

## Nothing But Stardust

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/31235879) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/31235879>.

Rating:	<a href="#">Mature</a>
Archive Warning:	<a href="#">Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings</a>
Category:	<a href="#">M/M</a>
Fandom:	<a href="#">Voltron: Legendary Defender</a>
Relationship:	<a href="#">Keith/Lance (Voltron)</a>
Characters:	<a href="#">Lance (Voltron)</a> , <a href="#">Shiro (Voltron)</a> , <a href="#">Keith (Voltron)</a> , <a href="#">Pidge   Katie Holt</a> , <a href="#">Hunk (Voltron)</a> , <a href="#">Allura (Voltron)</a> , <a href="#">Coran (Voltron)</a> , <a href="#">James Griffin (Voltron)</a> , <a href="#">Lotor (Voltron)</a>
Additional Tags:	<a href="#">Bisexual Lance (Voltron)</a> , <a href="#">Lance (Voltron) Angst</a> , <a href="#">Pining Lance (Voltron)</a> , <a href="#">Space Dad Shiro (Voltron)</a> , <a href="#">Lance (Voltron) Has Anxiety</a> , <a href="#">Lance's POV</a> , <a href="#">Blade of Marmora Keith (Voltron)</a> , <a href="#">Lance (Voltron) Needs a Hug</a> , <a href="#">do they have therapy in space</a> , <a href="#">Gay Keith (Voltron)</a> , <a href="#">Nonbinary Pidge   Katie Holt</a> , <a href="#">Emotional Hurt/Comfort</a> , <a href="#">Eventual Romance</a> , <a href="#">mostly just a way for me to vent</a> , <a href="#">Existential Angst</a> , <a href="#">religious trauma</a> , <a href="#">Religious Guilt</a> , <a href="#">this is my first fic so pls be nice</a> , <a href="#">started out as a flashfic but I'm gonna expand on it</a> , <a href="#">Bigger cooler grizzled older Keith</a> , <a href="#">Enemies to Lovers</a> , <a href="#">James Griffin (Voltron) Being an Asshole</a> , <a href="#">semi canon compliant</a> , <a href="#">Abuse</a> , <a href="#">Harassment</a> , <a href="#">Sexual Harassment</a> , <a href="#">Galaxy Garrison</a> , <a href="#">Allura doesn't know what Hell is</a> , <a href="#">Eventual Smut</a> , <a href="#">Developing Relationship</a> , <a href="#">Hurt/Comfort</a> , <a href="#">Langst</a> , <a href="#">Lance has catholic guilt</a> , <a href="#">Slurs</a>
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2021-05-11 Updated: 2021-05-18 Words: 4,221 Chapters: 2/?

# Nothing But Stardust

by [eVic](#)

## Summary

Lance hasn't seen Keith since he left for the Blade. For all he knows, Keith might be dead. Things haven't been easy while he's been away. But things weren't easy when Keith was here before either. But when Keith suddenly shows up after several months, Lance is conflicted about his feelings for him, and what that might mean about himself. As he struggles to deal with homesickness, crippling isolation, past trauma, religious abuse, a new festering feeling for his teammate and more, Lance wonders if he can manage to survive another day--or if he even wants to.

## Notes

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

# Chapter 1

## Chapter Summary

Lance talks to Shiro and underestimates the crippling loneliness of space

When I was little I used to think that if I took a flying leap from my bedroom window I could hurl myself onto the nearest satellite and take a lap around the galaxy. Every night I would sneak out of bed and tear out the window screen to crawl up on the rooftop in hopes that if I stood on my tip toes I might just be able to reach out and grasp one of those dancing lights in my tiny little hands.

Sooner or later I fell, of course; lost balance after I let go of the shingles and fell a solid 15 feet into our vegetable garden, breaking my shoulder. I spent 12 weeks in a sling. But I was proud of my injury. In a strange way, it seemed to prove just how badly I wanted to get myself up there. I didn't care how hard I would have to work or how much I would have to hurt, just so long as I could thrust my insignificant human morsel of dignity into that beautiful vacuum of chaos. A single moment up there would make it all worth it.

