The Atlas crew is on a mission: to recruit people for the Intergalactic Coalition. That doesn't mean they can't have fun doing it.
For Shiro, today was yet another launch day. However, this time would be different. Rather than
going to fight a war, Shiro and his crew would be leaving Earth to explore the universe.

There were many planets the crew planned to visit for the purpose of establishing stronger alliances
for the Intergalactic Council. They also planned to gather data on regions lesser known to both
human and alien alike. For Shiro, this mission would be a fulfillment of his lifelong dream: to explore
outer space. He could barely wait for takeoff.

Yet, there was still so much to prepare. The final supplies of food would have to be loaded, one final
checkup of the ship’s emergency systems would have to be completed, and the crew would have to
load their things onto the ship. Shiro, personally, didn’t have much to bring. He had never been one
to have many belongings. But he brought an old photo of him with Adam, and a few new pairs of
socks. He was planning on filling his cabin with souvenirs of his travels. Shiro’s thoughts were
interrupted by a welcome voice.

“Shiro, how are you doing?” He looked around to see Curtis placing his hand on his shoulder. Shiro
relaxed.

“I’m fine Curtis, thank you. Why don’t we get something from the cafeteria? It would be a good dry
run for the chefs, and insure that all the food supplies and systems are ready.”

“Great idea! But after you check, just have some lunch, okay? Everyone else is off ship spending
time with their families, yet you’re still here worrying. If you can’t take a day off, you might as well
have five minutes of peace.”

“Curtis, we’ve been over this. I’m the captain of this ship and the leader of this mission. I can’t take a
break, not when there so much to do.”
“Shiro, you know I love you, but you can be so stupid sometimes! Honestly, you can’t even take one day off? I refuse to believe that” ‘Curtis, please try to understa-”

“No Shiro, I am tired of you giving up your pleasure for everyone else all the time! No, you’ve convinced me, you are taking the rest of the day off!”

With that, Curtis dragged Shiro by the arm and dragged him out of the ship and out to a hover bike docked nearby. “Now, would you like to drive this to town, or will I have to?” Sensing there was no escape, Shiro sighed and sat in the front seat while Curtis sat giddily behind him. With a great roar, Shiro and Curtis rode away.

Shiro had forgotten how amazing this felt. He hadn’t been on a hover bike in six years. The wind beneath his hair, the rapidly passing landscape, and the feeling of the open road. It was the most exhilarating thing in the world. As Shiro drove, he became a bit cocky, and started doing tricks to Curtis’ delight. After an hour of driving, they reached the town. Even though it had been badly battered in the Galra attack, the people had almost completely rebuilt at this point. It was once again a bustling city with all manners of delights. Shiro wondered where Curtis wanted to take him

This couldn’t be happening. As soon as they had parked, Curtis had dragged Shiro through a mall to here. The sign read “Exotic Human Spa” with little gold swirls accompanying the sign on each side.

“Curtis, there is no way I am going in there.”

The idea of spending a day cooped up in a steam room seemed unappealing compared to something more physical.

“I’m not the spa type”

Yet Curtis insisted as they walked in.

“This will be good for you, Shiro. You never take a break, even if you really need one. You’re going to be working 24/7 in space for years, so at least give it a chance”

“Alright, alright. I'll give it a try, okay? But know I’m only doing this to get you off my back!”
With that, Shiro gave Curtis a playful shove, one he returned as they walked up to the front desk.

“Hello, m’am, may we please buy two passes to the tubs and a couple’s massage? Thank you so much”

The lady at the desk smiled nicely and set everything up for them. Faster than Shiro could blink, he was given some bathing shorts and was whisked away to a changing room that looked surprisingly like the one at the Garrison gym. After changing, he and Curtis headed to the pools. Shiro was absolutely out of his comfort zone, but the situation was improved by the fact that he got to see Curtis shirtless. *Hot damn* Shiro thought as the two of them entered the tub.

As he sat down, Shiro automatically sat up straight, to which Curtis responded by pulling Shiro’s shoulders down to a more natural position. “Shiro, this won't work unless you try to relax. You've described how it felt to connect to Black, right? Well, then try to connect with yourself instead. Try to focus on nothing.” “Alright, thank you so much for the tip” He tried to focus, as Curtis had suggested. As his breaths began to even out, Shiro realized it had been so long since he had just relaxed. It was almost a forgotten skill at this point, so he challenged himself to master it once again. Soon, everything became warm, and Shiro drifted off.

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He was in Black again on Arus. It was a beautiful clear day, and he could almost feel palpable excitement from his lion as Shiro piloted her through the tunnels and cliffs, as if she was his old hoverbike. All of a sudden, a Galra cruiser appeared on the horizon. Shiro called to the other paladins, yet there was no answer. It seemed he was the only one. As he prepared to attack the ship, it suddenly activated its tractor beam, one which Shiro couldn't escape. He was dragged onto the cruiser, and brought there. It seemed they wanted his other arm as well. He struggled hard, but they got him down and strapped him to the bench. There were beady yellow eyes, and the inevitable whirring sound. No, no! Not this again! N-

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Shiro woke up with a gasp. Fear still filled his chest, and his heart was beating very fast. He immediately sat up and tried to get his bearings. He half expected to be in his old room in the Castle of Lions, or even the Atlas. What he was not expecting was to be in a spa of some sorts. He tried to remember why he was here, then looked over and saw Curtis next to him, as deeply asleep as Shiro had been only minutes before. Then it all came back. Curtis. He had spent the whole day trying to get Shiro to just rest for once, and Shiro, despite his resistance had been genuinely touched someone would care about him this much. For the first time in a very long time, Shiro felt safe, and most of all, loved. He realized, deep down, that no one would ever let him get hurt like he had been ever again. This thought soothed Shiro, and he looked over at Curtis once more. He looked so peaceful. Shiro propped his arm behind Curtis’ head, and lay back. He fell asleep almost instantly.

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“Shiro.. come on wake up!”
“Curtis… did I… fall asleep?”

“You did, finally, after who knows how long. How do you feel?”

“I feel… great!” He really did feel great. *I have so much energy! This is amazing!*

“Thank you so much for this Curtis. Sorry I was a bit hesitant at first.”

“That's alright, a lot of people are when they first go, it's natural! Wow, you look so much better!”

“Thanks, I feel so much better!”

Shiro and Curtis got changed, and left for the Garrison. Shiro felt bold, plus they had some extra time, so he brought Curtis to his old riding grounds, and a steep cliff he dubbed “The Leap of Faith”. As they hurtled down the cliff at breakneck speed, they both laughed heartily and enjoyed the desert sunset.

“Is everything ready for launch?”

“Yes sir!”

“Thank you Veronica.”

“No problem, Shiro. It was my pleasure to take over for you today. Oh, and by the way, you look great, sir!”

“Thanks!”

Shiro smiled as he took his place at the helm of the ship.
“Initiating countdown, sir!”
Wheres the Beef?

Chapter Summary

The Atlas is recruiting their first planet, so everything has to be perfect!

Chapter Notes

I was originally going to name this "The Emerald Planet". However, Cam begged me to name it "Wheres the Beef?" So here we are.

Today was a big day for the Atlas: they would be recruiting their first planet. The ship was a beehive of activity, with every single crew member rushing about, making preparations for landing the ship and hosting the recruitment meeting. The only time that the crew stopped was when Captain Shiro came over the ship’s intercom.

“Attention Atlas crew. We are entering Eleuthra’s orbit. You might want to look out the window, this is quite a view.”

Everyone lucky enough to see through a window stared in awe. They were approaching a beautiful planet with emerald green oceans and lushly forested continents. They would be landing at the capital city of Bosque, which had a large landing port for the ship to land on. However, it’s spaceport was a bit outdated, seeing as they hadn’t used it in many years since the Galra had fled their planet (thanks to Voltron). As such, the crew in charge of the landing of the ship had to account for any possible error and damage to the landing pad as they prepared to enter the planet’s atmosphere.

As they descended, the crew was able to see the city they were about to enter. Bosque was a bustling metropolis among the trees, the architecture very similar to the Altean style, with a woodsy twist. Hunk, in particular, was very excited for this mission. He enjoyed these diplomatic missions infinitely more than his missions as a paladin.

“I heard that the Eleuthrans are all vegetarian, which means that i finally get to use some of the plants from your garden!” Hunk shouted excitedly to Colleen.

Colleen was in charge of the garden on the ship, and was the source of Hunk’s supplies of fresh fruits and vegetables.
“Alright Hunk, what do you need?” Colleen asked Hunk, who was nearly shaking from anticipation.

“Well, I could use….”

He went on a nearly five minute tangent, and then as soon as Hunk was given all his ingredients from Colleen, he thanked her profusely. Then, he ran to the kitchen to prepare the meal for the incoming dignitaries, the tails of his signature headband flying behind him.

In the meanwhile, Shiro was busy landing the ship, with his crew frantically making last minute calculations as the ship began to descend into the city. It was apparent as soon as Bosque was in close up view that the city’s spaceport would not be able to adequately handle a ship the size of the Atlas.

“Captain Shiro, it seems that the spaceport is unequipped to be able to dock a ship of this size. What are your orders?” Veronica announced in a crisp military manner.

“Continue with landing procedure. We will deal with any unforeseen consequences when the ship is on the ground.”

“Yes sir.”

Everyone on the Atlas held their breath as the ship approached the spaceport, afraid that the landing might go very badly. However, the crew couldn’t stop their preparations, so they put their trust in Shiro’s capabilities and continued getting the ship ready for their Eleuthran guests. Everyone cheered when the ship hit solid ground. Thankfully, the pad had been been able to just barely hold the Atlas with no problems.

As Shiro left the cockpit to greet their guests, Curtis pulled him aside and dragged him to Shiro’s cabin.

“Curtis, what are you doing? We have to go and welcome the dignitaries!”

“Not in that, Shiro”
Shiro looked down. He was wearing his armor. Even though the war was over, he wore it out of habit, and in case of emergency. Just because the universe was at a shaky peace didn’t mean an attack wasn’t possible.

“Here, put this on.” Curtis said curtly as he brought something down from a hanger. It was Shiro’s Garrison outfit, one that had been made for him and his fellow paladins. It was white, with a black shoulder band.

“You shouldn’t wear armor. This is a diplomatic visit, not combat. We need to appear peaceful. This is a start.”

Shiro put it on. Even though it had been hastily made upon his initial arrival to Earth, it fit very well.

“Thank you, Curtis.”

“My pleasure. Now come on, this ship needs its Captain when they open the doors!”

Shiro and Curtis ran to the main area of the ship as the doors began to open.

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“Greetings, Eleuthrans. We are the dignitaries sent to recruit you for Intergalactic Coalition. I’m Shiro, captain of the Atlas, and this is my crew.”.

Shiro gestured to the crowd of people in uniform behind him, some smiling and waving, others standing at attention. The Eleuthrans seemed impressed at the size of the crew of the Atlas, and with the ship itself. Through the awed crowd, a few dignitaries in elegant traditional garb walked up to Shiro. The rest of the crew invited them in, and soon after, the doors were closed.

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There was a large ballroom in the Atlas that had been added after the war had ended. It had been constructed so the Atlas would have a place to host dignitaries so it could fulfill its mission with no problems venue wise. The crew members in charge of decorating had outdone themselves: large swaths of purple velvet fabric were draped along the wall, and the table had been set with crystal silverware and plates. It was quite a sight to see for the members of the Atlas, let alone the foreign dignitaries entering. As everyone sat down, Hunk came out with a wide variety of salad dishes. The guests gasped at the sheer quantity of food presented. It seemed everything was going to plan, as negotiations for the terms of entry into the Intergalactic Coalition were discussed.
However, in the middle of negotiations, one of the dignitaries spoke up a bit and said, "I know this is a bit off topic, and I hate to be rude, but is the main course coming out soon?" Shit. Apparently, one crew member had made a big mistake, since it seemed the Eleuthrans weren't vegetarians after all. "I'll send one of our crew members to see how it's coming!" Shiro said with as much confidence as he could muster. "No, we will send one of our own, sir, we need all the members here." replied one of the head dignitaries. He didn't trust these people, and was starting to wonder if they were trying to poison the food. Wanting to placate a potentially angry Eleuthran dignitary, Shiro allowed a meek Eleuthran secretary to go and see how Hunk was doing in the kitchen.

"Hello!"

The head of a small Eleuthran was poking through the door to the kitchen.

Hunk smiled at her and said, "Hello! How are you doing? Did everyone like the food I made?"

"Well, we were all wondering when the main course was coming out?"

"Wait what"

"Yeah…"

*oh SHIT.* Hunk wanted to panic, but he knew he just didn't have time.

"So, what is your name?"

"My name is Menax, but my nickname is Nax."

"Well, Nax, how well can you cook?"

"Pretty well, actually. I make dinner for my family all the time!"
Hunk sighed with relief. “Great. Can you help me make an awesome main course? Unfortunately, it seems that we didn’t get accurate info about your traditional food. We were told you were vegetarians, which is obviously false!”

Nax began to laugh heartily, and said, “Oh my! That is quite a falsehood! We are all strictly carnivores, but we ate the salads to respect Earth customs. The best thing you could make is a savory meat dish. Even though we are surrounded by forest, us Eleuthrans would rather eat the creatures who live there than plants.”

Nax then began to give Hunk the directions to a popular Eleuthran recipe, while Hunk cooked furiously as soon as she gave the next step. In no time, Hunk had platters of the meat dish prepared, with Nax helping cook more batches after she gave Hunk the directions.

“Nax, you're amazing!” Hunk exclaimed.

“Thank you, but I'm just a humble secretary.” Nax mumbled.

“But you can be so much more” Hunk replied with a smile. “What?” Nax gasped.

“Join me! I'm recruiting people to help me out here! You can travel all over the universe, cooking amazing food for people!”

“Really!?”

“Yes!”

“Okay, I'd love to join you!”

Things were starting to get a bit awkward. The negotiations were just about over, and Shiro knew that questions about the supposed main course would soon be spreading like wildfire.

*Come on Hunk, please come through for me.* Shiro thought as negotiations finished up. Just in the nick of time, Hunk came striding into the dining room with a decadent meat dish, along with the Eleuthran secretary, now clothed in Atlas cooking crew garb. The dignitaries awed at the mountains
of meat, along with the Atlas crew. Hunk had truly outdone himself.

As everyone started to eat, Hunk requested everyone's attention for a moment.

“I just want all of you to know that I didn't do this all alone. The only reason this dish even exists is because of Nax here.”

Hunk gestured to a small Eleuthran smiling and blushing at the compliment.

“It just goes to show how far you can get when you work together! If two people can make a gigantic dinner, imagine what all of you can do for the Intergalactic Coalition!”

Hunk's speech ended with raucous applause from both the delegates and the Atlas crew.

“Oh, and one more thing! Please welcome Nax as the newest member of my cooking crew, and the Atlas!!!”

