





[Blue lion roaring]



[muffled shouting]









[Lance exhaling]



[Lance groaning]



..Huh..?

[Hunk] [muffled] He's waking up!





[Hunk] Lance!! [everyone gasping]





[Hunk] I gotcha, buddy..





[Hunk] [sniffing] I'm so relieved!





You're okay.. [laughs happily]

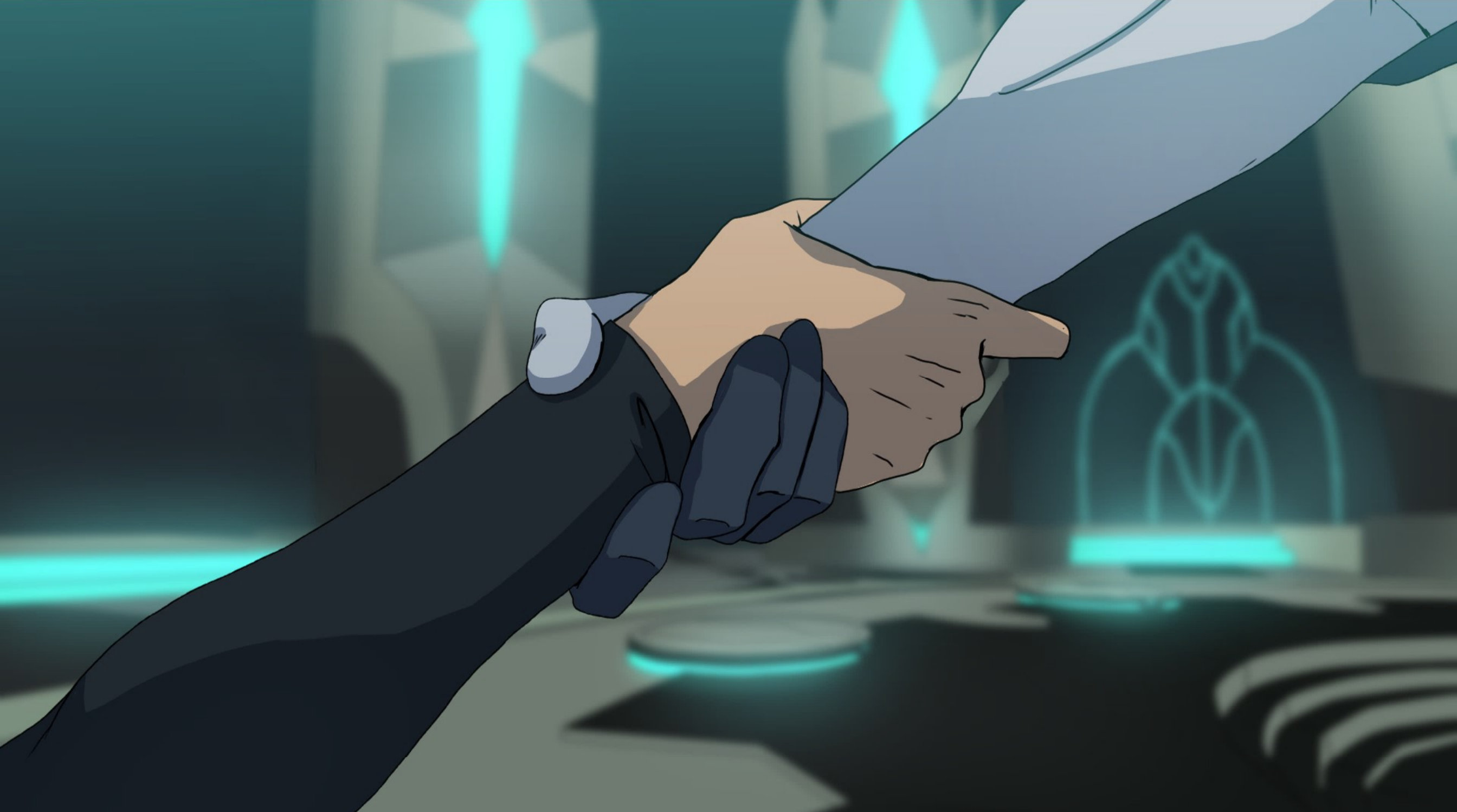


[Lance] [voice groggy] ..What happened?





