

The Fallout

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There were only three things Lance knew before he moved the controls and sped towards the Blue Lion.

The shield was broken; their only protection against the giant Galra warship was gone. His fingers held on with a vice grip and he urged Red on to go faster. Come on girl, please.

They had an Ion canon, a fully charged one that would be shooting any second now. Time was running out; he was nearly there. So close.

The shot was aimed directly at the Blue Lion, and her armament wouldn't be enough to defend the pilot inside. Lance barely managed to ram Blue out of the way before the blinding light reached her.

His world slowed, seconds turning into hours when everything around him started burning. He knew two more things then.

Allura would survive.

He would not.

On the way back to the castle Lance felt strangely numb. His hand spasmed where it laid on Red's control and he barely managed to balance the sensitive console before she veered off course. Nobody noticed. The comms were full of relieved chatter, the usual lighthearted comments that filled the air after a stressful mission. His eyelids threatened to close for a moment before he caught himself.

He focused on the black expanse of stars in front of his dashboard, saw them move by slowly in colors and lights. His attention waned and when he next looked up, the stars had been replaced by the flawless white of the castle ship's massive bulk.

Red touched down in the Hangar. Outside the white and blue of the walls and ground bled together. Details waned until they were fully swallowed by the sterile white and blue mix. He blinked, focused on the red that was all around, framing the white like a picture on the wall. His gaze dropped down, where his hands were loosely grasping the controls and he slowly lifted them away. Placing them in his lap instead. Looking outside his lion made his head swim.

The silence around him hung steady and deep.

When had the others disconnected?

He felt his back connect with the pilot chair. Confusedly he blinked his eyes open that he couldn't remember closing. All around him was Red.

Stumbling out took longer than he thought it would. His legs were always behind his thoughts. Or maybe his thoughts weren't fast enough for his legs, making him stumble whenever they caught up. The white was steady, the silence booming. A blue streak followed him where he walked throughout the halls.

He couldn't remember when he made it to his room. He just knew that at some point the white around him was replaced with darkness, and finally with blackness when his body hit the soft edge of his bed.

The castle alarm blared. Not the one for emergencies, the one that made adrenaline pump and resulted in a dead sprint to the bridge. No, the one that was preset on seven in the morning to wake up any Paladins still asleep for a healthy routine. The very same one that most of the others had disabled or replaced by alarms they set themselves. Like every morning he swore he'd disable it, a fiery hatred burning in his exhausted eyes and like every morning he forgot that same promise mere minutes later.

Hadn't he been sure that the alarm was preset on 7 am castle standard, he'd have thought it must have been the middle of the night. He felt bone-deep exhaustion dragging him down, and additionally, his whole body felt crusty and sticky. His brows furrowed ever so slightly and he forced his head up to get a look at himself.

Huh. He was still wearing his Paladin armor.

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Time seemed to pass him as a blur. One moment he was in the kitchen area, staring down into his bowl of green goo, the next he was seated in the common area, eyes

fixed listlessly on a tablet displaying information he couldn't comprehend.

He felt unreal.

At some point his feet led him in the training room, eyes unfocused until an unforgiving object collided with his side forcefully ripping him back into reality.

Lance twirled the Bayard in his hand, forming the standard blaster. This was what he had needed, he decided. He needed the rhythm of a fight. Of aiming, shooting, dodging, of metal fists that tried to bash in his head and training staffs that only barely missed his kneecaps.

He needed exhaustion and pain. A prove of where he was and what he was doing. The gladiators' feet pounded through the giant room, a chorus of metal meeting metal advancing on him at a dangerous pace. His body legged, missed the beat and his shot went wide. A dodge that was slow barely saved him from getting his head bashed in, with sluggish aim he still managed to nail the droid through the head before it could regain its balance.

Sometime after the night cycle had set in, he stumbled back into his room, falling into bed before he could bother with cleaning up or even changing.

