

Love Is Stronger Than Death by Purrsia
Prologue

Fandom: Voltron, Lion Team

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Genre: Drama, Angst, Romance - AU

Rating: BT

Warnings: Language, Violence, Adult Themes, Character Death

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Summary: Explores what might have happened if “The Sleeping Princess” episode came down differently: Lotor succeeds in spirited Allura away, with the Voltron Force thinking she’d actually died and going from there. K&A with some L&A elements as well.

Keith walked along with his teammates behind the horse drawn carriage that carried the body of Princess Allura. They acted as pallbearers, their last task being to escort the body to the royal mausoleum where she would be laid to rest beside her mother. His vision was blighted by tears that seemed to have flowed non-stop since the Princess lost her fight to survive following an attack two days before by a native lizard whose bite was highly toxic and to which there was no antidote. The creature wasn’t normally aggressive, or so he’d been told in the chaos that followed, but they must have wandered too close to its den causing it to strike out. One moment, they’d all been enjoying the sun alongside a lake, the next minute their lives were shattered by the spooked creature. It was a bitter irony that for all their worry when Allura began piloting the Blue Lion, sure they’d all lose her in battle against Doom, it was something unforeseeable that brought them here to do this somber task.

The service had been wrenching, seeing Allura lying there in her casket motionless as if asleep. Keith kept staring at her, as though his sheer will could spur her to breathe again. As eulogies were read, Keith replayed the scene at the lake in his mind over and over, trying to think if anything could have been done to save her. He’d turned his attention from her for but a moment to pick some flowers for her. It was an impulse he normally wasn’t given to, but he remembered they were her favorite – a delicate white-water lily. He didn’t even care that the others were around

to note the gesture. The afternoon was beautiful, and he'd felt more carefree than he had in ages. He had thought, perhaps, it was high time he did more to show Allura how he really felt. The fanciful reverie was shattered by Allura's screams. All he'd had time to do was turn around and see the creature take a firm bite into the arm Allura had thrown up in defense of her face. It scampered away as quick as it had attacked, and it amazed Keith how fast the venom in the bite affected her. She faded out of consciousness in his arms, and by late that night she drew her last labored breath. He'd berated himself ever since for not protecting her. If he hadn't turned away, if he hadn't reached for the flowers...so many ways another outcome could have been the reality. He knew it was no use beating himself up over it. It had happened so fast he still found it hard to believe she was really gone. Such a lovely, warm soul snuffed out in but a heartbeat.

He'd taken a sharp, faltering breath when he supposed to go before the casket and read a eulogy, and he knew he should. He'd been up the night before trying to put into words his impressions of Allura's life and the hole her untimely death would leave for them all to try in vain to fill. But words escaped him, and nothing seemed adequate. It was just as well. He doubted he could muster the strength to stand before the assembly and speak, so he ultimately declined the honor. Some things didn't have to be said, he reasoned. But he also hoped that when she was alive, Allura had some sense of what went unspoken in his heart. Although, it was only now he himself was aware of the force with which he felt certain emotions – now that he'd lost her. It was a bitter irony indeed.

When the time had come to lower the lid of the coffin, he hadn't been sure what was worse. Looking upon her knowing she was gone, or knowing as the lid closed that it would be the last time he'd ever see her face.

It isn't fair, his aching mind lamented as he walked, nay stumbled, along the rocky path up the hillside. There were moments where he feared he couldn't go on – part of him not wanting to make this final step because it was just that, so final. He was vaguely aware of their passing near the monument to the fallen royals of Arus, knowing too well a tribute to Allura would soon be added. As far as he was concerned, there weren't words to sum up what Allura meant to Arus, let alone what she meant to him – his attempt at a eulogy proved that. It had not simply been her beauty, but her heart and courage that Keith found so remarkable. There would never be another quite like her, of that he was sure.

