shifts, “And I should’ve asked your opinion…because we’re dating, and…and your opinion matters to me. I should’ve told you guys how I felt, and I should’ve been more open.”

“…About what?” Shiro offers.

“That…that I felt…bad. About being a stripper.” Lance breathes. He runs a hand across the mug, and tries, “I was so confused. There was this guy named Sendak who just…I gave him a dance and he gave me Zarkon’s business card promising me something better. He got in my head!” Lance gestures, “I just…I had this whole idea that maybe this wasn’t right. Then my mom started calling me and I was like oh god, I can never tell her about what I do and-“

“I had no idea.” Shiro blinks.
Keith crosses his arms, “Yeah. Same.”

“We would’ve done everything we could to help, even if you wanted a different career.”

“I should’ve told you.” Lance shifts, “About everything. And I’m sorry.”

Shiro stares, “Do you still feel that way?”

Lance sits, staring at the swells of his coffee. He sets the mug on the coffee-table.

“No.” Lance shakes his head, and slowly…slowly smiles. “No, I…” He’s grinning now- “I love it. I love being up there, and I love making people smile. I love dancing and I love the clothes and I love the people-” Lance pauses. He meets their eyes, and nods, “It’s a real family. I never saw that before.”

Keith and Shiro share a look. They speak in that secret language – the one they use with just their eyes. Their faces are softer, bodies more relaxed. It’s probably a good sign.

“I love what I do,” Lance continues. “I love both of you.”

They simultaneously inhale.

“Lance-“

He smiles, through the sting in his throat. Through the burn behind his eyes. “I don’t want to lose that.” Lance rubs his left eye, “Please. I don’t…”


Lance laughs, and it sounds horrible. He coughs, and rubs his eyes again. “Sorry.”


“Same.” Keith sniffs, angrily rubbing his eyes. His voice waivers, “But I don’t…I don’t want you to turn down a better offer for us. I don’t want to hold you back. E-Even if…even if it’s Zarkon.”

“An offer from Zarkon is not better.” Lance shakes his head. “He played me. He used me to attack the club.”

“Still…we definitely…overreacted,” Shiro looks to his hand. That’s his nervous habit, Lance has noticed. He runs his human fingers along every nook and crevice of his mechanical hand.

“You had every right to chew me out.” Lance assures him. “I was a huge asshole. You guys worked really hard on that routine and…I missed it, and-“

“Enough.” Keith grinds, “I don’t want to talk about it anymore. It’s done with.”

“Are…are my two minutes up?”

“Yeah,” Keith breathes. “Come here.”

Lance’s eyes water. Slowly, he lifts up from the chair. He waddles over to the couch, where Keith grips his wrist, and pulls him down between them.

“Ah-“
“I don’t like being mad at you.”

“I’m sorry.”

“Stop. It wasn’t just your fault.”

Lance laughs, a little wetly, “I don’t deserve you guys.”

“But wait,” Shiro shifts closer, as Keith and Lance hug stupidly close and snuggly. “I’m still confused about something.”

Lance pops back, “Hm?”

“Why don’t you want to live with us?” Shiro stares. “We…we really wanted you to. We…we still do.”

“Oh…” Lance freezes. Keith tightens his hand around his hip. Lance swallows, “I…”

He feels the weight of their eyes. The weight of the world. Lance is already so exhausted; he feels sick, from the rollercoaster ride of emotions.

“N-Not to pressure you or anything…I was just…wondering…”

“No! No, I…I wasn’t really sure if I belonged.” Lance offers a fakeass smile, “I think I’ve…been in love with you guys for a long time. Actually, I know I have. Really I just…wasn’t sure if I-“

“Fuck, dude!” Keith reaches up, and flicks his finger against Lance’s temple.

“Ow!”

“What else are you hiding up there, hm?” Keith hisses. “Seriously.”

“N-Nothing!”

“Good! Because I thought we made this clear!”

“What clear?”

“Communication, Lance.” Shiro’s fingers curl down around his wrist. Prod his hand free. Lace their fingers together, one by one. “You tell us how you feel.”

“Oh…yeah.”

"I mean... we haven't been the best about that either."

Keith and Shiro share a look.

"But we're going to change."

“You’re not some…some addition,” Keith says, firm and unwavering. “We want you here.”

“Even after everything..?” Lance laughs.

“Especially.”

“God, not talking to you for three days was killer,” Shiro smiles, and Lance – Lance has no more words. He can’t say anything – can’t describe how he feels.
How about how you feel? You there? Have you ever fucked up? Ever been forgiven? You know how it feels. I don’t have to tell you.

But the weight on Lance’s shoulders – the weight of his own sickly doubt – it’s gone.

There’s a hand in his hair, a hand at his hip. He noses into a shoulder, and sucks in big hard breaths. And there’s nothing else to say. They stay there, on that couch. There’s no birds to hear. No crickets. Just the cold weather outside, and the occasional hum of the dishwasher.

“Is this makeup sex?” Lance asks, kinda’ raspy and a little pathetic against the raw silence of the bedroom.


Lance makes a noise of acknowledgement, and slowly rocks his hips up to grind against his thigh.

They’re without clothes. Kinda’ without barriers, really. To call it an emotional roller-coaster is an understatement – to call it an emotional cliffdive is just half the story. But they shuffled into the bedroom, rolled onto the bed and pressed together like a sad pack of puppies.

“I just feel…” Keith exhales, mid thought. His breath his wet, and hot against Lance’s ear. Puffy, and familiar. Lance can faintly recognize Shiro curled up on his opposite side, idly running his fingers up and down Lance’s calf.

“Hm?”


“I’m s-“

“The bickering is fun,” Keith breathes. “But I hate fighting you.”

Lance rolls his tongue around – presses against his teeth, then his cheek nervously. He’s tired too – but there’s something really alluring and safe about Keith’s weight on his chest, and Shiro’s lazy fingers running down to his ankle and back up. There’s no pattern, no agenda, no set path – just a soft graze against his calf, a gentle squeeze around his knee.

Lance squirms, “I-“

Shiro makes a shushing noise. No more talking – that’s a good idea, for now.

Keith drives his thigh between Lance’s legs; ah, Lance rolls up and keens, super soft through half lidded eyes.

When Keith kisses him it’s slow. And romantic. And sweet. And loving.

It doesn’t really go anywhere. It’s got nowhere to go, really. It’s just soft moving hands and, sometimes, soft moving words. A lot of things click into place- Lance would joke about feeling like the X files intro, but it’s really no joke. He gets it, really, he gets it. Lance is one lucky son of a bitch – but he’s happy.
There’s no easy road ahead. There’s no poly handbook. Fortune tellers are kind of a scam. Horoscopes are pretty much BS, no matter how much Shiro reads into them.

Lance can only believe what’s in front of his eyes. What’s real. What makes the world go round and round-

To Lance, it’s this. Is this everything? No, not really. There’s other things that nag him – but at least here, beneath Keith, against Shiro, he can really feel happy. Lance can breathe, and sometimes, that’s more than enough.

When Lance comes back to work, Keith’s hand in his, there’s this big, unanimous sigh of relief from the studio. It’s comforting, almost, to know they were rooting for their odd little relationship.

It makes Lance smile, and work even harder.

New studio, new floors. New poles, a new Lance.

“Hey,” Lori smiles, when she sees him. “Good to see ya’.”

“Same,” Lance grins. He looks around the renovated backstage; fuck, it’s beautiful. The vanities, the floor. They have new makeup stations – room for more artists, and more dancers.

“Everything okay?”

“It’s getting there.” Lance smiles, “I think that’s the best part.”

Lori….Lori gives him a look he doesn’t understand. Something of content, and relief. Something that says yes, yes, you finally get it.

“I’m putting you in black tonight.”

“Ooh, big eyeliner?”

“You betcha’.” She spins the chair.

“Racoon eyes?”

“Mhm, it’s gonna’ take a while.” Lori hums. “Suficiente tiempo para deciерte quien se esta acostando con quien.”

"Ay, Muñeca,” Lance purrs. "Deme todos los detalles."

Things are getting there. That’s the best part.
“Good to have you back,” Hunk says, in an exhale.

“Whatya’ mean?” Lance blinks, hand still outstretched and waiting.

Hunk passes the bowl, “Nuthin’. Just, the past few months, you’ve been walking around with that ugly fake-smile.”

