

Love like an ache in the jaw

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Love like an ache in the jaw

by [sweetfire](#)

Summary

Shiro can't have ruts. Never has, never will, on account of all his body's been through throughout his life. And that's fine. He and Keith are mated, married, and living their happily-ever after while they work to better the universe after the war. So why, all of a sudden, is Shiro insatiably horny, emotional, and snapping at anyone who looks at Keith wrong?

Notes

This is a rut fic, but also, it's just my excuse to write soft, feral, horny husbands sheith taking care of each other. If that sounds like your cuppa tea, enjoy!

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Note that in this fic, I've left omega biology somewhat vague, but Keith has two holes and a dick and AMAB and neutral terms are used.

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

Chapter 1

Keith takes a deep breath, letting it fill his lungs until they stretch, then lets it go, feeling his shoulders sink with it, feeling it rush out of him. The air smells like pancake batter and maple syrup, and the morning light filters in through their little kitchen window, dappled onto Keith's face by the ginkgo trees in their side yard.

There's an ache in his thighs and his shoulders from sparring yesterday, but still every muscle fiber in his body feels relaxed. It's a Sunday morning, and there's nothing on his schedule, nothing but cooking breakfast and lounging around with his husband, maybe a walk around the neighborhood. It's beautiful weather, he thinks idly. He should open up the windows and get some fresh air in.

As if called by Keith's thoughts of him—as if his thoughts are anywhere else with any regularity—his ears pick up on the sounds of feet padding on the hardwood behind him. He turns to see Shiro, shuffling into the kitchen with those too-heavy steps of a body that isn't quite awake yet, clad in only his wrinkled boxers. Keith allows himself a moment to look, raking his eyes over his husband's body.

“Mornin’, baby,” Shiro slurs, rubbing the back of his forearm over his eyes and yawning.

Keith smiles, and there's that funny feeling again, the one he gets each time he realizes that this is really his life, that they really get to have this. This easy domesticity, deep love and companionship, and no threat of all that being torn away hanging just around the corner.

Shiro's always been an early riser—it would be unheard of for Keith to be the first one awake a few years ago, and it's still unusual now, but since the war, now that his body and mind are getting used to the idea that he doesn't have to be on high alert at all times, sometimes he sleeps in. It makes Keith so happy to see.

When Shiro reaches him, he turns his head back and tilts it up for a kiss, which Shiro delivers, smiling into it. Shiro's hand finds the back of his neck, and when Keith turns back to the griddle, he plants another kiss on his cheek, his jaw, the ticklish space under his ear, making Keith giggle and squirm away.

The pancakes are starting to bubble, so he slides the spatula under them and flips them over, listening to the satisfying sizzle when they land.

Behind him, Shiro leans into his back, all but draping himself over Keith like an oversized cape. He hooks his chin over Keith's shoulder, then wraps his arms all the way around him, until his hands reach around to form to Keith's hips.

“You're warm,” Keith comments, sliding a pat of butter onto each of the pancakes as they continue cooking.

“'M always warm,” Shiro mumbles, nuzzling into the side of Keith's neck.

“Yeah, but more than usual. Are you feeling okay?”

Keith cranes around, as much as he can while Shiro has him pinned against the counter, and presses the back of his hand to Shiro’s forehead.

“Yes,” Shiro replies, pouting at having been dislodged, but taking the opportunity to drop another kiss on Keith’s cheek.

He’s a little warm, but not enough to be concerned, so Keith gives a considering huff and turns back around to his pancakes, deeming them done on the other side and transferring them onto the waiting plate next to the griddle.

“There you go,” he prompts, pushing the plate back towards Shiro while he scoops more batter onto the skillet for another batch. “These are yours, go ahead and get started.”

He doesn’t expect Shiro to stay right where he is, returning to his place wrapped stubbornly around Keith’s back.

“No,” he refuses, pushing his nose into Keith’s hair and squeezing him tighter. “I’ll wait for you.”

“Your pancakes will get cold...” Keith protests.

“Don’t care,” Shiro grumbles.

“What has gotten into you this morning,” Keith laughs, not-so-secretly charmed by his husband’s early-morning cuddliness. Shiro just sighs and nuzzles into the mating bite on Keith’s neck. It makes Keith blush and shift his hips, unintentionally tilting his head to expose it more.

It’s a little harder than usual to finish cooking with a giant man hanging off of him, but he manages, and by the end of it his cheeks are sore from smiling and tickled by countless kisses.

They take their pancakes over to the little breakfast nook they had built in the corner of their kitchen, and to Keith’s amusement, Shiro slides into the bench on the same side as Keith, continuing until he’s pressed to his side. He rolls his eyes but leans into it, and is half surprised that Shiro doesn’t try to feed him bites of pancake off of his own fork, although he looks a couple of time like he’s considering it.

After the pancakes are gone and their fingers are sticky with syrup, Shiro rushes to offer to clean up, and Keith goes around the house opening up the windows, letting the breeze flutter their curtains. Shiro is finishing up the last of the dishes when Keith wanders back into the kitchen, and when Keith thanks him, he smiles like he’s just been given a gold medal, and Keith has the familiar feeling that if Shiro were a dog, his tail would be wagging.

They set out to spend their lazy Sunday just as a lazy Sunday should be spent—in love, relaxed, and with no plans or obligations. Keith goes to spend some time tending to their

back garden while the weather is so nice, and Shiro sits on the patio, ostensibly to read, but every time Keith looks over, he catches Shiro just watching him work.

Afterwards, they take a stroll through the neighborhood, hand-in-hand, Kosmo trotting beside them, enjoying the dappled sunlight and the newly-blooming azaleas.

“We should plant some of those out front,” Keith muses, and Shiro hums and puts an arm around Keith’s shoulders.

When they see their elderly neighbors outside, they wave hello, but Keith notices Shiro pulling him in closer.

Back home, they each take a shower and then spend the rest of the morning lounging together on the couch in their sun-filled den. Shiro lies back with Keith cushioned on his chest, one of Shiro’s arms thrown around his waist. Keith reads, and Shiro reads too, although most of the time it seems he’s distracted by playing with Keith’s hair, fiddling with the end of his braid and stroking it back from his forehead. When the breeze coming through the open windows pricks goosebumps into Keith’s skin, Shiro pulls a blanket over them and wraps him in it, pulling him back against his chest.

Early afternoon is welcomed by Shiro turning Keith over and fucking him into the couch, slow and languid but no less devastating, until Keith’s boneless and purring, draped over the arm of the couch and unlikely to move himself anytime soon. Lucky for him, he doesn’t have to, because after they both fall into a short nap, tangled together despite their sticky skin and the cum and slick dripping down Keith’s inner thighs, Shiro lifts him into his arms without so much as a grunt and carries him into their bathroom to get cleaned up.

He sets him on the counter next to the sink and turns on the water, waiting for it to get warm before he wets a washcloth and passes it over Keith’s flushed skin with care, cleaning him while Keith pitches forward and leans on Shiro’s chest with a yawn.

“You’re still warm,” he mumbles, rubbing his cheek against Shiro’s pec.

Shiro just hums and nudges Keith’s legs apart so he can clean between them. Despite the fact that Keith’s completely sated and frankly doesn’t have the energy to go again if he wanted to, the touch still makes him shiver. He can feel Shiro smirking into his hair, and he pinches his side in retaliation.

When he’s good and cleaned—and after he’s reminded Shiro to take care of himself, too—they head to the kitchen for a snack. If Keith doesn’t refuel, he’s going to fall right back asleep. That’s just what Shiro does to him, and he wouldn’t have it any other way.

Shiro prepares their snack—peanut butter and jelly sandwiches—and watches Keith eat, almost like he’s trying to make sure Keith eats it, to make sure he likes it. Keith’s a little bemused, not sure what’s up, but it’s not unlike his husband to be excessively attentive.

Afterwards, Keith lounges on the couch some more, Kosmo curled at his feet, while Shiro becomes suddenly concerned with the plants that have come to nearly take over their house. He starts meticulously looking over each of them, doing one pass around the house just to

check their moisture levels and fret over any brown spots that have turned up on their leaves, and then another pass to water the ones that need it.

“Baby, come back,” Keith whines after a while, wanting a partner in his relaxation, not someone running around being all productive around him while he’s trying to be lazy. He’s barely finished the sentence when Shiro is back in the room, dutifully climbing onto the couch and into Keith’s reaching arms.

With Keith’s encouragement, Shiro settles on top of him, weighing him down into the couch in a way that soothes something deep inside him. He sighs, and Shiro settles in and nuzzles into his neck, scenting him. Keith makes a pleased noise, and his hand finds the back of Shiro’s head, fingers running through the short hair on the back of it, fingernails idly scratching at his scalp.

The breeze from their garden carries on it the faint scent of honeysuckle, courtesy of the bushes they’ve let grow wild along their fence line. It smells to him like home, even though this has only been home for a small portion of his life. The dappled sunlight dances across his eyelids as the trees sway outside the windows, reminding him that it’s only afternoon, that there’s more day to be had, but he doesn’t care. If it’s up to him, he’s perfectly happy to spend it right here.

Shiro’s not someone who hates Mondays. Usually, he actually kind of likes them, barring any particularly awful meetings planned for the day or tight deadlines coming up. Monday mornings feel like a fresh start, and he enjoys the work that he does, even if he often works too much—he’s working on that. Usually, he likes boarding the Atlas when she’s grounded and greeting his friends and coworkers on board, running into the other paladins and stopping to give Kosmo a pet when he poofs into the hallway in front of him, tail wagging.

And the best part, the very best part, of going to work is the fact that Keith is there too. Working in the same place as his husband is an unexpected perk, but one he now doesn’t think he could live without. He loves working with Keith, having meetings with him, being able to eat lunch together and pop into each other’s offices.

Today, though, it isn’t enough.

From the moment they part ways in the morning after coming in together, heading to separate meetings in different parts of the Atlas, Shiro starts feeling uneasy, antsy, because Keith isn’t beside him. He’s too far away. Logically, Shiro knows he could be talking to Keith in a moment, see him in seconds if he needed to, but he can’t shake the agitated feeling that’s coming from being separated from his husband, tensing his muscles and making him tap his pen on his desk. It’s weird.

He just misses Keith, he tells himself. He wants to be with him, to be touching him, and there’s nothing unusual about that. He always feels like that to some extent, would always rather be next to Keith if he had a choice. It’s just that it’s *more* than usual.

A notification from his calendar dings on his computer, though, telling him he has a briefing call to get on, so he pulls out his phone and sends a text to Keith, just to tide himself over, before shaking it off and trying to focus.

It doesn't work. When Keith doesn't immediately text back— *he's in a meeting* , Shiro internally scolds himself, but it makes no difference—the nervous feeling intensifies, twisting sour in his stomach and speeding his pulse.

For the next half hour, while he puts himself on mute and the call on speaker, he spins in his desk chair, taps his pen against his thigh, grinds his teeth, and completely fail to absorb any of the information whatsoever. He doesn't know what's wrong with him.

Finally, when the call is wrapping up, and he signs off maybe a little more abruptly than he should, he glances at the clock in the corner of his monitor to confirm that Keith's own meeting should be over by now and gets up, heading out the door and down the hallways of the Atlas to Keith's office.

When he gets there, he knocks on the side of the open door before walking straight inside and up to his husband, whose back is toward him, wrapping his arms around him.

“Hi baby,” he says, smiling into Keith's hair.

Upon reflection, he's extremely lucky that Keith could probably smell it was him before he accosted him, because his husband has very quick reflexes and very sharp elbows. But as it is, Keith turns in his arms with a bewildered laugh and accepts his kiss smiling, if bemused.

“What is it?” he asks.

God, he's so pretty. No one's ever been so pretty. His eyes sparkle.

“Shiro?”

“Hm? Oh! Uh, I...I just wanted to give you a kiss,” he shrugs. “I missed you.” He feels his cheeks heating, because yeah, maybe this was a little silly, but it just felt necessary at the time.

“Sap...” Keith mutters, shaking his head, but his cheeks are pink too, and he's biting his lower lip the way he does when he doesn't want to show how wide he's smiling.

Now that Shiro's gotten to see him, to smell him and get some of his scent on his clothing to carry him through the rest of the day, he realizes he should really let them both do their jobs and says goodbye—but not before pulling him in and laying one last kiss on his lips.

The rest of the day is filled with meetings, each of them, unfortunately, separate from Keith's. Each time, Shiro finds himself growing more stressed and agitated after going a while without seeing his husband, tense and filled with undirected energy like a caged animal.

So in between meetings, he slips down the hallway and into Keith's office just to steal a kiss. He texts him regularly, throughout the day, nothing of substance, just wanting the contact if he can't have Keith with him physically. He's distracted to the point of being fairly useless in any of his meetings, eyes glued to his phone, waiting for it to light up and disappointed every time it does with a notification from someone other than Keith.

Keith indulges him with eye rolls and embarrassed, pleased smiles that he tucks his chin to hide.

When they drive home together, finally together, Shiro spends the drive with his free hand reaching across the console to rest on Keith's thigh, his prosthetic large and wide enough to span the width of it in a way that has a pleased rumbling noise wanting to kick up in his chest.

He always wants Keith, in every way possible—wants to be near him, to talk to him, to hear his thoughts. To be surrounded by his sweet scent, his warmth, the sound of his voice, to touch his skin. He wants to love him, to have him, to make him shudder and sigh. And right now, he wants it noticeably more than usual.

That's saying a lot, too. His baseline level of desire for Keith is pretty damn high. But right now, he feels like it's boiling over, like it's pushing the rest of the thoughts out of his brain, no room for them on top of the overwhelming need to press his face between Keith's legs and make him scream.

When they walk in their front door, Shiro is half-hard and ready to pick Keith up and carry him straight into the bedroom, but then Keith's stomach rumbles, and his train of thought comes to a screeching halt and all his focus switches immediately to getting Keith food.

They order takeout, getting pretty much half of the menu because Keith couldn't decide what he wanted and Shiro insisted on just ordering all of it. Keith throws on a movie that neither of them is really interested in and they eat on the couch, with Shiro gradually shuffling closer and closer, seeking more contact with Keith. He wishes he had him in his arms, even now, when there are takeout containers strewn everywhere and plates heaped with lo mein balanced on their laps. If he could grab Keith and pull him into his lap without causing a catastrophic mess, he would.

After the meal is finished and the copious leftovers are put away in the fridge, Shiro gets his wish, and they lounge cuddling on the couch, stretched out across the whole length of it with Keith lying in front of Shiro, back pressed to his front. Shiro has his flesh hand wormed under the hem of Keith's shirt, searching out his warmth, palming casually at his belly. He likes the way he can feel Keith breathing in the rise and fall of his stomach under his palm, the way he shivers and kicks out occasionally when it tickles, but then settles.

Keith sinks back further against Shiro, his whole body lax, fully relaxed. It satisfies Shiro somewhere deep and fundamental, feeling how comfortable and safe his mate feels here with him, maybe because of him.

Things are right, now. Keith is with him, pressed against him, and there's no one else around to get in the way. Shiro could almost purr with it.

He nuzzles his way into the soft warm crook of Keith's neck, scenting him, pleased when Keith tilts his head to give him better access. He rubs his cheek against Keith's mating mark, admiring the faintly silver, shiny lines of the scar, the smooth feel of it under his cheek.

He's not paying attention to the movie, but his thoughts aren't focused elsewhere—they're absent; his mind is nearly blank, filled entirely with Keith, the pure sensations of him. He's surrounded by the scent of him, his warmth, his softness leaning back against Shiro's chest, the faint feeling of his heartbeat under Shiro's palm. He moves his hand on Keith's chest to feel it more clearly.

After a while, without consciously intending to, just driven by some primal instinct, Shiro finds himself licking over Keith's mating mark, then nibbling at it gently, making sure not to bite in earnest.

Keith laughs, a short, confused burst, and he squirms, to which Shiro rumbles a noise of displeasure deep in his chest and pulls Keith closer.

"What are you doing?" There's a breathy tone to Keith's voice that has Shiro's dick twitching with interest.

He doesn't have an answer to that. He searches his mind to provide one, but it's unpleasant, pulls him out of the warm buzz blanketing him with his mate in his arms, so he stops trying and leans in to the good feelings. He starts pressing wet, open-mouthed kisses on Keith's neck, more intent behind them now as he lets his teeth graze the bite mark in between them, drags them over it.

Keith shudders and moans softly, stretching up into it, tilting his chin up, giving Shiro unfettered access to such a vulnerable, delicate part of himself without hesitation. Shiro preens at it internally, at the evidence that he's a good alpha, that he's been deemed worthy of such unrestricted trust. He sucks a mark into Keith's skin, then soothes over it with his tongue and pulls back far enough to get a look at it.

The words for what he's feeling won't quite string together in his head, but he knows he likes the sight of it, and images flash through his mind of Keith's neck decorated unmistakably with his marks when he goes to work tomorrow, of everyone noticing them and knowing just what they mean. They spark a flame in his core, spreading throughout his body and prickling the hairs on the back of his neck.

He moves an inch and starts working on another mark, laying down a line of purple jewels to adorn his husband's pretty neck.

The sounds of the movie have almost entirely faded from his awareness, now, turning into nothing more than a dull background noise, a source of light that flashes colors across Keith's skin, ever-changing. Keith is moving, shifting in his arms, pressing back against him and rubbing his thighs together.

"Shiro..." he moans eventually, a hint of a whine in it, because Shiro isn't taking this further. He's been busy, but now when he pulls back to examine his progress, he's happy with his work.

“Shhh, okay baby.”

He can attend to his husband now. His mate. Give him whatever he needs.

Shiro shifts his hips back just enough to get his hand between them, then grabs the back of Keith's waistband and pulls his sweatpants and briefs down past his ass. Immediately, he sees the glisten of slick between Keith's thighs, and a fraction of a moment later, he's hit by the smell of it, heady and sweet, smelling like love and lust and home. Keith's scent has changed since he and Shiro got together officially, especially the unique scent of his slick, like it's changing to be just for Shiro, just between the two of them, and it pleases and soothes something deep in Shiro's instincts to know that no one else has smelled him like this.

“Oh, sweetheart,” he groans. His head spins, like he's just taken a swig of whiskey, and his senses come into sharp focus, all narrowed in entirely on Keith. “Look at you. You're just soaking. Is that all for me?”

He plunges his hand into the slick, no hesitation, moaning at the feeling of his fingers sliding so easily between Keith's warm thighs, up between his cheeks. He spreads it around, then finds the heart of it, splitting his plush lips and feeling at his slit, where he's wettest.

Keith is having trouble forming words, mouth open in a silent moan as he arches his whole body, legs stretching and toes curling. He nods, and makes a choked noise in his throat, burying his face in the couch below him.

Shiro rubs over Keith's entrance clumsily and feels another burst of slick gushing out against his fingers. It's noisy; the movement of his fingers through Keith's folds makes a sloppy sound.

“Messy baby,” he mumbles. Keith whimpers.

He uses two fingers to push into Keith's hole, spreading it wide around them and sinking in deep. Keith's so silky inside, so hot and slippery. Strong, too, and Shiro grunts when Keith's muscles clamp down on him. His fingers are thick, but his cock is much thicker, nearly bursting out of his own pants now, grinding mindlessly into the clench of Keith's thighs below where his hand plays with him. He knows, though, that Keith will take him beautifully, open around him and let him in even as he's stretched nearly as wide as he can take—then wider, when Shiro's knot pops inside.

Keith is panting, head craned back and leaning on Shiro's chest, hand clawed into the couch in a grip that Shiro worries in passing might tear the upholstery. Wouldn't be the first time. There's a flush high on his cheeks, emphasizing the line of his cheekbone, and Shiro takes a moment to admire him. His lips are pink, plush from being chewed, parted in a way that makes Shiro want to push something in between them. His face is awash with pleasure, with desire; it's lax with it—no hint of stress, no traces of thoughts he's holding in.

Shiro pulls his fingers free with a slick sound and tugs his own sweatpants down far enough to pull out his cock, paying no mind to the sticky mess that comes with his hand.

Then, keeping his eyes trained on Keith's face, making sure he doesn't so much as blink, he strokes himself a couple of times, spreading Keith's slick over himself, and guides his head to notch against Keith's fluttering opening, then lets go to press his spread-wide hand against Keith's lower belly and sinks into him in one long, slow stroke.

As he does, he watches the way Keith's face changes—the way he cranes his head back further, parts his lips wider around a soft gasp, the way a small line appears between his eyebrows as they knit in pleasure at the stretch, the way the flush on his cheeks spreads down his neck and over his collarbones.

Shiro loves the way Keith blooms for him. He doesn't do it for anyone else. It's not just in the bedroom, either—the way Keith's whole being lights up when he finds Shiro's eyes across the room at a diplomatic party he doesn't want to be at, the way his body language changes when Shiro comes to stand next to him and places a hand on the nape of his neck, relaxing and opening, turning towards him like a sunflower to the sun. The privilege of being the person Keith opens up around, the one he can truly relax and be himself with, is one Shiro will never take for granted.

Warm sappy feelings aside, though, there's no denying that the way Keith reacts during sex goes straight to his dick, too. It only takes a few deep, powerful thrusts in before some kind of dam breaks in Keith, like it always does, and the noises start to spill out of him unrestrained. And there are a lot of them. He's loud, high-pitched and desperate in a way he would never let anyone else hear—it took Shiro a while to earn the trust for Keith to let him hear, either.

Shiro loves him like this. He loves him.

His thighs ache from the strain of the position as he keeps up a sharp, unyielding pace, pounding into Keith with one hand kept solid and firm on his stomach to hold him where he is, but he barely notices it. Keith is squirming, panting, moaning, then finally a purr breaks loose in his chest and rumbles through him. Shiro meets it with a gasp. He loves that sound most of all. It means he's doing something right, making Keith feel good and safe and loved and happy.

Shiro bites down on Keith's shoulder and comes with a growl, hips stuttering and grinding deep into Keith, shifting and pressing him into the couch. As soon as his awareness has come back enough, he leans back, hooking an arm around Keith and bringing him with him, letting go of his shoulder and licking over the dimpled bite marks.

He wraps a hand around Keith's cock and finds, with surprise, the stickiness of come already coating it—he must have come without Shiro noticing—but he's a thorough man if nothing else, so he closes his fist around it and strokes him anyway, wringing one more mewling orgasm out of him before he collapses, boneless, and pushes Shiro's hand away.

In the aftermath, the sounds of the movie fade back in. It's nearing the end, it seems, explosions and cars screeching on pavement flashing across the screen. They're both breathless, panting to recover, and Shiro can feel Keith's purr along with his heartbeat through his back against his chest.

They stay like that for a few minutes, just basking in each other, in the calm, the quiet, the aching thrum of tired pleasure in their bodies. Shiro's still buried inside Keith, sensitive and softening. He can feel every twitch of Keith's body, every involuntary clench around him as his muscles relax. The sensations are too sharp, but the feeling of still being surrounded by Keith is good enough that he stays where he is, just for a little while longer.

He noses into Keith's soft hair, inhales his scent. He presses soft kisses to each mark he made on his neck, then one lingering one to his mating bite. Keith's purr grows louder, and he finds Shiro's hand, still on his stomach, weaving their fingers together. Their rings clink against each other, one large and one smaller.

Eventually, Keith yawns, and that prompts Shiro into action. He brought his husband pleasure, now it's time to take care of him in other ways.

He stands, lifting Keith into his arms as he does. Keith makes a grumbling noise, but considering how boneless he is and how his head immediately flops into Shiro's chest, it was the right call. Shiro carries Keith to the bathroom and sets him on the sink to free a hand to turn on the water. When he turns back, Keith is looking up at him with a dopey kind of love clear as day on his face, and it makes Shiro want to melt. He kisses Keith's forehead and strokes his hair back where sweat has stuck it to his skin, then uses the built-in thermometer in his prosthesis to check that the temperature of the water is just right.

In the shower, Keith manages to get enough control of his legs back that he can stand under his own power, but Shiro still coaxes him to lean into his chest as he runs a soapy washcloth over him.

"Can I wash your hair?" he asks, playing with the long, loose ends of it.

