



"You're in luck buddy. I have two, a single and a suite. Which will it be?"

"I need a desk. Whichever one has a place I can write I'll take."

"They both do, but the single is really small. If you're gonna hole yourself up in a room during your stay, I'd pick the suite."

"The suite it is." Trowa said handing over his credit card. The night manager started and stared.

"Trowa Barton? Not Trowa Barton from Springfield Elementary?"

Trowa looked up amazed. "Yes, do I know you?"

"Good GOD! TROWA, it's Duo, Duo Maxwell. I moved in the fifth grade, but hell I THOUGHT we'd been friends."

"Jesus Christ! DUO!" Trowa's whole world brightened for a moment as he welcomed a hug over the counter. "I never would have recognized you."

"Hey, I didn't recognize you either pal. How the hell have you been?"

"Right now, tired and pissed with the world. I need sleep."

"I hear ya. But hey, before you go. Why don't I have your bags taken up, and you go check out the lounge." Duo said smiling and handing Trowa a key card.

"I'm too tired."

"Trust me dude. There's another old friend of yours in there." Duo said grinning and giving Trowa a shove toward the door.

"Really, Who?" Trowa asked slightly more awake than he had been a moment ago.

"I'm sure you'll remember When you see him, he HASN'T changed all that much."

Intrigued Trowa walked over to the lounge that was filled with locals and guests. Dark, rich wood and a warm fire glowed and the sounds of "It Came Upon a Midnight Clear" played with a soft jazz feel was coming from the piano in the center of the room.

Trowa's eyes scanned the crowd first, and then stopped when he reached the piano player. "Oh, my God." Trowa breathed. "Quatre."

Lots of things had obviously changed. First being Quatre was no longer five, but twenty-five. But that face was still as bright as Trowa remembered. A radiant smile, big blue eyes, and that wild mop of golden hair that caught all available light and shone like a halo, those things had not changed. They just happened to sit on the head and shoulders of a man now and not a little boy.

Trowa moved and decided the empty seat at the piano bar was the best place to be on the earth at the moment and he sat down, utterly staring and not giving a damn. He was drinking it all in, and couldn't wait to wrap his arms around Quatre in a massive hug.

Quatre for his part was trying to play and ignore the man staring a hole in him. It wasn't working. First there was a vague recognition that Quatre couldn't quite place, and second, this guy was really good looking and Quatre got a thrill out of those sultry green eyes plastered to him, it wasn't every day Quatre had someone notice him, especially a dish like this guy.

Quatre just hoped he was gay and not just drunk.

The song finished and the brunet across the piano clapped languidly and smiled. "That was absolutely beautiful... Quatre."

Quatre? How on earth did this guy know his name?

"Um, thanks... Mr.?"

"Don't remember? I certainly remember you."

Quatre's mind thought frantically of every possible meeting he could have had with this person. Praying he hadn't been drunk and slept with this guy. Not that that was a bad thing, just not remembering having slept with such a gorgeous guy was the scary part.

"I'm sorry, no. I'm afraid I've not been back in the states very long. Did we meet somewhere abroad?"

The man just smiled. "No, it was before you left. I'm hurt you don't remember your first best friend."

The penny dropped. "Oh God! TROWA?"

"The one and only." Trowa smiled and was laughing as the young man launched himself off his bench seat and tackled Trowa in a bear hug.

"God I missed you!" Quatre was laughing and crying and crushing Trowa in a hug. A hug Trowa returned with equal vigor.

"Probably not as much as I missed you. I cannot believe it, and you're not going to believe why I'm here in the first place. It must be fate." Trowa said as the men separated to look at each other.

"God you look great! Tell me EVERYTHING in a minute. I'm off work in two songs." Quatre said righting his bench, which he'd knocked over when he'd latched onto Trowa, and laughing into his microphone as he sat down once more.

"Sorry folks, but you know how it is when old friends turn up after twenty years. Now where was I? Any requests Trowa?"

"Nope, just play so we can get out of here and talk."

Quatre grinned and played the two shortest Christmas Carols he knew.

Almost immediately as the last note was struck, Quatre was up, bowing quickly to his audience, and grabbing his tip jar with one hand, Trowa's with the other and they were out of the lounge. Quatre laughing every step of the way and claiming another hug from Trowa the minute they were in the lobby.

"My room or yours?" Quatre asked as they headed toward the elevator,

"Mine." Trowa said as they passed the front desk.

"I see you found Cat." Duo said grinning as the pair passed.