He woke up to a castle alarm he knew all too well. He cursed it, stumbled out from underneath his covers, and shuddered in disgust at the feeling of dried sweat and fabric clinging to him.

Mornings were silent. Always silent. He ghosted through the ship, earlier than most of the team even woke up and in corridors that they never set foot in. His eyes were glued to the softly glowing blue stripes that drew their way all throughout the castle. He had never liked silence before, even less being alone.

People changed he supposed.

He trained until he couldn't move anymore, anything to stop time from speeding past him.

A routine, ingrained into his bones that he could follow even when sometimes he didn't really feel present.

A routine that came to a stop when he returned to his room in order to finally take a shower and caught a glimpse of himself.

He stood, staring at himself in the full-body mirror his small bathroom provided. Skin

littered like an uneven canvas with blue and violet, some an angry red. His fingers hovered over his stomach uncertain. He couldn't feel any of them. He flinched slightly at his own touch, only to notice that he didn't feel any pain radiating from the angry bruise. His hand laid flat, softly adding pressure.

Nothing.

His breath hitched. Gaze climbing up to his face; the reason he seemed to be ignoring mirrors lately. Dark circles almost as if scratched into his skin greeted him, skin that was flaky and pale, irritated beyond belief. Lips bitten and-

There were tears slowly rolling down his face.

It almost felt like time stopped then. But that was familiar, too familiar to that burning all-encompassing light-

His fist connected with the wall.

No.

His breath was coming out harshly, his eyes couldn't seem to focus turning everything in a blurry mash of white and blue.

No.

The door closed with a quiet whoosh after him. He would have liked to slam it. His fists curled tightly with the simmering need to take out what was brooding inside of him with violence.

No.

Metal hit the floor when the bot he shot stopped moving. It wasn't enough. Another and another and it wasn't enough.

His Bayard elongated into a sword, unfamiliar beyond what he had been told and yet painfully familiar in its coloration. His stance was weak, his movement wrong, everything about the fight unbalanced. But the sound of metal against metal, the feeling of resistance in response to his strikes was better. Better but not enough.

Again, again, again, again.

At some point, his Bayard hit the floor. Skin against metal, hands against unforgivingly cold machinery. A staff in his stomach, a sword in his arm, a cold fist in his side.

A blur of white and blue and yellow and red.

He couldn't let himself think. Not about the disconnect in his body and thoughts, not about the spilled blood he couldn't really feel, not about what happen- Nothing happened. Everything happened. No. No, he couldn't.

The dawn of the third day woke him in the middle of the training room. He fled, leaving behind sprinkles of red on the pristinely white floor.

His room closed behind him, cutting off the light source from the hall outside and leaving him in the dark.

He stood there. Breathing slowly and steadily. His eyes trained on a dark spot somewhere on his floor.

Time passed him by.

He didn't move.

It felt like he wasn't there. Like if he tried to move his body wouldn't respond, because he wasn't there. Like he was only watching.

This was wrong.

He was wrong.

There was a slow throbbing in his arm. A sensation almost entirely cut off, but still there.

Slowly, so very slowly, as if a move too fast would cut him out, he walked in the direction of his bed. Let himself sink down on it when he felt its resistance against his legs.

He slumped forward, dragged down by an invisible weight.

There were three things he knew before he had moved his lion.

The shield was broken.

They had an Ion canon.

Allura was going to get hit.

There were two things he knew right then.

Allura had survived.

He had not.

He had died. He could still feel that burning light, that excruciating pain that crushed him and burned him and tore him apart. He remembered how moments turned into hours, how the realization sunk in. Remembered those last moments where everything was bright and searing and painful.

And then everything stopped. He was gone. Just not existent anymore. No more thoughts, no more memories, no more Lance. He had lived it, yet he couldn't comprehend it.

He died.

Three days after he died, he broke down.

Three days in which he ran from the truth so much so that he almost broke himself.

Three days that culminated in so much pain and anguish, Red could be heard whimpering in her Hangar affected through their shared bond.