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The fragile buzz of fluorescent lights out in the halls, the heavy rumble of the ship, the feeling of being enclosed in something hurtling through an endless void. It feels hollow.

I am drifting; hovering; floating in the midst of trillions of galaxies and solar systems.

I feel so far away. I close my eyes and ease time to a hum.

I am falling, dissolving into those trillions of galaxies. I am the fabric of space held together by the fine weave of gravity. I am a meteor tumbling into the craters of forgotten worlds. I am an utterly captivating constellation. I am—

“Lance.”

My eyelids flutter open.

I'm on the ship, sitting with space spread out in all its glory before me and my forehead pressed up against an expanse of glass. I turn around, greeted by warm brown eyes and a head of matted silvery hair. Their owner stifles a yawn and speaks again.

“Lance, why are you still up?” I hear the tiredness of their voice. “You should try to get some sleep. We have a big day ahead of us tomorrow. We're scheduled to send Allura and Lotor out to investigate the Quintessence field we found.”

I turn back to face the glass. Those galaxies with their arms outstretched provide a more tempting offer than my bed. Nevertheless...

“Yeah, sure. Night Shiro,” I murmur.

We stand there silent for quite a while. The quiet is tense under the drol of the ship.

“Alright cadet, what’s on your mind?” Shiro finally brings himself to ask, taking a seat on the floor next to me.

“Nothing, it’s fine.” I cast a sideways glance at him. “And cadet? really?”

“Aw, come on,” he smiles and gives me a nudge while letting his expression soften. “There’s clearly something bothering you. It’s okay.” He leans in against the glass to see me better. “You know I’m here if you need someone to talk to. Or, if you don’t want to talk but you still want someone to be there with you, that’s okay too.”

“If I talk will you leave me alone?” I know how things like this with Shiro go.

“Yes.”

I take a deep breath in and hold it. I sigh. “Look, I just...I miss--home.”

“Ah,” he nods. “Space getting to you already, cadet?”

I continue staring off blankly. “Sure, something like that.”

“Is—” he starts, but he cuts himself off.

I bring my attention to him again. “Is what?”

“Oh, just... Is there anything else bothering you?”

Yes. “No.”

“Are you sure?”

“Yes, I’m fucking sure,” I retort a little too sharply.

Shiro backs off, raising his hands in surrender, his eyes filled with concern. “Woah, okay. Sorry.”

I redden slightly, feeling guilty. “Sorry, I just...” I lock my eyes intently on a small blue moon circling a tiny red planet. “I just miss something else, too.”

Shiro casts me a knowing look. I roll my eyes.

“What”, I groan.

“It’s Keith, isn’t it.” He speaks slowly, delivering his next phrase delicately. “You miss him.”

God damn it. "Shut up."

"Hey, there's nothing wrong with missing Keith. He's our teammate and our friend. It's only natural that you miss him," Shiro elaborates.

"Okay, fine. But it's not just that... I..." I consider what I should say. I don't know what I want to say. Nothing feels right. I shouldn't feel like this. "I just... Keith and I had a special bond. We were rivals. But we became friends too. And I know we give each other a lot of shit, but he's honestly one of my favorite people." I say it sincerely, but then I laugh under my breath.

"What?" Shiro gives me a confused look.

"Oh, nothing, just... He was one of the only people who didn't treat me like I was stupid."

"Well, yeah." Shiro smiles, then frowns. "Wait, Lance, do people really treat you like you're stupid?"

"Well, maybe poor choice of words but, I don't know. Kind of."

"Who?" There's hurt in his eyes. I can tell he actually cares. It's nice to remember what it feels like to be cared for.

