

# Comfort and Joy

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"I hate Christmas." Quatre said tossing his keys on the kitchen counter and sinking into a chair using his toes to pry his shoes off his feet that were throbbing from standing all day.

The day after Thanksgiving, the busiest shopping day of the year, and when you worked retail, it was also the most stressful day of work in comparison to all the other stressful 364 days of the year combined. And when you worked in the music store in the mall, directly opposite the Santa display, your store was hit hard. But no one wanted to buy pianos, they just wanted to come in, make him demonstrate every model with annoying requests for "Here comes Santa Claus", "Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer", and "White Christmas". ALL BLOODY DAY LONG!

He was a classically trained musician, a degree from Julliard, and what did he do to earn a living? He made minimum wage plus commission at the Piano store in the mall. Taking night gigs, weddings, and retirement parties to subsidize his measly paycheck and buy frivolous things like food, and rent.

To say his life at twenty-three was where he had wanted it to be at eighteen when he started college was an understatement, and then some.

His apartment was so small it was almost claustrophobic; hardly more than a bed sit really. One room sort of partitioned off into sections. The bathroom didn't even have a door, just a curtain to give the room a little privacy. The kitchen was just a counter against one wall with a half refrigerator on one end, a microwave, no oven, just a sort of burner range built into the counter, and a sink. He had one stool beside the counter since a proper table wouldn't fit so at least he could eat his cheap TV dinner without having to stand over the sink.

The rest of the apartment was his bedroom slash living room. It was a bed shoved against one wall and a couch on the opposite wall. There was one wall left, that's where his miniature upright piano sat. His only pride and joy in his entire existence. He had no TV, not even a computer. He had various novels from classics to cheap romances scattered on top of the piano and in milk crates stacked in a corner. His stereo sat on another stack of milk crates in another corner.

His clothes all fit in the one closet; it was depressing to see all his worldly possessions fit neatly into one tiny room. He sighed and moved the two feet from stool to bed and flopped down exhausted. This was so not where he had wanted to be in life. He had fancied getting a job somewhere like a ski lodge or bar or something, he never wanted fame, just to play and make

enough money to live on. Living in a rustic lodge in the mountains playing for vacationers on holiday was just perfect for him. The atmosphere relaxed and serene and no noise from siren's or traffic or the baby upstairs, or the newlywed couple next door, or the old man with the bad cough downstairs.

He had thought his dream had been reasonable. Apparently not, and he was stuck right where he was, alone, damn near flat broke, and positively surly with the whole idea of life in general and annoying Christmas shoppers. Not to mention his abysmal love life, which for the record was as non-existent as his savings account balance.

A love life and a choice that has ostracized him from his family ever since he 'came out of the closet' to them one horrible Thanksgiving some two years past, it had been somewhere during the end of the meal, before the pie, and his fathers exodus to the living room to watch football. It was all a blur really, but some inane comment from one of his multitude of sisters about never bringing home a girl from school, and then another saying something about his lack of manly behavior and he was probably gay. She'd meant it in jest, they had always teased him about not being overly tall, too thin, or artsy-fartsy as Iria termed him. That one he didn't mind, he WAS artsy-fartsy. The rest were all genetics inherited from his mother. The small frame, the blonde hair, big blue eyes, soft features, if you stuck him in a dress and a wig with a pair of falsies he could pass as a girl. And he had on more than one occasion for a Halloween party.

He wasn't quite so short anymore, but no where near tall, and he'd pretty much topped out, he hadn't grown any in a few years so it looked like five foot nine inches was going to be it from here on out, at least he didn't hear the short jokes anymore. Not like he heard anything from any of them anymore.

Well, that wasn't entirely true, Iria and Armineh still called him, they didn't care he was gay. The rest however had all looked like stunned turkeys about to be put to the block when he had simply confirmed to the family he never brought home girls because he was homosexual. His father had immediately gone into a rant about evils and sins, and going against nature, it was the last time Quatre had ever been welcome in that house, and he had not been back since.

That first Christmas spent alone in this apartment had quite possibly been the worst day of his young life. His favorite holiday had overnight turned into the one he dreaded coming the most.