At this announcement, the entire crew began to cheer, and Nax ran over to be with her new crewmates.

As the dignitaries left, Nax said her goodbyes and got her things onto the ship.

“Hunk, how did you do that?” Shiro asked in amazement.

“Just did.” Hunk replied confidently.

“Hunk, where should I go?” Nax asked meekly.

“I got this.” Shiro to Hunk with a smile, and introduced himself to Nax and led her to her room.

New crew members and new alliances had been secured that night, and the future of the Atlas looked bright as Shiro piloted the ship away from the emerald planet and back into the embrace of the stars.
Chapter Summary

The MFEs try to pull off the biggest prank in Atlas history, but they need help.

It may be said that the MFE’s were some of the most accomplished and professional cadets to ever grace the halls of the Garrison. However, they were still cadets.

Being on the Atlas was usually exciting, but could be a bit boring sometimes, especially when it came to the downtime between visits to planets. Everyone on board the Atlas usually had a hobby to keep them occupied during the long distances. Yet, it seemed the MFEs didn't have any hobbies besides causing trouble.

“I'm SO bored” Rizavi moaned as she flopped upside down on her bunk. “There is nothing interesting to do on this ship!”

“That's not true” Kinkade retorted, as he polished his camera. “You could go to the gym, or go help Shiro and the crew out in the cockpit. You could also go to the cafeteria, or the garden. There's plenty to do. Hunk could always use more help in the kitchen.” “Okay, but there's nothing FUN, nothing exciting anyway.”

“Well” James piped up, “We could always, you know, spice things up a little bit” Rizavi looked confusedly at James, and then his intent hit her. “oh, Oh! Oh yeah! Let's do it!”

“Who else is in?” James remarked at a neutral looking Liefsdottir and a bemused Kinkade.

“I'll help you with your prank.” Liefsdottir declared.

Kinkade sighed before saying, “Alright, if everyone is in on this, I might as well come for the ride.”

The kids figured out their plan, and most importantly, their victim.

“We have everything figured out, except for how we’re gonna do this!” Rizavi moaned.
“Good point, Rizavi.”, Kinkade replied. “We need help. No matter how much we can do on our own, it’s not enough to pull this off. Who do we ask for help?”

“I think I have an idea”

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The MFE’s knew that the best place to find co conspirators was the busiest place on the ship: the gym. Even though they were on the a diplomatic mission, the crew couldn’t deny their military roots, and most of them still kept themselves in tip top shape. It was where the MFE's knew they would find their first fellow prankster.

“Veronica, come on! You gotta help us!” Rizavi pleaded.

“Nope, no way. I have beef against Iverson, that's true. But…” Veronica stood in silence. Besides not working out, she could see no problem with a prank against Iverson. Besides, the cadets were staring at her with literal puppy dog eyes. There was no way she would be able to say no without an incredibly guilty conscience. “Alright fine I'm in”

“YESSSSS”

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“Come on, guys, you know better than this.”

It was bad enough Shiro had refused to help them, but he also went on to lecture the MFE's about being ‘mature’.

“Come on, Shiro!!!” Rizavi whined. “You gotta have some beef against Iverson!!!”

“I don't have beef with Iverson. We've been colleagues longer than he's been my teacher.”

“So”, James said curtly, “this is what has become of the legendary prankster Takashi Shirogane. I used to hear stories about some of your greatest pranks. Putting decaf coffee in the teacher’s lounge, stealing the hoverbike to take kids out on rides in the middle of the night right below the Garrison’s noses, and, most amazingly, hacking the flight simulators. Yet, it seems you’ve become too much of a goody two shoes over the years. My mistake to think the great Captain Shiro would want to join us measly cadets”. 
When James finished, he looked up to see a mischievous and slightly malicious glint burning fiercely in Shiro’s eyes, one that all the cadets knew to be very, very afraid of.

“Oh, you are going to regret saying that, cadet. I'm in”

The cadets gave each other shaky looks of victory as Shiro walked along behind them to go get Curtis.

Even though a team consisting of Veronica and Shiro alone was mighty enough to prank anyone, Shiro had insisted that Curtis had to come along.

“There is no way I'm doing this without Curtis. He is quite the prankster himself, and I know he’ll really enjoy this.”

When they entered Curtis’ cabin, he was on his bed, drawing a sketch of a planet they had just visited. It was a well known fact on the ship that Curtis was an avid sketch artist, as he often sat with Shiro in the cafeteria, drawing the people that were enjoying the space along with the couple. Curtis looked up in surprise when Shiro entered with the cadets.

“Shiro, there you are. I was thinking we could go to the bridg- wait why are the cadets here?”

Shiro explained the prank to Curtis and asked if he wanted in.

“Yes, YES I'M IN. Shiro, I have heard legends about your pranks back at the Garrison. I absolutely want to see this. That's not saying I wasn’t a prankster in my day.” A look of realization swept across Shiro’s face.

“Wait, no way, were you-” “Yup, I was the mysterious person who put dish soap on the floors of the main halls every Sunday.”

“Wow Curtis!” Shiro and Curtis proceeded to laugh and high five.
“Wow….” Rizavi looked like she had met a god.

“Now, let's do this!” James cried as he and Shiro led everyone out of Curtis's cabin.

“Attention everyone!” Shiro shouted from the top of a table in the cafeteria. “We are about to pull off the most epic prank on Iverson that the Garrison or Atlas has ever seen. But we need your help. We need all of you to blare the Avengers Theme whenever you see Iverson for the rest of the week. Okay?”

Everyone started laughing hysterically, which Shiro took as a resounding ‘yes’.

“Alright guys, let's get to the showers.”

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Shiro being the captain gained the group certain advantages, such as unlimited clearance and a very extensive knowledge of the least used pathways. It was quite a sight to see. Esteemed war veterans Captain Shiro, Lieutenants McClain, and Curtis Williams, and a bunch of cadets that pilot the MFE’s, all sneaking around to go prank a high ranking officer. When they reached the vent above the showers, all they had to do was wait for Iverson to arrive.

Iverson always used the same shower at the same time: 17:00, the third shower on the right. As Iverson turned on the water, he felt something cold and sticky drip on him along with the hot water. Dismissing it as the hot water going off for a second, he finished washing off, put his uniform back on, and headed to the cafeteria.

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Iverson was greeted with raucous laughter, the Avengers theme, and a few shouts of “Hey, Thanos!”. He looked at his skin and was horrified to find it was a deep purple, not unlike the shade of purple associated with the legendary Avengers villain.

Shiro and the rest of the pranksters ran to the cafeteria fast enough to witness the fallout, and they all almost died laughing at Iverson's shocked face. Things had most definitely been spiced up.
The Gift

Chapter Summary

Everyone gets a night off at the space mall. However, Shiro gives everyone a challenge no one can escape, not even the inimitable captain himself!

Chapter Notes

Another fanfic by yours truly god I love these idiots!

WE'RE GOING TO THE MALL!!!!!

“Ok everyone”

The crew of the Atlas was gathered in the cafeteria. They were about to land at yet another planet, but this time was different: this stop was purely for pleasure. The place they were stopping was a giant space mall, and most of the crew had aspirations of finding the nearest bar and drinking the night away. Yet, it seemed Shiro was about to prevent that dream from becoming a reality.

“I know tonight is your night off, but I have one simple request from all of you. All I ask is that you bring back one souvenir. But, it has to actually be interesting. If you come back with either no souvenir or one that is clearly from the Space Dollartree, I won’t let you come back on the ship until you find something that fits the requirement.”

Everyone looked at each other with excitement, and a bit of fear. Although a night of drinking was now off the table, no one on the Atlas could resist a challenge, no less one from the inimitable Captain Shiro. As soon as the ship docked and the doors opened, everyone was off to the races. The crew broke up into their friend groups and flooded out to the space mall beyond.

As soon as the rest of the crew was gone, Shiro started walking back towards his cabin. He had no interest in going to the space mall, and figured that he would spend the night catching up on some missed sleep or watching the stars from the bridge. Until Curtis came running out of nowhere, pulling a large shopping bag through the air behind him.

“Shiro, come on! We’re losing time to find what you coined an ‘interesting’ souvenir by standing here on the ship!”
As Curtis looked at Shiro, he gave a small gasp. “You weren’t planning on going, were you, Shiro?”

Shiro tried to not look guilty, but he had the worst poker face in the universe when it came to Curtis. It seemed that Shiro could stand his ground against mighty dictators, but would utterly crumble in front of the might of Curtis.

“Shiro, come on! You, who’s always telling people to go on adventures, to walk the less traveled path, you were planning on going to bed?” Curtis remarked with a slice of a smile and a cocked brow. His face shifted to one of a marked determination. “There is no way I’m going to let you stay on the ship all night, come on Shiro, let’s go!”

Before Shiro had a chance to protest, Curtis had grabbed his hand and whisked him away, out the doors into the gigantic space mall beyond.

“How are we going to find an interesting souvenir?” Rizavi whined as the MFE’s wandered the mall.

The task of finding a souvenir that would impress Shiro weighed on all of them heavily.

“How do you show something interesting to the man who’s seen everything?” Kinkade moaned.

“I don't know, but I don't want this stupid challenge to ruin our one night out. Come on, let's go have some fun!” James ordered as he led the group through the mall.

“That is quite the statement, James, but what are we going to do that is fun?” Leifsdottir replied. At that moment, the MFE’s spotted a carnival nearby.

“So, Shiro, if you were going to get anything you wanted, what would it be?”

Shiro and Curtis were walking through the mall, enjoying the atmosphere. Yet, the former had yet to get a souvenir for himself, and Curtis was trying to help.
Shiro replied, “I don’t know.. plain white socks? You can never fail with a pair of plain white socks.”

Curtis facepalmed and shakily said to his incredibly dumb boyfriend, “Shiro, that does not count. Really, if you could get anything, anything in the world, what would it be?”

Shiro was about to answer with the ‘plain white socks’ nonsense again when Curtis added, a tad bit threateningly, “Please be honest, lying will not help you”.

Shiro sighed and said, “You’ll laugh”.

“I promise I won’t, I really want to know.” Curtis said sweetly as he gripped Shiro’s hand.

“Alright, fine, I’ll tell you. When I was a little kid, I loved model kits of spaceships. I made them all the time, even on occasion at the Garrison. I haven’t told many people, though, so no one alive knows except you.”

Curtis smiled gratefully and said, “Thanks for telling me your secret. Now, let’s go get a model kit somewhere.”

“Wait, what?! Oh god no, Curtis, really, I couldn-”

“Shiro, please listen to me. We are getting you a kit, whether I have to force into your hands or not. Now, what kind of space kits did you like as a kid?”

With a sigh of contented defeat, Shiro recounted old stories of his childhood space shuttle kits as he and Curtis headed out to find a toy store.

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“Okay, so what do you guys want to do first?”

The MFE’s had all bought wristbands for unlimited rides. There weren’t many options for young pilots looking to have a bit of fun. Most of the rides were pretty tame, meant only for the very small. However, one thing caught Rizavi’s eye. At the very edge of the carnival, behind a small swing ride, there was an inflatable obstacle course. Now that would do nicely.
“Anyone want to race me?” Rizavi exclaimed as she led her fellow pilots towards the miracle bouncy house.

“Oh please, I could beat you in my sleep” James retorted.

“Really? Well, I hope you can put your money where your mouth is, James”

“Is that a challenge?”

“Yeah. Do you accept?”

“Bring it”

As Rizavi and James got fired up, Kinkade and Leifsdottir exchanged bets and laughs. The two challengers lined up at their respective starting lines as Leifsdottir and Kinkade lined up at the side to cheer for their respective contestant.

“Sir, could you start us off?” James asked the ride operator.

“Sure! It'll be the most exciting thing I've done all day.”

Kinkade and Leifsdottir waited with bated breath as Rizavi and James lined up at their starting places.

“Alright, ready, set, GO!”

Rizavi and James rushed off as soon as the operator gave the start, to Leifsdottir and Kinkade’s delight. The competitors both put up a mighty fight. At first Rizavi had the lead, using her natural dexterity to get through the tunnel a smidge faster than James. But James caught up on the rock wall, where Rizavi wasn’t as comfortable. In the end, Rizavi won by jumping from the top of the slide to the very bottom, while James took the traditional and slower way by sliding down.
When James got to the end, he shouted, “Come on! We gotta have a rematch!” Luckily for him, rematches from all of his teammates lasted well into the night.

The toy store that Curtis had dragged Shiro to looked like something out of his childhood dreams. It was clearly Terran (as aliens liked to call things of Earth origin), as there was a giraffe animatronic greeting you at the door.

Inside, the whole store looked like a fairytale. There was a mural of a castle on the walls, with spiral turrets and colorful flags. On the shelves there were a variety of toys, from stuffed animals to giant action figures. Of course, half the store was dedicated to toys about Voltron.

Looking around, hoping beyond hope that no one would recognize him, something caught Shiro’s eye. It was a kit for building the Voltron Lions and the mighty robot itself. It seemed complicated enough that Shiro would enjoy building it, but not so big that it wouldn’t fit in his room.

“Shiro, have you found something?”

“Yeah, Curtis, I think I actually have”.

“Oh crow! We forgot to get a souvenir!” Rizavi exclaimed.

The MFE’s were heading back to the Atlas after spending a wonderful night nearly killing themselves on the inflatable obstacle course.

“Well, we did get something ” Kinkade replied, gesturing to the wristbands everyone had on their wrists.

“Okay, that’s true. But I still feel guilty not getting a real souvenir.” Rizavi babbled.

“Well, maybe we can get Shiro a gift. I heard he was staying back at the ship to do work tonight, he would probably appreciate a souvenir.” James suggested (with an embarrassed pink tinge on his cheeks).

“That's the first time you've ever had a good idea!” Rizavi said cheekily. “But what do we get him?”
“I got it!” James exclaimed in a rare fit of enthusiasm. “Follow me!”

“Socks?”

James had led the rest of the MFE’s to a novelty clothing store, and then had promptly ran to the sock section.

“Yup! I remember I overheard a commanding officer mention that Shiro loved socks!” James declared.

“When did you hear that?” Leifsdottir asked.

“Back at the Garrison, when I was in my first year.” James replied. “I remember that the officer in question was trying to get Shiro something for his birthday. Now come on, everyone choose a pair you think Shiro would like and bring it to the checkout stand.”

“What souvenir did you get?” Shiro asked with a fake sense of skepticism.

He was standing at the doors of the ship, inspecting the souvenirs everyone had brought back for him to see.

“Well, we all got wristbands and a few rubber burns”, Rizavi exclaimed, gesturing back to her fellow MFE pilots. They all looked as if they had had the time of their lives.

“May ask how you earned those burns?” Shiro asked bemusedly.

“Well, we found a carnival here at the mall, and naturally spent the entire night racing each other in the inflatable obstacle course!”

