Operation: Time Out

by wittyy_name

Summary

Just when things between Keith and Lance seemed to be getting better, they took a turn for the worse. With the right side of Voltron constantly butting heads worse than ever before, the team comes up with a plan to get those two to work it out: lock them in the training deck until they learn to play nice.

Coran's suggestion? Add the invisible maze to the mix.

Notes

This was supposed to be a oneshot of two nerds figuring out their feelings with the hilarity of an invisible maze in the mix, and then it ended up so long that I decided to upload it in chapters.

Oh, and there's also official art for this fic by my brainstorming partner in trash.

You can find me on tumblr here: wittyy-name.tumblr.com
You can find the artist on tumblr here: wolfpainters.tumblr.com
“All I’m saying is that all we need is a good night out on the town.” You were saying, one hand on your hip and the other gesturing in the air. “You know, land on some planet, hit up a few clubs, hit up a few ladies. I’m telling you, a night out is exactly what we all need to loosen up a little.”

“And how will we even know if a planet has a civilization that’s developed clubs?” Hunk asked. “We might land and just find a bunch of, I don’t know, three horned frog people.”

You held up a finger. “I-“ You had no argument. Your finger wilted and your face dropped as you considered his argument. “Point taken.” Your eyes narrowed slightly in thought, lips pursing together. One arm went across your waist as your other elbow rested on top of it, fingers idly tapping your chin. “Alright, new plan-“

“Personally, and I’m just, throwing this out there, I think all we need is a nice, quiet night in. Maybe with some dessert, you know I picked up that weird, sweet sugary plant spice from that last planet we were on. And then we can all gather around the holo projector and watch some classic Altean movies. Doesn’t that sound fun? I think that sounds fun. Nice, quiet, team bonding.”

“Yeaaaaah,” You said slowly, drawing out the word to make your skepticism clear. “I was kinda hoping for something that didn’t involve getting all cozy with our fellow paladins.”

Hunk glanced over his shoulder. “Why? What’s wrong with our fellow paladins?”

You crossed your arms over your chest. “Nothing! It’s just…’ You looked away, scrunching up your nose and frowning. “I think our problem is that we’ve been spending way too much time together. I mean, sometimes I just need a little breathing room without— without people getting all up in my face, you know?”

Hunk leveled a look at you, tilting his head to the side slightly. “You’re talking about Keith, aren’t you?”

“What? No! Pffff,” You waved your hand, as if batting away the idea. “Keith doesn’t bother me. It’s not like he’s just… always… there, with his stupid mullet and his stupid voice and his stupid face. Trying to make me look like an idiot and trying to one up me. Well guess what, Keith, I’m onto you. I can see through your game. You’re just trying to get me all confused and frustrated so you can call me an idiot! Well the only idiot here is you, so get out of my face!” You stopped when you realized that Hunk was staring. He raised one eyebrow. You also realized that you had stopped walking, and your voice had slowly risen in volume and pitch. You cleared your throat, straightening and letting your hands drop to your sides. You hadn’t noticed them rising, fingers curled and palms up, in your frustration. One hand on your hip, you looked down. “Anyway, I think I just need some time away from certain parts of Voltron. Capeesh?”
Hunk sighed and continued walking. You fell into step beside him. You weren’t really sure where you were going. Hunk had just said he wanted to show you something. “I thought you guys were finally getting along.”

“We were.” You said softly, turning away so he couldn’t see your face. Your eyes dropped to the ground.

“Then what happened?”

“I don’t know!” You nearly shouted in exasperation, throwing your arms helplessly into the air. Your hands landed on your head and ran your fingers through your hair. “It was fine and we were bonding or whatever. The right side of Voltron was totes in sync, being a team and all that. And now every time I look at his stupid face I just get so mad and I just want to-“ You cut yourself off, suddenly at a loss for words. You didn’t know what you wanted to do to Keith, but the frustration you felt whenever he was around was enough to drive you insane. You wanted to strangle him, but somehow that just didn’t seem like enough. The thought of him conjured up his face in your mind’s
eye, smirking at you. You wanted to punch him right in his smug mouth. You felt your cheeks warm, and you dragged your fingers down your face, groaning. Your arms fell, hanging limp at your sides. “I don’t know, man, but he pisses me off.”

“I was afraid you’d say something like that.”

You glanced up at him, one eyebrow raised in suspicion. “Why?”

“It’s gonna make this harder for you.” He said, taking a turn and heading through the doors into the training deck. He held up his hands, pointer fingers raised toward the ceiling. “I just want to state, on the record, that this wasn’t my idea.”

Your eyes narrowed. “What’re you up to, Hunk?” You looked up as you stepped into the training deck. Your face immediately dropped, and you froze mid step. You felt your eyes widen in surprise before your brows furrowed in a sudden outburst of anger that went beyond your control. “Oh great, what’s he doing here?” You said loudly, throwing out a hand to gesture to Keith.

His arms were crossed over his chest, and his eyes narrowed slightly at your outburst. “Nice to see you, too.”

His tone was full of dry sarcasm and grated on your nerves. You weren’t sure why or when his voice started irritating you, but it never failed to make your blood boil. Not to mention the guilt that started to chew it’s way into your chest. He hadn’t done anything. He was literally just standing there. And yet the sight of him had been enough to spur you into an outburst. An outburst that had sounded a lot more accusatory and a lot more angry than you wanted it to. All he had done was be Keith. Yet, for some reason, being Keith was enough.

You cross your arms over your chest, pressing your lips into a tight frown. Seeing him, especially without any warning, immediately sparked frustration and a whole mess of emotions that just formed a mass ameba of anger. Then you were frustrated at yourself for feeling this way. Which only made it worse.

Things had been going great. He was still your rival. Duh, Keith would always be your rival. You didn’t think that would ever change. But you had been together as members of team Voltron long enough for you to get over the hate part of your rivalry. He had stopped annoying you on sight. Your insults lightened into teasing. The two of you actually made a good team. You looked forward to being with him. You liked how you could make him smile those rare smiles. Your insides fluttered when he teased you. The sight of him made your ears burn…

And then everything had suddenly changed, and he was back to frustrating you. The tension between you was thick enough to be cut with a knife, and you frequently had to resist the urge to just wrap your hands around his throat and shake him.

You hated it, and you wanted to stop feeling this way, but it wouldn’t go away, no matter how much you tried.

“What are you even doing here?” You asked, lifting your chin.

“Shiro asked me to meet him here.” He said flatly.

“Shiro? Where is he?” You looked around, but the deck was empty, save for the three of you.

Keith’s shoulders lifted and fell. “Not here yet obviously. What are you doing here?” He asked, one eyebrow raising, disappearing into his hair.
You felt a muscle in your jaw twitch. One of these days, you were going to shave that mullet. One hand on your hip, your other hand gestured over your shoulder with a thumb. “Hunk brought us here.” It occurred to you that you had no idea why you were there. “Hey, Hunk, what are we even doing- Hey!” You turned to look, but Hunk wasn’t where you had left him. You whirled around to find him inching his way back toward the door. “Where do you think you’re going??”

Hunk jumped when you spun around, eyes widening a fraction. He muttered a quick. “Oh no,” Before spinning on his heel and darting toward the door, falling forward as the momentum of his upper body caught up with his legs.

You stared after him, blinking in surprise. By the time you recovered enough to sprint after him, it was too late. The doors to the training deck had slid closed, and you heard the lock activate. The touchpad next to the door glowed red. You skidded to a stop, half slamming into the door. “Hey!” You shouted, banging your fists on the door. “Hunk, what the quiznak? Open the door!”

“No!” Hunk’s voice was muffled through the door. “I’m sorry, Lance, but this is for your own good!”

“What is for my own good?” You nearly shout, stepping away from the door.

“Not just you, but both of you.” Allure’s voice came across the speakers in the training deck, and you immediately looked up. You could see several figures standing in the control booth positioned high up on the far wall of the room.

“Allura?” Keith was also looking up at the booth. His arms fell to his sides as he turned. His eyes narrowed, frowning. “What’s going on?” He demanded, his own irritation showing in his voice.

“Think of this as a training exercise.” Shiro’s voice.

“Actually, it’s more like an intervention. Surprise.” Pidge.

“Shiro? Pidge?!” You raised your voice, stomping back towards the center of the room. You stopped when you were standing beside Keith, staring up at the control booth. Through the glass, you could definitely make out several shapes. “Are you all up there?!”

“Technically, no.” Coran spoke up. “Hunk isn’t here. He was down there with you- Oh, scratch that. Yes, we’re all up here.”

“What kind of training is this?” Keith asked, his bayard in his hand. How the hell did he even get that thing out so fast? He had already shifted his weight, spreading his legs and bending his knees to lower his weight. His bayard was held out at his side, and his other arm went up defensively. He wasn’t wearing his armor, but he looked ready for battle.

God, he was just so fucking… perfect, wasn’t he? Such a fucking show off.

The last thing you wanted to do was to fight Keith. Actually, scratch that. It was only the last thing if bayards were involved. Then all Keith had to do was get close to you and your laser gun would be useless and Keith would win. But if it was hand to hand combat… okay, so Keith would still probably kick your ass, but maybe then you could get out some of this pent up frustration. Your hair was standing on end just from being near him.

Then again, you doubted they’d trap you both in here just to pummel each other. They probably wanted you to fight together. You pulled out your own bayard, holding up up. “And what’s with this ambush tactic? Can’t you just like, I dunno, ask? Like, ‘hey Lance, come to the training deck for training,’ and I’d be like, ‘yeah, of course, buddy, go team Voltron,’” You gesture to Keith with your
free hand. “You wouldn’t even have to ask Keith. He practically lives here cause this is all he does.” Your voice made it clear what you thought about that. Seriously, you weren’t sure you had ever seen the guy chill.

Keith gritted his teeth, his head turning sharply to glare at you. “At least I do train.”

You rounded on him, bayard forgotten in your hand. “What’s that supposed to mean!?”

“It means you need to start being serious about your training!”

“I am serious!” You threw your hands in the air. “I’m so Sirius that I might as well die and fall through the archway! Open up, veil, here I come!”

Keith’s face completely blanked, all his anger and frustration draining as he blinked. “What?”

“Ooooh, too soon, man.” Hunk’s voice came over the speaker.

“Did you seriously just make a Harry Potter reference?” It sounded like Pidge and Hunk were sharing the mic.

Without taking your eyes off of Keith, you point up at the booth. “Stay outta this, Pidge.”

Keith sighed, head dropping as one hand went to pinch the bridge of his nose. His other arm went slack at his side. He had lost his battle stance from moments ago. “See? This is what I mean! You can’t take anything seriously.” He gestured toward the booth, standing straight again. “Everyone else has been working really hard training and gathering information. Have you done anything useful?”

“I’ve-“ You paused, mouth snapping shut with a frown. He… had a point. Ouch, way to hit a nerve. You huffed and stood up straight, crossing your arms over your chest. “I’ve helped Coran clean around the castle!”

“It’s true!” Coran spoke up. “He’s even earned a couple cleaning stripes!”

“See?” You tilted your head, smirking. “Do you have any cleaning stripes, Keith?”

He crossed his arms over his chest, mirroring your stance and ignoring your defense. “I don’t think I’ve ever seen you training unless it was a group exercise.”

You felt your smirk widen, one eyebrow rising. “What’s the matter, Keith? Miss me? Wanna spend more time with me? A little one-on-one action?” You weren’t sure why you had decided to go along that path of goading, but you had. Keith’s eye twitched, his lips pursing into a frown. And then you saw something you never thought you’d see: Keith was blushing. It was just a slight tinge to his cheeks, but it was so out of place that you noticed it immediately. You had to convince yourself that it was, indeed, a blush, and not a trick of the light.

You had hit something there, and you felt your smirk falter. Holy shit, Keith was blushing.

“Paladins,” Allura’s voice cut through the speakers, stopping whatever Keith had been planning to say. If he had been about to say anything. Both of you looked up at the booth. “I am sorry we had to resort to this, but we decided that the element of surprise was the best tactic. This is, as Pidge said, an intervention.”


“For the two of you. Lately you haven’t been… getting along.”
You snorted, rolling your eyes. “What else is new?”

“You constant fighting has become a liability to the team.” Shiro’s sounded stern and disappointed. You flinched.

“Last time we formed Voltron, we nearly destabilized because of you two.” Pidge’s voice.

“What if that happened in a fight?” Hunk cut in. There was some rustling, and you got the distinct feeling that they were fighting over the mic. “Do you know how useful a robot is with one leg and one arm? Pidge, tell them how useful a one legged, one armed robot is.”

“It’s not.”

“See? It’s not, guys! It’s just not! What am I gonna do? Hop at them?”

“The point is,” It sounded like Pidge wrestled the mic from Hunk. “The tension between you guys is thick enough to choke on, and we need you to work it out if we want to be able to sync up and form Voltron.”

“We don’t know what’s happened between you two, but you need to work it out.” Shiro’s words sounded final. You felt your shoulder’s slump, both from guilt and from dread.

“Even the paladins of old had trouble communicating and expressing themselves. Misunderstandings often occurred and grudges were formed, but they always managed to work out their differences and put them aside for the greater good. You are part of a team, and more than that, you are friends. Whatever has come between you, we want to help you get through it.”

“By what? Locking us in the training deck together?” Keith asked, leaning his weight to one hip. You had both put your bayards away.

“In essence, yes.”

“What do you expect us to do, fight each other?” Keith sounded sarcastic, but you stiffened anyway, glancing at him sideways.

“Well, that wasn’t part of our plan,” Shiro said, and reluctantly added, “But we considered that it might be a possibility. Whatever helps you two get over this.”

“Are you kidding me?” You shouted, throwing your hands out to gesture to Keith. “You’re locking me in here with a mad man and giving him permission to kill me?”

“Unless he wants to be apart of a one legged hopping robot, I trust Keith to have some restraint.” He could hear a little amusement in Shiro’s voice.

You glared up at the booth, arms falling to your sides. “Gee, thanks. I feel so much better.”

“Let me get this straight.” Keith put one hand on his hip, his other hand gesturing as he spoke. “Your plan was to lure us both here, then lock us in here in the hopes that Lance will magically grow up? You realize he’s like, twelve, right?”

You snorted again, casting him a scowling glare. Maybe if you glared hard enough, you could set that stupid hair on fire. “Yeah, on a scale of one to ten, maybe.”

He sighed, gesturing to you. “See what I mean?”

“Hey! This isn’t my fault!”
“That’s the plan, yes.” Allura said.

“And how long do you plan on leaving us in here?” Keith ignored your outburst, which only served to irritate you more.

“Until you’ve both come to a resolution, however long that might be.” She sounded proud of this plan. “I call it, Operation: Tough Love.”

“I wanted to call it Operation: Time-Out!” Coran piped up.

“I suggested Operation: Fire and Ice.” Shiro added.

“Operation: Blood or Bonding! Only time will tell.” Pidge announced.

“My vote was for Operation: Two Rights Are Making a Wrong.” Hunk snorted a small laugh. “Get it? Cause like, you guys are the right side of Voltron? And that saying, two wrongs don’t make a-“

“We get it, Hunk.” You said flatly.

“Nevertheless! We’ll be leaving now.” Allura announced. “We’ll come back to check on you.”

“Wait!” You shout, taking a step forward. “You’re just going to leave us here?”

“Unless you want us to listen to the conversation?”

Your face fell. She had a point. You didn’t want to be left alone with Keith, but having the rest of them all walking you through a heart to heart with Keith sounded agonizingly painful. Not to mention embarrassing. He grabbed at straws. “What if we get hungry? Or what if I have to pee?”

“Then you better start talking,” Shiro said. Man, they had no sympathy. It was beginning to dawn on you that you weren’t getting out of this. You were going to be stuck in here with Keith and forced to talk about your feelings or whatever. The thought made your stomach churn, and your heart sped up in response. “We’re leaving.”

“Good luck, guys.” Hunk said. “I’ll keep your food goo warm.”

“Try not to kill each other.” Pidge added.

“We’re counting on you,” Allura said. “Remember, you’re both paladins of Voltron. Nothing can come between you. You belong together.”

“Oh, and before we forget.” Coran spoke up, sounding eager. “Here’s the best part of our plan! This was my idea!” Without warning, a wall appeared just inches in front of your face. You yelped and jumped back, careful not to touch it. There were walls and corridors all around you. Keith had jumped, too, and was looking around with just as much surprise as you felt. Then, as suddenly as the walls appeared, they disappeared. “Invisible maze! Have fun, you two!”
You felt like screaming.

Chapter End Notes

DO NOT REPOST THE ART FROM THIS FIC

Instead, hop on over here and reblog it from the artist herself [HERE](#).

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Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

In which they introduce Altean "mood music" to the mix, and Lance is an idiot

Chapter Notes

The perspective is gonna be switched up in each chapter, but I will always indicate who's POV it is.

Thanks everyone for your comments! I treasure them all <3

See the end of the chapter for more notes

[ K E I T H ]

You felt like screaming.

You couldn’t believe they had locked you in the training deck, in the invisible maze, with Lance of all people. You had automatically dropped into a defensive stance when the walls had suddenly gone up. They were gone now, but your eyes scanned the room warily. You could still hear the subtle hum of electricity. They were definitely still up.

You could also hear a soft, strangled sound. You glanced sideways to find Lance standing there, legs spread wide and knees bent, arms held out with palms up and fingers curled. His eyes were wide and focused on the booth above you. His mouth hung open and a small, strangled whine escaped, long and continuous. All in all, he looked like a complete idiot. What else was new?

You sighed, relaxing and straightening back up. You crossed one arm over your chest and rested your other elbow on it, raising a hand to pinch the bridge of your nose. Squeezing your eyes shut, you bent your head and suppressed a groan of frustration. You wanted nothing more than to go to the door and try to force the damn thing open, but the invisible maze was keeping you in place. You had no desire to be shocked today.

“Pidge? Hunk?” Lance was suddenly shouting. You opened your eyes, staring at him without lifting your head. He was standing up straight again and had his hands cupped around his mouth. “REALLY FUNNY, GUYS! PIDGE! LET US OUT! HUNK? SHIRO? ALLURA? CORAN! ANYBODY?!”

You glanced up at the booth, but you could no longer see the figures that had stood there a moment before. You let your hand drop away from your face. “I don’t think they’re there.” You said flatly.

“Oh yeah? Well, what do you know?!” He said, rounding on you. His eyes were narrowed and his lips were pursed in a pout. You bristled instantly. You felt yourself tense and your frown deepen. Why was he always like this? How did he always manage to get a rise out of you? Why did you always rise to his goading? No one could get under your skin like Lance could. No one was as— as
frustrating as Lance was.

You could see why your team had decided the two of you needed an intervention, but that didn’t mean you were happy about it. The two of you had been fine. You had been getting closer, bonding, actually talking like normal people. You actually liked being around him. Once he stopped being needlessly aggressive, you found that he had a certain charm to him. He was still an idiot, but you were starting to find it amusing. Maybe even oddly endearing. Like a puppy.

Then everything had changed. You weren’t even sure what it was. One day he was friendly, and the next he was back to picking fights. The change was so abrupt and without explanation. His attitude was worse than before, and you had no idea what his problem was. You had thought he was actually starting to like you.

Being in this close proximity to Lance put you on edge. The air was alive with energy that made your hair stand on end, and you weren’t sure it was entirely because of the invisible maze.

“I know they’re not there.” You said dryly, waving a hand at the booth. “They left, genius. They even said they were leaving.”

“And you believe them? They’re probably sitting up there watching us right now. I know you’re there, Hunk! Pidge!”

You had the sudden urge to strangle him. It was an urge you had a lot recently. “Do you see them up there?”

Lance turned away from you to glance up at the booth. His mouth twisted into a frown, and his brow furrowed. He sighed and slumped, looking entirely defeated for a moment before straightening. “Okay, okay, so let’s assume they actually left.” He leaned his weight to one hip and crossed one arm over his chest. His other elbow rested on it as his free hand rubbed his chin. “I guess we gotta come up with a plan to get out of here.”

You leveled a look at him, eyebrows raised slightly. You put a hand on your hip, the other hanging slack at your side. “We could, you know, actually talk like they want us to.”

He gave you a look that was so comically filled with disgust that you might have actually smiled, had it not been for the fact that you knew it meant he was about to suggest something stupid instead.

He finally managed to gather his wits, as small as those wits might be. “Oh, hell no.” He began shaking his head. “Nope. No, no. Nononono. Nope. Nope, nope, nope.” He was waving his hands back and forth in front of him. Then he stopped and pointed both his index fingers toward the ceiling. “We are not having a heart to heart. Not doing it. Nope. No way. Screw that. We have nothing to talk about. And even if we did, I’m not talking about it with you.”

Your felt your brows furrow, and your eye twitched. You let your head fall slightly to the side. “You honestly think we have nothing to talk about?” You asked flatly.

He crossed his arms over his chest, shaking his head. “Nope, nothing at all.” He had his eyes closed and his lips pursed into a small frown, but he cracked one eyelid and looked at you curiously. “Why? Do you think we have something to talk about?”

“Uh, yeah?” You rolled your eyes, lifting the hand that was hanging at your side to gesture vaguely, palm up. “How about we talk about how you’ve been an ass lately, and it’s gotten bad enough to mess with our team synergy.”

“What?!” His hands straightened at his sides, his hands curling into fists. He stomped towards you.
“Don’t you blame this on me!” He jabbed a finger at your chest, and you felt your blood boil. “You’re the one who’s messing with our synergy!"

You gritted your teeth. “I’m not the one who’s trying to impress everyone with fancy footwork! Newsflash, Lance, it doesn’t work. You keep losing our balance!”

“At least I’m not the one trying to show off with fancy sword moves! We get it, Keith! You can play with a sword, big whoop!”

You gaped at him, mouth hanging open. You felt your bottom eyelid twitching. “I’m the right arm!” You felt your voice rising, sounding indignant. “I’m supposed to handle the sword! It’s my sword!”

You were leaning forward, and he jutted his head out towards yours. You quite literally butted heads. You glared up at him, and he met your stare head on. “Yeah? Well you don’t have to be so-! So-!” His mouth snapped shut and his lips twisted. His olive skin was showing hints of red across his nose and cheeks. He always blushed when he was mad or frustrated, but you had noticed it usually only happened when he was arguing with you. You weren’t sure what to think of that.

“Yeeaaah?” You said, drawing attention to his loss for words.

It had the desired effect. His flush deepened. You couldn’t explain it, but you felt satisfaction in making him flush like that. In making him lose his composure. His lips pursed into a thin line. “You don’t have to be a show off!” He shouted, throwing his arms into the air.

“I’m not being a show off! I’m doing my job!”

“Since when does your job include getting on my nerves?!”

“Your nerves are as easy to get on as you are!”

“What’s that supposed to mean?!”

He was so close. Too close. You could feel the warmth of his body. His breath brushed against your cheeks, caressing your lips. Looking up at him when he was this close, his eyes blurred into one. One blurry eye the color of deep oceans and the sky after sunset when darkness was setting in. His face was still flushed, a dark shade of red that burned on his cheeks. You had never seen him have this drastic of a reaction with anyone else. Only with you. And strangely enough, you were proud of that.

Still, his close proximity was starting to get to you. You could feel it hum along your skin, making the air on your arms stand on end. You could feel it in the way your knees shook. In the way your heart hammered against your chest in a rhythm that was way too fast for comfort. He just made you so- so… mad? Yes. No. He made you mad, but it was more than that. You were frustrated. You were anxious. You were annoyed. You were nervous. You were furious. You wanted to grab him, but you weren’t sure what you wanted to do with him once you had him. Your hands curled into fists, nails biting into your palm to keep from reaching for him. He just made you so- so… mad? Yes. No. He made you mad, but it was more than that. You were frustrated. You were anxious. You were annoyed. You were nervous. You were furious. You wanted to grab him, but you weren’t sure what you wanted to do with him once you had him. Your hands curled into fists, nails biting into your palm to keep from reaching for him. He got under your skin in ways that only he could, in ways you didn’t think were possible. It was confusing, and you hated it.

