Kiss My Ice

by delictor

Summary

Lance hasn't skated in a year since the accident that cost him the Olympics. Keith can't skate for shit but that doesn't stop him from catching Lance's attention, even when he can't so much as stand up after falling on the ice.

'When a person really desires something, all the universe conspires to help that person to realize his dream.'

“Soon as we're off this ice you're dead.” Keith's threat is an empty one and he knows Lance can tell by the way he laughs at it.

“Serious question though, do you not know who I am?” Lance questions.

“Should I?”

“No, I guess not.” Lance shrugs. “I'm gonna twirl you, okay?”

“No, no don't—wait!” Keith cries out as he's suddenly viewing the entire arena and his legs go rigid before colliding into Lance's chest, his chest rising and falling with laughter, hands gripping Keith's upper arms gently. “Put me back on land.”

“Technically, we are on land.”

“We're on frozen water, get me off it.”

Notes

I can't believe I have to say this but
**Do Not Repost This Anymore** This is my work, it's taken several long weeks to write, countless hours, rewritings and so much more. Do not repost, claim as your own, or anything else.

See the end of the work for more [notes](#).
Chapter 1

You know you're in love when you can't fall asleep because reality is finally better than your dreams

Seeing Lance on ice was mesmerizing to say the least. He moved with such grace and elegance that it looked like he was born just to skate. Everything about him radiated confidence when he was on the ice, whether as a single skater or with his partner, Nyma. When he skated he used every little muscle in his body, his fingers curled and extended, his wrists turned and flicked with every spin he did.

Ice skating was edged into his very bones—no, his very soul.

Maybe the obsession with being on ice started when he was four and his parents took him to Central Park and they all found out he was a natural at skating. Soon after that the classes started and then he met his partner for life, Nyma, when he was eight. They skated together in several competitions after that, winning trophy and medal after medal. They made a name for themselves as the best pair of skaters anybody had seen in decades. Lance was positive he and Nyma could win the World Championships and they both planned to try for that until they were eighteen and a coach for the Winter Olympics approached them after a nationals competition they had just won.

He wanted to train them for the 2014 Olympics.

Within a month they had a contract and were training from sunup to sundown. Not that Lance was complaining, the ice was where he felt the most at peace. It was his safe place, where he could express who he really was in full without words.

In the three years leading up to the Olympics Lance and Nyma had been interviewed by several different talk shows and magazines. Always keeping their lips sealed when it came to the kind of routine they had planned. The interviews were some of Lance's favorite things, he adored the attention, Nyma usually refraining as best she could. She tended to prefer to let Lance hog the attention and talk for the both of them. Lance simply assumed she was camera shy and gladly took the needed attention.

One question Lance had never been able to answer was whether he and Nyma were a thing or just a team. He had known Nyma for well over half his life and he'd be lying if he said he never felt attracted to her or even harbored a small crush. But Lance had admitted to never acting on those feelings, their teamwork depended on their relationship and neither would do anything to risk ruining that.

Three years seemed like a long time to train, it really did but both he and Nyma quickly realized that three years in fact was almost not enough. They had developed a complex routine, one that would blow the judges away and definitely win them first place but it had definitely taken all of those three years to perfect it.
The 2014 Olympics were something crazy for Lance. He and Nyma have been competing for years, they already had a large fan base but even if they didn't have that Lance knows they'd have all the cheers they currently do. Their short dance has the crowd chanting their names by the time they finish and when they're back out on the ice for their free dance Lance is positive they have the Gold medal in the bag.

He's positive of that as the music starts and he and Nyma are facing each other.

“Break a leg, Lance.” Nyma coos and all Lance can do is grin with a nod before they start.

They're face to face, each raising their left arm in a smooth arc, heads tilted to their rights. Their hands meet and then Lance moves to the right, Nyma twirling before following. They're both skating on their left legs, right legs kicking out to the front then back in rhythm to the music, hands swinging out then above their heads before they both skip off the ice, landing on their right feet and quickly dipping into a sit spin. Coming back up, Nyma spins twice before colliding with Lance gently and then they're skipping off the ice in a series of small jumps almost as if they were tap dancing on wood. Nyma is twirled around in circles before Lance is grabbing her waist and lifting her up, spinning the both of them while swinging Nyma to his left, out in front of him, then to his right like a swing dancer. She's twirled back onto the ice and then they part, both completing a butterfly jump. After the jump Lance is supposed to twirl and face Nyma, both coming chest to chest in a spin before parting and dipping down into mirrored sit spins but that never happens.

After that butterfly jump, Lance does his twirl perfectly, turning to face Nyma, they collide once again, hands clasped together as they're meant to be and they complete two perfect spins hand in hand. After which they both move to their lefts, Lance is the first to kick off forward but instead of going the one foot he's supposed to, his skate catches on something and he's completely thrown off balance. All grace and elegance gone, Lance's arms flail out beside him in wild circles in an attempt to regain his balance, skates clattering against the ice as he tries his best to catch himself. The moment he hears and feels one of his blades snap off his skate he's flung forward, pain shooting up his ankle. He tries to twist his body mid fall to avoid hitting the ice with his face but that only serves to make the fall be cushioned by his knee, body crumpling against the ice in a heap as he slides the rest of the way and his back hits the rinks wall.

He's not sure which is louder, the cracking noise he hears or the blood curdling scream he lets out. Maybe it's the screams of the crowd or maybe it's his scream being echoed back but it feels like his head might implode with all the noise reaching his ears. He's laying on the ice, unmoving because even the slightest movement sends a shock of pain through his body. He's positive he's still screaming but he can't be sure when all he's focused on is the pain in his leg. It's unlike anything he's ever felt before, he swears if somebody were to cut his leg off then and there he'd probably thank them.

The whole ride to the hospital he's in tears and gasping. Two things he repeats over and over. The first being I can't breathe. The second being Did we win though?

His mom isn't amused, that much he can tell from the tone in her voice. He can't make out the words she's sending his way but he'd recognize that tone no matter what language she spoke. He's in and out after that, there's tests, several sharp pains up his leg, several blanks in his memory and then he's waking up in a hospital bed. His mom sleeping in an armchair nearby and his head throbbing.

“Mom?” no answer except a small snore. “Ma!”

“Lance!” his mom shouts, jolting awake and out of the arm chair in seconds. It takes her a moment to make out her surroundings then she's by Lance's bed. “Lance, how are you feeling?”
“Like I hit a block of ice.” he answers dryly.

“Same old humor I see,” she tsks, a smile tugging at her attempted frown though. “At least we know you're still you then.”

He has to crack a smile at that, “What happened?”

“Your skates gave out...” and this time the frown written across her lips is real. Lance also doesn't miss the guilt that lingers in her voice. “Your ankle twisted when your blade came off and then you landed on your knee.”

“What... so I'll be fine in a week or two then? It's just an ankle twist, those aren't bad, not usually.” Lance sounds like he's trying to convince himself more than anything.

“No, Lance you broke your ankle pretty badly and you broke your kneecap too. It'll be more than a few weeks.” she looks and sounds just as distressed as Lance feels in that moment.

“I—I don't... but the skates were new! Ma, you bought them like two months ago! And—and I can still skate though, right? Not right away, but I can skate again eventually, right? I have to be able to skate, did the doctor say how long until I could be back on the ice? I—I have to, ma I can't not skate.” he feels on the edge of a panic attack and he's sure his mom can sense it by the way she reaches out to take his hand in hers.

“Six months minimum.” her answer is whispered and paled in comparison to how loudly Lance responds to that.

“What!” he cries out, pushing off the bed to sit up. “That's half a year of laying around, unable to train, I'll get out of shape and I'll forget moves that need to be practiced daily. I—I won't be able to compete anymore. I'm done. Ma, I'm only twenty-one and my career is over because of some fuc—damn faulty skates!”

“Your tongue Lance!” his mom snaps before pushing him back against his pillows gently. “Your career is not over. It's only half a year, if you take it easy the first few months I think you can get back out on the ice sooner. We'll get you through this, I did not raise a quitter, do you understand me?”

The tone in his mothers voice is enough to spark a bit of hope in him. But it's not enough to convince him that he'll ever get back to being as good as he was just hours ago. “I love you, mom. Thank you.”

“I love you too,” she smiles, leaning down to kiss his forehead. “Now please, get some rest.”

Nyma doesn't visit him the first day he wakes up. She doesn't show up until the third day he's in the hospital. It's near the end of visiting hours but she still walks in, flowers in hand and unreadable expression on her face. “Hey.” she greets coolly, setting the flowers down on a nearby table and making her way to his bedside, sitting on the edge. “How are you feeling?”

“Shitty.”

“No kidding, when I told you to break a leg I didn't mean it literally.” Nyma almost sounds accusing in her tone but Lance opts to ignore it.

“The skates were faulty. Did you know it's possible to break your knee cap? It's a new concept to me.” Lance sighs, hands fidgeting with the blanket at his waist.
“How long are you out of commission for?” she questions, eyes focused on his face.

“The doctor recommended six months for my leg to fully heal, but technically after two months the bones are healed almost fully. Then three months minimum before I'm allowed on ice but the doctor recommended six just because of how complex our routines can get. He said it'd be the safest bet to wait.”

“That's an awfully long time.” Nyma notes.

“I know.”

“There was a big cluster of reporters outside, some of them asked my opinion on what happened and if I'd continue to compete without you.” her attention turns to her hands where she starts to pick at her nail polish and Lance starts to get nervous at her lack on continuation.

After waiting long enough for a response that doesn't come Lance speaks up, “What did you say to them?”

“That I wasn't sure. I told them if you were out of commission for too long I wouldn't let it hold me back in my career. I love you dearly Lance but I won't put my life on hold for you, I hope you can understand that.” there's no trace of sympathy in her voice and it makes Lance's blood run cold. “I know it's only been a few days but already people have thrown offers my way to compete for them, to work with them. You know the skater Rolo? He offered me a deal...”

“You can't be serious.” Lance breathes out in surprise, Nyma promptly jumping to her feet and turning her back to him.

“I'm only thinking about what's best for me Lance and if that means turning my back on you then so be it.” Lance is speechless, as Nyma begins to leave the room “I'm sorry our parting ways had to be this way. I do hope you get better soon and can get back on the ice someday.”

His mom had a point, this leg break wasn't the end of his career but something like his lifelong partner walking out on him? That was definitely the end of his career.

A week later when he's released from the hospital he's bombarded by reporters. Camera's flashing and microphones all but shoved down his throat. And normally Lance would love the attention but that particular day it reduces him to tears and the headlines read about 'Ice Dancer Lance McClain has break down over never skating again' and he can't be bothered to argue against them.

He's back home in New York after that, refusing to get out much and instead watching Nyma on television competing with Rolo by the time January starts. In short, he falls into a depression over ice skating, over competing, over Nyma, over everything. When he's given a new pair of skates for Christmas he nearly throws them out but instead shoves them under his bed into the far corner. Mainly because his mom refuses to let him trash something so expensive and new.

He has a childhood friend, Allura, who owns a local ice rink he used to train at most days when he was younger. It's where he first started taking classes when he was six. She visits often, those visits being some of the few times Lance actually smiles. She tells him that once his leg is healed he has a free pass to skate at her rink whenever he wants, free of charge.

Hunk, his other childhood friend is another reason that Lance smiles. Despite Hunk not knowing a single thing about ice skating he had always supported Lance through every competition, every twirl and jump. Had filled Lance's ego with compliments and admiration at the way Lance moved on ice. And even with Lance just laying around his house most days Hunk encourages him. When
he takes baby steps in the cast Hunk is there to cheer him on with exaggerated ooo's and aww's. Enough to make Lance crack a smile.

Lance gets his cast removed in February, the day before his birthday. His mom had called it an early birthday present but he’d spent that afternoon in his room, staring at his ankle and knee. Had rotated his ankle several times to test the feeling and kicked his leg around a few times to stretch his knee. He felt fine, he felt normal but it still felt like something was missing.

Allura had been the first to suggest he go ice skating and see how he felt but he was quick to remind everybody that the doctor had recommended six months before he was back on ice. And who were they to argue against the orders of somebody in the medical profession? It was a cheap way of putting off skating for another few months but Lance was glad when nobody tried to convince him otherwise.

May came and passed and Lance still didn't skate. Always finding an excuse to not go, always finding a reason to put it off another day. He doesn't want to admit it and nobody confirms it but Lance has a newfound fear of skating. The one thing he’d once dedicated his life to was now the one thing Lance struggled to even think about. Months passed, June, July, August, September, October and eventually his family and friends stopped asking him to go ice skating. When the suggestions stop he's not sure if he's relieved or disappointed that even his family has given up on his skating.

“I'm just saying, you're giving up on something you've dedicated literally your whole life to.” they might have been on the phone but Lance could still imagine the disappointed look written on Hunk's face. It was November again and a year since Lance had last skated.

“Maybe I dedicated everything to the wrong thing.” Lance throws out, not convincing even himself of those words.

“Don't be ridiculous, you're the best ice skater there ever was.” Hunk snaps through the phone, Lance shrugging several times before realizing his friend can't see that.

“If I'm so great why did I completely blow the Winter Olympics and our chance at gold?” his voice is demanding and he wants an answer. He wants Hunk to let it go, let him give up on his dreams. They were childish anyway, figure skate for a living? Lance was a fool...

There’s a frustrated huff from Hunk, “Your skates gave out, Lance it happens. That's not on you so stop blaming yourself over something you couldn't control.”

“I should have known! I had those skates for two months Hunk, I should have known by then if they were faulty! I was stupid, I embarrassed myself in front of the whole damn world. Not only that but they have pictures of me crying outside of the hospital too.” Lance's cheeks are red with anger and his eyes are threatening to spill tears but he tries his best to fight against the urge to cry. “The whole world already thinks I'm never going to skate again, I can't put myself back out there like that. What if I can't skate, what if I fail and the whole world gets to laugh at me a second time?”

There's dead silence for a moment and Lance actually has to check to make sure Hunk hasn't hung up on him yet.

“A few years ago there was a pair of skaters who did worse. The guy lifted his partner and spun but he lost control and tipped forward, the girls face broke the fall and the guy was flung right over her. There was another time where somebody was doing that like, parallel to the ice jump spin thing and they totally just landed on their back. Or what about the time –”
“Hunk I get it.” Lance cuts in, not wanting to hear anymore (most likely googled) stories of failed figure skaters.

“What I'm saying is that it happens. Nobody blames you and your fans still love you. And the crying thing? I've heard and seen people admire you for it. They said it really touched their hearts to see you in such a vulnerable state. It's normal to cry and you showed that.” Hunk's voice is gentle and Lance actually believes him.

“You always seem to know what to say.” Lance chuckles dryly, a triumph damn right echoing through the phone from Hunk's end. “I only wish you'd given me this speech months ago, I... I really want to get back on the ice now.”

“Go! Go use that free pass Allura gave you, go, be free young one.” he encourages, Lance can practically hear Hunk's arms waving around in a shoo motion.

“Hunk you dork.” Lance snorts, jumping off his bed and quickly rummaging through his closet for his very old pair of skates, the ones he used for fun instead of training purposes. “Are you gonna come down to the rink too? I could use an audience... for a confidence boost.”

“Can't, I'm going out with Shay in an hour.”

“Alright, well I'll let you go then, I'm sure Allura and Coran will be there to watch me.” Lance smiles, ready to hang up.

“Lance! One more thing... I'm proud of you, like really proud.” Hunk's words make Lance pause in his search, a smile curling his lips up.

“Thanks. That means a lot.”

He doesn't tell his family where he's going, he'd rather keep it under wraps until he knows for sure if he's up for skating again. But the second Allura sees him walk through the buildings front doors she practically throws herself into his arms.

“Lance! Are you here to skate?”

“Here to give it a go.” Lance nods, tugging up his bag with a small shake, the skates making an audible clanking noise. “Hunk convinced me to leave the pity party for a little while.”

“You'll have to remind me to thank him next time I see him.” she smiles, leaning back to hold Lance away at arms length, her facial expression that of a proud mother. “I'm so, very proud of you.”

“Second time I've heard that today and it still gives me butterflies in my stomach.” Lance grins, hand rubbing at his abdomen for emphasis. “Is anybody out on the ice right now?”

“No, Central Park opened their ice a few weeks ago and most people have been going out there lately. The next class doesn't start for another three hours either, so you'll have the place all to yourself.” Allura tells him.

“Cool.” he nods, Allura chuckling at the accidental pun before she heads back to the counter and Lance finds a seat in the stands near the rinks main entrance. He's slow in pulling his skates on and even when they're fully laced up he sits for a few minutes before getting up to stretch. He stands on the mats, hands gripping the wall as he stretches out first, not wanting to run the risk of spraining something. He's slow in his stretches as well, kicking his legs up to touch his toes. Pulling his arms across his chest and over his head as well. He knows he's stretched more than enough but he's still
in no hurry to get on the ice just yet.

Once he finally convinces himself he's done stretching he stands by the swinging door that leads onto the ice. From where he stands he can see it is freshly polished and it's the best kind of ice to skate on. When the surface is so smooth with no clippings for his skates to dip into.

Getting back on the ice is like learning to walk all over again. He's wobbly and clumsy at first, hand gripping the wall as he does one full run around the entire arena. He knows it's only his imagination but he swears his ankle and knee feel like they were dipped in ice.

He manages to warm up to the ice again though. After a few full rink circles he's moving smoothly again and with speed. Eventually he ventures away from the wall with a few long strides. Then he's spinning again, twirling, dipping and gliding across the ice. His heart is pounding in his ears and he feels so at peace that he has to wonder just why he had waited so long to get back on the ice.

During one particular glide across the ice he stretches his arms out elegantly, head tilting back and eyes shut as he takes in deep breaths. It feels like pure bliss to be skating again, he almost feels weightless and he forgets all about what happened a year ago.

Despite having been training his whole life, the half hour he spends on the ice still leaves him breathless. He's standing at the far end of the rink when he hears the chime of the front door and then a cluster of kids walk in followed by one visibly distraught adult. He watches in amusement as the guy chats with Allura and then gets all the kids skates. It takes them several minutes to get skates on all the kids and then Allura is pulling out four bobby's for the kids to pair off. He notices the kids all seem to chant something and the adult throws his hands up in defeat.

He's stepping on the ice and Lance stands up straight, curiosity sparked. He watches as the man stands on the ice with shaky legs and then lets go of the wall, look of victory crossing his face far too early. He starts to turn to look at the group of kids and then his legs slide out from under him and he's crashing to the cool surface of the ice. Lance has to slap a hand over his mouth to silence his laughter and it becomes more of a struggle as he watches the man try to stand back up.

The guys first mistake? Trying to stand up like he's on a normal surface. He gets into that crab walk form and tries to push up but his legs keep sliding out from under him. Finally, Lance takes pity on the guy and pushes off the wall towards him and his group of kids.

o.O.o

Keith was six when his parents had their accident. He went from home to home after that before a family in New York took him in. The place was a foster home, filled with maybe fifteen other kids but somehow his adopted parents always made time for each and every kid, even when they both worked. The house was large and each room had two sets of bunk beds, four kids per room. Some kids came and went while others stayed longer, Keith was one of the few who stayed for years on end. Here he met the foster parents biological kids, Katie and Matthew Holt. Matt was eight years older and Katie was two years younger than him.

When he was nine they got a new kid, older than the usual kids they brought into the foster home. The new kid was seventeen and Keith was thoroughly confused as to why the Holts had taken somebody in who was so old. Not that the guy didn't deserve a home too but... the Holts were known for taking in younger kids mainly. But Keith never asked, he'd find out eventually or he'd forget about it, whichever came first.

It wasn't for a week that Keith finally found out that the new kid, Takashi Shirogane, was actually a family friend who's parents had just died three months prior. Shiro had been in the accident with them which explained the bright pink scar across the bridge of his nose and the prosthetic arm. The
Holts had offered to take him in right away but he'd just been released from the hospital and therapy and Keith was only nine but he knew the pain of losing your family.

“I'm Keith.”

The older boy jumped at the sudden voice, pen scribbling an ugly letter across his homework. “Huh?”

“My name, it's Keith.” he repeats, peering up at the older boy, finally getting a closer look at the scar on his face. It looked much more interesting up close than from a distance.

“Shiro.”

“I like your arm and scar. They make you look like a tough guy.” Keith admits, reaching up to grip the end of the counter and rest his chin against it.

“T-thank you?” even at just nine years old Keith can tell that Shiro isn't too comfortable with the compliment but he can't take it back now.

“I know how you feel.” Keith goes on to say next.

“I—what?”

“I lost my parents in an accident too.” Keith explains, teetering from his heels to his toes and back. “Three years ago, but it gets easier. I mean, you never really forget but it gets easier to handle with time.” there's a multitude of expressions that flash across Shiro's face at Keith's words. The ones Keith catches and can actually identify are shock, surprise, hurt and then acceptance.

“How old are you?”

“Nine.”

“You're pretty wise for your age, you know that Keith?” Shiro asks with a thin smile. Keith feels some sort of pride swell in his chest at the compliment.

“Thank you. What are you working on there?” Keith questions, hand stretching out across the counter to point at the sheet Shiro had been scribbling on before Keith had shown up.

“Homework. Do you want to learn a few things about math?”

Keith makes a face at the suggestion but nods unenthusiasticly still.

And that's how Keith dubs Shiro his new big brother. They spend countless hours after that talking and messing with each other. The way they acted towards each other, it was almost like they had actually been raised together. Shiro graduates from school and everybody expects him to go away for college but he doesn't. He goes to one locally and stays at the foster house, helping with the kids. He says he's too attached to ever leave them now. Keith doesn't particularly mind.

The years go by and Keith eventually calls Mr. and Mrs. Holt mom and dad sometimes. The foster home is his actual home and when he turns eighteen he follows in Shiro's footsteps and stays there as an official employee. The Holts offer to let him have the house and the foster program they run once they retire seeing as neither Pidge nor Matt want it, both wanting to pursue different careers. Keith tries to offer it to Shiro first but Shiro turns it down and Keith all but accepts the offer with tears. It'll be years before then but something along the lines of pride fills his heart at the thought of helping other kids like him one day.
Until then though, Keith helps around, files paperwork and on weekends he takes half the kids out for fun while Shiro takes the other half. On one particular day all the kids want to go ice skating and as reluctant as Keith is about that, he agrees after several minutes of whining, with a compromise however. He'd take them skating but not at Central Park, at one of the ice rinks instead for many reason. The first being that there were too many of them and he didn't want to risk losing anybody at the park. The second being Central Park was way too crowded this time of year. And the third reason being mildly selfish, but Keith preferred not to embarrass himself in front of a large crowd of strangers.

Upon arriving to the skating rink, the kids all but bombarded the lady behind the counter, Keith quickly apologizing.

“It's no worries.” the woman waves him off with a laugh. “Will everybody be skating today?”

“Yes,” Keith quickly nods, making his way past the kids and up to the counter. “Eight of us total, they've all got their sizes written down. I was also wondering if you had any of those skating help stick things...” Keith's wording is awkward but after a moment of thought the woman's face lights up with recognition.

“Oh! Bobby's! Of course, they're not the kind you're most likely used to, we don't use the typical square tubing systems, we use the dolphin seats. Where a child can sit in the dolphin and be pushed by somebody behind them.” she explains, Keith nodding in acceptance, that actually sounding better than the square tubes they had offered at other skating arenas.

“Anything works, none of us actually know how to skate.” he laughs.

It takes several minutes for all the kids to get their skates and pull them on and while the woman is pulling out four bobby's the kids egg Keith towards the ice.

“Show us how it's done!” Grace, the youngest of them all shouts out, blonde curls bobbing around as she jumps in place. “Show us Keith!”

The other kids join her in chanting show us, show us! And then Mason, one of the older kids gives Keith a gentle shove. “You're the adult, you have to get on the ice first.”

No amount of arguing was going to get him out of it, so reluctantly, Keith threw his hands up in defeat and then turned to step over the rink's entrance and onto the ice. His grip on the wall was tighter than necessary but the moment his blades touched the ice his heart practically stopped. He stood as still as possible on the ice for longer than necessary before letting his grip loosen and then pull his hand away from it completely.

His face quickly lit up with excitement and he was ready to turn and grin at the kids when suddenly his feet were slipping forward and he was crashing to the ice. With a thud, the kids erupted into laughter and Keith glared up at them.

“You guys knew that would happen.” Keith accuses them teasingly.

