

**Checkmate** by Lady Magdalena  
Chapter 3: Tension Afloat

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Author's notes:

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*Of course I was suspicious of everyone who claimed to be of a lineage suitable for a marriage to the Princess. Allura was the little sister that I never hand. What big brother wouldn't want to protect his little sister? Sure, I knew that Nanny and Coran were only trying to keep their promise to King Alfor but Nanny was so blinded by us being soldiers she wouldn't even entertain the thought that we were also looking out for her baby. Besides, driving Nanny crazy gave us some entertainment when we weren't busy fighting the Forces of Doom.*

- Lance Makdowall to Rebecca Moriarity in a subspace interview regarding his memoirs

Chapter 3 - Tension Afloat

Lotor looked at the young Prince from Planet Ashelon who knelt before him, head bowed in service to the Prince of Doom. When first discovered Ashelon was believed to be a twin planet to Oleron, however

years of research had led scientists to believe that it was actually one of Oleron's moons. King Zarkon's spies across the galaxy had informed him that the inhabitants of Ashelon were becoming dissatisfied with the Galaxy Alliance, particularly with their representation on Planet Earth. And the young man before him had spent the last hour re affirming that information. If he, Prince Lotor, could gain a stronghold in the region, he could seek out and kill that traitor Hazar and his whore of a sister Dorma. With the two of them gone surely he could sway the old guard back to the ways of the former Drule Empire and eventually conquer them as well. "And why should I align myself with you? What have you to offer me?" Lotor scowled.

The younger prince rose to stand. His long, jet black hair fell across his eyes down onto his shoulders. "Your quest to make Princess Allura your queen has traveled far my lord. I have the resources you need to help you achieve that quest." The young man brushed the hair away from his eyes. "My father King Maximillian petitioned the Galaxy Alliance for a location to discuss matters that concern both Ashelon and Oleron. That *neutral* location just happens to be Planet Arus. With my resources, you would even succeed in eliminating VOLTRON one and for all."

Lotor trusted no one. Yet this proposal intrigued him. "If you fail, you will die." He advised the prince thinking to himself, *you'll die anyway when I have no further need for you.* "And what are you asking me for in return?"

"Only to command your armies" Prince Zordar replied with a smile. He would not fail. He never failed. "I am much better at the job than the one you call Cossack the Terrible."

*Anyone is a better commander than Cossack. Haggar thought.*

“Very well.” Replied the Prince of Doom. “Leave me now and go to Arus. Haggar will provide you with a way to contact us securely from within the castle.”

“As you command sire.” Two of Lotor’s guards escorted the Prince out the door.

Lotor turned to address Haggar. “Let’s see this latest Robeast you brought.”

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Back on Planet Arus the reunion amongst the space explorers continued. A smile crossed Lisa’s face as Chip Pidge’s twin brother exited the shuttle to join them.

“Pidge!” Chip squealed.

“Chip!” Pidge squealed in return.

“This is certainly a surprise Lisa.” Keith commented as he watched Chip and Pidge hug each other. The two youngest proceeded to excuse them elves and headed to Pidge’s quarters to catch up.

Lisa could see that Keith was a bit uncomfortable all of a sudden. “You seem a little distraught Keith. Is everything alright?”

“When Marshall Graham called to inform us of the negotiations, he told us that Ambassador Gnilrets

and his wife were coming. We weren't expecting this. We...uh...might have a bit of a logistics problem with your sleeping arrangements."

Jeff looked over at Lisa as he spoke. "I don't think that will be an issue. Just give me a blanket and a couch and I'll be just fine."

"It was an unexpected change." Lisa apologized as she explained what happened. "Mother has taken ill and father needed to stay behind with her. I drew the short end of the stick. I had hoped I would never have to reveal this side of my life to anyone from the Academy. I was wrong."

"I don't understand." Hunk crossed his arms in front of him.

"Allow me to explain." My parents, William and Millia Sterling are the Ambassadors to Oleron on behalf of the Galaxy Alliance. When I entered the Academy, they made Marshall Graham seal my records so that only my immediate Commanding Officers would know that I was to someday succeed my parents as Ambassador to Oleron. I earned my way through the academy and onto the Explorer just like everyone else. However, my father made sure to include a supplemental clause in my commission and oath that upon the request of Galaxy Garrison, and should the need arise, I was to be made immediately available to assume my role as an ambassador also." She started to feel faint. *Not now.* she thought. *They must not find out just yet.*

"So Gnilrets is your..." Hunk thought for a minute. "Of course Sterling...Gnilrets...it makes sense. That also explains the full head covering. What better way to keep Lotor and all the other tyrants from taking you hostage than to hide you in plain sight."

***ATTENTION ALL PERSONNEL THE SHIP AND REPRESENTATIVES OF PLANET ASHELON ARE ARRIVING ON LANDING PAD SIX NINER ZERO.***

Allura noticed that Lisa was a bit pale. "Are you alright?"

"I'm fine Princess. Just out of my element so to speak. It's been a long journey. Wouldn't you agree Jeff?" Lisa looked to the Commander of Earth's Voltron and smiled.

Jeff nervously put his hand to the back of his neck. "Yea."

Lance knew something was up. Granted he hadn't seen them in quite some time, but this wasn't like his friends to be acting so strangely. Before he could say something the ruckus and shouting filled the entrance to the landing bay.

Jeff quickly grabbed Lisa by the hand and moved her behind Keith and the rest of the Lion Team.