Keith hums and nods, eyes closed and cheek pillowed comfortably on Shiro's pectoral. He feels warmed from the inside, needed and trusted, and worthy of it.

He takes the job seriously—taking the detachable shower head down and running the water over Keith's hair methodically until it's soaked through, then working Keith's eucalyptus-scented shampoo into his hair thoroughly, massaging his scalp as he goes. Keith's purr picks back up, vibrating against his chest, and Shiro can't help but stand a little straighter with pride. He washes the suds out, waiting until the water runs clear before moving on and smoothing conditioner into his hair, making sure to coat every strand in it. Keith often skimps on his conditioner, saying it's too expensive to use globs of every time, but Shiro thinks Keith deserves soft hair that detangles easily, no matter the price.

When they're both clean, Shiro sits Keith on the edge of the bathtub and wraps him in a soft robe after he's been dried, then runs a comb carefully through his wet hair, making sure to get out any tangles. Keith watches him quietly with a thoughtful look on his face, but Shiro doesn't ask what he's thinking. He knows Keith will tell him if he wants to.

They end up falling into bed naked afterwards, not bothering to put on clothes after the warm comfort of their shower and too tired to care. Curled together, Shiro relishes the feeling of skin against skin. Keith's face is buried in his neck, nosing unconsciously at his scent glands from time to time as he drifts off.

Shiro heaves a satisfied sigh and pulls Keith closer, feeling himself beginning to slip into a heavy sleep. Looking back on the day, he has admittedly felt a little weird. But now, he's too content to care.

Tuesday morning begins with Keith waking up with a Shiro-sized weight draped on top of him, nearly smothering him with his chest. He wiggles out from under him and gives Shiro a playful swat on the ass when he grumbles at losing Keith's warmth and pouts at him from the bed. In the bathroom, he first lifts his arms into a good, deep stretch. His muscles are sore—the good kind that comes from fucking and exercise, and he sighs deeply at the feeling of stretching them out.

Behind him, there's a rustling of the sheets and the heavy sound of Shiro's feet hitting the floor as he stands.

With a yawn, Keith releases the stretch and rubs his hand over his eyes, getting the sleep out of them before he blinks blearily at the mirror. The first thing he notices is his wild bedhead—not surprising after sleeping with it loose, though his hair is pleasantly soft and smooth from Shiro's thorough treatment. The second thing, shortly after, is the hickeys.

"Shiro!" he exclaims, staring open-mouthed at the absolutely ravaged state of his neck, littered with deep purple bruises.

"Hmm?" comes Shiro's sleepy reply as he walks up behind him.

"Look what you did to my neck!"

In the mirror, their eyes meet, and it takes only a moment for Shiro's eyes to flick to the marks and then guiltily back to Keith's.

Shiro wraps his arms around Keith's middle and rests his chin on his shoulder, pulling what could only be described as puppy eyes.

"Sorry," he says, not sounding at all sorry.

Keith rolls his eyes. "Ridiculous..." he mutters. "The amount of shit Lance is going to give me when he sees...and Kolivan's stare. He won't say anything, but that's somehow even worse." He cringes at the thought and quickly starts thinking of what excuse he might be able to use to not have his video on during his virtual meeting with the Blades today.

Shiro is quiet for a minute, still draped over him while Keith starts brushing his teeth.

"Are you mad at me?" he asks after the pause, and there's a vulnerable tone in his voice that makes Keith turn around to look him in the eyes, not his reflection.

He looks genuinely worried, eyes wide and almost sad, and Keith can't have that.

"Baby, no. I'm not mad. I—I don't mind if you want to mark me. I mean, yeah, it'll be a little embarrassing, but uh, I actually...I actually kind of like it."

He doesn't know why his cheeks are heating. Shiro has had his tongue up his ass, there's not exactly any need for acting demure at this point. But truth be told, the idea of everyone he sees on the Atlas today—and for the rest of the week, probably—seeing the plain evidence that his mate loves him, protects him and takes care of him...it has more than just his cheeks growing hot.

He's not the only one, if the way Shiro's looking at his reflection in the mirror now is any evidence. His eyes are hot, and fixed on the image of Keith with his neck scattered with his marks, like he's imagining what everyone else will see. What they'll know.

When Shiro's arms start to tighten around his waist, Keith wriggles out of his grasp and turns on the hot water to wash his face.

"Don't even try to start something," he scolds. "We'll both be late for work."

They're late for work.

Throughout the day, other little things start to crop up. Shiro packs Keith a lunch to bring to work, his favorite kind of sandwich wrapped up all neatly in parchment paper with crisp, perfect folds, plus a clump of grapes and a few thin slices of cucumber. He hands it off to Keith when they're rushing out the door for work like it's something precious, like it's incredibly important to him that Keith eats it.

"I know you don't have time to take a lunch today between meetings," he says, "and you have to make sure you eat."

When he does eat it, later, Shiro is in his office while they both join a call together, and he watches him as he eats, practically glowing when he can tell Keith likes it.

Shiro's in Keith's office a lot, in fact, popping in whenever he can with an adorable look of concern on his face that melts immediately into relief when he lays eyes on Keith. He's touchy, too, extra affectionate and, frankly, horny.

He's scenting Keith a lot. Sometimes subtly, sometimes not at all. Especially when there are others around.

None of this would necessarily be unusual on its own, but all at once, it's enough for Keith to notice. He doesn't know what to make of it.

Keith feels people's eyes on him throughout the day, too—on his neck, to be specific. He can't help but to preen a little, hold his head higher for them all to see. He's glad he decided not to cover the marks up. The alien diplomats visiting from other planets notice, too, and some of them are more obvious about their interest than humans would be, some looking at his neck and nodding with something that translates pretty clearly as a kind of impressed approval, or in one case, arousal. He finds himself thankful that Shiro isn't there when that happens, or he's pretty sure they would have an international diplomatic incident on their hands.

As expected, the first time he sees his friends, the pleased feeling turns a corner sharply into annoyance, most of which is directed straight at Lance.

“So, did Shiro run into an alien that temporarily turned him into an octopus last night, or what?” Lance asks from across the conference table where the group of them have lingered after a meeting.

Keith glares, baring his teeth a little. “No,” he growls.

At the end of the table, Hunk laughs nervously. “Well I’m glad you guys are uh, keeping the magic alive.” He scratches the back of his head. “You know, I’ve heard a lot of people say that marriage absolutely killed their sex lives—“

“Not those two!” Lance interrupts, sticking a finger up in the air as if he were the uncontested expert on the subject of Keith and Shiro fucking. “Nope, they’re always going at it like rabbits. Don’t think anything could slow them down.”

Beside him, Pidge groans. Her head has been in her hand for a while now. “Lance, just stop while you’re ahead.”

“What? Am I wrong?”

Matt chuckles softly and shakes his head. He’s been mostly quiet, which Keith appreciates.

“I ran into Shiro earlier when he was on his way to your office,” Matt says. “He seemed, uh. Weird.”

Keith’s always appreciated Matt’s bluntness. He lowers his hackles a little. Frowns at his folded hands on the table. He’s quiet for a minute, and then he shrugs.

“Yeah, he’s been sort of...extra Shiro the past couple of days. I don’t know what’s up.”

Matt makes a considering noise.

“Elaborate,” Pidge says.

So Keith explains. Leaving out most of the details, but giving enough to give them an idea of how he’s been acting.

“Oh,” Lance exclaims after, like it’s obvious, “sounds like he’s going into rut.”

At that, Keith positively hisses, leaning forward against the table like he might just leap over it.

“Don’t be a fucking idiot, Lance,” he snarls, with maybe more venom than is really necessary.

Lance immediately puts his hands up in his classic ‘what did I do wrong’ position, Hunk starts chuckling nervously again, Pidge throws her head back and rolls her eyes, and Matt

meets Keith's eyes knowingly, grimacing slightly. At least there's someone here who understands.

Because Shiro's *not* going into rut. Because he doesn't. Can't. Hasn't since his first sort of semi-rut as a teenager first presenting as an alpha, before his illness and the side effects of its treatment fucked with his body and his hormones enough that his whole mating cycle essentially went on hold, waiting for things to get back to normal, to stop having to fight for its life before resuming its natural background patterns. The thing is, things never got back to normal. Because while his illness was treated and controlled, it wasn't cured, and because when he went off to Kerberos, he didn't come back. Whether it was the lasting damage his illness caused, or the massive stress and trauma he went through after his capture and the war that ensued, they don't really know, but the end result is that Shiro's ruts are gone for good. He's never had a real one.

It doesn't matter, in the grand scheme of things. It's hardly the biggest scar Shiro's history has cruelly left on him, and it's not like the ruts would have provided anything they can't do without them. Still, it's just another way the universe has hurt Shiro, left its indelible mark on him, taken a part of life away from him that he should have gotten to have, that they should have gotten to experience together. It stings. It makes Keith hurt on his behalf.

Matt is watching him, and he offers a sympathetic smile.

Keith sighs. He's tired, and he has a headache, and really he just wants to go home and be with Shiro. This was his last meeting of the day, so there's nothing stopping him from leaving, and that's just what he's going to do.

"Well, anyway...I'm gonna go. See you guys tomorrow."

Hunk wishes him a good rest of his day, and Pidge apologizes on Lance's behalf—who's still trying to defend himself—but they all fade quickly as the door behind him shuts and he's left in the empty hallway.

Some of the tension he's carrying in his body fades during the walk through the Atlas to Shiro's office, so by the time he gets there, he's more tired and ready to fall into his husband's arms than he is angry.

When he puts his palm on the door lock and it swings open for him, though, Shiro turns, sniffs the air, and immediately gets up from his desk and comes to Keith's side.

"Is everything okay, baby?"

"M'fine. Just tired. Can we go home?"

"Of course, starlight." Shiro's petting his hair already, holding him, waves of comforting scent coming off of him. Keith turns his face to seek it out instinctively, pushing his nose into Shiro's throat.

By the time they get home, Keith's already feeling better. Shiro convinces him it's okay to doze off in the car while he drives, and he reaches across the console and holds Keith's hand

the entire way. The stress of the day hasn't gone away, but he's been able to push it into the background in favor of spending a pleasant evening with his husband. He's already thinking about the cuddling he's going to get, and wondering what kind of takeout they'll order.

Inside, their house is quiet and dark and familiar, and Keith can finally fully relax in the knowledge that it's only him and Shiro, here. He doesn't have to worry about anything or anyone else.

Shiro turns on the light in the foyer and bends down to help Keith get out of his shoes, kissing his knee as he does. Keith blinks in momentary surprise at the tenderness, even though it shouldn't be surprising when it comes from Shiro. Sometimes, he still has to pause to remember that it's okay to be taken care of now, that it isn't going to be yanked away from him when he needs it most. He puts a hand on Shiro's shoulder to balance himself, and when Shiro smiles up at him, Keith sees his whole future in his face.

When Shiro stands, he steps close into Keith's space and guides him with a hand on the back of his head to scent him. Keith goes easily, breathing in deep and rubbing his cheek up against Shiro's scent glands, and they stand there like that for a while, until Keith's tiredness makes itself known again and he shifts on his sore feet.

Shiro notices, of course, and makes a funny, concerned chuff in his throat.

"Why don't you get changed out of your work clothes, baby? Then we can order from the Vietnamese place in town?"

Shiro follows him into the bedroom and rustles through the drawers of their wardrobe while Keith unbuttons his uniform, searching for something.

He straightens when he finds it, and turns to Keith, holding a bundle of fabric in his arms and wearing a hopeful expression.

"Want to wear this?" he asks, that vulnerable tone there in his voice again.

Keith looks down at what Shiro's holding out towards him. He recognizes it quickly as a piece of Shiro's clothing, not his own—a sweatshirt, one that's big enough to be encompassing and cozy even on Shiro's huge frame, one of his favorites.

"It'll be really comfy," he adds.

It's no secret that Shiro likes Keith in his clothes, he just usually doesn't ask for it directly. Not that Keith minds.

He steps forward, taking the sweatshirt from Shiro gladly. It's soft between his fingers, and he brings it to his nose reflexively, pressing his face into the fabric. It's covered in Shiro's scent, duller than when Keith scents him directly but still soothing, and he takes a deep breath of it like it's fresh ocean air. He feels warmer already, before even pulling it over his head.

It's huge on him, unsurprisingly, and as it settles over the tops of his thighs, he feels pleasantly surrounded by it, like being held by Shiro secondhand.

When he looks back up, Shiro is staring at him like Keith is the sweetest thing he's ever seen.

"Pretty," he manages, voice husky and a little strained. Keith could swear he can see his pupils dilating all the way from here.

Keith snorts. "Like you've never seen me in your sweatshirt before."

"Hmm. Never gets old." Shiro smirks, then gives Keith a quick kiss as he passes by and heads to the kitchen.

They hunch together, pouring over the takeout menu and picking out frankly too much food to order for dinner while Shiro not-so subtly fawns over Keith in his sweatshirt, still captivated. He's running his big hands all over Keith's body without purpose, like he doesn't even know he's doing it, but just can't keep his hands off of him. Skating under the shirt, fitting around his ribs. When he's on the phone ordering, one hand finds its way down to grab a healthy handful of Keith's ass, and Keith has to muffle his yelp of surprise so it isn't heard on the other end of the line. Shiro doesn't move his hand.

They eat cuddled on the couch together, surrounded by takeout containers. Shiro pulls Keith close when they sit down, nearly into his lap—he probably would have if Keith let him.

Shiro's feeling playful, apparently. It's something Keith appreciates especially nowadays when it comes out, because he's so thankful that they're in a position now where that side of Shiro *can* come out. It's something he didn't see for so long, that now he treasures it when he does.

After they've eaten and cleaned up, lounging on the couch turns into an impromptu sparring session, initiated by Shiro, who's suddenly full of energy and a need to get it out. He tackles Keith onto the couch first, landing him on his back and then pulling back, half letting him go, inviting Keith to try to get away.

Not one to back down from a challenge, Keith hooks a leg around Shiro's waist and twists, using the torque of his body to roll Shiro onto the floor and land on top of him, grabbing his wrists and pinning them to the carpet above his head with a little growl.

Beneath him, Shiro is grinning, and Keith can see the gleaming sharp of his canines.

One thing Keith has always loved about sparring with Shiro is that they're exceptionally well-matched. Neither of them can reliably get control over the other, which leads to exhilarating, challenging grappling that they both enjoy. Shiro has the edge on raw strength and size, but Keith is faster, more agile. They've both got the training and experience to make them good fighters, the intelligence to put those advantages to use.

They can go at it for hours, pinning each other and then letting go to do it all again, until they're sweating and flushed pink with exertion and more than a little arousal. Often, the fighting leads to fucking, including when the sparring takes place in the shared gym on the Atlas or in the Castle of Lions, and they have to find the nearest semi-private space while tearing each other's clothes off as they go—which has led to a number of awkward

encounters with unsuspecting friends and coworkers just trying to get something out of the supply closet and finding Shiro pounding Keith against the shelves.

Now, when Keith rolls his hips down, cocky, teasing, he can feel that Shiro is already stiffening. They've only just begun.

Shiro takes the moment of distraction to surge upwards, unbalancing Keith and launching them into another scramble.

Twenty minutes later, they're still wrestling on the floor of their living room, trading playful growls and bursts of happy laughter. There's a vigor to Shiro's moves, an energy behind them. He's definitely hard now, as is Keith, but neither of them does anything about it—not until finally, Shiro pins him and bites down on his neck, a shallow mimic of his mating bite.

Immediately, Keith goes boneless and lets a high keen escape his throat, and Shiro ruts against him pointedly. The undercurrent of arousal that Keith was enjoying throughout the sparring spikes, blooming low in his belly, and he's suddenly desperate.

"Shiro, Shiro, fuck me, hurry," Keith gasps, already clawing at Shiro's clothes.

Shiro responds with a growl leading into a happy chuff, his instincts conflicted between raw, dominant need and the desire to please his mate that is now being satisfied. Keith manages a breathless laugh despite the ever-heightening *alpha, mate, submit, fuck me* throbbing in his veins, threatening to drown out his more conscious thoughts.

Shiro doesn't even seem to notice—too focused on yanking down Keith's leggings, just far enough. A new growl rumbles in his throat when he sees the slick already painting Keith's thighs, just from their sparring.

"Yeah," Keith pants, "see what you do to me? *Ahh, fuck, baby.*" Shiro's already inside of him, thrusting a few times to bury himself all of the way into Keith's tight heat. Shiro noses at the scent gland on Keith's neck, groaning, and drags his teeth over it, open-mouthed. Keith's panting rapidly, trying to catch his breath, relishing the stretch of being split open wide around Shiro's girth.

He doesn't get a chance to adjust before Shiro's pulling back until just the tip of him is keeping Keith's hole open, catching on the edges of it, and then plunging back in. Keith yowls with it, dragging his nails down Shiro's back where he clings onto him. Shiro snarls, and Keith feels his knot, already, popped and pushing up against Keith with every thrust.

Keith's so slick that the slide is slippery and easy despite his tightness, and Shiro can fuck in at a brutal pace. The house is filled with their panting and traded growls, the slap of sweat-dampened skin together as Shiro's hips snap against Keith's ass, likely leaving bruises and pinkened skin on his ass and the backs of his thighs.

"Yes, please, please, Shiro." Keith is clawing at Shiro's back, arching up into him, and he knows he's leaving angry red marks that'll be there in the morning, but he can't help it.

With each thrust, Keith's cock, trapped between their stomachs, gets sweet friction, and Shiro is pushing up against every sweet spot inside of him, and he's spiraling surprisingly quickly towards orgasm. As the knot in his belly tightens and high, breathy whines squeeze through his throat, Keith finds himself pushing back on Shiro's knot each time it bumps against his hole.

He doesn't usually take a knot outside of heat, unless he's especially horny and has been well-stretched, but right now, there's a feverish *want* in him that has him locking his ankles behind Shiro's back and pulling him closer.

"Go ahead, knot me, *alpha*, AH!"

Not needing to be told twice, Shiro puts enough strength behind his next thrust to push his knot in too—it takes a couple of insistent grinds of his hips to pop it all the way in, and when it does, Keith shrieks as he comes, clenching down on Shiro's knot. Shiro spills inside of him; Keith can feel it, wants almost to move closer to it, to get Shiro deeper inside of him, even though he's already buried as deep as Keith's body could possibly handle.

Keith feels like his body is buzzing, hot and flushed and dizzy with the feeling of being so full, so stretched to the limit.

"God," he groans, "hah, Shiro, fuck."

Shiro licks at his neck a couple of times, appeasing.

Each twitch of Shiro's cock inside him makes Keith's thighs twitch involuntarily, hypersensitive, and small aborted whines bubble up in his throat.

On top of him, Shiro's weight becomes heavier, sinking to rest on Keith as he comes down too.

"Wow," Keith pants, catching his breath. "We should spar more often."

Shiro grumbles, a noise almost like a purr that vibrates in his chest and makes Keith chuckle. He strokes Shiro's hair, the back of his neck, and lets himself float pleasantly back to earth while Shiro's knot comes down.

After a few minutes, when Shiro's knot has shrunk enough for him to slide free, Shiro shifts, readjusting. He wiggles down, and Keith lets him, confused but too sated to say anything. He stops when his head is level with Keith's chest, then lays it down, his ear pressed to the center of it, just to the left of his sternum. Then, he's quiet and still, a heavy weight draped over Keith, the rhythm of his breath slow and steady. Keith thinks he's listening to his heartbeat.

It's a tender moment, and Keith isn't willing to disrupt it, so they just lie there for a while, together, unperturbed. Keith is already sore, but it's a good kind of sore—the ache of well-used muscles and a good fuck. He wouldn't be surprised if Shiro started snoring soon. Then he'll have a giant pile of man to figure out how to get into bed. He closes his eyes and smiles, and can't help the happy chirp that spills out of him.

This is what they get, now, after all the pain and struggle. They get each other.

Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

Things escalate.

Keith feels good. That's the first fragment of a thought that makes its way to his consciousness as he drifts slowly awake in the morning.

Really good, wow.

Why does he feel so good?

First, he becomes aware of the light that filters in through their curtains in the early mornings, squeezes his eyelids against it. Next, his own breathing, faster than normal, a little uneven. Then, the lips around his cock, wet heat enveloping him, surrounding him with a sweet pressure.

Keith groans, shifting on the mattress now that he's finally awake enough to move. "Fuck, Shiro."

Shiro hums, which makes Keith's hips jump involuntarily at the vibration. Shiro just rides through it, and Keith is pretty sure he would be smirking if his lips weren't stretched around Keith's dick.

"God, what's so special about this week?" Keith manages to get out one sentence before Shiro swallows him down to the hilt and removes any ability he has for coherent speech for a while.

A few moments later, Shiro pops off, and Keith finally opens his eyes, squinting down at him. Shiro's grinning, all fangs but somehow also puppy-like, his fluffy forelock mussed and standing on end.

"What, I can't just want my beautiful husband?"

Keith rolls his eyes, ready to scoff, but then Shiro's putting two fingers in his mouth, and Keith knows what that means. He licks his lips, swallowing, and shifts so his legs fall open wider.

Shiro holds eye contact, and Keith couldn't look away if he wanted to. His eyes are trained on Shiro's fingers as he pulls them out of his mouth, shiny with spit, and then he's laving his tongue over the head of Keith's dick and slurping it down again.

Keith throws his head back against the pillow just as the tips of Shiro's fingers find his ass, circling his rim, teasing for just a minute before two pry inside. They're so thick, and firm, and they stretch him so nicely, working their way in where his body is soft and pliant from sleep, willingly making way.

Pleasure is sparking sharply through him as Shiro works him over with his mouth, taking him to the hilt easily. He's so sensitive, and each stroke of Shiro's tongue has his cock twitching, sending tingling pleasure down through his groin that spreads throughout his body, standing the hairs on his skin on end.

Shiro finds his prostate quickly, efficiently, nudging against it with practiced fingertips, just the right amount of pressure to make Keith moan and arch. He sucks at the head of Keith's cock at the same time that he twists his fingers around to rub his knuckles up against his sweet spot, making Keith jump and shout.

Keith's still reeling from being woken up like this, and he already feels his legs trembling, which Shiro no doubt notices. He pulls off of Keith's cock, humming happily and continuing to pump his fingers, spreading and twisting them to stretch Keith out and make his toes curl.

"Can I fuck you here, baby?" Shiro asks sweetly, kissing the tendon at the juncture of Keith's thigh.

"Yeah, uhn, please." Keith's hands are clawing at the sheets beneath him, opening and closing rhythmically.

Shiro shuffles up onto his knees, not removing his fingers or stopping their thrusting as he uses his other hand to pull his cock free of his sweatpants. He strokes it a couple of times, and it slaps against his stomach, heavy and hard. It makes Keith's mouth water.

He leans forward, prosthetic hand braced next to Keith's head, and notches the fat head of it against Keith's rim. In one move, he slides his fingers out and pushes his cock in while Keith's still open.

"*Ohhhh, ah*, Shiro, mmm." Keith's rim flutters around the thick intrusion, and he relishes the sting of the stretch.

When Shiro buries himself to the hilt, he repositions, grabbing Keith's legs and hooking them over his shoulders so he can bend down and lay himself over Keith, bending him nearly in half until he can kiss him.

The kissing is mostly one-sided, because Keith is just moaning, mouth open permanently as Shiro starts to fuck into him steadily. He rolls his hips just right, catching the head of his dick on Keith's sweet spot, filling him up just right. He can feel his cheeks heat, knows he's probably flushing down to his chest

"That good, sweetheart?" Shiro growls into his throat in between kisses and licks to his skin. "You feel so good. Always ready to take me, hmm? So perfect."

Keith isn't coherent enough to respond, but he doesn't need to, just clings to Shiro's shoulders and hangs on, trading sloppy kisses with him when he can get his lips and tongue to work.

They don't have the time to draw it out, not on a morning before work, so Shiro doesn't hold back, pounding into Keith's hole and using every little thing he knows about Keith's body to have him keening and writhing, teetering on the edge in no time. It isn't long before the taught band inside Keith snaps, and he comes, drawn-out and toe-curling, leaving him gasping.

He almost falls back asleep in the afterglow, jostled but unmoved by Shiro getting up from the bed to get in the shower, pressing a kiss in between Keith's shoulder blades before he leaves.