It was a pretty close call..





When we found you... We weren't sure you'd make it.





I'm just glad you're alright.



[Lance] ...Wait, how'd I even get back..?



You don't remember..?





...I remember.. an explosion.. getting the sphere.. that lieutenant guy..



[gasps]





...

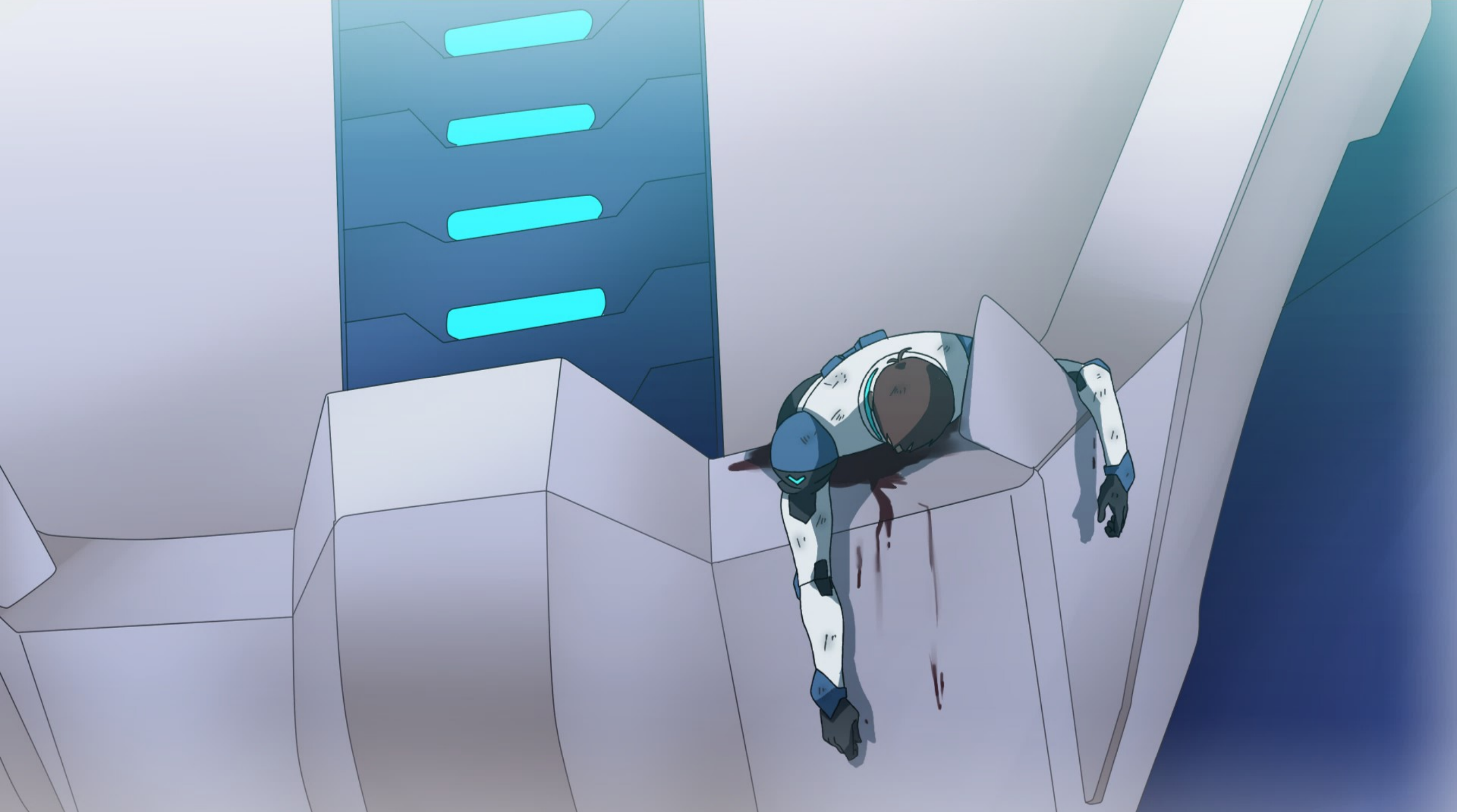


Yeah, you.. you got pretty messed up.. By the time we got you in the healing pod..