“Sounds great, you guys can come on in!”
The MFE’s went in laughing, but Leifsdottir stopped by him and handed him a small shopping bag.

“Even though this was James’ idea, he was too embarrassed to tell give these to you himself. He really admires you, so he got you a gift to show his appreciation.” She held out the bag, and Shiro gingerly took it from her hands. Inside were 4 pairs of wildly patterned socks, presumably one from each pilot.

“Tell James and everyone else that I really appreciate this. Thank you all so much”

The rest of the crew filtered in little by little. Some groups came laughing wildly with silly souvenirs and entertaining stories to tell. Other couples came with a bouquet of flowers or a box of chocolates, holding hands while giggling and blushing. Some crew members were able to get in their raucous night of drinking after all, as commemorative shot glasses from every last bar in the mall were brought before Shiro’s judging eyes. It seemed every last member from the crew had a story to tell for their souvenir, which was what Shiro had intended for his challenge to produce.

“Sir, what did you get?

Shiro was asked this question as he walked in with the last crew member. Soon, he was greeted with many iterations of the question while he walked into the cafeteria. In order to put the matter to rest, Shiro reluctantly resumed his place atop a cafeteria table and said,

“Alright, alright, listen up. It seems everyone is very curious about my souvenir, so I’ll only tell you all once. When I was younger, I used to be an avid collector and builder of model spaceships. So Curtis insisted I get one as a special treat, so I got a buildable Voltron.”

The crew had mixed reactions. Some chuckled at the thought of the mighty Shiro building a Voltron figure, while others longed to ask if they could help him build it. All of them marveled at Shiro’s honesty, since most them admitted to themselves that they didn't have the strength to be that honest. After Shiro’s short speech, the cafeteria quickly emptied, with all the crew going back to their respective cabins to get some rest after their wild night.

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Shiro and Curtis headed back to the former’s cabin to build the figure together. The set included each lion and the famous robot itself. It also included all six paladins. They accounted for the lion switch by making the heads removable, and giving keith a blade of marmora outfit. It was surprisingly accurate. It was especially nice to build the Black Lion, with her majestic wings. After the set was built, Curtis left for his cabin. As Shiro fell asleep that night, he stared at the figures that now held a pride of place on his shelf.
The Disappearing Room

Chapter Summary

The Atlas plays matchmaker, and Shiro becomes less lonely.

Chapter Notes

I wrote this while crying and eating caramel chocolate. My half asleep brain desired fluff, so here is this thing that is too cute to be legal

In which Shiro remembers that that Atlas is a magic ship, and the Atlas plays matchmaker

I made this while crying and eating chocolate. I need fluff

The only thing Shiro detested about being the captain of the Atlas was that he got his own room. Most people would consider that a bonus of the job, but Shiro detested it. He loved the camaraderie of sharing a bunk with someone else. He hated having to mentally gear himself up for sleep every night on his own. It would be much easier to face the prospect of another battle with his brain every night if Shiro knew he wouldn't be alone in the room.

The best he could do for now to keep his nightmares at bay was to work hard all day so that he would too tired to think at the end of the day. One night, though, he had enough.

----------------------------------------------------------------

It had been after a particularly bad nightmare. Shiro was shaking, and knew that he needed to just see another human so that he could be able to sleep again. It was hard to explain, but after a nightmare, it always made Shiro feel better to see people safe and sound, to know that it had just been a dream, as silly as it sounded. So Shiro decided right then and there that he was going to see Curtis.

Shiro opened the door of his room and crept through the Atlas as quietly as possible, so he wouldn't wake anyone else up. Soon enough, Shiro reached the door that led into Curtis's room. Whenever Shiro came here, he had a mental battle about going in. He didn't want to disturb Curtis, but Shiro knew that he was more than happy to help. On the other hand, Shiro sometimes thought about moving into Curtis's room for good. For some reason, Curtis's room never came with a bunk, so he slept alone like Shiro. He would probably appreciate having a bunk mate as well. With that thought, Shiro walked slowly into Curtis’s room.
Curtis woke up to Shiro sitting on the floor next to his bed in his signature criss crossed position, looking a bit embarrassed. Curtis was relieved to see him, though. Personally, he felt honored that Shiro trusted him enough to come to him when he needed help, rather than bottling up his emotions to try and keep his ‘unfettered leader’ persona intact.

Curtis smiled sleepily, and said with a bit of mirth in his voice, though not lacking compassion, "Hey Shiro, nice to see you here."

“Hey Curtis…” Shiro said while blushing a bit. He was always a bit embarrassed when he came in here. Shiro generally treated his feelings the way a middle school boy deals with crushes: utter rejection, denial, and repression. However, he tried to be open with Curtis.

“Want to come up here with me?”

“Sure”. Shiro and Curtis usually weren't big on physical affection. But on nights like these, they both lay in Curtis's bed and just talked until one of them (usually Shiro) fell asleep.

As soon as Shiro laid down, he asked Curtis the question that had been ping ponging in his head since he had entered the room.

“Curtis, I was wondering, is there any way that I could move in here with you? I spend most of my nights in here anyways, and I hate that I have to be in that big fancy room, which I really don't need.”

“I would in a moment, Takashi, but there's no way that could be possible. There's more than enough room, but there isn't a bunk bed.”

Shiro sighed in defeat. “I get it. Sorry to bother you”

“It's not a bother at all. I just wish that there was some way to bring a bunk in here.”

As soon as Curtis said that, all of a sudden a top bunk mysteriously appeared with a loud “thunk” right above where Shiro and Curtis lay. Along with the bed, strangely, came all of Shiro's belongings.
“What just happened?” Shiro said, shocked.

“I don’t know, but I guess you can be my bunkmate now!” Curtis said cheerfully with a small laugh.

As soon as Shiro realized he'd be here instead of the big captain's cabin, he nearly died of excitement. To make sure that everything was gone from his old room, Shiro told Curtis he'd be right back, and set out to find the captain’s cabin.

No matter how much Shiro looked, his old room was just gone. Shiro felt very confused, then connected the dots and realized that the bunk mysteriously appearing had been the Atlas's doing. The ship and him were connected after all, and maybe it sensed his wishes and tried to help him. The grateful captain thanked the ship profusely under his breath as he walked back to what was now his cabin, that he got to share with not only another person, but a very special person.

When Shiro got back to his cabin (his cabin!!!) he got settled. He put his figures and a few photos on the room's shelf, and then went into his own bed, despite Curtis insisting that Shiro could stay in his bed.

“Really, Takashi, it's no problem.”

“I know, but I've bothered you enough tonight. Really, just get some sleep. I'll be fine.”

“Alright, if you insist.”

Shiro turned the light out, and climbed into the top bunk.

“Goodnight, Takashi”

“Night, Curtis”

“I love you”
“I love you too”

The next day, when Shiro walked onto the bridge, he had a new spring in his step. Many of the crew members took notice.

“Shiro, good morning!”

“Morning, Veronica” Shiro said with a wide smile.

“May I say that you look, so, happy today! Not that you’re not happy normally, but you just look so, so, radiant! You’re practically glowing! Did something happen?” Veronica stammered.

“Yes, for some reason, my cabin disappeared, and a new bunk plus all of my stuff ended up in Curtis's room. So I'm sleeping there now.” Shiro said, relief and happiness twinkling brightly in his eyes.

“Ah”, Veronica said with a knowing grin. From then on, she would have to remind people that Shiro was bunking with someone due to a “ship malfunction”. Good for him, Veronica thought as everyone settled in for another day's work.

This would be Shiro's first night sharing a cabin with Curtis. Instead of heading to his lonely cabin near the bridge, Shiro gleefully headed towards the quarters near the cafeteria after completing all of his duties that day. Curtis walked with him, both of them holding hands and telling jokes and stories on the way to their cabin. Curtis was just as thrilled to have Shiro in his cabin as Shiro was to be there. He wouldn't have to be alone as well, plus he no longer had to wait for Shiro to come every night. Now, Curtis could just ask Shiro to come down and cuddle, a thought that exhilarated him.

They spent the afternoon hanging out, and then spent their time after dinner watching a romcoms on Curtis's phone in their cabin. They fell asleep together while watching. It was the first time Shiro didn’t have nightmares in long, long time.
The Gala

Chapter Summary

The Atlas is hosting a gala for the Intergalactic Coalition. Shiro finally gains a fashion sense, and Team Punk is back together and in action.

Chapter Notes

I wrote this to just have an excuse to write a ballroom scene with Shiro and Curtis. You can call me trash if you want, but god this piece of trash is enjoying herself.

“How does this look?”

In the small bag of clothes Shiro had taken, a small white suit had been the only superfluous thing included. The only thing besides the suit were quite a few work uniforms and a plain pair of pajamas. The suit was currently being tried on by a hesitant captain. For Shiro, he wasn't big on suits. But tonight wearing his best was required. The Atlas was hosting a huge celebration in honor of the 100th planet joining the coalition, a huge accomplishment. Everyone from the Atlas crew and the Intergalactic Coalition was attending, and as Captain of the Atlas and the unofficial leader of recruitment department, Shiro needed to look his absolute best.

“I think it looks nice, Shiro.”

“Thanks, Curtis, but it still feels like something is missing.” Shiro furrowed his brow in thought, then minute later, it looked as if a light bulb had gone off above his head. “Curtis, I'll be right back! I've got it!”

“Alright, Shiro, don't take too long!” Curtis yelled as Shiro raced out the door. He knew exactly what to do: he needed to go to the garden.

Shiro wanted to surprise Curtis with matching roses to wear, but in order for that to happen, he needed to get permission from Colleen.

“Colleen, are you in here?” Shiro asked tentatively as he walked into the garden.
The room responded with silence, sans the misters making soft sounds moisturizing the plants. Shiro was about to leave and go find Colleen somewhere else when he heard a soft “I'm here!” coming from a flower bush nearby. Shiro walked toward it, and found Colleen in her gardening overalls, picking some beautiful yellow daisies.

“Hello, Colleen, how are you?”

“I'm fine, Shiro! I'm so excited to see Katie again, I'm picking her some flowers to go with the dress she showed me over the holophone!”

*That's right*, thought Shiro. Katie, or Pidge as she liked to be called when she was a paladin, was going to be at the Gala tonight. Colleen was going to leave with her family tonight to go back to Earth. Hunk would be in charge of the garden after she was gone.

“We'll miss you around here, Colleen.”

“I know, but I know you didn’t just come to say goodbye. I have a feeling you want to ask me something.” Having the instincts of a mother, she could see through just about anyone, especially someone about Matt's age.

“Alright Colleen, you got me. I really need a favor.” Shiro started blushing a bit and continued, “I want to surprise Curtis and get us both matching roses for our suits, but I needed your permission to pick them, and your advice about which ones I should choose.”

“Say no more, Shiro, come over here.” Colleen led Shiro through rows of flowers and led him to a bush full of deep red roses. “These should be perfect”

“Thank you so much Colleen, I owe you a big one.”

“Then do this for me: make Curtis the happiest man in the world tonight, you hear?”

“Yes ma'am”
Shiro ran back to the room as soon as possible. Thankfully, Curtis was sitting there, ready to go, but he hadn’t left without Shiro. Shiro’s heart melted at the sight of Curtis in a tie.

“Shiro, come on, we gotta go.” Curtis said with a smirk.

“I know, but I have surprise for you. Close your eyes.” Shiro said tenderly.

“Alright, alright.”

Curtis sat on his bed with his eyes closed as Shiro started to fasten one of the deep red roses.

“Can I open my eyes yet?” Curtis asked cheekily

“Not yet, be patient.” Shiro replied with a similar amount of sass. “Okay, I’m done. You can open your eyes”

Curtis opened his eyes and looked down. On the lapel of his suit, Shiro had fastened a beautiful deep red rose. Shiro was wearing an identical one on his lapel as well.

“Shiro, it’s wonderful!”

“Thanks! I really wanted to do something special for you tonight.”

“Don’t worry about making tonight ‘special’, Shiro. It’s already special just being with you”

The two held hands and walked out of their cabin to meet the others before entering the gala.

As the pod approached the Atlas, Pidge could be found with her face smushed against the window, her eyes alight with excitement. She would be seeing her mother after many months apart, and, even
better, see Hunk again. She hadn’t seen him in nearly a year, thanks to his job on the Atlas and her work with the Garrison. However, Pidge knew that the former yellow paladin would be incredibly happy to see her despite their lapse of communication. True to form, Hunk was waiting for her in the Atlas’s hangar when the pod arrived and docked. Pidge had barely walked out of the pod when the former green paladin was scooped up into a huge hug by Hunk.

“Ow, Hunk, come on! I’m getting squished!” Pidge said with a laugh.

“I know, but it’s just so good to see you!” Hunk replied merrily. Thankfully, Hunk set Pidge down safely before any of her bones broke from the sheer force of the hug. “Wait, you look way different now that I see you”.

“Yeah, I know, you’ve never seen me in a dress, now that I think about it”

“Yeah, it’s kinda weird.”

“It felt weird at first. I haven’t worn a dress in a long time. It feels kinda nice, though” Pidge was wearing a short white dress with green trim. It had a tomboyish feel to it, which made it a perfect fit for her. A moment later, Colleen entered the hangar. She gasped when she saw Pidge.

“I can’t believe you actually put your dress on!” Colleen said with her signature cheek and a hint of genuine disbelief.

“Well, I know you really wanted me too, and since I figured you’d really appreciate seeing me in a dress, I broke my no dress rule this once!” Pidge said with a laugh as she and her mother had their own hug.

“Here, I got you a flower to go with your dress.” Colleen placed a vibrant yellow daisy into Pidge’s outstretched hand.

“Thanks…” Pidge said with a slight deadness, placing it behind her ear. Normally, she would’ve fought back (hard), but she knew her mom would quickly shut down any sort of rebellion on a special night like this. Yet, out all of all the hurdles Pidge had experienced, a flower was the least of her worries.

Colleen looked over at Pidge and said, “Now Katie, I know you haven’t seen Hunk in a while, so
“Thanks Mom!” Pidge cried as she and Hunk ran off to do who knows what.

“So, how are things going on the Atlas?”

Pidge and Hunk were wandering aimlessly around the ship, waiting for the dance to start, just chatting.

“They’re going pretty well! The recruitment meetings are definitely easier to manage than gigantic Galran warships!” Hunk replied with a laugh.

“Alright, Hunk, drop the formalities. You’re just prattling about the ship, not the crew. Come on, give me the dirt.” Pidge said with a smirk.

“Okay, okay. What kind of dirt do you need?” Hunk said with the air of an exotic salesman introducing his wares.

“Well… are there any new couples on the ship?”

“There are actually!”

“Ooo, who?” Pidge asked, with her beady eyes staring intensely into Hunk’s as she waited for an answer.

“So, do you remember that guy Curtis from the bridge of the Atlas?” Hunk asked.

“Vaguely. Why do you mention him?”