Once he's able to drag himself out of bed, Keith steps into the bathroom where Shiro is showering, and immediately, he's struck by a sweet, powerful scent that sets him back on his heels. It's Shiro, but he smells even better than usual, more potent and spicy, thick on the steamy air. It makes Keith dizzy. He wants more of it, wants to get closer, but he shakes his head, telling himself to snap out of it. They can't be late for work two days in a row. People will start to talk.

He's brushing his teeth when Shiro steps out of the shower and turns around to grab a towel, and he nearly chokes on his toothpaste at the sight of the scratch marks that are slashed in bright red lines down his back.

"Shit. Did I do that?" Keith mumbles half-coherently around his toothbrush.

Shiro turns, pausing in the middle of drying himself off and craning his head to look over his shoulder. He shrugs, then smirks, standing a little straighter. Like he likes the marks. Like he's proud.

"Sure did, baby." He rubs the towel through his hair, leaving it spiked up and messy, ridiculous—but oddly hot coupled with the self-satisfied glimmer in his eyes.

"Alright, no shirtless workouts until those heal," Keith says, "I can't imagine how long I'd be getting weird looks from the Blades if they saw." He grimaces at the thought. Not that the hickeys all over his own neck are exactly subtle. But still.

"What, you don't want everyone to know how good I am to you?" Shiro teases, but maybe he's not teasing, because his eyes are dark, and he's stalking towards Keith with his feet leaving wet prints on the tile floor.

Keith's breath catches in his throat, his heart quickens.

"Shiro, we have work—"

Before he can finish his thought, Shiro's on him, hooking an arm around his waist and drawing him in, kissing his lips hotly, hard enough that Keith has to arch back in his hold. He doesn't stop at one kiss, either. When he lets go of Keith's lips with a satisfied hum, he moves

to his jawline, kisses down his neck, while his hands wander, feeling Keith up and leaving him gasping, a little dizzy, and definitely hard.

“Alright, do you think the Atlas would cover for us if we were late...?”

He can feel Shiro smirking against his neck, then yelps when he nips it with a chuckle.

“Maybe we should find out.”

They spend most of the day together, in various meetings that they’re both a part of, which would normally be great, except...Keith is struggling. Because everywhere they go together, he can’t stop getting distracted by Shiro’s scent. That new, overpowering scent that makes him want to lean closer, to crawl into Shiro’s lap in the middle of some Arusian diplomat’s presentation and bury his face in his neck.

He tries to watch other people’s reactions, to see if they notice it too. It’s hard to tell—most of the people who work on the Atlas are experienced in keeping their true reactions under control. There are some moments, though—quick double-takes, nearly imperceptible pauses, small creases in the brows. It can’t possibly be as strong for them as it is for Keith, though. There’s no way they would be able to hide it that well.

The other, more embarrassing problem, is the fact that Keith is finding that he’s pretty much just leaking slick whenever Shiro is in close proximity to him. Which, sure, he’s not unused to being turned on by his husband at work. But this seems excessive. And inconvenient, considering the fact that his morning is packed full of back-to-back meetings today, meaning there’s nothing he can do about it. He’s left to just shift uncomfortably in his seat, rubbing his thighs together under the table and then gritting his teeth in frustration when that’s all he can do.

Shiro definitely notices, picking up the scent of Keith’s want, his nostrils flaring and pupils widening, knuckles white in their grip on the arm of his chair. Keith can only hope that the rest of the room can’t tell.

At lunch, Keith is hoping they can slip away, but Lance catches them on their way out of the conference room and drags them to the cafeteria, where they end up at a table with Pidge, Matt, and Hunk. As soon as they’ve sat down with their food, Shiro is scooting his chair closer to Keith’s, like the foot of space between them is just too much. He eats his meal one-handed, with the other arm wrapped around Keith, hand resting possessively on his hip.

Keith’s focus is zeroed in on it the whole time, unable to get unstuck from that feeling, from the warmth of Shiro against his side. The others talk around him, but his replies are delayed, distant, and he catches a couple of smirks and eye rolls from across the table. He can’t even bring himself to care. Shiro’s thumb is stroking a slow, deliberate pattern on his hipbone, tucking up underneath his shirt. It’s almost hypnotizing.

They’re at their last meeting of the day, thank god, and Keith is ready for it to be over. The meeting is with a representative who looks vaguely like a frog—they’re from a far-off planet

that's newly interested in joining the coalition, and they've been getting on Keith's nerves. His hackles have been up basically since they entered the room, and it takes Shiro's grounding hand on his knee under the table to keep him from breaking his diplomatic composure.

The representative has been arguing with each thing they tell them, questioning everything they say about what the coalition will need from them if they are going to join. Keith's been annoyed enough that he barely even notices Shiro's scent souring, or the way his hand is tightening on his knee, or the fact that the rest of the room has started staring.

They're arguing with Keith in circles about the requirement for the planet to surrender all of its inter-galactic weaponry when the alien scoffs, rolls their eyes, and sits back, crossing their arms.

"Well," they say in a biting tone, "clearly *you* don't know what you're talking about. Isn't there someone more experienced in diplomacy that I could speak to?"

"Don't you *dare* talk to him like that," Shiro spits, and Keith is shocked into silence by the venom in his voice. When he whips his head around, he sees Shiro's face twisted in anger, his teeth bared threateningly in a display of alpha aggression that Keith has never seen before outside of actual, life-or-death battle.

He can't look away from Shiro, but he's sure the alien is stunned and cowering, and he can feel the rest of the room's eyes on them.

"*Shiro*," Keith whispers, because yeah, the alien is being an asshole, but this is a diplomatic meeting, and several of the coalition's leading members are here, watching Shiro lose control.

Shiro doesn't growl, but it's a near thing; Keith can hear the rumble starting in the base of his throat and knows he has to deescalate this right now.

"Sorry about that," Keith says as he takes hold of Shiro's arm and begins to stand up, technically maintaining politeness but making no effort to hide the sarcastic tone of his voice. "But I believe this meeting is over. If your planet is still interested in joining the coalition, I suggest they send another representative at a later time."

Shiro's still tense, but his attention is shaken loose somewhat from the alien representative when Keith grabs him, his snarl falling as he looks up at Keith instead, a kind of confusion passing over his face. He goes easily as Keith tugs him up and then steps backwards, doing his best to get them out of the room before Shiro's sharp, furious scent gets any stronger. As it is, their coworkers are already failing to hide their expressions as it fills the small conference room.

In the hallway, once they've gotten far enough away and rounded a corner where it's quiet, Keith stops and spins Shiro around to face him.

"What was that?!"

Shiro looks conflicted. Chastised, apologetic, with those puppy eyes that make Keith want to cradle his head in his hands. But he's still glancing down the hallway with that sharpness in his gaze, like he wants to go back and give the alien another piece of his mind.

"Hey," he says, taking Shiro's cheek in his hand and pulling his face back to him. "Eyes on me."

Shiro complies, and a blush rises on his cheeks. "I'm sorry," he mumbles.

Keith raises an eyebrow. "Are you?"

There's a pause, then a huff. "Well, did you hear what they said to you?"

Keith laughs, shaking his head. "I know, I know."

Shiro's quiet, still staring at him. Like he's waiting for something. "I-I just wanted to defend you. I needed to."

Keith takes a close look at him. He's still breathing heavily from the adrenaline, chest rising and falling rapidly. He looks one part embarrassed, one part proud. And Keith would be lying if he said he wasn't a little pleased too.

"Mmm. I know, baby. Thank you for defending me. You're a good mate. I know you'll always protect me."

One moment, Shiro's eyes are widening, and the next, he's turning on his heel, grabbing Keith's hand and taking off down the hallway, with Keith stumbling along behind him with a surprised noise.

Shiro beelines to Keith's office in record time, drawing looks from everyone they pass on the way—luckily, no one important. He hardly notices, anyway. There's no room for caring what other people will think, not with all the feelings rushing through his veins, almost overwhelming in their force, pounding in his ears.

The guilt he felt when he realized that he'd lost his cool at the representative has faded into the background again, overpowered by the instincts that made him do it in the first place—the need to protect, to defend, to be a good alpha, a good mate. To make sure everyone had no doubts that he would fight for his omega.

He'd tried to shake those feelings away once Keith got him away from there and focused his attention on him, the anger temporarily fading in favor of painful chagrin, because his mate was scolding him, he'd done something wrong—but then, hearing his mate's praise, the confirmation he needed that his mate feels safe because of him, that he's doing his job, they all came rushing back.

Along with them, this time, is a burning need to mark his territory, to confirm to himself and to everyone else that Keith is his to protect, because clearly he hasn't gotten that message across clearly enough.

So when he presses his hand to the lock pad on Keith's office door and it opens for them with a whoosh, Shiro acts on instinct, barely letting the door close behind them before he's maneuvering Keith over to his desk and crowding him up against it, ducking his head down to Keith's neck straight away and breathing in his scent. Faintly, he notices Keith gasp and bring a hand up to the back of his head, but he's busy licking over Keith's scent gland and then rubbing his own all over it, laying down sloppy kisses as he goes.

"Shiro..." he hears, and he chuffs in response. He's not sure what his mate wants, but he'll give it to him.

He takes Keith's wrists one by one and turns them so he can access the delicate underside, where mores scent glands lie. He nips them and then rubs up against them, getting his own scent all over them, leaving his mark.

But it's not enough.

There's still something itching under his skin, even though Keith smells like him now, just as he should. He pauses for a moment and makes a frustrated noise somewhere in the back of his throat. Keith is looking up at him, watching him. There's something in his expression that Shiro can't read right now, and he wants to ask, but then he catches it—the scent of someone else in the room, leftover no doubt from some low-ranking officer stopping by with paperwork or some meeting Keith had earlier. Keith's office doesn't smell like him, and that just won't do.

Shiro dips his head and seals his lips to Keith's in a searing kiss, hands findings his waist and spreading around it, pulling him close. Keith melts into it, pushing against his chest and arching up to reach his lips better, hungry. He opens his mouth to moan, and Shiro takes the chance to lick inside, filling Keith's mouth with his tongue, claiming.

In one motion, Shiro spins Keith around so that his back is to him and pushes him down over the desk with a hand on the small of his back. Keith goes where Shiro moves him easily, only gasping and letting the breath back out in a quiet, surprised moan.

Keith's uniform pants are tight, but Shiro's prosthetic hand is strong, and he wraps it around the back of the waistband and tugs it down. He hears a rip, and it triggers a growl in his throat. He pulls until Keith's plump ass is bare, until the waistband is tight around the very tops of his thighs, squeezing them together. Keith is wet, he realizes. It's dripping down his thighs. Another growl, this time from lower in his chest. Both of his hands close around Keith's ass, pulling his cheeks apart, and his thumbs dig into the plush flesh.

Beneath him, he can hear Keith panting, feels like he can hear the butterfly-beat of his heart, too.

He lets go with one hand to pull down the zipper of his pants and get his cock out, already hard enough that he hisses out a sigh through his teeth when it's freed. For a moment, he hesitates, trying to decide which hole to put it in—they're both so appealing, but the tight little furl of Keith's ass is calling to him; he wants to feel its vice grip around him. He slaps the head of his dick against it a couple of times, startling a moan out of Keith, who pushes back against it reflexively.

“Good boy,” Shiro thinks he mumbles, then he slides his cock between Keith’s legs, coating it in his slick, and notches his head against Keith’s rim and thrusts home in one powerful stroke. It makes Keith shout and jerk against the desk as Shiro splits him open, fucking in deep and filling him up.

“Oh, ah, Shiro,” he moans, gasping and grappling at the desk, hands slipping and sliding on the lacquered wood as Shiro picks up a quick pace. Keith is so tight around him, so perfect and warm, and Shiro drops his head and groans, snapping his hips harder. He knows Keith can take it.

One hand finds its way to the center of Keith’s lower back, leaning his weight into it, pinning him down against the desk and giving himself leverage. He watches the way Keith’s ass bounces when his hips slam into it, the way the skin is quickly turning pink. There’s a low, rumbling noise, and he realizes it’s his own pleased growl.

Beneath him, Keith is noisy—probably too noisy for his office in the middle of the day, Shiro realizes distantly, but he can’t bring himself to care—and smells overwhelmingly like sweet slick, the heady scent filling the room and making Shiro’s chest puff with pride.

With his free hand, he reaches down between them to trail his fingers between Keith’s thighs and feel how wet they are, slippery. He chuffs, then bends down, draping himself over Keith’s back. He’s heavy, weighing Keith down, but Keith arches into it and moans, widening his legs as Shiro keeps rocking his hips, shorter thrusts now but just as powerful, the angle now pressing his cock down against Keith’s prostate and making him keen.

Everyone will know, now, how good he makes his mate feel. How well he satisfies him. Keith would never spread his legs for anyone else.

He finds the scent gland on the side of Keith’s neck, nibbles and licks at it. Keith’s hand flies back to grab at the back of Shiro’s head, nails raking across his scalp. In response, Shiro growls and fucks him harder, hard enough now that Keith’s desk is starting to be pushed along the floor and each thrust in knocks an involuntary noise out of his throat.

Shiro wraps an arm around him, working a hand under his stomach so he can wrap a loose fist around his cock. It only takes a few strokes in time with his thrusts until Keith is crying out into the crook of his elbow and spilling all over Shiro’s fist and the desk. He convulses to the extent that he can under Shiro’s weight, thighs left twitching and hole clenching tightly down on the base of Shiro’s cock where he buries it in him one last time and grinds in deep, groaning as he comes.

“Fuck,” Keith pants, quivering with the aftershocks.

Shiro grunts in some attempt at agreement and kisses Keith’s shoulder clumsily, breathing heavily.

It takes a minute before the haze clears. It’s strange how much Shiro was overtaken by it. How few thoughts went through his mind between that meeting and now. Below him, Keith shifts uncomfortably and makes a noise of complaint, snapping him out of his train of thought.

“Sorry, baby.” He presses an apologetic kiss to the nape of Keith’s neck and slides out of him gingerly. When he does, he gets the sight of his husband’s pinkened hole, still spread wide from being spread open for his cock, and a bit of his cum slowly dripping out, trailing down the inside of Keith’s cheek and towards his slit.

Shiro feels his mouth flood with saliva from the desire to drop to his knees and lick him clean, and his dick gives a valiant twitch at the idea that his seed is painting Keith’s inner walls and will be the whole way home—but they’re already pushing it with the sex-at-work thing, so he swallows thickly and just pulls Keith’s pants back up, swatting his ass when he’s done and earning an indignant yelp.

They make it to the car, somewhat surprisingly, without Shiro pulling Keith into a storage closet to fuck him again or throwing him over his shoulder and carrying him off faster than Keith’s wobbly legs can take him.

With the slam of the car door closed and the sudden quiet that comes with it, Shiro feels like he can finally really breathe. The noisy, busy world is shut outside, and he can let his guard down a little, because there’s no one here but him and Keith. Just them. He feels Keith’s eyes on him as he puts the key in the ignition, lets the car rumble to life.

As soon as he pulls out of the base parking lot and onto the straight and narrow road out into the desert, though, that spark of need is back, an itch under his skin. He shifts in the driver’s seat as it grows, fingers flexing around the steering wheel. Keith’s scent fills the small space quickly, intensely, and Shiro wants to breath it deeply, gasp it in.

His heart is beating faster in his chest, pumping blood to his cock, which is already growing hard again, his pants starting to become uncomfortably tight. Keith is too far away. He’s not touching Shiro. He’s not moaning, whimpering with pleasure because of Shiro. Shiro wishes he could sit him down on his tongue right now, but that’s not possible.

In a flash, Shiro’s letting go of the steering wheel with his right hand and reaching over to the passenger side.

“Shiro? Oh!”

Shiro’s hand immediately finds where Keith’s warmest, and he shoves it impatiently down the front of his pants, working into his underwear. He waits only long enough to register how wet Keith is, and how he moans and opens his legs automatically, before two fingers are plunging into his entrance.

“Ah!” Keith jumps and grabs onto the door handle for support, the other hand flying to the center arm rest.

Shiro hums happily at how Keith opens for him, how easily, how willingly. He’s wet and ready, always ready to welcome his mate, he thinks with satisfaction as his fingers stroke inside his slick, silky walls.

His eyes are on the road, and there's no one out here anyway, but there's a thrill to it that makes Shiro start pumping his fingers fast and hard, no working up to it. His prosthesis won't get tired, anyway.

Moans spilling constantly from beside him tell Shiro that he's doing a good job, as does the restless way Keith moves in his seat, propping his feet up on the dashboard and sliding down in the seat and twisting, like he can't get his thighs spread as much as he wants. He's rolling his hips now, biting his lower lip and making a muffled whine.

"Mmm, fuck."

He's so wet now, Shiro's fingers are sliding in and out so easily—he adds another, spreading him wide around three.

"Oh my god, oh my god Shiro." Shiro spares a glance over to see Keith's head thrown back, eyes closed and mouth fallen open. His cheeks are flushed beautifully, eyebrows arched in stricken pleasure.

Shiro turns on the vibrations in his prosthesis.

Keith screams, and his hand flies down to grab Shiro's wrist, holding his hand in place and riding it in jerky, desperate rolls and bounces, fucking himself on Shiro's thick fingers. Shiro can feel him squeezing around them, convulsing, fluttering each time the vibrating fingers touch his sweet spot.

"Fuck, fuck, fuck, yeah, Shiro!"

He clenches hard when he comes, cock shooting up his stomach and painting a line across the middle of his shirt—they won't be able to make any stops on the way home, then. Shiro turns the vibrations off as soon as he can tell Keith is over the peak and eases him down slowly.

"That's it, baby, there we go," he murmurs, then gently pulls his fingers away. Keith squeezes around them as he does, like he doesn't want to be empty. Shiro's fingers are soaked.

They've barely even gotten halfway home. It's going to be an interesting ride.

Amazingly, the next day at work passes by without Shiro almost setting off an intergalactic incident, although Keith has a sneaking suspicion that it might be because they don't have any meetings together, so he never gets a chance to get suddenly, ridiculously protective.

Keith's cheeks heat at the memory of yesterday, and he shifts in his seat, rubbing his thighs together subtly, because thinking about it sends pricks of want shivering through his core. He had a hard time hiding his limp today. He's absolutely sure people noticed. Somehow that just gets him hotter.

Keith has one late meeting at the end of the day, so he tells Shiro to go home before him—he has to do a lot of coaxing to get Shiro to leave without him, which includes both suggesting that Shiro might be able to start dinner so he'll have something to look forward to when he

gets home, and running a finger down the crisp chest of Shiro's uniform jacket and promising to make up for the time they'd spend apart.

"Does that sound good, hmm?" Keith hums, blinking maybe a little bit more than necessary because he likes the way Shiro looks like he might start to drool.

"Can I braid your hair?" Shiro asks.

Keith blinks. Not what he expected to be asked.

One of Shiro's hands finds its way to the base of Keith's braided hair, resting in the center of his back, and wraps it around his fist—casually possessive, but gentle, careful, almost reverent. Keith's mouth goes cottony. He nods.

Just like that, the lusty haze leaves Shiro's face and he lights up like a kid just granted permission to visit a candy store.

"Ok, I'll see you at home!" He pops a quick kiss onto Keith's lips and then he's off, with a jaunt in his step, leaving Keith to blink down the hallway, bemused.

When Keith gets home, he's greeted by the smell of something warm and hearty and delicious. When he sniffs again, he can pick up the way it's combined with his husband's scent, comforting and familiar, and he lets out a deep sigh, dropping his bag to the floor and leaving it in the foyer while all the stress of the day melts out of his shoulders.

He doesn't see Shiro in the kitchen when he wanders in, just a timer ticking down on the oven and a pair of mitts on the counter next to it, all of the dishes from cooking already cleaned up and loaded into the dishwasher. Shiro's always cleaning as he goes, hates to have a mess around him because it overwhelms his senses.

Keith smiles to himself as he thinks about Shiro coming home and doing this for him, warmth filling his chest. He didn't really mean that Shiro had to have dinner ready for him when he got home, although he should have known he would. Amazing that after all they've been through together, his husband still gives him butterflies regularly.

"Shiro?" he calls when he still doesn't find him, and he doesn't have to wait a moment before Shiro's yelling back.

"Upstairs, baby!"

Keith takes the stairs two at a time, giving Kosmo a pat on the head as he passes him on the top of the staircase. He turns the corner into their home office, where he can now detect Shiro's scent, and finds his husband bent by the window, hovering over the little coterie of plants sitting on the sill.

"Hi, starlight," Shiro greets, but he doesn't drop everything to come wrap Keith up in his arms like he usually does—doesn't even look over at him, actually. Instead, he's frowning down at one of their peperomias, prodding at its soil with his pointer finger. He sighs.

“Look,” he says, and then he does look over at Keith, but only to give him an exceedingly worried, very adorable expression, like Keith must understand what he’s distressed about.

“Um...I’m looking.”

“It’s drooping!” Shiro exclaims, like it’s obvious, gesturing towards the plant. Keith cocks his head. It doesn’t look too out of the ordinary to him. Maybe a tiny bit droopy. They’ve managed to keep it alive for several months without that much fuss, anyway.

“Hmm.”

“I don’t know what I’m doing wrong,” Shiro laments, and Keith would say he’s the one who’s really drooping, shoulders hanging as he looks down at the cute little plant. “I’ve checked its moisture level with the meter, and it says it’s dry, but it feels slightly damp to the touch to me, and I know it doesn’t like to be over watered. I think I’m going to buy a new moisture meter,” Shiro rattles on, putting his hands on his hips. “This one must not be calibrated correctly. And look at this!”

Shiro proceeds to lead Keith to their bedroom to show him a single brown spot on a leaf of the pothos on top of their wardrobe.

“Baby...I really think the plants are fine,” Keith tries, but Shiro isn’t hearing it.

He shakes his head. “I have to make sure they’re happy. Thriving. They could be doing better. They rely on me.”

Keith stands back and watches, trailing behind Shiro as he works methodically through their house, checking on each of their plants, fretting over anything that looks bad and tenderly trimming any unhealthy leaves. He offers to help, but Shiro waves him off with an “it’s okay, baby, you just rest.” But he doesn’t even seem to notice when Keith continues to shadow him instead.

An uneasy feeling is beginning to twist in Keith’s stomach. Shiro isn’t acting normal, and he doesn’t really know what he can explain it away as anymore.

Shiro practically glows with pride when he pulls a massive, steaming-hot lasagna out of the oven and presents it to Keith like he’s just killed him an elk.

Keith can’t help but set aside his worries when Shiro is pulling him into his lap, unwilling to let him sit all the way across their small kitchen table all dinner. Keith falls into his lap with a screech and a laugh at first, protesting weakly, and Shiro chuffs happily when he settles in, wriggling back more firmly against his chest and getting comfortable.

They eat like that, with Shiro’s prosthetic arm wrapped around Keith’s stomach keeping him close and warm, and a little horny.

When he tries starting something, though, rolling his ass back against Shiro teasingly, he gets nothing but a kiss on his cheek or a quick scenting and an encouragement to eat some more.

It's not fair, because Shiro is being even more touchy than usual, big hands wandering everywhere, surrounding him. When they move to the couch to wind down with some TV, Keith sits down next to Shiro, but Shiro makes a displeased noise and scoops him up, repositioning him to be splayed across his lap and slumped back against his torso. It really emphasizes how big he is, how strong. It makes Keith shiver, then relax when Shiro starts methodically running his fingers through Keith's hair, freeing it from the braid it has half fallen out of throughout the day.

When he's finished, and Keith's hair is silky smooth with no more tangles in it, Keith feels like he's practically in a trance. The nature documentary they threw on is background noise, the picture blurry, just splotches of vibrant color moving on the screen. Behind him, Shiro shifts, then pushes Keith forward slightly with a hand between his shoulder blades. It takes hardly any pressure; Keith flops forward pliantly, lets Shiro sit up straighter behind him.

Those big hands start running through his hair again, this time with more of a purpose, splitting it into three careful sections and beginning to weave them together—over, under, over, under. Keith's eyelids feel heavy, and he hears himself start to purr. Shiro chuffs in his ear, a tickly puff of warm breath. He feels so safe. So loved. He's used to feeling that way with Shiro, but it makes him feel warm from the inside out every time he notices it this way, a small lump sticking in his throat.