“Ugly?” Lance plays with the lighter, glass pipe glinting from the streetlamp across the road. “Excuse you, I’m cute even when I’m lying.”

“Not really.” Hunk settles back, more relaxed than usual, “I didn’t wanna’ pry though, ‘cause I figured you’d tell me if it was bad enough.”

Lance’s finger slips off the lighter, and it sparks once more. Lance looks up, then back down, “Yeah. You heard what happened?” This time he lights it, the car smelling stronger than it did before.

Hunk rests his head in his hand, elbow against the windowsill, “Not really. Pidge said it was a clusterfuck of ‘human emotions’. Whatever that means.”

Lance laughs, and sets down the pipe between them, “They’re not wrong.”

Hunk is smiling, so Lance smiles back.

Work is busy. Lance is tired. His apartment is full of moving boxes, and his fridge is empty – so Shiro drags him home after work, and tugs him in his lap. The T.V. clicks on, and Keith orders pizza for dinner.

Lance stays snuggled against Shiro’s chest, hands tracing up the smooth metal of his arm, swirling around the scar, and back down. He memorizes every divot, every bolt, every lip of smooth silicone. It’s cool, but not cold. Comforting, because it’s so distinctly Shiro.

There’s a nice silence, until Lance breaks it.

“How often do you talk to your mom?”

Shiro blinks, and shifts Lance in his lap. “Once or twice a month.”

“And she knows?”

“About you? Or the job?”

“Both.”

“Both, then.” Shiro rolls his hand up and down Lance’s thigh. It’s not sexual, just nice. “She knows both.”
Lance turns, to look him in the eye. “How do I be brave, Shiro?”

Shiro smiles, and breathes in, rolling around the words in his mouth, before saying, “You know, she was incredibly against all of this.”

“What’d she do?”

“Yell a little.” Shiro smiles, “Didn’t talk to me for a day or two.”

“Then?”

“Then nothing,” Shiro shrugs. “She loves me anyways.”

“Right. What if that doesn’t happen?”

Shiro breathes in, big, round chest swelling, before he pushes out air. He wraps an arm around Lance’s shoulders and squeezes, comforting in a way only Shiro can be. Everything smells like him.

“That’s a tough one,” Shiro mumbles. “Ideally, parents give you a lot. Sacrifice a lot for you. They’ll usually love you in the end.” Shiro shrugs, “But then there’s the cases where...that just doesn’t happen. I wish life was more like a fairytale.”

“I think...you should do whatever will make you happiest in the end,” Shiro looks him in the eye. “Your life belongs to you after all.”

“Yeah,” Lance shifts. “I just...I have brothers and sisters. Cousins, Shiro. So many people that...I can never show to you.”

“Are you sure about that?”

“I just don’t see them accepting all this,” Lance mutters.

“You know...” Shiro shifts a little closer, “…parents don’t have kids, thinking that every single one will be the same.”

Lance swallows, “Y...Yeah.”

“I’m behind you, no matter what you do.”

Lance giggles, and reaches up to smooch his cheek, “Thanks.”

“Yes, same,” Keith calls, sleepily from the bathroom, and Lance laughs.

---

“Hello?”

The old lady looks up over her glasses. Long hair, tired eyes.
“Yes? Can I help you?”

Yeah. There’s something Lance has to make right.

Lance shifts nervously on his feet, Vans squeaking a little against the floor. It’s marble; literally, the least homely furnishing there is.

He can see Keith and Shiro sitting on the petty grey couch beneath the chandelier. They’re talking to each other, but occasionally glance his way.

Lance tightens his grip on the jacket. The white, soft fabric bends beneath his fingers.

He nods, “Hi, my name is Lance McClain. Um, I know Mr. Z isn’t in right now, but I’d like to return this to him.” He lifts up the coat, and the receptionist’s eyes lighten.

“Oh! Mr. McClain. Mr. Zarkon has been expecting a call from you, yes?”

“Yeah. I’d like to talk to him as soon as he’s back in town.”

The receptionist’s eyebrows push together, “Oh? But he’s here now. You’re welcome to go up and see him, I’ll page ahead."

Lance frowns.

Oh, really now?

Zarkon is more of a bastard than Lance thought.

It was more than an attempt to steal Lance away. He planned it all, didn’t he? Planned the meeting on the day of the reopening. Planned Lance missing his performance. Planned it all.

Did he know about the coat? Did he know Keith would see it and snarl?

Lance grinds his teeth, and nods politely, “Yes. Thank you.”

Keith and Shiro are watching expectantly – he gestures to the elevator, and Shiro mouths, be safe.

The elevator is silent, and cold. Lance holds the jacket over his arm, trying his best to calm the anger boiling in his chest. He chews on his cheek. Watches the numbers light up.

Ding!

Lance steps out – he remembers the way. A left, then a right. Past the glass, and up to the beautiful, tall office door.

He brushes his knuckles against the wood. It’s probably something pretentious, like fuckin’, ebony or some shit. Lance sighs and knocks once. It opens immediately.

And there he is; tall, in all his evil beauty, eyes bright and purple, mouth pulled into a smile. His hair is slicked back, white suit just as clean and proper as the last time Lance saw him wear it.

Zarkon nods, “Lance, I didn’t know you were coming by today.”

“Yeah, I had the afternoon off.” Lance grits.

“Come in,” Zarkon smiles.
Lance steps through the doorway; the room is clean, and silent. The couch is there. The bar is untouched. It feels tense.

“It’s funny seeing you…” Lance begins, “…since you were supposed to fly out to Dubai on Sunday.”

“Oh, right!” Zarkon smiles, “My flight was cancelled, unfortunately. Something about a mechanical error in my private jet.”

“Right.” Lance eyes him. He breathes in, and fakes a smile, “Well, I just wanted to return this!” He lifts the coat.

“Oh, no no.” Zarkon nods, “Keep it. I have many more.”

“I don’t feel right about it.” Lance sets the jacket down on the couch, “Considering that…I’m turning down your offer.”

Zarkon inhales, “What?”

“I can’t leave the Paladin.” Lance smiles, “That’s my home.”

“But…” Zarkon’s voice lowers, “I offered you anything. Anything you wanted.”

“And I appreciate that,” Lance nods. “But I just can’t leave my family. I love what I do.” He smiles, and turns back to the door, “Thank you, Mr. Z-“

A hand, strong, and bruising, grips around his wrist, and pulls. Lance gasps, turning back around to meet his eyes. They’re scary, bright, and full of hot fire. But they’re nothing like Keith’s eyes. Nothing like that fire.

His voice rumbles, raspy and threatening, tugging Lance close, holding him against his will.

“That is not your family.” He leans in, breath hot. “They are traitors.”

Zarkon takes a step forwards- Lance flinches, until his back hits a wall. Zarkon’s eyes are glowing. His fingers are long, and hold a calloused strength that Lance wasn’t prepared for.

It hurts-

Lance inhales, tugging and wriggling, trying to yank out of his grasp.

It hurts, it hurts-

“Let go!”

Zarkon snarls, towering over him, “You are making a huge mistake.”

“No,” Lance hisses, “-you’re making a mistake.” He wretches, “If you leave even a single mark on me, my boyfriends are gonna’ march up here and kick your fuckin’ ass. Bodyguards be damned.”

Zarkon growls, pretty face twisted into something full of hate.

He whips his hands away, startling Lance into stepping towards the door. Zarkon breathes in. Smooths down the lines of his suit.

He looks Lance in the eye, and replies, voice cold as ice, “You do realize that if you are not with me,
you are against me.”

“Yeah.” Lance rubs his wrist and says, “But I won’t be alone.”

Zarkon’s eyes widen. Lance takes the opportunity to nod his goodbye, and turn on his heel. Lance walks away, hands by his sides, shoes silently padding against the floor.

Zarkon calls after him.

“The Paladin will fall.”

Lance grins, turning around to look him in the eye as he walks backwards.

He throws his arms out wide,

“Then I’ll go down with it.”

Lance turns, and disappears down the hall.
Alright, okay. So, this is it. The routine.

The one that Lance missed, all the way back in January.

The one that was planned for the reopening.

(The reopening that was still *so* successful, it gained enough sponsors to really, honest to god, *save* the Paladin.)

Henceforth and whatsonot, Lance begged, *begged* to let him do the routine. Like, for realsies. For closure.

And let’s be honest, who can resist Lance’s puppy dog face? Not Keith, not Shiro, and certainly not Allura.