“Well, he and Shiro started dating!”
“Really? That's great!” Pidge said excitedly.

“I know, right! They're gonna be at the dance tonight as a couple!”

“That’s amazing! We gotta do something for them!”

“But what?” Hunk asked.

A glint entered Pidge's eyes as she said, “I got just the thing.”

------------------------------------------------------------------------

Usually, for an event of this size, the hall would have been decked out in the most resplendent decorations that the crew had to offer. However, the Galactic Coalition had insisted that the gala should be a celebration of Earth culture, since the event would be hosted on a ship of Terran origin. At the insistence of everyone on the crew, the theme was 1980’s. Even though nearly one hundred years had passed since then, celebrating the 1980’s was still a huge part of human culture, even if most of the fads from the era were very outdated.

To fit the theme, the ballroom ceiling had lots of paper streamers draped on it, and the Atlas crew had (somehow) procured a gigantic, genuine Terran disco ball. They also had Hunk teach Kinkade how to use old discs speakers so he could DJ. Surprisingly, Kinkade picked it up quickly, and was proficient enough to be able to do some pretty good mixes by the time Hunk had taught him all he needed to know.

When all the dignitaries saw the ballroom, they were as amused by the decor as impressed. One dignitary went to compliment the Captain on his choice of theme.

“Ah, Captain Shiro!”

“Nice to see you here, Minister Xelgar. How are you enjoying the dance?” Shiro replied

“It’s lovely! I was wondering how you chose the theme?” The minister asked
“Well, the crew and I chose a couple of themes and then voted on the one we would use.”

“Really, you put it to a vote?”

“Well, it would be quite hypocritical if one of the people championing for peace and democracy didn't let their own crew have a say in matters of the ship.”

“Yes, of course!”

With that, the minister left to make some more small talk, and Shiro sighed in relief. Even though being captain of the Atlas was wonderful, talking to foreign diplomats was not one of his strong suits.

Thankfully, Curtis walked over to where Shiro stiffly stood.

“Hey Curtis, are you having a good time?” Shiro asked, hoping that at least Curtis was enjoying himself tonight.

“Yeah! Veronica and I were just over at the punchbowl to watch a chugging competition between Rizavi and James. I was half tempted to stop them, but then I watched and was shocked just how much punch those teens can fit down their throats!” Curtis rambled, laughing when he got to the chugging competition.

Shiro laughed, and the two held hands and looked out onto the dance, just enjoying their time together. Little did they know that hijinks were happening right below their noses.

------------------------------------------------------------------------

Hunk and Pidge were both determined to hook Shiro up with a slow dance. They knew that there weren't many moments where Shiro had time to enjoy himself, especially at events that involved the Intergalactic Coalition. So they knew Shiro would appreciate their gesture.

Kinkade was taking a short break and letting the song autoplay when Pidge and Hunk crept up to the DJ booth. Kinkade was mildly surprised to see Hunk and Pidge on the ground doing an army crawl,
but composed himself and asked, “Why are you guys on the floor?”

Pidge answered, “Because we didn't want to be seen.”

“Why don’t you want to be seen?”

“Because, I want to ask for a slow dance, but I always get pretty embarrassed when I try to do something romantic for someone”, Pidge said with a blush.

“Oh? Who is it for?” Kinkade said bemusedly, looking over at Hunk.

Pidge got the message quickly, and said embarrassedly, “No, not for Hunk! I want to do it for Shiro!”

This really caught Kinkade's attention. “Shiro?”

“Yes, I want a slow dance to be played so he can have a moment with Curtis, okay? Could you do that?”

Kinkade looked at Pidge with a smile. He had never been aware that they had been close, but he could understand why she wanted to do something for him. Shiro was one of those people that was always there for everyone but himself, and the idea of someone doing something for him genuinely touched Kinkade. “Alright, I'm on it.”

“Don't tell a soul, okay? I want this to be a surprise.”

“Got it.” Kinkade said with a nod.

With that, Pidge and Hunk crawled away, and Kinkade got to work getting everything ready for the slow dance.

Shiro was making small talk with yet another dignitary when all of a sudden, the bright lights of the hall dimmed to a soft purple. A slow song came on, and Shiro waded through the crowd of people to
find Curtis. Luckily, everyone coupled up fast enough that Curtis was easily visible in a matter of seconds. He was scanning the crowd, not knowing that Shiro had already found him.

When Shiro walked up to Curtis, he took his hand and said, “May I have this dance?” with as much suave as he could muster.

“Of course, I would be honored.” Curtis said with a huge smile and a blush on his face.

They both walked together onto the dance floor where the other happy couples had gone. Shiro wasn’t usually a very good dancer, but as with all things, he could be spectacular if he had enough adrenaline rushing through him. Curtis wasn’t bad at dancing either. They were by no means the best dancers on the floor, but together it looked as if they were gliding effortlessly next to some of the more hapless couples.

Shiro could hardly believe this wasn’t some beautiful dream. He felt as if he and Curtis were the only two people in the universe as they held each other, swaying slowly to the romantic 80’s music playing. Shiro looked tenderly into Curtis’s eyes and asked softly,”May I kiss you?”

“Yes”.

With that, they shared a tender kiss, the couple’s first. Not many people noticed, but the few that did were ecstatic. Pidge smiled with satisfaction, and Hunk looked ready to burst into tears.

“I know it sounds cheesy, but I’m just so happy for him. He, he just looks so happy” Hunk said as he nearly crushed Pidge in a huge hug.

“I know, right? He’s done so much for us, for me. He helped bring my family back together. Tonight, I wanted to do something for him.”

When the all the dignitaries had left, the second half of the dance began. This was when the crew would be able to have a bit of fun. Everyone went back to their rooms to change into their tackiest 80’s clothes they had, and then headed back to the hall to have a laugh. Alcohol was hauled out of the deepest recesses of the food supply, along with the leftovers of the extravagant desserts served at the party.
The crew laughed at all the people who had gone all out in 80’s wear, but the highlight was when Shiro arrived in a bright pink feather boa. It seemed even Shiro's professionalism had been chucked out the window. Soon, fast paced 80’s dance music started blaring out of the speakers, and the crew danced like the next day didn’t exist.

The MFE’s dabbed like it was still 2015, Veronica taught Acxa how to do the moonwalk, and Shiro could be spotted laughing with Curtis, while they tried and failed miserably to do the Hustle. The dancing lasted long into the night. The next morning, every adult on the ship had a well deserved hangover.
We Need to Talk

Chapter Summary

Shiro and Curtis fight, constellations are named, and Allura is honored.

Chapter Notes

So... I'm posting this because I posted the last chapter a bit late! I wasn't sure whether to post this as a one shot or a chapter, so I'm doing both! This is a bit different in tone than all the other chapters, but I'm really proud of it! Also, thank you to all of the lovely people who have been leaving kudos, nice comments, or even reading this humble little fic! 230 hits is MINDBLOWING, thank you all so much!!! Hope you guys enjoy this!!!!

When Shiro woke up today, he felt as if he had swallowed lead. He knew down to his bones what today was: the anniversary of her death. Even though he felt like staying in bed all day, Shiro knew he had to be there for the crew. They were on their way to Atlea, and would be at the planet by the end of the day so that the crew could pay their respects to Allura’s monument at the capital.

Shiro got up, and as he clambered down the ladder from his bunk, he noticed Curtis was still asleep. What time is it? Shiro looked at his holophone and saw that he had woken up at 4:30, very early even for someone who was known for getting up early. Maybe I should go back to sleep. Yet, Shiro made the decision to go to the bridge and make sure that the Atlas hadn’t strayed off course in the middle of the night. He also went to see the stars. Maybe being closer to Allura’s creation would make Shiro feel closer to her.

As Shiro turned to leave the room after getting dressed, he heard a stir.

“Shiro? Where are you going?” Curtis whispered, his voice still touched by sleep.

“I’m just leaving for the bridge a bit early today. I want to make sure that the ship is still on course. Go back to sleep.” Shiro replied tenderly.

“Alright, I’ll see you for breakfast at the cafeteria?”
“Of course. See you soon, Curtis.”

With that, Shiro quietly left the room, and Curtis fell into an uneasy sleep.

----------------------------------------------------------------

Shiro crept through the Atlas and made it to the bridge. The stars were burning brighter than usual. It seemed Allura, in whatever form she was in, was once again trying to brighten up the lives of the people she loved. Shiro felt it appropriate at that moment to say something, anything at all, maybe to Allura, or maybe just to the gently pulsing stars right outside the window. But he couldn't think of anything to say except, “Thank you”. He decided to show his appreciation by standing right by the window, watching galaxies float lazily by.

It felt like Shiro had stood in front of the window for hours, just staring at the stars, thinking about Allura. Then, an alarm on his holophone buzzed and pulled Shiro out of his thoughts. ‘Breakfast’ it announced in big bold letters. Shit. Apparently Shiro really had spent hours on the bridge. Shiro scrambled out of the door, trying to look composed as he dashed to the cafeteria.

----------------------------------------------------------------

Curtis sat alone, looking incredibly uncomfortable. He shifted on the bench, occasionally checking the time on his holophone. It was very strange for Shiro to be late in general, let alone late for the one guaranteed moment they had together each day.

He and Shiro had a ritual, a promise, that no matter how insane a day was going to be, that they would have breakfast together. It seemed that Shiro would be on track to miss it for the very first time, when the man in question ran into the cafeteria and nearly slid onto the bench where Curtis sat.

“Hey Shiro, happy to see you decided to slide in!” Curtis said with a laugh.

“Hey Curtis.” Shiro said quickly, as he was still catching his breath.

Curtis could tell something was up with Shiro just from looking at him for a moment. The light seemed to have gone out of his eyes, and he seemed deflated. Alarm bells were screaming in Curtis’s head.
“Hey Shiro, is something up?” Curtis asked

“No, Curtis, I’m fine.”

He was still worried, but Curtis sighed and said, “Okay, but if something is going on, know you can talk to me.”

“I know, thanks.”

Curtis and Shiro then sat together and ate breakfast in silence. It was strange, as Shiro usually caught Curtis up on the plans for the day, or Curtis would tell a very bad joke. Yet, it seemed as if Shiro refused to talk today. All attempts to spark a conversation were met with short, one word answers. Curtis desperately wanted to figure out what was up with Shiro, but didn’t feel it was his place to pry.

On the other hand, Shiro felt incredibly guilty for not opening up. He knew that Curtis would be happy to listen, but Shiro didn’t want to make today any harder for Curtis or anyone else than it needed to be. Shiro knew that today he needed to keep his ‘leader face’ on, and hopefully talk to Curtis another, more opportune time.

As soon as the cafeteria started to empty out, Shiro gave Curtis a terse goodbye and briskly made his way to the bridge. Shiro was almost there when he felt a familiar hand land on his shoulder.

“Hey, can we talk?” Curtis whispered.

Shiro swung around to see Curtis, who looked deeply concerned.

“Curtis, I can’t right now, I have to go-”

“Shiro, you can take a minute so we can talk.”

I know what day it is. Everyone on this ship knows.”
“I am aware of that, Curtis”

“Well then, can we talk about about it? I’m here for you, you know that.”

“I know that, Curtis.”

Shiro tried to walk alone to the bridge, but Curtis wouldn’t let that happen. He kept up best he could as Shiro strode towards the entrance to the bridge.

“You can’t run away from me, Shiro.”

Shiro just kept on walking. Curtis sighed. Shiro was shutting him out, which frustrated him immensely. Shiro could hide his true feelings from the crew, but he should’ve known keeping them from Curtis was futile. Shiro should’ve known that Curtis could read him like a book.

Curtis’s voice suddenly became intense.

“Shiro, I need you to talk to me. You’ve been acting really off today. If something is wrong, please tell me. I care about you, and I want to be able to help you.”

Curtis was met with silence from Shiro, who looked as if he was made of hard ice. Any other time, Curtis would’ve stopped, would've tried to thaw Shiro out. But right now, he was seeing red towards Shiro for the first time. Curtis exploded.

“Shiro, I am so fed up with you trying to shove your shit down! I don’t know if you are trying to ‘burden’ me less or whatever, but all you’re doing is keeping me from helping you! You don’t have to do it alone all the time, Shiro, I can do it with you! We can do it together!”

Shiro was still frozen. Curtis went in for where it hurt.

“Why won’t you acknowledge I’m in it with you, Shiro? Huh? Are you scared? Scared that you can’t always be the hero? Scared that maybe, somehow, you are still human? That you’re less than
Of course, Curtis hadn't noticed that he and Shiro had entered the bridge. He had been too busy trying desperately trying to get anything from Shiro. But everyone else had very much noticed the two of them enter. Veronica's jaw had nearly hit the floor, and Iverson was too shocked to bark his usual ‘Watch the insubordination!’.

Curtis was mortified. He looked over at Shiro, who was somehow more frozen than before. Curtis wondered how Shiro was going to respond to this. Shiro responded by asking Veronica for the latest updates on the status of the ship. Shiro responded by getting everything back to a shaky peace. Shiro responded by denying Curtis had said anything at all, or that he even existed.

*Denial, huh. So that's it. Just denial, goddammit!* Curtis was somehow even more livid than before, his blood feeling as if it was boiling. He realized that he needed to leave before he said something he really couldn't take back, as if he hadn't already. Curtis stormed out of the room, the sliding door slamming behind him. He had a feeling the Atlas had made the door close a bit faster for both his sanity and for the dramatic effect.

----------------------------------------------------------------

*As if today could get shittier*, Shiro thought morosely. Usually he enjoyed piloting the Atlas manually. It felt like piloting Black, in a way. He wasn’t connected to the Atlas in the same way he had been connected to his lion, but there was the familiarity of the controls, and a small connection to the ship through the crystal in his arm. However, all Shiro could think about was Curtis. He had looked so hurt, which concerned Shiro deeply. He just wished that Curtis had understood that he didn’t have the luxury of having time to sort out his feelings. He needed to take care of everyone else before he took care of himself. If Curtis is so concerned about me, then why couldn’t he have realized that I just wanted to be alone? Shiro thought bitterly. Before Shiro could entertain any more of his messy thoughts concerning Curtis, the ship’s system notified the crew that they were an hour away from Altea. The ship began to buzz with activity as all the crew members got ready to leave the ship. Shiro remembered that the other paladins would be at the memorial tonight for their annual meetup. *I wonder how they’re doing right now*, Shiro thought as he piloted the Atlas through the Altean atmosphere to the magnificent capital that lay below.

----------------------------------------------------------------

Lance had made the trip from Earth all the way to Altea so he could be here tonight. The familiar Altean constellations Allura had loved so much lit up the skies. Lance sighed and gazed up at her monument.

At the moment, he was waiting for all the other paladins to arrive. The paladins had a tradition that no matter where they were, they would drop everything to be here on the anniversary of Allura’s death. It had been two years now, and even though Allura’s loss was still hard for Lance, he was
beginning to feel a bit like his old self again. Shiro had helped him out by getting Keith to offer Lance a job with the Blades. Helping people, piloting ships, and spending time with Keith had really helped. Lance was healing, slowly but surely.