He falls asleep that way at some point, and Shiro must carry him to bed, because he wakes in their bed in the morning with warm sun on his eyelids and Kosmo's fur tickling his nose and making him sneeze. Shiro is draped over his back, his arm heavy and wrapped around him, like he's guarding him even in sleep.

When he carefully undoes his braid, yawning in front of their bathroom mirror while he lets Shiro snooze for a few more minutes, he runs his fingers through the strands and his hair is soft, left crimped in waves from Shiro's handiwork. He decides to leave it down, today.

Keith has an early meeting and manages somehow to convince Shiro not to come to work early with him, which Shiro regrets just as soon as Keith is gone down the road and he can't see or smell him anymore, anxiety immediately bubbling up in his stomach. A small whine escapes his throat, which is weird, but hey, he loves his husband, sue him.

Determined to do something that would be helpful to Keith while he's here alone, Shiro decides to get some chores done around the house. He loads the dishwasher and starts it, wipes down the counter top. He heads to the bedroom next, deciding it's probably time to wash the sheets after all the sex they've been having in the last few days. When he strips the bed and tosses the bedding into the washing machine, he decides he might as well do the rest of their linens too, so he heads into the bathroom to grab the towels.

He takes the towels and brings them down the hallway, absently feeling them in his hands. Then he stops. Something isn't right. Frowning, Shiro looks down at the towels in his arms, rubbing the fabric under his palm. It's just a regular towel, kind of nice really, but it feels so rough under his fingertips, so harsh when he thinks about Keith using it.

Dropping the towels on the ground, Shiro swings around and throws open their linen closet. He pulls out another towel, rubbing it against his cheek—it feels like sandpaper. Then another one—then he’s pulling all of their towels out of the closet, feeling each of them in turn and huffing with frustration when none of them are soft enough for Keith.

This won’t do.

Twenty minutes later, the contents of the linen closet are lying in a pile on the floor and Shiro is standing in the aisle of the home section of a department store, surrounded by shelves of fluffy towels in a rainbow of colors.

He’s thorough, treating this like a mission, running his hands over every single towel systematically, stopping at the better ones and pulling them out, rubbing them against his face and comparing them to the others he’s selected so far. It’s a frustrating process, and he’s tense, because he has to get this right, since he so clearly hasn’t been paying enough attention to the quality of Keith’s linens before, not like an alpha should.

From beside him, a gentle voice startles him out of his concentration.

“Hi there! Can I help you with anything?”

Shiro jumps a little, spinning around and just nearly managing to repress a reflexive growl at the small woman who’s interrupted his attempting to care for his mate. Immediately, he internally scolds himself, shocked and displeased at his own aggressive instincts.

The woman is looking at him with kind concern, though, so he shakes himself out of it in order to respond. Her scent is calming—maybe intentionally so, he realizes distantly—and she seems friendly and helpful, so he forces his bristles to go down a little.

“I’m looking for the softest towels you have,” he states with purpose, squaring his shoulders.

A look of amusement passes over her face, a shade of a knowing smirk.

“Going into rut soon?” she guesses with a kind chuckle. “Here, let me show you towards our collection that seems to be the favorite of omegas.”

Shiro blinks. The woman turns and begins to walk away, but he can’t follow her, frozen momentarily in place. He frowns. He’s not going into rut. What does she mean by that? That’s not possible. He just...he just wants to make sure he husband is comfortable. That’s normal. Right?

The woman turns back to look at him. Shiro makes himself move to follow her, but his thoughts are still focused in confusion on what she said.

True to her word, the towels she brings him to are especially soft and fluffy, even by Shiro’s suddenly sky-high standards. Now *these* are what Keith deserves. He buys four sets, in all of Keith’s favorite colors.

When he gets back in his car, he realizes that detour took him longer than expected—he’s pushing up against being late for a meeting, now, so he heads straight to work with the towels

in the back.

On the way, his phone rings, and after glancing at the caller ID, he answers it on the car's hands free system.

"Buddy!"

"Hi, Matt."

Matt's voice is jovial and a little bit impish as usual, and Shiro can easily imagine him in his office right now, talking to Shiro instead of working, leaning back in his roller chair with his feet up on his desk.

It's clear he's just called to shoot the shit because he's bored, and when it becomes clear there's nothing important going on, Shiro's thoughts quickly turn back to what the woman in the store said, Matt's voice fading into a drone in the background.

"Matt?" He speaks up suddenly, interrupting whatever it was Matt was saying about dried macaroni noodles.

"Yeah?"

"Do you...do you think I've been acting weird?"

Matt must be able to hear the vulnerability in his voice, because he doesn't make a joke or brush him off immediately. There's silence for a moment, then a considering hum, and Shiro can hear a faint squeak like he's leaning forward in his chair.

"I dunno. A little, honestly. But not really, like, not yourself, just—more yourself than usual, in some ways?"

"Hmm."

Shiro's silent for a moment, chewing on his lip.

"Is something up?"

Shiro sighs, shrugging, then remembers Matt can't see him.

"Maybe? I'm not sure. I just went to the department store to buy Keith some new towels and the sales associate asked if I was going into rut; I'm not sure if she was joking but it didn't seem like she was...But I can't go into rut, obviously. So I'm not sure what she was picking up on."

There's a pause. "What was wrong with his old towels?"

"Huh? That's not the point, I—"

"No, really. What was wrong with Keith's towels?"

“Uh. They were...not soft enough?”

“...Shiro.”

“What?!”

There’s a heavy sigh from the other end of the line, and Shiro can just see Matt putting his head in his hands and shaking his head.

“I mean, that kind of over-protectiveness sure sounds like a rut symptom to me. Coupled with everything else over the last few days—”

“Everything—wait, who have you been talking to?!”

“Look,” Matt says, putting on that tone he gets when he’s decided he has the solution to every problem and is going to so gregariously share them with you. “I know that it’s unlikely for you to be able to have ruts, like, medically or whatever. But I’d say you’ve had enough suspicious symptoms that it’s worth figuring out once and for all whether or not this is actually pre-rut.”

“What, like, go to the doctor?” Shiro considers it. He guesses it wouldn’t be a bad idea, if only for peace of mind.

“*Or*,” Matt continues, sounding more and more pleased with his own idea by the second, “you could do it the way more cool and fun way, and come with me and the gang to a nightclub tomorrow night and see if you get all jealous and possessive with the other alphas around seeing Keith being hot.”

“I’m not jealous,” Shiro grumbles, pointedly ignoring the uncomfortable twinge he gets in his stomach at the idea that Matt is calling his husband hot.

And it’s true—he really isn’t, all things considered; he’s always prided himself on being cool in public and not acting like one of those knot-headed alphas who won’t let their omegas so much as go somewhere other alphas will look at them with desire.

“Yeah, that’s exactly the point. Normal Shiro would be fine in that environment, but *rut* Shiro...he most certainly wouldn’t.”

It’s a pretty stupid idea. But also potentially a good one, Shiro thinks as he chews it over.

There’s an extended silence on the line while Matt waits for Shiro’s reaction. He can just see Matt’s eyebrows wiggling at him.

Shiro huffs and readjusts his grip on the wheel. His knuckles on his flesh hand kind of hurt; he must have been gripping the steering wheel too hard for some reason.

“Maybe. I’ll think about it. And see if Keith would even want to go, obviously.”

The security checkpoint outside of the Atlas’s landing space comes into view; Shiro’s going to have to hang up soon.

“Cool, I’ll see you guys then!” Matt says cheerfully, then hangs up the phone before Shiro can sputter “Wait!”

As soon as he steps onto the Atlas, Shiro can sense something is wrong.

It makes the hairs on the back of his neck stand up, his teeth clench and all his senses hone in on one thing.

Keith.

The scent of Keith’s distress is clear in the air, despite the ship’s advanced filtering system to keep all of the scents in the enclosed space from becoming an overwhelming, chaotic mess. But Shiro is attuned to it, more attuned to it than anything else.

Keith is upset, and that is so far from okay.

Anger begins to bubble up in Shiro’s chest as he marches through the hallways, directly towards Keith’s office, following his unhappy scent. His jaw clenches, teeth grinding together uncomfortably.

As he walks, his thoughts begin to spiral, imaging what could possibly be wrong. Whose fault it could be. Because whoever is upsetting his mate, they are going to have absolute hell to pay.

The scent gets stronger and stronger as he gets closer to Keith’s office, and with it, his adrenaline spikes higher and higher. Finally, he bursts through the door to find Keith—alone.

He’s sitting at his desk, chewing on the end of his pen, and he jolts and looks up when Shiro stumbles in.

“Shiro?”

Shiro kind of balks, unsure in the moment what to do when there’s no longer an obvious culprit for Keith’s distress who he can confront.

“Oh. Are you—I thought—what’s wrong?”

Keith blinks at him, hesitating. For half a moment, he’s afraid Keith is going to deny that something’s bothering him, or not give Shiro the real reason. But Keith knows he can be honest with Shiro by now.

Keith sighs, taking the pen out of his mouth and dropping it on the table. He looks down, half avoiding Shiro’s eyes.

“I’m just...I’m just worried about you.”

“About me?”

Keith sighs again. “Yeah. I know—I know it’s probably silly, but you’ve been having some, ah, kind of weird moments lately, you know? Extra...alpha-y. Which is fine!” Keith hurries when he sees Shiro’s face, “Really, it’s not a bad thing. It just seems like something is going on, and we should...we should know what that is.”

Looking at Keith, there’s no doubt that his concern is genuine. It’s etched into every line of his face, in the way he holds his body. Shiro doesn’t know how he didn’t notice it sooner.

He lets out a breath and deflates with it, shoulders sinking, sitting down heavily on the edge of Keith’s desk.

“Yeah. I...I don’t know what’s going on either.”

To be honest, he’s feeling increasingly uneasy too. He’s spent enough time not feeling connected to his body, and feeling like his own behavior is changing now without his awareness or control is...upsetting. To say the least. He’s felt like that before, too.

Keith’s hand is on his knee, grounding and steady.

“Why don’t you see if you can get into the doctor for some blood tests, just to confirm it’s not pre-rut. And then we’ll figure out where to go from there. I’m sure it’s fine, Shiro. And whatever’s going on, we’re in it together.”

Shiro gets on the phone with his doctor right there, with Keith’s hand in his. They don’t have any appointments available until Monday, though, so he grabs the earliest one and hopes for the best.

While the underlying worry remains, Keith does his best to distract Shiro, to soothe his anxieties now that they have a plan in place. They spend most of the rest of the day together, taking their separate virtual meetings from Keith’s office.

Shiro even wants to come with Keith when he gets up to go to the bathroom, uncomfortable with the idea of losing sight and smell of him, and Keith lets him, just giving him a smile and a nod when he sheepishly follows behind.

Lunch offers a welcome distraction in the form of their friends’ antics, even though Shiro does find himself tense and alert the whole time, with all the other people surrounding him and his mate. Keith is right there at his side, though, close enough to protect, close enough to touch—and he does, keeping some kind of contact with him through the whole lunch; a hand on his knee, a thigh pressed to his. It’s soothing. A constant reassurance. He bends his head to subtly scent Keith, just to get a hint of him to hold him over until the next time he can fold him in his arms.

Eventually, during a lull in the conversation, Shiro catches Matt’s eyes across the table, and there’s a mischievous glint in them that Shiro knows very well to be afraid of.

“Hey, by the way, Shiro, have you decided if you guys are coming with us to The Velvet?”

Pidge swings around on Matt like she had no idea they were doing such a thing, and he elbows her in the side, giving Shiro a wide grin. Keith doesn't see, because he's turned to Shiro, giving him a questioning look as well.

"Ah, I didn't get a chance to tell you yet sweetheart—Matt invited us along on Saturday night."

"Oh," Keith replies, pausing to think for a moment and then shrugging. "Sounds fun. Do you want to go?"

Shiro hesitates. He glances over to Matt, who's giving him an exaggerated wink.

Matt's plan is, objectively, bad. But...it also would probably work, at least in terms of helping Shiro figure out what's going on with him. And he couldn't get an appointment until next week...

"Yeah. Let's do it." There's a flutter in his stomach when he makes the decision—maybe nerves, maybe excitement.

Matt does a fist pump in the air, and Pidge groans.

"Who signed *me* up for this?"

"Oh, Shiro, fucking sweet Jesus, oh my god."

"That's it, come on angel."

Keith's already come twice, and personally, he thinks a third in one morning is asking a lot. But Shiro's the one asking, so damn if he won't try to give.

Shiro's hands are tight around the backs of his knees, pushing them up against his chest, bending him in half as he pounds into him at a ruthlessly persistent pace.

Keith trills, an honest, involuntary sound that's pulled out of his throat.

"Baby," Shiro groans. His voice is rough, morning-hoarse. Plus, Keith's dick down his throat a few minutes earlier didn't help things.

"I c-can't," Keith protests, arching with pleasure all the same as Shiro hits him in all the right places inside with brutal force and accuracy.

"Yes you can, starlight. One more," Shiro coos, leaning down to kiss Keith's flushed-red cheek.

"That's what you said last time," Keith grumbles, before shouting and coming, caught by surprise and sent reeling by it.

“Oh, *good boy*,” Shiro groans, speeding up as Keith squeezes around him, contorting with pleasure.

He bites his lip so hard it hurts, until he feels Shiro’s thumb pulling it out from between his teeth and pushing his thumb between them instead. He presses the pad of it against Keith’s tongue, pressing it down, and Keith lets him, stars in his eyes. His body goes limp, mouth slack as Shiro pushes his thumb further into his mouth and fucks him fast, losing his rhythm, chasing his release.

Shiro makes a guttural kind of noise when he comes, finally, grinding in deep and collapsing onto Keith, weighing him down.

Keith sighs, pleased with the feeling of his husband’s cum, warm inside of him. He lets his legs fall to the bed, flopping down heavily and bouncing on the mattress. Shiro licks at his neck, where his face is conveniently buried, and makes no move to pull out, which Keith doesn’t mind. Sometimes he likes to stay connected like this afterwards, to be full and warm and together, even when it becomes uncomfortable.

Then Shiro yawns against his neck, and Keith giggles, squirming at the ticklish feeling, which leads to Shiro playfully nipping at his neck in retaliation, then worming his big hands around Keith’s waist and tickling at his ribs, just where he knows will get him. Keith yelps, laughing and trying to wiggle out from under Shiro, and somewhere in the process, he’s shocked to feel Shiro hardening inside of him.

“Already?” he blurts out, because sure, they both have pretty high libidos, and Keith’s Galra heritage has always given him a pretty short refractory period, but Shiro can *not* usually get hard again a mere minute or two after an orgasm.

His body is definitely getting ready to go again, though; Keith can tell by the way his hands are clenching in the sheets, the way a muscle in his shoulder is twitching, and he’s up to full hardness in nearly record time.

Shiro shrugs, looking vaguely guilty, but also hungry. Keith snorts.

“You’re insatiable, huh?” he purrs. Shiro echoes a low, rattling noise back, pupils widening. He’s crouched over Keith, lowering himself further, caging him in.

“Can’t get enough of your husband?”

Shiro makes a wounded noise in return, like it’s too true, too much. His hips give a sharp, aborted thrust, involuntary—Shiro always has been horny for commitment.

Keith hisses through his teeth—he’s still oversensitive, even if Shiro isn’t, and a little sore—and Shiro stops himself from thrusting again, but he can’t help the little rocks of his hips, rubbing his substantial girth up against all the tender places in Keith where he’s stretching him wide.

“Okay, too much,” Keith grits, grimacing and flattening a hand against Shiro’s abdomen. “You’re gonna have to fuck me in the ass instead.”

Shiro takes the instruction wordlessly, pulling out a little too fast and then rutting up against Keith's hole, the head of his cock catching at his rim and pulling at it. Enough slick has dripped down between his cheeks, and Shiro's cock is already covered in enough of it that Keith can probably go without lube—and luckily, because the next thing he knows Shiro is pulling one of his legs up and back towards his chest and splitting him open, filling him so quickly Keith loses his breath for a moment.

“*Uhn*, oh, ah.” It feels even bigger in this hole, like he's being stretched even wider, even though he knows Shiro can't have gotten any larger. The sensation is still overwhelming, on the good side of too-much but teetering on the edge, and Keith groans, throwing his head back against the mattress.

“God, Shiro.”

Shiro bends and licks into his open mouth, and then he can't talk anymore.

Keith's body is jelly, exhausted and pleasantly sore. He's surrounded by Shiro's warmth, wrapped up in his arms, comfortable and sated as they bask in the afterglow. A quiet, low-grade purr has been vibrating in his chest for the last few minutes, ebbing and flowing with his breath. He might just have to fall back to sleep, waste the rest of the day away with Shiro, tangled in their sheets.

Then Keith's phone rings.

“Ugh,” he groans, throwing his arm over his eyes, as if that could stop that noise from interrupting their peace.

Shiro grumbles too, squeezing him tighter around the middle and nuzzling into his hair. Still, Keith has to at least make the ringing stop, so he manages to reach the nightstand, fumbling with his phone before he gets a hold of it and sees that it's Pidge calling.

With a sigh, he answers the call and puts it on speaker.

“Why,” he greets.

He's pretty sure he can hear Pidge's eye roll through the phone.

“Well good morning to you too,” comes her familiar voice, much less croaky than Keith's.

But as soon as the words are ringing clear out of the phone, a low, unmistakably angry *growl* rips through Shiro's chest.

Keith nearly jumps out of his skin and twists around to look at him.

“Shiro!” he scolds. And Shiro *whines*, instantly shrinking back, eyes going puppy-dog sad.

Keith doesn't even really know what to think. Shiro's certainly never growled at anyone who didn't deserve it before, much less one of their *friends*, and for simply saying hello over the

phone.

Shiro, to his credit, looks genuinely shocked himself, and plenty ashamed.

“Was that Shiro? What the fuck, man?!”

“Yeah, sorry Pidge,” Keith mumbles, distracted. He’s still looking at Shiro, who looks confused and sorry and ready to just hide himself under the sheets. “I just—uh, I think you just startled him. Morning brain and all that.”

“Uh huh.” She doesn’t sound convinced. “Well *anyway*, I was just calling to see if you’re still coming with us to The Velvet tonight.”

They talk for a few minutes, solidifying their plans for the night, during which Shiro hooks his chin over Keith’s shoulder and strokes his belly with his thumbs, dutifully keeping quiet and not letting another growl escape him. He even offers an uncharacteristically quiet “Bye Pidge, sorry,” before they hang up.

Keith rolls onto his back to get a better look at his husband. He reaches out and cups the side of Shiro’s face in his hand, stroking his cheek with his thumb.

“Are you sure you want to go out tonight? We don’t have to.”

“No, I—I’m fine, really,” Shiro insists, but Keith gets the sense he’s trying to convince himself, too. “I was just startled. We should go.”

Keith bites his lip but doesn’t argue. Instead, he stretches up to scent Shiro, tucking his nose up into the soft space underneath the corner of Shiro’s jaw. He smells like comfort, like home. Shiro chuffs softly, and Keith gives a chirp in response. He can feel Shiro relax against him, like that’s what he needed to reassure him that Keith isn’t upset with him. He’s not. He couldn’t be.

Shiro’s nose is in his hair, smelling him, and Keith smiles into his pillow. They’ll stay in bed just a little while longer.

Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

Shiro and Keith go to the nightclub, and things reach a boiling point.

Chapter Notes

Only one more chapter to go! Thanks to everyone for reading this far!

Keith's in the shower, without Shiro— "*Because I have to actually get clean in time for us to go out, Shiro,*" he said, which is fair, but it won't stop Shiro from pouting, lying on their bed and staring at the ceiling.

His body is pleasantly tired from the run they just got back from, a good ache in his muscles, and he allows his eyes to close, lulled by the sound of the shower running. They have good water pressure now. It's the small luxuries.

When Keith comes out of the shower, Shiro knows because his honeysuckle-sweet scent fills the room, carried on the steam that escapes from his hot shower. He stretches and rolls over, opening his eyes to find his husband wrapped in a towel and padding around the room, digging through the wardrobe. Shiro licks his lips, and his cock stirs. He almost rolls his eyes at himself.

"Alright, big guy, your turn," Keith says, not looking up from the drawer. "We've got an hour before we need to leave."

Reluctantly, Shiro drags himself out of bed, heading towards Keith instead of the shower. He can't help himself. Keith's his north pole.

He comes up behind Keith and snakes his arms around him, going straight for his neck, ducking to press kisses there while Keith chuckles and shakes his head.

"Shiro, one hour."

"I can be fast..." Shiro mumbles against Keith's skin, nipping one of the fading bruises he left there, wishing there was time to create a fresh set before they go out where everyone will be able to see, to look at *his* mate.

"In certain circumstances," Keith corrects, "of which I suspect this is not one."

Shiro's "hmpfh"s into the juncture between Keith's neck and shoulder, but he's right, so he only takes a moment to let his hands wander under Keith's towel, splaying his fingers around the swell of his hips and then grabbing a playful handful of his ass before letting go and striding into the bathroom.

He strokes himself off in the shower for good measure, trying not to think too hard about whatever it is that's going on with him, or about tonight, how he's going to have to manage to be cool while Keith is surrounded by horny alphas looking at him, smelling him, wanting him. His fist tightens around his cock unconsciously and he hisses at the too-tight squeeze.

Enough of that kind of thinking. It'll be fine—it's not like they haven't gone to clubs together before. He doesn't have a problem with other people wanting Keith. He knows he's the only one who has him. But right now, deep down, those facts aren't ringing true.

He pulls at his cock quickly—this isn't the time to draw things out—and when he comes, to his surprise, he pops his knot into his fist. He tries to muffle his guttural groan into his bicep, but he has a feeling he's not successful enough to go unnoticed by Keith's Galra-heightened hearing. He lurches forward, bracing himself on his forearm against the shower wall as he just keeps coming, more than usual, messy and hard enough that his abs hurt from how hard they're contracting. It's not the kind of orgasm he would usually have by his own hand—especially not with the amount of sex he's been having this week, and especially not popping a knot on top of it.

He's panting in the aftermath of it, forehead resting on his arm to support the suddenly-heavy weight of his head. His brow is knit, locked in thought when he's interrupted by a sudden noise and a blast of cold, dry air that makes him shiver and hunch his shoulders up protectively.

When he looks over, Keith is marching into the bathroom, stark naked, making a beeline for the shower.

Shiro, orgasm-dumb and staring blankly, doesn't catch up to what Keith's doing until he's stepping into the shower and under the spray and dropping to his knees in front of Shiro.

"Baby, you'll get all wet again," he almost says, ridiculously, but luckily his mouth is too slow to form the words.

Instead, he blinks down at Keith, who's looking up at him, pink-cheeked and stormy with eyes darkened with lust. He huffs.

"We're going to be *late* because you won't stop being *horny* and turning me *on*," he mutters, grabbing Shiro's softening cock and stroking it, no mind for the way Shiro twitches and hisses with oversensitivity.

"I thought—" he chokes out, and his poor Keith-drunk mind is just not keeping up with any of this, but Keith looks up at him again, through his eyelashes and the wet strands of his bangs flattened over his forehead. He looks kind of like he did when Shiro first met him, determined and confident and fiery. This time, though, he also looks like he wants to choke on Shiro's cock.

“I want to suck you off. Any objections?”

Shiro manages to shake his head. Keith lays Shiro’s tip on his tongue, blinks up at him twice like some black-and-white movie vixen, then swallows him down.

The oversensitivity from this kind of stimulation only moments after coming doesn’t last long. It starts feeling good almost immediately, *really* good, and he’s back to full hardness, twitching in Keith’s hot mouth.

“Fuck, baby, oh my god, good boy, that’s it, yeah, *fuck*, Keith,” he can’t stop babbling, words spilling out of his mouth unbidden, because Keith isn’t holding back, surrounding him with the perfect pressure, the soft stroke of his tongue on the underside of Shiro’s cock, the tip of it tracing over the sensitive vein that runs down the length of him.