"You were right Duo. He hasn't changed much. And thanks."

"Hey, no prob." Duo winked as the elevator doors opened and the pair stepped inside.

"So, you mentioned fate had a hand in this Trowa. Do start talking." Quatre grinned as the elevator started up to floor seven.

Trowa laughed and explained his hellacious adventure getting here, and how the sole reason for the trip was so he could think back on their time spent together as children, specifically to remember Quatre with no distractions.

"You're writing a book about me?"

"I planned to. And I can't think of a better inspiration than having you here to fill in the gaps my memory cannot recall."

"I can't think we did much to warrant a book about it. Other than maybe that time you and I got lost in the mall after seeing Santa. That was pretty scary."

"There was the time at the beach when your sister put that dead fish down your shorts too." Quatre added chuckling.

"Ugh, see there's one I had forgotten. Thanks for reminding me." Trowa shuddered as the doors opened and they walked to Trowa's room.

"No problem." Quatre laughed as they entered the room and Quatre dialed the kitchen. "Hilde, I know room service is closed. But I'm begging here. Can we get a pot of coffee up to room 734? Pleeeeeeeease? Maybe some of your gingerbread cookies can find their way onto the tray too? I'll be your eternal slave." Quatre whined playfully then hung up the phone grinning. "All nighter go-juice and nibbles coming up."

"Coffee sounds great, I've been up..." Trowa began looking at his watch "...going on twenty-five hours now."

"Good gracious, why don't you sleep we can talk in the morning."

"No way, I'd never sleep now. God am I glad to see you again. Weren't you in Egypt or something? Why are you back?"

Quatre frowned. "How about we not talk about me in present day for a while. It's not very nice."

Trowa's mood darkened instantly and he sat down next to Quatre on the foot of the bed. "What's wrong? I know it's been twenty-years Quatre, but to me you still are my best friend. You can tell me."

"I don't know. You may change your mind if you know why I'm back."

"I doubt it."

Quatre sighed and leveled him a gaze that well nigh defied description. "I hope you mean that." Quatre began taking a deep breath. "Let's just say, the part of the world I was living in is dangerous for people like me. Not that any place is really safe, but the states are safer than where I was."

"Because you're American?"

"No, Dad wasn't American, and I'm only American because I was accidentally born here. No Trowa, it's because I'm gay." Quatre stood up ready to leave when Trowa grabbed his hand and pulled him back down.

"Where are you going?"

"Don't you want me to leave?"

"No, why would I? Because you're gay? Newsflash Quatre, you'd have had to have been a murderer on the run for me to want you to leave. And since we're doing the confession thing right off the bat, here's news for you, I am too."

Quatre's face looked up in shock. "You're... you too?"

"Molly, homo, fag, butt-ranger, fairy, queer, queen, choose your derogatory term, there's not one I haven't heard or been called. Join the club."

Quatre laughed. "Same here. Only back there, you can be arrested for being gay, and well it's a death penalty in a lot of regions."

"I know. How on earth did you cope? Let alone, you know, have a love life?"

"No love life, period. I was more concerned staying alive than to find a date. First chance I got, I came back here."

The conversation was stalled when Hilde brought up a large carafe of coffee on a tray with cookies, cream and sugar. "Only cause I love you Cat." She said as Quatre brought in the bounty and kissed her cheek.

"I owe you. Thanks Hil."

"Yeah, yeah. Your debt keeps rising, I'll think of a way for you to pay me back later." She grinned and turned and left.

"You have to try Hilde's gingerbread, it's WONDERFUL." Quatre said pouring two cups and liberally pouring creamer and sugar in his before dunking a gingerbread man head into the liquid and purring in bliss as he savored the sweet.

Trowa just added a little sugar to his cup to take the edge off before agreeing with Quatre on Hilde's cookies.

"So..." Quatre said around a mouthful. "You've heard my lame story. What about you?"

"I don't get on well with others apparently. I can't keep a relationship beyond the first date. I've been accused of being morose, too depressing, too cynical, and just plain being a bastard. I don't make good first impressions."

"You seem fine to me."

"You are different."

"How so?"

"I actually like you for one."

Quatre laughed. "You like the five-year-old me. You may hate me in an hour."

"I doubt it. I know my opinion is twenty years out of date, but still I've not seen anything to change my opinion of you yet."

"That's good to know. So other than being a bastard writer with no love life anything else about you I should know?" Quatre teased and Trowa laughed.