As if his thoughts had called out to the man himself, Shiro seemed to appear out of thin air. It was strange for Shiro, because even if he didn’t like fanfare, it inevitably followed him wherever he went.

“Hey Lance.” Shiro said warmly

“Hey Shiro, how are you doing?” Lance replied.

“I’m doing well. How about you?”

“I’m doing great, actually. I still help out on the farm, but I’m teaching more classes here on Altea, and I’m starting to help ol’ mullet with more of his Blade of Marmora missions.” Lance said excitedly.

“Really? That’s great!”

“Thanks. I’m getting better.”

“That’s great, Lance.”

Lance then blushed a bit and stammered, “Oh god I’m just rambling about myself. How are things going on the Atlas?”

“Things are going well. We’ve recruited over a hundred planets already.”

“Really, that’s great! Also, I heard that you have a boyfriend now?”

“Lance, come on.” Shiro said in his ‘tired dad’ voice.
“Don’t get mad at me for wanting to know who swept the Black Paladin off his feet.” Lance said cheekily, his puppy dog eyes just begging for details.

Of course, Shiro relented, and “Okay, I’ll tell you his name. It’s Curtis-”

“You guys talking about Curtis?”

Hunk’s voice had appeared out of nowhere. The Yellow Paladin stood there, watching Lance and Shiro stare awkwardly at each other.

“Nice to see ya Hunk!” Lance replied. He went over and gave Hunk a high five and a hug, then resumed his conversation with Shiro.

“So, you said his name is Curtis. What’s he like?” Lance said inquisitively. Shiro had no idea how to respond until Hunk decided to speak for him.

‘Oh, you want to know about Curtis? Why didn’t you just ask me? Shiro here isn’t the only one on the Atlas.” Hunk replied, with a little sass.

Before Hunk could say something Shiro would regret hearing, he spoke up and said, “Fine, I’ll tell you about Curtis myself, calm down.”

Shiro then went on to tell Lance a bit about Curtis, with Lance eating up every last detail. Shiro was even going to tell Lance about their date at the space mall when Lance asked, “Why isn’t Curtis here with you? Coran said we were allowed to bring dates.”

Shiro sighed and was about to answer with a blatant lie when Hunk spoke up and said, “Because he went and pulled a Shiro again.”


Shiro grumbled a bit. “Pulling a Shiro”, as it was affectionately called, was when someone was trying to put on a brave face. The Paladins had come up with the term when Shiro had died, and then brought the term back into regular usage after Allura’s death. He usually laughed when it was used,
but the term was a bit too on the nose to be humorous today. The three paladins made some more small talk while waiting for the rest of the group to get there. As soon as Pidge, Coran, and Keith arrived, they all headed over to where they would be spending the night together.

Everyone was laughing and telling stories as they walked over, but Lance looked at Shiro for a second and said, “Hey Shiro? Can we talk later?”

“Sure Lance, no problem.”

-----------------------------------------------

The night had been wonderful. This year, everyone had decided to have a picnic under the stars on the hill near Allura’s statue. Of course, Coran had gone above and beyond setting up. He had (somehow) procured one of the largest picnic blankets anyone had ever see, plus a telescope for stargazing. Coran spent the night telling Pidge and Shiro the names and stories of the constellations, while Lance, Keith, and Hunk told stories and played truth or dare.

Shiro didn’t forget his promise to Lance, and when everyone started to get ready to say goodbye, Shiro pulled Lance aside so they could go talk. Of course, they ended up walking to Allura’s statue.

“Shiro, I don’t know how to feel about Allura anymore.” Lance whispered while staring at Allura’s statue.

“I know, Lance. It’s been the hardest for you and Coran by far. She meant so much to you, and you meant so much to her.”

“I know. But I’m starting to realize I’m not the only one who was affected by her loss.”

“What do you mean, Lance?”

“She was family to all of us, not just me. I’m starting to realize that all of the other paladins probably hurt as much as me when she died. Including you, Shiro”

Shiro sighed. He had come with Lance with the intention of comforting him. However, like every
other thing that had happened that day, this talk was going to go the opposite direction that Shiro wanted it to.

“Shiro, I always knew how hard today must be for you. But I never realized just how much Allura’s death hurt you.”

“What do you mean, Lance?”

“As soon as Hunk said you ‘pulled a Shiro’, I realized the reason Curtis isn’t here.”

“He’s not here because I wanted to just spend the night with you guys. I’m fine Lance, really.”

“You and I both know that’s a lie, and I’m sure that Curtis could see straight through that bullshit too.”

Shiro and Lance stood in silence for a moment, then Lance continued.

“Besides me and Coran, Allura was closest to you. Before we started dating, you were probably the paladin Allura was closest to. I understand if it’s hard to talk about her. Trust me, I get that more than anyone else Shiro. But, you can’t just hold it in. It’s not healthy, and it’s not fair to the people who love you and want to be there for you. I don’t know what exactly happened between you and Curtis, but he probably got angry because he just wants to be there for you, and you won’t let him.”

Lance sighed before continuing.

“Look, talk to Curtis, Shiro. The thing you don’t seem to understand is that maybe, just maybe, he’ll get it.”

Shiro listened to Lance intently the entire time, and then wearily chuckled and said, “Since when did Loverboy Lance give really good relationship advice?”

“I learned from the best, Shiro.”
Shiro realized that Lance was right. He had been pushing people away yet again. This time was going to be different, though: this time, Shiro was going to fix this before Curtis walked away.

“Lance, thank you.”

“You're welcome Shiro.”

Lance looked at Shiro intensely and uttered, “You know, me and Allura weren’t the perfect couple. We had our issues, and we never really had the time to work them out. Now, I’m never going to get that chance. But, you still have one, so don’t mess it up.”

“I know what you mean Lance. I promise I won’t mess this up.”

As soon as Lance left to go say goodbye, Shiro took out his holophone and texted Curtis.

*Meet me at the memorial. Let’s talk*

Shiro watched the stars while waiting for Curtis, reciting their newly learned names over and over in his head. Curtis walked up quietly next to Shiro, and just stood and watched the stars with him.

“Beautiful night, huh?” Curtis said.

“Hey Curtis.” Shiro murmured.

They both stood in silence for a while longer, until Shiro took a deep breath and said, “Curtis, I'm so sorry I didn't talk to you. I didn't want to make your day harder. And… and it's also really hard to talk about this stuff. My gut reaction is to just keep my leader face on, to make sure everyone else is okay before dealing with myself. But that's not fair to you. In the future, I'll try to be more open.”

“I understand. I just want to be able to be there for you, Shiro. And I'm sorry for blowing up like that.”
“I totally understand why you did”

“Doesn’t make it right.”

Shiro smiled and said, “Why don’t we play some truth or dare?”

Curtis smiled. They had played truth or dare on their first date, and since then the game had become a private joke between the two of them. “Okay. Do you want to go first?” Curtis replied.

“No, you should go first.”

“Okay, truth or dare?”

“Truth.”

“How close were you and Allura?”

“We were very close… but we drifted as everything got crazier. We drifted when I was gone, but in the beginning, when it was just five paladins, a crazy altean uncle, and her, well, I was probably the closest person to her besides Coran. We… we led together, and we were in it together. We took care of each other, she took care of me.”

Curtis sighed and said, “Okay, now ask me.”

“Truth or dare?”

“Truth”

“How close were you to Allura?”

“Shiro, that’s an easy question. I didn't know her well, but I thought she was a fantastic leader.”
Curtis sighed and said, “Okay, my turn. Truth or dare?”

“Truth”

“You were there when Allura died. This question, you don't have to answer. I'll understand if you don’t, but. What happened? Why did she give herself up? Was there another way?

“There was no other choice, we thought of everything possible. I would have been fine staying in the plane of existence for the rest of time. At least, that time, I wouldn't be alone. However, she… she didn't want that for us. It was never our choice, it was always here. Allura…. Allura decided that everyone but her was going to get a happy ending.”

Shiro sighed and looked up at Allura's statue. *She looks peaceful… I hope she felt that same peace at the end…*

Curtis put his hand on Shiro's shoulder and looked up at the statue.

“Curtis, truth or dare?”

“We're still doing this?”

“It's your turn”

Shiro laughed a bit, and Curtis gave a tiny smile.

“Okay then, truth or dare?”

“Truth”

“Do you think I'm doing Allura's legacy justice?”
“What do you mean, Shiro?”

“She worked so hard to bring down the Galra Empire so that the universe could live in stability. I go around trying to spread her message, recruiting planets, trying to convince these politicians that peace is real and attainable. I… just wonder if I’m doing it right.”

As Shiro spoke, he seemed to stare right into Allura’s eyes.

Curtis thought about how he could reply. A moment later, he spoke, “Shiro, of course you’re doing it right. The fact that you are questioning proves it. All good leaders never think they are good leaders, they just want to do the right thing. And Shiro, you are doing it right.”

Curtis offered Shiro a smile, and Shiro returned one of his own. They held hands, and looked above Allura’s statue to the stars beyond.
Sick Day

Chapter Summary

Shiro takes a sick day, Acxa drops her gun, and Curtis takes charge

Chapter Notes

sorry for posting this a few days late!!! school has been very busy these last few weeks. i really enjoyed writing this chapter, since it was a gift for two friends of mine who help me out with this story who both got sick at the same time! hope all of you enjoy this!!!

It was a normal day. The Atlas was preparing for their next recruitment mission, and the crew ran around the ship making sure everything was ready as Shiro piloted the Atlas towards it's next destination. However, Shiro didn’t look well, despite his attempts to hide it. He had a bit of a cough, and looked as if he obviously hadn’t slept well the night before. Yet, Shiro seemed to be keeping the cold under wraps, as no one had asked him any questions (yet).

Things were going as planned as the crew prepared to enter Naxela. The former bomb planet had become a bustling metropolis. The gigantic beams that had been part of the bomb system had been converted into sprawling skyscrapers, and people from all over the universe were settling there for the night life and economic opportunity.

The Atlas was running early, so the crew had a few extra hours to prepare when they reached Naxela. It also gave Curtis a bit of time to talk to Shiro.

“Shiro, are you okay?” Curtis asked concernedly.

“Yeah, I’m fine, just a head cold.” Shiro replied.

“Are you sure?”

“Curtis, if I can survive being stabbed by Haggar more than once, dying, being brought back from the void, and literally crashing into Earth on a giant Galra ship while fighting a purple alien, I think I can take a head cold.”
“Okay then, I’ll see you after the mee-”

Curtis was cut short by Shiro bursting into one of the worst coughing fits he had ever seen in his life. After coughing, Shiro stood up and started to walk away as if nothing had happened.

*Yeah there’s no way in hell I’m letting him back onto the bridge.*

“Shiro?”

“Yeah?”

“There’s no way you should head a meeting like this.”

“I can, though. I’ll be fine.”

“There’s no way I’ll let you.”

“Wait what?”

Curtis sighed. He knew Shiro wouldn’t listen unless he gave him a logical reason to not work while sick. All of a sudden, he had an idea, and said, “I understand that you need to be there for the negotiations today, but it won’t make the coalition look very good if our leader is sick. It’ll make it look like our members are spread thin. I won’t let you head the meeting both for the good of the Intergalactic Coalition and for because you shouldn’t be out of bed if you are this sick”

“I’m not that sick, Curtis, relax.”

“Everyone has noticed, Shiro. I haven’t seen anyone this sick in a long time.”

As if reading Shiro’s thoughts, Curtis said gently, “You know, it isn’t a crime to take a day off if you aren’t feeling well. This mission is important, but it isn’t life or death. It’s not like our mission with
Voltron. You can write Veronica a note telling her she’s in charge as her duty as second in command while you are sick, and everything will be fine. Besides, if anyone else was as sick as you are right now, you’d tell them to take a sick day.”

Shiro sighed and said, “You’re right. I’ll take a day off.” He laughed a bit and added, “You’re right that if you were as sick as I am right now, I wouldn’t just ask you to take a sick day, I’d probably march you to our room myself and take care of you all day.”

Curtis and Shiro both laughed, which resulted another bout of coughing from Shiro.

“Alright, I better write that letter.”

Looking at her letter, Veronica was so, so screwed. As Shiro’s second in command, she had been placed in charge of the crew while Shiro was gone. Hopefully, Shiro would only be gone for the day. You can handle one day, Veronica, you got this! , Veronica thought to herself while preparing to give orders.

“Alright everyone, let’s continue preparations for our meeting today! Iverson, could you give me our ETA?”

Veronica managed to get everyone on the bridge back to work, which of course meant that the crew in the rest of the ship could get back to work as well. Veronica was very pleased as she let everyone carry out their orders. This job was turning out to be much easier than she anticipated. She was even able to talk to Curtis about Shiro for a minute.

“Curtis, can you do me a huge favor?”

“What do you need, Veronica?”

“We need Shiro back on the bridge as soon as possible, but that won’t happen unless he actually gets some rest. Is there any way you can make sure he doesn’t try to get work done today?”
“Don’t worry Veronica, I was planning on taking care of him today, order or not. I’ll make sure that our captain is back as soon as possible.”

“Good. I swear to Allura, he really needs to take an actual sick day for once.”

Curtis was sitting with Shiro, trying desperately to get him to at least lie down. Yet Shiro resisted, and said with as much conviction a sick person could muster, “Curtis, I appreciate all this, but I have to get back onto the bridge. The crew needs me, we have a recruitment meeting today.”

“Shiro, the Atlas will be fine without you for one day. You know how capable Veronica is, everything will be okay. The more you rest today, the sooner you’ll be on deck again.”

Shiro sighed, which prompted a coughing fit, and then relented. “Fine. But you should at least be out there to help. I don’t need to be taken care of, that’s not your job.”

“But it is.”

“What do you mean?”

“Veronica is in command today, which means she gets to give orders. She predicted you’d say this, and ordered me to spend the day taking care of you”

Of course one of the only people in the universe who can outsmart me isn’t on my side today.

“Shiro, take this, I got it from the med bay, it should help out with the cough.”

It was a tiny cup of cough syrup. Shiro downed it without a second thought, and immediately regretted it. The stuff somehow made his head hurt more.
“What is this stuff, Curtis?”

“Once again, should help you with the cough”

Curtis looked at the labels and gave a small ‘oh’

“What’s the matter Curtis?

“The stuff that helps with the cough also has the side effect of drowsiness. Well, Shiro, you really can’t go out on the bridge now.”

Curtis hadn’t meant to get a cough medicine that had a drowsiness side effect, but Allura what bonus . It meant that Shiro couldn’t get out of actually being sick for the day.

“Shiro, you really need to lie down.”