You needed space. You needed a breath that wasn’t contaminated with Lance. You straightened and leaned back, half turning away and crossing your arms over your chest. You moved so suddenly that Lance had no time to adjust his balance. His arms waved frantically as he regained his balance, nearly falling forward. Nearly falling into you. When he stood, he was glaring, his bottom lip pouted in such a way that was so incredibly Lance. It made your stomach churn.

“Oh please,” You said, turning your head away. There was bitterness in your voice that you couldn’t
quite erase. “You know exactly what I mean.”

“No, I don’t!” He insisted.

“Then use your brain to figure it out.” You snapped back. “It’s not there for show.”

“Why don’t you use your brain and think of a way out of this?”

“Maybe I would if you were quiet for a second and let me think!”

“Why don’t you make me?!”

Your mouth snapped shut, jaw clenching as your lips pursed into a frown. You wanted to. God, you would do anything to make him shut up for two seconds. He was within arm’s reach. You could literally reach out right now and grab hold of him. You weren’t sure what you’d do then. Anything to make his voice stop. Anything to get your blood pressure and heartbeat back to normal. You wanted to punch him. In the face. In the mouth. In that gorgeous fucking mouth.

You froze. Where the hell had that thought come from? Your eyes widened a fraction, and warmth rushed up your neck.

You opened your mouth to speak, but before you could find your voice, the training deck was suddenly filled with ungodly screeching.

You might have shouted in surprise, but it was drowned out. Your hands automatically went to your ears, pressing against them in a weak attempt to stop the sound. It was loud, it was dissonant, and it was terrible. You opened your eyes, glancing around the room, but there was nothing new about your situation. Nothing except the noise that blared through the speakers.

“What the hell is that?” You barely managed to hear Lance’s words. You had to look at him, half reading his lips. He was also holding his hands to his ears, looking around in a state of alarm and wild panic. You were both hunched over, like somehow shrinking away from the ceiling would help you to get away from the sound.

“I think it’s music.” You shouted back.

“What?” Lance turned to look at you, confusion written all over his features, and you resisted the urge to roll your eyes.

“I think it’s music.” You repeated, raising your voice a little more. He was staring at you this time, and between your voice and your lips, he seemed to get the gist of what you said.

“It’s terrible.”

“I noticed.” You had even hesitated to call it music, but you were pretty sure that was what it was attempting to be. The music itself sounded dissonant, clashing harmonies and melodies that were disjointed and wrong. You didn’t recognize any of the instruments, if there were any instruments. It had no recognizable rhythm and reminded you of gravel in a blender. The vocals resembled screeching, high pitched, frantic, and forming syllables that you couldn’t identify, making sounds you didn’t know were possible. It had dips and movements and patterns that you might find in music, but it wasn’t anything like Keith had ever heard. It wasn’t anything pleasant.

“Guys! Turn it off!” Lance was shouting, turning his head up toward the booth. “Pidge? Pidge!! Hunk!! I’m begging you. Please guys turn it off! Show mercy! Shiro? Allura? Coran!”
“THEY’RE NOT THERE!” You shouted through gritted teeth, but you glanced up at the booth in hopes that you might actually see figures there. You didn’t.

‘THEN WHAT’S HAPPENING??” He turned to look at you, eyes wide and desperate.

You didn’t know. “IT MUST BE A MALFUNCTION!”

“OOOOH NO, THIS IS IT. THE CASTLE IS ACTUALLY GOING TO KILL US.” He fell to his knees, hands still clamped over his ears. “WE’RE ALL ALONE AND THEY CAN’T HEAR US AND WE’RE GOING TO DIE. I THINK MY EARS ARE BLEEDING.”

“LANCE, KNOCK IT OFF.”

“TRAPPED FOREVER AND IT’S ALL YOUR FAULT!”

You glared at him. He was hunched over on his knees. Quite frankly, you were surprised you were managing to stay on your feet. “MAYBE IF YOU HAD STOPPED YELLING THEY WOULD HAVE LET US OUT SOONER!”

“AT LEAST IF I GO DEAF I WON’T HAVE TO HEAR YOUR STUPID VOICE ANYMORE!”

“What’s wrong with my voice?” You snapped. Your irritation with Lance had been numbed somewhat by the sudden intrusion of the music, but it spiked again. Your chest felt strange and tight as your heart hammered. What was wrong with your voice?

“NOTHING! THAT’S THE PROBLEM! IT’S PERFECT, JUST LIKE THE REST OF YOU!”

You… had to have heard him wrong. You narrowed your eyes at him, frowning. “What did you say?”

He glared at you, face scrunched up. He squeezed his eyes shut as he tilted his head back to shout with all clarity: “I SAID YOU’RE TOO FUCKING PERFECT!”

Your entire body felt warm, and your stomach was twisted in knots. With how fast your heart was beating, it was no wonder blood flowed to your face so quickly. It started in your chest, your neck, heat rising. It was in anger, you told yourself. Lance, infuriating, irritating, annoying Lance, had put you in a rage. It was normal for people’s faces to flush while they were angry. After all, Lance had managed to take a compliment and make it sound like an insult. “I’M NOT FUCKING PERFECT!” You shout, biting out the words.

Lance rolled his eyes, and his whole head, dramatically, “YOU’VE GOT TO BE KIDDING ME.” He managed to get to his feet, not without struggling and nearly falling back over, and he proceeded to do a small dance with his hands still glued firmly to his ears. ‘WHY THE FUCK YOU LYIN’? WHY YOU ALWAYS LYIN’?’

“What are you doing?” You knew exactly what he was doing.

He danced from foot to foot, torso moving and hips swinging as much as he could without moving his arms. He looked ridiculous. It was sickeningly adorable. “OH MY GOD, STOP FUCKING LYIN’!”

“OH MY GOD, STOP FUCKING SINGING.”

Your plea went unheard. He took one step toward you, bending his knees and moving his hips to
hump the air. “ALWAYS LYIN’ TO ME! YOU LYIN’ SO MUCH!”

“YOU ARE THE WORST DANCER.”

“YOU MAKING IT HARD FOR ME!” He jutted his hips to one side several times, then to the other. His singing was more like shouting with a rhythm and clashed awkwardly with the noise blaring from the speakers. You kept your eyes firmly off his hips.

“WHY ARE YOU LIKE THIS?”

“EVERY TIME YOU TELL ME SOMETHING I FIGURE THAT YOU LYIN’.” He spun around and stuck out his ass, shaking it at you. He then jumped back toward you several times, ass out. On the third shuffle jump, he lost his balance. His hands tore away from his ears as his arms flailed. You stepped aside as he fell on his ass. A look of cringing pain cross his features before he hurriedly put his hands to his ears once again. He groaned and slowly lowered himself to his back. “I’M JUST GONNA LIE DOWN… ALWAYS FUCKING LYING.”

You couldn’t help it. You laughed. It bubbled up your throat, straight past all the irritation and frustration, and burst from you lips, surprisingly you both. It’s sound was swallowed by the screeching music, but your shoulders shook as your eyes closed, your head tossing back a fraction. “YOU’RE AN IDIOT!” You said, your shout laced with amusement. The laugh had been sudden, but you got yourself under control quickly. But when you looked back to Lance, your grin hadn’t completely faded from your lips.
His face was blank, his eyes wide and his lips parted slightly as he stared up at you. You felt something akin to a mix of embarrassment and irritation well up inside you, and your smile faded from your lips. You held your expression in a careful blank. “WHAT?”

The reaction in Lance was instant. His frown and glare came back in full force. “YOU’RE DOING IT AGAIN!”

The corner of your lips twitched in agitation, and a wave of exasperation washed over you. “WHAT DID I DO?”

“YOU’RE BEING- YOU’RE BEING WEIRD!”

“How am I being weird?”

“You’re smiling!”

You blanked, blinking several times while you let his words sink in. “SERIOUSLY?” You were
tired, and you just wanted to strangle Lance. He made absolutely no sense. “SMILING ISN’T
WEIRD. EVERYONE SMILES.”

His face scrunched up, and he glared at you from his spot on the floor. “IT IS WHEN IT’S YOU.”
He struggled to get to his feet, hands still at his ears. He nearly fell over several times, but then he
was standing and once again sticking his head close to yours. “EVERYTHING WAS FINE, AND
THEN YOU MADE IT WEIRD!”

Your mouth dropped open as you gaped at him, eyes wide. Then your lips curled, and your nose
wrinkled. You couldn’t believe this. The two of you had finally started to get along. Everything
seemed to be fine. Lance could be around you for longer periods of time without throwing insults,
and when he did, they were more playful and teasing than anything. And so he didn’t get on your
nerves, and for the first time, you actually started to feel like the two of you were friends. You were
bonding. You actually started to like Lance. You liked spending time with him. He was an idiot, but
it was endearing. You looked forward to the time you spent together, the banter, his ridiculous ideas,
his stupid gestures. Then he had suddenly done a complete turn around. He was annoyed whenever
you were in the same room. He glared at you with more animosity than you were used to seeing from him. He didn’t like to be near you, purposefully positioning himself as far as possible. It hurt. It hurt more than you wanted to admit. Especially since you hadn’t done anything besides start to open up to him.

And all because you were starting to smile around him?!

“YOU STARTED ACTING WEIRD BECAUSE I WAS SMILING?”

“YOU STARTED LAUGHING, TOO! YOU’RE KEITH! YOU DON’T LAUGH!”

Your head jerked back a fraction, your lip curling. “I LAUGH!”

“NOT AROUND ME, YOU DON’T! BUT THEN YOU STARTED TO AND IT GOT WEIRD!”

“YOU DON’T MIND WHEN THE OTHERS LAUGH! I THOUGHT YOU WANTED ME TO LAUGH AT YOUR STUPID JOKES?!”

“I DID!” Several expression crossed his features, all gone before you could identify them. Overall he just looked as frustrated as you felt. “BUT THEN YOU LAUGHED AND IT WAS WEIRD AND IT- IT GOT CONFUSING! YOU’RE CONFUSING!” He made no sense, but his tone was clearly accusatory, and you bristled.

You pulled back your head back, offended, your lips curling and your nose wrinkling. “WELL I’M SORRY THAT MY LAUGH OFFENDS YOU, LANCE. NOT EVERYONE CAN HAVE A NICE LAUGH.”

“THAT’S NOT- YOUR LAUGH ISN’T- WHAT I MEANT WAS- UGH!” Lance looked like he was grinding his teeth together. He bent his knees, squeezed his eyes shut, threw back his head, and screamed out his frustration.

Mid scream, the music abruptly stopped. Lance’s scream continued for a couple more seconds before he stopped. You both stood in blissful silence for several moments, looking around warily. When the music didn’t start up again, you slowly lowered your hands from your ears. You looked at the palms of your hands, half expecting to see blood. There weren’t any. Your ears were ringing, but you breathed a sigh of relief.

“Oh, thank quiznak.” Lance said, his voice still louder than normal. You were willing to bet his ears were ringing, too. He sighed, and looked up at control room. “Alright, haha, nice one, guys. You can let us out now!”

You rolled your eyes and crossed your arms over your chest. You could still feel your heartbeat through your ribcage. “They’re not there, Lance.”

His frown was bordering on a pout when he turned to glare at you, his head and shoulders slumping. “Oh yeah? Then how’d the music turn off, huh? And how’d it turn on to begin with?”

You honestly didn’t have any idea, but you didn’t think your friends and teammates were up there watching the two of you suffer. Shiro and Allura wouldn’t let them. You shrugged. “Weirder things have happened.”

He snorted to himself, putting a hand on his hip. A small smirk curved one corner of his lips. “Yeah, like you smiling.”
You felt your face flush in sudden agitation. “Why does my smile bother you so much?”

His smirk fell, and he examined your face for a moment. Something strange overcame his features, something soft, something worried. He looked like he was about to say something, but then he held his hands up and spun around on his heel. “Nope. I’m done. I’m outta here.”

You watched with one eyebrow raised as Lance cautiously moved away from you. He inched forward, sliding his feet across the floor, his hands raised and held out in front of him. His brows were furrowed, and his eyes were narrowed in concentration. His lips were pursed and pushed out. He looked absolutely ridiculous. Before you could say anything, his right hand hit the wall of the maze. The shock brought the wall panel briefly into view before it faded. Lance yelped, electricity crackled, and then he snatched his hand back.

“Alright, not that way.” He grumbled to himself, clutching his hand to his chest and rubbing it with his left. He glared at the wall like it had personally offended him. He turned his head to the left and reached out his other hand. “Maybe this-“ Another crackle of electricity and another short scream. “This way then.” He turned to his right and inched forward, leading slowly with his right foot.

“What are you doing?” You asked flatly, giving him a blank stare.

He gave you a quick glare over his hunched shoulder. “Unlike you, I’m trying to get out of here.”

“And how do you plan on doing that?” You had to admit, you were curious. As you watched, Lance moved forward until his foot bumped against a wall. He yelped and jumped back immediately, hopping on one foot as he held the injured one in both hands.

“I’m going to make it out of this maze if it kills me.” He hissed through clenched teeth. He turned to his right to pick a new direction, but took one step before running head first into a wall. He leapt back, both hands flying to his forehead and nose. His eyes watered from the brief pain.

You had to choke back a laugh, turning it into a small cough. The corner of your lips quirked upward. “It just might.”

“It’s better than standing there next to you.” He turned all the way around and started in that direction. With the walls of the maze invisible, he looked hilarious scooting forward, searching warily with one finger extended. He flinched with every inch.
“Even if you get out, the doors are still locked.” You reminded him, watching with amusement as a spark arched to his finger. He jerked his hand back so quickly and so dramatically that he hit a different wall. His noise of victory was quickly cut off.

“If we make it out of the maze by the time they come back, they’ll think we’ve bonded enough or whatever to work as a team.” He said, rubbing his nose. When he moved his hand away, he opened his mouth and wiggled his nose from side to side, scrunching it up. Your eyebrows went up, your lips curling a little more. You were willing to bet his face still tingled from running into the wall. “Then they’ll have to let us out.”

“That’s…” You started to say, then your words died in your throat. Your half smile fell, and you looked at Lance, thoughtful. Your head tilted to the side. “That’s not a bad idea.”

It wouldn’t be a bad idea, if you actually had any intention of going through the maze with him. Which you didn’t. You didn’t bring up this little flaw in his plan.

Lance was grinning, back straight with confidence. He put his hands on his hips. “See? Trust me a
You shook your head, trying to stifle the warmth that was spreading in your chest at the sight of his cocky grin. It had been a while since you had seen that expression on his face. It was so completely and utterly Lance, but he had been so on edge around you lately that you hadn’t seen much of it. You hadn’t realized how much you missed it. “I trust you about as far as I can throw you.”

He leaned his weight on one hip, crossing his arms over his chest. His smirk widened. He tilted his chin downward, looking up at you with a glint in his eye that made your stomach churn uncomfortably. “Dude, I’ve seen you throw people across a room, so I guess that means you trust me a lot, huh?” He winked and pointed at you with a finger gun. His voice was all smug teasing.

You had thought you missed the light hearted teasing, but the way your heart fluttered and you face warmed and your palms began to sweat… It was uncomfortable. You gave him a blank stare and kept your voice even. “Let me rephrase: I trust you about as far as you can throw me.”

His smug look dropped instantly and he frowned. “Hey!” His hands flew to his sides, his head leaning forward as he took a step toward you- only to run face first into another wall. He yelped and scrambled backwards, hitting the wall behind him. He screamed again, jumping forward with both hands flying from his face to his ass. His face was twisted in anguish. He looked absolutely pitiful.

You couldn’t help it: you threw back your head and laughed, then threw yourself forward and wrapped your arms around your middle, hunched over.

“It’s not funny!” He shouted, and when you glanced up at him, he was pouting, rubbing his nose with one hand and his ass with the other. “Have some sympathy, man.”

“You brought this on yourself.” You said as you straightened, wiping the corner of your eye. You crossed your arms comfortably across your chest and grinned at him. “You’re an idiot.” You hadn’t expected that to come out with so much… affection.

“Oh, yeah? Well you’re-“ His mouth worked, trying to find words. You raised an eyebrow, still smiling, which only made his red face even more prominent. He blushed so easily. “You’re a bigger idiot!” He finished lamely, sticking out his tongue.

“Careful, or you’ll shock your tongue.”

His tongue retreated quickly and his mouth snapped shut, his eyes wide with fear. He looked around, like he might somehow be able to see the invisible walls around him. Then his eyes settled back on you. “Aw, Keith, I didn’t know you cared.” He said dryly.

“On second thought, shock your tongue. Maybe then you’ll shut up.”

He turned his back on you and continued his awkward and wary shuffle forward. “You’d miss my voice too much.”

Something inside you twisted at that, and you didn’t like how true that statement might be. “Don’t project your own issues onto me.”

“I’m not projecting!” He shouted without looking at you

You raised an eyebrow, lip quirking upward. You couldn’t help it. “You’re the one who said I have a perfect voice.”

Lance’s back was to you, but he froze, his shoulders going rigid. He whipped around, face bright
red. He started to throw out a hand to point to you, but then stopped, eyeing the air around him warily. He settled for flipping you off. “Why don’t you just shut your quiznak and let me concentrate!”

You shrugged. “Fine.”

“Fine!”

“Fine!”

“Good!” He spun back around, fuming as he continued to inch forward through the maze.

You watched him, jumping slightly whenever there was a sudden loud crackle of electricity followed by one of Lance’s patented yelps. He kept going though, alternating each hand and each foot. He was an idiot. A complete and utter idiot, and yet he managed to make stupidity look… almost cute? The maze turned him back around so you could see the side of his face. He was still a deep, ruddy red beneath his dark complexion. One finger that had just been shocked was in his mouth, and he sucked on it while he stared straight ahead, brows knit together in concentration, face twisted into a wry and wary expression. You put a hand to your face, hiding your own expression while forcing yourself to stop staring at the finger he sucked on.

You felt like your face was on fire.

Chapter End Notes

DO NOT REPOST THE ART FROM THIS FIC

Instead, hop on over here and reblog it from the artist herself HERE

My Tumblr
The Artist's Tumblr
Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

In which Lance is shocked repeatedly, and apparently being an idiot is contagious

Chapter Notes

In case you haven't figured it out, this fic is like, 90% shenanigans and two boys being 100% oblivious of themselves and each other.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

[LANCE]

You felt like your face was on fire.

And it had everything to do with the fact that you were inching your way through an invisible maze that shocked you when you fucked up but you had no idea where you were going. This was the first time you had done this without someone in the control room guiding you through it. Your body being warm had everything to do with the fact that you were somewhere around your thirtieth shock, or maybe fortieth? Fifty? You had been shocked a lot, and you probably had just as much electricity running through your veins as you had adrenaline.

Your blush had absolutely nothing to do with a certain red paladin standing there watching every move you made.

Who were you kidding? Your blush had everything to do with Keith. You knew he was standing there, judging you, looking down on you, laughing at you every time you hit a wall. It made you so mad. You hated him watching you with that impassive face. You had such a hard time reading him and you hated it. You hated him, Keith, with his stupid perfect voice, and his stupid perfect face, and his stupid perfect mullet, and his stupid perfect smile that didn’t happen a lot but when it did it was like the clouds clearing and sun pouring through and making you feel all warm, too warm. He had no right to be that- that… perfect. UGH! Keith.

But you forced yourself to continue, pushing your way through the maze. You refused to give up. You had already started, and you sure as hell weren’t going to let Keith see you back out of it now. You’d make it to the other side and rub it in his stupid, smug, perfect face. He had even admitted that this wasn’t a bad idea, and you were determined to prove to him that you were right.

It was these thoughts that kept you going, kept you focused. But as time went on, and the more you got shocked, the more Keith’s silence started to grate on your nerves. It had been fine at first. Blissful even. He finally shut his stupid mouth, and you were able to focus on mapping out the maze in your head.

He had started out chuckling and snorting under his breath whenever you hit a wall of the maze.
Which was super annoying, but the worst part was the way your stomach twisted and your chest tightened at the sound of it. He was watching you, and you were hyper aware of the fact that he was watching you, and you… you liked it. You hated that you liked it, but there it was. You liked having Keith’s attention on you, and you liked hearing his stupid breathy laugh. You liked being the cause of it. And you hated how much you liked it. Keith was your arch enemy from school. He was your chosen rival. He was annoying and frustrating and did everything you wanted to be able to do so well that it was obnoxious. You had hated him, but you had started to see him as a friend. He was your teammate, and you made a good team. He was still frustrating, but you got along nine times out of ten.

You had just wanted to be his friend. Like you were friends with Pidge and Hunk and even Shiro. You hadn’t wanted to like being the center of his attention. You hadn’t wanted to like being the one to make him crack a smile. You hadn’t wanted to be proud of making him laugh. You hadn’t wanted to feel… more. But you did. You felt a lot more than you had been expecting, and you weren’t ready for it.

Even now you were hyper aware of him. With every turn you made, you knew exactly where he was. Every breathy chuckle and amused snort sent shivers down your spine and made goosebumps rise on your arms. Part of you was pleased to be the cause of his amusement, but a bigger part of you was annoyed and frustrated that his attention on you was spent laughing at you and not because you were doing something worthwhile.

Your life would have been much better if you had never tried to befriend Keith.

Nevertheless, because you were so intently aware of him, you noticed the moment he stopped chuckling whenever you hit a wall. He stopped sounding amused all together. He was, for once, actually silent. You couldn’t help the curious glance you sent over your shoulder as you turned. He was no longer looking at you with his eyebrows up and his lips quirked in amusement. He was scowling.

What the hell had you done now?

You ignored him and went about your business, but his silence weighed on you. You never thought you’d miss his stupid voice, even if it was just laughing at you. You wanted to know what was going on in his head, but his face was unreadable. He just looked… sour.

He didn’t speak up until you had managed to shock yourself about five times in quick succession. You hit one wall, turned one way only to hit another wall, then went another step in the opposite direction and hit a wall again, but the first wall wasn’t there until you took a couple steps and shocked yourself twice more.

“Oh, come on!” You shouted, putting a tingling finger in your mouth. Your nerve endings were buzzing from all the shocks. You wondered if you’d ever regain feeling in your hands. You rubbed your elbow fiercely and stomped on both feet, trying to regain some feeling before moving on and once more sacrificing them to the invisible maze walls.

“It’s a curve, you idiot!” Keith called suddenly, sounding extremely exasperated. You got the feeling that he had been holding it in for a while.

You stopped stomping and turned to look at him over your shoulder, one finger knuckle still in your mouth. He was gritting his teeth and glaring at you. The fact that he had spoken caught you off guard, and it took you a moment for his words to sink in. When they did, you glanced around, trying to remember all the odd angles that you had just been shocked at. “Oh yeaah,” You said slowly, nodding to yourself. “That would make sense.”
Out of the corner of your eye, you saw Keith face palm.

You would be lying if you said you didn’t feel some satisfaction in frustrating him as much as he frustrated you.

You pulled your knuckle out of your mouth, wiped it on your pants, and started forward again, inching along what you assumed to be the curved passageway. Your knees were bent as you slid them along the floor, and your pinky was extended forward. Slowly, carefully. Your heart hammered in your chest and your body was strung tight, anticipating the moment you felt the next shock. The curved corridor was steeper than you anticipated, your arm, side, and shoulder brushed up against the maze wall.

Electricity coursed through you and a loud crackle filled the air, mixing with the sound of your scream. It had caught you off guard completely. You instinctively jerked backwards, away from the wall.

“Lance! Don’t step back-“ Keith’s shout was cut off by another of your screams as your leg came in
contact with the opposite side of the curved corridor.

“Sweet quiznak!” You gasp out, hoping forward on one foot. You tried to stay exactly between the two walls. Balancing on your current good foot, you shook out your shocked leg, trying to get the tingling to stop. You wiggled your arm and rolled your shoulder, trying to get the terrible sensation out of your body. God you hated this maze.

“Stop doing that!” Keith was shouting at you.