"Unhand me you commoner!" The male voice yelled. "I am Prince Zordar and I demand to see Princess Allura immediately! Go tend to my cruiser. That is what you are paid to do."

"Your Highness," One of the guards could be heard speaking "Princess Allura has instructed us to escort you to your quarters."

"That is not good enough for me! I demand to see her now!" Zordar yelled spotting the Voltron Force

out of the corner of his eye.

Without warning he ran past the guards towards the Princess. Instinctively Keith and Lance stepped in front of Allura.

“Whoa there” Lance said placing his hand upon the young man’s chest. “Who the hell do you think you are?”

“Easy Lance” Keith moved Lance’s hand from the young man’s chest. “I’m Keith, commander of Voltron and head of security for the Castle of Lions.”

“I am Prince Zordar of Planet Ashelon.” Observing Lisa standing amongst the Voltron Force he pointed his finger directly at her. “**You!** How dare they send **you!** Are the Ambassadors to Oleron so old and feeble now that they have to send a surrogate to do their jobs?”

The words cut through Lisa like a knife, but she refrained from an outburst of her own. This was Princess Allura’s home and Lisa was her guest. Jeff placed his hand on Lisa’s shoulder and gave it a gentle squeeze.

Taking Lisa’s silence for an answer he continued to insult her. “You know nothing of what is happening on Oleron and Ashelon. You don’t give a damn about anyone. You’re nothing but an intergalactic slut!”

Jeff had enough of the Prince’s outburst. He would not allow anyone to talk to Lisa that way. “Why you...” He started towards Zordar but Allura raised her arm to stop him.

Allura nudged Keith and Lance to move to let her by. "That will be enough **Gentlemen.**" She ordered as she walked past them giving her a better view of the Prince. There was no doubt about it. He was very handsome. His long jet black hair flowed freely about his face and shoulders. His deep blue eyes nearly matched hers. "I am Princess Allura. And I do not take kindly to those choosing to insult my guests or my **friends.**"

He knelt down on his left knee and took her right hand kissing it much as Keith and the others had seven years before. "My most humble apologies. I did not mean to offend you." He looked up making sure that her eyes met his.

"The Castle of Lions is a place of peace and solitude for its visitors. If you would refrain from further outbursts it would be most appreciated." Allura looked over at Keith who just nodded at her in return.

"Your wish is my command." Zordar bowed before her. "Please permit me to say, you are much more beautiful than I expected."

"Thank you for your kind words." Allura replied. "My staff will show you to your room as I instructed them to do earlier."

Lance waited until Zordar was out of earshot. "I don't trust him. He reminds me too much of Prince Bocar." His mind drifted back to a day when, shortly after Allura had taken over for Sven, Nanny in her infinite wisdom had suggested that Bocar take over Blue Lion. They later discovered he was sent by King Zarkon and subsequently defeated him with the help of Voltron.

"Lance, don't you think you're taking that to extremes?" Allura asked of him. He just glared at her and walked off.

Feeling that Allura would be safe with Hunk, Jeff and Lisa, Keith hurried after his best friend.

"I'd at least keep it in the back of my mind Princess." Jeff commented. "Lisa and I would be the first ones to tell you that we learned a long time ago not to brush off Cinda and Cric's sixth senses."

"Sometimes I wonder if Lance sees the bad guy in everyone." Allura replied shaking her head back and forth. "Come with me. I'll show you to your stateroom. Jeff, you should find a couch in there as well. I think we can arrange for Chip to stay with Pidge."

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Keith quickly caught up to Lance just outside of Lance's own quarters. "Just what the hell was that all about?"

"I'm telling you Keith. That guy gives me the creeps. And on top of that, this whole situation with Lisa and Jeff being here instead of her parents is bothering me. Didn't you see the way they were acting back there? None of it is adding up."

"Lance, it's a long trip from Planet Oleron to Planet Arus. And then when you factor in Lisa having to travel from the Explorer's current location to Oleron to be briefed and then to us, it's tiring. We're just

lucky that Galaxy Garrison could spare them.” Keith attempted his own explanation of the situation. But like Lance he didn’t feel that things were Kosher either.

“Don’t you think it’s just a little strange that Marshall Graham or even Amalgamus for that matter didn’t tell you ahead of time of the change in plans? After all, you are head of security. There was plenty of time during their trip here to notify you. Don’t you also think it strange that Garrison would allow the commander of Earth’s Voltron and two of its key pilots to leave and come so far away? What if they need their Voltron?”

“I’m sure Marshal Graham had his reasons. But when you put it that way...” Keith’s sentence trailed off.

“See.” Lance tapped Keith’s chest and looked at his best friend. “Besides, I saw the way that so called Prince was looking at Allura and we’ve all seen that look before. From every single Prince Nanny brings around here to marry her off to. I know how you feel about Allura. You need to tell her.”

*If only you knew Lance.* Keith thought to himself. “You’ve tried that line with me for years and I keep telling you nothing will ever happen so forget it alright? She’s a Princess and I’m a pilot. It can and never will happen.”

“Whatever you say Commander Stick in the mud. You can fool yourself, but you can’t fool me.” Lance started walking down the hallway then turned back to face his friend. “Just tell her before its too late.”

Keith watched as Lance continued down the passageway. “I already have Lance. I already have.” Keith

said aloud as headed toward his quarters to file his latest report to Galaxy Garrison. Then he was going down to the archives for more research.