Shiro knew that at this point, there was no point in resisting. He was sick, and he wouldn’t be able to pilot the Atlas even if he wanted to (thanks to that cough medication). So, Shiro decided that maybe lying down wouldn’t be so bad. There were worse things to happen to a person than spending a day in bed. Shiro climbed into his bed with the full intention of just lying down for a second. Yet as soon as his head hit the pillow, he was out like a light.

Curtis sighed. He saw a sight almost no one in the universe had the privilege of seeing: Shiro, tangled up in his covers, snoring. Allura he looks cute like that, Curtis thought to himself happily.

Curtis had no idea when Shiro would wake up, so he decided he could go ask Hunk if he could bring some soup for Shiro, and go check out what was happening on the bridge.

Having Veronica in charge was bound to be interesting at the very least, and Curtis was not going to miss what could be one of the greatest stories of the Atlas. As Curtis left the room, he took one last look at Shiro to make sure he was still asleep, and closed the door as gently as possible so Shiro wouldn’t wake up.
“Veronica, who is going to be the head of negotiations today? Usually Shiro has it covered, but as we all know, he isn’t here today. We need to choose someone to be head of negotiations.” Iverson asked.

Veronica tried to hide her look of terror. Oh crow, who are we going choose? I don’t know many of the dignitaries on ship, what do I do, what do I do. As Veronica was about to try and give some sort of suggestion for who should lead negotiations, an unexpected call icon showed up on the Atlas bridge holoscreen.

Keith rarely called the Atlas. He didn’t have a lot of time, as being the leader of the Blade of Marmora was as intense as one would think. But today, he had a bit of free time, and decided to call the Atlas to see what Shiro and the others were up to at the moment. When the call went through, he was greeted by a scene of utter confusion. Things seemed normal enough, except Veronica was at the helm of the Atlas.

“Veronica? Where’s Shiro?” Keith asked (very) concernedly.

“He’s fine, at least not in mortal danger.” Veronica replied (with a bit of her signature snark).

“Then what’s going on? Why are you piloting?”

“Shiro just got sick, no biggie.”

“That’s weird. He never gets sick.”

“Well, I guess there’s a first time for everything.”

Their conversation was interrupted by an alert on the side of the screen announcing that they were due at the Naxelan capitol building in an hour.

Crow that’s right. Maybe Keith can help .
“Hey Keith?”

“Yeah Veronica?”

“Who would you suggest lead the negotiations? Shiro is usually head, and we’re running out of time.” Veronica said with a slight hint of desperation in her voice.

Keith answered coolly, “I think Acxa would be a good choice. She understands the culture on Naxela better than anyone on this ship, since it’s much closer to Galran culture rather than Earth's culture.”

“Thank you Keith.”

“No problem. I’ll call back soon. Tell Shiro I said hi.”

With that, Keith’s face disappeared and the call ended with a ‘click’.

Well, I better go find Acxa.

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Of course, Veronica found Acxa at the shooting range. Acxa was deeply focused on trying to hit a bullseye on one of the targets. She took a steady breath and was about to shoot when a small “Hey Acxa!” made her nearly drop her gun.

“Veronica, what are you doing here? You’re supposed to be on duty right now.” Acxa said, trying to keep her voice from betraying her surprise.

“I am on duty, and I need to talk to you.” Veronica commanded.

“Why? Is there an emergency?”
“Yes and no. Shiro is out sick today”

“Shiro is out sick?”

“Yes. I guess even invincible people get sick.” Veronica responded with exasperation. She was already getting tired of that question.

“Anyways, we need someone to head negotiations, and Keith happened to call and said you would be the best choice. Will you head negotiations today?”

“Of course.”

“Thank you Acxa.”

“You’re welcome. However there is something important you should know.”

“What?”

“I’ve only ever been a part of Lotor’s war meetings, so I’m not sure how your negotiation meetings work, unless they too involve holding knives to people’s throats. I’m finding your human customs to be a lot less violent”

Veronica’s blood turned to ice at that instant. Of course she hasn’t been a part of any peace treaties, she’s only ever worked with Lotor before. Veronica took a deep breath, and decided that she’d just have to teach Acxa whatever she could. When life gives you lemons, you make lemonade!

Veronica grabbed Acxa by the arm and dragged her away from the shooting range to a conference room. While speed walking through the halls, she bumped into Curtis.

“Hey Curtis, I know I ordered you to take the day off, but I really need you help.” Veronica (nearly) begged.

“With what?” Curtis asked warily.
“With giving Acxa some pointers for the conference today. Keith called and said she would be a good head of the negotiations, and since I don’t have any better ideas, we gotta make the best out of this situation.”

“Oh for Allura’s sake, Acxa? Oh, no offense, Acxa.” Curtis replied, giving a guilty smile to the less than pleased half galra.

"Shiro had to have talked to you about his leader stuff, right?"

“Shiro did talk about being the captain of the Atlas a lot the first few dates before leaving Earth, but we kinda stopped talking about work when we the mission started, since we didn’t have a lot of time to be together to begin with. But I do remember a bit of what he said, so I’ll try to help!’

Curtis took Acxa’s other arm and assisted Veronica in getting her to a conference room. As soon as Veronica and Curtis found an empty room, they yanked Acxa into the room and slammed the door. As soon as she had sat down, Curtis and Veronica were ready to give Acxa the longest lecture of her life.

“Alright, Acxa, listen up.”

As Veronica led the crew to the capitol building for negotiations, she felt a shaky confidence as she glanced back at her crew every so often. I’ve got the most capable crew in the entire universe, we’ll be fine.

As the negotiations started and Acxa laid out the terms for joining the Intergalactic Coalition, it seemed everything would be fine. Of course, everything was not fine.

Acxa tried so hard. Anyone who knew her could see the effort she was putting into being diplomatic. Yet, it all came crashing down when Acxa accidentally snapped at one of the dignitaries. The poor victim had asked a very stupid question, and Acxa, who was already on edge, was a bit more blunt than needed.

Veronica tried incredibly hard not to facepalm as the conversation took a turn for the worse. The
dignitaries started to take advantage of Acxa’s outburst, and proposed conditions that they knew Acxa would be more likely to accept in her annoyed state. While praying to Allura that Acxa would be able to salvage the situation, Curtis suddenly stood up, whispered something in Acxa’s ear, and took her seat. The shouts of the hall were silenced with a single look from Curtis.

“We can continue negotiations.” Curtis commanded.

As he struck down the unfair conditions, the dignitaries huffed a bit, but continued negotiations from the point where they had been before Acxa’s outburst. Curtis was a natural diplomat, and he navigated the deal with an ease that could’ve only been met by Shiro.

Everyone from the Atlas crew was stunned. They knew Curtis was capable, but he had never been known to be so commanding or be able to handle negotiations so thoroughly. Veronica especially was shocked. She had known Curtis since her cadet days, and he had always been a fairly shy person. Yet here he was, leading the negotiations with a confidence she had never witnessed from him. Curtis was truly in his element.

Soon enough, the meeting was over, and both the Atlas crew and the Naxelan dignitaries left satisfied. Curtis had helped both sides craft a treaty that fulfilled all of their biggest requests. It had been difficult, but thanks to both natural prowess and tips he had picked up from Shiro, Curtis had managed well.

He had a newfound appreciation for Shiro’s job. If Curtis was wiped from just negotiating, then he could only imagine how tired Shiro felt after both negotiations and piloting the ship. No wonder Shiro had gotten sick, his job was incredibly demanding. It was now honestly a marvel to Curtis that Shiro had the energy to even talk to him after work. All Curtis would be able to manage at this point would be a lowkey movie night that he could fall asleep to. He made a mental note to plan more of those, since he could see Shiro could really use the rest. When Curtis finally made it to his cabin on ship, he didn’t even take off his uniform before collapsing onto his bed. He was asleep in seconds.

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When Shiro woke up, he checked his watch.

_Wow, 5:30. How did I sleep through the whole day?_
He sat up in his bunk, and was shaking the sleepiness from his head when all of a sudden, Shiro heard a soft snore. He looked down, and saw Curtis collapsed in his own bunk. Shiro slowly climbed down from his bunk and got dressed, fully intending to leave to at least get information about how the negotiations had gone. He was about to quietly leave the room when he heard a small ‘hey’. Shiro turned around and saw Curtis, who looked as much of a wreck as Shiro had that morning.

“Curtis, are you okay? You look as sick as I did this morning.” Shiro asked concernedly.

“I could be better, honestly. Today was insane without you.” Curtis replied sleepily.

Curtis sat up and caught Shiro up on the events of the day, Shiro laughing a bit when he told him about Keith’s call.

As soon as Curtis finished, and he laid back on his bunk. Shiro could see that Curtis was exhausted, and said, “Hey. Why don’t you lie down? It seems like you had a hard day.”

“That sounds great.”

“Do you need anything?”

“Nothing, except you laying down too. You may be feeling better, but I won’t be able to rest if you aren’t asleep.”

Shiro sighed. Curtis was right. If he didn’t get some more rest, he could easily become sick again.

“Alright, I’ll go back to bed, don’t worry.”

Shiro was about to climb back into his bunk when Curtis said, “You know, you don’t have to go back into your bunk.”

“Okay, I’ll come back down.” Shiro replied with a content smile on his face.
He got down from his bunk and slipped under the covers with Curtis. Shiro and Curtis just laid there for a while, holding each other and just appreciating each other’s presence. They both eventually fell asleep. They were sick, but at least they were sick together.
hello yall! Sorry this fic hasn't updated in a while, school has been crazy and like shiro, i totally forgot valentines day was a thing, until i went to school, saw everyone decked out in red and white, and went OH NO I HAVENT WRITTEN A FIC QUIZNAK!!!!! XD enjoy this pile of fluff!

You would expect that Valentine’s Day would seem different just by existing. That the whole world would be seen in pink and red hues for one day only, a day for the celebration of love. Yet Shiro didn’t notice until far too late.

The day had been normal. Wake up, check the Atlas, have breakfast with Curtis, land the ship, recruitment meeting, lunch with the dignitaries, launch the ship, off to next destination.

The crew had evenings off. After the Atlas was well on it's way to it's next destination, the crew put the ship on autopilot and went to off to have some well deserved free time. Shiro often stayed on the bridge even after everyone left. Sometimes Curtis joined him, and they stared out at the stars, the Atlas's dashboard glowing a reassuring orange.

Tonight, Shiro decided to go and find Curtis and maybe go spend some time in the cafeteria with him and Veronica. He stopped by their room to see if Curtis was there, and instead found a small package on his desk. He picked up the package. It was heart shaped, and had a little note on it written in Curtis's untidy scrawl.

“For Valentine's Day. I would give it you myself, but I figured it you would stop by our room first thing after work. I know your routine by now! I want you to know how much I love you. Let's meet up in the cafeteria later! Love, Curtis”

Shiro gingerly removed the letter and unwrapped the box. It was filled with little pins of all shapes and sizes that were obviously homemade. There were vintage NASA pins, pins that had corny space puns like ‘Where would an astronaut park his spaceship? At a parking meteor!’, and a pin that had the black paladin insignia on it.

Shiro's blood went cold. He had somehow completely forgotten about Valentine's day. Curtis had spent so long on Shiro’s gift, but Shiro had nothing to give Curtis.

Shiro wracked his brain for something he could give. All of his ideas were pathetic, nothing that could even come close to matching the thoughtfulness of Curtis’s gift.
Think, Shiro. Let’s say one of the paladins was in this situation, what advice would you give them? Well, I would tell them to give something that came from the heart… but that won’t work right now. I have nothing to give… Or, maybe I’d tell them to ask for advice from another paladin.

Shiro decided to take his second piece of advice. Luckily for him, there was another paladin on the Atlas he could depend on: Hunk.

Hunk had just finished dinner prep for the night. He and his cooking crew were finally able to go and spend the rest of their night in peace. Hunk planned to go and call Shay tonight to wish her a happy Valentines Day, and then visit Shiro. Of course, Shiro ended up visiting Hunk before Hunk could visit him.

“Hey Hunk, Happy Valentine’s Day.” Shiro said casually as Hunk walked out of the kitchen. He hadn’t realized Shiro was by the door, and nearly jumped out of his skin in usual Hunk fashion.

“Hey Shiro, didn’t see you there. Happy Valentines Day to you too. Any plans tonight?” Hunk stammered.

“That’s actually what I wanted to talk to you about.”

“Well, what’s up?”

“I.. need advice, or an idea, for what I should do for Curtis. I somehow completely forgot about Valentine’s Day, and you know I’m not that romantic.”

“Woah, woah, woah. Let me get this straight. You, you. Who probably got half of the Voltron Coalition to sign up for actual war by just giving them a dashing look. You aren’t romantic.”

Hunk couldn’t believe that Shiro had actually said that. If Shiro didn’t think he was romantic, then romance was dead.

“Alright, Shiro. I don’t know why on Earth you would come to me for advice, but I’m always happy to help.”

“Thanks, Hunk. I knew I could count on you.”
“No prob. Do you have any ideas?”

“Not really. I don’t have a gift to give him, so maybe a date? But how would that work? We can’t go offship.”

“Why not?”

“Well, we aren’t near a planet.”

“You don’t have to be on a planet to be offship.”

“What do you mean, Hunk?”

“Why don’t you take out a pod? That way, you and Curtis can have a nice, quiet date offship! And as a bonus, maybe I can pack a picnic for you guys.”

“That sounds perfect Hunk. Thank you so much for the idea.”

“No problem! You helped me when I first asked Shay out, it’s the least I can do to return the favor!”

“Maybe I can help you with the picnic?”

It only took Hunk a moment to shoot down that idea. The last time Shiro had been even near a kitchen had been on the castleship, when he, Hunk, and the rest of the paladins had had a “bonding day”.

They had (tried) to make cookies, but Shiro had nearly burned down the whole ship, a remarkable feat when you considered that Hunk had been watching those cookies like a hawk.

Images of the Atlas going up in flames flashed through Hunk's head. There was no way that Hunk would let Shiro get even close to the kitchen.

“I got the picnic covered, don't even worry about it. Why don't you get ready?” Hunk said, with good natured anxiousness dripping through his voice.

“Good idea. Once again, thank you so much.” Shiro replied gratefully.
“Seriously, no problem. See you soon!”

With that, Hunk got to work, humming happily. Shiro slipped out of the room to go get ready.

Hunk was in the middle of cooking when he heard some whispers coming from right outside the room.

Hunk saw the MFES sneaking around, James trying to shush Leifsdottir as they (noisily) crawled across the floor the same way he and Lance had during their cadet days.

Hunk sighed and walked out of the kitchen into the hall, the door opening with a quick swish.

When they heard the sound, the blood of the MFES’s ran cold, and they all twisted around to see the towering figure of Hunk standing behind them.

“Give it up guys.”

The MFES didn’t even try to argue. They all shot up into military salutes, and Hunk led them solemnly to the kitchen. The MFES’s were prepared to be punished harshly, and they all tried to hide the looks of fear on their faces.