"Well, I guess I feel like ever since Pidge and Hunk started getting to know each other better, they're always around each other. The both of them are really smart and I guess I feel like they think I'm not as useful because I'm not smart like them. Or at least, I'm not an expert with tech or engineering or anything. And like, I've noticed that Pidge sometimes talks to me in a really condescending tone and it just makes me feel bad, you know? Because, don't get me wrong, I love Pidge, but they can be really harsh and overcritical sometimes, and I just..." Deep breath. "And Hunk too. Hunk and I used to be best buds at the Garrison and we'd do everything together, but ever since he met Pidge I feel like I've been missing out on quality time with him. He and Pidge make a really good team, but I just feel left out when I'm with them now."

Shiro nods. "I see."

"And for a while it really sucked, because they would run off with each other and Keith would be... well, Keith, so I wasn't sure what to do. He'd be off training or being a hotheaded ass, and everyone else would be busy, so I'd just sit here and look into the void. For a while it was kind of lonely."

"I'm sorry Lance. I didn't realize you felt like this. Why didn't you talk to me or the others about this sooner?"

"I don't know... I felt bad. I guess, maybe because I come from a big family and my parents and older siblings are always so stressed out taking care of the little ones and staying on top of the bills and cooking and work... I never wanted to be a burden to any of them, or to any of you."

“Lance, if it makes you feel better, there’s no bills in space—at least as far as I know. Maybe I should ask Allura about that.”

“That wasn’t really my point, but... I guess I just figured that, like, you guys are Paladins of Voltron. You have so much work to do as it is and after missions everyone is usually really tired. And as someone who knows how much responsibility it is to be a Paladin, I just figured that it would be easier for you guys if you stayed focused on the missions instead of focusing on my problems. I don’t want to be a burden to my friends.”

“Lance, paladin to paladin, you can always talk to me. Doesn’t matter if we’ve got a mission or if we’re coming back from one, or if we fail one or succeed in one. I’m always here if you need to talk.” He puts his nonmetal hand on my shoulder. It’s warm. “Lance, we all care about you a lot, and I’m sure that if you talked to Hunk or Pidge or any of the others they would all say the same thing. You’re important to us Lance. We want to make sure you’re okay.”

“Thanks, Shiro...”

We sit together in silence, staring into the shimmering void. Shiro shifts and stretches a leg out. I still feel bad. I fight the urge to pick at my nails. It’s only been a week since I last tore them apart and now they’re finally starting to heal. I start counting the stars as we pass instead. One red, one blue.

“How long has it been since he left?” he asks. Another red.

“7 months, as of yesterday.”

Shiro studies me for a moment, then turns to face the glass. “You don’t have to count, you know.”

“I know.”

We stare at the void together for a long time. I want to feel lost again, but I can’t make my eyes unfocus. Soon once again, everything is blurry, blurred by something wet. My eyes burn. Another blue. Another red.

I stand up abruptly and start to make my way down the starkly lit hallway, but I feel a hand move lightly up to my shoulder, stopping me mid-step. He’s caught me before I could escape. My head snaps up to look at him with an expression I pray is convincing.

“Hey. Lance. His voice is smooth, sympathetic, kind. “He will come back.”

“I know,” I repeat, but my voice breaks. I try to play it off by shaking free of Shiro’s grasp but it’s too late. I can already feel the corners of my eyes pooling. Then They’re overflowing, sliding down my cheeks and onto my chapped lips, and I know he can see me. I grit my teeth. I don’t need his sympathy. I don’t want it. I don’t want him to see me.

“Woah, hey there, Lance. It’s okay, it’s okay. Come here.” Shiro says, suddenly pulling me into his chest and wrapping his arms around me. The warmth of his body should be

comforting but I can't help but feel trapped by his touch. As the cool metal of his right hand makes contact with my bare arms, it triggers something in me and I flinch, shoving him away from me.

"Don't touch me." I hold everything close, every limb, every breath.