You gritted your teeth, shoulders tensing as you turned around in place to face him. You rubbed your arm, rotating your shoulder and rolling your head to the side. You glared at him. “This isn’t exactly easy.” You snapped.

He rolled his eyes, rolling his head in a slight circle before it rested to the side, mirror your stance. “It’s also not as hard as you’re making it.”

“Oh yeah?!” You were right. He was looking down on you.

“Yeah.”

“You don’t think I can do it?”

“No, I don’t.” He said bluntly, his tone unamused. “You’re going to end up getting yourself trapped in a corner and then I’m going to have to come rescue you.”

“Like I’d need your help!” You turned back in the direction you had been going, assuming your sliding position and sticking a finger out. “I got this maze all figured out. Easy peasy. Besides, I think I’m getting used to the shocks.”

“I don’t think that’s a good thing.” He said flatly.

Your eyes narrowed, concentrated on the open air in front of you, waiting for the brief moment of flying sparks before the full shock. “I’m sorry, Keith! I can’t hear you over the sound of me winning.”

“We’re not competing!” His voice raised to a near shout. You felt the corner of your lips quirk into a small smirk. He was getting flustered and angry. Good. He deserved it. You liked when he was flustered and angry. No one could make the great Keith lose his cool like you could, and you were proud of that.

Besides, frustrated Keith you could handle. You weren’t so sure about smiling Keith.

“Uh, sure, Keith.” You said, starting to feel cocky. You glanced back at him, smirking. “You’re only saying that cause I’m winning.”

“You’re not winning!” Keith groaned, gesturing to you with one hand while the other remained crossed over his chest.

You laughed. “Whatever helps ease the pain of losing, Keith- OW” You had stopped paying attention, and the inevitable happened: your finger hit the maze wall. You didn’t jump back in time and your whole hand pressed into it before you jerked it back. You held the abused hand to your mouth, and turned to glare at Keith.

You were expecting him to laugh at you. Hell, if you weren’t the one getting shocked, you’d laugh at you. But you were surprised to find him looking… angry. Exasperated and angry. His brow was
knit together and his nose wrinkled. He almost looked like he was in pain, which wasn’t fair, cause it was oddly adorable and you were the one experiencing all the pain.

“Don’t. Say. Anything.” You ground out, turning back to the task at hand. At least you found the end to the curved corridor. You turned in one direction and inched forward experimentally. You shocked your finger. “Ow, okay, not that way. This would be EASIER if SOMEONE shut down the MAZE!” You shouted pointedly.

“They’re not there!”

“Says you. You’re not always right, Kei- OW.”

“Lance, just STOP. You’re going to end up killing yourself.”

You smirked, leaning back to eye him sideways. You raised an eyebrow, puckering out your lips. “Careful, Keith. Keep that up and I’ll start to think you actually care about me.” His face reddened in a way that wasn’t just anger. It made your insides flip.

His hands curled into fists. “Voltron can’t have just one leg, you idiot!”

You rolled your eyes, picking a new direction to creep towards. You had forgotten which way you had come from and which way the wall was. Keith was totally ruining your concentration and making this a lot harder than it needed to be. “Now who’s being dramatic? Don’t worry, man, I got this.” You sounded smooth and confident, but the effect was ruined when your hand hit a wall. You hissed.

“You definitely don’t.”

“I can do this!” Your elbow hit the wall, sending a wave of fresh nerve pain down your arm. You yelped.

“You can’t!”

You flipped him off and kept walking. Your knee slammed into the wall. You fell backwards, landing on your ass and cradling your knee to your chest. You squeezed your eyes shut briefly against the pain. “I got this!”

“LANCE!” Your eyes snapped open. Was Keith… shouting? You stared at him, lips parted and eyes wide, pain momentarily forgotten. You had never heard him yell your name like that before. There was so much… intensity to it. It got your attention, that was for sure. He was glaring at you, his hair falling across his forehead, breathing heavily. His hands were curled into fists at his sides, his arms straight and shoulders rigid. “Just STOP, okay?”

You were shocked. Did he… was he actually worried about you? A strange tingling started up in your gut and it had nothing to do with the electric maze.

“You’re already an idiot, and you’re just going to end up frying the few braincells you have left.”

Never mind. That tingling feeling must be indigestion.

“Oh yeah?!?” You pushed yourself to your feet. “What’s wrong, Keith? Does it bother you when I do this?” You threw out your hand, wincing in anticipation. You hit nothing. Your hand hung out in open air. You frowned at it. “Oh suuuure, when I want to hit you, you’re not there!” You shouted at the maze. You wanted to dismantle the thing.
“Lance, are you seriously going to-“

Before he could finish, you took several quick steps forward until your hand hit the maze wall. You yelped, pulling the hand back to your chest. You turned your glare on Keith. “Does that bother you? Would an idiot do this” You pulled back your foot and kicked the wall of the maze. Pain from the force of the impact laced up your leg along with electricity. You yelped and fell backwards, landing on your ass with your hands behind you.

“Yes!” He threw his hands up in the air as he shouted, then brought them down to gesture at you. “That’s exactly what an idiot would do!”

He… might have a point there. But you weren’t exactly thinking straight. Your body hurt, your skin tingled, your muscles ached, and you were stuck in a room with the single most frustrating and confusing guy you had ever met in your life. You swore his scent was still stuck in your nose. A strange mix of Altean soap and Keith. You rubbed your nose just thinking about it, glaring at him over your hand.

Leaning back on both hands with one knee up, you lifted your other leg as high as you could get it while still keeping it straight. You stared at him, eyes narrowed and lips pursed into a challenging frown.

Keith stared at you blankly, but his eyes narrowed in suspicion. “Lance, what are you doing?” He asked flatly.

You pointed your toe as much as you could while wearing shoes, leaning back and holding your leg up high.

“You look ridiculous.”

You slowly started to bend your knee, aiming your pointed toes at the spot where you knew the wall was.

“Lance, oh my god-“

“Does this boooooother you, Keith?” You drawled out, slowly lowering your foot to the wall.
“Lance, I swear to-“ You didn’t stop. His eyes flashed and his frown deepened. “Yes!” He threw his hands in the air. “Yes! It bothers me!”

“Good!” Your foot made contact with the wall. You gritted your teeth to swallow your scream and pulled your leg back, somehow holding your position. Okay, you realized you were probably being stupid and you should probably stop purposefully touching the walls now. But it was all worth it to get a rise out of Keith.

“Lance, knock it off!” He snapped.

“Why don’t you make me!” You snapped right back.

His body stiffened, his hands curled into fists at his sides. “Fine! I will!”

You blinked. You hadn’t been expecting that. You leaned forward to get your weight off your hands and lifted them up into the air in challenge. “Be my guest!”
He looked around, tossing his head to get his hair out of his eyes. His body relaxed slightly as you could practically see the cogs turning in his head. He tentatively lifted his hands and held them out in front of him, palms flat. You lowered your arms, wrapping them around your bent knees. The movement caught his eye and his head snapped around to glare at you. “Don’t you move.”

You held up your hands defensively and shook your head. “Oh, I’m not going anywhere.” You lowered your arms back around your knees and grinned. “I wanna see this.”

His glare narrowed a fraction, his lips pursed slightly. He turned his head back to the task. He slid his feet forward, inching forward. He kept his back straight and his legs unbent, his hands stretched out in front of him. You had a perfect view of his face, and the nervous expression plastered there. His brows were knit together, his eyes wary. He licked his bottom lip and sucked it between his teeth. Your heart sped up and you felt your lungs stutter.

You didn’t get to stare much longer before his hand hit the wall and he shouted, flinching and ripping his hand back.

You threw back your head and laughed. He shot you a glare, his teeth clenched and his lip curling. His brows were still knit together, but this time you thought it might be from the sudden shock of pain. He looked away from you, and you got the distinct impression that he was embarrassed. But instead of giving up, he turned and held up his hands again, mouth set in determination.

“Oh, this is gonna be good.” You said, grinning. Your body still ached, and now that you weren’t moving, the odd and uncomfortable tingling sensation was brought to your attention. Your nerve endings felt like they were on fire. But all of it was worth it to watch Keith stubbornly try to feel his way through the maze.

You didn’t even mind the pain.

Chapter End Notes

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My Tumblr
The Artist’s Tumblr
Chapter 4

Chapter Summary

In which Keith moves through the maze, and has a shocking self revelation

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

[KEITH]

You didn’t even mind the pain.

Yeah, the maze hurt. Especially when you were repeatedly hitting the walls. You had never really minded this training exercise. It didn’t take long for your team to get the hang of it, and even Lance could guide you through it with minimal incidents. But that was different. That was a shock every couple minutes at most. This was a shock nearly every time you started moving again. So yeah, the shocks hurt, but they were more obnoxious than anything, startling you out of your concentration. The pain you could deal with. You had always been good at pushing past physical pain. You weren’t nearly as loud about it as the others. You preferred to bear your pain in silence.

So no, you didn’t mind the pain from the electric maze.

Lance, on the other hand, was a pain in the ass that was hard to ignore.

“Don’t tell me you’re giving up already?”

You didn’t need to turn around to know that Lance was grinning. He had been smirking obnoxiously wide ever since you made the stupid decision to dive into this godforsaken maze. You still weren’t sure why you thought this would be a good idea. Lance had just been so annoying, and he was constantly running into the stupid walls, and you were fairly certain that he was going to sustain permanent brain damage if he had kept it up for much longer, and god why did you care?

You didn’t know why you cared, but you did. It had been funny at first. Hilarious even. Haha, Lance is an idiot who’s getting shock in the maze. But the deeper he went, the more he got shocked, and the more he got shocked, the more irritated you had become. Irrationally irritated. You flinched every time he shouted in pain, and you felt bad for him for seconds afterward until he started moving again and anger bubbled up your spine. Why was he so stubborn and why did he keep hurting himself?

Why did you care?

You wished you hadn’t cared. If you hadn’t, then you wouldn’t be stuck in this maze yourself. But at least while you moved through it, he was too distracted to continue himself. At least you didn’t scream like an idiot.

“Is the mighty Keith ready to accept defeat?”

On second thought, you preferred it when he was the one getting hurt. Too bad you had already started and you weren’t about to give him the satisfaction of backing out now. You would make your way through the maze, you would get to where he was, then you would… you weren’t sure what
you were going to do when you reached him.

Strange him? Throw him into the wall? Shut his mouth for five goddamn seconds?

“Come on, just admit that I’m better than you at blind invisible maze-ing.”

“That shouldn’t even be a thing.” You mumbled, mostly to yourself. You hated that he had made it a thing.

“Just say it.” He continued, ignoring you. “Just say, ‘oooooh, Lance! You’re just so much braver and hard core than I am! You’re so cool and handsome and all the ladies love you! Lance, you’re my hero! Blue is so much better than Red!’”

Your eyes narrowed as you turned your head to look at him sideways. He was sitting cross legged on the floor, his hands clasped together and put under his cheek, head tilted, and eyelashes batting. His voice had raised several pitches.

“I don’t sound like that.”

“Sure you do, you sound exactly like that.”

You grunted, turning back to stare straight ahead. You were standing in front of a spot where you knew a wall was. Your hand still stung, and you shook it out next to you. You were mentally mapping out the maze, and if memory served… You stretched out a foot to the right, but pulled it back instantly as electricity sparked and jumped to your foot. You gritted your teeth, stepping back and tapping your foot on the ground to shake out the tingling feeling that lingered. Yup, there was a wall there, too. Which meant you were in a corner. The only way to go was left.

“Come on, Keith, just admit defeat. No one will judge you. It’ll be our little secret.”

You highly doubted that. “Not on your life.”

You turned to your left and started forward, step by small step, left hand outstretched. You were facing Lance. Your heart skipped a beat, your eyes widening a fraction before narrowing. “Come oooon, come oooon.” You muttered to yourself. Hopefully this was the straight shot you needed to reach Lance. He was sitting with his arms crossed over his chest, smirking at you. He was confident, but as you inched closer, that confidence started to falter and fade. You saw it in his eyes, in the way his smirk fell. A surge of excitement pulsed through you. This was it. You were almost there. You moved a little faster. You were going to get to him and punch him right in-

Both hands hit a wall and electricity coursed through you. Your knees gave out from surprise and you fell forward, your chest and cheek hitting the wall. Your eyes widened as your jaw involuntarily clenched shut. Your fingers curled. A shout was choked back in your throat. Then you were falling backwards, losing your balance and landing on your back. You groaned, staring up at the ceiling.

Okay, so maybe you shouldn’t have done that.

Lance’s laugh was loud and obnoxious. How could someone even laugh that… boisterously? It echoed around the room, filling up every nook and cranny. You closed your eyes, trying to let it wash over you. But it crawled under your skin and grated on your nerves. You grit your teeth. Why did his laugh make your stomach flip? He made you nauseous.

“Oh man! That was great!” He huffed between fits of laughter. “You should’ve seen the look on your face! Oh man, I wish I had a camera, cause that was a grade A Kodak moment right there!” His laughter slowly died down into soft chuckles, then even those faded.
You continued to lay on your back, eyes closed, focused on your breathing. You could still feel your skin tingling. Half of your face felt momentarily numb. You twitched your fingers a fraction, just to see if you could. Maybe if you pretended to be dead, Lance would stop talking.

“Keith?” No such luck. At least he was no longer laughing. In fact, he almost sounded concerned. “Buddy? Hey! You dead over there? Oh man, Shiro is going to kill me if you die. Hey, Keith! Can you hear me? Rise and shine, buddy!”

You lifted one arm and flipped him off.

“That’s right, come back to the land of the living. Move away from the light and follow the sound of my voice!”

“I’d rather die,” You grumbled. “At least then I wouldn’t have to hear your voice.”

“Ha! Jokes on you. I’d just haunt you from beyond the grave!”

You groaned, running both your hands down your face. “That’s not how haunting works, genius.”

He made a casual sound that gave you the distinct impression of him shrugging as he brushed off your comment. “I’d find a way to make it work.” He paused, and you didn’t say anything. The silence was blissful, for the whole thirty seconds it lasted. “Just let me know if you feel like giving up, man.” His voice was filled with that cocky confidence that got under your skin.

“I’m not giving up!” You snapped, sitting up suddenly and glaring at him. “Unlike you I’m not going through this thing blind. I’m mentally mapping out the maze.” He was staring at you, arms crossed over his chest. His eyes were wide, and his mouth hung open. Your frown deepened, brow furrowing. “What?”

Slowly, his lips curved into a wide, shit eating grin. His smile reached his eyes, crinkling them at the edges. You hated how much you loved that smile. “Well good morning there, sleeping beauty. Need a comb?”

“What are you-“ Your words died in your throat as you reached up to touch your hair. You could feel the static coming from it, making long strands stand on end away from your head. You scowled at him, running both hands through your hair to try to calm it.
Lance just laughed that loud, obnoxious laugh. You tried to ignore the way your stomach flipped at the sight of that grin. “Oh man! I’m gonna get Pidge to make me a space camera cause damn, this is gold! That’s more hilarious than your helmet hair!”

“Shut it, Lance.” You grumbled. You felt warm all over. Once you were convinced most of your hair was back to lying flat, you pushed yourself to your feet. Okay, so there was a wall directly in front of you. You were so close to Lance, but you still apparently had a few more turns to go.

As you turned to the side and started inching forward once again, Lance laid back on the floor, lacing his fingers together behind his head. One knee was bent into the air and he rested the ankle of his other foot across it. “I’m gonna remember that for the rest of my life.” He said wistfully. “The mighty Keith, scowling with straight up fresh out of bed sex hair.” He sighed happily, and you pressed your lips tight together. Your ears felt like they were burning. “I wonder if I can get Coran to hook me up to one of those memory-to-hologram doohickies.” He mused. “Then we could set up a holo-Keith to just stand there with permanent bed head and everyone could enjoy it.”
“You’d need a brain and the ability to focus.” You said dryly, inching forward, fingers outstretched, curled, and cautious. You zapped a finger on a wall and automatically turned, shaking that hand next to you.

“Oh yeah? And if you’re so smart, how’s that mental mapping going?” You hated how smug he sounded.

You glanced over at him. He was still lying down, but propped up on his elbows, twisted to lay slightly on his side as he watched you. Both legs were bent, one knee sticking up in the air and the other laying on the ground. When he saw you looking at him, he smirked, one eyebrow raised. He was cocky, and confident, and you hated how good he looked like that. That smirk made your stomach do unpleasant flips and your blood pump a little too fast for comfort.

You frowned and looked away.

“It’s fine.” Truth be told, it was extremely hard to concentrate with Lance watching you. You could feel his gaze hot on your back, and your hair stood on end. Half of your attention was
subconsciously devoted to simply being aware of his presence.

He snorted a short laugh. “Yeah, sure, and that’s why you got stuck in a corner ten minutes ago.”

Your brows furrowed. “It’s basically trial and error here, Lance. I can’t map it unless I’ve been there.”

His brief snort again. “Sure, keep telling yourself that, man.”

You grit your teeth. “This isn’t an exact science.”

“So you admit I’m pretty good for getting this far.” You glanced at him again, and he had tilted his chin down, grinning up at you and waggling his eyebrows. “Just admit it, Keith: I’m better than you.”

“You kinda ruined that when you started touching the walls on purpose.” You said dryly, and got the satisfaction of watching his smile drop and his brows fall into a flat line. Then his smile was back in place and he was waving a hand at you to brush it off, closing his eyes and tilting his head back.

“Oh, that? That was just to prove how hardcore I am. These walls? Pfff, they don’t mean nothing. I ain’t scared of them.” He turned to the side and slowly extended an arm. The second sparks flew to his fingertips, he pulled back, shaking his hand. His confidence faltered as he tried to smirk through his wince. “See? Nothing.”

You rolled your eyes, and turned back in the direction you were going. “Whatever, man.” You were headed closer to him now. Not directly at him, but parallel. From what you could remember of the direction he had taken to get there, you were coming up on the side opposite the curve.

“What? You don’t believe me?”

“I didn’t say anything.”

“Ooooh, don’t you ‘I didn’t say anything’ me! I can hear it in your tone!”

You sighed, tilting your head to look at him. “Lance, what are you-“ Your words stopped abruptly as you saw Lance standing there, hand outstretched again. Your brows dropped. “What are you doing?”

“I’m proving I’m more hardcore than you.” He said smugly. “Come on, Keith. I bet I can touch this wall longer than you can.”

“I’m not doing that.”

“What’s wrong, Keith? You scaaaaared.”

“I’m not scared!”

“Uh huh, why don’t you put your money where your quiznak is?”

Was your eye twitching? You could definitely feel your eye twitching. “That doesn’t even make sense!” You held a hand out, fingers curled. It hit a wall, and you pulled it back, hissing briefly. You turned in a new direction. You were facing him now.

“How do you know?! It’s an alien word!” While he was yelling, his hand extended more and his knuckles brushed the wall and he yelped in surprise, snatched his hand back. He stared at the spot next to him like the wall had reached out and bit him.
“Lance!” You snapped without thinking, your hands curling into fists.

He tore his eyes away from the invisible wall to stare at you blankly, blinking a few times in surprise. Then his lips slowly curved into a shit eating grin that was layered in smug realization. His eyes were crinkled as he tilted his head to the side. You felt your heartbeat pick up. You hated when he looked at you like that. You have given him something, that much was clear. You had fucked up.

“Oh yeaaaaah,” He said, drawing out the word, sounding like he just remembered something. “This bothers you, doesn’t it?” He hovered his hand in the air, fingers wiggling as they danced just inches from the invisible wall.

You grit your teeth and looked away from him, shuffling your feet forward slowly. You had a feeling you were close. You tried to focus on your mental map, figuring out where you were in relation to where Lance was. It was difficult, however, to concentrate when Lance was sitting there, smirking at you with his fingers dangling dangerously close to the electric wall.

“Hey, Keeeeeeith,” Your heart squeezed when he drawled your name. “Does this boooother you?”

“Lance,” You snapped, not quite able to hide the frustration in your voice. “Just— stop it.” You kept moving, testing the walls and looking for the next corner. You were so close. So very close. Only a couple yards away if you drew a straight line. Unfortunately, the maze didn’t operate in a straight line.

“Keeeeeith.” His voice was so falsely sweet and innocent.

You tried not to look at him, you really did. But you glanced at him and your face tightened at the sight of his stupid smug grin. Your chest felt like it was on fire, slowly spreading up your neck. When did his smug smirks start doing this to you? They had always irritated you, but this was something… more. You weren’t sure when it had started, and you didn’t want to think about what it meant.

He tilted his chin down, gazing up at you as he waggled his eyebrows. “I’m gonna do it.” Despite his words, his hand didn’t move.

“Lance,” You said flatly. You reached out slowly, feeling the small snag of sparks. You pulled your hand back. “No.”

“Why do you care?”

You opened your mouth, ready to fire back, but you snapped it back shut. Your brows furrowed as you pursed your lips. That was the same question you had been asking yourself. Why did you care? If he was so hell bent on being an idiot, you should’ve just let him. You should have sat back and watched him hurt himself repeatedly in the maze. He’d stop eventually. Probably. But no, it had annoyed you to see him hurt himself over and over again. It frustrated you to watch it, and you just wanted him to stop. You could have let him learn a painful lesson, but instead you let him goad you into going through the maze yourself. And now it was too late to back down, or you’d never hear the end of it.

His question had been simple, but it was a question that you didn’t want to look at too closely.

“I don’t.” You mumbled, but it didn’t sound convincing.

“Obviously you do, otherwise you’d just let me hurt myself.” He sounded so smug. Bastard.

You inched forward and reached out. Your hand didn’t meet a wall. You felt the corner of your lips
twitch into the barest of smiles. “Believe it or not, I don’t want to be part of a giant space robot with a brain-damaged leg.”

“Just admit it, Keith. You actually care about me.” He pushed himself to his feet and turned to face you. His hip was cocked to the side, his arms crossed over his chest, and his head tilted. He was still smirking at you, and god dammit you would do anything to just wipe that smile off his face.

“No, I don’t.” You turned to face him, arms crossing over your chest to mirror him.

“You do! You came all the way out here to keep me from hurting myself! You liiiike me.” He leaned forward, drawing out the word with a waggle of his eyebrows.

You scowled. “I came out here to shut you up.”

He ignored you. “You liiiike me, you really liiiike me.”

You felt heat creeping up your neck at an alarming speed. “Oh god, don’t start singing.”

Too late. He hand has hands out in front of himself, elbows out. His shoulders bobbed in time with his hips swaying from side to side, two beats each. “You liiiike me. Keith liiikes me. Keith tries to be cool but can’t hide the fact that he liiiikes me.”

“That doesn’t even fit the rhythm.”

His arms got more into the beat. You tried to keep your eyes on his face and off his hips. “You liiike me. You really liiiike me.”

Your ears felt like they were on fire and your eye was definitely twitching again. “Lance, shut UP!”

He stopping dancing, thank god, and put his hands on his hips. His lips were spread in a lop sided grin, and his eyes were glinting with mirth. He was all confidence and it made your stomach flip. You hated that look. And yet there was something inside you that really, really didn’t. You wanted to wipe that grin off his stupid face. His stupid, beautiful face.

“Why don’t you make me, pretty boy?”

Your gut fluttered with annoyance and something that was a little more difficult to identify. It was an insult and a challenge, yet it twisted your gut as if it had been a compliment and an invitation. What was wrong with you? You couldn’t think straight. His stupid, smug face was keeping you from having any sort of rational thought. You needed him to stop smirking at you like that. You wanted to do something, anything, to shock him into silence. Maybe if you kissed that annoyingly tempting mouth…

You froze, eyes widening a fraction.

Oh no. No fucking way. Was Lance… was he right? Did you... did you like him?

Oh god, you did. It hit you like lightning and shook you to the core. Your skin felt on fire and your knees felt weak. It was worse than any shock you had suffered from the maze. You actually liked Lance. Lance of all people. Stupid, frustrating, infuriating, beautiful, confident, amusing, annoying Lance.

You were so fucked.
“Maybe I will!” Your voice had raised. You were annoyed and angry, with him and with yourself, and you just wanted to wring his skinny little neck.