He dared not look at his friends, although he could hear their sobs at times above the din of the ambling carriage. And he dared not try to contemplate the fate of Arus without its compassionate heir to the throne. Even thinking of Allura in better times was no good. The memories of their first meeting, the unspoken affection they had for one another, all of it simply reminded him of what was lost and things that would now never be.

Keith fixed his eyes on the royal crest emblazoned on the back of the carriage and tried not to think at all. When, finally, the carriage slowed, Keith walked around to the front to help a distraught Nanny and a drawn Coran down from the front seat. Without a word, the two headed into the grand stone tomb, leaving the remainder of the Voltron Force to the grim task of unloading the casket and carrying it to the final resting place.

He avoided the eyes of his comrades while they carefully steadied the coffin and brought it into the mausoleum, finally setting it down gently on a waiting pedestal adjacent to the Queen's casket. Inside, only those within the higher royal court were present for this last goodbye, including Allura's aunt, Queen Orla, whom Keith supposed would now inherit the Arusian throne.

For the longest time, everyone stood there in relative silence save for the stray sob or snuffle. That is, until Coran reached out and with a shaking hand, and gingerly touched the lid of Allura's casket.

"Forgive me, Alfor. I have failed you," Coran rasped, his shoulders shaking with the force of new sobs. Nanny fell to her knees beside him and wailed mournfully.

Keith turned his head and squeezed his eyes shut to try to hold back his own fresh batch of tears, though it was no use. They fell, blazing a warm trail over his already wet cheeks. Coran, he knew, was wrapped up in his own guilt for the promise he made to Allura's father to look after her and keep her safe. From the moment he met her he wanted nothing more than to defend and protect her, as well. He could definitely relate to how Coran felt, though he didn't know what was more unbearable – his own sorrow or witnessing that of the others.

One by one, each person present took their turn approaching the casket to pay their last respects and lay a single rose upon the closed lid. Keith went last, murmuring to a departing Lance not to hold the carriage up for him. Alone in the mausoleum and bathed in the light of the setting sun, Keith stood still in the silence for a long moment. He stared at the lid, as if making a last-ditch effort to will her to open it and come dashing into his arms. But no, he would have to accept it.

He'd seen his share of death and he'd been to his share of mournful services for the fallen. Nothing in the galaxy, it seemed, could have really prepared him for this sad affair, however. Allura's passing hurt him like no other.

With trembling hands, he reached out and laid his rose on the pile amassed on the coffin.

"Goodbye," he whispered into the eerie stillness. There was still so much he wanted to say, but he couldn't work past the lump in his throat to muster much more than a feeble farewell. His lower lip merely quivered, refusing to form more words.

He walked out into the cool evening breeze, the others so far down the trail they were but a thin line from his vantage point. He looked out over the meadow in the valley to where the Castle of Lions stood high atop another rise across the way. Keith let out a faltering sigh before heading down the path. He wondered how much the Castle would feel like home now with Allura gone.

Dusk was fast giving in to the darkness of night on Arus, and a shadow crept through the doorway of the royal mausoleum. Lotor's eyes flashed with mischief as he approached the coffin that belonged to Allura.

I thought they'd never leave, he thought while raising the top portion of the lid. Inside lay a peaceful looking Allura shrouded among the soft petals of thousands of white flowers. They'd been placed there by her mourning subjects during the earlier service and gave off a sweet scent. A crooked grin graced his face when he looked upon his prize.

"They really think you're dead, my beauty," Lotor whispered to her, though she showed no response. "I know better." He paused to take in her beauty, which never failed to captivate him.

He carefully reached in and lifted the sleeping princess out of the casket, careful not to disturb the pile of roses on the bottom portion of the lid. He wanted them to continue thinking she was dead to reduce the risk that they would even think to come looking for her. So, the less things looked disturbed, the better. Allura didn't stir, and Lotor was struck by how truly dead she seemed. No breath movements could be detected with the eye. It was only lucky for Lotor that Arusians didn't embalm their royals or perform autopsies, opening the way for this brilliant plot of Haggar's to take shape.