Shiro immediately pulls away, eyes widened in apology. "Sorry—I should've asked first. I forget that you don't like to be touched during these sorts of things." He backs up a few steps, giving me some space. My stomach drops a little. I feel kind of nauseous but not enough to throw up. I feel shitty for making him apologize. He didn't do anything wrong. I just feel wrong. Everything feels wrong.

"No, no. Sorry, I don't know why I said that. It—it's fine, really." I fold my arms and pinch the bridge of my nose between my eyes as if a migraine were setting in. "I just—I think I need to be alone right now."

I feel like I need to contort my body and break every bone. It's like the emptiness got to empty and now something worse has filled it up. I need to move. I need to get this feeling--this thing--out. My head is a torrent. Everything is spiraling. I feel dizzy. Get it out. Get it out. Get it out.

Why do I even feel like this? This is stupid. Stop crying. Fuck, stop crying. You're pathetic. This isn't something to cry over. He's not dead. Fuck, he's not dead. If he was dead they would've sent a notice. Fuck, I wish I was dead. No I don't what the fuck. Lance shut up. Stop shaking god damn it.

"Yeah, of course." He nods. "Maybe sleep soon though, okay?"

"Yeah, I will."

"And let me know if you need anything."

"Okay, thanks Shiro."

He nods at me as if to say goodnight, and then heads back towards his room. I want to beg him to stay with me. I don't. I am left standing in the hall, alone in the dark, space laid out in all its emptiness before me. I gaze out of the large window, my stomach full of a bitter, sickly feeling. My head hurts. Everything is blurry. I can't focus my eyes. Another red. Another blue. The fragile buzz of fluorescent lights out in the halls, the heavy rumble of the ship, the feeling of being enclosed in something hurtling through space. It feels worse than hollow.

## Chapter 2

### Chapter Summary

Lance can't sleep and is plagued by unwanted memories of his time at the Garrison

### Chapter Notes

-TW// Gay slurs, sexual harassment, physical & verbal harassment

-I hate James Griffin so just a warning that he's gonna do some not so great shit

I don't sleep well. I keep tossing and turning, not even thinking about anything in particular. Just lying there in the dark, full of dread. That sick, empty feeling. I fight the urge to thrash. I don't have the energy. Still, I'm restless. Lying still is painful.

It's cold. It's always cold in space. I pull the blanket around me tighter. I think about how there aren't any windows in my room. I think about how it isn't my room.

The room is uncomfortably large. Not massive, but too big to feel homey. Everything is made of this pale grey metal that is both cold and lukewarm at the same time. It doesn't feel like metal. Touching it feels foreign. The floor is made of it and there are no carpets. I don't like walking around barefoot on the ship because of it. That feels wrong too. If you can't walk around barefoot in a place it's not home. I miss home.

There are geometric grooves on the wall that glow a soft blue in the dark, which means that there's no place in the castle that's fully dark. You close your eyes and you still see the blue glow through your eyelids. It's not the same as a nightlight. It's not comforting. It's not bright either. It doesn't fill up the room with warm light that scatters itself across the ceiling like a firefly or a candle and makes the shadows of your clothes and your toys dance all over the walls. It's motionless and dull and makes the whole room look like static.

It's never quite quiet either. There's always the rumble of the ship. The only time it's quiet it when you put on your helmet and it shuts out the sound. Even then, you can still feel the vibration beneath your feet. And then sometimes the whole world feels still because you're the one moving, feet pounding against the not-quite-cold floors in heavy not-quite-metal boots as you run out the doors into action.

I think about our first mission.



I try to stop thinking about our first mission.