He held out his arms. “Then come at me, bro!” His confidence hadn’t faltered one bit. “Right now. Come at me.”

Your eyes darted away from him, focusing on the empty air in front of you. Your gaze slid to the sides as you thought about your mental map. You were about seventy-five percent sure that there was a corridor in front of you that led straight to lance. If you were right, you could dive at him right now, and judging from the look on his face, he wouldn’t expect it.

Then again, you could be wrong and just dive head first into a wall. He’d have a good laugh about that, and you’d never live it down. But maybe if you hit the wall hard enough, you’d pass out. At least then you wouldn’t have to deal with it. You were still debating the pros and cons of just going for it when he spoke again.

“Unless you’re scaaaaared.” He teased, pursing his lips out. His stupid, tempting lips.

Fuck it. Feelings or not, you were shutting him up, one way or another.

With an angry and wordless shout, you leapt for him. You saw the moment Lance realized you weren’t going to hit a wall. The moment his confidence wavered and his gorgeous smirk fell. You saw the moment panic crossed his features. His hands went up defensively as his mouth opened.
His shout echoed in your ears.

Chapter End Notes

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Chapter 5

Chapter Summary

In which two boys fight out their feels in an electric maze

Chapter Notes

Thanks for all of your comments! They mean so much! The plan is to continue to update every few days and power through to the end of this fic. The rest is written, but good art takes time to make and we're in on this together. We already have another, much longer and NSFW slow burn fic planned out to do after this one (unrelated), so look forward to that B)

And daYUM would you look at the art for this chapter? It's my fav so far.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

[LANCE]

His shout echoed in your ears.

As you watched him leap through the air at you, face twisted into an angry scowl, hands outstretched, you had the thought that maybe, just maybe, you shouldn’t have pushed him too hard. Especially after you realized that he wasn’t going to hit a wall. Shit, he was better at this mental mapping thing than you were. You felt your grin fall and your arms came down in front of you defensively.

Truth be told, you were still kind of hoping a wall would miraculously be there to save you.

“Oh shit—” Was all you had time to mutter before Keith hit you.

His entire weight slammed into you, knocking you off balance. You fell backwards, arms automatically going around him as he went down with you. You made a sound halfway between a whine and a groan as he landed on top of you and forced the air out of your lungs. You cringed against the pain, but then laid back, resting your head on the ground. You let out a long, low groan, closing your eyes.

“Jesus fucking— Keith why are you so fat?” Your voice was hoarse and you still felt out of breath.

“I’m not fat.” He grumbled, propping himself up on his elbows to scowl down at you. And no, he certainly wasn’t. You had always known Keith wasn’t fat. Far from it. He was lean, his body chorded with lithe and defined muscles. He had a small waist, powerful arms, and you were pretty sure you’d spotted a six pack, or at least the makings of one, a few times when his shirt rode up. God he was anything but fat. He was just— just… fucking perfect.

And he was half laying on you, one leg lying alongside yours and his other knee pressed between
your thighs.

That realization made the blood rush to your face. You were pretty sure your blush was just a permanent part of your face now.

You were so screwed.

“You sure about that?” You said, finally getting ahold of yourself. You got your hands between you and pushed lightly against his shoulders. He didn’t budge. “Maybe you should lay off the food goo, man.” You tried to push again, but he still didn’t move. If anything, he shifted so he was more on top of you. You swallowed hard. He was scowling, his brows knit together and his frown tilting his lips. He was too close for comfort. “I can’t even breathe, sweet quiznak, you’re heavy.”

“And you’re an ass.”

You snorted a small laugh, rolling your eyes and smirking at him. “I believe you mean to say that I have a nice ass.” You weren’t going to say anymore, but something strange happened with Keith’s expression. His frown suddenly turned sour, but you could see his eye twitch and the red rush up his face. You had never noticed before, probably due to that stupid mullet, but his ears turned red when he blushed. And that was just so… cute? It encouraged you to keep going. Your grin widened and you waggled your eyebrows. “Small and round and tight, just like the ladies—“

Your words were abruptly cut off as his hand came down over your mouth. You gazed up at him, eyes wide and one eyebrow raised questioningly. His blush was still firmly in place, but his frown had twitched into a small smirk, and the look around his eyes had softened into something that might have been amusement. “I told you I’d shut you up.”

Your eyes immediately narrowed. Oh, so that’s how it was going to be? You promptly opened your mouth and stuck out your tongue, pressing it firmly to the palm of his gloves and moving it around, trying to get as much coverage as possible. It tasted of leather and salt, and it wasn’t exactly pleasant, but it got the job done.

Keith instantly pulled his hand back, holding it away from you and looking at his palm. His head then turned to face you, his lip curled in disgust. “Did you seriously just lick me?”

You were beaming proudly. “You bet your sweet ass I did.”

Okay, so maybe that wasn’t the best phrasing you could have used. Keith’s face blanked and his blush deepened. He pressed his lips together into a tight line and you just knew he was thinking about your words. And yeah, so what if Keith actually did have the sweetest ass you’d ever seen? It’s not like you wanted him to know that. The man had a big enough ego as it was. And you sure as hell didn’t want him to think you were complimenting him.

You knew you had said that Keith was the one making things weird, but you knew without a doubt that you were the one who had made it weird. It had always been you. Sure, it was a little Keith’s fault, but it’s not like he could help how fucking perfect he was. He couldn’t help how fucking cute he looked when he smiled. He couldn’t help the way his laugh made your insides flip and the way you just wanted to pull his stupid face to yours and kiss him until his lips were swollen and bruised—

God damn you had it bad. And you hated it. You hated how bad you had it for him. All you had wanted to do was be friends. Become closer to him like you were with the rest of the team. That was the plan. That was the only plan. Developing a crush on the guy was the last thing that you expected. But there it was. You had started to have feelings for him and you hadn’t known how to handle them. You still didn’t know how to handle them. But you sure as hell didn’t want him to know about
them. This was your problem, and you’d figure it out on your own. You guys were a team, and there was no room for your stupid hormonal feelings toward a guy who had just started to tolerate you.

You hadn’t wanted your newfound crush to ruin things. Unfortunately, it had. Just not in the way you were expecting.

You hadn’t meant to ruin things so bad. To fuck up your team synergy so completely that the others had to interfere. You hadn’t wanted to screw things up with Keith, but in your attempt to make sure things didn’t get weird, you definitely made them weird.

And here you were, complimenting his ass and making things weird again. You didn’t want him to think too hard about what you had said and the implications of it.

So you did the first thing you could think of: distract him.

“Surprise attack!” You yelled, suddenly pushing against his shoulders with more force.

He barely budged, and instead leaned more heavily on your chest. He raised one eyebrow. “It’s not much of a surprise attack if you announce it.” He said flatly, but his lips were curled up at the edges in the barest of smirks.

He was so close. Ugh, you needed him off you now or you were gonna have some problems that were a little harder to hide.

“That was just a distraction!” You matched his smirk, and your confidence made his waver.

“Lance, what are you—“

“Real surprise attack!” You lifted your knees and planted your feet, using it as leverage to shove all your weight up. You bucked up and to the side, waiting until his balance was off before using your hands to shove. You got a brief glimpse of Keith’s face, eyes wide in surprise and lips parted as his words were cut off, before you threw him off you.

And straight into a wall.

His back hit first, causing him to arch, which only made his head hit the wall as well. His hands seized up to his chest, and his mouth hung open in a silent scream. For a moment, he seemed suspended in air, attached to the wall by the bright, crackling jolts of electricity. Then he fell to the ground. He lay on his chest, head turned away from you. His limbs twitched occasionally, but other than that he was still.


He groaned, turning his head to face you. His hair was standing on end and a complete mess, but his eyes were open. He looked dazed, but definitely alive. Relief washed through you as his eyes looked up and focused on your face. You smiled, laughing softly. “There you are, welcome back, buddy.” You said, voice uncharacteristically soft.

You had no warning before his hand shot out, fingers curling into your shirt. Then you were being yanked forward and your face was pressed flat against the invisible wall, which crackled to life and blinked into existence for a brief second.
You screamed, arms flailing before you fell backwards. You groaned when you hit the floor. “Okay… okay, I may have deserved that.”

“You did.” Keith growled. He still hadn’t gotten up.

“You don’t have to be an ass about it.” You pulled back your foot and kicked forward, intent on kicking his side. But his reflexes were faster than yours. He got his weight on his arms and went up on his toes in a plank. Your foot shot right under him and hit the wall. You grit your teeth, eyes wide and arms curling to your chest as you shot up into a sitting position. You ripped your foot back and glared at him. “What was that?”

He lowered himself to his knees, smirking. “You deserved it.”

You rolled your eyes, throwing your hands into the air. “What did I do this time?!”

He scowled, sitting back on his knees. “It’s not about what you did now, it’s about what you’ve been doing.” He threw his hands in the air, indicating the whole room. “All of this is because you started
acting weird after we bonded!”

You knew he was right. “You’re the one who made it weird!”

He rolled his eyes, crossing his arms over his chest. “Why? Because I starting laughing?”

Well, if he was being truthful… “Yes! You started laughing at me!”

“Everyone laughs at you!”

He had a point. “But when you do it, it makes me want to— it just— and the way you— you just—! UGH!” You ran your fingers through your hair. It felt like it was standing on end as much as Keith’s was. You grabbed hold of the strands and tugged as you groaned.

He was frowning again, his lips pursed into a small pout. His cheeks were still tinged pink. He looked down and away. “Right, sorry my laugh offends you.”

Oh god, now he was pouting. How was it even possible that you could fuck up this much? “No, no, man, it’s not… it’s not like that. It’s just— ugh.” You groaned again, letting your hands drop from your hair. One scratched the back of your neck and the other flailed around in the air. “You have a nice laugh, okay? I like your laugh.”

The change in his expression was slow. The tightness around his eyes and mouth eased, his brow unfurrowed, and he blinked a few times. Even his blush started to recede a little, though not completely. He looked… almost thoughtful, and you immediately felt your chest tighten. Oh shit, had you made it too weird? You were just been trying to be sincere. Had it backfired? But then his head tilted to the side and the corners of his lips quirked upward into a small smirk.

“Was that a compliment?”

You felt heat creep up your neck as your lips twisted into a slight frown and you felt your eyes going wide. God fuck where did he get off being so… cute?! As he stared at you, small crinkles at the corners of his eyes, he raised an eyebrow, silently questioning. You felt your heart skip a beat before pounding into overdrive.

You crossed your arms over your chest, hunching your shoulders and sinking low, pouting your lips as you looked away. “Yeah, well, don’t get used to it.”

“I wouldn’t dream of it.” He muttered, amusement not completely gone from his voice. He slowly pushed himself to his feet and stepped away from the wall. He looked around, idly rubbing his arm and shoulder and wincing a little as he did so. The tension between you had tempered, at least for now, and he seemed perfectly fine with letting your little compliment go. For which, you were grateful. “What do we do now?” He asked, more to himself than to you. He was looking around the room, but his eyes were unfocused. You were willing to bet he was looking at his mental map or whatever.

You pushed yourself to your feet, put your hands on your lower back, and arched backward with a groan. Your skin still felt like it was tingling, like there was a light buzz flitting across your flesh, and your muscles occasionally twitched. You felt like your body was going to ache for days. You flopped forward, hunching your shoulders as you crossed your arms over your chest. You pursed your lips into a small pouting frown and shrugged. “I dunno, man. I suppose we could keep going?”

He twisted his body to level a stare at you over his shoulder, one eyebrow raised. “And do you volunteer to go first?”
Your skin prickled, and you shivered. Still, you stuck out your chin. “We could take turns moving forward.” You suggested.

He tilted his head, thoughtful. “That might work.” He held his chin with his fingers. He didn’t look like he was completely down with that plan.

“What’s wrong, Keith? Are you—“

“If you say ‘scared,’ I’m going to throw you into a wall again.” He snapped, cutting you off. Your mouth snapped shut and you glared at him, offended. You weren’t that predictable… were you? He held your gaze for several seconds before sighing and looking away. “I’m not scared, I just don’t see the point in needlessly shocking ourselves.”

“The need is we need to get out of this maze.” You said, frowning at him, brows knit. You glanced around, hands rubbing your upper arms. “I feel on edge just standing here.” You felt the hum of electricity like it was dancing across your skin, making your hair stand on end. “Plus if we get out, we can either find a way out of here, or convince the others that we used teamwork or whatever.”

Keith snorted a small laugh, but didn’t look at you. Yeah, teamwork. That was definitely what the two of you used to get to this point. Still, the others didn’t have to know the details.

“If only we had something to test for walls without shocking ourselves.” He muttered to himself, rubbing his chin. He closed his eyes and sighed, hands moving to rub his temples.

Test for walls, huh? Yeah, something other than your hands or feet would be great. You had the thought of throwing Keith against the walls to find them, but you knew that would just backfire. He was stronger than you.

You crossed one arm over your middle, resting an elbow on it to tap your chin. You slowly turned in a circle, seeing nothing but knowing that the walls were there. Man, fuck those walls. You hated this maze. You wanted to dismantle it. And from the looks of it, so did Keith. Honestly, with his temper, you were surprised he hadn’t taken out his bayard and attempted to beat the walls with his sword. Then again, the shock would just go through the sword and up his arm. It wasn’t like he had a laser gun or something…

Oh.

Oh.

“Oh.”

“What?”

You jumped. You hadn’t realized you had spoke out loud. Keith was staring at you. When you jumped, you had probably made a face that was guilty and sheepish. Whatever it looked like, it was enough to make Keith’s eyes narrow in suspicion.
“Lance.” His voice was flat and dangerous. He was demanding answers using nothing but your name.

Now was definitely not the time to be turned on by that.

You swallowed hard. You had two options at this point. You could tell him, or you could not. You decided to tell him, hoping that maybe he’d like the idea and be relieved enough to overlook the fact that you hadn’t thought of it sooner.

“We could try, uh,” You pulled out your bayard, holding it up but not quite forming it into it’s familiar gun shape. Your other hand scratched the back of your neck, and you smiled at him sheepishly. You tried for a more confident grin, but you didn’t think you pulled it off. “Using my bayard?”

His expression blanked, staring at you with a face that was completely relaxed and void of emotion. He looked almost serene. Too bad it only lasted about ten seconds. Then he got over his shock, and his face instantly tightened. Lines formed around his mouth as he pressed his lips together. His brows
furrowed. Were his eyes twitching? You definitely thought his eyes were twitching. His hands hadn’t dropped from his temples, but his fingers curled into fists.

He was silent for a long while. Long enough that you started to wonder if he had completely shorted out. You stared at him, lips pursed into a small ‘o’. You ducked your head and waved a hand in front of his face. “Hey, Keith? Buddy? You still alive in there?”

“You…” You flinched back. Nope, okay, he was definitely still alive, and he was definitely mad. His voice was quiet and calm, but the icy undertones sent shivers down your spine. “… have got… to be kidding me!”

You flinched again as his voice raised in sudden outburst. You held up your hands defensively, still holding your bayard. “Hey, whoa, just calm down, okay?” You took a step back.

His hands lowered from his temples to gesture out toward you, palms up and fingers curled. He gaped at you, brows furrowed, eyes wide, and bottom lids twitching. “Why didn’t you think of that earlier?!”

“I was distracted!” You said defensively, trying not to shout.

“By WHAT?!” Okay, he was definitely shouting.

“By—“ By him. He made it so hard for you to think. All you had been able to think was how to get away from him as fast as possible. Before you admitted things that would ruin any chance of friendship. Any chance of teamwork. Before you made things awkward. “By the music!” You said instead, grabbing at a logical reason for your rational thought to be scrambled.

You weren’t sure he bought it. He was gritting his teeth. “You went through the maze, shocking yourself senseless, making me go through this stupid fucking maze, all because you were distracted?!”

Okay, so yes, this might have been your fault. And yeah, you could have thought of this sooner and saved both of you from a shit ton of electric shocks, but that didn’t mean you were going to stand there and let him blame you!

Your brows furrowed as you glared at him. You pointed at him with your bayard. “I didn’t see you thinking of it either!”

“It’s not my bayard!” He threw his hands up in the air.

You held up your bayard, gesturing at it with your other hand. “Yeah, but you know what my weapon is! You could have thought of this plan, too, instead of letting me make a fool of myself going through this maze!”

He snorted, rolling his eyes. “You don’t need my help to make a fool of yourself.”

Your fingers curled into fists, and you put your bayard away. That was it. Crush or not, you were going to kill him. Consequences be damned. “Just shut up!”

His head tilted a fraction, his lips curling up at one corner. “Make me.” He snapped, clearly a mockery of your earlier conversations but also a challenge.

“Oh, it is ON!”

You dove at him, and judging from the sudden change in his expression, he hadn’t been expecting it.
His eyes widened comically, and his mouth opened in a silent shout. Whatever he might have been about to say was lost when you hit him. Your hands his hit shoulders, pushing him back with the force of your momentum. His back hit the wall of the maze, and your fingers involuntarily curled into his jacket as the electricity coursed through you both in loud, crackling sparks.

You both jerked away from the wall, and you fell backwards, Keith falling on top of you. You both groaned, the air rushing out of your lungs simultaneously. Your skin felt extremely sensitive, and Keith was warm and heavy. Your legs were tangled together and his head rested on your shoulder. This was way too close for comfort. Again. Your arms laid out on the ground next to you as you simply laid there and tried to breathe. And tried not to think about Keith’s body pressed against your own.

“What the hell was that?” He groaned, lifting up on one elbow to scowl down at you. The shift in weight pushed his hips against yours, and you felt your face burning.

You scrunched up your expression and put your hands to his shoulders, pushing him. “I was shutting you up!” You tried to push harder, but he resisted your shoves. He pushed himself onto his knees, snatching your hands and pinning them next to your head. With him hovering above you, scowling down at you with his cheeks tinged a dark pink, your body had a hard time deciding whether to send your blood to your head or your dick. “Get off me!” You sputtered, struggling against him, but his grip was strong. Holy shit, it was strong. Why was this so… hot?

Fuck.

You were so fucked.

“Lance,” He said flatly, but the sound of your name on his lips made you shutter. “This is not the right place to fight.”

It wasn’t the right place to be popping a boner for your teammate and self-proclaimed rival either, but that wasn’t exactly stopping you.

You tugged against his grip and bucked your hips. “I think it’s the perfect place to fight!”

“Lance, just stop—“

You wrapped a leg around his hips and threw your weight to the side. It caught him off guard and his eyes widened for a split second before he fell over and you rolled on top of him. “Ah hah!” You shouted triumphantly, grinning from your perch atop his hips.

He struggled beneath you, and okay, so maybe this wasn’t the best position to be in either, given your little half boner problem, but it was too late to back out of it now. You hovered over him and he pushed you back. You batted his hands away with your own. He tried to sit up, and you shoved him down with a hand to his face.

“Lance, get off.”

“Why? So you can shove me into a wall in revenge? Ha! I don’t think so!”

“You’re so stupid!”

“You’re stupid!”

You continued to fight with your hands, pushing against each other’s chests, shoulders, hands, and faces. He started bucking his hips, and nearly threw you off several times, but you fought to keep
your balance, to keep him pinned. You put a hand on his cheek, keeping your arm outstretched. He reached for you, but your arm was longer than his, if only barely. He couldn’t reach your face. You made a sound of triumph, grinning down at him. He glared up at you and then turned his head, biting your fingers.

You gasped, snatching your hand back, cradling it to your chest. You gasped at him. “Did you just bite me?”

He frowned at you. “You deserve it for getting us into this mess.”

You scowled. “I did not—!” Your sentence ended in a yelp as Keith suddenly bucked and twisted and threw you off of him. He rolled on top of you, and you used your momentum to keep rolling to the side, intent on throwing him off you again. You didn’t get that far. You both rolled into another wall, and the sudden crackle of electricity deafened both of your screams. You rolled away from it, both of you separating. You tried to take a moment to simply breathe, but Keith wasn’t having any of it.

“This is all your fault!” He gritted out between clenched teeth as he pushed himself onto his hands and knees. His head turned to the side and he glared at you from beneath his bangs.

You rolled onto your side, propping yourself up on an elbow to face him. “Like I said before, you could have thought of the laser gun, too, and then we wouldn’t be in this mess!”

He sat back on his knees, holding his hands up to gesture around them. “Not just this mess! Everything! We were bonding and you started acting weird!”

“You’re weird!”

“Great come back, dude.”

“I’ll come at you!”

And you did. You pushed to your knees, got your toes under you, and extended your legs to jump at him. Your arms wrapped around him as you took him to the ground. He made a grunting sound as the wind was knocked out of him, but then he was back to pushing and shoving at you. You rolled around, which, granted, wasn’t the best idea in a maze with invisible, shocking walls. But you didn’t care. You were mad. You were frustrated. You were so, so tired of him! You were tired of yourself for letting yourself get into this position in the first place. You hated these feelings he was making you have, so you took out your frustration on him.

“IT’S ALL YOUR FAULT!” You shouted, shoving at his face as he elbowed you in the gut.

He clawed at your neck. “HOW IS THIS MY FAULT?!” You found supreme satisfaction in seeing Keith writing beneath you, red faced and expression twisted in rage. He was losing his cool just as much as you were, and that made you feel better.
He shoved you to the side and you hit a wall. Electricity arched through you and into him with a loud crackle. Your bodies jerked before you disconnected from the wall. This time you didn’t even try to take a rest. You were too filled with… with rage. With energy. Everything from the past few weeks, everything from the past few hours was coming to a head. You wanted to kill him. You wanted to shut him up. You wanted to hit him. In the mouth. With your mouth. You wanted to fucking kiss him, but you couldn’t, cause that would be weird. That would open up a whole new can of worms that you weren’t sure you were ready to deal with. But fighting… yeah, they expected you to fight Keith, so you’d do it, if only to relieve some of this frustration you felt whenever you looked at his stupid, perfect face.

You pushed yourself to your knees and dove at him again. He caught you and rolled you onto your back. Before you knew what was happening, he was straddling your waist and his hands were wrapped around your neck. Your hands automatically went to his, scratching and clawing. He squeezed, but it was, admittedly, very light. It didn’t cut off your air, but it was enough to put pressure on your throat and give you a mild panic.
You gazed up at him, eyes wide and mouth hanging open as a soft whine escaped your lips. He was scowling down at you, brows furrowed and lips twisted into a tight frown. You expected to see rage in his eyes, and yes, it was there, but there was something… softer there. Something that hit a little too close to what you were dealing with.

“We were bonding!” He was shouting. “We were actually getting close and then you decided I wasn’t good enough to be your friend!”

Oh god, he was actually going to strangle you. You only regretted not getting to him first. Your heart was hammering in your chest, and you wouldn’t have been surprised if he could feel it in your pulse. You extended an arm, hand clawing aimlessly at his jacket, his shirt, his neck, his cheek. He leaned back, but couldn’t get far enough away if he wanted to keep his hands around your neck.

“I never said that!” You growled out, voice hoarse and a little breathless. He loosened his grip, but his hands didn’t move, pinning you to the floor.

His eyes narrowed a fraction. “Your actions said enough.”

“We were too close! I just wanted a little space!” You snapped. Your other hand went to his jacket and your fingers curled into all the fabric you could grip. You pulled him down so your face were just inches away. His lips parted in surprise, going lax. You avoided looking at them by holding his gaze. “But then you started getting all pissy!”

You dug your feet in and trusted your hips upward, using your arms to pull Keith’s torso. You flipping him over your head. It wasn’t very graceful, and you were hit by elbows and knees on his way over, but it was effective. There was a loud crackle as he hit a wall.

“How were we too close?!” He snapped through clenched teeth as he pushed himself to his hands and knees.

You rolled over and slowly climbed to your feet. Your legs were shaky and your knees were weak, but they held. You glared down at him, lips pressed into a frown and fists clenched at your sides.

