

"Do NOT go there Trowa Barton..." Quatre cut him off with a playful scowl. "...Or you will be sorry."

"No I won't. You're all bark and no bite Quat."

"I can bite if you want me too."

"Oh man.... don't tease me... not before a three hour practice Quatre, at any rate." Trowa said grinning and leaning over to kiss Quatre's cheek quickly before they walked into the huge set of double doors leading into the tiered Choir room. Which was already getting packed with all the choir students, freshmen through senior grade levels.

The seniors were at the back of the room mingling, while the other grade levels separated accordingly in the lower levels of the room.

One pack of seniors separated even further from the rest of the general "Choir" classes.

Twelve to be precise, six boys, six girls, and every single person in the room sort of stood staring at the elite group, some with looks of unmitigated awe, some with contempt, others just out of curiosity.

These twelve were the cream of the crop, and those who despised them really had no idea how hard they had worked to get to where they stood mingling with each other in the back of the room. It took severe dedication, long, long hours of practice after school and on Saturdays, and above all they had to have talent that was unquestionable.

Not only did they have to endure a singing tryout to obtain their coveted position in the show choir troupe known as "The Sandpipers", they had to be able to dance while singing without sacrificing sound quality, as well as be able to dance well to boot. It was not easy, it gave them no social life out of school since everyday was spent in rehearsal and weekends found them packed into a dingy yellow bus off to some other school in the tri-state area for a competition, where they slept in sleeping bags on gymnasium floors, only to get up and perform the next day, then get on a bus and come home. On top of having to keep at least a "C" average in ALL of their regular curriculum classes.

Let the others be jealous, they had no concept of what it took out of the performer to even be where he or she was in the first place. They all had well earned pride these twelve.

Quatre's dancing partner Hilde leapt up onto his back the moment he walked into the group. "So you excited Q?" She asked giggling and ruffling his hair. Hilde was his partner due to the fact she was the only person in the group shorter than he was.

They were paired off to each other by height basically, for visual appeal as they paraded around the stage. Quatre was a first tenor and Hilde was a soprano and they were one pair. Usually up front and center when performing because of their, as they claimed, "height impairment".

Duo and Dante just called them the "Short shits".

Duo was a second tenor as was his identical twin brother Dante. "The Bookends" as they had been nicknamed, because inevitably when the choreographer came in and spotted he

had a set of identical twins to work with, she always placed one twin front row, stage left, the other was always front row stage right.

It was a riot watching the audience look from one side of the stage to the other like watching a tennis match as they finally realized they weren't seeing things and that there were indeed two identical boys mirroring each other up on stage.

Hilde was Dante's girlfriend, if not his dancing partner. Dante was paired up with Catherine, Trowa's sister. She was technically a year older than Trowa, but had been so ill in third grade with 'mono' she had missed almost the entire school year, so had to repeat the grade. Now brother and sister were in the same class. And it was just weird to have those two teamed up as dancing partners, even if they did practice together at home.

Duo had one of the only two juniors in the Sandpipers as his dance partner, Zechs' little sister Relena made the troupe this year and was paired up with Duo.

Zechs had been with the troupe, but had graduated the year before, having been the "King" for the madrigal dinner the previous year with his girlfriend and dance partner Lucy Noin or just Noin who had been last year's Queen of the Court during madrigal season.

Those two were sorely missed. Trowa was the only deep bass left, and even then couldn't quite belt out those lower register notes, as Zechs had been able to.

Trowa's partner was the tallest of the girls, seeing as Trowa stood almost a head taller than everyone else. Dorothy was his partner and like Hilde latched onto his arm the moment he walked into the door. "Quatre driven you nuts yet?" She asked wrinkling her nose at Quatre who grinned back innocently.

"Hasn't he driven everyone nuts waiting for rehearsal today?" Trowa asked back smiling down at his boyfriend with a wink.

"Oh leave me alone guys, I can't help being excited. This is my favorite performance every year." Quatre said hoping up onto a low rise of stacked chairs against the wall.

Heero and his partner, the other junior classmen in the ranks, Sylvia walked into the room last looking harried and carrying huge stacks of music sheets. "Mrs. Theis caught us on the way in. Go help bring in the shit." Heero said dropping his stack on the piano bench at the front of the room and relieving Sylvia of her stack as well.

"She's Got Wufei and Sally dragging out the rest of the stuff from the music library." Sylvia said grinning at Quatre. "You trying out today for the solo?"

"What a stupid Question." Duo muttered chuckling and leaving with Heero to go bring in the rest of the music pages to be passed out to the rest of the group.