One more reason to hate holiday seasons added to the growing list and spending them alone was even worse. He'd yet to meet anybody he gave a damn about. The only people he did meet all had huge hang ups and he really did not need to shoulder someone else's woes as well as his own. He could barely afford to eat let alone spend money going out to meet people in the city. Twenty-dollar cover charges just to get in the door most places, and five and six-dollar bottles of just water, he

was broke ten minutes within walking in the door.

So meeting someone wasn't exactly feasible let alone probable. Just when Quatre thought his already dower mood couldn't get worse, the newly wed couple, who's bedroom was directly next to Quatre's bed wall, decided it was time to make like rabbits again. Quatre was sorely tempted to bang against the wall as their headboard started to pound against his wall, he'd tried that before, they never noticed. He began the countdown in his head; it happened every time, 5-4-3-2-1, "Oh Jeffrey". Came the moan.

"Yay, go Jeffrey you stud you. She's faking it." Quatre mumbled sarcastically grabbing his sneakers and his worn, navy surplus store, pee coat that had cost him all of five dollars last winter. It was ugly, dark blue, but warm, and shrugging it on, Quatre decided to go for a walk, sore feet or not. It was either that or listen to a chorus of 'oh Jeffrey's' all evening.

The streets were still packed with shoppers as Quatre walked without purpose down main street, his hands shoved deep into pockets to ward off the chill. It had snowed earlier in the week, but it had not left too much behind, all that remained were tiny piles of black slush here and there. It was still cold, and getting colder. He wondered if Jeffrey and Linda were through so he could go home and have his dinner in peace when the scent of pine wafted by, making him pause in his tracks.

He had always loved the scent of pine, it was his favorite part about Christmas, the various smells that all mixed together to create that one perfect, ever changing, ever the same blend that WAS Christmas. Pine and cinnamon, gingerbread and popcorn, hot spiced cider and hot chocolate, nutmeg and rum pudding and custard. All mixed together and lingering in the room as Iria and Armineh baked the confections, Dad and Alice laughed and argued while bringing down the ornaments out of the attic, Dad swearing when he inevitably stubbed his toe on the way down, and Quatre as he was at six years old, sitting on the floor stringing popcorn and cranberries to hang on the tree that hovered bare nearby, just waiting for his little hands to bring it life.

When he had started crying, he didn't know, it was all lost in the sensation and realization that those things were gone, and he'd never have them again. And he was standing in the middle of a Christmas tree lot, his hand fingering the stiff branches longingly as he inhaled the aroma, he never noticed the figure standing just behind him until he cleared his throat.

"My trees aren't that bad are they?" the soft baritone spoke causing Quatre to jump out of his skin and whirl around. Coming nose to nose with the most devastatingly handsome, green-eyed God he'd ever laid eyes on.

“No, sorry. Just having a really, REALLY bad day.” Quatre said regaining his composure and swiping his eyes with his sleeves. A tissue appeared and was handed to him.

“You’d be surprised how many people come here and cry. For some this time of year can be depressing. No need to explain, and you’re not the only one.” The stranger said with a slight encouraging smile.

“Thanks” Quatre said taking the offered Kleenex and dabbing his eyes with it, sniffing once or twice, before blowing his nose.

“No problem.” The stranger said with another one of those half smiles before turning around and helping another customer. Quatre sighed and turned back to the tree. If only he had a bigger apartment he’d like to have at least a tree. Oh who was he kidding, he couldn’t afford a tree, let alone anything to put on it, the tears almost started again, but he fought them off snatching his hand back from the limb he’d been caressing and shoving it back in his pocket. He was torturing himself standing here; it was time to drag his sorry butt home out of the cold. At least he could be miserable at home without crying like a baby in front of total strangers.

He turned and spied that tall god-like creature help lift a huge Douglas fir on top of an SUV, leaping up to the roof, agile as a cat to tie it down, while the husband huffed and grumbled, the wife jabbered away on her cell phone, and their very young daughter tugged on a piece of rope. A rope that was attached to a very tall tree, a tree she was pulling down on top of herself!

“LOOK OUT!” Quatre cried out. The stranger’s head shot up and the woman dropped her phone.

“JENNY NO!” The woman cried as Quatre dove for her, pushing her out of the way as the tree landed firmly on his back.

“Oh shit.” Quatre groaned as he felt the tree heaved off him.

“Are you all right?” The stranger asked where Quatre lay face down in the slush.