“You started to make me FEEL WEIRD!” You were definitely shouting again, but you couldn’t control the volume of your voice. “YOU STARTED SMILING AND LAUGHING AND IT WAS MAKING ME FEEL— MAKING ME FEEL WEIRD AND I JUST WANTED TO— TO—”

“To what?!” Keith was getting to his feet, glaring up at you through his hair and his lashes. His gorgeous, long lashes, ugh.

You ran your fingers through your hair, tugging at the strands. “TO JUST FUCKING PUNCH YOU IN THE MOUTH!”

“Would it make you feel better if you did?!” He stood straight, throwing his arms out and raising his chin. “Just fucking do it then!”

“That’s not—! I didn’t mean—! UGH!” You pointed at him, other hand curled into a fist and held out behind you. “This wouldn’t be a problem if you would just stop being HOT ALL THE TIME! IT’S CONFUSING WITH YOUR STUPID MULLET AND YOUR PRETTY EYES! JUST— FUCK YOU, MAN!”

His face contorted in rage, and his arms fell to his side. He stomped forward until he was right in front of you and jabbed you in the chest with a finger. “THIS ISN’T ALL MY FAULT!” He had raised his voice to match yours. “YOU’RE THE ONE WHO GOES AROUND ACTING LIKE AN ADORABLE IDIOT ALL THE TIME! YOUR JOKES ARE STUPID AND YOU’RE
OVER CONFIDENT AND THAT SHOULDN’T BE ATTRACTIVE!"

You knocked his hand away, which had been jabbing your ribcage with every other word, and shoved him with both hands. He stumbled back a step and you took a step forward. “YOU’RE THE ONE WHO’S GOOD AT EVERYTHING AND LIGHTS UP WHEN HE SMILES! HOW IS IT FUCKING FAIR THAT YOU LOOK GOOD WHILE YOU’RE ALL BROODY AND MOODY AND HAVE THE CUTEST FUCKING LAUGH? HERE’S A HINT: IT’S NOT! IT’S NOT FAIR!”

He shoved you back, taking a step forward until you were toe to toe, faces mere inches apart. You could smell his breath and feel it on your cheeks, your lips. Your ears were burning. Your chest and neck were burning. You could barely feel your face anymore. And the worst part? Keith had a matching blush that drew your attention to his stupid pretty eyes all the way down his slender, red neck, to the collar of his shirt.

“You’re the one who got me to ENJOY BEING WITH YOU AND SEEING YOU BEFORE YOU JUST FUCKING STARTED AVOIDING ME! I ACTUALLY CARED ABOUT YOUR STUPID, ANNOYING VOICE AND YOUR STUPID, GORGEOUS SMILE, AND THE WAY YOUR FUCKING FACE LIGHTS UP WHEN YOU’RE EXCITED!”

He shoved you again, and you stumbled back a few steps. The heel of your foot brushed a wall and you jerked away from it, startled. You turned your glare back on Keith. “DON’T SHOVE ME!” You snapped, shoving him back in return.

“I’LL SHOVE YOU ALL I WANT!”

“No, I’ll shove you!”

You pushed him, and he pushed back. You grabbed his arm and swung him into the wall, which only caused electricity to spark through you both. You nearly lost your balance, and he tackled you to the ground. You rolled, fighting for dominance. He had more fighting experience than you did, but you had grown up wrestling with older siblings and cousins. Big families meant big scraps, which meant you had to learn how to hold your own. You wouldn’t give up.

So you fought dirty. You licked his cheek when he had you pined. And in retribution, he bit your hand again when you tried to push him by the face. You took elbows to the gut as much as you gave them, and the slight boner you had from all of this was in constant danger of either being rubbed in a not-totally-bad way or being pegged with a knee. You clawed at him, scratching his beautiful neck, marking him. You grabbed at his clothes, scratching down his back whenever his shirt rode up. You even stooped to pulling his hair.

And everything you gave, you got in return. His fingernails marred your flesh, burning lines into it that you barely felt through the numbness of the constant shocks. You felt bruised and battered from flailing limbs and wayward punches. You rolled together, fighting and thrashing. You pinned each other, but neither of you held the upper hand for long.

You were constantly rolling and flailing, and constantly hitting the walls of the maze. They lit up around you, loud crackles deafening you so you barely heard each other’s shouts and screams. You had started out shouting at each other, but words quickly faded in favor of grunts and insults that you could barely hear over the crackle and the ringing in your ears. You could barely see him. You flailed so much, his hair was everywhere, your positions were constantly changing. You couldn’t focus on his face for long, but every time you did, his expression seemed to mirror your own.

You weren’t sure how long it lasted. Ten minutes? Thirty? An hour? Neither of you were willing to
give up, but the constant fighting and the constant electrocutions were starting to take their toll. Your movement slowed and got sluggish. Your hits became half assed and lazy. Finally, after a particularly bad shock where you had both hit the wall with the flat of your backs, you collapsed on the floor.

Groaning, you rolled onto your back, staring up at the ceiling and feeling dazed. Your arms splayed out to your sides, dead and unmoving. Slowly, like he didn’t have full control of his limbs, Keith crawled on top of you. You didn’t have the energy to stop him as he settled on you, straddling your hips. You gazed up at him, face relaxed. You didn’t even have the energy to scowl. Apparently neither did he. His hands gripped the front of your shirt, and he frowned down at you, brows knit together. Then when it was clear that you had no plans on moving, he sighed, and collapsed.

You found yourself staring at the ceiling again, but this time with Keith lying on top of you, his head nestled on your shoulder, his face turned toward the curve of your neck. You could feel his breaths, panting and hot against your flesh. His hair ticked your cheek. You licked your lips, but said nothing, content to simply exist in this moment.

You closed your eyes, letting your body relax. Keith was heavy on your chest, but it wasn’t uncomfortable. Most of his weight was supported by his knees. You were both panting heavily, slowly trying to catch your breaths. Your body was sore all over, but the tail end of your adrenaline was keeping the worst pain at bay. Your skin felt numb and seemed to hum with static. Your muscles twitched occasionally, and you could feel Keith’s twitching as well. It made you smile, despite everything.

His arms were folded between you as he curled up on your chest. You wanted to hold him. Now, when both of you were too dead to really do much or think much about it. You doubted he would protest. Now with the state he was in. This was your opportunity, and you decided to go for it.

Unfortunately, it was easier said than done. Your arms felt like dead weights at your sides. You twitched your fingers, just to make sure you could. It took a tremendous amount of effort, but you finally raised your arms high enough and pulled them inward before collapsing them across Keith’s back. Close enough. As soon as your arms were around him, you felt him hum. It was a deep, quiet rumble in his throat, vibrating through his chest and into your own. You tensed, expecting him to tell you to let go, but he didn’t, and you relaxed.

Your body felt numb, but Keith was warm, and you basked in it.

As aware of him as you were, you noticed the moment his breathing returned to normal. But he still didn’t move. For a moment, you wondered if he had fallen asleep. You wouldn’t blame him. You were exhausted yourself, and your body ached, and you wanted nothing more than to embrace the sweet void of sleep. Still, you stayed awake. As much as your body demanded sleep, you were determined to enjoy this moment and carve it to memory. You didn’t know when you’d get this opportunity again.

Without really thinking about it, you leaned your head to the side, pressing your cheek to the top of his head. His hair was soft, but full of static. You breathed in his scent, and a few stray strands tickled your nose. You opened your eyes, looking down at him. You couldn’t see much, but you enjoyed the sight nonetheless. A soft smile tugged at your lips.
Then, after what felt like ages but was still too soon, he spoke.

“You’re a fucking idiot.” He grumbled. There was no real heat to it. He sounded more exasperated and tired than anything. It was absolutely pitiful. Butterflies filled your chest.

You couldn’t help it: you chuckled. Your chest tensed and shook with it, and ouch, okay, that hurt. The sound was deep and breathy, barely audible, but you knew he could feel it. You let your eyes drift closed again. “Jeez, Keith, ouch. Tell me how you really feel.” You teased, lips curved into a small smile.

There was a long silence, and you started to doubt he would say anything more. But then he did, and his voice was soft, barely a whisper across your neck. His tone held notes of uncertainty, but it was also strong and full of conviction, like Keith so often was.

“I feel like kissing you.”

Your eyes snapped open. That wasn’t what you expected to hear. You must have heard wrong. “W-
what?” You stuttered. You fucking stuttered, your voice cracking in the process.

He lifted his head, hovering just a few inches above you. He held your gaze steadily, face framed by his hair. His expression was relaxed, but determined, and held absolutely no trace of doubt. He held your gaze and refused to let go.

“I want to kiss you.” He said again, lips barely moving and voice barely above a whisper.

You swallowed past the lump in your throat, licking your dry lips. You didn’t look away from him as your hands tightened around his back. “Okay.”

You might have forgotten how to breathe.

Chapter End Notes

Sorry not sorry about the cliffhanger B)

DO NOT REPOST THE ART FROM THIS FIC

Instead, hop on over here and reblog it from the artist herself HERE

My Tumblr
The Artist's Tumblr
Chapter 6

Chapter Summary

In which the team has been watching the whole time, and a couple bets have taken place

Alternatively:
In which Coran is the helpful uncle, Allura is a nosey mom, Shiro is a live-and-learn dad, Pidge really wants to win, and Hunk really, really doesn’t want to lose

Chapter Notes

Also Alternatively:
In which I am very proud of my puns, and my artist partner hates me for them

See the end of the chapter for more notes

[MEANWHILE...]

“Ninety-one…” Pidge cringed. “Oooo, that one had to hurt. Ninety-two…”

Hunk counted in tandem, but he was at another number. “Ninety-seven…” He cringed as well, turning his head like he didn’t really want to look down at the training deck, but he couldn’t quite tear his eyes away. “Okay, seriously, shouldn’t we turn off the maze now?— Ninety-eight— These are very high numbers, and it looks like it’s getting dangerous at this point.”

Pidge smirked at him, raising one eyebrow as they gazed sideways through half lidded eyes. “If we stop now, then I win. You ready for system cleaning duty?”

Hunk blanched, his expression dropping. He opened his mouth, then snapped it shut, considering. Lance was his best friend. And yes, he did care about his safety and wellbeing. But he also really, really didn’t want to muck out the castle’s less tended-to systems for the next three months...

“Okay, okay,” He conceded, tilting his head to the side and closing his eyes briefly and holding up his hands defensively. “Maybe we can keep the walls up a little longer. Ninety-nine, dammit, Lance!”

Pidge laughed, throwing their head back a fraction as they rocked backwards. “This is your fault for betting on Lance.”

Hunk slouched, pouting as he mumbled, “I thought he’d have more self-preservation than this. You know how the guy hates pain. Keith is the one who’s statistically more likely to run blindly through the maze to just get away from him!”

Pidge snorted and rolled their eyes, pushing up their glasses before leaning back on their hands. “Yeah, but you forgot to take into account Lance running from his feelings. The guy is reckless as hell when his feelings are involved, even if it’s just avoiding them.”
“He is stubborn…” Hunk muttered, still pouting.

Pidge was sitting on one of the consoles pressed against the glass of the control room. Hunk stood next to them, leaning over the console and resting his arms on his elbows and forearms. He sighed, resting his chin in both hands. “Aaaand that’s one hundred. Hey, Coran, is that a new record?” He glanced over his shoulder.

Coran stood with Allura and Shiro in the open space between consoles, where there was just a floor to ceiling spot of glass. He, Shiro, and Allura all wore the headsets with mics. Pidge also had one, but they had taken it off and set it on the console between them. Hunk had arrived too late to claim one, but it didn’t matter too much. They were all muted at the moment anyway.

“Certainly!” Coran said, cheerful as ever. Then he tilted his head, twirling his mustache thoughtfully. “Then again, we’ve never had a paladin go through the maze blind before. And I think I’ve only seen someone get to fifty shocks before giving up.” He perked up again. “That record goes to Lance, too!”

Pidge and Hunk gave him a flat stare before glancing at each other. “He’s an idiot.” Pidge said.

Hunk shrugged. “He is, but he’s our idiot.”

A small smile tugged at the edges of Pidge’s lips. “He is.” They turned to look back down at the training deck. “Besides, Keith isn’t much better. He let himself get dragged into Lance’s game.” They shrugged. “I guess love makes you do stupid things.”

Hunk hunched again, resting his chin back in his palms. “Man, I am never gonna be like that, even if I am in love. I do not have that kind of pain tolerance.” He shuttered.

“Yeah, but you have better taste in people.” They rested their hands on their ankles and leaned back, tilting their chin downward and smirking sideways at Hunk in a way that gave him the distant impression of Lance. “Or aliens, as the case may be.” They said slyly.
Hunk’s eyes went wide before he huffed and turned away, lifting his chin. He leaned back, crossing his arms over his chest. “Dude, I told you, she’s not my girlfriend. She’s just—“

Pidge waved a hand at him. “I know, I know. She’s just a rock.” They waggled their eyebrows, and Hunk came to the decision that Lance was probably a terrible influence on Pidge. “Just like she gets you rock ha—“

“Pidge.” Shiro says flatly, cutting them off.

Pidge hunched over, pouting, then glanced over at Hunk and whispered. “She’s still your giirlfiend.”

“Is not!” Hunk hissed in a loud whisper.

Pidge snorted. “Yet.”

“Hey! Keith just hit a wall!” Hunk said loudly, changing the subject. “Keep counting!”
Pidge sighed. “Ninety-three… Ninety-four… ninety— oh, come on, Keith! Don’t let Lance bully you like that! Ninety-six— OH! That’s one for you, Hunk!”

“Are you— are you sure?” He put his hands on the console and leaned forward, squinting. “I dunno, that kinda looked like it was all Keith.”

Pidge rolled their eyes. “Oh no, Lance’s arm hit the wall, too. That counts.”

Hunk groaned. “A hundred and one… I don’t think this is fair, Lance touched the walls on purpose. I don’t think those should count.”

“Shouldn’t have bet on the losing side then, Hunk. No mercy. It counts.”

Hunk groaned again. “One hundred and two… three…”

“In seventy… ninety-eight… wait, did that one really count? I’m not sure he touched anything. Lance body blocked it.”

“Ooooh, no, that totally counts. You’re not getting out of this, Pidge.”

They shrugged. “Fine, you’re still gonna lose.”

They had made the shock bet back at the beginning, when they had planned the intervention and Coran had suggested they use the invisible maze to keep Lance and Keith from making any escape attempts before they could talk it out. The bet was just between Pidge and Hunk, and it started the moment the maze went up. Pidge counted for Keith, and Hunk counted for Lance. Whoever hit the walls the most, losses. They had expected some rough housing, simply because it was Keith and Lance, and maybe some wayward gestures that hit a wall. What they hadn’t expected was for the two of them to actually try to go through the maze. It had certainly kept the bet interesting.

When Lance had started through the maze, Hunk groaned in despair and cringed with every number he counted. Pidge had laughed at his miserable expression, grinning with delight every time Lance hit a wall. At one point Hunk had grumbled that Pidge was sick and sadistic, to which Pidge simply replied that Hunk was just mad cause he was losing. Then Lance had goaded Keith into going through the maze and it was Hunk’s turn to laugh as Pidge’s triumphant expression soured. It soured even more when Keith got stuck in a corner a couple of times and his number quickly caught up to Lance’s, despite the fact that Lance had purposefully touched the wall a few times, unknowingly sabotaging Hunk.

“Perhaps Hunk is right.” Allura said, worry lacing her tone. She stood with one arm across her chest, the other lifted to lightly cover her mouth with her fingers. Her brows were knit together as she watched the two paladins below. “They have touched the walls a lot more than we anticipated.”

“Yeah, we didn’t really count on them actually being desperate enough to go through the maze.” Hunk added, looking over at them. His eyes then slid to the hologram projection of the maze, viewed from the top down. Two dots, basically overlapping, moved on the map. They were rolling around in an intersection with a lot of open space, but also a lot of walls and corners. He cringed as Keith shoved Lance into a wall. “One hundred and four.”

“To be honest, I’m not really sure why we didn’t.” Pidge added without looking away from the training deck below. They still sat cross legged, hands on their ankles as they idly rocked side to side. “We really should have seen this coming. Those two are the most stubborn, pig-headed people we know. Especially when it comes to each other. Ninety-nine…” They visibly winced when Lance dodged a charge and Keith ran straight on into a wall. “Ouch, one hundred…”
“Not to worry, the maze only has enough power to give a slight shock but not enough to cause any lasting harm.” Coran assured them all. He leaned back, holding out a hand to count on his fingers. “Then again, it could cause dizziness, nausea, muscle spasms, black-outs—“

“Oh man, none of that sounds good.” Hunk said, cutting off his list.

Allura had been giving Coran a flat stare, lips pouted as brows pushed down into a straight line. Then she shook her head and turned back to gaze though the glass. “Lasting damage or not, perhaps we should lower the walls. As Coran said, no one has sustained this many shocks before. We don’t know how it will affect them.”

“No!” Hunk said, looking desperately at Allura. “If we turn it off now, Pidge will win! One hundred and five…”

Pidge was grinning, despite still having to count. “A hundred and one…” It was almost mocking.

“Come on, Allura! Please!”

She sighed. “Shiro, what do you think?” She asked, turning to glance at him.

He stood next to her, arms crossed over his chest as he gazed down at the training deck. He had been intently watching the struggles between Lance and Keith, cringing with every crackle of electricity. At the mention of his name, he lifted his head, blinking. He looked from Allura to Hunk to Pidge, then back to Allura. He shrugged. “I don’t see a problem with it.” Allura scowled at him, and he put his hands up defensively. “Hey, they got themselves into this mess, let them learn from it.”
“It does not look like they are learning from it.” She grumbled, crossing her arms over her chest and looking back down at the two wrestling paladins. “We put up the maze to keep them contained so they would talk, not so they could fight in it and hurt themselves and each other.”

“Technically, they are talking.” Pidge said, raising one finger. “Even if that talking is more— one hundred and two— like shouting their frustration and feelings at each other— Oh, come on, Lance! That was a cheap shot! One hundred and three…”

“Hey! Cheap shots count! Go, Lance! One hundred and six… And I’d like to point out that they were talking. They’re not really talking much anymore.”

For a moment, the group had thought that Lance and Keith were finally going to actually talk about their feelings. They had gotten extremely close. Close enough to start shouting confessions, or at least, they were confessions if you read between the lines. They had all held their breath, waiting for the moment where they’d realized they were both pining for each other. That held breath was let out as a collective sigh when the two started fighting again instead. There were a lot of groans and face
palms in the control room.

Since then, there hadn’t been a lot of talking. Mostly just cursing and wordless shouts, with the occasional groan that accompanied the flash and crackle of electricity.

“They’ll tire themselves out eventually, then maybe they’ll talk.” Shiro said, the voice of patience. There might also have been a small hint of amusement there. “Those two have always butted heads, but they make a good team. They’ll figure it out.”

Allura raised one eyebrow. “You have a lot of faith in the two who are currently wrestling in an invisible, electric maze. They seem perfectly happy to throw the other into a wall.”

He shrugged again, tilting his head. “They’re not really mad at each other. They’re mad at themselves. Once they realize they feel the same way, I’m sure they’ll have an easier time accepting their own feelings.”

“Yeah, it’s just a matter of getting there before they pass out. One hundred and four…”

“Oh! That one didn’t count for me! Lance didn’t touch the wall. You saw that, Pidge, right? Lance didn’t touch the wall?”

Pidge crossed their arms over their chest and grumbled reluctantly. “Lance didn’t touch the wall.”

Hunk fist pumped the air. “Ah hah! Keith is catching up!” Then he lowered his fist, sobering a little with a thoughtful look. “Wait, what if they do pass out? Do we like… leave them in the maze? Put them in a healing pot? If we put them in a healing pod, what about our other bet? Is it still on? How will we know who does it first if we can’t see them? Do we wait until they wake up and try again?”

“We’ll worry about that if it gets that far.” Shiro said calmly, cutting off Hunk’s string of questions, letting him breathe. “I don’t think it’ll come to that. Look, they’re slowing down.”

It was true, their wrestling and shoving and strings of curses weren’t as heated as they had been five minutes ago. Their movements were starting to get sluggish.

“One hundred and five— come on, Lance! Hit a wall! Hit a wall like your life depends on it!” Pidge sat up straight, their hands curling into fists.

“Lance! If you hold our friendship dear, you will not!” Hunk’s voice had raised, too, even though they knew that they couldn’t be heard. The control room was sound proof and the mics were muted.

After they had announced they were leaving, Coran had turned on the one-way glass, making it so they could see out, but Lance and Keith couldn’t see in from inside the training deck. Giving them the illusion that they were alone. But like hell the team was actually going to miss this. Lance had been onto them at the beginning, but Hunk and Pidge assured the others that it was just Lance’s desperation talking.

“Why do they not just talk about their feelings toward each other? Paladins have a special bond, and it must cost them more energy than it is worth to hide these things from each other and themselves.” Allura was saying, shaking her head. “It would make things so much easier if they would just talk.”

Shiro shrugged, giving her a sideways smile. “You know them. They’re not really talkers.”

She gave him a flat look. “Lance talks all the time.”

Shiro chuckled. “Fair, but he’s not a talker when it comes to things like this.”
“He flirts with nearly everyone we come across!”

“That’s… different.” Shiro tried to explain. “Those are people he knows he’ll probably never see again. It’s just for fun. It’s how he is. With Keith… Keith is his teammate, his friend, and his rival. He doesn’t want to ruin things because he can’t control how he feels. And Keith sees it much the same way.”

“Not to mention Lance’s rivalry with Keith goes waaaay back.” Hunk added. “Even if it was one sided. It’s hard for him to admit he has a crush on someone who he once was convinced he hated— Pidge, that’s one for you! Yes! We’re even now!”

“Thanks, Hunk.” They said dryly. “One hundred and six.”

Allura sighed. “Humans are so stubborn.”

“It’s not so strange, princess.” Coran said, holding up a finger. “It wasn’t uncommon for Altean children to pull at each other’s hair and push each other out into the pounding rain and challenge each other to duels.” He sighed wistfully. “What’s a few broken bones when love is involved?”

The others were staring at him, but their attention was drawn back to the training deck at the loud crackling sound.

“One hundred and seven…”

“One hundred and seven… One hundred and— Oh, that was both of them! We’re still tied!”

“Come on, Lance, don’t let me down!” Pidge was saying, hands fists in front of them. “Be the biggest idiot you can be! I believe in you!”

“Come on, Keith! Don’t let Lance beat you!” Hunk mirrored Pidge’s stance, then he turned his head, grinning at the others. “Hey, maybe we should call this Operation: Shocking Developments. Heh, get it? Cause we weren’t expecting—”

“We get it, Hunk.” Pidge and Shiro said nearly at the same time. Hunk deflated with a small groan like whine.

After a brief pause, Pidge spoke up.”Besides, I think we should go for Operation: Tensions High, Sparks fly.”

Hunk snorted. “That’s a good one. Oh! What about— what about, Operation: It’s electric!” He held his hands up in loose fists next to his shoulders while he shimmied back and forth, humming the tune of The Electric Slide.

Pidge held up both hands, dramatically posing. “Operation: Rash Lighting!”

“Operation: Sexually Charged, Emotionally Drained.”

“Operation: Snap, Crackle, Shock.”


“Operation: Spark-ling Whine.”

With each suggestion, they made a different and equally dramatic poses, in some kind of robotic, quick witted, pun dance. But they both cringed and recoiled as both Keith and Lance hit the wall hard before going down. In fact, all five of them took a step back with varying expressions of pain.
“Oooo…” Coran.

“Ouch…” Pidge.

“Dang…” Hunk.

“Oh dear…” Allura.

There was a sharp intake of breath followed by a low whistle before Shiro said, “That’s gotta hurt.”

There was a long pause before Pidge and Hunk spoke in unison: “One hundred and nine…” They glanced at each other, eyebrows raised.


Hunk struck a pose. “Operation: Current Events.”

“Operation: Lance Lightning!”

“Operation: Static Keith!”

“Alright, enough with the bad puns.” Shiro said, sounding exasperated. But his lip twitched into a small smile. “Besides, how could you guys not think of—” He struck a pose— “Operation Voltron.”
“Aaahhh!” Hunk said excitedly, pointing at Shiro. “Good one, Shiro!”