Keith was cocky back then. And an asshole. It was always him and his stupid mullet saving the day. And back at the Garrison he was a god when it came to all those simulations too. I hated him for it. I hated his stupid cropped jacket that didn't even make any fucking sense because how does a cropped jacket keep you warm? I hated his stupid white boots that he probably meticulously cleaned every single day since he kicked up so much sand when he ran anywhere that it was impossible for them to stay clean any other way. I hated how he was somehow always clean shaven and always looked put together. I hated his eyes that were some stupid color probably that were always scrutinizing or analyzing something. I hated how he never laughed except under his breath when I made a mistake in class. I hated the stupid fucking grin he got when he knew he was right and I hated the way his voice got all low and arrogant and I hated the way he looked at me.

Fuck. I really did hate the way he looked at me back then.

He didn't know me back then. He didn't care about me back then. He just knew that I was some classmate of his that he would have to outdo. It wasn't a competition either. I called him my rival but it was one-sided. I knew he would always win and I hated him for it. And not a petty hate, but a real hate. The kind of hate that festers, that makes you sick when you look at someone. A kind of hate that makes you feel like you aren't good enough and that you never will be.

The only other person who hated him as much as me was James, but that's not saying much since James hated everyone. He was an asshole too. Keith was an asshole because he was cocky. But James was an asshole because he was a dick and a bully. He was better than me too but not in any place it really counted. He would harass Pidge a lot, which I never really understood because a) Pidge always scared me from the beginning, and b) James seemed to go out of his way to do this shit to the extent that it seemed like more of an inconvenience to him than the people he was harassing sometimes. Not to say that what he said didn't hurt Pidge. It really fucked them up. They don't talk about it though, so I'm still not sure how bad it really got, but what I saw of it was pretty fucking bad.

I remember one time James was being particularly pissy. It was before Pidge and I were that close, back when they hadn't come out as nonbinary yet and was still going around as a guy. It was after curfew and I was up and walking down the dorm hallway because I needed to pee. There were bathrooms in our rooms but ours had flooded and I was too intimidated by the instructors to report it, which I admit was a stupid thing to be afraid of. I was about to turn the corner to the bathroom, but I heard footsteps so I panicked and hid around a corner in the door alcove to one of the dorms. The footsteps belonged to Pidge who was sneaking around, up to something shady no doubt. They were coming back from somewhere holding a laptop close to their body. Right as I thought they were about to turn the corner and see me, they turned to duck into the girl's bathroom. That's when I heard a voice from right beside me.

“Where the fuck do you think you're going fag?”

It was James, who had just walked past me. I froze. He didn't see me.

“Leave me alone.” Pidge said, ducking their head and trying to walk away. But James stepped forward and pushed them back against the wall.

“I said, where the fuck do you think you’re going, faggot?” He said it again, with a gross familiarity accentuated by the harshness by which he articulated his ‘t’. His voice wasn’t loud, but it cut deeper than a shout.

“The bathroom. Fuck off.” Pidge pushed back, trying to get him off. James resisted.

“No can do.” James shoved them again and pointed at a sign on the door. “See, this sign right here says that this is the girl’s bathroom. Now, you’re not a fucking girl are you?”

“Stop it.”

“And what were you planning on doing in there with that laptop, fag?”

“Stop it.”

“Oh I know.” James leaned in. “Maybe you aren’t a faggot after all.” James towered over them. It was strange. I had never seen Pidge look so small before. “Maybe you were going to set up a camera in there and spy on the girls, isn’t that right? You sick, perverted fuck.” He grabbed Pidge’s shoulders and leaned in to whisper into their ear. “Bet you were gonna jack yourself off watching them piss and wipe themselves, right? Gonna make yourself cum all over the place knowing that you will never, ever, get your fingers that close to the inside of a girl’s pussy, isn’t that right?”

Pidge was frozen. I couldn’t see their face. “Stop it.” Their voice was so quiet it was barely there. It wavered ever so slightly. They were trembling. “Stop it. I wasn’t—”

“Shut up, faggot. What else could you be—” James’ face twisted into the most vile fucking grin I’ve ever seen. “Or maybe,” James said, moving his hands lower, “I was right. And you’re just a little…” Hands moving under a shirt hem, “Fucking…” hands moved back up, moved too far up, touching everything, “Tranny.”