“Remember what I said about having a bad day? Just chalk it up to my luck.” Quatre said groaning, as he sat up. He’d have a bruise, his clothes were shot, and he was soaked to the bone, but none

the worse for the wear thankfully.

The stranger smiled “At least you have a sense of humor about it. You’re sure you’ll all right?” He asked helping Quatre to his feet.

“Only thing wounded is my pride. I’ll be fine.” Quatre said as the woman came over and slapped him firmly in the face. Stunning Quatre.

“You shoved her into a puddle. Her dress is ruined and you scared her half to death you brute.” The mother ranted “I should call the cops on you!” She added before taking her spoiled rotten and hysterically crying daughter and getting into their SUV slamming the doors the husband peeling out of the drive.

The Stranger was laughing.

“What’s so funny?”

“I never finished tying the tree down. Once they hit a hard stop, the tree is going to tumble off. Ass holes, serves them right, you just can’t be nice to some people. Not so much as a thank you for saving their daughter. The fuckers.” The stranger said turning back to face Quatre.

Quatre got lost in stunning green eyes for a moment before he registered he was talking again. “I’m sorry what did you say?” Quatre asked and there was that soft chuckle again.

“That tree must have rattled your brain too. I said I’ve got a trailer over here set up as an office, I asked if I could get you some coffee while you dry off a bit?” He said and Quatre blushed.

“Oh sorry, yes please I’m freezing.” Quatre said, a perfectly timed sneeze punctuating his sentence.

“Thought so, lips are supposed to be pink not blue. This way.” Quatre followed the young man to a small aluminum trailer parked on the edge of the lot. The door marked ‘Barton’s Nursery and

Christmas Tree Farm Mount Madonna Lodge' It was a mouth full and a lot to fit on a door but it at least hinted at a name.

"Are you Barton?" Quatre asked as he was led inside.

"Yes and no. My father started the business; I inherited it when he died. Call me Trowa." The youth said directing Quatre to a seat as he poured a large mug of coffee. "Cream and Sugar?" He asked and Quatre nodded.

"Yes please. Thank you Trowa." Quatre said tasting the name and liking it. It was very unusual. Then again so was his name. "I'm Quatre." He added as an after thought realizing he hadn't given Trowa his name yet. There was that gorgeous semi smile again.

"Quatre. And I though I was the only one with a fucked up name." Trowa teased and Quatre laughed mid sip, sloshing a bit of hot coffee into his lap.

He was really having a horrific day.

"Jesus, I'm sorry" Trowa said diving for a towel to wipe away hot coffee from the top of Quatre's legs where he sat. Quatre suddenly felt extremely awkward and took the towel.

"It's okay, I'm not hurt." Quatre stammered wiping his own lap with the towel. "It's a very bad day, this is nothing, really." Quatre sighed and Trowa sat down opposite him across the small table.

"I'll say you're having a bad day. I've never met anyone as accident prone as you, without it being their fault. Lady luck is pissed at you for some reason." Trowa said taking a sip of black coffee out of his own mug.

"Lady luck hasn't spoken to me in years. She's upped it a notch, call it a vendetta now." Quatre sighed and Trowa quirked an eyebrow.

"I know I'm a complete stranger, but you want to talk about it? Sometimes it helps. You did look

really upset when I first saw you.” Trowa said looking at the bedraggled young man across from him. Even filthy with slush, and nose red with cold, he was incredibly handsome. Not quite cute, he’d grown out of cute, but he was damn close, as close as a grown man could get to the word. His hair a bright sunny gold, and his eyes a unique shade of blue that was flecked with green making his eyes change shade depending on the light. Trowa felt as if he was looking directly at the sun, god if only he was gay. He’d be on his hands and knees begging for a date.

“It’s a long story.”

“It’s nine o’clock, the lot is closed. I’ve got time to spare.” Trowa replied with a smile before reaching for the coffee pot and pouring more into Quatre’s cup.

“It’s nothing really. There are people with bigger problems.”

“And those problems aren’t yours. Yours are what is the topic of discussion currently.” Trowa replied and Quatre sighed.

“You’re persistent. Let’s just say I miss my family.” Quatre said, his eyes downcast into his mug.

“And that’s a cop out answer if ever I heard one. Let me see if I can guess then since you won’t tell me.” Trowa began leaning back in his chair and scratching his chin as he scrutinized the smaller man across from him.