He already feels like he could come again, and it shouldn’t be possible, but there’s that tightness low in his belly, and he has to bit his lip and clench his fist against the cold tile to stop from snapping his hips and chasing the pleasure.

Keith moans around him, sending vibrations that feel like they zip straight through his spine, all the way down to his toes. His free hand flies to the back of Keith’s head, fingers threading through the damp strands of his hair and splaying wide, cradling him there against him.

Keith takes a deep breath in through his nose and then sinks down further, squeezing Shiro’s cock into his throat, into that sweet vice grip.

Shiro gives a broken groan, unable to stop his hips from jerking now, making Keith’s throat spasm around him, but he stays, swallowing around the intrusion and encouraging Shiro to keep going.

“God, baby, you’re too—*fuck*—too good, *ahhh*, yeah, take my cock in your throat, you’re so pretty like this, perfect, my perfect baby.”

Keith’s eyes flutter closed and he makes a noise that Shiro thinks would be a trill if his airway wasn’t obstructed by Shiro’s cock, and he can see Keith’s hand dropping between his legs, beginning to stroke his own cock desperately.

Shiro moans.

“Does this turn you on, baby? *Mmm*, having my cock in your mouth?”

Keith moans. It’s getting sloppy, now, spit covering Shiro’s cock and running down the corners of his lips, distinguishable from the water that covers them. Shiro fucks his mouth carefully, shallow thrusts that are getting faster and less precise as he climbs towards his peak.

“Having to stretch your lips to fit around me?” he continues, breathless but unable to stop talking. “Letting me fuck into your throat? There’s not anywhere you won’t let me put my cock, huh?”

A ragged moan rips through Keith's throat, now, and his hand flies over his cock, fast enough that Shiro knows he's going to come any moment now. He hisses and tightens his grip on Keith's hair.

"That's it," he groans, rolling his hips, grinding into Keith's mouth. He's almost there, too, each sensation a spark, now, no telling which will make him ignite. "Gonna swallow everything I give you, aren't you?"

Keith whimpers and tries to nod, stopped by Shiro's grip on him.

"My pretty little mate," Shiro praises, and that's what does it for Keith, apparently—he shouts, muffled by Shiro's cock, and his whole body jerks and then tenses, and Shiro can't take it anymore. He comes too, spilling in Keith's throat with a growl, drawing out slowly as he keeps coming so he can stripe Keith's tongue with it. He lets the last spurt drip over Keith's lower lip, resting just the tip of his cock there while Keith keeps his mouth obediently open and lax.

When he pulls out entirely, Keith blinks up at him, letting his mouth hang open to show Shiro the pool of cum on his tongue.

Shiro groans. He's still trying to catch his breath, and Keith just keeps making his heart stutter.

"Look at you. So good." He pushes his thumb into Keith's mouth, pushes the bit of cum on his lips inside and slides his thumb through the mess on his tongue. "You can swallow now, angel."

Keith closes his lips around Shiro's thumb, and Shiro can feel him swallow, feel his tongue struggling to work around Shiro's thumb still in his mouth. Then he lets it go with a pop, opening his mouth one more time to show Shiro he's swallowed it all.

Shiro strokes his hair back, tucking it behind his pink-tipped ear.

"God, baby." He shakes his head, then chuckles breathlessly.

Keith drops his head against Shiro's thigh. Shiro can feel him smile.

Deciding he's as clean as he's going to get, Shiro turns off the water and then dips down to gather Keith in his arms and pick him up, carrying him out of the shower. It's the least he can do, really.

"I can walk, Shiro," Keith protests lightly, rolling his eyes as Shiro sets him on the counter and towels him off. "You didn't *fuck* me."

He didn't, but Shiro knows if he set him down right now his legs would tremble. A rumble makes its way through his chest, and he arches an eyebrow.

"Shh. I'm taking care of you."

When they're both dry, Shiro wraps a towel around his waist and Keith jumps down, walking back into their room.

"I'll tell Pidge we're going to be a little late," he says, then goes into the closet, rustling around for a minute before coming out and tossing a bundle of clothes at Shiro.

"You. Go change in the guest room so I don't get distracted again."

It doesn't take Shiro long to get ready; he just puts on the black slacks and white button down Keith chose for him, leaving the top few buttons open, because they are going to a club, after all.

Keith hasn't come out from their room yet, so he's sitting on the couch, waiting, fiddling around on his phone and answering Matt's texts telling them to hurry up. His phone dings as another message comes in, this time a picture—a blurry selfie of Matt in the club, hair messy and cheeks streaked with neon paint, a crowd of probably-undulating people behind him. A text follows it quickly.

Plenty of people here to flirt with Keith and get your alpha brain foaming at the mouth ;)

Shiro scoffs, shaking his head, but there's an unpleasant twinge in his belly too. Are the other alphas there going to be...flirting with Keith? He imagined them just being there, looking and wanting from afar. Will they really be bold enough to approach him, to openly hit on him?

"Shiro? Everything okay?"

Shiro didn't even realize he was frowning, and he goes to assure Keith that everything is fine as he looks up from his phone, but he's stopped frozen in his tracks by the sight in front of him.

His eyes travel up Keith's body slowly, from his ankles, laced into heavy black motorcycle boots, up his legs, long and graceful and bare, soft skin going up for miles, calling for Shiro to touch them so strongly that his fingers twitch. Then there are black shorts, cut sinfully short, enough that the soft tops of his thighs are visible, and Shiro knows if he turned around he would be able to see the pudge of his ass cheeks peeking out. Keith's torso is covered—barely—by a sheer mesh top in cherry red that hangs loose and ends just above the waistband of his shorts, wide arm openings offering a glance at his ribs and the swell of his pecs.

Shiro swallows, and it feels like something is lodged in his throat.

"Shiro?"

"Hmm?" He clears his throat, trying desperately to get something coherent out. "Oh, uh, ah, what?"

Keith blinks, then snorts. "Oh boy."

Shiro groans. “Baby...”

Keith cocks an eyebrow.

“God, I wanna fuck you,” he mutters, not really meaning to say it out loud, but it’s so earnest that it slips out.

Keith smirks. “Not until we get home,” he singsongs, twirling around and sauntering towards the door. Shiro whines in his throat.

They take a cab to the club, which is a good thing, because Shiro needs every incentive he can get not to grab Keith and pull him into his lap. The fact that their friends are waiting on them aside, public indecency is not exactly something he wants on his record.

When they get out onto the sidewalk in front of The Velvet, the boom of a thumping bass is emanating from the three-story, all-black facade. The purple neon sign above the door is flickering again, and Shiro wonders idly if they’re ever going to fix it.

Keith takes his hand as they head to the door. He’s grateful for it. It makes him feel a little better, having a physical line to Keith, when they step into the club and are immediately surrounded by a thrumming crowd of people, hit in the face with an overwhelming, dissident jumble of music, voices, and scents.

Shiro’s hackles are up in an instant. He can feel the hairs on the back of his neck stand up, his shoulders stiffening, muscles tight and primed, ready to defend Keith if necessary. Shit. This is not normal.

They find their friends quickly. Or really, their friends find them. Shiro nearly swings on Lance when he comes up behind them unexpectedly, way too close and shouting in their ears.

“There you are!” comes his grating voice, making Shiro startle and whip around. “What the hell got you guys so late? You know what, nevermind, I don’t want to know.”

Pidge appears from seemingly nowhere behind him and snorts. Shiro scans around them, not wanting to be caught off guard by anyone else. If he can’t tell his friends are right next to them, how is he supposed to protect Keith from all of the unfamiliar alphas here who might approach him?

To his displeasure, Keith drops his hand and steps forward to be able to hear Pidge better. Shiro itches to grab him around the waist and pull him back in, to wrap him in his arms and guard him, but he stops himself.

This is ridiculous, he tells himself. They’ve been in situations like this so many times before. There’s no threat looming over their heads. No one is going to just walk up and steal Keith away from him.

Why, then, is he shifting up behind Keith in a protective gesture. He might roll his shoulders back, knowing it makes his chest look bigger, but luckily no one notices. He’d never hear the

end of it.

Lance and Pidge lead them back to the rest of their little group—just Matt and Hunk, currently lounging in a cozy-looking corner on a couch.

“I’m grabbing drinks!” Pidge announces, then disappears into the crowd, and Lance flops down on the couch in between Matt and Hunk. Shiro sits in the armchair facing them and pulls Keith down with him to sit on his lap. He’s much happier with him there, though he’s still on high alert. Now, his back is to the rest of the club, which means they’re more vulnerable, so he has to be paying extra attention to everything going on around them.

From the couch, Matt catches his eye and gives him an evil grin. Shiro rolls his eyes. He adjusts his grip on Keith, settling one hand on his hip where he’s perched on Shiro’s leg, already locked in some argument with Lance.

Pidge comes back with six glasses somehow balanced in her hands, something pink and tasty-looking and probably deceptively strong.

It’s difficult to hear each other in the din of the club, but they make attempts at conversation anyway while they drink. Lance keeps checking his phone, and given that Allura isn’t here, he probably won’t be for long either. Shiro was right about the drinks, too—halfway through the fruity frozen slush, Shiro’s already starting to feel a little bit of the buzz in his brain, and he’s one of the largest of the group.

A voice in the back of his head tells him that all of this is a recipe for some kind of disaster, but he pushes it aside and shuts it up.

Keith is close, a light but undeniably present weight on his thigh, warm and smelling of summer, hot sun and warm wind, a breath of fresh air in the stale, too-strong scent of the club. Keith has always been his refuge.

He knows Keith’s tipsy when he flops back against his chest and lolls his head backwards, looking upside-down up at Shiro with a dopey smile and glassy eyes. Shiro tightens the arm around his middle, dances his fingers at the edge of Keith’s shorts where they cut into the meat of his thigh.

“Hi, baby,” he murmurs, quiet enough that it’s just for them.

“Hi,” Keith responds. The lights of the club are low and multicolored, moving across the floor, and they cast a stained-glass pattern on Keith’s face. His eyelashes are so long, his lips so plush.

Shiro wants to cart him off somewhere private. He doesn’t like sharing him like this. Not that he’s actually *sharing* him; no one here is going to touch him, of that he’s sure—just the thought makes his blood grow hot, makes his hands want to clench. But just letting other people share Keith’s space, his attention, letting them bask in his glow, is hard. At least, it is right now. It isn’t usually.

Some primal urge has Shiro bringing his flesh hand up from Keith's thigh to his neck. Before he really knows what he's doing, his fingers are skating over Keith's collarbone, fluttering in the dip at the base of his throat, and then spreading wide around his throat. Keith's mouth falls fractionally further open. Shiro can't hear the tiny gasp of breath he lets out, but he can feel it under his palm. He slides his hand up Keith's throat slowly, stopping when it fits underneath his jaw.

Keith is blinking at him rapidly. His eyes are locked on Shiro's, pupils wide.

Shiro presses up on Keith's jaw, tilting his head back. Keith lets him. He wants to see the marks he left on Keith's throat, to make sure they're there, still visible, still a sign to anyone else who might look at him that he has an alpha—a *mate*, he thinks with a silent, internal growl, tilting Keith's head to the other side so he can get a look at the smooth, silvery scar of his mating bite.

Keith bites his lip.

Pidge makes a gagging noise.

Broken out of whatever haze that was, Shiro looks up at that, probably glaring—but he doesn't growl, which he counts as a success. Matt is snorting into his drink.

"Alright, I think that's my cue," Lance says, shoving his phone into his pocket and getting up. "You two need to go work out some of that sexual energy on the dance floor," he says, gesturing derisively at Shiro and Keith.

Somehow, that feels like a bad idea. But Keith perks up.

"Oh! Dancing!"

He's definitely tipsy.

Keith jumps up out of Shiro's lap and turns around to offer him a hand expectantly. He pulls Shiro to his feet and then leads him to the dance floor, with Pidge, Matt, and Hunk hanging back for now. Matt calls out that they'll catch up with them later, and gives Shiro an exaggerated wink.

As they approach the crowd of people, Shiro tenses up more with every step. There are so many bodies, moving together, packed close and chaotic. Shiro feels like he needs to check each and every one of them—to meet their eyes and make sure they know they have no claim to Keith. He can feel the beginnings of a growl roiling in his chest, but it's too loud in the club to hear it, so he gets away with it, not really bothering to try to cut it off.

Keith weaves them through, and the bodies become denser, closer on every side. Suddenly, Shiro doesn't like the space between them that's bridged by their joined hands, not at all, so he shuffles closer, crowding up behind Keith's back until he can feel the warmth of him, placing a protective hand on his hip and curling around it.

He's glaring at everyone around them, and getting a lot of confused looks for it, unfortunately a few omegas caught in the crossfire too, who shrink back instinctively when he passes, putting off a sharp, defensive scent. He feels guilty, but only a little.

At a certain point, near the center of the floor, Keith stops, and his hip starts moving under Shiro's hand. It distracts Shiro enough, for the moment, that he stops looking for an alpha who he gets even a whiff of interested scent off of and focuses on his husband, leaning back slightly into his chest.

Keith pulls at their joined hands, guiding Shiro's hand to splay over his stomach. He can feel Keith sway there, feel the way his muscles move under the skin. He lowers his hand to where a strip of Keith's belly is bare between his shirt and his shorts to feel it better, wiggles his fingers up under the hem of the shirt, mindless.

The music is loud in his ears, but more than anything, he can *feel* it, vibrating his feet on the floor and pulsing through his bones, a bass-heavy song with beats that hit and then drag out in a sensual rhythm.

Keith is dancing, but Shiro can't quite get his brain and body to communicate enough to move that way right now—there's too much going on, too much stimulation, too much to feel and smell and hunger for and worry about.

Around every corner is a potential threat, someone who might want to challenge him for what's rightly his. But in front of him, moving smoothly against him, is his mate, pulling his attention firmly elsewhere, and Shiro is torn between the two.

He bends his head down to nose at Keith's hair. His hand slips under his shirt fully, thumbs pressing against his belly button. Keith leans his head back against Shiro's shoulder and trills, arching into the touch, and that—that gets people looking.

Even in the din of the club, the sound of an omega's happy, aroused trill cuts straight through to the listening ears of any alpha within a ten foot radius of them, and Shiro sees several heads swivel towards them at once, scents spiked with obvious interest.

Shiro bares his teeth, at no one in particular, at the mere idea that any of them would look at Keith that way.

Keith rolls his head back against Shiro's shoulder to smile up at him with gleaming eyes, and everything narrows down to him. It seems like he's moving in slow motion, hair bouncing around his face as he dances. Shiro's gaze drifts down, and this way, he can see those marks on Keith's throat again—his touch point, his reminder that his mate chose *him*.

He moves both hands to bracket Keith's hips now. They wrap so far around, and his thumbs rest on the soft skin bared by Keith's shirt. A pleased growl rumbles in his chest, and Keith must feel it, because his eyes widen and he bites his bottom lip, already pink and glistening.

Shiro swears he can feel a tension in the air around them, the other alphas' displeasure as they see the evidence that Keith is beyond their reach—the way Keith lets Shiro guide his hips, the way he trusts him, leans back into him, the adoring way he looks up at him.

They'll never know what he looks like when he comes, how sweet he smells in the morning when Shiro rolls over and buries his face in his neck, how good it feels to have his love, his devotion, and his body.

He leans down and presses an open-mouthed kiss to the side of Keith's neck. He feels Keith shiver slightly, and tightens his grip on Keith's hips, crumpling the flimsy fabric of his shirt. Keith's pressed closely against him, still moving to the music, but less, now, and a little off-beat, like it's an afterthought. He must be able to feel the way Shiro's quickly gotten hard against him—he makes no effort to hide it.

Keith's soft breath puffs against his ear, his only sign in the din of the club of the quiet sounds Keith must be making as Shiro travels down his neck, using his teeth and tongue. He puffs his chest out at the idea that everyone around can see them, that they can't do anything about it.

His hands on Keith's hips begin to guide him, pulling him back firmly against Shiro's crotch and encouraging him to twist and roll his hips, moving him slowly but certainly. Keith is putty in his hands. If Shiro weren't holding on to him, providing something solid for him to lean back against, he might just slink to the floor.

The friction between them has Shiro's cock growing harder, needier for his mate with each fluid movement of his hips. Shiro noses at the soft, sensitive spot on the underside of Keith's jaw, getting him to gasp. Then he drags one hand from his hip up his body, catching his shirt and pulling it partway up his chest on the way, until his hand lands notched around Keith's jaw so he can use it to direct Keith's head to the side and take his open mouth in a hot kiss.

Keith makes a sound into his mouth—half-surprise, half pleasure—and opens wider at Shiro's urging, letting him fill his mouth with his tongue.

He makes it dirty, messy, not holding back. Keith can barely keep up, ends up just going slack and pliant and letting Shiro take over.

Is Shiro showing off? Maybe. But he has to do *something*. He's not going to just stand here and let a pack of hungry alphas lick their lips at his mate. He growls into Keith's mouth at the thought. Keith keens loudly enough to reach Shiro's ears over the thumping music.

They're not dancing in any sense of the word anymore. But when the music stops, and there is a moment of silence between that song and the next, it seems to break them out of their bubble.

Keith breaks away with a wet smack, panting to catch his breath. Shiro's ready to keep going, occupying himself by kissing down Keith's jaw and neck, but Keith's tipsy attention span is short, and he's quickly spinning in Shiro's arms towards the bar.

“Shiro?”

“Hmm.”

Keith turns around again and puts his chin on Shiro's chest so he can blink up at him. Whatever he's about to ask, Shiro knows he'll leap to give it to him.

"Could you get more drinks for us?"

Shiro hesitates. His protective instincts are dubious that it's a good idea for Keith to have another drink, but those instincts are battling with the intense desire to provide for his mate, and the pride at having been asked to do something for him. He looks to the bar, then back to Keith. Keith blinks again, and that does it.

Shiro grumbles low in his throat. "Okay," he agrees, "but stay right here."

Surely he can leave Keith alone for the length of time it'll take him to grab a couple drinks. He'll hardly be any distance away, anyway.

Still, there's a tightness in his throat and in his jaw, radiating all the way down through his shoulders, as he lets Keith free of his arms and steps away, walking a couple of steps backwards through the crowd until he has to reluctantly turn around to make his way across the dance floor.

Every instinct in him is screaming to stop, to turn around and rush back to his mate's side, because how could he even think of leaving his omega alone here? The rational part of his mind fights against that urge, has him gritting his teeth and clenching his fists and forcing himself to continue, to act *normal* for god's sake, because *everything is fine*.

He's only at the bar for five minutes, if that. He's distracted, clipped with the bartender, concerned that the drink he brings back to Keith might be too strong, especially when he's already tipsy.

When he turns around, his eyes search out Keith without instruction, finding him like a homing beacon.

But there's something wrong, and it rips a painful growl out of Shiro's throat before he can stop it.

As soon as his eyes land on Keith, smiling with his eyes drifted closed, swaying his hips like he's lost in the music, they slide to the side of him, where a muscular alpha is leaning into his space, beginning to bend like he's going to try to get closer, to catch a whiff of Keith's scent or say something in his ear.

Shiro sees red.

He slams the drinks back down on the bar without looking. Cold liquid splashes over his hands, but he barely notices.

He stalks over towards them on pure instinct, not worrying about finding a path through the crowd—people move out of his way. Keith startles when he notices the alpha next to him, must hear him or feel his breath on his neck, and that makes Shiro even angrier. He watches Keith turn, watches his shoulders begin to raise defensively, his brow knitting.

The alpha gleams, showing his teeth. Keith only has a moment to snarl at him before Shiro is barging between them, sweeping Keith up into his arms and off his feet and putting his bulk between them like a shield.

He doesn't stop, even when Keith yelps in surprise; he uses his momentum to haul Keith across the dance floor, across the room, through the throngs of people, until they come out on the other side. Shiro lets his feet hit the floor, finally, when they've reached an area that's not too crowded, right on the edge of the club. Keith's hands are on his shoulders and he's looking up at him, trying to find his eyes, maybe confused, maybe worried, but Shiro is honed in on a single-minded focus.

"Mine," he growls. Only Keith can hear, but it's everyone else who he needs to *know*.

He keeps Keith firm against him with one arm hooked around his lower back, and his metal hand tangles in Keith's hair, palming the back of his head and keeping him in place as he bends to kiss his mouth open. It's not a pretty kiss, not made for teasing or finesse. It's made to claim, to protect and prove.

The music isn't as loud here, but it's still loud enough to be thrumming through his body—or maybe that's his heart pounding in his chest, or maybe it's Keith's; they're pressed together tightly enough.

The force of the kiss makes Keith bend backwards slightly, his back arching around the inflection point of Shiro's arm. Keith is surprised enough to not even try leading the kiss, letting Shiro open his mouth around his tongue and lick the backs of his teeth. He goes liquid, heavier in Shiro's arms, head lolling back into his hand.

It's not enough, though. That fire in Shiro's chest is still roaring, still unsettled, threatened and angry and protective and possessive all at once, because if it's not clear to every alpha in this building that Keith is *his* mate, that he's bonded and loved and taken care of well enough that he would never for a moment consider another, then what is Shiro doing wrong?

He shuffles forward, crowding Keith backwards blindly until they hit the wall. He doesn't let up the kiss, nipping at Keith's bottom lip and sucking on his tongue. Eyes are on them, he has no doubt, but that's the point. His hands slide down to grip Keith's ass unashamedly, pulling him up just enough that he's up on his tiptoes, has to loop his arms around Shiro's neck to stay up. Shiro pins him in position against the wall with his bodyweight.

When he squeezes his hands, his fingertips curl into the flesh of Keith's ass, exposed by his short shorts. He curls them further, up under the hem, just because he can, and Keith gasps into his mouth.

Shiro's cock is hard, and he knows Keith can feel it against his belly. He rolls his hips forward pointedly, grinds into him, and the little bit of friction is so sweet he nearly whines.

It's dark, but when he pulls back just enough to look, he can see the flush on Keith's cheeks, the blown out glimmer of his eyes. An image flashes through his head of Keith looking up at him like that from on his knees, lips slick with spit and parted around Shiro's cock. He rolls his hips again.

It feels too good, better than it should, and everything is so sharp, so loud and intense, all around him. He feels even more like he needs to surround Keith, to shield him from all this. To get close enough that all Keith feels is him.

Using his grip on Keith's ass, Shiro hikes him up a little higher, a little closer, as he ducks his head to mouth hungrily at Keith's throat. Keith arches, as much as he can pinned to the wall like he is. Shiro's rough with it, sucks and bites all up the line of Keith's neck, all while grinding against him, kneading at his ass with flexing hands.

It's not enough, though, not close enough, not scratching the itch that's taken root under his skin. So he slides one hand down to Keith's thigh and pulls it up, hooking it over his hip so that Keith is more open for him, a space for him to fit in.

Keith moans, surprised, and Shiro feels it vibrate against his lips on Keith's throat. The fingers on Shiro's shoulders dig in deeper, enough to make him growl. He moves back up to Keith's lips, kisses him hard and urgent at first, then slows it down, forcing himself to calm enough to really kiss him deep and thorough, take him apart.

He just keeps getting hotter, his skin is prickling with cold sweat, and he can't make sense out of anything because his head is spinning too much to think about anything other than *Keith, Keith, Keith*.

He's barely holding back, anymore, rolling his hips into Keith with intent, in a steady, unyielding rhythm, like he'd be fucking him if it weren't for the denim barriers between them.

They're making a scene. Shiro's too far gone to pick up on any scents or sounds of people watching them, but he knows just what they're thinking. It only spurs him on further, makes him want to tear Keith's clothes off and show them all what they're missing out on.

He's not sure where this is going to end, how far he'll go, but he has no interest in stopping himself, and boundaries seem like a problem for future Shiro. Future being like, maybe five minutes from now.

Keith seems to be lost to it too, not doing anything other than moaning into Shiro's mouth and clinging onto his shoulders.

Shiro nips at Keith's bottom lip, and pulls back just to see the way that Keith's eyes are lidded, pupils huge and dark and following Shiro's lips like he's drunk on them. It sends a sizzle of heat down Shiro's spine, and suddenly he needs more, frustrated into near frenzy by the clothes between them, keeping him away from Keith, from his mate.