[Keith] You were barely hanging on..





















..It was bad, Lance.







Well.. good thing you got me out of that facility when you did, then. I owe you one, Keith.



Uh.. What? What do you mean?





What do you mean, *'What do I mean'*? You came and got me, remember?



That... didn't happen.




Uhh.... yes it *did*? Pretty sure I remember not being able to make it back to Blue and lying on the ground in front of her. I couldn't even *move*.





then *you* showed up, and-



..grabbed my face and.. got all up in my business? and..









Uh.



W-Why are you looking at me like that?



[Lance] Uhh.....





[harsh whisper] *Dude!* Did you *kiss* me back there?! Is that why you're pretending it didn't happen?!



W-WHAT?! I did *NOT* kiss you!!











Er, Lance! Allow me to clarify what happened. It was actually your lion that brought you back to the castle, not Keith.






I believe the blue lion saw you in peril, and acted to save your life. With a bond as strong as the one you share, it only makes sense.







We have a strong bond..?



[gentle laugh] Yes. She chose you for a reason, Lance.





Aww... That's my girl..

So Keith *wasn't* actually there, then..



[Allura] Correct. You returned to us with your lion without any other assistance.



[Lance closed-mouth shrieking as he avoids eye contact with Keith]



[Lance] [clearing throat] There's still something I don't really get, though..



[Allura] What is it?

[Lance] Even if my memory *is* pretty foggy, I still remember someone being there..







*Whoever they were, they came up to me and...*





And..



[voice trembling] ..They took the Asterian sphere..



A-And I just let them walk away with it..!





[Lance] I-I.. I messed the whole thing up..



Hold on! Everything's fine. We've got the sphere.



Blue came back with you *and* some mangled sentry holding onto it.





Why yes! And the Asterian sphere itself fit perfectly within the castle's internal navigation system. It should stay powered for dodeca-pheobs to come!



Huh. Well, that's a relief.. Guess I didn't almost die for nothing, then.






[sniffling]





Huh?

A character in a blue, form-fitting suit is shown from the chest up, holding a man with a thick brown beard and long brown hair. The man is wearing a green shirt and has his eyes closed. The background is a blurred, light blue and grey environment.

[Pidge] [muffled, watery voice] ..Be more careful next time, okay..?



...Okay. Sorry for worrying you guys.



[Pidge sniffing, footsteps]



Why don't we let you two have a moment to er, talk. I'm sure you'll want to clear things up after that slight... miscommunication.



Don't take forever though, okay?



Hunk wants *his* bonding time with his best friend, too.









[sigh]





Uh. Look, man. I'm sorry I said that in front of everyone. I'm..



I'm not sure why I-...



Hey, don't worry about it, alright? I get it.





Y-You do..?



I mean, yeah. We've had weirder things happen to us since we got to space. Compared to flying giant cat robots and magic aliens, a couple hallucinations don't seem *nearly* as strange.



Oh.. Right. Yeah.





Anyway, listen.. I don't know if I should be the one to tell you this,



but before we got you in the pod, you were actually..



Your heart had already stopped. You were gone, Lance.. That's why we weren't sure if you'd make it.





...Oh.