"God no. And you make it sound so, trite."

"Like you I don't see it, but then my opinion of you is twenty years out of date too." Quatre grinned dunking another cookie.

"Your turn. Other than gay boy on the run from unforgiving environments, who are you now Quatre?"

"I like playing music. I studied music for years; I didn't have ANY friends over there. Dad kept us all pretty isolated with private tutors. I found I could escape boredom through music. When I got back, I ran across Duo when I answered an ad for an in-house musician here. The rest is history. I don't get paid a lot. But I have room and board, and an old friend, and I like it here. Been here about a year now, still no love life other than an occasional date. With losers I might add. It seems I find all the ones with major hang ups to date. Or ones who seem nice at first and turn out to be the overly macho type who want me to be their 'bitch'. I may be short, but I'm no one's 'bitch'."

Trowa laughed. "Oh that's just wrong on several levels. Okay one child hood image blown for good. Point one, the new Quatre can say the word "bitch" without blinking." Trowa grinned and Quatre laughed right back.

"Sorry to blow sugary images Trowa. But guess what, I'm a Big Boy now." Quatre said, ending the sentence 'big boy now' with his best five-year-old voice.

"So I noticed." Trowa said stifling a yawn.

"You're about to pass out Trowa, time to tuck you in for the night. We can talk all day tomorrow if you want to. I don't play until eight o'clock until midnight, Tuesday, through Saturday. I'm off Sunday's and Monday's and tomorrow is Sunday. Lucky you, you get me all day." Quatre grinned setting his cup down as Trowa stood and stretched.

"You're right I suppose. I'm getting foggy. I'll probably sleep until noon at this rate."

"Oh good, I hate mornings myself."

"Then that makes two of us. See you at lunchtime?"

"It's a date." Quatre said giving Trowa another hug before he let himself out.

"A date." Trowa grinned as he flopped down into bed with a huge smile on his face. There was more to Quatre now, so much more. Trowa was thanking every deity he could name for conspiring to bring Quatre back into his life. This was one thing he was not going to mess up, he was too infatuated with the new Quatre not to do everything in his power to latch on and not let go again.

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Duo and Hilde were chatting over the counter when the elevator doors chimed and a blond, literally waltzed out. Humming gaily and never missing a step, Quatre pulled Hilde into his arms and danced around the lobby.

Hilde laughed as she was whirled around the room. "So I take it you're on cloud nine?"

"Whatever gave you that idea?" Quatre asked innocently as they ended up back where they started and he leaned over the counter to grin at Duo.

"Am I to take this Fred Astaire impersonation as a good sign, or are you just practicing on being the next Ginger Rogers?" Duo asked and Quatre grinned brighter.

"He's Gay. Tall, hot, sexy, nice, and GAY! If I have to beg for this I will. I'll blow every sugar coated memory he has of me yet." Quatre said wagging his eyebrows and popping a mint off the counter into his mouth.

"You owe me ten bucks Duo." Hilde remarked holding out her hand.

"Damn it." Duo swore slapping the money into her hand.

"You two were not betting on that were you?"

"No comment." Hilde quipped tucking the cash down her top and whistling as she sauntered off.

"You are both rotten to the core. I'm gonna stop telling you these things."

"You don't have to tell us Cat. You advertise when you have the 'hots' for someone. Then you get all gooey when you have a decent chance. You're an open book." Duo teased and Quatre pouted.

"Crap. I'm that obvious huh?"

"Neon Billboards are less conspicuous."

"Damn."

Duo just laughed as Quatre soft shoed his way down the hall and to his room to try and sleep. Not that sleep was going to come easy tonight. He was flying high on cloud nine still. He had a long way to come back down to earth yet before sleep was even a remote possibility.

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Trowa awoke around eleven in the morning and after downing a cup of cold coffee to clear the fog from his brain, he stumbled to the shower and twisted the taps to 'just shy of scalding' and gratefully plunged into the spray.

He felt leagues better after a rather lengthy shower and shave. He felt human again, and damn near giddy. If that were an emotion he'd ever admit to feeling in the first place, which it wasn't.

Toothbrush hanging out of his mouth, Trowa began sorting through his clothes, he'd not brought ANYTHING he'd normally wear when trying to look his best, he hadn't intended this scenario ever happening on his vacation and simply packed a bunch of turtlenecks and sweaters. It was cold in Vermont this time of year after all. So he just chose the best of what he did bring with him, a black turtleneck, black jeans, his well-worn boots, and a forest green cardigan sweater, with a black argyle pattern circling the trunk of the sweater.