This being their fourth year of the madrigal, NONE of the seniors needed the music anymore. They knew it backward, forward, inside out, and upside-down already. Having sung every part at least once on their climb to the top rung on the ladder.

And to prove the point without really trying, Quatre began to hum one of the tunes as he moved to sort the stack of music so they could pass them out to those who needed it.

It didn't take long for the veteran's of previous Dinner's to start humming their harmony parts to Quatre's tune, and soon the room was singing merrily around stupefied freshmen as Quatre just smiled and began handing out sheet music with Hilde and the others.

"What song is that you're singing?" One young girl asked, all starry eyed as she smiled shyly at the senior. Uh-Oh, Quatre knew that look. Crap.

"Uh, the song's on page seventeen, it's "The Flaming Pudding Carol." You'll sing it as you bring desert in during the show." Quatre said pointing out the passage then almost running away from the fawning freshmen.

Hilde noticed and began laughing hysterically. "Ugh, new meat freshmen. Quatre don't run dah-ling!!! They're harmless!" She called out turning to grin at the girl Quatre was fleeing from. "Don't get your hopes up sweetie, he's taken." Hilde said with a wink and the girl almost pouted.

"By who?" She asked as Trowa leaned over her shoulder with a script.

"By me of course." He said wagging his eyebrows.

He never saw a more stunned fourteen-year-old girl in his life and it took all of Trowa's will power not to fall over in hysterics like Hilde.

"Why is my girlfriend having a conniption fit on the floor?" Dante asked bringing in a stack of more music.

All she could do was point at Quatre as her eyes drifted to a still stunned girl.

"Aw shit, again?!?! Why is it Quatre and Trowa get all the girls ogling them? Do girls have a sort of reverse gaydar or something?" Dante said dropping his stack of music on the bench with the rest of the stuff already accumulating there.

"No we're just better looking than you." Trowa said softly with a smile as he finished handing out music to the bass section and then moved to the back row of the section and found an empty seat just as Mrs. Theis, who looked frazzled rushed into the room.

"All right, settle down everyone. Duo, that means you too." Mrs. Theis said.

"HEY!" Duo protested from the back row of the Tenor section as the room sniggered. Mrs. Theis just smiled.

"Right, Are we in sections people?" Mrs. Theis asked getting situated behind her piano.

"I rounded 'em up all ready Mrs. T!" Sally hollered from the Alto section.

"Good. Then let's get started with a quick run through from start to finish so those of you who have not heard this before can get a general idea of the whole show." Mrs. Theis began shoving her glasses up her nose and scanning the room for faces. "Okay, Sandpipers raise your hands dears for a head count." She began and dotted from around the room rose twelve pairs of hands.

"Wufei, please read the role of the king please this year." She began and it looked as if Wufei was about to fall out of his seat.

"Oh man, the King? He's already got a big Head Mrs. T!" Dante commented and Wufei just flipped him off out of Mrs. Theis' eyesight.

"Sally, please read the role of the Queen." And Dorothy groaned this time.

"No bossing us around Sally like Noin did Last year." Dorothy said and Sally smirked.

"Oh Lord, no way!" Sally said in Mock Horror.

"All tight settle down kids. Where was I? Oh, Duo, you're the Friar again this year." Mrs. Theis said as she went down her list of assigned characters. "Trowa, please read for the Steward. Quatre, read Lord number one, Heero, number two, and Dante, number three. Dorothy, Lady number one, Hilde, number two, Catherine, number three, 'Lena, number four. Sylvia, you'll be St. Lucy in the procession at Dinner. That's everyone right?" Mrs. Theis asked rhetorically as she checked off her list.

Quatre was on the edge of his seat, he didn't care if he had lines, he just wanted the solo. Speaking of solos... Trowa WAS THE STEWARD!!!! He turned to grin at his boyfriend who looked like a stuck pig.

Quatre gave him a 'thumbs up'. Trowa would have one of the solos in the Boar's Head Carol as he carried in the fake Boar's head to present to the King and Queen that would usher in the dinner's main course. Wufei would take the second solo in that song and Sally the third verse. Everyone at the head table sang the Latin chorus in between solos. But Trowa would kick it off, acappella no less. Trowa HATED singing acappella, he was always afraid he'd go off key. He NEVER did, he just worried too much. Quatre chuckled from his seat in the first tenor section, as one of the freshmen tenors turned around to look at him.

"Hey, you guys were just messin' with Julie, right? Or is that guy really your boyfriend?" He asked and Quatre laughed again.