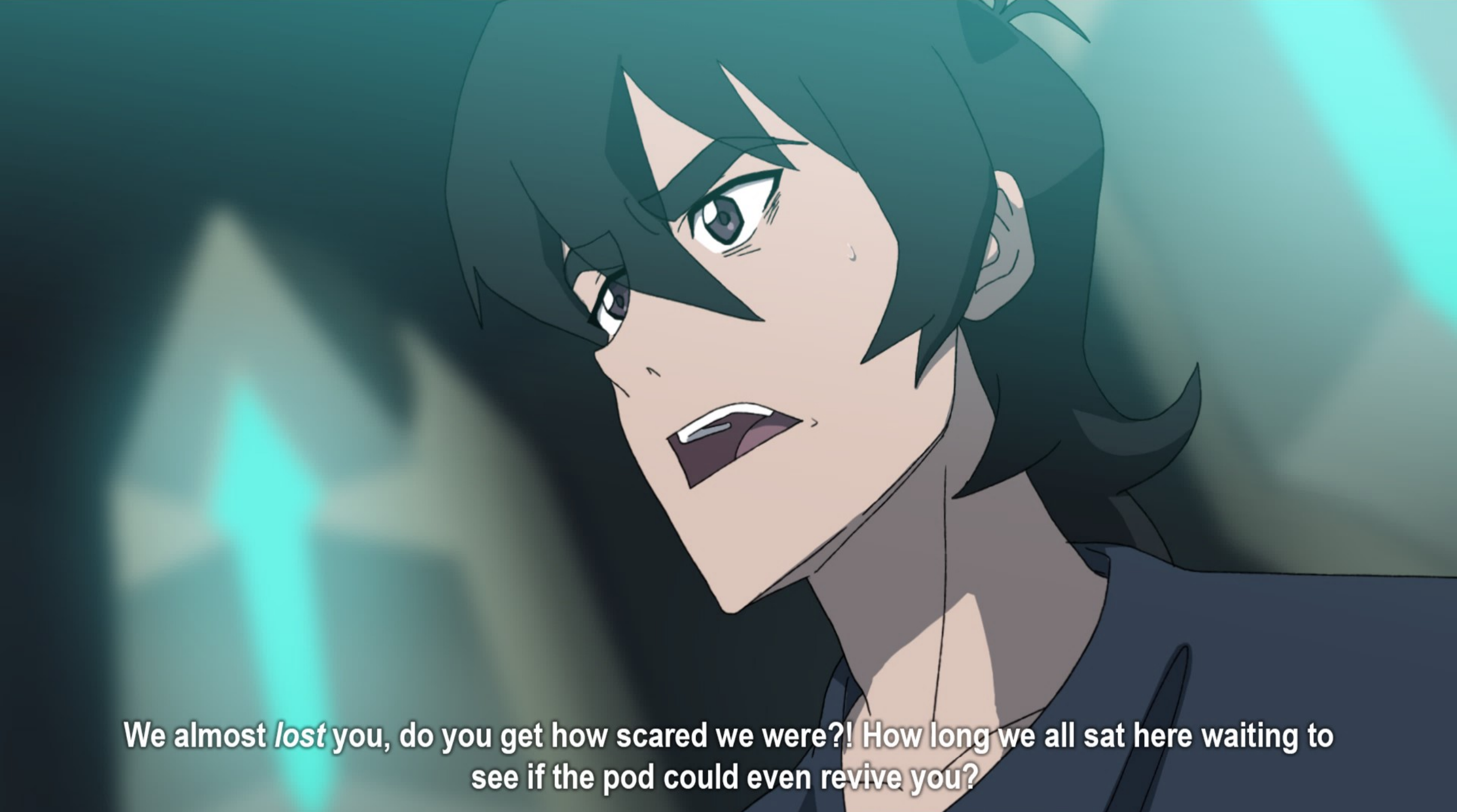


Wow. I guess it was a pretty close call, then.. [nervous laugh]



D-Don't *laugh!* This is serious!





We almost *lost* you, do you get how scared we were?! How long we all sat here waiting to see if the pod could even revive you?



Wh- It's not like I *wanted* to die!







[sighs] We're in a war, Keith. It's not easy to think about, but..



There's a good chance we might not all survive to see the end of it..




At least I didn't die fetching a ship part though, right? That would've been a dumb way to go, even for me..







[Keith] Stop it.

An anime-style illustration of two characters. The character on the right is shown in profile, looking down with a stern, almost angry expression. He has dark hair and is wearing a dark blue or black uniform. The character on the left is seen from behind, with their hand near their face. The background is a blurred, teal-colored environment. At the bottom of the image, there is a white text box containing the subtitle.

Don't.. talk about yourself like that. Just. Stop.







...Keith..?







I *know* what being in a war means, Lance. But I don't think you realize just how-



How much I.. Uh.