“Army Navy surplus store coat, and ratty tennis shoes. You’re working a crap job. Slight bags under your eyes, which means you’re probably doing a second job of sorts to scrape by. Am I warm?” Trowa asked and Quatre looked dumbfounded but nodded.

“More than warm. I work at Hammond’s Music in the mall, for shit money. And I do weddings and things on weekends playing shit music.” Quatre bemoaned rolling his eyes. “I have a degree from Julliard in performing arts, and I get paid playing the hokey-pokey.” Quatre grimaced and Trowa echoed that statement with a groan.

“The man who wrote that song should be shot.” Trowa said and Quatre laughed.

“Got a gun? I’ll be more than happy to put him out of his misery.” Quatre said smiling a little. Trowa mused how much more beautiful Quatre looked when he smiled like that, a frown should never mar that face.

“No, but seeing that smile, I sure wish I did.” Trowa said once more reaching for the pot to re-fill cups.

“Oh god, I’m gonna go on a caffeine high here in a minute. No more than two cups is my limit. Otherwise you’ll have me bouncing off the walls.” Quatre said laying a hand over the top of his cup to keep Trowa from pouring, but he only managed to stick his hand into the stream coming out of the pot.

“SHIT! Quatre!” Trowa stood as Quatre yanked his scalded hand back. “I’m so sorry.” Trowa said turning on the cold-water tap and pulling Quatre to his feet to stick his hand under the stream. Trowa holding his hand in both of his as the cold water took the heat away from mildly burnt flesh.

“Don’t be sorry, my fault.” Quatre said wincing.

“No, no. God I’m sorry.” Trowa said pulling out Quatre’s hand from the water to inspect it, it was bright pink. Trowa tested it with the pad of his thumb. “Does that hurt?” He asked concerned gently rubbing the back of Quatre’s hand.

Quatre was too wrapped up in the close proximity of Trowa’s body, and how his hands tenderly stroked his hand to register the question.

“Quatre? Hello? You still in there?” Trowa asked leaning closer to look directly into deep blue seas.

“Hum? Oh. It’s fine Trowa, I’m all right.” Quatre stuttered gently pulling his hand back and switching off the tap, Trowa was still pressed up against him, why wasn’t he moving?

“I think I just figured out what else is eating you.” Trowa said as Quatre turned. Trowa planted both hands on either side of him, trapping the smaller man against the counter.

“R-r-r-really? What’s that?” Quatre almost moaned, feeling trapped, but not scared. Just that overwhelming sense of something wonderful was about to happen.

“Have a bad coming out Quatre?” Trowa asked and the way Quatre’s head shot up, and his eyes widened with pupils dilating confirmed Trowa’s hunch. A really bad 'coming out' by the looks of things, judging by the trembling lower lip and the tears suddenly welling in those beguiling eyes.

“How did? I... yes.” Quatre said knowing hiding the truth was pointless, and he just felt the weight of the past two years hit him like a brick and he crumbled. Only to be caught up in strong arms and crushed against a hard chest. He began to sob uncontrollably against his will. Hands pulled him down to sit on a lap and he was sheltered and cradled like a child as he wept. Those same hands then began gently rubbing his back in soothing patterns.

“It’s all right Quatre. Let it out. I understand.” Trowa whispered into the hair that spilled over his collarbone as Quatre cried into his chest. He understood all too well, he’d been there. Had it not been for his sister Catherine, he and his father wouldn’t even have been on speaking terms before he died. That had been five years ago and he’d only had six months of reconciliation with his terminally ill father before he had succumbed to cancer and died.

He’d spent the last three years of his father’s life living in one hostel after another, working one dead end job after another. He knew exactly what Quatre was currently going through, and his heart broke for him. Christmas had been a horrible time of year. All one wanted was what carols promised. Comfort and Joy, but living day to day, paycheck to measly paycheck was not the way to get those comforts and joys. Only family and friends could give you those things. Not money, not presents, not gaudy wrappings and trimmings, but the love of one person for another.

Being in the arms of a loved one was where comfort was found. The laughter shared around the dinner table about mundane things was joy. It took losing those things to realize the simple truth.