"Oh lord, here we go again." Duo mumbled from beside Quatre. "Just turn around pipsqueak and pay attention to rehearsal. It's none of your business if Tro and Quat do the wild mambo together on Saturday nights or not." Duo said scowling at the freshmen, who then promptly turned back around in his seat to pay attention, utterly confused and intimidated by the oddball seniors behind him.

"Wild mambo Duo?"

"Horizontal Tango, the ugly bump-n-grind, dancin' in the sheets, butt bump..."

"I got it.... Shut up you sick animal." Quatre said glowering at his friend.

"You're so cute when you blush Q." Dante said reaching around his brother to pinch Quatre's checks.

"Fuck you both." Quatre mumbled barely audible.

"Sorry, Trowa would kick our asses if we got too friendly with you bud." Duo said, ripening Quatre's already over-ripe hue.

Trowa smirked and shook his head. He could tell from across the room Dante and Duo were picking on Quatre again with rude sex jokes or something similar. It was always the same, Quatre only blushed that brightly when the subject of sex was the source of the teasing, he was glad he had Heero and Wufei in his section, at least they were quiet and nowhere near as rude as the Maxwell twins.

"Okay, now most of you will be serving wenches and kitchen boys. So you will only be singing those songs marked for everyone, and pay attention to your parts. Those of you, who served last year, help those around you with their parts. Now for a run through... Sandpipers ready? A-one-a-two-three-four!" Mrs. Theis counted the tempo plunking out only the opening chord so they were all on pitch and the Sandpipers kicked off the rehearsal with *Adeste Fideles* in Latin for one verse, *O Come All ye Faithful*, the English version for the next two verses acappella.

Quatre's heart raced.... They'd begun, which meant when they reached the end of the show and it was time to sing "O Holy Night", they'd sing that song at least three times so all the senior girls who wanted to sing it had a shot to perform it for Mrs. Theis and then she'd decide right then and there who got the part.

Sally was the queen, but there was no way in hell she could sing the part, it was in a key best suited for a soprano or in Quatre's opinion, a first tenor like he was. He couldn't wait and he'd beg Mrs. Theis if needed so he could try for the part.

As it stood, Hilde, Dorothy, and Catherine had the range for the song, and would most likely be trying for the part as much as he was.

The pace moved along, lines were read in between songs, and the next thing Quatre knew Duo beside him began his acappella Gregorian style prayer-chant. Duo had played the Friar last year too, he really was perfect for the part, and he had a wonderful voice that never wavered. His chanting canticle began:

*Glory Be to God in the Highest
And on Earth Peace among Men with Whom HE is pleased
Unto you is born this day our Saviour
Which is Christ the Lord
Alleluia*

*Oh Lord Heavenly Father
Bless us and these thy gifts
Lead us not into temptation
And deliver us from sin
Alleluia*

Amen

Of course his patented smirk tended to rend the moment of bliss from his voiced prayer null and void. Not to mention he really got "in" to his Character, and for the next month of

rehearsals he'd walk around blessing people left and right like an evangelist on acid and introduce himself as "Father Duo of Iain'tnosissy".

Quatre felt his heart race in his chest, and he knew exactly where that little pain came from. He looked over to where Trowa sat, his outward appearance never betraying he was a nervous wreck inside.

His solo was next.

Quatre chuckled, Trowa had the WORST stage fright, but he never let on, never stumbled, and always looked perfect.

While on the inside, he was about ready to puke with nerves. Quatre just smiled at him and waited until Trowa looked at him.

"You'll do fine, love you." Quatre mouthed soundlessly and Trowa smiled back, the nerves gone.

"Love you too." Trowa mouthed back as the intro to "The Boar's Head Carol" began to issue forth from the piano.

Trowa took a deep breath and for a normally quiet young man, he made bones rattle with his deep reverberating bass in the acoustically perfect choir room.

*The Boar's head in hand bear I
Bedecked with bays and rosemary
And I pray you my masters, be merry
Quo estis in con vivio*

Quatre grinned; he loved when Trowa let fly and just belted it out. The Sandpipers all sang the chorus together:

*Caput apri defero
Reddens laudes Domino*

It was Wufei's turn to answer Trowa in verse.

*The Boar's Head I understand
Is the chieftest dish in all the land
And I pray you wherever it be found
Servite cum in cantico*

And again the Choir followed the verse

*Caput apri defero
Reddens laudes Domino*

Sally smirked in her seat; she was digging being the Queen this year, and began her verse.