“Relax, I’m not here to punish you.” Hunk said as soon as all the MFESs were inside the kitchen with all the doors closed.

They all felt visceral relief. A little “oh thank Allura” was muttered by Rizavi.

“But I could use your help. You guys up for it?” Hunk asked warmly.

“Well, since you obviously caught us, we have no other plans for the afternoon.” Leifsdottir stated.

“Well then, any of you know how to cook?”
Nax walked down the hall, taking in the peaceful atmosphere. The Atlas was usually quite busy, but it was a bit more quiet on the farther side of the ship, where the kitchens were.

All of a sudden, Nax heard a yelp break the silence, along with the signature fwoosh of a fire extinguisher. She began to run towards the source of the sound: the kitchens.

She was greeted by a nearly murderous Hunk, some charred bits of food she couldn't make out, and a few bickering cadets.

“Nax, thank Allura you've come. Can you help me clean up?” Hunk said with more than a hint of exasperation.

“Of course! What happened?” Nax replied nervously.

Hunk glared at the MFEs, and said, “I was trying to help Shiro out with his date by making him a picnic, but as you can see-” Hunk gestured to the kitchen, which looked as if it had come out of a post apocalyptic nightmare- “things didn’t go as planned.”

“Don’t blame all of us for Rizavi putting too much baking soda into the cookies.” Griffin grumbled.

“Hey! Hunk said that the baking soda made the cookies bake faster, I was just trying to help!” Rizavi shouted

“The cookies literally exploded!”

Before the fight could get too nasty, Kinkade picked up Rizavi and Griffin by the scruffs of their necks, apologized to Hunk, and briskly walked out the door, with Leifsdottir following the whole procession in curiosity.

Hunk watched the door close, and turned around to begin to process how much of a mess he was going to have to clean. Thankfully, Nax had already started to sweep up the disfigured cookies, so Hunk scrubbed the inside of the oven in an effort to get rid of the exploded batter inside.

“Hunk, do you need help with cooking? You mentioned you were trying to make something for Shiro?” Nax asked meekly.

Hunk sighed. He had completely forgotten why he had been trying to make cookies in the first place while dealing with the MFEs.
“Yeah, but I have no idea how they’re gonna be ready in time. I really wanted to help Shiro out tonight, but I don’t think I’ll be able to. I only have an hour and a half left, tops.” Hunk replied sadly.

“Well, maybe I can help? You know I’m good at baking.”

It was true. Since Nax had joined the Atlas, every confectionery that the crew had enjoyed had been made by Nax. Hunk figured that if anyone could help him, it would be her.

“I’d really appreciate the help. Here’s the recipe.”

The sheet of paper Hunk held had a long list of instructions and an image of the finished product on the top, a batch of red and pink frosted heart cookies.

Nax looked the instructions over, and started to gather all the ingredients. Hunk helped, and soon they were on their way to making a new batch of cookies.

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Curtis looked around the cafeteria anxiously. Shiro was supposed to get here ages ago. Curtis thought that Shiro must have stayed back on the bridge to get some extra work done. However, it seemed a bit strange for someone like Shiro, who at the very least would’ve shot Curtis a text. Maybe something had happened to him…

Deep in his thoughts, Curtis hadn’t noticed Veronica plop down next to him. Veronica realized that Curtis didn’t notice her as soon as she sat down.

He had what she had dubbed his “Space Boy” face, which amounted to a look Curtis had when he was either thinking hard or just gazing out at the stars.


Curtis snapped out of his reverie, and realized that he had been unintentionally ignoring Veronica.

He blushed a bit, and replied, “Hey Veronica, sorry for spacing out. How is your day going? Do you have someone this year?”

Veronica sported the tiniest of blushes herself and said, “Well, I don’t really have anyone at the
moment. Hopefully, I'll have someone soon.”

“You're going to ask someone out? Who?”

“Well I was thinking about aski-”

Veronica stopped herself, and stammered, “Wait a minute! I came over to ask about your plans! Stop deflecting!” She playfully ribbed Curtis, who laughed at her nervousness.

It was uncharacteristic of Veronica, and Curtis would absolutely grill her about it later. For now, though, he knew he couldn't avoid talking about what he had been thinking.

Curtis sighed, and said, “The thing is, I have no idea where Shiro is. I left him a note in our room to meet me here awhile ago. It's not like Shiro to ignore me like this, I just wonder if he's okay.”

“Of course he's okay, don't worry about him.” Veronica reassured. “Besides, knowing Shiro, he's probably off somewhere preparing a big surprise for you.”

“Really?”

“Come on, you know Shiro. He goes all out for everything he does. There's no way that he could forget about today. Just you wait, Shiro's probably gonna be here any second.”

Of course, speak of the devil and he'll appear. All of a sudden the whole cafeteria started to shout excitedly, and Curtis looked over to see Shiro standing at the entrance in his white tux, a rose tucked into his lapel. Veronica smirked, and Curtis's heart soared.

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Curtis gave a hurried goodbye to Veronica, and practically sprinted over to Shiro, where he stood in all of his glory.

“Hey Shiro, what's going on? Why do you have a tux on?” Curtis said with an almost tangible excitement.

“Close your eyes, and I'll show you” Shiro replied cheekily.

“That seems a bit counterproductive. I can't see anything if my eyes are closed.”

“Oh come on, close your eyes. I've got a surprise for you.”
“Really? What has the amazing Captain Shirogane prepared for tonight?”

“You’ll see!”

Shiro led Curtis (who had closed his eyes) to the hangar.

When Curtis opened his eyes, he let out a soft gasp.

In front of them a pod was parked. Somehow, Shiro had procured a pod for the night. Near the entrance to the pod a small stood a small picnic basket filled to the brim with frosted heart cookies and candy hearts.

"I got us a short date off ship as a gift, with a picnic courtesy of Hunk." Shiro said nonchalantly.

“Oh wow, Takashi…” Curtis whispered, his eyes shining with pleasure.

“Do you like it?”

“Like it? I love it!”

Curtis pulled Shiro into an ecstatic kiss, and they walked over to the ship holding hands.

As Shiro piloted the tiny pod out of the ship’s hangar into space, the Atlas got smaller and smaller. It looked like a toy floating in space as soon as Shiro stopped the pod.

There was no need for a candle as Shiro and Curtis had their picnic and chatted. The stars were burning bright enough to illuminate the pod in gentle starlight.

“You want to know something embarrassing?” Shiro asked.

“Sure, hit me. It can’t be worse than my anime phase.” Curtis replied.

“Well, this is pretty recent, and you have to keep it a secret, okay?"
“I won’t tell a soul. What’s up?”

“I… I forgot about Valentine’s Day.”

“Wait what? Does this mean that you organized this entire date in under three hours?”

“Well, yeah.”

“Takashi Shirogane, you are incredible.”

Curtis gave Shiro a kiss, which elicited a blush from Shiro and a small laugh from Curtis. Seeing Shiro flustered was a rare treat, as catching him off guard enough was incredibly hard.

Shiro took Curtis’s hands into own, looked Curtis in the eye.

“Curtis”

“Yeah, Shiro?”

“I don’t know if I have ever said this out loud, but, I want you to know I love you. Really and truly.”

“I know. I love you too.”

They kissed, and time seemed to stand still. It was the first Valentine’s Day that Shiro and Curtis had spent together, and they both desperately hoped it wouldn’t be their last.
Birthday Surprise

Chapter Summary

Shiro gets a scavenger hunt and an actual birthday, Pidge nerds out, and Curtis meets the palakids.

Chapter Notes

me on the 27th: im gonna write a small fic for shiro's bday!

me on the 7th: so that was a quiznaking lie

so yeah sorry for not updating for so long!!!! school has been kicking my butt!!! But dont worry paladudes, theres a whole lot of fun ideas coming your way!!!! hope you guys enjoy this, i think i sacrificed a bit of my soul to have this thing finished.

“Hey Atlas, I know I’m not Shiro, but can you talk to me?” Curtis whispered to the ceiling.

It was still early in the morning, and Shiro, along with the rest of the crew (hopefully), was dead asleep. The paladins would be arriving in a few hours for a surprise party. Curtis knew Shiro would love it, but he knew it would all be for naught if the Atlas just told Shiro about the party. The Atlas couldn’t talk exactly, but it was certainly sentient enough to inadvertently lead Shiro to the party.

Thankfully, Curtis felt something from the Atlas, as if someone had spoken into him. A whisper that had mass was the best way to put it. You are his, he trusts you, so I won’t tell Captain, it seemed to say.

Curtis silently wondered if Shiro knew the Atlas could (kinda) talk as he got a message from the paladins saying they would be at the Atlas in five vargas. Curtis responded to the text, and was about to fall asleep when he realized that he needed to set something out for the party. When that was taken care of, Curtis allowed himself to fall asleep again. He hoped Shiro would like this.
The last thing Shiro had expected to wake up to today was a scavenger hunt. It had been a tradition on Team Voltron to have a scavenger hunt for the paladin (or Altean) in question on their birthday, which always ended with a big cake in the kitchen and (hopefully) gifts.

Shiro hadn’t expected any sort of celebration from anyone on the Atlas besides Curtis and Hunk. Shiro loved his crew, but they weren’t close the same way he and the paladins had been. He and his team had spent years sharing each other’s head holes. To his crew, Shiro was just their captain, albeit a good one.

Despite the paladins being scattered all over the universe, the familiar letter that started the scavenger hunt was right there at the foot of his bunk.

Shiro felt waves of pleasant surprise as he climbed down his bunk and picked up the letter. It had an envelope with “Shiro” written out in curlicue letters. Shiro carefully tore open the envelope. It read:

Hey there birthday boy! Bet you weren’t expecting a scavenger hunt today! You can thank good ol’ Lancy Lance for this! Follow the chocolate trail! You know the rules, so no cheating! See ya soon, and good luck!

Love,

Lance

Shiro chuckled and set the letter on his desk. He knew that there would be more letters throughout the day, and that he would save all of them. Shiro noticed that there was in fact a small trail of chocolate kisses. *White* chocolate kisses. Lance was going to pay for that (terrible) pun later. For now, Shiro was happy just getting dressed and following the trail out the door.

Shiro followed the trail through the halls of the Atlas, the ever present path of kisses twisting around like a snake. Eventually, the trail stopped somewhere near the kitchens. Shiro looked up and found a small Oreo cupcake (his favorite), along with another note. This one had his name written in more blocky, neat script. It was obviously Hunk’s contribution. The letter read:

Hi Shiro!
I know I see you all the time, but I feel like I don’t tell you enough how amazing you are. You are an amazing paladin, captain, and most of all, friend. We should definitely figure out how to hang out more! Maybe a board game night with you, me, Curtis, Veronica, and Acxa? It’d be fun! Oh, or maybe some cooking lessons! You might want them when you see my gift! (not telling!) For now, here’s a small token of my appreciation! Happy Birthday!!

Love,

Hunk

Shiro smiled warmly. He made a mental note to go visit Hunk more often, and maybe take him up on his offer of cooking lessons. Then Shiro noticed a part of the letter he hadn’t read.

P.S! I forgot to add my clue! Go to the place where you can clearly see space! (Lance came up with the riddle by the way, so don’t blame me!)

Shiro gave a knowing sigh and headed off on his way. Lance had tried to be clever, but he knew exactly where the Blue Paladin wanted him to go.

- “If you guys don’t shut up, you’re gonna ruin the surprise!” Keith whispered threateningly.

The paladins were currently sneaking through the Atlas, praying they would make it to the ballroom undetected. They had their gifts tucked under their arms or against their bodies.

Unfortunately for the paladins, sneaking around the Atlas was much harder than sneaking around the Castle of Lions. They didn't know the Atlas nearly as well, plus the stupid ship could talk to Shiro. The fact they hadn't been discovered was a miracle and nothing less.

Thankfully, they all made it to the ballroom undiscovered. When they got there, Curtis was waiting.

“Hey guys! Nice to see ya!” Curtis said cheerfully.
“Nice to see you, and well, meet you.” Keith replied awkwardly. Classic Keith. Even though he was getting better by the day at speaking in public thanks to the Blade of Marmora, Keith was still awkward in personal interactions.

“I’m Pidge, nice to meet ya!” Pidge said as she gave a casual salute.

“So, you’re the famous Curtis.” Lance replied cheekily. “I’m Lance, the handsome one.”

Curtis chuckled a bit and replied, “I’ve heard so much about all of you. It’s kinda surreal to be meeting you in person!”

“Same here, dude. Now, let’s get decorating!” Lance exclaimed.

Curtis had bought a ton of arts and crafts supplies the last time the Atlas crew had a night off planetside. They were all laid out on the floor, gigantic banners waiting to be painted, glitter glue and paint galore, and colorful streamers.

As soon as Lance saw the supplies, he threw himself into decorating the ballroom as if it was going to be the last party to ever happen in this universe. Pidge helped, too, climbing on Lance's shoulders to hang streamers on the banisters.

Keith stayed in a corner looking moody the entire time Lance decorated, so Curtis walked over to him.

“Hey Keith, something up?” Curtis asked politely.

“Not much. I just don't think Shiro will appreciate all of this.” Keith muttered.

“What do you mean?”

“He never really liked a lot of fuss about his birthday. I think he’ll like the gifts and stuff, but I don't think we need to decorate so much.”
“I honestly don't think he'll care about the decorations. By the way he talks about you guys, I think the only thing he’ll care about is that you guys are here.”

Curtis paused, and added, “But I can get Lance to stop decorating for now.”

Keith gave a small smile, and replied, “Thanks. Curtis. Not just for this. Thank you for making Shiro so happy.”

“My absolute pleasure” Curtis replied happily with a small blush.

Then Curtis went off to go swipe the decorations out of Lance's hands before they all drowned in streamers.

When Shiro made it to the bridge, he was greeted by yet another note and a yappy Veronica.

“Hey Shiro! Happy birthday!” Veronica gushed.

“Thank you, Veronica. Is everything going okay on the bridge?”

The entire crew had borderline threatened him to take a day off for his birthday, which explained why Shiro hadn’t been on the bridge at all today.

“Shiro, relax. Everything is fine, don’t worry. We’ve got it handled.”

“Well then, I guess I better get to my letter.”

This envelope had Shiro’s name spelled out in letters that would be completely illegible to anyone but one of the paladins. They had all spent so much time reading Pidge’s handwriting that none of
them had any difficulty reading it nowadays.

**Hey Shiro!**

*I chose the smallest straw so my letter location is the worst. Quiznak! Anyways, happy birthday! Thank you for being an amazing leader, and an amazing friend. Just know you are definitely a part of the Holt family! Please come for dinner sometime when you get back to Earth, we miss you a lot! Plus, you and I got a LOT of videogames to catch up on! (Don’t forget you promised to play Killbot Phantasm 26: Revengifiance with me!) See you soon space cowboy!*

*Pidge*

*P.S. Your clue is ‘Go where James and Rizavi fell flat on their faces!’*

Shiro smiled the whole time reading the letter, and laughed hard when he read Pidge's clue. Of course she would remember that.