“Worth it,” Evelyn, the oldest girl grins, waving her phone around a bit to empathize that she had caught the whole thing on video.

“Oh you better delete that Evelyn or no dessert until the Holts come back home!” Keith immediately threatens, the girl seems to contemplate it before shrugging with a smirk and tucking her phone away. A defeated groan leaves Keith and he finally decides he needs to get up before his jeans get soaked by the ice under him.
Keith promptly sticks his feet out, digging his blades into the ice and reaching out to place his hands behind him and try to push up. That of course fails and he tumbles backwards again, the kids giggling after him. “If I'm stuck sitting on this ice I swear—”

“You're going about it all wrong.” a voice pipes up behind him, Keith turning quickly to spot somebody heading their way. The guy moves with such ease that Keith is nearly convinced he's not actually skating but just floating instead.

“What?”

“Getting up, you can't get up like if you were on a normal surface. You have to get on your knees then use one leg and push up.” the guy explains, sliding to a stop beside him and extending a hand out. “Or have somebody help you up.”

Keith tilts his head and looks at the offered hand doubtfully, “Won't you fall too?”

“No problem,” and from this close up Keith can tell they're nearly the same height. The stranger has an inch or two on him but that's it. And the guys eyes are a dazzling dark blue that Keith isn't sure he's ever seen before. He's also got a collection of freckles just a shade darker than his skin across his nose and cheeks. He's sure they're only noticeable if you really look for them and if you're close enough. “You guys are all first time skaters?” and just like that the kids become loud and rowdy again.

“A chain of answers fill the air and the stranger's face seems to light up. “Alright, well do you kids want me to show you a thing or two about skating?” again, the kids all seem to answer in unison and equal excitement. All eagerly shouting yes at him. “Well, first things first, I'm Lance and I'll be your very talented teacher today.” and the introduction is followed by an elegant looking bow, Keith noticing the way Lance's feet shift out from under him to slide across the ice and lower him just slightly. He makes standing on ice look easy.

Keith watches the man as he straightens and begins to address the group of kids. He doesn't really register what he's saying, too busy looking at the way Lance's arms swing around enthusiastically while he talks. Or the way he seems to sway from side to side on purpose. He's not sure why he's paying such close detail to the way this stranger moves—

“Hey, mullet man, what's your name?” fingers snapping in front of his face bring Keith back to reality and he has to blink a few times at the question.

“Ah—Keith.”

“Alright Keith, let's go, you're gonna be my dummy for today.” Lance grins, hands gripping Keith's wrists and pulling him out onto the ice.

“What—no! Hey!” Keith complains immediately, legs wobbling from side to side as he's led further onto the ice, the sound of kids cheering them on filling his ears. “Soon as we're off this ice you're dead.” Keith's threat is an empty one and he knows Lance can tell by the way he laughs at it.
“Serious question though, do you not know who I am?” Lance questions, swinging Keith's hands side to side, causing him to feel like he's about to topple over with each arm swing.

“Should I?”

“No, I guess not.” Lance shrugs. “I'm gonna twirl you, okay?”

“No, no don't—Lance!” Keith cries out as he's suddenly viewing the entire arena and his legs go rigid before colliding into Lance's chest. Lance's chest is rising and falling with laughter, hands gripping Keith's upper arms gently. “Put me back on land.”

“Technically we're on land.” the sass in his tone is enough to make Keith scrunch his nose in frustration.

“We're on frozen water, get me off it.”

Lance rolls his eyes but moves his hands to hold Keith's hands and pull him back to the group of kids. “Alright kids, basically make sure to not do what Keith here did, don't tense up your legs, you'll fall. But as long as you're holding onto the bobby you should be good to glide around. I'll help you guys all as best I can, alright?” he offers, the kids nodding. Evelyn (the oldest of the group, fifteen) pairs off with Wyatt, an eight year old and proceeds to push him around on the bobby. Mason (also fifteen but younger than Evelyn by a few months) goes off with Noah who's eleven. Avery pairs off with Annabelle, they're thirteen and ten respectively. That only leaves Keith with Grace who's just turned six.

Grace takes a seat on the bobby and Keith starts to push her around, Lance skating beside him, hands behind his back and looking like he's putting absolutely no effort into moving around the ice. Keith would be lying if he said he wasn't completely mesmerized by the way Lance moved. It looked like he was made to be on ice.

“Do you work here?” Keith questions finally, Lance puckering his lips as if the very idea was preposterous.

“No, my friend owns the place, I just like skating here.” Lance finally answers. “So why'd you guys come here instead of going to Central Park?” Lance questions after a long pause, spinning once before continuing to skate beside Keith, only now he's doing it backwards. Show off.

“I was worried about the kids getting lost in such a big crowd, plus they can't skate and I know skating rinks usually have some kind of skating helper.” Keith shrugs, freeing one hand to signal to the bobby.

“Are they... you're siblings? Or?”

“Oh no, no, I work at a foster house, these are some of the kids who're staying there currently. I guess—kind of yeah, they are my siblings.” Keith explains, eyes focusing on the back of Grace's head, her arms flailing around as she shouts for Keith to skate faster.

“Hm.” Lance hums, head tilting back to look at the ceiling. “Hey who wants to see something cool?” Lance shouts out, the kids echoing their approval. Lance quickly stops Keith in the middle of the ice and takes hold of the bobby. “Wait here Keith.” Lance smirks, kicking away from him, Keith immediately going into a panic at being left alone in the center of the ice with no way to move.

“Larry, don't leave me here!”
“Larry?!” Lance cries out in surprise. “I'm offended, just for that I'm leaving you there. You literally knew my name like two minutes ago, it's Lance.” he huffs, pushing Grace to the rinks exit with such speed.

“Louis!” Keith cries out just to spite the brunette.

“Sorry, can't hear you.” Lance laughs, helping Grace off the ice once they come to a stop by the exit. He bows to the kids and kicks off, skating backwards. Once he's close enough to Keith, Lance skates in circles around him, hands stretched out on either side of him. Then he does a fancy little foot skip and Keith is literally left gaping at him in awe. Lance goes through a series of spins and fancy small jumps, Keith's attention completely captivated.

He watches as Lance goes to one end of the arena, then speeds across it, jumping into the air and spinning mid jump a few times. Keith doesn't catch how many times he spins in the air but he's speechless. The second Lance's skate hits the ice again he dips down into a sitting position, one leg stretched out and he's spinning in place. He'd be lying if he said he wasn't slightly jealous at the way Lance can move on skates.

He watches as Lance smoothly rises back to a straight up position and kicks off, hands doing fancy looking arcs out in front of him as if to the tune of some music only he can hear, his body spinning slowly as he glides along the rinks wall. Once again, Lance passes by Keith and then Keith has to stop his jaw from hitting the ice when Lance throws his body up into the air, body coming near parallel to the ice and legs butterfly kicking behind him. He lands on his right foot and dips down in a slow spin, left leg stretched out behind him. Lance stands and does two spins before sliding to the left and then things go wrong. Even from the center of the ice Keith can see the way Lance's body tenses up and his legs wobble. He watches as Lance struggles to stop himself but his skate seems to catch and suddenly he's thrown forward, stomach hitting the ice and sliding across it until he collides with the wall.

Keith hears the kids let out cries of surprise and Keith knows, he knows he can't skate to Lance but he tries nonetheless. He stumbles forward, skates sliding out from under him and despite being on his stomach, Keith uses his hands to push off and towards Lance.

“Let me help you.” a voice reaches his ears and suddenly he's pulled up onto his feet. It's the woman from behind the counter. “Come on, let's get you off the ice.” it's not a suggestion but a demand. She leads him to the rinks exit and as quickly as she appeared by his side she's gone. She glides to a stop beside Lance and dips down to sit beside him. He's no longer laying on his stomach, he's sitting with his back against the wall, face buried in his palms.

Their voices aren't audible from how far away Keith is but he can practically feel the tension in the air. After what feels like an eternity, Allura helps Lance up and Keith is sure they'll have to come by them but they go off in the opposite direction instead. He's not sure why he's so worried but he stares long after they disappear behind an employees only door.

“I think we should start heading back.” Keith finally announces, none of the kids arguing against him. It takes them several minutes to pull their skates off and their normal shoes back on. Evelyn and Mason help him pull the bobby's off the ice and back towards the counter. Allura comes back out once they have all the skates back on the counter and the bobby's lined up by the counter.

“I hope you guys all had fun today.” Allura's tone and face look confident and comfortable but her eyes give away how worried she is.

A chorus of “We did!” follows from the kids and Keith offers her a small smile.
“Lance is he... is he okay?”

“Huh? Oh, yes, he'll be fine, just a little shaken up is all.” Allura nods, pulling out a can of disinfectant for the skates up on the counter. “No worries.”

“What happened?” Keith doesn't mean to pry but... he definitely means to pry.

“It's not my place to share that information.” Allura answers with an apologetic frown.

“Does he come here often?” Keith questions, Allura's eyes widening just slightly at the question.

“No. It's his first time back here in a year.”

“The way he skates though, I—I would've thought he practiced daily.” Keith admits, eyebrows knitting together.

“Used to.” she confirms, “All I can say is something happened a year ago and he hasn't skated since—well not until today. He was here maybe a half hour before you guys showed up.” she further explains. “Just leave it at that, if you don't know who he is then there's no need to pry into what happened. He'll be fine.”

“Right.” Keith nods, glancing around at the kids for a head count. “I'll see you around...”

“Allura.”

“I'll see you around Allura.”

The walk home is longer than necessary. The kids stop for cups of hot chocolate and donuts from a vendor while they're walking through Central Park. They pause to admire the lighting around and watch some of the skaters, Grace requesting—demanding—that they come to the park and skate one day.

By the time they actually get back to the house Shiro and the other half of the kids are walking up too. Keith's group of kids quickly attack Shiro in a group hug and Keith stands back with a laugh.

“How'd ice skating go?” Shiro asks, reaching out to ruffle the hair of the younger kids.

“Keith made a friend!” Wyatt announces, Shiro's face twisting into that of mock surprise.

“Didn't know that was possible.”

“Ha-ha, you're funny.” Keith answers with fake bitterness. “Just some guy we met at the skating rink, I probably won't see him again.” Keith shrugs, leading the kids up the stairs and inside.

“He held hands with the guy.” Mason pipes in, Evelyn snickering beside him when Keith turns to glare at the both of them.

“You held hands with a stranger?” Shiro questions in real surprise this time.

“It's not like that. The guy—Lance—he offered to help us ice skate and he dragged me around on the ice.” Keith explains with a shrug like it's no big deal. “He spent the whole time with us and he was a show off on the ice, he looked like a professional out there.”

“Lance?” Shiro's eyebrows knit together as if the very name brings back memories. “Sounds familiar.”
“I don't know, maybe I went to school with him or something, he asked if I was sure I didn't know who he was like I'm supposed to know or something.” Keith admits, kicking his shoes off by the entrance once all the kids are finally inside.

“We can talk more about it after dinner, I'm actually interested in hearing the whole story now.” it's not a request, it's a statement. They'd be talking about Lance whether Keith wanted to or not. The Holts are out of town for Thanksgiving, visiting Mrs. Holts parents and so Shiro and Keith are left in charge of meal preparation for the week. Normally it's easy, some pasta, a chicken maybe, grilled cheeses, salads, french toast, but both are far too tired to actually prepare anything and instead order a few pizzas. The Holts are always against the idea of eating out but Shiro makes the kids promise to keep this little secret between them and they all gladly agree.

Once the pizza and wings are gone the showers starts and all the kids are getting ready for bed. Keith helps the younger ones into pajamas and reads them all bed time stories before flicking the lights out and going off to shower himself and change. His shower is longer than normal, knowing full well Shiro would be waiting for him with a million and one questions about the events at the ice rink.

He waits until the water runs cold before finally shutting it off and getting out of the shower. He takes his sweet time in changing and padding down the three flights of stairs into the living room where Shiro is watching television.

“Hey.” Keith calls out, announcing his presence, Shiro turning slightly to wave at him.

“You used all the hot water, didn't you?” Shiro accuses, eyes never leaving the television screen.

“Yes.” Keith snorts, plopping down on the couch beside his brother and kicking his feet up into his lap. “Give it an hour or two and you can shower.”

“Thanks. So... about today.”

“I'd really rather not.” Keith sighs, leaning up to snatch the remote off the coffee table. “It's no big deal, really, the kids exaggerated the story.”

“I just wanted to ask about it, Keith you don't have that many friends in your age group.” Shiro points out as if that very fact is meant to cause some kind of revelation.


“Alright. But I'm just saying, it'd be nice for you to have some friends around.”

They sit in silence for a few minutes both focused on the cartoon playing out on the television. That's when the characters go ice skating and one of the characters skates circles around another that can't even so much as stand on the slippery surface.

“He was pretty nice to talk to.” Keith finally sighs, Shiro hiding his victory smirk. “When we first got there the kids had me go on the ice first and he didn't laugh at me—well I'm sure he did but he helped me up. He was tall and thin but strong, like ridiculously strong. He pulled me up off the ice like I weighed nothing.”

“That's... impressive.” Shiro admits, eyebrows raised higher than Keith has ever seen.

“Yeah. He moved on the ice like... like he was born with skates or something. I guess the best way to describe it is that seeing him skate was... pretty? Mesmerizing?”
“If I didn't know better I'd say you were smitten with him.” Shiro snorts, Keith kicking his thigh in warning.

“Shut up, he had me skating around until he left me in the middle of the ice to show off some dance routine. He was basically tap dancing on the fucking ice, Shiro, how does somebody even tap dance on something so slippery?” Keith's tone is almost accusing, like Lance almost cheated at skating or something.

“Training and practice I'm sure played a roll in that.”

“Yeah, well he had some... I don't even know what to call it, he froze up and he crashed into the wall and basically broke down?”

“It sounds like maybe a panic attack. He was fine and then just... not?” Shiro asks in disbelief.

“Yeah.” Keith slumps down further into the cushions and lets out a heavy sigh. “The girl who works at the rink, her name is Allura and she took Lance off into some employees only section and I didn't see him after that. She said that was his first time skating in a year.”

“Seems like fate that he run into you then.” Shiro teases, earning a much harder kick to his thigh this time.

“Cut it out. I'm seriously probably never gonna see him again.” Keith grumbles like it means nothing but positive his tone betrays how he really feels.

“Why don't you take the day off tomorrow. Have fun, go out, sounds like you could use it. What you do will be none of my business.” Keith nearly laughs at the suggestion. Leave Shiro alone with the current sixteen kids they have?

“That'll be a train wreck, you trying to keep sixteen kids under control.”

“And what exactly is that supposed to mean?”

“You're a pushover Shiro, no offense. These kids are going to eat you alive if I leave you home alone with them.” another laugh follows Keith's statement and then a yelp when Shiro pinches his ankle.

“Take it back.”

“What? No, it's the truth.”

A wicked grin crosses Shiro's face and Keith is too late and pulling his feet away. Shiro has a firm grip on his ankle and starts tickling his heels. Laughter erupts from Keith's mouth and he squirms around, trying his best to get away but failing. “S-Shiro! St-top!” Keith laughs, kicking at him with his other foot, both of them in a fit of laughter now. After one too many tugs, Shiro lets go of Keith's ankle mid tug and Keith basically launches himself off the couch and bangs into the coffee table before colliding with the floor in a heap of laughter.

“Shit, are you okay?” Shiro laughs, leaning forward to look at his still giggling brother.

“I hate you.” Keith finally breathes out when his laughs die down.

“So what? Are you going out tomorrow or what?”

“Sure. But don't call me an hour after I've left because I'm not turning right around when these kids
want to dress you up and cover you in make up.” Keith snaps, Shiro holding his hands up in defense.

“Deal.”

After that they both head up to their shared room for bed. Shiro’s the kind of person to snore the minute his head hits the pillow but Keith lays awake for what feels like hours. He stares at the window against the far wall, he can see the twinkling lights of sky scrapers in the distance and across the street. If he ignores his brothers snoring he can hear the faint sound of car horns and thumping music. He's as wide awake as the city and he's really not sure why. His stomach is twisting and knotting in excitement and it almost feels like the night before the first day of school again.

It's the thought of seeing Lance.

Or at least the possibility. He's not sure if Lance will even be at the skating rink tomorrow when he goes but it was well worth a shot. If anything though Allura would be there and she could always pass on his message his... message about wanting to see Lance again. How exactly was he meant to go about that?

*Hey Allura, I know we just met and I probably sent your friend into some kind of memory panic attack but... could you tell him I'd love to see him again?*

Keith blinks a few times, turning on his side and pulling his legs up close to his chest in a fetal position under his heavy blanket. “Damn it...” he breathes out, flinching when his brother's bed creaks suddenly. He tilts his head up to glimpse at Shiro but sees he only shifted around a bit. Dropping back against the pillow, Keith frowns and puckers his lips. He'd have to figure something out. Some kind of excuse, some reason.

Maybe if Lance wasn't there he could say he was there to ask about the classes they gave, maybe say one of the kids in the house wanted to sign up and he was there to ask. If worse came to worst he could always sign Grace up for classes... *that* would give him another excuse to go to the rink weekly. Maybe he'd run into Lance if—*wait*, was he seriously thinking about signing up one of his foster siblings for ice skating classes just so he could see some random guy?

Keith groaned, pulling the blanket up and over his head. He had really hit a new low.

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**Chapter End Notes**

So this chapter was wildly long and if you're all for that then great news, all 10 chapters should be equally as long! Alright, so let me know what you guys thought, yeah?
Lance is fiddling with the string of his hoodie, phone pressed to his cheek and sprawled across his bed.

“No, Hunk listen, the guy had the prettiest eyes I’ve ever seen.”

“I thought Allura held that title?” Hunk teased.

“Kind of.” Lance shrugs, unconsciously sticking the tip of his hoodie string in to his mouth. “Allura has pretty and sparkly blue eyes yeah, but this guy had like... they almost looked purple. I can't even begin to explain it.”

He hears Hunk breath out a laugh and Lance pouts at his ceiling. “Did you get his number?”

“No! That's the point of this call! I'm complaining!!” Lance huffs, jolting up into a sitting position on his bed, hoodie string slipping from between his lips. “I only know his name, Keith and that he works at a foster home but not which one. I uh—I might've had like a mild panic attack before I could ask for his number.”

“Wait, what?”

“Look, it's not that bad, I just... I had like a flashback of that day and it sent me into a panic and I hit the wall. Allura helped me calm down though, it's fine.” Lance assures Hunk. His legs are stretched out in front of him and Lance stares at his toes, wiggling them a bit. “I don't know how to find him again.”

“Maybe a wanted poster.” Hunk laughs. Lance chuckles at that and shakes his head.

“No, that's a little creepy.”

They sit in silence for a minute before Lance hears a knocking on his door. “Hey Hunk, hold on a minute.”

“Mhm.”

Sliding off his bed, Lance pulls his bedroom door open and spots his sister standing in the hall. “Mom said dinner is ready and to come get you.” Lance nods and then he's turning back into his room, picking the phone back up.

“Hunk?”

“Yeah!”
“I gotta go, dinner, but I'm figuring something out, I'm gonna see that mullet guy again, mark my words.” Lance hears muffled laughter and it splits a smile across his face.

“Whatever you say.”

o.O.o

“Any idea where you're going today?” Shiro questions over the sound of french toast sizzling in the pan in front of him. Keith is setting up plates around the two sets of tables in the dining room when he pauses to look up at his foster brother.

“Not really.” Keith replies, returning to the task at hand. “I might go to Times Square and maybe a book store, I've been meaning to get something new to read.” once he's done setting all the plates up, he moves to stand by Shiro and lean against the counter.

“No... ice rinks in mind today? Certain boys that look pretty on ice?” Shiro smirks, flipping the toast.

“W-what?”

“You mumble in your sleep. Something about pretty... ice and boy. Oh and Bobby, whoever that is.” Shiro shrugs before pointing the spatula at Keith accusingly. “I know you want to see him again.”

“Bobby is a dolphin.” Keith snaps, moving around Shiro to grab the plate of eggs and move it to the table. “I don't know what pretty and ice and a boy have to do with anything but I was dreaming about flying a plane last night.” Keith quickly throws out, cringing at how strange that excuse is.

“Mhm...” Shiro hums, starting on another slice of french toast. “Keith, just go to the rink, ask the person working there if they know Lance.”

“No, that's stalkerish.” Keith defends, grabbing the plate of bacon next. “I'll just... I'll figure something out, stop trying so hard, you're trying harder than me.”

“Whatsoever, lover boy.”

“Shiro!”

“Can you go get the kids? I'm almost done making enough french toast.”

“Hm.” Keith huffs and leaves the kitchen to drag all the kids out of bed. Sunday's were meant for sleeping in, at least, that's what most of the kids mumbled when they were forced out of bed at nine in the morning. Although, most of the complaints were quickly forgotten when they got down to the breakfast table.

Keith ate his food in silence, watching Grace and Wyatt go at it about superheroes and who was the best, Aquaman or Flash. Grace was definitely winning in her fight for Aquaman and Keith had to smile at the way she seemed to know almost everything about the Atlantian king.

“Aquaman would be proud.” Keith finally speaks up, ruffling Grace's hair and collecting his dishes off the table. “Shiro,” said person glanced up from his conversation with Jackie at the other table. “I'm heading out, I'll be back later tonight.”

“Don't forget about the ice rink!” Shiro calls out as Keith set his dishes in the sink and bolted from the kitchen, resisting the urge to flick Shiro the finger.
The walk to the train station is quick, he's about to head down into the station when he spots a couple walking in front of him, skates in hand. Ice skates. “Damn it.” Keith sighs, turning on his heels and heading in the opposite direction. He was going to the damn ice rink.

o.O.o

“I'm just pointing out the flaw in your logic,” Allura laughs, arms folded across her chest and leaning against the skates counter. “You're putting all your faith in... in fate and that's not how things get done.” Allura's practically giggling and Lance has to physically stop himself from frowning at her.

“I think it's perfectly sane. I wait here at the rink and hope that fate brings us back together.” he shrugs, moving up and down the rows of cubbies with skates in them, checking to make sure the numbers on the skates matched with their spot.

“I think Hunk's idea was more logical, wanted posters.” Lance shoots her a skeptical looks and her shoulders shrug up and down a few times. “I could design the poster for you even and print them here.”

“Allura, no.” Lance snorts, switching two pairs of skates to match their numbers.

“Lance?” Said person pauses to glance up at the new voice. A man with fiery red hair and a matching curled mustache. “Are you doing Allura's work again?”

“You know how I get when I've got nothing to do, Coran. Allura wasn't doing it anyway, so why not help out, right?” Lance shrugs, continuing to move down the rows.

“You don't work here or get paid though, lad.” Coran points out, moving down the row Lance was currently working on and blocking his path. “It's against laws to let you work when you aren't on file as an employee.”

“What if I apply?”

“You still wouldn't be able to work right away, you can sit behind the counter but enough of this.” Coran's hands flail around to signal at the rows of skates and Lance's shoulders slump, frown forming on his lips. “Go on and apply, I'll hire you and get you started as soon as possible.”

“Mm.” Lance hums, shuffling past Coran to lean against the counter beside Allura. “I'm still waiting here everyday.”

“Didn't doubt it.” Allura nods, both looking up when the front doors bells ding. Both of them stare in shock at who walks in.

“I fucking told you.” Lance cackles, pushing off the counter, Allura slapping his shoulder at his language.

“I really can't believe this.”

“Well believe it because fate is real and alive and so is my love life.” Lance grins. “Keith!” Lance shouts out, startling Keith who had been standing in the doorway staring at his phone.

Keith quickly put his phone away and moved up to the counter, smiling at both Lance and Allura. “Hey, I thought you didn't work here?”

“I don't.” Lance nods, pointing over his shoulder at Coran. “I know him though and Allura owns
the place so they let me hang out behind the counter.” Lance explains, trying to contain his smile as best he can. “What's your size?” Lance questions, standing up straight and getting ready to turn.

“Um—ten and a half?”

Lance nods, quickly turning and grabbing two pairs of skates off the shelf, Coran shooting him a stern look. Using the side door, Lance meets Keith on the other side of the counter and leads him out into the stands to sit. “Here, this is your pair.”

“I uh—I didn't pay to skate.” Keith points out but takes the skates into his hands anyway.

“It's fine, I have a free pass to skate here, plus one.” Lance is quick in pulling his skates on and lacing them up. “Come on, I've been dying to skate all morning.”