So they’re here, on stage. The lights are wild, the renovated club filled to the brim with people; Lance keeps his hands in his pockets, and grins. It smells like alcohol and heat, like a room full of people, but it’s familiar, and it feels like home.

Firm, pressed seams. Slicked back hair. Suit ties, and eyeliner.

“*Lookit’ that,*” The DJ hollers, above the music, “*It’s your cute little Paladin trio.*”

The audience is full, drinks sloshing, hands up. People yell – a girl tries to get his attention up front.

The three of them roll their hands up their chests; slowly, they reach for the ties.

“*Red and blue makes purple, don’nit?*”

Lance laughs – and the DJ giggles into the mic, before really turning up the music. He can see Keith out of the corner of his eye, running a hand through his gelled hair, back meeting the pole, to dance and thrust.

Then Shiro is just – gah. Hot as always, but the *suit* goddammit, it fits him so well. His broad shoulders really test the stitching, and his legs fill out the pants *sooo good*-

But Lance knows what’s underneath.

They’re perfectly in sync, just as they practiced oh-so long ago. They move together, chucking the ties, popping open the buttons to their shirts, one by one.

Lance flirts with the boys up front, wiggles his eyebrows, sticks out his tongue. Breaks away from their synchronized dance to point at one innocent lookin’ one, and grin.

There’s no purple eyes in this audience. No weird businessmen with cards.

As long as Lance knows, Zarkon has been eerily quiet. The club is more popular than it’s ever been – they’re expanding at speeds too fast to comprehend.
Lance is still caught up in doing his own thing – flirting with the guy up front, creeping his fingers around his neck and dragging his nails down the seams of his shirt.

Lance blinks, and thinks *oh yeah, shit, the routine-*

He looks to Keith and Shiro, expecting some kind of glare, but the look in their eyes is unanimous. Hot, and glazed. Like they’re undressing him with their eyes – and it makes Lance nearly choke. It’s filthy, really, and Lance won’t get used to it, like, ever. Would you? Fuck no.

He sputters back into the choreography, a little flushed, feeling warm under their eyes.

The shirts go next, and the noise from the audience is enough to make *Shiro* crack a smile.

Bras. Each in their own color, each in a cute variety of style.

They grip the poles behind them - even Shrio – and roll around it, kicking out before grinding against it, once, twice, slutty as fuck.

The money that falls, the people that laugh and scream; Lance *feeds* off of it. Lives, and grows, puffs out his chest and looks to his lovers, who dance so beautifully.

The belts, the belts, oh how the belts fall, one by one.

The pants, the pants, they’re next too. Zipped slow, slow. They roll the slacks off their hips – ahaha yes! The audience is going insane.

Because there’s garter-belts, bright and shiny beneath the suit pants.

And in one swoop, the rip-away slacks fall to the floor, the three of them left only in pinup-thigh-highs and lacy underwear which really, leaves nothing to the imagination.

Lance is laughing; it feels like…like a weight has lifted off his chest. Like he has *closure.*

Because he loves this. He *looooves this.* He loves swirling around the pole. Kicking high in to a split. Falling to the floor and grinding against it until there’s no *floor left,* just money, and more money.

There’s a hand at the back of his hair.

Lance leans into it, letting Keith shove him up against the pole, and stick his tongue past his own. Lance openly moans against it, and the crowd reaction is *insane.*

Hands brace beneath his thighs – Lance kisses him, as Keith’s hoists him up, spreading him wide and lewd. Their kisses are sloppy, more spit than tongue, but it’s for show, right? Lance peeks open an eye, and openly moans around the music; Shiro is playing with the garter belt, dipping his fingers around the lace of the underwear, rolling his hips in a way that still, Lance thinks should be outlawed.

They practiced this. They practiced, and practiced, but it never felt real? Back then they wore sweatpants – but now? Now Keith’s hair is sticking to his forehead. Now Shiro is in *thigh highs.* It’s just, *muah,* magnificent.

They dance up on that stage. They give it their all.

It’s good. Good shit, real fuckin’ good.
Lance waddles down the hallway – he’s like, ninety percent sure someone shoved a hundred-dollar bill between his ass cheeks. Keith reaches up and tugs on the elastic of the panties, pulling back and snapping it to his ass.

“Ow!!”

“Is there cash in there?” Keith jogs a little to catch up with him, “Attractive.”

“It’s mine! Don’t touch!” Lance covers his ass with his hands.

“Oh please, I don’t want your ass cash.”

“I do,” Shiro says, probably without thinking. Keith sighs, and Lance almost pukes from laughing so hard.

“What’s goin’ on?” Coran peeps into the hallway, “Everything alright boys?”

Shiro rubs a hand across his red face, “Fine, Coran. Thank you.”

“Hahaha, yeah, thanks man,” Lance giggles.

“You boys did fabulous,” Coran gives them a thumbs up, and a big toothy smile. “Go rest! You deserve it!”


“It’s a shame we couldn’t keep those ties.” Lance sighs, following Keith. “That purple tie looked sooo good on Shiro.”

“I can just buy a purple tie.”

“Then I want that one.” Lance gestures. “And then I want you to tie me up with it.”

Haha. Tie.

“Ahh!” Lori covers her ears. “Don’t come in here and do that to me.”

Coran pats Shiro on the shoulder, and disappears down the hallway.

But Lance isn’t really paying attention – he’s more interested in teasing Lori, grinning, still in that pin-up underwear,

“Ah, si. Sabes que el come culo como un Campeón.”

“Stop!”

“Sabes que el puede levantar a Keith y yo contra una pared al mismo tiempo?”

“Lance!” Lori grabs a water bottle off the table and chucks it, “You hoe!”

The water bottle bounces off the couch, and Keith dodges out of its path.

“Y despues el-“
Shiro wraps a hand around his mouth, now in sweatpants, but still in that purple bra-

“I don’t know what you’re saying,” Shiro laughs, “but I’m stopping it here.”


“It’s fine.”

“I’m just happy.” Lance wiggles, finally reaching around to dig out the cash stashed in his stockings.

“We finally got to do that routine.”

Keith pauses, shirt half on, but he meets Shiro’s eye and grins.

“We’ll talk about it when we get home.”

"Christ," Lori covers her face.

Shiro gives Lance a final swat on the ass, and Lance clicks his tongue with a wink.

They ‘talk’ about it later, for sure, for sure.

"Lance, get your gorilla legs off me."

"Ahaha fuck you dude, my legs are soft as fuck."

"Can we stop talking about Lance? For once?" Pidge tries, while Lance extends his leg as far as he can, trying to rub his bare ankle against Hunk's.

Hunk kicks his leg away, and Lance drunkenly laughs, here, with his friends.

Nothing feels more like home.

Lance is squished against Keith’s side, wrapped up in his arms, watching as the others click their glasses against the table, and down the shots.

They’re all here, but it’s not at the club. There’s no loud music, no glitter, no high heels.

They’re just at Allura’s place, a fine house, big enough to fit them. Well, it’s decorated like his abuelita’s old one story townhouse, but Allura is an old lady at heart – Lance can’t really blame her. Maybe she’ll spill the secret – you know, The Secret, of where all those grandmas get the strawberry candies.

Pidge refuses to let anyone else pour drinks, like the little control freak they are – Hunk is in Shay's lap, which is just, a whole new level of adorable.

“Can I?” Lance purrs, drawing out the vowel and pawing towards the Vodka.
“Nooo,” Shiro matches his tone, and tugs the bottle away. “You’ve had enough.”

“No fairrrrr,” Lance pouts, and sticks his nose back in Keith’s toasty shoulder. “You’re the worst dad ever.”

“Wouldn’t that make me a good dad?”

Lance wiggles his eyebrows, and Shiro reaches across Keith to push Lance’s face away with his palm.

“I hate this,” Pidge jokes. “I hate both of you.”


Pidge rolls their eyes, and downs a full goddamn shot, “You’re such a lightweight.”

“Well, yhur an alien.”

“Play nice,” Allura teases, relaxed back into her couch.

Keith is drunk, but has gone silent. He’s zoned out, probably, because he’s drawing absent circles on Lance’s hip. Lance rests his temple against his shoulder and sighs; it’s really, really homey. The way Allura and Coran laugh. How Shay tells jokes and Shiro tells horror stories of bad lap dances and recognizing patrons on the street-

Lance is too buzzed to really pay attention. Instead he’s just, happy with the warm feeling in his stomach. Happy with the dull nails that rub up and down his side. Happy to just, bask in Shiro’s voice whenever he talks.