..You what?





H...



Ugh!! I'm not good at this!



A-At what?! Are you trying to talk about your feelings or something man?





Hm?!



Lance, is.. is this okay..?







[voice cracking] Uh-huh.





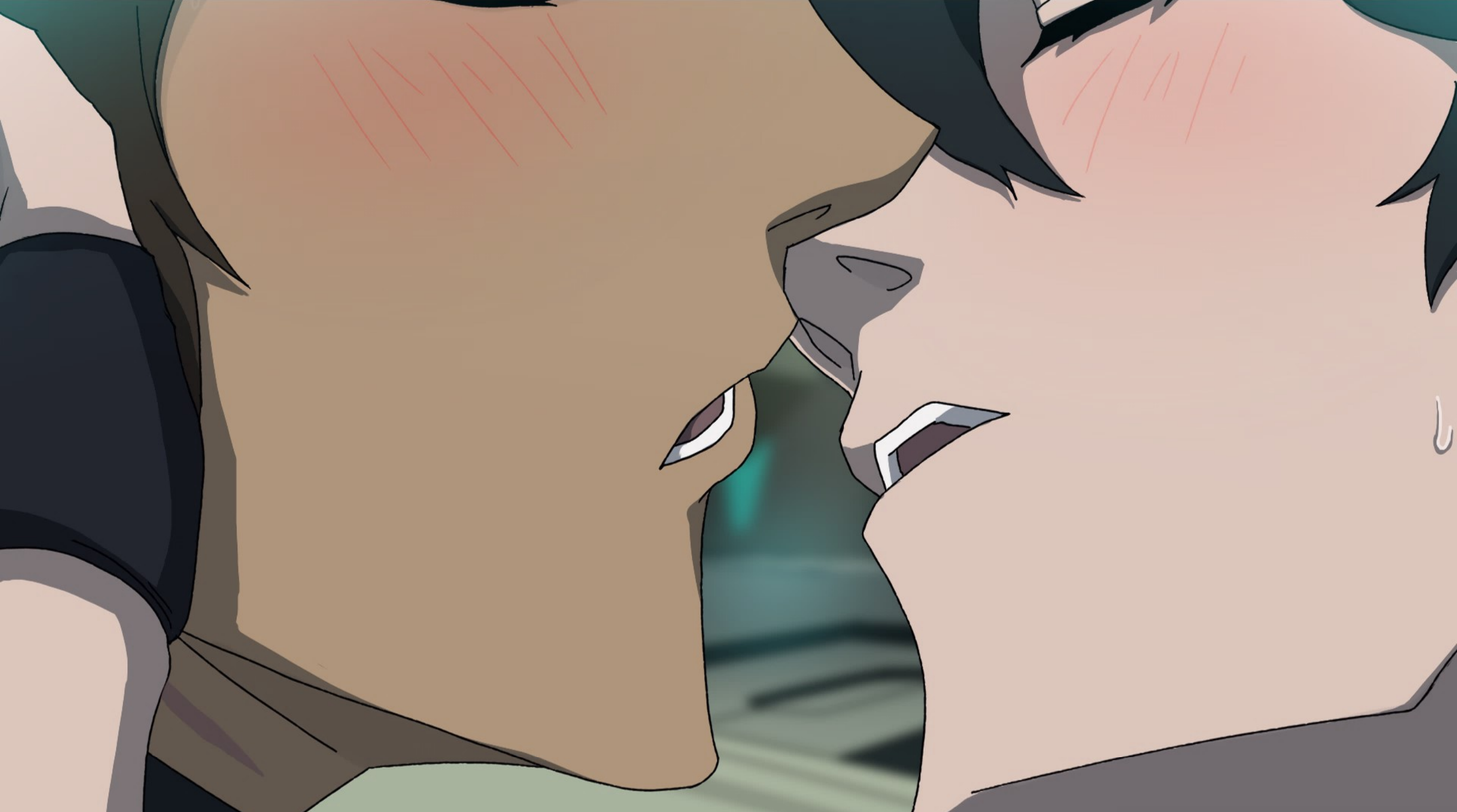