“Are you... are you okay?” Keith questions, Lance's eyebrows knitting together in confusion.

“Yeah, why?”

“Yesterday.”

“Oh.” Lance draws out the o sound and then turns to face the ice. “Thanks for worrying, but yeah I'm fine. Come on, get your skates on and I'll tell you about what happened.” Lance tries for a convincing smile but if Keith's expression is any indication, he isn't very convincing.

It doesn't take long for Keith to get his skates on and then Lance is holding his hands again and pulling him around on the ice.

“So why'd you come back today?” Lance finally asks, looping them around the rink and back out towards the center of the ice.

“I was um... I came to ask about the classes?” Keith shrugs, Lance smiling at that.

“For yourself? Because I can give you lessons for free, professional classes can get pretty expensive.” Lance explains.

“No, for my foster sister, Grace.”

“Which one was she?”

“The youngest one, the one I was pushing around on the bobby.” Keith explains, eyes trained on the ice and his feet.

“Oh, yeah she was adorable. She didn't skate much herself but I'm sure she's better than you.” Lance teases, pulling Keith forward suddenly with a playful grin and Keith tenses up and takes in a sharp breath of air. Keith slams into his chest and it takes everything in Lance to keep them both up right through his laughter.

“You're a real ass, you know that?” Keith snorts, gripping Lance's shoulder's tightly to stop himself from slipping.

“Ice!” Lance quickly snaps, hands reaching up to take Keith's into his own again and hold him away at double arms length. Keith clutches Lance's hands tightly, tensing up once again as he nearly slips.

“What?” Keith asks in confusion, eyes narrowed at the grin on Lance's face.
“You say ice instead of ass. We can't risk the younger kids hearing you say a bad word. So you say things like kiss my ice, Allura's rules, not mine.” Lance explains in an all too serious tone.

“You can't be serious?” Keith laughs but Lance forces his best stern look and nods his head, Keith's laughter dying down a bit. “I can't believe it, you are serious. Let me go, I'd rather literally kiss the ice than use that god awful pun.”

He's not really sure why he does it, but Lance pulls his hands free of Keith's grip and he watches the horror slowly creep into Keith's expression as he's suddenly gliding forward with no aid.

“Lance!”

Said person stifles a laugh before rushing forward and catching Keith just as his feet slide out from under him. “Don't worry, I wasn't going to actually let you hit the ice.”

“You're a real icehole.” Keith snaps but his grip on Lance tightens more than before.

“That's an awful thing to say,” Lance snorts, bringing them to a stop in the middle of the ice. “You were wondering if I was okay.” it's a statement, not really a question, but Keith nods. “Yesterday was the first time I've skated in a year.”

“I wouldn't have guessed from the way you could skate. You looked like a professional out there.” Keith mumbles, Lance smiling softly at the compliment.

“Thanks, just... a year ago, last November I had an accident while on the ice. I was skating with my partner during the free dance segment and something happened, my skates got stuck on the ice I guess and then I was like stumbling forward. I couldn't get my balance back and then my blade broke off and my ankle broke from the sudden dip and I landed on my knee. I broke my ankle and knee and it was pretty traumatizing.” Lance explains, his hands holding Keith by his upper arms a little too tightly.

“Lance...”

“Wait.” Lance cuts him off, “I was told I couldn't skate for six months after that. Well, technically three but the doctor suggested six and during those months that I was getting better I kind of developed this fear of the ice. Maybe it's because I thought my career was over because my partner dropped me for somebody new, but I was afraid of the ice. Three months after my accident I told everybody I was waiting for the recommended six months. When six months came and passed I still refused to get on the ice and even my family stopped trying to push me.”

“I'm sorry.”

“Don't be.” Lance doesn't mean to snap at him but he can't take it back now. “Don't be sorry, it's not your fault, it's not anybody's fault. Yesterday, my best friend, Hunk, convinced me to give skating another go and I was here for a while before you showed up. And seeing you not able to even stand on the ice kind of... it kind of helped me.” Lance shrugs, eyes flickering up to look at the surprise on Keith's face. “It reminded me of when I was six and at my first lesson, how I had this butt cushion on just in case I fell but I was the only one in the class who didn't slip. It reminded me that I've been skating for over half my life.”

“So... you're going to start competing again? Skating often again because I fell on my butt?” Keith's tone is light and Lance has to laugh at his wording.

“No, not exactly. I don't think I'll be competing again, not for a long time at least, if ever again. But I do want to skate again because of you, yes.” he nods. Lance doesn't miss the way Keith's checks
seem to flush pink but he doesn't comment on it.

“I don’t know if I’m supposed to say you’re welcome or just okay?” Keith laughs, head tilting down as if he's trying to hide his laughter. Lance tilts his own head though, trying to catch a better look at the way Keith's eyes seem to close when he laughs.

“You're welcome works fine.” Lance nods, wanting to lift Keith's face up to get a better look at him. So he does it, he let's his left hand leave Keith's arm and fall to rest under his chin instead, tilting his head up. The second their eyes meet Keith's laughter seems to catch in his throat and that light blush returns to his cheeks.

“Lance?”

“I don't know why I did that.” Lance laughs, hand darting away from Keith's face to scratch at the back of his head. “Sorry.”

“It's fine.” Keith mumbles, eyes still focused on Lance's face.

Embarrassed is an understatement to how Lance is suddenly feeling. He's glancing around everywhere except Keith and that's how he notices the photographer at the opposite end of the rink. He's snapping pictures and the moment his eyes meet Lance's, the guy dips down below the wall.

“What are you looking at?” Keith questions, following Lance's gaze.

“Nothing... hey do you want to go get some coffee? Maybe go for a walk?” Lance asks, attention turning back to Keith.

“Now? Like, right now?”

“Yeah, unless you have somewhere to be.” Lance nods.

Keith opens his mouth then closes it, looks down at the ice and the way he seems to mull it over has Lance on edge. “No, I'm free, it's fine. I'd love to go for a walk and get some coffee with you.” and Lance has to stop himself from letting out a sigh of relief.

“Cool, come on.” Lance leads Keith off the ice and they both sit in a comfortable silence while pulling their skates off.

“Leaving already?” Allura questions when they set the two pairs of skates up on the counter for her.

“Yeah, we're going to get coffee.” Lance nods.

“Have fun.” Allura calls after them as they walk out, side by side.

“Anywhere in particular you wanted to go?” Keith asks

“You ever been to Bluestone Lane?” Lance questions as they walk down the street.

“No? I've heard of it, just never actually stopped there.”

“You're gonna love it then.” Lance smiles. “It's not too far, it's up by central park, twenty minute walk tops.” Lance promises.

They walk for a block in silence, Lance wondering if this is a date or...
“Allura, is she your friend or like a cousin or something?”

“Hm?” Lance blinks a few times before registering the question. “Oh, yeah Allura is a childhood friend. Her mom and dad owned the skating rink and passed it on to her. Her mom died back when she was ten I think? And her dad recently developed Alzheimer's and she's been running the place with Coran's help for a few years now.” Lance explains.

"Oh."

“It's not so bad, she always says to just keep skating, keep going. If you fall you get right back up and try again.” Lance smiles. “She visits her dad every weekend, sometimes he doesn't remember her but... she says it's better than losing him forever.”

“I... yeah.” Keith nods.

“Sorry, I—you work at an orphanage don't you? You must see kids without parents all the time, that was probably inconsiderate of me to say.” Lance quickly apologizes, Keith shaking his head and smiling just slightly.

“Foster home, it's not an orphanage. And no, it's fine, Allura has a point. I'd give anything to see my parents again, but I won't hold anything she says against her or you. It's fine.”

“Wait you're an...?”

“Orphan? Yeah, why else did you think I worked at a foster home?” Keith laughs, Lance's cheeks flushing in embarrassment. Of course. Why hadn't he connected the dots before this?

“I don't know? I thought maybe you volunteered, I know some kids who do volunteer work like that. I didn't want to just assume you were an orphan too?” Lance shrugs.

The rest of the walk is silent again, the occasional comment about a funny looking pedestrian being tossed out. Like the man wearing booty shorts and a tank top in the cold November air. Or the lady wearing a polka dot hat with a stripped jacket and checkered pants.

“Okay but who let her out of her house and why?” Lance giggles, pointing to a building across the street. “That's the coffee shop.”

“Maybe somebody who hates her.” Keith chuckles, looking up to where Lance's finger was pointing.

Once the stop light changes for them to cross, they move across in laughter. Lance holds the door open for Keith and immediately the scent of cinnamon and coffee hits them. “Also, I know I said coffee but the hot chocolate they sell here is to die for. It's an original recipe and I need you to try it.”

“Hot chocolate is fine with me.” Keith nods.

Once they're up at the counter Lance orders and pays for both drinks and he only catches a glimpse of Keith's surprised smile at the gesture before they're moving down the counter to wait for their drinks.

Once their drinks are up, Lance stares at Keith expectantly and waits for him to take a sip. “Why are you looking at me like that?” Keith questions, cup held relatively close to his lips.

“I want to commit your facial expression to memory when you experience the wonder that is Bluestone Lane hot chocolate.” Lance shrugs, sipping his own and letting out an unnecessary
And there it is again, that laugh that Keith does where he tilts his head down, eyes shut and laughter directed at his feet. It makes Lance wonder if maybe once somebody had told Keith something awful about his laugh and made him feel the need to hide it.

“Alright, alright, here I go.” Keith smiled, lifting the cup to meet his lips and tilt it up. His eyes light up right away and then the cup is pulled away with a hushed ahh.

“Good right?”

“More like fantastic.” Keith nods, taking another sip of his hot chocolate.

“I'm glad somebody else appreciates this place like me.” Lance grins, draping an arm over Keith's shoulders. “Come on, lets go on that walk I mentioned.”

“Is there a bookstore near here?” Keith questions once they're out of the coffee shop and moving down the sidewalk.

Lance thinks the question over with a mouthful of hot chocolate. Swallowing it, he finally nods. “Yeah, I think just up the street, why?”

“I told my brother I was going to a bookstore.” Keith laughs, eyes focused on his cups lid.

“I thought you went to ask about classes for Grace?”

“That was a lie and I think you know it.” Keith looks up at and Lance feels his breath catch in his throat at how close their faces are.

“Oh... I guess I'm gullible, huh?” Lance laughs, positive his face is a bright red. “Alright, let's go to the book store, get you a book and then I'll walk you home.”

“You don't have to walk me home.” Keith frowns, taking another drink of his hot chocolate. “It's probably out of your way.”

“I don't mind.” Lance promises, turning them down a corner and pausing outside of the first building down that street. “Here.”

The door leading into the shop opens up to reveal a staircase and Keith almost turns it down in favor of not climbing up. Once at the top though, Keith stares in awe at all the books scattered around the room. There's shelves reaching all the way to the roof and overflowing with books. There's stacks of books at the end of each shelf and Keith has to wonder if this is maybe a safety hazard.

“Hello!” a voice greets, causing both boys to jump. “Oh, Lance!”

“Hey!” Lance smiles, moving over to the counter. Behind it stands a girl with puffy brown hair but cut short, she has big round eyes and her skin is a few shades darker than Lance's. She's a bit taller than Lance and she looks well built. “My friend here wanted to buy a book and we were over at the coffee shop so I figured I'd bring him here.”

“While I appreciate your free promotions of my shop, I do still have to remind you of our no drinks policy, Lance.” the girl's voice is stern and Lance pouts before turning to Keith and holding his hand out for the cup. Setting both drinks down on the counter, Lance clasps both hands onto Keith's shoulder's and leads him down one of the many aisles.
“Alright, let's get looking, we've got to get you a good book.”

They spend maybe half an hour looking and Lance is positive his hot chocolate is just lukewarm chocolate by now. “I can't believe you don't like any of the books I've suggested so far.” Lance groans, running his finger over the spines of several books.

“Most of them were kids books.” Keith points out, pulling a rather large book off the shelf, glancing it over and then shoving it back.

“Yeah, well, kids books are just as good.” Lance hums, not really reading any of the titles. Then something catches his attention, a familiar orange and yellow spine and then the title. “Keith, this one.”

“What?”

“You have to read this book. I know it's short but it's worth it, this book is... it's deep.” Lance nods, pulling the book free of it's spot on the shelf and holding it out to Keith.

“The Alchemist?” Keith questions in an unsure tone, flipping the book over to read the back.

“Trust me, it's worth it.” Lance nods. “One of my favorites, come on, let's go before our hot chocolate gets any colder.” Lance leaves no room for arguing as he forces Keith up to the counter.

“I thought you already owned a copy of this?” the girl questions, ringing up the book.

“I do, it's for Keith though, I wouldn't mind having a matching book with him.” Lance shrugs, holding out his debit card after the girl tells them their total.

“Wait, Lance you can't pay for it, that's my book.” Keith says, reaching out to stop the shop owner from taking Lance's card.

“I don't mind, it's just five dollars.” Lance shrugs, shaking his hand for the girl to take his card. “Shay, take it.”

“No.” Keith warns.

“Shay.”

“Lance I swear.”

“How about this,” Shay interrupts, both boys looking up at her. “The book is free of charge, think of it as a gift. We have been trying to get rid of it for months now, you would be doing us a favor.” Shay smiles, holding the book back out to Keith.

“No, I feel bad not paying.” Keith shakes his head, but Shay smiles again and slides the book closer to him.

“Lance is a friend and now so are you. Take it, please.”

“I'm paying you back somehow.” Keith promises, grabbing the book and his cup off the counter. “Thank you.”

“Hey Keith can you carry my cup down the stairs?” Lance asks, Keith doesn't seem to question it and holds his hand out for Lance's cup. Once Lance's hands are both empty he moves to the stairs and grabs the railing on either wall and slides all the way down, Keith staring in shock. “Pretty cool right?” Lance asks with a crooked grin once Keith reaches the end of the stairs.
“I guess.” Keith nods, handing Lance his cup back.

“Can I ask you something?”

“Shoot.” Lance nods, taking a sip of his drink and wincing at the very wrong temperature.

“Why did you basically demand I read this book?”

“It's pretty eye opening.” Lance replies, popping the lid off his cup and peering into it. “I read it back in high school when I was doubting my skating but it talks about like personal legends and stuff. How when we're kids we all know our personal legends and I was sure ice skating was mine. And there was this one quote 'When a person really desires something, all the universe conspires to help that person to realize his dream'. And maybe a year after reading the book I got offered a contract. I've reread the book several times and I bought my copy from Shay too.”

“I half expected you to say you only insisted so we could leave the shop already.” Keith admits, eyeing the book in his hand differently now.

“No, it's actually a really good book. Tell me what you think of it when you finish it, yeah?”

“Yeah.”

They're supposed to be heading back to the foster home after that but they make several detours instead. They pass one of Lance's favorite food vendor carts and they just have to stop for some burgers and fries. Before they know it they're walking around central park, coffee cups tossed and just talking. Favorite movies, books, comics and Keith even dares to bring up the Aquaman slander Wyatt had mentioned that morning. As it turns out Lance is an avid Aquaman lover as well and Keith is positive that he and Grace would get along swimmingly... without the pun.

The hours go by and before they know it's already later afternoon.

"I should be heading back, who knows how much longer Shiro can handle sixteen kids on his own."

"How many of you guys live there?"

"Sixteen kids, plus me and Shiro is eighteen then there's the Holts and their two kids so twenty-two people live at home." Keith counts, leading the way back to the house.

"Guess there's never a dull moment at home then, right?" Lance smiles.

"Never. What about you?"

"What about me?" Lance questions, glancing at Keith for a moment before looking straight ahead again.

"Do you have a big family at home?"

"Oh! Yeah, it's pretty big. My mom, dad then an older sister and brother, me, two younger brothers and a younger sister. My oldest sister, Mila, she's married and has three kids now and they're over pretty often so it's always a full house."

"Sounds nice."

"Yeah, it is."
As it turns out, the foster home isn't too far from central park and the rest of the walk home they talk about their families and share different stories of things their siblings have done and somehow, Lance ends up talking about Pepe the frog.

“He's relatable.” Lance argues but Keith just snorts in amusement.

“He's ugly.”

Lance gasps loudly, stopping in the middle of the sidewalk. “You take that back.”

Keith turns to stare at Lance and raise an eyebrow. “Really?”

“Really or I'm leaving you here.”

“You're childish.” Keith laughs, walking back to Lance and standing in front of him. “Pepe is ugly.”

“I can't believe I recommended my favorite book to a pepe hater.”

“I can't believe I spent my day with a pepe lover. Guess we can't both get what we wanted.” Keith shrugs. “Are you gonna finish walking me home or what? We're like two minutes away now.” Keith adds, pointing down the street.

Lance feigns hesitation then shrugs. “Fine.” once they reach the doorsteps to the foster house Lance stares up at the building. “Is the whole place your families?”

“Yeah, it's four floors.” Keith nods, glancing up at the red bricked building himself. “The Holts, the family who owns the house, they have their rooms at the very top. The top floor also has a room full of toys and games and another room designed like a dance studio. It's where the kids go to play and all that. The third and second floor are all the rooms and the first floor is the kitchen, living room, dining hall and the study room.” Keith explains, shuffling his book from one hand to the other.

“Can I ask you something?” Lance questions, his tone a bit too serious even for him.

“Yeah, I guess so.”

“What happened to your family? I mean—I know they're... you know, gone but I mean, what happened?” Lance asks, not missing the way Keith's eyes seem to darken a bit, eyebrows knitting together just slightly.

“Is it okay if I don't answer?”

“Yeah. Sorry if I made you uncomfortable, I was just—I'm a curious person.” Lance apologizes, swallowing hard and looking back down the street they had just walked up. “I should...”

“You have to uh... you have to reach a level thirty-six friend to unlock my dark backstory.”

That's when Lance manages to catch a good look at Keith's face when he laughs and boy was that a mistake. Doubled down, Lance looked up just in time to see Keith's nose scrunched up, eyes shut and lips pulled back as laughter left his lips. His cheeks were a bright pink as a result of his
laughter and Lance knew, he just knew that was the moment his heart fell for the boy who couldn't even stand on ice.

“H-hey Keith?”

“Yeah?” said person laughed, standing back up straight and scratching at his cheek.

“I can't reach level thirty-six without a way to see you again.” even Lance is surprised at how smooth that line is. Keith's eyes widen just slightly.

“Yeah, yeah right. Do you want my number?”

“That would be nice, yeah.” Lance nods, pulling his phone out and handing it over. “Put your contact in as Ice Kisser.” Lance adds, Keith shooting him a playfully dirty look.

“Then I'll put yours in as Ice Princess.” Keith retorts, Lance laughing at that.

“Is that meant as an insult or a name of affection?” Lance grins, taking his phone back and pleasantly surprised when the contact actually reads Ice Kisser.

“That's for you to decide.” Keith smiles, glancing behind him at the front door. “I should head in and see if the kids have managed to break Shiro down yet.”

“Alright, I'll see you around.” Lance nods, waiting around until the front door clicks shut.

The whole walk back to the ice rink Lance seems to replay Keith's laughter in his mind. It was contagious, even when just remembering it Lance wanted to laugh alongside him. Had he ever actually liked somebody? The way he liked Keith now? Maybe Nyma but...

No. He hadn't liked Nyma the way he did Keith now. He had idolized her, had wanted to keep her around and skate with her, with Keith though? Things were different. With Keith he wanted to get coffee, hold his hand and watch movies. He wanted to learn every little thing about Keith from what made him blush to what made him happy.

In short, Lance was pretty sure this was the beginning of a crush.

“Lance? We weren't expecting you to come back today.” Allura notes when Lance walks back into the skating rink and leans against the counter on the customer side of it.

“I had fun.”

“Really?” Allura grins, leaning forward and resting her chin in her hand. “Tell me about it.”

“We went to my favorite coffee shop and then we stopped by Shay's bookstore and I got him that book I told you about once, The Alchemist.” Lance starts, goofy grin curling on his lips. “Then I walked him home and that walk home took several hours, lunch included, then I got his number so now he doesn't need some lame excuse to come see me.”

“What was his excuse?” Allura questions curiously.

“He said he was going to ask about classes for his foster sister.” Lance snorts, glancing around behind the counter. “Did Coran leave?”

“No, he's in the back filing through this week's classes and checking who's paid their fees and who
still needs to.” Allura replies. “I have something else I need to tell you about.”

“Yeah?”

“Earlier I saw a man with a camera. He paid to skate but he didn't. He left right after you and Keith did and I have a feeling he was probably getting some pictures of you.” Allura sounds worried and Lance just sighs, typical.

“I mean I haven't been out much in the past year, somebody probably saw me coming to the skating rink and put it on blast on social media. So what, they post some pictures of me ice skating? No big deal, I don't plan on going back to competing.” he shrugs, jumping up onto the counter and swinging his feet. “They'll get bored of me again soon enough.”

“No, Lance, I meant I think they got pictures of you and Keith.” Lance glances over his shoulder in confusion at her.

“So?”

“So! Do you want a repeat of the head lines about us?” Allura questions in exasperation. “Lance dropping out of competition for secret lover.” she's practically cringing as she talks.

“Oh, right, I forgot about that.” Lance laughs. “I mean... I can't stop them now if they've already got pictures.”

Allura rolls her eyes at that and lightly pushes his shoulder. “No, you idiot, I meant did you tell Keith who you were? You don't want him to wake up to being on the news and suddenly find out you're some famous ice skater.”

“Oh, right. No, I told him about my accident but didn't tell him it was at the Winter Olympics. I probably should have.”

“No kidding,” Allura scuffs with a laugh, “tell him as soon as possible.”

“I will, tomorrow. I just like not being that famous guy, you know? I'll tell him tomorrow for sure though.” Lance nods, both he and Allura looking up when the door to the skates room opens and in walks Coran.

“Lance? What have I told you about sitting on the counter?”

“Does it really matter if my butt touches the counter? I mean, shoes touch it all the time, people can't be all that grossed out by my butt.” Lance shrugs, Coran frowning at him.

“Alright, alright, I'm getting off.”

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Keith kicks his shoes off and hangs his coat, book still clutched tightly in his hand and then he realizes something is off. Very, very off. The house is silent. That... spelled trouble for many reasons. Whenever all sixteen kids were home they were never quiet, even if they were all up on the fourth floor they could be heard loud and clear. Even while holding his breath Keith couldn't hear a single thing coming from anywhere.

“Shiro?”
Padding down the hall into the kitchen he noticed the lights were all off and there was no dinner out either. There was no way Shiro had taken all the kids out to eat, it was an unspoken rule that nobody takes all sixteen kids out as one group.

“Grace?!”

Setting his book down on the kitchen counter, Keith raced up the stairs to the second floor and quickly went from room to room, each one empty.

“Jackson, Evelyn, guys this isn't funny!” Keith shouted down the hall, pulling his phone out and immediately dialing Shiro. Straight to voicemail. “Shiro I swear if you guys are all dead I'm bringing you back to life just to murder you myself!”

He's up on the third floor now, each room empty just like the second floor. Worry was starting to creep in and he frantically rushed up to the fourth floor, taking the stairs two at a time. Rushing into the play room first, Keith flicked the light on and nearly jumped out of his skin when something collided with him. Grace.

“Grace?! What—” and then he hears it. Shiro and his damn battle cry.

“Chaaaaarge!” he has all of two seconds to brace himself before Nerf bullets and plastic arrows are pelting him. A rather large foam bullet hits him right between the eyes and then he's stumbling back into the hall, arms flailing out in front of him.

“Stop—guys! I trusted—Shiro!” Keith slams into the wall and slides down it, guns still clicking and bullets hitting him all over. He can hear Wyatt howling and then a sockball hits his cheek.

“Hold your fire!” Shiro calls out, lowering his gun and stepping forward. “I think we've defeated the great evil.”

Keith peeks between his fingers and notices all the kids have Mr. Holts ties wrapped around their foreheads in a bandanna style. Some of the older kids have red paint streaked across their cheeks, down their chins and across their foreheads. The younger kids are wearing as much green as possible and most of the girls have their hair pulled back. Three of the older kids hold bow and arrows while the rest have Nerf Guns and Grace has a basket full of socks rolled up into balls.

“What--? Why” Keith sputters, slowly sitting up against the wall.

“The kids wanted to do something fun so we went around the house collecting all the Nerf guns and bullets we had.” Shiro shrugs. “Then we needed a target, and well, I wasn't about to take a hundred bullets to the face so I volunteered you.”

“Have I ever told you I kind of hate you?” Keith questions, grabbing some of the bullets and tossing them in Shiro's direction, most missing him.