Pidge was grinning. “That one’s got my vote.”

“Look!” Allura said, drawing their attention. They all turned back to the glass.

“They’re not moving,” Coran observed.

“No, look, Keith is moving.” Allura took a step toward the window, crouching down and placing her hands on the window. She pressed her nose to the glass, squinting. “What is he—?”

“He’s crawling on top of Lance.” Coran supplied, taking a step forward, he idly rubbed his chin, leaning forward to squint his eyes at the scene down below. “Do you think he’s going to strangle him again?”

“No, look. He’s not doing anything. They’re not talking either.” Shiro said, crouching next to Allura. He put his right forearm against the glass above his head.
“Oh man, it doesn’t look like Lance is gonna try to stop him if he tries.” Hunk had his hands on the console, leaning forward to watch.

Pidge was also leaned forward, hands on the console in front of them. “Oh yeah, Lance is totally down for the count. That last shock must have been nasty.”

“It was.” Coran said helpfully, pulling up a floating holographic screen with the twist of his fingers. There were graphs and numbers and Altean words. He squinted at it, shuffling through some of the information. “They hit the last wall with quite a bit of force, and with the full length of their bodies. They absorbed quite a lot of electricity with that one. In fact, it was enough to fell a wild Lormaw from the planet Reiggen Five-Two-Six!”

Hunk leveled a flat glare at him. “Thanks, Coran.”

“I’m surprised Keith is still moving.” Pidge said, tilting their head. Keith was straddling Lance now, hands curled into the front of his shirt.

“He’s stubborn.” Shiro said, voice tinged with fond pride. “He’ll keep going until he drops.”

“Aaaaand there’s the drop.” Pidge announced as Keith collapsed on Lance’s chest. There was a long pause, in which everyone in the control room waited anxiously with baited breath. But nothing happened. Then, slowly, Lance’s arms began to move.

“Is he… going to throw him off?” Hunk asked, brows furrowing in worry. Neither of them looked like they could handle touching the wall again.

“No, look. He’s… he’s just holding him.” Pidge observed. They tilted their head, leaning back a fraction as a smile tugged at their lips. “Aww, they’re finally getting along.”

Hunk gasped, looking up at Pidge, then to the others. “Do you think this is the moment?”

Pidge shrugged. “Maybe, if they don’t pass out.”

“Shhhhh, I cannot hear anything.” Allura hissed, never taking her eyes from the training deck below.

“Are they saying anything?” Shiro asked, tilting his head and squinting his eyes. He leaned a little closer to the glass.

“I do not know.” Allura pressed her ear to the glass, waited a second, and then frowned. She lifted her head and turned to look over her shoulder. “Coran! Do we have other cameras in the training deck?”

Coran shook his head. “Negatory, princess. We’ve been talking about installing cameras in the deck to help observe the paladin’s training from new angles and allow them to view their own performances, buuuut—“

“But I Hunk and I haven’t finished building them.” Pidge finished, scratching their cheek and smiling sheepishly.

Allura scowled and then looked back to the deck below. “I wish we could get a better view. I want to know what they are saying.”

“To be honest, it doesn’t look like they’re saying anything.” Shiro said matter-of-factly. “It looks like they both might pass out.”
“What does that mean for the bet?” Pidge asked.

“Do you think they need to be put in the healing pods?” Hunk turned to look at the others.

Shiro shook his head. “No, let’s just let them rest for a moment. Maybe they’ll actually talk.”

“Shiro is right.” Allura had leaned away from the window, but her hands still rested on the glass. “They have gotten this far, so perhaps they may actually work through their problems. This is not just about the bet. This is important if you five ever want to form Voltron safely. They must reach an understanding.”

“Does that mean… Is the bet is still on?” Pidge asked, glancing over to Hunk. He shrugged, making a small noncommittal sound.

Allura glanced over her shoulder at them, a small smirk playing across her lips. “Of course.”

Pidge thrusted their fists into the air. “Aw yeah!”

“The bet is still on!” Coran announced, snapping his fingers and raising on hand into the air, finger pointed upward. He then curled his hand into a fist and brought it down on the open palm of the other. “Should I put on the Altean mood music again?”
“No!” Everyone shouted in response, whipping around to stare at him, wide eyed.

Coran’s expression blanked in surprise, then he shrugged, his easy going smile returning as he crossed his arms over his chest. “Suit yourselves. But nothing puts you in the mood for some smooching like some good old fashioned Altean mood music. Why, my first kiss was during the annual summer juniberry festival! This very song was playing and—“

“Coran,” Allura interrupted, her small scowl relaxed as she sighed. She smiled at him fondly. “You know I love Altean music, too, but it only served to agitate them more.”

Coran nodded. “That’s true.” He shook his head, holding up both hands in defeat. “If that didn’t get them in the mood, those two are hopeless.”

Pidge snorted, shoulders slumping. “I can’t believe you guys call that music.” They grumbled.

Hunk put his hands on his stomach, shuttering. “Yeah, I was getting motion sick just listening to it.”
“I heard better things on the galra ship.” Shiro muttered, shuttering, his eyes closing briefly.

Allura scowled at him. “We did not see you coming up with any ideas.”

Shiro shrugged. “Just let them work it out. They’re bound to get that far eventually. See? It looks like they’re talking.”

Everyone immediately turned back to training deck below. Lance and Keith did seem to be talking, but much of their faces weren’t visible from the angle they were at, and their words couldn’t be heard.

“Coran! I cannot hear anything!”

Coran leaned close to the glass. “I’m sorry, princess, but we don’t have any microphones down there either. We won’t be able to hear them unless they speak louder.”

“Kiss! Kiss! Kiss! Kiss!” Pidge and Hunk chanted.

“Shush!” Allura hissed.

Pidge’s hands were clutched in front of them, pumping up and down in small movements. “Come on, Lance, don’t let me down again! Kiss the boy!”

Hunk leaned back, crossing his arms over his chest. He was chuckling, shaking his head slowly back and forth. “Oh man, you are so going down, Pidge. There’s no way Lance is going to make the first move. He’s waaaaay too stubborn.”

“Oh please, he’ll hit on anything that moves. He’s not exactly shy about making the first move.”

“Yeah, well, this is Keith. Remember what we talked about before? Teammate? Rival? Friend? Doesn’t want to screw up?”

“And you think Keith will be better at dealing with his feelings?”

“I have to agree with Pidge. Lance will flirt with anyone he is attracted to. Surely Keith will not be an exception, once he accepts his own feelings.” Allura put in.

“We have plenty of evidence to prove this!” Coran added.

“Keith will reach a breaking point where he’d rather admit to his feelings than keep going on like this.” Shiro said with complete confidence.

“Look! I think something’s happening.” Pidge pointed to the window.

“What? What’s happening?” Coran asked, pressing his face to the glass, squinting as he crouched down before straightening up to his toes, trying to get the best angle and dragging his face across the window.

Allura, likewise, was pressed to the glass. “They are still talking. Are they getting closer?”

“They were pretty close to begin with.” Shiro said.

Keith had lifted his head to look down at Lance and propped himself up a little higher, but other than that, they remained in the same position they had been in moments ago.

“What’re they saying?” Pidge asked.
“I dunno, but can you see Lance’s face? Does he look shocked to you? He looks shocked to me. And not like, ‘just ran into an electric wall’ shocked, like ‘I can’t believe what I just heard’ kind of shocked.”

“I think I saw his arms tighten around Keith!” Pidge exclaimed.

Shiro still had his arm braced against the window, and he leaned forward a fraction. “I think Keith is leaning down toward him.”

“No way! Lance is totally leaning up!” Pidge insisted.

“Oh, quiznak, I can’t see anything from here.” Coran mumbled.

“Me neither, I cannot tell who is initiating it.” Allura grumbled. “Come now, paladins! Make it more clear for us!”

“Maybe they’re both initiating it?” Hunk suggested, his face scrunched up as he leaned around in all directions, trying to get a better view. “What do we do if they both initiate it?”

Allura leaned back from the window, looking thoughtful. Her lips pursed in distaste. “I am not sure.”

Shiro shrugged. “I guess we all win, and lose. We’ll all have to help categorize and map out the distress beacons.”

There was a collection of groans.

“Wait, wait, wait.” Hunk said, putting his hands up. “Does this mean the bet is almost over? Both bets? Like our bet, too?” He asked, gesturing between him and Pidge.

Allura nodded. “As soon as they kiss, yes.”

Pidge shrugged. “We did agree to only count the shocks until the other bet was over.”

“So what if we tie?” He asked, distress and desperation leaking into his tone.

Pidge raised one eyebrow. “I… dunno.”

Coran leaned away from the wall to grin at them. “I say you both get to help me muck out the castle’s inner systems! Prepare to earn your cleaning stripes, paladins!”

Pidge and Hunk both recoiled, lips curled and noses wrinkled, hands held up to their chests. They exchanged looks, both equally disgusted and horrified. Then Hunk’s eyes drifted to the side, focusing on the mic headset that sat on the console between them. Pidge followed his gaze, immediately bristling.

“Huuuuunk.” They said, voice full of warning.

Hunk’s eyes snapped back to them as he jumped. Then his face screwed up in determination. “I’m sorry, Pidge, but I am not mucking out those systems. I have a very sensitive constitution and gag reflex.”

“And you think I want to—? HEY!”

Hunk dove for the mic, Pidge just a second behind him. Hunk grabbed it, holding it in his hand with his arm fully extended away from Pidge. They were standing on the console, one foot digging into Hunk’s side as they attempted to climb over him and his shoulders to reach the mic. They extended
their arm as far as they could, but they couldn’t reach.

“Hunk, don’t do it! Ugh! Why am I so short?!”

“We love you and your shortness, Pidge, but I’m sorry! But I really can’t lose this!” He struggled to keep Pidge at bay while also searching the console for the mute button he had seen Coran hit earlier. He wished he could read Altean. Pidge doubled their efforts to climb over him, climbing onto his back and nearly reaching the mic.

“Pidge! Hunk!” Both Allura and Shiro snapped, but neither of the paladin’s paused in their struggle.

“A-HA!” Hunk exclaimed, finding the right button.

“HUNK, NO!” Everyone shouted, but it was too late. Hunk’s hand came down on the button.

He bent his arm, pulling the mic to his face and speaking quickly. “KEITH! HURRY, HIT THE WALL ONE MORE TIME—“

“KEITH, DON’T YOU DARE!” Pidge shouted in Hunk’s ear, climbing over his shoulder to snatch at the microphone headset.
They both had a hand on it and were trying to gain possession of it. “KEITH, PLEASE! I’M
BEGGING YOU! TOUCH THE WALL! I’LL DO ANYTHING—!”

“LANCE, TOUCH THE WALL FIRST! DON’T LET KEITH WIN!”

“NO, LANCE! IT’S A TRAP, DON’T DO IT!”

There was a brief pause, and then they heard Lance’s loud, high pitched shout. “I KNEW YOU
GUYS WERE UP THERE!”

Allura and Shiro sighed. Coran pinched the bridge of his nose, shaking his head. Pidge and Hunk
exchanged sheepish looks. Oops.

Chapter End Notes
I am a LITTLE sorry about extending the cliffhanger, but this chapter has been planned from the beginning and I honestly love it.

I challenge you to think back on all the events of this fic, and just imagine everyone's reactions in the control room. My artist partner and I have been laughing about it the whole time.

The next chapter will return to our regularly scheduled Klance. Also note: I've extended the total chapters to 8, as I've decided to write an epilogue for this fic, because you all deserve a little fluff after dealing with this fic

DO NOT REPOST THE ART FROM THIS FIC

Instead, hop on over here and reblog it from the artist herself HERE

My Tumblr
The Artist's Tumblr
Chapter 7

Chapter Summary

In which they finally give the team what they want, and they get out of the maze.

Chapter Notes

Just so everyone knows, this chapter has a special easter egg guest artist. Our friend Bolla (Sora's, the artist's, roommate) has done her OWN versions of all of Sora's drawings for this chapter. Click on the image to open up the secondary image. (it was entirely for fun and they're hilarious)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

[K E I T H]

You might have forgotten how to breathe.

"Okay." His voice echoed in your ears.

Okay. He had said okay. Just that one simple word struck you straight to the core. All of the anger, all of the frustration, all of the rage had drained out of you in the moments the two of you had spent laying in silence. The fighting had done exactly what you had hoped it would do: it had given you a way to vent your frustration. And, coincidentally, actually made Lance shut up for longer than five seconds. It had given you time to think without the rage boiling beneath the surface and without his voice to muddle your thoughts.

Not that your thoughts were all that deep. While laying on top of him, his cheek rested on your hair, his breath tickling your ear, his warmth seeping through your clothes and into your numb body, the gentle rise and fall of his chest, his arms resting loosely but snuggly around you… well, it was hard to think about anything else. You listened to his breathing, waiting for the moment he would say something and ruin the moment, but he didn’t. He stayed as silent as you. Even after his breathing calmed, you could still feel the rapid beating of his pulse beneath your hands. Eventually, even that slowed, and you were almost convinced he was asleep.

You tried to think about the things the two of you had said. Your stomach twisted when you thought of all the confessions you had shouted in your fury, but your chest fluttered when you thought of all the things he had said in return.

He thought you had a nice laugh and a cute smile. He thought you were hot. He thought you were attractive. He thought you had pretty eyes. You made him feel things, confusing things. Like the way he made you feel…

You didn’t know if any of it was true. It seemed true enough. The things you had shouted in the heat of the moment certainly were… still, you couldn’t help the trickle of doubt that chilled your spine,
souring the hopeful warmth that filled your belly.

But you couldn’t think too hard about it. You couldn’t think too hard about his confessions or yours. You couldn’t focus enough to analyze your own feelings. Not with him under you, living and breathing and so warm. Not with him holding you. Not with the way you were buried into his neck. Not with the way he filled your senses. All you could think about was how much you wanted to kiss this fucking idiot.

And so you told him that was exactly what you wanted to do, and he had said okay.

Despite the way your insides fluttered and twisted, you didn’t move. You hovered over him, his face just inches away, his beautiful, stupid face. His lips parted slightly, gazing up at you with awe in his eyes. A light blush dusted his cheeks. He was beautiful, and you wanted nothing more than to kiss those gorgeous lips of his, but you froze. Your limps were stiff, holding you in place. You gazed back at him, eyes wide.

He had said okay, and now you were hesitating.

Then his arms began to move, and you had a moment of panic. But his hands drifted up your back, slowly running through your hair. Your eyes fluttered shut for a moment as you shuttered. His touch was so light, so gentle. Nothing like it had been while you were wrestling and throwing each other into the walls. Then his hands were on your face, long fingers and palms lightly cupping your cheeks and your jaw. Your eyes opened, half-lidded as you gazed down at him. He was looking at you intently, and you couldn’t help the shiver that ran down your spine. With one hand resting on his chest, you could feel how quickly his heart was beating. It matched the tempo of your own. That gave you confidence. He wanted this just as much as you did. And he was just as nervous.

Then, so gently that you barely registered it at first, he tugged your face toward him. You let him, leaning down. Impatient as always, he was lifting his head from the ground, intent on meeting you halfway. You watched his eyes drift closed as his head tilted, and yours did the same. You felt his breath on your lips—

“KEITH! HURRY, HIT THE WALL ONE MORE TIME—“

“KEITH, DON’T YOU DARE!”

“KEITH, PLEASE! I’M BEGGING YOU! TOUCH THE WALL! I’LL DO ANYTHING—!”

“LANCE, TOUCH THE WALL FIRST! DON’T LET KEITH WIN!”

“NO, LANCE! IT’S A TRAP, DON’T DO IT!”

Your eyes snapped open. Lance’s eyes were wide as saucers, staring up at you. He was only a breath away, but it might as well have been miles. You were both tense, bodies frozen and stiff. As you watched, his face slowly morphed from relaxed anticipation to absolute horror. You knew his expression was mirrored by your own.

You both seemed to come to the same conclusions at the same time.

One, your team was definitely still watching.

Two, they had seen and probably heard everything.

Three, you were currently in a very compromising position.
You sat up straight, whipping your head around to stare at the control booth. You still couldn’t see any figures in the booth, and your eyes narrowed, your lips twisting into a frown. “What the—“ You started to mutter, but Lance’s shout cut you off.

“I KNEW YOU GUYS WERE UP THERE!” His voice was loud and high pitched. His hands pushed as your legs, urging you to climb off of him.

Right, you were still straddling his hips.

The two of you practically leapt away from each other, scrambling to get to your feet. You brushed yourselves off, adjusting your clothes. Your face felt warm again, and your ears were burning. You glanced sideways at Lance, and he wasn’t in much better shape. His dark complexion was only made darker by his deep flush. You just hoped your team couldn’t see your faces very well.

You didn’t have much time to mourn the loss of contact or the loss of the moment. It was too deeply buried in your mortified embarrassment.
“SHOW YOURSELVES! WE KNOW YOU’RE UP THERE!” Lance was shouting, one hand curled into a fist and the other pointing up at the control booth.

There was a long pause before, “Uh, we’re not here right now, please leave a message after the beep. Beeeep.”

“HuuuuNK!”

There was a deep, feminine sigh. “I suppose our cover has been blown. Remove the cloaking screen, Coran.”

A second later, the glass of the control booth flashed and suddenly there were five bodies standing in front of the glass. You stepped back, jaw clenching. Both of your hands were in front of you and curled into fists. “You were there the whole time?! All of you?!”

“I KNEW IT!” Lance was still shouting. He ran his hands through his hair, yanking at it while he shouted wordlessly, stomping his feet as he turned in a circle. “I KNEW IT! I KNEW IT!”

There was a pause, and you could see everyone shifting in the booth. After a moment, Shiro spoke. “Keith, you have to trust that we did this for your own good.”

Your bottom eyelids were twitching as you held up your hands. “You sat up there and watched as we— as we—”

“As we nearly killed ourselves in this fucking maze?!” Lance finished for him.

You gestured to him, but kept your face upturned toward the booth. “Yes! Exactly!”

“As I informed the team, the maze doesn’t actually conduct enough electricity to cause any lasting damage.” Coran said matter-of-factly.

“Could’ve fooled me!” Lance grumbled loudly, crossing his arms over his chest and cocking one hip to the side.

“We’re sorry, man, but we thought this was a good plan.” Hunk sounded honestly apologetic. That didn’t stop you from being mad at him

“What? Locking us up and then watching us like a bunch of creeps?!” Lance snapped.

“Our goal was to have you work out your problems on your own. We thought there might be a better chance of that happening if you thought you were alone.” Allura said, calm but a little defensive.

“So you tricked us?!” Lance hadn’t looked away from the booth since they revealed themselves. You glanced at him, but he seemed to be purposefully avoiding looking at you.

“Is she wrong?” Shiro asked. “Would you have gotten this far if you had known we were watching?”

Lance’s shoulder slumped and he looked to the side, away from you. “We didn’t really get that far anyway.”

“From our point of view, it looked like you got out your frustration and had actually started talking.” Shiro said it like it had been so innocent, but there was no way he hadn’t known exactly what the two of you had been about to do.

‘Talking’ wasn’t exactly what had been on your mind.
“Yeah, until Hunk ruined it.” Pidge said, accusatory. “You weren’t supposed to actually find out we were watching.”

“I’m sorry!” Hunk exclaimed. It sounded like he had taken the mic from Pidge. “I just—! I didn’t want to lose! Keith, please, for all that is good in the universe, touch a wall again! I’ll do anything—”

There was a rustling as Pidge snatched the microphone back. “Keith, don’t you dare move!”

You felt a muscle in your jaw tick. You crossed your arms over your chest, scowling. “Why do you want me to touch a wall?” You bit out.

“We, uh…” Hunk had gotten the mic back. “We might have made a bet over who would get shocked more.”

“WHAT?!” Lance’s head snapped back up to the booth.

“What?” You echoed.

“I said Lance would hit the wall the most, and Hunk said Keith would.” Pidge explained. They didn’t sound nearly as sheepish and guilty as Hunk had. “Right now you guys are tied, and the bet was supposed to be over once you guys finished, er, talking. But someone ruined that.”

“I just really didn’t want to lose!”

“Well congratulations, you both lost.” Shiro said. “You’re both helping Coran clean his castle from the bottom up.”

“I’m thinking we start with the inner workings of the kitchen systems, and then move swiftly into the castle’s plumping!” Coran added helpfully.

There were twin groans.

Lance huffed. “Serves you, right!” He looked away, but then glanced back up at the control booth out of the corner of his eye, eyebrows raised. “Out of curiosity, how many times did we hit the walls?”

“One hundred and nine.” They both said in unison.

His mouth dropped open, eyes widening. Mirroring your own expression. “Holy crow.” He whispered, turning to gape at you. You met his eyes. “Holy shit.”

Your sentiments exactly. You recovered first and scowled at him. “If I suffer any lasting damage because of this, you’re dead.”

His brow furrowed and his frown came back almost immediately. “Hey! I thought we agreed it was both of our faults?”

You rolled your eyes. “We did not agree to that.”

“You were the first person to ever get over one hundred shocks, Lance.” Hunk added helpfully.

Lance brightened at that, looking away from you and to the booth. “Really? Aw yeah, new record!” He pointed twin finger guns at you. “Put that in your pipe and smoke it, Keith. I made a new record.”

You rolled your eyes and looked away. “Congratulations.” You said dryly.
“Yeah, but you’re both tied for the high score.” Pidge said slyly. “Just one more shock and you win.”

He looked almost thoughtful, “Oh yeah.” You stared at him flatly as you saw the decision torn on his features. His hand twitched.

“You’ve got to be kidding me.”

He looked at you, smirking. “What’s the matter, Keith? Afraid I’m going to beat you.” He lifted a hand, reaching out.

“Lance!” Hunk’s voice was urgent and bordering on shrill. “If you do that you’ll be stuck eating nothing but food goo and Coran’s cooking!”

Lance froze, his smirk falling instantly.

“Prepare for nutritionally balanced meals!” Coran said.

Lance’s eyes narrowed as he looked to the side. He pulled his arm back and crossed it back over his chest. “Yeaaaaah, on second thought, I’m good with a tie.”

You breathed a sigh of relief through your nose, closing your eyes briefly and turning your head down. Then you breathed deep and opened your eyes, looking up. “Now that we know about your little plan, will you let us out of here?”

“Negatory, Red.” Coran said. “The two of you have yet to settle your differences.”

“Coran’s right. You haven’t actually talked it out yet.” Shiro’s words sounded final.

You gritted your teeth. “This is ridiculous!” You gestured to Lance. “We just spent who knows how long—"

“Nearly three thousand and six hundred ticks!”

“—Thanks, Coran.” You said dryly before continuing. “We just literally fought out our frustration. We had a bonding moment— he literally cradled me in his arms.”

Out of the corner of your eye, you saw Lance bristle. His head snapped to look at you. “Hey!, I—“

“Shut it, Lance.” You snapped, holding a finger out to him. “You did. Get over it. We had our bonding moment, or whatever. And in the process, we’ve hit the walls one hundred and nine times, because you didn’t put the damn thing down. Now I don’t know about Lance, but I’m tired, everything hurts, and there’s this constantly buzzing in my ears. I’m done.” You crossed your arms over your chest, leaning your weight to one hip.

“Yeah! What he said!” Lance spoke up, lifting his chin to the booth. “I could definitely go for a twelve hour nap. I’m gonna need some serious chill time to get over this traumatic experience.”

“I am sorry, Paladins, but we are determined to see this through.” To her credit, Allura did sound somewhat apologetic. More so than the others. “It is of the upmost importance that you two get along, and we are willing to stay here until you do.” She then perked up to such a degree that you wondered if you had imagined her sincerity before. “So the sooner you finish talking things out, the sooner we will release you! Remember, paladins, you are all connected by a mystical bond. You cannot hide from your feelings forever!”
“We’re not—!” You groaned, burying your face in one hand, shaking your head.