Pidge snapped. Still clutching their laptop, they jerked sharply, and swung their fist hard right into James’ face. Their face was wild and blank at the same time. Their body was shaking violently.

“What the fuck, you bitch?!” James yelled, staggering back. “Agh, fuck.” He whined, keeling over. I was shocked that none of the faculty came bolting down the hall to see what the fuck was going on. When he stood up he was clutching his nose. I saw red running down his chin. He was furious now, and his eyes were so dark. I couldn’t move. I wanted to step in but I couldn’t make my body move. Because I didn’t want to help. I was just as scared of James as Pidge was. We were powerless against him. If I ran in, he would just abuse me too. We weren’t people to him. Nobody was.

I pull one of the pillows I stole from Keith’s room over my head. My head won’t go quiet. Everything feels bad. It hasn’t stopped feeling bad in a long time. At this point I’m restless enough that I can’t help myself from thrashing. I know the walls are soundproof so when I

start kicking all my bedding and contorting my body so it hits everything and it echoes all around my dull blue not-quite-cold room and can't help myself from crying or screaming or making whatever the fuck this fucking noise is I don't care. I don't know why I'm thinking about this. I can't get the mental image out of my head. James and his hands. Stop thinking about this. Stop it. Stop it. Just stop it. I just want to go to sleep. I want to go to sleep and not think at all for at least the next couple of hours. Days if that's possible. Fuck, I can't stop thinking. Fuck fuck fuck. I throw one of Keith's pillows across the room.

Fuck. I'm thinking about Keith now. I don't understand what's happening to me.

I remember how James was with Keith too. Fuck, I don't want to think about James. He was part of the reason Keith got expelled though. Keith got him worse then he likes to admit, which I've never bothered him about. I'm pretty sure Keith had some kinda blade and that's the main reason they kicked him out. It was less about the use of violence and more about the weapon because it wasn't issued to him by the administration. After a couple incidents early on, way before I ever got to the Garrison, they had some issues with unauthorized use of weaponry, so they got really stingy about them. Which I suppose was a good thing. Gun violence was not necessarily uncommon. Duels were pretty commonplace, although nobody admitted it. We still had duels going on back when I was there. I was never part of one, but I knew a few people who were. James got in a lot. He was a coward though and a rich brat who usually paid someone else to stand in for him. He got a lot of people shot our first year. Only set to stun; he wasn't killing people. But still.

I try to sleep again. I lie on my back as still as possible with no blankets or pillow or anything. Just my body on the mattress. The blue light is killing me. I can't tell what time it is. Again, no windows. I feel like I've been up for hours.

I check the clock. I can't read it because it's in Altean. Coran showed me how to read it once, but I forgot. I know which hand is ticks and which is vargas, I just forget the way the numbers are oriented. It doesn't matter though, because immediately I am startled by an alarm blaring loudly.

"Good Morning Paladins!" Coran's voice bellows through the halls of the ship. "Rise and Shine! It is currently 8:30 am according to US Central Time on Earth. Hunk is currently making a delicious pancake breakfast which shall be served in thirty doboshes! Today we will send Allura and Lotor to investigate the Quintessence field, so please put on your armor after you finish eating so that we can be ready to swoop in if they require assistance. Thank you!"

I don't want to get out of bed. I can't do this.

I take a deep breath.

No, it's fine. It will all be fine. I can do this. I can make it another day. Just one more day.

I open my eyes and brace myself.

## End Notes

This is my first fic so pls be nice :) I wrote this originally as a flashfic but I liked it so much that I wanted to expand on it. I'm planning on doing something with the fall I mentioned at the beginning since I think it would be fun to do flashbacks to explore Lance's backstory. updates will probably not be frequent since I have school, but also because I'm still new at this and need to figure out where I wanna go with it. Regardless, Thank you for reading & I hope you enjoyed!

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!