“Once or twice.” Shiro shrugs. “Alright guys, reload your guns, this is war.”

“What?!” Keith jumps to his feet and Shiro holds up a hand to stop him.

“It's fine, we have an extra gun for you, it'll be a free for all.” Shiro promises, signaling to Jordan who immediately turns back into the play room and brings out an extra gun for Keith. Once all the bullets are up and all their guns are loaded, Shiro coughs loudly to get everybody's attention. “Now! I know this is war and it'll be hard and some of you may not make it but... I want you all to go out there and have fun.”
There's a loud collective cheer from the kids and Keith frowns a bit at it. “Wait, what are the rules?”

“First rule; if you get hit you go down a floor. We're all starting here on the fourth floor. You keep going down each time you're hit, once you get to the first floor you're out. At the end, the winner of each floor will be given a prize.” Shiro explains. “Second rule; No hits to the face, neck and down only. Third rule; Play fair, if you're hit, don't act like you weren't. Fourth rule; you can't aim for somebody coming down the stairs, that's just not fair. And lastly, the safe word is hippo. If anybody says hippo all shooting stops immediately, got it?”

“Got it.” the kids all chorus.

“Alright, everybody spread out, we'll start at the count of ten.”

At that, the kids all scatter, some heading into rooms to hide behind couches or desks and others stand at the end of the halls, guns at the ready. Evelyn wins the fourth floor, Keith is the first to get hit and immediately hides under one of the beds on the third floor. He manages well until he runs out of bullets and the kids all team up against him. Wyatt wins the third floor and then they're all down on the second floor. Most of the kids get taken out and Keith absolutely refuses to get sent down to the first floor. Finally, it comes down to Shiro and Keith, they're standing at opposite ends of the hall, staring each other down.

“I only have one bullet left.” Shiro announces.

“Same.” Keith replies.

“Can I ask how your day went? You went to the skating rink didn't you?” Shiro asks, taking a cautious step forward.

“Yeah. I did, I hung out with Lance all day.” Keith nods.

“Was it fun?”

“Yeah, we got coffee and went to a bookstore after we skated for a bit.” Keith nods, gun still aimed directly at Shiro's chest.

“Sounds nice, anything else exciting happen?” Shiro questions, leaning against the wall, smirk on his face.

“I got his number—or—well he got my number but, you know. He also walked me home.” Keith takes a few steps forward, eyes narrowing at the way Shiro is smiling.

“Sounds nice, so you're going on a second date soon I hope?”

“Second? We haven't... oh.”

Then there's a bang and Keith is hit from behind.

“What the f—Grace?” Keith asks in shock, turning to see the back stabber—er—shooter. Turning back on his heels, Keith points a finger at Shiro. “You knew!”

“Guilty.” Shiro laughs before he's hit in the chest with a bullet from Grace.

“I win!” she cheers.

“Cheaters, I was robbed of my second floor victory!” Keith cries out, slipping to the ground and
clutching his chest. “I see... the white light...”

“I hit you in the back, not the chest.” Grace comments, peering at Keith's face.
“Same difference.” Keith shrugs, sitting up and pulling Grace into his lap to tickle her. “Still shot me!” he laughs, Grace shrieking with laughter.

“K-keith! No! Keith!” she cries out between laughs.
“Evelyn! Wyatt! Get your butts down here, Grace won the last floor!” Shiro calls up through the staircase, muffled replies echoing back followed by footsteps. Once they're all downstairs most of the kids are surprised to find out Grace won.
“What's our prize?” Evelyn questions excitedly, following Shiro into the kitchen, Wyatt just behind her and Keith following them, Grace in his arms.
“King sized chocolate bars.” Shiro replies, some of the other kids whining. “Hey, what did we say about whining? We all agreed to play fair and not cry if we lost, remember?”

The kids grumble in response but scatter after that. Evelyn, Wyatt and Grace each grabbing a candy bar from the top cabinet and racing back up the stairs to their rooms.

"Did they have dinner yet?" Keith questions once they're gone.

“Not yet, but it's fine, it'll be an hour before the food is ready.” Shiro shrugs, starting to pull out ingredients from the fridge."I still can't help but feel like I--or well, we know Lance from somewhere."

Keith gives a small shrug, "Probably school or something. Maybe we've seen him compete on tv?"

"Maybe. But seriously, you actually went to the skating rink and miraculously Lance was there?"

"Yeah. I was doubtful myself but he was.” Keith smiles, helping wash off some of the vegetables for dinner.

“Fate?” Shiro hums. “I think it's great, let me know when you guys get engaged?”

“Shiro!”

o.O.o

**Ice Princess**: I had fun today, thank you
**Ice Kisser**: I had fun too, thanks for the book recommendation
**Ice Princess**: No problem (:*
**Ice Princess**: I'm gonna shower and then head to bed, goodnight Ice Kisser~
**Ice Kisser**: Goodnight Ice Princess

Chapter End Notes

Sobs about this update. I did it purely off mobile so it was a struggle. My laptop charger ripped and so I haven't been able to charge or use my laptop. I'm getting a new charger on Tuesday though. sooo I'm very sorry about any typos or if the text looks funky or anything. Pasting it from a word doc on mobile made it look weird but I tried to fix it as best as possible. Ummmm let's see what else. OH this is gonna be a pretty happy fic btw guys. Because most of literally everything I write is angsty and painful
af so I wanted to write something nice and cute for once. Thus this was born.

We'll learn about Keith’s backstory eventually btw. And the book I mentioned is really, really good too and I'd definitely recommend looking it up.

Okay, as usual, thank you for reading <3
Chapter 3

I'm all for being in love and whenever I like someone, I end up pretty much completely smitten

The first thing Keith realizes when he wakes up is that he’s freezing. Kind of trembling even. Blinking a few times, his eyes focus on the window and he frowns at the sight of snow against the glass. It was still November, he absolutely hated when it snowed this time of year. Sure, snow was pretty at first but eventually it just became a blanket of death and he could only hope it melted away earlier into the year than usual. That of course, usually didn’t happen.

Pulling the covers further up under his chin, he reaches out with one hand to grab his phone and hold it close. It’s only seven fifty-two but that meant Shiro had been up for almost two hours by now. How his brother managed to get up at six o’clock on the dot every day still confused Keith. Even without an alarm Shiro got up at six, it was like he’d conditioned himself to do that. Keith would know, he had once turned Shiro’s alarm off to see what would happen if he slept in but that only resulted in Shiro waking him up at six and laughing. Never again.

“Keith!”

Speak of the devil.

Shifting under his covers, Keith peeks at the door where Shiro is standing, phone held above his head and frantic look on his face. “Keith!” he repeats, rushing over and hurtling himself onto the bed.

“Shiro!”

“You don’t understand!” Shiro cuts him off, nearly tossing the phone at Keith’s face. “Read the article right the fuck now.”

Rolling his eyes, Keith sits up a bit and grabs Shiro’s phone, unlocking it and immediately choking at the title that flashes across the screen.

Lance McClain giving up ice skating for good because of Mystery Guy?

“Shiro what is this?”

“Read the actual article! I knew Lance sounded familiar!” Shiro snaps, grabbing Keith’s wrist and lifting the phone closer to his face.

“Alright! Let go.” Keith huffs, scooting back away from Shiro and skimming through the article.

Exactly a year ago Lance McClain had his infamous accident at the Winter Olympics.

Yeah, yeah, everybody knew that at this point.

Partner Nyma Queen dropped him just weeks later for new partner Derek Wilson, better known
as Rolo.

Rolo was a weird as hell name but who was Keith to judge?

Lance had yet to be seen back on the ice even after his casts were removed.

That Keith knew too. Lance had just started skating again on Saturday.

Quitter because of his loss of Nyma?

As if. Lance was living with trauma, not because he lost his petty partner.

Rumor had it he could never skate again because of chronic pains.

Lance was as healthy as a horse... at least, as far as Keith knew.

New anonymous source says he’s given up the skating scene for his mystery guy.

Who the fuck was this anonymous source?

The only question left? Who is this black haired beauty?

“Black haired beauty!” Keith screeches, slapping his hands down and giving Shiro the most ridiculous look he can muster.

“That was kind of my reaction too.”

“What the fuck?”

Shiro shrugs, taking his phone back and humming. “Keith has a famous boyfriend.”

“Shiro shut up.”

“I’m not kidding, this guy was in the Olympics! Keith, what did you do to catch his attention?”

“I kissed the damn ice.”

Shiro stares at Keith for a few seconds, eyes slowly narrowing more and more. “Literally or…”

“No!” Keith snorts, shoving at his brother before stumbling out of bed. “No, I fell on my ass. He said something about how me falling reminded him how much he loves skating. I don’t know? Maybe it was all the kids I had with me.”

“Maybe.” Keith is rummaging through his drawers while Shiro stares at the window, both comfortable with the silence. But that doesn’t stop Shiro from speaking up, “What are you looking for?”

“Clothes. I’m going out.”

“Again?”

“I need to, I’m confronting Lance on this.” Keith nods, shutting his drawers, outfit in hand. He should’ve told me.”

“Maybe he was scared.”
Keith scuffs at that, “Of what?”

“You being interested in just his fame. Or not interested because of his fame.”

Keith frowns at just how logical his brother always was. “He still should’ve told me so something like this didn’t give me a heart attack.”

“Hm,” Shiro hums, picking his phone back up and squinting at the screen. “You know, these pictures are actually pretty cute. This first one is the best, you look so shocked and there's a hint of a smile on your lips and Lance's hand is under your chin. You’re clutching his shirt like it's the only thing keeping you on Earth and if you squint and zoom in you can see your cheeks are kind of flushed red, what was he sayi--”

“Alright! We get it.” Keith groans, leaving the room with an echo of Shiro’s laugh following him.

An hour later, Keith is showered, dressed and leaving the foster house with toast in one hand and his phone in the other.

**Ice Kisser:** Meet me at the coffee shop? We need to talk.
**Ice Princess:** Now? What's up?
**Ice Kisser:** Now. You'll see.
**Ice Princess:** On my way.

The walk to the coffee shop is quick and Keith waits outside for Lance. He doesn't wait for long before the smiling brunette comes into view and Keith has to stop himself from smiling. He was supposed to look upset.

“Hey, what's up?”

“You tell me.” Keith huffs, arms crossing over his chest and a confused look taking over Lance's features.

“What?”

“The article.” Keith states as if it were meant to be the obvious answer. “Have you not seen it? How did my brother see an article about you before you?”

Lance's eyebrows knit together and then slowly his eyes widen. “Oh my god, the photographer, he posted the article already?”

“You knew!” Keith immediately accuses, stepping back and arms flying down to his side. “You knew and you didn't say anything!” Keith's heart is racing and Lance looks panicked as he shakes his head and steps closer.

“No! No, I didn't know about the article I swear! I saw the guy take pictures but didn't think he'd post anything that soon!”

“You knew!” Keith immediately accuses, stepping back and arms flying down to his side. “You knew and you didn't say anything!” Keith's heart is racing and Lance looks panicked as he shakes his head and steps closer.

“No! No, I didn't know about the article I swear! I saw the guy take pictures but didn't think he'd post anything that soon!”

“Lance, articles go up as fast as possible!” Keith laughs, looking away to the busy street. “Why didn't you tell me?”

“That some guy was taking pictures of us?” Lance scuffs, shrugging. “It seemed like a creepy thing to say.”

Keith let's out a frustrated groan and takes a deep breath. “No, Lance. Why didn't you tell me you were a famous figure skater?”
“Ice skater.”

“Same difference.”

“Actually--”

“Lance.”

“Right, sorry.”

“So? Why didn't you tell me?” Keith waits while Lance seems to mull the question over. He bites and his lower lip and Keith finds it endearing.

“I wanted somebody to like me for me. Not my fame.” Lance shrugs and any hint of anger Keith had is suddenly gone. Oh. That was a...

“That's... I wouldn't have cared if you were famous. Lance, I liked you for you from the beginning. Granted you were annoying a little but I still liked you. Even if you had told me I wouldn't have known who you were.” Keith explains, reaching out to gently grip Lance's arm comfortably. “I still don't care if you're famous, okay?”

“I'm just used to people getting close to me because I'm famous or because I have all this money and all that.” Lance shrugs, reaching out with his other hand to rest it on top of Keith's and squeeze it gently.

“This is probably a stupid question but is there any way you can stop those articles? I had a few people point at me while I walked here and I... don't like being recognized.” Keith questions, eyes trained on their hands. Lance's was slightly bigger against his he noticed.

“I don't have control over these articles. Usually they die out though. They once wrote one about Allura being my scandalous lover.” Lance snorts, Keith joining in the laughter.

“So I had a right to be jealous of her?” Keith jokes but his laughter stops short when Lance doesn't laugh. Lance stares at him instead, his expression unreadable and suddenly Keith feels uncomfortable. He'd said the wrong thing, he'd messed up already. “Sorry, I shouldn't have said that.”

“You're jealous of Allura? Why?”

“I'm not. I was just kidding.”

Lance doesn't seem to buy it though. “I don't have a thing for her, never have, never will. She's like a sister, okay? You've got nothing to worry about.”

“Lance, I wasn't.” Keith defends but his pink cheeks definitely betray him.

“It's fine, I'm not judging.” Lance laughs, his hand getting a better grip around Keith's hand and pulling their hands down between them. “Have you ever been to Rockefeller?”

“Once, my brother Shiro took me like three years ago.” Keith nods, eyes flickering down to look at their still interlocked hands.

“Do you want to go? They light the tree on December second this year, just a few days from today.” Lance seems to hesitate with the question and it forces Keith to look up. Lance's face is a deep shade of red and his eyes are also focused on their hands. It's cute.
“I’d love to go.”

Lance looks up quickly, their eyes meeting and both smiling a bit. “It’s a date then!” Keith’s breath catches in his throat but he nods. It was a date. A date. A real date with Lance.

“It is.” they’re silent for a moment, standing outside the coffee shop, hands interlocked and swinging between them. Keith feels the happiest he has in... well ever. He's generally a happy person, especially with his big family, but this was a different kind of happy. It was a selfish happy, one where he came first, not Grace, Wyatt, Jordan, not even Shiro. It was a happy that made his heart race and his palms feel sweaty.

“Did you want to maybe hang out today? I mean—if you're not busy, if you are I can wait until our date.” Lance stutters, free hand reaching up to scratch his cheek.

“I should actually get back to the foster house, Shiro watched all the kids on his own yesterday, I kind of bolted from the house this morning.” Keith laughs. “But if you want, you can walk me home?”

“I'll settle for that.” Lance nods, switching their hands and then moving to walk beside Keith. “Can we take a longer way?”

“Somebody's selfish.” Keith teases, Lance shrugging in full acceptance of the comment. “Sure.”

They walk through central park on their way home. Snow crunching under their feet with each step and Keith feels warm all over every time Lance's grip tightens then loosens. As if to remind them that they're holding hands.

They're almost back to the house when Keith speaks up. “How long have you been skating?”

“Skating since I can remember but I started lessons when I was six.” Lance replies, glancing at Keith for a second then straight ahead of them again. “Why?”

“You've been doing this your whole life, are you really not going back to it? Competing, I mean, you don't want to try the Olympics again? The next one is in like three years, right? You've got time to train, don't you?” Keith fires off each question quickly, regretting it almost instantly when Lance coughs and shrugs.

“I don't think competing is for me anymore.”

Keith expects more to hiss answer but when nothing else comes he frowns. “But why?”

“I don't have a partner anymore. I've only ever skated with Nyma and it feels wrong to even consider skating with anybody else, even if she's got a new partner already. I might one day skate solo again but for now I think just skating for fun is fine.” the foster house comes into view and Keith actually feels their pace slow down. “You're the first person I've ever skated with that wasn't Nyma or related to me.”

“Really?”

“Yeah.”

They come to a pause at the base of the stairs to the house and Keith turns to face Lance, hands still clasped together. “Can you teach me to skate?”

“Like on my level?”
“No, like just skate. Just basic skating so I don't look stupid on kiss anymore.” Keith laughs.

“Tired of being an ice kisser already?” Lance teases, Keith frowning as best he can at the comment. “Sure, I'll teach you. After the holidays when we've got more time. Lucky for you, lessons will be free from me unlike Allura's place, they can get pretty costly.”

“So you've said.”

“Have I?”

“I feel like you're stalling.” Keith jokes, leaning against the railing and smirking at Lance.

“Stalling what?”

“Leaving. Lance, are you being clingy?”

Lance feigns hurt at that and gasps at Keith before they both burst into laughter. “Please, I'm just stalling because I think those kids in the window are getting some amusement out of us just standing here.”

“What—kids?” Keith quickly turns to look at the window where he can clearly see several of the older kids peeking through the shaking curtains. “I—they are so gonna get it when I get inside.” Keith laughs, about to turn when he notices somebody press their lips to the glass and somebody else puckering their lips at them.

“Are they making kissy faces at us?” Lance laughs.

“They're making death faces is what they're doing.” Keith grumbles, turning his back to the window and meeting Lance's eyes.

“I mean, if they're asking though, I'm not about to disappoint a bunch of kids.” Lance starts, leaving Keith confused.

“What?”

Lance leans down and presses a kiss to Keith's cheek. It's quick and then his hand isn't in Keith's anymore. “I should get going, I'll see you soon Keith.”

“See ya.”

Keith doesn't go inside right away, he leans against the railing until Lance is out of view and even then he continues to stare. He resists the urge to touch his cheek, but his skin feels warm and tingly where Lance's lips had just been. Keith was done for.

“Keith? You might want to come inside before you catch a cold and get all the kids sick.” Shiro's voice calls out, Keith turning slowly to see Shiro poking his head out from behind the door.

“Coming dad.”

“Ha-ha.” the door swings open fully and Keith hurries in, closing it behind him. Keith is in the middle of hanging his jacket up when somebody collides into him and Keith stumbles forward, forehead banging against the coat hook.

“What the fffffff...frick.” He cries out, spinning around to find the person to blame. “Pidge!”

“We're back.” Pidge cackles, stepping back and pointing over her shoulder to where Matt is
waving.

“Hey Keith.”

“I thought you guys were getting home tomorrow?”

“Had to leave early, dad started a food fight because moms sister said the peas sucked and dad was just not having it.” Pidge sighs then waves her hands. “But enough about us, tell us about your new boyfriend.”

“Shiro?”

Said person holds his hands up in defense and shakes his hand. “They saw the article. It's all over the place.”

“How'd you land that?” Matt laughs, Pidge grabbing Keith's hand and dragging him into the dining hall.

“Why didn't you guys just ask Shiro for the actual story?” Keith complains, plopping down at the dining table, Pidge on his left and Matt and Shiro sitting across from them.

“It's better coming from you.” Pidge shrugs, gripping Keith's arm and shaking it. “So come on, tell us.”

“There's nothing to tell, I met him at the ice rink, he had me ice skate with him and then we just kind of started hanging out.” Keith shrugs, pulling his arm free of Pidge's grip.


“Alright, fine, Lance had a panic attack and then the next day—yesterday—I went back to the skating arena and kind of hoped to run into him and then I did.” Keith shrugs, slumping down in his seat. “We spent the day together, he got me a new book to read, one of his favorites then he walked me home and asked for my number.” Keith further explains, trying to fight off a smile now. “And then this morning I saw the article and we met up and he said he didn't tell me who he was because he wanted somebody to like him for him, not his fame.”


“Pidge, please.” Matt chuckles.

“He walked me home, we held hands and we just talked.” Pidge doesn't seem satisfied with the answer but it's all he gives her.

“And then the pretty guy kissed Keith.” Keith's vision goes blurry for a second and then he's spinning around to find Grace grinning behind them.

“Grace has always been my favorite.” Pidge grins from ear to ear, holding her hand out for a high five from the six year old.

“No!” Keith cuts in, slapping Pidge's hand away. “He didn't kiss me—well not on the lips. It was just a cheek kiss, a goodbye kiss, grow up!” Keith stammers.
“Still a kiss.” Matt grins, Shiro elbowing him in warning but fighting back a smile.

“Alright, are we done?” Keith groans, sending Shiro his best help me look.

“I think it's scandalous that you stole him from a girl like Nyma.” Matt states in all seriousness, three sets of eyes focusing on him. “What? Have you seen her? She's stunning, I kind of figured Lance would be hung up on her.”

“She straight up dropped him because he had an accident, what about that makes you think Lance would be hung up on her?” Keith questions, his tone almost threatening.

“I was just saying.” Matt shrugs cautiously, clearing his throat and almost instantly changing the topic, “I remember seeing the accident on tv.”

“I thought he died.” Pidge bluntly throws out.

“Wait, did we watch it?” Keith asks in confusion, not really remembering ever having seen it on tv. He'd watched the Olympics before with the Holts and foster kids but he couldn't remember last year.

“Most nights it was on, yeah but I think that specific night you were out? I know Shiro was there but I don't remember you being there?” Matt thinks, finger tapping his chin. “Nah, you were probably cooped up in your room or cleaning upstairs.”

“Huh.”

“You guys wanna watch the accident clip? I just pulled it up.” it's more of a statement than a question as Pidge holds her phone out at a good enough angle that they can all see.

It starts from the beginning of their routine and Keith definitely notes that Nyma is stunning. Her hair is held up in a perfect bun with two perfectly curled strands framing her face. Her outfit is sparkling and even without it she would seem like she was glowing. Keith nearly misses it when Lance stumbles, he seems to be in a panic, a chorus of screams echoing from the crowd. Then a blade slides across the ice and Lance is crashing to the ice, his scream is what makes Keith go pale. Then Lance slides across the rest of the ice and if it weren't for his constant screaming Keith would've thought he was dead too from how limp and still his body was.

He watches a woman immediately rush to the ice and she's got a similar shade of brown hair and tan skin. His mom.

“Turn it off.” Keith says, reaching out to click the phone off.

“Sorry.”

“I'm going to my room.”

The afternoon is silent for Keith. Nobody bothers him, not even when Lunch is ready. He stares at the wall for a while and scrolls through his phone until it dies. He's about to head down when there's a knock on his door. “Keith? It's Pidge.”

“Yeah?” Keith calls out, the door pushing open and in popping a head of messy dirty blonde hair.

“I know the video upset you but Matt and I were looking at it and look, we found some conspiracy theories.”
Pidge stands in the doorway, laptop, tablet and cell phone all in hand. Keith narrows his eyes and opens his mouth to talk but words fail him.

“Yeah, I know that's weird, there's theories around your boyfriend, but look, you might want to look at this, okay?”

“Fine.”

Pidge pads across the room and climbs onto the bed, setting her tablet and phone down beside her and clicking on a Youtube tab on her laptop. “Somebody said he did it on purpose.”

“You can rule that one out immediately, skating is Lance's entire life. He had a panic attack at the arena, he's not pretending. He didn't do it on purpose.” Keith shakes his head, Pidge pouting but closing that tab right away. “That leaves two more options. The first is that somebody sabotaged him. His blade literally breaks off and after some research that's kind of hard to do. So I think somebody over sharpened his blade, doing that can make it weak and easier to break and he does stumble and put a lot of pressure on it before it snaps.”

“That sounds possible but that doesn't explain why he stumbled in the first place.” Keith points out.

“Which leads to the other theory. Nyma.” Pidge grins, clicking on a different tab.

“Nyma?”

“Watch the video.”

It starts seconds before Lance stumbles and it's slowed down. He watches Lance kick off the ice and then start stumbling as if his foot were stuck in place for too long. It repeats the scene but this time a red circle pops up around their feet and it's vaguely visible that Nyma's skate catches on Lance's skate before he stumbles. It plays out further and then another circle pops up around Nyma, she doesn't skate forward like Lance did, she immediately spins around and watches Lance.

“See!”

“What?”

“Nyma did it! There's hundreds of video's saying Nyma tripped Lance and also had somebody over sharpen his skates so they'd be weak. She turned around almost immediately, before Lance actually starts stumbling. She knew it would happen.” Pidge exclaims, waving her hands wildly at the laptop screen.

“But why?”

“Ha! Got that information too. Six days after Lance's accident Nyma announces that she's signed on to be partners with a guy who goes by Rolo. But guess what? He's loaded, he's a rich, hot shot skater. Which means she would be making more money with him than with Lance even though Lance was Olympic level good.”

“So you're saying she purposefully blew the Olympics, injured Lance, hurt his feelings and all just to earn more money?” Keith asks dryly, the very thought of that being a possibility leaving a sour taste in his mouth.