Pidge says something that makes Hunk laugh, and Allura giggles so hard she snorts.

Lance could go on and on – spew sappy shit, paragraphs and paragraphs for ya’ll to read through. Long story short, tl;dr, things finally feel right.

“So…” Allura smiles, “…there was actually a reason I invited you all over.”

“Man,” Hunk sighs, ‘I really hoped this wasn’t a business meeting.’

“Ah…well…” Allura shifts, “…it’s just…a little bit of business.”

Lance meets Shiro’s eyes. They’re that deep grey color, the kind of shade you could swim in, probably. He gives that smile – the half one, where one dimple pops up on his cheek, and his eyes sparkle.

And Lance feels it; the hot wave that washes down his back. The gross, ew, disgusting, amount of affection – it’s suffocating.

Allura is talking, talking, talking. Something important, probably. Lance zones out.

“Mhmh.”


"What?"

“Wake up, wake up! I made breakfast~”

“Yhur in my house,” Keith muffles, rolling over, obviously half asleep.


“Lance, we worked so late last night.” Keith rubs his eyes, “Why are you doing this to me.”

“Uh, because I love you? And I wanted to feed you?”

“He has an ulterior motive,” Shiro mumbles, from the other side of the bed. “Don’t trust him.”

Lance scoffs, and places his hands on his hips, “This house! No trust!”

“Did you break something?”

“Of course not!”

“Set something on fire?”

“No!!!!”

“What ya’ forget?”

“N-Nothing!”

“Ah,” Shiro peeps open an eye. He lifts up the covers, “What was it?”

“Err….” Lance trails off, and looks away, “Um….”

“Hm?”

“I forgot to tell you that uh…” Lance grins, “…my mom is coming by today.”

“Huh.” Shiro blinks.

Keith sighs, sleepily shoving his face in the pillows, “I forgive you. Come back to bed.”

“But don’t you remember the disaster that was last time?”

“She scrubbed our entire kitchen spotless? That was hardly a disaster.”

“She lectured you on safe sex for an hour.”

“That…” Shiro trails off, “…was uh…”

“We’ll deal with it later,” Keith’s arm shoots out, and snatches onto Lance’s wrist like that goddamn chestburster from Alien.

“Ah!”
Keith rolls, with that weird strength of his, and pulls Lance into the body pile.

“Sleep!”

“But my mom-“

“Sleep!”

“I can’t just-“

“Sleeeeeeep!!!”

Shiro is the first to start giggling. Lance looks up from his sprawled position above Keith; Shiro reaches out, and gently grips him by the bicep. Through soft nudging, he pulls Lance off of Keith, and against his own chest. Shiro smiles, pressing a sloppy kiss against Lance’s forehead. Ah, it’s so cute it burns.

“We’ll handle it.”

“But my fooooood-“

Shiro rubs his nose against his neck, before kissing his ear and flopping back down into the bed, Lance pulled snugly on top.

Keith has already fallen back sleep – Lance can hear it in the deep, familiar breaths. Damn, he’s still fucking cute, with his mouth half open and his hair sprawled everywhere.

Shiro’s arms slip down his sides. They circle his thighs, roll back up, smooth around his back and wash rinse repeat. The tension in Lance just kind of…drains.

“Love you,” Lance half mumbles, into his chest. “Sorry.”

“I love you.” Shiro yawns. He pats Lance’s head, like a dog, pap pap, before closing his eyes, and breathing in the cool morning air.

Lance is lucky. Lucky, lucky, lucky.

Yeah, the breakfast gets cold. Yeah, mom comes in with all the siblings. Yeah, it’s a trainwreck.

But he’s theirs, and they’re his, and that’s all there is to it.

Whatever weird problem lands on their doorstep; they’ll handle it together. That’s the best part – the best part of all their fights, their arguments – they’re still a team. Still a group of people that love and support each other.

Ah, but for now, Lance falls back asleep, cheek against Shiro’s chest, lolled by his steady breathing.

Lance exhales, sweat dripping down his forehead, tanktop hanging off his body like an old greek toga. He slouches, panting, eyes narrowed.

“Allura, I’m not an acrobat.”
“Don’t give me that,” she points. “I’ve seen you put your legs behind your head. You can do a complicated invert.”

Lance huffs, “Yeah, maybe. Did you know that I can almost suck my own-“

“Oh my god, don’t.” Allura holds up a hand, “Just do the routine.”

“How’s it goin’?” Coran walks up, rocking back and forth on his heels adorably.

“As good as I can hope,” Allura says, crossing her arms. Lance rolls his eyes, and climbs the pole, reaching for the top and swirling around it, building up momentum.

Coran frowns, “Is it too much to ask for?”

“A ribbon routine isn’t that hard,” Allura retorts.

Lance wraps his wrists around the ribbon, creating tension, “Says you! I’m the one up here balancing by my ankles.”

“Just flip, Lance.”

He does, the ribbon catching, twirling around the pole, until he’s back on his feet.

“Woo!”

“What’s next?” Emily observes, “A night where we breathe fire?”

“No.” Allura smirks, “That’s why we hired Roman. He’s a professional fire-dancer.”

Lance jokes, playing with the ribbon, “Just call us a circus.”

“You’re the clown, then.”

“Wow Allura. You cut me deep.”

“Is Shiro the lion?”

“Oh my god,” Lance straightens. “Can we dress Shiro up like a lion?”

“No!” Shiro calls, from his corner of the dance studio.

Allura snorts, “He’s already forced to do the kitty routine. A lion would be no different.”

“No no no, you see,” Lance laughs, “we get him a mane. Manes are sexy.”

Emily cackles, “You’re a fucking furry.”

“Dude, shut up. Everyone wanted to bang Kovu from Lion King two.”

“Oh my god, you’re right.”

Allura rubs her temples, “Can we just do this? Please? I have other things to take care of.”

Lance grins, and unravels the ribbon from around his hands. Allura looks tired, yes, but she’s the healthiest Lance has ever seen her. They’ve hired so many more people; the backstage is just, swollen with workers now. People to make Allura and Coran’s jobs just, if any, a little easier.
So Lance nods, and wraps the ribbon around the pole, hoisting himself up, and giving it his all.

Every day is a fight; a fight for popularity; a fight to get customers through the door. Zarkon has been opening strip club, after strip club – he’s determined to set the Paladin ablaze.

So that’s why Lance is here, practicing, for hours on hours on hours, cracking jokes with his family.

If this is his home, Lance will surely do all he can to protect it.

“You’ve got a customer waiting in room five.”

“Huh??” Lance looks up from his phone, blinking in a panic.

“Yeah, didn’t you know?” Matt, the new hire, looks up from his clipboard, “I have you down for twelve thirty.”

“Fuck,” Lance shoves his phone back in his bag, “I’ll head right over.”

“Makeup is done?”

“Yeah, already worked platform for a while.”

Matt gives him this knowing look, before he nods, “Good. Have fun.”

Have fun? Okay, sure. Maybe it’s someone hot, that’d be fun.

Lance licks his palm, and smooths back his hair. Runs his fingers down his shirt, and straightens his sweatpants on his hips. Lori was forgiving with the gittery body butter today – last week she coated him so much, he almost took a nosedive off the stage like it was a goddamn slip and slide.

Lance knocks twice on the door, right beneath the big number five. There’s a noise, so Lance throws it open with a smile. “Hi-“

He chokes off, blinking, eyebrows pushing together.

Oh?

Keith is in the chair, one leg calmly crossed over the other, an arm hiked up on the back of the chair. Shiro sits on the couch adjacent, still shirtless from his last performance, but stunningly clean. His bangs are clipped back, which is just, yeah. Yeah.

“Uh….“ Lance looks back at the door number.

“You’re in the right place,” Shiro laughs. “Shut the door.”

Lance does, without question.

Keith snorts, “Why do you look so surprised?”

Lance raises an eyebrow, “What’s going on?”

“Well, you did have an appointment.” Shiro explains, “But…”
“He was really creepy,” Keith chews. “Giving you weird looks, ‘n shit.”

Ahh. Lance leans back up against the closed door, smirk ridiculously wide. “Oh? But I’ve only been working with regulars~. Did you scare off my client?”