With a growl, his hands move from their station, keeping Keith pinned to the wall with his hips so that he can pull at Keith's clothes, disorganized and urgent, hands searching for skin wherever they can find it. They end up sliding up under Keith's shirt, palming at his sides, feeling his ribs, hiking up the side of the loose shirt like he wants to just pull it off.

Focused as Shiro is on his goal, he hardly notices as Keith blinks some of the haze out of his eyes, as his expression begins to clear and focus, a crease appearing between his eyebrows

even as he moans when Shiro thumbs over his nipple.

“Sh-Shiro...”

Shiro merely grunts in response, ducking to suck at Keith’s collarbone. This is better, a little better—one hand trails down to Keith’s hip, tugging at the waistband of his shorts, fingers slipping under it and pulling uselessly, searching for the button, because they aren’t budging, and these shouldn’t be on right now, there must be some way to get them off—

“Shiro,” he hears again, louder now, firmer, and it cuts through the fog enough that he lifts his head up reluctantly, hands still squeezing and kneading at Keith but pausing in their mission until he can find out what Keith wants.

“Shiro, we can’t just...*fuck* in the middle of a *club*,” he mutters hoarsely, sounding a little like he wishes they could, which makes Shiro chuff happily. He doesn’t really understand what Keith is saying, but he does understand that Keith wants him, and that’s perfect, because he wants Keith too.

When their eyes meet, Keith searches his, something dawning over his expression.

He doesn’t look lost to lust anymore, which just isn’t right. Shiro frowns. Maybe pouts.

“Oh boy. Yeah, okay, we need to get out of here.” It sounds like Keith is talking to himself, which is strange, because Shiro is right here, but then Keith is pushing gently on his chest, and confused as he might be, he complies, stepping back and helping Keith slide to the floor.

“Hey, it’s okay, Shiro.” Keith’s hand is on his cheek now. Nothing is making sense, but that does help, and he leans into it. “It’s okay, I just want to go home, okay?”

It takes a moment, but Shiro nods. Home. That’s a good idea. Home is where Keith’s nest is, and he must want to go there together. He doesn’t want Shiro to fuck him here in front of everyone, which is fine, even if Shiro is maybe a little sad about it.

“Let’s just find our friends and let them know where we’re going.”

Keith takes his hand and leads him through the crowd, which is hard, because Shiro doesn’t really know where they’re going and there are all these people so close to him, and to Keith too, and he doesn’t like that. But Keith squeezes his hand and keeps going, and that must mean that everything is okay. He takes a deep breath and lets it back out.

Keith stops, and Shiro runs into him a little bit before he gets his feet to stop and stands close against his back. The faces in front of them are familiar now, and they’re nodding, looking from Keith to Shiro with funny expressions. Matt is snickering. He doesn’t know why.

Then Keith’s turning him around and they’re walking through all those people again, but Keith promises him it’s the last time, and sure enough, soon they’re outside, where it’s cool and fresh and quiet, and there’s all this space around them. He feels like he can breathe better now, as long as he has some point of contact with Keith.

Soon, they're enclosed again, but at least now there's only one other person in their space, and he doesn't smell like an alpha. Shiro scoots closer along the seat to Keith, winding an arm around his back and fitting his hand on his hip. He feels Keith's hand land on his thigh, squeezing gently.

"Hey," he whispers, "you can relax. It's okay. We're on our way home."

Shiro wants to respond, but the words get tied up somewhere between his throat and his tongue. All he knows is that he wants to stay glued to Keith's side, and that he'd much rather be in their own home where there's no one else and everything is quiet and smells like them.

Then Keith is saying something to the man up front and taking Shiro's hand and pulling him out, out into the open air again, and Shiro breathes a sigh of relief. He perks up when he sees the familiar warm lights of their house glowing through the windows on either side of the front door, and hurries toward it with Keith at his elbow.

They're alone now, finally. Keith stops at the front door to dig for the keys, and Shiro can't help himself, he wraps his arms around him and nuzzles his face in the crook of his neck, right where his scent is strongest.

He's still hard. He shifts his hips forwards, rubs himself against Keith's ass experimentally. Keith huffs a chuckle and turns the key in the lock.

Before he gets any further, though, Shiro's mouthing at his jaw, gathering him in closer.

Keith's belly is soft under his hands, yielding to the pressure of his touch. He feels so good against Shiro's cock, even through both of their clothes—but it would feel so much better without them.

Keith's breath catches and he opens the door, stumbling forward and dragging Shiro along with him, still attached to his back. He kicks the door closed behind them, which is a good thing, because Shiro wouldn't have had the presence of mind to think of it before he's fumbling with the button of Keith's shorts, prying it open and pulling down the zipper.

"Shiro..." Keith gasps. There's a breathy tone to his voice that tells Shiro he wants it too, and that makes him rumble with pleasure, his alpha instincts preening. Now he can show his mate how good he can be to him, he can fill him up and then take him to their nest, keep him warm, feed him. He can't wait.

Keith's scent is so much stronger here, here in their home where everything has been touched by him, the two of their scents entwined. It drives Shiro nearly frantic with want, with a need to claim his omega, to feel him, to be as close to him as it's possible to be.

They're too far from the bedroom. Shiro can problem-solve, though, so he shuffles Keith into their living room, then wraps a hand around the back of his neck and uses it to bend him over the back of the couch. Keith shivers.

He steps back enough to get his hand around the waistband of Keith's shorts and yank them down, his hand dragging down from Keith's neck to the small of his back to keep him down.

He can hear himself mumbling, but he doesn't really know what, only that it makes Keith gasp and moan and push back against him.

Another growl rumbles in Shiro's chest, not one of aggression but one of hunger. He grinds against Keith's ass, frustrated that his cock is still trapped behind the thick fabric of his jeans.

Keith is wet, so wet. It flares Shiro's nostrils and makes him want to drop to his knees and bury his face against him, lick it up like sweet honey dripping down the side of the jar. But his cock is aching too much to wait. He needs to bury himself inside of his omega, to knot in him, lock them together and fill him up until there's no question who his alpha is. He can indulge later.

When he pulls his hips back to pull his own zipper down, he sees a dark glistening patch on the fabric, a single string of slick connecting him still to Keith's soaked thighs.

He wants to say something, to spill filth from his lips and tell Keith just what the sight of that does to him, but he can't seem to catch the words, all spinning above his head.

He works his jeans and boxers down with one hand, unwilling to take the other off of Keith's hip where it's pawing and kneading at him absently. As soon as his cock is free, Shiro hisses through his teeth, fisting the base of it tight because he's so, so hard that it's painful. It feels like he could come at the barest touch, and also like he wants to keep going for hours and hours, just pounding into Keith's holes until his muscles give out.

With a grunt, he swipes his palm over Keith's leaking slit, drawing a wet gasp from him from below, then rubs the slick over himself in two quick strokes. Then he steps forward, flush to Keith's ass, letting his cock fit between Keith's soft thighs as he drops down over Keith's back, covering him. Keith feels so small under him. Only half as wide as his own torso, pinned completely and happily at his mercy.

One hand stays locked around Keith's hip while his metal arm snakes around Keith's ribs and holds him tight, pressing them together at every point he can. Thigh to thigh, hips to ass, chest to back.

Almost frantic, now, he ruts against Keith until the head of his cock catches on his hole, and he thrusts forward sharply, pressing in as Keith opens around him until his hip bones knock against Keith's ass. Keith gasps and trills, body tense for a moment, then going slack in his arms as Shiro pulls out halfway and fucks back in, then again, bottoming out hard each time.

He bites down on Keith's shoulder and Keith cries out, hand flying back to hook around the back of Shiro's neck, nails scratching through his buzz cut.

"Ohhh, fuck, Shiro, Jesus Christ."

There's no finesse to it, just instinct telling him to drive into Keith again and again, to lick at the bite mark on his shoulder, to mouth at his neck and fuck him harder with each warbling moan he knocks out of his mate's throat.

On one thrust in, he buries himself as deep as he can and grinds there, pushing Keith up on his tiptoes and making him shudder out a throaty keen. Just like that, the tight, silky heat around him clenches down even tighter and Keith comes.

“Shiro, *Shiro!*”

Shiro chuffs, readjusts his grip, and keeps fucking him. He sounds so good. Feels so good. Smells so good.

Keith is squirming, making high-pitched whines, at first like he’s trying to get away from the overwhelming feeling, then fucking himself back against Shiro’s cock before long, panting and chasing another climax. His fingers are clawing into the couch cushions, and if Shiro had more presence of mind right now, he might worry that Keith will rip them, but as it is, he only takes it as a sign that he’s satisfying his mate, that he’s stretching him and filling him up just right.

Shiro knows he’s close, can feel the tightness building up in his lower belly. He snarls at nothing, not ready for it to end, but then he reminds himself that his omega will still be right here, locked to him with his knot, and as soon as he’s recovered, they can go again.

He thinks Keith comes again. His head is too hazy to really tell. But he does notice when his knot pops, and he hurries to get it inside, pushing up against Keith desperately until it pops into his hole and Keith yelps before relaxing, panting into the couch cushion.

Shiro stills, finally sated as he empties in his mate—at least for the moment. Gradually, the world starts to spin a little less. He lets himself slump with the exhaustion, draped over Keith, burying his face in his hair and seeking out his cheek to kiss.

Keith is saying something, but it takes him a while to get the words to come through to him until he reaches back and taps Shiro on the hip to get his attention.

Shiro pushes himself up, just a little, so he can see Keith’s face, and makes a questioning noise.

“You’re, ah, heavy,” he pants, craning his head back to see Shiro over his shoulder and giving him a wry smile. “Not the most comfortable position.”

Oh! Of course. His omega is small, and Shiro is big, and he doesn’t want to crush him. He makes a sound of assent and straightens up quickly, getting his legs under him. He moves to pick Keith up and pull back from the couch, thinking they can lie down, but Keith hisses and a hand flies back to claw at his thigh, stopping him in his tracks.

“Mm, nevermind,” he grits, “no moving right now.”

Shiro is confused, but he stops, lowering back over Keith so he can lap at his neck apologetically.

After a few minutes, Keith starts purring. His eyes flutter open, but not wide, and he turns to nose at Shiro’s cheek.

“Okay, you can move us now.”

Carefully, Shiro gathers Keith up in his arms and picks him up, holding him close against him so his knot doesn't pull. He walks them around to the front of the couch, just a few steps, and then sits gingerly down with Keith in his lap, then lies down and turns them on their sides so they can be stretched out, spooning on the couch.

“Much better,” Keith says around a yawn.

Shiro nuzzles into the crook of his neck. He feels fuzzy with contentment, with his mate in his arms and on his knot, safe in their home. He sighs, and allows himself to drift, just a little—he has to make sure he's alert enough to protect Keith, after all.

He licks at Keith's mating mark, admiring it. He wishes he could make Keith his mate all over again.

His knot is starting to go down, but only slowly, much more slowly than it usually does. It's moved from the oversensitive post-orgasm stage, through the relative numbness as he recovers, and then back to starting to feel good again, all in the span of maybe fifteen minutes.

The pressure on his knot is incredible, and it's stimulated each time Keith's tired muscles twitch or he shifts slightly on the couch. It makes Shiro's abs clench, his hand press down on Keith's stomach.

Soon, that itch is there again, prickling at his skin and making him begin to rock his hips in small, stuttered thrusts. It startles Keith awake with a groan.

The feeling escalates quickly—first Shiro is mouthing along Keith's shoulder, just grinding slightly inside of him, drawing out little hiccuping gasps of oversensitivity from Keith. Then he's taking Keith's half-hard cock in hand and stroking it while Keith keens and squirms in his arms. He wants Keith to feel good. He wants to make him come again.

So he doubles down, stroking Keith firmly and smoothly, helped along by the steady drip of precum he's letting out. At the same time, he keeps grinding his cock inside Keith, seeking as much friction as he can get. He pulls his hips back, his knot pulling on the edges of Keith's entrance, which clenches down on him reflexively. Then he pushes back in, deep and sure.

There isn't much he can really fuck him with his knot locking them in place still, but he does as much as he can, rocking his hips and grinding in and out in those small aborted motions. It's barely anything, but still it lights Shiro's nerve endings on fire, everything so sensitive right now, enough that he's quickly at the point of desperation, clutching Keith to him and burying his face in his shoulder until everything reaches a fever pitch and he comes, again.

He growls as he comes, from deep in his chest, and his hand flies over Keith's cock.

“S-Shiro...I-I...” Keith cuts himself off with a choked groan and comes, spilling over Shiro's fist. His thighs tremble with it. Shiro runs his hand down them, petting, soothing, shushing.

Finally, now, his knot starts going down gradually. He waits it out, stroking Keith's hair and kissing each bit of skin he can find—his neck, his shoulder, the corner of his jaw. Then finally his mouth, when Keith cranes his head back and seeks out his lips for a sweet, drawn-out kiss.

When Shiro's knot has gone down enough, he holds Keith's hip in place and carefully pulls out. Before Keith can try to get up on his own, Shiro sweeps him up into his arms and carries him straight to their bed. Suddenly, all his body wants is sleep, and he needs it now.

He lays Keith down in their bed, but resists the temptation to crawl in straight after him. First, he has to make sure Keith will be protected while they sleep. Practically sleepwalking, he drags himself through the house, checking all the doors and windows to ensure they're secured. In the kitchen, he pours a large glass of water to bring back to his mate, to make sure he stays hydrated. He sways standing at the sink when a wave of exhaustion hits him, spilling some of the water, but he can't worry about that right now.

Satisfied that the premises are secured, he goes back to the bedroom to find Keith still awake, waiting for him. He's watching him carefully as Shiro approaches and puts the glass of water in his hands, and Shiro won't lie down until Keith has downed half of it.

Keith gives the glass back to him, and he places it on the nightstand, and finally, everything is taken care of. With his last ounce of energy, he sheds the last of his clothes, leaving them in a pile on the floor. Then, he crawls into bed and folds Keith into his arms, and sleep finds him swiftly.

Chapter 4

Chapter Summary

Shiro goes into rut. What more can I say.

Chapter Notes

Here is the 4th and final (chonky) installment! I very much hope you enjoy :)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

When Shiro wakes in the morning, his body is sore. Every single muscle has the kind of ache and persistent tingle that usually comes along with a good workout, individual muscle fibers twitching irregularly. He stretches his legs reflexively as the ache sets in, and the burn makes him groan. Beside him, a rustle of fabric and heat against his side brings back flashes of memory—of last night, of the club, the overwhelming tide of protectiveness, coming home and...well. Shiro feels his cock stir at the memory, despite his exhaustion.

Gradually, he floats closer to awareness, his breather growing shallower, his eyes starting to flit behind his eyelids. He remembers waking up one more time during the night, all tangled up in the blankets and Keith and covered in a sheen of sweat, once again wracked with need. He remembers kissing Keith awake and coaxing him to turn onto his stomach so he could fill him again, both of them too tired to do much more than rut lazily, slowly rolling into orgasm before collapsing into sleep once again.

He untangles a hand from the sheets to rub his eyes, clearing the sleep from them and blinking them slowly, reluctantly open.

His mind is clearer now than it has been since some point at the club. There's still a fogginess to his thoughts, a feeling of easy distraction, echoes of the uncontrolled way he felt last night—but he's cognizant enough that reality comes crashing down on him like a ton of bricks.

Fuck.

He is absolutely, definitely in rut.

For a minute, he just lies there, stock still and letting his mounting anxiety wash over him, until his stomach is rolling and he feels a little bit like the room is spinning.

He's in rut, and he doesn't really even know what that means for him, since he's *never had one before*. But he does know that it means...losing control. Not...not being himself. He

doesn't know what he'll be like in rut, what he'll do—but images flash through his mind, unwelcome, of other times he hasn't been in control of his body, and the association sends a sick, sour feeling clenching his stomach, and his breath catches in his chest.

“Shiro?” The whisper breaks him out of his spiral. “You awake?”

Keith's voice is gentle, quiet, a little hoarse with sleep. He doesn't sound angry, or afraid, or even worried, really.

Shiro squeezes his eyes shut tight one last time, then lets out all the breath in his lungs in a heavy sigh. Then he sits up, grunting at the burn in his abs.

“Yeah. Yeah, I'm awake.”

He doesn't look over, but he can feel Keith sitting up and shuffling closer.

“Are you...?”

“I'm...pretty with it. At least for now.”

There's a pause, and Shiro finally turns his head. Keith is cross-legged, facing him, and he shuffles forward when Shiro meets his eyes, until his knees bump into Shiro's thigh. The touch is grounding.

“So uh, I guess you can have ruts, after all.”

Keith is wearing a wry smile, but Shiro can't bring himself to reciprocate his lightness. He gives a mirthless chuckle instead.

“Yeah...guess so.”

There's another stretch of silence. Shiro stares at his hands in his lap. Keith watches him.

He doesn't need to say anything—Keith knows him well enough to understand. He's been there through all of it, after all. That scar on his cheek says so loud and clear.

The next thing he knows, Keith is shifting onto his knees and grabbing onto his face with both hands, directing it so that Shiro has to look at him.

“Shiro. I am not the slightest bit afraid of you. You are not dangerous just because you're in rut. You're just...really horny, and a little overprotective, and kind of an emotional wreck. You're still you.”

There's no hesitation or doubt in his eyes. They don't waver from Shiro's, and Shiro feels some of the held breath release from his lungs, some of the pressure lifting off the center of his chest where it was beginning to feel suffocating.

“You're...honestly really sweet in rut, if the last few days leading up to it are any indication. It's cute.”

Keith actually *blushes*. “You just need to...take care of me, and to know you’re a good alpha. And have lots and lots of sex,” he shrugs.

Keith’s fingers slide back from his cheeks into his hair, starting to stroke through the short strands, fingernails lightly scratching at his scalp. Shiro leans into it; he can’t help it.

“You’re a good man, Shiro. Through and through.” He leans in and dusts a kiss on Shiro’s lips, soft and short. His voice has gone so soft, so gentle, Shiro feels like he wants to wrap himself up in it and fall asleep.

“This is...this is something new, sure. But truth be told, I’m kind of excited to go through this new experience with you. I want everything with you, Shiro.”

Finally, Shiro feels like he can move. Like his limbs aren’t weighed down by heavy lead. He reaches up to wrap his fingers around one of Keith’s wrists next to his cheek. His thumb strokes the tender underside of it, and he can feel Keith’s pulse under the delicate skin. His head is starting to go a bit fuzzy again, but he’s held on long enough to know that this is okay, that it’s going to be okay.

Keith’s fingers in his hair are hypnotizing. It makes him flutter his eyes closed, and when he opens them, Keith’s expression is radiating fondness.

“Alright, baby,” he practically coos. “Let’s get you through this rut, hm?”

Shiro nods dumbly and slumps forward, resting his forehead on Keith’s shoulder. He turns his head to the side and nuzzles at his neck, taking a couple deep, calming breaths of his mate’s scent.

“Can I...can I feed you breakfast?” Shiro whispers into the cradle of Keith’s neck. He feels him nod.

“Of course, baby. Of course. You’re so sweet. C’mon, let’s go to the kitchen.”

Shiro loses his previous apprehension pretty quickly, once his fuzzy rut brain takes back over and he’s able to pursue his goal with a single-minded purpose—that goal being to take care of Keith.

It’s still early morning, and their kitchen is quiet, save for the sounds of silverware clinking and the crunching of bacon. Keith tried turning on some talk radio when they got down here, but Shiro stiffened at the sound of the voices, so he turned it off.

Shiro had some trouble deciding what he wanted them to have for breakfast—he wanted to cook Keith something substantial, but also wanted to be able to feed him *now*, so he spent a couple minutes paralyzed with indecision, stuck between some cereal or protein bars and the ingredients for pancakes before Keith stepped in and pulled out a bag of frozen hash browns from the freezer and a package of bacon as a compromise.

When the food was ready after some quick frying up, Keith went to sit on his side of their tiny circular breakfast table in the kitchen, but froze in place when he noticed the slightly forlorn look on Shiro's face.

Evidently, Shiro wanted Keith on his lap for this, so that's where he now sits, perched on Shiro's thigh as Shiro feeds him bites of hash browns and pieces of bacon. He's happier by the minute, smiling almost shyly up at Keith as his need to provide is fulfilled.

Keith makes sure Shiro eats too, little bites in between the ones he lifts to Keith's lips—he's going to need the energy for the next few days, after all. Shiro looks happy to do that, too—any way he can please his mate, he's all for.

The over-the-top affection that has been a feature of the past week of pre-rut is here in full force, and it's quickly becoming maybe Keith's favorite part of this Shiro. It's just...adorable. Shiro can't keep his hands off him, like he wants Keith to be closer even when he's sitting on his lap. His flesh hand has made a seemingly permanent home on Keith's hip, his metal arm wrapped around his waist when he's not feeding Keith by hand, and he keeps nosing into Keith's neck, nuzzling at him and smiling like he can't help it.

Keith doesn't mind it. Not at all.

When Keith has finished his plate and Shiro holds up a bite from his own, complete with puppy eyes, Keith shakes his head and gently pushes Shiro's hand away.

"I'm full, baby. But you should finish your food."

Shiro frowns and looks between the fork and Keith's mouth, making a little displeased huff.

Right. Keith isn't dealing in the realm of rationality right now. He needs to speak to Shiro's alpha instincts directly.

So he smiles, sweet as sugar syrup, and lays his head on Shiro's shoulder.

"Thank you for feeding me, alpha," he purrs. "You take such good care of me." He can feel Shiro's chest puff up under his cheek. "I'm all done for now, but I'd like you to finish your food so you have plenty of strength and energy to take care of me and...to-to fuck me."

He stumbles on the last bit, heat rising to his cheeks.

There's a rumble in Shiro's chest, and his arm around Keith tightens. He nods seriously, like Keith has made some excellent points, and quickly eats the rest of his meal, turning to Keith once the plate is clean as if looking for approval. Keith smiles, straightening up on Shiro's lap and kissing his cheek.

"Good. Now, how about a shower, hm? We worked up quite a sweat last night, didn't we?"

Shiro lets Keith lead him to the bathroom, where he turns the shower on and waits for it to reach a good temperature—just this side of too hot, just like Shiro likes.

When it's ready, he steps back to gesture Shiro in. Shiro hurries to obey, moving forward and about to step into the shower fully clothed before Keith throws an arm out to stop him.

"Wait!" Shiro freezes, blinking at him owl-eyed. "Shiro, your clothes."

Shiro looks down at himself for a moment, confused, and then seems to realize what Keith is saying and pulls the clothes off of himself in record time, tossing them haphazardly behind him. Now naked, he looks for Keith's nod of approval before stepping into the shower and under the spray.

Keith goes to close the sliding glass door, figuring Shiro will get more horny than clean if he comes in there with him, but he really should have known better than to think he could get away with that right now.

Before the door is halfway closed, Shiro's big hand is flying out and clapping onto it, stopping it in its tracks. He's frowning a little, more confused than anything, like he can't work out why his mate wouldn't be joining him in the shower. So he reaches out and grabs Keith to pull him in.

Keith squawks as his clothes are quickly soaked, shaking water out of his hair.

"Shiro! I'm still—" Keith stops when he sees the confused, verging on hurt look on Shiro's face and sighs. Might as well just get naked now.

Shiro paws at him when he gets back under the spray after tossing his clothes over the doors, apologetic and worried.

"It's okay, hey, I'm not mad baby. Now—don't you want to wash me?"

Shiro nods vigorously. He takes Keith by the hips and steers him around, flipping their positions so that Keith is under the shower spray. With a concentrated crease between his brows, he tips Keith's chin up to tilt his head back into the spray, running his hands over his hair to get it wet without getting water in Keith's eyes. Then he lathers him up with shampoo, massaging it into his scalp with careful fingers. He's so gentle. Far more gentle than Keith thought an alpha in rut could be. But he shouldn't be surprised. This is Shiro, after all.

After rinsing all the suds out, Shiro pumps a generous amount of Keith's favorite conditioner into his palms and starts working it into his hair, all the way down to the tips of it which lie wet and plastered to the small of his back. Shiro's fingers there make him shiver involuntarily, and Shiro notices, glancing up at him with eyes a shade darker than they were before.

