

Checkmate by Lady Magdalena
Chapter 4: Mysterious Happenings

Author's notes:

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The Castle of Lions was and always will be a place of magic and mystery. Just as the five lions have a spirit of their own, so does the Castle.

- From the collected journals of Coran Sasul

Chapter 4 - **Mysterious Happenings**

Just prior to their departure to Arus from Outpost 54 Haggard had sent one of the many harem girls to him as a way to satisfy his manly needs. Upon the young slave's departure from his company she left him with two items from the Sorceress of Doom. A lapel pin for his royal sash and an Amethyst Crystal.

Having been told by the slave girl not to remove either from the box in which they rested until after he was taken to his quarters on Planet Arus Zordar now took the crystal from its box and placed it upon the

nightstand next to the bed and secured the lapel pin to his sash. Placing the sash over his head and across his chest he admired himself in the mirror.

“Don’t you know that vanity is one of the seven deadly earthly sins?” Haggar’s voice cackled startling the Prince.

“Wh...Where are you?” He asked looking about the room but finding no one.

“Right here where you put me.” Haggar replied.

“What the...” Zordar started to say then realized that he had been talking to the Amethyst Crystal. *So that’s how she plans to infiltrate the castle!*

“When the time is right I will use this crystal to pass from my dream dimension into the Castle of Lions. Clever little plan isn’t it?” She asked.

“How will I find you?”

“**YOU** will not find me. *I* will find you. Just do as the Voltron Force tells you.” The old witch ordered.

“Hail Prince Lotor!” Zordar acknowledged and departed the room.

“Damn it! No matter how many times I got through these books there is simply just no way!” Keith slammed the cover shut.

If it is your will...it shall be done. The feminine voice resonated from within the archives, startling the Voltron commander who immediately unholstered his weapon and assumed a defensive posture. He scanned the archives but found nothing. *King Alfor?* He thought to himself. *No, that was definitely a female voice. And it didn't belong to Allura. Am I starting to lose it?* Lowering and holstering his weapon he looked down at his watch he realized that he'd better get back upstairs immediately. He had spent way more time down here in the archives than he originally planned. The sounds of approaching footsteps made him more uneasy. As a result he placed his hand upon his weapon, ready to draw in self defense as he once again scanned the room. A sigh of relief came over him as Allura's head Lady in Waiting approached him.

“Your maj...er Commander Bartley,” The young girl spoke politely correcting herself in the process, “Princess Allura asked if I would find you. The ambassador's negotiations are underway.” The young girl spoke politely. There was a certain aura about her that Keith just couldn't put his finger on.

Keith walked alongside the young Lady in Waiting to Princess Allura as they climbed the spiral brick staircase back up into the Castle. Her black full length tunic and golden circoat appeared to be a bit more faded than usual. “Your name is Maria, isn't it?” He asked taking the lead.

“Yes sir. My mother, Lady Novena, served in King Alphor and Queen Anastasia's court before Allura was born. Mother and Queen Orla became best friends during that time. Mother eventually went to Helena to serve Queen Orla and I was born shortly thereafter.”

“Yes. I remember that you came to Castle Arus from Queen Orla’s court about the time that Lance, Pidge, Hunk and I were reassigned back to Earth following our defeat of Doom’s forces. Before Lotor escaped from Bastille 12 and started this war all over again.” Keith turned around to help Maria over the last step into the castle, but she was nowhere to be found. It was as if she had vanished into thin air!

Prince Zordar hit the table with his fist then pointed a finger at Lisa. “The joint mining venture between Ashelon and Oleron is just an excuse to plunder what little resources we have left! The rulers of Oleron tell us that the ore will be used to provide the energy needed for the defensive weapons on both planets yet the larger of the main defensive weapons is on Oleron! Do you take my father for a fool?”

“No your highness, I do not. And I can assure you Galaxy Garrison has nothing but the utmost respect for your father.” Lisa calmly replied. “Need I remind you that it was not the people of Oleron that drained most of your resources but it was the Drule Empire? At the time when most of your resources were depleted the Drule Empire was searching, looking for a new homeworld for their people. We too were falling victim to Emperor Zheppo and his maniacal plans. Trust me, I know.”

“What would **YOU** know about it?” Zordar continued to bait Lisa.

I was there the day we, as Voltron, freed both planets you moron. Lisa thought as she looked up to assure herself that Keith and Jeff were still at the back of the room. As she proceeded to continue trying to get through to Zordar she silently asked herself just how did her parents manage such irate and

conceited people?

Jeff observed Lisa looking at them from across the room and nodded back at her. He could see the restraint in her expression. He was proud of his teammate for trying to diffuse Prince Zordar's temper.

Keith sensed some tension coming from Jeff. Zordar's shouting had subsided for now and he turned his attention to his friend, hoping that small talk would ease Jeff's mind "I never would have guessed Lisa was a diplomat."

Jeff nodded. It was as if Keith was looking at a mirror image of himself. "It took me a while to get used to the idea once Hawkins called us in and laid it all out. Lisa wasn't too thrilled about it. Hell, she'd never even told Ginger and those two share everything."

"Sometimes I wonder if Allura..." The Black Lion Knight started to say.

"Wonder if I what?" Allura interrupted.

"Nothing. Don't worry about it." Keith walked over to the other side of the room to get a better view.

"What's eating him?" Lance asked joining the group.

"You've got me." Allura replied. "Let me see if I can talk to him"

The Princess of Arus walked over to the Black Lion Knight. "Keith, what is it? You're on edge. Jeff's

noticed it. Lance is asking about it. What's bothering you?"

"What the hell do you think is bothering me?" His voice was still low, but louder than normal. "Two nights ago I was holding you and expressing my love for you like any normal couple. It's eating away at me Allura. I want to love you openly and be with you. Not from behind closed doors. But I can't there's just no way."

"Keith, we had this discussion already. We can petition the council...do more research..."

"What do you think I was doing when you sent Maria down to the archives to find me?"

Allura looked at Keith as if he suddenly had three heads. "Keith, I have no idea what you're talking about. Maria left for Earth three days ago on the same shuttle as Nanny. She's on loan to Galaxy Garrison."

"I'm telling you Allura, she was down in the archives."

Allura placed both hands on her hips. "Keith, I know where all of my Ladies in Waiting are at all times. You personally put that security protocol in place over 5 years ago."

Suddenly the castle Klaxons began to sound.

ALERT ALERT. GENERAL QUARTERS. ENEMY APPROACHING

“Damn it! Lotor **WAS** biding his time.” Keith immediately went into command mode. Raising his wrist com to his mouth he shouted “Voltron Force! Get to your lions!”

Both Allura and Lance nodded an acknowledgment as Keith continued barking orders to the security personnel. “Get Prince Zordar to the safety of the castle shelter. Commander Lamana will see to the ambassador.” By this time Jeff had grabbed Lisa by the arm and headed out the door.

“Yes Sir!” The young officer saluted then swiftly escorted the prince out of the room as Keith ran to join his teammates.

No one noticed the hooded figure walk from the shadows as it followed the Prince.