“He was ridiculously attractive,” Shiro explains.

Lance barks out a laugh – Keith smirks from the chair, but doesn’t move.

“Shouldn’t you be dancing?” Keith prods. “We’re not paying you to stand around.”

“You’re not paying me at all,” Lance jokes, but does push off the door, slowly twirling his finger around in the hem of his tank top.

Keith’s eyes follow the movement, so Lance does it a little more, tugging it up off of one hip, smoothing his fingers over the skin that wraps across his hipbone.

In a confident movement, he straddles Keith in the chair, lazily throwing his hands over the back, eyes meeting Keith’s. Since they’ve stopped talking, Lance can hear the music, playing smooth and echoey around the room.

“So a lapdance for my boyfriend~” Lance sings. “How fun.”

“I’m not your boyfriend,” Keith says, with a sharp look. “I’m your client.”

Lance’s breath hitches. He looks to Shiro, who has one arm up on the back of the couch, eyes fixated on just him. Lance suddenly burns with excitement.

“Oh ho, excuse me.” Lance shifts in his lap, slowly, slowly rocking his hips forwards. “What brings you here, sir~”

Keith’s pupils dilate, just slightly, but he’s motionless otherwise. He quotes what Lance has heard a thousand times, “Just here for a good time.”

Lance bites his tongue to hold back a smile. Instead he focuses on his shirt, slowly sliding it up his chest, inch for inch. He rolls his stomach, flexing the muscles, watching Keith’s eyes start at his collar, and travel south.

He’s a little nervous- Shiro is watching. Shiro is the king of lap dances – but damn, Lance isn’t going to let this opportunity go to waste. Usually he’s on the receiving end, so. Payback time~

Lance chucks off the shirt, but not before wrapping it around his wrists, and dropping it slow, and seductive. Lance is tanner than usual, now that it’s summer. He works his hips, ever-moving, staring Keith down and visibly rolling his tongue against his k-nines. His hands do what Keith’s can’t, pushing into muscle, rolling up his own chest, and shivering when his pinkeys brush his nipples.

“What about you?” Keith mumbles. “What’s something pretty like you doin’ working in a place like this?”

Lance actually snorts a little, but he hides it behind his hand. He palms down between his own legs, working his hardening dick just a little through his sweatpants – and Keith’s grip tightens on the chair.

“Oh, it’s a wonderful job, you know~” Lance purrs, rolling his tongue, dipping down to speak against Keith’s ear, “I get to sit on a cock like yours.”
He grinds down against Keith’s crotch, and *glows* when Keith chokes on his own spit, head tipping back, hips rolling up.

“Goddammit, Lance,” Shiro says, from the couch. “If you talk to patrons like that, we might have a problem.”

Lance laughs, tipping his head to look at Shiro as he dances, “Why? Isn’t it my job?”

Shiro’s pupils are entirely black.

Lance shivers in Keith’s lap, and looks away, instead focusing on teasing his sweatpants. He dips his hand beneath them, shoves them down to his mid-thigh. Keith inhales beneath him, and Lance subconsciously licks his lips, feeling a little numb. God, their eyes *hurt*. He can feel them – like little pin pricks. Little jolts of electricity, that turn into heated magma, settling in his gut.

Lance is feeling impatient, so he stands up, stepping out of the pants and sitting back down. He runs his hands down his thighs, up his chest, over his neck and into his hair. He dances slow, eyes closed, rocking into Keith, and smiling when he feels Keith rock back.

“Nuh uh~” Lance purrs. “No touching.”

“I’m not,” Keith snaps, a little too breathy.

Lance grins, “Then what’s this?” He drops his hand between them, and drags his palm against the hardon straining in Keith’s jeans. Keith makes a faint choking noise, but his pokerface can rival the blackjack players in Vegas – so Lance ups the ante, drilling his thumb into the head of his cock, squeezing his thighs and baring his neck. Lance’s throat is littered in very faint, healing hickeys from a few days ago. Keith trembles.

Lance goes slow, slow, slow. Slow in how he turns. Slow, in how he bends down, like a folding chair, pressing his hands to the floor and shoving his ass up in Keith’s face. Slow, how he stands back up. *Slower,* how he slides on his knees and noses into Keith’s thigh.

There’s a sharp “Lance,” from across the room, and it makes Lance’s hair stand on end. He looks to Shiro- and Jesus, his hand is down his pants, adjusting himself – but his eyes are narrowed, mouth firmly pressed close with unsaid words.

*Get on with it.*

Lance looks to Keith.

Keith is *suffering.*

Eyes clouded, hair sticky, body buzzing with impatience.

Lance laughs, and hops back up into Keith’s lap, “Wow, you guys can’t handle a taste of your own medicine?”

“You bring a whole new meaning to the word *tease.*”

Lance can’t help but giggle; Keith’s eyes light up with a silent smile. Lance brings his hand to Keith’s cheek. It’s warm, and flushed, and horribly soft beneath his fingers. Lance’s hand travels up, up, up, until he’s got a big fistful of hair in his hand. Keith needs a haircut, honestly, the strands have gotten more wily than usual, his stupid mullet more of a fringey mess- still, it’s cute in only the way Keith can be.
“There’s cameras in here, you know.”

“We may have…convinced Allura to turn them off for an hour or so.”

“Dear god,” Lance breathes. He can feel Keith’s hands twitching, “Did you promise her your firstborn?”

“No messes,” Shiro corrects.


Keith clicks his tongue, and drives his hips up impatiently, “Lance.”

Lance keeps his pace, looking down at Keith through half lidded eyes, “Hm?” The pressure is good; Lance is pretty hard, and every grind of his hips dulls the need just a little.

Hands, suddenly, brace beneath his ass and pull, slotting Lance forwards, rocking them together rough and hard, strong enough for Lance’s cock to throb in his sparkly shorts.

“Ahh~” Lance moans, without thinking, and Keith groans under him. Keith’s hands are everywhere – squeezing his ass, rolling down his thighs, smoothing up his chest and circling around his nipples.

“Lance,” Keith purrs, once more, this time against the divot of his neck. It gives Lance goosebumps. Makes his heart beat fast.

“Ha,” Lance shivers, “w-what happened to the no touching rule? Aren’t you a cli-ahh-client?”

Keith buries his nose into Lance’s collar, breathing in hard, pressing their chests together, and joking, “Don’t tell anyone.”

Keith’s hips push up, just as Lance’s grind down, and suddenly the pressure is intense. Lance can feel himself sweating; and suddenly he wants. He wants all the clothes gone; he wants to bounce up and down on Keith’s cock and yell-

Keith dips his thumbs into the V that extends from Lance’s hips, rolling down with pressure, feeling through the thin spandex, until his fingers meet Lance’s cock. Embarrassingly enough, there’s already a wet spot at the front of the blue shorts. Lance is not explaining this to wardrobe.

So he bats Keith’s hands away, shoving down the shorts beneath his ass, and shivering when his cock springs up against his stomach.

“God,” Keith rasps, fumbling with his own pants, “Lance, kiss me-“

So he does, tipping his head and fitting their lips like they were meant to. It’s just as electric as it always is- Lance is always surprised by the intensity. Lance’s lips are already swollen from licking them – Keiths are dry, so they’re a perfect mix. They kiss until there’s spit against Lance’s chin, until his tongue aches, until his mouth physically tingles.

But suddenly there’s a thigh, thick and strong, shoved up between Lance’s legs. Lance actually shouts, the movement painful and simultaneously so good, he almost comes.

Shiro- it’s Shiro, bracing a knee on the very small amount of space left on the chair, right between both Keith and Lance’s legs. He hovers behind Lance, one metal hand reaching over Lance’s shoulder to grip the chair by Keith’s collar; his right hand dips down, feeling across Lance’s side. Shiro’s grip strength is bruising, and its honestly the best thing in the world.
There’s a broken “Lance,” against the back of his neck, and a gravelly, “Please,” against his lips, so Lance was bound to lose.

Then they’re lost this way. With Keith kissing him, smothering Lance’s cock with his hand and bucking into his hip. With Shiro, grinding against his ass, speaking words too deep against his ear. Lance is wound up like a music box, so all he can do is sing.

Keith tries to smother Lance's broken moans and half-gasps with his own mouth, which is great in theory, but just turns Lance on even more. Shiro is killer, rocking behind him, breathing heavy, dick harder than hell.