“Yeah, basically. Especially since it only took six days to get an offer and sign it. I don't think that's how those things work. She wouldn't just give in that fast. It was planned.” Pidge adds, closing the tab and shutting her laptop.
“Alright.”

“Alright? That's it? You're not gonna tell Lance?”

“No, if he knows, then he knows. I'm not about to bring it back up, he's reluctant to even skate, I'm not about to make him consider his lifetime partner did it to him on purpose. Especially since there's no way to prove it other than asking her.” Keith explains, reaching over to grab his phone and check the percentage.

“But Keith!”

“Just leave it alone, Pidge. Please?”

“Fine. But don't think I'm not gonna keep digging, because I am.” and with that she collects her things and leaves the room. Keith sits, convincing himself for a few minutes it was for the best that he not mention it to Lance at all.

_Ice Kisser_: Hey

_o.O.o_

“I held his hand.” Lance grins, rummaging through a few coats on the rack.

“That's nice, were his hands soft?”

“They were cold. I think he's got some bad blood circulation.” Lance notes, pulling a blue jacket off the rack, Hunk peeking at it and shaking his head.

“You have like three jackets in that color already, go for something different.” Hunk says, turning back to the shelf he was looking through. “And weren't you guys outside? I mean it's snowing, he was probably just cold.”

Lance shrugs, pulling a red jacket off the rack and holding it up to Hunk who stares then nods. “Probably. But it was still nice and his hands were definitely soft.”

“Anything else happen?”

“I kissed his cheek.” Lance adds, looking through some shirts on the next rack.

“What! You kissed him and you thought starting off with the fact that you held hands—something you've done before, might I add—was more important?” Hunk asks, voice sounding completely and utterly surprised.

“You don't get it, kissing somebody is whatever. But holding somebody's hand? That's like... I think hand holding is better.” Lance shrugs with a laugh. Cheeks tinting pink at the thought of Keith and their _date_. “I asked him out too. To Rockefeller.”

“You were on a roll today.” Hunk teases, turning to his best friend. “And all it took was some sleazy photographer calling Keith your Mystery Man.”

“Pfft, I guess.” Lance grabs two different shirts and then leans against the shelf. “Got anything?”

“Yeah, I got something for Shay too. Which, by the way she told me she saw you and Keith the other day.” Hunk adds accusingly, Lance grinning.

“Yeah, I got him my favorite book to read.”
“The Alchemist?”

“Yeah.”

“Huh, must really mean a lot to you then?” Hunk grins, shifting the shirts from one hand to the other. “Ready to go?”

“Yeah.”

After paying and heading to the food court, they find an empty table with food from Subway and sit in silence for the first few minutes. “By the way,” Lance starts around a mouthful of a steak and cheese sub. “I also asked him on a date to Rockefeller when they light the tree.”

Hunk proceeds to set his sub down, clasp his hands together and narrow his eyes at Lance. “So you asked this boy out on a real date and you thought mentioning the hand holding first, then a cheek kiss were more important than mentioning that? I don't think you're the real Lance, who are you and what have you done with my best friend?”

Lance rolls his eyes and leans back in his chair, shrugging with the smallest of smiles. “I needed a moment to make sure everything really did happen. Hunk this guy is unlike anybody else I've ever met. I don't want to mess anything up with him, holding his hand? That made my palms sweaty and my heart race and it just... it felt like the best thing in the world? It's dumb but I felt like if I started with 'I asked him out and he said yes' then everything else would be in a shadow and not as meaningful. You know?”

“Yeah,” Hunk nods, scratching his chin then smiling. “This guy, Keith, he's really turned you into a sap, you know that? I feel like I'm a side character in a romantic movie. What's next? First real kiss under a mistletoe? Or, or, or you take him to meet your parents while you guys are decorating the Christmas tree and your parents absolutely adore him.” Hunk grins, eyebrows waggling in Lance's direction.

“Oh god Hunk, don't. I like him but introducing him to my family? That's too big of a step too soon. You know how close my family and I are, people have to earn the right to meet my family.”

“Dude you introduced me to them like five minutes after we met. Literally five minutes after we met.”

“Yeah but we were six and you let me play with your Power Ranger action figure.” Lance recalls, picking his sub back up and taking a bite.

“True.” Hunk agrees, picking some lettuce out of his own sub and then side eyeing Lance. “But you do hope he earns the right to meet your folks, right?”

“I plea the fifth.”

“That's answer enough for me.” Hunk teases, Lance pouting at him. “Seriously though, I like seeing you happy again. Shay said she hasn't seen you that hyped up in a long time, you even slid down the stairs?”

“Yeah, I don't know why but I did.” Lance laughs, setting his sub down and instead picking up his cookies. “But to answer your other question, yeah. I do.”

“You do what?”

“Hunk, don't make me say it.”
“I'm making you say it, Lance.”

“Yes! I hope he earns the right to meet my parents, jesus.”

**o.O.o**

**Ice Kisser:** Hey
**Ice Princess:** Hey (: 
**Ice Kisser:** I'm really looking forward to our... date.
**Ice Princess:** Me too!!
**Ice Princess:** btw what's your favorite subway sandwich?
**Ice Kisser:** um? Idk probably steak and cheese? Why? Are you buying me subway?
**Ice Princess:** nah, bc I'm at subway right now and I was curious
**Ice Kisser:** Oh, okay, makes sense
**Ice Princess:** That plus I wanna know every little detail about you
**Ice Kisser:** Lance you can't just say stuff like that
**Ice Princess:** :(/ too late

Chapter End Notes

Now we're getting some details about Nyma oooooooh. I wonder why?? Also Keith and Lance are both head over heels for each other and they're so in love already that I'm sick of them. SMH I hate them.

Anyway!! This chapter was supposed to be up this past Sunday but my laptop charger broke last week so I had to put off writing this chapter until yesterday when I finally got my new charger. I'm still posting a new update this coming Sunday!

Also, are the text message parts confusing? Should I change them? Like have Keith's messages be all bold and Lance's be italics? Or are they easy enough to read with the "to" and "from" in them? Ummmmm I think that's all I had to say? Yeah pretty much. And also thank you for all the support and attention this story has gotten so far! I care and appreciate each and every one of you who reads this!
Chapter 4

Chapter Notes

No spell check we die like mne

See the end of the chapter for more notes

I am absolutely unmistakably positively smitten with you

Catching the ball in his hands, Lances rolls it around in his grip then tosses it back to his brother. Beto catches it and just as he's about to toss it back Lance's phone goes off.

“New boyfriend?” Beto grins, tossing the ball between is hands, Lance rolling his eyes before glancing at the screen, sour expression quickly taking over his features. “Not the new boyfriend then.”

“Nyma.”

“Gross.” Beto moans, followed by fake gagging noises and a roll of his eyes.

“Shut up,” Lance snickers, rolling off his bed and pointing at the door. “Out, now.”

“I'm going, I'm going.” Beto groans, sliding out of the desk chair and shuffling out, ball in hand, Lance shutting the door behind him. He stares at the picture of Nyma on is screen for a few more seconds, lyrics to his ringtone ringing loudly, girl you know there ain't nobody, nobody else that can make it so hot like me. ZERO. Take it to the top like me. ZERO. Girl you know there—

“Hello?”

“Lance?”

“Yeah.” Lance confirms, holding the phone tighter than necessary.

“I'm so glad to hear your voice.”

“Really?” Lance's voice is too excited, he knows it. So he clears is throat and tries again, “Why?”

“Believe it or not, you're important to me.” Nyma laughs. “I've missed seeing you daily, it's just not the same lately.”

“Nyma, did you need something?” Lance cuts in, wanting to get this call straight to the point and over with. Nyma hadn't spoken to him in a year, there was definitely no coincidence that she called the day an article about him exploded everywhere.

“I saw the news about some guy you're apparently dating?” she starts, Lance letting out a sigh. There it was. “I know the press likes to blow things up but those pictures they got of you two looked... really intimate. I was curious.”
What was he even meant to say? It was really none of her business, she'd lost any and all rights to
know about Lance and his life the minute she showed no sympathy for him. “Don't worry about it
Nyma, he's not some mystery guy, his name is Keith and I really like having him around.”

“So it's true, you gave up skating completely for him?”

Lance can't help but laugh at the question and just how ridiculous it was. “No, I just met him on
Saturday. If anything, he's the reason I'm skating again. Not competitively but at least skating.”

They're bot silent for a moment, Lance feeling almost choked by the awkward, he actually paces
around his room, cringing and swinging his free arm around wildly. “That's nice.” Nyma finally
speaks.

“Yeah.”

“You're back in New York now, right? Full time?” she asks.

“Yeah. I don't travel anymore, no need.” Lance says, teetering back and fourth on his feet and
tugging on his shirt. Why did talking to Nyma make him so nervous again?

“Would you mind if I visited?”

The question catches Lance completely off guard and he nearly topples over. Catching himself,
Lance frowns and shakes his head. “Yes, I do mind. Why do you feel the need to suddenly rush to
New York? I'm doing just fine, better finally, no thanks to you. I'd prefer it if you didn't show up.”
he's not really sure if he means to sound so harsh but he has no regrets for his tone.

“Oh please, Lance. I told you, I couldn't put my life on hold, I thought you of all people would
understand.” She snaps, Lance's hand trembling at Nyma's accusatory tone.

“What's that supposed to mean?”

“Never mind, Lance. Sorry for upsetting you, I just miss you, alright?”

“Whatever you say, Nyma.”

“I'll see you around, okay?”

“Mm.” Lance hums. “Bye,” he doesn't wait for a response before hanging up and storming to his
bed and plopping down, letting his face hit the pillow and let out an aggravated scream. It doesn't
take long for a knock to echo in is room and his moms head to peek into his room.

“Lance, are you okay?”

“Fine, mama.”

“Now there's your telltale.” she hums, walking in to his room and sitting on the edge of his bed.
“You only call me mama when you're upset or frustrated. So tell me, what's wrong.”

Lance frowns, turning over on his bed to look at his mom. “Nyma. She wants to visit.”

His mom seems to take a deep breath and think over her words. “She was always a good friend to
you, I still don't understand where she went wrong.” his mom reaches out and squeezes his arm
lightly. “You keep her away if that's what makes you comfortable, you understand me?”

“I do. Thank you ma.”
“Now come on, dinner is ready.”

o.O.o

Reaching up, Lance readjusts the headband holding back his bangs and then starts skating in figure eights again. He's not jumping right back into the heavy stuff, he's taking it easy considering he hadn't actually skated in a year. He was out of practice.

He pauses in the middle of the rink when he hears some commotion coming from the front doors. Squinting, he leans forward a bit and frowns when a familiar head of blonde hair walks in, sunglasses hiding her eyes, blue track suit on and gray bag thrown over her shoulder.

“Nyma!” Lance shouts, catching her attention. The smile that lights up across her face isn't returned as Lance skates to the wall and comes to a sloppy stop, hands gripping the wall. “What the hell?”

Nyma's sitting on the bleachers on the other side of the wall, pulling on her own skates. Still that same shade as her skin, nude skates. Lance had always hated them, they looked ridiculous to him.

“What? I'm here to skate.”

“Bullshit!” Lance spits out, leaning further over the rink's railing. “How'd you know I was here? How'd you get here so soon?”

Jumping to her feet, Nyma waves a hand in his direction and moves to the rink's entrance. “I got here last night when I called, I was going to give you a heads up but you were so uptight about it that I thought a surprise would be better. She explains. “And this is the rink you always trained at, so lucky guess.” she adds, getting onto the ice and twirling around a few times.

“Well I was just leaving.” Lance huffs, about to move past her only to have slender fingers wrap around his upper arm and pull him back to a stop. Lance might've been strong for his lean size but Nyma was almost equally as strong. Her grip extremely tight and still a surprise to Lance even after all the years working together.

“No you weren't. You're only leaving because I showed up.”

Lance yanks his arm from her grip and musters up the best frown he can. “You're point is?”

“Stop holding this grudge. Anger doesn't look good on you.” she laughs. “Now come on, skate with me just once more? An old routine, something simple. I know you haven't skated with anybody else or at all, so we can go easy.” She promises, reaching out and interlocking their hands.

“Nyma, no, come on, stop.” Lance groans but letting her lace their fingers together.

“Like I said, just once, really easy.”

She tugs at his hand, throwing Lance off balance. “Nyma! Chill—hey!” and suddenly Lance thinks he knows just how Keith feels on the ice. It's strange having somebody else leads you around, despite having better control than Keith, Lance still feels off. Nyma pulls him out to the center and spins the both of them around, not actually doing any routine. “Come on, let go now.”

“Not until you dance with me!” Nyma laughs, beginning to tap her skates against the ice to the beat of a nonexistent song. “Come on, you know this one. From when we were nine” her hand slips out from his and then her hips are swinging side to side, hands held out in front of her and shaking them in a 'jazz hands' kind of way. “Can you shake your hands up high?” she sings, hands rising up to shake in front of her face. “And can you take touch your nose? Can you shake your hands down
low and can you touch your toes?” she sings, one hand tapping her nose then lowering her hands. She lifts one leg up, kicking her leg from side to side and tapping her skates.

Lance wants to be mad still but he can't help but laugh watching Nyma do such a silly dance from when they were nine.

“Come on Lance, you know the lyrics, I know you do.” Nyma laughs, hands on her hips.

“Can you jump forward, forward. Can you jump back, back?” Lance finally sings, skating past Nyma and doing a small jump forward, gliding to a stop then skating backwards into a spin. “And can you spin like this?” Can you jump left, can you jump right?” his voice echoes back to him but he still keeps skating from side to side.

Nyma's giggling her head off and Lance skates to a stop in front of her, laughing. “Oh man, that was better to watch than I expected.” Nyma giggles, glancing up at Lance. “Do you remember that one song, 'why do fools fall in love'?”

“That was from our first routine, how could I forget?” Lance laughs, smile staying on his face when he hears Nyma's skates tapping against the ice.

“Oo-ah. Oo-ah,” Nyma hums, kicking off the ice into a backwards shimmy on the ice, left leg kicking back and forth. “Why do fools fall in love? Why do birds sing so gay?” she sings, hands rising above her with each word, spinning and doing small skips off the ice. “And lovers await the break of day, why do they fall in love?” the echo of Nyma's voice definitely adds affect to her singing and Lance can't help but start to skate with her.

“Why does the rain fall from up above? Why do fools fall in love? Why do they fall in lo-ove?” Lance sings back, skating backwards beside her, grin on both their face. Reaching out, Lance takes her hand in his and then they both lower into a death spiral. When they come back up, Nyma starts singing the next verse, Lance humming it with her.

“Love is a losing game. Love can be a shame.” she sings, theirs hands swinging between them, Nyma pulling a little too hard and sending the both of them stumbling towards the rink's wall. Lance hits it first and Nyma collides into his chest, both of them laughing but Nyma keeps singing. “I know of a fool you see,” their eyes meet and Lance knows the next line. He knows it and he--

“That fool is me...” --he doesn't want to hear it.

“Why do fools fall in love?” Lance whispers, not even to the tune of the song anymore. His heart's racing when he blames the skating they'd just done. His palms are sweaty but so is his forehead, his upper lip, his... his lips pressed against Nyma's.

*His lips pressed against Nyma's.*

“No!” he shouts, breaking the kiss, hands gripping her shoulders and shoving her back a little too roughly.

“Gah--!” Nyma cries out, stumbling over her own feet and falling back against the ice. “Lance what the hell?!?”

“I told you no! No, I didn't want you here, I didn't want to see you. Nyma no! I'm done with you, with competing, everything! I don't want any of it or you.” Lance snaps, hands gripping the wall tightly, knuckles going white.

“How could you not? Fame used to be all you wanted! You loved the attention, the press, everything and suddenly you don't?” Nyma sneers, climbing back to her feet and glaring at him.
"What happened to you?"

"Keith," he spits out, shoving past her and to the ice's exit. Stepping off the ice, he quickly sits and pulls his skates off, switching them out for his normal shoes.

"You're a fool!" Nyma screeches, leaning over the railing. "Giving me up for that idiot!"

"Shut up!" Lance screams, jumping to his feet, hands trembling, skates held in one hand. "Shut up, don't you dare talk about him like that! He's been there for me more in five days than you were in—in fourteen years!"

"He's using you for fame and recolonization. He only wants your money, he doesn't give a rats ass about you!" she accuses, stumbling off the ice, all grace she's ever held suddenly gone.

"No, he hates being recognized. He doesn't give a shit about who I am, he didn't even know until yesterday. He doesn't want me money, he's nothing like you." Lance growls, shoving his skates into his bag and swinging it over his shoulders. "Do us all a favor Nyma and just go back to wherever you train with Rolo."

"Don't do this! Don't be an idiot, that guy Keith is a loser and you deserve better!" she screams rushing forward and pulling on Lance's jacket desperately. "Don't do this!"

"Let go!" Lance screams, nearly shoving her back but settling gripping her wrist instead and pulling her hand away roughly. "Just let go, like you said I can't put my life on hold for you."

"Lance?"

"Allura don't—don't let her come back when I'm here. I don't need her around me." Lance begs, Allura frowning and pulling him into her arms.

"I'm so sorry, I should've realized. But Lance, listen. Keith showed up."

"He what?" Lance cries out, palm slapping against his forehead. "He saw, didn't he? He freaking—he saw! He saw her kiss me!"

By the way Allura's lance winces Lance gets all the answer he needs. "I tried to stop him and explain but he all but ran out of here. I'm sorry."

"It's—it's fine, fine. I'm fine, I'll find him. It's fine." Lance stutters, giving her a weak smile. "I need to go, thanks for everything." he calls over his shoulder, rushing out and heading towards the foster house, glad he'd walked Keith home twice now and knew the way. He'd find Keith there one way or another, he had to go home eventually.

Of course, his attention is caught when he notices a crowd of people snapping pictures and shouting questions. The moment he hears his name being shouted as a question he knows. He just knows and he has to rush over.

"o.O.o"

With Pidge and Matt back in town it's easier for Keith to slip out of the house unnoticed. There's more adults around to control the kids and even when they notice he's gone it'd be too late.

So that's how Keith finds himself walking up to the ice rink and wondering just when did it become necessary to see Lance every day?
“Hey Keith.”

“Hey.”

“You sure have been coming by often, haven't you?” Allura grins, fingers lacing together under her chin as she leans forward on the counter, lips curled in a knowing smirk.

Shrugging, Keith waves his hand around with a laugh. “I was just dropping by really quick, nothing major. Is Lance here?”

“Mhm, out on the ice but... you should know that Nyma is here too.” Allura sighs, Keith's eyebrows knitting together in confusion.

“His old partner?”

“Mhm.”

“Why?” Keith doesn't mean to sound so... petty.

“No clue, she just showed up and I had no reason to turn her away so she paid and went out to skate.” Allura frowns, giving Keith an apologetic frown.

“It's fine, I'm sure it's nothing.” Keith laughs, pointing to the large open doorway that led to the rink. “So it's fine if I just dip in real quick to say hi then head out?”

Allura nods and then Keith is shuffling past the seating area and walking along the ice rinks wall, hand sliding along the safety window. He can see Lance skating around, a blonde girl mimicking his moves and... and they're singing. *Can you shake your hands down low and can you touch your toes?* The lyrics sounded childish but their moves still looked complex to Keith. Nyma moved with ease, she almost looked as good as Lance did skating around in circles.

Leaning against the railing, Keith can't help but smile at the way Lance laughs while Nyma does that ridiculous dance. And then Lance starts singing and Keith nearly falls over. He's definitely better at skating but his voice was still soothing and pretty, the words flowing from him nicely. And it's ruined by the silly jumping Lance starts doing. Snickering, Keith rests his cheek against his palm and watches while they do something that looks vaguely like tap dancing. Just how they moved with such confidence would always surprise Keith.

When Lance finishes his little dance Keith contemplates calling out to him but stops when he notices Nyma saying something. He could wait until they had their fun.

He'd be lying if he said he wasn't a little jealous when they started skating again. The small skips they did, the hand motions, their voices weaving together perfectly. It was years of working together and it showed and Keith almost felt pathetic feeling jealous over something like this.

Somehow, Keith convinced himself that Nyma was nothing to worry about. She had dropped Lance just days after his accident, there was no way Lance would have feelings for her other than resentment at this point, right? After all Lance had asked him out, had walked him home, had given him a cute contact name, had skated with him when he didn't skate with others. Lance had called him his inspiration, had suggested his favorite book to him. There was something there between them, right?

*Why do fools fall in love? Why do they fall in lo-o-ve?*

Lance's voice filled Keith's ears and even though the words weren't directed at him, Keith's cheeks
flushed red. Lance sounded full of emotion of sincerity and he genuinely sounded in love. And Keith wanted—hoped—he was the reason for that.

*Love is a losing game. Love can be a shame.*

That's when Keith's blood ran cold and he watched Nyma collide into Lance and pin him between herself and the wall. Maybe it was stupid, silly, petty but Keith's vision went temporarily fuzzy and he wanted to run out and interrupt whatever this was--

*I know of a fool you see, that fool is me...*

And the moment they kissed Keith felt a pang in his chest. He had seen Lance's lips move but he hadn't heard the words that came from him. Stumbling away from the railing, Keith ran a hand through his hair and quickly turned on his heels and racing out past the front counter where Allura quickly turned her attention to him.

“Keith? Keith what happened?”

“I'm an idiot, that's what!” Keith snapped, gripping the main doors handle tightly and freezing. “Tell Lance I hope he's happy with Nyma.”

“What?” Allura questioned loudly, jumping up and over the counter and to Keith's side. “What happened?”

“Nothing. Don't worry about it, they're just locking lips and I'm leaving.” Keith growls, shoving the door open and rushing out.

“Keith! Keith wait, I'm sure that's not what it looks like—Keith!”

He's practically running down the street and then through central park, bottom lip trembling but eyes refusing to let tears escape. He's more angry than upset, at least that's what he tells himself. He's not angry at Lance, he's angry at himself for being stupid. *So stupid.* How could he have been so naive and fallen for some stranger in... in less than a week?

Slowing down, Keith rubs at his eyes furiously and once his vision clears, he notices the large crowd of ice skaters. There were plenty of couples on the ice or adults holding hands with kids to keep them from falling. He hated it. All of it.

“Are you the mystery guy?”

Startling at the sudden voice, Keith jumps back a bit but quickly focuses his attention on the person standing beside him. “What?”

“Lance's mystery guy, is that you? You've got the same hair as that guy.”

“Oh. I'm the guy in the article yeah.” Keith shrugs. “But I'm not his mystery guy, we're not even friends.” Keith grumbles, eyes turning back to the skaters.

“Really?” the lady questions, “Because from those pictures in the article it sure looks like you guys are in love.”

He can feel the blush creeping up his neck but he Keith tries his best to keep his look stern. “Pictures can lie. They just caught us at the right times to make their article look good. Don't believe everything you see on the internet.”
“It's the mystery guy.” a voice whispers, catching Keith's attention, spinning around just in time to be blinded by a flash of light.

“What the--?” Keith says, rubbing at his eyes in confusion before a series of clicks follow and then people are crowding him. A few ask questions about Lance or what his name was but most of the crowd was asking what was happening. Most were confused and Keith was overwhelmed. “I—I gotta go.” he stammered out, trying to shove past people to no avail.

*What's it like to be dating Lance McClain?*

*Wait who is this guy?*

*What's your name mystery man?*

*What's going on over here?*

“Keith!”

“Stop!” Keith cries out, stumbling back a few steps right into somebody's chest. “Stop!” the series of clicks and flashes don't stop but the questions do and Keith is vaguely aware of two hands gripping his arms and holding him against their chest.

“Leave him alone.”

Lance.

“It's Lance! Lance—Who is he? Did you drop Nyma for him? Is he a new skating partner? Why didn't you go back to Nyma?”

“Enough!” Lance shouts over everybody, Keith turning to look at him. Lance is red in the face and anger doesn't suit his features Keith decides. “I didn't go back because I don't trust my old partner Nyma. I'm never skating with her again though and I don't skate with others except Keith. This guy, right here. And I'd very much appreciate it if the world left him alone. So back off.” Lance growls, leading Keith away from the stunned group. “Keith? Hey, are you okay?”

“Yeah.” he replies numbly. He stands in Lance's embrace for all of five seconds before shoving away from him and starting to walk away. He didn't need the pity.

“Keith! We need to talk about what you saw.” Lance calls out, running up beside him.