Christmas and life was not about material gain, it was about all the lives that touched you, and how you were held as dear to others as you held others dear to your heart. No big cosmic secret, no super after thanksgiving sale, no mechanical Santa Claus ringing a bell in front of the department store, no Christmas tree from his lot. Those were all just trimmings and gimmicks, the substantial aspects in life were needed first and those could only be found in your soul. And given to you by someone who loved you.

And this soul in his arms was bleeding, and was in desperate need of those small mundane things. He needed comfort, he needed joy, and he was going to get them, starting right now.

“Quatre, let me take you home. I don’t want you walking home by yourself, not like this.” Trowa said softly, tucking hair behind Quatre’s ears in a soothing gesture. Before grabbing another Kleenex and dabbing Quatre’s eyes that had become red and swollen with pent up anguish that had been building up for a very long time.

“I’ll be all right. You don’t need...” Quatre began and was silenced by a finger pressed to his lips.

“Yes, I need to. I want to. I understand Quatre, more than you know. I went through this too once.” Trowa said and again that look of disbelief in Quatre’s eyes. Trowa smiled.

“What? Shocked that I’m gay too?” Trowa asked and Quatre dumbly nodded.

“Don’t strike you as the type? Well here’s a newsflash for you then, you didn’t to me either at first. I think we need to start wearing signs or something, it would be a hell of a lot easier getting a date that’s for sure.” Trowa said and Quatre laughed, his hands flying up to cover his mouth in embarrassment. Trowa gently reached up and pulled Quatre’s hands down.

“Don’t hide that smile, it’s far too beautiful to cover up.” Trowa said and Quatre could feel the heat in his cheeks like fire as he blushed. Quatre had the sneaking suspicion that he’d paid his penance to lady luck and she just decided to visit him again.

“While you’re adorable and all sitting there on my lap, you’re heavy and my legs are falling asleep Quatre. Not to mention those pants of yours are still wet.” Trowa said and Quatre leapt up.

“Oh God, I’m sorry.” Quatre said blushing again. Trowa just chuckled standing.

“Don’t be. Come on; let’s get you home. My car is outside, it’s warmer than walking.” Trowa said leading Quatre out of the trailer.

They stopped for take out Chinese on the way back to Quatre's apartment seeing as both men had not had dinner yet and as they stepped inside Trowa stopped short. "This isn't an apartment, it's a converted linen closet." Trowa said as Quatre set one of the bags on the counter.

"I know it's cramped, sorry." Quatre said and Trowa flicked him in the nose with his finger.

"Quit apologizing already. Now change out of those wet clothes before you catch a cold." Trowa ordered and Quatre smiled.

"Yes mom." Quatre said disappearing behind the bathroom curtain, coming out again in an oversized Julliard sweatshirt and pants.

Trowa was settled in the middle of the floor, white take out boxes spread out on Quatre's blanket off his bed. "Only way to have a picnic in winter." Trowa said as Quatre flopped beside him on the floor.

"Original." Quatre said smiling picking up his chopsticks and egg foo young.

"Well you don't have a table." Trowa replied grinning as he filched a bite out of Quatre's box with a wink.

They chatted as they ate, Trowa telling Quatre about his past as well as Quatre finally relenting and telling Trowa his coming out nightmare. Both men tearing up occasionally as they covered the more arduous memories in the re-telling, but even though it was painful, it was also a release. Trowa had been right, just telling someone else did help ease the pain, and Quatre felt better than he had in a very long time.

After dinner, Quatre took the empty containers out to the dumpster since he was paranoid about roaches and never threw take out boxes into the trash in his apartment. When he came back up, he found Trowa seated at his piano bench, plucking out random notes.

"I always wanted to play. I play the flute, or rather I DID play when I was in high school. I haven't touched it in years, I'm rusty as hell." Trowa said as Quatre leaned against the piano. Trowa looked up and smiled. "Play something for me?" He asked and Quatre smiled.

“Sure, what would you like to hear?” Quatre asked and Trowa shrugged.

“Anything, play me your favorite.” Trowa said vacating the bench so Quatre could sit.

The moment Quatre’s fingers caressed the keys Trowa knew he’d never be able to get enough. The sound that issued forth was almost hypnotic as he closed his eyes and let Quatre touch his soul with his music. It was breathtaking, and pure joy. Until the assholes next door began pounding on the wall.

“Sorry, they don’t like it when I play.” Quatre said stopping.