He doesn’t mean to, of course, but Lance comes with a rough shout, Keith swallowing every pathetic whimper, every keen and whine. The wave is sudden, catching Lance so off guard, that he shakes. Shiro’s hand sneaks around to work his bobbing cock with Keith, the strokes dry, but incredibly practiced and amazing.

“Fuck,” Shiro groans against his ear, and Lance loses it.

Lance spills every word, every name, every syllable he knows. He babbles nonsense, until he can’t say anything more.

Keith’s tongue traces his bottom lip, before licking around his teeth, and tasting everything Lance has. Shiro’s sticky hand trails up Lance’s stomach. Lance trembles from the friction – god, the aftershocks are intense. His head is so fogged from the orgasm – still, Lance has half a mind to feel for Keith’s cock and stroke. He’s hard, he’s so hard-

And boy, that sobers Lance up real fast. Always does, really, because nothing is better than watching Keith lose it. Shiro grinds against his back, pants against his ear. Lance has never loved being a sandwich so much.

God, he loves them. And by the look in Keith's eyes? By the nose in his neck? They love him too.

They uh, didn’t follow that no mess rule – but it’s fine. By the time the cameras click back on, the chair is squeaky clean.

When the days get long. When the nights get longer. When Zarkon opens a club across the way, and Lance’s hair threatens to fall out by the handfuls. When he bruises his knees. When patrons grab his ass and break rules. Lance is never alone.

Zarkon comes and goes. Zarkon plays dirty, loses it all, goes bankrup with maddess, because the Paladin refuses to fall. Because they’re a family.

They hire new dancers, lose others. The club is almost malleable, constantly changing under pressure.

But you know what comes outta’ pressure? Diamonds, my dude. Diamonds.
here is the song that plays during the lapdance

thank you for all the kind comments! they always make me so happy ^^

and thank you miss mal for translating ~
There’s an inhale, sharp, but lost behind the music. It's busy backstage, but Lance projects his voice above the noise. He was blessed with a beautiful set of vocal chords, thank you.

“Hey, hey, hey! Whatya’ think you’re doing?”

“Dude, I’m eating. Take a chill pill.”

“Dude, I’m your boss, and you should be up on stage.” Lance pauses, and then furrows his eyebrows, “And don’t tell me what to do.”

Shiro calls from the lower stage, clipboard in hand, without looking up, “Lance, chill. Ginger, go.”

Ginger huffs, the young, skinny little thing. Of course, she only listens to Shiro – it’s not uncommon around here. She shoves half a bag of cheesepuffs in her mouth, before ripping off her shirt and walking out on stage, tits out, cheese still on her fingers.

“Brat.” Lance glares, “We were not that bad.”

“I wasn’t,” Shiro smiles, and even after so many years, he’s still beautiful. He must’ve sacrificed his soul to some demon, really, because skin that clear should be illegal. Hell, Lance has good skin, but he can still attest to the barely-there wrinkles Shiro has. Even so, Lance adores every small wrinkle – they’re his to love, you know.

There’s loud yelling from the hallway. Lance and Shiro share a look, long, and almost comedic.

Shiro is the first one through the doorway, Lance not that far behind - and yep, there’s Keith, holding a customer up against the wall like some highschool bully.

Funny enough, the bodyguards are standing by, blinking, completely unsure of what to do. Here’s a forty year-old man, shirt sleeves rolled up to his broad shoulders, teeth pulled back into a snarl.

“I said, you need to leave immediately,” Keith growls, thick hair pulled back, strands falling messily around his face. It’s hot as fuck, so Lance crosses his arms and grins.

The man chokes, “S-Sir, I didn’t do anything w-wrong-“

“Grabbing my kid’s ass? Shoving your hand down her pants? Yeah, I don’t think so.”

Lance smirks at the term my kid.

It wasn’t until the last few years, that Lance really began to understand Allura and Coran as people, and not work-aliens. Really, when you take the job, you adopt fifty kids. Lance gets it now.

“Keith,” Shiro sighs, “put him down.”

Keith drops him. The man scrambles to his feet.

“Aww,” Lance coos, “I was hoping you’d punch him.”
Keith jerks forwards, fist clenched, but a bodyguard grabs the offender by the collar, and Shiro wraps a protective arm around Keith.

“Babe, keep it together.” Shiro tells him, “Allura is supposed to fly in this weekend.”

Keith hisses, “And?”

“If you go to jail, you’ll miss dinner at Applebee’s.”

“Fuck, I love Applebee’s.”

“Exactly.”

The bodyguards pull away the creep, but Keith glares at him all the way out the door. Lance reaches over and rubs between his shoulderblades, “You did a great job, sweetheart.”

“Don’t patronize me,” Keith huffs. “I’ll kill him.”

“I miss Hunk,” Lance sighs. “He was so good at catching creeps at the door.”

“Heyyyyy~” A young little twink waves, done up in his makeup and wardrobe, “Dads one-through-three, where’s my client?”

“Oh,” Shiro blinks, and scrambles for his clipboard. “It wasn’t in the email? You’re scheduled in four.”

“Thanks,” Twink gives a peace sign. “I knew that, I just wanted to break up your pity party~”

“Oh my god,” Keith barks. “Fuck off, Marco.”

“Wait, wait,” Lance jogs, “don’t fuck off. We gotta’ discuss practice time.”

“Oooh, are you choreographing my next set?”

“Fuck yeah I am.”

“This is a terrible idea,” Keith speaks up.

Lance waves him off, “Go work, or something.”

Keith sticks out his tongue – Lance turns around and meets him. Marco rolls his eyes, “Oh my gooooood, I literally have places to be.”

“Right, right.”

Lance sits on the arm of the loveseat, fingers braced on either side of him. He’s in new, clean clothes, fluffy ones, that smell like linen. It’s nice, watching Shiro and Keith on the couch, finally relaxed. They deserve it.

They’ve been doing this for a while. Sometimes, Lance is still amazed that they’re here. Doing this, together. This? You ask? Everything. They’ve had fights, you know – one or two, not too many. They were nasty ones, full of self-doubt and insecurity.
But they’re here, in their home.

Lance is happy. Happy with this job he somehow adopted. Happy with the people he surrounds himself with.

“Ahhh~” Lance sings, swinging his legs, “I’m so excited~!”

“Can you act like an adult for like, three seconds?”

“No! Mother Allura is flying in soon.”

Shiro smirks, eyes watching Keith’s hands, “I’m excited too.” Keith is smooshed up against his side, cuddly and prickly all the same. Keith is just, one of those dogs with the mean faces that really like sitting on laps.

“See!” Lance flops back down on the loveseat, “It’s been so long. I wonder how she’ll take the news.”

Keith and Shiro look at each other, before shrugging, “No idea.”

Lance sits up, and watches Keith. He’s massaging Shiro’s bicep – right where all the scar tissue is. The metal arm lays on their coffee table; it’s a new, state of the art model, shipped fresh from Pidge’s lab.

It used to be odd, seeing Shiro without his prosthetic arm, but Shiro has grown so comfortable around them, that he frequently pops it off just to give the muscles a break. It’s really nice – a sign of pure trust between them.

“Hey Takashi?” Lance kicks.

“Hm?”

“Can we make enchiladas tonight?”

“I’m always down for enchilada night,” Shiro grins. Lance beams, sitting up from the chair, and hopping over towards the couch. Keith makes a noise of complaint, but Lance worms his way onto Shiro’s free side, throwing his legs over Shiro’s lap. Lance winces at the slight pain, but it’s fine.

Shiro’s eyebrows furrow, “Hey, how’s the knee?”

“Fineee.”

“Hm,” Shiro reaches into his lap, grabbing Lance’s bad knee, and massaging the tissue, “Still hurt?”

Ahhh, it stings, but Shiro’s hand is so talented, so, so deft and good. He knows where to roll his thumb, and how to make Lance’s head tip back and sigh.

“A little.”

“I told you that last routine was a mistake,” Keith frowns.

“I’m not old! I can still dance!”

“Not like you used to, asshole. You’re not made of rubber.”

“Yes I am! I’m Monkey D. Luffy~"
“Shut the fuck up.”

"Ahaha, I was still sexy though, right?"

"Well duh."

Lance laughs, reaching over to slap Keith’s knee- Keith is laughing too, so it’s fine.