“What? You were doing some lovey dovey routine with Nyma and then kissed her, what's there to talk about? It's clear cut.” Keith seethes, hands balled up in fists and heart racing.

“No, it's not clear cut! She kissed me and I shoved her away. Did you not see that part? Did you hear the part where I told her off? Where I told her I would gladly give everything up for you. Keith! Listen to me!” Lance's voice cracks at Keith's name and when he gets a grip on Keith's coat it's weak. “Please, just listen.”

Coming to a stop, Keith takes a deep breath and turns to face Lance. “We're vastly different Lance, it's stupid we're not compatible. You're built for the spotlight and... and I get overwhelmed when people take a picture of me. Nyma—she's the kind of person you're made for.”

Lance's eyes shut and it looks like he's about to cry but instead he barks out a laugh, startling Keith. He's clutching his sides with one hand, the other still pinching the sleeve of Keith's jacket. “P-please!” Lance chokes out between laughs. “Nyma? Please, as if, Keith—*holy cow Keith.*” Keith's
vision goes blurry for a second at the way Lance is laughing at him.

“Lance I don't apprec--”

“No, please, just listen.” Lance giggles, standing up straight and staring Keith dead in the eyes. “Just listen, yeah?” the eye contact leaves Keith silent, but he nods. Focused on the way Lance's eyes sparkle when he tilts his head up just right. “Nyma? She's a brat, she's selfish, she's entitled, she dropped me for a guy named Rolo because she'd be making more money. My mom liked her at first but now she downright hates her. Nyma used to be cool until we got a contract for the Olympics and suddenly she thought the world owed her everything. I don't want to be with somebody like that. Do you know why?”

“No.”

“Because I want to be with somebody like you. Caring, selfless, kind, beautiful inside and out. Keith you've given me more support in—in five days than Nyma has in the fourteen years I've known her. I was in a depressed pity party, hating myself for the past year and then I met you and suddenly.... suddenly it was like I was seeing for the first time.” Lance laughs, lips curling up into a lopsided grin.

“That's.... Lance that was cheesy.” Keith laughs, his cheeks still filled with a blush though.

“It's true, you're the kind of person I'd want to bring home to my family. Please, just, Nyma is manipulative. She does stuff like that all the time, I wouldn't put it past her if she caught a glimpse of you and kissed me just to piss you off. She's always gotten in the way of anybody who cared for me. Allura is the only one who's ever been able to put Nyma in her place.” Lance explains, his fingers finally letting go of Keith's jacket. “Please?”

“Please what?”

“Still go on that date with me?”

Keith stares at Lance for longer than necessary but he nods. Lance's face lighting up right away and Keith snickering when Lance pulls him into a hug.

“Come on, I'll walk you home again.” Lance grins, letting his arm rest around Keith's shoulders still. “We're half way there anyway.”

“Half way home or half way to a decent relationship?” Keith jokes, walking beside Lance and practically melting into his hold. He wants to reach up and interlock their hands but he finds the gesture to be a little too cheesy.

“Both.” Lance finally replies. “But we're gonna get there all the way.”

“I don't think you needed the there in that sentence.” Keith notes, Lance's eyebrows furrowing in confusion.

“Why not?”

“Because saying 'but we're gonna get all the way' makes more sense?” Keith replies.

Lance thinks it over for a minute then shrugs wildly. “I guess, whatever you say.”

The walk home isn't as long as usual considering they were already in the park but it's enough for Keith. For now. They stand outside of the house for a few minutes, talking about their upcoming
date. Where they would meet, what time, how excited they were.

“They're in the window again.” Lance laughs once they settle on all the details. Keith peeks over his shoulder and notices the ruffling of the curtain and several eyes and fingers peeking through the fabric.

“Huh.”

“Guess your threat from last time fell on deaf ears?”

“Actually, I forgot to tell them not to do that last time.” Keith admits, turning back to Lance who's eyes are still focused on the window.

“They're making kissy faces again.” Lance mumbles. “Can I?”

Keith turns to glance at the window then back to Lance with a confused look. “Can you what?”

Lance leans forward, hands gripping the staircase railing on either side of Keith, their faces just inches apart. “Kiss you?”

Keith is positive his mind short circuits for a minute there. He stares at Lance expressionless. “I—what? Wait—you—huh?”

Lance bursts into a fit of giggles and then stands up straight again. “Not before the first date, I get it. No worries, I'll get my chance and it's gonna be perfect, alright?”

“I didn't mean—alright. Yeah.” Keith laughs, hand reaching up to cover his mouth and laughter. “You fried my brain for a second there.”

“I'm glad I have that effect on you, you have the same one on me.” Lance says.

“Well you hide it well then.” Keith notes back, glancing to the door. “I should head inside, no more surprise visits at the ice rink, promise.”

“I don't mind.” Lance waves it off. “I'll see you around,” he adds before leaning forward and kissing Keith's cheek in goodbye.

Once Lance is gone, Keith rushes inside, racing into the living room where most of the kids are still huddled around the window. “You guys are so gonna get it.” Keith growls with laughter, the kids all shrieking in unison and then scattering. Keith is quick to race after the younger ones, he catches Grace, a fit of giggles and shrieks filling the air until somebody shoves Keith and Grace slips from his grip.

“You're an idiot!” it's Pidge.

“Nice to see you too.”

“No, hear me out. He wanted to kiss you and you just stood there!” Pidge's hands are waving around wildly before signaling stressfully at the doorway. “I'm telling Shiro!”

“Stop!” Keith cries out, reaching out for Pidge but falling short as she bolts down the hall and up the stairs. Keith races after her, chasing her up to the top floor. “Pidge! I swear—Pidge!”

“Shiro! Shiro!” She calls out down the hall once they're on the fourth floor. “Shiro, Keith almost kiss—ack!—mmph!” her words are muffled by a screech first when Keith grabs a fistful of her shirt and pulls her back, then by Keith's palm.
“No!"

“What's... going on?” Shiro questions, stepping out into the hall to see Pidge on her knees, Keith practically wrapped around her from behind, hand pressed firmly around her mouth and both of Pidge's hands gripping his wrist.

“Murder.” Keith deadpans. “She's bein—" Pidge!" Keith screeches, hand flying away from her face. “She licked me!”

“Keith kissed Lance! Almost—at least—er—yeah!” Pidge cries out quickly, Shiro's face quickly twisting into one of pain.

“Pidge!”

“Guys...”

“Shiro help!” Pidge scrambles to her feet and all but launches herself into Shiro's arms.

“I'm gonna kill you!” Keith shouts, slamming into both Pidge and Shiro, sending all three to the floor in a pile of limbs.

“What's going on out here?” Matt calls out from down the hall, quickly appearing in the doorway and snickering at the sight of Keith and Pidge pulling each others hair while sprawled over a motionless Shiro.

“Keith! Let go!”

“You're dead!”

“Typical, are you sure you guys aren't related? You sure act like stereotypical siblings.” Matt cackles, leaning against the door frame. “Did you guys kill Shiro?”

“I hope!” they screech in unison.


“Ma?” Lance's voice is soft and he's half hidden behind the door as he peeks into his moms room.

“Hm?” she hums, looking away from the paperwork on her desk. “Lance, come in, what's wrong?” she pulls her glasses off and turns in her seat to look at her son and wave him in.

“I saw Nyma today.” Lance starts, shuffling into the room and standing by her desk chair. “She showed up at the arena while I was training.”

“Lance, are you alright? We can get a restraining order if we need to.”

“No, no, ma I don't want this getting too much attention. I just... I hated it? Seeing her reminded me of that day of... of the past year. I hated seeing her but she still gets under my skin, she still gets to me.” Lance whispers, eyes focused on his hands as he cracks his knuckles. “I hate her.”

“Mijo, what she did... was unforgivable. I don't blame you for having such foul feelings towards her, like I said we can get a restraining order against her. But if you don't want to I'd suggest maybe going to a different arena to skate until she leaves town.”

“I'm not skating anywhere except Allura's place,” Lance shakes his head. “I just wanted to talk about it, I feel so frustrated! Why would she do that?” Lance cries out, stomping his leg to
exaggerate his point. “Why?” his voice cracks and his mom is quickly on her feet. She takes both of his hands into her own and the good five inches Lance has on her puts her in the perfect position to look straight up at Lance's lowered head.

“Listen to me, mas vale una verdad que duela, que una mentira que ilusione, Nyma? She was your illusion, this is your truth. This is who she is and it's better to feel temporary pain than to live with her lie. Do you understand me?”

Lance nods his head slowly, bottom lip trembling and his grip on his mother's hands tightening. “I just hate it...”

“I know, but you have your family, you have your friends and you have yourself. Nyma is just but one person who came and took her place in your heart for granted. Just as she said, don't let her hold you back in life.” Maria whispers, standing on her toes to place a kiss on Lance's cheek. “Now come on, no more tears, my beautiful boy is too good for sad tears.”

“Thanks ma,” Lance laughs, letting one hand slip out of Maria's to rub the tears from his eyes. “I wanted to tell you about somebody too. Somebody I met recently.”

“Oh?” she questions with a knowing smirk almost identical to Lance's.

“His name is Keith and he's unlike anybody I've ever met. He makes my heart race and I want to know every little detail about him. Every little useless thing about him and everything that matters. I want to know what he puts on his subway sandwich, I want to know what character he chooses on Mario Kart and I want to know if he drools in his sleep. I want to know why he hides his smile, what makes him laugh and what makes him mad. I want to know what calms him down and... and I wanna know what kissing him feels like.” Lance whispers, cheeks practically on fire and his eyes flickering between his moms face and the floor.

“It sounds like you sure are smitten with this boy,” Maria grins, reaching up and patting Lance's cheek. “Good. Show him you care, mijo. Show him you want to learn everything about him and hold onto him tightly. God knows you deserve some happiness in your life.”

Lance gives her a cheeky smile and presses his cheek affectionately against her palm. “He deserves some happiness in life too.”

"You both do and if you can find that in each other then the world is finally cutting you both some slack. Right?” she smiles warmly. "Now come on, dinner isn't going to make itself, is it?"

o.O.o

Ice Princess: Goodnight c:
Ice Kisser: It's?? Only eight?
Ice Princess: Yeah but I'm getting up at six to go out of town with my little brothers and sister to get a Christmas tree since my parents don't have time, not with running the hotel and all that
Ice Kisser: Oh well I guess that's pretty early. And your parents own a hotel?
Ice Princess: Yea lmao but ok yea I'm going to bed, I'll see you around ok?
Ice Kisser: Yeah, yeah definitely. Goodnight
Ice Princess: Goodnight ;*
Ice Kisser: Wait what does that mean?
Ice Kisser: that**
Ice Princess: It's a kissy face you dweeb. Now let me rest
Ice Kisser: Oh.
Ice Kisser: Goodnight ;* 

Chapter End Notes

If you didn't die at Keith's last text then?? Who even are you?

And yes, I did start a new thing where I put some sappy quote at the beginning of the chapters. I'm going back and adding quotes to the other chapters too if you want to go back and check those soon!

Lmao alright, sorry this update is late! Whoops, rip. I got held up on writing this. ALSO I got my wacom pen finally!!! So hopefully I can start drawing fanart for my fics soon!!!

Translation!! mas vale una verdad que duela, que una mentira que ilusione: A painful truth is better than a lie that makes you happy.
Chapter 5

Chapter Notes

TW: Towards the end Keith explains his parents death. It's nothing graphic but the subject of how they died might be triggering. In short: his parents borrowed money from a loan shark and being unable to pay it they were murdered.

I also added times to the texts and fun fact: all the dates actually correspond to 2014! November 26 was a Wednesday and so on.

Also!!!! Holy heck we're half way done with this fic already?? Omg 5/10 chapters omg

See the end of the chapter for more notes

You are my new favorite feeling

Wednesday November 26

(7:02 am) Ice Princess: update: we overslept lmao
(7:45 am) Ice Princess: we're leaving just now jfc, Beto has been up since 6 and he just laid in bed instead of getting ready or even waking us up, that dick wad
(8:33 am) Ice Princess: what time do you get up? We're finally here though, I'll send you pictures of our tree when we pick one out
(8:48 am) Ice Princess: that took longer than expected but look! Look at this tree its like 2 feet taller than me!!
(8:48 am) Ice Princess: (Picture)
(8:49 am) Ice Princess: anyway, we're heading back now, glad we came on their first day open and early af, it's already getting crowded with cars and all the good ones are gonna be taken soon
(9:03 am) Ice Kisser: I get up around 9 most days. Shiro is the one who gets up at 6 on the dot... the butt crack of the day and that tree is huge, is that gonna fit inside your house??
(9: 10 am) Ice Princess: Yeah ill fit. Our roof is really high DUCK BALLS be to!
(9:11 am) Ice Kisser: um?
(9:15 am) Ice Princess: I had to pull over bc I was laughing too much. I was doing the voice to text and my brother Beto screamed out dick balls and siri sent that lmao
(9:17 am) Ice Kisser: amazing

(7:05 pm) Ice Princess: do you guys get a Christmas tree?
(7:09 pm) Ice Kisser: yeah but not until December you heathen, it's not even thanksgiving yet
(7:12 pm) Ice Princess: cool guy emoji
(7:14 pm) Ice Kisser: did you just.... did you type that instead of using the emoji? LSANCE IT'S RIGHT THERE THE EMOJI IS RIGHT THERE. YOU HAVE AN IPHONE I KNOW YOU HAVE THE EMOJI
(7:16 pm) Ice Princess: cool
Thursday November 27

(9:05 am) Ice Kisser: good morning and happy thanksgiving
(9:07 am) Ice Princess: Good morning!! Happy Thanksgiving!!! Did you just get up?
(9:08 am) Ice Kisser: No I've been up since 8, Mrs. Holt likes to have us all help her with food prep. I was just waiting until 9 incase you were sleeping in
(9:12 am) Ice Princess: I've been up since 7:30 ;) mom likes to have us all help with food prep too. Especially since all of our relatives came to town this year.
(9:14 am) Ice Kisser: is that a lot of people?
(9:16 am) Ice Princess: boy you have no idea. My mom has 3 brothers and a sister and my dad has 3 sisters and a brother and for the first time in like 7 years EVERYBODY IS COMING we have enough food to feed 3 armies in my kitchen right now and it'll be a mess tomorrow morning
(9:19 am) Ice Kisser: wow that's... a lot of people and they all have kids too?
(9:22 am) Ice Princess: well not all of them but those that do have kids..... have a lot. Like my parents. I have 5 siblings and then my older sister has 2 kids already so yea holidays are crazy and all my cousins and it just gets hectic
(9:23 am) Ice Princess: wanna meet them someday?
(9:32 am) Ice Kisser: sorry no, Grace spilled cherries everywhere. I'd love to meet your family someday

Friday November 28

(12:34 am) Ice Kisser: LM FA O PIDGE JUST BODY SLAMMED A SOCCER MOM
(12:37 am) Ice Princess: HOLY FUCK IS THE MOM OKAY? /IS PIDGE OKAY??/
(12:42 am) Ice Kisser: it was over this crazy advanced telescope that's 80% off and Pidge wasn't about to pass it up, it was the last one. She got it and the soccer mom looked ready to cry
(12:43 am) Ice Princess: can pidge be my body guard?
(12:44 am) Ice Kisser: why would you need a body guard?
(12:45 am) Ice Kisser: wait I forgto you were famous
(12:45 am) Ice Kisser: forgot**
(12:47 am) Ice Princess: that's the nicest thing anybody has ever said to me. I'd like to thank the turkey gods for giving me this small moment of normalcy in my life

Saturday November 29

(2:00 pm) Ice Princess: so my little brother Chicharo is a really shy dude, like EXTREMELY shy but anyway, I think he thought he was home alone and I heard him singing and Keith......... OH MY GOF KEITH he has the singing voice of an angel
(2:10 pm) Ice Kisser: you evesdropped on your little brother?
(2:12 pm) Ice Princess: don't say it like that
(2:12 pm) Ice Princess: but yes
(2:13 pm) Ice Kisser: I'm telling on you
(2:14 pm) Ice Princess: you're uninvited to my house

o.O.o

Sunday November 30

(8:02 pm) Ice Kisser: look at this bath bomb Shiro bought me, my water is purple and blue and pink and sparkly and I feel like i'm taking a bath in space
(8:02 pm) Ice Kisser: (Picture)
(8:09 pm) Ice Princess: hoLY SHIT THAT LOOKS BOMB AF
(8:10 pm) Ice Kisser: I can't believe you just made a filthy pun out of my bath bomb
(8:13 pm) Ice Princess: that was on accident but thank you for appreciating it
(8:14 pm) Ice Kisser: bye i'd like to enjoy my bathbomb now
(8:15 pm) Ice Princess: without me :( 
(8:17 pm) Ice Kisser: GOOD BYE LANCE
(8:17 pm) Ice Princess: lMAO WORTH IT BYE ;*

o.O.o

Monday December 1

(10:11 am) Ice Kisser: we got our tree
(10:12 am) Ice Kisser: (Picture)
(10:12 am) Ice Kisser: ft Pidge and me
(10:15 am) Ice Princess: that's like not even a normal sized tree. You can't honestly tell me you guys are okay with a tree that's the same height as you??
(10:19 am) Ice Kisser: oh no, we have to settle for something short bc last time we got a tree that was taller than 6ft shiro knocked it over
(10:22 am) Ice Princess: Shiro? Not one fo the kids?
(10:22 am) Ice Princess: of*
(10:23 am) Ice Kisser: Shiro. Shiro that big fool thought he could stand on like a small stool and jump and put the star on but he miscalculated and took the tree down with him
(10:25 am) Ice Princess: omfg

o.O.o

Tuesday December 2

(2:59 pm) Ice Princess: on my way to your place
(3:03 pm) Ice Kisser: cool, I'm excited
(3:04 pm) Ice Princess: me too but nervous too, it's our first official date
(3:06 pm) Ice Kisser: you're going to make me nervous, stop that
(3:09 pm) Ice Princess: don't be, and tell the kids to stay up late they're totally gonna get that kissy face tonight
(3:14 pm) Ice Kisser: la n ce

o.O.o

They get to the Rockefeller Center around four thirty, hand in hand and both smiling at nothing in
particular.

“I'm still hung up on the fact that Shiro took out the Christmas tree that one time instead of one of the kids.” Lance laughs, maneuvering them around a cluster of people.

“He might sound like a cool guy but he's like a ten year old at heart.” Keith chuckles, looking around the plaza at the wired snowmen and angels and trees covered in lights.

“Hey look, doughnuts.” Lance grins, pulling Keith to a stop at a vendor. “Hey one glazed doughnut and what kind do you want Keith?”

“Chocolate.”

The man nods and hands over the doughnuts to each of them. “Would you like anything to drink with that? Hot chocolate?”

Lance glances at Keith and both nod. “Yeah, two medium cups is good.” their hands slip apart and each grabs a cup when the man hands them over. Lance pays and Keith lifts his cup to his lips to hide the smile that forms at the simple gesture. It takes them a total of seven minutes to find a low wall to sit on and enjoy their food. Cups are set between them and Lance is the one that reaches out and intertwines their free hands again.

Halfway through his doughnut, Lance glances over at Keith and immediately starts giggling. Keith raises a confused eyebrow at it. “What?”

“Oh you have some...” Lance smiles and taps his lips, Keith immediately going wide eyed and rubbing the back of his hand across his mouth. “It was cute though, I promise.”

“Hm.” Keith laughs, setting his doughnut down in favor of his hot chocolate. “What time do they light the tree?”

“Ready to leave?” Lance teases, “Around seven? We don't have to stay too late after though if you want.” Lance adds, finishing off his glazed doughnut.

“I was just asking.” Keith shrugs, setting his cup down.

The next few hours are spent walking around and taking pictures with the several props around the plaza and Lance insisting he get pretty pictures of the sky changing colors. Lance drapes himself over Keith's shoulders for several pictures. Lance's favorite picture by far is the one where he has one arm draped over Keith's shoulders, his head resting on his other shoulder and other arm extended. And the surprised look Keith has when Lance presses a kiss to his cheek.

“Lance, I look like I was shocked.” Keith snorts, still reaching for Lance's cellphone in a fruitless attempt.

“I love it though.” Lance insists, holding his phone as far as he can. Keith frowns but gives up in the struggle and instead just stands toe to toe with Lance, their two inch height difference noticeable from that close up. “Hey do you hear that?”

“The Christmas music?”

“Don't care about the presents,” Lance begins to sing, sliding his phone into his back pocket and wrapping his arms around Keith. “Make my wish come truuue, all I want for Christmas is you, yeah.”
“Lance,” Keith laughs, looking down and covering his face with both hands.

“I just want you for my own, more than you could ever know. Make my wish come true. All I want for Christmas is you, yeah.” Lance starts swaying the both of them from side to side, Keith laughing behind his hands.

Soon after the count down for the tree lighting starts and Lance's heart does a small dance when Keith lays his head on his shoulder. Hands still interlocked, Lance genuinely feels happy about where he is in life.

The moment the tree lights up Lance can hear Keith let out a small gasp and he stores that away for reference. Keith gasped when something surprised him. “It's beautiful.” Keith mumbles and Lance responds without thinking.

“Yeah, you are.”

Keith lifts his head and their eyes meet, neither moving for a few seconds before Keith starts laughing first and Lance's cheeks start to burn. “That was the cheesiest, most cliché thing you could've said.” Keith snorts, again, his face tilted down and Lance is still curious as to why he hides his laugh.

And again, Lance reflexively cups Keith's face with his free hand and lifts his head up. The difference now from the first time he did that? For starters, they weren't on ice and Keith wasn't clutching onto him for dear life. Also, this time he didn't pull his hand away and look everywhere but Keith in embarrassment.

“I know you said you don't kiss before the first date but what about during?”

Keith seems surprised by the question and Lance holds back the urge to frown. “No,” Keith shakes his head finally, Lance about to pull away only to have Keith reach a hand up into his hair and pull him closer, pressing their lips together. The kiss is gentle and quick. “But this is an exception.”

Lance almost feels dizzy, the kiss was hardly three seconds but it was the better than he could've imagined. Heart thudding, Lance grins and presses his forehead to Keith's. “I'm glad.”

An hour after the tree is lit and several performances later, Lance lets out a heavy sigh and pulls Keith into his arms, resting his chin on Keith's shoulder. “Wanna go to my house for some hot chocolate?”

Keith frowns at the question. “We had some when we got here and there's a vendor literally like right over there,” Keith points out, finger aimed at a stand not too far. Lance visibly pouts at this and glares at Keith. “Oh, oh right yeah. Actually going over and for some hot chocolate sounds good.” Keith nods, Lance perking up right away.

“Cool, come on.”

o.O.o

The walk to Lance's house isn't really a walk. It's a ten minute walk to the metro stop, a thirty-eight minute ride and a four minute ride to a ridiculously rich neighborhood. Lance notices the way Keith frowns at the large townhouses and he wants to laugh a little.

“You okay?”

“Yeah just... I forgot you were some rich and famous kid.” Keith laughs, Lance squeezing his
“Don’t worry, my family isn’t the rich and snobbish kind. They’re all nice and down to earth people, except Yahira, she can be a brat. Stay away from her.” Lance jokes, pausing at a large red brick house. “This one.”

Once they’re inside Keith notices the whole first floor is just a long hallway with a mailbox, an elevator at the end and one set of glass doors that leads to a staircase. Lance walks right past it to the elevator and once they’re inside, he sticks a key into the panel and hits the fifth floor button.

“Fifth floor?”

“I want to show you the roof before we actually go inside.” Lance explains, pulling the safety door open once the metal doors slide open. “It’s my favorite place.”

“Why?” Keith questions but one look around the rooftop answers his question. Leading out of the elevator is a blue path, lights strung up on seven foot pools all along the path. Stepping out of the elevator, there are potted plants all through the rooftop, the only visible flooring being the blue path.

“Come on,” Lance smiles, leading Keith down the path. It reaches to the edge of the building then splits off to the left and right. Lance takes them down the right and a large tan patio tent is set up. The netting is pulled back along the path and inside of it is a round table with three chairs, tiki torches set up at all four corners. “I used to come up here at night to just stargaze.”

“It’s like a mini park up here.”

“Yeah, it was my brother Milo’s idea.” Lance nods, pointing across the rooftop. “That other corner over there has those long beach chairs and a pool table. All the plants up here were grown by us, it took forever.”