“Classless Neanderthals. That was fantastic Quatre. We have a piano up at the lodge, I’d love to hear you play again without having to stop.” Trowa said and Quatre looked up.

“Lodge?”

“Yes, Mount Madonna Inn, it’s part of the Farm really. Just a little bed and breakfast sort of place, we have a couple of ski lifts, the Christmas tree farm, and the nursery. Dad owned Mt. Madonna and left it to Cathy and me. It’s small, but we get more than enough business. No one ever uses the piano unless a guest decides to tinker on it.” Trowa said leaning against the piano.

“I always wanted a little place just like that. Quiet, out of the way, serene.”

“Boring as fuck in summer”

Quatre laughed. “If you say so. But I’d love to come and play for you. It’s the very least I can do to say thank you for tonight.” Quatre said his hands folded in his lap as he smiled softly up at Trowa. Trowa’s hand reached down and brushed Quatre’s bangs off of his forehead.

“That smile is payment enough.” Trowa said turning his gaze up to the ceiling, Quatre looked up to

see something hanging from the overhead light above his head that had not been there before. Mistletoe.

By the time it dawned on him what was going on, Trowa had his lips on his. Quatre just closed his eyes and drank in the tender kiss. Nothing forward, nothing pushy. Just a simple chaste kiss, but its effects were as potent as if Trowa had ceased him in a full out French kiss assault.

And it was over far too soon. Trowa smiled as he pulled away, his gaze still boring a hole in Quatre's senses. "Simply Beautiful." Was all Trowa had an opportunity to say before the mood was ruined again.

Jeffrey and Linda were into round two. Quatre was mortified. Trowa's jaw dropped.

"Jesus Christ Quatre, are all your neighbors barbarians?" Trowa asked and right on cue, old man Babcock began another coughing fit. Trowa rolled his eyes.

"Do you work weekends Quatre?" Trowa asked and Quatre shook his head.

"Only when I have a gig. Nothing this weekend."

"Good, pack a weekend bag. I have rooms free, and I just hired a piano player for the weekend. You do give private performances right?" Trowa asked a stunned Quatre.

"But..."

"But nothing. How can you sleep?" Trowa said going over to the wall and banging. "We can hear her singing Romeo. Try stuffing a sock in it!!!" Trowa yelled and Quatre choked.

"TROWA!" Quatre said almost falling off his bench. Not sure whether to laugh or cry.

“That’s just rude. Why aren’t you packing?” Trowa asked with almost a smirk. Quatre leapt to his feet and began packing. He was almost giddy, this was just a dream come true. He looked up at Trowa who was putting his jacket back on.

No better than a dream, he never dream something that looked quite that good, nor as sexy. Quatre was praying that this weekend was one for the record books.

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It was a short drive up the mountain roads to Mt. Madonna Inn and it was almost midnight when Trowa pulled up and they walked inside. The front desk clerk yawned and smiled.

“Hey boss, you’re back late, I thought the lot closed at nine. Get distracted?” She teased knowing full well the sexual orientation of her employer. Quatre turned beat red.

“Nancy, I should fire you.”

“You won’t”

“No I won’t. Nancy give me the keys to Room 14 please.”

“OH, the honeymoon suite.”

“It’s not the honeymoon suite Nancy, quit it.” Trowa said scowling as Quatre gulped wide eyed.

“Sorry. Can’t help it, you never bring dates back here, I don’t get to tease you enough.” Nancy said grinning at Quatre.

“Quatre’s not a date. He’s a friend, and an employee this weekend.” Trowa growled. Quatre’s spirit’s dropped just a little. He had to quit with the fantasies, Trowa was right, this wasn’t a date,

and he was only here to play. No matter how much more he wanted or let his imagination make up.

He followed Trowa to room 14 quietly and waited while Trowa unlocked the door. "Sorry Quatre, Nancy is a HUGE gossip. I figured you'd rather not have her telling everyone your business while you slept only to wake up to the morning staff giggling at you. The less Nancy knows the better." Trowa said and Quatre's spirit's lifted.

"Knows what?" Quatre asked just in case.

"That the employee thing is just my excuse to kidnap you for a weekend and make you my musical slave." Trowa said pushing the door open and stepping aside to let Quatre enter. Quatre's spirits rose once more, then he just simply froze in place where he stood.