Dressed, hair combed, freshly shaven, cologne applied and sudden nerves squashed, Trowa headed down to the lobby a mere five minutes after noon.

Quatre was sitting on the sofa in the lobby waiting for him. "Been waiting long?" Trowa asked as he walked up behind him. Quatre just turned his face up and smiled.

"Just a few minutes. Ready to go?"

"Go where?"

"Out to grab food of course. Lunch does usually entail something to eat after all. And if you're anything like me, you slept through breakfast." Quatre grinned standing. Next to Trowa he stood just level with his shoulders, not overly tall, but he wasn't all that short either, Trowa mentally noted as he fell into step beside Quatre.

"I am famished. I had nothing but a stupid pack of peanuts on the plane."

"I figured as much, and a tip. Never eat in this hotel before dinner. Hilde is the only cook in the place who knows that food should be cooked, not over cooked." Quatre said as they stepped outside into crisp winter air.

Quatre led Trowa over to the employee parking lot and to his small SUV, and unlocking the passenger side first, he held the door open for Trowa. "Okay, this is just weird. I see you still have annoying good manners." Trowa commented and Quatre's laugh was cut short as the door shut and Quatre climbed into the driver's side.

It took a good few minutes before the heater decided to work, and by that time, Quatre was already parking along a quaint strip of Main Street, where shop after shop sat side by side. Christmas lights and wreaths, and all manner of festive decorations lined the street on either side, sending shoppers back to an era of simple pleasures of times gone by. "Welcome to Pine Cone, Vermont Trowa. This is it, blink and you miss it." Quatre said as they climbed out and Trowa followed Quatre as he walked down the street. They didn't go far when Quatre led them to a small coffee shop on the corner. "Great food and coffee in here." Quatre said as he stamped snow off his boots before they stepped inside.

The bell on the door chimed and a woman about their age, with twin braids of honey colored hair smiled and waved as Quatre came inside. "Looking good Cat. Same as always?"

"Yes, but we need a menu too Sally. I'm not alone this time." Quatre grinned as Trowa stepped up behind him.

"Well, I'll say you're not alone. How do handsome. Coffee to warm you up first?" She asked as they settled into a table in the corner.

"Please, and lots of it." Trowa said taking the menu Sally handed him before she turned over the cup sitting on the table already and poured.

"Then lots you shall have. Man Quatre, he's cute. Where'd you find him?"

Quatre smiled, and Trowa noticed a slight blush darken Quatre's cheeks. "Sally, this is my best friend Trowa. Trowa this is Sally, she makes the best coffee and sandwiches on the planet." Quatre introduced and Trowa shook her hand.

"Pleasure." Trowa smiled and almost chocked when Sally visually sized him up.

"Best friend... um-hum?" Sally hummed with blatant innuendo before turning and disappearing back into the kitchen. Quatre coughed.

"Sorry, Sally is sort of intense."

"I like her. She reminds me of Cathy."

"How is Cathy?"

"A pain in my ass. But I love her. She's nagging me constantly, but what older sister doesn't nag?"

"True." Quatre chuckled as he sipped his coffee. "She married?"

"Married and divorced. I have a four-year-old niece out of that though. Her ex was a prick. Thank Goodness Hannah takes after Cathy. Want to see a picture?" Trowa asked pulling out his wallet and bringing out a recent picture of his niece and sister and handing it to Quatre.

"That Cathy?" Trowa nodded an affirmative. "She turned out BEAUTIFUL, and Hannah looks just like her. She has your eyes though Trowa." Quatre smiled handing the photo back as Sally came to take their order.

Sally vanished once more and Trowa tucked his picture back into his wallet. "So what pictures do you carry since we're sharing."

Quatre grinned and fished out his wallet. "You remember this?" Quatre asked handing Trowa a very old photo, yellowed around the edges and Trowa went misty as he turned it over to look at.

"God, I remember taking this picture! I can't believe you still have it." Trowa gasped as he looked at a picture of Quatre and Himself sitting on Santa's lap.

"It was the only picture I had of you. And I'll never forget that day ever. You were my hero that day." Quatre said smiling and Trowa looked up confused.

"Hero? I just remember getting lost right after this."

Quatre nodded. "Lost and terrified. Bet you don't remember what you said to me."

Trowa shook his head.