Keith nods, staring around the rooftop in awe. “It’s pretty, I see why you like it up here.”

“Yeah. Come on, lets go downstairs now.” they ride down to the second floor and the second the doors open Christmas music floods their ears. The scent of ginger and cinnamon fills the air and two people can be heard bickering.

“Mom! Tell him I had it first!” there’s a pause, then a shriek from the girl and a cackling from a boy.

“Want it now Yaha?”

“You’re disgusting!”

“Both of you basta!” an older female voice snaps, the boy and girl falling silent. “Besides, it was Chicharo’s turn.”

Lance leads Keith down a long hall framed with several different pictures of a large family and some of the individual kids. They look like school pictures but there’s also some group shots of a group of kids together, all in matching outfits. There are several pictures of Lance in ice skating uniforms with trophies and medals, his mom by his side. At the end of the hall, Lance points to the door on the left and inside is a large living room. There’s a giant Christmas tree in the far corner, adorned with colorful ornaments and red roses, a dazzling bright gold star at the top.

“Mom I hope it’s cool I brought Keith over?” several heads turn to look at them and Keith wants to
“Of course!” an older woman chirps, immediately leaving the couch and moving to greet the two of them. “I'm Maria, Lance's mom.” she smiles warmly, hand extended in greeting. Keith takes it and notes the woman's grip is firm.

“You're Lance's new boyfriend right?” a boy that looks strikingly similar to Lance questions.

“Um—we?” Keith stutters, glancing at Lance for help.

“We haven't had that talk yet.” Lance finishes with a laugh. Next a girl pops up behind Maria and seems to study Keith up and down.

“I'm Yaha and that kid that looks like Lance is Beto,” the girl speaks up, eyes lingering on Keith and Lance's interlocked hands. “You sure you wanna date my brother? He's a handful, or, more like an armful to handle.”

“Yahira!” Lance snaps, the girl sticking her tongue out at him and Keith snickering. “Where's Chich?”

“Here.” a small voice pipes in, face half hidden by the couch.

“He's shy.” Lance whispers, slipping his hand out of Keith's and moving to the couch to talk to the almost hidden little boy.

“Is it true that Lance skated with you? Like hand in hand and did a routine?” Yahira questions, Keith clearing his throat and pressing his lips into a thin line.

“Kind of. I'm not much of a skater myself so he kind of just held my hands and dragged me around on the ice if that counts.”

Yahira and Beto glance at each other, seemingly having a conversation via facial expressions, Maria covering a laugh behind her hand. Finally, the two kids nods and glance at Keith simultaneously.

“Definitely counts.” Yahira starts.

“Lance has never skated with anybody except Nyma and us. What'd you do to get him to do that?” Beto finishes, Keith shrugging slowly with a nervous laugh.

“He kissed the ice,” Lance announces from across the room. “You guys aren't good at whispering you know, I could hear you loud and clear.” Lance smirks, leaning against the couch, arms crossed over his chest, Chicharo now peeking out over the couch more than before. “Also you guys started the gingerbread house without me?”

“You're the one who decided to go on a date when you *know* we always do it on the second!” Yahira snaps, Lance frowning at the quick reply.

“Yeah but we should've changed it, especially since dad had that big dinner to host tonight too. It's hardly fair that I'm being punished for having a social and love life.” Lance pouts.

“Up until Saturday you were always home,” Beto points out, Lance sputtering at the revelation. “How were we supposed to know you’d get a boyfriend that fast?” both Lance and Keith blush several shades of red at the last comment.
“Keith, honey, are you hungry? Did Lance buy you anything to eat while you were out?” Maria questions, turning her attention away from the bickering boys.

“Oh, yes ma'am. We had some... um actually no? We had doughnuts but that was it.” Keith smiles with a shrug, the woman immediately frowning.

“Well for starters, you can call me Maria or Mama. And secondly, I know I've taught that boy better than to go so long without eating. Come on, I can reheat some food for you.” she offers, turning Keith on his heels and resting a hand on his back while leading him back out into the hall.

“T-thank you but it's fine. I'm fine.” Keith assures her, following her nonetheless.

“Nonsense,” she shakes her head, walking down the hall past a few doors and then into a large kitchen. The kitchen is large, marble counter tops, steel appliances, a bar against the far corner, a small fireplace against another wall. The place looks more expensive than Keith's entire life.

“You're not a picky eater are you?”

“No ma'am— Maria. No.” Keith shakes his head, standing gingerly by the island table while Maria moved to rummage through the fridge.

“Alright, have you ever heard of Mole?” the woman questions, peeking out from behind the fridge door.

“Can't say that I have, no.”

The woman smiles at the reply and pulls a pot out from the fridge followed by two plastic dishes with syringe wrap on them. “Mole is a sauce I like to make. It goes on chicken and I serve it with corn rice and potato wedges.” she explains, moving around the kitchen and bringing two large round dishes to the counter top.

“What's in it?” Keith questions, peeking into the pot when she pulls the lid off to reveal several drumsticks covered in a thick brown sauce.

“Do you really want to know?” Keith nods and the woman smiles, already dropping a drumstick onto each plate and pouring extra sauce onto each plate. “Several ingredients. Tortillas, bread roll, chocolate, sugar, cinnamon, onions, tomatoes, tomatillos, thyme, raisins, chicken broth and a few other spices.” Keith's eyes go wide at the mention of chocolate being it.

“That sounds...”

“Disgusting?” Keith smiles cheekily and nods at that. “It sounds disgusting but the combination is good. Give it a try, alright?” putting the lid back on, she drops several spoonfuls of potato wedges and rice onto each plate and then moves to the microwave, setting one plate in first.

Keith watches her put the pot and plastic dishes back into the fridge and then go to switch the other plate into the fridge. “Your kitchen is beautiful.” Keith announces, Maria giggling at the comment.

“Thank you, my husband, Hector, he really has an eye for interior design. That's probably one of the reasons his hotel is so successful.” once the microwave beeps and the last plate is pulled out, Maria hands him a fork and sets the plate in front of him. “Go on, taste it before I start eating.”

Keith grabs the bone end of his drumstick and uses his spoon to pull off a strip of chicken covered in the brown sauce. Pushing it onto his spoon, he gingerly stuffs it into his mouth and is surprised by the taste. It's unlike anything he's had, it's not overly sweet like he'd been expecting and he can taste different spices mixed with the chicken. “It's delicious.” he announces once he swallows it.
“I thought so.” Maria grins, beginning to eat her own food. “So tell me, how did the date go today?”

Keith chokes on a spoonful of rice at the question and Maria laughs, patting his back before moving away and coming back with two glasses full of milk. After taking a sip, Keith sets the cup back down and smiles. “It was nice. It was the best date I've ever been on.”

Maria makes a small humming noise and sets her spoon down. “I have a question for you Keith.” Maria states, leaning her forearms against the counter and staring at her plate. Keith sets his spoon down and nods slowly.

“Yes?”

“You aren't with my son purely for his fame, are you? I've met far too many people that were like that.” Maria's tone is dead serious and Keith knows right away the woman isn't messing around when it comes to her son.

“No ma'am,” Keith starts, finding the term more appropriate for this situation. “No, I didn't know who he was when I first got... feelings for him. I just liked the way he smiled and talked to me. I liked the way his eyes lit up when he skated and I liked that he came off as a caring and kind person. I didn't know who he was until after I had decided I was... I was done for because I really liked this handsome guy that could skate circles around me.”

Maria is silent and Keith is almost positive he's said something wrong but then she starts to giggle and stands up straight. “The two of you sound so ridiculously smitten.” she giggled, reaching out and patting Keith's hand with her own. “I want you to know I approve of you.”

“T-thank you.” Keith smiles, reaching up and rubbing the back of his neck. “That means a lot.”

“Now come on, finish up before Lance thinks I've stuffed you in the oven like that other boy he brought home once.” Keith goes wide eyed and Maria peeks out from the corner of her eyes. “I'm just pulling your leg.”

By eleven Yahira and Chicharo are sent to bed because it's a school night and Beto sneaks off somewhere between Lance cleaning up the gingerbread mess and tucking Chicharo into bed. Keith stands in the hallway, listening as Lance reads the twelve year old a story. Towards the end of the story Keith takes the stairs back down to the second floor and start collecting his shoes and pulling on his jacket.

“Heading out?” Maria asks from the doorway, drying her hands against her jeans.

“Oh, yeah it's late I figured I should be heading out.” Keith nods, zipping his jacket up and walking over to Maria, shoes in hand. “Thanks for having me over, it was really nice meeting you and the others.”

“You're heading out?” Lance asks, appearing behind his mom in the hall.

“Yeah, it's getting kind of late.”

“Exactly, just spend the night, I don't want you getting hurt.” Lance argues, leaning a hand against the door frame. “Either that or give me five minutes to grab my jacket and shoes to walk you home.”

Keith quickly shakes his head at the offer and before he can talk Maria speaks up. “You can spend the night here, we've got plenty of guest rooms, I don't mind. Then you can meet Hector in the
morning.”

“I'm not intruding? I don't want you to feel obligated.” Keith starts but both Lance and Maria immediately stop him.

“It's fine, I've got some pjs you can borrow and if you want you can sleep in my room and I'll sleep on the floor, it'll be like a sleepover.” Lance grins, his mom glancing over her shoulder. “What? Nothing'll happen ma, we only met like a week ago.” Maria lets out a squeak and quickly turns, shoving Lance down the hall.

“Anda, go to your room right now.” they're both giggling and Keith follows behind slowly to the elevator. Going up, Maria gets off on the third floor and Lance and Keith keep going to the fourth floor.

“So, my room?” Lance asks in a teasing seductive voice.

“In your dreams.”

“Typically in my dreams we're in a really fancy hotel and you're naked, but you know.” Lance laughs, waving a hand jokingly at the look Keith shoots him. “Kidding, come on I'll go get some extra sheets for the floor for me. The dresser by my bed has t-shirts in it and the third drawer on the big dresser has sweats and stuff.” Keith nods and heads into the room. It's a clean looking room, the bed placed against the far corner, a window right beside it. A small brown dresser beside it with two drawers and a lamp, alarm clock and picture frame on it. It's Lance and a larger guy with him. The walls are decorated with ice skating posters with inspirational quotes on them. He's got a string of lights hanging along his roof on each wall and stars scattered around his ceiling. The bed sheets are blue with snowflakes on them and there's a ragged blue stuffed penguin on the bed.

Smiling softly at the room, Keith quickly grabs the first shirt he sees out of the small dresser and then a gray pair of sweats from the bigger dresser. Shimming out of his jeans, he pulls on the sweats and then as quickly as he can he pulls off his jacket and shirt and slips into the “Pancakes A-Hoy” t-shirt.

“Back.” Lance announces, turning into the room with a pile of sheets in his arms. Shuffling out of the way, Keith watches as Lance lays the blankets down one at a time and unfolds them into a rectangular shape. “So since it's a school night we can't be loud, Yaha and Chich have school.”

“W-why would we be loud?” Keith stutters out, gripping the end of his borrowed shirt, Lance pausing to shoot him a look over his shoulder.

“You're ready for bed? I thought we could talk and stuff?”

Letting out an embarrassed sigh, Keith nods, “No, that's fine I just—nevermind.”

Several minutes later the sheets are set up in a big pile on the floor and Lance is fishing out a shirt and sweats for himself. Keith expects him to leave the room to change but when he starts pulling his shirt off Keith quickly spins around. On one hand, Lance was comfortable enough to undress in front of him but on the other Keith was definitely not ready to see something like Lance shirtless. Sure a simple google search could probably bring up several shirtless pictures of Lance but—but that wasn't the point.

“I'm gonna turn the light off.” Lance announces, Keith spinning around to nod at him before crawling up onto the bed and under the sheet. Once the light flicks off he half expects it to be near pitch black but because of the area Lance lives in there's plenty of light streaming in through the
windows. Keith can clearly see Lance shuffling around the room, tossing his used clothes into the corner and moving shoes across the room before finally padding over to his makeshift bed. “How do I know when I reach level thirty-six friendship?”

“What? Why?”

“To unlock your dark backstory.” Lance snorts, Keith squinting at the comment then remembering.

“Oh! Oh... I can tell you now.” Keith laughs, rolling onto his side and propping his head up with his palm. Lance turns his head just a bit and when their eyes meet he nods. “Do you want the story I tell everybody or the real story?”

Lance frowns at the question, “What's the difference?”

"The story I tell everyone is that they got in a bad car accident when I was almost seven." Keith explains. "But that's not the whole story."

"What is then?"

"I was four when my mom got sick and had to quit her job. They couldn't pay for stuff anymore, I hardly remember it, we moved to a small apartment and dad was almost never home because he picked up a second job. I was five when suddenly they had enough money and mom started to get better. I could barely read, I didn't realize something was wrong. Then I was six when dad came home crying. He and mom packed up some stuff and then we left for New York. We left for a few months and everything seemed fine until a month before my seventh birthday.”

Lance sits up a little as Keith tells his story and Keith has to force a smile to let Lance know it's alright. That still doesn't stop Lance from reaching out and taking Keith's hand into his own.

“A month before my seventh birthday dad said they had found us and I didn't know what he meant. Mom was crying and they told me to stay in my room. They left and never came back. The next day a cop came over and told me they had a car accident and both passed away and from there I went from foster home to foster home. Until the Holts took me in and I guess they loved me because I never left.”

Lance's face is twisted into one of pity. Keith absolutely hates it. “That's awful.”

“Nobody knows so don't say anything. The police asked me if I knew anything and I said no. They think it was an honest death and not because my dad owed some loan shark damn near one million dollars.”

“Holy shit...”

“Yeah.” Keith frowns, mouth twisting into a frown. “I hate that he did that, he got mom killed, he got himself killed—he got me sent away.” Keith's breathing picks up and he lets out a cough, sitting up and pulling his hand free from Lance's to rub both of his eyes. “I hate it but I don't. I met The Holts and Shiro and... and you. But I want my parents—I want my family.” he wants to laugh but instead a cry escapes and he jolts when arms wrap around him.

Lance.

Keith doesn't pull away, his arms are folded up against him, palms pressed to his face and completely wrapped up in Lance's arms. “Shh, shh, shh, it's okay. I'm here, I've got you.”

They sit there for several minutes in silence, Lance constantly cooing at him and running a hand
through Keith's hair. Keith's breathing evens out and his body relaxes against Lance's chest. “Hey Lance?”

“Yeah?”

“Can you let go? My snot is starting to dry on my palms and upper lip.”

Both start to laugh at that but Lance lets go, turning to reach into his drawer and pull out a shirt. “Here, I'm doing laundry tomorrow anyway.” Keith takes the shirt into his hands and rubs at his face and hands. “Are you okay?”

“Yeah.” Keith nods, setting the shirt down by his pillow. “You know how you said you only ever skated with Nyma and your family?” Lance nods and Keith looks down at his lap and mumbles something.

“I'm sorry, what?”

“I said I'm regldouookatisk.” Keith mumbles just barely above a whisper.

Frowning, Lance reaches out with both hands, cupping Keith's face and tilting it up. “One more time, loud and clear this time.”

Keith's breath catches at the touch and it takes him several seconds to finally speak. “I said I'm glad you took that risk.” Lance doesn't move, doesn't breath, doesn't blink and Keith almost regrets saying it. Until he leans forward and their lips are pressed together. Lance's lips are soft and smooth and warm and Keith loves the feeling of them against his own. The kiss doesn't last long, definitely longer than their first but not by much.

“I'm glad I did too.” Lance whispers once he pulls away, one hand sliding down Keith's jawline and to the back of his neck, fingers tangling around the hair at Keith's nape. “I'm really glad you went to the rink that day instead of Central Park.”

This time it's Keith's turn to lean forward and kiss Lance. Only, he leans forward too far, too fast and too harshly because it sends Lance off the edge of the bed. And with Lance's hand in Keith's hair they both tumble off the bed, Lance landing on his back and Keith on top of him. “Fuck...” Keith breathes out.

“Fine—I'm fine.” Lance chokes out with a laugh.

“Sorry I wasn't—that totally ruined the moment, didn't it?” Keith laughs, sitting up and vaguely aware that he was straddling Lance at that very moment.

“I think it was cute.” Lance shrugs, taking in a deep breath. “We should probably get to bed though.”

Nodding, Keith slides off Lance and crawls back up onto the bed. Pulling the covers back over himself, Keith lays as close to the edge of the bed as he can and smiles down at Lance. This was nice. Really nice.

“Goodnight Ice Kisser.” Lance grins, Keith rolling his eyes.

“Goodnight Ice Princess.”

“Kissy face.”
“Lance shut up.” Keith snorts, reaching a hand out from under the blanket and over the edge. Lance eyes his hand in confusion and Keith pouts, not wanting to exactly ask for what he wants. Finally Lance catches on and moves several pillows around to lean against the bed frame then rest his arm against it and clasp Keith's hand with his own.

“Goodnight.”

“Goodnight.”

Chapter End Notes

Honest to god, I loved writing their texting scenes at the beginning of the chapter. And the reason I didn't update yesterday is because I was gonna draw some art to go eoth this but meh I didn't have time to finish them. Use your imagination for the pictures they sent each other~

Anyway! Here are a few links y'all might find helpful

Mole Sauce recipe here it's the most authentic one I could find and if done right it's like 10/10 would recommend. My mom makes this around winter time especially.

Lance's family reference here and these are my own personal headcanons. Obviously not canon but these are the family members I use in all my fics. They always stay the same in every AU I write.

jhsjrfnrswd this chapter feels short and compared to the others it was. It was only 6k words. RIP. Anyway though, feel free to send me asks or just message me about your thoughts on this story if you want! I'm on tumblr at blucbeetle
Chapter 6

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

I want you. All of you. Your flaws. Your mistakes. Your imperfections. I want you, and only you

The first thing Lance realizes when he wakes up is that his left arm is numb and something heavy is on it. His first thought is that something crazy has happened, maybe the dresser tipped over and they're going to have to amputate his arm. But then the weight shifts, a hand grips the back of his shirt tightly and hair tickles his neck. It's a person. Somebody is sleeping pressed tightly against his—Keith.

Glancing down he sees the head full of black hair and it's definitely confirmed as Keith. Suddenly the weight on his arm doesn't feel so heavy and the way the hair tickles his skin feels nice. Again, Keith shifts and then he's sitting up groggily, confusion written on his face. Their eyes meet and Lance watches Keith's cheeks go from a pale color to a deep red in seconds.

“What—Lance?” Keith stutters, shooting out from under the blanket and stumbling backwards. “What happened? I? Why am I on the floor? Why were we—did—when?”

Lance muffles a laugh at the messy question. Sitting up, he shrugs and glances at the bed, noticing the sheets were pulled off the bed as well. “Maybe you rolled off or you're a sleep cuddler?”

“I don't sleep walk. And I've never fallen out of bed before.” Keith counters quickly.

“There's a first for everything, you know.” Lance argues, gripping the mattress and standing. Arms stretched up over his head with a groan. “Besides, it's not like we did anything.” Keith lets out a hum at that logic and watches Lance shuffle around the room. Lance tosses things around the room, looking like he's somewhat cleaning by organizing things into different piles. Then he starts grabbing the blankets, one by one and folding them.

Keith wastes no time and standing up and helping to fold the stack of blankets. Every time they fold the blanket long ways, Lance walks towards Keith, hands meeting to fold the blanket and he leans forward to kiss Keith's cheek before folding the blanket once more in half. By the time they've got everything folded and put away the scent of pancakes, eggs, cinnamon and frijoles fills the air.

“Come on, you can meet my dad too. He probably slept a few hours after he got home.”

“What time did he get home?” Keith asks while they wait for the elevator down.

“I think it was four? Yeah, around there. He probably slept four or so hours.” Lance shrugs, hands dropping down on Keith's shoulders and leading him into the elevator.

“He doesn't go back to work right away, does it?” the way Keith honestly sounds concerned makes Lance smile a little.
“No, he always gets the day off after a big event at the hotel.” Lance explains, the ding of the elevator cutting him off as they shuffle out into the hall. “Usually he stays later than four, I think the new assistant manager he hired must've told him to go home.”

Maria is the first to greet them with a warm smile. “How did you boys sleep?”

“Pretty good.” Lance replies, swiping a strip of bacon off the plate. “Where's everybody?”

“Chich went to wake up Beto and I've been calling Yaha down and she keeps saying just one more minute.” Maria huffs. “Your father should be down soon too.”

Lance nods, grabbing the stack of clean plates off the counter and moving them to the table. Keith follows behind him and Lance wants to call him a lost puppy but he holds back that urge. “So, ready to meet my dad? The big, scary, tough guy? The guy who's gonna threaten you with his shotgun if you hurt his little boys heart--”

“Lance!” Maria cuts in, both Keith and Lance jumping. “Don't scare him.”

Keith rubs the back of his neck and smiles at Maria. Lance pouting at the scolding. “I was just playing, you know dad is gonna love him. I mean, you loved him and you're the scary parent.” Lance points out, Maria glaring at him. “You know what I mean!”

“You're mom isn't scary.” Keith mumbles, Maria snickering at the comment.

“Thank you Keith,” she smiles, dropping the last pancake onto a plate full of them. “Can the two of you move all this food to the table, please?”

Nodding, they each move back and fourth from the table to the counter until all the plates are moved.

“Good morning,” a new voice greets, Lance notices the way Keith seems to tense before spinning around to look at Hector.

“Good morning.” Keith replies in a steady voice.

Hector seems taken aback for a second at the new face. “Who's this?”

“Keith,” said person replies before Lance can even process the question. “I'm Lance's friend.”

“Ah,” Hector sighs, walking up to Keith, hand held out to him. “So you're the boy Maria and Lance have told me so much about.” Hector smiles, shaking Keith's hand, Lance immediately beginning to chew on his thumb nail. “Did you spend the night here?”

“Yes, sir.” Keith nods, Lance holding back a groan at the sir.

“Please, just call me Hector. The only people who call me sir are my employees.” Hector laughs, dropping his hand back to his side. “Tell me, what's the square root of three thousand twenty-seven, divided by three, plus four hundred thirty-two?”

Lance practically snorts at the question and the way Keith's face twists into surprise and then panic. “I—I don't know off the top of my head, si—Hector.”

“Hector.” Maria warns with a laugh.

“I'm just pulling your leg, boy.” Hector cackles, clapping a hand against Keith's shoulder. “Or should I say hair? It sure is long enough,” Hector smiles, tugging the end of Keith's hair.
“Hey! Only I can make fun of his hair.” Lance immediately cuts in, yanking Keith back a few steps. “His brother Shiro probably laughs about it too.”

“But Shiro cuts my hair?” Keith mumbles in all seriousness, everybody glancing at him.

“That explains so much.” Lance whispers, Hector and Maria bursting into laughter. “One time my older sister Mila asked my brother Milo to give her a haircut and he gave her a mullet. Shiro tried to prank you and it backfired.” Keith reaches up to touch his hair and frown.

“It's not a mullet?” Keith argues.

“Enough, leave the poor boy alone. He looks just fine in my opinion.” Maria warns teasingly just as Chich and Beto shuffle into the room.

“Morning.” they greet in unison.

“Where's your sister?” Maria asks, already taking a seat at the table.

“She was still locked up in her room.” Chich answers, sitting down as well.

“Hija de tu—Yahira!” Maria shouts, sliding her chair back, ready to head upstairs when said person walks into the dining room.

“I'm coming!” she groans, dropping her bag on the now empty counter top.

“She's gonna get it, now.” Lance whispers to Keith, Yaha shooting him a glare.

“Sit down, come on, we're having breakfast before you kids are late for school.” Maria huffs, everybody doing as they were told. Most of the meal is spent with Hector talking about the event held at the hotel. Everything went wrong and just how many times he locked himself in the supply closet to hide away from everybody.

“Of course, right when Johnathan slipped and took out the ice sculpture I tapped out. I told Vladimir, the new manager, to handle the rest of the event.” Hector laughs, before turning his attention to Keith. “So tell me, what do you do?”

“Work wise?” Keith questions, Hector nodding. “I work at a foster house. The one I was raised in, actually. The Holts, the people who own the building, have me down to inherit the place once they retire.”

“You were raised in a foster home?” Beto asks.

Nodding, Keith sets his fork down and takes a sip of his orange juice before talking again. “Yeah, I was really young when my parents had a car accident. I went to a few different foster homes before the Holts took me in and I never left. I met Shiro there, he's practically my actual brother at this point.”

“I'm glad you found yourself a forever home.” Maria smiles.