There’s shit they should be doing. Like, calling 503’s accountant and getting this month’s numbers. They should be doing routine choreography, and making up programs – but ha, they’re not, so, whatever. They worked all week, it can be someone else’s problem.

Shiro’s breathing is steady – it’s so familiar, it lulls Lance into a state of meditation, almost. The hand on his knee is a constant, the thumb digging smooth, warm circles. The ache ebbs away.

Lance looks around their home; they’ve lived here for a while. It’s full of odd things – masks from their trip to India, leis from their vacation in Hawaii. Weird impulse buys from Lance, a hundred of Keith’s candles, at least. Lots of houseplants – Shiro loves them like children. He loves the plants more than their beta fish, and Shiro loves the beta fish.

Yeah, they’ve been here a while. They’ve moved a lot too – been all over the place. But, it doesn’t really matter. Anywhere with Keith and Shiro is home. Gah, that’s sounds so cliché. Puke puke, gross-

“What’s going on in there?” Keith mumbles, gesturing to Lance’s head.

“Hm?” Lance perks up. “Nothing.”

“Figured.”

“Hey!”

Shiro laughs, softly leaning over to press a kiss against his hair, “Tired?”

“Nah,” Lance shifts. “Sorta. I had like six coffees this morning.”

“I’m surprised you haven’t pissed your brains out.”

“Oh, I did, don’t worry.”

“We need to go grocery shopping,” Shiro yawns. “I think that was the last of our coffee.”

“It was.”

“Should we go now?”

“Fuck no,” Lance snuggles into Shiro’s shoulder. “I haven’t gotten quality time with you guys in like, weeks.”

The hand on his knee is comforting, “I’m sorry it’s been so hectic.”

Lance sputters, “Why are you apologizing? I love what we do.”

Shiro shrugs, “I should’ve hired that assistant months ago. It would’ve made our lives easier.”

“Pssh, yeah, but now it’s better so, don’t worry.”
“Yeah,” Keith nods. “Plus our *Paladin* has met goal for the past four months. That’s pretty good.”

“Let’s stop talking about work.”

“You brought it up!”

“Did not!”

“Did too!”

“Ahh,” Shiro closes his eyes. “Good times.”

“Hahaha,” Lance jostles his leg. “You love us, shut up.”

“I do.”

They play pop music through the studio speakers. Dancers work, stretching where there’s room, chattering and sharing bottled water.

Keith isn’t here today – he’s been overseeing their costume design for a couple years, and the performance this weekend is a doosy. Feathers sure look cool, but they’re hell to work with.

Lance almost wishes he could be up on stage– almost, kinda’. But he’s had his time, his spotlight. It’s more fun to watch *his* dancers perform now, knowing they worked hard.

They’re recycling an old, *old* routine, from when Lance was twenty-three and doe eyed. It’s choreography done by none other than Allura herself; it’s weird, thinking about it now.

“How higher,” Lance grins, with a teacher tone he never thought he’d have. “You hafta’ go higher, darlin’.”

“Look,” she grits. “My legs don’t spread much farther than this. My asshole is gonna’ fall out.”

There’s a few laughs – a couple from Lance, too. He shifts his weight on his feet, folding his arms, “Do I need to bring Shiro in here? I’ve seen you do a perfect split for him.”

“I have no idea what you’re talking about,” she spins, laughing when Lance kicks the bottom of the pole, vibrating it a little.

“I don’t see what the big deal is about this Allura lady.” Marco grumbles, from his pretzel position on the floor.

“She’s beautiful and perfect, shut your mouth.”

“She’s like, sixty.”

“She’s beautiful and perfect shut your mouth.”

There’s a meow, that interrupts them all. The studio cat, Coco Chanel, comes waddling through the room, effectively distracting every single soul in the building.

“Coco!”
“C’mere kitty!”

Lance exhales, dragging his hands down his face. “Oh my god, can we just take this seriously for like, five seconds?”

But Lance pauses, suddenly, feeling like he’s heard those words before. Coran or Allura, probably. Dear god, who is he?

The kids laugh, and Lance scrunches up his face in a fake pout. Still, he’s happy they’re happy. Their lives – they haven’t been easy. But then again, whose life is?

Everyone came here, thinking it’d be another club. Thinking they were renting out their bodies for something horrible.

But nah. That’s not how they do it ‘round here.

So Lance lets them be happy, petting miss Coco Chanel, squatting around her in their baggy sweatpants and muscle tees.

He wakes up from a good dream.

It was less a dream, and more a memory. Of kicking his feet up in the backseat of Shiro’s old silver truck – of waving his hand out the window at passing cows, and singing Miley Cyrus until Keith physically stole the aux cord out of his hand.

It’s a good memory, nice and warm, and not really that old.

Lance rubs his eyes, looking at the clock and feeling content enough to roll over, and fling an arm over Keith’s side. He’s so warm, legs soft, hair messy.

Lance noses into his ear, and peeps open an eye to see Shiro already awake.

“Ngh,” Keith stirs, face first in Shiro’s chest.

“G’mooornin’,” Lance rolls his tongue, right in his ear, like a purr.

Keith sighs, voice exasperated, but full of love, “Lance.”

“Wakey wakey, eggs and stakey.”

Shiro’s shoulders shake with a small laugh, and Keith grumbles once more.

“Too early.”

“You know what today is?”

“Opposite day. Shut up and sleep.”

“Nope! It’s Thursday, and you promised you’d go with me to the zoo.”

“Oh my god. You were serious about that?”
Lance laughs, running his hand up and down Keith’s side, worming beneath his shirt. Soft, soft soft—There’s a scar, right above his hipbone, from a nasty fall he took off the stage years ago. The scar looks pretty now – Lance loves to suck around it, and litter it in hickies.

“Dude, you *promised.*”

“Allura flies in tomorrow.” Keith pushes further into Shiro’s chest, like it’s some safety net. “We’ve been getting up at the crack ass of dawn for weeks.”

Shiro mulls, “Don’t you mean ass crack of dawn?”

“Whatever.”

“That sounds like a dinosaur.”

“What, a crackassadawn?”

“Yeah!”

“You’re right, that does sound like a-“

Shiro is cut off by Keith sitting straight up, hair a wild mess. He kicks away the blankets, huffing, “I can’t handle you two. I’m sleeping on the couch-“

“Noooo,” Lance grips his wrist, using his newfound strength to pull Keith back on the bed. Keith wrestles with him, and Lance wrestles back, laughing as Keith’s face grows more and more frustrated. Bare feet press into calves, fingers in shoulders, knees against hips.

“God!” Keith struggles – and *aha,* there’s the smile- “The fuck? I used to be stronger than you.”

Lance tugs him back, rolling Keith beneath him with a grin, “Hitting the gym with Takashi, yo.”

Keith’s narrows his eyes, but there's something teasing there; his chin tilts up, and Lance meets him halfway.

They kiss, something soft and opened mouthed. Keith inhales during the kiss, making it feel all the more intimate. Keith tastes like Keith - homey, and alluring. Lance chases the feeling, eyes closed, lips working in a practiced tandem that never gets old. When they pull away, they’re smiling, licking their lips and breathing softly.

“Can you stop talking like that?” Keith smirks, finally flopping his head back against the pillow. “It’s not 2015 anymore.”

“Are you kidding? I’m super hip.”

“Oh my god.”

“Rad as fuck, dude.”

“Shut up.”

“I’m the illest bitch in the ro-ah!” Lance squeaks, jolting, when Shiro brings his cold metal fingers up to the gap between his shirt and his pajama pants. Shiro’s grin is positively adorable – but Lance shies away, as he tickles into his side, eventually gripping Lance by the hip and pulling him off Keith.
“My hero,” Keith teases. Lance squirms and giggles, back arching, as Shiro manhandles him perfectly.

Shiro is incredibly successful at holding Lance down, pinning him beneath his bodyweight and nosing into his neck. Which is, you know, sexier than hell.

“I’ll go to the zoo with you,” Shiro kisses beneath his ear, and Lance instinctually melts. Shiro’s breath still smells like the coffee he probably had at six in the morning, but his lips are soft and unchapped, nose a little cold.

Lance feels like his heart might explode, “I love you sooo much.”

“I love you too.”

“Like soo much. Like, to the moon and back. Like, to Saturn and back.”