“Alright, you want us to talk?” Lance took a step back, half turning to face you. “Keith, do you hate me right now?”

You lifted your head and met his gaze. He was giving you the barest of smirks, and his cheeks were lifted in such a way that made his eyes sparkle. You knew what he was thinking. He was thinking about that near kiss. About your admission that you wanted to kiss him. The kiss that never happened. You stiffened, your lips pursing together as you felt a familiar warmth tickle the back of your neck.

“Yes.” You said without hesitation.

His smirk dropped as his brows fell into a flat line. “I mean, do you hate me more than usual?”

Once again, you didn’t hesitate. The corner of your lips twitched upward. “No.”

“See?” Lance said, turning back to the control booth and gesturing to you. “He doesn’t hate me and I don’t hate him. Not any more than necessary. We fought it out and we’re good now. Right, Keith?”

‘Good’ wasn’t exactly the word you’d use to describe it. The two of you still had a lot to work out, but you also knew that you didn’t want to do so while you had an audience. So you nodded, “Right.”

“See? What’d you say? Let us out.”

“That is… not exactly what we were hoping for.” Allura said flatly, sounding disappointed.

“I’m not sure we buy it.” Shiro added, his tone matching hers. “We haven’t really seen any solid proof that you’ve settled your differences.”

“And our bonding moment wasn’t enough?” Lance was getting desperately frustrated. He was nearly shouting again.

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“And our bonding moment wasn’t enough?” Lance was getting desperately frustrated. He was nearly shouting again.

“We were hoping for something… more concrete.” Shiro added helpfully. It wasn’t helpful.

The two of you stared up at them with matching blank expressions, unamused.

“Just, like, go with the mood, you know?” Hunk tried. “Do whateeeever you feel like.”

“Pretend we’re not here.” Pidge added. “Just keep doing what you were doing.”

You groaned, rolling your eyes and tilting your head back as you did so. What the hell did they want from you?

Lance voiced your frustration. “What do you guys want from us?”

“Yeah, obviously you’re up there waiting for something.” You said, frustration lacing your tone. “Just tell us so we can get out of here.”

“We just want you to— what was that phrase you earthlings used? Ah yes— we want you to ‘kiss and make up’.” Coran said.

And suddenly things started to click into place.

You knew what they wanted. Hell, it was what you wanted. You couldn’t fucking believe they were
going to make you do this in front of all of them. Still… it was an opportunity you couldn’t pass up, and you knew there was little chance in hell that Lance was going to do it first. You just wanted out of this god forsaken maze.

“What the hell is that supposed to mean? We already did make up! We already told you we don’t hate each other anymore—!”

“Lance.” You said flatly and loudly, enough to cut him off. When you lifted your head, he was staring at you, brows furrowed and eyes narrowed. “Just, shut up, okay?”

His lips twisted into a frown. “Hey! You can’t tell— Keith?” His anger dissipated into confusion as you stomped toward him. It only took you a few steps. Alarm overtook his features as he saw the grim determination on yours. “What are you—?”

You grabbed the front of his shirt, fingers curling into the fabric, and yanked him toward you. Your lips crashed together in an awkward clash of teeth and noses. He let out a small squeak of alarm, hands shooting up defensively, but he didn’t push you away. He froze, everything stiff. His lips were rigid against yours, his nose bumping awkwardly against your own. You pressed your lips to his firmly and roughly, determined to get it over with. But he was so warm, and his scent filled your nose: a strange mix of all those ridiculous moisturizers and facial products he used, his deodorant, sweat, and just… Lance. His lips were chapped slightly and you could feel his heart beat pounding in his chest where you grabbed his shirt.

You had meant to kiss and pull away, but you couldn’t help it: you relaxed into him.

You hadn’t realized how much tension had been in your own shoulders until it melted away. Your kiss eased as your body relaxed, but you didn’t pull away. Not yet. Then, as if he had been waiting for that cue, he relaxed as well. He let out the breath you hadn’t realized he had been holding. It whistled through his nose as he tilted his head, and suddenly your lips were perfectly aligned. His hands came down to rest on your arms and his fingers curled slightly, but he didn’t push you away. You tilted your head a fraction, increasing the feeling of his lips against yours. You leaned into him, feeling your knees shake.
His lips parted enough for his tongue to slide out, running across your lips, and you couldn’t help the groan that rumbled from your throat. Your hand curled tight into the fabric of his shirt, pulling him closer—

“Aw yeah!” Hunk’s whoop echoed around the training deck, forcibly ripping your attention back to the here and now. And the audience that was watching you. “I told you, Pidge! Keith, my man!”

There was a groan. “Yeah, you got me, Hunk.”

A loud sigh. “At least they finally did it.” Allura grumbled.

“You should have more faith in them.” Shiro sounded like he was smiling.

“All they needed was a little shove in the right direction.” Coran sounded proud.

“Coran, I think you cheated.” Pidge said dryly.
“Hey! Leave Coran alone!” Hunk said. “It’s not his fault Keith is better at picking up hints than Lance is.”

“I still think it’s cheating,” Pidge grumbled.

You had both leaned back a fraction when Hunk’s excited exclamation had shattered the peace and solitude of the moment, but neither of you moved very far. You were still inches away, only far enough to keep his eyes from blurring together. Your breaths mixed together, and your lips were parted, as if waiting for more. You wanted more. You wanted it bad. But you also knew this wasn’t exactly the time or place for that.

You searched Lance’s eyes, his face, looking for any signs that he regretted it or resented you for it. You found nothing but surprised awe. Slowly, his tongue slipped out to lick his lips, and your eyes were drawn to it, shuttering as you remember how that tongue had felt.

“Whoa…” He breathed.

Reluctantly, but with purpose, you let go of him and stepped away. For a moment you weren’t sure if your legs would hold on their own, but they did. You left Lance standing there, looking positively dazed with his eyes wide and his mouth hanging open. You gestured to him, turning your face up to the control booth. Lips set into a firm line, you hoped they couldn’t see the flush on your cheeks.

“There!” You said, voice loud and carrying. “You happy now?!”

There was silence from the control booth as the seconds ticked by. Then Allura cleared her throat. “Well, some of us are more happy than others, but I suppose you did what we asked…”

“Good job, paladins. I knew we could count on you.” Shiro said. “Coran, lower the maze.”

“Right-O!”

The two of you jumped as the walls sprang to life around you before slowly dissipating, hexagonal panel pattern dissolving. Then it was gone, and you breathed a sigh of relief.

“Go get some rest, you two. We’ll see you at dinner.” Shiro said. “Now that everything is out in the open, we expect you to move forward from this. No backtracking, got it?”

Keith stiffened, jaw clenching as his hands curled into loose fists. Had they… had they really known the entire time? From the sound of it, they had, but you hadn’t thought your feeling had been that obvious. Hell, you hadn’t even realized how you felt until less than thirty minutes ago.

“Got it.” You said gruffly, turning on your heel, eager to get away from this room and away from your team. The light over the exit door was green, signaling your freedom. You took a few steps, hesitated, and braced yourself as you took a few more. You didn’t hit any walls, and you instantly sighed in relief.

“Wha—“ Lance seemed to have found his voice, but it cracked. He tried again. “What just happened?!?” He sounded a little panicked.

You stopped walking and half turned to look back at him. He was also half turned, staring at you with wide eyes, mouth hanging open. Confusion was written all over his features. He took one hundred and nine shocks from the maze, but you had a feeling it was your kiss that had broken him.

“Keith kissed you, dude.” Hunk said over the speakers.
Your lips curled into a small smirk at this, enjoying the moment as his face went through several rapid emotions: shock, disbelief, pleasure, pain, embarrassment. All the while, a deep red flush crawled up his neck to settle onto his cheeks, darkening his complexion. Your smirk widened and, you couldn’t help it, you winked.

That, apparently, was the last straw.

His eyes widened a fraction, and his Adam’s apple bobbed as he choked on whatever he was going to say. He spun back toward the control room and stomped away from you, fists at his sides, elbows bent, back hunched. He raised a hand, pointing to the control booth. “Coran! Turn the maze back on, right now!” He demanded, voice high and shrill. “I’m shocking myself into unconsciousness. This is not happening. I was not one upped by Keith of all people. Not in this. I refuse—”

“Lance.” You said flatly, almost a groan as you rolled your eyes.

He had stopped walked and was standing there, pointing at the booth and shouting. “Coran! I know you’re up there! Be a pal and turn this thing on! Let’s test this lasting damage theory!”

Sighing, you walked up behind him and grabbed him firmly by the collar of his jacket. “Come on, Lance. We’re leaving.” You turned and started walking back toward the exit, dragging him behind you by his jacket.

He stumbled along behind you, walking backwards as he continued to plead at the control booth. “Help! Help! I’m being kidnapped by a mad man with a mullet! Hunk! Where’s your compassion?! Pidge! Turn it on! I’ll touch a wall! You’ll win! Come on, buddy!”

The only response from the speakers was a collection of chuckles and amused snorts.

“Aw man! You guys are awful!” He gave up his struggle. He stopped dragging his feet and started walking along with you.

You rolled your eyes and dragged him out the door.

Once you were outside the training deck and the doors closed behind you, you paused, breathing in deep and exhaling in a long sigh. It tasted of freedom.

Lance pulled his jacket out of your grip, and you let go. He turned to face you, crossing his arms over his chest. His face was turned away, his eyes downcast, and a blush still evident on his cheeks. “So… what do we do now?” He asked, voice suddenly small.

You gazed at him. He looked so… unsure. Self conscious? It wasn’t a look you were used to seeing on him. It was oddly endearing. It made him more… real.

You tilted your head, putting one hand on your hip while the other hung at your side. You shrugged. “I don’t know about you, but I’m exhausted, everything hurts, and I’m ready to sleep for days.” Now that the adrenaline was wearing off, everything was hitting you. Your muscles ached, your chest burned, your limbs practically vibrated, and your entire body seemed to hum. There was a persistent ringing in your ears, and you weren’t sure how much longer your legs were going to hold you.

He lifted a hand to rub the back of his neck. He still wouldn’t look at you. “Yeah, a nap sounds good.” He turned his neck sharply, like he was trying to crack it, but he winced. You had the distinct urge to reach out to him.

“You can sleep in my room if you want.” You weren’t surprised by your words. You had been thinking them, and trying to gather the courage to say them. You had braced yourself for asking the
question. Your tone, however, was pleasantly surprising. Calm, steady, and casual. Almost offhanded in your nonchalance. The exact opposite of what you were anticipating.

Lance, on the other hand, was very surprised at your words. He finally looked at you, eyes wide. He searched your face as he seemed to digest what you had said. Then, slowly, his lids lowered halfway and his lips curved into a knowing smirk. His cocky, insufferable, attractive confidence was back. “Is the great, illusive Keith offering to cuddle?” He teased, practically grinning.

You felt heat creeping past your cheeks and to your ears. You shrugged, looking away, clearing your throat. “Whatever, I won’t offer again.” Your voice wasn’t as nonchalant as it had been moments ago.

His grin widened and he put his hands on his hips, leaning forward. “Come on, admit you wanna cuddle me.”

Your eyes narrowed and you said bluntly, “No.” You turned and started to walk away, down the hall and away from the training deck. You walked until it became clear that he wasn’t following you.

You stopped, looking over your shoulder. He was still standing where you had left him. His eyes were on you as he chewed his bottom lip, looking worried and indecisive. Your heart ached to see his lack of confidence, especially when you had thought the meaning behind your offer had been clear.

You sighed in defeat, tilting your head up to the ceiling and praying for strength. You were going to need it if you were going to put up with this one. “Lance, I want to cuddle you. Are you coming or not?”

He perked up right away, his lips flashing that signature grin that made your heart skip a beat. “Aw hell yes!” He fist pumped in the air and practically skipped to where you stood, long limbs flailing. When he reached you, he threw an arm over your shoulder, pulling you in close. His body was warm, and you leaned into it without thinking. “See? That wasn’t so hard. I mean, who can blame you for wanting to cuddle all of this.” He said smugly, using his free hand to gesture to himself.

You glared up at him, lips pressed into a thin line. You crossed your arms over your chest, but you didn’t move away. “Do you ever shut up?”

You weren’t sure how, but his smirk managed to turn mischievous, almost sinister. His eyes glinted as he leaned toward you, putting his lips at your ear. You could feel them against you as he spoke, and his breath ruffled your hair. You felt heat simultaneously rising up your neck and shooting straight down to your groin. “Make me.”
This boy was going to be the death of you.

Chapter End Notes

This is the last chapter of the original story, but there will be a "short" epilogue chapter with fluff and aftermath, because I am weak and you all deserve more fluff after dealing with all these shenanigans. And by "short", I mean a 7k word chapter B)

Hope you all enjoyed The First Kiss™

DO NOT REPOST THE ART FROM THIS FIC

Instead, hop on over here and reblog it from the artist herself HERE
You can find the easter egg art HERE

My Tumblr
The Artist's Tumblr
Epilogue

Chapter Summary

In which Lance has to help with the bet punishment, and Keith is a distraction.

Chapter Notes

And now the last chapter of this fic! Thank you all for reading! This chapter only has two drawings because Sora and I decided that we wanted to go ahead and finish this fic so we can move on to our next one. But holy daNG did Sora out do herself on these drawings. Simply amazing. As usual, you'll find the link to her tumblr post of them down below.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

[LANCE]

“But why do I have to help?” You whined, leaning back in your chair in the control room. You slouched low, arms on the arm rests. You glared at the holographic screens hovering in front of you. There was a map of a star system displayed there, all the planets shown in red. “I wasn’t even in on the stupid bet!”

“Yeah, but it’s your fault that we lost.” Pidge said from across the room. You rolled your head to the side, glaring across at them while you pouted. They were leaning forward in their chair, fingers tapping away at the screens.

“Maybe I wouldn’t have lost if you had told me what the bet actually was.” You grumbled loudly.

“What did you want us to do? Sit up there and start singing an a cappella version of ‘Kiss The Girl’?” Pidge asked, turning to glare over their shoulder at you.

“It would’ve helped!”

Pidge rolled their eyes. “Why couldn’t you have just flirted with Keith like you do with everyone else?”

“I don’t— that’s not— Keith is—!” You gave up trying to finish those thoughts and crossed your arms over your chest, sinking down a few inches more and looking away. “Whatever, Pidge, I don’t expect you to understand.”

“Why? Cause Keith is speeeeciaal?” Your gaze snapped over to them, and they were smirking now, eyebrows waggling.

“You keep those eyebrows under control, Pidge!” You snapped, pointing at them.

“Or what?”
“Or I’ll come over there and tape them down!”

“Paladins!” Allura said sharply, cutting you both off. She sighed. “It is very hard to concentrate with the two of you bickering.”

“Pidge started it.”

“Nu-uh!”

You stuck your tongue out at Pidge behind Allura’s back, and they stuck theirs out at you.

“While I am glad that you and Keith have finally worked through your problems, I must agree with Pidge. We would not be here if you had treated Keith like any of the other people you have tried to woo.”

“Ha!”

“Hey!” You sat up straight, putting one hand on the arm rest and pointing at them with the other. “Maybe you guys shouldn’t have been making bets behind our backs! Serves you right!”

“And now you are being punished with us.” Allura said dryly, giving you a flat look over her shoulder. You shrank a little under her gaze. “Now get back to work. We have a lot of ground to cover.”

You groaned, rolling your head and turning your eyes back to the screens in front of you. You started poking at the displays, dragging planet after planet of distress beacons into a list you had already named after the solar system. “Do we have to do like, the whole universe?”

“No,” She said simply. “Just everywhere that Zarkon’s influence has reached.”

“This is gonna take foreverrrrr.” You whined.

“Then I suggest you get to it.”

“Come now, Lance, it’s not so bad once you get in the groove of it!” Coran said from his position at the front console. He was effortlessly moving through his work. “Sometimes it helps to make up a little song about it, for example, I like to hum a little bit to myself like—”

“Thanks,” You said quickly and loudly, cutting him off. “Thanks, Coran, but, uh, I think I’m good.” You weren’t sure what he sounded like when he sang, but you had had enough of Altean music to last a lifetime.

“How’s it going, team?” Shiro’s voice greeted them as the doors at the back of the control room slid open.

“Awful!” You threw your hands into the air, letting them fall dramatically to the arm rests of your chair. You tilted your head to see over your shoulder. Shiro walked into the room, Hunk and Keith behind him. You frowned, eyes narrowing. “Oh great, what are you guys doing here? Come to rub it in?”

“Aw, Lance, we’d never do that.” Hunk said, feigning hurt. Then he snorted. “Who am I kidding? Of course, we would! How’s the work going?”

You glared at him. “Space has made you cruel, Hunk”

He shrugged, sipping on juice pouch he cradled in his hands. “Don’t hate the player, hate the game.
In this case, Keith’s game. Right, Keith? Up top!” He held up a hand and Keith stared at it, eyebrows raised. He also had a pouch of space juice and idly sipped it through the straw. His lips curved up at the edges as he gave Hunk a high five.

“We have gotten a surprising amount done.” Allura said, ignoring them. She tapped some things on her screens, dragging the beacons into groups and categories. She had been standing the whole time you’d been stuck in here, and you were honestly surprised her feet weren’t hurting. Did she ever sit down? With both hands, she expanded her map past the quadrant she was looking at and enlarged the map in front of her. She spun it to get a better look. “It is coming along smoothly. Despite some distractions.” She shot a look at you, and you wilted, sticking out your bottom lip in a small pout. You huffed, and faced forward, lifting your hands to idly drag around a few glowing lights.

She clasped her hands together, looking over the map she just made. “We are by no means close to finishing, but we’re nearly done categorizing the distress beacons from the nearest systems.”

Shiro came to stand next to her, arms crossed over his chest as he looked over the floating map. “Seems like as good a place to start as any.”

“It would go a lot faster if everyone helped.” Pidge pointed out, sending a look over their shoulder at Hunk and Keith.

“Sorry, Pidge, no can do.” Shiro said, shaking his head. You looked up to see his lips curved into a small smile. “A bet is a bet.”

Pidge sighed and turned back to their screens. You were willing to bet they were already on their second or third star system.

“Speaking of bets!” Coran straightened up, holding up a finger. He spun on his heel, a grin spread across his lips.

“Oh, no.” Hunk muttered, voice full of dread.

“Oh, no.” Pidge muttered across the room.

“Oh, yes!” He crossed one arm over his chest, his other hand going to stroke his chin. “I believe it’s about time we started on cleaning the castle!”

You couldn’t help the satisfied grin that spread your lips as you looked at Pidge in time to see their look of distress. “Allura!” Pidge whined, pleading with their eyes.

She was smiling a small, amused smile. “I am sorry, Pidge, but I believe Coran is right. We have been at this since morning. I believe it is about time for a break.”

“A break to do more work?”

“In your case, yes.” You said, grinning from your seat. You crossed your arms over your chest. “Serves you right, Pidge. And you, too, Hunk!”

Pidge glared at you. “When I die, I want Lance to lower my coffin into the ground so he can let me down one last time.”

You pointed at him, gaping. “Don’t you meme me, Pidge!”

“Come now, cleaning cadets!” Coran said, marching toward the exit with his hands clasped behind his back. They both groaned. Pidge pressed a few buttons and the screens in front of them
disappeared. They stood up, shoulders hunched and arms limp at their sides as they trudged after Coran. Hunk wasn’t far behind them, mirroring their posture as he grumpily sipped on his juice.

You watched them go, grinning widely. Finally, some justice! It felt good. And it meant you were off cleaning duty for a while. “Alright!” You said, stretching your arms over your head and arching your back. “Finally time to get my chill on.” You hunched forward, stretching your arms out in front of you. You put your hands on the arms of your chair and pushed yourself to your feet. “Is there any more of that space juice?”

“You are not going anywhere.” Allure’s voice cut through the air. You froze, hands still on the arms of your chair.

You blinked at her, then stood up straight, crossing your arms over your chest, frowning. “Why not? You just said we were going to take a break!”

She nodded. “We are, but you are not.” She crossed her arms over her chest, giving you her stern princess look that made you wilt. “You were here late, and you have barely gotten anything done. You will stay here until you have at least finished with that star system.”

Your shoulders hunched, mouth gaping. Your brows furrowed as you whined, “But you said I could sleep in! You know, to recover from the one hundred and nine shocks I got because of you guys.”

“We did not encourage you to go through the maze, or to touch the walls on purpose.” She said flatly, raising one eyebrow. You looked away, pouting as you felt your face warm. “Besides, late or not, the fact remains that you have not been working at an acceptable pace. So you will stay here until you have at least finished the work we assigned to you.”

“Aww, come on! Shiro?” You turned your pleading eyes to the black paladin.

He looked from you, to Allura, and back to you. He shrugged. “Seems fair to me. You should pull your own weight, Lance.”

You threw up your arms before collapsing back into your chair. You slouched heavily and crossed your arms over your chest. “Man! How is this fair! I wasn’t even in on the bet!”

They ignored you. “Shiro, there was something I wanted to speak with you about.” Allura said, turning back to her floating map.

“Yeah?” He said, looking back to her with an eyebrow raised.

“I wanted to get your opinion on what quadrants you thought we should venture to first, and whether we should move forward or hit the empire sporadically. And should we start with the oldest beacons first, or the newest?” With a few delicate gestures, she turned and spun the map. A small frown pursed her lips and her brows furrowed slightly. “No, this will not do. Will you come with me to the map room so we may get a better look?”

“All right then.” He said, and the two of them turned to leave the control room. As she left the center platform, her screens dropped away. You didn’t watch them go, but you heard them pause in the door. “The faster you work, Lance, the faster you can take a break.” Shiro said, not unkindly.

You grumbled something affirmative and heard the doors slide shut behind them. You lifted your hands, pressing a few bright red beacons and dragging them around. You had a fairly old system to deal with. Some of these beacons dated all the way back to the fall of King Alfor. You idly wondered if there was anything left on these planets to save. Your gut twisted at the thought.
You pressed one planet at random, bringing up the specs of it. It was hard to tell from the shades of red and orange the hologram showed it in, but it almost... looked like Earth. Sixty percent of the surface was water. Actual water. H2O. The atmosphere was even close to what you remembered of Earth’s. Your gut twisted. The distress beacon was over nine thousand years old. Had Zarkon started at another corner of the universe, this could have been Earth. You might have grown up with a very different life. You might not have met any of your friends, any of your team. You might have never known Keith—

As if on cue, Keith bent over the arm of your chair and your vision was suddenly filled with a black, messy mullet. You jumped. You had honestly forgotten he was in the room. You had been so wrapped up in your own self pity.

“What’re you looking at?” He asked, voice curious but otherwise blank.

“Just... planets.” You grumbled. You shoved his head aside, trying not to focus on how soft his hair was. “Back off, Keith, I can’t see past your big head.” He leaned away and you were able to minimize the planet’s display. You dragged around a few distress beacons, lips pressed together and face warm. You could feel him watching you.

“Wow, you really are slow at this.”

You grit your teeth. “Shut up.” You snapped. “I’m only behind because someone made me sleep in so late.” You turned your head up, intent on glaring at him. But no sooner had your eyes laid on him, you realized your mistake. He was holding up his juice, one hand on his hip. He was still looking at your screen, so you got to see his face in profile as his eyes softened and his lips curved upward at the edges.

“I don’t remember you complaining this morning.” He said softly, and tilted his head a fraction to send you a sideways look.

Your mouth suddenly felt dry, and you couldn’t swallow past the lump in your throat. You had nothing to say to that. He was right. You hadn’t complained this morning. And truth be told, you weren’t really complaining now.

After the events of the intervention at the training deck, the two of you had gone back to Keith’s room. You had been intent on napping. Hell, you were counting on it. One hundred and nine shocks really did a number on your body and you were exhausted. But once you had laid down on Keith’s bed, in Keith’s room, you found you couldn’t relax enough to sleep. It looked almost exactly like your room, but... it wasn’t. It had Keith’s things. It was filled with Keith’s scent, and honestly, just the knowledge that it was Keith’s space was enough.