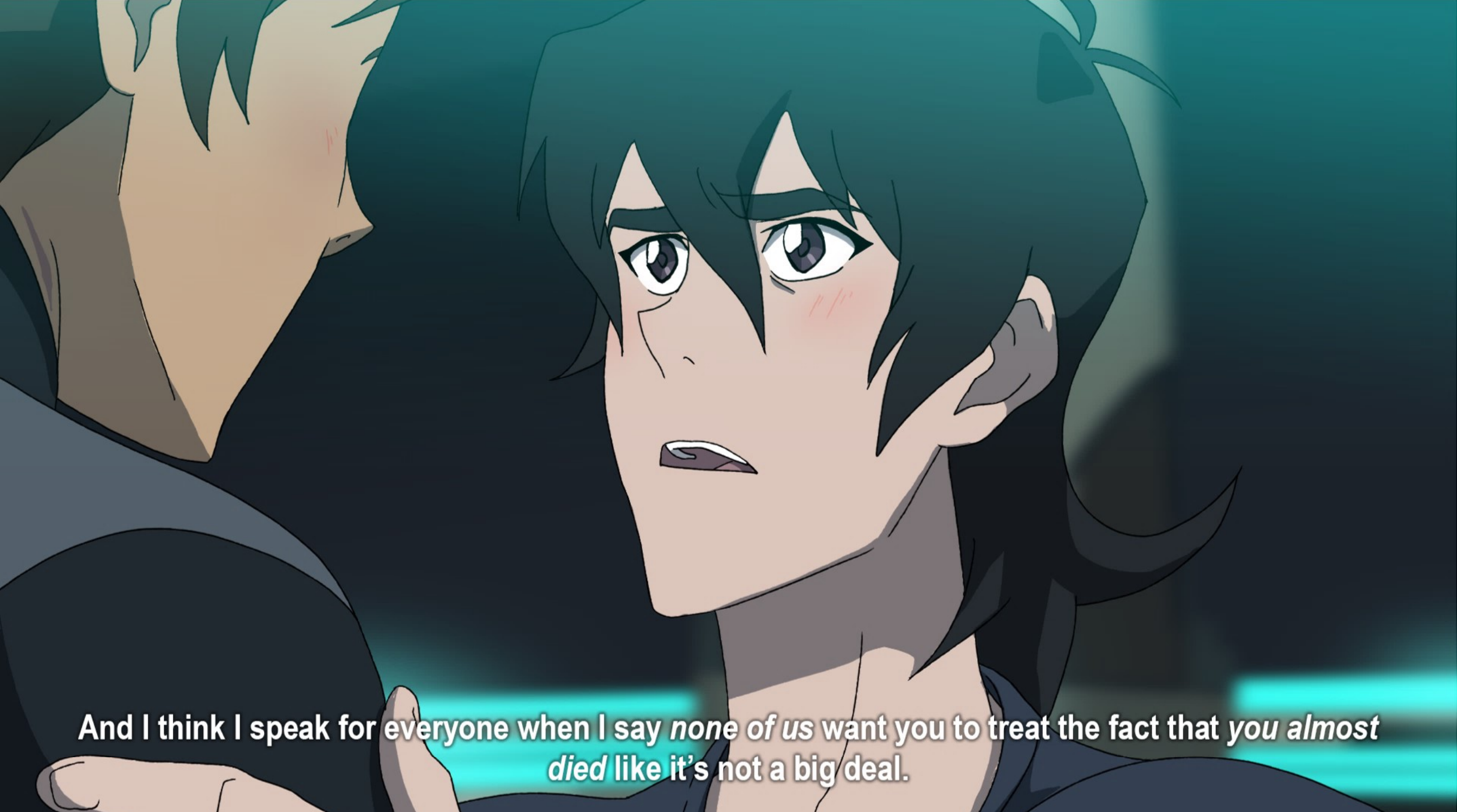


..Keith...



Y-You mean a lot to me, Lance.. I don't want to lose you.





And I think I speak for everyone when I say *none of us* want you to treat the fact that *you almost died* like it's not a big deal.