*Our Steward hath provided this
In honor of our king of bliss,*

*Which on this day to be served
In Reginensi Atrio*

And with a final flourish of voices joined in jubilant song one final chorus was delivered.

*Caput apri defero
Reddens laudes Domino*

Trowa looked visibly relieved as the show continued in rehearsal. The Sandpipers who would be entertaining during the meal while the rest of the music department served the food to the guests, Kicked off the cue that would see all the serving students carrying in the food itself with "The Gloucestershire Wassail" which would be repeated three times giving the servers ample time to get to their assigned tables with the food. Then they ran through their various Christmas carols that were part of the performance, "Good King Wenceslas", "O Tannenbaum" in German no less, These songs would be mixed with songs the orchestra members were practicing in another room. It wasn't all singing, thankfully. They all collapse from exhaustion. The music however never stopped throughout the entire main course dining experience.

Then all students went into "The Flaming Pudding Carol" that was for everyone to sing and was the cue to serve the desert course to those in attendance for the show.

During desert in the show itself, the Sandpipers would leave the head table and go mingle with the guests at their tables while the orchestra played yuletide chamber music for around twenty to thirty minutes. Enough time to let the guests, parents, friends, and general small town populace to eat and get the noisy job of getting dishes cleared off tables without disturbing the rest of the show. Not to mention give the Sandpipers' voices a well needed rest.

It was basically an intermission in the show for them and it was also a quest to find water or a bathroom, then visit with parents at tables and set the community atmosphere, as this was the show's main purpose to begin with.

And whilst doing all this, the quest was also to hide a multitude of bread rolls that had not been eaten onto various hiding places on their bodies.

The rolls were so tasty, and the performers were not supposed to partake of the fare served. But big puffy sleeves were just the perfect place to stick bundles of paper napkin wrapped rolls, that one could sneak off and devour quickly back stage during intermission and enjoy the snatched goodies.

One did get hungry performing and watching all your audience shovel food into their faces. And the one thing the school cafeteria did well was the bread. That and cups of the special "Wassail" they made which tasted like hot spiced apple cider with rum extract was a sinful treat to hungry music department students.

Quatre was musing and already salivating thinking about the rolls and wassail when his attention shifted back to the rehearsal.

He was absent mindedly singing "Plaudite, Psalite" when it dawned on him.

It was time. "O Holy Night" was next in the program and a million anxious butterflies suddenly swarmed his stomach.

Mrs. Theis looked up at him "Quatre, please sing the solo this year." She said and his jaw hit the floor.

No tryouts, it was a shock, a thrill, a surreal moment. He had wanted this for so long, and now it was his and he just could not believe he didn't have to tryout for it like Mrs. Theis did every year.

He didn't have time to ponder why Mrs. Theis suddenly changed her routine; the short three-measure introduction had already begun. {2}

In a euphoric haze of joy, Quatre closed his eyes, and just sang.

*O Holy Night
The Stars are brightly shining
It is the night of our dear Savior's Birth*

*Long lay the world
In sin and error pining
'Til he appeared and the Soul Felt it's worth*

*A Thrill of Hope
The Weary world rejoices
For yonder breaks a New and Glorious Morn*

He opened his eyes to look at Trowa who was beaming with just as much happiness for his boyfriend as he took a breath to join Quatre in singing the Chorus. The entire room erupted in sound.

*Fall on your knees
O Hear the Angels Voice
Oh Night Divine
O Night When Christ was born*

Quatre took a huge breath, the killer high note was coming up, only he would sing that note and he had to be louder than fifty other people when he did so.

O Night DIVINE

O Night, oh Night Divine.

Quatre was in tears as the last note faded away, and the rehearsal paused and the whole room took a collective breath.

"HOT DAMN QUAT! THAT WAS AWESOME!" Duo chortled breaking the mood and making Quatre blush.

"Thanks" He said with a pleased small smile.

"That was incredible Quatre. Very nice job, but Duo, watch that mouth." Mrs. Theis said grinning and plunking out the final song of the show, which was "We Wish you a Merry Christmas"

From there, the Sandpipers would move out into the Hall as give personal wishes of good tidings to exiting patrons as they left to go home.

Then everyone would move back into the cafeteria, clean it up and get it ready for the next night's show before all hitting the local Pizza Hut en masse to just hang out, be rowdy and obnoxious with more singing, with tons of coke pitchers and pizzas littering the pushed together table tops.

They'd all wind up leaving around midnight to fall dead from exhaustion. Only to get up early again, Head to school on Saturday to give a matinee performance and another Dinner.

Hit Pizza Hut again.