You had laid on your back and he had curled up into your side, half laying on your chest as he buried his head under your chin. You wrapped your arms around him, and the two of you had fallen into silence. Even though you were too strung up by his nearness and the echo of that kiss to really sleep, you had been planning on letting Keith do so. But Keith, as it turned out, couldn’t sleep either.

He had tilted his head back to look up at you, and you stared at each other for several long seconds before his gaze drifted down to your mouth. You remembered licking your dry lips, and feeling a shiver down your spine as his eyes followed the movement. And then he had leaned up and kissed you.

It had been soft, tentative, and shy. Nothing like the forceful crash of lips that you had experienced in the training deck. Your arms had tightened around him as you kissed him back. Small, soft pecks. You explored his lips, feeling them out with your own. Your heart hammered in your chest. You felt
dizzy with warmth and giddiness. Your stomach fluttered, twisting pleasantly as Keith shifted on top of you. Warmth coiled in your gut, your body was on fire where he touched. You could focus on nothing except for the hot weight of him pressing you into the mattress and his lips on yours, still shy and innocent even as his knee pressed between your thighs. His hands started to wander, his touches as light and tentative as his lips.

How could he be so damn innocent while driving you crazy? Your hands rubbed circles into his back, feeling all of him, mapping him. The muscles in his back quivered beneath your hands, and his shirt was tight enough that you could feel everything. You traced his spine, outlined the curve of his ribs, memorized the curve of his waist and his hips, felt for the dimples at his lower back. You wanted more of him. All of him. You wanted to feel him, to taste him.

You had let your tongue sneak out, licking along his bottom lip. His lips parted instantly as a low moan escaped his throat and you felt him shiver.

And then Coran’s voice came over the castle’s loud speaker announcing that it was time for dinner.

You both groaned, your head falling back to the pillow and his falling forward to rest his forehead against your chest. You stayed like that for several long moments, simply trying to regulate your heartbeats and savor the moment. Then he had lifted his head, pressed a soft kiss to your throat, and slid off of you.

It was an awkward dinner. It was awkward between you and Keith, and it was awkward because the team had witnessed everything in the training deck. Including your yelled confessions and your first kiss with Keith. Not only that, but they admitted that they had known about your apparently mutual feeling before either of you had been willing to admit it. And they admitted that the whole point of the intervention was to get you two to kiss. They had even made a bet about it! You spent most of the dinner hunched in your seat, poking your food, face warm and unable to look at Keith under the onslaught of the team’s teasing.

Keith, on the other hand, took it all in stride. In the few glances you snuck at him, you could see that he was blushing as much as you were, which was really fucking cute, but he was also smiling and smirking and just looked so fucking smug and happy and it did painfully pleasant things to your heart. The feel of his kisses still lingered on your lips, and not even the strange texture of the alien food could diminish it.

After dinner, you must have looked dead, because Shiro insisted that you get some rest. You were all too happy to oblige. You felt dead on your feet. You were physically, mentally, and emotionally exhausted, and wanted nothing more than to simply sleep. You and Keith had walked back together, and you both hesitated outside his door. He looked at his door, then down at his feet. You had scratched the back of your neck, looking away.

You had only managed to take one awkward step away before he grabbed your sleeve and tugged you into his room. That had been all the prompting you needed before collapsing onto his bed. He curled up next to you, and you didn’t remember much after that. You had woken up a few hours later to find Keith shivering next to you. You sleepily managed to throw the blanket over you both before wrapping him up and drifting back to sleep.

When you finally woke up that morning, or afternoon, or whatever space time it was, Keith was half on your chest again, tucked up under your arm and your chin, against your side. You stayed like that for a long time, eyes closed and simply enjoying his warmth, his scent, his nearness. You had missed his nearness. You had missed him. You couldn’t believe you had been missing out on this simply because you had been… well, you had been stupid. You knew that now. Still, hindsight was twenty-twenty, right? Besides, Keith had been just as stupid. Honestly, you owed your team big time. But
you weren’t gonna tell them that just yet.

Your fingers had idly traced circles on his exposed hip. Then he had woken, lifting his head and gazing at you with a half asleep, dazed expression.

You had smiled wide, eyes going to his hair. “I will never get tired of seeing your bed head, dude.” You said happily, lifting your hands to run your fingers through his hair, effectively messing it up more.

He had given you a half hearted glare and groggily muttered, “Shut up,” before burying his head again.

You chuckled as he shifted all the way on top of you, resting his arms across your chest and his chin on his folded arms. You put a hand behind your head to prop it up, and you gazed at each other.

“Shouldn’t you be helping the others with their work?” He mumbled, eyes still half lidded with sleep.

His shirt had ridden up, exposing the flesh of his lower back. It was hot to the touch. Your hand slipped under his shirt and slid up and down his back. His eyes drifted shut as he shuttered.

“They said I could sleep in, and I’m sleeping.” You said, grinning.

He opened his eyes, glaring at you. “You are not.”

“Sure, I am. See?” His eyes widened as you suddenly rolled over, flipping your positions. You slid down a bit and buried your face in his neck. His hands automatically went around your shoulders and you heard his breath hitch. He tilted his head to the side, exposing more of his neck. You slowly trailed your nose up the side of his neck before pressing a kiss behind his ear. He gasped, and it sent a jolt of warmth straight to your groin. Your heart fluttered into overdrive, just from that small sound. “See?” You said, voice a fraction huskier than it had been. You nuzzled his neck, letting your body relax on top of him. “I’m asleep.”

“Lance…” He had tried to say your name as a warning, but it had come out more like a small plea.

“Yes?” You asked innocently, trailing kisses down his neck, kissing his throat, his collarbone, before moving up to litter small, soft kisses along his jaw. He squirmed beneath you, but his head was still tilted back to give you the best access. You lightly nipped at his jaw and his fingers dug into your shoulders as his back arched with another of those delicious, soft gasps.

“Ah.” It was music to your ears. You wanted to hear more. Your hands had ran up and down his sides as you kissed your way to his ear, running your teeth lightly over the shell of his ear. His hips had bucked, and yours pushed down against them.

“Lance, if you are awake, please report to the control room.” Allure’s voice had rang out over the loudspeaker.

“Lance! I know you’re awake!” Pidge’s voice could be heard in the background. “Don’t make me drag you out of bed!”

You had both froze, and then you groaned, collapsing on top of him in earnest. “Why does this always happen?” You complained. Your body had gone slack, and Keith had grunted, pushing at your shoulders.

“Lance, you’re crushing me, you fat ass.” There were no real heat to his words, and his shoves were
only half hearted.

You chuckled against his collarbone. “Oh, how the tables have turned.”

By the time you had made it to the control room, they were already knee deep in work and you were definitely not in the mindset to do any of it.

You scowled, looking away from Keith and turning back to the task at hand. “Whatever, man. Just let me do my work.” You grumbled. You hated how aware of him you were. His presence was like fire next to you, and you were a moth to the flame. You fixed your eyes firmly on the screens in front of you and tried to work.

He watched in silence for several moments, which was exactly what you had asked for, but it still managed to annoy you. He annoyed you. He still managed to frustrate you just by being there. But it wasn’t like before. It wasn’t a confusing rage, or an itch beneath your skin, or an annoyance at every word he said. It was annoying because you wanted to hear his voice. You wanted to see his smile. You were frustrated because you wanted to just reach out and grab him and feel his lips again.

You supposed you’ve felt like this for a while, but it wasn’t until recently that you had let yourself realize exactly what you wanted.

Keith was frustratingly perfect. He was good at all the things you wanted to be good at. All the things you prided yourself in. He was still your rival, even if only you saw it that way. He was still annoyingly impassive half the time. Impulsive and reckless and obsessed with training. You were still convinced he didn’t know how to have fun. You still wanted to beat his ass to the ground, to outfly him, to one up him, and make him look like a fool. He still made you angry and could work you into a frenzy quicker than anyone else.

But Keith was also the guy who caught your eye. He made your breath hitch and your heart skip a beat. He was the one with an adorable smile and a laugh that made your stomach tie itself in knots. He was cocky, and smug, and it looked so damn good on him. He was the one who cared so deeply for your team and the mission. He was the one who put his all into everything he did. He was the one who had little regard for himself, but every regard for his teammates. He was the one who’s attention you craved, who made you feel like the world when he looked at you. He was the one who you wanted to push against a wall and the one you wanted to curl up with at night.

He was just… Keith. And you were starting to fully understand just how much that meant to you.

You were pulled from your thoughts by a loud and dramatic sigh. You instantly looked up, lips twisted into a frown. “What is it now?” You asked defensively, eyes narrowing.

Keith was standing up straight, one hand still on his hip. His eyes were still on your screen. “You are so slow.” He said again, and you felt yourself bristle.

“Well not all of us can be super tech geniuses— Hey!”

Keith sat on your lap. Just plopped down and settled onto your thighs like he owned them. You stiffened, back going ramrod straight and hands going up at your sides, hovering uncertainly in the air. “Uh,” You said after a moment. “What are you doing?”

“Well?”

He shrugged. “I got tired of standing.”
Your eyes narrowed, arms coming down to the arm rests. “You have your *own* chair, you know.”

He turned then, glancing over his shoulder at you, one eyebrow raised. “Do you *want* me to go to my own chair?”

You opened your mouth, then snapped it shut. Your brows furrowed as you deflated. “No…” You grumbled, slouching.

He turned back forward, but not before you saw the barest smirk on his lips. “Good, now get back to work.”

You grumbled, but did as you were told. He sat on your lap, back slightly hunched as he watched your screen and idly sipped on the straw of his juice pouch. It was a little awkward to work around him, but your arms were thankfully pretty long and you made it work. You weren’t about to ask him to get up. You did, however, have to lean forward, and it pressed your chest against his back. Your skin burned where you touched, even through two layers of clothes.

You tried to ignore the warmth that settled on your cheeks.

“You already did that planet.” He said mildly.

“I did not!”

“You did. See? It’s right here.” He said, pointing to your screen.

You squinted at it over his shoulder, lips pursing into a frown. “I knew that.” You mumbled, hastily deleting the duplicate. “I was just… testing you. Seeing if you were paying attention.”

He snorted. “Uh, huh. Sure you were.”

“Shut up.” You mumbled, slouching further to rest your chin on his shoulder. He stiffened for only a moment before relaxing back against you. You felt your lips tug up into a small smile. Your smile, however, was short lived.

“Is this your first star system?”

You pouted, brows furrowing. “Maybe…” To be fair, you were almost done. Just a few more planets to drag into the right categories, fitting them into the timeline, marking if they were dead distress signals or still active. And if they were dead signals, make a note of how long they had been so.

“How many has Pidge done?”

Your frown deepened as you grumbled. “I dunno, three or something…”

He snickered at that. He had the audacity to snicker at you! His shoulders shaking and everything! And it was too fucking cute for you to be mad. Ugh. Nothing about this was fair. “If you’re just gonna sit there and criticize me, I’m gonna banish your fat ass from my lap.”

“Yes that so?”

“I will banish you from lap town, Keith! I swear I will!”

“I’d like to see you try.”

That was enough of a challenge as any. “Alight! You asked for it!” You leaned back and dug your
fingers under him, firmly grasping his ass with both hands, and holy shit he had a nice ass. “You are hereby banished!” You grunted, trying to use all your strength to lift him off your lap. But it was an awkward angle, and you couldn’t really get much leverage. He was obviously pushing against you, and you got him maybe a couple inches off you before having to give it up. “Banished, I say! Begone, you foul beast!” You put your hands on his hips, trying to push him forward and off, but he dug in his feet and didn’t budge. “The citizens of lap town will no longer abide by your tyranny!” You tried to push on his back, but he just leaned forward, completely negating your shove. You sighed, falling back against your chair, arms flopping over the arm rests. He settled back, shifting so he was situated more squarely and firmly on your lap. You tried to ignore the feeling of his ass shifting as he settling into place. “Alright, I give up. You’re the mayor of lap town now.”

Keith snorted again, the sound dissolving into a short laugh. “I’m honored.”

“You better take care of lap town.”

“I’ll do my best.” He said, voice dripping in amused sarcasm. He reached down with his free hand to
idly pat your thigh. You felt your face tense as blood simultaneously rushed to your face and to your groin. Oh god. You were doomed. Still, you weren’t about to actually kick him off your lap. And you both knew it.

You sighed, leaning forward again and resting your chin on his shoulder. “If you’re gonna insist on sitting on me and criticizing my work, can I least have some juice?”

“Nope.” Keith lifted his juice pouch, reaching out with his lips to grab the straw in a way that was both adorable and infuriating.

“Aw, come on, Keith!” You whined, wrapping your arms around his waist. “Sharing is caring!” You tilted your head, batting your eyelashes.

He turned a fraction to look at you, one eyebrow raised. He looked unmoved. He released his straw to say simply, “Nope.”

“Keith, come on!” You tried to snatch the juice pouch from him, but he was faster. He held it out away and in front of him, arm extended fully. You tried, but it was out of your reach. “I’m gonna dehydrate over here!”

He had his head turned towards you, and a smirk was playing across his lips. You gave him a half hearted glare and a pout. “Give me one reason why I should.”

Your arms fell back to wrap around his waist and you nuzzled your face into his neck. “Because you liiiike me, you really liiiike me.”

“Oh god, please stop singing.”

You kissed his neck, feeling satisfied with the way he stiffened. You felt him shutter, and you smiled against his neck. “You liiiike me, you wanna huuuuug me, you wanna kiiiiss me.”

“I’m out of here.” He said flatly, moving to stand up.

You were laughing, grinning in delight as you caught sight of his face, tinged with red. He got about halfway up before you grabbed his arm and pulled him back down. He turned sideways in your lap, glaring at you with his lips pressed into a small frown.

You wrapped your arms loosely around his waist, leaning in close. “You wanna kiiiiiss me.” You sang softly, your lips moving against his.

“Oh my god, Lance, shut up.” He tried to sound irritated. You really think he tried. And it was an adorably firm attempt. But his voice just came out as a small whine, a little husky and very needy.

You chuckled, knocking your forehead against his and staring at his eyes until they blurred into one. “Make me, pretty boy.”

His free hand shot out, taking hold of your chin in a gentle, but firm grip, and he kissed you.

Your eyes closed as you smiled, leaning into the kiss. You couldn’t help but laugh against his lips. He growled playfully, hand sliding past your jaw and around your neck, his fingers tangling in the hair at the nape of your neck. He held you firmly in place as he tilted his head. You loved the way your lips fit together. You felt dizzy and warm, and the scent of him filled your nose. His breath whistled against your cheek as he breathed heavily.

He kissed your top lip and then your bottom lip before biting gently. Your shoulders slumped as your
lips parted, a soft moan escaping them. Keith’s tongue slipped between them, exploring your mouth. His other arm, hand still clutching his juice, draped over your shoulder as he shifted on your lap. Your hands found their way to his face, cradling his jaw in your palms, thumbs rubbing over his cheeks. He let out a pitiful sound low in his throat, and your tongue flicked out to move against his.

Without warning, he leaned away, breaking the kiss and moving his face out of your hands. He shifted off your lap and got to his feet. A pathetic whine of protest escaped your lips as the cold rushed in to fill the space he had just occupied. Your hands were hovering in the air where they had been just a moment ago. Your brows furrowed as you looked up at him.

He didn’t keep you waiting for long.

No sooner than he had gotten to his feet, he was turning to face you. He set his juice on the arm of your chair and crawled onto your lap, facing you as he straddled your lap. You might have made a pleased sound, but it was drowned out by the moan that he ripped from your throat as he reached forward and tugged you forward into another kiss. He wasted no time deepening the kiss, tongue pushing past your lips, claiming and exploring. You responded in kind, but he always seemed to be a step ahead of you, guiding you with his eagerness.

And holy shit, it was unlike anything you had ever experienced. You were reeling, desperate and grasping to keep up.

Your hands rested on his hips, thumbs rubbing the skin beneath the hem of his shirt. He wiggled in your lap, and you dug in your fingers, dragging him forward until he was flush against you. He broke your kiss with a soft gasp, and you grinned, opening your eyes. His face was flushed and his lips were bright red, parted as he panted. He was looking at you through half lidded eyes. His hands were tangled in your hair.

Still grinning, you leaned forward to push your forehead against his before whispering, “You’re so hot when you’re flushed and squirming in my lap.”

The reaction was instant. His eyes widened, his lips snapping shut and pressing into a small, thin frown. You didn’t think it was possible for him to be any more red, but you got the distinct impression that if he could, he would be blushing. Seeing him, flustered and scowling, was far too adorable. You leaned your head back against your chair and laughed.

The only warning you got was the tightening of his fingers in your hair before he leaned forward and suddenly his lips were on your neck. Your laughter stopped abruptly, choking into a low whine. You tilted your head to the side as he kissed his way up your throat, under your jaw, back to your ear. He trailed his lips down to your collarbone, your back arching as he bit down on the soft flesh at the curve of your neck. Your lips parted, a strangled sound escaping. Your brain short circuited.

“Keith,” You gasped out his name, and he hummed in response, tongue trailing over a spot he had just bitten.

Your fingers dug into his hips, but it wasn’t enough. You needed more. More of him. More of Keith. One hand trailed up his side beneath his shirt, sliding along to his back as your nails dug into his flesh. He was warm, so warm. And he groaned against your neck when you dragged your nails down his back. Your other hand ran down his thigh, eliciting another delicious moan that sent shivers down your spine.

He ran his hands down your chest, up under your shirt and back up. His fingers explored your chest and your stomach, mapping out everything with his fingertips. The leather of his gloves was warm and his fingers were hot, burning a trail across your skin. One hand trailed down, fingers idly drifting
across your stomach, right above your jeans. His lips trailed up to your ear.

“Lance-ah,” He breathed into your ear, voice broken by a half swallowed moan. You forgot how to breathe.

He bit the lobe of your ear just as his fingers dipped past the waistband of your jeans, tugging you closer.

“Keith-! Holy shit,” You gasped out, back arching as your hips jerked forward, pushing against his. The back of his knuckles were hot against your skin, burning beneath your waistline.

He chuckled low in his throat, his breath brushing against your ear and sending vibrations straight to your toes. He licked along the shell of your ear before whispering in a voice that was far too breathy and far too cocky for your poor heart to take, “You’re so hot when you’re flushed and squirming beneath me.” He leaned back to look at you. He was still flushed, but his dark eyes glinted with mischief and his lips were curved in a smirk. You felt your heart flip and skip a beat before pounding into overdrive.

How was it even fair for him to be this perfect? It wasn’t good for your health.

With a low groan, you slipped further down in your chair, both hands coming up to frame his face, pulling him forward into a deep, desperate kiss. His hand remained curled beneath the waistband of your pants, the other splayed across your stomach as he leaned into your kiss.

Then the doors to the control room slid open.

“I do feel terrible that we cannot reach everyone at once.” Allura was saying.

“I know, but there’s a lot of ground to cover, and we need to be smart about our movements. We’re not strong enough to liberate the planets at the heart of Zarkon’s empire just yet, even if they are suffering the most.” Shiro’s voice was soothing and consoling.

She sighed. “I know, I know. We will do our best, and in time, we will be able to help everyone—what are you doing?”

At the sound of their voices, your hands had shot off of Keith. You held your arms out and up as far as possible. Your eyes were wide as he stared at Keith. His expression was carefully controlled indifference, but there were cracks in his mask: his blush, his eyes a little too wide, his lips pressed together a little too tight. He was stiff and rigid on your lap, hands frozen exactly where they had been.

“NOTHING!” You said a little too quickly, your voice a little too high in pitch.

Slowly, Keith’s gaze slid away from yours, focusing on something over your shoulder. “Hi, Shiro. Allura.” You were amazed at how calm he sounded. How did he even do that?!

You heard Allura sigh. “Must you do this in the control room?”

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“Does that mean I can leave?” You asked, finally finding your voice and grounding it in sounding annoyed and indigent rather than embarrassed and squeaky. You let your hands drop to the arm rests, gripping them and half turning to glare over your shoulder. They were standing next to each other, Allura had both hands lifted, fingers pressed to her temples, eyes shut. Shiro hand one hand crossed over his chest, the other elbow resting on it and his hand covering his smile. His cheeks were lifted and his eyes danced with amusement.
Allura’s eyes opened, glaring back at you. “No. You have work to do. Keith, if you would be so kind as to let him work?”

Keith, who somehow managed to remain infuriatingly calm, shrugged and made a noncommittal sound. His hands slipped away from you as he slid off your lap. You turned back forward, and without thinking about it, a small pathetic whine slipped out of your throat. You immediately clamped your mouth shut, cutting off the sound, but not before it caught Keith’s attention. His head was bowed slightly, but he lifted his eyes, gazing at you through his lashes. He looked surprised for a moment, then his lips curved into the barest of smiles. A secret smile, soft and adoring and amused. Your stomach flipped and you swallowed hard.

Oh god, this boy was not good for your health. You just knew it.

He slid off your lap, only to grab his juice and take up his previous position of sitting on your lap, facing forward. His posture was slightly slumped, and he looked completely indifferent as he stared at your screens. But his ears were bright red where the poked through his hair. You watched in fascination as his tongue and lips groped for his straw before finding it.

“That is not exactly what I—“ Allura started, but Shiro’s soft voice cut her off.

“Let them have this. Keith knows not to distract Lance from his work.”

“I hope you are right.” She sounded skeptical.

He chuckled, and the sound was rich, low, and rumbling. “If he does, you can always make him work, too.”

“I like the way you think.” She said with a slow smile.

As it turned out, Keith didn’t actually need to do anything in order to distract you. Just him being there, on your lap, was enough to make your brain fuzzy and make your hands twitch from wanting to touch him. Still, you did your best to work, lest they tell him he needed to move. They didn’t, despite your slow progress and frequent complaining.

When Hunk and Pidge came in, Hunk said you two were adorable and Pidge snickered under their breath. You told them both to shut up, but Keith only leaned back against you, arms crossed over his chest, and smiled. When everyone came back to the control room to work on their task, Shiro and Hunk eventually left. You expected Keith to go with them, but surprisingly, he didn’t. And you weren’t complaining.

His yawns became more and more persistent, and he shifted restlessly on your lap. Finally, with a grunt of resignation, he curled up on your lap, turning sideways to throw his legs over the arm rest and leaning sideways against your chest. He rested his head against your shoulder, tucked under your chin. You froze as he settled. He sighed, body relaxing, and you knew that his eyes were shut. Smiling, you relaxed into your chair, bringing your screens a fraction closer with the flick of your hand. One hand continued to work while the other idly ran your fingers through Keith’s hair.

You heard a few sounds from around the room. A soft “awwww” from Coran, a mumbled “amazing” from Allura, and a snicker from Pidge. You ignored them all, eyes fixed stubbornly to your screens as you dragged planets’ distress beacons around. You were on your third star system by then.

You still weren’t sure what this meant for you and Keith. You weren’t sure what you were or what you were going to be. You knew what you wanted to be, but you needed to make sure Keith was on the same page. You knew that there were still plenty of things that needed to be sorted out.
But for now, this was fine. You still had plenty of time to figure it out.

As your fingers tangled through his hair, Keith sighed contentedly, shifting as he nuzzled further against you, his nose pressed against your throat. Your heart constricted.

Then again, you were pretty sure this boy was going to be the death of you.

Chapter End Notes

Welp, that's it ^_^ thanks for sticking around for the ride! I hope you enjoyed it and thank you for all your lovely comments and support! They mean a lot to both of us. This was supposed to be a oneshot that we came up with, but we decided to upload it in chapters to give Sora some time to draw for it.
This won't be the last you've heard from us! We have several more fics that we'll be doing, some will be collabs like this one and some will be just me writing (and sora will probably end up drawing for them eventually cause she has no self control lol). But keep an eye out! You can check for our next fic when it comes out on my Ao3 page or my tumblr. Next up: a multi-chapter dance au that we've had planned since the first chapter of Operation: Time Out was released B)

If you ever draw fanart for my fics, please send me a link here or on my tumblr! I LOVE to see artists' interpretations of my writing!

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