The MFE’s had been in the gym between missions, and Rizavi and James had gotten into a treadmill competition. Pidge, by glorious coincidence, had been there to see the spectacle along with Shiro.

When Rizavi and James inevitably fell flat on their faces, it had left Pidge howling with laughter. To this day, she had never let Rizavi and James live down the incident.

Shiro tucked the letter in his pocket, and headed off to gym.

Of course, as soon as decorations were taken care of, cake had to be made. The paladins and Curtis entered the kitchen, where Hunk was going to make a Paladin Cake.

The tradition had started when Hunk had made a gigantic birthday cake for Lance out of the wild array of ingredients in the Castle’s storage. The next time, of course, everyone had done a scavenger hunt in storage when Hunk had tried to make cake again, and the tradition was born. The Paladins
had brought ingredients from all over the universe for the cake this year. This year’s Paladin Cake was going to be insane.

Hunk had all the paladins working in the kitchen together. Lance nearly ruined the whole thing by almost pouring too much space baking soda. Luckily, Hunk caught the mistake before Lance could pour anything in, and scolded him for being reckless with Shiro’s cake.

After an hour, the cake was baked, which only left frosting. That delicate task was left to Pidge, who Hunk knew could be trusted to at least not get any frosting on the floor.

Once the cake was frosted, the only thing that was left was dragging it all the way to the ballroom without being detected. Easier said than done.

“If we actually get this thing to the ballroom, I’m the Black Paladin.” Lance grumbled as he helped maneuver the cake through the halls of the Atlas.

“Don't say that Lance, we might actually make it.” Pidge replied cheekily.

“Guys, stop fighting. Let's just get this cake to the dining room before Shiro finds us.” Hunk said anxiously.

Somehow, the group of paladins and Curtis made it to the ballroom with the cake. They high fives and cheered as soon as the cake was set down. All that was left was to wait for Shiro to arrive.

Shiro had finally made it to the gym after a long walk across the ship. The gym was the most popular place to go onship besides the cafeteria, and when Shiro arrived, everything was in full swing. As Shiro looked, he said gi to a few crewmates and received many birthday greetings.

Eventually, he found what had to be Keith's letter squashed under a particularly large weight.

_Dear Shiro,_
This feels dumb, but Lance says that it’s important to write something for someone’s birthday. I never got that. Why not just say whatever you want to tell the person out loud? Yet here we are. Anyway, I want you to know how much you mean to me. You’re my big brother, and you have changed my life so much. You are my role model, my teacher, my brother, and my friend. Thanks for always believing in me.

Sincerely,

Keith

P.S. My clue is “Go to the heart of the whole ship”, and then when you find the next letter, read it and go to the ballroom for a big surprise

Shiro smiled and made yet another mental note to call Keith more often. Life on the Atlas had been hectic, but Shiro knew Keith missed him more than he would care to admit. Shiro then tucked the letter and headed off to the final letter location.

Shiro finally made it to the hangars where the lions had been. The lions had left a few years ago by this point, but there was still a residue left over. He didn’t come to the hangars often, but Shiro sometimes felt the essence of Black purring at him when he did.

Today, though, he felt the faint feeling of Blue. Shiro hadn’t felt Blue’s presence this strongly since the day in the cave, when this whole crazy adventure had started.

Blue somehow beckoned Shiro to walk towards where she had once stood. In her place, Shiro saw a letter.

On the envelope, he saw a familiar loopy handwriting. This letter had been written by Allura. Shiro felt tears gathering at the edges of his eyes as he tore open the letter and began to read it.

Dear Shiro,

Happy Birthday! It seems funny to write that sentence, even after all the years we have spent together. I don’t think I shall ever get used to your strange human customs. I want you to know how happy I am that you have returned from the astral plane, and how much we all missed you. You
have always been a valuable leader, and a wonderful friend. You have always given me a listening ear, which I will always appreciate. You are so selfless and kind, even after all you have been through. I think that is admirable. If you ever need a listening ear in return, know that my door (or lion, as the case may be) is always open. I hope you have a wonderful day, and that you like my gift!

Sincerely,

Allura

P.S. Go to the ballroom!!! Presents and milkshakes await!!!!

Shiro tried to keep his tears from hitting the page as he read Allura’s letter. It had been so eloquent and thoughtful, purely Allura. It echoed a lot of the sentiments she had told him when she had said goodbye to him. Shiro very carefully folded the letter, along with the envelope, and gingerly tucked it into his pocket. After crying, sugar was absolutely in order for Shiro. He wiped his eyes and headed over to the ballroom, looking forward to some of Hunk’s famous Paladin Birthday Cake.

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In the middle of Lance and Keith’s bickering, Hunk hushed everyone and told them to listen. The sound of footsteps echoed in the hall outside

“Quiznak! Shiro’s coming! Everyone get down!” Pidge.

Everyone immediately ducked into their hiding spots, and waited for Shiro’s inevitable arrival. When Shiro made it to the hall, he started walking towards the paladins’ hiding spot. He had a bemused expression on his face as he gazed around the darkened hall.

When Hunk gave the signal, Coran flipped on the lights and everyone shouted “Surprise!” Shiro’s face was one that Hunk would treasure for years: a look of pure shock. He had been expecting a party, but the thought of the paladins being here hadn’t even crossed his mind.

Shiro smiled wide and exclaimed, “Guys! What are you doing here? How did you even get onship without me knowing, the Atlas would’ve told me!”

“I bargained with the Atlas to keep a secret for a day!” Curtis replied, and gave a hearty laugh. He then came over and gave Shiro a quick kiss on the cheek. “Happy Birthday, Takashi.”
Shiro blushed happily, and then pulled Curtis, along with the paladins, into a huge bear hug.

“Thank you guys so much for this. This must’ve taken a lot of effort on your part.” Shiro said gratefully.

“We’ve been planning this for a while, Shiro. You missed a few birthdays while you were in the void, so we wanted to do something special this year.” Lance replied and gave his signature “for once I’m being genuine” smile.

When the hug ended, Pidge zipped over to the frankly enormous pile of presents and cried, “Come on, Shiro! Let’s do presents, I’ve been working on mine forever!”

Shiro chuckled and then replied in his signature “Space Dad” voice, “Pidge, come on. I think everyone is hungry.”

Shiro then noticed Hunk’s gigantic Paladin Cake sitting on the table in all of its glory.

Shiro, of course, got the first piece. It was Oreo flavored, or at least made of the space equivalent of Oreos. Hunk had, as always, outdone himself. Everyone else got their slice (slices in the cases of Lance and Pidge), and began to chat happily.

Shiro was talking to Lance when the Blue Paladin mentioned, “The only hard thing about all of this was the decorations. Keith was pretty insistent that we kept it simple. If I had my way, you know this place would be even more decked out than it already is. But I did get one thing. Look up at the banner.”

Shiro stared at the banner above him more closely. On it read, “Congrats! You’re Still 6!” Shiro burst into laughter at the sight of it. Lance beamed with pride, while Pidge, Hunk, and Keith groaned. “Shiro is six” jokes had been very popular when Shiro had told the paladins what his birthday was. It figured Lance would hold onto the joke all these years later.

Soon, it was finally time for presents. Pidge was practically begging to be able to give hers, but for some reason the other paladins insisted that she give her present last. Pidge pouted a bit, but eventually relented. Hunk gave his present first, handing Shiro a package carefully wrapped in purple and black wrapping paper. Shiro gently tore the wrapping paper off, and was delighted to find a small cookbook inside.
“Do you like it? It was one of the first cookbooks I used growing up. The recipes are pretty easy, but they always taste really good! Maybe we can hang out in the kitchens sometime and make them together!” Hunk stammered earnestly.

“Thank you, Hunk. I would love to make some of these with you, I bet these recipes are delicious.” Shiro replied reassuringly.

Onto Lance’s gift. Lance had the gift in a large purple party bag stuffed with tissue paper. Shiro dug through the paper to find a shirt in the bag. It was obviously handmade, and read on the front, “I Survived A Purple Alien War And All I Got Was This Shirt”.

Shiro once again burst into laughter. It wasn’t something he would readily admit, but Shiro and Lance had a very similar sense of humor. Half the time Shiro had scolded Lance for his jokes, he had been laughing hard internally. The Blue Paladin could be very funny when he wanted to be.

The next gift was Keith’s. Before Keith handed his gift to Shiro, he murmured, “I really hope you like this. I saved it from your room, before they cleaned it out after the Kerberos mission.”

Shiro nodded solemnly, and gingerly took the gift into his hands. He slowly unwrapped the gift, and then unfolded the thing inside. As soon as Shiro saw it, he recognized it immediately. It was his old star chart, marked up with notes about all the different galaxies and constellations. Shiro had hung it on the ceiling, and he and Keith had spent many nights going over the name of each place they wanted to go to someday. Shiro was touched that Keith had kept it.

Shiro pulled Keith into a tight hug, and whispered, “Thank you so much, Keith. This is probably the best gift I’m going to get today.”

Keith whispered back, “Don’t count on that. Pidge has a pretty amazing gift.”

As soon as Keith pulled away from the hug, Shiro saw that Pidge had zoomed over next to him, practically vibrating with excitement.

“Alright, alright Pidge. I’ll open your present, relax.” Shiro said while laughing. He took the box from Pidge’s hands and opened it up. What Shiro saw inside took his breath away. The whole room quieted as Shiro gingerly removed a replica of the Black Bayard.
“No way. Pidge, this is amazing. How did you make this?” Shiro murmured in awe.

“Well, when you first disappeared, we thought the Black Bayard might give us some answers about where you were. Plus, I studied it thoroughly so that if we ever needed to make a bayard, we would know how. Try to use it, Shiro. It’s kinda like a lower energy version of connecting with your lion.” Pidge said, looking surprisingly bashful.

Shiro shut his eyes and concentrated on forming a connection with the amazing weapon in his hand. Apparently, it worked, because Shiro heard a collective gasp. He opened his eyes, and saw wings. They looked like the wings of the Black Lion, except scaled to human size, and they were attached to the back of his uniform. They gleamed in the bright lighting of the ballroom.

It only took a moment for Pidge to totally nerd out. She babbled excitedly as she clambered over Shiro’s wings, taking measurements and observations happily. Thankfully, Keith pulled her away before Shiro had to say anything.

“Pidge, chill, he hasn’t even tried them yet.” Keith scolded. Keith then looked to Shiro and asked gently, “Do you, want to try them?”

Shiro was so excited to try his wings he wanted to smash through the wall. After a long fight, he would finally be able to use Zark- no, his bayard. His bayard. Yet Shiro knew it would be rude to sprint off to the armory, so he settled for a nod. Thankfully, everyone seemed just as excited to see his new wings. Pidge looked as if she would die if Shiro didn’t go to the go get his armor on right now. However, Keith called out to Shiro before he could leave.

“Shiro! Wait! We have one more gift, something that will go well with those wings.”

Lance walked over with a very large box in his hands. He held it tenderly, and had a wistful gleam in his eyes. Shiro immediately knew it had to be from Allura. Shiro carefully took the package, and took a moment to put it down and give Lance a tight hug.

He then opened the gift, and nearly cried when he saw what was inside. It was the Black Paladin armor, just as Shiro remembered. The black Voltron symbol gleamed proudly from the front of the armor, and Shiro’s whole being felt warm with affection for his team and his title.

Lance stepped forward and said, “Allura made it. She spent a long time studying the paladin armor
so that you could have a set again, since it, y’know, got pretty wrecked in the big fight against Zarkon.”

Shiro looked at the armor in his hands, and then looked at his team and said, “Thank you guys, for all of this. It’s nice to know that I’ll always have my team to depend on. Now, let’s get this armor on.”

This was the best part of Shiro’s birthday, hands down. All of space was laid out before him, the stars glittering brightly in spiral galaxies light years beyond Shiro’s reach. Yet, they looked so close that Shiro felt as if he could touch them. Flying here in the vacuum of space was as close as he would get to piloting Black again. Freedom. The best gift one could ask for. Shiro saw his friends peering at him through the windows of the Atlas, gazing at him in wonder and excitement. Shiro gave them a charismatic smile and turned to take one more lap around the Atlas.

It was nighttime on the Atlas now. The paladins had left a few hours ago, in a rush of hugs and a few misty eyes. Of course, the crew had thrown Shiro their own party in the cafeteria, with presents and toasts aplenty.

Shiro had finally made it back to the room he shared with Curtis. Curtis had walked back with Shiro, both chatting happily about the day. Shiro had resolved to at least get a little work done today. But as soon as Shiro started to head towards his desk, Curtis grabbed Shiro’s arm and pulled him away.

“Shiro, you and I both know there is no way I’m going to let you do work right now.” Curtis declared

Shiro gave a half hearted sigh, trying hard to not break out into a smile. “I know, I know, Curtis.”

“Besides, I never got to give you my gift.”

“Oh quiznak, Curtis, I’m so sorry I di-”
Curtis quickly put a stop to Shiro’s apologies by placing finger on his nose.

“Shiro, seriously, it’s fine. I know firsthand how much of a handful the paladins are, even all these years later. How they all have so much energy I’ll never know.”

Curtis then walked over to the bunk, reached under it, and pulled out a small box.

Curtis looked Shiro softly and said, “You mentioned to me, earlier, that you wish you had more pictures of you and Adam together. So, I made sure we don’t make the same mistake.”

Shiro took the lid off the box, and saw a small book. It was filled with pictures, pictures of Shiro with the paladins, pictures of Shiro and Keith at the Garrison, pictures of the Atlas crew, and pictures of Shiro and Curtis together. There were well wishes and commentary written all over the book. Most of it was written in Curtis’s familiar handwriting, but others had Veronica’s and even Keith’s handwriting.

“Thank you Curtis, this… this is perfect.” Shiro said gratefully. He gave Curtis a kiss on the cheek, which was swiftly returned.

Shiro and Curtis spent the rest of the night watching Star Trek, which was a favorite for both of them. They fell asleep together, and if Veronica found them in a curled heap of blankets the next morning, there was no indication except for one photo of them curled up edited with little heart face emojis, tucked away in the deepest part of her phone storage.

Chapter End Notes

just want to say: HOLY QUIZNAK OVER 400 HITS?!?!?!?!?!?! THATS SO AMAZING I CANT EVEN *PROCESS* THAT!!!!! thank you to all the people who took time out of their day to read this, it warms my heart! to all the peeps who have left such kind comments and kudos, thank you guys so so much, if yall ever want to talk you can find me at yalejosie on tumblr! also extra special thanks to the peeps who have subscribed!!!!!!! when i saw i had actual subscribers i CRIED, thank you for making me feel so special!!!!!!! see you later paladudes!!!!!
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