“How does working there work? Do you live there too? Are you paid by the hour or?” Hector continues, Lance putting two and two together.... he was interviewing Keith at breakfast.

“I live there, yes. I share a room with Shiro and how it works is the Holts have us down as paid volunteers, since we can't live there as foster kids anymore because of our ages. They give us monthly stipends to save up since they pay for all other expenses. There's no rent, food, bills or
anything for us to pay for, so the stipend is just a thousand dollars a month.”

“Just!” Yahira cuts in with a snort, Maria shooting her a glare.

“Baby sis has a point you know,” Lance starts, “A thousand dollars is an awful lot a month, especially if you're not paying any bills or anything. How much do you have in your savings?”

“My savings? Is... maybe a couple thousand at this point?”

“Only a couple?” Hector questions and immediately Lance can hear the doubt in his fathers voice.

“Well,” Keith swallows, glancing down at his lap then up at Hector. “I put half the money in my savings each month and they started paying me after I turned eighteen. So four years times twelve months... if my math is right it should be around twenty-four thousand by now?”

Cue Beto and Yahira both spitting out their drinks and Keith jumping back in his seat.

“Sorry—did I—was it something I said?” Keith stutters, shooting Lance a panicked look who only laughs in response.

“No, they're just a bit impressed I suppose.” Hector chuckles. “Me as well, most boys your age wouldn't save that much in such little time. Anything in specific you're saving up for?” Hector questions, Lance slightly puzzled by the question but Keith seems to keep up with the pace of the conversation all too easily.

“Nothing in specific at the moment, no. I work where I live and anywhere I need to go can be done by taking the metro, there's really no need to buy a car.” Keith explains, his food long forgotten at this point. “A house in the future is already taken care of too. The Holts left their house to me, so there's no need to worry about buying a home in the future. Plus it's already fully paid off. The only real reason I'm saving up all this money is in case of an emergency. A medical one or a natural disaster, anything.” suddenly, Lance finds himself all the more attracted to this boy who thinks ahead. “I'm also putting any future kids of my own I'll have in mind. I want to be able to afford everything they need or want as well as a college tuition when it comes time.” Oh... oh Lance was definitely more attracted to this boy with a big heart now.

Hector nods at the response, seemingly satisfied with it. Maria is smiling that big smile she always wears when she's absolutely adores somebody. “You've sure put some thought into everything, haven't you, Keith?”

“Yes, s—Hector...”

“I have a question for you though.” Hector starts, running a hand over his mouth and letting out a small laugh. “Your foster parents, The Holts? Do they not have kids of their own?”

“Oh, no they do,” Keith nods, “They have two. A son named Matt and a daughter named Katie but she goes by Pidge.”

Hector slowly nods and again lets out a small laugh. “Do you mind if I ask why they're leaving their house and their system to you? Why not Matt or Pidge?”

Keith's lips form a thin line and Lance almost cuts in to say Keith doesn't have to answer but Keith starts talking before Lance can even move. “They didn't want what their parents had,” Keith shrugs. “Matt is really into astrophysics and he's pretty bad with kids if I'm being honest.” everybody around the table seems to chuckle at this, even Lance. “Pidge? She's still pretty young, she's in college right now and the only times she's good with kids is when she's acting like one. She
wants to be a computer engineer, she wants to work on robotics and programming and all of this crazy advanced stuff.” Keith does several hand motions as he talks and Lance finds it endearing. “They wanted bigger and better things than running a big home with kids that come and go.”

At the end of Keith's response, Lance reaches out under the table and takes his hand in his, squeezing it lightly in approval.

“Why do you want it then? Why not find yourself a bigger and better job?” Hector challenges and Keith doesn't miss a beat.

“A big family is all I've ever wanted in life. My parents used to talk about having several more kids and then I lost them and the idea of having all these siblings and a big family... it stayed with me.” Keith explains, “The Holts keeping me in their home forever was the best thing to ever happen to me.”

Immediately Maria and Yahira both cover their mouths and muffle their aww's at Keith's response. Hector on the other hand wears a perfect poker face and for the first time in Lance's life he can't tell what his father is thinking or feeling.

“Do the Holts have other jobs?”

Keith's hand tenses in Lance's grip and worry strikes Lance right away. “Yes. Mrs. Holt works for a law firm part time as a secretary. Mr. Holt works at the same law firm as an adviser.”

“That's your problem.”

“Excuse me?”

“Your problem,” Hector repeats, leaning back in his seat and frowning at Keith. “Both of the Holts work good paying jobs, they're paying to keep the foster home up and running. Food, school supplies, clothes for the kids, shoes, toys, insurance, medical appointments. How do you plan to pay for everything once the system is in your hands?”

“I—well Shiro is staying there still. He doesn't really plan on leaving and if needed, we'd both get jobs of course. I planned to do some teaching maybe, so I'd only work during school hours. The Holts work school hours only too. And the government gives a stipend for each kid monthly too that helps a lot. Most of the money the Holts get goes into a huge savings account they have that they're leaving to Matt and Pidge once they... you know, once they pass away. They also pay for Matt and Pidge's college, most of the money they make gets saved for emergencies too. They paid off their mortgage, they're debt free.” Keith seems slightly out of breath once he's done and Lance wants to pull him away from the room, but he stays in place.

“I'm glad to hear you have a plans. Teaching is good, and you'll be inheriting something that's debt free. I simply wanted to make sure you weren't just going in blindly or planning to marry rich.” Hector explains, momentarily glancing at Lance. “Anyway, Yaha, Chich, you kids ready for school?”

“Yes.” they chime in unison.

“Leave your dishes, Lance and Beto can get them, you're both about to be late for school. Get going.” Maria snaps, both kids rushing off to grab their bags and shoes.

“It was nice meeting you, Keith.” Hector announces, extending a hand to Keith.

“Nice meeting you too.”
“I'll be seeing you around?” Hector questions, turning his attention slightly more to Lance than Keith.

“I hope so.” Keith nods, Lance smiling at the response.

“Definitely.” Lance adds in, Hector chuckling before walking off.

It takes them about a half hour to get the entire dining room clean, everything washed and all the food put away. Maria smirking the whole time from her seat at the table.

“Ay que padre que tengo hijos tan buenos para limpiar. Y un yerno tan bueno tambien.” Maria sighs, Lance letting a cup slip from his hands and clatter to the ground.

“Ma!” he shrieks, Keith jumping and Beto trying his best to hide his laughter but failing.

“What... what did she say?” Keith questions, Lance's ears burning.

“Nothing! She just said she’s glad she has such good kids that help clean and... and that you're great too.” Lance mumbles. Maria snorts at this but Keith seems to buy it.

“Well... I should be heading back, I didn't give the Holts a heads up that I'd be staying out.”

“I'll walk you out.” Lance announces, tossing the cup into the sink and rushing out into the hall with Keith. “Sorry about... that.” Lance sighs, motioning to the kitchen as they pull on their shoes.

“It's fine, could've been worse.”

“How?”

“Your dad could've kicked me out? Or your mom could've come at me with a knife...” Keith snorts.

“You've got a strange sense of humor.” Lance laughs, stepping into the elevator once the doors ding and slide open.

“Guess you've gotta deal.” Keith smiles, stepping in behind him.

“Hey, do you think your friends would wanna hang out with mine?” Lance asks, watching the number change from two to one.

“Like? Shiro, Pidge and Matt? Because that's pretty much all I've got.” Keith jokes.

“Yes,” Lance nods, “Them. We could invite Hunk, Shay and Allura, like all do something fun, you know?” Lance smiles, stepping out into the long hall and heading to the exit at the end of it. “We could go to Central Park or go get pictures with Santa.”

Keith snorts at the last suggestion but nods. “Yeah, we could plan something.”

“Cool, text me?”

“Mhm.” Keith nods, coming to a stop in front of Lance.

“Alright, just... let me know what they say and all.” Lance smiles.

“I will...”
They stand in a slightly awkward silence for a few seconds before they both lean forward for a kiss, unfortunately both tilting their heads in the same direction and slamming their noses right against the others. Pulling back, Lance's hand darts to his nose and Keith is laughing before Lance even processes what happened.

“It was bound to happen eventually.” Keith laughs, Lance chuckling along with him.

“Alright, come on, you actually have to leave for this to be a goodbye.” Lance teases, leaning forward and pressing their lips together in an almost perfect kiss. If it weren't for Keith's insistent giggling, that is. Reaching up and running a hand through the end of Keith's hair, Lance pulls away just enough to talk. “Are you gonna leave or should we just head back up?”

Keith's laughter dies down a bit and he presses a quick kiss to Lance's lips before stepping back a few steps. “I'm going, I'm going.”

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Wednesday December 3

**(8:07pm) Ice Kisser:** hey, shiro and Pidge said they can both come this friday if thats cool? Matt is busy this whole weekend and next for some big project he's working on

**(8:29pm) Ice Princess:** cool!! I asked Allura, Hunk and Shay and they all said they're free this friday too for ice skating. Soooo maybe around 4?

**(8:35pm) Ice Kisser:** yeah they said four works

**(8:37pm) Ice Princess:** cool!! okay

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Thursday December 4

**(9:00am) Ice Princess:** Good morning!! c:

**(9:01am) Ice Kisser:** did you really send that at the exact time I wake up?

**(9:03am) Ice Princess:** I didn't wanna send it too early!

**(9:07am) Ice Kisser:** you're a dork

**(9:08am) Ice Princess:** but I'm YOUR dork!!

**(10:58pm) Ice Princess:** anY WAY TELL GRACE I SAID HELLO I LOVE HER

**(10:59pm) Ice Kisser:** Lance she went to b ed at nine????????????

**(11:00pm) Ice Princess:** tell her anyway

**(11:04pm) Ice Kisser:** no

**(11:05pm) Ice Princess:** you never listen tome???? :((((

**(11:06pm) Ice Kisser:** yup i’m going to bed, goodnight

**(11:07pm) Ice Princess:** KEITH WAIT

**(11:08pm) Ice Princess:** Ke ith pleASE!!

**(11:10pm) Ice Princess:** k eIT H

**(11:13pm) Ice Princess:** fiNE BE THAT WAY

**(11:14pm) Ice Princess:** goodnight <3 I really care about you ;*

**(11:14pm) Ice Kisser:** LANCE PLEASE

**(11:15pm) Ice Princess:** sorry I'm asleep

**(11:16pm) Ice Kisser:** GOODNIGHT I CARE ABOUT YOU TOO BYE
On Friday they all meet up at Central Park. Lance, Allura, Hunk and Shay having arrived first. Lance is the first to notice Keith, Shiro and Pidge walking up and he immediately bolts, slamming into Keith.

“I missed you!” Lance greets, kissing Keith's cheek and causing Pidge and Shiro to both smirk, Keith's ears burning.

“I missed you too.”

“You must be Shiro!” Lance chirps, shoving Keith away and offering Shiro a hand.

“Sure am.” Shiro nods, shaking Lance's hand.

“And Pidge?”

“Yup.” said person nods, also shaking Lance's hand in greeting.

“Cool, okay, my friends are right over there, the awkward people staring right at us.” Lance laughs, Allura, Hunk and Shay all flinching and turning their attention away from the others. Keith slips his hand right into Lance's as they start walking and Lance doesn't seem to even be surprised by the action. “Alright, girl with the aesthetic type look going on, that's Allura.” Lance starts once they're close enough to his friends.

“Nice to meet you all.” she greets, smiling at Shiro and Pidge.

“Big guy over here is Hunk, yes the name fits him perfectly.” Lance grins, said person waving Lance's compliment off.

“Nice to meet you guys.”

“And the pretty girl holding his hand is the lovely Shay!” Lance finishes, the girl smiling and waving. “And the big guy with the fancy hair over here is Shiro and shortcakes is Pidge.” Pidge frowns at the nickname and Lance simply grins.

“Treading on thin ice, lover boy.” Pidge grumbles.

“Ha!” Lance cackles, “Good one.”

Right away, Keith can see the way Shiro's attention seems to radiate towards Allura and he wants to shout I knew it! But he decides now and then isn't the time. Pidge gets along with Hunk and Shay swimmingly and it's almost like they were all meant to be friends with the way everybody talks so casually.

Once they actually get on the ice Keith finds out Shiro isn't good at everything as it turns out. Ice skating seems to be his enemy right away with the way he can barely even stand. Allura skates circles around him and Keith swears that Shiro's eyes never once leave Allura all afternoon. Pidge seems to cling to Allura most of the afternoon too but at some point she gets off the ice and watches Shiro and Allura skate around the rink, hand in hand. Hunk isn't all too elegant on the ice. It's clear he knows how to keep his balance and move but he stumbles every now and then and all he manages to do is skate around the rink. Shay looks slightly more gantlet, moving with ease and chuckling each time Hunk seems to stumble.

Lance and Keith? They skate hand in hand, Lance spinning Keith every now and then and eyes
turning to them often. They take several breaks with Pidge and watch the others skate. One thing Keith notices is that their hands never part.

It's eight when Lance pulls Keith off the ice and leads him to the benches set up for the skaters. “I needed to talk to you.” Lance announces and Keith knows those words. He knows it's ridiculous to immediately think of the break up talk but he does.

“Uh... yeah, sure.”

“We haven't actually... you know, talked about what we are.”

“We're human.” Keith whispers, Lance's eyebrows knitting together with a laugh.

“No, I mean like... are we dating? Boyfriends? Or are we still you know... figuring things out?” Lance moves on, Keith swallowing back the panic.

“Oh. Yeah, we haven't talked about it yet.”

“Look, Keith I'm not about to tip toe around it. I really... really like you. Like a lot. I really like holding your hand and getting to kiss you and... and I'd really... really like it if I could call you my boyfriend. But! But, of course I'm willing to wait if you're not ready for that.”

Keith's mouth feels dry at how honest Lance is but he knows he'd by lying if he said he didn't feel the same way. “Are you asking me out? Because I... accept. Definitely.”

Lance looks up and Keith notices the dark shade of red his cheeks are. “Really?”

“Really.”

Keith is slightly caught off guard when a hand cups his cheek and then lips are pressed against his own. It takes a fraction of a second to realize Lance is kissing him and then for him to kiss back. Once the kiss ends, Lance's hand doesn't move and their foreheads are pressed together.

“Get a room!” Pidge shouts from the rink, Shiro shoving her lightly. And of course, that turns some heads and Keith wants to hide away from all the eyes on them.

A few minutes later, everybody is sitting around the benches with them. “Should we head off? Maybe go get something to eat?” Allura asks, sitting a little too close to Shiro, Keith notes.

“I could definitely go for a meal right about now,” Hunk nods, “We could go to the dinner a few blocks away.”

“Mamama Mia's?” Pidge squeaks, perking up in her seat.

“Yes!” Hunk grins.

“I'm down!” Pidge grins, turning to everybody else.

“I'm game if you are Keith?” Shiro asks, Keith nodding. “Alright, let's get going then.”

Fifteen minutes later, they're all piling into a booth, chattering and skimming through menus.

“Guys, I've got an idea.” Lance announces, slapping his menu down against the table.

“Here we go.” Allura teases.
“Hm,” Lance pouts, “Anyway, hear me out guys. Secret Santa.”

Nobody talks for a minute but the way everybody slowly starts to nod Keith realizes this is definitely going to be a thing.

“That's actually not a bad idea?” Pidge cuts in.

“I'm packed with great ideas.” Lance smirks.

“Alright, here I can write out names and we can pick now?” Shay offers, grabbing a few napkins to rip into pieces. “Anybody have a pen?”

“Oh! I do.” Allura pipes in, rummaging through her purse. It takes Shay a few minutes to write down all their names and Lance offers his beanie to draw from. Keith is the last to draw and his slip of napkin reads Hunk in almost perfect handwriting.

“Should we set a price minimum and maximum?” Hunk asks, slipping his napkin into his pocket.

“Minimum twenty and max forty?” Lance offers.

“That works.” they all agree.

“Keith are you busy tomorrow?” Lance asks, resting his head against Keith's shoulder.

“Why?”

“I wanted to know if you wanted to go shopping with me?” Lance shrugs, glancing in Shiro's direction. “If Shiro lets you.”

“He's not my dad.” Keith snorts, the look he gets from Shiro causing him to frown a little. “Anyway though... Shiro can I go shopping with Lance tomorrow?”

“Nope.” Shiro smiles, the others laughing slightly.

“What?” Keith exclaims.

“Hey now, dad has spoken.” Lance says, Keith scooting over enough to cause Lance to slip off his shoulder. “Sorry—alright—Shiro, come on?”

“Fine, since you had your boyfriend ask so nicely.”

Keith chokes slightly at the word boyfriend and he hears Lance let out a soft laugh. “Whatever. I'm not paying for your food.”

“Keith! I was just messing with you!”

“Nope.”

o.O.o

The ride to Times Square is spent with Keith and Lance arguing over who gets to put their hand in the front and who puts in the back when they hold hands.

“How about whoever initiates the hand holding gets to put it in the back?”

“That's not fair, you always initiate it.” Keith argues, twisting in his seat as the speaker announces
their stop coming up.

“That's my point! See, it is fair.” Lance argues.

Keith shakes his head and once the bus comes to a stop he jumps to his feet and rushes off, Lance at his heels. “Hold my hand Lance.” he shouts over his shoulder, Lance's jaw dropping.

“That doesn't count!”

“I initiated, so I get to bottom.” Keith smirks and Lance can practically see the insinuation in his word choice.

“Fine.” Lance huffs, lacing their hands together and starting off down the sidewalk. “Where to first?”

“Disney store?” Keith asks, pointing straight ahead, Lance's eyes following.

“Who are you shopping for? Pidge?”

Keith snorts at the jab and shakes his head, “No, I just wanna go look. I might find something for Grace while we're in there but I also haven't been in the Disney store in years.” deciding that's enough of an answer, Lance nods and they head into the children packed store.

“You seem to really like Grace more than the others?”

“Don't tell any of them, because I always say I don't have a favorite.” Keith laughs, “But yeah, Grace is different. She's the youngest foster kid we've ever had. I was seven when the Holts took me in but Grace is six right now. She's been with us for a year now, her parents passed when she was three.” he explains, Lance's stomach knotting.

“That's so young.”

Keith nods slowly before pausing at the end of the new toys section. “I had an immediate attachment to her when she got there because her previous foster home was a bit racists. She's clearly a mixed kid and the idiots who fostered her treated her like utter dirt. When she first came to stay with us she was so confused as to why we gave her several meals a day and why she got a bed with a mattress and not just a box spring. We reported the previous family but we haven't heard back on whether they've been shut down or not.”

“That's terrible, Grace is beautiful and doesn't deserve that.”

“Nobody does.” Keith shrugs, looking up and down the aisle of toys.

“This one!” Lance announces, Keith turning to see him holding a boxed Moana doll.

“She doesn't play with dolls.”

Lance almost looks skeptical. “Does she own any? Has she ever? This is different, it's Moana, who doesn't like her? I almost wanna buy it for myself.”

Keith snorts at the last comment and shakes his head but takes the doll into his hands anyway. “I guess we could give it a try, but I also want to buy her a Nerf gun when I get the chance.” he explains, holding the box in one hand and holding the other out to Lance for him to hold.

“She knows how to shoot that?”
“She shot me in the back during our Nerf War the other day. She could probably take you out, too.” Keith chuckles, tucking the boxed set under one arm and stretching the other one out for Lance to hold.

Intertwining their hands, Lance scuffs. “Yeah right, my family and I used to have Nerf Wars all the time too. I was always the winner unless I let some of the younger kids win or everybody ganged up against me. I have perfect aim, it's a result of ice skating.”

“How does ice skating have anything to do with aim?”

“Coordination, good eye to foot movements?” Lance shrugs. “I dunno but it does.”

“Hm.”

They walk around the toy store for another half hour, messing with several toys and putting on masks in the Star Wars section before Keith finally pays and they head out to actually start their secret Santa shopping. Lance is insistent they go into Forever 21. There's a green army jacket Lance points to and immediately follows it with “I would love to own that” waggling his eyebrows at Keith.

They end up leaving Forever 21 empty handed and while walking to the next store Lance lets out a heavy sigh. “Hey Keith, what do you want for Christmas?”

“You.” Keith answers all too quickly and absentmindedly before stumbling to a stop and turning to Lance with wide eyes. “That—I was just—it was funnier in my head.”

The doesn't stop the smirk slowly growing on Lance's red cheeks. “I don't want a lot for Christmas,” Lance starts singing slowly, “There is just one thing I need, and I don't care about the presents underneath the Christmas tree.” at this point Keith pulls his hand free and uses it to cover his mouth while clutching the Disney store bag in his other. “I don't need to hang my stocking there upon the fireplace.”

“Lance, please.” Keith laughs, looking around at the people smiling as they pass by. A few stopping to watch the whole exchange.

“Santa Claus won't make me happy with a toy on Christmas day!” Lance is doing a little dance in place at this point, not a care in the world that people were watching. “I just want you for my own, more than you could ever know. Make my wish come true! All I want for Christmas... is... you.” he finishes, stepping up close to Keith and pressing a kiss to his cheek.

The sound of people clapping make both of them jump a bit. As the crowd disperses, Lance loops an arm around Keith's shoulders and looks around at the different stores. “Where should we go next?”

“Actually, I'm going into that one store over there for a minute, would you mind if I went alone?”

Lance raises an eyebrow slowly but shakes his head. “I don't mind, meet up here in a few?” Keith nods and heads off with a quick goodbye kiss. Lance starts to walk down in the sidewalk in the direction they had originally been heading when he spots something in the window of a nearby jewelry store. A locket necklace in the shape of a snowflakes with a pair of figure skates as a charm. Maybe it's a bit girlish but he wants it immediately. For Keith. His Secret Santa.

Walking into the shop, he walks around the small area first and glances through the several charms they have in one corner.
“Hello, can I help you find anything?” an older man greets from behind the counter, wide smile on his face.

“Yeah I was looking at the snowflake charm necklace you guys have up on display?”

The man's eyebrows knit together in thought then slowly rise. “Ah! Yes, our limited edition Winter Land charm.” the man nods. “Let me go grab that from the back for you.”

“Thanks.” Lance nods, turning back to the charm stand as the man disappears. He decides on the silver figure skates and the three fall leaves in varying shades of red.

Once the man returns, he sets a long, thin white box down in front of Lance on the counter, popping it open to show the snowflake locket. “Were you planning to add charms to it as well?”

“The skates and the fall leaves.” Lance nods, pointing to the two. “How much is all of it?”

“The necklace on its own is one twenty. Each additional charm is thirty dollars.” the man explains, Lance lips pulling back into a thin line.

“Oh.”

“Is that out of your price range?” the man asks, Lance squinting at the man a bit.

“Not at all, I was just participating in a Secret Santa and they had set the maximum price to forty dollars. But it's for my boyfriend, so I don't mind going well over the price they set.” he shrugs, the man nodding slowly.

“Let me add the charms for you. Would you like it wrapped?”

“Please.”

Several minutes later, Lance has the wrapped box in a small jewelry store bag and he's heading back to their meeting spot, Keith already standing there and scrolling through his phone. Bumping their shoulders together, Lance peeks at the screen in time to see a cat fall off a dresser. “Got everything you need?” Keith asks, tucking his phone away.

“Yup, did you?”

“Yeah.” Keith nods, holding up three bags, the Disney store one included. “You got your giftee jewelry?” Lance glances down at the bag in his own hand and chuckles.

“Yeah, kind of. Are the other two gifts for your giftee?”

“No, but you can't see otherwise you'll know right away who the gifts are for.”

“Just one small peek?”

“Can I peek at what you got?” Keith shoots back, Lance pouting.

“Fine, no peeking.”
Hi! I'm sorry this update took like almost a month. My excuse however is that my parents decided to go to Mexico and while we were there I rarely got anytime to myself, we were always with relatives or out at tourist sights and such. So I had zero time to write! I got home back on the 5th and wrote this chapter really quickly yesterday.

On that note, this chapter is...... ick to me. Probably seems rushed but several scenes in it were cute imo. But yeah! Guys we have 4 more chapters left. We're getting close to some Drama and then this wildly happy and cute ending.

Leave some feedback if you'd like! And if any of you out there are artists and draw anything hmu on my tumblr blog (blucbeetle) so I can freak out tbh.

As always, thank you for reading! Sorry for the long wait!

I'm trying to get back into writing so hopefully I can start updating this and other stories regularly again!

My blog: Blucbeetle

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!