Coba, her cat, was disguised as a venomous lizard common to Arus – one that had been known to be found in increasingly unusual places due to the destruction from battles depleting its natural habitats. Haggar then had the cat deliver a potion with its ordinarily harmless bite that would mimic the effects of the real lizard's deadly bite, right down to the compounds that would show up in a victim's blood if they were to check. There would be no reason for them to suspect anything was amiss - just a horrible twist of fate that cost them their Princess. The only visible sign of injury were the puncture marks on her afflicted arm, which would heal in time.

However, the spell would wear off soon, so Lotor had to be quick yet remain undetected. Coba jumped onto the open half of the casket lid, effectively closing it for the Prince. It let out an ear-splitting cry to signify this accomplishment.

"Thank you, kitty. You and your master will be rewarded well. But first, we have to get our prize safely back to Doom."

With that, the thieving duo crept out, Lotor clutching Allura near to him as they made haste toward the wooded area behind the crypt. There, waiting for them, was a different sort of coffin, one Doom used as a convenient and hard-to-detect transport.

Lotor laid Allura inside with utmost care, before positioning himself beside her. Coba filed in last curling up at Lotor's feet. It would make for a cramped ride home, but Lotor wasn't about to complain about being in close quarters with the woman he'd coveted from the moment he saw her. In fact, he'd relish it.

"Indeed, Arus, you have said goodbye to your Princess," Lotor uttered as the coffin lid closed. In seconds, the transport took off, carrying an unwitting Allura to a new life on Doom.

Keith sat in his room inside the Castle, staring dejectedly out into the star-filled sky. The mood in the Castle was tense and morose and he just had to get away from it. The talk of finding a replacement pilot for the Princess made him bristle the most, as it seemed so callous of Galaxy Garrison to have that concern as their chief reaction to Allura's passing. Although, the practical part of him understood that Zarkon would not wait and would likely take advantage of her absence once word got out. But still, the last thing Keith wanted to do was train a new cadet. He knew Allura loved her world and people above all else and that sooner or later he would have to do what he must to ensure he could continue to protect it. That would be what she would want him to do. No, he did not have the luxury to mourn extensively and mope about. In his heart, Keith knew this. But it didn't help him to feel less bitter that there was no time to really mourn her properly. He felt nothing but anger, hopelessness and despair. True he wasn't the first one to lose someone dear to him, but it was so raw and painful right now Keith could see no point in time where he would ever be over her passing.

He chose to brood in his room for the moment. He didn't know what else to do right now, although he was sure if he'd mixed among the Castle crew it would be a matter of time before his pent-up emotion would manifest in unpleasant ways. Being around the others aggravated the situation for him, so he told them he was turning in - even though he knew full well he couldn't sleep.

A shooting star caught his eye, although it was odd in the direction it swept off the horizon and up. Keith pondered it for a moment, but his aching head chalked the sighting up to his exhausted and overwhelmed mind not seeing things properly. But if wishes on stars came true, Keith sorely wished the events of the last few days never happened - that he could walk down the hall right now and bump into Allura, that his ears could hear her silken voice again. He tried to take comfort in thinking perhaps she was on the other side with her parents, and maybe her spirit was looking down on him now. But somehow, even that evoked feelings of anger and despair.

Tears threatened to spill over again. Keith got up out of the chair he'd been slumped in and made his way to his bed where he buried his head in a pillow to sob. Despite his reckoning that he wouldn't be able to sleep, it was only a short time before his shuddering sobs subsided and his exhausted body gave in to the need for rest.

*Me & my friend were walking
In the cold light of mourning.
Tears may blind the eyes but the soul is not deceived
In this world even winter ain't what it seems.*

*Here come the blue skies, here comes springtime.
When the rivers run high & the tears run dry.
When everything that dies.
Shall rise.*

--Love Is Stronger Than Death, The The