The room was bigger than his entire apartment; it was a suite after all. A huge Jacuzzi bath tub in a heart shape, a large fireplace in the middle of the floor, furry rugs scattered on the floor, and a massive king size bed in a separate room. Quatre just dropped his bag and stood jaw agape at the rustic splendor.

"Oh, my, GOD! I've died and gone to heaven." Quatre said spinning around to take in the splendor of the room.

Trowa closed the door and flipped a switch on the wall, the fireplace roared to life and Quatre squeaked. HE SQUEAKED!!! Trowa's mind chortled, absolutely taken with Quatre's entire personality and make up. His almost but not quite innocence, his beauty, his talent, his soft tenor that sounded like he was practically singing when he spoke, his smile, his natural grace when he walked. God Quatre was perfect, he'd been waiting a very long time to find him, Trowa would be damned if he let Quatre walk in and walk out of his life.

He was falling for him, and falling hard. He said a silent prayer that Quatre was feeling the same. It was like something just clicked and Trowa knew that he was on the verge of something grand here.

He then walked over to another switch and soft Christmas Carols began to play from the in house radio. "God Rest ye Merry Gentlemen" began as sung by the Mormon Tabernacle Choir in the background as he helped Quatre unpack his hastily packed bag.

"I take it you like the room?" Trowa asked as they settled on the couch by the fire, still unsure how close they should sit to one another. It was like he was suddenly a teenager again and Trowa was fumbling all over himself not sure what would be too forward or not enough. He HATED feeling like this, and no one EVER made him feel like it, only Quatre.

It was magical, it was infuriating, it was sublime, and it was getting late, if he was going to make a move he'd better make it, Trowa told himself as he watched Quatre lazily stare into the fire.

But then Quatre started to hum along to the end of the song, and Trowa forgot about the time as he listened to him, even just humming the music mesmerized Trowa, Quatre was not real, nothing so wonderful was real.

"I love this room" Quatre finally answered the question turning to look at Trowa and he smiled softly. "Thank you so much."

"No thanks Quatre. I want you here, it's not everyday I meet a man who gets my insides tied up in knots, I feel like a teenager here, I have no idea how to act, so I'm not going to mince words here. I am about two seconds away from kissing your socks off." Trowa said smiling and Quatre's gaze turned almost sultry and Trowa's throat went dry.

"What's stopping you?" Quatre asked leaning closer.

Trowa smiled. "Absolutely nothing now." He said melting into and around Quatre and pressing his lips against soft and yielding lips that parted in welcome when they met.

"Oh tidings of Comfort and Joy, comfort and Joy, oh tidings of comfort and joy"

The choir sang in the background as two new lovers came together in the soft glow of the firelight. The mood perfect and warm and oh so right, Trowa had no idea when he had met Quatre that evening that by night's end, there would be even more healing, that of his own loneliness too. The joy of the season couldn't hold a candle to the joy in two hearts that night that had found each other at last.

Quatre never went back to his apartment to stay, only to retrieve his belongings with Trowa by his

side; the lodge got a new permanent resident and employee, and Quatre never looked back. And he had never been happier.

Christmas came and was spent in the arms of his love, with the scent of pine and gingerbread, cinnamon and nutmeg, popcorn and rum pudding filling the air and at last Quatre could make new memories associated with the things he loved best. The most treasured of those scents was a new addition, that of cheap Stetson cologne that was awful in the bottle, but smelled oh so good on a freshly shaven Trowa. Quatre knew exactly what was going to be in Trowa Christmas stocking next year, and every year after that, as he inhaled all the aromas where he lay nestled in Trowa's arms by the fire. "I love Christmas." Quatre sighed as they lay by the fire, the radio softly playing in the background. "I love you." He added as Trowa pulled him closer.

"I love you too." Trowa replied resting his cheek atop the soft strands of sunlight that made up Quatre's hair.

With a contented sigh, Quatre began to sing, a baritone joined in adding a perfect harmony of support beneath Quatre's melody.

God Rest ye Merry Gentlemen

Let nothing you dismay.

Remember Christ our Savior was born on Christmas Day.

To Save us all from Woe and Sin

When we were gone astray

Oh Tidings of comfort and Joy

Comfort and joy

Oh tidings of Comfort and Joy.

~\*~\*~\*~\*~\*~

The End

Merry Christmas, it's almost that time of year again and the Fables spinner's feeling sappy.

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