Shiro’s laugh is melodic, rumbling beneath Lance’s skin, and making his heart squeeze tight. This is real love, truly. He lives with his best friends – and they still make him jittery, like a teen in love. Lance leans up, rubbing the scruff of his cheek against Shiro’s, and laughing when it tickles. Kisses press into the corner of his mouth, around his chin, down his throat-

“God, fine.” Keith throws his hands up, “I’ll go too.”

Lance turns, looking him in the eye, “You’re so predictable, baby.”

“Whatever. Shut up and shower with me.”

The zoo is nice. Shamelessly holding hands and looking at giraffes – pushing their worries to the back of their minds.

Keith seems nonchalant, until he sees the big fluffy lions, and loses his shit entirely.

Tomorrow is a busy day, but Lance is content to wear sunhats and share lemonades with the people that matter most.

“So we’re doing it, then.”

Things are going well, when Lance spots Allura standing in the back of the club. Every dancer has been on time, they’ve been making exceptional tips – there’s been no injuries, no problems with the customers –
But Lance sees her and gasps, pushing out the doors, and around the side entrance. He elbows past customers, beyond security, until he’s wrapping his arms around Allura’s waist and picking her up in a spin.

The music is loud, but they talk louder.

“Lance!” She barks, swatting his arm with a smile, “Stop that!”

“It’s been years!”

“Only three.”

“Years!”

He sets her back down, and she’s smiling. Her dimples have turned into wrinkles, but her makeup is still just as gorgeous as ever, long, dark eyelashes flicking against her skin. The white hair is pulled up, lovely in a bun, just as Lance remembers.

“We have so much to catch up on!” Land squirms, setting his hands on her shoulders. It’s odd – she always seemed so tall, but now they see eye to eye.

“Don’t do that,” Allura swats his hands away from her shoulders, squaring her head and looking him in the eye, “I’m still your boss.”

“Uh huh, yeah.”

She jokes, “I’m a big mean C.E.O, you see.”

Lance grins, “Yep. You totally didn’t cry when Shay and Hunk had a kid.”

“You cried too!”

“Well, you’re not wrong-“

“Where’s Shiro and Keith?” She interrupts, trying to look around Lance’s shoulders. She gazes around the club, “Everything holding up?”

“Yeah, some maintenance issues with the stage, but nothing too bad.” Lance nods, “Also Shiro and Keith are backstage working.”

Allura bristles, “Like you should be. We can talk after closing, go, go-“

Lance laughs as she braces her hands against his back, nudging him away. “Alright, alright. I’ll let them know you’re here.”

There’s a final pat against his back – one that makes Lance bite his lip and smile.

“I’m honestly surprised that Applebee’s is open this late.”

“Does anything make sense in this god forsaken city?”

“Not really, no.”
Allura laughs, setting down her water, “Sorry about that.”

“No, no.” Shiro shakes his head, “It was a fabulous financial decision. Business is great here.”

Keith nods, “We get some real fuckin’ weirdos, but it’s oddly entertaining.”

“Like we’re not weird to begin with,” Lance wiggles, for show. Keith sighs, less annoyed, more tired, and rests a hand on Lance’s thigh.

“Yeah, that too.”

Allura nods, “Good to know. I’ve been reading your weekly reports, Shiro. No big incidents this month?”

“Not really.” Shiro rubs behind his head, where his undercut is growing out a little bit. “Some guy tried to spike a girl’s drink last week, but our bartender caught that shit way too fast.”

Allura covers her heart with her hand and sighs, “Thank goodness.”

“How are things back home?” Keith asks. “Coran doing okay?”

“Yeah,” Lance adds, “everything cool? Since you two became platonic life partners, or whatever.”

Allura nods, “He’s doing better. He gave me a real scare, calling me from the hospital like it was no big deal.”

Lance gives a little smile, “Oh I can hear it now.” He mocks Coran’s accent, “Dear Allura, I’ve taken a small trip down th’ stairs, but don’t worry sweeateheart, I’ll be right as rain!”

Allura half-laughs, “You’re not even wrong.”

“So his leg is healing up?”

“Yes.” Allura rubs her forehead, “The only good thing to come out of this, was that it forced Coran to finally retire.”

“God, bless his soul. He’s been working for the club for what,” Shiro pauses, “fifty years?”

“Sixty.” She shakes her head, “He’ll be eighty-one this year.”

“Dear lord. You father scouted him young, then.”

Allura grins, “Oh yeah. A wide eyed, twenty-one year old business graduate. He had no idea what he was getting into.”

“How’s the Paladin doing then?” Keith threads his hand through his hair, and Lance becomes lost in the movement, for just a moment. Oh how he looks mature, in the dim Applebee’s light.

“Great,” Allura nods. “I… I don’t work as much as I used to. I mostly oversee things from home, managing all four locations. Lori has pretty much taken over makeup and costume design, while Matt is floor supervisor.”

“Tell me you’re sleeping, then.”

“Of course.”
“Good,” Shiro nods, the edges of his eyes wrinkling as he smiles. It makes Lance smile. Makes his gut happily churn. He meets Shiro’s eye, and feels a pang of almost nervousness.

But Keith is squeezing his thigh, thumb running up and down in calming lines. Allura is staring out the window, fingers softly playing with the salt shaker. It’s suddenly quiet, besides the radio, and the football game on T.V.

Shiro inhales, to break the silence, “There was uh, something we wanted to tell you about.”

“Hm?” Allura turns, looking a little sleepy. Lance feels it – the weight of the night. It’s familiar.

“Maybe we should wait,” Keith interrupts. “If she’s tired.”

“I’m fine.” Allura’s face darkens, “What, what is it?”

“Nothing bad,” Shiro says. “Well, I mean, it depends.”

Allura’s eyebrows push together. She pulls her sweater closer to herself, and sits up straight in the booth, “Everything okay?”

“Everything is great.” Lance smiles, trying to lighten the mood. Because its good. It’s a good thing. To them, at least.

“We just….” Keith drawls.

“We’re thinking of quitting,” Shiro says, ripping off the bandaid. Allura blinks once, not too surprised, but not angry either.

“Really?”

“We want our own place,” Lance says. “Our own nightclub. N-not that you’re not a good boss, but-“

Allura smiles, the mood shifting, “You want it to be your own.”

“Yeah,” Keith exhales. “That. We just want something different.”

“We’re thinking more theater,” Lance squirms, giddy. “Something with less naked, and more show.”

“And more choreography.”

“Yeah!”

Allura is smiling, head in her hand. “And you’re asking for my blessing.”

There’s a pang of silence, before a soft, “Yeah.”

Yeah, yeah. Because Allura is important. Her opinion is important.

“If you need us, we’ll stay, of course.” Shiro’s mechanical hand nervously runs along the edge of his glass. “We just thought since, you know, our Paladin is doing so well…”

Allura shrugs, “Well, it makes sense to me. I am the one that made you guys move here.”

“We’ve loved it.” Lance says, seriously. “Well, I’ve loved it. Working for you. Running the club, and shit. It’s – its great. We just-“
“Don’t defend yourself. You shouldn’t have to.” Allura holds up a hand, “Family is still family. I respect your choice.”

Lance can suddenly breathe again. Keith and Shiro look happy too, eyes all sparkly. Lance bites his lip, turning his head with a smile, because he’s happy. So, so happy.

They keep moving forward, one step at a time. Taking the world, hand in hand.

“Have you come up with a name?”

“Huh?”

“For the club?”

“Oh!” Lance straightens. He shares a look with Shiro and Keith – they’re smiling too, looking more confident than ever. Shiro nods, Keith squeezes his thigh, and Lance bites his lip through his smile.

He looks Allura in the eye; he sees years and years of memories in her. Sees that day, where he stood in her office. Where his hands shook along with his voice. Sees all the times she supported him. Sees all the times he supported her. He sees a future, a past. A world that he used to be scared of - a world that's now his.

He used to be so driven by what was real. Hope used to be scary. He thought everything was black and white.

But Lance has grown. Turned into a man that isn't afraid of his childlike wonder. He's watched Shiro and Keith overcome struggles - he's watched them still struggle, but he's watched. He's been there to help, and support. He's grown with them, and now they'll grow more.

Lance stares as he finally speaks, like the dot at the end of a sentence.

“The Coxcomb.”

Chapter End Notes

Thank you to everyone who supported me and sent me nice messages throughout this fic. It took 6 months to plan and write, and it was one of the most fun projects ive done

^^ thank you for enjoying this ship alongside with me

one last song

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