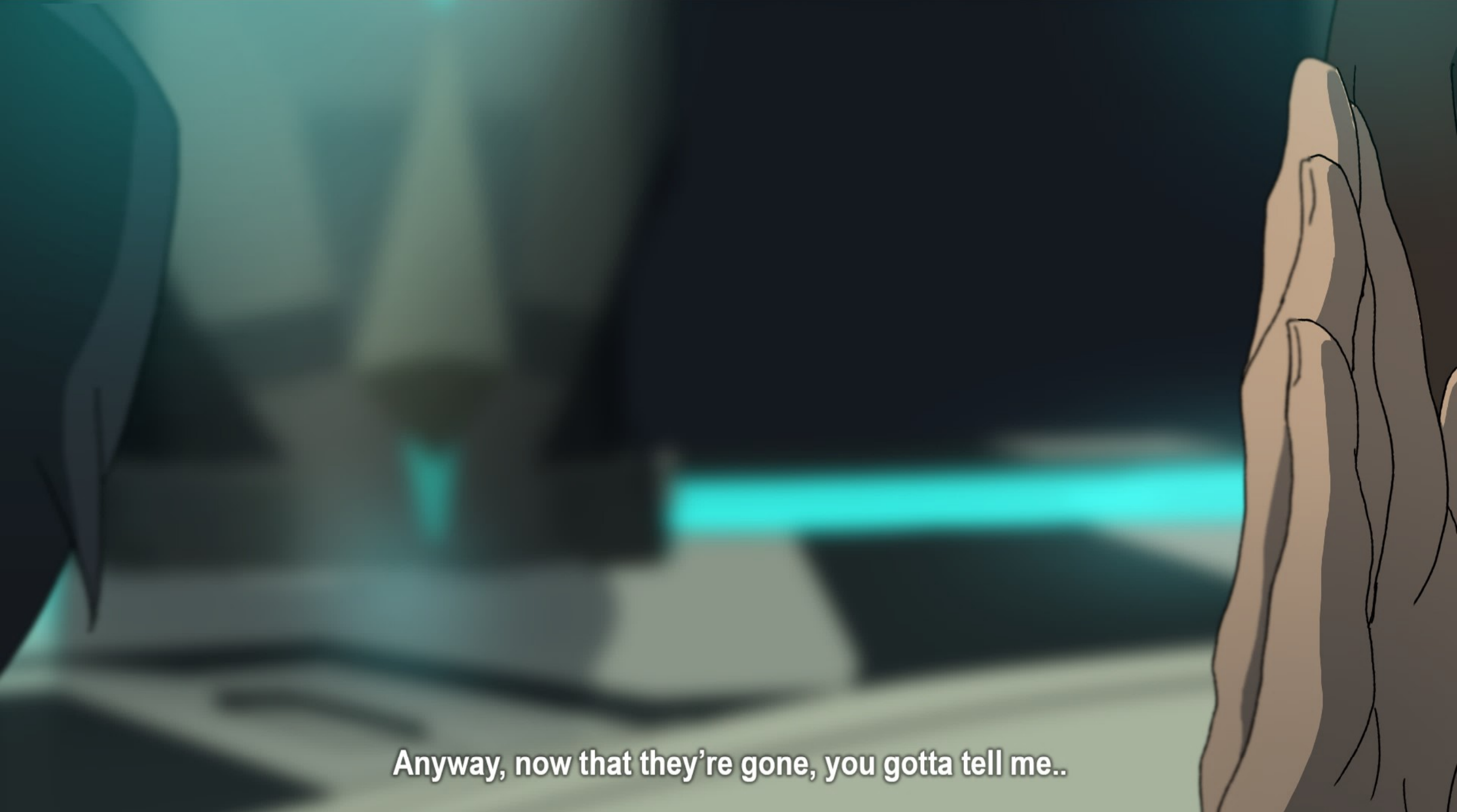
We're gonna look out for each other, and make it to the end of this war *together*. Okay?







..Okay.

The image shows a blurred background scene. A bright cyan beam of light is visible in the center, extending horizontally. On the right side, there is a hand with fingers slightly curled, appearing to be in the foreground. The overall color palette is dominated by dark blues and greys, with the cyan beam providing a strong contrast.