Then repeat it for once more for the final Matinee on Sunday. After the Sunday performance, when spirits sagged because it was all over, everyone would pitch in and tear down the decorations, stow them away until next year then once more go home and die.

Monday at school, if they even made it in, was just a bleary eyed blur. Most teachers had pity on the music department students that weekend, and didn't assign homework on the Friday before, or the Monday following.

It was the same every year, but even so, the thrill was always there. It had been performed for fifteen years, before this show, and it would be there again next year for the new high school seniors and the even newer to the incoming freshmen.

It was a tradition, and every year it just got bigger and better audience wise. Every performance sold out by early November. It was the Music department's biggest fundraiser of the year, but it was also a gift to the community.

Once a year, this small town was taken back to Christmas past, and allowed to just revel in the holiday spirit of simpler times. To see Children and Grandchildren, friends and relatives celebrate the season in song.

And happy memories like those lasted a lifetime and could never be replaced.

Christmas was about remembering and sharing after all. Celebrating peace and joy and all that was still good about mankind.

And there were still good things out there, they seemed to be forgotten and tended to get clouded over the rest of the year, but in moments like these, when you could feel and remember in song, it restored the hope that fades temporarily.

And that was the meaning of Christmas, at least in Quatre's point of view. As he sat in the passenger seat of Trowa's car as Trowa drove him home after rehearsal.

the audience, with all the candles twinkling and the whole emotional weight of the room was on me. If there was ever a moment I ever felt closer to "God" or whoever is up there. It was right then as I hit the "High C" in the song and held it. *Shudder* I still get chill bumps today, 13 years later thinking back on it. This was one of the highest parts of my life. Where I really felt I accomplished something grand for once. Simple songs can do that I guess when your heart and soul are really into it. *Sigh*

I couldn't however hit that note again now if I tried!!! Too many years of cigarettes turned this one Soprano into a Baritone. (No I'm not kidding there either. I sing Baritone now, tenor if I push it. DON'T SMOKE! Trust me on this one! Those who heard me sing at Yaoi-con in the Kareoke bar can attest to how much I sound like a guy now when I do croak out a song)

For Information, the Sheet Music and Midi Version of the Songs Go here:

The Boars Head Carol:

<http://www.rememberjosie.org/xmas/s7307.html>

Good King Wenceslas:

<http://rememberjosie.org/carols/s7009.asp>

O Tannenbaum:

http://rememberjosie.org/carols/s7251_deutsch.asp

O Holy Night:

http://rememberjosie.org/carols/o_holy.asp

Adeste Fideles:

<http://rememberjosie.org/carols/s5726d-latin.asp>

The Gloucestershire Wassail:

<http://www.knightsong.com/cd.html>

And For information in more detail How a Madrigal Dinner is set up: This is almost PRECISELY how we used to run the show. Even the songs used as fanfare in-between courses of the meal. Go here for more info:

<http://www.elyriaschools.k12.oh.us/ehs/music/feaste.htm>

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The Flaming Pudding Carol Lyrics (From My Memory sorry, I couldn't find a link on the Web Anywhere for this)

Come Bring with a Noise
My Merry, Merry Boys
The Christmas Pudding-a-flaming
While my good King bids that ye all be free
And Eat to thy hearts desiring.

(The flaming Pudding is really a FLAMING PUDDING. A Plum Pudding covered in Brandy is set ablaze and served as the desert to follow the Christmas feast traditionally in English History. WE didn't serve that... we served Carrot Cake... O.o...Hey it was HIGH SCHOOL!
GRIN)

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Plaudite, Psalite ("Sing we Clear" in MODERN Translation, that's not accurate, I'll provide an accurate Translation)

Written by: Giovanni Gabrieli (1557-1612)

Lyrics: (Latin)

Plaudite, psalite,
Jubilate Deo, omnis terra: alleluia.
Benedicant Dominum, omnes gentes,
collaudantes eum: alleluia.
Quia fecit nobiscum
Dominus misericordiam suam: alleluia.
Et captivam duxit captivitatem,
admirabilis et gloriosus in sæcula:
alleluia.

Translation:

Clap your hands, play the stringed instrument,
shout with joy to the God, all the earth: Alleluia.
Let all nations praise the Lord,
extolling him: Alleluia.
Because he has brought to pass amongst us
his compassion: Alleluia.
And he has led out of captivity the captive,
admirable and glorious for all ages:
Alleluia.

Whew and if you're still reading the footnotes... GOOD FOR YOU! Long and lengthy I know.

HAPPY CHRISTMAS!!!

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