He moves on, though, after the brief interruption, grabbing some lavender-scented shower gel and beginning to rub it over Keith's skin, working his way over his shoulders and arms first, then his chest and stomach. He slides his hands up Keith's neck, carefully lathering his throat, up to the underside of his jaw, where Shiro's fingers fit perfectly.

Keith's whole body is tingling under the attention, not enough but something, a taste of what Shiro could give him. He bites his lip as Shiro soaps up his back, drawing Keith forward into

his chest while his arms loop around him, scrubbing thoroughly. He holds his breath when Shiro slides one hand down his ass, skipping it for now, and hooks under the back of his thigh, encouraging him to pick it up.

Shiro places Keith's hand on his shoulder, and Keith holds it for balance as Shiro uses both hands now to wash him down. He works down his thigh first, then his fingers are in the sensitive crease of Keith's knee. The sensation makes Keith's breath catch, but then Shiro's moving on, lathering his calf, fingers digging into the muscle and releasing some tension Keith didn't even know was there. He sighs when Shiro does the same to his achilles tendon, then the arch of his foot, kneeling now to reach, propping Keith's heel on his bent knee.

He looks up at Keith before pressing a kiss to his knee and placing his foot back on the ground. Keith shifts his weight in anticipation, and Shiro picks up the other leg, working from his foot up, this time.

Keith's breath is coming heavier now, and there's no way Shiro isn't noticing the way his belly rises and falls more quickly, the way Keith's grip is a little tighter on his shoulder.

Shiro looks up at him again when he reaches the top of his thigh, flesh hand rubbing into his hip. He doesn't say anything, doesn't break eye contact as he leans in and kisses the inside of Keith's thigh. His metal hand creeps further upward, and Keith knows he's feeling the slick that's surely dripping down his inner thighs by now, building over the course of this careful treatment.

Shiro groans, a guttural noise that rattles in his throat. His hand on Keith's hip clamps down, pressing divots into his flesh. Fingers find the source of his wetness and dance over his entrance, and a slick-drunk haze falls over Shiro's face.

Before Keith knows it, Shiro is pushing him back into the spray, quickly washing the suds down the drain, then pinning him to the shower wall.

He gasps at the cold tile against his back, then at Shiro's mouth landing hungrily on his hole while one hand throws Keith's leg over his shoulder to open him up.

"Oh! Shiro," he pants, hardly able to keep up, because Shiro is pushing his tongue into him, lapping his slick up artlessly and desperately. His hands claw Keith's cheeks apart, fingers playing at his rim as Shiro shoves his face closer, as close as he can get between Keith's thighs with him standing the way he is. It's the best kind of overwhelming.

Shiro's feeling overwhelmed, too, if the way he moans and whines is any indication. When Keith glances down, Shiro is unsurprisingly hard, his alpha cock swollen and red and ready to mount.

Shiro plunges two fingers into him just as he stands, tossing Keith's leg off his shoulder and pressing his whole body against him. He stays there just for a moment, before he takes a step back and grabs Keith's waist, flipping him around to then cover his back.

He slips in easily, with Keith being as turned on as he is, and considering how often he's been filled over the past week. Keith blushes at the thought at the same time that he moans and

claws at the tiles.

Shiro's breath is hot against the back of his neck. He snarls and kisses him there, a scrape of teeth like he's holding himself back from biting. Keith kind of wishes he would.

He strokes himself as Shiro fucks him quickly, pushing him up onto his toes and eventually flattening him against the wall, forcing him to let go of himself and reach back to cling onto Shiro instead, just holding on and taking it.

Soon, Shiro pops his knot—Keith can feel it bumping up against him, pulling on his entrance, stretching it. Something about it—the pressure, the promise of more, has Keith coming with a surprised shout. Shiro lets out a sharp grunt as Keith squeezes down on him reflexively, and then Keith feels him start to come.

Instead of shoving his knot in as he finishes, Shiro pulls out suddenly, fisting his knot and spilling the last couple ropes of cum over Keith's lower back. So much for all that washing.

After the shower, while they're toweling off and brushing their teeth and getting dressed in soft, comfortable clothes that surely won't stay on for long, Shiro can't seem to stop smelling Keith. He noses at his neck, then pulls back, then does it to his hair, his shoulder.

"Shiro?"

Shiro huffs. He's frowning, clearly agitated, sniffing and huffing and sniffing again. Then it occurs to Keith. They just showered. Well—*he* just showered, really. But he must not smell like himself anymore, or like Shiro, covered up by the flowery scent of soap and shampoo. Shiro's cum dripping back out of him is, apparently, not enough.

So Keith isn't surprised when Shiro crowds into him and takes him in his arms, bringing him closer, enclosing him. Shiro starts to scent him, rubbing his cheek up against the scent glands on Keith's neck and then rubbing his own neck against Keith's, mixing their scent together and covering Keith in it. Keith just lets him, squirming and giggling when it tickles but otherwise lax in his arms and waiting patiently for him to be done.

When he's satisfied that Keith smells right again, he stops but doesn't let him go, electing instead to hoist Keith up into his arms and cart him into the living room, dumping him gently onto the couch. He disappears for a moment, then comes back with an armful of blankets, looking exceedingly proud of himself.

"Oh, thank you baby," Keith says, managing to hold back a giggle. Shiro beams, and begins laying the blankets on Keith, draping them over him and tucking them in around him carefully. He then joins Keith on the couch, laying down and cuddling up behind him until they're a little pile of warmth. He wraps Keith in his arms and hooks his chin over Keith's shoulder, and then swiftly falls asleep.

Keith chuckles softly, careful not to wake him up. He's not surprised. Rut takes a lot of energy.

Shiro's heavy, half on top of him and weighing him down gradually as his muscles slacken with sleep and he sinks into the couch. He feels Shiro's breath as it deepens and slows, the rise and fall of his chest steady and comforting.

Keith's not quite ready for a nap himself, at least not until the warmth and pressure lulls him into it anyway, so for now he just lays here, worming a hand out of his cocoon of blankets so he can stroke Shiro's hair. There's a little bit of tightness in his chest, the happy kind, and he smiles as he watches his husband sleep.

Keith wakes at the same time Shiro does, to the feeling of him sleepily nuzzling at his neck, grunting softly as he gradually drifts to the surface. Keith yawns, then realizes he was purring when the noise stops and then kicks back up again when he lets it.

He wonders what time it is. It's hard to keep track anymore, with the strange schedule they're keeping. When he blinks his eyes open, he sees dappled light cast onto the kitchen floor, shifting and blinking as a breeze rustles the tree outside the window over the sink. Probably afternoon, then.

He stretches, moaning softly when it pulls at his sore muscles. Shiro paws at his belly, a rumble in his throat. He shifts behind him, and Keith feels his hardening cock slotting up between his cheeks insistently.

"Mmm," Keith sighs, yawning again into the crook of his elbow. He reaches back and wraps his hand around Shiro—at least as much as his girth will allow, the tips of his fingers barely meeting each other—and strokes him idly, not sure if he's coaxing or teasing or helping take the edge off before Shiro fucks him again.

In mere moments, he's completely hard, stiff and unyielding under Keith's palm. His cock is hot, but the rest of him is, too—Keith can feel it radiating off of him, like he has his back to the sun. He wouldn't be surprised if Shiro is approaching the peak of his rut, body preparing to fill his omega over and over, to show his prowess and prove his worth.

Shiro growls and bucks into Keith's hand. Keith rubs his thighs together, wondering how much longer it will be before Shiro snaps.

The answer is not long—as soon as Keith finds the right angle to twist his wrist and flick his thumb over the head, collecting the thick pearl of precum from his slit, Shiro surges forward, pressing Keith belly-first into the couch and mounting him with no further preamble.

Keith chirps, muffled by the cushion where his face is suddenly buried. The angle has Shiro spearing down towards his belly, straight into his g-spot before pushing past it and stretching him, filling him to the almost-too-much point he's grown used to, but still somehow never quite expects.

It steals the breath from his lungs, at first, just how *much* it is—how big Shiro is, how intensely he feels every movement right now. Every sensation is heightened, from the slight scratch of the sofa against his naked skin, to the puff of Shiro's hot breath against his

shoulder, to the pounding of Shiro's cock inside him, splitting him open, rubbing every spot inside of him.

It's overwhelming, to say the least, all this stimulation when he's still fucked raw from the past 24 hours, when he's had just enough of a break that everything feels fresh and new and sensitive again.

He can't decide if it's a good or bad feeling, just that it's a *lot*, but then all of a sudden he's coming all over the couch with a drawn-out trill, so that answers that.

Shiro groans happily, nipping at the side of Keith's neck and speeding up his thrusts, chasing his own release now. It comes quickly, and when his knot pushes its way into Keith's hole, Keith howls into the cushion. He's so full, overstimulated, and another sudden orgasm crashes into him. His whole body convulses, clenching involuntarily around Shiro's knot and forcing another spurt of cum out of him.

He's babbling, he realizes as he gradually comes back to earth, comfortably crushed under Shiro's weight in a way that feels like it's the only thing holding him together. It's mostly Shiro's name, and other words for it—things like *alpha* and *mate* that make the tips of his ears grow hot.

It's unclear if Shiro really fully understands Keith's words this deep in rut, but he recognizes his name, humming and chuffing into the nape of Keith's neck.

This time, once his knot has shrunk enough that Shiro could pull out, he doesn't. Keith keeps waiting for it—for Shiro to let out a sated, tired groan and uncouple them so he can roll onto his back and fall asleep or wander into the kitchen in search of food to refuel them.

Instead, Shiro stays inside him, even as he softens and naturally slips partway out, until Keith is only filled with half of his cock. He's laying lazy kisses on Keith's neck and shoulders, scenting him and smiling dopily into his skin, rubbing a big hand back and forth absently over his stomach, like he has no intention whatsoever of moving from their position anytime soon.

They're sticky with sweat and cum, and every so often Keith twitches with the oversensitivity of still being filled, and he's too hot, surrounded by Shiro's fever-warmth, but nothing could make him move right now. Not with the love of his life, his best friend, his mate, happy and relaxed and laving him with affection, here where nothing can encroach on their joy, where Keith has not a shred of doubt in his mind that he is limitlessly loved.

Shiro is, evidently, now in a stage of rut where he can't stand to be physically separated from Keith, in any way, for any duration. It's sweet, if inconvenient, and Keith can't be too bothered by the soreness when Shiro wants to keep him on his half-hard cock for as long as possible.

After an extended period of cuddling, Shiro grabs Keith and rolls over with him so he can lie on his back with Keith sprawled on top of him, apparently comfortable enough to fall into a

long, deep nap.

When he wakes, Keith thinks for sure he'll pull out and they'll go clean off, but instead, to Keith's surprise, he simply tightens his grip around Keith and stands up with him still speared on his cock.

"Shiro!" Keith yelps indignantly, hands flailing for something to grab on to as Shiro starts walking with him into the kitchen, like carrying Keith around in a squirming bundle pressed against his chest is no trouble at all.

"Okay, this is—this is overkill," he grits out, teeth clenched as Shiro's now a little more than half-hard cock is jostled inside of him. "We can't just stay like this for the rest of your rut—oh!"

Having grabbed a packet of cheeses and cured meats from the fridge, Shiro ignores Keith's protests and promptly sits down heavily on one of the stools at their kitchen island.

"Baby, okay, let's stop moving for a moment, huh?" Keith pants out, grabbing the edge of the counter and gripping it white-knuckled while Shiro makes a confused noise and rips the snack package open.

Keith hisses when he shifts again, shuffling in the seat and apparently adjusting to get comfortable in this position before he finally stills.

When Keith cranes his head back to shoot Shiro an accusatory look, Shiro looks quite pleased with himself, evidently very satisfied with having his omega perched in his lap and on his cock while he feeds him.

With a low, happy rumbling in his chest, almost like an alpha purr, Shiro hooks his chin over Keith's shoulder and wraps an arm around his stomach, pressing him back against his chest securely before he reaches for a slice of salami and a piece of cheese and then brings the morsel to Keith's lips.

Keith takes it, because he needs the food, and he knows Shiro needs to feed him right now. But he's distracted enough by the very conspicuous feeling of a huge, hard alpha cock buried inside him that it's the most he can do to open his mouth whenever he feels something pressed against his lips and take the food from Shiro's fingers. His awareness is spotlight-narrow, everything else hazy and seemingly unimportant. It almost feels like being in heat, the way his body and mind are reacting to the intensity of the last 24 hours, like Shiro's hormones are rubbing off on him.

Admittedly, he's preoccupied enough that he isn't able to give as much attention as he should to making sure that Shiro gets the necessary nutrients in him too—he does his best, grunting and pushing the food towards Shiro a few times so he knows Shiro has at least eaten *something*, but he makes a note to self to get him to eat something more substantial later.

When Keith is full, he turns his head to the side at the next offering, refusing the food. Shiro allows it, chuffing and nuzzling Keith's cheek. He pops the last piece of cheese into his own mouth and then closes his arms around Keith's waist. Keith barely has a chance to brace

himself before Shiro is shifting his weight forward and standing up, pressing Keith forward until his hipbones are pinned against the hard edge of the counter.

Keith gasps, both from the surprise of the sudden movement and the way it makes Shiro sink deeper inside of him. Shiro doesn't put him down—he would have to pull out in order to do so, so instead, Keith's legs dangle down, toes barely brushing the tile floor.

Shiro nips at the nape of his neck. Keith doesn't have to guess what he's thinking.

His grip shifts and his fingers dig into the meat of Keith's hip and then he's leaning forward, pressing Keith's chest down on the counter and starting to thrust in slow-but-sharp movements.

Almost immediately, Keith knows it's going to be too much. Tensing and hissing through his teeth, he slaps a hand back against Shiro's stomach to hold him off, then wraps his hand around the base of Shiro's cock when he slows and pulls partway out in response.

He can smell the rut-heightened concern spiking in Shiro's scent right away, which isn't what he wants, so he takes a moment to focus on his own scent, making sure it's calm and sweet.

"Too sore," he explains breathlessly, "here—" he nudges at Shiro so he pops out of him fully, then redirects him to his ass.

It only takes Shiro a moment of pause before he's notching the head of his cock against Keith's rim and then thrusting right in, continuing on as he was.

Keith moans, a sound that echoes off the stone and tile of the kitchen, and buries his face in the crook of his elbow. It feels *good*, so good, even though it's so sudden and so much, and he's wet there, too, the slick squelching sound leaving no doubt of that as Shiro picks up his pace.

He's not even sure if he *can* come anymore; he has to run out of steam eventually, and right now he feels about as wrung out as a used washcloth. But hell, it sure feels like he's going to. With each pounding thrust, Shiro is pushing up inside of him, making room for himself and pressing and rubbing against Keith's sweet spot with his girth, and soon, Keith feels his thighs starting to tremble.

Shiro's clearly getting close too, losing his rhythm and gripping Keith's hips tighter, and when he pops his knot, Keith barely has time to realize it before he's popping it inside of him with one hard thrust, knocking Keith's hips against the countertop and punching a shouted moan out of him.

"Shiro! Holy shit, *ohhh*, fuck." Keith bites down hard on his lower lip as he comes loudly, shaking apart.

He's never been knotted in the ass before. It feels like it shouldn't fit, but it does, somehow, barely, and the pressure has him jerking with the aftershocks. The squeeze must be incredibly tight for Shiro, and sure enough, he collapses over Keith's back and comes too, with a few desperate pumps even as they're firmly locked together.

The wisdom of kitchen-counter sex comes into question while they're now stuck together in this less-than-comfortable position, but Keith doesn't exactly expect wisdom from an alpha this deep in rut—even if that alpha is Shiro.

Shiro contents himself with lapping at every bit of Keith's skin that he can reach in this position while they wait for his knot to go down, apparently not the least bit bothered by the situation.

This time, when it's gone down enough, Shiro finally does pull out, catching Keith by the waist before he slides straight off the counter and onto the floor in a puddle and guiding him down. He keeps an arm around Keith after his feet find the floor, helping keep him upright while he finds his balance again.

Jesus. Keith isn't sure he's ever felt so sticky. He can feel both of his holes fluttering, clenching around nothing and stretched open enough that he can't stop some of Shiro's cum from leaking back out, which is both gross and hot, and he feels his cheeks flame.

He also really has to pee, so as soon as he gets the feeling back in his legs, he's disentangling himself gently from Shiro's hold and making a beeline for the bathroom.

Shiro follows him, padding a short distance behind him a little bit like a lost puppy.

He stands in there with him, because apparently waiting outside the door is far too much distance between them, and watches as Keith relieves himself and then grabs a washcloth. Keith doesn't think twice when he wets the washcloth under warm water and starts scrubbing it over some of the dried cum from earlier—but then he hears a *whine* coming from behind him.

He spins around to see Shiro, looking at him with the most forlorn, hurt expression, glancing between him and the wash cloth like he can't imagine what he could have possibly done wrong that his mate would be cleaning *himself* up instead of letting him do it. Even though Keith knows it's silly and a classic manifestation of Shiro's rut brain, it's kind of heartbreaking.

Immediately, Keith rushes over, cooing.

"Hey, it's okay baby—here, here, you do it." He pushes the washcloth into Shiro's hands, hoping that'll be enough to wipe that look off his face.

Shiro takes the washcloth and runs it carefully over his skin, the wounded expression lifting off of him more and more with each moment, while Keith provides a running litany of assurances of how well he's doing.

"Thank you, Shiro," he says when he's all wiped down and Shiro is now going over the same spot for the third time, almost like he's locked into the task and can't break himself out of it. "I'm good now, thank you. I'm thirsty, though—"

Keith doesn't even have a chance to suggest going to the kitchen to get themselves some water before Shiro is dropping the washcloth, shooting up to attention at the first sign of

something Keith needs. In the blink of an eye, he's being swept off his feet again—and he supposes he should get used to only traveling in Shiro's arms for the duration of this rut.

In the kitchen, Keith kisses Shiro's shoulder and gets him to pour himself a glass of water, too, which he promptly gulps down. He must have been thirsty—Keith reminds himself to make sure he's drinking more, and tries not to stare at the droplets of water that escaped his sloppy drinking and are rolling down his chin and throat.

Shiro needs fuel of some kind, so Keith pulls out one of his protein shakes from the fridge. Shiro takes it without protest at first, uncapping the bottle and taking a swig, but as soon as the first drop hits his tongue, he changes his mind. He rears back from the bottle like it stung him, face screwed up in disgust. A displeased little growl bubbles up from his chest as he fixes the protein shake with a personally offended look, and Keith can't help but laugh.

"Shiro," he manages between his chuckles, "you drink those all the time."

Shiro shakes his head vigorously. Keith's always wondered what was wrong with Shiro's taste buds that he thought those things were good. Now he knows his doesn't.

With some coaxing, Keith manages to get Shiro to drink most of the shake, so at least he's gotten a bit of highly concentrated nutrients to make up for all the energy he's been expending and his lack of interest in feeding himself. He preens at Keith's praise, which is adorable, even as he's making faces at the taste.

It's even more adorable when, once he's decided he's done drinking the protein shake, he scoops Keith up into his arms and sits on the counter stool, apparently for the sole purpose of snuggling him. He squeezes Keith tight and nuzzles his face into his neck, smiling so happily that it makes Keith's heart physically ache. Shiro may not be able to *tell* him that he loves him right now, but he feels every ounce of it. And Shiro—Shiro deserves this sweet, content softness more than anyone he knows.

He pets Shiro's hair and kisses his forehead, and whispers his love into his ear.

Shiro has a rough night.

It's clear that this is the true peak of his rut—or at least Keith hopes it is, because he can't imagine things reaching any higher of a fever pitch. His body won't let him get much sleep, waking him up with heat and need every hour or so. He growls and snarls like it's painful, although he shakes his head when Keith asks him if it hurts. He's nearly always hard, now, his cock not having a chance to soften fully after his knot goes down before it's stiffening up again and rousing him from his sleep.

It's no picnic for Keith, either—he wakes whenever Shiro does, if only enough to roll over and spread his legs, although once or twice he's deep enough asleep that he wakes up with Shiro already inside him.

A couple of times, Keith doesn't let Shiro fuck him, just too worn out and tender and needing a break. Shiro's stopped easily when Keith grunts and pushes at his hip, groggily offering a hand instead, or letting Shiro rut against him or fuck between his thighs.

Early in the morning, when only the very first slivers of blue-tinted light are filtering through their curtains, Keith wakes to Shiro pawing at him again. He yawns at first, stretching and humming in acknowledgment, tilting his head to let Shiro scent at his neck. It takes him a moment to get his bearings, blinking the blurriness out of his eyes. He feels much more rested now—he must have gotten a good chunk of sleep.

Shiro, on the other hand, is clearly exhausted. When Keith rolls over to get a look at his husband, there are dark circles under his red-rimmed eyes, and half of his fluffy forelock is plastered to his forehead with sweat. He can barely get his muscles to work, clearly, as Keith watches him struggle to prop himself up and crawl over Keith, arms shaking as he does. But he can't rest—his body won't let him. His pupils are wide with need, forcing his irises into thin rings of silver.

"Oh, baby, hey," Keith croons, voice croaky from sleep—and ruined from moaning. He pushes at Shiro's shoulder gently, but it's enough to tip him over, making him fall onto his back with a thump. Shiro whines, hands still grabbing for Keith but too tired to get back up, although he tries.

Keith clucks his tongue, sitting up hurriedly and pressing a hand to the center of Shiro's chest to stop him.

"I know, I know," he assures, getting up onto his knees. "It's okay." He straddles Shiro, kneeling over his hips and leaning forward while he pushes the covers down and gets a hand around the base of Shiro's cock, angry red and leaking.

"It's okay, puppy," he coos, slotting him against his slit and rubbing some of his own slick down his length to ease the way. "I'll pop your knot for you, you just lie there, hm?"

Shiro makes a sort of half-whine, half-moan that comes out as more of a gurgle in his throat—Keith's never heard that noise before.

He lowers himself down carefully, breathing through the stretch and pausing halfway through to adjust until his thighs start burning. When he settles on Shiro's hips, filled to the brim, he bites his lip and looks down at Shiro, who's staring up at him like he's some kind of miracle. He lets a long breath out, and it comes out shaky, because even though he probably should have lost all sensation by now, it still feels good. He wonders absently if maybe Shiro's rut pheromones are affecting him in some way, too, and starts rolling his hips.

He starts slow, increasing his pace as he goes until he's working Shiro's cock expertly. Shiro stays obediently still, letting Keith do all the work, lax except for his hands laying loosely around Keith's hips.

Keith breath starts coming in short, airy gasps, and he slams himself down harder, seeking the pressure somewhere deep inside him that's making him see stars. He feels when he pops Shiro's knot, pressing insistently at his hole with each roll of his hips down. He teases it for a

few strokes, grinding down on it but not taking it, until the rubber band keeping Shiro docile suddenly snaps and he grips Keith's waist, growling as he yanks him down hard on his knot and holds him there.

They both come, and Keith is pretty sure he blacks out for a moment, head spinning as he gasps for breath.

"God, baby...you've gotta be setting some kind of record," he pants. Shiro yawns, eyelids already drooping again. Keith snorts. "Alright, big guy." He lowers himself down gingerly onto Shiro's chest, wincing when it makes his knot shift inside him. By the time he's settled comfortably draped on top of him, Shiro's nearly asleep already, breath stuttering in the beginnings of a soft snore.

Keith's not far behind, lulled by the gentle rise and fall of Shiro's chest below him, like being rocked to sleep by waves.

He wakes again, a couple of hours later, to Shiro's face buried between his thighs, lapping up his slick and licking at his holes.

Keith groans and widens his legs reflexively, still half-asleep and hazy, but his body knows pleasure and it wants more. He tosses his head to the side, hand knotting in the sheet below him. Shiro's thumbs dig into his inner thighs.

He's making quiet, happy rumbles in his throat as he eats Keith out, almost a purr. There's a different note to it now, an absence of feverish desperation that signals that he's over the peak of his rut, now on the way back down. Keith has no idea how long this phase will last, but it's off to a good start, at least.