Anyway, now that they're gone, you gotta tell me..



Was that *seriously* not you back on the planet?



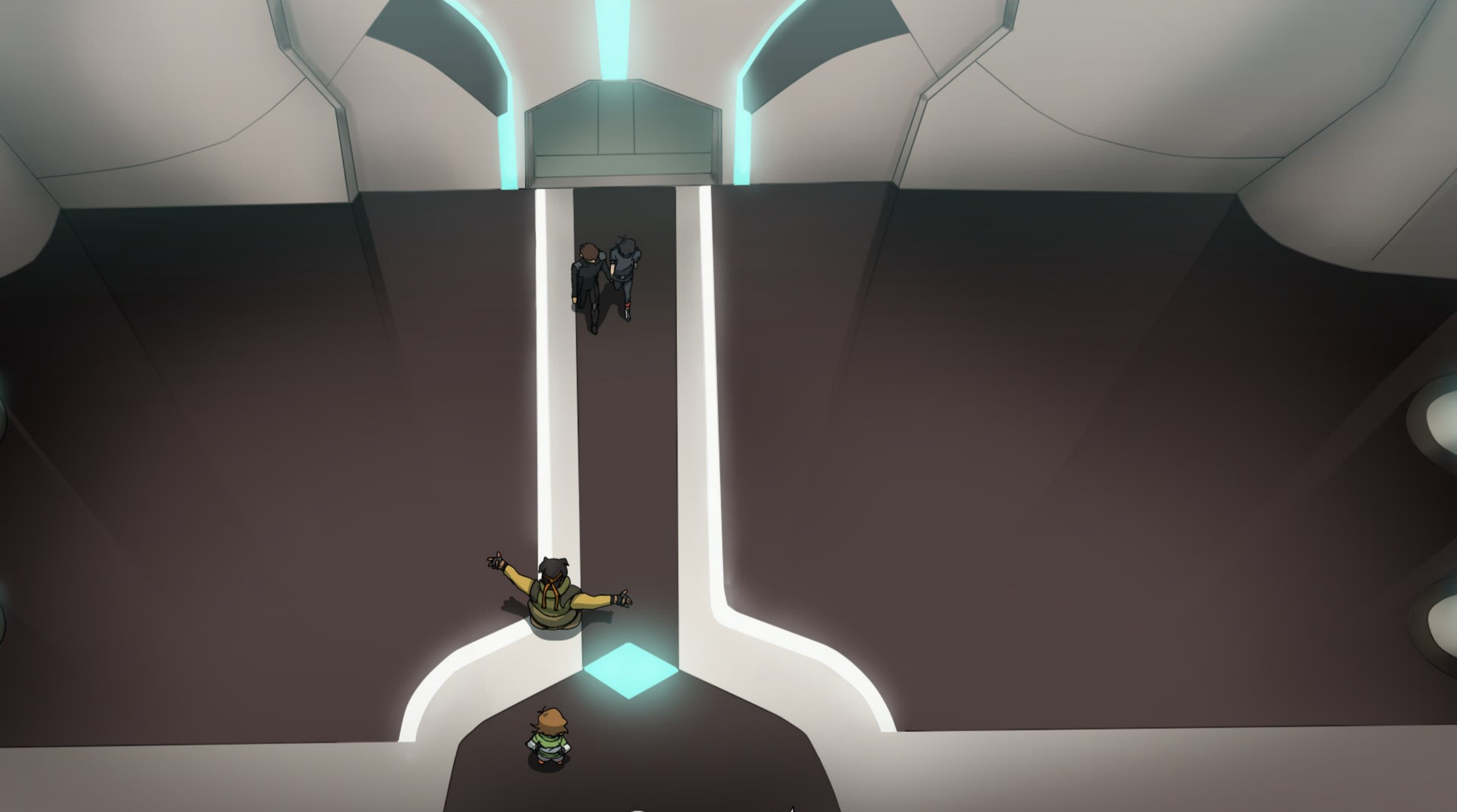
[Keith] No!!!



[Lance] Whoa-!!

Created by Bina

















Thank you for reading!