"I can remember it like yesterday. I was making myself sick crying, and you turned to me, handed me the hanky still pinned to your sweater, took my hand and said 'Don't cry Cat. I'll protect you.' Your mother showed up just a few minutes later, but for those few minutes I wasn't scared anymore. You were my hero that day." Quatre smiled as he finished his memory and gently took back his picture, tucking it reverently back into his wallet.

"I can't believe you remember that. I just remember you crying and then mom showed up. I'm touched. I've never been anyone's hero before."

"And all by the age of five no less. You left your mark Trowa, I never forgot you. And I can't begin to describe how happy am to see you again."

"That feeling is by far and away mutual Quatre. I never forgot you either, obviously, since I'm here to write a book all about you." Trowa replied in kind reaching out and gently squeezing Quatre's hand as Sally brought their plates.

The sentimental mood was postponed while they ate, and talk turned to more current topics of conversation as they spent the meal catching up for lost time.

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"I agree. This is heaven, I had no idea I was so cold. But then I started out the day dry Quatre Winner. If I catch a cold it's all your fault." Trowa said splashing Quatre who blinked and sat back up, grinning ear to ear.

"But deny you had fun."

"Can't. That brought back a ton of memories. I'll let you win next time." Trowa teased and got splashed for his efforts.

"Let me win?! Why you!" Quatre feigned being affronted and moved into give Trowa a dunk under the water.

Trowa once again was faster as was laughing as he twisted and got Quatre pinned against the side of the tub. Quatre laughing and twisting and splashing as their fight continued from where they left off.

"All we need now is that plastic submarine you used to have and we really will be back to the old days Trowa. Only I don't remember us taking baths together sill in our underwear." Quatre laughed and Trowa grinned.

"That can be rectified you know." Trowa purred hooking his thumb into Quatre's shorts.

"Funny, I don't remember you hitting on me before. Are we for making new memories all of a sudden Trowa?" Quatre asked slowly wrapping his arms around Trowa's neck.

"New and equally unforgettable memories. I don't want to be your hero anymore."

"What do you want to be Trowa?"

"I just want to be yours."

"That makes two of us then." Quatre sighed sitting up to close the distance and slowly and purposefully placed nibbling kisses along Trowa's bottom lip.

Trowa only growled and tore into Quatre's kiss with vigor. Water was everywhere, as they grasped each other, fighting for breath as they clung and kissed and held on tight.

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Quatre was wrapped in a soft terry cloth robe as he answered the door for room service. It was Hilde standing there smiling from ear to ear. "So?" She asked expectantly.

Quatre only smiled and wheeled the cart inside. Trowa, in a matching robe took the cart from Quatre and in answer to Hilde's question hung the "Do Not Disturb" sign on the outer doorknob before closing the door with a soft click.

They could hear Hilde laugh all the way back to the elevator.

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Trowa popped the cork from the champagne and poured two glasses. Handing one to Quatre as they snuggled up together beside the fire. Once settled Trowa held up his glass for a romantic toast: "To old friends, to new memories, to me coming in to this hotel on a not so clear midnight, and finding instead a clear path to my heart."

Quatre smiled and clinked glasses before sipping and then offering his own toast. "To my hero, to my lover, to my best friend. May this midnight, be the first of many."

"I'll drink to that. We are in Vermont after all, marriage is legal here."

"One step at a time Trowa. I have many more sugary images of my youth to blow irrevocably for you yet."

"After sex on a bathroom floor? Quatre, trust me, I do NOT see you as a five-year-old anymore. You are without a doubt a 'big boy' now. A VERY big boy."

"Just so we're clear on that."

"We are." Trowa said taking Quatre's glass and setting it aside as he claimed those lips once more in a passionate kiss. Moving to kiss Quatre's exposed neck.

"He CAME upon a midnight clear...." Quatre sang out sniggering and Trowa laughed, the mood shot and totally broken.

"Oh lord, don't decompose Carols Quatre, that's sacrilege!"

"Good King Wenceslas looked up, while he feasts on Stephen!"

"QUATRE!"

"Chestnuts roasting on an open fire, Jack Frost nipping at my balls."

"That's it!" Trowa picked up Quatre and flung him on the bed and proceeded to 'punish' him in the most pleasurable and obscene ways possible. Both men were laughing heartily as they basked in the joy of their reunion and a friendship that had grown into love.

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Yup, I'm in the Christmas mood again and needed a Sappy feel good fic to go with it. Not one of my best, but it's Christmas season fast approaching, and I'm in the spirit of sap.

Ho ho ho!

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