Shiro slips his hands further up Keith's thighs, until his thumbs trace the crease of them and then dip in to spread him open, letting his tongue delve deeper, dipping inside and tasting him. Keith lets himself drift, awake but not alert, letting the gentle pleasure of Shiro contentedly making a home for himself between his legs wash over him in waves. Shiro is generous with his tongue, hungry but patient, easing off each time Keith's thighs start to tremble for just long enough that his sensitivity builds back up when he goes back to work.

In return, Keith lets his pleasure show, a soft litany of moans falling easily from his lips, mumbled, half-coherent praise that makes Shiro chuff with pride.

Keith is soaking. It would be uncomfortable if he didn't know that his husband will carry him straight to the shower after this and he can throw the sheets in the wash. When Shiro slips two fingers in beside his tongue, it's embarrassingly easy, with how slick and open he is. It makes his cheeks flush, but he moans loud and spreads his legs, shifting restlessly against the mattress.

"Mmm, Shiro."

Shiro rumbles in response and crooks his fingers, finding that soft spot that makes Keith's thighs clamp around his head. He lets out a wet gasp when Shiro licks a line up his cock, swirling his tongue around the head and then swallowing him down to the root.

"Shiro, god," he groans, throwing his head back.

Part of him wants more, more than this gentle torture gradually taking him apart, but at the same time, he knows this is what he needs. Shiro always knows what he needs.

When the insistent press of Shiro's fingers makes him come, Shiro eases his way down, pulling off his cock but still mouthing at the base of it idly while his fingers gently rock, letting Keith ride them through the aftershocks.

Blinking his eyes fully open for the first time this morning, Keith looks down, while Shiro wipes his glistening wet cheeks and chin on the back of his hand and rests his chin on Keith's thigh, grinning up at him.

Keith laughs breathlessly, flopping his head back on the pillow. He shifts, stretching his legs, and stares up at the ceiling, waiting for it to stop spinning.

"You...you're gonna kill me," he pants.

Shiro hums, rubbing his cheek on Keith's flushed thigh.

"Mmm, baby."

Keith's head shoots back up, almost fast enough to give him whiplash. Shiro's still just looking up at him, like he has no idea he's just spoken for the first time in...two days? Three?

Something loosens in Keith's chest, letting a breath escape him that it feels like he's unknowingly been holding. It's not...it's not that he was afraid he wasn't going to get Shiro back, after this. He knows how ruts work, knows this is all perfectly normal and there's nothing to be worried about. But still...this is new, to them. And maybe it's just a bit of a relief to see that they're moving in the direction of coming out on the other side.

Just as expected, once he's had his fill of basking in the afterglow, Shiro scoops Keith up in his arms and carries him into the bathroom. Keith doesn't bother to protest—and realistically, he can admit that walking on his own two legs is becoming increasingly difficult.

He lets Shiro sit him on the side of the bathtub and wash him, in between getting distracted by the miles of bare skin available to him to kiss and bite and suck little marks into.

This far into his rut, Shiro has clearly entered a new stage—besides the baby-steps return of his speech, the flavor of his relentless horniness seems to have shifted. It's no longer so much of a basic, animal need, thoughtless and ravenous. He doesn't need it as badly or as often, doesn't seem to be wracked with pain or frustration when he hasn't knotted something hot and tight in too long, and, it becomes clear as the day goes on, he's more focused now on attending to his mate, bringing him pleasure and making him come.

It's still overwhelming, for both of them no doubt, but it's easier now, and Keith finds himself relaxing into it—into being pampered, fed and washed and cuddled and coaxed to orgasm more times than he can count—of course Shiro is one of those alphas who has to make his omega come a ridiculous number of times during rut.

Shiro becomes gradually more verbal, too—"Pretty omega," he rumbles into his back as he's rocking into him, "Mine," he growls spontaneously when Keith is curled in his lap on the couch, half-asleep, "Keith," he finally hisses as Keith pillows his lips tight around the head of his cock and blinks up at him.

He's constantly fluffing up the pillow, dragging armfuls of extra blankets from the linen closet and dumping them in Keith's lap, waiting expectantly for him to make a nest, huffing and helping when Keith evidently doesn't do a good enough job.

Lucky for Keith, he doesn't seem to notice how Keith is constantly suppressing laughter, or how when he's not, he's staring misty-eyed at his husband, at how sweet and good he is. It's a privilege to be the one to go through this with Shiro, to learn what his ruts are like and recount it to him later, complete with fond teasing.

He sleeps a lot more as his rut winds down, too, which Keith takes advantage of to get some work done—as much as he can while trapped under Shiro's heavy arm or burrito-ed in blankets, quietly tapping at his PADD as Shiro snores. Keith does his fair share of napping, too—god knows he needs it after the last couple days.

On what Keith thinks is the fourth day, in what looks like the afternoon, Keith is sending some messages back and forth with Kolivan about an upcoming humanitarian mission, wrapped tightly in a blanket and held against Shiro's chest, tucked under his chin while the alpha dozes on the couch.

He managed to convince Shiro to let them crack open the windows in the kitchen to air out some of the...stuffy, rather pungent air that's built up in the house over the past few days. Shiro didn't like it, spend the first couple hours alert and eying the windows suspiciously like a band of alphas might burst through and steal his mate at any moment, but he couldn't ward off his sleepiness for long.

Now, Keith's eyes are getting heavy, too, and his PADD is drooping in his hands. He manages to type out one last response to Kolivan before he drops it completely and decides it's okay if he succumbs to the sleepiness for just a while, he'll have plenty of time to pick his work back up later.

Just as his mind is going cottony and his limbs iron-heavy, a piercing ring breaks through the peacefulness of the house.

It startles Keith unpleasantly back awake, his whole body jerking in surprise as he nearly falls off the couch. Before he knows what's happening, a growl is ripping through the air behind him and Shiro is jumping up, clambering over the back of the couch and landing on the floor with a thump.

Keith sits up, struggling to clear his bleary eyes and see what's going on.

Shiro is still growling as he stalks across the room to their front door, and it occurs to Keith that whoever just rang their doorbell is about to get a face-full of territorial alpha.

Keith gathers the blanket to cover himself, clothed only in Shiro's shirt which drapes off his shoulder and barely kisses the tops of his thighs, and clambers up off of the couch, getting ready to do damage control.

Shiro rips the door open. Keith can't see at first what's beyond it, because Shiro's filling up the whole doorway with his hulking frame, shoulders hunched defensively.

"Whooaaa, okay there, big guy," comes an amused, familiar voice. Matt. *Shit*, Keith thinks, and scurries toward the door, tripping on the trailing blanket and nearly faceplanting as he does.

Shiro's growl doesn't let up even in the face of his friend. There's a little bit less alpha in it now that he sees who it is, at least, which is good.

Before Keith can get close enough to see around Shiro's bulk, another voice pipes up.

"Sorry man," Hunk chuckles nervously, "we uh, we come in peace! Haha—"

"Guys, what the hell," Keith grumbles, appearing behind Shiro's shoulder. Who, he realizes with a sudden combination of horror and great amusement, is stark naked. He doesn't seem to notice or care, but Keith knows he will at least a little when this is all over, so he sheds the blanket in favor of throwing it over Shiro's shoulders with a grimace.

Matt's eyebrows disappear under his bangs when he sees him. He whistles, long and low. "Whew. The state of you..."

A new warning growl rumbles through Shiro's chest, and he glances back, displeasure plain on his face when he realizes Keith is half-naked, swollen-lipped and covered in love bites, clearly debauched. Hurriedly, he moves to the side in front of Keith, covering him with his body so Keith has to poke his head out from behind him to see their visitors.

Hunk holds up two nearly-bursting plastic bags like a peace offering. "I uh, brought you some food?"

"We just wanted to check on you two, make sure you were doing okay," Matt adds. He shrugs his shoulders, hands stuffed in his pockets casually, but he eyes Shiro and Keith in turn in a way that betrays his genuine care.

"We're fine," Shiro snips, not budging or relaxing in the slightest.

"Thank you, and thanks for the food, Hunk," Keith hurries. He's starting to smell the food from here, and if he's honest, his mouth is already starting to water. He could really use an actual meal that wasn't frozen first. "Really. We just, ah, aren't really in a position for visitors right now," he smiles tightly.

"No, of course, yeah, that's fine, here, I'll just—" Hunk steps forward with the intent to bring the food inside, but he's stopped when Shiro takes a step forwards, letting out a full-alpha

growl.

“Yeah, I don’t think that’s gonna be possible right now,” Keith says. “You could just—leave it on the threshold?”

Nodding, Hunk carefully places the bags down in front of the door. Shiro tracks his every move, not letting his eyes off of him until he’s straightened and stepped back from the door.

“It sure does smell like sex in there,” Matt observes. Keith shoots him a glare.

“Alright, time to fuck off now, thank you,” he sing-songs. Matt holds up his hands and walks backwards off their porch, Hunk waving apologetically and hurrying off in tow. Shiro bends down to pick up the bags in one hand, then slams the door closed with the other, probably with more force than was really necessary.

Now that they’re alone, Shiro drops the blanket and dumps the bags on the coffee table and moves to wrap Keith into his arms instead.

“Mine,” he growls quietly, like he’s just making sure.

“Yours,” Keith agrees, nodding into his chest.

Shiro’s frowning, pouting, almost.

He paws over Keith’s body, hands wandering like he’s taking inventory of everything that’s his.

“Not for them,” he adds.

“No. Only for you.”

Shiro huffs, then buries his face in Keith’s neck, scenting him.

“Have to...make sure they know you’re off limits,” he mumbles.

Keith scoffs and rolls his eyes. “Yeah, I don’t think that’s in question.”

Shiro makes a noise like he’s not entirely convinced. His hands wander further, pushing up under the shirt barely covering Keith’s ass to grab it, taking a bold handful. Keith hums and steps closer, flattening himself against Shiro’s chest. The next thing he knows, he’s being spun around and pushed over the arm of the couch. The feeling of Shiro pressed against the backs of his thighs follows close behind.

Keith lets out a breathless laugh, bracing his hands against the cushion and spreading his legs.

“Something you need?” he teases.

Shiro grunts and palms Keith’s ass. Keith pushes up on his tiptoes, into Shiro’s hands.

“Go on, then,” he purrs.

Shiro’s hand slides inwards, he thumbs at Keith’s rim, puffy and loose and slicked with the load of Shiro’s cum he took there earlier today. He presses the tip of his thumb inside, just to the first knuckle. Keith squirms on it, and he pulls it out with a grunt, then plunges it back in, only to stretch Keith’s hole open. Keith feels the head of Shiro’s cock nudging in next to his thumb, holding it open for him. He pushes the first couple inches in alongside his thumb with a grunt. It stretches Keith even more than Shiro’s substantial girth normally would, and knocks the breath out of him in a reedy whine.

Shiro makes another low noise, one of appreciative satisfaction, then pulls his thumb out slowly. Keith twitches around him as he does, his rim fluttering involuntarily to tighten around what’s left inside him. At the same time, Shiro clasps his free hand around Keith’s hip and uses it to pull him back onto the rest of his cock until he’s buried to the root, Keith’s ass meeting his hips with a bounce. Shiro lets a pleased sigh rumble out of him, jerking forward once like he just wants to make sure he’s as deep as he can go, that Keith is really taking every inch of him.

Everything feels bigger in his ass, and he’s more sensitive here and less raw since Shiro hasn’t fucked it as much during the impatient heat of his rut. He can’t help the little noises that spill from his lips, turns his head to the side and rests his cheek on the cushion so Shiro can hear them better.

Shiro thrusts lazily at first, a slow, hard rhythm. The house is quiet, and the slaps of their bodies meeting is loud, and it makes Keith blush. For a flash of a moment, he wishes Shiro would take a picture, and the thought sends a zip of arousal down his core. He files that thought away for later and moans Shiro’s name.

Shiro’s other hand slides up from where he was spreading Keith’s ass, circles his hip instead, so he’s got Keith enclosed on both sides, using the grip to pull him back on his thrusts. His thumbs find the dips at the base of Keith’s spine and press into them—they’ll probably leave bruises, to add to Keith’s collection of keepsakes from Shiro’s first rut.

Keith feels Shiro lean into him, bearing down on his grip on his hips as he speeds up to a brutal pace that has Keith reeling, little “*uh, uh, uh*” sounds punched out of him with each time Shiro bottoms out deep in his guts.

“Mm, Shiro,” he moans, twisting his back into a deeper arch. He feels his own cock twitch against the arm of the couch, the pummeling to his sweet spot combined with the bit of friction there each time he’s jerked forward by the force of Shiro’s thrusts enough to have that knot in his belly tightening already.

Shiro collapses over his back when he comes, panting hot on the nape of Keith’s neck. His weight shifts only enough to shove a hand between Keith’s hips and the couch and stroke him roughly, only a couple strokes before he’s coming with a hoarse shout, his whole body convulsing and only held down by Shiro on top of him.

For a few moments, they stay like that, just catching their breath. Keith realizes that Shiro didn’t knot him this time, which is a good sign that his rut is progressing toward its end.

Shiro occupies himself with laying little kisses down on each bit of Keith's skin he can reach in this position, sprinkled with a few pinching bites for good measure.

As soon as Keith regains his voice, he grunts and squirms until Shiro gets off of him.

"We've gotta get that food in the fridge," he pants.

Hunk's food, unsurprisingly, is delicious. They eat bowls of a beefy, brothy soup with noodles in ungraceful, ravenous slurps sitting at the kitchen island, and it's good enough that it occupies Shiro for a few minutes before he pulls Keith onto his lap and wants to feed him himself.

Keith is no longer sure what time it is, or even what day, when he waddles his way into the bathroom and squints his eyes against the harsh lights. He's sticky, and that needs to change, and he's pretty sure his teeth could use a good brush.

The tile floor is cold under his feet, so he shifts his weight back and forth, picking them up one by one. He glances over to the shower, giving it a moment of consideration before deciding that the sink and a washcloth will do. He grabs one off the towel rod and turns on the faucet, waiting for perfectly warm water before he wets it. He takes it to his face, first, gently rubbing off some of the sweat and god knows what other bodily fluids. It makes him feel infinitely fresher and more awake, and when he blinks his eyes clear and happens to look in the mirror, he now has the awareness to notice just how destroyed he looks.

There are bruises absolutely *everywhere* on his body—hickeys and bite marks smattering his neck, collarbones, the insides of his thighs, both dark red and faded purple; marks from fingers clenching around his hips, waist, and thighs. His hair is a complete mess, his lips red and swollen, noticeably plumper than they usually are and slightly parted, like he's always ready to sigh out a moan.

"Good god Shiro," he mutters to himself, turning to the side and craning his head around to get a look at the bruises that trail down his sides, his ass, the backs of his thighs. They tell quite a story. He bends over slightly and grabs one side of his ass while he holds onto the sink with the other hand for balance, then pulls himself open so he can see the state of his holes in the mirror—red, shining with slick and cum. He can *see* how loose he is.

Breath leaves him in a rush, like it was forced from his lungs.

He lets go of himself and straightens shakily, then turns back to the sink.

He passes the washcloth between his legs, wincing because it's not warm enough anymore after sitting on the vanity. After cleaning gingerly between his cheeks too and down his inner thighs, he turns the water to cold and starts to brush his teeth.

The freshness feels good. The taste of mint in his mouth is a welcome change. As he's brushing, there's the sound of heavy steps, then Shiro comes around the corner and into the bathroom. Their eyes meet in the mirror. Keith smirks around the toothbrush stretching the corner of his lips, and Shiro's eyes travel up and down Keith's body slowly, mapping out what Keith's already seen. Then they do it again. Shiro groans.

"Baby..."

"Hm?" Keith responds, feigning innocence. He spits into the sink and rinses his mouth with a palmful of water, and when he straightens, Shiro's heat is against his back, his arms wrapping around him. He noses into Keith's neck, kisses one of the bruises there. Thumbs over Keith's nipple and makes him gasp. Then the world is spinning as Keith is picked up and thrown over Shiro's shoulder like he weighs nothing.

He's so used to it now that he doesn't even shriek, just relaxes and lets himself be carted off into the bedroom. Shiro throws him down on the mattress with a bounce and follows to crawl over him, eyes dark and hungry.

Keith swallows hard. "Take a picture of me," he blurts out suddenly. Shiro freezes. He groans, dragging his eyes over Keith.

"Yeah?"

Keith nods. "Want—want to have it for, for later."

Shiro's eyes grow wide as silver dollars. He reaches over to the nightstand, fumbles for his phone. He sits back, kneeling over Keith, and opens the camera.

"Just like that, baby," Shiro murmurs, his brow creased in concentration. Keith doesn't move from where he landed, sprawled out on the sheets, his legs parted and his hair a messy cloud around his face.

He holds his breath as the artificial shutter noise clicks. It's an intense feeling to be on display like this, to know it's not something fleeting and ephemeral that can't escape the moment—that there will be evidence of how Keith looks right now, all the loving bruises Shiro has pressed into his skin captured in a permanent representation.

It makes him flush, his skin warm and prickly. He wonders if the camera will capture that too.

After taking a few pictures, Shiro throws his phone down on the bed and pounces on Keith to rail him into the mattress once again.

That night, Shiro holds Keith in his arms and strokes his hair, rubs a soothing gel into his reddened skin and a eucalyptus-scented balm into his lips. He still jumps and tenses at every sound, and checks the locks too many times, and he's at least half-hard more often than not, but he's more coherent by the hour, clearly nearing the end of his rut.

When he falls asleep, it's deep and long. Keith lays awake for a while listening to him talk in his sleep, mumbles that are almost entirely about Keith, sweet things that make his heart ache, and the occasional thing that makes him blush plum-deep.

He sleeps through the night, and then some, well into the next afternoon—to the point that Keith starts to wonder if he should wake him up. But he resists, figuring Shiro probably needs this, and that maybe this long sleep is bringing him out of his rut.

He's in the living room, cross-legged on the couch in Shiro's sweatshirt and trying to get some much-needed work done when Shiro comes stumbling out of their room, blinking against the light and looking adorably rumpled.

"Hey," Keith greets, quickly putting his PADD down beside him and turning around to face Shiro, who has a blanket draped around his shoulder and is otherwise naked.

"Hey," Shiro croaks back, then clears his throat and pads over before launching himself into Keith's side, burying his face in his throat and gathering him in his arms. He scents Keith eagerly, then sighs through his nose, his shoulders relaxing.

"You weren't there when I woke up," he mumbles into Keith's neck.

"Oh, I'm sorry baby."

Shiro shakes his head, then lifts his head up to give Keith a quick peck. "It's okay. Just... stupid alpha brain."

"Mm," Keith responds, running his fingers through Shiro's disheveled forelock. "How are you feeling?"

"Good," Shiro says around a yawn, then tips forward and crashes into Keith's chest, his face smushed into his sternum. "I think...I think it's over, pretty much."

Keith hums, scratching his nails over the back of Shiro's head. He can't deny that it's...a relief, to be coming out on the other side of this. But he's not necessarily glad it's over, either. It was a special experience.

"How do you feel?" Shiro asks, suddenly shooting up to search Keith's face, worry etched into his features.

Keith laughs, and reaches up to smooth out the crease between Shiro's brows. "I'm fine, Shiro. I could use a break from your dick for like, a good while, but that's all."

Shiro doesn't look entirely comforted, but he lets it be for now, rolling his shoulders and stretching his neck, wincing. "Yeah, I think my dick could use a break too. And the entire rest of my body."

"I have an idea then." Keith gently pushes Shiro back and unfolds himself from the couch, standing and offering Shiro his hand. He leads him to the bedroom and has him sit down on the bed while he digs through their bathroom cabinets, then lets out a triumphant "aha!" when he finds what he's looking for.

He brings back a towel which he lays out on the bed with a flourish, and sets down a bottle of massage lotion on the sheets. Kneeling onto the mattress, Keith shuffles over to Shiro's side and eases the blanket off his shoulders.

"Come on," he coaxes, patting on the towel, and after a moment of hesitation, Shiro rolls over and crawls on top of it, lying down on his stomach with his arms crossed to lie his head on.

"There we go," Keith praises.

Shiro melts into the mattress almost immediately at Keith's first touch to his shoulder. He presses his fingers deep into the muscle and pushes them forward, eased by the lotion smoothed onto his skin.

"I should...I should do you first," Shiro protests weakly, even as he moans.

"Shh, let me." Keith straddles Shiro's hips for a better angle and gets to work on his back first. He digs in, leaning into it, and works the tension out of Shiro's muscles, satisfied by the way he relaxes, the feeling of the knots in his shoulders disappearing.

Once he's done with Shiro's back and shoulders, he massages his flesh arm, feeling the strength in it and coaxing it to relax. He works his way down, pressing his thumbs into the soft underside of his wrist, rubbing circles into his palm so his fingers splay out.

He presses his love into every bit of his mate's skin, sure to soothe every muscle, head to toe. Once Shiro's back side is done to his satisfaction, he has Shiro turn over and sits down on his stomach to knead at his pecs, soft and jiggly now while they're not tensed. Shiro grunts, shifting under him, nearly making Keith lose his balance until he laughs and chastises him gently.

When he's done, he leans down and kisses Shiro on the lips, slow and deep, but without intent behind it. Shiro's eyes are still closed when he straightens up, and in a moment he lets out a long, pleased sigh. His hands come up to encircle Keith's hips, rubbing up and down his flanks.

"Mmm, your turn," he murmurs.

"Only if you want—" Keith starts, but then he's being dislodged and tossed down on the bed, and Shiro treats his body with the utmost care and affection, unraveling him until all his aches are gone and his limbs feel like jelly. His mind is fuzzy, his eyelids heavy, and even though it's the middle of the afternoon, he feels like he could fall asleep. The last thing he's aware of is Shiro kissing his mating mark and lying down beside him, cuddling up to his side and sharing his warmth.

Shiro wakes to Keith's scent strong in his nostrils, his hair tickling the tip of his nose. He breathes in, and gives himself a few moments of this before he opens his eyes.

When he braves the light, he blinks his eyes open to see Keith, face close enough that it's hard to focus on, those deep, thoughtful eyes studying him closely. He doesn't stop when he's caught, just smiles, a sight that can instantly unwind any hastily tied-up knots in Shiro's heart.

Shiro sighs and slings an arm over Keith's back, pulling him closer into his chest. He starts combing his fingers through Keith's hair, smoothing and untangling it.

"So," he starts.

"So," Keith echoes, a smirk playing on the corner of his sweet cherry lips.

They need to have a conversation. A debrief. Of highest priority is that Shiro needs to know that Keith is okay, physically, and then that he's not upset in any way, or didn't like what happened during Shiro's rut. He's worried he won't have. He doesn't remember everything—although it's starting to come back already, in fuzzy dream-like flashes—but he knows it must have been intense, a lot to ask of anyone, especially his husband and mate who has stood by him unflinchingly through every difficult twist and turn already.

Keith seems to be able to read Shiro's thoughts, which isn't surprising, and he shakes his head gently, smiling. He finds Shiro's metal hand and brings it to his cheek, resting it in his palm.

"You were a perfect gentleman. As expected."

Shiro scoffs. "I don't know about that."

"Well I do. Shiro, I know you. You couldn't be anything other than sweet if you tried. You love me too much."

There's a lump in Shiro's throat suddenly; he doesn't know where that came from. Then Keith continues, whispering the words into the scant space between them.

"You've been my safe harbor since the moment I met you. Going through your rut with you hasn't changed that. Nothing ever will."

The lump is definitely bigger now, and Shiro has to lean in to press his forehead to Keith's, grounding himself.

"Promise?" he whispers hoarsely.

Keith grins, then, sharp and bright, and reaches up to hook his pinkie finger with Shiro's. "Pinkie."

They lie there talking for a long while, once they're each assured, feeling safe and anchored. They tackle everything there is to tackle—feelings are laid out, requests made for next time, plans to get this on Shiro's doctor's radar so his new ruts can be monitored as they develop.

Shiro's therapist would be proud. After, they eat more of Hunk's food and curl up on the couch to watch some trash TV, because catching up on work can wait another day.

They take care of each other. Like always.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you so so much for reading!!

End Notes

I can't believe this is the first thing I've posted this year - I've really missed it and I'm so so excited to be sharing this. Thank you for reading! Chapters will be up once a week on Mondays.

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